

Newsletter

3 2017

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

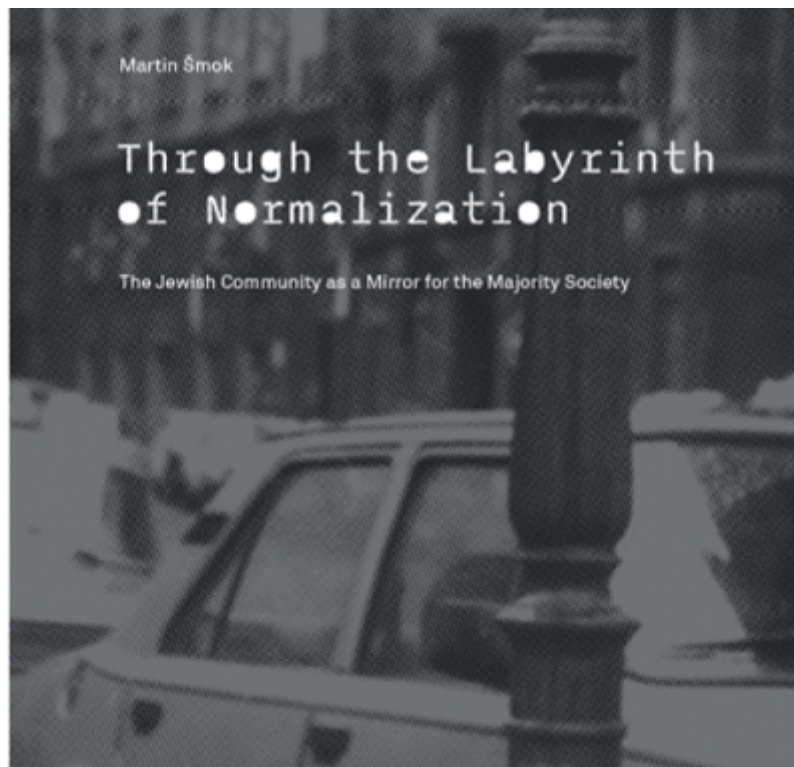
Through the Labyrinth of Normalization: The Jewish Community as a Mirror for the Majority Society

Currently on display at the Robert Guttmann Gallery (until 28 January 2018) is an exhibition that was produced by the Jewish Museum in Prague in co-operation with the Security Services Archive and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes for the 40th anniversary of the founding of Charter 77.

Charter 77, a civic initiative demanding adherence to human and civil rights, was the most important form of resistance to the communist regime and normalization in Czechoslovakia. The exhibition presents concrete cases of StB (former State Secret Police) operations against Jewish communities, the dilemmas faced by community members, and the involvement of several members in dissident and other activities outside the official scope of Jewish communities. However, the exhibition highlights more than the various forms of “anti-Zionist” propaganda during this period and its impact on individual lives. Normalization also entailed the destruction of Jewish cemeteries, the demolition of synagogues, and the obstruction of research and documentation relating to the fate of Jews during the Second World War, as well as policies that nearly eradicated Jewish studies completely. On display are photographs depicting daily Jewish life and the efforts that were made to preserve it despite the co-ordinated attempts of the communist regime to suppress any sort of meaningful activity, especially the passing down of Jewish traditions from one generation to the next. Brought together from a number of archives, the majority of the unique documents and photographs are being shown for the very first time.

The exhibition was conceived and curated by the film documentarist Martin Šmok. It has received support from the State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic and from the City of Prague.

An English-language catalogue was written for the exhibition by the curator Martin Šmok. The catalogue can be purchased at the Jewish Museum’s e-shop at <https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/e-shop-en/exhibition-catalogues/through-the-labyrinth-of-normalization/> or at the Robert Guttmann Gallery (U Staré školy 3, Prague 1).



