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Jan Masaryk and the Palestinian Solution

Solving the German, Jewish, and Statelessness
Questions in East Central Europe

Abstract

This article uses war-time speeches, notes scribbled on postwar planning pamphlets, confidential government letters and private conversations from the early to mid-1940s to demonstrate how Jan Masaryk's understanding of postwar Jewish questions, namely who belongs to the Jewish people and where do those Jewish people belong geographically, cannot be unwoven from broader questions regarding German belonging in the Czechoslovak body politic. While the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister remained committed to resolving statelessness as a condition and wanted to protect Czech and Slovak-speaking Jews in his reconstituted postwar state, his commitment to purging Czechoslovakia of its German minority trumped his other beliefs. This obsession with cleansing the Czechoslovak body politic of Germans and German groupness captivated Jan Masaryk so much that he sometimes failed to differentiate German-speaking Czechoslovak Jews from the broader ethnically German mass. Therefore, scholars who desire to understand how Jan Masaryk utilized his power and influence to keep the bricha flowing across the Polish-Czechoslovakian border in 1946 or how he lobbied for the creation of a Jewish polity in the Middle East, must evaluate how his broader Weltanschauung necessitated the reorganization of all east central European peoples along political lines. In this way, Masaryk's postwar commitment to enabling Jewish movement away from east central Europe and towards a faraway, ethnicized polity is best understood within the context of the overall ethnic revolution, which gripped the region between Berlin and Moscow across the 1940s.

A few weeks after the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine produced their much anticipated report, Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk expressed his agreement with the majority recommendation to divide the British Mandate into two federated states: one for Arabs and one for Jews. Meeting with representatives of the UN in Lake Success, New York on 8 October 1947, Masaryk rationalised his support for the contentious plan and a provision therein encouraging more Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in Europe to emigrate, urgently if necessary, towards this new polity. In comments featured in *The New York Times* one day later, Masaryk spoke candidly about the "Jews of the ghetto, the gas chamber and those still in concentration camps".¹ He urged that these Jews, whom he no longer identified as Czechoslovak or Polish citizens but as members of the Jewish people, should be aided in their quest to enter Palestine and establish themselves as part of the soon-to-be partitioned state. Masaryk's comments in the autumn of 1947 expressed the

1 Thomas J. Hamilton, U.N. Urged to Seek Zionist-Arab Talk, in: *The New York Times*, 9 October 1947, 12. Masaryk most likely meant in displaced person camps, which were often located in former concentration camps.

view that Europe's Jews "belonged" outside of Europe's borders and closely aligned with a specific set of actions he had taken more than a year earlier.

During the summer of 1946, Masaryk and a few key actors within the Czechoslovak government refused to let the border between their state and Poland close, thereby allowing Polish Jews to exit their homeland en route towards the Adriatic or DP camps in occupied Germany and Austria and onward to new hypothetical homelands in the Middle East, Western Europe, and across the oceans. The Polish Jews crossing the border into Czechoslovakia in June, July, and August were not the first to use the north-eastern border of Masaryk's state as a departure point. Beginning in February 1946, large groups of Polish Jews, many of whom had survived the war in the Soviet Union and had just recently returned to Poland on organised transports earlier that year, began swarming the border crossings near the town of Náchod in Czechoslovakia. By the end of June 1946, the last of the 180,000 to 200,000 Jews with Polish citizenship who had spent the war years in the Soviet Union had returned to Polish territory but not to their former homes.² Many of these residences stood in regions relinquished to the westward expanding Soviet Union. Thus, central planners at the state level directed them onward toward depopulated cities mainly in the so-called Recovered Territories, the westernmost territories of the new Polish state that had belonged to the German state. These returnees arrived to homes left empty by evacuating 'ethnic' Germans and to navigate the often deadly terrain of the post-war Polish state.³

In the immediate postwar years, a condition bordering on civil war existed across Polish territory at varying times in varying locations and between various groups (combatants in this war included Poles aligned with the government-in-exile in London, "home" communists, "Moscow" communists, extremist Ukrainian national-

2 On the Polish experience in the Soviet Union during the Second World War, see Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile. Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939–48*, London 1994; Laura Jockusch/Tamar Lewinsky, *Paradise Lost? Postwar Memory of Polish Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 24 (Winter 2010) 3, 373–399, I take the numbers of the repatriates from Jockusch and Tamar; Natalie Belsky, *Encounters in the East. Evacuees in the Soviet Hinterland During the Second World War* (Dissertation), Chicago 2005; Eliana Adler, *Hrubieszów at the Crossroads. Polish Jews Navigate the German and Soviet Occupations*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 28 (Spring 2014) 1, 1–30; Katherine Jolluck, *Exile and Identity. Polish Women in the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, Pittsburgh 2002; Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station. Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War*, Ithaca 2009; Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile. Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939–48*, London 1994; Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad. The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*, Princeton 1988; Mark Edele/Sheila Fitzpatrick/Atina Grossmann (ed.), *Shelter from the Holocaust. Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, Detroit 2017.

3 The English-language historiography on forced population transfers, especially of 'ethnic Germans' in the postwar years, has grown exponentially of late. See Gregor Thum, *Uprooted. How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions*, translated from German by Tom Lampert and Allison Brown, Princeton/Oxford 2011; Hugo Service, *Reinterpreting the Expulsion of Germans from Poland, 1945–9*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 47 (2012) 3, 528–550.; R.M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane. The Expulsion of the Germans After World War Two*, New Haven 2012; Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black. Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, Cambridge, M.A./London 2007; Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands 1900–1948*, Ithaca 2008; David Gerlach, *The Economy of Ethnic Cleansing. The Transformation of the German-Czech Borderlands After World War II*, Cambridge 2017; Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing. Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia*, New York 2005; and, the formative standard, Joseph Schechtman, *European Population Transfers*, Oxford 1946. Schechtman was a researcher at the Institute of Jewish Affairs of the World Jewish Congress and early drafts of this book can be found in the Archive of the World Jewish Congress at the American Jewish Archive in Cincinnati (hereafter AJA). See AJA, WJC, C117/7, for instance, for drafts that Schechtman wrote in 1942.

ists, and warring partisans).⁴ The already uncertain and violent atmosphere further destabilised on 4 July 1946 when a pogrom occurred in the city of Kielce, during which residents and people from nearby locations killed 42 Polish Jews in one day's time.⁵ The chaotic status quo coupled with two elements – the fear of another Kielce and the work of operatives from Mandate Palestine and elsewhere who were encouraging Jewish returnees from the Soviet Union to leave – prompted nearly two thirds of the remaining Polish Jews who had survived the Second World War and the Holocaust to join those who had passed into Czechoslovakia earlier in 1946. They became participants in the *bricha* (literally “flight”, the semi-legal postwar movement of Jews away from Europe towards Mandatory Palestine, or so the Zionist-inspired agents abetting their exit hoped). For scores of thousands of these newly displaced people, the road out of Poland passed directly over the Czechoslovak border and, five miles onward, through the town of Náchod. Thus, as long as the border between these two states remained open for passage, Polish Jews could leave Poland and hope to become some of the first citizens of a modern Jewish state or federal entity if and when such a polity came into existence.

Masaryk and his colleagues throughout the highest echelons of the Czechoslovak government exerted a high level of control over this border point and the flow of DPs in the spring and summer of 1946. More so than officials of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), leaders of the great powers, or Jewish non-profit agencies working on the ground, Czechoslovak state and local officials in Prague, Náchod, and various points in between crafted policies, upheld precedents encouraging movement, and ignored others that would have stifled the flow of these migrants.⁶ Only Polish officials like Marcin Spsychalski equalled the importance of Czechoslovak actors. Arguably, the Czechoslovak state was most responsible for the continuation of this migratory movement. According to historian Yehuda Bauer, an

4 After the war ended in May 1945, Poland still remained a very hostile place. In 1945 and 1946, Poland's borders changed drastically, shifting more than 150 miles westward, with the Soviet Union absorbing the eastern third of the country. Thus, most of Poland's western and eastern borders were highly contested by residents on the ground. Involuntary and voluntary population exchanges ensued between Poland and the Soviet Socialist Republics of Belarus and Ukraine. On Poland in the immediate postwar period see: Antony Polonsky/Bolesław Drukier, *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland, December 1943–June 1945*, London 1980; Norman Naimark/Leonid Gibianskii (ed.), *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, Boulder 1997; Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* [The Great Fear. Poland 1944–1947. A Popular Reaction to Crisis], Warsaw 2012. On Jews in postwar Poland, see David Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944–1946*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998), 43–85; David Engel, *Bein shichrur lebrichah. Nitzolei hashoah bepolin vehama'avak al hanhagatam, 1944–1946* [Between Liberation and Flight. Holocaust Survivors in Poland and the Struggle for Leadership], Tel Aviv 1996; Natalia Aleksion, *Dokąd dalej? Ruch syjonistyczny w Polsce 1944–1950* [Where To? The Zionist Movement in Poland, 1944–1950], Warsaw 2002; Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence. Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia in 1944–1948*, Cambridge 2014; I. F. Stone, *Underground to Palestine*, New York 1946; Jan Gross, *Upiorna dekada, 1939–1948. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów* [Ghastly Decade, 1939–1948. Three Essays on Stereotypes about Jews, Poles, Germans, and Communists], Cracow 1998; Jan Gross, *Fear. Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Princeton 2006; and Jan Gross/Irena Grudzinska Gross, *Golden Harvest. Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*, Oxford 2012. John Connelly's wonderful review essay of Jan Gross' oeuvre illuminates any encounter with Jan Gross' work: *Poles and Jews in the Second World War. The Revisions of Jan T. Gross*, in: *Contemporary European History* 11 (2002) 4, 641–658.

