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Imperial Embraces and Ethnic Challenges: The Politics of Jewish Identity in the Bohemian Lands

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During the last three decades of the nineteenth century Czech nationalist politicians sharply criticized the cultural choices and political allegiances of the Jewish population of the Bohemian lands. The Jews' linguistic practices, educational strategies, and voting patterns—the critics charged—demonstrated that they had taken sides in the increasingly heated struggle for power between Czech and German activists, lending their support to a presumed project for German linguistic and cultural hegemony. This article examines the origins of Jewish political culture in the Bohemian lands in the context of the late-Enlightenment imperial project that aimed to modernize Jewish institutions and create Jewish imperial subjects through education to the high culture of the state. This acculturation was assumed to require a German linguistic complexion, but its political ideology and loyalties were imperial—and liberal—not national. What ethnic politicians of the late nineteenth century were demanding of Jews in their midst amounted to a reduction of perspective, a shift from the imperial to the local and from state to nation. Many Jews in the Bohemian lands, in fact, met this demand, having learned the need to articulate individual and collective identity in national terms. The Czech Jewish movement was one result; so, too, was Prague Zionism.

In 1887 Karel Adámek, a politician and economist affiliated with the Young Czech Party, published the second part of what would come to be a four-volume survey of Czech national life titled *Z naší doby* (From Our Time).[1] The first installment, published the previous year, had focused on industry and

[1]Karel Adámek, *Z naší doby*. 4 vols. (Velké Meziříčí: J. F. Šašek, 1886–1890).

commerce in the Bohemian lands, but the second volume was devoted to music, culture, the performing arts, literature, and education. Schools in particular served as an important site of contestation in nationalist politics of the late nineteenth century, thanks in part to the equation of culture and sovereignty in ethnic and linguistic nationalism, and—perhaps more important—to the role that writers, journalists, and the technical and professional intelligentsia played in promoting nationalist claims. It was the public school after all that helped to transform a dialect or peasant language into a vehicle of high culture and that paved the way for the sons and daughters of small towns and villages to enter the occupations and professions of the new industrial age. It was the school that prepared one for a career in the bureaucracy under the auspices of an expanding state, and if integration into the larger state and society proved impossible or unsatisfactory, it was again to the local high culture disseminated by the schools that a disaffected intellectual or professional might turn in search of an alternative political community.[2]

For Adámek and other Czech nationalists, general satisfaction with the rapid growth in Czech-language primary schools throughout the Bohemian and Moravian countryside over the preceding decades was blunted by a counterbalancing frustration over the continued presence of private elementary schools, many of which preferred to educate children in the German language. Spokespeople for the Czech nation regarded these schools as both anachronistic—remnants of the confessional structure of education that had obtained before the school reforms of the late 1860s—and colonialist, since they often relied upon the minority German *Schulverein* (School Society) for material support if not their very existence. The Jewish communities of the Czech lands—large and small, rural and urban—found themselves in the middle of this controversy, caught as it were in the headlights of Czech national scrutiny. Adámek was one of those who directed sharp criticism at Jews, charging in *Z naší doby* that they, together, with the Austrian bureaucracy, had to be counted as "surely . . . the strongest German factor in Slavic circles," and that the independent Jewish schools, like those of the *Schulverein*, represented a "dangerous tool in the Germanization of Czech cities and communities."[3]

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[2]On education and national conflict among Germans, Czechs, and Jews in the Bohemian lands, see Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 135–158. Some of the early material in this paper is taken from these pages.

[3]Adámek, *Z naší doby*, 2:20.

Adámek also went so far as to claim that the German *Schulverein* based much of its strategic plan for the Czech countryside on the maintenance of private Jewish schools. To support this contention, he quoted the remarks made by a certain Dr. Kraus at the General Assembly of the *Schulverein* in 1882:

> In Bohemia there is a whole array of private German schools, with and without public legal status, which are maintained in purely Slavic localities by the Jewish religious communities there. We must look upon these schools in the purely Czech countryside as rare linguistic islands that must be preserved, since in such regions these schools are often the only seedbeds of German culture.[4]

