

# Tomas Kraus

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Prague

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Interviewer: Dagmar Greslova

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JUDr. Tomas Kraus was born on 19th March 1954 in Prague. Already during the time of his high school studies he occupied himself with activities in Prague's cultural life, particularly in the Jazz Section of the Musicians' Union. He was production manager for Prague Jazz Days and other music festival, contributed articles and reviews to the Jazz Bulletin and other magazines. He graduated from the Faculty of Law at Charles University in Prague. After finishing his university studies, he worked in the foreign department of the SUPRAPHON Company, from 1984 as the Music Video department manager. From 1985 Dr. Kraus worked for the ART CENTRUM Company, where he initially collaborated on the EXPO 86 project; later he held the position of Assistant to the General Director, and subsequently as the manager of the mercantile department, which was responsible for audio- visual presentations, advertising, exhibitions and architecture. Since 1991 Dr. Kraus has been the Secretary of the Federation of Jewish Communities. Besides developing a new infrastructure for the entire organization, he has in this function particularly concerned himself with questions of restitutions of Jewish property and compensation for Holocaust victims, on both domestic and international levels.

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## My parents

My grandfather on my mother's side, Otto Flusser, was from Teplice-Sanov. He lived there with his wife, my grandmother, Elsa Flusserova, nee Hackelova, and with his children. Back then there were six thousand Jews living in Teplice, after Prague it was the second largest German-speaking Jewish community. Teplice was in the Sudetenland [1](#), and Czech wasn't spoken at all there. My grandpa was a trained butcher, he had his own butcher shop, but interestingly enough, it wasn't a kosher butcher shop, but a normal butcher shop, because he wouldn't have stood up against the competition, as there were a lot of kosher butchers there. He had a shop across from the Hotel Ditrich, which when I tell this to Teplice natives today, they say that that's as good a place as you could get. My mother Alice Krausova [nee Flusserova] had six siblings, two brothers and four sisters. One of my mother's sisters, Luisa, was even a subreta [a female singer of young, merry soprano roles, usually in operettas] in the Teplice Operetta, which back then was a big deal - back then Teplice had the nickname 'Little Paris' because of it's cultural prestige.

In 1938, right after Munich [2](#), the entire Flusser family moved to Prague. They left absolutely everything behind in Teplice - their apartment, store, property, and picked up and escaped to Prague. It was very hard for them to get used to Prague and make it there, because they couldn't speak Czech. People in Prague looked upon them as Germans. But finally they managed to establish themselves in Prague. There my mother met my father in 1938. So I always say, that if not for the betrayal in Munich, I actually wouldn't have been born.

Along with her entire family, my mother went to Terezin [3](#) a few months after my father went there on the AK1 transport. Unfortunately one of my mother's brothers, so my uncle, was put on the first extermination transport to Poland, to Trawniki I think. He didn't survive. They unloaded them from the train and shot them all on the spot.

In Terezin the entire Flusser family was gradually designated for the transports, my father wasn't able to protect them all. He was only able to save my mother and grandmother from deportation. Finally, in 1944 my parents went to Auschwitz together. They had to leave after the visit of the Red Cross, when the majority of the camp was eliminated, even those who had lived there the whole three years, after that they all had to go to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz my parents were separated. Both of them were lucky, in quotation marks, that they were assigned to work. My father was assigned directly to the main Auschwitz camp at Birkenau, and got a number. A lot of people have numbers, but I've spoken with people from the Auschwitz Museum, really only those that were already designated for work got numbers. Not those that were designated for liquidation.

My mother didn't get a number, though she went to work, but right after arriving she was sent to some sub-camp. I don't know exactly how long she spent in Auschwitz sub-camps. One was named Merzdorf, it was between Auschwitz and Katowice. The she got into a labor camp that was in Kudowa Zdroj [Kudowa Spa], which today lies in Poland right across the Czech- Polish border by the Nachod-Belovas border crossing. In Kudowa Zdroj she lived to see the liberation - in May of 1945 the Russians arrived there and transported the prisoners away.

There are two types of Holocaust survivors. On the one hand those that want to describe and tell everything in detail - what color of gloves the SS soldier had who pointed right and left, basically describe everything in the greatest possible detail. This is the case with my father; he really did describe it in the minutest detail. For one he was capable of it, because he was a reporter, but mainly he wanted to write it down - as a memento, a warning. On the other hand, there is a second type of people, who are silent; they won't say even a word. By not talking about it, they are, metaphorically speaking, erasing the experiences from their memory, because the memories are too painful. An example of this attitude was my mother.

The only thing that I do know about what happened to my mother during the war, I know from one of her friends. She told me a story, that when they were returning from the camp in Kudowa Zdroj, the Russians were transporting them on a truck. One time, when the Russians had caught some Germans, a Russian soldier came up to my mother and her friend, handed them a rifle, and said, 'Now do with those Germans the same as what they had done with you,' and all they said was, 'If you want to punish them, shave their heads.' Because my mother never talked about her imprisonment, this is the only anecdote I know from that time.

Besides my mother, no one from the Flusser family survived the Holocaust. As late as 1947 my parents were taking out ads in newspapers, just in case someone knew something about the

Flussers, in case they had by chance survived - because they didn't know what had happened to them and back then there were no records available.

After the war my mother worked in the school system, she worked for the staff department at Charles University in Prague. She died in 1988.

My grandfather on my father's side, Robert Kraus, was from Uhlirske Janovice. The Kraus family lived by the Sazava River, in Vlasimi, in Kacov. Grandfather had a lot of siblings, brothers and sisters. The family owned a farming estate in Uhlirske Janovice.

