

HISTORY AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Similarities and Dissimilarities in the History of the Jews in Germany and the Czech Lands 1918-1945

"The 1000 year-history of German Jewry has reached its end." Thus, in April 1933, the president of the Reich Representation of the German Jews (Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden), Rabbi Leo Baeck, summed up the acute shift that had occurred in the existential situation of Germany's Jews following the rise to power of the National Socialist movement.¹

In August 1939, five months after the occupation of the Czech Lands by Nazi Germany, Dr. Emil Kafka, head of the Jewish Community of Prague, convened an emergency meeting of all the Jewish communities to inform them that Adolf Eichmann had ordered the expulsion of all Jews from the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia." "Never in the thousand-year history of Czech Jewry have we known a harder time than this," he said.² "The authorities have issued an order that the Jews residing in the Protectorate must leave their places of residence and emigrate, this time to remote foreign lands."³ Kafka was referring to the fundamental difference between the new historical situation and past expulsion decrees, drawing a comparison with the seemingly analogical but in fact radically different case of the last expulsion order issued to the Jews of Prague, Bohemia, and Moravia, in the mid-eighteenth century, during the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa.

A striking feature of the declarations made by the two Jewish leaders at this critical juncture in the history of the Jews in each country is their awareness, deriving from a deep historical consciousness, that a distinctively new period has begun. Common to both statements, by Baeck and by Kafka, is a sense that the onset of Nazi rule signals the impending end of the Jews' historical existence: in Germany as the first country in which the Nazis gained power; and in the Czech Lands as the first occupied country outside the sphere of the "German Nation."

¹ German: "Die Tausendjährige Geschichte des deutschen Judentums ist zu Ende." Cf. Alexander, Kurt: Die Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden. In: Reichmann, Eva (ed.): Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Rabbiner Dr. Leo Baeck am 23. Mai 1953. London n. d. [approx. 1953] 76-84, here 78. – Reichmann, Hans: Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens. In: *Ibid.* 63-75, here 72. – For a different version cf. Aronsfeld, Caesar C.: Was niemand ahnen konnte. In: Die Zeit, May 8, 1991. – I wish to thank Avraham Barkai who gave me the reference of Aronsfeld's article.

² Czech: "[...] v tisíciletých dějinách židovstva v Čechách nebylo ještě tak těžkých dob jako dnes." Cf. Kulka, Otto Dov: The SD Judenpolitik in the First Three Occupied Countries (Austria, Bohemia-Moravia, Poland 1938-1939). In: Yalkut Moreshet 18 (1975) 163-184, here 168 (Hebrew), facsimile of the documents in German and Czech.

³ *Ibid.*

Despite this awareness of the looming end, which in one form or another began to trickle into the consciousness of everyone, the Jews went on with their daily business seemingly oblivious to the new situation. The main effort of the communities and their leadership was devoted to the struggle for material and spiritual survival, and not only in Berlin of 1933 and Prague of 1939 but equally between the walls of Theresienstadt and other ghettos up to the violent phase of the "Final Solution."

This article draws a comparison between the Jews of Germany and the Jews of the Czech Lands in the period between 1918 and 1945: the parallel or analogical developments, the ties and reciprocal influences, the differences in their political and social status, and the ways with which they tried to cope with a changing historical situation. The primary framework for the comparison is chronological, following a parallel periodization of the history of the Jews in the two countries during these years:

1. Weimar Germany vis-à-vis the First Czechoslovak Republic.
2. The years 1933-1938 in Germany in comparison with the period of the "Second Czecho-Slovak Republic," which survived in the shadow of Nazi Germany between October 1938 and March 1939.
3. The first War years under the rule of "Greater Germany" (Großdeutsches Reich) – which also included the former Austria and parts of Poland – in the two countries up to the beginning of the mass deportations in fall 1941.
4. The period of mass deportations and annihilation until the end of the war. In this last chapter the Theresienstadt Ghetto played a singular role in the life and fate of the Jews from both countries.

The axis around which the discussion will revolve is the period between 1918 and 1938 in Germany and between 1918 and 1939 in the Czech Lands. This will provide the basis for a later discussion of the parallel deportation policy in the two countries, the initiatives of Czech Jewry to establish the Theresienstadt Ghetto, and the continuation of autonomous Jewish activity in the struggle for survival under Nazi rule until the period of the "Final Solution." An epilogue will describe the different fates of the heritage of the historical past in the two countries, following the destructions during the *Reichskristallnacht* on the one hand and the initiatives to establish the "Museum of the Extinct Jewish Race" on the other.

The Weimar period and the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic

The Weimar Republic

The period of the Weimar Republic is marked by a polarization in the two basic tendencies that had shaped the history of German Jewry in the modern era. On the one hand, there was an unprecedented increase in tendencies of acculturation and integration into the country's cultural, social, and political life. Yet at the same time there also was an unprecedented radicalization of Antisemitism, especially of a racist secular appearance bearing a political character.

Much has been written about the Jews' integration and about their achievements, mainly as individuals, in the areas of culture and science and in the public and political life of the state during the Weimar period, and I will not dwell on this subject

here. Suffice it to mention, for example, Niewyk's "The Jews in Weimar Germany"⁴ and Peter Gay's "Weimar Culture".⁵ On the other hand, I want to set the record straight and refute, once and for all, the notion that Antisemitism in Weimar was "relatively moderate" as compared with the Kaiserreich and more especially as compared with the Antisemitism of the mass pogroms in Eastern Europe. It need hardly be pointed out that this image has taken root in the writings of many historians, in Germany and other countries, including Israel.

As for the decline of the Antisemitic parties after the 1890s, several scholars have shown that there was no longer a need for them, since their basic ideas were integrated into the ideology and propaganda of most of the large political parties in Germany on the eve of the First World War and during the Weimar period.⁶ As David Bankier has shown, these attitudes penetrated the political propaganda even of the socialist parties, including the Communists.⁷ Those who maintain that there was a substantial difference between the Antisemitism of Weimar Germany and the Antisemitism that underlay the pogroms in Eastern Europe disregard the basic differences in political culture between Eastern and Central Europe in those years. It is obvious that the revolutions and regime changes in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1920 bore a different character from both the changes generated by the Russian Revolution and the bloody civil war in Russia, and from the wars of independence in Poland and Ukraine in the latter part of the First World War and its aftermath.

