

Newsletter

2 2017

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

Through the Labyrinth of Normalization: The Jewish Community as a Mirror for the Majority Society

The period after the armies of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was called by communist ideologues “normalization.” Under the watchful eye of Soviet military occupation, Czechoslovak society was to return to “normal,” that is, to a rigid ideological socialism with a single political force having an unchallenged monopoly of power and wholly subject to Moscow’s dictates.

True to its anti-Semitic traditions, Soviet propaganda labeled the political liberalization in Czechoslovakia from 1967 to 1968 a Zionist conspiracy, alluding to the show trials of the 1950s. The Kremlin considered a Zionist anyone with Jewish ancestry or who associated with Jews. Many Czechoslovak communists adopted this formulation, and after an interval of many years, State Security once again began to compile lists of names of those with Jewish heritage for “operational usage” in the fight against Zionism.

Citizens designated by the communist regime as Zionist, no matter if they considered themselves Jewish or not, began to encounter a variety of problems, the reasons for which they were often unaware. Jewish communities, which operated under the direct supervision of state bodies, experienced enormous pressure, as did other religious institutions, and, as was the case with the population at large, their officials were subjected to extensive vetting and purging.

This exhibition presents several chapters in this history, stones picked out from the total mosaic. We believe it will serve as inspiration for a deeper examination of life in the Jewish communities under the political monopoly of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during the era of late state socialism.

The exhibition, on display until 28 Jan 2018, was curated by the film documentarist Martin Šmok and produced by the Jewish Museum in Prague in cooperation with the Security Services Archive and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. An English language exhibition catalogue is available

at <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/e-shop-en/exhibition-catalogues/through-the-labyrinth-of-normalization/>

Robert Guttman GALLERY

U Staré školy 3, Prague 1

Open daily, except Saturdays and other Jewish holidays 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.



Stones made from Jewish tombstones were used to pave a pedestrian zone in Prague 1 district. Photo Dana Cabanová. © Jewish Museum in Prague

Giving victims back their faces

In co-operation with the Jewish Museum in Prague, the Vodňany Municipal Museum and Gallery (former synagogue) hosted an exhibition of documents, titled *“Giving Victims Back their Faces: The Lost World of Vodňany Jews”*, between 1 May and 18 June 2017. Curated by Josef Nožička from the State District Archives in Písek, the exhibition commemorated the Jewish inhabitants of Vodňany in the 1920s–1940s and drew attention to their impact on the social and economic life of the local community.

Brok Rudolf
Brok Vilém
Broková Irma
Broková Magda
Danzer Jiří
Danzer Josef
Danzer Viktor
Danzerová Božena
Ehrlichová Marie
Ehrmann Rudolf
Ehrmannová Klára
Ehrmannová Olga
Gans Artur
Gansová Josefína
Gansová Zofie
Karpeles Adámek
Karpeles Heřman
Karpeles Hugo
Karpeles Karel
Karpeles Viktor
Karpeles Vilém
Karpelesová Klára
Kohn Jiří
Kohn Rudolf
Kohn Vilém
Kohnová Berta

Vrátit obětem jejich tvář...

Zmizelý svět vodňanských židů
75 let od transportů do Terezína
(1942 – 2017)



A SELECTION OF CULTURAL EVENTS AND LECTURES IN PRAGUE

Po-lin / Jews in the Republic of Many Nations

On 19 April, a completely packed Maisel Synagogue welcomed the famous Polish prose writer Olga Tokarczuk, who read from her extensive historical novel *The Book of Jacob*. Published in Czech this year, the focus of this book is on the self-proclaimed prophet and religious reformer, Jacob Frank. Over the course of the evening, the audience's attention was drawn to the world of Polish Jews in multicultural Rzeczpospolité (a name for the Polish state) by "The Many Languages of the Vocalist, Instrumentalist and Composer Karolina Cicha" – a project comprising songs in Yiddish, Baroque Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian, which evoke the atmosphere of the multilingual Podlachia region where Jewish settlements were established from the 15th century onwards. A touring exhibition on the history of Jews in the historic territory of Poland between the 16th and 18th centuries was on view in the synagogue. The event was organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague in co-operation with the Polish Institute in Prague and the POLIN Museum of History of Polish Jews.



