

# Bedriska Felixova

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Brno

Czech Republic

Interviewer: Zuzana Pastorkova

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Mrs. Bedriska Felixova lives in a three-bedroom apartment in her home town of Brno. She has been a widow since 1994. Her two sons live on their own, but since they also live in Brno they visit their mother frequently. The interview took place at the premises of the Brno Jewish community, located at 3 Kapitana Jarose Avenue. Mrs. Felixova is a very affable and intelligent woman with a good sense of humor. In 1942, at the age of seven she was deported to Terezin, so her descriptions of the Holocaust are as seen through the eyes of a child. She gained much information about her childhood and the life of her family and relatives before World War II from her mother, with whom she lived upon their return from the ghetto until her death in 1973. Mrs. Felixova was very willing to be interviewed. She did ask us, however, to restrict it to only one sitting, due to the fact that reminiscences of the Holocaust and of those dear to her that she lost greatly disturb her.

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## My family background

My grandfather on my father's side was named Burgmann. Unfortunately I don't remember his first and Jewish name. He was born in Uhersky Brod in the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. My grandmother's maiden name was Jana Burgmann, nee Schoen and she was also from Uhersky Brod. After their wedding they stayed in their home town and moved into a small house. They had two sons: Bedrich and Gustav. Grandfather, however, soon died and was buried in the local Jewish cemetery.

I don't know much about Grandfather Burgmann. He probably only finished elementary school, but I don't remember what he did for a living. Grandma told me that he played the violin beautifully during services in the synagogue. My grandmother probably also just studied in elementary school. Their mother tongue was German.

After her husband's death my grandmother moved with her two children to Brno, where living conditions were better. Without any support or financial help she bought a three-bedroom

apartment at 3 Orlova Street. She got along well with both her Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors. Grandma was a very hard-working woman. She ran a textiles store from her apartment and sold bedding, underwear, tablecloths, trousseaus and so on. She called it a 'white goods' store. At home she had a servant named Annie who cooked, cleaned and did the shopping. Grandma closed her business before World War II once her two sons moved out and started their own lives.

I never met my grandfather; I don't even know what he looked like or how he dressed, because my parents and my grandmother never told me. My grandmother was small and plump and always dressed well. She wore long skirts typical for those pre-war times, a decorative white collar and a hat. I don't think she wore hats for religious reasons, for she wasn't a religious Jew. Grandma's hair was of very poor quality. Sometimes she would take us grandchildren for walks in the park in Luzanky. While all others had normally arranged hairdos, her hair would be messed up by the wind, so she was always frizzy despite a great number of hairclips with which she tried to tame her hair. My mother told me that when I was born, Grandma stroked my head and said: 'The poor girl is going to be unhappy, because she's got my hair.'

My father's mother wasn't a religious Jew. She wasn't an atheist, but didn't live strictly according to Jewish laws either. I think that like every person to whom fate hasn't been kind she in the end lost her faith. Her husband died quite early on; she became a widow at the age of 39. In the year 1928 her younger son Bedrich also died, as a result of a heart defect. These losses broke her faith. She observed Jewish holidays desultorily and went to the synagogue only on the major holidays. She didn't have a kosher household. Mom remembered that once her future mother-in-law invited her for lunch and placed before her a plate of sauerbraten. Mom at first hesitated, because at home they kept kosher, but in the end she ate it. She later enthusiastically told her parents that it was quite tasty. Despite the fact that grandma didn't strictly keep Jewish customs, she moved about in predominantly Jewish circles; she was a member of the Brno Jewish community and the Maccabi [1](#) sports club.

As to my grandfather's siblings, no one in my family told me anything about them. On the other hand, I know plenty about my grandmother's siblings. Grandmother had a sister named Hermina and a brother, Moritz. Both were born in Uhersky Brod but moved to Brno where they had better living conditions. Aunt Hermina was a tall, dark-haired, very pretty and elegant lady. She married Mr. Kohn, a rich Jewish widower who was in the lumber business. Before World War II there were only two wealthy Kohns in Brno - 'lumberman' Kohn and 'brickman' Kohn, who owned a brick factory. Widower Kohn had two children from his previous marriage. People first felt sorry for them that they were orphans, and when he remarried, they said that they had a wicked stepmother. I don't believe that Aunt Hermina was unkind to them; I'm sure it was only gossip.

Uncle Moritz was the director of the Brno Eskomptni Bank. He married some German woman who literally ran away from him after the occupation of Bohemia [see Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] [2](#). In 1942 Aunt Hermina and Uncle Moritz along with me, my parents and my paternal grandmother were transported to Terezin [3](#). Since at that time they were both over 70, life in the ghetto was very difficult for them. Aunt Hermina died from pneumonia three weeks after our arrival and Uncle Moritz died shortly thereafter. They had an undignified death, dying neglected on dirty straw mattresses, covered by a dirty blanket. When you move an old tree to a new and moreover worse place, it usually ends badly.

My grandfather on my mother's side was named Herman Baru. He was born in Damborice, most likely still in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Grandmother was named Gizela Baru, nee Heska. Her Jewish name was Gitl. She came from Podivin in Southern Moravia. Both completed at least elementary school. Grandfather then became apprenticed as a tailor. I don't know how they met, but they settled in Brno. They had three children: Otto, Bedrich and my mother, Regina.

Grandfather worked as a tailor in a tailor's shop which he most likely owned. He probably had some employees, but my parents didn't tell me anything about it. Grandma was a housewife. She sometimes got a few geese from her home town of Podivin, which she fattened up in the entrance hall of their apartment in Brno. To make money on the side she then sold the fattened kosher geese to local Jews. My grandparents lived in an apartment behind today's main train station, on a street then named Stiftgasse, now Nadacna. They lived in humble conditions and didn't have a lot of money. Despite having empty pockets, they behaved with a certain moral noblesse. My mother and her brothers were very lucky to be able to grow up in surroundings where family came first.

Both my grandparents' mother tongue was German, which they spoke among themselves and their children. However, Grandfather could read Hebrew and prayed according to Hebrew prayer books. I remember Grandpa being of slight, thin build and that he parted his hair in the middle. He was very good-hearted, like every proper grandpa. My grandparents dressed like the majority of the city's residents and didn't show their Judaism by the way they dressed. Unfortunately I don't know what my grandmother looked like because I was born after her death [she died in 1934].