5 In his memoir recounting these events, Yitzhak Zuckerman pinpointed the days immediately following the Kielce Pogrom as a decisive moment for Polish policies towards an open border with Czechoslovakia. He also credited Marcin Spsychalski with deciding when and how to allow the movement of Polish Jews across the border. See the last chapter in *A Surplus of Memory. Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, Berkeley 1993.

6 On the shift of international norms relating to minority rights and population transfers which foregrounded these developments, see Sarah A. Cramsey/Jason Wittenberg, *Timing is Everything. Changing Norms of Minority Rights and the Making of a Polish Nation-State*, in: *Comparative Political Studies* 49 (2016) 11, 1480–1512.

expert on the *bricha* since his book on the topic was published more than half a century ago, “quite simply, no Jews could have passed to Bratislava or Prague had it not been for the aid and sympathy extended by the Czechs”.⁷ And one Czech in particular, Jan Masaryk, leveraged a great deal to keep the stream of Polish Jews moving at full capacity.

Masaryk figures prominently in a report written by Israel Jacobson, a Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) official in Prague who participated in meetings related to the permeability of the border crossing near Náchod throughout July 1946. In Jacobson’s official telling, Masaryk personally assured him and the JDC that “everything would be done to keep the Czechoslovakian border open and that he personally would pay tribute to the various officials who had been assisting this important work at the (scheduled) government meeting on July 16”.⁸ Moreover, Masaryk declared to Jacobson that “Czechoslovakia must remain a haven of refuge for these Jews fleeing from terror” and that if the Czechoslovak borders were closed he “would resign” in protest.⁹ Jacobson’s report features prominently in Bauer’s account of the *bricha* and so, in both documents, Masaryk assumes a hero-like status on account of his ultimatum.¹⁰ Because of their dedication to keeping the border near Náchod open and subsidising the short-term stays and further travel of Polish Jews who crossed into Czechoslovakia, Masaryk and his fellow government officials became intrinsic supporters of a larger project devoted to achieving a Jewish territorial unit in Palestine.¹¹

What motives propelled Jan Masaryk to advocate for the “Jews of the ghetto” before the United Nations and to keep the border at Náchod open so that the *bricha* out of Europe could continue undeterred? Scholars interested in Masaryk’s impact have offered some explanations. Besides his philosemitism and his commitment to compensating, albeit in a small way, those Jews who had survived the tragedy of the Shoah, recent contributions by Jan Láníček and Kateřina Čapková have revealed

7 Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue. Brichah*, New York 1970, 182. Bauer wrote: “it must have cost the Czechs a very considerable sum of money for trains and food and they earned the sympathy and the gratitude of the Jews”, 184.

8 Archiv bezpečnostních složek [Archive of the Security Services, Prague, hereafter ABS], Report of Israel Jacobson to the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, #425-192-74.

9 Ibid.

10 Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, 182-188.

11 Jan Láníček discussed how Masaryk leveraged his influence to keep the border open in order to secure the political and economic support of American Jewry. See Chapter 5 in his *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938–48. Beyond Idealisation and Condemnation*, London 2013 and the documents he cited in: Bulínová, Marie (ed.), *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956. Dokumenty [Czechoslovakia and Israel 1945–1956. Documents]*, Prague 1993. In September 1946, the stream of Polish Jewish refugees lessened considerably, coinciding with a substantial drop in violence against Jews on Polish territory. See Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland*. I submit that the violence against Jews stopped and the stream of refugees slowed simultaneously because so many Jews, including most repatriated Polish Jews, had already left Poland by the autumn of 1946. With the repatriation process over, those Polish Jews who wanted to settle in Upper or Lower Silesia would have already decided to stay by this point. Violence against Jews ceased for similar reasons. Once Jews stopped returning to Poland, they stopped being a threat for those non-Jewish Poles who occupied formerly Jewish houses or who had obtained Jewish property. Thus, the “fear” which Jan Gross invoked had an expiration date in postwar Polish society. Violence against Jews or against Jewish property therefore seems, to my mind, to have been directly related to Jewish repatriation waves. The UN closed the border at Náchod in November 1946, but the border seems to have been opened again soon thereafter. A few thousand people crossed the border in the early winter of 1947 but new emigration policies in Poland made travel out of Poland much more difficult beginning in February 1947. Dariusz Stola’s work is helpful on this topic, see *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949–1989 [A Country With No Exit? Migration from Poland, 1949–1989]*, Warsaw 2010. Around this time, Náchod ceased being a viable exit point. The JDC and federal operations helping refugees stopped soon after.

more complex incentives.¹² Both of these Czech scholars have linked Masaryk's encouragement of Jews to live as a nation elsewhere to his desire to remove the German-speaking minority from postwar Czechoslovakia.¹³ In fact, Láníček's convincing and well-documented monograph reveals that Masaryk and the entire Czechoslovak government-in-exile "embarked on [a] policy that aimed at liquidat[ing...] the Jewish minority question in Europe" in order to justify their commitment to liquidating the German minority in Czechoslovakia as well.¹⁴

My intervention draws inspiration from Čapková and Láníček while also attempting to answer a slightly different set of questions. Besides his political desire to rid Czechoslovakia of minority politics and thus of German, Jewish, Hungarian, Polish, and Ruthenian minorities, Masaryk also pushed for Jews to belong elsewhere, in an ethnically Jewish territorial entity within the Palestinian Mandate, and to move there with the financial and logistical support of his own country and other international entities. Further, he desired to simultaneously solve the problem of "statelessness", which he saw as inextricably linked to both the 'Jewish question' and the failed issue of minority rights. So how did Masaryk come to envision that a massive Jewish migration away from Europe towards an ethnically determined territory in the Middle East would constitute the ideal solution for the German, Jewish, and statelessness questions? To phrase it differently, how did Masaryk's new answers to the perennial questions of "who belongs to the Jewish people and where do the Jewish people belong" allow him to solve other pressing problems in domestic and international contexts?¹⁵

This article uses wartime speeches, notes scribbled on postwar planning pamphlets, confidential government letters, and private conversations to chart the development of Masaryk's views on German-speaking Czechoslovak citizens, the place of Jews in postwar Czechoslovakia, the viability of Palestine as a Jewish state, as well as the issue of statelessness in general throughout the 1940s. Unlike his colleague, President Edvard Beneš, who publicly expressed strong views concerning the future of Palestine as a homeland for nationally-minded Jews in the early 1940s and deviated little from those ideas for the duration of the war, Masaryk laboured over Jewish questions, sometimes even contradicting himself in one and the same

12 Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938–48* and Kateřina Čapková, *Between Expulsion and Rescue. The Transports for German-Speaking Jews of Czechoslovakia in 1946*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 32 (Spring 2018) 1, 66-92.

13 Láníček also indicated that support for bricha improved Czechoslovakia's image, especially in American popular opinion. See Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, 176. For an introduction to the issues facing German-speaking Jews in Central Europe, see Kateřina Čapková/David Rechter, *Germans or Jews? German-Speaking Jews in Post-War Europe. An Introduction*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 16 (2017), 69-74.

14 Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, 191. On the Czech government-in-exile, see also Livia Rothkirchen, *The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile. Jewish and Palestinian Aspects in the Light of the Documents*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies* 9 (1973), 157-199.

