

The situation of the Jewish population in the territory of Czech Silesia during the occupation (1938 – 1945)

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Before starting to explain the war destinies of Jews in Czech Silesia, I have to briefly mention the administrative structure implemented by the occupying government of this territory, since orientation in it is often difficult even for historians of the region themselves. A traditional emphasis of Czech historiography on the history of the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia somewhat overshadowed the interest in the development of occupation in the torn off areas of Czech lands, where an absolute majority of the territory of Czech Silesia belonged. After the Munich agreement, Czech Silesia was violently torn into four asymmetrical pieces, which were, in October 1938, allocated to Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland. Although shortly after that the whole Czech Silesia found itself under the dominion of Nazi Germany, the affiliation of these four parts to higher territorial complexes, determined by the Munich agreement and its consequences, was retained during the entire war. Basically it meant that the conditions of occupation in each of those parts were somewhat different. It concerned for instance the position of the local population, methods of Germanisation and the whole policy of occupation. I am aware of the danger of using the measures of Nazi bodies and a German administrative system regarding the Silesian territory and its population. However, I consider their knowledge extremely important and necessary for understanding the specifics of historical development of this territory.

A. SUDETEN

In the pre-war republic, Czech Silesia was initially an administratively independent complex, the Silesian land. After 1928 it was part of Moravia-Silesia [země Moravskoslezská]. It was actually the territory of the former Austrian Silesia, with the exception of Cieszyn, a part of the divided Silesia, which fell to Poland in 1920, and of the

Hlučín area, which, on the contrary, was taken out of Prussian Silesia and annexed to Czechoslovakia in the same year. In 1939, the largest part of Czech Silesia, approximately 3 thousand km², became part of the newly created governmental county of Opava in the Reich region of Sudeten¹. It included the whole counties of Opava (both city and land), Bílovec, Bruntál, Frývaldov and Krnov. In "Eastern Sudeten", as the governmental county of Opava was called, Silesian counties were in the minority, because another 8 counties from Northern Moravia belonged here and the counties Lanškroun and Králíky reached into Eastern Bohemia. More than 800 thousand people altogether lived here, from that approximately 340 thousand in the Silesian counties. According to a census, in the counties of Krnov (95%), Frývaldov (96%) and Bruntál (98%) Germans unequivocally outnumbered Czechs, there was only a Czech majority in the counties of Opava (56%) and Bílovec (74%). Based on the agreement on citizenship and option matters, concluded between the Czechoslovak Republic and Germany, Czech citizens (both Germans and Czechs) could become German nationals under conditions similar to the Hlučín area or they could opt for Czech nationality, but at the cost of leaving the occupied territory. In March 1939, after the occupation of the rest of the republic, this provision became meaningless and German authorities considered those opting for Reich citizenship to have Czech nationality. For instance during the 1939 census, 62% of residents of the Bílovec county, 56% of the Opava-land and 19% of the Opava-city regarded themselves as Czechs, while in the counties of Bruntál, Frývaldov and Krnov, Czechs made up only a negligible one tenth of a percent.

In respect to material life they were at the same level as Germans. It was their advantage over Czechs in the protectorate; unlike them, however, they were subject to much stronger racial oppression and Germanisation. They also had more limited options in finding their subsistence².

According to statistics, in the Silesian part of the Sudeten region there were 1924 Jews before the war. Most of them were in the Opava county – 1069 (mainly in Opava – 971), much fewer in Kateřinky – 19, Jaktář – 17, Odry – 16 and Vítkov – 12. That was almost 1% of the county population. 348 Jews lived in the Krnov county, that is 0.6%

¹ The Sudeten region consisted of governmental counties of Cheb (Karlovy Vary), Ústí nad Labem and Opava, at its head was the Reich governor Konrad Henlein, whose seat of office was in Liberec.

² For more see J. Bartoš, *Okupované pohraničí a české obyvatelstvo 1938-1945* (Prague, 1986); id., 'Základní charakteristika východních Sudet (vládního obvodu Opava) 1938-1945', in *Historie okupovaného pohraničí 1938-1945*. Vol. 3 (Ústí nad Labem, 1998) 7-24.

