43 Life Stories: The Centropa Interviews in Czechia

Olivia Christman
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Centropa Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation

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Author: Olivia Christman

Graduate Student at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna 2021

Using 43 Personal Czech Interviews for material

Edited by Edward Serotta

Introduction:

This project is motivated by a gap in how we remember history. The 20th century is often a topic talked about in classrooms, books, and political discuss and often talk of the 20th century includes reference to the Holocaust. The issue is that the reference is usually broad and generalizing. There is very little intimate discussion of individual stories or experiences. We hear only about what happened to European Jews in the 20th century. That assumes that all European Jews had the same experience. The worst assumption in this way of talking about the Holocaust is that it downgrades Jewish life in the 20th century to only the years between 1938-1945. Very rarely is one Jewish survivors whole life, from birth to old age looked at in depth and analyzed. This research fills that gap, using Centropa's personal interviews, we have the data and stories of 43 people.

Centropa's interviews are not 'war stories' that only cover the hard facts or tragic events of 1938-1945. The interviews speak of each person's childhood, school life, early romances, to their current marriages and how their children and grandchildren find the world today. This all-encompassing life story is shocking to read and research. The interviews make the reader feel like they really get to know a fellow human being, the interviewees offer life advise and worldly wisdom, they are survivors who lived a full and long life.

We can see the struggles that survivors faced upon their return home in all matter of way. After surviving the Holocaust and seeing the worst of humanity how can a person adapt back to normal life in high school? After losing your whole family, home, and childhood, what remains important to you? Through these interviews we can see how these 43 individuals dealt with their loss, dealt with their fate, and how they over came it all. In other words we are not looking into simply Holocaust survivors, these are people that continued to survive everything that was thrown at them, be it Communism or political upheaval. Young people after the war, they went back to school, many went on for higher education and obtained decent jobs, they rejoined the society that had persecuted them and then they added to it. By focusing on one country and individual people's lives we can find out more not only about their Holocaust experience, but about European Jewish life in general during the 20th century.

This project was so important for me because I have friends whose families fled Europe during the 20th century and now in my generation are recreating roots where their families once lived. Their own experience and their own research into the past, made me curious as well. I want to see the data and hear the stories of those who went through this horrific period in history so there can be a greater knowledge and understanding. It is not only important never to forget, in order not to forget we must first understand. One of the best ways to understand what Czech Jews went through is to read the stories of their lives and imagine how you would have felt if you were put through what they were. Empathy is one of humanity's greatest gifts, you cannot but empathies with these 43 people.

The reason for choosing the Czech Jews rather than any other country interviews from Centropa's files was mainly based on the resources available. There were 43 detailed Czech Centropa Interviews. All the interviewees were quite vivid in their descriptions and covered the whole of the interviewees life. The Czech Jews were different than other European Jews due in some part simply to the changing nature of their country and its time under Communism after the war. This made it obvious to choose to focus on the Czech case. It was also more interesting for me that the Czech Jews were already very assimilated and mostly secular before WWII. Therefore, many of them only became more involved with Jewish culture and religion during the Holocaust when they were pushed out of the rest of society. The Czech Jews were also different than Jews in other Eastern European countries, Ukraine, or Russia in that they spoke multiple languages and were often relatively well-educated.

Research Goals; Interrogating the Data

Using Centropa's 43 published online Czech interviews, this project highlights the life stories of each individual while also gathering the hard data on various points during three classified periods of their lives: pre-war, during the war, and post-war. Some of the data that was specifically searched for was: Pre-war if the interviewee grew up religiously (using their own determinations), went to a state or Jewish school, were assimilated into society, and their relative social class (according to their own determination). The war time data tells us: where the interviewee and their family was during the war and who survived in their family. The post-war data tells us: about their political affiliations, their occupation, marital status and with whom their married (Jewish or not) as well as if they had children, emigrated, or experienced further anti-Semitism.

Each Interviewee has a page in the following document that details their family details into first their basic info in the top section, then their paternal grandparents, maternal grandparents, parents, and finally ending with their own pollical views and whether they integrated or emigrated after the war. Then there is also a clear photo of them or them with their family members. Underneath each photo, I have written my own short introduction summary overview of their original interview in order for the researcher to quickly identify and gather basic elements of each person's life. The link to the whole interview is found immediately under each person's name making it very convenient to access, and from there on the Centropa website it is easy to access all photos of this person, videos if applicable, and other related material. Lastly, there is one relevant personal quote on each person's page that helps grab the attention of the reader. There is also a section of all the most relevant quotes for each interviewee that helps to snapshot the individuals experiences, character, or personal opinions.

This research data will be helpful for Centropa's files as well as for future researchers and academics. The goal is to pave the way for this data to be more accessible for future use and study, it is not supposed to imply an end to the research on the experience of Czech Jews during the 20th century. Also, it should be noted that the relatively well integrated and assimilated nature of the Czech Jews pre-WWII along with the fact that most were quite secular before the war, makes the data found on them specific to this region.

This data should not be used as a broad categorization of European Jews in general or even of all Eastern European Jews. The data on political affiliation and on how religious the interviewees were after the war is also affected by the political events in the Czech Republic after the war, which came under Communist rule and Soviet influence. Even a cursory reading will show that the Czech Jews were relatively unique in Eastern Europe, this reflects the country itself. Reading through the various Centropa interviews it becomes very clear that there can be no general categorization of Eastern European or even Central European Jews.

In general it was found that most interviewees were relatively well off financially before the war and came from quite integrated and non-religious families who saw themselves as patriotic Czechs. Most interviewees said they never experienced anti-Semitism until 1938 when the Germans influence arrived in their country. Many of them went to Ghettos (65.1% in Terezin alone) and as children actually enjoyed their time there in many ways, especially compared to the horrors of later places they found themselves such as Auschwitz (51.2%).

They all lost family members or relatives, most lost quite a few and some lost everyone. Many did not marry other Jews (46.5%) or remain religious after the war, but everyone did marry and most interviewees had children and started new families. A slight majority claim to have been anti-communist (53.5%) while (30.2%) were actually joined the party. However this was sometimes for reasons such as a better job status or due to their partner's influence. Only one interviewee (2.3%) was against the Velvet Revolution by 1989, most claimed that it was something they strongly supported (76.7%).

Most interviewees expressed that life after the war was not easy, especially due to their country's political situation, but they felt like they were not worse off or discriminated against due to their religion (74.4%), though some fervent communists did feel held back by anti-Semitism (23.3%). Many of the interviewees expressed support for Israel, though they themselves did not emigrate there, some had family that did, and for many it was a comfort to think of it as a safe place to go if they ever needed to.

Quite a few expressed their content with both their country and the lives they and their children/grandchildren made in their countries and did not seem worried for the future either economically or due to anti-Semitism. All of the interviewees were integrated into society after the war (though this could have been helped by there being less Jews or Jewish schools/synagogues in their area and their probability of being less religious after the war).

What the Data Tells Us:

Education
Almost all of the 43 respondents were born between 1920 and 1940, which means several did not attend secondary schools prewar.

Prewar

Attended a Jewish Primary School:	11/43 (25.6%)
Did not attend:	28/43 (65.1%)
Forced to transfer during occupation:	3/43 (7.0%)
NA:	1/43 (2.3%)

Note: all those who attended Jewish secondary school did so pre 1940 as Jewish schools were forced to close shortly after the war.

Attended a Jewish secondary school:	7/43 (16.3%)
Did not attend:	34/43 (79.1%)
NA:	1/43 (2.3%)

During the War

Interviewee was in Terezin:	28/43 (65.1%)
Interviewee was in Auschwitz/Auschwitz-Birkenau:	22/43 (51.2%)
Interviewee was in England:	4/43 (9.3%)
Interviewee was in Terezin & Auschwitz	16/43 (37.2%)
Interviewee was in Auschwitz but NOT in Terezin	6/43 (14.0%)
Interviewee was in Terezin but NOT in Auschwitz	12/43 (28.0%)
Interviewee was in NEITHER Terezin nor Auschwitz	9/43 (21.0%)

Marital Choice Post WWII

Married Jewish:	17/43 (39.5%)
Did not marry Jewish:	20/43 (46.5%)
Mixed:	4/43 (9.3%)
NA:	2/43 (4.6%)
Emigrated:	1/43 (2.3%)
Did not emigrate:	39/43 (91.0%)
Only during the War:	1/43 (2.3%)
Only after the late 80's:	2/43 (4.6%)
Experienced Anti-Semitism after War:	10/43 (23.3%)
Did not:	32/43 (74.4%)
NA:	1/43 (2.3%)

Postwar political affiliation

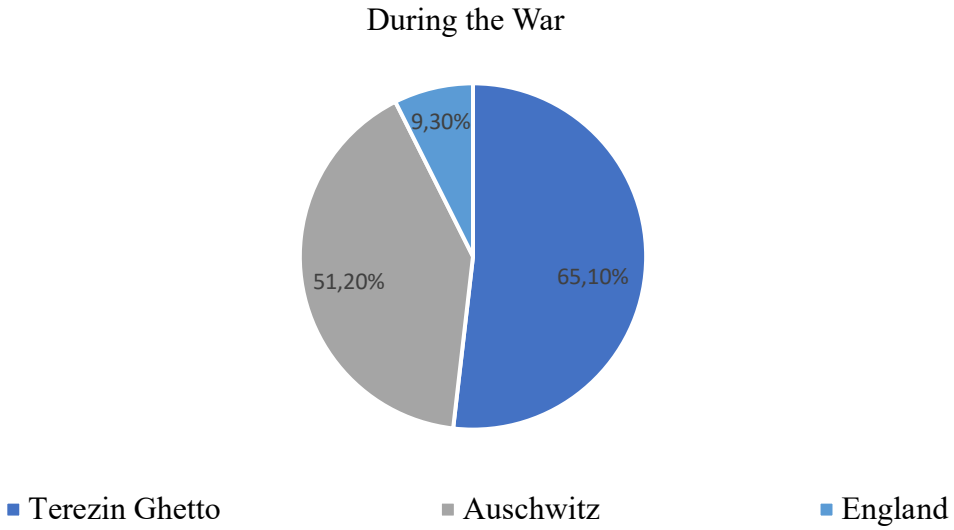
Pro-Communist:	15/43 (34.9%)
Anti-Communist:	23/43 (53.5%)
NA:	5/43 (11.6%)
Party Members:	13/43 (30.2%)
Non-Members:	18/43 (41.9%)
NA:	12/43 (28.0%)
Pro-Velvet Revolution:	33/43 (76.7%)
Against Revolution:	1/43 (2.3%)
NA:	9/43 (20.9%)

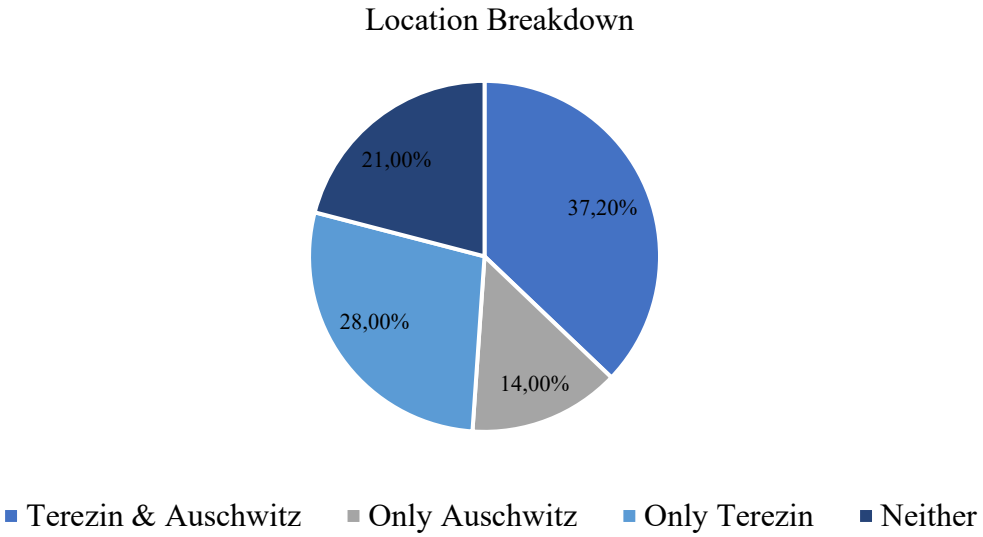
Socio-economic (based on their own description)

