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Textures of Intercession –
Rescue Efforts for the Jews of Prague, 1744/1748

Jewish intercession (hebr. *shtadlanut*) has been part and parcel of the Jewish political tradition ever since the advent of the Diaspora. For centuries, the legend of Esther interceding with the Persian king Ahasverus served as a master narrative to those acting on behalf of a Jewish community in a Gentile environment.¹ The first detailed account by a Jewish dignitary interceding for his community goes back to the first century of the Common Era. In the year 40, Philo from Alexandria, together with a delegation from his community, pleaded with Gaius Caligula in order to prevent the Greek majority of his home town from achieving supremacy over the Jewish community.² In European history, the late Middle Ages and the early modern period offer a rich panorama of this culture of intercession, demonstrating in many cases the closeness of Jewish individuals to the ruling elites. Names like Joseph of Rosheim or Menasseh ben Israel stand out for the scope and occasional success of this political instrument, but these well-known protagonists of *shtadlanut* should not obscure the fact that intercession on behalf of Jewish communities was a ubiquitous and well-established institution of Jewish communal life.³

The profound changes taking place in the course of the 18th century in Europe affected Jews and non-Jews alike. The very nature of intercession was transformed, as Jewish communities were confronted with new challenges which ultimately had to lead to new strategies. The following reflections focus on the expulsion of the Jewish community of Prague, ordered by Maria Theresia (b. 1717, d. 1780), archduchess of Austria and queen of Bohemia and Hungary, on December 18, 1744, an event that proved in many respects unprecedented.⁴ For that reason, this case study may serve as a

- 1 Elias Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*, New York 1967, offers a helpful introduction to the book of Esther.
- 2 Philo of Alexandria, *Legatio ad Gaium*. Edited with an introduction, translation and commentary by E. Mary Smallwood, Leiden 1961; Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus. Practice and Theory*, New Haven 1938, 1–20.
- 3 François Guesnet, *Die Politik der Fürsprache. Vormoderne jüdische Interessensvertretung*, in: Dan Diner (ed.), *Synchrone Welten. Zeitenräume jüdischer Geschichte*, Göttingen 2005, 67–92, cf. *idem*, *Politik der Vormoderne. Shtadlanut am Vorabend der polnischen Teilungen*, in: *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 1 (2002), 235–255.
- 4 It is a remarkable fact that no monographic study has been devoted to date to the most dramatic event in Central European Jewish history of the 18th century. Its paradigmatic status may be illustrated by the fact that it served as the introductory *leitmotiv* to David

prime example for analysing the changes within the Jewish political tradition necessitated by the emerging absolutist state. In addition, the impressive wealth of material pertaining to this event, and especially the collection of letters sent by and addressed to one of the key figures in the rescue efforts, Wolf Wertheimer, allows for a much more detailed analysis of attitudes and strategies of Jewish notables in many European communities.

After a short description of the main course of events, this paper will turn to a short reflection on the motives of the expulsion and a detailed analysis of the Jewish rescue efforts, focusing on the epistemological aspects of these initiatives. How did those carrying out the task of preventing the expulsion communicate their knowledge, thoughts, recommendations and intentions? Its main hypotheses are that contrary to the generally accepted line of argument, these efforts ultimately had but little effect on the decision of Maria Theresia to revoke her expulsion decree in 1748, but they were nonetheless a major step in the evolution of the political culture of the Jewish communities involved.

The Events

Prague, the capital of Bohemia, was conquered and occupied twice during the Austrian Wars of Succession by the allied enemies of Austria, first in 1742/43 by the French and the Bavarians, and again, for a short period of time, by the Prussian army in the fall of 1744. In both cases, the Jewish community was subjected to extortionist taxation by the occupier and suffered pogroms and plundering at the hands of the local population and as well as by military personnel.⁵ In 1743 and in 1744, individual Jews com-

Vital's study on the Jews in modern European history: *A People Apart. The Jews in Europe 1789–1939*, Oxford/New York 1999 (introduction).

5 Several contemporary descriptions of the plundering of the Jewish quarter have been published: *Diarium Pragense. Das ist Ausführliche Beschreibung alles dessen, was sich von Anfang des letzten Böhm. Kriegs an sowohl bei der Belagerung und Eroberung der k. Hauptstadt Prag mit k. Preussischen Truppen besetzt gewesen sowohl in als ausserhalb der Stadt merckwürdiges zugetragen und begeben hat; mit grossem Fleiss von einem Böhmischen Lands Mann, der sich während solcher Zeit in Prag aufgehalten*, Prag 1744; Aaron Freimann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag in den Jahren 1742–1757*, in: *Kovets al jad* [Hand collection], Berlin 1898; Salomon Hugo Lieben, *Die Plünderung der Judenstadt in Prag am 26. November 1744*, in: *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1909), 372–375; Aaron Freimann, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag*, in: *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* 16 (1913), 3: 97–100, 4/5: 143–153, 6: 186–190; Salomon Hugo Lieben, *Handschriftliches zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag in den Jahren 1744–1754*, in: *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 2 (1904), 267–330, here 270–286.

promised the community by a certain degree of economic cooperation with the occupier, leading in both cases to measures taken by the leaders of the Jewish community to appease Maria Theresia. Whereas in 1743 they sent a gift of 150,000 guilders, the first initiative after the re-establishment of Austrian power in late 1744 was to send an intercessor to Vienna in order to investigate the general mood towards Prague Jews at the court, and to request the Viennese Jewish community for assistance.⁶ This intercessor was not one of the community elders, but the community secretary, Zanvel (Samuel) Koref.⁷ Koref was on his way from Prague to Vienna that he learned about the decision of Maria Theresia to expel the whole of the Jewish community in Prague within one month, and all of Bohemian Jewry by the end of June of the following year.⁸ He passed the information on to the community board in Prague and continued his journey to Vienna, where he was to stay for the next several months. Besides sending an intercessor to Vienna, the elders of the Prague community prepared numerous copies of a letter to other communities describing the recent pogrom, and sent it to several Central European communities, as well as to London.

A memorandum to the monarch was drafted even before her reaction to the rumours were known. It presented the long history of the community and its privileges, its usefulness to the kingdom and its loyalty towards the monarch.⁹ When the news of the expulsion decree reached the Jews of Prague, a group of prestigious community members joined Koref in Vienna. To give a general picture of the further events, suffice it to note that a first postponement of the execution of the expulsion was issued on January 9, 1745, delaying it until the end of February. The main reason for this delay were reports sent by the Viennese representative in Prague (the so-called “*Stathalterei*”), insisting that an expulsion by the end of January was almost impossible to implement, since the Jewish and non-Jewish economic spheres were too closely intertwined, and sending 12,000 souls into exile in the midst of a harsh winter would inevitably lead to the death of many of them.

