

Fatal Betrayal: The Socioeconomic Motives for the Holocaust in Holešov, Moravia

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na zničení židovské obce v Holešově a socioekonomické motivy nežidovského obyvatelstva Holešova, které je vedly ke zničení životů jejich židovských spoluobčanů. První část této práce se zabývá vývojem židovské obce v Holešově. Druhá část se zaměřuje na čtyři pogromy, které se uskutečnily v Holešově a jejich příčiny a následky. Třetí část poskytuje informace o situaci za druhé světové války. Na závěr tato práce zkoumá následky persekuce Židů v Holešově za druhé světové války. Jako poslední tato práce dokazuje, že konečná perzekuce holešovských Židů nebyla realizována pouze nacisty, ale že se na ní podíleli i holešovští nežidovští občané, kteří se chtěli zmocnit židovského majetku a jednou provždy vypudit židovské obyvatele z města.

Klíčová slova: Židé, pogrom, druhá světová válka, nacisté, holocaust, Holešov, Morava, Československo

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the destruction of the Jewish community in Holešov and the socioeconomic motives of Holešov's gentile residents that led them to destroy the lives of their Jewish neighbors. The first part of this thesis deals with the development of the Jewish community in Holešov. The second part focuses on the four pogroms that occurred in Holešov together with their causes and consequences. The third part provides information about the state of affairs during the Second World War. Finally, the consequences of the Jewish persecution in Holešov during the Second World War are examined. Ultimately, this thesis concludes that the final persecution of Holešov's Jews was not initiated only by Nazis, but that Holešov's gentile residents also participated, with the intention of seizing Jewish property and banishing them from the town once and for all.

Keywords: Jews, pogrom, Second World War, Nazis, Holocaust, Holešov, Moravia, Zlín Region, Czechoslovakia

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout Holešov's long history, the Jewish community had to face and overcome difficulties including racial discrimination and constant attempts by gentile residents to banish Jews from the town. Despite these obstacles, the Jewish community became a strong socioeconomic force highly successful in crafts and business, and even politically powerful. However, during the Second World War, Holešov's Jews lost their wealth and their lives as a result of gentile greed and Nazi hatred. This thesis charts the rise and fall of Holešov's Jewish community, and it proves that the Holocaust as it played out in Holešov was not the work of the Nazi's alone. A combination of their different religion, business acumen, wealth and prosperity, and attachment to the German language led Holesov's Czech-speaking gentile residents to dislike their Jewish neighbors and covet what they had. The Nazi occupation simply afforded them an opportunity to punish their Jewish neighbors and steal their possessions. Of course, they might not have been aware of the "final solution" that awaited their Jewish neighbors in the concentration camps of the Third Reich, but they were complicit in their deaths nonetheless. However, not all of Holešov's Jews died in the Holocaust. Some returned to Holešov after the war, but despite their best efforts, they failed to renew Holešov's Jewish community, which is now just a memory.

1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN HOLEŠOV

1.1 Beginning of the Jewish Settlement

Holešov was one of the largest and most significant Jewish settlements in Moravia. The first written reference to Holešov can be traced back to 1141 A.D. In 1272, Holešov was referred to as townlet (*městečko*), but by 1322 it was a town (*město*).¹ Evidence suggests that Jews had inhabited Moravia as early as the thirteenth century. As for Holešov, the first record of Jews there is from 1391, when the Jew Pešak from Brno purchased land in Kostelec u Holešova. At that time, settling in homesteads belonging to the church or the aristocracy was forbidden to Jews. However, this restriction was changed by King Jan of Luxembourg, who allowed the settlement of Jewish families in towns such as Svitavy, Mohelnice, Kroměříž and Vyškov.²

In the Middle Ages, Jews were often migrating from Western Europe, where they were terrorized, persecuted or expelled. In some cases, their settlements were destroyed and residents were killed. The reasons for such oppression were often religious intolerance, prejudices, or greed for their property. These events had an impact on the Jewish situation in the Czech lands. These Western Europe refugees greatly increased the Jewish population, which resulted in many attempts to expel Jews from Czech towns. The ascension to the Hungarian throne of Albrecht II in 1437 marked the beginning of a dark era for Jews. Before his death in 1439, he ordered the expulsion of Jews from Jihlava, a town between Prague and Brno and on the border between Bohemia and Moravia. In 1454, his son Ladislav Pohrobek, extended the expulsion to all Moravian royal towns (Jihlava, Brno, Olomouc, Znojmo, Neustadt and Uherské Hradiště).³ According to historian Livia Rothkirchen, expelled Jews had to seek shelters in “villages and small towns under the protection of feudal lords on whose estates they performed various functions.”⁴ These towns included Prostějov, Mikulov, Holešov, Bzenec, Kojetín and others. Some Jews

¹ “Historie,” Holešov, accessed April 15, 2017.

<https://www.holesov.cz/historie>.<http://holesov.jinak.cz/zide.php?zide=synagoga2&menu=2>.

² František Zapletal, “Z historie holešovských židů,” in *Historický sborník* (Krajské museum v Gottwaldově), 35.

³ Miroslav Marada, “Židovské obce na Moravě,” in *Židé a Morava. Sborník z konference konané v říjnu 1994 v Kroměříži* (Kroměříž: Muzeum Kroměřížska, 1995), 8.

⁴ Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 10.

decided to migrate out of the Czech lands and start over. One of the reasons for the expulsion was that Jews were successful in business, thus serving as stiff competition for non-Jewish merchants.⁵ Most of the expelled Jews worked as artisans, tailors and as merchants of wool and cloth.⁶ Afterwards, for almost four centuries, Jews were only allowed to enter Moravian royal towns under special conditions.⁷

The Jewish expulsion by Pohrobek in 1454 is connected with the beginning of the major Jewish settlement in Holešov. At that time, the Šternberk dynasty was in possession of Holešov manor. The Šternberks, who rejected religious intolerance, offered Jews protection and place to live (on empty land behind the Přerov Gate). In 1514, the expulsion happened in Uherské Hradiště and some of the Jews from that town most likely moved to Holešov.⁸ Shortly thereafter, the development of a Jewish Quarter began. It was separated from the rest of the town by the Přerov (Jewish) Gate (destroyed in 1906), and soon there was a synagogue and cemetery.⁹

During the time when Jews were seriously oppressed and there had been many restrictions concerning their lives, an interesting turn of events occurred in Holešov. At the end of the fourteenth century, Holešov was in the possession of two brothers, Zdeněk and Jan (Ješek) from Šternberk, who split the town between them. Zdeněk owned the north, west and south parts and also the stronghold. Ješek owned the east part and could also use the stronghold. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, Ješek had a conflict with a Jew Sára from Kroměříž, the wife of wealthy Jew named Nazan. Sára loaned money to Ješek's relatives who did not repay their debt. Ješek vouched for them, and therefore Sára demanded that Ješek repays the debt. When he did not Sára went to the bishop and filed suit against Ješek. The Bishop sided with Sára and in 1403 gave Ješek's half of Holešov to Sára. This meant that all the payments and taxes from the residents in eastern part of the town belonged to Sára. She even had the right to use Holešov's stronghold and had some jurisdictions. The Šternberks, however, did not approve of this new owner. In 1409, Sára sued Albrecht from Šternberk (son of Zdeněk from Šternberk), who was collecting taxes

⁵ Marada, "Židovské obce na Moravě," 8.

⁶ Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 10.

⁷ Tomáš Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě* (Praha: Sefer, 2001), 49.

⁸ Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 36.

