

**“MUNICH” AS A MORAL NARRATIVE
IN CZECH HISTORY
CZECH-JEWISH STANDPOINTS COMPARED
TO THE MAJORITY STANDPOINT¹**

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Abstract: “Munich” (the Munich Agreement of September 29th – 30th, 1938) paved the way for the destruction of the First Republic’s liberal democracy. The influence of foreign political powers played a decisive role in this destruction. Very soon afterward, doubts regarding the sovereignty of the state were even expressed by political representatives of the Second Republic, who understood the “new” Czechoslovakia as part of German Central Europe. Immediately following September 30th, Czech society began to question whether “Munich” was a betrayal by the “immoral” Western powers, who ignored their Allied commitments in exchange for a dubious peace, or perhaps it was a moral punishment from history or even God for the alleged fatal mistakes of First Republic democracy, now being visited upon the citizens of the Second Republic. At the same time, of course, the public also questioned the morality of the military capitulation of a small nation, an issue which was also repeatedly raised by Czechoslovak historiographers and mass media after the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May of 1945. While after September 30th, 1938 and shortly after the liberation of Czechoslovakia the moral narrative was ideologically and politically structured (the Czech-Jewish movement understood Munich as a moral failure of all of Europe), in the final weeks of the Second Republic, during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and after the February coup (with the exception of the Prague Spring), a single “official” view prevailed. Following the February coup (1948), this view was also adopted by Czech Jews. The objective of this study is to analyze the meaning and ways in which “Munich” was moralized after September 30th, 1938, from May 1945 to February 1948, after the February coup, in the “golden sixties” and during the years of “normaliza-

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tion". At the same time, it demonstrates that "Munich" was used to legitimize period political interests and create socio-political capital.

Keywords: moral narrative, Czech history, Munich, Czech-Jewish movement

Introduction

The Munich Agreement (29 – 30 September 1938) and its consequences, also referred to as Munich, is a key event in modern Czech and Czechoslovak history and is also one of the most popular topics in the fields of Czech historiography, journalism and art. Even though the lives of the majority of survivors of this national tragedy have come to an end, the "Munich experience" is repeatedly used as an argument in times of social-political change. The destruction of the First Republic democracy, which was a source of majority national pride, by external political forces, was more than just a political and economic tragedy (Gebhart & Kuklík, 2004, p. 26, pp. 163-180; Hájek, 1959, p. 22; Křen, 1963, pp. 98-99; Kural, 1994, p. 5, p. 36; Moulis, 1979, p. 16; Pasák, 1999, p. 220). The destruction of the Czechoslovak First republic democracy also came about with near unbelievable speed. In this new independent state formation, discussions began regarding who does and does not belong with us. Refugees, or German-Jewish, Jewish and German refugees from Nazi Germany and from Austria, as well as non-Czech refugees from the border areas, were initially placed in the category of foreigners (Gebhart & Kuklík, 2004, pp. 171-172; Kural, 1994, pp. 19-20; Rataj, 1997, pp. 12-14; Rothkirchen, 2005, pp. 78-80). So-called German Jews, i.e., those who claimed German nationality in the census (the last of which took place in 1930), were then also included in this category. Czech Jews, i.e., those who felt they were of Czech nationality and perceived their Jewish identity on the level of religion, origin, family roots or ethics, were also subjected to nationalist attacks a little later.² However, the marginally right-wing regime also saw democratic Czechoslovaks as an enemy on a general level. Probably the best known case is that of writer and journalist Karel Čapek, who was subjected to attacks by Czech Fascists (Kudělka, 1987). The repercussions of the Second Republic failure of the social elite, culminating in the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, can be felt to this day. This means that Czech society continues to

² On the growth of antisemitism Bednařík, 2016, pp. 198-221; Frankl, 2009; Gebhart & Kuklík, 2004, pp. 187-195; Kárný, 1989; Nakonečný, 2006, pp. 157-162; Pasák, 1999, pp. 227-239; Pejčoch, 2011, pp. 138-141; Rataj, 1993; Rataj, 1994; Rataj, 1997, pp. 93-119; Rataj, 2007, pp. 32-34; Soukupová, 2007, pp. 93-94; Soukupová, 2008; Soukupová, 2013, p. 34, pp. 40-50, p. 66; Šebek, 2016, pp. 56-72.

live with “Munich at its heels”³, even though we are confronted with a decline in its historic knowledge.

