

Forgotten?: The Jews of Vsetín and the Historical Memory of the Holocaust

Petra Dřevojánková

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl prozkoumat motivy, které vedly obyvatele Vsetínska k spoluúčasti na vraždě téměř celé místní židovské komunity během holokaustu, a vysvětluje skutečnosti, které přispěly k tomu, že historická paměť místních obyvatel týkající se jak Židů, tak vědomí spoluúčasti na zániku této menšiny, upadla v zapomnění. Zkoumáním vývoje antisemitismu, který negativně ovlivnil společenské postavení Židů na Valašsku, dokazuje důležitost této menšiny v historickém, sociálním, ekonomickém a politickém kontextu. Výsledky této studie ukazují, že fenomén holokaustu byl odstraněn ze všeobecného povědomí do té míry, že většina současných obyvatel nejen že netuší, jak významnou úlohu Židé v regionu Vsetínska měli, ale především, že se místní obyvatelstvo úmyslně podílelo na vraždě více než čtyř set příslušníků této komunity.

Klíčová slova: Židé, židovská komunita, holokaust, antisemitismus, Vsetínsko, Valašsko, historická paměť, menšina, nacismus

ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to examine the motives, that led the residents of the Vsetín Region into complicity in the murder of almost the entire local Jewish community during the Holocaust, and to explain how the historical memory of Vsetín's Jewry and the culpability of the local non-Jewish inhabitants sank into oblivion. Despite nearly constant anti-Semitism that negatively affected the societal status of the Jews in Wallachia, this work proves the importance and vitality of this community in historical, social, economic and political contexts. The research indicates that the Holocaust was deliberately eliminated from the general awareness to the point that most of the modern-day inhabitants of Vsetín are not aware either of the significance of the Jews in the Vsetín Region or of the complicity of locals in the demise of more than 400 members of the local Jewish community.

Keywords: Jews, Jewish community, Holocaust, anti-Semitism, Vsetín Region, Wallachia, historical memory, minority, Nazism

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INTRODUCTION

“I realized that you cannot escape your past, even when you want to bury it and you want to forget it...” Ilse Reiner, 2007¹

Ilse Reiner is a Holocaust survivor who experienced the era of oppression, persecution and premeditated extermination performed by the Nazi regime in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, now the Czech Republic. At the age of eleven, after having lost her parents at the hands of the Nazis, she was transferred to an orphanage in Prague. From there she was soon sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp, which she was one of only one hundred out of fifteen thousand children to survive.² Later, she witnessed and survived the atrocities of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland and the labor camp in Kurzbach, Germany. Only a few days before the liberation of the protectorate she escaped from the death march heading for Gross Rosen, Poland. After the war's end she returned to her Moravian hometown of Vsetín where she found temporary shelter with family friends. In 1946, sixteen-year-old Reiner emigrated to the USA³. She has since dedicated her life to sharing the story of her experiences. As she explains in the epilogue of her published childhood diary, “We tell our stories and paint images with our words for those who care to know more about our plight and historic accuracy.”⁴

Part of the historic accuracy Reiner attempts to get across through her story is that the Shoah⁵ in the Czech lands, although often perceived as a uniquely Jewish matter, has deep roots involving not just the Jewish community but ethnic Czechs and Germans as well.⁶ The complicity of the locals in the murder of the Jewish community of the Vsetín Region is undeniable. The natural human ability to forget should not serve as an apology, for the victims were once somebody's neighbors, friends or foes. A fairly small community of approximately three hundred, comprising roughly one-third of the total Jewish population

¹ Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner, Brian Wray (Atlanta, Georgia Public Broadcasting, 2007), DVD, 1:20:13.

² Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner, 0:52.

³ Ilse Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2006), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵ The Hebrew expression for the Holocaust.

⁶ Česká televize, “Odchody a návraty židů,” Videoarchiv Historie.cs Adobe Flash Player video file, 8:55, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10150778447-historie-cs/211452801400035-odchody-a-navraty-zidu/video/> (accessed January 2, 2012).

of Moravian Wallachia⁷ and just 3 percent of Vsetín's population at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jews still influenced and shaped the modern history of Reiner's hometown of Vsetín.⁸ Despite the fact that their impact on the local community was sizeable, they hardly ever met with understanding, positive feelings or popularity. Instead, the non-Jewish residents of Vsetín allowed the prosperous Jewish minority in their midst to perish. Furthermore, supported by the anti-Semitism that permeated the communist era, most of the Vsetín residents willingly cut all connections with the past, allowing the Judaic heritage of the region to sink into oblivion, taking with it the memory of the Holocaust as well as the memory of their culpability in it. As a result, most modern-day residents of Vsetín live under the assumption that the Holocaust happened elsewhere but not in the Vsetín Region. This thesis proves this widely held opinion to be false. The Holocaust did indeed occur in Vsetín, with deadly consequences. Ilse Reiner, a victim of the Holocaust in Vsetín, has not been able to escape her past. Vsetín should not be allowed to do so either.

⁷ In Czech, *Valašsko*; one of the eastern-most regions of the Czech Republic bordering Slovakia, comprising the regions of Vsetín, Valašské Meziříčí and Rožnov pod Radhoštěm.

⁸ See the results of 1900 census published in *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, April and May 1901.

1 THE RISE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE VSETÍN REGION

Vsetín, a cultural center of Moravian Wallachia, is located in the easternmost part of the Czech Republic, near the border with Slovakia (see appendix I, X). The mountainous character of the area helped to shape its cultural, economic, political and social attributes, making it distinct from the rest of the Czech lands. Even so, the majority of the residents of Vsetín shared at least one thing in common with other Czechs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: anti-Semitism.

Prejudice and xenophobic tendencies are often based in local folklore. A considerable level of conservatism and backwardness among the inhabitants of Vsetín was the result not only of its distance and relative isolation from Prague but of the indisputably strong position of the Catholic Church in the area. According to Vsetín historian Zdeněk Pomkla, the backwardness of the region until the twentieth century was comparable to the situation of the far eastern Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic.⁹ The biased inhabitants of the predominantly Catholic Wallachia inclined to anti-Semitic tendencies as soon as the first Jews settled in the region. As a result, the Jewish community never fully integrated into the local society. As historian Hillel J. Kieval puts it, “Jews were characterized as ruinous to the nation, poisoning it with their brandy, demoralizing it with their peddling, ruining it with their money exchanges, and pulling it down with their rejection of nationalism.”¹⁰ The factors that influenced the public opinion to the local Jewry covered a wide range of social issues including the difference of religion, the Jewish preference of the German language and culture, and a certain disposition towards commerce and economics.¹¹ However, to understand these tightly connected factors and how they led to anti-Semitism in the Vsetín Region requires some historical context.

⁹ Zdeněk Pomkla, interviewed by the author, Vsetín, October 12, 2011; The First Republic lasted from 1918 until the Munich Betrayal in 1938.

¹⁰ Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of Community. The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 129.

¹¹ Adam Hrdý, “Antisemitismus, aneb jak vyučovat o holocaustu” (master’s thesis, Tomáš Baťa University Zlín, 2009), 13.

1.1 The Position of the Jews in Medieval Bohemia and Moravia

1.1.1 The Jewish Tradesmen in a Christian-based Environment

Starting probably with the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 422 BCE, the Jewish community expanded beyond the borders of Palestine and spread all over the world in the Diaspora.¹² Although preserving some typical attributes, their natural character later adjusted to the character of the particular land in which they settled.¹³ Historian Hayim H. Ben-Sasson explains that due to conditions favorable for commerce the Jews quickly adapted to an “urban way of life” in Europe to the point that overtime “the rural life became strange and unfamiliar to them.”¹⁴ The first Jews coming to the Czech lands in the tenth century were already merchants and traders. As the barter economy gradually gave way to monetary commerce around the eleventh century, the potential and importance of money and finances increased. Even so, money was considered dirty, and dealing with it was left primarily to heathens. Thus, the Jews became the financial administrators and money lenders to both average citizens and the aristocracy.¹⁵

Historian Tomáš Pěkný notes that since the eleventh century the Jews in the historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia fell under the direct jurisdiction of the Czech king. They were charged high taxes in exchange for protection, thereby guaranteeing a regular source of income for the king.¹⁶ Moreover, the Jews served as a bottomless financial resource for expedient loans to cover the king’s expenses.¹⁷ However, representing a foreign element and enjoying certain privileges led them often to be demonized, accused of connection with evil powers, the death of Jesus, poisoning the Christians’ wells, spreading the plague, desecration of the host or partaking in blood rituals.¹⁸ The backwardness of the Christian realm during the Middle Ages, states Ben-Sasson, gave the Jews bleak future prospects. Nevertheless, the Jews encouraged the economic development of the feudal structure of

¹² A Greek term denoting a dispersal of the Jews from their homeland in Palestine.

¹³ Hayim H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 160.

¹⁴ Ben-Sasson, 394.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 398-399.

¹⁶ So called “judengeld”. Pavel Kocman, “Daňové zatížení moravských Židů v 16. a 17. století,” (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 5, 2008).

¹⁷ See Tomáš Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě* (Praha: Sefer, 2001).

¹⁸ Pěkný, 18, 248.

medieval society.¹⁹ Ben-Sasson also describes the precarious position of the Jews among the locals:

The attitudes of the rulers, who were concerned with public order and to whom the economic and social function of the Jews was important, certainly differed from those of the masses, who were animated by a simplistic Christian zealotry, as well as by local animosity towards small groups of successful and wealthy “infidel” merchants and financiers.²⁰

As a result of the long-term intolerance of Christians towards Judaism, the Jews remained in the eyes of locals “antagonists to the generally accepted faith of the world.”²¹ Despite the fact that Christianity is based on the grounds of Judaism and European society is thus characterized as Judeo-Christian in its origin, the Christian point of view was that the Jews should pay for the death of Jesus Christ and remain in the position of *Servitus Judeorum*, “the servitude of the Jews”, for eternity.²² The Jews found themselves at the bottom of society and their humiliating status of *servi camerae regiae*, “the servants of the royal chamber”, confirmed the power of Christianity during this period.

1.1.2 The Jewish Involvement in Finance and Money Commerce

The First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century directed against the enemies of Christianity aggravated the situation of the Jews. Facing brutal killings and pogroms,²³ the Jews were forced to be baptized and were punished for the death of Jesus by fanatic Crusaders. The introduction of anti-Jewish regulations by Pope Innocent II in the first half of the twelfth century further deteriorated their standing. The Jews living in the royal cities were forced to reside in ghettos, separate streets or quarters far removed from Christian residences, churches or cemeteries. To easily identify the Jews from the regular population, a special marking was made obligatory.²⁴ The leading authorities and officials considered any relationship either personal or commercial between the Jews and the Christians a crime. Since commercial activities were banned as a means of Jewish livelihood, consumer loans served as the only acceptable business field.²⁵ Furthermore, Christians were forbidden to deal with money by the Church, while the Jews were only prohibited from

¹⁹ Ben-Sasson, 398, 409.

²⁰ Ibid., 410.

²¹ Ibid., 412.

²² Pěkný, 249.

²³ A Russian term for violent attacks against a minority group.

²⁴ The form of the marking varied according to the region and period given. The most common was special clothing or a sign in a visible place on the upper clothing; a yellow circle or later the Star of David during the Nazi era. See Pěkný, 16.

²⁵ Ben-Sasson, 470.

making loans to other Jews.²⁶ The interest rates fluctuated from 30 to 90 percent. To repay such high-interest loans proved impossible for many debtors. Nevertheless, the nobility and the king profited from the usury business, for the interest was taxable. Financing and money lending were activities in which only a minority among the whole Jewish community engaged, mainly the wealthy. The rest of the community engaged in occupations within the walls of the ghettos including positions as cantors, teachers or craftsmen. However, notes Ben-Sasson, both usury and money-lending “has come to be regarded as the economic activity most characteristic of all Jews at that period.”²⁷

1.1.3 The Blood Libels

Statuta Iudaeorum, a document issued by King Ottokar II of Bohemia in 1254 set the grounds for the first Jewish legislation in the Czech lands. Based on a Papal Bull by Pope Innocent IV in 1247, Ottokar’s document outlawed aggression, forced baptism or any other acts of violence against the Jews including the blood libel accusations.²⁸ The blood libel originated in twelfth-century England. The Catholic Church opposed it from the very beginning. The rumor was that the blood of innocent Christian children was added into the matzo bread prepared during the Passover festival or drunk as a source of energy by pregnant Jewish women.²⁹ Against widespread slander, Ottokar proclaimed: “A Jew may be accused of washing in Christian blood or of drinking it only if the Christian accuser can produce three Christians and three Jews as proof.”³⁰ The libel phenomenon covers also the libel of desecration of the host. However it was the blood accusation that introduced terror into the already pitiful position of the Jews. As Ben-Sasson has noted, “By its very nature, this phenomenon constituted a vicious circle: each false charge added to the terrifying image of the Jew, and the worsening of that image lent greater credence to constantly renewed accusations.”³¹

²⁶ Ben-Sasson., 471.

²⁷ Ibid., 390, 398.

²⁸ Ctibor Rybár et al., *Jewish Prague: Notes on History and Culture - A Guidebook* (Praha: TV Spektrum, 1991), 11.

²⁹ Česká televize, “Nekupujte u židů cukr, kafe, mouku...” Videoarchiv Historie.cs Adobe Flash Player video file, 18:10, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10150778447-historie-cs/212452801400006-nekupujte-u-zidu-cukr-kafe-mouku/video/> (accessed February 9, 2012).

³⁰ Rybár, 11.

³¹ Ben-Sasson, 481.

1.1.4 The Difference in the Status of Moravian and Bohemian Jews

Moravia, a historical land of the Czech kingdom, acquired a certain level of autonomy under the control of the nobility. Although officially ruled by the Czech king, the system of Margraviate³² led to a slightly different development of Moravia in comparison with Bohemia prior to the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Thereby the position of the Jews in Moravia and Bohemia differed. While the Jewry in Bohemia and the royal cities was subordinate to the king, the Moravian Margraviate and the nobility represented a slight advantage for the Moravian Jews:

Moravian Jews lived by and large in small-to-medium-sized towns under the patronage of the nobility. They were able to preserve many of the features of urban culture and occupational life, but fell outside the preview of burgher control and competition, as the towns that they now inhabited were the private domains of magnate families.³³

During the fifteenth century Czech King Ladislaus the Posthumous inspired by John of Capistrano's anti-Jewish preaching drove the Jews out of the royal cities in Moravia in order to seize their property. However, the Jewry under control of the nobility was protected.³⁴ Vsetín historian Ladislav Baletka believes that some of the fugitives were the first Jewish settlers in Vsetín, but historical records are insufficient.³⁵

By the end of the fifteenth century, Christians were allowed involvement in money business, freeing the king from financial dependence on the Jews. Nevertheless, the Jewry still represented the lowest class and a riskless source of tax income for the Habsburg monarchs, who ruled the Czech lands since 1526 and who tolerated Jews only as *pestis rei publicae*, "a public plague", but *malum necessarium*, "a necessary evil".³⁶ Various legal amendments influenced the Jewish societal position during the following centuries. Rather than accurate definitions of Jewish rights, "these were documents delimiting the rights of the recipient within the specific area concerned."³⁷ Having become a part of the Habsburg

³² An official term for Moravia as a part of the historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia.

³³ Kieval, 13.

³⁴ Pěkný, 49; Kieval, 13.

³⁵ Ladislav Baletka, "Holocaust. K historii židovské komunity na území našeho okresu a k jejímu zániku," *Nové Valašsko*, November 4, 1992; Ladislav Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí* (Valašské Meziříčí: Městský úřad ve Valašském Meziříčí, 2004).

³⁶ See Pěkný.

³⁷ Ben-Sasson, 409.

monarchy, the Czech lands saw their independence replaced with an absolutist system that would prevail until the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.³⁸

1.2 The Development of the Jewish Community in the Vsetín Region

1.2.1 The First Jews in the Vsetín Region

The nobility in the Vsetín Region adjudicated over potential Judaic settlers. A Jew named Issac Daniel, a lessee of the toll gate and distillery in Valašské Meziříčí,³⁹ was granted residence permission in 1650; the same privilege was guaranteed to Hirschel in Vsetín by Count George Illesházy in 1661. Subsequently, only a few families were allowed to stay for a period limited by the lease term of the taverns, distilleries or breweries.⁴⁰ Since spirits were very popular among the local gentile community and the Jews were forbidden by their religion to drink alcohol, running a distillery represented a very productive and profitable business. Vsetín historian Silvestr Kazmír points out that the region was highly dependent on this business branch. The profits were subjected to taxation and thus a considerable amount of earnings was paid to the nobility. Furthermore, to secure a regular income an additional tax for those who did not buy the stipulated amount of spirit was introduced.⁴¹ Besides the taxes on interests and alcohol, a per capita tax, known as a “schutzgeld” tax, and a tax for military purposes were imposed exclusively on the Jews. Moreover, most of the taxes compulsory for the Christians applied to the Jews as well.⁴² Considering these conditions, the Jewish settlement in Wallachia, although beneficial for the nobility, was simply tolerated rather than welcomed.

1.2.2 The Germanization of the Moravian Jewry

The declaration of the so-called *Familiant Laws* by the Habsburg King of Bohemia Charles VI in 1726 thwarted a hoped-for extension of Jewish rights. *Numerus clausus*, “a closed number” was introduced for Jewish families, as was the institution of *Inkolate*. The number of the families in Moravia was set at 5,106 and in Bohemia at 8,541. Later these

³⁸ Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 9-10.

³⁹ A town located approximately 20 kilometers north of Vsetín.

⁴⁰ Baletka, “Holocaust. K historii židovské komunity na území našeho okresu a k jejímu zániku”.

⁴¹ Silvestr Kazmír, “Holocaust na Vsetínsku” (lecture, Masaryk Library, Vsetín, January 26, 2012).

⁴² Pavel Kocman, “Daňové zatížení moravských Židů v 16. a 17. století” (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 5, 2008).

numbers were raised to 5,400 and 8,600 families. Regarding Inkolate, only the oldest son was allowed marriage, while families with daughters were considered dead. In order to avoid punishment, many of the younger sons married secretly or moved out of the country.⁴³ These regulations violated the core values of Jewish society. A community based on close familial ties suffered another blow.⁴⁴

An Edict issued by Maria Theresa, daughter of Charles IV and Empress of the Habsburg Monarchy, in 1744 for Bohemia and in 1745 for Moravia, expelled all Jews from the Czech lands. Behind this act, assumes Pěkný, stood her aversion towards the Jews as well as financial aspects and the alleged Jewish collaboration with the Prussian enemies of the Habsburgs. The Jews once again found themselves as ideal scapegoats for the monarch's anger. Despite the apparent intransigence of Maria's decision, be it harsh winter conditions or strong economic ties with the gentile population, the Empress changed her mind several times, and finally in 1747 the Jews were allowed to return to their homes. Among the most probable reasons for cancellation of the Edict was the financial crisis caused by the departure of the Jews. The previous restrictions by Charles VI, namely the *Familiant Laws* and *Numerus clausus*, applied to the Czech Jewry with the same intensity as before 1744, moreover a *Tolerance tax* was introduced in 1747. While the impact of Maria's Edict on the rural Jewry in Bohemia and Moravia was minimal, the Prague Jews faced serious economic and material damage.⁴⁵

Reforms by Maria's son, Emperor Joseph II, signified a certain emancipation of the Jewish community. However, Rybár suggests that the issuance of the *Toleration Patent* in 1781 "did not mean that the Jews and their religion gained equal rights [with the Christians]", moreover, a *Systemalpatent* by the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I "was based on the principle that Jews were not subjects with equal rights, but merely a suffered minority."⁴⁶ Historians Ivo Cerman and Hillel Kieval claim that while the Jews desired to be perceived as human beings, Joseph II intended them to become "more useful to the state" and thus encouraged them to engage in all spheres of the state economy.⁴⁷ Education and jurisdiction offered equal opportunities and besides the Czech language, German was

⁴³ Pěkný, 95.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 98-106.

⁴⁶ Rybár, 63.