⁹ Erika Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově" (PhD diss., Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 2007), 9.

from her part of the town. In 1413, Sára sued another Šternberk – Albrecht from Šternberk and Lukov, was standing in the way of her performing her duties. Then Ješek took her fief and did not allow her to enter. These legal disputes continued until the beginning of the Hussite revolt in 1415, when disputes were solved by sword. This ended Sára's possession of the eastern part of Holešov, but Holešov remained truly unique within the Czech lands in that, for 12 years, a Jewish woman owned half of the town.¹⁰

Not much information exists about Holešov in the sixteenth century, because in 1560 a fire destroyed almost the entire town. However, Holešov quickly recovered. Jindřich from Šternberk even allowed Holešov's Jews to build a new synagogue out of stone, replacing the wooden structure destroyed in the fire.¹¹

Generally, Moravian Jews were starting to work in other fields than just finance. They were trading goods and making handicrafts. However, this Jewish prosperity again angered the Christian merchants and artisans, who did not appreciate the competition. This led to many attempts to pass trading restrictions on Jews or to even expel them from the country. Even though such attempts were successful in Bohemia, where many Jewish families had to leave their homes, in Moravia the Jews were too prosperous and financially important for the land lords, who protected them from expulsion.¹² In Holešov, the Jewish community was thriving, and many of its members worked as tailors, carriers, tanners, butchers, etc. Although the guilds tried to persuade the nobles to put price and quantity restrictions on Jews, the Jews paid the nobles handsomely, so they had no reason to prohibit the Jewish artisans and merchants from running their businesses. The biggest disagreements were between Jewish and Christian butchers. The Jewish butchers were selling kosher meats at low prices, undercutting the Christian butchers.¹³ Holešov's Jews even engaged in business across the borders, most frequently in Wrocław and Leipzig. And Jakob ben Meir from Holešov owned a printing office in Cracow.¹⁴

The first half of the seventeen century was bad for the residents of Holešov, Jew and gentile alike. In 1622, Holešov was damaged by the troops of Bethlen Gabor, and in 1643 the Swedish army burned the town down, took all of the cattle and seized any possessions

¹⁰ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 1. část," *Holešovsko* 15 (2011): 19.

¹¹ Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 36.

¹² Marada, "Židovské obce na Moravě," 8.

¹³ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 2. část," *Holešovsko* 16 (2011): 19.

¹⁴ Jaroslav Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova* (Holešov: MěÚ Holešov, 1999), 3.

they could carry away. When the residents thought all the suffering was over, the Black Death struck in 1645.¹⁵

Another difficulty that the Jews in Holešov had to undergo was the frequent change of manor holders, because the Jews had to repeatedly pay the new holder for their licenses. The Šternberks were followed by Lobkowitz family, who in turn sold Holešov in 1650 to Count Jan Rottal for 200, 000 florins (*zlatých*). Rottal was a supportive manor holder who recognized the benefits that Holešov's Jews represented. When in 1651 the Jews asked him to confirm their previous privileges and allow them to build houses, he agreed. However, these privileges were subject to change, and Holešov's Jews had to pay him 700 florins per year.¹⁶ In exchange, they were granted 15 permissions, including the rights to build their own houses, school and synagogue, as well as to engage in trade and other crafts. They also were granted permission to marry, and they were pardoned from *corvée*.¹⁷

Under Rottal's lordship, the Jewish community in Holešov grew. The town was comprised of 248 houses, of which 50 belonged to Jews. The Jewish ghetto on Přerovská Street had 37 houses, 30 of which belonged to Jews. After the Thirty Years' War, when 40 Christian houses sat empty, the Jewish houses remained almost fully occupied.¹⁸ The Jewish community in Holešov was so important that in 1653 the first rabbinic synod took place there. The old statutes of Moravian Jewish communities were modified and extended. In fact, Holešov's Jews were so prosperous that in 1657 they were able to lend money to the Jewish Community in nearby Kroměříž for the construction of their synagogue.¹⁹ They were also able to expand the size of the Holešov Jewish cemetery and build a stone wall around it.²⁰

1.2 Occupations of Jews in Holešov in the Second Half of the 17th Century

The Jewish community was a strong economic force that was highly successful in business and crafts. Besides finance and trade, Holešov's Jews were also artisans. The businesses of Holešov's Jews in the second half of the seventeenth century can be divided

¹⁵ Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 36-37.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 10.

¹⁸ Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 39.

¹⁹ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 3.

into three categories: merchants (one) and storekeepers (five), artisans (a tailor, a tanner, a stocking weaver, and a bookbinder), and the food and beverage industry (five butchers and five distillers).²¹

1.3 Charles VI and Official Anti-Semitism

Jews began to experience another difficult period in the second half of the seventeenth century when the Bohemian Diet released a decree that prohibited Jews from settling in places they had not occupied in 1618. In this case, they had four months to leave their homes. This restriction had a damaging effect on Jewish life. During this period, Jews were losing their purchased protections. In 1680, Emperor Leopold II expelled Jews from Vienna, and some of them settled in Czech towns. The end of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century is often referred to as a period of “official anti-Semitism” (*úřední antisemitismu*) due to all the restrictions that were imposed on Jews. Emperor Charles VI legally attempted to decrease the number of Jews living in the Czech lands.²² In 1726 and 1727, he issued restrictions that strictly ordered Jews to live only in ghettos, and Jews from villages were not allowed to move to Prague. Then a regulation called *numerus clausus* came into force, which allowed only 8,541 Jewish families to live in Bohemia and 5,106 Jewish families in Moravia. To make this possible, the Jewish population was regulated by the law *Familianten* (*familiantský zákon*), according to which only the eldest son of each family was allowed to get married; other sons had to leave the country in order to get married and automatically became foreigners without Czech citizenship. Jews that violated this law were punished by whipping or expulsion from the country. Many Jews were secretly getting married or immigrating to places where this law was unenforced. On December 8, 1726, another regulation further isolated Jews by dictating that their ghettos had to be far enough away from Christian churches, cemeteries and places where religious parades took place. This restriction concerned about 20,000 Jews in Moravia. In some places, new ghettos had to be created or the already existing ghettos had to be moved further from Christian homes. Even a forced exchange of homes

²⁰ Zapletal, “Z historie holešovských židů,” 40.

²¹ Pavel Kocman, “Židé na Moravě podle lánových rejstříků,” in *Židé a Morava. Sborník z konference konané v Muzeu Kroměřížska dne 7. listopadu 2001* (Kroměříž: Muzeum Kroměřížska, 2002), 14-15.

²² Marada, “Židovské obce na Moravě,” 9-10.

between Jews and Christians had to happen in some cases.²³ Jewish houses were marked on city plans, and those located in Christian parts of town had to be sold.²⁴ This act directly affected the Jewish community in Holešov, which owned houses not just outside of the ghetto but in the town square. In 1727 in Holešov, the restrictions were enforced, and all Jews were required to live in the ghetto.²⁵

1.4 Seven Years' War and Empress Maria Theresa

The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) was another dark period in Holešov's history. In the beginning of 1742, 72 Prussian soldiers were staying in the Jewish ghetto. Communication between the soldiers and Jews was easy because they shared the German language. In March, the Prussian soldiers demanded protection money from the Jewish and Christian parts of Holešov. The Jewish community had to pay a 2,301 florin war tax and make an additional contribution of 5,000 florins. These payments harmed the development of the Jewish community. After the war, Empress Maria Theresa accused Jews of cooperating with Prussian soldiers, and in 1745 she issued a decree expelling all Jews (including those in Holešov) from the Habsburg lands. Jews in Holešov lost their property, including religious objects, and had their synagogue closed. Moreover, important members of Holešov's Jewish community were imprisoned. Although these sanctions were ultimately canceled, much of their confiscated property was never returned. Surprisingly, Holešov's Christian community came to the defense of their Jewish neighbors, informing Habsburg officials that the town's Jews did not cooperate with Prussians and suffered equally.²⁶ Holešov's Jews had, in fact, remained loyal to the empire. Even so, Empress Maria Theresa, a devout Catholic, remained highly anti-semitic and antagonized her Jewish subjects whenever possible.²⁷

Despite the suffering of Holešov's Jews during the Seven Year's War and despite one-third of the Jewish ghetto being destroyed by a fire in 1745,²⁸ the Jewish community thrived. In 1674, there were 329 Christian houses and 48 Jewish houses. But in 1754, the Jewish community was comprised of 50 houses, whereas the number of Christian houses

²³ Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, 95.