The supposed comparison, based on the notion that Antisemitism in Germany during the Weimar period bore a minor character, ignores the vast scale of Antisemitic publications in this period. According to a bibliographic study, which is currently being conducted by Rena Auerbach at the Vidal Sassoon Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, this literature reached unprecedented dimensions, unexampled both in earlier periods in Germany or in any other country in Europe.⁸

Similarly, the traumatic Antisemitic experience undergone by German Jewry in the First World War, when, in 1916, the Empire's military and political leadership ordered a "count of the Jews" (*Judenzählung*) – and of Jews only – who were soldiers on the front lines is unparalleled in any other army in a war situation, including the army of the Antisemitic conservative regime in Czarist Russia.⁹

⁴ Niewyk, Donald L.: *The Jews in Weimar Germany*. Baton Rouge, London 1980.

⁵ Gay, Peter: *Weimar Culture. The Outsider as Insider*. New York 1968; for more updated systematic work about this period cf. Meyer, Michael A. (ed.): *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*. Vol. 4: *Renewal and Destruction 1918-1945*, New York 1996, chapters 1-8.

⁶ Cf. Ettinger, Shmuel: *The Secular Roots of Modern Antisemitism*. In: Kulka, Otto Dov / Mendes-Flohr, Paul (eds.): *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National Socialism 1914-1945*. Jerusalem 1978, 37-61, here 60-61.

⁷ Bankier, David: *The German Communist Party and Nazi Antisemitism 1933-1938*. In: Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 32 (1987) 325-340.

⁸ Auerbach, Rena (ed.): *The "Jewish Question" in German-Speaking Countries*. Vol. 2: 1914-1932. A Bibliography (forthcoming).

⁹ The most recent study which also compares the parallel attempts in other armies which all failed, is: Rosenthal, Jacob: *An Episode of "Risches"? The "Counting of the Jews" by the*

To this we need to add the findings of Saul Friedländer, Ulrich Herbert and Michael Wildt¹⁰ concerning the attitude of the intellectual elites, especially the students, in the Weimar period. About 70 percent of the students were members of Antisemitic organizations, whose charters not only denied Jews admission to their ranks but also demanded their expulsion from Germany. As Ulrich Herbert and Michael Wildt have shown, the members of this generation of students from the Weimar period later occupied most of the positions in the civil and military governments in the occupied countries and were very active in the initiatives for the persecution and mass murder of the Jews, on ideological grounds. A similar path was followed by many young university teachers, including important future historians such as Theodor Schieder and Werner Conze, whom Götz Aly and Susanne Heim describe in their study, with at least partial justification, as “forerunners of the Final Solution” (*Vordenker der Vernichtung*).¹¹

Indeed, Antisemitism in Weimar Germany, though not without manifestations of violence – such as desecrations of hundreds of Jewish cemeteries, boycott, incitement, and physical attacks on Jews – can be characterized not only as a political stream and a social mindset, but also as a salient intellectual trend.¹²

In the light of these findings, it is also called for a reexamination of the often-quoted theses propounded by Shulamit Volkov about the ostensible differences between Antisemitism of the *Kaiserreich* and under Nazism. The former is described as “Antisemitism of the written word” or as a “cultural code” of the conservative German society, the latter of the “spoken word,” referring to the Nazis’ mass assemblies.¹³ In fact, the written word and its intellectual representatives are as prominent in Weimar Antisemitism as they were in the earlier period, and according to the number of Antisemitic publications more than in any other European country. Therefore the time has come to dispense with the generalizing, unfounded, and misleading statements that are adduced in the dialogue between historians in Germany or Israel.

To conclude the discussion of the Weimar period, we will note another sphere in which the developments now appear partly different from the image that has taken root in the historiography. Opposed to the trends of uncritical integration and accul-

German Army in the First World War. Tel Aviv 2005. (Based on his Hebrew PhD Thesis at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2002, Hebrew, with a summary in English.)

¹⁰ Friedländer, Saul: *Nazi Germany and the Jews*. Vol. I: *The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*. New York 1997. – Herbert, Ulrich: *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903-1989*. Bonn 1996. – Wildt, Michael: *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes*. Hamburg 2002.

¹¹ Aly, Götz/Heim, Susanne: *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung*. Hamburg 1991.

¹² In addition to the books by Herbert and Friedländer on the academic elites and antisemitism at the universities, cited above, cf. Walter, Dirk: *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt in der Weimarer Republik*. Berlin 1998. – Borut, Jacob: *Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany*. In: *Yad Vashem Studies* 28 (2000) 7-50. – Bajohr, Frank: „Unser Hotel ist judenfrei“. *Bäder-Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt/M. 2003.

¹³ Volkov, Shulamit: *Das geschriebene und das gesprochene Wort. Über Kontinuität und Diskontinuität im deutschen Antisemitismus*. In: *Idem: Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. München 1990, 54-75.

turation, which were mentioned above, a contrariwise trend is also discernible in the life and culture of German Jewry and its self-perception. This development is described in Michael Brenner's study, "The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany",¹⁴ which shows how Weimar Germany became an important center of modern Jewish culture, largely secular, not only German, but even Hebrew. In this context the *Ostjuden* – Eastern Jewry and its culture – also appear in a new light. The subject of the *Ostjuden* was generally raised only in connection with the causes of Antisemitism and the disdain in which the *Ostjuden* were held by the autochthonous Jews of Germany.¹⁵ Yet Eastern European Jews also appear as a revelation and a source of inspiration for assimilated Jewish intellectuals, representing a living, fruitful Jewish culture that carried messages relevant to the modern era without forsaking the historic Jewish identity. Suffice it to mention the works and intellectual activity of Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Gershom Scholem. Brenner notes many other Jewish writers and scholars, whose short-lived careers in Germany had a significant influence throughout the Jewish world, especially in Israel and the United States.

I have noted this special facet of the Jewish society and culture in Weimar Germany because of the newly emerging innovative aspects of current research. Clearly, this is only one element in a broader spectrum: a manifold Jewish life that included various political, religious, and cultural organizations, a variegated Jewish press, and the fascinating Jewish-German literature produced in this period. The overall picture of the Weimar period in this sphere is more widely known and I will sum it up here very briefly.

