

**Londýnský kroužek Ostraváků**  
**Der Londoner-Ostrauerkreis**  
**Our Ostrava Group**

**Number 25 Summer 2012**

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**2012 Ostravak Reunion**

We have fixed the date of the next Ostravak Reunion . It is Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 2:30 p.m. and it will be held, once again, in the Czech Embassy, London, by kind permission of H.E. Mr Michael Žantovský, the Ambassador. He will be one of two Guests of Honour. The other is Mr Jan Fischer, formerly Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and now candidate for the Presidency of the Czech Republic.

Please put the date in your diary.

## Comments on Newsletter #24

### David Freedman Exhibition

Miriam Freedman Morris sent us a link from Deutsches Haus NYU about the recent David Freedman exhibition:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQFh748qS5Y&list=UUS3lcih4m98vNAV20LG99xw&index=1&feature=plcp>

### Clubs and Societies in Ostrava

Jitka Radkovičová received some useful material from us about the Blau-Weiss club, and writes to thank us and to ask for further information:

Dear David!

Thank you for all the hard work and I am appreciating everything you have done for me so far. I must tell you that I am also looking for another organizations, which was established in Ostrava and their names were for example Brit Trumpeldor, Hashomer Hatzair, Makkabi Hatzair, Bnei Akiba and so on, and about these organizations I do not know anything!

I am also looking for Jewish scouts organizations from different cities from Czechoslovakia but I am afraid that it might be over your Ostrava's border territory, but it would be fantastic, if any information I could get. I would appreciate very much.

If you have any information please contact Monica or David and we will pass it on to Jitka.

### Leah Patak and Hannah Kohn

Leah wrote from Canada:

Dear David,

Thanks for the Newsletter # 24.

What a surprise! I have found on posted photograph my **mother Hannah** ( Hana, Hanele, Hanicka as my father called her) **Kohn**. She is the one sitting in front row, second from the left.

She married in 1940 Ferko ( Frank, Frantisek ) Pollak. They had 3 children. Leah, Ruth (born in Northampton ) and Karel born 1946 in Brno.

I think, that time spent at Summer Camps were there most precious moments in their lives.

Happy holidays and all the best  
from Leah in Vancouver, BC, Canada

### Dominican Republic

Dr Blažena Przybylová, the Ostrava City Archivist, sent us a copy of a paper she wrote in 2005 about the attempts of Ostrava Jews to emigrate to the Dominican

Republic (San Domingo). Dr Jan Bettelheim very kindly translated the 8 page article into English for us:

## **HOPES FOR SAN DOMINGO – A FAILED ATTEMPT AT EMIGRATION**

**Blažena Przybylová**

**Paper published in Proceedings of a XII Conference “Jews and Moravia” in Museum Kroměřížska 2005. Kroměříž 2006, p.143 - 160**

The English translation is attached as an Appendix to this Newsletter. If you need a paper copy, please let Monica know.

Hana Muzika Kahn adds a rather ironic note to this story:

Thank you for the inclusion of the most interesting article about the 1939 emigration of 1000 Jews from Ostrava to the Dominican Republic. They were granted asylum in the DR by then dictator President Trujillo who did so in hopes of whitening the DR population (he also ordered the massacre of thousands of black Haitians). It is an irony that it was a racist motive which facilitated the Ostrava Jews' escape from the Nazis.

Martie Jelinek tells us that there are still some Jewish connections:

Something 'clicked' in my mind when I read the piece about the Ostravak Jews who went to the Dominican Republic, as Aldo has been there several times, most recently in December last year. As you know Aldo is not Jewish, but he's always interested in history and his surroundings: I asked him about the link between Jews and the Dominican Republic and he says 'yes, he had read about it' before going there and when he enquired with local people he was told that there had been a small village which was home to the wartime Jewish community in the region he visited, Puerto Plata. He was told that a bakery remained, called Panaderia de los Judios - 'The Jews' Bakery'.

## **67<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Ostrava**

Radan wrote on 30<sup>th</sup> April, and sent some photographs:

"Today we celebrate the 67 anniversary of liberation of Ostrava and the war for the town. There was a small celebration at the grave of Red Army soldiers (who died during the liberation).

Parents met there Pavel Wechsberg - Vransky, who was in RAF. You can see him on a photo with the daughter of General Ludvik Svoboda, the chief commander of the Czech battalion in Red Army and much later the president of the Czechoslovakia. Her name is Prof. Klusakova.



There was also March of the Living in Auschwitz. Michal Salomonovič was there with some students. They had a panel discussion about holocaust."



## Jewish Community Centre defaced.

The Salomonovič family sent these distressing photographs of the Community Centre in Ostrava:





To help us keep our sense of perspective, Peter Gordy wrote:

Paste this web site into your browser and you'll find enough Jewish jokes to last you for 10 years!