(319 directly in Krnov), 12 in the town of Albrechtice (from the former famous and large village of Osoblaha only 13 Jews were left). 217 Jews lived in Bílovec area, that is 0.5% (80 in Svinov, 64 in Bílovec, 28 in Klimkovice and 16 in Studénka). 184 Jews lived in Frývaldov, that is 0.3% (96 in Frývaldov, 34 in Cukmantl, 27 in Česká Ves). Finally, 106 Jews lived in Bruntál, that is 0.2% (73 in Bruntál, 15 in Horní Benešov). From the total of 1924 Jews, only 766 professed to be ethnic Jews, which is about 39%. It is interesting to note that in purely German counties of the Silesian part of the governmental county of Opava, substantially fewer Jews professed themselves as ethnic Jews (Bruntál 13%, Frývaldov 16%) than in the counties where the Czech population was in majority (Opava and Bílovec, both 48%)³.

The first more distinct persecution of Silesian Jews can be noticed mainly in border areas with a predominantly German population, ever more strongly influenced by Nazi ideas. Under the influence of the Austrian Anschluss [Annexation], Jews were starting to leave even the Silesian parts of the future Sudeten region. In the first days after the Munich agreement, their escape became a truly mass phenomenon. Therefore from the very beginning, Nazis had an easier path towards a total “removal” of Jews from their territory. Those Jews who still had not decided to escape, were immediately thwarted in the first days after the annexation of Sudeten; they were publicly dishonoured, their businesses and shops were closed and there was much violence. Jewish property was confiscated and the threat of pogroms forced Jews to leave the occupied territory as quickly as possible. For example according to the report of 12th October 1938, the State Police arrested 60 people in Bruntál, which resulted mostly in the escape of residents of “non-German blood”⁴.

To a great extent, the destiny of non-German Jews was similar to the destiny of Austrian Jews, who lost all their property, all their life assurances and civil rights in the very first weeks of “Anschluss”, in contrast to Jews in the Reich, who were deprived of their rights and human dignity slowly, over the course of several years.

Immediately after the occupation of Sudeten, the Reich legislation was instituted here, including the anti-Jewish Nurnberg Laws. Registers in Jewish communities were

³ *Statistický lexikon obcí v zemi Moravskoslezské* (Prague, 1935) 3-4, 17-9, 31-6, 57-61, 87-91; ZAO, Regierungspräsident Troppau, 1820. According to the report of German landrats (county administrators) from 1939, there were allegedly as many as 2936 Jews in the mentioned counties.

⁴ ZAO, Regierungspräsident Troppau, 1449.

confiscated, the Gestapo as well as the Sudeten civil administration at the hand of landrats (county administrators) took over the registration of Jews. By the decree of 12th December 1938, Jews were entirely eliminated from economic life, since they were prohibited to pursue any business. Several weeks earlier, the Reich ordinance on displacing Jewish half-castes in the economy came into effect in Sudeten. By the end of January 1939, Jews in Sudeten had to officially register their property, which was subsequently “aryanized”. In this way a whole set of discriminatory regulations was instituted, for example the regulation of 17th November 1939 enforced the Reich law on the obligation to add to Jewish names the first name of Israel for men and Sarah for women etc.⁵.

Jews were often pre-emptively arrested and forced to proclaim that they would voluntarily emigrate, or otherwise they would be given over to Gestapo. The systematic terror brought the coveted results very quickly: already during the May 1939 census it was discovered that in comparison with the Reich there were less Jews in the Sudeten region than was the average in the whole Reich⁶. In Silesian counties there were now just 142 Jews left⁷. However, it was a paradox that thanks to the Nazi racist theory, their number was increased again to 642 by half-castes of the first and second degree⁸.

