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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile and the Jews  
during World War 2 (1938-1948)**

By

**Jan Lániček**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2010



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON  
ABSTRACT  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Doctor of Philosophy  
THE CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE AND THE JEWS DURING  
WORLD WAR 2 (1938-1948)  
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The thesis analyses Czechoslovak-Jewish relations in the twentieth century using the case study of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile in London and its activities during the Second World War. In order to present the research in a wider perspective, it covers the period between the Munich Agreement, when the first politicians left Czechoslovakia, and the Communist Coup in February 1948. Hence the thesis evaluates the political activities and plans of the Czechoslovak exiles, as well as the implementation of the plans in liberated Czechoslovakia after 1945.

In comparison with previous contributions to the theme, this thesis is based on extensive archival research. It examines how the Czechoslovak treatment of the Jews was shaped by resurgent Czech and Slovak nationalism/s caused by the war and the experience of the occupation by the German army. Simultaneously, the thesis enquires into the role played in the Czechoslovak exiles' decision making by their efforts to maintain the image of a democratic country in the heart of Europe. An adherence to western liberal democracies was a key political asset used by Czechoslovakia since her creation in 1918. Fair treatment of minorities, in particular the Jews, became part of this 'myth'. However, the Second World War brought to the fore Czechoslovak efforts to nationally homogenize the post-war Republic and rid it of its 'disloyal' minorities. Consequently, the thesis evaluates how the Jews as a minority were perceived and constructed.

The thesis is divided into five chapters, following the developments in chronological, as well as thematic order. The first chapter analyses the influence of people in occupied Czechoslovakia on the exiles' policy towards the Jews. Chapter two and three document the exiles' policy towards the Jews during the war, including the government's responses to the Holocaust. Chapter four enquires into the wartime origins of the post-war Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews. Finally, the last chapter analyses the influence of public opinion abroad on the Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews during and after the war.

Contemporary historiography acknowledges the peculiar situation of Jewish survivors in post-war Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that the post-war developments had their origins during the war and cannot be attributed purely to the malignant influence of Nazi anti-Semitism. Consequently, the thesis documents the main influences that shaped the exiles' attitude towards the Jews and contextualizes them with other priorities on their agenda.

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Jan Lániček

declare that the thesis entitled **The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile and the Jews during World War 2 (1938-1948)**

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- parts of this work have been published as: Lániček, Jan, ‘The Czechoslovak Jewish Political Exile in Great Britain during World War Two’, in Brinson, Charmian – Malet, Marian (eds.), *Exile in and from Czechoslovakia during the 1930s and 1940s. The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Volume 11 (2009), pp. 167-182; Lániček, Jan, “To Get a Refusal Would Result in an Unfortunate Loss of Prestige”: The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile and the Holocaust’, in *Holocaust Studies. A Journal of Culture and History*, Volume 14, no. 3, Winter 2008, pp. 119-141.

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

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## List of Abbreviations

ABS	Archives of the Security Forces of the Ministry of Interior
AČR	Archives of the Czech Radio
AfZ	Das Archiv für Zeitgeschichte
AJA	American Jewish Archives
AJJDC	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
AJHS	American Jewish Historical Society
AKPR	Archives of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic
AMZV	Archives of the Czech Foreign Ministry
APNP	Archives of the Memorial of the National Literature
AÚTGM	Archives of the Institute of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk
AZEC	American Zionist Emergency Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BoD	Board of Deputies
BS WJC	British Section of the World Jewish Congress
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre
CJRC	Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee
CNA	National Archives of the Czech Republic
CPC (KSČ)	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CRC	Czechoslovak Red Cross
CUA	Columbia University Archives
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
FCJ	Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews
FDRPL	Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
HIA	Hoover Institution Archives
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JA	Jewish Agency
JDB	Jewish Daily Bulletin
JFC	Joint Foreign Committee of British Jewry
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency
LA	London Archives
LAC	Library and Archives of Canada
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LOC	Library of Congress
MNO	Ministry of National Defence
MSP-L	Ministry of Social Welfare – London
MV-L	Ministry of Interior – London
MZV	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NYPL	New York Public Library
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCNL	Polish Council of National Liberation

PLILMRA	The Pinchas Lavon Institute for Labour Movement Research
PMR-L	Presidium of the Council of Ministers
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
SD	Sicherheitsdienst
SNA	Slovak National Archives
SNC	Slovak National Council
SRC	Slovak Red Cross
SRP	Association of Racially Persecuted
SSEES	School of Slavonic and East European Studies
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom
UHA	University of Haifa Archives
UJA	United Jewish Appeal
UN	United Nations
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNWCC	United Nation War Crimes Commission
ÚRP	Office of the Reichsprotektor
USA	University of Southampton Archives
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
ÚVOD	The Central Leadership of the Home Resistance Movement
VHA	Military Historical Archives
WJC	World Jewish Congress
YUA	Yeshiva University Archives
YVA	Yad Vashem Archives

## INTRODUCTION

*The reparation which Christendom owes to Jewry is infinite. It is debt which can never be paid, but which can only be acknowledged.*

Rev. James Parkes (1962)

According to classic historiography, bystanders constitute one of the three main categories, besides the perpetrators and victims, of Holocaust research. Since the mid-1960s, many historians have tried to focus on one sub-category of the bystanders, on the outside world's responses to the Jewish plight. Comprehensive studies have emerged on the American, British and recently on Soviet policies.<sup>1</sup> However, when we survey the historiography on the subject, we can see that not many historians have ever tried to focus on, let alone comprehend, the position of the exile governments. Hence this introduction will evaluate the reasons why a special study on an exile government's Jewish policy is desirable and *in fact* necessary. It aims to highlight that the minor Allies did *not* play a marginal role in the world's response to the Holocaust. An exploration of the exiles' treatment of Jewish issues can also help to re-evaluate the response of the Allies as a whole. Subsequently, the core of the preface is focused on the introduction to the case study of one of the exiles, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. The introduction opens and explains the complexity of the situation the exiles faced when dealing with the so-called 'Jewish question'. The investigation is done with the help of a new methodological approach to the topic with the emphasis on comparative analysis and on the continuity of the historical development.

### ***Bystanders to the Holocaust: the uniqueness of the exile Governments' responses***

During recent years, the topic of the bystanders to the Holocaust has remained heatedly contested by historians. Even the term 'bystander' remains controversial. Especially, to label an actor as a 'bystander' bears negative

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<sup>1</sup> See Kushner, Tony, 'Pissing in the Wind: The Search for Nuance in the Study of Holocaust Bystanders', in David Cesarani – Paul Levine (eds.), '*Bystanders' and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 57-76; Marrus, Michael R., *The Holocaust in History* (London: Penguin Books, 1989); Altman, Ilya, *Жертвы ненависти. Холокост в СССР 1941-1945 гг. [Victims of Hate. The Holocaust in the USSR, 1941-1945]* (Moscow: Kovcheg, 2002).

connotations. As Thomas Brudholm suggests, ‘to label something or somebody a “bystander” typically functions like a kind of shaming or an acknowledgement of failure; the audience could and should have done something, yet did not’.<sup>2</sup> Michael R. Marrus criticizes historians for judging and moralizing about the ‘bystanders’ on the basis that ‘they failed to live up to our standards’. He continues: ‘The obvious temptation in this kind of exposition is to assess bystanders, not from the standpoint of their own cultures, priorities and preoccupations, but from what we assume *ought* to have been their beliefs and actions.’<sup>3</sup> Marrus hence advises that only ‘by making a painstaking effort to enter into their minds and sensibilities’, can we actually fully comprehend the conduct of a bystander.<sup>4</sup> A bystander’s behaviour needs to be explained in its historical context. It means to enquire into his/her other priorities and also to understand the responses within a long-term perspective.

Concerning the historiography of the bystanders’ responses to the Jewish plight, nobody has ever tried to summarize, or comprehend, the position of the exile governments. There are comprehensive individual studies, especially on the Polish government. Nevertheless, nobody has researched the minor Allies’ cooperation with their Jewish policies, or evaluated the importance of this issue in their diplomatic relations with the major Allied powers. It could be argued that the British to a large extent influenced exile governments’ policies towards the Jews. The reason was that the minor Allies were from the very beginning in close contact with the British government. The former were especially allowed to continue their fight against the Axis on the latter’s soil. This meant that they had to respect the rules set by their British hosts. In addition, the influence of the Soviet Union and the United States, as the main powers in the world, cannot be denied. Yet this was a two way process: the exiles had the ability to influence the policy of the major Allies towards the Jews as well.

For example, the exile governments had better access to intelligence from the occupied countries. It was their underground movements that communicated information about the Holocaust from Europe. The disclosures of the British and

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<sup>2</sup> Brudholm, Thomas, ‘Surveying a Gap: A Philosophical Perspective on Historians’ Responses to Discourses on the ‘Bystanders’’, in *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, Volume 11, No. 3 (Winter 2005), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Marrus, Michael R., ‘Bystanders to the Holocaust (Review of Monty Penkower’s *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* and David Wyman’s *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*)’, in Verne W. Newton (ed.), *FDR and the Holocaust* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Marrus, Michael R., *The Holocaust in History* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 157.

American military intelligence and the messages deciphered by the Office of Strategic Services, the US intelligence agency, revealed substantial information about the ‘Final Solution’.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as suggested by Nick Terry, the intelligence was far from clear; not all of the information was caught in its entirety and it was frequently out of context and misleading.<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, the role of the exiles’ connections with home underground groups should not be underestimated. The minor Allies might significantly contribute to the disclosure of the ‘Final Solution’.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, by revealing or suppressing such intelligence, they could influence the policies of the British and American governments. Moreover, strong interventions or publicity in the exile press could have influenced the major Allies’ policies and their reluctance to broaden the rescue measures. Nevertheless, the exiles’ influence on the British or American governments might have been a negative one too. Bernard Wasserstein suggests that worries concerning Polish anti-Semitic policies caused British carefulness in restricting immigration to Palestine during the war.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, concerning the specificities of the exiles’ perception of the Jews, the Nazi occupation of the European countries triggered resurgent nationalism. These sentiments affected the populations of the subjugated countries and had their imprint in exile as well. This is a crucial factor, especially when relations between major nations and one minority are discussed. Indeed, the national feelings and hatred were directed not only against the occupying forces and their nation; together with nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism also re-emerged. We can presume that the policies of the exile governments were shaped by the strong nationalism in the occupied homeland, as well as in their own ranks.

Additionally, there were generally different political issues that the exiles dealt with than those in the case of the major Allies. The main Jewish issues can be

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<sup>5</sup> Breitman, Richard, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (London: Penguin, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Terry, Nicholas, ‘Conflicting Signals: British Intelligence on the ‘Final Solution’ Through Radio Intercepts and Other Sources, 1941-1942’, in *Yad Vashem Studies*, XXXII, 2004, pp. 351-396.

<sup>7</sup> For example the mission of a Polish courier Jan Karski in November 1942 actually brought to the Allied countries the confirmation about the mass extermination of Jews. See: Karski, Jan, ‘The Message that was delivered, but not heard’, in Marcia Littell – Richard Libowitz – Evelyn Bodek Rosen (eds.), *The Holocaust Forty Years after* (Lewington: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), pp. 29-35; *Story of a Secret State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944).

<sup>8</sup> Wasserstein, Bernard, ‘Polish Influences on British Policy Regarding Jewish Rescue Efforts in Poland 1939-1945’, in Anthony Polonsky (ed.), *Polin, Volume 11: Focusing on Aspects and Experiences of Religion* (London: The Litman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), pp. 183-191.

coherently summarised as the problem of the rescue and relief measures for the Jews in ghettos and concentration camps. The Jews were citizens of the countries represented by the exiles and one of the most fundamental duties of a state is that of protecting its own citizens. Among the other political issues the exiles faced were: the repatriation of the deported or exiled Jews; retribution of the crimes committed against the Jews; and the post-war settlement of ‘the Jewish question’ in their countries. Not all of these issues were on the agenda of the major Allies, or at least were not so strongly pronounced. One of the intentions of the thesis is to present, with regard to the Czechoslovak case study and in a comparative perspective, a theoretical framework of the exile bystanders’ responses during the war. Hence we can raise a question as to what extent were the exile governments a separate category in the Allied reaction to the Holocaust? We also have to ask whether there existed anything like a *policy* of the exile governments, or whether we have to talk all the time about their *policies*. When we keep in mind the insufficient state of the contemporary historiography on the subject, is it still possible to determine any common taxonomy of the exiles’ conduct and to find a place for the Czechoslovaks?

The Czechoslovak case study is at the centre of this thesis. Nevertheless, the case studies of the other exiled governments are used to identify the main issues that might be of interest. It does not suggest that all the identified theories need to be necessarily valid for the Czechoslovak case study, only that we *may* suppose that they might have played some role. Recent historiography has used comparative approaches towards Jewish/non-Jewish relations during the war. This seems to be a very important and indeed useful approach.<sup>9</sup>

As documented, there is a large variety of topics that call for our attention when dealing with the exile governments’ relations with Jews during the war. The centrality of the Holocaust in the whole story cannot be disputed. The tragedy of the Jewish people simply seems to be the main Jewish issue on the agenda of the exile political representatives. However, contemporary historiography has proved that the imagination of the Allied politicians was not able to grasp entirely the enormity of the Nazi extermination plans.<sup>10</sup> If we accept this theory as a plausible or at least a partly correct variation, can we thus also dispute the centrality of the Holocaust on

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Kosmala, Beate – Tych, Feliks (Eds.), *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Kushner, Tony, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford – Cambridge (Mass.): Blackwell, 1994).

the exiles' agenda? As suggested by the aforementioned ascent of nationalism, we shall start the exploration of the exiles' Jewish policies not at the moment when the first deportation trains left for 'the east', or even when the Nazis introduced their anti-Jewish legislation. Instead, it is more suitable to start the investigation of the topic even earlier, at the moment when the Nazis' expansionist policy threatened Czechoslovakia in the days of the Munich crisis. This was the point when no one could actually predict the future horrific scope of the Nazi racial policy in Europe. The intention is to document that the exiles started to contemplate the plans for the post-war solution of the Jewish position in their countries *regardless* of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. The development in post-war Czechoslovakia, concerning the Jews, was to a large extent prepared a long time before the exiled authorities realised the full scale of the Jewish tragedy. It seems that in this case, the fact of whether they fully realised the fate of the European Jews in 1942 or 1944 was only of secondary importance in setting the course of the Czechoslovak government's Jewish policy. However, before we analyse the Czechoslovak case study, we need to evaluate the contemporary historiography on the governments-in-exile and the Jews.

### ***Historiography of exile governments' attitude towards the Jews***

A desire to research the topic of the exile governments' Jewish policies during the war faces the lack of an extensive and sophisticated historiography. There were nine exile governments during the war: Belgian, Czechoslovak, Dutch, French (National Committee), Greek, Luxembourg, Norwegian, Polish and Yugoslav. Not all of their attitudes towards the Jews have been a subject of comprehensive historical research. The main exception is the Polish government, whose approach towards the Jewish plight has been discussed extensively. A strong condemnation of the Polish government's conduct was already presented in the shadow of the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. Emanuel Ringelblum, a historian hiding on the 'Aryan' side of Warsaw, concluded:

at a time when extermination threatens the Jewish people, the government has done nothing to save at least a remnant of Polish Jewry. The official attitude concerning the surviving handful of Polish Jews

has been completely wrong, viewed in relation to the unprecedented tragedy, which the Jewish people is undergoing in Poland.<sup>11</sup>

The tone of the post-war historiography has been polarized.<sup>12</sup> The works that have dealt with the Polish war-time policy can be divided into two groups. One group of historians condemn the Poles. They explained that the Polish war-time indifference to the Jews was caused, for example, by political anti-Semitism; others attributed it to more pressing priorities on the Poles' political agenda.<sup>13</sup> The second group, in contrast, has tried to prove that the Poles responded adequately and did more than any other of the Allied governments.<sup>14</sup> This historiographical dispute was part of a wider discussion of the Polish-Jewish relations that has been in progress since the end of the war and which became stronger in the late 1960s during the new wave of anti-Semitism in Poland.

The two most comprehensive volumes were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s by David Engel. Engel suggests that the pro-Jewish actions of the Polish government were shaped by their conviction about the influence of international Jewish organizations over the major Allied governments, especially the Americans. In fact, this was not the case only with the Polish western government: Stalin, for example, apparently shared these feelings as well.<sup>15</sup> Engel concludes that this notion prevailed among the lower ranking Polish military officers as well as the government's ministers.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he also shows that most of the pro-Jewish

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<sup>11</sup> Ringelblum, Emmanuel, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), p. 223.

<sup>12</sup> Stola, Dariusz, 'In the Shadow of the Facts', in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 8: Jews in independent Poland* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), pp. 331-344; Engel, David, 'Reading and Misreading: A Reply to Dariusz Stola', in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 8: Jews in independent Poland* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), pp. 345-381.

<sup>13</sup> Avital, Zvi, 'The Polish Government in Exile and the Jewish Question' in *Wiener Library Bulletin* 33/34, 1975, pp. 43-51; David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939-1942* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); *Facing a Holocaust: the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Gutman, Yisrael – Krakowski, Shmuel, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986); Stola, Dariusz, 'The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Final Solution. What Conditioned Its Actions and Inactions?', in Joshua D. Zimmerman (ed.), *Contested Memories. Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 85-96.

<sup>14</sup> Lukas, Richard C., *Forgotten Holocaust. The Poles under German Occupation 1939-1944. Revised Edition* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2007); Iranek-Osmecki, Kazimierz – Lichten, Joseph L. – Raczyński, Edward, 'The Polish Government in Exile and the Jewish Tragedy During World War II' in *Wiener Library Bulletin* 37/38, 1976, pp. 62-67.

<sup>15</sup> Friedlander, Saul, *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1945. The Years of Extermination* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), p. 250.

<sup>16</sup> Engel, David, *Facing a Holocaust*, pp. 27-28 and 34.

actions of the government were not followed through.<sup>17</sup> The policy of the Polish government resembled walking on eggshells, when any pro-Jewish action was immediately criticized by the Polish resistance in the occupied country. Simultaneously, the exiles' reluctance to fulfil demands of pro-Jewish activists was commented on in the western press. The Poles were hence caught in a net of complex influences. Engel's conclusions seem plausible and could be further elaborated on in the Czechoslovak case study. As the newest research has confirmed, although the treatment of the Holocaust by the Poles was far from positive, we could not talk about any conspiracy of silence.<sup>18</sup>

Concerning the other exiles, studies on the Belgian or Dutch approaches have mostly been based on the radio broadcasts from London, exile press, or on randomly chosen documents.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the official authorities in Belgium recently decided to conduct a comprehensive research on the Belgians' behaviour during the war. As a result of this initiative, an extensive study was published. The book also critically explores the Belgian exile government's response to the persecution of the Jews

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<sup>17</sup> As was the case with the *Council for Matters Relating to the Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland*, the Polish version of the *War Refugee Board*. See Engel, David, *Facing a Holocaust*, pp. 138-167.

<sup>18</sup> Wróbel, Piotr, 'Dziennik Polski (The Polish Daily), the Official Organ of the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Holocaust, 1940-1945', in Robert Moses Shapiro (ed.), *Why didn't the Press Shout? American and International Journalism During the Holocaust* (New Jersey: Yeshiva University Press – KTAV Publishing House, 2003), pp. 507-534.

<sup>19</sup> Laureys, Véronique, 'The Attitude of the Belgian Government-in-exile in London toward the Jews and the Jewish Question During World War II', in Dan Michman (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust. Jews-Belgians-Germans* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), pp. 287-306; Coestecker, Frank, 'The Reintegration of Jewish Survivors into Belgian Society, 1943-1947, in David Bankier (ed.), *The Jews are Coming Back. The Return of the Jews to their countries of origin after WWII*, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 72-107; Barnouw, David J., 'Dutch Exiles in London', in Martin Conway – José Gotovitch (eds.), *Europe in Exile. European Exile Communities in Britain 1940-1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), pp. 229-246; De Jong, Louis, 'The Netherlands and Auschwitz', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 7, 1968, pp. 39-56; Presser, Dr. J., *ashes in the Wind. The Destruction of Dutch Jewry* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1988), pp. 329-336; van der Zee, Nanda, *Um Schlimmeres zu verhindern... Die Ermordung der niederländischen Juden: Kollaboration und Widerstand* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2002). For example Presser based his description of the Dutch government's response to the Holocaust on 'the Minutes of an Enquiry Committee' of the post-war Dutch parliament. Book by van der Zee is very critical of the Queen Wilhelmina and her decision to leave the Netherlands on the eve of the German occupation. It was, according to van der Zee, one of the reasons of the very high number of victims among the Dutch Jewry; because the Queen left the country, the German civil administration with Arthur Seyss-Inquart was appointed and immediately started to prepare the gradual segregation of the Dutch Jewry. Most of the Dutch historians are sceptical about her conclusions. Selected historiography on the Jews in the other countries with exile governments during the war: Pavlowitch, Stefan K., 'Out of Context – The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, The Second World War: Part 1, (January 1981), pp. 89-119; Goldstein, Ivo, 'Restoring Jewish Life in Communist Yugoslavia, 1945-1967, in *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2004, pp. 58-71; Zariz, Ruth, 'The Jews of Luxembourg during Second World War', in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 1993, pp. 51-66; Abrahamsen, Samuel, *Norway's Response to the Holocaust. A Historical Perspective* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991).

during the war.<sup>20</sup> The Belgians' attitude was full of contradictions. Whilst they avoided mentioning the plight of the Jews when contacting people in the homeland, they at the same time conducted schemes that would exchange German civilians in Allied hands for Jews in occupied Belgium.<sup>21</sup> Other authors noted that the Belgians and Dutch were unable to grasp entirely the information coming from Europe. Véronique Laureys shows that the Belgian newspapers in exile published the incoming information inconsistently, in odd corners and – in the terms of timing – arbitrarily. However, she also concludes that the news coming from Europe was contradictory and often simply wrong.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the Dutch government, the most revealing fact is that its prepared repatriation programme expected that around 70,000 Dutch Jews would return from Poland. In fact, only 6,000 Dutch Jews survived the Nazi extermination camps in the east.<sup>23</sup> More critically, an academic discussion was stimulated by a controversial book by Nanda van der Zee. She strongly criticizes Queen Wilhelmina's and the Gerbrandy government's silence on Jewish issues, especially over the BBC.<sup>24</sup> The limited sources used by van der Zee have caused doubts on the side of historians and her thesis is not generally accepted.<sup>25</sup> In any case, the authors of the studies on the Belgian, French and Dutch governments still generally agree that the reaction to the Holocaust had a low place on their agenda. For example, Sébastien Laurent notes that the French Military Intelligence was so obsessed with the military revenge against the Germans that anything else than purely military intelligence simply did not interest them.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, important issues have been raised by Renée Poznanski in her investigation of the French resistance movement's attitude towards the 'Jewish question'. In her opinion, the attitude of the French resistance (including De Gaulle's

<sup>20</sup> Van Doorslaer, Rudi (ed.), *Gewillig België: overheid en jodenvervolging tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: SOMA, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Debruyne, Emmanuel, *The Belgian Government-in-Exile and the Jews during World War 2*, paper presented at the conference 'Governments-in-Exile and the Jews during World War' at the University of Southampton, 21-22 March 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Laureys, Véronique, 'The Attitude of the Belgian Government-in-exile in London toward the Jews', pp. 292 and 305.

<sup>23</sup> Barnouw, David J., 'Dutch Exiles in London', pp. 242-243.

<sup>24</sup> van der Zee, Nanda, *Um Schlimmeres zu verhindern... Die Ermordung der niederländischen Juden: Kollaboration und Widerstand*.

<sup>25</sup> Professor Peter Romijn (NIOD, Amsterdam) to the author, 12 December 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Laurent, Sébastien, 'The French Military Secret Service and the Holocaust, 1940-1945: Omission, Blindness or Failure?', in David Bankier (ed.), *Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust. Collected Essays from the Colloquium at the City University of New York* (New York – Jerusalem: New York – Jerusalem, 2006), pp. 185f. For another article on De Gaulle see: Yapo, Eliezer: "De Gaulle and the Jews", in *Gesher*, Vol. 116, 1987, pp. 106-117.

Free French) towards the Jews was full of ambiguities. They understood that most of the population believed that a ‘Jewish problem’ existed in France. Hence we need to differentiate between their humanitarian compassion with the persecuted minority and feelings about the general Jewish position in France. The Free French cautiously followed the development in the public opinion in occupied and Vichy France. The Gaullists had to struggle for public support with the Pétain Vichy government which was, for a long time, seen by the French population as a potential power that might turn against the Germans and liberate France. Simultaneously, the Jews were accused by the French of ruling the decadent pre-war Third Republic (for example Leon Blum). They were thus allegedly the main culprits of its disintegration and military defeat. According to Poznanski, the concerns about the public opinion in France caused De Gaulle’s careful handling of Jewish issues.<sup>27</sup> A report prepared for the General in April 1943 stated among other: ‘*the General must not be the man who brings back the Jews* [emphasis in the original]’.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, another document stated:

It would be in the Jews’ interest to no longer constitute a separate group but to assimilate into the rest of the French people, not to stand out during the period of national reorganization after the war and to enter equally all circles and all professions (*numerus clausus*), without which fairly vigorous reaction will emerge spontaneously and impair the moral unity of France.<sup>29</sup>

As will be documented, similar demands emerged also in the Czechoslovak resistance.

Concerning the Czech and Slovak historiography after the fall of Communism, both Jewish history in Bohemia and Moravia and Czech-Jewish relations were slowly scrutinised more closely by historians. This is also relevant to modern Jewish history, especially the twentieth century. Concerning the topic of this thesis, historians, however, focused mostly only on the immediate post-war period. The transitional years between the liberation of Czechoslovakia and the Communist

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<sup>27</sup> Poznanski, Renée, ‘The French Resistance: An Alternative Society for the Jews?’, in David Bankier – Israel Gutman (eds.), *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), pp. 411–433. Poznanski recently developed her thesis in her book *Propagandes et persécutions: La Résistance et le “problème juif” 1940-1944* (Paris : Fayard, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Poznanski, Renée, ‘The French Resistance: An Alternative Society for the Jews?’, p. 432.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 431.

coup in February 1948 have been comprehensively investigated.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the authors have mostly focused only on the history of the third Czechoslovak republic (1945-1948) without investigating the origins of the post-war development in the situation during the war.

Yet there are also historians who have touched on the topics in connection with the situation among the Czechoslovak exiles. Peter Heumos published a social study of the wartime Jewish emigration from Czechoslovakia.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he raises issues of the approach of the Czechoslovak political authorities as well. Other authors, for example Avigdor Dagan,<sup>32</sup> Erich Kulka,<sup>33</sup> Jan Němeček,<sup>34</sup> Livia Rothkirchen,<sup>35</sup> or Jan Stříbrný<sup>36</sup> have attempted to explain the diverse factors of the Czechoslovak and inner Jewish politics in exile. One of the issues discussed has been the role of Zionism and minority rights for Jews in the preparation of the post-war order. Nevertheless, none of the authors has studied the problem in its complexity and none has researched all the available sources. Němeček, whose area of interest lays more in the government's diplomatic policy, presents his article as a short

<sup>30</sup> Hanková, Monika, *Kapitoly z poválečných dějin židovské komunity v Čechách a na Moravě (1945-1956)* (MA thesis, Prague: Faculty of Arts, 2006); Novotná, Hedvika, *Soužití české společnosti a Židů v letech 1945-1948 ve světle různých pramenů* (MA thesis, Prague: Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, 2003); Sedlák, Petr, *Poté. Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)* (PhD thesis, Brno: Institute of History, Masaryk University, 2008); Brod, Petr, 'Židé v poválečném Československu', in Václav Veber (ed.), *Židé v novodobých dějinách: Soubor přednášek FF UK* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1997), pp. 177-189; Krejčová, Helena, 'Czech and Slovak anti-Semitism, 1945-1948', in Karel Jech (ed.), *Stránkami soudobých dějin. Sborník statí k pětašedesátinám Karla Kaplana* (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1993), 158-173; 'The Czech Lands at the Dawn of the New Age (Czech anti-Semitism 1945-1948', in Jan Hancil (ed.), *Anti-Semitism in Post Totalitarian Europe* (Praha: Franz Kafka Publishers, 1993), pp. 115-124.

<sup>31</sup> Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938-1945* (München: Oldenburg Verlag, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Avigdor Dagan, 'Československá vláda v exilu a židovská tragédie za druhé světové války', in Miroslav Kárný – Vojtěch Blodig (eds.), *Terezín v konečném řešení židovské otázky* (Praha: Logos, 1992), pp. 204-207; 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-exile and the Jews', in Avigdor Dagan (ed.), *Jews of Czechoslovakia: Historical Studies and Surveys. Volume III* (Philadelphia – New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), pp. 449-495.

<sup>33</sup> Kulka, Erich, *Jews in Svoboda's Army in the Soviet Union: Czechoslovak Jewry's fight against the Nazis during World War II* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); *Židé v československém vojsku na Západě* (Praha: Naše Vojsko, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Němeček, Jan, 'Československý londýnský politický exil a židovská otázka', in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty 2002* (Praha: Academia, 2002); 'Československá exilová vláda v Londýně a řešení židovské otázky', in Zlatica Zudová-Lešková (ed.), *Židé v boji a odboji. Rezistence československých Židů v letech druhé světové války* (Praha: Historický ústav, 2007), pp. 217-244.

<sup>35</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of Documents', in *Yad Vashem Studies IX*, Jerusalem, 1973; *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia* (Lincoln (Ne) – Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press – Yad Vashem, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Stříbrný, Jan, 'Židovští vojenští duchovní a židovská otázka v československém vojsku na Západě v letech 1939 - 1945. Příběh Alexandra Krause a JUDr. Hanuše Rebenwurzela – Rezka,' in Helena Krejčová – Jana Svobodová (eds.), *Postavení a osudy židovského obyvatelstva v Čechách a na Moravě v letech 1939 - 1945.* (Praha: ÚSD AV ČR, 1998), pp. 162-220.

summary of the most important issues of the Czechoslovak exiles' war-time policy towards the Jews. Nevertheless, doubts can be cast on some of his conclusions, especially on the role of Zionism in Beneš's war-time strategy, the treatment of the Holocaust by the Czechoslovak administration and the positive role of Jan Masaryk.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, no one among the historians has sophisticatedly evaluated the Czechoslovak exiles' attitude towards the Jews in comparison with their relation to other minorities in the Republic, especially the Germans and Hungarians.

Rothkirchen, besides her interests in the Beneš government, was also one of the initiators of the first academic studies of Czech-Jewish relations in the Protectorate.<sup>38</sup> She suggests that there were anti-Semitic tendencies in the ranks of the Czech resistance movement and also opens the issue of Beneš's problematic response to the Jewish persecution.<sup>39</sup> Yet she does not, for example, enquire into the reasons for Beneš's and Jan Masaryk's staunch support of the Zionist movement.<sup>40</sup> Her contributions can be regarded as the most comprehensive, but even her latest book is based on research from the late 1960s and early 1970s making her study outdated.<sup>41</sup> Hence, for the situation in the Protectorate, the studies by Miroslav Kárný are particularly indispensable.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the historiography of the Slovak treatment of the Jews during the war is better developed than in the case of the historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Němeček, for example, writes about an initiative to exchange some of the Theresienstadt inmates for German prisoners or citizens in Allied countries. He attributed the initiation of the scheme to Masaryk (Němeček, Jan, 'Československá exilová vláda v Londýně a řešení židovské otázky', in Zlatica Zudová-Lešková (ed.), *Židé v boji a odboji. Rezistence československých Židů v letech druhé světové války* (Praha: Historický ústav, 2007), p. 236). However, the scheme was in fact initiated by Czechoslovak Jewish politicians, who approached the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister.

<sup>38</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime', in Michael Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust: historical articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Vol. 5. Public Opinion and Relations to the Jews in Nazi Europe* (Westport: Meckler, 1989), pp. 415-449; 'The Defiant Jew: Jews and the Czech "Inside Front" (1938-1942)', in *Yad Vashem Studies XIV* (1981), pp. 35-88.

<sup>39</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Defiant Jew: Jews and the Czech "Inside Front" (1938-1942)', in *Yad Vashem Studies XIV* (1981) p. 46; *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*, pp. 178-181.

<sup>40</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln (Ne) – Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press – Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 284-285.

<sup>41</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*.

<sup>42</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Czech Society and the "Final Solution", in David Bankier – Israel Gutman (eds.), *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), pp. 309-326; "Konečné řešení". *Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice*, (Praha: Academia, 1991).

<sup>43</sup> See for example: Kamenec, Ivan, *Po stopách tragédie* (Bratislava: Archa, 1991); 'Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called "Solution to the Jewish Question" During the Period 1938-1945, in David Bankier – Israel Gutman (eds.), *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), pp. 327-338; Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-1948)', in *East Central Europe*, Vol. 2, 1978, pp. 186-202; 'The

The tone of all the important works dealing with the Czechoslovak exiles' Jewish policy remains mostly positive. Criticism is directed only against some parts of the army officer corps, but never against the Czechoslovak exiles as a whole.<sup>44</sup> The authors have not questioned the prevailing notion of the Czechoslovaks' exceptional democratic attitude towards the Jews. The history of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations is seen positively, with the sole exception of the brief period of the Second Republic (October 1938-March 1939).<sup>45</sup> It is only modern historiography that tries to comprehend Czech-Jewish relations in their complexity and in broader international comparison. Michael Frankl, for example, suggests that anti-Semitism was a significant element in the Czech political tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> He, in collaboration with Kateřina Čapková, also questions the Czechoslovak welcoming of German and Austrian refugees who tried to escape the Nazis during the 1930s.<sup>47</sup>

More conclusions can be drawn from the contributions on general Czechoslovak history, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and interethnic relations in occupied Bohemia and Moravia. The first academic studies on the Czechoslovak exiles emerged in the early 1960s. The Marxist historian Jan Křen introduced in two volumes the history of the first years of the exile resistance movement.<sup>48</sup> He also included a short synopsis on the exiles' treatment of the Jews and highlighted the nationalistic and anti-Semitic tendencies that developed especially in the army.<sup>49</sup> On the other side of the globe, the Czech-American émigré historian Radomír Luža presented the first serious study on Czech-German relations

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"Final Solution" – The Slovak Version', in Michael Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust. Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Vol. IV.2. The "Final Solution" Outside Germany* (Toronto, Mecklermedia, 1989), pp. 462-472; Lipscher, Ladislav, *Die Juden im Slowakischen Staat 1939-1945* (München: Oldenbourg, 1979); *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939-1945* (Bratislava: Print-servis, 1992); Nižnanský, Eduard – Andrea James-Jamrichová, 'Deportácie Židov zo Slovenska v rokoch 1944/45 – niekoľko dokumentov', in *Studia historica Nitriensia*, vol. VIII, 1999, pp. 299-310; Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Destruction of Slovak Jewry. A Documentary History* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1961).

<sup>44</sup> See works by Kulka and Stříbrný.

<sup>45</sup> Rataj, Jan, 'Český antisemitismus v proměnách let 1918-1945', in Jerzy Tomaszewski (ed.), *Židé v české a polské občanské společnosti*. (Praha: Filozofická fakulta UK, 1999), pp. 56-60.

<sup>46</sup> Frankl, Michael, "Emancipace od židů." *Český antisemitismus na konci 19. století* (Praha – Litomyšl: Paseka, 2007), p. 313.

<sup>47</sup> Čapková, Kateřina – Frankl, Michal, *Nejisté útočiště. Československo a uprchlíci před nacismem 1933-1938* (Praha: Paseka, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Křen, Jan, *Do emigrace: Západní zahraniční odboj 1938-1939*. 2. vydání (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1969); *V emigraci: Západní zahraniční odboj 1939-1940* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1969).

<sup>49</sup> Křen, Jan, *V emigraci: Západní zahraniční odboj 1939-1940* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1969), pp. 102, 106f.

before, during and after the war.<sup>50</sup> In his opinion, the German anti-Czech policy in the 1930s and 1940s inevitably led to the expulsion of the German minority from Czechoslovakia after the war. However, Luža did not explore the exiles' treatment of other Czechoslovak minorities, including the Jews. Also in the United States, another émigré, Edvard Táborský, the former personal secretary to Beneš, wrote the diplomatic history of the struggle for renewed Czechoslovakia.<sup>51</sup> Táborský analysed Beneš's foreign policy during the war and the development of his contacts with the Soviet Union. He did not mention the Jews at all and hence did not attribute to them any role in the Czechoslovak diplomatic history. Furthermore, the second volume on the history of Czech-German relations by Johann Wolfgang Bruegel analyses the development during and after the war.<sup>52</sup> He critically approached Czech nationalistic tendencies that developed after Munich and condemned the expulsion plans. Significantly, Bruegel raises the issue of the persecution of the German-speaking Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia.

In Germany Detlef Brandes, in his older study, analysed the German occupation regime in the Protectorate and the responses of the Czech resistance groups.<sup>53</sup> In contrast to previous authors, Brandes utilised the temporary openness of Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s and researched primary sources in Prague archives. In his newer study, he compared the formation of three exile governments, the Czechoslovak, Polish and Yugoslav, and their relations with their British hosts.<sup>54</sup> Brandes focuses his study on diplomatic history and hardly deals with Jewish issues.

The Czechoslovak attitude towards the Sudeten Germans became one of the main topics of the post-Communist historiography in particular. Tomáš Staněk was the first Czech author who after 1989 focused on the post-war expulsion of the German minority from Czechoslovakia.<sup>55</sup> Staněk also briefly introduced the wartime path that led to the expulsion plans and drew historians' attention to the fate of the German-speaking Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia. Another detailed study on the

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<sup>50</sup> Luža, Radomír, *The transfer of the Sudeten Germans: a study of Czech-German relations, 1933-1962* (London: Routledge, 1964).

<sup>51</sup> Táborský, Edvard, *President Edvard Beneš: Between East and West, 1938-1948* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1981).

<sup>52</sup> Brügel, Johann Wolfgang, *Češi a Němci. 1939-1946* (Praha: Academia, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945* (Praha: Prostor, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem* (Praha: Karolinum, 2003).

<sup>55</sup> Staněk, Tomáš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947* (Praha: Academia, 1991).

transfer of the German population from Czechoslovakia emerged in the late 1990s thanks to Brandes.<sup>56</sup>

Of the general historiography on Czechoslovakia in the first half of the twentieth century, the recent successful study by Andrea Orzoff should be emphasised.<sup>57</sup> Orzoff presents the myth-building of Masaryk's Czechoslovakia and the struggle for its sustenance during the late 1930s and 1940s. She describes how the 'myth' was created during the First World War in order to persuade the western powers to support the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia. This 'myth' was later promoted in the international arena as one of the main assets the Czechoslovaks used in the 1930s to maintain the support of the western world. Orzoff lists Jews among staunch supporters of the 'myth', especially because of the role of Masaryk.<sup>58</sup> Yet she fails to discuss the role that the Jews played in the *formation* of the 'myth' and also whether the treatment of the Jews was not used by Czechoslovakia as another proof of its adherence to democratic ideals. Furthermore, as this thesis argues, the wartime and post-war change in the Czechoslovak perception or treatment of the Jews did not pass unnoticed. Did this cause any complications in the Czechoslovak mythmaking? If not, then what were the reasons for this development?

Important studies dealing with the interethnic relations in the Protectorate have recently been published. Chad Bryant examines Czech nationalism and asks how people in occupied Bohemia and Moravia and in exile responded to the Nazi policy of Germanization.<sup>59</sup> Bryant questions the accepted stereotypes of identity formation and presents wartime Bohemia and Moravia as a territory with 'hopelessly mixed people'. Furthermore, Bryant documents how the exiles utilised the anti-German feelings of the majority of Czechs to settle accounts with the German minority and force it into expulsion.<sup>60</sup> Tara Zahra also uses new approaches towards the study of Czech nationalism and the treatment of minorities.<sup>61</sup> She focuses on the family level and discusses how children were claimed at different times by various

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<sup>56</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung. Pläne und Entscheidung zum 'Transfer' der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen* (München: Oldenbourg, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Orzoff, Andrea, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>59</sup> Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208-252.

<sup>61</sup> Zahra, Tara, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

nationalists as the offspring for future national generations. National radicalization of the Czechs is further documented by Benjamin Frommer.<sup>62</sup> His analysis of post-war Czechoslovak retribution proves how radical Czech nationalism and the determination to homogenize the Republic became the main objectives of the exiled and the first post-war governments. They preferred the expulsion of all the Sudeten Germans to a prolonged prosecution and trial of the middle and low ranking criminals.<sup>63</sup>

Hence the available historiography offers answers to various questions that emerge from the topic of this PhD. Yet, at the same time, the historiography opens other issues that need to be evaluated and addressed here. Are the case studies of the other exile governments a useful instrument in this respect?

### ***Policy or policies of the governments-in-exile?***

We can identify several key factors that shaped the Jewish policy of the exile governments. These can be divided into two main groups: one of them is connected with the conditions in exile and the second one with the situation in the occupied homeland. War-time Jewish policies of the exile governments were influenced by the set of priorities on their agenda. The interests of the nation, who could feel betrayed by its allies and lived under the terror of occupation, were always prioritized. In this respect, the diplomatic position of the governments figured at the top level and insecurity in this area pushed other issues aside. Not all of the exile governments were firmly accepted by the Allies, at least not during the whole war. This was mostly the case with the East-Central European governments, countries liberated later by the Red Army, or by underground movements. For example, the Czechoslovak government and its President Edvard Beneš had problems receiving full recognition from the Allies. Even after Beneš gained full diplomatic status, the government constantly and carefully followed the growing Soviet imperialistic tendencies in the east. Even more complex was the position of the Polish and Yugoslav governments. There was a strong opposition against them within their own

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<sup>62</sup> Frommer, Benjamin, *Retribution Against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228-266.

countries or later from the side of the Soviets.<sup>64</sup> The exiles' struggle for their political survival might have influenced their reaction to the persecution of one minority living among them.

The structure of the exile community played its role as well, particularly the number and political/national affiliation of the Jews who escaped the Nazis and organised their political struggle abroad. The western minor Allies (and to a large extent also the Yugoslavs and Greeks) did not have to 'solve' any difficult problems because their Jewish population had been assimilated long time before, or because there were not many of their national Jews in war-time London.<sup>65</sup> Assimilated Jews did not want to stress the persecution of the Jewish minority by the Nazis in order to prove their unconditional loyalty to the struggling major nation.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, the Czechoslovak and Polish Jewish exiles were to a large extent supporters of the Jewish national movement. They organised themselves into political organisations and attempted to influence the politics of their respective governments. We can therefore argue that in this respect the situation of the Czechoslovaks and Poles was different from that of the other Allies. Hand in hand with the national-Jewish demands for the minority rights went the issue of the governments' view of Zionism.

However, interventions did not come only from the side of exile Jewry. International Jewish organisations focused their attention on the exile governments as well. The most eloquent among the former were the pro-Zionists. They were mainly interested in the countries with large Jewish populations, especially those in East-Central Europe. The role of the international and exile Jewries in the formation of the exile governments' policies should not be underestimated. The exiled governments maintained contacts with the pro-Jewish activists because of their political eloquence and alleged influence on the international stage. Furthermore, every issue related to minorities needed to be treated carefully because of the

<sup>64</sup> Pavlowitch, Stefan K., 'Out of Context – The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945', pp. 89-119. Moreover, the situation of the Royal Yugoslav Government was complicated by the internal rift and the administration was generally too weak to be able to cope with any significant issue. No exile government underwent such an internal struggle for power as in the case of the Yugoslavs. There was no unifying power, any strong personality, as was the case with the Czechoslovaks and their President Beneš, or for a long time with the General Wladyslaw Sikorski of Poland. For the internal situation in the Yugoslav government see also: Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem* (Praha: Karolinum, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> The terms 'Zionist' and 'national Jewish' are used as synonyms in this thesis. The author is aware of the slight difference in the meanings of these two terms; not all national Jews were necessarily Zionists.

<sup>66</sup> See the Belgian example above.

democratic image the exiles wished to maintain in the west. No one wanted to be perceived as an undemocratic government. Interestingly, for the Jewish organisations, the record of the pre-war treatment of the Jewish minority in each particular country played a more prominent role than the actions conducted by their exile administrations in the war. Therefore the Poles had to struggle from the beginning with strong prejudices on the side of the Jewish organisations.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, Czechoslovakia was always considered to be one of the most sympathetic countries towards the Jews.<sup>68</sup>

In any case, further influences on the policies of the exile governments have to be sought in the occupied homelands. Indisputably, key factors were the number of Jews in the particular countries, their proportion vis-à-vis the major population, their religious and national affiliation, the number of Jewish refugees from other countries, but also the presence of other national minorities, particularly Germans. The case study of Belgium shows that we cannot judge only according to the numbers of Jews in each specific country. Around 65,000 Jews lived in this country before 1940, but 90 percent of them were refugees from the east, or Germany. They were not regarded as a part of the Belgian national community.<sup>69</sup> Hence the Belgian Jewish community, in the eyes of London, consisted only of several thousands Jews. The actions of the Pierlot government could be influenced by its perception of who was and who was not 'Belgian'. Whilst this constituted a big issue in comprehending the Western European exile governments' response to the Holocaust, it was not the case with the others. Although there were Jewish refugees in Poland and Czechoslovakia, their proportion was relatively low.

There was another Jewish factor that played a role in these two particular countries. Whilst the Jewish community in the west was mostly assimilated, many Czech and Polish Jews were followers of the Zionist movement, or of Jewish orthodoxy. The number of national Jews constituted one more issue for the exile governments, mainly in connection with the prepared post-war order in the liberated countries. The exile governments were reluctant to promise any new group minority rights. This of course was met with strong opposition within Zionist circles. Hence it is also necessary to evaluate how the Jewish minority was perceived by the majority

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<sup>67</sup> See Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz; Facing a Holocaust*.

<sup>68</sup> Dagan, Avigdor, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-exile and the Jews', p. 471.

<sup>69</sup> Caestecker, Frank, 'The Reintegration of Jewish Survivors into Belgian Society, 1943-1947', pp. 73-76.

society. An analysis of the behind the scenes perception of the Jews seems crucial. The exiles officially declared their adherence to democratic and liberal values. Yet does this mean that they felt and acted in this manner?

Another issue to take into account was to what extent the Jewish policy of the exile governments was influenced by the approach of underground groups and by the prevailing moods in the occupied countries. The state of the historiography on Jewish/non-Jewish relations in occupied Europe is better developed than is the case with the exile governments. For example, in the case of the Poles, French, or Dutch, researchers have conducted studies on the Jewish aspect in the underground press.<sup>70</sup> There is no such study on the Czechs.<sup>71</sup> It has usually been assumed that the Czechs behaved decently towards the Jews during the war. But recent research implies that the response was marked more by indifference than by decency.<sup>72</sup> Whilst, for example, the Dutch underground press wrote about the gas chambers and mass murder as early as 1942 and 1943, this was probably not the case with the Czech resistance. It is, indeed, the attitude of underground resistance organisations that needs to be studied, as highlighted by Poznanski. The exiles were accountable to the population in the homeland as its political representatives. At the same time, they also struggled with public opinion at home that was to various degrees influenced by Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda, or by the peoples' own negative sentiments against the Jews.

This basic summary primarily documents that the exile governments did not constitute a homogeneous group. Their attitude towards Jews was influenced by

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<sup>70</sup> Wróbel, Piotr, 'Dziennik Polski (The Polish Daily), the Official Organ of the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Holocaust, 1940-1945', pp. 507-534.; Hershkovitz, Roni, 'The Persecution of the Jews, as reflected in Dutch Underground Newspapers', in Chaya Brasz – Yosef Kaplan (eds.), *Dutch Jews as perceived by themselves and by others. Proceedings of the Eight International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), pp. 307-322; Kerem, Yitzchak, 'The Greek Press, 1933-1945: The Writing on the Walls', in Robert Moses Shapiro, *Why didn't the Press Shout? American and International Journalism During the Holocaust* (New Jersey: Yeshiva University Press – KTAV Publishing House, 2003), pp. 587-604; Adler, Jacques, 'The Jewish Press in Wartime Europe: France, 1940-1944, in Robert Moses Shapiro (ed.), *Why didn't the Press Shout? American and International Journalism During the Holocaust* (New Jersey: Yeshiva University Press – KTAV Publishing House, 2003), pp. 559-584; Friedrich, Klaus-Peter, *Die Nationalsozialistische Judenmord in polnischen Augen. Einstellung in der polnischen Presse 1942-1946/7* (Universität zu Köln, 2002, unpublished PhD Thesis).

<sup>71</sup> The only study so far: Livia Rothkirchen, 'Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime', pp. 415-449. Kárný, Miroslav, 'Czech Society and the "Final Solution"', pp. 309-326.

<sup>72</sup> Already in 1960 H. G. Adler wrote in his comprehensive history of the Theresienstadt Ghetto that only 424 Czech Jews survived the war in hiding. That was proportionally even less than in Nazi Germany. Adler, H. G., *Theresienstadt: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (Thübingen: Mohr, 1960), p. 15.

other agendas and by other issues that might on the surface be perceived as more prominent. As suggested, the diplomatic position of the exiles and the complexity of their relations with the population in the homeland need to be evaluated as the key issues. It will now be helpful to turn to the historical background of the Czechoslovak-Jewish relations before the Second World War.

### ***Historical background of the Czechoslovak-Jewish relations***

In order to comprehend the Czechs' and Slovaks' perception of the Jews and vice-versa during World War 2, an exploration of the pre-war development is essential. The purpose of the following introduction is to identify the main issues of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations before 1939, providing a context for the period following – the main focus of this thesis. Hence the intention is to document the continuity in mutual perceptions, but keeping in mind that the Second World War brought its own dynamics to an already complex situation. Yet, these new factors emerging after 1938 should be added to longer term factors.

It is necessary to go back to the end of the nineteenth century and then to the years 1918 and 1919 – to Versailles, where the nations of the world met to discuss the post-war situation in Europe. This period of turmoil was the time when the new independent Czechoslovak state emerged and the first official contacts between the Czechoslovak authorities and the Jewish political leadership in the world were established. Czechoslovakia was created after World War 1. Simultaneously, the Jewish national programme was, following the Balfour Declaration, introduced to the international arena.

At this point it is important to introduce Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The positive reputation of his approach towards Jews is crucial for the whole history of modern Czechoslovak-Jewish relations. However, the attitude of Masaryk (a pre-war professor at Prague University) towards Jews was ambiguous. He was brought up in a traditional Christian surrounding, with stories about Jews kidnapping Christian children and killing them for ritual sacrifice. He himself admitted that he never overcame anti-Semitism emotionally – only intellectually.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Kieval, Hillel J., *Languages of Community. The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Barkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 206.

Masaryk did not believe in national assimilation. He labelled it as ‘impossible, in fact laughable’.<sup>74</sup> He argued that no person was able to assimilate fully into another nation. This applied also to Jews. Masaryk supported the Zionist goal, not necessarily in Palestine, but at least culturally, in the sense of ideas presented by Achad Ha’am. Masaryk’s attitude to national assimilation, directed to the Czechs, but applied also to the Jews, could be described by the following two quotes: ‘It is a duty of every thinking person to participate actively in the rebirth of his nation’<sup>75</sup> and ‘a person of solid character would never, under no circumstances be untrue to his nation’.<sup>76</sup> Consequently Masaryk became one of the first non-Jewish politicians to declare *publicly* his support for Jewish national revival. Later, in 1927, as the Czechoslovak President, Masaryk was the first head of state to officially visit Jewish Palestine.<sup>77</sup>

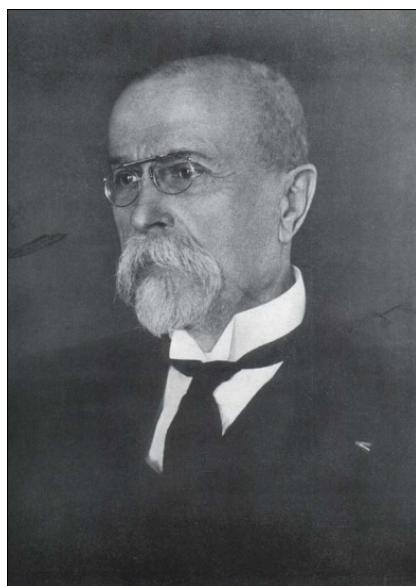


Image no. 1: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1925)<sup>78</sup>

Masaryk gained a world reputation thanks to his open fight against the blood libel superstition and ritual murder accusations. In 1899, a poor Czech Jewish pedlar, Leopold Hilsner, was accused of murdering for blood a Christian girl, Anežka Hrůzová. Hilsner was convicted and received life imprisonment.<sup>79</sup> The affair aroused overt anti-Semitic reaction among the Czech population and was utilised by populist

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Pojar, Miloš, ‘T. G. Masaryk’s relations with Jews’, in *Judaica Bohemiae*, XXXVIII (2003), pp. 75-80.

<sup>78</sup> [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

<sup>79</sup> For the details of the case see Frankl, Michal, “*Emancipace od židů.*” *Český antisemitismus na konci 19. století*, pp. 272-303.

politicians. Risking his own reputation and public position, Masaryk stepped out and fought the superstition. In the end, Hilsner still spent almost twenty years in prison. Yet, Masaryk's defence received wide acclaim and gained him respect among all Jewish national and ideological groups.

His defence of Hilsner and the public support of Jewish nationalism gained Masaryk popularity among American Jews, represented before the war for example by Stephen Wise. In particular, Wise invited Masaryk in 1907 to be the first speaker addressing the Free Synagogue on the 81<sup>st</sup> Street in New York.<sup>80</sup> Masaryk's reputation among American Jews became momentous during World War 1. As Masaryk recollected:

In America, as elsewhere, the Jews stood by me; and particularly in America my former defence of Hilsner [...] put me in good stead. As early as 1907 the Jews of New York gave me a great reception. Now I had many personal meetings with representatives of Orthodox Jewry as well as with Zionists. Among the latter I should mention Mr. Brandeis, a judge of the Supreme Court, who was originally from Bohemia [sic!] Brandeis was born in Louisville, Kentucky. His parents arrived from Bohemia – J. L.]; he enjoyed the confidence of President Wilson. In New York Mr. Mack was a leading Zionist and I met Nahum Sokoloff [sic!], the influential Zionist leader.<sup>81</sup>

Likewise, Masaryk wrote to Beneš, his close associate in exile during World War 1 and later the first Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, in October 1918: 'Hilsner helped us a lot now: Zionists and other Jews have publicly accepted our programme'.<sup>82</sup> Later on, Masaryk's reputation was further boosted when the Czechoslovak constitution allowed Jews to declare publicly their nationality.

Another document confirming Masaryk's reputation among American Jews was the special "Masaryk Issue" of *the Jewish Daily Bulletin* (JDB) that appeared in March 1930, on the occasion of Masaryk's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday.<sup>83</sup> The most important representatives of the world Jewry, for example Wise, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and

<sup>80</sup> American Jewish Historical Society Archives, Newton Centre, Massachusetts (AJHSA). Stephen S. Wise Papers. A draft of Wise's article for the special issue of *Jewish Daily Bulletin* (JDB), 4 March 1930 (The author is thankful to Lea New for photocopies of documents from Stephen S. Wise Papers).

<sup>81</sup> Pojar, Miloš, 'T. G. Masaryk's relations with Jews', p. 165. Pojar quotes from Masaryk's *Světová Revoluce* (World Revolution), pp. 236-237.

<sup>82</sup> Hadler, Franz, "Erträglicher Antisemitismus" – Jüdische Fragen und tschechoslowakische Antworten 1918/19', in *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 1*, 2002, p. 178. My translation. 'Hilsner hat uns jetzt sehr genutzt: die Zionisten und die übrigen Juden haben unser Programm öffentlich akzeptiert'.

<sup>83</sup> AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, *Masaryk Issue*, 7 March 1930, p. 3.

Felix Frankfurter toasted the birthday of the first Czechoslovak President. Indeed, even the American Vice-President Charles C. Curtis wrote for the JDB: ‘The fact that Masaryk, in the midst of his indomitable championship of his own people’s freedom, nevertheless found time to assist the Jewish people to realize its national aspirations, testifies to the nobility of character of this true idealist.’<sup>84</sup> The perception of Masaryk’s democratic Czechoslovakia was acknowledged also within high-ranking politicians in the United States. Hence the notion – ‘the myth’ – of the exceptional Czechoslovak democracy – closely linked to its treatment of Jews – was born. The Czechoslovaks soon became aware of this image among the other East Central European nations and began to utilize it for their own political benefit. The ‘myth’ of Czechoslovak democracy became the main asset of Czechoslovak foreign policy in Versailles.<sup>85</sup>



Image no. 2: Louis D. Brandeis<sup>86</sup>

The Versailles conference, besides the peace treaty with Germany and its allies, also solved issues concerning the newly emerged countries in Europe. These were mostly multi-national states, with significant minorities within their borders. Yet, at the same time, they were countries whose democratic political system and treatment of minorities was in doubt.<sup>87</sup> As suggested by Mark Levene, regarding the

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Orzoff, Andrea, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948*, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> [www.wikipedia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_D._Brandeis)

<sup>87</sup> Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, ‘The Jewish Minority’, in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia: Historical Studies and Surveys. Volume 1* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), pp. 168-170; Levene, Mark, ‘Nationalism and Its Alternatives in the International Arena: The Jewish Question at Paris, 1919’, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 28, no. 3, July 1993, p. 511.

various lobbying minority groups, ‘the peace-makers in Paris [had come] increasingly to focus their attention on [...] Jews, as if its problems [had been] symptomatic – indeed paradigmatic – of all the Eastern European national minority issues under discussion’.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the Jews, represented by western Jewish politicians, French, British, and American, became one of the eloquent minority groups at the Conference.<sup>89</sup> Their most evident achievement was the inclusion of the so called ‘Jewish articles’ (Article 10 and 11) into the Polish Minority treaty.<sup>90</sup>

Nonetheless, the Czechoslovak politicians, especially Beneš, refused to sign a treaty that would explicitly mention the protection of Jews in Czechoslovakia.<sup>91</sup> The following negotiations between the Czechoslovak delegation and the representatives of the Jewish groups documented the existence of factors that shaped Czechoslovak-Jewish relations in the following decades.

During his talks with pro-Jewish activists during World War 2, Beneš repeatedly recollected his meeting with Woodrow Wilson. The latter wanted the Czechoslovaks to sign the minority treaty including ‘the Jewish articles’. Beneš refused and asked Wilson whether he would be willing to sign the same treaty for the United States. According to Beneš, Wilson laughed and the issue was withdrawn.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, in 1919, Beneš expressed the position of Czechoslovakia in the following way:

Our state and nation generally enjoy the sympathies and confidence of all the Allies in this respect. We have fulfilled and will fulfil all obligations and we have shown that in the national question we are more liberal than anyone else. I rejected the article that might have morally questioned the relations of our state with the Allies.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Levene, Mark, ‘Nationalism and Its Alternatives in the International Arena: The Jewish Question at Paris, 1919’, p. 511.

<sup>89</sup> Levene, Mark, ‘Nationalism and Its Alternatives in the International Arena’, p. 513. For the Jewish diplomacy in Paris, see: Fink, Carole, *Defending the Rights of Others. The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 148-151.

<sup>90</sup> Janowsky, Oscar I., *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898-1919)* (New York: AMS Press, 1966 – reprint of a publication from 1933), pp. 344-369.

<sup>91</sup> Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, ‘The Jewish Minority’, pp. 169-177. Beneš even claimed that the minority treaty as such was not necessary in the case of Czechoslovakia. See YIVO Archives, RG 348, reel 17, folder 159, Interview with Dr Beneš, 22 August 1919.

<sup>92</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington D.C. (USHMMA), WJC C2/96, *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941*.

<sup>93</sup> Čapková, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918-1938 (Praha-Litomyšl: Paseka, 2005), p. 30. My translation.

Nevertheless, the creation of the Republic and the beginning of the negotiations in Paris was accompanied by anti-Jewish riots in Czechoslovakia.<sup>94</sup> Those took the form of public rallies and the losses were generally mostly material. They could not be compared even closely to the events in Galicia, where tens-of-thousands of Jews were massacred by various armies, including by the Polish and Ukrainian.<sup>95</sup> But the events in the Czech lands still raised concerns on the side of the Jewish activists. Max Brod wrote in his letter to Leo Hermann, a Zionist politician born in Czechoslovakia, in the eve of the Czechoslovak independence that ‘[i]t seem[ed] certain to [him] that when the proclamation [was] made [in Prague] at a later date [...] there [would] be major anti-Jewish riots which [might] well turn into outright pogroms’.<sup>96</sup> Brod even suggested a coded language for the following correspondence in case the Czech censorship would not allow the passage of authentic information.<sup>97</sup> His letter thus shows that the Jewish representatives were indeed afraid of the progress of events in Czechoslovakia.

Moreover, in mid-1919, Chaim Weizmann complained strongly about the anti-Semitic development in the new country, especially in Slovakia: ‘These facts are [...] in complete contrast to the avowed Czech policy in Paris, and also to the public utterance of the Minister Beneš.’<sup>98</sup> According to Weizmann, even the official authorities and newspapers were arousing anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>99</sup> Still, as documented on Beneš’s statements, the Czechoslovaks in Versailles were promoting the notion of their exceptional democracy and their unconditional adherence to liberal values. The Czechoslovaks presented themselves as an exception among the new countries in East-Central Europe, not refraining, as suggested by Beneš’s meeting with Wilson, from comparing themselves to the United States. The comparison is remarkable when we keep in mind that Czechoslovakia was born only

<sup>94</sup> Lichtenstein, Tatjana, *Making Jews at Home. Jewish Nationalism in the Bohemian Lands, 1918-1938* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009, Unpublished PhD thesis), pp. 30-36; Mendelsohn, Ezra, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 150-152; The most serious riots occurred in Slovakia, see: Jelínek, Ješajahu Andrej, *Dávidova hvieza pod Tatrami. Židia na Slovensku v 20. storočí* (Praha: Vydavateľstvo Jána Mlynárika, 2009), pp. 123-131; Klein-Pejšová, Rebekah, *Among the Nationalities: Jewish Refugees, Jewish Nationality, and Czechoslovak Statebuilding* (New York: Columbia University, 2007, Unpublished PhD thesis), pp. 77-127.

<sup>95</sup> Mendelsohn, Ezra, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>96</sup> Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, ‘The Jewish Minority’, pp. 246-7.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Weizmann to The Minister Plenipotentiary, Republic of Czechoslovakia (probably Štefan Osuský), London, 8 July 1919. ‘[T]he organ of the Minister for Home Affairs takes a prominent part therein.’

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

half a year before the aforementioned negotiations took place. Therefore no one could claim any guarantee of democratic progress in the country. Beneš was building the image of a democratic and tolerant Republic even as anti-Jewish incidents took place in newly born Czechoslovakia.

Both Masaryk and Beneš were aware of anti-Semitic tendencies that existed among Czechs and Slovaks. However, exactly at that time, ‘a notion of relativity’ came into existence and was diligently spread by the Czechoslovaks. One of the main cards used by the Czechoslovak delegation in Paris was the comparison with other countries in the region. Beneš declared to Sokolow:

the two articles [10 and 11] represented a sort of ‘yellow badge’ of which only Poland and Rumania were deserving. Unlike those countries, Czechoslovakia was at the head of the Slavic nations, and was a Western state. Moreover, she was not anti-Semitic and suspicion must not be allowed to arise in the World that she was.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, in a letter to Weizmann, one of the Zionist representatives recalled his meeting with Masaryk in late 1918: ‘Masaryk agreed that the Poles are most unreliable. He told me how often he, himself, had argument with the Poles, about the Jews and he never could bring them to see the questions in the light of justice and liberalism.’<sup>101</sup> The author later described Masaryk’s reaction to the reports that Czechs were driving Jewish refugees back to Galicia. Those were presented to him by Broughman, a Philadelphia newspaperman, and Water Lippmann, an assistant to the President Wilson: ‘Masaryk made clear his position and promised to use all his influence in order to have the Jews fairly treated in his country’.<sup>102</sup> The situation in Czechoslovakia was therefore presented as relatively good and as being easily improved if Masaryk’s influence could be utilised.

This notion was confirmed by the Czech Zionists, when Felix Weltsch wrote: ‘the Czech anti-Semitism is an endurable anti-Semitism’.<sup>103</sup> The leaders of the Jewish organizations clearly differentiated between the situation in Poland and that in Czechoslovakia. As the information that the new Czechoslovak State intended to send Jewish refugees back to Galicia leaked to the west in 1918, the Zionist politicians were primarily anxious that the expellees might have been caught in

<sup>100</sup> Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, ‘The Jewish Minority’, pp. 174-5.

<sup>101</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Aaron [?] to Weizmann, 9 December 1918.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Hadler, Franz, ‘”Erträglicher Antisemitismus“? – Jüdische Fragen und tschechoslowakische Antworten 1918/19’, p. 169. ‘Der tschechische Antisemitismus ist ein erträglicher Antisemitismus.’

pogroms back in Poland.<sup>104</sup> In their opinion, the Czechoslovaks were intolerant and were expelling foreign Jews, but the Poles were instigating pogroms.

Identical arguments, comparing the situations in Czechoslovakia and other countries, were used by Sokolow when he tried to persuade the Czechoslovak authorities of the desirability to include ‘the Jewish articles’ into their minority treaty. According to Janowsky, ‘[i]t was feared that [the Czechoslovaks’ refusal] would set a precedent for other states, for Rumania, for example’.<sup>105</sup> This argument was repeatedly used during the ongoing negotiations by pro-Jewish activists.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the omission of ‘the Jewish articles’ in the Czechoslovak treaty was *indeed* based on the facts that ‘the Jews were comparatively few in number [...]; they did not constitute, as in Poland, a separate community with a different language, and, there was little tendency to persecute them’.<sup>107</sup> At the time, when anti-Jewish riots were taking place in Czechoslovakia and only twenty years after the Hilsner Affair, two very important notions became rooted in common perception. First, Czechoslovaks were tolerant and knew how to treat minorities, particularly the Jews: as stressed repeatedly by Masaryk and Beneš, there was no Jewish question in Czechoslovakia.<sup>108</sup> Second, the notion about Czechoslovak decency was to a large extent based on the comparison with other countries in East-Central Europe, especially with Poland.

How is it possible that these notions were immediately rooted in the perception of Czechoslovakia by the outside world, especially in connection with a country that had been born only several months before the negotiations in Versailles took place? Furthermore, how could this be in relation to the country that refused the inclusion of ‘the Jewish articles’ into its minority treaty and after its creation witnessed anti-Jewish riots? The explanation of this phenomenon opens other issues that are significant for the study of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations during the Second World War.

<sup>104</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Weizmann and Jacobson to Nahum Sokolow, 13 December 1918. ‘Have received urgent cables regarding expulsion order by Czecho-Slovak Government affecting Jewish refugees numbering seventeen thousand people. As final date is fixed for fifteenth [D]ecember take immediate steps with Benesh [sic!] Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister Paris to countermand the order. If Jewish refugees are compelled to return to Galicia where pogroms in progress disastrous results will inevitably follow.’

<sup>105</sup> Janowsky, Oscar I., *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898-1919)*, pp. 374-5.

<sup>106</sup> YIVO Archives, RG 348, reel 7, folder 82, Czech-Jewish relations, Peace conference Paris 1919 (prepared 6/7/1942), note of the meeting on 13 July 1919.

<sup>107</sup> Janowsky, Oscar I., *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898-1919)*, p. 372.

<sup>108</sup> Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, ‘The Jewish Minority’, pp. 165 and 175.

Although ‘the Jewish articles’ were not embodied in the Czechoslovak minority treaty signed in Versailles, some of the Jewish minority rights appeared in the Czechoslovak Constitution, or explicitly in the explanatory report to its Article 128 of 29 February 1920.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, Czechoslovakia was the *only* East-Central European country that allowed Jews, who *wanted* to declare their nationality in the population census, to do so. This right was not based on their mother tongue, or membership in religious communities.<sup>110</sup> As Hillel Kieval remarks, ‘[i]n the context of interwar East Central Europe, Czechoslovakia concessions to Jewish nationalism [had been], in fact, unprecedented’.<sup>111</sup> But, why did the Czechoslovak Republic allow Jewish nationalists to declare their nationality freely and publicly? Concerning the internal reasons, the role of Masaryk and his sympathy with the Jewish national movement should not be left out. Furthermore, this concession did not cost the Czechoslovak Government very much. It did not mean any significant minority right and it was granted to all the other minorities (for example, Germans and Hungarians).

**Table no. 1: Nationality of the Czechoslovak Jews according to censuses in 1921 and 1930<sup>112</sup>**

	1921	1930
Jewish nationality	53.62 %	57.20 %
Czechoslovak nationality	21.48 %	24.52 %
German nationality	14.26 %	12.28 %
Hungarian nationality	8.45 %	4.71 %
Other nationality	1.83 %	1.29 %

In fact the permission given to Jews to declare their Jewish nationality was significantly influenced by the Czechoslovaks’ desire to weaken the German and Hungarian minorities.<sup>113</sup> The citizens of Jewish nationality lived mostly in the border areas of the country and used German or Hungarian as their means of communication. Hence, once the Jews were allowed to register as members of the Jewish nation, the German and Hungarian nations were less prominent in the census in some of the crucial regions of the country. The fact that one of the main inter-war Czechoslovak concessions to the Jewish minority came through an effort to weaken the remaining

<sup>109</sup> Čapková, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? *Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918-1938*, p. 33.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Kieval, Hillel J., *Languages of Community. The Jewish experience in the Czech lands*, p. 213.

<sup>112</sup> See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Volume 5 (Detroit: Macmillan, 2007), 355.

<sup>113</sup> Čapková, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? *Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918-1938*, p. 43.

minorities is fundamental to understanding developments during the Second World War. Consequently, the change of the Czechoslovak policy towards the Germans and Hungarians in the 1940s – the plans for the expulsion of these minorities – were to impact also on the position of the Jewish minority.

However, there were also external factors in play – the pressure of the American Zionists and their influence as perceived by the Czechoslovak leadership. Sokolow, for example, threatened Beneš with the potential adverse effect that the Czechoslovaks' rejection of the Jewish national demands might have had on their image among the American Zionists.<sup>114</sup> Additionally, Weizmann used the following argument concerning anti-Semitic riots in Slovakia:

The sympathy shown by the whole of Jewish opinion throughout the world to the struggles and triumph of the Czechoslovakian nation is well known to you. We believe in the spirit of liberty which animates the Czechoslovakian people and the name of the President is a sufficient security for its continuance. [...] Our appeal to you is therefore the stronger, and we most urgently ask you to take all possible steps to check the unworthy anti-semitic agitation now being carried on [in Czechoslovakia] and the undignified attitude of officials in Slovakia towards the Jews. No one would regret more than ourselves if, as a result of these occurrences in Slovakia, the Jewish and non-Jewish circles of England, America and other Entente countries, which have always inclined to the Republic, should call public attention in their respective countries to the dangerous position of the Jews in Slovakia.<sup>115</sup>

Sokolow indeed remarked during a meeting of the *Committee of Jewish Delegations* that Masaryk '[did] not forget either the services which Brandeis and other Jews in America [had] rendered to the Czechoslovakian people, with Wilson'.<sup>116</sup>

The observations by the Zionist leader were not entirely baseless. It brings us to another key factor for the study of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations. The Czechoslovak political leadership believed in the power possessed by the American Jews and their press. Masaryk revealed it in a conversation with the famous writer Karel Čapek:

<sup>114</sup> Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, 'The Jewish Minority', pp. 174-175. *Sokolow's report about his meeting with Beneš*, 28 August 1919.

<sup>115</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Weizmann to The Minister Plenipotentiary, Republic of Czechoslovakia (probably Štefan Osuský), London, 8 July 1919. For the Czechoslovak's responses see Rabinowicz, Aharon Moshe, 'The Jewish Minority', pp. 225-227.

<sup>116</sup> Janowsky, Oscar I., *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898-1919)*, p. 332, f. 18.

Yet during the [First World War] I came to realize how useful it had been [Masaryk meant his defence of Hilsner – J. L.]. The world press is partly managed or financed by Jews; they knew me from the Hilsner case and repaid me by writing sympathetically about our cause – or fairly at least. That helped us a great deal politically.<sup>117</sup>

Later on, Masaryk repeated the same story, only instead of using ‘partly managed’ he used the connection ‘a great influence on newspapers in all the Allied countries’.<sup>118</sup> The great philosopher and humanist Masaryk was still able to use exactly the same anti-Semitic trope that has always been at the bottom of all anti-Jewish accusations. The perception of the alleged ‘power’ of the American Jews was generally widespread at that time and was accepted in their discourse even by liberal politicians.<sup>119</sup> Jews living in America were still seen as Jews not as Americans. They were supposed to act on behalf of the Jews in the world and to influence American public opinion in the direction they decided. In fact, the American Jewish politicians were also spreading the notion to enhance their position in political negotiations.<sup>120</sup> Such beliefs contributed to the concession given to the national Jews in interwar Czechoslovakia.

After its consolidation, the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938) did not witness any outburst of anti-Semitic sentiments similar to the events between 1918 and 1920.<sup>121</sup> Although anti-Semitism existed in Czechoslovakia, the situation calmed down and was stabilised.<sup>122</sup> Thanks to the political and moral leadership of Masaryk and later Beneš, public pronunciation of anti-Semitism became politically unacceptable for the most part.<sup>123</sup> Anti-Semitic parties never gained many votes in the elections. Another reason for the limited spread of anti-Semitism in

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<sup>117</sup> Čapek, Karel, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk* (North Haven, CT: Catbird Press, 1995), pp.167-168.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 192-193.

<sup>119</sup> Lichtenstein, Tatjana, *Making Jews at Home. Jewish Nationalism in the Bohemian Lands, 1918-1938*, pp. 36-47. Lichtenstein wrote with the reference to Frank Hadler: ‘Beneš had “confusing fear of Jews,” he contends, and was rather suspicious of Jews with regards to their role on the international political stage’.

<sup>120</sup> Engel, David, ‘Perception of Power – Poland and World Jewry’, in *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 1*, 2002, pp. 20-21. See also YIVO Archives, RG 348, reel 17, folder 159, Interview with Dr Benes, 10 April 1919. ‘Jewish delegates urged upon us to assure Dr Benes that the new Czech State might rely on the political and financial support of British Jews as they thought this would be the best way of securing the interests of the Czech Jews’. Stuart Samuel also promised that the Jews would provide loans for new Czechoslovakia. Beneš was allegedly pleased to hear that.

<sup>121</sup> Mendelsohn, Ezra, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, p. 152.

<sup>122</sup> Čapková, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? *Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918-1938*, p. 26; Hahn, Fred, ‘Jews and the Second Czech Republic’, in *The Jewish Quarterly*, No. 2 (150), Summer 1993, p. 18.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

Czechoslovakia was the extensive secularization of the Czechs. Moreover, with the establishment of free Czechoslovakia, the national ambitions of Czechs and to some extent of Slovaks were satisfied.<sup>124</sup> This theory seems to be confirmed by the sudden rise of anti-Semitism after Munich.

Nevertheless, negative sentiments against some parts of the Jewish population existed in Czechoslovakia and were confirmed even by Beneš. Jews were seen by Czechs as tools of national oppression and contributors to the Germanization policy of the Hapsburg Empire. Indeed, in the case of Slovakia, Jews were repeatedly accused of supporting the former Hungarian rulers. The constant Jewish usage of the Hungarian language backed these accusations.<sup>125</sup> The previous Jewish assimilation to the German/Hungarian nation/s was, in Beneš's eyes, one of the reasons why the Czechoslovak leadership welcomed the Jewish national revival. He stated:

In old Austria, Jews frequently let themselves be used as instruments of Germanization, as tools of persecution of non-Jewish nations [Völker]. The Jewish nationalist movement, which allows Jews to consider themselves as members of the Jewish nation, counteracts the repetition of such policy and is therefore in line with Czech state ideology. On the other hand, the Czech government does not want to exploit Jews in the same way, meaning as instruments for Czechization. It would be more beneficial if the Jews exist as an independent and neutral element [*Die Juden kaemen als unabhaengiges neutrales Element viel wohlzuender zur Geltung*].<sup>126</sup>

Beneš's remarks showed that Jews were not entirely trusted by Czechoslovaks. However, as perceived, the fault was on the Jewish side, not on the Czech or Slovak. Thanks to the fulfilment of the Czech national ambitions, the issue of German Jews in Czechoslovakia ceased to be acute at that time. Nevertheless, as we will see later, the problem existed and came back with virulent power in the hour of the Czecho/Slovak nation's crisis.

In his 1926 statement Beneš repeated the idea of the tolerant Czechoslovak attitude towards the Jews who, in his opinion, could freely function in the Republic. The notion of Czechoslovak exceptionality was strengthened in the 1930s with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes surrounding the last bastion of democracy.

<sup>124</sup> Čapkova, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? *Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918-1938*, p. 26.

<sup>125</sup> Klein-Pejšová, Rebekah, *Among the Nationalities: Jewish Refugees, Jewish Nationality, and Czechoslovak Statebuilding*, pp. 94-98.

<sup>126</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, *Aufzeichnung ueber die Audienz von Sir Wyndham Deedes und Leo Herrmann bei Dr. Benes, Minister des Auswartigen der Tschechoslowakischen Republik. Prag, am 23. Januar 1926*. My translation.

Almost all of the neighbouring countries – Hungary, Rumania, Poland, and of course Germany – introduced anti-Jewish laws. This was not the case with Czechoslovakia. Moreover, when in 1935 Germany introduced the Nuremberg Laws, Beneš argued to Nahum Goldmann, a prominent Jewish activist, that Jews should start publicly campaigning against them. The Czechoslovak Foreign Minister and an important representative of the League of Nations did not speak only about protests against the German racial laws, but also about organizing ‘a fight against Hitlerism on all fronts’. He promised full Czechoslovak support.<sup>127</sup> There were obviously also Czechoslovaks’ own interests in the fight against the Germans, besides any altruistic sympathies for Jews. Yet this statement further reinforced the Jewish trust in the Czechoslovak leadership.

Oskar Janowsky, an author analysing the history and adherence to the minority treaties in East-Central Europe, wrote in 1938: ‘Czechoslovakia does not persecute Jews.’<sup>128</sup> Although he criticized the Czechoslovak government for their treatment of Jewish employees among civil servants, he added that ‘it [wa]s difficult to suspect the government of employing methods prevalent in Rumania or Poland.’<sup>129</sup> In his opinion the ‘statesmen of Czechoslovakia alone, notably the humane Masaryk and his discipline, President Beneš, [...] manifested an understanding of the problem [of minorities] and a desire to evolve a satisfactory solution.’<sup>130</sup>

This summary by Janowsky does not mean that the Czechoslovaks were, in reality, that tolerant or exceptional. The difference between the perception of events and the real state of affairs opens one of the main theoretical approaches of this thesis. The historiography of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations mostly deals with the description of the events themselves and is not focused that much on the *perception* of the events by both interested parties. Nevertheless, it might have been indeed the *perception* of the events that was to play a key role during subsequent developments. It is indeed the perception of the other that is an important factor when evaluating relations between two parties. Both the Czechoslovaks and the Jewish leadership had

<sup>127</sup> Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (CZA), Z6/2751. *Nahum Goldmann about his discussion with Beneš, 18 September 1935. (‘Aber nicht nur protestieren, sondern den Kampf gegen den Hitlerismus auf allen Gebieten organisieren’)*. My translation.

<sup>128</sup> Janowsky, Oskar I, *People at bay. The Jewish Problem in East-Central Europe* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938), p. 104.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34-35.

political agendas that they aimed to achieve and the misleading of the other party was a common feature of the negotiations. Hence a description and explanation of both of them, of the events themselves and of their perception by both actors, needs to be contextualised. A comparison with similar case studies and the continuity of events will be at the core of this thesis.

However, even pure perception of the events by one of the parties is not a sufficient source for the description of mutual relations from the historian's point of view. For example: when checking memoirs published by various Jewish politicians after the war, we can without any doubt conclude that Czechoslovakia is always mentioned as the friendliest country towards the Jews. There is hardly any negative assessment of the Czechs' attitude. The names of Masaryk, of his son Jan, and of Beneš are always pronounced with respect and admiration.<sup>131</sup> However, can we be, as a result, convinced that the war-time relations and the perception of the Czechs' attitude towards the Jews were entirely positive? Could not the post-war perception of Czechoslovaks be shaped by the situation during the Communist era, with anti-Zionist and indeed anti-Semitic campaign in Czechoslovakia and the non-existence of Czechoslovak-Israeli relations? In this comparison, the Czechoslovak record prior to the Communist coup must appear positive.

The image of democratic Czechoslovakia was one of the main assets of Masaryk's and Beneš's foreign policy. The fair treatment of Jews and comparison with the other neighbouring countries were the crucial elements of this notion. The perception of the Czechoslovak government, of Masaryk and Beneš, had a firm position among international Jewish public even at the end of the inter-war period. At the same time, in the Czechoslovaks' perception, the pro-Jewish politicians in the USA contributed to the creation of Czechoslovakia and were influential in international politics.<sup>132</sup> Being on good terms with these actors was considered

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<sup>131</sup> For example, Gerhart Riegner wrote about Beneš as a great friend of the Jewish people. Also Goldmann and Weizmann wrote purely in positive terms. See: Riegner, Gerhart M., *Never Despair. Sixty Years in the Service of the Jewish People and the Cause of Human Rights* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), p. 52; Weizmann, Chaim, *Trial and Error: the autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (London: East and West Library, 1950), pp. 500-501; Goldmann, Nahum, *Memories: the autobiography of Nahum Goldmann. The story of a lifelong battle by world Jewry's ambassador at large* (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), pp. 148-149, 243.

<sup>132</sup> For example, the role of the Congressman Adolph J. Sabath in the creation of Czechoslovakia is often mentioned. Sabath was born in Záboří, Bohemia, and was of Jewish background. He was among the politicians who opposed Wilson's plans for the separate peace with Austria-Hungary and promoted the idea of self-determination for various nations of the Monarchy, particularly Czechs. Furthermore, Sabath was instrumental in organizing of the meeting between Wilson and Masaryk that

essential. The thesis first of all aims to analyse how the Czechoslovak treatment of the Jews developed during the war when challenged by the resurgent Czech and Slovak nationalisms. Yet it will also answer the question of how this changing attitude towards the Jews was reconciled with the Czechoslovaks' efforts to maintain the image of a democratic country and being on good terms with international Jewish organizations.

The sources selected for this thesis correspond with the methodological approach that sets the Czechoslovak case study in a comparative analysis. Primary sources are constituted mostly by documentation of official provenance. The thesis is to a large extent a diplomatic history. It deals with the issues of high politics, of political negotiations conducted in the highest strata of the Allied political leadership during the war. Most of the archival sources are of Czechoslovak official provenance and will provide material for the main body of the thesis. These are especially governmental papers, for example, of President Edvard Beneš, the Council of Ministers, and the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice and Social Welfare. They should supply information for understanding the internal mechanisms that functioned within the Czechoslovak exile government's structure.

Furthermore, the thesis enquires into the perception of the Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews by other actors who were involved in the political negotiations during the war. Hence primary sources from outside of the Czechoslovak circles, especially of various Jewish organizations and the Allies (the American, British, and Polish governments) were consulted. The main focus of the thesis is to understand mutual perception of the Czechoslovak-Jewish relations by all relevant actors. The papers of the World Jewish Congress, especially, provide an insight into the changing perspective of the Czechoslovak exiles' treatment of minorities, in this case the Jews.<sup>133</sup>

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took place in June 1918. See Boxerman, Burton A., 'Adolph Joachim Sabath in Congress. The Early Years, 1907-1932', in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1973, Volume 66, no. 3, pp. 327-340; 'Adolph Joachim Sabath in Congress. The Roosevelt and Truman Years', in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1973, Volume 66, no. 4, pp. 428-443. See also Kisch, Guido, 'Woodrow Wilson and the Independence of Small Nations in Central Europe', in *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 19, no. 3, September 1947, pp. 235-238.

<sup>133</sup> The World Jewish Congress Papers are held in several archives: American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (AJA) (WJC – New York Office), CZA (WJC – London Office; WJC – Geneva Office), Archiv für Zeitgeschichte, Zürich (AfZ) (WJC – Geneva Office); University of Southampton Archives (USA) (WJC – British Section, as a part of the Institute for Jewish Affairs Papers). The USHMM holds microfilm copies of all the documents.

Aside from the papers of the official authorities, private papers of individuals involved in the Czechoslovak-Jewish relations during the war have been studied. The information contained in private documents is used to reveal influences or intentions hidden behind the official scene.<sup>134</sup> For illustration of the public presentation of the Czechoslovak-Jewish relations during the war, selected newspapers, from all interested parties, were also consulted.<sup>135</sup>

The thesis is divided into five chapters and deals mostly with the situation in Czechoslovakia and among the Czechoslovak exiles between the Munich Agreement in late September 1938 and the Communist Coup in February 1948. The main focus is on the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile that existed in London between 1940 and 1945. Yet the examination of the theme starts from the formation of the Czechoslovak exile resistance after Munich and follows also the development in liberated Czechoslovakia. Hence it will analyse not only the political programme and plans prepared by the exiles during the war in London, but also their implementation and new influences that shaped the plans in post-war Czechoslovakia. The thesis generally follows the development in chronological order, but I also want to stress the thematic element. Hence the first chapter is focused on one of the main influences that shaped the exiles' policy during the war: the attitude of people in the occupied homeland and of the main resistance groups towards the Jews. How did they influence the Czechoslovak exiles' policy towards the Jews?

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<sup>134</sup> For example, the private papers and diaries of Edward Táborský, personal secretary to President Beneš, or the diaries of Ivo Ducháček, a secretary to the Undersecretary in the Foreign Ministry, Hubert Ripka, were researched. Also of importance were the private diaries of the Polish Zionist politician Ignacy Schwarzbart. Schwarzbart was already from the autumn of 1939 a member of the Polish exile advisory body, a quasi-parliament, *Rada Narodowa*. Thanks to his official status, he was in a position to consult the highest strata of the Allied politicians. He made extensive notes from these negotiations, mostly in Polish. He later, after the war, translated these diaries into English. Yet he also slightly changed the previous record.

<sup>135</sup> Those were for example the official print of the Czechoslovak exile government Čechoslovák, or *Central European Observer*, or British Jewish *The Jewish Chronicle*, *The Zionist Review*, or from the Allied countries, *The Times*, *the Palestinian Post* or *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

## CHAPTER 1: CZECHO/SLOVAK UNDERGROUND MOVEMENTS, PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED HOMELAND, THE JEWS AND THE GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE

*It is the general opinion that after the war Jews will not dare to go in for politics or take part in public life, or be doctors or lawyers.*

Report about the situation in the Protectorate (1942)<sup>136</sup>

### ***Introduction***

Exile governments form a specific subcategory among the bystanders to the Holocaust during World War 2. Although the response of the outside world to the Nazi persecution of the Jews has been an important theme of historical research in the recent decades, many questions, especially in connection with this sub-category, remain unresolved. For example, a common taxonomy of the exiled bystanders has yet to be presented. As a matter of fact, the factors shaping exiles' responses to the Jewish plight were fundamentally different than those influencing the policies of the major Allies. It does not mean that this chapter seeks to argue that the relations in the process of each particular bystander's policy-formation necessarily differed. Instead, the actors and factors that influenced exiles' policy-making had particular origins. Special attention will be paid to the connection between the broad masses of people in occupied countries and their representatives – the resistance movements abroad. The policies of the American and British governments, concerning, for example, the admission of immigrants were influenced by the sentiments prevailing among the population, by economic considerations and by the fear of possible 'racial problems' within their own societies.<sup>137</sup> The population of the western countries, not occupied by foreign armies and not facing the Nazi persecution, still influenced their governments to defend the perceived national self-interest.

What, then, was the situation with the exile governments whose populations were indeed witnessing the true meaning of the Nazi 'new order'? The population in occupied countries did not possess the means to control directly its representatives abroad. Yet, the exiles were supposed to be answerable to the people at home, whom

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<sup>136</sup> TNA, FO 371/30837. Report sent by Bruce Lockhart to Ambassador Nichols on 30 June 1942.

<sup>137</sup> Kushner, Tony, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination. A Social and Cultural History*, pp. 199f; Sherman, Ari Joshua, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (Ilford, Essex: Frank Cass, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1994), p. 222.

they claimed to be representing. In order to be recognised diplomatically by the major Allies, the exiles had to prove recognition and support by people in the homeland.<sup>138</sup> The exiles were in contact with underground leaders and they wanted to influence each other. Therefore, the information transmitted in both directions did not have to correspond entirely with the real situation either in exile or in the country. We can presume that both the underground leaders and the exiles coined their views on the Jewish issues. But, did the general population have any influence on the exile government's Jewish policy and if so, in which direction? These contacts between underground movements and the exiles are one of the main factors that make a case study on an exiled bystander unique. Thus, by analysing the Czech and Slovak underground groups' perception of the Jews, this chapter will provide an important part of the framework for the following examination of the exiles' policy itself.

Case studies of the other exiles, particularly the Poles and French, help to identify the main issues to be examined with regard to Czechoslovak exiles' contacts with the homeland. The core of the chapter is focused on underground reports that contributed to the formulation of the exiles' policy towards the Jews. The validity of this hypothesis is partially examined through an analysis of mutual contacts between the exiles and home underground groups. It serves as a preliminary explanation of the degree to which the underground groups shaped the exiles' policy. Nonetheless, the Slovak underground movement developed independently from the Czech resistance. Hence it is dealt with separately. This approach is necessary also because of the different nature of the war experience in Slovakia and Slovaks' extensive collaboration in the 'Final Solution'.

### ***Underground movements in occupied countries and the Jews***

As argued by David Engel, after the occupation of Poland, Polish-Jewish relations were 'determined according to a new set of factors, not the least important of which was each group's estimation of the other's willingness and ability to assist it in the achievement of its aims vis-à-vis the occupiers'.<sup>139</sup> The main feature

<sup>138</sup> For example Smutný, Jaromír, 'Edvard Benes a Československý odboj za druhé světové války', in *Svědectví*, vol. VI, no. 21, Summer 1963, p. 53; Tesař, Jan, *Traktát o "záchrane národa"*. *Texty z let 1967-1969 o začátku německé okupace* (Praha: Triáda, 2006), pp. 108-109.

<sup>139</sup> Engel, David, 'An Early Account of Polish Jewry under Nazi and Soviet Occupation Presented to the Polish Government-In-Exile, February 1940', in Michael Marrus, *The Nazi Holocaust: historical articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Vol. 5. Public Opinion and Relations to the Jews in Nazi Europe* (Westport: Meckler, 1989), pp. 299-314 (Reprint), pp. 299.

accompanying the occupation of Poland, but generally of every country in Nazi Europe, was a rise (or continuity) of powerful nationalisms. The interests of the nation became the main factors shaping the policy-formation of resistance movements. Furthermore, very often the most nationalistically radical elements within society, among them former members of the officer corps or politicians, reached the highest echelons in the fight against the Nazis. This strong nationalism excluded any elements not fitting into the framework of an unconditional fight in the interests of a nation. Thus it became an essential factor in the relation between the major population and the Jewish minority as well. Non-Jews in occupied countries wanted Jews to join the common struggle unconditionally. Any deviation in this process was to have consequences at the hour of liberation, but also during the occupation.

Despite the fact that there is not any synoptic piece of historical writing dealing with the topic under consideration, the present historiography still offers research dealing with the main factors of this chapter. Engel and Poznanski are in agreement that the messages transmitted by home resistance movements did *indeed* have an influence on the decision-making of the exiles.<sup>140</sup> At the same time, both share the view that their impact was mostly negative. For example, in February 1940, Jan Kozielewski (née Karski), a Polish underground courier, prepared a report about the Jews in the occupied homeland.<sup>141</sup> His account and other reports transmitted to the exiles negatively described the Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland. The attitude of the Poles to the Jewish population was depicted as being at best ambivalent, but generally hostile. The parts of the report presenting the Jews welcoming the Soviet occupation forces in the eastern Polish territories were

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<sup>140</sup> Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939-1942; Facing a Holocaust: the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943-1945*; ‘Possibilities of Rescuing Polish Jewry under German Occupation and the Influence of the Polish Government-in-Exile’, in David Bankier – Israel Gutman (eds.), *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), pp. 136-148; Poznanski, Renée, ‘French Public Opinion and the Jews during World War II: Assumptions of the Clandestine Press’, pp. 117-135.

<sup>141</sup> Engel, David, ‘An Early Account of Polish Jewry under Nazi and Soviet Occupation Presented to the Polish Government-In-Exile, February 1940’, pp. 299-314 (Reprint). For another report, from mid-1944, prepared by Witold Bienkowski, a member of Zegota, see: Gutman Ysrael, ‘A Report of a Member of the Polish Underground on Polish-Jewish Relations in occupied Poland’, in Michael VI. *On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* (Tel Aviv: The Diaspora Research Institute, 1980), pp. 102-114. Bienkowski concluded that despite the almost total extermination of Jews in Poland, the ‘Jewish problem’ would continue to trouble the country in future.

highlighted.<sup>142</sup> By alleged collaboration with the Soviets, who together with the Germans occupied Poland, the Jews were betraying the Polish nation.<sup>143</sup> Thus any action on behalf of the Jews, for example, a political declaration about their post-war status, or request of their support by the Polish underground, was seen by the Sikorski government as complicating their own political stance in the homeland.<sup>144</sup> In this manner, the underground movements shaped the policy of the western Polish government.

As argued by Poznanski, the reasons for the Free French carefulness in dealing with the ‘Jewish question’ were to some extent different. The motive was actually not the reports depicting French attitude towards the Jews, but the worries of the possible effectiveness of the German propaganda that was presenting De Gaulle as being controlled by the Jews.<sup>145</sup> Well-known is the story of the Nobel Prize award winner René Cassin who initially rejected an offer to join the leadership of De Gaulle’s Free French. Cassin did not want to compromise the French resistance by his Jewish origins.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, Poznanski proves that these political considerations of the Free French played a vital role in decisions about broadcasting on the BBC.<sup>147</sup> A notion existed among the exiles in London that the Jewish presence was too prominent and might cause harm to the resistance. It suggests that besides the reports of the Czech and Slovak underground, Poznanski’s conclusion about the role of Nazi and collaborationist propaganda also needs to be taken into account.

### ***Czechs’ attitudes towards the Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia***

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<sup>142</sup> A report about the situation in the Eastern territories, occupied by Soviet Union, prepared by Roman Knoll, a leading member of the Polish underground movement, ended: ‘No longer do we face a choice between Zionism and the former state of affairs; the choice is rather – *Zionism or extermination*.’ The report is dated in the early December 1939. Friedländer, Saul, *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1945. The Years of Extermination*, p. 48.

<sup>143</sup> Engel, David, ‘An Early Account of Polish Jewry under Nazi and Soviet Occupation Presented to the Polish Government-In-Exile, February 1940’, pp. 301-314. The account is full of stereotypical anti-Jewish prejudices. Karski even counted the Jews among the enemies of the Polish nation.

<sup>144</sup> Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 64.

<sup>145</sup> Already in the summer of 1940, one of the political instructions of the Free French recommended ‘acting with the greatest discretion to avoid “giving the enemy’s propaganda service a basis for saying that the National Committee of the Free French is sustained by Jewish encouragement”’. Poznanski, Renée, ‘French Public Opinion and the Jews during World War II’, pp. 126-128.

<sup>146</sup> Marrus, Michael R. and Paxton, Robert O., *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 189f.

<sup>147</sup> Poznanski, Renée, ‘French Public Opinion and the Jews during World War II’, pp. 134f; Poznanski, Renée, ‘The French Resistance: An Alternative Society for the Jews?’, in David Bankier – Israel Gutman (eds.), *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), pp. 411-433; *Propagandes et persécutions: La Résistance et le “problème juif” 1940-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 2008).

The historiography is in agreement that the attitude of ordinary Czechs towards the Jews in the Protectorate was positive and humane.<sup>148</sup> People expressed their solidarity with the suffering Jews and also extended some basic help to their unfortunate plight. Although it seems that only a low number of Jews survived in hiding in the Protectorate,<sup>149</sup> the explanation for this can largely be put down to geographical, demographic and political factors. Concerning the Czechs' attitude towards the Jews in the first war-years, the Protectorate *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) situational reports have been utilised. Based on the reports, it has been assumed that the Czechs' attitude towards Jews became a serious problem for the occupation authorities.<sup>150</sup> This assessment appeared especially in the autumn of 1941 at the time of the branding of Jews with the Star of David and preparations for the deportations to the east.<sup>151</sup>

These positive accounts notwithstanding, anti-Semitism had long history in the historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia. Besides the traditional Catholic sources of anti-Semitism, or anti-Judaism, economic and social tensions can be documented throughout the centuries. Furthermore, a special variety of anti-Semitism, developed in the nineteenth century historical lands, tended to perceive Jewish cultural and linguistic identification with Germans.<sup>152</sup> These prejudices survived the fall of the Hapsburg Empire, although they were not strongly articulated in the interwar period when Czechs dominated the newly founded Republic. Yet the collapse of the Republic in 1938 caused their revival. Additionally, after Munich, racial anti-Semitism was taken from the Nazis and partly introduced in the Second

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<sup>148</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Czech Society and the "Final Solution"', pp. 309-326; Krejčová, Helena – Hyndráková, Anna, 'Postoj Čechů k Židům. Z politického zpravodajství okupační správy a protektorátního tisku 1939-1941', in *Soudobé dějiny* 4/2, 1995, pp. 578-605; Kryl, Miroslav, 'Vztah české společnosti k Židům v době nacistické okupace', in *Česko-Slovenská historická ročenka*, 2001 (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 2001), pp. 79-87.