Adámek then rattled off the names of Czech communities where private German schools were being subsidized by the *Schulverein*: Holešovice, Libeň, and Josefov within greater Prague; Pardubice, Příbram, Slaný, Nové Benátky, Jičín, Nový Bydžov, etc. Singling out several specific cases of German-Jewish "treachery," he cited the example of Heřmanův Městec, where the formerly private Jewish school had been transformed into a public German establishment because Jews there "freely chose the German nationality"; also the private German school in Nymburk, in which 230 students had enrolled in 1884–85 even though—according to the 1880 census—only 226 self-declared Germans lived among a population of 5,352. Adámek also claimed—employing some sort of algorithm that he never identified—that, of the 230 students enrolled in the school, only 39 could legitimately be identified as "German." The others, by implication, had to have been drawn from other populations. "What would the *Schulverein* schools look like," he asked rhetorically, "if they were not attended by Jewish and Czech children?"[5]

Some Czech politicians, among them Josef Kořán, a journalist and deputy in the Bohemian Diet, appealed directly to Czech-speaking Jews in their own publications to "de-Germanize" their communal institutions. Writing in the pages of *Kalendář česko-židovský* (Czech-Jewish Almanac), Kořán pointed out that the first thing that had to go, naturally, were the German-Jewish elementary schools. Not only did they prevent Jewish children from developing the proper Czech national sentiment, they also "stole" non-Jewish children from the national camp; for alongside the 4,073 Jewish children in Czech towns and

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[4]Adámek, *Z naší doby*, 2:32–33.

[5]Adámek, *Z naší doby*, 2:33. In the fourth and final volume of the work, published in 1890, Adámek indicated that the *Schulverein* subsidized 14 percent of the private Jewish elementary schools in Bohemia—a relatively low figure given the ardor of the Czech national grievance against the Jews? (*Z naší doby*, 4:80.)

villages who in 1885 continued to be educated in German schools attached to the Jewish religious community sat 192 Catholics and 17 Protestants![6] Kořán challenged Bohemian Jewry to admit to the untruthfulness of many of the rationalizations that they used to justify this cultural behavior. "The supporters of these schools," he wrote, "would doubtless object to us that they are only intended for children to be taught in German from a young age, but that [the children] are not educated in anti-Czech thought" (that is, that the schools do not promote German nationalism). "But the mere existence of the schools," he continued, "is conclusive proof that Jews who establish and support them do not think as Czechs, have no love for our language, have no confidence in the victory of our cause; and even the knowledge of Czech [carries] less weight than the knowledge of German. These schools are a living protest against our national and political endeavors; in fact—even if their supporters did not have this in mind—[these schools] are demonstrations against our Czech culture."[7]

The special scrutiny paid to Jewish schools—and the suggestion that they worked to thwart the efforts of Czech speakers to assert their national rights within the Habsburg monarchy—came as an unwelcome surprise to many Jews living in the Bohemian lands, who did not, by and large, attach any national significance to this institution. The system of German-language Jewish schools that had been educating Jewish children in Bohemia and Moravia for about a century had been mandated by the Emperor Joseph II in the 1780s as the central element in a series of reforms designed to "modernize" Jewish life and break down some of the cultural, social, and economic barriers that had inhibited the state's engagement with its Jewish population, limiting its ability to transform Jews into what the enlightened monarch liked to call "more useful subjects of the state." The Jewish *Normalschule* in Prague (one of whose functions was to train new cadres of teachers) and the scores of Jewish elementary schools that dotted the countryside stood as a living memorial to the imperial state's embrace of its Jewish population, both the symbol of a promised integration into state and society and one of the main vehicles of its implementation.[8]

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[6]Josef Kořán, "Židovské školy v Čechách," *Kalendář česko-židovský* 6 (1886–87): 97–102.

[7]Kořán, "Židovské školy v Čechách," p. 101.

[8]On the Josephinian reforms of the 1780s, see Michael K. Silber, "Josephinian Reforms," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, edited by Gershon David Hundert, Vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 831–834.

On the German-Jewish *Normalschulen* in the Bohemian lands, see: Kieval, *Languages of Community*, pp. 37–64; and Louise Hecht, "Normalschulen," in *YIVO Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, pp. 1273–1274.

Conventional accounts of Jewish language use in the Czech lands point to the Josephinian era schools as the starting point for the German cultural orientation of most Jews in the nineteenth century (particularly in Prague and the larger towns). According to this narrative, the state compelled or cajoled a linguistically indeterminate Jewish population to acculturate to the German language and its cultural norms—seducing it with implicit promises of mobility and advancement or menacing it with implicit threats of state sanction in the event of non-compliance, depending on the narrator's perspective. And there is much to recommend this explanation. The flurry of reforms set in motion by the absolutist state at the end of the eighteenth century—which also included the mandatory adoption of personal and family names, ending the jurisdiction of Jewish courts in most civil and criminal cases, the conscription of Jewish males to military service, the admission of Jews to the artisan crafts (as journeymen), an effort to encourage agriculture among Jews, and—eventually—the requirement that all Jews desiring marriage licenses present evidence of having passed an examination on a Jewish civics text called *Bnei Zion*—provided the formal structure for the transition from a premodern, largely self-contained Jewish social life to a multifaceted engagement with the state, its various institutions and legal bodies, and with Bohemian and Moravian society at large.[9]