My mother's parents were religious Jews. Grandfather went to the synagogue every Friday, Saturday and during Jewish holidays, and Grandmother regularly baked barkhes. During Pesach they always observed the dictated procedures and courses; Grandfather led the seder and someone from the family read from the Haggadah at the ceremonially set dinner table. Of course, during Passover we ate matzot or matzah dumplings, chicken and so on. My grandparents also observed Yom Kippur, during which according to custom they always fasted, as they saying goes, come rain or shine. My mother's parents ate strictly kosher. I suppose that they either bought kosher meat from a kosher butcher in Brno or had it brought from Podivin, where my grandma was from. My grandparents were very conscious of their Judaism and followed their convictions and belief in the raising of their three children. They were members of the Brno Jewish community and moved about predominantly in Jewish social circles.

My grandparents died before World War II. My grandmother was tormented by the tragic death of her son Otto, who died as a result of injuries he suffered in a car accident. In 1928 she had a stroke, was half paralyzed, and my grandfather took care of her together with my mother for six and a half years. She died in 1934. My Grandfather died in 1941 in an old age home on Starobrnenska Street. Unfortunately I don't remember my grandfather's siblings. Grandma likely had two sisters who lived in Podivin, but I never met them.

My mom and grandmother often told me about my great-grandmother. Her married name was Heska, but I don't remember her first or Jewish name. She lived in the town of Podivin in Southern Moravia. According to oral tradition Podivin was founded by some Jew named Podiv. My mother remembered that during her childhood about half of the town's occupants were Jews. By the time she met my great-grandmother she was already a widow who made a living by raising kosher geese. She apparently only finished elementary school, but she was a very wise, capable woman

with a dry sense of humor, which maybe I inherited from her. My grandmother used to tell us that her mother's education was the university of life.

My great-grandmother was a very religious Jewess; she kept the Ten Commandments and Jewish rules and laws. She ate strictly kosher, regularly attended the synagogue and observed all Jewish holidays. When my mother was small it seemed strange to her that she would call her neighbors on Friday evening and Saturday to come and switch off and on her lights. My great-grandmother raised her three daughters according to Jewish religion. This was passed on to my mother from grandma, my mother to me and I try to raise my sons the same way. My great-grandmother died in Podivín and was buried in the Jewish cemetery, which still exists today. Only Hebrew writing is visible on the gravestones, so I don't even know where exactly her grave is. In the attendance hall on the cemetery grounds, however, there is a list of Jews that lived in Podivín at the end of the 19th century and in the 20th century, and my great-grandmother's name is among them.

### Growing up in Brno

I spent my childhood in Brno. Before World War II the city had a population of around 300,000 [Editor's note: according to the 1921 census Brno had 227,313 inhabitants, 10,866 of who were Jews. In 1930 the population was 271,521]. Though I don't exactly know how many Jews lived there at the time, I do remember that most Jewish families lived in the city centre. The Brno Jewish community was composed of mainly so-called liberal but also Orthodox believers [see Orthodox communities] [4](#). Our family belonged to the liberal Jewish population. Orthodox Jews were a minority. They used to go to the Orthodox synagogue on Krenova Street. [Editor's note: the so-called Polish Temple, built in 1883, enlarged in 1886. Religious services were held there until WWII. In 1954 it was converted to a graphics studio and later served as a warehouse.] They were more religious than 'liberals', they more strictly observed Jewish laws and regulations. I suppose that they also dressed accordingly. Personally though, I've never met an Orthodox Jew.

We used to go to a smaller synagogue [the so-called New Synagogue, built during the years 1905-06, which stood on Ponávka Street, and was demolished in 1986]. I don't remember much about it, because I was still a small child at that time. I think it was built from red bricks. Apparently it was in the Communists' way, because they had it torn down. A third synagogue, which stood behind today's main train station, was burned down on 16th March 1939 [the so-called Big Synagogue, built in 1853-55 on the corner of Spálená and Prizova Streets, burned and demolished by the Nazis]. To commemorate this tragic incident one street in Brno was named Spálená [Burned]. I currently go to a former Orthodox synagogue [the so-called New Orthodox Synagogue on 13 Skořepka Street, a functionalist building from the years 1935-36, built by architect Otto Eiler, and to this day open for religious services].

Each synagogue had a different rabbi. I remember only a cantor who had an amazing voice and everyone listened to his beautiful singing with delight. Mother used to reminisce that Brno also had a mikveh. My grandmother on my mother's side maybe used to go there, but my mother certainly didn't. She used to say 'Nothing's better than your own bathroom.' Brno also had a Jewish high school. The only difference between it and state schools was that the students were Jewish.

Jews in Brno were mainly merchants and businessmen. Many of them were clerks. My father was also a clerk. Jews owned many textile factories and wholesale businesses, I remember for example the owner of a textile factory, Mr. Stastný. Up to the end of World War I [1918] the city was quite

Germanic. This means that German was spoken more than Czech. Many factory owners were originally Austrians. Brno had a German theater and a German Center, which was completely shot to pieces in 1945. Before World War II the city had a more old-world look and I liked it more than I do now. Jews but even other residents were closer to each other than nowadays.

My father was named Gustav Burgmann and his Jewish name was Gedalie. He was born in Brno on 8th October 1897. My mother's maiden name was Regina Baru and her Jewish name was Rivke. She was born in Brno on 16th August 1901.

My father went to schools where German was the instructional language. He successfully finished business school and got a job in Brno with this uncle Kohn [Aunt Hermina's husband], who was in the lumber business. He had various functions there; he did the accounting, administration, in short he was a jack of all trades. In those days there were no computers, accounts were written in longhand into ledgers and my father always had everything in perfect order. He was very skilled and had beautiful handwriting.

My mother went to elementary and town school. [Editor's note: a part of the educational system before 1945. This type of high school was created according to statute XXVL/1893. A condition of study in town schools was completion of 4 grades of elementary school. The school could be founded by the state, but also by towns.] After that she became apprenticed as a seamstress. She opened a ladies' dressmaking shop in Brno and after her wedding employed two or three seamstresses. She had a good reputation in town, but never had time for me. Mother loved dressmaking; she used to say: 'During sewing I forget about the entire world.' In December 1928 though, her mother had a stroke and my mother was forced to eventually close her business, because she had to take care of her mother along with my grandfather.