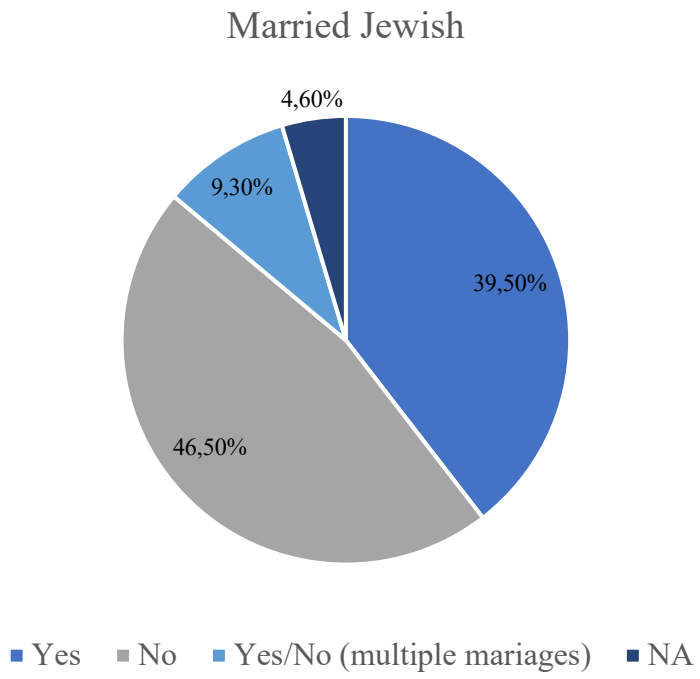
Upper Middle Class:	11/43 (25.6%)
Middle Class:	11/43 (25.6%)
Lower Middle Class:	5/43 (11.6%)
NA:	16/43 (37.2%)

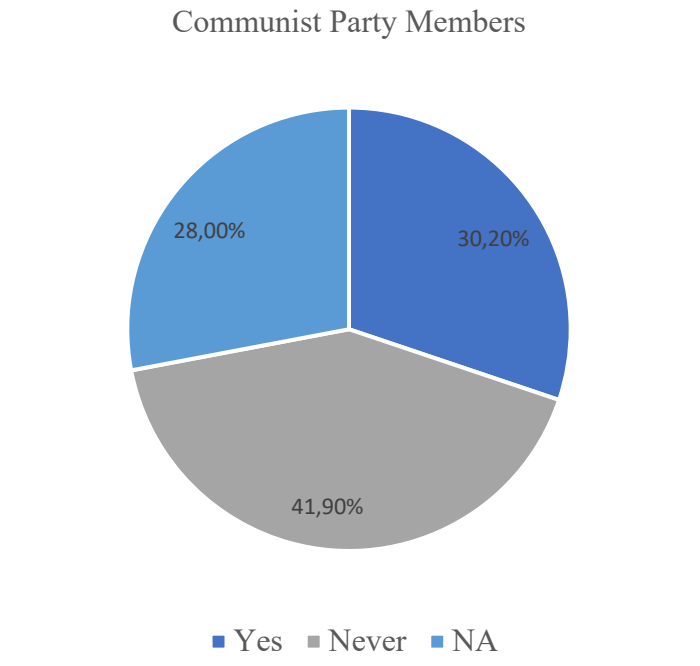
Religious identification

Family Atheist before war:	2/43 (4.7%)	Atheist After WWII:	8/43 (18.6%)
Family Practiced before war:	12/43 (28.0%)	Occasionally practiced postwar	4/43 (9.3%)
Family secular before war:	22/43 (51.2%)	Secular after WWII:	31/43 (72.1%)
Family Orthodox before war:	5/43 (11.6%)	Orthodox after WWII:	0/43 (0%)
Slovaks Neolog before the war:	2/43 (4.7%)	Neolog after WWII:	0/43 (0%)






Married Jewish
4,60%
9,30%
39,50%
46,50%
Yes
No
Yes/No (multiple mariages)
NA


Communist Party Members
28,00%
30,20%
41,90%
Yes
Never
NA

Name: Agi Sofferová
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/agi-sofferova
Family Name nee: Agi Kahan
Family Name changed: to Sofferová in 1947 due to marriage
Birth Year:1923
Birth Place: Mukachevo
Occupation Post-WWII: kindergarten teacher
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes (had to stop attending school in 1939)
Spouse: Josef Soffer
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: NA
Spouse's birth place: Kravsko
Spouse's occupation: Worked for a large company
Number of Children: 2 (daughters) (not religious)
Integrated pre-WWII: not very (mainly Jewish friends)

Paternal Grandfather: NA
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Birth Place: NA
Paternal Grandmother: Hana Kahan
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Orthodox

Maternal Grandfather: Berger
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Maternal Grandmother: unknown (nee Hochman)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Bence Kahan
Birth Place: Signet Marmatiei (today Romaina)
Birth Date: 1873
Death Date: 1939
Death Place: Mukachevo
Occupation: Buisnessman
War Service: Austro-Hungarian KuK Army in WWI, Italian front
Mother: Miriam Kahan (nee Berger)
Birth Place: Mukachevo
Birth Date: 1882
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Orthodox (devout)
Class: Lower Middle

During the War/Holocaust related:
1939 had to stop attending school
1944: whole family sent to Auschwitz
(her, mother, sisters/brothers, brother/sister in law, brother, nephews/nieces)
1945 Death march: from Auschwitz to Wroclaw
1945 Concentration camp: Ravensbrück
1945 Death march: from Ravensbrück

Lost Family Members: 2 brothers, 2 sisters, Mother, grandmother
Survived: 2 brothers, 1 sister

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: NA (not a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, visits (many family members on husband's side live(d) there)

Interviewed by: Zuzana Strouhova March 2006 in Znojmo, Czech Republic

Agi Sofferova Summary:
Agi was born on 15 March 1923 in Mukachevo, then in Czechoslovakia (now in modern Ukraine) to an Orthodox Jewish family. It was a majority Jewish town, but she had also Christian neighbors and friends and they all got along until 1938. She was the youngest child in her family with many older siblings so she spent a lot of time with her mother, otherwise she liked to go to play in the forest and swim in the river. She was from a poor family and she did not go on any family vacations that she remembered. Then she had to stop attending school in the 8th grade in 1939 due to the occupation and anti-Jewish laws. When they were ordered to the transport, she went with her mother and one piece of luggage. Her mother had always been Kosher, but on the way, she managed to by Agi a piece of sausage to eat since it was all there was. When they got to Auschwitz they were lined up and separated. Her mother went left and Agi was forced to the right, she never saw her mother again and can only imagine what happened to her. She was in Auschwitz till 1945 when the Russians were approaching so the Germans moved the prisoners back West on a Death March. She was forced to march across Europe on foot with little to know food and water. She ended up in Ravensbrück concentration camp. She did not get back to her home country till mid-summer in 1945, after being away over a year and a half. She didn't want to go back to school after the war, so instead she completed a two-year nursery teachers' course and became a teacher and foster mother. Later, she married a Jewish man name Josef Soffer after falling in love. He was quite a bit older than her, but after the war and having felt so small and helpless, she loved the stability he offered and she thought it would be easier to marry someone who also went through the same unimaginable experience she had. They had two daughters and they were her biggest joy. Her new family thought of emigrating to Israel, but she became pregnant and her husband was employed in Czech, they worried about uprooting and having to start completely afresh somewhere new and unknown. She found joy again in life with her family going on holiday to a cabin in the countryside and spending time with her daughters. Now her children are grown and she has grandchildren. They were never a rich family, but they made the best of their life, living through Communism and Revolution and all the turmoil the political instability caused. She never joined the Communist Party and didn't believe in it. She was happy when the Velvet Revolution came in 1989. She didn't feel very religious after the war and never celebrated any Jewish or Christian holidays afterwards, but she is proud of who she is and her culture and joined the Brno Jewish community after her children were grown. She never felt any anti-Semitism after the war, but she will never forget what she went through.

"When I came into the world, I was this ugly duckling, and my poor mother was embarrassed. Back then her neighbor said to her, 'Don't cry, Miriam, they'll all leave the nest and she'll be the only one to stay.' And it really did happen, they all left the nest and the two of us went onto the transport together."

Name: Alena Munkova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/alena-munkova
Family Name nee: Alena Synková changed in 1963 due to marriage
Birth Year:1926
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Dramaturgist/scriptwriter
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (but had to leave school in 1939)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: 1st no, 2nd yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse 1: Josef Till
Spouse 2: Jiri Munk
Spouse 1's birth place: Prerov
Spouse 2's birth place: Brandys nad Labem
Number of Children: 1 (daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Adolf Synek
Birth Place: Mlada Vozice 1871
Occupation: Publisher/bookseller
Paternal Grandmother: Terezie Synkova (nee Löfflerova)
Birth Place: Slovakia
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Bohumil Steiner
Birth Place: Kovansko 1871
Occupation: Textile merchant
Maternal Grandmother: Hermina Steinerova
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Father: Emil Synek
Birth Place: Vienna
Birth Date: 1894
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Dentist
War Service: WWI
Mother: Marie Synkova (nee Steinerova)
Birth Place: Kolin
Birth Date: 1898
Death Date: 1933
Death Place: Prague
Step-mother 1: Marta Synkova-Erbenova (nee Polakova)
Step-mother 2: Anna Synkova (nee Mandova)
Marriage Type: arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Middle class

<u>During the War/Holocaust related:</u>
1939: had to stop attending school
1942-1945: Terezin Ghetto (her, Paternal grandfather (died 1943), uncle)
1944: Auschwitz (her father)
~1944: Ravensbrück concentration camp (Step-mother Anna)

Lost Family Members: Father, maternal grandmother
Survived: Brother, Step-mother

Integrated After War: Very
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: NA
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive but skeptical, visits

Interviewed by: Terezie Holmerová January 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

Alena Munkova Summary:
Alena was born on 24th September 1926 to a secular middle-class Jewish family in Prague, Czechoslovakia. She had an older brother name Jiri but he went by Frantisek Listopad when he wrote books and did theater later in his life. She went to dance school and played in her the apartment building's courtyard. Her mother had cancer and she grew up knowing her mother was dying, which was hard on her at school, she felt like an outsider already before the war. After her mother's death her father remarried and she had a step-mother. She had to leave school and she was going through a lot with starting puberty and also coming to terms with Anti-Semitism when she had not been raised in a Jewish way and was suddenly confronted and called out as one. She helped her dad out in his Dentist practice as his assistant, but she felt so lonely as many of her friends were not Jewish and she was not allowed to go shopping or to the movies with them anymore. In 1942 her brother was summoned for transport alone, but instead of going he faked his own suicide and went into hiding. Then in December 1942, at age 16, she was summoned. She had had the chance to emigrate before with another family in 1939 when she was only 12, but after losing her mother, her father didn't want to send her away. They didn't' know what was to come, they could not imagine how bad it would get. So, she went to Terezin Ghetto alone, but there she finally felt like she belonged, she was with other people her age for one of the first times in about 3 years. Her paternal grandfather, and her uncle had been in Terezin before her, but they died there early on, so she didn't have any relatives to rely on like other people did. She became best friends with her bunk mate Vera who was only half Jewish and became her confident. She experienced her first love in Terezin, and she tried to live as normal a teenage life as she could, but none of her lovers survived the war. Her Father died in 1944 in Auschwitz, she never saw him again after 1942 when she was transported for the first time. Around 1944 she ended up in Ravensbrück concentration camp. After the war she managed to find her brother still alive and her step-mother. They lived together in their old apartment, but all they belongings had been stolen and the place had been ransacked so nothing of their past life was there. She found it hardest to interact with people in the city when she got back, she didn't know if they wanted her in shops now or not, or if she should portend to not be there. In 1946 she started university and studied journalism and political science. She finally found herself again in work in the 1950's surrounded by loving co-workers and enjoying her career. She married a non-Jewish man first but it didn't last long. Her second husband, Jiri Munk, was Jewish though secular, they met as he was a friend of her first husband. They had a daughter together and though they didn't enjoy living under the Communist regime, they lived quite happily. She is not religious because she does not have faith.

"I of course also experienced love in Terezin. And not just once. I think that I fell in love there at least five times. I never counted the times, and I always also soon got over it. It never lasted very long for me, which was still the case long after the war."