<sup>149</sup> Ludvíková, Miroslava, *Darované životy. Příběhy českých a moravských Spravedlivých mezi národy* (Hradec Králové: Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2007); Adler, H[ans] G[ünter], *Theresienstadt, 1941-1945: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft, Geschichte, Soziologie, Psychologie* (Thübingen: Mohr, 1960), p.15. According to Adler, 424 Jews survived in hiding in the Czech lands. Adler probably quotes from Meyer, Peter et al, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1953), p. 67. Meyer mentioned 424 'underground survivors and others'.

<sup>150</sup> Krejčová, Helena – Hyndráková, Anna, 'O postoji Čechů k Židům. Z politického zpravodajství okupační správy a protektorátního tisku 1939-1941', In *Soudobé dějiny* 4/2 (1995), pp. 578-605.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 583 and 587. The solidarity of the Czechs was also immediately debated by the newly appointed Deputy Reichsprotector Reinhard Heydrich with the Protectorate Gestapo and police. *Ibid*, pp. 603-605.

<sup>152</sup> Rataj, Jan, 'Český antisemitismus v proměnách let 1918-1945', p. 47. For anti-Jewish violence in Bohemia during World War I see Rees, H. Louis, *The Czechs during World War I. The Path to Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 63, 65f.

Czechoslovak Republic, for example, in professional associations.<sup>153</sup> However, historians are in agreement that the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia changed this trend, by revealing to the Czechs the real culprit of the national catastrophe.<sup>154</sup>

Crude Czech anti-Semitic circles, who were active collaborators with the Nazi authorities, never received any significant support among ordinary Czechs.<sup>155</sup> Although the Czech fascist groups, for example, *the Banner*, tried to stir anti-Jewish violence in the streets of Czech towns during 1939, Czech people never took part.<sup>156</sup> In addition, the German authorities understood the limited support Czech fascists had in the society and used them only as a threat to the Protectorate government, as a proof that they had other forces in case the ministers did not cooperate.<sup>157</sup>

The historiography of the Holocaust in Bohemia and Moravia praises the Protectorate government of the General Alois Eliáš for its alleged opposition against the implementation of the strict Nuremberg Laws in the Protectorate.<sup>158</sup> The definition of a Jew, as proposed by the government, was indeed more lenient than the final law adopted by Konstantin von Neurath, the *Reichsprotektor*. Yet, the attitude of the Protectorate government was driven, at least partially, by their concerns that a wider definition of a Jew would transfer too much property from Czech hands to the Germans. Any company with a Jew (as defined by the law) in its management was designated for *Aryanization*. The struggle for the definition of a Jew was decided

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<sup>153</sup> Rataj, Jan, 'Český antisemitismus v proměnách let 1918-1945', pp. 56-59.

<sup>154</sup> Rataj, Jan, 'Český antisemitismus v proměnách let 1918-1945', pp. 62f.

<sup>155</sup> Pasák, Tomáš, *Český fašismus 1922-1945 a kolaborace 1939-1945* (Praha: Práh, 1999), pp. 265-272. Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945* (Praha: Prostor, 1999), pp. 55f.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-4; For details about the anti-Jewish violence in Czech streets in 1939, see Pasák, Tomáš, 'Český antisemitismus na počátku okupace', in *Věda a Život*, 1969, March, pp. 147-150.

<sup>157</sup> Kennan, George F., *From Prague after Munich. Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 221, doc. 35, Despatch of August 19, 1939, from Consul General Linnell to the Department of State, on the general trend of developments in Bohemia and Moravia.

<sup>158</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*, pp. 141-144. Hitler firstly in his communications with the local German authorities stressed his wish that the 'Jewish question' in the Protectorate was to be solved by the Czechs themselves. Gruner, Wolf, *Jewish Forced Labour Under the Nazis. Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1939-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 145. The governments of the Second Republic and of the Protectorate also showed more inclination to defend Jews who had been settled in the Historical lands already before 1914 as opposed to its negative attitude towards the newly settled Jews. Mendelsohn, Ezra, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, pp. 167f; Rataj, Jan, 'Český antisemitismus v proměnách let 1918-1945', Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, pp. 56; 87-94 and 107; Krejčová, Helena, 'Specifické předpoklady antisemitismu a protižidovské aktivity v protektorátu Čechy a Morava', in *Emancipácia Židov - antisemitizmus - prenasledovanie v Nemecku, Rakúsko-Uhorsku, v českých zemiac a na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Veda, Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1999), pp. 148-151.

unilaterally by the *Reichsprotektor* von Neurath himself on 21 June 1939, and the German version of the Nuremberg laws was introduced in the Protectorate.<sup>159</sup>

The Protectorate government developed further initiatives to limit the position of the Jews in the society even during the following months and years.<sup>160</sup> The National Alliance (*Národní souručenství*) was the only quasi-political organization allowed in the Protectorate, associating almost the whole adult population.<sup>161</sup> In 1940, anti-Semitic activists gained the upper hand in its leadership and introduced 'Jewish decrees' regulating the contacts between the members of the Alliance and the Jews. Nevertheless, the decrees caused indignation in the society and most of them had to be repealed.<sup>162</sup> This conflict documents that the situation in the Protectorate was complex and also the involvement of the Czechs, on various levels, must not be marginalised.<sup>163</sup> Only Heydrich's arrival in Prague at the end of September 1941 as the Deputy *Reichsprotektor* and the beginning of the deportations finally moved all the initiatives into the hands of the German administration.<sup>164</sup>

During the war, the information about the Czechs' unyielding positive treatment of Jews filled columns in the western press.<sup>165</sup> However, when looking into the reasons for the Czechs' behaviour, Miroslav Kárný argued that it was more in line with 'the Germans' enemy is our friend'.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, an SD report from August 1942 stated that public support for the Jews, for example during deportations, was perceived by the Czechs as a way of expressing anti-German sentiments.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, the Czechs were afraid that after the Jews it would be their turn. In this

<sup>159</sup> Milotová, Jaroslava, 'Zur Geschichte der Verordnung Konstantin von Neuraths über das jüdische Vermögen', in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 2002, pp. 75-105.

<sup>160</sup> Gruner, Wolf, Jewish Forced Labour Under the Nazis. Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1939-1944 pp. 150f; Kárný, Miroslav, "Konečné řešení". Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice, (Praha: Academia, 1991), pp. 47-58.

<sup>161</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 51-54.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142f.

<sup>163</sup> See, for example, Frommer, Benjamin, *National Cleansing. Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in postwar Czechoslovakia*, pp. 164-180.

<sup>164</sup> Six thousand Jews were sent to the ghettos in Lodz and Minsk. Heydrich also decided that all the Protectorate Jewry was to be concentrated, before their deportation to the east, in the fortress of Terezín, in Northern Bohemia.

<sup>165</sup> The reports, for example, brought to the public information about Czechs being executed for aiding Jews. *Daily News Bulletin* (Jewish Telegraphic Agency), 26 September 1941, p. 3 'Czech Jews threatened with reprisals for London anti-Nazi broadcasts'; 10 October 1941, p. 2 'Czech population defies Gestapo in pro-Jewish demonstrations'; 31 October 1941, p. 1, Czech population anxious over deportation of 40,000 Jews from Prague'; 23 July 1943, p. 2 'Nazis execute Czechs in Prague for assisting Jews to escape deportations' etc.

<sup>166</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Czech Society and the "Final Solution"', p. 323.

<sup>167</sup> Czech National Archives, Prague (CNA), Úřad říšského protektora (ÚŘP), 114-308-5, box 307, Daily situational report prepared by the SD Office, Prague, 27 August 1942.

respect, Kárný concluded that the 'ever more evident link' to 'the "solution of the Czech question" had a much stronger impact' on Czechs' sympathies with the Jews.<sup>168</sup>

SD and Gestapo reports for 1943 and 1944 presented a complex image of the Czechs' attitude towards the Jews. The Gestapo repeatedly reported the significant help offered by ordinary Czechs to the Jews trying to avoid deportations.<sup>169</sup> Yet, the SD in late 1943 concluded that more and more Czechs appreciated the German cleansing of the Protectorate of its Jewry and that they did not wish the Jews to return.<sup>170</sup> The majority of the Czechs were allegedly against the Jewish presence in Bohemia and Moravia and hoped that the Jews would not be willing to come back after the war.<sup>171</sup> This report cannot be dismissed as pure German propaganda, especially when taking into account the previous SD reports condemning Czechs for their sympathies with the persecuted Jews. Likewise, the SD later stated that with the changing military and political situation in Europe, some Czech circles behaved in a friendlier manner towards the remaining Jews. The SD concluded that even those Czechs, who resented the Jews, had sought political advantages in the case of the anticipated Allied victory and the Jewish return to Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>172</sup> The change documented by the SD approximately between 1942 and 1943 is highly significant. Reports describing Czechs' sympathies with the Jews were replaced by those documenting Czech negative perceptions of the persecuted minority.

Do these reports suggest a negative change with regard to the Czechs' perception of the Jews during the war? SD and Gestapo documents offer an important insight into the situation in the Protectorate. But caution is necessary when dealing with these documents. The reports were prepared by criminal agencies, following their own policies and the information cannot be taken at face-value. Yet these reports were intended only for internal use. Hence we can accept that they might present the situation as it was perceived in order that adequate measures might be taken. In any case, cross-referencing with other sources is desirable.

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<sup>168</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Czech Society and the "Final Solution"', p. 323.

<sup>169</sup> CNA, Německé státní ministerstvo pro Čechy a Moravu, 110-5-31, Gestapo, Prague, report for May 1943 (3 June 1943), June 1943 (5 July 1943), September 1943 (5 October 1943), November 1943 (prepared 1 December 1943).

<sup>170</sup> CNA, ÚŘP, 114-307-3, box 306, SD daily report for 16 November 1943.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*; CNA, ÚŘP, 114-307-5, box 306, SD daily report for 7 and 9 October 1943.

<sup>172</sup> CNA, ÚŘP, 114-301-6, box 299, SD daily report for 11 July 1944. Similarly CNA, ÚŘP, 114-308-5, box 307, Daily situational report prepared by the SD Office, Prague, 27 August 1942.

There is a lack of any comprehensive study that would analyse the Czechs' attitude towards the Jews in the Protectorate, but some documents from the provenience of the Czechoslovak resistance circles tend to confirm Nazi observations. Anti-Semitic prejudices could be documented among some of the resistance leaders and Czech intellectuals.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, an article from underground *Přítomnost*, published in March 1943, revealed anti-Jewish sentiments among Czech underground groups.<sup>174</sup> A similar analysis was presented by Emil Sobota, a pre-war official in Beneš's presidential office. Sobota did not condemn Jews on racial grounds. However, sections of the Jews were labelled as an anti-social and anti-Czech entity.<sup>175</sup> The brutal Nazi policy aroused Czech sympathies for the persecuted minority. However, the *Aryanization* allegedly confirmed to the Czech people the disproportionate wealth owned by the Jews. Sobota emphasised that the following development would be dependent on the solution of the 'Jewish question' by the post-war administration. Only 'social justice' in the restitution of the Jews would cause the eradication of anti-Semitism in Czechoslovakia. If handled otherwise, Sobota concluded, even stronger anti-Semitism would emerge among the Czech

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<sup>173</sup> Pynsent, Robert B., 'Conclusory Essay: Activists, Jews, the Little Czech Man, and Germans', in *Central Europe*, Volume 5, Number 2, November 2007, p. 259. Pynsent refers to Albert Pražák's memoirs of his pre-war political activities. Pražák condemned Jewish economic role among the Czechs. He became the chairman of the Czech National Council and played important role in the Prague Uprising in May 1945, see Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 455f, 474-476. For anti-Semitism among Czech intellectuals, see memoirs of the literary historian Václav Černý, *Paměti 3, 1945-1972* (Brno: Atlantis, 1992), pp. 365-368.

<sup>174</sup> *Přítomnost*, 3 February 1943, Discussion (quoted in Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Defiant Jew: Jews and the Czech "Inside Front" (1938-1942)', p. 42, footnote 18a and p. 44. 'The Jewish Question in Bohemia. Although there was no widespread anti-Semitism amongst the Czechs, we cannot deny that the relationship between the two people was not clear-cut and straightforward in every respect. Whatever grievances the Jews held against the Czechs are not known and were from early times expressed openly: 1. Germanization. 2. Social oppression. Any Czech was quite prepared to acknowledge the work and merits of people like O. Fischer, and others like him, as regards their role in Czech culture, but could not forget that most Jews claimed to be Germans. The Jewish Question has been dealt with by Masaryk and Lenin (the Jews were strong Germanizers, even during the Austrian Empire and gave to the border cities their German character). To Lenin's conception nothing can be added today. But as with every question of great moment, time and place impact a varying significance. And so it is in Bohemia. And so it will be when the confusions of our days will be finally solved. (with a due respect to the equality of nations, religions and races, only facts will be assessed). No one will be asked why he suffered, and every individual will be asked: how did you conduct yourself in the interest of your nation, whom did you support and whom did you oppress today, yesterday and even before that. And to these questions there will be simple responses which *per se* will straight away resolve this very unpleasant Jewish Question as well. K. J.' In the case of this article, the most important fact is that the underground press published the letter at all. It showed that the publishers did not consider the content to be in contradiction with the democratic values as perceived by the resistance fighters. We do not know whether they agreed with it, but they at least did not mind.

<sup>175</sup> In 1942, Sobota analysed the Jewish position in the historical lands. Sobota, Emil, *Glossy 1939-1944* (Praha: Jan Laichter, 1946), pp. 95-98. *On Czech anti-Semitism*.

people.<sup>176</sup> As noted by Sobota, the majority of the Czechs avoided any direct involvement in the Nazi anti-Jewish policy. Yet there was a part of Czech society that joined the Nazi racial struggle and their efforts had an influence on the exiles as well.

### ***Anti-Semitic Propaganda in the Protectorate and the exiles***

In the September 1941 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, Benjamin Akzin, a revisionist Zionist, published an article called 'The Jewish question after the war'.<sup>177</sup> Akzin concluded that there was no place for the Jews in post-war Europe and the only solution was their emigration to Palestine. Even more significant was the argumentation used by Akzin. He opened the article with remarks made by Jan Masaryk in early 1940. Masaryk, who later became the Czechoslovak exile Foreign Minister, was to assure a public gathering in London that all the Jewish émigrés would eventually come back with him to liberated Czechoslovakia. This statement received wide publicity, but was taken over by the German authorities.<sup>178</sup> German propaganda allegedly used it to win over the public support in the Protectorate. The Germans warned people that, thanks to the exiles, the Jews would come back and would claim all their property.<sup>179</sup> Consequently, according to Akzin, the Czechoslovak exiles, concerned about the response at home,

began anxiously inquiring whether an adequate and humane solution could be found for these refugees other than their return to Czechoslovakia. Not stopping there, these liberal Czechs, never before impressed by the need for Jewish emigration from Europe, suddenly embarked on a feverish if discreet search for an outlet which could absorb many of the Jews who remained in Bohemia and Moravia and who, once the war is over, would like to find a better future elsewhere.<sup>180</sup>

In fact, Akzin did not condemn the exiles for this reaction. It was impossible to ask the 'liberal leaders' to throw the non-Jews out of their jobs and give them back

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Akzin, Benjamin, 'The Jewish Question after the War', in *Harper's Magazine*, September 1941, pp. 430-440.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

to the Jews. It would have questioned the authority of the Czechoslovak leadership.<sup>181</sup>



Image no. 3: Jan Masaryk<sup>182</sup>

Hence Akzin already during the war publicly identified one of the most important influences that shaped the exile governments' Jewish policy: the voice of the people in occupied countries, or, better formulated, its perception by the exiles. Furthermore, he confirmed that the Nazis used 'the Jewish Question' in their propaganda war against the exiles.

Anti-Semitism belonged to the main themes of Nazi and collaborationist propaganda machinery across the whole of occupied Europe.<sup>183</sup> The main bearers of anti-Semitic propaganda at the onset of the German occupation of the historical lands were Czech fascist groups. The Jews were accused of all the misfortunes of the Czech nation, especially of the rule in the inter-war Republic, the opposition against Czech-German rapprochement that led to Munich and of their role in the Bolshevik Soviet regime (Judaebolshevism), one of the Allies of the Beneš pre-war Republic.<sup>184</sup> More influential was a group of Protectorate activist journalists, formed

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430f.

<sup>182</sup> <http://www.life.com/image/50444741>

<sup>183</sup> Herf, Jeffrey, *The Jewish Enemy. Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>184</sup> Pynsent, Robert B., 'Conclusory Essay: Activists, Jews, the Little Czech Man, and Germans', p. 250.

around Vladimír Krychtálek, Karel Lažnovký and Emanuel Vajtauer.<sup>185</sup> Additionally, among the politicians, the main role in anti-Semitic propaganda was played by the renegade former Colonel of the Czechoslovak army, Emanuel Moravec, often labelled the Czech Quisling. In January 1942, Moravec became the Minister of education and national enlightenment.<sup>186</sup> The rest of the Czech Protectorate ministers, including the State President Hácha, mostly avoided any overt anti-Semitic proclamations.

Jeffrey Herf proves that one of the main themes of Nazi propaganda was accusing London and the Allies of waging the war in Jewish interests.<sup>187</sup> Goebbels diaries are also full of references to the Jewish role in the Allied radio propaganda.<sup>188</sup> The link made between the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and the Jewish interests was one of the main features of the Protectorate collaborationist propaganda.<sup>189</sup> For example, Krychtálek described the Beneš exile administration as full of Jews (members of the parliament Julius Friedman, Julius Fürth, or of the government, the Minister of State, later the Minister of Justice, Jaroslav Stránský).<sup>190</sup> The Beneš government's struggle for political freedom was presented as waging war on behalf of the Jews, for their money and in their interests. The Protectorate journalists were indeed not only searching for 'Jews' among the exile politicians, but also among their relatives.<sup>191</sup> Hence they 'revealed' Jewish relatives in the case of Bohumil Laušman, a member of the State Council and an important Social-

<sup>185</sup> For Vajtauer see: Čelovský, Bořivoj, *Strážce nové Evropy: prapodivná kariéra novináře Emanuela Vajtauera* (Čenov u Ostravy: Nakladatelství Tilia, 2002). See also: Cebe, Jan – Končelík, Jakub, 'Novinářský aktivismus: protektorátní kolaborantská žurnalistika a její hlavní představitelé z řad šéfredaktorů českého legálního tisku', in *Sborník Národního muzea v Praze*, Volume 53, 2008, Issue 1-4, pp. 39-48; Večeřa, Pavel, 'Židé a antisemitismus na stránkách vybraných českých deníků v letech 1939-1945', in *Média a realita 2002. Sborník prací Katedry mediálních studií a žurnalistiky FSS* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2003), pp. 103-120; Brabec, Jiří, 'Antisemitská literatura v době nacistické okupace', in *Revolver Revue*, 50, 2001, pp. 274-313.

<sup>186</sup> For more about Moravec see: Pernes, Jiří, *Až na dno zradu. Emanuel Moravec* (Praha: Themis, 1997).

<sup>187</sup> Herf, Jeffrey, *The Jewish Enemy. Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*.

<sup>188</sup> For example see: Föhlich, Elke (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Teil 2 Diktate*, (München : K.G. Saur, 1993-1996), Band 4, 27 May 1942, p. 376; 10 June 1942, p. 481; Band 6, 14 December 1942, p. 445; 17 December 1942, p. 461.

<sup>189</sup> Pynsent, Robert B., 'Conclusory Essay: Activists, Jews, the Little Czech Man, and Germans', p. 240. Moravec broadcast and published: 'Duke Wenceslaus [the benefactor of the Bohemian Lands, utilised by the pro-Nazi propaganda] shall protect us from the death Britain threatens us with and from the grave/diggers who speak Czech, but think Jewish'. Pynsent quotes and translates from Moravec, Emanuel, *O český zítřek*, p. 266.

<sup>190</sup> AÚTGM, Sbírka 38. Vladimír Klecanda, file 172. A transcript of *Večer* 22 February 1941; *Árijský boj*, Volume IV, no. 21, 22 May 1943, 'Od žida Kapra až po žida Stránského'; *Árijský boj*, Volume IV, no. 12, 20 March 1943, 'Žid Jaro Stránský'.

<sup>191</sup> Jacobi, Walter, *Země zaslíbená* (Praha: Orbis, 1943), p. 156. For example spouses of ministers Ripka and Outrata.

Democrat<sup>192</sup> and Hubert Ripka, the head of the exiles' propaganda.<sup>193</sup> The labelling of the President Beneš as a 'White Jew', a term used for non-Jews 'fraternizing' with Jews, was common.<sup>194</sup> Krychtálek in his February 1941 article continued:

[D]o you really think that Mr Beneš uses his own funds? He has never done that. So, in order to sustain his gang, he has only the money given to him by Jews, and one day the Jews would like to request the money to be paid back, but of course not from his [Beneš's] funds, but from the calluses of the Czech nation. Because if Beneš should some day come back, then it would be with a pack of bloodthirsty Jewish hyenas, and then all the people here would at once become Jewish slaves. England and America are entirely in thrall to the Jews, our London and American emigration is in thrall to them; even Beneš himself is in their thrall.<sup>195</sup>

This article was largely a response to the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (JTA) report about Czechoslovak Zionists' demand for representation in the exile parliament.<sup>196</sup> The article thus documents that the Protectorate activist journalists followed the development among the exiles and responded aggressively. We also know that the Beneš government was informed about these reports published in the Protectorate press.<sup>197</sup>

Reports sent to London by the Czech underground movement can be used in order to assess the impact of this propaganda on Czech and Slovak people. Nevertheless, the reports can hardly be seen as expressing the opinion of the nation as a whole. They rather revealed the sentiments of specific resistance groups, very often consisting of several tens or maybe hundreds of people. The exiles understood

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<sup>192</sup> Laušman was labelled as 'a Jew who was trying to incite from London'. Šolc, Jiří, *Útěky a návraty. Bohumil Laušman – osud českého politika* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 2008), p. 95; *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 26 September 1941, p. 3, 'Czech Jews threatened with reprisals for London anti-nazi broadcasts'.

<sup>193</sup> *Árijský boj*, Volume IV, no. 32, 7 August 1943, p. 1-2, 'Živnost paní Ripkové'. Ripka was attacked because he divorced 'an Aryan' and married 'a Jewess'.

<sup>194</sup> Pinard, Peter Richard, 'Alois Kříž a cyklus rozhlasových relací "Co víte o Židech a zednářích?"', in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty 2005*, p. 218. For another example of the Protectorate propaganda attacking the exiles on the Jewish issues see for example: CZA, A320/25. *Moravské noviny*, 24. VIII. 1944; Pynsent, Robert B., 'Conclusory Essay: Activists, Jews, the Little Czech Man, and Germans', p. 252 and 260. Krychtálek and Lažnovský presented Beneš as a 'Jew-lover'. Chmelář wrote about Beneš: 'After all, Jewishness does not always have to be determined by character traits. In his behaviour Beneš was always a typical Jew by nature'.

<sup>195</sup> Archiv Ústavu Tomáše Garrigue Masaryka, Prague (AÚTGM), Sbírka 38. Vladimír Klecanda, file 172. A transcript of *Večer* 22 February 1941.

<sup>196</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II – 2916, k. 394. JTA clippings, 20 December 1940. *Jews and the Czechoslovak State Council*.

<sup>197</sup> This specific newspaper clipping was, for example, among the files of the exile government. See AÚTGM, Sbírka 38. Vladimír Klecanda, file 172. A transcript of *Večer* 22 February 1941.

the limitations of these reports and did not take them at face value as an expression of the Czech people's sentiments.<sup>198</sup>

A home resistance organization warned the exiles as early as December 1939 that the Czech people resented the presence of so many Jews in Beneš's entourage.<sup>199</sup>

Another report from Prague in the early spring of 1942 stated:

Naturally the propaganda which alleges that all the influential places with us were secured by the Jews has a lot of influence even in the circles which are otherwise disinterested, and account must be taken of this fact.<sup>200</sup>

Later, at the end of 1944, a report sent by a certain Tristan XY (probably Vladimír Tůma) confirmed that the Czechs were receptive to this part of Nazi propaganda: 'There is here [...] a kind of anti-Semitism that after all has become slightly stronger, partly thanks to propaganda, as well as with the experience with the often cowardly behaviour of the Jews during these years'.<sup>201</sup> Other reports confirmed the conclusions, presented by Akzin in 1941 that much apprehension existed among the Czechs that the exiles would bring back, upon their return to the country, all the Jewish émigrés and would reinstate them to their previous positions: 'It should be taken into consideration that after the war anti-Semitism will grow substantially, and that all those who will try to ease and assist the return of the Jews will meet with opposition'.<sup>202</sup> Additionally, in March 1944, Arnošt Frischer – an exiled Zionist in

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<sup>198</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 84. *Referát o zprávách z domova pre št. radu* (1944), by Juraj Slávik.

<sup>199</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-50-56c, A report from Czechoslovakia prepared on 1 December 1939. This report was based on information provided by Czechoslovaks who arrived on a business trip to an unknown country (X....).

<sup>200</sup> The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), Foreign Office (FO), 371/30837. Reports from Prague, March 24-31 1942.

<sup>201</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II/1, i. č. 1365. Zprávy z domova V 77/2, a report by 'Tristan XY', 1 September 1944. Jan Rataj identifies the author of the message, based on the information from Jana Vondrová, as doc. Vladimír Tůma. See Rataj, Jan, 'Český antisemitismus v proměnách let 1918-1945', p. 61; Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*, doc. 140, p. 285-6. A report sent to London by Tristan XY (doc. V. Tůma) on 1 September 1944. See also VHA, 37-91-7, Report by engineer Bartoň (Škoda works in Sweden) who visited the Protectorate on 15 June 1944; VHA, 37-91-7, Report by Kučera (Czech Embassy in Stockholm) for the Ministry of National Defence, based on information provided by a refugee from the Protectorate, 17 April 1944.

<sup>202</sup> Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1945*, Volume 2, (Praha: Academia, 1966), p. 721, doc. 518, Hanák (Consul in Ankara) to London, 10 August 1943. The English translation according to Rothkirchen, Livia, 'Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime', p. 444.

the Czechoslovak State Council – warned Beneš that Nazi anti-Semitism would not disappear immediately after the liberation.<sup>203</sup>

The exiles were concerned about the possible effects of anti-Semitic propaganda. The *Association of Czechs-Jews*, an organization of the exiled Jewish assimilationists, argued in 1942 that the Protectorate propaganda stories about Jewish role among the exiles had an effect on the Beneš government.<sup>204</sup> The result, according to the assimilationists, was the suppression of the Jewish element in the ranks of the exile administration.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore Masaryk, the Foreign Minister, upon returning from one of his stays in the United States, expressed amazement about what he perceived as the *Judaization (užidovštění)* of the Foreign Ministry since he had been abroad. He thought it might have caused troubles to the exiles.<sup>206</sup> The source of Masaryk's worries has to be sought exactly in the possible confirmation of the Protectorate propaganda stories. Indeed, during a conversation with the WJC representatives in London, Beneš emphasized that he was being attacked daily by Protectorate propaganda and was being presented as being under Jewish influence.<sup>207</sup> It was, according to the President, one of the reasons why he was reluctant to include a Jew in the exile parliament, the State Council.<sup>208</sup> Based on these conclusions, we should turn our attention to the reports revealing to the exiles the perception of the Jews by home underground groups.

### ***The Czechoslovak Exiles' dependency on the public opinion at home***

The exiles' concerns about the efficiency of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda might have been reinforced by reports sent to London by underground groups. The government was aware that home resistance depicted the situation according to their own perception, pursuing their own policy and trying to influence the exiles. The

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<sup>203</sup> AÚTGM, Edvard Beneš Papers – II, box 157, file 1557, Memorial Treatise by Arnošt Frischer, 2 March 1944.

<sup>204</sup> CNA, Ministerstvo vnitra – Londýn (Ministry of the Interior, Londýn), box 255, file 2-63-2, 'Námět, jak řešit otázku židovskou a vymítit antisemitismus'.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> Čechurová, Jana – Kuklík, Jan – Čechura, Jaroslav – Němeček, Jan (eds.), *Válečné deníky Jana Opočenského* (Praha: Karolinum, 2001), pp. 229. A diary entry 15 August 1942.

<sup>207</sup> USHMMMA, WJC – L, C2/96, Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941. 'Dr. Benes said that he is being daily attacked by the Germans in Czechoslovakia who accuse him that he is a weapon in Jewish hands. Even for the sake of contracting this propaganda, he has to deal with all minority representation [in the Czechoslovak State Council] at the same time.'

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

reports could not be taken as all-encompassing.<sup>209</sup> Yet the reports served to the exiles as a good guide documenting sentiments among people at home.<sup>210</sup> The policy of the exiles was shaped by two main factors: home underground reports and the exiles' diplomatic contacts abroad. Complying with both of them, it was hoped, would lead to them being the recognised government of the whole population on their return. This was the *alpha and omega* of their very existence.

The relations between the exiles and home branches of the resistance were complex. In London, Beneš stressed his dependency on public opinion at home. In his words, the exiled statesmen

could make only such decisions which they were convinced would ultimately be ratified by their nationals. [...] [A]s they were acting outside their countries, they had to be doubly careful in formulating what they considered to be the real views of their people.<sup>211</sup>

This statement notwithstanding, the Czechoslovak President was an experienced diplomat, whose public statements need to be carefully examined alongside his decisions reached in private. There are known cases when Beneš acted against the will of the home resistance movement.<sup>212</sup> Also with the progress of the war, the significance of the underground movement in the Protectorate was diminishing. No representative of the home resistance was called on the first post-war government.<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, this was an outcome of a development that no one could have predicted during the war and the influence of underground groups on Beneš's policy, especially in the first war years, cannot simply be ignored.

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<sup>209</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 84. *Referát o zprávách z domova pre št. radu* (1944), by Juraj Slávik. During one of his talks in the Czechoslovak State Council in 1944, the Minister, presenting the content of reports that arrived from the occupied country, stated: 'After all, I stressed that the reports received from home were not comprehensive and expressed the view only of a part of our population, very often only the informers and their associates. I drew the attention to the fact that each particular report has to be evaluated and reviewed according to what we generally know about the situation at home as well as about the couriers and the environment they work in.' My translation.

<sup>210</sup> This statement was made by Táborský, the Personal Secretary to Beneš. Hoover Institution Archives, Palo Alto (HIA), Edward Táborský Papers, Box 2, Diary 19 February 1943, p. 192-193.

<sup>211</sup> USHMMA, WJC – L, C2/96, Memorandum on Interview with the President of the Czechoslovak Republic Dr. E. Beneš, 22 July 1941.

<sup>212</sup> For example the case with the assassination of the Deputy Reichsprotector Reinhard Heydrich. See: Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 168-169. Kural, however, stresses that ÚVOD acted as almost an equal partner of Beneš. See Kural Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1997), pp. 7.

<sup>213</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, p. 476. For memoir literature, see: Luža, Radomír, *V Hitlerově objetí. Kapitoly z českého odboje* (Praha: Torst, 2006), p. 298 and 323f; Grňa, Josef, *Sedm roků na domácí frontě* (Brno: Blok, 1968).

Consequently, this chapter only opens the issue of the exiles' policy-formation, by presenting the image the exiles had about demands of people in the occupied homeland. In the case of political plans, or decision making, the influence of the home resistance has to be taken into account. However, there are cases when the impact of the home resistance seems easier to document. This is the case with the contacts between the exiles and the population in the homeland – for example, the Czechoslovak BBC section broadcasts. Analysis of these serves to confirm the hypothesis concerning underground groups' influence on the exiles' policy. Subsequently, this influence will be considered in the following chapters, examining the exiles' treatment of the so-called 'Jewish question' during and after the war.

In relation to the reports sent to the exiles, the issue of who was actually in charge – or, more precisely, who was capable of informing the exiles – needs to be addressed. The contacts between the Czechoslovak home and exile resistance movements were maintained mainly via radio transmissions or broadcasts, by courier services, or orally by people who escaped from the Protectorate and Slovakia and who were later interviewed by the Czechoslovak authorities in neutral or allied countries.<sup>214</sup> This suggests that the means of communication with the exiles were the privilege of a small circle of underground resistance fighters. Moreover, reports to London by an occasional refugee did not carry the weight of a report sent by the recognised resistance in Czechoslovakia.

Who were the main leaders of the Czechoslovak underground movement? A basic line needs to be drawn between the historical lands and Slovakia. A strong underground structure in Slovakia, with the programme of a common Czechoslovak state and links to London did not develop until 1943. This was the time when the mainstream Czech underground political movements had already ceased to exist.<sup>215</sup> The first resistance structures in Bohemia and Moravia emerged immediately after Munich, many years before any significant non-Communist illegal organisations appeared in Slovakia. Pro-Beneš politicians, who remained at home, played a major role in the movement. It was the ex-President, now in London, who gradually assumed the leadership and was accepted by the resistance. The first organisations of

<sup>214</sup> Kokoška, Stanislav, 'Dvě neznámé zprávy z okupované Prahy o postavení židovského obyvatelstva v Protektorátě', in *Terezinské studie a dokumenty* 1997, p. 30.

<sup>215</sup> Jablonický, Jozef, *Z ilegality do povstania : Kapitoly z občianského odboja*. (Bratislava: Epochá, 1969); Josko, Anna, 'The Slovak Resistance Movement', in Victor Mamatey – Radomír Luža (eds.), *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 369-372.

the civic movement, for example *Political Headquarters* (*Politické ústředí*), *Petition Committee We Remain Faithful* (*Petiční výbor Věrni zůstaneme*), or *The Defence of the Nation* (*Obrana národa*) were led by experienced politicians and soldiers.<sup>216</sup> Although the radicalisation of the movement, in the national sense, was already clearly visible, their political programme still remained moderate, even in their attitude towards the Germans.<sup>217</sup> Besides the civic underground, the Communist structure was also founded.<sup>218</sup> Its importance was constantly increasing, especially after 22 June 1941, but the Communists did not maintain contacts with the exiles in London.

The first generation of the Czech resistance was crushed by the Germans by the winter of 1939/1940 and its leaders were either captured, or escaped abroad, to exile.<sup>219</sup> In early 1940, a new, radical generation entered the scene and acquired a strongly articulated anti-German (not anti-Nazi) programme of the total elimination of the whole German element in Czechoslovakia.<sup>220</sup> The programme was influenced by the radicalization of the German occupation policy in the autumn of 1939 (closure of universities, arrest of the resistance leaders).<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, widespread condemnation of the economic and social system in the pre-war Republic ruled among the Czechs. The population generally expressed more leftist tendencies and demanded broader participation in the economy, going as far as advocating the nationalization of key industries.<sup>222</sup>

The first political messages about the Jewish position in post-war Czechoslovakia already reached the west shortly after the beginning of the occupation in 1939. Concerning their content, the home resistance's reports dealing with Jews could be summarized into several sections. The first distinction should be

<sup>216</sup> Kural Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, p. 13 and 20.

<sup>217</sup> Kural Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, p. 35f; Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 74-78.

<sup>218</sup> More on this Hájková, Alena, *Strana v odboji, 1938-1942. Z dějin ilegálního boje KSC v letech 1938-1942* (Praha: Svoboda, 1975); Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 89-94, 229-233, 291-293, 400-411.

<sup>219</sup> Kural Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, p. 51. For example, Prokop Drtina, Jaromír Nečas, or Karel Ladislav Feierabend escaped to London. Drtina became a close associate to Beneš in his Chancellery. Nečas and Feierabend became Ministers in the exile government. See also Feierabend, Karel Ladislav, *Politické vzpomínky I.* (Brno: Atlantis, 1994), pp. 251-292.

<sup>220</sup> Kural Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, pp. 51-58 and 74-77.

<sup>221</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 101-113 and pp. 213-220.

<sup>222</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, p. 211; Kural Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, pp. 109-114; Koura, Petr, *Podplukovník Josef Balabán. Život a smrt velitele legendární odbojové skupiny „Tři králové“* (Praha: Rybka Publishers, 2003), pp. 109-120.

drawn between the messages actually revealing the attitude of the home resistance cells and those only forwarding Protectorate propaganda. When evaluating the former, the underground cells' reports contained four groups of information in relation with the Jews:

- 1) The general political programme;
- 2) Overall attitude of the population towards minorities and in particular the Jews;
- 3) Information about the Jewish plight; by revealing or suppressing it, or by expressing ambivalence to the Jewish plight, the resistance movement showed its attitude, possibly influencing the government-in-exile;
- 4) Political reports, in the sense of statements on how the post-war status of Czechoslovak Jews should be solved and how the resistance movement viewed the restitution and rehabilitation of the Jews in Czechoslovakia.

#### ***Reports sent by Protectorate resistance groups to London***

Whilst the Protectorate propaganda attacks on Beneš were part of the war between the Axis and the Allies, the Czechoslovak resistance movement's views of 'the Jewish question' had to be considered by the exiles even more seriously. The Jewish question was not of the utmost importance for the home underground groups. The resistance was more interested in the general issues of minorities, especially the Germans. Nevertheless, their perception of the German problem is revealing on minority (in particular Jewish) issues in general. Czech national interests were a common feature of the reports sent to London. The Czechs, as a nation, felt abandoned by their Allies, but also by people actually living with them in the common state – by minorities. Concerns for the future Czechoslovak state allowed the resistance to suppress the interests of other nations or people who were living in the same territory and who in some cases had not caused any harm to the Czechs. On the contrary, the assessment of who actually had betrayed the nation was constantly becoming harsher. Judging and condemning 'others' became an integral part of the Protectorate underground groups' discourse.

The national radicalization in Bohemia and Moravia became a cause of conflict with the exiles. *The Central Leadership of the Home Resistance Movement*

(*Ústřední vedení odboje domácího – ÚVOD*<sup>223</sup>), an umbrella organisation, was formed by the civic, pro-Beneš resistance fighters in early 1940. Its leaders disagreed with the exile President on the participation of Sudeten Germans in the exiled administration. They informed Beneš, who negotiated with exile Sudeten Germans to satisfy the British demands that the nation would never accept any concessions given to the Germans.<sup>224</sup> We have no proof that the leaders at home were informed about the political demands of exile Jewish groups. Still the home resistance made their point clear. They did not accept any fragmentation of the resistance movement, especially on a national level, but also any political representation based purely on personal ambitions.<sup>225</sup> The struggle for the nation should have been without any preconditions.

A report received by the exiles in May 1939 argued that the anti-Semitism of the Second Republic disappeared with the arrival of the Germans. Yet, the author documented prevailing suspicion towards the Jews and especially the reluctance to share with them the Czechs' own concerns about the *national* liberation.<sup>226</sup> Therefore, an issue, how the Jews – as a group – were perceived by the resistance in the Protectorate, has to be addressed. The Jews were not alluded to as a nation. Reports dealing with minority issues in the post-war Republic did not mention the Jews at all. In the national sense, the Jews were perceived based on the language they used and were also supposed to share the fate of each of the particular national groups in post-war Czechoslovakia. Hence, Czech Jews were perceived as a special group of people, living in the territory of Bohemia and Moravia; a group of people who were expected

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<sup>223</sup> About this organization see a comprehensive book by Kural, Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*; Or Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 206-208 and 289-291.

<sup>224</sup> Furthermore, the home resistance articulated strongly anti-German programme, proposing ethnic cleansing. They rejected any alternations of borders, proposed by Beneš and concluded that the historical border, without any Germans, was the only solution. Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 213-220; Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, pp. 89-103.

<sup>225</sup> Josef Balabán to Sergěj Ingr (exile Minister of Defence), 25 November 1940. 'We will not pardon to people here and over there [in the Protectorate and in exile] that in the hardest time of our nation, they did not give up, for its benefit, all the personal ambitions and utilitarianism and made the way of Calvary even worse and more difficult, with their impertinence and insulting manners and hence facilitated our subjugation by all our enemies'. My translation. In Kural, Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, p. 71.

<sup>226</sup> A report by A. Hoffmeister to the exiles sent on 2 May 1939. Referred to by Jan Křen in his *V emigraci: Západní zahraniční odboj 1939-1940*, p. 417, footnote 6. This exclusion of Jews from the nation was typical for the discourse of the Polish underground. See: Puławski, Adam, 'Wykluczenie czy samowykluczenie? Trzy aspekty obecności Żydów w wojennym społeczeństwie polskim na przykładzie 1942 roku', in *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, no 1 (12), 2008, pp. 130-136. Some of the members of underground groups claimed that the Jews excluded themselves from the Polish nation.

to be grateful to the Czech nation for being allowed to join it after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Jews were regarded by the Czechs as a peculiar community-in-transition from the German national and cultural surroundings – more as a subject than a partner. The transition was to be only one way and nobody who actually wanted to live among the Czechs was to be allowed to remain or behave German: that is not to adhere to the German culture and especially not to use the German language.<sup>227</sup> The Jews were supposed to be Czech, to use the Czech language, to be a part of the community and share its happiness and sorrows. It also seems that for an individual, to be, or to remain simply Jewish was not considered an acceptable option.

This ‘opportunity’ to become ‘Czech’ was perceived to have been missed by a large segment of the Jewish population, a fact that was considered as going against the interests of the Czech nation.<sup>228</sup> Based on a section of the Jews, the whole Jewish community was regarded as agents in spreading *Germanization*. As Jan Tesař suggests, one of the main features of Czech nationalism after the occupation was the renewed interest in Czech history and culture, but especially the maintenance of the Czech language.<sup>229</sup> These sentiments reinforced the already existing stereotypical prejudices against the Jews. Hence the reports sent to London contained information about their allegedly inadequate behaviour in the fateful hours of the Czech nation. A report, sent to London already in 1939, highlighted that the persecution was perhaps good for the Jews and they would not continue to support voluntarily the German national stream anymore.<sup>230</sup> More specifically, in 1940, the underground journal *V boj* (*To the Fight*) brought an article under the headline *Židovská otázka* (*The Jewish Question*). It contained the following:

The purpose of these lines is not to incite our people against the Jews. However, we realize facts and we declare clearly and determinedly.

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<sup>227</sup> Reference to HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 10. July 1943, report of the Slovak underground. The definition of the term ‘German’.

<sup>228</sup> See the results of the census: Table no. 1. Yet many Zionists used German in their daily communication. Those were thus constructed by ordinary people as Germans as well. We can argue that ordinary people did not take Zionism, as an ideological movement, into account and rather used more easily recognisable attributes – as was the means of communication – to impose identity on a person.

<sup>229</sup> Tesař, Jan, *Traktát o “záchraně národa”*. *Texty z let 1967-1969 o začátku německé okupace*, pp. 190-224.

<sup>230</sup> Kokoška, Stanislav, ‘Dvě neznámé zprávy z okupované Prahy o postavení židovského obyvatelstva v Protektorátě’, p. 31. A report from ‘Citoyen’, sent from Prague on 11 June 1939. Kokoška quotes from VHA, 37-91-1.

There will be no racial theories for us. We reject this German nonsense, as the whole civilised world does. It means that a Jew, who is a good Czech, does not have to be afraid that he will be treated differently than any other good Czech. However, it does not mean that a Jew, who behaved as a coward, or even as a traitor of our cause, should think that just because he is Jewish – we will treat him differently than a traitorous Czech! And no Jew, who today thinks that he must – even only at home in his family – gibbering in German, should not hope that – just because he is Jewish, we will handle him better than other barbarians. On the contrary: a Jew, who still after all the suffering from the side of the Nazis, is still using German, has to be logically considered as an extra hard-core Germanizer and according to it we will break the back of him! We know about him, we follow him and we have him in our lists.<sup>231</sup>

The discourse of this article confirms the perceived stereotypes of Jews as cowards and Germanizers. Czechs regarded themselves as democrats who were rejecting all German racial theories. At the same time, however, under the changed conditions, only those who were unconditionally Czech were to be allowed to live in Czechoslovakia. Any deviation, perceived by the resistance with the help of an imposed identity, was then considered as a hostile act. The article was not just a sober listing of ‘facts’, it was an overt threat to the German-speaking Jews. This publication, which was available to the exile government, expressed the view of the radical part of the Czech resistance movement – the ÚVOD military wing – in 1940.<sup>232</sup> In their opinion, even the basic fact that a person used the German language, although s/he had been brought up and educated in it and used it for the whole of his/her life, was a symbol of their adherence to *Germandom*, to the German culture, to the oppressors of the Czech nation – all despite of the cruel persecution of those Jews, even because of it.<sup>233</sup> Those tendencies among the Czech population did not disappear with the progress of the war and with the gradual progress of the ‘Final Solution’. Beneš himself argued to the leaders of the WJC in London that the main

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<sup>231</sup> CNA, Archiv Huberta Ripky, 1-50-56b. *V Boj*. My translation.

<sup>232</sup> For more information edited volume of *V Boj: Edice ilegálního časopisu I-III, 1939-1941* (Praha: Historický ústav Armády České republiky, 1992-1995). An introduction to the Volume III.

<sup>233</sup> Chad Bryant quotes another report, sent from the Protectorate on 5 May 1944: “‘Anti-Semitism is stronger than before’, another informant reported. ‘People maintain that Jews had spoken German and identified with Germans. Why didn’t they go with us? Now they’re in concentration camps or executed’”. See Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, p. 225. Bryant cites from VHA, 37, sign. 91/7, 3, 4. An anonymous report sent on 5 May 1944. Another report from early 1945 suggested that the main cause of the raising anti-Semitism was the Jewish adherence to Germandom. Based on the Czech rejection of all German, also the Jews were resented. See: AÚTGM, Klecanda Collection, folder 172, A report from 30 January 1945, prepared based on the perception of the situation in the Protectorate in May 1944. The informants were former soldiers of the Protectorate army that was sent to Northern Italy to fight the partisans. A part of the army deserted.

reason for the rise of anti-Semitic tendencies in the Bohemian lands were some ‘short-sighted Jewish opportunist forces’ who in the nineteenth century decided for the German nation.<sup>234</sup> Thus the highest strata of the exile administration expressed understanding for the position adopted by the population at home. In fact, the exiles shared the prejudices, or at least it did not consider it politically indiscrete to talk overtly about them.<sup>235</sup>

In 1942, one of the escaped members of the resistance revealed to the exiles further evaluations of Czechs’ views. At this time the main part of the resistance had already been destroyed and the deportation of the Protectorate Jewry to the east was in full swing:

It is the general opinion that after the war Jews will not dare to go in for politics or take part in public life, or be doctors or lawyers. If this fact is overlooked it may have very unpleasant political consequences. Our people recognise that all have an equal right to live and reject the crude German anti-Semitism. But they say that the Jews must work like others in crafts, on the land and in factories and fulfil both his civic and national duties unconditionally. The German knout [a metaphorical usage of the word used to stress the harsh totalitarian rule – J. L.] has taught us to respect ourselves and work for that which is here and there, and when it is a case of a Jew who has helped the Germans against us nothing can be done for him.<sup>236</sup>

The Jews were to be allowed to stay *only* as Czechs, not as a distinctive community in any sense. Curiously, the underground groups wanted the Jews to be Czech, but perceived them only as Jews. The quote referred also to the position of the Jews in Czechoslovakia and argued that limitations on their economic and social position were desirable. It was a new factor to be taken into consideration. Other similar reports show that the negative perception of the Protectorate Jewry was

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<sup>234</sup> USHMM, WJC – L, C2/96. *Memorandum on Interview with the President of the Czechoslovak Republic Dr. E. Beneš, 22 July 1941.*

<sup>235</sup> USHMM, WJC – L, C2/96. *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941.*

<sup>236</sup> The report contained new condemnations of the German-speaking Jews. It started as follows: ‘Nobody has forgotten that, in the Ostrava district for example, the Jews were the agents of Germanisation. [...] [T]here are groups of Jews who are still today [early 1942] not ashamed of speaking German aloud in front of Czechs. The latter regard this as provocation, and it is not surprising that their feelings are strongly anti-Jewish.’ TNA, FO 371/30837. Report sent by Bruce Lockhart to Ambassador Nichols on 30 June 1942. For further details about the origins of the report see Columbia University Manuscript Division, Bakmeteff Archive, New York (CUA), Jaromir Smutny Papers, box 12, report written 5 May 1942 – reference to the teacher A. Merta who was allegedly the author of these lines. He helped to escape from the Protectorate to several members of the exiled government.

widespread and that London was very well-informed of such attitudes.<sup>237</sup> More significant is that the exiles did not try to suppress the reports and even forwarded it to the British Government.<sup>238</sup>

Moreover, the Jews were not perceived as zealous fighters for the Czechoslovak national cause. Information about their alleged cowardice was repeatedly received in London.<sup>239</sup> Among others, the exiles themselves contributed to this stereotypical perception of the Jews. For example, Prokop Drtina, the political referent of the Czechoslovak National Council (the official body before the Provisional Government was recognised), wrote to the Protectorate about the problems with the formation of the Czechoslovak army abroad: 'Then there is here [in exile] a group of intellectuals, mostly Jews, very often with Communist tendencies, who have a thousand plus one ideological reasons to avoid joining the army. We will cope with them.'<sup>240</sup> The Jewish presence among the deserters was prominently highlighted. Drtina's reference to their Communist ideals also reveals his assessment of Jewishness based on racial grounds.<sup>241</sup>

The negative image of 'a Jew' was thus constructed with the common help of old anti-Jewish prejudices and resurgent Czech nationalism. Both these factors played an equally crucial role in the underground movement's treatment of the information about the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Czech underground groups,

<sup>237</sup> TNA, FO 371/30837. Reports from Prague, March 24-31, 1942. 'Whatever the Germans may do, there is no hatred of the Jews amongst the people. Rather is there a definitive sympathy with them. If things develop as they have so far, in a year's time there will not be any so-called Jews at all, and those who remain will be beggars. Their movable goods will be consumed by the Germans, their immobile goods for the most part in the hands of the German hands. Only very little Jewish property, if any, has come into Czech hands. [...] Naturally our people do not approve of their [Jewish] cruel persecution. But they allow for the fact that *after the war the Jews will never return to the positions which they occupied before*. Naturally the propaganda which alleges that all the influential places with us were secured by the Jews has a lot of influence even in circles which are otherwise disinterested, and account must be taken of this fact [italics – J. L.]'. For other examples see Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943* Volume 2, p. 721. Report by the Czechoslovak Consul in Ankara Miloš Hanák; Pasák, Tomáš, 'Český antisemitismus na počátku okupace', p. 151. See also: VHA, 37-91-7, Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of National Defence, 26 April 1944. The report described the Czech Jews as Germanizers, cowards and ungrateful to the Czech nation who helped them after Munich. As stated, the Jews, although they knew about the coming deportations, still did not give their property to the Czechs who helped them and let the Gestapo steal it. When interrogated, the Jews denounced Czechs who listened to foreign broadcasts and many people were thus allegedly executed by the Nazis.

<sup>238</sup> TNA, FO371/30387. Reports from Prague, March 24-31, 1942, or Report sent by Bruce Lockhart to Ambassador Nichols on June 30, 1942.

<sup>239</sup> For example, CNA, Archiv Huberta Ripky (AHR), 1-50-49. MZV to KPR, MNO, MV, PMR, 24 January 1944.

<sup>240</sup> HIA, Vladimír J. Krajina, box 7, p. 522. Report sent to the Protectorate on 25 May 1940. My translation.

<sup>241</sup> Jewish Communists did not consider themselves as belonging to the Jewish nation, or religious groups. They were internationals, Communists.

compared to the Poles or even Slovaks, were not in the position to reveal to the west the actual situation in the east, especially the grim reality of ghettos and the death camps.<sup>242</sup> These events took place outside of the Czech territories. Hence only information about the situation in the Protectorate itself, or reports by occasional refugees – who escaped from Poland, was available.

Radio transmissions to the west contained information about the Jewish plight only occasionally. However, more significant was the manner in which the information was presented or additional demands were attached by the resistance. SPARTA 1 was a clandestine radio connection with London, operated by *the Political Headquarters* between 1939 and early 1941. A comparison of two messages from the autumn of 1939 reveals the PH's perception of two repressive actions conducted by the occupation regime in the Protectorate. In the first case, the underground simply stated: 'The Gestapo carries out the violent removal of *all* the Jews from the Protectorate to Galicia. [...] The operation is supposed to be carried out quickly and for the whole Protectorate [italics – J. L.].'<sup>243</sup> Yet, when describing the first extensive anti-Czech action, the suppression of the national demonstrations in October 1939, and the subsequent closure of universities and the persecution of students, the PH attached further demands:

Try to secure that the governments of England and France protest most vigorously, as soon as possible, against the brutal persecution of the Czechs in the homeland and that they declare publicly that in retaliation they will treat the Germans in their territories in the same manner. Negotiate with the Neutrals, especially USA, USSR, and Italy that their ambassadors make a protest against our persecution.<sup>244</sup>

In the case of the planned deportation of the *whole* Protectorate Jewry to Eastern Poland, the underground group simply transmitted the message. However, in the case of the persecution of Czechs, they demanded retaliatory measures to be adopted by the Allies. This simple comparison captures the different perceptions of the Nazi persecution of various groups of people by one of the leading underground organizations.

<sup>242</sup> For the situation in Poland, see: Puławski, Adam, *W obliczu zagłady. Rząd RP na Uchodźstwie, Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj, ZWZ-AK wobec deportacji Żydów do obozów zagłady (1941-1942)* (Lublin: IPN, 2009).

<sup>243</sup> HIA, Vladimír J. Krajina, box 6, *Ve službách odboje a demokracie*, p. 87. Despatch to Rumania, 17 October 1939. My translation.

<sup>244</sup> HIA, Vladimír J. Krajina, box 6, *Ve službách odboje a demokracie*, p. 166. Despatch, 30 November 1939. My translation.

In the following years, the Czech underground occasionally transmitted further communiqués containing information about the Jewish plight.<sup>245</sup> Nevertheless, there rarely was any demand for action.<sup>246</sup> One exception is a message, sent in late 1939, which asked the exiles to denounce publicly the persecution of the Jews in the Protectorate. However, the content of the letter overtly documents the actual attitude of some among the underground leaders and thus needs to be quoted at length:

I am of the personal opinion that it would be necessary for the press of our resistance abroad to deal more energetically with the racial persecution, especially in the direction that the Czechoslovak nation, both in the Protectorate and in the exile, has not committed atrocities against the Jews or has not taken part in their persecution. It has to be noted that according to Czech Jews themselves, the Czech nation has still remained faithful to its democratic principles and that all the decrees, ordering the persecution and abuse of the Czech Jews have been boycotted, indeed in many cases defied.<sup>247</sup>

The author then pointed to T. G. Masaryk's defence of Hilsner. Yet, Masaryk's action was presented as defending the Czechs and their image in the world.<sup>248</sup> He continued:

In this case, Masaryk's struggle was not led on behalf of the Jews, but to protect the Czech nation.

Hence I consider the present time and situation suitable to show not only to the Jews all around the world, but also to all the democratically inclined nations that the Czech nation has not abandoned democracy, not even an inch.

I would like to add that some circumstances force us to ask you to publish similar articles, because German propaganda tries by all means to delude both American and all the Jews living in the whole world that the Czechoslovak nation in the Protectorate and in Slovakia persecutes the Jews on its own initiative, following the example of the Reich.

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<sup>245</sup> For example, CNA, AHR 1-50-44. A report from Prague, 13 December 1939. 'All the Jews from Bohemia and Moravia, without exception, are supposed to be evicted in the following two months'.

<sup>246</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Defiant Jew: Jews and the Czech "Inside Front" (1938-1942)', pp. 57. Rothkirchen quotes a report sent by *Petiční výbor Věrní zůstaneme* (*Petition Committee We Remain Faithful*), a more liberal and left-wing underground organization: 'With regard to certain measures it is advisable to demand American reprisals and to launch a campaign towards the aim; nothing else can help. One cannot stand by and watch everything passively. For instance if it should come to mobilization, drafting for forced labor, mass deportation of Jews public opinion has to be prepared so that the campaign may be launched, of necessary...'

<sup>247</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-50-44. *A Proposal dated 29 September 1939*.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.* 'As well as our President Liberator [T. G. Masaryk] in his times, by his energetic argumentation against the ritual murder took the Czech nation into protection, because by the intention of this behind-the-scene shabby game *the Czech nation* was supposed to be thrown against the Jews that it might be pointed to its brutality and backwardness to lower its respectability in the eyes of the World.'

The aim of this propaganda is quite clear: in the first instance, it is supposed to divert the foreign Jews from both the financial and moral support of the Czechoslovak resistance movement and, secondly, it is aimed at weakening the boycott of the German trade and turning it into an ‘anti-Czechoslovak’ boycott. It should not remain unnoticed that the Protektor [Konstantin von Neurath] has forbidden permission to non-Aryans to visit the Prague specimen trade fair and on the contrary, the non-Aryans did not have any difficulty in visiting Leipzig and Germany as a whole.

A short proclamation of our noted representatives abroad, over the radio, would have a very significant effect and could not miss its objective.

I am of the opinion that as we needed good Jews during the [First] World War, we need them now even more [underlined in the original].<sup>249</sup>

The Czechs considered it politically significant to maintain the image of a democratic nation, but the tone of the letter clearly contradicted the notion. It was, indeed, not the fate of the Jews, but the reputation of the Czechs that worried the resistance. Even more striking was the desire to use the power and money of international Jewish organizations, but, at the same time, not caring about their co-religionists in the Protectorate. It was important, in the interests of the Czechs, to distance people at home from the racial persecution. The Czechoslovak resistance groups perceived the alleged interests of the nation as paramount.

When the Germans began the widespread confiscation of Jewish property (*Aryanization*), it was, in the eyes of an underground group, only the transfer of the Jewish property to German hands that was emphasised.<sup>250</sup> According to the Czechs, *Aryanization* was not the theft of Jewish property, but only a pretext for the general *Germanization* of the historical lands.<sup>251</sup> The resistance asked the exiles to broadcast a warning to the Czechs against participation in the *Aryanization* process. Nevertheless, the reason was not that the whole concept was immoral. As argued by the authors, in the case of the German victory the property would not be saved for the Czechs and, in the case of the German defeat, the property would be returned.<sup>252</sup> Still,

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<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> A report containing this information was sent to London in October 1940. It asked the exiles to condemn *Aryanization* and to warn the Czech people against participating on the whole process. The *Aryanization* was just a pretext for *Germanization* of the Czech lands. Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943* Volume 2, pp. 572-573. A transcript of a report sent by the resistance organization PVVZ to London, 1 October 1940; Pasák, Tomáš, ‘Český antisemitismus na počátku okupace’, p. 148; VHA, 37-91-1 (263), Report from the end of July/beginning of August 1939.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

the authors recommended that the broadcast should not deal *exclusively* with the possession of the Jews, but rather also with the property of the Legionnaires and the Red Cross.<sup>253</sup> It implies that the underground did not consider it wise to give prominence to the persecution of the Jews. This was, in fact, also a feature of the messages describing the actual situation in concentration camps.<sup>254</sup>

During the final years of the war, the home resistance groups expressed their views on the general position of the Jews in liberated Czechoslovakia. Nazi propaganda, mixed with sharp nationalism, was by now deeply rooted in society. It became apparent that the post-war government would have to face those issues sooner or later. A report received via Ankara in 1943 stated that anti-Semitism was the only part of the Nazi programme that would be probably assimilated by the Czechs. The Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia were supposed to stop profiting from the work of Czechs. Restitution of the Jewish property was not to be allowed. Any attempt to return property back to the Jews would go against 'public opinion'.<sup>255</sup> Likewise, another report from late 1944 demanded nationalization of big properties previously owned by 'German Jewry' that thus used to be 'German property'.<sup>256</sup>

Furthermore, the authors of the following two reports even made a link to the exiled Jews and their role in the Beneš government, one of the main points repeatedly stressed by Protectorate propaganda. In August 1943, Milan Hanák, the Czechoslovak Consul in Ankara, forwarded the following report:

Much apprehension [exists] that the Czechoslovak Government will, upon its return to the country, bring back all the Jewish émigrés and will return them to their original and, possibly, even better positions. To our own [local] Jews, people are extending help wherever they can, prompted by sheer humanitarian motives. Otherwise they do not wish their return. They feel alienated from them and are pleased not to encounter them any more.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* Legionnaires were called those, who formed the Czechoslovak army units in the Allied forces during World War One.

<sup>254</sup> When in mid-July 1943 a short note about the camp in Auschwitz was sent to London, Eduard Táborský, the personal secretary to Beneš, simply wrote in his diary: 'The message also confirms the previous reports that the Germans in Oswiecim are burning and asphyxiating *internees* with special gases [italics – J. L.].' HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 2, diary entry 18 July 1943, p. 272. The Jewish factor in the general Nazi plans for persecution of subjugated nations was not stressed.

<sup>255</sup> Pasák, Tomáš, 'Český antisemitismus na počátku okupace', in *Věda a Život*, 1969, March, p. 151.

<sup>256</sup> Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*, doc. 140, p. 285-6. A report sent to London by Tristan XY (doc. V. Tůma) on 1 September 1944.

<sup>257</sup> Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943*, p. 721, doc. 518, Hanák (Consul in Ankara) to London, 10 August 1943. The English translation according to Rothkirchen, Livia, 'Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime', p. 444.

In their discourse, the authors again wanted to confirm their democratic feeling by showing that Czechs were helping the Jews. Nevertheless, the return of the Jews to Czechoslovakia was seen as going against the wish of the nation. Even the language differentiation among the Jews was no longer present. The line between ‘our own’ people and the Jews was clear and impossible to cross. Later, in mid-1944, the most important resistance organization in Bohemia and Moravia, *The Council of Three* (*Rada Tří*), made the threat even clearer: ‘We will not tolerate the return of Germans, including the Jews.’<sup>258</sup> The *Council of Three* reacted to a message from Beneš, informing them about the plan to allow the return home of Germans who had joined the resistance abroad and fought for Czechoslovakia.<sup>259</sup> There was no reference to the Jews in his message.<sup>260</sup> As Chad Bryant has concluded, even the ‘more gracious among Czech informants’ had stated that those Jews who would like to stay in post-war Czechoslovakia would have to speak Czech.<sup>261</sup>

How did the exiles perceive similar messages? When the answer of the *Council of Three* was received in London, it did not cause any overt response that would try to change these views. Vladimír Klecanda, a member of the State Council and a close associate to Beneš, after reading it, simply made a note: ‘[I]f we answer [to the Council of Three] that they should definitely follow the Masaryk legacy, you will see that [they] will truly follow the President.’<sup>262</sup> With the progress of the war, the exiles started to be more self-confident in their treatment of the underground

<sup>258</sup> HIA, Vladimír Ducháček Papers, File #24.8. The Ministry of Defence to the Foreign Ministry, 15 September 1944. Reports from the occupied country from the period 23 August – 8 September 1944. For the History of the Council of Three, see: Luža, Radomír, *V Hitlerově objetí. Kapitoly z českého odboje* (Praha: Torst, 2006), pp. 202-219; Grňa, Josef, *Sedm roků na domácí frontě*; Brandes, Detlef, *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*, pp. 385-389. For another report, expressing almost identical sentiments see. VHA, 37-91-7, Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of National Defence, 26 April 1944, forwarding a report from the Protectorate.

<sup>259</sup> HIA, Vladimír Ducháček Papers, File #24.9. Beneš’s letter to the underground in the Protectorate, 16 June 1944.

<sup>260</sup> I have tried to find out more about the content of the message. I sent a letter to Professor Radomír Luža who actually was a member of the group. After the war, he was Professor of History in the USA and published a book on the Transfer of Sudeten Germans. However, in his reply he did not remember anything about the message and opposed that the group would be anti-Semitic. Also the memoirs of Josef Grňa, the author of the above mentioned message, do not include any information about Jews, or about the despatch.

<sup>261</sup> Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, p. 225. Bryant refers this report to: VHA, sign. 91/7, 7. A report from ‘Netíka [? Netík – J. L.]’, 5-8 February 1944. That this demand was sent from the Protectorate was also stressed by Minister Slávik in his report for the State Council. See: CNA, MV-L, box 84, *Referát o zprávách z domova pre št. radu (1944)*, by Juraj Slávik. Only those who mastered the ‘state language’ were supposed to stay in Czechoslovakia. It is possible that Slávik referred to the same report as cited by Bryant.

<sup>262</sup> HIA, Vladimír Ducháček Papers, File #24.8. Klecanda’s remarks on the message sent to London by the Council of Three. My translation.

groups' messages; a process that ended in the total exclusion of the home resistance fighters from the post-war government. Moreover, as highlighted later by Klecanda himself, the resistance, as such, had a clear opinion about the 'difficult' 'Jewish problem'. It had to be solved in a just, democratic and moral manner.<sup>263</sup> A part of the exiles were not able to comprehend the real extent and pervasiveness of radical Czech nationalism.<sup>264</sup> Hence they thought that a simple reference to the democratic tradition would be sufficient to change the opinion of the people at home. However, most of the exiles expressed serious concerns when touching on issues that were condemned by the underground groups.

### ***The Czechoslovak BBC Section broadcasts in the shadow of the underground movement's reports***

The Czechoslovak exiles did not raise Jewish issues in their official communication with Protectorate underground groups.<sup>265</sup> The situation was different when the exiles addressed people at home over the BBC. These were the main exiles' means of communication with the broad masses at home, with people who very often risked their and their family members' lives listening to the exiles. From a theoretical point of view, the broadcasts to the occupied country constituted a mix of complex influences: the exile government's intention was to influence the population at home. Simultaneously, the broadcasts themselves were inspired by reports coming from the occupied country, revealing the actual mood and demands of the population, or rather of the resistance leaders.<sup>266</sup> The government's efforts to shape public opinion at home reflected the content of messages received from the Protectorate underground groups. The home resistance thus possessed influence on the exiles' Jewish policy. Nonetheless, the content of the broadcasts usually became public in London as well.<sup>267</sup> The broadcasts dealing with Jewish issues were often published

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<sup>263</sup> Prečan, Vilém (ed.), 'Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně (říjen–listopad 1944): Nové dokumenty', in *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka*, 1999, p. 221.

<sup>264</sup> Chad Bryant documents exiles' lack of understanding of the situation in Bohemia and Moravia in the last war years, see Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, pp. 180–191.

<sup>265</sup> See Šolc, Jiří (Ed.), E. Beneš: *Vzkazy do vlasti. Směrnice a pokyny československému domácímu odboji za druhé světové války* (Prague: Naše vojsko, 1996). This volume includes all the correspondence sent by Beneš to home underground groups.

<sup>266</sup> This is the main drawback of a controversial study on the Dutch BBC by Nanda van der Zee. She does not enquire into reasons for Dutch exiles' neglecting of the Jewish issues on the BBC. Van der Zee, Nanda, *Um Schlimmeres zu verhindern... Die Ermordung der niederländischen Juden: Kollaboration und Widerstand*.

<sup>267</sup> For example a broadcast by Juraj Slávik, 9 February 1944, published by Arnošt (Ernest) Frischer, a member of the State Council (London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Board of Deputies Papers

by pro-Jewish activists, or journalists. Indeed, it cannot be completely ruled out that some of these speeches were intended not only to inform people at home but also to enhance the exiles' image in the west. British censorship or unwritten laws in the BBC might have played a role too. Hence the government had to balance every broadcast because of the possible damage to their image at home *as well as* abroad.

During the war, the exiles did not try to change the presented perception of the Jews among the people at home. For example, the prejudices against a group of people, based only on the language they used, were not considered as being undemocratic or worth fighting against. In fact, the reports coming from the Protectorate helped the exiles in strengthening their perception of some parts of the Jewish population. Consequently, the exiles hardly touched the issue over the BBC at all. One of the exceptions was a broadcast by Masaryk on the occasion of the Jewish New Year in the autumn of 1943:

It is [...] true that some Jews did not behave well. They went about the Prague coffee houses and spoke German even after 1933. But they have received such a lesson that after the war it will be difficult to find a Czechoslovak Jew who would wish to repeat these mistakes. But of course we also knew many, very many, decent, honest, modest, loyal Jews, legionaries, Sokols [patriotic youth sport movement] and they belonged and still belong to us and are our own [...] You must have understanding for their weaknesses and if any of these disinherited, confused, frightened and wretched people talk German to-day, thinking that it may save them after all, then you must explain this as the expression of complete powerlessness in which the drowning man seizes at a straw or even at a blade.<sup>268</sup>

Masaryk in his speech indeed asked Czechs to overlook the Jewish usage of German as a means of communication. As expressed in the speech, those Jews were desperate and that was why the Czechs should treat them benevolently. However, Masaryk did not fight the main principle of those accusations, which was wrong in its basic assumption: that the Jews did not use German because they were sympathetic to the Germans (or even the Nazis), or because they wanted to Germanise Czechs. They spoke German because of the historical development in Bohemia and Moravia, which could not have changed over several years. The exiles

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(BoD), Acc3121/E/03/510). Or reaction of the British Jewish organizations to the broadcast by Ripka on 18 September 1941, see *We think of you* (London: HaMacabbi, 1941).

<sup>268</sup> Archiv Českého rozhlasu, Prague (AČR), BBC 1939-1945, box 25, a broadcast by Jan Masaryk, 29 September 1943, 7.45 p.m. Rothkirchen, however, refers to this speech as one of the examples of the positive Czechoslovak responses to the Jewish plight during the war. See, Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 184.

did not try to convey to the population back home that the Jews, who were terribly persecuted by the Germans, were not guilty just on account of their mother tongue.

In his discourse, Masaryk even assimilated the underground groups' perception of the Jews. The Jews living in the Protectorate appeared as a group of people not fully responsible for its deeds. They were presented as a community that was incapable of reaching the only fundamentally correct decision, in a kind of pubescence. Furthermore, it was a community that tried not to comply fully with the good will of its educators, the democratic Czechs. Indeed, Masaryk repeatedly revealed paternalistic tendencies over the Jews.<sup>269</sup>

The lack of an adequate government response to the anti-Jewish prejudices suggests that the exiles were concerned about the reaction in the Protectorate if the prejudices were publicly attacked. Therefore, we can argue that the exiles were influenced by the attitude of home resistance. Indeed, although Czechoslovak BBC broadcasts dealt with the Jews only rarely, they still provoked ambiguous responses at home. During a government's meeting in liberated Czechoslovakia, in October 1945, Ripka, the war-time chief of exiles' propaganda, stressed that

in relation to the Jewish problem [...] Minister Masaryk and he talked about it from London several times, always receiving letters from the Czech and Slovak circles, where the authors expressed their opinion against the fact that they were taking care of the Jews.<sup>270</sup>

For example, one of the escapees from the Protectorate, who reached Stockholm in 1944, considered it important to mention the following:

The speech by the Minister Masaryk on the occasion of the Jewish New Year made an unfortunate effect. [...] The Czechs have not done any wrong to the Jews, they have human compassion for them, but cannot do anything actively for them. [...] A lot of people, who helped, fell into misery, because the Jews, under slightly larger pressure, revealed everything. Dr. Schonbaum, himself now in Theresienstadt, said that –

<sup>269</sup> After the war, during the so-called *Brichah*, when Jews were escaping pogrom-stricken Poland and the Czechoslovak Government was pressured by the British to close the border with its northern neighbour, Masaryk told the chief of the political intelligence in the Interior Ministry: 'You know what my *hobby* is – Jews. I beg you, close your eyes when some of the Polish Jews are crossing the border [italics mine. My translation].' See: Bulínová, Marie (ed.), *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1993), p. 61. '10 and 11 October 1946 – Zprávy velitele politického zpravodajství MV Zdeňka Tomana a jednání s ministrem zahraničních věcí J. Masarykem o československé pomoci polským Židům, pro ministra vnitra.' The exiles' perception of Jews is further elaborated in the following chapter, but this quote suggests how Masaryk's war-time speeches to the occupied country might be read. The word 'hobby', used by Masaryk, also confirms his paternalistic attitude towards the minority.

<sup>270</sup> Minutes of the 62nd government meeting, 2 October 1945, Prague. In Bulínová, Marie (ed.), *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, p. 23. My translation.

although people had human pity for the Jews and if possible, were willing to help – there was neither enthusiasm nor endeavour in the Bohemian lands to give back to the Jews the positions that they were forced to leave by the Germans. This mood is particularly confirmed by the courier and his surroundings, which has never been biased against the Jews. It is still possible that those sentiments might change, or become less pronounced, but this is the situation right now. It is reflected in a joke, now widespread that it will be necessary to build a monument to Hitler in Prague, because he: 1/ has unified Slovakia, 2/ has rid the Czechs of the Jews, 3/ destroyed Germany.<sup>271</sup>

The prejudices against the Jews as cowards, betraying people who helped them, were particularly prominent. Furthermore, the adjustment of the social and economic status of Jews was presented as desirable. However, the Czechs still lived with their own democratic self-image as decent people. Therefore Masaryk's pleas on behalf of the Jews were perceived as being offensive. The Czechs were allegedly aware of their duties themselves and did not want to be edified. The fact that the courier coming from the Protectorate included the information about the reaction to Masaryk's broadcast into his report showed that at least some circles at home were not content with similar addresses. Likewise, not surprisingly, the collaborationist propaganda immediately responded to similar broadcasts. Moravec or activist journalists attacked the exiles for their pro-Jewish sentiments that allegedly went against the interests of ordinary Czechs.<sup>272</sup> In fact, even SD reports emphasised the negative Czechs' responses to Masaryk's address. The SD concluded that the Czechs resented Masaryk's stance on the Jews.<sup>273</sup>

Further examination of the policy behind exiles' broadcasts about the Jews confirms their concerns about the possible reaction in the Protectorate. One of the directives for the broadcasting was that the Jews should not be addressed by the speakers separately.<sup>274</sup> Moreover, speakers among the politicians, when dealing with Jewish issues, were carefully selected. Beneš, for example, never mentioned the Jews

<sup>271</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-50-49. MZV to KPR, MNO, MV, PMR, 24 January 1944. My translation. Feierabend identified Rudolf Jílovský (Parsifal) as the author of the report (see Feierabend, Ladislav Karel, *Politické vzpomínky* 3, pp. 438-450).

<sup>272</sup> *Árijský boj*, Volume IV, no. 41, 9 October 1943, p. 1-2, 'Honza žádá amnestii pro židovské parazity' – 'Johny asks for amnesty for Jewish parasites'; *Venkov*, 10 April 1943; 'Žid Stránský, jako obhájce krvavého bolševismu'; Moravec, Emanuel, *O český zítřek* (Praha: Orbis, 1943), pp. 344-350. Moravec speech 'the Reich's defence and the Jewish offensive', 11 December 1942. It was a reaction to Masaryk's speech over the BBC on 9 December 1942.

<sup>273</sup> CNA, ÚRP, 114-307-5, box 306, SD daily report for 7 and 9 October 1943.

<sup>274</sup> CZA, A280/33, Frischer to Linton, 21 April 1944. It was confirmed during a meeting between the chancellor to Beneš, Smutný and the Czech-Jewish politicians.

in his talks over the BBC.<sup>275</sup> When asked by Czech Jewish assimilationists in London to talk about the Jews on the BBC, the President declined on account of ‘the reasons of higher interests’.<sup>276</sup> Almost no reference to the Jewish plight could be found in the addresses by Prokop Drtina, another popular speaker.<sup>277</sup> Indeed, at the beginning of the war, the home resistance expressed disappointment that the speakers on the Czechoslovak BBC were German Jewish, with strong accents.<sup>278</sup> The exiles agreed with the undesirability of the state and tried to change the speakers who had been previously chosen by the BBC.<sup>279</sup>

In relations with the Protectorate, the only speeches dealing with the Jewish question were delivered by Ripka, Masaryk, and Jaroslav Stránský<sup>280</sup> or by ordinary members of the Czechoslovak BBC staff.<sup>281</sup> Nevertheless, Masaryk, despite his repeatedly praised pro-Jewish sentiments, rarely dealt expressly with the Jews. In fact, it seems that he was not able, as the Foreign Minister, to deliver a speech about the branding of the Protectorate Jewry with the Star of David.<sup>282</sup> For reasons, which are unclear, it seems that for some time the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister was not advised to talk about the Jews on the BBC (the problem was on the Czech, not British side). Whatever the reason, the fact is that Masaryk talked for the first time

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<sup>275</sup> See Beneš, Edvard, *Šest let exilu a druhé světové války: Řeči, projevy a dokumenty z r. 1938-1945* (Praha: Družstevní práce, 1946).

<sup>276</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 255, 2-63-1, The report of the meeting by the Association of Czech-Jews, 15 May 1942.

<sup>277</sup> Drtina, Prokop, *A nyní promluví Pavel Svatý. Londýnské rozhlasové epištolky Dr Prokopa Drtiny z let 1940-1945* (Praha: Vladimír Žikeš, 1945).

<sup>278</sup> Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1945 Volume 2*, p. 518f. Document 387, Drtina to A. Pešl (*Political Headquarters*), 12 March 1940.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Stránský, Jaroslav, *Hovory k domovu* (Praha: Fr. Borový, 1946). Stránský talked about the Jews only once and his address is further elaborated in the 3rd chapter. The reason that he rather avoided talking about the Jews might have been his alleged Jewish descent. Jacobi, Walter, *Země zaslíbená*, p. 156-158 (the reaction of Protectorate propaganda to Stránský’s speech on the eve of T.G. Masaryk’s birthday, where he – with reference to Masaryk – asked Czechs to help the Jews).

<sup>281</sup> For example by Josef Kodíček – he was a writer, not a politician.

<sup>282</sup> Ignacy Schwarzbart, a Zionist in the Polish National Council, described in his diary a conversation he had with Masaryk. Yad Vashelem Archives, Jerusalem (YVA), M.2/765, Schwarzbart’s diary 6 October 1941. The Polish version M.2/749. There is an issue with a different description of this story in the Polish and English versions of Schwarzbart’s diaries. The Polish version mentions only that Masaryk told to Schwarzbart that the broadcast had been his idea, but Ripka made the speech. In the English version, Schwarzbart further developed the story and added Masaryk’s explanation that he, as the Foreign Minister, could not read the speech. The fact is that the English version is only a translation did by Schwarzbart in the late 1950s.

about the Jews over the BBC only in August 1942.<sup>283</sup> This sharply contrasted with his regular pro-Jewish addresses made in Britain or the United States.<sup>284</sup>

An interesting insight into the conditions in the Czechoslovak BBC Section is offered in an anecdotal story by Pavel Tigrid (Schonfeld). He was one of the main Czechoslovak speakers – as an ordinary member of the staff. Before the last broadcast to Czechoslovakia, he and his colleagues, partly because of their own ‘egotism’, wanted to reveal to the listeners their real names, not only the pseudonyms they used during the war. Their chief, Minister Ripka, listened to their request, but responded:

Young men, I am not against it, if you want to, do it. But consider also this [...] you know me well, you know that I am no anti-Semite, but we probably cannot say this about people at home [...]. Well, we cannot flatter ourselves, nearly all of you are Jewish young men, with distinct Semitic names, it may not make a good impression on the listeners, may be they do not know, as we all here know that the European Jews had only two possibilities, either to escape, or perish. Consider it.<sup>285</sup>



Image no. 4: Hubert Ripka<sup>286</sup>

The exiles were concerned that the possible linkage to the Jews could discredit the popular BBC broadcasting. It might have implied that the Czechoslovak

<sup>283</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 15, 1 August 1942. The address was not read by Masaryk, but by Mikuláš Berger, an ordinary member of Czechoslovak BBC staff. It was a reading from Masaryk's address sent to the National Jewish Fund. His first direct speech about Jews was broadcast on 9 December 1942.

<sup>284</sup> See, for example, Masaryk's public speech 15 January 1939 (probably in London) (CZA, Z5/851), Masaryk in the Royal Albert Hall, 29 October 1942 (*Czechoslovak Jewish Bulletin*, Number 11, 7 November 1942, p. 2), Yeshiva University, New York, 18 June 1942 (Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 184; AÜTGM, Klecanda Collection, file 267, *Czechoslovak Jewish Bulletin*, no. 5, 1 September 1942).

<sup>285</sup> Tigrid, Pavel, *Kapesní průvodce inteligentní ženy po vlastním osudu*, (Prague: Odeon, 1990), p. 219. My translation.

<sup>286</sup> <http://bohuslavbrouk.wordpress.com/tag/herben/>

exiles' war-time propaganda was in the hands of Jews. Although during the war the government-in-exile was spreading the stories about the Czechs' true democratic spirit, the real situation was not that clear. The presented reports sent to London by the Protectorate underground groups and the exiles' concerns about the efficiency of Nazi propaganda impacted on the government's policy. But what was the situation in relation to Slovakia? Could any such influence be documented there?

### ***Slovak underground groups, the Jews and the exiles***

In comparison with the Protectorate, the Slovak state developed its anti-Jewish policy without any considerable pressure from the German government. The segregation of the Jews started immediately after the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia received autonomy in October 1938.<sup>287</sup> The Catholic Church played a decisive role and contributed to the development of anti-Jewish policy. Moreover, pre-war sources of religious, racial and socio-economic anti-Semitism were merged with national anti-Semitism, with the Jews accused of possessing pro-Hungarian sentiments. Anti-Jewish legislation was implemented in independent Slovakia between 1939 and 1941. The following negotiations between the radical Slovak politicians, especially the Prime Minister Vojtěch Tuka, and the German authorities resulted in the mass deportations of almost 60,000 Slovak Jews to the ghettos and extermination camps in occupied Poland between March and October 1942.<sup>288</sup> The participation of the

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<sup>287</sup> Nižnanský, Eduard, *Holokaust na Slovensku 6. Deportácie v roku 1942* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2005), pp. 6-13.

<sup>288</sup> 57,752 Jews were deported to Poland in 57 transports during 1942. 38 of these transports with 39,006 Jews arrived to Lublin district and mostly perished in Treblinka and Majdanek. 19 trains with 18,746 were directed to Auschwitz. See: Nižnanský, Eduard, *Holokaust na Slovensku 6. Deportácie v roku 1942* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2005), p. 84; Lipscher, Ladislav, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939-1945* (Bratislava: Print-servis, 1992), 140-141. The driving forces behind the deportations were especially Vojtěch Tuka and Alexandr Mach. The German Ambassador to Bratislava, Hans Ludin, sent a telegram to the German Foreign Office: 'Die Slow. Regierung hat sich mit Abtransport aller Juden aus der Slowakei ohne jeden deutschen Druck einverstanden erklärt. Auch der Staatspräsident persönlich hat dem Abtransport zugestimmt, trotz Slow. Episkopates.' This telegram was sent on April 6, 1942, nearly a fortnight after the deportations had started (See Tönsmeyer, Tatjana, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939-1945. Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003, p. 148). According to Yeshayahu Jelinek, the deportations were a result of the internal political struggle in Slovakia. Tiso agreed to the deportations to show to the Nazis that he could act radically. He was afraid that otherwise radicals, for example Tuka and Mach, might gain Hitler's support (See Jelinek: Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The "Final Solution" – The Slovak Version', in Michael Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust. Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Vol. IV.2. The "Final Solution" Outside Germany* (Toronto, Mecklermedia, 1989), p. 471; 'The Holocaust and the Internal Policies of the Nazi Satellites in Eastern Europe: A Comparative Study', in Michael Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust. Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Vol. IV.1. The "Final Solution" Outside Germany* (Toronto, Mecklermedia, 1989), p. 295).

Slovak population in *Aryanization*, and also in subsequent crimes committed by the Tiso regime, was widespread. Although only selected groups of local collaborators participated in the main wave of *Aryanization*, the auctions of the property of deported Jews were attended by a large stratum of locals.<sup>289</sup> Ordinary people willingly accepted the spoils stolen from their unfortunate neighbours already relocated ‘somewhere’ in Poland. Consequently, the Slovak population became co-accountable for the anti-Jewish development in this German satellite.<sup>290</sup> As in the case with the Protectorate, the impact of strong anti-Semitic propaganda on the general population should not be downplayed.<sup>291</sup>

Starting in 1943, the Slovak oppositional political mainstream was willing to seal a new pact with the Czechs, especially to avoid the unconditional defeat of Slovakia.<sup>292</sup> However, this new pact was to be sealed under completely different circumstances and with a different social and political structure in Slovakia. Slovak resistance fighters, although more or less respecting Beneš as the President and the leader in contacts with the foreign partners, overtly declared their will to solve internal affairs in Slovakia on their own.<sup>293</sup> These Slovak tendencies to reach a looser constitution with the Czechs were crushed after the war. Yet, between 1944 and 1947, the Slovaks in many instances ruled themselves without the central government being able to influence the course of events. In contrast to the historical lands, the anti-Semitic sentiments had been better developed in Slovakia even before the war.<sup>294</sup> The Tiso government cleansing of the Jews from Slovak society and the

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<sup>289</sup> Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called “Solution to the Jewish Question” During the Period 1938-1945’, p. 333. The examples of the records from the auctions could be found, for example in YIVO Archives, Benjamin Eichler Collection, record of the auction in Snina (Humenné district), 5 November 1943.

<sup>290</sup> Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called “Solution to the Jewish Question” During the Period 1938-1945’, p. 333. As Ivan Kamenec, a Slovak historian writes: ‘The regime held the public jointly responsible for the crime, blackmailing them with the threat that if the Jews returned, they would seek revenge on the new owners of their former property.’

<sup>291</sup> Besides the day-to-day propaganda depicting the alleged role of the Jews in the Slovak society, also articles suggesting the role of the Jews among the Czechoslovak exiles appeared. See CZA, A320/25, *Slovák* 4 November 1944; *Gardista* 16 November 1944. War-time Minister Slávik referred to this in his post-war address to the United Jewish Appeal in New York, see: HIA, Juraj Slávik Papers, Box 26, file 11. Speech by H. E. Dr. Juraj Slávik, Czechoslovak Ambassador to the U.S.A. at the UJA Dinner held in New York June 11<sup>th</sup> 1947.

<sup>292</sup> Dejmek, Jindřich, *Edvard Beneš. Politická biografie českého demokrata. Část druhá. Prezident Republiky a vůdce národního odboje* (Praha: Karolinum, 2008), pp. 396, 402-407.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 407f, 462-470.

<sup>294</sup> For historiography see Fatranová, Gila, ‘Historický pohľad na vzťahy slovenského a židovského obyvateľstva’, in *Acta Judaica Slovaca*, Vol. 4, 1998, pp. 9-37; Nižnanský, Eduard, *Holocaust na Slovensku 7. Vzťah slovenskej majorítnej a židovskej minorítnej (náčrt problému). Dokumenty* (Bratislava:

instalment of the ‘new and just’ order was in many cases approved of even by the oppositional forces and by the Slovak people.

Reports sent to London by the civic resistance movement occasionally dealt with the population’s attitude towards the Jews. The authors did not mention the complicity of the locals in the anti-Jewish policies introduced by the Tiso Government. Nevertheless, they still stressed that the population in its entirety agreed with the limitations placed on the ‘overrepresentation’ of the Slovak Jews in the professions, or in business. Viliam Radakovič, an envoi of the Slovak civilian part of the resistance movement, arrived to London in mid-April 1943. He submitted a report to the exiles about the situation in Slovakia and also revealed his personal impressions to the Undersecretary in the Ministry of Defence, General Rudolf Viest.<sup>295</sup> According to Radakovič, the solution of the Jewish question was regarded as beneficial for Slovak society, from an economic, moral and national viewpoint. Although the brutality of the solution was criticised, it was considered as being definitive and any revision would be rejected by the majority of the Slovak population. Only the revision of *Aryanization*, the robbing of the Jews of their property, was demanded by his group.<sup>296</sup> Radakovič and his underground leaders did not belong to the part of Slovak society who participated in *Aryanization*. They agreed with the return of personal property to the deportees, but still believed that the Jews should not regain their pre-war position within society, which was perceived as unjustified and disproportionate. The social and economic *status quo* after the deportation was definitive. The meaning of this message, sent by an important part of the underground in Slovakia (Radakovič became a member of the Czechoslovak State Council in London) was clear.

Furthermore, a report, prepared in Jerusalem, based on the experience of two Slovak (probably Jewish) escapees, presented an even grimmer picture:

Concerning the attitude of the people towards the Jews, it is one-sided and negative, mostly because of their bitterness, partly also because of fear. Having contacts with a Jew is not regarded as something that would

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Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2005); Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called “Solution to the Jewish Question” During the Period 1938-1945’, pp. 327-338.

<sup>295</sup> Tóth, Dezider (ed.), *Zápisky generála Rudolfa Viesta. (Exil 1939-1944)* (Bratislava: Ministerstvo obrany, 2002), p. 200, the Viest diary entry, 22 April 1943.

<sup>296</sup> CNA, MV-L, 2-11-17, Report dated 12 March 1943, by Radakovič. Also another resistance group in Slovakia – Flora (Kveta Viestová) – demanded investigation of the *Aryanization* (Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1965), p. 173. Doc. 51, 13 March 1944 – a report forwarded to London by Jaromír Kopecký from Geneva, originally sent by members of a non-Communist clandestine organization in Slovakia.

increase trust towards an individual [...] People look at the Jews as unfortunate herds, which deserve their fate. The Jews are not pitied, they are not helped by the Slovaks and the way their fate bears on them is followed, if not with maliciousness, then definitely with indifference. A Jew is for a considerable majority of people a vermin that has to be hunted, because it is possible to capture its belongings. We are not talking about companies, or properties, but about the furniture owned by the deported Jews, which is being sold in auctions by the Gardists' auctioneers, accompanied by the jeering and greed of the crowd. The belongings have been sold for ridiculous prices, because the main purpose was not about the pay-off, but about a suitable anti-Jewish enterprise that could not miss its effect. Anti-Semitism was spread especially with the help of those auctions, because it became obvious that more expelled Jews from their houses meant more cheap possession to buy.<sup>297</sup>

Both escapees were, with high probability, subjects of Slovak racial persecution and their anti-Slovak bias might have influenced their account. Yet, this report confirmed important trends in Slovak society and documented the complicity of ordinary Slovaks in the state-sponsored persecution.

Besides the economic and social factors in Slovak anti-Semitism, its national dimension was also considerably highlighted in the communications with the exiles. The situation resembled the development in the historical lands, where Czechs identified the Jews with Germans – the national oppressors of Czechs. As discussed, this national conflict in Slovakia triggered anti-Jewish violence in towns and villages during the period of transition in 1918-1919. It is correct that the majority of the Slovak Jewry used Hungarian as their language of communication. Likewise, as proved by Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, inter-war Czechoslovakia sought the proof of Jewish loyalty in Slovakia in their abandonment of the Hungarian milieu.<sup>298</sup> The Czechoslovak constitution allowed people to adhere to a nationality regardless of their means of communication and many Slovak Jews thus declared Jewish

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<sup>297</sup> This message, forwarded to London by the Czechoslovak Consul General in Jerusalem, Jan Novák, summarized the content of his interrogations of two Slovaks, who escaped to Palestine. It was therefore based on a subjective perception by two observers who were most likely among the subjects of the Slovak racial persecution. CNA, MV-L, box 119, 2-11-17, Ministry of Defence to Ministry of Interior, 7 December 1943. The ministry was forwarding a report about the situation in Slovakia, based on information provided by two Slovak (Jewish) women, who escaped to Palestine. My translation.

<sup>298</sup> Zionism and the promotion of the Jewish national sentiments were perceived by a significant part of the Jewish society as a way to find the most suitable pattern of national behaviour in inter-war Slovakia. Klein-Pejšová, Rebekah, "Abandon Your Role as Exponents of the Magyars": Contested Jewish Loyalty in Interwar (Czecho) Slovakia', in *AJS Review*, 33:2 (November 2009), pp. 341-362.

nationality. Yet, ordinary people perceived the situation differently. Based on the language they used, the Jews were still perceived and constructed as Hungarians.

In 1943, a Slovak underground group sent to London a survey of the national feelings among various groups in Slovakia, discussing their preferences for potential rulers in the territory. The report suggested that the Jews would probably decide for Hungary.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, during an exile government's meeting in June 1943, the Minister of the Interior, Juraj Slávik, presented one of the messages sent by Slovak underground groups.<sup>300</sup> It expressed strong sentiments against the Jews and also warned the government to be careful when dealing publicly with Jewish issues in Slovakia. The authors of the report especially emphasised that Jews world-wide, mostly in the USA, supported Hungarian irredentism. The Horthy government allegedly used the Jewish persecution in Slovakia to support their international position in relation with post-war negotiations (southern Slovakia was occupied by Hungarians in November 1938).<sup>301</sup> Curiously, the only part of the report criticised by Slávik were the remarks about the international Jewish support of Hungarians. In fact, he agreed with all the accusations against Slovak Jews – about their adherence to Hungarians and their economic and social exploitation of Slovak people.<sup>302</sup>

This notwithstanding, Slávik thought that for international purposes it would be necessary for the people in Slovakia to distance themselves from the cruel persecution of the Jews. It was supposed to show that the Hungarians' accusations were baseless; Slovak people were not guilty of the crimes committed by the Quisling government.<sup>303</sup> Even Beneš himself expressly mentioned in the communication with the Slovak resistance the persecution of the Jews as *one of the* causes of the declining popularity of Slovaks in the world.<sup>304</sup> The suppression of the information and the white-washing of Slovaks were desirable for the image of Czechoslovakia. The anti-Jewish sentiments ruling in Slovakia might damage the Czechoslovak reputation abroad.<sup>305</sup> Nevertheless, the government's response to

<sup>299</sup> Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovené národné povstanie: Dokumenty*, p. 89, doc. 19, Jaromír Kopecký (Geneva) to the Foreign Ministry, 4 September 1943. The report was prepared by a group around Vavro Šrobář, one of the founders of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

<sup>300</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 182, Minutes of the government session, 25 June 1943.

<sup>301</sup> Generally, making the connection between the Jews and Hungarians living in Slovakia is one of the common features of reports sent from Slovakia to London.

<sup>302</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 182, Minutes of the government session, 25 June 1943.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, box 3. Beneš's message to Slovakia, 20 March 1943.

<sup>305</sup> For example, in the opinion of Viktor Fischl, an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British did not differentiate between Czechs and Slovaks. Hence any information about the rising of

Slovakia did not deal with the Jews at all. The exiles were apparently afraid to demand the Slovaks' dissociation from the persecution of the Jews. It was in the end Slávik himself who made the public speech over the BBC on 9 February 1944.<sup>306</sup> In his address, he dealt with the Hungarian diplomatic exploitation of the Jewish situation in Slovakia, but at the same time overtly distanced ordinary Slovaks from the crimes of the Tiso regime.



Map no. 1: The Partition of Czechoslovakia 1938-1939 (Copyright USHMM)<sup>307</sup>

The reports documenting Slovaks' unwillingness to listen to the addresses about the Jews were to serve the exiles' purposes. On 18 December 1942, Slávik over the BBC highlighted that the messages coming from Slovakia advised the exiles to avoid mentioning 'unpopular' Jewish topics when talking to the homeland. Even so, the Minister suggested that despite of the reports, ordinary people did not agree with the persecution and were actually helping the Jews.<sup>308</sup> This apparent distortion of the reports' content was simply following the interests of Czechoslovakia and was used for propaganda purposes abroad.<sup>309</sup>

anti-Semitic tendencies in Slovakia might have had an adverse impact on the image of the Czechoslovaks as a whole. CNA, AHR, 1-46-6-10. A note by Viktor Fischl, 5 June 1942.

<sup>306</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E03/510. Slavik's speech on 9 February 1944.

<sup>307</sup> <http://www.ushmm.org/lcmedia/viewer/wlc/map.php?RefId=CZE71030>

<sup>308</sup> 'However, we know that the Slovak people do not agree and that they could never approve this fury and murders. Evangelical bishops resolutely protested against the brutal fury against Jews and the Slovak people were not only showing respect, but were also helping to the victims of this bloody regime.' HIA, Juraj Slávik Papers, Box 29, file 3. B.B.C. Special late night Czechoslovak News. By dr. Juraj Slávik and dr. Ivo Ducháček, 18 December 1942. My translation.

<sup>309</sup> Slávik after the war, in 1947, referred to this speech, at a United Jewish Appeal dinner, and stressed that during the war: 'I did not fear unpopularity at home by warning my fellow countrymen not to harm the Jews, by ordering them to help their Jewish fellow citizens survive the [G]erman terror, by threatening every Czechoslovak with severe punishment for cooperating with the invader,

However, the situation during the war differed and anti-Jewish prejudices were continuously presented in reports coming from Slovakia. The exiles were willing to admit anti-Semitic trends among the people in Czechoslovakia, but their explanation was always on the side of the Jews themselves, or of the Germans and anti-Semitism enforced by them. Hence Beneš, in one of his conversations with the Czechoslovak Jewish exiles in the USA, utilised another report coming from Slovakia.<sup>310</sup> The Jews, in order to save themselves, but also because of their ‘inadequate character and national feelings’, were allegedly revealing oppositional underground cells to the Slovak authorities.<sup>311</sup> This entirely baseless accusation was built on the stereotype of a Jew willing to do anything to save his/her life and sharply contrasted with brave non-Jewish resistance fighters.<sup>312</sup> Based on the words of the Czechoslovak President-in-exile, Slovak anti-Semitism was based on the personal failure of some among the Jews.<sup>313</sup> If an underground cell was betrayed by a Slovak, then it was a weakness of a certain person; if by a Jew, his Jewish background was immediately emphasised.<sup>314</sup> How far Beneš believed in those accusations, or how far he used them for white-washing the Slovak people, is difficult to determine.

The exiles’ relations with the Slovak resistance were complex. There was a danger that the Slovak leaders, among them many Communists, could reject the exiles’ authority. It was important for the exile government to receive and maintain full recognition by the Slovaks and to avoid any pretext for their possible independence tendencies. The exiles’ negotiations with the underground Slovak

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especially in anti-Jewish activities.’ HIA, Juraj Slávik Papers, Box 26, file 11. Speech by H. E. Dr. Juraj Slávik, Czechoslovak Ambassador to the U.S.A. at the UJA Dinner held in New York June 11<sup>th</sup> 1947.