6 Lieben, *Handschriftliches zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag*, in: *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 2 (1904), 267–330, and 3 (1905), 241–276, here 245.

7 Josef Bergl, *Die Ausweisung der Juden aus Prag im Jahre 1744*, in: *Die Juden in Prag. Bilder aus ihrer tausendjährigen Geschichte. Festgabe der Loge Praga des Ordens B'nai B'rith zum Gedenktage ihres 25jährigen Bestandes*, unter d. Leitung v. Samuel Steinherz, Prag 1927, 187–247, here 210. Koref descended from a respected local family, figuring as members of the community board and of the burial society in the late 17th century, cf. Aleksandr Putik, *Prague Jews and Judah Hasid. A Study on the Social, Political and Religious History of the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 34 (2003), 53–92, here 59, 65, and 83.

8 *Ibid.*, 211.

9 Lieben, *Handschriftliches zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag*, in: *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 3 (1905), 249.

A further delay in the execution of the order reached Prague on February 27th, i.e., one day before the second term expired. At this point in time, between 10,000 and 14,000 Jews already had left Prague, most of them finding temporary shelter in the nearby town of Brandys nad Labem, about nine miles from Prague, and other places, in this way obeying the royal order.¹⁰ In a rescript of May 15, 1745, after numerous reports from Prague Maria Theresia recognised that her intention to expel all of the Jews from Bohemia was extremely detrimental to the kingdom, and temporarily rescinded implementation of the expulsion from these territories. However, the monarch upheld her decision to refuse Jews resettlement in Prague. The consequence of this decree was general confusion concerning the prospects of the Jews of Prague and Bohemia.¹¹

One year later, in June 1746, there was a further twist for the worse. An administrative body, the Expulsion Commission ("Ausweisungscommission"), had been created in order to dissolve the remaining economic links between the Jewish community and the population, which consisted in private real estate, community property and financial assets. This commission had proven too mild in dealing with the Jews, and its responsibility was passed on to the military commander in Bohemia. Just one month later, the Queen (who had declared herself Empress, after her husband was elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) announced her decision to expel not only all of former Prague and Bohemian Jewry, but in addition the whole of Moravian Jewry, ordered to leave within six years.¹² These measures were never implemented. Maria Theresia revoked her decisions in the late summer of 1748 and accepted the return of Prague Jews to their former homes, a neighbourhood now almost completely dilapidated. Formally, the right for the Jews from Prague, in Bohemia and Moravia to remain (or return) to their homeland was granted for a limited period of ten years, and only after payment of a so-called tolerance tax of 300,000 guilders to Vienna.¹³

10 Bergl, *Die Ausweisung der Juden aus Prag*, 230f., and Hana Legnerová, *Das Exil der Prager Juden auf der Herrschaft Rothenhaus (Červený Hrádek) in den Jahren 1745–1748*, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 38 (2002), 48–71, here 49.

11 Josef Bergl, *Das Exil der Prager Judenschaft von 1745 bis 1748*, in: *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik* 1 (1929), 263–331, here 268–272. Cf. also Legnerová, *Exil der Prager Juden*, 52f., who cites a letter by Prince Auersperg from June 5, 1745, to the administrator of his estate that "in this matter no further adversities are expected." Nevertheless, the exiles on his estates stayed or even tried to emigrate to German territories.

12 *Ibid.*, 292–299.

13 *Ibid.*, 303, 316f.

The Monarch's Motives

We should briefly consider the attitudes and reasons that motivated Maria Theresia in formulating and signing the expulsion order and the ensuing measures until the Jews were finally re-admitted to Prague. Obviously, rumours about the alleged collaboration of Jews from Prague with the Prussian occupier had triggered the decision, which had been made by the monarch alone and contrary to the advice of her administration as well as of her closest personal entourage.¹⁴ Although non-Jewish burghers resented the economic success of the Jews, and the history of living together in Prague was not specifically harmonious, the Queen's decree was not the result of Gentile lobbying from Prague.¹⁵ Maria Theresia herself conceded during an audience just one month after she had signed the expulsion order that even should some of the allegations turn out correct, most of the exiles were innocent: "She admitted that the Jews are honest, but that she had her reservations and did not wish any in her lands."¹⁶ All scholars agree on the profound dislike the monarch had for the Jews. Religious prejudice may in fact have been the main ideological basis of this attitude.¹⁷ Her early reign was characterised by religious zeal.¹⁸ However, written interventions by some of the highest-standing Roman Catholic dignitaries of the Holy Roman Empire, amongst them the archbishop from Cologne and the bishops from Würzburg and Bamberg, did not lead to a reversal of the Queen's decision. To the dismay of Thomas Harrington, envoy of the English king, an intervention by the Holy See "for the repeal of the edict" in March 1745 failed. Like other contemporaries, Harrington had stipulated "some rash vow" as the origin of the expulsion decree, an obstacle which "might be removed by a papal absolution."¹⁹

14 Johann Krengel, *Die englische Intervention zu Gunsten der böhmischen Juden im Jahre 1744*, in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 44 (1900), H. 4, 177–185, H. 5, 259–281, here 259, 263. See Peter Baumgart, *Die Stellung der jüdischen Minorität im Staat des aufgeklärten Absolutismus. Das friderizianische Preußen und das josephinische Österreich im Vergleich*, in: *Kairos N.F.* 22 (1980), 226–245 for an analysis of attitudes among Austria's state functionaries.

15 Alfred Ritter von Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresias*, vol. 2, Wien 1864, 237f.; vol. 4, Wien 1877, 41–51.

16 Letter of Samuel Wertheimer in Vienna to his father Wolf Wertheimer in Augsburg, January 20, 1745, in: Salomon Hugo Lieben, *Briefe von 1744–1748 über die Austreibung der Juden aus Prag*, in: *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik* 4 (1932), 353–479, here no. 38.

17 Eugen Guglia, *Maria Theresia. Ihr Leben und ihre Regierung*, München/Berlin 1917, vol. 1, 330–333.

18 Gerson Wolf, *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Böhmen im Jahre 1744 und deren Wiederaufnahme im Jahre 1748*, in: *Illustrierte Monatshefte für die gesamten Interessen des Judentums* 2 (1865), 271–280, 358–377, 447–458, here 366; Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresias*, vol. 4, 41–51.

