Artur Radvansky

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Interviewer: Martina Marsalkova
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Mr. Radvansky is a very vigorous man. Our conversation took place at the apartment of his good friend and co-worker from the Terezin Initiative 1, Misha (Michaela) Vidlakova. Mr. Radvansky related his life story very obligingly and in a compelling fashion.

Family background

My father's father was named Adolf Tüeberger. He was born sometime in the second half of the 19th century, in the Polish Beskid Mountains. Grandpa Tüeberger had an elementary school education and after ending school he opened a small grocery store. He died sometime in the 1880s. My grandmother on my father's side was named Sali, nee Rauchbergerova. My father's mother was also the sister of my mother's father, Jindrich Rauchberger. She was born in 1860, most likely also in the Polish Beskids. After finishing council school she apprenticed as a seamstress. Like her husband Adolf, she observed all Jewish holidays and kept kosher. At the turn of the century my grandma left with her brothers and sister to work in the Ostrava region. She settled in Bartovice, a small village not far from Radvanice, where she also died in 1920.

Grandma Sali Tüebergerova had two brothers, Jindrich and Jakub Rauchberger, and a sister, Aunt Shaufeldova. I don't remember her [first] name. Jakub was born in 1855, also in the Polish Beskids. When he and his siblings arrived in the Ostrava region, he at first worked at a mine in Ostrava, and then settled in Petrvald. Petrvald is a village beside Radvanice. In Petrvald Uncle Jakub opened a small pub and a general store. His wife was named Hermina, and came from Horice. They had two sons together. One of them was named Otto, and I don't remember the second son's name. Uncle Jakub died in 1937 or 1938, and his son Otto took over the pub after him. Both of Jakub's sons and wife died during World War II in Auschwitz. Jakub was very religious. He observed all Jewish holidays, he prayed every morning and evening and kept ritual eating habits.

My grandfather on my mother's side was named Jindrich Rauchberger. He was born around the year 1860, also in the Polish Beskids. His wife, my grandmother, was also born around the same time. But her name I don't remember. My grandpa was a tinsmith. My grandma took care of the household. I don't know when they met. At the beginning of the 20th century they then moved to

the Ostrava region, to Radvanice, where after World War I my grandfather opened a tinsmithery, which was in the courtyard of the butcher Mr. Brenek. There they also had a two-room apartment. They lived there with their son Samuel. They lived there until 1931, when my father built a house, and they then lived there with us.

My grandpa after he got up, twice a week he shaved, and not with a razor, but with chemicals, something that was like quicklime. He shaved in this fashion because according to the Jewish religious ritual, he wasn't allowed to shave with steel. Afterwards he'd have a shot of slivovitz or some other liquor and would start praying in the bedroom. When he prayed, it had this nice melody and I loved to listen to him. When I was around three or four, he even taught me this little prayer for the morning and evening. He was proud of me, because very few children of my age knew how to pray. I remember that prayer to this day, because also thanks to it I was capable of getting through the war years. It gave me faith in life and the conviction that I simply have to survive it all. While my grandpa was praying, my grandma would prepare his breakfast. He went to work on Monday morning, and stayed there until Wednesday, on Thursday he'd again go to work, where he prepared materials for Friday, and on Friday he also worked, but only until noon. He returned home from work just in time to be able to wash before Sabbath. In the winter times were tougher as far as money goes, because there was no work, and so my grandparents lived on what they had saved during the summer.

My grandparents were religiously oriented. They observed all holidays, kept the commandments and Sabbath and ate kosher. For my grandfather, the Bible [Old Testament] was the law. Sometimes I asked him why riding the streetcar during Sabbath isn't allowed, after all, the driver isn't working, or why we don't eat pork, if at the slaughterhouse there's a veterinarian who inspects the hogs to make sure they aren't infected. To this my grandfather always replied, 'That's how it's written in the Bible, so that's how it should be.' My grandpa was gentle, calm. I don't remember him ever yelling or hitting anyone. My grandma was also very kind. All her life she was ill, because from birth she had one leg shorter than the other. The interesting thing about her was that she had adopted from the Catholics their expression 'Jesus Mary,' and just changed it around a bit.

Radvanice was a small town that already in those days had electricity and running water. I remember that my father had an electric refrigerator in his store. The nearest large city was Ostrava, from which led a narrow- gauge streetcar through Petrvald and Radvanice to Orlova and Karvina. My grandparents' relations with their neighbors were problem-free. A journeyman by the name of Jurecek, who came from the Polish Beskids, lived in my grandpa's workshop. My grandpa was also friends with the Radvanice vicar. They played cards together in the Workers' Lodge, and bowled at the Sokol House.

My grandfather had three siblings - his brother Jakub, his sister Sali, married name Tüerbergerova, and a sister married as Shaufeldova. His sister Shaufeldova was born in the 1860s or 1870s. The only thing that I know about her is that she married the Jewish cantor Shaufeld. Cantor Shaufeld had two sons. One was a doctor and lived in Prerov or Prostejov. His brother was named Emil, and I don't remember how he made a living. I don't know the exact date and place, but most likely Aunt Shaufeldova died in the Terezin 2 ghetto.

My father was named Marek Thüeberger. He was born in Jawiszovice in the Polish Beskids in the year 1888. My father's father was originally named Tüeberger. However, when after my father's

birth the Jawiszovice vicar was recording him in the chronicle, because the town didn't have a Jewish birth registry, he got the name wrong and wrote Thüeberger, and this name stayed with him.

My father apprenticed as a store salesman. He observed all religious holidays, ate kosher, but on Saturday he worked and didn't keep Sabbath, so he wouldn't lose customers. My father, as a member of the Zivnostenska Party 3, also became involved in politics in the 1930s, when he ran for the Radvanice town council. After Hitler came to power in 1933, however, he left politics. Due to his heavy work load, my father didn't have any pastimes. He didn't read much, and when he did, it was mainly newspapers. He read the Ranni Noviny [Morning News], a workers' daily, which contained mainly business matters. He also subscribed to the Jewish magazine Jaldut, which was initially published in German, and later also in Czech. My father had no siblings.

My mother was named Anna Thüebergerova, nee Rauchbergerova. She was born in the year 1896. She was educated as a seamstress, but when my father opened his store, she stopped sewing and helped him in the store. She and my father were the same as far as religious inclinations went. My mother was very culturally-minded. She loved the theater, and especially opera. She and Father used to go to the German theater in Ostrava or to amateur performances by members of a group of spiritualists. These were people who believed in telepathy and spirits, and gathered at séances. There were no Jews in these circles. My parents bought a gramophone and records of compositions from operettas like 'Zeme Usmevu' ['The Land of Smiles,' by Franz Lehar (1870-1948), Hungarian composer of operettas] or 'Cardasova Princezna' ['The Czardas Princess,' by Imre Kalman (1882-1953), Hungarian composer of operettas]. At our home the radio was also mainly tuned to music.

My mother had four brothers. Her brother Richard [Rauchberger] was born around 1900 and apprenticed as a store salesman. He died in 1942 in the Dachau concentration camp. Her brother Arnold [Rauchberger] was born in 1898. He was a shoemaker. As opposed to the rest of his siblings and his parents, he was an atheist. He himself wasn't a Communist, but shared their opinion on religion. This was something that vexed my grandfather very much. Though Arnold did attend the synagogue, he didn't pray and didn't allow himself to be called to the Torah. You could say that he went there only for my grandpa's sake. He married Richard's wife's sister. She died during childbirth in Israel, and he never remarried. He died in the year 1971 in Israel.

My mother's brother Filip [Rauchberger] was born around the year 1900. He was a tailor. He was married, but he and his wife divorced. He had two sons from his marriage, Bedrich and Max. Of all the brothers, he was the most religious. He died in 1942 in the Majdanek 4 or Treblinka 5 concentration camp. Her brother Samuel [Rauchberger] was born sometime during the 1890s. During World War I, while he was at the Polish front, a grenade exploded in front of him, and the shock severely marked him. The mental shock eventually turned into Parkinson's disease, so up until his death he had to live with his parents, who took care of him. For a while he also lived at our house in Radvanice, which my father built. He died in 1931.

My father and mother were cousins. My father's mother, Sali Tüebergerova, was the sister of my mother's father, Jindrich Rauchberger. My father liked my mother, and likewise she him, but she was afraid due to the fact that they were related, because of the children, because she had heard that it causes problems. At the end of World War I my father was at an infirmary in Vienna. My mother went to see him, and for fourteen days took care of him and visited him. There they also

decided that they'd get married. Which they then did in 1920, when they had a clerical wedding, because in those days you didn't have to go a government office yet. When I look back at my grandfather's standing in the family, it's clear that they had to have had his permission for the marriage, and so most likely the marriage was also agreed to by the rabbi. If not, my grandpa would never have allowed it.

In 1923 my two twin brothers, Karel and Max Thüeberger, were born. Unfortunately my mother's fears due to her and my father being related were realized, because my brothers were born deaf-mute and mentally retarded. Thus my parents had to continually take care of them. My brothers spent a lot of time in various institutions. One of them was for example an institution in the town of Lipnik nad Becvou.

After they were married, my parents rented an apartment in a building that belonged to Mr. Habr in Radvanice. It had two rooms and a kitchen. Because my father had some sort of disagreement with Mr. Habr, we then rented a building that had at one time served as a Polish school. The building belonged to a miners' association and was taken care of by Mr. Seidler, who was the superintendent of a miners' hotel and spa in Rajecke Teplice in Slovakia. Then in 1931 my father built a house where we, Grandpa and Grandma Rauchberger and Uncle Samuel lived. My father also had a store in that house, which he opened at the beginning of the 1930s. Half of the store was devoted to shoe supplies, which he used to buy from Mr. Konvicka, who had a leather factory, and who was a family friend. Mr. Konvicka was related to Tomas Bata 6. The second half of the store had hardware, like nails, pots and pans, etc. The house had two residential floors. It also had electricity. The house also had a small garden with fruit trees, and where we grew mainly potatoes and cabbage. We then pickled the cabbage. We also had domestic animals, chickens, geese and ducks.