I don't know how my parents met, because they never talked to me about it. I think that Jewish origins certainly played a role in picking out a partner. They were married in Brno in the Big Synagogue behind today's main train station on 19th February 1927. They had a proper Jewish wedding. I don't know who led the bride under the chuppah, but it was customarily either her mother or future mother-in-law. My mother never told me anything about the wedding party afterwards.

My parents spoke German to each other, but only Czech with me. My father was a big Czech patriot. He was tall and slender, with dark hair, and was always impeccably dressed. He wore spectacles and had a prudent air about him. He had a very mild nature. My mother was a very pretty, dark-haired woman and of a shorter build. She didn't like the latest fashion trends but dressed tastefully and was always clean and neat. She wore typical city fashion of the time. She was a very witty and wise lady. She belonged to those that make their mark in the world and I think that she was well- liked.

Right after they married my parents moved out and bought a three-bedroom apartment at 32 Akademicka Street. There was a bedroom, living room, dining room, children's room, kitchen and bathroom. We heated with an American stove that had the logo 'hitling' on it. The apartment was tastefully furnished; in the dining room we had beautiful furniture made of walnut. My father knew a lot about wood, as he worked for his uncle, who was in the lumber business. For her part my mother liked nice things for the display case. My parents were relatively successful and belonged to the upper middle class. Mother had a maid who helped with the housework, cleaning, cooking



and shopping. You see, in the beginning Mother didn't like cooking very much. I don't remember if our maid also lived with us, but she certainly ate with us at the same table.

Our neighbors weren't Jewish, but we never experienced any anti-Semitism from them. We moved from Akademicka Street to an apartment on Malsova Street, where we had central heating. After the occupation the Germans moved us together with other Jews into an apartment at 26 Legionarska Street [today Kapitana Jarose Avenue]. From there, on 31st March 1942 we went directly onto a transport, which was on its way to Terezin.

My parents read mainly literature written in German. They had some books at home, but certainly not a lot. Father was more partial to newspapers. He subscribed, I think, to Svobodne Slovo [Free Word] but otherwise he read all the dailies. Mother rarely looked through the daily papers; she preferred to read historical or factual literature.

When she was single Mother loved opera and operetta. Her neighbor, who was an opera singer, more than once gave her a ticket to the Brno opera when there was a free seat available. This neighbor was named Maria Jedlickova, but performed under the stage name of Maria Jedlica. Her patron was some Jewish factory owner. She made it as far as the Metropolitan Opera in New York and became the first promoter of Janacek's operas. [Janacek, Leos (1854-1928): Czech composer, professor at Brno Conservatory, prominent folklorist. Janacek's compositions met with marked success at international festivals in Salzburg, Venice and Frankfurt. His works exceeded the artistic and intellectual sphere of Czech environs.]

My parents were never politically active. They were members of the Jewish Maccabi sports club. As a young girl Mother regularly went to gymnastics and father enthusiastically devoted himself to football. [Editor's note: in 1921, the Jewish Football League of Czechoslovakia was founded during a meeting of Jewish sports organizations.] My father was maybe active in some Jewish group or in the Jewish community, but I doubt that he would have had some sort of function. My parents predominantly met with their childhood and school friends. Their friends were mainly Jews and members of the middle class. Besides this they met with Aunt Hermina and her husband, Mr. Kohn, at least twice a week. I liked it a lot at the Kohn's. Their apartment was furnished with beautiful antique furniture. I remember how our whole family used to go on trips and how we would sleep in summer apartments that some farmer would rent to us. We used to go for walks in the countryside. In Brno we often spent our spare time in the park at Luzanky. Dad knew every nook and cranny of Brno. He liked it here a lot, and I think that today he could easily make a living as a tourist guide. Sometimes he liked to go to some cafe. He wasn't a layabout; he had only one coffee, one cigarette, and went home.

My parents were liberal Jews. They didn't keep the kashrut and went to the synagogue only on the major Jewish holidays. Dad really just stood there, but Mom always brought her prayer book. I don't remember whether we observed Sabbath before the war, but I do remember that on Saturday afternoons my mother's friends, who were very conscious of their Judaism, would come to visit. After my grandmother's death [on mother's side], my grandfather regularly came to my parents for Passover and led seder. Mother told me how my hungry father impatiently waited for his father-in-law to end the ceremony and prayers, so he could start eating. We kept Chanukkah in a simple fashion. Every day, of eight in all, we would light only one candle and then would move it to a different place on the candelabra, the so-called chanukkiyah. Mother was very tidy and that silver

candelabra was very hard to clean. For that reason we only used one candle. We never had a Christmas tree. At Rosh Hashanah we went to the synagogue.

Father's only brother was named Bedrich Burgmann. I assume that he was born in 1903, because he was six years younger than my father. Uncle Bedrich was a big athlete and was a member of the Maccabi Jewish sports club. I don't think he was a religious Jew. He realized who he was, but almost never went to the synagogue. He advocated Zionism. He died in Brno of a heart attack in 1931 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Brno. My grandmother [on father's side] wasn't able to come to terms with his premature death. She convinced my parents to name their next child Bedrich, after my uncle. However, I was born instead, so I got the name Bedriska.

My mother had two older siblings. Her oldest brother was named Otto and the middle one Bedrich Baru. Both were born in Brno, Otto in 1899 and Bedrich in 1900. Uncle Bedrich finished business school and worked as a clerk. After the occupation in 1939, in the Bohemian and Moravian Protectorate anti-Jewish laws came into force [see anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] [5](#). The breaking of one law was fateful for Bedrich. He went to one cafe for a coffee, but the SS were doing a sweep there and they immediately dragged him off to a transport. He likely died in 1941 in Mauthausen.

Otto Baru studied at the Faculty of Medicine at Masaryk University in Brno. He became an outstanding eye doctor. He married Ruzena Kohn. In 1926 they had a daughter, Helena Baruova. Uncle Otto died very young, at the age of 29. Mother told me that he died in a car accident in October 1928. He was hurrying to work in Znojmo, and while passing the main cemetery in the direction of Moravia he drove into an unlighted pit. He died as a result of his injuries after being taken to the hospital. My grandmother [on mother's side] never recovered from his death. In December 1928 she had a stroke and half of her body was paralyzed.