<sup>310</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/5. Minutes of the meeting between the CJRC and Beneš, 27 May 1943 (written 30 May 1943).

<sup>311</sup> Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty*, p. 77. A report sent to Beneš (in Washington D.C.) by Jan Masaryk, 21 May 1943. For another example see HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 2, Diary entry 19 February 1943, p. 192-3. For another report, repeating similar accusations, see CNA, AHR, 1-50-44 (box 190), *A study of the internal situation in Slovakia*. The author of this report suggested that rich and cowardly Jews were working for Germans, in order to keep their property.

<sup>312</sup> Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty*, p. 77, footnote 5a. The cell was betrayed by an agent provocateur of the Slovak police. More on this see: Lipscher, Ladislav, *Die Juden im Slowakischen Staat 1939-1945*, pp. 174f.

<sup>313</sup> However, Beneš did not mention that ‘inadequate character and national feelings’ were the reasons for the Jewish collaboration. The President only suggested that the Jews had been subjected to German torture and that was why they had revealed the Slovak underground groups. AJA, WJC Papers, H100/5. Minutes of the meeting between the CJRC and Beneš, 27 May 1943 (written 30 May).

<sup>314</sup> Another stereotypical accusation against the Jews argued that only the poor ones were deported. The rich remained active in the Slovak society and allegedly even in the state apparatus. See Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty*, p. 54, document 9. A report sent from Bratislava on 12 February 1943.

National Council (SNC) that was established in 1944, touched mostly on the post-war position of Slovaks in the common state, the centralization of the government, the issues of the existence/non-existence of the Slovak nation and not those relating to the Jews.<sup>315</sup>

This complex situation, in combination with the extensive Slovak participation in *Aryanization*, made any direct involvement of the exiles in the Jewish question in Slovakia difficult. This can be documented in relation to the issue of the restitution of Jewish property. The exiles declared by late autumn of 1941 that all transfers of property made under duress were invalid.<sup>316</sup> Slávik confirmed this information to the Slovaks over the BBC in February 1944.<sup>317</sup> The speech was indeed heard and some reports from Slovakia suggested that the people welcomed the information. Additionally, the report argued that those who had participated in *Aryanization* were ready to give the property back.<sup>318</sup> However, other sources revealed that still a significant part of the Slovak resistance did not stop taking part in the process and was even buying property from the former *Aryanizers*.<sup>319</sup> Likewise the delegation of the SNC, visiting London in November 1944, ruled complete restitution out and generally expressed strong anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>320</sup> Similar messages and indeed direct encounters with Slovak politicians were to have an impact on the exile government's preparation of the restitution laws.

Any theory suggesting that the authorities in post-war Czechoslovakia were caught off guard by the anti-Jewish development in Slovakia is baseless. The reports confirming the strong anti-Semitic tendencies among the Slovak population were continuously pouring into London during the last years of the war. One of them, from the early summer of 1944, documented that the situation had not changed at all:

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<sup>315</sup> Prečan, Vilém (ed.), 'Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně (říjen–listopad 1944): Nové dokumenty', in *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka*, 1999, pp. 159–291.

<sup>316</sup> For the English version of the declaration see YVA, M.2/297.

<sup>317</sup> LMA, Board of Deputies, Acc 3121/E/03/510. Slávik's speech on 9 February 1944. The Slovaks were warned before participation on the process of the aryanization already by Jan Masaryk in December 1942. See AČR, BBC 1939–1945, box 50, Masaryk on BBC 9 December 1942).

<sup>318</sup> CNA, Archiv Hubert Ripka, 1-49-4g, 2nd attachment to the report from Slovakia, 22 March 1944. See also: Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty*, p. 173, document 51, Kopecký (Geneva) to the Foreign Ministry in London, 14 March 1944. Kopecký forwarded a report, received from the Slovak group 'Kaviár' – Viestová.

<sup>319</sup> Prečan, Vilém (ed.), *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty*, p. 229. A report sent to London by group 'Flora', 12 and 14 July 1944.

<sup>320</sup> The Delegation consisted of Ján Ursíny (right-wing, agrarian politician) and Laco Novomeský (Communist Party of Slovakia). Prečan, Vilém, 'Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně (říjen – listopad 1944): Nové dokumenty', pp. 221–223.

Anti-Semitism, imposed on Slovakia by the Germans with the help of the anti-Jewish measures, was firstly accepted by the people apathetically /except for the [Hlinka Guards], who considered it as a good business/. Over the course of time, a bit of propaganda has taken hold and now, when many can see that important positions could be occupied also by Slovaks, as they used to be by the Jews, and when they see that the Jews are working for Germans [!] and the Slovak police against other Slovaks, anti-Semitism in Slovakia has become again a problem that will need to be somehow solved after the war. The utmost anger was caused by the fact that a lot of Jews have been willing, for temporary benefits, to sell themselves out to the Germans and spy on our people.<sup>321</sup>

Anti-Semitic stereotypes that were the common feature of the previous messages remained alive among the Slovak population until the end of the war. This report, in a very stringent tone, summarized all the possible accusations against the Jews living in Slovakia. The image of the sentiments prevailing among the Slovak population was clear; the Jews were not welcomed back in Slovakia.

### ***Conclusion***

Several main features repeatedly appeared in the reports sent to London by Czech and Slovak underground groups:

First, there was a general condemnation of minorities' policy in the pre-war Republic, and of minorities as such. Minorities did not have a place in post-war Czechoslovakia.

Second, a new, just social order, including the nationalization of key industries, was demanded. This could have an impact on Jewish restitution.

Third, the Czech and Slovak Jews were condemned on national grounds. They were perceived as contributors to Germanization and Magyarization of cities in each respective part of Czechoslovakia. Only the Jews who used the Czech or Slovak language were to be allowed to stay in Czechoslovakia.

Fourth, the reports documented that Czechoslovaks were, to some extent, buying into anti-Semitic propaganda. The social and economic role of the Jews in the pre-war Republic was condemned and its revision was presented as desirable.

Fifth, the reports constructed a stereotypical image of the Jew as cowardly, unwilling to fight for his country and denouncing underground fighters for temporary privileges.

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<sup>321</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-50-56c, Report from Slovakia, 26 June 1944 (sent 23 June 1944). My translation.

Sixth, Jews and their lobby were perceived and presented as powerful in international relations.

Seventh, the exiles were warned against any effort that would facilitate the return of the Jews to post-war Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, in the case of Slovakia, a significant problem arose in the case of the *Aryanization* of Jewish property. A large proportion of Jewish property and personal belongings were stolen or auctioned by ordinary Slovaks. They did not wish to return the property to the Jews. It is noteworthy that the Protectorate messages about the Jewish situation in post-war Czechoslovakia tended to confirm the views revealed in the SD documents. It seems that there was indeed a negative change in the Czechs' sympathies with the Jews at the point when the German defeat and the Jewish return became imminent.

Reports sent by the home resistance thus revealed deep-seated prejudices against the Jews. Czech anti-Semitism was very often described as national, as based on alleged Jewish support of Germans during the Austrian Empire. Indeed, the resurgent Czech and Slovak nationalisms played a crucial role during the war. Czech experience of the occupation and the existence of the first Slovak state in history resulted in the growing self-interests of both nations. Furthermore, nationalism was strengthened by anti-Jewish prejudices brought to the attention of ordinary people by the virulent Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda campaign.

The authors of the reports also differentiated between their negative perception of *some* Jews and racial Nazi anti-Semitism. In their opinion, whilst the former was a correct evaluation of the Jewish behaviour, the latter was backwards, even mad, and definitely not assimilated by enlightened Czech people. However, in their perception of the Jews, the same authors used the same ascribed identity, labelling people not on their own feelings, but through an outsider's point of view. They were projecting onto the Jews all the negative characteristics ascribed to the enemies of Czech people. The first Czechoslovak Republic accepted the Jews under certain conditions, especially if they would cease being German or Hungarian. With the changed conditions after Munich, also the Czech acceptance of the Jews changed dramatically.

The response of the exiles was shaped by two main factors: first of all, they partly shared those views and the messages reinforced such sentiments. However, they knew that these sentiments were not compatible with the image of the democratic nation, at least as this was perceived in the west. Moreover, the Beneš

government needed to struggle for acceptance by the people at home, mainly in Slovakia. Hence they considered it undesirable to fight the anti-Jewish sentiments publicly. This attitude was documented by the examination of the Czechoslovak BBC Service broadcasts. Thus we can suppose that this influence existed and it will be considered in the following analysis of exiles' Jewish policy. Furthermore, the role of anti-Semitic propaganda, depicting the exiles as overt supporters of the Jewish restitution, had to be taken into account. The reports of the underground amplified the exiles' concerns about the impact of anti-Semitic propaganda. Poznanski's conclusion concerning De Gaulists' policy supports this thesis.<sup>322</sup>

In relation to the issues of minorities, the reports provided Beneš with the most radical platform. It was a justification of the eradication of all the minorities in post-war Czechoslovakia. At the same time, Beneš was aware that there was another party participating in the negotiations whose consent with any radical solution of minorities' question had to be obtained. No such a solution in post-war Czechoslovakia could have been carried out without the approval of *the major Allies*. In one of his letters to ÚVOD, sent on 6 September 1941, Beneš agreed with the desirability of the radical programme. Nevertheless, he continued as follows: 'But every responsible politician must ask himself a question in the interest of the nation: what shall I do and how shall I act in the case it would be impossible to execute this maximum programme'.<sup>323</sup>

The letter dealt with the proposed total expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia. Yet it could be applied to all the minorities and to all the programmes proposed by the home resistance movements. Beneš *de facto* respected their views, but was still aware of the difficulties in the diplomatic negotiations with the major Allies, two of them representing the main liberal democratic countries in the world. Beneš particularly expressed doubts about the position of the Americans 'who [did not] understand the European issues so far and [would] not understand them even at the end of the war'.<sup>324</sup> Furthermore, in his contacts with the underground organizations, Beneš tried to avoid Jewish issues at all costs. Nevertheless, it was impossible to do so in his negotiations in exile. International Jewish organizations closely followed the disturbing development in the

<sup>322</sup> Poznanski, Renée, 'The French Resistance: An Alternative Society for the Jews?', p. 432.

<sup>323</sup> HIA, Edward Táboršký Papers, Box 5, Beneš's message home, 6 September 1941. My translation.

<sup>324</sup> Šolc, Jiří (Ed.), *E. Beneš: Vzkazy do vlasti. Směrnice a pokyny československému domácímu odboji za druhé světové války*, p.141. Document 72, a message home, 10 October 1942.

Czechoslovak perception of the so-called 'Jewish problem'. The radical programme concerning minorities received strong support and was partly initiated at home. However, Jewish issues played a more significant role during negotiations in London. It was also due to the fact that the Czechoslovak exiles wished to maintain a democratic image in the west.



## CHAPTER 2: THE CZECHOSLOVAK EXILES AND THE JEWS BETWEEN 1939 AND 1941

[A] *Minority is [a] minority.*

Edvard Beneš (1941)<sup>325</sup>

### ***Introduction***

As suggested, the exiles' decision-making process was partly shaped by the reports sent to London by underground groups, both in the Protectorate and Slovakia. Nevertheless, the underground leaders were not the only force that was in the position to influence the Czechoslovak exiles. There were other actors, living in the 'free world', who had interests (or were perceived by the exiles as having interests) in Czechoslovak-Jewish relations. This chapter, as the first in the thesis dealing exclusively with the situation in exile, is focused on the early years of the war – the time period when the structures and diplomatic position of the Czechoslovak official representation in exile were being formed.



Image no. 5: Edvard Beneš<sup>326</sup>

In the summer of 1941, the exiled President of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Beneš, sent a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, the President of the USA. Beneš, already

<sup>325</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of Documents', p. 189. Document 9. *Memo by Zelmanovits. Excerpts by Memory on my Visit to President Beneš on March 28th, 1941.*

<sup>326</sup> [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edvard\\_Bene%C5%A1.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edvard_Bene%C5%A1.jpg)

officially recognised by the British government, tried to receive similar recognition by the American government. In the letter, he summarized the main arguments he was utilising for the justification of the exiles' political claims. In this respect, the letter may help us to identify the main areas of our interest for further analysis:

In agreement with my country we have created a new Czechoslovak army on British soil and organized our Air Force, which has now been fighting for a full year with the R.A.F. in repelling German attacks on England. We have unified our political emigration and we are working in close collaboration with our country, with the political leaders of the nation at home, with the intelligentsia and with the other classes of people. [...] Our state and people were a true democratic state; we were the only democracy who were able for a full twenty years to preserve our happy and successful democratic freedom; and had it not been for the events of Munich our land would still be the home of one of the finest democracies in Europe.<sup>327</sup>

Beneš thus highlighted three main points: the democratic tradition of Czechoslovakia, the unity within the Czechoslovak resistance movement and the Czechoslovak army. These were the most important issues for the Czechoslovak diplomatic struggle during the first part of the war. It could be added that the general historiography on the origins of the Czechoslovak exile movement scarcely deals with the Jews at all.<sup>328</sup> Does this mean that the Jews did not play an important part among the exiles between 1939 and 1941? As will be argued, an assessment of their influence, even a *potential* one, on the Czechoslovak exiles' fight for the restoration of Czechoslovakia is crucial for the understanding of mutual relations, particularly in relation to the three points summarized by Beneš to Roosevelt. Indeed a significant

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<sup>327</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York (FDRPL), President's Personal File, File 5952. Edvard Beneš to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 4 June 1941.

<sup>328</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung. Pläne und Entscheidung zum 'Transfer' der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen; Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*; Křen, Jan, *Do emigrace: Západní zahraniční odboj 1938-1939*. 2. vydání; *V emigraci: Západní zahraniční odboj 1939-1940*; Kuklík, Jan, *Londýnský exil a obnova československého státu 1938-1945: právni a politické aspekty obnovy Československa z hlediska prozatímního státního zřízení ČSR v emigraci* (Praha: Karolinum, 1998); *Vznik Československého národního výboru a Prozatímního státního zřízení ČSR v emigraci v letech 1939-1940* (Praha: Karolinum, 1996); Němeček, Jan, *Od spojenectví k roztržce. Vztahy československé a polské exilové reprezentace 1939-1945* (Praha: Academia, 2003); *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady* (Praha: Academia, 2008); Smetana, Vít, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)* (Praha: Karolinum, 2008); Smutný, Jaromír, 'Edvard Beneš a československý odboj za druhé světové války', in *Svědectví*, vol. VI, no. 21, Summer 1963, pp. 50-60.

part of the following analysis does not deal with what *actually* happened but with the mutual perception of the development by Czechoslovaks and the Jews.

We can argue that in comparison with other exile governments, the Jewish themes on the agenda of the Polish government most resembled those dealt with by the Czechoslovak exiles. Generally, the exile governments coming from East-Central Europe, from the countries that had accepted the minority treaties, were in a different position to the others. Their treatment of minorities was subjected to international control. The historiography of the Polish exiled government's attitude towards the Jews identifies several conflicting issues during the first war years, prior to the mass deportation of Jews to the Nazi extermination camps. It was especially the notion of Polish anti-Semitism that complicated mutual relations with Jewish organizations. The latter consequently demanded from the Poles a declaration that would confirm the position of the Jews in liberated Poland as citizens with equal rights.<sup>329</sup> The Poles were aware of their peculiar situation and attempted to distance themselves from the pre-war *Sanacja* regime. Ignacy Schwarzbart, a Zionist from Cracow, was immediately appointed to *Rada Narodowa* – the exile parliament.<sup>330</sup> However, the proposed declaration of Jews' rights met with severe opposition on the Polish side. The Sikorski government was aware that anti-Semitism was not compatible with the image of a democratic country. Yet anti-Jewish sentiments were overtly pronounced in Poland, as well as among the Polish exiles.<sup>331</sup> Finally in November 1940, the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Jan Stańczyk, published a declaration about the rights of Polish Jews. The declaration was, indeed, overtly criticized in reports coming from occupied Poland.<sup>332</sup> Furthermore, the declaration did not appease the 'eloquent and mighty' world Jewish organizations who demanded concrete proof of positive Polish change.<sup>333</sup> The reason behind the scepticism of the Jewish organizations was the repeated occurrence of anti-Semitic incidents in the Polish army in France and Britain. Moreover, Polish right-wing, overtly anti-Semitic politicians were appointed to the government, anti-Jewish laws from pre-war Poland continued to be a part of the Polish legal system, and a part of the Polish political

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<sup>329</sup> Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 55.

<sup>330</sup> Gutman, Yisrael – Krakowski, Shmuel, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), p. 58

<sup>331</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60; Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 80.

<sup>333</sup> Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 13.

mainstream still supported forced emigration of Jews from Poland.<sup>334</sup> The Polish exiles were thus caught between two complex influences: strong nationalism, sometimes containing anti-Semitism, and an effort to present themselves as a democratic nation in the sense of the western liberal democracies.

In the Czechoslovak case, the main issues in the exiles' relations with the Jews differed. In contrast to the Poles, the Czechoslovaks could rely on the notion of their democratic tradition. Masaryk's and later Beneš's Czechoslovakia was regarded by Jews as *a true symbol of democracy*. The dominant factor in Czechoslovak-Jewish relations after 1919 was the notion of the 'democratic tradition' of the Czechoslovak treatment of minorities, in particular the Jews. It was built by the mutual efforts of the Czechoslovaks themselves and by international Jewish organizations. Moreover, Czechoslovakia's neighbours – the Poles, Hungarians and Rumanians – unintentionally contributed to its formation. In the context of the wider region, the relative stability of democracy in inter-war Czechoslovakia contributed to its exceptional perception by international Jewish organizations. The ratification of the Munich Agreement in September 1938 was mourned by Jews throughout the world. Stephen Wise, the President of the American Jewish Congress and the WJC, for example, stated in a sermon: 'Czecho-Slovakia was crucified in her absence by the Judases who betrayed her to the Pontius Pilates of a new day [...] My heart has broken over the end of a great and noble democracy.'<sup>335</sup> Later, during the war, Wise admitted his deep emotional excitement when he had been listening to the radio broadcast about Munich:

I wonder whether I ought to make the shameful confession to you that I cried like a child, like a little child when the last word came from the radio that night, that night of shameful betrayal. [...] I never lost faith, not for one moment, in Czechoslovakia's power to redeem itself, but I was overwhelmed with sorrow. I felt that an infinite wrong had been done. It was dishonouring to both of the two great countries which should never, never under any circumstances have permitted even the temporary overthrow of Czechoslovakia. [...] I consider Czechoslovakia more than any country in the world, the younger brother of these United States of America.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>334</sup> Gutman, Yisrael – Krakowski, Shmuel, *Unequal Victims*, p. 58f.

<sup>335</sup> AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, 2/75-A, Wise about Czecho-Slovakia, 1938 (no date). Another Wise's sermon was directed to 'dear brothers in Czechoslovakia'. AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, box 89, WJC Circular letter, 15 October 1938.

<sup>336</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, D95/3. Wise's speech (no date).

For Wise, the betrayal of Czechoslovakia symbolised the end of democracy in Europe and also the beginning of the dark era of the Nazis. This notion of Czech decency survived even in the time of the limited democracy of post-Munich Czechoslovakia. Some Jewish politicians observed Czechs' dissatisfaction with the western liberal democracies and with the political system as such. As a result, they expressed their concerns about the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia soon after Munich.<sup>337</sup> This rise of nationalistic hatred was attributed by world opinion to German/Nazi pressure and possibly also to the rise and influence of certain circles in Slovakia that later declared the clero-fascist Slovak republic essentially a German satellite.<sup>338</sup> What is more significant, Beneš, who was forced to resign his presidency and left the country, or other followers of the late President Masaryk, especially his son Jan, were successful in distancing themselves from this undemocratic development in Czechoslovakia.<sup>339</sup> The Czechoslovak exiles built their political credit on the notion of their *continuous* adherence to democracy and it was crucial for determining their position among the other governments-in-exile.

Nevertheless, the beginning of the war witnessed complications in relations between the exiled Czechoslovaks and Jews. In contrast with the Poles, no Jew was appointed to the Czechoslovak State Council, exile parliament, in December 1940.<sup>340</sup> The negotiation of an appointment of a Jew to the parliament triggered broader discussion about the post-war status of the Jews in Czechoslovakia. The following analysis will suggest that a radical change regarding all minorities, including the Jews, occurred among the Czechoslovaks. The dramatic rise of Czecho/Slovak nationalism/s found its impact also among the Czechoslovak exiles. However, as in the Polish case, the Czechoslovaks became aware that their image of desirable democrats might be questioned. The exiled government was caught in the fight between the national radicalization within the resistance movement and their efforts not to stand out as anti-Semites, or as people with anti-Jewish inclinations. In relation

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<sup>337</sup> AJA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, microfilm, box 89, WJC Circular letter, 15 October 1938. Also AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, box 81, Stephen Barber to Lillie Shultz (WJC), 4 October 1938, or LMA, BoD, Acc/3121/E/03/510, *the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia, a report written 17 March 1939*.

<sup>338</sup> AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, box 81, Stephen Barber to Lillie Shultz (WJC), 4 October 1938. This part does not want to start a discussion about the grade of the Slovak dependency on Germans.

<sup>339</sup> Ripka, Hubert, *Munich: Before and After* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1939), p. 251 and 288.

<sup>340</sup> A Jew in the sense that the person would consider himself or herself Jewish. Julius Friedman, Julius Fürth and Jaroslav Stránský, all completely assimilated and baptized Jews were appointed to the parliament in December 1940. In 1941, Stránský became the Minister of State and from 1942 the Minister of Justice.

to the Jews, the first years of exiles' political activities were filled with the defence of the Czechoslovak 'myth'.

This chapter follows developments between 1939 and late 1941. The final appointment of a Zionist to the parliament is highlighted as a crucial point in these years. Arnošt Frischer was appointed in November 1941 by Beneš *de jure ad personam*, yet *de facto* based on his Jewish nationality. This concession meant an important exception in the Czechoslovak government's minority policy during the war. The key part of this chapter describes the change in the Czechoslovak view of minorities' position in the liberated Republic that was to have a critical impact on Czechoslovak Jewry. Consequently, the chapter will analyse the main influences on the exiles' Jewish policy that existed during the war in the west. These influences might have contradicted the impact of the Czech/Slovak nationalism/s that was analysed in the first chapter. However, before we start enquiring into the Czechoslovak-Jewish relations in exile, introducing the politicians who represented Czechoslovak Jewish interests in Allied London is desirable.

### ***Czechoslovak Jewish Political Exile in the United Kingdom***

Jewish émigrés formed a significant part of the Czechoslovak exiles, far exceeding their proportional share among Czechoslovak citizens as a whole. Beneš stressed during a conversation that took place in war-time London that the Czechoslovak emigration to Britain was formed mostly by Germans and Jews (more than 7,000 of 9,000 Czechoslovak civil émigrés).<sup>341</sup> Indeed, there were only a few Czech and even fewer Slovak exiles living in Britain during the war.<sup>342</sup> It was a logical result of the Nazi and post-Munich Czech policy, when Jews and democratic Sudeten Germans were threatened by the Nazi menace earlier than the majority population.<sup>343</sup> The Jews and anti-Nazi Germans were therefore willing, or felt forced, to leave the country after Munich. Another reason, in the case of the Jewish refugees, was the enforcement of their emigration by the Nazi administration in the first years

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<sup>341</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of the Documents', p. 160.

<sup>342</sup> Peter Heumos wrote that there were 10,000 Czechoslovak civil émigrés in Britain. Between 80 and 90 % of them were supposedly Germans and Jews. Heumos estimated the number of Jews at app. 5,000. See Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938-1945*, pp. 207 and 268.

<sup>343</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*, p. 42; Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, p. 19.

of the occupation: this was in accordance with the Nazi plans for ‘the solution of the Jewish question’ between 1939 and 1941.<sup>344</sup> Among the large wave of Jewish refugees leaving East-Central Europe were also the majority of the former Czechoslovak Jewish politicians who were active in inter-war Czechoslovakia, representing various ideological, religious and national groups. Nevertheless, most of them found their way to British Mandate Palestine and not to Britain,<sup>345</sup> where the centre of the Czechoslovak resistance movement abroad was later formed.<sup>346</sup> In any case, it should be noted that not all the Jewish émigrés from Czechoslovakia were willing to join the Czechoslovak resistance movement. The nationally-minded radical Czech movement did not appeal to Jewish émigrés coming from the German national milieu.<sup>347</sup> The situation was different with Czech, Slovak and national Jews who still saw their future in liberated Czechoslovakia.

The first Czechoslovak Jewish groups in the United Kingdom were formed immediately after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. Those were mostly of a humanitarian character and their work consisted of securing relief for refugees or immigration visas for people in the Protectorate and Slovakia.<sup>348</sup> These groups later assumed political tasks as well, especially *the Central Council of the National Jews from Czechoslovakia* (*Ústřední rada národních Židů z Československa* – hereafter referred to as *the National-Jewish Council*).<sup>349</sup> This National-Jewish Council

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<sup>344</sup> Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, p. 69.

<sup>345</sup> Hence, among the politicians, who reached future Israel were both former leaders of the parliamentary Zionist ‘Jewish party’ (‘Židovská strana’), Emil Margulies and Ernest Frischer, both last members of the Czechoslovak Parliament for the ‘Jewish party’, Angelo Goldstein and Chaim Kugel, but also both former heads of the Central Zionist Union in Czechoslovakia (‘Ústřední svaz sionistický v Československu’), Josef Rufeisen and Paul Maerz. On the contrary, to Britain escaped only second-rank Jewish politicians, or representatives of a new generation in the Czechoslovak Jewish politics. For example, the former Secretary of the ‘Jewish party’, Lev Zelmanovits, Štěpán Barber (former representative of the World Jewish Congress in Paris), Viktor Fischl (former parliamentary secretary of the ‘Jewish party’) and Imrich Rosenberg (an activist of the youth movement ‘Hamaccabi’). Most of them later belonged to higher strata of international Jewish organizations (especially the World Jewish Congress), or of the civil administration in the State of Israel.

<sup>346</sup> For the general historiography on the Czechoslovak political exile see: Smetana, Vít, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)*; Martin Brown, David, *Dealing with Democrats. The British Foreign Office and the Czechoslovak Emigres in Great Britain 1939 to 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006).

<sup>347</sup> Křen, Jan, *V emigraci: Západní zahraniční odboj 1939-1940*, p. 416.

<sup>348</sup> See London, Louise, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948. British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), pp. 142-168; Shatzkes, Pamela, *Holocaust and Rescue: Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938-1945* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 57-64.

<sup>349</sup> For more details about this group and other groups established by Czechoslovak Jewish émigrés, see Lániček, Jan, ‘The Czechoslovak Jewish Political Exile in the United Kingdom during World War

consisted of former members of *the Jewish Party* and of the Social-Democratic *Poale Zion*.<sup>350</sup> The group was founded in the late autumn of 1939, when Beneš officially declared the beginning of the fight for the new Republic and his National Council of Czechoslovakia was recognised by the French and British governments.<sup>351</sup> The national Jews immediately declared their willingness to cooperate with the former President. It is clear from the name of this organisation, headed by Lev Zelmanovits, that its main purpose was to secure the interests of the Jews who considered themselves Jewish in national terms. The renewal of Jewish minority rights was the essential point of their political programme.<sup>352</sup> The relations between the National-Jewish Council and the Czechoslovak government were rather complicated. For example, Beneš personally disfavoured Zelmanovits. First of all, the Zionist leader avoided joining the army.<sup>353</sup> Furthermore, his perceived methods of leading political struggle, of blackmailing and public campaigning against the government in order to reach his goals were overtly condemned by Beneš.<sup>354</sup>

There were two other Jewish groups, besides the Zionists, who declared their interests in different ideological, national, or religious terms. The first group was formed by the orthodox Jews/Agudists<sup>355</sup> and the other by adherents of assimilation, continuators of the so called *Association of Czechs-Jews (Svaz Čechů-židů)*.<sup>356</sup> At the

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II', in *Exile in and from Czechoslovakia during the 1930s and 1940s. The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Volume 11, 2009, pp. 167-182.

<sup>350</sup> CZA, 280/12, Memorandum prepared by the Council, 2 December 1940.

<sup>351</sup> CZA, Z4/30388, Zelmanovits, Protocol of the meeting with Beneš, written 14 December 1939.

<sup>352</sup> CZA, A280/4, Minutes of the Council's first meeting, 22 November 1939.

<sup>353</sup> There was also strong opposition against Zelmanovits in the National-Jewish Council. Some of the members of the Council even blacken him in correspondence with the Czechoslovak authorities. YVA, M.2/762. Schwarzbart's diary, diary entry 25 June 1941. See also CZA, A280/8. Oskar Zweigenthal to the National-Jewish Council, 24 June 1941.

<sup>354</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II, box 394, reg. no. 2916, Jaromír Nečas, a memorandum concerning the issue of Jewish representation in the Czechoslovak State Council, 1 July 1941. Zelmanovits was not popular among the exiles. He, for example, threatened the government with campaign among Jewish soldiers to enter the planned Jewish army instead of the Czechoslovak, in the case the Jewish political demands would not be accepted. School of Slavonic and East European Studies Archives, London (SSEES), Lisický Collection, box 10, 3/2/1. Report of Minister Nečas about his bureau for the year 1941. These methods were unacceptable for the Czechoslovak President. YVA, M.2/765, Schwarzbart's Diary, entry 2 October 1941. Schwarzbart's notes about his conversation with Viktor Fischl from the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry: 'I tried to explore the possibility of Zelmanovits' appointment to the Czechoslovak State Council. There is no hope whatsoever. Zelmanovits earned the disfavour of the Czechs by his press communiqué complaining about the non-appointment of a Jew to the State Council.' Beneš himself personally disliked Zelmanovits. See Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943, Volume 1*, p. 146, document no. 119, notes by Smutný about Beneš's opinion on the representation of Jews in the State Council, 25 November 1940.

<sup>355</sup> Agudas Israel

<sup>356</sup> For a history of the Czech-Jewish movement see Čapková, Kateřina, *Češi, Němci, Židé? Národnostní identita Židů v Čechách*, pp. 93-174.

beginning, neither group had political programme. These were mostly developed later as a reaction to the activities of the national Jews, at the moment when the latter declared their right to be represented in the exile parliament.<sup>357</sup> The Agudists, who, as a group, had not been politically active before the war, were firstly represented by *the Federation of Czecho-Slovakian Jews*<sup>358</sup> – a humanitarian organisation. Later, as its unofficial political branch, *the Union of Orthodox Jews from Czechoslovakia* emerged.<sup>359</sup> Only a few Czechoslovak orthodox Jewish politicians found their refuge in the United Kingdom.<sup>360</sup> Orthodox Jews lived mostly in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia,<sup>361</sup> whilst generally a higher number of people from the Bohemian lands came into British exile.<sup>362</sup> Hence the Agudists were dependent on the support of the British orthodox Jewish politicians, especially on Harry A. Goodman, the political secretary of the British *Agudas Israel*. The aims of the orthodox *Union* were very modest compared to the Zionists and mostly touched upon the securing of religious freedom in future Czechoslovakia, or the issue of the orthodox Jewish upbringing.<sup>363</sup>

The last mentioned group, *the Association of Czechs-Jews*, was not active in the political sense, because they, as adherents of assimilation, did not want to cause further fragmentation of the Czechoslovak resistance.<sup>364</sup> At the same time, they did not have any fundamental demands aside from a declared equality of people regardless of their religion or race.<sup>365</sup> Mutual relations among the three main Jewish

<sup>357</sup> CNA, PMR-L, Box 84. Sunday Times, 1 September 1940; AÚTGM, EB – II, k. 364, Minutes of the meeting with the Association of Czechs-Jews, 18 April 1940, probably by Smutný.

<sup>358</sup> The hyphen was later removed and the official name of the organization was hence ‘Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews’.

<sup>359</sup> Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa (LAC), MG 31, H 158, Yitzhak Rosenberg, ‘Benes and the political rights of the Jewish minority during World War 2 (the inside story), p. 3 (unpublished article).

<sup>360</sup> Among the Czechoslovak Agudists, we can mention names like Meir Raphael Springer, Kurt Leitner and Karol Rosenbaum.

<sup>361</sup> Hirschler, Gertrude, ‘The History of Agudath Israel in Slovakia (1918-1939)’, in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia, Historical Studies and Surveys, Volume II*, (Philadelphia – New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), pp. 155-172.

<sup>362</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510. Note about Slovakia. A report about the visit of Gizi Fleischmann in Britain, where she unsuccessfully tried to secure immigration visas for Slovak Jews, 14 August 1939. Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, p. 106. Heumos states that 1,462 Jews from Slovakia came to Britain.

<sup>363</sup> USA, Solomon Schonfeld, MS 183, 636, Report of the Federation of the Czechoslovakian Jews for 1939-1945.

<sup>364</sup> If there are names to be mentioned from this camp, then it was a businessman Milan Kodíček and especially the former head of the Prague Jewish religious community, Emil Kafka.

<sup>365</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 364. Minutes of the meeting between the Association of Czechs-Jews (Kafka, Růžička, Bondy, Kodíček) and Smutný, 18 April 1940. They also prepared a material dealing with the issues of Czech anti-Semitism, whose spreading demanded, in their opinion, more attention than the

groups were complicated. They rarely acted as partners. The inability of the Jewish exiles to find a common ground was apparent to the Czechoslovak government and it influenced its perception of the Czechoslovak Jewish politicians in an adverse way.

In any case, the only group that developed comprehensive political activity was the National-Jewish Council. Furthermore, it established strong links with the mainstream British and American Zionist organizations, especially the World Jewish Congress (WJC).<sup>366</sup> It was, however, the political activity of the Zionists that was to cause complications in relations with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. The reason was that the Czechoslovak resistance reached the conclusion that after the war the minority system of the pre-war Republic should not be re-established. These plans were publicly presented by Beneš in 1941.

### ***The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile and minorities***

In October 1941, President Beneš prepared an elaborate article describing Czechoslovak plans for the post-war settlement in Europe.<sup>367</sup> The article was published in January 1942 in a prestigious international journal – *Foreign Affairs* – under the title ‘Organization of postwar Europe’.<sup>368</sup> The main focus of Beneš’s analysis was the pre-war system of protection of national minorities. As argued by the President, the old system of minority protection had broken down because it had not been applied generally in all countries. Furthermore, some – Germany, Hungary and Italy – made improper use of the treaties to disintegrate democratic European countries that had respected their minorities, especially Czechoslovakia.<sup>369</sup> The minority treaties thus became ‘a burden upon the states which supported them’.<sup>370</sup> Although the League of Nations had detailed information about the infringement of

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exiled government was willing to pay. CNA, MV-L, box 255, file 2-63-2, ‘A suggestion how to solve the Jewish question and to eradicate anti-Semitism’ (‘Námět, jak řešit otázku židovskou a vymílit antisemitismus’).

<sup>366</sup> CZA, A280/50. Minutes of the National-Jewish Council meeting on 16 March 1945.

<sup>367</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung. Pläne und Entscheidung zum ‘Transfer’ der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen*, p. 140; Smetana, Vít, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)*, pp. 273-310. The Czechoslovak President and government originally formulated the views in July 1941 in *The Fortnightly Review* and in September 1941 volume of *The Nineteenth Century and After* (See Beneš, Edvard, ‘The New Order in Europe’, in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Volume 130, 1941, pp. 150-155).

<sup>368</sup> Beneš, Eduard, ‘Organization of postwar Europe’, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol.20, 1941-1942, pp. 226-242.

<sup>369</sup> Beneš, Eduard, ‘Organization of postwar Europe,’ p. 237n.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.* p. 237f. Beneš did not refrain from highlighting the Czechoslovak adherence to the democratic principles: ‘Czechoslovakia did not expect to be thanked for fulfilling her minority obligations [...]. I only say that in Europe, apart from Switzerland, we were the best’.

the treaties by Germans and others, it did nothing to help the affected states. In other words, Czechoslovakia felt betrayed and did not want to commit itself to the system again. The issue that needed to be solved was what to do with national minorities. Beneš realised that a total homogenization of states was probably impossible. Nevertheless, a transfer of populations was to be used ‘on a very much larger scale than after the last war’.<sup>371</sup> He continued:

The protection of minorities in the future should consist primarily in the defense of *human democratic rights and not of national rights*. Minorities in individual states must never again be given the character of *internationally recognized political and legal units*, with the possibility of again becoming sources of disturbance. On the other hand, it is necessary to facilitate emigration from one state to another, so that if national minorities do not want to live in a foreign state they may gradually unite with their own people in neighboring states [italics – J. L.].<sup>372</sup>

Beneš was not the first one to coin ‘population transfer’ as a way of solving the problems of minorities in multi-national states. In fact, not long before – after the First World War – the transfer of population was used in order to solve the dispute between Greece and Turkey; over a million Greeks were moved to mainland Greece.<sup>373</sup> Moreover, when the fateful Munich Diktat was signed in September 1938 and Czechoslovakia was forced to cede its borderland to Germany, around two hundred thousand Czechs, Jews and democratic Germans were forced to leave their homes.<sup>374</sup> The Germans, furthermore, conducted extensive population transfers in occupied Poland after 1939.<sup>375</sup>

Beneš’s article reflected the experience of the Czechoslovaks during the disintegration of the Republic in 1938-9. The pre-war Republic had a multinational character and minorities enjoyed protection according to the peace treaties. Nevertheless, it was the German, Hungarian and Polish minorities that orchestrated the collapse of the Masaryk Republic and its occupation by Germany after the *Ides of March* 1939. As argued, the experience of the years 1938 and 1939 triggered a national radicalization among Czechoslovaks in the homeland, as well as in exile.

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<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.* p. 238

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.* p. 239.

<sup>373</sup> Frank, Matthew, *Expelling the Germans. British Opinion and post-1945 Population Transfer in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 20-25.

<sup>374</sup> Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, p. 25.

<sup>375</sup> Frank, Matthew, *Expelling the Germans. British Opinion and post-1945 Population Transfer in Context*, pp. 39-41.

The first plans for national homogenization of the Republic had previously been discussed at the time of Munich and then since the first days of the Czechoslovak exiles' political activities.<sup>376</sup> The plans gradually became more radical and the final goal was set clear: minorities in Czechoslovakia should not be allowed to cause another national catastrophe, as before the war. Beneš revealed his vision of the German position in post-war Czechoslovakia to the resistance in the Protectorate in November 1940:

It is necessary to have a programme directed not only by a just feeling of revenge and hatred against Germans, but also by the enduring interests of the nation and state [...] 1/ Also the Czech nation needs its *Lebensraum* – using the Nazi terminology. The borders set in Munich do not ensure that. Hence the Munich border must disappear. [...] 2/ [...] The most important will be to create for the future new bigger nationally Czech territory and secure it. [...] There would be three districts outside of the nationally Czech territory. [...] The Germans living inside of the Czech territory, incl. Prague, would have to move out or to accept unconditionally the purely Czech regime, in the language and administrative sense and without minority rights inside of this new Czech ethnographic border [spacing in the original – J. L.].<sup>377</sup>

Beneš's plan did not count with any officially recognised minorities in Czechoslovakia at all. As stressed by Beneš, Germans who would be allowed to stay in the Czechs' *Lebensraum* would be forced to accept the Czech regime completely. They would have the same civil rights as any other citizen, but not as a group.<sup>378</sup> Although not specifically mentioned, these plans were to affect the position of the Jews as well. We do not have any written confirmation of Beneš's views on the Jews from the period under discussion, because the Czechoslovak President did not present them in public. We have to rely on information from the Jewish side – from pro-Jewish activists who were informed during private talks with the President. The former asked Beneš to keep his views secret and not to publish them for the time being.<sup>379</sup>

<sup>376</sup> Brandes, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung*, pp. 14-21. For documentation see Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*.

<sup>377</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 5, Beneš's message to Prague, 18 November 1940. My translation.

<sup>378</sup> Vondrová, Jitka, *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka*, p. 106. Doc. 55, minutes by Smutný from a meeting between Beneš and Minister Stránský, 11 May 1941. Beneš later clarified what he meant: 'The rights for minorities as *de l'homme et de citoyen*. Hence, it will be guaranteed, for example, that a German will be allowed to speak in German in Prague and he will not be put into jail for that, but when in contacts with authorities, he will have to speak in Czech.' My translation.

<sup>379</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Minutes of meeting between Beneš and Namier, 7 January 1941.

### ***The policy of population transfer and the Jews***

The Provisional Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile was recognised by the British on 21 July 1940. The exile administration was to formally copy the democratic constitution. Besides the President and the government, Beneš also planned to establish an advisory body, a quasi-parliament, the Czechoslovak State Council. Consequently, the National-Jewish Council conducted a series of negotiations aiming at securing a place in the exile parliament for their representative. The national Jews referred to the notion of continuity of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak regime, as promoted by Beneš. Two national Jews were elected to the last pre-war parliament in Prague.<sup>380</sup> Yet during the negotiations, the Czechoslovak President revealed to the Zionists his new theory of the Jewish status in liberated Czechoslovakia. These new plans were to differ significantly from the settlement in the pre-1938 Republic. In September 1940, Beneš met the delegation of the National-Jewish Council and was to argue:

The Jewish question as it has shown itself shortly before the war and now during the war has to be brought to a definitive solution. [...] I believe that this time the Zionists should be more consequent and should all aim [at the Jewish State in Palestine] which avoids further spreading of Antisemitism.<sup>381</sup>

Likewise, Lewis Namier, a prominent Zionist and a leading historian in Britain, presented Beneš's viewpoint at a meeting with other Zionist leaders in December 1940: 'Dr. Benes' [sic!] view was that in future Jews in Czechoslovakia would have to be either Czechs or Zionists; he did not want any more national minorities.'<sup>382</sup> A more elaborate interpretation of Beneš's conception was forwarded by Zelmanovits to Arnošt Frischer, the former chairman of the interwar Zionist *Jewish Party*, who at that time lived in Palestine:

If expressed simply, the conception is as follows: one of the biggest tasks for the post-war period must be the complete eradication of anti-

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<sup>380</sup> Angelo Goldstein, Chaim Kugel. They both emigrated to Palestine in 1939.

<sup>381</sup> YIVO Archives, RG 348, Papers of Lucien Wolf and David Mowshowitch, Reel 17, Folder 159, Rosenberg to Brodetsky, 14 September 1940.

<sup>382</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Short minutes of meeting held on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1940, at 77 Great Russell Street, W.C.1. Present: Dr. Weizmann, Professor Namier, Mr. Locker, Mr. Bakstansky, Mr. Linton. Namier was informed about Beneš's plans by Zelmanovits.

Semitism. In order to achieve this, Zionism is the best instrument, but only consistent Zionism. A Jewish state must be founded in Palestine after the war with the help of other countries and nations. As its result, all the people who identify themselves with the Jewish nationality, will have to decide, no matter where they live, either for the Palestinian citizenship, or integration into those nations with whom they live. In other words, they will be either foreigners with the citizenship of the Jewish state or they will assimilate completely. With regard to this matter, Pres. Benes remarked that consistency in this case is crucial; one would have to plan a fast, in fact immediate emigration of the Jews, especially those from Central Europe, to this Jewish state, or maybe also to some other territory.<sup>383</sup>

Beneš was rather vague about the meaning of assimilation into the main nation. He only remarked: 'Regarding the Jews something similar should be created as in England'.<sup>384</sup> The timing of Beneš's proclamations on behalf of the Zionists coincided with his letter concerning the Czechoslovak Germans. In the second half of 1940, the Czechoslovak President, supported by the other exiles and by home underground groups, reached a decision about the future national composition of Czechoslovakia.<sup>385</sup>

The exiled authorities did not differentiate among minorities. All of them were disrupting the national character of Czechoslovakia and were seen as a potential danger for its security.<sup>386</sup> Although Beneš's article in *Foreign Affairs* did not mention the Jews, the theory it presented entirely matched his remarks on Zionism privately revealed during 1940 and 1941. The years of the Second World War and the rising Czecho/Slovak nationalism/s changed the rules of the game. Also the Zionists had no place in the Republic. However, the situation with the Jews was different to that of the Germans who were seen as a common enemy among the Allies. Beneš could not support any forceful expulsion – a population transfer – of

<sup>383</sup> CZA, S26/1546, Zelmanovits to Frischer, 7 December 1940. My translation. Beneš revealed this vision to Zelmanovits and Rosenberg already in September 1940. YIVO Archives, RG 348, Papers of Lucien Wolf and David Mowshowitch, Reel 17, Folder 159, Rosenberg to Brodetsky, 14 September 1940.

<sup>384</sup> YIVO Archives, RG 348, Papers of Lucien Wolf and David Mowshowitch, Reel 17, Folder 159, Rosenberg to Brodetsky, 14 September 1940.

<sup>385</sup> Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*, doc. 47, Edvard Beneš, 'Mírové cíle Československé', 3 February 1941, pp. 84-92; doc. 48, K. L. Feierabend, 'Notes to Beneš's memorandum', pp. 92-95; doc. 50, Ripka's notes to Beneš's memorandum, pp. 97-99; doc. 54, Ingr's notes on Beneš's memorandum, pp. 104f.; doc. 56, Slávik's notes on Beneš's memorandum, pp. 107-109; Kural, Václav, *Vlastenci proti okupaci*, pp. 74-77, 112f., 142f.

<sup>386</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 5, Beneš's message to Prague, 6 September 1941. Beneš hence even rejected a home group's proposal to claim the inclusion of Lusatian Serbs' territories to Czechoslovakia.

the Jews from Czechoslovakia. The President had to find a different way to solve ‘the Jewish question’.

Czechoslovakia was well-known for its positive attitude towards the Zionist movement and practical Zionism that aimed at creating the Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>387</sup> The late president Masaryk was sympathetic with the Jewish national movement and also had visited Jewish Palestine in 1927. However, the overt Czechoslovak support of the Jewish State in Palestine during the Second World War has to be seen in the context of the Czechoslovaks’ efforts to solve the minority question in the Republic. In comparison with other minorities, the Jews were to have the option to decide whether they wanted to stay in Czechoslovakia. Yet if they did decide to stay, they had to accept the Czechoslovak conditions and assimilate into the main Slavonic nations. All the Jews who wanted to declare their Jewishness as a national group were expected to move to Palestine. If they decided to stay in Europe, they could as equal citizens but without any rights as a group.

There is, however, another issue that has to be addressed here: what influenced the London exiles’ decision to treat Jews as other minorities and not to grant them any special status in liberated Czechoslovakia? Why did the Czechoslovaks decide that the support of political Zionism, this support of the solution of the Jewish question by ‘population transfer’, was in the interest of the Czechoslovak Republic?

The Czechoslovak and world Zionists opposed Beneš’s plans and tried to persuade him of the negative effect his theory would have on ordinary Jews. They first of all doubted that all national Jews would be willing to abandon their countries and move to Palestine.<sup>388</sup> Furthermore, the question of a wholesale emigration to British Mandate Palestine seemed to be problematic as early as 1940. Beneš thus felt obliged to ‘explain’ to the pro-Jewish activists the reasons that led him to his conclusions. During his talks with western pro-Jewish groups, Beneš presented himself as a good protector of Jewish national aspirations and even of the Jews themselves. In his conversation with Sydney Silverman, Labour MP and the chairman of the BS WJC, the President argued as follows:

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<sup>387</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*, pp. 284f.

<sup>388</sup> YIVO Archives, RG 348, Papers of Lucien Wolf and David Mowshowitch, Reel 17, Folder 159, Rosenberg to Brodetsky, 14 September 1940. Rosenberg argued that not all national Jews were in fact Zionists.

If the solution [of the Jewish question] was to be a positive one it would make an immense [difference] in the Jewish problem. *Jews will become a nation (which they are not at the present time)*. The moral effect would be considerable both to Jews and non-Jews. The Jews *would lose their inferiority complex* from which they have suffered so long and which has made them tools of stronger nations, say Germany or Russia, who have used them for Germanization or Russification purposes. [...]

The Jewish problem was to a very great extent a moral and psychological one as well as a political problem. If the Jewish State was created and if that state was able to receive great numbers of Jewish immigrants from Europe, probably the most active and national minded elements of Jewry would gradually be concentrated there. It was clear that not all Jews would emigrate but that in about 50 or 60 years those who remained in the various countries would undergo a very serious process of assimilation. In this way every Jew would have the alternative either of supporting and relying on the Jewish National State or remaining a citizen of the state in which he resided and gradually facing assimilation [italics – J. L.].<sup>389</sup>

As stressed by Beneš, diaspora Jews were not considered to be a nation. Only by assimilation, or emigration to Palestine, by losing their ‘inferiority complex’, could the Jews become better people. Furthermore, Beneš, in a very paternalistic tone, informed Namier about the reasons why he revealed to the Zionists his new conception of the solution of ‘the Jewish question’: ‘[Beneš] was saying it to the Zionists because their Zionism was often luke-warm and theoretical [!]. A nation cannot conquer, or reconquer, its national independence and state unless it puts its entire energy into it.’<sup>390</sup> In another conversation, the Czechoslovak President praised Angelo Goldstein<sup>391</sup> over Zelmanovits, because the former, as a ‘real’ Zionist moved to Palestine, not to London.<sup>392</sup> Beneš hence acted as a good and caring patron of the Zionists. Patronizing Zionists was perceived by the Czechoslovak President as being natural. In his own opinion, his new theory – though slightly misunderstood – was correct and the Zionists should simply realise that he only wanted the best for them.

Beneš was more open in a discussion with Chaim Weizmann nearly a year later – in the end of 1941. He, in fact, admitted the influence of people in the occupied homeland on the exiles’ political planning. The Czechoslovak President

<sup>389</sup> USHMM, C2/96, *Memorandum on Interview with the President of the Czechoslovak Republic Dr. E. Benes, 22 July 1941*.

<sup>390</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Minutes of meeting between Beneš and Namier, 7 January 1941.

<sup>391</sup> Angelo Goldstein was a pre-war MP for the Jewish party in the Czechoslovak parliament.

<sup>392</sup> Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943, Volume 1*, p. 146, document no. 119, notes by Smutný about Beneš’s opinion on the representation of Jews in the State Council, 25 November 1940.

allegedly revealed to Weizmann that ‘when the war was over Czechoslovakia would probably find itself obliged to “dilute” its Jewish population, perhaps by one third’.<sup>393</sup> The difficulties laid in economic reasons. Beneš confirmed that the Jewish population was economically ruined by Aryanization. The President, however, continued:

[i]n many instances, such property had come into the possession of other Czechoslovak citizens. Simply to dispossess them in an effort to restore the property to its original owners was scarcely a solution. It left out of account any number of difficulties, both of a practical and political nature.<sup>394</sup>

It was impossible to take all the property from the Czechoslovak people and return it to the Jews. Hence, emigration of a part of the affected Jewish population would be a solution. The Czechoslovaks were willing to co-finance their migration.<sup>395</sup> The statement by Beneš contradicted all his previous and future proclamations and public support for the Zionist cause. The interests of people in Czechoslovakia were clearly confirmed. When enquiring into the reasons for the Czechoslovak government’s overt support of Zionism, these political and utilitarian reasons should be taken into consideration. Yet there were more factors that shaped the exiles’ attitude towards the Jews. Among them, the policy of national homogenization and the perception of ‘loyalty’ played key roles.

### ***Perception of the Jews by the Czechoslovak Exiles***

The exiles contemplated the post-war position of the Jews in Czechoslovakia already at the beginning of the war. Their perception of the Jews’ identity played a crucial role. A clear distinction was made between the Jews living in the western parts of the Republic, in the Bohemian lands, and those living in Eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. In internal correspondence, but also in negotiations with international partners, the exiles expressed their intention to lower the number of the Jews living in Czechoslovakia, particularly among those settled in the east. Hence Minister Ripka suggested to the Polish Foreign Minister Edward Raczyński

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<sup>393</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, A. J. Drexel Biddle (Legation of the United States of America near Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia) to the Secretary of State, 27 December 1941. A copy of a file from National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (NARA), RG 59, 867N.01/1791.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

that there was no Jewish problem in Bohemia and Moravia because of the low number of Jews living there and their advanced assimilation. This was not the case with the Jews in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Both ministers agreed that the Polish and Czechoslovak government would prefer it if ‘the Jewish problem’ was solved by the international community.<sup>396</sup>

An identical perception of the Jews living in Czechoslovakia was later confirmed by Julius Fürth, a member of the State Council and an assimilated Jew. In his report for the Czechoslovak authorities, Fürth concluded: ‘the Jewish problem in Czechoslovakia would be considerably reduced if Subcarpathian Ruthenia with its 102,000 Jews [...] did not constitute a part of the Czechoslovak State’.<sup>397</sup> Moreover, he noted that ‘the backwards’ Jews of Ruthenia lived under the mild Hungarian regime and most of them, in contrast to the Jews in the other parts of Czechoslovakia, would survive the war. Thereby, they would constitute at least two thirds of all the Jews living in the Republic.<sup>398</sup> A considerable part of the Czechoslovak Jewish community was seen by the exiles as alien to the major population. The perceived problem of the *Ostjuden* laid in their alleged backwardness and also strict adherence to Judaism and Jewish tradition.<sup>399</sup>

Nevertheless, the exiles expressed traditional prejudices against Jews as a whole. A report sent to Beneš by his close collaborators in the spring of 1939 argued that most of the Jewish émigrés were allegedly ‘the so-called economic émigrés, who [had] left the Protectorate mostly for economic reasons and [had] no intention to work in any [resistance] movement’.<sup>400</sup> Furthermore, Taborský mentioned in his diary that the Jews serving in the Czechoslovak army were shirking and were not

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<sup>396</sup> HIA, Poland: Ambadasa (U.S.) Records, File 51/3, Edvard Raczyński about his meeting with the Minister Ripka, 29 November 1941. For Ripka’s version of the meeting, see CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-2, box 104, Minutes of Ripka’s meeting with Raczyński, 29 November 1941.

<sup>397</sup> Kratochvil, Michaela, *The Jewish Aspects of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Minority Policy During 1939-1948* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2000) (unpublished Master’s thesis), document 3 (no page), Fuerth for the Chancellery of the President, for the Minister of the Interior and Justice, 6 October 1942.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> These concerns played role in the negotiations of the Czechoslovak-Polish confederation at the beginning of the war. See FDRPL, Alexander Sachs Papers, box 108, ‘Note on the Outlook for Czechoslovakia’. The Czechoslovaks allegedly opposed the free movement of people between Poland and Czechoslovakia. The reason was their concerns about possible mass migration of Polish Jews to Czechoslovakia.

<sup>400</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 3, *A Report sent to Beneš by Edward Táborský and Václav Benes in the Spring of 1939*. My translation.

willing to drill. He concluded that the Jews were not eager to fight.<sup>401</sup> The reason he gave was their ‘inherent aversion to the physical strain’.<sup>402</sup> Others, especially the Minister of Defence, Sergěj Ingr, overtly condemned the Jews as cowards who were afraid to join the army and fight. He condemned them as an unreliable element and opposed the general mobilization of Czechoslovaks living in Britain.<sup>403</sup> As stated, the majority of the exiles were Jewish and German and it was not in the interest of the army to have a ‘German-Jewish character’.<sup>404</sup> An image of a Jew was constructed – one who escaped from the Protectorate only for economic reasons; a Jew who was not willing to fight and even if he joined the army, his psychological predisposition hindered him in defending Czechoslovakia in the proper way.

In national terms, the fact that was repeatedly highlighted was that most of the Czechoslovak Jewish émigrés residing in Britain were German-speaking.<sup>405</sup> It was again Táborský who stressed the detail in his diary.<sup>406</sup> Also Beneš used this argument in his negotiations with the BS WJC:

In dealing with the Jewish side of the problem [of representation in the exile administration] he has to face the chief difficulty that the great majority of the Jewish-Czech emigration in [Britain] are German-speaking Jews. There is an old mistrust amongs[t] the Czechs [against] these German Jews – who have been for a long time the bearers of Germanization among the [Czech] population in small towns and villages – a mistrust [of] the [G]erman in them.<sup>407</sup>

Negative sentiments against German-speaking Jews were also acknowledged in writing by two ministers of the Czechoslovak government, Ladislav K. Feierabend

<sup>401</sup> Táborský stated: ‘It seems that most of our Jewish fellow-citizens, who came here, have no exalted will to defend themselves, their race and their country with a weapon in their hands’. See Táborský, Eduard, *Presidentův sekretář vypovídá. Deník druhého zahraničního odboje* (Zurich: Konfrontace, 1983), p. 39f. Diary entry for 23 January 1940. My translation.

<sup>402</sup> Táborský, Eduard, *Presidentův sekretář vypovídá. Deník druhého zahraničního odboje*, p. 39f. Diary entry for 23 January 1940. My translation.

<sup>403</sup> Němeček, Jan – Šťovíček, Ivan – Nováčková, Helena, Kuklík, Jan (eds.), *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně I. (1940-1941)* (Praha: Historický ústav AVČR – Masarykův ústav a archiv AVČR, 2008), ‘the Minutes of the 2nd government meeting, 2 August 1940’, pp. 97f.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘the Minutes of the 10th government meeting, 11 October 1940’, pp. 193-195.

<sup>405</sup> About the German-speaking Jews in the British exile see Schmidt-Hartmann, Eva, ‘Die deutschsprachige jüdische Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Großbritannien 1938–45’, in Ferdinand Seibt (ed.), *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern* (München-Wien: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1983), pp. 297–313.

<sup>406</sup> Táborský, Eduard, *Presidentův sekretář vypovídá. Deník druhého zahraničního odboje*, p. 39f. Diary entry for 23 January 1940.

<sup>407</sup> USHMMA, C2/96, *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941*.

and Ingr.<sup>408</sup> Ingr even proposed that only those mastering Czech or Slovak languages were to be allowed to serve in the army.<sup>409</sup>

Additionally, the exiles' perception of who actually was and was not Jewish was often false and crudely imposed. Ivo Ducháček, a close associate to Minister Ripka, noted a conversation between Rudolf Bechyně, the designated chairman of the State Council, and the Prime Minister Jan Šrámek. The discussion concerned the nomination of Fürth, an assimilated and baptized Jew, to the exiled parliament. Bechyně opposed Fürth's nomination on the grounds that the exiles ought to be careful about the overall number of Jews in the parliament. The conversation continued:

Šrámek argued that Fürth was a Catholic and not a Jew. Bechyně reacted: "Oh yes, but he is still Jewish". Stránský<sup>410</sup> has already been appointed and there might be others – it is though impossible to burden the National Council [State Council – J. L.] in a such way".<sup>411</sup>

Bechyně's 'worries' were probably based on the possible harm caused to the parliament's image at home or among other exiles. It still reveals the exiles' viewpoint of the issues connected with Jews. Neither Fürth nor Stránský were Jewish in their own perception. It was an imposed identity, when even people who did not have anything in common with Jewishness, were still judged racially, based on their ancestors. The Czechoslovak political mainstream constructed Jews as an entity alien to the Czech nation. This brings us to the next question: what was the Jews' place in the exiles' overall plans for minorities in Czechoslovakia?

### ***To solve the minority question in Czechoslovakia***

After the First World War, the Jews in Czechoslovakia were granted special national privileges in the constitution, mostly on the ground that the Germans and

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<sup>408</sup> Feierabend, Ladislav Karel, *Politické vzpomínky I*, pp. 54f; CNA, PMR-L, box 84, Ingr (Minister of Defence) to the Presidium of the Council of the Ministers, 4 November 1940.

<sup>409</sup> Němeček, Jan – Šťovíček, Ivan – Nováčková, Helena, Kuklík, Jan (eds.), *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně I. (1940-1941)*, 'the Minutes of the 2nd government meeting, 2 August 1940', p. 98.

<sup>410</sup> Jaroslav Stránský came from partly Jewish background, but he himself did not feel Jewish. During the war, he was the Undersecretary for Justice and from 1942 the Minister of Justice in the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile. He also very often broadcast via BBC to occupied Czechoslovakia.

<sup>411</sup> HIA, Ivo Ducháček Papers, #1.6, Diary entry 15 September 1940. My translation.

Hungarians received them as well.<sup>412</sup> Also during the Second World War, the fate of the national Jews became linked to other minorities. These tendencies developed in 1940. Whilst in December 1939, Beneš declared to Zelmanovits his willingness to reserve a seat on the parliament for the Zionists, he dropped this plan in the following months.<sup>413</sup> The President in his conversations with representatives of the Zionist organizations repeatedly referred to his decision to solve all the minorities' representation in the State Council simultaneously.<sup>414</sup> When the Zionist politicians pointed to the loyalty of Jews to Czechoslovakia and thus to the injustice of comparing them to the Germans, Beneš simply replied: '[a] Minority is [a] minority'.<sup>415</sup> Among the other exiles, for example, Feierabend from the very beginning opposed Beneš's plan to call to the parliament representatives of the former Czechoslovak minorities. Feierabend wanted the parliament on a national level to be purely Czechoslovak.<sup>416</sup> Also Slávik expressed amazement that the Jews demanded representation on the exile parliament. The Minister of the Interior asked whether this might not cause harm to the Jews themselves because they would constitute themselves as a minority. In Slávik's perception, 'becoming a minority' was a negative development and threatened the future of the Jews in Czechoslovakia.<sup>417</sup> To be a minority was simply a negative attribute.

Furthermore, concessions to the Jews, as a minority, threatened to cause a precedent for other minorities. During 1941, this became an argument centred on the question of why the exiles did not want to publish any declaration of the Jewish status in the post-war Republic.<sup>418</sup> Ripka confirmed the government's position to

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<sup>412</sup> Čapková, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? *Národnostní identita Židů v Čechách*, pp. 43f. Čapková quotes a document that attests that Czechoslovaks, for example, allowed Jews to declare Jewish nationality in order to weaken German and Hungarian national minorities in Czechoslovakia. The Jews were specifically mentioned in the explanatory report to the Article 128 of the Constitution of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, 29 February 1920. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>413</sup> CZA, Z4/30388. Minutes of the meeting with Beneš by Zelmanovits, 14 December 1939.

<sup>414</sup> USHMMA, C2/96, *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941.*; CZA, S26/1546, Zelmanovits to Frischer, 7 December 1940. It was presented by Beneš as a reason for non-appointment of a Jew to the State Council.

<sup>415</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of Documents', pp. 188f. Document 9. *Memo by Zelmanovits. Excerpts by Memory on my Visit to President Beneš on March 28th, 1941.*

<sup>416</sup> Čechurová, Jana – Kuklík, Jan – Čechura, Jaroslav – Němeček, Jan *Válečné deníky Jana Opočenského*, p. 32. Diary entry for 10 August 1940. Opočenský was a close associate to Feierabend.

<sup>417</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-1, box 104, 'Minutes of an informative meeting organized by Ripka, 18 December 1940'.

<sup>418</sup> For example, Maurice Perlzweig argued to Wise and Goldman that the WJC should insist on a statement made by Beneš or Masaryk parallel to what the WJC received from General De Gaulle. See AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Collection, box 91, Perlzweig to Wise and Goldman, 25 February 1941.

Ignacy Schwarzbart of the Polish National Council in October 1941. The State Minister agreed that the Jews had been the most ‘reliable excellent citizens’ of the Czechoslovak Republic and that ‘there [had not existed] any Jewish question’ in Czechoslovakia before the war.<sup>419</sup> However, according to Ripka, no one knew about the real outcome of the war and about the situation in Europe:

We don’t know how we shall succeed in solving the problem of the Sudeten and the German problem in general but under no [circumstances] do we want to have a German problem in our state. It is for all these reasons that we are in no position to issue a declaration regarding the national minorities at present.<sup>420</sup>

After Schwarzbart’s suggestions, Ripka admitted the differences between the German and Jewish minorities. However, Schwarzbart’s reference to the Jewish demand for their own educational opportunities in post-war Czechoslovakia led to a negative response from the Minister. The Czechoslovaks strictly opposed the German educational system in the Republic. Possible concessions to the Jews were hence seen as a precedent for other minorities.<sup>421</sup> The government was cautious in relation to any step that might have caused any complications with the territorial integrity of the Republic. Any declaration in connection with minority groups, including the Jews, was, therefore, inadmissible. In fact, the Zionists’ demands raised the issue of loyalty; loyalty of the people who, as the situation in the army was to confirm, were not entirely trusted.

### *The situation in the Czechoslovak Army*

Two particular affairs need to be addressed in connection with the situation in the army: the mobilization of the Czechoslovak Jews living in Palestine and anti-Semitism in the Czechoslovak army abroad.

In April 1940, Josef M. Kadlec, the Czechoslovak Consul General in Jerusalem, ordered a compulsory mobilisation of all the Czechoslovak citizens

<sup>419</sup> YVA, M.2/765, Schwarzbart’s Diary, entry 7 October 1941. Conversation with Ripka. Cross-check with the Polish version M.2/749. See also Ripka’s minutes of the meeting: CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-2, box 104, Ripka’s minutes, 7 October 1941.

<sup>420</sup> YVA, M.2/765, Schwarzbart’s Diary, entry 7 October 1941. Conversation with Ripka. Cross-check with the Polish version M.2/749.

<sup>421</sup> The exiles’ caution in relation to minority issues was confirmed by the government’s reserved response to the Atlantic Charter. The document in its second paragraph promised the right to self-determination. As perceived by the exiles, this American initiative might have been utilised by the Sudeten Germans. HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 5, Benes’s letter home, 6 September 1941.

situated there.<sup>422</sup> The Czechoslovak Jews in Palestine constituted a very important source of potential rank-and-file for the army.<sup>423</sup> Their enlistment to the army was important from a political point of view. The exiles needed a significant-sized fighting corps that would contribute to the Allied struggle. However, the leaders of the Czechoslovak Zionists in Palestine opposed this act and preferred to wait for the planned establishment of the Jewish army. They intended to stay in Palestine and thus to contribute to the defence of the future Jewish state. In their opinion, a Jew, once he had migrated to Palestine, abandoned his commitments to the previous country and was bound only to the land of Israel.<sup>424</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time, most of them did not renounce their Czechoslovak citizenship because of the post-war claims vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia where they were forced to leave their property.<sup>425</sup>

As argued before, the Jews were not seen by the exiles as zealous fighters for the Czechoslovak cause, and their proportionally significant representation in the army was seen as undesirable.<sup>426</sup> Curiously, with the progression of mobilization, it

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<sup>422</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of Documents', p. 170.

<sup>423</sup> SSEES Archives, Lisický Collection, correspondence of the Consul-General Kadlec. 3/2/4, box 10 and 3/5/4, box 13.

<sup>424</sup> Kulka, Erich, *Židé v československém vojsku na Západě*, pp. 191-2. Document no. 3, *Declaration of Hitachduth Olei Czechoslovakia to the Mobilization of the Czechoslovak Citizens settled in Palestine*.

<sup>425</sup> See, AÚTGM, EB-II, box 181, Minutes of the government meeting on 28 August 1942. Ingr described a meeting he had with Moshe Shertok and Hugo Bergman. Ingr during the meeting mentioned that it was an obligation of all Czechoslovak citizens to serve in the Czechoslovak army and if they did not, they would face the consequences. Shertok was to comment if that meant that such a person would not be allowed to come back to Czechoslovakia. Ingr did not contradict the statement. About the position of the Jewish Agency see the memorandum prepared for Ingr by Leo Hermann: CZA, Z4/31183, Leo Hermann to the Jewish Agency, London, 28 June 1942. Both parties in the end reached an agreement that the Jews who came to Palestine as a temporary refuge joined the Czechoslovak army and those, who wanted to settle there permanently, joined the British army. See Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938-1945*, p. 148. See also Rothkirchen, Livia, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of the Documents', p. 196-199, document 11, *Minute of Interview [of Moshe Shertok and Leo Hermann with General Sergey Ingr, Czechoslovak Minister of War, King David Hotel, June 19, 1942]*.

<sup>426</sup> The conflict between Kadlec and the Czechoslovak Zionists in Palestine was commented on in a letter sent by Smutný to the General Consulate in Jerusalem: 'it is alright that the circumstances accompanying the declaration of mobilization in Palestine documented the thinking of former citizens of the Republic, for whom the mobilization was intended in the first instance. We did not have any illusion about the outcome and it might be even expedient that the result has been such as you depicted in your messages, because the already now high percentage of the Jewish element in the army is a precarious factor.' My translation. This remark by Smutný corresponded with the perception of Jews ruling among the exiles in Britain. Kulka, Erich, *Židé v československém vojsku na Západě*, p. 44 and p. 71, footnote 44, quote from AÚTGM, f. 40, EB-II, 15/32/16b, Smutný to Kadlec, Jerusalem, 7 May 1940.

became obvious that the army could not reach any significant size without Jews.<sup>427</sup> The government officials were, in reality, caught between two mutually conflicting problems. Yet the Palestinian Zionists' opposition to the mobilization came at the worst possible moment – that is when the German armies attacked Western Europe.

The Czechoslovak diplomatic and military representatives in Palestine frequently criticised the Zionists, or even simply the Jews. In one of the reports from late 1941, an officer of the Czechoslovak army stationed in Haifa wrote about a new wave of volunteers for the unit. He characterised the newly presented volunteers as those 'who belong[ed] neither to the group that [had] faithfully enlisted to the army before the fall of France, nor to the group as [were] the people in Atlit,'<sup>428</sup> but to a group that [was] most intelligibly called "J e w s" [spacing in the original – J. L.].'<sup>429</sup> The reason for their sudden volunteering was, according to the document, their realization that thanks to their previous 'overcunning', they almost lost any chance ever to return to Czechoslovakia. The Jews had allegedly realized that because of the bad economic situation in Palestine, they would not be able to reach their previous social and economic position. Hence they suddenly changed their mind and wanted to go back to Czechoslovakia.<sup>430</sup> The author of the letter opposed their calling to the army.<sup>431</sup> The Czechoslovak representatives in Palestine regularly supplied the exiles in London with reports loaded with information about alleged anti-Czechoslovak feelings, conduct, or even the pure personal expediency of the Czechoslovak Jews living there.<sup>432</sup>

Authors of such messages found a willing audience in London. Beneš noted that he had already been prepared to nominate Angelo Goldstein to the State Council. Goldstein was a former Zionist MP in the interwar parliament who came to Palestine

<sup>427</sup> As stated, majority of the Czechoslovak exiles in Britain was German and Jewish.

<sup>428</sup> British detainee camp near Haifa for Jewish illegal immigrants to Palestine.

<sup>429</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84. Major of the General Staff Jaroslav Petr to the Headquarters of the Czechoslovak Military Mission in Jerusalem, 13 November 1941. My translation.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>432</sup> For example, CNA, PMR-L, box 84. A letter from the Czechoslovak Military Mission for the Balkans, Near and Middle East, 2 November 1940. General Gak sent protest against the projected of two Palestinian Zionists to the State Council, Angelo Goldstein and Chaim Kugel. Especially Goldstein openly opposed the mobilization to the Czechoslovak army. This information was published by Palestinian press. Gak wrote that if there was an intention to nominate to the Council someone among the Palestinian Jews that it should be someone among 'the true Czech Jews' and not 'similar Zionists'. Gak also quoted a speech by Josef Rufeisen, a representative of Hitachdut Olei Czechoslovakia. Rufeisen allegedly said: 'We say no to the mobilisation by the Consul-General J. M. Kadlec. The Consul-General of a, in fact, non-existing country drafted our people to bled in France for Czechoslovakia'. The impression of this quote on the Czechoslovak exiles in London cannot be underestimated.

in 1939. Nevertheless, Goldstein's opposition to the mobilisation and his complicated relations with Consul Kadlec purportedly caused the Czechoslovak President to abandon this plan. Beneš changed his opinion despite the fact that he had expressed understanding for Goldstein's position on mobilization only a couple of months before.<sup>433</sup> Indeed, only in September 1940, Beneš stated to Zelmanovits and Rosenberg:

the Czechoslovak people would never make reproaches to the Jews if in these times they would not fight under the Czechoslovak flags. And should they not reach their aim after this war [the Jewish state in Palestine – J. L.] the Czechoslovaks would not fail to recognise their pure intentions and approve of them.<sup>434</sup>

It is obvious that a change in Beneš's perception of the issue occurred sometime in the autumn of 1940. When the Czechoslovak Zionists in London asked Beneš to investigate the whole Palestinian affair, the President

informed [Zelmanovits] that Consul Kadlec had done and was continuing to do very valuable work [in Palestine]; that he was a well-known personality and especially to the English authorities. For this reason [Beneš] did not wish to make any investigations. It was enough for him to know that there were disagreements and he was, therefore, not able to call on anyone who might continue those differences here [reference to Goldstein's appointment to the State Council – J. L.].<sup>435</sup>

The events in Palestine and Beneš's remarks confirmed that the Zionists were no longer trusted. Their conduct in Palestine threatened to exclude them from the mainstream of the Czechoslovak resistance movement and consequently from 'Czechoslovakia'. The WJC leadership immediately recognized that this affair might have influenced the Czechoslovak-Zionist relations in an adverse way. Thus WJC politicians in America tried to distance themselves from the whole affair and also

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<sup>433</sup> Otáhalová, Libuše – Červinková, Milada (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943, Volume 1*, p. 146, document no. 119, notes by Smutný about Beneš's opinion on the representation of Jews in the State Council, 25 November 1940.

<sup>434</sup> YIVO Archives, RG 348, Papers of Lucien Wolf and David Mowshowitch, Reel 17, Folder 159, Rosenberg to Brodetsky, 14 September 1940. Beneš and Zelmanovits talked about the mobilization to the army in Britain. Zelmanovits suggested that if the information about the Beneš's plans for the Jews became public, Jews would reject the mobilization to the Czechoslovak army and would join the Jewish army.

<sup>435</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, *Memo by Zelmanovits. Excerpts by Memory on my Visit to President Beneš on March 28th, 1941*.

desperately called on the Czechoslovak Zionists in Palestine to stop all obstructions and cooperate with the Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>436</sup>

Despite the opposition among the Czechoslovak Zionists in Palestine, thousands of Jews joined the Czechoslovak army. In fact, Jews constituted a significant part of the Czechoslovak armed forces.<sup>437</sup> However, since the beginning of the war, the army was accused of containing anti-Semitic elements that led to the persecution of Jewish soldiers. Anti-Semitic incidents occurred from time-to-time, beyond any doubt, in the exiled army and have been sufficiently described by other authors.<sup>438</sup> Hence this part is more concerned with the implications that the existence of the army's negative reputation might have had on the position of the exile government. Furthermore, did the publicity given to the anti-Semitic incidents have any impact on the Czechoslovaks' perception of the Jews?

In 1941, Beneš stressed that the existence of the exile army in Britain had helped him to receive official recognition by the British.<sup>439</sup> However, the evacuation of the army from France in June 1940 was accompanied by anti-Semitic incidents. The moral degradation of the army, where most of the nationally radical elements were concentrated, continued on British soil.<sup>440</sup> In August 1940, a delegation of Jewish soldiers prepared a memorandum for Beneš and Ingr, summarizing all the accusations against the army.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, at approximately the same time, many

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<sup>436</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Tartakower's letter to Zelmanovits, May 1941: 'What, exactly, happened in Palestine? We are afraid that this incident may have a general influence upon the relations between Czechoslovakian Jews and their government. It is our opinion that our people should be careful to avoid all friction with the representatives of the Czechoslovakian government in Palestine'

<sup>437</sup> Táborský, Eduard, *Presidentův sekretář vypovídá. Deník druhého zahraničního odboje*, p. 39f. Diary entry for 23 January 1940; Kulka, Erich, 'Jews in Czechoslovak Armed Forces Abroad During World War II', pp. 424.

<sup>438</sup> Kulka, Erich, *Jews in Svoboda's Army in the Soviet Union: Czechoslovak Jewry's fight against the Nazis during World War II*; Židé v československém vojsku na Západě; Stříbrný, Jan, 'Židovští vojenští duchovní a židovská otázka v československém vojsku na Západě v letech 1939 - 1945. Příběh Alexandra Krause a JUDr. Hanuše Rebenwurzela - Rezka', pp. 162-220; Brod, Toman, *Tobruké krysy* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1967).

<sup>439</sup> Beneš remarked to the Chancellor Smutný in 1941: '[the Czechoslovaks] had [got] the army overthere (from France to England), had helped [him] m o s t to obtain the recognition of the government [the spacing in the original – J. L.]'. This quote highlights the importance of an army for the exiles. LAC, Imrich Rosenberg Papers, MG31, H158, Volume 5. *Review of the article by Rothkirchen* (Yad Vashem Studies, 1973), p. 2. Rosenberg quotes the Jaromír Smutný Diary, 1 May 1941.

<sup>440</sup> Křen, Jan, *V emigraci: Západní zahraniční odboj 1939-1940*, pp. 102-106, 417, n. 5.

<sup>441</sup> Kulka, Erich, *Židé v československém vojsku na Západě*, doc. 4, pp. 193-202. Another memorandum on the situation in the army was submitted already in the end of July 1940 to the Board of Deputies, to Selig Brodetsky. Authors of both of the documents were identical: Capt. Brichta, Lft. Artur Fleischmann, Sec. Lft. Alexander Kraus, Private Dr. Štěpán Barber, Private Dr Rudolf Braun,

Jews joined the Communist initiated desertion of more than 500 soldiers from the army.<sup>442</sup> Prevailing anti-Semitism was given as one of the reasons for their desertion.<sup>443</sup> Had the rumours about anti-Semitism been proven to be true or even only commonly acknowledged, the political struggle of the Beneš government might have faced considerable obstacles. Racial persecution did not fit into the image of a democratic nation fighting against foreign totalitarian oppression.

As noted by Ripka, ‘some international Jewish organizations’ were susceptible to the complaints made by Czechoslovak Jewish soldiers.<sup>444</sup> In August 1940, Silverman attacked the undemocratic conditions in the Polish army in his parliamentary speech. He continued as follows:

Regrettable as it is, there is something on the Czech side too, which needs a certain amount of care and attention. I am sure that these things will not be lost sight of. I am drawing attention to these questions. I hope I have done it in a friendly fashion.<sup>445</sup>

Similar discussions were cautiously observed by the Czechoslovak exiles.<sup>446</sup> The British parliamentary arena was indeed more dangerous than occasional reports in the British press in terms of negative propaganda.<sup>447</sup>

Anti-Semitic incidents in the army were repeatedly confirmed by several Czechoslovak ministers and Beneš.<sup>448</sup> The incidents were, however, criticized as the

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see LMA, BoD, Acc 3121/E/03/510, letter sent by the delegation of Jewish soldiers to Brodetsky, 31 July 1940.

<sup>442</sup> Kulka, Erich, ‘Jews in Czechoslovak Armed Forces Abroad During World War II’, pp. 372-375.

<sup>443</sup> Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938-1945*, p. 262; Stříbrný, Jan, ‘Židovští vojenští duchovní a židovská otázka v československém vojsku na Západě v letech 1939 – 1945’, p. 182; Kulka, Erich, ‘Jews in Czechoslovak Armed Forces Abroad During World War II’, p. 374.

<sup>444</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-15-19-1, box 104, ‘Minutes of an informative meeting organized by Ripka, 3 September 1940’.

<sup>445</sup> *Hansard*, Volume 364, 21 August 1940, column 1379. Also Eleanor Rathbone mentioned anti-Semitism in the Allied armies, not specifically in the Czechoslovak, during one of her parliamentary addresses, see *Hansard*, Volume 365, 5 November, column 1175-1176: ‘Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is a considerable number of experienced soldiers belonging to Allied countries who would rather fight in any British Force because of the suspected Fascist reactionary or anti-Semitic feeling in those other Forces; and in view of the fact that it cannot but be to the injury of any Force to have in it reluctantly conscripted soldiers, would not the hon. Gentleman consider the question again in conference with Allied Governments?’ Heumos incorrectly suggests that Rathbone talked concretely about the Czechoslovak army, see: Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938-1945*, p. 259.

<sup>446</sup> The Czechoslovak exiles were aware of Silverman’s speech see: HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 1, Diary entry 21 August 1940, p. 274.

<sup>447</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, box 1, diary entry 12 August 1940, p. 268. Reynold’s News and Daily Worker wrote about the problems in the Czechoslovak army.

deeds of individuals and the Czechoslovaks rejected the idea that the army could be anti-Semitic as a whole. Moreover, Beneš and Ingr appealed to the Jewish soldiers, stating that they should follow first and foremost the higher common goal of the Czechoslovak ‘saintly and righteous cause’.<sup>449</sup> In addition, Beneš in his public speech to the soldiers suggested that both sides should always be tolerant.<sup>450</sup> The Czechoslovak leaders were aware of the problems in the army, but fought against any publicity given to them. In this sense, Jewish complaints about anti-Semitic incidents were presented as going against the Czechoslovak cause. The complaints of Jewish soldiers questioned their loyalty to the resistance movement.

Beneš and Ingr blamed the anti-Semitic atmosphere on the disintegration of the army during the evacuation from France. Furthermore, both statesmen sought the roots of anti-Semitism among Jews themselves. Ingr, in his response to a memorandum submitted by a delegation of Jewish soldiers, referred to the Jewish adherence to Germans back in Czechoslovakia, even though many Jews grew rich when living with the Czech nation. The Minister complained that many Jews used the German language even after the occupation.<sup>451</sup> According to the Minister, the anti-Jewish sentiments in the army were not anti-Semitic, but anti-German.<sup>452</sup>

In his conversation with representatives of the Board of Deputies Beneš presented three main sources of anti-Semitic feelings among the soldiers: 1) It was the general rise of anti-Semitism in the World that influenced a small number of Czechoslovaks. Also some of the officers in the army were affected by this ‘poison’; 2) Agents provocateurs were spreading those sentiments among the soldiers in the army; 3) The Jews themselves were guilty of worsening the situation. For example, as stated by Beneš, some Jews joined the army in Palestine only to get to Western

<sup>448</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-15-19-1, box 104, ‘Minutes of an informative meeting organized by Ripka, 3 September 1940’; Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 172; Beneš, Edvard, *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš : from Munich to new war and new victory* (Leicester: George Alles & Unwin Ltd, 1954), p. 118; Smutný, Jaromír, ‘Edvard Benes a československý odboj za druhé světové války’, p. 57.

<sup>449</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84, Ingr (Minister of Defence) to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 4 November 1940. My translation.

<sup>450</sup> Stříbrný, Jan, ‘Židovští vojenští duchovní a židovská otázka v československém vojsku na Západě v letech 1939 – 1945’, p. 184.

<sup>451</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84, Ingr (Minister of Defence) to the Presidium of the Council of the Ministers, 4 November 1940.

<sup>452</sup> In December 1939, Ingr during a meeting of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris favoured the applications of Jewish soldiers who asked if their German-sounding names could be changed. See Kuklík, Jan (ed.), *Od rozpadu Česko-Slovenska do uznání československé prozatímní vlády 1939-1940. Příloha, Zápis z zasedání Československého národního výboru 1939-1940*, (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 1999), pp. 161-2, doc. 33, the meeting took place on 14 December 1939.

Europe. Beneš thought that they simply wanted to escape the bad economic situation in Palestine and did not have the intention to fight.<sup>453</sup> Equally doubtful was another explanation given by Beneš: anti-Semitic feelings in the army were spread thanks to the Czech liberal tradition. The democracy in the army allowed for the discussion of all topics that soldiers wished.<sup>454</sup> Beneš in any case labelled the allegations as rather exaggerated.

What is important in the case of Ingr and Beneš is the reference to the Jews' own contribution to anti-Semitism in the army. Based on this perception of anti-Semitism, the Jews who complained were perceived as troublemakers. In fact, the Jewish soldiers were aware that their contemplated mass desertion might have only harmed the Jewish political position during and after the war. The authors of the memorandum for Ingr and Beneš decided to stay in the army.<sup>455</sup> The situation finally calmed down in the second half of 1940.<sup>456</sup>

Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak government was still on alert. Shortly after Christmas 1941, Beneš complained to Ingr that although anti-Semitism had actually never played any important role in the army, there were still some 'excesses, whose repetition might lead to serious consequences'.<sup>457</sup> The Christmas celebrations in the army were accompanied by several, mostly verbal, anti-Semitic incidents. Beneš was warned by some Jewish soldiers that 'certain Jews, not so loyal to the Czechoslovak cause, might have appealed to the British authorities and public'.<sup>458</sup> Beneš warned Ingr that similar complaints might have seriously harmed the reputation of the Czechoslovaks.<sup>459</sup> Yet as noted by the Jewish soldiers, the situation in the Czechoslovak army raised the issue of Jewish loyalty. How then was Jewish loyalty perceived by the exiles?

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<sup>453</sup> This information came from Ingr, see: Němeček, Jan – Štoviček, Ivan – Nováčková, Helena, Kuklík, Jan (eds.), *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně I. (1940-1941)*, 'the Minutes of the 9th government meeting, 1 October 1940', pp. 186; *Ibid.*, 'the Minutes of the 10th government meeting, 11 October 1940', p. 193.

<sup>454</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc 3121/E/03/510. Note of interview with His Excellency Dr. Edouard Benes, 13 August 1940. By Adolph G. Brotman.

<sup>455</sup> Stříbrný, Jan, 'Židovští vojenští duchovní a židovská otázka v československém vojsku na Západě v letech 1939 – 1945', p. 183. Furthermore, see YVA, O.59/50, testimony by Alexander Kraus.

<sup>456</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, box 1, the diary entry 24 August 1940; TNA, FO371/24290, C13739, Lockhart to Halifax 17 December 1940.

<sup>457</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 6, Beneš to Ingr, 17 February 1942. My translation.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.* My translation.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.* Beneš in the letter to Ingr energetically rejected that the Czechoslovak army was anti-Semitic. Nevertheless, in order to avoid any possible accusations, he regarded it exigent to investigate all the incidents and to punish the guilty. The President concluded: 'Officers with similar personal qualities have no place in our army.'

### **What did it mean to be ‘loyal’?**

The exiles’ perception of Jewish attitudes towards the resistance movement, particularly towards the army and Jewish political demands, opened the issue of ‘dual loyalty’. Was it possible to be loyal to both the Czechoslovak government and to the land of Israel – to the Zionist ideals – at the same time? Did the Czechoslovaks think that this dual loyalty was possible? Or, to be more precise, how did the exiles understand the term ‘loyalty’? What was demanded from ‘a loyal citizen’?

At the beginning of the war, Beneš told a delegation of Czechoslovak national Jews: ‘You are Jews and Czechoslovaks and I am aware that according to the manner of your work, one does not have to be detrimental to the other’.<sup>460</sup> However, the situation changed soon afterwards. Within a month, Smutný, the Chancellor to Beneš, revealed to Zelmanovits that it was not advisable for the National-Jewish Council to demand recognition as the official representation of the Czechoslovak national Jews in Britain. Any fragmentation of the Czechoslovak resistance movement was unwelcome.<sup>461</sup> People associated with Beneš repeatedly expressed their doubts about the Zionist or Jewish loyalty to the Czechoslovak cause. Smutný remarked that in his opinion ‘a hundred-per-cent supporter of the Czech national interests [could] not be anybody Jewish’.<sup>462</sup> Even Beneš privately criticized the Czechoslovak Zionists. Once he was supposed to have uttered a remark that ‘the Jews [could not] be represented in the [State] Council by Zionists, that there [was] no place for [Zionists] in the Republic of Czechoslovakia and that they should emigrate’.<sup>463</sup>

As argued previously, it was especially strong Czech nationalism that played an enormous role in the confrontation with Jewish issues. Only unconditional adherence to the mainstream Czechoslovak resistance movement was seen by the exiles as an expression of loyalty. No particularistic issues were thus expected, or welcomed. This was, for example, also the case of several Slovak politicians who in

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<sup>460</sup> CZA, A280/25, Zelmanovits’s article in *HaMacabbi*, p. 6f.

<sup>461</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 364, minutes by Smutný of the meeting with Zelmanovits, 16 January 1940.

<sup>462</sup> Heumos, Peter, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938-1945*, p. 259. My translation.

<sup>463</sup> Čechurová, Jana – Kuklík, Jan – Čechura, Jaroslav – Němeček, Jan (eds.), *Válečné deníky Jana Opočenského*, p. 37. Diary entry for 3 September 1940. Opočenský had the information from Kamil Kleiner a journalist and an officer in the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kleiner himself was Jewish and demanded a representation of Jews in the parliament. See *Ibid*, p. 35. Diary entry for 22 August 1940. My translation.

exile tried to promote a more autonomist regime for post-war Slovakia.<sup>464</sup> The evaluation of the perception of the Jews by the Czechoslovak authorities in exile confirmed the trends already recorded among the resistance groups in the homeland. The Jews were not seen as being a reliable and unconditional part of the Czechoslovak resistance.

The importance of the situation in the army and the threats emerging from its occasional utilization by the Zionists should not be marginalized. The government apparently stopped believing in the possibility of dual loyalty among the Czechoslovak Zionists. Based on the information about the Zionists' conflict with the Czechoslovak authorities in Palestine, Smutný told Zelmanovits that 'he [could] appreciate the very confl[ict] which faces every Zionist, but still one must decide once and for ever between the old and new Fatherland'.<sup>465</sup> At almost the same time, the Czechoslovak Zionists in Britain started their campaign for representation in the exile political structures. According to the President's chancellor, the Zionists could not exist between two nations, or as a part of two nations. They were supposed to decide on only one of them and join it with all their efforts. The undesirability of Zionists' particularistic interests was echoed in the highest strata of the Czechoslovak exiles. Its confirmation came during the negotiations of an appointment of a Jew to the exile parliament. Beneš rejected Jewish nomination into the first parliament, also for the reason that he did not reach any agreement with other minorities, especially the Sudeten Germans.<sup>466</sup> It confirmed that the Zionists were treated as any other minority.

The main problem was the different *perceptions* of loyalty. The Zionists still adhered to 'the contract signed' between them and the Czechoslovak state in 1919. They believed in the world of Versailles and rightly pointed to the different records of the Jewish and German minorities' behaviour in pre-war Czechoslovakia. The Zionists were apparently unable to comprehend that the war and occupation radically changed the rules of the game. The Czechoslovak state no longer demanded only

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<sup>464</sup> For example Štefan Osuský, one of the co-founders of the Czechoslovak resistance movement was later forced to leave the government because of his demands for Slovak autonomy and opposition against the notion of Czechoslovak national unity. Němeček, Jan – Šťoviček, Ivan – Nováčková, Helena, Kuklík, Jan (eds.), *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně I. (1940-1941)*, p. 20. Or former Prime Minister between 1935 and 1938, Milan Hodža. *Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>465</sup> CZA, Z4/31705, Leo Hermann to A. Lowrie, 14 May 1940. Hermann forwarded information about Zelmanovits' meeting with Smutný.

<sup>466</sup> CZA, S26/1546, Zelmanovits to Frischer, 7 December 1940. USHMMMA, C2/96, *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941*.

‘passive loyalty’. The Czechoslovak leadership was no longer content with a minority that was loyal in the sense of supporting the regime, but living its own particular life in a national and political sense. The Republic demanded what can be labelled as an ‘active loyalty’; it was a loyalty without preconditions, an unconditional loyalty. Consequently, the perceptions of loyalty, as formulated by the Zionists and Czechoslovaks, could not meet.

In the first war years, also based on the pressure from the Allies, the Czechoslovak government could not rule out completely the presence of Germans in post-war Czechoslovakia. Those were supposed to be concentrated in small districts to distract from the national character of the new European states in the most minimal manner possible. This solution was impossible in the case of the Jews. The special character of their community was to allow a part of them to assimilate, completely, to the major population. Nevertheless, the national Jews, in the sense of the theory of *transfer of population*, were supposed to move to the Jewish state. Although there were minor differences between the planned Czechoslovak solution of the Jewish and German questions, the basic principles were identical. Hence the overt Czechoslovak support of the Zionist movement should be understood in the broader context of the Czechoslovak solution of minority issues in post-war Czechoslovakia. Indeed, it was presented as a possible plan for Europe as a whole.

Beneš was caught by surprise by the Zionist opposition to his plans. He probably expected that his overt support of the Zionist movement would be welcomed by the Jewish nationalists who would, in return, refrain from demanding special privileges based on their nationality. The government’s perception of the Zionists did not change over the first months of 1941, especially when the Zionists rejected an invitation to the opening meeting of the State Council.<sup>467</sup> Moreover, Zelmanovits even started a public campaign to support the Zionists’ claims for representation in the parliament.<sup>468</sup> It again brought up the issue of the fragmentation of the exile movement. Nevertheless, the negotiations continued and, in the second half of 1941, Beneš expressed his willingness to nominate a Zionist to the State Council. However, the Czechoslovak President made a last gesture of protest. Instead

<sup>467</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 394, Zelmanovits to Bechyně, 10 December 1940. The designated chairman of the State Council, Rudolf Bechyně, responded to Zelmanovits that the Zionists’ refusal to take part in the celebratory event was improper. See AÚTGM, EB-II, box 394, Bechyně to Zelmanovits, 12 December 1940.

<sup>468</sup> CZA, S26/1546, Zelmanovits to Frischer, 7 December 1940, supplement from 12 December 1940.

of Zelmanovits, who was supported by the British and American Zionists and who apparently wanted to secure the place for himself, Beneš appointed Arnošt Frischer, a Czechoslovak Zionist living in Palestine.<sup>469</sup> As will be shown later, Frischer was a moderate Zionist and, in fact, accepted Beneš's vision of the Jewish position in post-war Czechoslovakia.



Image no. 6: Arnošt Frischer<sup>470</sup>

Although Frischer was appointed *ad personam*, as any other member of the parliament, he positioned himself and was perceived as a national Jew. The Jewish press wrote about him in this respect and he was also presented as a *Jewish member* during his public appearances in London.<sup>471</sup> What, then, were the reasons that finally persuaded Beneš to accept Jewish minority representation in the parliament? There was another force in play that countered radical Czech nationalism. It was in the interest of the state to protect the image of Czechoslovakia as a democratic country. In these efforts, the Czechoslovaks faced what they perceived as a mighty interlocutor: international Jewish organizations.

### ***The Czechoslovak Exiles and the 'power' of the international Jewish organizations***

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<sup>469</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Wise, Goldmann, Perlzweig to Jan Masaryk, 17 October 1941; Silverman to Beneš, 23 October 1941. As claimed before, Beneš personally was not fond of Zelmanovits.

<sup>470</sup> Photo in author's possession.

<sup>471</sup> For example *The Jewish Chronicle*, 21 November 1941, p. 11 'Mr. Frischer's appointment. Czechoslovak Jewry gratified'; 1 May 1942, p. 9, 'Post-war Czechoslovakia'; AMZV, LA – 1939-1945, box 500, newspaper clippings, *Congress Weekly*, 14 October 1941, *Daily News Bulletin (JTA)*, 24 October 1941; *Zionist Review*, 14 November 1941.

Political negotiations and the concession given to the Zionists opened up another topic that was already part of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations a long time before the war. It was the issue of the role played in world politics by international Jewish organizations and Jewish press, or rather its perception by the Czechoslovak exiles; their alleged influence on American and British public life and on the decision-making of both western governments. Engel's study of the Polish exile administration's relations with Jews during the war is based on the assumption of the deep Polish belief in the power of the American Jewish lobby. The Jews were perceived as an important possible ally.<sup>472</sup> However, the influence of the Jews, as perceived by the Poles, might also have been very negative.<sup>473</sup> How far was the Beneš government policy shaped by their perception of the Jewish lobby in world politics? And how was 'the power of the Jews' perceived by the Czechoslovaks?

As argued in the introduction, the late President Masaryk acknowledged the importance of the support he had received before 1918 from the influential American Jewry.<sup>474</sup> Furthermore, when the Czechoslovak government of the post-Munich Republic discussed the introduction of anti-Jewish legislation, opposition against the laws was justified by their adverse impact on the Czechoslovak image abroad. The specific consequence was to be the threat of the boycott of Czechoslovak goods by the Americans and British.<sup>475</sup>

Likewise the exiles from the very beginning of the war recognized the importance of being on good terms with American and British pro-Jewish political groups. On 14 December 1939 Beneš was visited by a delegation of the National Jewish Council. During the conversation with Zelmanovits, Beneš appreciated their willingness to join the Czechoslovak resistance abroad. Moreover, the ex-President revealed to the delegation his idea of their participation in the struggle for

<sup>472</sup> In the words of 'a high-ranking Polish military intelligence officer', 'The Jews [were] the best newspapermen in the world, [...] winning the Jewish world over [to the Polish cause – note by Engel] could facilitate our [propaganda – Engel] actions in the Allied countries tremendously'. See Engel, David, *Facing a Holocaust*, p. 27.

<sup>473</sup> Engel, David, *Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 20. Jews powerful and dangerous enemy.

<sup>474</sup> Čapek, Karel, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk*, pp. 167-8 and 192-3.

<sup>475</sup> Hahn, Fred, 'Jews and the Second Czech Republic', p. 22; Dagan, Avigdor, ""München" aus jüdischer Sicht', in *München 1938. Das Ende des alten Europa* (Essen: Reimar Hobbing, 1990), p. 352; Krejčová, Helena, 'Specifické předpoklady antisemitismu a protižidovské activity v protektorátu Čechy a Morava', in Jörg K. Hoensch – Stanislav Biman – Ľubomír Lipták (eds.), *Emancipácia Židov – antisemitizmus – prenásledovanie v Nemecku, Rakúsko-Uhorsku, v českých zemiach a na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Veda, SAV, 1999), p. 151; Bednářík, Petr, 'Antisemitismus v českém tisku v období druhé republiky', in *Židé v Čechách. Sborník příspěvků ze semináře konaného 24. a 25. října 2006 v Liberci* (Praha: Židovské museum, 2007), pp. 41f.