19 Krengel, *Die englische Intervention zu Gunsten der böhmischen Juden*, 277.

No less surprising is the fact that intense interventions by the king of England, of Poland, by the General Estates (Netherlands), the king of Denmark and many others had so little impact. Maria Theresia blamed those pleading for the Jews to be “influenced by Jewish money.”²⁰ As “there is hardly a man of estate in Bohemia and Moravia who will not suffer greatly in his private economy,”²¹ large segments of the local nobility repudiated the monarch’s decision, as did those in the local and central administration ordered to implement them.²² At the end of March 1745, three months after the expulsion decree had been published, a high dignitary of the Viennese court, Count Staremborg, confided to the British envoy Thomas Robinson that “the Queen’s ancestors had thought proper to come to like measures with respect to the Jewish nation in one or other territories, but then, things had been done with less precipitation and severity,” and Robinson continued: “in general, there is not one who does not disclaim all share and part whatever in this rigorous sentence and [...] they had all given their advice against it.”²³ Her own administration in 1746 sketched a detailed picture about the fiscal and economic losses due to the expulsion, which amounted to several million guilders.²⁴

Three months after the decree had been published, the general mood among the Jewish intercessors at the court of Vienna was gloomy. Samuel Wertheimer, son of Wolf Wertheimer, one of the most active court Jews to organise the rescue effort, wrote from Vienna:

“Whatever evidence my father and teacher has about all former governments tolerating the Jews, this has been demonstrated over and over again, but the Queen says that is all fair, but she won’t suffer the presence of any [Jews]; so this cannot be the basis for the plea, because she is the sovereign now and can decide as she wishes.”²⁵

The radicalism of her decision, her refusal to negotiate it with the representatives of the subjects affected, her obstinacy not to listen to any of the advice by her own administration, her obtuseness toward the interventions

20 Ibid., 276. This letter offers many insights into the reluctance of the Viennese administration to execute the order of the Queen. On the intervention by the General Estates, see David Kaufmann, *Barthold Dowe Burmania und die Vertreibung der Juden aus Böhmen und Mähren. Nach seinen Depeschen an die Hochmögenden in den Jahren 1745–1746*, in: *Jubelschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag des Professor Dr. Heinrich Graetz*, Breslau 1887, 279–313.

21 Ibid.

22 The economic consequences, of which the debts of local Jews, equally threatened by expulsion, and the loss of know-how in the production and distribution of alcohol, were the most serious, are described for the estate of Prince Auersperg in Legnerová, *Exil der Prager Juden*, 52f.

23 Kregel, *Die englische Intervention zu Gunsten der böhmischen Juden*, 276.

24 Wolf, *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Böhmen*, 457.

25 Lieben, *Briefe*, no. 65 (March 24, 1745).

of the regional estates and the pleadings of the highest representative of the faith she adhered to – all this may serve as the perfect illustration of what an absolutist government was about. By the merciless execution of a lonely, arbitrary and unjustifiable decision, Maria Theresia ultimately demonstrated her will to uphold the principle of absolute sovereign power against fiscal, political, economic, religious, and humanitarian arguments, by dint of no rationale other than her determination to enforce her will. The expulsion of the Jewish community from Prague may thus serve as a perfect example for the dialectics of absolutism: by pushing aside corporate interests – as manifested by the Bohemian estates as well as by the court’s administration – the monarch without doubt “undermined, constricted and eliminated traditional patterns of social behaviour,” but it hardly can be said that it was based on a “systematic application of reason.”²⁶ The leitmotif in the monarch’s policy towards the Jews was the implementation of personalised sovereign power.²⁷

Inadequate Reactions to an Unprecedented Royal Attitude

This assessment of the monarch’s motivations is of central salience in attempting to better comprehend the dynamics of the intercessory effort undertaken by Jewish communities and individuals to prevent the expulsion. To threaten a Jewish community with complete expulsion was not common currency at this point in time.²⁸ As was the case after the occupation of Prague in 1743, the eventuality of restrictive or punitive measures, Jewish intercession consisted in demonstrating the good-will of the community and the advantage of not carrying out these measures. Intercessors would make an attractive (and normally costly) “counter-offer,” arguing that the expulsion was contrary to the legal basis of Jewish presence in the given community, and that the decision-maker was better off in not implementing it. Thus,

26 James van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and “Modernity” in Early Modern Europe*, in: *German Studies Review* 8 (1985), 383–398, here 392.

27 It would not serve the purpose of this present article to once more sum up the changing currents in the decade-long discussions about the essence of the absolutist age. Valuable reflections may be found in van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and “Modernity”*; Heinz Duchhard, *Absolutismus. Abschied von einem Epochebegriff?*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 258 (1994), 113–122, and Jürgen Schlumbohm, *Gesetze, die nicht durchgesetzt werden. Ein Strukturmerkmal des frühneuzeitlichen Staates?*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 23 (1997), 647–663. I am grateful to Dietlind Hüctker for these references.

28 In the case of Prague, the period of harshest persecutions against local Jews was between the so-called Rindfleisch Uprising in 1298 through the mid-fifteenth century, with numerous massacres and plunderings. The last expulsion before the events discussed here took place almost two hundred years earlier, in 1559.

the very first letters of intercession directed to the court in Vienna presented the monarch with a long history of the Prague community, arguing that the accusations leveled at individual members in the community could not possibly lead to the expulsion of the whole community.²⁹ The second part of the counter-offer was not transmitted to the court in writing but in a conversation between one of the Prague *shtadlanim*, Maritschke, with Franz I., the husband of Maria Theresia and archduke of Lotharingia. The community offered to pay for all Austrian military expenses in Bohemia for a period of six months – in a period of war a substantial offer indeed.³⁰ But contrary to all experience, and this constitutes an absolute novelty indeed, this offer was not only spurned, the monarch adamantly refused any and all negotiations.³¹ The twist that left the Jewish intercessors confused about how to proceed was the irrationality of the monarch's attitude: "One can prove all accusations and slanderous calumny wrong and thus try to defuse animosities, but if [Maria Theresia] says they [the Jews] are honest, but she still won't suffer them, what can we plead, what can we say?"³² Thus, it was not the outdated character of Maria Theresia's expulsion order that led to a late blooming of early modern *shtadlanut*. On the contrary: it was the very novelty of her intransigent attitude.

In his pioneering study on the expulsion from Prague, Baruch Mevorah has given a detailed picture of these efforts.³³ Jewish notables in Prague and in Vienna sent letters to all important Jewish communities, concentrating on communities within the Holy Roman Empire. Independently, other communities and individuals emerged as centres of *shtadlanut* on behalf of the Jews of Prague: Wolf Wertheimer (1681–1765), a court Jew in Bavaria living in Augsburg, who had spent his childhood and youth in Vienna, and whose son Samuel Wertheimer still lived in Vienna, were at the heart of a well-documented network of Jewish notables, mostly court Jews. These men were highly active on behalf of the Prague community, especially during the first half of 1745, and continued their efforts through 1746. Obviously, as the son of the most important court Jew of the Habsburg court of his time, Samson Wertheimer (1658–1724), he possessed many skills and insights that allowed him to orchestrate a complex intercessory campaign.³⁴ After he had

29 Lieben, Briefe, no. 1 (December 1, 1744).

30 Ibid., no. 54 (February 21, 1745), no. 61 (March 12, 1745), and no. 79 (July 26, 1748).

31 Ibid., no. 54 (February 21, 1745).

32 Ibid., no. 38 (January 20, 1745).

33 Baruch Mevorah, *Intercessory efforts in Europe to prevent the expulsion of the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia* [Hebrew], in: *Zion* (1963), 125–164; idem., *Die Interventionsbestrebungen in Europa zur Verhinderung der Vertreibung der Juden aus Böhmen und Mähren, 1744–1745*, in: *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte* 9 (1980), 15–81.

