

Conclusion

On the eve of the Nazi accession to power in 1933, the Jewish community of Magdeburg and its organisational bodies continued to operate as efficiently and as fully as they had always done. As a German-Jewish community with approximately 1,000 years of history, it had experienced periods of profound civic, cultural and religious achievement, in addition to tragic periods of persecution, massacre and expulsion. From that fateful year of 1933, the community as a structure and its members experienced the most disastrous, and heretofore never experienced, persecutions, which ultimately led to catastrophe – the physical destruction of not only the community as a structure, but the annihilation of the Jews themselves. The events of September 1935, November 1938, September 1939 and April 1942 marked the graded process of persecution and destruction, commencing with exclusion and leading ultimately to extermination. By 1945 the Jews of Magdeburg ceased to exist as a physical component of the cityscape. Their rich legacy as one of the oldest Jewish communities in Germany has, largely, remained a memory of those Jews who survived those years and those in Magdeburg today who wish to reconnect to this important aspect of their city's history.

With the introduction of antisemitic legislation and measures in 1933, the rich and diverse cultural, economic, religious, social and welfare functions of the community adapted and continued to attempt to meet the associated requirements of the Jews. Owing to the well-organised nature of both the religious congregations and the large number of communal organisations, the cultural, economic, religious and social needs of Jews, which only continued to increase, were ably met. Whilst persecution did not alter the religious divisions between the

Synagogen-Gemeinde and the *Shtiblech*, they did co-operate on non-religious matters, such as the preparation and emigration of youth. When the *Synagogen-Gemeinde* became the only official religious congregation in early 1939, combined with the gravity of the circumstances, the communities were forced to merge. All communal organisational structures, with the exception of the *Synagogen-Gemeinde*, were dissolved by the end of 1939.

Jews sought to defend themselves as individuals, whilst simultaneously much of the defence of the community in an official capacity was conducted, albeit with limited success, by the local branch of the *Centralverein* (CV). Communal organisations and the CV occupied central positions in the community in attempting to secure Jewish existence and to represent and defend communal and individual interests. Roles and responsibilities continually increased, particularly after the advent of the Nuremberg Laws. The greatest organisational focus up until the middle of 1937 remained adapting to life under new and difficult circumstances. This is most obvious in the area of employment and retraining. However, the reality and the ramifications of the Nuremberg Laws caught up with the community from the middle of 1937, when a new area of priority became the rescue of children and youth. This marked the period where a number of members in the community began to lose hope and were re-assessing their situation. For a great number of them, one of the key issues that had brought them to this realisation was the perceived lack of a sustainable financial future, as economic strangulation had reduced them to impoverishment.

In the economic sector, the experiences of individuals were absolutely dependant upon which sector of the commercial landscape they occupied. 1933 was a tumultuous year of ongoing boycotts and fear in Magdeburg. However, in

spite of an effective and ongoing campaign of boycott and defamation, the majority of Jewish businesses adjusted. This was to change in the wake of the Nuremberg Laws, when the process of 'aryanisation,' particularly of lucrative and highly coveted businesses, was expedited. This period also marked the effective end of any non-Jewish patronage of Jewish businesses. By 1938, of the remaining 40% of the original businesses in existence in 1933, only a small minority were functioning with any serious business turnover. However, of all the sectors in the commercial landscape, they possessed slightly more autonomy over their financial future. The only other group that could be included in this category were self-employed merchants and business people. Despite the circumstances, all of these individuals still possessed some control over their livelihoods. The majority of Magdeburg's Jews fell into this category.

Salaried employees, professionals and civil servants faced the predicament of immediate collapse. In Magdeburg, given both the support and the efficiency of the Nazi Party, the city's authorities, the province's authorities and the associated professional associations, the situation for the majority of individuals became very grave from the early years. Almost all salaried employees in non-Jewish establishments were dismissed from their positions with the application of the Nuremberg Laws. For high-profile employees, the end of their careers came as early as 1933. The situation of professionals in law and medicine, in which Jews were very well represented, was no less serious than the predicament of salaried employees. The effects of the application of the *Berufsbeamtengesetz* in 1933 and the activities of the *Bund Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Juristen* in Magdeburg effectively reduced the number of legal professionals in 1935 to less than one fifth of those in practice in 1933. The situation of medical professionals

was very similar. The city's administrative authorities played the greatest role in reducing the number of Jewish physicians, by refusing them access to clinics. The survival rate of their private practices fared better than their legal cohorts. In 1938, when all legal and medical professionals lost their licences to practise, Magdeburg still possessed just under 50% of its original medical professionals, who were in practice in 1933. Civil servants, including professionals in education, generally enjoyed a period of respite until the Nuremberg Laws. However, by the end of 1935 and at the very latest by early 1936, Jewish civil servants and non-Jewish civil servants with Jewish spouses had been forced into retirement.