Czechoslovakia. Besides their loyalty to the Czechoslovak official representation abroad, Beneš only asked the Zionists to spread the Czechoslovak exiles' propaganda among American and British Jews.<sup>476</sup> Beneš was thus seeking support for the Czechoslovak resistance movement among Jewish groups in the west. Zelmanovits indeed later informed Selig Brodetsky, the head of the Board of Deputies, that it would be important if someone from the Czechoslovak Jewish circles in America could give publicity to the Czechoslovak cause.<sup>477</sup>

The exiles' concerns about the influence of American Jews were revealed during the negotiations of the Jewish representation in the State Council. During one of the first meetings with Beneš, Zelmanovits remarked that based on the theory of continuity with pre-Munich Republic, the national Jews had a 'legal claim' to be represented in the exile parliament. He emphasized that American and British Jews would not be able to grasp the non-appointment of a national Jew.<sup>478</sup> Namier went as far as claiming that this was not 'an internal Czechoslovak problem but a matter of interest to all Zionists throughout the world'.<sup>479</sup> Indeed, Silverman in conversation with Beneš in April 1941 'pointed out to [...] Beneš' with respect, that he underestimates the adverse influences in which the postponement of the settlement of the Jewish Representation in the State Council has resulted, especially the adverse influence in [the] U.S.A.'<sup>480</sup> The Zionists actively sought to cause concerns among the Czechoslovak government.<sup>481</sup>

When a Zionist was not appointed to the first parliament in December 1940, Zelmanovits initiated a public campaign to support the Zionists' ambitions. He perceived it as very ambitious, but the only correct way to achieve the Zionists'

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<sup>476</sup> AÚTGM, k. 364, Beneš's notes about the visit of the National-Jewish Council, 14 December 1939 (the date was confirmed by Jan Němeček in his 'Československá exilová vláda v Londýně a řešení židovské otázky', p. 224, footnote 33). For the perception of the meeting by Zelmanovits, see CZA, Z4/30388. Gedächtnis-Protokoll by Zelmanovits, 14 December 1939.

<sup>477</sup> CZA, A280/16, Zelmanovits to Brodetsky, 28 March 1940.

<sup>478</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 337. Zelmanovits and Otto Arje visit to Beneš, no date (most probably in the autumn of 1940). Zelmanovits mentioned this fact also in a letter to Selig Brodetsky: 'Es ware darauf hinzuzeigen, dass nicht nur das Englische, sondern auch Amerikanische Judentum es erwartet, dass die jüdische Minorität, die in der ČSR ihre, in orderlichen Wahlen gewählten parlamentarischen Vertretern hatte, auch im jetzigen Rumpf Parlament ihre Vertretung haben soll.' See CZA, Z4/30387, Zelmanovits to Brodetsky, 12 August 1940.

<sup>479</sup> TNA, FO371/24290, C13739, Lockhart to Halifax, 17 December 1940.

<sup>480</sup> USHMMA, C2/96, *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941*.

<sup>481</sup> The National-Jewish Council sent a delegation to USA that was to inform American Jewish groups about the negotiations between the Czechoslovak national Jews and the government. See *Di Vochnzaitung – The Jewish Weekly*, vol. VI, no 263, 14 March 1941, 'Czech Jewish Patriots'.

goal.<sup>482</sup> Zelmanovits' group, although invited, intentionally did not attend the opening session of the parliament. In addition, they prepared a protest memorandum for the Jewish press, international Jewish organizations and the British government.<sup>483</sup> The desired effect occurred immediately. After hearing about the reports prepared for the Jewish press, the Secretary to Beneš (most probably Táborský), asked Zelmanovits to inform the news agencies that the negotiations were not closed and would continue.<sup>484</sup> A sentence about the ongoing negotiations with the Jews was also included at the last moment in the opening speech by Beneš to the parliament.<sup>485</sup> Later, when the articles about the non-inclusion of a Jew – *not* a Zionist – appeared in the press, the Czechoslovaks were even more concerned about the negative impact on their image.<sup>486</sup> Victor M. Bienstock, from the JTA, described his conversation with Masaryk:

I had lunch yesterday with Jan Masaryk who asked me to assure his Jewish friends in the States that there was no need for alarm with regard to the State Council situation. He said he knew there was some alarm over the fact that a Jewish member had not been appointed, and he wanted his friends to know there was no question of 'playing dirty'. He was keeping an eye on the question.<sup>487</sup>

Masaryk felt obliged to refer to his close ties with Jewish organizations in the USA and also to the name of Masaryk, 'the idol of the Jews'.<sup>488</sup> Later, in April 1941, Zelmanovits informed Schwarzbart that Beneš was suddenly willing, under further conditions, to appoint a national Jew to parliament. The President was allegedly influenced by the campaign in the American Jewish press.<sup>489</sup> In addition, Stephen Wise's intervention might have contributed to the decision.<sup>490</sup>

<sup>482</sup> CZA, S26/1546, Zelmanovits to Frischer, 7 December 1940, a supplement from 12 December 1940.

<sup>483</sup> TNA, FO371/24290, C13739, Lockhart to Halifax, 17 December 1940.

<sup>484</sup> CZA, S26/1546, Zelmanovits to Frischer, 7 December 1940, supplement from 12 December 1940.

<sup>485</sup> HIA, Ivo Ducháček Papers, #1.6, Diary entry 11 December 1940. The remark about the negotiations with Jews was included on Ripka's and Masaryk's initiative. Both ministers considered it significant because of the influence of Jewish groups in international politics. See CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-1, box 104, 'Minutes of an informative meeting organized by Ripka, 18 December 1940'. For the text of Beneš's speech see: Vondrová, Jitka, *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka*, p. 81, doc. 44, the opening speech of the Czechoslovak State Council, 11 December 1940. T

<sup>486</sup> For example, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 20 December 1940, p. 9, 'No Jews on Czech State Council'.

<sup>487</sup> LMA, BOD, ACC3121/E03/510, Victor M. Bienstock (J.T.A.) to Adolph Brotman, 13 December 1940.

<sup>488</sup> See the report by Bruce Lockhart for the Viscount Halifax, 17 December 1940. Lockhart wrote: 'M. Jan Masaryk has assumed his father's role as the chief opponent of anti-Semitism, and he is the idol of the American Jews.'

<sup>489</sup> YVA, Ignacy Schwarzbart Papers, M.2/761. Schwarzbart's Diary, 28 April 1941. For the original Polish verison see YVA, M.2/748, 28 April 1941. 'Zdaje sie, ze glossy prasy zydowsko-amerikanskiej

A nationally Jewish MP was finally appointed in November 1941. Hence in the end the Czechoslovak Zionists succeeded. The role of the Jewish press has to be acknowledged especially when other Czechoslovak minorities, particularly the Germans, never received such recognition.<sup>491</sup> Likewise, Beneš later admitted that the Zionists had a far-reaching (*dalekosáhlý*) influence in Britain, but especially in the United States. Therefore he decided to support their claim to have an MP.<sup>492</sup> During the same talks with Czech-Jewish assimilationists, Masaryk added that the whole American war effort was dependent on American Jews, who cooperated with Zionists.<sup>493</sup> Beneš's concerns about the public reaction in Britain and even more so in the United States are fundamental in explaining his concession to the Zionists in the second half of 1941. These worries were interconnected with Beneš's perception of the power possessed by American Jewish organizations. This seems more likely when we keep in mind that Frischer was appointed to the exile parliament in November 1941, at a point when the American government still did not fully recognise the Czechoslovak government-in-exile.<sup>494</sup> At that time, Beneš's future diplomatic position was still not entirely secure – hence the government's overestimation of the Jewish influence helped the Zionists to have a member on the exile parliament. At the beginning of 1942, Jaromír Nečas, the State Minister, informed the exiles after his return from America about the 'really extensive influence' of the American Jews. Interestingly, the Minister acknowledged their

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krytyzujace stanowisko rządu czeskiego w tej sprawie [appointment of a Jewish member to the parliament] wpłynely Benesza w tym sensie, ze kompromisowo pzdjal koncepcje pierwsza [appointment of a National Jew in the case the Orthodoxy and assimilants would not oppose it].

<sup>490</sup> Němeček, Jan – Kuklík, Jan – Nováčková, Helena – Šťoviček, Ivan (Eds.), *Od uznání československé zahraniční prozatímní vlády do vyhlášení válečného stavu Německu 1940-1941. Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky, sv. B/2/1*, (Prague: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2006), Document no. 121, pp. 277-278. Stephen Wise to Jan Masaryk 21 January 1941; Weizmann, Chaim, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann. Series A. Letters, Volume XX, July 1940-January 1943* (eds. By Michael J. Cohen) (New Brunswick, NJ: O.U.P., 1978), p. 229. Weizmann to Beneš, 27 November 1941.

<sup>491</sup> Brandes, *Detlef, Der Weg zur Vertreibung. Pläne und Entscheidung zum 'Transfer' der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen*, pp. 128-150.

<sup>492</sup> CNA, MV – L, box 255, file 2-63-2. A Report by the Association of Czech-Jews, 15 May 1942.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.* The same sentiments were shared by the Chancellor to Beneš, Jaromír Smutný, who remarked during a conversation with Czech-Jewish assimilationists: 'In relation to today's prosperity of the Zionists and their service for the war effort of the USA' ('Vzhledem k nynější prosperitě sionistů a jejich službě válečné výrobě USA [...]') CNA, MV-L, box 255, 2-63-2, Smutný for the Ministry of Interior, 19 July 1942. Czech Jewish assimilationists in their memorandum about this meeting did not forget to make reference to the 1919 negotiations in Versailles. During the conference, they stated, Zionists forced the Czechs to accept the 'disgraceful obligation of protecting minorities'. According to assimilationists, history was repeating itself during the Second World War (see CNA, MV-L, box 255, file 2-63-2. A Report by the Association of Czech-Jews, 15 May 1942).

<sup>494</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady*, pp. 411-412.

sympathies for the Czechoslovak cause that was only partially affected by the reports about anti-Semitism in the Czechoslovak army.<sup>495</sup> There was no word about the parliament or minority rights. The appointment of Frischer was to ‘appease’ American Jews.<sup>496</sup>

In his letter to Roosevelt, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, Beneš based his political struggle on the democratic tradition of the Czechs. When dealing with the political ambitions of the Czechoslovak Zionists, the Czechoslovak President faced the danger of being presented by the American Jewish press as a man who declined the ‘just’ demands of the Czechoslovak Jews. Also the fact that the ‘anti-Semitic’ Poles appointed Schwarzbart, a Zionist, to the parliament at the beginning of the war caused an unavoidable comparison. The Czechoslovak nationalists opposed any concession to minorities. Yet the threat of losing the reputation of a democratic statesman, when attacked by ‘mighty’ American Jews, caused temporary concessions.

The belief in the influence of American pro-Zionist Jews was wide-spread. Even pro-Jewish politicians willingly spread this notion, which helped them in approaching the governments of East-Central Europe.<sup>497</sup> The anti-Semitic perception of Jews was very fluid and some of the prejudices became commonly accepted. Even politicians, who based their whole political struggle on repeating references to their own democratic tradition, expressed their worries about American Jewish power. However, can we prove any actual impact of this ‘lobby’ on the negotiations between the Czechoslovak exiles and the American and British governments during the first years of the war?

### ***The British and American views of the Czechoslovak Exiles’ treatment of the Jews***

The United Kingdom and the United States were the main liberal democracies in the world and were natural partners of all the countries that fought against the Axis. The Allies presented themselves as fighters for a just cause and also wanted to be perceived as such. That was the case with the minor parts of the alliance, of the governments-in-exile too. A fair treatment of minorities was seen as being a part of this liberal democratic image. However, how did the western democracies

<sup>495</sup> HIA, Ivo Ducháček Papers, file #1.9, Ducháček’s Diary, 9 January 1942.

<sup>496</sup> AMZV, LA – 1939-1945, box 500, Fischl on the coverage of Frischer’s appointment in the press, 15 December 1941.

<sup>497</sup> Engel, David, ‘Perception of Power – Poland and World Jewry’, pp. 17-28.

perceive the exiles' attitude towards the Jews? As noted in the Polish case study, the Poles' Jewish policy contributed to the British reluctance to allow Jewish mass immigration to Palestine. The British government were afraid that the Poles might have utilised it for their own goal to ensure the mass exodus of Jews from Poland; these plans were indeed contemplated by the Polish political mainstream.<sup>498</sup> Can any such relation be documented in the Czechoslovak case? Were the Czechoslovaks' concerns about the Jewish influence based on an accurate assessment of the American and British policies? The main areas where the Allied interests in the Czechoslovak Jewish policy might have lain were the alleged anti-Semitism in the army and the representation of the Zionists in the administration.

The British were the main power that was actually in the position to influence the exiles in relation to the situation in their armies. The soldiers were stationed on British soil and only the British could allow the exiles to form and sustain their armed forces. Consequently, the British followed the development within the armies. The Foreign Office had information about anti-Semitic incidents in the Czechoslovak forces from Bruce Lockhart, the British diplomatic representative to the Provisional Czechoslovak government. But Lockhart at the same time downplayed the importance of the incidents and stressed the Czechoslovaks' positive reputation and explained the anti-Semitism in economic terms. Based on information Lockhart gained from Beneš, 'the Jews were allegedly the first to escape [from Czechoslovakia] and some of them, at least, succeeded in transferring certain sums of money to [Britain].'<sup>499</sup> We do not have precise information about the perception of the situation in the Czechoslovak army by the Foreign Office. Yet we may use the British evaluation of the situation among exiled Poles. The Poles were repeatedly criticised by pro-Jewish activists for their anti-Semitic behaviour prior to and during the war. When confronted with the information, the Foreign Office was not persuaded of the advisability of publicizing the information, or even negotiating it

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<sup>498</sup> Wasserstein, Bernard, 'Polish Influences on British Policy Regarding Jewish Rescue Efforts in Poland 1939-1945', pp. 183-191.

<sup>499</sup> TNA, FO371/24290, Lockhart to Halifax 17 December 1940. 'From my talks with [Beneš and Masaryk] I deduce that there is very little truth in Mr. Namier's assertion that the Czechs are developing anti-Semitic tendencies. In the army there was some months ago some discrimination against Jews, partly, I think, because the Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia were the first to escape and some of them, at least, succeeded in transferring certain sums of money to this country. But Mr. Zelmanovič himself admitted that conditions for Jews in the army had improved very much, and President Beneš himself has taken strong measures to check any anti-Semitic sentiments among the Czechoslovak Officers.'

with the Poles. Frank Roberts from the Central Department of the Foreign Office made the following comment:

We must clearly hope that the Polish Government will benefit from their sojourn in this country and adopt more tolerant ideas against the day of their return to Poland. But this can only be a natural growth and I am sure that the position of Polish Jews at home will not be improved if the Polish Government now in this country are badgered by H. M. Government or by the World Jewish Congress in spite of the satisfactory attitude they have adopted in public. Nor will it, unfortunately, strengthen their position with their own people, which is obviously a British interest against the day of the reconstruction of Poland, if their enemies are able to accuse them, however, unjustly, of having fallen under Jewish influence during their stay in this country.<sup>500</sup>

The Poles were firmly supported by officials in the Foreign Office. This assessment of the Polish situation can hence also be used in the Czechoslovak case.<sup>501</sup> Furthermore, the files of the Foreign Office do not contain any significant material accusing the Czechoslovak exiles of strong anti-Semitism. Although remarks about growing anti-Jewish sentiments were time-to-time forwarded to the British, they never reached the scale of the Polish case. Additionally, the British were afraid that had they supported the Jewish claims against the exiles, the exiles might have started public campaigns to support Jewish immigration to Palestine; a development that the British government wanted beyond any doubt to avoid.<sup>502</sup>

The British remained passive also during the Czechoslovak-Zionist dispute about the State Council. The British administration did not interfere at all. Lockhart

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<sup>500</sup> TNA, FO371/26769, C4879/4655/55. Minute by FK Roberts, 9 May 1941. See more in Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Oxford: Institute for Jewish Affairs, 1979), pp. 121f.

<sup>501</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*, p. 77f. and 427f. Brandes states that it was in the British interest that Poles, as well as Czechoslovaks had strong fighting corps in Britain, but also with good public image. Large waves of deserters from Polish or Czechoslovak army were hence usually admitted to the Military Auxiliary Pioneer Corps of the British army and they were not forced to stay in the Polish or Czechoslovak armies.

<sup>502</sup> TNA, FO371/26769, C4879/4655/55. Minute by FK Roberts, 9 May 1941. ‘But even if the Polish Government’s attitude were less satisfactory I should still doubt the wisdom of our taking up this question with the Polish Government. Since there are some 3 million Jews in Poland (10 per cent of the population of pre-war Poland) and many of them are not very well assimilated, any Polish Government must inevitably aim at finding some solution of this problem by emigration. Since, however, no other country is willing to accept Polish Jews and the absorptive capacity of Palestine is strictly limited, it is not in the interest of H. M. Government to encourage such a policy on the part of the Poles. All we can do is to express the pious hope that the Poles will in fact do their best to assimilate the Jews. This being so, it can hardly help us or the Poles to embark upon any conversations with the Polish Government about their Jewish problem’.

sent a report to Viscount Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, after discussing the issue with Beneš and Masaryk. In this report, Lockhart clearly sided with the Czechoslovak leadership and even added that ‘it would be most unfortunate if a Zionist problem were to be added to the other difficulties of the Provisional Czechoslovak government’.<sup>503</sup> The opinion was shared by the Foreign Office when one official commented on the issue: ‘I see no reason whatever why Dr Benes should agree to [...] representation of ‘Zionism’ in his provisional Parliament’.<sup>504</sup> The British government was appealing to Beneš to include some of the exiled democratic Sudeten Germans to the parliament.<sup>505</sup> But there was no such British involvement in the case of the Zionist representation. Lockhart in his memorandum sharply rejected the interventions by Namier.<sup>506</sup> On the contrary, the British government suspiciously followed Beneš’s pro-Zionist policy. The Foreign Office felt threatened by Beneš’s support of the Zionists.<sup>507</sup> The Polish and Czechoslovak preference for Zionism was perceived as an attempt to solve East-Central Europeans’ problems on Britain’s account. The British would apparently prefer assimilation and integration of the Jews into the major East-Central European nations. As a consequence, there was no call for Jewish minority representation in the Czechoslovak administration.

The Americans did not interfere extensively in the exiles’ political affairs during the first period of the war. This notwithstanding, the Roosevelt administration advised that minorities should be represented on the Czechoslovak government. Roosevelt allegedly recommended that four of the former minorities living in Czechoslovakia should be included in the exile administration;<sup>508</sup> by this the Americans probably did not mean the Jews.<sup>509</sup> However, it seems that the Czechoslovaks’ perception of the Americans’ viewpoint and not the real situation was to influence the exiles’ behaviour. Being recognised by this superpower

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<sup>503</sup> TNA, FO371/24290. Lockhart to Halifax, 17 December 1940.

<sup>504</sup> TNA, FO371/24290, C13739 Representation of Czechoslovak Jews on the Czechoslovak State Council. Note by ‘Ram’ 2 January 1941. ReB (Butler?) added a week later: ‘Nor I’. Another official complained that this was exactly ‘the sort of intrigue’ that caused the British government’s problems with conscription of Czechoslovaks and Poles. *Ibid.* Note 9 January 1941. *Ibid.*, Note by ‘JGW’, 31 December 1940.

<sup>505</sup> Smetana, Vít, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)*, p. 275.

<sup>506</sup> TNA, FO371/24290, C13739, Lockhart to Halifax, 17 December 1940. Furthermore consult: Parliamentary Archives (HPA), Bruce Lockhart Papers, LOC/34, Diary entry 11 December 1940.

<sup>507</sup> TNA, FO371/26388, C14276/216/12. Minute by Roberts, 4 January 1942.

<sup>508</sup> FDRPL, President’s Secretary’s File, Box 2. John G. Winant to Cordell Hull, 24 July 1941.

<sup>509</sup> They probably meant four amongst: Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians.

remained one of the main aims of the Czechoslovak exiles.<sup>510</sup> In his letter to the Czechoslovak underground groups, Beneš stressed that the Americans did not understand developments in Europe.<sup>511</sup> A fair treatment of minorities was part of the image of liberal democracies and the Czechoslovak exiles wanted to be considered as one of them. The perception of American ideals was behind the exiles' efforts to reconcile with the Zionists. Moreover, as documented in the previous section, the exiles believed in the influence of the American pro-Zionist lobby. This was not the case with the Beneš government understanding of the influence possessed by the British Zionists.<sup>512</sup> The truth is that the non-appointment of a Zionist, or at least a Jew to the State Council, caused a deep disappointment among pro-Jewish activists.<sup>513</sup> However, the influence of the Jewish organizations on the American and British governments was simply non-existent.<sup>514</sup> Yet, apparently, this reality was not recognised by the Czechoslovak government.

However, one issue in relation to international Jewish organizations and their attitude towards Czechoslovakia has to be addressed now. How was the development of the Czechoslovak exiles' attitude towards the Jews perceived? Did the government's plans change the American Zionists' positive appraisal of Czechoslovakia? Or were there also other factors in play besides the concerns about growing Czechoslovak nationalism?

### ***The Perception of the Czechoslovaks by International Jewish Organizations***

The development in the first war years attested to a change in the Czechoslovak perception of the Jewish presence in the Republic. The clash of Czech and Jewish nationalisms, combined with the exiles' worries about their image in the west *and* at home, caused the deterioration of the Czechoslovaks' perception of the

<sup>510</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Soumrak a úsvit československé demokracie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady*, pp. 407-412.

<sup>511</sup> Šolc, Jiří (Ed.), E. Beneš: *Vzkazy do vlasti. Směrnice a pokyny československému domácímu odboji za druhé světové války*, p.141. Document 72, a message home, 10 October 1942.

<sup>512</sup> APNP, Viktor Fischl Diary entry 29 May 1942.

<sup>513</sup> CZA, A87/386, Zelmanovits, a confidential note, 23 December 1940.

<sup>514</sup> The fact about the real power of the American Zionists was known also to other world Jewish organizations. Moshe Shertok, after his return from USA in April 1943 remarked on behalf of the American Jewish organizations: 'I grieve to inform you that the Zionist movement has few supporters among American Jewry. To our sorrow the 5,000,000 American Jews place too much faith in what the neighbours think, and fear that open admission of their race and open support of the Zionist movement will render them victims of anti-Semitic action'. Sachar, Howard M. (gen. ed.): *The Rise of Israel. A Documentary Record from the Nineteenth Century to 1948. A Facsimile Series Reproducing over 1,900 Documents in 39 Volumes* (New York - London: Garland Publishing, 1987). Volume 31. The Zionist Political Programm 1940-1947 (ed. by Michael J. Cohen), p. 120. (FO371/35035).

national Jews. But how did the perception of Czechoslovakia by international Jewish organizations change?

First of all, we have to differentiate between various international Jewish organizations and their ideological positions. Concerning the mainstream Jewish organizations in the United States and Britain, the focus will be especially on the Orthodox and supporters of Zionism. The latter, especially the WJC and the American Jewish Congress, represented the broader masses of Jewish people in the west. Nonetheless, the eloquence of British Agudists, especially their leaders Harry A. Goodman and Solomon Schonfeld, cannot be marginalized. In political terms, pro-Zionist activists had more specific demands than the Orthodox. The first war years hence did not change Agudists' relations with the Czechoslovak exiles. On the contrary, *Di Vochnzaitung*, British Orthodoxy's weekly, repeatedly criticized Zionists for their political attacks on the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, and on the true friends of Jews, Beneš and Masaryk.<sup>515</sup> Indeed, pro-Zionist organizations, linked to the Czechoslovak exiled Zionists, expressed concerns about developments in Czechoslovakia. They, for example, raised the issues of anti-Semitic incidents in the Czechoslovak army and among the Czechoslovak leadership.<sup>516</sup>

Yet the main issue that shaped mutual relations was the appointment of a national Jew to the State Council and the rejection of the Jewish minority status in the post-war Republic. The western Zionists were informed about the development at the end of 1940 and immediately started inquiries to assess the real state of affairs.<sup>517</sup> According to some of the statements made by American Zionists, their perception of the Czechoslovaks was about to change. For example Arieh Tartakower from the WJC concluded that '[t]he attitude of [the Czechoslovak] government to the question of a Jewish representative in the Czech[oslovak] National Council [wa]s very strange

<sup>515</sup> *Di Vochnzaitung (The Jewish Weekly)*, Vol. V, no. 249, 6 December 1940. 'But when Beneš and Masaryk and their delegates are attacked in a Yiddish daily, by one of these „nationalist“ writers, for not fulfilling the nationalist wishes then Anglo-Jewry must take it quite clear that we will not tolerate the method of the Carpathians in London. The names of Benes and Masaryk stand above these internecine quarrels. We Jews have not too many friends, that we can afford to jeopardise the friendship of men such as these in order to fulfil the personal ambitions of one or two individuals.' For another example see *Di Vochnzaitung (The Jewish Weekly)*, Vol. VI, no. 297, 5 December 1941.

<sup>516</sup> See, for example, The American Jewish Committee, *Governments-in-Exile on Jewish Rights* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1942), p. 17; AJHSA, Stephen S. Wise Collection, box 91, Perlzweig to Wise and Goldman, 25 February 1941.

<sup>517</sup> At the same time, as already mentioned, the information about the conflict between the Czechoslovaks and Zionists found its way into Jewish press., a fact that was not welcomed and appreciated by the Czechoslovak authorities. One of the reasons was that in 1941, the US government still did not recognize the Czechoslovak government-in-exile as the official authority for occupied Czechoslovakia. The Czechs were therefore afraid of their image among the American public.

and *should not be tolerated* [italics – J. L.].<sup>518</sup> Wise in this respect contacted Masaryk, but the Czechoslovak government ignored the intervention.<sup>519</sup> This further stirred the situation. Maurice Perlzweig, a leader of the WJC in America, thus concluded:

The failure of Masaryk to reply to Wise's cable is a grave matter. [...] Moreover, there were serious signs of anti-Semitism in the Czech Army and in some circles represented in the present coalition government about which we were constrained to take action in London months ago.<sup>520</sup>

These comments notwithstanding, the situation did not erupt into any conflict as had happened in the case of the Polish exiles.<sup>521</sup>

Silverman's parliamentary speech in August 1940 about anti-Semitism in the exiled armies frightened Beneš and his colleagues. Drtina hence asked Minister Nečas to approach the Labour MP and dispel his worries about the development among the Czechoslovak exiles. The meeting took place in the Houses of Parliament in January 1941. During the talk, two main points came to the fore. Firstly, Nečas defended the Czechoslovak democratic tradition and referred to the members of the government, where Masaryk, following his father, and Ripka were 'downright Philosemite[s]'.<sup>522</sup> Furthermore, Nečas himself led the Jewish Department for the late President Masaryk.<sup>523</sup> It was a clear reference to the positive past that was to help in contemporary diplomatic negotiations.

The discussion later moved to another issue that was to play an enormous role in the assessment of Czechoslovak anti-Semitism during the whole period between 1919 and 1947. One of the MPs accompanying Silverman made 'a joke' about the mutual rapprochement between the Czechoslovaks and Poles during confederation

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<sup>518</sup> AJA, H159/6, Tartakower to BS WJC, 7 February 1941.

<sup>519</sup> Wise sent a letter to Masaryk in January 1941. The American Zionist leader expressed his disappointment that no Jew was appointed to the parliament. Masaryk, as it seems, did not respond to the letter. Viz Němeček, Jan – Kuklík, Jan – Nováčková, Helena – Šťovíček, Ivan (Eds.), *Od uznání československé zahraniční prozatímní vlády do vyhlášení válečného stavu Německu 1940-1941. Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky*, sv. B/2/1, Document no. 121, pp. 277-278. Stephen Wise to Jan Masaryk 21 January 1941.

<sup>520</sup> AJA, Stephen Wise Collection, box 91, Perlzweig to Wise and Goldmann, 25 February 1941; for the worries about anti-Semitism among Czechoslovak exiles see Duker, Abraham, G. *Governments-in-Exile on Jewish Rights* (New York: the American Jewish Committee, 1942), p. 17.

<sup>521</sup> Engel, David, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, pp. 90-93.

<sup>522</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 6, Report on the talk Minister Nečas had with Silverman (concerning alleged anti-Semitic tendencies in the Czechoslovak Army), 1 February 1941 (the meeting took place on 29 January 1941).

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*

talks.<sup>524</sup> One of the features was, in his words, the introduction of Czech anti-Semitism. Silverman, however, immediately disagreed and concluded ‘that the Czech nation [was] democratic and that one could not compare the conditions among the Czechs and Poles. He [had] expressed himself roundly about anti-Semitism in the Polish army and among the Polish leadership’.<sup>525</sup> Nečas later concluded that his arguments were accepted by Silverman, but the Minister recommended maintaining good relations with this ‘upstanding’ but ‘stubborn’ man.<sup>526</sup>

Reference to the Czechoslovak tradition and a comparison with the situation among the Poles made the state of affairs among the Czechoslovaks less momentous. All concerned knew that even the situation in the Czechoslovak case was not ideal, but the pro-Jewish activists believed in the good intentions of the Czechoslovaks. In addition, more revealing is a letter sent to Masaryk by Neville Laski, the former President of the Board of Deputies:

My dear Jan,

[...] I have, as you know, so high a regard for Czechoslovakia that I should dislike intensely any publicity being given to either of these cases, or to an allegation which is sometimes made that there is a body of anti-[S]emitic feeling in the Czechoslovak Armed Forces. I feel sure that this is not the case, and that if there is any anti-[S]emitism it is of a trifling character. Nevertheless, an assurance from you which I could use would be of the highest value, and the facts with regard to the two men whose names I append hereunder would be of value in preventing my informant [...] bursting into public song, or perhaps attempting to refer to a question in the House of Commons. As you know, there is always some kindly disposed Labour member who will take up a grievance without realizing that perhaps there may be reactions which do a great deal of harm. It is exactly this which I wish to avoid.<sup>527</sup>

Some Jewish politicians hence even warned the Czechoslovak exiles beforehand of the potential danger. Laski’s letter documents the special place that Masaryk enjoyed among Jews. His close personal friendship with, for example, Weizmann is well-known. Moreover, Schwarzbart, otherwise a very critical observer, admitted that he was prompted to visit the Foreign Minister primarily ‘by a desire of [his] heart to make the acquaintance of Jan Masaryk’.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.* My translation.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> LMA, BoD, ACC3121/E03/510, Neville Laski to Jan Masaryk, 5 June 1941.

<sup>528</sup> YVA, M.2/763. Schwarzbart’s Diary, entry 13 August 1941.

Yet the ‘myth’ of Czechoslovak democracy also caused concerns among pro-Jewish activists. In their view, the change in the democratic Czechoslovaks’ attitude towards the Jews might have far-reaching consequences. Following the non-appointment of a national Jew to the first State Council, Noah Barou of BS WJC, approached Beneš in the following manner:

Jewish democrats have often looked up to Dr Benes and to the Czech Democracy, as to the leaders of the democratic forces among the smaller nations, and have been always ready to rally around his banner. In the tragic conditions of the last two years, it would be a very great moral blow, if they should have to nurse any doubts, about the change of attitude of [sic] behalf of Dr Benes or the Czechs in general. Our mutual enemies are starting a double w[h]ispering campaign. The[y] tell the non-Jewish world: you see even the Czechs are changing their attitude to the Jews. They are saying to Jews: you see, even your friends the Czechs are abandoning you. The moral value of the attitude of Dr Benes and the Czech[s], because of their standing and influence in the democratic world – is too important – and must be preserved from any misunderstanding and misinterpretation.<sup>529</sup>

This open statement shows that the Czechoslovak tradition was utilised to influence Beneš’s plans. This notion of Czechoslovak decency, very often sustained by the Czechoslovaks themselves, was suddenly used against them. The intention was to show Beneš that his treatment of Jewish issues had broader implications, exactly based on the moral reasons on which he built the exiles’ prestige abroad. It was hinted that because of his true democratic spirit and for the sake of it, he was supposed to handle minority issues more carefully.<sup>530</sup> For example, Schwarzbart was

<sup>529</sup> USHMM, WJC-L, C2/96. *Report Re Interview with the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic Dr Benes, 17 April 1941.* Sydney Silverman added: ‘Jews throughout the World have always regarded Dr Benes and the Czechoslovakian Republic as the outpost of world democracy and the most enlightened nation in regard to the treatment of the Jewish problem in general and of the Jewish minority in Czechoslovakia. The fact, that the State Council started its existence without Jewish representation made Jewish public opinion throughout the World uneasy and it is important that the leading Jewish Organizations should be able to give the necessary explanation and to mitigate the uneasiness.’ See also Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Minutes of meeting between Beneš and Namier, 7 January 1941. ‘Moreover, whatever the Czechs do will affect far greater numbers of Jews than those of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs are known to have behaved better to the Jews than any other nation in that part of the world, and every other nation will say that if the Czechs do this or that, surely they are entitled to do the same.’

<sup>530</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Tartakower to Beneš, 9 April 1941, a concept that was probably not sent. Actually, this was exactly the way how the situation was perceived by pro-Zionist politicians. Tartakower internally mentioned that it was not easy to believe that that Czechoslovak government, whose attitude towards the Jews has always been, even in the days of complete independence of Czechoslovakia very correct, should decline this people just now its right to be represented on the Czech National Council. See AJA, WJC Papers, H102/2, Tartakower to Zelmanovits, 17 February 1941.

afraid that Beneš's position might have influenced *and* been utilised by the Polish government-in-exile.<sup>531</sup> Likewise, as expressed by Tartakower: 'There might be some countries, not so eager to assimilate their Jewish citizens, which might accept the slogan of enforcing their emigration from the respective countries on the basis of principle formulated by [Beneš].'<sup>532</sup> The WJC saw a deeper dimension in Beneš's attitude. The whole point was precisely summarized by Lillie Schulz in New York:

the Beneš idea [is] the most dangerous idea which had yet been projected, and could have a far-reaching effect upon the future position of the Jews in Europe, particularly because it came from one whose reputation has always been of a liberal and friend of Jews.<sup>533</sup>

According to the Zionists, Beneš's vision of only two possibilities for the Jews in Czechoslovakia – assimilation or emigration – might have set a welcomed pretext for other countries in the region. It is notable that the WJC did not observe purely negative intentions behind the theories presented by Beneš. The President allegedly did not want to rid the country of its Jews, but to assimilate them. In contrast, there were other countries in the region, with a clear reference to Poland, Hungary and Romania, that might have misused Beneš's views.

Indeed, some of WJC members attributed the change in the Czechoslovak government's plans to the influence of the exiled Poles during negotiations of the Central European Confederation.<sup>534</sup> It was inconceivable to those activists that the Czechoslovaks could act accordingly without being influenced by an external power. Hence, as after Munich, the change in the Czechoslovak treatment of the Jews was attributed to external actors and factors.

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<sup>531</sup> YVA, M.2/748. Schwarzbart's Diary, entry 28 April 1941. 'Obawiam sie znacznego wpływu jego pogladow na sprawę polsko-żydowska.'

<sup>532</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Tartakower to Beneš, 9 April 1941, a concept, probably was not sent.

<sup>533</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Lillie Schulz to Wise, Perlzweig, Tartakower, Goldmann, Lipsky 3 September 1941.

<sup>534</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Maurice Perlzweig to Stephen Wise, Nahum Goldmann, Arieh Tartakower, 11 April 1941. 'I hazard the conjecture that [Beneš] has taken his present attitude as part of the price of the new alliance with Poland. If there is to be anything like a federal arrangement, the Poles will want to have assurances that they will be free from the influence of the liberal tradition of Masaryk. I have for some years followed very closely the development of cooperation among anti-Semitic powers, and I am convinced that the attitude of Benes simply means that the Czechs have now been *led by circumstances* into this combination [italics mine].' However, it is doubtful that any such Polish influence on the Czechoslovak exiles could be documented. About the Confederation talks see Smetana, Vít, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)*, pp. 244-273; Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*, pp. 103-109, 213-219, 332-342.

When Beneš appointed Frischer to the State Council, the situation changed completely. Beneš allegedly admitted to Zelmanovits that his theory of not granting minority status to the Jews in Czechoslovakia was not ‘the only possible solution’.<sup>535</sup> Furthermore, Zelmanovits was confident that Beneš’s attitude could be changed by ‘certain influence’.<sup>536</sup> In fact, according to a hand-written note, probably by Tartakower, the Czechoslovak State Minister Ján Lichner and the Consul-General in New York, Karel Hudec confirmed that minority rights would be again granted to Czechoslovak Jews.<sup>537</sup> Was the information only part of a diplomatic game on the side of the Czechoslovak authorities? There is no proof that the Czechoslovak government ever expressed their willingness to restore the protection of minorities in the post-war Republic. Indeed, Bohuš Beneš, the President’s nephew, confirmed by mid-1942 that there would not be any minority rights in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovaks would consider them only if they would be applied generally in the whole world, including the United States and Britain.<sup>538</sup>

In any case, late 1941 brought reconciliation in Czechoslovak-Jewish relations in the west. The Czechoslovak democratic tradition influenced the Zionists’ response to the changing policy of the exiles in two ways. Nobody among the Zionists understood the new Beneš position in the sense of a broader change in the Czechoslovak plans for minorities. Simultaneously, no one among the Zionists understood that the minority rights granted to the Czechoslovak Jews after the First World War were linked to the rights granted to the Czechoslovak Germans and Hungarians. The Zionist perception of the Czechoslovak democratic ‘myth’ caused concerns about the development in Europe in case the Czechoslovaks would stick to the plans they had presented. Yet a reference to the Czechoslovak past was utilised by pro-Jewish activists during their negotiations with the Czechoslovak authorities in order to change the exiles’ policy. The Zionists’ concerns were corroborated by worries of the possible effects on the other governments in the region. Curiously, the existence of those governments – especially the Polish – made the Czechoslovak case less acute. Hence diplomatic negotiations and not a public campaign were chosen to change the Czechoslovak position. As stated by Schwarzbart to Masaryk:

<sup>535</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H102/2, Zelmanovits to Tartakower, 29 October 1941.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.* A hand-written note: ‘Min. Lichner + Hudec – office. inf. Cz. Govt. dec. to appt J rep in NC. Jew min rits granted as bef. War. Believe now everyth. alright.’

<sup>538</sup> APNP, Fond Viktor Fischl, diary entry, 6 July 1942.

‘Jews have to treat differently a friend who makes a mistake from an adversary who continues to make mistakes.’<sup>539</sup>

Consequently, the Czechoslovak government was able to keep its prestigious reputation for the second half of the war. The unwavering trust of the Zionists in Czechoslovakia was confirmed by Gerhart Riegner of the WJC office in Geneva. In late 1941, Riegner argued that all the exiled governments should publish a declaration confirming the rights of Jews (not minority rights) for the post-war period.<sup>540</sup> He expressed the opinion that the easiest way would be to firstly ask the governments of the Netherlands, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Greece and Czechoslovakia. He did not anticipate any problems in connection with those governments. The others – Riegner obviously referred especially to the Poles – would then feel obliged to join the declaration too. Hence the message was clear: the Czechoslovaks were among the democrats and the Poles were not.

### ***Conclusion***

Zelmanovits in his letter to the WJC headquarters in the USA related that Beneš’s opinion on the minority status of the Jews in Czechoslovakia might possibly change. The Jewish politicians saw that the main problem of the whole conflict was on the side of the Czechoslovak President.<sup>541</sup> However, as confirmed, Beneš represented a moderate part of the Czechoslovak resistance. The opposition to any concessions and to any minorities, including the Jews, was broad, even consensual. For example, Masaryk frequently promised his support for several, often competing Jewish groups. Nevertheless, there is in fact no proof that in the end he did anything

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<sup>539</sup> YVA, M.2/763, Schwarzbart’s diary, entry 13 August 1941. Masaryk appreciated that the reaction of the Jewish groups against the Czechoslovak government was not that severe.

<sup>540</sup> AfZ, World Jewish Congress – Geneva Office Papers, C3/799, Riegner to Silverman, 11 November 1941. ‘We are of the opinion that through negotiations with different Governments now in London, we should try to obtain a solemn collective declaration of all governments residing in London, a declaration in which they state that they declare null and void all anti-Jewish laws, decrees and measures taken by the authorities of occupation and their helpers, and that they shall not in any way recognize [sic!] in the future any right or pretention of private or public law, which would have their basis in those anti-Jewish laws, decrees and measures.’

<sup>541</sup> YVA, M.2/765. Schwarzbart’s Diary, entry 7 October 1941. For comparison with the original Polish version consult M.2/749. When translating his wartime diaries into English, Schwarzbart added to his description of 1941 conversation with Ripka: ‘I imagine that [Ripka] is no friend of Jews [...] at the bottom of his heart. Masaryk fully recognized the difference between the German Jewish problems but they may both meet by being prevented to do anything by – Bene[š].’

against the will of the government.<sup>542</sup> The national radicalization of the underground groups also became clearly articulated among the exiles. Both branches of the Czechoslovak resistance agreed on the national homogenization of the Republic. The Czechoslovak political leadership did not differentiate between the minorities. Even the national Jews were no longer trusted. The problem of different perceptions of loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic was behind the mutual conflict. First of all, the national Jews failed to recognize that the Czechoslovak authorities demanded unconditional loyalty of all its subjects. The conflicts in the army, the Zionist political demands during the war and their repeated calls for minority status in post-war Czechoslovakia were perceived as proofs of disloyalty. Furthermore, the danger of potential precedence for the German minority caused by concessions to the Jews was, according to the Beneš government, imminent.

Therefore, contrary to the conclusions presented by contemporary historiography, the Jews played an important role during the formation of the Czechoslovak exile political movement. This was at the time when Beneš fought for political recognition and had to present a united resistance movement, promoting democratic values and principles. Taking into account the three points summarized by Beneš in his letter to Roosevelt: 1) according to the Beneš government, national Jews caused fragmentation of the Czechoslovak resistance movement; 2) their partial opposition to the mobilization and campaign against anti-Semitic incidents in the army threatened to destabilize one of the main political tools Beneš possessed during the war; 3) the situation in the army and the Zionists' campaign for political recognition threatened the image of Czechoslovakia as a democratic country. Consequently, the Czechoslovak government considered the national Jews as any other minority. As noted, being a minority had a negative connotation. The government decided to promote the policy of 'population transfer' in order to solve the minority problem in Czechoslovakia. As a consequence, political support of Zionism was used as a way to solve 'the Jewish question' in Czechoslovakia.

Yet, the national radicalization of the Czechoslovak resistance was partly contradicted by the government's concerns to preserve the image of Czechoslovakia as a democratic country. These considerations were further strengthened by the

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<sup>542</sup> He, for example, promised to Schwarzbart that his broadcast to Czechoslovakia would contain a couple of sentences of encouragement for the Jews. (YVA, M.2/765, Diary entry 6 October 1941). However, the final version of his speech did not include anything in that direction.

Czechoslovak exiles' vision of the influence of the pro-Zionist lobby in the western countries. The Czechoslovak exiles' perception of the Zionists' power helped to secure the appointment of Frischer, a national Jew, to the parliament.

Beneš's theory met with opposition among the Zionists. However, the attitude of the international Jewish organizations towards Czechoslovakia did not change as much as might have been anticipated. The majority of Zionists still trusted in the Czechoslovak democratic tradition, but they especially perceived the development in comparison with the Poles. The end of 1941 brought further improvements in the mutual relations. First of all, Beneš appointed Frischer to the exile parliament. Moreover, in mid-September 1941, Minister Ripka in a BBC broadcast addressed the Jews living in the Protectorate and offered solace to the people newly branded by the Star of David. The speech was immediately spread in London, became widely acclaimed by the Jewish public and was even published under the title 'We Think of You'.<sup>543</sup> Pro-Jewish activists thanked Ripka in a personal letter and spread the information that the Czechoslovak Minister was the first of the Allied statesmen to address Jews via the BBC directly.<sup>544</sup> The fact that the information was not correct – René Cassin of the Free French talked about Jews before Ripka – further confirmed the unique position of Czechoslovaks' among the Jews.<sup>545</sup> Furthermore, the Czechoslovak government had as early as December 1941 published a declaration that annulled all the transfers of property made under duress after 27 September 1938.<sup>546</sup> This declaration was celebrated by the Jewish groups as a clear sign that after the war all the property confiscated from the Jews would be returned to its rightful owners.

Likewise, the appointment of Frischer raised the expectations that the Beneš theory about the necessity of the Jewish nationals' emigration to Palestine had been forgotten. Nevertheless, the development in the following years was to show that the conduct of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in 1941 was only a series of immediate concessions. The Czechoslovaks' perception of Jewish issues did not change: it was just temporarily suppressed. In any case, the development in occupied

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<sup>543</sup> *We Think of You* (London: HaMaccabi, 1941).

<sup>544</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc 3121/E/03/510. Zelmanovits to Brodetsky, 20 September 1941; Brodetsky to Ripka, 25 September 1941; Ripka to Brodetsky, 30 September 1941.

<sup>545</sup> Poznanski, Renée, 'French Public Opinion and the Jews during World War II: Assumptions of the Clandestine Press', pp. 122-123.

<sup>546</sup> For the English version of the Declaration see YVA, M.2/297. It was broadcast on 19 December 1941 via the BBC.

Europe was to change the themes of negotiations between international Jewish organizations and the exile governments. On 16 October 1941, the first deportation train with 1,000 Jews left Prague. Its direction was the Lodz ghetto in occupied Poland.

## CHAPTER 3: THE CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE AND THE NAZI PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

*It is possible to succumb to the appearance that Nazism led the first attack in our country against 'the Jews' and the second against the Czechs and Slovaks. In reality, however, the first and, from a political viewpoint, the only decisive strikes were led against the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic, against its democracy, its army, against its intelligentsia, schools etc. Had there been no Jews in the Czechoslovak Republic, the Nazi terror would have gone against the existence of the country [...] in any case.*

The Chancellery of the President of the Republic (1946)<sup>547</sup>

### ***Introduction***

Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia constituted a specific example of anti-Jewish policy conducted during the years of the Second World War. The Protectorate was formally ruled by the local collaborationist government under the State President Emil Hácha.<sup>548</sup> The government was, however, controlled by the German civil administration, headed by the *Reichsprotektor* and by competing German agencies.<sup>549</sup> Several centres, from within as well as from outside, shaped anti-Jewish policy in the Protectorate and their interests were frequently in conflict.<sup>550</sup> The implementation of anti-Jewish policy in the Protectorate was complex. For example, low-ranking officials, town councils and *Landräte* (district chiefs) set in motion local initiatives that led to the radicalization of the Jewish

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<sup>547</sup> Archiv Kanceláře Prezidenta Republiky, Prague (AKPR), D17375/46, a note of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic for the Ministry of Interior, 13 September 1946 (and 8 October 1946). My translation.

<sup>548</sup> There were four Prime Ministers during the existence of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: Rudolf Beran (March-April 1939), General Alois Eliáš (April 1939 – September 1941), Jaroslav Krejčí (January 1942 – January 1945) and Rudolf Bienert (January 1945 – May 1945).

<sup>549</sup> For the description of the German occupation policy in the Protectorate see: Brandes, Detlef, *Die Tschechen unter Deutschem Protektorat. Volume 1. Besatzungspolitik, Kollaboration und Widerstand im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren bis Heydrichs Tod (1939-1942)* (München: Oldenbourg, 1969); *Volume 2. Besatzungspolitik, Kollaboration und Widerstand im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren von Heydrichs Tod bis zum Prager Aufstand (1942-1945)* (München: Oldenbourg, 1975).

<sup>550</sup> For example, the Hácha government, the church, German administration, Czech pro-German collaborators, ordinary Czech people, central Reich agencies, etc.

policy in the Protectorate and even in the Reich as a whole.<sup>551</sup> Furthermore, although the Czech collaborationist circles never received any significant approval from the Czech population, they repeatedly attempted to stir anti-Jewish violence in the streets of Czech towns during the first months after the occupation. The quisling press, in addition, as suggested by Benjamin Frommer, contributed to the progress of Jewish persecution on a local level by allowing in its pages anonymous denunciation of Jews and 'Jewish-friendly' Czechs. The Czechs thus had an option to denounce their neighbours without the need to face the feared Nazi authorities.<sup>552</sup>

Between 1939 and 1941, the situation of the Jews in the Protectorate deteriorated. Their position was gradually limited by the introduction of new restrictions. When in October 1939 the Nazis made the first attempt to deport European Jews to Nisko in the Lublin district, more than a thousand Jews from Moravská Ostrava were also forcibly included in the transports. Furthermore, when the main wave of deportations from the Reich to the east began in October 1941, trains from the Protectorate started rolling eastwards too. Six thousand Jews from Prague and Brno were sent to the ghettos in Lodz and Minsk. Further, the Reichsprotektor Heydrich decided that all the Protectorate Jewry was to be concentrated, before their deportation to the east, in the Northern Bohemian fortress of Terezín.<sup>553</sup>

The situation in semi-independent Slovakia developed differently. The Slovak government willingly collaborated in the 'Final Solution' and in 1942 handed over almost 60,000 Jews to the Germans.<sup>554</sup> The catastrophe was completed in the spring of 1944 with the Nazi occupation of Hungary. In the following months, the last fortress of pre-war Czechoslovak Jewry was destroyed by the deportations of the

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<sup>551</sup> Gruner, Wolf, *Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis. Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938-1944*, p. 150. The Reichsprotektor was repeatedly petitioned to introduce a mark separating Jews from the rest of the society.

<sup>552</sup> Frommer, Benjamin, *National Cleansing. Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in postwar Czechoslovakia*, pp. 164-174.

<sup>553</sup> Milotová, Jaroslava, 'Der Okkupationsapparat und die Vorbereitung der Transporte nach Lodz', in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente 1998*, pp. 40-69; Gruner, Wolf, *Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis. Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938-1944*, pp. 161f.; Kárný, Miroslav – Milotová, Jaroslava – Kárná, Margita (eds.), *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha* (Praha: TEPS, 1991), pp. 31f.

<sup>554</sup> Nižnanský, Eduard (ed.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 6. Deportácie v roku 1942*, p. 84; Lipscher, Ladislav, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939-1945* (Bratislava: Print-servis, 1992), pp. 140f.

Jews from Subcarpathian Ruthenia to their death in Auschwitz.<sup>555</sup> Over 270,000 Jewish residents of pre-war Czechoslovakia perished during the war.<sup>556</sup>

The following text will analyse the response of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile to the Jewish persecution in the Protectorate and Slovakia. We need to enquire firstly into the information about the 'Final Solution' that was available to the exiles. It is important, in this respect, to evaluate the sources of incoming intelligence and to determine how the information was perceived. The analysis will consequently lead to an examination of how the exiles responded diplomatically to opportunities to alleviate the plight of Jews in Europe. It is thus necessary to propose a theoretical framework relating to the exile government's position vis-à-vis the possible rescue of European Jewry. Yet as in the case with the previously depicted visions of the radical Czech and Slovak nationalists, their perception of Jewish suffering in relation to the global war led by Czechoslovakia also needs to be examined. As noted, radical Czech nationalism rejected any fragmentation of the conflict, perceiving the war as waged in the interest of the Czechoslovak state itself. Hence we shall analyse how Czechoslovak diplomacy responded in cases where interventions on behalf of the Jews did not comply with the Czechoslovak fight for national freedom. Furthermore, we need to ask, how Jewish suffering was presented by official Czechoslovak exiles' propaganda.

### ***What was known and how was it understood?***

The Czechoslovak exiles were aware of the deportations from the Protectorate and Slovakia from the very beginning.<sup>557</sup> The exiles in Paris and London both received and published reports describing the first wave of deportation to Poland in October 1939.<sup>558</sup> The Lublin district, the so-called Jewish reservation, was correctly identified as the destination of the transports.<sup>559</sup> Likewise the radicalization

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<sup>555</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu A., 'Carpatho-Rus' Jewry: The Last Czechoslovakian Chapter, 1944-1949', in *Shvut*, no. 1-2 (17-18), 1995, pp. 271f.

<sup>556</sup> Hilberg, Raul, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Harpertorch Books, 1979), p. 670.

<sup>557</sup> Archiv Ministerstva Zahraničních věcí, Prague (AMZV), Londýnský Archiv (LA) – 1939-1945, box 514, the Czechoslovak Relief Action to the Czechoslovak Consul in Jerusalem, Novák, 22 February 1944.

<sup>558</sup> CNA, AHR, box 190, 1-50-44, Report from Prague, 2 October 1939; Report from Brno, 28 October 1939; Report from Prague, 27 December 1939; *Ibid.*, 1-50-45, Jaroslav Lípa, Report from Belgrade, 12 February 1940; Vojenský historický archiv, Praha (VHA), 37-91-1, Report from the Protectorate (2485/39), 27 October 1939.

<sup>559</sup> *Česko-Slovenský boj*, no. 31, 25 November 1939, p. 5.

of German anti-Jewish policy in the Protectorate was reported almost in ‘real-time’ in the pages of the press in London. In October 1941, the JTA, based on various sources, including the Czechoslovak exiles, related information about *wholesale* deportations to an ‘unknown destination’. This destination was later wrongly identified as the Bialystok region and Pinsk marshes in newly occupied Eastern Poland and western Belarus.<sup>560</sup> The Czechoslovaks also brought to the public sphere the place of Terezín as ‘a labour camp’ for Jews ‘who committed offences against anti-Jewish regulations’.<sup>561</sup>

**Table no. 2: Direct deportations from the Protectorate to the east<sup>562</sup>**

Date	Place of departure	Destination	Number of deportees
16 October 1941	Prague	Lodz	1000
21 October 1941	Prague	Lodz	1000
26 October 1941	Prague	Lodz	1000
31 October 1941	Prague	Lodz	1000
3 November 1941	Prague	Lodz	1000
26 November 1941	Brno	Minsk	1000
10 June 1942	Prague	Ujazdów	1000
27 October 1944	Prague	Auschwitz	18

Desperate Protectorate Jews contacted relatives in the United States to enquire into the possibility of obtaining Cuban visas.<sup>563</sup> Based on their correspondence, Emil Kafka, the London based pre-war chairman of the Prague Jewish Religious Congregation and an assimilated Jew, approached the exile government in late October 1941. He concluded that the only alternative to the deportation to the Pripet marshes, which meant misery, suffering and death, was escape to Cuba.<sup>564</sup> Kafka advised that the Foreign Ministry might contact Minister Masaryk, who lately arrived in the United States, and ask him to use his ‘considerable influence’ to secure American help with collective visas to Cuba.<sup>565</sup>

<sup>560</sup> *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 6 October 1941, p. 1, ‘Nazi press in the Protectorate campaign at expulsion of Jews’; *Ibid.*, 12 October 1941, p. 1, ‘Nazis to order expulsion of Jews from Prague’; *Ibid.*, 31 October 1941, p. 1, ‘Czech population anxious over deportation of 40,000 Jews from Prague’; *Ibid.*, 3 November 1941, p. 1, ‘100,000 Czech Jews receive order to be ready for deportation to Poland’.

<sup>561</sup> *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 2 December 1941, p. 3, ‘Czech Protectorate loses 110,000 Jews, deportations’.

<sup>562</sup> [www.terezinstudies.cz](http://www.terezinstudies.cz)

<sup>563</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Emil Kafka to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 October 1941.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, the detailed information about deportations to Poland led to two meetings of Czechoslovak ministerial officials. The first meeting took place on 7 November 1941. The peculiar situation of the Czech Jews was acknowledged and the officials discussed options for the evacuation of the Jews from Europe. The only proposition deemed possible was to obtain immigration visas to Latin American countries.<sup>566</sup> The officials then contacted Masaryk in the United States and conducted further negotiations with Latin American embassies in London.<sup>567</sup> The meeting confirmed the peculiar situation of the exiles who, on their own, possessed no substantial means to help the threatened Jews. Firstly, the government was dependent on positive negotiations with Latin American countries. Secondly, the exiles did not constitute a political power that might have influenced the decision of the possible destination countries. Last, but not least, the whole scheme was dependent on the approval of Nazi Germany. Only a week after the November meeting, the Czechoslovak government was informed that the Germans prohibited any further Jewish emigration from the territories under their control.<sup>568</sup> This brought any further efforts to get the Jews out of the Protectorate to a sudden end. However, the government explored other ways of helping and the officials proposed sending relief parcels to the Czechoslovak inmates of concentration camps *and* to the Jews deported to Poland.<sup>569</sup> Yet the problem here was the British economic blockade of continental Europe.<sup>570</sup> It took more than a year, until spring 1943, before the British allowed the relief parcel scheme to be launched.<sup>571</sup>

Nevertheless, more detailed information about the situation in the east was necessary to set any of the proposed relief schemes in motion. One of the best sources of information about Jews in Polish ghettos was the Swiss centre of

<sup>566</sup> Particularly Paraguay, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia and Santo Domingo. More complicated, concerning transit visas and travel arrangements, was possible emigration to Belgian Congo and Dutch Western India (Guyana). See CNA, MSP-L, box 58, minutes of an inter-ministerial (Foreign Ministry, Finance Ministry, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Interior, Czechoslovak Legation in London, meeting 7 November 1941.

<sup>567</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, minutes of an inter-ministerial (Foreign Ministry, Finance Ministry, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of the Interior, Czechoslovak Legation in London, meeting 7 November 1941.

<sup>568</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to Ministry of Social Welfare, 14 November 1941. The information was provided by the Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews, based on JTA news from Lisbon.

<sup>569</sup> AMZV, LA, 1939-1945, box 515, CRC (Kleinberg and Paulíny) to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 28 January 1942; *Ibid.*, box 511, CRC to the Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews, 30 January 1942.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>571</sup> Láníček, Jan, 'Arnošt Frischer und seine Hilfe für Juden im besetzten Europa (1941-1945)', in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 2007, pp. 31-47.

international Jewish organizations, particularly the Hechalutz movement. Its representative, Nathan Schwabl, was in charge of a network that brought intelligence from all of occupied Europe, including the Protectorate, Theresienstadt, Poland and Slovakia to Switzerland. There were also representatives from other agencies, like Abraham Silberschein (Relico) and Saly Mayer who had connections to the Jewish underground centre in Slovakia, which was one of the best informed circles in the Nazi sphere of influence.<sup>572</sup> Schwabl and Riegner (of the WJC) were in regular contact with Fritz Ullmann (of the Jewish Agency) and Jaromír Kopecký, the Czechoslovak representative to the League of Nations. Kopecký forwarded all the reports he received from the Jewish emissaries to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in London. This was by far the most significant source of information about the Jewish plight that was available to the Czechoslovak government.<sup>573</sup>

The Czechoslovak government was, thanks to Ullmann, informed about the situation in Theresienstadt, mainly because of the position of this ‘model ghetto’ in Nazi anti-Jewish policy and its misuse in their propaganda.<sup>574</sup> The reports, forwarded to London by Ullmann, contradicted Nazi propaganda and confirmed that Theresienstadt was, in fact, a transit camp on the road to the east; despite the wholesale deportations from the Protectorate, only 30,000 Czech Jews were

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<sup>572</sup> For more on Mayer see: Zweig-Strauss, Hanna, *Saly Mayer 1882-1950. Ein Retter jüdischen Lebens während des Holocaust* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2007).

<sup>573</sup> Riegner, Gerhart M., ‘Vztah Červeného kříže k Terezínu v závěrečné fázi války’, in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty* 1996 (Praha: Academia, 1996), p. 178. About Kopecký’s activities on behalf of the people in Nazi Europe see Kopecký, Jaromír, *Ženeva. Politické paměti 1939-1945* (Praha: Historický ústav, 1999), pp. 152-156. Kopecký was allowed by Masaryk to use the Czechoslovak network and to send coded telegrams to the Czechoslovak government in London. Ullmann and Kopecký established close contacts already in September 1939 and this cooperation lasted until the end of the war. Kryl, Miroslav, ‘Fritz Ullmann a jeho pomoc vězňům v Terezíně’, in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty* 1997 (Praha: Academia, 1997), p. 173. The intelligence about Auschwitz, available to the Czechoslovak government, can be regarded, even in comparison with the Polish government, as original, although again, for a long time, imprecise. Świebocki, Henryk (ed.), *London has been informed... Reports by Auschwitz Escapees* (Second Edition, Oświecim: The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2002), pp. 70-76.

<sup>574</sup> Kryl, Miroslav, ‘Fritz Ullmann a jeho pomoc vězňům v Terezíně’, in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty* 1997, p. 174. Kárný, Miroslav, ‘Jakob Edelsteins letzte Briefe’, in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 1997 (Praha: Academia, 1997), p. 199; ‘Terezínská zpráva Otto Zuckera’, in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty* 2000 (Praha: Academia, 2000), pp. 97-101. More about Ullmann and his activities during the War See: Kryl, Miroslav, ‘Fritz Ullmann a jeho pomoc vězňům v Terezíně’, in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty* 1997, pp. 170-197; Ullmann’s own text ‘Sechs Jahre Genf’ in CZA A320/514; Karger, Mendl, ‘Dr. Fritz Jizchak Ullmann 1902-1972’, in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden*, 1973, no. 1/2, pp. 45-48. See also Schwabl’s correspondence: The Pinchas Lavon Institute for Labour Movement Research Archives, Tel Aviv (PLILMRA), III-37A-2, III-37A-1. On Theresienstadt and German propaganda see: Bauer, Yehuda, *A History of the Holocaust. Revised Edition* (Danbury CT: Franklin Watts, 2001), pp. 203-206.

allegedly imprisoned there in July 1943.<sup>575</sup> Later, in 1944, Minister Slávik reported that whilst 75,000 Jews lived in Theresienstadt in 1943, only 50,000 were to be found there in 1944.<sup>576</sup> Despite the delays and interference of the Nazi censorship, Ullmann was able to comprehend the content of the received reports and did not spread false information. For example, he immediately denied the veracity of the International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) report on Theresienstadt, prepared by Maurice Rossel after his visit to the ghetto on 23 June 1944.<sup>577</sup> Rossel presented Theresienstadt as a camp of final destination, with no Jews being sent further to the East and as one that was subject to Jewish self-government.

Rossel's report from mid-1944 was contradicted by information which had been available to the Czechoslovaks since early 1942. A message, forwarded to London by Ullmann in August 1942, described the pace of deportations from the Protectorate.<sup>578</sup> Although 50,000 Jews were confined in Theresienstadt, some deportation trains went directly to Poland.<sup>579</sup> According to the report of the London-based Czechoslovak Red Cross (CRC), Theresienstadt 'appear[ed] to be a camp in which Czechoslovak Jews were detained before they [were] deported into Polish territory'.<sup>580</sup> On 22 December 1942, Jožka David of the Czechoslovak State Council

<sup>575</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, Report from Geneva, forwarded by the Foreign Ministry to Frischer, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Welfare, Czechoslovak Red Cross and Consul Čejka in Lisbon, 21 July 1943.

<sup>576</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 84, Slávik for the State Council 1944 (probably early 1944). Slávik presented conflicting reports about Theresienstadt: 1) Theresienstadt as a destination of deportation trains from Slovakia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, France. Theresienstadt was presented as a transit camp, through which already 400,000 Jews had passed. 2) Another source summarized that there was 75,000 Jews in Theresienstadt in 1943, but only 50,000 in 1944. The situation and treatment of the Jews was allegedly relatively mild (this might have corresponded with the Germans attempt to use Theresienstadt as an alibi – J. L.). For the report see VHA, 37-91-7, attachment to 224/44 (no date)

<sup>577</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Kopecký to Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 25 September 1944. Kopecký forwarded Ullmann's report about his conversation with Rossel. Ullmann wrote that he had informed Rossel that his report was full of mistakes and the facts had to be corrected.

<sup>578</sup> The same report was sent by Ullmann to Frischer on 2 August 1942, see CZA, A320/25, Ullmann to Frischer, 2 August 1942.

<sup>579</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Theresienstädter Dokumente', in *Judaica Bohemiae* XVII, 1981, doc. 33, p. 31, Kopecký to the Foreign Ministry, 17 August 1942 (A copy in AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189). There were only 15,000 Jews left in Prague (See also CZA, A320/25, Ullmann to Frischer, 2 August 1942). 'Bericht aus dem Protektorat'. Between 1 and 31 July 1942, 15,000 Jews was forced to leave the Protectorate, 7,000 of them for the Theresienstadt ghetto. Almost 50,000 Jews were incarcerated in the Theresienstadt ghetto, 40,000 of them between 65 and 85 years old and unable to conduct any labour and therefore entirely dependent on the community.

<sup>580</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Theresienstädter Dokumente', p. 33-34. doc. 34, Memorandum concerning the conditions of Czechoslovak civilians in prisons or concentration camps (by Milada Paulíny, CRC). According to information available to the CRC, already 60,000 'civilians' were deported to the Lublin district, where they lived in several labour camps. For *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA) coverage at that time see: 3 September 1942, p. 4, 'New deportations of Jews from Czech Protectorate to Poland'; 21 September 1942, p. 3, 'Nazis set date on which Czechoslovakia will be completely "Judenrein"'.

stated that 72,000 Czech and 76,000 Slovak Jews had already been deported to ghettos and camps.<sup>581</sup>

**Table no. 3: Deportations from Theresienstadt (1942-1944)<sup>582</sup>**

Destination and years	Auschwitz	Bergen Belsen	Directly to the east (small ghettos and extermination camps)	Warsaw ghetto	Riga ghetto
1942	1866		38005	1000	3000
1943	18264				
1944	25960	40			

More problematic was to obtain information about the destinations of the deportation trains. Contacts with the ghettos and camps in the east were nearly non-existent and available only with the help of underground groups. Sporadic reports about destinations of the trains and about massacres behind the Eastern front were available in the allied and neutral press.<sup>583</sup> On 3 May 1942, the JTA relayed the information that the Nazis had established a ‘Jewish reservation’ in Galicia, near Lvov. Also Jews from Slovakia were mentioned among those forcibly settled there.<sup>584</sup> A Swiss newspaper in late May 1942 reported that 30,000 Slovak Jews were already deported to the Lublin district.<sup>585</sup> Later, in August 1942, the JTA noted that tens of thousands of deportees from the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were concentrated in the area of Bełżec, near Rawa Ruska in the Lvov district. Other, private sources informed London that many deportees,

<sup>581</sup> *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 27 December 1942, p. 1, ‘British Jews present proposals on rescuing European Jewry to Eden’. Concerning the first information about deportations from Slovakia see *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 14 May 1942, p. 2, ‘Slovakia determined to become „Judenrein“ this summer, minister announces’. Already 32,000 of 87,000 Slovak Jews were deported in mid-May and another 30,000 was confined and waited for deportation (*Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 19 May 1942, p. 1, ‘Slovak Parliament approves bill to expel all Jews from the country’).<sup>581</sup>

<sup>582</sup> [www.terezinstudies.cz](http://www.terezinstudies.cz)

<sup>583</sup> The reports were published by *The Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), or by *The Jewish Chronicle*. The most famous is the so called ‘Bund Report’ from May 1942 that stated that around 700,000 Jews had been killed in Poland alone. *Daily Telegraph* made its content public on 25 June 1942. See Gilbert, Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London: Michael Joseph/Rainbird, 1981), pp. 39-44; Bauer, Yehuda, ‘When did they know?’, in Michael R. Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust. Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Vol. 8. Bystanders of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Mecklermedia, 1989), pp. 52-59.

<sup>584</sup> *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 3 May 1942, p. 2, ‘Nazis establish “Jewish reservation” in Galicia for Hungarian, Slovakian Jews’.

<sup>585</sup> USHMMMA, VHA – Prague, 140/24, ‘a message about the situation in Slovakia’ – probably from late May, early June 1942. The following locations were mentioned: Lubartów, Firlej, Ostrow-Lubelski, Kamionka pri Lubartowe, Rejowiec (Chełm district), Sawin, Kryszow (both in Chełm district), Opole (Pulawy district).

especially from Brno (Moravia) were settled close to Izbica by Krasnyscav in the Lublin district.<sup>586</sup> In mid-1943, Ullmann informed Frischer about messages that arrived from Jews deported to labour camps in Poland, mostly from Ossava (Chelm district), Trawniki (Lublin district), Birkenau, Monowitz, Jawischowitz (all in Silesia), Tomaszow (Lublin district) and Vlodava (Lublin district).<sup>587</sup>

More specific details about the deportations to Poland were obtained thanks to Jewish underground groups in Slovakia. The ‘Working Group’ (*Nebenregierung*) was a centre established in 1940 under the leadership of Gizela Fleischmann and an ultraorthodox Rabbi, Michael Dov Weissmandel.<sup>588</sup> Their comprehensive network of couriers had access to the Jewish ghettos in the General Government. Furthermore, they received first hand reports about the life and death of Jews there.<sup>589</sup> The Czechoslovak exiles thus, for example, received the well-known letter by Fleischmann to Silberschein in Geneva, sent on 27 June 1942.<sup>590</sup> Fleischmann stressed that 60,000 Slovak Jews had already been deported to the General Government and to the Reich.<sup>591</sup> She also described horrific conditions in the Lublin district, where deportees, unable to undertake forced labour, had been settled.<sup>592</sup>

Yet the realization of the situation in the east came slowly. Comprehensive information arrived only gradually. For example, an account of the life in the Riga ghetto in occupied Latvia was provided by a Czechoslovak escapee who reached neutral Spain. He testified, in October 1942, to the mass shootings of tens of

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<sup>586</sup> AÚTGM, Klecanda Collection, file 267, *Židovský bulletin*, no. 3, 3 August 1942, p. 4.

<sup>587</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, Ullmann for Frischer, 1 July 1943, forwarded by the Foreign Ministry.

<sup>588</sup> Bauer, Yehuda, *Hews for Sale. Nazi-Jewish negotiations, 1933-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 91-101; *Jewish Reactions to the Holocaust* (Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989), pp. 164-172; Fatranová, Gila, *Boj o prežitie* (Bratislava: SNM – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 2007), pp. 200-265.

<sup>589</sup> Frieder, Emanuel, *Z deníka mladého rabína* (Bratislava: Slovenské Národné muzeum, 1993), pp. 74-77; for correspondence between Gizela Fleischmann and representatives of Jewish organizations in Switzerland see Hradská, Katarína (ed.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 3. Listy Gisely Fleischmannovej (1942-1944). Snahy Pracovnej skupiny o záchrane slovenských a európských židov* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2003); Lenard, Dionys, ‘Flucht aus Majdanek’, in *Dachauer Hefte*, 7, 1991, pp. 144-173.

<sup>590</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, box 189, Kopecký to Masaryk, 18 August 1942. Kopecký attached a copy of Fleischmann’s letter to Silberschein, 27 June 1942.

<sup>591</sup> Hradská, Katarína (ed.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 3. Listy Gisely Fleischmannovej (1942-1944). Snahy Pracovnej skupiny o záchrane slovenských a európských židov*, doc. 1, p. 20, Fleischmann to Silberschein, 27 June 1942.

<sup>592</sup> Silberschein provided a copy of the letter to Kopecký who forwarded it to Masaryk. The Czechoslovak government was asked to cooperate with Jewish organization on the help provided to the deportees. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Kopecký to Masaryk, 18 August 1942. Kopecký attached a copy of Fleischmann’s letter to Silberschein, 27 June 1942.

thousands of Jews, including deportees from Theresienstadt.<sup>593</sup> Moreover, in mid-October 1942, Frischer passed onto the government a report, stating as follows: 'The Warsaw Ghetto is being liquidated. All Jews, without distinction of age or sex, are being taken away in batches from the Ghetto to be shot [sic].'<sup>594</sup> The report mentioned that the mass shootings took place in special camps, one of them 'in Belzec' [Belżec].<sup>595</sup> It continued:

[t]he wholesale slaughter of the Jewish population in Poland is being carried out step by step in order not to provoke irritation abroad. Aryans from Holland and France have been drafted to the East for labour, whilst the Jewish deportees from Germany, Belgium, Holland, France and Slovakia, were, it is assumed, condemned to death [...] Many of the German deportees are supposed to be in Theresienstadt. This camp, however, is only an intermediary station, and the same fate awaits the inmates of this camp, as the rest [underlined in the original].<sup>596</sup>

The report emphasised the uniqueness of the persecution of Jews as a group destined for death. According to another account, coming again from Geneva, most of the deportees from Western Europe were dying during the journey to Poland and only corpses arrived at their destinations.<sup>597</sup> It concluded: 'The killing in special gas rooms has been replaced by another method which consists in injecting of [...] air by physicians into the veins of the human body.'<sup>598</sup> Moreover, a coded eye-witness account clearly stated that 'measures of extermination [were] being applied on a large scale to 600,000 Jews residing in Warsaw'.<sup>599</sup> The Jews were being annihilated.

<sup>593</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, box 189, minutes of the interrogation of Jakubovič, 6 October 1942. Captain Šeda, the Czechoslovak Military representative in camp Miranda, in Spain, concluded that although the information could not be verified, the events might happen and their description was plausible.

<sup>594</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 October 1942. A copy of the report was attached to the letter.

<sup>595</sup> This was the first time, when one of the extermination camps was mentioned in despatches to the Czechoslovak government. In fact, the deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto led to Treblinka and people were killed mostly by gas. Shootings took place only in special cases. Friedländer, Saul, *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1945. The Years of Extermination*, pp. 426-433.

<sup>596</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 October 1942. A copy of the report was attached to the letter. There are two handwritten minutes on Frischer's letter. Thanks to them we know that Ripka and Masaryk read this report.

<sup>597</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189. An attachment (a note from a reliable German source) to the letter sent by Kopecký to Masaryk, 9 October 1942, received in London 12 November 1942.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, letter sent from Warsaw on 4 September 1942. My translation. The letter was included in the despatch sent by Kopecký on 9 October 1942 (*Ibid.*). It originated from Warsaw and its author was 'a Swiss Jew' residing in the former Polish capital. '[T]he Germans [were] driving the Jews out of Warsaw in order to annihilate them outside of the town on countryside'. 'Ich habe Herrn Jäger [Germans] gesprochen. Er sagte mir, dass er alle Angehörige der Familie Achenu [Jews] ausser Frl.

Even before, at the beginning of September 1942, Masaryk received a copy of ‘the Riegner Telegram’ from Easterman, informing him about the German plan to exterminate all Jews in Europe.<sup>600</sup> On 26 September, Riegner sent a note to Easterman stating that he had ‘got new strong evidence confirming [his] message to Silverman plans already in execution’.<sup>601</sup> Noah Barou, Easterman and Frischer visited Beneš and asked him about the authenticity of Riegner’s report. It is likely that they informed him about the latest news as well.<sup>602</sup> In mid-March 1943, Easterman contacted Ripka with another account provided by Riegner and highlighted that ‘the extermination of the Jews at the hands of Nazis [was] now rapidly reaching a climax. One report, for example, reaching [the WJC] through the Polish Government [stated] that not more than 250,000 Jews [remained] alive in Poland’.<sup>603</sup> Riegner thus asked Easterman to ‘urge relief action of the Allies’.<sup>604</sup> A message from Jewish groups in Switzerland in May 1943 stressed that transports of Jews to the east were being annihilated during the journey. Likewise, the Jews from Theresienstadt were being sent to their deaths.<sup>605</sup> The information about the annihilation campaign against the Jews was reaching the Czechoslovak government.

What, however, was the Czechoslovak government’s awareness of the death camps in the east? As early as July 1942, Frischer named ‘Oswiecim’ among the places where Slovak Jews had been deported.<sup>606</sup> More concretely, Raczyński, the Polish Foreign Minister, informed Masaryk in January 1943 that 5,000 Czechoslovak

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Eisenzweig von Warschau zu sich nach seinem Wohnsitz Kewer [tomb] einladen wird’. It was sent from Warsaw on 4 September 1942.

<sup>600</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 238/2/14. Easterman to Masaryk, 2 and 4 September 1942. For a copy of the Riegner telegram see: Peck, Abraham J. (ed.), *Archives of the Holocaust. An international collection of selected documents. Volume 8. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, the Papers of the World Jewish Congress 1939-1945*, (New York: Garland, 1990), p. 208, doc. 56. In his autobiography, Riegner did not describe the reaction of the Czechoslovak government to the telegram comprehensively. He only states that Beneš, a great friend of the Jewish people, surprisingly did not believe the report. See Riegner, Gerhart, *Niemals verzweifeln. Sechzig Jahre für das jüdische Volk und die Menschenrechte* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 2001), p. 80.

<sup>601</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 238 2/11. Telegram from Riegner to Easterman, 26 September 1942. The message to Easterman was the so-called ‘Riegner telegram’.

<sup>602</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 238 2/11. Telegram from Easterman and Barou to Wise and Perlzweig, 30 September 1942. They visited Beneš on 29 September 1942.

<sup>603</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84, the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to Frischer, 18 March 1943. The telegram was sent by Kopecký and was intended for Easterman. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Easterman to Ripka, 21 March 1943.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>605</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, MZV to KPR, MSP, MV, FCJ, Frischer, 22 May 1943.

<sup>606</sup> TNA, FO 371/32680. Frischer to British Foreign Office, 2 July 1942. Frischer wrote that the Slovak Jews had been concentrated near Lublin, Miedzrzecz-Podlaski, Chlom (all in Lublin district) and Oswiecim.

Jews had been incarcerated in the ‘most notorious of those camps at Oświecim’.<sup>607</sup> Nevertheless, the report presented Oswiecim mainly as a *concentration camp* for Poles.<sup>608</sup>

The Czechoslovaks received more precise intelligence about Auschwitz relatively early.<sup>609</sup> Kopecký reported on 15 July 1943:

Malota from Bat'a informed via Bratislava that the reports that the internees at Oswiecimi [sic] are being destroyed by asphyxiation and burning are accurate. Malota spoke in Olomouc with somebody who escaped from the camp and witnessed everything there.<sup>610</sup>

Although the message mentioned the killing of the inmates, it did not explicitly name Jews. Another report by Kopecký was based on the information from ‘a French deportee worker’. He described a large concentration of French workers, English POWs, ordinary convicts and several thousand Jews near Birkenau in Upper Silesia. The treatment of the Jews was the worst.<sup>611</sup> The problem with regard to understanding the intelligence was that Oswiecim and Brzezinka (Birkenau) were not regarded as two parts of one camp complex. According to the reports, the inmates were being killed in ‘Oswiecim’, but Jews were being deported to ‘Birkenau’.<sup>612</sup>

From the late spring of 1943, Ullmann received reports about deportations from Theresienstadt to ‘Birkenau bei Neu Berun’ and later, in September 1943 that ‘a new camp [was] being built there’.<sup>613</sup> 5,007 Jews deported to Auschwitz from

<sup>607</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Raczynski to Masaryk, 20 January 1943.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘According to the camp register, the number of women interned amounted on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942, to 8,620. The number of men at the same date was 38,720 of which 8,170 were Jews, including about 1,100 French Jews and about 5,000 Czechoslovak Jews’.

<sup>609</sup> Riegner, Gerhart, ‘Vztah Červeného kříže k Terezínu v závěrečné fázi války’, p. 178.

<sup>610</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Message by official Bydžovský about Kopecký’s telegram. 20 July 1943. My translation.

<sup>611</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Message from the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry for Frischer. It was a message from Riegner and Frischer was asked to hand it over to Easterman. 20 July 1943.

<sup>612</sup> See VHA, 37-91-7, Kopecký from Geneva, 22 January 1944. In January 1944, Kopecký warned the exiles in London that the information that the Jews from Theresienstadt were being deported to Oswiecim contradicted other reports received in Geneva. He noted that, according to his information, the Jews were being sent to Birkenau. He advised the exiles in London not to spread information about deportations to Oswiecim because it might have caused panic.

<sup>613</sup> AMZV, LA – 1939-1945, box 515, the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to Frischer, 17 May 1943; Kárný, Miroslav, ‘Terezínský rodinný tábor v „konečném řešení“’, in Toman Brod – Miroslav Kárný – Margita Kárná (eds.), *Terezínský rodinný tábor v Osvětimi-Birkenau* (Praha: Terezínská Iniciativa – Mellantrich, 1994), p. 48, footnote 25. The information came from Leo Janowitz, a member of the Theresienstadt Jewish Council, who was deported to Birkenau in September 1943. Ullmann later wrote that Birkenau, in Upper Silesia, was intended to be a camp for around 35,000 Jews. See Ullmann’s undated text about Theresienstadt (probably from the first months of 1944) in CZA, A320/25.

Theresienstadt in September 1943 were in fact the first part of the ‘Theresienstadt Family Camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau’.<sup>614</sup> The sole purpose of this Nazi project was to disguise the last stages of the ‘Final Solution’. It was to show that although Jews had to work in labour camps in the east, they were alive and safe.<sup>615</sup> The Nazi deception worked – until mid-1944, nobody connected Oswiecim (or Auschwitz) and Birkenau.<sup>616</sup>

Even more scarce was information about the Operation Reinhard camps.<sup>617</sup> In November 1943, a report summarizing the situation in occupied Poland noted:

Trepelini [sic! – Treblinka] is a mass cemetery of the Jews. Thousands of Jews have been murdered there [...], in Rava Ruska [Bełżec] [...] people were killed by gas [...]. The camp in Oswiečim is considered to be the worst, it outdoes even Dachau. People have been burned there. There are thousands of Jews from the Protectorate and Slovakia in the camp.<sup>618</sup>

The report, received after the actual destruction of Treblinka, considerably underestimated the number of victims of this infamous camp. Further, it distorted the names of the camps and was generally misleading. Only several months later, a Rabbi, originally from Mukachevo in Subcarpathian Ruthenia who got to Palestine,

<sup>614</sup> The Nazis created the Theresienstadt Family Camp in Auschwitz Birkenau in September 1943. The first transports arrived in September, the second in December 1943 and the last in May 1944. Contrary to the custom in Birkenau, these transports of Theresienstadt Jews were not immediately gassed. Furthermore, men, women and children were allowed to live together. However, all the survivors from the September transport (3,792 people) were gassed exactly six months later on 8 March 1944. The second liquidation action took place on 11 July 1944, but several thousands of the Jews had been sent to labour camps before. The main purpose of the Family Camp was the Nazi deception of the free world and of the Jews still living in Theresienstadt. See Kárný, Miroslav – Blodig, Vojtěch – Kárná, Margita (eds.), *Terezínský rodinný tábor v Osvětimi-Birkenau* (Praha: Terezínská Iniciativa – Melantrich, 1994); Kárný, Miroslav, ‘Obóz familialny w Brzezinke (BIIb) dla Żidów z getta Theresienstadt’, in *Zeszyty Oświecimskie* 20, 1993, pp. 123-215.; Kulka, Otto Dov, ‘Ghetto in an Annihilation Camp. Jewish Social History in the Holocaust Period and its Ultimate Limits’, in *The Nazi Concentration Camps – Structure and Aims – The Image of the Prisoners – The Jew in the Camps*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 315-330.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>616</sup> In fact, Birkenau, as a sub-camp of the main Auschwitz camp was no more than three kilometres from it and this was the place where the main gas chambers and crematoria were built and more than one million Jews were murdered.

<sup>617</sup> Treblinka, Sobibor, Bełżec.

<sup>618</sup> CNA, ČsČk – L, box 53. A letter from the Czechoslovak MFA for MSW, MF, CRC, FCJ and Frischer. 18 November 1943. My translation. The message was sent by Kopecký. There were more details in the report: It mentioned that in ‘Trepelini’ Jews from the Warsaw ghetto had been liquidated. In comparison to this camp, Katyń was only ‘a toy’. ‘The camp in Rava Ruska’ was for the Jews in Galicia, Lublin district and deportees from various regions. Before the people were killed, they had to take off their cloths and were searched for money and valuables. The camp in ‘Oswiečim’ was illuminated during the night by searchlights, to prevent escapes. There were names of the new ghettos written on the trains with deportees, but those ghettos did not exist. This was for the general population, to think that the Jews were being transported to new ghettos.

made it clear that with minor exceptions, there were no more Jews in Poland. He confirmed that camps in the Lublin district were destroyed; Treblinka, Malkinia [sic] and Bełżec were completely exterminated and eradicated by the Germans.<sup>619</sup>

This notwithstanding, it was all only a preface to the most detailed report ever received by the Czechoslovak government – the so-called ‘Auschwitz Protocols’.<sup>620</sup> This report – prepared by two Slovak Jews who escaped from Auschwitz – reached Kopecký via Slovak underground channels on 10 June 1944. He, in cooperation with Ullmann, Riegner and Lichtheim, forwarded the report to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and shared it with other Allies.<sup>621</sup> The Protocols were a comprehensive description of all aspects of life and death in the Auschwitz complex. The authors estimated that around 1,765,000 Jews had been killed in the camps between April 1942 and April 1944. The report finally revealed to the Czechoslovak government the true extent of the murder programme in Auschwitz.<sup>622</sup> In addition, the Protocols for the first time confirmed the murder of the Czech Jews deported from Theresienstadt to Birkenau.<sup>623</sup>

The list of the reports presents an impressive documentation of the Czechoslovak government’s knowledge about the Holocaust. That the government possessed intelligence about the situation in the east from the second half of 1942 is indisputable. But these were scarce reports. They may seem comprehensive when

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<sup>619</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 84, ‘A report for the State Council’ by the Minister of the Interior, Juraj Slávik. The report probably originated in early 1944. Malkinia was actually a railway junction on the way to Treblinka, only several kilometres outside of the camp.

<sup>620</sup> Vrba also wrote about Majdanek, where he had spent several months before he was transferred to Auschwitz. For the full text of the Protocols see: Wyman, David S. (ed.), *America and the Holocaust. A Thirteen-Volume Set Documenting the Editor’s Book The Abandonment of the Jews*, Volume 12 (New York – London: Garland Publishing, 1990), pp. 1-64. Document no. 1. ‘German Extermination Camps – Auschwitz and Birkenau’, November 1944.

<sup>621</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, ‘The Vrba and Wetzler Report’, in Yisrael Gutman – Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 557. Gilbert, Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. 232-234. For Riegner’s personal description see: Riegner, Gerhart, *Niemals vezweifeln. Sechzig Jahre für das jüdische Volk und die Menschenrechte*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>622</sup> For a critical discussion of the uniqueness of the information see Breitman, Richard, *Officials Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), pp. 120f.

<sup>623</sup> It was the gassing of the September Theresienstadt Family Camp transport on 8 March 1944. The escapees wrote: ‘The next day, 7 March 1944, he [Fredy Hirsch, one of the leaders of the camp, who committed suicide before the September transport was liquidated] was taken, unconscious, along with his 3,791 comrades who had arrived at BIRKENAU on 7 September 1943 on trucks, to the crematoria and gassed’. Świebocki, Henryk (ed.), *London has been informed... Reports by Auschwitz Escapees*, p. 240. Vrba and Wetzler also warned of the prepared murder of the second Family Camp transport that was planned on 20 June 1944. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

juxtaposed on paper, but the power of their few lines is diminished when mixed with thousands of other documents handled by the government during those years.

Information about the first phases of the Jewish persecution, including deportations, was widely available in London.<sup>624</sup> The solution to the Jewish question and the deportation of these ‘undesirable’ elements were openly announced by the respective Nazi, or authoritarian governments. From the territorial point of view, the underground connection to the outside world from Slovakia was better than in the case of the Protectorate. A problem arose, however, when reliable information about the Jewish plight in the east, where the Jews lived and died in remote areas of Galicia and Eastern Poland, needed to be obtained.

Furthermore, the Czechoslovak intelligence service and official sources did not provide any information about the fate of the Jews in the east. The theme was not among the priorities of the service, focused, as it was, predominantly on military intelligence.<sup>625</sup> Additionally, the whole Czech underground, after being crushed by the Germans in late 1941 and 1942, was not able to maintain communication lines with London.<sup>626</sup> Ministers Ripka and Feierabend, for example, complained that the

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<sup>624</sup> *The Persecution of the Jews in Slovakia* (London: Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews, 1942), pp. 8-15. This pamphlet was published by the Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews in June 1942. It contains newspaper clippings, from the Slovak and Yugoslavian Press, describing the gradual segregation and persecution of Slovak Jews. For example: ‘All Jews will be expelled’ in *Slovenská Pravda*, 29 March 1942. The Slovak newspapers were for example: *Slovak*, *Grenzbote*, *Gardista*. From the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: *České Slovo*, *Polední List*, *Národní Politika*, *A-Zet*.

<sup>625</sup> Kokoška, Stanislav, ‘Dvě neznámé zprávy z okupované Prahy o postavení židovského obyvatelstva v Protektorátě’, p. 30. Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 175; Šolc, Jiří, *Smrt přála statečným* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1995). A special place in the history of the Czechoslovak secret service has been assigned to the mythical German agent A-54 – Paul Thümmel. An Abwehr officer, who had already cooperated with the Czechoslovak service during the late 1930s, most certainly would have been informed about the Nazi treatment of Jews (For more about Thümmel see Kokošovi, Jaroslav and Stanislav, *Spor o Agentu A54*, (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1994). Šolc, Jiří, *Ve službách prezidenta* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1994), pp. 35-37. Moravec, František, *Špión jemuž nevěřili* (Praha: Rozmluvy, 1990). However, we know only one message, from the summer of 1941, where Thümmel informed Czechoslovaks about the ongoing massacres of Jews in the east. See Breitman, Richard, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew*, p. 95. Breitman wrote: ‘Paul Thümmel [...] told [...] that German forces in the Ukraine were resolving the Jewish question in a radical way. They arrived at a locality, separated the male Jews, had them dig trenches supposedly to be used as fortifications, and then shot them into the trenches.’ Breitman took this information from Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*, p. 489, footnote 890. The message was sent on 26 July 1941. This information is rather controversial. Dr Milotová, who has conducted serious research into this topic, informed me that at the time when he was supposed to obtain this information from a chauffeur of the Gestapo chief in Prague, Thümmel was not in the Protectorate (Conversation of the author with Dr Milotová, Prague, 12 July 2007). However, the report can be found among the captured German documents in NARA RG 242, T-77/R 1050/6526109.

<sup>626</sup> Bryant, Chad, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, p. 143. The Czechoslovak military intelligence network and its head – Colonel František Moravec – have been the subject of a long-lasting idealization and myth-making (Moravec, František, *Špión jemuž nevěřili*. For a more

exiles were insufficiently informed about the situation in the occupied homeland. In fact, Feierabend added that Jewish groups had incomparably more information about the situation in Europe than the Czechoslovak exiles.<sup>627</sup> The intelligence from the mainstream underground groups did not deal with Jewish persecution and the exiles were thus dependent on pro-Jewish activists and their sources.<sup>628</sup>

There were certainly many smaller sources of intelligence. Yet, their importance for the whole picture of the Jewish suffering in Europe was marginal.<sup>629</sup> This was also the case with the Allied governments. For example the British and Americans rarely informed the exiles about the plight of the Jews. The flow of the intelligence in this case was simply one-sided.<sup>630</sup> Even the Polish government, which was, thanks to its wide home resistance movement, the best informed administration in London, only rarely gave confidential details to the Czechoslovaks.<sup>631</sup> In all accounts, the Czechoslovak authorities repeatedly expressed doubts about the

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balanced approach see: Šolc, Jiří, *Ve službách prezidenta*). Beneš and his service were considered to be the best informed circle among the exiled leaders in London. Dagan, who as an employee of the Czechoslovak MFA was an actor in the whole story, has argued that positive assessment of the Czechoslovak intelligence network had not been entirely without justification. See Dagan, Avigdor, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-exile and the Jews', p. 467.

<sup>627</sup> For example, for the Agudists' sources of information see: USA, Joseph Hertz Papers, MS 175/79/3. Letter from 'Chajim', Spring 1942. The recipient of the letter is unknown. It was somebody in Britain. The letter described the situation in Slovakia during the first half of 1942. Its abbreviated version was later published in *The Persecution of the Jews in Slovakia*, p. 16.

<sup>628</sup> CZA, A280/33, Kunoš to Frischer, 4 April 1944.

<sup>629</sup> For example, various Jewish émigrés sent notes to the government. Before December 1941, Czechoslovaks in the United States received letters from their relatives in the Protectorate. The Czechoslovak consuls in Lisbon (František Čejka), Stockholm (Vladimír Kučera), and Istanbul (Miloš Hanák) have to be mentioned as well. They were in the same position as Kopecký in Geneva; it means that they were not officially recognised, but tolerated.

<sup>630</sup> In November 1942, Nichols asked the Foreign Office, whether he could send one report received by the British to Beneš. Frank R. Roberts answered: 'There is nothing in this report which it would be undesirable for us to pass on to the Czechoslovaks. On the other hand I am not sure that it is wise to begin handing reports of this kind to the Allied governments. They have a definitive object in showing us their reports since they wish us to receive a certain impression of conditions at home. We have no such object and if we only communicate an occasional anodyne report we run the risk of appearing to the Allied governments concerned either extremely secretive or extremely ill-informed. In the circumstances I think it would perhaps be better that you should not pass the report on'. Incidentally, this report, received by the British legation in Zurich, contained intelligence about the massacres of the Jews in the east, as they were reported by two Slovak army officers, who suffered a mental breakdown (TNA, FO371/30838, C10044/539/12, Situation in Slovakia, a minute by Roberts, 3 November 1942; *Ibid.* Zurich Consulate General to the Foreign Office, 21 September 1942). The US intelligence services were even intercepting internal Czechoslovak correspondence. See intercepted letter from Kopecký to Ripka, sent on 26 June 1944, dealing with the 'Auschwitz Protocols'. See pictorial documentation in Bankier, David (ed.), *Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust. Collected Essays from the Colloquium at the City University of New York* (New York: Enigma Books, 2006), between pp. 272 and 273.

<sup>631</sup> The Poles sent the intelligence mostly in the late autumn of 1942, in connection with the prepared UN Declaration that was published on 17 December 1942 (See AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212). The Jewish members of the Polish National Council (Rada Narodowa) shared the intelligence with Frischer more often. It was mostly the case of Ignacy Schwarzbart.

veracity of Polish information about the Jewish plight. Viktor Fischl, for example, stated that the Bund report from May 1942, stating that 700,000 Jews had been murdered since the beginning of the German-Soviet war, was probably authentic but that one had to be reserved about Polish sources.<sup>632</sup> Similarly Beneš remarked in May 1943 that ‘the Polish propaganda (and [he did] not blame it) [overplayed] to some extent the massacres which [were] taking place’.<sup>633</sup> Most of the information about the Holocaust available to the Czechoslovaks arrived from Jewish and Polish sources. Considering Beneš’s remarks about Polish sources (made in front of Jewish representatives), one can argue that this fact might have contributed to the scepticism of the Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>634</sup>

But, putting aside prejudices against Polish and Jewish sources, was it possible to comprehend the real nature of Nazi policy? In December 1942, the Allied governments publicly declared their knowledge of the Nazi extermination of the Jews.<sup>635</sup> Could the Declaration be regarded as the real turning-point in the Czechoslovak government’s perception and understanding of the Holocaust? As suggested by Barnett, ‘[t]hroughout the World, the predominant reaction to reports from Europe was disbelief, indifference, passivity, and a sense of powerlessness’.<sup>636</sup> It is difficult to identify when ‘information’ became ‘knowledge’.<sup>637</sup> The Czechoslovak exiles for a long time believed that the policy of forced concentration in Polish ghettos and maltreatment with insufficient supplies were the main features of Hitler’s policy against the Jews. Frischer underlined the whole situation in August 1942 as follows: ‘There is no precedent for such organised wholesale *dying* in all Jewish history, nor indeed in the whole history of mankind [emphasis added].’<sup>638</sup> According to him, the Germans planned to establish a reservation area in

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<sup>632</sup> APNP, Viktor Fischl Papers, the Fischl Diary, entry 25 June 1942.

<sup>633</sup> USHMM, WJC-L, C2/1974, ‘Report by Dr. Goldmann at the meeting of the Office Committee, 21 May 1943’.

<sup>634</sup> One can mention the remark made by the Chairman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee William Cavendish-Bentinck in July 1943: ‘The Poles, and to a far greater extent the Jews, tend to exaggerate German atrocities in order to stroke us up’. See Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, p. 296 (quoted from TNA, FO 371/34551, C9705/34/G).

<sup>635</sup> *Hansard*, 17 December 1942, volume 385, column 2083.

<sup>636</sup> Barnett, Victoria, *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity During the Holocaust* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 51.

<sup>637</sup> Marrus, Michael R., *The Holocaust in History* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 158.

<sup>638</sup> It is important to stress that at the same time, Frischer was one of three speakers at the press conference organised by the BS WJC on 29 June 1942, where the Jewish member of the Polish National Council, Ignacy Schwarzbart, said that more than one million Jews had been already killed, partly by gas (NARA, 740.00116 EW 1939/536. Biddle to the US State Department, 26 August 1942; attached memorandum ‘Help for the “Ghettos”.’) and Wyman, David S. (ed.), *America and the*

Galicia, consisting of internment camps called ‘ghettoes’, for all European Jews.<sup>639</sup> It took a long time before the state sponsored extermination campaign was fully acknowledged.

This notion can be documented through the Czechoslovak government’s relief parcel scheme to ghettos and camps. The scheme was carried out until late 1944 despite of all the information about the Jewish plight in occupied Europe.<sup>640</sup> Was it possible to comprehend the Jewish policy of the Third Reich and, at the same time, keep sending relief parcels to Jews in Majdanek, Auschwitz or Birkenau? Furthermore, in May 1943, Beneš during his conversation with WJC leaders in the USA ‘expressed his conviction that we would find more Jews alive after this war than we think.’<sup>641</sup> He repeated similar remarks in late March 1944, a statement that caused uneasiness among Jewish soldiers in the Czechoslovak army who allegedly consequently complained to the Chancellery of the President.<sup>642</sup>

Two factors caused the Czechoslovaks’ complicated realization of the Jewish situation in Europe: firstly, the exiles’ perplexity about the sources of information and secondly, the impossibility of comprehending the uniqueness of a state sponsored extermination drive against one race. Regardless of the slow realization of the Jewish plight in Europe, the Czechoslovak government was frequently approached to conduct rescue or relief interventions. Was the Beneš government in a position to offer any help?