34 Wolf Wertheimer was a typical second-generation court Jew, well-acquainted with the life at the Gentile courts and eager to emulate some elements of noble life-style, like

read the news about the re-occupation of Prague and the pogroms, he identified the danger for the Prague community and reacted immediately on December 2, 1744 by sending letters to relatives, correspondents and friends in several important communities: Frankfurt on Main, Hamburg, London, Munich, Hannover and Breslau. As far as it appears from the documents, he never was formally charged with this task by the Prague community board. Also quick to react were the Sefardic and Ashkenasic communities in the Netherlands and in London, notables of the community in Frankfurt on Main, in Dresden and in the three Hamburg communities. Some documents pertaining to the intercessory effort show how in this initial phase of the campaign, several communities and individuals received multiple reports about the events, thus reflecting their reputation as important centres for information dissemination.³⁵

Thus, the new quality of absolutist decision-making forced those involved to improve on time-tested procedures. As a first consequence, and in contrast to previous cases of *shtadlanut*, the effort lay not in the hand of a few individuals, closely connected to and mandated by the hierarchy of the threatened community.³⁶ Rather, several networks of self-proclaimed intercessors evolved, whose persistence matched the monarch's obstinacy. These networks did not constitute a consistent group. On the contrary. Though the return of the Jews of Prague was clearly a common objective, Jewish notables in the above-mentioned centres of activity competed with each other, which is especially true for the efforts of Jewish notables in Vienna. Writing from there, Samuel Wertheimer reported to his father in February 1745:

"The delegates from Prague act in a confused manner, they bang their heads against the wall not knowing what to expect from it [. . .] People hold meetings and there are 1000 ideas, everybody is eager to show his abilities and to distinguish himself; somebody makes a proposal, another rejects it [. . .] People intervene as much as possible, but everybody makes a big secret of his activities, as if it were some kind of business and another might get in his way. Thus, the matter takes much time."³⁷

hunting; nonetheless, he remained closely connected to the fate of the Jews, cf. J. Friedrich Battenberg, *Ein Hofjude im Schatten seines Vaters. Wolf Wertheimer zwischen Witeltsbach und Habsburg*, in: *Rotraud Ries/J. Friedrich Battenberg (eds.), Hofjuden – Ökonomie und Interkulturalität. Die jüdische Wirtschaftselite im 18. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 2002, 240–255.

35 The Polish Jew Michel Apt at the Dresden court can be considered such a communicative node, cf. Lieben, Briefe, no. 24 (January 11, 1745). Cf. also Bernhard Brillling, *Die Intervention des Kurfürsten und Erzbischofs von Köln zugunsten der Prager und böhmischen Juden im Jahre 1745*, in: *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 174 (1972), 125f.

36 This would be the standard for traditional intercession, cf. Guesnet, *Politik der Fürsprache*, 67–68, 73–74.

37 Lieben, Briefe, no. 48 (February 3, 1745).

Samuel Wertheimer repeated his almost sarcastic criticism of the futile attempts by the Prague intercessors to achieve something: "Unfortunately, the interventions have not been treated as they should be; the intercessors from Prague, who are not very skillful anyway, intervened in their careless Prague-like way."³⁸ This "careless Prague-like way" corresponded to traditional forms of intervention, focussing on a direct contact between intercessor and non-Jewish notables or princes.³⁹ In his description, these interventions seemed almost ridiculous: "The people from Prague run around all day seeking count Kinsky and lament, crying bitter tears, to the effect that he sharply rebuked them and replied with words I cannot repeat here."⁴⁰ After a few more days, the obvious lack of success led to resignation: "All intervening and soliciting by envoys and by members of the nobility has unfortunately led to nothing." Samuel even recommended to his father to abandon the effort: "In my opinion, my father should not inconvenience himself further, God will consider the good will, and you have fulfilled your duty, as you have done what is in your power."

The main problem was the refusal of the Queen to negotiate: "The Queen has not budged from her decision."⁴¹ One month later he noted: "There is no lack of persistent insistence. But unfortunately, we have no entrance."⁴² At the end of March 1745, and shortly before the first thrust of intercession came to an end, he expanded: "In the matter of the community [Prague], everything has been in vain so far. The King of England has sent another envoy [...], and Holland has also intervened once more, but it's all to no avail. [...] The cardinal has undertaken another effort, with no success."⁴³ Whereas leading Protestant powers, like England, the Netherlands and Denmark, were quick to react positively to demands of Jewish notables to intervene on behalf of the Jews of Prague, others were more reluctant. The community of Turin replied to Wolf Wertheimer at the end of January 1745: "Although we have attempted all means of intervention, we have not been able to obtain a letter of intervention by our King addressed to the Queen."⁴⁴

The competition that Samuel Wertheimer described in his letters to his father is illustrated by the way in which Diego d'Aguilar, the most visible court Jew in Vienna, communicated with Wolf Wertheimer. Obviously, he had no inten-

38 Ibid., no. 49 (February 3, 1745).

39 Guesnet, *Politik der Fürsprache*, 69–72.

40 Lieben, *Briefe*, no. 51 (February 14, 1745).

41 Ibid., no. 55 (February 24, 1745).

42 Ibid., no. 65 (March 24, 1745).

43 Ibid., no. 68 (March 31, 1745). A similar gloomy description was sent from Vienna already in February by another correspondent of Wolf Wertheimer, Moses Löbl, *ibid.*, no. 57 (February 28, 1745).