⁴⁷ Kieval, 27; Česká televize, "Nekupujte u židů cukr, kafe, mouku..." Videoarchiv Historie.cs Adobe Flash Player video file, 18:10, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10150778447-historie-cs/212452801400006-nekupujte-u-zidu-cukr-kafe-mouku/video/> (accessed February 9, 2012).

proclaimed official. Pěkný argues that the reason for introducing German was not primarily to Germanize. However, the Jewish community was affected the most and their inclination towards German society significantly complicated their future position among the local population.⁴⁸

Jewish multilingualism appeared with the commencement of the Diaspora.⁴⁹ As there is no Jewish language, Hebrew served as a language of prayers whereas Yiddish, a dialect created by the Ashkenazy Jews as a mixture of German, Hebrew as well as Czech vocabularies, served as a daily communication tool inside the community. Besides Hebrew and Yiddish, the Jews spoke the language of the particular country in which they lived.⁵⁰ Unlike in Moravia, the Bohemian communities maintained their dialect, and the language of everyday life tended to be Czech.⁵¹ The Jews in Moravia decided to embrace the German culture mainly due to their close proximity to Vienna that resulted in strong social and economic connections with the inhabitants of that capital city.⁵² The law stipulated the introduction of the German language into Jewish schools “with the state approved teachers and curricula,” and the Jewish names had to acquire a Germanic form.⁵³ Consequently, as noted by Kieval, “Jews faced the dilemma of reconciling an essentially German acculturation with the reality of an ethnically divided society.”⁵⁴ The status of the German language, the newly gained freedoms and a position in German society assured the Jews of the rectitude of their decision.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the use of the German language hindered both the communication with the Czech-speaking population and the position of the Jews within local communities.⁵⁶ The Jewish-German connection was perceived by gentiles as self-segregation and a public betrayal of the Czech culture since from the end of the eighteenth century the National Revival movement, in an effort to “awake” Czech national identity and pride, laid due emphasis on the Czech language.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Pěkný, 111.

⁴⁹ Dušan Riegl, “Jazykový vývoj židovské entity na Moravě a jazyk jidiš” (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 12, 1997).

⁵⁰ Leo Calvin Rosten, *Jidiš pro radost* (Praha: Academia, 1998), 5; Pěkný, 217.

⁵¹ Miroslav Marada, “Židovské obce na Moravě” (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, October, 1994).

⁵² Riegl, “Jazykový vývoj židovské entity na Moravě a jazyk jidiš.”

⁵³ Kieval, 45.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁵ Pěkný, 489.

⁵⁶ Rybár, 77.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Pěkný, 496.

1.2.3 The Jews and the Economic Boom in the Vsetín Region

The Revolution of 1848 cancelled all previous anti-Jewish restrictions. After the issuance of the December Constitution of 1867, actual equality was reached in religious, personal and juridical freedoms. The Jews consequently left the ghettos and freely resettled.⁵⁸ Jewish families from the ghettos in such nearby places as Holešov or Uherský Brod settled in the Vsetín Region, significantly increasing the local Jewish population in a short period of time.⁵⁹

Regarding the early Jewish settlement in the Vsetín region, until Count Stephan Illesházy expelled the Jews from Vsetín in 1823, there lived only individual Jewish families. Among the first Jews allowed to settle in Vsetín was the family of Jakub Kohn. As the Kohns represented the only Jews in town in 1830s, their small colorings business did not suffer from competition. Later, the Kohn family established wood, glass, furniture and match manufacturing factories. Josef Kohn together with the brothers Salomon and Jakub Donath rented the local brewery (see appendix VI, VII, IX). Bentwood furniture maker Michael Thonet from Vienna came to the region and established the “Gebrüder Thonet” company in nearby Halenkov. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century the Jewish minority controlled the majority of the district’s economy and was involved in most of the daily issues. The Kohn’s company expanded internationally. However, due to the unsuccessful fusion to Mundus-Kohn and Thonet-Mundus companies in order to improve economic prospects after World War I, and the declining number of foreign investors as a result of the world economic crises in 1929-1933, the traditional manufacturer ceased to exist. A glass factory established by the Kohn family was later bought by an already successful businessman Salomon Reich. His factories spread all over the region and later across Europe. Based in Valašské Meziříčí, “Sal Reich & Comp.” laid the foundations for the future of the glass industry in Wallachia (see appendix II and IX).⁶⁰

In rural Vsetín, the Jews represented a distinct group not only in religion and language, but also in occupation. They were economically-oriented, persistent and modest in contrast

⁵⁸ Pěkný, 12.

⁵⁹ Zdeněk Pomkla, “Události roku 1938 a německá okupace,” in *Okres Vsetín. Rožnovsko – Valašskomeziříčsko – Vsetínsko*, ed. Vladimír Nekuda, (Brno: Hvězdárna Valašské Meziříčí, 2002), 270-289.

⁶⁰ Ladislav Baletka, “Židé,” in *Okres Vsetín. Rožnovsko – Valašskomeziříčsko – Vsetínsko*, ed. Vladimír Nekuda, (Brno: Hvězdárna Valašské Meziříčí, 2002), 320-328; Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

to the Christian tradesmen.⁶¹ The Jewish minority in the region were employed in positions requiring a certain level of education and abilities, including lawyers (Salomon Heller, Norbert Lazarus), medical doctors (Kohn and Prager), owners of factories (Kohn and Reich), shops (Sax), pubs and distilleries (Glesinger), and notaries (see appendix II, III, VII, VIII, IX). On the other hand, most of the Christian population made its living as workers in Jewish-owned factories, as craftsmen or peasants. Over 3,000 worked in the Jewish factories in Vsetín, while many Christian women served in Jewish households.⁶² Thus the Jewish influence and impact on the local society appears undeniable. Baletka claims that the economic prosperity of the region was proportional to the Jewish settlement in the city.⁶³ At the beginning of the twentieth century the local Jewry reached its highest peak of prosperity and despite decreasing in numbers during the following thirty years the community perished only with the commencement of the Nazi regime.

1.2.4 The Jewish Community Cohesion

After 1849, the Jewish Religious Communities gained full autonomy.⁶⁴ However, the Jews in Valašské Meziříčí did not religiously organize until 1868; the Jewish Religious Society in Vsetín was established in 1886. Although keeping the Torah in the private households obliged the owner to organize the religious services before 1848, to gain full authority cemeteries and synagogues were built in both cities by the end of the nineteenth century (see appendix IV).⁶⁵ The Jewish Religious Community in Valašské Meziříčí commenced in 1890 and included the Jewry of Vsetín as well. The subsequent division of the region led to the renaming of the organization to the Jewish Religious Community of Valašské Meziříčí-Vsetín.⁶⁶

According to Ludmila Nesládková, Jewish life was devoted to the family. Jewish women were equal to men and Jewish children received at least the basic level of education in contrast with a great number of the illiterate Christian locals.⁶⁷ Leopold Blau,

⁶¹ Pěkný, 319.

⁶² Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

⁶³ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 36.

⁶⁴ Pěkný, 336.

⁶⁵ Ladislav Baletka and Jaroslav Klenovský, "Osudy vsetínské synagogy" (paper presented at the annual meeting *Židé a Morava*, Kroměříž, November 13, 2002).

⁶⁶ Ladislav Baletka, "Židé," in *Okres Vsetín. Rožnovsko – Valašskomeziříčsko – Vsetínsko*, ed. Vladimír Nekuda, (Brno: Hvězdárna Valašské Meziříčí, 2002), 320-328.

⁶⁷ Ludmila Nesládková, "Moravské židovské rodiny, jejich typologie a biologické předpoklady ve druhé polovině 19. století do roku 1918" (paper presented at the annual meeting *Židé a Morava*, Kroměříž, November 13, 2000).

a cantor in Vsetín, worked as a teacher in public Jewish schools. Some wealthy families employed private teachers.⁶⁸ Blau also held the post of a ritual butcher. Likewise, Adolf Schönbeck, director of the Reich's glass factory in Vsetín, was previously employed as a private butcher for the Reich family.⁶⁹ The community did not accept violence and was based upon democratic principles. Fines were the most common punishment, while dismissal from the community was considered the highest penalty.⁷⁰ The community cared about its poor, old and sick members. Charity was a common way of help: the Kohn family established a fund supporting poor children of any faith, while Reichs and Donaths contributed to the development of the region.⁷¹

Jewish historian Livia Rothkirchen points out that while the Jews in the bigger cities tended to assimilation, “the village Jews, for the most part peddlers, remained devoted to Judaism.”⁷² Indeed the Vsetín Jews presented themselves as of the Jewish, Mosaic or Israelite faith according to the census of 1900.⁷³ Due to the different religion and the German language spoken by most Jewish families, the Jews remained a foreign element in the eyes of the conservative Vsetín Region. Historian Ben-Sasson explains that whereas the Jews integrated into various spheres of life, their presence, typical characteristics and economic successes emphasized the difference from the locals which caused envy and hatred much stronger than before.⁷⁴ The disjointed attitude of the Vsetín residents towards the Judaic townsfolk is clearly explained in the town's chronicle; the backwardness and partial illiteracy of the locals was supposedly intentionally maintained by the German capitalists and the Jews, because the people of Vsetín were existentially dependent on them.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the Jews took an active part in many non-Jewish organizations and public activities. To speak about a complete alienation and self-segregation from the locals is thus inaccurate. The negative public opinion and conservatism was nurtured by the local newspaper called *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, representing the Catholic point of view, which

⁶⁸ Baletka, “Židé,” 320-328.

⁶⁹ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí* (Valašské Meziříčí: Městský úřad Valašské Meziříčí, 2004), 35.

⁷⁰ Ruth Davis, “Myšlenka komunity ve světě plném násilí - 311 ustanovení” (paper presented at the annual meeting *Židé a Morava*, Kroměříž, November 13, 2000).

⁷¹ Baletka, “Holocaust. K historii židovské komunity na území našeho okresu a k jejímu zániku”; Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín. The chronicle is a handwritten Czech language book that provides witness accounts of key events in the history of Vsetín.

⁷² Rothkirchen, 12.

⁷³ National Census - Vsetín, 1900, file 760-763A, State Archive Vsetín.

⁷⁴ Ben-Sasson, 870.

⁷⁵ Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

continuously attacked the Jewish enclave. The Jews served as a scapegoat for national or language problems and as default explanation for social and economic difficulties.

1.2.5 The Anti-Jewish Demonstrations of 1899

The cancellation of the equality of the Czech and German languages by the Austrian chancellor on October 14, 1899 intensified the already escalated negative feelings towards the Jews. The decree constituted German the only official language, and the Jews as its main representatives became victims of the bloody anti-German demonstrations, which subsequently took place all over the Vsetín Region. According to Zdeněk Fišer, a demonstration in Vsetín took place on October 24, 1899. Most of the protesters were employees in the Jewish factories, accompanied by many curious residents. The dramatic situation ended with five protestors killed and many arrested by the intervening officers. The Jewish synagogue, houses, shops and taverns were heavily damaged (see appendix V). More than forty suspects were arrested the following day, with twenty-nine of them later sentenced to jail. Collections to help the victims of the demonstration took place across the region. Similar demonstrations occurred in Valašské Meziříčí and in many small villages throughout the region.⁷⁶ The protests against the local Jewry resulted mainly from the language and nationality difference, evinced by the fact that the crowd sang national songs while damaging Jewish property. However, despite speaking German, most of the Jews of Vsetín considered themselves to be Czech; but the language spoken was generally identified with the nationality. Not only the locals remarked upon the alienation of the Jewry. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Karel Havlíček Borovský, Jan Neruda and other Czech writers emphasized the differences of the Jews. While Masaryk referred to them “as a nation completely different than ourselves”, Neruda went much further by declaring them “our fiercest enemy.”⁷⁷ *Noviny zpod Radhoště* quoted Rabbi Bloch who claimed that the world Jewry is based on religion and thus should not be judged for choosing a different nationality.⁷⁸ This ambiguous issue was solved only by the First Republic Constitution. Until then, the Jews as a community based mainly on religion claimed allegiance either to the Czech, German or Jewish nation. The Christian newspapers further admitted that

⁷⁶ Fišer, “Z bouřlivých dnů ve Vsetíně. K stému výročí krvavých událostí roku 1899”; Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

⁷⁷ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Ernest Renan o židovství jako plemenu a náboženství* (1883), quoted in Kieval, *Languages of Community...*, 205; Pěkný, 505.

⁷⁸ “Židovské rozumy,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, January 20, 1900.

besides the language issue it was also the religious difference that caused the demonstrations.⁷⁹ The aggression of 1899 did not ease the hate of many locals. Paid by local Jewry, soldiers from Olomouc⁸⁰ intervening against the protesters during the demonstration stayed in Vsetín to protect the Jews.⁸¹ The claims of the local periodical nourished the negative attitude of the locals. Since the Jews tended to German, they were accused of provocative expressions of satisfaction over the language equality cancellation to spite of disappointed Czechs.⁸²

To define the accurate position of both the Jews and gentiles in Vsetín is rather complicated, for the original sources are marked by strong anti-Semitism and tend to exaggerate the actual situation. Nevertheless, the behavior of the non-Jews towards their Jewish neighbors throughout nearly three centuries of co-existence in the city and mainly in the period of the Nazi regime confirms that the non-Jewish residents deserve blame for the troubled situation in the Vsetín Region.

1.2.6 The Modern Blood Libel

The tense atmosphere at the end of the nineteenth century was also fueled by the Hilsner Affair, a blood libel accusation which once again turned the biased Christians against their Jewish neighbors. A girl named Anežka Hružová was found dead on April 1, 1899 near Polná, an East Bohemian village, shortly before Passover. Since she was Christian and her body was found bloodless, the connection of the approaching Jewish festival and rumor of the use of Christian blood resulted in mass hysteria of ritual murder. A Jewish wanderer Leopold Hilsner fell under suspicion. Later he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.⁸³ The affair resulted in open hostility and public anti-Jewish demonstrations. Masaryk, an East Moravian parliamentary candidate and a professor at Charles University, strongly agitated against the widespread anti-Semitic reaction. For his liberal point of view he was badly criticized by the journalists of *Noviny zpod Radhoště* and by most of the nationalistically-oriented society. Besides suspecting Masaryk of connection with a secret Jewish sect, which was supposed to support him financially, the local weekly based most of its accusations upon a discussion about his surname origin,

⁷⁹ "Protižidovské hnutí na Moravě," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, February 9, 1899.

⁸⁰ Olomouc is a Moravian city ca 80 kilometers northwest of Vsetín.

⁸¹ Fišer, "Z bouřlivých dnů ve Vsetíně. K stému výročí krvavých událostí roku 1899"

⁸² See *Noviny zpod Radhoště* 1899, 1900.

⁸³ Rybár, 81.

calling him “Masařík”, a Czech version of his name, and alleging him to be of false nationalism and supporting of the German language.⁸⁴ Masaryk himself argued that his involvement in the Hilsner Affair did not result from his philo-Semitism but from an effort to educate the biased Czech society stuck in medieval traditions and with groundless hatred toward the Jews. Arguing that a Christian should not be anti-Semitic, he rejected the extreme fanaticism of the Catholic Church.⁸⁵ Czech author Karel Čapek recorded Masaryk’s attitude towards the Jews: “Anyway, all my life I’ve gone out of my way not to be unjust to Jews. That’s why I’ve been said to favor them. When did I get over my ‘folk’ anti-Semitism? Well, maybe never on an emotional level, only rationally. After all, it was my own mother who taught me the superstition about Jews’ making use of Christian blood.”⁸⁶ Most of Masaryk’s opinions did not openly express support of the Jewish minority; however, his liberal approach and policy attracted the oppressed Jewish community and laid the grounds for a better position of the Jewry in the future Czechoslovakian Republic with Masaryk as president. Due to the situation, higher numbers of Jews in the 1910 census reported themselves to be of Czech nationality and language. German allegiance was on the decline and during the next decade almost entirely vanished.

Christian newspapers deeply influenced public opinion, demonstrated by the fact that the blood label accusation divided Czech society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Based on this, it appears obvious that *Noviny zpod Radhoště* buffered the region from modern ideologies and flamed the tense atmosphere with xenophobic beliefs. Hence, the newspaper was to blame for much of the backwardness of the thinking of Vsetín inhabitants, not the local Jewry as claimed by the town’s chronicle.

1.2.7 Each to His Own

The “Each to his own” (Svůj k svému) campaign expressed the anti-Jewish moods in a less aggressive way in comparison to the demonstrations in 1899. A boycott of Jewish-owned businesses should have eliminated the competition in local trade. A “Don’t buy from Jews” slogan accompanied the campaign and was supported and advertised mainly by *Noviny zpod Radhoště*. Convinced that the public disregard of Jewish shops and pubs

⁸⁴ “Masaryk countra Massařík,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, March 30, 1907.

⁸⁵ Pěkný, 262-263.

⁸⁶ Karel Čapek, *Talks with T.G. Masaryk* (North Haven, CT: Catbird Press, 1995), 49.

[http://books.google.cz/books?id=e-](http://books.google.cz/books?id=e-udK8SWIQEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=falfa)

[udK8SWIQEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=falfa](http://books.google.cz/books?id=e-udK8SWIQEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=falfa)
(accessed January 15, 2012).

would force the Jews out of the region, the journalists dubiously noted the enslaving business practices of the Jews.⁸⁷ Although strongly advertised, the campaign did not meet with broad success.

A bigger problem for the Jews came in the form of the widespread alcoholism and foolishness of non-Jewish locals. Since the Vsetín Region was among the poorest in the Czech lands, the Jews were made scapegoats for any difficulties and problems the inhabitants of Vsetín faced. *Noviny zpod Radhoště* claimed that the Jews brought moral destruction into the region.⁸⁸ However, poverty, unpaid debts and alcoholism were the fault of the locals themselves. Ninety-three-year-old Vladimír Frydrych recently recalled his experiences, arguing that although the Jews differentiated from their non-Jewish neighbors, the picture of a greedy wealthy Jew was created by debt-ridden locals. In attempts to destroy debentures, Jewish property was often damaged.⁸⁹ The backwardness of the locals indeed played an important role in the development of the status of the Jews in the region. In the decade before World War I, the Czech-Jewish-German relationship in Vsetín to some extent stabilized, however a significant change appeared only with the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. This period will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁸⁷ “Židovstvo a vlast,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, July 22, 1905; “Po bouřích,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, November 2, 1899; “Z Val. Meziříčí (Svůj ke svému),” *Noviny zpo Radhoště*, June 23, 1900; “Varujeme Židy,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, June 8, 1907.

⁸⁸ “Židovstvo a vlast,” 1905.

⁸⁹ Vladimír Frydrych, interviewed by author, Zlín, September 16, 2011.

2 THE FIRST REPUBLIC AS THE GOLDEN AGE OF CZECHOSLOVAK JEWRY

Czech Jewry entered the twentieth century emancipated and legally equal to the non-Jewish population. However, the dramatic changes of the 1848 revolution and the subsequent legislation providing legal, social and cultural freedoms for Jews still did not secure the equal status of the minority in the minds of the majority. Disagreements regarding the national, religious and language preferences divided the Czech Jewish community. Having survived a volatile period of discrimination and hatred, and facing a cultural breakdown from within their own community, the vision of a liberal Czechoslovak state based upon democratic principles and guaranteeing to the Jews actual rights mobilized the Jews to take an active part in public and political affairs concerning not only their future status in the state but the future of the state itself.

2.1 Changes in the Jewish Status before the First Republic

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the gap between Moravian and Bohemian Jews did not close. On the contrary, the Bohemian Jewry for the most part assimilated into Czech society and gathered around the center of progress, Prague. As a result, they acquired a slightly different life view than their Moravian neighbors, who were still influenced by Austro-Hungarian absolutism. First, the German language in Moravia, although decreasing in use, still denoted a close relationship to Vienna. Nevertheless, due to the pressure of local society and as a consequence of anti-Jewish demonstrations and gradual political changes, the language reported in the census of 1910 of the Vsetín inhabitants notes a sizeable shift to Czech as an *Umgangssprache*⁹⁰ (vernacular, obcovací řeč). Very few families remained devoted to German.⁹¹ Still, the Moravian Jews inclined towards tradition more than their Bohemian brethren. As a result of these opposite ambitions within the Jewish community two movements emerged: Zionism and the Czech-Jewish Movement. While the Moravian Jewry, including the Jews of the Vsetín Region, embraced mainly Zionism, the maintenance of Jewish traditions, and the desire for a

⁹⁰ A language reported in the census until the establishment of the First Republic in 1918, encompassing both the language and the nationality.

⁹¹ National Census - Vsetín, 1910, file 34-37A, State Archive Vsetín.

Jewish nation state referred to as Erez Yisrael,⁹² the Bohemian assimilationists' preference for Czech nationality, language and culture gave rise to the Czech-Jewish Movement. These two trends found supporters in both parts of the country dividing Jewish society.

