

Newsletter

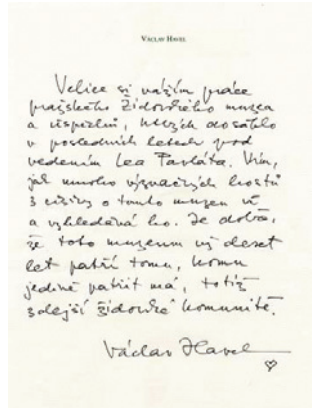
3 2014

TWENTY YEARS SINCE REGAINING INDEPENDENCE

In October 2014 the Jewish Museum in Prague will be celebrating 20 years of activity as an independent institution without state support. It was handed over by the state to the Czech and Moravian Jewish community in the autumn of 1994: its collections were returned to the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, and the historic synagogues of Prague were placed in the care of the Prague Jewish community. The federation and community, together with the Czech Ministry of Culture, then initiated the founding of a common-interest association of legal entities – the present-day Jewish Museum in Prague. The collections that had been returned to the federation were placed in the museum, and the buildings (including synagogues) that had been returned to the community were rented to the museum and used for the display of its exhibitions

The museum is the third oldest and currently the largest institution of its kind in Europe. It has one of the most extensive collections of Judaica in the world and is consistently the most visited museum in the Czech Republic. Among its aims is to familiarize the general public with the history and culture of the Jewish community in the Czech Republic.

We would like to thank our main partners – the Federation of Jewish Communities, the Prague Jewish community, the Czech Ministry of Culture – and other supporters who have helped to make the museum a successful and respected institution. We are also grateful to our partner organizations for their cooperation and to all our friends for their support.



Letter of congratulations from President Václav Havel on the occasion of the tenth anniversary (in 2004) of the museum's regaining of its independence.

"I highly regard the work of the Jewish Museum in Prague and the success that it has achieved in the past years under the supervision of Leo Pavlát. I know how many important guests from abroad know about this museum and come to see it. It is right that for the past ten years this museum has belonged to whom it should belong, the local Jewish Community."



Among those who attended the museum's opening ceremony were the former President Václav Havel, Deputy Prime Minister Josef Lux and Culture Minister Pavel Tigrid, as well as other high-ranking government and state officials.

Invitation

Jewish Museum in Prague, 1994–2014: Assessments and Perspectives

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Jewish Museum's regaining of independence from the state, we are pleased to invite you to a debate that will assess the museum's past years and future visions. Discussing this topic will be the museum's director Leo Pavlát, deputy director and historian Michal Frankl and art curator Michaela Sidenberg. The moderator will be journalist Petr Brod.

Thursday 30 October, 6 p.m.

Jewish Museum in Prague – Department for Education and Culture

Maiselova 15, Prague 1 (3rd floor). Tel. 222 325 172

Free admission.

EXHIBITIONS IN THE ROBERT GUTTMANN GALLERY

The Orient in Bohemia? Jewish Refugees during the First World War

This exhibition by the Jewish Museum in Prague focuses on the fate of refugees during the First World War and reflects on the centenary of the outbreak of this conflict.

During the First World War, hundreds of thousands of people fled from destroyed and occupied towns to the inner regions of the Habsburg monarchy out of fear of violence in the Front areas.

"Although they were the first large group of refugees in the modern history of the Bohemian lands, their fate has been overlooked. By holding this exhibition, the Jewish Museum in Prague seeks not only to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, but also to emphasize the importance of refugees and refugee policy in Czech and Czechoslovak history of the 20th century. For the Jewish population in particular, the flight of these refugees and their loss of rights was part of their journey through what was to be a century of refugees," says Michal Frankl, the author of the exhibition.

This exhibition follows the fate of Jewish refugees in Bohemia and Moravia in the broader context of refugees and refugee policy throughout the Habsburg Monarchy. In addition to highlighting the immediate fate of the refugees, however, it also explores the response of society. It examines the extent to which the then widespread division of people along ethnic lines influenced the attitude towards refugees, the extent to which the response to Jewish refugees was affected by prejudices, and the reason why Jewish refugees were targeted in unscrupulous anti-Semitic campaigns in the post-war period after the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia.

On display are photographs that have never before been shown in the Czech Republic. These images not only document the life of the refugees and refugee camps, but also point to a fascination with the difference of "Eastern Jews" whose clothing, piety and unusual language attracted great attention at the time. Narrated excerpts from period chronicles and newspapers illustrate how the local population dealt with this difference and reveal the prejudices against Jewish refugees. The exhibition also features items from the Jewish Museum's visual arts collection, which further document the response to the Jewish refugees living in Bohemia.