44 Ibid., no. 41 (January 24, 1745).

tion to co-operate with anyone. Replying to some detailed suggestions by Wolf Wertheimer on how to proceed after first efforts failed, d'Aguilar clothes his disrespect for Wertheimer in a few meaningless lines: "The recommendations that our monarch receives in matters of our nation are numerous. It may please God that we will have success, and I will do everything I can to help our poor brethren."⁴⁵ In another instance, the project to send a seasoned intercessor to Vienna was given up out of fear lest the feelings of d'Aguilar be hurt.⁴⁶ But this was an exception, as were the few cases where internal strife prevented prominent communities from taking adequate action, as in the case of Fürth.⁴⁷ The responsible Jewish notables from Prague and Vienna were severely criticised in the course of the rescuing effort. Moses Kann, a notable from Frankfurt, wrote to Wolf Wertheimer about the elders from Vienna: "And what do you think about the leaders of Vienna, young and old, who due to hubris or fear do not tell us a word. Who has ever heard of such a thing?"⁴⁸ Most remarkably, it became an oral tradition in the Prague community to blame the community's elders of responsibility for the expulsion actually taking place: "It was in their hands to prevent [the expulsion], but they did not prevent it."⁴⁹ Jewish notables outside the community and who were involved in the effort were also highly critical of the community concerned. Almost immediately after the revocation of the expulsion in the summer of 1748, a member of the Viennese community described in a detailed letter how the *shtadlanim* from Prague, the rest of Bohemia, and Moravia undertook to outsmart each other when it came to divide the sum which had been imposed on them by Maria Theresia.⁵⁰ Remarkably enough, even Gentile members of the court in Vienna noticed some of these inconsistencies in the intercessory effort, as Samuel Wertheimer reported: Count Los was quoted as saying "that the [Jewish] intervention is not being organised as it should be."⁵¹ This amalgam of jealousy, secrecy and ambition among appointed and self-proclaimed *shtadlanim* should be considered as a

45 Ibid., no. 50 (February 10, 1745).

46 Ibid., no. 66 (March 24, 1745).

47 Ibid., no. 13 (January 1, 1745).

48 Ibid., no. 30 (January 15, 1745). The critique was repeated by Moses Kann, one of the most active intercessors, in no. 36 (January 19, 1745) and appeared ever more explicit in no. 46 (January 29, 1745), and is also expressed by a member of the Fürth community, Kopel Frenkel, in no. 44 (January 29, 1745).

49 Lieben, *Handschriftliches zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag*, in: *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 2 (1904), 268. Lieben cites the saying as "haya b'yadam lamhot v'lo mahu" and elaborates that according to this tradition, the Prague rabbinate tore out those pages from a community chronicle pertaining to the expulsion, as they contained grave accusations against the community leaders.

50 Lieben, *Briefe*, no. 79 (July 26, 1748). See also Lieben, *Handschriftliches zur Geschichte der Juden in Prag*, in: *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 3 (1905), 270f., and 2 (1904), 296f.

51 Ibid., no. 64 (March 21, 1745).

kind of background for the following description of the intercessory effort itself. What did the Jewish notables behind this effort achieve, and how did it happen?

It has already been mentioned that the first steps in organising support for the community in Prague were taken even before it was known how Maria Theresia would react to the rumours of Prague Jews helping the Prussian enemy. In Vienna, Prague, and in Augsburg, letters were sent to all potential sources of help. Each of these early letters was accompanied by descriptions of the pogroms and plundering in November 1744. They asked the recipients to forward the call for help to all other potential supporters, thus creating an initial network. This phase of inner-Jewish mobilisation was already characterised by an intense discussion on how to organise non-Jewish intervention, and whom to call upon in order to influence the monarch in Vienna.

This brainstorming shifted into high gear when the actual expulsion order was signed and it turned out that Maria Theresia would prove absolutely adamant in standing by her decision. The notables involved came up mainly with the idea to intensify the effort: to have more letters sent to the Queen, to have ever higher standing authorities support the Jews of Prague, to multiply the personal interventions. Thus, Moses Kann from Mainz advised a Jewish notable in Vienna to send as many intercessors to Austrian dignitaries: "One has to negotiate with court secretary Helm [the emissary of the bishop and Elector from Mainz] for him to intervene relentlessly [...] the intercessors from Prague should go see him, one after the other; thus they will arouse the pity of the emissaries."⁵²

The *shtadlanim* from Prague interceded personally on a daily basis with high-standing figures of the court in Vienna. It was considered a first great step forward when Maria Theresia accepted a gift from a representative from the Jews of Prague: "The highly respected Rav Samuel received fresh salmon from the first haul of the year and offered the largest one to the Queen in the name of the Jews of Prague, and adjured her to have mercy on them. The Queen graciously accepted it and while leaving offered her hand for a kiss."⁵³ One week later, a group of *shtadlanim* from Prague awaited the Queen on her way to Schönbrunn palace, to "throw themselves upon their knees, with a petition in their hands, simultaneously crying and pleading, until finally the Queen ordered Prince Auersperg to take the petition. He told them to cease their lamentations and be quiet."⁵⁴ These efforts to find personal leverage with the Queen or dignitaries of her administration were to no avail. These two examples of direct, personal interventions of a tradition-

52 Ibid., no. 46 (January 29, 1745).

53 Ibid., no. 63 (March 17, 1745).

54 Ibid., no. 65 (March 24, 1745).

al type with the Queen took place in March 1745, and had no effect whatsoever. Maria Theresia's decision to repeal her order was made more than three years later, and it would be more than hazardous to draw a line of cause and effect between the efforts in Vienna in the early spring of 1745 and the repeal.

The Epistemology of Intercession

Direct interventions at the Viennese court were one field of action, and obviously the one favoured by the Jewish notables from Prague. Mobilising influential non-Jews in general was the objective of the intercessory efforts by most other Jewish notables engaged in the rescue effort. It appears that this effort depended less on the community's dignitaries and more on self-proclaimed *shtadlanim* active in several European Jewish metropolitan centres. One can differentiate several target groups for the objective to have non-Jews intervene on behalf of the Jews of Prague. The prime target of intercession were the most influential European courts that seemed likely to support this effort. It is obvious that the Jewish notables favoured interventions from the leading Protestant powers, like the Netherlands, Great Britain and Saxony. For equally obvious reasons, those members of the Central European nobility depending on prosperity of regional trade and finances had a major interest in having the expulsion order repealed, and were mobilised to support the intercessory effort. The Bohemian nobility intervened independently and through its representative body, the Bohemian estates.

Because of the monarch's widely known religious zeal, Jewish notables were especially keen in obtaining intercessory letters written by members of the Catholic hierarchy.⁵⁵ Support for the activities aiming at a repeal came also from many members of the local as well as the central state administration, as has already been mentioned.⁵⁶ Jewish notables were especially energetic and successful in mobilising the closest personal relatives and associates of Maria Theresia. It is a noteworthy fact that Jewish notables established direct personal contact with the Queen's husband, her brother-in-law, her mother, her mother-in-law, her grandmother and her

55 Bernhard Brilling, Die Intervention des Kurfürsten und Erzbischofs von Köln zugunsten der Prager und böhmischen Juden im Jahre 1745, in: Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein 174 (1972/73), 122–137.