But other factors went into this particular cultural affinity as well. In the non-Jewish world, the defeat of the Czech nobility at the hands of the Habsburg forces in 1620 ushered in a long decline of Czech as literary language, during which time it virtually disappeared from secular urban settings. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Czech was spoken mainly among peasant families in the countryside or could be heard in sermons and homilies in the revived Catholic Church. This meant, as Jonathan Bolton has noted, that when acculturated Jews began writing in vernacular languages toward the end of the eighteenth century, they naturally chose German, the language of the city.[10] And when Joseph II ordered the establishment of Jewish schools to be supervised by the state, it was assumed by all parties that the language of

[9]On the overall effects of the reforms on Jewish culture and society, see Silber, "Josephinian Reforms"; Kieval, *Languages of Community*; and Louise Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Der Pädagoge und Reformer Peter Beer (1758–1838)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008).

[10]Jonathan Bolton, "Czech Literature," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, p. 370.

instruction would be the same as in *most* schools in the monarchy at the time: again, German.

Other circumstances that favored the adoption of German by Bohemian and Moravian Jews were more intrinsic to Jewish culture and society in early modern Europe. These included the use of Yiddish (an evolved form of Judeo-German) as an everyday language by most Bohemian and Moravian Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and the transnational connections that existed among the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe during the same period. The sharing of a common linguistic culture with Jewish communities in Poland-Lithuania, Hungary, and other parts of the Holy Roman Empire facilitated a two-way movement of young Jewish men across state borders in the pursuit of talmudic education; enabled marriages to be contracted with families outside the Bohemian lands; and meant that communities such as Prague and Nikolsburg/Mikulov could attract distinguished candidates for rabbinical positions from other Jewish centers in Ashkenaz. Even more important for the long-term viability of Jewish life in Bohemia and Moravia, the relative ease with which Jews could move across borders and establish themselves in Jewish communities in Germany, Poland, and Hungary provided families with a crucial demographic safety net, as imperial legislation from the early eighteenth century (known as the Familiants Laws or *Familiantengesetze*) had sought to curtail Jewish population growth by limiting the right to marry to only the eldest son in a Jewish household while establishing a strict limit on the number of Jewish families able to reside legally in the Bohemian lands.[11]

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[11]On the use of Yiddish among Bohemian and Moravian Jews, see: Marie Krappmanová, "Jidiš (nejen) v Čechách a na Moravě," in Jakub Guziur, ed., *Úvod do studia judaistiky: sborník přednášek* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2006), pp. 49–69; Ruth Bondy, *Mezi námi řečeno: jak mluvili Židé v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague: Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 2003); Chava Turniansky,"Yiddish Song as Historical Source Material: Plague in the Judenstadt of Prague in 1713," in Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London: P. Halban, 1988), pp. 189–198; and Peter Demetz, "Speculations about Prague Yiddish and Its Disappearance: From Its Origins to Kafka and Brod," in Mark H. Gelber, ed., *Confrontations / Accommodations: German-Jewish Literary and Cultural Relations from Heine to Wassermann* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2004), pp. 237–247.

On the Familiants Laws and their effects on Jewish life, see: Ivo Cerman, "Familiants Laws," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, pp. 493–494; and Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 10–13.

Regarding the transnational market in rabbinic leadership, let me offer two just two examples among many. The leading Jewish intellectual force of the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century—Judah Loew ben Bezalel (ca. 1520–1609), known as Maharal—hailed originally from Poznań in the Kingdom of Poland; served for two decades as the Chief Rabbi of Moravia; established and directed a private talmudic academy in Prague under the patronage of Mordecai Maisel; returned for a number of years to Poznań; and also served as communal rabbi in Cracow, before finally being named Chief Rabbi of Prague in 1597.[12] Ezekiel Landau (1713–1793), Prague's most influential rabbi of the eighteenth century, was born to a prominent family in Opatów, Poland; spent years of study in the *kloyz* (private talmudic academy) in Brody; and served as rabbi of the Polish city of Jampol before he was called to Prague to serve as its Chief Rabbi in 1754, a post that he would hold until his death in 1793.[13] All of this is to say that the *cultural and linguistic* boundaries of early modern Jewish life in the Bohemian lands extended far beyond the political borders of the Crown lands, beyond the confines of the Habsburg monarchy itself. The Jewish world of Central and Eastern Europe rested on a dense network of family ties, commercial relationships, institutions of higher rabbinic learning, and Hebrew and Yiddish publishing. The Czech vernacular universe, by comparison, must have seemed quaint and provincial; the realm of literary Czech, almost invisible. German language and culture, in contrast, beckoned—extended by a benevolent monarch to a population that may not even have comprehended the implications of the offer.

