

Jewish Museum in Prague

The **Jewish Museum in Prague** (Czech: *Židovské muzeum v Praze*) is a museum of Jewish heritage located in Prague, Czech Republic.

The Jewish Museum in Prague was founded in 1906 by historian Dr. Hugo Lieben and Dr. Augustin Stein, who later became head of the Prague Jewish Community. The goal was to preserve artifacts from the Prague synagogues demolished during the Urban renewal of the old Jewish Quarter in the beginning of the 20th century. In 1942, the communities were instructed to send the contents of their synagogues to the Jewish Museum in Prague, and, with a few exceptions, the Torah Scrolls, gold and silver and ritual textiles were sent to Prague, along with thousands of books. Artifacts were shipped to the museum from all the Jewish communities and synagogues of Bohemia and Moravia. The inventory of the Prague Jewish Museum expanded by fourteen times as a result, and a large number of Jews were put to work by the Germans to sort, catalogue and put into storage all the items that had come from over one hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia. It needed over forty warehouses, many of them deserted Prague synagogues, to store all these treasures.

It was once accepted that the accumulation of this vast hoard of Judaica was intended by the Nazis to become their museum to the extinct Jewish race. There is, however, no evidence that any such museum was ever planned. The Prague Jewish Museum had been in existence since the turn of the century, and was not created in order to house the Judaica collected at this time.

After the defeat of Germany, a free and independent Czechoslovakia emerged, but it was a country largely without Jews. Most of the surviving Jews in Prague and the rest of Bohemia and Moravia were from Slovakia and further east from Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Prague which had had a Jewish population of 54,000 in 1940 was reduced to under 8,000 by 1947, and many of these were to leave.

On 27 February 1948, after less than 3 years of post war freedom, the Communists staged a coup and took over the government of Czechoslovakia. The country was back under dictatorship. The Prague Jewish Museum came under government control, and was staffed mainly by non-Jewish curators. The Torah Scrolls in the Michle Synagogue building also came under public ownership. The Jewish Museum put on the exhibition the collected Judaica.

The Museum's building in the Prague's Jewish Quarter,

as well as other buildings it administers — the Klausen, Maisel, Pinkas and Spanish synagogues — received significant damage during the 2002 European floods, although its collections were moved before the flooding began and remained unharmed.^[1]

1 External links

- Official website (English version)
- The Jewish Community of Prague's website
- The Old-New Synagogue website

2 Books

- *The Jewish Museum of Prague: A Guide Through the Collections*, Hana Volavková, Umělecká beseda, 1948
- *Jewish Art Treasures from Prague: The State Jewish Museum in Prague and Its Collections : a Catalogue*, Charles Reginald Dodwell, Whitworth Art Gallery, 1920
- *The Precious Legacy: Judaic Treasures from the Czechoslovak State Collections*, David Altschuler, Vivian Mann, Simon & Schuster 1983
- Magda Veselská: *Archa paměti: Cesta pražského židovského muzea pohnutým 20. stoletím* [The Memory Ark: The Path of the Prague Jewish Museum through the Eventful 20th Century], Academia: Prague, 2013, ISBN 978-80-200-2200-4

3 References

- [1] "Prague Jews recall floods" (August 14, 2003). Including interview with museum director Leo Pavlat. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*. Retrieved 2015-04-28.

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