Touring exhibitions

The touring exhibitions that the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture offers for hire to cultural and educational institutions attract great numbers of visitors. For example, the exhibition *Baroque Synagogues in the Czech Lands*, which was on view at the Regional Museum in Mikulov was seen by almost 4,000 people between April and June.

Currently on view at the Dobříš Museum is another of the museum's touring exhibitions – *History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia*.

For more information on the touring exhibitions on offer, see <https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/program-and-education/exhibits/traveling-exhibitions/>.



A SELECTION OF CULTURAL EVENTS AND LECTURES IN PRAGUE

European Day of Jewish Culture

As it does every year, the Jewish Museum in Prague took part in the programme of the annual European Day of Jewish Culture (3 September). The theme for 2017 was the Jewish Diaspora. For this broad topic, the museum organized a screening of *Naive Dreams*, a 2013 documentary film by Peter and Susanne Scheiner about the attempts at reviving a small Jewish community in the town of Komárno, Slovakia. After the screening, the journalist Petr Brod moderated a discussion with the director Peter Scheiner and the Slovak sociologist Fedor Gál who talked about the actual situation in Komárno and about the broader context of Jewish life in Slovakia.

Jews in the Czech Lands after the Shoah: Identity of a Wounded Memory

On 19 September, the Maisel Synagogue hosted a presentation of the first synthetic work on the topic of the identity of Czech Jews after the Holocaust, entitled "*Jews in the Czech Lands after the Shoah: Identity of a Wounded Memory*" (Marenčin PT, 2016). The book is authored by Blanka Soukupová, an ethnologist and historian at the Charles University Faculty of Humanities. The author talked about her book and related topics with the journalist and Czech Radio Plus commentator Jan Fingerland.



OTHER NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

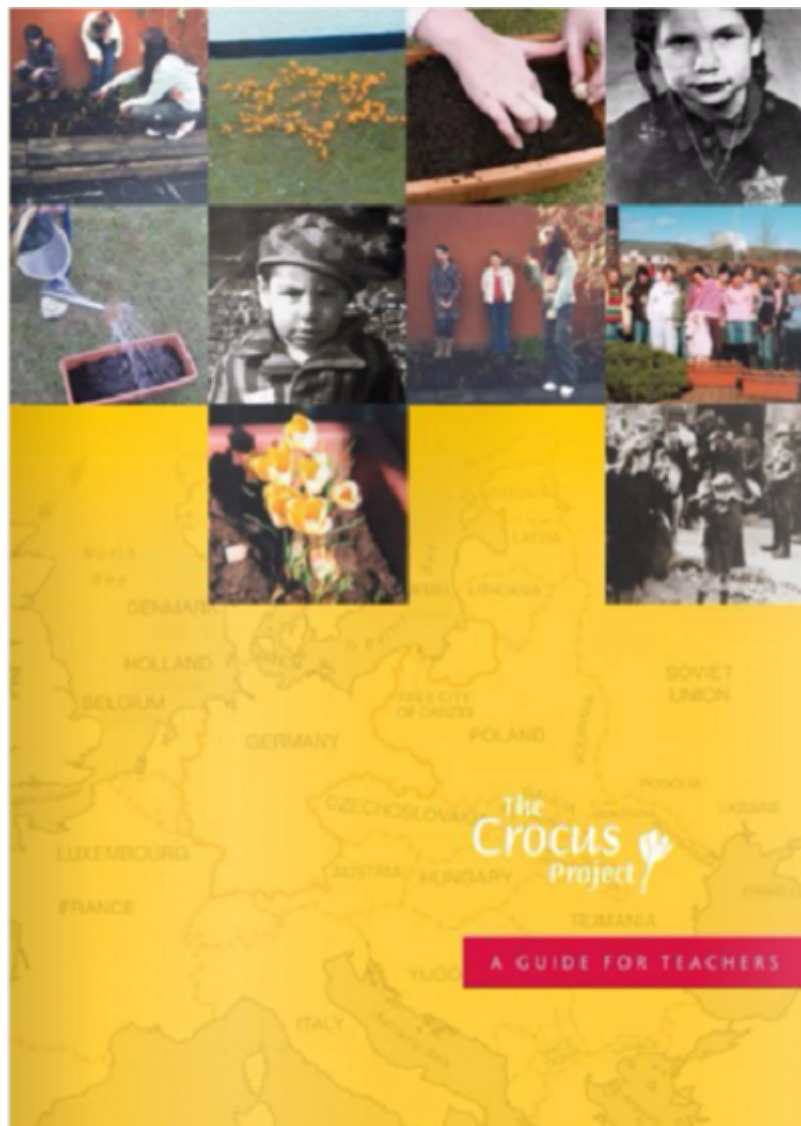
Reconstruction of the auditorium of the Department for Education and Culture