Because of my father's store, my parents didn't take vacations together. But in the 1930s my mother and I used to travel to Rajecke Teplice to visit Mr. Seidler and his family. His daughter Danuska was my first case of puppy love. Always when we came to Teplice, we'd play together, hug each other, and sleep in the same bed. This continued even when Danuska was in the fifth grade. We'd hold hands, hug each other, and Mr. Seidler would laugh and say that he was already preparing a dowry for us. The last time we were in Teplice was in 1937.

Sometimes they would also come to visit for Christmas. However, the visits couldn't overlap with Jewish holidays, because our relatives like for example my grandma's grandchildren, and Uncle Richard with his wife, would come to visit, and stayed with us during the holidays. Guests slept on fold- out beds with mattresses in our large attic, which my father was planning to turn into bedrooms. But because there were a lot of us family members, additional guests wouldn't have fit. For example, during Chanukkah, I left for the first and last two days. Otherwise I had to be at home. During these times we tried to have the whole family together and spend some time together.

We all spent most Jewish holidays at Uncle Jakub's place. Father would close the store and my grandfather his workshop and we'd travel to Petrvald. At home Jakub had an aron kodesh, and Cantor Löwy, who lived in Petrvald, used to also come visit him. It was Cantor Löwy who prepared me for my bar mitzvah when I was 13. Back then it was a big event and a big honor for my uncle, because of all the children back then I was the first bar mitzvah. As a gift I got a silver watch from him, but then someone stole it from me at school.

We also celebrated other holidays at my uncle's, like for example Sukkot. There was a sukkah in his garden. After prayers we'd eat in it, and Aunt Hermina would bring us out food. We also had a sukkah in our garden in Radvanice. My father and grandfather built it. It was this shed with a roof but no walls, so we had to put up reed mats so that passers-by wouldn't stare at us. Holidays like Sabbath and Passover we celebrated at home in Radvanice. For Sabbath, we'd all gather on Friday evening and have supper together. My mother and grandma prepared the food. Mostly it was chicken or beef. They both also baked barches. For Sabbath it was an unusual one, with 'fingers,' which looked like a two or three-layer braided Christmas cake.

The meat was also ritually prepared, because my grandfather knew a shochet by the name of Lasy, from Poland, who on Wednesdays would travel from Polsky Tesin in the direction of Radvanice and in the towns he passed through he would ritually slaughter animals. In Radvanice, where he would arrive on Thursday, he worked in one part of a local butcher's building. There he also had a helper at his disposal. On Thursday night he'd sleep over at my grandma and grandpa's and on Friday he would once again set out on foot to Polsky Tesin. I also recall that he had short and crooked legs, but a beautiful voice. He sang so very beautifully during prayers.

We would always take the chulent, which we would prepare on Friday afternoon from chicken or beef, to the Jewish baker, who would stick the entire pot into the oven, and a servant, who used to come to our house in the evenings, would pick it up from there. During Passover we would bring down the Passover dishes from the attic. Once again, we would celebrate this holiday together, and the Passover supper was presided over by my grandfather.

For Purim we'd go to Ostrava, because the Ostrava Jewish community put on a celebration for children. We also went to Ostrava for Simchat Torah and also for Chanukkah, but in the evening we'd be back at home to light the candles.

Growing up">Growing up

When I was two or three years old, and my brothers Karel and Max were born, some cousin whom we called Aunt Paola moved in with us, and she took care of us children. Because she was from the Sudetenland 7, we learned to speak German from her. Then in 1926, when she got married and left us, we stopped speaking German at home, but I didn't forget it. However, my parents didn't know this, and always when they wanted to tell each other something that they didn't want us to know, they spoke German. But I listened to them, and gave myself away once by laughing at a joke.

Then in the second grade of council school my father arranged a German teacher for me. From that time on I had no problems reading German. With grammar it was worse. When I was attending high school, I didn't study it at all. During composition exercises my book was constantly marked in red with corrected grammatical mistakes. To this day, writing a letter in German is a problem for me. I always have to pick up at least some fat dictionary for help. Then at school, I was taught by Hilda Wernerova, who was from one Jewish family from Orlova that had a soda bottling plant or some sort of factory. She would call me up and let me talk about what I had done the day before or what kind of time I'd had in the mountains, and these conversational exercises went extremely well for me, because my vocabulary and pronunciation was the same as, if not better, than my teacher's or the supervisors' that used to come for inspections.

In Radvanice I attended council school. I also spent tons of time in Sokol 8. I used to go there for dance parties, I'd play handball for the juniors, I didn't play soccer, but I did play hockey. We'd play hockey on the skating rink, which was a part of the playground that was sprayed by water from the river, and when the water froze, people would skate on it. When we'd be just skating around on the ice and I'd see some chick that knew how to skate, I'd skate around with her. Basically I had friends among Czechs, Germans and also Poles.

I danced at the dance parties, because I was one of the few boys in Grade 8 that already knew how to dance. My mother taught me the Waltz, while my female classmates taught me those modern dances like the Tango or Foxtrot. I knew the Waltz, the Rumba, the Beseda, even though I had never attended dance classes, and I had been taught only the basics by my mother. Thus at dance parties I was a sought-after dance partner. We also 'trained' dancing during Catholic religion classes. That is, whoever wanted to stay for religion class, could. Father Birek didn't mind, on the contrary, he would sometimes ask me to explain the Old Testament from a Jewish standpoint. When we didn't stay, we'd then go to a singing class. There was a piano there that someone would play, and we'd also dance to the music. I have very fond memories of Father Birek. He was a Semitophile, who could even read Hebrew. Otherwise he taught religion and Latin. I also remember that he had a big sweet tooth. Below our school there was a sweets manufacture. We'd buy the trimmings, because they were the cheapest. For a crown I'd get a whole bagful of them. Father Birek always said that we were going to 'kohorty,' which is some sort of Catholic prayer, so he actually made fun of it.

From the year 1926 on I also skied. I used to go skiing to Frenstat pod Radhostem, where Mr. Konvicka's family was. I learned to ski perfectly by the time I was about eight or ten years old. Then I used to race downhill and cross-country for the Juniors, even though I was still a student. I liked visiting Frenstat. Mrs. Konvickova also became fond of me. I was her little Arturek with beautiful blue eyes.

In Grade 6 I also began to take violin lessons. I may not have been the worst at it, but at that time I didn't like it at all. For my 12th birthday I got a violin from my father, but despite this I didn't try very hard, and so my father stopped paying for my lessons. I regret it to this day. My violin's history is very interesting. When during World War II Jews had to give their violins away, my mother hid it with our neighbor, Mrs. Palkova, and that Palkova then moved away to someplace below the Beskids. But her daughter, who used to go to school with me, found out in the year 2000 that I had survived the war and that I live in Prague, and sent me the violin. I wept for joy like a little kid.

At Christmas I'd go with my friend Walter Knopp to a Catholic church for Midnight Mass, even though I didn't go there to pray, but to meet girls. During Christian Easter I also used to go caroling with a whole gang of boys. Among them was also the son of Father Olsansky and our German classmates from school who were learning Czech from us. After 1933 they had to leave Czech school and were forced to find work. After caroling we'd switch the girls [with birch switches, a Czech Easter tradition] and we'd also dance with them. Because I didn't want to irritate anyone and because it was also Passover, I ate roast chicken, roast duck or roast goose, which weren't kosher, but they offered it to me.

We weren't the only Jews in Radvanice. There were about fifteen Jewish families in all. Their children were around the same age as me, so I could play with them. Mostly they were German-

speaking Jews, and you could say that they were a little on the atheistic side. They observed only the main holidays, but perhaps for example not Sabbath. There was for example the Lauber family, they were already assimilated, then the Kohl siblings who had a textile store, Fogl the baker, whose son had run away to join the Foreign Legion and returned in 1936 or 1937, and then also made a living as a baker.

When I was around twelve, I for the first time didn't eat kosher. Before that I hadn't dared, because I was afraid that I'd die. But the first time I went someplace for a visit, where I had been invited for supper, I was embarrassed to say that I don't eat something. Sometimes it was fine, when they offered me bread, eggs, sardines and so on, but once they offered me salami, and that I also ate. That's how I also found out that I wouldn't die. I can't say that I ever bought it myself, but when they offered it to me, I ate.

I experienced anti-Semitism mostly only in verbal skirmishes. I don't remember anyone calling me rude names. In my opinion, Czechs weren't in essence anti-Semitic; it was the Polish Jews that had it worse. After the Thirty Years' War, when re-catholicization occurred, some Protestants converted to Judaism instead of Catholicism, mainly during the time of Josef II 9. So it would happen that part of a family remained Protestant, part was Catholic and a small part Jewish, but they were still relatives, so Czechs weren't, as it were, ingrained anti-Semites. Well, and according to my extensive experience, I've got to say that Protestant priests helped Jews a lot, by issuing them false birth certificates, by which they saved many of them. Due to excessive discipline, Catholic priests didn't do this because they were afraid, although at heart they weren't bad.

During the war">During the war

After the arrival of the German army, which means 14th March 1939 [on 15th March 1939 the occupation of the Czech lands by the German army began], I returned home from skiing and parked in front of our house was a German tank. They then threw me out of high school, because as a Jew I wasn't allowed to go there [see Anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] 10.

