

<http://www.kingston-synagogue.org.uk/index.php/community/ostrava>

Londýnský kroužek Ostraváků
Der Londoner-Ostrauerkreis
Our Ostrava Group

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Ostravak Reunion

The next Ostravak Reunion will be on

Sunday 27th April, 2014

At 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. in the Embassy of the Czech Republic, by kind permission of H.E. Mr Michael Žantovský, the Czech Ambassador. It is 3 days before the 69th Anniversary of the Liberation of Ostrava.

Put the date in your diary!

Please let Monica or David know if you are coming, together with the number of people in your party, so we can tell the Embassy and also ensure the catering arrangements are appropriate. There will be a charge of £7.50/head to cover the (kosher) catering costs and we would welcome any donations to offset these charges. Please make your cheques payable to KSDS Cultural and Education Committee

Velké Dílo, The Magnum Opus:
The History of Ostrava and Its Jewish Community

For a long time now, we have been promising to write the History of Ostrava and its Jewish Community and, until very recently the only thing that was visible was the

(ironic) working title of *Velké Dílo* or the *Magnum Opus*. We are now delighted, if somewhat amazed, to report significant progress.

Libuše and David have been joined as co-authors by Prof Aleš Zářický, Dean and Academic Director, Department of History (Faculty of Arts), University of Ostrava and Mgr Hana Šústková PhD, Head of the Archive in the VÍTKOVICE, joint stock company. Both of them have published many articles in this field.

The outline structure of the book has been agreed, although it will doubtless change somewhat as the work progresses:

1. A general not an academic book for the general English-speaking reader but one that has academic and intellectual validity, covering the history of (Greater) Ostrava and its Jewish community
2. An initial chapter setting Ostrava in its geographical, political and social background from pre-history to say mid-18th Century.
3. The rise of industrialisation and economic development in Ostrava. Critical importance of coal, iron and steel.
4. Later development of real toleration and acceptance by society, anti-Semitism, Czech Nationalism
5. Stories of growth of industries, businesses, individual families to illustrate the story
6. 1930's, Munich, invasion, persecution
7. Story of our *sefer* and the Kingston Group
8. Lessons from the story
9. "Gazetteer" or encyclopaedia of major, significant and/or interesting Ostrava Jewish families, with their histories.

Writing has commenced, although it is much slower than expected as we try to ensure accuracy and completeness. We have already found many gaps in our knowledge and a number of cases where the secondary sources disagree so we will have to find the primary material. On-site research in Ostrava, Prague, Vienna and probably Israel will be required. The gazetteer of families is being compiled mainly by Libuše, of course, and the material which is quite extensive, will have to be translated into English. We envisage having this done professionally at a very modest price but given the volume of material we expect this item alone to cost over £3,000!

None of the authors will be paid, of course, but the total costs will way exceed the modest reserves of the Ostrava Group. We therefore appeal to our readers for donations and even Sponsorship of this project.

We have been assured that there is not an equivalent or similar book in Czech or German and certainly not in English.

British Czech and Slovak Review

The Editors of the BCSA Review asked a number of their contributors to recall some precious connections to the Czech or Slovak Republics, in about 200 words. David sent this:

Outside Ostrava railway station

At one o'clock on October 15 2009, on the pavement outside the railway station in Ostrava-Přívóz, a group of mainly elderly people huddle together in the bitter wind, sheltering as best they can against the sheeting rain. It is an uninviting spot made even less attractive by the weather.

The bleakness was appropriate as we were gathered to unveil a memorial to the Jews of Ostrava, who had been deported to Nisko nad Sanem in Poland, in October 1939. It

was the first mass deportation of Jews of World War II, organised as a pilot scheme by Adolf Eichmann. It led inexorably to the crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the murder of six million.

