

Ludmila Rutarova During The War



This picture of me is from 1941. It was taken in Prague. During the war, my knowledge of Catholicism that I had gained in school in Nadejkov came in very handy. This is because I was going out with a young man who wasn't a Jew, but we did want to escape Hitler together, to Canada. We absolved all sorts of medical checks so that we could leave the country, but another condition for leaving the country was for me to be baptized. At that time my mother made the rounds of all the churches in the neighborhood, everywhere they were very kind, but told us that they alas couldn't baptize me because that was prohibited. Because it was already 1939, right before the occupation, and priests had already been forbidden to baptize Jews. In the end we

managed to find some highly revered priest at the diocese in Hradcany, who said he'd be able to arrange a baptism for me. I remember setting out for Hradcany, I was not quite nineteen at the time, I don't remember all the titles by which I had to address the man, but he was actually a very nice person. He told me he knew a priest in Nizebohy who'd be willing to baptize me. But that prior to that I'd have to learn various prayers and recitations, so he brought me a book which I was supposed to read, and said he'd test me on it before I was to undergo the baptism. I opened the book, and told him that I didn't need it, that I knew it all. He was very surprised, and asked how it was possible. I told him that I'd attended Catholic religion classes for two years. He asked me if it wouldn't upset me if he tested me anyway. It was no problem for me of course; on the spot I recited all the prayers for him, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Lord, I Believe one after another. He was completely flabbergasted, and said I knew it so well that I didn't need any book of his, and that he'd go ahead and arrange my baptism. I was baptized by Father Culik in Nizebohy, who even arranged a banquet for me to go with it, and was very kind to me. However, in the end I didn't leave for Canada anyway, because my young man and I had broken up!