

Milena Prochazkova With Her Grandparents



This is a picture of Rudolf Stern and Elsa Sternova, my mother's parents. And between them am I, when I was about 2. But I have no clue where the photo was taken. Grandma Sternova was generous, but was stricter with us. On the other hand, Grandpa Stern spoiled us rotten. My grandparents lived together in Kamberk, where they had a huge farm estate. My grandpa probably had some sort of agricultural high school, because as a farmer he was very successful. But it was terrible drudgery. That estate was really very large, because twelve families lived there. They worked for them in the fields and gardens, basically whatever was needed. And got a salary for that. They had horses, cows, poultry, everything. From 1928 onwards, when my mother, Hedvika Kosinerova, was married, Grandpa and Grandma lived in Prague. They sold the farm and bought half of an apartment building on Veletřní Street, and lived on the rent from it. I don't think that this transaction was connected to my mother's wedding in any way, more likely they were toil-worn and wanted to retire. What's more, it had probably been planned for a long time, because they bought the building with some distant relative of my grandmother's, and Grandma had half and they had half, so it must have been agreed upon long before. As far as religion goes, my grandfather on my mother's side regularly attended synagogue. At least once a month. But mainly he always observed the New Year [Rosh Hashanah] and the Long Day [Yom Kippur]. He was brought up that way at home, likely by his father, because his mother didn't observe anything. You know, what could you observe in those villages. Both his parents were Jews, just like my grandma's, they were generations of Jewish families. But they were village families. I suspect that they tried to live in such a way so as not stick out too much from the other villagers. Some sort of attending synagogue was of course not possible in a village in those days. Nevertheless neither did my grandfather live in some sort of Orthodox fashion, he observed only the High Holidays, didn't eat kosher and on the contrary, spent Christmas with us children. Neither did he try to exert some sort of religious influence or pressure. No one talked about it in that family. He lived his own internal life, but without us. I think that Grandma finished junior high, and then she worked on that farm - they slaved away there - and also took care of the children. She had five of them, but three died in 1918 or 1919, when the Spanish Flu was at its peak. She didn't live in any particularly religious fashion.