

# Anna Hydrakova

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Prague

Czech Republic

Interviewer: Pavla Neuner

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*Anna Hydrakova is retired but still a very active person. She works for the Jewish Museum in Prague and with the Association of Former Prisoners of the Terezin Ghetto.*

*She lives on her own in a nicely furnished apartment. The room where the interview took place is her cabinet, in which she has a lot of books and a desk with a computer.*

*She is proud of having learnt how to work on a computer and using the Internet. She showed me a number of belongings treasured from World War II including a toothbrush from Terezin.*



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## • My family background

My grandfather on my father's side was called Vilem Kovanic, but I don't know when he was born. I didn't know him at all. It was said that he might have been a dealer in feathers. I know that he came from a Czech family and they spoke Czech, but he also spoke German.

His first wife died but she left him a son, Izak. I didn't really know him though; he seemed really old to me. I know that he lived in Lanskrout and that his two daughters, Truda and Hana, immigrated to Palestine. Izak died before World War II.

My grandmother on my father's side was called Julie Kovanicova, nee Kopecka. She was a housewife and gave birth to nine children. My grandmother died when her last daughter, Olga, was born in 1898. Until that time, my grandparents had been living in Kolin.

After my grandmother died, my grandfather moved to Prague and got a housekeeper, Marjanka Zazova. His eldest daughter Irma and Izak also looked after him a lot. My grandfather died in Prague in 1924. He had a Jewish funeral.

My paternal grandparents had nine children together: Arnost, Irma, Leo, Elza, Petr, my father Pavel, Zdenek, Ota and Olga. Arnost had a workshop with his brother Petr in Liberec and was killed in Auschwitz. Irma was a married housewife with two children. She was killed in a concentration camp.

Leo survived Terezin [1](#) as he was able to show that he was living in a mixed marriage - his Russian Jewish wife had burnt all her papers and persuaded White Guards [2](#) to draw up new ones to say she was Christian Orthodox. Her name was Polina, but we called her Aunt Pesa.

Elza and her husband Jindrich Flusser had a shop in Prague called Bambino where they sold children's clothes. She ended up in Auschwitz, along with her three sons and husband.

Petr, who was my dad's twin, was executed in the concentration camp Flossenburg in Germany. He had a little workshop in Liberec for calculating machines, something like calculators; it was called Mira. Anyway, some 'treuhender' [trustee] who wanted it denounced him as a spy. Petr had two sons, Heinz and Harry, but they also perished.

Zdenek survived Terezin because his wife Ruzena was an Aryan and he had been baptized. Their three children, Vera, Pavel and Zdenek, also survived.

Ota also had an Aryan wife; he was in Terezin for about two or three months and survived. Ota had four children: Ota, Milca, Milan and Jiri. Milca died before the war. Ota and Jiri perished during the Holocaust. Milan survived a concentration camp.

Olga was the only one to remain single; she helped her sister Elza with her youngest son. Somehow she couldn't find a suitable match, so her family sent her to America to stay with relatives. The journey was by ship, and she sat out on the deck sunbathing until she got really burnt. She arrived in America but because she was red all over, she didn't appeal to anyone, so she went back. She was later sent to the gas chamber at Auschwitz.

My grandmother on my mother's side was called Katerina Spitzova, nee Adlerova, and was born in 1861 in Berkovice, which is about 30 kilometers from Prague. She spoke Czech but I don't know what family she came from. All I know is that she had a sister and two brothers. I didn't know my maternal grandfather at all, because he died before I was born. He was called Bedrich Spitz.

My grandmother lived with us in one apartment. She was quite a self-conscious and self-sufficient woman. When they went out for a beer in the evening, for instance, she would order a stout, but she always gave dad the money for it. My grandmother was the most religious person in our house; she kept to a kosher cuisine. She had a small haberdashery store in the center of town, where she sold thread, pins, needles, thimbles, press studs and tape measures.

I used to play in that little shop and I would also arrange the goods. On Sundays she would put everything into a sack and go round villages on the outskirts of Prague selling things. Her shop was in a good place, near the Jewish Quarter. Right opposite was Mrs. Gachova's little store, a kosher

butcher's. But it was then decided that this house would be pulled down, so Mrs. Gachova and my grandmother were given notice to quit.

From all the turmoil, my grandmother had a stroke in 1933. It happened in the house where we were living, at the butcher's, where she had just gone to buy me a sausage. She kept that sausage in her hand for three days, for they couldn't wrest it from her grasp. After that, she was paralyzed down one side of her body for seven years and mum looked after her at home. When it got worse, later on, she stayed at the Masaryk Home in a medical place for the terminally ill, where she died in 1940. I was very fond of her; she was a nice person. Whenever I go to the Jewish cemetery, I always say to her, 'Hello grandma', and I feel she can hear me. After her death we didn't keep the Jewish traditions at home like we had done before.

### • Growing up

My dad was called Pavel Kovanic and he was born in 1891 in Kolin. He went to a Czech elementary school and probably trained as a shop assistant later. He came from a Czech family, so we spoke Czech at home. My dad and mum spoke German together only when they didn't want me to know what they were saying. My dad could also speak Russian, because he had been in Russian captivity in World War I as a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army [see KUK army] [3](#).

He was still in captivity in Moscow with his brother Leo in 1917, when they applied to join the [Czech] Legion. They got a letter which read: 'Brothers, your application is being dealt with. For the time being watch out for Jewish Bolshevik agents who are mixing with POWs.' After reading that, they couldn't give a damn about the Legionnaires, so they stayed in captivity until the end of the war.

Uncle Leo came back with a Siberian Jewess named Polina who he had married over there. My dad was a supporter of Masaryk [4](#) and a patriot. He wept whenever he heard patriotic anthems like Our Czech Song [Ta nase pisnicka ceska]. He respected Masaryk for the stance he took in the Hilsner Trial [5](#).

My mum was called Augusta Kovanicova, nee Spitzova. She was born in 1894 in Prague. She had seven brothers and sisters, but only three reached adulthood - Eduard, Julius and Matylda. Eduard and his wife Anna had two children, Eva and Didi. The whole family died in a concentration camp. Julius died along with his wife; they didn't have any children. Matylda and her husband died in the Holocaust; only their son Ervin survived.

Mum went to a German-language school, but not out of conviction, it's just that there weren't Czech schools everywhere. She spoke Czech with my grandmother but wasn't too confident about her written Czech. She had a compulsory education. Mum made friends with my dad's sister Elza and it was through her that she met him.

Elza was actually my mother's best friend. Dad often used to say how they had been together at some gathering and that he accompanied all the girls home but took Mum home only at the end, because he liked her. Even back then, when I was little, I used to ask myself why he didn't take her home first if he liked her. They had a Jewish wedding and were married by Rabbi Reach.

My mother wasn't as religious as my father. She took the Jewish religion more as a historical tradition. She was a housewife; she did all the sewing for us and, whenever necessary, helped out my grandmother in the store.

Mum was a very small lady. Once, when I was sick, she went to the school to ask what they were learning about at the moment. My teacher later said to me, 'Anicka, that small dark-haired lady that was here, was that your mum?' I said, 'No, my mum is tall.' But she was actually smaller than me - she just seemed tall to me at the time. At the age of 14 I was already taller than she was.