Back then I also had an agreement that I'd start working at Bata's factory in Zlin as an apprentice, and that I would then go to Bata's branch company in South Africa. But it was not to be, because they arrested me about ten days before 1st September 1939, when I had been supposed to start in Zlin.

Already in the 1930s, after Hitler came to power, we had been meeting up with the emigration of democrats from Germany. Most of these people didn't share a similar political orientation. What they had in common was more the fact that they were free-thinking and uncompromising opponents of Hitler. They were escaping to Czechoslovakia, because our country was this oasis against Fascism. In Poland there were Fascists in power, in Hungary as well, in Slovakia the clericalists, and in Germany Fascists. So they ran away from Germany to us, and sometimes also continued on.

Then when in 1939 the Gestapo came to Bohemia, many of our policemen, among whom there were many closet fascists, had lists of these people prepared and together with the Gestapo were arresting them and sending them to concentration camps. We were helping these people escape

across the border of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 11. Because at that time Poland had occupied a part of Slovakia around Tesin, and so the border of the protectorate was about two kilometers from our front door in Radvanice. On the border, in the forest, there was a coal mine, to be exact the Ludvik pit, and on the other side, in Poland, I don't remember the exact distance any more, but it might have been around 500 meters, there was also a coal mine. Well, and because at that time Poland was a free country, we would lead the refugees through the forest to the pit. Usually it was at most five people, who already had clothing prepared.

We would signal the people on the other side when the situation was right. Then the refugees were led via connecting mine shafts to Poland on the other side. From Poland they continued on to Denmark or by ship to France. Leftist-oriented refugees aimed in the opposite direction, into the Soviet Union. These crossings were organized by our group of youngsters, and because we weren't even 18 and had no experience with illegal activities, we were exposed. Then the Gestapo came to arrest me at home, and as I wasn't of age yet, and my father was responsible for me, they took him along with me, even though he had no clue about my activities in that respect.

It goes without saying that the Gestapo beat us brutally both at home in front of my mother, and at the base in Ostrava. In Ostrava I found out that an acquaintance of ours had given us away, who had pretended to want to get someone across. According to the Nazis, my participation was actually conspiracy to commit treason. The Nazis also couldn't stand the fact that a Jew had been helping Germans on the run. The Nazis put us in jail, from which a miracle helped us get out. In the yard, where we had to walk in circles in front of the Gestapo prison, my father recognized in one soldier Gustav, his comrade in arms from the Polish front during World War I. By coincidence we had been in touch with his family before the war. He had a son, Gustav, who was the same age as I, who knew Czech, and a wife from Hlusinsko who was half German and half Czech. When they moved to Anaberg, which was about 15 kilometers from the Czechoslovak border, my father used to go visit them and buy material for shoes, because Gustav was a shoemaker. I would always go visit them for 14 days, and Gustav would come visit us, so with his help I improved my German, and Gustav his Czech.

Gustav, who was neither in the Gestapo nor SS, came at night with a car, and under the pretence that he was taking us for interrogation he drove us away from prison. We of course didn't go to the Gestapo, but to our house. His act was really very courageous, because if they would have caught him, they would have shot him. When I tried to find him after the war, I was told that he and his son had most likely died on the Russian front, but no one can say for sure. His wife, who survived, moved deeper into Germany and remarried.

When he drove us home, that was the last time I saw my mother, who was still frightened out of her wits that ten days earlier the Gestapo had brutally beaten us while they were arresting us. We said goodbye to her, to my brothers, grandma and grandpa. My father and I took some winter clothing, backpacks, food for the road and went to the Ludvik pit, made contact with a flashlight and my friends led us over to the other side. When we had been on the road for three days and were about 40 kilometers from Ostrava, the Polish War broke out [see Invasion of Poland] 12. We wanted to go to Krakow, to join Svoboda's army 13, but in Jawiszovice, my father's home town, we were stopped by the military police and although we had new identification, they arrested us due to my father's 'Jewish' appearance. So we got into the Ravic collection camp, which lies about 30 kilometers before Katowice. After 14 days in Ravic we were put on a transport to Buchenwald 14.

They took us by train to Weimar and there they drove us out of the wagon and herded us to the edge of town. Whoever couldn't go on and fell in exhaustion was beaten or even shot.

And so we got to Buchenwald. Buchenwald was a concentration camp built in 1936. It was located in a forest in the mountains. We lived there in a large army tent for 500 people in bunks four high. At night two men would have one blanket together to cover themselves. The tent wasn't heated, so we were constantly cold. They also didn't give us any shoes and so the cold was even worse. For clothing we got a blue and white striped cap, a jacket and pants from Germans, for work in the quarry we then got wooden shoes and instead of socks, rags.

All people in this tent had in their documents written RU [Rückkehr Unerwünscht], meaning return undesirable, so we were sentenced to extermination there. They helped us to this end both by refusing us medical treatment and with miserable sanitary facilities, which were latrines scooped out of the ground. We couldn't wash, and as far as food goes, all you could say was that perhaps even pigs in pigsties had better food than we did. Not only that the food was miserable, but sometimes not all the prisoners got to eat. Because in a span of a half hour, food had to be distributed to three thousand people, and those who they didn't manage to get food to within a half hour, simply remained without food. We ate from unwashed dishes and cutlery, and the soup sometimes even contained dirt and also turnips that were fed to livestock. Despite the food not being anything to write home about, when after a half hour the remaining food had to be dumped out on the ground, most people threw themselves at it and ate it from the ground. Within three days a dysentery epidemic came about, and people died en masse.

We also had to work, in a quarry, where we would walk up and down hills, and where those wooden shoes slipped around nicely. We had to carry heavy rocks uphill, for the construction of army barracks. I always tried to give my father the lightest ones, to make it easier on him. While we worked, the SS and capos [concentration camp inmates appointed by the SS to be in charge of work gangs] beat us. When we'd be scurrying by the SS, sometimes an SS soldier would snatch someone's cap from his head, throw it behind him and say, 'Get the cap!' And when someone set out to fetch it, they'd shoot him for attempting to escape. Then when in Germany an attempted assassination of Hitler took place in a Munich beer hall on 8th November 1939, we were all designated as sympathizers of the perpetrators, and didn't get anything to eat for three days.

There I also met Father Plojhar. Together with fourteen Czechoslovak Jews from the camp he at night brought and then passed under the fence to us a few hot potatoes, for which they had to bribe the cook, and hot water with molasses. While I don't know what Mr. Plojhar did as a minister, in the camp he was very courageous and helped us a lot. It's just a shame that no one mentions this. I don't mean his Communist orientation, but his bravery and humanity, which he showed in the camp.

My father died of hunger on 20th November 1939. His last words, when my friends carried me to him - at the time I had frostbitten feet - were for me to help my mother and protect my brothers. This I promised him. It was horribly painful for me, and even now I can't hold back the tears when I think back to it.

After my father's death, I once again had luck in the form of a good and brave person. The chief of the hospital in Buchenwald was a locksmith, and an exceptional young Communist, Walter Krämer. In 1933 they had thrown him in jail as a Communist; there he learned to do surgery. He was an

excellent surgeon and gradually worked his way up from nurse in prison hospitals to the position of chief of the hospital in Buchenwald, where he arrived in 1937. And Walter Krämer convinced the SS that even as chief of the hospital he can't guarantee that the infections from our camp won't make their way via ground water into their camp. God only knows why they didn't shoot us all back then. Out of 3,800 prisoners around 300 of us remained. I was emaciated, just skin and bones, bugged-out eyes. At the time, with my height of 175 cm I weighed only 30 kilos. I couldn't lift my feet or get up on a chair. Our clothing was in tatters, only the shoes lasted, but were leaky. We all had frostbite. And in this situation one day arrived Walter Krämer with nurses and took care of what they could.

They took me and some others, because we were close to death, out with the corpses on hearses and hid us in this shed that belonged to the hospital, because in the hospital the SS would have recognized that we were from the camp. There they nursed us and even operated on some of us, and gave us more food than in the camp. I was treated there for about ten days, and then, because the camp was closed down, they put us into normal blockhouses that had been freed up for us. There were about two of them, and for us they became an earthly paradise. We were dressed, deloused, bathed. Each one of us got two blankets, a towel, pillow, his own cabinet and leather boots, basically everything that we had only dreamed of in the camp. We were in quarantine for six weeks and then they began to assign us to work.

I worked in the first commando in the garden, where we had to dig out rocks and carry them to wagons that then carted them away, to the transport group. Into which in the end I also got. We pulled huge wagons on an uneven surface. We pulled on cables, in such a fashion that 20 people pulled a cable on one side, and 20 on the other. We had to trot along due to the uneven terrain, so we could keep the wagons in motion. That's what we carted out of the garden. Into the garden we then carted wood, trees, cement, lime, sand and bricks.

With the help of one friend, I got into an 'apprenticeship' as a bricklayer with one master bricklayer, who due to a labor shortage was teaching young Jews. He found a house for us that was heated, and thanks to him we survived another winter. We were learning how to prepare malt and other bricklaying procedures. When we were at least a little educated, he looked for work for us. We worked for example in a kitchen, where we repaired chimneys, potato cellars. In exchange we'd get pots of potatoes and bread. Then I got to building barracks, crematoria, canteens and other buildings.

In Buchenwald I went through my first selection. From it I remember mainly that here Walter Krämer saved the life of Franz Lehar's librettist, that is, Bedrich Löhner, who was born in Usti nad Orlici, spoke perfect Czech and before the war collaborated with our performing artists. There were about 500 Jewish prisoners present at that selection. When Walter Krämer got to Bedrich Löhner, the officer that was accompanying him said, 'Mr. Lagerarzt [camp doctor], that's the person that wrote 'Land of Smiles.' Shall we let him keep smiling?' And Krämer was very surprised, he looked at him for a while and then with a nod of his head saved his life for another four years. Bedrich Löhner in the end died in Auschwitz.