As so often in history, German Jewry in this period was characterized by both continuity and change. New organizations and ideologies sprang up alongside others that continued from the period of the "Kaiserreich" or even earlier. Politically, the main triangle consisted of the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, C. V.), the Zionist Federation of Germany (Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland, ZVfD), and the nationalist German-Jewish organizations; while in the religious sphere the three sides of the triangle were the Reform Communities, the Orthodox *Austrittsgemeinden* and the moderate *Gemeindeorthodoxie*.

Among the new forces that rose to prominence after the First World War, the organization of Jewish front soldiers (Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, RjF), stood out. However, in terms of the significance of the Jewish organizations within the Jewish public, it is clear that the thrust toward integration into the surrounding society and its culture was far more powerful in this period than focusing on Jewish identity.

¹⁴ Brenner, Michael: *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*. New Haven, London 1996.

¹⁵ Aschheim, Steve: *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in Germany and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*. Madison 1982. – Maurer, Trude: *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918-1933*. Hamburg 1986. – Weiss, Yfaat: *Deutsche und polnische Juden vor dem Holocaust. Jüdische Identität zwischen Staatsbürgerschaft und Ethnizität 1933-1940*. München 2000.

The First Czechoslovak Republic

The parallel period in the history of Czech Jewry is that of the First Republic, which existed from October 1918 to September 1938. In comparison with German Jewry, historical research on the Jews in the Czech Lands in this era has been less fruitful.¹⁶

Many features of Czech Jewry in this period bear a remarkable similarity to those of German Jewry, though there are also a number of basic differences, which affected its subsequent development. The similar, parallel, or analogous features are apparent in several spheres: the trends of acculturation and integration, which were quite intensive at this time and produced unprecedented achievements; the social and class structures; the professional diversity; the demographic thrust toward urbanization; the declining birthrate; the proportion of Jews who abandoned Judaism, and also the scale of intermarriage, which was above 40 percent in both countries; and the relative share of the Jews in the total population – about one percent in the last census of 1930. All these features show marked similarities between the Jewish communities in the two countries.

Similarities also existed in internal Jewish life, notably in structural organization and in ideological cleavages between the Assimilationists and the Zionists, though the ratio was slightly different. In the religious sphere there was a certain organizational difference: as in Austria, relations between Reform and Orthodoxy did not lead to an intercommunal rift as it occurred in Germany. The efforts to establish a central umbrella organization were tellingly similar to the founding of the National Representation in Germany in January 1932, a year before the Nazis' assumption of power. In the Czech Lands, the National Organization of Jewish Communities came into being and was accorded legal status in April 1937, about a year and a half before the fall of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the rise of the conservative nationalist regime of the Second Republic, with its acute Antisemitic orientation.

Toward the end of this period, and during the Second Republic, various programs relating to internal Jewish life emerged which drew their inspiration explicitly from the contemporaneous example of German Jewry.¹⁷ Finally, we find among Czech Jews, too, trends toward the renewal of the Jewish cultural and religious identity, inspired by the encounter with the Jews of Eastern Europe and their culture.

I will cite a few examples in this respect: the wide reverberations generated by the famous speeches "Reden über das Judentum" which Martin Buber delivered in Prague about Judaism; Franz Kafka's diary entries about his conversations with the actors of the Yiddish theater of Lvov/Lemberg, who visited Prague; the enthusiastic reports in the Jewish press about the Prague performances by the Hebrew Theater Company Habimah from Moscow; and the literary works and illuminating studies by Georg/Jiří Langer about the cultural traditions of Eastern European Jewry and about Jewish mysticism. Although Langer was not alone in addressing these sub-

¹⁶ For literature see: Bibliographie zur Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern bzw. in Tschechien im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, compiled by Robert Luft, Collegium Carolinum, München, cf. <http://www.collegium-carolinum.de/doku/lit/juedg/bibl-jud-per.htm> (28. 10. 2005).

¹⁷ This will be discussed in the next section.

jects, his “reawakening” to ultra-Orthodox Judaism according to Eastern European tradition certainly made him an unusual figure in Prague.

However, there were also a number of significant differences. Unlike the situation in Germany, where integration was into one society and culture – the German – the Jews in the Czech Lands were oriented toward different and rival trends of integration and acculturation: German, Czech, and – according to the declaration on national identity – Jewish as well. In the 1930 census, 46 percent of the members of the Jewish religious communities in Bohemia declared themselves to be of Czech nationality, 34 percent declared German nationality, and 20 percent Jewish nationality; whereas in Moravia only 18 percent described themselves as being of Czech nationality, 30 percent said they were of German nationality, and 52 percent cited Jewish nationality.

Overall, of 117 551 Jews of the Czech Lands at the time, 37 percent declared Czech nationality, 32 percent Jewish nationality, and 31 percent German nationality. The decline in identification with German nationalism continued until the end of the period of the First Republic, while identification with Czech and Jewish nationalism increased. We have no accurate statistics to enable a comparison with the 1930 census.¹⁸

One way to illustrate this multicultural integration is by noting the names of Jewish writers from Prague in this period: Franz Werfel, Franz Kafka and the poet Otto Pick – all of whom wrote in German; the playwright František Langer, then known throughout Europe; Jiří Orten, a young poet who wrote in Czech and was known as the “Czech Rilke;” and Vojtěch Rakous and Karel Poláček, who recorded the Jewish way of life in Czech. Among the Zionist writers who wrote in German, Max Brod must be mentioned, while those who wrote in Czech included Avigdor Dagan – now a resident of Jerusalem, he publishes in Czech under his original name, Viktor Fischel. And there were also those who wrote in both languages as well as in Hebrew, such as Georg/Jiří Langer, who was already mentioned.

It is only natural that within this multicultural reality – or perhaps better, triangular cultural symbiosis – the Jews were among the most important translators. They mediated between the two principal cultures, the German and the Czech, in both directions. One needs only to mention the two most outstanding linguists, Otakar Fischer and Pavel Eisner. Nor is it by chance that in the famous correspondence between Kafka and his Czech translator, Milená Jesenská, he wrote in German and she in Czech.

This national, cultural, and linguistic dilemma was also widely reflected in education. Nearly all the German-language Jewish schools gradually closed and few Czech-Jewish educational institutions were opened in their place. The majority of the Jewish students in the First Republic attended institutions of the Czech education system, at all levels.