Author Olga Tokarczuk in the Maisel Synagogue

The cradle and grave of the physician and traveller Jakob Eduard Polak

On 25 May, the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture hosted a lecture by the historian David Venclík (Charles University, Faculty of Education) on the almost-forgotten life of Jakob Eduard Polak (1818–1891), who introduced modern medicine in Persia and served as personal physician of the Shah, and on his connection to the Czech lands. Polak's grave in the Jewish section of the Vienna Central Cemetery is regularly visited by, among others, Iranian physicians and medics living in the Austrian capital. It remains a little known fact, however, that Polak was born in the village of Velká Mořina near the town of Karlstein in Central Bohemia.



Dr. J. E. Polak.

Jakob Eduard Polak. Photograph by an unknown photographer.

© [Universitätsbibliothek Trier](#)

The Czech String Duo

A concert of chamber music by violinist Lucie Sedláková Hůlová and cellist Martin Sedlák was given to a large audience in the Maisel Synagogue on 8 June. It featured works by N. Paganini, R. Glière, G. Piatigorsky as well as the so-called “Theresienstadt composers” E. Schulhoff, G. Klein and Z. Schul.



The Czech String Duo

PUBLICATIONS

A new issue of the journal *Judaica Bohemiae*

A new issue of the journal *Judaica Bohemiae* (Vol. 52/2017, 1) came out at the end of June 2017. The opening study, by Iveta Cermanová, summarizes the present state of knowledge on the fate of Prague Jews during the War of the Austrian Succession at the beginning of the reign of Maria Theresa, and on their alleged collaboration with the enemy – which became a pretext for two pogroms in 1744 and for the expulsion of the Jews from the Bohemian lands. It explores the contemporary Jewish and non-Jewish sources on these events and presents a previously unknown source – the family megillah of Joseph Kirschner Shohet (1717–1766) – which describes the author's tragic experience during the second Prague pogrom in November 1744. The following study by Magda Veselská, entitled *Early Documentation of the Shoah in the Czech Lands: The Documentation Project and the Prague Jewish Museum (1945–1947)*, deals with the activities of individuals who gathered authentic documents during and shortly after the Second World War in order to record contemporary events and, above all, the persecution of Jews. It draws particular attention to the post-war gathering of documents and testimonies by individuals and the group around Zeev Shek (as part of the Documentation Project), and to the involvement of the Prague Jewish Museum in this work. In the 'Documents' section, a study by Petr Vítámvás critically assesses hitherto opinions on the beginnings of Jewish settlement in Boskovice in the Middle Ages and, by analyzing records on Jews in Boskovice municipal books, shows that Jewish settlement did not start there until the 16th century.

In the 'Reports' section, V. Hamáčková and A. Putík provide an overview of the life and work of Jan Heřman (1933–1986), a historian, archivist and first editor of *Judaica Bohemiae*, who died just over 20 years ago; Lenka Uličná provides information about a long-term project of the Jewish Museum in Prague involving the comprehensive processing of genizah finds in Bohemia and Moravia, and focuses on the preliminary research that is part of this project – the processing of finds from the Rychnov nad Kněžnou genizah; István Pál Ádám gives an overview of the conference "The Holocaust and its Aftermath from the Family Perspective", which was held in Prague on 15–16 March 2017. The final section of the journal contains reviews of the following books: *Juden in der mittelalterlichen Stadt. Der städtische Raum im Mittelalter – Ort des Zusammenlebens und des Konflikts / Jews in the Medieval Town. Urban Space in the Middle Ages – A Place of Coexistence and Conflicts* by Eva Doležalová et al (reviewed by Helmut Teufel); "Avigdor, Benesch, Gitl." *Juden in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien im Mittelalter. Samuel Steinherz zum Gedenken (1857 Güssing – 1942 Theresienstadt)* by Helmut Teufel et al (reviewed by Ivan Hlaváček); *Bürger zweiter Klasse? Juden auf dem Land in Preußen, Lothringen und Luxemburg* by Stephanie Schlesier (reviewed by Ines Koeltzsch); *Židovské identity v Československu před 2. světovou válkou a po ní* [Jewish Identity in Czechoslovakia before and after the Second World War] by Michaela Peroutková (reviewed by Alena Heitlinger).