When Joseph II issued letters of toleration to the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia in October 1781 and February 1782—which included the mandate to establish a network of state-supervised Jewish schools and to train a new corps of teachers in German language, western history, civics, mathematics, and science—traditionalists, led by Ezekiel Landau, reacted with what I would call cautious disapproval. In a major address to the Jewish community of Prague issued on *shabbat ha-gadol*, the Sabbath before Passover, 1782, Landau praised his king, likening him to Cyrus the Great of Persia. The Habsburg emperor, Landau proclaimed, "has decided to help us and to raise us from our degradation. May God reward him for his good deed and raise his

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[12]Tomáš Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague: Sefer, 2001), pp. 441–443; Joseph Dan, "Yehudah Leib ben Betsal'el," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, pp. 2049–2050.

[13]Sharon Flatto, "Landau, Yeḥezkel ben Yehudah," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, pp. 966–968.

glory ever higher." While Jews, in Landau's view, continued to live under the sting of exile, Joseph's graciousness toward them helped to make that reality more endurable. "Even though we are slaves," Landau told his congregation, "he has removed from us the stigma of bondage, removed all externally recognizable signs of servitude. If we inwardly take it upon ourselves to be submissive, this is as it should be."[14] In the same sermon, Landau directed scathing criticism at Jewish adherents of the European Enlightenment (*Maskilim*), in particular Naphtali Herz Wessely, whose Hebrew treatise *Divrei shalom ve'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth), which advocated major structural changes in the curriculum in Jewish schools, had been written under the inspiration of Joseph's *Toleranzpatent* and in large measure in order to rally Jewish support for its educational provisions. Landau worried that the Josephinian schools might be used as a laboratory for the Haskalah and a vehicle for the reform of traditional Jewish education. Thus he insisted in subsequent negotiations with Ferdinand Kindermann von Schulstein—the liberal-minded priest selected by Joseph II to oversee the establishment of the new German-Jewish schools in Bohemia—that these schools in fact teach no Jewish subjects, at least none of the subjects that fell within the purview of a *heder* or *yeshivah* education.[15]

Landau's own position on the issue of secular knowledge as part of a Jewish school curriculum again hewed the line between accommodation and resistance. He accepted the notion that Jews ought to acquire technical expertise in European languages, science, and math—going so far as to agree with the need for Jews to learn how to comport themselves according to the conventions of the non-Jewish world—but he insisted on the maintenance of a sturdy barrier between the critical methods of Enlightenment rationalism and the storehouse of traditional knowledge. Landau claimed to have no objection

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[14]Yekezk'el Landau, *Derushei hatselah* (Jerusalem, 1966; Photo-offset of Warsaw, 1899 ed.), fol. 53a. For an English translation, see Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 362, 364; *Derushei hatselah*, 53a.

Landau's remark that "he has removed from us the stigma of bondage, removed all externally recognizable signs of servitude," is most likely a reference to the provision in the *Toleranzpatent* that Jews were no longer to be required to wear any distinguishing marks or signs on their persons or clothing.

[15]On Landau's grudging accommodation to the establishment of the German-Jewish schools in Bohemia, see: Kieval, *Languages of Community*, pp. 37–64; and Hillel J. Kieval, "The Unforeseen Consequences of Cultural Resistance: Haskalah and State-Mandated Reform in the Bohemian Lands," *Jewish Culture and History*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1–2 (2011).

to teaching Jewish children proper German; on this point, in fact, he chided his listeners for imagining that the Yiddish (or *Judendeutsch*) that they spoke was adequate to the task:

> As to the substance of the matter—the value of etiquette and of grammatical knowledge of the languages spoken by our neighbors—I too esteem these things. The government has done a great favor in deciding to teach our children to speak correctly. . . . Do not think that you know how to speak the German language. No one can be said to know a language unless he can speak it grammatically.
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> . . . Those who fear the Lord have eyes to see, and they will be able to master both, making Torah the basis, yet also learning to speak correctly and behave according to the patterns that guide a person on the right path.[16]

