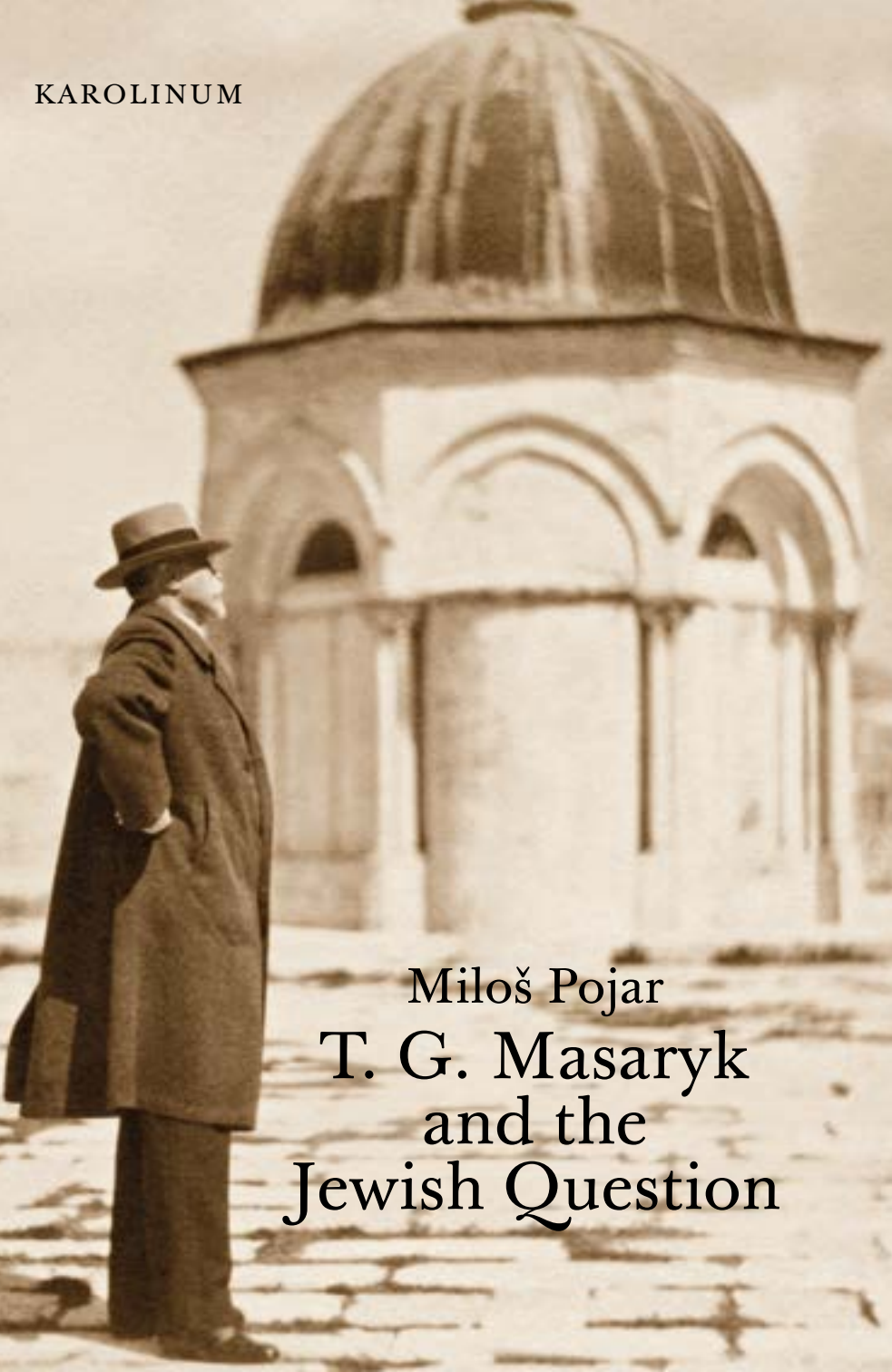


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Miloš Pojar
T. G. Masaryk
and the
Jewish Question

T.G. Masaryk and the Jewish Question

Miloš Pojar

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Preface

SHLOMO AVINERI

Kde domov můj? (Where is my home?) – the hauntingly beautiful opening line of the Czech national anthem – could be seen also as encapsulating the challenges facing Jewish people in the Czech lands in the second half of the 19th century. Political equality granted to Jews in the Austrian part of the Habsburg monarchy in 1867 ran parallel with the emergence of the Czech national movement. In the cauldron of the changing realities in the multi-ethnic empire, the very identity of the Jewish community was thrown into the dramatic, new and unprecedented context of the struggle between German and Czech speakers that totally transformed their social and cultural existence: now the Josephine *Toleranzpatent* could not adequately address challenges which were no longer issues of merely religious tolerance.

The main virtue of Miloš Pojar's *T.G. Masaryk and the Jewish Question* is in weaving Masaryk's life story integrally into the history of the Czech national movement both in the waning years of Habsburgian rule and the first Czechoslovak Republic. In a memorable comment Pojar states that Masaryk's leadership redeemed Czech nationalism from serious strains of anti-Semitism and re-formed it in the mold of a humanistic, tolerant and inclusive movement, eventually making post-1918 Czechoslovakia into the only post-Habsburgian successor state which not only established a consolidated democracy but whose ideology, policies and institutions were free from anti-Jewish discrimination which marred, in one way or another, its inter-war neighboring countries.