56 Legnerová, Exil der Prager Juden, 49f., describes the exile of Jews from Prague on the estate of a high member of the Viennese court, Prince Heinrich von Auersperg. The exiles had to pay a tax amounting to the tax for temporary Jewish residents, cf. Legnerová, Exil der Prager Juden, 49f.

royal tutor. The members of the closest kinship of the monarch were all contacted within two weeks after the expulsion order had been signed and apparently all agreed to plead for the Prague community, within this very short period of time.⁵⁷ No comparable efforts can be traced to enlist the support of Gentile groups like merchant or artisan guilds. Merchant guilds from important commercial centres like Leipzig, Hamburg, Amsterdam and London indeed did intervene with the Viennese court, but these interventions were, it seems, not instigated by Jews involved in the intercessory effort.⁵⁸ Moreover, the declarations of the Prague artisan guilds that first had welcomed the expulsion, but tended towards readmitting the Jews once the economic consequences had materialised, were instigated by the Bohemian estates and not by Jewish intercessors.⁵⁹

One key factor in achieving a successful intervention was the use of coherent information and a strict line of argumentation. The small degree of variation in information being passed back and forth between Prague, Vienna, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, London, Augsburg and many other communities is quite astonishing. One way to achieve this was to meticulously copy letters received and sent as well as to gather and forward as much information as possible. It is obvious that competition and secrecy, although unavoidable, could seriously impede the intercessory effort, and are a main criterion to establish in retrospect the formation of sub-networks within which information was circulating.

57 Contacts were especially intensive with Maria Theresia's husband, Franz I Stephan of Lotharingia. His support was considered crucial from the moment rumours about possible retributions against the Prague community spread, cf. Lieben, Briefe, no. 1 (December 1, 1744), no. 2 (December 2, 1744), no. 34 and 35 (both January 19, 1745), no. 42 (January 24, 1745), no. 43 (January 28, 1745), no. 47 (February 1, 1745), no. 53 (February 11, 1745), no. 56 (February 25, 1745), no. 71 (January 28, 1746); cf. also Brillling, Intervention des Kurfürsten, 127; Wolf Wertheimer encouraged Dutch court Jews to intercede with Franz I Stephan's brother and brother-in-law of Maria, Karl, as he played a crucial role in spreading these rumours, cf. *ibid.*, no. 18 (January 7, 1745), no. 22 (January 10, 1745), and no. 73 (October 23, 1746); it is not clear whether empress Elisabeth, the mother of Maria Theresia, in fact did intercede in support of the Jews of Prague – for Wolf Wertheimer, she was one of the first potential addressees of an intervention by the court Jew Moses Kann, who had personal ties to Elisabeth, cf. *ibid.*, no. 8 (December 28, 1744); equally early, the grandmother of Maria Theresia agreed to write a letter on behalf of the Prague community, as a court Jew of Polish origin in Dresden, Michel Apt, described in a long letter about the intercessory efforts in the Saxonian residence, cf. *ibid.*, no. 24 (January 11, 1745); the teacher of Maria Theresia, the countess Fiksin, was called upon to act somewhat later, cf. *ibid.*, no. 60 (March 3, 1745).

58 Wolf Wertheimer described the activities by various merchant groups, among them the Nuremberg merchants, whose intentions he qualified as “only in their own interest, not in favour of the children of our nation,” *ibid.*, no. 14 (January 3, 1745).

59 Tobias Jakobovitz, Die jüdischen Zünfte in Prag, in: Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik 8 (1936), 57–145.

Many letters pertaining to *shtadlanut* against the expulsion from Prague contained specific paragraphs intended to serve as drafts for the recipient, who was supposed to use these capsules or discursive insertions when negotiating with a potential non-Jewish intercessor. The term capsule here means inserting the model draft of a letter to the addressee supposed to use this draft when writing his intervention letter to the main target person, in this case Maria Theresia. The most striking example in the intercessory effort for this kind of encapsulated message – or in effect message in a bottle – is a long letter obviously inspired by Wolf Wertheimer and sent by a Jewish regional assembly (*va'ad*) in Swabia (south Germany) to several Jewish communities of Mantua, Rome, Venice and Turin.⁶⁰ This letter contained two model drafts or capsules: the first was a short line of argument to be used by members of the Italian communities in negotiating with local non-Jews who could possibly send letters of support for the Prague community. The second was to be forwarded to the Holy See in Rome and is a draft letter to be used by the Pope writing to the monarch in Vienna. In very strong wording, the highest ecclesiastical authority admonishes the Austrian Queen not to pass a “bad, incorrect judgement against tens of thousands of innocents,” asking “what law she is referring to when expelling innocent people without proper inquiry” and warning that “she should take care not to kill the just along with the wrongdoer.”⁶¹ These words obviously differ considerably from the language even a high-standing court Jew could use in addressing one of the most powerful monarchs in Europe. Nonetheless, these are the words Wolf Wertheimer from Augsburg used, in effect putting himself in the position of the pope, when writing to Maria Theresia.

These capsules are to be found at every stage of the intercessory effort, and guaranteed the consistency of argumentation and information. Already in the first letter mobilising the Jewish communities, sent by Wolf Wertheimer from Augsburg on December 1, 1744, the author recommends writing letters to the Queen, arguing that it is not suitable to punish a whole community and many innocent persons in order to punish those guilty of treason.⁶² The following capsule, part of a letter by Wertheimer to Moses Kann in Frankfurt on Main, another crucial figure in the intercessory effort, complemented this argument by the request to establish a commission to investigate the substance of the charges brought against Jews from Prague.⁶³ This request was to reappear in almost all known intercessory letters by foreign courts and non-Jewish dignitaries. Thus, the King of England asked in De-

60 Lieben, Briefe, no. 15 (January 4, 1745).

61 *Ibid.*, 386. An identical procedure was chosen by Wolf Wertheimer to encourage intervention by the Dutch General Estates, *ibid.*, no. 33 (January 15, 1745).

62 *Ibid.*, no. 1 (December 1, 1744).

63 *Ibid.*, no. 8 (December 28, 1744).

ember 1744 to “revoke the said edict, or at least to suspend the time of the expulsion, and to establish a commission of enquiry.”⁶⁴ The next day, Wolf Wertheimer started to mobilise other Jewish communities with a letter containing two inserted capsules. The second described how to convince Gentile dignitaries to take action, using predominantly politico-strategic arguments in the context of the War of Succession,⁶⁵ while the first intercalation formulated the letters these dignitaries were supposed to send.⁶⁶ In contrast, one of the most active correspondents of Wolf Wertheimer, Moses Kann from Mainz, cited a letter formulated by him for the Elector. In this capsule, Kann cites the Elector’s appeal to Maria Theresia to have mercy on the Jews “and only to judge the guilty but not the innocent, which would bring much more glory to the Queen,” and continues: “In this manner, the heart is softened, and in a discreet way displays the pernicious effects and consequences which will all be formulated by the court’s secretary [Hofrat].”⁶⁷

Obviously, the use of such model intercalations or capsules was a common practice. Thus, Wolf Wertheimer received a letter from Hamburg, containing quotations from a letter by the Danish king to Maria Theresia. In it he presented his main argument that the moral failures of some individuals would not justify such harsh action against the whole of Prague Jewry.⁶⁸ The objective of these capsules was to exert as much influence as possible on the interventions by European courts, princes and members of the Catholic hierarchy to Maria Theresia, and to have this message as homogeneous as possible. These interventions were obviously considered the best leverage to reach the common goal, the return of the Jews of Prague. A significant part in this effort was to create a homogeneous basis of knowledge among the members of the various Jewish intercessory networks. Thus, much attention was devoted to distributing information on who had tried to obtain a letter of intervention, to passing on information about who had received what kind of information, to copying letters already sent, to enlarging the

64 Krengel, *Die englische Intervention zu Gunsten der böhmischen Juden*, 270.

65 Lieben, *Briefe*, no. 10 (December 29, 1744), 377. The paragraph begins with the words “to these Sirs, you have to present the origin and truth, why the Jews suffer these misgivings [. . .].”