15 Masaryk left behind published writings from his time as a diplomat until his mysterious death in 1948, some of which are cited below. For more on Masaryk's life, see: Zbyněk Zeman, *The Masaryks. The Making of Czechoslovakia*, New York 1976; Antonín Sum, *Otec a syn. Tomáš Garrigue a Jan Masarykové ve vzpomínkách přátel a pamětníků* [Father and Son. Tomas Garrigue Masaryk and Jan Masaryk in the Memories of Their Friends and Those Who Remember Them], Vol. 2, Prague 2000; Robert Lockhart, *Jan Masaryk. A Personal Memoir*, London 1951; and a memoir by his girlfriend at the time of his death, Marcia Davenport, *Too Strong for Fantasy*, New York 1967.

meeting.¹⁶ Just as high-profile members of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), an international organisation founded in 1936 to speak in a collective voice for Jews in the diaspora and their right to live wherever they pleased, and other leaders throughout the Allied universe slowly moved towards Beneš' ideas regarding the necessary creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as the 1940s progressed, Jan Masaryk eventually became a key spokesperson for the idea that Europe's Jews belonged elsewhere as well.¹⁷ Arguably, in the corridors of the exiled Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry based in London, at the first meeting of the UN in San Francisco, and at various meetings related to the work of UNRRA, Masaryk advocated more consistently on behalf of Jewish demands for emigration out of Europe than any of his diplomatic equivalents. His picaresque journey towards endorsing a Zionist-compatible solution to the 'Jewish question' and Jewish migration out of Europe cannot be unwoven from his less convoluted intellectual trajectory concerning German migration away from Czechoslovakia. In this way, plans pertaining to the small number of surviving German-speaking Czechoslovak Jews illuminate larger considerations about the ethnic makeup of his postwar state and his thoughts regarding the plague of statelessness overall.¹⁸

Jan Masaryk's ideas about the return of Jews to postwar Czechoslovakia were closely linked to his feelings regarding the fate of German nationals who had been Czechoslovak citizens before the Munich Agreement in 1938. The boundaries conceived at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and finalised by international agreements thereafter divided historically German-speaking regions and incorporated more than three million German-speakers into the First Czechoslovak Republic. After Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, political leaders like Konrad Henlein from

16 In fact, in 1940 and 1941, the World Jewish Congress perceived Edvard Beneš as a threat for the continued declarations that after the war Jews in Europe who wanted group rights would only achieve them in a Jewish state. According to WJC Official Arieh Tartakower on September 25, 1941, "Dr. Beneš expressed himself against granting the Czech Jews minority rights in the future Czech Republic ... [he] felt that 'national Jews' [those who selected Jewish as their nationality on the interwar census] should be deprived of Czech citizenship and should be induced to emigrate to Palestine as soon as possible ... this is a very dangerous attitude which contrasts markedly with the former democratic traditions of Czechoslovakia and endangers the position of Jews in other countries." AJA, WJC Collection, A 24/1, "The minutes of the meeting of the representatives of Czech Jews and Polish Jews in the United States."

17 On the WJC, see: Unity in Dispersion. A History of the World Jewish Congress, New York 1948, and Zohar Segev, *The World Jewish Congress during the Holocaust. Between Activism and Restraint*, Berlin 2014.

18 In both interwar Czechoslovakia and interwar Poland, as multi-ethnic states, citizens of Jewish origin (or members of a religious community) could opt for either Jewish nationality or German, Czechoslovak, or Polish nationality. Usually, the census classification was decided on the basis of "everyday language". Thus, citizens in Poland or Czechoslovakia would be counted as Jewish nationals if they spoke Yiddish (or in a smaller number of cases Hebrew) at home. Poles or Czechoslovaks of Jewish descent still qualified as Poles and Czechoslovaks on the census if they spoke Polish or Czechoslovak as their language of everyday use. According to the 1930 Czechoslovak census, there were 117,551 Jews living in Bohemia and Moravia and 356,830 living in Czechoslovakia overall. 57 per cent of this population were declared as having Jewish nationality (speaking a "Jewish" mother tongue), 24 per cent were declared as Czechoslovaks, 12 per cent as German, 4 per cent as Hungarian, and 1 per cent as "other". Thus, about 42,000 Czechoslovak Jews spoke German as their mother tongue (although these Jews were often bilingual). Nearly 80,000 Jews from Bohemia and Moravia died during the Second World War and the Holocaust. Of the 40,000 or so that survived in 1945, a few thousand were 'native' German-speakers. To learn more about the interwar censuses in Poland and Czechoslovakia and Jewish identification on those censuses, see Jeffrey Kopstein/Jason Wittenberg, *Between State Loyalty and National Identity. Electoral Behavior in Interwar Poland*, in: Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry 24 (November 2011); Kateřina Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé? Národní identita Židů v Čechách, 1918–1938* [Czechs, Germans, Jews? The National Identity of Jews in Bohemia, 1918–1938], Prague 2005; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*; Tatjana Lichtenstein, 'Making' Jews at Home. Zionism and the Construction of Jewish Nationality in Interwar Czechoslovakia, in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 36 (June 2006) 1, 49-71; Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Racializing Jewishness. Zionist Responses to National Indifference in Interwar Czechoslovakia*, in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 43 (April 2012), and Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia. Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging*, Bloomington 2016.

amongst these German-speakers (classified as *Volksdeutsche* or ethnic Germans under Nazi German expansionist ideology) continued to generate feelings of separatism. Henlein's party, after 1935 the Sudetendeutsche Partei, used the spirit of the Minority Treaties drawn up after the Paris Peace Conference to advocate for increased national autonomy within Czechoslovakia and even the attachment of German-speaking regions to an enlarged German state. Accordingly, Beneš and Masaryk blamed the minority rights system and the "Germanising segments" of Czechoslovakia's German minority for the dismemberment of their state in the Munich Agreement. Soon after their move from Prague into diplomatic exile, Beneš and Masaryk commenced a public relations campaign linking the German minority to German aggression overall. Even though Masaryk, Beneš, and their government could not guarantee whether or when they would return to their homeland, they were certain that a reconstituted Czechoslovakia could not include this 'fifth column'. After the war ended (whenever that might be), the Germans had to go.¹⁹ Problematically, German-speaking Jews with Czechoslovak citizenship could potentially fall into this category.

President Edvard Beneš' wartime views on Czechoslovakia's 'German problem' are well-documented.²⁰ His key associate Jan Masaryk, by contrast, has received much less attention. Recent contributions by Láníček and Čapková have certainly helped to correct this imbalance. The documentary trail in this article, however, hurtles towards the crisis at the Czechoslovak-Polish border near Náchod and the 1947 meeting of the UN cited above. Thus, this mix of previously cited and new evidence has been harnessed to an original end: to understand how Jewish settlement in Palestine helped solve, at least partially, three 'problems': that related to the German minority, that related to the Jewish minority, and that related to the persistence of statelessness. Along with my forthcoming monograph, *Uncertain Citizenship. Jewish Belonging and the 'Ethnic Revolution' in Poland and Czechoslovakia, 1936–1946*, this article contributes to an exciting conversation that scholars of the twentieth-century Czechoslovak Jewish experience like Láníček, Čapková, Michal Frankl, Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, Anna Cichopek-Garaj, Tatjana Lichtenstein, and Christiane Braun have initiated over the past decade.²¹ My research contributes a new vantage point to this rich discussion by positioning the Czechoslovak story within a broader trans-

19 See Chapter 6 in Bryant, *Prague in Black*. Also helpful is Chad Bryant, *Either German or Czech. Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939–1946*, in: *Slavic Review* 61 (Winter 2002) 4, 683–706.

20 See Bryant, *Prague in Black*, and Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, as well as Frommer, *National Cleansing*; see also the chapter "The Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile in London. Attitudes and Reactions to the Jewish Plight", in: Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*, Omaha 2006, 160–186; and, most recently, Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*.

