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The Shoah in Poland in the Work of Jiří Weil: Translations and Literary Reference*

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Jiří Weil (1900–1959) is currently associated in particular with novel-writing. His works *Moskva-hranice* (Moscow to the Border), *Život s hvězdou* (Life with a Star) and *Na střeše je Mendelssohn* (Mendelssohn is on the Roof) has been translated into several world languages. Jiří Weil was also a journalist, a researcher at the Jewish Museum in Prague and a translator. This study *The Shoah in Poland in the work of Jiří Weil* focuses on his translations of Polish poets and his literary work dealing with the Shoah and set in postwar Poland, Warsaw, Łódź and Auschwitz.

KEYWORDS: Jiří Weil; Poland; Shoah; poems; short story; Władysław Szlengel; Warsaw Ghetto; Łódź ghetto; Auschwitz

In April 1951, a translation of a poem by Władysław Szlengel entitled *Protiútok* (Counter-attack) came out in “Věstník Židovské obce náboženské” (Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community), with a brief introduction¹:

Władysław Szlengel, a modern Polish poet, died in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In the ghetto he wrote a collection of poems entitled *Co jsem četl zemřelým* (What I Read to the Dead), some of which has survived in transcriptions. *Protiútok* is Szlengel’s last poem. It portrays the beginning of the uprising in the ghetto (Szlengel 1951a: 189).

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¹ The author of the explanatory notes in “Věstník Židovské obce náboženské” is unknown.

Under the translation, readers found the abbreviation “jw”. A week later a translation of a poem entitled *Věci* (Things; Szlengel 1951b: 211) by the same Polish poet was printed in the same periodical under the same abbreviation.

The abbreviation “jw” was used by Jiří Weil (1900–1959), a famous writer, translator, journalist and by that time research worker at the Jewish Museum in Prague. More of his translations of poems, mostly with an explanatory note “*Poem from the Ghetto Poetry collection*”², were printed throughout 1951 in “*Věstník Židovské obce náboženské*”: in addition to Władysław Szlengel (*Protiútok, Věci, Zazvoňte* – Ring), there were also poems by Stefania Ney (*Heršek, Jurek*), Lucjan Szenwald (*Zemřelé* – Dead), Horacy Safrin (*Verše o mé matce* – Verses About my Mother), Henka and Ila Karmel (*Stopa na zdi* – Mark on the Wall) and Wanda Ewa Brzeska (*At se nám to jen zdá* – Hope We Have Just a Nightmare). The accompanying information on the translation of the poem by Stefania Ney completed the explanation for the readers of the origin of the *Ghetto Poetry* collection: “The Jewish Historical Institute publishers in Warsaw recently published a collection of Polish poems by authors who died in the Nazi ghettos in Poland” (Neyová 1951: 334).

Following the nine poems selected from this anthology that same year, Weil’s translation of a poem by Leopold Lewin *Otčino mé víry* (Fatherland of my Faith) was printed with the accompanying text: “Today we are publishing a poem by Polish Jewish author Leopold Lewin, which won second prize in a Polish-Soviet Friendship Association competition (first prize was not awarded) (Lewin 1951b: 561)”³. Three years later (1954), Weil’s translation of Szlengel’s poem *Telefon* (Telephone) (Szlengel 1954: 46) was published in “*Věstník Židovské obce náboženské*”. A total of thirteen poems can be found in “*Věstník Židovské obce náboženské*”, “*Světová literatura*” and the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature, twelve⁴ of which were demonstrably translated by Jiří Weil⁵.

²The book concerned is the anthology *Pieśń ujdzie calo* (1947).

³The original poem was printed in *Nowa Kultura* (Lewin 1951a).

⁴The poem *Poplach* was most likely translated by Jan Zábrana, v. undermentioned.

⁵One of these translations, a poem by Izabela Gelbard *Stíny křičí* (The Shadows Shout), stored in the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature (hereafter LA PNP), has not been found in any of the periodicals from that time. The formal layout of the typescript

What for Jiří Weil was key to the selection of these poets and poems is partly indicated in his lecture for members of the Czech PEN Club⁶ given in 1955 as a part of a lecture series arranged to mark the 10th anniversary celebrations of the end of the Second World War.