My dad became a commercial traveler, selling perfume for a firm called Korwig. He usually traveled by train; he didn't have a car. He used to give me these little tubes of toothpaste, which my friends and I liked to suck on - we'd then spit out the foam on the street. He often met up with other commercial travelers; they all knew each other and probably went on trips together. I knew some of them, because they and their families often went on holiday with us in the summer.

Dad had his bar mitzvah, but he wasn't religious and he never fasted on Yom Kippur. I recall that one day my dad went off to have a snack on Yom Kippur but said he was going to the synagogue, and I remember my mum said, 'Pavel, just so long as grandma doesn't find out!' I never saw him wearing a tallit, tefillin or a kippah.

My parents were traditional Czech Jews who liked it over here. In 1930 they registered as Czechs, not Jews. [Editor's note: There was an official census in 1930 and people could choose the nationality - like Czech, German, Jewish etc.] My dad was amused when, during the war, I started to go to meetings of Hashomer Hatzair [6](#), which was a left-wing Zionist movement.

He said that Zionism is when one Jew sends another Jew to Palestine with a third Jew's money. During the occupation, when we were entirely dependent on the Jewish community, as the community was our only authority through which everything got arranged, my dad had a whole-hearted dislike of them [Jewish officials of the community, who were closer to Jews who professed Judaism before than to assimilants].

Every Sunday my dad would go to the Bulvar Cafe. That was on Wenceslas Square in the center of Prague. In the afternoon I used to go with mum to fetch him. From time to time he liked to smoke a cigar or a Virginia. He was a great person - so nice and kind. I remember that he had really beautiful hands.

When the weather was nice, we used to go to a garden restaurant on Letna Plain in the afternoon. I'd get a glass of syrup and water - a kind of raspberry flavored soda water. Mum had a coffee and dad might have had a beer. We also went on day trips to Krc Wood, at the end of which there was a pub where we had beer and cheese.

My sister was called Gertruda Kowanitzova, nee Kovanicova, and was born in 1921 in Prague. She was seven years older than me. I think she went to a Czech high school and then to a private school of advertising. She then got a job in an office somewhere and drew for fashion magazines, from which she earned a living on the side. She was very clever and good with her hands. She could speak French and German and was really smart and beautiful. She could also play the piano, even though we didn't have one.

Mum was really skilful - she made clothes for us and she always sewed something for me with whatever material was left from a dress she had just made for my sister. Needless to say, my sister wasn't happy about this - she said she went around in the same clothes as I did and that everyone would see the brat was my sister - because when she went on a date, I used to loiter behind her with a friend. In fact, we liked each other a lot, but we only realized this during the war, when it was too late for everything.

Until I went to school I was at home with mum. We didn't have a nanny. When mum needed to be in the store in place of my grandmother, she took my sister and me with her. One day, my sister - this was when she was little, before I was born - vanished from the store and wasn't anywhere to be found.

They all ran around like crazy looking for her, and in the end they found her. As it turned out, she had taken a brush and had gone out to sweep the pavement - she swept and swept until she ended up four blocks away.

I didn't want to eat anything as a child, as I wasn't interested in food. I usually 'sabotaged' afternoon tea somehow, but whenever mum gave me fifty halers or a crown to buy an apple, then I would go get some sausages from the horsemeat butcher. I was afraid mum would find out, but she would have been glad to know I was eating at least some meat: minced horsemeat and horsemeat sausages with a slice of bread; the butcher, Mr. Karabec, always had really soft bread which was very floury underneath.

One day at home they were looking for a small pan, which I had somehow managed to lose and my sister became suspicious. She looked behind this tall clock and there was the little pan, in which there were some dried out, moldy scrambled eggs. As long as I could eat, I didn't, and when I wanted to eat later on, there wasn't any food.

### • My school years

I went to a Czech elementary school. After that it was on to either the council school or the grammar school. Grammar school was for people who wanted to get a higher education; the council school was for those who didn't expect they would be carrying on with their studies or who would get an apprenticeship or go to a technical school, perhaps to a commercial academy.

At the time of the Munich Pact [7](#), my parents wanted me and my sister to learn foreign languages, so that it would be possible for us to emigrate.

They sent me to a preparatory school, preparing me for an English grammar school. Actually, I repeated my fifth year of elementary school here, but this time everything was in English. It was excellent and I learnt a lot there. We had several language lessons every day.

I then took an entrance exam for the English grammar school, but I wasn't accepted [see Exclusion of Jews from schools in the Protectorate] [8](#). They called for my dad and told him that my exam results were excellent but that they had a policy of 'numerus clausus' for Jews, which meant that no more than 2.7 percent of pupils could be Jewish. [Editor's note: The number of Jewish pupils was constantly restricted until no Jewish pupil was allowed to study.]

Anyway, they suggested he apply for an exception. That was at the end of the school year 1939/1940. Well, my dad got really angry and said he couldn't give a damn about asking for permission to send his child to go to school, so he went and enrolled me in a Jewish school.

In September 1940 it was no longer possible [for Jews] to go to a normal school. I was lucky to have already enrolled in the Jewish school, because I wouldn't have got there after that. For example, a friend of mine at the time and to this day, Bohunda, didn't make it to school.

There were probably around 60 of us in the class, but a deportation train then took away half of the children and teachers. They took on more at the school and those who didn't make it had lessons in groups where they sometimes did exams later on. Dad said to me: 'You've done the fifth year [of elementary school] twice, so you're a clever girl.' He then put me straight down for the second year [of high school].

And then, on the order of the Germans, they skipped a year in order to increase the size of the labor force. As a result, I then went on to the fourth year. I went to the Jewish council school only for two years.

I used to enjoy Czech and art lessons a lot in council school. I wrote nice compositions and wanted to become a writer. But I hated German and arithmetic - I sabotaged these lessons and always got poor marks. I wrote composition exercises that I swapped with boys for lines they had written in German. In Czech lessons we were given the task of writing compositions on themes like 'My holidays' or 'Sundays with my parents', and the teacher, Mrs. Lauscherova, often gave me lines for being naughty during German lessons. I would have to repeatedly write out, for example, the declension of adjectives and nouns in the singular and plural, which I had to do by the next day. Once I had to write out 180 lines by the next day. Anyway, some boys wrote the German lines for me, because the teacher didn't read them anyway; she just glanced over them to see if they had been written and then tore up the paper.

Our Czech language teacher was excellent, but I hated Mrs. Lauscherova. She just couldn't understand why we were so naughty. For her, German was the language of Goethe and Schiller and she couldn't see that for us it was the language of the occupiers. She really tormented me with German. If only she had said something like 'Hey, just learn a bit.

After all, you're not stupid and we'll be deported anyway, so it might come in useful.' Instead, she preferred to give me poor marks in German, even though she knew I would have to do a resit. It was just vindictive of her. In order to move on from the second year I had to learn a long poem by Goethe in German, which I know to this day, in the same way I don't know the grammar to this day.