During the Communist era I went to have a look around in Uhlirske Janovice, sometime in 1981, I went to the cemetery and found my grandparents' tombstone. Later, still under the Communists, this cemetery was liquidated by burying all the tombstones in one spot and all that remained was just a lawn. The graves are there, of course, no one did anything with them, but it's not demarcated, there's just a bench and a memorial plaque. So that they wouldn't have to take care of it, they simply buried it. Which is basically according to the Jewish religion, if the tombstones are severely damaged and there's no one to take care of the cemetery, everything is buried.

Grandpa Robert Kraus had already moved to Prague as a small child, so you could say that he was actually a Prague native. He became a traveling salesman, so he traveled a lot, and that's why it's fitting that he met my grandmother [Matylda Krausova, nee Kollmannova] on some train. The interesting thing is that Grandpa and Grandma got divorced, which in those days wasn't at all common. Grandpa then remarried, he married some Maria, I don't know her whole name, but I do know that she wasn't Jewish. That saved his life during the war, because she didn't divorce him, on the contrary, she tried to keep their marriage together. Marie kept him in Prague for the whole war, up to January of 1945, when he had to leave for Terezin, but he was actually only there for four and a half months and then came right back to Prague.

Jakob Kollmann [father of Matylda Krausova] was from Ceske Budejovice. He was a light machinery mechanic, and had a little shop where he sold clocks, barometers and all sorts of devices like that. His store was right on the town square, underneath a beautiful arcade. Not long ago I received some photographs where my great-grandfather's store can be seen, you can even see how there used to be a streetcar driving around the square, and my great-grandfather is standing there underneath his shop sign.

My grandmother was from Ceske Budejovice. After she and Grandpa Robert Kraus were divorced, she remarried; she married some man, a Jew, who was named Alexandr Straschnow. My father basically adopted that Mr. Straschnow as his stepfather, and loved him very much. I consider him to be my step- grandpa. He died in 1941, before the deportations.

My father managed to protect his mother, my grandmother, from the transports until 1944. In 1944 he himself had to leave Terezin, that's connected with the propaganda that took place around the visit of the Red Cross. When the Nazis liquidated practically all of Terezin. However, my grandmother had the luck that she stayed in Terezin and survived. It's a very unusual case that both of my grandparents survived, which is truly an exception, because usually it didn't happen that way. My grandmother survived thanks to the fact that my father was in AK1 and my grandfather thanks to the fact that he was in a mixed marriage.

My father, Frantisek Robert Kraus, was born on 14th October 1903 in Prague, into a traveling salesman's family. As he himself once wrote, he lived a relatively idyllic childhood, on the slum-clearance and demolition lots of the Jewish Town, in those days Prague's fifth quarter. As was common back then in so-called better Jewish families, he came by his elementary education at the Piarist convent school on Panska Street, then continued at the private high school on Jindrisska Street, and then did his graduation exams at the classical high school in the Kinski Palace on the Old Town Square. After his parents divorced, he stayed with his mother and had to begin to contribute financially to the household. For a long time this meant the end of his considerations of an academic career, but it did lead him to be a journalist.

My father and mother met in the year 1938, shortly after my mother and her entire family came to Prague from Teplice. At that time my father was already divorced, he had a son, Ronald Kraus, from his first marriage. He married my mother in 1939, which was already somewhat of a problem, but marriages by the normal civil authorities were still possible.

Dad was a journalist and writer. He wrote the records of the Kraus family in the form of books in which he reminisces about his family and childhood, though he did also write other people's stories, there are a lot of autobiographical elements in his works. During the time of the First Republic [4](#) he began working for German Jewish papers, for example for the famous Prager Tagblatt [5](#), Prager Presse [6](#) and others. He had contacts in Czech intellectual circles. He really did know all the famous figures of the time. He knew Franz Kafka [Kafka, Franz (1883-1924): a German-language writer of Jewish origins from Prague] or Jaroslav Hasek [7](#). His literary paragon, family friend and lifelong teacher at the same time was the 'raging reporter' Egon Erwin Kisch [Kisch, Egon Erwin (1885-1948): a German writer and journalist of Jewish origins from Prague]. At one time my father even lived at Kisch's place, and they became very good friends. But later, in 1948 they parted ways in a matter of opinion, because my father was a convinced leftist social democrat, while Kisch remained a Communist even after 1948, and approved of the putsch [8](#). From that time onward my father and Kisch never spoke again.

My father was there when Czechoslovak Radio [9](#) was founded. He worked in radio, he broadcast in foreign languages: in German, in English, in French; for a long time he also worked for the Czechoslovak News Agency [10](#). My father was often abroad due to his collaboration with the Berlin magazine 'Die grüne Post.' But in those days Nazism was already assuming power. My father tried to take a stand against the nascence of Nazism in Czechoslovakia, especially in the Sudetenland, in his regular radio reportages and broadcasts. He thus elicited the anger of Henlein's supporters [11](#), who even lobbied against him in Parliament - due to which he got blacklisted. He considered the mobilization - he addressed this theme in the story 'Helmet In The Field' - and subsequent events, culminating with the capitulation in Munich, in the reportage 'Runciman at Henlein's', which had tragic consequences not only for him, to be fateful.

## During the War

My father found himself on the black list, he was interrogated a few times, but they didn't put him in jail, but instead put him on the very first transport that went to Terezin in October of 1941, that was transport number AK1, which stood for 'Arbeitskommando' [German for 'labor battalion']. This group was to take part in reconstruction of the town of Terezin into a Jewish ghetto. This first Terezin transport was still a normal, classical train, not the cattle wagons that were used later.

They took the train to Litomerice, got off at Bohusovice, had police in front and behind them, all told there were about 340 of them. That was the entire train, a normal train with everything, someone even told me how it all fits together, that it's exactly how my father describes it in his books. That person found an entry written by the police, that they really did accompany this train. The entry even states at exactly what time the train left Masaryk Station in Prague; the policemen before were on duty, because they had helped a circus depart prior to that. The policemen didn't really even know why they were accompanying the transport. So they arrived in Bohusovice, and from there it was three more kilometers on foot to Terezin.

When one looks at it from a historical standpoint, from today's perspective, the horrendous tragedy of my father being put on the very first transport basically saved his life. Because in Terezin AK1 had special status, you can't say that they were privileged; they weren't prominent people, like for example the Council of Elders, but neither were they completely on the level of the rest of the prisoners. Thanks to this my father for example managed to protect his mother, my grandmother, from the transports until 1944. In 1944 he and my mother both had to leave Terezin, which was connected with the propaganda that took place around the visit of the Red Cross. When the Nazis liquidated practically all of Terezin. However, my grandmother had the luck that she stayed in Terezin and survived.

My father and mother were transported together on 17th March 1944. After their arrival at Auschwitz they were separated. My father commuted daily from Auschwitz to work at IG Farben and to Buna, where they made synthetic gasoline. One day blacksmiths and carpenters were supposed to apply - my father, who had never held a hammer in his hand in his life, applied. So he was assigned to a branch labor camp in Gleiwitz [12](#), where they were repairing railway wagons, which was horrible work for which they picked mostly prisoners from Terezin. Then sometime on the cusp of 1944 and 1945 they transferred my father to another factory in Blechhammer (Blachovnia). About in April of 1945 the Nazis began to liquidate the branch labor camps and were organizing death marches [13](#). They also dispatched a death march from Blechhammer, but my father and a couple of other people managed to escape from there.

Arnost Lustig [(b. 1926): Czech-Jewish writer] writes about my father's travails in the time of the war's end:

"For the time being he wandered, like Odysseus, through territory through which armies and rivers of refugees poured, from Poland through Subcarpathia to Budapest. On the way, he received a document from Brigadier General Svoboda [14](#) that he was a journalist, which he in any case felt himself to be everywhere where he was driven along.

He wanted to bear witness. Because he was never alone. He was with the dead, who he had survived. He was with the echoes of those killed, which he couldn't drive out of his ears. He couldn't give up the memory, which he perceived as the foundation of further existence. He was with his dead, with whom he had lived four years of the war in various camps. He remained with his pre-war newspaper colleagues, whose ashes were blowing in the Polish wind over the European continent and rivers and seas, the same as the ashes of Ottla Davidova, Franz Kafka's sister, whom he had known and who must also have undertaken that long road via Terezin into the chimney of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

He carried within him experiences that had burned their way to the bottom of his soul. He wanted to be rid of some of them. Those that degraded even after the fact. Those that tore at his soul, as if it was a worn-out tire. Echoes of the inferiority and meaninglessness of a life thrust upon him by Nazi Germans and Austrians and all those who served them.

He felt himself to be like an aging snake, who, despite the number of times he's already had to do it, has to shed his old skin in the spring." (Arnost Lustig on F.R. Kraus)

Thanks to the partisans, my father got to Budapest via Poland and Subcarpathia [15](#) in March of 1945, which had already been liberated. There he started to more or less pull himself together again. Through his career as a journalist he knew a few people in Budapest. So he contacted them, and they found some basic assistance for him, rented a small apartment for him. In Budapest he sat down, and wrote down all the experiences that were still fresh inside of him. So when he arrived in Prague in May of 1945, he already had a whole book finished. As he was a reporter, he wrote a book of reportage. This book, 'Gas, Gas...Then Fire,' was published in September 1945 and it was the very first reportage about the camps that was published in Czechoslovakia. It was published by the old publisher Chvojka, with whom I even managed to speak. They divided this reportage into two parts, one book was named 'Gas, Gas...Then Fire,' and the second part is called 'And Lead Back Our Scattered Ones.' It's a continuation, but from a somewhat different angle, the emphasis here is on describing the time in Terezin.

When my father returned to Prague from Budapest, he had nowhere to go. He got the idea to go to the apartment of my grandfather's, Robert Kraus's, second wife. Grandpa survived the war in Terezin, as he had been in a mixed marriage. This aunt, who wasn't Jewish, had been able to hold on to his apartment on Maislova Street the entire time. Right after the liberation she went to Terezin for my grandfather, and brought him back to their apartment. When my father then arrived in Prague, it occurred to him to go to Grandpa's apartment and he found Grandpa there! When my mother returned from the concentration camp, she had no idea what she should do, and because she also had no place to go, she said to herself that she'll go there, and they all met up there! I think that it would be worthwhile to write a novel about this meeting.

"The last disease was incurable kidney disease, which he couldn't blame on alcohol, only on hunger, thirst, beatings and the last cruel winter of 1944-1945. On invisible pain of the soul, unexaminable wounds that never healed, on blisters and frostbitten hands and swollen feet from the death march before he got to Prague with the unceasing echo of massacres, without a penny in his pocket, without a roof over his head... He reached his goal in rags, destroyed shoes, with ID from the Repatriation Office, until he got his citizenship card. He felt a burning satisfaction; victory pregnant with losses, defeats and desperation; a joy resembling a flame, which is quenched by invisible waters." (Arnost Lustig on F.R. Kraus)

My father also captured the issue of war in the book 'David Will Live.' He had originally dedicated it to Jan Masaryk [16](#) under the name 'Semarjahu Searches For God,' but it was published in December of 1949, and so the publishers changed not only its name, but also added a new ending. The novel, which is based on actual events, tells the story of a Jewish doctor who passes through Terezin and subsequently Auschwitz, where his family is forcibly divided. It's not until many years after the war that he then meets up with his son, whom he thinks hadn't survived, only due to an utter coincidence. For in the meantime David has become a world-renowned violin virtuoso. Once



David is playing at a concert, sitting in the front row is a person who notices that David has a number tattooed on his forearm. After the concert he comes to see David, and says that he also has a number. They find out that the numbers are consecutive, that they must be father and son - they recognize each other only thanks to the numbers tattooed on their forearms. This story really happened. However, as opposed to the original conclusion, which took place in what was then Palestine, in the last chapter, added by the Communists, of the revised edition, David becomes a fervent Communist and plays for workers in factories.

A similar fate also befell another novel, 'The Changed Land,' which wasn't published until 1957. In it my father doesn't devote himself to concentration camps any longer, but returns to the issue of the Sudetenland. The countryside around Ceska Lipa, which he had fallen in love with before the war, became for him the location of events and human destinies before and after Munich, during the war and immediately after it. My father drew upon not only his experiences, but also on many historical sources and preserved materials, which he carefully studied. Here too, though, the publishers intervened, and assigned my father a co-author, Jaroslav Pechacek, who added to the book the proper air of 'building socialism' - scenes where factory workers organize Communist resistance. So the entire book gives the impression of a celebration of the Communist anti-Fascist resistance, thus in a way that my father intended. My father had originally wanted to show in the book that the Sudetenland Germans were actually victims of the Nazi ideology, during the period that the book was published, he couldn't publicly present anything like that.

February 1948 had an influence not only on the fates of my father's works, but also on him as well. For after the war he again started working for the Czech News Agency and for Czechoslovak Radio, where he became the founder and head of the shortwave foreign broadcast department. He also worked there as an announcer in English, French and German, and as the commentator for Central Europe. All that, however, ended at the beginning of the 1950s with the Slansky trials [17](#). Within one day my father lost his positions in both CTK and in Radio. With the exception of the publication of 'The Changed Land,' which was only allowed to be published at the price of dramatic changes in the text, from that time on he could only make a living with occasional writing. Thus he focused on his childhood experiences. Stories of Old Prague soon became a rewarding theme, which were used by many newspapers and magazines, including foreign ones. From time to time even a story appeared with a theme of World War II and concentration camps - the concept of the Holocaust wasn't in use yet back then.

My father also became one of the main regular contributors to the Jewish Religious Communities' Newsletter. He was the head of a commission that organized parties at the Prague Jewish Community. Parties were held in Maislova Street twice a year - always at Chanukkah and Purim. Thanks to my father, in the 1960s the pick of Czech culture used to go to the Community - my father had many contacts still from the times of the First Republic. He was capable of inviting many well-known people to these events - Jan Werich [18](#), Milos Kopecky [Kopecky, Milos (1922-1996): Czech actor of Jewish origin], Miroslav Hornicek [Hornicek, Miroslav (1918-2003): Czech actor, writer, playwright and director], the singers Karel Gott [Gott, Karel (b. 1939): the leading Czech singer of popular music in the 20th Century] and Waldemar Matuska [Matuska, Waldemar (b. 1932): Czech singer] and many other artists. People were excited by these parties - after their experiences from the concentration camps and after the events of the political trials with Rudolf Slansky, they represented for them at least a little relaxation, and the Community represented a

substitute family for them. They also organized lectures for young people, in which there was a relatively large amount of interest.

These events and the cultural life at the Community functioned perfectly up to the year 1968, when a fundamental turning point occurred, and 90 percent of my friends immigrated. Practically no one from the generation of my friends remained here. The August occupation in 1968 [19](#) changed these people's lives in a fundamental fashion - before this turning point most of them would never have thought of emigrating. Most of these emigrants did very well abroad, and today would no longer consider returning to the Czech Republic - their children no longer have anything in common with Prague. After 1989 [20](#) one of my contemporaries decided to contact all our friends that had participated in the cultural life of the Community - the group 'Children of Maislova' was formed, and there have already been several reunions. [Children of Maislova: Jewish youth that had known and associated with each other before 1968 on the basis of their membership in the Prague Jewish Community.]

The novel 'The Executioner Without a Shadow' came into being at the beginning of the 1960s. In it my father returns to his authentic wartime experiences, which he contrasts with typical pictures of Old Prague, teeming with many figures and local detail. As he himself writes in the introduction, he wanted to write '... about events which from beginning to end really took place on this planet, in the middle of its culturally most advanced continent, in the heart of Europe... and to describe the fate of a relatively insignificant person with an ugly face, who... for long years lived in our Old Prague ... That, which he in the end became, was created by, and only by people ...'.

The novel was about the Jewish executioner in Terezin, who performed the only two executions that took place in Terezin. Everyone accused him of being a monster, that he even looked like a monster, as he was hunchbacked. My father tried to describe him in such a fashion, that the person was in reality also a poor wretch, a victim, that he compensated some complexes of his own with his behavior. He managed to interconnect the entire description with scenes and the atmosphere of Old Prague - he contrasted the idyll of Old Prague with the atmosphere of Terezin.

But Czech publishers at the time didn't show much interest in the book, mostly pointing to the fact that the subject of Nazi persecution had already been exhausted. I myself still remember that my father made the rounds of publishers, manuscript in hand, and no one wanted to publish the book, with the reason that World War II was already passé, and that no one was interested in that subject matter any longer. I published the novel 'The Executioner Without a Shadow' in 1984 as a samizdat in the Jazz Section.

A similar fate also befell another novel 'Three Rifles,' which was created at the urging of Adolf Branald as a psychological probe into the hearts of three SS officers, and a novella intended for children, 'Song About Lea.' Though the theme of the novel 'Face No. 5' about a Nazi criminal who after the war has his identity and looks changed, was used in the film 'Lost Face,' filmed at Barrandov, it was, however, without my father's authorship being acknowledged in any way. [Editor's note: The interviewee is referring to director Pavel Hobl's film 'Ztracená tvář' (Czechoslovakia, 1965) also known as 'The Borrowed Face' or 'The Lost Face'.]

My father, Frantisek R. Kraus, died in Prague on 19th May 1967. He managed to see the 'thawing' after the Liblice Conference on Franz Kafka, which he considered being a turning point in cultural and political life, but he didn't live to see the Prague Spring.



## Growing up

I was born in 1954, so not until after World War II - the interesting thing is, that my parents were among the few to have both survived the Holocaust. People of my generation mostly come from marriages that were second marriages, because their original partners hadn't survived. Such people lost a partner, didn't find another until after the war, and only then started new families.

I met up with Judaism from a very young age - as my father was active in the Prague Jewish Community, it was completely natural for me to attend the Community regularly. I went to the Community for parties, later as a student for lunches. I never felt any division of identity - I perceived Judaism as some sort of tradition, however in a non-religious fashion. As a child I remember that during Christmas we had a tree at home, so that we children wouldn't miss out on anything. The tree is this symbol, which actually vouches for coexistence and the intermingling of traditions; I looked at the Christmas tree in a religious context.

After the year 1945 the Prague Jewish Community was composed in small part by original Prague Jews, who had returned here after the war. The larger part of the community was formed by people who came to Prague after the war from Subcarpathia, and these brought with them something that was absolutely foreign, what absolutely didn't have any tradition here - Orthodoxy. Prague was never Orthodox [21](#), the mainstream here was Neolog [22](#) - people here practiced more to preserve continuity, not because of religion itself. The Community as such was of course religious, it observed all regulations, but most people before the war, and after the war, also those that returned, were secular.

My parents tried to give me a nice childhood, so we traveled a lot, so that I wouldn't grow up in Prague, in the city - we'd regularly go to certain places. We visited my grandpa, who lived in Marenice, in the Sudetenland. I spent a large part of my childhood in the area around Ceska Lipa - July and August in Stare Splavy at my father's friend's; fall we spent in Dubi at a friend of my father's, the writer Marketa Reichmanova. In March we'd regularly go on vacation to Svaty Petr. In December, around Christmas, we'd visit the Karlovy Vary [23](#) spa. My father had a lot of friends at the Karlovy Vary Jewish Community, which stayed very numerous until the year 1968. We visited the spa until the end of the 1960s; my father would meet friends from all around the world there. One of my father's friends was the general director of the Hotel Pupp [Grandhotel Pupp], which was the best hotel in Karlovy Vary - so we always lived in the best suites and very much enjoyed our vacation at the spa. My parents were also recuperating from the effects of the war there; although you couldn't see it on them, the years spent in concentration camps had left their mark on them. My father was ill and died early - in 1967.

My parents had friends in West Berlin, and they would occasionally come to visit us in Prague, we of course couldn't go to the West too much. When I was 14, in August of 1968, my mother and I managed to leave the country to go visit these friends. By coincidence we were in West Berlin right during the time when the Russians invaded Prague [24](#). For a terribly long time we didn't know what we should do. If we should return, or stay in Germany. Everyone said, 'Don't be stupid, you can't go back there. There are going to be big problems there now.' We didn't want to stay in a completely foreign environment, my mother was already older after all, and said that she didn't want to start from scratch in a foreign place. I was 14, I didn't know anything yet. The official propaganda from Czechoslovakia claimed that nothing serious was going on, that the Russians may be here, but

everything had been agreed to in Moscow, everything is fine, the reform process is continuing. We stayed in Berlin for about three months, and then returned to Czechoslovakia. For a while after that it really did look like the situation wasn't that bad, the borders were open - they didn't close until April 1970. However Gustav Husak [25](#) ascended to power, the normalization [26](#) period began, of hidden anti-Semitism, and 'the jig was up.'

## Reflections on the Holocaust

Reflections on the Holocaust in the Czech environment underwent significant transformations. The first reaction to more detailed information and the description of what the concentration camps represented was absolute shock - a natural reaction to the horrors and atrocities that had taken place behind the walls of the camps. This perception lasted from the end of the war until 1948. Gradually, however, from the 1950s this picture began to change - thanks to the political situation that existed in socialist Czechoslovakia, and thanks to the image of the resistance that the Communist authorities at the time propagated. The original image of the resistance was allied, which is supported by film documents, which show a parade of Allied armies in Old Town Square, where the English, Americans, French and Russians were all marching together. However, from the 1950s onward nothing of the sort could be considered - the Communist doctrine promoted its own version of history: Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Red Army, and the only anti-Fascist resistance that existed was Communist. It's true, after a fashion, that the Communist resistance was the only one that was more or less organized. However, very little is known, for example, about how many Jews were in the resistance and neither is the fact mentioned that many Jews fought in foreign armies, many of them fell on both the Western and Eastern fronts. In Czechoslovakia the Jewish victims were 'nationalized' by the Communists - they didn't talk about Jewish victims, but Czechoslovak victims.

Reflections on the Holocaust began to imperceptibly change in the 1960s in connection with the new wave in literature and film. The writer Arnost Lustig wrote beautiful and interesting books about the Holocaust. Many of these books have been made into movies, and this theme thus made its way into public consciousness. The subject of concentration camps and the Holocaust began to be used by people that didn't have such close connections with the war as the Holocaust survivors, thus the Holocaust in a certain fashion made its way into the nation's subconscious, because people felt the need to come to terms with this subject.

A fundamental turning point, however, came with the normalization era. The year 1967, when diplomatic relations with Israel were severed, was crucial. Using events in Prague's Pinkas Synagogue, one can observe the Communist regime's approach towards Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The interior of the Pinkas Synagogue was altered in 1954-1959, when it was changed to a memorial to the victims of Nazi persecution. The painters Jiri John and Vaclav Bostik inscribed on its walls the names and dates of 77,297 Protectorate Jews that had died during the Holocaust. In 1968, however, the memorial was closed, with the official reason given being that groundwater was rising into the synagogue walls.

In reality, however, the main motives were political. The memorial was perceived as propagating Israel. Jewish victims of the Holocaust weren't to be mentioned - the remembrance of the Holocaust became politically undesirable. Back then, Czechoslovak politics were influenced by the politics of the USSR, and its relationship with the state of Israel, which in the beginning had been positive, as

the USSR had thought that it would include the new state in its sphere of influence. From 1952, however, relations between the USSR, its satellites and Israel worsened. From this point on, anti-Zionism was strongly promoted in the USSR and its satellites in Central and Eastern Europe. Anti-Semitism and negative anti-Jewish social stereotypes had also been imported to us from Russia, while earlier in the Czech environment, they had been more of clerical stereotypes - anti-Judaism.

An example of the Communists' approach to the Holocaust was the Terezin Memorial. The former children's dormitory L410 [The so-called 'Mädchenheim,' accommodation for young girls] was set up as a police museum for the North Bohemian region. No sign of any Jews anywhere - the only exception was a stone menorah, which had been erected by the cemetery in the 1960s. That was all. Jewish victims weren't supposed to be presented to the public. The Terezin Memorial did have its own internal Terezin studies, where serious research went on without being fouled by ideology, but for example no results were allowed to be published.

In the attitudes towards the presentation of World War II and the Holocaust, political momentum dominated, victims of war - Czechoslovak citizens who had died because of their political convictions and participation in the Communist anti-Fascist resistance were remembered. The fact that in the concentration camps as well as outside of them, there had also existed a non-Communist anti-Fascist resistance movement was never mentioned. What's more, Czech Jews were counted in the official number of Czechoslovak victims, and under the influence of the normalization, consciousness of the Jewish victims gradually faded. Jewish victims were inconvenient for the rhetoric of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Communist propaganda took advantage of Jewish victims for its own ends, and presented them as Czechoslovak victims.

This attitude towards Jewish victims of the Holocaust partially persists in society to this day - as witnessed by the position of the Czech Freedom Fighters Association on the question of compensation. When the Federation of Jewish Communities began to negotiate compensation for victims of the Holocaust, the Czech Freedom Fighters Association looked upon these victims through the optics of the resistance: allegedly one cannot compare Jewish victims who suffered by being jailed in concentration camps to partisans who fought with arms in hand.

The year 1989 brought a turning point. In the 1990s the archives were opened and proper research began. Today's perception of the Holocaust is influenced, among other things, by the fact that we live in a 'global village' - although earlier there had already been some sort of consciousness of the Holocaust in the nation's consciousness, interest in the Holocaust is returning to us via the United States of America. A groundbreaking work was Spielberg's film 'Schindler's List' [27](#), which was greeted with enthusiasm the world over. For the Czech environment, however, Schindler's figure is very controversial, as he had been a part of the 'Abwehr' [German for 'defense;' the 'Abwehr' was a German intelligence organization that existed from 1922-1944.], units that participated in the liquidation of the Sudetenland. Through America, klezmer and Yiddish literature is coming to us - but people don't realize that nothing like that existed in Prague before the war. Often it is erroneously stated that before the war, three cultures coexisted in Prague - Czech, German and Jewish - however, that's not at all how it worked. The Prague Jewish community was more or less a branch of Austrian and German ones. Jewish culture as such didn't exist in Prague before the war - Jewish protagonists were for one in Czech circles, on the other hand they were also in German circles, but more often they formed some sort of bridge, a connection between Czech and German culture.

Today's awareness of the Holocaust in the Czech world is not sufficient - many people designate the Holocaust as genocide, which is however an erroneous classification. The Holocaust was accompanied by a massive theft of property, which was in its time the main motive. If one was to talk about genocide, then the Holocaust was genocide carried out on the basis of laws - and it's exactly in this that the Holocaust is unique. That is why the Holocaust is completely unique.

## **Glossary:**

### **1 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.

### **2 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).

### **3 Terezin/Theresienstadt**

A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. It was used to camouflage the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a 'model Jewish settlement'. Czech gendarmes served as ghetto guards, and with their help the Jews were able to maintain contact with the outside world. Although education was prohibited, regular classes were held, clandestinely. Thanks to the large number of artists, writers, and scholars in the ghetto, there was an intensive program of cultural activities. At the end of 1943, when word spread of what was happening in the Nazi camps, the Germans decided to allow an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Theresienstadt. In preparation, more prisoners were deported to Auschwitz, in order to reduce congestion in the ghetto. Dummy stores, a cafe, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

#### **4 First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938)**

The First Czechoslovak Republic was created after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy following World War I. The union of the Czech lands and Slovakia was officially proclaimed in Prague in 1918, and formally recognized by the Treaty of St. Germain in 1919. Ruthenia was added by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. Czechoslovakia inherited the greater part of the industries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the new government carried out an extensive land reform, as a result of which the living conditions of the peasantry increasingly improved. However, the constitution of 1920 set up a highly centralized state and failed to take into account the issue of national minorities, and thus internal political life was dominated by the struggle of national minorities (especially the Hungarians and the Germans) against Czech rule. In foreign policy Czechoslovakia kept close contacts with France and initiated the foundation of the Little Entente in 1921.

#### **5 Prager Tagblatt**

German daily established in 1875, the largest Austro- Hungarian daily paper outside of Vienna and the most widely read German paper in Bohemia. During the time of the First Republic (Czechoslovakia - CSR) the Prager Tagblatt had a number of Jewish journalists and many Jewish authors as contributors: Max Brod, Willy Haas, Rudolf Fuchs, E. E. Kisch, Theodor Lessing and others. The last issue came out in March 1939, during World War II the paper's offices on Panska Street in Prague were used by the daily Der neue Tag, after the war the building and printing plant was taken over by the Czech daily Mlada Fronta. 6 Prager Presse: during the years 1920 - 1939, a leftist-civic daily paper published in German in the Czechoslovak Republic. It was founded on the impetus of T.G. Masaryk with a goal to integrate the German-speaking minority of those days. At that time Germans formed approximately 22.5 % of the country's population. The paper's editor-in-chief during the years 1921 - 1938 was Arne Laurin. 7 Hasek, Jaroslav (1883-1923): Czech humorist, satirist, author of stories, travelogues, essays, and journalistic articles. His participation in WWI was the main source of his literary inspiration and developed into the character of Schweik in the four-volume unfinished but world-famous novel, The Good Soldier Schweik. Hasek moved about in the Bohemian circles of Prague's artistic community. He also satirically interpreted Jewish social life and customs of his time. With the help of Jewish themes he exposed the ludicrousness and absurdity of state bureaucracy, militarism, clericalism and Catholicism. (Information for this entry culled from Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia and other sources)

#### **8 February 1948**

Communist take-over in Czechoslovakia. The 'people's democracy' became one of the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. The state apparatus was centralized under the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC). In the economy private ownership was banned and submitted to central planning. The state took control of the educational system, too. Political opposition and dissident elements were persecuted.

#### **9 Czechoslovak Radio**

up until the year 1989 was characteristic as the central ideologically political organization, which



served for mass information and propaganda. Was born as the successor organization to the company Radiojournal Ltd, which commenced regular radio broadcasts in the Czech lands on 18th May 1923 (among the first places in Europe). In 1939 Slovak Radio separated. Czech Radio answered to the Protectorate government, and from the year 1940 directly to the Reich Protector Heydrich. Up until the spread of television in the 1970s, it had a leading role in informing Czechoslovak citizens; during the invasion of armies in 1945 and 1968, key battles were fought for its possession. Czechoslovak Radio ceased to exist on 31 December 1992, it fell apart with the division of the federation, into Czech Radio and Slovak Radio.

## **10 Czechoslovak News Agency**

Shortly after the outbreak of World War I, the Czechoslovak News Agency was created in Washington; concurrently, T. G. Masaryk founded the Czech News Agency in 1916 in London. These organizations can be considered as the precursors of today's CTK, founded by the Czechoslovak National Assembly presidium on 28th October 1918. CTK's evolution was interrupted by the war. In November 1950 CTK merged with the Slovak Press Agency, which was created during the rebellion in Banská Bystrica in 1944. During the 1950s the publishing of all news was subject to the approval of the agency's political secretariat; in 1953 it had only two foreign correspondents and all other foreign news was taken from the Soviet agency TASS. From 1954 onwards, CTK performed the monitoring of foreign radio stations, which however wasn't a normal service, but was meant for special clients. In 1991 the signature CSTK, which in Slovakia had been used since 1968, began appearing under its dispatches. At this time in Slovakia the news agency began using the abbreviation TK SR. In 1992 the local branches became independent, and in November the Independent News Agency SR Slovakia with the signature TASR was created. The Czech agency once again returned to the signature CTK. [11](#) Henlein, Konrad (1898-1945): From the year 1933, when Adolf Hitler took power in Germany, the situation in the Czech border regions began to change. Hitler decided to disintegrate Czechoslovakia from within, and to this end began to exploit the German minority in the border regions, and the People's Movement in Slovakia. His political agent in the Czech border regions became Konrad Henlein, a PE teacher from the town of As. During a speech in Karlovy Vary on 24th April 1938, Henlein demanded the abandonment of Czechoslovak foreign policy, such as alliance agreements with France and the USSR; compensation for injustices towards Germans since the year 1918; the abandonment of Palacký's ideology of Czech history; the formation of a German territory out of Czech border counties, and finally, the identification with the German (Hitler's) world view, that is, with Nazism. Two German political parties were extant in Czechoslovakia: the DNSAP and the DNP. Due to their subversive activities against the Czechoslovak Republic, both of these parties were officially dissolved in 1933. Subsequently on 3rd October 1933, Konrad Henlein issued a call to Sudeten Germans for a unified Sudeten German national front, SHP. The new party thus joined the two former parties under one name. Before the parliamentary elections in 1935 the party's name was changed to SDP. In the elections, Henlein's party finished as the strongest political party in the Czechoslovak Republic. On 18th September 1938, Henlein issued his first order of resistance, regarding the formation of a Sudeten German "Freikorps," a military corps of freedom fighters, which was the cause of the culmination of unrest among Sudeten Germans. The order could be interpreted as a direct call for rebellion against the Czechoslovak Republic. Henlein was captured by the Americans at the end of WWII. He committed suicide in an American POW camp in Pilsen on 10th May 1945.



## **12 Gleiwitz III**

A satellite labor camp in Auschwitz, set up alongside an industrial factory, Gleiwitzer Hutte, manufacturing weapons, munitions and railway wheels. The camp operated from July 1944 until January 1945; around 600 prisoners worked there.

## **13 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.

## **14 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).

## **15 Subcarpathian Ruthenia**

is found in the region where the Carpathian Mountains meet the Central Dnieper Lowlands. Its larger towns are Beregovo, Mukacevo and Hust. Up until the First World War the region belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but in the year 1919, according to the St. Germain peace treaty, was made a part of Czechoslovakia. Exact statistics regarding ethnic and linguistic composition of the population aren't available. Between the two World Wars Ruthenia's inhabitants included Hungarians, Ruthenians, Russians, Ukrainians, Czechs and Slovaks, plus numerous Jewish and Gypsy communities. The first Viennese Arbitration (1938) gave Hungary that part of Ruthenia inhabited by Hungarians. The remainder of the region gained autonomy within Czechoslovakia, and was occupied by Hungarian troops. In 1944 the Soviet Army and local resistance units took power in Ruthenia. According to an agreement dated June 29, 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the region to the Soviet Union. Up until 1991 it was a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. After Ukraine declared its independence, it became one of the country's administrative regions.

## **16 Masaryk, Jan (1886-1948)**

Czechoslovak diplomat, son of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia. He was foreign minister in the Czechoslovak government in exile, set up in Great Britain after the dismemberment of the country (1938). His policy included cooperating with both, the Soviet Union as well as the Western powers in order to attain the liberation of Czechoslovakia. After the liberation (1945) he remained in office until the 1948 communist coup d'etat, when he was announced to have committed suicide.

## **17 Slansky trial**

In the years 1948-1949 the Czechoslovak government together with the Soviet Union strongly supported the idea of the founding of a new state, Israel. Despite all efforts, Stalin's politics never found fertile ground in Israel; therefore the Arab states became objects of his interest. In the first place the Communists had to allay suspicions that they had supplied the Jewish state with arms. The Soviet leadership announced that arms shipments to Israel had been arranged by Zionists in Czechoslovakia. The times required that every Jew in Czechoslovakia be automatically considered a Zionist and cosmopolitan. In 1951 on the basis of a show trial, 14 defendants (eleven of them were Jews) with Rudolf Slansky, First Secretary of the Communist Party at the head were convicted. Eleven of the accused got the death penalty; three were sentenced to life imprisonment. The executions were carried out on 3rd December 1952. The Communist Party later finally admitted its mistakes in carrying out the trial and all those sentenced were socially and legally rehabilitated in 1963.

## **18 Voskovec and Werich (V+W)**

Jan Werich (1905-1980) - Czech actor, playwright and writer and Jiri Voskovec (1905-1981) - Czech actor, playwright and director. Major couple in the history of Czech theater and in the cultural and political history of Czechoslovakia. Initially performing wild fantasies, crazy farces and absurd tales, they gradually moved to political satire through which they responded to the uncertainties of the depression and the increasing dangers of fascism and war. Their productions include Vest Pocket Revue, The Donkey and The Shadow, The Rags Ballad. In addition, V+W created a completely new genre of Czech political film comedy (Powder and Petrol, Hey Rup, The World Belongs to Us).

## **19 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.

## **20 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.

## **21 Orthodox communities**

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

## **22 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into to (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions. The third group, the so-called Status Quo Ante advocated that the Jewish community was maintained the same as before the 1868/69 Congress.

## **23 Karlovy Vary (German name**

Karlsbad): The most famous Bohemian spa, named after Bohemian King Charles (Karel) IV, who allegedly found the springs during a hunting expedition in 1358. It was one of the most popular resorts among the royalty and aristocracy in Europe for centuries.

## **24 Warsaw Pact Occupation of Czechoslovakia**

The liberalization of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring (1967-68) went further than anywhere else in the Soviet block countries. These new developments were perceived by the conservative Soviet communist leadership as intolerable heresy dangerous for Soviet political supremacy in the region. Moscow decided to put a radical end to the chain of events and with the participation of four other Warsaw Pact countries (Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria) ran over Czechoslovakia in August, 1968.

## **25 Husak, Gustav (1913-1991)**

entered into politics already in the 1930s as a member of the Communist Party. Drew attention to himself in 1944, during preparations for and course of the Slovak National Uprising. After the war he filled numerous party positions, but of special importance was his chairmanship of the Executive Committee during the years 1946 to 1950. His activities in this area were aimed against the Democratic Party, the most influential force in Slovakia. In 1951 he was arrested, convicted of bourgeois nationalism and in April 1954 sentenced to life imprisonment. Long years of imprisonment, during which he acted courageously and which didn't end until 1960, neither broke Husak's belief in Communism, nor his desire to excel. He used the relaxing of conditions at the beginning of 1968 for a vigorous return to political life. Because he had gained great confidence and support in Slovakia, on the wishes of Moscow he replaced Alexander Dubcek in the function of First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. More and more he gave way to Soviet pressure and approved mass purges in the Communist Party. When he was elected president on 29th May 1975, the situation in the country was seemingly calm. The Communist Party leaders were under the impression that given material sufficiency, people will reconcile themselves with a lack of political and intellectual freedom and a worsening environment. In the second half of the 1980s social crises deepened, multiplied by developments in the Soviet Union. Husak had likely imagined the end of his political career differently. In December 1987 he resigned from his position as General Secretary of the Communist Party, and on 10th December 1989 as a result of the revolutionary events also abdicated from the presidency. Symbolically, this happened on Human Rights Day, and immediately after he was forced to appoint a government of 'national reconciliation.' The foundering of his political career quickened his physical end. Right before his death he reconciled himself with the Catholic Church. He died on 18th February 1991 in Bratislava.

## **26 Political changes in 1969**

Following the Prague Spring of 1968, which was suppressed by armies of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, a program of 'normalization' was initiated. Normalization meant the restoration of continuity with the pre-reform period and it entailed thoroughgoing political repression and the return to ideological conformity. Top levels of government, the leadership of social organizations and the party organization were purged of all reformist elements. Publishing houses and film studios were placed under new direction. Censorship was strictly imposed, and a campaign of militant atheism was organized. A new government was set up at the beginning of 1970, and, later that year, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, which incorporated the principle of limited sovereignty. Soviet troops remained stationed in Czechoslovakia and Soviet advisers supervised the functioning of the Ministry of Interior and the security apparatus.

## **27 Schindler's List**

Steven Spielberg's 1992 film featuring the deeds of Oskar Schindler, who saved the lives of more than 1,200 Polish Jews during World War II. The film received awards for best film, best director and best script at the Golden Globes.