An afternoon session entitled *Básně utrpení a vítězství* (Poems of Suffering and Victory) was compiled from the lecture and recitation of translations of selected poems, the authors of which were imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto⁷. This took place 1. 6. 1955 at the National Club in Prague (LA PNP, PEN Club fonds, 2-D/132). The lecture by Jiří Weil has been preserved at the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature:

The poems that are to be read here are tragic poems. They were written in circumstances in which works of poetry are rarely written, by people who knew they were about to die and who are now dead with one or two exceptions. They were written in the Warsaw Ghetto and read by their friends, who like them were also about to die (LA PNP, Jiří Weil fonds, 32/C/23).

Jiří Weil's lecture acquaints the audience with the history of the Warsaw Ghetto. He highlights the heroism of the ghetto defenders, refers to the reception of their deeds throughout Europe and provides a brief run-down of selected world artists who dedicated some of their work to the Polish uprising. Jiří Weil then briefly presents individual poets whose works were read out during the presentation and summarizes the content of the foreword written by Władysław Szlengel for his poetry collection *Co jsem četl zemřelým* (What I Read to the Dead). After this brief introduction he deals with the authors of the selected poems in greater detail:

is identical in the translations published in "Věstník Židovské obce náboženské", but here it is not found, although the accompanying note on the verses indicates it was printed. All the other poems were published in "Věstník Židovské obce náboženské" or "Světová literatura". *Stíny kříží* is the introductory poem of the collection *Pieśni żalobne getta*, published originally in 1946.

⁶According to PEN Club meeting notes 1938–1939, Jiří Weil was accepted as a PEN Club member in elections of members on 29.11.1938 and 3.01.1939. (LA PNP, PEN Club Fonds, 2-D/113)

⁷According to notes stored in the PEN Club fonds, the Polish and Czech PEN Clubs collaborated. (LA PNP, PEN Club Fonds, 2-D/110 and 2-D/138). Both countries collaborated not only at the political level as part of what was known as the Czechoslovak-Polish Agreement, but also in the cultural arena and other areas. The Czechoslovak press at the time made detailed records of meetings between the representatives of these countries in the cultural sphere.

Although the most important testimony is the work of the Warsaw Ghetto poets, particularly Władysław Szlengel, a poet who died with a weapon in his hands on the second-to-last day of the uprising. Only a handful of verses have survived from his poetry book *Co jsem četl zemřelým*, hidden away at his friend's home. However, even these few poems speak of the great strength of the poet's mode of expression, the richness of his imagination and the pathos of his struggle. (...) Szlengel's poetry shows (...) development – from a description of the horrors, from a yearning for his lost life in *Telefon*, his poetry grows into the revolutionary epic of *Protiútok*. Before the war, Szlengel was a member of a group of Polish surrealists, and his development towards revolutionary poetry is similar to that of Éluard. He established a poetry circle in the ghetto that was joined by Stefania Ney, a poet whose verse you will hear too this day and who also died in the uprising. Izabela Gelbard, another ghetto poet, escaped after the uprising was put down and fought in the partisan movement until the end of the war under the name of Captain Czajka. The second outstanding poet well-known even before the war was Lucjan Szenwald, who began to write under the strong influence of Sergei Yesenin and was introduced to literature by Julian Tuwim. Lucjan Szenwald was not in the Warsaw Ghetto, but he fought in the ranks of the Red Army and died in his native land before Warsaw. Other poets⁸, whose work will be read out today, are unknown, but their verse speaks the same language and shows the same heroism, the same hatred for bestial fascism and faith in the victory of a just cause (LA PNP, Jiří Weil fonds, 32/C/23).

The lecture was concluded by “several poems by Czech poets introduced by Milena Nováková” (LA PNP, PEN Club fonds, 2-D/132). This consisted of a selection of poems by Czech writers celebrating liberation.