With the flurry of legislation in 1938 the community descended into a state of impoverishment, which culminated in the registration of Jewish assets. By the time of the pogrom in November 1938, Jews still holding positions in Magdeburg were, almost without exception, professionals with an exclusively Jewish clientele or Jews working for Jewish employers. A minority were living off the proceeds of liquidated assets. The remainder were unemployed.

Economic strangulation and its effects were diverse. Non-salaried individuals possessed more autonomy over their lives, and 'aryanisations' were not expedited until after the Nuremberg Laws. Dismissals of salaried individuals commenced almost immediately in 1933 and the majority were unemployed and seeking alternatives by the end of 1935. However, financial impoverishment resulted in the same solution – emigration or relocation. In the wake of the *Reichskristallnacht*, the Jews of the city were finally completely removed from the local economy and the remaining businesses and property confiscated.

The implementation and application of Nazi policy toward the Jews affected them in all avenues of their lives. Daily life in the public domain became

increasingly onerous as the years progressed. The phases marking their situation and the reality of their exclusion mirror those previously elaborated on. For Jews, experiences in the public domain in 1933 were marked by shock, confusion, adjustment and a broad range of both supportive and antagonistic behaviours from non-Jews. For the period from 1933 up until the months preceding the Nuremberg Laws, Jewish citizens were either subjected to or witnessed a broad range of antisemitic behaviours in public ranging from the standard antisemitic signage, boycotts, the singing of defamatory songs to occasional street violence. However, during this phase the thrust of the antisemitic behaviours Jews experienced was largely confined to their terrorisation rather than their complete exclusion and isolation. From mid-1935, in the months leading up to the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws through to 1938, in addition to these behaviours, Jews were subjected publicly to exclusionary measures, designed to simultaneously vilify and segregate. Daily life continued, but Jews only ventured into the public domain when it was absolutely necessary, and even when doing so they attempted to remain inconspicuous. By the time of the pogrom of November 1938 their contact with non-Jews was minimal, as Jews were effectively dwelling in their own private island in the city.

Contact with non-Jews continued for a relatively short time after 1933. For the majority of Jews, such relationships had been terminated by the time the Nuremberg Laws were enacted. A minority of Jews maintained some social contact with non-Jewish friends and acquaintances beyond this period until the pogrom of November 1938; some even beyond it. The experiences of adults and children varied, with children generally experiencing greater abuse by their non-Jewish cohort. Particularly after September 1935 through until the pogrom of

November 1938, Jews confined themselves socially to the company of other Jews. This became yet another element of their isolation. The Nuremberg Laws effectively ended any possibility of social intercourse between the two groups. Contact with non-Jews became potentially fraught with serious danger and even with accusations of '*Rassenschande*,' a crime which featured in Magdeburg even before the Nuremberg Laws were promulgated.

The trials of Jews in Magdeburg for '*Rassenschande*' featured as early as June 1935. Owing to the co-operation of the Nazi Party (in *Gau* Magdeburg-Anhalt), the judiciary and the city council, Jews from all avenues of society were publicly humiliated, degraded and in the end incarcerated for this crime, the most notorious being that of the baptised Jew, Albert Hirschland. This crime, complete with its associated demonisation of Jews as racial polluters, exacerbated isolation and exclusion, whilst simultaneously adding further degradation to already difficult daily lives. Further to this, it created a real fear of contact with non-Jews, especially in business relations, as Jews were now unprotected by the law. Given the grotesque and sensationalistic media coverage of the alleged crimes, the impact in the public domain for Jews was immediate and unrelenting. By the very essence of the crime, '*Rassenschande*' could be viewed as perhaps the most humiliating and degrading of all crimes a Jew could be accused of at that time. The creation of this new crime also marked irrevocably the official nullification of what had been the success story of the much loved and proudly nurtured German-Jewish identity.