Mrs. Lauscherova taught everything; she actually knew everything, apart from pedagogy. Even after the war she gave lessons in Greek, Latin, physics, German, needlework, cookery, chemistry and math. She even gave lessons to children who came back and wanted to study to make up for lost time.

I also had my first religion lessons at the council school. In addition to religion itself, there was Judaism and Hebrew. I also had poor marks in that subject because I didn't want to learn it. Otherwise there were excellent teachers there, for instance secondary school professors who were now out of work.



This Jewish council school was based in Jachymova Street in Prague's Jewish quarter. First, I went to the school there, then I worked there at the Jewish Museum and now that is where I go to the [Terezin] Initiative Organization [9](#). Whenever I go through that passageway I always wonder what ever happened to the little children whose feet used to pitter-patter around here.

I used to read a lot, and still do. I began reading Rodokapsy [cheap paperbacks] and when my sister saw this, she started to give me books from the European Literary Club, which I read at quite a young age. So I read novels from childhood, but only the ones by good authors, not romantic fiction or whodunits.

I was also a good swimmer; in tests I used to swim across a lake with a boat going alongside me. I also did ice-skating and went skiing several times. I went to Maccabi [10](#) from the age of four and then I really wanted to go to Sokol [11](#), because I liked those disgusting Sokol girls' outfits. I asked mum and she went to the Vinohrady Sokol Hall, sometime in 1938 or 1939, to sign me on.

However, the woman in charge said she was sorry but they didn't accept Jews. Instead I went a few times to the Workers' P.T. Unit [Physical Training], which was a kind of social democratic organization. One time we were doing an exercise known as the 'Candle', and my insteps were stretched when one girl turned to me and said, 'You've got Jewish feet.' After that I stopped going there. Unfortunately I never learnt to ride a bike. I didn't have a bike, besides it wasn't very safe on the roads, with all that traffic where we lived.

When we were still living with grandma, we observed Pesach; I used to say the mah nishtanah, or rather I would sit on my dad's lap and he would prompt me. We had a Yahrzeit at home. This was a kind of calendar next to which we lit candles on the anniversary of the death of someone in the family.

We also had the Haggadah, but I didn't read it as it was in Hebrew on one page and the same text in German on the other. We went to the synagogue, but only on high holidays. When we lived in Vinohrady we went to the synagogue on Sazavska Street, which was later bombed.

On Yom Kippur we didn't go to school and I was really glad because I actually had double holidays. I can remember Simchat Torah, when children were given sweets and the Torah was kissed. Mum used to say, 'Just pretend, with your fingers like this, don't kiss it - you don't know who touched it before you.' We also celebrated Chanukkah.

When mum took my sister to dancing lessons and dad was on one of his trips, I used to sleep at the caretaker's place so I wouldn't be at home on my own. His daughter, Marta, was a friend of mine. Marta was Christian. In the evening she would kneel beside her bed and pray, but she wasn't really all that religious; she just did it in front of me.

I also wanted to show that I prayed; I knew that Jews didn't kneel, so I just stood and muttered something. On St. Nicholas' Day my dad came home with some oranges, apples and nuts. We celebrated Christmas, but we never had a Christmas tree. At Christmas we ate fried carp and potato salad. I also gave mum a present on Mother's Day.

We observed Jewish and Christian holidays, just like we did Czech ones traditionally. I don't think that my parents were believers. They didn't bring me up in a religious way. I came to religion only

during the war when I was in the Jewish school.

First of all, I was living with my parents, sister and grandma in the center of Prague, in an apartment with two rooms and a kitchen. It was a pretty terrible place with a communal gallery - it was dark and had bed bugs. There was no running hot water and no bathroom in the apartment.

There was a bathroom and a laundry room on the ground floor, where we would sometimes go to have a bath, but that would involve getting wrapped up and going through the yard, upstairs again and across the gallery. So the way we did it, on Fridays, before Sabbath, a zinc bath was taken out and we took turns to get washed - I got in first, then my sister, then our mum. There was a large tiled stove and a stove water-tank, and the water was heated up in pots back then.

In 1938 we moved to a nice area in Vinohrady, on Krkonosska Street, where my dad's two sisters were living at the time. This apartment was of a better standard, light-filled and healthy. There was a bathroom there but no heating, of course, just a big boiler. Mum bought black furniture, which shone from the polish. In the room there was a sideboard, couch, table and chairs.

We had running water and a bathroom with a bath and washbasin. But we had to light up the boiler whenever we wanted to take a bath. We lived on the third floor and we had to carry coal up from the cellar. Gas was used to heat the water in the washbasin, though. We had an old two-ring gas cooker.

The stove was used for cooking only in the winter, when we used coal for heating. The bedroom was unheated, though. We only heated the kitchen, which is where we spent most of the time. Otherwise we used gas for cooking which was quite modern at the time. The rent was 3,000 crowns, which was the same as our rent in the center of town.

The apartment was in an apartment building next to Riegr Park. We were in close contact with dad's family because his sisters lived near us. This apartment also had two rooms and a kitchen. At first, I shared a room with my sister and my parents had the bedroom. Later on, when my sister got married in 1941, I moved into the bedroom with my parents. We didn't have anything of particular value at home, no artistic objects. Dad just had his stamp collection, which our neighbor didn't return to me after the war.

When we were still living in our first apartment, mum would often keep a goose in the cellar for its fat. She used to bake 'dough cones' on the stovetop, which she then fed to the goose. It was always quite an event with the goose. At night mum went to feed it and check it was okay, because if the goose had suffocated, she would have had to throw it away.

The goose was kept in a small box. These days the animal rights people would come out against such a thing, because the goose was completely square-shaped by the time it was taken out of the box. It was then killed in the kosher way, but this wasn't done in front of me.

I can remember being at the cinema before the war when a film about Janosik [12](#) was on. In the film, Janosik says 'Since you've baked me, you might as well eat me', and then they stuck him on a hook, at which point dad covered my eyes with his hat so I wouldn't see it. Likewise, they wouldn't have killed the goose in front of me.



Anyway, the goose was then skinned and we had delicious crackling. On the inside of the sideboard drawers mum wrote when the goose was weighed, how heavy it was, how much fat it had on it, and how much the liver weighed.

As it was so fat, the goose had a big liver. We stuck almonds in it and roasted it in its fat. It was delicious. And then we made several meals out of it. The giblets were prepared in a thick sauce, which dad really liked. He couldn't pronounce the letter 'r' properly, so it was funny when he said he wanted 'thwee wings'. The goose legs were put in a cholent stew and the breasts were prepared as beilik with potato dumplings. The beilik was seasoned with garlic and salt. On Pesach, mum used to make something really good. It was from matzot and was baked like a cake, kind of smooth, stuffed with dried plums and, when it was ready, wine was poured over it. It was stuffed with nuts and was very sweet.

Our standard of living corresponded to that of the lower middle class. I never felt in need of anything, but what we had was no luxury. When my parents were doing well, we had a maid, and when they weren't so well off, we didn't have one. It kind of varied. A cleaner came round to our house when there was a lot of washing to do. I remember that we had a servant.