The poems were probably selected for translation by Jiří Weil himself in the early 1950s, on the basis of his affinity to their content. The motifs of hiding, fear of the doorbell, arrest and resistance, yearning for a lost home and friends, clinging to things, theft of Jewish property, memories of mother, suffering of children, as well as shadows of the dead – all these subjects appear in Jiří Weil's novels and short stories, as he also experienced similar situations during the occupation and suffered similar personal losses.

Weil's translation of three of Szlengel's poems (*Telefon* – Telephone, *Račte zvonit*⁹ – Please Ring, and *Věci* – Things) was reprinted in 1961 in “Světová literatura” magazine along with the hitherto unpublished poem

⁸A precise listing of authors has not been preserved.

⁹In the original translation for “Věstník Židovské obce náboženské” and PEN Club *Zavoňte*.

*Poplach*¹⁰ (Alarm). The poems are preceded by Szlengel's accompanying note *Polskému čtenáři* (To the Polish Reader) and the introduction *Co jsem četl zemřelým* (What I Read to the Dead); both texts were preserved in Warsaw with the original discovered poems.

Szlengel's poems and accompanying texts are preceded by a brief introduction summarizing, as in the case of Jiří Weil's lecture for the PEN Club, information on the life and fate of Władysław Szlengel and his hidden work, only a fragment of which has survived, and the postwar literary works in which this poet appears as a character. The brief accompanying text concludes with a warning: "These days when fascistic madmen in the West have again started charging around synagogues with brushes and buckets of lime, Szlengel's verse is definitely not utopian" (Szlengel 1961d: 146). The last translated poem is then followed by this information: "Translated by Jiří Weil and Jan Zábřana¹¹. Sent to the printers at the time the Adolf Eichmann trial was coming to a climax" (Szlengel 1961c: 160).

Based on a comparison of translations of the poems in manuscript and typescript form from the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature with the printed versions of the poems in "Věstník Židovské obce náboženské" and subsequently in "Světová literatura", it can be stated that the publication of the poems in "Věstník..." differs from the version in "Světová literatura". The man behind the alterations and the text changes involved is most probably co-author Jan Zábřana. A comparison of the Polish originals and both versions of the Czech translation

¹⁰The translation of this poem has not been preserved either in manuscript or typescript form in the Jiří Weil fonds at LA PNP. The author of the Czech translation of the poem *Poplach* is most probably Jan Zábřana, who is named in the conclusion as the co-author along with the now deceased Jiří Weil. Although these two writers were separated by a considerable age difference, they were friends, and Jan Zábřana used to visit Jiří Weil, while from the start Weil helped him in translations from Russian.

¹¹In addition to works by Jiří Weil, other Czech artists also dealt with Polish poetry. For example, in 1947 a selection of Polish poetry from 1938 to 1945 translated by Jan Pilař came out under the title *Pochodně* (Torches). In 1952 an anthology was published under the title *Nová polská poezie* (New Polish Poetry). The poems in this collection were translated by Adolf Hoffmeister, Jan Pilař, Josef Rumler, Zikmund Skyba, Erich Sojka and Jaroslav Závada. Translations of modern Polish poets came out e.g. in works by Viola Fischerová, Petr Motýl and Václav Burian.

clearly shows that the translation by Jan Zábřana is closer to the Polish original.

The poems *Heršek*¹², *Jurek*, *Otčino mé víry*¹³, *Ať se nám to jen zdá*¹⁴ and *Věci*¹⁵ can be considered to be some of Weil's best translations.

