

Elsa Kleinova



This is a picture of my aunt Elsa Kleinova, nee Schulzova with her husband Pavel Klein and their children Marta and Tomas. The photo was taken in Prague in the 1930s.

Aunt Elsa was born in 1901 in Palupin. Her husband Pavel was a lawyer. He was always in the center stage whenever people got together, for he was a terrific person and had a great personality.

He may have been a good lawyer, but he was what they called a lawyer for the poor, so he didn't get on too well financially.

They lived in Prague. We would sometimes come over from Most and pay them a visit.

They had two children, Tomas, who was born in 1928, and Marta, born in 1929. They weren't sent to Terezin until the summer of 1943, seeing that my uncle worked for the Jewish community.

After the war, Marta told me that she envied us for being in Terezin, as it was so terrible in Prague at that time - there was no-one to talk with and they weren't allowed to walk on the sidewalk, in fact they couldn't go anywhere.

Things were so unpleasant that she was looking forward to being among her own. Once in Terezin Marta spent the whole time lying in the tuberculosis ward, as she had fallen ill.

They were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in December 1943 on the second transport of that month and then stayed in the so-called Czech Family Camp.

After its liquidation in July 1944, they were all subjected to the selection process. Uncle Pavel and Tomas didn't return and we never found out the circumstances of their deaths.

Marta and Elsa were rescued, but it was all very dramatic. They got to the Stutthof camp where they were sent off to work. Together with other women, they dug trenches in the vicinity of Gdansk.

It wasn't a proper camp, for they lived in tents and when they finished work in one spot, they just moved on to another. They survived under wretched conditions.

The Red Army liberated them in January 1945, by which time they were in a desperate state, sick and frost-bitten.

They received treatment at a military hospital and were then sent on a hospital train to the center of the Soviet Union, where they stayed for a long time in various camps, along with captured Germans.

Later on, a few of the young girls there were sent home with them, while the others remained incarcerated. Marta returned in November 1945 on her own. Aunt Elsa didn't return until 1946.