I also remember that bailiffs from the tax office came round to our place. When you owed taxes in those days, they'd come and put stickers on things and if you didn't pay your taxes on time, they'd come and take away your things. That didn't happen to us, though. Most members of our family were middle class. Only Uncle Arnost had a car. We were something like the 'poor relatives'.

It was my mum's dream to go to the sea. Every year we made plans to go, but in the end we never did. We always went to Brandys nad Orlici in East Bohemia, where it was very beautiful. Some of our relatives and friends also went there. I've got happy memories of it, but mum never did get to see the sea. We used to spend the entire summer holidays in Brandys.

Dad would come to stay with us at the weekends. We had a rented room there. We used to go by train and sent our things as registered luggage. They would wrap up a large wicker basket, as well as dishes, because mum did the cooking. We lived on the square, but it wasn't far from the river. The square was full of little stores.

They already knew us there and when I had some money I would go to buy toffees. It was nice to walk past the baker's shop because there was always the delicious smell of bread. Others who went there included Mr. Stransky, the Flussers and, later on, the Barnais, with whose daughter, Margit, I went to school and remained friends after the war. We were a kind of big summer community over there.

As there were a lot of us in the family, we didn't usually meet up together. We went to the Stranskys and the Flussers a lot. My parents had Jewish friends. I didn't just have Jewish friends back then; when we lived on Na Porici Street I had a friendship with Marta, who wasn't a Jew. We went to school together. There were a lot of Jewish families living in Vinohrady, which is where we moved to when I was in the first year at school.

The main thing was that two aunts with their families were living near us, so I made friends with their children. To this day, I've kept the friends I had in those days - like Mrs. Havrankova, who is now on the social commission of the Jewish community in Prague, or Mrs. Timplova. When I was

little I spent my free time with my parents, later on, with my friends.

We used to play in the Jewish cemetery on Ondrickova Street in Prague in Zizkov or in the Old Town Square. There were no funerals any more and we weren't allowed to go anywhere else as Jews. We would romp about on the graves, but we didn't think anything of it, as we were only little.

Also mothers with small babies were going there for a walk. Above all, we weren't allowed to go anywhere else. So we would play at the Hagibor [13](#) grounds. Hagibor was the only sports ground where Jews were permitted, so that's where we did most of our sports.

At the time of the Munich Pact in 1938, I remember that dad was somewhere in Moravia, I was sleeping with mum in his bed and she was crying. She was worried about how dad would get here now. I can also remember that my sister was on duty at the air-raid defense in May 1938 during the first mobilization. People were supposed to go around with gas masks, and all she had was this case with plums in it.

### • During the war

I was brought up in such a way that I was supposed to greet everyone I met. I used to say 'salutations' to my mum's friends. In September 1941, mum sewed a yellow star on my jacket and said to me: 'You needn't be ashamed of it, it isn't your fault, but you're not to greet anyone any more, as it might make them feel awkward or even threatened.' I remember going out with my friend, Bohumila, who didn't wear the star to begin with, as she was of mixed race.

We were walking together - me with the star on, her without - when we met some woman who said to my friend: 'You should be ashamed of yourself, going around with a Jewess.' When she got home she made a scene and said she wanted to wear the star, too.

Another time, I was going to her place to ask if she could come out. I went down a hill and saw three boys standing there. They spat at me and then spat on my new leather gloves, which I had been given at my sister's wedding. Normally, I would have got into a fight, but I didn't do anything. I just walked on.

It also happened that two of my fellow-pupils kept bullying me on my way home from school. My mum went to see our teacher, Mrs. Stefkova, to complain. She probably didn't like us, because otherwise she would have dealt with the two girls herself. But she went to tell their parents.

The father of one of the girls, who was a bookbinder, gave his child a smack and that was the end of that, but the other father thought he was a cut above. He came round to our place and rang the bell. My sister opened the door on the chain and he put his foot in the door and said we were Jewish swine and that Hitler would come and show us.

That was after the Munich Pact, but still before the occupation [see Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] [14](#). When Mrs. Stefkova died and I went with the class to her funeral, I felt a kind of satisfaction, as if to say: 'You see, you're in a coffin, not me!' Otherwise I didn't come across any overt anti-Semitism. Our neighbors were quite helpful to us, for they let us hide things at their place, even though, for the most part, they didn't give them back to me after the war.

In 1940 or 1941, dad was no longer allowed to work as a commercial traveler. His boss was no longer Mr. Korwig but a Mr. Simsa, who wasn't a Jew. Mr. Simsa behaved very decently and even gave dad some money, although he was no longer working for him. Jews weren't allowed to travel or to be employed by an Aryan-owned firm.

Jewish firms were closed down. After that, dad got a job painting lampshades, and I helped him with it. They were garish items for export to Germany, but at least he got the odd crown for them. I made up my own designs and drew catkins. You got more money for your own designs. We used acetone paints, which smelt awful. Mum didn't make me do the dishes any more. Instead, she told me to go out for some fresh air.

Adults suffered a great deal in this situation. We had a map of Europe on our kitchen wall, and my uncles used to meet up, since they weren't allowed to work any more, and would engage in political debates on the whereabouts of Hitler and such like. I know that it gave them great pleasure when the Soviet Union was attacked, because they said: 'Now Stalin will show them.' But we children didn't take too much notice of it.

In October 1941, my sister married the Jewish man Frantisek Kowanitz in Vinohrady Town Hall. It was a civil wedding, and, for the occasion, I got some leather gloves and silk stockings. They got a red dinner service from Aunt Elza, which I still have to this day. From another aunt, my sister got a gas oven, as well as an embroidered lace tablecloth with twelve covers, which was - and still is - very expensive.

Frantisek was born in 1916; he was a distant relative. He worked as a chief clerk and was in the coal business. By the time I met him he was no longer allowed to do his job. We all lived together. I didn't like him at first, because they talked a lot and were all very jovial while I had to do the dishes.

I was about 13 and I kept a diary in which I wrote that I didn't like him because I had to be in the kitchen all the time. My sister probably read it, because he started coming into the kitchen after that and said things like 'You're my sister- in-law' and 'Dear sister-in-law', so I liked him a lot then.

Frantisek was really good-looking and clever. He was a fine person. But we didn't know each other too well. My sister and me didn't understand each other too well either, on account of the big age difference between us. By the time we had started to see eye-to-eye, we were in Terezin.

They obviously got married quickly because deportations were already taking place at that time and they wanted to go together. Immediately after the wedding, Frantisek was sent to a work camp [forced labor camp] in Lipa and then to Terezin. My sister went to Terezin in December 1941.

I remember the period after the assassination of Reichsprotektor Heydrich [see Heydrichiade] [15](#), because we were playing in the cemetery when suddenly my mum came running in. She took me by the hand and dragged me home, absolutely terrified, because they were expecting a pogrom. The police came to our house in the night.

All three of us were standing together in our pajamas while they searched the apartment to see if anyone was hiding there. Our lives were pretty restricted after that. [see Anti- Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia] [16](#).

