

My escape from Prague (Story of Jindrich Lion)



<http://centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=31&nID=78&q=m>

LESSON PLAN

In our 9th grade we teach 20th century history in history classes and Jewish history in Jewish education classes. We wish to use the Jindrich Lion film throughout the whole year in the following way:

Aim: students will realize that historical events are not merely a chapter in a history book. They will study the impact of these events on individual lives of people.

School subject: history

- 1) On the first lesson of history, students will be asked to put down the most important points in Czechoslovak history in the 20th century. Results will be put on a poster. As a homework, students will ask their parents the same question + they should ask, which of these events affected their families the most. Next lesson, new answers will be added. To each event names of students' families that noted the events as important (+ possible details) will be added for further use during the year.
- 2) The students will watch the film and will be asked again to add events to the list.

The final list of events should include the following events:

- a) 1914-18 First world war
- b) 1918-38 Czechoslovak „first republic“
- c) 1938 Munich conference
- d) 1939-45 Second world war
- e) 1948 Start of communism
- f) 1950s Communist trials
- g) 1968 Occupation of Czechoslovakia by soviet army
- h) 1989 Velvet revolution

3) Students will create a paper time line around their clasroom on which they will mark these events. As they study these events throughout the year, they will always:

- a) study the event in general way (as they always do in history class)
- b) review the relevant part of the Jindrich Lion film and discuss it
- c) each event will have one or two students present in the class how their family was affected by this event.

4) During and after the study of the particular event, the students will always add to the paper time line in their class:

- a) general details of the events
- b) details of Jindrich Lion´s life
- c) presentation of the personal story of the family(ies) of the students

The time line will be presented to parents/ students of other classes at the end of the year, possibly during a farewell party for the students.

„Two lesson“ lesson plan

Aim: Students will realize the differences in Jewish population during the „first republic“ in Prague and on Carpatho Ukraine

School subject: History lesson or Jewish education lesson

Lesson 1

- 1) At the beginning of the class students will be asked to brainstorm in groups about their knowlege of differences between Jewish population of Prague and Carpato-Ukraine during the first republic. They will discuss their answers and note them on a poster/blackboard. In case the teacher knows the students would know too little about the topic, the teacher can help them with the following additional questions:
 - a) What was the religious life of the Jews like?
 - b) What was the way they dressed?
 - c) What was their education like? (concentrate on the emphases on religious/secular studies)
 - d) What was their attitude towards the surrounding non-Jewish population?

2) Students will split into two groups. Each of them will watch the beginnings of the two stories – Jindrich Lion and Ernest Galpert. They will watch the film in separate classrooms (this is possible in our school) Each of them will, in addition, read one story by Jiří Langer from *Nine gates* short-stories book describing the life of Carpatho Ukraine Jews (Galpert group) or its preface by the author's brother František Langer describing the differences between these two lifestyles. The task of each group is to prepare a presentation of a lifestyle of the particular Jewish community for the other group. In their presentation they should concentrate mainly on the following questions:

- a) What was the religious life of the Jews like?
- b) What was the way they dressed?
- c) What was their education like? (concentrate on the emphases on religious/secular studies)
- d) What was their attitude towards the surrounding non-Jewish population?

(Alternatively students do not have to split into groups. The whole class can watch both films and read both stories. This setting however, naturally requires twice the time)

Lesson 2

- 1) Each group will present the results of their research from the previous lesson.
- 2) The teacher will supplement the presented information by additional information. Students will note the learnt material into their notebooks.
- 3) Students will compare the results of their research + teacher's supplemented information with the brainstorming notes from the beginning of the 1st lesson.
- 4) As a homework, students will write a fictional „diary entry“ of one day of a person of their age either in Munkacs or in Prague of that time. The diary entry must show all features of the life of the population that was studied during the lesson(s)

Historical links

Jindrich Lion was born in Prague in 1922. During the two decades of its existence (1918-1938), Prague was the capital of the First Czechoslovak Republic. [The Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs on its history from 1918 to 1938. Read a chronology of key events during Czechoslovakia's statehood \(1918-1992\) provided by the BBC.](#)