21 See the contributions by Jan Láníček, *The Postwar Czech-Jewish Leadership and the Issue of Jewish Emigration from Czechoslovakia (1945–1950)*, 76–96, and Kateřina Čapková, *Dilemmas of Minority Politics. Jewish Migrants in Postwar Czechoslovakia and Poland*, 63–75, in: Françoise S. Ouzan/Manfred Gerstenfeld (ed.), *Postwar Jewish Displacement and Rebirth, 1945–1967*, Leiden 2014; Jan Láníček, *What did it mean to be Loyal? Jewish Survivors in Post-War Czechoslovakia in Comparative Perspective*, in: *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 60 (September 2014) 3, 384–404; Michal Frankl/Kateřina Čapková, *Nejisté útočisté. Československo a uprchlíci před nacismem 1933–1938 [An Insecure Haven. Czechoslovakia and Refugees before Nazism 1933–1938]*, Prague 2008; Jan Láníček, *Arnošt Frischer and the Jewish Politics of Early 20th-Century Europe*, London/New York 2017; Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence. Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia in 1944–1948*, Cambridge 2014; Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia*; Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia*, Bloomington 2015; Christiane Brenner, "Země se vrací". Konstrukce identity v českém diskursu o pohraničí po roce 1945 ["The Land Will Return". The Construction of Identity in the Czech Discourse about Borderlands after 1945], in: *Proceedings of the Tenth Meeting of Czech Historians, Ostrava 2015*, 317–324; and Christiane Brenner, *Mezi tradicí a revolucí. Kontinuita a změny v myšlení Edvarda Beneše po druhé světové válce [Between Tradition and Revolution. Continuity and Change in the Thinking of Edvard Beneš after the Second World War]*, in: *Dějiny a současnost [Past and Present]* 6 (2004), 40–44.

national history detailing how East Central Europeans of both Jewish and non-Jewish background decided to negate the diaspora and push for an ethnically Jewish state in the Middle East during the first half of the 1940s. To understand how Jan Masaryk became a prime enabler of this ‘ethnic revolution’, or the process by which East Central European states became ethnically homogenous and Jews became perceived as citizens of their own state on far away Palestinian shores, it is necessary to evaluate Masaryk’s wartime views on these three questions and how those views changed (or changed very little) over time.

A note on my sources before we plunge into the document trail: While collections in Prague and London yield a few fresh documents about Jan Masaryk, the archives of the WJC in Cincinnati, Ohio contains a plethora of useful texts that have only recently been studied by scholars of East Central Europe. Lániček and Čapková have mined the documentation of this archive in their recent contributions and this article will reconsider documents that they have used as well as other, new documents, specifically concerning discussions about statelessness and the 1946 events on the Czechoslovak-Polish border that I have decided to prioritise here. The Executive Committee of the WJC wrote to Masaryk, received telegrams from Masaryk, met frequently with Masaryk, corresponded with diplomats under Masaryk’s leadership, and spoke amongst themselves about Masaryk, his changing views, and their expectations about him. Masaryk demanded the attention of the WJC for his position as Foreign Minister, the second highest-ranking member of the government based in London, and his ability to communicate in fluent English with other Allied officials.

German Questions, Jewish Questions, and Their Problematic Overlap

Like his colleague Edvard Beneš, Masaryk decided early on during the war that postwar Czechoslovakia should no longer contain an ethnic German minority in the abstract. Over the radio waves on the evening of Wednesday, 23 October 1942, for example, Masaryk addressed the Nazi-appointed State Secretary of the Protectorate Karl Hermann Frank on BBC Czechoslovak-London radio.²² Speaking mostly in German, he asked “his people in Czech to forgive him for doing so” explaining that their shared language was “too good to use when addressing such jackals”. Masaryk used vivid vocabulary to describe the despicable “Germans who are very quick at putting the noose around peoples’ necks throughout Europe”. With tactics such as “public mass murder and torture”, Frank and all “blood suckers are writing a white book of bloody horror, pronouncing [their] own verdict of guilt”. After this current conflict, Masaryk declared with certainty that Germany would be defeated and the “disgusting spider of the swastika will be swept away”. Punishment would ensue and “evil doers” would face “terrible severity”. Masaryk’s opinion of German elements within his occupied state rang loudly: they must face their crimes and the consequences.

Masaryk and Beneš agreed that culpable Germans should be punished and excised from Czechoslovak society. But how to weed out the “good Germans” from the “bad Germans”? Furthermore, how to differentiate those persecuted as Jews under Nazi racial laws from others listed as German nationals on the 1930 Czechoslovak

²² AJA, WJC Collection, Report of the Czechoslovak Press Bureau dated October 23, 1942, H 292. See Chapter 1 of Lániček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews* for more on the Czech government-in-exile, radio broadcasts, and the BBC. Lániček mentioned this broadcast, but dated it to 1943, not 1942.

census? While Beneš and Masaryk agreed on the exclusion of Germans in postwar Czechoslovakia, they issued sometimes contradictory opinions about Jewish belonging in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. Masaryk seemed notably less certain than Beneš regarding his stance on Zionism and Jewish settlement in Palestine in the early war years.

For instance, in a speech given at the Royal Albert Hall in London a few days after this radio broadcast on 29 October 1942, Masaryk mentioned Palestine but guaranteed that Jews could return to postwar Czechoslovakia.²³ Addressing an assembly of British Jews, Masaryk reminisced about the equality Jews enjoyed in his interwar state: When “Czechoslovakia again takes its rightful place in the heart of Europe, our Jewish brethren will be welcome and I count on their cooperation in building up what Hitler has destroyed”. He noted that, although the audiences’ “longing eye often rests on the country of your past glory, Palestine”, deliverance would come only if those Jews in the audience fulfilled their “duty one hundred percent as citizens of Great Britain”.

Like his colleagues in the WJC, Masaryk spoke more openly about Jewish migration from Europe as the war progressed.²⁴ However, unlike WJC leaders such as Nahum Goldmann, Arieh Tartakower, Lev Zelmanovits, Maurice Perlzweig, and Zorach Warhaftig who debated to what extent they should negate the diaspora in Europe, build a postwar Jewish home in the Middle East or reinforce Jewish culture within a region that had cradled a unique and demographically numerous Jewish collective, Masaryk had a more overriding concern: endorsed plans to build up a Jewish polity in Mandate Palestine partially as an attempt to solve Czechoslovakia’s ‘German question’. For if non-Jewish Germans belonged elsewhere, namely in an ethnic German state, then German-speaking Jews belonged elsewhere as well. Because he could not justify the expulsion of German Jews who were suffering under Nazi racial laws, the establishment of a Jewish state allowed Masaryk to solve a very real conundrum: namely how to eliminate the German ethnic element from the Czechoslovak body politic.

Even when Masaryk was invited by Jews to speak about Jews at a Jewish event, his thoughts repeatedly turned to Germans instead. While delivering the Lucien Wolf Memorial Lecture at the Jewish Historical Society of England on 14 September 1943, Masaryk reflected on national minorities in interwar Czechoslovakia. Although he mentioned the Jewish “religious minority” in his former state, his emphasis fell upon the German “racial minority” and the disastrous consequences of their existence. Offering some historical context, Masaryk explained how, soon after the conclusion of the First World War, Czechoslovaks as a whole realised they would have to “share [their] citizenship with Germans, Magyars, Little Russians [Ruthenians from Subcarpathian Rus] and others”.²⁵ Once the government “found the solution for the German minority” within Czechoslovakia’s borders, it could “easily find the solution to other minority problems”.²⁶ Beginning in 1918, the ‘German question’ and Czechoslovakia’s response to it served as twin foundations for the entire minority rights system. By the 1930s, moreover, rabid German nationalism had corroded the

23 AJA, WJC Collection, Masaryk’s speech at Royal Albert Hall, London on 29 October 1942, H 98/5. Lániček mentioned this speech but did not analyse it. Lániček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, Chapter 1.

24 On the idea that many members of the exiled diplomatic universe became “empirical Zionists” over the course of the war, see Sarah A. Cramsey, *The Palestinian Turn. How Arieh Tartakower and the World Jewish Congress Recast Jewish Belonging Away from East Central Europe, 1940–1945*, forthcoming.

25 Jan Masaryk, *Minorities and the Democratic State. A Lucien Wolf Memorial Lecture*, London 1943, 7.

26 *Ibid.*

cement binding ethnic German nationals to their Czechoslovak citizenship. No doubt referring to the support directed towards Henlein's party in the Sudetenland, Masaryk lamented that the German minority had proved itself unable to live "entirely unto itself" and exchanged their "Czechoslovak citizenship for German Reich citizenship" when they overwhelmingly voted for Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Partei in the 1935 parliamentary elections.

Unlike the Jews in the Weimar Republic, who "blended love of country, the true patriotism, with [their] European citizenship", many Germans living in Czechoslovakia "believed in a hierarchy of races", thus destabilising the political life of the First Republic and making the Munich Agreement seemingly inevitable. Masaryk stood before the gathered listeners nearly five years into a conflict spawned by German nationalist aggression. He could not envision a postwar reality in Czechoslovakia that included a replication of the post-First World War minorities system and asked that "the minority problem be settled drastically and with finality".²⁷ As the problem of the German minorities transcended Czechoslovak borders, the nations as a whole "must take steps to ensure that minorities shall never again act as a lever for power with aggressive designs". Thus, those who opted for German citizenship in the Reich "ceased to be citizens of their former states" and "governments of the liberated countries are, therefore, entitled to decide for themselves whom among the Germans they will restore citizenship". Those German nationals who wished to prove themselves good citizens of Czechoslovakia could apply for their citizenship to be reinstated. Overall, however, the Czechs and Slovaks had to consummate their national life in their own homeland. In Masaryk's view, "members of minorities in all countries have before them a compelling, momentous and irrevocable choice – to work faithfully for the welfare of the countries in which they are living or to get out!"²⁸ Masaryk did not employ the word "expulsion" nor did he explain how population transfers of ethnic minorities would proceed. The message underlying his vision of the postwar world, however, comes across in unnuanced, ethnic terms.