¹²Omitted from the translation of the poem *Heršek* is an impressive verse with a child's plea to God for a happy return from a trip beyond the ghetto for bread and a terse message that in time of war God has other concerns. Moreover, an additional comparison is added (e.g. crawls under the wires like a viper, i.e. he is nimble and swift; while the original only has "crawls under the wires"). A subtle shift in meaning occurs with regard to the gendarme's movement: In the translation of the poem, the gendarme turns his back, in the original goes round the corner. There is also a significant shift of meaning in the third and fourth verse, when the word "společník" (partner) is translated as "kamarád" (comrade) and the greeting "Heil Jew!" in the original is translated as "Hi Heršek!", and in the fourth verse in place of Germans who kill, the word gendarme is repeated from the second verse, while Weil changes the image describing the dying lying by the wire for what is probably a more compelling image for the reader of a gendarme who "has killed more children that they are countless" (Ney 1947a: 124–125; Neyová 1951: 334). The question is whether the omission of the words God, Jew and German was caused by fear of the censor or a more serious intervention (although God is portrayed negatively in the poem). Before the war, Weil was expelled from the Communist Party in Moscow. This was followed by move to Interhelpeo and Central Asia. After returning to Prague, Weil faced sharp criticism from the Communists for his prewar novel *Moskva-hranice* (Moscow to the Border). After the revolution, he was the target of harsh criticism for his novel *Život s hvězdou* (Life with a Star). This was followed by expulsion from the Union of Writers, he had to retire into literary seclusion and all his works were heavily censored till the end of his life (for details v. Hrubeš, Kryl 2003 a Kryl 2008).

¹³There are only minor shifts in the translation: Mention of a Russian girl and a fascist was omitted (Lewin 1951a: 1; 1951b: 561).

¹⁴There are only minor shifts in the translation as well: instead of wheels from a scooter appears a leg from a little horse. In translation there is another type of binding for the child. The children were cold because they were barefoot, not because the wind was blowing. A significant mistake in the translation is the information in the first verse about the length of the period of hiding (the translation says four months, but the original says five months) (Brzeska 1947: 75–76; 1951: 469).

¹⁵The translation of the poem *Věci* is practically identical in the 1950s to the translation in 1961. Apart from minor differences (e.g. instead of a piece of sausage the translation says bread and butter), a sentence is added to the original "How they are good, who denies it, these things of the Jewish vampire?". Jewish vehicles are translated as vehicles with Jews. The verse "a gloomy crowd travels" is translated as "travels with misery in their faces" (1951), but also as "travels with horror in their faces" (1961). Due to an error in the translation (confusion of "pětistup" – column of five for the word "pažba" – butt) instead of "they marched in columns of five straight down the street", the two translations say "the gendarmes drove them with rifle butts" (1951) and "the gendarmes beat them with rifle butts" (1961). Also the conclusion of the poem is different to the original. The original says that the tablet remaining

The great majority of the twelve translated poems differ in meaning from the original¹⁶. The translation of Szlengel's poems involved a shift

on the table will be evidence of events that have taken place, even if the truth is defeated (i.e. it will not be known). In the translation, the tablet in the empty apartment becomes a mute judge of those "whose memory is cursed". Weil also deliberately works with the motif of family portraits, which he uses to achieve a climax, in contrast to the author. Family portraits disappear and are replaced by portraits of a new family, which also disappears (Szlengel 1947c: 172–175; 1951b: 211; 1961c: 158–160).

¹⁶For example in the poem *Verše o mé matce* (Verses About my Mother), the word "ghetto" is used instead of the word "town", which concretizes the otherwise indeterminate time-space in the original poem. The word "modlitba" (prayer) is confused for the word "přání" (wish). Words for camp and noise of the cannon are added. There is also a significant change in image of the death of the mother. In the original poem, the poetic subject hopes that the mother will avoid the rifle butt, the mercenary's boot and the barrel of the gun, and that she dies quietly in bed and is buried in "bratřská hrobka" (fraternal crypt). The translation uses a subtler image "the mercenaries' butt will not break down your door" and "your coffin will be carried from the threshold of your birth", i.e. soldiers will not break into your house and the ritual of placing the corpse in a coffin in your own home will be maintained. A significant change is made at the end of the poem, where the original speaks of overcoming hatred if the mother is found: "I shall weave all that burning hatred into a symphony of our days, I shall recast the word into lightning, I shall ring the heart in alarm!", whereas the conclusion of the translation is written in compliance with socialist realism: "And in the work of our days and the laughter of our children this branch will blossom and there'll be no death" (Safrin 1947: 139; 1951: 507).