This was a remarkable achievement, as the beginnings were not auspicious. Masaryk was initially burdened with two sets of legacies which made Czech relations with the Jews in their midst problematic. By Masaryk's own admission, the countryside in which he was born was infused with anti-Semitic prejudices, en-

couraged by the church and society in general. But beyond this, Masaryk also encountered a Czech national movement which looked with skepticism if not enmity on the Jewish population and saw it as part of the German-language hegemony fostered by the Austrian authorities against which it was fighting to assert its own identity and culture.

The reasons for these suspicions against the Jews were rooted in the circumstances of Jewish emancipation after 1848. While many members of the Jewish intelligentsia participated in the Czech revolution of 1848, for many Jewish people the road to equality went through integration into the hegemonic German-speaking culture, especially in the cities with their mixed German-Czech populations. For many Czech nationalists this led to opposition to Jewish emancipation and occasionally turned anti-German demonstrations into anti-Jewish pogroms.

Masaryk's road away from these prejudices was not immediate. The first step took place when he moved from the countryside to Brno and later Vienna and came in touch with members of the educated Jewish bourgeoisie, in whose households he occasionally served as a tutor; some of his university teachers were also Jewish. It was there that he realized that the issue of Jewish equal rights was immanently linked to the future of society in general and had to be de-coupled from the theological heritage of the Christian approach to Judaism as a religion: it was a civil and moral challenge, not a religious disagreement.

Unsurprisingly, during his Brno and Vienna student days, when Masaryk developed his views on the Czech national movement, some of his first publications focused on polemics against Ernest Renan's views on Judaism and Gobineau's racist ideas. On a theoretical level he sometimes agreed with Renan but argued that they were irrelevant to the issue of Jewish rights in modern society. He recognized that the Jews have national characteristics which may be different from those of the majority population, but they have a right to maintain and preserve them: the principle of emancipation leads to self-determination, and in Masaryk's vision of a tolerant Habsburg empire the Jews deserved to be integrated: the Herderian cultural principles apply to them as to all other groups. As for Gobineau's theories of race, Masaryk argued that there are no "pure races" and this applied to the Jews as to any other group.

With Masaryk's appointment, first as a *Privatdozent* in Vienna and then as a professor of philosophy in Prague, his views gained a pulpit which he used not only in his lectures but also in his numerous publications, both scholarly and popular.

These views were integrated into his first major work on Marxism, which addressed not only Marx's philosophy but was also a response to the Austro-Marxists who tried to square their Marxist principles with the reality of the multiethnic Habsburg empire and especially the challenges of a multilingual proletariat in some of its major urban centers, as in Vienna and Brno, where ethnicity and class could not be easily separated from each other.

Masaryk recognized Marx's immense contribution to social and economic thinking, yet he differed from him on a major premise: materialism. He recognized the enormous importance of economic factors in human history and social analysis, but insisted that there were other interests apart from them which cannot be ignored and cannot be reduced to merely economic considerations. Masaryk's book became one of the first seminal, positive-yet-critical assessments of Marxism in general and tried to present a kind of socialism based on a broader ethical and cultural foundation.

Masaryk's extensive study of Marx confronted him also with Marx's notorious essay *On the Jewish Question* which equates Judaism with capitalism. Quite interestingly and significantly, Masaryk strongly disagrees with this position for a number of reasons. Sarcastically he admits the force of Marx's rhetoric, but writes that it is poor on social analysis and exhibits ignorance on the reality of Jewish life: not all Jews are capitalists, says Masaryk, pointing out that in Poland, Galicia and Russia most Jews are poor and there is a vast Jewish proletariat in Eastern Europe.

Yet Masaryk's critique of Marx's essay goes deeper: Marx, according to him totally ignores the fact that there are national dimensions in Jewish life, that Jewish identity is not just religious. By ignoring the national aspect of the Jewish question Marx thus is unable to adequately address the issue. Regardless of the complex historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity, the fact of the matter is, according to Masaryk, that in recent times the emergence of Zionism suggests that Jews are returning to history, and the fact that so many Jews support socialism is another indication of their positive role in contemporary society.

Writing in this vein in the late 1890s provides extraordinary insight into the novel dimensions of Jewish life at the turn of the century, and the fact that it comes in the context of a polemic with Marx is quite significant.

But Pojar rightly points out that all these writings were, after all, basically academic: the great defining moment in Masaryk's contribution to changing the discourse of Czech nationalism away from the anti-Semitic tones which characterized it at the time came with the Hilsner Affair in 1899, when a Jewish man was accused in Polná with the ritual murder of a Christian young woman. It was his public role in denouncing the Polná blood libel that identified Masaryk's name with a courageous battle against anti-Semitism. That the Polná Affair took place at the time the Dreyfus Affair shook French politics helped cast Masaryk in a role comparable to that of Emile Zola.

Initially Masaryk was reluctant to get involved in what appeared a messy and nasty provincial murder case, and his first responses – when asked by Jewish students to raise his voice – were tentative and focused on some of the questionable forensic details used falsely to condemn the Jewish defendant. Yet when the murder case became transmogrified into accusations of ritual murder which were supported by the Czech press and some of the Czech student organizations, Masaryk realized – as he wrote – that this was not just a question of the fate of an individual but a battle for the soul of the Czech national movement.

