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James Loeffler

AJS Review / Volume 34 / Issue 02 / November 2010, pp 289 - 308

DOI: 10.1017/S0364009410000358, Published online: 17 December 2010

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0364009410000358

How to cite this article:

James Loeffler (2010). Between Zionism and Liberalism: Oscar Janowsky and Diaspora Nationalism in America. AJS Review, 34, pp 289-308 doi:10.1017/S0364009410000358

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BETWEEN ZIONISM AND LIBERALISM: OSCAR JANOWSKY AND DIASPORA NATIONALISM IN AMERICA

by

James Loeffler*

Of all the varieties of modern Jewish politics, none has experienced a more curious fate than Diaspora Nationalism. This nonterritorial strain of Jewish nationalism, also known as Autonomism, was once widely regarded as “together with Zionism the most important political expression of the Jewish people in the modern era.”¹ From its fin-de-siècle origins in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, it spread rapidly across Eastern Europe, sprouting various movements for Jewish national-cultural autonomy. After World War II, however, Diaspora Nationalism vanished almost overnight. So too was its intellectual afterlife marked by silence, as postwar historians of Jewish political thought largely ignored its legacy.² Recently, however, Diaspora Nationalism has emerged as a growing field of scholarship.³ The results are impressive: a striking new wave

* This article was written with the support of the University of Virginia Jewish Studies Program and Dean’s Office, and the Posen Foundation. Jennifer Cole at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Elizabeth Vernon and Vardit Haimi-Cohen of the Harvard College Library Judaica Division, the staffs of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and American Jewish Historical Society, and Jessica Kirzner provided very helpful research assistance. I thank David Myers, Benjamin Nathans, Noam Pianko, Simon Rabinovitch, Eugene Sheppard, Nancy Sinkoff, and the editors and anonymous reviewers of *AJS Review* for their valuable comments and suggestions on various versions of this article.

1. Melvin Fagen, “Review: The Jews and Minority Rights,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 26, no. 1 (July 1935): 38.

2. An important exception to this trend was the continued focus on the career and posthumous intellectual influence of Simon Dubnow. See, for example, the following works: *Simon Dubnow, Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, ed. Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958); Robert M. Seltzer, “Simon Dubnow: A Critical Biography of His Early Years” (Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1970); Sophie Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnow: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History*, trans. Judith Vowles, ed. Jeffrey Shandler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds. *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

3. For a recent reflection on this academic trend, see Allan Arkush, “From Diaspora Nationalism to Radical Diasporism,” *Modern Judaism* 29, no. 3 (2009): 326–50.

of studies on its intellectual leadership,⁴ political parties,⁵ cultural projects,⁶ and various interwar East European Autonomist experiments.⁷ This abundance of fresh research promises to reframe not only the history of Diaspora Nationalism, but also that of Zionism and Jewish nationalism more generally.

Given Diaspora Nationalism's deep ideological linkage to Eastern Europe, it comes as little surprise that most scholars have limited their gaze to that region. However, the reality is that the movement was a thoroughly transnational phenomenon. To properly understand the history of Diaspora Nationalism, we must look beyond Eastern Europe to assess its larger impact on global Jewish political life.

4. Simon Rabinovitch, ed., *Diaspora Nationalism in Modern Jewish Thought* (Brandeis University Press, forthcoming); Viktor Kel'ner, *Missioner istorii: zhizn' i trudy Semena Markovicha Dubnova* (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 2008); Anke Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus: zur Geschichtskonstruktion Simon Dubnows* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Yosef Gorny, "Bein otonomiyah le-kehilah: Shimon Dubnov, Benedikt Anderson ve-Antoni Smit 'al ha-leumiut," *Iyunim be-tekumat yisrael* 17 (2007), 107–21; Jess Olson, "Nation, Peoplehood and Religion in the Life and Thought of Nathan Birnbaum" (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2006); Evyatar Friesel, "Zionism and Jewish Nationalism: An Inquiry into an Ideological Relationship," *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 2 (September 2006): 285–312; Roni Gechtman, "Conceptualizing National-Cultural Autonomy: From the Austro-Marxists to the Jewish Labor Bund," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 4 (2005): 17–49; Simon Rabinovitch, "The Dawn of a New Diaspora: Simon Dubnov's Autonomism, from St. Petersburg to Berlin," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 50 (2005): 267–88; Jeffrey Veidlinger, "Simon Dubnov Recontextualized: The Sociological Conception of Jewish History and the Russian Intellectual Legacy," in *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 3 (2004): 411–27; Joshua Shanes, "Yiddish and Jewish Diaspora Nationalism," *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* 90, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 178–88; and Kristi Groberg and Avraham Greenbaum, eds., *A Missionary for History: Essays in Honor of Simon Dubnov* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

5. Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Simon Rabinovitch, "Alternative to Zion: The Jewish Autonomist Movement in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia" (Doctoral dissertation, Brandeis University, 2007); David Rechter, "A Nationalism of Small Things: Jewish Autonomy in Late Habsburg Austria," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 52 (2007), 87–10; and Markos Silber, "Poalei Tzion be-Ostriyah be-milhemet ha-olam ha-rishonah u-hamavak le-otonomiyah leumit shel yehude galitzia ve-polin," *Ha-tsiyonut* 22 (2000): 99–127.

6. Joshua Karlip, "The Center That Could Not Hold: 'Afn Sheydveg' and the Crisis of Diaspora Nationalism" (Doctoral dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2006); Itzik Gottesman, *Defining the Yiddish Nation: The Jewish Folklorists of Poland* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003); Cecile Kuznitz, *The Origins of Yiddish Scholarship and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research* (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2000).

7. Anton Weiss-Wendt, "Thanks to the Germans! Jewish Cultural Autonomy in Interwar Estonia," *East European Jewish Affairs* 38, no. 1 (2008): 89–104; Verena Dohrn, "State and Minorities: The First Lithuanian Republic and S. M. Dubnov's Concept of Cultural Autonomy," in *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews*, ed. Alvydas Nikzentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliunas (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 155–73; Yoav Peled, "The Concept of National Cultural Autonomy: The First 100 Years," in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, ed. Jack Jacobs (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 255–70; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland: An Illustrated History, 1928–1996* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

A case in point is the movement's links to the United States. In every episode of international diplomacy from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 through to the founding of the United Nations (UN) in San Francisco in 1945, American Jews figured prominently in negotiations regarding Jewish minority rights in Eastern Europe.⁸ Yet we know relatively little of the particulars of Diaspora Nationalism's intellectual reception and political support in the American Jewish context.⁹ In this article, I address this lacuna by recovering the biography of one of Diaspora Nationalism's foremost American intellectual advocates: Oscar Janowsky (1900–1993).