Jindrich Lion's brother František was born in 1919. At that time, Prague was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia. [Read more on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the Encyclopedia of Austria. The Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs on ideas of the Czech National Revival before the First World War.](#)

Jindrich Lion's mother came from Maschau (Czech Mašov), then part of the "Sudetenland". [You can find out more about Mašov's history on the town's website.](#) "Sudetenland" is the German name used in English in the first half of the 20th century for the western regions of Czechoslovakia inhabited mostly by ethnic Germans, specifically the border areas of Bohemia, Moravia, and those parts of Silesia associated with Bohemia. [You can find a definition of the term as part of this Library of Congress country study.](#)

Jindrich Lion attended the funeral of president Masaryk. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937) was the president of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1935. Masaryk was not only a statesman, but also a sociologist and philosopher. [Read an article on Czechoslovakia's first president by Radio Praha, the international service of Czech Radio. Read another biography provided by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic.](#)

Edvard Beneš followed Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in office, and was president of Czechoslovakia from 1935 to 1948 (in exile during the Second World War). [Read his biography provided by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic.](#)

Jindrich Lion talks about the Munich Agreement. In 1938, the Munich Agreement signed by Germany, France, Britain, and Italy permitted Nazi German annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. The Sudetenland was of immense strategic importance to Czechoslovakia, as most of its border defenses were situated there. The agreement was negotiated among the major powers of Europe without the presence of Czechoslovakia. It was an act of appeasement, which is commonly called the "Munich dictate" or "Munich betrayal" by Czechs and Slovaks. [The Yale Law School offers the original text of the agreement in English translation. You can also read historical articles from archive of The Times, or another contemporary Time Magazine article on the events in 1938.](#)

[St. Andrews University offers a site that contains a collection of key documents and other materials relating to the "Munich crisis" of 1938.](#) The documents reflect the attitude of Nazi Germany towards Czechoslovakia and the development of the British response to the rising international tension in Central Europe culminating in the Munich Agreement.

The term "Appeasement" is most often applied to the foreign policy of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain towards Nazi Germany between 1937 and 1939. [Read an essay on Chamberlain's foreign politics by the Oxford Biography Index.](#)

Before World War II, "Fall Grün" (Case Green) was a German plan for a war against Czechoslovakia. The first draft of the plan was made in late 1937. The final version scheduled the attack to September 28, 1938 but after the Munich Agreement the plan was completely abandoned. [St. Andrews University offers the original text of Hitler's directive for "Case Green".](#)

In November 1938, Emil Hácha was elected president of the Second Czechoslovak Republic (renamed Czecho-Slovakia), succeeding Edvard Beneš. [Read his biography provided by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic.](#)

On March 15, 1939, Nazi Germany in flagrant violation of the Munich agreement invaded and occupied the remaining provinces of the rump Czechoslovak state. [Read a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum article on the history of Czechoslovakia after 1938. The Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs on the fate of Czechoslovakia during World War II.](#)

The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was established on March 15, 1939 by proclamation of Adolf Hitler from Prague Castle. The protectorate, which Nazi Germany established, included central parts of Bohemia, Moravia and Czech Silesia in what is today the Czech Republic. [Yale Law School offers the original document concerning the establishment of the protectorate.](#)

The partition of Czechoslovakia between 1938 and 1939 determined the fate of its Jews during the war. [Read a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum article on the Holocaust in Bohemia and Moravia.](#)

In October 1939, the former Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš created the Czechoslovak National Liberation Committee in Paris, France. British diplomatic recognition turned this committee into the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. [Radio Praha, the international service of Czech Radio, offers a post-Cold War perspective on the wartime Czechoslovak government in London. You can also read an article on Czechs during World War II by Radio Praha.](#)

During World War II, Czechoslovak pilots fought for the British Royal Air Force. In 2001, Czech director Jan Svěrák, who won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, made a film about these pilots called "Dark Blue World" (Czech Tmavomodrý svět). [Read a BBC film review.](#)

In June 1942 the German General Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated in Prague by members of the Czechoslovak Force serving in England, paratrooped to Bohemia. At that time he served as the Reich Protector for the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the state formation set up by Nazi regime after occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939. In 2002, an exhibition marked the 60th anniversary of the assassination of Nazi governor Heydrich. [Read an article by Radio Praha.](#)