The national-cultural tangle also generated social and political confrontations, which were felt most acutely by the Jewish intellectuals. This had a considerable

¹⁸ *Friedmann, František: Einige Zahlen über die tschechoslovakischen Juden: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der Judenheit. Prag 1933.*

impact on the emergence of the different forms of Antisemitism in the First and Second Republics, as well as on the character of the Zionist movement.

This particular aspect is the subject of several important new studies by young American and Israeli scholars who explored the origins of the Jewish students' organizations in Prague toward the end of the Habsburg Empire and in the early stage of the First Republic.¹⁹ The Jewish students were originally members of the associations and cultural institutions of the German liberal students, but were expelled from them as the organizations became increasingly nationalist, racist, and Antisemitic. Attempts by Jews to join Czech student associations met hostile refusal, owed to their actual or alleged attachment to the German language and culture. In this state of affairs the Jewish students established – almost concurrent with the appearance of the Zionist movement – Jewish national associations and cultural institutions that bore a distinctive Zionist orientation.

A groundbreaking contribution by Dimitry Shumsky points out the limitations of the above-mentioned research based on ethnocentric methodology in dealing with the social, cultural, and political history of the Jews in Bohemia (e.g. viewing its essence as lying in conflicting tendencies of assimilation into the Czech or German nation). He adduces instead the socio-cultural concept of a bilingual and multicultural “Czech-German Jewry.” Though Shumsky focuses in particular on the first generation of Zionists, he also demonstrates that the bilingual and multicultural orientation was characteristic of the broad Jewish public in the Czech Lands between the fin de siècle and the end of the First Republic.²⁰

It is here, I believe, that the explanation lies for the predominantly intellectual character of the Zionist movement in the Czech Lands. I will mention only the best-known figures of the Zionist leadership in Czechoslovakia: Hugo Bergmann, one of the founders of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and its first rector; Robert Weltsch, the Prague journalist and editor of the Zionist “Jüdische Rundschau” in Berlin; his nephew, the philosopher Felix Weltsch, who was the editor of the Prague-based Zionist journal, “Selbstwehr”; and the Moravian-born Jewish linguist and publisher, Moshe Moritz Spitzer, who edited the “Schocken-Bücherei”, a series of Jewish books that appeared under the imprint of the Schocken Publishing House in Germany up to the end of 1938. Hence also, the ties and the reciprocal influence between the Jews of the Czech Lands and Germany in the realm of Jewish culture were discernible.

The national confrontations were fertile ground for the emergence of the modern form of Antisemitism within the intelligentsia. Antisemitism then spread through

¹⁹ *Cohen*, Gary B.: Jews in German Society: Prague 1860-1914. In: Central European History 10 (1977) 28-54. – *Idem*: The Politics of Ethnic Survival: German in Prague, 1861-1914. Princeton 1981. – *Kieval*, Hillel J.: The Making of Czech Jewry. New York 1988. – *Rachamimov*, Alon: Between Czechs and Germans: Jews in Student Associations, Prague, 1876-1914. M. A. Thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1992 (Hebrew). – *Spector*, Scott: Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siecle. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2000.

²⁰ *Shumsky*, Dimitry: Historiography, Nationalism and Bi-Nationalism: Czech-German Jewry, the Prague Zionists and the Origins of the Bi-National Approach of Hugo Bergmann. In: Zion. A Quarterly for Research in Jewish History 59 (2004) 1, 45-80 (Hebrew).

the German and Czech publics, drawing its inspiration and political support from the national tensions. According to a myth that has taken root in the historical memory and in the public consciousness everywhere – Jewish and non-Jewish alike – the tolerant Czech nation was sympathetic to the Jews and even showed philosemitic tendencies. The Czech nation is frequently depicted as an island of light in the dark sea of anti-Jewish hostility during the interwar period. That is the picture as construed by memory and historical image. Historical research, though, paints a radically different picture.

Modern Antisemitism in Bohemia and Moravia took shape in the fading period of the Habsburg monarchy, as one of the by-products of the national conflicts between the Czechs and the Germans. Among its dramatic manifestations in the latter stages of the Empire were the anti-Jewish riots and the controversies surrounding the Polná blood libel of 1898. On that occasion, the Czech philosopher and future president Tomáš G. Masaryk confronted the militant majority of the Czech national movement and came to the defense of both the Jewish defendant and Judaism. The birth of the Czech Republic was accompanied by riots as well as by several anti-Jewish pogroms, of which the most widely known occurred in the Moravian city of Holešov. At the same time, Jewish veterans of the First World War organized independent Jewish self-defense. The first two presidents, Tomáš G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, tried to cope with the Antisemitism, seeking to demonstrate the young state's ability, notwithstanding its serious minority problems, to maintain a regime of religious and national tolerance and thereby strengthen its political standing among the nations of the West.

That this was a highly fragile trend is apparent from the affair of the Jewish historian Samuel Steinherz. His election as rector of the German University of Prague in 1922 touched off Antisemitic riots by students, in the wake of which the Czech Minister of Education was compelled to accept Steinherz's resignation "for reasons of health." Steinherz went on to devote much of his research to Jewish history and from 1927 on he edited the series of famous historical yearbooks of the Czech-Jewish Historical Society, "Jahrbücher der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik".

Nevertheless, in the final analysis the period of the First Czech Republic overall was marked by the successful effort of the central government in Prague, led by the first two presidents, to ensure the equality of the Jews and their free political and social activity. The regime resolutely fought manifestations of Antisemitism by the large German minority and by the fascist nationalist minority within the liberal Czech majority, in what was by then the last democracy in Central Europe, until its fall in the wake of the Munich agreement. This period saw a rising tide of racist Antisemitism among the approximately three million Germans in the Czech Lands, under the influence of the surging Nazism in neighboring Germany. It was manifested primarily in the form of the anti-Jewish boycott in the *Sudetenland* and the migration of Jews into the interior of Czechoslovakia, even before the territories were handed to Germany. A wave of nationalist Antisemitism coursed through the Czech population already in the wake of the annexation of Austria, and more acutely following the national disaster of Munich. This wave continued to gather momen-

tum throughout the brief period of the Second Czech Republic and its repercussions were felt in the period of the Nazi occupation as well.