After the constitutional bodies of the First Czechoslovak Republic accepted the agreement, “Munich” also began to be judged from the aspect of ethical values. However, it soon transformed into one of the most significant moral narratives in Czech history. The Czech public particularly asked the questions of who caused “Munich”,⁴ whether a small nation has a moral right to military capitulation face to face with the greater history and what strategies it is moral to accept following capitulation. However, the post-war history of Czechoslovakia also began to be judged from the aspect of “Munich”. Mottos, such as *Munich never more* paradoxically established the legitimacy of the new post-February totalitarian regime, the start of the vassal pro-Moscow trend in foreign policy and the national repression of the bourgeoisie.

Moral appeals in the majority public space immediately after 30 September 1938

In his famous poem *Zpěv úzkosti* (*The Song of Fear*) from the collection titled *Torso naděje* (*Body of Hope*), František Halas (1940, p. 20-21) morally condemned France and England, the allies of the First Czechoslovak Republic, as traitors who failed to meet their international political obligations. However, we can also find similar moral condemnation of France in the poem by Vladimír Holan titled *Uražení a ponížení* (*Insult and Humiliation*) from the collection *Září* (*September*) 1938 (Holan, 1938, p. 26). It was actually poets who were able to very accurately portray the mood in Czech society at the time. But the motif of betrayal was also expanded by political parties, who created the ruling Party of National Unity at the end of November 1938 (Soukupová, 2016b, p. 20). On the contrary, political Catholics considered the First Republic’s democracy to be at fault for causing “Munich”, allegedly having abandoned so-called traditional values, particularly the tradition of Saint Wenceslas (Soukupová, 2016b, p. 21). “Munich” could therefore also be interpreted as a moral punishment enacted upon the citizens of the so-called Second Republic by “history” or even God for the alleged fatal mistakes made by the First Republic and for its megalomania. On the contrary, after “Munich”, democratic political subjects portrayed the Czech nation or Czechoslovakia in the role of a victim of the short-sighted French and British policy, with its naive idea of maintaining peace in Europe (Soukupová, 2016b, p. 22). It was the status of

³ I borrowed this phrase from an essay by a trio of historians. Kuklík, Roček & Zátka, 1969. Compare also the title and content of the book by Kuklík, Němeček & Šebek, 2011.

⁴ This issue subsequently reappeared repeatedly. Compare for instance Kolektiv autorů, 1959.

a sacrificed nation (country) with its great moral potential that justified the capitulation of the Czechoslovak armed forces and relieved them of any accusation of cowardice. This also corresponded to the atmosphere in Czech society at the time, which was undoubtedly prepared to enter into an unequal war with Nazi Germany during the “Munich” period. Of the myriad of memories that support this statement, I choose one from literary scientist, critic and translator Václav Černý (1994, pp. 371-372):

I actually physically sensed in Dobrošov [military fort – comment BS] that our nation had found itself at one of its own historic pinnacles, that it had achieved a proud identification with its freedom, that it felt *qualified*. It wanted to prove itself in battle, at that moment it was great. I also felt that it would be tragically dangerous to strike down its self-confidence from this pinnacle through cowardice and capitulation. I experienced moments of joyous exaltation and I practically wished for the impending war! I was tormented by an internal need for the moral truth of the new Czech identity to prove itself through action and, through this, to be able to prove myself!

Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš justified capitulation through the argument of the physical survival of the nation

When Beneš capitulated, I believe he did so for two reasons. First of all, he was grievously wounded by the betrayal of France and England’s indifference. And secondly, he – possibly – considered that biological essence of the nation and believed that he was not entitled to sacrifice it, particularly at a time when war would be hopeless, Journalist Ferdinand Peroutka, a post-February emigree, reminisced during a broadcast by Free Europe (Peroutka, 1995, p. 130).⁵ However, Beneš did not doubt the qualities of the First Republic for even a moment.⁶

⁵ However, “Munich” and the capitulation remained a life-long political-moral trauma for Beneš.

When I returned from the concentration camp after the war and met Beneš for the first time, I could see that this issue still affected him deeply. Wondering whether he had made the right decision to not to make war. As soon as I entered the door, when he asked “How are you?”, his second question was “Did I make the right decision?” He meant that that there would have been far, far fewer victims than if there had been a war with Germany, Peroutka reminisced (Peroutka, 1995, p. 130). In Beneš’ memoirs we can read that he decided the matter of whether to fight or capitulate from the Czechoslovak and European aspect, from the human aspect – honourably and correctly (Beneš, 1968, p. 342).