It was not an easy position to take. His lectures were disturbed by radical Czech nationalist students; his pamphlet on the trial was banned by the authorities because it questioned the decisions of the court which condemned Hilsner to death; his lectures at the university were temporarily suspended and some of the Czech papers accused him of treason and being a lackey of the Jews and the paid agent of Jewish capitalists.

But because the issue – a blood libel in the relatively liberal and tolerant Habsburg monarchy at the threshold of the 20th century – gained international press coverage, Masaryk's name became known across Europe and also in the United States, where Jewish organizations got involved in Hilsner's defense. Shrewdly Masaryk later commented that his fame as the defender of an innocent Jewish victim of a medieval anti-Jewish myth helped the Czechoslovak national case during World War I as many

Jewish newspapers and financiers supported the movement in recognition of his role in the Polná case.

Hilsner's verdict was not overturned, though Emperor Franz Joseph commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment. But the visibility of the public debate initiated by Masaryk helped to change the discourse within the Czech national movement, and Masaryk's subsequent election to the Vienna parliament underlined the significant change in the direction of Czech nationalism towards a tolerant approach to the Jewish question which then became the foundation of the new Czechoslovak Republic.

Pojar's description portrays the confluence of Masaryk's intellectual and moral authority in shaping the policies of Czechoslovakia regarding its Jewish population after 1918. This was not free from structural problems originating in the legacy of the Czech national movement and was certainly further exacerbated by the differences between the highly secularized and urbanized Jews in the Czech lands and the mainly Orthodox Jewish communities in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathia, many of them living among the rural and religiously conservative Catholic population; the political forces opposed to Masaryk's approach were not negligible.

Pojar does not overlook some of the internal tensions in Masaryk's own position. His valiant stand in the Hilsner Affair was paradoxically accompanied by some of the ambiguities inherent in his general theoretical approach to the core issues of nationalism. On the one hand, his Herderian background led him to view the Jews as a nation, not just a religious community, hence encompassing self-determination, part of which meant that they were entitled to the preservation of their distinct culture. This led Masaryk to a sympathetic understanding of Zionism, especially in its cultural version as expressed by Ahad Ha'am and Aharon David Gordon. On the other hand, this also caused him to maintain that Jews could not easily become members of the Czech nation, and his support of equal rights for the Jews did not agree with the premises of those Jews who saw in assimilation – especially radical assimilation – an ultimate and desirable goal. It is for these reasons that he viewed Zionism not leading primarily to emigration to Palestine but as a vehicle for a Jewish cultural renaissance within Europe generally and, after 1918, as a distinct ethnic group within a pluralist Czechoslovak demo-

cratic republic. It was not an easy position to take, and neither Jewish assimilationists nor Zionists were wholly happy with such a differentiated position; nor were radical Czech nationalists.

These ambiguities appeared to be evident also during his visit to Palestine in 1927 – the only European head of state or major statesman to visit the country during the inter-war period. In Jewish and Zionist memory this came to be viewed as an historical event, to be feted and recalled for decades to come, as testified by the numerous streets and squares called after him in contemporary Israel, as well as in the symbolism involved in naming a kibbutz – Kfar Masaryk – in honor of his visit.

But the event itself – he visited Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Rishon le-Zion, the first kibbutz as well as a kibbutz founded by immigrants from Czechoslovakia – for all the enthusiastic reception granted to Masaryk by the Jewish community, was a much more complex affair.

The visit was part of what can be called a traditional Grand Tour of the Orient: it started in Egypt, for whose culture Masaryk always had deep respect and admiration; in Palestine he was hosted by the British High Commissioner and met with the leadership of the Moslem Arab community, headed by the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini. He lodged mainly in Christian hostels, primarily Franciscan establishments, and visited the Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and around the Sea of Galilee – and made sure that these aspects of his visit would be publicized.

Yet there is no doubt that his most extensive exposure was to the Jewish community of the country, and his visits to the Jewish National Library – then headed by the Czech-born philosopher Hugo Bergmann – and the nascent Hebrew University were the most visible aspects of his interest in Jewish matters and his fundamental support for Zionism; so was his deep interest in the kibbutz idea. But the visit also brought to the surface – in private communications, not in public statements – the very ambiguities which characterized his complex approach to Jewish phenomena. While admiring the progress – economic, scientific and cultural – Zionism brought to the country, he was somewhat pessimistic whether the Jewish immigrants would be able to find an understanding and a *modus vivendi* with the Arab majority population. He was equally skeptical that the Jews could

become a majority in the country, without which their political aims could not be achieved. Not surprisingly, his visit to Palestine – symbolic and significant as it certainly was – strengthened his support for the cultural, rather than political aspects, of the Zionist project. Just as in the Czech case, so in the Jewish case, Masaryk was centered much more on the cultural rather than the purely political. While Pojar does not say so, in both cases he eventually turned out to be wrong, though because of reasons totally outside of his control.

Masaryk was a true son of the liberal legacies of the 19th century; the 20th century turned out to be much more cruel. Yet both the Czech nation and the Zionist project survived, but not without paying a heavy price for their respective achievements.