Published since 1965 by the Jewish Museum in Prague, *Judaica Bohemiae* focuses on Jewish history and culture in Bohemia, Moravia and the wider Central European area (the territory of the former Habsburg Monarchy).

The texts are in English and German.

JUDAICA BOHEMIAE LII-1



JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE 2017

OTHER NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

New testimonies in the Oral History Collection

The Jewish Museum's oral history project, which has been systematically recording interviews with witnesses since 1990, seeks to chart the history of Jews in the 20th century. The goal is to preserve the Jewish memory and, at the same time, to establish the Jewish experience as part of the Czech collective memory. Having learning about the museum's project in 2014, Vera

Schiff, a native of Prague living in Toronto, expressed a desire to provide testimony. We managed to find a colleague in Canada, Kateřina Fischer, who visited Vera to set down her account. Vera was born to a Czech Jewish family in Prague in 1926. Her close-knit family life was brought to an abrupt end by Nazi persecution. She lost her loved ones in the terrible conditions of the Terezín ghetto, but she herself survived, sometimes – as she says – despite herself. Like other Shoah survivors, after returning from the camps, she encountered a lack of understanding from others and suffered from her own despair. After the Communists soon came to power, Vera felt that she couldn't live in another totalitarian regime. With her husband and young son, she emigrated to the newly-established Jewish state, where the foundations of present-day Israel were being laid. However, life was also difficult for her there. Vera's biography is being published in four issues of this year's Revolver Revue magazine (at www.revolverrevue.cz).



EHRI fellowship at the Jewish Museum in Prague

Since 2010, the Jewish Museum in Prague has been involved in the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), a unique project that offers fellowships at its partner institutions. For more information on EHRI fellowships, see: <https://www.ehri-project.eu/ehri-fellowship-call-2016-2018>).

In May 2017, Viktorie Suková from Ukraine was awarded an EHRI fellowship at the Jewish Museum in Prague. A lecturer at the University of Kharkiv, she

has conducted long-term research into topics relating to the Second World War and the Shoah. During her month-long stay, Viktorie Suková focused on a study of the archive sources in the museum's Shoah History Department, complementing her research on the topic of culture and theatre in ghettos during the Second World War.



Culture against antisemitism

Once again, the Jewish Museum in Prague was a partner to the annual public meeting against antisemitism on Holocaust Remembrance Day. A 'good will' march through the centre of Prague was held by the Czech branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) on Sunday 23 April. The participants walked from the Old-Town Square through the streets of the Jewish Quarter to Palach Square in front of Rudolfin Hall, where a group of professional dancers commemorated the victims of the Shoah. The march ended in the Wallenstein Garden, where those taking part joined a gathering.

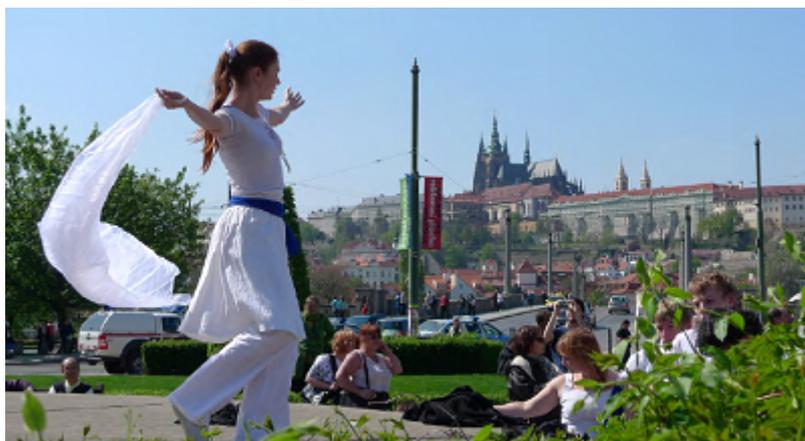


Photo © ICEJ

Yom HaShoah 5777 (2017)