Already in the quarry I had also met the capo Vogl. He belonged to a group of prisoners that had been convicted of theft, murder and such. Vogl was from Hamburg. He had a position of power in the camp. He was involved in the cigarette black market with the SS, so he was also quite wealthy.

And because he had been in jail for more than ten years for his crimes, he had become a homosexual. He was known throughout the whole camp for his love affairs, especially with young Polish prisoners. One day after work I ran into him in the shower. Most likely because he was very attracted to me, he wrote down my number and found out which block I slept in. He also came there one day, to have a look where exactly I slept, and promised me that he'd come visit me in the night. I was afraid, both of his visit, and of the fact that someone could find out about it, because that could cost me my life. For about three days I didn't sleep at night at all.

When one night I saw someone crawling in through the window, it was on the ground floor, it was clear to me who it was, because the prisoners were forbidden to be out and about at night. Vogl crawled in through the window and at that moment I began to shout 'mother,' as if in my sleep, which woke everyone up and they tried to stop me so that they could sleep. At that point he had to disappear, so that no one would discover him. This scene repeated itself about three times, and then Vogl stopped coming. But I was so rattled by it that at night when someone was just going to the bathroom and tapped my bed along the way, I also started shouting.

At this point I'd like to mention punishment. The specialty of the SS in all camps that I passed through was punishment for nothing. During that time it didn't miss me either. Once they punished me by tying my arms behind my back, and behind the camp they hung me by those arms on beech trees that stood there. Of course my arms were immediately dislocated. After I returned to the camp I could neither eat nor wash myself, and if I hadn't have had good friends that took care of me in this situation, I wouldn't be here today. Recovery took about two months.

When I was in the bricklaying gang, I was punished a second time. This time they led me off to the gate, where there was this table with a recess in it. They tied my hands and feet, pulled down my pants and the SS arrived, who gave me 25 lashes on my buttocks with a bullwhip. Everyone that was beaten in this manner had to count each blow aloud, and whoever wasn't capable of this due to the pain, had his punishment increased. Most people then died of infection. To top it all off, after the punishment was meted out, we had to thank them for it. That was perhaps even worse than the punishment itself. Once again, Walter Krämer helped me. I was admitted to the hospital, because I had fevers of almost 40 degrees Celsius, and he took care of me.

During the war I learned from my fellow prisoners of that man's fate. Walter Krämer knew too much about Nazi practices. That's why they wanted him and his successors to sign a confirmation that German and Russian officers in the camp had died of tuberculosis. But when he signed it, they sent him to Poznan to a subsidiary workplace, where they mined gravel. There they shot him with a rifle.

Five years ago I and some friends managed to have Walter Krämer designated as Righteous Among the Nations, only about four hundred Germans have received this distinction. He's buried in Ziged, where I then used to go to give lectures about the Holocaust. There I found out that he's known among the Germans as the 'doctor from Buchenwald,' Whenever I go there, I light a candle on his grave and at my lectures, on TV and on the radio they always ask me about Walter Krämer. He was one of the most righteous and self- sacrificing people I've ever met.

In April 1942 I got into Ravensbrück 15. In Buchenwald they loaded us onto a train, where we traveled in relatively decent conditions. There were about sixty of us in one wagon, plus about ten German soldiers. We arrived in Ravensbrück at the Furstenberg station, and from there they drove us to the camp in cars. Here we also first had our hair cut, were washed and clothed. Because it

was March, we also got winter clothing such as a coat, cap and boots. They put us all into the Jewish block, into block No. 5. Once again we got blankets, which we though had to give back during the day, sheets and a pillow. We slept in three-story bunks. In those I would always take the middle one, because there it wasn't so cold, but neither overly heavy and exhausted air, so you could breathe well.

Together with several dozen young Jews I got into a 'workplace' where they disinfected laundry. We carried lice-ridden laundry to the ovens, and in such a way that we had these sacks on us, into which we stuck the laundry, so we wouldn't catch the lice. Then we'd stick it into the oven and there it was disinfected using Zyklon B. That's where I first met up with it. When the clothing was in the oven, you would then wear a gas mask and sprinkle Zyklon B on this grille, from which at 25 degrees Celsius hydrogen cyanide would start to emanate. In this way the laundry would undergo disinfection for a half hour. Then the ventilators would kick in, which exhausted away the hydrogen cyanide. But we weren't present during this. This was done by members of the SS. After a half hour we'd return, remove the laundry from the oven and carry it. We carried it on our backs, and not a few of us were half-poisoned from it. The guys from the Sudetenland, who were working there with us, had also warned us to not sniff the disinfected laundry. At that time no one yet knew how Zyklon B would be used in the future.

It was unpleasant work, but the good thing there was that the SS didn't guard us, but members of the Wehrmacht, who didn't yell at us, didn't beat us, there were even a few Sudeten Germans among them, who spoke Czech and gave us bread. At the same time, they had to be on the lookout for the SS. In that case they would warn us with the agreed-upon 'Ächzen' [German for 'groan']. I also met Jewish boys from Bohemia there, there were about five of them. One of them was a friend of mine. He was named Herman and was from Mikulov. In the end he died in Dachau, where his name is on the plaque of those who died.

We did this work for only about two months, but it was pleasant for us, because we could rest while doing it. Then I was again assigned to the bricklayers. We lined factory heating ducts. These ran beside the women's camp, which was separated from ours by a double fence. When during our work we saw the women for the first time, we were told to come to the fence at 12 o'clock, when the guards in the towers changed, which took about ten minutes. So I had an opportunity to ask about my mother or someone from Radvanice. The women asked for me in the typing pool, but unfortunately I didn't find anyone. They also helped us with food. We'd pass a jam bucket underneath the fence attached on a string, and would then put some cooked food with potatoes in it. Sometimes, when they sent raw potatoes, I'd make potato dumplings from them. We'd grate the potatoes on a grater that we'd made ourselves, strained the water through a piece of cloth, added some grated hard bread, which was obtained by the foremen. We then added margarine and salt to the leftover water and ate it as soup. It was a risk for all, for us, the foremen and the women, because we were under the strictest orders to not communicate with them.

I was also present at a second selection at Ravensbrück. They were picking out young people, on which the SS were testing new medicines. Most of the selected people then returned around July without arms, legs, basically cripples. I was lucky that they didn't select me there. About two years ago I found out the name of the euthanasia institute where these atrocities were perpetrated. It was the Sonnenstein castle, near Pirna.

Once we also stood on the assembly square for 36 hours, because one German prisoner had tried to escape. After 36 hours they found him, half dead, and hung him right before our eyes. I think that after that beating he didn't feel much anyways. While we were standing on the assembly square we couldn't even go to the toilet, and of course eat or drink. We got food only on the third day after, and very little, because the capo of our block, some Fritz Meser, a Czech, who was with us in Buchenwald, was profiteering with our food. He was your basic killer. When he took a liking to someone's gold teeth and the person didn't allow them to be pulled out voluntarily, he beat him to death. He and his pal, the Viennese Jew Schmied, stole bread from us and traded with the SS.

In August or September 1942 we again went onto a transport, because everyone in the camp that wasn't absolutely necessary had to go to the East. But we knew that there were extermination camps in the East. Before we got to the East, they transported us to Sachsenhausen. On the way to Sachsenhausen we stopped off at an airport for about thirty Jewish prisoners. Among them was also some guy named Sohnenstein, with whom I made friends. We were in Sachsenhausen for only a short time. I worked there in the 'Schuhkommando.' Its job was testing shoes for a factory that was competing for orders from the SS and the army. Part of the road was asphalt, part concrete, part made up of small stones, partly of large ones and so on. We tested all day, rain or shine. During testing we couldn't go to the toilet, eat or drink. Many people who couldn't handle walking or even running on the road died there, because they were shot.

In Sachsenhausen I also met an engineer by the name of Skuta, a clerk from the gardening commando, whom I had met still before the war, in the Ludvik pit. He and I used to organize those escapes to Poland together. When he recognized me, he picked me out for the commando, where for three weeks I repaired broken gardening implements. During that time I was better off. I had access to food, ersatz coffee, saccharine, bread. I was there for only a short time. Then I went into a brick factory. There we manufactured very hard bricks, so-called clinkers [cinder blocks]. It was horrible work in that we had to pull them out of the oven with our bare hands, and also that many people died on the way across a canal and two rivers where the bricks had to be carried. They were joined by a narrow and unstable plank, and the SS shot or left to drown anyone that fell down, and there were not a few of them.

In Sachsenhausen I was also a participant in the first prisoner uprising which wasn't bloodily suppressed. Before our departure for Auschwitz, which was scheduled for 6:30pm, we first showered and then also were disinfected in the showers. Some old prisoners from the typing pool came to us there, and said that just like us, they had sent off a transport of Russian prisoners to the East, and that the only things that had returned were their bloodied clothes. They then told us that we've got nothing to lose, and that we should resist. Sohnenstein was the first that ran out the door. I followed him and jumped out the window. Of course, outside the 'Blockältester' [person in charge of one barrack, or 'block'] caught us, and the SS began to beat us. The 'Lagerführer' [camp commander] also arrived and asked Sohnenstein, who had been his servant in one of the preceding camps, whether we hadn't by any chance lost our minds. To this Sohnenstein fired back that we didn't want to snuff it like sheep. But the Lagerführer convinced him that we weren't headed for our deaths, but that we were needed in the East for work. At that time he also said the name Auschwitz for the first time. We then got proper clothing, a third of a loaf of bread and a piece of bloody headcheese for the trip.