We weren't allowed to go skating, for instance. They took people's dogs, cats and canaries away from them, which must have been terrible for the children, but we didn't have any pets. I somehow thought it was natural that other children could go skating while I couldn't. Or that we were allowed only two hours to do our shopping each day.

The grocer from next door, however, occasionally left us things he wasn't supposed to. All this didn't frustrate me; I was just bothered that friends kept disappearing. Later on, we just kept company with other Jews. Because of all the inequality and lack of freedom, I was actually quite looking forward to going to Terezin, for I saw it as a kind of scout outing.

Once in Terezin we were kind of relieved that we were among our own kind and that everyone wore the star. We were equal among equals. No one had to worry about being thrown off a tram, whether moving or not, or about the Hitlerjugend [17](#).

### • Our deportation to Terezin

In September 1942 my parents and I were summoned to board a deportation train to Terezin, but for some reason the train departed and we were left standing at the assembly point. Several dozen people stayed behind and, to this day, I still don't really know why. Anyway, along came another train and we were given new numbers.

In the end we spent six weeks at that assembly point at the Trade Fair Palace in Prague. The Jewish community gave us supplies and we spent the time just lolling around. Today, a hotel is located there, but there's also a memorial plaque. In those days there were low, wooden pavilions from some trade fair there.

We went on transport Ca to Terezin; that was in October 1942. Two or three days later, the train went straight to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. But because my sister and brother-in-law had already been in Terezin for some time and knew the ropes, they hid us, so we managed to escape it.

I later said to myself that if we had gone on that first transport to Auschwitz, my parents would have perished two years earlier than they did; they wouldn't have known they were going to the gas chamber, so this would have spared them all kinds of suffering.

But because we survived it and were reclaimed from another two transports, once because I was ill, the other time because dad had a job at the disinfesting station, it wasn't until May 1944 that we went to the family camp at Auschwitz, where, for a number of weeks, we lived next to the gas chambers and the crematory chimneys, with all the stench.

My first job in Terezin was in the box-making workshop, where they colored those disgustingly garish bookmarks. I would have liked to do that but I didn't get to do it - what I did was stick cellophane wrappers on powder boxes. I then became seriously ill. It began with an infection of the middle ear and then I got a high fever, although I didn't know why, and then I got jaundice. By the time I had got a bit better, I got phlegmon in the neck, and then I got jaundice again.

I was let out of hospital in February 1943. I then went on a course for dentist's assistants and worked as an auxiliary assistant at the dentist's. Later on, my parents wanted me to get more fresh

air, so they arranged for me to work in the garden. My brother-in-law was in the disciplinary service, but I don't know what my sister did.

At first, my sister lived apart from her husband, but they later built a kind of closet out of wood-wool slabs in the attic of a house, and there they lived, which was a big advantage. Those who went on the first transports to Terezin had certain privileges.

They [my sister and brother-in-law] lived with their daughter, Jana Ivana, who was born in Terezin in June 1943. We called her Honzulka. Dad worked at the disinfesting station, mum worked in the 'Warme Kueche', which was a warming-up kitchen. Each barrack had a room with a stove where they reheated things people had cooked for themselves earlier; heating was only allowed in the winter. We ate what we were given.

At first we had something from home to improve the food or else we would receive a package from a relative. At first, I lived with mum, but the barrack had to be evacuated later on for the Dutch transports [in 1943]. I was then sent to the youth house.

Life in the youth house was the best what you could have in Terezin. We learned and read a lot, poems by Wolker, Villon, Halas, Seifert and Nezval. [Editor's note: Wolker, Jiri (1900-1921): Czech proletarian poet. Villon, François, real name F. de Montcorbier or des Loges (1429 (1432) - 1463 (1467)): French lyrical poet.

Halas, Frantisek (1901-1949): Czech proletarian poet. Seifert, Jaroslav (1901-1986): Czech poet and Nobel prize holder (1984). Nezval, Vitezslav (1900-1958): Czech poet, dramatist and translator.] We were equal; everyone wore yellow stars. We were visiting lectures, concerts and theatre performances.

### • From Auschwitz to Christianstadt

In May 1944 I was placed with my parents to be transported again. We were put along with fifty people in one cattle-truck with two buckets of water and some bread. I don't remember how long the way to Auschwitz was. In Auschwitz most of us didn't work because we were in the family camp. We saw smoke from the crematorium and knew what it meant. Mum's hearing wasn't very good, which protected her quite a bit from the nerve-racking situations that the others went through.

She didn't hear the screams and wails, the barking of dogs, the cries and groans of the people around us. The toil began only in the other camps. A selection was carried out in June 1944 and I was separated from my parents, who stayed behind. I was sent to the women's camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. They took us to the sauna. I had a picture of my mum, dad and sister on me.

I cut out their heads with manicure scissors and wrapped them in cellophane and hid them under my hair-clip. We were searched to see if we were hiding anything. I kept shifting the photos. I had them in my mouth when I was examined by a Slovak woman, who said: 'What's in your mouth, you goose?' 'Photos,' I replied. 'Who of?' 'Mum.' 'Go on then.' So I smuggled them through. I was there about a fortnight and it was sheer hell. There were endless roll calls. For entire days we gazed across the ramp at our old family camp. One morning the camp was empty.

In July they sent us to Christianstadt [now Krzystkowice in western Poland]; this belonged to Gross Rosen. There were several workplaces in Christianstadt and I was allotted to the forest commando. We went to a forest where we knocked down trees and pulled out the stumps. When we left it, there were roads there. They didn't have an asphalt covering - that wasn't finished - but they were graveled. After that, we worked in a munitions factory and in a sandpit, where we loaded sand onto trucks. That was terrible drudgery.

In February 1945 our camp received transports from eastern areas that had been liquidated. When I saw the state those girls were in, I persuaded a friend to run away with me. Another girl joined us, so we managed to escape from the death march the third day of marching while we stopped on a road surrounded by woods.

On the way we claimed to be from the Sudetenland and that we were escaping from a Czech camp. But in three days we were informed on by a farmer and they came for us because I was having hallucinations, as I had a high fever, probably dysentery, and, in my delirium, I was speaking Czech. Well, in short, they caught us and took us to the Niesky camp, which was a camp for Aryan men only. We were there for about three days and were then taken to labor camp Gorlitz.

The last day of the war we felt something in the air. The camp was in a big mess, everything was over but in fact wasn't because the fascists were still there. At a roll call we had there at the end of World War II, the Lagerfuhrer [camp commander] offered to take us to the Americans. They wanted to go to the Americans themselves so they would get better treatment. He horrified us by telling us everything that the Russians would do to us. We were afraid to stay in the camp, because it was said that the Germans would place mines in it and set it on fire, so we left with them. There were twelve of us, with horse and cart to carry their provisions, and we escaped with them. The cart was full of margarine, marmalade and bread. We met the Red Army only on our way to Prague.

The Germans escaped to the Americans. They went west; we went east. We lost our way and then there were only four of us, with one cart. In one town we met some SS men from our camp who recognized our men and forced them to change clothes with them - our civilian clothes for their German uniforms.

That was a very critical moment, because we were still in Germany and they knew who we were and that we were on the run. We were saved by the presence of mind of a fellow-prisoner who said we had lice and maybe even typhus.

