

Alfred Weiner



This is a picture of my father, Alfred Weiner, from the 1930s. It was taken in Prague. My father always liked to talk about how my parents met. In Cernovice my mother knew someone named Emil, they'd been going out together for several years, and it was already clear that they'd be getting married. When Emil came to ask Grandpa for my mother's hand, he was interested in what sort of dowry my mother would get. When my grandfather listed everything she would get, Emil asked whether she would also get a cow for her dowry. To this my grandfather answered that she

wouldn't get a cow. My mother was listening behind the door, and when she heard this, she said: "You wanted a cow? So marry a cow!" and left for Prague. In Prague she met my father, and married him out of spite. My parents had a general store where they sold various goods: fruit, vegetables, baked goods, butter, eggs, milk, coffee, tea, sugar, sometimes even chickens and geese. I didn't like being in the store too much, because I had to help! My parents rose early in the morning and would go to the market close to Narodni Trida for vegetables, fruit, eggs and other goods. At the market, when they'd see our mother approaching, they'd say: "The countess is coming" because she used to root around in the goods. [The Czech word for countess is "hraběnka" while the expression for rooting or digging around is "hrabat."] During the time of the protectorate we had to close the store and move in to one room. Before that we'd been living in the building where our store was, and we had a small apartment - one room, a kitchen, and a larger front hall. My father didn't want to live anywhere else other than the house where we had our store, so he'd be close to work. We were basically a secularized family; we didn't live in any especially religious fashion. We observed Christian Christmas, and also used to have a tree. We didn't cook kosher, and as far as I know from what I was told, even my grandparents' families didn't cook kosher. We observed Passover at home about once or twice, because my brother and I liked matzot, and so because of us my mother made seder. My father would only go to the Jerusalem Synagogue for the Long Day or Rosh Hashanah, I don't even know exactly which of these holidays. Once, when my brother and I were small, we also went to the synagogue together with our father. I remember that when the rabbi was singing, we found it funny and were killing ourselves laughing, so they threw us out of there.