We were transported off to Auschwitz around 15th October 1942. There I also got to my third selection. For this one we assembled washed, with our hair cut and naked on the assembly square. Here we also got numbers and so lost our identities. From that time onwards, we were only numbers, not people. When my turn came during the selection, and the SS officer Entres, to this day I remember his name, asked me for my occupation, I remembered that I had always envied the workers in the prison hospitals their larger food rations, less frequent contact with the SS and that they didn't have to go to the assembly square. And so I said that I was a medical student at Charles University in Prague, and that I had two semesters behind me. Thanks to this I was assessed as being capable of work and was given the number 70315, which was tattooed on me by one prisoner. I was also designated with a triangle as a Jew.

I got into Block No. 21 in the hospital. It was the surgery ward. But I got a fever due to a sinus infection. In the bed in which I laid, there were three other prisoners, so none of us got any sleep. By coincidence I found out that the 'Lagerältester' [camp elder] was Ludvik, my friend from Buchenwald. After our joyous reunion, he also approved of the fact that I had proclaimed myself to be a medical student.

From about April 1943 I worked at the gynecological clinic for wives of the SS. The resident gynecologist was the head of the entire Auschwitz medical complex. I mopped the clinic, cleaned the doctor's cloakroom and his office. I was also given the task of taking care of the baths of all the officers and members of the SS. Every afternoon that doctor also called together all the other doctors, who were to inform him about the results of experiments and other activities. Here I also met up with Doctor Mengele. Because I took care of the baths, I washed and massaged his back. He was always courteous to me, he never shouted at me or beat me. It was a complete contrast to his horrible acts and mainly his experiments on people.

In Auschwitz I once again met up with an unselfish member of the German medical corps. It was Maria Stromberger, an Austrian. She made very good friends with my friend, the Polish prisoner Eduard Pys. Thanks to him she crossed over completely to our side. She scrounged up medicines for us, or also tried to save our relatives and friends. Thanks to her connections with members of the SS we were able to secretly deliver the SS members' leftover food to the camp. The way we got it in was that we'd wrap it in a clean bed sheet and stick it under a pile of dirty laundry. The SS soldier that guarded the gate was afraid to check the laundry due to infections, so we could safely deliver it to the laundry. There I had a friend from Buchenwald. My friend and cohort in these deliveries, Ladislav Lukas, again worked in the new laundry.

In Auschwitz I found out that Hilda Wernerova, who had taught me German in high school, had been there. Unfortunately I didn't find out about her presence until fourteen days after her death. I was quite saddened by it, because I was a fairly influential person in the camp. I knew the doctors and if I would have said that my friend from school was there, she could have gotten into some commando where she could have survived. But I didn't know about it.

In 1943 or 1944 Maria didn't celebrate Christmas Eve with the SS, but prepared a Christmas supper for the prisoners in the infirmary. This didn't include us five Jews, who only stood watch so that we wouldn't be discovered by the SS. We did also taste the food that she cooked, as it had after all been we that stole part of the ingredients and brought them to the cook. Another person that helped us was named Cyrankevicz, and worked in the typing pool. To this day I don't know how,

but he worked utter miracles with the index cards. He saved many people, and despite this he always came out with the correct number of dead and alive.

In Auschwitz I also met my future wife, Alzbeta [nee Kürtiova], a Slovak. In the camp she worked for the Gestapo as a typist during interrogations. The boss of that department was some Viennese that called himself a doctor. Whether he really was one, I don't know. The fact that he used to shoot people in front of her during interrogations had a severe impact on Alzbeta's psyche. I used to see Alzbeta when they walked by the infirmary on their way to the Gestapo. But first I met her cousin, Klara Weiss. She also worked for the Gestapo, but only manual labor. When she did laundry for the SS, she used to go for hot water. She'd always come and say she needed it, and we'd prepare it for her. When she came with a member of the SS, we'd bribe him, usually with margarine and bread, to make sure he didn't see anything. Sister Maria would have prepared some food for the girls, so Klara would bring the girls a hamper.

On 17th January 1945 we were sent on a death march 16. First we had to go to the town of Leslau [Wloclawek in Polish], which is its German name, which was 70 kilometers away. I unfortunately don't remember the Polish name. We walked in the cold, shabbily dressed in extreme, freezing cold. At night we'd sleep in the snow, packed together like sardines. All together there were about thirty of us lying there, but those on the edges usually didn't survive. It seemed terribly depressing to me, when a friend with whom I had been in the camp for two, three years, was suddenly lying dead beside me.

When we arrived in Leslau, they then herded us into open wagons, where we didn't have any food or water. A terrible lot of people died during this trip. It was so horrible that I even wanted to run away. One guy from Hodonin suggested to me that we jump out during some bends in the track around Hodonin, that there the train goes slowly and that there's a lot of snow by the tracks. Of course he told me about these plans quietly, because otherwise the entire wagon would probably have jumped out. Then when the train really did begin to slow down in the turns, he jumped out first. I didn't have time, because a machine gun started firing. But because the train didn't stop and they didn't go looking for him, he managed to escape. After the war I found out that he'd managed to survive and that he was living in Switzerland and making a living raising horses.

We had barely arrived in Linz, when they loaded us into cars and still that night drove us off to Mauthausen. They immediately herded us into a bath, though it was around 20 degrees Celsius below zero. From the bath they chased us out into the freezing cold, and there we had to wait until another fifty people had their baths. Many of us died, of a group of twenty about ten of us survived. After a selection and a fourteen-day quarantine, we were driven to Ebensee, to my last camp.

Ebensee was a small camp built for 6,000 prisoners, and at that time there could have been up to 8 or 10 thousand there. Prisoners there were drilling shafts in cliffs, where a V2 factory was to be built. Those were rockets that were used to bombard London. Because the factories where they were built had been bombed to bits, they were being built in Ebensee. I worked there like the others, which means that I drilled the shafts with a drill. I knew the guys that organized the work there from Buchenwald. The drill that I was given sat on the ground, so a person could sometimes have a rest during the night shift. The way it worked was that the one that was drilling sat on the ground and pressed the drill on with his legs. A friend of his would lean up backwards against him and sleep. In this way we took turns and slept. Sometimes, though, a person was so tired that he

even fell asleep during drilling. When one of the SS began approaching on patrol, there was always someone that would begin shouting and alerted us to the patrol.

When the hole was deep enough, the explosives master came and set off a charge. We weren't allowed to be present, because the rocks flew quite far. We then had to carry the rocks away. I did this work until March. Then I was assigned to the 'Himmelfahrt' commando. Its task was to excavate unexploded bombs. The Germans called it Himmelfahrt because in German Himmelfahrt means ascension to heaven, and during this work about half really did die because the bomb exploded underneath their hands. We excavated bombs in a little town that was fifteen or twenty kilometers away from Ebensee. Today there's a still quite well-preserved monument in that town to those that died doing this work.

I did this work all April. Then I was in the camp. There I met with friends that had been with me in Buchenwald. Along with them had come a Viennese engineer from the Buchenwald construction commando. Because I knew the camp commander, he immediately appointed him as the oldest in the blockhouse that I was also in. And thanks to him, I swept in the camp, distributed food and so on. In this function I met up with cannibalism, when they were carrying dead people with cut-up buttocks out of the blockhouse. The others ate their raw flesh.

In the blockhouse I also met up with anti-Fascists from Spain. Actually, I already knew five of them from Buchenwald. Several of them were among those that survived until liberation. When the Russians approached from one side and the Americans from the other, the Germans told us to hide in the shafts, that they're afraid that we could get hurt. But the Spaniards found out from one German soldier that they wanted to blow us all up. They told everyone and so I experienced another rebellion. If the Germans would have had the time, it would for sure have ended badly for us. But they were afraid of the Russians, so themselves were fleeing west into American captivity.

Post-war">Post-war

On 6th May 1945 the Americans liberated us. I didn't even have the strength anymore to crawl up on a tank and greet them. Recently, when I was at the anniversary celebration, I met one of three tank drivers that had come to the camp. He didn't remember me, nor I him, and we didn't find out about it until one of the event's organizers said that he belonged to the liberators of Ebensee. I was terribly touched, because I had never expected to meet a person that had liberated us. I'm sure he felt the same way, because when we met, we hugged each other and were both crying. Now I've got his address, so when my daughter is going to go to America, she'd like to send him greetings and thanks.

Soon after the Americans arrived, they put me into this one camp for Czech civilians, who had been doing forced labor. They weren't as lice-ridden and it was clean there. I don't even know how many of us there were. We divided ourselves up into groups and each one had a different job. One cleaned, the second rounded up food, which means that it was usually stolen. The last group had time off and could do what it wanted. When I had time off, I would go swimming in a nearby lake, which despite the heat was horribly ice cold.

In the camp there soon formed a group of us that wanted to set out for Czechoslovakia in a car that ran on wood gas. So we had to scrounge up blocks of hardwood. These cars ran well, just when we

were going uphill everyone had to get out so that the car would even crawl its way to the top. In this fashion we got to Ceske Budejovice and from there we took a train to Prague, where we arrived at night. That first night, we slept in the building of the Red Cross in the Lesser Quarter, today's German embassy. Due to us being lice-ridden we couldn't sleep in the rooms, so they made a bed for me on a bench. The next day they drove us to the Bulovka hospital, where they deloused us and gave us some clothes. I was at the Red Cross for another two or three days, and then I found a place to stay at the YMCA at Na Porici, which was in the street between the Powder Tower and the Bila Labut [department store]. There I slept in a room that had been occupied by some Canadian pilot, who gave me some things that he didn't need any more. When I was leaving the YMCA, the students there gave me a suit, some clothes and a suitcase.

Next I went to the Jewish Community. There I found out that my entire family had died. About my father I knew. My mother died in 1942 in Maly Trostinec in Belarus. As far as my brothers are concerned, I had suspected that they didn't survive, being deaf-mute. And they really did die in a euthanasia institute in Kromeriz. Grandma Rauchbergerova and Grandpa died in 1942 in either the Treblinka or Majdanek concentration camp. The only one to survive was Uncle Arnold, who due to being unemployed left at the end of the 1920s for the Heftzi-Ba kibbutz in Palestine, later Israel. He worked there as a shoemaker and raised chickens. I myself never left for Israel. Most likely because I wasn't educated and neither did I have a trade, and instead I studied.

When I left the YMCA, I found lodgings with Mrs. Capkova in Liliova Street in Prague 1. Here I had one room which I shared with another student. During that time I finished my high school education at a high school in Zizkov [a neighborhood of Prague] and in July 1946 I graduated. Back then I had to do three grades of high school in one year.

In 1946 my friend Emil, whom I knew from Auschwitz, came to visit me. In Auschwitz he had fallen in love with Klarka, Alzbeta's cousin. It was this long-distance love affair, because they couldn't see each other, as it was forbidden, and they only met up once in a while by chance. After the war Klarka lived with Alzbeta on Italska Street in Prague. Emil told me to come along with him to visit them. So I went. There were four girls there in all: Klarka, a friend of hers from Auschwitz, another girlfriend, who had hidden herself with some nuns at a convent, and Alzbeta. As luck would have it, she was in bed with the flu at the time. But by Sunday she was feeling better, so I talked to her and we decided to go dancing in Barrandov on Sunday. And at the dance we decided to get married. She then introduced me to her brother Laszlo. We were married in 1946 in the Old New Synagogue.

Alzbeta's father was originally named Weinstangel. He was born in the town of Kert na Ostrove, in Slovakia, but spent most of his childhood in Komarno. He was brought up as a Hungarian and his mother tongue was also Hungarian. Then, when he was an officer in the Hungarian army, he changed his name to Kürti, because he was from Kert na Ostrove. Alzbeta's mother, who was from Komarno, was named Weissova before being married. When she and Kürti got married, they moved to Bratislava, where they lived on Dunajska Street. Kürti manufactured products like lipstick, toothpaste and so on. Alzbeta had two siblings, her brother Laszlo, and her sister Gizella.

During World War II, Alzbeta, her mother, father and sister Gizella ended up in Auschwitz. Her father died there, but Alzbeta managed to save her mother, sister and cousin Klara by finding them a job in the political department of the Gestapo. Her mother then died in Germany after the liberation. Her sister Gizella returned to Prague. There she got married and moved to Sach, Poland.

In the end she and her husband moved to the United States of America. Because she couldn't have children, she and her husband adopted two Jewish children, with whom they have a beautiful relationship.

Before the war her brother Laszlo had begun to study dentistry. During World War II he then served in Tito's 17 army, where he worked as a dentist. He used to carry this foot-powered drill with him. He carted it and other tools around on a mule that they had assigned him. He of course also carried a machine-gun, so he could defend himself against the Germans. After the war he finished his studies in Prague. As a partisan and officer of the Yugoslav Army, he also managed to find us an apartment in Prague's Vinohrady quarter. Up to the year 1947 he worked as a dentist in Duchcov, and in 1947 he left for Guatemala, where he made a living as a dentist. There he had to re-write his final exams, because they didn't recognize his Czechoslovak education. After some time he moved to the United States, where he received his approbation in psychiatry, and then worked as a psychiatrist. He died the year before last [2003], in Houston, I think.

That year [1946], I took a summer job in the Stalin Works in Litvinov [chemical works, today Chemopetrol] and in October I started my first semester at ICT [Institute of Chemical Technology]. My first exam was in hydrology, in 1947. I was really quite afraid of my exam in inorganic chemistry, and so I studied hard and didn't leave anything to chance. I did my exam in inorganic chemistry with a professor whom I had met in Sachsenhausen. I did my exam in organic chemistry with Professor Sorma, with whom I then worked at the Academy of Sciences.

At first Alzbeta worked for the Czechoslovak branch of UNRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], where she took care of correspondence. UNRA was a charitable organization that distributed goods like food and groceries, which were destined for countries affected by war. I also worked there part-time on the weekends to make some money. I could only work when we didn't have labs at school. In that office I organized the card index, put together lists of supplies and similar office work. At that time they also offered me a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, a nice and heavy machine. If I would have hidden it in some shed, today I could get a lot of money for it. But back then I didn't take it, because I didn't have any money, plus I didn't understand anything about those machines. Now I say to myself that it's a shame, because today these machines are extremely valuable.

I 'skated through' the Communist putsch and the subsequent Communist years as a member of the resistance, an anti-Fascist, I was in the Association of Freedom Fighters and trade unionist. [Editor's note: The Czech Association of Freedom Fighters is a political, independent organization, which brings together participants of the national liberation resistance during World War II.] I had actually already started to give lectures about the Holocaust in 1946, so I was looked upon as a progressive individual.

In 1947 or 1948, while still studying at ICT, I used to travel to Ostrava to the mining university for consultation regarding mining chemistry. At that time I also for the first time went to Petrvald to look at [Uncle] Jakub's house and the places where I had to a large degree spent my childhood. When I went there a second time, however, Jakub's house was no longer standing. For they mined coal there, and the house was already so undermined that it had collapsed. That was a terrible disappointment for me. From Petrvald I took the narrow-gauge streetcar to Radvanice. Because I didn't have anyone there any more, I had to stay with strangers. It was a horrible feeling, when I

said to myself that here I had spent part of my life and now I don't even have a place to sleep. I continued by train to Orlova, where I found that our Czech high school building wasn't there any more. It had also collapsed thanks to the mineshafts.

In 1951 I graduated from ICT. Immediately after I finished my studies I started working at the Academy of Sciences, where I worked as a chemist. My boss there was Dr. Bazant, originally from Pisek. There were quite a few Jews at the academy, and I can't say we felt some sort of anti-Semitism. The fact that at one time I was even chairman of the company board at the Academy vouches for the fact that my Jewish origin wasn't a handicap for me. There was also a lot of interest among my co-workers in my stories about my experiences during World War II.

In 1954 or 1955 I also changed my name, Thüeberger, to Radvansky, because I didn't want to have a German name any more. I chose the name Radvansky according to Radvanice, where I was born and spent my childhood.

Our son Jiri was born in 1956. About six months after he was born, I noticed that there was something wrong with my wife's mental state. I visited a friend of mine, a Jewish doctor who was head of the infectious diseases ward of the Bulovka hospital, and asked him to have a look at my wife. He gave her a checkup, and immediately sent her to the psychiatric ward, where they found that she had schizophrenia. This then is how the mental shocks that Alzbeta had daily experienced at the Gestapo precinct at Auschwitz manifested themselves. At the hospital they gave her electroshock therapy, because back then that was probably the only treatment. From that time on my wife has been ill and my legal dependant, and I take care of her at home. It's a hard life. Sometimes she also wakes me up at night and starts to sing or recite something, either in Hungarian, English, French, German or Russian. Because she speaks all of these languages.

When the Prague Spring [18] arrived, I was terribly glad and the course of events after 1968 greatly disappointed me. On the other hand, after the arrival of the Soviet armies, I searched out Jews among the soldiers, and made friends with them. I for example got to know one sergeant who used to come to our place for holidays and Sabbath suppers, along with other Jews.

I worked at the Academy of Sciences until 1977, when I retired. That year we moved to Prague-Suchdol, about two hundred meters from the Theoretical Chemistry Technology Institute. In the beginning it was I who went about raising money to have the institute completed, and because I succeeded, I was quite respected. In this part of Prague our family also built a house, where today my daughter Anicka and her family live.

Despite my being raised in a religious environment and also having had a clerical wedding, I didn't raise my children in a religious way. I was afraid that if the Jewish persecutions returned, that my children would suffer. In the beginning my children didn't notice anything. But when Anicka started Grade 1, she began to wonder why the other children had grandmas and grandpas, and she didn't. She used to address all old white- haired people that she met as Grandma and Grandpa, and acted very warmly towards them. Old people in Riegrovy Sady [a park in Prague] that already knew her were terribly fond of her.

My attitude towards this issue changed when Anicka heard the curse: 'You smelly Jew!' at school. At that moment I realized that my hopes that people would forget about our Jewish origin were in vain. After all, I would sometimes walk around in a short-sleeve shirt, and so you could see my

number from the concentration camp on my arm, plus I'm registered at the Jewish religious community. I started to blame myself for not telling my daughter anything, while the children at school already knew it. So I said to myself, enough, and started telling Anicka that there had been bad people that had sent her grandma and my whole family to do hard labor, during which they didn't give them enough to eat, and they died. Then when Jiri was born, and the time came, I spoke to him about it normally. Then when the children were in elementary school in Vinohrady, one of my friends, a cantor, began to give them classes in religion and reading Hebrew.

In the 1970s I started working at the Jewish religious community with children from five to 15 years old. I met with them on Saturday once every fourteen days, we'd play ping-pong, tell fairy tales, I read to them from 'Modche and Rezi' by Vojtech Rakous [Rakous, Vojtech (1862 - 1935): real name Adalbert östereicher, came from a Czech-Jewish farming family; author of humorously, even sarcastically toned stories from the lives of ordinary, small Jews in the countryside] as well as passages written by the Kolin rabbi Feder for Czech youth magazines. [Feder, Richard (1875-1970): Chief provincial rabbi in Brno; awarded the Order of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk III Class, in memoriam - 2002 for exceptional services to democracy and human rights.] The children liked it very much. I gradually began to tell them about the concentration camps. By then my girlfriend Misha Vidlakova was helping me out. She took a group of the smallest children and I had the older ones. But basically both groups were always together. We also took the children to camp. They were camps à la going camping with your uncle, no parading around, assembly, or hoisting a flag up and down the flagpole.