With regard to this period in Czechoslovakia, it is also important to note a striking difference to the situation in Germany, stemming from the chronological asymmetry of the two periods under discussion. After 1933, Czechoslovakia, and especially the capital, Prague, became a base for anti-Nazi activity and a haven for political émigrés from Germany, among them many Jewish intellectuals. Political exiles from Austria also arrived in Czechoslovakia after the Anschluss of March 1938, until the catastrophe of Munich. The Jews of Czechoslovakia themselves viewed the political developments following the annexation of Austria as a Damoclean sword hanging over them. A few spoke of “the writing on the wall” and read the writing carefully, understanding that they, too, were potential refugees in their own country.

The Jews in Nazi Germany and the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic

Germany from 1933 to 1938

About the first six years of the Nazi regime, during which German Jewry became the first Jewish community in Europe to experience the signs of the looming end, we have numerous publications to rely on. Most of the historical literature deals with the Nazi policy of discrimination and persecution. The social aspects and internal Jewish life, including the Jews’ understanding of their situation and their activity in this period, have received less scholarly attention. I will focus primarily on this latter aspect and try to summarize my research findings in this area.²¹

The first dramatic change was that the Jewish issue became the center of the public, political, and media nexus in Germany and remained so until the fall of the Third Reich. This development actually had its origins in the last years of the Weimar Republic and left its imprint on the attitude of the German society toward the Jews and on the self-awareness of German Jewry.

Another change, which impinged on day-to-day life, was the establishment of a regime of unrelenting anti-Jewish terror – bureaucratic and saturated with uncontrolled violence – in state policy as well as through “pressure from below.” A third change occurred in the Jews’ self-understanding and the patterns of activity of the Jewish society and its leadership. With the Nazi’s rise to power, the Jews of Germany faced three alternatives:

The first alternative was the atomization of the Jewish society and the paralysis of all its institutions and organizations under the impact of the waves of anti-Jewish terror. At the individual level, this alternative initially took the form of panic-stricken mass flight, though many returned soon in desperation and in quite a number of extreme cases Jews chose suicide as their way out.

²¹ Kulka, Otto Dov (ed.): *Deutsches Judentum unter dem Nationalsozialismus*. Vol.1: Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden 1933-1939. Tübingen 1997. – *Idem./Jäckel, Eberhard (eds.): Die Juden in den geheimen NS-Stimmungsberichten 1933-1945*. Düsseldorf 2004.

The second alternative was diametrically opposed to the first. It was the temptation to draw the supposedly logical conclusions from the crisis and from the failure of the democratic regime, also ascribed to the failure of the internal democratic principles in Jewish society. In this view, all of German Jewry should be placed under a regime of authoritarian Jewish leadership based on the *Führerprinzip*. This approach was advocated by German-Jewish national organizations, such as the circle of Max Naumann, "Deutsch-Nationale Juden," but also by those around Hans Joachim Schoeps and his organization, "Der Deutsche Vortrupp."

In contrast, the "Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden," whose all-encompassing forum had been founded already a year earlier,²² chose a third alternative. It opted for the continued existence of the democratic, pluralistic tradition of Jewish society from the post-Emancipation period, together with the creation of a new general framework consisting of a central organization based on voluntary membership of each body and on free activity within the organization. At the same time, the continued existence of all the components of the "Reichsvertretung" was also marked by an element of change: in the pre-1933 period their place in the life of the Jews was marginal, whereas after 1933 they became central and assumed existential significance.

This development was not self-evident. The Nazi regime did not force the continued existence of the political and religious groups and organizations, still less the existence of their parliament-like central organization. However, under the racist ideology underlying the process of the totalitarian *Gleichschaltung*, the Jews were excluded a priori from this process, which applied solely to the members of the "German nation and race" (Volksgemeinschaft). The paradoxical result was the existence of a pluralistic democratic society within the racist totalitarian state. Thus, the Jews in Germany gained a modicum of autonomy in many spheres, in contrast to the surrounding society. However, it was autonomy of the ostracized, and in retrospect, freedom of the doomed.

The final aspect of the paradoxical duality that I want to mention is the essential similarity and difference between the government's aims with respect to the "Jewish question" and the activity of the "Reichsvertretung." The regime set itself two general goals: First, to remove the Jews from political and social life as well as from the public administration in Germany and to isolate them (what current German historiography refers to as *Ausgrenzung*). And second, to expel the Jews from Germany by exerting pressure on them to emigrate.

In nearly every sphere of life, the German Jews filled the void that was generated by the government's policy of social segregation with substantive content and frameworks of activity. Although most of these activities appeared to be new, they were actually a continuation and further development of existing organizations. Some of the associations, such as the Jewish "Kulturbund" and the "Reichsvertretung" itself, were created as a direct reaction to the new reality of the Third Reich; yet even they were shaped mainly on the base of modern Jewish secular culture and the existing organizational traditions. This was also the case with the expansion and renewal of

²² *Kulka*: Deutsches Judentum unter dem Nationalsozialismus, doc. 1 (cf. fn. 21).

the Jewish educational system, especially adult education, which was headed by Martin Buber.

Amid the unremitting pressure for the expulsion of the Jews from Germany by means of emigration, the "Reichsvertretung" developed its own organizational tools and modes of operation. It sought emigration possibilities, financed emigration, organized professional training and vocational retraining, and encouraged young people to leave as preparation for their families to follow in their wake. At the same time, the "Reichsvertretung" also participated in illegal immigration to Palestine – an operation known as "Aliyah Bet" – at the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s. What the regime viewed as "cleansing Germany of the Jews" was perceived by the "Reichsvertretung" as an escape from terror and discrimination, and afterward, especially after the pogroms of the *Kristallnacht*, rescue in the sense of saving lives. This paradoxical continuity did not cease with the *Kristallnacht* or even with the establishment of the successor organization to the "Reichsvertretung" – the "Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland." It persisted in distinctive ways until the liquidation of German Jewry in 1943 and perhaps even beyond.²³

The Second Czecho-Slovak Republic

The Second Czecho-Slovak Republic, which existed from October 1938 until March 1939, displays, in my opinion, instructive and fascinating similarities – if one may speak thus of such a tragic and cruel period – to the situation in Germany from 1933 to 1939, as described in the previous chapter. However, as in the case of the First Republic, there are also striking differences, which stem directly from the divergent reality.²⁴

In this period, the atmosphere of liberal openness that characterized the political regime and the social climate were transformed almost overnight into a hostile anti-Jewish orientation and social mindset, as occurred in Germany after 1933. In the pursuit of this policy, the Jews were removed from all spheres of political, cultural, and economic life. Socially, the most active Antisemitic element was the intellectual elite and the professional organizations, such as the federations of lawyers and physicians, the cultural and sports associations, and the journalists, including the preeminent liberal humanists from the period of the First Republic. A policy of "Aryanization" was introduced in the economic sphere, and Czech and German groups competed with each other over who would seize more Jewish property. The Czech and German population perpetrated acts of violent anti-Jewish terror, especially the German *Hitlerjugend* organizations and the Czech fascist youth organizations.

