

Gertruda Glasova



This is a photo of my mother Gertruda Glasova. It was taken in Prague in 1956. My mother was also very much influenced by her war experiences. She used to say that the only language that she really knew well, German, she hated. Which is, of course, nonsense, how can someone hate a language? A language can't be responsible for something. She was brought up in German, studied in German and didn't learn Czech until before the occupation, and never properly. She also used to say that Germans should be castrated. I understood it, it was an expression of her desperation. My mother actually never enjoyed her life. She saw World War I, then had tuberculosis, then there were worries as to what my father would do when he lost his job, well, and then suddenly the occupation was here, war... Even before it broke out here, there was news about what was

happening in Germany, in Vienna, Crystal Night. And finally my mother lived as a widow. Later, when German friends of mine used to come visit, who'd certainly done nothing wrong, because they'd been little children at the time, she behaved very coldly towards them. I'd explain to them that they shouldn't be upset at her, that she simply couldn't deal with it. When the Benes Decrees began being enforced, we were terribly afraid that they would also deport us, as Germans. Everyone who'd registered themselves as being of German nationality before the war were, according the Benes Decrees, supposed to be deported, and whether or not they'd been imprisoned in a concentration camp wasn't taken into account. Only those that proved they'd been anti-Fascists. But where could a Jew who'd been locked up in a concentration camp find that sort of proof? Those decrees didn't take this into account. My mother didn't know what nationality our father had registered us as in 1930. In the end it came out that as Jews, and so we were allowed to stay here. What would have moving to Germany meant for us? After all, we weren't Germans. For a long time, neither I nor my mother wanted to speak German! For Jews who'd returned from the concentration camps, it must have been horrible, living among those that hated them, and they on the other hand hated Germans. You can't live like that. I didn't return to the German language until 1956.