The reasons why Jiří Weil chose this poem for translation might have been purely personal – the memory of his own mother, who died in an extermination camp.

Minor changes have also been made to the meaning of the poem *Stíny křičí* (The Shadows Shout) and there is again a substantial change at the end. The concluding couplet of the original "If only this cry never allowed you to sleep. Millions of defenceless innocent people were murdered – Life was vilified" is replaced by a call at the end: "(...) their cry does not let you sleep, (...) They will only live in your vengeance. So take a weapon and defend their honour, defend!" (Gelbard 1946: 9; LA PNP, Jiří Weil fonds, 32/C/24). Jiří Weil used a similar approach in the poem *Protiútok*. The translation of the original poem *Protiútok*, which is outstanding from the outset and only differs in a few words (mention of "vagón" (carriage) was omitted, and instead of "práskání bičů" (whip cracking) there is "střelba" (shooting), instead of "hyenas" there are "wolves", "tormented children" are added to the "tormented woman" to deliberately heighten the effect of the verse and likewise the words crematorium and gas are (erroneously) added, while the middle section diverges entirely from the original. Even in the manuscript, the first translation of the verse is deleted and replaced by the verse: "now the song of happiness and blows of steel crush them" and later "Molotov cocktail" is added along with the sentence "here your «yids» are protected". In contrast to the original, in the poem in translation the Jews ask God for weapons and death in the fight, not for a rapid death in the fight. However, the mentions of God are not deleted as they are in the other poems. The Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature has only preserved the poem manuscript,

in the poetics¹⁷. In some cases, the Czech translation is not complete either (it might have been abridged due to a lack of space in the published periodical).

The most prominent changes were made in the poems *Zemřelé*¹⁸ (Dead) and *Stopa na zdi*¹⁹ (Mark on the Wall). The difference between the translations of *Račte zvonit*²⁰ (Please Ring) and *Telefon*²¹ in the 1950s and 1960s are considerable.

on which Weil considered the verse “for smoke above Birkenau, for blood and tears of children”; in the printed version this is replaced by the verse “We are now on the attack and we are getting ever closer, (...)” (Szlengel 1947e: 190–193; 1951a: 189).

¹⁷According to Štěpán Balik, who analysed the poetics of Weil’s translations of Szlengel’s poems for this study, the translation resulted in a shift in the poetics. A simple verse form gives rise to a “sublime” poem.

¹⁸The original poem has 22 verses. The translation has ten verses and contains a partly recast version of the original poem. However, at the end of the abridged poem, in particular, there were considerable “pro-regime” alterations. The verse “the army fights its way through” and the word “pancéř” (armour) was added as well as the entire final verse (“In the roar of the cannons, the barking of the machine guns, the blow of just vengeance, your name will ring out against sorrow, as the clear melody of victory”). The translation of the poem omits important Orpheus myth. However, the tears of a child and mother’s grief, the gas and the crematorium oven are erroneously added (Szenwald 1947: 148–151; 1951: 611).

¹⁹In the poem *Stopa na zdi* (Mark on a Wall), there is an overall change in the content and hence the meaning of the poem. The girl, who is addressed by the poetic subject, who thinks that her efforts to leave a trace of herself on an otherwise undetermined wall is in vain, turns into a girl who is fighting by leaving a trace of herself in the prison where the shouts of the jailers and the sobs of the tormented can be heard, as she knows that the mark will survive her. The word Stalingrad appears in the poem, although it is not in the original (Karmel 1947: 104; 1951: 409).

²⁰The first translation (1951) of the poem *Račte zvonit / Zazvoňte* (Please Ring / Ring) contains plenty of imagined information and verses, while subsequently second translation (1961) is outstanding in its form and content. Of interest here is the use by Szlengel of vampires (tenants as vampires) (Szlengel 1947d: 184–186; 1951c: 529; 1961a: 154–155).

