

SUMMARIES

MARIA THERESA AND THE BOHEMIAN JEWS

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With Maria Theresias eviction decree of December 18, 1744, difficult times lay ahead first for all Prague Jews and subsequently for Jewish people all over Bohemia. Soon however it became apparent that the eviction decision was intertwined with issues of corporate opposition against attempts at systematizing absolutist rule and of diplomatic troubles caused by the succession wars and the loss of Silesia, and that it caused economic reverberations taking the form of lost business for Christian artisans in Prague and comparable troubles for the landed gentry. Especially with regard to the anti-centralization struggle of the Bohemian estates, the eviction became the object of contrasting interests, a fact which finally turned the scales in favour of the Jews who were allowed to return, in exchange for having to pay higher taxes, after three years' time. What made the difference in the end was the absolutist notion of what benefited the state, not tolerance. Besides, Maria Theresa knew very well that absolutist rule needed a framework of general rules and guidelines and that arbitrary acts such as the eviction of the Jews ran contrary to the reform efforts. The eviction, and its revocation by the Empress, testify to the transitional character of Habsburg rule in the second half of the 18th century.