Once an influential scholarly figure in American Jewish affairs, today Janowsky is all but forgotten. His reputation rests narrowly on the book he published in 1933, *The Jews and Minority Rights, 1898–1919*, the only major study of Diaspora Nationalism that appeared in the English language in the twentieth century.¹⁰ In its day, the book earned him a reputation as a leading American authority on minority rights and nationalism. During World War II, he championed Jewish national-cultural autonomy for postwar Eastern Europe, arguing prominently that national federalism and political autonomy offered more general solutions to the problems of nationalism, minorities' protection, and state sovereignty. As late as 1945, even after facts about the Holocaust had become widely known, Janowsky continued to press the Autonomist political claim on behalf of East European Jewry.

Taken together, Janowsky's wartime writings raise an interesting question about the persistence of Eastern Europe in the mid-century American Jewish political imagination. But what makes him still more relevant to a general reappraisal of the history of Jewish nationalism in the United States is his active participation in the leadership of the American Labor Zionist movement. Thus, at the same time as he called consistently for Jewish national autonomy in Eastern Europe, Janowsky publicly campaigned for the cause of Jewish statehood in Palestine. We are accustomed to typologies of Jewish nationalism that posit Zionism and Diaspora Nationalism as locked in a zero-sum competition for popular Jewish loyalties.¹¹ This putative conflict is often framed in terms of a choice between

8. Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Mark Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe: The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf, 1914–1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

9. On the interplay between Eastern Europe and the United States in interwar Jewish politics, see the recent cogent arguments in Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); and Nancy Sinkoff, "Yidishkayt and the Making of Lucy S. Dawidowicz," preface to Lucy Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time, 1938–1947: A Memoir* (Camden, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2008), xiii–xxxii.

10. As recently as 1996, the work was described by one historian as "still the best introduction to Jewish Diaspora Nationalism." See Alon Rachamimov, "Diaspora Nationalism's Pyrrhic Victory: The Controversy Regarding the Electoral Reform of 1909 in Bukovina," in *State and Nation Building in East Central Europe: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. J. S. Migiel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 16.

11. See, for example, Ephraim Nimni, "From Galut to T'fusoth: Post-Zionism and the Dislocation of Jewish Diasporas," in *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics*, ed. E. Nimni (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 117–52.

two symbolic homelands, Ashkenaz and Zion. The binary opposition is neatly encapsulated in the opposition between the Hebrew term *aliyah* and the Yiddish concept of *doikeyt*, or “hereness,” denoting ideological rootedness in Eastern Europe. This dichotomy, however, is based largely on the bitter political conflicts of Eastern Europe and the inevitable backshadowing produced by Zionism’s later success. By contrast, Janowsky’s model of American Jewish nationalism emphasized the easy and necessary reconciliation of these two distinct political objectives (national autonomy in Eastern Europe, national sovereignty in Palestine). His case highlights the elastic character of American Zionism, in which two political foci not only coexisted but also actively complemented each other in a harmonious vision of global Jewish nationhood.

Of course, Janowsky was not alone in his theoretical rapprochement between Diaspora and Zion. Recent scholarship has highlighted a number of other twentieth-century Jewish thinkers, including Shimon Rawidowicz, Mordecai Kaplan, Horace Kallen, and Israel Friedlander, who developed broader models of nationhood and political sovereignty in order to balance dual commitments to American liberalism and Zionism.¹² Thanks to this work, we no longer approach the intellectual history of American Zionism strictly in terms of an either/or dichotomy between America and Zion or homeland and exile. Nor do we take for granted that support for territorial sovereignty was the sole factor defining this kind of liberal nationalism. Yet because Eastern Europe is usually bracketed out in historical discussions of American Jewish nationalism, a certain false emphasis on the binary split between Israel and Diaspora persists. Adding Janowsky to this emerging narrative allows us to recover a third geographical dimension to American Jewish nationalism. Reexamining American Zionist support for minority rights in Eastern Europe suggests how Diaspora Nationalism served as a crucial ideological bridge between the potentially divergent ideals of statist nationalism in Palestine and political liberalism in the United States. So, too, does it draw our attention back to the time when American Jews grappled with the question of whether they themselves should seek state recognition and political rights as a national minority in the United States.

In this article, I analyze Janowsky’s attempt to define a model of American Jewish nationalism with a dual telos: Diasporic minority rights in Eastern Europe and territorial sovereignty in Palestine. Beginning with an analysis of his 1933 book and its reception, I trace the further development of his ideas in the early 1940s’ context of wartime Zionist and American foreign policy circles. I then turn to his reactions to the abrupt decline of minority rights after World War II and their replacement by the new doctrine of international human rights. That seismic shift, coupled with the triumph of Zionism, brought an end to Janowsky’s

12. David Myers, *Between Jew and Arab: The Lost Voice of Simon Rawidowicz* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008); Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Noam Pianko, “‘The True Liberalism of Zionism’: Horace Kallen, Jewish Nationalism, and the Limits of American Pluralism,” *American Jewish History* 94, no. 4 (December 2008): 299–329; and *Conservative Judaism* 56 (2004) (Special Issue on Israel Friedlander).

model of Jewish nationalism. His response took two forms: a heated critique of international human rights as a form of Jewish “assimilation” and a series of sociological studies in which he struggled to define American Jewish collective identity without reference to nationalism. These two efforts expose the root tension between his steadfast belief in the protean and exceptional character of American Jewish identity and his ideological assertion of global Jewish nationhood. I conclude that Janowsky’s support for Diaspora Nationalism ultimately faltered on the shoals of American Jewish identity. Documenting this failure thus not only exposes the limits of transnational political ideologies’ penetration into American Jewish life, but also reveals the crucial mid-century moment when liberal internationalism and Jewish nationalism completed their larger fateful divergence.

I. A LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALIST

Oscar Janowsky came of age during the single most fertile decade of Jewish political thought in twentieth-century America. Born in 1900 in the Polish-Lithuanian shtetl of Suchowola, he arrived on the Lower East Side in 1910 just as American Jewish intellectuals had begun to radically rethink Jewish collective identity in the face of the massive flood of new immigrants and nationalist ideologies from Eastern Europe. In search of a framework for Jewish national identity and international political solidarity in a diverse, liberal American society, they produced a flurry of new ideas and social experiments: Horace Kallen’s cultural pluralism; Louis Brandeis’s American Zionism; Chaim Zhitlovsky’s socialist Yiddishism; the New York Kehillah communal autonomy of Israel Friedlander, Mordecai Kaplan, and Judah Magnes; the Joint Distribution Committee’s international philanthropy; and the American Jewish Congress movement.¹³

Janowsky encountered many of these thinkers and their ideas firsthand during his teenage years. After studying in a Talmud Torah and graduating from DeWitt Clinton High School, he enrolled at City College. At the same time, he took courses at the New York Kehillah’s Board of Jewish Education and the Jewish Theological Seminary Teachers Institute. Though energized by the climate of intellectual experimentation, he recoiled from the partisan passions and manic factionalism of many of his peers. Under the influence of Brandeis, Friedlander, and Kaplan, he stressed the harmonious interplay of Jewish and American in his identity. A “confirmed Zionist,” he wept with joy upon hearing the news of the Balfour Declaration, yet took equal pride in acquiring his U.S. citizenship.¹⁴ As an immigrant himself, he harbored little sentimentality for Eastern

13. Arthur A. Goren, “Spiritual Zionists and Jewish Sovereignty,” in Arthur Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 145–64; Jonathan Frankel, “The Jewish Socialists and the American Jewish Congress Movement,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 16 (1976): 202–341; Ben Halpern, “Diaspora Zionism: Achievements and Problems,” in *Zionism in Transition*, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 45–56; and Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 125–78.