²¹In the translation of the poem *Telefon* (Telephone), the author has replaced the original titles and names with similar Czech equivalents. The question arises whether the reason was just an attempt to find a historical equivalent (Gary Cooper x Chaplin), or titles and names that were unknown to the contemporary reader, or whether it involved a censorship or auto-censorship intervention. Weil in the poem again left out any mention of God, although this time there was the sigh “proboha” (good heavens). On the other hand, the question arises why Weil replaced autumn in the verses by spring, changed the time in the timer and in the final verse wrote “five minutes past twelve” instead of “five minutes to twelve”. The translation printed in the early sixties differs considerably from the first translation. It is a practically perfect faithful reflection of the content of the original, including mentions of God (Szlengel 1947b: 169–172; 1954: 46; 1961b: 157–158).

The question arises whether it was appropriate to print the translation in such a markedly different form, doubtless resulting to a large extent from the censor's interventions and wishes²² (a weaker grasp of the original language also comes into consideration in some cases, although in view of the verbal precision of the unaltered "pro-regime" sections of the translation this seems unlikely), as practically brand new poems were created, which were quite remote from the original.

Whether or not Jiří Weil's primary interest in the works of Jewish poets from the Warsaw Ghetto stems from his membership of the internationally collaborating Czech PEN Club, from a general interest in Polish literary output as part of the close Polish-Czech cultural friendship predominant at that time, from his specialist work in State Jewish Museum in Prague or for personal reasons (the tragic death of family and friends, a desire to show the bravery and mettle of the Jews, or there again an effort to warn against a repetition of the recent tragic events), it is not possible to determine on the basis of surviving archive material or the testimonies of surviving contemporaries.

Jiří Weil's interest in Poland and Polish Jewish poets is already evident from his journalistic and fictional work in the latter half of the 1940s, when his articles smoothly followed on²³ from his prewar journalistic experience²⁴.

In 1947, he was authorized as editor of the Prague daily "Mladá fronta" to travel with the support of the Ministry of Information under the Czechoslovak-Polish Agreement: "Dr. Weil is to travel (...) to Poland²⁵ as

²² Likewise some of the passages from Jiří Weil's *Na střeše je Mendelssohn* were "amended".

²³ V. e.g. articles on Polish culture: *Polský básník u nás* (Weil 1946: 3), *Spisovatelé v Polsku* (Weil 1947a: 6) and *Československo-polská kulturní spolupráce* (Weil 1947b: 6).

²⁴ The roots of Weil's translation and journalistic activity go back to the 1920s, when as a young poet and promising student he moved from Praskolesy to Prague, where he entered the world of intellectuals, writers and translators, and on the model of his new friends he continued not only on his own poetic work, but he also began to focus on translation and journalistic activity. In his meetings in cafes, salons and apartments, and in discussions on the differences between the east and the west, and literature and art, he first met inter alia Franz Kafka, Karel Teige, Jaroslav Seifert, Julius Fučík and František Halas.

²⁵ In his personal notebooks stored at the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature, there are Polish names and addresses with the following Polish towns: Kielce, Gdańsk, Warsaw, Wrocław (LA PNP, Jiří Weil fonds, 32/C/25).

a correspondent of the aforementioned daily on a study trip and at the same time to acquire photographic material that cannot be obtained in Prague” (National Archive, Prague Police Headquarters fonds, box no. 12186, shelf no. V 1628/18.). This trip abroad gave rise to a series of reports printed in July 1947 in “Mladá fronta”²⁶. Just like Jiří Weil’s trip to the Soviet Union before the Second World War, when first his reports emerged from the locations being visited, followed by reportage stories and books, so likewise in his postwar trip to Poland Jiří Weil drew inspiration for his other literary work²⁷.

At first he presented to readers the short story *Varšavská suita* (Warsaw Suite; 1947). The second story *Lodžské intermezzo* (Łódź Intermezzo) was firstly published in 1948²⁸, then in a collection of short stories entitled *Mír* in 1949). The manuscripts of both stories can be found in notebooks with fragments of the novel *Život s hvězdou* (Life with a Star). A decade later the introductory and concluding passages of *Žalozpěv za 77 297 obětí*²⁹ (Lament for 77, 297 Victims) appeared, based on memories of Auschwitz.