Misha Vidlakova and I had known each other since the 1950s. In 1956 my wife Alzbeta fell ill, and in 1957 she told me that she didn't want to live with me any longer. We did live together for another two years, but finally it was no longer possible to endure. Back then I had a choice. Either divorce Alzbeta, which I didn't want, or keep on like up to now. In the end I stayed with her, and eventually met and got together with Misha, with whom I'm 'friends' to this day.

When I retired in the 1970s, I became the Secretary General of the Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia. I got this position after the death of the previous Secretary, Dr. Iltis. The way I got to this function was that once I was walking by the Old New Synagogue, and the president of the Council of Jewish Communities, Dr. Bas from Brno, was sitting there with Rabbi Moshe Rosen 19 from Bucharest. Dr. Bas says to me, 'Sir, you've worked with those children...I need a general secretary.' To which I said that I didn't have any experience with legal work. To this the Bucharest rabbi says to me that I've got a university education, after all, so why don't I at least try it. And so I became general secretary and held the position from 1979 until 1984.

At that time I was called to the Ministry of Culture, where they offered me collaboration with the STB [Statni Tajna Bezpecnost] 20. I told them: 'Look, I don't have the nerves for it, my psyche is damaged; I was in a prison camp for five years.' And because of that I then could no longer perform the function of general secretary, which I quite regretted. I took it so hard that I had a heart attack and had to have a bypass. When they then discharged me from the hospital, I began to work as the superintendent of the new Jewish cemetery, where Frank Kafka is buried. [Kafka, Franz (1883 - 1924): Prague writer of prose of Jewish origin who wrote in German.] I held this position until 1994.

Both of my children graduated from academic high school and university. My son Jiri studied medicine at Charles University, and is currently an applied cardiology specialist at the department

of children's sports medicine at Motol Hospital. He's married and he and his wife live in Prague, about twenty minutes from my place in Prague-Suchdol. Jiri's wife is named Jitka and isn't of Jewish origin. She's Protestant after her mother, but really she's more of an atheist. She's a very kind and tolerant girl. For Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah she goes with us to the synagogue. She and Jiri have two children, Marketa [born 1991] and Edita [born 1995]. Marketa is 14 years old now, and attends a Spanish high school in Prague, and Edita is in Grade 5.

My daughter Anna graduated in chemistry from ICT in Prague, like me, and today works as a chemist in the laboratory at Motol Hospital. She and her husband live about 800 steps away from me. Anne's husband is named Jarda Sterec, and is of Jewish origin. Jarda's father was named Stern and was an engineer. He survived the war in Romania. His first wife wasn't Jewish. In the end he also divorced her, because she was German and looked down at everything Jewish. He met Jarda's mother, Magda, someplace in Bucharest, and lived with her until he died. He's dead now, but Magda still lives in Prague and is about 90 years old. Jarda caught tick-born encephalitis and had brain fever, and now with his health it looks very bad.

Anna and Jarda have two children together - Eva [born 1983] and Pavel [born 1984]. Eva is studying medicine in Prague and my grandson Pavel stage design and direction at the Academy of Theater in Brno. My daughter is a member of the Jewish Community in Prague and also sings Hebrew songs with the Mispach choir. She is leading her children to Judaism as well. This especially had a big influence on Pavel. In the beginning he really was very devout, so there were even times when he regularly attended the synagogue and ate kosher. He was also interested in my reminiscences from the concentration camps. This religious 'shock' of his is subsiding, but he still doesn't eat pork and goes to the synagogue.

We try to celebrate Jewish holidays all together. We gather mainly at Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We celebrate either at Anna's or at my and Alzbeta's place, a co-op apartment in Suchdol, which we have not far from the children. I have to drive Alzbeta to Anna's by car, because she's got bent legs and can't straighten them. Our grandchildren also take part in all the events put on by the Prague Jewish community for young people. Besides that I also tell them about my wartime experiences. First I told Marketa about them, when she was a little older. Now Edita is also curious and is always saying, 'Well, Marketa knows about it and I don't.' So I have to slowly also tell her, even though for now I'm not telling her about all of those slaughters.

Currently another member of my family is my dog Punta [Spot]. He's a cross between an indefinite breed and a schnauzer. Punta one day came to us and then stayed, so really he's the one that found us, rather than we him. He's a big adventurer, because he's constantly running away, mainly after the local bitches. Once he ran away, dug under the fence of my neighbor, who's got a 13-year-old bitch, and the result was six puppies, one of which is named Artur. Punta is also capable of traveling by bus. He jumps into it, rides to the cold-storage warehouses in Suchdol, because he remembers that one bitch lives there, and then he returns again. Once he took the bus all the way to Ruzyn [Prague's airport], from where some man called me that Punta had strayed there. But before my son-in-law Jarda managed to arrive to collect him, he had run away again and didn't return home until three days later.

My relationship with the state of Israel is very sympathetic. I know that if worst comes to worst, I've got someplace to go. As far as Israeli defense policy goes, I think that it's mainly a result of Arab

pressure. I personally feel sad when someone kills Jewish or Arab children, because you can't live with permanently bloodied eyes. I'd be very happy if things in this region were finally resolved and my Israeli friends say this as well. I very much regretted the break in diplomatic relations between Israel and the CSSR in 1967, because my uncle Arnold lived in Israel. In 1970 he came to visit us in Bohemia for a month, and a year later he died in Israel. From that time on, when I go to Israel, I go to light a candle at his grave in the Heftzi-Ba kibbutz. I've been to Israel several times. Misha Vidlakova and I always first drop anchor at Tivon at her family friends', where we borrow a car and drive around to see the sights, friends and my uncle's grave.

My family still has relatives in the USA, where my wife's sister, Gizella Lesna, and my wife's niece live. Because the niece's daughter recently got married, Anna is going to America to visit her. With the death of Uncle Arnold, I lost my only relative. This is because most of my family died during World War II.

I greeted the revolution in 1989 [Velvet Revolution] 21 with enthusiasm. My first trip to the West led me together with Misha Vidlakova to visit a friend in West Berlin. Along with her we then set out via Austria to Switzerland, to her friend's place, where since that time we go every year to ski. Misha Vidlakova and I are active in the Terezin Initiative. She's in one of the head positions of this foundation. Since 1989 we've been making the rounds at elementary and high schools and universities in the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria to lecture about the Holocaust. Misha is currently also a member of the Prague Jewish religious community presidium. As I'm already retired and also have to take care of my wife, I don't have time left for any other activities. Perhaps only that I keep in touch with friends from the Auschwitz Commission. It's located in the Czech Republic and its members are people who were in Auschwitz during the war. As far as my financial situation goes, I can say that it's not all that bad, because I collect my pension, allowances from the Czech-German [Future] Fund 22 and from the Claims Conference.

Glossary">Glossary

1 Terezin Initiative
In the year 1991 the former prisoners of various concentration camps met and decided to found the Terezin Initiative (TI), whose goal is to commemorate the fate of Protectorate (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) Jews, to commemorate the dead and document the history of the Terezin ghetto. Within the framework of this mission TI performs informative, documentary, educational and editorial activities. It also financially supports field trips to the Terezin Ghetto Museum for Czech schools.

2 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.

3 Zivnostenska Party

A right-of-center party of small businessmen, founded in 1906 in Bohemia, and, two years later in Moravia, which existed until 1938. The party did not have its own clean-cut program, never became a mass party and never reached more than 5,4 percent of votes in parliamentary elections. The best-known representatives of the party were Rudolf Mlcoch and Josef Najman.

4 Majdanek concentration camp

situated five kilometers from the city center of Lublin, Poland, originally established as a labor camp in October 1941. It was officially called Prisoner of War Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin until 16th February 1943, when the name was changed to Concentration Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin. Unlike most other Nazi death camps, Majdanek, located in a completely open field, was not hidden from view. About 130,000 Jews were deported there during 1942-43 as part of the 'Final Solution'. Initially there were two gas chambers housed in a wooden building, which were later replaced by gas chambers in a brick building. The estimated number of deaths is 360,000, including Jews, Soviets POWs and Poles. The camp was liquidated in July 1944, but by the time the Red Army arrived the camp was only partially destroyed. Although approximately 1,000 inmates were executed on a death march, the Red Army found thousand of prisoners still in the camp, an evidence of the mass murder that had occurred in Majdanek.

5 Treblinka

village in Poland's Mazovia region, site of two camps. The first was a penal labor camp, established in 1941 and operating until 1944. The second, known as Treblinka II, functioned in the period 1942-43 and was a death camp. Prisoners in the former worked in Treblinka II. In the second camp a ramp and a mock-up of a railway station were built, which prevented the victims from realizing what awaited them until just in front of the entrance to the gas chamber. The camp covered an area of 13.5 hectares. It was bounded by a 3-m high barbed wire fence interwoven densely with pine branches to screen what was going on inside. The whole process of exterminating a transport from arrival in the camp to removal of the corpses from the gas chamber took around 2 hours. Several transports arrived daily. In the 13 months of the extermination camp's existence the Germans gassed some 750,000-800,000 Jews. Those taken to Treblinka included Warsaw Jews during the Grossaktion [great liquidation campaign] in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. As well as Polish Jews, Jews from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR were also killed in Treblinka. In the spring of 1943 the Germans gradually began to liquidate the camp. On 2 August 1943 an uprising broke out there with the aim of enabling some 200 people to escape. The majority died.