Name: Alexander Gajdos
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/alexander-gajdos
Family Name nee: Alexander Goldberger
Birth Year:1924
Birth Place: Nitria
War Service: 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps 1945, Czechoslovak Army, reconnaissance company 1940s
Occupation Post-WWII: Jewish Community employee
Religious type: Secular (Jewish aware) (raised children secular)
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes (grades 1-5)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No (till 1939, then stopped schooling)
Married Jewish: 1st yes, 2nd no
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse 1: Irenka Gajdosoba (nee Rothova)
Spouse 2: Miluska Gajdosova (nee Hrochova)
Spouse 1's birth place: Kajdanove 1926
Number of Children: 2 (sons)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes (friends/neighbors with Jews & non-Jews)

Paternal Grandfather: Bernat Goldberger
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: had a general store
Paternal Grandmother: Terezia Goldbergerova
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular (non-practicing) (not kosher) (only celebrated major holidays)

Maternal Grandfather: Markus Lubovic
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: owned a bakery
Maternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Neolog Jew

Father: Heinrich Galik (nee Goldberger)
Birth Place: Nitra
Birth Date: 1898
Death Date: 1978
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: traveling salesman, office worker
War Service: WWI
Mother: Sindy Goldbergerova (nee Lubovicova)
Birth Place: Trstena
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Probably in Ravensbrück
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular (non-practicing) (observed some major holidays)
Class: Lower middle class

During the War/Holocaust related:
1942 – 1944: Zilina (whole family)
October 1944: Slovak rebel army: Martin, Strecno,
November 1944: Partisan: Banska Bystrica
November – December 1944: In hiding in Low Tatras
December 1944 – February 1945: In jail in Banska Bystrica
February – March 1945: Partisan in Low Tatras, Priechod, Podkonice
March – June 1945: In the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps: Poprad to Prague

1942-1944: Zilina, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald (father)
1942-1944: Zilina and Ravensbrück (mother)

Lost Family Members: Sister, Mother, grandfather, 2 uncles
Survived: Father, 4 uncles, 3 aunt, 3 cousins

Integrated After War: Very
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a Party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, visits, (wife 1s family is there, wife 1 didn't' want to emigrate)

Interviewed by: Martin Korcok August 2005 in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

Alexander Gajdos summary:
Alexander was born on 8th April 1924 in Zilina, Czechoslovakia (present day Slovakia) to a secular lower-middle class Jewish family. He and his sister got on well and went first to a Jewish elementary school, and attended religion classes, but he was a good student and went to the public high school after. There, when he was 14, he started to feel anti-Semitism from his classmates and teachers. His non-Jewish friends and neighbors for the first time started to treat him differently. Then in 1942-1944 his whole family was interned in the Zilina collection camp. His dad and him had to work in physical labor, his mother in the kitchens. After an uprising where his family tried to escape, the family was separated, his mother and sister were sent to Ravenbrück and never heard from again. His father a was sent first to Sachsenhausen, and then Buchenwald and managed to survive it, whereas he was able to join the Slovak Rebel Army. He spent the next year and a half between fighting against the German invaders and in hiding. After the war he went to junior officer's school and joined the Czechoslovak Army. Later after being discharged from service, he went back to Zilina his home town and found his father. They had a rough time at first, they had not managed to get back any of their property or belongings from before the war and had to start with nothing. He worked as a plumber to afford food, till he finally got a job in a company. He was for these reasons, a proud Communist originally, and had joined the Party. He first married a Jewish woman named Irenka Rothovia who was a seamstress. They had two sons, but did not raise them religiously, but they were aware they were Jewish.

"Eventually we learned that the traitor had been the man who'd taken charge of us after our arrival in the village, and who'd fed us the cakes. If he wouldn't have sent us up to the gamekeeper's lodge to the partisans, I wouldn't be here today. He de facto saved us."

Name: Alice Klimova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/alice-klimova
Family Name nee: Alice Justitzová changed to Klimova in 1948 due to marriage
Birth Year:1928
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Teacher/professor
Religious type: Secular (Jewish aware but non-practicing)
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes (completed grade 5, June 1939)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Robert Klima
Spouse's birth place: Ostrava 1920
Number of Children: 2 (daughter & son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes (friends Jewish & non-Jewish)

Paternal Grandmother: Emilie Justizova
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Julius Glauber
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation: Owner of a wholesale coffee business
Maternal Grandmother: Otylie Glauberova (nee Hellerova)
Birth Place: Prague
Religious type: Secular (observed the high holidays)

Father: Bohumil Justitz
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1894
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Owner of an electrode factory
War Service: Austro-Hungarian army WWI
Mother: Ida Justitzova (nee Glauber)
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1894
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular (Not very Religious) (only observed high holidays)
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust related:
June 29th 1939: last day of school, grade 5
June 29th 1939-August 1945: She and her sister stayed with families in England

1942-1944: Terezin Ghetto (Father, Mother, grandmother)
1944: Auschwitz September (Father, Mother)
1944: Treblinka (grandmother)

Lost Family Members: Father, mother, grandmother, many aunts/uncles, 2 cousins
Survived: sister

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a Party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive-generally
(thinks Jews + Palestinians should live peacefully together)

Interviewed by: Lenka Koprivova May 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

Alice Klimova Summary:
Alice was born in 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a secularly Jewish family. She lived in a four-room apartment with her parents, grandmother, and sister. She loved gymnastics. Her mother used to take her to the gym for practice. Her parents were somewhat strict and did not tolerate misbehavior, but her father liked to joke and play with his daughters and they were a very loving family. The thing she hated most about childhood was that she had many older cousins, so she never got her own clothes or anything new, but always had to wear their hand-me-downs. In June 1939, she went to her last day of 5th grade. Afterwards, she was told she could no longer attend school. Almost immediately her parents told her she had to go away to England. Her sister and her were sent in the Kindertransport alone without their parents. She never thought about religion as divisive as a child and had many Christian friends. The age restrictions for the Kindertransport to England in Czechoslovakia at the time were only 10-16, so at 16.5 her sister was not supposed to be allowed to go. But because the director of her sister's high-school was a powerful Christian man and her sister's best friend's father and he helped arrange it, though the sisters were not put together and saw each other very rarely in England. Her whole family was murdered, when her sister and her returned to their homeland in 1945 after the war, there was no one left there for them to find. After the war she finished high-school and then went to university and became a teacher. She and her sister struggled for years to make end meet after losing everything. She joined the Communist party thinking it could be a good change. She married a Jewish man Robert Klima in 1948 when she was only 20 years old and later, they had two children. Life was hard, but she didn't want to go to England or Israel, she wanted to be in her homeland.

"Everyone had their necks craned out the window, and as soon as the train started moving, I saw that my father started weeping. He simply could no longer hold it in, no one had any idea for how long we were saying goodbye. My last words to him were, 'Dad, don't blubber here and don't embarrass me!' That was the last thing I said to him."

Name: Anna Hydrakova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/anna-hyndrakova
Family Name nee: Anna Kovanicova changed to Hydrakova due to marriage in 1949
Birth Year: 1928
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Office Clerk
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes (till 1940, denied a spot in English grammar school)
Married Jewish: NA
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: NA
Spouse's Birth Place: NA
Number of Children: 2 (daughter & son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Vilem Kovanic
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Dealt in feathers
Paternal Grandmother: Julie Kovanicova (nee Kopecka)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Bedrich Spitz
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Maternal Grandmother: Katerina Spitzova (nee Adlerova)
Birth Place: Berkovice 1861
Religious type: Kosher

Father: Pavel Kovanic
Birth Place: Kolin
Birth Date: 1891
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Commercial traveler
War Service: Austro-Hungarian KuK WWI (held captive in Moscow 1917)
Mother: Augusta Kovanicova (nee Spitzova)
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1894
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Religious type: Secular
Class: Lower middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939-1940: denied spot in English Grammar school had to switch to a Jewish school
1942: Terezin (with mother and father)
1944: Auschwitz
July 1944: Christianstadt
February 1945: Niesky
3 days later: Gorlitz
11th May 1945: returned to Prague alone

1941-1944: Terezin (sister and brother-in-law)
1945: Death march (brother-in-law)

Lost Family Members: Sister, mother, father, grandmother, niece, uncles, aunts, ~5 cousins
Survived: Uncles, aunts, ~5 cousins

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Supportive

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner June 2003 in Prague, Czech Republic

Anna Hyndrakova Summary:
Anna was born in 1928 in Prague to a lower-middle-class secular Jewish family. Her sister was seven years older than her and her role model. She did well in school and actually was so good in languages that she passed the test to go to the prestigious English grammar school, but that was in 1940, and then due to the Jewish exclusion laws, she was not allowed to attend. Instead she had to transfer to a Jewish school. In 1941 her dad was no longer allowed to work. Then in 1942 her whole family was sent to Terezin Ghetto, where she had to work in box-making. She didn't live with her family in Tezezin but in the Youth house, which was actually the best place to be. She was with others of her age and had some classes and spend time with poets and writers when she was not forced to work. In 1944 her parents and her were sent to Auschwitz, where her parents were murdered. She was sent to Christianstadt to knock down trees and pull out their stumps. She finally arrived home to Prague alone in May 1945, her whole family had been killed. When she got back, she tried to find an orphanage to take her, but they were all full, so she worked in a pediatrician's office for enough to support herself. Then eventually she was able to go to school and move into an orphanage and later a women's home. She was very poor and for this reason supported the Communist regime and joined the party hoping for her life to get better. She became an office clerk, got married, and had two children. Her children went to university and had better lives. She has grandchildren and likes to spend time with her family. She is also a very active member of the Terezin Initiative and was Deputy Chair.

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

Name: Anna Lorencova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/anna-lorencova
Family Name nee: Anna Weinsteinova
Birth Year:1927
Birth Place: Most
Occupation Post-WWII: Photographer/clerk
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No, Yes from 1940-1941
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Bohumil Lorenc
Spouse's birth place: Moscow 1925
Number of Children: 2 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Filip Weinstein
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Commercial traveler
Paternal Grandmother: Sofie Weinsteinova
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Arnold Schulz
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Estate Owner
Maternal Grandmother: Berta Schulzova
Birth Place: Konstantinovy Lazne
Religious type: Religious

Father: Richard Weinstein
Birth Place: Budweis
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1984
Death Place: Ceska Lipa
Occupation: Doctor
War Service: NA
Mother: Gertruda Weinsteinova (nee Schulzova)
Birth Place: Palupin
Birth Date: 1904
Death Date: 1988
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Practices
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
January 1939: Parents decided to keep her and her brother home from school
1940-1941: Attended 4th grade in the Jewish council school
December 1941-1945: Theresienstadt Ghetto (her, brother, mother, 2 grandmothers)

1944: Wulkow (brother)
1944: Auschwitz (grandmother)
1939-1941: Auschwitz via the Brno Kounic track (uncle Arnost, died)
1943: The Small Fortress -> Auschwitz (uncle Walter & Aunt Anny, died)
July 1943-1944: Terezin -> Auschwitz-Birkenau (Pavel & Kamila, died)
1941-1945: Shanghai (father)

Lost Family Members: uncle, aunt, 1 grandmother (1944, Poland)
Survived: Brother, 1 grandmother, 2 aunts, mother, Father

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very Supportive (has family there)

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner July 2003 in Prague, Czech Republic

Anna Lorencova Summary:
Anna was born in 1927 in Most, Czechoslovakia to a practicing Jewish family. Although her family observed the Jewish holidays and often went to synagogue, they also were assimilated and celebrated Christmas, not religiously but with the Christmas tree, a big dinner, and presents. Their family had a dog named Bobik they children loved dearly. She went to the elementary school in Most where she was one of only three Jewish girls in her class, but that was fine with her and many of her friends were not Jewish. Her brother got them both to school by bike, he would ride and she would sit on his cross-bar. In 1940 she had to leave school due to the anti-Jewish laws, so, her parents had her finish the third grade a Jewish school nearby. But that was not for long, since in December 1941 her mother, brother and her were deported to Terezin Ghetto. Her father had already escaped and gotten to Shanghai in 1941 to work as a doctor, he planned to have the family join him there later, but they had already been deported by then. Her family lived apart, he mother in the women's barracks, her brother in the men's, and her in the girl's barracks. Because her brother and mother had important jobs in Terezin, they all stayed there till 1944 without being sent on to Auschwitz or another camp. However, her one grandmother as well as aunts/uncles, were not so lucky. Her brother was also sent off in 1944, but he managed to survive. She fell in love after the war with a non-Jewish man named Bohumil Lorenc and got married. They had two daughters and were happy for a while, but eventually got divorced. They still all get together for holidays (Christian and Jewish). She never wanted to emigrate. She joined the Communist party and believed in change. She only left the party in 1969 after they threw her out. But by 1989 she was very ready for the end of Communism and for the Velvet Revolution. She had many odds and ends jobs, she had trouble finding jobs without having gotten a secondary education, but eventually got a stable secretary job.