My cousin Helena, whom our whole family calls Lenka, was deported to Lodz ghetto [6](#) in Poland. She managed to survive, and after the war she married Ervin Krumholz, a native of Ostrava, whom she had met in Prague. Two years after the war they had a son, Dany. In 1948 they emigrated to Israel, where they lived about a year. But Ervin couldn't get used to the hot climate, so they both left for Canada and settled in Toronto. Ervin worked as an auto mechanic and Helena worked for years in a Canadian travel agency. The Krumholzes are quite religious Jews. They go to the synagogue regularly; they can even pick which one they want to go to, because in Toronto there's a lot of them. Ervin died in 2003. To this day Helena and I write to each other in Czech. She's quite talkative and still commands her mother tongue perfectly.

My name is Bedriska Felixova, nee Burgmannova. I inherited my Jewish name, Gitl, from my grandmother [on mother's side]. I was born in Brno on 17th January 1935. My mother gave birth to me at home with the assistance of a midwife.

My mother didn't want to have me at first, and wanted to go for an abortion. My father, however, wouldn't hear of it. He had a very mild and peaceful nature; mother saw him lose his temper only twice, and it was always because of me. The first time he made a scene was when she wanted the abortion. He told her that he knew what he was doing. He was sure that he was going to have a daughter. Mother's relatives also persuaded her and in the end she agreed. Father was right, and they had a daughter. The second time Father lost his temper was when he began shouting in Terezin when someone wanted to hurt me. I don't remember exactly what it was about. Only his

words remain engraved in my memory: 'God's justice is slow but sure. You'll pay for everything in the end.'

When I was little my mother spent most of her time with me, but my grandfather [on mother's side] was there as well. Sometimes our maid Anicka took care of me. Later they enrolled me in the state nursery school. Almost immediately I had to leave though, because of the anti-Jewish laws. My mother remembered how the teacher sorrowfully told her that she couldn't help, because I was Jewish.

In the Jewish community [in Brno] on Legionarska Street, as it was called then [today's Avenue of Kapitan Jaros], an interim Jewish school was opened. I spent only the first grade there, because in 1942 my parents and I were transported to Terezin. I got to spend only nine years in all with my father, because he died in Auschwitz in 1944. But already as a young girl I felt that we were very close.

My brother was named Otto Burgmann after my uncle [mother's brother] who died in a car accident. Unfortunately I don't remember his Jewish name. He was born in Brno on 17th November 1928. He went to the state elementary school in Brno, which he didn't finish due to his premature death. We liked each other, but of course like all small children we often teased and tormented each other. I don't remember him much, because we didn't have a lot of time together. I was only four when he died. He got appendicitis, but doctors diagnosed it incorrectly. He died in Brno on 9th February 1939. They buried him in the Brno Jewish cemetery. My mother used to tell me that after his death several men would meet in our flat to pray for his soul. Mother was in mourning, she sat shivah, but my father probably didn't.

### **During the war**

After the annexation of the Sudetenland [6](#) by the German Reich, my parents suspected what was going to happen with us. After the occupation the Germans expropriated all Jewish property, including Uncle Kohn's wholesale business. Because my father was a very capable clerk, they let him work a few months more in his job. At the beginning of 1941 they however moved him to a building at 31 Legionarska Street, where he wrote up lists of people intended for transport. An armed Gestapo officer stood watch over him all day to make sure that he didn't leave even one name off the list. I remember how exhausted and devastated he used to be when he came home.

I was too young [in 1939, when World War II broke out], I was only four and my parents didn't want to confuse me. Mother explained the situation by saying that bad people had come, who wanted to harm us. I was mainly affected by the fact that I had more things forbidden than allowed. I felt quite limited. I wasn't allowed to go to a normal state elementary school. In the building where the Jewish Community was located, a provisional Jewish school was opened, and there I absolved only the first grade [see Exclusion of Jews from schools in the Protectorate] [7](#). I couldn't go to the park, or to the puppet theatre. My mother wanted to spare me the response 'you're not allowed', so she always told me: 'you can't'. I therefore spent most of my time in our apartment. I remember my mother crying uncontrollably when she was sewing the yellow Star of David on my dress.

In 1942 I, along with my parents, my grandmother [Jana Burgmann] and her siblings were put on a transport to Terezin. At first they gathered us in the elementary school on Merhautova Street, the next day they transported us to the main train station. We were transported to the concentration



camp in passenger trains. They transported us all over Bohemia; we must have detoured all the way to 'Kamchatka'. In Terezin they immediately separated the men and women. For about a year I lived with my mother and grandmother in the so-called Podmokelsko barracks, and then the Dresden barracks. Father lived in the Sudetenland barracks.

My mother's trade of seamstress saved her life. She was ordered to sew German army coats. She was always honest and hard-working, but that didn't apply very much to those German uniforms. When her thread ran out, she threaded a new one into the needle, but didn't continue sewing in the place where she had stopped. Often she left a nice big unsewn patch in the jacket's underarm.

My grandmother was a very determined and tough woman. She came to Terezin at the age of 70 and everyone admired her tenaciousness. In fact she even volunteered for work. She liked me a lot, she called me her Pipushka. Smaller children in the ghetto had no schooling at all. Despite this my grandmother tried to give me at least some elementary education. Usually we sat on a bench in the park, Grandma taught me how to count and we would read from Babicka [Grandma] by Bozena Nemcova [1820-1862, Czech writer]. I have that book to this day as a remembrance.

My grandmother had problems with her gall bladder already before World War II. In those days a gall bladder operation was unthinkable, doctors prescribed a special diet. Of course, in Terezin that was impossible. Her health gradually got worse and she ended up in hospital. I also became ill at that time, so I was unfortunately a witness to her dying. Just before her dying breath, the nurse threw me out and said that I should wait outside for my mother, who sat by my grandmother's death bed up to the end. Grandmother died in 1943. Her funeral was very undignified. It seemed to me as if the Germans were making fun of it. It wasn't really a proper Jewish funeral, only a sort of farewell. In the barracks courtyard stood the rabbi, behind him my parents. After the ceremony her body was taken away to the crematorium, burnt, and the ashes ended up somewhere in the Ohra River.

As a child I couldn't understand that I could move about only in Terezin and couldn't cross its boundary. They left me with my mother, but older children lived in a so-called 'Kinderheim' [German for children's home], where they received an albeit secret, but more regular education. Our diet was terrible. We got unchanging soups and sauces, beet broth, barley stew and so on. To this day I can't stand to even look at barley. My father was assigned a job in food distribution where he was responsible for distributing bread rations. In the beginning we used to see him each day at noon or in the afternoon for one or two hours. He would either come to where we were living or we would meet somewhere in the town on the street. Then he supposedly left for work from which he never returned. In those days we had no inkling that in Poland there were other concentration camps where Jews were dying in horrible conditions. Father likely died in Auschwitz in 1944.