The basic turning point in the life of Jews in the German conquest was brought about by the events of the Kristallnacht from the 9th to the 10th of November 1938 and the following days. The terrorist action organised by Nazis throughout the whole Reich territory also affected the Silesian part of Sudeten. According to preserved police reports, in Svinov u Ostravy Jewish dwellings were attacked, in Bruntál SS officers closed all Jewish shops, in Bílovec Jewish physician Dr. Beck was arrested for alleged “vilification of race”, in Krnov SS units also carried out an operation against Jews – on the square of Adolf Hitler, books from the store of Jewish bookseller Dr. Kunnewälder were burnt in public. The synagogue in Krnov was partially demolished; its imminent burning down was stopped under the order of SS command, because it was to be rebuilt into a

⁵ L. Kocourek, 'Osud židů v Sudetské župě v obraze dochovaných dokumentů', *Tereziánské studie a dokumenty* (1997) 76-8; V. Zimmermann, 'Pachatelé a přihlížející. Pronásledování židů v Sudetské župě', *ibid.* (1999) 137-8.

⁶ *Ibid.* 135-6.

⁷ ZAO, Regierungspräsident Troppau, 1820. Counts of “total “ Jews including half-castes of both degrees according to Silesian counties: Opava-city 247, Krnov 141, Bílovec 78, Frývaldov 73, Bruntál 58, Opava-province 45.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 611. Counts of “total “ Jews including half-castes of both degrees according to Silesian counties: Opava-city 247, Krnov 141, Bílovec 78, Frývaldov 73, Bruntál 58, Opava-province 45.

town market hall, which later actually came about. On the other hand, the Jewish cemetery was destroyed, the hearse was smashed and burnt. In Bruntál, an attack on the oratory was carried out and the ceremonial hall at the Jewish cemetery was burnt out. The synagogue in Opava was completely destroyed by fire, the scene was – according to a preserved photograph – watched by local residents with their hands in pockets. Violence also accompanied the subsequent escape of Jews, for instance on 14th November in Bílovec the Nazis confiscated from Jews furniture and other property, which they wanted to take along⁹.

For Jews who still remained in the Opava area, a detention camp was built in the summer of 1939 in Skrochovice u Bruntálu, to which Jews from occupied Těšín Silesia were also brought later on. The camp is known for its bad treatment of prisoners, about 10 prisoners died there. Its commander was the war criminal Herman Jäckel, later the head of a unit in Terezín. At the beginning of 1940 the camp was vacated and prisoners were delivered to concentration camps. The few Jews remaining here are recorded in Nazi reports just as sporadic mentions. For instance these records concerned reports that they did not obey the regulation on Jewish surnames or did not wear the Jews' mandatory mark. For instance Nazis from Opava demanded that even Jews from mixed marriages wear the yellow star. Another report mentioned confiscation of Jewish textiles and furs, yet another one punished the people who were in contact with Jews or verbally advocated them¹⁰. The last Jews in the governmental county of Opava were carried away on 18th November 1942, 18th November 1943 and 10th January 1944 and transported to Terezín and then to concentration camps. It concerned only 80 people¹¹.

B. HLUČÍN

After the Munich agreement, the Hlučín area was the only seceded part of the republic, which was annexed directly to Altreich¹². Approximately 50 thousand

⁹ ZAO, Regierungspräsident Troppau, 1449 and 1458; Chronik des Sudetenlandes, DZ Bohemia, 13. XI. 1938; M. Borák, 'Wydarzenia "nocy kryształowej" i ich oddźwięk na terenach Czechosłowacji'. in *Colloquium Opole '98. 60 rocznica pogromu Żydów w Niemczech* (Opole, 2000) 49-60.

¹⁰ J. Orlík, *Opavsko a severní Morava za okupace. Z tajných zpráv okupačních úřadů z let 1940-1943* (Opava, 1961) 54, 74, 94, 101; Zimmermann, 'Pachatelé a přihlížející' 139-40.