Regardless of how Jews felt about their identities, after September 1935 the decision had been made for them. As far as the Nazis were concerned there were only Jews in Germany and not Jewish Germans. With the full application of the

Nuremberg Laws, this separation enabled the complete public vilification of Jews, as the apparatus of the state sought to lay bare the 'criminality' of the Jews. In Magdeburg the combined efforts of the judiciary and the press proved highly successful, as evidenced in the '*Rassenschande*' trials. Their effective efforts in many respects symbolised the destruction of the German-Jewish symbiosis in the city. One of the outcomes of this amputation was the creation and nurturing of Jewish identities and Jewish space internal to the community. Jewish education became a priority. Owing to their exclusion in every sphere, by 1938 Jewish lives were centred on the home and the few remaining Jewish institutions still operational.

The situation of Jewish life in public was one of continued and unrelenting degradation, humiliation and ostracism. Jews were subjected to verbal, and sometimes physical, abuse. Social contact with non-Jews declined and with few exceptions had ended, after the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws. The few contacts which did remain, however, proved of vital importance to survival. This isolation of Jews fostered a strong sense of Jewish community and a consolidation of Jewish social networks. Conversely, Jewish identities only strengthened. Jewish family life became central to emotional and physical survival and well-being, as eventually Jews were excluded from public space, and their safety when outdoors was always a serious concern. Jews attempted to live full and rich lives, to the best of their ability.

By June 1937 more than one third of the Jewish population had relocated or emigrated. The majority of Jews remained and attempted to navigate their difficult lives under increasingly hostile circumstances. The subject of emigration was one that featured widely in all Jewish households and within the community itself.

Those adults and families who had left Germany by the time of the *Reichskristallnacht* had either much foresight or, in the majority of cases, were forced to, owing to their impoverishment. Some youth in the community prepared themselves for unaccompanied emigration, intending to be re-united later with family members. A majority of the younger generation, having only known Nazism for a large portion of their lives, did not feel the same sense of nostalgia for a German homeland as the older generation still felt in 1938.

The decision to emigrate and the processes and dilemmas Jews faced were varied according to specific circumstances. In the case of Magdeburg, by November 1938 the remaining Jews may have at any time considered emigration, but definitely not acted on it. Both legal restrictions in Germany and abroad acted as great disincentives. Countries offering refuge to Jews were generally not desired destinations. Finally, Jews were reluctant to leave their homes and their country of birth. They felt strongly about their perception of nation, of Germany and of Germanness; their extended families; and their livelihoods. The only way separation of family could be perceived and endured, was if emigrants told themselves that it was only a temporary measure. The reason why emigration prior to the *Reichskristallnacht* could be perceived as a quandary was that the majority of Jews felt that they still had choices and still possessed hope. Both of these illusions were shattered on the evening and morning of 9–10 November 1938.

As no private Jewish day school had ever existed in the city, children attended local public schools, whilst also attending the *Religionsschule* or *Cheder* of the local synagogues. Consequently, Jewish pupils were confronted with their vulnerability from both teaching staff and non-Jewish pupils from the very

inception of the Nazi regime. Not surprisingly, Jewish youth became cognisant of their pariah status very early and some rejected the German component of their identities. The majority of Jewish pupils remained in public schools until the pogrom of November 1938, despite local governmental attempts to force them to attend segregated schooling from April 1938. However, a significant number of pupils did commence attending the segregated school in June 1938.

There is no one pattern characterising the situation of Jewish pupils in public schools. The situation varied from school to school; from teacher to teacher; and from non-Jewish pupil to non-Jewish pupil. Generally, Jewish children loathed attending school. Up until the middle of 1935 the emergence of antisemitism was relatively gradual. However, the deterioration from this point can be linked directly to the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws and the ensuing antisemitism of the school authorities in Magdeburg, which sought segregation shortly thereafter. This culminated in the establishment of the '*Judenschule*' in June 1938. After the *Reichskristallnacht* and the wave of emigration, the remaining Jewish pupils did not return to their segregated school until June 1939, when it had been moved to a new location.