²³ *Ibid.* 24-31, 382-452. – *Idem.*: The Reichsvereinigung and the Fate of German Jews, 1938/9-1943. Continuity or Discontinuity in German-Jewish History in the Third Reich. In: Paucker, Arnold (ed.): Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland/The Jews in Nazi Germany 1933-1943. Tübingen 1986, 353-363.

²⁴ For a specific study on this period, see: Kulka, Otto Dov: The Munich Agreement and the Jewish Question in Czechoslovakia in 1938. In: Yalkut Moreshet 2 (1965) 51-78 (Hebrew). The second part of the article (60-78) also includes data and a description of the developments during the First Republic.

The political background to this extreme change is of course the Munich agreement and its ramifications. In its wake, tens of thousands of Jews fled or were expelled into the Czech interior lands from the Sudeten areas that were annexed to Germany. As such, they created the first stream and pressure of migration to the remaining Czechoslovakia with the intention to emigrate. This trend of emigration continued until it was banned for all the Jews of Germany and the annexed countries in October 1941.

Ironically, despite the tragedy of the expelled Jews, Czech statesmen and many members of the Czech public leveled a wild collective accusation against the Jews, alleging that they were responsible for the disaster that befell the Czech nation. This absurd fiction centered on the argument that the Jews strengthened the German linguistic and cultural segments, thus creating a basis for the claims of Nazi Germany to annex the territories in question, which were populated by some three million German speakers. In fact, the number of Jews who declared German national affiliation constituted less than half of one percent of those three million.

However, the paramount political factor that affected the attitude toward the Jews was the pressure exerted by Germany on the government of the new republic. Germany demanded the introduction of a systematic and comprehensive anti-Jewish policy as a condition for fulfilling its promise to guarantee the borders of the truncated republic, and in effect to guarantee its continued existence. In contrast, England and France, the Western partners to the agreement, brought heavy pressure to bear on the Czech government, especially in the financial sphere, to refrain from pursuing an Antisemitic policy. The crux of the issue was funding for the emigration of the Jewish refugees. Even the Soviet Union declared that the Czech government's avoidance of an Antisemitic policy would serve as a criterion by which to measure whether it was subordinate to the Third Reich or whether it preserved its political independence.

Both the new political reality and the social dimension of the shift were summed up concisely in an illuminating report sent by the British ambassador in Prague to London on December 8, 1938:

But it is over the Jewish question that German influence is being most actively pressed. It seems that, not content with exterminating the Jews in their own country, the Germans are determined to carry the campaign into that of their neighbour, realizing, no doubt, that Jewish influence is bound to be hostile to them and should therefore be eradicated wherever possible. The Czechs thus find themselves between two fires, being urged by the Germans to destroy the Jews, and by us to protect them. I fear there is little doubt, which advice will be the more strongly heeded, nor in which direction the sentiments of the Czechs themselves are now turning. There are already a number of individual cases of persecution in the professions and by students at the university. Even the more decent-minded have the feeling of helplessness in the matter [...].²⁵

It bears noting that there were also individuals, including some intellectuals, who spoke out publicly in defense of the Jews. Prominent among them were the writer and journalist Milena Jesenská, Kafka's translator and beloved friend, whom we

²⁵ Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939. Vol. III. London 1947, 407-414.

know primarily from his "Briefe an Milena" of 1920-1922;²⁶ and Josef L. Hromádka, Dean of the Comenius Faculty of Theology of the Czech Protestant minority.

These, then, were the broad political and social developments that paralleled those in Germany from 1933 to 1938. As noted, however, there were also important differences. The major difference lay in the character and definitions of Antisemitism, especially in the legislative sphere. In the Czech Lands the official basis of Antisemitism was not racist but national. In other words, for the purpose of the anti-Jewish laws and regulations, Jews were considered those who did not identify themselves with the Czech nation in 1930 but instead defined themselves as being of Jewish or German nationality.

This distinction also had harsh consequences for internal Jewish life. Against the background of intensive internal organizing and intensified autonomous Jewish activity, paralleling what we saw in Germany after 1933, the Organization of Czech Jews (Czecho-Jews, Česko-židovské hnutí) demanded that a clear line of distinction be drawn between their members and the other Jews in the country. The organization also supported discriminatory measures against the other Jews and supported the calls for their migration to countries whose nationality they identified with, which in practice meant Nazi Germany or Mandatory Palestine.

The activity of the Jewish communities and of the new central organization, which as mentioned was not ratified by law until 1937, focused on organizing emigration and vocational retraining, and mobilizing economic aid for the growing numbers of the needy. However, Jewish education was also reorganized and cultural institutions were created, and an effective political leadership was established in which the status of the Zionists was greatly enhanced. This was to have important implications in the period of direct Nazi occupation.

In the sphere of internal Jewish life, already toward the end of the First Republic and more especially in the period now being discussed, we find a number of developments and programs that were based explicitly on the example of German Jewry. Among them I will note the efforts to expand Jewish education and to establish a Czech rabbinical college and train teachers for Jewish education, together with the intention to found a Society for Jewish Studies, initiate a translation of the Jewish Bible into Czech, establish a central Jewish publishing house like "Schocken-Verlag" in Germany, and more. These steps were undertaken with a sense of admiration for the way in which the parallel institutions in Germany struggled with the harsh conditions of life under the Nazi regime in its first six years.

In February 1939, toward the end of the Second Republic, expectations and preparations mounted within the Czech government and among the public for what was termed the "Czech-German dialogue on the subject of the Jews." However, the conquest of the remaining Czech Lands in March of that year rendered that dialogue – and the direct responsibility of the Czech political leadership and of the Czech society for the fate of the Jews – irrelevant.

²⁶ Jesenská's collected essays from that period were recently published in Czech: *Jesenská, Milena: Nad naše síly: Češi, Židé, Němci 1937-1939* [Beyond Our Power: Czechs, Jews, Germans 1937-1939]. Olomouc 1997.