The memorial is a simple grey stone with an inscription, backed by a fractured *Magen David* (Star of David) symbolising the Ostrava Jewish community, or even the whole of European Jewry, broken and almost destroyed by the war. But although the setting

and occasion were sombre the event was positive and uplifting as among those present were survivors who had gathered from all over the world for the event. And, by being there, we were celebrating survival as well as remembering destruction.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, collaboration with the JMP

Several years ago, the USHMM made a donation to the Ostrava Group to help with costs associated with translation and entry of material into the data base of the Jewish Museum in Prague, in return for which, researchers at the USHMM would have access to the Ostrava archive in the JMP. This project has now reached fruition and the USHMM writes:

A description of this collection will appear in our online catalogue under the Ostrava Jewish Community Collection with a subheading: Ostrava Project at the Kingston synagogue in the UK in cooperation with the Jewish Museum Prague.

Here is our online catalogue for your reference: <http://collections.ushmm.org/search>

Old Photographers and Old Photographs

You may remember that Jiří Hrdina has sent us some very interesting items and some wonderful old photographs. He has now written a short article for us and it is so fascinating, we reproduce it in its entirety.

Very many thanks, Jiří!

The early days of photography in Northern Moravia and Silesia

Since the times of mammoth hunters, people were passing through the 80 kilometer-long valley of the Moravian Gate from north to south and from south to north. Symbolically, this migration route was also used for the coming of photography into Ostrava.

Western and especially Eastern Galicia (Galizien, Galicja) was a constant reservoir of

workers for the rapidly growing industrial regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The designation Eastern Galicia started to be used in Austro-Hungarian Empire after the year 1850 for the eastern part of the Kingdom of Galicia with the cities Stanislawów, Tarnopol, Przemysl, Sanok, Krosno and the capital city of Lvov (Lwow, Lviv, Lemberg). The eastern border of Austria-Hungary was set by the region of Bukovina and its capital city of Chernovtsy (Cernauti, Czernowitz. Tip for a trip - it is a nice small town, where the time seems to be frozen in 1918). Western Galicia ranged from Krakow (formally not belonging to Galicia, but it was de facto a part of it), and included cities such as Biala (Austrian half of the twin-city of Bielsko-Biala), Tarnow, Rzeszow, Nowy Targ, Nowy Sacz and Jaworzno. The capital of this region was Krakow.



Bieltitz, Haupt synagoge (1881-1939), today Bielsko-Biala, Poland, 35 km away from Ostrava city.

Bielsko-Biala, a town on the border of Austria-Hungary and Prussia, has much in common with Ostrava. What was the coal and iron for Ostrava, it was the textile industry for Bielsko. The first textile factory in Bielsko was founded in 1810 by Joachim Adler. The largest weaving factory in the first half of the 18th century was the company of Sternickel & Gülcher.

The Jewish religious community was founded in 1870. In 1910, 15% of the population was already Jewish. You can still visit the well-kept Jewish cemetery located on the street Těšínská 92 and get lost among more than 1,200 gravestones. In 1863, Anton Rosner (Rösner) from Komorowic, today part of Bielsko-Biala, is already seeking authorization to operate a photo-studio in Ostrava. Longtime owner of a photography studio in Ostrava-Přívoz (Oderfurt) and Bohumín (Oderberg) Jakob Borger was also from Bielsko. Before Jakob Borger (1855) came to Ostrava with his wife Anna (1859), he established his photostudios in many other towns in the area. Most of those places were marked by births of his eight children: Heinrich (1880, Wagstadt - Bílovec), Rosalie (1882, Freiberg - Příbor), Rosa (1887 Freistadt), Gustav (1885 Moravská Ostrava) Malvine (1891, Freiberg), Hermine (1889 Moravská Ostrava), Regina (1898 Vitkovice), Leo (1896 Gurtendorf - Skorotín). He managed his photo studio with his son, Heinrich on the Nádražní street 448 (Bahnhofstrasse) in Ostrava-Přívoz in the house of Bohumil Chvatal. On the photo you can see not only the signboard and samples of his photographic work, but perhaps someone from his family as well (in the windows). Heinrich's photos were marked by a silver medal, which he received in 1903 at the International Exhibition held in Crystal Palace in London. His brother Leo Borger operated a branch studio in Bohumín (Oderberg), Heinrich Borger died in 1935. His wife and two sons were murdered in Auschwitz. Later, controversial photographer František Šidlík operated at the same address, and the photo studio Photographia finally closed three years ago. Today, the premises are used as a casino, one of many in the Přívoz district. Once an exclusive neighbourhood, designed by the famous Viennese architect and urbanist Camillo Sitte, it is now inhabited by socially disadvantaged and excluded people, and the number of pawnshops and casinos is slowly exceeding the number of inhabitants.