66 *Ibid.*, 376. This capsule starts with the words “the community elders [. . .] have to ask for an explicit letter of intercession to the Queen, stating that this matter is one of conscience [. . .].”

67 Lieben, *Briefe*, no. 16 (January 5, 1745).

68 *Ibid.*, no. 32 (January 17, 1745). In a comparable manner, Wolf Wertheimer asked two Jewish notables in Augsburg to intervene with the regional estates and attached the text of this intervention, *ibid.*, no. 21 (January 8, 1745), and sent the text for an intervention by Gentile courts in Cologne and Braunschweig to two unidentified Jewish notables in these places, *ibid.*, no. 80 (no date given, second half of 1745), as well as the text for an intervention by the Dutch emissary in Vienna to a Jewish notable from the Hague, *ibid.*, no. 77 (June 25, 1747).

network or to securing its functioning. One letter dated January 11, 1745, by Isaak, son of Wolf Wertheimer, illustrates the precision in handling the distribution of information, and should be quoted at length:

“I have received your letter dated January 3, as well as the enclosed copies of your letters to the Bishop of Bamberg and to the conference minister in Vienna, including some information, as well as the letter written by you and our common relative, the rabbi, to the elders in Mantua, and in an identical manner, to those of Venice, Turin and Rome. I report that my father-in-law [. . .] has informed his son about his and R. Berl Heizfeld’s visit at the court of the abbot-bishop last Sabbath evening. In the enclosed excerpt you find that they have succeeded, and that the bishop mentioned you, my father and teacher [. . .] I have not yet received the copy of your memoir, and have forwarded your information to R.S. to send on to his father.”⁶⁹

Many documents offer a similar picture of an extremely diligent handling of information pertaining to the intercessory effort. The lines by Isaak Wertheimer reflect the importance attached to quality, distribution, and effectiveness of information. Access to information marked the limits of the sub-networks and defined their members. Thus, Samuel Wertheimer reported from Vienna early in February 1745 that he was unable to obtain information concerning the intervention by the Danish king: “You ask for copies of all intercessions in order to have all information in this matter complete [. . .] but I have to confess that I have not been able to obtain these, and have not yet found a way to do so.”⁷⁰ In some cases, press excerpts were used to substantiate information contained in letters coordinating the intercessions. Wolf Wertheimer himself had first learned about the events unfolding in Prague and Vienna through the most important contemporary newspaper, the *Augsburger Zeitung*. However, the Jewish notables involved in the intercessory effort used press information only on rare occasions.⁷¹

As significant as organising and coordinating written interventions, there were also direct, personal efforts in mobilising the above-mentioned target groups. Many documents show that written intervention was considered necessary, but preference was given to the personal contact: “Letters alone cannot correct these misgivings and misfortunes, because the princes to whom we write put our letters aside,” Wolf Wertheimer warned Moses Kann in Mainz at the outset of the campaign.⁷² It appears that a substantial difference existed between the possibilities of face-to-face communication in matters of intercession. Thus, personal contact also allowed for passing on (seemingly) sensible information: “It is of utmost importance,” writes Wolf

69 *Ibid.*, no. 25 (January 11, 1745).

70 *Ibid.*, no. 48 (February 3, 1745).

71 *Ibid.*, no. 18 (January 7, 1745), and no. 21 (January 8, 1745).

72 *Ibid.*, no. 8 (December 28, 1744).

Wertheimer to a court Jew in Dresden, "to tell those noble men to whom one turns that duke Kinsky, chancellor of Bohemia, is a great enemy of the Jews [one of the very few supporters of the expulsion order] and is leading the Queen astray [...] and has, as rumour has it, has lost his mind."⁷³

Another advantage of a direct contact between intercessors and Gentile dignitaries, the opportunity to reinforce humanitarian arguments by handing out money, was spelled out by Michel Apt, a Polish Jew at the Saxonian court in Dresden: "For this kind of business someone has to stand up in person with a purse full of golden dinars, because a physician that costs no money does no good [...] but so far nobody appeared with this most important cure."⁷⁴ Remarkably enough, Samuel Wertheimer reported to his father in March 1745 that the time had not yet come to bribe the highest echelons of the court in Vienna: "We have indirect information that prince Karl [Maria Theresia's husband] has reviewed the above-mentioned project but has rejected it. Thus, it is obvious that an improvement or redressing of the situation by utilising the purse is not yet likely."⁷⁵ Evidently, it was highly precarious to pass this kind of information on in writing, and numerous documents contain hints and allusions about facts and developments the authors did not want to be known. Thus, Samuel Wertheimer reported to his father likewise in March 1745: "The king of England has sent an express messenger [...] I cannot convey in writing in what a forthright manner the King has intervened."⁷⁶

Closely related to these reflections on the need for discretion is the function of the evolving public sphere. It seems that the small number of newspaper articles pertaining to the exile were not instigated by those participating in the intercessory effort. In some cases, these articles were attached to letters and merely meant to enhance their credibility in the eyes of the recipients or their Gentile contacts. The press, and thus also the public sphere, were not considered a major factor in the eyes of the Jewish notables. A very small number of Hebrew writings were printed about the fate of the Prague community during its exile, mostly dealing with the Jewish sufferings during the pogrom in November 1744, and less with the expulsion.⁷⁷ They might be considered an argument in the efforts to collect money for the exiled community.

The one extant contemporary publication devoted to the expulsion in a language other than Hebrew or Yiddish (including Judeo-German) was

73 Ibid., no. 34 (January 19, 1745).

74 Ibid., no. 24 (January 11, 1745). In this respect, Apt was not right, as we know from other documents (cf. note 32) that Moses Löbl, a Jewish notable from Vienna equally used the image of cure and healing for the act of intercession, *ibid.*, no. 57 (February 28, 1745).

