

Tomas Kraus At A Get-Together Of The Prague Jewish Community



This is a picture of me at a Chanukkah party at the Prague Jewish Community in 1959. At the time my father (Frantisek Robert Kraus) had written a poem for me for the occasion, which I recited. My mother (Alice Krausova), the lady standing underneath the podium, in the hat and black coat, gripping a purse in her hand, is anxiously following my performance. I met up with Judaism from a very young age - as my father was active in the Prague Jewish Community, it was completely natural for me to attend the Community regularly. I went to the Community for parties, later as a student for lunches. I never felt any division of identity - I perceived Judaism as some sort of tradition, however in a non-religious fashion. As a child I remember that during Christmas we had a tree at home, so that we children wouldn't miss out on anything. The tree is this symbol, which actually vouches for coexistence and the intermingling of traditions; I looked at the Christmas tree in a religious context. After the year 1945 the Prague Jewish Community was composed in small part by original Prague Jews, who had returned here after the war. The larger part of the community was formed by people who came to Prague after the war from Subcarpathia, and these brought with them something that was absolutely foreign, what absolutely didn't have any tradition here - Orthodoxy. Prague was never Orthodox, the mainstream here was Neolog - people here practiced more to preserve continuity, not because of religion itself. The Community as such was of course religious, it observed all regulations, but most people before the war, and after the war, also those that returned, were secular.