Enjoy!!!

[www.awordinyoureye.com](http://www.awordinyoureye.com).

Thanks, Peter!

## **Goldberg Letter Archive on-line Exhibition**

The official launch of the Jewish Museum of Prague's on-line exhibition of the Goldberg letter archive is now fixed for Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 6:00 p.m. in the Jewish Museum, the week before Rosh Hashannah. It will be almost exactly 70 years since the first transports from Ostrava to Terezín.

We hope that Bertie Goldberg will be there with members of his family. David Lawson will also be there to describe the Ostrava material that we have collected and which is being held by the Jewish Museum and made available in electronic form to future researchers.

All Ostravaks are invited to attend. Please let Monica or David know if you plan to be there.

## **"Last Train to Tomorrow"**

Paul Rice (Pavel Reiss) writes:

I have just come home from a 2-hours long concert in Manchester's magnificent Bridgewater Hall where the Halle orchestra gave a most unusual concert to a full house. It was conducted by Carl Davies who also composed the main piece called "The last train to tomorrow". The other pieces were Smetana's "Ma vlast", Humperdinck "Hansel & Gretel" and Britten's "Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra".

The principal item, 50 minutes long, was a composition for a small orchestra and 50 young singers and 6 solo voices and its theme was the "Kindertransport" from Prague to London in 1939. The composer/conductor explained to the audience the background of this action and the six solo voices described the background to the need to save so many Jewish Children and how they were separated from their parents at Prague station, their travel difficulties across Germany, then Holland and the sea crossing to Harwich and the well prepared arrival in London and welcome by their "new" parents. The whole thing was most emotional due to the impressive libretto and first-class performance by the orchestra and conductor. At end there was an 8-minute ovation and, considering that most of the audience were NOT Jewish, this was very surprising. Full Marks to the Halle and Manchester!!

It was a pity that Nicholas Winton was not there to acknowledge the gratitude of so many of his "children", a few of whom were present.

## News of Ostravaks

### Hanford Gross- František Benedikt

Hanford Gross went to Prague and Ostrava, researching his grandfather-in-law, František Benedikt. He wrote a great 10-page travelogue about the trip, available on our website (<http://www.kingston-synagogue.org.uk/resources/ostrava/hanford-gross-trip.pdf> )

### George Lowy

George sent us two lovely photographs, from Israel.



**1931:**  
**Kindergarten, Jewish Primary School, Ostrava.**  
**George is standing by the tree.**  
**Raphael Kahn is in front, with the bucket.**

Can you recognise anyone else? Please let us know if you can.

**1934 - Leaders of the Zionist Organization in Ostrava, from left to right:**

**Franzi Loewy (my mother), Kornblueh (standing), Schmitz (sitting) Dr. Franz Kahn, Olga Kahn (standing), Anni Rufeisen, Bubi (Arje) Rufeisen, Dr. Frirz Loewy (my father), Dr. Josef Rufeisen (President of the Czech Zionist Organization) and unknown lady.**



1934

## Erich Brauner

David and Daniel Kinrot recently wrote to us from Israel:

My name is Daniel Kinrot. I am the brother of David Kinrot who recently got in touch with you regarding our unkl Erik Brawner. I was asked by him to provide you with some detail.

Our mother Eva Zweigental grew up from age 6 in Ostrava. our father learn and render in Ostrava high school after he left Uherske hradishche. He stayed with his brother Hugo Artur Brauner Our mother kept in touch and even visited with my brother at the home of Mrs. Salomonovich in Ostrava.

I wonder if you could help us with details regarding our unkl Erik. All we know is that he was killed by the nazis.

Thank you



As always, Libuše was able to provide a brief family tree, and added a photograph of the Uherske Hradiste ohel, where the memorial of Holocaust victims is installed

## Allen-Apfelbaum

David and Lilly Allen came to one of David's talks to AJR (Association of Jewish Refugees) some time ago. Their son, Danny, provided some information:

Pater familias was Jacob, a sign-painter and Gerer Chasid, who came from Russia and mother was Berta (from Poland). There were 3 children, Emil (now David), Oskar and Edita. My father escaped to family in Poland at the time of the fighting in Silesia and eventually shipped himself out (he was working for a shipping company) and ended up in England. Oskar had already emigrated to Palestine and ended up marrying a classmate of my maternal aunt's (from Vienna) who was living there.

My grandfather (Jacob) went with a cousin (at the suggestion of Molotov [yes, the Molotov], whom the cousin had known during WW I) to Russia where they were placed in a concentration camp and I believe the cousin (or his son) died). Jacob went back to Ostrava after the war, but when the Russians came in '48 he jumped on the first plane to Israel living everything behind.