After 1933 Jewish youth groups became an increasingly important source of camaraderie, distraction and hope for young people. Despite the comparatively small number of children and youth in Magdeburg, the number and variety of youth groups represented both the organisational quality and diversity of the Jewish community. Both non-Zionist and Zionist groups operated. Apart from family life, youth groups became the focal point of their social and sporting lives, until all groups were dissolved or the members emigrated.

Whilst their ideologies on German and Jewish identities and the role of Palestine and Zionism for German Jewry were at variance, both strands of youth groups filled the social void for Jewish youth, when they were excluded from German society. Jewish youth were provided with a rich cultural, educational, social and sporting life. This led to the development of positive Jewish identities; to broad educational and sporting experiences; and for a majority it also led to an ambivalence toward their German identities and the country of their birth or even an eventual rejection of that identity and Germany. For a number of children and teenagers, the youth groups, together with a number of communal organisations, also prepared them for unaccompanied emigration.

Preparation of youth for unaccompanied emigration was organised by the Zionist movement, the *Provinzial-Verband für jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege in Sachsen-Anhalt, Beratungsstelle Magdeburg* and by the families of the emigrants themselves. For the non-Zionist component of Magdeburg Jewry, it was not until after the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws that the emigration of unaccompanied children and youth became a considered option. Unlike those at the *Hachsharah* centres, their preparation came somewhat later because their intention had never been to leave Germany. Whilst vocational preparation did occur, neither Jewish youth nor their families could prepare themselves for the pain of separation. The only means by which Jews were able to bear the reality was by clinging to the belief that it was only a temporary measure.

For those children and youth who departed prior to the pogrom of November 1938, departure was well organised and executed. This was generally not the case for those whose emigration had been organised prior to the pogrom, but delayed by its occurrence. When their departure did take place in the wake of the

Reichskristallnacht, it was enveloped by the chaos and panic that ensued. Regardless of their destination, the emigration of unaccompanied children and youth was characterised by both a sense of anticipation and relief. Nevertheless, once emigrants had physically left German soil these feelings were soon replaced by anxiety and a fear of the unknown. For both relatives left behind and the young emigrants, the emotional and psychological predicament they experienced pushed them to near breaking-point, if not to breaking-point itself. The large-scale attempt at the evacuation of Jewish children and youth from Magdeburg did not take place until after the calamitous events of the *Reichskristallnacht*.

Jewish children and youth displayed much resilience in their daily lives. Unlike their adult cohort, the majority of them were not nostalgic toward a German-Jewish identity, particularly as they experienced humiliation and rejection in their school life. In some respects, this made them adapt more readily to each situation they faced. The experiences of segregated schooling, compulsory for all Jewish children after the pogrom of November 1938, were positive and enriching, fostering a love of both Jewish identity and learning. Youth groups of all ideologies offered Jewish children and youth a social life, hope and also prepared a number of them for emigration. Beyond Jewish circles, Jewish children and youth faced only exclusion and rejection.

The ‘*Polenaktion*’ confronted the Jews of Magdeburg as it did all Jews throughout the *Reich*. Up until that time they had endured ongoing exclusion, humiliation and financial ruin. However, this event marked a transition point in Nazi policy. The physical expulsion of Jews was not something that the Jews of Germany expected, despite the difficulty of their circumstances. The chain of events that followed cemented this transition point in the history of Magdeburg

Jewry, and indeed for German Jewry. The prelude of the '*Polenaktion*' became the spark that ignited events that led directly to the *Reichskristallnacht*, an act of unprecedented violence.

The execution of the pogrom in Magdeburg occurred with the same uniformity as it did across the *Reich*. This included the looting and destruction of the interior of the *Synagogen-Gemeinde*, attacks on businesses owned by Jews and the incarceration of Jewish males. As such, the *Reichskristallnacht* was a critical turning-point in the history of Magdeburg Jewry and represented the end of the first stage of the *Shoah*. The demolition of the synagogue and the destruction of Jewish businesses symbolised the end of Jewish public life in the city. Most Jews abandoned the notion that they still had some sort of right as citizens of their German *Heimat*. The old discussions of the alternatives of 'homeland or exile' and the question of 'leaving or not leaving' faded. Most Jews no longer suffered any delusions about their future in Germany. Along with this, particularly for the older generation, came the brutal and stark realisation that Jewish life in Germany was no longer feasible.