14. Oscar Janowsky, Unpublished autobiographical manuscript, American Jewish Archives, SC-14391–14393, 138, 147 [hereafter *Autobiography*]; Oscar Janowsky, “Zionism Today: A

Europe or his native Yiddish language. Indeed, his connection to Diaspora Nationalism emerged not through political activism but through academic scholarship.

After graduating with a BA in History from City College in 1921, Janowsky immediately enrolled in the PhD program in modern European history at Columbia University. In search of a topic with contemporary political implications, he chose as his dissertation the subject of “Jewish national minority rights” at the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁵ Interestingly enough, the choice was made over the objections of his advisor, Professor Carlton Hayes, the preeminent American historian of nationalism of the day. Hayes openly resisted the idea that the Jews constituted a distinct nation. He went out of his way to emphasize his conviction that “both in ancient times and throughout the middle ages, and even down into modern times, the Jews have been not so much a nationality infused with nationalism as adherents to a religion.”¹⁶ Undeterred, Janowsky continued his research, which included interviews with scores of American and East European Jewish political leaders, among them Simon Dubnow, Cyrus Adler, Chaim Zhitlovsky, Chaim Weizmann, Yitzhak Greenbaum, Nahum Sokolow, and Menachem Ussishkin. After positive approval by the Jewish historian Salo Baron, newly appointed to the Columbia faculty, and a grudging acceptance by Hayes, Janowsky submitted the completed work. The following year he published his dissertation as book with a preface by American Zionist Judge Julian Mack. *The Jews and Minority Rights* earned Janowsky a teaching position at City College, where he went on to spend the remainder of his career, rising to become a distinguished professor of history and international relations.¹⁷

In substance, Janowsky’s book comprises a sweeping history of the movement for Jewish national minority rights in Europe in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and a very careful, detailed study of the political process at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 that had produced the interwar Minorities Treaties. The result is a vigorous prescriptive argument in favor of Diaspora Nationalism in the guise of strictly descriptive scholarly account. The book opens with a brief overview of the origins of “minority nationalism” among East European Jews, emphasizing its recent origins and the influence of Austro-Marxism and the East European sociopolitical context. Janowsky stresses that his topic is neither Zionism nor Palestine: “Our objective is rather to trace the development

Clarification,” *Menorah Journal* (October 1943), 228. Additional biographical information can be found in Oscar Janowsky, “Rethinking the American Jewish Experience: Forgotten Worlds: An Unfinished Memoir,” *American Jewish Archives* 46, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1994): 247–78.

15. Janowsky, *Autobiography*, 300, 303.

16. Carleton Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926 [1966]), 27–28. Janowsky himself recalled, “[To him the study of] Jewish nationalism was rank folly and even an impertinence.” Janowsky, *Autobiography*, 300–303, 308.

17. Janowsky, *Autobiography*, 304–306. On Baron’s own evolving identity vis-à-vis Jewish minority status and political nationalism, see David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobarionism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 243–64.

of the claim that the east-European Jews constitute a distinct nationality and are therefore entitled to a special national existence, or to national rights, in their native lands [incorporated into] the state organism as a national unit along with the other nationalities who clamored for recognition in Eastern Europe.”¹⁸

Janowsky makes no secret of the fact that he takes a maximalist view of the meaning of minority rights. In his eyes, the Minorities Treaties should have been formulated as a vehicle for national self-determination rather than merely an international device to protect vulnerable minorities in the new multiethnic nation-states of the region. He therefore criticizes the Jewish political achievements at the Paris Peace Conference as insufficient. Despite guarantees of Jewish citizenship and linguistic and cultural rights, the Jews failed to realize any of the broader potential “vision of states of federated nationalities.” Various proposals for Jewish membership in the League of Nations, the right to collective reparations, self-regulated emigration, and other “national legislative and administrative organs” simply vanished from the final product. Without these, Janowsky explains, the Jews of Eastern Europe cannot be said to have fulfilled their nationalist aspirations.

Given this expansive interpretation of minority rights as an explicit vehicle for national self-government, it is not difficult to detect the strong influence of contemporary Diaspora Nationalist thought throughout the book. Chief among those thinkers whose ideological imprint is clearly evident is Simon Dubnow. Janowsky dates the beginnings of “non-Zionist nationalism” as a modern political movement to 1898, the year of Dubnow’s first explicit call for national autonomy. So too does he follow Dubnow’s lead in invoking the pre-modern European Jewish *kehilah*, or corporate, autonomous community, as the prototypical model for modern Jewish Diaspora Nationalism.¹⁹ However, in one important respect, Janowsky breaks with his fellow historian. Although Dubnow had suggested that American Jewry might organize itself into a national self-governing body, Janowsky emphasizes that in the United States and other Western countries, Jewish national autonomy is neither necessary nor appropriate.²⁰ Hence, one must take care to differentiate “the objectives of the western nationalists from those of the east-European autonomists.” “The former did not demand national rights for themselves,” he explains; instead, they sought “to unite world Jewry on a program calling for national rights in the east-European states of multiple nationality.”²¹ Given the unique social and political character of the United States, which was not a “state of multiple nationalities” but a homogenizing society, national

18. Oscar Janowsky, *The Jews and National Minority Rights, 1898–1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 34–36, 49, and 62–85.

19. On Dubnow’s interpretation of the medieval *kahal*, see Yisrael Bartal, “Taḥlif le-memshalah, li-medina u-le-ezraḥut—Shimon Dubnov ve-hashilton ha-atzmi ha-yehudi,” in *Kozak u-vedvi: am ve-arets ba-leumiyut ha-yehudit*, ed. Y. Bartal (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2007), 196–205.

20. Simon Dubnow, *Pis’ma o starom i novom evreistve (1897–1907)* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 283. On the place of America in Dubnow’s thought, see Robert Seltzer, “Affirmation of the Diaspora: America and Palestine in Dubnow’s Thought,” in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: KTAV Press, 1976), 529–38.

