

Kurt Kotouc With Colleagues



This picture was taken in 1985 in Zaluzany. We went there to see some art collection. I am the first from left, the others are my colleagues from the National Gallery in Prague.

In 1949 I completed Industrial Art School in Brno and did various jobs. First, I was at the Institute of Regional Planning where I helped with the graphic design of maps. I wrote articles about art exhibits and thanks to that I got work at the Brno House of Art where I had opportunities to meet artists and organize exhibits. From 1958, I worked in the Centre for Trade Art in Brno. In 1963, I re-located to Prague to work in the head office of the Centre for Trade Art. The last twenty years I've worked in the National Gallery in Prague preparing art catalogues and posters.

I was expelled from the communist party after the Prague Spring. At that time, I was working at the National Gallery in Prague, where I worked in uncertainty because I wasn't a member of the Party. I was the director of the print section, which bothered one director who constantly emphasized that I shouldn't be allowed to continue in my function. In the end, I managed to hang in there, in part because the National Gallery was directed by Jiri Kotalik. Many people reproach him for cooperating with the regime because he remained diplomatic with party and state representatives. Otherwise, they wouldn't have kept him there but at the same time, he allowed the National Gallery to work with certain people who would otherwise have been politically unacceptable. That in itself is notable because at that time, it was difficult to employ someone who had been expelled or written off by the party to a position that was not manual labor.

I managed to stay in my job but I was constantly living in doubt. After I divorced for the second time, I shared an apartment with a man who was a traffic police officer. Once, early in the morning, his friends came to visit him and they were in uniform. I was lying in my room and I could see the movement of the uniforms through the frosted glass on my door and in my sleepiness, I was sure that they had come for me. But other people experienced much worse things. Because of my work at the National Gallery, I didn't have a great deal of free time. I liked to travel and I was one of the lucky people who because of various exhibits got to go abroad. I retired in 1987.