

Carl Fischer And His Wife Charlotta



These are my grandparents on my mother's side. The photo was taken in Jihlava in the 1930s. Grandpa Carl Fischer, my mother's father, was born in 1861 in Mlada Boleslav. From this branch of our family we're not purely Jewish, because my great-grandfather came about as a result of a Jewish girl being raped by some German soldier. The girl brought a boy into the world, but after giving birth jumped into some water out of desperation and drowned. My great-grandpa was brought up by her sister. My mother also told me that in the Fischer family it was a custom for

cousins to marry. This rule was meant to keep property in the family, but it had very serious consequences in the risk of genetic damage and various illnesses. Grandpa Fischer broke with this tradition when he married Charlotta Kollek, my grandmother, who was from far-away Zdanice na Morave. The marriage was arranged by a so-called shadkhan, or matchmaker. Grandpa Fischer died when I was two, and so all I remember is once visiting, and him sitting by the radio, cutting pieces off a pear and giving them to me. Grandma Fischer I remember very well. I used to see her when we'd go to Jihlava to our summer house, and at one time as a small boy I lived with her. She never got a proper education, perhaps only for one year did she have a home tutor with her other siblings, which is why she didn't know how to read and write properly. During the occupation she moved to Prague, and would often come over to visit us. Then she arrived in Terezin, where she stayed until the end. After the war she immigrated to Australia where her two daughters were, and where she died in about 1965.