21. Janowsky, *Jews*, 158–59.

minority rights do not apply to the American Jewish situation. In other words, the role of “western” Jews in America is to enact political nationalism as a long-distance program in Eastern Europe.²²

To justify this bifurcated model of Diaspora Nationalism, Janowsky emphasizes that the key distinction in Jewish politics lies not between Diaspora Nationalists and Zionists, but in the fundamental division of the Jewish world into “two well-defined classes”: “nationalists” and “assimilationists.” The former, whom he identifies with the American Jewish Congress and other Zionist groups, recognize Jews as a “nationality.” They therefore support Jewish claims to political autonomy in Eastern Europe and sovereignty in Palestine. Meanwhile the “assimilationists” reject the “characterization of the Jews as a national group.” Reading his narrative, it becomes clear that he views the British and American “assimilationists” as wholly responsible for the demise of true national-cultural autonomy for East European Jewry. Much as they had opposed the Balfour Declaration, the American Jewish Committee and the Anglo-Jewish Association had similarly derailed the prospects for Jewish autonomy in Paris in 1919. By framing the narrative of the Peace Conference in terms of a morality play between good and bad Jewish leaders, Janowsky reveals his underlying goal: to link the cause of Diaspora Nationalism in Eastern Europe to that of Zionist statehood in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration had granted Jews their lawful rights to territorial nationhood in Palestine. Their parallel rights to autonomous nationhood in Eastern Europe, however, still eluded them.²³

Despite this novel linkage, Janowsky’s model of Jewish nationalism still rested on the same assumption of American Jewish exceptionalism held by other American Zionists of his day. From World War I on, the Brandeis school of Zionism had claimed that Jews could thrive under conditions of American democracy, but that less fortunate brethren elsewhere needed a national homeland. This “long-distance nationalism” was explicitly framed as a form of civic philanthropy and enlightened advocacy that complemented, rather than challenged, American liberalism.²⁴ Similarly, Janowsky’s two-chambered Jewish nationalism effectively split America and Eastern Europe even as he linked them. Even while claiming that Diaspora Nationalism had profound “national implications” for all Jews, he stressed that the political rights in question applied only to the Jewish struggle for national autonomy in Eastern Europe, not elsewhere in Western Europe or North America.²⁵

22. *Ibid.*, 145–46. He further argues that American Zionists deserved credit for organizing American Jewish political action on behalf of East European Jews during World War I. Janowsky, *Jews*, 163.

23. See the incisive comments of Mark Levene on this aspect of Janowsky’s narrative in “Resurrecting Poland—The Fulcrum of International Politics, 1917–1919,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 1 (2002): 31.

24. On the concept of “long-distance nationalism,” see Steven Rosenthal, “Long-distance Nationalism: American Jews, Zionism, and Israel,” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism*, ed. Dana Evan Kaplan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 209–24.

25. Oscar Janowsky, “The Problem of Minorities,” *Conference on Jewish Relations Newsletter* (April 1935), n.p.

The reactions to Janowsky's book confirmed the ideological divide over nationalism in American Jewish politics at the time. Most critics recognized his scholarly achievement but contested his characterization of the American Jewish struggle for East European Jewish minority rights at Paris. Thus, Melvin Fagen of the American Jewish Committee disputed that "assimilationist" American and British Jewish leaders had resisted supporting the political interests of East European Jewry. Western representatives did, in fact, promote "minority rights" regarding Jewish language and culture in Eastern Europe, Fagen concluded in a 1935 book review. They simply rejected "national rights," because "they did not confuse the desire to retain a traditional group-culture with a political program designed to set them apart from their neighbors, to make them what they are not and cannot be—a political division [on the basis of] already outworn ideas of a political nationalism that defied reality."²⁶ Morris Waldman, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, castigated the book's subjective distortions and "unveiled contempt" for Western Jewish leadership: "Since Janowsky is writing a history and not a polemic he does not express his views directly in his description of the course of events which led to the Minorities Treaties. But his sympathies for Jewish nationalism are threaded throughout the fabric of his work." To Waldman, Janowsky's call for "political autonomy" for East European Jews was a "dangerous" form of Jewish nationalism, "which reduced to elementary terms is the Nazi theory that we Jews are aliens in the countries in which we live."²⁷

In reply to his critics, Janowsky consistently defended his scholarly objectivity. Yet he also clearly relished the fight with his ideological opponents.²⁸ More importantly, he sought out and received the positive endorsements of prominent American Zionists, such as Julian Mack, Felix Frankfurter, Brandeis, and Kallen. The latter two men went even further, proposing that the American Jewish Congress send Janowsky to Europe for the 1935–1936 academic year to research the current status of Jews and other national minorities under the League of Nations system. Janowsky eagerly assented. Before he had finalized his plans, however, a surprising offer arrived from his ideological rivals at the American Jewish Committee. They asked him to prepare a report on diplomatic efforts and international law regarding the status of minorities, particularly Jews, in Germany. The Committee's aim was to produce a substantial monograph to be released in conjunction with the public resignation of James McDonald, the

26. Fagen, "Review," 40–41.

27. YIVO RG 347.1.29, American Jewish Committee Papers, Box 44, Folder 10 (War and Peace. Minorities and Minority Rights), Letter from Morris Waldman to James Rosenberg, 25 May 1935; Internal Memorandum of Morris Waldman, 3 June 1935.

28. "The book and I made some enemies," he recalled in his memoirs, "We ran afoul of the Jewish Anti-Zionists and 'assimilationists' . . . [for whom] the word 'National' was tabu [sic]." Janowsky, *Autobiography*, 311. See also the exchange between Janowsky and Max Kohler in M. Kohler, "Jews and Minority Rights," and O. Janowsky, "Dr. Janowsky Objects," in *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune* 133 (1933): 150, 160, and 342.

American-appointed High Commissioner for Refugees at the League of Nations.²⁹ Despite obvious mutual antipathy, the exigencies of the moment and Janowsky's unique expertise led to an agreement.³⁰ After protracted negotiations, the two Jewish organizations agreed to co-fund his year in Europe with the Conference on Jewish Relations, a nonpartisan scholarly organization, serving as official sponsor.³¹ In the summer of 1935, Janowsky relocated his family to Palestine, and from there departed for Europe to begin his research.

II. AUTONOMY IN EASTERN EUROPE, SOVEREIGNTY IN PALESTINE

Janowsky's European journey over the course of 1935 and 1936 coincided with the moment when prospects for Diaspora Nationalism were in rapid decline. Nazi Germany had quit the League of Nations and enacted the first of the Nuremberg Laws; Poland had likewise withdrawn from its Minority Treaty and succumbed to a right-wing military dictatorship. The Comité des Délégations Juives, an Autonomist organization that nominally represented European Jewish political interests to the League of Nations, had fallen apart following the death of Leo Motzkin in 1933. Its successor organization, the World Jewish Congress, had yet to come into existence. Chaos in the international Jewish political world and the grave situation of European Jewry therefore posed an acute test to Janowsky's political ideas. However, his European sojourn only reinforced his conviction that autonomy in Eastern Europe and sovereignty in Palestine should go hand in hand.