Let me end on a personal note.

I grew up in Herzliya, at that time a small agricultural village north of Tel Aviv. In the critical and difficult months of the Israel War of Independence in early 1948, the first serious arms the Jewish self-defense force (the *Haganna*) received were supplied by Czechoslovakia, and they were crucial in saving the Jewish community from the Arab onslaught. I was at that time a high school student, a member of the Youth Brigades of the *Hagan-na*, and when the first deliveries arrived at an abandoned airstrip near Herzliya, I was among the teenagers called up to help unload them. For us, members of the small and beleaguered *Yishuv* – the Jewish community in British Mandatory Palestine – these were historical moments, and I still remember the thrill we felt in unloading and unpacking the machine guns and rifles flown in by Czechoslovak military pilots.

Many decades later, in June 1990, I was a member of an international group of observers to monitor the first free post-Communist elections in Czechoslovakia. The delegation included Madeleine Albright, and her presence added a symbolic dimension to the historical occasion, which to me was combined with the memories of the Czech arms deliveries to the nascent Israel on 1948. That my ancestors came from Moravian Třebíč, where they had found refuge in the 18th century after being expelled from Vienna, added a further historically significant dimension.

More than one circle was thus closed for me. And to the perennial question of “Where is my home?” the only adequate answer is that it is both the world at large and one’s own land: *tertium non datur*. Masaryk with his humanist patriotism would in all probability agree.

Shlomo Avineri
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Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*)

1. Childhood, youth, studies; University of Vienna (1850–1882)

...all my life I've gone out of my way not to be unjust to Jews.

Talks with T.G.Masaryk, 1927–1931

T.G.Masaryk was born on 7 March 1850 at Hodonín, one of the centres of Moravian Slovakia (Slovácko). At the time of his birth 65 Jewish families (215 Jews) were resident in Hodonín. They were mostly merchants, innkeepers, artisans, as well as a physician, a cantor and a teacher, and belonged to the better-off section of the population. A synagogue had existed in Hodonín since 1863 and a Jewish school building stood alongside it. When the school was abolished Jewish children attended the public German school.¹

The history of the Jews in Hodonín is documented since the first quarter of the 17th century but dates back much earlier. The cemetery in Hodonín was founded in 1620 and closed down in the 1970s under the Communist regime. The estate of Hodonín had been owned since 1762 by the Empress Maria Theresa, who had already expelled the Jews from the town in 1744 and abolished their community.

By 1753, after they were permitted to return, there were 109 Jewish families in Hodonín, and by 1783, during the reign of Emperor Joseph II, a further 13 families had moved there. By 1910 the Jewish inhabitants numbered 976.²

1) O. Donath. "Židé na Masarykově cestě životem." In *Thomas G. Masaryk and the Jews, a collection of essays*, ed. E. Rychnovsky. New York City, 1941, pp. 125–127.

2) O. Donath. "Židé na Masarykově cestě životem," p. 122. For a detailed history of the Jewish community in Hodonín, see G. Treixler. "Die Gödinger Judengemeinde," *Zeitschrift des deutsch. Vereins für die Geschichte Mährens u. Schlesiens*, 21, 1917, pp. 23–58, 239–262, 335–368.

Masaryk's father hailed from Kopčany, not far from Holič,³ which is located in Slovakia, east of the river Morava. The Holič estate had been purchased in 1749 by Francis of Lorraine, the husband of Empress Maria Theresa. Thus both estates, Holič and Hodonín, became in turn the property of the imperial family. There were Jewish communities in both Kopčany and Holič.

For several generations the family of Masaryk's mother were settled in Hustopeče⁴, where the Jewish community had been revived in the mid-19th century. The reconstructed original Jewish synagogue still stands, but the cemetery was closed down in the 1980s.⁵

In course of time Masaryk's parents moved with their children from Hodonín to Mutěnice and then back to Hodonín. The family then lived from 1856 to 1862 in Čejkovice, and then in Čejč in 1864.⁶

Jewish communities existed in two other towns in Slovácko, namely, Břeclav and Strážnice. The latter community was older, dating from the beginning of the 15th century; by the middle of the 19th century Jews represented 10% of the population and resided in eighty of the houses.

Masaryk started to attend school in Hodonín, but soon after transferred to the village schools in Čejkovice and then Čejč. From 1861 to 1863 he attended the Piarist two-year Realschule in Hustopeče and in 1865 he passed the entrance examination for the prima grade at the Piarist Gymnasium at Strážnice. That same year he was admitted to the *sekunda* grade at the German Gymnasium in Brno

As a child Masaryk had ample opportunity to encounter Jewish families, including those settled in the villages and those in the larger settlements such as Hodonín, and Strážnice.

Masaryk described his impressions from his first encounters -with the Jewish community in his autobiographical fragment

3) "I think I'm a pure-blooded Slovak." T. G. Masaryk. "Slovenské vzpomienky." In J. Doležal. *Masarykova cesta životem*. Vol. 2. Brno, 1921, pp. 19–25.

4) "Mother was German". "Běh života." In J. Doležal. *Masarykova cesta životem*. Vol. 2, pp. 1–8.

