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JEWISH MONUMENTS IN BOHEMIA AS VIEWED BY THE STATE AND JEWISH LEADERS FROM 1945–1989

POMNIKI ŻYDOWSKIE W CZECHACH W OCZACH WŁADZ PAŃSTWOWYCH I ŻYDOWSKICH W LATACH 1945–1989

Abstract
The study is based on the thesis that monuments are not only highly valuable in terms of art and history, but they also have specific meaning for certain groups of people (nations, minorities). It addresses the problem of what qualities were taken into account by the Czechoslovak state and the Jewish minority in the case of Jewish monuments in the Czech lands after the Second World War. The text concludes that although Czechoslovak elites declared the global artistic and historical significance of Jewish monuments (albeit only in Prague), they failed to provide them with adequate care. Thus, maintenance and repairs (often not entirely successful) were reserved for the Terezín concentration camp and select monuments, mainly in Prague.

For the fraction of Jews that survived the Shoah, Jewish monuments became a source of self-esteem and new self-identification with the Czech space. However, not even the small number of Jewish religious communities could prevent the decay of synagogues, cemeteries and other monuments. The situation of poorly secured regional monuments was the most tragic. Jewish communities were often forced to sell them or rent them out. This unfavorable state of affairs worsened after the defeat of the Prague Spring (August 1968), when all hopes for improved monument care associated with the "Golden Sixties" vanished. The period of "normalisation" was then marked by the extensive and rapid demolition of a number of historically valuable buildings, which were forced to "give way to the public interest".

Keywords
Jewish monuments, Bohemia, 1945–1989

Abstrakt
W artykule przyjęto tezę, że zabytki są nie tylko niezwykle cenne pod względem artystycznym i historycznym, ale mają także określone znaczenie dla określonych grup ludzi (narodów, mniejszości). Autorka opisuje, jakie walory brało pod uwagę państwo czechosłowackie i mniejszość żydowska w przypadku pomników żydowskich na ziemiach czeskich po II wojnie światowej. Konkluduje, że choć czechosłowackie elity deklarowały światowe znaczenie artystyczne i historyczne pomników żydowskich (aczkolwiek tylko w Pradze), to nie zapewniły im odpowiedniej opieki. Prace konserwacyjne i naprawy (często nie do końca udane) prowadzone były na terenie obozu koncentracyjnego w Terezinie oraz w związku z wybranymi zabytkami, głównie w Pradze.

Dla tej niewielkiej części Żydów, którzy przeżyli Zagładę, pomniki żydowskie stały się źródłem poczucia własnej wartości i nowej identyfikacji z czeską przestrzenią. Jednak znikoma liczba żydowskich gmin wyznaniowych nie zapobiegła zniszczeniu synagog, cmentarzy i innych zabytków. Najbardziej tragiczna była sytuacja słabo zabezpieczonych zabytków regionalnych. Społeczności żydowskie często były zmuszone je sprzedawać lub wynajmować. Ten niekorzystny stan rzeczy pogłębił się po klęsce Praskiej Wiosny (sierpień 1968), kiedy zniknęły nadzieje na poprawę opieki nad zabytkami kojarzone ze „złotymi latami sześćdziesiątymi". Okres „normalizacji" upłynął wówczas pod znakiem rozległych i szybkich wyburzeń wielu cennych historycznie budynków, które zmuszone były „ustąpić miejsca interesowi publicznemu".

Słowa kluczowe
pomniki żydowskie, Czechy, 1945–1989

Introduction

Modern Czech society first began recognizing monuments one hundred and twenty years ago. The primary criteria have been the artistic and historical value of monuments, not their national significance (Soukupová 2007: 17). In addition to artistic and historical value, monuments may also possess other values. Czech philosopher Jaroslava Pešková drew attention to this fact when she characterized monuments as the visual manifestation of memory and the roots of human settlement (Pešková 1998: 34). This study attempts to answer the question of how the state and Jewish leaders viewed Jewish monuments after the Second World War. Were they viewed as historical works of art or did they mean something more? And what classified something as a monument? Was it simply something worthy of protection, or could monuments be commercialized or even outright destroyed?