The voices, experiences and attitudes of the refugees appear to have vanished among the heaps of documents and dozens of photographs that have been preserved in archives in the Czech Republic and other countries. This is why the exhibition features the unique audio-visual testimonies of Jewish refugees and draws attention to their opinions and everyday life as reconstructed from newspapers and from fragmentary



Pepi Hut. Photograph of an orphan refugee from the documents of Mikulov rabbi Moritz Lewin who organized aid for refugees. © The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem



The exhibition *Orient in Bohemia? Jewish Refugees during the First World War* opened on 27 August 2014.

materials relating to aid organizations. Visitors will also have an opportunity to study the response of the Jewish press in dealing with the “Eastern” Jews and their difference from the more integrated Jews in the Bohemian lands.

For the most part, the only physical traces of the refugees’ stay in Bohemia during the First World War are their graves in Jewish cemeteries. One of these, a unique wooden tombstone on loan from Horažďovice, will be on view at the exhibition from October.

The exhibition has been put together by Michal Frankl, Jan Wittenberg and Wolfgang Schellenbacher.

Jewish Museum in Prague – Robert Guttman Gallery, U Staré školy 3, Prague 1
 Open daily except Saturdays and Jewish holidays
 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (until 23 October 2014)
 9 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. (from 25 October 2014)

Invitation to a guided tour

Tuesday, 4 November, 5.30 p.m.
 Guided tour of the exhibition *The Orient in Bohemia? Jewish refugees during the First World War* by the curator Michal Frankl.

Admission: CZK 40 or with a ticket for the museum.

Under preparation

Shattered Hopes, 1945–1953

The re-establishment of the Prague Jewish community after the Second World War is the first chapter of the Jewish Museum’s new exhibition project, which aims to chart and document the most recent history of the Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia. This exhibition will draw attention to the efforts made by Jewish communities and aid organizations to revive Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia. The introductory part will focus on the liberation and return of Jewish survivors and on the rebuilding of their lives. It will highlight the stories of survivors and the testimonies of witnesses for whom Czechoslovakia became a sanctuary or a key transit country. Exhibition panels and screenings will draw attention to the problems of post-war restoration, the stories of refugees, survivors and witnesses, the mass migration of Holocaust survivors (the Bricha operation) and the efforts aimed at erecting local monuments to the victims of genocide.

This exhibition will also look at the attitudes of Czech and Moravian society towards Jewish refugees and will explore the still topical subjects of migration, emigration and the mixing of cultures. It will also deal with attempts at coming to terms with the trauma of genocide, the need to commemorate and remember, and the desire to forget and to begin a new life. In addition, it will reveal the gradual loss of hope at restoring the life of the Jewish community in Czechoslovakia after the onset of a new – this time Communist – dictatorship, which only a few years after the end of the Jewish genocide began to employ stereotypes and constructions that were often based on racist principles. The epilogue to the story will feature documents on the explosion of anti-Jewish hatred during the Prague show trials of the 1950s, the splitting up of families and the emigration of a considerable portion of the Jewish population when given the opportunity.

This exhibition is intended for anyone interested in modern Czechoslovak and Jewish history, and for schools and students of related subjects, as well as for all Jewish survivors, witnesses and their families. It will feature unique photographs and film material from the Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, the JDC Archives in the USA and the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University, as well as film interviews from the USC Shoah Foundation.

The exhibition curator is Martin Šmok, a representative of the USC Shoah Foundation who has put together a number of exhibitions and documentaries.

OUR TWENTIETH CENTURY – BIG AND SMALL HISTORY THROUGH THE EYES OF WITNESSES

At the end of September, the Jewish Museum's department for education and culture launched a new series of programmes that present a different pair of Holocaust survivors each month. The aim of the series is to provide the general public with the opportunity of personal meetings with people who faced Nazi persecution and who also suffered under Communism as a result of their Jewish origin or who chose the difficult life of emigrants. The programme is being organized by Petr Sokol, who has worked with the museum for many years and who has developed the methodology for our project *Ours or Foreign? Jews in the Czech Twentieth Century*. Before each meeting, we will provide a profile of each survivor with basic biographical details so that visitors will be more informed and ready to ask questions in the following discussion. The programme will be held regularly on Sundays evenings and is free to members of the public. A recording of each meeting will be available on the museum's [YouTube channel](#).



Anna Hyndráková and Pavel Stránský shared their recollections on Sunday, 28 September.

Invitation to a Sunday meeting with Holocaust survivors

Our Twentieth Century

A series of programmes organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague at which ten pairs of Holocaust survivors share their recollections of the pre-war, wartime and post-war years. It is moderated by the teacher and lecturer Petr Sokol.