*"Greater Germany"**German Jewry between "Kristallnacht" and mass extermination*

The period between the *Kristallnacht* pogroms and the beginning of the mass deportations is marked by the growing radicalization of anti-Jewish policy in all spheres. The wave of terror, destruction, and mass arrests in November 1938 received legal sanction, and the bureaucratic terror was expanded, with the declared aim of bringing about the final removal of the Jews from whatever share they still had in economic and social life in Germany. The brutal pressure to complete the "Aryanization" process, and above all emigration, continued unabated. There were also mass deportations on a regional basis to the neighboring occupied countries – to Poland, in the East, in February 1940, and to France, in the West, in October of that year. The abolition and closure of most of German Jewry's institutions and organizational frameworks is well known.

Less known is that the central Jewish organization – the "Reichsvertretung" – was not abolished and that its internal structure and spheres of activity remained fundamentally unchanged. Immediately after the November pogroms, the "Reichsvertretung" continued its reorganization into a more centralized framework, a process which had begun following the abolishment of the communities' legal status in March 1938. Internally, this process concluded with the establishment of the "Reichsvereinigung," as a kind of comprehensive national community, in February 1939; its legal status was enshrined in Reich law in July of the same year.

The "Reichsvereinigung" continued its intensive activity to promote legal and illegal emigration, which now became a matter of sheer life-saving. The efforts to liberate Jewish prisoners from concentration camps and help them out of Germany were also part of this activity. The education system was expanded and vocational retraining and adult education went on as before. Relief work – now critical due to the impoverishment of German Jewry – was stepped up. The activity of the "Kulturbund" also persisted in this period, within a more officially dependent and centralist structure. Nor did political activity entirely cease in 1938: it assumed a more dramatic character through the protest by the leadership and demonstrative actions against the first mass deportations, in 1940. That protest cost the lives of several of the "Reichsvereinigung's" representatives.

For the most part, this activity also continued after the critical date of October 1941. Indeed, it can be said that in this period the Jews' material and spiritual existence as individuals would have been impossible without close ties to the "Reichsvereinigung" and its branches in the former communities.

A characteristic reaction by the German population to the fate of the Jews and to their continued existence among them was its amazement, in the wake of the decree that all Jews must wear a yellow Star of David, that so many Jews still lived in Germany, including Christians of Jewish origin (according to the race laws). The latter now attended Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany, wearing the mark of opprobrium.²⁷

²⁷ Cf. *Kulka*, Otto Dov: "Public Opinion" in National Socialist Germany and the "Jewish

Czech Jewry between 1939-1941

From March 1939 to October 1941 the Jews of Czechoslovakia were subjects of Greater Germany (Großdeutsches Reich), though still within their own organizational framework. The major change was the transformation of the Prague community into an umbrella organization of the Jews in the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia." The most dramatic implication of this development was a change in the Jews' legal status, which was adjusted to render it almost the same as the legal status of the Jews in Germany. Their status was no longer a question of national identity but was based on a uniform definition of Jews under the race laws. The semi-autonomous Czech authorities also treated the Jews in this spirit, and – what was the hardest for the Czech Jews to accept – so did the great majority of the Czech public.

More than in the past, the Prague community now headed the Czech Jews' activities. Although it was intensified and expanded along lines similar to those of German Jewry, it remained different in character. The official decrees were written in German and Czech, and the only semi-official Jewish newspaper was also published in two parallel editions, in German as "Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt" and in Czech as "Židovské Listy".

The events of November 1938 in Germany did not bring about a sharp shift in the history of Czech Jewry, with the exception of the Sudeten regions, which were annexed to Germany in the wake of the Munich agreements. However, October 1941 was as fateful for the Czech Jews as it was for the Jews in Germany.

*Deportations and Annihilation**German Jewry*

German Jewry between October 1941 and June 1943 was characterized by the dual process of continued activities by the "Reichsvereinigung" parallel to deportations and annihilation. The systematic mass deportations to Poland and to the occupied areas of the Soviet Union beginning in October 1941, which often ended with the immediate execution of the deportees, went on alongside the continued activity of the Jewish leadership to ensure the material and spiritual existence of the Jews in Germany itself. A special chapter in the history of this period were the deportations from Germany to the Theresienstadt Ghetto, from where most of the deportees were sent later to the annihilation camps. There were no ghettos in Germany itself, but the remaining Jews were concentrated in the so-called *Judenhäuser*. The still existing self-directed activities were mainly in the fields of welfare for the aged, who by then were the majority of the Jewish population, as well as education and culture. The first activity to be officially terminated was that of the "Kulturbund", in

Question". In: Zion. Quarterly for Research in Jewish History 40 (1975) 186-290 (Hebrew with English summary). About the German reactions to the "Yellow Star" 224-247. – *Idem/Jäckel*: Die Juden in den geheimen NS-Stimmungsberichten, chapter XI (cf. fn. 21). – *Idem*: The Churches in the Third Reich and the "Jewish Question" in the Light of Secret Nazi Reports on German "Public Opinion." In: Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique. Miscellanea historiae ecclésiasticae IX. Bruxelles 1984, 490-505.

September 1941. Jewish education continued amid the mass deportations up to its official abolition in July 1942.

Welfare activity also went on, until the official dissolution of the "Reichsvereinigung" and the proclamation of Germany as "Free of Jews" in June 1943. Until the end of the war, the so-called "Rest-Reichsvereinigung" looked after several thousand Jews living in mixed marriages and the so-called Mischlinge.

The deportations from the Czech Lands and the Role of the Theresienstadt Ghetto

The period of 1941-1943 in the history of Czech Jewry bears a marked similarity to the processes of continuity and liquidation in Germany, though there is also an important difference in the political sphere. The Jewish leadership, and above all the Zionist leaders, confronted with the fear generated by the first mass deportations "to the East," because of the unknown fate of the deportees and the rumors about inhuman living conditions and even of mass executions, tried to find a way to cope with the situation. They knew that it was impossible to stop the deportations as such and were appreciative of the demand by the Czech autonomous authorities to concentrate the Protectorate Jews at a single location: Jewish leaders hoped that in this way the majority would survive the war in their native land. Thus the initiative was engendered which in one of its alternatives would become Theresienstadt Ghetto.