Bohemian and Moravian Jews on the whole greeted this first embrace of the state with enthusiasm. Attendance at the Prague *Normalschule* ebbed and flowed for a decade or two but climbed to impressive levels by the early 1820s with annual enrollments averaging between 700 and 800 students. An early history of the school, published in 1832, claimed that the total enrollment for the years 1790 to 1831 stood at 17,800. Not all students who registered at the Prague school studied there for the full five years, so it is impossible to know exactly how many Jewish youngsters passed through its doors during this time, but the number may have been as high as 6,000. The yearly average of 424 students at the Prague *Normalschule* (for the four decades stretching from 1790 to 1830) may have constituted as many as 40 percent of the eligible Jewish children in the city—an impressive figure when one recalls that throughout this period wealthier families preferred to hire private tutors to teach in their homes; public education remained in large part the domain of the poor and the dispossessed.[17]

For much of the nineteenth century Jewish educational and communal institutions aligned with both the formal regulations of the tutelary state and its implicit expectations with regard to the transformation of Jewish culture and society. At the same time, Jewish families looked to the high culture of the state and the emerging industrial economy to provide opportunities for their sons and daughters for upward social mobility. In this scenario, the Jews of the Bohemian lands might be compared to colonial elites recruited by an imperial power through education and cultural literacy and buttressed by promises

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[16]Landau, *Derushei hatselaḥ*53a.; Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, pp. 365–366.

[17]For a more detailed discussion of attendance figures, see Kieval, *Languages of Community*, pp. 57–62; and Louise Hecht, "Normalschulen," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, pp. 1273–1274.

of integration and mobility. As it happened, the state made good on many of its promises, slowly—almost grudgingly—at first (marriage and residency restrictions, for example, were not fully repealed until 1848, while the last barriers to free economic activity did not come down until 1860); but with the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867, Jews achieved full legal emancipation, and, in the Austrian half of the monarchy, Judaism enjoyed the status of an officially recognized religion.[18] From 1867 to the fall of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918, many Jews came to identify with the state as a supranational, almost cosmopolitan, political home, which, because it defined citizenship in solely political terms, could provide refuge from ethnic and social conflicts of various kinds.

From time to time over the course of the nineteenth century, Bohemian Jews shifted their gaze, as it were, from the imperial center to their own provincial surroundings and tentatively explored the linguistic cultural world of their Czech-speaking neighbors. Some of these experiments—such as the overtures of the Jewish writers David Kuh, Siegfried Kapper, and Moritz Hartmann toward middle-class Czech culture and politics in the 1840s, or the publication by Kapper himself in 1846 of an original book of Czech poetry, *České listy* (Czech Leaves)—ended in failure. Industrial riots in Prague in 1844, which at first pitted Czech workers against Jewish factory owners, eventually spread to the Jewish Quarter itself, spreading fear in all segments of the community, and stopping in its tracks any political overtures that a new generation of Jewish intellectuals might have been willing to make.[19] The publication of Kapper's *České listy* was met with a singularly hostile review by the leading Czech writer of the day, Karel Havlíček Borovský. Havlíček dismissed Kapper's efforts to write poetry in the Czech language because Havlíček tied artistic creativity to membership in an ethnic community, and, since he understood Jews to be Jewish by nationality (*národnost*) as well as religion, they could not at the same time consider themselves part of the Czech nation. Kapper, as far as Havlíček was concerned, stood outside of the ethnic community and was thus incapable of transmitting his own feelings to Czech readers, of creating what one scholar has called "a community of shared emotion."[20] Because he was not ethnically

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[18]Kieval, "Bohemia and Moravia," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, pp. 202–211.

[19]On the overtures of Jewish intellectuals in the 1840s and their response to popular violence, see Kieval, *Languages of Community*, pp. 65–94.

[20]Jonathan Bolton, "Czech Literature," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, p. 370.