People in Germany helped us on the way; we spoke German with them. I can remember when the armistice was signed. All of a sudden, there were signal rockets going off everywhere, it was as light as day. One of the girls was an Austrian; the other two were German Jews.

We slept in a pub: me and the Austrian in a room downstairs, pretending to be German refugees and the two men in the attic. At about four in the morning, the door was kicked open by a Russian soldier who pointed his sub-machine gun at us. Instead of saying who we were or showing our tattooed numbers, we went to embrace and kiss him, and we made such a racket that the two men upstairs came down to find out what was going on.

The soldier was going to shoot them; well it was all pretty drastic and it was only by chance that he didn't do us in. He thought we were Germans. He then took us to his commander's office where



they gave us the necessary bumf to say we were from a concentration camp, so we could then get to Prague.

I returned to Prague on 11th May, but I knew my parents weren't alive. My sister's friend and my cousin were on one of the last transports to go through Christianstadt, and her friend told me that my sister had gone with her little girl on the last transport from Terezin in October 1944 straight to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Her husband died in 1945, somewhere on the death march. He had phlegmon in the leg.

### • Post-war

After the war I went straight to my uncle Ota's wife's place, but she soon threw me out. I then went to my aunt Pesa's place, but things didn't work out there either. In the meantime, I lived with two girls who invited boys home and went with the American soldiers to Pilsen.

I applied to stay at the Jewish orphanage, but it was full, so I had to wait for a place to become vacant. My brother-in-law's son bought me some new shoes and got me a job with a pediatrician, Doctor Kubena - I worked there part-time for a thousand crowns a month. I had to hold the children while they were being inoculated and to look up card indexes, but I only did this during the holidays. I then went to a school of graphic arts.

I lived at the Jewish orphanage in Belgicka Street, before they moved us on to the Jewish women's home in Lublanska Street. I was living there even when I was married. Because of personal reasons I don't want to talk about my husband.

I got married at the beginning of 1949. In March 1949 they were closing down the brothels, one of which became a university hall of residence for married students. We got a tiny little room there. All we could fit in was two beds, a few chairs and a small table. There was an inbuilt sink and cupboard.

When I left Lublanska Street and started to live with my husband, we were pretty badly off financially, because they took away my grant of 1,200 crowns, seeing that I was married and my husband was earning. But he wasn't earning anything at the time, and when he was, it was very little. I had an orphan's allowance, at first 427 crowns, then 600 crowns, which was a pittance.

We were poor, but it was a start, just as it was for other young people. But what made it worse was that girls normally bring something with them to the marriage from their family, whereas I didn't even have any shoes. After the war I returned to our pre-war apartment but somebody was living there and the lady who opened to me banged the door.

We had some of our property hidden away at our aunts' and friends' places. One aunt gave me all the photos she had kept. My sister had got a gas oven as a wedding present from another aunt. I stayed with that aunt and would often stare at the oven, absent-mindedly.

She said, 'what are you staring at the oven for, it's not Gertruda's, I bought it for myself.' In reply, I asked her what good would a gas oven do me when I didn't have anything, except perhaps for sticking my head in it. Some of the neighbors returned things, but most of them didn't.

After the war I graduated from the secondary school of graphic arts with pretty good results. But I don't have any great talent or any compulsion to do art. I just like to make things with my hands, but it doesn't exactly have to be art with a capital A. I'm good with my hands. I forgot a lot of my English.

After the war I went to a language school, but I stopped, as I didn't have the money for it. I also studied at university - the School of Politics at the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. It was the only university I could go to, as I didn't have a high school education, as I had been to a secondary technical school. I had a go at studying history externally, but I had two children, neither of whom was completely healthy to start with, and then I got to thinking that I was too old to do a normal course of study, and besides there wasn't the money for it.

The main thing was that it was completely new stuff for me, as I had never learnt about Ancient Rome and Greece, so I decided to drop it. I then went to the School of Politics, where I got a First. They taught mainly economy and the history of philosophy and the history of the Czechoslovak Communist Party [18](#).

I joined the [Communist] Party, but first of all I was in the Czechoslovak Youth Association [19](#). On the one hand, all my friends had joined the party, on the other, the Russians had liberated us and I thought that it was the only force that could prevent what had happened ever being repeated. And they wanted me to join. No one else wanted me. No one would miss me if I didn't return to the orphanage in the evening. In the Youth League, I was in a committee; it was a fine group and they arranged their meetings according to when I could make it.

For example, we were supposed to have a meeting on Friday. And I said, 'I can't on Friday, no way, that's the only time we get a decent meal at the orphanage. If I come to the meeting, then I miss out on the only decent meal, the Sabbath dinner.' So they rescheduled it. And being in the League was only a small step from being in the Communist Party.

Anyway I believed in it. Uncle Leo said to me, "Don't go there, your dad was a Social Democrat." But I thought that it was basically the same thing, except the communists were a bit more revolutionary and more for young people.

I had my first doubts during the Slansky Trials [20](#). After that, I no longer believed in it, but I still wanted to believe. I was mystified as to why, all of a sudden, a person's Jewish origin had to be stated. I hadn't seen socialism as an anti-Semitic system, nor had I come across any extreme manifestations of anti-Semitism after the war. I was ejected from the Party in 1969.

### • My children

I have two children, a daughter and a son. My daughter, Alena, was born in 1950, my son, Pavel, in 1954. When I had Alena in 1950, that completely took up all my time and energy. My first child was the first one I had ever held in my arms and had had to look after. When my daughter got German measles, I was told that while she had a temperature she shouldn't lie down too much, as there was a risk of pneumonia.

So I paced up and down the apartment, nursing my child and shouting out loud, 'She's going to die on me, they've all died on me.' I've never vomited, but both my children used to throw up quite often. Once, when my daughter was still very young, she threw up in her swaddling clothes.

I got really scared, so I took hold of her and brought her to the pediatrician's, where there was a waiting room full of people - I had such a desperate look in my face that all the women let me go first. The doctor said, 'Now then, what's the matter?', and I said, 'Doctor, she's vomited.' He looked at me and said, understandingly, 'Don't worry, that often happens.'

Both of my children have been to university; Alena is a microbiologist and managed a laboratory, Pavel is chemical engineer and runs a research and development laboratory for a large company of millers and bakers. They both have their own families.

My daughter lives with her husband in the Czech Republic. My son married a French woman and lives in France. I go to see them nearly every year. They didn't have a religious upbringing, as I hadn't had one either, but they always knew that I was Jewish and they knew about what had happened to me.

They have an awareness of the tradition and a tremendous solidarity. I once heard my son talking to his sister about the 'halakhah', and he said, 'You're lucky, your children will be Jewish, but not mine.' They have been to visit Auschwitz and Terezin. I have three grandchildren, Anna, Marie and Pavel, aged 20, 17 and 14.

Before I had children, I worked as an artist at the Head Office for the Mechanization of Agriculture. I then took maternity leave. Later on, I ran the photo archive of the Institute for the History of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. From 1969, I worked at the Jewish Museum where, along with Mrs. Frankova, I put together the Holocaust documentation center.

