

Regina Burgmannova With A Friend



This photograph was taken in 1970, most likely in one of Brno's parks. On the right is my mother, Regina Burgmannova, nee Baru. Mother lost her husband during the Holocaust and didn't marry a second time. In the photograph she is standing next to her boyfriend, whom she lived with for a time before her death. After World War II my mother got some financial reparations from the state and had a widow's pension. She stayed at home and never worked again. In reality she didn't even want to work in a collective and have people around her. I remember that she never even went out before the afternoon. She always waited for me to get home from school. Up to her death in 1973 we lived together in our three-bedroom apartment at 16 Erbenova Street. My mother may have thought of emigrating, but her feelings for her native land were evidently stronger than the desire to settle in a new place. What's more, she didn't have the strength anymore to start over. Politics didn't interest her very much. Even though she had grown up in relatively poor conditions, in a working class neighborhood, she didn't agree with Communism. I remember her saying: 'My Lord, they can have endless meetings, but the poor will stay poor.' We lived with my mother until her death in 1973. Because of this she had a big influence on our daily life and the keeping of Jewish traditions. Mother remained a believing Jew even after World War II. She prayed very earnestly, but she didn't keep Jewish rules to the letter. She reached the conclusion that religiousness is useless when a person has lost his loved ones and especially in such a cruel fashion. She celebrated all Jewish holidays and tried to commemorate them at least with traditional holiday foods. Holiday meals didn't have to be kosher, but she would usually roast a goose, duck or chicken. For Yom Kippur she kept the required fast. In her later years her worsening health didn't permit her to fast so extensively. She talked me into keeping the fast as well. Once I became ill and so she told me: 'Why should you fast, you've gone hungry enough [in the ghetto].' From that time at Yom Kippur I fast only until noon. For Pesach we used to eat matzot and matzah dumplings. For Chanukkah we lit candles and the children got presents. We never had a Christmas tree. I'm not a religious Jew, but I still don't have a Christmas tree. Mother convinced me to go to the synagogue with her. I remember her German prayer book from which she prayed. My mother died in Brno in 1973. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery in Brno according to Jewish customs. She was prepared for her

final journey by a member of the funeral brotherhood, Mrs. Dita Fastlova, who formerly worked as a nurse. First she ceremonially washed the body, then covered it with a sheet, leaving only the face uncovered. Finally they put the deceased in a coffin, which was immediately closed. I remember how she said a few words to console me: 'Your mother was nice-looking even after death.' The funeral service was led by our friend, Mr. Hynek Vrba, who in those days was the acting cantor in Brno, and the funeral speech was held by another of our friends, Mr. Bedrich Hoffenreich.