Berta and Edita were taken to Terezin and very quickly after to Treblinka where they died in October 1942.

Libuše has researched the family and confirms the details. Danny has now sent me two family photos and a painting of Edita, Berta and Jakob::



## Rudi Unger

Katia Gould (geb. Löwová) remembered Rudi Unger as she was reading about the Dominican Republic in the last Newsletter. John, her son writes:

She was very friendly with Rudi Unger, who she believes was the main driving force of the emigration. Rudi was also the main spokesman vis a vis the Dominican authorities for the Czech Jews who spent the war years in Dominica.

Rudi was born in about 1914 and was brought up and educated in Ostrava. He then studied medicine in Prague, but as he had to earn a living while studying, he did not finish his studies until late 1938.

One of the ways he earned money was by organising children's skiing holidays, and my mother went on two of his holidays in the mid-1930s.

After the war, Rudi left Dominica to settle in Melbourne, Australia where he founded a boarding school and children's holiday home. He was also appointed honorary consul for Dominica in Victoria.

Ray Huppert (geb Otto Heitlinger) lives in Australia and has added some detail to this story:

Rudi Unger was living in Melbourne in the 1950's right up to his passing on 10th August 1972. It is rather sad that I did not remember, as I have met him. The following might be of interest:

My first wife died in 1956 and I was left with a 2 1/2 year old daughter, Lili. In 1957 I tried to leave Australia and join my married brother Henry in South Africa. In preparation for this trip, after applying to the South African authorities for the necessary permit, I put my daughter into a child care institution in Melbourne. It was called "Children's Paradise" and was located in Canterbury Road, North Balwyn (a northern suburb of Melbourne) and it was highly recommended. Guess who was managing this:



Mr. Rudi Unger !

My application was refused by the South Africans, so after spending several weeks at Children's Paradise I took my daughter out and joined my parents in Melbourne. I have not met Mr. Unger after this. Let me just add that Children's Paradise enjoyed an excellent reputation and that was all Mr. Unger's hard work.

From the Chevra Kadisha in Melbourne my daughter found out that Rudi Unger is buried at The Necropolis, Jewish Memorial Garden no.1, row D, grave no. 10. May he rest in peace.

## Dr Josh Backon

Josh Backon is the son of Shimon, a cousin of Yehuda Bacon, and writes from Israel:

My maternal grandmother was born Miriam Teicher in 1902 in Zabreh then grew up in Vitkovice (and then raised a family in Ostrava before escaping to America in 1939. Are there any genealogical records of her father Josef Teicher or her mother Raizel (Shub) ?

As always, Libuše delivers the goods:

Teichner Josef \*15.1.1868 Wiśnic ,Polsko+19.12.1933 M.O., wife Rosa Staub \*20.10.1867 Wiśnic. They had 6 children :

Deborah\*1865 married Weiss,

Jakob \*1897,

Regina \*1900 married Reich ,

Hana \*1891,

Lieba Charlotta \*1892 married Silbiger,

Miriam Malvína \*28.4.1902, according to my data married 17.3.1927 Hirsch

Deresiewicz, a businessman from Brno .

The family's address was Ostrava-Vítkovice, Nerudova 23.

This produced the response "WOW!!" from Josh!

## Schonfeld

Raymond and Rosemary Schonfeld made a trip to Ostrava to see places connected to their family. They had a wonderful trip and Raymond writes:

My sister Rosemary and I visited Olomouc and Ostrava last week, and we want to thank you for creating the opportunity, through the Ostravaks, to make the visit to our father's birthplace and childhood town such a moving and rewarding experience.

Michal Salomonovic, his wife Liba and son Radan, as well as Jirí Jung in Ostrava and Radana Sušilová of the Jewish Museum in Prague all gave us precious insights into the history – happy as well as sad – of the German and Jewish communities to which our father belonged, and the post-war reconciliation in Czechoslovakia.

Liba's research skills and results on individuals are frankly amazing. The staff of the Ostrava archive were also wonderful – we could hardly believe how much detail they hold or how helpful they are to visitors. We even saw the family house in which our father grew up, had lunch in a pub which had just opened in the 1920s and which he probably knew, and visited the charming town of Valašské Meziříčí near Ostrava, where the members of our family who had not escaped were able to spend their last days of countryside happiness before deportation -- with the deportation now commemorated in the Stolperstein in the name of our grandmother outside the family home in Morosk Ostrava.

The humanity and willingness to help of all those we met, of all faiths or none, was almost overwhelming. Any hatred there ever was in those communities – religious or linguistic – seems to have disappeared entirely in a more united Europe. All of that helped us to balance the sadness with a huge amount of optimism of the ability of the world to recover from the darkest tragedies.

We have no desire for publicity, but if you think this account could help show how grateful so many people are for the work of the Ostravaks, you are of course welcome to reproduce this in your newsletter.

With many thanks again, and very best wishes., Raymond.



Michal Salomonovič with Raymond and Rosemary  
in the Ostrava City Archive

## Ernst Velden

You may remember an article (Newsletter #8) about the ice cream dessert, *Arctic Roll*, invented by Dr Ernst Felix Velden. Sue Davis discovered this reference on our website as she was researching food heroes: <http://foodheroesandheroines.wordpress.com/>.

We were never able to prove that Ernst came from Ostrava although there are records of Veldens (formerly Vorzimmer) in Ostrava and we know that Ernst and his wife Vera were formerly known as Vorzimmer. Can anyone help?

## Ostrava Business Directories

Madeleine Isenberg has found two fascinating Ostrava business directories from 1865 and 1925 respectively:

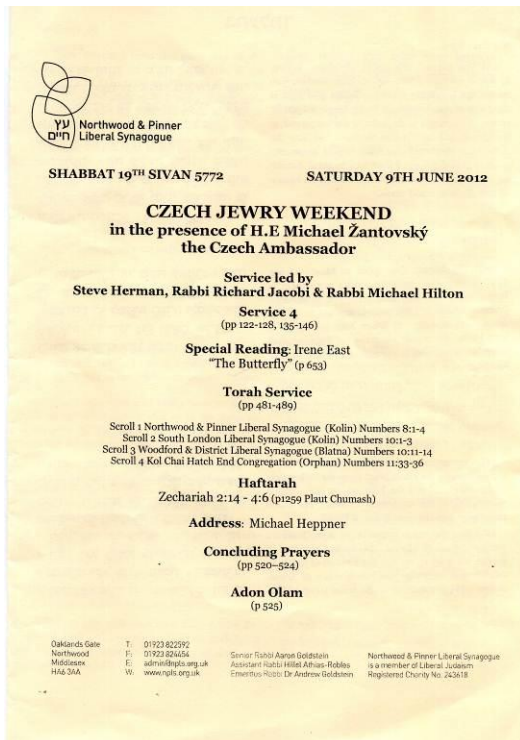
[http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10290321\\_00265.html](http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10290321_00265.html)

<http://camea.svkos.cz/kramerius/MShowPageDoc.do?id=362685&mcp=&author=&s=djvu&ind=1>

## Czech Scroll Seminar

Northwood and Pinner Synagogue held a Czech Scrolls seminar recently, with representatives of many communities with Czech Scrolls. Monica, David and Judith attended and we made a presentation about the activities of the Ostrava Group and the Ostrava worldwide network. Copies of our Newsletter were distributed and the whole was well received. Our fame is spreading!

After the seminar there was a performance of an abridged version of *Brundibar*.



**YP** Northwood & Pinner  
**DP** Liberal Synagogue

SHABBAT 19<sup>TH</sup> SIVAN 5772 SATURDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012

**CZECH JEWRY WEEKEND**  
in the presence of H.E Michael Zantovský  
the Czech Ambassador

Service led by  
Steve Herman, Rabbi Richard Jacobi & Rabbi Michael Hilton

Service 4  
(pp 122-128, 135-146)

Special Reading: Irene East  
"The Butterfly" (p 653)

Torah Service  
(pp 481-489)

Scroll 1 Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue (Kolin) Numbers 8:1-4  
Scroll 2 South London Liberal Synagogue (Kolin) Numbers 10:1-3  
Scroll 3 Woodford & District Liberal Synagogue (Blatna) Numbers 10:11-14  
Scroll 4 Kol Chai Hatch End Congregation (Orphan) Numbers 11:33-36

Haftarah  
Zechariah 2:14 - 4:6 (p1259 Plaut Chumash)

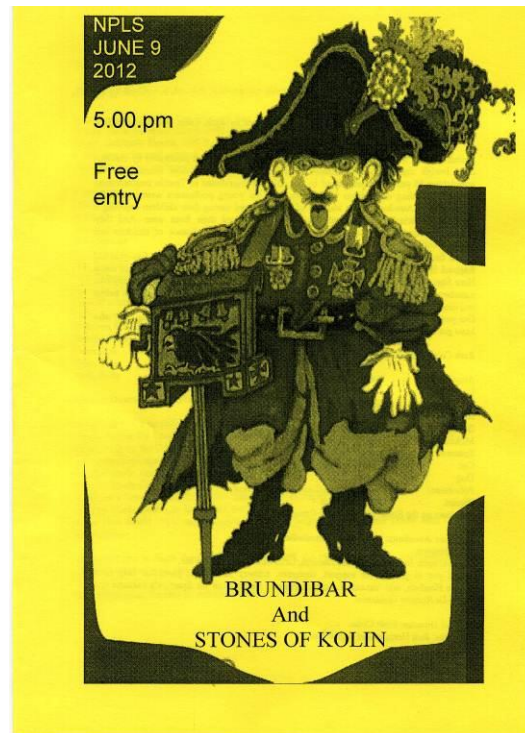
Address: Michael Heppner

Concluding Prayers  
(pp 520-524)

Adon Olam  
(p 525)

Oaklands Gate T: 01923 822592  
Northwood P: 01923 824054  
Middlesex E: admin@npls.org.uk  
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Seminar Rabbi Agnes Goldstein Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue  
Assistant Rabbi Hella Nadav-Robbis is a member of Liberal Judaism  
Emeritus Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein Registered Charity No. 243618



NPLS  
JUNE 9  
2012

5.00 pm

Free  
entry

BRUNDIBAR  
And  
STONES OF KOLIN

## Help needed: Dr Hella Nadel

Yoram wrote to us about his aunt, Dr Hella Nadel:

The reason I inquire is that I need some help concerning my aunt Dr Hella Nadel who was the chief physician of the children hospital in Terezín. My mother secured her a certificate from British-controlled Palestine but she refused to leave the children and save herself. All we know is that she left in the last children transport and that she kept a cyanide pill for herself as she intended to defy the Nazis not to determine when, and how she dies. We also know that her husband escaped to London. Then my

mother on the occasion of a scientific conference in Prague, in 1968 I think, saw her name on some memorial wall there.

If you know anything about Dr Nadel or the Chief Physician in Terezín, please let Monica or David know and we will pass on the information to Yoram.

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## Appendix.

### HOPES FOR SAN DOMINGO – A FAILED ATTEMPT AT EMIGRATION

**Blazena Przybylova**

**Paper published in Proceedings of a XII Conference Jews and Moravia in Museum Kromerizska 2005. Kromeriz 2006, p.143 - 160**

As a consequence of political events west of the Czechoslovak border in the third decade of the 20th century thoughts of emigration were being taken ever more seriously by the Jewish community. The resolve to leave was becoming more tangible in a section of the Jewish population. One clear impulse in many cases was the increasing influx of the Jewish population from Germany following the rise to power of Adolf Hitler. This flow of German Jews represented the first indirect warning, but at the same time not so much as to force an immediately exit from what was at the time seen as a democratic country, namely the Czechoslovak Republic. The worsening situation on the European political scene, the annexation of Austria and the subsequent signing of the Munich Treaty pushed certain groups of the Jewish community seriously to re-evaluate their priorities in life and to start looking for a possible exit from the beleaguered country. The mixed feelings of those who were born and lived in the original Czechoslovakia were most poignantly captured by Ruth Bondyova in her biographical novel “Jakob Edelstein” which drew on the memoirs of F. Weihs: “The first Jews started to leave the city (Karlovy Vary - auth.). Some of the better-off went over the ocean, others retreated inland. But the majority, especially the older generation, did not move, motivated by their love for the country, or because of their hard gained property, or their sense of responsibility, or because they were convinced that no one born here would be harmed... Many stayed out of a sense of solidarity with the Republic, so that their departure would not weaken the Czech resistance.” (1) These words express everything and may be applied to the thinking of the Jewish population in general.

A similar situation prevailed among the Jewish community in Moravska Ostrava (2). Predominantly the ‘better’ informed and financially well secured had thoughts of leaving the Republic. Among these was also the long serving director of the Vitkovice Steel Works Adolf Sonnenschein and his family, who chose Switzerland as their destination (3). Paradoxically, A.Sonnenschein himself had been a vigorous supporter of germanisation at the time when he ran the steel works and, by way of example, he never reconciled himself with the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state. His successor as director of the steel works, Oskar Federer, left for England in March 1939. The exact date of his departure varies in the written records: he made a firm decision to leave either just before 15th March 1939 or shortly after the occupation of the territory by the German army (4). Judging by some of his actions – sending part of his art collection abroad as a loan for an exhibition and leaving the works of art there even after the planned event - indicates that thoughts of emigration were not far from his mind and it is most probable that he had been weighing up such a step for some time (5).

Most of the ‘ordinary’ people of Moravska Ostrava and the surrounding area did not take such a drastic step or could not put it so swiftly into action. Several factors weighed against any contemplation of emigration. First among these was probably a shortage of appropriate contacts abroad. Mental unpreparedness for the major adjustment needed for a life abroad also played a role. Last but not least was the question of securing the necessary financial resources. In addition to this, it is likely that the majority of the Jewish population still secretly hoped that the situation would somehow be resolved, as is also shown in the quote above from Ruth Bodyova’s book.

The expression ‘solution’ had been appearing in political commentary more and more frequently, not only in connection with the political situation, but mostly in the phrase “solution of the Jewish question”. Since the end of 1938 the daily press carried not only the first articles on this problem

giving information about the exit of Jewish emigrants from Germany, but it also published news about the organization of the emigration of the 'domestic' population. Towards the end of December 1938 at a meeting held in Prague representatives of the Palestine Authority and of the Prague Jewish Community even tried to convince delegates from other Jewish communities about the necessity to leave the Republic. (6) At this meeting, according to R.Bodyova , these representatives repeatedly stated “ emigrate, leave the country, get on your way, not temporarily, but to build a new home, there is no way back nor is it possible to stop half way. “

The list of countries willing to offer asylum at the beginning was a diverse one. Among the traditional destinations for emigrants was Palestine, USA and England. In the context of these 'forced' emigrations of the Jewish community in the 1930s the more exotic sounding countries, from the point of view of a central European, were becoming increasingly popular. Especially countries in central and south America such as Ecuador, Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay, Paraguay, Columbia and Peru were entering the frame. (7). These destinations were seen as a vision of a better future, or at least offering the possibility of a decent life. However, for many these target countries for Jewish emigration remained only as distant places, longed-for dreams unrealised in spite of enormous struggle. For a large group from Ostrava one such unfulfilled aim became the Republic of San Domingo.

“Hopes for San Domingo” was supposed to enable the Jewish people, mostly from the Ostrava region, to be released from the Nuremberg Laws and thereby avoid all the denigrating rules, prohibitions, (8) and all other regulations which initially limited “only” their liberties and subsequently affronted their human dignity. It was a hope, on the one hand offering a grueling journey to the Caribbean and on the other the possibility of escape from the reach of Nazi power.

In the list of potential “hoped-for” destinations for emigrants the Dominican Republic could be said to have been in a dominant position. Even the state authorities viewed the ongoing negotiations in this cause optimistically. The report of the Police Directorate in Moravska Ostrava, which monitored the activities of the Jewish community, stated in February 1939:” The emigration of Jews in February reached an impasse because individual overseas countries would not allow further immigration of Jews, with the exception of San Domingo, where some 1200 people should emigrate during March and April, in an operation lead by Bruno Kulka from Moravska Ostrava”. (9)

In order to increase the chances of success, even given the complicated political situation that then prevailed, the emigration of a sizable group had to be organised with great precision. It was the duty of the organizers to secure sufficient financial means, arrange the necessary travel documents and to select a suitable shipping company for the journey itself. Time was at a premium, protracted negotiations and the need to satisfy all mandatory conditions for departure was a strain on all operations being organised at the time and not only in Moravska Ostrava (10). Each political change narrowed the room for manoeuvre, thereby severely limiting the options for the handling of formalities. The outbreak of the second world war on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 further seriously hindered the organization of legal emigration of large groups.

Marie Schmolokova became significantly involved in the project of emigration to the Caribbean. She was the guarantor of solidity for the representatives of the European section of the American Joint Distribution Committee. (11) According to K.Capkova, it was for this reason that Marie Schmolokova accompanied a delegation from Ostrava to Paris for a meeting in January 1939 with the chairman of the European section of JOINT, a Mr. Morris C.Tropper. This organization was in the process of securing a special settlement project in San Domingo. Pursuant to an agreement the government of that country, led by its highest representative Rafael Leonidas Trujiall Molin and through the offices of a company called Dorsa, was generously to offer some 26,000 acres of land for settlement. According to R.Bondyova “a group of 200 people from Central Europe (countries not specified - auth.) left for San Domingo for a trial to see if they could cope at all with the subtropical climate. If they could then further thousands would follow”. (12)

As could be deduced from the existing information, the distant Dominican Republic should initially have been a destination for less wealthy members of the Jewish faith, who did not, or more to the point, could not succeed in obtaining a permit from such attractive countries as USA and England as well as Denmark and Sweden. As the numbers of available immigration permits fell, even the better-off and the professional classes such as doctors and lawyers began to show interest

in the Caribbean state. (13) It became especially popular in the Ostrava region. Judging by the daily press and also the reports of the Police directorate in Moravska Ostrava, it seems that the representatives of the state authorities had high hopes in this respect and were very optimistic at the beginning. It was assumed that negotiations would go smoothly and would result in the departure of 250 Jews in February, although I could not find any evidence to say whether this was the “trial expedition” referred to by R.Bondyova above. By this time the press, e.g. the Ostrava edition of *Ceske Slovo*, spoke about roughly a thousand people. The public speculation about living conditions was bound to give applicants near absolute confidence in their promised departure from the country. The editor of the *Ceske Slovo* newspaper published on 21.1.1939 a leading article headed “Thousands of Ostrava Jews are moving to San Domingo” and describing with great assurance the circumstances of the journey and the future prospects for the “Ostrava collective”. The credibility of the offer was further reinforced by other factors. On 29 January 1939 representatives of the “BATA” Company arranged a meeting with those applicants seriously contemplating a move to a country with a completely different climate, i.e. “Jewish-emigrants interested in the colonization of the republic of San Domingo”. These representatives of the world famous company, which also had operations on the island of Haiti, could provide the most realistic information about living, climatic and economic conditions, amongst others, in the region. About 500 people took up the invitation, driven by their desire to obtain as much relevant information as possible, as well the need for answers to the many questions that arose in the difficult and stressful decisions that faced them. Doubts as to how to manage the move to such a strange environment, different not only from the linguistic point of view, but most of all in its climate, were probably plentiful and, according to a report filed by the police, both speakers “tried to describe the island to the future settlers in the best possible light and to dispel all worries”. (14)

Bruno Kulka became the leading figure in the entire operation (15). This liaison officer, probably the moving force behind all preparations not only with the city, but also in Prague – The Centre for Jewish Emigration - made an exceptional effort in order to bring ‘his own’ initiative, the Bruno Kulka Action for Emigration’ (16) as it was officially called, to a successful conclusion. Who was Bruno Kulka? A personality about which we know little from the official sources, thus making concrete identification more difficult.

Judging by the response with which the Dominican Republic initiative had been met in the Ostrava region plus also some other fragments of information, I began working on the assumption that he had very close ties to Moravska Ostrava and that he lived there. I therefore started with the list of residents in the city. From the information I could find I finally identified him as Bruno Kulka, a man who came to the city with his family from Holesov between 1921 – 23. The documents identify him as a clerk (17). At the beginning of the 1930’s he opened a grocery shop (No.4 Postovni street, close to Masaryk square). Within a year he changed the shop into a business importing tea and coffee and trading under the name Kolumbia,. After only a year he transferred management of the business to his deputy Marketa Elmerova (18). I was unable to find any more information about his activities prior to 1939.

The planned journey to a distant island was not as simple as presented in the daily press. Completing all negotiations under pressure of time and a steadily worsening domestic and foreign political situation was very difficult. The intention of concluding everything within one or two months proved to be quite unrealistic. In spite of these considerable delays, Kulka’s initiative belonged among those with a tremendous chance of success and which therefore gave the applicants a certain amount of optimism. Of course, this optimism was bound to be undermined by worries about a future in a country which most ‘settlers’ could only find with the help of an atlas. The initiative was probably also hindered by a shortage of money. B.Kulka, as the main organizer, conducted further negotiations in Prague and in Paris during the spring months. According to the police directorate it was necessary to arrange foreign currency for approximately one thousand families representing some 1700 people. Some progress had been achieved at the beginning of May 1939 when, during the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of that month, 581 people attended at the offices of the Ostrava notary Alois Krumnikl and signed a “power of attorney for Bruno Kulka in Moravska Ostrava for emigration from the Protectorate of Czech and Moravia to san Domingo [and] for

accepting receipt of money”. (19) The report of the police directorate for May mentions further foreign trips by B.Kulka for the purpose of securing the much needed foreign currency. This May report refers to a more realistic time of departure, having been postponed by “some two to three months”.

The records of the granting of the powers of attorney enable us to form at least some idea about the composition of the applicants for emigration who came mostly from Ostrava. The list of people recorded in these documents is published in alphabetical order in the attachment. Names as well as professions are quoted exactly as they appear in the original without any alterations or corrections. Of the total of 583 people 497 lived in Moravska Ostrava. 39 applicants originated from the now Silesian part of the City, most, 13, were from Muglinov and 10 from Hrusov. This distribution corresponds roughly to the size of Jewish communities in the individual boroughs. Another 47 applicants were recorded in a variety of Moravian towns and villages and in most cases it is possible to detect a family relationship between them and the Ostrava applicants. Four applicants came from Brno, Frenstat, Hodonin, Mistek and Olomouc and six came from Prostějov.

The range of professions in the group was also quite varied. The most numerous were a group of tradesmen representing more than thirty types of business. Of these the largest was a group of 85 shopkeepers. Closely connected with retail was another large group consisting of 53 shop assistants and 46 traveling salesmen. Other trades were less well represented: 15 seamstresses, 10 tailors, 10 blacksmiths, 7 upholsterers, 7 electricians, 7 chemists, 7 dentists, 6 inn keepers, 6 dress makers, 6 shoe makers, 5 butchers, 4 cabinet makers and 4 barbers. The list of trades however did not lack a confectioner, stonemason, bookbinder, furrier, optician and an engine driver. Among 46 members of the intelligentsia choosing the Dominican Republic were 14 doctors, 7 professional engineers and 5 teachers, including a teacher of religion from the Moravska Ostrava Jewish school, a Mr. L.Lowinger. There were also two agriculturalists, a veterinary surgeon, a pharmacist, a building contractor, an architect and a historian of music.

During the summer months the emigration initiative seemed to have reached a stalemate. None of the further negotiations lead to any progress. There was a never-ending string of meetings abroad and within the framework of the Jewish Centre for emigration in Prague – but without any positive outcome. A report by the police directorate from September 1939 states that “The emigration initiative of Bruno Kulka in Moravska Ostrava vanished because Kulka together with his secretary Rudolf Bachner transferred their emigration office from Moravska Ostrava to Prague”. (20) The flaring up of the war after 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 further complicated the continuously postponed initiative and resulted in frustrating any hope that the substantial Jewish community had to tying their continued existence with a life in San Domingo. The move by Bruno Kulka and his office to Prague still did not mean a definitive end to the journey to the chosen country. However, even in spite of a number of successful steps this organized group did not manage to leave the coast of Europe and, instead of setting sail on a free sea, they were caught in the net of the Protectorate. This unsuccessful step turned out to be fatal for most. Only a small percentage managed to emigrate by some other means.

Every subsequent regulation issued by the occupation authorities had the effect of steadily decimating the Jewish community in Moravska Ostrava. The first significant blow to the life of Jewish citizens was brought by the [forced] transport to Nisko upon San in October 1939 (21). The Jewish men of Ostrava, including some of those who had strived for emigration to the Caribbean, became the first victims of “the solution of the Jewish question”. Some of them returned from this deportation. The last but completely devastating step was the transport of the Jewish population from Moravska Ostrava to Terezin in September 1942 and from there to the concentration camps. Many of those who had pinned their hopes on San Domingo perished in these transports. Their dreams of sun had been dashed completely.

Notes:

1 BONDYOVÁ, R.: Jakob Edelstein. Praha 2001, s. 92. Převzato ze vzpomínek F. Weihse uložených v Yad



Vashem, Jerusalem, Izrael.

2 PRZYBYLOVÁ, B.: Emigrace ostravského židovského obyvatelstva ve 30. 40. letech 20. století. In: Historica Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty Ostravské univerzity, , č. 3, Ostrava 1995, s. 61-71.

3 Korner a Sonnenschein ve Švýcarsku. Národní směr 31.3.1938, č. 7.

4 VESELSKÁ, M.: Oskar Federer. Židovská ročenka 2004, s. 99.

5 PRZYBYLOVÁ, B.: Federer Oskar. In: Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy. Nová řada, sešit 3 (15), Ostrava 2002, s. 53-54.

6 BONDYOVÁ, R.: c. d., s. 179.

7 Národní archiv Praha, Ministerstvo sociální a zdravotní péče Praha, např. kart. 916.

8 GRACOVÁ, B., PRZYBYLOVÁ, B.: Problémy každodenního života ostravských židovských obyvatel v prvních letech okupace. In: Akce Nisko v historii "konečného řešení židovské otázky". Ostrava 1995, s. 234-252.

9 Zemský archiv v Opavě (dále ZAO), Policejní ředitelství Moravská Ostrava (dále PŘMO), presidiální spisy, kart. 470, sign. 9/1.

10 PRZYBYLOVÁ, B.: Emigrace..., c. d., s. 65.

11 Za tuto informaci velmi děkuji vedoucí projektu Lidé na útěku Kateřině Čapkové.

12 BONDYOVÁ, R.: c. d., s. 179.

13 ZAO, PŘMO, presidiální spisy, kart. 472, sign. 9/1.

14 Tamtéž.

15 Tamtéž. Domnívám se, že ve zprávě je mylně uvedeno jméno Josef místo Bruno.

16 Archiv města Ostravy (dále AMO), Okresní soud Slezská Ostrava, nezpracováno, spis P248/38.

17 AMO, Archiv města Moravská Ostrava, domovská kartotéka.

18 AMO, Okresní úřad Moravská Ostrava, i. č. 25, živnostenský rejstřík zápis č. 316

19 AMO, Notářství Ostrava, notář JUDr. Alois Krumnikl, kart. č. 80. Za upozornění na tyto dokumenty v uvedeném archivním fondu velmi děkuji Libuši Salomonovičové.

20 ZAO, PŘMO, presidiální spisy, kart. 487, sign. 3292

21 BORÁK, M.: Transport do tmy. Ostrava 1994.