5) Z. Nejedlý. *T. G. Masaryk*. Vol. I/1. Praha, 1930, pp. 71–73. For details about Masaryk and Hustopeče see A. Janšta. *Masaryk a Hustopeče*. Hustopeče, s. d., pp. 3–24.

6) Z. Nejedlý. *T. G. Masaryk*. Vol. I/1, pp. 75–81.

“Náš pan Fixl” (Our Mr Fixl): “In the fifties (of the last century – it sounds so bygone and distant) every little Slovak in the Hodonín district was inculcated with anti-Semitism, by the family, by the school, by the church and by society as a whole. Our mother forbade us to have contact with the Lechners, telling us that Jews need Christian blood, the blood of children. I therefore always gave the Lechners’ house a wide berth, as did all the boys I was friendly with in Čejkovice. I would always be hearing admonitions against the Jews in sermons and also at school. When he was in a very good mood the curate would ask the schoolmaster to play the “Jewish one” – an imitation of Jewish praying, in the style of some hackneyed old song. We lived next door to the schoolmaster and when the curate paid him a visit I would wait on them, so I got to hear that “Jewish one”. In the manner of rural music lovers, the curate would mumble some text purporting to be Jewish: “tairerl-tairrl-tai-terlai” – and he himself would laugh his head off at it!

The supersitition about Christian blood also took hold of me so that every time I happened by chance to find myself close to some Jew – I never deliberately came close to any of them – I’d eye their fingers to see if some blood remained sticking to them. I kept that stupid habit up for a long time.

And yet I liked Mr Fixl in those days, ‘Our Mr Fixl’ as we used to call him at home. Only now as I reminisce do I realise that our family’s anti-Semitism conceded one absolutely philo-Semitic exception; but as a child I didn’t realise that Mr Fixl was also a Jew. Mr Fixl was a door-to-door pedlar from Hodonín; Mother bought cloth from him and house linen of every kind. Mr Fixl would call on us from time to time and we would all look forward to his arrival; he would spread out piles of his wares in front of us, telling us where each one came from, from which factory, and to whom he had already sold of bit of that or that, and how much; he would tell us all the latest lively and interesting news from Hodonín and the surrounding villages. And naturally in the process he would let drop a bit of gossip – in strict confidence, of course. And in the end I would always be given a bit of pencil (which we called *plevajz*). In short we were very fond of Mr Fixl. And he was ‘our’ Mr Fixl.

Blood was forgotten as a result of acquaintance, coexistence and a mutual economic relationship – the superstition applied

only to those Jews we didn't associate with, and in general everyone who held to the ritual murder superstition had or has their own Mr Fixl. The Jewish children had their own school and their own teacher, so we grew up apart from each other, strangers and alienated one from another. They had their Jewish ghetto, we had our Christian one.

It was at the Realschule in Hustopeče that I first had a Jewish classmate. But I would avoid him, and look at his fingers... We would all torment him quite a bit, in an unchristian fashion, and yet he was a thoroughly decent lad; he wasn't clever and was a slow learner, and all in all he truly confounded all our Jewish psychology. And that Jew and classmate became the Damascus moment for my anti-Semitism. We once went on an excursion to the Pálava Hills (we didn't call them mountains). On the way back we lingered over supper at an inn in Dunajovice; wine and beer were drunk and the schoolmasters indulged in banter with us, and the butt of their jokes was "Leopold". (I can well recall his face, but I've forgotten his surname; I only know there were some esses in his name.) The sun had gone down – Leopold disappeared from the table, and eventually it was decided to send out a search party; they found him, they said, standing outside the gate praying with his straps on his forehead. The boys ran out to see and they teased him even while he was praying. I also went to look. I've never forgotten how I was taken aback by Leopold: he was standing outside the gate in a squalid spot, probably to avoid being seen, thinking that no one would look for him there. He was bowed down in prayer. I suddenly had no taste for mockery. We scampered around and Leopold did not neglect his praying. From that instant my anti-Semitism was undermined. Maybe it wasn't yet overcome, but it was undermined in a religious sense.

My parents managed to return to Hodonín that time and I had a chance to acquaint myself with the Jewish town and with a large number of Jews. My experience demolished the ghetto of prejudice and through contact and comparison I came to realise that there are Jews and Jews, just as there are Christians and Christians. Acquaintanceship gave rise to friendship – good, faithful friendship. My circle of Jewish acquaintances grew – in Brno and Vienna. Prejudices disappeared even though my childish habit surfaced from time to time; habit is a powerful and dreadful thing.

Younger generations now growing up together in national schools cannot feel the anti-Semitism that we did. Here the tendency is to philosophise about the economic difference between us Christians and Jews; people read the theories of Wagner, Nietzsche, Lagarde, and Gobineau. Our anti-Semitism was simply superstition and essentially clerical.

Isn't it odd that we Czechs have no theorist of anti-Semitism? In the Hilsner affair it was the old, primitive and somewhat barbaric anti-Semitism that came to the fore, and a considerable section of the intelligentsia fell prey to it. More than once, in those days, did I recall Leopold behind the gate at Dolní Dunajovice – hopefully I atoned for all the nastiness that I was led into by my former anti-Semitism.