Sunday 19 October, 5 p.m.

A meeting with Holocaust survivors Evelina Merová and Eva Lišková.

Sunday 16 November, 5 p.m.

A meeting with the Salomonovič brothers, Michal (Ostrava) and Josef (Vienna).

Venue: Jewish Museum in Prague – Department for Education and Culture
Maiselova 15, Prague 1 (3rd floor). Tel. 222 325 172

Free admission.

OTHER EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM'S EDUCATION AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT

An exhibition of photographs by Richard Homola – *Testimony of the Terezín Walls* – opened at the Jewish Museum's department for education and culture in mid-September. This project focuses on a search for traces left by prisoners on the site of the former Terezín ghetto – engravings, inscriptions on walls, drawings and even frescos. It involves a collaboration with a group of renowned history, photography and art experts and will result in a comprehensive publication that may be used as a 'historical source'.



Richard Homola at the opening of his exhibition of photographs from the Terezín ghetto.

A Czech version of the book *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* (published by Torst, 2014) by the Czech-born Israeli historian Otto Dov Kulka was presented at the Jewish Museum's department for education and culture on 18 September. Unlike Kulka's historical scholarship, this book contains his most personal reflections on Auschwitz, which are cast into the rich depths of his personal Auschwitz mythology. After an opening speech by the museum director Leo Pavlát, Kulka gave a reading from his book. It was followed by a Q&A with the author.



Otto Dov Kulka reading from his book at the Jewish Museum.



TEREZÍN 2014: FILMS FROM GHETTOS AND CAMPS

The successful exhibition *Truth and Lies: Filming in the Ghetto Terezín, 1942–1945* – which was presented by the Jewish Museum in collaboration with the National Film Archives in Prague last year – opened at the Terezín Memorial in September 2014 to coincide with the international conference, *Films From Ghettos and Camps: Propaganda–Clandestine Messages–Historical Source* (4–7 September; www.terezin2014.com). Organized by Dr. Natascha Drubek-Meyer (University of Regensburg), this conference focused on the topics of filming in Nazi camps and ghettos, collaboration and the present-day understanding of these propaganda films. Along with Holocaust historians from around the world, film and literary experts commemorated the 70th anniversary of the making of the propaganda film from 1944–1945 that for many years was known under the title *The Führer Gives the Jews a City*. An in-depth discussion was held on a previously little-known film from 1942 that was made under duress by the filmmaker Irena Dodalová, a prisoner at the Terezín ghetto. Also taking part in the discussion forum were former prisoners of the Terezín ghetto – Anna Hyndráková, Dagmar Lieblová and Alfréd Popper, the latter having appeared as a child in a scene of the propaganda film from 1944–1945. The conference was also visited by film-makers - the documentarist Pavel Štingl and the director Juraj Herz, who talked about the making of the film *Transport from Paradise* (directed by Zbyněk Brynych), which was shown at the conference. There was also a screening of the film *Distant Journey* (directed by Alfréd Radok) and Pavel Štingl's documentary *Baluty*.



President of the Terezín Initiative Dana Lieblová and Alfréd Popper, now a Swiss resident who as a boy witnessed the making of the propaganda films in the Terezín ghetto.



The exhibition *Truth and Lies: Filming in the Ghetto Terezín, 1942–1945* is on view at the Terezín Memorial.

Under preparation

International workshop on Holocaust documentation, Prague, 21–23 October 2014

As part of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure project (EHRI; <http://www.ehri-project.eu/>), the Jewish Museum is organizing an international

workshop on Holocaust documentation during and shortly after the Second World War – entitled *Early Attempts at the Historical Documentation of the Holocaust*). It will be held at the Institute of Czech Literature – Czech Academy of Sciences (Na Florenci 3, Prague 1) on 21–23 October 2014. Historians from several countries will be there to present and compare documentation projects and the creation of archives in various countries, showing how the efforts at preserving the original documents and testimonies were an immediate response to the persecution and murder of European Jews. The workshop will be in English.

Invitation

The Auschwitz Album

Michael Kraus (Middlebury College, Vermont, USA), Daniel Uziel (Yad Vashem, Israel) and Martin Jelínek (Jewish Museum in Prague) will be contemplating the Auschwitz Album, a unique photographic record of the extermination process at the Auschwitz–Birkenau death camp. The discussion is part of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure project (EHRI) and will close the above-mentioned workshop on Holocaust documentation programme. It will be held in English with simultaneous interpreting into Czech.

Thursday, 23 October, 6 p.m.

Jewish Museum in Prague – Department for Education and Culture
Maiselova 15, Prague 1 (3rd floor). Tel. 222 325 172
Free admission.