²⁴ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 4. část," *Holešovsko* 18 (2011): 22.

²⁵ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 9.

²⁶ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 5. část," *Holešovsko* 19 (2011): 19.

²⁷ Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, 99-101.

had declined to 319. In 1770, there were 52 Jewish houses and only 249 Christian houses. Census records thereby prove the sustainability of the Jewish community.²⁹ Yet another setback came in 1774, when the murder of Christian maid Josefa Trnečková by Jew Abraham Aron resulted in Holešov's first pogrom, during which the ghetto was looted, including the synagogue.³⁰

1.5 Josef II and his germanization of Jews

This looting proved only a minor setback in the Jewish accumulation of wealth. Emperor Josef II proved more favorable than his mother to Jews within his realm and relaxed restrictions against them. He even enabled them to own property outside of the ghetto. Then, Josef II took the unprecedented step of proclaiming religious equality and tolerance. For this, the Jewish community was grateful, despite the price they had to pay for it.³¹ For reasons of administration, Josef II wanted to Germanize his empire, which meant making German the official language, not only in town halls but in schools. Accordingly, every Jewish father, legal guardian or unmarried man was required to choose a German family name for the whole family, and then each person within the family had to choose for themselves a German first name.³² Holešov's Jews gladly accepted German as their language together with German names,³³ as doing so meant greater freedom in the form of reduced taxes, improved education, access to higher education, as well as access to all types of occupations.³⁴

1.6 Legal rights for Jews

In 1848–1849, the legal status of Jewish citizens changed. They were granted freedom of movement and freedom to settle, and to get married. They could become teachers in state schools. The law *Familianten* was abolished together with the *numerus clausus* and ghettos. However, equality for Jews was not fully achieved until December 1867, with the approval of a new constitution, which contained acts referring to personal freedoms:

²⁸ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 4.

²⁹ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 5. část," 19.

³⁰ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 4.

³¹ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 5. část," 19.

³² Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, 114-117.

³³ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 5. část," 19.

³⁴ Marada, "Židovské obce na Moravě," 10-11.

freedoms of speech, movement, occupation, education, etc. Jews were granted full citizenship, and they were allowed to freely move from place to place and be in possession of immovable property. Moreover, they were granted the right to vote. This was the first time Jews had the same rights as other citizens.³⁵

Thanks to the reforms of Josef II, the first half of the nineteenth century was a time of development and economic growth for the Jewish community in Holešov, which also had an impact on the number of Jewish citizens in Holešov. While in 1794 there were 2,973 Christians and 1,032 Jews, in 1830 the number of Jews rose to 1,316 and in 1848 there were 1,694 Jews, who comprised one-third of Holešov's population. After the revolution of 1848, Jews in Holešov realized they had increased opportunities in education and occupation, and they could move outside of the ghettos. Consequently, Holešov experienced rapid out-migration of mainly young Jews to bigger cities such as Brno, Olomouc, Ostrava and Vienna.³⁶ This migration led to the demise of some Moravian Jewish communities.³⁷ Holešov was not immune to this migratory impulse. The Jewish population of the town dropped to 951 by 1869, 784 in 1890, and 695 in 1900. Of these 695, about two-thirds lived in an independent Jewish town, while the remainder lived in Christian parts of Holešov. The decrease of the Jewish population of Holešov in the second half of the nineteenth century worked to the benefit of the Christian community.³⁸

Despite the remarkable decrease in Holešov's Jewish population, from 1,694 in 1848 to 695 in 1900, the Jews that remained were economically prosperous. Mr. Beer owned a clothing manufacturing company. Mr. Adler operated a knitting factory. Lazar Grätzer's factory produced artificial fertilizers, while the Zwilling brothers owned a tannery.³⁹ Jakub and Josef Kohn owned and operated a furniture factory. This factory was one of the largest in the country and was well known internationally. Many distilleries owned by Jews existed in Holešov, among them Deutsch brothers' distillery, Adolf Redlich's distillery and E. M. Batsch's distillery. Moreover, Holešov's Jews also owned many bars and public houses.⁴⁰

³⁵ Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, 124-125.

³⁶ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 6. část," *Holešovsko* 20 (2011): 19.

³⁷ Marada, "Židovské obce na Moravě," 11.

³⁸ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 6. část," 19.

³⁹ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 5.

⁴⁰ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 12.

1.7 Independent Jewish communities

After 1849, Jewish political communities came into existence. Before 1848, there were 52 Jewish communities in Moravia. In 1867, this number was down to 27, but these communities were then separate political entities with their own electoral authorities. The official language of the Jewish political communities was German. Even in the 1930s, 75 percent of Moravian Jews reported German as their native language.⁴¹ Among these independent Jewish communities was the one in Holešov. After 1849, Holešov's ghetto became a self-governing religious and political Jewish community with its own town hall, reeve, mayor, rabbi, German school, fire brigade and even police.⁴² Holešov was divided into two independent parts – Jewish and gentile. The Jewish community was separated from the rest of Holešov by the Přerov Gate. Even though most of the residents of the Jewish political community were German-speaking Jews, there were also Christian and Czech-speaking citizens (about one-third).⁴³ However, gentiles were not particularly fond of the independent Jewish communities because the German-speaking Jews were big supporters of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and they had an important role in politics.⁴⁴

1.8 Language regulations and the 1899 pogrom

At the end of the nineteenth century, an outbreak of Czech-German discord occurred in the Czech lands. The Czech-speaking community increasingly made cultural and political demands. As a response in 1897, Count Badeni issued language regulations making Czech and German equal in the Czech lands. From then on, every official document was to be processed in the language in which it was submitted. This required all clerks in Bohemia and Moravia to speak Czech. German-speaking citizens strongly disagreed, and riots were the result. That same year, Badeni was ousted, and his replacement changed language regulations. Now, each district would have an official language (that was spoken by the majority). This resulted in more riots, and in 1899, a new government and another change; the privileged status of German was renewed. This infuriated Czech-speaking citizens who were at that time occupying influential positions and were used to Czech as the official

⁴¹ Marada, "Židovské obce na Moravě," 11.

⁴² Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 42.

⁴³ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 6. část," 19.

language. The Jews in Holešov mainly spoke German and openly approved of the privileged status of their language, which added to their power and prosperity. This angered Holešov's gentile population.⁴⁵

In response, the Jewish community in Holešov took measures to protect itself, among them, reinforcing its police units. With this, the stage was set for conflict. Late at night on October 21, 1899, a group of gentile men provoked a conflict by walking through the Jewish Quarter singing loudly. When they refused to stop, the Jewish police attacked and beat them. Later, the court in Holešov decided that the use of force was excessive, and it briefly imprisoned the Jewish police and the Jewish mayor. With tensions high, a drunk gentile was thrown out of a Jewish-owned distillery. In response, a crowd of Christians attacked the Jewish Quarter, killing four. With this, the relations between Jews and Christians in Holešov were even worse than before, causing some Jews to leave the town. In 1900, Holešov was home to 728 German nationals (mostly Jews) and 5,499 gentiles. By 1910, only 417 German-speaking Jews lived in Holešov, while the number of gentiles had increased to 6,311. Even so, the remaining Jews were among the wealthiest citizens of Holešov.⁴⁶

1.9 World War I and the last pogrom

World War I (1914 – 1918) highly affected Holešov. At issue was the loyalty of the German-speaking Jews, who generally supported the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.⁴⁷ Holešov's Jews, favored by the monarchy, were well-supplied and actually prospered during the war, while other Holešov residents, under suspicion of being disloyal, often suffered.⁴⁸ This only increased the antagonism towards the Jews. In 1915, 32 young men from Holešov were arrested and imprisoned in Špilberk for three months. Public opinion was that Jews were the informers who reported the men to the authorities, although there is no evidence of this. Ultimately, the youth were released for lack of any evidence, but the

⁴⁴ Pavel Pálka, "Konec židovského města a vznik jednoho Holešova," in *Židé a Morava. Sborník z konference konané v Muzeu Kroměřížska dne 11. listopadu 2009* (Kroměříž: Muzeum Kroměřížska, 2010), 123.