Traveling armed with an array of academic, press, and U.S. diplomatic credentials, Janowsky traversed much of the continent, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Greece. The results were issued in rapid succession: *International Aspects of German Racial Policies* (1937), co-written with his erstwhile critic, Melvin Fagen, a sober study of the legal and political status of minorities under Nazi persecution, and *People at Bay: The Jewish Problem in East-Central Europe* (1938), an unflinching country-by-country account of Jewish suffering under fascism, right-wing nationalism, and anti-Semitism.³² As these books make plain, Janowsky harbored few illusions about the enormous dangers confronting European Jews and the fundamental obstacles to Jewish physical survival, let alone national political life, even before the war began. Still, he declined to endorse the conventional Zionist view of emigration as the obvious solution to the crisis. In the conclusion to *People at Bay*, he

29. On the background of the American Jewish Committee's activities in the mid-1930s on behalf of European Jewry and dealings with James McDonald, see Naomi W. Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection: The American Jewish Committee and the Joint Foreign Committee in Defense of German Jews, 1933–1937," *American Jewish History* 90, no. 4 (2002): 353–84.

30. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 347.1.29, Box 44, Folder 10, Correspondence between Morris Waldman and James Rosenberg, 1 Feb–3 June 1935.

31. Janowsky, *Autobiography*, 327–55.

32. Oscar Janowsky and Melvin Fagen, *International Aspects of German Racial Policies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937); and Oscar Janowsky, *People at Bay: The Jewish Problem in East-Central Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938).

wrote, "Palestine alone cannot solve the Jewish problem of East-Central Europe." While a Jewish "national homeland" was certainly a positive desideratum, it represented only one of a number of "palliatives and partial solutions." These included the economic reconstruction of European Jewish life, large-scale emigration to the West, and a "United Jewish Representation" to represent the Jews of Europe in the same way the Jewish Agency operated on behalf of those in Palestine.³³

The events of World War II did little to weaken Janowsky's firm adherence to a dual vision of Jewish national autonomy in Eastern Europe and national statehood in Palestine. In a 1943 article on "Jewish Rights in the Postwar World," he offered a simple prescription: "In multi-national states, principally those of Eastern Europe, the Jews would constitute a minority nationality with political as well as cultural implications. And in Palestine, the Jews should be a territorial nation."³⁴ However, the dichotomy between these two entities would not necessarily be symmetrical, since a "Jewish Homeland implies—definitely demands—a status for the Palestinian Jews radically different from that obtaining in any other country. . . . Palestine alone offers the promise of a full and unhindered development of Jewish life. Everywhere else the Jews can only constitute a minority; at best their institutions can only be supplementary to the all-embracing culture of the country."³⁵ In Palestine, Jewish national life would thrive to its fullest extent. So too would Jewish territorial sovereignty remove "the veil of anonymity from the Jewish people," assuring dignity of status, national equality, and "standing in the world community."³⁶

The hierarchy between statehood in Palestine and nonterritorial autonomy in Eastern Europe points to a deeper tension in Janowsky's model. On the one hand, in his wartime writings he frequently depicted an independent Jewish state as the ultimate prize in international politics. His privileging of Jewish sovereignty reflected classical Zionist tenets regarding the superiority of statist, territorial nationalism over any other kind of Diasporic Jewish political arrangement. On the other hand, he criticized those Zionists who focused exclusively on Palestine as the sole location for Jewish national life. For both practical and ideological reasons, he concluded in a 1943 essay, "Zionism does not presume to have found the complete solution of the Jewish problem."³⁷ Moreover, he argued elsewhere that, in order to secure peace in regions of multiple nationalities, conventional sovereignty should be replaced with a new model of "cultural pluralism." The conflict between these two positions naturally comes to a head in Janowsky's treatment of Palestinian Arab nationalism.

33. Janowsky, *People at Bay*, 161, 183–87.

34. Oscar Janowsky, "Jewish Rights in the Postwar World," *Survey Graphic* 32, no. 9 (September 1943): 365. See also Oscar Janowsky, "The Question of Loyalty," *Jewish Frontier* 16 (June 1949): 5–6.

35. Janowsky, "Zionism Today," 255–56.

36. Janowsky, "Jewish Rights," 365.

37. Janowsky, "Zionism Today," 257.

In the early 1940s, left-wing Zionists such as Judah Magnes and Martin Buber campaigned vigorously for the creation of a binational Jewish–Arab state in Palestine. Many argued that a shared framework of national federalism provided the only solution to the equally just national claims of Arabs and Jews. Faced with the specter of binationalism in Palestine, Janowsky concluded that it represented utopian fantasy incompatible with both the moral claims and political necessities of Zionism. Instead, he suggested, Zionists should pursue “a bi-national regime in which the Jewish majority forms a Jewish State, but the Arab minority continues to function as a nationality [with] not only civil and political equality but also recognition as a national community worthy of official sanction of its language, its religious and educational institutions, and its customs and ways of life.” The “bi-national” character of this state should not translate into political parity between the two nations:

Thus the issue is not bi-nationalism versus the Jewish state. The issue is a Jewish state with a bi-nationalist constitution versus a Jewish-Arab state. . . . In the final solution—the determination of the political form of Palestine after the transition period—minority status for the Jews of Palestine must be ruled out as inconsistent with the conception of a Jewish National Homeland.³⁸

Diaspora Nationalism thus offered a solution to Zionism’s Arab dilemma. If autonomy can satisfy Jewish national demands as a minority population in the multinational states of Eastern Europe, where Polish, Romanian, and other forms of conservative nationalism are unlikely to vanish, it can surely rise to the task for the Arabs of Palestine. The Jews of Eastern Europe will therefore benefit from the international prestige and political clout of Zionist sovereignty; at the same time, their own national minority experience will help make the case that an Arab minority can thrive in a majority-Jewish nation-state.

III. FROM MINORITY RIGHTS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

As word of the Holocaust spread in American society over the course of World War II, many Jewish political thinkers abandoned the idea of minority rights, dismissing them as an utter political failure. Janowsky, however, took the opposite stance. Rather than merely champion national-cultural autonomy for postwar East European Jews, he now argued more broadly that the Jewish case was the exception that would create the new rule in international relations. “In our own day of intense and almost universal national consciousness,” he explained in a 1942 volume entitled *Strategy for Democracy*, “[we] must recognize that in regions of mixed nationality, liberty and equality can be realized only by the extension of religious pluralism into cultural pluralism.”³⁹ The ideal model for political

38. *Ibid.*, 250–51, 255.