In 1974, the then director Erich Klima sacked me for political reasons. The museum was state-owned and everything depended on the director. While Mr. Benda was in charge, we were a bit restricted, of course, but it was okay. And then Klima became director.

He banned the use of certain words. Whenever an exhibition was being prepared or something was being written, such as an inventory, we were not allowed to write 'Transports to the East', for instance, because it was from the east that freedom came.

In those days, the archive was basically not in operation; we sorted everything and turned it into the Terezin and Persecution Documentation collections, which are still in use to this day. People came there for photos and documents. I can remember once that a rabbi came from America to select photos and documents.

In those days we bent the rules a bit, because instead of charging for these services, we asked them to send us some books. That rabbi was an anti-Communist and was very active; he asked us why we had gone to the deportation trains like sheep and why we hadn't hidden somewhere.

I was responsible for his care at the time because I was the only one whose English was so-so. I told him, 'And where would you hide for six years?' He replied, 'Well, the streets are so small here.' He then also asked why we hadn't gone to Israel, upon which I asked him, 'And why didn't you go

there?'. He said, 'Well, I support Israel financially.' Anyway, we then sent him what he had selected, and he took his revenge on the Communist regime by not sending us the books he had promised us. So we didn't get to read them.

After they had given me the sack, my daughter found me a job through an ad, which I did until 1982. That was as an economic organizer at the Central Bohemian Head Office for Communications, which meant that I paid out the wages and traveling expenses, and such like.

When I went to collect the money I was always accompanied by a security guard. He carried a gun and I was supposed to carry the bag with the money in it. But the bag was chained to the hand, so it couldn't be put down, and there was usually an amount of 300,000 to 380,000 crowns to carry.

The bag was really heavy because there were also coins in it, so my escort carried it for me. One day, however, there was a security check and they found out that he was carrying the money and the gun, which was just not possible. I said, 'I can't carry it as you can't put it down.'

Anyone can see that.' They told me that I should carry the gun then. And I was given all these rules as to when I could and could not use it, so I thought to myself that this was all a bit too much. I told them, 'Surely you don't think I should risk my life for some money.' So I decided I would retire as soon as possible, which I did in 1982. I could have retired earlier as I have a certificate under Article 255 [21](#).

I don't want to talk more about my life in the 60s, 70s and 80s.

I then did the books at the Jiri Wolker Theatre and, later on, I looked after my grandchild, since my daughter was unable to find work for a long time. And then, starting in 1991 I began to document the testimonies of Holocaust victims at the Jewish Museum with my colleague Anna Lorencova. I went to see people who had survived and recorded their testimonies on a cassette, which I then archived at the museum.

Whenever I made friends with someone, it never mattered whether that person was a Jew. But it is a fact that if I found out he was a Jew, then it brought me closer to that person in a different way. In the 1950s we began to live in a house with a garden, which was fine for the children. We also went to visit my in-laws, who lived in Mnichovice, not far from Prague.

I didn't go the synagogue. I used to bake Easter cake at Easter and I celebrate Christmas with my daughter and granddaughter. We have carp [for Christmas dinner] and give each other presents. We also celebrate our birthdays together. I don't celebrate Jewish holidays; I only light the candle in honor of my sister and parents.

Before November 1989 I distributed Samizdat publications [22](#), for which I also wrote, but mostly we listened to Radio Free Europe [23](#). I was enthusiastic about the revolution [see Velvet Revolution] [24](#). I went on demonstrations even beforehand, and was once showered by a water cannon. We weren't at the demonstration on 17th November though, because we were moving house on 1st December. I was packing and making preparations, so it was a bit of a hectic time. After the revolution, my personal life changed in that I got divorced and remained single. Also, I had very bleak prospects as to how I would manage to pay the rent on my low pension. Things later improved thanks to various compensation funds and humanitarian contributions. After the divorce I

started to work again, collecting the testimonies of Holocaust survivors for the Jewish Museum.

I've been to Israel once - for three weeks in 1991 on an invitation from some friends of mine. I have friends there with whom I broke off correspondence during the Communist regime because things were really starting to hot up over here; I didn't know what to write because I wasn't allowed to say the truth. But we have since renewed the contact and now send emails to each other.

I have a friend there who had been in Terezin but I only met her after the war in the women's home where we became friends. I also have an old school friend over there who was also in Terezin and who I see whenever she comes over.

My best friend from the concentration camp immigrated to America in 1968, but she has already died. I thought about emigrating, although not to Israel, but in the end I decided not to go. We also asked our children to think about it but they couldn't make up their minds.

I am an active member of the Terezin Initiative of which I have become third deputy chair. After the revolution I also worked at the Institute for Contemporary History where I contributed to the publication of three works, one of which was on eminent people in Terezin. I also took part in the preparations for a new exhibition on the Terezin ghetto and for a new exhibition to complement the Czech exhibition in Auschwitz. At the moment, I'm preparing for publication the Terezin 'Tagesbefehle' [Daily Orders]. [Editor's note: They were published in fall 2003.] I feel I owe a debt of gratitude to those who didn't survive and that I'm paying this off by doing something in this field.

#### • Glossary:

**1** 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.

**2** White Guards: A counter-revolutionary gang led by General Denikin, famous for their brigandry and anti-Semitic acts all over Russia; legends were told of their cruelty. Few survived their pogroms.

**3** KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army: The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual

Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

**4** Masaryk, Tomas Garrigue (1850-1937): Czechoslovak political leader and philosopher and chief founder of the First Czechoslovak Republic. He founded the Czech People's Party in 1900, which strove for Czech independence within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, for the protection of minorities and the unity of Czechs and Slovaks.

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia. He was reelected in 1920, 1927, and 1934.

Among the first acts of his government was an extensive land reform. He steered a moderate course on such sensitive issues as the status of minorities, especially the Slovaks and Germans, and the relations between the church and the state. Masaryk resigned in 1935 and Edvard Benes, his former foreign minister, succeeded him.

**5** Hilsner Trial: In 1899 the Jew Leopold Hilsner was accused of ritual murder. During the first trial proceedings the media provoked an anti-Jewish hysteria among the general public and in legislative bodies, as a result of which Hilsner was sentenced to death, despite the lack of any direct evidence.

Both his ex officio counsel and President T. G. Masaryk tried to demythologize superstitions about the blood libel. In 1901 Emperor Franz Josef I changed the sentence to life imprisonment but he did not allow a retrial probably out of fear of pogroms. In 1918 Hilsner was granted pardon by Emperor Charles.

**6** Hashomer Hatzair: 'The Young Watchman'; A Zionist-socialist pioneering movement founded in Eastern Europe, Hashomer Hatzair trained youth for kibbutz life and set up kibbutzim in Palestine. During World War II, members were sent to Nazi-occupied areas and became leaders in Jewish resistance groups. After the war, Hashomer Hatzair was active in 'illegal' immigration to Palestine.

**7** Munich Pact: Signed by Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and France in 1938, it allowed Germany to immediately occupy the Sudetenland (the border region of Czechoslovakia inhabited by a German minority). The representatives of the Czechoslovak government were not invited to the Munich conference.

