

The Synagogue In Luze



This is a picture of the synagogue in Luze, taken in the 1950s. At the time I lived there, Luze was a relatively small town ? there were only about 1360 people living there. Today the synagogue has been renovated, but doesn't serve as a synagogue, but as a space for gallery shows and theater performances. In Luze our family had been living for generations in an old family home at 202 Jeronymova Street; alas today our house is no longer there. We had five rooms and two kitchens ? one large and one smaller one. The street was named Jeronymova, but people used to call it Zidovna [from 'Zid' the Czech word for Jew], as earlier there had been a Jewish ghetto there. At the time I lived there, Luze was a relatively small town ? there were only about 1360 people living there. But located in Luze was the center of the Jewish religious community for surrounding towns as well. All Jews from the area belonged to the Jewish religious community in Luze. My grandpa, Max Alter, was the president of the Jewish religious community. After my grandpa's death some Mr. Cervinka was president, and after he died my father, Emil Polak, became president of the Community. My father became president when the war hadn't started yet, and remained so up until the transport, so all organization of handing over of property was done by my father. The Jewish community in Luze was quite large, as it was the center of Jewish life in the region. During the war the shammash's apartment was occupied by some person that cured rabbit hides, and he dried them right in the synagogue! This basically had one advantage, that during the war the synagogue wasn't dank and didn't go moldy, as because of the drying of rabbit skins it had to be ventilated a lot. After the war the Luze synagogue fell into disrepair. Today it belongs to the Prague Jewish community, and was renovated several years ago; it's no longer used for religious purposes, but concerts and exhibitions are held there. During the synagogue's reconstruction they found some hidden baby shawls that had been hidden there for ritual purposes. The Jewish cemetery in Luze also fell into disrepair after the war, and was partially pillaged, as tombstones were very valuable. Our family's tombstone was also pushed over, but because it was very heavy the thieves didn't steal it. The cemetery was also renovated a few years ago.