## Liberation

On 7th May 1945 at around 9:30 in the evening the Russians arrived in Terezin. The Germans had run away about three days before their arrival. All of a sudden we were in no man's land, we had no idea what was or wasn't happening. Shots and explosions which at that time carried to us all the way from Prague all of a sudden ceased and a strange quiet came over the camp. In the evening we were slowly falling asleep when we heard some sort of metallic sound. With us was the master seamstress under whom my mother had had her dressmaking exams. She ran off to see what was going on. She returned out of breath: 'Girls, the Russians are here!' Both started crying and Mother

tore off my star, almost taking my dress with it.

The next morning we went to have a look into town. The main square was packed with Russians lying around and also tanks, which had evidently been making that strange metallic sound the previous evening. Looking at one soldier my mother said to me: 'Look, he's sleeping.' I could have done whatever I had wanted; those soldiers were so tired, that had I sung or shouted in their ears they would have slept on. We returned to our accommodations. In the afternoon the master seamstress came and said that women shouldn't go out at all, so those men wouldn't rape them. After two or three days even this danger ceased.

Trains with prisoners from the liberated concentration camps began arriving at Terezin train station full of wretches that had been forced to take part in the death march. Being a little girl, I ran about between those wagons searching for my dear father. He wasn't to be found, however. Out of the wagons tumbled emaciated people, the living along with the dead. The dead were buried right there in the Terezin cemetery and the ill were treated in the local hospital by Red Cross workers. Many of them were so exhausted that they couldn't even say their name and would only lifelessly show their arm, where their ID number was tattooed. While I was running back and forth between the wagons hopelessly searching for my father, a family friend saw me, and immediately berated my mother that I could catch some disease there. The thing is that typhus had begun spreading. Shortly thereafter I fell ill. A doctor came to see me, and said that it didn't look like typhus, but more like tonsillitis. I got a poultice, and tea with lemon for the first time in five years, and that doctor said to me: 'Little girl, show me what you're capable of.' Well, I guess I was capable, because I'm still alive.

## Post-war

In June of 1945 my Mom and I got a ride on a truck to Prague. We spent the night with a friend, Petr Bondy, who had also survived the Holocaust in Terezin. Then we took a train and returned to Brno. Before we left Prague my mother wrote our former building superintendent when we would be returning. We got off the train in a Brno suburb, because bombing had damaged the railway to the main train station. Mrs. Matouskova was already there waiting for us. When they were tearfully hugging each other, she asked: 'And where's the little one?' I was hiding behind my mother's skirt. She looked at me in horror, because at the age of eleven I weighed maybe at the most 16 kilograms. I was all arms and legs, with only a nose and big eyes sticking out of my face. 'I'll fatten you up,' she comforted me. She made poppy seed cakes, but the poppy seeds made me nauseous, because my stomach had shrunk from long years of hunger.

Mrs. Matouskova let us stay with her because Mother couldn't find us a place to live. Mr. Matousek offered to accompany her. He worked as a traffic cop and was a mountain of a man. When they finally came to the front of the line, the official told Mother that they didn't have any apartments available. Everyone already had someplace, only we didn't have our own roof over our heads. At this moment, however, dear Mr. Matousek intervened: 'Well what are you thinking?! How long am I supposed to be saddled with this woman and her kid? How long am I supposed to support them?! I couldn't care less; I've only got one salary. So they'll go out on the street, big deal!' Mother started to cry, the official left the room and Mr. Matousek whispered in her ear: 'I hope you don't think that I would throw you and the little one out. Do you want a place to live? Of course you do. OK, so I had to act out this little scene.' Thanks to him we in the end got a three-bedroom apartment that had

belonged to some Germans at 16 Erbenova Street.

I have no idea what happened with our pre-war apartment, and with the furniture that we had left there. Mother wasn't interested in it at all; she didn't want to return there because of all the memories. We met selfless people that helped us, but there were also those that hurt us. My grandmother's former maid Anca didn't show herself in a good light in her memory. Before the war Grandma hid some Persian carpets with her, which she denied having upon our return from the ghetto. She invited my mother for coffee, sat her down, and through half-opened doors to the next room my mother saw my grandmother's carpets on the floor. Mrs. Anca, coming into the room with a tray, immediately closed the doors. Of course she lied to my mother and said that everything had been stolen by the Russians. Mother didn't even finish her coffee, ran out of the apartment and never met with her again.

After World War II my mother got some financial reparations from the state and had a widow's pension. She stayed at home and never worked again. In reality she didn't even want to work in a collective and have people around her. I remember that she never even went out before the afternoon. She always waited for me to get home from school. Up to her death in 1973 we lived together in the three-bedroom apartment at 16 Erbenova Street.

My mother may have thought of emigrating, but her feelings for her native land were evidently stronger than the desire to settle in a new place. What's more, she didn't have the strength anymore to start over. Politics didn't interest her very much. Even though she had grown up in relatively poor conditions, in a working class neighborhood, she didn't agree with Communism. I remember her saying: 'My Lord, they can have endless meetings, but the poor will stay poor.'

After World War II I resumed my unfinished schooling at the state elementary school in Brno. After that I went to a town school for four years and finally studied for three years at medical school. I graduated successfully. My favorite subjects were Czech and literature. During the Communist regime we didn't have many authors to pick from; we read the works of Julius Fucik [8](#) and similar writers. I was mainly interested in historical novels, factual literature or well-written travelogues. Our history and Czech teacher was a fair and very wise man. He once said something that was very courageous for the 1950s: 'Remember children, today anyone can be an author, even Antonin Zapotocky [9](#).' I never felt any signs of anti-Semitism in school. I don't know what may have been said behind my back, but no malice because of my Jewish roots was ever shown in front of me. In the 1950s I used to take English lessons. I thought command of this worldwide language would be useful. Under Communism, though, this lost all perspective, because they saw it as the language of the hostile West. My efforts came to nothing, because there was nowhere I could make use of my new abilities.

We had an excellent collective at medical school. I made many friends there, most of which weren't Jewish. To this day we meet every five years. In May of this year [2004] we met for the 50th anniversary of our graduation. Our meetings are enchanting and very pleasant.