Czech, but belonged, rather, to what Havlíček called the "Semitic nation," Kapper was relegated to the category of "strident" (*křiklavý*) writers, who were forced to mask their lack of true feeling behind bluster and contrivance, and denied entry to the ranks of the truly "sensitive" (*cítlivý*). "We hope that there is no need to prove the point," Havlíček wrote, "that it is impossible to belong simultaneously to two fatherlands and two nations, or to serve two masters. Therefore anyone who wants to be a Czech must cease to be a Jew."[21]

Havlíček, in my view, was not an antisemite. But he did understand nations to comprise communities of biological descent—and the cultural life of nations to depend on ethnicity as that which produced and comprehended aesthetic beauty. As a result, he wrote Jews out of the Czech nation even as he urged them not to abandon their own longing for Zion or their love for the Hebrew language. He criticized those who would give up this language in favor of some European substitute, but he also—somewhat contradictorily—allowed for the inevitability of acculturation. "If Jews want to know our personal opinion," he concluded, "we would advise them, if they insist on throwing overboard their language and literature, to attach themselves to the Germans and German literature, since the German language has become the second mother tongue of the Jews."[22]

Havlíček's contention that the Jews of the Czech lands constituted their own nation would not have found much of an echo among the Jews themselves. Throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Jewish political strategies, social ambitions, and collective identity were in fact predicated on the opposite notion: that a distinct Jewish nationality did not exist in Central and Western Europe. The Jewish middle classes strove for political equality, economic opportunity, and social advancement above all. Jewish national identity was simply not on the menu. If Jews did take to heart any of Havlíček's advice, it was to complete their embrace of German language and culture. In political terms this meant averting their eyes from their local environment and imagining a different, larger, more cosmopolitan universe of education, politics, and high culture. Or perhaps, as Moritz Hartmann confided to his fellow writer Alfred Meissner in 1844, the world of aspiration actually needed to

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[21]Partial texts of Havlíček's review are printed in Guido Kisch, *In Search of Freedom: A History of American Jews from Czechoslovakia* (London: Edward Goldston & Son, 1949), pp. 213–214 (in Czech; English translation on pp. 36–38), and in Oskar Donath, "Siegfried Kappers Leben und Wirken," *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, Vol. 30 (1908): 434 (in German). My translation is based upon both sources.

[22]Kisch, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 38.

become smaller. Alluding to his recently completed book of poems, *Kelch und Schwert* (Chalice and Sword)—which had articulated the vision of a bilingual Bohemianism and had glorified the democratic and social ideals of the Hussites—Hartmann now wrote: "When one hears about revolution, like the one your fellow Praguers had, the best thing for a person to do now is to become a loyal citizen and make his volume of poetry smaller by half."[23]

And yet a movement of Bohemian and Moravian Jews, which identified with the political and cultural program of Czech nationalism (at least in its liberal and progressive articulations) and which promoted a more intense Jewish engagement with Czech language, literature, and history, *would* in fact emerge during the last third of the nineteenth century. Marked by associations such as *Spolek českých adademiků-židů* (Society of Czech Jewish Students), *Národní jednota českožidovská* (Czech Jewish National Union), and the synagogue group *Or-Tomid*—as well as a range of new publications (*Kalendář česko-židovský* [1881–1939]; *Českožidovské listy* [1894–1904]; *Rozvoj* [1904–1939]; and *Tribuna* [1919–1924])—this political-cultural reorientation owed as much to Jewish population growth in the Czech-speaking countryside, the migration of village and small-town Jews to Prague and other large cities, and the entry of the sons and daughters of these migrants into secondary schools and universities as to any kind of ideological conversion. The urbanization of Czech Jews produced a collision of cultures within Jewish society itself, a clash between the dominant pattern of German Jewish liberalism and a growing inclination to identify with the language, culture, and political aspirations of the Czech majority. With the establishment of student organizations, Jewish auxiliaries of the National Liberal and, later, the Realist party, newspapers and almanacs directed at merchants and shopkeepers, and translations of the prayer book and Torah into Czech, a growing Czech Jewish integrationist movement had come of age.[24]

One of the principal targets of Czech Jewish activists in the 1890s was the German-Jewish school that had been a ubiquitous feature of their own village and small-town childhoods and had so exercised the likes of Karel Adámek and Josef Kořán during the previous decade. Through its fortnightly newspaper, *Českožidovské listy*, the Czech Jewish National Union called for

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[23]Hartmann to Meissner, in Otto Wittner, ed., *Briefe aus dem Vormärz: Eine Sammlung aus dem Nachlass Moritz Hartmanns* (Prague, 1911), pp. 255–256. *Kelch und Schwert* did eventually appear in 1845, not reduced by half, but complete.