During the summer months, the lecture halls at the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture were reconstructed according to plans drawn up by the architect Jindřich Svatoš.

Crocus Project expanding

The Crocus Project is an initiative by the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland (HETI) in association with the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture. This project is a tangible way to introduce young people to the subject of the Holocaust and to raise awareness about the dangers of discrimination, prejudice and fanaticism. HETI provides free yellow crocus bulbs for school pupils to plant in memory of the 1.5 million Jewish children who perished in the Shoah and thousands of other children who were victims of Nazi atrocities. Now in its 12th year, the project involves school children from throughout the world and is expanding each year. In 2016, more than 55,000 Irish and

European school pupils were involved in the Crocus Project. This year, the project has attracted unprecedented interest and more than 450 schools in the Czech Republic have joined.



Testimonies in the Oral History Collection

Eleven testimonies, mostly from first-generation survivors, have been added to the Jewish Museum's Oral History Collection over the course of the last three months. We also recorded testimonies from second-generation survivors, who described the fate of their parents and told us about their lives during the communist era in Czechoslovakia. The interviewees provided us with a large amount of valuable photographs and documents from their family archives. We intend to use some of this material in the new exhibitions that we are currently putting together in the Pinkas and Spanish synagogues. The new recordings are a major contribution to the museum's collection.



Hana Frištenská (née Kleinová) with her brother Petr in 1947. This photograph, along with other material, was provided by Hana's son Frank Frištenský, who previously helped to identify his mother on footage from a propaganda film that was made in the Terezín ghetto.

Digitization in memorial institutions

On 18–20 September, the State Regional Archives in Třeboň held an international conference (“Digitization in Memorial Institutions, 2017”) to mark the 10th anniversary of the launch of a project to digitize sources in archives in south Bohemia. Archive, museum and library staff from the Czech Republic and Austria presented their digitization projects and discussed how digitization has changed the long-established way of working with sources and making them available to the public. The Jewish Museum in Prague presented two of its international projects – EHRI and Yerusha – at this conference. Through their output and databases, both of these projects aim to facilitate the work of researchers, in particular by carrying out research through information technology that provides online information about sources relating to Jewish history/culture and Holocaust history. The presentation of these projects met with great interest from colleagues from other memorial institutions. Of particular note was the online presentation of the Terezín Research Guide, which is one of the outputs of the EHRI project. With regard to the Yerusha presentation, the conference participants were particularly pleased to hear about the continued research on Judaica in other Czech and Moravian archives. For more information about these research projects, see <https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/collection-research/science-and-research/>.

Inscriptions of the names of Shoah victims corrected

At the end of August, museum staff corrected some of the inscriptions of the names of Bohemian and Moravian victims of the Shoah on the walls of the Pinkas Synagogue. Corrections are made every few years on the basis of verified initiatives that staff of the Jewish Museum's Shoah History Department

receive from specialists and the general public. This year, corrections were made to the birth dates of two victims and one date of death was completely changed on the basis of new evidence provided by foreign researchers. As with the majority of the victims, however, even in this case the precise date of death is not known; instead, it is the date when the person was last deported, i.e. the last date on which they were known to have been alive.