GALA CONCERTS IN THE SPANISH SYNAGOGUE

Tribute to Viktor Ullmann

The composer Viktor Ullmann (1898–1944) was deported to the Terezín ghetto in 1942. Despite the unfavourable conditions, he and the composer Hans Krása (1899–1944) managed to organize a fairly broad range of musical activities there. In July 1944 he composed one of his best works in the ghetto: *The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke for recitation and piano*. On 16 October 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered soon after.

To mark the 70th anniversary of Ullmann's death, his compositions *The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke*, *Piano Sonata No. 6*, *Op. 49* were performed at the Spanish Synagogue on 11 September. The concert was presented by the non-profit organization Elysium – Between Two Continents. Since its foundation in 1983, Elysium has been active at the intersection of American and European cultures. Its mission is to foster artistic and creative dialogue and understanding between the USA and Europe, and to fight against racism, anti-Semitism and hatred by means of art. It has already presented more than 400 projects in dozens of cities across the world. Elysium primarily seeks to preserve music and literature by artists who were persecuted by the Nazis.

The concert was held in association with the Austrian Culture Forum in Prague, the Austrian Embassy and the Embassy of the United States in Prague.

Saint Wenceslas Celebrations 2014

Songs from Silence were heard in the Spanish Synagogue on 23 September as part of the 23rd international festival of sacred music held by the Society for Spiritual Music. This is a unique Slovak-Czech music project featuring songs of longing, hope and love



After an introductory talk by Michael Lahr, Ullmann's composition was performed by Gregorij H. von Leitis (recitation) and Dan Franklin Smith (piano). Photograph Petr Buček for Austrian Culture Forum in Prague.

that have been collected throughout Europe. A Slovak group of musicians and singers performed songs from Jewish ghettos and camps, which resonated under the arches of one of Central Europe's most beautiful synagogues. These were only some of a large number of songs that were written on the walls of concentration camp barracks and preserved in the memory of Holocaust survivors. The message of the songs was further enhanced by readings of excerpts from works by Jewish authors. The arrangements of the songs for choir and orchestra were made by the Czech composer Hanz Sedlár; the lyrics were poetically translated into Slovak by Mária Muráňová. Despite the bleak atmosphere in which the songs were written, their beautiful, lyrical melodies are full of hope, love and faith in human togetherness.



Songs from Silence performed by The Hope Gospel Singers, the vocal group VOX and the chamber orchestra ZOE Bratislava. Photographs of the performing artists from www.svatovaclavske.cz were used with the kind permission of the event organizer.

Under preparation:

CINEGOGUE 2014: *The City Without Jews*

CINEGOGUE is a series that combines "cinema" with "synagogue" to screen silent films accompanied by live music in a historic space acclaimed for its architecture. Its mission is to uncover little known works of world cinematography to present a different view of Jewish culture and the artists of the post-emancipation period, which saw not only the inception of the international Zionist movement and the large waves of immigration from Central and Eastern Europe to the New World, but the frenetic growth of the avant-garde and cinema as well.

The film *The City Without Jews* (*Die Stadt ohne Juden*), made by Austrian director and producer Hans Karl Breslauer (1888–1965), was based on the novel of the same name by author, journalist, and bon vivant Maximilian Hugo Bettauer (1872–1925).

The new score for *The City Without Jews* was specifically commissioned by BERG Orchestra from composer Petr Wajsar. The orchestra is one of the leading music ensembles, whose innovative concerts have attracted the public's attention with its combination of contemporary music, dance, film, theatre, and video projections.

Spanish Synagogue
Prague 1, Věžeňská 1
13 + 14 October at 7.30 p.m.



Leo Strakosch a.k.a. Henri Dufresne (Johannes Riemann) and his fiancée Lotte (Anna Milety) in the final scene of the fifth act of the film *The City Without Jews* (*Die Stadt ohne Juden*, 1924). © Filmarchiv Austria

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Unique video recording of the museum's opening ceremony

To coincide with the 20th anniversary of the museum's regaining of its independence, we have purchased a unique 42-minute video recording of the museum's opening ceremony in October 1994. We now have an exclusive licence for this footage, which has never before been shown in public. The recording was made on 13 October 1994 in the Prague Jewish community building in Maiselova Street, Prague. The ceremony was attended by a number of prominent politicians and cultural figures, such as President Václav Havel, government ministers Cyril Svoboda and Josef Lux, and Rabbi Karol Efraim Sidon, along with the new museum director Leo Pavlát. The opening speech was given by the culture minister Pavel Tigrid. The ceremony also featured a performance of traditional Jewish songs by the Mišpacha choir. The recording can be seen at our multimedia centre.