My dearest friend was a Jew and was named Zuzana Weiszova. She was the daughter of an academic painter, Professor Ungar. Some of his paintings, which he painted in the Terezin ghetto, managed to be saved. Most of them are presently in Yad Vashem [10](#), one or two are on exhibit at the Brno Museum and a few hang in Zuzka's apartment. Zuzka and I saw each other regularly from 1945 until her death in February 2004. Since we were both nurses, our profession brought us closer

as well. When we were young we liked immensely to go on walking tours in the country. Almost every weekend we would go on a trip to the mountains. I loved long walks through nature. I liked to explore every chateau, castle or church. I didn't mind that I was of a different faith; to me churches were historical sites or works of art. To this day I'm still friends with Mrs. Weber from Kyjov, whom I had already fleetingly met when we were children in the Terezin ghetto. However, it wasn't until after World War II that we started to see a lot of each other. We're both members of Chevra Kaddisha. In spite of the great distance that separates us, we visit each other occasionally.

## Married life

I met my husband, Milan Felix, in Brno after World War II. He'd seen me around and apparently liked what he saw. The first time we met was at our mutual friends' where he came for coffee 'by chance' at the same time as I. I was relatively glad that my chosen one was Jewish. I didn't want that one day someone would hold it against me that I was a Jew. We were married at the Brno city hall in 1960. Since we were both older, we didn't want a big wedding. We invited only my mother, a colleague and her mother, and the Ulmers, close friends of my husband.

My husband was named Milan Felix and his Jewish name was Mordecai. He was born in Hodonin in 1923. His mother tongue was Czech. He went to the state elementary school in his home town, and there he also became apprenticed as a pastry cook. His ambitions were however interrupted by World War II. In 1942 Milan was deported to Terezin, where he stayed only three days. From there he went to Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps.

After World War II he didn't return to Hodonin, because his entire family died in the Holocaust. He settled in Brno and continued his studies, ending up as a cook. He basically had to make it on his own. His only support was from his friend Ulmer, whom he had met in Terezin, and who held a protective hand over him until the end of his life. My husband changed jobs several times, but he was always employed as a cook. His last job was in one company canteen in Brno, and in 1985 he retired.

My husband was an only child, born to older parents. His father was named Max Felix and his mother Irena Felixova. Both were from Hodonin. My father-in-law owned a textile shop in Hodonin and my mother-in-law was a housewife. From my husband I know that they were quite religious Jews and raised him according to the Jewish faith. Both died during the Holocaust.

After I finished my medical school studies, on 1st October 1954 I was offered a job as a dental assistant in Nove Mesto in Moravia. After three quarters of a year, in about the middle of May 1955 I returned to Brno, where I got a nursing job in a dental clinic. In the course of time I worked in several clinics; the last one was in Kralove Pole. I liked my work very much, though in the last two years I slowly began to lose patience with my patients. I went into retirement in 1987. I worked as a nurse for 32 years and no one said anything bad to my face regarding my origins. When someone asks me what nationality I am, I usually say: 'I'm a Czech Jew'. I'm not at all ashamed of my Jewishness, but I'm also a proud Czech. Though I'm quite saucy, I don't like to provoke people, because I think that it would eventually come back to me. I always try to speak in a way that no one is insulted or hurt. I know for a fact that insults aimed at Jews would hurt me.

I have two sons: Jan and Michal. Jan was born in Brno on 18th July 1960 and got his Jewish name Gedalie after his grandfather [on mother's side]. Michal was also born in Brno, on 14th May 1966

and got the Jewish name of Michael.

Jan studied at VUT [Technical College] in Brno. These days he has his own company and works as a design engineer. My younger son is a professional gardener and enthusiastic stamp collector; he collects old stamps and postcards. Both of course have been conscious from a young age that they are Jews. We raised them so that they could freely develop their own opinions and philosophy. Our older son has a somewhat lukewarm relationship to Judaism, while the younger one feels it more deeply and shows more interest. He doesn't since go to the synagogue often, but regularly takes part in activities and events organized by the Brno Jewish community. To this day he doesn't celebrate any Christian holidays. He doesn't have a Christmas tree, because he feels that all those uselessly cut down trees are a waste.

After our wedding my husband and I lived along with my mother in the three- bedroom apartment at 16 Erbenova Street. We didn't belong to the wealthier of families, but as long as we didn't go hungry and barefoot, we were content. We didn't have a car, but didn't miss it. I spent my spare time on second shift in the kitchen, as the saying goes. My husband loved billiard, and was a member of a billiard club. I always said that I didn't marry Felix, but billiard. In spite of this our marriage lasted 35 years. Here and there I took the children on a trip. Sometimes my husband came along, but walking tours didn't interest him much. On Saturday we usually visited with my good friend Zuzana Weiszova. My husband's friends were mainly his billiards 'colleagues'.

My husband would buy all sorts of newspapers and read everything, beginning with sports. Less often he would read some book; usually he read humorous things like *The Black Barons* [a book by Josef Skvorecky, whose publication and reading was forbidden during the totalitarian regime]. I preferred factual literature and historical works. During socialism I didn't subscribe to any newspapers, because they always wrote about the same things. Around 1968 I did find the *Literary News* to be of interest [originally a monthly devoted to literature and cultural reportage of the European Literary Club; the paper ceased publication in 1967]. These days I buy *Mlada Fronta* [daily paper published in Prague since 1945].

We lived with my mother until her death in 1973. Because of this she had a big influence on our daily life and the keeping of Jewish traditions. Mother remained a believing Jew even after World War II. She prayed very earnestly, but she didn't keep Jewish rules to the letter. She reached the conclusion that religiousness is useless when a person has lost his loved ones and especially in such a cruel fashion. She celebrated all Jewish holidays and tried to commemorate them at least with traditional holiday foods. Holiday meals didn't have to be kosher, but she would usually roast a goose, duck or chicken. For Yom Kippur she kept the required fast. In her later years her worsening health didn't permit her to fast so extensively. She talked me into keeping the fast as well. Once I became ill and so she told me: 'Why should you fast, you've gone hungry enough [in the ghetto].' From that time at Yom Kippur I fast only until noon. For Pesach we used to eat matzot and matzah dumplings. For Chanukkah we lit candles and the children got presents. We never had a Christmas tree. I'm not a religious Jew, but I still don't have a Christmas tree. Mother convinced me to go to the synagogue with her. I remember her German prayer book from which she prayed. For me the services didn't mean as much. I visited the synagogue mainly out of respect for my ancestors. I couldn't understand how God could exist, when I saw so much evil and unhappiness around me.