In Magdeburg, as elsewhere in the *Reich*, the situation became life-threatening. Given the events and the ensuing circumstances, the majority of the Jews sought emigration at any cost and to almost anywhere. It was only after the pogrom that Jews were finally convinced that they faced physical danger. The initial reaction on the part of the Jews of Magdeburg to the pogrom and the arrests of the *Reichskristallnacht* was characterised by disbelief and fear, followed closely by chaos and panic. However, the brutality of the events both compelled and propelled Jews to quickly take control of their lives. For many Jews the fear of the unknown and leaving their family members behind was enough to keep

them in Germany; for the others, the violence of the events made the decision on emigration easier. On a communal level, the ethnic, the political and the religious differences which existed between the *Synagogen-Gemeinde* and the *Shtiblech* dissolved as the absolute gravity of the situation compelled unity.

The immediate reaction of the perpetrators was to apportion blame on the victims and, in the weeks leading up to the end of 1938, Jews experienced further exclusion and segregation and the government commenced the complete removal of Jews from the German economy. This included the levying of the Jewish community and the exclusion of Jewish children from public schools. This intensification of persecution in all avenues of life represented the commencement of the second phase of the *Shoah*. Complete exclusion and de-facto ghettoisation became policy for the Jews. By May 1939 approximately 726 Jews were still living in Magdeburg.

As all over the *Reich*, the *Reichskristallnacht* was the watershed event in this community's history. Up until this point, the majority of the community had adjusted to the exclusion and persecutions in place. The attachment to their country, their families and their livelihoods played a serious role in delaying emigration. The violence of the pogrom shocked and galvanised a large number of Jews and emigration became the only option. Nevertheless, by the middle of 1939, there still remained over 700 Jews. Clearly, a large number of Jews from Magdeburg could not find a country of refuge, in addition those who chose to stay, to those whose plans were stymied by the outbreak of World War Two and those too old and/or too impoverished to leave.

By the end of 1939 the Jews were experiencing an even greater level of demonisation, exclusion and pauperisation. The majority of employable

community members were now unemployed. At the very best they were living off the proceeds of the sale of assets and at worst relying on welfare assistance. Total segregation had commenced and was consolidated by evictions and allocation of rooms in '*Judenhäuser*.' Jews from Magdeburg were still emigrating when war broke out. For those who remained, in the wake of the vacuum created by the departure of Rabbi Dr Wilde, the teacher Hermann Spier led the community until his deportation in April 1942. For the Jews of Magdeburg, what they had experienced in the 1930s prior to Germany waging war became a prelude to new levels of persecution they were yet to endure.

Stigmatisation reached new levels when Jews were ordered to wear the yellow Star of David in 1941. Life in public deteriorated steadily and most Jews avoided being outdoors altogether, unless it was absolutely necessary. The lives of Jewish children in the community continued to be fully enriched educationally and Jewishly even beyond the dissolution of the '*Judenschule*' in July 1942. Despite the degradation they constantly endured, Jews attempted to continue to live their lives as normally as possible. Jews were subjected to curfews, total bans from all public venues, public transportation and were eventually ordered to surrender the majority of their remaining basic possessions. Eventually, even articles of clothing deemed 'unnecessary' were confiscated. The community's sense of isolation and stigmatisation increased rapidly, but Jews attempted to maintain their dignity in spite of their daily humiliation. This third and final phase in the destruction process of the community marked the beginning of the prelude to the physical annihilation of the Jews.

Soon after this ultimate act of stigmatisation occurred with the wearing of the yellow star, the preparatory steps for deportation followed. This physical removal

of the Jews from the city occurred in a perfectly organised and well-executed manner. As early as March 1942, the *Verwaltungsstelle Magdeburg* notified community members of the forthcoming *Transport* to the east. For some Jews the phase of ghettoisation was approaching its end, as they unknowingly and methodically prepared their suitcases for what became their final journey. Deportation and extermination had reached the remnant of this community. This was the first of seven documented mass deportations, which marked the end of the life of this Jewish community.