Bringing his attention back to his audience at the Jewish Historical Society, Masaryk concluded with the pronouncement of a "precious, almost heavenly word – security". Both the Jews and the Czechoslovaks "need and deserve security – economic security, political security, religious security. The future of Europe, nay of the world, depends on that. May it please God that his gift, kept from the Czechoslovaks for a long time and from the Jews for a still infinitely longer time will become our common denominator."²⁹ Masaryk could have invoked yet another type of security: ethnic security. If the German national minority destabilised Czechoslovakia and represented a fifth-column threat to the democratic state, security depended on the separation of that population from the body politic. He did not utter the name Palestine or demand the creation of an ethnic Jewish polity, but his plea that both Jews and Czechoslovaks deserved "security" independently suggested the existence of two independently secure states.

27 Ibid, 19.

28 Ibid, 20.

29 Ibid.

Masaryk and Debates over DPs at UNRRA

Just a few weeks after his lecture at the Jewish Historical Society in London, Masaryk travelled to Atlantic City, New Jersey to attend the first conference of UNRRA. There, he encountered WJC official Arieh Tartakower and received readings regarding Jewish topics.³⁰ Three pamphlets from the meeting remain pressed between caramel coloured folders in the confidential archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The longest piece, “Memorandum on Postwar Relief and Rehabilitation of European Jewry”, which was finalised on 11 November 1943, detailed postwar plans for European Jewry as a whole. The list of suggestions comprises twenty-nine pages, briefly mentions the possible “urge to migrate towards Palestine”, and recommends that “the task of resettling uprooted Jews must, therefore, be divided between the governmental and intergovernmental machinery on the one hand and the competent Jewish organizations on the other”.³¹ This more general reading astutely complemented a more specific “Aide Memoire” from the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee published on 5 November 1943, which was specifically addressed to Jan Masaryk. Authored by Czechoslovak Jews Frederick Fried and Hugo Perutz, this pamphlet argued “that the Jewish problem differs from other problems” and that the restoration of family unity for uprooted Jews must motivate postwar planning.³²

Lest we think that the publications of the WJC fell on deaf ears, a third publication concerning the UNRRA conference was adorned with underlining, highlighting, and a handful of memos stapled to the back.³³ A short, four-page flyer entitled “The Atlantic City Conference of UNRRA” rolled off the presses of the British arm of the WJC in January 1944 and garnered the attention of at least two Czech Foreign Ministry employees working in London exile: Zdeněk Procházka and Hubert Ripka. Both men left evidence of their readership on the worn flyer in the form of thin, wobbly underlining, thick red highlights, and their signatures. Their reading attention focussed on UNRRA discussions concerning the repatriation of DPs to their countries of residence and to other countries willing to accept them.

Which specific passages did Procházka and Ripka mark with their red and black pens? One of the two men underlined that “displaced populations” constituted the “most acute rehabilitation problem”. The UNRRA subcommittee dedicated to “Displaced Persons” and the entire council did not specify protocols for Jews as such, instead advocating that the “sole rule of procedure in the case of deportees should be ‘repatriation’ and that ‘repatriation’ should mean solely the return of United Nations citizens to their countries of origin”.³⁴ The British Section of the WJC noted a fatal flaw in this logic. Both readers drew attention to the next section and declared that many Jewish refugees after the war “will not find it possible or will not prefer to return to the countries of homes from which they were removed and who should by every rule of justice be aided to resettle elsewhere”.³⁵ As a corrective, the WJC British

30 Arieh Tartakower was a sociologist from Poland who was in the Executive Committee of the WJC during the 1940s and beginning in 1944 headed the Department for Relief and Rehabilitation.

31 Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí [Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Prague, hereafter AMZV], Aide Memoire of the Jewish Representative to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association Meeting in Atlantic City by Frederick Fried and Hugo Perutz, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný [London Archive-Secret], Box #33.

32 Dr. Frederick Fried was Chairman of the Czechoslovak Jewish Representative Committee of the WJC while Prof. Hugo Perutz, who was a notable member of the Prague Jewish community, also served on this committee.

33 AMZV, The Atlantic City Conference of UNRRA, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný, Box #33.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

Section proposed that “repatriation of deportees [could] take the form not only of returning citizens to their countries of origin but also of returning displaced residents who were not citizens of their country in question to the countries of their ‘settled residence’”.³⁶ The British WJC wanted UNRRA to make their DP solution formula more lenient. In this way, personal choices gained leverage, whereby citizenship would not be the deciding factor animating repatriation schemes. These ideas disturbed Procházka and Ripka, not necessarily because they wanted to impede the resettlement of European Jews, but because they wanted to ensure that German nationals would be excluded from postwar Czechoslovakia.

After the UNRRA conference in Atlantic City, a few other members within the Czech government joined the conversation initiated by Procházka and Ripka to discuss how international plans concerning the repatriation of DPs meshed with internal discussions about the expulsion of German nationals. Plans for the expulsion of German nationals from postwar Czechoslovakia had not necessarily been finalised or detailed, but the idea that population exchanges could ensure postwar peace had been approved personally by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in June 1943 and by Joseph Stalin in December 1943 during private meetings with President Beneš. Czech officials, including Masaryk, vetted UNRRA declarations and the proceedings of the subcommittee devoted to DPs to decipher how freshly established UN precedents could interfere with domestic plans for expulsion.

This deciphering proved difficult, however, because the first UNRRA meeting had not established clear precedents. Moreover, of all the problems UNRRA members had dealt with in Atlantic City, “one of the most difficult” concerned the solutions for the “rehabilitation of displaced persons”. In a report dating from the end of November 1943 and disseminated to all government departments in December of that year, a Czech delegate to UNRRA named Josef Hanc detailed the dissonance which plagued discussions of these topics.³⁷ During subcommittee meetings, “many opinions” were voiced. The Czechs agreed with the Yugoslavs that governments must agree on evacuations but the committee as a whole did not issue an opinion on this statement. The “general resolution given in the end” was that the “delicate and complicated question be solved humanitarily”.³⁸ Hanc, the former Czech Consul General in the United States, did not comment on this vague formulation in the report. Two of his colleagues, Procházka and Ripka, would comment on this in a handful of letters exchanged in early 1944.

In reading over the subcommittee minutes dealing with DPs, Ripka noticed that a slight change in wording could potentially inhibit Czechoslovakia’s ability to control the ethnic makeup of its postwar population. In an early meeting of the Subcommittee for Displaced Persons, those assembled – including two Czechoslovaks, Jiří Stolz and Evzen Loebel – confirmed that nationals of UN states or stateless people should “be repatriated to their countries of residence, provided these countries are willing to receive them”.³⁹ Ripka agreed with this formulation, whereby the individual state ultimately decided on the process of repatriation. Language issuing from a

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ AMZV, Josef Hanc, Report on UNRRA Meeting in Atlantic City, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný, Box #33. Josef Hanc served as a diplomat in the Czechoslovak Foreign Service, as a lecturer at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy during the war, and wrote in journals and the *New York Times* on Czechoslovak themes. See for example *Czechs and Slovaks Since Munich*, in: *Foreign Affairs* (October 1939), 102-115. Trained as a historian, his books included *Tornado Across Europe. The Path of Nazi Destruction from Poland to Greece*, New York 1942, and *Eastern Europe and the United States*, Boston 1942.

³⁸ AMZV, Josef Hanc, Report on UNRRA Meeting in Atlantic City, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný, Box #33.

³⁹ AMZV, Letter from Ripka to Procházka on January 25, 1944, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný, Box #33

subsequent meeting of this subcommittee, however, did not guarantee the same level of state autonomy. In fact, the will of individual states was completely erased from the repatriation equation. Instead, UNRRA would work “in consultation with member governments to assist in the return of nationals of UN states and stateless people who had been displaced as a result of the war to their countries of settled residence”.⁴⁰ The prerogative of the individual states was absent in this subcommittee formulation. Ripka saw this slight change as intensely problematic. If an individual state like Czechoslovakia could not control the displaced Germans filtering back to their pre-war Bohemian and Moravian homes, then Czechoslovak plans to expunge the body politic of the German national element would be threatened. Accordingly, Czechoslovaks had to work to amend this language and ensure that UN legal codes protected state autonomy. If Stolz and Loebel had protested this revision in the subcommittee, Ripka would have precedence to offer disagreement. He asked Procházka for clarification and direction.⁴¹

Procházka responded quickly to Ripka’s letter. While he registered Ripka’s concern for this “serious situation”, he considered patience the best possible response. Masaryk’s busy schedule precluded time to consider UNRRA’s stance on repatriation. Procházka promised to ask Masaryk for guidance moving forward upon the Foreign Minister’s return from travelling.⁴² Nearly five weeks later, Procházka wrote back to Ripka with Masaryk’s response to this repatriation quandary. Procházka had spoken to Masaryk about Ripka’s concerns and Masaryk had offered clear responses. First, even though Czechoslovakia had agreed to welcome stateless individuals and refugees from Germany and Austria across her borders, future meetings of UNRRA might allow for further discussions and different solutions regarding this matter. More importantly, Masaryk directly addressed Ripka’s fundamental concern regarding the ability of individual states to control the ethnic composition of their body politic. According to Procházka, Masaryk offered assurances that “the expulsion of Germans will be our own affair”, despite the “formal adoption” of UNRRA proposals indicating the contrary.⁴³

The report submitted by the British Section of the WJC found readership within Czech government circles. Information gleaned from the report, however, did not necessarily inspire discussions devoted to Jewish life in postwar Czechoslovakia. The more meaningful questions revolved around the German issue. Masaryk endorsed UNRRA proposals demanding universal policies towards stateless DPs while simultaneously crafting plans to push German nationals beyond Czechoslovakia’s borders. There is no differentiation in this particular paper trail between non-Jewish Germans, Jewish Germans, German-speaking enemies, or German-speaking dissidents working against the ‘Third Reich’. Masaryk and his colleagues privately working through UNRRA proposals cast the world in monolithic ethnic terms. Publicly, however, Masaryk vacillated between more nuanced understandings of ethnicised belonging and speaking of the Jews as a discernible entity deserving of their own state.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 AMZV, Letter from Procházka to Ripka dated January 26, 1944, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný, Box #33.

43 AMZV, Letter from Procházka to Ripka dated March 3, 1944, Londýnský Archiv-Důvěrný, Box #33.

Public Voice Versus Private Meetings. Masaryk's Contradictory Language

When Masaryk spoke with the press after attending the inaugural 1943 UNRRA conference in Atlantic City, he offered an evaluation of the event infused with Jewish exceptionalism. The 'Jewish problem', Masaryk opined, demanded "a specific treatment" and it was "laughable" to think otherwise.⁴⁴ The nations of the world could not "build a permanent peace" without treating Jewish concerns as such in the rehabilitation program. For 2,000 years, Masaryk said, "we Christians have been discriminating against Jews. Let us this once have the courage to discriminate in order to help them finally solve their problem."⁴⁵ In this public setting, Masaryk mandated discrimination. In fact, he declared that a permanent peace depended on this particular kind of positive discrimination.

A few months later, however, Masaryk promised to oppose discrimination in all its manifestations throughout the postwar world. At a dinner arranged in his honour by the Czechoslovak Committee of the United Jewish Appeal on 24 May 1944, he reiterated that the UN had a "duty" to deal with the 'Jewish problem' "thoroughly and for all time".⁴⁶ It did not follow, however, that there would "be any differentiation on religious grounds among the citizens of the future free and democratic Czechoslovakia". Instead, Masaryk declared that neither he nor Beneš "would be a part of any such indecency". When people returned to Czechoslovakia, "we are not going to ask: are you a Jew or a Catholic or a Protestant?" Rather, the "people at home will ask 'have you done your duty during the terrible crisis that all of us together have been facing the last half a dozen years'".⁴⁷ Thus, actions, not discrimination, would provide the foundation for postwar Czechoslovak citizenship.

Perhaps Masaryk revised his call for Jewish discrimination because he stood at a lectern in the midst of fundraising for the United Jewish Appeal. After all, calling for continued, albeit positive, discrimination vis-à-vis the Jewish people might have ruffled the feathers of American Jews advocating for continued support of Jews in the diaspora and equality overall. But the juxtaposition of these two public statements focusses attention towards the precarious position Masaryk held as a deeply respected public figure intent on securing his state the most favourable postwar conditions. Publicly referred to and privately regarded as a loyal friend to the Jewish people by the WJC and others, Masaryk's words carried weight in public opinion and diplomatic circles.

His commitment to the Jews functioned in two, sometimes contradictory, ways. First, he advocated for the re-entry of Czechoslovak Jews into postwar Czechoslovakia. Second, he pressed that the "nations of the world, among them the Jews" gather at peace conference tables to deal with the 'Jewish problem' "intelligently and humanely".⁴⁸ Sometimes, these two commitments opposed each other. Czechoslovak Jews who professed German nationality complicated Masaryk's first commitment while also solidifying his allegiance to his second commitment. Masaryk did not expect the Czechoslovak people to ask "are you a Jew or a Catholic or a Protestant" in the wake of liberation. He did, however, assume that his countrymen would ask "are you German?"

44 Cited in Z.H. Wachsman, *Jan Masaryk, Friend of the Jewish People*, New York 1943, 16.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*, 15.

The dissonance evident in Masaryk's sometimes conflicting visions for Jews in the postwar world appeared once again in a meeting between the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister and two representatives of the WJC. Maurice Perlzweig and Frederick Freid met Masaryk in Washington, D.C. on 16 May 1944 to discuss comments made by Edvard Beneš concerning the repatriation of Jews in general and Czechoslovak Jews in particular after the war. According to the memo filed by Perlzweig a few hours after the meeting, Masaryk issued contradictory statements concerning postwar plans for the reintegration of minorities in Czechoslovak society. In this intimate meeting, Perlzweig explained that disquiet had emerged in Jewish circles by Beneš' declaration "that the return of Czechoslovak Jews must depend on the adoption of some international machinery for the repatriation of Jews".⁴⁹ In response, Masaryk "wished to explain the background of the statement

[...] indicating at the same time that he did not see eye to eye with Beneš on this question." Briefly, in Perlzweig's shorthand, "the background was the Sudeten question". During a visit to Churchill before Masaryk left London, "Winston had expressed the hope that the Czechs would get rid of the Germans."⁵⁰

When Masaryk exhibited "hesitation", "Winston reassured him that he meant no harshness, but said that it might be done gently, by giving them 48 hours [sic] notice to go for example".⁵¹ Offering no comment on whether such a short time frame would be harsh or not, Perlzweig continued with his description of the meeting. "Having told this story [about Churchill], Masaryk turned on me and with great conviction said 'there will be no more minorities, Brother Perlzweig.' The rest of the conversation left it crystal clear that the Czechs felt that their loyal support of special minority rights under the old system had been very ill rewarded and that they did not propose to repeat it."⁵²

Perlzweig's response to Masaryk's blunt comment harkened back to earlier WJC responses to Beneš' Zionist leanings earlier in the war. He expressed concern for the citizenship status of Jews in the diaspora. The WJC leader "pointed out that [the Sudeten German question] was not the issue and that it was important to reassure public opinion that the citizenship rights of Jews in regard to repatriation would be observed". Masaryk prevaricated and proposed "to make a strong statement about it at a forthcoming meeting of the United Jewish Appeal" and, subsequently, "offered to write out a statement immediately". Perlzweig attached the statement in full. Dated 16 May 1944 and signed by Jan Masaryk, it read:

"I wish to go on record once again in 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. This little statement can be considered as the concerted opinion of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile."⁵³

Commenting on this statement in his memo, Perlzweig observed that "there is no explicit reference to repatriation, but apparently it is implied in the reiterated prom-

49 AJA, WJC Collection, Memo to the Office Committee From Dr. Perlzweig on May 16, 1944, H 98/3. Additionally, Perlzweig noted that "it would be impossible for Masaryk to say anything of value if more than two of us were present". Lániček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, references this meeting in Chapter 4, *The Jewish Minority in Postwar Czechoslovakia*, 116-137.

50 AJA, WJC Collection, Memo to the Office Committee From Dr. Perlzweig on May 16, 1944, H 98/3.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

ise of equal rights.” During the meeting, Perlzweig and Fried had directed Masaryk to this admission. In response, Masaryk “repeated one of his stock sayings: ‘I will not go back without my Jews’”.⁵⁴

Thus, a gathering initiated to offer clarification resulted in thicker confusion. In response to a serious question about the status of Jewish repatriates overall, Masaryk offered, to use Perlzweig’s wording, “a stock saying” and an incomplete glimpse of a broader context that he did not fully describe. This meeting reveals that even in May 1944, after Beneš had received private guarantees from Roosevelt (June 1943) and Stalin (December 1943) concerning the homogenisation of the Czechoslovak body politic and further reassurances on populations transfers more generally from the Big Three at Teheran, the Sudeten Germans haunted conversations about postwar Jewish life in Masaryk’s state. Perlzweig, Fried, and their WJC colleagues were justified in raising the point about procedures for Jewish repatriation. In less than a year, thousands of Czechoslovak Jews bearing German nationality (and most likely German mother tongue) who had survived the war would return to a country where their citizenship rights remained uncertain. The inability of Masaryk (and, to be fair, others in the Czechoslovak government-in-exile) to tease out these ‘Jewish problems’ from the broader ‘German problem’ arguably abetted citizenship confusion on the ground in the wake of Hitler’s defeat.

Just how deep did Masaryk’s suspicions concerning German-speaking Czechoslovak Jews strike? A radio address delivered by Masaryk on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah on 29 September 1943 provides an informative glimpse: Masaryk reminded his Czech-speaking listeners in the United Kingdom or perhaps those intercepting the signal illegally on the continent that on this day Jews in “America, England, Russian, and Palestine” prayed for the “poorest of the poor, who had their synagogues torn down by the German barbarians and were massacred by the millions”.⁵⁵ Reflecting on the war in general, Masaryk noted that German antisemitism was the “first statement of the German taste for domination and eradication of others” and thus should be considered the first indicator of Hitler’s aggressive war. Reflecting on Jews in the diaspora worldwide, Masaryk admitted “it is true that every nation is known by how it treats the Jews, and we behave admirably”.⁵⁶

However, Masaryk continued, in a different and provocative tone, “it is also true that some Jews did not behave well. They walked repeatedly through Prague cafés and spoke German [němčili] even after 1933.”⁵⁷ In the midst of a radio address commemorating the Jewish New Year, in which he spoke of the evils of antisemitism and the murdered Jewish millions, Masaryk recalled that some Czechoslovak Jews acted badly in the waning years of the First Republic, gallivanting around with the German language on their lips. After the war, however, Masaryk predicted, “it will be difficult [...] to find a Czechoslovakian who will make these mistakes again”. What to make of this prediction? Was it a veiled threat, or a simple admission that the discrimination and murder unleashed by Nazi Germans would impel German-speaking Czechoslovak Jews towards other languages and more complete integration? He quickly regained his bearings, noting that he had “also know[n] many, very many decent, proper, faithful Jews” who “belonged among us as our own”.⁵⁸ As he closed his radio remarks, Masaryk assumed a self-congratulatory posture, saying that after

54 Ibid.

55 Jan Masaryk, *Volá Londýn* [London Calling], Prague 1948, 261.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid, 262.

58 Ibid.

the war “our children and the whole world can say that we helped the Jews and we remained descent people amidst German horrors”.⁵⁹

Fundamentally, Masaryk’s decision to recognise the Jewish New Year is exceptional and justifies journalist Z.H. Wachman’s categorisation of him as a “friend to the Jewish people”. Masaryk had offered condolences for the wartime Jewish loss, maintained a note of hopefulness moving forward, and exhibited a sensitivity to a religious calendar that was not his own. On the other hand, this address, which was meant to mark the passage of Jewish time, contains problematic references to “Germanising” tendencies amongst Czechoslovak Jews. Poised before a microphone and intent on reaching out to Jews across occupied Europe and in liberated areas as well, Masaryk cast accusations concerning regretful interwar behaviour and a prediction that Germanising Jews would not operate in the same haughty manner after Hitler’s defeat. Why include such negative reminiscences in an address containing Rosh Hashanah greetings at a very sombre moment? Masaryk’s words are best understood against a backdrop of paranoia. So worried was Masaryk about the ethnic German element in Czechoslovakia that a New Year’s speech for a decimated people became an opportunity for pointing fingers and offering a guarantee that Jews in postwar Czechoslovakia would never “Germanise” in the same way again.

Confronting Statelessness at the UN and in Postwar Plans

As Masaryk prepared for another extended trip to the United States early in 1945, the entire Czechoslovak government-in-exile prepared for their return to continental Europe. In March, Masaryk went to San Francisco for the inaugural session of the UN. Beneš, on the other hand, travelled east, beyond Prague towards Moscow, where his overland homeward journey would commence. If, as they initiated their equally circuitous routes back towards Prague, the two men contemplated the fate of German nationals (of Jewish and non-Jewish background) in postwar Czechoslovakia, the heralding of 1945 also occasioned action with regards to another neighbouring state: Poland. On 1 January 1945, the Soviet Union, which had severed diplomatic relationships with the London Poles after the discovery of the massacre of Polish soldiers at Katyn in the spring of 1943, recognised the Government of National Unity as the government of Poland. At the end of that same month, Czechoslovakia became only the second state to do the same. The British and the Americans still considered the London Poles as representing the Polish state. Thus, a sovereignty dispute resulted in the convening of the first meeting of the UN without Polish representation: Neither of the “Polish governments” was present in Atlantic City. With Germany, Austria, and Hungary absent from the UN’s gathering (as the former Axis powers they were not at first admitted to the UN), Czechoslovakia was the only East Central European government present in San Francisco. Thus, the mail room at Masaryk’s Foreign Ministry office once again became a receptacle for guidance and requests from Jewish organisations concerned with East Central European Jews in general.

The final section of this article turns to the category of statelessness and how ideas about this condition influenced Masaryk’s more general worldview concerning Germans, Czechoslovak Jews, and the ethnic revolution. Discussions of statelessness were omnipresent in international circles during the Second World War. Statelessness and citizenship are mutually exclusive: Therefore, to eradicate statelessness, a

⁵⁹ Ibid, 263.

political entity must bestow citizenship or an international organisation must create a new category for political belonging which transcends state borders. As the Second World War drew to a close, few serious discussions at international levels entertained the reintroduction of Nansen passports or the creation of a new status that would simply prolong statelessness. Instead, it became “generally accepted doctrine that statelessness is undesirable”.⁶⁰ Thus, nationality law had to be reformed in such a way that “every individual may have a nationality and statelessness may be eliminated”. In the words of a booklet produced by the British Section of the WJC, which arrived at Czechoslovakia’s Foreign Ministry in March 1945, the “abolition of statelessness can only be a humanely satisfactory remedy if nationality warrants the enjoyment of fundamental human rights by all nationals”.⁶¹ In other words, for statelessness to vanish, the category of nationality needed to guarantee basic rights for all people regardless of nationality.

The author of the article, legal scholar Paul Weis, explained that “there is no basis in present international law for a right to a nationality; neither has the individual a right to acquire a nationality at birth, nor does international law prohibit loss of nationality after birth by deprivation or otherwise”.⁶² This situation placed the individual at the mercy of the “nationality-granting” state. Due to an “exaggerated conception of the state”, “the unlimited exercise of its sovereign omnipotence”, and the “lack of effective international machinery for the enactment and enforcement of universal rules”, the individual floated alone on the high seas, cast off from political lifelines. As long as “nationality is the link between the individual and the benefits of the Law of Nations, legal policy regarding nationality must see its task in providing this link”. Nationality should be conceived of as a “means” towards a specific aim: the “enjoyment of the benefits of the Law of Nationals and – ultimately – of the Rights of Man by all of those rights which are common to all men”.⁶³

To foreground his argument, Weis made reference to a series of denaturalisation laws passed in the 1930s which stripped groups of citizenship rights. These laws had had a sizeable impact on his own life: Born in Vienna in 1907, Weis had been a law student when he lost his citizenship and faced internment in Dachau in 1938 and 1939.⁶⁴ While describing the revisions of German and later Austrian law, Weis emphasised the Jewish predicament which emerged in a variety of occupied countries as Nazi German law was instituted by the occupiers. Stateless people were by default “unprotected”.⁶⁵ The status of statelessness was hereditary and only stateless people codified as refugees could claim international protections. Statelessness evaporated only after repatriation, naturalisation in another state, marriage, or death. Notably, migrations directed towards Palestine and America did not lead to statelessness as these immigrants were in a position to “acquire the nationality of the country of immigration”.⁶⁶

60 AMZV, Paul Weis, *The Problem of Statelessness*, Londýnský Archiv [London Archive], Box #440, 3.

61 *Ibid.*, 3. Weis offered a clarification in terminology: “in this paper nationality is used in the Anglo American sense to denote membership in a state and not in the sense used in Central Europe, where it denotes belonging to a nation”.