My mother died in Brno on 20th June 1973. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery in Brno according to Jewish customs. She was prepared for her final journey by a member of the funeral brotherhood [Chevra Kaddisha], Mrs. Dita Fastlova, who formerly worked as a nurse. First she ceremonially washed the body, then covered it with a sheet, leaving only the face uncovered. Finally they put the deceased in a coffin, which was immediately closed. I remember how she said a few words to console me: 'Your mother was nice-looking even after death.' The funeral service was led by our friend, Mr. Hynek Vrba, who in those days was the acting cantor in Brno, and the funeral speech was held by another of our friends, Mr. Bedrich Hoffenreich.

My husband died in Brno on 15th October 1994. We buried him in the Jewish cemetery and his gravestone bears a Hebrew inscription. I don't remember what this inscription means, because I can't read Hebrew. But I left it there out of respect for the memory of his parents, who were religious Jews. I always commemorate anniversaries of the deaths of my loved ones by lighting a candle on their grave.

My older son Jan married Iva Filova, who isn't Jewish. Of course my husband and I had wanted him to marry a Jewish girl, but we didn't protest. We reached the conclusion that the important thing is for him to find a partner that suits him. I think that Iva has a positive relationship with Judaism. In fact once she was at the synagogue with us for Chanukkah, and she liked it very much. However, at home they don't celebrate Chanukkah; they have a Christmas tree. Even so, Jan doesn't really take Christmas that seriously, religion as such doesn't have much meaning for him. I also have two grandchildren, 18-year-old Lucka and 12-year-old Karel. This school year Lucka will graduate from high school, and Karel is in elementary school. We haven't talked to them about Judaism yet, we don't want to confuse them with religion. Once they grow up, they'll decide what they want to be themselves. My younger son hasn't married yet.

After World War II we went from one totality to another. We felt like we were in a cage. During the Fascist regime the Germans persecuted us, but during socialism we harmed ourselves. I was never politically active. I remember how the show trial with Rudolf Slansky ended [see Slansky trial] [11](#). In 1952 I was still in medical school and didn't know much about politics. On top of that, it was unpleasant to see how they sentenced that former functionary of Jewish origin to death. We didn't even talk about it in public for fear that someone would report us.

In the beginning my husband and I used to march in the May Day parades, because participation in these events was controlled. Sometimes I would accompany the children in the lantern march during the October Revolution celebrations [see Russian Revolution of 1917] [12](#). So I at least got out a bit in the fresh air. We very much wished to live as people. Of course it was never possible.

The Velvet Revolution [13](#) in 1989 was a moving experience for me. I looked forward to the fact that we would finally be free, that we would have freedom of speech and that there wouldn't be shortages of goods. The whole family, except for me, went out into the streets and jingled their keys. [Editor's note: during the Velvet Revolution people symbolically expressed their dissatisfaction with the Communist regime by jingling their keys during demonstrations.] As if I suspected that it was going to go awry in the end. These days I'm quite disappointed with the results of the revolution. It seems to me as if it's the same people sitting in the government, just wearing different coats.

The situation of Jews began to gradually improve after the Velvet Revolution. After 1989 in Brno a formal council was formed within the Jewish community, we were able to speak freely about Israel and could travel there without any problems. I didn't get to Israel until 1998, when the Brno Jewish community organized a seven-day tour. I liked it there, but I couldn't live there. You shouldn't transplant an old tree.

## My relatives

Some of my relatives settled abroad. My father's cousin, Tomas Burgmann, escaped before Hitler's rise to England and settled in the city of Leeds. He opened a store with women's wear. He was very kind to us and during the Communist regime he constantly supported us. He would regularly send clothes from his shop, or if he was in Tuzex [an exclusive shop with foreign goods that weren't normally available in Communist countries], he would bring us Tuzex vouchers [currency used for payment in Tuzex], in short he was always giving us something. We used to send each other letters, but he also visited us several times. I don't think he would have ever moved back, but in his way he couldn't forget that he was a Czechoslovak.

My husband and I visited Uncle Tomas only once, in 1964. We stayed with him for 14 days. We had to leave our older son Jan at home with my mother as insurance that we would return to our country. First we took the train to East Germany, then West Germany, across Belgium and then across the La Manche channel to Dover, where we transferred to a train to Leeds. Already during the trip we were surprised at life in the West. Everything we saw, everything we touched was new to us. Germany, a country that had been totally defeated, was much more developed than our country. In Leeds we found well-kept streets and buildings, shops full of goods and customers. People weren't afraid at all, they could say whatever they wanted; they could even shout it. They were truly free. I was quite ashamed of my crudeness. When we were getting out of our taxi in front of our hotel in Leeds, a hotel employee wanted to take in my luggage, and I started a tugging match with him over it. The hotel elevator in those days already had an automatic sensor, and I wanted to exit it every time the doors opened. In short I felt stupid. The sales ladies in every store were constantly asking what they could do for me. In one drugstore I bought ten lipsticks as gifts for my co-workers. The sales clerk was quite bemused by my request, but she wrapped each lipstick in a separate wrapper and then put them all into a bag. It was quite a difference from the situation in Czechoslovakia.

To this day I still correspond with my husband's sister, Ruth Felixova, who emigrated to Mexico in 1948. She got married, but kept her maiden name. In fact she used to cook in some kosher kitchen. She visited us in November of this year. I've never been to Mexico.

After the war my husband and I immediately registered with the Brno Jewish community. My husband was a so-called passive member, and I started to be more actively interested in it only after the revolution in 1989.

In 1994 Mrs. Holmes asked me to replace her in Chevra Kaddisha. Within the funeral brotherhood women and men work separately. Only members of the same sex can prepare a dignified Jewish funeral for the deceased. Older Jewish women who had devoted themselves to this ritual gradually left, and only three of us remained: I, Mrs. Weber from Kyjov and Mrs. Antonina Militka from Brno. Our task is to ritually wash the body of the deceased, dress her in clean clothing and then put her in a coffin, which is immediately closed. These tasks are performed in a special room. During the

preparations the men pray for the deceased in the anteroom. The closed casket is then carried into a room where a public parting ceremony takes place. Finally the casket is buried. To this day I'm not sure how I managed to get through the first funeral. I remember that they were burying Mrs. Machova, and because I was afraid I took a few tranquilizers. In time I got used to it. Because I'm a native of Brno, I recognize most of the women and it's psychically quite difficult for me. In spite of this I'm willing to perform this function, because I think that each one of them deserves a proper burial according to Jewish beliefs.