Jewish monuments and public officials after the Second World War

One of the first people to address the issue of Jewish monuments after the Second World War was Dr. Václav Vacek (1877 Libochovice – 1960 Prague-Lhotka), the first post-war mayor of Prague. Vacek was primarily concerned with select monuments in Prague's Jewish Quarter (particularly the Old Jewish Cemetery, The Old New Synagogue and The Jewish Museum), and he emphasized that unlike Jewish monuments in Warsaw, Lviv and other parts of Ukraine, these historical artistic gems should be protected (Vacek 1945: 1). A similar view on the matter was shared by Professor Jan Rypka (1886 Kroměříž – 1968 Prague), an Orientalist, former Dean of the Charles University Faculty of Arts and co-founder of the Oriental Institute (1927). When speaking at the opening of the Jewish Museum in Prague in 1946, he emphasized the venerable age and world renown of Jewish monuments. And with regard to the Jewish Museum itself, he viewed it as a potential tool for the promotion of liberated Czechoslovakia (Projev děkana (Dean's speech) 1946: 55).[1]

Jewish monuments after the Second World War as viewed by the Jewish minority

The fraction of the Jewish populace of the Czech lands that managed to survive the Shoah[2] undoubtedly also needed monuments after the war for another reason: as a tool for self-identification. Jews were not only confronted

[1] Rypka also discussed the fate of the museum during the Protectorate, when relics from defunct Jewish religious communities were collected (Projev děkana (Dean's speech) 1946: 55). Historian Magda Veselská believed the collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague was preserved during the Protectorate for several reasons: the perception of the collection as "aesthetic" and "harmless curiosities", the property value of artifacts, and the particular status of the Protectorate that included certain elements of autonomy, which forced the occupation administration to choose special methods of repression (Veselská 2012: 63).

[2] According to the Council of Jewish Religious Communities, the highest institutional body, there were about 10,000 people of the Jewish faith in Bohemia in October 1945 and 5,000 Jews according to the Nuremberg Laws. In Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, the number of Jews had fallen to 10% of its pre-war level (U pana presidenta (A Talk with the President) 1945: 26).

with the loss of their own families, but also with the "disappearance" of their communities and, of course, the manifest ations of post-war anti-Semitism and its leitmotif of the Jew as foreigner. The existence of Jewish monuments in the Czech landscape (especially Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and remnants of Jewish ghettos) was first and foremost a reminder for returnees of the thousand-year presence of Jews in the Czech lands. The function of monuments was to help returnees find or rebuild their lost homes. During the initial post-war years, monuments were therefore not valued by the Jewish minority for their antiquity, artistic value or world renown, but rather for their ability to evoke a sense of continuity of Jewish life in the Czech lands and to foster a dialogue between Jewish generations, which is the significance attributed by Jaroslava Pešková. This was expressed quite succinctly by engineer Arnošt Frischer (1887 Heřmanův Městec – 1954 London), a Zionist politician, member of the Czechoslovak State Council during the war, and later chairman of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Historical Lands. At the opening of the Jewish Museum in Prague, however, he too spoke mainly about Prague's Jewish monuments (synagogues, cemeteries, but also the statue of Rabbi Löw):

> It was not possible to save the living, but it was possible to save the monuments. These are now – and to a much greater degree will continue to be – witnesses to the glorious history of Jews in the Czech lands, a Jewish community that has been here for more than a thousand years and has distinguished itself by its high culture and vast knowledge. The Jewish community of Prague has been called the 'mother' in Israel. The Jewish quarters of Prague towns shared the fate, struggles, disasters, but also the joy and the good times of the communities into which they were incorporated (Iltis 1946: 54).