On Rosh Hashana, 15th September 1879, Ostrava's main synagogue was opened in Pittler Street (Pittlergasse). The history of first permanent photographic studio in Ostrava is also connected with the same street – the studio was in number 166. Ottmar Rebaglio, Rudolf V.Schigutt or Anton Brand – these are some of the names connected with the studio.

We can discover Ostrava at the turn of 19th and 20th century particularly through old postcards. Photography processed by the litography method was the main source of postcards. The second half of the 1890's can be considered to be the „golden age“ of postcards. More than two and half billions of postcards of every sort traveled throughout the world at the time. The first postcards were so called „long address“ postcards because one side was meant for indicating the address only, while the text was usually written directly into the picture on the other side. The „short address“ as we know it today – address on the right, personal message on the left – are used



House of Bohumil Chvátal in Ostrava Přívoz (Oderfut) where Jakob Berger's photostudio was located.

since 1904. Even before the spread of printed postcards, photographers were making pictures of cities and landscapes, sticking them on pieces of cardboard and sell as souvenirs. In Ostrava, the brothers Josef and Edmund Goldmann used to deal in this sort of business. Starting in 1869, their photographs are tagged with „Goldmann brüder“ at the reverse side. From 1866 to 1869, their business was located in the city of Těšín (Teschen) at Altmarkt (today's Stary Targ in Polish Cieszyn/Těšín). At one of the photographs/postcards which served as an advertisement for their business, we can see the castle in Slezská Ostrava, Chain Bridge (Kettebrücke, collapsed in 1886), today's Masaryk square and also a panoramic view over Ostrava from the Jaklovec hill.



The occupation of travelling photographer have not disappeared even after the advent of newer technologies and permanent photo studios. Photography was still keeping its mysterious charm both for its practitioners and spectators. No fair or a festival would be complete without a travelling "artist" photographer. The Market Rules of Ostrava-Mariánské Hory city district placed photography among a circus and a menagerie. In 1910, the census commissioners found two photographers in Ostrava. Samuel Hahn, born 27. 10. 1857, of a jewish religion, belonging to the town of Nagyatád (in Hungarian region of Somogy, near the border with Croatia), and Hermina Fleischhammer, born 1866, belonging to the town of Sabás (Hungary), both of them temporarily residing in Ostrava. Samuel Hahn decided to settle in Ostrava and established a photo studio in Nádražní street No.25. Apart from the aforementioned "mass" production of postcards, the photographers were also publishing their own "realphoto" postcards. These were usually depictions of various scenes from everyday family or public life, some were used as ads for photographer's services, few of them are rather bizarre. Samuel Hahn

photographed the arrest of mass murderer Ludwig Wresky and published the photo as postcard. The person who sent it has added a description: "Let me send you a photo of Ludwig Wresky, four-times mass murderer from Moravská Ostrava. He killed two policemen in a brothel, one policeman on the street and even a man and his horse in a forest."