6 Bata, Tomas (1876-1932)

Czech industrialist. From a small shoemaking business, he built up the largest leather factory in Europe in 1928, producing 75,000 pairs of shoes a day. His son took over the business after his father's death in a plane crash in 1932, turned the village of Zlin, where the factory was, into an industrial center and provided lots of Czechs with jobs. He expanded the business to Canada in 1939, took a hundred Czech workers along with him, and thus saved them from becoming victims of the Nazi regime.

7 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.

8 Sokol

One of the best-known Czech sports organizations. It was founded in 1862 as the first physical educational organization in the Austro- Hungarian Monarchy. Besides regular training of all age groups, units organized sports competitions, colorful gymnastics rallies, cultural events including drama, literature and music, excursions and youth camps. Although its main goal had always been the promotion of national health and sports, Sokol also played a key role in the national resistance to the Austro- Hungarian Empire, the Nazi occupation and the communist regime. Sokol flourished between the two World Wars; its membership grew to over a million. Important statesmen, including the first two presidents of interwar Czechoslovakia, Tomas Masaryk and Edvard Benes, were members of Sokol. Sokol was banned three times: during World War I, during the Nazi occupation and finally by the communists after 1948, but branches of the organization continued to exist abroad. Sokol was restored in 1990.

9 Joseph II (1741-1790)

Holy Roman Emperor, king of Bohemia and Hungary (1780-1790), a representative figure of enlightened absolutism. He carried out a complex program of political, economic, social and cultural reforms. His main aims were religious toleration, unrestricted trade and education, and a reduction in the power of the Church. These views were reflected in his policy toward Jews. His ‚Judenreformen' (Jewish reforms) and the ‚Toleranzpatent' (Edict of Tolerance) granted Jews several important rights that they had been deprived of before: they were allowed to settle in royal free cities, rent land, engage in crafts and commerce, become members of guilds, etc. Joseph had several laws which didn't help Jewish interests: he prohibited the use of Hebrew and Yiddish in business and public records, he abolished rabbinical jurisdiction and introduced liability for military service. A special decree ordered all the Jews to select a German family name for themselves. Joseph's reign introduced some civic improvement into the life of the Jews in the Empire, and also supported cultural and linguistic assimilation. As a result, controversy arose between liberal-

minded and orthodox Jews, which is considered the root cause of the schism between the Orthodox and the Neolog Jewry.

10 Anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

In March 1939, there lived in the Protectorate 92,199 inhabitants classified according to the so-called Nuremberg Laws as Jews. On 21st June 1939, Konstantin von Neurath, the Reichs protector, passed the so-called Edict Regarding Jewish Property, which put restrictions on Jewish property. On 24th April 1940, a government edict was passed which eliminated Jews from economic activity. Similarly like previous legal changes it was based on the Nuremburg Law definitions and limited the legal standing of Jews. According to the law, Jews couldn't perform any functions (honorary or paid) in the courts or public service and couldn't participate at all in politics, be members of Jewish organizations and other organizations of social, cultural and economic nature. They were completely barred from performing any independent occupation, couldn't work as lawyers, doctors, veterinarians, notaries, defence attorneys and so on. Jewish residents could participate in public life only in the realm of religious Jewish organizations. Jews were forbidden to enter certain streets, squares, parks and other public places. From September 1939 they were forbidden from being outside their home after 8pm. Beginning in November 1939 they couldn't leave, even temporarily, their place of residence without special permission. Residents of Jewish extraction were barred from visiting theatres and cinemas, restaurants and cafés, swimming pools, libraries and other entertainment and sports centres. On public transport they were limited to standing room in the last car, in trains they weren't allowed to use dining or sleeping cars and could ride only in the lowest class, again only in the last car. They weren't allowed entry into waiting rooms and other station facilities. The Nazis limited shopping hours for Jews to twice two hours and later only two hours per day. They confiscated radio equipment and limited their choice of groceries. Jews weren't allowed to keep animals at home. Jewish children were prevented from visiting German, and, from August 1940, also Czech public and private schools. In March 1941 even so-called re-education courses organized by the Jewish Religious Community were forbidden, and from June 1942 also education in Jewish schools. To eliminate Jews from society it was important that they be easily identifiable. Beginning in March 1940, citizenship cards of Jews were marked by the letter 'J' (for Jude - Jew). From 1st September 1941 Jews older than six could only go out in public if they wore a yellow six- pointed star with 'Jude' written on it on their clothing.

11 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.

12 Invasion of Poland

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

13 Army of General Svoboda

During World War II General Ludvik Svoboda (1895-1979) commanded Czechoslovak troops under Soviet military leadership, which took part in liberating Eastern Slovakia. After the war Svoboda became minister of defence (1945-1950) and then President of Czechoslovakia (1968-1975).

14 Buchenwald

Nazi concentration camp operating from March 1937 until April 1945 in Germany, near Weimar. It was divided into 136 wards; inmates were forced to labor in the armaments industry, quarries; approx. 56,000 thousand of the 238,000 inmates, representing many nationalities, died. An uprising of the prisoners broke out shortly before liberation, on 11 April 1945.

15 Ravensbruck

Concentration camp for women near Furstenberg, Germany. Five hundred prisoners transported there from Sachsenhausen began construction at the end of 1938. They built 14 barracks and service buildings, as well as a small camp for men, which was completed separated from the women's camp. The buildings were surrounded by tall walls and electrified barbed wire. The first deportees, some 900 German and Austrian women were transported there on May 18, 1939, soon followed by 400 Austrian Gypsy women. At the end of 1939, due to the new groups constantly arriving, the camp held nearly 3000 persons. With the expansion of the war, people from twenty countries were taken here. Persons incapable of working were transported on to Uckermark or Auschwitz, and sent to the gas chambers, others were murdered during 'medical' experiments. By the end of 1942, the camp reached 15,000 prisoners, by 1943, with the arrival of groups from the Soviet Union, it reached 42,000. During the working existance of the camp, altogether nearly 132,000 women and children were transported here, of these, 92,000 were murdered. In March of 1945, the SS decided to move the camp, so in April those capable of walking were deported on a death march. On April 30, 1945, those who survived the camp and death march, were liberated by the Soviet armies.

16 Death march

the Germans, in fear of the approaching Allied armies, tried to erase evidence of the concentration camps. They often destroyed all the facilities and forced all Jews regardless of their age or sex to go on a death march. This march often led nowhere, there was no concrete destination. The marchers got no food and no rest at night. It was solely up to the guards how they treated the prisoners, how they acted towards them, what they gave them to eat and they even had the power of their life or death in their hands. The conditions during the march were so cruel that this journey became a journey that ended in death for many.

17 Tito, Josip Broz (1892-1980)

President of communist Yugoslavia from 1953 until his death. He organized the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1937 and became the leader of the Yugoslav partisan movement after 1941. He liberated most of Yugoslavia with his partisans, including Belgrade, made territorial gains (Fiume and the previously Italian Istria). In March 1945 he became the head of the new federal Yugoslav government. He nationalized industry but did not enforce the Soviet-style collective farming system. On the political plane, he oppressed and executed his political opposition. Although Yugoslavia was closely associated with the USSR, Tito often pursued independent policies. He accepted western loans to stabilize national economy, and gradually relaxed many of the regime's strict controls. As a result, Yugoslavia became the most liberal communist country in Europe. After Tito's death in 1980 ethnic tensions resurfaced, bringing about the brutal breakup of the federal state in the 1990s. 18 Prague Spring: A period of democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia, from January to August 1968. Reformatory politicians were secretly elected to leading functions of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). Josef Smrkovsky became president of the National Assembly, and Oldrich Cernik became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubcek, General Secretary of the KSC Central Committee (UV KSC). In April 1968 the UV KSC adopted the party's Action Program, which was meant to show the new path to socialism. It promised fundamental economic and political reforms. On 21st March 1968, at a meeting of representatives of the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia in Dresden, Germany, the Czechoslovaks were notified that the course of events in their country was not to the liking of the remaining conference participants, and that they should implement appropriate measures. In July 1968 a meeting in Warsaw took place, where the reformist efforts in Czechoslovakia were designated as "counter-revolutionary." The invasion of the USSR and Warsaw Pact armed forces on the night of 20th August 1968, and the signing of the so-called Moscow Protocol ended the process of democratization, and the Normalization period began.

19 Rosen, Moses (1912-1994)

Chief Rabbi of Romania and president of the Association of Jewish Religious Communities during communism. A controversial figure of the postwar Romanian Jewish public life. On the one hand he was criticized because of his connections with several leaders of the Romanian communist regime, on the other hand even his critics recognized his great efforts in the interest of Romanian Jews. He was elected chief rabbi of Romania in 1948 and fulfilled this function till his death in 1994. During this period he organized the religious and cultural education of Jewish youth and facilitated the

emigration to Israel by using his influence. His efforts made possible the launch of the only Romanian Jewish newspaper, Revista Cultului Mozaic (Realitatea Evreiasc? after 1995) in 1956. As the leader of Romanian Israelites he was a permanent member of the Romanian Parliament from 1957-1989. He was member of the Executive Board of the Jewish World Congress. His works on Judaist issues were published in Romanian, Hebrew and English.

20 Statni Tajna Bezpecnost

Czech intelligence and security service founded in 1948.

21 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. A non-violent political revolution in Czechoslovakia that meant the transition from Communist dictatorship to democracy. The Velvet Revolution began with a police attack against Prague students on 17th November 1989. That same month the citizen's democratic movement Civic Forum (OF) in Czech and Public Against Violence (VPN) in Slovakia were formed. On 10th December a government of National Reconciliation was established, which started to realize democratic reforms. On 29th December Vaclav Havel was elected president. In June 1990 the first democratic elections since 1948 took place.

22 Czech-German Future Fund

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