On 24 April, the Jewish Museum in Prague participated in the 12th year of publicly reading out the names of Holocaust victims on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. The continuous reading of names took place in thirteen Czech cities. In Prague, it was held at Jiřího z Poděbrad Square, with other sites in Blatná, Brno, Havlíčkův Brod, Klatovy, Kolín, Kosova Hora, Kutná Hora, Liberec, Olomouc, Pilsen, Sušice and Ústí nad Labem. On the same morning, a commemorative event to remember the Jewish victims of

the genocide was held in the Pinkas Synagogue.

יום השואה
Jom
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MEETING BRNO Festival

On 19–28 May, the Jewish Museum in Prague participated in the second MEETING BRNO festival, which again focused on charting and highlighting the history of Moravia and its largest city – a place shaped and influenced by the Czech, German and Jewish communities. The museum provided visual materials from its archive for a mobile app that provides a new way to explore the city’s Jewish heritage (“The Jewish Trail”). Users of the app can follow the marked trail signs in the streets and check out details on the website <http://stezkybrno.cz/zs/> (available in three languages). For more information about the festival, see www.meetingbrno.cz.



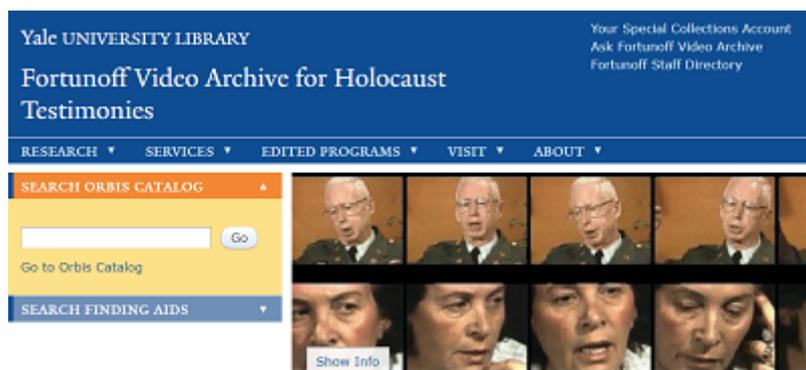
2017 Prague Museum Night

The Jewish Museum in Prague again participated in Prague Museum Night, now in its 14th year. This cultural event helps to promote the activities of museums and galleries, and since 2004 it has offered the public an opportunity to explore the city's cultural heritage in a somewhat different light. The Maisel Synagogue (with its exhibition on the history of Jews in the Bohemian lands from the 10th to the 18th centuries) and the Spanish Synagogue (with its exhibition on the fate of Jews in Bohemia and Moravia in the 19th and 20th centuries) opened their doors to this year's throng of visitors. A guided tour of the Maisel Synagogue was also provided for hard-of-hearing visitors. As in previous years, public interest in visiting the museum at night was enormous. Around 3,827 visitors came to see the exhibitions between 10:30 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. – 40% more than last year.



Fortunoff Video Archive

As of June 2017, the Jewish Museum's Library and Multimedia Centre provide access to the collection of recorded interviews with witnesses and survivors of the Holocaust in the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. This collection of testimonies, which have been recorded since the end of the 1970s, is now overseen by the Yale University Library. The Jewish Museum has been selected as one of the Archive's partner sites, which means that it has free access to the testimonies. The Fortunoff Video Archive currently holds more than 4,500 testimonies. Our library is one of several places in Europe where registered users can request Fortunoff materials for viewing, which makes a significant enhancement to our own oral history collection. The Jewish Museum in Prague also provides access to the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive.