11th Congress of Czech Historians

On 13–15 September, members of the Jewish Museum’s Department of Jewish History and Jewish Studies took part in the 11th Congress of Czech Historians – a meeting with a long tradition that stretches back to 1937, when it was held at Palacký University in Olomouc. Aside from the three main sections, there were 81 loose panel sessions, approved by a specialist board. The “Jews in Bohemia and Moravia in History and Historiography” panel (guarantor: History Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Near Eastern and African Studies at the Charles University Philosophy Faculty) was focused entirely on Jewish issues with the aim of reviewing research carried out to date and, above all, of discussing perspectives for current and future research. Over the course of two days, there were 13 presentations by specialists on Jewish history and culture from seven different institutions. These were divided into thematic blocks – “Jews of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period in Academic Research”, “Media and People: Thought and Culture Transfers”, and “Jewish Society in the Light of Early-Modern and Modern Sources”. Members of the Jewish Museum’s Department of Jewish History and Jewish Studies gave presentations in the first of the thematic blocks. Iveta Cermanová and Alexandr Putík started with a paper on the role of the Prague Jewish Museum in post-war research into Jewish history; Daniel Polakovič spoke about the documentation of Jewish cemeteries in the Czech Republic; Pavel Kocman gave a paper on the specific features of Jewish history in Moravia in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. The presentations brought about lively debate, which continued into the evening hours at an informal meeting of all the panel participants. This debate also contributed to a useful exchange of specialist information, helped with getting to know one another better, and added to the overall positive experience of the event. For more on the congress, see (in Czech) <http://historieolomouc2017.upol.cz/>.

Seminar on modern Jewish history

The Institute of Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Sciences, CEFRES (French Research Centre in Humanities and Social Sciences), the Masaryk Institute and the Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in association with the Jewish Museum in Prague, would like to invite you to another series of seminars on modern Jewish history:

17 October, 5 p.m.

- *Large Scale Use of Oral History Accounts in the Historiography of the Shoah: The Case of the Hungarian-Jewish Slave Labourers in Vienna (1944-45)* - Éva Kovacs (Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies)

14 November, 5 p.m.

- *Concerning Retribution: The Holocaust on Trial in Slovakia, 1945–48* - Michala Lónčíková (Comenius University, Bratislava)

28 November, 5 p.m.

- *Solving the Housing Crisis: The Eviction and Resettlement of Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, 1939-1942* - Benjamin Frommer (Northwestern University, Evanston)

12 December, 5 p.m.

- *Publishing Books in Early Modern Jewish Prague* - Olga Sixtová (Charles University, Prague)

The seminars will be held at the CEFRES building (address: Na Florenci 3, Prague 1). For more information, see www.jewishhistory.usd.cas.cz/



TripAdvisor® Certificate of Excellence for the Jewish Museum in Prague

As it did last year, the Jewish Museum in Prague has again received the prestigious TripAdvisor® Certificate of Excellence. This award honours tourist attractions and destinations that consistently achieve outstanding reviews on TripAdvisor from travellers around the world. We received the award not only for the museum as a whole but also separately for the Pinkas, Klausen and

Spanish synagogues, as well as for the Old Jewish Cemetery. The Certificate of Excellence highlights the uniqueness of remarkable sights and tourist destinations. It can be applied for by any organization that has been listed on TripAdvisor for at least 12 months and has maintained a rating of at least 4 out of 5 points.



PROMINENT VISITS

July

On 13 July, the museum was visited by David N. Myers, a UCLA professor of history and leading expert on Jewish history.

August

On 9 August, the museum was visited by Gila Gamliel, the Israeli Minister for Social Equality.



On 29 August, the museum was visited by Pavel Vošalík, the Czech Ambassador to the Holy See.



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www.jewishmuseum.cz

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