"In communism I saw a solution to the Jewish question. Even before the war I was inclined towards communism, for there was a kind of omnipresent salon communism about, especially in literature and the humor of Voskovec and Werich."

Name: Anna Mrazkova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/anna-mrazkova
Family Name nee: Anna Polakova
Family Name changed: Anna Capkova changed due to remarriage in 1956
Birth Year: 1924
Birth Place: Luze
Occupation Post-WWII: Nurse
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No (stopped attending school during year 4 of Highschool)
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged (out of necessity to first husband, marriage of convenience)
Spouse 1: Karel Capek
Spouse 2: Karel Mrazek
Spouse 1's birth place: Prague, 1925
Number of Children: 0
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes (best friend non-Jew, associated with everyone)

Paternal Grandfather: Hynek Polak (born 1860-1956)
Birth Place: Jicin
Occupation: Merchant
Paternal Grandmother: Helena Polakova (nee Alterova) (died 1934)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Max Alter (1860-1930)
Birth Place: Jarosov
Occupation: Merchant
Maternal Grandmother: Kamila Alterova (nee Beranova) (1865-1938)
Birth Place: Luze
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Emil Polak
Birth Place: Jicin
Birth Date: 1895
Death Date: 1945
Death Place: Death March
Occupation: Merchant
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army WWI
Mother: Helena Polakova (nee Alterova)
Birth Place: Luze
Birth Date: 1901
Death Date: 1971
Death Place: Luze
Marriage Type: Not arranged (were cousins but didn't know each other till they met)
Religious type: Orthodox (kosher)
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1938: Had to give their dogs away (Jews could not have animals)
19:39: Stopped attending school during 4th year of Highschool
1940-1941: Started training as a seamstress
December 1942: Terezin Ghetto (her, father, Paternal Grandfather, Mother, sister)
December 1943: Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp (her, Father, mother, sister)
Spring 1944: Hamburg labor camp (her)
Bergen-Belsen concentration camp (her)
July 1945: Returned Home (her, mother, sister)

1945: Death March (father, mother, sister)

Lost Family Members: Father, Uncles, aunts, cousins [27 in total]
Survived: Paternal Grandfather, Mother, Sister, 2 cousins, aunt, uncle

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Supportive (family lives there)

Interviewed by: Dagmar Greslova December 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

Anna Mrazkova Summary:
Anna was born on 6th June 1924 in Luze, Czechoslovakia to an Orthodox Jewish family. She went to a normal public elmentry school in Luze, but after, since there was no local high-school her parents had her move to live in Prague with her uncle Jiri. She attended school in Prague for four years, till she was forced to stop due to the Jewish Exclusion laws. She was only about 15, so she was happy to no longer have to suffer school then. She thought she could start working, but it was also not allowed for her to work, so she realized there was nothing for her to do. Her best friend was a non-Jewish girl who she had first met in nursery school, but during the early days of the war Anna's mother asked her to stop coming over to see Anna at their home, since she worried the girl, though Aryan, would suffer for it one day. So, she didn't get to see her friends either. Her grandpa Hynek Polak, father, mother, sister and her were all sent to Terezin in 1942 together. She had a small room for her mother, sister, cousin and her. But her father and grandfather lived apart in a men's barrack. They suffered most from bedbugs that made it impossible for them to get any sleep. She worked as a nurse, though she had not been trained. She was somewhat happy in Terezin since the people often put on concerts, read poems, and stories allowed, so there was access to some form of culture and some form of social life. In December 1993 her family and her were transported to Auschwitz. From there she was sent to multiple labor camps, but somehow survived to return back home in July 1945 after the war. She found not only her mother and sister when she returned but several young girls her mother had brought home with her as they had become orphans. Her mother set up a plague to remember her father, though he didn't come back. She worked in a Research Institute for many years and married twice but had no children.

"Once during a roll-call [in Auschwitz], when we'd been standing a long time, I fainted. They dragged me off a ways and were trying to revive me. I remember that I was already coming to a bit, and I heard a girl standing above me saying: 'Uh oh, she's not going to see another day!' As I was coming to my senses and heard her words, I was suddenly filled with this amazing strength, and to myself I said: 'You know what, you stupid goose, I will, too!'"

Name: Antonie Militka
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/antonie-militka
Family Name nee: Antonie Michalova
Birth Year: 1928
Birth Place: Brno
Occupation Post-WWII: Office Clerk
Religious type: practiced
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Ladislav Militky (1929-2003)
Spouse's birth place: Litovel
Number of Children: 1 (son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Karel Michal
Birth Place: Brno
Occupation: Book printer
Paternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Catholic

Maternal Grandfather: Samuel Reiter
Birth Place: Drachinet
Occupation: Farmer
Maternal Grandmother: Rezi Reiter
Birth Place: Drachinet
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Ludevit Michal
Birth Place: NA
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1983
Death Place: Brno
Occupation: Barber/textile mill worker
War Service: NA
Mother: Mrs. Michal
Birth Place: Drachinet
Birth Date: NA
Death Date: NA
Death Place: Brno
Marriage Type: Not arranged
Religious type: Orthodox
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1938-1943: Had to move to Hybesova St. to an older house
1943-1945: Terezin Ghetto (her, mother joined in 1945)

1944-1945: Jail in Prague (mother)
1944-1945: Worked as a machinic for non-Jew friend (brother)
1944-1945: Postelberg/Postoloprty labor camp (father)

Lost Family Members: uncles, aunts, cousins
Survived: Brother, mother, father

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (NA if Party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, visits (brother emigrated there)

Interviewed by: Barbora Pokreis December 2004 in Brno, Czech Republic

Antonie Militka Summary:
Antonie was born in 1928 in Brno, Czechoslovakia to an Orthodox Jewish family. She went to camp in the summer each year with the Jewish community in Maccabi. She loved her younger brother and their dog, Tiger. Her best friend was another Jewish girl Kitty, but she didn't survive the war. The anti-Jewish eclusion laws came to full force when she was only 12 and her brother 8. They were not allowed to play in parks, go to school, or walk about in the city anymore. In 1943 they were kicked out of their family house and ordered to tear it down, her father while trying to comply fell off the roof. Not even 14 days later Antonie was in Terezin. In February 1945 her mother joined her in Terezin, while her brother avoided it in hiding. Her father came from Aryan (catholic) Origin and managed to arrange false documents claiming he had not been Jewish, but they arrested him in 1945 for having a Jewish wife. Their family was lucky in that they got most of their property back, besides their house had been torn down and their father remained an invalid from his fall. Also, luckily her brother survived in hiding, no one ever turned him in, and they helped take care of him. She met her husband at a spa in Lipova in 1956, he was not Jewish and they had a civil marriage. She had to undergo surgery for her frost-bitten toes later on and it took her a while to recover. She had a son. She worked in the Jewish Community from 1986-2005.

"I told my son about what took place during the Holocaust. I was very careful, just fragments, so he had to put it together himself. It wasn't like now, when we're sitting here and I'm telling you everything. I wanted to protect him, because it's been proven that the fear gets passed on up to the second generation, that even his children would still have been afraid... I wanted to protect him from that."

Name: Artur Radvansky
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/artur-radvansky
Family Name nee: Artur Thüeberger changed in 1950s to assimilate
Birth Year: 1921
Birth Place: Radcanice u Moravske Ostravy
Occupation Post-WWII: Chemist
Religious type: Practice
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged (met in Auschwitz)
Spouse: Alzbeta Radvanska (nee Kürtiova) 1918
Spouse's birth place: Komarno
Number of Children: 2 (son & daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes (friends with Czechs, germans, Poles)

Paternal Grandfather: Adolf Tüeberger
Birth Place: Polish Beskid
Occupation: small buisnessman
Paternal Grandmother: Sali Tüebergerova (nee Rauchbergerova) (1860-1920)
Birth Place: Polish Beskids
Religious type: Orthodox (kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Jindrich Rauchberger (1860-1942)
Birth Place: Polish Beskids
Occupation: Tinsmith
Maternal Grandmother: Mrs. Rauchbergerova (1860-1942)
Birth Place: Polish Beskids
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Marek Thüeberger
Birth Place: Jawiszovice
Birth Date: 1888
Death Date: 1939
Death Place: Buchenwald
Occupation: Businessman
War Service: Austro-Hungarian KuK WWI (Polish front)
Mother: Anna Thüebergerova (nee Rauchbergerova)
Birth Place: NA
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1942
Death Place: Maly Trostinec
Marriage Type: not religious (cousins)
Religious type: Practiced (kosher)
Class: NA

"We had to carry heavy rocks uphill, for the construction of army barracks. I always tried to give my father the lightest ones, to make it easier on him. While we worked, the SS and capos beat us. When we'd be scurrying by the SS, sometimes an SS soldier would snatch someone's cap from his head, throw it behind him and say, 'Get the cap!' And when someone set out to fetch it, they'd shoot him for attempting to escape."

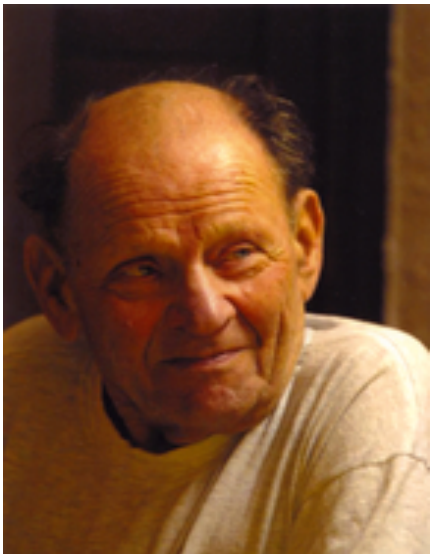
<u>During the War/Holocaust Related:</u>
1939: had to leave university
1939-1942: Buchenwald concentration camp (him, father [died 1939])
March 1942-October 1942: Ravensbrück concentration camp
October 1942-September 1942: Sachsenhausen concentration camp
September 1942-January 1945: Auschwitz
January 1945: Death March
January 1945: Mauthausen concentration camp
Febuary-May 1945: Ebensee labor camp

1942: Euthanasia Institute in Kromeriz (brothers died)
1942: Terezin ghetto -> Maly Trostinec concentration camp (mother [died there in 1942])
1942: Majdanek/Treblinka concentration camp (maternal grandfather/grandmother [died 1942])

Lost Family Members: Brothers, father, 2 uncles, mother, maternal grandfather/grandmother
Survived: Uncle Arnold

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: No (never a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very Positive, visits

Interviewed by: Martina Marsalkova June 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic



Artur Radvansky Summary:
Artur was born in 1921 in Radvanice Ostrava, in Czechoslovakia to a practicing Jewish family. He liked to go to Sokol, dance parties, play handball and hockey. He danced with all the girls at school since his mom had taught him the Waltz and he knew the Tango too. He often practiced dancing while his classmates had (catholic) religion class at school as there was not Jewish religion class where he was. He went to Christmas Midnight Mass with his best Christian friend, because he found it fun and they liked to talk to girls after. He didn't feel any anti-Semitism before the war and had many Christian friends. His family kept kosher, but he ate whatever was offered him when he was at his friend's houses. He was no longer allowed to attend high-school due to the Jewish exclusion laws. He was arrested in September 1939 and went to Buchenwald concentration camp, then Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and then Ebensee. His work in Buchenwald was carrying heavy rocks uphill, his father was with him, so he always found the heaviest for himself and tried to find the lightest for his father. His father died of starvation in November 1939, he was unable to help find for food for him, since his feet had been frostbitten so badly, he was unable to walk. He was liberated by the Americans in May 1945. He found out when he got back that his whole family had died. He didn't want to emigrate anywhere else since he did not have a university education or a trade, let alone speaking the language, he thought it would be harder for him to find work abroad. So, he started studying at the Institute of Chemical Technology and after worked as a chemist. He was not a communist, but rather a member of the resistance. He married a Jewish woman Alzbeta Kürtiova and had two children. He didn't raise his children religiously, but once they were in school, they started to wonder why everyone but them had grandparents and he had to find ways to explain which he found difficult. In the 1970's he started working for the Jewish religious community and became secretary general of the Bohemia and Moravia communities.