⁶ In his radio speech on 10 September 1938 Beneš stated:

Our republic developed in peace and progress for an entire two decades; political democracy and freedom, economic and civilisational enrichment, the growth of democracy, cultural and

On the contrary, immediately after Munich, the opposition Communist Party pointed out the alleged betrayal of the egoistic “bourgeoisie” which took fright at the helping hand that was allegedly offered completely selflessly by the Soviet Union (Soukupová, 2016b, p. 25). This myth continued to be propagated after the Second World War by both the Communist media and belles lettres literature⁷. However, the “conflict between democracy and totality” also manifested in the opinions of the post-Munich direction of society. While right-wing and ultra-right-wing powers interpreted the oncoming national egoism as completely moral, the democratic public condemned this strategy as developmental denial of First Republic traditions (Soukupová, 2016b, p. 29). In the middle of October 1938, the Fascist National Republic presented the so-called Second Republic as a ship that must jettison the weight of the Jewish attorneys, physicians and financiers (Soukupová, 2016b, p. 32). We can demonstrate the absolutely decay of democracy in a leading article by Ferdinand Peroutka (Přítomnost 22 February 1939), in which this elite First Republic journalist called for resignation to the fate of German Jews in the residual republic (Soukupová, 2000, pp. 70-78).

Foreigners have reduced our tangible territory and now our own are reducing our spiritual territory ... This is the national catastrophe and not the lost territory!
painter and writer Josef Čapek moralised (Čapek, 1970, p. 208).

The Czech Jewish opinion of “Munich” after 30 September 1938

There were 79,777 individuals of Jewish faith living in Bohemia in First Republic Czechoslovakia in 1921, 37,989 in Moravia and 7,317 in Silesia. In 1930 these numbers were 76,301 in Bohemia and 41,250 in Moravia and Silesia. 11,251 people in Bohemia, 15,335 in Moravia and 3,681 in Silesia claimed Jewish nationality in 1921. During the second census, 15,697 people in Bohemia and 21,396 in Moravia stated Jewish nationality. In 1921, of those who claimed Jewish faith, 38 per cent claimed Czech nationality (43,350 individuals), 34.7 per cent claimed German nationality (39,69 individuals) and 25.9 per cent claimed Jewish nationality.⁸ The post-Munich views of the Czech-Jewish

religious tolerance and social justice achieved step by step without crisis, without a coup d'état or revolution, peacefully and progressively. What caused dangerous movement, or even revolution elsewhere, was dealt with reasonably in this country, without blind passion and practically (Beneš, 1968, p. 484).

⁷ Compare particularly the second part of the trilogy by Marie Pujmanová *Hra s ohněm* (*Playing with Fire*) (Pujmanová, 1974, pp. 277-287).

⁸ “Other” nationalities made up 1.4 per cent (this was 1,586 individuals). Comp. Macháčová & Matějček, 1999, s. 116.

movement, which primarily strove to address people of Jewish faith of Czech nationality, possibly Czechs of Jewish origin, can be described as very emotional. The Czech-Jewish press expressed its disappointment in the attitude of the great powers (or more precisely their ruling sets /Soukupová, 2007, p. 87/), who sacrificed Czechoslovakia, and the “shameful” capitulation of the Czechoslovak government (Soukupová, 2016a, pp. 165-166, p. 170). The association of Czech Jews in the Czechoslovak Republic, a central corporation of Czech-Jewish assimilationists, immediately began gathering material resources and money for refugees from the border areas, without distinguishing between language, nationality or political orientation (Soukupová, 2016c, p. 168). This attitude drew from the Jewish principle of moral severability. However, the second source of Czech-Jewish morals sprang from enlightenment: Czech Jews felt a deep obligation to the country they were born in (Soukupová, 2016a, p. 174), to the country in which they were now in danger. This is also why they refused to emigrate on the official level during the first weeks post-Munich. Displacement from Czechoslovakia was only freed of negative connotations at the beginning of 1939, on the background of preparation of anti-Semitic legislation by the government of Rudolf Beran (Soukupová, 2007, pp. 90-91, pp. 97-98; Soukupová, 2016a, pp. 186-188, p. 189). Remaining in Jewish religious communities was also considered moral. It is clear from the data gathered to date that the results only affected hundreds of people (Soukupová, 2007, p. 97). However, Czech Jews did not consider “Munich” itself a Czechoslovak matter, but the moral decay of all of Europe.⁹ The rapid escalation of anti-Semitism during the so-called Second Republic was described as an “injustice” to the loyal Jewish population. However, in the spirit of the Jewish tradition, the Jews also questioned their own potential failure (mainly by speaking German in public, too many members of the community in so-called non-productive fields), which may have reinforced anti-Jewish hatred (Soukupová, 2016a, p. 181, p. 186). However, the rule of moral severability was violated towards democratic German and German-Jewish refugees: These refugees were only supposed to be entitled to safe departure from Czechoslovakia, not to a new home on its borders (Soukupová, 2016a, pp. 182-183).

