

Mrs. Felixova At A Memorial Ceremony In Terezin



This photograph was taken in Terezin in May 2004, on the occasion of the 59th anniversary of the liberation of the Terezin ghetto. I am standing on the right. Each year we remind ourselves of the liberation of the Terezin ghetto. Regularly on this occasion many Jews and non-Jews get together. The survivors walk through the entire site, reminisce about the hard times they experienced and talk about the undignified conditions in which the prisoners lived and about the experiences that they gained in the ghetto. Usually a representative of the Czech government holds a speech. There is a Catholic and Jewish service and prayer for the dead.. On 7th May 1945 at around 9:30 in the evening the Russians arrived in Terezin. The Germans had run away about three days before their arrival. All of a sudden we were in no man's land, we had no idea what was or wasn't happening. Shots and explosions which at that time carried to us all the way from Prague all of a sudden ceased and a strange quiet came over the camp. In the evening we were slowly falling asleep when we heard some sort of metallic sound. With us was the master seamstress under whom my mother had had her dressmaking exams. She ran off to see what was going on. She returned out of breath: 'Girls, the Russians are here!' Both started crying and Mother tore off my star, almost taking my dress with it. Trains with prisoners from the liberated concentration camps began arriving at Terezin train station full of wretches that had been forced to take part in the death march. Being a little girl, I ran about between those wagons searching for my dear father. He wasn't to be found, however. Out of the wagons tumbled emaciated people, the living along with the dead. The dead were buried right there in the Terezin cemetery and the ill were treated in the local hospital by Red Cross workers. Many of them were so exhausted that they couldn't even say their name and would only lifelessly show their arm, where their ID number was tattooed. While I was running back and forth between the wagons hopelessly searching for my father, a family friend saw me, and immediately berated my mother that I could catch some disease there. The thing is that typhus had begun spreading. Shortly thereafter I fell ill. A doctor came to see me, and said that it didn't look like typhus, but more like tonsillitis. I got a poultice, and tea with lemon for the first time in

five years, and that doctor said to me: 'Little girl, show me what you're capable of.' Well, I guess I was capable, because I'm still alive.