¹¹ *Terezínská pamětní kniha. Židovské oběti nacistických deportací z Čech a Moravy 1940-1945* (Prague, 1996) 1318; L. Kocourek, 'Několik poznámek k postavení židů v Sudetské župě 1938-1945', in *Židé v Sudetech* 204-9; Id., 'Osud židů' 72-88; Krejčová, 'Židovská komunita' 138.

¹² It became a part of the Racibórz county in the Opole district of the Reich province of Silesia, from the year 1941 the province of Upper Silesia.

inhabitants lived here, 95 % of whom, according to the last pre-war census in 1930, registered themselves as Czech nationals. The fact that after two centuries of separation from the Czech Opava area, more than 80% of the local population still professed “Moravian language“ as their mother tongue, even though they considered the Prussian state their fatherland, served as substantiation for the Czech claim to the Hlučín area, apart from transportation and strategic grounds¹³. However, inhabitants of the area continued to be a group that, from the national standpoint, was not definitely formed, with a specific interpretation of the concept of *nation* or *nationality*, above which in their value system they placed concepts of *family* or *home* in an intimately regional sense. It was demonstrated immediately after the Munich agreement – exactly the same number of local inhabitants professed to be of German nationality in January 1939. Laws of the Reich allowed residents who were born here before the year 1910 and had their permanent residence here on 10th October 1938, to automatically gain German nationality together with the rights of Reich citizens. In contrast to conditions in the protectorate, Sudeten or the Těšín area, only a few residents in the Hlučín area remained without German nationality¹⁴.

According to the 1930 census, the fewest Jews in the territory of the four mentioned parts of Czech Silesia lived in the Hlučín area. In the statistics it was not even possible to express their number in percentages. There were only 41, mostly in Hlučín, partially in Šilheřovice and Oldřišov.¹⁵ However, in the past it had been different. In Prussian Hlučín people could find more freedom than in Austria, and so for instance in 1841 there were 244, almost a tenth of the former town population¹⁶. The departure of Jews was probably caused by a certain economic decline of the town in the interbellum period, when traditional binding to the Racibórz area was interrupted and Hlučín was not an important trade centre any more.

Also in the Hlučín area of Silesia, the anti-Jewish Nurnberg Laws were put in force right after the territory annexation to the Reich, with all resulting consequences. The Jewish problem was practically non-existent here, because the absolute majority of local

¹³ For more see J. Plaček, 'Hlučínsko pod nadvládou Pruska a Německa (1742-1920)', *Ostrava. Příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy a Ostravska* 19 (1999) 109-46; *Hlučínsko v proměnách času* (Hlučín, 1995).

¹⁴ V. Plaček, 'Ostravská průmyslová oblast v letech 1938-1945', *Průmyslové oblasti* 3 (1971) 43-4; N. Pavelčíková, 'Peripetie vývoje Hlučínska v letech 1938-1948', in *Hlučínsko v proměnách času* (Hlučín, 1995) 64-72.

¹⁵ Plaček, 'Ostravská průmyslová' 36-7.

¹⁶ U. Wanderburg, *Historie města Hlučína*, Vol 2 (Hlučín, 1991) 76.

Jews left before the war. It was not even possible to burn the synagogue, since it had already fallen into ruins in 1931. And so the hatred of the Nazis was unleashed at least in the Jewish cemetery, which was destroyed¹⁷. A local eyewitness says that convoys of Jews passed through the Hlučín area in open coaches and it was prohibited to hand them tea, even though their “howling“ of thirst was inhuman. For local Nazis this was just further proof of their assertion that Jews are not people. Although there were no local Jews left, children at Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth) meetings had to allegedly voice a swearword every time their commander pronounced the word “Jew“¹⁸.

