

**On 18 September 1941 State Secretary Hubert Ripka of the Czechoslovak government
in exile in London sides with the Jews in the Protectorate¹**

B.B.C. – Czechoslovaks News Talk

Thursday 18th September, 1941 9:45 p.m. By Dr. Hubert Ripka,² Under secretary for Foreign Affairs.

So Hitler has forced the Jews in our country, too, always to appear in public with a special distinguish[ing] mark by which they should be easily distinguished from the others. Thus it is to be made easier for the Nazi mob and the rabble of the Vlájka³ and of Tuka and Mach⁴ to hurl themselves on the wretched defenceless Jews whenever they wish. It was not sufficient for these barbarians to rob and plunder the Jews, cruelly to persecute them and sadistically to torture them; no, over and above this they now expose them by publicly distinguishing them from the others to daily insults and brutal caprice.

It will remain the terrible shame of the German nation that it has allowed itself to be misled by the monstrous racial doctrine and that such a vast party has fallen victim to bestial anti-Semitism. In this, of course, there also lies the most visible expression of their feeling of inferiority; for only he who is not sure of himself, has not sufficient self-confidence in himself, needs to raise himself in his own eyes and those of others above everyone else. German anti-Semitism, which Hitler has exploited to whip up the basest and often diseased and perverted instincts, is an expression of the typical disintegration and endeavours to overcome these not only [by] boastfulness, but also by brute force against others. Incidentally, what is a disgusting shame for the Germans in all this, a shame for which they will bitterly atone, is an honour for the persecuted Jews: for why should the Nazis torture, exile, rob and kill the Jews if they were not afraid of their intelligence, cleverness and talent?

If the Jewish distinguishing mark is now also being introduced into our lands⁵ we wish to tell you, Czech and Slovak friends, that we believe you will do nothing for which you have to be ashamed one day. We are convinced that you do not forget your honourable privilege in belonging to the nation of Masaryk, who educated all of us to be revolted by debasing anti-Semitism and who also in this way contributed to making our nation a spiritually advanced and self-confident nation, whose members of [the] Jewish race

1 CZA, C2/96 – 15.9.1941. The document is a transcript of a radio broadcast. The original document is in English.

2 Dr Hubert Ripka (1895–1958), journalist and politician; editor of the Czechoslovak Legion newspaper *Národní osvobození*, 1925–1930; editor of the newspaper *Lidové noviny*, 1930–1938; emigrated to Britain in 1940; state secretary for foreign affairs in the Czechoslovak government in exile in London, 1940–1945; returned to Prague in 1945; minister for foreign trade until 1948, then emigrated to Britain again.

3 See Docs. 254 and 284.

4 Vojtěch Tuka (1880–1946); prime minister of the Slovak Republic, 1939–1944, and its foreign minister from 1940; sentenced to death and executed in Czechoslovakia in 1946. Aleksander (Šaňo) Mach (1902–1980), interior minister and deputy prime minister of the Slovak Republic, 1940–1945.

5 A decree issued on 1 Sept. 1941 had made it mandatory for Jews in the Reich and the Protectorate to wear visible identification in the form of a yellow star. See Doc. 212.

are able or unable to be excellent patriots and decent people, just as its members of different racial origin are also able or unable to be so.

We here abroad are well informed about everything that is happening at home. Therefore, we also know well how everyone has behaved and is behaving towards the Jews. It fills us with justified pride when we can announce to the civilised world that our people behaves towards the persecuted Jews with Christian sympathy and profoundly human understanding for their cruel hardships. And we are happy that the German anti-Semites are joined only by a handful of rascals, who speak Czech and Slovak but have sold their souls to their slave-drivers.

Czechoslovak Jews, we think of you with sincere sympathy in these days. We know of your sufferings, and we carefully assemble all the data about the way in which you are persecuted and the people who persecute you. We know that they are driving you out of the towns, that they are restoring the ghetto, that they imprison you in concentration camps and torture you there to death; we know what happens in the so-called labour camps at Nemecký Brod, Terezín near Choclen,⁶ and elsewhere where even the older and invalid Jews are driven and where they must work eleven hours a day under the most shameful food and lodging conditions; we know what fell work is being wrought by the criminal Mach, how he is driving Jews from Pressburg and the other towns, even the small ones, how he steals their property and drives them like beasts into huts where they will suffer from cold, filth and hunger.⁷ We know everything, even the details. We cannot help you for the present. But we tell the world about your sufferings, and we assure you that they will not be forgotten.

To-day they wish to designate you publicly by a mark of shame. But the yellow star of David is a sign of honour which all decent people will respect. I recall the words of the profoundly faithful Catholic of Jewish origin, the writer Alfred Fuchs,⁸ whom the Nazis tortured to death. For his Catholic zeal he received a Papal distinction. He then said: If the Germans introduce a Jewish badge in our country, I shall wear it with demonstrative pride beside my Papal distinction.⁹ Jewish friends, strengthen your minds in faith in the victory of justice. To-day it is already certain, and it is no longer in the invisible future. You will live to see the day of liberation and just retribution.

⁶ The mention of Nemecký Brod is probably a reference to the retraining centre in nearby Linden. The Jewish community was required to send a certain number of men there. The reference to Theresienstadt (Terezín) is evidently a mistake, since at the time in question there was no camp or ghetto. There were, however, rumours that a ghetto might be built.

⁷ From 1940, numerous anti-Jewish laws were enacted in Slovakia under Vojtěch Tuka and Šaňo Mach. The culmination of these policies was the 'Jew Code', enacted on 9 Sept. 1941, which was closely modelled on the Nuremberg Laws.

⁸ Dr Alfred Fuchs (1892–1941), poet, journalist, translator and literary critic; editor of the *Prager Abendblatt*; senior director of the press department at the headquarters of the Czech government's ministerial council; wrote on religious matters, in particular Judaism and Catholicism; was murdered in Dachau concentration camp.

⁹ This could not be verified.