The younger generations no longer have any ghettos, they assimilate more easily and grow together. Assimilation – I recall the Lechner children who were taboo for us children, whereas Mr Fixl was ours. The ghetto has fallen – but a Jew cannot become a higher ranking military office, cannot become a higher judge and we don't vote him mayor, etc., we still simply have our Fixls, our Mr Fixls. Assimilation?..."⁷

Masaryk would repeat that reminiscence in an abbreviated form to Karel Čapek in *Talks with T.G. Masaryk*: "as for Judaism, well, I was afraid of Jews: I believed they used Christian blood in their rituals. I would go several streets out of my way to avoid Jewish houses. Jewish children wanted to play with me because I knew a little German, but I refused. It was only later, at the Hus-topeče school, that I more or less made my peace with the Jews. Once on a school trip to the Pálava Hills we were cavorting about after our meal at the tavern when I saw one of our Jewish school-mates slip away. I was curious and followed him. He was kneeling behind an open gate with his face to the wall, praying. For some reason I felt ashamed to see a Jew praying while I played. I was loath to admit that he prayed as fervently as we did and had remembered to say his prayers even in the midst of our frolic.

Anyway, all my life I've gone out of my way not to be unjust to Jews. That's why I've been said to favour them. When did I get over my "folk" anti-Semitism? Well, maybe never on an

7) T. G. Masaryk. "Náš pan Fixl", *Besedy Času*, 24. 2. 1914; J. Doležal. *Masarykova cesta životem*. Vol. 2, pp. 37–39, 69–76, 151–152.

emotional level, only rationally. After all, it was my mother who taught me the superstition about the Jews' making use of Christian blood."⁸

In the years 1865–1869 Masaryk attended the German-language gymnasium in Brno. At that time the Moravian metropolis was German in character. In 1857 Brno's population stood at 58,809 or 59,819 depending on the source. In 1880 it numbered 82,660, comprising 48,591 Germans and 32,142 Czechs (according to their native tongue). In 1857 Jews in Brno numbered around 2,230, and in 1880, 5,498. In 1863, 68.7% of the students at the Technical University were Germans and 30.1% were Czechs, and 11.1% of the total were Jews.⁹

Jews had been living on the territory of Brno since the 13th century. In 1454 they were expelled from the city (and from all other royal boroughs in Moravia), the synagogue was demolished and the cemetery closed. Admission to the city was still made difficult for them in the 18th century; they were not allowed to spend the night there and they could enter the city only on certain days (for markets and court hearings), and until the Edict of Tolerance they had to pay a special toll to do so. In 1797, 12 registered Jews were living in Brno, in 1834, 135, in 1848, 445, in 1857, 1,262 (a different figure from above), and in 1869, 4,505.¹⁰

Permission to establish a Jewish community was not granted until 1859, and the first rabbi commenced his ministry there a year later. The first synagogue, known as the Great, was built from 1853 to 1855 (it was demolished by the Nazis). The first Jewish school with religious teaching opened in 1861.¹¹

At the gymnasium Masaryk had several Jewish fellow-pupils in each year he was at school, most of all in the second grade. It is not known whether he had closer relationships with any of

8) K. Čapek. *Talks with T.G. Masaryk*. Trans. D. Round, ed. M. H. Heim. North Haven, 1995, p. 49.

9) *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern. Vorträge d. Tagung d. Collegium Carolinum in Bad Wiessee vom 27.-29. November 1981*. München - Wien, 1983, tables on p. 331 and subsequent.; P. Weber. "Brněnská židovská obec." In *Židovská Morava - Židovské Brno*. Brno, 2000, p. 22.

10) According to T. Pěkný. *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*. Praha, 2001, p. 404.

11) P. Weber. "Brněnská židovská obec", p. 22.

them.¹² He did not gain any greater knowledge of Judaism, or study it in any way while he was at the school. He read Greek and Latin authors, and German and French literature, and he was interested in Darwinism and philosophy. He also read anti-religious authors. As he later told Karel Čapek "... I couldn't avoid pondering on books like Renan's *Life of Jesus* and the like..."¹³

In 1869 Masaryk transferred from Brno to Vienna and started to attend the sexta grade at the Akademisches Gymnasium.

Masaryk attended the gymnasium in Vienna from 1869 to 1872, when he passed his final examinations. Among the 50 pupils in his final year there were 23 Jews, many of whom later rose to positions of prominence in Austrian public life, chiefly as lawyers, judges, industrialists, professors and actors. Masaryk was subsequently in contact with some of them. There is also no evidence from Masaryk's studies at the Vienna gymnasium that he started systematically to take an interest in Judaism or the so-called "Jewish Question". An important factor would seem to have been the Jewish salons that he came into contact with when he moved from Brno to Vienna with the Le Monnier family as tutor to their son (Chief of Police Le Monnier was not Jewish). These salons flourished in the families of the Jewish bourgeoisie in the era of liberalism in Austria. He also became a tutor in the home of the rich Jewish family of the Sterns, where the lady of the house held a salon attended by the cream of Viennese scientific and artistic life. Later Masaryk also coached Alfred Schlesinger, son of the Director General of the Anglobank in Vienna.¹⁴

12) O. Donath. "Židé na Masarykově cestě životem", p. 149, in note 28 there is a quotation: "... My circle of Jewish acquaintances grew - in Brno and Vienna. Prejudices disappeared even though my childish habit surfaced from time to time." There is a reference to Doležal (*Masarykova cesta životem*. Vol. 1, p. 38) and Donath (*Masaryk a židovství*. Brno, 1920, p. 23). See also Z. Nejedlý. *T. G. Masaryk*. Vol. 1/1, p. 177.