C. ČESKÝ TĚŠÍN

The most complicated development was in a large part of the Český Těšín area, called *Zaolzie* by Poles, namely the entire county of Fryštát, almost the entire county of Český Těšín and several villages or their parts from the Frýdek county. About 230 thousand inhabitants lived here, of that 54% Czechs, 32% Poles and a scant 8% Germans. In October 1938 this territory was joined to Poland¹⁹. Polish state citizenship was awarded only to Poles and to residents who had their right of domicile here even before November 1918. These conditions, together with the fear of racial persecution, caused the departure, often forced, of about 30 thousand Czechs and 5 thousand Germans from the Těšín area and lead to other changes in the nationality structure of the population. A year later, when Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany, the Těšín area, as a part of the conquered “Eastern territories“, was also annexed to the Reich in October 1939²⁰. The basis for the Germanisation effort of invaders became the so-called Volkslist (German National List) drive, which actually meant a conditional avowal of German citizenship. Mainly those residents forced to enrol in Volkslists, were those who at census entered themselves as Silesian nationals, but also Poles and Czechs, who formerly greatly outnumbered Germans in the Těšín area. Under the threat of losing property, displacement or deportation to a concentration camp, but also for tactical reasons allowing survival under the conditions of occupation persecution, over 70 percent of the

¹⁷ J. Fiedler, *Židovské památky v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague, 1992) 118.

¹⁸ L. Martinik, *Žil jsem na Hlučínsku i na straně císařské* (n.p., n.d.) 33.

¹⁹ The county of Český Těšín was joined to the Polish county of Cieszyn and together with the county of Frysztat they were a part of a duchy with its seat of administration in Katowice.

²⁰ The occupied county of Teschen, integrated into the Katowice governmental region in the Silesian and, from 1941, the Upper Silesian province of the Reich was created from the counties of Frysztat and Cieszyn.

Těšín area population enrolled themselves on Volkslists. Those residents who refused to be Germanised were subject to tough discrimination, which affected mainly Poles²¹.

According to statistics, 3678 Jews lived in Těšín Silesia, from that 2062 (56%) professed themselves as ethnic Jews. In the Fryštát county there were 2139, they made up 1.5% of the population (most in Bohumín and Nový Bohumín –754, then Orlová 394, Fryštát 322, Karviná 172, Doubrava 69, Lazy 58, Petřvald 50, Skřečoň 48, Rychvald 38 etc.). In the Český Těšín county there were 1539 Jews, that is 1.8% (Český Těšín 1148, Třinec 138, Jablunkov 61, Bystřice 31, Svibice 30, Stráž 19, Bludovice 13, Náves 11 etc.)²².

While in November 1938 in German Silesia synagogues burnt, in Těšín Silesia the anti-Jewish violence of the Kristallnacht was not reflected. However, both sides of the Těšín area, Polish and Czech, are known for their anti-Jewish displays. In comparison with the territory of the entire Upper Silesia, however, they were evidently less marked. For instance in March 1938 in Poruba near Orlová, an invitation was handed out for a Czech “National domestic ball without Jews“. It became subject to a police investigation²³. Nevertheless, it is surprising that the first bomb attack on a Jewish building in the former Czechoslovakia happened in the Těšín area. It took place as early as at the end of September 1938, thus more than a month before the Kristallnacht. At that time a part of economic buildings of the synagogue in Třinec exploded. The operation was carried out by young Poles, members of the scout brigade of the Militant organisation, within the framework of the on-coming offensive against Czechoslovakia²⁴.

On the Polish side, in Cieszyn, there were anti-Jewish rebellions repressed by the police as early as in 1937. In February 1939 students of the national-radical political

²¹ For more see M. Myška, *Z tajných zpráv NSDAP o Těšínsku* (Ostrava, 1964); M. Borák, *Svědectví Života, Těšínsko za druhé světové války a okolnosti životické tragédie* (Český Těšín, 1999). The situation of Czechs was much more favourable. Their property was not confiscated, they were not displaced (save exceptions), they did not pay higher income tax and they were not subject to the tightened criminal laws. However, they did not have any national rights.