75 Ibid., no. 61 (March 12, 1745).

76 Ibid., no. 68 (March 31, 1745). See also no. 69, no. 70, no. 79, and no. 84.

77 See above, note 5.

printed in Nuremberg.⁷⁸ Without any doubt, for most of the Christian contemporaries in the Holy Empire, its title "Description of exit of the entire Jewish community of Prague . . ." echoed the many titles written during the flurry of publications in the context of the expulsion of the Salzburg Protestants in 1733. The place of publication, one of the Protestant publishing activity in this period, also supports this interpretation.⁷⁹ The difference in including the public sphere as a factor shaping the attitudes towards the persecution of a religious minority – as was the case of the Salzburg Protestants – or in garnering the support of royal and aristocratic courts – as in the case of the Jews of Prague – made all the difference in making the former the most prominent *cause célèbre* of its time, and the latter an effort to exert influence within the royal *arcanum*.⁸⁰

It is true that Jewish notables and Gentiles involved indeed invoked the danger for Maria Theresia of gaining a "bad reputation."⁸¹ Especially noteworthy in this respect are the unequivocal and repeated allusions in the letters of the British minister of foreign affairs, the Earl of Harrington, referring to "the prejudice that the world might conceive against the Queen's proceedings"⁸² and to the fact that this "severe and merciless resolution could not but be esteemed by all mankind as an indelible stain both in point of justice and clemency upon her hitherto moderate and equitable Government."⁸³ And in one of the last

78 Beschreibung des Auszugs der sämtlichen Prager-Judenschafft aus Prag den 21. Februar und 3. Martii 1745 nebst einer kurzen Historischen Erzählung aller Fatalitacten, die Ihnen seit ihrer Aufnahm in Boehmen und sonderlich in der Stadt Prag, bis auf diese Zeit widerfahren, n.d., Nürnberg. It should be noted that Jewish notables from Venice took the initiative to print some of the letters pertaining to the exile of the Jews of Prague, although nothing is known about the distribution of these printed letters, cf. letter by the elders of the Venice community to Wolf Wertheimer, no. 40 (January 22, 1745). It is useful to mention here that Abraham Trebitsch included some pages on the expulsion in his "Korot ha'etim," written early in the 19th century, cf. Iveta Vondrašková, The "Events of Times" by Abraham Trebitsch of Mikulov (Nikolsburg). The Chronicle and Its Relationship to the Development of Modern Historiography, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 37 (2002), 92–144.

79 Another contemporary Gentile reflection of the Prague events were the mock Jewish chronicles about the expulsion by the German lawyer and author Christoph Gottlieb Richter (1716–1774). Drawing on biblical vocabulary and imitating Jewish chronicles, the author basically defended the decision of Maria Theresia to expel the Jews of Prague, cf. Ivo Cerman, Maria Theresia in the Mirror of Contemporary Mock Jewish Chronicles, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 38 (2002), 5–29.

80 A comparison of the expulsion of the Salzburg Protestants and of the Jews of Prague will be included in my forthcoming study on Jewish intercession.

81 Lieben, Briefe, no. 16 (January 5, 1745), no. 18 (January 7, 1745), no. 34 (January 19, 1745), no. 54 (February 21, 1745), no. 61 (March 12, 1745), no. 63 (March 3, 1745). Maria Theresia obviously ventilated the possibility of printing an official presentation of the facts, which was not done.

82 Letter dated December 28, 1744, as in Krenzel, Die englische Intervention zu Gunsten der böhmischen Juden, 271.

83 Ibid., 273, letter dated February 22, 1745.

letters pertaining to this intercessory effort by the English court, Harrington warned that "His Majesty [the King of England] was much concerned to find the Queen [Maria Theresia] so inflexible with respect to the expulsion of the Jews, both out of compassion to those poor people, and for the sake of her Majesty's own reputation and interest."⁸⁴ However, this argument did not function in relation to the evolving public sphere, but was restricted to the communication between courts and nobles. Most Jewish notables involved in the effort considered a maximum degree of discretion an absolute necessity.

Conclusion

Two explanations for the repeal of the expulsion in 1748 vie with one another today. The first has been succinctly summed up by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson: "Due to the relations they had established, the court Jews, Ashkenasim and Sephardim, could exert diplomatic pressure in favour of their co-religionists, like in 1744/45, when Maria Theresia expelled the Jews of Prague, but finally agreed to their return."⁸⁵ The marvellous medal stamped in the Netherlands in 1748 seems to be an illustration to this claim.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, there is no evidence for a direct relationship between the intercessory efforts and the re-admittance of the Jews of Prague. In a recent study, Stefan Plaggenborg has shown that interventions by non-Jewish individuals and official bodies like the Bohemian estates, the local representatives of the central power ("Statthaltereï"), as well as those charged with the implementation of the expulsion order, the Expulsion Commission ("Ausweisungscommission"), and also intervention by merchants guilds in Leipzig, Hamburg, and Amsterdam, had a significant impact on the monarch's attitude. The decisive factor, however, was the pressure exerted by the Bohemian estates, unwilling to accept a new system of centralised taxation, the so-called *Decennialrezeß*, without re-admitting the Jews to Prague. That was seen by the estates as a counter-balance for the losses the nobility would suffer through the new tax system.⁸⁷

84 *Ibid.*, 280f., letter dated April 12, 1745.

85 Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, London 1976, 900.

86 Two specimens of this medal have been preserved, one in the Dutch Royal Numismatic Collection, the other in the Jewish Museum in New York City, see Arthur Polak, *Joodse penningen in de nederlanden*, Amsterdam 1958, 17f.; Daniel Friedenberg, *Jewish Medals. From the Renaissance to the Fall of Napoleon (1503–1815)*, New York 1970, 35. This medal will be discussed in detail in a forthcoming study pertaining to the tradition of *shtadlanut*.

87 Stefan Plaggenborg, *Maria Theresia und die böhmischen Juden*, in: *Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder* 39 (1998), 1–17; this line of argument

The new element in the intercessory effort against the expulsion order was the highly dynamic mobilisation of several sub-networks, consisting mainly of the emerging elite of court Jews. This shift was evident to the contemporaries. As Samuel Wertheimer reported to his father from Vienna, and thus indirectly and probably inadvertently criticising him, in February 1745: "Nothing new under the sun, and no relief in the matter of the *klal*. On the one hand, the intervention here is neglected, and nobody writes to the communities. Yet on the other hand, the notables elsewhere have not written to the community elders here, but solely to their respective correspondents [i.e., other court Jews]."⁸⁸ This quotation clearly indicates the shift in political agency from the community hierarchy to the individual court Jews and their network(s). Their effort featured a high degree of sophistication in the management and distribution of information, drawing on traditional *shtadlanut*, but going on beyond its scope and possibilities. In the case of the expulsion of Prague's Jews, however, it remains to be shown if there indeed was a causal link between this effort and the repeal of the expulsion. Probably its major effect lay rather in enabling the exiles to persevere, in assuring them material aid, and in giving them some sense of hope, before they were finally able to return to Prague.

is already to be found in Guglia, *Maria Theresia*, 333, though without further documentation.

88 Lieben, *Briefe*, no. 54 (February 21, 1745), 440.