### ***An exiled government and the Holocaust***

When the Germans closed the doors to any Jewish emigration from their realm, all significant rescue alternatives seemed to be abandoned. The Allied policy during the war remained that only victory could bring rescue to the Jews.<sup>643</sup>

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*Holocaust. A Thirteen-Volume Set Documenting the Editor’s Book The Abandonment of the Jews*, Volume 1, p. 37, doc. 20. Ambassador Biddle to the State Department, 13 August 1942.

<sup>639</sup> Daily News Bulletin (JTA), 29 April 1942. Used from: CNA, Zahraniční tiskový archiv, box 206, folder Frischer.

<sup>640</sup> See more about this scheme in: Láníček, Jan, ‘Arnošt Frischer und seine Hilfe für Juden im besetzten Europa (1941-1945)’, in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 2007, pp. 31-47.

<sup>641</sup> CZA, A280/28. Kubowitzki to Frischer, 24 May 1943.

<sup>642</sup> HIA, Poland: Ministerwo Informacji, box 80, folder 6, Polish Defence Ministry to the Polish Ministry of Information, 26 April 1944.

<sup>643</sup> For example, the Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior, Slávik, in his speech in January 1943 explained his position to the State Council. We do not know if he had been influenced by the approach of the major Allies, but his stand exactly copied their attitude. He said: ‘It is impossible to alleviate or end their [the deported Jews] sufferings as long as the ghastly Nazi murder-lust rules Europe. Only the quickest defeat of the Germans and the annihilation of Nazism will bring about the end of the

Nevertheless, after 17 December 1942 and the UN declaration against the German atrocities, the pressure on governments to investigate possible rescue attempts became more tangible.

When examining the responses of the Czechoslovak government to the Jewish plight during the war, we have to introduce a theoretical framework for the exile governments' position vis-à-vis possible help to the Jews. Was the Czechoslovaks' position unique or was it just another ally (-in-exile)? Two rescue attempts serve as examples to provide this framework: a scheme to evacuate children from Slovakia in the spring of 1943 and plans to exchange Czech Jews interned in Theresienstadt for German civilians in Allied hands in late 1944.

In April 1942, Minister Ripka handed to the Bishop of London, Edward Myers, an aide-mémoire for the Vatican. During the meeting, Ripka described the situation of the Czechoslovak Jews who were being deported to Poland. Ripka suggested that an intervention by the Holy See could persuade the Germans to let the children and elderly leave for neutral countries.<sup>644</sup> Also Frischer frequently appealed to the Allies to save the children. He, for example, stressed this point in a memorandum to the US Department of State, as well as during a Czechoslovak State Council meeting shortly after the UN Declaration in December 1942.<sup>645</sup> Likewise, in October 1942 Viktor Fischl, a Zionist in the Foreign Ministry, discussed the

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sufferings of the peoples in occupied Europe'. *Czechoslovak Jewish Bulletin*, no. 17, 9 February 1943, pp. 2f. 'Ministr Dr. Juraj Slávik on the Situation in Czechoslovakia'). The same approach was shared by the British and Americans. No measures could interfere with the successful progress of the war (For example: Braham, Randolph L., *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 1103).

<sup>644</sup> AMZV, LA 1939-1945, box 514, minutes of the Ripka's visit to Bishop Myers, 14 April 1942 (notes taken by Vladimír Slavík).

<sup>645</sup> Frischer in his memorandum for the American government in August 1942 appealed: '[n]o enemy, however cruel, would refuse to grant and make possible the free withdrawal of children from a besieged fortress. [...] It would be expedient to proceed by evacuating first from Vienna, Czechoslovakia and Germany and taking to Switzerland those children who have not yet been deported from these countries to Poland. Germany might subsequently be prevailed upon to transfer from the Polish internment camps to transit camps those children who have already been deported from these camps to Poland'. NARA 740.00116 EW 1939/536. The US Ambassador to the Czechoslovak government, Anthony J. Drexel Biddle to the Department of State, 26 August 1942. Attached memorandum „Help for the “Ghettoes“, prepared by Frischer. Likewise, *Bulletin of the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee*, No. 4, February 1943, p. 4. For minutes of the State Council meeting see CNA, SR – L, box 40, minutes of the State Council meeting 21 and 22 December 1942.

possibility that several hundreds of Jewish children could possibly be saved from occupied Czechoslovakia, with Swedish journalists in London.<sup>646</sup>

Those were, however, non-specific calls to initiate rescue actions. Yet on 3 February 1943, Oliver Stanley, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, announced in the House of Commons British willingness to admit 5,000 Jews from the Balkans to Palestine.<sup>647</sup> Frischer immediately contacted the British Ambassador Philip Nichols and enquired whether 1,000 children from Slovakia might be included in the scheme.<sup>648</sup>

Frischer's efforts were further amplified by a letter sent by Schwalb to Kopecký on 19 March 1943.<sup>649</sup> Schwalb suggested that most of the Slovak Jews deported to Poland had lived until August 1942 in the Lublin district. They were then chased, 'under massacres and gas-poisoning', across the Bug.<sup>650</sup> Schwalb appealed that further deportations from Slovakia had to be avoided at any cost. The Slovak government was allegedly willing to allow 3,000 Jews to leave the country. The Czechoslovaks were asked by Schwalb to secure Palestinian certificates.<sup>651</sup>

At the same time, in March 1943, Fischl and Frischer received, thanks to London Hechalutz, copies of correspondence between Fleischmann in Slovakia and Saly Mayer in Switzerland.<sup>652</sup> Fleischmann especially debated the possibility of saving the remaining Slovakian Jews by bribing Nazi officials in Slovakia,

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<sup>646</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, a note by Fischl, 7 October 1942. Fischl proposed to the journalists that the Czechoslovak representative in Stockholm could cooperate with them.

<sup>647</sup> Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, p. 180. A scheme proposed by Stanley included 4,500 persons from Bulgaria and further 500 children from Hungary and Romania.

<sup>648</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 8 March 1943; Ripka to Nichols, 19 March 1943.

<sup>649</sup> PLILMRA, III-37-1A-15, Schwalb to Kopecký, 19 March 1943.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, 'unter Massaker und Gasvergiftungen, über den Bug forschickt'. Another group of 300 young Slovak deportees lived under unbearable conditions in Birkenau.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.* The Slovaks were to announce this permit on 5 March 1943. I have not found any reference to the issue of this permit in the archives and among other primary sources.

<sup>652</sup> Those were probably copies of communications sent by Fleischmann on 27 August and 17 (or 19) September 1942. Hradská, Katarína (ed.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 3. Listy Gisely Fleischmannovej (1942-1944). Snahy Pracovnej skupiny o záchrane slovenských a európských židov*, doc. 2 and 3, pp. 31-50. They were transmitted to London via the Hechalutz connection between Geneva, Schwalb, and London (Fritz Lichtenstein) and also thanks to Imrich Rosenberg of the Czechoslovak National-Jewish Council (CZA, A87/399, Frischer to Rosenberg, 17 March 1943 and Frischer to Rosenberg, 25 March 1943. Copies of the letters: ABS, 425-230-1, letters dated: 17, 21, 28 and 29 September 1942. See also the correspondence between Frischer and Fritz Lichtenstein of Hechalutz in London, 4 and 10 March 1943 (ABS, 425-230-1)). We are not informed why those letters were not transmitted to the Czechoslovaks via Kopecký, as was the case with the previous letter quoted above (27 June 1942 from Gisela Fleischmann to Abraham Silberschein). Very tense relations between Schwalb and Fritz Ullmann, who was the main source of Kopecký's information, could be a plausible explanation (CNA, MSP-L, box 58, a note on Frischer's visit to the Ministry of Social Welfare, 1 April 1943).

particularly Dieter Wisliceny, wrongly identified in the copy of the letter as ‘Wilhelm Eichmann’.<sup>653</sup> This collaboration with ‘Wilhelm’ and the Slovak authorities had already allegedly caused a four week break in deportations.<sup>654</sup> Even Schwalb, in another communication, emphasised that money transferred to Switzerland might be used to save the remaining 15-20,000 Jews in Slovakia by bribing the Nazis and Slovaks. The Slovak Jews would then be deported to labour camps in Slovakia instead of Poland.<sup>655</sup> Fischl and Masaryk informed Eleanor Rathbone, an independent MP for Combined Universities and a British pro-refugee activist, about this proposal.<sup>656</sup>

Outraged by the reports, Czechoslovak Zionists in the state apparatus initiated an inter-ministerial meeting on 29 March 1943.<sup>657</sup> Fischl during the meeting noted the willingness of the Jewish Agency to reserve 3,000 child certificates for Slovak Jews. The British government, however, would have to allow adults, travelling on child certificates, to enter Palestine. There were several other obstacles: Slovak Jews needed transit visas for Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, but these countries were not willing to issue substantial numbers of transit permits.<sup>658</sup> The British, moreover, had to allow the transfer of currency to Switzerland to fund the whole scheme. The Czechoslovak authorities already had experience with British unwillingness to break the blockade rules when negotiating the funding of the relief parcel scheme from Switzerland and Portugal.<sup>659</sup> This notwithstanding, Czesaný of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Finance considered it plausible to receive British consent with the transfer of funds. The officials therefore decided to contact the Foreign Office to receive permission to use 3,000 Palestinian certificates for Slovak Jews. The

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<sup>653</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212. A summary of Fleischmann’s letters by Fischl, 20 March 1943. The coded language used by Fleischmann caused considerable misinformation of the exiles.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.* The crucial point of the letter, as perceived by Fischl, was the cooperation of the Slovak authorities on the whole bribery affair.

<sup>655</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, a note by Fischl, 5 March 1943. Fischl mentions the letter sent by Schwalb in the second half of January 1943. See CZA, A87/399, Schwalb to Lichtenstein, 17 January 1943. However, Schwalb did not mention in this letter the bribes being paid to the Slovak authorities.

<sup>656</sup> AMZV, LA 1939-1945, box 512, Fischl to Rathbone 9 March 1943, including ‘Notes for Miss Rathbone’. Fischl mentioned that Rathbone had met Masaryk a week before. The Minister informed her about the proposals submitted by Schwalb. We are not informed whether Rathbone developed any activity in respect with the proposals.

<sup>657</sup> APNP, Viktor Fischl Papers, Viktor Fischl Diary entry 27 March 1943. The meeting was initiated by Imrich Rosenberg and Viktor Fischl.

<sup>658</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, minutes of the inter-ministerial meeting of officials, 29 March 1943.

<sup>659</sup> Láníček, Jan, ‘Arnošt Frischer und seine Hilfe für Juden im besetzten Europa (1941-1945)’, pp. 31-37.

government on the contrary rejected the proposal to send money to Switzerland for bribing purposes, as proposed by pro-Jewish activists. The officials considered it pure blackmail without any guarantee that the Germans would not deport the Jews.<sup>660</sup>

No reply from the British was received by mid-May, when another inter-ministerial meeting of officials was convened. The meeting was initiated by reports that Chaim Barlas (of the Jewish Agency in Turkey) possessed 12,500 Palestinian certificates for European Jews, including Czech and Slovak, and funds for their transit to Palestine.<sup>661</sup> In the meantime, the Czechoslovak Consul-General in Jerusalem reported that a transport of 122 Jews from Hungary, among them 47 Jews from Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, had arrived in Palestine. Similar schemes were indeed feasible.<sup>662</sup> Moreover, the government received another shocking account describing deportations of Slovak Jews to Poland in April 1942 and life and death in the ghettos (most probably in the Lublin district).<sup>663</sup> On 19 May 1943, the ministerial officials welcomed the proposal by Barlas and the Ministry of Social Welfare was positively disposed to secure funding for the scheme.<sup>664</sup> Yet the officials decided to remind the British government about their previous communication in the first instance.<sup>665</sup>

The British administration dealt with the subject when Masaryk's letter was received on 12 April 1943. Additionally, Nichols on his own initiative proposed that the suggested Jewish evacuation from Slovakia might be a topic for the Bermuda conference.<sup>666</sup> Ian Henderson of the Foreign Office, however, dismissed the proposal by Nichols and forwarded the Czechoslovak request to the Colonial Office instead.<sup>667</sup> The Colonial Office later confirmed the allocation of 500 certificates for Jewish children and accompanying adults from Slovakia and likewise from Bohemia and

<sup>660</sup> CNA, MSP-L, box 58, minutes of the inter-ministerial meeting of officials, 29 March 1943.

<sup>661</sup> AMZV, LA, 1939-1945, box 513, Minutes of the inter-ministerial committee meeting of the officials, 19 May 1943. It was to be a first part of a wholesale transfer of 25,000 endangered Jews, among them 1,000 from Bohemia and Moravia and 1,000 from Slovakia.

<sup>662</sup> CNA, AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Nečas (administrator of the Czechoslovak Consulate in Jerusalem) to the Foreign Ministry, 16 March 1943; *Ibid.*, Consul Novák to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 1 April 1943.

<sup>663</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 119, 2-11-17, an anonymous account 'Sered-Opole- zpät' na Slovensko' [Sered-Opole and back to Slovakia], received in London on 11 May 1943].

<sup>664</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 120, 2-11-21, Minutes of the inter-ministerial meeting, 19 May 1943.

<sup>665</sup> AMZV, LA, 1939-1945, box 513, Minutes of the inter-ministerial committee meeting of the officials, 19 May 1943.

<sup>666</sup> TNA, FO371/36701, W5860/391/48, Nichols to Eden 12 April 1943. Nichols: 'I do not of course know whether this suggestion is a practicable one, but if it is, it might perhaps conveniently form the subject of discussions at the forthcoming conference at Bermuda'.

<sup>667</sup> TNA, FO371/36701, W5860/391/48 Palestinian visas for Czechoslovak Jews. Minute by Henderson, 19 April 1943.

Moravia. The Colonial Office also asked the ‘Protecting Power [...] to consider an approach to the Germans for consent to their departure if and when transport can be arranged’.<sup>668</sup> Awaiting the British reply, Frischer pressed the whole matter with Nichols. He also enquired whether the certificates could have been granted ‘outside the quota provided by the White Paper, suggesting the certificates to be granted [for] temporary refuge’.<sup>669</sup> Frischer’s suggestion was turned down but Nichols confirmed the allocation of 1,000 certificates, as agreed by the Colonial Office.<sup>670</sup> The British were willing to help, though only within the boundaries of their official policy towards the Jewish immigration to Palestine.<sup>671</sup>

The scheme to evacuate the Jews in 1943 was entirely dependent on external circumstances that were outside the influence of the Czechoslovak authorities and in the end it was not successful. The German Foreign Ministry contacted the chief of the Gestapo, Heinrich Müller, concerning the scheme in July 1943. The Foreign Ministry confirmed that it had conducted appropriate negotiations with the British government through the medium of the Swiss. The Germans, however, rejected Palestine as the land of arrival and suggested mainland Britain instead. The Germans needed to maintain good relations with the Jerusalem Mufti who objected to any Jewish immigration to Palestine.<sup>672</sup> Furthermore, German pressure caused the

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<sup>668</sup> TNA, FO371/36701, W6612/391/48, Colonial Office to H.A. Walker, 28 April 1943; It took three weeks before the Foreign Office informed Nichols, see TNA, FO371/36701, W6612/391/48, FO (A. W. Randall) to Nichols, 21 May 1943.

<sup>669</sup> CZA, Z4/30385, Frischer to the Jewish Agency (Linton), 17 May 1943.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.* ‘A few days ago I have been asked to call on Mr. Nichols who told me on behalf of his Government that as a reply to my application I should regard the answer given by Colonel Stanley to Mr. Sorenson in the House of Commons on February 3rd, which, as you no doubt are aware, was negative’. See *Hansard*, 3 February 1943, Volume 386, column 866: *Mr. Sorenson*: ‘Is there any necessity still to preserve the numerical limit laid down in the White Paper, and could arrangements be made for any number of Jews temporarily to reside in Palestine?’ *Colonel Stanley*: No, Sir. I think, although this goes far beyond the limits of this Question, that it is essential, from the point of view of stability in the Middle East at the present time, that that arrangement should be strictly adhered to. *Sir Richard Acland*: Do not the claims of humanity come before your quota restrictions? Why not take all you can get under all conditions? *Colonel Stanley*: Winning the war is the most important thing of all.’

<sup>671</sup> On the British official wartime policy towards the Jews, including Palestine see: Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*. The Foreign Office was especially concerned about the reaction of the Arab population.

<sup>672</sup> This German attitude was confirmed by Oskar Neumann, a member of the Working Group, in his post-war memoirs. Neumann referred to negotiations with Dieter Wisliceny, the German adviser (Berater) for the Jewish question at the Slovak government who rejected Palestine as a possible land of departure. Neumann, Oskar, *Im Schatten des Todes. Vom Schicksalkampf des slowakischen Judentums* (Tel Aviv: Olamehu, 1956), p. 188f. Neumann unfortunately did not use a strictly chronological approach in his narrative and it is, therefore, complicated to date the negotiations between the Working Group and Wisliceny concerning the evacuation of Jews from Slovakia. See also Friling, Tuvia, *Arrows in the Dark. David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust. Volume 1* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), pp. 168f.

Bulgarians, whose agreement initiated the negotiations in the first place, to change their previous consent to the scheme.<sup>673</sup> At the same time, the Germans wanted the House of Commons to decide publicly about the scheme.<sup>674</sup> The German agencies apparently intended to utilise the scheme for a propaganda attack on the British government.<sup>675</sup> There are also doubts about the Slovak willingness to let the Jews leave the country in the spring of 1943. We do not have evidence that Schwabl's information from March 1943 was genuine.<sup>676</sup> Proposals for the solution of 'the Jewish question' in Slovakia showed that the Ministry of the Interior was, in fact, supporting radicalization of anti-Jewish policy.<sup>677</sup>

Further questions are raised by the British conduct during the negotiations. Immediately after the war, the British government was blamed by the Slovak Jewish activists for the failure of the scheme.<sup>678</sup> For example, the British agreed to give assurances to the Turkish government that the evacuated Jews would be allowed to enter Palestine. Yet the Turks were not informed accordingly until March 1944.<sup>679</sup> Consequently, the Turkish government did not issue transit visas for escaping

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<sup>673</sup> Friling, Tuvia, *Arrows in the Dark. David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust. Volume 1*, pp. 168f.; Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, pp. 180f.

<sup>674</sup> See the quoted document: German Foreign Office to the Chief of Gestapo Müller, 13 July 1943, in Favez, Jean-Claude, *Warum schwieg das Rote Kreuz. Eine internationale Organisation und das Dritte Reich* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994), p. 264.

<sup>675</sup> Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition: 1999), pp. 161f. Whatever the final decision of the British had been, their political cause would have suffered in any case. They would either reject a scheme that might have saved thousands of children or their public approval of the transport might have proved that Britain was in fact ruled by the Jews and was saving their co-religionists at the expense of British POWs. See the quoted document: German Foreign Office to the Chief of Gestapo Müller, 13 July 1943, in Favez, Jean-Claude, *Warum schwieg das Rote Kreuz. Eine internationale Organisation und das Dritte Reich*, p. 264.

<sup>676</sup> Fleichmann during a meeting of the Jewish Council (*Ústredňa Židov*) on 31 March 1943 mentioned possibilities for emigration of children between 10 and 16 years old. Yet, those plans were a bit hazy and she specifically mentioned only an option to send abroad 25 children. See 'The Minutes of the meeting of the presidium of the Jewish Council 31 March 1943', in Hradská, Katarína (ed.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 8. Ústredňa Židov (1940-1944)* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2008), p. 301f, doc. 144.

<sup>677</sup> Nižnanský, Eduard – Kamenec, Ivan (eds.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 2. Prezident, vláda, Snem SR a Štátne rada o židovskej otázke (1939-1945)* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2003), document 105, p. 256ff. 'Undated proposal by the Slovak ministry of the interior how to solve the Jewish situation in Slovakia'. The ministry proposed radicalization of the anti-Jewish policy.

<sup>678</sup> CZA, S6/970, Oskar Krasnanský to the Organizational Department of the Jewish Agency, 5 May 1947.

<sup>679</sup> Friling, Tuvia, *Arrows in the Dark. David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust. Volume 1*, p. 174 and 193. Friling suggests that the British were often a major source of the hindrance.

Jews.<sup>680</sup> In contrast, Anthony Bevins suggests that the British tried to help in this particular scheme. He argues that they investigated various alternatives to secure transport facilities, the main obstacle to the scheme for getting Jewish children from the Balkans to Palestine.<sup>681</sup>

The exiles could render only limited help to the rescue interventions. Jews in occupied Europe were mostly citizens of the countries officially represented by the exile governments. When specific rescue alternatives emerged, the British demanded to be approached by the exile administrations and not directly by pro-Jewish activists.<sup>682</sup> It served the positive reputation of the Czechoslovak administration that they willingly forwarded those proposals to the British authorities. Nevertheless, although the rescue of Jews in occupied Europe might have been conducted only by the major powers, it was at the same time impossible without the consent of the Axis. There was indeed little space for the Czechoslovak authorities and other exile governments in the diplomatic struggle to secure any specific help. However, the impossibility of contributing to the rescue of endangered Jews made the situation of the exiles easier. They could shift all responsibility to the major Allies, without having to decide on schemes themselves. The exiles thus focused only on minor operations, usually with the help of their diplomatic representatives in neutral countries.<sup>683</sup> This notwithstanding, we can document differences even among the minor Allies – the governments-in-exile.

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<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.* See also TNA, FO371/36701, W6782/391/48, A. Walker, minute commenting that the transport via Turkey was the obstacle, 7 May 1943. *Ibid.*, MacMichael from Palestine to SS for Colonies, 3 May 1943, about negotiations with Kaplan (JA Palestine). The Slovaks were allegedly willing to let the Jews go, but the main problem was to secure Turkish transit visa. The Turks wanted to be assured about transit facilities from Turkey to Palestine. The Jewish Agency would, according to Kaplan, cover the costs; Dagan, Avigdor, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-exile and the Jews', p. 470.

<sup>681</sup> Bevins, Anthony, *British Wartime Policy towards European Jewry: British Diplomatic Efforts to Secure the Release of 4,500 Jewish Children from the Balkans 1943-44* (Reading: University of Reading Department of Politics Occasional Paper, 1991).

<sup>682</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, the Colonial Office to Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, 23 February 1943. 'Allied nationals are primarily the responsibility of their own Governments, and that if those Governments were to request the assistance of the Foreign Office the matter would receive full consideration'; *Ibid.*, Oliver Stanley to Joseph Hertz, 18 June 1943.

<sup>683</sup> The Czechoslovak representatives as, for example, Kopecký in Switzerland, Čejka in Lisbon, Vochoč in Marseille, Hanák in Ankara or Kučera in Stockholm in fact provided significant relief to Jewish internees, but also escapees from Nazi controlled Europe. Moreover, as we are informed by Dagan, 'the representatives of the Czech government-in-exile in Geneva, Stockholm and Lisbon were instructed to assist in the rescue of individuals and small groups wherever feasible'. In this case, we simply have to believe Dagan and his private archives, because we do not have any proof from the archival documents (Dagan, Avigdor, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-exile and the Jews', p. 469).

### ***Negotiating exchange schemes***

Further conclusions about the theoretical position of the Czechoslovak government can be documented with regard to the proposed exchange schemes between the Allies and Germans. Fischl informed the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in September 1944 that the Dutch government-in-exile had approached the Germans via the ICRC. The Dutch had suggested that 6,000 Jews in German hands might be exchanged for German civilians seized in the Dutch overseas colonial territories.<sup>684</sup> The Germans allegedly agreed, in the first instance, to exchange 100 persons who were to be allowed to enter Palestine. Hence Fischl concluded that the Palestinian authorities might be approached to issue further certificates for internees in Theresienstadt. In contrast to the Dutch, the Czechoslovaks had not seized any German civilians who might possibly have been exchanged. Fischl therefore recommended that German nationals settled in allied countries, who had been Czechoslovak citizens, might have been used, with the Allies' consent, for this scheme. As Fischl concluded, at least a handful of 'the most worthy people' might be saved.<sup>685</sup>

Yet the idea that pre-war German Czechoslovaks might have been admitted to Czechoslovakia raised objections in the government. Procházka, of the Foreign Ministry, emphasized that the government's intention was to deny return to the Republic to any 'of our unreliable subjects' who spoke German. This scheme would have contradicted the Czechoslovak plans and might have affected post-war negotiations with the Allies.<sup>686</sup> The situation would have been different had the British approached Czechoslovaks themselves and suggested such a scheme. The government might have admitted an exception from its programme and supported the scheme on humanitarian grounds. Procházka additionally enquired whether it was politically expedient to suggest the exchange only of Jews and not other citizens of Czechoslovakia who 'were suffering equally or even more than Jews'.<sup>687</sup> But he concluded that it seemed that Germans would only let Jews go because they perceived them as a security threat. Procházka in the end agreed with Ripka that the Foreign Ministry would contact the British and Americans as suggested by the

<sup>684</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Fischl for the MFA, 26 August 1944; Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, pp. 234-235

<sup>685</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Fischl for the MFA, 26 August 1944.

<sup>686</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka for Ripka, 30 August 1944.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

proposal.<sup>688</sup> In any case the letters to the American and British Ambassadors mentioned only that 250 persons might be exchanged. The communications did not propose that German nationals of Czechoslovak origin might be considered for the scheme.<sup>689</sup> The Czechoslovaks' concerns that 'unreliable' persons might have been sent to Czechoslovakia weakened the final appeal to the Allies.

Czech historiography presents the scheme as another proof of the humanitarian spirit represented in the exile government by Masaryk.<sup>690</sup> The letters sent to the Americans and British were indeed signed by the Minister.<sup>691</sup> The Czechoslovak internal correspondence, however, documents that the scheme was initiated by Fischl and Frischer and its execution was agreed between Procházka and Ripka.<sup>692</sup> The letters were signed by Masaryk only accidentally because the typist prepared them by mistake on papers with Masaryk's letterhead.<sup>693</sup> The exchange scheme confirmed that similar interventions came mostly from Jewish officials in the administration. The scheme also highlighted differences among the minor Allies. Countries with colonial territories, such as the Netherlands and Belgium, had better means to negotiate with the Nazis.<sup>694</sup> The Czechoslovaks did not have anything to offer and were thus entirely dependent on the major Allies.

The major Allies were not eager to conduct similar political negotiations with the Nazis. The Americans did not even answer the Czechoslovak enquiry.<sup>695</sup> The British were aware of the Dutch and Belgian exchange schemes, but concerning the Czechoslovak proposal, the Foreign Office commented:

[a]lthough many British internees in German hands in France have now been released, I do not think we can definitely say that we now have more

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<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*, Ripka agreed on 31 August 1944 (a handwritten note on the document).

<sup>689</sup> TNA, FO 916/929, Masaryk to Nichols, 21 September 1944 and AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Masaryk to Schonfeld, 21 September 1944.

<sup>690</sup> Němeček, Jan, 'Československá exilová vláda v Londýně a řešení židovské otázky', p. 236.

<sup>691</sup> TNA, FO 916/929, Masaryk to Nichols, 21 September 1944 and AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Masaryk to Schonfeld, 21 September 1944.

<sup>692</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka to Ripka, 22 September 1944. Frischer was asked to confirm information provided by Fischl that the Jewish Agency secured 250 certificates for internees in Theresienstadt (AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Fischl to Procházka, 8 September 1944).

<sup>693</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka to Ripka, 22 September 1944.

<sup>694</sup> TNA, FO 916/929, minutes by a Foreign Office official, 29 September 1944 (signature not legible).

<sup>695</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Schonfeld to Masaryk, 26 September 1944; FDRPL, WRB Papers, box 36, Schonfeld to the Secretary of State, 27 September 1944. Rudolf E. Schonfeld of the American Embassy confirmed to Masaryk that he received the letter and forwarded it to the Department of State. The Department forwarded the letter to James H. Mann, the WRB representative in London. We have no more information about the American response to the enquiry. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka (MFA) to Ripka, 17 November 1944.

Germans in our hands available for exchange than the Germans have BSS [?], and failing a clear balance in our favour I doubt whether we should wish to make such Germans available for exchange against foreign Jews.

If not, and since the [Czechoslovak Government] hold no Germans for the purpose, we cannot comply with the request.<sup>696</sup>

The British government was, however, considering another exchange of Palestinian citizens interned in Germany for Germans in Palestine. The Foreign Office suggested that some internees in Theresienstadt might also be proposed as a part of the deal.<sup>697</sup> Clearly the British considered it problematic to exchange Germans for non-British Jews at the point when British subjects were interned in Germany as well.<sup>698</sup> This rescue scheme documents another weakness in the relations between the British and the minor Allies. There were too many exile governments whose rescue actions depended on the major Allies. However, the latter first of all felt obliged to act in their own interests.

Finally, there was the last of the major Allies whose help might be considered – the Soviet Union. With the advance of the Red Army in 1943 and 1944, the question of the liberation of the camps in Eastern Poland arose. In mid-June 1944, Frischer asked the Soviets via Ripka if they might consider liberation of the camps by a swift action and thus prevent the murder of the remaining prisoners.<sup>699</sup> Ripka, although he was aware of the difficulties, approached the Soviet Embassy and concluded that the Czechoslovaks ‘would like to do everything that could contribute to the liberation of [the Czechoslovak citizens with Jewish roots].’<sup>700</sup> Humanitarian principles did not figure high in the Soviet military strategy and the reply of the Embassy only confirmed this fact.<sup>701</sup> The only possible help for the inmates was ‘the

<sup>696</sup> TNA, FO916/929, minutes by a Foreign Office official, 29 September 1944 (signature not legible).

<sup>697</sup> TNA, FO916/929, Walter Roberts to Nichols, 6 October 1944; Nichols to Masaryk, 10 October 1944; Masaryk to Nichols, 26 October 1944. The Swiss government, functioning as the intermediary, would be informed about this possibility, though the British could not ask the Swiss to give preference to the Czechoslovaks.

<sup>698</sup> TNA, FO916/929, minutes by a Foreign Office official, 29 September 1944 (signature not legible).

<sup>699</sup> As early as mid-1942, Frischer was concerned that in the case of the forced German withdrawal, the Jews in the camps would be threatened with wholesale liquidation. Wyman, David S. (ed.), *America and the Holocaust. A Thirteen-Volume Set Documenting the Editor’s Book The Abandonment of the Jews*, Volume 1, p. 37, document no. 20. Ambassador Biddle to the State Department, 13 August 1942.

<sup>700</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Ripka to the Soviet Embassy. Undated concept (it was sent on 21 July 1944). *Ibid.*, Ivo Ducháček (Foreign Ministry) to Frischer, 26 July 1944. Ducháček informed Frischer that the letter to the Soviet Embassy had been sent. My translation.

<sup>701</sup> Arad, Yitzhak, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, Ne – Jerusalem: The University of Nebraska Press – Yad Vashem, 2009), pp. 532-544; Dobroszycki, Lucjan – Gurock, Jeffrey S. (eds.), *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Studies and sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR 1941-1945* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

swift cleansing of Poland from the German usurpers now being carried out by the Red Army'.<sup>702</sup> Concerning the situation in occupied Polish territories, 'the Polish Committee for the National Liberation' (PCNL), recently established in Lublin, was to be contacted.<sup>703</sup> The Soviets clearly wanted the Allied governments to recognize their satellite governmental body in liberated Poland. Once contacted by the Czechoslovak government, the PCNL would have been officially recognised.<sup>704</sup> The Czechoslovaks did not respond and the scheme was shelved.<sup>705</sup>

The WJC approached the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in late October 1944 and drew its attention to the precarious situation in Slovakia. The Czechoslovak Jews were interned by the Germans during the suppression of the Slovak National Uprising in the camp in Sered.<sup>706</sup> The previous negative experience notwithstanding, Procházka suggested that the Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow, Zdeněk Fierlinger, might be contacted concerning the possible exchange of the internees for Germans under Soviet control.<sup>707</sup> Procházka stressed that if the Czechoslovaks succeeded it would constitute a significant achievement for the government.<sup>708</sup> He proposed asking Fierlinger informally what the Soviet reaction might be if the Czechoslovaks decided to approach them. Although Ripka questioned the feasibility of the scheme and had personal doubts about contacting the Soviets in the affair, Fierlinger was in the end informed.<sup>709</sup> The Ambassador, however, responded by saying that this initiative would have been unlikely to have been approved by the Soviets. Such schemes were conducted only in cases of persons of high diplomatic position. Fierlinger advised that only a general request by Beneš to the Soviet

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<sup>702</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Valkov (Soviet embassy) to Ripka, 1 August 1944. My translation.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.* The pro-Soviet Polish organisation, later the Polish government.

<sup>704</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Od spojenectví k roztržce* (Praha: Academia, 2003), p. 260f.

<sup>705</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Frischer to MZV, 10 August 1944, a minute on the document made by Ivo Ducháček on 15 August and then 15 September 1944. Frischer in the letter also suggested that it might be proposed to the Soviets to bomb the gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz and Birkenau.

<sup>706</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 30 October 1944. In this case, Ripka was not too eager to conduct any intervention with the Soviet government. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka 11 November 1944.

<sup>707</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 1 November 1944.

<sup>708</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 1 November 1944; *Ibid.*, a draft of a telegram to Fierlinger, submitted by Procházka and approved by Ripka on 3 November 1944.

<sup>709</sup> On 30 October 1944, the Foreign Ministry Official Procházka informed Ripka about the telegram from Kubowitzki (WJC) that contained the suggestion that 5-7,000 Jews from Sered (Slovakia) could be exchanged for Germans. Ripka made a hand-written remark: 'I am doubtful, if it is possible – and I do not really want to do it'. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 30 October 1944. During a meeting at the MSW, Ripka expressed his displeasure with exchange schemes as such. See AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 2 February 1945.

Embassy could possibly have any chance of being considered.<sup>710</sup> Procházka consequently prepared an elaborate analysis of the scheme. He highlighted the practical complications with regard to the transport of exchanged persons. This would involve the help of neutrals, Sweden and Switzerland, and the political support of the British. Nevertheless, he concluded that the scheme was possible and stressed the moral benefit for the government.<sup>711</sup> The final decision, suggested Procházka, depended personally on Beneš. Yet, Ripka had already before refused the exchange on the grounds that the Soviets would have severely rejected any such initiative.<sup>712</sup> The ministry subsequently asked Fierlinger to keep the whole plan on file for later when larger parts of Germany would be occupied and the Soviets might be more amenable to similar schemes.<sup>713</sup>

The Czechoslovaks generally agreed to initiate diplomatic consultations with the major Allies, despite their own doubts about their ability to influence the latter's conduct. The Foreign Ministry, for example, knew that the Soviets would 'never change their military plans, except for purely military reasons'.<sup>714</sup> In spite of that, Ripka asked them to do so in connection with the renewed Soviet offensive in January 1945 which brought the Red Army close to Auschwitz.<sup>715</sup> Those initiatives did not mean that the Czechoslovaks wanted to interfere with the agenda of the major Allies.<sup>716</sup> As documented during preparations for the Bermuda conference, the

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<sup>710</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, box 190, a note by Procházka, 10 November 1944; Procházka to Ripka, 11 November 1944.

<sup>711</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 11 November 1944.

<sup>712</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 11 November 1944. A minute by Ripka, 13 November 1944.

<sup>713</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, a note by Procházka to Fierlinger, 17 November 1944 and Procházka to Ripka, 17 November 1944.

<sup>714</sup> AMZV, LA, 1939-1945, box 514, Viktor Fischl's remark on the report by Vladimír Kučera, Czechoslovak Consul in Stockholm, about Kučera's negotiations with the Jewish Agency envoy Solomon Adler-Rudel. 20 September 1944. My translation.

<sup>715</sup> AMZV, LA-D, 1939-1945, box 190, Frischer to Ripka, 22 January 1945. On 19 January, A. Frischer and Leon Kubowitzki (WJC) visited Ripka and asked him to inform the Soviets. Ripka promised to intervene immediately.

<sup>716</sup> In March 1943, Ripka prepared a joint statement of the exile foreign ministers that was to demand some rescue attempts. He planned to send it to Eden who was at that time in Washington. However, because a similar proposal for British and American action was presented in the House of Lords, Ripka's statement was not dispatched. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212. Easterman to Ripka, 21 March 1943; Ripka to Easterman, 24 March 1943; Ripka to Frischer, 25 March 1943. Dagan wrote that Ripka, impressed by Easterman's rescue proposals, initiated the joint telegram of the Allied governments-in-exile to Eden, asking him to raise the problem of assistance to the Jews in Europe during his talks with the American authorities. Dagan continued: '[T]he cable from the Allied foreign ministers may well have been the factor that led to the convening of the Anglo-American Conference in Refugees, which met in Bermuda in April 1943'. See Dagan, Avigdor, 'The Czechoslovak Government-in-exile and the Jews', p. 470; 'Excerpts from a London War Diary', in *Review for the History of Czechoslovak Jews*, Vol. 1, 1986, p. 46. Dagan did not study archival

Czechoslovaks did not want to approach the British because they considered the conference an internal affair of the major Allies.<sup>717</sup> Likewise Czechoslovak efforts to instigate the Allied bombing of extermination centres, repeatedly stressed in historiography, were never proposed by the administration as such.<sup>718</sup> It was Frischer, in his own personal capacity, who sent such requests to the Czechoslovak government and to the major Allies.

The Czechoslovaks did not study the persecution of the Jews in Europe systematically. The government, for example, never considered the creation of a body similar to the American War Refugee Board (WRB) or the Polish Council for Matters Relating to the Rescue of the Jewish Population.<sup>719</sup> Indeed, when contacted by the WRB representative in London in September 1944, the Czechoslovak officials allegedly denied any knowledge of the existence of this American governmental body.<sup>720</sup> This discussion opens up an important issue that needs to be addressed here: what was the role of the Jewish plight in the considerations of Czechoslovak diplomacy?

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documents and used his private collection and own memory. He was certainly not informed about all Ripka's or Masaryk's actions.

<sup>717</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, National-Jewish Council (Zelmanovits) to Šrámek, 5 April 1943; Ripka to the Presidum of the Council of Ministers, 17 April 1943.

<sup>718</sup> Gilbert, Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 303; Neufeld, Michael J. (ed.), *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should Allies have attempted it?* (Lawrence, Ka: The University of Kansas Press, 2003), pp. 67, 103, 112f.; Wyman, David S., *The Abandonment of the Jews. American and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 295f.; YVA, M2/429, Frischer to John M. Allison (2<sup>nd</sup> secretary of the US embassy), 15 July 1944; Archives of the State Museum in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Materialy Ruchu Oporu, t. XLI, p. 47; Kubowitzki to J. McCloy, 9 August 1944. Proposals to bomb Auschwitz, sent to the Americans, were Frischer's private interventions. The only appeal made by the Czechoslovaks was Ripka's letter on 4 July 1944, where the Minister simply forwarded proposals prepared by the Slovak Jewish underground. The call to bomb the camps and railways leading to them were not commented on, or endorsed by the Czechoslovak Minister (Wyman, David S. (ed.), *America and the Holocaust. A Thirteen-Volume Set Documenting the Editor's Book The Abandonment of the Jews*, Volume 12, pp. 98-102. Document no. 15. Summary of the Auschwitz escapees' report by Gerhart Riegner, World Jewish Congress, Geneva, sent by R. E. Schoenfeld, U.S. chargé to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile to Cordell Hull, 5 July 1944). The Czechoslovak authorities were repeatedly approached by pro-Jewish activists (Frischer, Goldmann) to request the major Allies to bomb the camps. There is no evidence that Beneš or Masaryk ever did anything in this direction. See AMZV, LA – Confidential, box 190, Goldmann to Masaryk, 3 July 1944; *Ibid.* Viktor Fischl's comments, rejecting the proposal, but leaving the final decision on Beneš, 12 July 1944.

<sup>719</sup> Engel, David, *Facing a Holocaust. The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943-1945*, p. 138.

<sup>720</sup> FDRPL, WRB Papers, box 77, James H. Mann to John Pehle, 19 September 1944. Surprisingly, the Czechoslovaks allegedly reacted favourably when informed about the creation of the WRB by the US Ambassador to London Winant in February 1944, see: FDRPL, WRB Papers, box 37, Winant to the Secretary of State, 1 March 1944.

### *Czechoslovak diplomacy and the Holocaust*

As I have argued, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile could offer hardly any direct help to the Jews in Europe on their own. Furthermore, the Czechoslovak exiles regarded rescue attempts in relation to their overall political programme where the interests of the future Republic had precedence. This approach is usually put under the category *Realpolitik* and stands in opposition to idealism. The issue needs to be put into a wide context: the restoration and form of the post-war state were entirely dependent on the major Allies.

In late September 1942, President Beneš was visited by a delegation from the BS WJC. They asked him to confirm or disclaim the intelligence contained in ‘the Riegner telegram’. Beneš, who was considered to be well informed about the situation in occupied Europe, promised to ‘USE HIS MACHINERY’ to prove whether the message was correct.<sup>721</sup> He advised the pro-Jewish activists not to publicize the information until he investigated it.<sup>722</sup> Beneš concluded that it might only be Nazi propaganda, a statement that seemed plausible to Stephen Wise.<sup>723</sup> However, more than a month passed and another intervention was needed before Beneš finally answered the enquiry. At the time, when the majority of Polish Jews had already been gassed in the death camps and more than a year after the expulsion of Jews from the Protectorate had begun, Beneš wrote:

Dear Mr. Easterman,

[...] I obtained two replies to my enquiries and both were rather in a negative sense. According to my reports there seem to be no positive indications that the Germans should be preparing a plan for a wholesale extermination of all the Jews. From the reports which I have at present at hand, it would appear that such a plan does not exist and I therefore cannot give you any confirmation of the information which you receive in this matter.

This of course, does not mean to say that the Germans are not going perhaps to proceed against the Jews with ever growing brutality. Indeed, the more they see that they themselves are lost, the more will their fury and

<sup>721</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 238 2/11, telegram from Easterman and Barou to Wise and Perlzweig, 30 September 1942.

<sup>722</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 238 2/11, telegram from Easterman and Barou to Wise and Perlzweig, 30 September 1942. In a cable sent by Easterman and Barou after this meeting took place, both informed the WJC headquarters in the United States that Beneš was surprised by the message and ‘STRONGLY ADVISES NO PUBLICITY UNTIL REPORT FULLY INVESTIGATED’.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.* See also AJA, Stephen S. Wise Papers, 2/11, Wise to Goldmann, Perlzweig, Schulz, 6 October 1942. ‘Benes raises a very important point. I have communicated the substance of this letter to Welles’. See FDRPL, Sumner Welles Papers, box 86, Wise to Welles, 6 October 1942.

their terror increase – against the Jews as well as against other subjugated peoples. But this has, in my opinion, nothing to do with any special plan such as you mentioned when you and your delegation came to see me. And my doubts regarding the existence of any such plan are further strengthened by the fact that although innumerable Jews are being terribly persecuted and practically starved, there are others, however small their number may be, who still remain in their original places and even are almost unhindered.

I shall continue, however, to follow the matter and I shall let you know any further information which I might obtain in the matter.

Yours sincerely,  
E. Beneš<sup>724</sup>

Meir Sompolinsky claims that the President was undoubtedly engaged in ‘a maneuver to pacify the Jewish leaders’. The unwillingness to promote the suffering of one group above the persecution of other groups was allegedly behind this denial of Jewish extermination in Europe.<sup>725</sup> Walter Laqueur has queried whether Beneš’s intelligence service misled the President, or if it was a failure of the service.<sup>726</sup> Yet he does not solve the issue of whether Beneš had previously had any source that might have confirmed such information. The Czechoslovak intelligence service did not have a connection with occupied Europe between 1942 and 1944, a point acknowledged by Laqueur as well.<sup>727</sup> The intelligence offered by the Czechoslovaks was one of the very few services the government was able to offer to the Allies. Beneš thus could not have revealed that his service was not as important as the Jewish activists believed.<sup>728</sup> It is doubtful that Beneš received any intelligence

<sup>724</sup> Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 179. At the conference *Fenomén Holocaustu* [the Phenomenon of the Holocaust] in 1999, Yehuda Bauer mentioned a letter sent by the BS WJC to its headquarters after the Jewish activists had received this Beneš’s reply. In the letter they allegedly expressed doubts about everything that Beneš had written to them. However, later, Bauer was not able to remember the source of this information. He only wrote that it had to be somewhere in the Israeli Archives (*Fenomén Holocaustu. Sborník Mezinárodní vědecké konference, Praha 1999* [http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/holocaust/speeches/sbornik\\_ctvrtek.htm](http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/holocaust/speeches/sbornik_ctvrtek.htm) (20/08/07); Correspondence between the author and Yehuda Bauer, June/July 2007).

<sup>725</sup> Sompolinsky, Meier, *The British Government and the Holocaust. The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Brighton – Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), pp. 7f. Sompolinsky labels it even ‘the sacred principle’ of the Allied governments.

<sup>726</sup> Laqueur, Walter, *The Terrible Secret: An Investigation into the Suppression of Information about Hitler’s „Final Solution“* (New York: Penguin, 1982), pp. 162-164.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>728</sup> For example the British government was generally sceptical about the abilities of the Czechoslovak intelligence service: Sompolinsky, Meier, *The British Government and the Holocaust. The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?*, pp. 7 and 216-217, footnote 12. Sompolinsky, quoting from TNA, FO 371/26515, writes: ‘in the discussions held at the Foreign Office on December 23, 1941, doubts were raised about the reputation of the Czechoslovakian secret service and the reliability of Benes’s sources’.

concerning his enquiry or even that he asked his service to investigate the matter.<sup>729</sup> It was highly important for Beneš to present himself as a significant contributor to the Allied war efforts and his ‘excellent’ Czechoslovak intelligence service was one of the best ways to achieve that. He could not have rejected the WJC request and thus promised to investigate the information. Simultaneously, as noted, the President was sceptical or disbelieved stories describing the wholesale destruction of the Jewish people. Diplomatic considerations, insufficient information provided by the Czechoslovak intelligence service and the scepticism of Beneš himself therefore resulted in the letter sent to Easterman.

Additionally, as suggested by Sompolinsky, Beneš in the letter made a parallel between the persecution of the Jews and ‘other subjugated peoples’. This policy of juxtaposing the Nazi anti-Jewish measures with the other crimes committed against Czechs or Slovaks was typical of Beneš’s discourse.<sup>730</sup> Indeed, the information campaign conducted by Czechoslovak authorities all over the world during the Nazi reprisals after the assassination of Heydrich and the destruction of Lidice was never repeated on behalf of the Jews.<sup>731</sup> An attempt to secure diplomatic recognition of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak borders played the key role in this campaign.<sup>732</sup> At exactly the same time, Frischer faced significant obstacles to secure

<sup>729</sup> Miroslav Kárný tried to locate these ‘two replies’ among the intelligence sent to Beneš, but was not able to find it. See: *Fenomén Holocaustu. Sborník Mezinárodní vědecké konference, Praha 1999*. There is a report that was forwarded to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry by Frischer in mid-October 1942. It described the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto and differentiated between the fate of Jews and Aryans (See the first chapter AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 October 1942). We know that Ripka and Masaryk read it, the latter even a week before Beneš answered the WJC enquiry. There is no proof that the ministry informed Beneš. We certainly cannot rule that out, but there is no remark on the document in that respect. On the other hand, Frischer and Easterman could report it to Beneš during their visits in September and November 1942.

<sup>730</sup> In 1940, Beneš wrote: ‘What can be read in the British White Paper about the persecution of Jews in the concentration camps is a very mild version of what the Gestapo has perpetrated against Czech patriots since the occupation of Prague’. Beneš, Edvard, *Nazi Barbarism in Czechoslovakia* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1940), pp. 24f. About the ‘The White Paper on German Atrocities’ see Kushner, Tony, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination. A Social and Cultural History*, p. 123. It was published by the British government in late October 1939. Curiously, the Jewish persecution did not play any important part in the document.

<sup>731</sup> *German Massacres in Occupied Czechoslovakia Following the Attack on Reinhard Heydrich* (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1942). Detlef Brandes writes in connection with the informing about Lidice all around the world about ‘the effective Czechoslovak propaganda’. Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*, pp. 182f; For the history of the operation ‘Anthropoid’, whose aim was the assassination of Heydrich see: MacDonald, Callum, *The Killing of SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich* (London: Papermac, 1990).

<sup>732</sup> It was successful, the British signature on the Munich agreement was officially repudiated on 5 August 1942. Brandes, Detlef, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem a Teheránem*, pp. 182f.

the Foreign Ministry's support for his visits to the British and American Ambassadors. He wanted to discuss with them the position of the Jews in Europe. Apparently, the Czechoslovaks did not want the persecution of the Jews to overshadow Nazi reprisals in the Protectorate.<sup>733</sup>

This approach was also adopted by other members of the UN. In fact, the Czechoslovak government, especially Masaryk, was more inclined to stress the uniqueness of the Nazi persecution of the Jews than the other Allies. In the St James Declaration, published on 13 January 1942, nine exile governments condemned crimes committed by the Germans against civilian populations in the occupied countries. No distinctions according to race, nation or religion were made.<sup>734</sup> Jewish organizations, particularly the WJC, negotiated with exile governments in order to receive special recognition of the crimes committed against the Jews as a group. Ripka was asked to support their demands for a special declaration that would also condemn anti-Semitism as such.<sup>735</sup> The Minister agreed, but advised the WJC not to expect any declaration that would confirm the complete restitution of Jewish property. He expected considerable opposition among the other governments.<sup>736</sup>

Easterman later proposed to Ripka that the persecution of the Jews should be recognised as possessing a unique character. Additionally, he asked whether a Jewish representative could be allowed to take part in the following meetings of the St James conference.<sup>737</sup> The WJC received support from the Polish Prime Minister

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<sup>733</sup> The Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry firstly did not support the audience and Minister Ripka agreed. (AMZV, LA – 1939-1945, box 511. Record of Frischer's visit at the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 13 June 1942). There is a hand-written remark that the Foreign Ministry did not recommend the visit to the embassies. Ripka added: „Souhlasím“ ['I agree']. Frischer urged the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry at the end of June 1942. AMZV, LA – 1939-1945, box 500, Record of Frischer's visit at the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 26 June 1942. It took three weeks before Frischer paid a visit to the ambassadors. He was received by the US Ambassador Biddle on 30 June 1942 and later by the British Ambassador Nichols. His visit to Nichols was certainly prepared by the Czechoslovak Government. However, we cannot be certain in the case of Biddle. Dariusz Stola wrote that this intervention, by Schwarzbart and Frischer, was arranged by the Polish Foreign Minister Raczyński (Stola, Dariusz, *Nadzieja i zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940-1945)* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 1995), p. 161).

<sup>734</sup> *St. James's Conference of the Allied Governments in London and Nazi Anti-Jewish Crimes. Documents exchanged with the World Jewish Congress* (London: BS WJC, 1942); Fox, John P. 'The Jewish Factor in British War Crimes Policy in 1942', in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 362 (Jan. 1977), pp. 82 and 86f.

<sup>735</sup> CNA, AHR, box 104, 1-5-19-3, minutes of meeting between Ripka and Zelmanovits and Barou (both WJC), 20 January 1942.

<sup>736</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>737</sup> AJA, WJC – Papers, C11/7, Note on Mr. Easterman's and Dr. Barou's conversation with Dr. Hubert Ripka, Foreign Minister [sic!] of the Czechoslovak government in London [s. d. – February/March 1942?].

Władysław Sikorski in this respect.<sup>738</sup> Yet the other exile foreign ministers rejected it. They claimed that the St James declaration already covered the WJC demands and no special document was thus necessary.<sup>739</sup> The opposition notwithstanding, Ripka assured the WJC of the Czechoslovak willingness to issue a separate declaration that would condemn Nazi crimes committed against the Jews.<sup>740</sup> No such declaration was ever issued.

There was also Allied opposition to Jewish delegates taking part in the meetings of the St James conference. It was confirmed in a comment made by Roberts of the Foreign Office on Masaryk's behalf. The Czechoslovak Minister was labelled, because of his support for the Jewish claim, as a man 'whose humanity is better than his judgement'.<sup>741</sup> However, there is no evidence suggesting Masaryk's continuous diplomatic support for the Jewish demand. The Allies adopted the policy of treating the Jews as nationals of respective counties and not as a special category. This policy was partly changed only in December 1942 by the UN Declaration condemning the Nazi extermination of the Jews.

The Allies were not willing to declare their support for the Jewish cause repeatedly. Easterman approached Masaryk in September 1943 and enquired whether the UN could publish two new declarations.<sup>742</sup> The first would confirm their determination to punish the atrocities committed against the Jews. The second would address people in occupied Europe and call on them to exercise 'all the means in their power to aid and protect Jewish and other potential victims of the Nazis'.<sup>743</sup> Masaryk supported both proposals. He only objected to the implication that people in

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<sup>738</sup> AJA, WJC – Papers, C11/7, St. James's Conference on Nazi crimes, interview with Sikorski and BS WJC, 4 March 1942.

<sup>739</sup> AJA, WJC – Papers, C11/7, Note on conversation with Dr. Hubert Ripka, by Barou and Easterman, 14 April 1942. There was also judicial problem that haunted Allied statesmen until the end of the war: how to prosecute Germans guilty of crimes committed against the German people, for example, the German Jews.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>741</sup> Eppler, Elizabeth E., 'The Rescue Work of the World Jewish Congress During the Nazi Period', in Yisrael Gutman – Efraim Zuroff (eds.) *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), p. 60. TNA FO371/7839/61/18, 30917 F. K. Roberts, 16 August 1942. Roberts, on the contrary, appreciated the attitude of Sikorski.

<sup>742</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 202, Easterman to Masaryk 9 September 1943. Easterman also approached the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see: HIA, Poland: MSZ, box 612, folder 20, Easterman to Adam Romer, 9 September 1943; For the Polish reply see: *Ibid.*, K. Kraczkiewicz (on Romer's behalf) to Easterman, 23 (29.?) September 1943. The Poles rejected to initiate the declaration, because they had organized the UN Declaration in December 1942. Kraczkiewicz advised that another of the UN governments might initiate it and promised Polish support.

<sup>743</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 202, Easterman to Masaryk 9 September 1943.

Europe had not done enough for the Jews so far.<sup>744</sup> However, Masaryk's support (we are not informed how strongly he advocated the proposals during the actual meeting) did not meet with the approval of the Allied foreign ministers. Masaryk confirmed to Easterman that no distinction between the persecuted Jews and other nations could be drawn.<sup>745</sup> Furthermore, a new declaration would only weaken those already issued. Masaryk concluded that the previous declarations might have been reassessed, but 'some quite exceptional incentive would have to arise'.<sup>746</sup> One can only wonder, what more than the complete annihilation of the Jewish people by the Nazis might have been meant. Similarly, a call to the people of Europe to support the Jews was turned down. It might have 'produce[d] the misleading impression that in this respect the nations of Europe [were] indifferent'.<sup>747</sup> The atmosphere in London ruled out any overall stress on the uniqueness of the Jewish persecution. Firstly, the 'liberal' approach opposed any differentiation among persecuted people based on their nationality, race or religion.<sup>748</sup> However, 'the competition in suffering' among the Allies and the unwillingness to allow the Jewish persecution to be stressed at the expense of other people was also a crucial factor. In addition, the Allies did not want to do anything that might confirm Nazi propaganda that suggested that the war was controlled by the Jews.<sup>749</sup>

The Czechoslovak authorities were inclined to support Jewish demands. Thanks to this support, the Czechoslovak government retained its positive image among Jewish groups. When, for example, the Czechoslovak representative, Bohumil Ečer, threatened to resign from the UN War Crimes Commission, the Americans immediately commented that this would cause a negative response from Jewish circles.<sup>750</sup> Yet we must conclude that the Czechoslovaks, although promising

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<sup>744</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 202, Procházka, information for Masaryk before the meeting of the Foreign Ministers on 4 October 1943.

<sup>745</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 202, Masaryk to Easterman, 6 October 1943.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>748</sup> USHMMMA, WJC-L, C2/1973, Executive Committee WJC, Report by Max Freedman, 17 December 1942. 'The Dutch and the Belgians were primarily responsible for the refusal of a Jewish representative at St. James' conference. The Dutch said: As the Jews have no state of their own, a representative would mean underwriting the Nazi theory. Mr. Cohen assured us that the head of the Belg. Red Cross is an unmistakable anti-semit. Both in the Belgian and in the French governments there are little cells of anti-semites'.

<sup>749</sup> Tomlin, Chanan, *Protest and Prayer. Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld and Orthodox Jewish Responses in Britain to the Nazi Persecution of Europe's Jews 1942-1945* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 88f

<sup>750</sup> '[E]specially that the large Jewish population will be aroused into hostility'. NARA, RG 59, 740.00116EW/9-2744, Herbert Pell (UNWCC) to the Secretary of State, 27 September 1944.

otherwise, never challenged the position adopted by the other Allies. They, for example, did not issue a separate declaration condemning the Nazi crimes. The solidarity among the Allies did not allow them to act on their own initiative. In contrast, the main driving force behind the UN declaration of December 1942 was the Polish government.<sup>751</sup> When the Allies discussed the publication of the declaration, Ripka and Masaryk remained passive, an attitude that sharply contrasted with their vocal calls for wholesale reprisals after the Nazi burning of Lidice.<sup>752</sup> Similarly, the Czechoslovak attempt to initiate another pro-Jewish declaration in July 1944, when the Auschwitz Protocols were received in London, was abandoned soon afterwards.<sup>753</sup> The British government opposed it and the Czechoslovaks did not push the matter forward.<sup>754</sup> Does this mean that the Czechoslovaks were not willing to challenge the policies of the major Allies?

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<sup>751</sup> The leading role of the Poles is confirmed by the minutes of the meeting of the exiled Foreign Ministers. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Ripka to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the Chancellery of the President of the Republic, 10 December 1942. The Poles wanted to publish the declaration without waiting for the decision of the major powers. Based on Eelco van Klefens (Dutch Foreign Minister) and Henri-Paul Spaak (Belgian FM), the Foreign Ministers decided to issue the declaration together with the major Allies and not a separate one. Both ministers were supported by Ripka; AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Masaryk to Raczyński, 16 December 1942. Heřman of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry suggested that the Poles initiated the declaration to improve their image among the American public, see: AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, a note by Heřman, 16 December 1942. The Polish initiative continued also after the Declaration was published, see: CNA, AHR, box 105, 1-5-19-5, a meeting of the exile Foreign Ministers with the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, 18 January 1943; Fox, John P. ‘The Jewish Factor in British War Crimes Policy in 1942’, p. 102.

<sup>752</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Vladimír Slavík (Foreign Ministry) to the Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1942; Skalický (Foreign Ministry) to the Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1942; Baráček-Jacquier to the Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1942; the Czechoslovak ambassador to the Yugoslav Government to the Foreign Ministry, 18 June 1942; Dr Szathmary (the Czechoslovak ambassador to the Norwegian government) to the Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1942; Baráček-Jacquier to the Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1942; Dr. Černý, (the Czechoslovak ambassador to the French National Committee) to the Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1942; The exile government intended to support the Czechoslovak call for reprisals on German civil targets. The British, however, repeatedly rejected any call for reprisals (CNA, AHR, box 105, 1-5-19-5, a meeting of the exile Foreign Ministers with the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, 18 January 1943). Kochavi, Arieh J., *Prelude to Nuremberg. Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 23-25; Fox, John P. ‘The Jewish Factor in British War Crimes Policy in 1942’, p. 89; See also Lukas, Richard C., *Forgotten Holocaust. The Poles under German Occupation 1939-1944. Revised Edition*, pp. 152-167.

<sup>753</sup> TNA, FO371/42809, WR218/3/48, Ripka to Nichols, 4 July 1944. Similar letters were sent to all the governments of the United Nations. For the original letters and responses of the governments see AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, boxes 189 and 190.

<sup>754</sup> TNA, PREM 4/51/10. Eden to Churchill, 3 July 1944. Eden opposed any new declaration. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, F. K. Roberts to Masaryk, 29 July 1944. Ripka was informed that the British were negotiating the new declaration with the Americans and the Czechoslovak government would be notified in a due course. The Czechoslovak government did not respond to this communication and the whole matter was filed.

### *Czechoslovak diplomacy, the major Allies and the Jews*

Beneš was regularly approached by international Jewish organizations who perceived him as an important actor in international politics, especially because of his good diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>755</sup> The existing notion about Czechoslovak sympathies for minorities and in particular the Jews played its role too. The Czechoslovak government was, furthermore, the last of the recognised exile administrations that stayed in London until the winter of 1944/5, when the Red Army neared the concentration camps in the east.

During meetings with Beneš, pro-Jewish activists faced an experienced diplomat who was not prepared to risk his own position and reputation. A BS WJC delegation, consisting of Barou and Easterman, visited the Czechoslovak President on 23 July 1943. The representatives of the WJC expressed their disappointment with the progress of possible rescue activities on behalf of the Jews despite the UN Declaration of December 1942 and the Bermuda Conference of April 1943. The real disincentive was, allegedly, the American government, not the British. The WJC asked Beneš, if – together with the other Allied leaders – he could prepare an especially strong intervention to Roosevelt. According to the WJC:

President Beneš said that he did not regard the suggestion as out of order and he considered the proposal of much interest. It was of such a character, of course, that he could not give a definitive answer on the proposal at the moment but that he would require to think it over. The first thing he would have to do would be to suggest to the American government, through Ambassador Biddle in London, that a proposal of this kind might be made and to ascertain how such an approach would be received. Two things were essential. First, that Heads of States could not act publicly and there was always the danger, particularly in America, of publicity being given to it. That would be extremely undesirable but difficult to avoid. Second, to make reasonably certain that the response would be favourable. To get a refusal would result in an unfortunate loss of prestige and this the Heads of States could not risk.<sup>756</sup>

Rescue interventions could not be undertaken if the prestige of the heads of states was at stake. This position of Beneš was confirmed later when the President rejected Barou's proposal to ask Stalin about the fate of Polish Jewish refugees in the

<sup>755</sup> In comparison, the Poles' contacts with Stalin were tense from the beginning of the war and were further severed when the crimes of Katyn became known in the west.

<sup>756</sup> LAC, MG 31 H 158, Vol.5. Dr Rosenberg's work during the Second World War: Photocopies of research material and correspondence 1938-1943, Note of Conversation between President Edvard Benes and Dr. N. Barou and Mr. A. L. Easterman, on Friday, 23 July 1943.

Soviet Union. The Czechoslovak President ‘was more concerned with the Russian attitude about the general Jewish situation’.<sup>757</sup> Beneš later promised to investigate the proposals presented by the WJC, but it seems doubtful that he did anything in this respect.

Beneš was again visited by BS WJC representatives on 16 March 1944. Silverman, Easterman, and Zelmanovits (a member of the BS Executive since 1943) asked Beneš to contact Stalin with proposals concerning the situation of Rumanian Jews and the role of the Red Army in the liberation of the concentration camps.<sup>758</sup> The WJC desired that one of the conditions presented by the Soviets to the Rumanian government during prepared armistice talks should be a demand for the transfer of Transnistrian Jewry to ‘old Rumania’ and their protection there.<sup>759</sup> Beneš did not consider it possible or easy to include the proposals in the first round of negotiations between the Soviets and Rumanians as suggested by the WJC. As had been the case during the meeting in July 1943, while the WJC delegation was considering immediate measures on behalf of Rumanian Jewry, Beneš was thinking about the general Jewish position in post-war Europe. He repeatedly promised to send a telegram to Stalin. This probably did not happen, even though the President later confirmed to Zelmanovits its despatch.<sup>760</sup> Beneš needed to maintain the notion about his close relations with Stalin. The reality was not so simple and he was not willing to contact the Soviet leader with such proposals.

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<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>758</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 241/3/46: ‘Notes on the visit to President Benes on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Written on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1944.’ Furthermore, the Rumanian government would be expected to allow Jewish emigration to Palestine and the Red Army might be sent special orders and adopt timely measures to rescue the Jewish population in Eastern Europe.

<sup>759</sup> During the advance of the Axis armies in 1941, between 145,000 and 150,000 Rumanian Jews had been deported from Rumania to Transnistria. They had to live there under unbearable conditions and around 90,000 of them died. See *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden. Band I-III* (München: Piper Verlag, 2nd Edition, 1998), pp. 1421-1425.

<sup>760</sup> USA, WJC Archives, MS 241/3/46: ‘Notes on the visit to President Benes on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Written on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1944.’ LMA, BoD, Acc 3121/C/11/010/006, Meeting for Consultation between representatives of the Board of Deputies and the WJC, 22 March 1944. The author has examined documents at the AÚTGM and has not been able to find any reference to the telegram. It is not among telegrams sent to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Moscow (AÚTGM, EB-II-Dep 14/209, box 14. Telegrams from 1944) or in the correspondence between Beneš and Stalin (AÚTGM, EB-II-V62A-C/3, box 196). There is a handwritten note on a letter sent by Easterman to Beneš on 20 March 1944. Easterman wanted to be informed about any response from Stalin received by the President. The note said: ‘According to the decision by Mr. President a[d]. a[cta]., 9.4.44.’ It might mean either that Beneš had sent the telegram, but had not received any answer, or that he simply did not want to be bothered with the whole matter. However, in the case of the former, we would expect some remark in the sense that the telegram had been sent, or that the President was still waiting for Stalin’s response.

The Czechoslovak government was in fact concerned about the possible deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union as can be shown by an episode that developed in late 1944. In September 1944, the Polish government-in-exile asked the western Allies and the Czechoslovaks to release a declaration or warning to the Nazis. It was prompted by received reports that the Nazis planned to destroy the camps in Auschwitz, Birkenau and Buchenwald, and murder all the inmates.<sup>761</sup> The Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry apparently did not know how to react because the Poles failed to contact the Soviet government, who established their own Polish proxy in Lublin.<sup>762</sup> The Czechoslovak government, concerned about the Soviet reaction, did not want to adhere to a separate declaration of the western Allies. The Foreign Ministry was willing to associate itself only with a UN declaration.<sup>763</sup> However, the American and British governments published their own separate warnings on 10 October 1944 and the western Polish government appealed to the Czechoslovaks to adhere to it as well.<sup>764</sup> In this connection, in contrast to the Poles, the Czechoslovak government informed the Soviets about the Nazi threats, but not about the proposed declaration.<sup>765</sup> It took twelve days and two visits to the Soviet Embassy before the Czechoslovak government finally associated itself with the warning.<sup>766</sup> Although the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in general supported the warning, concerns about possible complications in relations with the Soviet Union prevented it from acting earlier.

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<sup>761</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189. Letter from the Polish government to the Ambassador O’Malley, 18 September 1944. A copy was sent to the Czechoslovak government. Another appeal was later sent by Leon Kubowitzki from the WJC (AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189. Telegram, Kubowitzki to Masaryk, received on 2 October 1944). See also HIA, Poland: Poselstwo (Czechoslovakia), Romer to Tarnowski (Polish Ambassador to the Czechoslovak government), 19 September 1944 (and the following note about Tarnowski’s visit to Masaryk, 22 September 1944).

<sup>762</sup> As mentioned, relations between the Soviets and western Poles were almost non-existent.

<sup>763</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189. Masaryk to Schonfeld (US Embassy), 28 September 1944: ‘if [the Allies] deem[ed] it advisable that a declaration on the lines suggested by the Polish government be issued by *the United Nations*, the Czech Government w[ould] willingly associate itself with such a document’ [emphasis added].

<sup>764</sup> TNA, FO 371/39454. A copy of the British declaration; AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189. Procházka (Foreign Ministry official) to Kraus (Foreign Ministry official), 18 October 1944.

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.* Masaryk to Lebeděv (Soviet Ambassador), 6 October 1944. A similar letter was sent to the British and American governments. The information about the declaration was not mentioned in these letters.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.* Procházka to Ripka, 12 October 1944. Remark about Kraus’s conversation with the Soviet officials and another planned visit at the Embassy. *Ibid.* Procházka (Foreign Ministry official) to Kraus (Foreign Ministry official), 18 October 1944. Attached is the text of the Czechoslovak declaration. As in the case of the western Allies, the word ‘Jews’ was not used in the entire text, there were only ‘Czechoslovak citizens’ in Auschwitz and Birkenau. The Czechoslovak warning was published on 22 October 1944, see AČR, BBC 1939–1945, box 29, and Pavel Tigrid, 22 October 1944.

Likewise in mid-January 1945, Ripka was asked by Kubowitzki if the Czechoslovaks could convene a meeting of Allied governments in London to discuss actions that might have saved the remaining Jews in Nazi concentration camps. A similar meeting had been organized by Kopecký in Geneva in November 1944. Ripka, however, rejected the proposal ‘in view of the delicate Polish situation’.<sup>767</sup> The Minister was referring to the precarious situation that emerged when the Soviets insisted on the recognition of the Lublin-based PCNL. The Soviets wanted the Allies to abandon the western Polish administration.<sup>768</sup> Ripka advised that, for example, the French might be approached to initiate the meeting. He promised that the Czechoslovak government would take part in such a meeting, if convened.<sup>769</sup> Diplomatic considerations played a crucial role in the Czechoslovak exiles’ responses to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. But was this the case only with regard to proposed interventions that might question the relations with the major Allies?

### ***Neutral governments and their diplomacy: an obstacle on the road of rescue?***

During the war, neutral governments constituted an amorphous group that existed between the Allies and Axis. Officially they did not support either part of the conflict and maintained relations with both sides. The neutrals thus accepted the pre-war disintegration of Czechoslovakia and did not recognise the Beneš government. They, on the contrary, recognised the Slovak State.<sup>770</sup> Although the recognition by the neutrals was not as significant as the diplomatic ties with the major Allies, official contacts with the former would represent an important moral support for the Czechoslovak exiles.<sup>771</sup> However, the Swiss and Swedish governments and Pope Pius XII maintained diplomatic contacts with the Tiso government until 1945.<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>767</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, D112/8, Note of Conversation between Mr. Frischer, Dr. Kubowitzki, and Dr. Ripka, 19 January 1945.

<sup>768</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Od spojenectví k roztržce*, pp. 284-7. The Czechoslovak government finally recognized the PCNL on 30 January 1945. Němeček documents that in January 1945, the Soviet pressure on Beneš became unbearable and the constant reluctance to recognize the Soviet proxy threatened relations between the Soviets and the Czechoslovak exiles.

<sup>769</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, D112/8, Note of Conversation between Mr. Frischer, Dr. Kubowitzki, and Dr. Ripka, 19 January 1945.

<sup>770</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady*, p. 213 and 345.

<sup>771</sup> For example, with relation to Slovakia, the major Allies supported Beneš’s position as early as 1941. The Slovak government joined the war against the Soviet Union on German side and declared war to the United States and the British Empire in December 1941. Rychlík, Jan, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1914-1945*, pp. 215 and 219.

<sup>772</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady*, pp. 230 and 352. The Holy See recognised the Slovak government *de jure*

These diplomatic ties with the Slovak state were considered an obstacle to the reestablishment of diplomatic contacts with the neutrals by the Beneš government.<sup>773</sup>

The only exceptions were the exiles' repeated attempts to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican.<sup>774</sup> The Slovak government's complicity in the 'Final Solution' was to support the exiles' campaign. For example, on 6 July 1942, the Czechoslovak delegation handed an aide mémoire about the situation of the Jews in Slovakia to Bishop Myers to share with Cardinal Arthur Hinsley and the Vatican.<sup>775</sup> Arguably, the aide mémoire had a deeper political significance than purely to alleviate the plight of the Slovak Jews. In particular, there were repeated references to the Czechoslovak government's political and territorial continuity with pre-war Czechoslovakia and to the transience of the rulers in Slovakia.<sup>776</sup> The purpose of this memorandum was to show the Holy See who would be the real master of the territory and in this way to convince it to repudiate the Slovak government whose persecution of the Jews was inconsistent with Christian ethics.

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immediately on 25 March 1939 and the Czechoslovak ambassador was informed that relations between the Vatican and Czechoslovakia had been broken. (Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Destruction of Slovak Jewry. A Documentary History*, pp. xxixf.). This state of affairs lasted till 30 May 1945, more than a month after the Slovak Republic ceased to exist on 18 April 1945.

<sup>773</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady*, p. 230.

<sup>774</sup> Němeček, Jan, *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie. 15. březen 1939 a československé zastupitelské úřady*, pp. 241-255. *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, Vol. IV, pp. 360-363. Document no. 244. Le délégué apostolique à Londres Godfrey au cardinal Maglione. Londres, 21 janvier 1941; *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, Vol. V, pp. 115-117. Document no. 27. Le délégué apostolique à Londres Godfrey au cardinal Maglione. Londres, 27 juillet 1941. There was probably no answer to this letter. *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, Vol. IV, p. 425f. Document no. 297. Le cardinal Maglione au délégué apostolique à Londres Godfrey, Vatican, 25 mars 1941. Beneš, Edvard, *The Memoirs of Dr. Edvard Beneš: From Munich to New War and New Victory*, pp. 335-341. 'Memorandum from President Dr. Edvard Beneš to the Holy See, delivered to President F. D. Roosevelt on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1943'; The Vatican did not answer Beneš's letter of May 1943. However, in March 1944, during a conversation with the Slovak ambassador Karol Sidor, Maglione said that the Holy See could not recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. (Kamenec, Ivan – Prečan, Vilém – Škovránek, Stanislav (eds.), *Vatikán a Slovenská republika (1939-1945). Dokumenty* (Bratislava: Slovak Academia Press, 1992), p. 153, footnote 5).

<sup>775</sup> It seems that the government was not allowed to approach the Apostolic Delegate Godfrey directly and therefore the way via Bishop Myers and Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, had to be chosen. The delegation consisted of Vladimír Slavík (Foreign Ministry), Viktor Fischl and Arnošt Frischer AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Foreign Ministry to the Czechoslovak Consulate General in Jerusalem, 8 July 1942. Note about the visit to Bishop Myers. For a personal account of the visit, see APNP, Viktor Fischl Papers, Viktor Fischl Diary, 25 June 1942. The preparation of the aide memoire was initiated by Frischer. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Aide Mémoire (6 July 1942). Curiously, the document has not been included into the edition of documents published by the Vatican (*Actes*).

<sup>776</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190. Aide Mémoire (6 July 1942).

An almost identical text was sent to the Vatican, via Myers, in February 1944.<sup>777</sup> Yet although Pius XII intervened with the Slovak authorities on several occasions, he never put enough pressure on them to force them to stop further deportations and never thought of terminating relations with Tiso.<sup>778</sup>

One issue needs to be addressed here: why did the exiles not try to secure help for Slovak Jews from other neutrals, for example Sweden, Switzerland, or other Allies? The situation can be explained using the example of one particular episode. The Slovak National Uprising in late August 1944 and the ensuing occupation of Slovakia by the Wehrmacht meant a deadly threat for the remaining Jews.<sup>779</sup> In October 1944, Frischer presented several suggestions as to how the government might help the Jews in Slovakia. He asked the Foreign Ministry to request the King of Sweden, the Swiss government, the Vatican and the Slovak Red Cross (SRC) to intervene with Tiso to stop the deportations.<sup>780</sup> However, nearly all of Frischer's proposals were turned down. Procházka noted that the government could not ask the Swedish and Swiss governments because their subsequent contacts with Tiso would have meant the exiled Czechoslovaks giving certain recognition to the renegade Slovak government. Further, the SRC could have been approached only directly by the Czechoslovak Red Cross (CRC), which could not have negotiated without the approval of the Czechoslovak government.<sup>781</sup> The fact that even the Czechs living in Slovakia were threatened by the German occupation did not help. On the other hand,

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<sup>777</sup> Jewish organizations in Switzerland received intelligence about the forced census of the remaining Jews in Slovakia. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Frischer to Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 31 January 1944. The Czechoslovak government was asked to approach the Holy See. The MFA reacted immediately and Ripka handed the aide mémoire to Myers (AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Ripka to Myers, 4 February 1944). Archbishop of Westminster, Griffin, sent the Aide Mémoire to the Vatican (*Ibid.*, Archbishop Griffin to Ripka, 22 February 1944. Myers to Ripka, 19 February 1944).

<sup>778</sup> See Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Destruction of Slovak Jewry. A Documentary History*, p. xxxiii; 'Vatican Policy and the "Jewish Problem" in "Independent" Slovakia (1939-1945)', in *Yad Vashem Studies VI*, 1970, pp. 27-53. Lipscher, Ladislav, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939-1945*, p. 151.

<sup>779</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Linton (Jewish Agency) to Frischer, 4 October 1944; See also Fatran, Gila, 'Die Deportation der Juden aus der Slowakei 1944-1945', in *Bohemia* 37, Vol. 1, 1996, pp. 98-119.

<sup>780</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka for Ripka about Frischer's interventions, 9 October 1944. Frischer was influenced by the June 1944 interventions of the Swedish King Gustav V with the Hungarian Horthy government, a diplomatic effort that partly caused the halting of deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. Bauer, Yehuda, *A History of the Holocaust. Revised Edition*, p. 348. Frischer even submitted to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry translations of telegrams sent by the Swedish King to Horthy and his reply. See: AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to Procházka (Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry), 13 October 1944.

<sup>781</sup> This intervention would have had to be conducted with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross. AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka for Ripka about Frischer's interventions, 9 October 1944, Procházka summarized the notes made by Ducháček.

the intervention via the Vatican was finally approved by Ripka.<sup>782</sup> The Foreign Ministry was afraid of the tricky situation that emerged when the ministry refused some of the interventions. Consequently, it prepared a summary of its activities on behalf of the Slovak Jews in October and November 1944. It was to serve as a proof that the ministry had tried to alleviate the plight of the threatened Czechs and Jews in Slovakia.<sup>783</sup>

Similarly, in mid-January 1945, during a meeting with Kubowitzki, Ripka rejected further interventions with neutral governments. The issue was the non-existence of their diplomatic relations with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile.<sup>784</sup> The Minister, on the contrary, confirmed that he had contacted the Vatican prior to the meeting.<sup>785</sup> The Czechoslovak government wanted to re-establish mutual diplomatic relations with the Vatican and kept contacting it. The diplomatic ties with the other neutrals were not perceived to be as fundamental. The government wanted firstly to be approached by the neutrals and only then to re-establish diplomatic relations. It was to document the re-emergence of the Czechoslovak power in the European diplomatic world.

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<sup>782</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Procházka to Ripka, 9 October 1944. Although the Foreign Ministry official Procházka wanted to formulate the Memorandum for the Vatican in a way that it would not encourage the Pope's direct negotiations with the Slovak government, it finally ended: 'The Czechoslovak Government considers it its duty, to draw attention to this new imminent danger and to utilise all possibilities which may tend to avert, or at least diminish, this new wave of the persecution of the Czechoslovak population'. It did not mention a direct intervention with Tiso, but what other might have been meant under the term 'all possibilities'? (*Ibid.*, Memorandum prepared by the Czechoslovak government). The memorandum was sent to the Vatican via the British government. See *Ibid.*, Nichols to Ripka, 21 November 1944, with attached Translation of Pro-Memoria from the Vatican, 2 November 1944; TNA, FO371/38942, C13878/1343/12, Ripka to Nichols, 9 October 1944 (memorandum attached); Nichols to Eden 11 October 1944. The Foreign Office did not want to associate itself with the intervention, because they had issued a warning to the Germans only several days before. The FO was afraid that another declaration might provoke German reprisals against British POWs. Hence they only forwarded the memorandum to the Vatican (*Ibid.*, a minute on the file, 16 October 1944, signature not legible. The memorandum was forwarded to the Holy See on 19 October 1944).

<sup>783</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Ripka to the Chancellery of the President of the Republic and to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 23 November 1944. In the end, the Foreign Ministry decided to approach the ICRC. It was executed, probably unofficially, by Kopecký in Geneva.

<sup>784</sup> FDRPL, WRB Papers, box 36, John Gilbert Winant (US Ambassador to Britain) to the Secretary of State, 30 January 1945. Winant forwarded to the Secretary of State communication between Ripka and the US Ambassador to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, Rudolf Schonfeld. Ripka informed Schonfeld on 27 January about his conversation with Kubowitzki, where the latter asked the Czechoslovaks to approach 'protecting powers', the Vatican and the ICRC, concerning the German plans to exterminate the remaining Jews of Europe. Ripka forwarded Kubowitzki's request to the Big Three, but stated that the Czechoslovaks could not approach the 'protecting powers', because the government did not maintain contacts with them.

<sup>785</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, D112/8, Note of Conversation between Frischer, Kubowitzki, and Ripka, 19 January 1945.

If proposed rescue actions were inconsistent with the administration's political goals, they were simply dismissed. This was the case with negotiations that might have meant even indirect recognition of the Slovak government or might have risked complications in diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. On the contrary, in the case of the Vatican, the Slovak persecution of the Jews was utilised as another proof of the decadence of the Tiso regime. High politics and the *Realpolitik* posture of the major officials in the Czechoslovak ranks thus played a crucial role in the government's response to the Holocaust. But we need now to enquire into the discourse used by the Czechoslovak exiles when dealing publicly with the persecution of the Jews. It will illustrate that, in fact, the exiles instrumentalised the persecution of the Jews in order to serve their political objectives.

### ***The Czechoslovak BBC Section and the Holocaust***

The exiles' war-time BBC broadcasts from Britain to occupied Europe should be seen as one of the non-military weapons of the war, a propaganda tactical weapon to support the ideology and politics of this particular side of the conflict. One of the topics that inevitably came up was the persecution of civilians by the Germans and also the persecution of the Jews. Therefore the BBC broadcasting of the information needs to be perceived in relation to the propaganda war effort conducted by the Allies as a whole.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the broadcasts to occupied Europe were shaped by a mixture of competing influences:

1) The exile governments' intention was to influence the population in the occupied homeland. Simultaneously, the broadcasts themselves were inspired by reports sent to London by underground groups. In the governments' efforts to shape the public opinion at home, the governments reflected the content of messages forwarded to them by underground movements.

2) The content of the broadcasts regularly became public in London.<sup>786</sup> The broadcasts dealing with Jewish issues were published by pro-Jewish activists and journalists. The Czechoslovak exiles occasionally published the speeches in their

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<sup>786</sup> For example a broadcast by Juraj Slávik, 9 February 1944, published by Frischer (LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510). Or reaction of the British Jewish organizations to the broadcast by Ripka on 18 September 1941, see *We think of you*.

official publications as well.<sup>787</sup> We can suggest that some of these speeches were indeed intended to enhance the exiles' image in the west. The minor Allies wanted to be seen as adherents of democratic ideals. They were a part of the war between the forces of light, as the Allies wanted to be seen and the dark, evil forces of the Nazis.

3) The Czechoslovak BBC Service, as was the case with other European services, was a part of the broader conglomeration of the BBC and thus under the surveillance of the British governmental agencies, particularly the Political Warfare Executive. British censorship or unwritten laws in the BBC played their role in decisions about broadcasts. The British, for example, did not allow foreigners to prepare the news services of the BBC.<sup>788</sup> The topics of the Czechoslovak political commentaries during the war were decided among the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, the British Foreign Office and the individual speakers.<sup>789</sup> The following analysis is thus mostly focused on political commentaries that reveal attitudes unique to Czechoslovak broadcasting. Starting from 1943, the Czechoslovaks received 25 minutes of 'free time' which was entirely at their disposal and which had to comply only with British political and military censorship.<sup>790</sup> The Czechoslovak broadcasting was still under British control, but only in the cases that went against British interests.<sup>791</sup>

Information about the massacres and planned extermination of the Jews was presented in Czechoslovak broadcasts, frequently based on directives from the chairmen of the European BBC Services, Noel Newsome and Joel E. Ritchie.<sup>792</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> *Central European Observer*, July 21, 1944, p. 226. 'The Fate of European Jews: Oswiecim and Birkenau. A Document'.

<sup>788</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 271, 2-82-4, Proposal for Modification of the Czechoslovak Service, 25 February 1943.

<sup>789</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 271, 2-82-4. Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Czechoslovak broadcasting, 17 December 1941. The Czechoslovak authorities during the first war years confirmed that their broadcasting was in fact 'British' and the Czechoslovaks had only limited powers to pursue their own policy.

<sup>790</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 271, 2-82-4. Minutes of the new Arrangements of the Czechoslovak BBC Service, 1943. This time was allocated for Czechoslovak political commentaries and also meant that the government had to abandon completely the preparation of news bulletins. Also available secondary sources suggest that there was 'very little [British] control' over the Czechoslovak programme. Briggs, Asa, *The War of Words. The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume III* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 470.

<sup>791</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Collection, box 2, Táborský diary entry 12 September 1941, p. 574. The censorship did not allow the State Council Member, Vido, to mention that the parts of Slovakia that were ceded to Hungary would be returned back to Czechoslovakia. Also all the broadcasts were always translated into English, most probably for the British censorship see AČR, BBC 1939-1945.

<sup>792</sup> The chairmen dealt in accordance with instructions of the Political Warfare Executive, an agency linked with the British government. We can identify three main time periods when the European Services were asked to broadcast about the Jewish persecution: in late June 1942, when the British

Indeed, the European Services, in contrast to the British Home Service, aired information about the Holocaust more frequently.<sup>793</sup> Their broadcasts were also more detailed and the manner and tone were more open.<sup>794</sup>

Probably the most controversial question regarding the Allies' responses to the Holocaust is: 'When did they know?' In the case of the BBC, it should rather be: 'When did they broadcast?' But we must be careful; because of the propagandist nature of the broadcasts, the question should rather be: When did the broadcasts contain information that might be considered as publicizing the Nazis' determination to exterminate the Jews? The BBC Czechoslovak Service first mentioned Theresienstadt, as a ghetto for 90,000 Czech Jews, in early March 1942.<sup>795</sup> Poland, as a place where the Jews were being exterminated can be traced in all BBC services to the early summer of 1942, after the so-called Bund Report arrived in London.<sup>796</sup> The information about the massacres of Jews in the east occasionally appeared on the Czechoslovak BBC, but there was no systematic approach to the topic. Broadcasts were, for example, based on stories provided by the Czechoslovak soldiers fighting in the USSR. One speech, aired on 27 April 1944, was exceptional due to its elaborate style and very moving tone. Pavel Tigrid dramatically described the execution of Jews behind the eastern front:

Can any of the murderers of the Reich's paradise escape? The  
17-year old girl that has been taken to the execution ground only

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press published the so-call Bund Report; in mid-December 1942, at the time of the UN Declaration condemning the Nazi persecution of the Jews; and in the summer of 1944, when information about the fate of Hungarian Jews in Auschwitz reached the west. Milland, Gabriel, 'The BBC Hungarian Service and the Final Solution in Hungary', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1998, pp. 353-373. See, for example: Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge (CAC), NERI, 1/1/2, Directives for 25 and 26 June 1942.

<sup>793</sup> About the British attitude, see BBC Written Archives, Caversham, Reading, R34/277, Minutes of the BBC Board Meeting, 19 November 1943; Anti-Semitism: BBC Policy, 17 November 1943. For the European Service policy, see CAC, NERI/3/4, The European Service, Principles and Purposes. Problems and Policy Points by N. F. Newsome (Director of European Broadcasts), 1 January 1943, As suggested by the head of the European Services, Noel F. Newsome: 'We do seize the anti-Semitic bull by the horns and do not hesitate to express indignation at the persecution of the Jews and our own recognition of the Jews as equals and brothers in every respect. Apart from this, we do not go into the question of the future of the Jews, Zionism, etc: etc:, treating them simply as citizens of Europe and of that country which they made their home'.

<sup>794</sup> Harris, Jeremy D., 'Broadcasting the Massacres. An Analysis of the BBC's Contemporary Coverage of the Holocaust', *Yad Vashem Studies XXV*, 1996, pp. 74 and 78.

<sup>795</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'Theresienstädter Dokumente', p. 24, document 12, a note by the Prague Nazi intelligence service (Abhördienst), 3 March 1942. The BBC broadcast in July that already 50,000 Czech Jews had been deported from 'Czechoslovakia', see *ibid.*, p. 30, document 28, a note by the Prague Nazi intelligence service (Abhördienst), 15 July 1942.

<sup>796</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 14, broadcast 26 June 1942, read by Josef Kodíček. The Czechoslovak BBC aired the details on 26 June 1942.

because she was Jewish didn't understand it; she wanted to live so badly!

Rows and rows of Jews gathered from the whole district were pushed into a deep ditch. The S.S. men didn't give their rifles a chance to get cool. They started shooting their victims already at 6 o'clock.

A row of people which contained Rája Reichová was led to the ditch. "I don't want to die... I don't want to, I'm not Jewish..."

Rája was clinging on to life with a desperate cry. The head hangman gave his signal. The barrels of the automatics clicked. S.S. men approached Rája. "And what are you?" — the corners of his mouth contracted into a contemptuous smile. Rája possessed too much of the eastern beauty to be able to convince the cynical murderer.

"And what are you?" — he repeated with a smile.

"Russian," sighed Rája.

"Oh, then, you can't die with the Jews," grinned the commander, turning to the S.S. men. He took Rája's hand and led her away.

"You will die nicely on your own!"

He stepped back a few steps and with satisfaction he aimed at her. She looked into the black opening with eyes wide-open, eyes that would not understand.

Ta-ta-ta went the automatic and Rája collapsed. The S.S. men kicked the expiring body and shouted, "Take the carrion away!"<sup>797</sup>

Speeches with informative and humanitarian character which aired via the Czechoslovak BBC had two main features. Firstly there were regular warnings to the Germans in the Protectorate and to the Slovak government. Secondly, the speakers repeatedly asked Czech and Slovak people to help the Jews. After 17 December 1942 several Czechoslovak warnings were issued. They were usually a reaction to information about new waves of persecution, including deportations, or to reports that the Nazis intended to destroy the concentration camps before the arrival of the Allies.<sup>798</sup> Furthermore, the broadcasts aired in mid-June 1944 were a contemporaneous attempt to save lives. On 14 June 1944, Kopecký sent from Geneva the first sections of 'the Auschwitz Protocols'.<sup>799</sup> The escapees, among

<sup>797</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, Box 31, Pavel Tigrid 27 April 1944.

<sup>798</sup> Thus Minister Ripka appealed to the Czech doctors not to participate in the planned sterilization of the Jews in the Protectorate (5 January 1944) and Minister Slávik threatened the Slovak government on the eve of new registration of Jews in Slovakia (9 February 1944). On 22 October 1944, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile joined the British and American governments in their warning against the liquidation of remaining prisoners, though *not* specifically Jews, in Auschwitz. AČR, BBC 1939-1945 box 29, Hubert Ripka 5 January 1944; *Ibid.*, box 36 and 38, Pavel Tigrid 22 October 1944; LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Speech by Slávik, 9 February 1944.

<sup>799</sup> For details see Kárný, Miroslav, 'The Vrba and Wetzler Report', pp. 553-568.

others, warned of the imminent liquidation of the Theresienstadt Family Camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, after its six-month quarantine on 20 June 1944. The government's immediate reaction was a broadcast to the Protectorate. The Germans were threatened with retribution in the event that the liquidation of these people would be carried out and the Czechoslovak people were asked to help the Jews wherever possible.<sup>800</sup> The Nazis gassed most of the people remaining in the Family Camp in July 1944, but several thousand of them had by then been sent to labour camps in Germany. The BBC broadcasting did not play any decisive role in the Nazi decision not to murder all the prisoners. This notwithstanding, it was still an important case of the Czechoslovak BBC broadcasting being used with the intention of saving the lives of Jews.<sup>801</sup>

The speeches presented in this section clearly had a humanitarian impulse. However, when we enquire more into the purposes of the political commentaries dealing with Jewish issues, we can find a broader dimension. The Czechoslovaks needed to maintain the image of decent people, not affected by Nazi anti-Semitism and here, the BBC broadcasts serve the purpose well.

When dealing with the Czechoslovak government's responses to the Holocaust, we have to first of all differentiate between events that took place in the occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and those that took place in independent Slovakia. The exiles' propaganda faced considerable obstacles when dealing with the Czech authorities in the occupied western parts of the Republic. State President Hácha had already been lawfully elected to his office before the occupation. He and the Prime Minister Alois Eliáš were, during the first war years, in contact with the underground movement and with Beneš. Even later, when Hácha and the government were repeatedly attacking the exiles, Ripka, the head of the exiles' propaganda, advised restraint when condemning Hácha. It was not advisable, according to the Minister, to attack the Protectorate authorities on a general level.<sup>802</sup>

<sup>800</sup> Pavel Schönfeld (Tigris) read out the warning for several days, starting 15 June. See Miroslav Kárný, 'Obóz familijny w Brzezinke (BIIb) dla Żidów z getta Theresienstadt', pp. 209f.; Toman Brod, 'Zamyšlení nad účelem rodinného tábora a nad osudy uvězněných chlapců', in Miroslav Kárný – Vojtěch Blodig – Margita Kárná (eds.), *Terezínský rodinný tábor v Osvětimi-Birkenau* (Praha: Terezínská Iniciativa – Melantrich, 1994), pp. 66-67; AÚTGM, Klecanda Collection, folder 177. Schönfeld was later well-known under the name Pavel Tigris.

<sup>801</sup> Kárný, Miroslav, 'The Vrba and Wetzler Report', p. 559; Brod, Toman, 'Zamyšlení nad účelem rodinného tábora a nad osudy uvězněných chlapců', pp. 66-67; Kulka, Otto Dov, 'Ghetto in an Annihilation Camp. Jewish Social History in the Holocaust Period and its Ultimate Limits', pp. 315-330.

<sup>802</sup> CNA, MV-L, box 271, 2-82-4, minutes of the Advisory Council to the Czechoslovak broadcasting,

For international reasons, Hácha and the government were to be condemned only based on specific actions they took. The situation concerning the Slovak government was different. Tiso and Tuka were to be attacked on all fronts. It was also only in connection with Slovakia that the Advisory committee of the Czechoslovak broadcasting recommended raising issues of Jewish persecution via the BBC.<sup>803</sup> Broadcasts to Slovakia hence followed different objectives and will be dealt with separately.

### ***Broadcasts to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia***

When broadcasting to the Protectorate, the Czechoslovak exiles repeatedly asked Czech people to offer help to the Jews whenever possible. However, the influence of home underground reports which dealt negatively with political issues connected with the Jews made their mark. Help to the Jews was not necessarily presented as a fundamental, altruistic deed. The exile Minister of Justice, Stránský, addressed people at home on the eve of the birthday of the late President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in the following manner:

all the help and relief that you grant them will be for your honour and glory in the world. And it will be put to the credit also of our own national cause. [Tomáš Garrigue] Masaryk's world popularity from which our cause profited so abundantly during the First World War was originally founded by the valiant campaign against [...] ritual superstition and against the injustice committed against a single insignificant and poor Jewish fellow-citizen. In this way too, therefore help in whatever way you can, help and you will be helped.<sup>804</sup>

As presented, help to the Jews was in the interest of the Czechs. The belief in Jewish influence in world diplomacy was behind Stránský's broadcast.<sup>805</sup> The exiles believed that the world was following the treatment of the Jews by the Czechoslovak people. The exiles considered it important to *explain* to the Czechs why they were supposed to help the Jews. The Czechoslovak resistance based their political struggle

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9 July 1942.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>804</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 19, Jaroslav Stránský 6 March 1943. The speech started: 'Among you alone the Germans have tortured and tortured to death tens of thousands of these human beings without the merest semblance of any guilt, simply because they were born of Jewish fathers and mothers - on the European continent these victims go into millions. [...] Not many of the castaways from this wretched ship have remained among you.'

<sup>805</sup> For a description of these concerns, see for example: CNA, MV – L, box 255, file 2-63-2, report by the Association of Czech-Jews 15 May 1942.

during the war on sustaining the notion of Czech exceptionality. Helping the Jews in the Protectorate was consequently to strengthen the notion and thus to support the Czechoslovak resistance movement as such.

We can characterise other features of the broadcasts to the Protectorate using an analysis of one particular address. On 17 December 1942, Ripka commented on the UN Declaration acknowledging the Allies' awareness of the Nazi extermination campaign against the Jews. The broadcast started with a detailed description of crimes committed against the Jews. It furthermore provided estimates of the numbers of Jews who had already been murdered by the Nazis:

The joint declaration of the Governments of the United Nations which you have just heard is only a moderate expression of the horror and disgust with which civilised mankind is moved to-day. For the horrors committed against the Jewish population of Europe cannot be portrayed in an official declaration. The history of mankind is not without its shadows. But what is now being carried out by Hitler's regime against innocent and defenceless people, this slaughter that goes into hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions, this torture by hunger, extermination by gas and electric current, these massacres of old men, women, invalids and children, are the most shameful defilement of the name of man. It has been reserved for Hitlerite Germany to win this darkest record of vileness and barbarism. [...]

[T]he present anti-Jewish madness is nothing but the expression of a pathological demon who is driven to fury by the very conception of humanity. In anti-Jewish massacres on this scale there is, it is true, method but there no longer appears from them any normal human feeling. Only one thing is clearly evident in them: the fear of defeat of Hitler and his regime.<sup>806</sup>

It thus cannot be claimed that the persecution of the Jews was overlooked by the *Voice of the Free Republic*. Very detailed information was indeed broadcast, especially at the time of the UN Declaration.<sup>807</sup> Nonetheless, the issue was the way in which the information was commented on. Specifically, it was the German persecution of Czechs which played the dominant role. In December 1942, the exiles, for example, broadcast: 'Hecatombs of death are covering the Czech land, currents of blood are irrigating it day after day.'<sup>808</sup> Even when broadcasting about the situation of Jews in occupied Europe, the situation of other nations was not to be forgotten.<sup>809</sup>

<sup>806</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 17, Hubert Ripka, 17 December 1942.