13) K. Čapek. *Talks with T.G. Masaryk*, p. 74.

14) Concerning Masaryk's gymnasium study see his Curriculum vitae, which was a source for Z. Nejedlý. *T. G. Masaryk*. Vol. 1/1, pp. 195-219; O. Donath. "Židé na Masarykově cestě životem", note 1, p. 134-138; S. Polák. *T. G. Masaryk. Za ideálem a pravdou*. Vol. 1 (1850-1882). Praha, 2000, pp. 124-146 and subsequent.

Masaryk would later speak of his situation in the family of the banker Schlesinger as follows: "In the circle of their family and friends I came to know how the rich live. They are not happy: their wealth is a wall cutting them off from others, which often leads to follies and perversities."¹⁵

From 1872 to 1876 Masaryk studied classical philology at the University of Vienna, attending lectures in classical philology and Greek philosophy given by Professor Theodor Gomperz. Gomperz came from a Jewish family in Brno and he had a great influence on Masaryk, introducing him, among others to the writing of John Stuart Mill, whom he translated, and also of Comte. Masaryk also attended lectures in other disciplines, including the grammar of Sanskrit. Disillusioned, on the whole, with the study of classical philology, Masaryk turned to the history of philosophy, and above all to Plato, the aforementioned J.S.Mill, and Auguste Comte. There followed Bacon, Pascal, Vico, Descartes and Rousseau, the *Encyclopédistes*, Leibniz, Lessing, Herder, Kant, Hume, as well as Darwin and Marx, whose *Das Kapital* he read during those years.¹⁶

Masaryk completed his studies in Vienna at the beginning of 1876 with his doctoral thesis "Plato and the Essentials of the Soul" and passing an oral examination in philosophy and classical philology, whereby he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. After a visit to northern Italy, Masaryk arrived in Leipzig with his ward Alfred Schlesinger on 15 October of that same year to attend lectures in philosophy.

During Masaryk's stay in Leipzig in 1876 and 1877, an event occurred that would be decisive for his private life: he met there an American, Charlotte Garrigue, and after closer acquaintance, fell in love with her. They became engaged and were married in America in 1878. In Leipzig, he attended lectures in philosophy and psychology, which he did not find very rewarding. He gave a lecture on suicide to the Philosophical Society, which was essentially an earlier essay of 1875, but was more extensive and intended for publication. The Leipzig lectures were also attend-

15) K. Čapek. *Talks with T.G.Masaryk*, p. 88.

16) For details of Masaryk's university studies in Vienna see Z. Nejedlý. *T. G. Masaryk*. Vol. I/1, pp. 219-263; O. Donath. "Židé na Masarykově cestě životem", footnote 1, pp. 138-142; S. Polák. *T. G. Masaryk. Za ideálem a pravdou*. Vol. 1, pp. 146-229.

ed by a much younger student, Edmund Husserl, a Jew from Moravia, born in Prostějov. Masaryk remained in contact with him later in Vienna and they corresponded after the war. Influenced by Masaryk, Husserl studied the New Testament and subsequently converted to Protestantism.¹⁷

In his earliest period in Vienna, i.e. before his arrival in Prague, when he was studying and coming to terms with the issue of progress and development in connection with the suicide rate, and later regarding the question of human races, Masaryk encountered the phenomenon of the Jews and their role in the development of humanity. At the end of his study *O pokroku, vývoji a osvětě* (On progress, development and public education)¹⁸, devoted to the problems of human progress and public education, Masaryk admits the possibility of humanity's annihilation as a result of "unforeseen radical changes" and the possibility of public education being destroyed by some barbaric nation. He says in this connection that he has in mind races that have contributed to education and concedes that there are nations that have done little for education. Although the preceding passages do not relate to the Jews, he immediately states: "It is well known that the Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people; nowadays the Indo-European race declares itself to be the elect..."¹⁹ Concerning nations, he states that none of them is pure and unmixed. And he continues: "What we call a race has no historical validity, so there can be no question of races being chosen."²⁰

In 1877, Masaryk returned to Vienna from Leipzig and two years later he successfully defended his thesis on suicide. That same year, 1879, he was appointed a private Associate Professor at the University of Vienna. In his first major work, the sociolog-

17) V. K. Š. "Edmund Husserl a T. G. Masaryk." In *Masarykův sborník*. Vol. 3. Praha, 1929, pp. 367–368; Husserl's letter to Masaryk was printed Jan Patočka's afterword to the Czech translation of Husserl's Cartesian Meditations: *Karteziánské meditace*. Praha, 1968, pp. 162–163.

18) T. G. Masaryk. *O pokroku, vývoji a osvětě*. Wien, 1877; subsequently published in J. Doležal. *Masarykova cesta životem*. Vol. 2, pp. 198–217; most recently in T. G. Masaryk. *Juvenilie. Studie a stati 1876–1881*. Praha, 1993, pp. 48–68.