Jewish view of “Munich” after Czechoslovakia was freed (May 1945)

After Czechoslovakia was freed in May 1945, “Munich” became an important tool in the fight for political power. Interpretation of the Munich event by the propaganda of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, the most influ-

⁹ Europe experiences its greatest moral decline; Europe.....surrendered its rights, yielding to force, wrote Czech-Jewish weekly *Rozvoj* (Konec jednoho údobí, 1938, p. 1).

ential political party at the time, remained unswerving: the Western Powers allegedly betrayed Czechoslovakia in Munich together with Czechoslovak political powers (particularly social democracy, i.e., the main post-war political rival of the Communist Party) led by Edvard Beneš, in the terms of Communist editor Gustav Bareš, the “Czech reaction” (Bareš, 1948, p. 11, p. 14, p. 30). The only political power fighting against “Munich” was allegedly the Communist Party. And this was also the basis of its post-war political capital. This interpretation of the Munich events took place on the background of adoration of the Soviet Union and the Red Army after the Second World War, which allegedly rescued Czechoslovakia from absolute destruction (Soukupová, 2016c, pp. 13-14).

The leitmotif of the Jewish public, which was initially ideologically unstructured after the Second World War, became not repeating Munich, which allegedly opened the path to the 14th (which was when the independent Slovak state was established) and 15th of March 1939 (the violent occupation by Nazi Germany began on 15 March). Kurt Wehle, a representative of the Council of Jewish Religious parishes, expressed this spirit at the demonstration by Slovak Jews in Bratislava on 16 March 1939, i.e., on the anniversary of the declaration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939). It was the 16th of March that was the decisive date from the aspect of constitutional law, because this was when Adolf Hitler issued the Decree on the Establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (known as *Erlass*). On the date of this anniversary, Wehle simultaneously emphasised the moral standpoint of Jews in September 1938: the Jews did not betray the republic and subsequently fought on all fronts in the Second World War, including in partisan units, for its freedom (*Slovo k židům*, 1946, pp. 17-18). Germanist Pavel Eisner subsequently emphasised the fundamental relationship between many Jews and Czechoslovakia in an atmosphere of disputed or denied Jewish loyalty to the republic:

Not long after Munich, Petschek's Director, Taussig, shot himself ... This was a man with practically unlimited tangible potential, with unrestricted access to any foreign country, a man who was breathlessly awaited outside. I never heard that Petschek's Director Taussig was the Chief of the Prague Sokol regional organisation and I certainly do not know how knowledgeable he was in Czech. But that Petschek's Director Taussig rejected his escape abroad in his case as non-hazardous and chose death. He was incapable of leaving. After Munich, Chief Editor Thomas (Teweles) and his wife committed suicide by poisoning themselves. Half his Czech editorial staff were waiting for him in London, he could have looked forward to his global personal contacts. And this person, who was not heavy of temperament and was passionately devoted to all the pleasures of life, chose suicide. His motive: that he would never see Hradčany again and would not have Prague (Eisner, 1946, p. 59).

Štěpán Engel also defended the “German Jews” when the Minister of the Interior, Václav Kopecký, accused them, as alleged Germans, of being in-

volved in the Munich catastrophe, which was the first stage of the Nazi occupation, at the conference of chairmen of the Communal administration on 20 February 1946. According to him, members of Henlein's Sudeten German Party committed a "fateful betrayal" and this was why the presidential decrees should only apply to them (Engel, 1946, pp. 18-19).