<sup>807</sup> See AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 17.

<sup>808</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 17, broadcast on 11 December 1942, 6.45pm.

<sup>809</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 17, broadcast on 15 December 1942, 6.45pm. '[A]fter Jews (and together with them), Poles, Russians, Czechs, Yugoslavs will be butchered. The Nordic consciousness

The Nazi campaign against the Jews, though stressed as a unique crime, was still presented only as a prelude to the annihilation of other nations. Sometimes the Jews were even relegated to the background: ‘The Germans have on their road to domination through Europe murdered millions of innocent people, Slavs, Frenchmen, Belgians, Greeks, Norwegians, and Jews.’<sup>810</sup> Ripka returned to the theme in his broadcast on 17 December 1942:

The German nation, already burdened by so much guilt, is to share in a crime which history will never be able to forget. And all that is in Hitler’s reach is to share his fate of confusion, destruction, death. The massacres of the Jews are only a dress rehearsal for massacres of the other enslaved nations. Some of them, such as the Czechoslovak nation, he still needs. But when his situation is still more hopeless he will spare none who are within the reach of his power. This is the political importance of the campaign of extermination against the Jews and of this you must be aware.<sup>811</sup>

Hence we can see that the Czechoslovaks’ perception of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia resulted in the stress being put on the ‘political importance’ of the Nazi extermination of the Jews. It was always the interest of the nation, of the Republic, that counted in the first place. An evaluation of the exiles’ perception of priorities hence explains why some important features of the Jewish persecution did not receive considerable attention via the Czechoslovak BBC. The wave of deportations from the Protectorate in mid-October 1941 coincided with the escalation of the persecution of Czechs after Heydrich’s arrival in Prague. The resistance leaders, including Prime Minister Eliáš, were imprisoned, hundreds of people were shot and martial law was introduced in the Protectorate. These events of late September and October 1941 received substantial coverage by the BBC. This was not the case with the first deportations of the Jews.<sup>812</sup> The situation repeated itself in June 1942. The so-called Bund report arrived in London exactly at the time when the assassination of Heydrich was followed by brutal persecution of Czechs and the destruction of Lidice. The Polish BBC service, for example, brought the Bund report to the public on 2 June 1942, whereas the Czechs, together with the other BBC

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is supposed to steel itself with the view of the murder of Jews, not to shake when the turn of the others will come.’

<sup>810</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 33, broadcast by Ivan Petruščák, 25 June 1944. Petruščák was a member of the Czechoslovak State Council in London.

<sup>811</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 17, broadcast by Hubert Ripka 17 December 1942.

<sup>812</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 9, broadcasts from October 1941.

Services, only in late June.<sup>813</sup> Of significance for the comparison of persecutions of Czechs and Jews was a speech planned by Minister Slávik. A talk depicting the persecution of Slovak Jews was originally planned to air on 11 June 1942. It was nevertheless postponed for four days, most probably because of the event of Lidice.<sup>814</sup>

There is moreover another feature of Ripka's December 1942 speech that needs to be contextualized. Anti-Semitism was presented as something German, or Nazi, but definitely not Czech; as something that could not appeal to the Czech people. Czechoslovak BBC speakers regularly distanced Czechs from Nazi anti-Semitism. These were not pleas to the Czech people to avoid collaboration in the persecution of the Jews. Rather they were words of self-assurance, of self-congratulation with regard to decency. And the role of Czech collaborators in the 'Final Solution' was scarcely mentioned and not emphasised at all.<sup>815</sup> Even Czech fascists could not cast doubt on the Czechs as a whole. These messages were undoubtedly directed to the audiences in the west as well as to the occupied country:

Vain have been Hitler's attempts to infect with the spiritual poison the nations which he has enslaved. The French, Dutch, Polish peoples, and among the first also the Czech people, have shown themselves to be immune against the plague which was to seize them and then disrupt them. The [e]scutcheon of the Czech people is pure and nothing has happened on Czech initiative which might dishonour the good name of the Czechs.

[...]

Czechoslovak people: the Czechoslovak Government has signed the declaration of the United Nations in the knowledge that it is thus defending not only the cause of humanity and justice but [in] the sincerest interests of the Czechoslovak nation. It is convinced that it is thus expressing your innermost conviction. [...] It has many times been stressed in the Nazi programme that the aim of Hitlerism is to eradicate the Czechoslovak nation from Central Europe. [...] [R]ealise that the future of the Czechoslovak nation is safeguarded only by loyalty to the ideals of the President-Liberator [Masaryk] and by unshakeable solidarity with all suffering and fighting nations.

<sup>813</sup> Bauer, Yehuda, 'When Did They Know?', p. 53. The Czechs broadcast the information only after the report was published by British press and was also included among the directives of the European Service. See CAC, NERI, 1/1/2, BBC European Division directives for 25, 26, 27 and 30 June 1942.

<sup>814</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 14, Juraj Slávik broadcast 15 June 1942 (originally was supposed to be aired on 11 June 1942). One source even suggests that the speech was originally planned for 1 June 1942. The assassination of Heydrich took place on 27 May 1942 and this might be the reason for the postponement of the broadcast to 11 June and later to 15 June. See HIA, Juraj Slávik Papers, 18:4.

<sup>815</sup> AÚTGM, Klecanda Collection, file 177, broadcast 5 December 1944 about Alois Kříž, an ardent anti-Semitic broadcaster in the Protectorate.

And solidarity with the suffering, tortured and slaughtered Jews is today a sacred duty of every decent man. We, obedient to the voice of our national tradition, have always fulfilled this duty and shall continue to fulfil it to the end with fervency of heart and with the profoundest inspiration of soul.<sup>816</sup>

Broadcasts to the Protectorate depicting the Nazi persecution of the Jews followed the same pattern. The description of concrete events was juxtaposed with a link to the fate of other nations and finally concluded by stressing Czech non-involvement in the extermination campaign. For example, on 16 July 1944, Ripka broadcast a comprehensive report about the Auschwitz Protocols. The Minister in his speech summarized the most important facts, describing in detail the killing machinery of the Auschwitz complex.<sup>817</sup> However, he refrained from mentioning the overall number of Jews killed in the camp complex of Auschwitz, one of the most important features of the report.<sup>818</sup> The second part of the talk made a call to the Czech people, by showing them a broader dimension of the Nazi policy.<sup>819</sup> The persecution of Jews was never presented as possessing its own singularity. But the situation in connection with the Jewish persecution in Slovakia was different. The anti-Semitism of the Slovak government played a prominent part in Czechoslovak BBC broadcasts.

### ***Political intentions behind broadcasting to Slovakia***

Slovakia was the first of the German satellites voluntarily to start deporting its Jews to Nazi Poland.<sup>820</sup> This was done intentionally and without any significant German pressure.<sup>821</sup> The Czechoslovak exiled politicians mentioned the Jewish

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<sup>816</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 17, broadcast by Hubert Ripka 17 December 1942.

<sup>817</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 34, broadcast by Ripka 16 July 1944.

<sup>818</sup> TNA, FO 371/42809, Ripka to the British Ambassador Phillip Nichols, 4 July 1944. Ripka in this letter admitted his view that the overall number of Jews killed in Auschwitz, as stated in the report, might be exaggerated. It might be that the number of 1,765,000 murdered Jews was seen by the Minister as unrealistic and hence he avoided mentioning it in the broadcast.

<sup>819</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 34, broadcast by Ripka 16 July 1944.

<sup>820</sup> For the historiography on the deportations from Slovakia see: Tönsmeyer, Tatjana, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939-1945. Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn*; Lipscher, Ladislav, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939-1945*; Rothkirchen, Livia, *The Destruction of Slovak Jewry. A Documentary History*. Hilberg, Raul, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), pp. 766-794. *Tragédia slovenských Židov. Materiály z medzinárodného sympózia, Banská Bystrica 25.-27. marca 1992* (Banská Bystrica: Datei, 1992).

<sup>821</sup> See Tönsmeyer, Tatjana, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939-1945. Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn*, p. 148; Jelinek: Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The "Final Solution" – The Slovak Version', p. 471; 'The Holocaust and the Internal Policies of the Nazi Satellites in Eastern Europe: A Comparative Study', p. 295.

situation in Slovakia in their official discourse more often than they did in case of the Protectorate. There were several reasons behind this decision:

First, the exile government saw the possibility of attacking the ‘treacherous’ Slovak government on humanitarian grounds.

Second, as documented, in contrast to the Bohemian lands, anti-Semitic tendencies had been significant in Slovakia even before the war.<sup>822</sup> A considerable part of the Slovak population collaborated with their government in the ‘Final Solution’. The Tiso-Tuka government cleansing of Jews from Slovak society was in many cases approved of by Slovak people and even by oppositional forces.<sup>823</sup> The Slovak population changed their view of the persecution of the Jews only when confronted with the reality of the deportations in 1942, but the Czechoslovak exiles did not possess any knowledge of this change.<sup>824</sup> Moreover, as already documented, this development in the Slovaks’ attitude did not mean that they wanted the Jews to come back.<sup>825</sup> The Slovak government’s persecution of the Jews and the attitude of the Slovak population threatened the reputation of Slovaks in the world.<sup>826</sup> The story in fact might have harmed the image of Czechoslovaks as a whole.<sup>827</sup> According to the exiles, Slovaks, as well as Czechs should be perceived as decent people by the public abroad.

3) There was an international implication in the exile’s considerations when deciding about broadcasts to Slovakia. During a government session in June 1943, Minister Slávik presented a report received from the Slovak underground.<sup>828</sup> The account suggested that the Jews in Slovakia supported Hungarian irredentism. They

<sup>822</sup> For historiography see Fatranová, Gila, ‘Historický pohľad na vzťahy slovenského a židovského obyvateľstva’, in *Acta Judaica Slovaca*, Vol. 4, 1998, pp. 9-37; Nižnanský, Eduard, *Holokaust na Slovensku 7. Vzťah slovenskej majority a židovskej minorítu (náčrt problému). Dokumenty*; Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called “Solution to the Jewish Question” During the Period 1938-1945’, pp. 327-338.

<sup>823</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-50-56c, Report from Slovakia, 26 June 1944 (sent 23 June 1944). Tóth, Dezider (ed.), *Zápisky generála Rudolfa Viesta. (Exil 1939-1944)*, p. 200, the Viest diary entry 22 April 1943.

<sup>824</sup> About the change among the Slovaks see Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called “Solution to the Jewish Question” During the Period 1938-1945’, pp. 334-6.

<sup>825</sup> The reports sent to London confirmed that the Slovak population did not want to allow the Jews to regain their pre-war social status that had been, in their opinion, unjustified and disproportionate, see CNA, AHR, 1-50-56c, Report from Slovakia, 26 June 1944; similar remarks were made by the Communist member of the Slovak National Council, Laco Novomeský, during his stay in London in October 1944 see Prečan, Vilém, ‘Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně (říjen – listopad 1944). Nové dokumenty’, pp. 221-2.

<sup>826</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, box 3, Beneš’s message to Slovakia, 20 March 1943.

<sup>827</sup> As stated by Viktor Fischl, a Foreign Ministry official, the British did not differentiate between Czechs and Slovaks. CNA, AHR, 1-46-6-10, a note by Viktor Fischl, 5 June 1942.

<sup>828</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 182, minutes of the Czechoslovak government session, 25 June 1943.

were allegedly, in cooperation with the Jews in the United States, influencing the Americans to support the Hungarian international position in post-war negotiations (southern Slovakia was occupied by Hungary in November 1938). The Slovak government's persecution of the Jews and their relative security in Hungary was to play a role in this development.<sup>829</sup> Slávik did not accept the existence of the Jewish pro-Hungarian lobby, but he thought that it would be important, for international purposes, to show that the Hungarians' accusations were baseless. He highlighted the importance of documenting the Slovak people's decency and non-involvement in the crimes committed by the quisling government.<sup>830</sup>

In his BBC broadcast on 18 December 1942, which was well before the discussed meeting of the government, Slávik noted that the messages coming from Slovakia advised the exiles to avoid mentioning Jewish persecution when addressing the home audience.<sup>831</sup> He nevertheless continued as follows:

we know that the Slovak people do not agree and that they could never approve this fury and murder. Evangelical bishops resolutely protested against the brutal fury against Jews and the Slovak people were not only showing respect, but were also helping to the victims of this bloody regime.<sup>832</sup>

Slávik hence introduced the situation in Slovakia as if the people there, while not wanting to hear about the Jews, still did not participate in their persecution. They were, *in fact*, helping the Jews. The white-washing of the Slovak people, this maintaining of the positive Czechoslovak image, was the main feature of the broadcasts directed to Slovakia. In June 1942, at the peak of the deportations of Slovak Jews to Poland, Slávik addressed the audience in Slovakia:

Slovak kinsmen, the crimes of your traitors and unworthy leaders must appear in a quite new and even more frightful light. [...] [T]he

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<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.* Unfortunately, it was not completely correct. The first part of Slovak anti-Jewish policy, the aryanization and even the beginning of the deportations to Poland, were supported by a large segment of Slovak population. It had changed in 1942, when the truth about the situation in Poland reached Slovakia and also thanks to the changing war situation (See: Lipscher, Ladislav, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939-1945*, p. 151; Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The Vatican, the Catholic Church, the Catholics and the Persecution of the Jews During the Second World War: the case of Slovakia, in Bela Vago and George L. Mosse (eds.), *Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe 1918-1945* (New York and Toronto: John Wiley and Sons – Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1974), pp. 230-231)

<sup>831</sup> Also the report read by Slávik warned the exiles not to deal with Jewish issues when addressing people in Slovakia. AÚTGM, EB-II, box 182, minutes of the Czechoslovak government session, 25 June 1943.

<sup>832</sup> HIA, Juraj Slávik Papers, box 29, file 3, B.B.C. Special late night Czechoslovak News. By dr. Juraj Slávik and dr. Ivo Ducháček, 18 December 1942. My translation.

God-fearing Slovak people will avenge its shame and disgrace, [...] it will make order with the traitors and diabolic evil-doers [...]. The whole world is shocked at the cruelty and the un-Christian vengeful rage with which the executioners of Mach and Tuka are running amok. Revenge and hate are their law. And at the same time, disgusting Pharisees, they boast of their Christianity. You yourselves see every day how they are shaming and distorting the doctrine of Christ. Only look at what they are doing to the Jews. Sano Mach publicly boasts that by September he will drive 90,000 Jews from Slovakia. He envies the dubious fame of Herod. In cruelty and mercilessness he wishes to surpass his master, the monster Hitler. He is a disgusting vengeful lackey who wishes to curry favour with his commander and master. He even boasts, moreover, that he is doing it without pressure and at the commandment of his own black soul. The newspapers of a neutral country which trembles before the Nazi danger, Sweden, venture to give expression to their horrors at the fact that in no country, not excluding even Nazi Germany, is the Jewish question settled in such an inhuman fashion as in Slovakia.<sup>833</sup>

Slávik intentionally differentiated between the actions conducted by the Slovak government and the sentiments of ordinary Slovaks.<sup>834</sup> The speakers on the BBC and in public appearances in London dissociated the ‘God-fearing Slovak people’,<sup>835</sup> and the ‘Slovak Patriots’,<sup>836</sup> from the ‘so-called President Tiso’<sup>837</sup> and ‘the Slovak Quislings’.<sup>838</sup> The rulers in Slovakia were foreign to their own national tradition and to Christianity which they claimed to represent. Whilst the Slovak population’s cooperation in the ‘Final Solution’ did not find its way into the broadcasts, the Tiso government’s persecution of the Jews was criticised regularly.

Those attacks furthermore served as another – diplomatic – weapon in the exiles’ fight for new Czechoslovakia. The propaganda of the exile government declared that after the reestablishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, and after the inclusion of Slovakia to the common state, the democratic spirit would rule again in the whole country:

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<sup>833</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 14, Juraj Slávik broadcast 15 June 1942 (originally was supposed to be aired on 11 June 1942).

<sup>834</sup> For another example consult the BBC broadcast by Msgr. Pavel Macháček, the chairman of the Czechoslovak State Council, on 31 August 1942, see: *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 3 September 1942. The newspaper cutting is from USA, Joseph Hertz Papers, MS 175, 78/4.

<sup>835</sup> *Daily News Bulletin* (JTA), 17 June 1942. The newspaper cutting is from: USA, Joseph Hertz Papers, MS 175, 78/4, speech by Juraj Slávik.

<sup>836</sup> *The Jewish Bulletin*, July 1942, p. 4. ‘The Martyrdom of Slovak Jewry.

<sup>837</sup> Slávik, Juraj, ‘The Jews in Nazi Slovakia’, In *Di Vochnzaitung (The Jewish Weekly)*, 27 March 1942.

<sup>838</sup> ‘Reception to Czech and French Ministers’, In *Di Vochnzaitung (The Jewish Weekly)*, 9 April 1943.

The Slovak people has never been inhuman and cruel and it has always had a profound faith in God.

[...] Again we shall be guided not by the example of Nero and Caligula, not by the laws of Hitler and Mach, but by Christ's love and by the humanist principles of Masaryk. Czechoslovak unity will be further consolidated and cemented by the inhuman bestialities, unexampled in history, that are being committed by the monsters who murder even women and children. The brotherhood of the Czechs and Slovaks will again be the foundation of a happy life for future free generations.<sup>839</sup>

The main theme of these proclamations was unwavering Czech and Slovak adherence to the 'myth' of Masaryk democracy.



Image no. 7: Juraj Slávik (R) (Copyright LIFE.com)<sup>840</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The Czechoslovak government-in-exile was sufficiently informed about the deportations of Jews from the Protectorate and Slovakia to Poland. Although the administration lacked detailed intelligence about the fate of the Jews in the east, there was little doubt that the Jews had to endure hardship incomparable to anything known before. The government thus approached the Allies with rescue proposals, contributed to the relief parcel scheme, published material about the Jewish plight and made broadcasts to the occupied homeland.

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<sup>839</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 14, Juraj Slávik broadcast 15 June 1942 (originally was supposed to be aired on 11 June 1942).

<sup>840</sup> [www.life.com](http://www.life.com)

Nevertheless, whilst it is certainly correct that the Czechoslovak government was unable to secure any rescue action on its own, officials rarely urged the Allies to do so and were content just with forwarding rescue and relief proposals. Moreover, initiations of the interventions were dependent on pro-Jewish activists and their implementation was first of all considered in terms of Czechoslovak diplomatic objectives. The reason was not a lack of interest on the part of the involved officials, but their perception of the government's priorities.<sup>841</sup> Shortly after the war, with all the extermination centres liberated and the murderous Nazi deeds revealed to the world, the Chancellery of Beneš rejected the idea that the Jews were the first and main targets of the Nazis. It was indeed the Czechoslovak Republic and its democracy that was attacked in the first place.<sup>842</sup>

Michael Marrus rightly suggests that we should try to comprehend the conduct of a bystander 'by making a painstaking effort to enter into their minds and sensibilities'.<sup>843</sup> The analysis of the government's responses to the Holocaust further confirms the conclusions of the previous chapters. Munich and the Ides of March meant a severe blow to the Czechoslovak nation. The first and foremost objective of the Czechoslovak exiles' war was the reestablishment of an independent Republic. Beneš was willing to risk horrific retribution, after the planned assassination of Heydrich, to document the suffering and resistance of the Czech population. The territorial integrity of the liberated Czechoslovak Republic and the return of the government back to the country were of the highest importance on Beneš's political agenda. Beneš's position among Allied politicians, but also vis-à-vis the home resistance movement, was insecure for a very long time. The exiles thus respected the diplomatic positions adopted by the major Allies and were concerned about conducting any intervention that might have severed mutual diplomatic relations, especially with the Soviets. The future of Central Europe was decided without the exile governments and without knowledge of the Allied negotiations that were conducted between 1943 and 1945. The example of the western Polish government,

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<sup>841</sup> AMZV, LA - Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190. Procházka to Ripka, 31 October 1944. When describing the government's reaction to Frischer's proposals concerning intervention on behalf of Slovak Jews in the autumn of 1944, Procházka (Foreign Ministry official) wrote: 'I draw Your [Ripka's] attention to this fact [that Slovak Jews have been already deported], because it may be possible that the government will be questioned, why it did not push [the interventions] through more strongly. However, I am not sure if we could have done more'. My translation.

<sup>842</sup> AKPR, D17375/46, a note by the Chancellery of the President of the Republic for the Ministry of Interior, 13 September 1946 (and 8 October 1946).

<sup>843</sup> Marrus, Michael R., *The Holocaust in History*, p. 157.

whose political fate was decided unilaterally in Moscow, was a cautionary one. Unfortunately for the Jews, this was exactly the time when the main rescue actions were being discussed. The Jews were perceived as a particularistic group and their demands could not be risked in cases when Czechoslovak national interests might have been put in peril.

The case study of the BBC broadcasts documents that the speeches were influenced by complex factors. The reports sent by the home underground movements and the exiles' diplomatic consideration changed the rules of the game. The Czechoslovak government was not indifferent to the Jewish plight. Yet its public treatment of the Holocaust needs to be perceived as an effort to maintain the image of Czechoslovak decency. The Czechoslovaks wanted to be seen as a democratic nation. The people in the Bohemian lands and in Slovakia were therefore distanced from the anti-Jewish persecution conducted by the Nazis and the Slovak government. In the case of the Slovaks, their record was indeed whitewashed in order not to harm the Czechoslovak diplomatic struggle abroad.

The exiles' treatment of the Jewish persecution was not an *intentional* downplaying of the Nazi extermination campaign. The main factor was their perception of priorities, where the Nazi attack on the Republic was regarded as the main feature of the war. Political considerations aside, the exile Czechoslovaks' broadcast the persecution of the Jews on several occasions. That most of the broadcasts carried broader messages, which regularly overshadowed the presented facts about the Jews, was the result of the many anxieties of the exiles in these difficult and fast changing years.

With the coming of the end of the war and in the shadow of the emerging Holocaust, the exiles and pro-Jewish activists returned to the negotiations of the post-war position of the Jews in Czechoslovakia. It became apparent that Czechoslovak radical nationalism did not disappear with the progress of the war. On the contrary, the national homogenization of Czechoslovakia became one of the exiles' objectives in their struggle for a better post-war order. Hence the issue of how the Jewish position in liberated Czechoslovakia was prepared during the war needs to be addressed now.



## CHAPTER 4: CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENTS AND THE JEWS IN POST-WAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

*There will be no more minorities, Brother Perlzweig*

Jan Masaryk (1944)<sup>844</sup>

### ***Introduction***

At the beginning of 1944, Arnošt Frischer of the Czechoslovak State Council prepared a Memorial Treatise about the issues affecting the life of Czechoslovak Jews with the coming liberation of the Republic.<sup>845</sup> Frischer highlighted the most pressing themes and presented the Treatise to President Beneš. In turn, the Treatise was to initiate a discussion about the position of Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia. It presented the viewpoint of the official national-Jewish representative in the exile administration. However, Frischer existed as a kind of a maverick among the exiles; his political contacts with his home organization, the National-Jewish Council, were tense.<sup>846</sup> Especially Frischer and Zelmanovits, the head of the Council, differed in their perception of the Jewish position in liberated Czechoslovakia.<sup>847</sup> The Treatise was prepared personally by Frischer and ought to be considered as his individual initiative.

Yet its importance was emphasised by Frischer's status as the official representative of Jews in the Czechoslovak parliament during the war. Additionally, in September 1945, he became the chairman of the Council of the Jewish Religious Congregations in Bohemia and Moravia, an umbrella Jewish organization in post-war historical lands.<sup>848</sup> In fact, Frischer was the only one who presented such an elaborate analysis of the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia. His views should thus be at the centre of our analysis of the Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews. Hence this

<sup>844</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to the Office Committee about his meeting with Masaryk, 16 May 1944.

<sup>845</sup> AÚTGM, Edvard Beneš Papers – II, box 157, file 1557, Memorial Treatise by Arnošt Frischer, 2 March 1944.

<sup>846</sup> The biggest conflict occurred in April 1944, see: CZA, 280/5, Rosenberg and Platzek to Frischer, 18 April 1944 and Minutes of the National-Jewish Council meeting, 17 April 1944.

<sup>847</sup> Frischer very often acted without any consultation with the National-Jewish Council. See: CZA, A280/5, Minutes of the National-Jewish Council meeting on 9 May 1944.

<sup>848</sup> For Frischer's post-war activities see: Lániček, Jan, 'Výhry a prohry Arnošta Frischera' in *Židovská ročenka 5769, 2008-2009* (Prague: Federace židovských obcí v České republice, 2008), pp. 47-63.

chapter will examine how the issues identified by Frischer were dealt with by the Czechoslovak authorities during and after the war.

There were five key issues Frischer discussed in the document. First, he dealt with all aspects touching the life of Jews, including their position vis-à-vis the major population. Initially he suggested that Jews had not committed any crime against the nations of Czechoslovakia. Therefore, they should enjoy the same rights as the Czechoslovak constitution had granted them before the war. It was not clear how far this statement by Frischer was intended as a claim for the renewal of the minority treaties. Only the following part of the Treatise stressed that all the rights given to *other* minorities, as groups, ought also to be given to the Jews.<sup>849</sup> It constituted a claim for minority protection only in the case that similar concession was given to other groups. Thus Frischer presented his understanding for the new Czechoslovak internal policy.<sup>850</sup> He also accepted the Czechoslovak desire to punish all minorities that had been deemed to have caused disintegration of Czechoslovakia before the war, especially the Germans and Hungarians.<sup>851</sup> However, he argued in this respect, with a clear reference to the German-speaking Jews, no Jew ought to be punished simply based on the nationality s/he had declared before 1939 in connection with their mother tongue.<sup>852</sup>

Second, Frischer expressed his concerns about anti-Semitism in Europe. He did not expect that anti-Jewish hatred would disappear with the end of the war and hence demanded special protection for the Jews. The state administration was supposed to act against any manifestation of anti-Semitic feelings, without Jews having to report particular incidents and demand action against the culprits.<sup>853</sup>

Third, Frischer devoted a special section of his Treatise to the issue of repatriation. The Jews deserved special consideration, he argued, because their situation was unique. In the spring of 1944, not fully realising the scope of the Nazi extermination campaign against the Jews, Frischer stated that a considerable number

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<sup>849</sup> AÚTGM, Edvard Beneš Papers – II, box 157, file 1557, Memorial Treatise by Arnošt Frischer, 2 March 1944.

<sup>850</sup> See also Frischer's address in New York on 18 November 1944: *Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak Jews: address delivered at the meeting of the Czechoslovak Jewish representative committee affiliated with the WJC, Nov 18, 1944* (New York: Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee, 1945), pp. 18-32.

<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 22f.

<sup>852</sup> AÚTGM, Edvard Beneš Papers – II, box 157, file 1557, Memorial Treatise by Arnošt Frischer, 2 March 1944.

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid.*

of children and elderly would take part in the repatriation process.<sup>854</sup> Additionally, survivors would not be met by their relatives, because all the Czechoslovak Jews had been deported by the Nazis. Moreover, Frischer tried to open a topic that became very sensitive for the Czechoslovak leadership: the return of Jews who did not possess Czechoslovak citizenship, but had been residents of the Czechoslovak territory in 1938.<sup>855</sup>

Fourth, Frischer demanded full restitution of Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis and other aryanizers, or compensation in cases when such restitution would be impossible.<sup>856</sup> Money received after the war from Germany as indemnification or international loans might have contributed to the compensation.<sup>857</sup> Heirless Jewish property was to be used for the reconstruction of Jewish communal life and for the economic revival of pauperized Jews.<sup>858</sup>

Fifth, concerning its foreign policy, the government was asked to continue with its support for the Zionist movement. At the same time, this policy was not to be used against Jews still living in the Diaspora. Emigration to Palestine was not supposed to be compulsory. This vision was in clear opposition to Beneš's plans presented since 1940.<sup>859</sup>

The whole argument presented by Frischer was built on the assumption that a significant part of Czechoslovak Jewry would eventually survive the war. The document was prepared before the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944. More than 150,000 of the pre-war Czechoslovak Jewish community lived in Southern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, annexed to Hungary in November 1938 and March 1939. They were supposed to form the backbone of Jewish society in post-war Czechoslovakia. The national and cultural distinctiveness of this community – Ruthenian Jews, especially, could be labelled as *Ostjuden* – was used by Frischer as the main justification for the official recognition of the Jewish minority status in post-war Czechoslovakia.<sup>860</sup> Yet only several weeks after the completion of this Treatise, the German occupation of Hungary and the almost

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<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>855</sup> For example German and Austrian refugees before 1938/9.

<sup>856</sup> AÚTGM, Edvard Beneš Papers – II, box 157, file 1557, Memorial Treatise by Arnošt Frischer, 2 March 1944.

<sup>857</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.* In the last part of his Treatise, Frischer summarized all measures that were essential for the help provided by the state to Jewish survivors immediately after the liberation.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*

immediate start of deadly deportations to Auschwitz changed the rules of the game. Only 50,000 Jewish survivors returned to the Republic after the war.

Nevertheless, the real extent of the ‘Final Solution’ was not comprehended in London until the last months of the war. Beneš even remarked in March 1944 that he was of the opinion that a considerable part of the Jewish community would eventually survive the war.<sup>861</sup> The reality of the near total annihilation of the Jewish population could not therefore be taken into account during the discussions of the Czechoslovak plans for the Jewish minority that were going on until mid-1944.<sup>862</sup>

This chapter aims to explain how the policy, prepared during the war in exile, was implemented in liberated Czechoslovakia. The post-war position of Jewish survivors needs to be perceived in a wider time perspective emphasising continuity. This notwithstanding, new forces, emerging after 1945, should also be taken into account. Whilst the previous chapters dealt only with the democratic, pro-Beneš branch of the Czechoslovak resistance, this chapter also enquires into the positions adopted by the Communist exiles. The decisive role played by the Soviet Union in the final defeat of Nazi Germany raised the significance of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC). The Soviet Union did not take part in the Munich Diktat and was perceived positively by a significant part of Czech and Slovak society. Hence the CPC became a partner of the London based exiles in the negotiations of the post-war settlement in Czechoslovakia. The Communists’ attitude towards the Jews therefore needs to be taken into consideration.

### *Jewish Voices against the plans for the national homogenization of Czechoslovakia*

The experience of the Second World War shaped Czechoslovak attitudes towards the minorities that had lived in Czechoslovak territories for centuries. Public addresses by Beneš and especially his article in the January 1942 issue of *Foreign Affairs* brought to the public attention Czechoslovaks’ plans for the solution of minorities’ problem in Europe.<sup>863</sup> As summarized above, no minorities were to have any new protection guaranteed by international treaties; countries of East-Central

<sup>861</sup> HIA, Poland: Ministerstwo Informacji, box 80, folder 6, Polish Defence Ministry to the Polish Ministry of Information, 26 April 1944.

<sup>862</sup> The so-called Auschwitz Protocols arrived in London in June 1944. As argued previously, this was the turning point in the Czechoslovaks’ realization of the true extent of the ‘Final Solution’.

<sup>863</sup> Beneš, Edvard, ‘Organization of postwar Europe’, pp. 226-242. See chapter 2 for details.

Europe were to become national states. The policy of population transfers was to help with the solution in countries where minor border corrections could not solve the problem of territorial minorities.<sup>864</sup> The Czechoslovak plans were first of all directed against German and Hungarian minorities.<sup>865</sup> Yet Jews, as another minority, could not count on any revival of minority treaties and were not supposed to constitute a recognised minority.

The development of plans concerning the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia is somewhat difficult to follow. The Czechoslovak authorities did not issue any official declaration about the Jews' status after the war.<sup>866</sup> We must thus rely on the gradually evolving plans concerning the German minority that were to influence Jewish survivors in post-war Czechoslovakia. Another source of information is the interventions of pro-Jewish activists. They felt alarmed by the emerging plans of what is now labelled as the transfer or ethnic cleansing of post-war Czechoslovakia of its German minority.<sup>867</sup>

Shortly after Beneš's article appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, Jewish organizations in Britain and the United States started enquires about the real meaning of the President's writing. The following debates revealed deep ideological division in the ranks of Jewish organizations. During a meeting of the Joint Foreign Committee of British Jewry (JFC), Harry A. Goodman, an activist of the British *Agudas Israel*, expressed appreciation that the Czechoslovak President was the only statesman who clearly expressed his views on the post-war position of the Jews. It was apparent that Goodman, as an adherent of orthodoxy, did not oppose those of Beneš's plans that reconsidered the system of protection of *national* minorities.<sup>868</sup> In the Orthodox Jewish perception, the Jews did not constitute a minority in the national

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<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>865</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>866</sup> Jews, as a separate category, were not mentioned in plans for post-war position of minorities in Czechoslovakia. Beneš was to mention that his reference to the minorities excluded reference to Jews. See USHMMMA, WJC-L, C2/1973, Executive Committee WJC – Report by Max Freedman, 17 December 1942. Only in March 1945, Ripka made an official statement about the Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews. See *The Jewish Chronicle*, 23 March 1945, p. 9, 'Full Equality for Czech Jews. Minister's Important Pronouncement'.

<sup>867</sup> For historiography of the expulsion, or transfer of the Sudeten Germans from post-war Czechoslovakia see, for example: Staněk, Tomáš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947*; Kural, Václav, *Místo společenství konflikt! Češi a Němci ve Velkoněmecké říši a cesta k odsunu (1938-1945)*; Luža, Radomír, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans. A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962*; Naimark, Norman M., *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 108-138; Ther, Philipp – Siljak, Ana (eds.), *Redrawing Nations. Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001); Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung 1938-1945*.

<sup>868</sup> USA, AJ37/MS137/15/4, Joint Foreign Committee Meeting held on 3 and 4 August 1942.

sense. As expressed by Goodman, Agudists understood Beneš's policy that was based on Czechoslovaks' experience with the alleged betrayal of the nation by minorities before the war. Goodman concluded that '[i]n this atmosphere it would be suicidal for the Jews in Central European countries to insist upon being recognised as minorities, and to demand minority rights'.<sup>869</sup>

The Agudist viewpoint reflected in Goodman's intervention inevitably met with opposition among Zionist members of the JFC. Furthermore, the Zionists were alarmed by the plans proposed by Beneš. Selig Brodetsky, the President of the Board of Deputies, tried to dispel their concerns. He suggested that the article by Beneš had been 'authoritatively explained as not referring to the position of the Jews in Czechoslovakia'.<sup>870</sup> Brodetsky had already met with Minister Ripka in December 1941. They had indeed talked about the population transfers as suggested by Beneš during his talk in Aberdeen.<sup>871</sup> Unfortunately, the minutes of the meeting – made by Ripka – did not mention the Czechoslovak perspective and summarized only the ideas presented by Brodetsky.<sup>872</sup> Both politicians, when discussing the issues regarding population transfers, dealt first of all with Czechoslovak Germans. Brodetsky expressed himself roundly against the Germans, who ought to be punished with the utmost severity.<sup>873</sup> Concerning Jews deported to Poland, the best solution would be their transfer to Palestine, but only as a part of an internationally agreed solution, not as a unilaterally enforced action.<sup>874</sup> These views could easily correspond with the Czechoslovaks' plans for the national homogenization of the Republic.

Brodetsky and the majority of the JFC were not the only activists concerned with Beneš's views. Further sporadic voices appeared among the Jewish public in the west, both within and outside of the Czechoslovak Jewish exiled community. For example, Georg (Jiří) Weiss,<sup>875</sup> an exiled lawyer from Czechoslovakia, contacted the Board of Deputies concerning the Czechoslovak plans in May 1942. He first of all

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<sup>869</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>871</sup> His article in *Foreign Affairs* was partly based on this talk in Aberdeen on 10 November 1941.

<sup>872</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-2, box 104, Minutes of meeting between Ripka and Brodetsky, 19 December 1941.

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>874</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-2, box 104, Minutes of meeting between Ripka and Brodetsky, 19 December 1941.

<sup>875</sup> He closely collaborated with Frischer and was author of an analysis of the Jewish repatriation to Czechoslovakia. See Relief Committee of Jews from Czechoslovakia, *Proposals for principles for the repatriation of deported Jews* (London: Relief Committee of Jews from Czechoslovakia, 1943).

opposed the whole theory of population transfers that, as he argued, could not increase the external security of a country. Moreover, Weiss continued as follows:

But there is quite a good chance that some 30,000 to 40,000 Jews will be counted as 'Germans' when the transfer should be carried through.

As you know such a number of Jews lived in the Sudetenland. Mostly more than 30 years old they [speak] German only and even the younger generation has been educated in German schools, using German as their 'mother language' although speaking Czech as well. Only those of them who were Zionist declared themselves as Jews at the last census in 1930<sup>876</sup>, when the Criterium [sic!] was not 'nationality' but 'mother language'.<sup>877</sup>

Weiss also suggested that although it was unlikely that Jews would be regarded and treated as Germans, there might be people who would consider them a danger for Czechoslovakia and would prefer their transfer.<sup>878</sup> He stressed that it would be in the interest of Jews that the determining in post-war Czechoslovakia of who was 'German' should not be based on a language test. If a test was required, it would result in a 'considerable number' of Jews being labelled as Germans and thus discriminated against by the Czechoslovak government.<sup>879</sup> In another letter, a month later, Weiss stressed that there was no official Czechoslovak declaration suggesting that Jews would be treated as Germans or Nazis after the war. Yet, Weiss continued:

a quite important Czech official took it as a matter of course that there [has] to be no difference between the treatment of Nazis and German speaking Jews so far as the transfer of population is concerned. I was told that that particular gentleman has changed his mind. But the fact that he had this point of view clearly shows that the possibility, I pointed out, really exists.<sup>880</sup>

Weiss' argument against these plans mainly emphasised the injustice that would occur in the event that the Czechoslovak government persecuted German-speaking Jews: '[i]t seems to me necessary to point out how wrong it is, to base any far-reaching consequences in 1942 or 1943 on a statement made in 1930 under quite

<sup>876</sup> This was the last pre-war census that might have been used by the Czechoslovak authorities. It was conducted under completely different circumstances, three years before Hitler came to power. Before the outbreak of the war, many Jews who in 1930 declared German nationality assimilated into the Czech national and cultural surroundings, or adhered more to Zionism. Those processes could not be officially confirmed, because the census planned for 1940 did not take place.

<sup>877</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Weiss to Leonard Stein, 1 May 1942. The letter was initiated by Ripka's speech on 29 April 1942.

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>880</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Weiss to Leonard Stein, 8 June 1942.

different circumstances'.<sup>881</sup> 1930 was the year of the last pre-war census in Czechoslovakia.

Weiss was, moreover, concerned that the Czechoslovak plans might receive support even from within the Czechoslovak Jewish community. He expected that Czech-speaking Jews, especially the assimilationists, might not oppose, though not actively initiate, policy against the German-speaking Jews.<sup>882</sup> The situation in post-Munich Czechoslovakia served as an example that this possibility was not totally inconceivable.<sup>883</sup>

Frischer, although a Zionist, implied in private correspondence that he had similar sentiments. He was prepared to raise the whole issue of the German-speaking Jews with the Czechoslovak authorities, after receiving information from Weiss. Nevertheless, privately he admitted that, in his opinion, Jews, who in 1930 declared German nationality, showed 'a very unfriendly attitude towards the Czechoslovak people'.<sup>884</sup> He claimed that they had had an option to declare Jewish nationality instead.<sup>885</sup> Frischer thus adopted the argument of the Czechoslovak authorities prior to and during the war. Jews who in 1930 declared German nationality were not to be trusted.

Weiss was not the only person expressing concerns about the possible harm caused by Czechoslovak plans in relation to the Jews. In 1942, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research published *The Transfer of Population as a Means of Solving the Problem of Minorities*. Its author was Mark V. Vishniak, a Russian Jewish émigré residing in New York.<sup>886</sup> The book included, as an appendix, an exchange of letters between Max Weinreich, the director of YIVO, and Jan Masaryk.<sup>887</sup> Written in Yiddish and therefore not accessible to the general public, the book analysed the history of population transfers. Only the last chapter focused on developments during

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<sup>881</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>882</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>883</sup> After Munich, Czech-Jewish assimilationists supported measures adopted against foreign born Jews and defended the right to live in Czechoslovakia only for the citizens who declared Czechoslovak nationality. Čapková, Kateřina, Češi, Němci, Židé? *Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918-1938*, pp. 172-4.

<sup>884</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Frischer to Adolf Brotman, 2 June 1942.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>886</sup> Lemberg, Hans, 'Jan Masaryk antwortet Max Weinreich (1942). Zur Zukunft der jüdischer Minderheit in der ČSR', in Kristina Kaiserová – Jiří Pešek (eds.), *Viribus Unitis nedosti bylo Jana Křena. Janu Křenovi k pětasedmdesátinám* (Ústí nad Labem: Alibis International, 2005), pp. 197-198.

<sup>887</sup> For more about the background of the publication see Lemberg, Hans, 'Jan Masaryk antwortet Max Weinreich (1942). Zur Zukunft der jüdischer Minderheit in der ČSR', pp. 197-217.

the proceeding war.<sup>888</sup> A considerable part of the chapter was Vishniak's response to the articles published by Beneš, including the most famous in *Foreign Affairs*. Vishniak concluded that it was very dangerous if such theories were shared by people like the Czechoslovak President – that is otherwise liberal-minded people. Also Weinreich, in his preface to Vishniak's book, highlighted the rumours circulating in New York that Beneš opposed any new minority rights and that an individual would have to decide either to move to the land of his nation or to stay in his original land without any protection.<sup>889</sup> These rumours are what induced Weinreich to write to Masaryk in order to dispel concerns about the future of Czechoslovak Jews.

In the first letter, Weinreich assured Masaryk that YIVO understood that Beneš's theory was first of all directed against Sudeten Germans. However, he pointed to the fact that some governments in East-Central Europe had intended to 'evacuate' Jews even before the outbreak of the war.<sup>890</sup> The Jews and particularly YIVO felt threatened by the whole concept of population transfer as presented by the Czechoslovak President. The Jews, according to Weinreich, considered themselves parts of their own countries. They wanted to stay in those countries and enjoy the rights of ethnic minorities.<sup>891</sup> Weinreich asked Masaryk to clarify the attitude of the Czechoslovak authorities which was, he opined, open to serious misunderstanding.<sup>892</sup> Weinreich refrained from attacking the Czechoslovak President but, as pro-Jewish activists between 1940 and 1941 had, referred to possible misuse of his theories by other governments in the region.

The addressee, Masaryk, was considered the most sympathetic among Czechoslovak politicians towards the Jews. He thus acquired the role of appeasing Jewish organizations in the west and repairing possible damage caused by the rumours about Czechoslovak intentions. The research institute was not the only organization seeking clarification by the Czechoslovak authorities. The Board of Deputies also contacted the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister in order to receive an explanation about the possible danger for the German-speaking Jews in

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<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 200-206.

<sup>889</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204. From Yiddish translated by Hans Lemberg.

<sup>890</sup> *Ibid.*, reprint of the letter sent by Weinreich to Masaryk, 1 [14?] April 1942, pp. 207-208.

<sup>891</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*

Czechoslovakia.<sup>893</sup> However the Jewish agencies seriously overestimated Masaryk's possible influence. The Minister spent considerable time outside London, mostly in the United States and was not in daily contact with the Czechoslovak authorities. It cannot be doubted that Masaryk was indeed sympathetic and even paternalistic towards the Jews. Even so, he did not possess the political power or even perhaps the will to change the progress of events.<sup>894</sup>

In response to Weinreich, Masaryk tried to dispel his concerns and labelled Beneš's plans as only 'very hazy'.<sup>895</sup> The Czechoslovaks were considering ridding Republic of 'some of the Germans around the frontiers of Germany who have never been much good' to the Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>896</sup> Regarding Jews, Masaryk concluded: 'I would like to go on record, and you have my approval to use this letter in any way you want to, in stating that Jews are certainly not included in these [...] plans. And I have Dr. Beneš's authority in emphasizing this point.'<sup>897</sup> Masaryk expressed similar views during a discussion with Brodetsky and Brotman from the Board of Deputies in London.<sup>898</sup> Yet, he did not repeat the assurances given by Beneš during this meeting.<sup>899</sup> Indeed we have no proof that Masaryk negotiated his response to Weinreich with the Czechoslovak President.<sup>900</sup>

Contemplating the discourse used by Masaryk, it needs to be considered that the wholesale transfer of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia was not on the official agenda of the Czechoslovak government until the last stage of the war and was, in fact, approved only in Potsdam by the Big Three.<sup>901</sup> In 1942, plans for the transfer of Germans did not specifically deal with the German-speaking Jews.<sup>902</sup> In

<sup>893</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Interview with Jan Masaryk (by Brotman), 21 July 1942. Their intervention was probably triggered by the correspondence with Weiss.

<sup>894</sup> For example, minutes of the exile government's meetings do not document any considerable interference by Masaryk on behalf of the Jews during the whole war. See AÚTGM, EB-II, box 180-185.

<sup>895</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Masaryk to Weinreich, 5 May 1942.

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>897</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>898</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Interview with Jan Masaryk (by Brotman), 21 July 1942. 'M. Masaryk said the question of the Sudetenland Germans and other people of that status was one which was being very closely considered, and was a difficult matter, but that there was no danger of Jews of the type described being regarded as German nationals.'

<sup>899</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>900</sup> Also Beneš allegedly mentioned that his plans for minorities did not include Jews. USHMMMA, WJC-L, C2/1973, Executive Committee WJC – Report by Max Freedman, 17 December 1942.

<sup>901</sup> Staněk, Tomáš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947*, pp. 90-92; Luža, Radomír, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans. A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962*, pp. 277-292. Article XII of the conference agreement: Orderly transfer of German Populations.

<sup>902</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung*, pp. 167-168. The radicalization of the anti-German discourse can be traced among the exiles in the late summer 1942, after the German reprisals

fact, the German-speaking Jews, counting several tens of thousands before the war, constituted, in comparison with almost 3 million Sudeten Germans, only a marginal problem for the Czechoslovak authorities. It is still noteworthy that individuals such as Weiss, Vishniak and Weinreich were, as early as 1942, able to comprehend the radicalization of the Czech nationalists. They predicted that plans considered by the exiles could, in fact, cause a lot of harm to the Jews who used to live in Czechoslovakia.

The concerns of the YIVO chairman were not allayed by Masaryk's letter. In April 1943 Weinreich contacted Frischer and noted that there was 'even more uncertainty about the official Czechoslovak point of view on the problem of transferring minorities' since Vishniak's book appeared.<sup>903</sup> Frischer eventually contacted Prokop Drtina of the President's office and asked for some assurance from the President. Frischer additionally wanted to gain the President's approval for the draft of his response to Weinreich.<sup>904</sup>

Unfortunately, Drtina's comments cannot be found. Indeed we cannot even be certain whether Frischer in the end sent his letter to Weinreich.<sup>905</sup> In the draft, Frischer confirmed that the plans for population transfer were contemplated by the Czechoslovak authorities, but were not intended against the Jews.<sup>906</sup> He thus approached the whole affair in an identical manner to Masaryk. Beneš allegedly assured Frischer in November 1942 that there was no intention to punish democratic Germans. They had been threatened by the Nazis and were forced to leave Czechoslovakia even before the outbreak of the war.<sup>907</sup> Frischer concluded:

[t]his, therefore, applies all the more to the Jews and there is no doubt about it that the Czechoslovak Republic will take care of all her citizens who [wish] to return, as far as there is no offence against the Republic on their part,<sup>908</sup>

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following the assassination of Heydrich, including the destruction of Lidice (see Kural, Václav, *Místo společenství konflikt! Češi a Němci ve Velkoněmecké říši a cesta k odsunu (1938-1945)*, pp. 206f).

<sup>903</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Weinreich to Frischer, 12 April 1943.

<sup>904</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to Drtina, 6 June 1943.

<sup>905</sup> There is no letter in the YIVO archives (See YIVO Archives, RG 584 Max Weinreich Papers), as well as in the consulted collections in Czech archives.

<sup>906</sup> AMZV, LA- Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, a draft letter by Frischer to Weinreich, 5 June 1943.

<sup>907</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid.*

In this way Frischer tried to appease the disquieted activists. As suggested in my second chapter, Beneš considered the solution of the so called ‘Jewish question’ to be only another step in the national homogenization of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the definition of ‘an offence’ against the Republic was open to various interpretations. Despite that, it would be wrong to claim that the Czechoslovak authorities intentionally planned to *expel* some of the Jews from Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless as the plans for Czechoslovakia as a national state developed, the manoeuvring space for the Jews became limited.

### ***A Conditional support of the Zionist movement***

Between 1943 and 1945, the Czechoslovak exiled political leadership maintained regular contact with Zionist organizations. Both parties carried on with discussions that had started before, dealing with the position of the Jewish minority in Czechoslovakia.

Beneš met with Wise and Goldmann of the WJC during his only war-time trip to the USA on 21 May 1943 in New York. Beneš specifically wanted to be informed about the political demands of the WJC. Goldmann did not refrain from emphasizing that Beneš’s already known views on minority rights caused disquiet among pro-Jewish politicians. He also emphasised that they were ‘difficult to be reconciled with the great liberal ideas [Beneš] had always [been] defending’.<sup>909</sup> The Czechoslovak President responded that he only ‘[had] expressed serious doubts concerning the wisdom of demanding simultaneously a Jewish State in Palestine and minority rights in the countries where Jews live[d]’.<sup>910</sup> In line with this philosophy, the Czechoslovak President advised the Jewish leaders that there should be no half-measures; they needed to decide what they wanted.

Likewise, Beneš mentioned several days later on 27 May 1943 to a delegation of the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee (which was affiliated with the WJC) that he ‘looked reality in the eyes’.<sup>911</sup> He meant that only one of the Zionist demands was feasible. The world as perceived by the Czechoslovak President was labelled as reality and the Jewish politicians were supposed to accept it. Beneš

<sup>909</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Kubowitzki to Frischer, 24 May 1943. For another copy of the letter see, for example: CZA, A280/28.

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>911</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/5, Meeting between the CJRC and Beneš in Hotel Waldorf Astoria, 27 May 1943 (minutes prepared by Perutz for Kubowitzki on 30 May 1943). ‘Sie wissen, dass ich der Realität direkt ins Augen schaue’.

accordingly emphasised that he did not want to interfere with the Zionists' policy. He only informed them about his own 'precise and clear' policy; he was not going to divert from his standpoint.<sup>912</sup> This was a clear political statement.

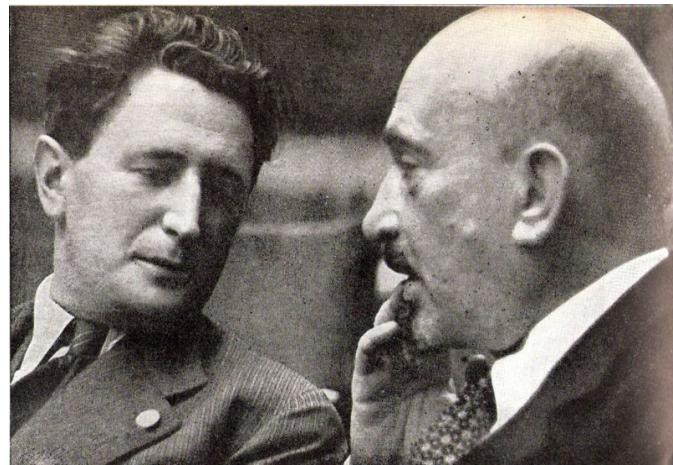


Image no. 8: Nahum Goldmann with Chaim Weizmann in 1935<sup>913</sup>

What was the response of the Zionists? In a letter to Frischer, Kubowitzki described the WJC demands presented by Goldmann during the talk with Beneš as follows:

'What we want', [Goldmann] said, 'is only recognition of the fact that there is a Jewish people in the world, that Jewish citizens of the various states have the right to remain members of this Jewish people; that they may continue to instruct their children in the Hebrew language and in Jewish values, to display a deep interest in Palestine and in the Jewish fate everywhere, to cultivate their heritage and cultural ties. This', he concluded, 'is what we mean when talking of minority rights. We do not, for instance, ask for separate Jewish wards in elections.'<sup>914</sup>

Beneš allegedly responded: 'Whoever told you that I oppose such legitimate demands, misunderstood me.'<sup>915</sup> The definition of minority rights, as presented by Goldmann, was not identical with the minority treaties signed in Versailles. Goldmann did not demand political rights; he also, for example, did not demand official recognition of Jews as a minority that would be allowed to use its language in official communication with authorities. If they had been agreed, rights demanded by Goldmann would not have constituted Jews as a political or national, but rather as a cultural group.

<sup>912</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>913</sup> [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) (in Hebrew)

<sup>914</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Kubowitzki to Frischer, 24 May 1943; see also USHMM, C2/1974, Report by Dr. Goldmann at the meeting of the Office Committee of the WJC, 21 May 1943.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, as the following exchange of letters between Kubowitzki and Frischer suggested, even the Zionists were internally divided in their demands. Frischer belonged to moderate Zionists and it might be that this was one of the reasons for Beneš's decision to appoint him to the State Council.<sup>916</sup> During the war, Frischer, although appointed *ad personam*, claimed to be the sole representative of Jewish interests in contact with the Czechoslovak government.<sup>917</sup> He had not belonged to the main supporters of the generally applied minority treaties before the war.<sup>918</sup> In 1941, his views were summarized in a letter to Tartakower of the WJC in the USA:

Jews should not demand any minority rights or special legally and internationally guaranteed protection and no special status at all in such countries where there is only one nation, so that nationality and citizenship are considered identical and where there is such a degree of humane and democratic attitude that no particular discrimination of the Jews is to be expected.<sup>919</sup>

Moreover, he argued that the future of the Jewish minority position in Czechoslovakia depended on whether there would be strong German, Hungarian and Ruthenian minorities as well.<sup>920</sup> It is noteworthy that Frischer revealed these ideas in the autumn of 1941 before the large scale deportations of Jews from the Protectorate and from Slovakia and their mass-murder in Poland.<sup>921</sup> Yet, even at this early stage of the war, Frischer advised that 'a demand for Jewish minority rights can be made only under the supposition that such rights will be given generally, then equality can be rightly demanded for the Jewish people'.<sup>922</sup> Frischer expected that without other minorities in the country, the Czechoslovak support for the Jewish demands would diminish. The future Zionist member of the exile parliament concluded that 'the

<sup>916</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 394, 2916, Nečas for Drtina, 1 July 1941. Nečas argued against the appointment of Zelmanovits. He was in favour of Frischer. However, he was also of the opinion that Frischer would not be willing to leave Palestine and come to London. Nečas would prefer the appointment of Rudolf Jokl, a pre-war member of Poale Zion from Moravská Ostrava, otherwise not a well-known person. Nečas argued that Jokl was a moderate member of the National-Jewish Council and might be acceptable for the other groups as well. The effort to call to the parliament a moderate, rather than a radical Zionist was apparent.

<sup>917</sup> About conflicts between Frischer and the National-Jewish Council see: CZA, A280/5, Minutes of the National-Jewish Council, 4 May 1944; *Ibid.*, Minutes of the National-Jewish Council, 9 May 1944; *Ibid.*, National-Jewish Council (Rosenberg) to Frischer, 18 April 1944.

<sup>918</sup> Frischer, Arnošt – Winterstein, Eugen – Neumann, Oskar, *K Židovskej otázke na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Židovská strana v ČSR, 1936).

<sup>919</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Frischer to Tartakower, 19 October 1941.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>921</sup> Large scale deportations from Prague to Poland started in October 1941 and from Slovakia in March 1942.

<sup>922</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Frischer to Tartakower, 19 October 1941.

Jews should have the right understanding for the whole building-up of [Czechoslovakia] after the war'.<sup>923</sup> Hence the 'national minority rights', as a term, was, according to Frischer, to remain in the background.<sup>924</sup>

Frischer adhered to this discourse in his response to Kubowitzki's letter in June 1943. He explained that Jews in pre-war Czechoslovakia had failed to enjoy the full extent of the minority rights which were reserved for minorities inhabiting certain territories in large numbers.<sup>925</sup> This was not the case with the Jews before and, with the Nazi extermination campaign in progress, would hardly be so after the war. Frischer repeated the full understanding for the new Czechoslovak policy towards minorities and warned the WJC against the Jews becoming trailblazers for the general renewal of minority rights in post-war Europe.<sup>926</sup> As suggested, the problem was not with the Jews, but that their rights might be a precedent for other minorities. Consequently, Frischer recommended that in order not to refer to the minority rights previously misused by other minorities, the Jews should formulate their demands under a completely different term, for example, 'rights of men'.<sup>927</sup>

Kubowitzki argued with Frischer against this position. The Jews should not abandon the term 'minority rights' just because Germans misused them.<sup>928</sup> They should not 'neglect any opportunity to stress the difference that exist[ed] between the national minority rights claimed by the territorial minorities and the right [the Jews demanded] to maintain and foster [their] religious and/or cultural heritage'.<sup>929</sup> Kubowitzki continued that Jews should face reality by adhering to the claim for minority rights and not hide behind any new labels as, for example, 'rights of men' as suggested by Frischer.<sup>930</sup> Jews should stress the fact that they 'were different and wanted to foster this difference [underlined in the original – J. L.]'.<sup>931</sup> They had to stress 'the difference existing between the national minority rights claimed by

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.* 'I only want to add that the Czechs and Slovaks had a great interest that the Jews considered themselves members of the Jewish nation, because before the World War they had mostly professed to be German or Hungarian, an interest that may not be topical [?] anymore after the present war.'

<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>925</sup> CZA 280/28, Frischer to Kubowitzki, 21 June 1943. Frischer in the letter suggested that Jews in Czechoslovakia had not and could not have possibly fully enjoyed what had been called minority rights. Only a minority that constituted 20 percent of inhabitants in a region could use its language in official contacts with authorities.

<sup>926</sup> *Ibid.* Frischer stressed, adopting the Czechoslovaks' discourse that 'the Jews [had been] a complication but never an embarrassment to the Czechoslovak statesmen'.

<sup>927</sup> *Ibid.* He did not think that Jews should be champions of minority rights.

<sup>928</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Kubowitzki to Frischer, 15 July 1943.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>930</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>931</sup> *Ibid.*

territorial minorities and the very modest contents of our group demands'.<sup>932</sup> The WJC leaders apparently could not find common ground with the Czechoslovak authorities. The Czechoslovaks did not want to differentiate among minorities. They regarded the whole system of minority protection as a failure. It is furthermore noteworthy that Frischer, the politician claiming to represent the Jewish minority in contacts with the Czechoslovak authorities, in essence agreed with the Czechoslovak plans.

However, the WJC leaders might have found it helpful to use the government's services in another direction. Minutes of a meeting between the Czechoslovak President on one side and Goldmann and Weizmann on the other noted that 'Mr. Benesh [sic!] [had taken] the attitude of a sincere and devoted friend of the Zionist Movement'.<sup>933</sup> The Czechoslovak President presented himself as being at the disposal of the Zionist leaders. The minutes record that he said:

I am convinced more than ever that the Jewish problem must now be radically solved, and that the solution is a Jewish State [...] The democratic world is under obligation to solve the problem of your people, and the solution is a Jewish State in Palestine.<sup>934</sup>

During the war the Czechoslovak government and especially Beneš were perceived as the main 'bridge' between western democracies and the main ally in the east.<sup>935</sup> They were the only government, especially among the minor Allies, who sustained reasonable relations with Stalin.<sup>936</sup> Goldmann and Weizmann therefore considered it opportune to utilize Beneš's pro-Zionist sentiments and his good relations with the Soviet Union. In this respect the Czechoslovak government highlighted its significance for pro-Zionist activists. With the progress of the war, it seemed impossible to receive any official recognition of Zionist political demands in Palestine without the support or at least non-involvement of the Soviet Union.<sup>937</sup> Beneš therefore was to play an essential role in this diplomatic struggle. More

<sup>932</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>933</sup> Chaim Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Report on Visit with President Benesh, of Czechoslovakia at Blair House, 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, 18 May 1943.

<sup>934</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>935</sup> Táborský, Eduard, 'Benes and Stalin — Moscow 1943 and 1945', in *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 13, 1953-1954, p. 154.

<sup>936</sup> This perception of the Czechoslovaks was even more striking when compared with the Sikorski government of Poland. The Poles' relations with the USSR were very complicated and completely frozen when the crimes committed in Katyń were revealed in April 1943.

<sup>937</sup> Gorodetsky, Gabriel, 'The Soviet Union's role in the creation of the state of Israel', in *Journal of Israeli History*, Volume 22, Issue 1, 2003, pp. 4-20.

significantly for the Zionists, their policy suddenly found a common platform with the Czechoslovak President. A Jewish State in Palestine could solve the internal problem of Czechoslovakia as well.

During a conversation with Weizmann and Goldmann in Washington D. C. in May 1943, Beneš presented himself in the role of a western emissary going on an important mission to Moscow. In addition, he expressed his readiness to raise Zionist issues with the Soviet leaders. His goal was to help the Soviets to overcome their animosity towards Zionism, a position which he was not able to comprehend.<sup>938</sup> Goldmann offered to prepare for Beneš a memorandum about the Zionist problem.<sup>939</sup> According to the minutes recorded by the Zionists, Beneš concluded: 'I hope that [the Soviets] will understand that there is nothing in their policy which conflicts with Zionism, and that they are interested in this solution of the Jewish problem. I will be glad to be helpful in this way.'<sup>940</sup>



Image no. 9: *Aufbau* (published in New York) informed about Beneš's upcoming negotiations with Stalin<sup>941</sup>

Beneš's trip to Moscow was postponed for another half a year until November – December 1943, which gave pro-Jewish activists more opportunities to ask him to render further services to the Jewish cause there. But it became apparent that the Czechoslovak President wanted to follow his own priorities and this was also

<sup>938</sup> Chaim Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Report on Visit with President Benesh, of Czechoslovakia at Blair House, 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, 18 May 1943.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*; For the memorandum see: *Documents on Israeli-Soviet Relations 1941-1953*, Part I: 1941-May 1949 (London: Frank Cass, 2000), Document 27, Goldmann to Beneš, 27 May 1943, pp. 60-66.

<sup>940</sup> Chaim Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Report on Visit with President Benesh, of Czechoslovakia at Blair House, 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, 18 May 1943.

<sup>941</sup> *Aufbau*, 18 June 1943, p. 1.

the case with Jewish issues. In July 1943, Barou and Easterman, secretaries of the BS WJC, visited Beneš in London and raised other possibilities regarding his trip to Moscow. Barou especially asked him to ask Stalin about the fate of Polish Jewish refugees in the Soviet Union.<sup>942</sup> Beneš responded by saying that he planned to talk about Jewish issues during his trip to Moscow, ‘however that he [had been] more concerned with the Russian attitude about the general Jewish situation’.<sup>943</sup> Even though Beneš promised to consider the proposal, it seems doubtful that he did anything in this direction. In asking him to discuss with Stalin such a sensitive topic, the WJC representatives clearly overestimated Beneš’s pro-Jewish sentiments.

Beneš’s preliminary list of topics to be discussed with the Soviet leaders included only the issue of Zionism. And even this topic was later withdrawn, when during the preparatory talks in Habbaniyah, Iraq, the Soviet Deputy Commissar for the Foreign Affairs – Alexander Kornejčuk – refused to include it on the agenda.<sup>944</sup> The official minutes of Beneš’s Moscow talks with Molotov and Stalin did not mention Zionism at all.<sup>945</sup> Yet, later in London, Beneš informed the Zionist leadership that he had raised the Zionist problem with Stalin. According to him, the Soviet leader allegedly expressed willingness not to hinder the creation of the Jewish commonwealth in Palestine,<sup>946</sup> providing the western Allies supported it.<sup>947</sup> This conversation allegedly took place not as part of the official negotiations, but later, informally, and only between Beneš and Stalin.<sup>948</sup> This piece of information later

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<sup>942</sup> LAC, MG 31 H 158, Vol.5. Dr Rosenberg’s work during the Second World War: Photocopies of research material and correspondence 1938-1943. Minutes of the meeting between Beneš and the WJC delegation (Barou, Easterman), 23 July 1943.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>944</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II/1, V186/62A-C/6, f. 196. Beneš’s trip to the Soviet Union, Conversations 1943. The Conversation with Kornejčuk in Habbaniyah on 28, 29 and 30 November 1943: ‘Bod 8e) Zionism – nechán stranou, nezajímá je, sionisté dosud byli proti SSSR’ [‘Bullet point 8e) The Zionism – put aside, they [the Soviets] are not interested in it, the Zionists have been against the Soviet Union up to now’]; a different version could be find in CUA, Jaromír Smutný Papers, Box 14, Smutný’s notes for conversation with Kornejčuk, 2 December 1943. Smutný wrote that Zionism was not an important point and thus he decided not to talk about it.

<sup>945</sup> See Mastný, Vojtěch, ‘The Beneš-Stalin-Molotov Conversations in December 1943: New Documents’, in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 20, 1972, pp. 367-402.

<sup>946</sup> See Nahum Goldmann: *Das jüdische Paradox. Zionismus und Judentum nach Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 3. Aufgabe, 1988), 128-129. According to Goldmann, Stalin used term ‘Ausgleich’ – it means ‘compensation’ or ‘reconciliation’ – so not ‘a state’.

<sup>947</sup> Weizmann Archive, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Short minutes of meeting held on 7 March 1944 (Weizmann, Brodetsky, Shertok, Namier etc.). This information was brought to the meeting by Lewis Namier. Or: FDRPL, microfilm, correspondence between FDR and Stephen S. Wise. Wise to FDR, 24 January 1945.

<sup>948</sup> Goldmann, Nahum, *Das jüdische Paradox. Zionismus und Judentum nach Hitler*, pp. 128f.

found its way to the White House.<sup>949</sup> Subsequently, during the founding UN Conference in San Francisco in the spring of 1945, Masaryk revealed to Weizmann, that 'the Soviet Union would favour a Jewish State in Palestine'.<sup>950</sup> The Czechoslovak politicians thus provided an important service to the Zionist leadership.

Whatever really happened in Moscow in December 1943, the story confirms that Zionism was the main Jewish issue of Beneš's interest. Hence the theory about Beneš's purely humanitarian motives towards the Jews seems doubtful. Jewish emigration to Palestine would solve the so called 'Jewish problem' in Europe and particularly in Czechoslovakia. Both Masaryk and Beneš repeatedly stressed that the 'Jewish question' needed to be solved in the international arena.<sup>951</sup> This solution lay not in the revival of minority treaties and protection of Jews in Europe, but in either their emigration or their assimilation. The Soviet support of the Zionist movement was to pave the way to the desired solution. Thus, this was the only issue that Beneš, most likely, raised in Moscow when negotiating with the Soviet leader.

However, the Czechoslovak support of Zionism was not to be offered unconditionally. The Minister of State, Ripka, stressed it during a celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic, organized by the National-Jewish Council in October 1943:

It is natural that the Czechoslovak State will continue in the future to consider it a matter of each Jewish citizen's individual conscience whether he regards himself as a Zionist or not. The Czechoslovak Government will continue in the future to show full understanding for the efforts of Zionism; naturally it expects that the Zionists too will show understanding for the internal needs of a restored Czechoslovakia.<sup>952</sup>

Hence Ripka summarized the government's attitude towards Zionism: the Czechoslovaks would continue to support Zionism, but the Zionists would not claim any special status in post-war Czechoslovakia.

The signals about the government's new attitude towards the Jewish position in post-war Czechoslovakia were regularly received by pro-Jewish activists. Yet they seemed not to be able to grasp the Czechoslovak determination to adhere to this

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<sup>949</sup> FDRPL, microfilm, correspondence between FDR and Stephen S. Wise. Wise to FDR, 24 January 1945.

<sup>950</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Volume VIII, p. 710. *Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Evan M. Wilson of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs*, 20 June 1945. Copy from NARA, RG 59, 867N.01/6-2045.

<sup>951</sup> HIA, Poland: MSZ, folder 25:4, Minister Górká to the Polish Foreign Ministry, 12 July 1944.

<sup>952</sup> CZA, A280/26, Celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Czechoslovakia's Independence by the Anglo-Palestine Club and the National Council of Jews from Czechoslovakia.

solution. The final negotiations were conducted in 1944, in the atmosphere of high expectations of the coming liberation of Europe. British and American Jewish representatives were to face a confident partner who had already made his irrevocable decision.

### ***The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile and the position of the Jews in the post-war Republic***

Until 1943, most of the specific remarks concerning the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia by the Beneš government were made privately. Despite this, rumours spread among the Jewish public and some of the public speeches made by Czechoslovak politicians contained intimations of their intentions too. For example, Ripka's statement from October 1943 was hidden among other references to the unique relations between Jews and Czechoslovaks and was probably not heard or fully comprehended by attending Zionists. This notwithstanding, it could be regarded as one of the first *public* statements about the future situation in Czechoslovakia.

The Czechoslovak authorities confirmed their determination not to change these plans during the final negotiations conducted in 1944. Pro-Jewish activists were unable to comprehend the new philosophy of the Czechoslovak government with emphasis put on the Slavonic character of the renewed Republic. Frederick Fried, the chairman of the CJRC in the USA, informed WJC leaders about public statements made by Beneš and Ripka in early 1944. He reported that in a broadcast made from Moscow the Czechoslovak President had stated that 'the Czechoslovak Republic w[ould] be a national State consisting of Czechs, Slovaks and Carpathian Ruthenes [underlined in the original – J. L.]'.<sup>953</sup> Ripka, Fried continued, concluded that it was 'unlikely that we shall simply return to the principle of the protection of minorities, which produced disastrous results that cannot be forgotten'.<sup>954</sup> Furthermore, individual members of a minority should enjoy equality, but there should not be any 'privileged political position' for them.<sup>955</sup> Kubowitzki in response to Fried questioned the meaning of the statement that Czechoslovakia would become a 'national state of Czechs, Slovaks and Carpathian Ruthenes'.<sup>956</sup> He suggested that

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<sup>953</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H101/04, Fried to Kubowitzki, 5 February 1944. Radio broadcast allegedly made from Moscow on 29 January 1944 [should be earlier because Beneš left Moscow earlier].

<sup>954</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H101/04, Fried to Kubowitzki, 5 February 1944.

<sup>955</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>956</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H101/04, Kubowitzki to Fried, 8 February 1944.

this would still be another ‘nationalities State’. <sup>957</sup> It was an apparent misunderstanding of the position adopted by the Czechoslovak authorities, when certain Slavonic nations obviously counted differently than members of other nations.

Moreover, Beneš caused serious anxieties among Jews by the statement he made during his visit to the Czechoslovak army camp in Britain in March 1944. The President, when asked about problems with repatriation of displaced persons after the war, allegedly summarized:

As to the repatriation of Jews to their former position, our laws do not make a difference between loyal citizens whatever may be their origin or religion. I should like to add that the Jewish question is an international one, needing to be resolved internationally after the war.<sup>958</sup>

So the Czechoslovak statesmen repeatedly emphasised that the ‘Jewish question’ needed to be solved internationally. Nevertheless, rumours immediately spread about this statement made by Beneš. Jewish newspapers in Britain, Palestine and the United States informed the public that the Czechoslovak President allegedly opposed the repatriation of Jews back to Czechoslovakia.<sup>959</sup> For example, *Reader’s Digest* reported that Beneš considered Jewish repatriation to Czechoslovakia to be impossible.<sup>960</sup>

Jewish groups’ reactions to the address by Beneš confirmed, however, that world Jewry could hardly speak with one voice. An ideological division among various Jewish political groups shaped their particular responses. The Zionists living in Palestine perceived it as another confirmation of their policy. There was no future for Jews in Europe according to their statement and all of the Jewish survivors should move to Palestine.<sup>961</sup> The Palestinian Zionists did not condemn Beneš and rather praised him for being the only politician who had a straightforward attitude

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<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>958</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/17, Kubowitzki to the Office Committee, 6 July 1944. Kubowitzki quoted an article by Angelo Goldstein, published in *HaZman*, 23 May 1944. Beneš’s visit to the Czechoslovak army camp took place on 24 March 1944 (The translation of Goldman’s article comes from *News Flashes from Czechoslovakia*, 19 June 1944).

<sup>959</sup> For newspaper cuttings see: AMZV, LA – Confidential, box 189.

<sup>960</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189. *The Reader’s Digest*, July 1944, p. 114. ‘Dissenting reports on Palestine’. ‘It is argued that Polish, German and Rumanian Jews will not be welcome in their original homelands after the war, and President Beneš of Czechoslovakia is quoted as saying that it is impossible for Jews ever to return there.’

<sup>961</sup> For the report about the responses of various Jewish ideological streams in Palestine by the chief of the Czechoslovak Military Mission to the Middle East see AMZV, LA – Confidential, box 189, Ministry of Defence to Ripka, Šrámek and the ministry of interior, 8 June 1944; *Ibid.*, Dr Felix Seidemann, ‘Dr. Benesch und die Repatriierungsfrage’, in *Jedioth Chadaschoth*, 3 May 1944. According to Seidemann, Beneš understood the problem of Jewish repatriation as it really was.

towards Jews and who was not afraid of telling them the truth about their future.<sup>962</sup> On the contrary, Czech-Jewish assimilationists, who had escaped to Palestine before the war, were alarmed by the statement and sought explanation.<sup>963</sup> They intended to go back to Czechoslovakia after the war and similar proclamations seemed to threaten their future.

The Czechoslovak authorities were concerned that false accounts of Beneš's statement might harm Czechoslovak interests and so they tried to provide an additional explanation.<sup>964</sup> They claimed that Beneš was only trying to point out the difficulties with the repatriation of Jews dispersed all over the world.<sup>965</sup> The President allegedly stressed problems concerning Jewish repatriation by comparing the situation to the repatriation of Czech slave labourers from Germany. The latter were supposedly in a completely different position, with families awaiting them back in liberated Czechoslovakia.<sup>966</sup> Therefore, Beneš's statement was presented as an attempt to alert the world about the precarious situation of Jews dispersed all over the former Nazi empire. It was not the first time the Czechoslovak authorities tried to reverse a damaging declaration made by Beneš into a favourable statement claimed to be in the interest of Jews.

It was not only the assimilationists who were alarmed by the President's statement. Pro-Jewish activists in the west, among them many pro-Zionists, also wanted further clarification about the Czechoslovaks' intentions. The main negotiations were conducted by the representatives of the Board of Deputies in May and June 1944. William Fraenkel and Selig Brodetsky were received by Procházka, the head of the Foreign Ministry Legal Department, and the second time by Ripka. Procházka explained Beneš's statement in the following manner: firstly, all the Jews holding Czechoslovak citizenship would be allowed to return to the country.<sup>967</sup> There was, however, the problem of German and Austrian Jews who had found refuge in

<sup>962</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, a copy of *Haaretz*, 12 April 1944; *Hegge*, 12 April 1944. See also *Ibid.*, Czechoslovak Consulate-General in Jerusalem to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 26 April 1944.

<sup>963</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Czechoslovak Consulate-General in Jerusalem to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 26 April 1944.

<sup>964</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Frischer to Smutný, 5 May 1944.

<sup>965</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to the Consulate-General in Jerusalem, 3 June 1944.

<sup>966</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, a note by the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry for the Czechoslovak Consul-General in Cape Town, Blahovský, 24 October 1944. See also the original letter by Blahovský, *Ibid.*, Blahovský to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, 14 October 1944.

<sup>967</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Note of Interview with Dr. Prochazka, Head of the Legal Department CMFA, 11 May 1944.

pre-war Czechoslovakia and might want to return there after the war. This would constitute a problem for the Czechoslovak government. Procházka was to say:

Czechoslovakia had been generous in admitting refugees and he thought that when the state of Europe was to be settled, it would be unfair on Czechoslovakia if they were all to return to that country, even though they had been admitted as temporary residents.<sup>968</sup>

Procházka repeated that this problem of Jewish refugees needed to be solved internationally.<sup>969</sup> Czechoslovakia did not want to be forced, just because of its former 'generosity', to re-admit more refugees than other countries.<sup>970</sup>

The Czechoslovaks generally wanted to be in control of people who were to be admitted to Czechoslovakia after the war. In early 1943, after the UN Declaration condemning the Nazi extermination of Jews, the Polish government wanted to contribute to the rescue activities. They published a declaration that all the Polish refugees admitted to neutral countries would be allowed to come back to Poland after the war.<sup>971</sup> The Czechoslovaks were reluctant to publish any such declaration because it might bind them to allow many 'undesirable persons' to return to Czechoslovakia.<sup>972</sup> Although they did not mean by the statement specifically Jews – rather traitors and others who committed 'crimes' against the Czechoslovak Republic – this policy might negatively influence the progress of rescue activities. The Czechoslovaks were reluctant to make any such statement regardless of the negative impact on the possible rescue of endangered Jews. Similar remarks were repeated by Procházka to Brodetsky and Fraenkel in May 1944.

Brodetsky and Fraenkel did not react to these plans defended by Procházka. The reason was that there were other, more pressing issues to discuss. First, it was the Czechoslovaks' attitude towards the potential renewal of the minority treaties and

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<sup>968</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>969</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka (head of the legal department, Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry) to Ripka, 15 May 1944. Procházka informed Ripka about his meeting with Brodetsky and Fraenkel.

<sup>970</sup> *Ibid.* Procházka stated that the German refugees were 'an alien' element for Czechoslovakia.

<sup>971</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Frischer to Masaryk, 22 February 1943. Frischer forwarded to Masaryk a piece of information from the British press: 'Poland's Refugee Pledge'; MZV to Frischer, 15 April 1943.

<sup>972</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 212, Notes by Procházka about the negotiations conducted in March 1943. They were initiated by Frischer, but the declaration was not issued. Pro domo 1770(6?)/dův/43.

the protection of Jews in European countries.<sup>973</sup> The repeated efforts of various Zionist organizations indicate that there was rarely any cooperation even among otherwise ideologically related organizations. For example, the WJC and the Board never conducted any joint initiative in order to influence the policy of the Czechoslovak government. As was the case with the WJC representatives, Brodetsky and Fraenkel could not find a common platform with the Czechoslovak government. Procházka sharply rejected any policy that would differentiate among Czechoslovak citizens and explained that it was in the interest of Jews themselves if they did not constitute any separate category.<sup>974</sup> As in the past, the Foreign Ministry official was referring to the previous misuse of minority protection by the Germans. Procházka explained that the Czechoslovak government now officially preferred the transfer of population as the solution of the minority problem.<sup>975</sup> No policy of minority protection had place in post-war Czechoslovakia, unless generally applied in the whole world.

Brodetsky and Fraenkel agreed with Procházka that special protection for Jews was not needed in Czechoslovakia, whose record was not being questioned.<sup>976</sup> They, however, used the already familiar argument about the development in neighbouring countries that were not trusted. They suggested that Czechoslovakia should accept international minority protection to induce other countries in the region to comply with the system.<sup>977</sup> Furthermore, the Board representatives pointed out that the long rule of Hitlerism would definitely leave behind a legacy of anti-Semitism and special protection for the Jews was thus even more desirable.<sup>978</sup> Nevertheless, Procházka rejected these proposals and confirmed the Czechoslovaks' determination to have a national state of purely Slavonic character, without recognised minorities. In the minutes of the meeting prepared for Ripka, Procházka asked if the Minister agreed with the discourse he used during the talks. Ripka not only agreed, he advised Procházka to use a 'more vigorous tone' next time.<sup>979</sup>

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<sup>973</sup> LMA, BoD, Acc3121/E/03/510, Note of Interview with Dr. Procházka, Head of the Legal Department CMFA, 11 May 1944; AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka (head of the legal department) to Ripka, 15 May 1944.

<sup>974</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>975</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>976</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>978</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>979</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka (head of the legal department) to Ripka, 15 May 1944. A note by Ripka, 16 May 1944.

The discussion continued several weeks later when the Board delegation visited Ripka. Ripka proved that any discussion with the Czechoslovaks was pointless. He even warned Brodetsky and Fraenkel not to help the Germans in Czechoslovakia to receive internationally guaranteed protection that would enable them to cause political disruption in post-war Europe.<sup>980</sup> Czechoslovakia did not want to accept a burden of international protection of Jews only to set a positive example for the neighbouring countries to follow. The initiative was taken over by the Czechoslovaks and the Jewish activists had to defend themselves against accusations that they might be supporting the common enemy. The Czechoslovaks were willing to let the Jews live in a community, but no political parties and activities would be allowed.<sup>981</sup> The Board representatives tried to influence Ripka by reference to their negotiations with the British government. The Foreign Office was allegedly contemplating renewal of minority protection in post-war Europe.<sup>982</sup> This piece of information raised Czechoslovaks' concerns, but was later denied by the British Ambassador Nichols.<sup>983</sup> The British planning went in completely the opposite direction.<sup>984</sup> Ripka later, after the meeting with Brodetsky and Fraenkel, noted that he had not fulfilled the expectations of the activists. Nevertheless, he believed that such an approach was necessary in order 'not to let them live in illusions' about Czechoslovak policy.<sup>985</sup> The decision was irrevocable.

Similarly, Masaryk during his stay in the United States emphasised to Maurice Perlzweig of the WJC in his own manner: 'There will be no more minorities, Brother Perlzweig'.<sup>986</sup> On the contrary, on Perlzweig's insistence, Masaryk repeated what the WJC representative labelled 'his stock sayings': 'I will not go back without

<sup>980</sup> CNA, AHR, box 105/106, 1-5-19-7, minutes of a meeting between Ripka and the Board delegation (Fraenkel, Brodetsky), 6 June 1944.

<sup>981</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>982</sup> AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 189, Procházka (head of the legal department) to Ripka, 15 May 1944; CNA, AHR, box 106, 1-5-19-9a, minutes of a meeting between Ripka and Ambassador Nichols, 2 June 1944.

<sup>983</sup> CNA, AHR, box 106, 1-5-19-8, minutes of a meeting between Ripka and Ambassador Nichols, 4 July 1944.

<sup>984</sup> *Ibid.* Eden confirmed this position to Beneš and Ripka already in April 1943. Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Česi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*, pp. 240f, doc. 117, Ripka's minutes of the meeting between Beneš and Eden, 22 April 1943; Bruce Lockhart made identical statement to Beneš in December 1941, see Smetana, Vit, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)*, pp. 288f.

<sup>985</sup> CNA, AHR, box 105/106, 1-5-19-7, minutes of a meeting between Ripka and the Board delegation (Fraenkel, Brodetsky), 6 June 1944.

<sup>986</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to the Office Committee about his meeting with Masaryk, 16 May 1944.

my Jews'.<sup>987</sup> Indeed, the Minister made a written statement to the WJC that was to confirm the Czechoslovaks' intention not to hinder repatriation of Jews after the end of the conflict.<sup>988</sup> Masaryk wrote:

I wish to go on record once again stating that decent citizens of Czechoslovakia regardless of race or faith will be treated in the same fair manner as was the case before this terrible war started.

The treatment of Jews in my country is a matter of personal pride to me and there will be no change whatsoever in this respect.<sup>989</sup>

Masaryk stated that 'decent citizens' of the Republic would be treated in the same manner as before. Despite this statement, it became apparent with the progress of time that the Czechoslovaks themselves wanted to set the rules about who had behaved decently. The Czechoslovaks' perception of decency towards the Republic did not match with its perception by the Jewish groups. The situation became precarious especially for Jews, who in 1930 declared German or Hungarian nationality. During 1943, Beneš received an informal approval with the expulsion of Sudeten Germans from the major Allies.<sup>990</sup> The Beneš government consequently started preparing laws that would enable them to deprive the Germans of their Czechoslovak citizenship and prepare their expulsion to Germany.<sup>991</sup> The government was aware of the impossibility of expelling all the Germans because there were cases of Germans fighting during the war on the Czechoslovak side.<sup>992</sup> This notwithstanding, the Czechoslovaks decided that it would be the Germans themselves who would have to claim their citizenship back. It was to be 'a new contract' – an active proof of loyalty. They would be obliged to present evidence that they did not commit crimes against Czechoslovakia and, in fact, fought on her behalf

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<sup>987</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>988</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>989</sup> *Ibid.* Statement by Jan Masaryk, 16 May 1944 attached to Perlzweig's letter.

<sup>990</sup> Kural, Václav, *Místo společenství konflikt! Češi a Němci ve Velkoněmecké říši a cesta k odsunu (1938-1945)*, pp. 211-223; In contrast, Brügel opposed that the Big three gave any concrete approval to the idea of the total expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia. Brügel, Johann Wolfgang, *Češi a Němci 1939-1946*, pp. 205-235.

<sup>991</sup> See Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*, pp. 288-293, doc. 142, a proposal by J. Císař how to solve the Sudeten German question by a transfer in two phases and a response by J. Špaček; Jech, Karel – Kaplan, Karel (eds.), *Dekrety Prezidenta republiky. Dokumenty. Druhé vydání* (Brno: Doplněk, 2002), pp. 349-368.

<sup>992</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, A71/6, 'Progressive policy in postwar Czechoslovakia', address by Beneš to the Czechoslovak soldiers in Britain. The Central European Observer, 14 April 1944.

during the war.<sup>993</sup> Thus all the people who, in 1930, had declared German nationality, were to be stripped of their Czechoslovak citizenship. This legislative act was to impact upon several thousands of Jewish survivors who returned from the concentration camps.

This development was not accidental. In January 1944, Frischer asked the Minister of Social Welfare, Ján Bečko, if, in preparation for repatriation, Jews could register their nationality based on their current feelings and not according to 1930. He thought that after the experience of the last years many Jews, who in 1930 declared German nationality, would reconsider their previous ‘superficial’ decision.<sup>994</sup> It seems that this proposal was rejected. In August 1944, the National-Jewish Council discussed the existence of a threat of discrimination against Jews during the repatriation and investigation of their Czechoslovak citizenship.<sup>995</sup> Although Frischer denied that any such law was in preparation, the opposite proved to be correct.<sup>996</sup>

In late November 1944 Zelmanovits informed the National-Jewish Council that the Ministry of Social Welfare intended to repatriate only Czechoslovak citizens of Czech, Slovak (in fact Czechoslovak) and Ukrainian nationality.<sup>997</sup> Citizens of German and Hungarian nationality would be repatriated only if they did not pose any potential danger for the Republic.<sup>998</sup> The Jewish activists were anxious that, based on these plans, Czechoslovak citizens of Jewish nationality might have been deprived of their citizenship.<sup>999</sup> This issue brought together both otherwise alienated Czechoslovak Jewish ideological groups: Agudists and Zionists. Czech-Jewish assimilationists, however, failed to show enough enthusiasm to fight for non-Czech Jews.<sup>1000</sup> We do not have sufficient information about possible interventions of Czechoslovak Jewish groups, but the government in the end slightly amended its

<sup>993</sup> Vondrová, Jitka (ed.), *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka, 1939-1945: Dokumenty*, p. 289, document 142, ‘Návrh J. Cisaře na řešení sudetoněmecké otázky cestou transferu ve dvou etapách a vyjádření J. Špačka k tomuto návrhu.’

<sup>994</sup> CZA, A280/16, Frischer to Bečko, 22 January 1944.

<sup>995</sup> CZA, A280/5, Minutes of the meeting of the National-Jewish Council, 24 August 1944.

<sup>996</sup> CZA, A280/5, Minutes of the meeting of the National-Jewish Council, 29 November 1944. For Frischer’s denial see CZA, A280/5, Minutes of the meeting of the National-Jewish Council, 24 August 1944.

<sup>997</sup> CZA, A280/5, Minutes of the meeting of the National-Jewish Council, 29 November 1944.

<sup>998</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>999</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1000</sup> *Ibid.* Milan Kodíček, the chairman of the Association of Czechs-Jews, informed Zelmanovits that he had to consult this intervention with his group before joining any initiative. Interestingly, the assimilationists expressed willingness to cooperate with the Zionists and Agudists only a fortnight before. See, CZA, A280/5, Executive Meeting of the National-Jewish Council, 16 November 1944.

plans. Minister Ripka confirmed it in a discussion with Kubowitzki and Frischer in January 1945. The Minister said:

the Czechoslovak approach in this question was dominated by the Czechoslovak determination to keep as few Germans and Hungarians as possible. An exception had been made in favour of Jewish citizens whose language is German, unless they opt for German nationality.<sup>1001</sup>

Ripka meant that Jews who declared Jewish nationality and were using the German language were to be spared the fate of other ‘Germans’. This ‘favour’ was not granted to the Jews who had declared German nationality. The ‘treason’ committed in 1930 was, therefore, to be paid back in 1945. This proposal was brought by the London exiles to the negotiations with the Communist exiles in Moscow. The concerns revealed in 1942 by Weinreich or Weiss and in 1944 by Frischer were justified. Also assurances given by Masaryk became worthless when facing the radical political programme of the Czechoslovak exiles.

Historians discussing the Czechoslovak exiles’ treatment of minorities tend to overlook the Jews.<sup>1002</sup> It is justifiable to state that Jews did not constitute any comprehensive problem for the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, especially when compared with three million Sudeten Germans. It is also correct that the Czechoslovak authorities did not conduct any diplomatic negotiations with the major powers that would deal with the Jewish status in liberated Czechoslovakia. Yet there is another part of the whole problem that deserves our attention. In 1942 and 1943, the Czechoslovak exiles severed all contacts with the Sudeten German democratic exiles around Wenzel Jaksch.<sup>1003</sup> Subsequently, the Jews constituted the major group that could raise the issue of minorities’ protection when negotiating with the Beneš government. Jewish groups in the west tried to raise these issues when negotiating the post-war status of minorities in Czechoslovakia. The documented political support of the Zionist movement showed that the Czechoslovak authorities took Jewish demands seriously. They offered to the Zionists an option for the development of their national claims without harming the Czechoslovaks’ intention

<sup>1001</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, D112/8, Note of Conversation between Frischer, Kubowitzki and Ripka, 19 January 1945.

<sup>1002</sup> Staněk describes the treatment of ‘German’ Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia. Other authors, who have dealt with the expulsion of Sudeten Germans mention their fate only scarcely. Staněk, Tomáš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947*, pp. 163-5, 339-345.

<sup>1003</sup> Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung 1938-1945*, pp. 191-210. There were also other political groups of Sudeten Germans (e.g. Zinner Group). However, when Beneš rejected Jaksch, he severed relations with the most important and influential group of exile Sudeten Germans.

of clearing the society of all groups whose loyalty was questioned. The political negotiations analysed here were hence important for the discussion of minorities' issues as a whole.

As during the first war years, several factors influenced the London exiles' decision to reject the special status of the Jews in liberated Czechoslovakia. Firstly, the role of the Czechoslovak underground movements in Bohemia and Moravia, and in Slovakia has already been highlighted. Secondly, the exiles rejected the system of minority protection as a whole. Thirdly, the government did not consider the Jews as an entirely reliable minority. Every individual, who did not perceive himself first and foremost as being Czechoslovak (or Czech or Slovak), was looked upon with suspicion. Some officials in the Foreign Ministry, for example, clearly opposed any benefits given to Zionists or any negotiations with them. Members of the Czechoslovak Zionist organization in Palestine, *Hitachdut Olei Czechoslovakia*, were even labelled as 'traitors' and negotiations with them were not recommended.<sup>1004</sup> Horský of the foreign ministry complained to Ripka that the government was too pro-Zionist and the approach should be more 'balanced'.<sup>1005</sup> Horský likewise argued that the Zionists had formed a distinct minority in pre-war Czechoslovakia and they did not feel Czechoslovak.<sup>1006</sup> This recommendation consequently caused Ripka's refusal to address a meeting of the United Jewish Appeal in June 1944, although he had promised to attend the gathering before.<sup>1007</sup>

Fourthly, the situation in the Czechoslovak army in the west alienated the government and Jewish groups. In early 1942, some army journalists were successful in initiating anti-Semitic discussion on the pages of the official Czechoslovak press, *Čechoslovák*. Editors of the newspaper allegedly allowed such discussion to show the decadence of anti-Semitic thinking; that is to document the moral prevalence of democratic ideals.<sup>1008</sup> As it was, the initial article called *Dva světy* (*Two Worlds*) was

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<sup>1004</sup> AMZV, LA, 1939-1945, box 514, a note by Horský about *Hitachdut Olei Czechoslovakia*, 2 June 1944.

<sup>1005</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-46-6-14, a note for Minister Ripka by Horský, 30 May 1944.

<sup>1006</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-46-6-14, a note for Minister Ripka by Horský, 30 May 1944.

<sup>1007</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-46-6-14, Ripka to United Jewish Appeal, 3 June 1944.

<sup>1008</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/11, Frischer to Felix Rezek (CJRC), 16 June 1942. Frischer wrote: 'I am very much in doubt about the correctness and utility of this mean, but it was certainly not done out of an evil sense. After all, the discussion was frankly disapproved in official circles of the Government and the State Council'.

not well received in the west and also the ‘educational purpose’ of the discussion, as suggested by the editorial board, was not fully comprehended.<sup>1009</sup>

Although accusations of anti-Semitism against the Czechoslovak army did not reach the level they did earlier, in 1940, the army itself was indeed not freed from anti-Semitism. There was always the possible danger of this being exposed during a public campaign in the British press or House of Commons.<sup>1010</sup> This danger was among the main concerns of the Czechoslovak leadership. Shortly before D-Day, the Defence Minister Ingr warned army officials that in order to cause harm to the Czechoslovaks, ‘some anti-Czechoslovak circles’ might utilize the pre-invasion period to raise the issue of the army’s anti-Semitism.<sup>1011</sup> These concerns were not entirely baseless. In spring 1944 the leftist and allegedly pro-Soviet National Committee for Civil Liberties initiated a large-scale campaign against anti-Semitism in the Polish army.<sup>1012</sup> Tom Driberg MP even brought the affair to the House of Commons.<sup>1013</sup> Subsequently, the Czechoslovaks’ concerns about the publicity given to certain incidents in their army seemed justifiable. No difference was made by the fact that the whole Polish affair was most probably caused by pro-Soviet sentiments of the aforementioned MPs.<sup>1014</sup> No similar campaign was launched against the Czechoslovaks who were generally considered as pro-Soviet.<sup>1015</sup> Nevertheless, the

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<sup>1009</sup> Čechoslovák, 30 January 1942, p. 5; Kulka, Erich, ‘Jews in the Czechoslovak Armed Forces Abroad During World War II’, p. 377.

<sup>1010</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84, a note by Viktor Fischl, 28 April 1944. In defence of the Polish army, Captain Alan Crosland Graham MP unsuccessfully tried to initiate a parliamentary discussion about the position of Jewish soldiers in the Czechoslovak army. The debate was reported in *the Jewish Chronicle*. Furthermore, in November 1943, G. L. Mander, a Czech friendly MP, informed Ripka about letters complaining about anti-Semitism in the Czechoslovak army. See Stříbrný, Jan, ‘Židovští vojenští duchovní a židovská otázka v československém vojsku na Západě v letech 1939 - 1945. Příběh Alexandra Krause a JUDr. Hanuše Rebenwurzela – Rezka’, p. 207.

<sup>1011</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84, Ingr to the military command of the Czechoslovak Independent Brigade, Czechoslovak Air Forces, Czechoslovak Reserve Troops, 10 May 1944.

<sup>1012</sup> University of Hull Archives, DCL/3/13, folder on the campaign organized by the National Council for Civil Liberties against anti-Semitism in the Polish armed forces; *Ibid.* DCL/310/8 for letters of Polish-Jewish soldiers about anti-Semitism in the Polish army; Driberg, Tom, *Absentees for Freedom* (London: National Council for Civil Liberties, 1944); See also Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, pp. 124-130; Engel, David, *Facing a Holocaust*, pp. 108-137.

<sup>1013</sup> *House of Commons Debates, Hansard*, Volume 398, Column 2010, 5 April 1944. Driberg initiated the debate on 5 April and it lasted for several following weeks, drawing considerable attention of the press.

<sup>1014</sup> On Driberg’s account of the events see: Driberg, Tom, *Ruling Passions. The Autobiography of Tom Driberg* (London: Quartet Books Limited, 1977), pp. 202f; See also Wasserstein, Bernard, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, pp. 127-129; Lukas, Richard C., *Forgotten Holocaust. The Poles under German Occupation 1939-1944. Revised Edition*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>1015</sup> Indeed, Driberg met with officials in the Czechoslovak foreign ministry shortly before he started the public campaign against the Polish army. CNA, MV-L, 2-16-7, box 174, Nosek (MFA) to Slávik (MV), the Chancellery of the President and General Ingr, 13 March 1944. Driberg informed Nosek

whole campaign against anti-Semitism in the Allied armed forces was in the Czechoslovaks' eyes another proof that the Jews had the ability to complicate the Czechoslovak diplomatic position.

All the aforementioned factors thus contributed to the Czechoslovaks' decision that Jews who did not want to assimilate should not stay in the post-war Republic. Their particularistic interests and at the same time the existence of a powerful pro-Jewish lobby in western countries was perceived as causing more harm than good to the Czechoslovak cause. On 12 March 1945, Ripka announced to the press that all Jews would enjoy full equality as *individual citizens* in liberated Czechoslovakia. No group minority rights would be restored. Zionists 'will be able to leave for Palestine and the Czechoslovak authorities will help, with friendly understanding, to organize the emigration of Zionists living in Czechoslovakia to their own National State'.<sup>1016</sup>

In any case, post-war order in Czechoslovakia was prepared in London *and* in Moscow. The Czechoslovak Communists had moved during the war from the periphery of the Czechoslovak political spectrum to its centre. It became obvious that the Communists did not want to be second fiddle in the negotiations conducted between 1943 and 1945. It is therefore necessary to introduce their vision of the Jewish position in post-war Czechoslovakia. Did it correspond with the plans already prepared by the Beneš government in London?