Lidice, a village just northwest of Prague, was completely destroyed by the Germans in reprisal for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. On June 10, 1942, the Germans in a much-publicized atrocity murdered all men over 16 years of age from the village on spot. The rest of the population was sent to Nazi concentration camps where many women and nearly all the children were killed. [You can visit the Lidice memorial online.](#)

In the last moments of the war in Europe, the Prague uprising was an attempt by the Czech resistance to liberate the city from German occupation. Events began on May 5, 1945, The uprising went on until May 8, 1945, ending in a ceasefire the day before the arrival of the Soviet Red Army. [Read articles by Radio Praha](#) and the [BBC on today's remembrance of the events](#).

Jindrich Lion worked for the Allied Forces in Persia. During World War II, [Persia \(today's Iran\)](#) was a vital oil-supply source and link in the Allied supply line for lend-lease supplies to the Soviet Union. The then-Shah's pro-German sympathies led to British and Indian forces from Iraq and Soviet forces from the north occupying Persia in August 1941. In September, the British forced Reza to abdicate in favor of his pro-British son Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who ruled until 1979. Read a book on Persia during World War II provided by the US Army.

Jindrich Lion returned to Prague in 1946. At the end of the Second World War, the Communist Party shared in the work of the Czechoslovak government for the first time. Competition among political parties was restricted by a ban on re-establishing pre-war right-wing parties, which had been accused of collaborating with the Germans. All the permitted parties were grouped into a National Front. [The Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs on the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia after 1945](#).

In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with Soviet backing, assumed undisputed control over the government of Czechoslovakia. [Read an article on the 1948 Coup by Radio Praha](#).

In the film, you can see a picture of Klement Gottwald, a Czechoslovak Communist politician, longtime leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KS?), prime minister and president of Czechoslovakia from 1948 to his death in 1953. [Read his biography provided by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic](#).

Jindrich Lion tells us about the events of the "Prague Spring" in 1968. The Prague Spring was a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia during the era of its domination by the Soviet Union after World War II. It began on January 5, 1968, when reformist Slovak Alexander Dubček came to power, and continued until August 21, when the Soviet Union and members of its Warsaw Pact allies invaded the country to halt the reforms. [Read an article on the Prague Spring by the German magazine "Der Spiegel"](#) and [a chronology of events leading to the 1968 Invasion by Radio Free Europe](#). [You can also read a series of essays on the importance of the Prague Spring in the context of Europe's history after 1945](#)

Jindrich Lion conducted an interview with Ludvík Svoboda. Ludvík Svoboda was a Czechoslovak politician and military leader who fought in both World Wars. At the time of the Prague Spring Svoboda was elected President of the Republic on March 30, 1968. Until August 1968 he was acknowledged as a moderate and noncommittal support for the reformers. He stayed in office until 1975. [Read his biography provided by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic](#).

Charter 77 (Charta 77) was an informal civic initiative in Czechoslovakia from 1977 to 1992, named after the document Charter 77 from January 1977. Founding members and architects were amongst others Václav Havel, who became president in 1989. After the 1989 Velvet Revolution, many of its members played important roles in Czech and Slovak politics. [The](#)

[National Security Archives offers an in-depth documentation of the events. Read an original copy of the text provided by Carles University Prague.](#)

Jindrich Lion tells us about the events of the "Velvet Revolution" On November 17, 1989, the regime led by the Communist Party harshly intervened against demonstrations organized by students on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the closure of Czech schools by the Nazis. People came out on the streets to protest the brutality of the intervention and organized demonstrations and strikes. [The Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs on the Velvet Revolution and its aftermath.](#)

At the end of the film you can see a picture of Václav Havel, the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech republic (from 1993 to 2003). [Read his biography provided by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic.](#)

The dissolution of Czechoslovakia, which took effect on 1 January 1993, saw Czechoslovakia split into two separate countries: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. [Read an article on the dissolution of Czechoslovakia by author Jiří Pehe.](#)

Today, the Czech Republic is a member of NATO (since 1999) and the European Union (since 2004). [You can inform yourself on the official web pages of the Czech Republic operated by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.](#) The Czech Republic presides the European Union in the first six months of 2009. [You can visit the official website to find out more on news and events during the Czech presidency.](#)