²² *Statistický lexikon* 29-31, 106-10; *Seznam obcí a okresů republiky Československé, které byly připojeny k Německu, Maďarsku a Polsku (stav ke dni 28. listopadu 1938)* (Prague, 1938) 6. Stated 2077 Jews according to nationality, probably a rectified count after the border adjustments; H. Krejčová, 'Židovská komunita v Sudetech a její osudy po Mnichovu – 1938', in *Židé v Sudetech* (Prague, 2000) 130. Without mentioning the source, it lists 4026 Jews in the separated Těšín area, from that 2225 ethnic Jews.

²³ B. Gracová, 'Židovské obyvatelstvo Ostravska v období druhé republiky', *Acta Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Ostraviensis, Historica* 153/3 (1995) 74.

²⁴ E. Długajczyk, *Tajny front na granicy cieszyńskiej. Wywiad i dywersja w latach 1919-1939* (Katowice, 1993) 145; K. Badziak, G. Matwiejew, P. Samus, "Powstanie" na Zaolziu w 1938 r. *Polska akcja specjalna w świetle dokumentów Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego WP* (Warsaw, 1997) 167.

orientation executed several attacks on Jewish shops and distributed provoking anti-Jewish leaflets. For this action they were pursued by Polish bodies. At that time many Jews from Těšín decided to emigrate. After the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the flood of Jewish refugees headed through the Těšín area to Poland and further abroad, but Polish authorities sent many of them back. However, several refugee help centres were created, for example in Fryštát, Petřvald and Orlová²⁵.

A real threat to the existence of Těšín Jews came with the German occupation of Poland in September 1939. On 26th October, after a short period of military administration, Hitler's decree of 8th October 1939 on integration and administration of conquered eastern territories came into force. So, Těšín Silesia also gradually became subject to German legislation, for example the German criminal law of 6th June 1940. This law was amended on 4th December 1941 by a decree on special criminal judiciary for Poles and Jews, which could inflict the death penalty for mere anti-German attitudes or statements. Amendments to this law also permitted punishment of young Poles and Jews in the same harsh way, even for deeds perpetrated before the law came into force. For Jews the validity of this decree ceased on 1st July 1943, when they were excluded from the jurisdiction of all courts and were to be punished solely by the police²⁶.

In September 1939, all synagogues and Jewish buildings (except two) in Cieszyn and Český Těšín, as well as in Bohumín, Fryštát, Karviná, Orlová and Třinec, were burnt²⁷. As early as on 6th September 1939, Jews were officially devoid of property, chased from their homes and forced to do manual labour repairing roads, diverting rivers, street cleaning and in sewers. They were gradually concentrated in former Jewish buildings in the town and later taken away to Jewish camps and ghettos in Gliwice, Wadowice, Sosnowec, Będzin and Myszków²⁸. From there they were transported in 1942 for liquidation, predominantly to the nearby KL Auschwitz. It must be mentioned that approximately 130 Jews from the Těšín area, stretching from Bohumín to Třinec, were in one of the very first Jewish transportations in Europe, which headed to Nisko nad Sanem

²⁵ M. Kantor, *Záhuba těšínských židů* (Diplomová práce, Ostravská univerzita, 1994) 42-3; F. Pasz, *Żydzi i my w Cieszynie*. 2nd Ed. (Cieszyn, 1997) 63-6.

²⁶ M. Borák, *Na příkaz gestapa. Nacistické válečné zločiny na Těšínsku* (Ostrava, 1990) 238-40.

²⁷ Ibid., page 80-2; M. Makowski, 'Główna synagoga w Cieszynie', in J. Spyra (ed.), *Żydowskie zabytki Cieszyna i Czeskiego Cieszyna* (Cieszyn, 1999) 47; J. Klenovský, 'Żydowskie zabytki na terenie Czeskiego Cieszyna', Ibid 50-4.

²⁸ F. Pasz, *Żydzi i my* 82-3; B. Poloczkowa, 'Żydzi cieszyńscy w czasie drugiej wojny światowej (materiały archiwalne, informacje terenowe)', *Zaranie Śląskie* 50/1-2 (1987) 73-88.

as early as in October 1939²⁹. In October 1943, according to Nazi statistics, only 28 Jews were left in the Těšín area. The vast majority of Těšín Jews perished. Quite fragmentary post-war statistics mention particularly 1667 victims for the Karviná county and 186 victims for the Těšín part of the Frýdek-Místek county³⁰.

D. PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA

Relatively a small part of Silesia, the slightly curtailed Frýdek county, remained within the framework of the Czechoslovak Republic after the Munich agreement and after March 1939 it became a part of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This term, formulated by the invaders, actually falsified reality, since it denied the piece of protectorate Silesia on the right bank of the Ostravice River, stretching from the Beskidy mountains up to the Odra River near Ostrava.

The location of the Ostrava agglomeration with its extremely developed industry was speculated on only briefly. Nazis from Upper Silesia and from Sudeten had their ambitions and, on the other hand, the protectorate residents hoped that the Těšín area would be returned to the Czech lands. In the end everything stayed the way it was decided in the Post-Munich era.

Before the war approximately 115 thousand people lived in the Frýdek county, an absolute majority of Czechs (94%), but also 4% Germans and 1% Poles. After the arrival of German invaders, protectorate Germans acquired German nationality and fell under the Reich's legal order, which made them a special privileged caste. According to another regulation, further persons could become German nationals, as long as they met approval conditions (for instance mixed marriages, German origin and the like). For Czechs a protectorate nationality was introduced, which entitled them to hold public office in the territory of Protectorate and get employment. In contrast to other Silesian areas, Czechs had relatively extensive national rights here. Thus, they were not equal to Germans, but not without any rights like protégés of the Reich (Schutzangehörigen) such as Poles in the Těšín area³¹.

²⁹ M. Borák, *Transport do tmy, první deportace evropských Židů* (Ostrava, 1994) 53-9, 122-3.

³⁰ *Dějiny Orlové* (Orlová, 1993) 132; *Oběti hitlerovské okupace a války 1939-145 v okrese Karviná* (Karviná, 1995); *Almanach obětí nacismu v letech 1939-1945 v okrese Frýdek-Místek* (Frýdek-Místek, 1991). *Dějiny Orlové* (Orlová, 1993) 132, *Oběti hitlerovské okupace a války v okrese Frýdek-Místek* (Frýdek-Místek, 1991).

³¹ Plaček, 'Ostravská průmyslová' 27-31; *Statistický lexikon XVII*.

Before the war, 975 Jews lived in the protectorate county of Frýdek, which was 0.8% of the population. Most of them were in Frýdek – 237; 234 were in Silesian Ostrava and 219 in Hrušov (a further 62 in Muglinov, 61 in Michálkovice, 58 in Radvanice, 31 in Kunčičky and so on). 475 of them, that is 48%³², professed to be ethnic Jews. It seems to be a rule that in counties with a smaller German population, the national consciousness of Jews was much higher than in counties where Germans sharply predominated.

In the Frýdek part of Silesia living conditions of Jews started to get worse right after the Munich agreement. Czech fascists, who had a strong influence in the Frýdek area in the Fascist guards of Svatopluk [Fašistické Svatoplukovy gardy] and were quite numerous in the Silesian part of Ostrava, were mobilised. Anti-Semitic demonstrations, boycott of Jewish shops and handing out nationalistic leaflets, were all common phenomena, even though the Czechoslovak police usually firmly intervened³³ in these actions. Although the anti-Jewish legislation was called into action only by the Protectorate legislative, the efforts to exclude Jews from the economic and social life of the state were already clearly visible. For instance Jews could not become members of the governing Party of National Unity [Strana národní jednoty], already in October 1939 the memorandum of Czech physicians asked for the definition of the concept of a Jew, some Sokol (scouting) regions proposed that Jews be expelled from the republic. A sector of the Czech press denounced Jews who were still active in education or state institutions. In January 1939 Beran's government decided that state employees of Jewish origin would be dismissed³⁴.

In March 1939, after the occupation of the rest of the republic, the legal status of Jews turned immediately worse. Local Germans of Jewish origins were liable to Nurnberg Laws and a similar destiny was awaiting Czech Jews. The protectorate government already adopted a whole package of anti-Semitic measures at its first session on 17th March 1939. It banned any practise of "non-Aryan" physicians and lawyers and ordered elimination of Jews from all leading positions of the country's

³² *Statistický lexikon* 26-9.

³³ B. Gracová and B. Przybylová, 'Problémy každodenního života ostravských židovských obyvatel v prvních letech okupace', in L. Nesládková (ed.), *Mezinárodní vědecká konference Akce Nisko v historii "konečného řešení židovské otázky". K 55. výročí první hromadné deportace evropských Židů. Sborník referátů = Die internationale wissenschaftliche Konferenz "Die Aktion Nisko in der Gesamtgeschichte der "Endlösung der Judenfrage". Die anlässlich des 55. Jahrestages der ersten Massendeportation der europäischen Juden. Sammelband* (Ostrava, 1995) 234-51.

³⁴ H. Krejčová, 'Židé a česká společnost. Léta 1938-1939', *ibid.* 53-61; Borák, *Transport do tmy* 10-1.

economic life. However, its next proposal to appoint fiduciaries and administrators of Jewish property was stopped by the Reich protector. German invaders had no interest in strengthening Czech positions. On the contrary, they wanted to get the Jewish property solely into their own hands. The decree of the Reich protector Neurath of 21st June 1939 on Jewish property practically implemented Nurnberg Laws in the protectorate. The consequent decree on legal status of Jews in public life, promulgated by the protectorate government on 4th July 1939, which was made public after the remarks of occupation authorities on 24th April 1940, determined a long listing of professions which could not be exercised by Jews. At the same it allowed president Hácha to grant exemption to some Jews. From more than one thousand applications, the government recommended 41 for settlement, but the Reich protector did not allow a single one. His decree of 26th January 1940 on excluding Jews from the economic life and many other decrees destroyed the bases of existence of protectorate Jews³⁵.

In the end, Jewish matters in the protectorate were taken over by the Gestapo. Jews were deprived of property and their basic human rights were drastically restricted. In June 1939 Nazis burnt the synagogue in Frýdek and the oratory in Hrušov, all synagogues in Ostrava were burnt too. In October 1939, Jews from Frýdek, together with Jews from Ostrava, were placed in the deportation transport in Nisko nad Sanem. The whole operation was handled by Adolf Eichmann himself³⁶.

In contrast to other areas of Czech Silesia, Jews in the protectorate part of the Těšín area survived a little longer. They were concentrated outside their homes, had to submit to humiliating regulations and hard labour and from 1st September 1941 they had to wear yellow stars on their clothes. However, it was not until September 1942 that Jews from the Ostrava and Frýdek areas were taken away in four loads to Terezín and from there usually to Auschwitz. Another load left on 30th June 1943 and the last one, with people from mixed marriages on 4th March 1945³⁷. Quite fragmentary statistics of Jewish victims from the protectorate Frýdek area amount to 141 names³⁸.

³⁵ M. Kárný, "Konečné řešení". *Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice* (Prague, 1991) 24-34, 47-68. In October 1940 the protectorate government tried to issue its own form of the law on the protection of Czech Aryan honour and blood, but in the end it was replaced by the German third executing decree to the law on the protection of German blood and German honour, issued on July 5 1941, according to which in this matter the protectorate citizens should be handled as German state citizens.

³⁶ J. Klenovský, *Židovské památky Ostravy* (Ostrava, 1997/98) 24; Borák, *Transport do tmy*.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 121-3.

³⁸ *Almanach obětí*.

The elimination of Jews from public life was carried out in various parts of Czech Silesia in various times and their deportation was executed in various ways and at various speeds. Some forms of discrimination against Jews also mutually differed in many aspects. Nevertheless, the final goal – elimination of Jews from the Silesian territory and their liquidation – was in all cases identical and only the defeat of Germany in the world war prevented its full implementation.