The short stories *Lodžské intermezzo*³⁰ and *Varšavská suita*³¹ are among a set of tales reflecting to varying degrees the Shoah that were

²⁶ Reports from Warsaw, Gdańsk and Auschwitz.

²⁷ Minor references to Poland can be found in his works written during the war and shortly after the war. According to an official document required for the issue of a passport, he also visited Poland in 1935 on a trip to the Soviet Union. Weil mentions his prewar trip across Poland himself in his report from Warsaw.

²⁸ *Lodžské intermezzo* (Weil 1948: 11).

²⁹ For more details v. the study of *Žalozpěv* (Hříbková 2016).

³⁰ Stored at LA PNP in manuscript and typescript form. The manuscript finishes with a decision made by the poet not to return to the theatre, while the typescript version is extended to include information by the poet on the uprising and heroism of the Łódź Jews.

³¹ In the manuscript *Večer ve Varšavě* (Evening in Warsaw), subsequently *Varšavský večer* (Warsaw Evening), and in the typescript version *Varšavská suita* (Warsaw Suite). The manuscript and the typescript differ substantially. In some parts, there is a shift in the meaning or a change in the climax, e.g. at the beginning of the story the narrator describes the surroundings. He perceives people, who are brewing tea in the ruins of what was once Warsaw. In contrast, he sits with other people on the terrace. However, the apparent peace and quiet is interrupted: “Some fragments of bricks fell on the veranda and some just missed our heads”. These fears of a possible injury are changed in the typescript version into what is more an annoying inconvenience: “Some fragments of bricks fell on the veranda right in our food”. There are other significant changes to the content of the story. Compared with the manuscript, there are deletions of passages on criticism of America and a description of the looting and

included in the *Mír* (1949) collection³². Six of these are linked by the autobiographical narrator wandering through postwar Europe. The short stories in this collection, which mostly comprise dialogues during chance meetings, do not have any significant climax. The aim of the stories is to evoke the climate of opinion at that time, giving rise to a specific narrative approach whereby standing out against a fuzzy backdrop are the emotions of several characters that become mouthpieces for historical facts, without any external commentary from the narrator. The participants in these discussions are representatives of various nationalities and professions, thus ensuring that conflicts of opinion take place. The narrator does not directly judge the expressions, behavior and conduct of the characters. A critical level is hidden between the lines in the dialogues of individual characters, and it is up to the reader just how much of their hidden message is understood. The main themes of dialogues are the Shoah, various forms of persecution and the complicity of Switzerland, which was a neutral country during the war.

The short story *Lodžské intermezzo* deals specifically with the Holocaust of Łódź Jews. Here the author also included references to the guilt of the German civilian population, which was demonstrated thanks to the letters included among the Nazi documentation preserved in the Łódź ghetto archive.

In his subsequent postwar literary works, Jiří Weil turns fully to the persecution and Shoah of Bohemian and Moravian Jews. The time-space of Nazi-occupied Poland is only mentioned allusively in connection with the transport of Czech Jews and the “trip into the unknown”, without any detailed descriptions. He does not return again in his work to the persecution and Shoah in Poland or to Polish Jewish characters.

attacks in the ruins of Warsaw. The story manuscript ends with a shout from the character of the colonel about the erasure of Europe from the map. In comparison, the typescript version is extended to include a fantasy story about a botany lecturer who has set up a miniature garden beneath a table for his daughter in the Warsaw ghetto, and a concluding reply by one of the characters and a paragraph on the renovation of the city. This story includes the statue motif that became a leitmotif in the subsequent novel *Na střeše je Mendelssohn* (Mendelssohn is on the Roof; LA PNP, Jiří Weil fonds, 32/C/24; 32/C/18).

³²Typescript stored at LA PNP; it contains the story *Varšavská suita*, but it was not included in the book edition.

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