19) T. G. Masaryk. *Juvenilie. Studie a stati 1876–1881*, p. 65.

20) *Ibid*, p. 66.

ical treatise *Sebevražda* (Suicide), Masaryk first commented more extensively on Judaism.²¹

“In order to understand modern civilisation, one must know the Greek, Roman, and Mosaic-Oriental culture that rests at the base of our culture; these secondary influences of the ancient Orient can remain unmentioned here because of their slight significance.”²²

After dealing with Greek and Roman culture, Masaryk notes that at the time of Christ’s birth the pagan Roman world was in complete dissolution. “Mosaic theism, with its law and ceremonial, also could not take hold of man’s destiny and rescue him; the Jews themselves were weak and in need of deliverance. In this time of general longing for a saviour and deliver, Jesus appeared, the Messiah, and his life and his teachings did rescue mankind.”²³ Masaryk examines Christian teaching, whose belief in God and pure monotheism, in common with Judaism and Islam, “is inimical to the suicide tendency”. In his teachings Jesus restricted himself to the Old Testament.²⁴

Masaryk says the following in relation to the Jews: “What is valid for the Christian peoples also holds for the non-Christian peoples, especially those who participate in the modern labour of civilisation. The non-Christian peoples are also happy and enjoy life if they have a unified world-view, if their intellectual cultivation is in harmony with their inner life, if they are, in a word, religious. This depends not so very much on the goodness and elevation of the religion as it does on the degree to which religion is really an object of feeling and is a genuine means of satisfaction and fulfilment for the people. A faithful Jew or Mohammedan finds just as strong a support in his faith as the faithful Christian. All three find peace for their souls amidst gloom; the

21) Masaryk’s first published work came out in German under the title *Der Selbstmord als sociale Massenerscheinung der modernen Civilisation*. Wien, 1881. Published in English translation as *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization*. Chicago, 1970.

22) T. G. Masaryk. *Sebevražda hromadným jevem společenským moderní osvěty*. Praha, 1930, p. 163. Regarding Masaryk’s attitude to the Orient see, inter alia P. Poucha. “T. G. Masaryk a jeho vztah k Orientu”, *Nový Orient*, 5, 1949-1950, pp. 142-143.

23) T. G. Masaryk. *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization*, pp. 152-153.

24) *Ibid.*, p. 154.

effect of all three can be the same despite the qualitative differences of the effective causes.

“Let us first consider the Jews. The philosophers, no less than the common people, have long racked their brains over the ‘cosmopolitan race’ of the Jews, and yet the history of this most remarkable people has not yet been written. We are interested here only in the living faith in God of this people. The Old Testament reveals how strongly theism was planted in the hearts of the Jews by those responsible for their intellectual and moral leadership. It is quite amazing how these people amidst their terrible troubles – there is hardly any more unfortunate people than the Jews – always found new hopes and new faith in their God.

The Jews have endured many oppressions to which they have been exposed as a result of their religion, which, as Gibbon has rightly remarked, is wonderfully adapted for defence but has never been directed to conquest. Persecuted and despised, the Jewish people cling to the religion of their fathers and have distinguished themselves by a joy in life and a practical optimism which does not allow the development of the morbid suicide tendency. Their great moderation also has a favourable effect in the same sense.²⁵

But religious indifference, scepticism, and unbelief are also prevalent among the Jews, especially among the educated. And it cannot be otherwise; living with and among you irreligious Christians, they take an active part in modern intellectual activities, and therefore show, especially in the cities, the same characteristics as the Christians with respect to religion. Heine, the poet of naked scepticism, was a Jew.”²⁶

25) Masaryk added the following footnote: “Suicide appears among the Jews, as an exception to the general rule, during times of severe persecution. In their sacred literature, which includes a history of more than 10,000 years, there are found 10 examples of suicide at most.”

26) T. G. Masaryk. *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization*, pp. 214–215

2. Masaryk's study of the Jewish question (1882–1914)

...as a nation the Jews really are less mixed than the European nations.

T. G. Masaryk, *Sborník historický*, 1883

JEWES IN THE CZECH LANDS FROM THE MID-19TH CENTURY TO 1914

1848/49

The attempts of the Jews in the Czech Lands to align themselves with the Czech nation, expressed, for instance, in Siegfried Kapper's Czech-language poetry collection, were disparaged by Karel Havlíček Borovský. He told them that Jews are a nation and therefore could not become Czechs. He spoke somewhat unkindly of the Jews. He also counselled them to stick to German, whereby he caused many of them to embrace Austrian liberalism. The Moravian Jews did not take much persuading; they were always influenced by Vienna and Austrian culture and were much more inclined to accept German culture and the German language than those in Bohemia.

In the states of the German Confederation in the period leading up to the revolution of March 1848, many Czech Jews took an active part in the struggle for a new social order. Representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia, journalists, doctors, industrialists, bankers – and subsequently politicians too – would take part in the Kremsier (Kroměříž) Parliament, the Frankfurt Parliament and in the preparations for the March revolutions in Prague and Vienna, as well as in the St Wenceslas Committee, and as commanders of the student legions. The revolutionary events in Vienna, Prague, Pressburg (Bratislava) and Pest (Budapest) were followed, of course, by anti-Jewish riots, pamphleteering and