Links related to Judaism

Jindrich Lion was born in Josefov (also Jewish quarter; Josephstadt in German), a town quarter and the smallest cadastral area of Prague, formerly the Jewish ghetto of the town. Historical sites include Franz Kafka's birthplace the High Synagogue (a 16th century synagogue), the Jewish Town Hall (an 18th century rococo town hall), the Klaus Synagogue (a 16th century baroque synagogue), the Maisel Synagogue (a 16th century synagogue destroyed by fire, now used as a museum), the Pinkas Synagogue (a 16th century synagogue, now a memorial to Holocaust martyrs), the Spanish Synagogue (a 19th century synagogue with Oriental interior), the Old Jewish Cemetery (Europe's oldest surviving Jewish cemetery), the Old New Synagogue (a 13th century Gothic synagogue), and the Jewish Ceremonial Hall (a 20th century neo-renaissance hall). [Find out more about Jewish Prague with the help of the Jewish Virtual Library.](#)

The Jewish Museum in Prague is an organization that manages six of the most historic sites in Josefov. [You can visit the museum online.](#)

[A ghetto is defined by Webster as a "a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure."](#) Jewish ghettos existed in Europe because Jews were viewed as cultural minorities due to their non-Christian beliefs in a Christian environment. As a result, Jews were placed under strict regulations throughout many European cities. [To find out more about Jewish ghettos in Europe, visit this website by Professor Kim Pearson of The College of New Jersey.](#)

Jindrich Lion tells us that he could see the Old New Synagogue from his window. The Old New Synagogue situated in Josefov is Europe's oldest active synagogue. It is also the oldest

surviving medieval synagogue of twin nave design. There are two explanations for the name. The first is based on the German and Yiddish name of the synagogue. According to this explanation, the synagogue was originally called the New or Great Synagogue and later, when newer synagogues were built in the 16th century, it became known as the Old New Synagogue. Another view says that the synagogue is built from stones from the Temple in Jerusalem, and the synagogue was built "on condition" (in Hebrew: Al-Tnai) that the stones would be returned after the reconstruction of the Temple. [Find out more on the website of the Jewish Museum Prague.](#)

Jindrich Lion's mother went to the Maisel Synagogue. The Maisel Synagogue is a synagogue in Josefov. It was built in the 1590s, and was paid by Mordechai Maisel. [You can find out more on the Maisel family in the Jewish Encyclopedia.](#) The synagogue burnt down at the end of the 17th century and was then rebuilt in baroque style. It serves today as the Jewish Museum, [and you can find out more on its website.](#)

Jindrich Lion's father was a member of B'nai B'rith. The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith (Hebrew "Sons of the Covenant") is the oldest continually-operating Jewish service organization in the world. It was founded in New York in 1843. The organization is engaged in a wide variety of community service and welfare activities. [The organization's main body is B'nai B'rith International, which you can visit online.](#)

You can find out more about the Jewish history of the regions that today form the Czech Republic in article of the [Jewish Virtual Library.](#)

Jindrich Lion used to visit Vienna in his childhood and later settled there finally. [Take a virtual Jewish History Tour to Vienna and read about the past and present of the city's Jewish community.](#)

Jindrich Lion fled from Prague to Palestine at the age of 16. [The Jewish Virtual Library informs on Jewish migration to Palestine.](#) [You can find an introduction to the History of the Jewish Agency for Israel on its website.](#)

The term Aliyah refers to Jewish immigration to Israel. [The Department for Jewish Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency offers a definition of the term and introductory remarks.](#)

Jindrich Lion's voyage to Palestine led from Prague to Trieste. Trieste is a port city in northeastern Italy near the Slovenian border. With the approach of the Second World War, Trieste became an emergency exit for Jews leaving Europe for Israel. After World War II around 1,500 Jews remained in Trieste; they restored the Synagogue (one of the biggest in Europe) and renewed Jewish communal institutions. Today the Jewish Community counts about 600 members. [You can find out more on the Jews of Trieste with this article of the Jerusalem Post.](#)