Jewish opinion of "Munich" after the February coup d'état (1948)

As early as 1947, historian Miroslav Karný wrote in the Communist magazine *Tvorba* about the "Munich policy". That is what he called a policy that was supposed to aim German Nazism against the Soviet Union (Soukupová, 2016, p. 466). After the February coup d'état (1948), the Jewish representation assumed the reasoning and rhetoric of the Communist Party. "Munich" continued to be interpreted as a betrayal, which opened the path to 15 March 1939, and also as the beginning of the tragedy of the Czech Jews. However, more alleged guilty parties to this betrayal were a new element of the minority moral narrative. In his essay dated 17 September 1948, Karel Kreibich, a German Communist intellectual, accused the Jewish "bourgeoisie" and also some of the Jewish intellectuals, who were allegedly willing to back the reaction during the crisis years or at least avoided the political battle, of being involved in the catastrophe. After the February coup d'état, they began preparing a new "Munich" as emigres. Members of the global Zionist movement also allegedly acted in the same manner (Kreibich, 1948, pp. 405-406).

Czech "democrats", who caused the Munich catastrophe and thereby the torture and death of thousands of Jews through their policy of capitulation and were eliminated from public activities in the people's democracy by the events of February, were now making treasonous plans against the republic along with the protectors of Fascism, Nazism and anti-Semitism, during which time they cooperated with displaced Henlein supporters. That is how a new Munich is prepared, Kreibich wrote (Kreibich, 1948, p. 406).

At the same time, Communist propaganda intentionally failed to highlight that Beneš' abdication and acceptance of the agreement was the result of pressure from abroad and also from Czechoslovak politics.

But the same moral narrative could also be heard during the years of political trials with major anti-Semitic tendencies and their repercussions during the second half of the nineteen fifties. The moral message of "Munich" was intended to convince the Jewish population that the "Jewish question" could only be resolved within the terms of a socialist system and that the role of the Jews is only as enthusiastic builders of a new world order under the patronage of the Soviet Union. Not just negative attitudes towards socialism, but also

political passiveness, were inexcusable and the motto *He who does not stand with us, stands against us* became employed extensively. Štěpán Kisch, a cousin of left-wing journalist Egon Erwin Kisch and a representative of the Jewish religious community, who proved that “Munich” was the result of the capitalist order, in whose reinforcement some Jews were also involved, wrote his leading article *Když zrada byla dokonána (When Betrayal Was Accomplished)* in the same spirit as Kreibich. However, Kisch also praised the Jewish resistance, even though only the one on the Eastern Front:

Our coreligionists were trying to cope with the events of the time, which occurred in rapid succession. Of course, they all hated Hitler and his hordes. Of course, they all condemned the betrayal to which our homeland was sacrificed, but only a small minority realised the background and causal relations of this catastrophe. Only a very small minority were aware who their own archenemy was, why this disaster, which also dragged them into the chasm, occurred ... the Jewish upper and middle classes believed that they could remain outside global events, that they could simply declare themselves “neutral” and completely overlook that they were helping their archenemy by their “neutrality” ... This is why the Munich betrayal and its consequences, which also included the occupation of the remainder of the republic on 15 March 1939, affected a great number of our coreligionists so deeply because they were simply unprepared for the absolutely logical course of events ... Disaster ... was the only logical consequence of a twisted social order, the laws of which are aimed solely towards protecting and retaining the property and power of a negligible group of people, living to the detriment of the working masses ... it is impossible to hide that this group also includes a certain percentage of Jews. However, there were also different coreligionists. And I am talking about the thousands and thousands of coreligionists who expressed their willingness to fight at Sokolov, at Kyiv, at Bílá Cerkva, at the Dukel Pass, side-by-side with the heroic Red Army in the independent Czechoslovak Brigade and won their equality on the bloody battle-fields of the Eastern Front of the Second World War (Kisch, 1951a, p. 120).