From the second half of 19th century onwards, Ostrava went through period of rapid development. This transformation has also affected the relations between ethnic and religious groups in the city. Local Jews, mostly german-speaking, were considered "the enemies of Czech cause". Even the jewish photographers were facing attacks of czech "national" press. On 6. 10. 1897, the



Sigmund Teichner CDV

newspaper "Opavský týdeník" slandered Sigmund Teichner: "News from and around Ostrava. Attention! In the villages around Moravská Ostrava, certain israelite Teichner from Moravská Ostrava is hanging around with the photographic machine and offering his "excellent" services. Many people were conned by this Jew and only later discovered that this Teichner is just a bungler, his pictures will get washed out after a few days, that it is just botched jewish work, but quite expensive. Someone should find out if this kike is paying his taxes, so let this be a warning for both our readers and the authorities." Considering the attached photo, you can assess how well is his work doing after more than hundred years. Sigmund Teichner started his business in 1882 and worked in his studio in Vítkovice district until 1891 and then in the Střelniční Street No.14 until 1903. Teichner was born on 5th of May, 1841, and on 21st of August, 1903, the german newspaper Ostrauer Tagblatt published his obituary, commissioned by his children. They left Ostrava even before the declaration of Czechoslovak independence in 1918.

Daguerrotype was the very first, but not the only one of early photographic methods. Another technology, well suited for use outside the brick and mortar studios, was the so called Ferrotype (better known as Tintype). In the Czech regions, it used to be called "American" photography. This technology was widely used in USA, where it also saw its biggest boom of popularity during the Civil War (1861-1865). Even today, we can find a large amount of those images in museums and private collections. Men, women, children, soldiers, animals and various happy revellers are usually depicted while standing in front of crudely painted background. Tintype was related to the wet collodium process and it was also used in the first coin-operated machines for instant photography. The BOSCO machine was named after the stage magician Bartolomeo Bosco and patented by german inventor Conrad Bernitt in Hamburg in 1884. Instant photography was also present in Ostrava, where one Rudolf Kulka established his "Photomaton" in the Nádražní street No. 14 in Moravská Ostrava (today's LIBREX store).

Inventor of this machine Anatol Josepho may be a classic example of immigrant's success in the USA. Son of russian jewish jeweller Marc Josephowitz, he was born in the city of Tomsk in Central Siberia. After education in Omsk, he learned to be a photographer in Berlin and spent the First World War in Budapest, where he managed his first photo studio. After a short business activity in Harbin (Northern China), he established new photo studio in Shanghai in 1921. In 1923, he got off the ship in Seattle, visited San Francisco and Hollywood, and started to work on his instant photography automaton in New York in 1925. We may add that his activities were entirely paid by his wife Ganna, a silent-movie star, who had to pawn her jewelry.



Tintype from Ostrava



Anatol Josepho and his photobooth.

So much for the brief overview of the early days of photography in Northern Moravia and Silesia. The story of these and other Jewish photographers will continue later....

Jiří Hrdina.

Ostrava Chanukiah in the White House

Libuše sent an article from the magazine *Rosh Chodesh* published in Prague. For those whose Czech is not too good, Radan provided an English summary:

Chanukia originally from Ostrava-Hrušov, where the family of Hanford Gross and family Katz lived. The Chanukia was provided as a short, temporary loan to the White House, based on the First Lady's wish and US Ambassador in Czech Rep. Mr. Norman Eisen initiative.

CHANUKIJA Z HRUŠOVA OZÁŘILA BÍLÝ DŮM

Již podruhé putoval jeden z chanukových svíců ze sbírek pražského Židovského muzea do Bílého domu ve Washingtonu. Letos to byla chanukija z moravského Hrušova s dedikačním nápisem: „Toto daroval Avraham Jicchak se svou manželkou, paní Chajou Ettinger, roku 682 p.m.p. (=1922) zde v Hrušově.“ Svícen ozdobil během letošních oslav Svátku světla reprezentační prostory Bílého domu.

Zápůjčka se uskutečnila z iniciativy velvyslance USA v ČR pana N. Eisena. V roce 2009 do zámoří na prosbu první

News of Ostravaks

Michelle Vered

Madeleine Isenberg has introduced a new Ostravak tour network! Michelle contacted Madeleine about some of Michelle's family who came from Kezmarok and Madeleine discovered some Ostrava connections:

Anyway, Michelle sent the following information:

"My grandfather, Jiri Moshe Wellner, was from Ostrava, Czech Republic. He emigrated to Israel as a teenager just before World War II to escape anti-semitism. He died in 1974, so I never met him and again don't know very much about the family history. His father was Leo Wellner and his mother was Paula Redlich, also both from Ostrava. Paula Redlich's father Otto Redlich owned a butcher shop there and also served in the Austrian army in World War I.