After 1989 I got some financial compensation from the Claims Conference and from the Czech-German Future Fund [14](#) for persecution and imprisonment during World War II. It's at least a small reparation for the suffering I endured that has improved the quality of my everyday life. Though it's a nice gesture, it will never replace that which I lost during the Holocaust.

## Glossary

### **[1](#) Maccabi World Union**

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

### **[2](#) Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

Bohemia and Moravia were occupied by the Germans and transformed into a German Protectorate in March 1939, after Slovakia declared its independence. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was placed under the supervision of the Reich protector, Konstantin von Neurath. The Gestapo assumed police authority. Jews were dismissed from civil service and placed in an extralegal position. In the fall of 1941, the Reich adopted a more radical policy in the Protectorate. The Gestapo became very active in arrests and executions. The deportation of Jews to concentration camps was organized, and Terezin/Theresienstadt was turned into a ghetto for Jewish families. During the existence of the Protectorate the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia was virtually annihilated. After World War II the pre-1938 boundaries were restored, and most of the German-speaking population was expelled.

### **[3](#) Terezin/Theresienstadt**

A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. It was used to camouflage the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a 'model Jewish settlement'. Czech gendarmes served as ghetto guards, and with their help the Jews were able to maintain contact with the outside world. Although education was prohibited, regular classes were held, clandestinely. Thanks to the large number of

artists, writers, and scholars in the ghetto, there was an intensive program of cultural activities. At the end of 1943, when word spread of what was happening in the Nazi camps, the Germans decided to allow an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Theresienstadt. In preparation, more prisoners were deported to Auschwitz, in order to reduce congestion in the ghetto. Dummy stores, a cafe, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

#### **4 Orthodox communities**

The traditionalist Jewish communities founded their own Orthodox organizations after the Universal Meeting in 1868- 1869. They organized their life according to Judaist principles and opposed to assimilative aspirations. The community leaders were the rabbis. The statute of their communities was sanctioned by the king in 1871. In the western part of Hungary the communities of the German and Slovakian immigrants' descendants were formed according to the Western Orthodox principles. At the same time in the East, among the Jews of Galician origins the 'eastern' type of Orthodoxy was formed; there the Hassidism prevailed. In time the Western Orthodoxy also spread over to the eastern part of Hungary. 294 Orthodox mother-communities and 1,001 subsidiary communities were registered all over Hungary, mainly in Transylvania and in the north-eastern part of the country, in 1896. In 1930 30,4 % of Hungarian Jews belonged to 136 mother-communities and 300 subsidiary communities. This number increased to 535 Orthodox communities in 1944, including 242,059 believers (46 %).

#### **5 Anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia**

After the Germans occupied Bohemia and Moravia, anti-Jewish legislation was gradually introduced. Jews were not allowed to enter public places, such as parks, theatres, cinemas, libraries, swimming pools, etc. They were excluded from all kinds of professional associations and could not be civil servants. They were not allowed to attend German or Czech schools, and later private lessons were forbidden, too. They were not allowed to leave their houses after 8pm. Their shopping hours were limited to 3 to 5pm. They were only allowed to travel in special sections of public transportation. They had their telephones and radios confiscated. They were not allowed to change their place of residence without permission. In 1941 they were ordered to wear the yellow badge.

#### **6 Sudetenland**

Highly industrialized north-west frontier region that was transferred from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the new state of Czechoslovakia in 1919. Together with the land a German-speaking minority of 3 million people was annexed, which became a constant source of tension both between the states of Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, and within Czechoslovakia. In 1935 a nazi-type party, the Sudeten German Party financed by the German government, was set up. Following the Munich Agreement in 1938 German troops occupied the Sudetenland. In 1945 Czechoslovakia regained the territory and pogroms started against the German and Hungarian minority. The Potsdam Agreement authorized Czechoslovakia to expel the entire German and Hungarian minority from the country.

#### **7 Exclusion of Jews from schools in the Protectorate**

The Ministry of Education of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia sent round a ministerial decree in 1940, which stated that from school year 1940/41 Jewish pupils were not allowed to visit Czech public and private schools and those who were already in school should be excluded. After 1942 Jews were not allowed to visit Jewish schools or courses organised by the Jewish communities either.

## **8 Fucik, Julius (1903-1943)**

Czech national hero, Communist journalist, author, theatre critic and translator. From 1940 worked in illegality; arrested in 1942. A year later he was executed by the Nazis in Berlin - Ploetzensee.

## **9 Zapotocky, Antonin (1884-1957)**

From 1921 a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC), 1940-1945 imprisoned in the Sachsenhausen- Oranienburg concentration camp. 1945-1950 president of the Central Union Committee (URO), 1950-1953 member of the National Assembly (NS), 1948-1953 Prime Minister. From March 21, 1953 president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

## **10 Yad Vashem**

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

## **11 Slansky Trial**

Communist show trial named after its most prominent victim, Rudolf Slansky. It was the most spectacular among show trials against communists with a wartime connection with the West, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, Jews, and Slovak 'bourgeois nationalists'. In November 1952 Slansky and 13 other prominent communist personalities, 11 of whom were Jewish, including Slansky, were brought to trial. The trial was given great publicity; they were accused of being Trotskyist, Titoist, Zionist, bourgeois, nationalist traitors, and in the service of American imperialism. Slansky was executed, and many others were sentenced to death or to forced labor in prison camps.

## **12 Russian Revolution of 1917**

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

## **13 Velvet Revolution**

Also known as November Events, this term is used for the period between 17th November and 29th December 1989, which resulted in the downfall of the Czechoslovak communist regime. The Velvet Revolution started with student demonstrations, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the



student demonstration against the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. Brutal police intervention stirred up public unrest, mass demonstrations took place in Prague, Bratislava and other towns, and a general strike began on 27th November. The Civic Forum demanded the resignation of the communist government. Due to the general strike Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec was finally forced to hold talks with the Civic Forum and agreed to form a new coalition government. On 29th December democratic elections were held, and Vaclav Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia.

#### **14 Czech-German Future Fund**

a multi-state institution resulting directly from the Czech-German Declaration of January 21, 1997. By laws passed by the Czech and German governments it was founded on December 29, 1997 as an endowment fund according to Czech statutes, headquartered in Prague.