In another essay, with the no less characteristic title of *Žlutá hvězda vyšla v Mnichově (The Yellow Star Rose in Munich)*, Kisch again named the alleged betrayers of the “Czechoslovak people”: the anti-Soviet orientated and politically naive Western Powers (updated to Western Imperialists) and the Czech “Bourgeoisie”, which betrayed the Czechoslovak people, who had resolved to fight side-by-side with the Soviet Union:

It became apparent in Munich that the Western Imperialists no longer control their own tool – German and Italian Fascism, which is out of their control and, what is more, they themselves were at its mercy. The tool aimed against the Soviet Union turned first of all against its own master, against its intellectual parent. The Munich Agreement could not, however, have been dictatorially imposed on our homeland without the ample help of the Czech bourgeoisie, the Preisses,

Baťas, Petscheks, etc.....The Czechoslovak people, the working masses and working intelligentsia, wanted to fight during the historic days of September in 1938.....It was once again only the Communist Party who supported the efforts of the people in all aspects and resolutely emphasised the fact that the Soviet Union is prepared to help us.....However, our bourgeoisie did not welcome the help of the Soviet Union. It preferred to submit to the dictate of Hitler at the price that their bundles of money would remain untouched (Kisch, 1951b, p. 464).

The Western democracies were ablaze, as they said at the time, with enthusiasm for Hitler and Mussolini, who were able to heroically deal with the dissatisfaction of the labourers. They privately or publicly admired the authoritative regimes, which strangled the neck of the so-feared international communism... Hitler and those similar to him, duly utilised this hate towards the Soviet Union during the long years of their tyranny. This is why our “castle” wing of the ruling class was closer to Hitler than the Soviet Union... This, and long before, is where the beginnings of Munich and thereby the Jewish tragedy arise. It was regretful that many Jewish factory owners and bankers did not realise that Fascism would not decimate just the Jewish people’s classes, but that it would also take great pleasure in seizing them and their property to “aryanise” it, wrote the Jewish Bulletin twenty years after “Munich” (Za opravdovou lidskost, 1958, p. 1).

In the predominant rhetoric of the time however, a strong national aspect was already being, seemingly surprisingly, employed. The comparison of Munich to the post-White Mountain tragedy, a symbol of the historic tragedy of the Czech nation in Czech ideology, appeared as a leitmotif.¹⁰ The national framework, into which “Munich” was integrated, contributed substantially to the crushing criticism of Adenauer’s Germany and increased after former West Germany (so-called German Federal Republic) joined NATO. On the contrary, the consequences of “Munich” for the Jewish population of Czechoslovakia at the time were practically not mentioned by the official majority propaganda (Soukupová, 2017, pp. 15-16).

Moral narrative in the “Golden sixties”

The “Golden sixties” introduced two new topics to the established interpretation of “Munich” as the betrayal of the Czechoslovak people by the “bourgeoisie”, which only the Communist party desired to prevent, “Munich” as an opening event to the Second World War as a result of the short-sighted “imperialistic” anti-Soviet policy, and the continuation of “Munich” in the political practice of West Germany: the topic of Munich as a consequence of the nationalistic policy of the First Republic and the topic of the division of West German historiography in the matter of its interpretation (Soukupová, 2017, pp. 16-18). In the second case we can speak of a “political thaw”. This

¹⁰ Comp. e.g. Bareš, 1958, p. 5; Křen, 1958, p. 14; Hájek, 1958, p. 46.

also manifested as improved relations between Czechoslovakia and West Germany. West Germany subsequently announced the nullity of “Munich” in 1963 (Kubišta, 1988, p. 7).

The minority press continued to expand upon the motive of 15 March 1939 as a result of “Munich”, or more precisely, the “betrayal” by the bourgeoisie, which refused the help of the Soviet Union and capitulated (O.H., 1962, p. 2). In 1963, on the 25th anniversary of “Munich”, the minority Bulletin repeated the stereotype about selfish western democracies, which were capable of negotiating with Hitler on the platform of anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism.

Munich, as history has proven, was the last effort by European imperialist countries to arrange an anti-Soviet pact before the war. It fell apart six months later due to insurmountable conflict between its signatories and turned against them... Entire other nations were earmarked for liquidation after the communists and Jews, the Bulletin wrote, but simultaneously appealed, under the more relaxed political-social conditions, for the creation of a coalition of western democracies with the Soviet Union. This was supposed to be a sort of continuation of the tradition of the anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War (Mnichov po 25 letech, 1963, p. 1). The bitter fate of Jewish refugees who spoke the German mother tongue and searched for a substitute home in the late First and so-called Second Czechoslovak Republic, also became a new topic.