Needless to say, Libuše was able to add some information and Michelle sent some more, together with two wonderful photographs:

Hannah Vizanski (nee Wellner) is my great aunt, the daughter of Leo Wellner and Paula Redlich. She now lives in Herzliya, Israel. Hannah was only 10 when her family immigrated to Israel and can't remember everything about her extended family from when she lived in Ostrava.

A number of people on the family tree immigrated to Israel in 1940. They originally came on the SS Milos, then were transferred to the SS Patria. On board the Patria, they were part of a pretty famous incident, when the SS Patria was blown up by the Hagannah while it was sitting off the coast of Israel. The Hagannah did this in order to disable the ship and prevent the British from ordering the ship to turn around with everyone still aboard, but miscalculated the force of the explosion and sank the ship. Many died, although the Wellners aboard managed to swim to shore and get to Israel safely. These people were aboard the ship:

- Paula Wellner (nee Redlich)
- Hannah Wellner
- Regina Redlich (nee Lerchenfeld)
- Alfred Wellner
- Thea Wellner (nee Schwarz)
- Marion Wellner (also known as Marianna and nicknamed Miri)

After the Patria was sunk, the survivors were placed in the Atlit holding camp by the British, then eventually released and allowed to permanently settle in Israel. Paula worked as a cleaning lady in Haifa, then as a seamstress in Atta. Hannah was at a boarding school in Shfeiya, a children's village between Haifa and Tel Aviv. Paula met and married Max Hochman shortly after coming to Israel. He had been in Dachau during the war and then escaped and came to Israel.

Regina Redlich (nee Lerchenfeld) married Yitzhak Fogel sometime after she came to Israel, and they lived together in Sabinia, near Haifa.

Hannah Wellner married Yaacov Vizanski. They had two children, Oded Visanski and Anat Vizanski. Anat married Ohad Levi. Anat and Ohad had 3 children, Roni Levi, Hadas Levi, and Noga Levi. Hannah and Yaacov now live in Herzliya, as I mentioned.

I'm not sure whatever happened to Alfred Wellner, Thea Wellner, and Marion Wellner.

Paula Redlich's parents were Otto Redlich and Regina Lerchenfeld. The Lerchenfelds were apparently a large family, but there were a lot of things Hannah couldn't remember about them and I'm still looking for more information. Regina Lerchenfeld apparently had a lot of siblings. Hannah thought maybe 8 siblings, whose names she couldn't remember. Hannah thought that many either of them or of their children immigrated to Israel. Otto Redlich was a butcher. He also served in the Austro-Hungarian army during WWI. He died in 1933 and I have a copy of his death record. Otto and Regina had one other child besides Paula, Alfred Redlich, who immigrated to Israel before WWII and worked as a butcher in Tel Aviv. Alfred Redlich married Marianna, in Israel. They had two children, Yoram and Chanan. Chanan still lives in Israel, and has Down's syndrome. Yoram changed his last name to Ne'eman. Yoram married Dalia Chalvani. Yoram and Dalia had children Almog Ne'eman, Ezra Ne'eman, and Adva Ne'eman. Adva married Yossi Abramovich. Adva and Yossi had children Noam Abramovich and Ofri Abramovich.

What Hannah remembers about Leo Wellner was that he was diabetic, and worked in Ostrava as a bricklayer. Shortly before Paula and Leo divorced, Leo was injured in a car accident, and because of it didn't want to work, just live off of his pension. Hannah told me she thought this was the cause of some of the arguments between her parents. When Paula and Leo were divorced, it was somewhat shocking to the community because women divorcing their husbands and trying to support themselves as single mothers was uncommon at the time. Hannah didn't know her father well, as her mother didn't like to talk about him. Leo and Hannah wrote a few letters to each other after the war, and Hannah learned he was still living in Ostrava and had married a woman named Ida, who had helped him out in the camp he was in during the war.