⁴⁵ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 6. část," 19.

⁴⁶ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 7. část," *Holešovsko* 21 (2011): 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 43.

rumor mill had already done its damage to the relationship between Jews and gentiles in Holešov.⁴⁹

After the end of World War I and the formation of an independent Czechoslovakia, the residents of Holešov could be more optimistic. However, the supply conditions and standards of living were still an issue. The Jewish support of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and their use of German as their native language aggravated their Czech-speaking fellow citizens. The Czech-speaking part of town had not forgotten the troubles of 1899, for which they continued to blame the Jews. The already tense conditions escalated in 1918 when on December 3 and 4 another pogrom took place in Holešov. It was started by soldiers from Kroměříž who had just returned from war, but it quickly spread to include others. Many houses were plundered and set on fire, resulting in an estimated damage of 2.5 million Czech crowns. Two Jewish men were killed (Heřman Grunbaum and Hugo Graetzer), and many people on both sides were injured.⁵⁰ This pogrom led to a dramatic emigration of Jews from Holešov. In 1910, there was 610 Jews in Holešov out of which 378 lived in the Jewish community. In 1915, the town experienced an increase in the Jewish population thanks to the arrival of wartime refugees from Halič; the number of Jews rose to 853. In 1921, after the pogrom, only 328 Jews out of a total city population of 6,603 remained. Nine years later (1930) there was only 273 Jews in Holešov out of 6,738 residents (4% Jewish). This emigration of the Jewish population was caused not only the pogroms but also by the urge to realize their potential in bigger cities.⁵¹

1.10 The end of the independent Jewish community

After 1849, 25 Jewish communities came into existence in the Czech lands, Holešov among them. However, after the last pogrom in 1918, the remaining Jewish community in Holešov agreed to merge with the town of Holešov. The Jewish community transferred its assets and liabilities together with funds, rights and obligations to the town of Holešov on January 10, 1919. The mayor of Holešov, Jan Rolka, took over administration of the Jewish community. In February 1919, the Jewish community relinquished its right to make any decisions about its affairs. However, the Jews were at peace with this decision, as the

⁴⁹ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 7. část," 19.

⁵⁰ Karel Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 8. část," *Holešovsko* 22 (2011): 22.

⁵¹ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 7.

Jewish Quarter remained, at least until 1939, when the Nazis shut it down and confiscated its assets.⁵²

⁵² Pálka, “Konec židovského města a vznik jednoho Holešova,” 124-132.

2 POGROMS IN HOLEŠOV

In the history of Holešov, many anti-Jewish pogroms took place. Some of them were stopped before any serious damage was done, but some of them had horrifying consequences. This chapter provides detailed descriptions of the events that either preceded or happened during and after the pogroms. The behaviors and actions of Holešov's residents during the pogroms significantly affected the relationship between Jews and gentiles and often led to the emigration of the Jewish population from Holešov. The four pogroms in Holešov clearly demonstrate the long-lasting anti-semitic attitudes of Holešov's gentile residents towards Jews.

2.1 Pogrom of 1774

The reason for the first pogrom in Holešov was the murder of a Christian woman, Josefa Trnečková. She was found dead on March 30, 1774 in the house of a Jewish man, Abraham Aron. Josefa had a bad reputation stemming from adultery and illegitimate children. She visited Abraham with the intention of blackmailing him. Abraham hit her, and Josefa retaliated with great force. In response, Abraham killed her with an axe and fled the scene. After Josefa's body was found, five Jewish citizens were imprisoned (two men and three women), who were then transferred to the court in Brno. False rumors about Jews killing Josefa for ritual reasons quickly spread. On April 5, 1774, gentiles stormed the Jewish Quarter, where they plundered the Jewish ghetto together with the Šachov synagogue. The authorities took quick and effective action. They arrested nine gentiles who had organized the pogrom, and sentenced them to whippings and six months of hard labor on a chain gang. On May 5, the five imprisoned Jews in Brno were released and promised protection. Abraham Aron was caught in Uherské Hradiště and sentenced to death. On June 4, 1774, he was beheaded.⁵³

2.2 Pogrom of 1850

The Jewish community in Holešov was, as other communities in Moravia, affected by the revolution of 1848, after which Jews were granted civil rights, including the right to freely move outside of the ghetto. The financial prosperity of Holešov's Jews together with their new rights led some to move outside of the ghetto and buy houses in the town square.

However, the gentile residents did not agree with Jewish expansion, which led to a second pogrom in Holešov in 1850.⁵⁴ Holešov's gentile residents demonstrated in front of a house owned by a Jewish family, the Fischers. However, the police dispersed the raucous crowd before any real violence could occur.⁵⁵

2.3 Pogrom of 1899

The pogrom in 1899 was the result of two events – the Hilsner Affair and the abolishment of Gautsch's language restrictions. The Hilsner Affair resulted from the murder of nineteen-year-old Anežka Hružová, whose body was found in the woods near Polná on March 29, 1899. She had a cut on her neck, which led people to assume she was killed for ritualistic reasons. Leopold Hilsner, a twenty-two-year-old Jew of a low intelligence, was accused of the murder and arrested. However, thanks to T. G. Masaryk's protest against this arrest, Hilsner was released. However, at a different trial in a court in Písek, Hilsner was charged with the murder of another woman, Marie Klímová, two years prior. He was sentenced to death, but then the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on the grounds that the trial was influenced by anti-Semitism. Because of the intense publicity that this trial received, many people were following the trial, and the commutation angered the gentile population in the Czech lands. They believed in the guilt of Jews and wanted them to be sufficiently punished.⁵⁶ Even gentiles in far-away Holešov did not agree with the outcome, and they grew angry at the Jews.

The abolishment of Gautsch's language restrictions was not well accepted by the Czech population. In response, in Holešov, an anti-Jewish riot took place on October 21 – 24, 1899. On October 21, riots occurred throughout Moravia. To protect Jewish citizens, the mayor activated a patrol to watch over the Jewish community. That night, a group of gentile men walked through the Jewish Quarter singing loudly (during Shabbat), which the Jews took as a provocation. The patrol, led by the mayor, attacked and beat the men.⁵⁷ The next day, when a drunken man was thrown out of Graetzer's distillery, Holešov's gentile

⁵³ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 5. část," 19.

⁵⁴ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 21.

⁵⁵ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 6. část," 19.

⁵⁶ "Murder in Polná - Exhibition to Mark the Centenary of the Hilsner Affair," Jewish Museum in Prague, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/program-and-education/exhibits/archive-exhibits/363/>.

⁵⁷ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 21.

residents interpreted it as another Jewish attack. A raging crowd of approximately 1,500 gathered, and then the crowd went on a rampage, breaking a window of the distillery and windows of Jewish houses. When the crowd had finished its violence and was returning to the gentile section of town, five police officers who were standing under the Přerov Gate, for unknown reasons, began shooting into the crowd, resulting in three dead and eleven injured. After the attack, the police ran away. The angry crowd returned to the Jewish ghetto, where it plundered Jewish shops and broke more windows. Then the crowd burned down Graetzer's Distillery. On October 24, 1899, an estimated 3,000 people attended the funeral of the three victims.⁵⁸ Afterwards, multiple gentile rioters were arrested, as were members of the Jewish patrol and the mayor of the Jewish ghetto. Short prison sentences were handed out on both sides, and the violence subsided.⁵⁹

2.4 Pogrom of 1918

The last pogrom in Holešov started as a reaction to the Jewish behavior during World War I. Jewish businesses were prosperous even during the war because the Jews were making money on the suffering of others. Prices of their goods were too high, and Holešov's gentile residents blamed them for poor supplies and social conditions. These factors contributed to the last pogrom on December 3, 1918.⁶⁰

At 9:30pm some soldiers together with civilians cut the telegraph wires, isolating Holešov from the rest of the world. After 11:00pm, three shots were fired, and started destroying the Jewish community. The main instigators were two from Kroměříž's garrison, but there were a couple hundred people involved. The raging crowd started by plundering 51 Jewish houses, 26 shops, 4 pubs and a distillery. Many were injured and two were killed by soldiers. The violence lasted all night. In the morning, 120 soldiers from Kroměříž tried to end the riot but were unsuccessful. Finally, soldiers from Brno put an end to it.⁶¹ As a result of this event, a curfew was declared in Holešov until January 25, 1919. On July 21 – 29, 1919 the court in Olomouc tried 70 participants of the pogrom. Of them, 23 were convicted and sentenced to up to ten years in prison.⁶² The court's decision was

⁵⁸ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 7. část," 19.