Following the advent of ‘*Judenhäuser*,’ war and stigmatisation, the Magdeburg Gestapo meticulously organised and executed forced labour and deportations. The level of degradation and humiliation for Jews in public became so increased that Jews avoided being outdoors unnecessarily. Despite the appalling conditions governing their lives, they continued to conduct religious services, maintained schooling for children and celebrated a sense of community until it was officially dissolved in June 1943. Those not deported were subjected to forced labour and eventually the only remaining Jews in the city after the final mass deportation in January 1944 were those Jews in mixed marriages, the children of such marriages and those few Jews in hiding. The loyalty of non-Jewish spouses remained essential to the survival of those Jews in mixed marriages and the children of such marriages. Of the approximately 185 remaining Jews in July 1944, the majority lost their lives in the final months of the war during the aerial bombardment of the city by the Allies. By April 1945 there were fewer than around twenty Jews remaining from the original, now decimated, Jewish community.

In the wake of Nazi Germany's capitulation and the liberation of the remaining Jews, a small Jewish community was re-established. In 1946 there were 119 Jews living in the city.¹ The vast majority of these members were former inmates of concentration camps, en route to their homes; followed by a small number of surviving Jews in mixed marriages, their children; and those few Jews who had survived in hiding. The departure of the American forces and the arrival of the Soviets led to further Jewish emigration in this transition period. By March 1948 the Jewish community amounted to eighty-two adults and eight children.²

The small community that existed up until the collapse of the German Democratic Republic drew largely from those Jews originally from Eastern Europe, who had settled in Magdeburg after liberation. The original community had ceased to exist. By 1987, the population of the community had dropped to twenty-nine members.³ In the wake of a renaissance of Jewish life in the united Germany, the *Synagogen-Gemeinde zu Magdeburg* is currently approaching 1,000 members. Of this figure, the vast majority of members have come from the republics of the former Soviet Union and no one in the current community is descended from the community annihilated by the Nazis. Thus, the Jewish community is undergoing its third transformation demographically and ethnically since 1945.

Between June 1933 and May 1939, approximately 1,247 Jews, 63% of the originally community, left Magdeburg and/or emigrated. Precise numbers of Jews

¹ Landesverband Jüdischer Gemeinden Sachsen-Anhalt, ed., op. cit., p. 189.

² Correspondence and report from the president of the Synagogen-Gemeinde zu Magdeburg, Otto (Ismar) Horst Karliner, to Director Fink, American Joint Distribution Committee, 1 March 1948, Bestand 5B1, Signatur Nr. 65, CJA, op. cit., p. 213.

³ Spector, ed., op. cit., p. 782.

who relocated to elsewhere in Germany remain undocumented, with the exception of those who were born in Magdeburg. Of this group, at the time of their deportations, 184 Jews, whose domicile was elsewhere, were registered as natives of Magdeburg. Of this figure, 153 of them lived in Berlin up until their deportations. These statistics present a possible emigration figure of up to an estimated 1,000 Jews from the original community of 1,973 as at June 1933. However, of this figure, it remains unknown how many of the potential emigrants took refuge in European countries, later occupied by the Nazis and subjected to its genocidal policies. Consequently, it must be assumed that an unknown percentage of these 1,000 Jews were deported from occupied Europe, or perished in those countries. What has been established with certainty from statistics of German Jews deported from Germany is that at the very least a minimum of approximately 800 Jews were deported to their deaths. This figure positions the mortality rate for this community at a minimum of approximately 41%.

Jews from Magdeburg whose emigration saved their lives settled on every continent. Very few returned to the city of their birth to settle. Instead, they took root in their adopted countries and gave birth to the Magdeburg Jewish diaspora – a diaspora currently in its twilight. Of the approximately seventy Jews from Magdeburg who immigrated to Australia between 1933 and 1948,⁴ there remain an estimated seven individuals. A minority of those Jews who settled in Australia have at some stage of their lives returned to visit their former home. Attitudes toward their former home and former non-Jewish fellow citizens range from ambivalence, to mild nostalgia, to unveiled contempt.

⁴ Correspondence from Gerry Levy AM to the author, 26 August 2005.