For this reason, the Jewish Bulletin also welcomed the re-erection in August 1946 of a statue of Rabbi Löw by Ladislav Šaloun that had been removed during the occupation. It was placed in front of the New Town Hall on Marianske Square (Židovská 1946: 83).

Interest in monuments and post-war Jewish leaders

One of the first tasks of Jewish leaders was to restore the original function of various monuments (especially synagogues). Religious services were demonstrably held as early as the summer of 1945 in the Old New Synagogue

in Prague (Zpráva sekretariátu (Secretariat report) 1945: 5).[3] Another Prague synagogue that re-opened was the synagogue on Dušní St., where on October 27th, 1945 on the eve of a national holiday a sermon was given by military spiritual rabbi Hanuš Rebenwurzel (Rezek) J.D. (1902 Strážnice – 1948 Greece), officer of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech and Moravian-Silesian Lands (Nezapomeň! (Don't Forget!) 1945: 18). On March 13th, 1946 the first memorial service for the Czech Jews who were murdered in Auschwitz on the night of March 8th–9th was held here (Nechť živí slyší (Let the Living Hear) 1946: 12). The following year the memorial service was held in the Jerusalem Synagogue (Den smutku čs. Židů (A Day of Mourning for CS Jews) 1947: 81).[4] The Jewish Town Hall in Prague also resumed its activities (Dr. St. 1946: 10). Thus, in the first post-war months, Jewish leaders focused explicitly on renewing Jewish life in Prague's Jewish monuments. Already in the summer of 1946, however, Prague's Jewish monuments began to attract tourists. In September 1946, the Jewish Museum in Prague completed the Prague Ghetto Museum. In mid-October, it exhibited paintings by the Terezín painter Otto Ungar (1901 Husovice – 1945 Blankenhain nach Weimar). In March 1947 the museum exhibited the Terezín paintings of Karel Fleischmann, a doctor from České Budějovice (1897 Klatovy – 1944 Auschwitz) (Posmrtná výstava (Posthumous Exhibition) 1947: 95). In July 1946 alone, there were 1,671 visitors to the Jewish Museum in Prague, a number which increased to 2,473 in August (Novinky (News) 1946: 98).[5]

The leaders of the Jewish community addressed the question of monuments and heritage care in two ways: first in relation to the Jewish Museum in Prague and then with respect to the destroyed, dilapidated and vandalized unprotected rural Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. In the case of regional Jewish monuments, however, little mention was made of their historical or artistic value. First and foremost was their significance for returning Jews, whose first journey was often to the Jewish cemetery to visit the graves of relatives. The vandalism of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries

[3] On Sept. 6th, 1945 the synagogue on Na skořepce Street in Brno was re-dedicated (Zprávy (News) 1945: 8).

[4] Summary of the restoration of Jewish religious life in the Czech lands after the war (Soukupová 2016: 56–63).

[5] In 1946, 11,000 people visited the museum and in 1947 it welcomed 40,000 visitors. A year later, 73,000 people viewed the museum's collections. In 1949, the number of visitors was again in the tens of thousands (Veselská 2012: 147).

that took place after the Second World War was considered by Jewish leaders to be residual anti-Semitism from the Protectorate. Meanwhile, local national committees and competent ministries called for the protection of these sites. There were also efforts to remove street cobblestones that had come from Jewish gravestones destroyed during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (e.g., in the spa town of Lázně Kynžvart) (Iltis 1947: 309; Středověk (Middle Ages) 1948: 37).[6] From the beginning, it was assumed that rural Jewish cemeteries would undergo the most urgent repairs. In the case of abandoned synagogues, most were rented out for "dignified" purposes or sold off (Wehle 1946: 122).[7]

In the spring of 1947, a new monument of extraordinary symbolic significance emerged – the Jewish cemetery in Terezín. The primary focus was on historical authenticity (Vg. 1947: 136).[8] In the following years, we witnessed the growing world renown of the Jewish Museum in Prague. Already in early January 1948, the year the new exhibition on the history of Jews in Bohemia and Moravia in the Pinkas Synagogue opened, the Jewish Bulletin wrote: "What the National Museum is for the domestic public, schools and rural visitors to Prague, the Jewish Museum has become for the global public" (Úkoly (Tasks) 1948: 52).

Jewish monuments after the February Coup (1948)

After the February Coup (1948), the Old Synagogue even served as a venue to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of Charles University. On this occasion, Chief Rabbi Dr. Gustav Sicher (1880 Klatovy – 1960 Prague) emphasized that the "venerable and world-famous" synagogue was still a hundred years older than the Prague university (Oslava (Celebration) 1948: 178). On July 2nd, 1948, a copy of the statue of Moses by František Bílek, removed in the spring of 1940, was returned to the Old Synagogue. The statue was to become a symbol of mutual tolerance between Christians and Jews (Mollik 1948: 310). The continuing destruction of Jewish cemeteries (e.g., in 1948 in Dobříš) continued to be explained as vandalism by former) fascists (Faltys 1948: 420).

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[6] Summary of the post-war fate of cemeteries (Soukupová 2016: 369–374).

[7] Summary of the post-war condition and fate of synagogues (Soukupová 2016: 380–385, 387–391).

[8] Summary of the cemetery in Terezín in the 1950s (Soukupová 2016: 395–397).

However, the Prague Jewish monuments, which in April 1950 were transferred from the national administration of the Jewish Council of Elders to the State Jewish Museum at the suggestion of Zdeněk Nejedlý, Minister of Education, Sciences and Arts (Státní (State) 1950: 175), were by this time already competing with Terezín. The former concentration camp was to become a symbol of the common suffering of Czechs and Jews (Projev (Speech) 1948: 301). On the contrary, memorials in Jewish cemeteries became explicitly Jewish monuments, albeit unveiled with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Enlightenment, the Union of Freedom Fighters, local and district national committees, the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners, the National Security Corps, the army, the Union of Friends of the USSR, schools and other associations and churches. Such memorials were usually erected by a surviving member of the Jewish community, who also provided funds for it, or by the local Jewish religious community.[9] For example, on April 24th, 1950 a memorial was unveiled in Kolín. This was followed by a service in the reconstructed synagogue, a tour of the ghetto and a walk to the old cemetery.[10]

Despite public assurances that Jewish monuments were under the protection of the people's democratic state (Poper 1951: 93), post-February Czechoslovakia and its inefficient economy was unable to prevent the further deterioration of monuments. The state was faced with the problem of which monuments to repair, which to let decay and which to demolish outright, in which case the primary argument for destroying monuments was "public interest", especially new roads. Nevertheless, in 1951, the Jerusalem, Pilsen and Maisel synagogues were repaired, and the State Jewish Museum opened a Contemporary Department in the Maisel Synagogue. There were also plans after archaeological and historical/structural research and repairs to house a museum of Jewish martyrology in the Pinkas Synagogue featuring a memorial to seventy-seven thousand two hundred and ninety-seven people who perished in the Shoa (Iltis 1951: 614),[11] inspired by foreign war

[9] For example, on September 5th, 1948, a monument was unveiled in Pardubice (architect Freund). The bulk of credit belongs to Bernard Schütz, the post-war chairman of the community (Iltis 1948: 400). Summary of the creation of memorials (Soukupová 2016: 374–379).

[10] The memorial was the work of academic sculptor Věra Bejrová and architect Jaroslav Křelina (Feder 1950: 196).

[11] See also *Památník sedmdesáti sedmi tisíc dvou set devadesáti sedmi (Memorial to the 77,287* 1953: 31). A year later, new collections were organized in the Klaus

memorials (Veselská 2012: 179). The memorial was opened without foreign participation in 1959. The state authorities were dissatisfied with both the idea of its creation and its design (Soukupová 2010: 32–33; Soukupová 2016: 406–408). In addition to the Pinkas Synagogue, attention also turned to the Jewish Town Hall in Prague, which following research in the early 1950s was determined to have been founded as early as the mid-13th century (hv 1953a: 63). At the same time, however, the demolition of the Vinohrady Synagogue in Prague, damaged at the end of the war by bombing by the American army, began on June 15th, 1951. The synagogue was considered to be architecturally and religiously uninteresting (Št.E. 1951: 305). The synagogue in Dušní Street was practically forgotten (hv 1953b: 22–23). In the mid-1950s, even the world-famous Old New Synagogue fell into disrepair (Soukupová 2016: 399–400). The condition of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague was also dire (Soukupová 2016: 404–405). However, an even worse fate awaited the abandoned Jewish monuments in the regions, which were ignored by state authorities and foreign tourists whose interest remained mostly limited to Jewish Prague. The poor condition of the cemeteries worsened, with closings by state authorities and attacks by vandals (Soukupová 2016: 401–402).

Jewish monuments during the "Golden Sixties"

A glimmer of better times was heralded by a trip of Jewish leaders to Paris to attend the opening of a Memorial to an Unknown Jewish Martyr in October 1956 (Setkání (Meeting) 1956: 3–4). On December 8th, 1956, the *Terezín Ghetto* exhibition, organized by the State Jewish Museum in Prague and its director Hana Volavková (1904 Jaroměř – 1985 Prague), first opened in Prague's Maisel Synagogue (Výstava Terezín (Terezín Exhibition) 1957: 4). In May 1957, a representative of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (then West Germany) visited the museum to learn from the Czech experience so a similar museum could be created in Berlin (Návštěvy (Visits) 1957: 10). The following year, the Pinkas Synagogue was again opened to the public (Veřejnost (The Public) 1958: 9). In February 1959, the renovation also began of the Spanish Synagogue in Dušní Street in Prague, which had been a warehouse for the Ministry of Health (Herbenová 1960: 109). The

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Synagogue (history of Jews in antiquity) and in the Ghetto Museum. The use of the High Synagogue was planned (Odkud přišli (Where They Came From) 1953: 6).

renovation of Prague's most famed and currently only functioning synagogue, the Old New Synagogue, was scheduled for 1966 (Brod 1966: 9).

All of these activities show that the Shoah and memorial sites linked to the Jewish tragedy had begun to attract the interest of Czech society. The government even began preparing a National Czechoslovak Museum in Auschwitz. In 1963 it was decided to incorporate the Terezín Jewish cemetery and crematorium into the National Memorial in Terezín. In previous years, Jewish leaders had lobbied for this to no avail (Soukupová 2016: 413–416). In the "Golden Sixties", however, Terezín also attracted domestic and foreign scholars (Soukupová 2016: 418–419, 482–492). Relics of camp life were collected again: remnants of clothing and shoes, food bowls, articles from prison workshops and cells, knives, spoons, cigarette cases, dolls, flags, embroidered handkerchiefs, eggs and little hearts.[12] In 1964, a deputation from the Jewish Religious Community in Vienna visited Terezín with Dr. Ernst Feldsberg (Styky (Liaison) 1964: 4). In the same year, the Jews in Moravia exhibition officially opened on September 6th in Shakh's Synagogue in Holešov (with text written by historians Jan Heřman and Vladimír Sadek from the State Jewish Museum in Prague) (Holešov 1964: 12; Süss 1964: 4).[13] Among other Moravian Jewish monuments, the Jewish cemetery in Brno was of particular interest to visitors.

> This cemetery is still frequently visited not only by local people, who have friends and acquaintances here, but also by numerous foreigners who come to visit us during the autumn fairs in order to report back to Brno natives living abroad. In addition, people from the surrounding area come here every day to spend part of the day here amidst the peaceful verdure – wrote Rabbi Richard Feder (1875 Václavice – 1970 Brno) in 1963 about the use of the cemetery (Feder 1963: 9).

On the other hand, the nationalized Jewish Museum, despite the worldwide success of the traveling exhibition of children's drawings from Terezín (Veselská 2012: 172–174; Z pražského (From Prague) 1958: 3) and despite the increasing interest of tourists, was at risk of having its collections

[12] The idea of collecting these objects had already emerged during the war. Many prisoners brought these objects home as „souvenirs" and they needed to be gathered in one place. At the end of the 1960s, equipment from the Richard Nazi underground factory in Litoměřice was added to the collection (Hmotné (Material) 1969: 5).

[13] In 1960 it was also decided to restore seven ghetto buildings in Mikulov (Drobné (Minor) 1960: 11).

added to oriental or municipal collections, which would mean de facto liquidation (Soukupová 2010: 35).[14] In 1956, the *Guide to the State Jewish Museum in Prague* was published to help improve the limited knowledge of Czech society about the history of Czech Jews (Taraszka 1957: 9). In 1963, 550,000 tourists visited the museum, 80% of whom were foreigners (Soukupová 2010: 35).

Also of great interest was the *Jewish Traditions and Customs* exhibition, hosted by the Klaus Synagogue (following the previous exhibition, *Unforgotten Crimes*, which was extended until the end of 1960 (Volavková 1960: 9). Vilém Benda (1916 Prague – 1978), the director at the time, stated:

> The exhibition is widely visited not only by foreign tourists, but also by locals, who do not conceal their appreciation of the artistically tasteful and successful exhibition explaining all the supposed secrets of Jewish ritual. Comparisons with analogous Christian customs have worked well. This too contributes to mutual understanding (Benda 1966: 11).

Similarly, the *Silver of Czech Synagogues* exhibition was also prepared in 1965 in the Maisel Synagogue (Benda 1965: 6). Despite these successes, however, the State Jewish Museum in Prague found itself in a very troublesome situation made all the more difficult by the continuing rift between its administration and Jewish leaders, who understood this institution of memory to be a cultural institution, with non-Jewish employees who were not prepared to respect the Jewish faith. This is why, in the mid-1960s, representatives of the Jewish community refused the museum's request to place books from the museum's collections on the third floor of the Jewish Town Hall in Prague (Soukupová 2010: 33–34). However, this building was also under threat; in the late 1950s there had been plans to convert it into government offices (Soukupová 2010: 33).

The beginning of de-Stalinization also brought the first open criticism of the condition of regional monuments. At the suggestion of the State Monument Care Department, the Jewish Museum in Prague was to prepare a proposal for preserves and open-air museums (Soukupová 2016: 402–403). This clear pivot away from Prague's famous monuments to ghettos as the supposed counterparts of feudal castles and chateaus may have led to documentation work, but financial resources were lacking to repair regional monuments, especially cemeteries (Soukupová 2010: 37–39; Soukupová 2016: 409–413).

[14] Hana Volavková sought to classify the museum as a special museum (Volavková 1958: 45).

In November 1963, Otto Heitlinger (1913 Holice – 1980 Prague), Secretary of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities, stated at the Congress of Delegates of the Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech Regions:

> We have about 400 cemeteries, but the only ones that are in good condition and properly maintained are in places where there is a Jewish religious community or synagogue congregation. There is a similar problem with religious buildings in places where there is no longer a religious community. In many cases, our communities have been able to find interested parties who guarantee these buildings will not be used for undignified purposes. However, it is necessary for all communities to take the initiative in this regard so that former synagogues need not be demolished (Sjezd (Congress) 1964: 3).

Engineer František Fuchs, vice-chairman of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities, made a similar statement to the delegates at an extraordinary congress in January 1967:

> The preservation of the memory of our martyrs and our past also includes, according to our religious traditions, the preservation of Jewish cemeteries. You yourselves well know that the state administration has retained possession of these cemeteries for us, even though they are no longer used for burials. This is a matter of considerable concern to us. I consider it necessary to ask you to take care of these cemeteries with all your strength, to maintain them and, above all, to involve the national committees in their care (Mimořádný (Extraordinary) 1967: 3).

However, the "Golden Sixties" also saw the sale of some Jewish property by the state, especially 1526 Torahs (Soukupová 2010: 39–40).

Jewish monuments during the period of "normalization" (1969–1989)

A new chapter in the handling of Jewish monuments was brought about by the failure of the Prague Spring and the following period of "normalization" (1969–1989). Even before the deterioration of relations between the State of Israel and the Soviet Union after the Six-Day War (1967), one of the most popular monuments,[15] the Pinkas Synagogue, was closed and fell into

[15] In the early 1970s its attendance exceeded the total attendance of the Terezín concentration camp (Nová 1971: 3).

a state of disrepair for twenty years (Veselská 2012: 195; 217). The closure of the monument was accompanied by a ban on foreign participation in the celebrations of the millennial anniversary of Jews in the Czech lands. Postage stamps with Jewish themes that had been prepared for the millennium were withdrawn (Členská (Membership) 1969: 6). The seven-hundred-year anniversary celebration of the Old New Synagogue was moved to May 1970 (Staronová (Old New) 1970: 1) and significantly reduced. The activities of the State Jewish Museum in Prague and the Terezín Memorial were also curtailed, although in 1972 it was decided to declare Terezín a monument reservation (-jam- 1972: 8). Jewish cemeteries in Prague[16] and the regions fell into disrepair,[17] were demolished en masse,[18] and tombstones still bearing Hebrew inscriptions were sold off (Soukupová 2016: 420–423; 427–430).

The cemetery in Roudnice nad Labem dating from the late 15th century was classified in 1974 as a most historically valuable burial site (similar to the cemeteries in Kolín, Mladá Boleslav, Brandýs nad Labem, Libochovice, Ivančice and Mikulov (-l- 1973: 5)). Its condition at the time was described by the Jewish press as follows:

> How many people pass down Třebízského Street without looking over the half-demolished wall where gray tombstones are visible on the hillside? From elsewhere the cemetery is not visible, everything else is hidden behind the remains of the walls or the lush cemetery vegetation (J. K. 1973: 5).

In 1975, the newly elected chairman of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities, Bedřich Bass, J.D., also drew attention to the dismal state of Jewish cemeteries:

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[16] In 1971, Hebraist Bedřich Nosek stated that the dismal condition of the Jewish cemetery on Fibichova Street in Prague's Žižkov district was the subject of complaints not only by local residents but also by tourists from abroad who came to visit the graves of prominent rabbis (Nosek 1971: 3).

[17] The Cemetery Commission, established by Jewish leaders, was to take care of the cemeteries in the Central and East Bohemia regions. Sometime later, its competence was extended to other regions. At that time, there were 450 Jewish cemeteries in Czechoslovakia, most of them abandoned (Lamberk 1972: 7).

[18] The closure of the cemetery was preceded by an appeal to survivors to register with the local national committee. A cairn with a memorial plaque was constructed from the abandoned gravestones (Výzva (Appeal) 1976: 7). By 1976, the number of cemeteries had dwindled to 380 (Terezín 1976: 4). Awareness of the ongoing decay led to new documentation efforts (Heřman 1978: 4–5).

> It was once said that we have no choice but to let our cemeteries decay with dignity. We cannot continue to accept this position, but we must also realize that – if the question of cemeteries is not resolved by this generation, it probably never will be. While it is true that some cemetery commissions have been set up and have worked diligently with some success, these were entirely individual cases that cannot obscure the problem of what will happen to our 400 or so cemeteries in the Czech Socialist Republic. As a result of the rapid development of our towns and villages, our cemeteries, which were once miles away from populated areas, are now on the edge of towns, if not directly surrounded by new urban development. And one has to understand the frustration of fellow citizens who look out the windows of their new apartments, often at the desolation of the nearest cemetery. A comprehensive solution to the cemetery question will, of course, only be possible in close cooperation with the state authorities (Volby (Elections) 1975: 2).

In connection with the construction of a television transmitter in Mahler's Gardens in Prague's Žižkov district, a brigade-landscaped plague cemetery was devastated some time ago (1979) (Soukupová 2016: 423; 430–431).

After the war, even the historically valuable cemetery in Mikulčice was left uncared for (-jk- 1984: 4). Nor did the former ghettos escape destruction.[19] Nevertheless, even in these years, the Jewish press occasionally noted the repair of a cemetery. For example, in 1974 the cemetery in Golčov Jeníkov was repaired by the Kynology Department of the Svazarm (Schwarz 1974: 3), and in the early 1980s the cemetery in Mariánské Lázně was repaired by the Jewish community of Pilsen (Mariánské 1980: 88).[20] Some other important monuments were also repaired here and there. For example, from 1974–1980, the former Jewish Town Hall in Kroměříž was repaired to meet the needs of the District Cultural Center in Kroměříž (Svátek 1981: 2). In 1983, the State Jewish Museum's *Rare Heritage* exhibition ("Vzácné" ("Rare") 1984: 2) opened in the USA, presenting the museum's most valuable collections.

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[19] In the 1980s, for example, the Prague ghetto in Libeň was demolished (Kafka – Fiedler 1986: 4–5).

[20] In 1981, the cemetery in Dřevíkov was repaired by the East Bohemian Center for Heritage Protection (Fiedler 1981: 6). From 1982 onwards, repairs were carried out on the cemetery in Čkyně (Podlešák 1982: 3). The 1980s also saw repairs of the Jewish cemeteries in Dolní Kounice and Ivančice (Brno 1984: 8). In 1987 the cemetery in Bechyně from the early 17th century was opened. It immediately became a tourist attraction (Židovský 1987: 2). Holešov reported another repaired cemetery (Brno 1988: 7). Pilsen followed (Plzeň 1989: 8).

Conclusion

In the initial post-war years, the Jewish minority above all appreciated the symbolic value of their monuments. It paid the greatest attention to the monuments of Prague and to the memorials of the persecution during the Protectorate period, and it insisted on not distorting this past. As tourism re-emerged, people wanting to learn about the Jewish past of the Czech lands headed to Prague, where the world-famous Jewish Museum was born. As for regional monuments, for reasons of piety, Jewish leaders focused on performing the most urgent repairs in Jewish cemeteries (regardless of their age or historical value), while maintaining community ownership of synagogues was seen as an unrealistic task. The 1950s saw the establishment of the State Jewish Museum in Prague. However, despite the renovation of several Prague synagogues, the state did not succeed in its role as protector of monuments, even in the case of the world-famous Prague monuments. The "Golden Sixties" brought greater freedom of movement, both in terms of Czechoslovaks visiting foreign capitalist countries as well as increased tourist visits to Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, there was adoption at least in theory of advanced and comprehensive monument care, including not only Prague but also the regions; on the other hand, funds were lacking to repair even the most famous Prague Jewish monuments. Moreover, it appears that the main initiative to save Jewish monuments came from Czech society. The normalization period was characterized by the selective repair of some monuments, along with the widespread and rapid demolition of others. Monuments were often declared an obstacle to new construction; or important buildings simply "required" their demolition. The public was sold the idea that a monument could be sold off or destroyed without impoverishing society. I believe it was this attitude towards monuments that even before the Velvet Revolution (1989) led to a revival of civic activity that began to resist the expropriation of memory, with people refusing to be cut off from their own past.

Translation: Didacticus, s r. o.

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