⁵⁹ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 22.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 22-23.

⁶¹ Václav Drchal, "Ty potvoro, ještě žiješ?," *Lidové noviny* 49 (2012): 20.

⁶² Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 23.

that the pogrom was organized by soldiers and the whole event was planned. The damage that was caused to Jews in Holešov was 2.6 million crowns. 17 Jewish residents of Holešov received compensation in 1921, but at 90,000 crowns, it was only a token gesture.⁶³

At the end of December 1919, the city council sent a letter to Masaryk proclaiming the innocence of Holešov's citizens. The city council's argument was that the citizens were manipulated by soldiers to start the pogrom and that it was partly the fault of Jews because they were the reason for the bad supply situation during World War I. The residents of Holešov also blamed Jews for the previous pogroms during which many Christians were harmed. However, Masaryk refused to accept the letter.⁶⁴

⁶³ Václav Drchal, "Ty potvoro, ještě žiješ?," *Lidové noviny* 49 (2012): 20.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

3 SECOND WORLD WAR

In 1938, the mayor of the Holešov Jewish religious community was asked about the issue of the constantly-decreasing Jewish population. He blamed it on a low birth rate and predicted a time when Holešov would not have any Jewish residents. His prediction was remarkably prescient.⁶⁵ Adolf Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany in 1933, and he did not like Jews.⁶⁶ For the moment, that was a domestic issue.

On September 15, 1935, Germany passed the Nuremberg Laws.⁶⁷ First was the “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour,” which banned marriage between Jews and non-Jewish Germans. It also criminalized sexual relations between them. These relationships were labeled as ‘race defilement’.⁶⁸ Marriages between Jews and non-Jewish Germans would be considered invalid. Existing married couples were pressured to divorce and become victims of discrimination when they did not.⁶⁹ The second law was the “Reich Citizenship Law,” which stated that “only people of ‘German or kindred blood’ could be citizens of Germany.” The Nazis no longer thought of Jews from the religious point of view. They believed the Jewish race to be predetermined by birth and blood. This law clarified who was a German and who was a Jew. Because some Jews looked like Germans, the Nazis turned to genealogy. “People with three or more grandparents born into the Jewish religious community were Jews by law. Grandparents born into a Jewish religious community were considered “racially” Jewish. Their “racial” status passed to their children and grandchildren.” In Germany, Jews were considered “subjects of the state” instead citizens. As a result of Nazi’s perception of Jews as being predetermined by blood, many people who never thought of themselves as Jews would ultimately be killed in concentration camps.⁷⁰

On September 29, 1938, the Munich Agreement was signed, stripping Czechoslovakia of its Sudetenlands. On March 15, 1939, what remained of Czechoslovakia was taken over by Hitler, and on March 16, 1939, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was established. Not long after, the Nuremberg Laws came into force in the Protectorate and

⁶⁵ Zapletal, “Z historie holešovských židů,” 43-44.

⁶⁶ Němcová, “Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově,” 24.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Nuremberg Laws,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 1, 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007902>.

⁶⁹ Němcová, “Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově,” 24.

were applied to the Jewish population. German authorities asserted their control over every aspect of Jewish lives. Gradually, Jews lost their civil and human rights, their property and eventually their lives.⁷¹

3.1 The Beginning of the Second World War in Holešov

After the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, many Jews in Holešov started to have a sense of foreboding. Based on the testimonies of other Jews from Germany and Austria, some of Holešov's Jews even decided to end their lives before the Nazis could get to them. Erich Klopfer and Vally Süssová both committed suicide two days after the beginning of the Nazi occupation. These deaths only increased the panic of the Jewish population of Holešov.⁷²

3.2 Jewish Emigration as the First Stage of the Final Solution

Before the implementation of the Final Solution, there was a wave of Jewish emigration. On July 15, 1939, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration was established in Prague. Later, this organization would play a main role in Jewish persecution. In the beginning, Nazis supported the emigration of Jews, albeit with evil intentions. Emigration would reduce the amount of force necessary to implement the Final Solution. It also made it easy to acquire the Jewish property. Not only could the emigrating Jews not take most of their property with them, but they had to pay all kinds of fees in order to be allowed to leave. After the Jews emigrated, the Nazis confiscated their property. The wealthiest Jews were often forced to emigrate, and the property confiscated from them was used to fund the Final Solution for those Jews who remained behind. When the Nazis were fully prepared in 1942 to start the process, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration was renamed the Central Bureau for Arrangement of the Jewish Question in Bohemia and Moravia. Between September 1, 1939 and November 1942, 25,977 Jews emigrated. Among them were Alfréd Naschov and Ina Weinbergová of Holešov, who successfully emigrated to Palestine.⁷³

⁷⁰ "Nuremberg Laws."

⁷¹ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 25.

⁷² Ibid., 27.

⁷³ Ibid., 29-30.

3.3 Operation Albrecht I

On September 1, 1939, Operation Albrecht I took place in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. During this operation 2,000 people were arrested (800 in Moravia) and sent to concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald. This event happened the same day as the invasion of Poland. Operation Albrecht I was well prepared.⁷⁴ Its primary purpose was to intimidate, and its secondary purpose to get rid of the Czech elite. They were using innocent people as hostages to intimidate the rest of the nation. However, this operation targeted also Jews. It was the first stage of the Final Solution in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The selection of Jews that were arrested was not random. They were representatives of Jewish religious communities, lawyers, doctors, businessmen and factory owners. By arresting and deporting Jewish civic, political and religious leaders, they were attempting to kill the head so that the body would die.⁷⁵

During Operation Albrecht, ten citizens of Holešov were arrested, half of them Jews – Josef Redlich, Rudolf Müller, Arnošt Michalovský, Otto Hájek J.D., and Leo Kämpf M.D.⁷⁶ Redlich, owned two houses, a distillery, an inn and a shop, with total appraised value of 400,000 crowns. Müller owned a shop worth 20,000 crowns. Michalovský was in possession of a house worth 200,000 crowns. Hájek owned a house with a garden, and a field with a barn, bringing his net worth to 350,000 crowns. Kämpf was their doctor. These five men were transported to a school in Kroměříž and then to Špilberk in Brno. There, Redlich was imprisoned for two month and then released (only later to be arrested again and sent to Terezín, which he survived). The other four were sent first to the concentration camp Dachau and by the end of September to the concentration camp Buchenwald. Kämpf died there on April 5, 1942.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ “Represivní aparát okupantů II,” last modified March 10, 2006, <http://www.zasvobodu.cz/news/represivni-apat-okupantu-ii/>.

⁷⁵ “Akce Albrecht der Erste a zdejší židovská komunita,” last modified December 25, 2008, <http://kehila-olomouc.cz/rs/768/akce-albrecht-der-erste-a-zdejsi-zidovska-komunita>.

⁷⁶ Zdeněk Fišer, “Poslední pogrom,” (Kroměříž, 1996), 142.

⁷⁷ Petr Pálka, “Židé v Holešově 1939-1943 a řešení bytové otázky ve městě,” in *Židé a Morava. Sborník z konference konané v Muzeu Kroměřížska dne 14. listopadu 2007* (Kroměříž: Muzeum Kroměřížska, 2008), 176-177.

3.4 Takeover of the Jewish property

As of March 18, 1939, all Jewish shops had to be labeled with the sign *Jüdischer Betrieb* (Jewish company), *Jüdisches Geschäft* (Jewish shop), or *Jüdische Unternehmung* (Jewish enterprise). On June 21, 1939, the Regulations of the Reichprotector were issued, which identified Jews and discussed the status of their property. On February 12, 1940, another regulation eliminated Jews from economic life. It forbade Jews from doing business, forcing them to close the business, sell it (at greatly reduced value) or find an Aryan protector to oversee it.⁷⁸

Jews were also obligated to hand in all their jewelry, clothes of high quality such as fur and woolen clothes, bicycles, motorcycles, musical instruments, typewriters, sewing machines and other possessions to a Nazi corporation called Hadega. To ensure Jews were following these orders, the Gestapo could search their houses anytime, and did so.⁷⁹

3.5 Restrictions against Jews

After the outbreak of the Second World War, many restrictions were applied to Jews. They were forbidden to walk on the streets after 8 o'clock in the evening. They could not change their residence without being ordered to, and they were allowed to move only to other Jewish residences. They were also forbidden to enter some parts of Holešov, such as the Main Square, the park Smetanovy sady, Palackého Avenue, Neurathova Street and the American park.⁸⁰

Regulations were issued that forbade Jews from entering restaurants, cafés, public swimming pools,⁸¹ parks, wine bars, spas, theaters and cinemas. A case of violation of this regulation occurred in Holešov, when a Jewish student, Otto Langfelder, attended a movie screening in a cinema in nearby Zlín. The Gestapo arrested him and sent him to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he died on February 16, 1942. Entrance to Holešov's spa was banned on March 30, 1942, and signs forbidding dogs and Jews from entering were placed in front of the spa. This was the Nazi attempt to portray Jews as less than human. The restrictions against Jews even extended to public transportation. First,

⁷⁸ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 27-28." The 1965 Academy Award-winning film *The Shop on Main Street* told the story of a Slovak elderly female shop owner and her male Aryan protector.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 32-33.

they were allowed to travel by train, however only in the carriage platform or the corridor. Later they were completely banned from travelling by trains.⁸²

Since February 1941, the time during which Jews were allowed to shop was reduced to two hours, from 3pm to 5pm. They were allowed to shop only in shops that were intended for Jews, such as Ladislav Prusenovský's bakery, Ludvík Kocfeld's butcher's and Ludmila Votavová's general shop. Based on the ration cards, Jews were forbidden to buy apples, jam, sugar, meat, wine, hard alcohol, and garlic.⁸³ All the shop owners were obligated to place a notice board about shopping hours for Jews next to the shop entrance. Jews also had their driving and fishing licenses revoked. Jews in Holešov were allowed to go to the protectorate's bureaus only between 8 and 9am, and they were also forbidden to visit hairdressers and public laundry rooms. Other prohibitions banned Jews from having pets and employing Christian maids. At the post office, Jews were not allowed to send parcels containing food. Therefore, they had to bring an opened parcel so the clerk could examine the contents.⁸⁴ To worsen the communications among Jews, they were forbidden to telephone and to own homing pigeons. Although homing pigeons were largely a thing of the past this restriction was proof of Nazi thoroughness in depriving Jews of their rights. In total, the Nazis created 350 restrictions against Jews. Nonobservance of these rules was punished by a financial fine or imprisonment, which was usually followed by transportation to a concentration camp.⁸⁵

On July 12, 1939, the Ministry of the Interior issued a regulation banning all Jewish children from attending German schools. However, some private Jewish schools still remained and the education of Jewish children was possible in small groups. After July 27, 1942, this was no longer an option, because a new restriction banned the education of all Jewish children, even in private Jewish schools. However, by that time, most Jewish children were already in concentration camps, including those from Holešov. According to a document from March 22, 1941, there were 27 Jewish school children in Holešov including Arnošt Auerbach, Manfred Baran, Gerda Eggerová, Ruth Kleinová, Vladimír,

⁸¹ Bartošek, "Židé v Holešově – 8. část," 22.

⁸² Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 33-34.

⁸³ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁴ Státní okresní archiv Kroměříž (SokA), "Sloučení křesťanské obce a židovské obce v jednu politickou obec, perzekuce židů, soupis židovského majetku 1918 – 1943."

⁸⁵ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 34-35.

Löff, Inge Nussbaumová, Tomáš Müller, Zdeňek Bergmann, Henna Bergmannové and Herold Zikan. All of these children died in concentration camps except for Henna Bergmannová, who somehow escaped the deportation and survived.⁸⁶

On April 24, 1940, the government of the Protectorate issued an act regulating the position of Jews in public life. The purpose of this regulation was to eliminate Jews from public life in the Protectorate. According to this act Jews were not allowed to work in the judiciary, occupy positions such as lawyers, doctors and newspaper editors. They could not be members of representative bodies, scientific institutions or political clubs. They were also banned from teaching in schools, except at Jewish schools. Because of this regulation, many Jews in Holešov lost their means of making a living, namely Doctors Hugo Fuchs M.D. and Zikmund Knopf M.D., engineers Vítězslav Fuchs and Karel Polák, advocate Jana Pokorná J.D. and others. However, not only “pure” Jews faced the loss of their professional positions. It concerned even those who had a Jewish ancestor or who lived in mixed marriages. All the state employees had to prove their Aryan origins with seventeen documents, such as the birth certificate of their own, their parents and their grandparents, then the marriage certificate of their own, their parents, wife, their wife’s parents, etc. This shows the extreme thoroughness of Nazis in regard to Jewish elimination. To escape the discrimination, many Jews divorced their partners. However, many cases existed when the marriage between Jew and non-Jew saved the life of the Jewish partner. This was not the case in Holešov, where the Aryan partners of Jews were transported to the concentration camps shortly after their Jewish partners.⁸⁷

On September 1, 1941, Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich issued a regulation that every Jew over six years old was obligated to wear a Jewish star (Star of David) in public. It was a six-pointed yellow star with the word “Jude” written on it. Jews had to wear this star on their left breast pocket so it was visible. Its purpose was to identify Jews and make it easier to control the observance of the restrictions aimed at Jews. However, another purpose of this labeling was to separate Jews from the rest of the population before they were sent to concentration camps.⁸⁸ In the protectorate, this act came into force on September 19, 1941, but it had some loopholes. For example, the husband from a mixed

⁸⁶ Němcová, “Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově,” 35-37.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 37-39.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 43.

marriage, who had children who were not considered Jews, did not have to wear the star. Even a Jewish wife in a childless marriage with a non-Jew was not obligated to wear the star.⁸⁹ However, these exceptions were abolished after Heydrich's arrival to Prague on September 27. Heydrich issued an act which stated that every Jew with no exceptions had to wear the Star of David. He also ordered the closure of Jewish synagogues because they were supposedly no longer used for religious purposes but for spreading propaganda. The city council in Holešov followed this order and closed the Old Synagogue on October 14, 1941.⁹⁰

3.5.1 The housing situation in Holešov

Just before the Munich Agreement was signed, Holešov was experiencing a shortage of apartments due to an inflow of refugees from the borderlands. Ideas about how to solve this issue were proposed, some of which involved people who owned houses with uninhabited rooms. After the Nazi occupation, the Holešov City Council decided to solve this problem by using houses and apartments of Jews, who had fewer and fewer rights. To make matters even worse, Antonín Krutil was appointed the commissioner for Jewish property. Krutil was openly collaborating with Germans in anti-Jewish propaganda. In response, Mayor Jan Šráček resigned, replaced by Deputy Mayor Antonín Tacl. The Holešov City Council then created a list of Jewish houses which should be inspected. After the inspection, the city council agreed on the resolution of the housing-shortage matter, and Tacl began to send out notices about the eviction of Jews from their houses. Jewish residents including Greta Beerová, Josefina Deutschová and Cecilie Bermannová received eviction notices and were forced to move out. The city council was creating so-called *Jewish houses*, where Jewish families were forced to live in cramped conditions, sometimes occupying only one room.⁹¹

It was unacceptable for Jews to rent Aryan houses. An example of this violation was the case of Leo Süß, who lived in the Aryan house of František Bartoník. Bartoník was forced by the city council to cancel the lease agreement. However, not all Jews left their houses without a fight, one of whom was Olga Müllerová, who received her first

⁸⁹ "Sloučení křesťanské obce a židovské obce v jednu politickou obec, perzekuce židů, soupis židovského majetku 1918 – 1943."

⁹⁰ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 44.

⁹¹ Pálka, "Židé v Holešově 1939-1943 a řešení bytové otázky ve městě," 175-191.

notice about eviction from Deputy Mayor Tacl on August 26, 1940. Müllerová lived in an apartment in the Moravia Hotel, owned by the brewery in Litovel. On August 30, 1940, Müllerová sent a letter to the Holešov City Council, in which she asked the council to extend her eviction deadline until her husband returns from a concentration camp in Buchenwald, because her financial situation was unfavorable. Her husband was Rudolf Müller, who was arrested during Operation Albrecht I on September 1939. The brewery in Litovel did not mind Olga living in the apartment, however, the city council stood by its decision and sent another notice. After eight months of resisting eviction, Olga and her son were sent to Terezín on September 4, 1942, five months ahead of other Holešov Jews. From there, they were sent on October 8, 1942 to the concentration camp Treblinka in Poland, which is the last piece of information about them.⁹² The German occupation departments did not order the eviction of Jews in Holešov. Instead, it was the city council's initiative to provide better living conditions for gentile residents at the expense of Jews.⁹³

3.6 Heydrichiade

Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich arrived in Prague on September 27, 1941, and right after his arrival he announced martial law, during which 500 people were executed. One of those victims was historian Vladimír Groh from Holešov. Heydrich's assassination on May 27, 1942, triggered the Heydrichiade, resulting in the immediate deaths of 1,600 people; 3,000 more were sent to concentration camps.⁹⁴

Immediately after Heydrich's assassination, random witnesses were questioned. Based on their testimonies, a description of the offenders was created. A reward was announced for whomever found them, leading to a nationwide manhunt. Even Holešov was affected by this terror. It all started with a member of Flag (*Vlajka*), who informed the Gestapo in Zlín about a suspicious man resembling the description of one of the assassins. Gestapo agents Urbánek and Raschka arrived right away in Holešov, and asked for the assistance of two police officers from Holešov, who were familiar with the surroundings. Police officers Schrott and Kantor volunteered. They were openly anti-Jewish and they led the Gestapo officers to the house of the Jewish widow Zemanová. There, they caught her son Rudolf.

⁹² Pálka, "Židé v Holešově 1939-1943 a řešení bytové otázky ve městě," 181-184.

⁹³ Ibid., 186.

⁹⁴ Miroslav Neumann, "Květen 1947 – Heydrichiáda: Pět občanů Holešova bezprostřední obětí Heydrichiády," *Holešovsko* 5 (1997): 31.

However, there was no connection between him and the Heydrich assassination. He was only on the run from work in the Reich. Disappointed, Gestapo agents left empty-handed. When driving through the town square, Schrott called their attention to a group of four Jewish men talking to an Aryan, which was forbidden. The Gestapo agents arrested all of them and took them to the Gestapo headquarters in Zlín. They were questioned and then transported to the Kaunivo university dorms in Brno. Soon, the four Jewish men, Jiří Bermann, Leo Klein, Štěpán Braun, Alfred Löff, were sentenced to death by hanging for approving of the Heydrich assassination and for talking to an Aryan. The Aryan's name was Josef Javůrek. He was born in Přílepy and grew up in the United States before moving to Holešov in the 1930s. There he started working as a geodesist, and it was in this capacity that he met those four Jewish men. Therefore, when the Gestapo arrested them they were not discussing Heydrich's assassination, but their work. For a long time, there was no information about what happened to Josef Javůrek. However, one day a letter from Auschwitz concentration camp was delivered to Holešov, stating that Javůrek had died there. Josef Javůrek, a gentile, had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time, with tragic consequences.⁹⁵

3.7 Destruction of the New Synagogue

Before the New Synagogue was built, there was the Old Synagogue (the Šach Synagogue), which was built in the sixteenth century and to this day represents the most valuable and preserved Jewish monument in the area. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Old Synagogue was no longer sufficient for the Holešov's Jewish community because of its small space and insufficient facilities. Therefore, the New Synagogue was built and then consecrated on September 3, 1893.⁹⁶

The night of March 14, 1941, an incident occurred in Holešov's square when an unknown offender broke the windows of Nazi professor František Rybka's house. The blame was laid on Holešov's Jews. Therefore, the Jewish religious community had to pay for the repairs which cost 3,325 Czech crowns. This decision was made by city councilman Antonín Krutil, who was actively engaged in creating anti-Jewish restrictions, one of which

⁹⁵ Miroslav Neumann, "Květen 1947 – Heydrichiáda: Pět občanů Holešova bezprostřední obětí Heydrichiády," *Holešovsko* 5 (1997): 31.

⁹⁶ Holešov Jinýma Očima. "Nová synagoga." Accessed March 21, 2017. <http://holesov.jinak.cz/zide.php?zide=synagoga2&menu=2>.

was to remove an iron fence around the Jewish synagogue. With the synagogue defenseless, on the evening of July 23, 1941 unknown perpetrators made their first attempt to destroy it by fire. Holešov's fire brigade put out the fire, but an investigation over who started it was stopped by Zlín's Gestapo, and the culprit was never found.⁹⁷

On August 11, 1941, a second attempt to destroy the Jewish synagogue was made. The culprits broke into the synagogue, soaked everything in petrol, and then set it on fire. Ultimately, only the peripheral walls remained. The fire brigade of Holešov was protecting surrounding buildings, however there was no chance of saving the synagogue. The damage was estimated at 900,000 Czech crowns. After the fire, the Zlín's Gestapo took over the investigation and promptly shelved it, making it clear that the culprits were Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. At that time, many similar cases appeared throughout the Protectorate, and it was obvious that the Nazis were the culprits.⁹⁸ The next day the Holešov City Council ordered the Jewish religious community to close all the entrances to the burned synagogue and to hand in all the metal material from the synagogue. Seven months later, on March 24, 1942, the synagogue's ruins were destroyed by dynamite. Shortly after, the city council in Holešov decided to reward the people who participated in the final destruction, namely Antonín Bezděk, Ladislav Kantor and Ladislav Schrott, the same men who had participated in the arrest of the five men after the Heydrichiade. Those men were paid 246 Czech crowns, from which the biggest share went to Schrott, who was the most involved in this work. On June 1942, the stones from the synagogue's ruins were sold off, and the town Holešov bought the land on which the synagogue used to stand, for 9,680 Czech crowns.⁹⁹

3.8 Deportation

On October 18 and 27, 1939, the first deportations of Jews from the Protectorate took place. Jews were deported mainly from Moravská Ostrava to Nisko, Poland, to build a camp, which would be a base for Jewish transports from Poland, Austria, Germany and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. However, this operation did not last long. On October 17, 1939, the operation Nisko was canceled in Berlin. However, it was not until

⁹⁷ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 39-40.

⁹⁸ Stanislav Pumprla, "Zničení nové synagogy v Holešově," *Zpravodaj MK v Kroměříži* 2 (1985): 23-25.

⁹⁹ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 41-42.

April 14 when the Jews from Nisko were transported back home.¹⁰⁰ Out of 2,876 Jews deported to Nisko, only 657 returned home. Even though, the return of Jews from Nisko was the only case of repatriation during the Holocaust, most of the repatriates' lives ended later in concentration camps.¹⁰¹

Between the summer and fall of 1941, the preparations for mass deportations of Jews from Europe began. The chief of the Reich Main Security Office Reinhard Heydrich was appointed to create plans for the realization of the Final Solution. Part of these preparations was to find a suitable temporary place where the Jews would wait until they were transported to their final destination. On October 10, 1941, Heydrich announced that the temporary camp would be Terezín, north of Prague. Nine days later, Prague's Jewish community was ordered to prepare the Terezín ghetto for the arrival of prisoners. The Terezín ghetto operated from November 1941 until the end of war.¹⁰²

Between October 16 and November 16, 1941, the first six transports (one thousand people in each) left the Protectorate, from which five arrived in Lodz's ghetto and one in Minsk. On January 20, 1942, a conference was held in Wannsee, headed by Reinhard Heydrich. It was decided that the Final Solution would involve at least eleven million European Jews. Heinrich Himmler was chosen by Adolf Hitler to manage the Final Solution.¹⁰³

The Final Solution in Holešov began on January 17, 1943, when the luggage of Holešov's Jews was transported to Uherský Brod, and the next day the Jews themselves followed. Every individual was allowed to bring 10 kilos of food for six days and 50 kilos of luggage. After the arrival to Uherský Brod, the Jews were placed in the local ghetto and gymnasium.¹⁰⁴ Holešov's Jews were then transported from Uherský Brod to Terezín by three transports, namely Cn which departed on January 23, 1943, Co which departed on January 27, and lastly Cp which departed on January 31. Most of Holešov's Jews (273)¹⁰⁵ were in the Cn transport, making them among the first to depart from the camp in Uherský Brod to Terezín. However, Terezín was not their final destination. From there they were

¹⁰⁰ Miroslav Kárný, "*Konečné řešení*": *Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice* (Praha: Academia, 1991), 39-47.

¹⁰¹ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 47.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Kárný, "*Konečné řešení*": *Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice*, 76-87.

¹⁰⁴ Pálka, "Židé v Holešově 1939-1943 a řešení bytové otázky ve městě," 191.

¹⁰⁵ Klenovský, *Židovské památky Holešova*, 6.

transported to concentration camps which were, for most of them, their final destinations.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Němcová, “Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově,” 48-49.

4 SITUATION AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

After the Holocaust, only eleven or twelve million Jews remained in the world.¹⁰⁷ On March 15, 1939, there were about 135,000 people, who were classified as Jews by the Nuremberg Laws, living in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Already by October 1, 1939, this number had decreased to 88,105. By the end of World War II, about 80,000 of these were dead. After the war, approximately 16,000 Jews returned to the Bohemia and Moravia.¹⁰⁸

In 1939, 341 Jews lived in Holešov, but the Holocaust decimated this population. After the liberation on May 1945, a small number of Jews (estimates vary from 13-16) returned to Holešov,¹⁰⁹ among them Jews named Ehrlich, Braun, Bachner, Gränder sr. and Knopf M.D.¹¹⁰

The names of Holešov's Jews, who were victims of the Holocaust are recorded on the wall of the Pynkas Synagogue in Prague, among 77,297 names. Holešov also has a memorial plaque in the ceremony room of its Jewish cemetery. 252 names of Jews killed by the Nazi genocide are recorded there.¹¹¹ According to František Zapletal, the houses of Holešov's Jews became other people's possessions, and their businesses either perished or were nationalized.¹¹²

4.1 Renewal of the Jewish religious communities

After the Jewish survivors returned from the concentration camps, they started to create committees for renewal of the Jewish religious communities. After the formation of these committees, which usually had two or three members, they also created a notice about the resumption of the Jewish religious communities. The key factor for their renewal was the number of repatriates who wanted to restore the Jewish communities. By 1947, 53 Jewish religious communities existed in Czechoslovakia (33 in Bohemia, 19 in Moravia and Silesia), one of which was the community in Holešov. At the beginning of

¹⁰⁷ Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1,063.

¹⁰⁸ Zdeněk Fišer, *Poslední pogrom* (Kojetín: KATOS, 1996), 141-142.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 144; Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 44; Miroslav Neumann, "Osudy Židů v Holešově" (letter), Holešov: Městská knihovna v Holešově, April 17, 2003.

¹¹⁰ Státní okresní archiv Kroměříž (SokA), "Kronika města Holešova: II.," 154.

¹¹¹ Němcová, "Perzekuce Židů za druhé světové války v Holešově," 49.

¹¹² Zapletal, "Z historie holešovských židů," 47.

1949, the emigration of Jews to Palestine was an essential period for the Jewish religious communities. This emigration wave caused the termination of many communities, which had to be shut down because of low numbers. After the communists ascended to power in February 1948, the transformation of the religious communities to synagogal bodies (*synagogální sbory*) began. The concept of these bodies was to limit the power of religious communities and transfer it to the town (“parent town”) in which the community existed. On June 1952, the delegates of the Jewish religious communities decided on 9 “parent towns” (Ostrava, Olomouc, Brno, Ústí nad Labem, Pilsen, Kyjov, Liberec, Karlovy Vary and Prague). By 1982, the parent towns were Prague, Pilsen, Ústí nad Labem, Ostrava, Brno and Uherský Brod. Holešov was a synagogal body of Brno. After 1989, the Jewish religious communities changed their names to “Jewish communities.” At the present, there are ten independent Jewish communities (Prague, Liberec, Děčín, Ústí nad Labem, Teplice, Karlovy Vary, Pilsen, Brno, Olomouc and Ostrava).¹¹³

4.2 Festival of Jewish Culture

The beginning of Holešov’s annual Festival of Jewish Culture is closely connected with the organization Olam – Society Judaica Holešov, which was founded to extend the knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history and Jewish historic sites in Holešov. The first Festival of Jewish Culture took place in Holešov on August 11, 2001. The festival has now become one of the largest cultural events in Holešov, and a model for other events and festivals all over the Czech Republic.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Petr Sedlák, “Obnova a organizace židovských náboženských obcí v českých zemích po skončení druhé světové války,” in *Židé a Morava. Sborník z konference konané v Muzeu Kroměřížska dne 9. listopadu 2005* (Kroměříž: Muzeum Kroměřížska, 2006), 192-201.

¹¹⁴ FŽK Holešov 2016, “O Festivalu,” accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.zidovskyfestival.cz/#o-festivalu>.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this bachelor thesis was to determine whether the Jews in Holešov were persecuted during World War II by Holešov's gentile residents, and if so, for what reasons. To make sense of this, the thesis also documents the socioeconomic of the Jewish community in Holešov throughout history. Even though Holešov's Jews had to overcome many obstacles, they became an important part of local society, even in the early times. The rulers of the Czech lands saw Jews as loyal supporters and as a source of wealth. Therefore, they allowed Jews to settle on their estates and pursue crafts and businesses, which Jews were highly successful in. However, Christian residents pressured the rulers to apply restrictions on Jewish businesses and their everyday life, and expel them from Moravian royal towns. During the Second World War, the Jewish population lost its basic human rights, and many restrictions were imposed on them. However, the Nazis were not the only ones responsible for the destruction of Jewish Holešov. Gentile residents were not only complicit in this destruction but played a major role, for several reasons. For a long while, Holešov's gentiles had not been on friendly terms with their Jewish neighbors because of the Jewish attachment to the German language. Moreover, when the Jewish population became a powerful economic force in Holešov, gentile residents began to envy their wealth and prosperity. Jews became strong competitors of Christian businesses, which led to many disputes. In order to drive their competition out of town, gentiles created many rumors and false accusations about Jewish ritual murders. The Second World War, and the Nazi hatred of Jews, gave Holešov's gentile residents reasonable cause to get rid of the Jewish population, their competitors, and moreover to steal their valuable property. Only a few Jews returned from the Nazi concentration camps, not enough to reestablish a long-lasting Jewish religious community. The Jewish history of Holešov is now remembered only by the Old Synagogue, the Jewish cemetery with the memorial plaque in the ceremony room, and an annual Festival of Jewish Culture.

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