39. Oscar Janowsky, “Towards a Solution of the Minorities Problem,” in *Strategy for Democracy*, ed. J. Donald Kingsley and David W. Petegorsky (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1942), 117.

reconstruction of postwar Eastern Europe is a multinational state in which “each minority [is recognized] as a legal entity with power to tax its membership and direct its cultural institutions” in a framework of decentralized “national federalism.”⁴⁰ Rather than abandon the principle of minority rights, world leaders should embrace them even further. Under the interwar Minorities Treaties system, Janowsky noted, national minorities within given countries technically did not possess affirmative national rights as a group, but only as individuals. Hence the Jews could not petition the League of Nations directly for redress of violations of their collective rights. These two problems could be resolved, Janowsky believed, through instituting the principle of “cultural pluralism” as a constitutional apparatus within individual states together with a new kind of League of Nations, featuring an international “tribunal representing the various national units and the minorities” of the world to which any “aggrieved minority” might turn for redress.⁴¹

Janowsky’s optimistic view of national-cultural autonomy as both a Jewish and general postwar political solution stemmed from his wartime involvement in the newly reenergized liberal internationalist circles that had sprung up among American intellectuals and academics, particularly in New York City.⁴² During the war, organizations such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace (CSOP) proposed a renewed multilateralism in American foreign policy. They promoted the idea of a new international political organization with global legal authority to ensure world peace, collective security, and international protection of minorities.⁴³ Janowsky began his association with the CSOP early in 1940 and continued to participate in working groups, policy planning conferences, and publication projects throughout the war.⁴⁴ In the spring of 1945, the CSOP published Janowsky’s major foreign policy study, *Nationalities and National Minorities (with Special Reference to East-Central Europe)*, with a foreword contributed by its leader, James Shotwell.⁴⁵

In *Nationalities and National Minorities*, Janowsky argued that the era of the sovereign national state had ended in Eastern Europe. It would be replaced, he posited, by a system of multiethnic states in which minorities peacefully

40. *Ibid.*, 114.

41. *Ibid.*, 110.

42. See, for example, his essay, “Ethnic and Cultural Minorities,” in *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*, ed. R. M. MacIver (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 157–70, and Janowsky, “Towards a Solution.”

43. Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Harold Josephson, *James Shotwell and the Rise of Internationalism in America* (Cranbery, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1975), 237–47; Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America during World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

44. American Jewish Historical Society, P-874 (Papers of Oscar Janowsky), Series 1, Sub-series 2, Box 15, Folder 4 (Correspondence with James Shotwell, 1940–1960).

45. Oscar Janowsky, *Nationalities and National Minorities (with Special Reference to East-Central Europe)* (New York: Macmillan, 1945).

coexist in an arrangement of true national-cultural autonomy. As proof of viability of this new model of multiethnic states, he pointed specifically to Switzerland, the Soviet Union, and South Africa (though he conceded the obvious weaknesses of the latter two).⁴⁶ Undeterred by his awareness of the war's genocidal impact on Jewish life, Janowsky still predicted a significant Jewish place in the postwar political order:

Many Jews will undoubtedly remain in east-central Europe. Though reduced in numbers and impoverished, they should be assured not special privileges, but a status of equality with other nationality groups. If the end of the war finds some settled in compact masses on a definite territory, they should enjoy national and territorial autonomy like other similar peoples. If they survive only as small and scattered communities, national-cultural autonomy should place them on an equal footing with other minorities. In either case, they should be an integral part of the structure of the state.⁴⁷

In writing these words in the spring of 1945, Janowsky was not alone among American Jews in advocating a renewal of Jewish life in Eastern Europe with some form of group rights. Most American Zionists continued to assert that, in theory, Jews should retain at least the same cultural and linguistic rights they had under the Minorities Treaties after the war.⁴⁸ Organizations such as the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Labor Committee advocated a more affirmative platform of national minority rights. Janowsky took a similarly maximalist line in his policy-planning work with the CSOP. In particular he focused on the new United Nations human rights program as the vehicle through which to finally secure Jewish autonomy in Eastern Europe.

Over the course of 1943 and 1944, Janowsky co-authored the CSOP's report, "International Safeguard of Human Rights" and lobbied the State Department on the organization's behalf.⁴⁹ As a result, he initially placed high hopes in

46. For important contemporary reactions, see Hannah Arendt, "Janowsky, Oscar I., Nationalities and National Minorities" [Book Review], *Jewish Social Studies* 8 (1946): 204; Hans Kohn, "National Federalism," *New York Times*, June 2, 1946, BR6; and Inis Claude, *National Minorities. An International Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 63–64. Strangely, Janowsky here ignored what he himself already knew of the fate of Soviet Jewry, that there had been no "adequate solution of the Jewish problem . . . [and thus] the Jews of the Soviet Union are fast disappearing as a national or cultural community." Oscar Janowsky, "Jewish Fate in Russia," *The Menorah Journal* 30, no. 1 (January–March 1942): 100. After 1945 he never again invoked the USSR as a successful political model.

47. Janowsky, *Nationalities*, 151.

48. Abraham Duker, "Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Post-War Problems," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (September 1942): 61; American Jewish Conference, *Program for Postwar Jewish Reconstruction* (New York: American Jewish Conference, 1945): 4–6.

49. National Archives and Records Administration, RG59, Harley Notter Files, Box 1463, Folder 10–1644—10–1944, "SPA Memorandum, Oct. 17, 1944"; Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, *Fourth Report. International Safeguard of Human Rights* (New York: Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, 1944), repr. in *Building Peace; Reports of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, 1939–1972* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1973), I:163–84.

the United Nations as an expanded and improved version of the League of Nations. He was, therefore, bitterly disappointed to witness the express shift away from minority rights to human rights in the 1945 United Nations Charter.⁵⁰ To his thinking, the political change severely undermined chances for rethinking the nation-state and nationalism in a way that was vital to global Jewish interests and world peace as a whole. Even more galling, the new framework of human rights discarded an affirmative right to national-cultural autonomy. Its replacement, a universal yet nonbinding system offering protection of individuals from discrimination, ignored the sociopolitical realities of Eastern Europe. It also severely challenged his vision of East European Autonomism as a vehicle for American Jewish nationalism.

“Today, ‘minority rights’ are as passé as the boyish bob,” lamented Janowsky in a 1946 article. Rather than a victory for international democracy, the new UN Charter represents a “catastrophic retreat” and “retrogression in the struggle for human rights.” “‘Minority rights’ were not an alternative to ‘human rights’ but their fulfillment,” Janowsky argued, “the culmination of at least a century of repeated international efforts to protect human rights.”⁵¹ Strikingly, the party he identified as most responsible for this political debacle was neither the CSOP nor the U.S. State Department, but the American Jewish Committee. The group had hailed the new human rights vision as “the best protection for Jews is the security of all human beings and the enforcement of their fundamental rights [as individuals].”⁵² Janowsky mocked this claim as utopian and “assimilationist.”⁵³ Though evidently aware of the larger political forces at work in the shift from minority rights to human rights, he still insisted on interpreting 1945 as an ironic repetition of the drama of Paris in 1919. Both at the Paris Peace Conference and at the San Francisco United Nations Conference twenty-five years later, he wrote, American Jewish “assimilationists” successfully undermined the cause of Jewish minority nationalism.⁵⁴

Janowsky’s impulse to blame American Jews for the decline of national-cultural autonomy in international relations exposed the dilemma at the root of

50. This historical shift from the League of Nations’ Minorities Treaties to the UN global human rights regime has recently received a growing amount of attention. See, for example, Mark Mazower, “The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933–1950,” *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 2 (2004): 379–98; Eric Weitz, “From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions,” *American Historical Review* 113 (December 2008): 1313–43; and Susan Pederson, “Back to the League of Nations,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007): 1091–1117.

51. Oscar Janowsky, “The Human Rights Issue at the San Francisco Conference. Was It a Victory?,” *Menorah Journal* 34, no. 1 (April–June 1946): 29, 49, and 51.

52. American Jewish Committee, *To the Counselors of Peace* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1945): 22.

53. Janowsky, “The Human Rights Issue,” 54.

54. Janowsky went on to work for decades on a never-completed study of the history of human rights, in which he offered a more nuanced view of the reasons for the decline of minority rights and rise of human rights. American Jewish Historical Society, P-874 (Oscar Janowsky Papers), Box 26, Folders 7–8, “The Mirage of an International Bill of Human Rights.”

his entire model of global Jewish nationhood: the question of Jewish identity in America. As his charged critique of the American Jewish Committee suggested, the quest for Jewish minority rights in Eastern Europe was not simply a valuable political end in and of itself. Rather, it served in his mind as the means of defining a Jewish national consciousness in the otherwise liberal context of American society. Yet all of the ire he directed at the American Jewish Committee's antinationalism belied his own reluctance to embrace a more direct language of nationalism with reference to American Jews. In fact, Janowsky's own conflicted attitude toward American Jewish collective identity eroded much of the force of his own political argument. Janowsky's writings about American Jewish identity offer a revealing coda to his lost battle for Diaspora Nationalism, for they highlight the underlying thread of American Jewish exceptionalism that runs throughout his work.

IV. *THE AMERICAN JEW*: FROM "NATIONALITY" TO "COMMUNITY"

The question of American Jewish identity first appeared explicitly in Janowsky's 1940 article, "The Status of Minorities in a Democracy," published in *The Reconstructionist*. There he contrasted the Jewish situation in the United States with that of Eastern Europe, explaining that American Jews need not seek national-cultural autonomy: "In our broad American democracy there is room and to spare for Jewish group life. But we must realize that, unlike Eastern Europe, American minority groups will cultivate their historical traditions as a secondary or supplementary culture, maintained and furthered on a voluntary non-political basis."⁵⁵ On the surface, Janowsky's language suggested that American Jews should abandon any national self-definition—let alone political aspirations—given the dictates of American democracy. This placed him, ironically, in the same camp as his antinationalist foes. Yet even as he conceded the inadequacy of traditional "national" and "political" labels for American Jewish collective identity, he still sought to preserve a model of tangible Jewish nationhood compatible with political liberalism. In his 1942 anthology *The American Jew*, a collection of scholarly essays edited by Janowsky, he tackled the question of nomenclature directly. Writing in the book's conclusion, he cautioned that it was incorrect to refer to American Jews as a "national" group. Rather, they were better termed a "spiritual-cultural group," for whom Jewish group life was entirely voluntary and secondary to their fundamental Americanness.⁵⁶ However, in the

55. See also Oscar Janowsky, "The Status of Minorities in a Democracy," *The Reconstructionist* 6, no. 7 (May 10, 1940): 11.

56. Oscar Janowsky, "Conclusion," in *The American Jew: A Composite Portrait*, ed. O. Janowsky (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 253. For a parallel shift in vocabulary by Janowsky's friend and mentor Mordecai Kaplan, see Noam Pianko, "Reconstructing Judaism, Reconstructing America: The Sources and Functions of Mordecai Kaplan's 'Civilization,'" *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006): 50.

same essay he still tried to retain a “national” notion of Jewish peoplehood by parsing the semantic difference between *nation* and *nationality*:

[T]he unity of Jewish people requires a word of explanation as to what is the relationship between American Jewry and the Jews of other countries. There has been much confusion in the use of the words “nation,” “nationality” and “community.” The term “nation” signifies a political state. Obviously, the fifteen or sixteen million Jews of the world do not constitute a state. The political allegiance of every Jew is to the country of his citizenship. . . . The word “nationality” is the English equivalent of the French *nationalité* and the German *nationalitaet*, which connote, not political allegiance, but spiritual and cultural affinity. . . . Since the term “nationality” has not gained wide currency in the United States, the word “people” might perhaps better characterize this conception. The Scotch and Welsh are nationalities or peoples within the British nation. Their political allegiance is indivisible, but they are conscious of specialized cultural loyalties. Likewise, the American Jews, whose political loyalty is exclusively to the United States, recognize a religious and cultural relationship with Jews in other parts of the world. . . . There is, then, a Jewish nationality, or a Jewish people.⁵⁷

Despite his attempt at clarifying the semantics of *nation* and *nationality*, Janowsky was incorrect in claiming that *nationality* or its French or German calques were devoid of political significance. So, too, did his postulation that *nation* only meant *state* fly in the face of his own earlier arguments about the nature of East European society and Jews therein. Instead, his semantic contortions reflected his wishful thinking regarding the struggle to define Jewish nationalism in the American context. Invoking a “Jewish nationality” was his attempt at reaffirming Jewish nationhood while also theorizing out of existence any possible tension between Jewish nationalism and American liberalism.⁵⁸

Envisioning Jewishness in America as a purely voluntary, substate affair, more akin to a historic, affective bond, than a formal, state-level political status, Janowsky faced the perennial modern challenge of maintaining an otherwise unbounded Jewish identity in an open, liberal society.⁵⁹ The dilemma became even more acute after 1948, when the ideological debates about Zionism in the American Jewish world rapidly subsided. As the reality of the State of Israel, the Cold War, and internal racial tensions in the United States all materialized, American Jews shifted decisively toward a model of ethnic solidarity and communal philanthropy rather than overt political nationalism. Even the American Jewish Committee, Janowsky’s favorite opponent, abruptly made peace with Zionism. In

57. Janowsky, “Conclusion,” 254.

58. Janowsky’s attempt at distinguishing between “nation” and “nationality” evidently derived from his contemporary rereading of Brandeis’s own explanation. In 1940, Janowsky wrote the introduction to a reissue of Brandeis’s 1915 pamphlet. See Oscar Janowsky, “Introduction,” in Louis Brandeis, *The Jewish Problem and How to Solve It*, ed. O. Janowsky (New York: Hadassah, Women’s Zionist Organization of America, 1940), 1–4.

59. Janowsky, *Nationalities*, 150.

the face of this transformation, Janowsky focused the brunt of his public activity on combating the evils of “assimilation” in American Jewish life. In the late 1940s and 1950s, he led two massive national survey projects—the Jewish Welfare Board Survey, a three-year sociological study (1945–1947) of Jewish communal life, and the Commission for the Study of Jewish Education in the United States (1952–1957).⁶⁰ In each case, he jostled publicly with those leaders whom he termed “assimilationists.” He reserved his greatest scorn for his scholarly opponents, criticizing sociologists Louis Wirth and Arnold Rose and historian Oscar Handlin as openly hostile to the value of Jewish peoplehood.⁶¹

Looking back decades later, Janowsky claimed victory in the postwar fight with “assimilationists” who sought to undermine the Jewish people. After the struggles over Zionism and Diaspora Nationalism, American Jewish identity represented the last frontier in need of defense from the errant proponents of liberal universalism. However, his postwar communal activities on behalf of education and communal relations were a far cry from the vigorous, globally engaged political nationalism he espoused during the 1930s and 1940s. Language was again a key factor in this change.⁶² Even as he fiercely argued in the 1950s against other scholars who claimed American Jews were not a “minority group,” he conceded that “American Jews do not constitute a minority in the East European sense of the term” and that the term *national* did not quite apply to their identity.⁶³ By 1964, in the sequel volume to *The American Jew*, he had even abandoned the term *nationality* when referring to American Jews. Reluctantly, he instead opted for the muted term *community* to describe American Jews as a group. Despite the fact that they possess “neither a representative spokesman nor a central address,” he wrote, the term *community* indicated that “the great majority [of Jews] have a sense of belonging together, with common interests which are served by special organizations and institutions.”⁶⁴

Addressing the fate of interwar Diaspora Nationalism, Hannah Arendt wrote in 1940 that the only way to turn Jewish “minority rights” in Europe into a viable

60. Oscar Janowsky, “A Nationwide Study of Jewish Education,” *Religious Education* 50 (1955): 32–37.

61. Oscar Janowsky, “A Confrontation with Assimilationists: Concept of a Non-Sectarian Jewish Communal Institution (A Memoir),” in Korn, *Bicentennial Festschrift*, 191–218; Janowsky, “Landmark,” 13.

62. On the power of language to define Jewish social identity in mid-century American society, see Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 189–208; and David Biale, “The Melting Pot and Beyond: Jews and the Politics of American Identity,” in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. D. Biale, M. Galchinsky, and S. Heschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 17–33.

63. Oscar Janowsky, “A Confrontation with Assimilationists: An Oblique Attack on the JWB Survey,” in Janowsky, *Autobiography*, 33 [new pagination].

64. Oscar Janowsky, “Conclusion: Image of the American Jewish Community,” in *The American Jew. A Reappraisal*, ed. O. Janowsky (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 387–88.

political option would have been to link them explicitly to the Zionist project in Palestine: “What might have been said was: We, who have been granted the right to a national homeland in Palestine demand the rights of a national minority in all the other countries of the world . . . a people can be a minority somewhere only if they are a majority somewhere else.”⁶⁵ Arendt’s imagined argument on behalf of Jewish nationalism nicely sums up Janowsky’s actual credo. He sought to link Eastern Europe and Palestine in a vision of Jewish nationhood that blended national autonomy with national sovereignty. Neither precluded the other. In fact, the claims to nationhood in each political context reinforced one another in a complementary fashion. But the emphasis on political nationhood, legally recognized, in Europe and Palestine only exacerbated the tension when it came to the United States. For Janowsky was unwilling to assign American Jews a national political identity of their own.

In the end, Janowsky’s brand of American Jewish nationalism lived and died by its American Jewish exceptionalism. Much as he aggressively spoke the language of Jewish nationhood in the American context in the 1930s and 1940s, he carefully emphasized that neither minority rights nor territorial sovereignty applied to American Jewry. Indeed, together with his fellow American Jewish nationalists and rival antinationalists, he shared the belief that Jews as a group should remain invisible to the American state. He steadfastly resisted any concept of American Jews as a distinct juridical or political category. The very expansiveness of his nuanced Jewish nationalism, coupled with a firm embrace of liberalism, made it difficult to articulate what Jewish nationhood actually meant in the American context. If Jews formed one global nation, why did only those in Eastern Europe and Palestine require state-level national recognition? And if the sole purpose of American Jewish nationalism was to secure Jewish autonomy in Eastern Europe and sovereignty in Palestine, what need was there for such a political ideology after Zionism’s postwar triumph and Diaspora Nationalism’s precipitous decline?⁶⁶

Ultimately, Oscar Janowsky’s American vision of Diaspora Nationalism represented an attempt to bridge the classic divide between nationalism and liberalism in modern Jewish political thought. His goal was not to challenge the Zionist vision of Jewish nationalism as a project of territorial sovereignty but to complement it with a Diasporic strain of national-cultural autonomy. In doing so, he sought to forge a middle space between the extremes of Jewish political life in Palestine and the United States. By expanding the notion of Jewish nationalism to include Eastern Europe as a secondary national homeland alongside Palestine,

65. Hannah Arendt, “The Minority Question (Copied from a letter to Erich Cohn-Bendit, summer 1940),” in H. Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007): 126–29.

66. Writing at the same time, an otherwise sympathetic colleague of Janowsky explained this dilemma in these terms: “There is no such thing as separate nationalisms reserved for the Polish, the Rumanian, the Russian Jews from which the American Jews can claim exemption. Either there is one Jewish people or there is none.” Joseph Tenenbaum, *Peace for the Jews* (New York: American Federation for Polish Jews, 1945), 16.

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Janowsky also aimed to spur American Jewish identification as part of a global nation without jeopardizing political integration into American society. What he found instead was a now-familiar paradox: mid-twentieth-century American Jews recoiled from the language of nationalism even as they enthusiastically supported nationalist political aspirations abroad. Zionism appealed to them precisely because it concentrated Jewish national politics within the territory of the sovereign Jewish state. Any attempt to blur the ideological lines between nationalism and liberalism or separate the nation from the state in the manner of Diaspora Nationalism threatened this neat ideological dichotomy. Even as American Jews continued to focus on the Jews of Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, they advocated not minority rights but national repatriation to the Jewish homeland. Political life could no longer take place outside the confines of American liberalism or Jewish territorial nationalism. As the United States and Israel emerged as the two poles in the American Jewish political imagination, the former space between them, both geographic and metaphorical, vanished.

James Loeffler
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia