

NEIGHBOURS WHO DISAPPEARED

Sokolov



The subject „Jewish settlement within the Sokolov region“ had never been specifically examined. Therefore I was able to try to fill in a blank space in the history of our region. One could say that the project „Neighbours Who Disappeared“ became a part of my life for one year. For the whole period I tried - anywhere it was possible - to collect data, documents, photographs and in fact anything somehow connected with this subject. But all the time I met a total lack of any data available. The documents of highest value, that is the records of Jewish communities within the Sokolov area, have been irretrievably damaged. I have made my own photographs of Jewish sites of our region and recorded the epitaphs on the tombstones if legible. Leo Hoenig's chronicle considerably extended my work.



Hella Adler Heller, Rosa Heller
a Wera Adler Heller



Alma Zepin



Leonard Hoenig



R. Dr. S. Fouerenkhal

The Jewish cemetery in Kynšperk nad Ohří was probably founded in the 12th century. In 1350 on Pesach day there was an atrocious pogrom in Cheb. About 3.000 victims were killed and consequently the entire numerous Jewish community perished. Those, who survived the fanatic rampage, escaped to Kynšperk.

In the 17th century there were four Jewish communities within the then region of Loket. The development of Jewish communities within the Sokolov region lasted till 1933. After Adolf Hitler's rise and with the increasing power of Henlein's movement the Jews, due to fear, gradually left the Sokolov region.

... on 10 October 1938 the big synagogue burst into flames, at the same time all the documents concerning the Jewish settlement in the Sokolov region were damaged. In the after-war confusion and chaos of the years 1945-1947 the documents and archive sources fell into oblivion. After the transfer of German inhabitants, it is unlikely that anybody who could remember the at one time considerable Jewish community lives here any more.

Even before the eruption of organized hatred of the Jews, which was allowed to become a part of ideological policy of Nazi Germany, the future possible victims had a foreboding of the imminent danger and escaped to the four corners of the earth. Some of them found homes for themselves and their descendants in America, in the State of Israel and in many other parts of the world. However for the others, life ended in an atrocious tragedy. Almost nothing remained of both the first and the others except for some houses, photographs and family records. One day they disappeared without trace. Only their names inscribed in memorials and records from the deportation books and prison lists remained.



Jan Jecha, one of the last living descendants of the original owners of the textile factory Noe Stoaš, around which the village of Libavské Údolí developed, remembers: When I wanted to return to Libavské Údolí after many years I almost had to crawl. From the standpoint of the mighty I was a class enemy. I tried to get a job here - unsuccessfully. Eventually I had to leave. I also had to change my name. Unfortunately even now people still say: He is an outstanding man but he is Jewish. Even my name alone, Bernfeld, provoked people around to anti-Semitism which is still deep-rooted in the nation.

The Jewish abuses photographed before their damage. They belonged to Anna Hönigová and Adolf Hoeniger. None of the Hermanns survived the Holocaust.



The only preserved photograph of the interior of the synagogue in Sokolov.



The Jewish cemetery in Sokolov was founded as a separate part of the municipal cemetery. In the 1950s part of it was abolished and the tombstones were backfilled with rubble and earth.



The Jewish cemetery in Kynšperk is quite large due to its antiquity. The town lacks money for its restoration so without quick intervention of preservationists we will just watch the sad fate of this deeply impressive place.



Only the old Jewish cemetery of the former municipality Kádná Lopa remained preserved. It is in the best condition of all Jewish sites.



My main goal was to preserve the memory of an important group of inhabitants of our region whose existence was, after long years of development, violently terminated within several years. They must not be forgotten because as long as we still know about a man, even after his death, he can never vanish from this world and only at the time when a man does not live in any of us does his existence cease.

P. S. I would also like to thank all, thanks to whom I did not get lost somewhere while looking for Jewish sites...
Michal Vesel

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