Both the S.D. and the *Gestapo*, headed by Reinhard Heydrich, decided on a similar initiative, though of course with completely different intentions. Their goal was to deport to Theresienstadt, for "humanitarian reasons," certain groups whose fate was being watched by world public opinion with concern, notably the elderly Jews of Germany and certain privileged groups, such as disabled veterans of World War I and well-known public figures. Subsequently, Theresienstadt Ghetto, as well as a special camp for Theresienstadt Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau, was used to disguise the "Final Solution." The ghetto was presented to representatives of the International Red Cross as a haven of Jewish autonomy under the auspices of the *Führer*.

However, the German authorities' true intention was to use Theresienstadt as a transit ghetto for deportees from the Czech Lands, Germany, Austria, and even Holland; from there they would be transported systematically to the extermination camps, mainly Auschwitz. Even though Theresienstadt Ghetto was not completely liquidated, and on May 3, 1945, was placed under the protection of the International Red Cross, only a handful of deportees remained there. Among them was Rabbi Leo Baeck, the leadership figure who symbolizes German Jewry during the Nazi period.²⁸

²⁸ From the many publications on Theresienstadt, I here mention only the basic study by Adler, Hans G.: *Theresienstadt 1941-1945. Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft. Geschichte, Soziologie, Psychologie*. Tübingen 1960, which does not include information about the Jewish initiative for the establishment of the Ghetto. This information appears in a Hebrew book of testimonies by the survivors of Theresienstadt: *Rezniceňko*, Yehuda (ed.): *Theresienstadt*. Tel Aviv 1948 (Hebrew). – For additional information from unpublished archival sources I thank Silvia Noll who was doing a research on the Jewish Community of Prague in the years 1939-1942 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. – On the short-lived so-called "Family Camp" of the Jews from Theresienstadt in Auschwitz cf.

Epilogue

The physical end of German Jewry is quite similar to the end of Czech Jewry, although probably far more Jews in Germany survived by finding sanctuary with the underground than in the Czech Lands – in contrast to the fate of the historical remnants of the material culture in the two countries. Because the largest part of the Czech Lands was occupied by Germany only in March 1939, four months after *Kristallnacht*, most of the synagogues were left intact. It was only in the Sudeten areas, annexed to Germany in October 1938, that synagogues were burned. The sacred objects and other assets of the communities, including archives and libraries, survived in the abandoned synagogues and community centers. During 1942 the Jewish leadership in Prague proposed a new rescue initiative, which was put to the Nazi government. Their intention was to collect and preserve the ritual items in order to save them, and at the same time to rescue the large Jewish staff before deportation and engage them in collecting, registering, and cataloguing. The German administration accepted the proposal for its own purposes, in a manner that in part echoes the acceptance of the plan to establish Theresienstadt Ghetto. They viewed the project as the basis for the creation of a museum that would be used for exhibitions and propaganda about the “extinct Jewish race.”

Indeed, the idea to establish a Jewish Museum in Prague was realized after the war, under different political circumstances. By then, however, Czech Jewry had been almost completely wiped out, though the heritage of its magnificent culture survived in this way.²⁹

There is much that is similar, parallel, and analogous in the history of these two Jewish communities both before the rise of Nazism and under its rule. At the same time, as we saw, there were substantial dissimilarities, stemming primarily from the different historical, political, social, and cultural background of the two countries. In regard to both the fate of the Jewish historical heritage in the two countries and the impact of the Jewish historical consciousness in the postwar era, the dissimilarities were greater than the similarities.

The small number of Jews who emigrated from the Czech Lands between 1938 and 1941 could make only limited efforts to go on cultivating the Jewish-Czech historical consciousness and the tradition of historical research that was abruptly cut off.³⁰ Since the reestablishment of democracy in 1989, a renaissance of Jewish

Kulka, Otto Dov: Ghetto in an Annihilation Camp. Jewish Social History in the Holocaust Period and its Ultimate Limits. In: *Gutmann*, Israel (ed.): *The Nazi Concentration Camps*, Jerusalem 1980, 315-330. – The most recent research works have been published in the *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente/Terezínské studie a dokumenty*, a yearbook published by the Institut Theresienstädter Initiative/Institut Terezínská iniciativa since 1994.

²⁹ Details about the number, names, and destiny of the Czech Jews were published in: *Kárný*, Miroslav et al. (eds.): *Židovské oběti nacistických deportací z Čech a Moravy 1941-1945* [Jews Victims of Nazi Deportations from Bohemia and Moravia 1941-1945]. 2 vols. Praha 1995.

³⁰ The only comprehensive publication on the history and the cultural heritage of the Czechoslovakians was prepared by the Society for the History of the Czechoslovak Jews: *Dagan*, Avigdor (ed.): *The Jews of Czechoslovakia. Historical Studies and Surveys*. 3 vols. New York 1968-1984. The only periodical dealing with the Life and History of Czech Jews,

studies and publications is taking place, reviving the scholarly tradition, which was terminated in 1939.

The Jews from Germany, in contrast, continued to cultivate the historical consciousness and historical research of their country of origin. The relatively large number of Jews who succeeded in leaving the country between 1933 and 1941 established the research and publication centers of the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem, London, and New York. Moreover, since the war the study of the history of German Jewry has attracted generations of historians, both Jews and non-Jews. They are fascinated by the distinctiveness of this community, which was the first in Europe to pave ways into the modern age, but tragically also the first to face the looming end and have to cope with the Nazi policy, which ultimately encompassed all of European Jewry.³¹

Although the material culture of German Jewry was destroyed almost completely, they left behind substantial documentation, important parts of which have become available to researchers only in the past decades, after being discovered in former GDR and in Russia. This material is enabling a reexamination of the final chapter in the thousand-year history of German Jewry, and in its light also of key aspects of the tragic end to the history of the Jews in Europe.

Judaica Bohemiae is published since 1965, the eve of the "Prague spring" and above mentioned Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente.

³¹ The most important publications are the Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, which has been published in London since 1956; the fourth volume of the series on German Jewish History Meyer, Michael (ed.): German Jewish History in Modern Times. Vol. 4. Renewal and Destruction: 1918-1945. New York 1996; and the two volumes in the series History of the Holocaust, published by Yad Vashem: Margalit, Avraham/Cochavi, Yehoyakim (eds.): History of the Holocaust. Germany. 2 vols., Jerusalem 1998 (Hebrew). – For further extensive literature, see the bibliographies in the Leo Baeck Institute Year Book.