In finalising this documentation of the life and the destruction of this Jewish community a number of observations and conclusions on the experiences of the Jews of Magdeburg during this catastrophic period of their long and illustrious history can be made. The experiences of the community can be divided into four periods, each signalling the commencement of increased demonisation, exclusion and persecution. The period from 1933 up until the immediate period prior to the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935 was marked by initial shock, confusion and ultimately adaptation to the new conditions. The period from September 1935 up until the period prior to the November pogrom of 1938 represented the loss of all rights, a serious escalation of antisemitic policies and raised the prospect of emigration in the minds of approximately one third of the Jewish population. The period from November 1938 up until September 1939 represented the realisation that Jewish life in the city, as they had once known it, was no longer feasible, and emigration was the only solution. The final period of the community's history from September 1939 up until the final deportations signalled stigmatisation and extermination. Whilst these periods represent increased levels of persecution, the actual life and the eventual destruction of the Jewish community can also be divided into two distinct phases – that prior to the *Reichskristallnacht* and the phase after. Prior to the pogrom, the Jewish community as a structure functioned under the burden of Nazism, just as Jews attempted to navigate difficult lives. After the pogrom, this altered dramatically, with the final dissolutions of communal organisations, mass emigration and the end of any form of communal life in its previous form. Whilst the first phase represented the exclusion of the Jews and their attempt to adapt to the new conditions imposed on them, the second phase represented the end of Jewish

communal life in Magdeburg and the physical removal of the Jews from the cityscape. These patterns conform to what was happening throughout Germany from 1933.

Whilst the focus of this study has been the experiences of the Jewish community under Nazism, some important conclusions and observations on the actions of the perpetrators must also be made, as these had a profoundly detrimental effect in exacerbating official antisemitism. When examining all facets of Jewish existence in the city, it becomes clear that the exclusion, humiliation, impoverishment and the eventual destruction of the Jews were attended to with much diligence. The administrations of the local and provincial governments, the professional associations and the various arms of the Nazi Party apparatus all worked co-operatively to effectively destroy Jewish life. This is viewed particularly in the general activities of the professional associations and the *Nationalsozialistische Handwerks-, und Gewerbe-Organisation* (NS-HAGO) in the economic sphere; in the various show trials, particularly in the cases of the ‘*Rassenschande*’ trials and their obscene reporting in the press; in the persistence of the mayor’s office in pursuing, at the national level, the desire for segregated schooling for Jews, three years before it was enacted; and the ongoing exercise of ensuring that every last component of public space was forbidden to Jews. In possessing such virulent antisemites in the personalities of the mayor and the local *Gauleiter*, antisemitic policies in the city were administered and executed with noted ruthlessness. This played an important and devastating role in the journey of this community from boycotts in 1933 to deportations in 1942. There remains little doubt that this contributed to the large number of Jews who relocated

elsewhere in Germany and the high mortality rate of Jews from Magdeburg. This provides a further and revealing perspective on this particular community.

One important and final observation which shaped the lives of Jews for the entire period was their lack of anonymity. In 1933 the Jews of Magdeburg comprised 0.64% of the city's total population. However, they experienced a long and prominent profile in the city's affairs, and this, combined with the smaller size of the population of such a provincial city, meant that Jews were readily identified and known, even prior to the stigmatisations. This compounded their situation and there was simply nowhere in the city centre where Jews did not risk detection.

Despite the prevailing conditions, the Jews of Magdeburg attempted to maintain full and productive lives, even as their exclusion, humiliation, pauperisation and vilification intensified. For those who did not reach safe shores and remained in the city they had once thought was their *Heimat*, their suffering continued until their eventual extermination, their death during the Allied bombardment of the city or for the very few who witnessed liberation. However, while ever Jews remained in the city, Jewish life continued within the confines of the ghettoised lives imposed on the remaining Jews. Whilst Magdeburg was not quite '*judenfrei*' in April 1945, the Nazi regime, with the assistance of diligent and efficient local efforts, had erased the Jewish community from the physical landscape of this city on the River Elbe. Henceforth, the community of Rabbi Dr Wilde and Hermann Spier featured largely only within the confines of nostalgic conversations over coffee and cake by those Jews formerly of Magdeburg now spread across the globe, who visited the city predominantly in their dreams and undoubtedly in their nightmares.