Karol Efraim Sidon, Václav Havel and Josef Lux at the museum's opening ceremony (scene from the video recording).

New acquisition for the museum

One of our most recent acquisitions is a suitcase that tellingly documents the fate of members of the Jewish community in the 1950s. The suitcase belonged to Evžen Lieberman (1922–2014), who was born in the village of Sjurte in what was then Czechoslovakia and later became part of Ukraine. After liberation he opted for Czechoslovak citizenship but his wife was not allowed to leave for Czechoslovakia, which is why they decided to emigrate without permission. In October 1946, however, they were arrested with another couple by Soviet border guards near the Romanian border. Evžen Lieberman was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in a labour camp but he was expelled to Poland after two years as he claimed to be a Polish national. He then managed to cross the border to Czechoslovakia and to stay there legally.

In Czechoslovakia he joined the underground activities of the Jewish community – bringing Jewish refugees into Israel and illicitly funding Jewish institutions. This area of his work is documented by the above-mentioned suitcase, which has a false bottom for hiding valuables. Evžen Lieberman was later given a seven-year prison sentence after his involvement was revealed. In 1965, after being released, he was allowed to travel to Israel, where he took this suitcase with the false bottom.

The life story of Evžen Lieberman has been recorded by staff at the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. The institute's representatives and Evžen's son Ari Lieberman handed over the suitcase together with accompanying documents to the museum on 23 July 2014.



Evžen Lieberman hands over the suitcase to the museum director Leo Pavlát.

NOTICE

Closure of part of the Jewish Museum's visual arts depository

Due to reconstruction work, we will be limiting access to the depository that houses our visual arts collection (curated by Michaela Sidenberg) for a period of about 6 months as of 15 September 2014. During this time, the paintings in this collection will not be made available for any use – i.e., for taking out or depositing, lending, digitization, condition appraisal, study or research purposes, or for the provision of information that is not otherwise available in our database or in other records and documents. Access to the prints and drawings in this collection will be limited, depending on the current situation. We will let you know in advance of the depository's reopening through our website and newsletter and on Facebook. We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

Closure of the Jewish Museum's archive

Due to reconstruction work on our archive depository (installation of self-extinguishing equipment), our archive will be closed to the public between 1 October 2014 and the beginning of 2015. The precise date of reopening will depend on the progress of the construction. As a result of the building alterations it will be necessary to clear out the entire archive, which is why we will not be able to deal with requests from researchers during this time. We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

WORK ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MAISEL SYNAGOGUE CONTINUES

The Maisel Synagogue is one of the six buildings that are included in the tour of Prague's former Jewish Town and are overseen by the Jewish Museum in Prague. It was built in the Renaissance style in 1590–1592, using the remains of an earlier building. It has been considerably altered several times during its lifetime, having a Neo-Gothic makeover in 1893–1905. The last partial reconstruction was in 1994–1995 in connection with preparations for a new exhibition of the Jewish Museum.

In our last newsletter we provided information about the reconstruction of the synagogue, which started in May 2014. So far, everything is going to plan. In August all the underfloor cables were completed and the lock fittings for display cabinets and audio-visual elements were installed. In September the underfloor heating cables were laid and then covered with screed using polypropylene fibre reinforced concrete. The electro-osmotic drying process was activated in the outside walls and interior columns. Work is currently underway on repairs to the three exterior facades and on the



Work on the underfloor cables in the Maisel Synagogue.

restoration of the metalwork, joinery and glazed elements. Also in September a sample display case was produced (by Lotech design firm) for comprehensive tests.

A large number of changes relating to the project are being discussed with our contractual partners over the course of the reconstruction with the aim of optimizing the function, aesthetics and cost of the work. Most noticeably, the colour range will be somewhat richer than originally intended (as a result of additional surveys) and a large ultra HD LED screen will be used for the animation of the virtual tour of the Jewish Town, instead of a projection screen with data projectors.

It is expected that the building work will be completed and approved in the spring of 2015. Afterwards a new exhibition in the synagogue – *The History of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands, From the First Settlements Until Emancipation* – will open to the public.

PROMINENT VISITS

August

- J. E. Gary Koren, the Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic visited the Pinkas Synagogue and the Old Jewish Cemetery on 8 August.

September

- Basketball legend Tal Brody – “Mr. Basketball” – came to the Czech Republic at the start of September as the Goodwill Ambassador of Israel. He visited our museum with his wife on 1 September.



Repairs to the outside walls of the Maisel Synagogue.

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Editor: Kateřina Honskusová

Translation: Stephen Hattersley

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