[24]On the emergence and development of Czech Jewish institutions and politics, see Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, pp. 10–92.

the closing of all such schools in Prague and the Czech countryside. Modern Czech Jews, the paper argued, had no reason *not* to send their children to local Czech schools, and to persist in the old practice of maintaining separate Jewish schools had to be viewed as an affront not only against the Czech people but against what it labeled the "modern Jewish spirit." Between 1894 and 1907 *Českožidovské listy* reported with great interest on Czech Jewish efforts to purge the German-language elementary schools from the countryside. One by one it rattled off the names of small-town and village communities (like a gunfighter from the Old West carefully taking aim and picking off rows of standing targets): Benešov, Tábor, Hradec Králové, Kutná Hora, Mldadá Boleslav, Plzeň, Slaný, and so on. Josef Kořán himself made a second appearance in the Czech Jewish Almanac to report on the progress made over the past decade. His report showed that in all of Bohemia—German areas included—the number of German-Jewish schools had declined from 113 in 1885 to 90 ten years later. The number of Jewish children enrolled in these schools had fallen by 39 percent (from 4,239 to 2,587) while the number of Catholic students in German schools had dropped by only 9.4 percent during this period, the number of Protestant students, by 23.5 percent. Not only did a greater percentage of Jews switch from German to Czech schools in the decade 1885–95, but virtually all of the establishments that had succumbed were schools whose student body was exclusively Jewish. Those that had a mixed Christian-Jewish student body enjoyed greater stability and resistance to change.[25]

Where gentle persuasion would not work, the National Union resorted to all-out attack. Such was its tactic regarding the Jewish community of Kolín in Central Bohemia, which had one of the larger provincial Jewish populations at the time. In March 1898 *Českožidovské listy* ran a series of columns devoted to what it was calling "the situation in Kolín," contending that the German-Jewish school there was staying open against the wishes of the majority of the city's Jews, against the statutes of the community, and "as a provocation to the entire Czech nation regardless of faith." To support its charges, the paper published an open letter, signed by sixty voting members of the Jewish community, which charged that neither the executive council nor the board of deputies of the community represented the thinking of the majority of Kolín's Jewish citizens, and which demanded that the larger directorate of the community be convened so that it might quickly decide on the closing the German-Jewish

[25]The campaign to close the German-Jewish elementary schools in Bohemia is discussed in much greater detail in Kieval, *Languages of Community*, pp. 135–158.

school. This school had educated 147 children during the 1894–95 school year; within six months of the start of the campaign, it closed.[26]

In 1906 the Czech Jewish National Union announced with satisfaction that, as far as it knew, fifty-two German-Jewish schools in Czech linguistic districts had closed since the organization first began its efforts in 1893. Additionally, at least two public German schools—frequented primarily by Jewish students—ceased to function; and in at least two other localities German-Jewish private schools had been replaced by Czech-Jewish institutions.[27] Actually the extent of school closings far exceeded even these rosy estimates. At the start of the campaign, some 4,500 children were attending private German-Jewish schools throughout Bohemia, over 88 percent of which were located in Czech-speaking districts, including Prague. By 1910 the number of children attending the German-Jewish schools had shrunk to 154. Of the 114 private schools that had existed in 1885, only five remained.[28]

The choice of where to send one's children to school hardly exhausted the range of Jewish behaviors that were scrutinized by both Czech and German nationalists. Declaring a "language of everyday use" in the Austrian census; voting for or against a political party; subscribing to a newspaper; marching in a parade or political demonstration—all of these behaviors were endowed with symbolic significance, and many had direct and obvious implications for the competition for power in the Bohemian lands. More than a few Jews complained that they found themselves in a no-win situation; the smallest action seemed to produce an unintended—certainly undesired—political effect. Writing in his newspaper, the *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*, in 1884, Josef Samuel Bloch, a Galician-born rabbi who resided in Vienna and represented a Galician constituency in the Austrian *Reichsrat*, offered a brief litany of complaint that underscored the difficulties that the empire's Jewish population faced in acting politically. "It is certainly tragic," he wrote, "how the Jews can never make things right with the people. If they remove themselves from society, one complains about their being closed off. If they seek the company of Christians, they are pushy; if they do not spend much, they are miserly." Shifting to the first person plural, Bloch continued:

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[26]*Českožidovské listy*, 15 March 1898, pp. 3–4.

[27]"Národní jednota českožidovská," *Kalendář česko-židovský* 26 (1906–07): 181–182.

[28]Kieval, *Languages of Commuity*, pp. 153–154.

> If we allow ourselves to earn money, we are showy. If we wish to step back from the battle of the political parties, we are called cosmopolitans (*vaterlandslos*); if we get involved, we are reproached for being presumptuous. If we go with the opposition, that means that we are stirring up the nationalities; if we support the regime, the mob cries "the Jew always sides with the powerful."[29]

More outburst than analysis, these lines by Bloch nevertheless captured the dilemma that Jews of the multinational empire faced, caught as it were between the mythical Scylla and Charybdis—on one side, the imperial blandishments of integration through high culture and supra-national loyalty to the state; on the other, the pull of local nationalism, which also promised a type of integration but demanded one more acculturation before Jews could be said to have passed the test of emancipation. It was partly as a response to this complex situation that Jewish nationalism (in the form of Prague Zionism) began to enjoy greater and greater popularity among Jewish academics, merchants, and professionals at the turn of the century. As I have argued elsewhere, Prague Zionism and the Czech Jewish movement represented parallel aspects of a broad and extensive reworking of Jewish identity in the Bohemian lands in the years between the Austro-Hungarian compromise and the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic, one in which Jews distanced themselves from what had been an overwhelming identification with Austrian German liberalism and experimented with new cultural and linguistic patterns, new articulations of political culture. It was this half-century of change and struggle that made it possible for Jews in the Bohemian lands to adapt to the new political conditions in 1918 with relative ease and become among the most loyal citizens of the new Czechoslovak Republic.

But old stereotypes died hard. The image of Jews as promoters of German hegemony and power (cultural, economic, and political) and as enemies of Czech nationalism dogged Czech-Jewish relations right up to the Second World War. In many respects, it continues to dominate conventional understandings of Jewish linguistic and cultural loyalties in the Czech lands. In 1899—in the shadow of the sensational Hilsner Affair, in which an unemployed Jewish glove maker stood accused of having murdered a young woman in the small town of Polná in order to perform Jewish ritual from her blood—Karel Adámek revisited the question of the impact of Jews on Czech life in his

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[29]*Österreichische Wochenschrift*, 15 October 1884; reprinted in J. S. Bloch, *Der nationale Zwist und die Juden in Oesterreich* (Vienna: M. Gottlieb, 1886), pp. 12–13. All translations are mine.

pamphlet *Slovo o židech* (A Word About the Jews).[30] Looking at the 1880 and 1890 Austrian census returns, Adámek noted how most Jews in Bohemia, and especially Moravia, continued to declare German to be their daily language and to send their children to German schools.

> Drawing their culture in our lands for the most part from German sources; employing—with rare exceptions—German as their everyday language; and continuing to stand in the camp of our enemies, they adapt in every way.[31]

Industry and capital markets in the Bohemian lands, Adámek complained, remained in foreign hands (i.e., German and Jewish). He did acknowledge the emergence in recent years of organizations such as the Society of Czech Jewish Students, *Or Tomid*, and the Czech Jewish National Union, established with the goal of improving cooperation ("national, intellectual, social, and economic") between, as he called them, "Czechs of Jewish belief" and "their fellow Czech natives."[32] Adámek even took note of the fact that in recent years German-Jewish schools in Czech communities had closed; that some Jewish communities were holding religious observances in Czech; and that more and more Jews were proclaiming the Czech nationality. He judged these phenomena to be tentative, however, and warned that much work still needed to be done "before Jews themselves will have removed the main causes of antisemitism among us."[33]

In the years leading up to the First World War, the stark contrast of empire and nation—Central Europe's rock and hard place—loomed for Jews as never before. Mid-century liberalism, described by Josef Samuel Bloch as the Jew's "port of shelter after a thousand years of homelessness . . . his letter of emancipation after servitude of unknown hardship and pain," had succumbed all too easily, in the eyes of many, to the blandishments of ethnic nationalism.[34] Indeed from Bloch's perch in Vienna, the answer to the failure of political liberalism lay in abstention from the monarchy's nationality struggles and self-conscious identification with the imperial state. For a growing number of Jews in the Bohemian lands, however, any hope for a supra-national, imperial identity was rapidly receding from view. Long-standing, historical patterns of

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[30]Karel Adámek, *Slovo o židech* (Chrudim: Eckert, 1899).

[31]Adámek, *Slovo o židech*, p. 31.

[32]Adámek, *Slovo o židech*, p. 45.

[33]Adámek, *Slovo o židech*, p. 47.

[34]*Österreichische Wochenschrift*, 2 January 1885; repr, in *Der Nationale Zwist*, p. 25.

acculturation and political behavior now seemed ill-adapted to an environment in which smaller and larger nations—or, rather, their self-appointed spokespeople—daily competed for resources, power, and prestige; in which the answer that one gave to a census questionnaire on "language of daily use" might provoke a riot. Even if "abstention" were possible, it would have to be made using the vocabulary of nationalism, in the name of the revival of Jewish ethnic consciousness. Old seductions were a memory; new ones beckoned.