Award for the town of Kolín

The Memorial Scrolls Trust London and the Jewish Museum in Prague have together granted an award to Kolín for its efforts at preserving the town's Jewish heritage and the memory of local Jews who disappeared during the war. The award was granted on 1 June for the 75th anniversary of the Kolín transports and on the occasion of a visit by representatives of the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue. A memorial plaque with the names of students who did not survive the Holocaust was unveiled at the local business academy. The town's 65th commemorative cobblestone, called *Stolperstein*, was laid in honour of the Hübsch family in Karolíny Světlé Street. A concert for the

presentation of the award was held by the Kolin High School Choir and the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue Choir. It was attended by Michaela Marksová, the Czech Minister for Labour and Social Affairs.



A Bag of Marbles

In May, the Jewish Museum in Prague provided partnership support for the release of the feature film *Un sac de billes / A Bag of Marbles* in association with the distribution company Cinemart. Based on the book of the same name (published in Czech by Mladá fronta), it tells the true story of two Jewish boys who escape from Nazi-occupied Paris to southern France. The Czech premiere of the film was held at the Zlín Film Festival at the end of May and was released in Czech cinemas on 1 June. Before the film premiere, the Jewish Museum held a competition for copies of the book and tickets to the film showing. The film trailer can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HZCqTITd1Q



Jewish Prague in a different light: a debate about the book series *Jews–History–Memory*

On 10 May, for the Book World book fair, the Jewish Museum in Prague, *Lidové noviny* publishers and the Institute for Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Sciences held a debate with Martina Niedhammer and Ines Koeltzsch, the authors of new books about Jewish Prague that have been published by *Lidové noviny* in the book series *Židé–dějiny–paměť* (Jews–History–Memory). Together with the historians Kateřina Čapková (technical editor of the book series) and Zuzana Schreiberová (co-ordinator of the successful project “Prague Shared and Divided”), they discussed how to write about the history of Jewish Prague in a way that differs from the traditional narratives, how to utilize the phenomenon of the urban space for historical research, and why Jewish history is an important part of the history of Prague in general. For more information about the above book series, which is published

by *Lidové noviny* in association with the Institute for Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Jewish Museum in Prague, see <https://www.nln.cz/knihy-zidedejiny pamet/1>.



PROMINENT VISITS

April

On 20 April 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by South Korea's Ambassador to the Czech Republic, His Excellency Moon Seoung-Hyun. Accompanied by the museum director Leo Pavlát, he saw the exhibition *Through the Labyrinth of Normalization: The Jewish Community as a Mirror for the Majority Society*, which is currently on view at the museum's Robert Guttman Gallery.



May

On 8 May 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by Jaroslava Doležalová from Žďár nad Sázavou, who, with her husband in 1944, saved the

life of a five-year-old Jewish girl, Jarmilka Vilhelmová, by hiding her from the Nazis. Jaroslava Doležalová's story was featured on Czech Television ([see www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10117034229-168-hodin/217452801100507/obsah/542274-o-jarusce.](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10117034229-168-hodin/217452801100507/obsah/542274-o-jarusce.))



Jaroslava Doležalová (in the middle) with her son (on the left)

On 24 May 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by a delegation of guests led by Prof. Gert Weisskirchen, the former Vice-President of the German Parliament.

On 25 May 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by a group of 60 deputies, assistants and other staff members of the Czech Parliament and various ministries led by MP Petr Kudela.

June

On 13 June 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by Ronald S. Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress and the founder of the philanthropic organization that bears his name and supports the Lauder Schools of Prague (Jewish kindergarten, elementary school and high school).



On 15 June 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by the First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans with the Czech Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek.



On 20 June 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by a delegation from the European Court of Human Rights, led by its president Guido Raimondi (pictured on the left). They went on a tour of the museum's exhibitions with the President of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic Pavel Rychetský and the museum director Leo Pavlát.



On 25 June 2017, the Jewish Museum in Prague was visited by Israeli Knesset member and Minister of Science, Technology and Space, Ofir Akunis (pictured second from left) with cabinet members and representatives of the Israeli Embassy in Prague.



Jewish Museum in Prague, U Staré školy 1, 110 01 Prague 1

www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/info/visit/

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Photo: ŽMP