After Leo and Paula got divorced, Hannah lived with her mother, and Jiri Wellner spent some time with his father. Paula worked in an underwear store, and then in a nursing home. In 1938, Jiri Wellner went to Israel, changing his name to Moshe Wellner. He went alone because his mother was afraid for their safety. Moshe left right after the Germans came to the Czech Republic. Paula had a brother in Israel, Alfred Redlich, who was supposed to keep an eye on Moshe. Moshe stayed with a farmer and, along with many other boys there his age, worked part time in the fields, and studied part time. Later, he went with some people from there to a moshav, Kfar Yedidiah. Then, in 1941, he went to the kibbutz Kfar Blum because they needed more people to help out. He helped to build this new kibbutz. Moshe married Vera Agnes Politzer. They had children Irit Wellner, Eldad Wellner and Yair Wellner. Irit married Amram Gazit. Irit and Amram had children Atar Gazit, Oz Gazit, Adad Gazit, and Ofer Gazit. Atar Gazit married Dror Peled and had a son Rotem Peled. Oz Gazit married Avishag Pundak and had a daughter Alma Gazit. Eldad Wellner changed his last name to Vered and married Jane Zevnik. Eldad and Jane are my parents. There's me, Michelle Vered, and my brother Samuel and sister Rachel. My grandmother Vera now lives in a nursing home in Israel. My grandfather Moshe died young of a heart attack. I never met him.

I'm attaching two pictures I have. One I believe is from Ostrava around 1908 and shows Paula Redlich as a child along with her mother Regina and the Lerchenfeld family. The other photo was taken in the 1930s and shows Paula along with two children, Hannah and Moshe (Jiri) Wellner.



We would, of course, be delighted to hear from anyone who knew or knows the families.

Shoshana Dub

Shosh Dub (born Susan Hanna Brauner daughter of Hugo Brauner) is the niece of Erich Brauner and Danny Kinrot's cousin – see Newsletter 28. Recently, Magda from the Jewish Museum in Prague visited her and received a collection of family documents and photographs, now in the JMP Archive.

The JMP are always keen to receive similar materials. If you have family documents etc that you are willing to donate, please let Monica or David know and we will make the necessary arrangements.

Ann Altman (née Körner)

Ann has discovered a remarkable coincidence as she was once going through some of the material on our website. She found the story of the Goldberger family as told by Michael (now Gordy) and compared it with the story of her own father:

Michael Gordy wrote:

Shift ahead to 1939. Hitler has swept through Czechoslovakia and Jews are prohibited from exiting the country without an exit visa. Within days, my grandfather's father meets Muller on the street to find that Muller was an SS officer assigned to Ostrava, I think a Captain. Muller told him to send his son (that is, my grandfather) to his office. My grandfather did as instructed. He was not permitted to see Muller, but his passport was stamped with an exit visa. With this, he made his way to London.

Ann's father's story:

“..the record shows that the Nazis took over the town and deported the Jews not long after the beginning of the War. My father was staying with his parents when

a young man came to the door, dressed in full Nazi uniform. He had been in high school with my father and told him, “Stephan, if you do not leave today, you will not be able to leave tomorrow”.

Heinrich Goldberger was born in May 1907. Stepan Körner was born in September 1913. The Müller, in SS uniform, who gave the Goldbergers exit visas was “a childhood friend” of Heinrich. The Nazi officer who warned Stepan was in school with him. It is stretching coincidence too far for there to be two German-Czech members of the Nazi party, in uniform, of very similar ages in Ostrava who helped Jews escape. It must be the same person. So two families owe their existence to the humanity and bravery of a poor Czech-German, who was killed for his pains.

Peter Briess

On a more cheerful note, Peter Briess has sent this photograph of a fancy dress party, taken by Pietzner in Ostrava. Peter cannot recognise anyone in the photograph. Can you?



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