62 *Ibid.*, 36.

63 *Ibid.*, 36.

64 For biographical information, see Ivor Jackson, *Editorial Paul Weis, 1907–1991*, in: *International Journal of Refugee Law* 3 (1991) 2, 183–184. For a broader postwar overview of the issues in this pamphlet, see Paul Weis, *Nationality and Statelessness in International Law*, London 1956. Weis was connected to the International Refugee Organization and was a legal advisor to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva.

65 AMZV, Paul Weis, *The Problem of Statelessness*, 4.

66 *Ibid.*, 19.

Seeking a solution to the problem of statelessness, Weis argued that simply “allotting stateless persons a nationality” would not ameliorate the situation. Rather, the “question has to be decided whether the nationality to be allotted is the nationality of the State with which the person is in fact most closely connected”.⁶⁷ So the “will of the people” had to be ascertained before nationality could be fixed. As the individual and the group were entitled to state belonging as a basic human right, the power and authority of individual states was, necessarily, constrained. The state could no longer indiscriminately deprive someone of nationality and could not arbitrarily cast out citizens until those people had acquired political belonging elsewhere.⁶⁸ To cite Weis directly: “under existing customary International Law, no State may refuse to receive back into its territory any of its nationals or former nations unless the latter has acquired another nationality. It is desirable that this rule should be laid down unconditionally and unambiguously by contractual legislation.”⁶⁹

Therefore, Weis recommended that in countries like Czechoslovakia, where Jews might want to live again, returning prewar citizens should obtain their former political status *ipso jure*, as legislation initiated by occupying powers was to be rescinded. Those Jews who possessed wartime citizenship in Axis countries, however, could decide not to reacquire their prewar nationality. Compulsory repatriation may have been out the question, but decisions regarding citizenship were to be made by individuals and not necessarily by state powers. For example, a reinstatement of interwar citizenship laws across Nazi-occupied Europe would allow Jews to return to their former countries of residence. For those Jews refusing to return to their prewar homes in Germany, Austria, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, and France, the eradication of statelessness would have opened up an aperture for the creation of new citizenships elsewhere, as in Palestine or the western hemisphere. Weis himself would have fallen into this category had he not acquired British citizenship in 1947. After being released from Dachau in 1939, he had managed to emigrate to England, where he continued his law studies and began his work for the British Section of the WJC. On the question of whether Jewish DPs should have the right to emigrate directly to Palestine, as the final resolution of the WJC’s War Emergency Congress demanded, Weis was silent. He did not address this specifically in his paper as “it requires special and most careful examination in connection with the entire Palestinian problem”.⁷⁰

In the end, Weis articulated a handful of distinct demands. First, he asked that “nobody should be deprived of his nationality for reasons of discrimination (political, racial, religious or other)” in the future.⁷¹ Second, he suggested that old nationalities should be restored “from the date on which they were deprived of it”.⁷² Both of these fundamental demands were translated into Czech and sent from Procházka’s desk to the Ministry of the Interior soon after the pamphlet arrived at the Ministry’s London office in March 1945. Why did these two demands provoke concern in Czechoslovak government circles? The memorandum attached to the translation does not offer an explanation. Perhaps, however, we can deduce from the evidence presented in this article why Weis’ revision of “statelessness” as a viable political category would threaten postwar plans for a reconstituted Czechoslovak body politic.

67 Ibid, 21-22.

68 Ibid, 22.

69 Ibid, 23.

70 Ibid, 23.

71 Ibid, 23.

72 Ibid, 24.

As illustrated by numerous examples, Masaryk and his colleagues in the Czechoslovak government-in-exile desperately wanted Germans out of postwar Czechoslovakia. Accordingly, they approached the issue of statelessness with this paramount concern woven throughout their thoughts. So, if German-speaking Jews from Czechoslovakia could automatically regain their prewar citizenship with the backing of international law, a small but noticeable number (arguably between 1,500-2,000 people) would potentially have legal rights to stay in Czechoslovakia, thereby complicating the expulsion of Germans. Both Paul Weis and the WJC wanted to guarantee that Jews could not arbitrarily be deprived of political belonging in the future, and both wanted previously annulled citizenships to be reinstated. In general, Masaryk hoped that citizenship would be reinstated for Jews as well. He did not, however, want German-speaking Jews to remain in his Czechoslovakia, despite their prewar citizenship status as Czechoslovaks. Herein lies the contradiction: Masaryk, the steadfast friend of the WJC in Allied diplomatic circles, wanted German-speaking Jews to gain citizenship elsewhere, perhaps in an ethnically Jewish state, so that Czechoslovakia's plans for postwar ethnic homogeneity could be more completely realised. The emergence of Palestine as a state for 'ethnic' Jews offered Masaryk a solution to the perennial 'Jewish problem', the problem of statelessness, and the problem of minorities in Czechoslovakia and East Central Europe overall.

At the end of June 1945, delegates from 44 nations individually approached a table laden with two volumes, the UN Charter and the Statute of the International Court of Justice, to add their signatures to the freshly finalised international covenant. Even after four weeks of meetings and assembly, much remained unsolved. A definitive resolution on statelessness did not emerge from this gathering. In fact, the UN did not issue official conventions on statelessness until 1954 and 1961 respectively. Further, the UN assembly in San Francisco did not produce definitive guidelines for dealing with Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. In fact, many months later, continued attempts to enshrine a category specifically for Jewish DPs in international law met with failure until February 1946.⁷³ At that time, resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations included "persons who, having resided in Germany or Austria, and being of Jewish origin" as constituting "refugees".⁷⁴ Beyond this, no mention of "Jewishness" was encoded in UNRRA or other United Nation's policies in the immediate postwar years.

Without clear directives on these two important topics, Masaryk left California and, for the first time in seven years, travelled home towards Prague. He arrived in Prague in the summer of 1945 as a "somber optimist".⁷⁵ He strongly felt that "Europe must be saved" in the wake of Hitler's war. But what would "Europe" look like after this intervention? Masaryk returned to Czechoslovakia anxious to recast his state in a new, ethnically homogenous image. A few points had coalesced in his mind in descending degrees of clarity. First, most Germans, including some German-speaking Jews with interwar Czechoslovak identity documents, would not be welcomed back. Second, by supporting Zionist ambitions to establish a Jewish state on the territory of Mandatory Palestine, Masaryk could further justify his plans to create an ethnically homogeneous Czechoslovakia through any means possible. Moreover, Ger-

73 AMZV, Report of the special committee for Refugees, London 8 April – 1 June 1946, Mezinárodní Odbory [International Organisations], Box # 206.

74 See Annex #1 of the Draft Constitution for the International Refugee Organization, presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 December 1946, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/historical/3ae68bee8/refugees-displaced-persons-report-third-committee.html> [accessed January 9, 2019].

75 AMZV, Journal of the Third Session of the Council London, Aug 7-25 1945, Mezinárodní Odbory, Box #206.

man-speaking Jews who had citizenship in interwar Czechoslovakia could claim another potential homeland in a Jewish polity. Third, the wider ethnic revolution, which promised to cement new links between “land” and “people”, had the potential to improve the condition of statelessness.

This article has argued that Masaryk’s understanding of postwar Jewish questions, namely who belonged to the Jewish people and where those Jewish people belonged geographically, cannot be unwoven from broader questions regarding German belonging in the Czechoslovak body politic and the more general issue of statelessness. While Masaryk remained committed to resolving statelessness as a condition and wanted to protect Czech- and Slovakian-speaking Jews in his reconstituted postwar state, his commitment to purging Czechoslovakia of its German-speaking minority trumped his other beliefs. This obsession with cleansing the Czechoslovak body politic of Germans, the German language, and a German collective identity captivated Jan Masaryk so much that he sometimes failed to differentiate German-speaking Czechoslovak Jews from the broader ethnically German mass. Therefore, scholars who desire to understand how Jan Masaryk utilized his power and influence to keep the *bricha* flowing across the Polish-Czechoslovak border in 1946 must evaluate how his broader worldview necessitated the reorganisation of all East Central European peoples along ethnic lines. In this way, Masaryk’s commitment in the summer of 1946 to keeping the border open and the facilities in the town of Náchod accessible to Polish Jews trading their former heterogeneous homeland for a faraway and imagined ethnically homogeneous polity, as captured in his 1947 speech at the UN, is best understood within the context of the overall ‘ethnic revolution’ which gripped the region between Berlin and Moscow throughout the 1940s.

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