Jindrich Lion reached Haifa, scene of many dramatic confrontations between the British who sought to keep Jews from entering Palestine and the clandestine efforts of the Haganah to smuggle in immigrants. [Read more on the city's history](#) and [Jewish immigration to Israel during the War in articles of the Jewish Virtual Library.](#)

During the war, Jindrich Lion served in the Palestine Police Force, a British colonial police service established in 1920. [The Middle East Centre of St Antony's College, Oxford](#)

[University, runs a British Mandate Palestine Police oral history project where you can find further information on the colonial police force.](#)

Information of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on [the United Kingdom's Jewish Brigade](#) Group, which fought under the Zionist flag.

Jindrich Lion returned to Czechoslovakia in 1946. Though Czechoslovakia soon placed a ban on Jewish emigration to Palestine, it was one of the first countries to recognize Israel in the United Nations. In the years after 1948, relations between Czechoslovakia and Israel grew cold and diplomatic relations were finally severed completely following the 1967 Six Day War. Meanwhile, the Jewish community of Czechoslovakia, consisting of less than 20,000 people, was forced to hide their Jewish affiliation like those in most other Soviet controlled countries. One of them was Jiří Franěk, a professor of Slavic studies who lectured at leading German universities and at the Charles University Prague. [You can read Centropa's interview with Jiří Franěk to find out more about this fascinating persona.](#)

[Read another Holocaust rescue story from Czechoslovakia](#) as part of a book by Ellen Land-Weber, professor at Humboldt State University's Art Department.

Other links

Jindrich Lion was born in Prague, the "golden city", one of the most beautiful cities of Europe, today [the capital of the Czech Republic](#). [You can visit the Prague municipality's or the city hall's website](#), go on a [virtual visit to the city center](#), [read articles by the Prague Post](#), or use the [city's tourist information service to plan](#) your next visit there. Find out [more about Jewish Prague](#) with the help of [the Jewish Virtual Library](#). [See all of Centropa's photos from Prague.](#)

The City of Prague is crowned with many complimentary names. One of the most frequently used names is "The City of a Hundred Spires". [You can go on a virtual visit from the top of these spires with the help of this fascinating website.](#)

During his childhood, Jindrich Lion often visited [Vienna](#), about 250 miles (400 km) to the southeast of his hometown Prague. He finally settled in the capital of Austria after 1968. Vienna and Prague share the common past of the Austrian Empire, which you can trace in the architecture of both cities. Information and services of [the City of Vienna are available on the web](#), as well as [its tourist information service](#). Take [a virtual Jewish History Tour to Vienna](#) and [read about the past and present of the city's Jewish community](#), or search the [Centropa database for pictures from Vienna](#).

Jindrich Lion spent his first years in Palestine in Tel Aviv, today the second-biggest city of Israel. To find out more about the city's Bauhaus-style architecture, which gave the city its nickname "[The White City](#)", read this article provide by the [Jewish Virtual Library](#). You can also visit the [Tel Aviv municipality website](#) and its [tourism information](#). [See all of Centropa's photos from Tel Aviv.](#)

In 2003 UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has designated the "White City architecture" of Tel Aviv as a World Heritage Site. [You can read the official description on UNESCO's website.](#)

During the war, Jindrich Lion's family lived in Jerusalem. [Visit the official website of Jerusalem](#), go on guided [virtual tours through Jerusalem with your MP3-player](#), take a [virtual tour to the ancient city of David](#), and [discover today's Jerusalem](#). [Maps of today's Jerusalem](#) and [the ancient city](#) are available on these websites. [Search the Centropa database for photos from Jerusalem](#).

After the war, Jindrich Lion's brother worked for the Czech News Agency ?TK. [You can find their English website here](#).

Jindrich Lion worked for the newspaper "Svobodné slovo" (The Free Word) after his return to Czechoslovakia. [You can read on the history of its publishing house Melantrich on this website by Columbia University](#).

Jindrich Lion's latest publication is a bilingual German-English tourist guide to Jewish Prague. [Visit the publisher's website to find out more \(available in German only\)](#).

Jindrich Lion's son Thomas works for a child cancer research institute in Vienna. [You can reach his website here](#).

Made by:



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