Tens of thousands of people moved from the border areas to the centre of the country, including Jews, usually speaking German. This clearly escalated the element of “Germanisation”, which was all the more painful because Hitler used old Austrian statistics about the “German” population in the border areas to support his claims in Munich. And it was well-known that the business and social involvement of Jewish businessmen in this area played a great role... External pressure, particularly on the level of chauvinistic, very aggravated circles, indisputably increased (Skončilo to, 1969, p. 7).

Interpretation of “Munich” during the “normalisation” period (1969 – 1989)

The official “normalisation” interpretation of “Munich” was in the spirit of the return to the rhetoric of the turn of the forties and fifties, as discussed above. The leitmotif became the interpretation of “Munich” as a result of the West’s (as global imperialism was termed at the time) hatred of the Soviet Union. The leitmotif of betrayal by the “bourgeoisie” and the Communist Party as the only anti-Hitler force, was repeated (Soukupová, 2017, p. 18). The painful topic of capitulation becomes the moral narrative once again. *Měli*

jsme bojovat (We Should have Fought) is the name of one of the period editions of documents originating as a result of the activities of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in September 1938 (Štěpán & Soukup, 1978). The topic of capitulation is opened at the same time. “Munich” was supposed to be used mainly as evidence of the unsustainability of the “bourgeoise” concept in the Czechoslovak state after the crushing defeat of the Prague Spring:

Munich proved that the bourgeoisie concept of the Czechoslovak state was unsustainable. It became a synonym of betrayal by the Czechoslovak grand bourgeoisie and the Western powers, and the capitulating nature of the leaders of the reformist parties, for the Czechoslovak people. This is where the process of learning, during which people realised that the working class must come to the fore of our nations, led by the Communist Party (Štěpán & Soukup, 1978, p. 3), began.

The year 1988, when the fiftieth anniversary of “Munich” was overshadowed by the minority memory of fifty years since “Crystal Night” from 9 to 10 September 1938 (Noc, 1988, p. 1) heralded an extensive complex of political-social changes.

Conclusion

Throughout the entire post-war period, “Munich” remained a tragic milestone in majority and minority interpretation, which opened the path to the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. However, the Jewish representation absurdly had to defend itself against the accusation that some of the Jewish population, who claimed German nationality during the census in 1921 and 1930, contributed to “Munich”, right after Czechoslovakia was freed. It devoted itself to refusing this accusation during the more relaxed environment of the nineteen sixties. The Jewish principle of moral severability was clearly applied after the Shoa. After the February coup d’état (1948), the minority official rhetoric overshadowed the majority. However, the Jewish representation admitted at the time that Jews were also involved in the catastrophe, partially as a result of the Jewish ideology, which seeks the cause of failure in itself. The Jewish “bourgeoisie” was merged with the Czechoslovak “bourgeoisie”. Jewish intellectuals also allowed the victory of a response with their hesitant attitude. While a strong national framework was employed in majority interpretations, the minority interpretation remained strictly partisan, “more Catholic than the Pope himself”. I believe that this was one of the consequences of the political trials and the new efforts of state anti-Semitism. The tried and tested intentional politisation of “Munich” continued during the “Golden sixties”, when efforts to show the ununified opinion of “Munich” in West German his-

toriography also appeared in official historiography. The minority standpoint emphasised the need to bring the western democracies closer to the Soviet Block, specifically in a reminiscence of the anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War. “Normalisation” dragged the discussion about “Munich” back to the period of the strictest totalitarianism, but found a reason for the socialist direction of Czechoslovakia under the leadership of the Soviet Union as the only possible developmental alternative, in this event. The majority and minority narrative of Munich after the Velvet Revolution (1989) deserves to be studied separately. From the aspect of majority historiography, we encounter efforts to critically map “empty spaces” in history on one hand, with the goal of analysing the failure of the political representation of the Second Republic (and it is positive that this interpretation predominates). On the other hand, the uninfluential conservative research movement explains the end of the First Republic as the inevitable collapse of the liberal democracy, which was unable to cope with a social and national crisis, and denies the fact of the rapid Fascistification of the Second Republic. The specific trivialisation of anti-democratic activities by Catholic intellectuals is also typical. However, the Czech-Jewish public logically links “Munich” not only to the destruction of the First Republic's liberalism, but also, like most historians of the Second Republic, to the 233 to 277 thousand Jewish victims of the Nazi regime, who came from the First Republic of Czechoslovakia.

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