Hungary and Poland were also allowed to seize territories: Hungary occupied southern and eastern Slovakia and a large part of Subcarpathia, which had been under Hungarian rule before World War I, and Poland occupied Teschen (Tessin or Cieszyn), a part of Silesia, which had been an object of dispute between Poland and Czechoslovakia, each of which claimed it on ethnic grounds.

Under the Munich Pact, the Czechoslovak Republic lost extensive economic and strategically important territories in the border regions (about one third of its total area).

**8** Exclusion of Jews from schools in the Protectorate: The Ministry of Education of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia sent round a ministerial decree in 1940, which stated that from school year 1940/41 Jewish pupils were not allowed to visit Czech public and private schools and those who were already in school should be excluded.



After 1942 Jews were not allowed to visit Jewish schools or courses organised by the Jewish communities either.

**9** Terezin Initiative Foundation (Nadace Terezinska iniciativa): Founded in 1993 by the International Association of Former Prisoners of the Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto, it is a special institute devoted to the scientific research on the history of Terezin and of the 'Final Solution' of the Jewish question in the Czech lands. At the end of 1998 it was renamed to Terezin Initiative Institute (Institut Terezinske iniciativy).

**10** Maccabi World Union: International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth.

In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi.

The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

**11** 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.

**12** Janosik, Juraj (1688-1713): Slovak folk hero. He was a serf in the Fatra mountains in Upper Hungary (today Slovakia) and became an outcast. According to legend he robbed rich noblemen and townsmen and gave the haul to the poor.

Janosik participated in the Rakoczy uprising against the Habsburgs (1703-11). He joined a unit of irregulars and after the suppression of the revolt they became mountain robbers. He was caught by Lipto county authorities and executed in Liptoszentmiklos (today Liptovsky Mikulas). Janosik is the

hero of many Slovak folk tales and legends and also celebrated in folk songs.

**13** Hagibor: Prague camp, located on Schwerinova Street. Most of the people interned here were Jews from outside Prague living in mixed marriages. The internees who were fit to work were employed in the 'mica works' of the firm Glimmer-Spalterei, G.M.b.H. On 30th January 1945, it was decided to deport the entire mica works to Terezin.

The number of Jews interned at Hagibor subsequently dropped from an average of 1,400 to a mere 100-150. In total, 3,000 people passed through the camp. Hagibor was allegedly closed down on 5th May 1945, and the remaining internees returned to their homes.

**14** 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.

**15** Heydrichiade: Period of harsh reprisals against the Czech resistance movement and against the Czech nation under the German occupation (1939- 45). It started in September 1941 with the appointment of R. Heydrich as Reichsprotektor of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, who declared martial law and executed the representatives of the local resistance.

The Heydrichiade came to its peak after Heydrich's assassination in May 1942. After his death, martial law was introduced until early July 1942, in the framework of which Czech patriots were executed and deported to concentration camps, and the towns of Lidice and Lezaky were annihilated. Sometimes the term Heydrichiade is used to refer to the period of martial law after Heydrich's assassination.

**16** Anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia: After the Germans occupied Bohemia and Moravia, anti-Jewish legislation was gradually introduced. Jews were not allowed to enter public places, such as parks, theatres, cinemas, libraries, swimming pools, etc.

They were excluded from all kinds of professional associations and could not be civil servants. They were not allowed to attend German or Czech schools, and later private lessons were forbidden, too. They were not allowed to leave their houses after 8pm.

Their shopping hours were limited to 3 to 5pm. They were only allowed to travel in special sections of public transportation. They had their telephones and radios confiscated. They were not allowed to change their place of residence without permission. In 1941 they were ordered to wear the yellow badge.

**17** Hitlerjugend: The youth organization of the German Nazi Party (NSDAP). In 1936 all other German youth organizations were abolished and the Hitlerjugend was the only legal state youth organization. From 1939 all young Germans between 10 and 18 were obliged to join the Hitlerjugend, which organized after-school activities and political education.

Boys over 14 were also given pre-military training and girls over 14 were trained for motherhood and domestic duties. After reaching the age of 18, young people either joined the army or went to work.

**18** Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC): Founded in 1921 following a split from the Social Democratic Party, it was banned under the Nazi occupation. It was only after Soviet Russia entered World War II that the Party developed resistance activity in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia; because of this, it gained a certain degree of popularity with the general public after 1945.

After the communist coup in 1948, the Party had sole power in Czechoslovakia for over 40 years.

The 1950s were marked by party purges and a war against the 'enemy within'. A rift in the Party led to a relaxing of control during the Prague Spring starting in 1967, which came to an end with the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet and allied troops in 1968 and was followed by a period of normalization. The communist rule came to an end after the Velvet Revolution of November 1989.

**19** Czechoslovak Youth Association (CSM): Founded in 1949, it was a mass youth organization in the Czechoslovak Republic, led by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. It was dissolved in 1968 but reestablished in April 1969 by the Communist Party as the Socialist Youth Association and was only dissolved in 1989.

**20** Slansky Trial: Communist show trial named after its most prominent victim, Rudolf Slansky. It was the most spectacular among show trials against communists with a wartime connection with the West, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, Jews, and Slovak 'bourgeois nationalists'.

In November 1952 Slansky and 13 other prominent communist personalities, 11 of whom were Jewish, including Slansky, were brought to trial. The trial was given great publicity; they were accused of being Trotskyist, Titoist, Zionist, bourgeois, nationalist traitors, and in the service of American imperialism. Slansky was executed, and many others were sentenced to death or to forced labor in prison camps.

**21** Certificate under Article 255/1946 Coll.: Certificate awarded to certain people involved in the national struggle for liberation during World War II. It was issued by the Ministry of Defense and entailed certain advantages, such as early retirement.

**22** Samizdat literature in Czechoslovakia: Samizdat literature: The secret publication and distribution of government-banned literature in the former Soviet block. Typically, it was typewritten on thin paper (to facilitate the production of as many carbon copies as possible) and circulated by hand, initially to a group of trusted friends, who then made further typewritten copies and distributed them clandestinely.

Material circulated in this way included fiction, poetry, memoirs, historical works, political treatises, petitions, religious tracts, and journals.

The penalty for those accused of being involved in samizdat activities varied according to the political climate, from harassment to detention or severe terms of imprisonment.

In Czechoslovakia, there was a boom in Samizdat literature after 1948 and, in particular, after 1968, with the establishment of a number of Samizdat editions supervised by writers, literary critics and publicists: Petlice (editor L. Vaculik), Expedice (editor J. Lopatka), as well as, among others, Ceska expedice (Czech Expedition), Popelnice (Garbage Can) and Prazska imaginace (Prague Imagination).

**23** Radio Free Europe: Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block.

The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central European communist countries and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

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

Brutal police intervention stirred up public unrest, mass demonstrations took place in Prague, Bratislava and other towns, and a general strike began on 27th November. The Civic Forum demanded the resignation of the communist government.

Due to the general strike Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec was finally forced to hold talks with the Civic Forum and agreed to form a new coalition government. On 29th December democratic elections were held, and Vaclav Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia.