Maud Michal Beer

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Maud Michal Beer was born as Maud Stecklmacherova in Prostejov in 1929. She lived a life full of dramatic events. As she herself says, she's getting old now. She could take her memories to the grave with her – with dried flowers, letters and photographs. Like everyone, she'd like a bit of immortality for herself, and for her loved ones. For those close to her, about whom she wrote just for herself, for her family, friends, for people from her religious community who'd perished and ceased to exist long ago. In her case this interview took place mainly because her loved ones and eventually she herself will receive a little immortality. The reader has before him the story of a strong woman, who after the suffering and horrors of World War II began a new life in a new country – Israel.

Growing up

I was born in 1929 in Prostejov, which used to be called ‘The Jerusalem of Hana’ [The Czech Hana region is situated along the Morava River, in the central part of Moravia]. There were ‘Jewish streets’ in the center of town, the way it is in many European towns, which is a sign that our people lived in the town since its beginnings. From early childhood I was aware that we were Jews, even though my family wasn't religious. My parents [Friedrich Stecklmacher and Katharina Stecklmacher, nee Steinerova] were Zionists 1. Father and Grandpa were members of the Zionist organization B'nai Brith 2, and Mother and Grandma were in WIZO 3. I remember the Jewish holidays well. One of my first books was ‘Bible Stories’ by Joachim Prinz; that's why I knew and had feelings for the Bible and Israel from earliest childhood.

At the age of four, I began exercising in the Jewish gymnastics organization Maccabi 4. At the girls' elementary school in Komenskeho Street, I was the only Jewish girl in my class. I differed from my classmates because of my name 5, and also in that we spoke German at home. Most of the girls were fair-haired, while I was dark. Our Grade 1 teacher, Mrs. Tihelkova, was probably taken aback when to the question what I wanted to be, I replied ‘A gardener in Palestine.’

From the age of seven, I was a member of a Zionist youth movement, where I met with Jewish children, and most of my friends were from there. In the movement, we learned about Palestine,

about the history of the Jewish nation, we studied Hebrew, and sang Hebrew songs.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur – High Holidays, that's what Jews as well as Czechs called them. When in fall our Christian neighbors saw us go to the temple in our best clothing, they'd say: ‘The Jews are having their High Holidays.’ Our family wasn't religious, but despite that we'd all go to the temple for the High Holidays. In our large temple in Prostejov, Grandma and Mom would go upstairs to join the women, and Grandpa, Dad and I, while I was small, would sit downstairs amongst the men. When I grew up some, I also had to go upstairs to join the women. I didn't like doing it – I felt better downstairs amongst the men.

From Grade 1 I was learning to read Hebrew in religion class; I didn't understand almost anything, but in the temple I tried to read the prayers along with the rabbi and with the religious community. During breaks we'd walk on the small square in front of the temple, and the narrow Jewish streets of the former ghetto. We'd greet each other, and wish each other a good New Year; our grandmothers and grandfathers still in old Hebrew: ‘L'shanau tauvo,’ we young ones already in modern Hebrew: ‘L'shanah tovah.’

For Yom Kippur, we'd bring apples to the temple, with fragrant cloves stuck in them, for our grandmothers and mothers – to ease the all-day fast. Standing at the entrance to the temple would be the shammash, Mr. Bleichfeld. Always kind and smiling, even though the children didn't always behave in an exemplary fashion.

It was a large and good religious community; I knew almost all its members. During the years 1940 and 1941, the Nazis forbade us from praying in the large temple, and we were only allowed to perform services in the old small temple building named Beit HaMidrash. There, in a small space, it used to be very crowded. I remember how in 1941, during the holidays, I went to temple with the yellow star 6 on my chest, like all my co-religionists.

The High Holidays of 1942 we celebrated in the ghetto in Terezin 7. Luckily the weather was good – it wasn't cold yet, nor raining – people prayed in groups in the narrow ghetto streets – the prayers seemed to be rising straight to heaven. It made a strong and deep impression on me – I felt that people were praying from all their heart, from the depths of their souls. In the Terezin ghetto there were also Jews that had been sent there from Germany and among them were such that were much more devout than we Czech Jews. I've still got a letter from that time from my boyfriend, in which he asks why I, such an innocent girl, without sin, fasted for Yom Kippur. After all, here in the ghetto we go hungry every day.

My best friend was Ruth Weisz. We met during Jewish religion class in the then Rejsek School in Prostejov. We became friends in Grade 3. I've since then never experienced such friendship again. Ruth's parents, Ethel and Simon, came to Prostejov from Slovakia. Mr. Weisz worked in the Prostejov clothing manufacturing industry. He was much more devout than my parents, and often attended synagogue, the small, old one – not our large and modern temple. He prayed at home, and maybe even wore a cap 8; he was very strict. Ruth's mother was a pretty, kind and pleasant lady who led a kosher household 9. They spoke Hungarian amongst themselves.

Ruth was a very pretty girl. We were both precocious. Back then, Otik Hirsch photographed us while we were skating. Then he and his friend Luisek Schwarz escorted us from the Maccabi 10 grounds to town. How proud we were that we, barely 12-year-old girls, were being accompanied by

20-year-old young men – and Otik was so beautiful! How afraid Ruth was that her father would see us!

It was a beautiful friendship; when the Nazis forbade us from going to school, we studied in groups, and Ruth and I were together every day. In 1941 her parents invited me for seder. We weren't allowed to be out in the street after 8pm 11, so I slept over at their place. We'd visit each other every day; as opposed to children today, it didn't even occur to us to talk on the phone – and even if it had, would we have gotten it from our parents!

Ruth had a grandma and grandpa in Slovakia, in Sastin – I often saw her mother read and write letters. A young woman, Hermina, arrived with her from Sastin, who worked in their household. In about 1936 Ruth's sister Eva was born, but died shortly after birth. Ruth remained an only child. We used to ride our bikes together to the Maccabi sports grounds and all over the place. Marie, who worked in our household, once forgot her false teeth in her home village of Slatinky. Ruth and I went to get them on our bikes. To this day I remember the trip through the beautiful Hana countryside – how we found Slatinky, God only knows. Marie's sister treated us to some goat's milk, which we town girls weren't familiar with. We saw a little cottage. Beds piled high with bedding. After that we had to turn our bikes over to the Germans 12.

Luckily we were assigned to the same AAm transport to Terezin, and experienced the ‘shloiska’ [quarantine] in the bakery together. Ruth and I talked to each other about everything, we confided everything to each other; it was only about Hermann that I didn't tell even Ruth anything, though she knew him and probably suspected something.

Perhaps the last time we saw each other in Terezin was on one sunny July afternoon in 1942. We went to have a look at mothers that were behind the Dresden barracks in the fresh air and sunshine with their babies and toddlers. It was a strong experience for us, summoning our young maternal instincts. We spoke about this and about life as such; Ruthie went to their accommodations, to join her mother, and I stayed there a little longer alone, thinking, forming some sort of opinion – but I no longer know what; and actually during my whole life I'm accompanied by this feeling that back then I forgot something important.

Then Ruth was gone; they sent them, as they used to say, to Poland. Transports were dispatched so quickly that we didn't have time to say goodbye. I often remember Ruthie, what she'd say if she saw a skyscraper, a jet plane... She didn't live to experience love, she didn't live to have children, she wasn't even 13, when they most likely shot her, or even worse, stuffed her into a ‘dushegubka’ [a van in which the prisoners were suffocated by its exhaust fumes on their journey to their burial place].

Father used to tell me that his father, Grandpa Jakob Stecklmacher, came to Prostejov from Boskovice when he was 13, with his brother Salomon and his sister, after their parents had died. My mother later told me, that when he was young, Grandpa Stecklmacher worked for a shirt manufacturer. I still remember Grandpa's little shop on Masaryk Square, diagonally across the church. Today the Prior department store is on that spot. It wasn't far from the Jewish streets. Grandpa founded a business that my father then inherited, despite being the youngest of five sons. Before my parents built the house at Sadky No. 4 in 1933, my father had a smaller shop on the corner of Komenskeho and, I think, Lutinovova Street, again close to the Jewish streets.

Family background

What did Grandpa and my father do – how did they make a living? In Prostejov there were many factories and workshops that manufactured clothing. I still remember how people from the town and perhaps also from the surrounding villages would take home cut clothing. Often they'd carry them on their backs. They'd sew them at home and then return them to the owner again. Later the sewing was already done in the factories. Grandpa and Father had a dealership. They represented companies and manufacturers from other places, where they made buttons, clasps, thread, silk, lining fabrics, and wadding. There were samples in the shop, and Father used to take them around from factory to factory to get orders. We used to play with the samples at our place, especially during summer vacation, when my cousin Ruth would come from Prague, along with my cousins Jirka and Gusta. Whether my sister used to play with them, that I don't know anymore, she was little.

My father had four brothers. He and Uncle Arthur were handsome men. Uncle Arthur was also talented; he studied and became an architect. I don't think Uncle Otto had enough élan, which is why my dad inherited the store, though he was the youngest, and Otto worked in the store. Uncle Arthur later moved to Prague; his wife was Aunt Ruza, who was from Bohemia, from Spalene Porici. Their two children, Honza [Hans, Jan] and Ruth, were born while they were still in Prostejov. Dad's brother Emil died in childhood, and Bruno fell during World War I. Bruno and Otto were twins.

Grandpa Jakob had a brother, Salomon. They shortened my great-uncle Salomon's name from Stecklmacher to Steckler when he served in the army during the time of Austria-Hungary. His first wife was named Josefina, and was the sister of my grandma Klotilde from the Eisler family. I don't know when Josefina died; all I remember is my great-uncle's second wife, Ernestina. A tall, nice-looking, gray-haired lady, she had a sweet shop close to the church, which interested us children very much. Sometimes we'd go to the shop to get a handful of candy. Salomon also had five sons; the youngest, Felix, lived with Ernestina, they lived right beside the church on Filipcova Square. Felix had thick, curly black hair, quite dark skin, and looked a bit like a light-skinned Negro [African-American]; he was tall and good-looking like most of the Stecklmachers – Grandpa, Arthur, and my father.

I remember my great-uncle Salomon only very little; he died when I was still small. His son Emil was paralyzed from the horrible flu that raged after World War I. I used to meet him in the street, in a wheelchair, that the lady that took care of him used to push him around in. I never spoke to him. He had a beautiful son, Honza. His wife Bertl finally divorced poor Emil. She married Mr. Weinberger and moved with Honza to live with him in Brno. I still remember Honza's bar mitzvah in Prostejov, and Bertl's parents, the Wasservogels, who had a little shop with wafers and sweets, I think in what was back then Rashin Gate, actually also where today Prior is located, across from Serhovni Street. Honza Steckler, his mother Bertl and his stepfather Mr. Weinberger were sent from Brno to Minsk 12 in the fall of 1941, and perished.

Salomon's son Alfred moved to Jihlava, where he became the manager of a bank. Early enough, in 1939, he left for Palestine and his daughter Edith Schnabel lives in Israel. Salomon's son Leo also moved to Palestine; when my cousin Ruth arrived alone in Palestine at the age of 13, she used to visit him at the kibbutz Beith Alfa, during summer vacation. Leo had a son, Josi [Josef]. He wanted to have a child, despite not being married. Today Josi is an old man; I've never met him, but I know

that he's got a large family and that they changed their name to a Hebrew one. On 21st October 1941, Father's cousin, Dr. Robert Steckler, was sent along with his wife from Prague to Lodz 13, where they both perished, but their daughter Ena survived in England. During 1945 – 1946 there was a notice at Prostejov city hall that Ena was looking for her relatives. Ena is a shortened version of Josefina. She was named after her grandmother, who died before she was born.

Grandma Stecklmacher also had siblings. In the fall of 1942, my father's aunt on his mother's side, Mrs. Löw, arrived in Terezin from Vienna. She was old, and couldn't even stand any more; when we found her, she was sitting on the floor. I don't know if she died in Terezin, or whether they managed to send her somewhere in Poland. Other relatives from the Eislers' side lived in Olomouc. Recently one of their descendants found me. He's the well-known filmmaker Pavel Schnabel [Schnabel, Pavel (b. 1946): German filmmaker of Czech-Jewish origin], who now lives in Frankfurt. He's still making excellent Czech films.

My grandpa on my mother's side, Max Steiner, was the oldest of five children of Jakob and Charlotte, née Husserl. Great-grandpa Jakob bought the house at Pernstyn Square No. 6. My mother told me, that Grandpa's grandmother was still living in the Jewish streets, and my grandpa lived with her, so that she wouldn't be alone, to take care of her and help her. When Max came to visit his parents, his youngest brother Josef asked who he was. Josef was 12 years younger, and didn't know that Max was his brother.

They used to say that when my grandpa was a child, he used to often visit his grandmother, whom he loved very much. She used to cook him noodles, not like today, but homemade ones, with sugar and poppy seed. Grandpa used to tell me that at the age of 78 his grandmother still had all her teeth; once, when he hugged and kissed her, one of her teeth fell out – how sorry my grandpa was for that! I am almost 79, have all my teeth except one!

Grandpa's grandmother's maiden name was Brüll and her husband was Mayer Steiner, whose name during my childhood was still written along with Jakob's name on their leather shop on Perstyn Square. This is the building where in the spring of 1929 – the coldest spring in memory – I was born.

Downstairs there was the shop, warehouse space and a cellar, and on the first floor lived Grandpa Max with Grandma Stefanie [Steffi] neé Steiner from Ivancice, along with their only daughter Katharina [Kathe], my mother. A hallway led from the shop into the residential part of the building, but I remember the main entrance from the street better. The door, almost a gate, made of heavy wood, a huge key and already we're in the passageway; a narrow little passageway to the courtyard and a broad wooden staircase to Grandma and Grandpa's apartment on the first floor.

We used to enter the apartment through the kitchen. Grandma's kitchen! Bright, clean-smelling. In the center of the kitchen ceiling was a hook, where once a gas lamp hung. Grandma was an excellent housewife, and her meals and baking were perfect. A doorway led off the kitchen into the bedroom; doors so wide that in the corner formed by one of them, Grandma used to force-feed a goose. A large window looking out from the bedroom onto the town hall.

The living room, in it Grandpa's piano, a shelf with a flute and sheet music. A clock that was wound once a year; Grandpa showed me: he pulled one weight down, that pulled the other one up – and that was it! A sideboard with better dishes, tablecloths and napkins. In a pot a plant almost to the

ceiling. Grandpa's library, books, atlases, a lexicon that Gusta and I liked looking through; a vessel made of olive wood, from Palestine – from the Holy Land, and on it something written with Hebrew letters. That vessel was later at my relatives' in Prague. My relative Nada, née Steinerova, who lives in Prague, gave it to me during our visit to Prague in 2006. I have it here in my apartment in Tel Aviv.

In the living room, various pictures hung on the walls, and also a photo of Grandpa's beautiful sister Gisela, who died at the age of 21 during childbirth. Then there was a narrow small room where my mother had grown up, and another room where Pepka, Grandma's household helper, lived. On Saturday afternoon, Father, Mother, my sister Karmi [Karmela] and I used to come to Grandpa and Grandma's place for coffee and Grandma's good cakes. On the second floor lived Uncle Josef with his son Gusta [Gustav]. Josef's wife, Aunt Mela, died when Gusta was seven. Mela, neé Sborowitz died in 1932.

My grandparents the Steiners had a shop with supplies for shoemakers. Working in the store were Grandpa, occasionally Grandma, Uncle Josef, and several employees. Mrs. Mania made entries with her beautiful penmanship into voluminous accounting books in a separate office in the back of the store. There was a telephone there, old-fashioned, black and big. From Grandpa's writing desk I remember a glass paperweight that I liked, as well as colored calendars decorated with gilding that used to arrive in the shop around Christmas and New Year's as promotional items from companies whose goods they sold in the shop. Besides leather, they sold shoelaces, nails, pins, thread and other shoemaking supplies. In small drawers there were little discs of wax; in each drawer a different color: white, brown, light brown, black. My mother's cousin Gusta and I used to like playing with those discs.

Jenda worked in the store, and later also Mirek; Jenda was good at cutting leather for soles. How I loved going to that store, with its intoxicating smell! I was allowed to play with the discs of colored wax that the shoemakers used to buy. Above the main door there hung an ad for ‘Armada’ shoe polish, with a likeness of a husky, smiling man. Right beside was written ‘God be with you!’ At the age of five I already knew how to read, and I was convinced that the man in the ad was God. Then when I started attending religion classes, I was all confused.

The largest number of customers would come on market days, on Monday and Thursday. From the villages they'd bring fruit, vegetables and eggs, and would buy what they needed in town. After selling their goods, they'd go to Mr. Vareka's tavern for a drink. Mr. Vareka was the Steiners' next-door neighbor – I visited their son Emil around 1994. We knew each other from childhood, he recognized me and gave me a toy that he'd had put away all those years for the late Gusta, Mother's cousin. He'd gotten it for safekeeping before we left for Terezin. Some of Vareka's customers drank too much. I was very afraid of drunks. Sometimes they'd even fall down in the street and Uncle Josef would help them get up.

Thanks to Grandpa's leather store, we had good shoes, made to measure. I remember Mr. Dosedel, a skilled shoemaker, from Urcicka Street I think. To this day, I buy and wear comfortable shoes.

On Sundays we'd go take trips out into the countryside with Grandpa, Grandma, Uncle Josef and Gusta, and we'd meet friends. Luckily I've got several photographs – from Pteni, Pohodli, Stinava, Strazisko, Belecky Mlyn, Hradisko... We'd pick strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and mushrooms. At the Plumlov Reservoir, I learned to swim. During the winter we had to stay in town,

and on Sundays I'd go to Grandma's for lunch. I always liked her food better than at home. After all, she was an excellent housewife and cook! I also felt better there. Grandma was more lenient than my parents, and I had it good at her place.

Once at Grandma's place I got a high fever. I stayed at her place until I got better – how good I felt, how she took care of me and spoiled me – I was glad that I'd fallen ill at my Grandma's. I rarely slept over at Grandma's, but how good it was! The town hall and church bells would sound the hour. Everything's stayed in my memory. Then I used to sleep on the floor with many people. In Israel I lived in a tent. For years, our children lived with us in a tiny wooden cabin, in the beginning without electricity, often without water.

Grandpa died in Terezin in his sleep, on the floor amongst many people. Luckily Grandma was beside him. In October 1944, they sent my beloved grandma to Auschwitz – directly into the gas. How we missed her! She'd been in Terezin with us for over two years.

Grandpa Max Steiner once took me for a walk to the botanical garden beside the church of St. Peter and Paul, and then showed me the old Jewish cemetery right across the way. He went with me to the grave of Mrs. Bamberger, and told me that she was a relative of ours, that one branch of our family came to Prostejov from the German town of Bamberg. Later I visited that town with my daughter Ednah. Grandpa probably told it to me, in the hope that I'd pass it on to my progeny, which also happened.

In our family it was said that Grandpa's grandfather, when he was already old, liked to sit on Florianek [Florian Square] and imagine that he was sitting under an olive tree in Eretz Israel – a bond with our land after almost 2000 years of exile. One more reminiscence, to do with Grandpa's grandmother. She got married against the will of her parents to a man that was studying the Holy Word, and in order to make it possible for him, she supported the family on her own. She sold leather and in her ‘accounting book’ there were expressions like: ‘The old woman in the red kerchief owes...’

My parents were married on 25th March 1928 in our hometown, Prostejov. My mother at the age of 20, while my father was already almost 30. In their wedding photo, which by chance survived, my mother is wearing a white lace veil. As a dowry she got table and bed linen – embroidered damask and batiste, often with a monogram. Also dishes, silver-plated cutlery and modern stainless-steel cutlery.

After the war, my mother, sister and I returned –by miracle we'd survived the Holocaust. We still had a part of what remained of the things we'd taken with us three years earlier to Terezin. In March 1949 we left for Israel. Mother divided our belongings up into three portions; we knew that we weren't going to be living together. I got a medium-sized stainless-steel spoon that had returned with us from Terezin. As long as my children were little, they ate soup and porridge with it; since they grew up the spoon has been mine and I use it only. When my first granddaughter, Inbal, was little, she ate with my spoon when she was at our place. My wish is to eat with my spoon until the end of my days.

During the war

As I've already mentioned, in 1941 the situation for us Jews changed greatly. Many prohibitions and decrees were issued. We children were mainly affected by the fact that we weren't allowed to go to school, nor to the park, cinema, theaters, the playground or swimming pool. We were forbidden to leave town. We wore the yellow star. I was proud to wear it. We had to be home by 8pm, weren't allowed to associate with Aryans, and were allowed to shop during certain hours, and only in a Jewish store. Fascist newspapers with anti-Jewish articles and caricatures of big-nosed Jews were being published. Starting September 1940, we weren't allowed to attend public schools 14.

The Germans confiscated our large new temple, the courtyard beside it, and the so-called Beyt Haam, the community hall. We had no choice but to congregate in the very small and old temple across the street. When my grandpa Max Steiner was still a child, he'd attended the very old and small Jewish school. Now we went there, but only for a short time. The Germans didn't want so many of us in one place – I guess they were afraid of us – and forbade classes in the old building.

So we began learning in ‘circles’ in pupils' homes. We weren't allowed to be more than five or six to a ‘circle.’ Our teachers were excellent; highly educated people, lawyers, doctors, professors and university students. They'd been forbidden to work in their fields, thanks to which we had such amazing teachers. It was enjoyable to learn in this way, and that was actually the first time in my life that I enjoyed attending ‘school.’

Father and Grandfather lost their livelihood – so called ‘Treuhänder’ [trustees] took over their businesses. We had to give the Germans our radio, jewels, warm clothing and furs for Germans in Russia, carpets, and silver.

During these times, Jews and Jewish youth would gather in the old Beyt Haam and at the Maccabi sports grounds. We gathered there, and were happy in each other's company. Maccabi was far from the center of town, and our parents got us bikes. One spring day in 1941, we were riding our bikes, my mother's cousin Gusta and I. A group of young Jewish people approached us from the opposite direction, also on bikes. We stopped, got off our bikes and talked. Gusta introduced me to Hermann, and told me that after we move out of our house – by order of the Nazis – we'd be living with Hermann, whose family also had to leave their apartment. That's how we met – Hermann and I. I liked him. I was a little over 12, Hermann was almost 24. Hermann moved into Sadky No. 9 with his mother and aunt Regina earlier than we did. We still lived in our house at Sadky. No. 4 – across the street.

We had to be home by 8pm. I lived in an orderly family; we ate supper at precisely 8pm. Before eating I'd go wash my hands, I'd stand with a towel by the window and watch until I saw Hermann, hurrying home at the last moment, either on foot or on his racing bike. Mother would be calling for me to come eat already, and my excuse would be, that I was washing my hands. To this day I can recall the pleasant soapy aroma of a freshly washed damask towel. You can tell that I was interested in Hermann and that I liked him, even before we got to know each other better.

In the summer of 1941 we moved. Downstairs on the ground floor of the house at Sadky. No. 9 lived old Mrs. Wolf, the original owner of the house, and in two rooms also the Tandlers – Hermann, his mother and his aunt Regina Lagodzinska. The upstairs, up a flight of carpet-covered wooden stairs, was given to us: father, mother, Karmi and I. At first our helper and cook Marie lived with us; later she wasn't allowed to work for Jews anymore. There was a shared bathroom upstairs beside us, and a shared hallway, kitchen, laundry, courtyard and a nice garden were downstairs.

Right the first day the residents of the house formally introduced themselves. Mrs. Wolf was a good old friend of our family; Hermann and his mother had escaped from Moravsky Krumlov to Prostejov to his mother's sister's place, the independent and single Miss Lagodzinska. It was decided that the ladies would address me informally, and that Hermann and I would also address each other informally. [Editor's note: The Czech language has formal and informal versions of 'you' – 'vy' and 'ty' – similar for example to the French 'vous' and 'tu' .] I liked that.

It was summertime, the weather was nice, and after 8pm we'd spend time in the garden. I was a girl with a teenager's spirit in a woman's body. I was serious, and even though my friend Ruth and I would sometimes be seized by fits of uncontrollable teenage giggling, we did a lot of thinking. Of course and naturally, I spent a lot of time in Hermann's company. Once we were in the garden together, and in a completely innocent and childlike manner, I was combing and stroking his beautiful wavy hair. Suddenly I realized that I was actually doing something erotic.

When Hermann would be returning from work in the afternoon, I'd wait for him to ring and run to open the door for him. Once he kissed my hand at the door, I was upset, but I also liked it. We'd give each other little gifts; once in winter he brought me a rose. What could I do with it; after all I couldn't show it to my parents. I dried it and have it to this day. When Hermann would be going to work early in the morning and moving about in the hall downstairs, I'd come out of my room to the stairs and we'd both go 'sssss,' so that no one would hear that we're saying 'Good day' to each other.

I, truthful and direct, learned to prevaricate in all sorts of ways, so that I could be with Hermann. One October afternoon my parents and Karmi weren't home. Right when Hermann came out of the bathroom, I came out of the room beside the bathroom and there Hermann took me in his arms and kissed me on the lips. My heart was beating, and I was beside myself. I ran to look in the mirror, if it could be seen on my face, if my parents would notice what had happened to me.

Once my mother found a note that Hermann had left for me under the carpet in the hall. She told my father, there was a scandal, he spoke with Hermann. Finally I promised my father that I'd try to break off the relationship with Hermann, at least for a time. I'm an honest person; I keep my promises, even if it's very hard. But one day, when I was returning from class with Ruth, Hermann came to meet me. He was waiting for me in the passageway of one building – and that was the end of my promise to father. I remember the brown tiles of that passageway; in 1995 they were still there.

Once I excused myself from a visit at Grandma and Grandpa's, that I had too much homework. Then I went with Hermann on our bikes all the way to Plumlov; he spoke later with Marie and asked her to calm things down between my parents and me. Sometimes Hermann would leave the house, saying he was going to Otik's or David's, and then I'd leave – we'd meet up, go for a walk, as far as was allowed, Jews weren't allowed past the town limits. I didn't want people to know about us, I even kept our love a secret from my friend Ruth.

Once Hermann was waiting for me by my mother's cousin Lici's place, where I had English lessons. That day, Lici decided that there'd be 'conversation,' and that we'd go for a walk. I refused her invitation for a snack at her place, saying that I had too much homework. On the way back, we saw Hermann by the entrance to her building. Lici figured out, that it wasn't by chance, and a couple of days later came to our place to tell on me. My parents were in an uproar, and I was crying

helplessly.

I lived a full and busy life. The private lessons in the circles with five or six Jewish pupils and teachers were intensive. Hermann, who'd studied engineering at the Technicum in Brno before, almost finished his studies; he helped me with math and geometry. We spoke seriously about how when I was ‘big’ we'd get married and we called our children ‘little bricks’ so that no one would understand us.

Once we were planning to go for a walk. At home I said that I was going to the dentist, Dr. Löwi, and then to Ruth's place to study. I told Ruth that I had to go to the dentist. I really did go to Dr. Löwi, and from there, straight on a long walk with Hermann through Urcicka Street and back via Brnenska. We got caught in a proper rainstorm, to this day I can see the water running down Hermann's nose; how lucky we felt, simply to be together! We walked along, holding hands, and the boyfriend of Hermina, who helped in the household at Ruth's place, saw us. He didn't keep quiet, and the next day I had to make excuses to Ruth, and even to her father, the strict Mr. Weisz – I was never good at it, and to this day I'm not.

Winter arrived, and with it dark and cold evenings – those the residents of our house spent around a large oval table, which not long ago had been with us at Sadky 4. My parents allowed me to spend these evenings amongst the grownups, but at 8.30 or 9pm I had to go to bed. Father would open our large atlas and would inform us about the political situation. I used to hear the names of faraway places like Kharkov and Tobruk. And then we'd play cards. Hermann and I often sat beside each other on a crate and whispered to each other, or would write each other notes hoping, that no one noticed. Sometimes one of us would go to the toilet, the other into the hall into which there was a window from the toilet, and there in whispers we'd say all sorts of things to each other.

For the time being we survived our High Holidays – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. We attended the small temple, as the Germans had confiscated our new, large temple. I attempted to read Hebrew prayers fast enough to keep up with the rabbi and the members of the Kehilah. Then came New Year's Eve, which we celebrated in the evening with the occupants of our house. We decorated our common hall and everyone contributed something good to eat. Hermann's family was originally from the east; that was the first time I tasted peas with salt and pepper, as is the custom in those places.

In the spring of 1942, when the Prostejov Jews, young and adult men and unmarried young women, were sent to Zarovice to a work camp, father and Hermann were among them. I missed them, mainly Hermann. On Saturday afternoon they came home for Sunday, suntanned and dirty, with loads of dirty laundry. I sent Hermann secret letters to Zarovice, and got replies from him via his mother. Ruth and I went for walks, as far as was allowed, now we were forbidden to walk on the sidewalk and walk in the gutter; we talked about how it would be, when we'd be ‘big,’ we'd have our own families, but I didn't say a word about Hermann. By the railway tracks we found four-leaf clovers; I sent them in letters to Hermann, and wish him much luck with all my heart.

On Saturday afternoon, when we waited for ‘our men’ to arrive from Zarovice, I anxiously listened for the doorbell, so I could open up for Hermann. He always came alone, ahead of my father. I remember a beautiful spring evening, I missed Hermann very much, I went to the garden, it was already dark, the sky was full of stars, and the old pear tree was beautifully, fragrantly blooming. I hugged its trunk, looked at the almost-full moon, and hoped, pleaded, that perhaps Hermann, too,

was looking at the moon, and that our gazes and thoughts would be meeting. I experienced feelings so strong like never before and rarely afterwards.

June arrived, and with it the departure of the AAf, AAg, AAm and AAo transports from Olomouc and its surroundings to Terezin. At home we baked, prepared noodles, roux, and homemade condensed milk. My parents, like all Jews, ordered backpacks and light aluminum dishes, colored bedcovers were sewn, and sweatpants. I learned to use a sewing machine, and sewed bags for sugar, noodles and so on.

Hermann and his family were assigned to the AAg transport, and left Prostejov about four days earlier than we did. I went with Hermann to the train station to say goodbye. I said goodbye to Hermann, and to this day I remember how I walked back home from the train station, the sadness, I'd never before experienced such grief.

In June and July 1942, four transports left the town – we were sent to Terezin. On July 2nd we and Mr. Wolf also left our home at Sadky 9. Each one of us was allowed to take 50 kg along. My little eight-year-old sister with a little backpack, to which was tied her doll Olinka and a chamber-pot – that's how the majority of little Jewish children went to the transport. All of us with a number around our necks. It was summer – school was out for summer holidays, and we had got three or four layers of clothing on, and high boots. What do you think fits into 50 kg when you know that hunger awaits? You take along food, and duvets for the winter. After a long railway ride in a dark and terribly crowded cattle wagon, we arrived in Bohusovice, where I took my backpack and joined a long line of people walking to Terezin.

Our ‘shloiska’ was in a former bakery. In Terezin there was a ‘Ghettosperre’ like always, when a transport arrived or departed. Half the transport – several hundred people – were put up in a large room – a former storage room. A packed earthen floor and the strong sour smell of moldy flour. Latrines – a ditch and above it a rough board and the stink of quicklime, that is to accompany us our whole time in the ghetto. We're beginning to be hungry. We aren't allowed to leave the bakery. After I threw the heavy bags to the ground, I couldn’t help it and burst into crying, no one noticed, luckily. They brought a barrel of soup – my family hadn't arrived yet – I, the shy one, took the ladle and began serving the soup. One old man probably couldn't find his mess tin, and came for the soup with a night pot. It was new, but still, it was a night pot, and we'd left our homes only three days earlier!

Our aunt from Brno, who'd already been in Terezin for several months, visited us after a few days and alerted us to not be surprised if we wouldn't get our menses. The Germans were probably putting something in our food so that we couldn't multiply. Then we all left the ‘shloiska,’ my father was transferred with the men to the Sudeten barracks, Grandpa and Grandma to the old people's house, my mother, sister and I to block Q 802, where mothers with children lived.

When Hermann didn't arrive, I put aside my shyness, stood by the bakery gates – we weren't allowed out – and asked a passer-by from Prostejov to tell Hermann that I was waiting for him. The second or third day Hermann arrived, towards evening I managed to leave the ‘shloiska’ with my mess tin in hand, and together we went to the Magdeburg barracks to see his mother. I refused the potatoes that Mrs. Tandler offered me; I'd come because of Hermann and not because of food. There was no place to be found, that wasn't teeming with people. It seemed that there wasn't anyone by the stairs in the Magdeburg barracks, we could finally kiss; along came Mr. and Mrs.

Beer from Prostejov; I thought that I'd die of shame.

The beginning of fall 1942. We had already been in Terezin for several weeks. A nice day, sunshine, blue sky. My boyfriend Hermann and I weren't working that day. In the morning we stopped for a while at the Dresden barracks. Standing in a long queue in the large courtyard were old people that had recently arrived from Germany. Among them an old lady with a blind person's badge on her sleeve. In her hands a cup with a bit of crumbled moldy bread. They'd pour coffee over it, a black, watery bitter, but warm liquid – she'd have breakfast.

Transports were being sent from Theresienstadt to Poland all the time. In October 1942 transports mainly of old people were sent. Hermann, an only son, was born when his mother was already 40; now she was 65, and they put her on transport Bx. Hermann reported voluntarily to go with his mother, that went without saying and nothing could be done about it.

On our last evening Hermann pleaded with me to not cry. My mother offered that she'd come with me to the ‘shloiska’ to say goodbye to them; we brought them a can of food for the trip. Hermann and I promised that we'd wait for each other, and he gave me an address, where I should look for him after the war. I remember it to this day: Berlin, Wilmersdorf, Ahrweilerstrasse 3. After returning to our room, on a sudden impulse I suddenly flew down to the street, and pushed my way through the crowd of people standing by the rope that divided us from those leaving. At that moment Hermann was walking by, in a coat, a rucksack on his back, in his hand a cane on which hung a suitcase. That's how I saw him for the last time; he surely didn't see me...

I'd like to express my recognition and admiration for the cultural and spiritual life in the ghetto. Fine, faithful people organized lectures, plays and operas, without costumes, without sets, with a minimum of instruments, up in attics. In the beginning father dug graves, later he was entrusted with the task of organizing cultural events. We had a children's theater, soccer was played in the courtyards of the barracks, and people, mostly children, played sports up on the fortifications. I'll never forget the High Holidays in the ghetto. And we children learned under the worst of circumstances. Early in the morning, while it was still dark, and in the snow, I walked with my girlfriends before work to the boys' home, so that we could listen to lectures by Rudy Lieben about the Bible. Despite all difficulties and worries, hardly a day went by without reading; for the most part we read good literature. Often I visited the library, where on my own I studied what interested me.

Several weeks after our arrival in Terezin, I received a summons for work in the ‘Jugendgarden,’ in the gardens where adolescents from 12 to 17 worked, which I have to this day, it is signed by Fredy Hirsch [15]. At first I worked in the garden behind the ghetto between the ramparts, which was taken care of by Meda with the help of Mausa, who lives in England. We worked in the fresh air, and sometimes succeeded in eating something, or even to bring a few vegetables to our mothers in the ghetto. The entire family was then delighted by it, when we'd meet in Mother's room in the evening.

The head of agriculture was Mr. Kurszavy, a German and a decent man, who treated us humanely. He noticed that we were suffering from impetigo, ulcers caused by vitamin deficiency, and so allowed us to pick nettles and orache and bring them to the ghetto, where vitamins were a rarity. Our mothers would make something like spinach out of them, except that we didn't have flour for roux. Sometimes we managed to scratch a bit of flour off the underside of bread. Rich and lucky

were the girls that worked in the fields during the singling of beets. They'd bring sacks of seedlings back to the ghetto. Later I worked in the garden led by Pavel Löw from Olomouc.

The clothes and shoes that we'd brought with us from home began to be shabby and were tearing. Some of my things were sent to Auschwitz – while I was, luckily, reclaimed from the transport at the last moment and remained in Terezin. I had to do something about my 'wardrobe.' At that time it was possible to buy old clothes with the so-called ghetto money. I bought some clothes, and Mrs. Flusser, a kind and nice lady, mended them a bit for me. I also bought a pair of boots – high, black lace-up boots, almost to the knees, pointy and with high heels – boots that earlier had probably belonged to an elegant older lady. I wore them until the end of the war, and longer, until I got another pair of shoes in their place, certainly also used ones.

In the summer of 1944 the bedbugs in our bunks multiplied to the point that it was unbearable. We were covered with bites, and our bodies were full of red blotches, that quickly changed into festering impetigo. After all, we'd been suffering from vitamin deficiency and malnourishment for two to three years already. The braver girls would get up in the middle of the night, when it was the worst, took their bed sheets into the hall, lay them down on the floor and went to sleep again. The hallways were filling up, there wasn't even a bit of space left. We found another solution; luckily no one forbade it. As soon as we returned from work in the afternoon, each one of us took her bed sheets and ran down to grab a place in the courtyard. It was summer, warm, and so about four hundred girls were now sleeping in the courtyard. But the nice little bedbugs moved along with us; I saw them crawling on the trunks of several trees that grew in the courtyard.

There was a time, during the October transports in 1944, when I lost hope, and let myself become demoralized – which is against my nature – I 'enjoyed' the moment, that what I have now. When I got the weekly margarine ration – 60 g, I spread it on one slice of bread – that was a delicacy! When I got the weekly sugar ration – 70 g, I ate it on the spot – I no longer scrimped and saved, I had no thought for tomorrow.

During the October transports, after over 20,000 people were sent away from the ghetto, everything changed, everything fell apart; we who by miracle had remained then worked in various places. We worked in potato fields; in the fall I put muddy, icy potatoes on my body in order to carry them into the ghetto. In 'Kurszavy's Garden' under a huge apple tree I found partly rotted, fermenting apples, which I ate with great relish.

In Terezin we subsisted on 'bonkes,' i.e. hearsay. There was no radio, no newspapers, there was no telephone, no communication at all with the outside world. Only when a transport arrived did we find out what was new, and starting in 1943 incoming transports were few and far between. The Jewry of the Protectorate 16 was already almost all concentrated. Prophets and clairvoyants had their say. What did they talk about? When the war would end. That was our only wish – we didn't yet know what was happening to our people, our loved ones in 'the East,' in Poland. That we found out when the war ended, and it completely spoiled the joy of liberation. What were we planning? That the second Sunday after the war ended, we'd meet on Old Town Square in Prague, under the astronomical clock. What we'd eat and cook. Each day we'd wash with warm water and with soap! And we'd change our underwear whenever we feel like it.

In the spring of 1943 Father fell ill. He got pneumonia and in the Terezin ghetto this illness was almost lethal. There were no antibiotics. Father grew very weak, and was lying in the sick ward in

the Sudeten barracks – the men's barracks, where he lived in a large hall with hundreds of men in bunks.

I wanted to do something for my sick father besides the fact that here and there I'd bring a bit of vegetable from the garden and my mother would cook it and bring it to him. Once a week we children were issued a bit of sweet bun. We'd look forward to it all week, even though it was just a piece of slightly sweetened baked dough. Any and all food was extremely important, because we were constantly hungry. That evening, when we were being issued the buns, I asked three girls from our room, Lilly, Sonia and Renee, called Teddy, to lend me their share, that I'd gradually return it to them over the next three weeks. I visited my father in the sick ward, and made him a present of four pieces of bun. I got the impression that he was quite touched by that. Father gave me a piece of bread, as it was easier for him to eat the buns than the Terezin bread.

If my memory doesn't deceive me – that was the last time I saw my father. I had a good feeling, that I'd done at least something for my father in the last days of his life. For three weeks I paid off my debt to my three friends. Liza, who lived above me, got tuberculosis and was confined to bed in the sick ward for children with tuberculosis. One evening I decided to visit her, instead of going to see my mother as usual. That evening, after partly recovering, father visited mother for the last time. At night he committed suicide; it was only later that I found out he'd jumped out of the window in the Sudeten barracks. The next day in the evening I as usual went to visit my mother in block Q 802, where Aunt Ruza, Ruth's mother, told me the terrible news. I wanted to run away – but then I returned to my mother's room. Shortly before his death, father wrote down for mother a list of hidden things and what to do with them.

My grandma was a kind soul. Shortly after arriving in Terezin, my grandfather died, and grandma became a widow. From a rotund lady, she turned into almost a skeleton. With pain Grandma saw my mother, her only daughter, and us, her granddaughters, in the harsh conditions of the ghetto. She didn't find her siblings, who'd come to Terezin before us. Her brothers had been sent to the East, to Poland, and her sisters died after a short stay in Terezin.

Despite this, my grandma had a place in her heart for bigger wretches than we were. She took under her wing an old man who'd come from Germany, completely alone and desperate. He lived in the attic of our building with hundreds of old German Jews who'd arrived in Terezin, hoping that they were going to spend their old age in a spa town. When he got dysentery – Terezinka, as we called it – she cooked him semolina porridge from the small supplies of food that we'd brought with us from home. Once towards evening, this man came to see Grandma and under some pretext asked her to hide for him the only valuable thing that he still had – an elegant light gray felt hat. The next morning they found him hanged.

My grandma's birthday was on 20th April. My beloved, good, incomparable grandma, whom I loved the most of the entire family, didn't live to be as old as I am now. She was sent to Auschwitz on one of the October transports in 1944. Several times the four of us – Grandma, my mother, sister and I – managed to stay in Terezin, despite being scheduled for transport eastward. This time, however, there was no option; Grandma went alone. We wanted to go with her; I no longer remember what and how it was. Once they reclaimed us, because my mother was working in the mica workshop and I in agriculture.

To this day I see my grandma the way I saw her for the last time. I'm not sure why she went to the transport dressed all in black. After being in Terezin for over two years, Grandma was skinny, a little hunched over, wrinkled. That's how I saw her standing in the large gates of the Hamburg barracks, through which she went directly onto the train – into a cattle wagon, of course. That was my last glimpse of Grandma; to this day it hurts very much, and I've missed her all my life.

If our grandma, a wise, experienced and mature woman would have stayed with us, our life would've been different and probably better. After all, my mother was still young, she was only 36 years old. How often did I think about the fact that Grandma could've lived to see the birth of my children. When my youngest was born, in 1962, Grandma would've been 80. But Grandma was sent to the Auschwitz gas chambers at the age of 62 and a half.

When the war ended, rumor had it, that some older women had been sent to work in textile factories. When in April 1945 the ghetto began filling up with prisoners that were arriving from the death marches, we'd stand at the edge of the road and watch the arrivals. I tried hard to constantly keep my eyes open and to not even blink, so that I wouldn't miss my grandma if she was among them. Today I'll add that I, of course, also very much hoped that Hermann would be among the arrivals.

Towards the end of the war, after the transports that left in October 1944, few people remained in the ghetto, and even less that were capable of working. At that time the Germans wanted to cover up the evidence of their crimes. Old people and children got the order to report for work. They stood them in a long line, from the crematorium all the way to the Ohre River. They passed cardboard boxes along from hand to hand. Those standing on the riverbank would empty their contents into the flowing water. They were the ashes of our dead. My sister, who was about ten at the time, returned from there pale and quiet. Only many years later did she tell me, that the boxes were marked with the transport numbers of the deceased, and the entire time she'd looked for our father's number.

On 13th February 1945 – I didn't find out the date until after the war – we witnessed the bombing of nearby Dresden by the Allies – we heard them clearly. Now, in the spring of 1945, we sometimes heard and sometimes glimpsed airplanes from a great height; sometimes pieces of tin foil would fall from the sky, which the Allies were probably using to confuse the enemy. It was forbidden to pick these pieces of tin foil from the ground or collect them, but there were children who picked them up and surreptitiously showed them around. For us it was a greeting from the free world.

The Sudeten barracks had been completely emptied, and a secret archive was moved into them, probably from Berlin; they brought in piles of papers, documents. We were forbidden to approach the Sudeten barracks. I remember that every day during that time I walked on a wooden bridge that had been built, so that we wouldn't walk near these barracks. In the spring the Germans burned the archive, so that secret evidence wouldn't remain behind. They already knew that they'd lost the war. Besides ashes, scraps of half-burned documents and papers fluttered around in the air, from which you could tell that they'd been lists of names.

On 20th April 1945, the first transport from the East [Poland] arrived in Terezin. Towards evening we were just returning from work, and the girls brought our supper in a bucket as always. This time we had a piece of sweet bun for supper. We heard that a transport of starving people had arrived – we grabbed the bucket with the buns. We ran to the Jaeger barracks, where the transport had

apparently stopped, because we wanted to see them and hand out the buns. Amongst the arrivals were a few people that had been transported away from Terezin in October, about five months ago – they were unrecognizable! Shaved heads, skin and bones, striped clothing, lice, diseases, weak and terribly hungry – they were called ‘musulmen.’ They told us of the gas chambers, and we believed them.

Jews arrived from France, Hungary, from all sorts of countries. Non-Jewish prisoners also arrived, criminals, murderers, starving, ill, lice-ridden, typhus, cannibalism. The liberation wasn't as happy and pleasant as we'd imagined it would be, for three long years. The new arrivals were placed in recently built barracks on the ramparts, as well as elsewhere in the ghetto. From then on, transports arrived daily, on foot or by train.

Once a train pulled up in Terezin, all the way to the Hamburg barracks, as far as the tracks had been laid in 1943. That freight train was full of corpses, and the few living that remained were eating the flesh of the dead out of hunger. I didn't see it with my own eyes, but I heard about it.

One day, Mr. Robert Schreiber and Dolfek Perschak, from Prostejov, were among the arrivals. Whether they recognized me or I them, I no longer remember. They said that they hadn't eaten for days on end, that along the route they'd taken, not even grass remained... I ran to the other end of the ghetto to my mother's, to have her cook from the bit of semolina we had in our emergency reserves a bit of porridge with water, as there was no milk. And then I quickly ran with the pot with the hot porridge and a spoon to bring it to those two men from Prostejov. It was only recently, when many transports were already arriving in Terezin from various concentration camps that we had found out in what terrible shape Germany was in. The arrivals claimed that the war would be over in a few days. One evening, the men that were building the so-called duck pond rebelled, suspecting that they were building gas chambers instead. In order to calm us down, the SS ordered that we be given a special serving of soup!

The gendarmes that used to walk with us to our work outside the ghetto and then guarded us there, began treating us better. One of them gave us his midmorning snack – each child got a bite. ‘Our’ gendarme actually ‘had an affair’ with our Jewish boss; during that time before the end, he'd stand with his back to us and talk to Anicka, and sometimes also to us. In our girls' home in L 410, almost everything was still the same. We practiced for the ‘Beseda’ [traditional Czech folk dances and music] – we walked all over the ghetto and looked for red flower patterned scarves, white blouses, and for the girls that were dressing up as boys, with pants and high boots. One nice spring day we put on the clothing we had prepared for the ‘Beseda,’ and walked about the ghetto; despite everything, the mood was good, the end was drawing near; we walked to the gate by the Magdeburg barracks, and merrily and cheekily asked the gendarmes when the Americans would be arriving.

One event began to arrive on the heels of another. The Germans were preparing to escape. On the way to work, we sometimes found on the Aryan road documents, purses, letters, family photos of the SS, who'd likely thrown them away as they were escaping. German cars drove by the ghetto at insane speeds, some people got up the courage to escape, non-Jewish visitors came to the ghetto, mostly from mixed marriages. Representatives of the International Red Cross arrived.

Like every day, at 6am we were in our ‘Heim’ preparing to go to work. A girl from the next room over came in and told us that another transport from some concentration camp had arrived again.

We quickly jumped out of our bunks, threw on our clothes and ran to the ‘shloiska.’ Again, that terrible feeling of helplessness, that we can't help those poor people and the awareness that none of our near and dear would likely be returning. We where helping where it was needed, and suddenly bang, bang... What is it? Gunshots! These people, returning from hell to the relative safety of Terezin, found out, that they wouldn't avoid one last encounter with the Germans. During a whole day's shooting, the ghetto waited in deep silence for fate's verdict. Will it be destroyed, or will it see the end of the war? Slowly the twilight deepened, and with the darkness the shooting and the tension grew.

Suddenly we hear a woman's voice: ‘A royte Fuhn!’ [‘A red flag’ in Yiddish]. In the streets, which within a moment were full of people, cheering erupted after the terrible silence. The ghetto breathed a sigh of relief, that it had gotten through the previous horrors and with joy greeted the liberators, the troops and tanks of the Red Army. Everyone who could, ran to them. The Russians were throwing us bread. One of the striped ones, who'd recently arrived, was run over by a tank when he wanted to pick up a piece of bread from the ground.

We didn't have the luck to be liberated by the bountiful Americans. The Russians brought only square black bread and potatoes. The main thing was, that we were finally free, and neither were we hungry anymore. We were afraid of the soldiers, didn't go into the streets alone, and just in case always had our mess tin in our hand for defense. Our happiness was marred by the thought and awareness that so many people who'd been waiting for this moment hadn't lived to see it. We girls met up one more time in our room before going our separate ways, and said to each other that it was up to us young people whether there would be any more horrible wars, taking so many victims, and taking from all people their happiness and contentment.

In the meantime my mother was caring for the sick, mainly the ‘typhoids.’ I was afraid for her health and her life. The ‘ladybugs’ – German women from Litomerice, who stole from us, took contraband – that's why we called them ladybugs. Now they filed into the ghetto to clean latrines. A small handful of us from Prostejov got together, almost all women except for Mr. Grabscheid; the meeting was led by Mr. Dr. Wald, and we spoke about whether we should leave straight for Palestine. The decision was made to first leave for Prostejov, in case some of our relatives returned from Poland. In the meantime, we children were sent to Mr. Premysl Pitter's recuperation centers in former German chateaus in Bohemia. Before the beginning of the school year, the children that had at least one parent returned to their original homes, so that five years later they could once again attend school. My sister, Karmela, sat in a school desk for the first time in the first year of council school. She'd missed elementary school 17.

Post-war

Finally, the long-awaited end of this horrific war! On 8th May 1945, the Red Army liberated the Terezin ghetto. Shortly before that, a death march 18 transport had arrived in Terezin. Former residents of Terezin among them. From them we found out about Auschwitz, about the gas chambers, about the near-extermination of European Jewry. I'm mentioning this so that it's clear what sort of mental state we were in.

Of our family, Aunt Lotte from Miroslav, my mother and my sister Karmela, at that time 11 years old and I, 16 years old, had remained in Terezin. Finally I could show Karma the garden between the ramparts, where I'd worked for almost three years. From there I'd occasionally brought her a

few vegetables.

Mother brought our things to Prostejov, and moved into a rented apartment with other repatriates. She managed to find a room for us in a four-room apartment on Krizovskeho Street; Mrs. Koblerova, Mr. Herzog and a married couple from Hungary or Slovakia lived with us. There were seven of us living in one apartment – the remnants of four families.

Before the beginning of the school year my mother traveled to Prague to fetch Karmela and me. She made the rounds to some of our Aryan acquaintances, the decent ones, and they were a majority, who returned the things they'd hidden for us before we were transported to Terezin. Our neighbors and acquaintances in Prostejov were decent when we returned with our mother. She furnished the room a bit, at first we didn't even have a wardrobe, nor beds, for another few weeks we still slept on the floor and our meager clothing hung on nails in the walls. We three –Mother, Karma and I – later moved along with Mrs. Koblerova into her old apartment on Trebizskeho Street, close to the train station.

Except for the aunt from Miroslav, no one from our family had returned. Of my friends, only Eva Herrmannova, a child of mixed parentage. I pondered and brooded over the meaning of life, and thought of suicide; but it was clear to me that after what my mother had been through, I couldn't do something like that to her; and a healthy survival instinct probably saved me.

In September 1945 I began attending the 5th year of a girls' high school [Grade 10] on Komenskeho Street. Before the principal, Mr. Letocha, admitted me to high school, he said: ‘Stecklmacherova, you finished Grade 5, go into first year!’ [first year of high school, so Grade 6]. Somehow I managed to change his mind, that in Terezin and afterwards I'd learned, and for him to allow me to try Grade 10. Soon I found that the girls had already been taking French and Latin for several years, and Russian from the beginning of May, and that I probably wouldn't be able to catch up to them. I asked to be transferred to Grade 9.

After I'd returned from Hechalutz 19 winter camp, it was decided after much deliberation, that I'd leave school and go for hakhsharah 20. The hakhsharah was in Bratislava – there weren't enough young Jewish people in Bohemia and Moravia for them to put a hakhsharah together. Several other former Terezin prisoners made the same decision. Max Lieben from Prague was already there, and I met young people, some of which I keep in touch with to this day – but there was no longer any real friendship, I was still sad and broken.

I was then transferred from Bratislava to Zilina. Then they sent me to Prague for about a year and then to Brno to organize Jewish children for departure [aliyah] and life in Palestine. When I was in Prague, the United Nations was voting on whether there would or wouldn't be a Jewish state in Palestine. We followed it; it was suspenseful and amazing. After the Communist coup in 1948 21 a notice was issued that whoever wanted to move to Israel had to leave the Czechoslovak Republic by a certain date in 1949 22, and who didn't leave by that date, would stay.

My mother and Karmela lived in Prostejov; mother worked, and tried so that after three hungry years, during which she barely grew any, Karmela would have good food. In our temple there was furniture stored that the Germans had confiscated from abandoned Jewish homes. Everything had been pilfered, except for things that no one wanted. My mother chose a few pieces from this, and I have some of them to this day. Also a small very old brass menorah. From Terezin, Mother brought

a few mattresses so that we'd have something to sleep on, and then in Prostejov she bought three beds and had the mattresses redone. What happened to the Terezin bedbugs, I don't know, we used the mattresses for years and had no bedbugs. During that time my mother bought a few dishes, some clothes, books and even a bike for Karmela and me!

I worked quite hard in Bratislava; I planted vegetables in a garden and tended them, I cooked, did the laundry, and shopped for groceries. Despite all of my difficult life experiences, I was an idealist, and connected Zionism with chalutziut [pioneering], only very few girls worked as hard as I did. I continued with Hebrew studies. During the summer and winter camps were held, that were organized by the youth movement, I was always a 'madricha,' i.e. a leader of a group of younger people. I did it quite well and honestly, the only thing that was wrong was that I can't sing. My sense of direction isn't very good either, once when my group was taking part in a scouting game, I mixed up the directions and we ended up God knows where – they had to look for us.

Later I was transferred to Zilina, and once again I was one of the hard-working ones. Then my mother didn't allow it anymore, because she wanted me to learn something. So for a few months I visited Mrs. Schmiedlova, a seamstress, and learned a few basic things in sewing, which later came in handy in my household with children. Then the movement decided to send me to Prague to organize Jewish children for the aliyah, i.e. for life in Palestine. They sent me because I spoke Czech, and had a seminar and being a group leader at camp behind me.

As far as I can remember, I remained in Prague for about one year. During that time important events took place. The Communists took over the government, and Jan Masaryk [23] committed suicide; during his funeral I stood amongst the thousands on Wenceslaus Square, and was at the House of Representatives for the Requiem. In May of 1948, the Jewish state Israel was proclaimed in Palestine. Then I was sent to work with Jewish children in Brno, did it for almost a year.

The end of February 1949, the Communists were in power. We were preparing to go to Israel, could take only this and this with us, we were not allowed that and that. When we were packing, they sent a controller from Brno to our place, Mr. Chlup. He took a fancy to me, and if I'd have yielded to him, he'd have looked the other way, but I didn't yield, and avoided him any way I could. And so: the fan – no, a small stove – no, not a single one more than half a dozen pieces of underwear, paintings – no, better dishes and a rug – of course not. Finally my mother sent to cousin Bruno, who'd survived the Holocaust by going to England and lived in Prague, a crate of the things we weren't allowed to take with us – three years after the ghetto we didn't have much. Onto two nice paintings, which I have in my apartment, Mother glued family photos, and the third painting Bruno gave me, when I visited him for the first time in 1990. That's the only thing that I have left from Grandpa and Grandma's house at No. 6 Pernstyn Square in Prostejov.

Prior to our departure, Mother managed to sell this building, for a ridiculous price of course. During the illegal transfer of money the sum decreased some more, and in the end the half or third that I received, sufficed so that in 1951 my husband and I could rent one room in a two-room apartment in a Haifa suburb. When we were already sitting in the train at the Bratislava train station, the buyer of that house came running with his lawyer, saying that buildings were being nationalized [24] and that he wanted his money back. But the train was already moving... I remember, it was Mr. Suchomel!

The Gordonia-Maccabi Hatzair youth movement, whose center in Czechoslovakia was in Bratislava back then, organized our trip to Israel. During the trip I was responsible for a group of children who were going to Israel alone. Either they no longer had parents, or only one, or the parents were supposed to go later. We went to Italy, and during the Sabbath we stood still and were within eyeshot of Venice. I so wished to leave the ship and have a look around there, but it, of course, wasn't possible. We were stuffed below deck on four-story bunks on an aging ship named the Campidoglio. Beside us, a slowly rotting load of onions and crates full of apples.

It wasn't until Haifa, that one worker took pity, a crate dropped and broke, and each child got an apple. We hadn't any fruit during the weeklong sea voyage. Finally Cyprus – there we exchanged sardines we'd brought with us, from the UNRA, of course, for oranges from Greek fishermen – what bliss! A few hundred meters from Tel Aviv we waited for Sabbath to end, and on Sunday morning we climbed down rope ladders into little boats – the Tel Aviv harbor is shallow, and a large ship can't enter it.

Married life

Efra, our mother's cousin from Vienna, who arrived in Palestine in 1930, was waiting for us. Thanks to him, his parents and sister survived. Thanks to him we now have many relatives in Israel, five generations already. My mother and Efra left the bus at a road that leads to the Givat Chaim kibbutz, and we kept going to Haifa, Karmela and her group to Kfar Hamakabi, the small children to Dagania, and I as the only one to Ginegar. Like all new arrivals, I also got a few days off, and looked around Ginegar. I reported, that I wanted to work in the vegetable garden. I stayed in Ginegar for not quite two years. In the spring of 1950, young men began appearing in Ginegar, who'd come from Czechoslovakia and were at the Dorot kibbutz in the Negev. They wanted to meet Czech girls.

So that's how I met my husband. Shimon became my husband. He'd already been in Palestine for ten years; he'd left the kibbutz long ago, and lived in Haifa. During World War II he was in the Palestinian brigade that battled against the Germans on the side of the English. When we met in 1950, Shimon lived in Haifa in a tiny little room with one young man. He worked in customs at the harbor, and in his spare time was translating ‘The Sad Eyes of Hana Karadzicova’ by Ivan Olbracht [Olbracht, Ivan (1882 – 1952): Czech author, journalist and publicist]. He was getting ready to write his high school leaving exam, externally.

Our wedding was in January 1951; we were married in Haifa by Rabbi Mr. Glaser, who used to be a rabbi in Brno and had done Shimon's bar mitzvah. The wedding was very modest, in the rabbi's apartment; there were a couple of relatives and friends, I didn't even buy a new dress. Today no one would believe it, but I wore a dress that had once belonged to my deceased grandmother, and someone from amongst our Prostejov acquaintances returned it to Mother.

After I left Ginegar, I found work taking care of children in a village where children who'd recently come to Israel lived – in Ramat Hadassah. Shimon still lived in the little room in Haifa, and would visit me over Saturday. Then we began looking for someplace to live together; my mother gave us money, as after all she'd sold the house in Prostejov. We rented one room in a two-room apartment in Gav-Yam; our neighbors were a young married couple from Yugoslavia, Mirek and Bori. Shimon commuted to Haifa for work, and was preparing himself for his high school leaving exam. Our little room was close to the sea. I liked it very much.

Oskar Shimon Beer was born on 27th February 1925 in Brno as the second son of finance councilor JUDr. Julius Beer and Hildegard, née Fried. His older brother Pavel Zvi was born in 1923. The Beers were from Jevicko, the Frieds from Holesov, and the Beers and Frieds also had relatives in Olomouc. Pavel and Shimon, or Ossi, attended Jewish kindergarten, school and high school in Brno that taught modern Hebrew, too. Shimon had been influenced by Professor Kurzweil, so he was not only a Zionist, but also became religious. That's why, despite Shimon being the younger of the siblings, he left in December of 1939 on the last transport from the Protectorate for Palestine.

At first he stayed with relatives, attended school in Haifa, and then transferred to agricultural school in Pardess Chana. Then he left for a kibbutz and as soon as he was old enough, eighteen, he joined the Palestinian brigade in the English army to fight the Nazis, who'd in the meantime imprisoned and then in Auschwitz killed his parents and all his relatives. His brother Pavel by miracle survived, and in 1949 arrived in Israel, got married, and had two children and five grandchildren.

Shimon and Pavel met up in Brno in the summer of 1945; the brigade had given him permission to go look for relatives. Pavel was still a ‘musulman,’ and told Shimon of the death of their parents – Shimon collapsed – that haunted him his whole life. He felt that he had to live in a certain disciplined fashion in order to be able to function. Despite that, Shimon graduated; he wanted to be a chalutz and work in agriculture. Neither of us wanted to be in a kibbutz. I mainly because of the children. In the kibbutz the children lived in childrens' houses, separate from their parents. At last we joined the moshav Beit Lehem Hagalilith 25.

In February 1953, Ednah was born in Beit Lehem Hagalilith. My mother came to help me, and then Karmela, who at that time was serving in the army and had a couple of days off. When Ednah was three months old, we moved from our temporary dwelling. We were assigned a field on which stood a wooden shack. For the first few months we didn't have electricity; Ednah was already standing, the first time we turned on a light bulb, and said ‘or,’ meaning light in Hebrew. Sometimes we didn't have water, there was no paved road or sidewalk, and during the winter there was deep mud everywhere.

First we started growing vegetables, then we got a cow, and later some chickens, part of which went for meat and the rest remained to lay eggs. Close to the piece of land where we were intending to build our house, we planted fruit trees, many kinds for our own use; we had beautiful guavas, big and small, mandarin and regular oranges, grapefruits, lemons and all sorts of fruits and an almond tree that never bore even one almond. When Shimon was building something, he poked a couple of sticks in the ground to mark something for himself; the result today are two huge mulberry trees.

In the meantime, like everyone else we began building our house, and in 1958 we moved into it. We didn't have an electric refrigerator; I was still lugging ice, that they'd bring three times a week, and which would always melt before the next would arrive. All that time, besides working in our household, I also worked in agriculture – I singled, weeded, hoed, harvested, and packed dozens of crates of lettuce, sewed sacks of potatoes and onions shut, fed chickens, and learned how to milk a cow, but my hands are too small for that, and I wasn't able to finish milking more than one cow.

Shimon worked hard, but we never made much money, and like most families we also had debts that were hard to live with. We lived very modestly, but even that didn't help. Shimon began

working off the farm, at an experimental agricultural station, around 1960, when Hanan was about six.

Hanan was born in December 1954. Both children were good, and got along well – everyone held them up as an example, and even though conditions were very hard, it was a joy and comfort to have children and care for them. Our little girl Yael was born in 1962. When she was not quite two, Ednah and Hanan came home from school at noon, and found me on the ground, unconscious. Ednah was shy, but Hanan ran to the local nurse, Rachel. They quickly sent me to the hospital – I was already barely breathing. It was encephalitis, a brain infection, an illness that I'd already had in a much lighter form in 1943 in Terezin, where it had been an epidemic. This time, in 1963, the illness was so serious that the doctors thought that I would never recover from the several days of unconsciousness with a high fever. But I did regain consciousness – the maternal instinct?

Time passed, and the children grew; Ednah and Hanan were going to high school in Tivon, at the age of five Yael already knew how to read – Ednah sat down with her a couple of times, and she was already reading! When Ednah was 14, Hanan 12 and Yael five, the Six-Day War broke out in 1967 26. Luckily it was short. From our porch, I saw a plane fall.

When she was 18, Ednah graduated and joined the army. She served in Tel Aviv, close to Moshe Dayan 27, David Elazar [Elazar, David (1925 – 1976): Israeli Chief of Staff from 1972 – 1974] and other well-known soldiers. Then Hanan graduated and went into the army; shortly thereafter Ednah got married.

Shimon did his B.A. at the University of Haifa, at the same time he supported our family of five. Shimon answered an ad where the US government was looking for a translator from Hebrew to English. They asked him to come in, they tested him, apparently a very tough exam, and they chose him to work for the FBIS, the foreign radio service, whose center for the Middle East was in Cyprus. [Editor’s note: the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) is an open source intelligence component of the CIA’s Directorate of Science and Technology that monitors, translates, and disseminates within the US Government openly available news and information from non-US media sources.]

Ednah and her husband, Eli, lived in our house. Hanan, being a soldier, would come when he had leave, either to visit them or my mother, who had in the meantime left the kibbutz along with Karmela's family and was living in Kyriat Gat. In 1973 Shimon, Yael and I left for Cyprus. By plane it's not much further than Eilat, if something happened – and my greatest worry was for Hanan – I'm home in less than an hour. For me it was liberation from a hard life in a village, and even though Kyrenia was a small town, it nevertheless wasn't a village and it was by the seashore, an amazing seashore, and a harbor and tourists; I met new people, had to try to speak English, got to know different customs, different foods. Shimon had an American salary, in 1970 I began getting some money from Germany, health compensation, so we were no longer as helplessly poor as we'd been till then.

In the fall of 1973 the cruel Yom Kippur War 28 broke out. Hanan was a soldier in Sinai, right at the Egyptian border, and was among the first who clashed with Egyptian troops. Most of his friends were wounded, many fell. Later we heard that Hanan had been quickly transporting his wounded and dead friends wherever necessary. And Shimon sat by the radio and television in Cyprus and translated... I was completely paralyzed with fear, and as soon as it was possible – I flew home.

After several days I saw Hanan, who'd gotten a few days' leave. Those were hard times; Hanan still had another two years or so of army service ahead of him.

Yael, who'd probably inherited Shimon's talent for learning languages, went to an English school in Nicosia after several weeks of intensive training provided by the FBIS. She'd go there on a school bus with other pupils. She was one of the best students. Shimon had a contract with the Americans that he'd work for them in Cyprus for two years. But it wasn't to be. After the school year ended, we went with Yael to the airport in Nicosia – she was flying home for summer vacation. We were planning that she'd stay with my mother in Kyriat Gat and in Beit-Lechem with Ednah, and that I'd stay in Kyrenia for a month and the second month I'd be in Israel. That didn't happen though, as war broke out on Cyprus. The Turks occupied part of the island, and we were transferred to Tel Aviv.

In 1979 Yael was 17, and was in her second-last year at the ‘Herzliah’ high school; studying was easy for her, she was mature and independent. We thought that we could leave her alone for a few weeks. My mother promised that she'd come see her now and then. Because we'd decided to join a month-long tour that was being offered by a travel agency for a good price. I was 50, Shimon 54 – up till then we'd hardly been anywhere. We flew to Johannesburg in South Africa, and visited Pretoria, a safari in Kruger Park, and then flew to Australia – Sydney and Melbourne, we met friends and acquaintances that had moved there from the Czechoslovak Republic and from Israel.

While we were away, Yael fooled around with drugs. Later we found out that she'd been doing them before as well. Back then it wasn't ‘in’ yet. Yael was always the first, avant-garde. Yael was slowly finishing her army service, was living with us, and was working in all sorts of places, cleaning apartments, babysitting, making money to also be able to go traveling around Europe. In the meantime Hanan began taking chemistry at university in Jerusalem. He lived in a dorm, cooked for himself, and did well at school; from the second or third year on he got a stipend. But he still had to serve in the army for at least one month each year; it was hard, and sometimes he couldn't write his exams because he was in the army, and he took all sorts of work to make extra money.

In 1982 the war with Lebanon 29 broke out, and Hanan came to pick up his army boots from our apartment in Tel Aviv. I walked with him to Ibn Gabirol Street, from where he wanted to hitchhike north. I pleaded with him to not go. But Hanan left. For some time we didn't have any news from him, then one evening he called from the northern border, that he'd come visit us. We waited up for him until 2 or 3am, Yael and I. Finally he arrived, pale and with a strange expression in his eyes. He'd been a witness to one of our planes mistakenly strafing a number of our soldiers in tanks. Hanan took part in saving them. Again he carried and drove the dead and wounded, and he was terribly disturbed by it. They were soldiers much younger than he was. I myself had studied to be a medical secretary in 1976, and worked at a clinic and later in a hospital.

Yael finished her Army service, went abroad and after she registered at university in Jerusalem – she returned home. She wasn't the way we'd known her. After several weeks at university she said that she was no longer interested in it, that she couldn't concentrate. She returned to our apartment in Tel Aviv. In 1984 Sara's and Hanan's wedding took place.

Yael lived with a girlfriend of hers for some time, and worked at various jobs, then lived with us again, and her behavior kept getting stranger – psychologists, psychiatrists, and a diagnosis: depressive, and it looked like it had something to do with her doing drugs. She insisted on going to

Norway one more time. She had a boyfriend there. This time she went in the fall, and we were worried about here; a very long letter arrived, and there was a long phone conversation. Hanan was the one who noticed it and alerted us to everything that sounded wrong. I sent Yael money to return home. Her condition kept getting worse. She visited psychologists and psychiatrists. We didn't want to put her in a hospital. She was getting medicines that were supposed to help her. She was still trying to work, cleaning, waitressing, but she didn't last anywhere, she wasn't capable of working properly.

In March of 1986 Ednah's youngest was born – Adi. Yael went to help Ednah, but it was no longer anywhere close to that old fit and skilful Yael. At that time I was caring for two children and later for three old men, one after the other. Shimon left FBIS and worked in various places, initially as a senior bureaucrat for the Ministry of Communications. After turning 60 he taught English and Hebrew. In June 1986 we went to visit my mother, Shimon and I. Yael didn't want to go. I didn't go without worries, but we didn't think that we had to keep an eye on her.

Yael took advantage of our absence, swallowed all the pills that she'd gotten from the psychiatrist, and turned on the gas. When we returned from my mother's in Kyriat Gat, Yael was in the hospital. She lay there for a month, unconscious, and on 15th July 1986 she died at the age of 24. Nothing worse can happen to a parent. I reproached myself for the mistakes I'd made – whom to blame, if not myself – the mother who cared for the child? Shimon and I decided to not take any sedatives, nor accept help from psychologists that weren't able to help our dear, beloved Yael.

In December 1986, our only grandson was born, Sarah's and Hanan's firstborn, Lior. For the first year and more, I visited them every month. That was my therapy. Hanan and Sara are both chemists. Sara works for the police. Whenever there's an explosion, they call her, even at night, even when the children were small! At the age of 35, Hanan got his PhD, and he works for the American company Intel. They had to leave their children with strangers since they were small, which I regretted, but nothing could be done about it, except for frequent visits to their place in Jerusalem. In 1988 Noah was born, in 1994 Danah.

Hanan's last name is Bar. Hebrew is written without vowels, so our family surname, Beer, is written in consonants, BR. Everyone automatically says Bar, which means grain in Hebrew. We old ones were still somehow stuck on Beer, but we always had to correct it and explain it to people.

In 1989 I went on an organized tour of the USA and Canada. Shimon had had enough of Americans from work, and so at the same time he went to Europe, to Czechoslovakia for the first time in fifty years, still during the time of Communism. He got in with difficulty. A Negro got a visa immediately, while Shimon, who'd been born in the Czechoslovak Republic, had to wait three weeks for a visa because he was from Israel. He brought interesting experiences back from his trip to England, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland and finally three days in Brno.

In 1990, already after the revolution 30, I went to Czechoslovakia with Ednah. I immediately began working on us getting back the building in Prostejov at Sadky. No. 4, which I succeeded in doing in 1991. Back then there was a school there. In 1994 I went to the Czech Republic to sell the building in Prostejov. I stayed there for two and a half months. For the first time in 45 years, I was here in the fall and winter. Christmas was coming, and it was snowing. The snow-covered town reminded me of my childhood.

My sister Karmela came to Israel with our mother and me in 1949, when she was 15. She went with a group of young people to the Kfar Hmakabi kibbutz, whose members were mostly from the Czechoslovak Republic. She left the kibbutz at the age of 20, and married Eugen [Jano] Weiss. Later they changed their name to the Hebrew Ben-Dom. They've got two children, a son, Ran, and a daughter, Naomi, who has a PhD in biochemistry. Ran is a medical doctor, his wife, Dalia is from Persia - Iran. They've got two nice children, a son, Itay, and a daughter, Maayan, and live in Beer Sheva. Naomi has a daughter, Roni, who's pretty and smart, and has all adults wrapped around her finger. My mother lived with Karmela's family in Kyriat Gat since 1964, where she died in 1993 and where she's buried. She was almost 85.

Since 1989 Shimon worked, as an employed retiree, for Mr. Stepanek, who was the representative of the company Transakta in Tel Aviv. After November 1989, in 1990, diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and Israel, broken off long ago, were restored. Mr. Stepanek was the interim consul, and Shimon had a lot of work – and interesting work. They were issuing visas – opening the embassy after many years. Then the Stepaneks left and Shimon began working for Yad Sara [a volunteer organization that lends aids to the disabled], where he worked for many years, almost to the end of his life; they valued and respected him very much, and he felt good there. Time passed, our grandchildren grew, and we grew older.

Shimon died in 2002; he was over 77. The last year and a half he was ill – lung cancer; he didn't want any radical surgery or treatment. After being his wife for almost 52 years, I knew that being in a hospital wasn't for him. I let him die at home, in his bed. At least that I did right. Now I'm battling with loneliness and old age. I'm grateful for the fact that I'm relatively healthy, except for asthma and my back, and that I'm a free person, that I've got food to eat. I don't want anything else except for it to stay that way. I've been writing my memoirs since 1977, during 1997 – 1998 they made a movie from them, and my writing, reworked by authors, is in three books. I'm active in ‘Beit Terezin’ 31. Whenever they call me and I'm able, I go there and tell young people about the Shoah.

I was on vacation in Eilat once, on one of my visits to the beautiful coral reef and its diverse inhabitants. Thanks to Yael I learned to snorkel; I was already 50 at that time. I was staying at a hotel. In the evening I was sitting in the dining room. A German-speaking lady tourist asked me if she could sit down at my table. We had supper together and talked. During World War II, we'd been witnesses to the same event – each from a different side of course. On 13th February 1945 the Allies bombed Dresden so massively that it was destroyed almost to its foundations. The tourist from Germany told me that at that time she'd been in Dresden, her hometown. By miracle she remained alive; her friends and family members had either been killed or wounded.

At that time I'd been in Terezin – 70 km from Dresden. I was living in L 410 – 24 girls in our room. We woke during the night, sat on our bunks in the dark, and listened – boom – boom – boom; it was far away and very powerful. We were happy – something had happened to our enemy, our torturer – hopefully it will bring the end of the war closer. This is what we spoke of in the quiet atmosphere of the hotel in Eilat, with a good and plentiful supper on the table. It's hard to believe – that there could be ease and understanding between a German woman and me. We said goodbye with a wish that there should be peace, and no more wars ever again.

When I arrived in Israel in 1949 after the Shoah, there were still echoes of the war for independence here, and then a war every few years and between the wars unrest – Fedayeen,

Shaheeds, Intifadas – mostly living in fear. Shimon was exempted from army service for what he went through during World War II. Our son served for three years, and perhaps more, right during the time of our hardest war, which broke out on Yom Kippur in 1973 and for many years, until the age of 46, he was a ‘fighter.’ Each year they called him up for at least one month of army service. Hanan is 53 now, and not serving in the army anymore. But our grandson Lior, who is 21, is a soldier now. Girls serve in the army, too. We're less afraid for them than for the boys.

As I've written, we live in constant fear of another war. Constant fear for existence as such, our existence here, where we'd hoped to find sanctuary after the horrific Shoah. Despite that, I wouldn't change the fact that I'm Jewish. Despite the fact that we were scattered over the entire world, we were aware of our Jewish identity, it was an important part of our life, and never did we even consider abandoning it. Life in this small, tiny, always endangered country was hard.

I've been living here for 59 years, and I don't know whether and for how long our little country will exist. Whether the Muslims won't murder us all, or drive us out again, even though they've got a dozen large countries and we have only one tiny one, which we have to share with them. If nothing more will remain of our efforts, struggles and endeavors than the fact that we met up here, Jews from the world over, that Hebrew was spoken here for several generations, that our children and grandchildren studied the Old Testament and our history in Hebrew, that thousands of Hebrew books were published, even that will have been worth it – it'll be recorded by history.

When I was a small girl, I concerned myself with thoughts of death. I wished to die with my parents and other beloved members of my family – I was afraid of parting and grieving. Several years later – during the time of the Shoah – my wishes were almost granted. My childhood friends perished with their parents and families while they were still children. Their ashes are scattered over the Polish land. By utter chance we stayed alive – my mother, sister and I, always in pain, in grief, but nevertheless. I arrived in Israel, started a family, and have children and grandchildren. How happy my great-grandfather, both my grandfathers and my father would have been, if they'd have known that three of my grandchildren were born in Jerusalem, and the rest in Israel.

Now I'm old. I have a hard time believing it, and in my mind I hear what Liv Ullmann, wrote: ‘The young girl that's in me refuses to die.’ Sometimes I forget how my aunt Klementina, the oldest woman in our family, looked and behaved when she was almost as old as I am now, and when I was still a child. Aunt Klementina wore black, long dresses buttoned up all the way to the neck, and high, black boots. She walked slowly, heavily, venerably and seriously. I sometimes forget and act like a young girl, and run, jump, and forget that my body is no longer that young, that lithe.

I do despite everything think of death, which awaits me like all mortals – it's just closer to me now. What keeps me alive is mainly my huge curiosity, fear of the unknown, and the love that exists between my family and me. I don't believe that anything but bones will remain of me after I die; just the memories of those that will live when I'm gone. My wish is - to live and to die honorably, so that I am a burden to neither my loved ones nor to myself.

Now I can be satisfied, there's a video movie and my stories and memories in three books, which were translated into several languages. When I did by chance survive, I feel that I owe it to those that were brutally murdered to preserve their memory, to do everything so that they won't be forgotten, so that as many people as possible the world over know about them. I have submitted more than 400 names of Holocaust victims to Yad Vashem.

The following is a translation into English of a poem that was published in the book ‘Co ohen nespali’ [‘What Fire Won't Burn’]. The poem was originally written in Hebrew, and I then translated it into my other languages: Czech, English and German.

I have known hunger, cold and death.
Have been deprived of all human rights,
have known boundless pain.
I have been driven from my home,
have lost my family,
all my friends - our Kehilah.

I'm thankful for every good day,
am grateful that I sleep in my own bed,
that I have good food and am sate.
That I'm a free person in my land.

How beautiful the sea,
how good the air!

Every drop of precious water is dear to me,
it hurts when the streets aren't clean,
when people aren't kind.

I'm afraid that we'll lose again,
what is a matter of course
to our children and grandchildren.

Maud Michal Beer, 2001, Tel Aviv

Glossary

1 Zionism
A movement defending and supporting the idea of a sovereign and independent Jewish state, and the return of the Jewish nation to the home of their ancestors, Eretz Israel - the Israeli homeland. The final impetus towards a modern return to Zion was given by the show trial of Alfred Dreyfuss, who in 1894 was unjustly sentenced for espionage during a wave of anti-Jewish feeling that had gripped France. The events prompted Dr. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) to draft a plan of political Zionism in the tract 'Der Judenstaat' ('The Jewish State', 1896), which led to the holding of the first Zionist congress in Basel (1897) and the founding of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). The WZO accepted the Zionist emblem and flag (Magen David), hymn (Hatikvah) and an action program.

2 B'nai B'rith
(Hebrew for 'Sons of the Covenant') Network of Jewish organizations modeled upon Masonic lodges, its members being the elites of the Jewish nation. Its statutory goal was caring for the 'preservation and renewal of the Jewish soul,' which in practice meant welfare and educational activities.

Founded in New York in 1843. In 1911, the voyage to the Orient of Siegmund Bergel of Berlin was a catalyst for the order. While traveling southward, Bergel founded lodges at Belgrade, Sofia, Adrianople, Constantinople, Salonica, Smyrna, Alexandria, and Cairo, and on returning he founded lodges at Zichron-Jacob and at Beyrouth. The common language of the lodges was French. The first B'nai B'rith branches in Poland were established in the 1880-1890s in the areas then belonging to Prussia: Katowice, Poznan, Chorzow, and Austria-Hungary: Bielsk, Cracow, Lvov. The latter made a particularly meritorious record during World War I, helping refugees from Russia. In 1924, the Polish B'nai B'rith branches merged into the Great Lodge of the Polish District (number 13), with its seat in Cracow. B'nai B'rith offered financial support to various civic society organizations, victims of natural disasters, as well as refugees from the Soviet Union, and, in the 1930s, from Germany. It initiated the establishment of the Institute of Judaic Studies in Warsaw. A presidential decree dissolved the Polish B'nai B'rith organization on 22nd November 1938.

3 WIZO

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920 with humanitarian purposes aiming at supporting Jewish women all over the world in the field of education, economics, science and culture. A network of health, social and educational institutions was created in Palestine between 1921 and 1933, along with numerous local groups worldwide. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. WIZO became an advisory organ to the UN after WWII (similar to UNICEF or ECOSOC). Today it operates on a voluntary basis, as a party-neutral, non-profit organization, with about 250,000 members in 50 countries (2003).

4 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.

5 Joseph II (1741-1790)

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

Joseph's reign introduced some civic improvement into the life of the Jews in the Empire, and also supported cultural and linguistic assimilation. As a result, controversy arose between liberal-minded and orthodox Jews, which is considered the root cause of the schism between the Orthodox and the Neolog Jewry.

6 Yellow star – Jewish star in Protectorate

On 1st September 1941 an edict was issued according to which all Jews having reached the age of six were forbidden to appear in public without the Jewish star. The Jewish star is represented by a hand-sized, six-pointed yellow star outlined in black, with the word 'Jude' in black letters. It had to be worn in a visible place on the left side of the article of clothing. This edict came into force on 19th September 1941. It was another step aimed at eliminating Jews from society. The idea's author was Reinhard Heydrich himself.

7 Terezin/Theresienstadt

A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. The Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a 'model Jewish settlement,' used it to camouflage the extermination of European Jews. 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 café, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

8 Orthodox Jewish dress

Main characteristics of observant Jewish appearance and dresses: men wear a cap or hat while women wear a shawl (the latter is obligatory in case of married women only). The most peculiar skull-cap is called kippah (other name: yarmulkah; kapedli in Yiddish), worn by men when they leave the house, reminding them of the presence of God and thus providing spiritual protection and safety. Orthodox Jewish women had their hair shaved and wore a wig. In addition, Orthodox Jewish men wear a tallit (Hebrew term; talles in Yiddish) [prayer shawl] and its accessories all day long under their clothes but not directly on their body. Wearing payes (Yiddish term; payot in Hebrew) [long sideburns] is linked with the relevant prohibition in the Torah [shaving or trimming the beard as well as the hair around the head was forbidden]. The above habits originate from the Torah and the Shulchan Arukh. Other pieces of dresses, the kaftan [Russian, later Polish wear] among others, thought to be typical, are an imitation. According to non-Jews these characterize the Jews while they are not compulsory for the Jews.

9 Kashrut in eating habits

Kashrut means ritual behavior. A term indicating the religious validity of some object or article according to Jewish law, mainly in the case of foodstuffs. Biblical law dictates which living creatures

are allowed to be eaten. The use of blood is strictly forbidden. The method of slaughter is prescribed, the so-called shechitah. The main rule of kashrut is the prohibition of eating dairy and meat products at the same time, even when they weren't cooked together. The time interval between eating foods differs. On the territory of Slovakia six hours must pass between the eating of a meat and dairy product. In the opposite case, when a dairy product is eaten first and then a meat product, the time interval is different. In some Jewish communities it is sufficient to wash out one's mouth with water. The longest time interval was three hours - for example in Orthodox communities in Southwestern Slovakia.

10 Maccabi Sports Club in the Czechoslovak Republic

The Maccabi World Union was founded in 1903 in Basel at the VI. Zionist Congress. In 1935 the Maccabi World Union had 100,000 members, 10,000 of which were in Czechoslovakia. Physical education organizations in Bohemia have their roots in the 19th century. For example, the first Maccabi gymnastic club in Bohemia was founded in 1899. The first sport club, Bar Kochba, was founded in 1893 in Moravia. The total number of Maccabi clubs in Bohemia and Moravia before WWI was fifteen. The Czechoslovak Maccabi Union was officially founded in June 1924, and in the same year became a member of the Maccabi World Union, located in Berlin.

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

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

yellow six-pointed star with 'Jude' written on it on their clothing.

12 Minsk

Capital of Belarus. On the eve of German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, 80,000 Jews lived in Minsk. In November 1941 Germans initiated an “Aktion” in which 12,000 Jews were murdered. Soon after, Jews from the Reich were deported to Minsk. Over the course of the next year, 35,442 had come. They were put in the separate ghetto. The Germans launched another “Aktion” later that month in which 7,000 Jews were murdered. In March 1942 the Germans ordered the “Judenrat” to surrender 5,000 Jews, but the council refused. In retaliation, the Nazis attacked Jews coming home from work and killed more than 5,000. They also carried out murder operations at night throughout the spring 1942. At the end of July 1942 the Germans exterminated more than 30,000 Jews, including the Jews from the second ghetto. When the “Aktion” was over, only 9,000 Jews were left. In March 1943 more German Jews were murdered and in August, Jews from Minsk were deportated to Sobibor. The Germans carried out the final “Aktion” in Minsk in October 1943, murdering the last 4,000 Jews. Minsk was liberated on 3rd July 1944. Only a handful of Jews who had hidden during the final “Aktion” were left. (Source: Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Facts on File, Inc., Yad Vashem 2006. pg. 320)

13 Lodz Ghetto

It was set up in February 1940 in the former Jewish quarter on the northern outskirts of the city. 164,000 Jews from Lodz were packed together in a 4 sq. km. area. In 1941 and 1942, 38,500 more Jews were deported to the ghetto. In November 1941, 5,000 Roma were also deported to the ghetto from Burgenland province, Austria. The Jewish self-government, led by Mordechai Rumkowsky, sought to make the ghetto as productive as possible and to put as many inmates to work as he could. But not even this could prevent overcrowding and hunger or improve the inhuman living conditions. As a result of epidemics, shortages of fuel and food and insufficient sanitary conditions, about 43,500 people (21% of all the residents of the ghetto) died of undernourishment, cold and illness. The others were transported to death camps; only a very small number of them survived.

14 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 organized by the Jewish communities either.

15 Hirsch, Fredy (1916–1944)

Member of the Maccabi Association, a sports club founded in the middle of the 1920s as a branch of the Maccabi Sports Club, the first Jewish sports association on the territory of Bohemia and Moravia. Hirsch organized the teaching of sports to youth at Prague's Hagibor, after his deportation to Terezin he continued in this activity there as well. After the reinstatements of transports to Auschwitz in 1943 and after the creation of the "family camp" there, Hirsch and other teachers

organized a children's home there as well. They continued to teach until the Nazis murdered virtually all the members of the "family camp", including children and teachers, in the gas chambers.

16 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.

17 People’s and Public schools in Czechoslovakia

In the 18th century the state intervened in the evolution of schools - in 1877 Empress Maria Theresa issued the Ratio Educationis decree, which reformed all levels of education. After the passing of a law regarding six years of compulsory school attendance in 1868, people's schools were fundamentally changed, and could now also be secular. During the First Czechoslovak Republic, the Small School Law of 1922 increased compulsory school attendance to eight years. The lower grades of people's schools were public schools (four years) and the higher grades were council schools. A council school was a general education school for youth between the ages of 10 and 15. Council schools were created in the last quarter of the 19th century as having 4 years, and were usually state-run. Their curriculum was dominated by natural sciences with a practical orientation towards trade and business. During the First Czechoslovak Republic they became 3-year with a 1-year course. After 1945 their curriculum was merged with that of lower gymnasium. After 1948 they disappeared, because all schools were nationalized.

18 Death march

In fear of the approaching Allied armies, the Germans tried to erase all 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 and there was no specific destination. The marchers received neither food nor water and were forbidden to stop and rest at night. It was solely up to the guards how they treated the prisoners, if and what they gave them to eat and they even had in their hands the power on the prisoners' life or death. The conditions during the march were so cruel that this journey became a journey that ended in the death of most marchers.

19 Hechalutz

Trailblazer, pioneer, a Zionist youth group with socialistic tendencies, which overarched several smaller Zionist groups. Its main goal was emigration to Eretz Israel.

20 Hakhsharah
Training camps organized by the Zionists, in which Jewish youth in the Diaspora received intellectual and physical training, especially in agricultural work, in preparation for settling in Palestine.

21 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.

22 Zionist conference in Piestany
at the Zionist conference in January 1949 in Piestany, the last one held in Czechoslovakia, the Israeli ambassador, Ehud Ariel, confirmed that 20,000 Jews would receive permission to emigrate. That meant the departure from Czechoslovakia of practically all Jews who were interested in leaving for Israel. Czech government officials made it clear that those deciding to remain in Czechoslovakia were expected to fully assimilate.

23 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.

24 Nationalization in Czechoslovakia
The goal of nationalization was to put privately-owned means of production and private property into public control and into the hands of the Socialist state. The attempts to change property relations after WWI (1918-1921) were unsuccessful. Directly after WWII, already by May 1945, the heads of state took over possession of the collaborators' (that is, Hungarian and German) property. In July 1945, members of the Communist Party before the National Front openly called for the nationalization of banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and industrial enterprises, the execution of which fell to the Nationalization Central Committee. The first decree for nationalization was signed 11th August 1945 by the Republic President. This decree affected agricultural production, the film industry and foreign trade. Members of the Communist Party fought representatives of the National Socialist Party and the Democratic Party for further expansion of the process of nationalization, which resulted in the president signing four new decrees on 24th October, barely two months after taking office. These called for nationalization of the mining industry companies and industrial plants, the food industry plants, as well as joint-stock companies,

banks and life insurance companies. The nationalization established Czechoslovakia's financial development, and shaped the 'Socialist financial sphere.' Despite this, significantly valuable property disappeared from companies in public ownership into the private and foreign trade network. Because of this, the activist committee of the trade unions called for further nationalizations on 22nd February 1948. This process was stopped in Czechoslovakia by new laws of the National Assembly in April 1948, which were passed that December.

25 Moshav

Village community in Palestine (then Israel), where - in contrast to the kibbutz - people did have own homes and could decide independently about their own lands. At the same time they farmed collectively, and members of the community helped one another. The emigrants of the 1880s established the first villages of this type, and there were 18 of them by 1897. A majority of them became important towns.

26 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

27 Dayan, Moshe (1915-1981)

Israeli military leader and diplomat. In the 1930s he fought in the Haganah, an underground Jewish militia defending Israelis from Arab attacks, and he joined the British army in World War II. He was famous as a military strategist in the wars with Egypt, Syria and Jordan. He was minister of agriculture (1959-64) and minister of defense (1967-1974). After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, he resigned. In 1977 he became foreign minister and played a key role in the negotiation with Egypt, which ended with the Camp David Accords in 1978.

28 Yom Kippur War

(Hebrew: Milchemet Yom HaKipurim), also known as the October War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the Ramadan War, was fought from 6th October (the day of Yom Kippur) to 24th October 1973, between Israel and a coalition of Egypt and Syria. The war began when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack in the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively, both of which had been captured by Israel during the Six-Day-War six years earlier. The war had far-reaching implications for many nations. The Arab world, which had been humiliated by the lopsided defeat of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance during the Six-Day-War, felt psychologically vindicated by its string of victories early in the conflict. This vindication, in many ways, cleared the way for the peace process which followed the war. The Camp David Accords, which came soon after, led to normalized relations between Egypt and Israel - the first time any Arab country had recognized the Israeli state. Egypt, which had already been drifting away from the Soviet Union, then left the Soviet sphere of influence almost entirely.

29 **1982 Lebanon War**

Also known as the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon, and dubbed Operation Peace for Galilee (Shlom HaGalil in Hebrew) by Israel, began 6th June, 1982, when the Israel Defense Forces invaded southern Lebanon in response to the Abu Nidal organization's assassination attempt against Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov, but mainly to halt Katyusha rocket attacks on Israeli population in the northern Galilee region launched from Southern Lebanon. After attacking Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Syrian and Muslim Lebanese forces, Israel occupied southern Lebanon. Surrounded in West Beirut and subject to heavy bombardment, the PLO and the Syrian forces negotiated passage from Lebanon with the aid of international peacekeepers.

30 **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.

31 **Terezin Initiative**

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