2.1.1 The Czech-Jewish Movement

The tendencies of the Jews to assimilate within Czech society met with understanding mainly in Bohemia. Historian Blanka Soukupová researched the impact of the Czech-Jewish Movement in Moravia and determined that the efforts of the assimilationists to persuade the Moravian Jewry only partially succeeded. Approval came mainly from the inhabitants of large cities, whereas rural inhabitants remained largely traditional.⁹³ To accept the Czech language and culture to some extent harmed traditional Jewish society, but it reduced the almost constant pressure produced by the Czech environment. As Ben-Sasson notes, "The emergence of the Jewish national movement was undoubtedly a decisive turning-point in modern Jewish history. The trend towards integration into the general society and the achievements of emancipation led the Jews to an increasing identification with the peoples and nations among whom they lived."⁹⁴

The process of assimilation consisted of multiple phases and was typically not smooth. Mainly, the Jews did not cease to be Jewish from a religious point of view. The number of Jews converting to Christianity as well as the number of mixed marriages considerably increased later, after the establishment of the First Republic in 1918.⁹⁵ Most importantly, the Jews refused German nationality, becoming Czechs of the Jewish faith. Pěkný argues that the reasons for merging into Czech society cannot be perceived as of material character, since the Jews decided to integrate into a nation oppressed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁹⁶ The privileges gained from assimilation completed the process of equalization, for from then on the Jews were "active in all spheres of life, with [their] Jewishness being regarded as a natural factor."⁹⁷

The beginning of World War I in 1914 for some time silenced the movement activists, since many of the young representatives enlisted in the army and fought for their native

⁹² A Hebrew term denoting the land of Israel, the holy land of the Jewish nation.

⁹³ Blanka Soukupová, "Moravští Židé - naděje, nebo brzda českožidovského hnutí?," (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 3, 2004).

⁹⁴ Ben-Sasson, 891.

⁹⁵ Rothkirchen, 37.

⁹⁶ Pěkný, 507.

⁹⁷ Ben-Sasson, 892.

country supporting the idea of an independent Czech state.⁹⁸ *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, a traditional opponent of Jewish activities criticized the low representation of the Jews on the battlefield; however, their arguments were dubious.⁹⁹ On the contrary, Jewish soldiers fighting in the Czech legions during the war played an important role in the battle for independence of the Czech state.¹⁰⁰

2.1.2 Zionism

While the Czech-Jewish Movement addressed a solely Czech national issue, Zionism, a renaissance of core Jewish values and national consciousness, reached the Czech lands with the same intensity as in other European countries. According to historian Pěkný, the growing tendency of anti-Jewish feelings, the Hilsner affair and the language fights at the turn of the nineteenth century intensified the aspirations for a new Jewish state. Pěkný further emphasized the complicated position of the Czech Jewry torn between two nations, the Czechs and the Germans. A renaissance of the Jewish national identity and the consequent moving to a new home in Palestine should have solved this situation.¹⁰¹

Theodor Herzl, an Austrian Jewish Journalist and a founder of the Zionist ideology and *The World Zionist Organization*, proposed his solution of the “Jewish problem”, namely a “consolidation of the consciousness of the Jewish national identity and endeavours to secure the return of the Jews to their original historical country.”¹⁰² Ben-Sasson explains that for Herzl, the Jews represented “one nation”, thus the only possibility to escape the ubiquitous anti-Semitism was to establish a Jewish state.¹⁰³ The aspirations by Herzl and another Zionist thinker, Ahad Ha-Am, inspired the Czech Jews as well. The Maccabi organization, later renamed Bar Kochba, established by Prague students in 1894, sharing the visions of Zionism and strongly refusing assimilation, issued a proclamation the same year claiming that “the Jews are neither German nor Slavs, they are a nation in their own right.”¹⁰⁴

The idea of a historical and national revival of the Jewish nation and a return to the fatherland of Erez Yisrael was not new to the traditionally-oriented part of the Jewish

⁹⁸ Rothkirchen, 24; Pěkný, 514.

⁹⁹ “Proč je tam málo židů na frontě,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October 6, 1917.

¹⁰⁰ Pěkný, 514.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 522.

¹⁰² Rybár, 86; The book by Herzl is entitled *The Jewish State*.

¹⁰³ Ben-Sasson, 898.

¹⁰⁴ Rothkirchen, 21.

society, explains historian Pěkný. However, the attempts to build a new homeland of the Jewish nation in various places around the world, including Africa, failed. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Jews focused their attention on Palestine. In 1917 the Balfour declaration, a letter by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom Arthur Balfour addressed to Baron Rothschild, an English Jewish representative, supported the idea of a Jewish homeland in the British protectorate of Palestine. Support also came from the USA, France and Italy.¹⁰⁵ Although the Jewish state was not formally established until 1948, many of the Bar Kochba members left for Palestine before or shortly after the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.¹⁰⁶

According to Soukupová, the Jews in Moravia were not as extremely devoted to the Czech nation as in Bohemia, thus their aspiration to Zionism was much stronger even in the liberal atmosphere of the First Republic.¹⁰⁷ Pěkný further states that the supporters of Zionism were mostly poor European Jews, liberal intellectuals and socialists.¹⁰⁸ In Valašské Meziříčí, The Jewish People's Association Sion was established in 1924 with the aim of supporting the Jewish settlement in Palestine, strengthening the Jewish national consciousness and propagating the Jewish culture. Various lectures, collections and discussions took place in order to fulfill these goals. However, those who understood their Jewishness as nationality gradually abandoned the resettlement idea, mainly due to their increasing age and the unfavorable settlement conditions for most native Czech Jews.¹⁰⁹ The Christian newspaper *Noviny zpod Radhoště* strongly supported the ideas of Zionism. Nevertheless, the motives of the encouragement of the Jewish national aspirations were of very negative character. Considering the wealth of the Jews, the journalists emphasized the advantages and satisfaction of all Christian nations upon the relocation of the world Jewry into Palestine.¹¹⁰

2.1.3 Jewish Participation in World War I

Noviny zpod Radhoště and Vsetín's chronicle described the involvement of the Jews in World War I in quite an antagonistic manner. While the weekly newspaper concerned itself

¹⁰⁵ Pěkný, 242.

¹⁰⁶ Rothkirchen, 25.

¹⁰⁷ Soukupová, "Moravští Židé - naděje, nebo brzda českožidovského hnutí?"

¹⁰⁸ Pěkný, 240-241.

¹⁰⁹ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 50.

¹¹⁰ "Židé nás chtějí opustit," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, July 16, 1901; "Nová zaslíbená země," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, March 5, 1900; "Židé v Rumunsku," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, July 7, 1900.

with the low number of Jewish soldiers, the chronicle dealt with the hostile behavior of the local Jews towards their gentile neighbors.¹¹¹ However, the position held by the Jews must be understood from the point of their national feelings and in light of the upcoming political changes. The main problem lay in the Jewish loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, explains historian Pěkný. Their social, economic and cultural connection with the German society confirmed them in their fight for maintenance of the monarchy.¹¹² According to Vsetín's chronicle, the German allegiance of the town's Jews was even more remarkable during the war years. The Jews supported anti-Czech activities, and their behavior was described as cynical, provocative, anti-national and hostile.¹¹³ The efforts of the Czechs to establish an independent state clashed with the Jewish preference of German dominance. On the other hand, the Czech-Jewish assimilationists supported the national fight and fought as volunteers in the Czech legions. Pěkný notes that their proportional representation on the Russian fronts was comparable to the Czechs.¹¹⁴ The Jewish community divided with respect to the position held towards its future development. Those who claimed allegiance to Germany either moved out of the country after the war's end or gradually adapted to the Czech environment. The Jews of Czechoslovakia then followed one of three paths: complete assimilation in language, culture and religion; an acceptance of Czech (or other state-recognized) nationality and Jewish faith; or Jewish nationality and faith.

The aspirations of the German-Jewish minority in the Vsetín Region might have been understood as anti-national, yet the anti-Semitic violence perpetrated by the Czech Christian population and tight social and economic bonds to Austria account for the Jewish support of the monarchy. The arguments by *Noviny zpod Radhoště* must be understood as highly anti-Semitic, and the attempts to denigrate the local Jews should be recognized as part and parcel of the newspaper's longstanding anti-Semitic platform.

2.1.4 The Jewish Refugees from Galicia and Bukovina in the Vsetín Region

The war refugees from Galicia and Bukovina once again put both the Jewish community and the gentile inhabitants of the Vsetín Region to the test of mutual

¹¹¹ "Proč je tak málo židů na frontě," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October 6, 1917; Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

¹¹² Pěkný, 514.

¹¹³ Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

¹¹⁴ Pěkný, 514.

tolerance.¹¹⁵ The region of Galicia and Bukovina belonged among the most affected during the fights on the Russian front. As a result, “Hundreds of thousands of Jews, including women, children and old men, were ordered to leave their homes in twenty-four or forty-eight-hours’ notice,” explains Ben-Sasson.¹¹⁶ According to historian Daniela Srbová, over a quarter a million of these Jewish refugees found shelter in the Czech lands, hundreds of them in the Vsetín Region. The first Jewish families entered the region as early as 1914, dead tired and devastated, many of them bringing with them their property and even livestock.¹¹⁷ The local newspapers *Noviny zpod Radhoště* surprisingly stressed the importance of acceptance and assistance provided for the Jewish refugees no matter what nationality or religion. The first reaction of the locals was thus positive and supportive.¹¹⁸ Srbová notes that about 150 Jews were accommodated in Valašské Meziříčí, 80 in Krásno and 100 in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm. However, these numbers were far exceeded during the following years. The first wave of the refugees returned to their homes after the war situation slightly improved in 1915. Nevertheless, most of them were forced to leave their homes again in 1916. In fact, the number of Jews entering the region in the second wave was much higher, and around two hundred of them settled in town of Vsetín.¹¹⁹

Local Jewry took an active part in the financial and psychological care of their eastern brethren. The gentile inhabitants of the region tolerated their presence without open disagreement. The new agriculturally-based and orthodox Jewish community however soon aggravated the already strained conditions of the Czech-Jewish relations. The Christian periodical suddenly turned against the refugees and as the only periodical issued during the war years misused its position and influence on the locals by spreading hatred and anti-Semitic moods. The first problems connected with the Jews from Galicia and Bukovina related to the state financial support, which, as *Noviny zpod Radhoště* claimed, was much higher than the support provided for the locals. Since the refugees did not work, the newspapers blamed them for the declining economic situation of the region and

¹¹⁵ Galicia and Bukovina are historical regions in Eastern Europe, today’s Ukraine and Romania, under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during World War I.

¹¹⁶ Ben-Sasson, 889.

¹¹⁷ Daniela Srbová, “Židovští váleční uprchlíci z Haliče a Bukoviny za 1. světové války v dnešním okrese Vsetín,” (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 7, 2001).

¹¹⁸ “Postižení válkou na Valašsko,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, September 5, 1914.

¹¹⁹ Srbová, “Židovští váleční uprchlíci...”.

wrongful enrichment at the expense of the poor hardworking Wallachians.¹²⁰ The affair that concerned the weekly the strongest applied to the unjust business practices of the newcomers. Arguing that they bought up all the goods in local shops which they subsequently resold for much higher prices, the newspaper claimed that it was basically impossible for the locals to buy at regular prices considering the already complicated economic situation of the war years.¹²¹ In 1917, the Jewish refugees gradually moved back to their home country. This was celebrated and praised by the periodical, which emphasized the moral devastation brought to the region by the departing Jews.¹²² Six tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in Vsetín commemorate the Jews who could not return to Galicia and Bukovina. However, the Jews were not the only war refugees who found shelter in the Vsetín Region. Between 1915 and 1917, around six hundred Italian Catholics survived the war hidden in the regional cities and villages. It is noteworthy that even though *Noviny zpod Radhoště* touched upon the Italians, the response was considerably restrained in comparison with the reaction towards the Jewish refugees from Galicia and Bukovina.¹²³

2.2 The First Czechoslovak Republic

On October 28, 1918, the Czechoslovak National Council proclaimed the independence of the Czechoslovak Republic.¹²⁴ Based on the Declaration of Independence of October 18, issued by the first Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in Washington D.C., the Republic was to “guarantee complete freedom of consciousness, religion and science, literature and art, speech and press, and the right of assembly and petition.”¹²⁵ The independent nation state commenced as a consequence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapse caused by World War I, and was established upon a right of “self-determination” confirmed by the Paris Peace Treaties of 1919. Nevertheless, to establish a single-national Czech state was impossible due to the ethnic and geographic

¹²⁰ “Vystěhovalci,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October 6, 1917; A term denoting the inhabitants of Moravian Wallachia – Wallachians, Vlachs or Vallachs.

¹²¹ Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

¹²² “Dobře jim tak,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October 20, 1917.

¹²³ Srbová, “Židovští váleční uprchlíci...”

¹²⁴ The Czechoslovak National Council was an official representative body of the future Czechoslovak Republic, later reformed into the interim government of Czechoslovakia, which ceased to exist after the legal formation of the Republic.

¹²⁵ Rothkirchen, 27.

diversity of the lands. The First Republic consisted of Bohemia, Moravia and part of Silesia as the Czech historical provinces, enlarged to include areas of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Hence, besides Czechs and Slovaks, the multinational Czechoslovakia included Germans, Poles, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Gypsies and Jews.¹²⁶ Incorporated in the Constitution of 1920, the exceptional policy of the Czechoslovak Republic provided for the equality of rights for all citizens irrespective of nationality or religion, which fundamentally changed the legal and social status of the Jews. The era of the First Republic was the most favorable period for the Jewish minority in Czechoslovakia. Vsetín's Ilse Reiner, born towards the end of 1929 in Vsetín, fondly remembers this period of her childhood.¹²⁷

2.2.1 The Jews in the First Republic

We, the Jews, lived peacefully and sagely and therefore contentedly and happily in the first republic of Czechoslovakia, in Masaryk's republic. We were its citizens enjoying full rights, and not only on paper, but also in real life. We had the same duties, but also the same rights as other citizens, we could, without any risk, avow the Czech, Slovak, German, Hungarian and even Jewish nationality and we could write with a small or capital J. ...We were everywhere and nowhere, because we were relatively few in number and we did not stand in anyone's way.¹²⁸

These feelings, as recorded by Rabbi Dr. Richard Feder, describe the general position of the Jewry in the First Republic. Experiencing the era of democratization and equalization, the awareness of the Jews and the relations of the Jewish minority and the gentiles radically improved.¹²⁹ The National Jewish Council, established on October 22, 1918 and led by Ludvík Singer, submitted a memorandum to the Czech National Committee demanding the recognition of the Jewish nationality and religious community, full equality with the other state minorities and autonomy guaranteed by the Jews' loyalty to the newly established state. The requirements of the Council were partly included in the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye of September 10, 1919, legally confirming the independence of Czechoslovakia. The minority rights which were subsequently embodied into the Czechoslovak Constitution of February 29, 1920, provided the equal rights for "all

¹²⁶ Rothkirchen, 27; Ben-Sasson, 949.

¹²⁷ The Jewish community was enlarged by approximately 140,000 Slovak and 110,000 Ukrainian Jews after the establishment of the First Republic. Pěkný, 134; Rothkirchen, 29.

¹²⁸ Rybár, 98.

¹²⁹ Ben-Sasson, 941-942.

national, religious, and language minorities within the republic.”¹³⁰ Rothkirchen points out that the term “national” in the Constitution primarily applied to specific group membership, however, the language criteria did not imply to the specification. The Jews thus regarded themselves of Jewish nationality irrespective of the language spoken. Both Masaryk and the Czechoslovak government understood the advantages of recognizing the Jews as a nation, for this decision weakened the sizeable Hungarian and German minorities in the state, since a great number of Jews regarded themselves as members of these nationalities before 1918.¹³¹ Kieval claims that Masaryk was never philo-Semitic due to his anti-Jewish upbringing, however, having broken the prejudice, his sense of rationality supported the idea of Jewish nationality, arguing that “the Czechs should not refuse for others what they want for themselves”. He further notes that although the Constitution did not particularly specify the Jews among the national minorities, to recognize them as a nation defined neither by language nor religion was unprecedented in interwar Europe.¹³² Pěkný argues that not to define the Jews specifically as a minority but to accept them as a nation was a compromise made with respect to both Jewish factions, the Czech assimilationist and Zionists.¹³³ Additionally, Ben-Sasson notes that the acknowledgement of the Jewish nationality “increased their proportion in the general population and expanded their areas of linguistic and cultural autonomy.”¹³⁴ According to Rothkirchen, out of 354,000 Jews living in the Republic, 51.01 percent reported themselves to be of Jewish nationality. However, Pěkný claims that the Jewish nationality represented only 25.93 percent compared to 37.97 percent Czechoslovak Jews and 34.71 percent Germans in the national census of 1921. The other constitutionally-recognized nationalities amount to 1.39 percent.¹³⁵ The numbers considerably vary, yet they clearly signify the decline of German influence and the increasing tendency of Jewish national consciousness.

2.2.1.1 Economic Difficulties and Anti-Jewish Aggressions in Democratic Czechoslovakia

The liberal atmosphere supported by pragmatic Masaryk eased the anti-Jewish tendencies of the Czechoslovak population. In comparison with Poland, Russia and even

¹³⁰ Rothkirchen, 28; Pěkný, 135.

¹³¹ Rothkirchen, 28-29, 31.

¹³² Kieval, 213-215.

¹³³ Pěkný, 525.

¹³⁴ Ben-Sasson, 951.

¹³⁵ Rothkirchen, 29; Pěkný, 135.

the component territories of Slovakia and the Ukraine, the Czech lands might have been described as philo-Semitic (see appendix XI).¹³⁶ Nonetheless, Czech nationalism gave rise to a desire for revenge for the years of Habsburg persecution. While the inhabitants of Vsetín celebrated their newly gained freedom by destroying any German reminders of the Monarchy, local Jewry remained rather calm yet grew increasingly concerned about the situation. Since the community still represented a majority of the Germans in the district, their “samospasitelná”, a local derogatory term for German language, irritated proud Czechoslovaks. Soon after the war’s end, most of the German Jews from Vsetín left for Vienna. As a result, the local Jewish community became considerably smaller.¹³⁷ This did not stop anti-Jewish aggression from flaring up even in the tolerant background of the First Republic. The first riots occurred shortly after the establishment of the Republic. The cost and economic problems associated with the fall of the first Czechoslovak government in 1919 raised negative feelings in the local population, which zealously attacked wealthy Jewish businessmen and “usurers”.¹³⁸ Demonstrations and pogroms took place between 1918-1920 in many localities across the nation, for example in Prague, Holešov and Vsetín. According to Baletka, in 1918 and 1919 there were a few attempts to confiscate Jewish property in the Vsetín Region. Anti-Jewish activities occurred in Velké Karlovice and Krásno. Baletka also notes that J. Chrastina, mayor of Valašské Meziříčí, promised to provide protection for the local Jews in exchange for their shift to Czech language. Indeed the majority of the Jews in the region gradually accepted the sudden changes, and most of the Jewish children attended Czech schools or still existing Jewish schools in Vsetín and Valašské Meziříčí.¹³⁹ While the social situation in the district gradually stabilized and the involvement of the Jews in Czech culture, economy and politics brought them closer to the gentiles, which was evinced by the decreasing percentage of Jewish Germans in the national census of 1921, the difficult economic situation in the region was reflected in an

¹³⁶ Pěkný, 514.

¹³⁷ The numbers of the Jews in Vsetín (year – number): 1880 – 111, 1890 – 158, 1900 – 165, 1921 – 97, 1930 – 101; Valašské Meziříčí: 1890 – 150, 1900 – 123, 1921 – 88, 1930 – 135. Jaroslav Klenovský, “Vsetín a Židé,” *Vsetínské noviny*, March 3, 1992; Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 68, 71; Ladislav Baletka, “Holocaust - pokračování. K historii židovské komunity na území našeho okresu a k jejímu zániku,”; Baletka, “Židé,” 320-328; Vladimír Nekuda et al., *Okres Vsetín – Rožnovsko, Valašskomeziříčsko, Vsetínsko*, (Brno: Hvězdárna Valašské Meziříčí, 2002), 239.

¹³⁸ Pěkný, 512.

¹³⁹ Baletka, “Holocaust – pokračování...”; Baletka, “Židé,” 320-328; Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 71.

insufficient food supply.¹⁴⁰ A great number of the locals suffered from malnutrition and tuberculosis. The most affected working class took out their frustrations on their employers. Striking workers at Kohn's, Reich's and other non-Jewish factories in Vsetín clamored for higher wages and better working hours. Demonstrations against "ket'as", local profiteers, happened on a daily basis. The bad economic situation damaged local industry, and despite efforts to save the factories, the world economic crisis in 1929 completed their downfall.¹⁴¹ Consequently, in 1933 unemployment reached 10,600 in the Vsetín district, approximately one-third of the total population. Two-thirds of the locals suffered from poverty.¹⁴²

2.2.1.2 The "Latent Nature" of Czech Anti-Semitism

Although not public, anti-Semitism still existed during the First Republic. František Xavier Šalda, Czech journalist and writer, one of the fundamental figures of the Czech fight for independence and a friend of Masaryk, wrote on the insidiousness of local anti-Semitism:

A strange phenomenon – we do not have in our country a political party, be it ever so small, having anti-Semitism, racial hatred or antagonism as part of its platform. ... There must thus exist in the depths of the soul of our people a kind of hatred towards Jews, which bursts out at the opportune moment and casts its shadow over the issue as clearly as two and two are four. What terrifies me most is its latent nature gnawing at the very roots of the national character.¹⁴³

Despite decreased in intensity and frequency, the Catholic newspapers *Noviny zpod Radhoště* and *Lubina* expressed xenophobic ideas even in the tolerant atmosphere of the First Republic. But in general, the relation between the Vsetín gentiles and the Jewish minority stabilized due to democratic principles and the equal rights policy of the state. Representing just 2.5 percent of the total Czechoslovak population, Jews accounted for 30-40 percent of the total capital in Czechoslovak industry. Over half concerned themselves with business, finance and communications, while around 30 percent dealt with industry and crafts. The Jews also pioneered the foreign trade and export industries; 80 percent of the glass export was in the hands of the Jewish businessmen.¹⁴⁴ To organize the Jewish nation politically, the Jewish Party of Czechoslovakia was established in 1919, and in 1929

¹⁴⁰ National Census of 1921 - Vsetín, State Archive Vsetín.

¹⁴¹ Chronicle of Vsetín 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín; Nekuda, *Okres Vsetín – Rožnovsko, Valašskomeziříčsko, Vsetínsko*, 240.

¹⁴² Nekuda, *Okres Vsetín – Rožnovsko, Valašskomeziříčsko, Vsetínsko*, 257.

¹⁴³ Rothkirchen, 50.

¹⁴⁴ Rothkirchen, 37; Rybár, 104.

the party members were the only national minority in continental Europe to be represented in the state government.¹⁴⁵ The Jews in the Vsetín Region were not successful in 1920 parliamentary elections: out of 36,753 votes cast, the Jewish Party gained just 189. In 1925 elections, 232 out of 41,204 votes went to Jewish candidates. In 1925 and 1932, the Jews won only one mandate in the local elections in Valašské Meziříčí.¹⁴⁶ Vsetín's chronicle expressed satisfaction over the outcome of the mayoral election in 1919, for "finally" a regular worker supported by social democrats was chosen to lead the town, thus ending the influence of the factory owners and Jews.¹⁴⁷

2.2.1.3 *First Republic Zionism*

Supported by the government and President Masaryk, and represented in the Jewish Party, the Jewish national aspirations of the Zionist movement grew. In 1919-1920, the Zionists' organization was reorganized in order to integrate the Jews from Slovakia and the Ukraine who tended to Jewishness stronger than their Czech brethren.¹⁴⁸ Rothkirchen states that the Zionists, although having a strong position and tradition in Czechoslovakia, did not represent a mass movement. Partly it was because of the Jewish mainstream, the middle class Jews, who longed for a peaceful life with their Czech neighbors, and partly because of a lack of unity within the movement. Additionally, the orthodox Jews and Jewish communists never fully supported the idea of Jewish nationalism.¹⁴⁹ The seat of the Zionists was transferred from Prague to Moravská Ostrava in 1921 and soon it became one of the most important centers of the movement in the world.¹⁵⁰ Masaryk's attitude paradoxically favored the Zionists over assimilationists. Known for his disinclination for multi-nationalism, open criticism of total Jewish assimilation irrespective of traditions and considering the idea of a Jewish homeland as purely utopian, Masaryk perceived the Jewish role in European history to be essential: "Without Judaism and the Old Testament you cannot understand the bases of European thought and feeling."¹⁵¹ Despite his pessimistic view, he was the first head of state to visit Palestine in 1927 where, as Rothkirchen describes, he was welcomed as a hero, an example of a liberal leader in his

¹⁴⁵ Pěkný, 135, 526; Rothkirchen 50.

¹⁴⁶ Nekuda, *Okres Vsetín – Rožnovsko, Valašskomeziříčsko, Vsetínsko*, 245, 248, 249, 251.

¹⁴⁷ Vsetín's Chronicle 1850-1930, file 134, State Archive Vsetín.

¹⁴⁸ Ben-Sasson, 939-940; Pěkný, 527.

¹⁴⁹ Pěkný, 135, 525, 528; Rothkirchen, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Pěkný, 135.

¹⁵¹ Rothkirchen, 4-5.

struggle for a democratic and independent state.¹⁵² To unify the Jewish population in the Republic, the Supreme Council of the Federations of Jewish Religious Communities in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was established in 1926. The idea of the new homeland in Palestine expanded and was supported by the National Jewish Councils as well. Members of *Techelet lavan*, an organization preparing the Czech Jews for the Aliyah¹⁵³ to Palestine, and of *Bar Kochba* were the first Czech-Jewish settlers in the Land of Israel. The obligatory training held by the emigrants was one of the conditions of the British government to gain an immigration certificate. During 1933-1938, 3,762 Czech Jews left for Palestine, but some of them returned due to harsh living conditions. The *Sion* association in Valašské Meziříčí faced similar problems. Most of the Jews in Wallachia understood their Jewishness as faith, not nationality, and tended to assimilation rather than building a new Jewish state. The difficulties of gaining residence permission in Palestine, harsh living conditions and the high average age of local Zionists contributed to the demise of the organization in 1934.¹⁵⁴ In the 1930s, around 250,000 Jews in total immigrated to the Holy land, mostly because of the fascist ideology spreading throughout Europe.¹⁵⁵ For those who decided to stay in the Republic, the Makabi, one of the most popular Jewish organizations in the Czech lands, a Jewish version of the Czech sporting club Sokol, spread throughout the state in the 1930s.¹⁵⁶

2.2.1.4 *The Czech-Jewish Assimilation Movement*

The efforts of Czech assimilationists increased the level of Jewish integration into Czech society during the First Republic. Kieval claims that the state democratic system encouraged the Jews to blend with the Czechs. The connection with German culture thus gradually declined.¹⁵⁷ In the national census of 1921, the shift from German to Czech nationality and language in the Vsetín Region reflected for example in the renaming of the German names of the Jewish organizations to Czech.¹⁵⁸ The symbiosis of the Jews with the Czech society in culture, traditions, values and even religion resulted from the radical changes in the state organization. Firstly, the government legalized civil marriages, the

¹⁵² Pěkný, 526.

¹⁵³ Aliyah is a term denoting the immigration of the Jews from the Diaspora into Erez Yisrael, Palestine.

¹⁵⁴ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 50.

¹⁵⁵ Ben-Sasson, 939-940, 1010; Palestine fell under British governance in 1920; Pěkný, 529, 531.

¹⁵⁶ Pěkný, 530.

¹⁵⁷ Kieval, 216.

¹⁵⁸ National Census - Vsetín, 1921, State Archive Vsetín; Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*,

power of state and church separated, and as a result, the Jews could claim affiliation to any religion. Consequently, a high number of mixed marriages, a low birthrate and an increasing tendency for conversion decreased the number of the Jews in the Republic.¹⁵⁹ From a small movement before the First World War, Czech-Jewish assimilation movement significantly increased after the establishment of the Republic. Although minor in the Jewish National Council and the Jewish Party, the assimilationists held a strong societal position and ran many non-political organizations during the First Republic.¹⁶⁰

Regarding the development of the Jewish minority in the Czech lands, 354,000 Jews lived in the Czechoslovak Republic in 1921. According to Rothkirchen 180,855 (51.01 percent) of them claimed to be of Jewish nationality. Pěkný states that in Moravia the situation slightly differed. The stronger influence of Zionism was obvious: 47.84 percent of the Jews claimed to be of Jewish nationality, 34.85 percent to be German and 15.71 percent considered themselves as Czechs (Czechoslovaks). In Bohemia, 14.60 percent felt to be of Jewish nationality, compared to 34.63 percent Germans and 49.49 percent Czechoslovaks.¹⁶¹ In the following census of 1930, 36.30 percent of the total Jewish community were Czechoslovaks, 29.08 percent German and 31.29 percent Jewish.¹⁶² The rest of the Jews belonged to other state-recognized minorities such as Hungarians, Ruthenians or Poles. The rising tendency of allegiance to Czechoslovakia significantly sped up due to the popularity of fascism and anti-Semitism in Germany, which spread into the Czech lands.

2.2.2 The Impact of Fascism and Nazi Ideology on the First Republic

General awareness of fascist ideology reached the Czech lands much earlier than Hitler's nationalism. General Rudolf Gajda, the head of the National Fascist Community in Czechoslovakia (Národní obec fašistická, NFC), found inspiration in Italian policy and established the political association in 1927. However, the organization did not gain sufficient voter support either in the Vsetín Region or elsewhere in the Republic. In the 1929 parliamentary election, the NFC gained 0.3 percent in total in the Vsetín Region. Although not significant, the increasing support of fascism was reflected in the 1935

¹⁵⁹ Rothkirchen, 37, 49; Pěkný, 487.

¹⁶⁰ Rothkirchen, 32.

¹⁶¹ Pěkný, 135, 516; Rothkirchen 29.

¹⁶² Pěkný, 137.

elections, as more than 1.6 percent cast their votes for the NFC.¹⁶³ The anti-Semitic tendencies involved in Hitler's National Socialism spread across Europe, and except from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia was the only country to resist.¹⁶⁴ Rothkirchen points out that the truly serious problem threatening public opinion lay in the ethnic and national diversity of the Czechoslovak state. Even though the minorities were legally equal, their social position considerably differed. While the Hungarians, Germans and Poles remained rather sideline in their status, the Jews had their representatives in government, which made them the only state recognized national minority with this privilege. The sizeable German community in the Republic (the largest in all non-German states) amounted to around 3 million people or 23.23 percent of the total population of Czechoslovakia. These ethnic Germans lived mainly in Bohemian border regions, later called Sudetenland, and dominated the other state minorities. With the establishment of Czechoslovakia, the Germans found themselves a minority, which did not contribute to their general eagerness to engage in the social and political life of the Republic. According to Rothkirchen, the Germans "were ready to collaborate" with the Czechs in 1920, 1925 and 1929 parliamentary elections, however for most of them the rise of National Socialism in Germany brought a new hope of national recognizance.¹⁶⁵ The feelings of Sudeten Germans led to the formation of the Sudeten German Party (SDP) by Konrad Henlein in 1933.¹⁶⁶ The anti-Semitic atmosphere increased after the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in 1933. The majority of the nationalistic Germans, but also Slovaks, Hungarians and Ruthenians of Czechoslovakia embraced the Nazi propaganda and fought for their independence against the Republic. On the other hand, most of the Jews who still insisted on their ties with Germany turned their attention to Czechness due to Hitler's anti-Jewish stance. When Hitler introduced his plan of *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final solution of the Jewish question) in 1933, anti-Semitic activities also increased in Czechoslovakia.¹⁶⁷ Edvard Beneš, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, clearly stated the position of the Czech government and Czech nation towards Hitler's anti-Jewish policy: "There is no Jewish question in Czechoslovakia... No one, and naturally no Jew, declaring himself a member of the German nation - and I

¹⁶³ Rothkirchen, 46; Nekuda, 243, 250, 253.

¹⁶⁴ Ben-Sasson, 958.

¹⁶⁵ Rothkirchen, 50-51, 63.

¹⁶⁶ Konrad Henlein was a Sudeten German founder of SDP, SS Obergruppenführer, Reichsstatthalter in Sudeten since 1939.

¹⁶⁷ Rothkirchen, 50-52; Pěkný, 341.

underline that - could in our country be persecuted because of this, as long as his allegiance to our state remains beyond doubt.”¹⁶⁸

Thousands of refugees, many of them Jewish, crossed into Czechoslovakia in search of protection against the Nazi regime set up in Germany. According to Rothkirchen, they came in three waves. The socialists, forced to leave due to their political aspirations, and German intelligentsia came first. The refugees of the second wave were Jewish emigrants, who fled for racial and economic reasons. The last to appear were discharged prisoners of concentration camps.¹⁶⁹ The general attitude of Czechs towards the refugees was mostly positive. They were provided accommodation and guaranteed protection. Aid was also given by the Jewish Committee for Aid to Refugees from Germany, supported by other national associations and by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Consequently, the Czech lands became one of the most active in anti-Nazi activities and represented a haven for all refugees. For instance the family of Žofie Brilllová sought refuge in Rožnov pod Rahoštěm.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the enormous amount of immigrants the Republic had to deal with brought substantial difficulties. The lack of job opportunities and worsening economic situation of both, the refugees and the state, nurtured the political parties and groupings agitating against the Jews and sympathizing with the Nazi regime. Members of the rightest political parties led by the Heinlein party engaged most actively in the anti-Semitic campaign. Due to constant pressure from the side of pro-Nazi representatives, the government issued a law in 1935, limiting German refugees.¹⁷¹

The Catholic newspaper *Noviny zpod Radhoště* misused the escalating situation and published a detailed list of accusations against Felix Rotter, a Jewish medical doctor from Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, who was supposed to have intentionally abused his powers and refused to give aid to two patients who later died from their illnesses. Although Rotter, a Czech nationalist and a popular figure in town, was found innocent, the press contested the court's decision.¹⁷² The issuance of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935 made the anti-Jewish campaign even more concrete, for the laws viciously restricted all spheres of Jewish

¹⁶⁸ Rothkirchen, 52.

¹⁶⁹ Among these belonged for example brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann, well-known German writers.

¹⁷⁰ Baletka, “Židé,” 320-328.

¹⁷¹ Rothkirchen, 53-54, 76.

¹⁷² “Pan dr. Rotter a jeho pacienti,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, August 24, 1935; Daniela Srbová, “Poslední lékaři - Židé v Rožnově pod Radhoštěm,” (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 3, 2004).

life and provided grounds for persecution, racial discrimination and the subsequent genocide of European Jewry.¹⁷³ The Jewish communities repeatedly warned about the enormous threat of anti-Jewish propaganda. A statement by the Supreme Court of the Federation of the Jewish Religious Communities issued on September 22, 1935 stressed the acute necessity of intervention against the Nazi ideology: “In the name of humanity we call upon the governments of all civilized nations, and as Czechoslovak citizens upon the government and nation of Czechoslovakia, to extend a helping hand to the victims of the German regime within the framework of the League of Nations.”¹⁷⁴ *Noviny zpod Radhoště* emphasized moderation of the Czech nation in relations with local Jewry, but the Catholic journalists also warned the Jews about the limited patience of the Czechs.¹⁷⁵ Although lower in intensity, the anti-Semitic tendencies of the regional press widely influenced the opinions of the locals.

The sizeable Nazi prestige among the Sudeten Germans and the election victory of Henlein’s SDP in 1935 created the worst situation possible for the newly appointed President Edvard Beneš. In order to protect the country militarily, he authorized the building of fortifications and the rearmament of the Czechoslovak army. A treaty of mutual assistance was signed with the USSR, supplementing an alliance with France from 1924.¹⁷⁶ Despite being persecuted, the Jews took an active part in their fight against the Nazis and their relations with the Republic became even closer than before. Czech Jewry financially subscribed to all activities manifesting their disagreement with the situation development, namely in the Defense Training Program, Defense Loan, and provided individual financial contributions.¹⁷⁷

The increasing anti-Semitism and influence of Nazi propaganda characterized Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s. The ideology was not a matter of private aspirations

¹⁷³ According to the laws, the Jew was defined as offspring of at least three Jewish grandparents. Further, the so-called *Mischlinge*, mixed Jews of first degree or half-Jews, had two Jewish grandparents and did not belong to a Jewish Religious Community at the date of the law’s issuance. Second degree mixed Jews had one Jewish grandparent. A special racial questionnaire was introduced in order to ensure the Aryan origin and maintenance of pure German blood. Projekt holocaust.cz. “Norimberské zákony,” accessed February 20, 2012, http://www.holocaust.cz/cz/history/events/nuremberg_laws. In Czechoslovakia the laws became effective on June 21, 1939 and will be closely discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁷⁴ Rothkirchen, 55.

¹⁷⁵ “Prager Juden,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October 17, 1936.

¹⁷⁶ Rothkirchen, 56; The treaty should have ensured the alliance of Russia and France in case of an attack on Czechoslovakia.

¹⁷⁷ Rothkirchen, 57. Rothkirchen notes that the individual contributions of the Jews reached millions of Czech Crowns.

anymore, for it officially entered the media. Both the Jewish assimilationists and Zionists searched for a way to reverse the intimidating situation. While the young generation of Zionists initiated a campaign to promote better understanding of Judaism, their Czech counterparts made an effort to emphasize the national activities of the Jews. Hitler's effort to liberate the persecuted Germans of Czechoslovakia and Austria culminated on March 12, 1938 by the Anschluss of Austria. From then on, the solution of the Jewish question applied to the Austrian Jews as well. The Austrian refugees heading for Czechoslovakia increased the declining influx of German emigrants. The gates of the Republic nevertheless closed to hundreds of thousands due to strict regulations.¹⁷⁸ The impact of German dictatorship was visible not only in the general attitude towards the Jews, but *Noviny zpod Radhoště* openly expressed admiration of the political system. Criticizing the dying Czechoslovak democracy, the newspapers highlighted the unity and true national aspirations of Hitler's regime, calling it a regime of great ideas.¹⁷⁹ Such coverage confirms the growing power of the Nazi regime, but even more the backwardness of the local press.

The position of the Republic, made complicated by the revolting minorities and Nazi Germany, resulted in the Runciman Report of September 28, 1938, which vindicated the irredentist claims by Konrad Henlein of Sudetenland self-determination and its annexation to Germany. Hitler's aim was to dismantle Czechoslovakia and eliminate any connection with the Western powers. To fulfill this aim he planned to create a fascist Slovakia and absorb Bohemia and Moravia.¹⁸⁰ The Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938, signed by representatives of France, Britain, Italy and Germany put an end to the independent Czechoslovak Republic. The Sudetenland was officially annexed to Germany (see appendix XII). This act has remained in the eyes of Czechs an act of great betrayal.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Rothkirchen, 58-59, 76.

¹⁷⁹ "Diktatura a demokracie," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, May 14, 1938.

¹⁸⁰ Rothkirchen, 60, 63.

¹⁸¹ "Spojenci nás opustili!," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, September 24, 1938.

3 1938 – 1945: THE LAST YEARS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE VSETÍN REGION

3.1 The Second Republic

The “Munich Betrayal” raised feelings of disappointment, hopelessness and fear within the curtailed Czech nation. The establishment of the so-called Second Czechoslovak Republic on October 1, 1938, the resignation of President Beneš on October 5, and the subsequent appointment of Nazi-approved President Hácha on November 30, ended the era of model European democracy.¹⁸² The rightist Party of National Unity (Strana národního sjednocení), commenced the consolidation of other parties, opposed only by the National Labor Party (Národní strana práce).¹⁸³ Despite random protests, the shocked Czech populace expressed basically no resistance or disapproval. George Kennan, an American diplomat in Czecho-Slovakia, stated his opinion on the overall situation: “Nothing was left in the popular mind but bitterness, bewilderment and skepticism. Every feature of liberalism and democracy in particular, was hopelessly and irretrievably discredited.”¹⁸⁴ According to Rothkirchen, besides social damages, the economic loss of the state was enormous. Losing “three-tenths of its territory, one-third of population and four-tenths of national income” including the majority of its natural resources located in the occupied Sudetenland, cut the Republic off from any possibility of self-sufficiency and set the stage for a complete take-over by Germany.¹⁸⁵ *Noviny zpod Radhoště* reacted to the situation with a clear stand: the only chance for the Czechs was to get rid of the foreigners controlling industry and commerce and quit the vain humanity in order to preserve the Czech nation.¹⁸⁶

An increasing level of anti-Semitism deteriorated the situation of the Jews in Czecho-Slovakia. More than 17,000 homeless refugees from occupied borderlands searched for

¹⁸² Rothkirchen, 63-65. Beneš and the political representatives created an exile government in Great Britain.

¹⁸³ Jana Korytářová, “Každodenní život ve Vsetíně v době okupace 1939 – 1945,” (master’s thesis, University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, 2010), 26.

¹⁸⁴ George Kennan, “From Prague After Munich,” *Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940* (Princeton, N.J., 1968): 7, quoted in Livia Rothkirchen, “Czech Attitudes toward the Jews during the Nazi Regime,” in *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance* Vol. 13, edited by Livia Rothkirchen, 287-329, Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1979.

¹⁸⁵ Rothkirchen, 69.

¹⁸⁶ “Světový mír zachránět na účet Československa,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October, 8, 1938.

help in the interior parts of the state.¹⁸⁷ Families Honigwachs, Perl, Meisel, Hirsch, Klein and many others found shelter in Wallachia.¹⁸⁸ Although provided with necessary aid by the government and various Jewish organizations, their presence nourished the anti-Semitic flames. Since the state was already glutted with refugees from Germany and Austria, the growing unemployment rate, lower industrial production, subsequent closure of factories and lack of residential premises for the refugees forced the government to refuse any extra expatriates.¹⁸⁹ Ben-Sasson argues that the economic position of the Jews was more than desperate.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, the subsequent expulsion of the Jews from society confirmed emigration to be the only chance for refused refugees. No Jewish person, not even the Czech-Jewish assimilationists, could have felt safe in their position within the Czech environment: “Anti-Semitism here is growing fearfully. The local people say: ‘It is the fault of the Jews. The Jews have sold us out!’ Where is the logic [in that]? But hate does not require logic!”¹⁹¹ Most of the Jews who intuitively decided to leave Czechoslovakia in 1938 and the early months of 1939 escaped certain death in the Nazi’s “Final Solution”.¹⁹² The idea of emigration was supported by the Czech representatives and the British leaders, who together with France provided the Czech government with financial aid, which substantially eased its complicated financial situation. However, the visas necessary for a legal transfer to Britain, Palestine or other exile destinations were difficult to obtain. Additionally, most of the target countries’ governments issued restrictions limiting the number of immigrants. For those who did not believe in a positive outcome, emigration, either legal or illegal, was the only possible solution. Thousands of refugees left for Palestine, Great Britain, France, northern Europe, the United States, South and Central America until the borders of the Republic definitely closed in 1939.¹⁹³ Not all escapees were successful. Many refugees died abroad while caught and repatriated illegals ended up in the hands of the Nazis shortly after their return. Baletka claims that the increasing number of passport applications in the Vsetín Region during the Second Republic period, represented the growing interest in emigration among the Jewish inhabitants. Salomon Honigwachs with his son Arnošt, the family of Bedřich Beck and

¹⁸⁷ Rothkirchen, 78.

¹⁸⁸ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 72-73.

¹⁸⁹ Rothkirchen, 78.

¹⁹⁰ Ben-Sasson, 959.

¹⁹¹ From a letter by poet Ilse Weber, quoted in Rothkirchen, 69.

¹⁹² A Nazi plan for the systematic concentration and subsequent extermination of the European Jews.

¹⁹³ Rothkirchen, 81.

Erich London from Valašské Meziříčí were successful in their requests. The parents of Ilse Reiner tried to obtain proper contacts in order to emigrate to the United States. Unfortunately, their attempts failed.¹⁹⁴ According to historian Blažena Przybylová, only those well-informed and financially secure sought a chance to leave the country. Most of the general public was not able to either decide or prepare fast enough for the departure. Insufficient financial resources, a lack of suitable contacts or basic human emotions such as fear or denial played important roles in the decision-making process. However, the majority of the Jews stayed and simply hoped for a good ending.¹⁹⁵

The turning point for the Jews took place on October 9, 1938 in German territory and in the annexed provinces of Sudetenland. An anti-Jewish pogrom led by the Nazis ended in 267 burned synagogues, 7,500 damaged Jewish shops and apartments, and more than 30,000 arrested Jews subsequently imprisoned in concentration camps. The *Kristallnacht* (the Night of Broken Glass) declared war on the Jewish race.¹⁹⁶ An open manifestation of hatred did not occur in the Vsetín Region, nevertheless a constant flow of propaganda reached the whole population within a short time. Willing or not, the majority of Czech society gradually succumbed to the pressure of anti-Semitism. It appears obvious that, contrary to Beneš's proclamation from 1933, a Jewish question indeed existed in Czechoslovakia. *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, a devoted adversary of the Jews in Wallachia, also intensified its xenophobic attitude. In an article called "A Jewish Question", the newspaper understood the persecution of the Jews as an expression of accumulated aversion. Describing the minority as a foreign element in the body of a nation, which must be removed, it emphasized the necessity of the solution to the Jewish question.¹⁹⁷ Even though the position held by the newspaper did not represent the general attitude of the gentiles in the Vsetín Region, the influence of the local press left remarkable traces in the public consciousness. As Ben-Sasson claims, there emerged some kind of battle between the Jews and the gentiles with no winning potential for the Jewish minority.¹⁹⁸ The proclamation of independence of Slovakia on March 14, 1939, annexation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia to Hungary on March 15, and the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and

¹⁹⁴ Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child*, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Blažena Przybylová, "Naděje San Domingo - nezdařený pokus o emigraci," (paper presented at the annual meeting *Židé a Morava*, Kroměříž, November 9, 2005).

¹⁹⁶ Pěkný, 567.

¹⁹⁷ "Otázka židovská," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, November 5, 1938.

¹⁹⁸ Ben-Sasson, 856.

Moravia the very same day finished the political, economic and social disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia.¹⁹⁹ The era of hatred, persecution and final extermination of the Czech Jews began.

3.2 The Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia – The Destruction of the Jewish Community

“I took my coat and left at once. I still heard those cowards shouting out my name for the last time from the back of the room. Then I found myself outside, on the freezing street, trembling with fatigue. Oh God, where have I sinned?” Jiří Orten, 1940²⁰⁰

Nearly a thousand-year history of Jewish discrimination, persecution and hatred renewed itself after only two decades of legal equality and social and economic freedoms guaranteed by the Czechoslovak democracy. With a great contribution by the general public, a community largely influencing the Vsetín Region for over three centuries perished in less than three years of Nazi persecution.

3.2.1 The Nazi Invasion of Czecho-Slovakia

On March 15, 1939 the Nazis invaded the remnants of what used to be Czechoslovakia. The soothing act of autonomy declaration of the newly established Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as well as its euphemistic designation did not cover the real aim of Hitler. Ilse Reiner, living in Vsetín in 1939, recalled her reaction to the occupation: “It seemed odd to be called ‘protectorate’, because if they hadn’t come to invade us, we wouldn’t need a protection.”²⁰¹ For effect, Emil Hácha remained president, supported by a newly nominated cabinet. In fact, Konstantin von Neurath, a Deputy Protector appointed on March 18, with Karl Herman Frank as State Secretary, represented the actual leader of the protectorate, Adolf Hitler.²⁰² While entering the weakened country, his nationalistic regime based on “Blood and Soil” territorial expansion and the superiority

¹⁹⁹ Rothkirchen, 97.

²⁰⁰ Jiří Orten was a Czech Jewish poet who died during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. Entry of 27.10.1940, in *Deniky Jiřího Ortena: Poesie – myšlenky – zápisky* (Prague, 1958), p. 304, quoted in Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 115.

²⁰¹ Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner, DVD, 4:30.

²⁰² Rothkirchen, 99.

of the biologically pure Aryan race did not meet with much opposition. Additionally, to unify the protectorate political system, the Committee of National Solidarity (Národní souručenství) comprised of men of non-Jewish origin, acted as the only officially recognized political party after April 1939.²⁰³

On the very day of occupation, the Nazis entered Vsetín led by Gestapo officer Eckert, who announced the establishment of the protectorate to the town's council (see appendix XIII).²⁰⁴ "Liebstandarte SS Adolf Hitler" and other German units moved into the town the following day. "Soon the red flags with swastikas were draped from the windows and the shops of Jewish merchants were padlocked."²⁰⁵ On March 17, the council issued an occupation proclamation to the local populace. The Jewish community immediately experienced the fatal consequences of the newly established regime. On the night of March 19, the Nazis burned down the synagogue in Vsetín. As Baletka claims, the intervening firefighters were forbidden to act. Consequently, the local Gestapo unit, later known for its particular cruelty, brutally beat the old and almost blind cantor Blau, just saved from the burning building by his neighbors.²⁰⁶ Although the gentile inhabitants shared with the Jews a considerable displeasure with the Nazi presence in the town, it was information they willingly provided that resulted in the beating and torturing of the local Jews. Such violence was repeated daily in the Gestapo headquarters in Vsetín, and although mainly due to trivialities, was often very brutal (see appendix XIV). Little Ilse Reiner personally experienced the violence of the Nazi police: "...I have seen Jewish citizens standing up against the wall who were at the headquarters for questioning. Furthermore, I saw a man with a heavy chair running up and down the stairs."²⁰⁷ For the majority of the local Jews, optimism was replaced with absolute despair. Not able to handle the present or face the bleak future, Josef Berger of Valašské Meziříčí committed suicide shortly after March 15.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ Zdeněk Pomkla, "Události roku 1938 a německá okupace," in *Okres Vsetín. Rožnovsko – Valašskomeziříčsko – Vsetínsko*, edited by Vladimír Nekuda, 270-289 (Brno: Hvězdárna Valašské Meziříčí, 2002).

²⁰⁴ Gestapo is an abbreviation of German "Geheim Staatspolizei" (Secret German Police).

²⁰⁵ Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child*, 11; Korytářová, "Každodenní život ve Vsetíně v době okupace 1939 – 1945," 35.

²⁰⁶ Ladislav Baletka and Jaroslav Klenovský, "Osudy vsetínské synagogy," (paper presented at the annual meeting Židé a Morava, Kroměříž, November 3, 2004).

²⁰⁷ Ladislav Baletka, "Holocaust – pokračování..." *Nové Valašsko*, November 25, 1992; Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child*, 40.

²⁰⁸ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 86.

3.2.2 Anti-Jewish Legislation in Practice

The Vsetín town council issued one of the first documents delimiting Jewish rights on the day of the invasion. In order to take over the Jewish apartments for Germans, twenty-one Jewish apartment-owners with their families were forced to move in with relatives without any financial or material compensation.²⁰⁹ Reiner remembers: "...my mother and I took our possessions having lost most of them and hiding others, and we moved to a nearby village of Ruzdka, where we occupied one room and shared the toilet down the hall with two other families."²¹⁰ Consequently, all inhabitants were obliged to report their actual residence as of April 30, 1939. Besides other data, the document asked for racial allegiance, literally, whether the person was a Jew or not. In the summer of 1939, the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were applied to the protectorate and harshly oppressed the lives of all Jews. On June 21, the Reich Protector issued a precise definition of the Jews in order to simplify the stipulation of determinative racial factors.²¹¹ The Jews were forbidden to visit culture and sport organizations, shop except in certain stores and at times given, and leave their houses after 8 p.m., visit parks and playgrounds, move beyond the assigned side of streets, or travel by public transportation. Further humiliating restrictions followed.²¹² Word of the discriminating bans spread quickly among the public, despite efforts by Vsetín's council to restrict the dissemination of the information just to the local Jewish community. The aim of the laws was more than clear: to violate Jewish rights, dehumanize and segregate the Jews and evoke a feeling of inferiority among the Jewish community.²¹³

²⁰⁹ The ordinance issued by the town's council contains names and signatures of Eichner, Glesingerová, Gold, Goldberger, Grünbaum, Heisová, Heisz, Hirschová, Knöpfelmacher, Langfeldrová, Lazarus, Neugebauer, Rebenwurz, Reichenthal, Sax, Schön, Schrötter, Steinhartová, Weinstein, Wintrová, Zeml.

²¹⁰ Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child*, 12.

²¹¹ "A Jew is defined as: (a) A descendant of at least three Jewish grandparents; a grandparent is considered Jewish if he belonged to the Jewish religious community. (b) Any part-Jewish person who descends from two Jewish grandparents who (1) belonged to the Jewish religious community on March 17, 1939 or was admitted thereafter; (2) was married to a Jew on March 17, 1939 or thereafter; (3) is the issue of a marriage with a Jew. As defined in (a), concluded after March 17, 1939; and (4) is the issue of an illegitimate union with a Jew, as defined in (a), and was born after February 1, 1940." Moses Moskowitz, "The Jewish Situation in the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia," *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 1 (1942): 17-44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4615186> (accessed October 3, 2011).

²¹² Korytářová, "Každodenní život ve Vsetíně v době okupace 1939 – 1945," 44. A prediction by *Noviny zpod Radhoště* from the year 1900 of the Jews to be separated in extra coupes of trains in fifty years' time appears unbelievable. Indeed, forty years later, the Jews were allowed to use only the last coach of train for transport. "Židovská drzost," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, September 15, 1900.

²¹³ Pěkný, 368.

As Uriel Tal notes: “the Nazis excised the Jews from humankind and transformed them into a germ, a parasite, a bloodsucker... ‘basic material of everything negative’.”²¹⁴

Rothkirchen points out that the attitude of the locals towards their Jewish neighbors indeed rapidly deteriorated: “Chauvinism and narrow-mindedness became more perceptible and vociferous; profound demoralization and cynicism gained the upper hand among the Czech populace. The relationship between the Czechs and the Jews in what was now Reich Protectorate reached its lowest point.”²¹⁵ The increasing power of Germans gradually affected all spheres of public life, not only of the Jews but the general public as well. Although only fifty-three persons were of German nationality in the whole Vsetín Region, they too often faced terror, insults and disregard from the Czechs.²¹⁶ In Vsetín were the German police, comprising six officers and a NSV unit (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt) which supplied poor inhabitants with food. Ironically, the food had to be paid for by the town’s government. Even so, the Germans took photos of the disbursement and used them as propaganda back in Germany.²¹⁷ The equalization of the German language in all civil and administrative matters on July 5, introduced one of main aims of the Nazi program, Germanization of the Czech nation. *Noviny zpod Radhoště* praised this step as very practical and useful.²¹⁸ Following the exclusion of the Jews from public administration, the judiciary, government, and medical practice, four Jewish members of Vsetín town council resigned.²¹⁹ Lists compiled by Max Schön and Pavel Neugebauer, members of the Jewish Religious Community in Vsetín, and by Karel Heller in Valašské Meziříčí provided the Nazis with exact names, addresses and occupations of the local Jews (see appendix XV and XVI). To keep the poor supply situation under control, the

²¹⁴ Uriel Tal, “On the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide,” in *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance 13*, edited by Livia Rothkirchen, 7-52 (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1979, p. 40).

²¹⁵ Rothkirchen, 100.

²¹⁶ Korytářová, “Každodenní život ve Vsetíne v době okupace 1939 – 1945,” 42. Chad Bryant, “Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939-1946,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 4 (2002): 683-706, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3090386> (accessed September 2, 2011).

²¹⁷ Pomkła, “Události roku 1938 a německá okupace,” 270-289. Among other German organizations in Vsetín belonged: DAF – Deutsche Arbeitsfront, the German Labor Front; NSF – Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft, The National Socialistic Women Organization; HJ – Hitlerjugend for youngsters; RAD – Reichsarbeitsdienst, pre-military education for boys between 15–19 of age and BDM – Bund Deutscher Mädel with the same purpose but intended for girls. See appendix XIV and Korytářová, 36.

²¹⁸ Rothkirchen, 104; “Úprava jazykové otázky,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, August 26, 1940.

²¹⁹ Dr. Rebenwurz, Ludvík Schön, Josef Goldberger, Hanuš Knöpfelmacher; Baletka, “Holocaust – pokračování...”.

protectorate government introduced food tickets in September 1939. As declared by the town's ordinance, the Jews were excluded from this program as well (see appendix XIX).

The process of Aryanization, de-Judaization of the economy, began on June 21, 1939 (see appendix XVII and XVIII). The Jewish businesses fell into hands of so-called "Treuhänder", faithful hands of German nationals. Consequently, the Jews had to hand in their finances, jewelry, securities and valuables. Only in Valašské Meziříčí, fourteen Jewish-owned shops and factories were Aryanized.²²⁰ Rothkirchen estimates that the Jewish property seized by the Nazis, which represented one-third of the industrial and bank capital of Czechoslovakia, amounted to seventeen billion Czech Crowns. Pěkný claims, that the sum reached twenty billion minimum.²²¹ To acquire property illegally held by the Jews, the Gestapo repeatedly ransacked Jewish houses. Reiner remembers: "One day the Gestapo showed up again and conducted a house search making a mess out of our room... Fortunately, they had overlooked a couple of cactus plants on the window sill, for in the earth we had hidden some jewelry..."²²² The Jews were employed only in positions allocated to them by the Labor Exchange. As unpaid labor, they performed hard physical work in road-building, quarries, farms and forests, they were forced to clean public houses of anti-German signs, streets from snow in winter or to work on an agricultural farm in Branky.²²³ Any revolt resulted in immediate punishment, torture and dispatch to a concentration camp. During 1941, prior to the mass deportation of the Vsetín Jews, some of the Jewish youngsters died in the Vernichtung durch Arbeit (Annihilation through work) program in labor camps in Poland.²²⁴ Restrictions alienating the Jews from society continued with the exclusion of Jewish children from public schools in August 1940. The next month all Jews were obliged to submit a racial questionnaire of origin.²²⁵ As a part of the process of Aryanization, all Jewish shops and businesses had to post a sign denoting

²²⁰ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách...*, 87; The plot of the 1965 Academy Award-winning film *Obchod na Korze* (The Shop on Main Street) revolves around the main character, Anton Brtko, being appointed Treuhänder over Rozálie Lautmannová's button store.

²²¹ *Noviny zpod Radhoště* specified seventeen billion in property and twenty billion including jewelry and securities. Rothkirchen, 105; Pěkný, 370; "Soupis židovského majetku," *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, August 26, 1940.

²²² Pěkný, 368; Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child*, 12.

²²³ About forty young and healthy Jews from the region were held in the farm for forced labor by the Gestapo. See We Remember Jewish Nový Jičín & Jewish Valašské Meziříčí! (Czechoslovakia), "Michael Honey: Commemoration of Valašské Meziříčí." (accessed July 5, 2011). <http://www.zchor.org/valasske.htm#commemoration>.

²²⁴ Rothkirchen, 110; Baletka, *Židé v dějinách...*, 92; Baletka, "Holocaust – pokračování..."; The prisoners died as a consequence of malnutrition and hard labor.

²²⁵ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách...*, 90.

their Jewish ownership. Subsequently, anti-Semitic posters fighting against usurers and Jewish blood-sucking businessmen appeared across Vsetín.²²⁶ Ben-Sasson notes that the middle class townsmen, who had been competing against their Jewish rivals for centuries, opposed the Jews even more intensively.²²⁷ Influenced by centuries-long anti-Semitism, the inferior position of the Czechs in the protectorate nurtured the negative attitude towards the local Jews. Despite being native, they were persecuted by the Germans. To blame the Jews as the cause of this persecution was an easy and convenient way to improve the living conditions under occupation. Silvestr Kazmír recently supported this assertion in describing the attitude of the local gentiles towards the Jews as hateful and averse.²²⁸

Beginning September 1, 1941, the Star of David, a six-point star with the black imprint “Jude”, became an obligatory accessory worn by the Jews on the left side of the upper clothing.²²⁹ Reinhard Heydrich, appointed Deputy Protector the same month, introduced a new policy based upon three principles: “Germanization of the Protectorate, wiping out Czech resistance and launching the ‘Final Solution’ – the wholesale deportation of the Jews.”²³⁰ As a result of Heydrich’s policies, the synagogue in Valašské Meziříčí was closed on the grounds that it was a center of illegal Jewish propaganda. Once empty, local Hitlerjugend and Nazi supporters seriously damaged the building.²³¹ After the establishment of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, which was to unite all 136 Czech Jewish Religious Communities numbering 118,310 persons in total, in order to concentrate and “evacuate” all Jews from the protectorate, the solution of the Jewish problem in the Czech lands was found.²³² The Jews were to be isolated from the gentile population, centralized into closed places and gradually transported to the East and liquidated.²³³ Related to this plan, Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer-SS announced: “The Führer demands that the Reich and the Protectorate, from west to east, be liberated from the Jews as soon as possible.”²³⁴ *Noviny zpod Radhoště* took advantage of the general anti-Semitic tendencies and nurtured the general hatred. Once again, the local press blamed the

²²⁶ Korytnářová, 57.

²²⁷ Ben-Sasson, 855, 871; Korytnářová, 57.

²²⁸ Silvestr Kazmír, interviewed by the author, Vsetín, January 26, 2012.

²²⁹ Korytnářová, 44.

²³⁰ Rothkirchen, 123.

²³¹ Ladislav Baletka, “Synagoga ve Valašském Meziříčí-Krásně,” (paper presented at the annual meeting *Židé a Morava*, Kroměříž, November 12, 2003).

²³² Rybár, 117; Rothkirchen, 116.

²³³ Pěkný, 345.

²³⁴ Rothkirchen, 123.

Jews of spreading alcoholism, moral decline and the destruction of the poor Wallachians, and stressed the importance of a quick solution to the Jewish problem. The Jews were defined as slave traders and exploiters, and the idea of de-Judaization of the Czech lands appeared as the only solution possible for healing the country.²³⁵

3.2.3 The End of the Jewish Community in the Vsetín Region

In response to the seriousness of the threat facing them, the different factions of the local Jewish community, the Czech assimilationist and Zionists, set aside their differences.²³⁶ The emotional and material support among the community members was basically all the Jews could rely on. Starting in February 1942, the Gestapo punished any attempts of communication with the Jews and any sympathetic displays towards them. Furthermore, the Jews themselves were forbidden to meet non-Jewish.²³⁷ According to the Chancellor of Germany Joseph Goebbels, “there can be no sentimental feelings here. The Jews have deserved the catastrophe that they are now experiencing. They shall experience their own annihilation together with the destruction of our enemies. We must accelerate this process with cold brutality...”²³⁸ Intimidated by the Gestapo, fearful for their own lives and rather uninterested in the fate of their Jewish friends, the people of Wallachia enabled the smooth implementation of the Nazi plan. On September 14, 1942, the majority of the Jews of the Vsetín Region left for the Theresienstadt concentration camp near Prague. This transitional camp served as a gathering place of all Czech Jews on their way to death. As Baletka describes, the Jews were brought to the railway station in Valašské Meziříčí and quietly loaded in cattle cars so as not to attract attention. Deprived of almost all personal property, they were allowed a fifty-kilogram suitcase including a spoon, a blanket, a cup, necessary clothes and food supplies for three days. The cattle train took them northeast to Ostrava first, and three days later to Theresienstadt. The transport marked simply “Bh” arrived at the camp on September 18.²³⁹ Reiner recalls the atmosphere inside the wagon: “There is a lot of pushing, there is a lot of screaming. You get shoved in, the doors get bolted. You do see at this point the SS soldiers with the guns standing guard

²³⁵ “Očista arisací českého společenského života,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, October 14, 1940; “Odžidovštění je zájmem národa,” *Noviny zpod Radhoště*, February 22, 1941.

²³⁶ Rothkirchen, 116.

²³⁷ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách...*, 91.

²³⁸ Martin Brozsat, “Hitler and the Genesis of the “Final Solution”: An Assessment of David Irving’s Theses,” in *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance 13*, edited by Livia Rothkirchen, 73-125 (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1979, p. 101).

²³⁹ Baletka, *Židé v dějinách Valašského Meziříčí*, 95.

around the train so you know you cannot get out. You're packed in like sardines, you can hardly breathe, the air is very, very dense, it's hot and there is a lot of stench."²⁴⁰

Surviving the transport, one third of all deportees immediately left Theresienstadt for a death camp in Maly Trostenets, Belarus, where they were lined up at the edge of large pits and executed with a single shot to the back of the neck. Those lucky enough not to die of malnutrition in Theresienstadt were "evacuated" to the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau or Treblinka, Poland, Dachau in Germany and many others including Zamošči and Sobibór, in the former Soviet Union (see appendix XX).²⁴¹ Of the Jews from the protectorate, 73,468 were transported to Theresienstadt; 6,152 died there. Only 3,097 out of 60,382 Jews later deported to the East survived.²⁴² By the end of 1942, there were no Jews left in the Vsetín Region. Out of 430 Vsetín Jews imprisoned in the concentration camps only seventeen of them returned.²⁴³

In front of the eyes of their neighbors, some of whom even expressly celebrated, a sizeable group of people was legally driven out of society, deported to death camps and murdered.²⁴⁴ More than 80,000 people, over two-thirds of the Czech Jewry, died during the Holocaust either on their way to the concentration camps, in "Annihilation through Work" programs, starved to death, poisoned in gas chambers, shot by the *Einsatzgruppen*, murdered during death marches or simply for fun by perverted Nazi sympathizers.²⁴⁵ But

²⁴⁰ Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner, DVD, 33:38.

²⁴¹ See Silvestr Kazmír, *Holocaust na Vsetínsku 1939 – 1945*, https://4615146068179867692-a-1802744773732722657-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/silvestrkazmir/knihy/holocaust-r-v-2011/Holocaust%20na%20Vsetínsku.swf?attachauth=ANoY7cqwrsmu-t9FTELqsruWXh04sDeXsqOURB-dtgdCZbdjiVtSMIOXioNZZvCV1zfSgqHEuox4mocBv_18F9SvgaSmxNIu9o9BR3wnYkzk0BZMcyPNkOp7KwXLCdvVrnKIZLKZy1lBK_HFNyEoXogqfgQ9ejKXZZ7nbheUK5LBB2Mk_kNvuILcFzU_DfVtcY5xdbnkFswuxD86LV2oc2GwYf7m-jC330P6zq7ms_RF_wnms-PjbZ2jIB0ITv95gKoytAj53gMG&attredirects=1 (accessed February 2, 2012).

²⁴² Vítejte na Pražském hradě, "The Genocide of the Czech Jews," http://old.hrad.cz/kpr/holocaust/hist_zid_uk.html (accessed September 30, 2011).

²⁴³ The data on Jewish survivors of the Holocaust differ according to the criteria used for definition of a Jew. According to Baletka, the names are as follows: from Vsetín: Ilse Eichnerová (Reiner), Otto Knöpfelmacher, Marta Roubíčková-Golbergerová, Erich Schön, Otto Schön, Albert Schön, Marek Schön-Svoboda and Otto Deutelbaum. From Valašské Meziříčí: Anna Grollová, Olga Grollová, Michael Honigwachs, Zdeňka Langrová, Marek Quittner, Paula Quittnerová, Aurélie Schönfeldová, Babette Tintnerová (see appendix XXII). From Rožnov pod Radhoštěm: Petr Beck. See Baletka, "Židé," 2002. Erich Kulka-Schön later emigrated to Israel and became a famous historian and writer, author of books dealing with the history of the Czech Jews and the Holocaust

²⁴⁴ Pěkný, 570.

²⁴⁵ Pěkný, 656; Felix Rotter, a Jewish doctor from Rožnov pod Radhoštěm was one of the leaders of the Defense of the Nation resistance movement. Among the other members of the movement were Milan Kulka from Nový Hrozenkov, Karel Gold and Desider Reichenthal (later executed by the Nazis – see appendix XXI), Rudolf Knöpfelmacher, Pavel Neugebauer, and Josef Schrötter from Vsetín, Leo Knöpfelmacher from

the Jews should not be perceived as completely passive in their struggle for life. Those who were able to run or hide fought as members of the British air force, Czechoslovak units in the USSR, Africa and elsewhere for the independence of their Czech nation.²⁴⁶ However, the careless behavior of the gentile population not only facilitated the aim of the Nazis, but stigmatized the whole generation as accomplices of the largest genocide in world history. This expression of indifference and hatred, be it driven by desires for revenge or feeling of envy, fear or anxiety, group mentality, or just a plain stupidity, is completely incomprehensible. Consequently, the majority of the people of the Vsetín Region intentionally participated in the murder of 413 human beings.²⁴⁷ Afterwards, the residents of Vsetín turned their attention to covering up their crimes against humanity by controlling the historical memory of the Nazi era. They would see to it that their culpability in the Holocaust would be forgotten by future generations.

Valašské Meziříčí and others. See Ladislav Baletka, *Rožnov pod Radhoštěm a jeho okolí v odboji proti fašismu 1938 – 1945*, Vsetín: OV ČSPB, 1986 and Ladislav Baletka, “Holocaust - pokračování...,” 1992.

²⁴⁶ Pěkný, 140; Brothers Sax served in British army, Petr Beck in Soviet army. See Baletka, “Holocaust - pokračování...,” 1992.

²⁴⁷ The numbers of Jewish victims differ. The anthology of all war victims of Wallachia contains 411 Jewish names. See appendix XXII and František Chovančík and Jaroslav Švehla, *Almanach obětí nacismu v letech 1939-1945 v okrese Vsetín* (Vsetín: Okr. výbor Čes. svazu bojovníků za svobodu, 1994).

4 FORGOTTEN? FACTORS DETERMINING THE HISTORICAL MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust belongs among the darkest periods of human history due to the millions of innocent victims viciously murdered by fanatic supporters of the anti-Semitic Nazi ideology. However, the historical memory of the Shoah remains incomplete. The general public, the silent majority who allowed a sizeable group from their midst to perish and subsequently erased it from the collective awareness greatly contributed to the extent of the tragedy by both allowing it to happen and then sweeping the memory of it under the rug. The residents of the Vsetín Region proved no exception, allowing the local Jewish community to fall into oblivion. How is it possible to forget such an atrocious part of one's own history? Historian Jan Gross condemns such an action, noting that "...those who witnessed such a horrible tragedy would be callous indeed if they had all but forgotten what happened."²⁴⁸

The reasons and motives for forgetting the Holocaust diverge and were shaped by various factors. Postwar political development and four decades of totalitarian regime greatly influenced the general perception of both the Holocaust and the Jews in the region. Yet, the personal and inner motives often played a fundamental role in forming the local historical memory. Due to a combination of factors, local inhabitants of Vsetín successfully eliminated the Jewish community together with the Holocaust from the public awareness. As a result, most of the modern-day inhabitants, even though well-informed about the atrocities of World War II, live under a false notion that the Jews did not live and the Shoah did not happen in the Vsetín Region.

4.1 The Postwar Political Development

4.1.1 The Reconstruction of Czechoslovakia and the Establishment of the State of Israel

The approach of the Czechoslovak state towards the national minorities rapidly changed after the liberation in May 1945. Whereas Masaryk's Republic, regarding the geographic and national diversity within the newly established state, represented a melting

²⁴⁸ Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 129, 134.

pot in the center of Europe, Beneš, after his return from exile, prevented the reoccurrence of minority problems by establishing a state “as homogenous as possible”.²⁴⁹ The strictly bi-national state of Czechs and Slovaks granted full equality of rights. Nevertheless, there was no place for the minorities anymore. Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians and other ethnicities were transferred to their countries of origin. As there was no legal Jewish state yet, the few surviving Jews had to decide among either of the legally-recognized nationalities. Although the Jews once again found themselves sidelined, Beneš and his newly established government supported the idea of the Jewish homeland in Israel: “It will, first of all be necessary to put a radical and permanent end to racism and anti-Semitism. I regard the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as the only just and possible solution of the world Jewish problem.”²⁵⁰ Thus, those who were lucky enough to survive the war and did not accept the idea of complete assimilation either because of the disillusionment caused by horrible experience of the Holocaust, or their long-life orientation to Zionism, embraced the hope of emigrating to the Holy Land. The support of the official institutions and a general goodwill both greatly contributed to the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.²⁵¹ In the first two years of existence of the Jewish state, over 19,000 emigrants left Czechoslovakia.²⁵² On one hand, the postwar policy of Beneš definitely supported the desire of the Jews for their own national recognizance. On the other hand, the subsequent Aliyah²⁵³ considerably lowered the already diminutive number of the Czechoslovak Jews.

4.1.2 State-approved Anti-Semitism of the Communist Regime

The growing popularity of communist ideas in opposition to German National Socialism, together with political disunity within the postwar Czechoslovak government, led the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to take over state control on February 25, 1948.²⁵⁴ Following Beneš’s resignation in June 1948, Communist Prime Minister Klement Gottwald became president and introduced a totalitarian regime, which subsequently prevailed in the republic for more than forty years. The initial attraction of this new

²⁴⁹ Rothkirchen, 170.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 185.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 170, 285, 287.

²⁵² Ibid., 288.

²⁵³ As discussed in Chapter 2, Aliyah is a term denoting the immigration of the Jews from the Diaspora into Erez Yisrael, Palestine.

²⁵⁴ So-called “Victorious February”.

political system is well understandable considering the circumstances of the past decade. Most of the Czech Jews naturally took sides with the leading party.²⁵⁵ However, the positive possibilities dissipated practically overnight. What seemed to be an ideal solution, radically changed to another horror affecting the Czech Jewish community for more than four decades. Diplomatic relations with Israel were interrupted, and the new leading power of Czechoslovakia proclaimed an open war against the Jews as “parasites, cosmopolitan aliens conspiring against proletarians”.²⁵⁶ Only three years after the liberation from the Nazi regime, the Jews found themselves again in the position of state enemy number one. Although not officially a part of the Communist program, anti-Semitism flourished, in part because “a widespread propaganda was launched in the press and on the radio denigrating the issue of the Holocaust.”²⁵⁷ In the 1950s, Jewish organizations were prohibited. A reduction in religious services and a prohibition of any expressions of Judaism followed in the 1960s.²⁵⁸ Most of the Jewish property was nationalized. Jews themselves were psychologically and physically attacked, removed from their positions in politics, economics and culture, spied on and often imprisoned.²⁵⁹ Consequently, about 6,000 Jews emigrated from Czechoslovakia, reducing the community even more.²⁶⁰ Jewishness became a symbol of shame, animosity and subversion of the regime. The country suffered under the regressive political system, isolating the republic from liberal thinking and education, which subsequently led to a distinct lack of data considering the Holocaust and the Jewish community in particular, and the silencing of most of the Holocaust victims and rescuers under the threat of the death penalty.²⁶¹ The general knowledge and awareness regarding the atrocities of Second World War and the fate of the sizeable Jewish minority, which formed a part of the history of Czechoslovakia, became unpopular. Unfortunately, the impact of this period reflects in modern times and the process of reconstruction of the historical memory of the Holocaust, successfully erased by the Communist regime, has been very long and complicated.

²⁵⁵ Rothkirchen, 96.; 285.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 292.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 293.

²⁵⁸ Pěkný, 144, Rothkirchen, 291.

²⁵⁹ Pěkný, 145, 374, Rothkirchen, 288.

²⁶⁰ Pěkný, 148.

²⁶¹ Rothkirchen, 219.

4.1.3 The Holocaust: A Missing Chapter in Postwar Education

All nations failed to save millions from extermination, nor did they make denunciation of mass-murder and genocide a central theme in their education. Rather they frequently turned a blind eye to the terrible suffering of the Jews or hushed it up. The few heartwarming examples of assistance and sacrifice only served to emphasize the general disregard, the blank wall of rejection and hostility that the Jews encountered almost everywhere.²⁶²

As stated by Ben-Sasson, the Holocaust and the destruction of Czech Jewry still remains rather a controversial topic regarding extent of coverage in the history textbooks. However, the Czech education system was also subject to requirements of the postwar political systems. The very short period of the Czechoslovak democracy from 1945-1948 is characterized by a deficiency in data and sources available, for the majority of the Jews who returned to their hometowns after liberation did not reconcile themselves with the situation and either emigrated or at least moved out of the town, where they had nothing left but bad memories. Additionally, it took very a long time to put the facts and evidence together. Yet, when it was finally the right time to face the truth of the Holocaust, the Communists kept the Czechs and Slovaks from talking about it openly. Moreover, the victims themselves again became hunted, which only strengthened their silence. Following the “Velvet Revolution” of 1989, the Czech democratic system finally allowed for the truth to be told. Nevertheless, the process of the integration of the Holocaust topic into the public media and education systems was very complicated. Czech historian Michal Frankl explains that among the most important factors, regarding the processing of the incredible amount of data suddenly available, belonged the incapability of journalists, historians and teachers to deal with the topic, and to incorporate the Shoah both into the Czech history and into the general awareness.²⁶³ Information publicized in the textbooks either did not encompass the Holocaust at all, or included only generally known names of concentration camps and numbers of victims. Fortunately, the general knowledge of the topic grows together with the interest of the public in the genocide of the Czech Jews and quality of the school texts.²⁶⁴ Reiner explains: “We felt that the general public has now reached the point,

²⁶² Ben-Sasson, 854.

²⁶³ Česká televize, “Konečné řešení – zapomenuté transporty,” Videoarchiv Historie.cs Adobe Flash Player video file, 04:30, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10150778447-historie-cs/210452801400026-konecne-reseni-zapomenute-transporty/video/> (accessed January 2, 2012).

²⁶⁴ Michal Frankl, “Holocaust Education in the Czech Republic, 1989-2002,” *Intercultural Education* 14, no. 2 (2003): 177-189.

where they can learn and hear which they did not want to do right after the war.”²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the long hiatus of the Holocaust education and facts withholding affected many generations and severely damaged the collective memory.

4.2 The Personal Attitude of Inhabitants of the Vsetín Region towards the Jewish Minority

The outbreak of the Second World War and the Holocaust irretrievably damaged the relations between the Jews and the non-Jewish community of Wallachia. Rothkirchen notes that “... the toll of Jewish lives was by and large determined by the nature and extent of German control, by the Führer’s postwar global aims, and in certain measure by the attitude of the local population.”²⁶⁶ In fact, the locals never got over the differences which nurtured their anti-Semitic tendencies. Their negative personal attitude towards the minority both before and after the war resulted in what can be termed as collective memory loss. The very existence of the Jewish community together with the awareness about the occurrence of the Holocaust in the region vanished out of the historical memory of Wallachians. As a result, the contemporary population of the region has little to no knowledge not only of the presence of the Jews in the region, but also of their importance and involvement in local social and economic life, and their appalling fate at the hands of the murderous Nazism.²⁶⁷

4.2.1 Quiet Departure and Unexpected Return

The relief and indifference of the residents of Vsetín was evident immediately after the departure of the local Jews for the concentration camps. Since most of Jewish property fell into the hands of the Nazis, and the factories ceased to exist, there was practically nothing left of the community. The involuntarily abandoned jewelry and things of emotional value often ended up in the ownership of their non-Jewish neighbors. If the survivor returned, he most often met not only with the astonishment of the locals over his homecoming but also

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&hid=8&sid=9639959e-73dd-4b2b-adca-7ef2eb5ae57c%40sessionmgr15> (accessed July 15, 2011).

²⁶⁵ Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner, Brian Wray (Atlanta, Georgia Public Broadcasting, 2007), DVD, 18:40.

²⁶⁶ Rothkirchen, xi.

²⁶⁷ Based on personal interviews performed by the author with the inhabitants of the Vsetín Region between September 2011 and February 2012. The interviewees chose to remain anonymous.

with an unwillingness to restore his property to him. Rothkirchen states that the postwar reluctance to restitute the Jewish property "...indicates that it was the material aspect which became the prime concern of the people in determining their stance vis-à-vis the Jews."²⁶⁸ Moreover, the population often refused to believe the atrocities committed at the camps, thus the Jews were denied not only their property but also sympathy and help.²⁶⁹ However, as Monika Hanková notes, most of the Jews had neither a place nor a community to which to return, because in the majority of cases all of their relatives were murdered by the Nazis and their Christian friends refused them. Moreover, locals primarily concerned themselves with their own postwar renewal, and the very presence of the Jews served as painful and unwanted reminders.²⁷⁰ Sixteen-year-old Ilse Reiner was one of eight survivors of the Holocaust who managed to return to Vsetín and find shelter with family friends. But also for her it was inconceivable to stay in the town, deprived of her family, property and childhood, so she decided to emigrate to the USA.²⁷¹ Reiner describes the attitude of the society: "It was all too terrible and too scary so nobody wanted to listen."²⁷² Whereas, to cope with the mass murder was rather impossible for the locals, the Jews had no other chance than to learn how to live and deal with such an experience. Silenced by the majority, the Jews often kept their stories secret, due to political reasons as well as to the gruesomeness of their experiences.²⁷³ Reiner adds: "Some people cope with it better than the others, some people need to talk about it, other people cannot."²⁷⁴ Nevertheless, considering the number of returnees (seventeen from the whole Vsetín Region), the incapability of the locals to listen and of the Jews to speak about their experience, and additionally the subsequent emigration of most of the survivors, locked the mutual experience deep in the collective memory of the locals, where it remained buried and lost to future generations.

²⁶⁸ Livia Rothkirchen, "Czech Attitudes toward the Jews during the Nazi Regime," in *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance 13*, edited by Livia Rothkirchen (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1979), 320.

²⁶⁹ Monika Hanková, "Léta obnovy a zklamání nadějí. Zkušenosti židovské komunity v Čechách a na Moravě (1945-1948)," *Historický obzor* 17/9-10 (2006): 209-228.

²⁷⁰ Hanková, "Léta obnovy a zklamání nadějí. Zkušenosti židovské komunity v Čechách a na Moravě (1945-1948)".

²⁷¹ See Ilse Reiner, *Through the Eyes of a Child* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2006).

²⁷² *Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner*, Brian Wray (Atlanta, Georgia Public Broadcasting, 2007), DVD, 18:40.

²⁷³ Pěkný, 576.

²⁷⁴ *Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner*, DVD, 18:30.

4.2.2 Aspects Determining Local Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community of the Vsetín Region was rather small compared to the Christian majority. Yet their involvement in local economics and social life greatly influenced the development of the region. Nevertheless, the differences in religion, culture, personal attributes and abilities built a fence which prevented their complete assimilation into local society. The distance and high level of prejudice intentionally maintained by the Catholic Church also contributed to the antagonistic behavior of the locals towards the fate of the Jewry. As Rothkirchen notes, the clergy did not oppose the Nazi plan at all.²⁷⁵ Pěkný argues that the dogma of collective guilt of the Jews for the death of Jesus Christ and the necessity of punishment remained overt within the Christian community.²⁷⁶ Although the relations between Judaism and Christianity found a common path eventually, the influence of the Church belongs among the aspects which greatly contributed to the negative attitude of the locals.

“Did the long tradition of Jewish presence in Vsetín and the Jews’ unique role in the local economy and culture affect the Czech society’s attitudes?”²⁷⁷ The Jews of the Vsetín Region and mainly the factory owners and businessmen instigated anger, hatred and jealousy in the locals, irrespective of the economic and social development they introduced to the region. Understood as a foreign element, exploiters and usurers, they never met with affability. Hence losing their influence and position resulted in general relief and satisfaction among the gentile population. Czech diplomat Miloš Hanák reported in 1943: “Anti-Semitism will probably be the only thing we shall partially adopt from the Nazi ideology... After the war, in the New Republic, our people hope that the Jews will not be able to profit from our labor as they did before the war.”²⁷⁸ Indeed, the Jews of Wallachia were not in any way involved in postbellum public life in the region.

4.2.3 Insufficient Commemoration of the Holocaust in the Vsetín Region

The fact that the Jewish community represented only a small part of the regional population, and the fact that the number of local Holocaust survivors was very low, facilitated the removal of the Jewish minority from the general awareness. There are no reminders of the Jews anymore besides the survivors and the cemeteries in Vsetín and

²⁷⁵ Rothkirchen, 221.

²⁷⁶ Pěkný, 264.

²⁷⁷ Rothkirchen, xii.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 184.

Velké Karlovice. The synagogue in Valašské Meziříčí was demolished in 1949. Only twelve tombstones from the local cemetery remain after it was gradually dismantled for building foundations, pavements and decorations.²⁷⁹ The memorials commemorating the victims of the Second World War often ignore the Jews completely or briefly state “victims of the racial persecution” at the very bottom of the monument.²⁸⁰ Fortunately, thanks to a growing concern about the Holocaust mainly among historians and the descendants of the Jewish survivors, memorials in Valašské Meziříčí and Vsetín remind the contemporary residents of the perished community. Tomáš Töpfer, a Czech-Jewish actor, emphasized that the remorse over the past does not change anything, for what happened cannot be undone.²⁸¹ It is impossible for the young generation to imagine the horror of the Holocaust, because as Kieval notes, “One can never directly apprehend another individual’s experience of his or her reality, one can only know the expressions of that experience.”²⁸² Those, who witnessed the genocide of the Jews, fell into some kind of a collective amnesia caused by feelings of guilt and shame, which must have been present in most of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Vsetín. Naturally there was an effort to forget the horrors of the war, and time, which supposedly heals all wounds, elapsed. But as Geoffrey Short stated in his study, “They [the Jews] went through the Holocaust with so much pride...,” yet this cannot be said about the majority of the gentiles of the Vsetín Region.²⁸³ Among those, who risked their lives for their Jewish friends during the Holocaust, and were honored “Righteous among the Nations”, belong only three Wallachians: Václav Juráň, Karel Frýdl and Jan Tkadleček.²⁸⁴

No Jews live in the Vsetín Region anymore. As such, it appears that the process of elimination of an unpleasant and undesirable part of local history was successful. Nevertheless, because “Each generation views historical events through its own set of

²⁷⁹ Baletka, “Židé,” 320-328.

²⁸⁰ Kazmír, *Holocaust na Vsetínsku 1939 – 1945*.

²⁸¹ Česká televize, “Konečné řešení – zapomenuté transporty,” Videoarchiv Historie.cs Adobe Flash Player video file, 51:10, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10150778447-historie-cs/210452801400026-konecne-reseni-zapomenute-transporty/video/> (accessed January 2, 2012).

²⁸² Kieval, 3.

²⁸³ Geoffrey Short, “Learning from Genocide? A Study in the Failure of Holocaust Education,” *Intercultural Education* 16, no.4 (2005): 367-380, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=19&hid=8&sid=5ce42cf5-f51a-496c-9134-c3959125ac85%40sessionmgr13> (accessed September 8, 2011).

²⁸⁴ Kazmír, *Holocaust na Vsetínsku 1939 – 1945*. They were honored for helping Erich Kulka and his son Otto, who escaped from the death march heading from Auschwitz. See http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/pdf/virtual_wall/czech_republic.pdf

spectacles,” a survey conducted between 1992 and 1996 noted a significant shift in perception of the Jewish minority in the Czech Republic.²⁸⁵ Only 4 percent of the Czech respondents believe that “the Jews behave in a manner which provokes hostility in our country,” however, the impact of prejudice is visible in an alarming 34 percent who believe that “as in the past, Jews exert too much influence on world events” and 23 percent agree that “Jews are exploiting the memory of the Nazi extermination of the Jews for their own purposes.”²⁸⁶ Although no regional surveys were taken, there is no reason to believe that the population of Vsetín thinks differently towards the Jews than other Czechs. The ignorance of local history and of the Holocaust prevails in Vsetín, as does a degree of prejudice against Jews.

²⁸⁵ Rothkirchen, 305.

²⁸⁶ Global Jewish Advocacy, “Knowledge and Remembrance of the Holocaust in the Czech Republic,” <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=ijITI2PHKoG&b=846743&ct=1042051> (accessed September 23, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Anti-Semitism and prejudices, which had prevailed in the Vsetín Region for centuries, had fatal consequences for the local Jewry. Despite the fact that the Jews of Vsetín greatly influenced the economic, social and political life of the region, the local residents allowed the prosperous and vibrant Jewish community in their midst to perish during the Holocaust. Part of the history, which was consciously forgotten by the local populace, is that many of the Wallachians intentionally assisted in the demise of the Jewish community, and made a conscientious effort to allow the Judaic heritage of Vsetín to sink into oblivion, taking with it the memory of the Holocaust as well as their culpability in it. Additionally, due to various factors including deep-rooted xenophobia, backwardness and conservatism, and supported by rampant anti-Semitism that permeated the communist era, the effort of the residents of Vsetín to forget proved extremely successful to the point that most residents now live under the assumption that the Holocaust happened elsewhere but not in the Vsetín Region. Although the Holocaust in the Czech lands is often perceived as a uniquely Jewish matter, it has deep roots involving the Czech society as well. The Holocaust did indeed occur in Vsetín, with deadly consequences, and the complicity of the local inhabitants in the murder of the Jewish community is undeniable.

“We somehow always felt that whatever lay ahead of us will pass and we will come out, everything will be good again. Some of us were lucky, we came out of this horror, some of us were not so lucky. But whatever, one thing I can assure you of and that is that every one of us is emotionally scarred. There is no other way.”²⁸⁷ Ilse Reiner, one of seventeen survivors out of 430 Jews deported from their homes in the Vsetín Region, was not allowed to forget her past. The inhabitants of Vsetín should not be allowed to do so either, for they still have not atoned for their inactivity, indifference, inhumanity and complicity in the atrocities of the Holocaust.

²⁸⁷ Through the Eyes of Ilse Reiner, DVD, 17:55.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX I: THE VSETÍN REGION



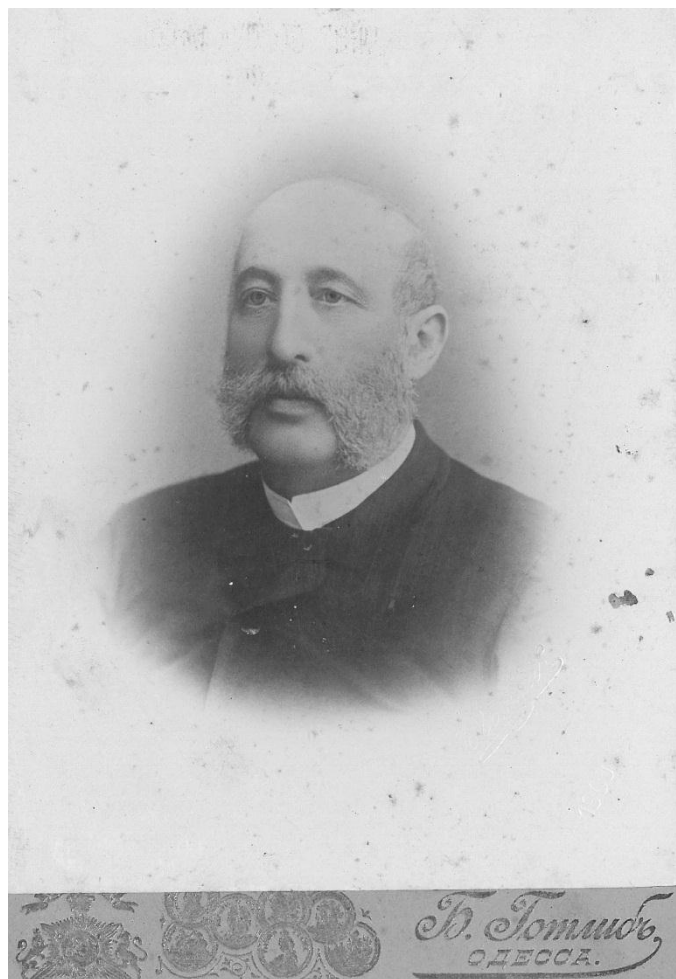
Map issued by SHOCKart spol. s r.o., 2007.

**APPENDIX II: SALOMON REICH, FOUNDER OF A GLASS INDUSTRY
IN THE VSETÍN REGION, AND ALOIS REICH**



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

**APPENDIX III: JOSEF GLESINGER, AN OWNER OF A DISTILLERY IN
VSETÍN AND JOSEF SCHRÖTTER**



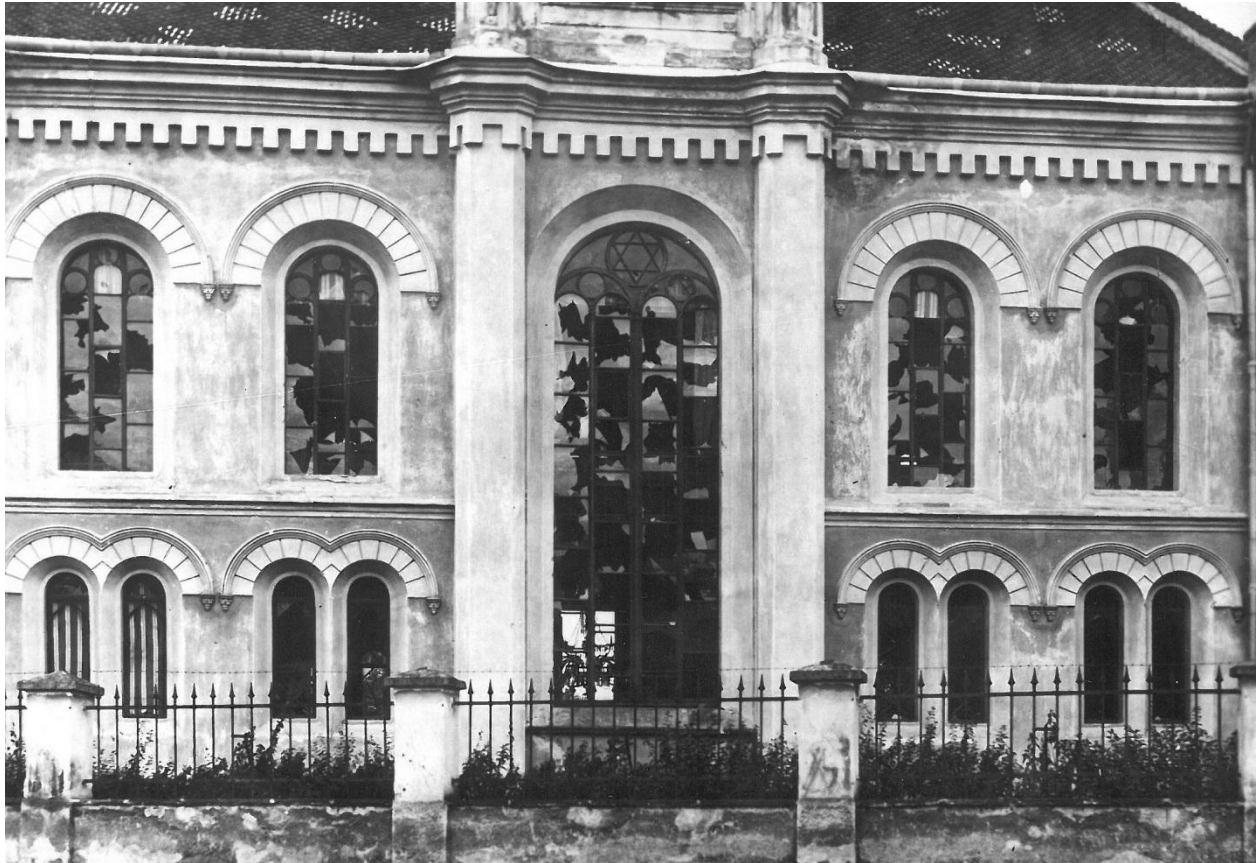
Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX IV: SYNAGOGUE IN VSETÍN



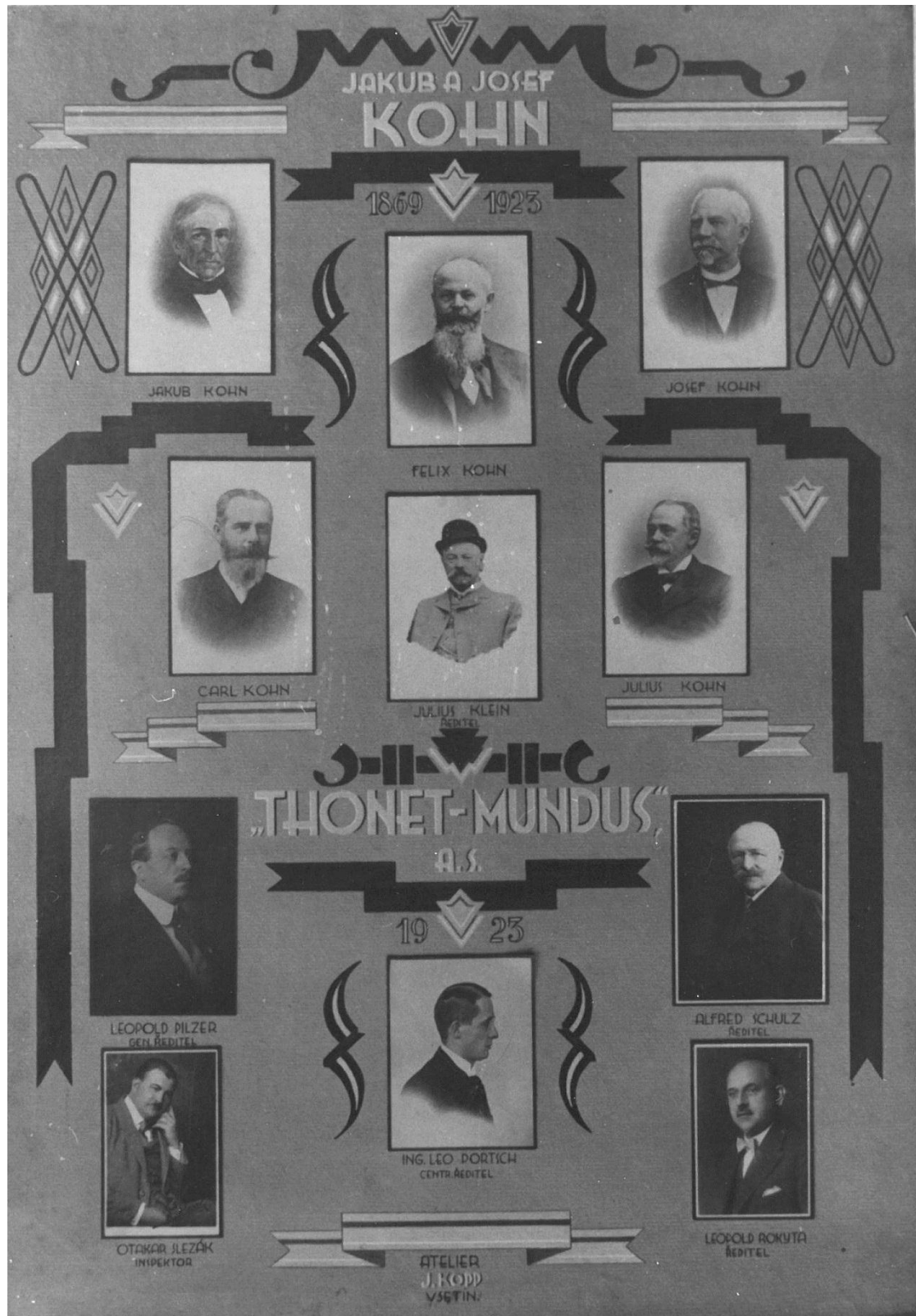
Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

**APPENDIX V: DAMAGED SYNAGOGUE IN VALAŠSKÉ MEZIRŮČÍ
AFTER THE ANTI-JEWISH DEMONSTRATIONS IN 1899**



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

**APPENDIX VI: OWNERS OF THE KOHN FACTORY IN VSETÍN
BEFORE AND AFTER THE MERGER TO THONET-MUNDUS
COMPANY**



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX VII: KOHN FACTORY IN VSETÍN



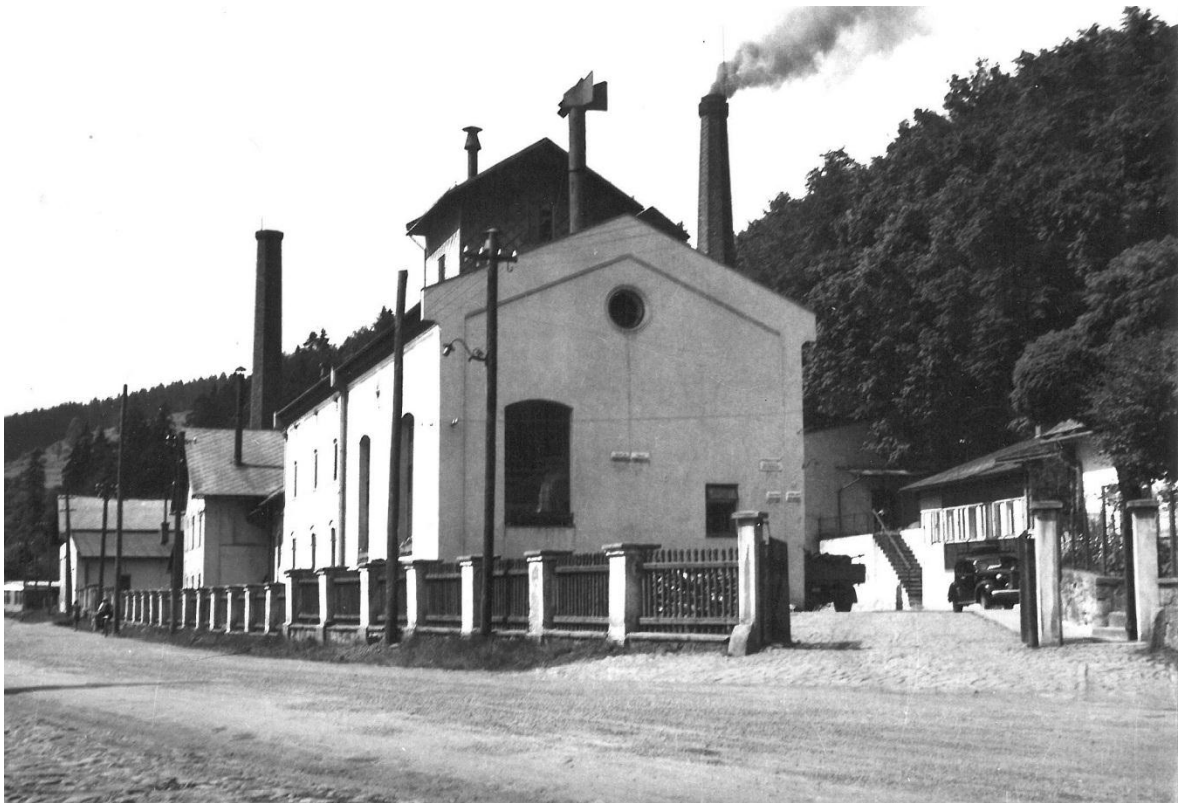
Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX VIII: JAKUB SAX'S TANNERY IN VSETÍN



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX IX: GLASS FACTORY AND BREWERY IN VSETÍN



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX X: VSETÍN IN 1910



Distillery and tavern of Josef Glesinger, marked with a star.



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX XI: TOMÁŠ GARRIGUE MASARYK IN VSETÍN



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX XII: ADOLF HITLER SIGNING THE MUNICH AGREEMENT, THE LAST PAGE OF THE AGREEMENT



- 4 -

7.) Es wird ein Optionsrecht für den Übertritt in die abgetretenen Gebiete und für den Austritt aus ihnen vorgesehen. Die Option muss innerhalb von sechs Monaten vom Zeitpunkt des Abschlusses dieses Abkommens an ausgeübt werden. Ein deutsch-tschechoslowakischer Ausschuss wird die Einzelheiten der Option bestimmen, Verfahren zur Erleichterung des Austausches der Bevölkerung erwägen und grundsätzliche Fragen klären, die sich aus diesem Austausch ergeben.