### ***The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Jews during the war***

The underground movement and exiles linked with the internationally recognised President Beneš played the main role in the Czechoslovak resistance during most of the war. Nevertheless, with the coming liberation and the international importance of the Soviet Union their Czechoslovak protégés, the CPC, had to be considered when discussing the future Czechoslovakia.<sup>1017</sup> The CPC consisted of several power centres. During the war the illegal Central Committee in occupied Bohemia and Moravia and an underground centre in Tiso Slovakia were formed. However, the pre-war Communist leadership escaped to Moscow after the

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that he had persuaded the Foreign Office to transfer some of the Polish Jewish soldiers to the British army. The reason was to be crude anti-Semitism ruling in the Polish army.

<sup>1016</sup> *The Jewish Chronicle*, 23 March 1945, p. 9, 'Full Equality for Czech Jews. Minister's Important Pronouncement'.

<sup>1017</sup> Agnew, Hugh LeCaine, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), pp. 220f;

Munich Diktat and formed the Central Committee of the CPC abroad. The main leaders of the Party in Moscow were: the pre-war chairman of the Central Committee, Klement Gottwald, and his close associates including Rudolf Slánský, Václav Kopecký, Bohumil Šmeral, the Slovak, Viliam Široký and others.<sup>1018</sup> The Moscow headquarters indisputably played a more prominent role in setting the political directives than Beneš did in his contacts with democratic underground in the Protectorate.<sup>1019</sup> Other centres of the exile Communist party were formed in Paris and later in London. Prominent Party members, for example Vladimír Clementis,<sup>1020</sup> Václav Nosek, or Karel Kreibich were involved in the west.



Image no. 10: Klement Gottwald<sup>1021</sup>

During the war, the political programme of the CPC was dictated by the Third Communist International, Comintern, in Moscow.<sup>1022</sup> Hence, the Communists did not cooperate with the Beneš exiled movement between August 1939, when the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was signed, and June 1941, when the Axis attacked the Soviet Union.<sup>1023</sup> The official western Czechoslovak administration was labelled as waging war in the interest of British and French imperialism and Czech anti-German

<sup>1018</sup> *Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě 1938-1945. Finding aid to the archival holdings* (Praha: Archiv Ústavu Marxismu-Leninismu ÚV KSČ, S.d.), pp. 2-5.

<sup>1019</sup> Korbel, Josef, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia. The Meaning of Its History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 195-7; Luža, Radomír, 'The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Resistance, 1939-1945', in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (December 1969), pp. 564-570; Kural, Václav, 'Úvahy a poznámky o problémech politiky KSČ v letech 1938-1945', in Zdeněk Kárník – Michal Kopeček (eds.), *Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu IV*, (Praha: Dokorán, 2005), pp. 75-78.

<sup>1020</sup> His Party membership was suspended after Clementis publicly condemned the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact in August 1939. He was later accepted back to the Party.

<sup>1021</sup> <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/klement-gottwald>

<sup>1022</sup> Kural, Václav, 'Úvahy a poznámky o problémech politiky KSČ v letech 1938-1945', pp. 75-78.

<sup>1023</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76-79; Luža, Radomír, 'The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Resistance, 1939-1945', pp. 566-570

chauvinism.<sup>1024</sup> The CPC, following the policy of the Soviet Union, did not officially differentiate among people in the national and ethnic sense. The German and Austrian working class was thus perceived as one of the allies in the Communist struggle against Hitler's imperialism and the capitalists who paved his way to power.<sup>1025</sup> For the Communists, a German worker was a closer ally than the Beneš government. They likewise rejected the Protectorate leading circles, including the Hácha government.<sup>1026</sup>

We do not have any comprehensive sources documenting the Communist perception of Jews during the first war years. The Nazi persecution of Protectorate Jewry occasionally found its way into the illegal Communist newspaper *Rudé Právo* (The Red Right/Law), but the theme was not systematically followed. The emphasis was put on the participation of the 'ruling classes', for example the Hácha National Solidarity (*Národní souručenství*), in the Nazi laws directed against the Jews.<sup>1027</sup> The Protectorate government's actions were contrasted with the true will of the Czech nation that was allegedly looking up to the Soviet Union.<sup>1028</sup> The socialist country was presented as a land of the new social system that had created respect and friendship among people of all nations and races.<sup>1029</sup>

Comments on the Jewish persecution occasionally appeared, as, for example, in September 1941 after the branding of the Jews by the Star of David.<sup>1030</sup> These sporadic notes and expressions of sympathies with the persecuted minority were later replaced by articles describing the suffering of the Czech nation as a whole.<sup>1031</sup> As in the case with the Soviet Union, there was rarely space for the persecuted minorities in the official communications of the home and foreign Communist centres.<sup>1032</sup> For example, the Communists' broadcasts over the BBC and Moscow radio included

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<sup>1024</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1939-1945, box 1, telegrams sent from Moscow by Gottwald to the Communist underground in the Protectorate, 14 September 1939, 16 October 1939, 11-16 March 1940.

<sup>1025</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1939-1945, box 1, telegrams sent from Moscow by Gottwald to the Communist underground in the Protectorate, 16 October 1939, 11-16 March 1940.

<sup>1026</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1938-1945, box 2, file 12, Gottwald to the Czechoslovak Communists in London, 21 December 1943.

<sup>1027</sup> *Rudé Právo*, an issue published in beginning of December 1940, in *Rudé Právo 1939-1945* (Praha: Svoboda, 1971), p. 141.

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1029</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1030</sup> *Rudé Právo*, October 1941, no. 10, in *Rudé Právo 1939-1945* (Praha: Svoboda, 1971), p. 234.

<sup>1031</sup> E. g. *Rudé Právo*, December 1942, in *Rudé Právo 1939-1945* (Praha: Svoboda, 1971), pp. 366-369.

<sup>1032</sup> Arad, Yitzhak, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, pp. 532-544.

information about the Jews only sporadically.<sup>1033</sup> In one case, Gottwald attacked the Slovak Quislings via Moscow radio in summer 1943. Further, the Communist leader accused Hácha of consenting to Protectorate Jewry being sent to Theresienstadt and Poland, where they were subsequently killed in Polish death camps by shooting, or in special carriages filled with chlorine lime.<sup>1034</sup> Gottwald concluded that the Germans, as well as the Protectorate and Slovak collaborators had to be met with proper retribution after the war.<sup>1035</sup> Similar arguments could be heard in broadcasts by Clementis via the London BBC as well as in the London exiles' general attacks on the Tiso regime.<sup>1036</sup> London was, on the contrary, apparently reluctant to attack Hácha and his Protectorate government.<sup>1037</sup> This was a clear difference between London's and Moscow's responses to the persecution of the Jews in the Protectorate.

The future of Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia failed to attract much attention from the leading Communists. We are thus dependent on articles published by lower-rank functionaries, or on the Communists' general attitude towards other minorities. This issue opens the question of how the Czechoslovak Communists perceived Jews as such. When discussing the future of minorities, the Communists never alluded to Jews. For example, a Czechoslovak-German Communist in London, Karel Kreibich referred to Jews by using the term 'Stammesgenossen'.<sup>1038</sup> This can be translated as members of a tribe, but definitely not as a nation. The Jews, according to this label, belonged together, in a community, but did not reach the level of a nation. This perception of Jews resembled the views revealed in London by Beneš.

The Communists likewise perceived Czech and Slovak Jews as a community in transition between two national communities. Czech Jews were moving from the

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<sup>1033</sup> Mark Cornwall documents that the Sudeten German Communists' broadcasting from Moscow did not follow the Nazi extermination campaign against the Jews, though the information about the crimes revealed in liberated territories occasionally appeared. Cornwall, Mark, 'Stirring Resistance from Moscow: The German Communists of Czechoslovakia and Wireless Propaganda in the Sudetenland, 1941-1945', in *German History*, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 230. Cornwall mentions that the *Sudetendeutsche Freiheitssender* informed on 13 November 1943 that 70,000 Jews had been murdered in Kiev.

<sup>1034</sup> Klement Gottwald over the Czechoslovak clandestine transmitter 'For the National Liberation' ('Za národní osvobození'), 5 July 1943, published in Gottwald, Klement, *Spisy XI, 1943-1945* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1955), pp. 178-179.

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1036</sup> AČR, BBC 1939-1945, box 31, Clementis, 1 April 1944.

<sup>1037</sup> About discussions about Hácha that took place in London see, for example: CNA, MV-L, box 271, 2-82-4, minutes of meetings of the advisory council for the Czechoslovak BBC broadcasting, 9 July 1942 or 29 July 1942.

<sup>1038</sup> CNA, Karel Kreibich Papers, box 14, Karel Kreibich, 'Antisemitismus und Judenschlaechterei', in *Einheit*, 1 January 1943, p. 5f.

German national and cultural surrounding to the Czech side. This process, according to Kreibich, had been completed before the outbreak of the war.<sup>1039</sup> Also the Slovak Jews had started their transition from the Hungarian to the Slovak national community before the war.<sup>1040</sup> This assessment of the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia went hand in hand with Kreibich's call for all Jews to join the Czechoslovak struggle for the freedom of the Republic unconditionally.<sup>1041</sup> That would definitely prove their allegiance to the Czech and Slovak nations. These Communist remarks directed at the Jews coincided with the slow change of the official Communist policy towards the German minority in post-war Czechoslovakia. Until late 1943, Moscow headquarters followed a programme that stressed differences between, on the one side, the German proletariat and, on the other, the military and political leadership, supported by the bourgeoisie and capitalists.<sup>1042</sup>



Image no. 11: Karel Kreibich<sup>1043</sup>

Only when Stalin, during Beneš's December 1943 visit to Moscow, expressed his approval of the Czechoslovak plans for the transfer of Germans did the CPC change its political argument.<sup>1044</sup> A letter sent on 21 December 1943 by Gottwald to the Communists in London suggested that although the CPC was against the general

<sup>1039</sup> CNA, Karel Kreibich Papers, box 14, Karel Kreibich, 'Böhmishe Juden', in *Einheit*, 17 June 1944., pp. 15-17.

<sup>1040</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1041</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1042</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1938-1945, box 2, file 8, 'About the Policy and subsequent Tasks of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 5 January 1943 (A programme prepared by the Comintern). The future of the Sudeten German was to be decided based on their conduct during the war. The programme noted that the majority of the Sudeten Germans were against Hitler and against the war.

<sup>1043</sup> <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/karel-kreibich>

<sup>1044</sup> Kural, Václav, 'Úvahy a poznámky o problémech politiky KSČ v letech 1938-1945', p. 85.

transfer as such, all guilty Sudeten Germans were supposed to lose Czechoslovak citizenship and would be forced to leave the country.<sup>1045</sup> The internationalist element of the cooperation of the working classes was soon replaced by the emphasized front of Slavonic nations under the leadership of the victorious Soviet Union.<sup>1046</sup> According to this programme, Czechoslovakia was to become a purely Slavonic country of Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians.<sup>1047</sup>

Communists in London repeatedly appealed to the Jews to decide unconditionally for the Czech side. Pavel Reimann published in *Einheit*, ‘a Sudeten German anti-Fascist fortnightly’, an article called ‘Juden am Scheidewege’ (‘Jews at the Cross-road’).<sup>1048</sup> It told the story of ‘a well-known’ Jewish writer, called by a cover name ‘Dr. Bergner’, who had been recently murdered in Poland. ‘Dr. Bergner’ was born in Prague before the First World War and was, like many Jews at that time, brought up in German cultural surroundings. He worked in Germany after 1918 and left only when Hitler came to power. Reimann used ‘Dr. Bergner’ as an example of a Jew who did not recognize that his adherence to the Germans, even after the defeat of the German militarism in 1918, was ‘rotten and decayed’ (‘morsch und faul’).<sup>1049</sup> Reimann suggested to the Jews that they had to fight against the Germans and join the Czechoslovak resistance movement.<sup>1050</sup> Furthermore, in January 1943, Kreibich roused the Jews saying that they had to revenge their murdered *Stammesgenossen*. They could not just sit at the bank of Babylon, Thames, or Hudson and wail. They should fight under the motto ‘Liberation and Revenge’ (‘Befreiung und Rache’).<sup>1051</sup> These articles documented the stereotypical perception of Jews as cowardly, passive and wavering in their national feelings.

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<sup>1045</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1938-1945, box 2, file 12, Gottwald to the Czechoslovak Communists in London, 21 December 1943. Those Sudeten Germans that would not be found guilty of crimes against the Republic ought to be allowed to choose between Czechoslovak and German citizenship. All the Germans who took part in the resistance movement were to be given Czechoslovak nationality automatically.

<sup>1046</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1939-1945, box 2, file 12, Gottwald, 21 December 1943, *Several suggestions for the management of the radio propaganda from London*.

<sup>1047</sup> CNA, Jan Šverma Papers, box 2, file 7, manuscript of an article ‘Národnostní problém nové republiky’ [Nationality issue in the new Republic], published by Šverma on 15 June 1944, probably in *Československé listy* in Moscow.

<sup>1048</sup> CNA, Karel Kreibich Papers, box 14, Pavel Reimann, ‘Juden am Scheidewege’, in *Einheit*, 16 January 1943, pp. 21f.

<sup>1049</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1050</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1051</sup> CNA, Karel Kreibich Papers, box 14, Karel Kreibich, ‘Antisemitismus und Judenschlaechterei’, in *Einheit*, 1 January 1943, p. 5f.

The official Party line towards the Jews was summarized in July 1944 by the Communist ideologue Václav Kopecký in Moscow.<sup>1052</sup> It is the only comprehensive evaluation of the so called ‘Jewish question’ by a leading Communist during the war. The article, published in *Československé listy*, could be considered as an important contribution to the Czechoslovak struggle against anti-Semitic prejudices. Yet the new Communist vision of post-war Czechoslovakia found its clear expression in Kopecký’s argument as well. The post-war Republic was introduced as a *nationally* Slavonic country, with strong ties to the Soviet Union.<sup>1053</sup> In this article, the mighty ally in the east was celebrated, in a clear comparison with the west, as a country where no prejudices were rooted. Anti-Semitism was labelled as an invention of capitalist, bourgeois circles.<sup>1054</sup>



Image no. 12: Václav Kopecký in 1937 (Copyright LIFE.com)<sup>1055</sup>

The Communist and pro-Soviet political bias was omnipresent in this exposé. Kopecký also argued that the Czechoslovak army in Britain, based on the chaotic manner in which it had been formed, included anti-Semitic elements. Such a development was out of the question in the case of the Czechoslovak Svoboda army

<sup>1052</sup> *Československé listy* and for German translation of the article see USA, MS 238/2/20, V. Kopecký, ‘Der Weg zur Lösung der Judenfrage’, taken from *Einheit*, vol. 5, No. 20, 23 September 1944. It was published after the war in Czech as *Antisemitismus poslední zbraní nacismu* (Praha: Svoboda, 1945). The following references are to this last edition of Kopecký’s article. However, the German version in the University of Southampton Archives is almost identical.

<sup>1053</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 3f.

<sup>1054</sup> Kopecký in this connection talked about Polish reactionaries in the United Kingdom. Publishing shortly after the campaign against anti-Semitism in the Polish army, Kopecký did not refrain from attacking the western Poles, whose relations with the Soviet government were in 1944 non-existent.

<sup>1055</sup> [www.life.com](http://www.life.com)

in the Soviet Union.<sup>1056</sup> The working-class, he said, including that in western countries, had been liberated from these undemocratic prejudices.<sup>1057</sup> Moreover, Kopecký suggested that the Czech and Slovak nations did not express anti-Semitic tendencies thanks to the pedagogical influences of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.<sup>1058</sup> Also Hácha and the Slovak Government authorities were not able to impose anti-Semitic poison on the Czech and Slovak people. Anti-Semitism was perceived simply as a platform where anti-democratic, anti-Soviet and anti-working class elements could meet.<sup>1059</sup>

Kopecký devoted the main part of his analysis to the national and social reasons behind anti-Semitic prejudices. He focused on their role in the restitution of the Jewish position in post-war Czechoslovakia. Kopecký explained the historical development in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia that caused the adherence of a large part of Jews to the German and Hungarian nations. There was a definite change in their national behaviour during the interwar period, when most of the Jews decided for the Czech nation.<sup>1060</sup> As stated by Kopecký, this de-Germanization and de-Magyarization was completed during the Second World War.<sup>1061</sup> However, concerning the position of Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia, Kopecký adopted a discourse closely resembling that of the Czechoslovak politicians in the west:

It is clear: in connection with Czechoslovak citizens of Jewish origin, those Jews who feel themselves to be Germans or Hungarians must face the same measures that will be taken against the Germans and Hungarians in Czechoslovakia. The liquidation of anti-Semitism does not mean that we will grant the Jews special privileges if they feel themselves to be Germans or Hungarians. Nor will we allow those who feel themselves to be Germans and Hungarians to hide their true feelings behind the claim of Jewishness. Liquidation of anti-Semitism cannot be allowed to cause harm to the national and Slavic character of the future Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>1062</sup>

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<sup>1056</sup> In fact, the situation in the Svoboda army was more complicated. Kulka documented many anti-Semitic incidents during the war. See: Kulka, Erich, 'Jews in the Czechoslovak Armed Forces Abroad During World War II', pp. 389-426; *Jews in Svoboda's army in the Soviet Union : Czechoslovak Jewry's fight against the Nazis during World War II*.

<sup>1057</sup> Kopecký, Václav, *Antisemitismus poslední zbraní nacismu*, p. 5f.

<sup>1058</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-11.

<sup>1059</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>1061</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12f.

<sup>1062</sup> Translation partly taken from Cichopek-Gajraj, Anna, *Jews, Poles and Slovaks: A Story of Encounters, 1944-48* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2008, Unpublished PhD thesis), p. 332

The Communists, therefore, explicitly argued that not all Jews should be allowed to stay, or return to Czechoslovakia. Even more significant was Kopecký's suggestion that the determination of who among the Jews was German should not be done based on their own feelings, but on the examination of their conduct before and during the war.<sup>1063</sup> At the same time, contrary to the Beneš exiles in London, Kopecký stated that Jews, who wanted to declare Jewish nationality, might retain this privilege.<sup>1064</sup> They would have all rights, including religious, as other citizens of Czechoslovakia. It is not entirely clear whether Kopecký by this statement meant group minority rights or basically the equal rights of 'a citizen'.<sup>1065</sup> Nevertheless, this opportunity was not to serve as a disguise for German and Hungarian Jews who wanted to stay in the Republic.

In the case of the Communists, social issues in connection with Czech and Slovak Jews were also shaped by the Communist doctrine. Jews were to be 'cleansed' of socially 'disloyal' elements. Kopecký argued that 'big capitalist bloodsuckers' and 'panic mongers' were not to be allowed to come back to Czechoslovakia. The criteria again rested in the pre-war conduct of an individual.<sup>1066</sup> The post-war screening of the Jews, as well as other people, was to take into consideration both the political *and* social behaviour of an individual.<sup>1067</sup> Nationalization of big properties owned by Jewish capitalists was a part of the Communist programme. The alleged intention of the CPC was that the so called 'Jewish question', based on a negative perception of the Jewish minority, was to cease to exist.<sup>1068</sup> The German and Hungarian minorities were to be considerably reduced and the fate of the Jews was to be decided based on their 'national behaviour' prior to the conflict. For Jews, who did not commit any crime against the Czechoslovak Republic, only two options remained: assimilation or adherence to Jewish nationalism.

With the end of the war in sight, the ideological approaches of both the exiled branches of the resistance movement towards the Jews became almost identical. Further, an important shift occurred in the Communist relationship to Jewish nationals. This Communist vision of the Jewish position in liberated Czechoslovakia

<sup>1063</sup> Kopecký, Václav, *Antisemitismus poslední zbraní nacismu*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>1064</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1065</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1066</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1067</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>1068</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

was revealed to the public by Erik Kolár shortly after the liberation of Prague on Czech Radio in June 1945.<sup>1069</sup> He called for complete equality for the Jewish citizens of the Republic, including restitution of their property. The proper education of children he said, would eradicate any anti-Semitic sentiments that had become more pronounced during the war. Kolár also explicitly highlighted what he perceived as the most prominent issue in the struggle once and for all to overcome the so-called ‘Jewish problem’:

One more painful problem must be mentioned; national anti-Semitism. There is no doubt that the older Jewish generation was educated in the German spirit. The problem of this generation was solved in the gas chambers in Oswiecim. The young generation, part of which survived the terror of the concentration camp, has had a Czech education. There is no language problem among these people. Only a small part remains of the middle-aged generation, which professed to be German. These Germans must realize that the Czechoslovak Republic is now a national state. There is no doubt that these Germans who endured racial persecution will be treated like other anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi German citizens of our State, who in accordance with the Government's programme, will be considered loyal citizens and will not be deprived of their citizenship. It is hoped that they will have enough political wisdom not to create any obstacles to the complete assimilation of the Jewish Czechs. The same is expected of the so-called Jewish nationals, the Zionists.

[...]

The Jewish public [...] must realize that there are only two alternatives: either Jewish nationality in an independent Jewish State, or complete and full assimilation with the nation in whose midst they [live]. A half-measure is illogical and would only prolong the solution of the problem.<sup>1070</sup>

Similarly, at the first founding meeting of the Council of the Jewish Religious Congregations in September 1945, Kopecký repeated this perception of the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia. He stated that although the assimilation of Jews was desirable, adherence to Jewish nationalism would not be obstructed.<sup>1071</sup> The

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<sup>1069</sup> Kolár was a Communist of Jewish background, who was during the war imprisoned in Theresienstadt.

<sup>1070</sup> Translation taken from: AJA, WJC Papers, H99/17, ‘Talk by Dr. Eric Kolar: “What do you know about the Jews”,’ 18 June 1945, 7.30pm; AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to Masaryk, 12 July 1945; for more about Kolár see Sedlák, Petr, *Poštoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)* (PhD thesis, Brno: Institute of History, Masaryk University, 2008), pp. 136-141.

<sup>1071</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221f, especially footnote 689. Sedlák quotes other examples of Communists, who preferred emigration of Zionists to Palestine, *Ibid.*, p. 222; See also University of Haifa Archives, Center for Historic Documentation, The Strochlitz Institute of Holocaust Studies (UHA), Dr Vojtech

Communist support of Jewish nationalism was in accordance with their general attitude towards various nations in post-war Czechoslovakia. They supported Slovak nationalism, for example. This backing slowly waned when, in the 1946 elections, the majority of Slovaks rejected the Slovak Communists and decided for the Slovak Democratic Party, linked with the Catholic Church and the former war-time People's Party.

However, as in the case with the London exiles, the more radical politicians came from the ranks of the Communist underground movement. Many of the Slovak Communists survived the war in hiding and later contributed to the preparation and execution of the Slovak National Uprising that broke out on 29 August 1944.<sup>1072</sup> Jews proportionally constituted a considerable part of the Slovak underground and were prominent among the resistance fighters during the uprising.<sup>1073</sup> But it seems they were never entirely trusted. They allegedly behaved badly, worked on behalf of the Slovak security service, and disclosed secrets when interrogated by authorities.<sup>1074</sup>

Prejudices against the Jews were revealed by Ladislav Novomeský, a Communist member of the Slovak National Council (SNC) delegation that visited London in October 1944.<sup>1075</sup> One of the first decrees issued by the SNC after the outbreak of the uprising cancelled all the undemocratic legislation of the Slovak State, including all anti-Jewish laws.<sup>1076</sup> Novomeský suggested that the Jewish persecution provoked considerable pro-Jewish sympathies among the Slovak population. Yet he noted that one of the main tasks of the SNC was to make sure that the Jewish question ceased to exist in Slovakia.<sup>1077</sup> One of the ways to achieve this goal was the adjustment of the Jewish position in Slovak society. The main cause of Slovak anti-Semitism was, according to Novomeský, the disproportional presence of

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Winterstein Collection, W.4/5, Report about Winterstain's trip to the European Conference of the World Jewish Congress in London in August 1945.

<sup>1072</sup> Agnew, Hugh LeCaine, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, pp. 217f; Korbel, Josef, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia. The Meaning of Its History*, pp. 188-193.

<sup>1073</sup> Lipscher, Ladislav, *Die Juden im Slowakischen Staat 1939-1945*, pp. 169-172.

<sup>1074</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-48)', in *East Central Europe/L'Europe du Centre-Est*, No. 2, 1978, p. 194.

<sup>1075</sup> For published documents about their stay in London see: Prečan, Vilém, 'Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně (říjen - listopad 1944): Nové dokumenty', pp. 159-291.

<sup>1076</sup> Prečan, Vilém, (ed.) *Slovenké národné povstanie: Dokumenty* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1965), p. 1151.

<sup>1077</sup> Prečan, Vilém, 'Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně', p. 221.

the Jews in big business and among capitalists.<sup>1078</sup> He furthermore repeated the allegations against inadequate Jewish national connection with the Slovak nation, expressed by their adherence to Hungarian and German identity.<sup>1079</sup> It was, he said, in the Jewish interest that they should not play a prominent role in the Slovak economy. Novomeský also attacked alleged Jewish behaviour in liberated Slovakia. The Slovak population perceived what it saw as the Jewish unwillingness to join the reconstruction work.<sup>1080</sup> Jews, he said, claimed that they had already suffered too much and, because of this, sometimes ‘brutal methods’ had to be used to force them to work.<sup>1081</sup> Anti-Semitic prejudices like these can be traced in the discourse of the Communist leaders.

The attitude of the CPC towards the Jews developed from revolutionary internationalism to outspoken Czecho/Slovak, Slavonic nationalism. The Communist exiles adopted pro-Slavonic discourse and became strict defenders of the national cleansing of Czechoslovakia. Also illegal Communist branches in occupied Bohemia and Moravia, and in Slovakia, contributed to the radicalization of the Communist programme in connection with Jewish issues. With the coming liberation of Czechoslovakia, both exiled branches of the Czechoslovak resistance met in Moscow to discuss post-war order in the Republic. How the post-war position of the Jews was shaped by developments during the war is the subject of the next section.

### ***Post-war Czechoslovakia and the Jews***

The main part of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, including President Beneš, left London for the liberated Czechoslovak territories on 11 March 1945. Their journey firstly led to Moscow, for political negotiations with the Communists. They discussed the formation of the new government and its political programme until the first post-war elections.<sup>1082</sup> The negotiations proved that the Communists intended to play the decisive role in the new Republic.<sup>1083</sup> Beneš’s position as President was not questioned, but Zdeněk Fierlinger, the Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow, both a Social Democrat and an admirer of the Soviet system, became

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<sup>1078</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221f.

<sup>1079</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222.

<sup>1080</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222f.

<sup>1081</sup> *Ibid.* p. 223.

<sup>1082</sup> Dejmek, Jindřich, *Edvard Beneš. Politická biografie českého demokrata. Část druhá Prezident Republiky a vůdce národního odboje (1935-1948)*, p. 499.

<sup>1083</sup> *Ibid.*), pp. 499-509.

Prime Minister.<sup>1084</sup> Only four parties in Bohemia and Moravia, and four in Slovakia were allowed to function and they formed the National Front, a coalition government ruling without opposition. The Communists themselves were allocated the posts of two of five deputy Prime Ministers and other important portfolios in the government, including the Ministry of the Interior. The new government was sworn into office at the beginning of April and moved to Košice, in Eastern Slovakia, as its provisional seat.

The heartland of Bohemia and Moravia was one of the last parts of the Nazi occupied territories liberated by the Allied forces. The US army reached Pilsen (Plzeň) in Western Bohemia on 5 May 1945. It was, however, the Soviet army that, according to the Soviet-American agreement, finally liberated Prague in the morning of 9 May 1945. The government, arriving from Košice, was welcomed at Prague airport by Soviet soldiers. It served as a symbol of the new order in liberated Czechoslovakia. The Communists indeed scored almost 40 percent in the first post-war elections in May 1946. However, they did not reach a majority and the government of the National Front continued to function until February 1948 when the Communist coup took place. Four key factors shaped the position of Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia:

- 1) Anti-Semitism in Bohemia and Moravia and especially in Slovakia survived the downfall of German rule.<sup>1085</sup>
- 2) In relation to other minorities, Jewish themes developed in the background of extensive population transfers. Almost three million Sudeten Germans were forced to leave the country as a way of solving the centuries-long struggle between Czechs and Germans.
- 3) The attitude towards the Jews developed in an atmosphere of political struggle between the pro-democratic part of the Czechoslovak political scene and the Communists.

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<sup>1084</sup> For the general history of post-1945 Czechoslovakia, see, for example: Kaplan, Karel, *Nekrvavá revoluce* (Praha: Mladá Fronta, 1993); *Československo v letech 1945-1948, 1. část* (Praha: SNP, 1991); Drtina, Prokop, *Československo můj osud. Svazek II.* (Praha: Melantrich, 1992); Veber, Václav, *Osudové Únorové dny* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 2008).

<sup>1085</sup> Krejčová, Helena, ‘Czech and Slovak anti-Semitism, 1945-1948’, pp. 158-173; ‘The Czech Lands at the Dawn of the New Age (Czech anti-Semitism 1945-1948’, pp. 115-124; ‘K některým problémům židovské menšiny a českého antisemitismu po roce 1945’, in Jerzy Tomaszewski (ed.), *Židé v české a polské občanské společnosti*. (Praha: Filozofická fakulta UK, 1999), pp. 65-77.

4) The different war-time experience in Slovakia, with strong autonomous tendencies still surviving after the war, shaped Slovak political parties' policies towards the Jews as well.

As an umbrella, covering all these four factors, Czech and Slovak nationalisms shaped development in post-war Czechoslovakia in relation to the Jews.

There were fewer than 20,000 Jews in the historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia after liberation and approximately 30,000 Jews in Slovakia.<sup>1086</sup> They constituted approximately one fifth of the pre-war Czechoslovak Jewish population. In spite of this loss, the now insignificant minority encountered significant obstacles when trying to re-join Czechoslovak society.<sup>1087</sup> Besides the trauma of survivors, of people who often lost their whole families in Nazi extermination camps, the majority population frequently looked upon the survivors and their demands with suspicion. Although suggestions presented by Frischer in his Memorial Treatise in March 1944 were moderate in comparison with other Zionists, they still contradicted the philosophy of the new Czechoslovak state.

First, not all Jews who lived in pre-war Czechoslovakia were allowed to regain Czechoslovak citizenship. Those excluded were especially Jews of German and Hungarian nationality. The first post-war government's programme included rules for the withdrawing of Czechoslovak citizenship. It referred especially to the people, who during the last pre-war census in 1930 (3 years before Hitler came to power in Germany) declared German or Hungarian nationality. According to available information, between 2,000 and 3,000 Jewish survivors belonged in this category.<sup>1088</sup> The law listed several groups of people who were excluded from this

<sup>1086</sup> For estimates concerning Bohemia and Moravia see Hanková, Monika, *Kapitoly z poválečných dějin židovské komunity v Čechách a na Moravě (1945-1956)*, pp. 21f. Concerning Slovakia see, Bumová, Ivica, "The Jewish Community after 1945 – Struggle for Civic and Social Rehabilitation," in *Holocaust as a Historical and Moral Problem of the Past and the Present* (Bratislava: Dokumentačné stredisko holokaustu, 2008), p. 253.

<sup>1087</sup> Historiography: Brod, Petr, 'Židé v poválečném Československu', pp. 177-189; Hanková, Monika, *Kapitoly z poválečných dějin židovské komunity v Čechách a na Moravě (1945-1956)*; Kratochvíl, Michaela, *The Jewish Aspects of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Minority Policy During 1939-1948*; Meyer, Peter et al, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*; Novotná, Hedvika, *Soužití české společnosti a Židů v letech 1945-1948 ve světle různých pramenů*; Sedlák, Petr, Poté. *Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)*.

<sup>1088</sup> This number was quoted by foreign press, see Bednářík, Petr, *Vztah židů a české společnosti na stránkách českého tisku v letech 1945-1948* (Praha: Karlova Univerzita, 2003, Unpublished PhD thesis), p. 86. Staněk states that there were 1,876 Germans 'of Jewish origin and faith' in Czechoslovakia by 30 December 1946. See Staněk, Tomáš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947*, p. 343. See also Archiv Bezpečnostních složek ministerstva vnitra ČR, Prague (ABS), 425-231-2, Frischer's meeting with Beneš, 8 May 1946. Frischer mentioned that the Jewish community

directive and were allowed, if they wanted, to stay in Czechoslovakia. The first, hazy definition of this exemption did not include people who were persecuted by the Nazis, only those who fought against them before and during the war.<sup>1089</sup> Later on, a precise directive was published as a part of the Constitutional Decree of President Beneš, no. 33/1945 Sb. on 2 August 1945. It stated:

The persons [...] who can prove that they remained faithful to the Czechoslovak Republic, who have never committed offence against the Czech and Slovak nations and either actively collaborated in the liberation of Czechoslovakia or suffered under the Nazi or Fascist terror, are allowed to retain their Czechoslovak citizenship.<sup>1090</sup>

All three conditions had to be complied with. The final decision in each particular case was left to regional National Committees, to people who very often had personal interests in depriving Jews of their citizenship.<sup>1091</sup> The pretext was the alleged Jewish support of German and Hungarian minorities, very often expressed only by their usage of ‘improper’ languages, or attendance of nationally ‘improper’ schools.

Immediately after his return to Czechoslovakia, Frischer informed Czechoslovak Jews in London that Czechs had started to inquire of individual Jews whether they had declared German nationality in 1930.<sup>1092</sup> Some local National Committees issued slightly different directives that first of all investigated the language used by the claimants before and during the war. This directive was, for example, issued in Olomouc, in Moravia.<sup>1093</sup> Jews, who in 1930 declared Jewish nationality but used German as their means of communication, could retain their citizenship only if their *active* support of the Czech national movement during the war could be proved. As the Jewish Religious Congregation in Olomouc bitterly remarked, it was difficult to support Czech resistance from the concentration

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estimated the number of ‘German Jews’ in Czechoslovakia at 2,500, but that the final number was probably lower.

<sup>1089</sup> The Košice government programme. See [http://www.svedomi.cz/dokdoby/1945\\_kosvlp.htm](http://www.svedomi.cz/dokdoby/1945_kosvlp.htm) (accessed 30 March 2010).

<sup>1090</sup> Jech, Karel – Kaplan, Karel (eds.), *Dekrety Prezidenta republiky. Dokumenty. Druhé vydání*, p. 345, document 21, *Constitutional decree of the President of the Republic no. 33, 1945 Sb. on 2 August 1945 concerning modification of Czechoslovak citizenship of persons of German and Hungarian ethnicity*. My translation.

<sup>1091</sup> Bumová, Ivica, ‘Protizidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v historickom kontexte (August 1946)’, in *Pamäť Národa*, 03/2007, p. 16.

<sup>1092</sup> CZA, A280/42, Frischer to the Social Council of Jews from Czechoslovakia, 3 June 1945. For German translation of this letter see, CZA S26/1245.

<sup>1093</sup> ABS, 425-232-1, Jewish Religious Congregation in Olomouc to Frischer, 6 June 1945.

camps.<sup>1094</sup> Similarly, the National Council in Ústí nad Labem (Aussig) in Northern Bohemia decided that all Jews, who had declared German nationality in 1930, were considered German despite the fact that they had been persecuted during the occupation.<sup>1095</sup>

The reason behind these more stringent rules appeared to be material concerns of the local National Committees' members. To have the 'proper nationality' was one of the preconditions for restitution of property confiscated by the Nazis, in the case of Jews during the so called process of *aryanization*.<sup>1096</sup> As suggested by Yeshayahu Jelínek: 'It was easy to deny someone his proper national identity on the basis of language, and then to hinder the restitution of his property'.<sup>1097</sup> In several cases, Jews were labelled by local authorities as Hungarian or German, with the sole purpose of allowing the confiscation of Jewish property.<sup>1098</sup> Based on this confusing law, many German-speaking Jews were refused Czechoslovak citizenship.<sup>1099</sup> There are even documented cases of Jews who shared the fate of almost three million German expellees and were sent in trains to Germany, or who, rather than leave, committed suicide.<sup>1100</sup>

What was the role played by the exiles in this development? The last paragraph of the Presidential decree stated that fighters against Nazism *and* those

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<sup>1094</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1095</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.), *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, p. 29, doc. 3, A letter from the Council of the Jewish Religious Congregations in Bohemia and Moravia to the Ministry of Interior, 12 October 1945.

<sup>1096</sup> Jech, Karel – Kaplan, Karel (eds.), *Dekrety Prezidenta republiky. Dokumenty. Druhé vydání*, p. 216, doc. 12. *Decree of the President of the Republic no. 5/1945Sb. of 19 May 1945 concerning the invalidity of some transactions involving property rights from the time of lack of freedom and concerning the National Administration of property assets of Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators and of certain organizations and associations*.

<sup>1097</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-48)', p. 200.

<sup>1098</sup> Bumová, Ivica, 'Protizidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v historickom kontexte (August 1946)', p. 16.

<sup>1099</sup> ABS, 425-231-3, Frischer's minutes of the meeting between Paul März and Minister Masaryk, 1 May 1946. Masaryk was to state that 800 Jews had been threatened with expulsion to Germany, but the negotiations about their fate were not yet finished.

<sup>1100</sup> Staněk, Tomáš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947*, pp. 340f. Staněk notes that many Jews left Czechoslovakia to Germany voluntarily, but some of them were also forced to join the early transfers of German expellees. Furthermore, Staněk argues that Czechoslovak public opinion was inclined not to differentiate among Germans based on their 'racial' origin. See also Meyer, Peter et al, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, p. 81. Dr M. Ungerová spent the war in England, voluntarily serving in a hospital for Czechoslovak soldiers. After her return to Czechoslovakia, she also immediately went to Terezín, former Theresienstadt ghetto, and treated survivors infected with typhus. When she later applied for Czechoslovak citizenship, her application was turned down. The justification stated that Ungerová studied at the German University in Prague, used German, or alternatively English and French as means of communication and never mastered Czech. She allegedly had no 'positive ties' with the Czech nation. When confronted with this decision, Ungerová committed suicide.

who suffered under the German rule might retain Czechoslovak citizenship.<sup>1101</sup> Nevertheless, the article, stating that a claimant had to remain faithful to the Republic during all that time, allowed local authorities to utilise the law for their own benefit. The issue was that too much power was given to individuals who sometimes wanted to cover their own past.<sup>1102</sup> Also Beneš later privately agreed that the German-Jews were being deprived of their citizenship only because of material reasons.<sup>1103</sup> Yet, in a conversation with Bartley Crum, a member of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine, the Czechoslovak President was to remark that German-speaking Jews were sharing the fate of the rest of the German minority and were to be deported to Germany.<sup>1104</sup> This was not an accidental development but a planned policy of what Benjamin Frommer calls ‘national cleansing’.<sup>1105</sup> The ‘cleansing’ of the Czech and Slovak societies simply offered opportunities to gain material profit. Under the pretext of defending the interests of the Czech nation, local authorities gained access to the property of Jewish claimants.

Indeed the Jewish usage of German and Hungarian language became the main feature of anti-Semitic accusations against Jewish survivors. Based on several thousands of survivors who did not master Slavonic languages, the whole of remaining Jewry was again labelled as agents of Germanization and Magyarization.<sup>1106</sup> These sentiments, repeatedly stressed in the war-time communications of Czech and Slovak underground groups with London exiles, survived the downfall of the Nazi empire. In the war itself, Frischer appealed to Jewish exiles, who intended to return to Czechoslovakia, to learn Slavonic languages.<sup>1107</sup> He admitted that a mature democracy ought not to differentiate among people based on the language they used, but Jewish survivors in Czechoslovakia had

<sup>1101</sup> Jech, Karel – Kaplan, Karel (eds.), *Dekrety Prezidenta republiky. Dokumenty. Druhé vydání*, p. 345, document 21, *Constitutional decree of the President of the Republic no. 33, 1945 Sb. on 2 August 1945 concerning modification of Czechoslovak citizenship of persons of German and Hungarian ethnicity*.

<sup>1102</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, ‘The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-48)’, p. 200f.

<sup>1103</sup> ABS, 425-231-2, Frischer's discussion with Beneš, 8 May 1946.

<sup>1104</sup> Crum, Bartley C., *Behind the Silken Curtain. A personal Account of Anglo-American Diplomacy in Palestine and the Middle-East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), p. 117.

<sup>1105</sup> Reference to Frommer, Benjamin, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi collaborators in postwar Czechoslovakia*.

<sup>1106</sup> See, for example, situational reports from Slovakia: Slovenský Národný archiv, Bratislava (SNA), PV-B, box 2, Situational report from Slovakia, May 1946; *Ibid.*, Situational report August 1946; Or, SNA, PV-B, box 483, A Report by the Main Command of the National Security, 8 August 1945; SNA, PV-B, box 1, Situational report from Slovakia for 1 July – 15 August 1945.

<sup>1107</sup> YVA, M.2-249/28, Frischer's address to Czechoslovak Jews in America, 5 July 1943.

to accept ‘the reality’.<sup>1108</sup> Also Slovak authorities in 1946 advised the Slovak Jewish leadership to persuade the remaining Jews to use only Slavonic languages in public and in private.<sup>1109</sup> Indeed, Jewish politicians, although complaining about this development, recommended to Jewish survivors not to use German or Hungarian in public.<sup>1110</sup> In this way, the Jewish leadership accepted developments in post-war Czechoslovakia. By this act, Jewish organizations further excluded those Jews who did not master Slavonic languages and the backlash hit Jewry as a whole.

As mentioned previously, the alleged defence of Czech and Slovak nations offered justification for actions conducted against the material claims of Jewish survivors. In 1941, the Czechoslovak government published a declaration cancelling all the transfers of property made under duress. During the war, Frischer repeatedly expressed concerns about the unwillingness to conduct wholesale restitution of Jewish property. He was not persuaded about the real intentions of the Czechoslovak politicians, including Beneš.<sup>1111</sup> However, Frischer *privately* expressed his understanding concerning the complicated situation in Slovakia.<sup>1112</sup> He realised that it would be complicated to ask the pauperised Slovaks to return all the property.<sup>1113</sup> Likewise Feierabend, the Minister of Finance, in 1943 almost ruled out a complete financial restitution.<sup>1114</sup> He suggested that restitution would not be feasible from German sources obtained after the war as indemnification, or from people who enriched themselves from the aryanized property. The Minister additionally emphasised that no contribution to restitution could come from the Czechoslovak state, for example, by higher taxation.<sup>1115</sup> Frischer opposed this argument; the only case when Jewish property might not be a part of restitution was if the Czechoslovak people after the war decided for nationalization of key industries. But it ought to be

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<sup>1108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1109</sup> SNA, Úrad Zboru povereníkov 1945-59, Zasadanie Zboru povereníkov, box 12, Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Commissioners, 17 September 1946. The Commissioner of Interior, Gen. Ferjenčík, was asked to contact Slovak Jewish leadership in this respect: see UHA, Dr Vojtech Winterstein Collection, W.2.1.3, Minutes of the SRP (Association of Racially Persecuted) meeting on 30 September 1946.

<sup>1110</sup> UHA, Dr Vojtech Winterstein Collection, W.4/2, SRP (Association of Racially Persecuted), probably Winterstein to the Office of the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, 17 August 1947. ‘Endeavour to maintain the Slovak character of Bratislava, district cities, summer resorts and spas’. See also W.3/1, Minutes of the SRP (Association of Racially Persecuted) meeting on 23 September 1946.

<sup>1111</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-161-1, box 259, Diary entry by Ripka, 18 February 1943.

<sup>1112</sup> CZA, A280/9, Minutes of the plenary session of the National-Jewish Council, 11 October 1942.

<sup>1113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1114</sup> CZA, A280/26, a cyclostyle of a letter by Frischer to Czechoslovak citizens abroad, 21 October 1943.

<sup>1115</sup> *Ibid.*

applied generally and not solely against aryanized Jewish property.<sup>1116</sup> Yet later, during his visit to New York in November 1944, Frischer admitted in front of the Jewish gathering that complete restitution would not be possible.<sup>1117</sup>

Underground sources informed the exiles about their opposition to the restitution of Jewish property already during the war. In April 1944, General Ingr argued during a government meeting that a complete restitution of Jewish property would be impossible. The Minister noted that although reports from the occupied homeland did not oppose the return of Jews, they opposed the complete restitution of their pre-war status. The Minister added that the property owned by Jews in pre-war Czechoslovakia had been disproportionate to their number. Furthermore, claimed Ingr, not only Jews were persecuted by the Nazis.<sup>1118</sup> In addition, other ministers remarked that announcements of general restitution were utilised by the enemies who accused the government of planning to give property back to rich Jewish capitalists.<sup>1119</sup>

Under the influence of mixed messages coming from occupied Czechoslovakia, the reluctance to return all the *aryanised* property became apparent in London. For example, Ministers Feierabend and Ján Lichner protested against the law that was to introduce a restitution decree.<sup>1120</sup> Lichner justified his protest on the basis that Slovak peasants received parcelled Jewish estates.<sup>1121</sup> This was therefore serving the interest of groups mentioned several times in the Slovak underground messages. Consequently, the restitution was accepted by the government only as a principle and a specific law was supposed to be discussed later.<sup>1122</sup> Ministers agreed that the government would not recognise any transfers of property made under duress. But under certain conditions, the property would remain with the recent owners.<sup>1123</sup>

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<sup>1116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1117</sup> *Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovak Jews, addresses delivered at the meeting of the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee*, p. 29.

<sup>1118</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II, box 183, minutes of government meeting, 14 April 1944.

<sup>1119</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II, box 183, minutes of government meeting, 5 April 1944, remarks by Ripka. The Minister complained about responses to his address (broadcast?) where he mentioned that the Jews would receive compensation and the government would not recognise anti-Jewish laws introduced by Germans.

<sup>1120</sup> Jančík, Drahomír – Kubů, Eduard – Kuklík ml., Jan, “*Arizace“ a restituce židovského majetku v českých zemích (1939-2000)*”, (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 2003), p. 46. It might be noted that both these ministers escaped from Czech/Slovakia only several months after the occupation and proclamation of the Slovak independence.

<sup>1121</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II, box 183, minutes of government meeting, 5 April 1944.

<sup>1122</sup> Jančík, Drahomír – Kubů, Eduard – Kuklík ml., Jan, “*Arizace“ a restituce židovského majetku v českých zemích (1939-2000)*”, p. 46.

<sup>1123</sup> AÚTGM, EB – II, box 183, minutes of government meeting, 5 April 1944.

An identical development can be documented in the case of the Communists. Although in December 1943 Gottwald promised restitution of Jewish property (of course still in the line with the Communists plans for nationalization of big businesses), the Slovak Communists had other intentions.<sup>1124</sup> The Slovak resistance was, according to Novomeský, persuaded of the impossibility of the complete restitution of the Jewish pre-war position. It was, moreover, argued that to accept these plans served the interests of the Jews.

The delegation of the underground Slovak National Council, visiting London in October 1944, ruled out complete restitution.<sup>1125</sup> It was later moderated by one of the members of the delegation, Ján Ursíny, an Agrarian politician, during his meeting with Frischer.<sup>1126</sup> Ursíny stressed that in cases where small areas of agricultural land were transferred to Slovaks, compensation *would* be offered to the affected Jews. Frischer and the National-Jewish Council were not, however, entirely persuaded of the sincerity of his words.<sup>1127</sup>

Their concerns proved to be correct after the liberation of Czechoslovakia. Restitution in Slovakia was one of the ‘Jewish themes’ that became part of the main political struggle. During the war, Beneš and the exile government repeatedly stressed that a final settlement in the post-war Republic would be decided by people at home.<sup>1128</sup> Indeed, the will of the people was to play an important role in hindering the full restitution of Jewish property in Slovakia. A discussion about the restitution decree took place during a government meeting in liberated Czechoslovakia in May 1945.<sup>1129</sup> The Minister of Justice, Jaroslav Stránský, defended the section of the proposed decree cancelling all transfers of property made under duress. He highlighted the international significance of the law and argued that especially

<sup>1124</sup> CNA, Zahraniční vedení KSČ v Moskvě, 1938-1945, box 2, file 12, Gottwald to the Czechoslovak Communists in London, 21 December 1943. All the property with value less than 500,000 pre-Munich Czech Crowns was to be returned to pre-war owners.

<sup>1125</sup> Prečan, Vilém, ‘Delegace Slovenské národní rady v Londýně’, pp. 221-223.

<sup>1126</sup> CZA, A280/25, Imrich Rosenber’s report of meeting between Frischer and Ursíny, 23 October 1944.

<sup>1127</sup> *Ibid.*; CZA, A280/5, minutes of National-Council meeting, 2 November 1944. Zelmanovits reported about the State Council meeting, where the delegation of the Slovak National Council repeatedly accused Jews of cowardice, black-marketeering and also that they avoided cooperation with population on reconstruction of Slovakia. Zelmanovits condemned Frischer for not responding to these accusations. Consequently, Zelmanovits met with Ursíny who tried to ‘water down’ his previous accusations.

<sup>1128</sup> Beneš, Edvard, ‘Czechoslovakia Plans for Peace’, in *Foreign Affairs*, XXIII, vol. 1, 1944-1945 (October 1944), p. 35.

<sup>1129</sup> Minutes of government meeting, Prague, 17 May 1945, in Jech, Karel – Kaplan, Karel (eds.), *Dekrety Prezidenta republiky. Dokumenty. Druhé vydání*, pp. 230-235.

‘influential Jewish groups’ in the United States and Britain were following developments.<sup>1130</sup> Slovak ministers – on behalf of the SNC – defended the postponement of the implementation of the restitution decree in Slovakia. The Minister of Finance, Vavro Šrobár, a follower of the Slovak democratic stream, pointed out that the Slovak population opposed the restitution of property to Jews who had not declared Slovak nationality before the war.<sup>1131</sup> The defence of Slovak national interest was used against the wholesale restitution of aryanized property. Its opponents were, in the end, successful in postponing the decree coming into effect in Slovakia. The decree was issued with immediate effect only for Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>1132</sup>

Jewish property played the main role in another clash with Czech and Slovak nationalisms encountered by the Jewish leadership. Approximately 140,000 Czech, Austrian, Danish, Dutch, German, Polish and Slovak Jews were between 1941 and 1945 confined for some time in the Theresienstadt ghetto. They left behind considerable assets. Very often none of the legal heirs survived the Nazi extermination campaign. Heirless aryanized Jewish property and assets left behind in Theresienstadt constituted an important potential source for the rebuilding of the Jewish community in Czechoslovakia. Frischer claimed during the war: ‘It will be up to us then, to insist that such property be handed over to the entire Jewish community as such. Out of the funds the Jewish community will rebuild its synagogues, its social and administrative buildings.’<sup>1133</sup> Pro-Jewish activists considered it natural that heirless Jewish property would be given to the community in order to help it to re-establish Jewish life in Czechoslovakia.<sup>1134</sup> In fact, they received Masaryk’s support, when the Minister, whilst at the founding UN conference in San Francisco, made the following *personal* declaration:

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<sup>1130</sup> *Ibid.*, p.232-3.

<sup>1131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1132</sup> Jech, Karel – Kaplan, Karel (eds.), *Dekrety Prezidenta republiky. Dokumenty. Druhé vydání*, pp. 216-36, doc. 12. *Decree of the President of the Republic no. 5/1945Sb. of 19 May 1945 concerning the invalidity of some transactions involving property rights from the time of lack of freedom and concerning the National Administration of property assets of Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators and of certain organizations and associations*. See also Bumová, Ivica, ‘Protížidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v historickom kontexte (August 1946)’, p. 15. The decree for Slovakia was to ‘take into account’ the specific situation in Slovakia.

<sup>1133</sup> *Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak Jews, addresses delivered at the meeting of the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee*, p. 29.

<sup>1134</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, C119/3, Riegner to Zelmanovits, 28 May 1945.

Many of [the Jews] have left property and no heirs. This property naturally would be taken over by the respective governments of the countries, the citizens of which these unfortunates were. It has occurred to me that a large part of this should be made available for help and reconstruction activities in favor of the surviving Jewish sufferers.<sup>1135</sup>

Masaryk at the same time emphasised that he made the statement without any consultation with the Czechoslovak government.<sup>1136</sup> The following affair that developed concerning the heirless property documented that Masaryk had only limited power in shaping the government's policy. The Minister of Social Welfare, Jozef Šoltéz, intended to use the Jewish property left behind in Terezín, amounting to one billion Czech crowns, for general rehabilitation purposes.<sup>1137</sup> Nevertheless, the WJC noted that such property did not belong only to the Czechoslovak Jews. Property left behind by deportees from Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and elsewhere was found in Terezín after the war.<sup>1138</sup> Yet a significant part of the Czechoslovak government considered the assets as belonging to the state and wanted to use them for the reconstruction of the Republic.<sup>1139</sup> It was in the interest of the Czech and Slovak nations that the money be used for general purposes. Jewish claims, perceived as particularistic, were met with disapproval.<sup>1140</sup>

During the complicated development of the restitution process, Jewish themes entered mainstream politics. This was especially the case with Slovakia. The former

<sup>1135</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, I18/7, *Information Bulletin of the World Jewish Congress. Reports on the World Jewish situation*, p. 4. Report about a meeting between Nahum Goldmann and Jan Masaryk in San Francisco.

<sup>1136</sup> *Ibid.* Masaryk was to say: “I speak for myself, not having had an opportunity to discussing thoughts on this subject with my government”.

<sup>1137</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Nahum Goldmann to the US Ambassador in Prague, Laurence A. Steinhardt, 26 August 1945.

<sup>1138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1139</sup> Beneš, Edvard, ‘Postwar Czechoslovakia’, in *Foreign Affairs*, XXIV, 1945-1946, p. 408. Beneš wrote in 1945: ‘There are instances in which great properties had been stolen from Jews, who afterwards were killed or perished without leaving any heirs. And there were many other similar cases. It was impossible to return this sort of property in the ownership of the state, even though it was decided that it would be administered in accordance with the principles of private enterprise.’ See also: AJA, WJC Papers, H101/8, ‘The Terezin fund’ by Jan Bečko, 6 October 1945; *Ibid.*, H322/7, Kubowitzki to Riegner, 29 January 1946. ‘The rededication of Czechoslovakia to the humanitarian ideals of T. G. Masaryk which Minister Bečko mentions does not exclude the fact that he maintains that the remaining property in Terezin will be confiscated by the Government for the purpose of rehabilitating the Jews in Czechoslovakia only [there were also Jews from Austria, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland etc. in Theresienstadt – J. L.], and that non-Jews will be considered after they have made their choice.’

<sup>1140</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Stephen S. Wise to Lawrence Steinhardt, 14 June 1945; Goldmann to Steinhardt, 26 August 1945; Library of Congress Manuscript Division (LOC), Lawrence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 83, Steinhardt to Goldmann 17 September 1945; *Ibid.*, Steinhardt to Masaryk 17 September 1945; Wehle, Kurt, ‘The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: 1945-1948’, in Avigdor Dagan (ed.), *The Jews of Czechoslovakia. Historical Studies and Surveys. Volume III*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), p. 520.

supporters of the Slovak Tiso regime and also people who profited from *aryanization* became important players in the political struggle.<sup>1141</sup> They constituted a source of political support in the elections. Besides the Democratic Party, which offered shelter to the supporters of the war-time regime, the Slovak Communist Party reached the conclusion that overt support for Jewish claims did not serve their own political objectives. Several CPC members advised that the party should be cautious in considering the fight against anti-Semitism and for the restitution of Jewish property. CPC chairman Gottwald, for example, allegedly warned Gustav Husák, the leading Slovak Communist that the number of new Jewish members of the Party should be limited.<sup>1142</sup> In addition, the Slovak Communist newspaper, *Pravda*, announced in February 1945 that there was no intention of returning all the Jewish property to its pre-war owners.<sup>1143</sup>

A big debate about anti-Semitism in Slovakia took place during the first post-war meeting of the Central Committee of the CPC in July 1945. Karol Šmidke and Eduard Friš, both from Slovakia, suggested that many low-ranking Communist officials in National Committees shared anti-Semitic sentiments.<sup>1144</sup> As explained by Friš, the sentiments were caused by the specific situation in Slovakia, with a large part of the Jewish population still expressing their pro-Hungarian sentiments.<sup>1145</sup> Jews were, furthermore, allegedly ‘unduly sensitive’ and wanted all problems, including restitution of their property, to be solved immediately.<sup>1146</sup> Other members of the Party, especially Anežka Hodinová-Spurná and Široký, the Deputy Prime Minister, criticized the Slovak Communists. Hodinová-Spurná claimed that the problem was not the Jews, but the absence of laws.<sup>1147</sup> In fact, it was the anti-Jewish riots that took place in Slovakia in the autumn of 1945 which prompted the

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<sup>1141</sup> Bumová, Ivica, ‘Protižidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v historickom kontexte (August 1946), p. 16f.

<sup>1142</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia and the Communists, 1918-1948* (Boulder, CO: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 109.

<sup>1143</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, ‘The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-48)’, p. 195.

<sup>1144</sup> Prečan, Vilém, ‘Záznam o zasedání Ústředního Výboru KSČ 17. a 18. července 1945’, in *Česko-Slovenská historická ročenka*, 1997, (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 1997), p. 230.

<sup>1145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>1146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>1147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

government to demand the implementation of the restitution law in Slovakia. Široký overtly supported these efforts.<sup>1148</sup>

Yet the implementation of the law was again postponed.<sup>1149</sup> Several months later, Samuel L. Sharp, the WJC representative in post-war Czechoslovakia, met Husák, who had become the head of the Committee of Commissioners, the Slovak semi-government. Sharp described the meeting as follows:

This Communist leader is known to belong to the wing of the party which believes that communists cannot risk their popularity by fighting the deeply seated feelings of the population. He told me that anti-Semitism in Slovakia is not seven but seven hundred years old, that the Jews are impatient and 'make a noise' when their demands are not satisfied [a] hundred percent. [...] [He] stated that one cannot remove the Partisans who were appointed trustees of Jewish enterprises and property before new jobs are found for them.<sup>1150</sup>

The main topic of Sharp's discussion with Husák was the anti-Jewish riots in Bratislava accompanying the meeting of Slovak partisans in August 1946.<sup>1151</sup> The source of the disturbances is still unclear. Jelínek asked whether the Communists had helped to initiate the pogroms. The Communist intention might have been to revive concerns about the surviving fascist tendencies in Slovakia. Consequently, they might attack their main opponent, the Democratic Party, who scored a crushing victory in 1946 elections in Slovakia.<sup>1152</sup> As argued by historians, the Slovak Communists' behaviour towards Jews was influenced by opportunism. They supported Jewish claims only in the cases that promised benefit for Communist

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<sup>1148</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.), *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 2, p. 26. Minutes of government meeting, 2 October 1945.

<sup>1149</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H99/17, Hugo Perutz to Nehemiah Robinson, 9 January 1946.

<sup>1150</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H97/12, Samuel L. Sharp to Kubowitzki, 30 August 1946.

<sup>1151</sup> About the riots see: Bumová, Ivica, 'Protizidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v historickom kontexte (August 1946)', pp. 14-29; Bulínová, Marie (ed.), *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 6, pp. 35-38, Report from the regional head of the State police on anti-Jewish riots in Slovakia, 1-4 August 1946 and on the adopting of security measures; LOC, Lawrence Steinhart Papers, box 50, Emil Havas to Lawrence Steinhart, 7 August 1946; SNA, Poverenictvo vnútra – bezpečnosť, box 498, Hlavné veliteľstvo národnej bezpečnosti to Podriazené útvary NB, 6 September 1946.

<sup>1152</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-48)', p. 198; 'Zachráň sa, kto môžeš. Židia na Slovensku v rokoch 1944-1950: poznámky a úvahy', in *Acta Judaica Slovaca* 4 (Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 1998), p. 98. As suggested by Jelínek, Communists might have intended to document that the Democrats' commissioners were unable to maintain public order in Slovakia and their power should be limited.

political objectives.<sup>1153</sup> At the same time, when support of popular anti-Semitism promised public sympathy, local Communist leaders joined the ranks of the former supporters of the authoritarian Slovak Republic. Sharp's notes of the meeting with Husák confirm this conclusion.

Bohemia and Moravia were not spared anti-Jewish disturbances caused by the political struggle either. In February 1946, the Communist Minister of the Interior, Václav Nosek, accused in a public speech the Jews of the pre-war Germanization of Brno, the largest city in Moravia. He labelled them as Germans who were later 'partially persecuted' because of their Jewish origin.<sup>1154</sup> Moreover, in March 1947, newspapers in Czechoslovakia published a speech by Kopecký, the Communist Minister of Information. It addressed the issue of Jewish refugees from Subcarpathian Ruthenia, now living in Czechoslovakia.<sup>1155</sup> In an address to factory workers, Kopecký joined the ranks of the most vicious post-war anti-Semites:

The bearded Solomons who are running away from Sub-Carpathian Russia from the Socialist Regime [...] They did not come alone, but with all their relatives up to the tenth degree (these words were pronounced with a special accent, and were frantically applauded by the audience) [...]. This Jewish scum [...] The new white guardists [...] many of them pushed themselves into the Army after the Red Army had decided already the war [...] I recognise only Czech and Slovak nationality but not a Jewish one.<sup>1156</sup>

This report of the speech confirmed that Kopecký's remark found fertile ground among the factory workers. This was perhaps the reason why Kopecký chose those particular words.

This event coincided with another affair that developed in relation to the restitution of the Jewish property. In March 1947, Emil Beer, the lawful owner of a textile factory in Varnsdorf, Northern Bohemia, was denied entry to his property by factory workers. They did not allow him to take over the property despite the decision of the district court, which confirmed Beer as the lawful owner of the

<sup>1153</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu, 'The Communist Party of Slovakia and the Jews: Ten Years (1938-48)', p. 198f.; 'Zachráň sa, kto môžeš. Židia na Slovensku v rokoch 1944-1950: poznámky a úvahy', p. 98. Jelinek notes that Communists distributed Jewish property among former partisans.

<sup>1154</sup> Brügel, Johann Wolfgang, 'Die KPČ und die Judenfrage', in *Osteuropa*, vol. 11/1973, p. 875.

<sup>1155</sup> Bednářík, Petr, *Vztah židů a české společnosti na stránkách českého tisku v letech 1945-1948*, pp. 91-95.

<sup>1156</sup> His speech was reported by the WJC representatives to the Czechoslovak Embassy in London, see: USHMMA, C2/1067, Easterman to J. Císař, Minister Plenipotentiary, Czechoslovak Embassy in London, 31 March 1947.

factory.<sup>1157</sup> The workers' committee in cooperation with the district committee of the CPC initiated a public campaign against Beer and went on strike.<sup>1158</sup> They were supported by the powerful Central Council of Trade Unions, likewise linked with the Communists.<sup>1159</sup> Beer was accused of supporting Germanization before the war and was labelled as an 'asocial' element. In fact, Beer had attended Czech schools, supported Czech national organizations and declared Jewish nationality. He spent the war in England and supported the Czechoslovak exiles.<sup>1160</sup>

The non-Communist parties of the National Front protested against the Communist-initiated affair, which was later discussed in the parliament.<sup>1161</sup> Yet the Communists and the trade unions were in the end successful in preventing Beer's claims.<sup>1162</sup> The basis of the Communist fight against Beer was not his Jewish origin; it was just another part of their struggle for the new social order in Czechoslovakia. But, what is more significant, the Communists, as documented through Nosek, Kopecký and the Varnsdorf Affair, did not refrain from using anti-Semitic discourse in order to gain political points.<sup>1163</sup> The existing historiography suggests that the Varnsdorf affair demonstrated the politicization of the restitution of the Jewish property.<sup>1164</sup> Czech and Slovak nationalisms, and their misuse and utilization in the political struggle, thus constituted the main factors that influenced the position of the Jews after the war.

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<sup>1157</sup> Sedlák, Petr, *Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)*, pp. 122-29.

<sup>1158</sup> Kubů, Eduard – Kulík jr, Jan, 'Ungewollte Restitution. Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in den böhmischen Ländern nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', in Constantin Goschler – Phillip Ther, *Raub und Restitution. "Arisierung" und Rückerstattung des jüdischen Eigentums in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003), p. 194.

<sup>1159</sup> CNA, 100/35, Antonín Zápotocký Papers, folder 7:332, a radio address by Zápotocký, the head of the Central Council of the Trade Unions (*Ústřední rada odborů*), 12 March 1947, 'About the new order of law'. *Ibid.*, folder 7:333, address by Zápotocký at the board of the Central Council of the Trade Unions, 14 March 1947.

<sup>1160</sup> Kubů, Eduard – Kulík jr, Jan, 'Ungewollte Restitution. Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in den böhmischen Ländern nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', pp. 184-204.

<sup>1161</sup> Sedlák, Petr, *Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)*, pp. 129, 229-237, 274-287.

<sup>1162</sup> Kubů, Eduard – Kulík jr, Jan, 'Ungewollte Restitution. Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in den böhmischen Ländern nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', p. 295.

<sup>1163</sup> Meyer, Peter et al, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, p. 87; Sedlák, Petr, *Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)*, p. 233; see also Brügel, Johann Wolfgang, *Češi a Němci 1939-1946*, pp. 201-203.

<sup>1164</sup> Kubů, Eduard – Kuklík, Jan ml., 'Ungewollte Restitution. Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in den böhmischen Ländern nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', p. 195.

## Conclusion

Almost none of the main points in Frischer's Memorial Treatise were successfully implemented. The demands presented by the Jewish member of the Czechoslovak State Council faced substantial obstacles from the side of the Czechoslovak authorities. Minority rights in Czechoslovakia were not renewed and the Jews did not receive any special protection.<sup>1165</sup> As argued in the proposed, but not published, constitutional decree of the President 'about the partial solution of the Jewish question' no special status for Jews was necessary.<sup>1166</sup> First, its authors suggested that even minority protection of Jews did not hinder their destruction by the Nazis. Moreover, they claimed, Czechs and Slovaks always treated Jews decently. Second, there were not enough Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia, especially when Subcarpathian Ruthenia ceased to be part of the Republic. Third, even more important was that the young Jewish generation allegedly adhered to Czech culture. They no longer belonged to the German cultural milieu and a special, 'artificial' category of Jewish nationality was not necessary to weaken the German nationality. Indeed, as argued by the authors of the decree, the majority of Jews expressed willingness to assimilate, for example, when they joined the Czechoslovak army abroad and fought against Germany.<sup>1167</sup> This last argument was entirely flawed, because many Zionists fought in the Czechoslovak army during the war. Yet it documented the thinking of Czechoslovak nationalists who argued against the special minority status of the Jews. As they concluded, the recognition of 'an abstract Jewish minority' would break the fundamental principle of the nation state.<sup>1168</sup>

Jews coming back to Czechoslovakia faced many obstacles before they could re-join society. It was their personal decision whether they wanted to stay in the place of Nazi terror, the place of trauma. However, it also depended on their willingness to accept purely Czech or Slovak nationality, to assimilate into the Czech and Slovak nations. Yet even Jewish willingness to assimilate was not sufficient. A person of Jewish origin, who wanted to stay in Czechoslovakia, was supposed to

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<sup>1165</sup> Jan Masaryk allegedly remarked that had the government tried to renew the minority treaties, population in Czechoslovakia would have forced it to step down. Barnovský, Michal, 'Sovietsky zväz, komunisti a riešenie maďarskej otázky na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-1950' in Zdeněk Kárník – Michal Kopeček (eds.), *Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu III*, (Praha: Dokořán, 2003), p. 162.

<sup>1166</sup> AKPR, D11484/47, A synopsis of the Constitutional decree of the President about the partial solution of the Jewish question.

<sup>1167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1168</sup> *Ibid.*

fulfil one main precondition. They had to prove their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state prior to the war. If they had declared German, Hungarian, or in some cases Jewish nationality, their citizenship might be in peril. Furthermore, if Jews kept using German or Hungarian as a means of communication, it could easily serve as a proof of their disloyalty.<sup>1169</sup> Only a correct ‘nationality’ and ‘behaviour’ could lead to citizenship. This radical Czech nationalism, even chauvinism, was partly a genuine expression of the experience of the German occupation. All the main branches of the Czechoslovak resistance movement agreed on this solution.

Nevertheless, the defence of the Czech and Slovak nations in many cases served only as a disguise for material claims against Jewish survivors. Indeed, restitution of Jewish property became the cornerstone of Jewish reintegration into Czech and Slovak society. This continuity in the development is crucial for an assessment of the exiles’ attitude towards the Jewish position in post-war Czechoslovakia. As proved by negotiations conducted already in London, the exiles could not be exculpated from developments in post-war Czechoslovakia. Controversial and often unclear laws were prepared in London and Moscow, and in cooperation with underground groups, particularly from Slovakia. The disunity of various Jewish groups – and the exiles were well informed about such tensions – made the situation for the government easier.<sup>1170</sup>

Slovakia needs to be singled out as a special case. The development after the Slovak National uprising and in the first post-war years was separate from the historical lands. The central government, even if willing, was not capable of enforcing full restitution of Jewish property. Neither of the main political parties in Slovakia was willing to challenge the prevailing anti-Jewish sentiments. The utilization of Czech and Slovak anti-Jewish sentiments in the political struggle was evident.

Radical Czech and Slovak national sentiments fundamentally shaped Czechoslovaks’ attitude towards the Jews. Homogeneous Czechoslovakia, still considered as a democratic country, did not want to have minorities any more. The Jews’ particularistic demands were perceived as not being in the interest of post-war Czechoslovakia. There was, however, another factor that might have significantly

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<sup>1169</sup> CZA, Z5/1156, L. B. [? Probably from the Jewish Agency] about his conversation with Bartley Crum. ‘God help you if you talk German in the streets’.

<sup>1170</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-46-7-16, Ducháček for Ripka, 1 December 1944.

shaped the development in the country. Czechoslovakia was very eager to maintain the image of a democratic country. Nevertheless, developments after the war threatened to damage this notion and the ‘myth’ of the Masaryk Republic. Negative publicity abroad and the interventions of international Jewish organizations might have influenced the situation in the country. The Czechoslovak authorities had to take this danger of losing their reputation into account.



## CHAPTER 5: DEFENDING THE ‘DEMOCRATIC MYTH’: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF CZECHOSLOVAK-JEWISH RELATIONS IN THE 1940S

*It is also felt that we should investigate the possibilities of launching a series of articles in the press concerning the situation of the Jews in Czechoslovakia.*

The WJC Office Committee, 3 May 1946<sup>1171</sup>

*[O]ur president Dr. Edward Benes, [...] is perhaps one of the greatest friends the Jews have.*

Juraj Slávik, 30 March 1947<sup>1172</sup>

### ***Introduction***

The previous chapters presented a comprehensive evaluation of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations, focusing on the Czechoslovak exiles and the immediate post-war years in liberated Czechoslovakia. They documented the impact of Czech and Slovak nationalisms on Czechoslovak-Jewish relations and the Czechs’ and Slovaks’ perception of the Jews as such. The examination of the topic illustrated that the suppression of Jewish issues during the war was not intended to harm the Jews. The Czechoslovaks regarded change in the internal composition of the Republic and securing the existence of the post-war state as the highest priorities. The Jews were regularly seen as an obstacle in this struggle. Only the Jews’ unconditional cooperation in the resistance movement and in the life of the Czech-Slovak *national* community was therefore accepted as an assurance for their post-war presence in the nationally Slavonic Czech-Slovak state. Furthermore, the government in liberated Czechoslovakia was too weak to prevent the misuse of laws by individuals for their own material purposes. Some political parties also utilised anti-Jewish discourse to score points in political struggles. There was, nonetheless,

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<sup>1171</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H99/17, Office Committee meeting, 3 May 1946.

<sup>1172</sup> Yeshiva University Archives, New York (YUA), Vaad Hatzala Papers, 22/16, the speech of Dr. Juraj Slavik, Czechoslovak Ambassador to the US, Station WEVD, 30 March 1947, 1.30pm.

another part of the story that was to threaten the Czechoslovaks' intention to solve what they perceived as the 'Jewish problem' in Czechoslovakia once and for all. The Czechoslovaks' effort to completely change the national structure of Czechoslovakia and their attempt to present the whole process as a deed committed by a democratic society was not entirely successful.

This chapter seeks to explain another dimension of the Czechoslovak governments' treatment of the Jewish issues during and after the war. The frequently presented, praised, utilised and defended 'myth' of the exceptionality of Czechoslovak democracy was on trial during the post-war years. The Czechoslovaks' adherence to democracy was indeed one of the main cornerstones in the Czechoslovak struggle for the reestablishment of the Republic. Yet the homogenization of the Czechoslovak national community, problems with the citizenship of Jewish survivors, the maltreatment of the German-speaking Jews, problems with the restitution of Jewish property, surviving anti-Jewish sentiments in the country and even overt hostility from the Slovak population towards returning Jews perilously challenged the Czechoslovaks' image abroad.

The chapter will not present a comprehensive description of the development in post-war Czechoslovakia that was broadly outlined in the last chapter. Furthermore, contemporary historiography already offers studies that explore the situation of Jews in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1948 from various points of view.<sup>1173</sup> Instead, the intention here is to follow the scheme presented in the previous chapters and to document continuity in the historical development of Czechoslovak-Jewish relations in the international arena. As in the previous chapters, the *perception* of the mutual partners rather than the reality will be the main theme of the discussion.

The chapter starts with the examination of the response of American Jewish organizations to developments in post-war Czechoslovakia. American Jewish groups were the most eloquent and allegedly the most influential among international Jewish organizations and deserve special attention. The chapter aims to illustrate that there was indeed a change in their perception of the Czechoslovak democracy in

<sup>1173</sup> Brod, Petr, 'Židé v poválečném Československu', pp. 177-189; Hanková, Monika, *Kapitoly z poválečných dějin židovské komunity v Čechách a na Moravě (1945-1956)*; Kratochvíl, Michaela, *The Jewish Aspects of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile: Minority Policy During 1939-1948*; Meyer, Peter et al, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*; Novotná, Hedvika, *Soužití české společnosti a Židů v letech 1945-1948 ve světle různých pramenů*; Sedlák, Petr, *Poté. Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)*.

relation to its treatment of the remaining Jews. The next section suggests that the critics of the Czechoslovaks' treatment of the Jews received support in the western press. Yet Czechoslovakia could also rely on a mighty ally that shaped the attitude of the pro-Jewish activists in the west towards Czechoslovakia. The pro-Jewish activists realised that total alienation of the Czechoslovak authorities was not in their own interest. In several instances the Czechoslovak Republic provided important help for Zionist politicians. Additionally, the situation in the broader region played into the Czechoslovak hands. The last section of the chapter examines whether the Jewish groups were indeed able to secure any help against Czechoslovakia among the western democracies. It evaluates the perception of the Czechoslovaks' treatment of the Jews by the American and British governments. Was the pro-Jewish lobby really as influential as was widely believed?

### ***The WJC and the Czechoslovak treatment of the Jews***

The appointment of the Zionist Frischer to the exile parliament fuelled the expectations of international Zionist organizations for a renewal of the Jewish minority status in post-war Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, another Zionist, Imrich Rosenberg, was appointed the Jewish member of the Czechoslovak delegation to the liberated territories in late 1944.<sup>1174</sup> However, as documented, the Czechoslovak government had never really left their projected vision of post-war Czechoslovakia as a nationally purely Slavonic state. The partial concession of Beneš concerning the Jewish member of the parliament was influenced by the perceived influence of the world Zionist (especially American) organizations and by the reports in the American press. At the time, when his diplomatic position was not completely secure, Beneš did not want to risk complications in relations with the 'influential' western Jewish organizations.

The WJC tried to negotiate minority rights for Jews in Czechoslovakia for the rest of the war. Yet it became apparent that the Czechoslovak exiles did not want to grant them to anybody. This point was repeatedly stressed during Beneš's, Ripka's, or Masaryk's negotiations with Jewish groups between 1943 and 1945. Consequently in 1945, in a memorandum for the first, founding conference of the United Nations in

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<sup>1174</sup> CZA, A280/5, minutes of the National-Jewish Council, 2 November 1944; LAC, MG 31, H 158, Yitzhak Rosenberg, 'Benes and the political rights of the Jewish minority during World War II (the inside story)', p. 23 (unpublished article); Rosenberg, Yitzhak Imrich - Goldman, Corey, *A Jew in Deed* (Ontario: Penumbra Press, 2004).

San Francisco, the WJC did not mention the claim for minority rights for Jews in Europe. They did not want to cause a conflict with some of those countries concerned, namely with Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.<sup>1175</sup>

Despite that, the WJC did not want to leave Czechoslovakia's changed attitude towards the Jews as a minority without protest. First of all, the American and British Zionists advised Czechoslovak national Jews not to resign on the minority status openly.<sup>1176</sup> They did not want the Jews actively to accept the loss of their minority status, rather to allow the rights to be taken from them by the authorities. Secondly, in July 1945, Perlzweig – the most eloquent among the WJC representatives – summarized the attitude of his organization towards the new Czechoslovak minority policy in a memorandum for Masaryk. It was more a political statement by the WJC than an attempt to change the progress of events. The representatives of the WJC had been informed about the Czechoslovak new minority conception long before:

Considerable disquiet has been caused throughout the Jewish world and particularly in the United States and Great Britain, by statements reported to have been made by Czechoslovak officials on the future status of the Jews in that country. These reports, which come from many sources, suggest that Czechoslovak Jews will in future be presented with the alternative either of emigrating to Palestine or of becoming totally identified spiritually and culturally, as well as politically, with one or the other of the nationalities which now make up the Czechoslovak population.

Since the tragic events of the past few years have resulted in the annihilation of by far the greater part of the Jewish community, it is clear that the surviving Jews must in any case have a hard struggle to maintain their ethnic, religious and cultural identity. The task would become impossible in the teeth of a government policy aimed at the destruction of their distinctive way of life. Accordingly, the World Jewish Congress

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<sup>1175</sup> AJA, WJC-Papers, A72/2, Meeting of the WJC Office Committee, 7 June 1945.

<sup>1176</sup> UHA, Dr Vojtech Winterstein Collection, W.4/5, Report about the trip to the London European Conference of the World Jewish Congress in August 1945, prepared by Winterstein. During a meeting with other delegates (Goldmann, Barou, Mrs. Sief, Tartakower, Kubowitzki, Zuckermann, Zelmanovits, Oskar Neumann, and Stephen Barber), Winterstein was advised not to resign on the minority rights. After his return to Czechoslovakia, Winterstein consulted the following policy towards the Czechoslovak authorities with Frischer. Frischer had already prepared a letter for the Minister of the Interior, Nosek, where he informed him that the Czechoslovak Jewry resigned on minority rights. Consequently Frischer and Winterstein changed the content of the letter and did not mention the resignation. The leadership of the Slovak Zionists had discussed the issue in May 1945 and concluded that they could not claim the minority rights any more. They argued that the Jewry had to respect the political *status quo* in post-war Czechoslovakia that became a nation state of Czechs and Slovaks. See ABS, 425-226-2, Minutes of the meeting of the Central Zionist Union in Slovakia, 29 and 30 May 1945. Winterstein chaired the meeting.

begs you to endeavor to secure a reexamination of government policies in relations to the Jews.

[...]

The World Jewish Congress ventures to urge that members of the Jewish community, whose loyalty has never been in doubt, should retain the right in some appropriate form of registering as Jews, irrespective of the language of their education and upbringing.<sup>1177</sup>

The tone of his address showed unease with developments in the country. It additionally provided an insight into a totally different perception of Jewish identity in Czechoslovakia. The WJC wanted even those Jews who decided to stay in their countries of origin to retain their Jewish identity. Not all Zionists were allowed to go to Palestine because of the British restrictions on immigration. In relation to Czechoslovakia, the WJC argued as follows:

There is scarcely an active Zionist anywhere who is not now convinced that President Beneš has made up his mind that the price of Czechoslovak citizenship henceforth must be the loss of any real Jewish identity. If this apprehension is mistaken, it ought obviously to be removed by an official statement. Unfortunately, every scrap of information that comes to us from Czechoslovakia tends to confirm it.<sup>1178</sup>

In addition, the WJC had received information about the practical execution of efforts to make Czechoslovakia a purely Slavonic country. First reports about the persecution of the Jews, who in 1930 declared German and Hungarian nationality, reached west. This new national policy in fact contradicted declarations previously delivered by Czechoslovak ministers like, for example, Masaryk.<sup>1179</sup> Reports that even survivors of the concentration camps and returning soldiers might face persecution, or at least obstacles in their life, were, it was suggested, causing considerable disquiet among Jews in America:

While it is recognized that injustices may occur during a period of revolutionary change, we find it difficult to believe that the Czechoslovak Government would wish to tolerate so gross and macabre an injustice as to punish Jewish survivors of Nazi concentration camps for Nazi crimes

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<sup>1177</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to Masaryk, 12 July 1945.

<sup>1178</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to Masaryk, 12 July 1945.

<sup>1179</sup> See the part discussing Masaryk's correspondence with Max Weinreich of the YIVO in Chapter 4. The British magazine *Time and Tide* published on 3 November 1945 an article based on a letter sent from Czechoslovakia by a Czechoslovak Jews. The author complained about the maltreatment of Jews in Czechoslovakia and reminded the Czechoslovak authorities about the assurances given by Masaryk to Weinreich in 1942. See ABS, 425-233-2, a copy of the article from *Time and Tide*, 3 November 1945.

or to brand Jewish soldiers who have honorably worn Czech uniforms as traitors.<sup>1180</sup>

Reports about the new Czechoslovak legislation concerning minorities, nevertheless, soon gave way to coverage of events in Slovakia. Jewish organizations in the west had easy access to information from Czechoslovakia. Several Jewish activists were in the ranks of the Czechoslovak administration, or were attached to Jewish humanitarian organizations, for example the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint). One of the most eloquent activists, Imrich Rosenberg, deserves special mention. He was a war-time member of the Czechoslovak National-Jewish Council and an official of several Czechoslovak ministries.<sup>1181</sup> Rosenberg belonged to the younger generation of Czechoslovak Jewish politicians and also to the more radical wing of the Czechoslovak national Jews represented by Zelmanovits.<sup>1182</sup> As a member of the Czechoslovak government's delegation to the liberated territories, Rosenberg arrived in the Soviet Union in November 1944 and later reached Eastern Slovakia.<sup>1183</sup> He therefore had first hand access to information from the liberated eastern parts of Czechoslovakia.

In comparison with the cautious Frischer, who reached Slovakia only in April 1945, Rosenberg was willing to publicize critical reports about the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia. Of particular importance was that Rosenberg conducted this criticism from his official post as the Deputy Head of the Repatriation Department of the Czechoslovak government. In an interview with the JTA correspondent in Prague, he commented on the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia: 'Jews returning to Czechoslovakia are not being welcomed home with open arms and, in Slovakia particularly, have encountered a great deal of hostility'.<sup>1184</sup> Rosenberg moreover stated that the majority of Jews did not want to stay in Czechoslovakia and that because of the increasing anti-Semitism they desired to emigrate to Palestine.<sup>1185</sup>

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<sup>1180</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to Masaryk, 12 July 1945.

<sup>1181</sup> Láníček, Jan, 'The Czechoslovak Jewish Political Exile in Great Britain during World War Two', pp. 172.

<sup>1182</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177f.

<sup>1183</sup> Rosenberg, Imrich Yitzhak – Goldman, Corey, *A Jew in deed* (Ottawa: Penumbra University Press, 2004), p. 21. For his reports from Moscow and later from the liberated territories see, for example, AMZV, LA – Confidential, 1939-1945, box 190, Foreign Ministry to Zelmanovits, 8 February 1945; CNA, MSP-L, box 58, Foreign Ministry to Frischer, 19 February 1945; AÚTGM, EB-II, box 331, folder 1845, Rosenberg about the situation of Jews in Slovakia, 18 April 1945.

<sup>1184</sup> *Jewish Standard*, 15 June 1945, p. 5, Hostile Reception for Jews in Czechoslovakia.

<sup>1185</sup> *Ibid.*

Although Rosenberg did not criticize the central government, he did not refrain from attacking the Slovak authorities.<sup>1186</sup>

With time, news agencies in the west brought out more reports about the generally hostile environment for the remaining Slovak Jews, including the delayed restitution of Jewish property. As the Overseas News Agency's correspondent reported: 'Hitler's hymn of hate against Jews is being whistled if not loudly sung by people in Slovakia'.<sup>1187</sup> The first information about the physical violence – anti-Jewish riots in Prešov in Eastern Slovakia – also appeared in his report.<sup>1188</sup>



Image no. 13: Congressman Adolph J. Sabath<sup>1189</sup>

The leaders of the WJC came to the conclusion that something had to be done. The WJC was also pressurised by the American Jews whose relatives lived in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, Perlzweig informed the Office Committee of the WJC about his conversation with Congressman Adolph Sabath. During the meeting with Perlzweig, Sabath mentioned that the reports about anti-Semitism in Slovakia moved him to prepare a draft letter for Beneš. Sabath allegedly 'felt very strongly about the whole situation since he considered that he had himself played a decisive part in persuading the late President Wilson to support the establishment of a Czechoslovak

<sup>1186</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, D61/6, *News from Europe issued by National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror*, 12 June 1945. 'Anti-Jewish and anti-Hungarian demonstrations are said to have been held on May 2nd in Slovakia. Some members of the Slovak Government have asserted that they "do not want the return of Jewish capitalists" and the proposed legislation cancelling all anti-Jewish laws, has not yet been passed.'

<sup>1187</sup> AKPR, 624/27, Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Office of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, 22 September 1945. *Overseas News Agency* report from 31 August 1945, Bratislava.

<sup>1188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1189</sup> [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

Republic'.<sup>1190</sup> Sabath was one of the Jewish Congressmen who supported Tomáš G. Masaryk during the First World War.<sup>1191</sup> We do not know whether Sabath proceeded with his intervention. However, had it been sent, it would have constituted a serious attack on the core of Czechoslovak concerns about the political influence of the American Jews.

As it was, Perlzweig, in the name of the WJC, visited the Czechoslovak Consul General in New York, Karol Hudec and sent a letter to Foreign Minister Masaryk.<sup>1192</sup> During these contacts with the Czechoslovak authorities, Perlzweig presented an ambiguous picture of the situation in Czechoslovakia and the role played by the government. During the meeting with Hudec, Perlzweig in fact agreed with the latter's statement about the sources of anti-Semitism in Slovakia. Hudec suggested that the situation in the eastern part of the country was a logical result of war-time propaganda, the role still played by the Catholic Church and the remnants of the previous regime. Perlzweig also included the Soviet Union among the elements spreading anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>1193</sup> The Czechoslovak government was therefore accused of non-action rather than active participation in anti-Jewish measures.<sup>1194</sup>

The discourse used by Perlzweig nevertheless showed that there was a change in the perception of the Czechoslovak democratic image among American Jews. It was indeed a reference to the traditionally friendly Czechoslovaks' attitude towards the Jewish minority that played the main role in the argument presented by Perlzweig. According to him, the WJC did not intend to accuse the Czechoslovak leadership of anti-Semitism. Yet the WJC expected a public declaration that would resolutely condemn the situation in Czechoslovakia, particularly in its eastern parts:

This silence, together with the increasingly serious reports which reach us, has created an atmosphere of acute discomfort. Jewish public opinion is becoming very restive, and we are in no position to answer any of the urgent questions which are being raised.

[...]

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<sup>1190</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, A72/3, Minutes of the Office Committee of the WJC, 2 October 1945.

<sup>1191</sup> Boxerman, Burton A., 'Adolph Joachim Sabath in Congress. The Early Years, 1907-1932', in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1973, Volume 66, no. 3, pp. 327-340; Kisch, Guido, 'Woodrow Wilson and the Independence of Small Nations in Central Europe', in *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 19, no. 3, September 1947, pp. 235-238.

<sup>1192</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/9, Perlzweig to the Office Committee, 25 September 1945.

<sup>1193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1194</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/9, Perlzweig to the Office Committee, 25 September 1945.

I doubt very much whether it is appreciated in Prague how strong the feeling is here. What we are trying to do is to prevent a rise in the temperature of public feeling. We do not want to have public meetings of protest, which some people have already begun to demand, and we are hoping that you [Masaryk] will be able to help us to avoid this tragedy by persuading the government to take a strong and more active line.<sup>1195</sup>

[...]

We are anxious to do whatever we can to reassure Jewish public opinion, but I think it fair to say, though I do so with the greatest reluctance, that expressions of faith in the Czechoslovak tradition are ceasing to carry weight. It is respectfully submitted that it has become urgent for the Czechoslovak Government to take action without avoidable delay if the situation is not to deteriorate still further.<sup>1196</sup>

In this letter, Perlzweig was using the line of argument already familiar from the early war years and was playing on perceived Czechoslovak concerns about possible damage to their positive image in the west. In addition, he emphasised the alleged power of 'Jewish public opinion' in the United States. The WJC considered that the Czechoslovaks' might feel threatened by the danger of public meetings held in America against their country. Furthermore, Perlzweig appealed to the Czechoslovaks by referring to their unique position in East-Central Europe:

It is really a terrible blow to us to have to face the fact that Jews are subjected to physical violence in any part of Czechoslovakia. We might regard it as normal elsewhere, but not there.<sup>1197</sup>

The WJC still regarded the Czechoslovak authorities and, in particular, Masaryk, as sympathetic to Jewish aspirations: '[Y]our record and your name are all the guaranty we need that you will understand our anxieties. But to put it bluntly and personally, there are not to[o] many Masaryks in Czechoslovakia, and certainly not in Slovakia'.<sup>1198</sup> Masaryk was known for his humanitarian attitude towards the Jews and for his public proclamations supporting Jewish demands during the war. We have seen, however, that his powers were rather limited and he was not in a position to influence the government. The WJC therefore in many aspects simply overestimated Masaryk's position and his power to change the progress of events. In contrast, other pro-Jewish activists had no illusions about Masaryk's influence.<sup>1199</sup>

<sup>1195</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to Masaryk, 21 September 1945.

<sup>1196</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, memorandum prepared for Masaryk by Perlzweig, 21 September 1945.

<sup>1197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1198</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to Masaryk, 21 September 1945.

<sup>1199</sup> ABS, 425-231-5, Frischer to Perutz, 16 October 1946.

The change in the WJC's attitude towards the Czechoslovak authorities was finally summarized by Perlzweig to Hudec. The WJC representative called the Czechoslovak Consul's attention to the fact that, '[the WJC] regarded the situation in Czechoslovakia as one of great gravity and that [they] could no longer have faith in the appeals to names and tradition with which [their] complaints had been answered so far'.<sup>1200</sup>

The American Jewish leaders were suddenly willing to challenge the situation in Czechoslovakia in public, in the press, or in contacts with western political representatives. The whole campaign also needs to be seen in conjunction with the Zionists' struggle to open the doors of Palestine for further Jewish immigration. One of their particular goals was to pressurize the British authorities by presenting the situation in continental Europe as impossible for further Jewish residence. Czechoslovakia played the role of the country most sympathetic to the Jews that still was not entirely free from anti-Semitism. Unsurprisingly, the Czechoslovak authorities restlessly followed this development.

September 1945 witnessed the escalation of the American Zionists' campaign against Czechoslovakia. The action of the American Zionist organizations also revealed their actual weakness in confronting Eastern European countries and particularly Czechoslovakia. The American Jewish leaders in fact worsened their own negotiating position with the Czechoslovaks by their lack of caution. In September 1945, Abba Hillel Silver from the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC) and Stephen Wise, of the WJC, sent an open letter to the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee. Based on a JTA report, these two Zionist leaders complained about the situation in Czechoslovakia. The main point of their letter was the statement that around 7,000 concentration camps' survivors, most of them Jews, had been persecuted by the new regime in Czechoslovakia and had consequently committed suicide.<sup>1201</sup> The open letter was originally printed in *The New York Post* on 27 September 1945, but was later published by other American press and various agencies around the World.<sup>1202</sup> For example a Zionist-Revisionist weekly *The Jewish Standard* issued a black framed article reporting '7,000 suicides in Prague'. Based on 'a reliable source', the weekly reported that '[t]he tragic position in which many of

<sup>1200</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perlzweig to the Office Committee, 25 September 1945.

<sup>1201</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Fried and Perutz to Dr. Wise, 1 October 1945.

<sup>1202</sup> *Ibid.*

the people returning from concentration camps [found] themselves [had led] to [these suicides] in Prague since last May'.<sup>1203</sup> Although the Czechoslovak authorities were not directly blamed for these alleged tragedies, the publication of similar articles threatened the good image of Czechoslovakia in the west.

It nevertheless soon became obvious that the report was based on false information and it caused outrage among the Czechoslovak authorities. Wise was immediately informed by the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee in the USA (CJRC) that the statement did not correspond with the facts. The CJRC furthermore added that the statement undoubtedly would negatively affect the public in Czechoslovakia 'and certainly [would] not alleviate the Jewish situation there'.<sup>1204</sup> The CJRC later informed Wise that the Czechoslovak Ambassador Hurban was 'very angry about the matter' and that the Embassy expected to receive an apology from the AZEC.<sup>1205</sup> The whole unfortunate event enabled the Czechoslovak authorities to gain the initiative and to position themselves in the role of victim of false propaganda. It also made any following *official* publicity conducted by the American pro-Jewish activists difficult. The Czechoslovak authorities could always point to the affair and reject on this basis any subsequent criticisms.<sup>1206</sup>

Perlzweig, who prepared Wise's apology to the Czechoslovak Embassy, tried to keep it on a dignified level. He agreed that 'it [was] obvious that a serious error [was] made', and that the WJC had to do what they could 'to repair it if [they were] to maintain decent relations with the Czechoslovak government'.<sup>1207</sup> Wise's letter to the Consul General Hudec tried to explain that the accusation was not made against the Czechoslovak people, but against the situation caused by the enemy occupation. Yet it presented a compassionate apology to the Czechoslovak people.<sup>1208</sup>

The accusation of 7,000 suicides caused serious damage to the WJC efforts to influence events. The leaders of the Jewish organization, despite being disillusioned with the Czechoslovaks' treatment of the remaining Jews, were forced to present an apology that contradicted their inner conviction. The beginning of the affair showed that a change in the perception of the Czechoslovaks as a tolerant nation had indeed

<sup>1203</sup> *Jewish Standard*, 28 September 1945, p. 2. '7,000 Suicides in Prague'.

<sup>1204</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Fried and Perutz to Dr. Wise, 1 October 1945.

<sup>1205</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perutz to Wise, 15 October 1945.

<sup>1206</sup> YIVO Archives, American Jewish Committee, 347.7.1, Foreign Affairs, Hurban to Jacob Blaustein (AJC), 23 January 1946.

<sup>1207</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/9 Perlzweig to Wise, 4 October 1945.

<sup>1208</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/7, Wise to Hudec, 4 October 1945.

occurred. The original letter sent by Silver and Wise would not have been possible before or during the war. Western Jews would not have believed such information before. The apologies provided by Wise could hence be seen as a humiliation of the long-standing Jewish leader. This argument is strengthened further by the fact that the WJC publicized the apology in the press and also by the tone of the apology. *The New York Times* brought to public attention the following quotes from Wise's letter to Hudec:

I accept unreservedly your judgement that this story is not true [...] and I am glad and grateful for many reasons to be able to do so.

As you know, I have for many years given whole-hearted support to the cause of a free and democratic Czechoslovakia and was among the first of those who stood behind the late President Masaryk in his heroic and historic fight for the independence of your country. I am glad to be able to take this opportunity of reaffirming my faith in the great democratic tradition of your country, of which President Beneš has been so distinguished and consistent an exponent.<sup>1209</sup>

The letter by Wise, published in mainstream American press, again revived the Czechoslovak democratic 'myth'. The fading leader of American Jewry had to deliver another apology when an identical letter was demanded by the Czechoslovak Ambassador to the D.C., Vladimír Hurban.<sup>1210</sup> Hurban was uncompromising in his efforts to whitewash the Czechoslovak record. He demanded that the apology had to be published in all the newspapers that previously carried the original report from the *New York Post*. He persisted in his demand even though the WJC did not know about all the newspapers and journals that publicized it.<sup>1211</sup>

Within the WJC, Perlzweig accused Hurban of escalating the whole affair by informing the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry.<sup>1212</sup> A public apology was hence more desirable because of the Foreign Ministry's recent support for the WJC's demands concerning the heirless assets left by Jews in Theresienstadt.<sup>1213</sup> It is worth noting that the apology was made by the WJC, although the author of the original letter probably came from among the more radical and eloquent Silver's group

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<sup>1209</sup> *The New York Times*, 10 October 1945, p. 9. 'Dr. S. S. Wise Regrets Error on Czech Jews'.

<sup>1210</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Perutz to Kubowitzki, 17 October 1945. For the letter by Wise to Hurban see: ABS, 425-230-8, Wise to Hurban, 15 October 1945.

<sup>1211</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/7, Perlzweig to Hurban, 8 November 1945.

<sup>1212</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3 Perlzweig to the Office Committee, 26 November 1945.

<sup>1213</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/17, Perlzweig to Wise, 12 October 1945.

(AZEC).<sup>1214</sup> Although Frischer sent an assurance from Prague that the situation had been settled as well as possible, the whole affair meant that the American Jewish leaders had to act with utmost caution during any of the following interventions.<sup>1215</sup> They realised that the Czechoslovak authorities were easy to alienate, but difficult to appease. Subsequent interventions by the Jewish leaders were through diplomatic channels in order not to cause another rift with the Czechoslovaks.

The maintenance of good relations was perceived as crucial for Jewish interests. But western Jewish leaders received another strong ally in their struggle for the alleviation of the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia – the western press. It was a surprising supporter when taking into account the previously generally positive coverage the Czechoslovaks received in the west. The negative publicity in the press was to remind the Czechoslovak leadership of their previous worries concerning the influential American Jews. Also the progress of the anti-Jewish disturbances in Slovakia reached its climax and the interventions of the Jewish groups could no longer be ignored.

#### *A conspiracy of the press? British and American journalists about the treatment of the Jews in liberated Czechoslovakia*

On 24 September 1945, the Western Slovakian town of Velké Topoľčany witnessed an event that caused many worries for the Czechoslovak government in Prague. A mob, initiated by the people who profited from Jewish property during the war, harassed the remaining Jews in the town, shouted anti-Semitic slogans and ransacked Jewish houses. The violent mob was later joined by a military unit, consisting of 20 soldiers, who were sent to stop the disturbances.<sup>1216</sup> Rumours, such as that a Jewish doctor inoculated Christian children with poison, or that nuns were to be expelled by the Jews from schools, were used as a pretext to trigger the riots.<sup>1217</sup> The pogrom in Topoľčany was only one in a chain of anti-Semitic riots

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<sup>1214</sup> NARA, RG 84, Czechoslovakia – mission to the government-in-exile, box 13, Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, 30 October 1945. Steinhardt rejected the content of the report and noted that also the JTA was now in an uncomfortable situation. The report was prepared based on information from certain Szigaly, JTA correspondent. His Hungarian sounding name might suggest pro-Hungarian bias of this correspondent, but we do not have any proof for this conclusion.

<sup>1215</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/3, Frischer to Perlzweig, 30 October 1945.

<sup>1216</sup> Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Protizidovský pogrom v Topoľčanoch v Septembri 1945’, in *Studia Historica Nitrenia* VIII, 1999, pp. 90f.

<sup>1217</sup> Kamenec, Ivan, ‘Protizidovský pogrom v Topoľčanoch v Septembri 1945’, p. 85.

(although the most important) in post-war Slovakia.<sup>1218</sup> Regional authorities in Slovakia warned the central authorities from the day of liberation that strong anti-Semitic sentiments had survived the fall of the Tiso regime.<sup>1219</sup>

The inevitable negative publicity given to the events in Topoľčany was seen by the central government as threatening Czechoslovakia. This attitude was exposed during the government's meeting following the events. It was Masaryk who brought the topic to the attention of the ministers. He argued that the pogrom would have negative consequences for the Czechoslovak Republic abroad. He was convinced that the notions of the Czechoslovak Republic and of a pogrom were 'completely incompatible'.<sup>1220</sup> Also other ministers, for example Ursíny, Gottwald, and Stránský, agreed that it was impossible to conceal such an incident from the public in the west.<sup>1221</sup> Minister Ripka consequently suggested that it might be efficient to publish a government press release condemning the pogrom and ensuring the world that similar events would not be allowed to take place again.<sup>1222</sup> He argued that the silence from the government might be perceived as its acceptance of anti-Semitic violence in Slovakia. The ministers therefore decided to anticipate the upcoming negative press campaign in the west and to condemn the events of Topoľčany in the strongest words. The condemnation was indeed published and was spread among journalists. It also found its way to the American and British Ambassadors' communications with their headquarters.<sup>1223</sup> Furthermore, Beneš angrily suggested to a Swiss journalist that if Slovaks were not able to solve the problem themselves, he would send the Czech army there to preclude any repetition of such incidents.<sup>1224</sup>

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<sup>1218</sup> See, for example: Šišjaková, Jana, 'Some Problematic Issues of Anti-Semitism in Slovakia during the Years 1945-1948', in *Holocaust as a Historical and Moral Problem of the Past and the Present. Collection of Studies from the Conference* (Bratislava: Dokumentačné stredisko holokaustu, 2008), pp. 410-419; Šmigel', Michal, 'Murders of Jews in Northeastern Slovakia in 1945 – the Kolbasov Tragedy', in *Ibid.*, pp. 420-432; Bumová, Ivica, 'The Jewish Community after 1945 – Struggle for Civic and Social Rehabilitation', in *Ibid.*, pp. 253-278.

<sup>1219</sup> SNA, Povereníctvo vnútra – bezpečnosť, box 483. A report by the headquarters of the National Security, 8 August 1945. Quote is a report by the command of NS from Eastern Slovakia. Or. SNA, Povereníctvo vnútra – bezpečnosť, box 1, Situation report from the Slovak territory, 1 July – 15 August 1945.

<sup>1220</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 2, government meeting 2 October 1945, pp. 17-27, quote from p. 17.

<sup>1221</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>1222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>1223</sup> TNA, FO371/47081, N13748/48/12, Nichols to Bevin, 5 October 1945; NARA, RG 59, SD Files, 860F.4016/10-1945, Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1945.

<sup>1224</sup> Čechurová, Jana – Kuklík, Jan – Čechura, Jaroslav – Němeček, Jan *Válečné deníky Jana Opočenského*, p. 436, diary entry 2 October 1945.

Any negative publicity in the western press was followed with growing suspicion by the Czechoslovak authorities. The press was one of the closest allies of the Czechoslovak cause during the whole war. Liberated Czechoslovakia was a relatively open country where foreign journalists were largely free to move around and to report any event.<sup>1225</sup> The situation in post-war Czechoslovakia received extensive coverage in the west. In fact, it was the only country in the Soviet military sphere which offered such privileges to journalists.<sup>1226</sup> For example, this extensive coverage was the main reason why the initial negative response of British public opinion to the transfer of German minorities from Eastern Europe was directed against Czechoslovakia.<sup>1227</sup>

The Czechoslovak authorities resented the negative publicity which their treatment of the German minority received in the British press. As Ralph Parker of *The Times* wrote to his editor:

a leading article or two in the Manchester Guardian [sic! – a comment by Frank], written by some well-meaning person who has no idea whatsoever of the feeling of the people here can do immense harm to our cause. I don't think that it is always realized at editorial desks, especially those of the Liberal press, how seriously every word they write is read in Central Europe today, and how sensitive people are after six years of German occupation.<sup>1228</sup>

As Matthew Frank commented on the events, 'the Czechs [...] exhibit[ed] an almost pathological sensitivity to any outside criticism of their handling of the German problem'.<sup>1229</sup> How can we view the Czechoslovak response to foreign criticism of their treatment of Jews? In comparison, the Germans really were being expelled from the Republic. The Czechoslovaks were particularly open about the transfer and had foreign approval which they received in Potsdam. The whole transfer was presented as a definitive solution to the impossibility of the coexistence of two nations. The subject of the foreign critique was not the transfer *per se* but the manner in which it was being carried out. Yet the Czechoslovaks were not prepared

<sup>1225</sup> YIVO Archives, American Jewish Committee, 347.7.1, Foreign Affairs, Hurban to Jacob Blaustein (AJC), 23 January 1946.

<sup>1226</sup> Frank, Matthew, *Expelling the Germans. British Opinion and post-1945 Population Transfer in Context*, p. 97.

<sup>1227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1228</sup> Frank, Matthew, *Expelling the Germans. British Opinion and post-1945 Population Transfer in Context*, p. 108. Frank quotes from: NIARO, RBW/1/Barrington Ward RM 1945-1947, Parker to Barrington Ward, 9 July 1945.

<sup>1229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

to admit any officially directed persecution of Jews. Hence their response to the allegations in the American and British press was fierce. At the same time, the Czechoslovak authorities searched for hidden intentions behind these allegations.

The greatest turmoil was caused by the coverage of events in Czechoslovakia by the main American newspapers *The Washington Post*, *The New York Post* and *The New York Times*. *The Washington Post* reported the peculiar situation of Jews in Czechoslovakia on 12 September 1945 even before the pogrom in Topoľčany. Even the title of the editorial, ‘Question For Beneš[š]’, suggested that the journalists intended to present the situation in Czechoslovakia as a deliberate policy targeting the most vulnerable sections of the population. The Czechoslovak President was attacked on the basis of two charges: first, the Czechoslovak expulsion of Sudeten Germans and second, anti-Semitic developments in Slovakia. The author of the article, based on Beneš’s interview given to John MacCormac of the *New York Times*, concluded: ‘[W]hen Czechoslovakia’s President is not vague, he is illiberal.’<sup>1230</sup> According to Joseph G. Harrison of the *Christian Science Manner*, the Hlinka Guard in Slovakia was behaving as if the war had not ended, persecuting minorities, notably Jews and Hungarians. The Jews were, according to Harrison, discriminated against in the distribution of UNRRA relief shipments. The journalists therefore appealed to the Council of Foreign Ministers, a body formed of ministers of the main Allies established in Potsdam that they should ‘call on President Benes at once to arrest the vicious practices which are going on under his nose’.<sup>1231</sup>

Czechoslovak diplomats were caught unprepared by the emerging complications for Czechoslovakia’s image abroad. Ján Papánek, a Czechoslovak diplomat in the USA with close contacts to Beneš, expressed his personal feelings about the development in late August 1945. Puzzled, Papánek acknowledged that the reports coming from Czechoslovakia were not good. Yet he labelled Zionist circles in America, with close ties to Poland and Hungary, as the main initiators of the undesired publicity.<sup>1232</sup> Those circles, he alleged, wanted to cover up the situation in neighbouring countries by focusing the attention of the world on Czechoslovakia.<sup>1233</sup>

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<sup>1230</sup> *The Washington Post*, 12 September 1945, p. 6, ‘Questions for Benes’.

<sup>1231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1232</sup> New York Public Library (NYPL), Jan Papanek Papers, Box 61, Jan Papánek to Beneš, 31 August 1945.

<sup>1233</sup> *Ibid.*

The articles published in the United States tended to accuse the Czechoslovak government of not responding adequately to anti-Semitic developments in Slovakia. These allegations were so strong that the Czechoslovak Ambassador Hurban felt obliged to react. He confirmed that anti-Semitism was to a certain degree acknowledged ‘frankly and honestly’ by Beneš. However, in his explanation of the sentiments prevailing among Slovak society, Hurban returned to the explanation used by the Czechoslovak authorities since the days of Versailles. In his words, ‘[t]he Jews in Slovakia during the Hungarian regime were the privileged class, who served the Magyar oppressors – to oppress the people and exploit them mercilessly’.<sup>1234</sup> According to Hurban, the fact that the Jews remained Hungarian even after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia could not be ‘forgotten so easily by the population’.<sup>1235</sup> Nevertheless, he argued, there were factual reports that documented the Slovaks’ help to the Jews during the war when many Jews were saved from deportation to Poland and the gas chambers. Hurban, moreover, emphasised that in Bohemia and Moravia the Jews were nationally Czech and did not cause any significant anti-Semitism.<sup>1236</sup> This was a false statement: as documented, there were several thousand German-speaking Jews in Bohemia and Moravia who faced considerable hostility from the Czech population.

The reaction of the Ambassador proved that the Czechoslovak authorities were not prepared to accept any foreign criticism of their internal affairs. They remained unwavering in their defence of Czechoslovakia in their public appearances and fought against any accusation that appeared in the press. As time went on, the reaction of Czechoslovak authorities to these accusations became excitable. Papánek, otherwise an experienced diplomat, reacted to an article called ‘Liberated Czechoslovakia: Words and Deeds’, published by ‘the Jewish News-Letter’ *Trend of Events*, in the following way:

[U]nder the said title you crowd a boat of statements lacking any foundations. Sprinkling throughout numbers of [...] decrees of the Government connected with the Czechoslovak policy towards the German and Hungarian minority to give veracity to your assertion in the mind of an uninformed reader [concerning those Jews who, in 1930, declared German or Hungarian nationality – J. L.]. But even here you quote only those parts of the said decrees, which might plausibly support

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<sup>1234</sup> *The Washington Post*, 26 September 1945, p. 6, ‘Question for Benes: A Communication’.

<sup>1235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1236</sup> *Ibid.*

your false statements, omitting those which would make them baseless. [...] [T]he tone of your article and the collection of untrue statements it contains would demand but a two word answer [...].<sup>1237</sup>

Papánek concluded the letter with the advice that such articles, as published by the *Trend of Events*, could not help the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia. He called the attention of the editor to the fact that Czechoslovakia was a democratic country, easily controlled by press and ‘agencies concerned with the problem’.<sup>1238</sup>

Likewise, about a year later, Rudolf Kuráž, the Czechoslovak Consul General in New York, convened a press conference because of reports about the previously discussed Varnsdorf affair in the American Jewish press. The failure of Beer’s restitution received extensive coverage in the United States. With reference to Beneš, Masaryk, Ripka and Slávik, Kuráž stated: ‘We Czechoslovaks do not like the idea of having to apologize to any group or nationality. In fact, we have nothing to apologize for.’<sup>1239</sup> Furthermore, he attacked the press itself on the basis of its alleged non-action when the ‘Final Solution’ was taking place. Any serious attack on Czechoslovakia was therefore immediately countered by the Czechoslovak authorities in order to keep the name of the country clean. It was not only that Czechoslovakia did not like to apologize; basically, as Kuráž said, it did not like to be criticized.

The Czechoslovak authorities were not willing to admit that the publicity in the press might be caused by sincere concerns among western journalists. The latter were repeatedly accused of siding with the Hungarians and their political demands against Czechoslovakia. The accusation of the Hungarian utilizing of developments in Czechoslovakia was another relic of war-time suspicions regarding American Jewry’s connections with the Hungarians.

This notion opens the issue of the role of diplomacy in the ‘Final Solution’ and of Jewish themes in post-war diplomatic negotiations. Holly Case argues that the territorial struggle between Hungary and Slovakia contributed to the Slovak’s willingness to collaborate with Germany in the ‘Final Solution’. Simultaneously, Slovaks, in order to support their territorial claims, stressed to the Germans the

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<sup>1237</sup> CZA, C7/1293, Papánek to Meir Grossman, Editor of “Trends of Events”, 25 February 1946.

<sup>1238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1239</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H98/4, ‘Press Conference given by Dr. Rudolf Kuraz, Consul General of Czechoslovakia in New York City, for the Jewish Press on Monday, March 17, 1947’.

Hungarians' unwillingness to deport Jews.<sup>1240</sup> Curiously, with the coming end of the war, the Czech and Slovak resistance feared that the Tiso collaboration in the 'Final Solution' might harm post-war Czechoslovak claims against Hungary. The Slovak democratic underground groups were afraid that the Hungarians might use the Slovaks' persecution of Jews in post-war talks.<sup>1241</sup> How deeply those preconceptions were embedded in the minds of the Czechoslovak politicians was revealed by Beneš's Secretary Táborský. In July 1944 an outrage was caused in the west by the deportations of Jews from Hungary and the now confirmed information about the massacres in Auschwitz. The declaration made by Cordell Hull, US Secretary of State, about the guilt of the 'puppet Hungarian government' was welcomed by Táborský with a comment that 'another of the Hungarian lies lays in the dust'.<sup>1242</sup> The Hungarians had been trying, according to Táborský, to cash in on the comparative security of Jews in Hungary for political gains.<sup>1243</sup> The coming of the 'Final Solution' to Hungary was perceived by the Czechoslovak authorities as lowering Hungarian credit in the peace negotiations. Also the Czechoslovak democratic exiles believed in the existence of a Jewish pro-Hungarian lobby in the USA.

These sentiments survived the war. In September 1945, the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry asked the Slovak National Council for material that would help them to counter 'malign propaganda' in discussions with foreign journalists. The main issue was the delay in restitution of Jewish property in Slovakia and also the fact that *Aryanized* properties were allegedly still in the hands of Hlinka Guardists and other fascists.<sup>1244</sup> The Foreign Ministry concluded that journalists often had reports from persons directly involved with those cases and Czechoslovak officials were facing a very delicate situation.<sup>1245</sup> The democratic image of Czechoslovakia was allegedly at stake, because, for example, the news from the *Washington Post*

<sup>1240</sup> Case, Holly, 'Territorial Revision and the Holocaust. Hungary and Slovakia During World War II', in Doris Bergen (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies VIII. From Generation to Generation* (Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press, 2008), pp. 222-244.

<sup>1241</sup> AÚTGM, EB-II, box 182, minutes of the exile government's meeting on 25 June 1943. See also VHA, 37-91-7, Report from the homeland, 20 March 1944, forwarded to London by Kopecký in Geneva. Kopecký added that Jewish organizations in Switzerland appreciated the Hungarian attitude towards the Jews. He added that they contrasted it with the Slovaks and Rumanians. Kopecký warned that this attitude might have undesirable consequences for Czechoslovakia.

<sup>1242</sup> HIA, Edward Táborský Papers, Box 2, Diary entry 15 July 1944, pp. 464-465. My translation.

<sup>1243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1244</sup> SNA, Poverenictvo vnútra – prezidiálne – box 2, 2769/46, Foreign Ministry to the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, 18 September 1945.

<sup>1245</sup> *Ibid.*

was broadcast by New York radio and published by the Hungarian press.<sup>1246</sup> The Foreign Ministry concluded that Hungarian agents and ‘other malicious persons’ tried to cause political and economical harm to Czechoslovakia among the Allies. This potential danger, argued the officials, was not caused by the Czechoslovak treatment of Jews, but by the efforts of Hungarian agents and their helpers to destabilise the Czechoslovak diplomatic position.

However, this does not mean that the Czechoslovak authorities were not partly correct about the role of pro-Polish and pro-Hungarian lobbies in disseminating false reports about the situation in Czechoslovakia. Pro-Polish circles in the British parliament did not easily bear the negative perception of the Polish as opposed to the positive perception of the Czechoslovak treatment of Jews during the war. For example, they tried to bring the Czechoslovak case to the agenda of the Houses of Commons in spring 1944, when parliament discussed the affair caused by the maltreatment of Jewish soldiers in the Polish army. Alan Crosland Graham, a Conservative MP with sympathies for Poland, attempted to shift the attention to the alleged desertion of 80 Jewish soldiers from the Czechoslovak army.<sup>1247</sup> But Graham’s efforts were not successful. Furthermore, the accusation was refuted by the Czechoslovak army.<sup>1248</sup>

More accusations were spread in London by Polish journalists. In April 1945, the New York based *Morning Journal* published a report based on a piece of information from a ‘Catholic Polish journalist’ in London. He accused the new Czechoslovak Social-Democrat Prime Minister, Zdeněk Fierlinger, of anti-Semitic remarks during his stay in Košice, the provisional seat of the government. Fierlinger allegedly blamed the Jews in Czechoslovakia for collaboration with the Nazis. The article in the *Morning Journal* also reported that no Zionist was invited to the first reception held in Košice on behalf of Beneš’s arrival to Czechoslovakia.<sup>1249</sup> Fierlinger immediately publicized a categorical *dementi* and there seems to be no evidence that he really made any accusations against the Jews.<sup>1250</sup> It was just a

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<sup>1246</sup> *Magyar Nezmet*, 14 September 1945.

<sup>1247</sup> *Hansard*, volume 398, column 2278, the House of Commons session on 6 April 1944; Driberg, Tom, *Absentees for Freedom* (London: NCCL, 1944).

<sup>1248</sup> CNA, PMR-L, box 84, a note by Viktor Fischl, 28 April 1944.

<sup>1249</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-161-4, box 259, a minute for the Minister Ripka, 24 April 1945. *Morning Journal* published the report on 17 April 1945.

<sup>1250</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-161-4, box 259, Fierlinger’s telegram, sent to the Czechoslovak Minister Ripka, London, via Moscow, 25 April 1945.

provocation that aimed to stir up the Jewish public in the United States against Czechoslovakia.

The development in post-war Slovakia was in any case more closely followed in Hungary. Every anti-Semitic incident was immediately commented on in the Hungarian media and was forwarded to the Jewish agencies.<sup>1251</sup> Hence the Czechoslovak authorities tried to explain some of the anti-Semitic riots in Slovakia as being initiated by pro-Hungarian forces. For example, the gathering of Slovak partisans in Bratislava in July 1946 was accompanied by extensive anti-Jewish riots. Yet the provincial police commander informed the authorities that the unrest was stirred up by pro-Hungarian forces who wanted to complicate the Czechoslovak position before the peace talks with Hungary in Paris.<sup>1252</sup> The immediate publicity given to the events in the Hungarian press supported this theory.<sup>1253</sup> Also the Jewish leadership in Czechoslovakia tried to press the government into action against the rioters by stressing that those incidents were being utilised by the enemies of the Czechoslovak Republic, namely Hungarians.<sup>1254</sup>

An understanding of the capabilities of the pro-Jewish lobby in the United States seemed to be equally spread among the Czechoslovaks as well as among the Hungarians. Both parties saw the Jews as a good ally, but potentially a difficult enemy. The Czechoslovaks were afraid that the situation in Slovakia might sabotage their demands against Hungary in Paris. Curiously, during the Paris peace negotiations, the Czechoslovaks helped to reject the British declaration against Hungarian anti-Semitism.<sup>1255</sup> The Czechoslovak delegation probably followed the directive from Moscow, because the Soviet Union was the main opponent of the

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<sup>1251</sup> AJA, H100/17, Perutz to Perlzweig, a letter sent from Czechoslovakia by Dr Nicholas Berman to Tibor S. Borgida; Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 6, pp. 35-38. August 1946, Report by the regional commander of the State Police about the anti-Jewish disturbances in Slovakia, 1-4 August 1946 and about the adopted security measures.

<sup>1252</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, Doc. 6., pp. 35-38. August 1946, Report by the regional commander of the State Police about the anti-Jewish disturbances in Slovakia, 1-4 August 1946 and about the adopted security measures.

<sup>1253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1254</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 8, pp. 40-46. September 1946, a request by the Council of the Jewish Religious Congregations to the PM Gottwald about the disturbances in Slovakia, 1-4 August 1946; UHA, Dr Vojtech Winterstein Collection, W.3/1, SRP meeting on 23 September 1946.

<sup>1255</sup> HIA, Juraj Slávik Papers, box 26, folder 6, an article based on an interview with Slávik, ‘Naše stanovisko v židovské otázce je jasné’, in *Lidová demokracie* (s.d.).

declaration.<sup>1256</sup> Yet we could also argue that the Czechoslovaks rather did not want to open the discussion about anti-Semitism in Hungary because of their concerns about the situation in their own country.

The anti-Jewish riots in Slovakia reinforced Czechoslovak efforts to maintain the image of a democratic country. That the negative publicity abroad could significantly alter Czechoslovak policy can be documented in one particular case study. This was the issue of the Czechoslovak citizenship of Jews who in 1930 had declared German or Hungarian nationality. Their precarious position after the liberation of Czechoslovakia was simply another link in the chain of mistrust and hostility against these Jews. It was not surprising that the international Jewish organization immediately reacted to the plan to deprive the Jews of citizenship in post-war Czechoslovakia. The WJC contacted the Czechoslovak government:

This is the only case of Jewish citizens of an Allied country being deprived wholesale of their citizenship (at least temporarily) and placed in the same position as Germans or Hungarians. Even if in the end these persons will probably retain their citizenship, the necessary administrative delay causes great hardship, leaving them in a state of utter insecurity, and, in many cases, barring them from re-integration in [...] economic and social life. All this even applies to people who have returned from concentration camps.<sup>1257</sup>

The WJC claimed that the Jews were the first victims of Nazi oppression and were always loyal citizens of Czechoslovakia. The WJC then requested that the Czechoslovak government issue instructions to lower authorities to the effect that none of the Jews should be regarded as losing their citizenship, even temporarily.<sup>1258</sup>

The Czechoslovak government gradually realized that the treatment of these Jews was a burning issue. Interventions by Jewish organizations and especially negative publicity worldwide might have escalated into an international affair. For example, the aforementioned address given by the Minister of the Interior, Nosek, in February 1946 in Brno caused real uproar among the Jews.<sup>1259</sup> As a result, Minister Václav Kopecký promised Frischer that he would raise the issue at a government

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<sup>1256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1257</sup> AfZ, WJC – Geneva Office, C3/827, WJC to the Czechoslovak Government, 9 January 1946, a draft.

<sup>1258</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1259</sup> For the speech see: Brügel, Johann Wolfgang, 'Die KPČ und die Judenfrage', p. 875; ABS, 425-231-2, Frischer's minutes of the meeting with Beneš, 8 May 1946; ABS, 425-231-1, Frischer's minutes of the meeting with Masaryk, 11 March 1946.

meeting.<sup>1260</sup> Kopecký stated that a grave injustice could have been committed against those Jews and that it might harm the Czechoslovak image.<sup>1261</sup> Kopecký in fact presented the whole issue to Frischer as an accidental result of the post-war laws that solved the German problem in Czechoslovakia. This statement was obviously incorrect because it was Kopecký himself who in 1944 argued that German-speaking Jews should be sharing the fate of other Germans.<sup>1262</sup>

The interventions from abroad really influenced the Czechoslovak government. A telegram sent to Beneš in February 1946 allegedly put a stop to any possible transfer of Germans-speaking Jews from Czechoslovakia.<sup>1263</sup> Moreover, under pressure from the publicity abroad, the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior issued a directive that no Jews was supposed to be included on expulsion trains taking Sudeten Germans out of Czechoslovakia.<sup>1264</sup> The final decision to allow these Jews to stay in Czechoslovakia was reached partly under the influence of an article published in *News Chronicle*. The liberal and pro-Jewish British newspaper reported plans to expel 2,000 Jews from Czechoslovakia to Germany.<sup>1265</sup> Furthermore, these

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<sup>1260</sup> ABS, 425-231-2, Meeting with Kopecký, by Frischer, 7 May 1946.

<sup>1261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1262</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>1263</sup> AJA, WJC Papers, H100/7, Oskar Karbach to Irving Dwork, 7 February 1946. 'Dr Goldmann told us, after his return from Europe, that meanwhile, and probably as a result of our intervention in Prague President Benes has issued a confidential circular letter to the authorities concerned, directing them to regard Czechoslovak Jews who, at the last census declared that they spoke German or Hungarians, as Jews, and not as members of the German or Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia'; AJA, WJC Papers, H100/7, Kubowitzki to Easterman, 19 February 1946; *Ibid.*, B2/2, Activities of the World Jewish Congress [probably prepared in early 1947]: 'The Congress made many representations of the Czechoslovak government about these Jews, notably in a cable to President Benes under date of February 4, 1946.' However, a draft reply of Beneš's office did not suggest any immediate change in the assessment of citizenship of Jews who in 1930 declared German or Hungarian nationality. The office noted that the Czechoslovak officials had to follow the constitutional decree and there could not be any immediate amendment in favour of one particular group. See: AKPR, D11484/47, the Chancellery of the President to the CJRC, 12 February 1946.

<sup>1264</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, p. 59, footnote 1.

<sup>1265</sup> Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1947-1953* (Praha: Doplněk, 1993), p. 15, footnote 10; Sedlák, Petr, *Poté. Postoj a přístup k Židům v českých zemích po druhé světové válce (1945-1947/1953)*, p. 97. Sedlák quotes minutes of the meeting of the interior ministry officials, where it was mentioned that the whole matter of citizenship of the Jews was reopened because of the article published in *News Chronicle*. Sedlák refers it to ABS, 300-29-1. The meeting took place on 7 September 1946. See also TNA, FO371/57695, WR2441/3/48, Expulsion of Jews from Sudetenland. The report in *News Chronicle* was based on a piece of information received from UNRRA. *News Chronicle* published the article 'Czechs to expel Jews from Sudetenland'. Wilkinson, Foreign Office, commented on it: 'If true, this will be the first time that Jews have been expelled from and not assisted out of a country in the "Orbit".' Curiously, the content of the article was later disclaimed by the JTA. See *Ibid.*, a minute on the document on 25 September 1945 (signature not legible).

plans were criticised by Robert Murphy, the political advisor to General Joseph T. McNarney, Commander-in-chief of the US occupation forces in Germany.<sup>1266</sup>

In response to this negative publicity, the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior decided that all the German and Hungarian Jews were eligible to retain Czechoslovak citizenship. The only exceptions were Jews who, until 1938, participated in the policies of Germanization and Magyarization. The sole fact that a Jew in 1930 declared German or Hungarian citizenship was *no more* considered as evidence of Germanization and Magyarization. Only active support for irredentist movements, the founding of German or Hungarian schools in Slavonic districts or support for non-Slavonic officials and institutions, were still considered hostile acts against the Czechoslovak Republic. Those could lead to an individual being deprived of Czechoslovak citizenship.<sup>1267</sup> The situation was therefore significantly changed based on reports published in the foreign press. It was seen as not in the interests of the positive image of the Czechoslovak government when Jews were treated as their war-time oppressors and expelled together with them in cattle trucks.<sup>1268</sup> The directive of the Ministry of the Interior changed the situation and most of the Jews were allowed to stay in Czechoslovakia.<sup>1269</sup>

That the west was interested in Jewish issues and especially that the pro-Jewish lobby was influential in western public life shaped Czechoslovak policy after the war. Press coverage of the Jewish situation in Czechoslovakia strengthened this notion. It was not only that negative publicity given to the Czechoslovak treatment of Jews might reverse the so far positive attitude of western Jews towards Czechoslovakia; it was also that pro-Jewish actions by the government might help the Czechoslovak cause. Czechoslovak support of Zionism and events in neighbouring Poland offered to the Czechoslovaks a chance to improve their image among Jews in the west. The Czechoslovak government caught the proffered hand with remarkable enthusiasm.

<sup>1266</sup> American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York (AJJDCA), 1945-1954, Box 201, Israel G. Jacobson, Report on Czechoslovakia, July – November 1946, 17 January 1947.

<sup>1267</sup> For the full version of the directive see: Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 9, p. 55-59. It was published on 13 September 1946.

<sup>1268</sup> AJJDCA, 1945-1954, Box 201, Israel G. Jacobson, Report on Czechoslovakia, July – November 1946, 17 January 1947.

<sup>1269</sup> AJJDCA, 1945-1954, box 200. A situation report from Czechoslovakia for 1 December 1946 – 31 March 1947, by Joint. Yet there were still documented cases of individual Jews who had problems with reclaiming their Czechoslovak citizenship back. See: CNA, Prokop Drtina Papers, 7-82, the Office of the Prime Minister to Viliam Široký, 17 May 1947.

***'It is very important for the future to maintain the goodwill of the Czech government'*<sup>1270</sup>**

The critical approach of western Jews towards post-war Czechoslovak policy had its limits. Groups such as the WJC and the Jewish Agency were aware that total alienation of the Czechoslovak government was not in their interest. They realised that they had a potential need of Czechoslovak politicians and accepted some of their worldview. Although the philosophy of the Czechoslovak politicians had a different justification, it could find a common ground with the objectives of the Zionist leadership. That was especially the case in the attitude towards 'practical' Zionism. The previous chapters argued the reasons for the Czechoslovaks' support of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Czechoslovaks wanted to solve their own internal issues with minorities; pure humanitarian motives, though present, were in the background.

Some pro-Zionist activists understood the viewpoint of the Czechoslovak authorities, specifically of Beneš. In July 1945, Imrich Rosenberg presented his perception of the Czechoslovak President's worldview to Easterman:

It is my firm conviction that if the Russians can be made to feel that [the Zionists] accept the Soviet standing in Europe, that we do not want to interfere in big politics and in their position in Europe, that we will act correctly and accept their views and that we are interested only in the solution of the Jewish problem that has still remained in Europe, - then I feel that we could get their help; I feel that this help is needed now. This help could be given through diplomatic and political pressure, and I think Prague is the appropriate place where it could be done.

Beneš is the man to be approached, because he is quite open in his [belief] that there is either Zionism or full assimilationism as a solution of the Czechoslovak Jewish problem.

[...] Beneš would help you, for he wants to solve the Jewish problem completely and would give you every assistance.<sup>1271</sup>

Rosenberg had no illusions about Beneš's reasons for supporting Zionism, but advised the WJC to utilise that support for their own benefit. Rosenberg furthermore highlighted the previously depicted notion about Beneš's role in the Zionists' efforts to gain the support of the Soviet government, reinforcing the Zionists' need for

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<sup>1270</sup> CZA, S25/5272, Adler-Rudel, 'Notes on visit to Czechoslovakia and Austria', 24 July 1946.

<sup>1271</sup> USA, MS 238 2/26, Conversation between Imrich Rosenberg and Alex Easterman, 3 July 1945.

having decent relations with the Beneš administration.<sup>1272</sup> It seemed politically inopportune to alienate such a political force.

Beneš and members of the government did not confine their support of the Jewish state in Palestine only to diplomatic negotiations. What seemed equally important was their regularly expressed preference for Zionism to the press. Their argument, as documented by Beneš's interview for the JTA, complemented that of Zionist groups. Beneš stated:

I have always been a friend of Zionism. The establishment of a Jewish Home in Palestine is a necessity for all nations, because anti-Semitism is a regrettable but practically inevitable social phenomenon. It will not vanish till the creation of a Jewish country granting citizenship to all Jewry.<sup>1273</sup>

He additionally promised to do everything possible to facilitate Jewish emigration to Palestine.<sup>1274</sup> Although Beneš understood the impossibility of immediate total Jewish emigration to Palestine, he saw it as feasible at least for Jews living in Europe.<sup>1275</sup> Similar views were expressed by the Communist Undersecretary in the Foreign Ministry, Clementis.<sup>1276</sup> The Czechoslovaks argued that the still persistent anti-Semitism in Europe, as evident in Slovakia, revealed that there was no future for Jews in Europe unless they completely assimilated. Those who wanted to retain their Jewish identity had to leave for Palestine. This *transfer of population* should thereupon be supported by the international community. What made those public proclamations of particular importance was the democratic image of Czechoslovakia. It was the argument of a government that did not persecute Jews but

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<sup>1272</sup> Weizmann Archives, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Short minutes of meeting held on 7 March 1944 (Weizmann, Brodetsky, Shertok, Namier etc.). This information was brought to the meeting by Lewis Namier. FDRPL, microfilm, correspondence between FDR and Stephen S. Wise. Wise to FDR, 24 January 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Volume VIII, p. 710. *Memorandum of Conversation*, by Mr. Evan M. Wilson of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 20 June 1945. Copy from NARA, RG 59, 867N.01/6-2045. See also FDLPL, WRB Records, box 7, Huddle (Bern) to the Sec of State (a message for WRB from McClelland, For Nahum Goldmann from Gerhard Riegner), 7 December 1944.

<sup>1273</sup> *Jewish Standard*, 24 August 1945, p. 6. 'Anti-Jewish Feeling still Strong in Slovakia. President Benes Explains Need for Jewish State in Palestine'. About the information published in *Aufbau*, see Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic, D11484/47, 11725/45, American Press, Interview with the President Beneš.

<sup>1274</sup> *Jewish Standard*, 13 July 1945, p. 5, 'President Benes favours Emigration to Palestine'.

<sup>1275</sup> AKPR, D11484/47, 11725/45, American Press, Interview with the President Beneš.

<sup>1276</sup> *Jewish Standard*, 11 January 1946, p. 5. 'Czechoslovakia will favour Jewish State'.

still favoured their emigration to Palestine. The Jewish press agencies consequently provided considerable publicity to these Czechoslovak declarations.<sup>1277</sup>

The Czechoslovak government indeed appreciated the publicity that confirmed to the world their humanitarian support for underdogs. As Hurban commented to Eliahu Epstein of the Jewish Agency, there had been a lot of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Czechoslovak policy after the war:

On several occasions misleading reports were circulated and he has had to defend his Government against stupid accusations of anti-Semitism, although the Czech people were never anti-Semitic. His Government had the courage to speak the truth to the Jews and to the world alike. [The Zionists] can always count on the support of the Czechoslovak Government whenever such support may be required.<sup>1278</sup>

The Czechoslovak government repeatedly declared their support for the partition of Palestine between 1945 and 1947.<sup>1279</sup> Pro-Jewish activists even wanted Masaryk to be present personally at the UN meeting discussing the issue of Palestine in the spring of 1947. They considered his presence of considerable importance for the final outcome of the negotiations. They thought that his arguments might significantly support the Zionist cause.<sup>1280</sup> The belief of some Zionist politicians in the Czechoslovak sympathies with Zionism was deeply embedded in their minds. Two months before the USSR officially backed the partition plans, Zionist politicians did not doubt Czechoslovak support for the Jewish state. They expected the Czechoslovaks' positive vote even despite the negative Soviet attitude to the partition plans. Walter Eytan wrote in a memorandum for the Jewish Agency:

I do not believe that Czechoslovakia under Masaryk and Beneš would cast an anti-Zionist vote. But I suggest that a special effort be made in Prague, not to prevent an anti-Zionist vote at the dictation of USSR, but to persuade the Czech government to give us vocal support.<sup>1281</sup>

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<sup>1277</sup> See, for example, *The Palestinian Post*, 30 January 1946, 'President Benes favours Jewish State. No other remedy for Anti-Semitism'.

<sup>1278</sup> CZA, Z4/30623, Eliahu Epstein, Jewish Agency to Members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, 18 February 1946.

<sup>1279</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 10, 9 October 1946, Beneš on the creation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine, revealed to Angelo Goldstein of the Jewish Agency.

<sup>1280</sup> LOC, Laurence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 55, William Rosenblatt to Steinhardt, 16 April 1947.

<sup>1281</sup> *Documents on Israeli-Soviet Relations*, Vol. 1, p. 165. Doc. 72, Memorandum by W. Eytan, Jerusalem 25 February 1947. Copy: CZA S25/5343.

In the end, the Czechoslovak delegation cast a vote in favour of the partition and thus supported the Zionist aspiration in a practical way. Furthermore, it seems that the Czechoslovak delegation in New York actively supported the pro-Zionist position during the discussions in the UN.<sup>1282</sup> There were, in any case, several reasons behind this decision, including humanitarian sympathy with the persecuted minority. The role of the Soviet Union should be taken into consideration as well. The Communists played the main role in the Czechoslovak government and followed Moscow's line.<sup>1283</sup> There is, however, undeniable evidence that the government, especially Beneš, acted on their inner conviction that the problem of the Jewish minority had to be solved in Europe. Pro-Zionist activists either did not recognize the real intentions, or, as in the case with Rosenberg, accepted the philosophy and decided to utilize it.

Furthermore, Czechoslovakia played an important role in supporting Jewish emigration to Palestine. After their return home, Jews in liberated Poland faced constantly growing hostility from the non-Jewish population. Sources of widespread hostilities were of economic, as well as political origins.<sup>1284</sup> The Jews were accused of siding with the new Communist authorities, seen as hostile to the Polish nation. This image of *Zydokomuna*, of Jewish collaboration with Communism, was particularly strong. Consequently, a wave of murders, anti-Jewish riots and pogroms took place all over Poland.<sup>1285</sup> The Jewish quarter in Cracow was plundered on 11 August 1945. Many Jews were severely beaten and the synagogue was desecrated.<sup>1286</sup> However, all this was just a prelude to the sweeping terror unleashed

<sup>1282</sup> LOC, Ján Papánek Papers, box 3, Papánek memoirs (unpublished), pp. 288-291. 'I gave a speech in the General Assembly about how things should be decided. It was probably the first open speech suggesting that there should be a separate state for Jews, if not the first, then one of the first speeches that began to sway opinion in that direction'. See also Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 192.

<sup>1283</sup> Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1947-1953*, pp. 9-11. In August 1947, the Warsaw meeting of Communist parties decided that individual Communist parties would support the creation of an independent Jewish state. See also Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, p. 192f.

<sup>1284</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, pp. 159-161. Engel, David, 'Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946', in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 26, 1998, pp. 43-85; Cichopek-Gajraj, Anna, *Jews, Poles and Slovaks: A Story of Encounters, 1944-48*.

<sup>1285</sup> Gross, Jan T., *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An essay in Historical Interpretation* (London: Random House, 2007).

<sup>1286</sup> More about the Cracow pogrom see: Cichopek, Anna, 'The Cracow Pogrom of August 1945. A Narrative Reconstruction', in Zimmerman, Joshua D. (ed.), *Contested Memories. Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Brunswick – New Jersey – London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 221-238.

in the Central Polish town of Kielce on 4 July 1946. As in the case of Cracow, the medieval superstitions of blood libel (Jews killing Christian children) served as a trigger for bloody violence in the streets. Forty-two Jews were murdered and many more injured.<sup>1287</sup>

Not surprisingly, a decisive number of Polish Jews did not see any future for Jewish life in Poland and decided to leave, mostly for Palestine.<sup>1288</sup> This illegal movement, organized by Zionist groups, became known under the term *Brichah*. The main road for escapees led to the South – to Mediterranean and Adriatic ports. Czechoslovakia came to play a role as the main ‘land of transit’.<sup>1289</sup> The Jews were crossing the border in northern Bohemia (Náchod) and proceeding to Bratislava in Western Slovakia. They then continued via the Soviet occupied part of Austria and reached the US zones.<sup>1290</sup> Hence maintaining the goodwill of the Czechoslovak government was critical for the Zionists.

Yet the position of the Czechoslovak government was not as simple as might appear. The British government, because of its restrictive policy towards Jewish immigration to Palestine, criticised this movement of tens of thousands of Jews. The Foreign Office appealed to the Czechoslovak government in the summer of 1946 not to allow the stream of Polish-Jewish refugees to cross its territory. As one British official noted, the Jews should not be allowed to continue to their ‘final (and illegal) destination’.<sup>1291</sup> The Czechoslovak authorities were asked to tighten border controls and forbid passage to escapees who lacked the appropriate documentation.<sup>1292</sup>

Nevertheless, for most of the time, the border was not completely sealed and escaping Jews were allowed to carry on to Palestine.<sup>1293</sup> There were several reasons

<sup>1287</sup> More about the development in post-war Poland and particularly about the Kielce pogrom see: Gross, Jan T., *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, pp.83-117.

<sup>1288</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, pp. 157-182.

<sup>1289</sup> Bauer, Yehuda, *Flight and Rescue: BRICAH* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 179-189; *Out of the Ashes. The Impact of American Jews on post-Holocaust European Jewry* (London: Pergamon Press, 1989), pp. 105-111.

<sup>1290</sup> *Ibid.* and Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, pp. 185-192.

<sup>1291</sup> TNA, FO371/57685, WR178/3/48. Quote from a minute by MacKillop, 19 January 1946. See also *Ibid.*, MacKillop to Nichols, 5 February 1946. ‘We are determined to stop the exodus, which we regard as an entirely unscrupulous ramp.’

<sup>1292</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., ‘Indirect Pressure: Moscow and the End of the British Mandate in Palestine’, in *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 10, no. 1, p. 63. Kochavi quotes: TNA, FO371/52632, Schuckburgh to Fierlinger, 2 September 1946.

<sup>1293</sup> CZA, C7/1275, David R. Wahl (American Jewish Conference) to I. L. Kenen, 4 November 1946; YIVO Archives, AJC, 347.7.1, Box 11, Gottschalk to Slawson, Wishcom NYK, 14 September 1946.

for the Czechoslovak reluctance to stop the flow of refugees. The first can be sought in humanitarian motives and compassion with suffering Jews. There were, however, other important reasons that deserve further evaluation. The whole movement from Poland, across Czechoslovakia and the Soviet occupation zone, could not have been done without at least the silent consent of the Soviet government.<sup>1294</sup> As was the case with the support of political Zionism, the Communist Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald overtly supported the passage of the Polish refugees.<sup>1295</sup>

Furthermore, on 16 August 1946, Minister Ripka informed the Council of Ministers about the British note asking Czechoslovakia to close the border to Jewish refugees. The Minister agreed that the government did not want to sever relations with the British administration. Yet there was another viewpoint that needed further consideration. The Czechoslovak government was negotiating a loan from the American government and, in Ripka's words, needed 'the support of American Jews'.<sup>1296</sup> The Minister hence advised proceeding with extreme precaution.<sup>1297</sup> Ripka in fact revealed the same perception of the problem to the British, namely to C. A. Schuckburgh from the British legation in Prague.<sup>1298</sup> Consequently, the border was never entirely closed and a stream of refugees flowed continuously between Poland and US Zones in Germany and Austria via Czechoslovakia.<sup>1299</sup>

The Czechoslovaks' utilization of the *Brichah* passage across its territory was also mentioned by Masaryk to officials in the Czechoslovak Ministry of the

<sup>1294</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, pp. 185-192.

<sup>1295</sup> ABS, 425-231-3, Minutes of the meeting between Frischer, Gottwald and the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Herzog, 16 August 1946.

<sup>1296</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 7, p. 39, Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> extraordinary meeting of the Czechoslovak Government.

<sup>1297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1298</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States, & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, p. 189. Quote from TNA, FO 371/52629/E8079, Schuckburgh to FO, 15 August 1946.

<sup>1299</sup> YIVO Archives, AJC, 347.7.1, Box 11, Gottschalk to Slawson, Wishcom NYK, 14 September 1946. 'Czech borders not been closed Polish Jews but American zone borders closed stop [Masaryk] hopes these borders reopen next Monday stop. No official reply given to British but Masaryk spoke Bevin asking British should not insist as Jews would receive generous treatment while he would be in government'. Other reports suggest that the border was temporarily closed, but Czechoslovak officials were asked by Masaryk and Gottwald not to be too stringent when hindering the stream of Polish Jews on their way to the US zone. See Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 11, p. 61, Prague 10 and 11 October 1946, A report prepared by Zdeněk Toman, the commander of the political intelligence department of the ministry of interior, about his negotiations with Masaryk. See also Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States, & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, p. 192. Kochavi argues that the border indeed was temporarily closed.

Interior.<sup>1300</sup> The Minister in connection with *Brichah* and the new, lenient attitude towards the Jews of non-Slavonic nationality, mentioned that both these cases had a tremendous importance in the international arena. He added that the 30 million Crowns spent by the Czechoslovak state on the maintenance of Jewish refugees from Poland was a good investment. He explained that due to these pro-Jewish interventions, he would be able ‘to mobilize’ American Jews for the support of Czechoslovak claims during peace negotiations with Hungary.<sup>1301</sup> Indeed, the Czechoslovak government asked the Joint to provide it with information about the publicity the Czechoslovak support of *Brichah* received abroad.<sup>1302</sup> The final report had to please the Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>1303</sup> The Czechoslovak government was keen to receive positive publicity in the USA.

In public and to pro-Jewish activists Czechoslovak support for *Brichah* was presented as a natural humanitarian deed.<sup>1304</sup> A closer research of the available documentation, however, reveals that the authorities were more afraid that some of the refugees might settle permanently in Czechoslovakia. Their worries were strengthened by reports that some of the Jewish refugees managed to escape illegally from the refugee camps and got to Czech towns, including Prague.<sup>1305</sup> Czechoslovak ministers especially stressed that Jewish escapees needed to be under constant surveillance and had not to be allowed to mingle with the Czechoslovak population.<sup>1306</sup> They were even labelled as ‘dangerous elements’. Fierlinger pointed out that it would be a real danger for the peaceful development of Czechoslovakia if ‘some of the people’ would be allowed to stay in the Republic.<sup>1307</sup> These considerations hence also contributed to the final decision to facilitate a smooth

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<sup>1300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1302</sup> AJJDCA, 1945-1954, box 213, Israel G. Jacobson to Joint NY, 11 October 1946. ‘Getting from you releases and clippings favourable to the Czech Government for its actions will not only be satisfying to them, but will probably be of real help in planning further cooperative action with the Government.’

<sup>1303</sup> AJJDCA, 1945-1954, box 213, Israel G. Jacobson to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Interior, 16 October 1946. ‘The foregoing are a few of the many deservedly good publicity reports which the Czechoslovak Government has received as a result of its humane treatment of Polish Jewish refugees. I am proud of the fact that we have been of some service in helping to develop goodwill for a government which has done so much for human beings seeking refuge from terror.’

<sup>1304</sup> ABS, 425-231-3, Minutes of the meeting between Frischer, Gottwald and the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Herzog, 16 August 1946.

<sup>1305</sup> AJJDCA, 1945-1954, box 213, Maurice Eigen to Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, 8 October 1946.

<sup>1306</sup> Bulínová, Marie (ed.) – Dufek, Jiří – Kaplan, Karel – Šlosar, Vladimír, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956. Dokumenty*, doc. 5, minutes of the government meeting, 26 July 1946, p. 33. Drtina’s remark.

<sup>1307</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33f. This remark was made by Fierlinger.

transfer of Polish Jews to the US Zone. A controlled transfer, which also ensured that none of the ‘dangerous elements’ was allowed to stay, was conducted by the Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>1308</sup> Furthermore, the Czechoslovaks stressed that the transit should not have any influence on the number of German expellees being received monthly by the Americans.<sup>1309</sup> Czechoslovak society was being nationally and culturally homogenized and escaping Jews could not have been allowed to spoil these efforts.

Whatever the reasons for the Czechoslovak support of the *Brichah* movement were, it increased their importance for pro-Jewish groups in the west. The Czechoslovaks’ lenient attitude towards the Jews escaping Poland without any appropriate documents became crucial for the *Brichah* movement. As Salomon Adler-Rudel of the Jewish Agency suggested: ‘[i]t is very important for the future to maintain the goodwill of the Czech government, because it may be assumed that the flight from Poland will certainly continue for the next few months’.<sup>1310</sup> Jacob Rosenheim of the Agudas Israel World Organization asked whether the Czechoslovak authorities might be approached with a plan to establish a transit camp for the escaping Jews in Czechoslovakia: ‘there would be a chance [...] to induce the Czechoslovakian government to prove again its really democratic and humane sentiments in the spirit of the traditions of Masaryk’.<sup>1311</sup> The political and practical support of the Zionist movement contributed to the western Jewish groups’ discretion in further attacking the Czechoslovak government.

It is noteworthy that it was again the situation in neighbouring Poland that allowed the Czechoslovaks’ to counteract their fading ‘myth’ in the west and they made full use of this opportunity. With successful propaganda tools, they spread information about their support of *Brichah* movement. For example, almost a year

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<sup>1308</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States, & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, p. 192.

<sup>1309</sup> ABS, 425-231-2, Minutes of the meeting organized by governmental officials at the Office of the Prime Minister, 2 February 1946; *Ibid.*, Minutes of the meeting at the repatriation department of the ministry of social welfare, dealing with the transit of Polish escapees via Czechoslovakia, 29 July 1946.

<sup>1310</sup> CZA, S25/5272, Salomon Adler-Rudel: ‘Notes on Visit to Czechoslovakia and Austria’, 24 July 1946.

<sup>1311</sup> LOC, Laurence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 83, Jacob Rosenheim, Agudas Israel World Organization to Laurence A. Steinhardt, 1 October 1945. ‘It would be a disaster, and a judgment of death for ten thousands of innocent people, if these refugees would not be permitted to remain in Czechoslovakia, until it would be possible to evacuate them to other countries.’

after the events, Slávik, the Czechoslovak Ambassador to the USA,<sup>1312</sup> addressed a meeting of the United Jewish Appeal in the following manner:

Last year when tens of thousands of Jews came to seek sanctuary and temporary shelter we neither closed our borders nor our hearts to those unfortunates. Our government and people wholeheartedly cooperated with the great Jewish relief organizations and helped those unfortunate people in every way possible. It is not to boast [that I cite] here the modest sum of 80,000,000 crowns spent by our government in a brief period of less than 15 months for relief to trans-migrants and refugees.<sup>1313</sup>

The Czechoslovak politicians wanted to strengthen their democratic image among Jewish organizations in the United States. This self-congratulation and discourse used by Slávik had an obvious political purpose.

### ***The Western Allies and the Czechoslovak treatment of the Jews after the war***

Conflicts between the Czechoslovak authorities and western journalists were caused by the former's concerns that their negative image might influence diplomatic and economic negotiations conducted after the war. Czechoslovakia's image of a democratic country in the heart of Europe suffered serious blows during the first post-war months. The situation of the Jews in Czechoslovakia could not be overlooked, notably because of the press coverage in the west and the interventions of pro-Jewish activists. Therefore it is crucial to explore the American and British perception of Czechoslovakia's treatment of Jews.

At the beginning of the war, Czechoslovakia retained a positive image in the correspondence of American diplomats. In early 1939, the post-Munich, authoritarian Beran government stepped up the limitation of Jewish presence in society.<sup>1314</sup> Yet even then George F. Kennan of the US embassy in Prague informed the State Department: 'The mass of the people appear simply to have very little

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<sup>1312</sup> Slávik was the Minister of the Interior in the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and after the war became the ambassador to Washington D.C.

<sup>1313</sup> HIA, Juraj Slávik, Box 26, Folder 11, 'Speech by H.E.Dr. Juraj Slavik, Czechoslovak Ambassador to the U.S.A. at the UJA Dinner held in New York June 11<sup>th</sup> 1947'. See also YUA, Vaad Hatzala Papers, 22/16, the speech of Dr. Juraj Slavik, Czechoslovak Ambassador to the US, Station WEVD, 30 March 1947, 1.30pm.

<sup>1314</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD Files, 760f.62/1912, Conversation with Czechoslovak Minister, Baráček, Riga, 9 January 1939. See also Bauer, Yehuda, *My Brother's Keepers. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929-1939* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974). p. 261

interest in anti-Semitism.<sup>1315</sup> If there was any possibility of anti-Semitic policy, it was assumed it would be done under German pressure or as a result of the development in neighbouring countries.<sup>1316</sup>

The Czechoslovak political struggle during the war found support among the Americans. The Lidice massacre caused a profound reaction in America.<sup>1317</sup> For example a village in the vicinity of Chicago was renamed ‘Lidice’.<sup>1318</sup> Furthermore, an internal document prepared in 1943 by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the American Intelligence agency, revealed that the Czechoslovaks held a special position among the other exiles in the eyes of Americans. The OSS claimed that although Czechoslovakia had not suffered any significant destruction, its successful propaganda policy made it into a collective symbol for all the oppressed countries: ‘It is simply to point out that the Czechoslovaks have known better than any of their co-sufferers how to state their cause before the world.’<sup>1319</sup> Also British Foreign Secretary Eden confirmed that the Czechoslovak political cause had strong support in America.<sup>1320</sup> This Czechoslovak image in the United States was further enhanced by President Beneš’s visit to America in the spring of 1943 when he was even invited to address Congress.<sup>1321</sup>

Reports in American files suggested that the Czechs in the Protectorate behaved sympathetically towards the Jews and expressed ‘coldness to the anti-

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<sup>1315</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD Files, 860F.4016/68, George F. Kennan to the State Department, 17 February 1939. ‘It seems evident that if Czechoslovakia existed in a vacuum the Jews, despite, their considerable number, would not present any problem which could not be solved with relatively humane and painless methods.’ Kennan, George, *From Prague after Munich*, pp. 42-57, doc 7.

<sup>1316</sup> *Ibid.* and Kennan, George, *From Prague after Munich*, pp. 42-57, doc. 7. About the German pressure on the implementation of anti-Jewish programme in Slovakia see: NARA, RG 59, SD Files, 860F.4016/93, Alexander Kirk (Chargé d’Affairs in Berlin) to the SD, 5 September 1940.

<sup>1317</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-4, the meeting of officers with Jan Masaryk, 8 July 1942. Already the first wave of anti-Czech persecution after Heydrich’s arrival to Prague in late September 1941 received wide publicity in the United States. See NYPL, Ján Papánek Papers, Papánek to Beneš, 7 October 1941.

<sup>1318</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-5-19-4, the meeting of officers with Jan Masaryk, 8 July 1942.

<sup>1319</sup> NARA, RG 226, OSS Records, Roll 43, 490-496, Czechoslovakia, Special Records, 22 July 1943. The report especially highlighted the fate of Lidice: ‘There were only two Lidices in Czechoslovakia, and the second one was only a tiny village. There have been scores of Lidices in Yugoslavia, in Poland, in occupied Russia. And yet it is Lidice which has become the universal symbol for them all.’

<sup>1320</sup> CNA, AHR, 1-161-1, Minutes of the meeting between Eden and Beneš, 22 April 1943.

<sup>1321</sup> Dejmek, Jindřich, *Edvard Beneš. Politická biografie českého demokrata. Část druhá. Prezident Republiky a vůdce národního odboje*, pp. 387-394; Némeček, Jan – Nováčková, Helena – Šťovíček, Ivan (eds.), ‘Edvard Beneš v USA v roce 1943. Dokumenty’, in *Sborník archivních prací* 49, 1999, no. 2, pp. 469-562; AJA, WJC – Papers, H98/3, Nahum Goldmann to Edward Benes, 10 May 1943. Goldmann asked Beneš if he could devote a part of his address to the Congress to the Jewish plight in Europe. However, Beneš did not do that.

Semitic philosophy'.<sup>1322</sup> A memorandum about the position of Jews in Czechoslovakia concluded that the essential solution after the war was to return Jews to the position they had held prior to the conflict. The author of the report did not expect any considerable obstacles in the case of Bohemia and Moravia, though he argued that it 'would require more serious economic and cultural adjustments in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia'.<sup>1323</sup> Interestingly, he stated that Czechoslovak Jews did not constitute a minority, but rather a religious group.<sup>1324</sup> In fact a significant part of the Jewish community in Czechoslovakia considered itself a part of the Jewish national minority. This misunderstanding hence contributed to an erroneous assessment of the feasibility of the restoration of Jews to their pre-war position.

Nonetheless, rumours about the changing Czechoslovak perception of the Jewish national minority did circulate in America. Daniel L. Moses from Baltimore contacted the State Department in March 1945. He expressed his profound shock on the information now coming from official Czechoslovak circles:

Last week the most liberal and humane head of any Government in Europe, Edward Benes [sic!] of Czechoslovakia, notified the world that Czechoslovakia would have no room for the Jews after the war. If that is the attitude of the most humane ruler in Europe, what will become of what is left of these poor people?<sup>1325</sup>

While the wording of Moses' record of Beneš's statement might seem distorted, it in fact fully summarized Czechoslovak intentions. They did not want to remove Jews from Czechoslovakia as such, but wanted them to assimilate fully into the main nations. The Jews who decided to stay in Czechoslovakia were supposed to cease being Jewish. However, the reply by James Clement Dunn, Assistant Secretary at the State Department, revealed deep trust in the Czechoslovak democracy:

The statement attributed to President Beneš in the enclosure to your letter is an unfounded rumor which has been in circulation for over two years. A search of the press and our own sources of information fail to reveal any basis for this rumor. I am sure you will agree with me that such an attitude is also contrary to the well-known political philosophy

<sup>1322</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD files, 860f.4016/100. A report 'Jews of Czechoslovakia', 23 February 1944.

<sup>1323</sup> NARA, RG 84, Czech Legation, London, 1941-1945, Box 8, Czechoslovakia: Minority Problems, The Position of the Jews, 9 May 1944.

<sup>1324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1325</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD files, 860f.4016/3-1945, Daniel L. Moses to Dan [?], 15 March 1945.

of President Beneš and the excellent record of his country in all racial questions.<sup>1326</sup>

It is revealing for the American administration's assessment of the Czechoslovak attitude towards Jews that Czechoslovak intentions were not fully comprehended. Furthermore, the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia was not perceived with the highest urgency and hence not studied in its entirety.

The Czechoslovak 'myth' in the United States was still alive. It was only partially shaken later when American soldiers occupied western parts of Bohemia and witnessed the settling of accounts between Czechs and Sudeten Germans.<sup>1327</sup> The Americans received comprehensive coverage about the situation in post-war Czechoslovakia from its army and embassy. Also western journalists and pro-Jewish activists travelled around Czechoslovakia and provided the Truman administration with first-hand accounts.

In its assessment of the situation in a country, a government in the first place relies on the information it obtains from its official representation. Ambassadors possess considerable influence on their respective governments. The American and British governments were represented in Prague by Ambassadors who were sympathetic to the Czechoslovak cause and eagerly promoted the image of a democratic country.<sup>1328</sup> In this respect, Laurence A. Steinhardt, the first American post-war Ambassador to Prague, was an important actor in the American perception of the events that took place in the Third Czechoslovak Republic, 1945-1948.<sup>1329</sup>

Before 1945, Steinhardt had already gained experience representing US interests in Sweden, the Soviet Union and Turkey. Although he maintained contacts with the Jewish and particularly Zionist circles in the United States, he always promoted the interests of the United States first.<sup>1330</sup> Steinhardt was well informed about the post-war development of the 'Jewish question' in Czechoslovakia. He had

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<sup>1326</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD files, 860f.4016/3-1945, James Clement Dunn to Daniel L. Moses, 24 March 1945.

<sup>1327</sup> Ullmann, Walter, *the United States in Prague 1945-1948* (Boulder, CO: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 60.

<sup>1328</sup> Nichols was once in the Foreign Office labelled as 'a more than 100 percent Czechophile'. See Smetana, Vit, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938-1942)*, p. 298.

<sup>1329</sup> About Steinhardt's background see: Rubin, Barry, 'Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt: The Perils of a Jewish Diplomat, 1940-1945' in *American Jewish History*, Vol. 70, March 1981, pp. 331-346. Rubin called Steinhardt 'America's first Jewish "career" ambassador', which adds another interesting flavour to the whole story.

<sup>1330</sup> Rubin, Barry, 'Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt: The Perils of a Jewish Diplomat, 1940-1945', p. 332f.

information about anti-Jewish disturbances in Slovakia, about the threats that the immigrants from Subcarpathian Ruthenia faced in Czechoslovakia (deportation back to the Soviet Union) and about the persecution of the Jews who in 1930 did not declare Czechoslovak or Jewish nationality.<sup>1331</sup> Representatives of the WJC regularly pleaded for his help and informed him about their intentions to attack the Czechoslovak government in the US press. Steinhardt nevertheless played down the importance of the incidents and advised the WJC not to publish the information.<sup>1332</sup> In one of his letters to Francis T. Williamson (State Department), he argued:

I quite agree with you that the bad press the Czechs have been receiving in the United States – particularly on the subject of anti-Semitism is most unfortunate and that something ought to be done about it, particularly as it is most undeserved. Just because the Czech Government has been busily engaged in reconstructing itself and rehabilitating the country without waiting for help from the outside and has not bothered to advertise its efforts or to engage in propaganda is no good reason why it should be presented in a false light to the American public [underlined in original – J. L.].<sup>1333</sup>

Steinhardt's letter thus provides clear evidence that the notion of the undesirability of attacking the Czechoslovaks in the press was widespread among State Department officials.

There were two factors that shaped Steinhardt's reaction to the development in Czechoslovakia. Inevitably, he always showed preference to the US interests. Consequently, he did not want to alienate the Czechoslovak government. The negative response of the US military authorities in Germany to the implemented transfer of the Sudeten Germans caused trouble in Czechoslovak-American relations.<sup>1334</sup> Furthermore, anti-Jewish incidents in Slovakia received negative publicity in the American press and the reaction of the Czechoslovak authorities was

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<sup>1331</sup> See NARA, RG 59, SD Files, 860F.4016/10-1945, Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1945; NARA, RG 84, Czechoslovakia – Mission to the government-in-exile, box 11, Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, 5 October 1945; LOC, Laurence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 50, Goldmann to Steinhardt, 11 June 1946; *Ibid.*, box 55, correspondence between Steinhardt and Joseph Wechsberg in 1947.

<sup>1332</sup> AfZ, WJC – Geneva Office, C3/1112, Steinhardt to Goldmann, 12 April 1946. Steinhardt wrote: 'I think it would be most unfortunate were there to be any attacks on the Czechoslovak Government in the United States by American Jewish organizations. It seems to me that the least that can be expected of the American Jewish organizations is that they will not attack the Czechoslovak Government until it has taken affirmative action – for obviously under existing conditions whatever the Czechoslovak Government do to help cannot be publicized.'

<sup>1333</sup> LOC, Laurence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 83, Steinhardt to Francis Williamson, 20 October 1945.

<sup>1334</sup> Ullmann, Walter, *The United States in Prague, 1945-1948*, p. 64.

fierce. US diplomats in Prague understood the importance of good relations with the Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>1335</sup> Steinhardt therefore put off American Jews from publishing information about the situation of Jews in Czechoslovakia, believing it might cause more harm than good.



Image no. 14: Laurence Steinhardt (R) in September 1948 with Zdeněk Fierlinger (L) and Antonín Zápotocký (C) (Copyright LIFE).<sup>1336</sup>

Moreover, Steinhardt generally sided with the Czechoslovak cause. His sympathies found expression in remarks concerning Hungary and its attacks on the Czechoslovak government after 1945. He wrote to the State Department:

It strikes me as rather odd that an enemy country defeated only a few weeks ago should be allowed to carry on such a campaign against one of the United Nations, and yet the Czech Government busy with its internal affairs has done nothing to counteract this campaign. [...] I am strongly sympathetic to the desire of the Czechs and Slovaks to rid themselves of the Germans and Hungarians. One could not have much respect for a sovereign country which was torn to pieces by the Germans, Poles and Hungarians, suffered dismemberment and untold sufferings for six years if it does not care to see the process repeated 20, 30, or even 50 years from now. [...] Anything the Department can do to set the Hungarian Government right as to who won the war would undoubtedly be helpful and might save us a great many headaches later on.<sup>1337</sup>

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<sup>1335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1336</sup> [www.life.com](http://www.life.com)

<sup>1337</sup> LOC, Laurence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 83, Steinhardt to Francis Williamson, 20 October 1945.

Steinhardt's pro-Czech sympathies and his intention to secure US interests in Czechoslovakia were the main reasons for his whitewashing of Czechoslovakia's treatment of the Jews. Steinhardt was aware of the problems facing the Czechoslovak Jews. He nevertheless preferred not to spread the information and rather tried to secure some help via secret channels. He mentioned his diplomatic interventions with the Czechoslovak authorities in his letters to Goldmann of the WJC. He tried, for example, to prolong the decision on deporting Ruthenian Jews back to the Soviet Union and wanted to allow them to cross illegally to the US Zone in Germany.<sup>1338</sup> Yet Steinhardt never blamed post-war developments on the Czechoslovak authorities. The main culprits, he maintained, were the remnants of the Slovak People's Party, the transitional period of unlawfulness, regional Communist functionaries or growing pressure of the Soviet Union.<sup>1339</sup>

It was not only Steinhardt who did not want to interfere with internal Czechoslovak affairs. Rudolph Rusek, an American subject, appealed to the State Department in September 1947 on behalf of his brother Otto. The latter was threatened with deportation from Czechoslovakia because, although of Jewish origin, he had declared German nationality in 1930. Rusek closed his plea to the State Department by asking whether the Czechoslovak government was entitled to deport Jews 'because they were born in Sudetenland'.<sup>1340</sup> Williamson responded, using diplomatic language:

I regret to inform you that this Government is not in a position to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state such as Czechoslovakia unless the rights of American citizens are involved. [...] With reference to the last paragraph of your letter, as you are no doubt aware, the transfer of certain German and Hungarian populations in Czechoslovakia was approved by the Allied nations at Potsdam on condition that transfers be conducted in a humane and orderly manner. The Czechoslovak authorities were responsible for determining which persons would be expelled. While most of these were located in the Sudeten area, it is understood that neither the address, birthplace nor religion of an individual was a basic factor in the selection.<sup>1341</sup>

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<sup>1338</sup> AfZ, WJC – Geneva Office, C3/1112, Steinhardt to Goldmann, 12 April 1946.

<sup>1339</sup> See *Ibid.*; LOC, Manuscript Division, Laurence A. Steinhardt Papers, box 83, Steinhardt to Goldmann, 17 September 1945; *Ibid.*, box 85, Steinhardt to Joseph Wechsberg, 3 March 1947; NARA, RG 59, SD Files, 840F.4016/10-1945, Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1945.

<sup>1340</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD files, 860f.4016/9-2447, Rudolph Russek to the President of the United States, 24 September 1947.

<sup>1341</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD files, 860f.4016/9-2447, Francis T. Williamson, Assistant Chief, Division of Central European Affairs to Rudolph Russek, 15 October 1947.

The central American agencies apparently did not intend to question whether there were any Jews among the expelled Germans. It does not mean that the Americans were not aware of the changing situation in Czechoslovakia. Charles Woodruff Yost of the US Embassy in Prague summarized the situation in Czechoslovakia with the utmost precision:

[T]hus a situation is created in which, while the Czechoslovak people as a whole are not anti-Semitic and do sympathise with the sufferings of the Jewish people during the war, conflicts over property in which both private interests and political strategy are involved are nevertheless gradually contributing to a reascendance of anti-Semitic feelings.<sup>1342</sup>

The Czechoslovaks' concerns about the influence of the pro-Jewish lobby in the United States were not based on an accurate assessment of the situation in America. Furthermore, the very low number of Jewish survivors in Czechoslovakia failed to catch the attention of the American administration which was busy solving problems of much broader scope, such as of DPs and of Palestine. Also Steinhardt's role needs to be highlighted. After all, Czechoslovakia managed to retain its positive image. What finally shook US relations with Czechoslovakia was not the position of Jews, but the growing strength of the Communist party, the influence of the Soviet Union and the unsolved compensation to Americans for economic losses in Czechoslovakia. That was also the reason why the financial loan to Czechoslovakia, originally supposed to be supported by American Jews, was not granted.<sup>1343</sup>

In comparison with the Americans, the British government was more involved in the discussion about the Jewish position in liberated Czechoslovakia. After the war, the British were cautiously following the situation in Palestine. The rise of anti-Semitism in East-Central Europe added another dimension to the issue of the Jewish DPs waiting in German camps and longing for emigration to Palestine.<sup>1344</sup>

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<sup>1342</sup> NARA, RG 59, SD files, 860f.4016/8-647, Yost to the Secretary of State, 6 August 1947.

<sup>1343</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Volume IV, p. 250f., The Chargé in Czechoslovakia (Bruins) to the Secretary of State, 5 December 1947 (860F.6131/12-547).

<sup>1344</sup> The western Allies were divided in their perception of DPs and Palestine. See Bauer, Yehuda, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 257f. As it was, the problem of the DPs was the main reason behind the American call on Britain to open Palestine for Jewish immigration. See also Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, pp. 89-114.

Furthermore, in comparison with the Americans, the British had reserved opinion about the Czechoslovak treatment of minorities overall.<sup>1345</sup>

The British government's interest in the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia was interconnected with their plans concerning Palestine. Already during the war they reluctantly followed the pro-Zionist proclamations of the Czechoslovak exiled politicians. In 1942, Frank Roberts of the Foreign Office commented on the contact between Beneš and Weizmann:

I am sorry to see that Dr. Beneš and Dr. Weizmann have been getting together as I fear that no good to H.M.G. can result from such contacts. It must surely be our policy to convince Central European Governments that they must cope with their own Jewish problem at home and not look to H.M.G. to provide convenient national homes abroad either in Palestine or elsewhere.<sup>1346</sup>

As suggested by Roberts, the Czechoslovaks, together with other governments, supported the Jewish immigration to Palestine not for altruistic motives, but to solve their own internal problems. The British had no illusions about the motivations behind Beneš's support of Zionism.

Jewish issues featured among despatches sent from Prague after the war by the British Ambassador Nichols.<sup>1347</sup> He forwarded information about anti-Jewish incidents occurring in Slovakia and mentioned anti-Semitic proclamations of low-ranking regional officials.<sup>1348</sup> A month before the pogrom in Topoľčany, Nichols summarized the situation: 'There seems no doubt that anti-Semitism is on the rise in

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<sup>1345</sup> Cornwall, Mark, 'The Rise and Fall of a 'special relationship'? Britain and Czechoslovakia, 1930-1948', in Brian Brivati – Harriet Jones (eds.), *What Difference did the War make?* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), pp. 130-150. See also TNA, FO371/47089, N7153/207/12, a minute by Donnelly: 'Czechoslovakia had in American eyes something of the same sort of prestige as Finland used to enjoy. It was regarded as one oasis in Europe of the kind of democracy in which America believed.' See also TNA, FO371/34355, M. Masaryk's Lecture entitled 'Minorities and the Democratic State'. Handwritten remark by D. Allen: 'Nothing much in this, as Mr. [Philip] Nichols says, except the usual Czech self-congratulation, which would carry more conviction if one could feel convinced of the disinterestedness and high-mindedness of the Czechs in internal affairs at the present time.'

<sup>1346</sup> TNA, FO371/26388, C14276/216/12, From Mr. P.B.B. Nichols to Mr. Makins. A minute by F. K. Roberts, 4 January 1942. Roberts continued: 'I think, therefore, that when the time comes to discuss any of these arrangements with Dr. Beneš, we should discourage the idea of getting rid of 40% of the Jews in Ruthenia.'

<sup>1347</sup> TNA, FO371/47096, N16797207/12, report about the situation in Czechoslovakia during the first half a year after the liberation, by the Ambassador Nichols, 28 November 1945. The Jews were not mentioned at all.

<sup>1348</sup> TNA, FO371/47081, N10511/48/12, Nichols to the Foreign Office, 16 August 1945. Unrest in Slovakia; *Ibid.*, N11255/48/12, Nichols to the Foreign Office, 27 August 1945. A report about anti-Semitic remarks made by the Communist Chairman of Topoľčany District National Committee as they appeared in the press (11 August 1945).

Slovakia and unconfirmed reports refer to excesses already having taken place. At the same time Jews themselves express fear of pogroms'.<sup>1349</sup> Even so, the Ambassador emphasized his confidence in the Czechoslovak government.<sup>1350</sup> Likewise, when describing the Topoľčany events, Nichols stuck to the official declaration of the Czechoslovak government and did not condemn the inaction of the authorities.<sup>1351</sup>

Minutes made by Foreign Office officials on Nichols' despatches documented that his reports about anti-Semitic incidents in Slovakia did not cause any reaction in the Foreign Office. The British were more concerned with the prepared influx of the Sudeten Germans, who were partly destined for the British occupation zone in Germany. The British were aware that their ambiguous attitude towards the expulsion complicated relations with the Czechoslovak government.<sup>1352</sup> The Czechoslovaks could not comprehend why the western Allies did not enthusiastically support their intention to get rid of the German minority once and for all. As Ralph Parker wrote to *The Times* office in London: 'I am convinced that one of the most important tasks of our diplomacy in Central Europe is to prevent such impression of Britain being seemingly unsympathetic to national aspirations'.<sup>1353</sup> Consequently, Jewish issues were considered marginal in comparison with millions of Sudeten Germans to be expelled in the following months.

Yet the British authorities did respond to the Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews when it threatened British interests. The British attitude can best be documented through issues connected with the Czechoslovak citizenship of the Jews who in 1930 declared German and Hungarian nationality. The Foreign Office was informed about the Constitutional Decree, depriving the German and Hungarian citizens of their Czechoslovak citizenship. This law did not cause any response among British diplomats. The British considered it solely as an internal

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<sup>1349</sup> TNA, FO371/47081, N11255/48/12, Nichols to the Foreign Office, 27 August 1945.

<sup>1350</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1351</sup> TNA, FO371/47081, N13748/48/12, Nichols to Bevin, 5 October 1945.

<sup>1352</sup> TNA, FO371/47091, N9514/207/12, Nichols to Eden, 23 July 1945. Nichols informed Eden about the overt criticism the US Army received in Western Bohemia because of its allegedly friendly attitude towards the Sudeten Germans. FO371/47096, N16797/207/12, Nichols to Bevin, 8 December 1945. Nichols wrote: 'Meanwhile, during the last six months there has been a notable increase in the tendency amongst the Czechs to believe that the Americans and ourselves do not appreciate the importance of this problem [expulsion of the Sudeten Germans – J. L.] and are likely to become increasingly critical of the policy of transfers and even to find some way to preventing its realisation.'

<sup>1353</sup> TNA, FO371/47090, N9298/207/12, Ralph Parker to Barrington Ward (*The Times*), 9 July 1945.

Czechoslovak affair.<sup>1354</sup> We are not informed about how far the British realised that by this decree also some of the Jews in Czechoslovakia could be deprived of their citizenship. They simply did not investigate the matter.

The rules of the game changed only several months later, when the British received reports that German-speaking Jews might be expelled to Germany. The Foreign Office immediately contacted Nichols:

We should like to emphasise that Jews who have a good claim to Czechoslovak nationality are, in our view, simply Czechoslovaks of Jewish race. We are determined to stop the general exodus of Jews from Poland which we regard as an entirely unscrupulous ramp.<sup>1355</sup>

The Foreign Office considered the looming expulsion of these Jews from Czechoslovakia as a part of *Brichah*, the flight of Jews from Poland. As in the case with Roberts during the war, the British perceived the situation through the lens of Palestine. The countries of East-Central Europe were allegedly solving their internal issues at the expense of the British Empire.

The divergence of American and British attitudes towards Jewish survivors in Europe can be documented also in the case of Czechoslovakia. At the beginning of 1946, both western powers were informed about the planned repatriation of Ruthenian Jews, who stayed in Czechoslovakia, to the Soviet Union. All the civilians who in 1930 declared Czechoslovak nationality were allowed to opt for Czechoslovak citizenship. However, most of the Jews had adhered to Jewish nationality and were thus threatened with forced repatriation.<sup>1356</sup> The Czechoslovak authorities did not want to antagonize the Soviet authorities and there was also reluctance to let these 'foreign elements' stay in Czechoslovakia.<sup>1357</sup> Therefore the Czechoslovaks were liable to agree with Soviet claims.

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<sup>1354</sup> TNA, FO371/47091, N10171/207/12, Nichols to the Foreign Office. Minutes: 21 August 1945, 'This is I think exclusively an affair for the Czechs' [the signature is not legible], 23 August 1945, 'I agree' [the signature is not legible]. For other information about the new Czechoslovak laws depriving Germans and Hungarians of their citizenship, see: TNA, HO213/1797, GEN323/6/11, M. Nathan to Home Office, Aliens Department, Central Committee for Refugees, 22 August 1945.

<sup>1355</sup> TNA, FO371/57685, WR178/3/48, MacKillop to Nichols, 5 February 1946. The information about the Czechoslovaks' plans to expel the Jews, who in 1930 declared German nationality, was forwarded to the Foreign Office by Zelmanovits in the office of the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees.

<sup>1356</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu A., 'Carpatho-Rus' Jewry: The Last Czechoslovakian Chapter, 1944-1949', pp. 278f.

<sup>1357</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279f.

Neither of the western powers officially interfered in negotiations that were entirely an internal affair of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Yet Steinhardt tried, with the silent consent of the Czechoslovak authorities, to help to get these Jews to the US zone in Germany.<sup>1358</sup> The British response was fundamentally different. Easterman of the WJC approached the Foreign Office to ask the Czechoslovaks to grant citizenship to the threatened Jews.<sup>1359</sup> The Foreign Office responded that although they did not agree with any repatriation against the will of the individual concerned, they ‘would have no locus standi for intervening [underlined in the original – J. L.]’.<sup>1360</sup>

This was not the end of the whole story. The British were informed in July 1946 that the Jewish Agency office in Prague planned to issue the Ruthenian Jews with ‘provisional certificates’ for Palestine. Based on these documents, the Jews could be allowed to go to work in France and thus would avoid forced repatriation.<sup>1361</sup> The Foreign Office was aware that they could not interfere with the French decision to allow these Jews to enter its territory. Nevertheless, the British started an information campaign to explain that ‘provisional certificates’ did not entitle their owners to enter Palestine and did not give any assurance that a proper certificate might be issued in the future.<sup>1362</sup> The Mandate authorities furthermore spread the rumours that the true intention of the Ruthenian Jews was not to work in France, but to reach Palestine as illegal immigrants.<sup>1363</sup> The Foreign Office instructed the British Ambassador to Paris, A. Duff Cooper, to ask the French to prevent the departure of these Jews to Palestine.<sup>1364</sup>

Thus the British became interested in the Czechoslovak attitude towards the Jews only when the Czechoslovak policy threatened to contradict British plans for Palestine. British interventions with the Czechoslovak government during the flight

<sup>1358</sup> AfZ, WJC – Geneva Office, C3/1112, Steinhardt to Wise, 10 April 1946; *Ibid.*, Steinhardt to Goldmann, 12 April 1946; AJA, WJC Papers, Steinhardt to Goldmann, 21 May 1946.

<sup>1359</sup> TNA, FO371/57689, WR838/3/48, Ian L. Henderson to the Foreign Office, 11 March 1946. Henderson wrote about his meeting with Easterman.

<sup>1360</sup> TNA, FO371/57689, WR838/3/48, Ian L. Henderson to the Foreign Office, 11 March 1946. Henderson wrote about his meeting with Easterman. Similar response was later forwarded to Silverman, MP, who supported Easterman’s request. TNA, FO371/57689, WR838/3/48, McNeil to Silverman, 2 May 1946.

<sup>1361</sup> TNA, FO371/57691, WR1212/3/48, High Commissioner in Palestine to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 12 April 1946; Colonial Office to Henderson, 1 May 1946; TNA, FO371/57692, WR1789/3/48, HC Palestine to the Secretary of State, 20 June 1946.

<sup>1362</sup> TNA, FO371/57691, WR1212/3/48, Ernest Bevin to H.M. Representatives in Europe, 24 June 1946.

<sup>1363</sup> TNA, FO371/57692, WR1789/3/48, Mathieson (Colonial Office) to Henderson, 4 July 1946.

<sup>1364</sup> TNA, FO371/57692, WR1789/3/48, Edwards (Foreign Office) to A. Duff Cooper, 24 July 1946.

of Polish Jews across the Czechoslovak territory support this hypothesis.<sup>1365</sup> The British considered the whole *Brichah* movement as an illegal enterprise organized by Zionist agents to undermine the British position in the Middle East. Although the British Ambassador to Poland, Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, agreed that the position of Jews in Poland had become unbearable, the Foreign Office apparently did not share his view.<sup>1366</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Several key issues in post-war Czechoslovakia triggered repeated interventions by Jewish groups, especially the WJC.<sup>1367</sup> The first of these issues was the citizenship of Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia. In the second place the WJC raised the issue of the minority status of Czechoslovak Jews. Thirdly, the third Czechoslovak republic was occupied throughout its duration with the problem of negotiating Jewish restitution, including heirless property.<sup>1368</sup> Fourthly, in 1946, pro-Jewish activists were alarmed by the danger that several thousands of Ruthenian Jews might be deported to the Soviet Union. And, fifthly, there was the issue of anti-Semitic tendencies in Slovakia which continuously called for the attention of activists in the west.

In their interventions, the pro-Jewish activists received important support from the American press. In contrast, the Jewish community in Czechoslovakia, particularly in Bohemia and Moravia, was reluctant to back public campaigns against the Czechoslovak government.<sup>1369</sup> Also Slovak Jewry, though more willing to

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<sup>1365</sup> CNA, Úřad Předsedy vlády – běžná spisovna (ÚPV-BS) (The Office of the Prime Minister), box 1322, the Office of the Prime Minister to the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Interior, 6 September 1946. See also Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, p. 191.

<sup>1366</sup> Kochavi, Arie J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, pp. 162, 169f., 178. See also TNA, FO371/57694, WR2287/3/48, Cavendish Bentick to the Foreign Office, 25 August 1946. Cavendish Bentick repeatedly stressed that the British Embassy in Warsaw did not have any proof that the movement of the Jews was organized by the Zionist organizations.

<sup>1367</sup> However, also other groups intervened on behalf of Czechoslovak Jews. See the *Memorandum on the Jewish Position in Czechoslovakia* prepared by the American Jewish Conference for the US Department of State, CZA, C7/1293.

<sup>1368</sup> Kubowitzki, A. Leon, *Unity in Dispersion. A History of the World Jewish Congress* (New York: WJC, 1948), p. 283; AJA, WJC Papers, H101/05, Easterman to Clementis, 1 December 1948.

<sup>1369</sup> ABS, 425-232-5, Frischer to Perutz (CJRC), 18 October 1945; ABS, 425-231-1, Eisner (HOC) to Frischer, 7 January 1946; CZA, Z5/1156, L. B. [Joint ?] about the meeting with Bartley Crum, member of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine.

threaten the government with public campaigning, approached the theme carefully.<sup>1370</sup>

Pro-Jewish activists never received any significant support from the American and British governments. Whereas the British generally opposed any pro-Zionist campaigns, Steinhardt preferred diplomatic interventions. Curiously, many of his actions, for example on behalf of the Ruthenian Jews, went against the interests of his British allies. To complete the picture, the Soviets were never really visible during the time under consideration. Yet their impact on Czechoslovak policy was undeniable. The passage of Brichah and the Czechoslovak support for the partition plans could not have been done without the consent of the Soviet Union.

Although the Americans and British did not support Jewish interventions, the Czechoslovak authorities apparently believed in the existence of an influential Jewish lobby in the United States. Therefore they felt the need to maintain the image of a democratic country with a tolerant attitude towards the Jews. In response to negative publicity abroad, the Czechoslovak government was willing to amend post-war laws. Around 2,000 German-speaking Jews were allowed to stay in Czechoslovakia and Ruthenian Jews were not, in the end, repatriated back to the Soviet Union.<sup>1371</sup> The Czechoslovaks, although excessively sensitive to any criticism abroad, were aware of the controversies arising from developments in the post-war Republic. Yet in cases when the interests of people in the homeland outweighed the need for a positive image abroad, even foreign interventions could not help. This was the case with either the minority status of the Jews or the restitution of (heirless) Jewish property.

However, just as the Czechoslovaks believed in the need for a positive Jewish influence in the United States, so the Zionists also needed Czechoslovak support. Pro-Jewish activists repeatedly expressed disappointment and concerns about developments in post-war Czechoslovakia. Yet at the same time they acknowledged the need for the goodwill of the Czechoslovak government. Continuous and eloquent Czechoslovak support for Zionism seemed crucial. In the UN, Czechoslovakia overtly backed the creation of the State of Israel. Moreover, the government agreed an arms deal (for cash dollars of course) with the Yishuv that helped to win the

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<sup>1370</sup> UHA, Dr Vojtech Winterstein Collection, W.3/1, SRP meetings on 23 September 1946 and 31 October 1946.

<sup>1371</sup> Jelinek, Yeshayahu A., 'Carpatho-Rus' Jewry: The Last Czechoslovakian Chapter, 1944-1949', pp. 278-82.

Israeli war of independence. Furthermore, the regional factor came into play again. The logistic and material help to Jews fleeing Poland promoted the democratic image of Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovak politicians were able to utilise the prevalence of the climate of ‘fear’ in Poland as a way of stressing their own humanitarian spirit. The support of Brichah and Zionism replaced the otherwise negative tendencies of post-war Czechoslovakia in Jewish public memory.



## CONCLUSION – BEYOND CONDEMNATION AND IDEALIZATION

Antony Polonsky asks us to go beyond ‘condemnation, apologetics and apologies’ when studying Polish-Jewish relations in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>1372</sup> He rejects any simplifications in presenting historical research and stresses the complexities of Polish-Jewish relations on the eve of the Holocaust. There have been several intensive debates about modern Polish-Jewish history. One can mention recent discussions on books by Jan T. Gross. Studies of the Polish exile government’s response to the Jewish plight during the war have also triggered a strong exchange of opinions between David Engel and Dariusz Stola.<sup>1373</sup> Similar debates have further stimulated historical research and modern Polish-Jewish history belongs to the best documented areas of Jewish studies as such. This is particularly clear in comparison with modern Czechoslovak-Jewish history, and especially Czechoslovak historiography. We can indeed argue that besides radical pro-Zionist historiography that condemns the situation in Europe as such, Czechoslovakia is still presented as an ideal country that respected the Jews in the inter-war period and responded positively to the Holocaust. When the Czechoslovak post-war record is questioned, the situation is explained in terms of the general moral decadence of the Second World War and as a bitter legacy of Nazi rule in Czechoslovakia. My thesis could thus be summarized, with a slight amendment of Polonsky’s thesis, as going beyond condemnation, but at the same time beyond idealization.

In summary, there are eleven points to emphasise.

First, we can document that the behaviour of various governments-in-exile during the Second World War was shaped by almost identical factors. As in the case with the Polish government-in-exile, also the Czechoslovaks’ treatment of Jewish issues was shaped by their desire to maintain the image of a democratic country. Yet the Czechoslovak government at the same time tried to keep pace with strong

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<sup>1372</sup> Polonsky, Antony, ‘Beyond Condemnation, Apologetics and Apologies: On the Complexity of Polish Behavior Toward the Jews During the Second World War’, in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry XIII. The Fate of European Jews, 1939-1945. Continuity or Contingency?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 190-224.

<sup>1373</sup> Stola, Dariusz, ‘In the Shadow of the Facts’, in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 8: Jews in independent Poland* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), pp. 331-344; Engel, David, ‘Reading and Misreading: A Reply to Dariusz Stola’, in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 8: Jews in independent Poland* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), pp. 345-381.

national radicalization of the resistance movement abroad, as well as in the occupied homeland.

Second, we can argue that the national radicalization was more strongly articulated in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the territory subjected to the German occupation regime. The Czechs responded to Munich with renewed interests in Czech history, Czech language and Czech culture. Furthermore, they were persuaded that the occupation of the country was caused by the betrayal committed by minorities. In the Czechs' perception, the Sudeten Germans had been treated decently, but they, as the fifth column, helped the German Reich with its attack on the integrity of Czechoslovakia. In the case of Slovaks, the end of the first Czechoslovak Republic brought them the first modern experience of independence; an independence that was granted at the expense of the previous Republic. The modern Slovak nation was born under the Hungarian rule in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Germans were the main enemies of Czechs, Hungarians were for Slovaks. Consequently, the resistance movement demanded that post-war Czechoslovakia would be constituted as a nationally homogeneous Slavonic country.

Third, in order to be recognized as the official representation of the Czechoslovak resistance movement abroad, the Beneš government had to respect the sentiments of people living in occupied Bohemia and Moravia, as well as in independent Slovakia. Reports about these sentiments and this political programme were forwarded to London by underground groups, the self-proclaimed representatives of the oppressed people. The people who were able to communicate the political stance of the population were only a small minority in comparison with the population as such. Resurgent nationalism in the occupied homeland influenced the perception of the Jewish minority by the general population. The Jews were constructed as a distinct minority that had never felt Czech and in fact had contributed to the Germanization or Magyarization of the Czech and Slovak territories in the past. The Nazi persecution of the Jews was not rejoiced by the non-Jewish population, but the political, social and economic position of the Jews after the war was to be 'adjusted'. This image was presented to the exiles in reports that reached London.

Fourth, the exiles' rejection of the German and Hungarian minorities opened the issue of the perception of the Jews. All the minorities were perceived negatively, because they might have disrupted the peaceful development in post-war

Czechoslovakia. Also the Jews were generally constructed as an entity that was mostly foreign to the interests of the Czech and Slovak nations. During the war the Czechoslovak government-in-exile repeatedly stressed that ‘the Jewish question’ in Europe needed to be solved and therefore would cease to exist. The main problem was the existence of anti-Semitic ideologies that, according to the exiles, poisoned the minds of people in Europe. Yet as argued by the exiles, the problem had to be solved by the Jews themselves, not by the majority population. The international community would contribute to the solution of ‘the Jewish question’ by the creation of a Jewish state. The Jews who still wanted to declare their national status, those who claimed to belong to the Jewish nation, would be asked to move to Palestine. The Jews who wished to stay in European countries had to undergo a complete integration, even assimilation, into major nations. The Jewish *national* minority in Europe would no longer be present.

Fifth, Czechoslovak-Jewish relations in exile were shaped by mutual mistrust. The Czechoslovak exiles, under the influence of the home underground groups, demanded the unconditional loyalty of all subjects who intended to claim residence in the post-war Republic. The Zionists/national Jewish groups became the most eloquent defenders of Jewish minority rights among the Czechoslovaks in London. Yet their political demands were perceived as a fragmentation of the exile movement and raised the possibility of ‘dual loyalty’. Furthermore, pro-Jewish groups frequently threatened to accuse exiled governments of anti-Semitism; this was essentially in connection with the situation in exiles’ armies. The cornerstone of the Czechoslovak resistance was the notion of their adherence to democratic principles: self-congratulation with regard to the image of a democratic country in the heart of Europe. Particularistic demands presented by national Jews and the constant threat of anti-Semitic accusations served as proof to the exiles that the Jews were not a reliable minority.

Sixth, the complexity of the Czechoslovak perception of the Jews was highlighted by their belief in the existence of the pro-Jewish lobby in the United States. The Czechoslovaks had acknowledged the role of American Jewish politicians in President Wilson’s decision to support the creation of the Czechoslovak republic. The Benes government repeatedly expressed concerns about the power of pro-Zionist press in the United States. Hence the response of this ‘mighty’ Jewish press to the non-appointment of a Zionist/Jew to the first exiled parliament in 1940

eventually persuaded Beneš to nominate Frischer as an MP a year later. Nevertheless, this temporary concession to the national Jews reinforced Beneš's decision that Jews, as a distinct minority, should not be present in the renewed Republic.

Seventh, in comparison with the Czechoslovak resistance overall, Beneš was a moderate politician who acknowledged the need for balanced relations with the western powers. He was a politician who was aware that Czechoslovakia had to maintain the image of a democratic country. Yet even Beneš regarded Jews as a not entirely reliable minority that had mighty supporters abroad; a minority that had the potential to complicate the situation in the renewed Republic. Thus the overt support of the Zionist movement was offering another option to the national Jews. Whilst the Sudeten Germans were to be expelled from Czechoslovakia, the national Jews could decide where their loyalties were to be placed. In Beneš's opinion, a nation, in order to prove its existence, had to conquer. National Jews, if they wanted to constitute a nation, should prove it in Palestine.

Eighth, there were not many democratic politicians who in the early 1940s overtly declared support for the Zionist movement. Pro-Jewish activists in the west acknowledged the need for good relations with the Beneš government. During and after the war, the Czechoslovak support of political and practical Zionism was an important contribution to the struggle for an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Especially Beneš's contacts with the Soviet authorities documented the Czechoslovak intention to support the Zionist political programme. The information brought by Beneš from Moscow in 1943 further assured the Zionist leadership that good relations with the Czechoslovak President were in the interest of the Zionist project.

Ninth, the Czechoslovak exile government's response to the Holocaust proved that all interventions and diplomatic activities were subordinated to the interests of the Czechoslovak nation. We can document several humanitarian acts of the Beneš government that were to alleviate the plight of the victims of Nazi oppression, including the Jews. The singularity of the fate of the Jews was repeatedly recognized by the Czechoslovak government. The humanitarian compassion with the suffering minority was frequently articulated and had its imprint in specific rescue or relief actions conducted by the government. Yet all these actions had to conform to the Czechoslovak interests, first of all in the diplomatic sphere. In their official communications about the Jewish situation in occupied Europe, ordinary Czechs and

Slovaks were always dissociated from the Jewish persecution. These government's efforts led to the whitewashing of the Slovak complicity in the Nazi 'Final Solution'. Furthermore, any diplomatic interventions threatening to cause even indirect recognition of the political *status quo* in Slovakia, that is the existence of the puppet Tiso government, were rejected. The main interest was the reestablishment of a united country of Czechs and Slovaks. Hence all political interventions on behalf of the Jews had to respect this programme. In the government's perception of the war, the main attack was led by the Nazis against the existence of the Czechoslovak republic, not against any of its particular national, religious or cultural groups.

Tenth, the Jews in liberated Czechoslovakia were not granted any group minority rights. Although national-Jewish activities were not suppressed, assimilation was favoured by the Czechoslovak authorities. All the main branches of the Czechoslovak resistance agreed on this programme. However, the laws that enabled the Czechoslovak authorities to expel the German minority impacted on the Jews as well. The laws prepared by the exiles could easily be misused by people whose sole interest was often to secure Jewish property aryanized during the war. Additionally, in the case of Slovakia, Jewish themes entered mainstream politics. Both the Communists and the Democratic Party utilised anti-Jewish sentiments among the Slovak population in their political struggle. The Communist party also adhered to anti-Semitic discourse in Bohemia and Moravia.

Eleventh and lastly, the Czechoslovak attitude towards the Jews was shaped by several complex factors. Yet the same can be concluded about the attitude of national Jews towards Czechoslovakia. For example, the WJC was informed about what they perceived as a change in the Czechoslovak attitude towards the Jews relatively early. These concerns were further multiplied by the existence of the notion or 'myth' of a democratic Czechoslovakia. The WJC was anxious that if the information about the plans became public, other – 'undemocratic' – countries in the region, particularly Poland and Rumania, could adhere to identical plans with reference to democratic Czechoslovakia; the model country of East-Central Europe was setting an example that was easy to abuse.

However, the development in the broader region, particularly in Poland, unintentionally supported the Czechoslovak 'myth'. During the war, Polish-Jewish relations in London were gradually deteriorating. Furthermore, the events in liberated Poland and the Czechoslovak involvement in the evacuation of the escaping Polish-

Jewish refugees further contributed to the Czechoslovaks' efforts to maintain their democratic image. Yet even in Prague, the Communist coup and the deterioration of the Soviet-Israeli relations were soon to change the situation.

The official Czechoslovak policy towards the Jews underwent significant change between 1918 and 1948. In 1918, Masaryk's Czechoslovakia accepted Jews of all ideological and national backgrounds. During the 1920s and 1930s, Jews in Czechoslovakia enjoyed considerable freedom and an independent cultural and national development. Many Jews abandoned their German or Hungarian background and identified themselves with Czechs or Slovaks. Simultaneously, the number of Jews adhering to the Jewish national movement was constantly rising. However, the Second World War and resurgent Czech/Slovak nationalism/s impacted on the Jewish position in Czechoslovakia. Only full integration into the main nations was offered to the Jews who wanted to stay in the Republic. Contemporary historiography acknowledges the peculiar situation of Jewish survivors in post-war Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that the post-war developments had their origins during the war and cannot be attributed purely to a malignant influence of Nazi anti-Semitism. Yet Czechoslovakia still desired to maintain the image of a democratic country and its overt support of Zionism served this purpose. An adherence to liberal democracy was a key political asset used by Czechoslovakia since her creation in 1918. Fair treatment of minorities, in particular the Jews, became part of this 'myth'. However, the Second World War brought to the fore Czechoslovak efforts to nationally homogenize the post-war Republic and rid it of its 'disloyal' minorities. The change in the Czechoslovak *policy* towards the Jews in the 1940s raises the question as to what extent this reflected a change in mentalities. How did Czechoslovaks perceive the Jews, as a minority, prior to the conflict? Did the positive treatment of the Jews mean that they, as a minority, were perceived favourably? This issue deserves further evaluation by future researchers.

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