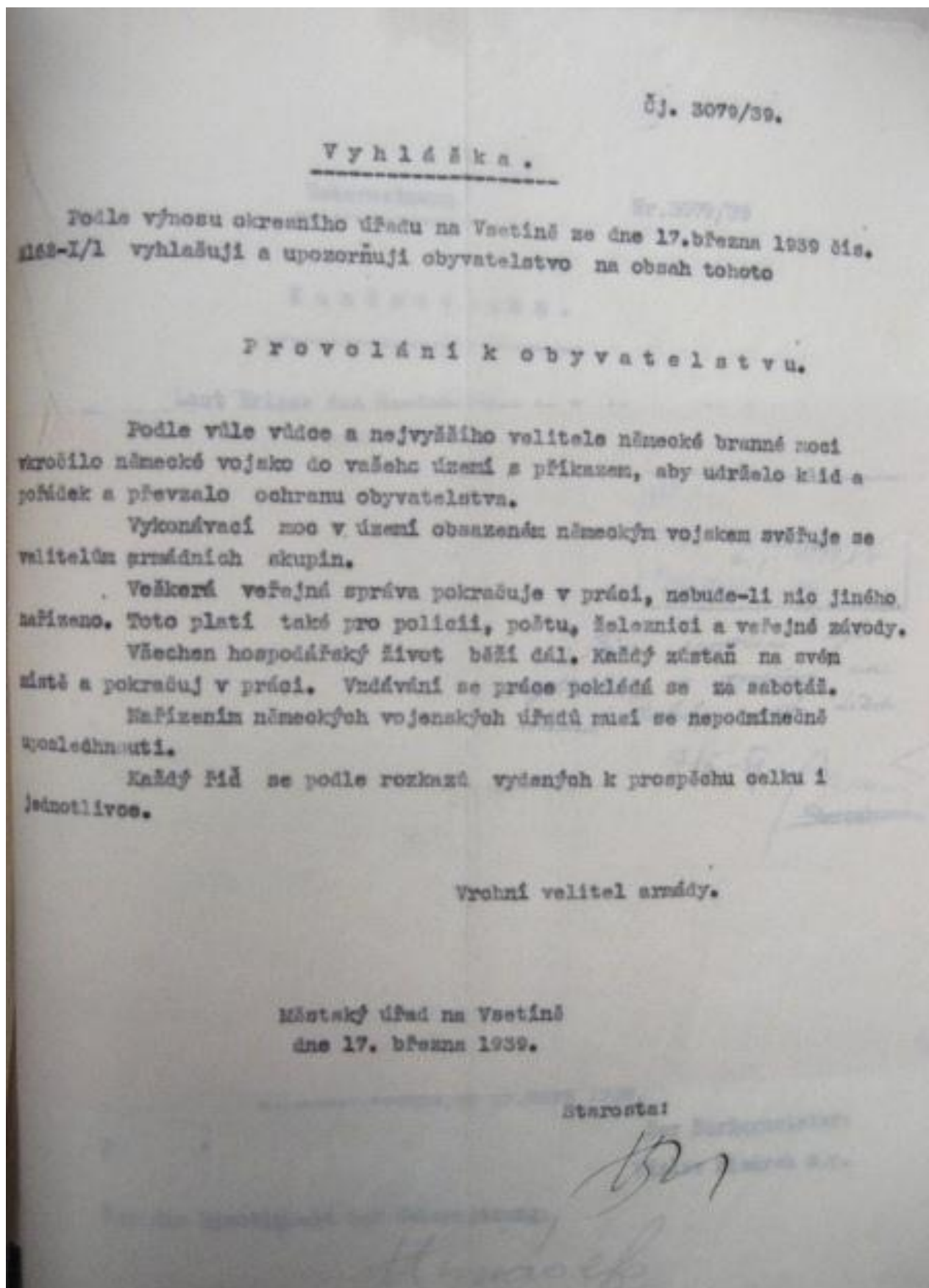
8.) Die Tschechoslowakische Regierung wird innerhalb einer Frist von vier Wochen vom Tage des Abschlusses dieses Abkommens an alle Sudetendeutschen aus ihren militärischen und polizeilichen Verbänden entlassen, die diese Entlassung wünschen. Innerhalb derselben Frist wird die Tschechoslowakische Regierung sudetendeutsche Gefangene entlassen, die wegen politischer Delikte Freiheitsstrafen verbüßen.

München, den 29. September 1938.

Handwritten signatures: Chamberlain, Benes, Hitler, Neurath

Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX XIII: VSETÍN'S COUNCIL OCCUPATION
PROCLAMATION



APPENDIX XIV: VSETÍN'S GESTAPO OFFICERS, SUMMER CAMP OF HITLERJUGEND IN VELKÉ KARLOVICE



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

APPENDIX XV: A LIST OF THE JEWS OF VSETÍN, PART I

Sohn Siefried	12./1.1887	obchodník	Smetanova 1131
Malvína	5./11.1886	manželka	
Erich	18./2.1911	syn	
Otto	12./4.1916	syn	
Albert	6./8.1919	syn	
Schrötter Josef	3./2.1896	obchodník	Pod Zakopenicí
Irena	16./8.1900	manželka	
Neugebauerová Karolina	10./11.1864	soukromnice	Štěpánská 425
Vilma	10./9.1898	dcera	
Neugebauer Pavel	10./12.1901.	obchodník	
Hirschová Ella	20./3.1893	soukromnice	
Langfeldrová Regina	22./11.1888	sklad piva	Štěpánská ul.370
Božena	23./8.1911	dcera	
Bedřicha	3./6. 1915	dcera	
Glesingerová Žofie	28./8.1866	soukromnice	Dol. nám.365
František	19./7.1899	studující	
Glesinger Gustav	2./12.1867.	obec.chudý	Chudobinec
Glesinger Max	9./11.1867	soukromník	Štěpánská 372
Zeml Ladislav	26./3.1909	obchodník	Havlíčková 848
Františka	22./2.1914.	manželka	
Sax Robert	17./7. 1894	obchodník	Dol. nám.319
Eichner Max	22./2.1897	obch.vášt.	Havlíčková 759
Charlota	1./3.1898	manželka	
Ilsa	21./12.1929	dcera	
Gold Jindřich	8./3.1880	obchodník	Pod Zakopenicí
Olga	18./1.1887	manželka	
Stuška	20./10.1925	dcera	
Hirsch Bruno	18./12.1891	advokát	Havlíčková 1078
Stěbšta	23./10.1910	manželka	
Lezerus Norbert	17./10.1880	advokát	Slackého 189
Stella	20./12.1911	dcera	
Lezarusová Regina	7./9.1860	soukromnice	
Weichenhal veslifer	2./9.1910	lékař	nemocnice

APPENDIX XVI: A LIST OF THE JEWS OF VSETÍN, PART II, III

Jméno	Data narození	Zanětnání	Adresa
Weinsteinová Pavla	20./1.1890	soukromnice	Svárov č.1039
Weinstein Josef	23./3.1885	obchodník	Palackého 305
Arnošt	19./6.1924	syn	
Weinstein Samson	14./12.1869	obchodník	Palackého 305
Cecilie	28./7.1880	manželka	
Alfréd	21./12.1903	právník	
Otté	19./12.1906	obchodník	
Weinstein Sigmund	20./3.1873	obchodník	Palackého 164
Anna	10./4.1876	manželka	
Weinstein Šimon	18./10.1874	obchodník	Pod Zákopanicí
Regina	4./12.1874	manželka	
Weinstein Vilém	4./1.1887	obchodník	Svárov č.1039
Johana	13./11.1891	manželka	
Schön Leopold	22./7.1861	obchodník	Svárov 435
Regina	24./8.1869	manželka	
Schön Max	12./5.1899	obchodník	
Markéta	17./4.1907	manželka	
Alice	24./9.1927	dcera	
Eva	3./12.1930	dcera	
Schön Otto	14./2.1907	obchodník	
Livia	7./12.1915	manželka	
Gita	27./1.1928	dcera	
Schön Ludvík	25./6.1899	obchodník	Pod Zákopanicí
Olga	15./5.1896	manželka	
Hilda	8./11.1922	dcera	
Schön Leopold	1./2.1857	obchodník	
Kateřina	6./11.1879	manželka	
Siegfried	21./5.1898	syn	
Otto	18./5.1908	syn	

Weisz Hugo	21./10.1912	talmudista	Štěpánská 804
Weisová Irma	8./9.1862	obchodnice	Radražní 712
Alice	27./1.1912	dcera	
Hilda	7./3.1915	dcera	
Rebenwurz Hanuš	22./1.1902	advok. koncip.	Dol. náměstí 429
Goldberger Josef	21./6.1889	obchodník	Dol.nám. 439
Anna	21./7.1893	manželka	
Marta	20./8.1921	dcera	
Otto	3./1.1925	syn	
Knöpfelmacher Rudolf	25./4.1881	obchodník	Havlíčková 992
Hela	18./10.1889	manželka	
Otto	30./3.1916	syn	
Grünbaum Karel	3./9.1889	obchodník	Čateční 892
Ilona	3./11.1895	manželka	
Otakar	3./4.1925	syn	
Jen	3./3.1927	syn	
Bedřich	4./2.1930	syn	
Wintrová Judita	27./11.1914	úřednice	Svárov 683
Steinhartová Teresie	13./6.1851	soukromnice	Palackého 159

Vsetín, dne 15.června 1939.

Courtesy of the State Archive, Vsetín.

APPENDIX XVII: JEWISH PROPERTY CONFISCATION ORDINANCE

Okresní úřad na Vsetíně.

Čís. 1637-IV/10

Provádění čtvrtého prováděcího výnosu
k nařízení říšského protektora z 21.
června 1939 o židovském majetku.
Dne 28. února 1940.

Všem obecním úřadům.

Říšský protektor v Čechách a na Moravě nařídil čtvrtým prováděcím výnosem ze dne 7. února 1940 ke svému nařízení ze dne 21. června 1939 o židovském majetku, přihlášení židovského majetku, jež se týká:

- a./ Všeho provozního majetku všech židovských podniků včetně živnostenských provozoven, jež jsou na území Protektorátu Čechy a Morava.
- b./ Židovského majetku pozemkového i židovských práv, rovnajících se pozemkovému majetku a práv na pozemcích.
- c./ Židovských akcií, podílnických práv a účastenství všech druhů.

Přihlášky židovského majetku podle bodů a./, až c./ se provádějí dvojmo na úředních tiskopisech a musí být předloženy okresním úřadům nejpozději do 15. března 1940.

V podrobnostech platí toto:

- 1./ Přihlášení jmění židovských podniků ve smyslu bodu a./ se provádí na tiskopise I a sice u okresního úřadu sídla podniku.
- 2./ Přihláška židovského pozemkového majetku podle bodu b./ se provádí dvojmo na tiskopise II. Příslušnost okresního úřadu se řídí polohou nemovitosti. Přihlašující odevzdají vyplněné tiskopisy II u tohoto okresního úřadu pro každý knihovní soud odděleně na zvláštním tiskopisu. Při spoluvlastnictví na nemovitostech odevzdá každý spolusajitel přihláškou povinný samostatnou přihlášku.
- 3./ Přihlášky židovských akcií, podílnických práv a účastenství se provádějí rovněž dvojmo na tiskopise III.

Ukládám všem pánům starostám obcí pod osobní zodpovědností jejich, aby na toto opatření upozornili všechny v úvahu přicházející osoby, bydlící v dané obci.

Příslušné tiskopisy prodávají se u okresního úřadu za cenu 4.50 K za jeden tiskopis včetně poučení. Každý zájemce si musí obstarati všechny tři tiskopisy dvojmo /vzor I-III/.

Upozornění všech zájemců staniž se i h m a d, aby lhůta pro podání řádně vyplněných přihlášek mohla být dodržena.

Podotýká se, že soupisu podléhá veškerý židovský provozní pozemkový a akciový majetek ve smyslu bodů a/ až c./ a to i tehdy, když správa tohoto majetku byla jakýmkoli způsobem převedena neb svěřena jiným osobám.

Za okresního hejtmana: Zimola v. r.

APPENDIX XVIII: JEWISH SIGNATURES ACCEPTING THE PROPERTY ORDINANCE

<p><i>Karl Leber</i> Schön Leopold.</p> <p><i>Karel Ludvík</i> Schön Ludvík.</p> <p><i>Simon Weistein</i> Weistein Šimon.</p> <p><i>Simon Weistein</i> Weistein Šimon.</p> <p><i>Karel Gold</i> Gold Karel</p> <p><i>Josef Gold</i> Gold Karel</p> <p><i>Josef Gold</i> Gold Bohumil</p> <p><i>Zofie Glesingrová</i> Glesingrová Zofie.</p> <p><i>Ter. Steinhartová</i> Steinhartová Ter.</p> <p><i>Karel Grünbaum</i> Grünbaum Karel.</p> <p><i>Židovská obec náboženská</i> Židovská obec náboženská.</p> <p>Potvrzuji, že oběžník dán byl k vědomí pí. Regině Schönové, která odepřel podpis. Jindřich Gold prohlásil, že své syny o oběžníku uvědomí.</p> <p><i>4/8. 40</i></p> <p><i>H. H. H.</i></p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Městský úřad ve Vsetíně</p> <p>Dne 28. II. 1940 --</p> <p>Číslo pozem. 2469</p> </div> <p><i>Podpis</i></p> <p><i>potvrditi a podat zprávu k soudovi</i></p> <p>Vzali na vědomí dne 1./3.1940.</p> <p>Schön Siegbert. <i>Schönová E.</i></p> <p>Eichner Rudolf. <i>Buchanan J.</i></p> <p>Eichner Max <i>Buchanan J.</i></p> <p>Schön Otto</p> <p>Schön Max</p> <p>Schön Leopold</p> <p>Reisová Irma <i>Reisová Irma</i></p> <p>Knöpfelmacher Otto. <i>Knöpfelmacher O.</i></p> <p>Knöpfelmacher Rud. <i>Knöpfelmacher R.</i></p> <p>Weistein Vilém <i>Weistein Vilém</i></p> <p>Sax Robert <i>Sax Robert</i></p> <p>Weistein Cecilie. <i>Cecilie Weistein</i></p> <p>Goldberger Josef. <i>Goldberger Josef</i></p> <p>Neugebauer Nathan. <i>Neugebauer Nathan</i></p> <p>Langefeldrova Hg. <i>Langefeldrova Hg.</i></p> <p>Schröter Josef. <i>Georg Glöckl</i></p>
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Courtesy of the State Archive, Vsetín.

APPENDIX XIX: FOOD TICKETS ORDINANCE

Kundmachung.

Lebensmittel- und Kleiderkarten

werden
am 18. und 19. Dezember 1939
von 8 bis 12 und von 14 bis 17 Uhr
in folgenden Ausgabestellen ausgefolgt:

Ausgabestelle Nr. 1 - Städt. Rathaus
für die Einwohner auf dem Sychrov, in der Oberstadt, der Palacký-
strasse bis zum Masaryk-Denkmal.

**Ausgabestelle Nr. 2 - Gasthaus beim
Vaněk in der Jasenkastrasse**
für die Einwohner von Bobeky, Thonet-Viertel, Jasenkastrasse, Hr-
bova, Larky, Pod Zakopanic, Palackýstrasse bis zum Masaryk-
Denkmal.

**Ausgabestelle Nr. 3 - Gasthaus beim
Bartoloměj in der Stefaniestrasse**
für die Einwohner in Potůčky, Bosačky, Stefaniestrasse, Babela-
Viertel, Schlachthausgasse und Travníky.

**Ausgabestelle Nr. 4 - Masaryk-
Realgymnasium**
für Einwohner der Smetanastrasse, bis zur Stefaničková, Ko-
lonie der Waffelfabrik, Svárov, Hlásenka, Unterstadt, Havlíček-
gasse, Václavkagasse, Brückenstrasse, Na Pískopě.

**Ausgabestelle Nr. 5 - Gasthaus beim
Sebesta auf der Ohrada**
für alle Einwohner, welche zwischen dem rechten Ufer des Hečva-
dusses und des Jasenitzbaches wohnen, einstblieslich Filakova u. Lahu.

**Ausgabestelle Nr. 6 - Schulgebäude
in Semetin** für die Einwohner in Semetin.

**Ausgabestelle Nr. 7 - Schulgebäude
in Jasenitz** für die Einwohner in Jasenitz.

Jeder Besitzer einer Lebensmittelkarte hat sich mit derselben persönlich
bei der Ausgabestelle einzufinden, wo den dort die Lebensmittel- u. Kleiderkarten
ausgefógt werden.

Personen, welche die Lebensmittelkarte nicht vorweisen,
können keine Bezugscheine erhalten.

Die Lebensmittel- und Kleiderkarten werden nur an den dazu bestimmten
Tagen und in der festgesetzten Tageszeit ausgegeben werden.

Personen nichtarischer Abstammung haben keinen
Anspruch auf Kleiderkarten.

Stadtamt Wsetin
am 12. Dezember 1939.
Der Bürgermeister:
V. Misárek m. p.

Vyhláška.

Potravinové lístky a lístky na oděv

vydáváme
dne 18. a 19. prosince 1939
od 8 do 12 a od 14 do 17 hodin
v následujících výdejnách:

Výdejna čis. 1 - Městská radnice
pro obyvatele na Sychrově, Horním městě, Palackého ul. až po
pomník prezidenta Masaryka.

**Výdejna čis. 2 - hostinec u Vaňků
na Jasence**
Bobeky, Thonetovy byty, Jasenka, Hrbová, Larky, Pod Zakopanic,
Palackého ulice po pomník prezidenta Masaryka.

**Výdejna čis. 3 - hostinec u Bartolomějů
Štěpánská ulice**
Potůčky, Bosačky, Štěpánská ul., Babelaova tř., Jateční ul., Travníky.

**Výdejna čis. 4 - Masarykovo státní
reálné gymnasium**
Smetanova ulice po Štefančkově mostě, kolonie Žitostovky, Svárov,
Hlásenka, Dolní náměstí, Havlíčkova ulice, Václavkova a Mostecká
ulice, Na Pískopě.

**Výdejna čis. 5 - hostinec u Šebestů
na Ohradě**
všichni občani, bydlící mezi pravým břehem Bečvy a potokem Ja-
senice včetně Filakova a Lahu.

Výdejna čis. 6 - škola v Semetině
pro obyvatele bydlící v Semetině.

Výdejna čis. 7 - škola v Jasenicích
pro obyvatele bydlící v Jasenicích.

Každý majitel potravinového kmenového lístku či lístku na oděv potravin-
ových lístky a lístky na oděv měkké a potravinovým kmenovým lístky.

Osobám, které nepředloží potravinové kmenové lístky, nebudou
potravinové lístky a lístky na oděv vydávány.

Potravinové lístky a lístky na oděv budou vydávány pou-
ze v uvedené dny a stanovené hodiny.

Osoby nearijského původu nemají nárok na lístky
na oděv.

Městský úřad na Vsetině
dne 12. prosince 1939.
Starosta:
V. Misárek v. r.

APPENDIX XX: DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP, EXECUTION OF GERMANS BY PARTISANS IN THE VSETÍN REGION



Před krematoriem v Dachau v den osvobození Dachau armádou USA dne 29. dubna 1945.



Courtesy of the Museum of Wallachia, Vsetín.

**APPENDIX XXI: EXECUTION ORDINANCE OF DESIDER
REICHENTHAL AND FIVE INHABITANTS OF VSETÍN**

BEKANNTMACHUNG.

Der 58jährige **Vladimir Drápala**,
der 30jährige **Karl Esteřák**,
der 34jährige **Rudolf Rajnoch**,
der 37jährige **Alois Šimurda**,
der 30jährige **Josef Vondrouš** und
der 32jährige **Desider Reichenthal**

aus Wsetin, die der Volksgerichtshof wegen
Vorbereitung zum Hochverrat zum Tode ver-
urteilt hat, sind heute hingerichtet worden.

Berlin, den 29. April 1943.

VYHLÁŠKA

58letý **Vladimír Drápala**,
30letý **Karel Esteřák**,
34letý **Rudolf Rajnoch**,
37letý **Alois Šimurda**,
30letý **Josef Vondrouš** a
32letý **Desider Reichenthal**

ze Vsetína, které Lidový sborový soud pro
přípravu k velezradě odsoudil na smrt, byli
dnes popraveni.

V Berlíně, dne 29. dubna 1943.

Der Oberreichsanwalt beim Volksgerichtshof.

Courtesy of the State Archive, Vsetín.