Name: Asaf Auerbach
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/asaf-auerbach
Birth Year: 1928
Birth Place: Ain Harod
Occupation Post-WWII: Economist
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Miloslava Auerbachova (nee Vancatova)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 2 (sons)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Simon Auerbach (1849-1914)
Birth Place: Becov nad Teplou
Occupation: Merchant
Paternal Grandmother: Louisa Auerbachova (nee Fischerova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Jindrich Fantl (1867-1940)
Birth Place: Chlebnik
Occupation: owned a store
Maternal Grandmother: Zofie Fantlova (nee Epsteinova) (1873-1954)
Birth Place: Prague
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Rudolf Auerbach
Birth Place: Becov nad Teplou
Birth Date: 1899
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Farm worker in Palestine auditor in Czech
War Service: NA
Mother: Marketa Auerbachova (nee Fantlova)
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auchwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular (not kosher)
Class: NA

<u>During the War/Holocaust Related:</u>
Summer 1939: Emigrated to England lived in Stoke-on-Trent (him and brother)

1942-1944: Terezin Ghetto (father, mother, p. grandmother [died 1942], m. grandmother)
1944: Auschwitz (father, mother)
1943: Fought in the Czech army (brother)

Lost Family Members: Mother, Father, paternal grandmother, uncle
Survived: Aunt, cousin, brother, maternal grandmother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (his whole family where Party members besides him)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, visited

Interviewed by: Lenka Koprivová November 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

Asaf Auerbach Summary:
Asaf was born in 1928 in Ain Harod, Palestine to a secular Jewish family. He was not as athletic as his older brother was and preferred to be at home with his mother and help her cook and with the chores around the house. His parents sent him and his brother to England summer of 1939 to keep them safe, but he was only about 10 and cried to leave his mother. His brother, him, and six other children from the train were taken by a Mrs. Hanna Strasserova to the town of Stoke-on-Trent. The children lived with her in house that was part of an orphanage, they called her Mother, but there was no 'father' and they counted each other as siblings. Until 1942, they were able to write letters back home to their parents, but after that no letters came, but no letters came to any of the children, so the boys didn't worry, they didn't really know what was going on back home. They were transferred to various married Czechoslovakian couples in England over the years, all while attending school. His brother turned 18 in 1943 and was able to join the Czechoslovak Army, other boys he lived with did as they aged into it too, but he was never able to, the war ended when he was barley 17. He was sent back to his home country and showed up at his aunts' door and luckily found her and his grandmother still alive, but his parents had been killed a few years ago, no one knew when exactly. In 1950 he married a girl that he met in high-school after the war, Miloslava Vancatova who was not Jewish. Later they had two sons. He never joined the party because he felt they were, being against all religions, not for him to join as a Jew even though he was secular. He worked as an Economist. He didn't care back when he was younger, but now he is happy Israel exists, he feels like his people came from there, and it's nice they have somewhere they can be safe.

"So, you want to at all costs know what my Jewishness consists of, how I perceive it, what it means to me. Don't you have some simpler question? Why is it always asked of us, Jews? Or of us so often and others only sporadically? What's more: why do we ask it of ourselves? When you ask ten Czechs what being Czech means to them, they'll all give you approximately the same answer. Similarly, when you ask ten Germans, ten Frenchmen and so on."

Name: Bedriska Felixova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/bedriska-felixova
Family Name nee: Bedriska Burgmannova
Birth Year: 1935
Birth Place: Brno
Occupation Post-WWII: Nurse
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No/Yes (in 1939 had to transfer to Jewish school)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Milan Felix (1923-1994)
Spouse's birth place: Hodonin
Number of Children: 2 (sons)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: NA
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: Jana Burgmann (nee Schoen) (died 1943)
Birth Place: Uhersky Brod
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Herman Baru (died 1941)
Birth Place: Damborice
Occupation: Tailor
Maternal Grandmother: Gizela Baru (nee Heska) (died 1934)
Birth Place: Podivin
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Gustav Burgmann
Birth Place: Brno
Birth Date: 1897
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Clerk, accountant
War Service: NA
Mother: Regina Burgmannova (nee Baru)
Birth Place: Brno
Birth Date: 1901
Death Date: 1973
Death Place: Brno
Marriage Type: arranged
Religious type: practiced
Class: Upper middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939-1942: stayed home in Brno, could not go to the State nursery
1942-1945: Terezin Ghetto (father, paternal grandmother [died 1943], mother, her)

1944: Auschwitz (father [died 1944])

Lost Family Members: Father, paternal grandmother
Survived: mother, her, cousins

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: NA
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive (thought it did not change enough)
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, visited, no desire to emigrate

Interviewed by: Zuzana Pastorkova November 2004 in Brno, Czech Republic

Bedriska Felixova Summary:
Bedriska was born 17th January 1935 in Brno, Czechoslovakia to an upper-middle-class practicing Jewish family. She went to the state nursery school, but after only a couple weeks had to leave due to the anti-Jewish laws. She went then to a Jewish school for a year, but then her family was deported to Terezin. She does not remember much of her father. She was only 9 when in 1944 he died in Auschwitz and she was not able to live with him since she was 7 when they were first deported. But she remembers that he yelled at the Germans very fiercely in the Ghetto not to hurt his daughter. She also hardly remembers her brother, he died in 1939 when he got appendicitis. She was only four, but she remembers that in 1940 her mom cried uncontrollably while she sewed a yellow star into Bedriska's dress. Luckily her mom and her were saved by her mom's profession, as a seamstress of German uniforms they were kept in Terezin and not sent on. Her grandma tried to give her some sort of education in Terezin and taught her to count and read, but her grandmother couldn't handle the rough living conditions and didn't make it a year in the ghetto, she died in 1943. The Russians liberated Terezin in May 1945, and her mother ruined her dress tearing the star off it as soon as they arrived. She was 11 when they got back home but she only weighed 16 kilograms. A kind woman let her mother and her live with her and nursed them back to health, till she found them their own place. They had nothing left from their previous life, they got nothing back. She resumed elementary school, then went to high school and eventually medical school. She met her husband Milan Felix after the war, he was Jewish and they had mutual friends, they married in 1960. She worked as a nurse in a dental clinic and liked her work a lot, she didn't retire until 1987. They have two sons and two grandchildren.

"Each synagogue had a different rabbi. I remember only a cantor who had an amazing voice and everyone listened to his beautiful singing with delight. Mother used to reminisce that Brno also had a mikveh. My grandmother on my mother's side maybe used to go there, but my mother certainly didn't. She used to say 'Nothing's better than your own bathroom.'"

Name: Chava Pressburger
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/chava-pressburger
Family Name nee: Chava Ginzova Eva
Birth Year: 1930
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Artist
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: Not arranged
Spouse: Abraham Jindrich Pressburger (nee Abraham Heinz Pressburger)
Spouse's birth place: Bratislava
Number of Children: 2 (daughter & son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Josef Ginz (nee Josef Gunz) (1857-1912)
Birth Place: Barchovice
Occupation: Teacher, antiques merchant
Paternal Grandmother: Berta Ginzova (nee Stastna) (1866-1943)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Antonin Dolansky
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Teacher
Maternal Grandmother: Ruzena Dolanska (nee Pultrova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Catholic

Father: Otto Ginz
Birth Place: Zdanice
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1975
Death Place: Israel
Occupation: worked for Stein and Co.
War Service: NA
Mother: Marie Ginzova (nee Dolanska)
Birth Place: Cibuz
Birth Date: 1898
Death Date: 1990
Death Place: Israel
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Practiced
Class: Upper middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1944-1945: Terezin Ghetto (her, father)

1942-1944: Terezin Ghetto (Brother, paternal grandmother [died 1943])
1944: Auschwitz (brother)
1938-1945: Aryan, at home and sent packages to her children (mother)

Lost Family Members: Brother, Paternal Grandmother, aunts, uncles
Survived: Mother, father,

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: NA
Pro-Communist: No
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: Yes (lives in Czech & Israel)
View of Israel: Very Positive, whole family emigrated

Interviewed by: Martin Korcok May 2005 in Prague Czech Republic

Chava Pressburger Summary:
Chava was born in 1930 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a practicing Jewish family. She remembers her home as always active and fun, they always had guests over to visit. On Sunday her family went for walks together in the park with all her aunts, uncles, and cousins. Her mother's family was Christian, she had converted when she married Chava's father. So, they didn't celebrate Christmas at home, but they did with her mother's relatives. Her brother and her went to the Jewish elementary school, her favorite class there was drawing. She only really had Jewish friends because of school. Reading was her main hobby. Since her mother had been Christian before, Chava's brother and her were considered half-breeds, but that still meant that all anti-Jewish laws applied to them. The only benefit to being a half-breed was that you had to be 14 years old to be deported, so her brother was transported to Terezin alone in 1942. She was transported there after her birthday in 1944. She remembers the worst part was knowing that as soon as her birthday came, she would be ripped away from her parents and home and sent alone into the unknown. Her father was safe, since he was married to an Aryan, until 1945, when the Germans changed this rule. Usually half-breeds were not sent to Auschwitz, but somehow her brother had been, probably swapped by someone who had connections who was supposed to go. They don't know, all they know is her brother Petr never returned. She finished school first and continued to study art. She married her husband Jindrich also a Jew after the war and they emigrated, they didn't want to go back. She is an artist and traveled and lived in many places. She had two children. She now has residence back home in the Czech Republic, finally desiring to return, as well as a residence in Israel where she had settled with her family. However, she raised her children and remains secular. She still loved to draw.

"This decree [on half-breeds] was very cruel, and I'd say that for mixed families often worse, because the family couldn't stay together. The Germans tore from a family a child, which then had to leave alone, which was horrible both for it and for the rest of its family. I remember my feelings when I was waiting to turn 14 with the knowledge that my parents were going to have to give me up to the Germans. The feelings of my parents, their fear and helplessness were similarly indescribable."

Name: Dagmar Lieblova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/dagmar-lieblova
Video Link: https://www.centropa.org/node/44639?language=cs&subtitle_language=en
Family Name nee: Dagmar Fantlova
Birth Year: 1929
Birth Place: Kutna Hora
Occupation Post-WWII: Teacher/professor
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Petr Liebl
Spouse's birth place: Ceske Budejovice
Number of Children: 3 (2 daughters & 1 son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Vilem Fantl (1858-1940)
Birth Place: Lubenec
Occupation: farmer
Paternal Grandmother: Jindriska Fantlova (nee Hechtova) (1859-1940)
Birth Place: Suchomasty
Religious type: Orthadox

Maternal Grandfather: Maxmilian Reitman (1870-1941)
Birth Place: Trhova Kamenice
Occupation: Buisnessman
Maternal Grandmother: Augusta Reitmanova (nee Hermanova) (1870-1942)
Birth Place: Pokrikov
Religious type: Practiced

Father: Julius Fantl
Birth Place: Cimelice
Birth Date: 1892
Death Date: 1943
Death Place: Auschwitz-Birkenau
Occupation: General practitioner
War Service: NA
Mother: Irena Fantlova (nee Reitmanova) (1901-1943)
Birth Place: Malin
Birth Date: 1901
Death Date: 1943
Death Place: Auschwitz-Birkenau
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Middle class

<u>During the War/Holocaust Related:</u>
1939: no longer allowed to go to school
1942-December 1943: Thresienstadt Ghetto (father, mother, maternal grandmother, her)
December 1943: Auschwitz-Birkenau (sister & father & mother [died 1943], her)
1944: Dessauer labor camp
1944: Neugraben
1944: Harburg and Tiefstack in Hamburg
1945: Bergen-Belsen concentration camp
1945-1948: recovered in a Zamberk, Prague sanatorium (affection of the lungs)

1942: Treblinka concentration camp (maternal grandmother [died 1942])

Lost Family Members: sister, father, uncles, aunts, mother, m. grandmother
Survived: aunt, uncle

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: NA
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Positive (for freedom to travel abroad)
Emigrated: No (lived for a time in South Africa for husband's job)
View of Israel: Positive, visits

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner January 2004 in Prague Czech Republic

Dagmar Liebblova Summary:
Dagmar was born in 1929 in Kutna Hora, Czechoslovakia to a middle class secular Jewish family. She often fought with her younger sister, and her biggest annoyance as a child was to have to always take her everywhere with her. There was not a Jewish school in the area and her sister and her went to a local girl's elementary school. There was only one other Jewish girl in her class, but she never, minded, she had many non-Jewish friends and never felt any anti-Semitism before 1938. She was not allowed to go to school anymore in 1939, and there was only one grocery store Jews were allowed to shop at and its selection was very limited. In 1942, her family was transported to Terezin ghetto. She was with 24 other girls her same age (13) in the children's barracks under watch by Magda Weissova. The girls' job was to work in the garden during the day and at night they studied, sang, and listened to poems people had memorized. Then in December 1943, this new life she had gotten used to ended as her family was transported to Auschwitz. Her new job in Auschwitz was looking over 10-year-old boys, even though she herself were only a child. She left Auschwitz alone and arrived in Hamburg. She returned home, but was the only one in her family to do so. She had nowhere to go and not even a completed elementary education. Luckily on of her father's friends survived the war and was willing to become her guardian. She went back to school and eventually was even able to go to university. There she met her future husband Petr Lieble, he was Jewish too. She was a teacher and professor and her husband worked at the university in mathematics. They had 3 children together and traveled to various universities around the world for work. They returned to Czechoslovakia in mid 1968.

"My father was a doctor in Terezin and when we arrived in Birkenau, he was told to see the chief physician who asked him if he had studied at a Czech or German university. My father was very patriotic, so naturally he said he had been to a Czech one. He was asked another two times but kept saying he had been to a Czech university. If he had said he had been to a German university, he could have been a doctor there as well, but he would never have said that. Instead, he had to go around checking the inmates to see if they had flees."

Name: Dagmar Simova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/dagmar-simova
Family Name nee: Dagmar Deimlová
Birth Year: 1928
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Office Clerk
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Vladimir Sima
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 2 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Hynek Deiml (1860-1934)
Birth Place: Dobriv
Occupation: Merchant
Paternal Grandmother: Emilie Deimlova (nee Straussova) (1861-1942)
Birth Place: Dobriv
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Arnost Korbel (1874-1942)
Birth Place: Novy Bydzov
Occupation: stationmaster
Maternal Grandmother: Olga Korbelova (nee Ptackova) (1874-1944)
Birth Place: Austira
Religious type: Secular

Father: Rudolf Deiml
Birth Place: Dobriv
Birth Date: 1889
Death Date: 1943
Death Place:Auschwitz
Occupation: General practitioner
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army WWI
Mother: Marketa Deimlova (nee Korbelova)
Birth Place: Novy Bydzov
Birth Date:1903
Death Date: 1943
Death Place: Terezin
Marriage Type: Not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939-1945: In Great Britain

Terezin Ghetto (father, p. grandmother, mother [died 1943], m. grandfather [died 1942], m. grandmother)
Auschwitz (sister, father [died 1943], maternal grandmother [died 1944])
1942: Treblinka concentration camp (paternal grandmother)

Lost Family Members: Sister, Mother, Father, p. Grandmother, m. Grandfather/Grandmother
Survived: uncles, aunt

Integrated After War: Yes, very
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (never a Party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supported it (wanted to be able to visit other countries)
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, skeptical

Interviewed by: Lenka Koprivová July 2006 in Prague Czech Republic

Dagmar Simova Summary:
Dagmar was born in 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a secular Jewish family. Her father was big on hiking and they often went as a family and in winter they liked to go skiing. She also loved to read a lot and their home was filled with books. Her sister and her were supposed to go to England to escape. A family in England had agreed to take the sisters, but then her sister broke her leg. Her parents decided she should not go. So, Dagmar was sent alone, but the family was no longer willing, so she went instead to one of her uncles there. She never saw her sister or parents again, and she blames her parents for keeping her sister there rather than sending her to safety. She was only 11, her sister would have been 6. She went to a boarding school in England and was there until 1944. When she was not at school she was with her uncle and his political friends and exiled fellow Czechs. During all this time she heard nothing from home and did not know anything about her family. She only found out after the war when she returned home. She was able to stay with a distant relative, but she had to support herself, and her orphan's pension was not enough. She had trouble because she had no legal rights till, she was an adult and that meant 21 years old in 1950. She married her husband Vladimir Sima a non-Jewish man who was in the Army and they had two daughters together. She was not supportive of the Communist regime and never joined the party. She was atheist after the war and never had any contact with the Jewish community, but she is proud of who she is.

"My sister was also supposed to go, and we'd been picked out by some family, that we'd be staying with them. But then my sister broke her leg, and what then happened is something I'll never forgive my parents. They said that she can't go anywhere with a broken leg, and that she won't leave until the September transport, when she's well. As is known, the September transport never left."

Name: Eva Duskova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/eva-duskova
Family Name nee: Eva Freyova
Birth Year: 1930
Birth Place: Pilsen
Occupation Post-WWII: Librarian
Religious type: Practices
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Milan Dusek
Spouse's birth place: Vysoke Myto
Number of Children: 2 (daughter & son)
Integrated Pre-WWII:

Paternal Grandfather: Julius Frey (1866-1943)
Birth Place: Dolni Kounice
Occupation: Railway Conductor
Paternal Grandmother: Hermina Freyova (nee Breitenfeldova) (1875-1943)
Birth Place: Litomysl
Religious type: Practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Rudolf Finger (1877-1944)
Birth Place: Kozolupy
Occupation: Merchant
Maternal Grandmother: Irma Fingerova (nee Ledererova) (1884-1944)
Birth Place: Litomysl
Religious type: practiced

Father: Viktor Frey
Birth Place: Pardubice
Birth Date: 1901
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Terezin
Occupation: Mechanical engineer
War Service: none (flat feet)
Mother: Marketa Freyova (nee Fingerova)
Birth Place: Ceska Lipa
Birth Date: 1909
Death Date: 1992
Death Place: Litomysl
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Practiced
Class: NA

"As an adult I was at the synagogue on Friday evening, and it seemed to me to be foreign, impersonal, so I said to myself that I have no need of it. But because as a child I was used to going to the synagogue on the high holidays, somehow, I attended the whole time, even during Communist times. Because I'm a librarian, I also had official errands to run, so I combined it with some official errand. And no one knew anything. Probably I was lucky."

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939: had to stop attending school
December 1942-October 1944: Terezin Ghetto
(her, father [died 1944], p. grandfather [died 1943], mother, m. grandfather/grandmother)
October 1944: Auschwitz (her, p. grandmother [died 1943], mother, m. grandfather [died 1944])
October 1944-May 1945: Lenzing concentration camp (her, mother)

Lost Family Members: father, p. grandfather,
p. grandmother, aunt, m. grandfather/grandmother [died 1944])
Survived: mother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (never a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supported it (went to protest)
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive, visits

Interviewed by: Zuzana Strouhová September 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

Eva Duskova Summary:
Eva was born 22nd of March in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia in 1930 to a practicing Jewish family. She was an only child and only even had one cousin, so she mostly spent time with her mother. She only was able to attend the first four grades of elementary school before she had to stop attending due to the anti-Jewish laws. In December 1942 her family was transported to Terezin ghetto. Her father died in Terezin, he had been a heavy smoker, so his immune system was weaker, and he didn't last long. Right after her father died in 1944, her mother and her were deported to Auschwitz. But after only 14 days they were moved to Mauthausen concentration camp. Somehow her mother and her survived till the camp was liberated by the Americans. She felt weird after she was back home and started school again, the none Jewish kids didn't have any idea what she and other Jews had gone through and they didn't seem to want to know either. It was hard to feel like a normal child and care about school and childish things after the last few years of only caring about surviving. Her mother was in such bad health when they got back that she could not take care of Eva, so instead her grandparents old housekeeper Marie took her on. She worked in the library and enjoyed her job. She married Milan Dusek, who was not Jewish, and they had two more together. They raised their children Jewish and Catholic and practiced both faiths at home. Neither of her children practiced either faith when they grew up though. Both children do identify as Jewish, not in a religious way, but in an identity way. She now likes to spend time with her friends and her family. She never joined the communist party or supported it.

Name: Eva Meislova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/eva-meislova
Family Name nee: Eva Böhmová
Birth Year: 1923
Birth Place: Tábor
Occupation Post-WWII: Departmental head in socialist firms
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (none there)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Jiri Meisl (1921-1999)
Spouse's birth place: Cerveny Ujezd
Number of Children: 0
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Jakub Bohm (1861-1942)
Birth Place: Batelov
Occupation: Owner of a store
Paternal Grandmother: Veronika Bohmova (nee Redererova) (1860-1942)
Birth Place: Celkovice
Religious type: Practiced (kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Josef Kraus
Birth Place: Cechtice
Occupation: Owned a small business
Maternal Grandmother: Pavlina Krausova (nee Fischerova)
Birth Place: Mlada Boleslav
Religious type: Atheist

Father: Alois Bohm
Birth Place: Celkovice
Birth Date: 1885
Death Date: 1940
Death Place: Oranienburg
Occupation: Businessman
War Service: NA
Mother: Stepanka Bohmova (nee Krausova)
Birth Place: Cechtice
Birth Date: 1895
Death Date: 1962
Death Place: Tabor
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1942: Terezin Ghetto (her, p. grandfather/p. grandmother [died 1942], mother)
December 1943: Auschwits (her, mother)
Summer 1944: Frauenlager women's camp (her, mother)
1944: Forced labor in Harbug (her, mother)
1944: Neugraben & Tiefstack concentration camp (her, mother)
1945: Bergen-Belsen concentration camp (her, mother)
April 1945: liberated by the English

1940: Dresden concentration camp -> Oranienburg concentration camp (father)
1944: Death march from Schwarzheide concentration camp (brother)

Lost Family Members: brother, father, p. grandfather/grandmother
Survived: mother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (NA is ever Party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Against it
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner March 2003 in Prague Czech Republic

Eva Meislova Summary:
Eva was born in Tábor, Czechoslovakia in 1923 to a middle class secular Jewish family. Her mom was always a super happy person and her father a super serious person but they loved each other a lot. Eva had a brother Rudolf who was two years older. He was a boy scout and she went to dance courses. Her parents had a bedroom, but her brother and her slept in the living room, as they didn't have a room for their own. They did have a maid though who helped their mother around the house, but the maid never took care of them. Their family only observed the high Jewish holiday and didn't go to synagogue often. They also celebrated Christmas and new year's like their Christian neighbors, they were very assimilated. After 5th grade she had to leave school due to the anti-Jewish laws, this really hurt her, since she was the only Jew in her class, so she was the only one who had to leave. Her father died in 1940. In 1942 her mother, brother, and her were transported to Terezin. Her mother and her were selected for transport to Auschwitz in 1943 so her brother volunteered himself too so they would stay together. Her mother and her made it out, but her brother grew too weak and sick and didn't survive, his friends shot him when the camp was liberated on his dying request. She married a boy she had been with the whole time during the war since Terezin, a Jewish man named Jiri. She and Jiri lived with their friends another young recently married couple. She was not able to have children and never desired them enough to adopt any. She was supportive of the Communist regime because she felt that capitalism made society very unequal. She relied on the state after the war, and she didn't agree with all the policies or politics of it, but she didn't know anyone that went hungry, that was what was most important to her.

"There wasn't enough food. In the evening we got a quarter of bread and my mum said to me, 'You must not eat it all, you have to save half of it.' So, we were saving part of the bread but our co-prisoners stole it. From then on we were eating everything at once."

Name: Gabriela Brodska
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/gabriela-brodska
Family Name nee: Gabriela Rothova
Birth Year: 1924
Birth Place: Roznaba
Occupation Post-WWII: Accountant
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Ondrej Brodsky (1911-1976)
Number of Children: 2 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: NA
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: landowner
Paternal Grandmother: Fanni Roth (1870-1939)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Neolog Jew

Maternal Grandfather: Jakub Kraus (1863-1937)
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: owned a general store
Maternal Grandmother: Etel Krausova (nee Weber) (1862-1918)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Neolog Jew

Father: Jeno Roth
Birth Place: Zadrofalva
Birth Date: 1890
Death Date: 1932
Death Place: Roznava
Occupation: Owned forests in the Roznava region (farmed)
War Service: Austro-Hungarian KuK army 1911-1918
Mother: Jolana Eichnelova (nee Kraus)
Birth Place: Zlate
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Secular
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1944: Roznava ghetto (her, mother)
1944: Diosgyor ghetto (her, mother)
1944-1945: Auschwitz (her, mother [died 1944])
1945: Auschwitz death march (her)

Lost Family Members: brother, mother,
Survived: none

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: NA
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very Positive

Interviewed by: Unkown in Carlsbad, Czech Republic

Gabriela Brodska Summary:
Gabriela was born in Roznaba, Czechoslovakia in 1924 to a secular Jewish family. She only felt Jewish after 1939 when she started to experience anti-Semitism, before that she never felt anything but a normal Czech girl, same as all her classmates. She often got into fights with boys, she was not too girly. She spent a lot of time cooking and making plum jam with her mother in the kitchen. Her father died before the war and her mother remarried soon after that. But this second marriage was not a happy one and she hated her step-father more than anyone. Her step-father did not like her brother and her and told her mother if she didn't give him his own child, he would get rid of her two current ones. This scared Gabriela. She found a way to coup through playing the piano, she fell in love with the music by Chopin. Her brother was four years older than her but they had a really close relationship. They were deported to Roznana ghetto in May 1944. She had to work in a brick factory there. Then in June they were sent to Auschwitz. Her brother did not make it back from there. Her mother was separated from her almost upon their arrival and she never saw her again. When she returned, she was alone, the only one in her family to have survived. She never played the piano again. She didn't want to go back to the musical conservatory. Instead she married a Jewish man name Ondrej, he was older and she looked to him for protection after all they had been through. She found a job as an accountant and they had two daughters. Her husband was in the army and went away sometimes on service. They spent weekends together with their daughters at a little cottage in the countryside. They were a very happy family and she was very sad when her husband died in 1976. She lives close to her daughters and she still after everything loves her hometown and country.

"In Roznava the Jewish population was very assimilated. To this day I don't really know what I am. I live in this vacuum. And if it was possible to write 'nationality human,' or 'person,' in questionnaires, I would most certainly write 'nationality human.' I feel myself to be a person. I'm not saying that I'm a cosmopolitan, but I love this country, because I live here. I love my native city, my native land and I don't know if I could get used to being someplace else, but in no way am I nationalistically or chauvinistically inclined, in no way whatsoever. Neither with respect to Judaism, nor with respect to the other side."

Name: Harry Fink
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/harry-fink
Birth Year: 1931
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Manual Laborer
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse 1: Marie Pavlinkova
Spouse 2: Hannelore Miszcich
Number of Children: 2 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Hynek Fink
Birth Place: Bernatice
Occupation: Farmer
Paternal Grandmother: Terezia Finkova (nee Mautnerova)
Birth Place: Bernatice
Religious type: Practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Leopold Scharpner
Birth Place: Hermoanov Mestec
Occupation: Shoemaker
Maternal Grandmother: Jenny Scharpnerova (nee Fischlova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Practiced (not kosher)

Father: Ludvik Fink
Birth Place: Bernatice
Birth Date: 1891
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Store owner
War Service: NA
Mother: Marketa Finkova (nee Scharpnerova)
Birth Place: Hermanov Mestec
Birth Date: 1898
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Secular
Class: Upper Middle Class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1941: Charles Square jail (father)
1942: Terezin (p. grandmother [died 1943],
m. grandmother [died 1943], him, mother, father)
December 1943: Auschwitz (him, mother, father)
January 1944: Death March from Auschwitz (him)
1944: Mauthausen -> Melk -> Mauthausen (him)
1944: Gunskirchen -> freed by the Americans (him)
1944: Taken to Vienna's New Town -> Bratislava -> Prague repatriation office (him)
1945: Childrens home in Vlasta, Jachymov (him)

Lost Family Members: p. grandmother, m. grandmother, father, mother
Survived: father's cousin

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (never was a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Ambivalent

Interviewed by: Barbora Pokreis August 2005 in Czech Republic

Harry Fink Summary:
Harry was born in 1931 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a secular upper-middle-class Jewish family. As a child he loved to read, he read all the books they had around the house. His favorite book was about a boy whose father was a forest ranger. His dad used to play cards in coffee shops with his friends and he would bring Harry along to watch. His family went of vacations to swim or ski in the local lakes and mountains. His family was also very close to all their relatives and met up often with all his aunts, uncles, and cousins. The only holiday they practiced was Passover, and then not even vert strictly. From 1937-1940 he went to a non-Jewish school, but after the third grade he had to leave due to the anti-Jewish laws. Unlike most kids who just stopped going to school, he managed to finish elementary school during the war between 1940-1942. His dad was arrested and jailed for his political believes an being a Jew in 1941. In 1942 his mother and Harry were sent to Terezin and his father joined them there soon after. In December of 1943 they were then all sent on to Auschwitz. It was there that he really learned for the first time what it meant to be hungry, cold, and miserable. His father and mother were sent to the gas chambers in 1944. He was driven into the death march back West from Auschwitz in mid-winter as the Germans knew the Russians were coming. He ended up in Mauthausen till it was liberated by the Americans. He had no family left, so he had to live in a children's' home upon his return home and he went back to school. After he finished school, not being of legal age (21) he was sent to a different youth home for older boys and there he started training to be an electrician. The only property he got back from his parents old flat, was a single painting and his mother's four favorite books, all of which had been entrusted to a Christian neighbor before the war. Later, he joined the army. In 1952 he married a non-Jewish woman named Marie Pavlinkova and they had two daughters together. However, they got divorced in 1969 and he then remarried a German woman in 1973. He was never a party member or interested in politics. He never had any issues after the War, either with the Communists or with anti-Semitism, he was still proud of his country.

"In 1944 various selections took place; the whole camp was going into the gas. Then after they sent us off, I managed to meet up with my father one more time. Somewhere he had organized some short corduroy pants and somehow got into the men's camp and brought them to me. That was the last time I saw him. My father and mother stayed in the family camp for another day or two, and then went into the gas."

Name: Helena Kovanicova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/helena-kovanicova
Family Name nee: Helena Munková
Birth Year: 1924
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Office clerk, accountant
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Rudolf Kovanic (1908-1972)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 1 (son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Eduard Munk (1856-1913)
Birth Place: Privory
Occupation: Had a bar and small farm
Paternal Grandmother: Paulina Munkova (nee Gläsnerova) (1859-1921)
Birth Place: Cernuce
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Rudolf Nachod
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation: Lawyer
Maternal Grandmother: Hermina Nachodova (nee Eisenschimmelova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Father: Adolf Munk
Birth Place: Privory
Birth Date: 1887
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Lawyer
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Olga Munkova (nee Nachodova)
Birth Place: Brandys nad Labem
Birth Date: 1897
Death Date: 1982
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Secular
Class: NA (middle or upper middle)

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939: had to leave high school after fourth year {year 9} (her)
1939-1943: Brandys Jewish Community (her, father, mother, brothers)
1943: Terezin Ghetto (her, father, mother, brothers, husband [married there])
January 1945: Switzerland Adliswil, Les Avants, Caux sur Montreau (her, husband)

1944: Auschwitz (father [died 1944], elder brother)

Lost Family Members: father
Survived: mother, brothers, husband

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (her and her husband never joined the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: NA

Interviewed by: Terezie Holmerová February 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

Helena Kovanicova Summary:
Helena was born in 1924 in Prague, Czechoslovakia the oldest of three siblings to a secular Jewish family. She liked elementary school and did well-enough, but afterwards she started at the high-school and she really struggled with math, so she didn't' do so well. But after 4th year of high school (after 9th grade) she had to stop attending school due to the anti-Jewish laws. They didn't attend any holidays religiously, but often celebrated Christmas and Passover in some way. Her parents bought her books often, her father often gave her the books he read after he finished with them too, she was encouraged to read everything. The only things her parents didn't want her to read was 'girl's novels'. She also liked to draw fashion items and dreamed of being a fashion designer. During the war her and her siblings all caught scarlet fever, which was good in a way that for a long time the Germans didn't come to their apartment or deport them since they were afraid of being infected. However, they had trouble remaining home, since they weren't allowed out and none of their neighbors were allowed to talk or associate with them. Then in January 1943 they were deported to Terezin. In Terezin she met her future husband, he was her boss and older than her. He'd been there from the first transport. Her mother and her youngest brother were never transported onwards and luckily survived. Her father and older brother were not so lucky they were sent to Auschwitz, where her father was killed. She married Rudolf Kovanic and they got an apartment where they lived with her mother and two brothers all together. She was never very well off after the war and she did not finish her schooling. She worked as an office clerk and her husband worked as an economist. They had one son and continued to care for her mother until her death, which was actually 10 years after her husbands. Her older brother also remained impaired after the war, and though he liked to draw he never had a normal life, but he also would not explain what happened to him, so they didn't know how to help. Her whole family was in the camps, yet they never discussed it with each other afterwards.

"Everyone then hoped that we wouldn't return, so that they wouldn't have to return anything to us."

Name: Herta Coufalova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/herta-coufalova
Family Name nee: Herta Glasnerova
Birth Year: 1926
Birth Place: Trebic
Occupation Post-WWII: Reception Manager in hotel
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (had to stop in 1939)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: Not arranged
Spouse: Karel Coufal (1926-1983)
Spouse's birth place: Trebic
Number of Children: 3 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Hermann Glasner (1845-1922)
Birth Place: Trebic
Occupation: Founded a store
Paternal Grandmother: (Pavla Glasner (nee Orchstein) (1845-1930)
Birth Place: Trebic
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Hermann Reich (1869-1929)
Birth Place: Trebic
Occupation: Owned a textile store
Maternal Grandmother: Hermina Reich (nee Mayer) (1875-1944)
Birth Place: Pohorelice
Religious type: Practiced (kosher)

Father: Emanuel Glasner
Birth Place: Trebic
Birth Date: 1885
Death Date: 1941
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Owned glass/porcelain store
War Service: 1911-1922 Austro-Hungarian Army
Mother: Irma Glasnerova (nee Reich)
Birth Place: Trebic
Birth Date: 1902
Death Date: 1941
Death Place: Ravensbruck
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: practiced (kosher)
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939: had to stop attending school
1939-1942: At home in Trebic (whole family)
1942-1944: Terezin Ghetto (m. grandmother, brother, her)
1944: Auschwitz (brother [died 1944], m. grandmother [died 1944], her)
1944: Kurzbach forced labor camp (her)
1945: Gross-Rosen Concentration camp (her)
1945: Bergen-Belsen Concentration camp (her)

1941: Auschwitz (father [died 1941])
1941: Ravensbruck (mother [died 1941])

Lost Family Members: brother, mother, father, m. grandmother
Survived: uncle, aunt, cousins

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (she was a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No (wanted to but married a catholic man and had a baby…)
View of Israel: Very Positive, visits

Interviewed by: Barbora Pokreis November 2004 in Sumperk, Czech Republic

Herta Coufalova Summary:
Herta was born in 1926 in Trebic, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class practicing and kosher Jewish family. Her family celebrated all the Jewish holidays and often went to synagogue and she loved this, unlike most kids, she did not find it boring, maybe because they often went for coffee and sweet buns afterwards. She loved to read as a child, but not so much books, but rather the newspaper. Her father was always telling her that she could be anything she wanted and do whatever she wanted, but the one thing she should never change is who she is, a Jewess. She didn't know that many other Jewish people and her parents did not have many friends either Jewish or Christian, so she was mostly only surrounded by family growing up. Both her parents came from big families and everyone often met together on the weekends and holidays. She wanted to go to the Business Academy for high-school and was accepted, but this was in 1939, so due to the anti-Jewish laws she was not allowed to go. Her favorite subjects had been history, geography and literature and she was sad she could not continue with them. She was quite busy before the war, she took piano lessons, had to study English and German, and also went to scouts. Scouting was her favorite. She loved to spend time with her younger brother Harry, but they often fought and she was bigger so she beat him up each time and her parents always blamed her for everything. Now she looks back on this sorely because they sent him straight to the gas chamber in 1944 in Auschwitz, so she never got to make up for it. Her first experience with the German occupation in 1938 before being thrown out of school was having to turn over her new bicycle to the Gestapo. In 1941 her father was arrested and soon after her mother was transported too. Her brother and her remained home with their maternal grandmother till they were sent in 1942 to Terezin. Later they were sent on to Auschwitz, where only she survived. She spent the rest of the war between multiple labor and concentration camps till May 1945. When she got back, one of her old neighbors allowed her to stay with them till she got married and a place of her own. She desperately wanted to emigrate to Israel, she thought she would feel safe there, but she married a Catholic man named Karel Coufal and he didn't want to, so they stayed. She never joined any political party or supported the communists. She had three children but didn't raise them religiously, but they know they are Jewish. She has always been a member of the Jewish community in Brno and she still practices her faith after everything.

"On 23rd January 23, 1945, on the day of my 19th birthday, I got a wonderful gift. They sent us out of Kurzbach on a death march; of course, we didn't know at the time that it would later be known by this name. What an unforgettable birthday gift!"

Name: Jan Fischer
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/jan-fischer
Birth Year: 1921
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Pre-WWII: Employed by Craftsman
Occupation Post-WWII: Theater Director
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Hana Fischerova (nee Meisslova) (1921-1997)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 2 (daughter & son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Jakub Fischer (1856-1921)
Birth Place: Beroun
Occupation: Tailor
Paternal Grandmother: Rosa Fischer (nee Reiss) (1856-1920)
Birth Place: Stirin
Religious type: practiced

Maternal Grandfather: NA
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Goldsmith
Maternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Not Jewish

Father: Richard Fischer
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1885
Death Date: 1938
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: Representative of German optical companies in Prague
War Service: 28th Prague regiment in Bruck an der Mur WWI
Mother: Julie Fischer (nee Lederer)
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1884
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Bergen-Belsen
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Upper middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1938: Father made to give up business [commited suicide]
1941: Terezin Ghetto (him, cousin)
1944: Auschwitz (him, brother [died 1944])
1944-1945: Gleiwitz labor camp (him)

Bergen-Belsen (mother [died ~1943]

Lost Family Members: Brother, Mother
Survived: None

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a member of the Party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: NA

Interviewed by: Silvia Singerová November 2003 in Prague, Czech Republic

Jan Fischer Summary:
Jan was born in 1921 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to an upper-middle-class secular Jewish family. His house was quite a place to be, often musicians came and played for parties in their backyard. His dad was a very successful businessman. He was raised by a nanny. She was always there and the one that raised him that she was even the one holding him in the family photos. He went to a normal school and the Jews and non-Jews all said the Lord's prayer every day before class started. He loved the theater as a child and liked to even preform his own operettas at home. In 1938 his dad's company was taken from him due to the anti-Jewish laws, his dad could not take the shame and soon committed suicide. Then the bank came and took all their property and possessions claiming his father had depts to pay. They went from being quite well off to having absolutely nothing. In December 1941 he was ordered to go to Terezin, he went alone, but by chance met his cousin there. He had only seen his cousin a few times before, but in the camp they became inseparable. In Terezin the prisoners put on theater shows and performances and he loved this, he felt there was so much culture in the camp. He remembers being sick and having an injured arm, but still just enjoying a performance. There was even a library of sorts in Terezin, only those under age 20 could borrow books, but he took advantage of this. His older brother and mother eventually arrived in the ghetto but by that time he was already living his own life, he had a good job, he was having a love affair with a famous actress and seeing all the shows put on. So, he didn't see them much and soon they were transported on and killed probably in Auschwitz. In September 1944 he too left for Auschwitz, but from there was selected for forward transfer to a labor camp, Birkenau. He got back home in June 1945 and at 23 years old he realized he had nothing and no one left. He believed in Communism and joined the Party. He married a Jewish woman named Hana Fischerova and had two children. They were very poor but they were happy. He continued to go to the theater all his life. He is not an atheist, but he does not believe in any single religion either. He published a book in 1998 about his life.

"Suddenly everything changed around us. The normal world disappeared beyond the horizon. The lives we had been leading until then came to an end and the new, horrifying reality showed its face. We were in the hands of madmen and murderers and, from then on, no-one could be sure of his life. Amen."

Name: Jiri Franek
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/jiri-franek
Family Name nee: Jiri Frischman
Birth Year: 1922
Birth Place: Vysoke Myto
Occupation Post-WWII: Teacher/professor
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No (Yes, after 1940)
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: Not arranged
Spouse: Zdena Kolarska
Spouses birth place: NA
Number of Children: 2 (daughter & son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: yes

Paternal Grandfather: Adolf Frischmann
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: wholesale grain business
Paternal Grandmother: (nee Wallersteinova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Moritz Pfeifer
Birth Place: Nove Hrady
Occupation: baker
Maternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Practiced

Father: Alfred Frischman
Birth Place: NA
Birth Date: 1881
Death Date: ~1925
Death Place: Vysoke Myto
Occupation: Merchant, tradesman
Mother: Hana Pfeiferova
Birth Place: Nove Hrady
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: practiced (not kosher)
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1940: had to stop attending school, so moved to Brno to attend a Jewish high school (him)
December 1942: Terezin Ghetto (whole family)
1943: Auschwitz (brother [died 1944], mother [died 1943], him)

Lost Family Members: mother, brother,
Survived: aunts, uncles

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: Yes (probably a member of the Party, NA)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very Supportive

Interviewed by: Dagmar Greslova February 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

"You see, people changed a lot, because they had the impression that their particular faith had let them down, so Zionists became Communists, Communists became Czech jews, Czech jews became Zionists and so on. Avi Fischer, who was in my 'troika,' was a big Czech jew and then later left for Palestine, but he was a swell guy."

Jiri Franek Summary:
Jiri was born on 24th November 1922 in Vysoke Myto, Czechoslovakia to a practicing Jewish family. His family was quite assimilated and he never felt different from others in his town or community until 1938. But after 1938 he started to be bullied quite hard and he was often beaten up by other boys in his school for being a 'dirty Jew'. So, he learned to fight back and got in a lot of trouble then. He had a brother who was one year older than him, Frantisek. He managed to finish high school in 1940 and he was going to be smuggled out of the country to Switzerland and then France, but before he left, the Germans occupied Paris and it was no longer an option. He moved to Brno, because he only had one year left to complete and there were no Jewish school options anywhere else. He didn't have much experience with Judaism till he started at the Jewish school in Brno and lived with a practicing family while there. Only 4 of his 29 Jewish high school classmates survived the war. In 1942 his mother, brother and him were sent to Terezin ghetto. Then in 1943 they were all sent to Auschwitz where his mother was killed right away and his brother soon followed. Only he survived. He met his wife a non-Jewish woman Zdena Kolarska at a parade after the war. He finished his studies and started teaching at a university. They had a daughter and a son. He was supportive of the communist regime and as a professor it was easier to be supportive. He did have some issues being Jewish, but he feels strongly Czech and never felt the desire to leave his native country. He is a strong supporter of Israel.

Name: Jiri Munk
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/jiri-munk
Birth Year: 1932
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Architect
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (but went to religion classes after school for 2 years)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Alena Munkova (nee Synkova)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 1 (daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Eduard Munk (1856-1913)
Birth Place: Privory
Occupation: had a pub and small farm
Paternal Grandmother: Paulina Munkova (nee Glasnerova) (1859-1921)
Birth Place: Cernuce
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Rudolf Nachod
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation: Lawyer
Maternal Grandmother: Hermina Nachodova (nee Eisenschimmelova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Father: Adolf Munk
Birth Place: Brandys nad Labem
Birth Date: 1887
Death Date: 1945
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Lawyer
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Olga Munkova (nee Nachodova)
Birth Place: Brandys nad Labem
Birth Date: 1897
Death Date: 1982
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1943-1945: Terezin Ghetto (whole family)
Auschwitz (father, brother)
Kaufering labor camp (brother)

Lost Family Members: father, aunts, uncles, cousins
Survived: brother, sister, mother

Integrated After War: Yes (some issues since not communist)
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (never a member)
Founded KAN (club of Non-Party Members)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Supportive

Interviewed by: Terezie Holmerova January 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

Jiri Munk Summary:
Jiri was born in 1932 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class secular Jewish family. He was the youngest of three children, he had an older sister and brother. He had a nanny to raise and take care of him since his birth, but his mother took care of his older siblings. He even went with her on holidays and weekends to visit her family, a very large Catholic one. They welcomed him and he grew up between the two families. In 1938, he had to hand over their pet cat and dog to the Germans they never saw their pets again and can only guess where they were taken. Then when he was only eight, he was no longer allowed to go to school. His nanny offered to take Jiri as her own son and forge papers so she could save his life and pretend he was not Jewish, but Jiri's father refused to believe the situation was so desperate and wanted to keep his family together. His family thought of emigrating but they were not able to, almost no country was accepting Jewish refugees anymore. So, they had to stay. In 1943 his family was sent to Terezin Ghetto, his mother and him stayed there and survived. His older brother and his father were sent to Auschwitz where his father was killed in 1945. When they got back, other people were living in their old apartment, and his mother was not able to manage to make them leave or address the situation, so they had absolutely nothing after the war. Luckily a friend took them in. His mother was a mess after the war. She had never had to deal with things, his father had always done everything. His mother had no education or skills and this made it very hard for her to support her three surviving children. He was only 13, but a lot of the other boys at his school became very involved in politics and wanted to fight and were quite divided between Communists and Anti-Communists. He didn't do very well in high school, but since his brother read many classic books and helped teach them to him, he did alright. Then he went to university and studied architecture. In 1959 he met his wife Alena Munkova who was also Jewish. They had one daughter together. He was against the Communist regime and never joined the Party, instead he founded and joined the KAN (Non-Party Members club).

"I felt very lonely in Terezin. I don't remember there being another boy in the Hamburg barracks. Apparently somewhere right by the Hamburg barracks there was a children's home, where children were together, but my mother didn't put me in it… Occasionally I'd meet some other boy, but they all eventually left on the transports."

Name: Kurt Kotouc
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/kurt-kotouc
Birth Year: 1929
Birth Place: Brno
Occupation Post-WWII: Manager
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes (due to Anti-Jewish laws couldn't attend others)
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: NA
Spouse's birth Place: NA
Number of Children: 2 (sons)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Leopold Kotouc
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Miner
Paternal Grandmother: Johana Maria Kotoucova (nee Hanslova) (1864-1942)
Birth Place: Oslavany
Religious type: Not Jewish

Maternal Grandfather: Alois Sensky
Birth Place: Ivancice
Occupation: Businessman
Maternal Grandmother: Josefina Senska (nee Steckerlova) (1875-1942)
Birth Place: Misslitz (Miroslav)
Religious type: practiced

Father: Otto Kotouc
Birth Place: Oslavany
Birth Date: 1895
Death Date: 1942
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Businessman
War Service: Austro-Hungarian KuK army during WWI
Mother: Stella Kotoucova (nee Senska)
Birth Place: Mohelno
Birth Date: 1902
Death Date: 1942
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Lower-middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1941: family forced to move to a three-room housing unit in Koliste Park in Brno
Summer 1942-October 1944: Terezin Ghetto (Brother, him)
1944: Auschwitz-Birkenau (him, brother)
1944: Niederorschel labor camp (him, brother)
1945: Buchenwald concentration camp (him, brother)

Auschwitz (m. grandmother [died 1942])
Treblinka concentration camp (P. grandmother [died 1942])
Gestapo jail Kounic Hall/Cejl in Brno -> Auschwitz (father & mother [died 1942])

Lost Family Members: P. Grandmother, M. grandmother, mother, father,
Survived: Brother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes (seen as less trustworthy in the Party)
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a member of the party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: NA

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner October 2004 in Prague, Czech Republic

Kurt Kotouc Summary:
Kurt was born in 1929 in Brno, Czechoslovakia to a secular lower-middle-class Jewish family. He has an older brother named Hanus. They were not raised in a Jewish way, and they did not uphold the holidays or keep Kosher. They did celebrate Christmas though not in a religious way. Their parents never talked of people's religious identity and so he does not know how many of his neighbors and town were Jews or not, it didn't matter. At school Jews were definitely the exception, but he was friends with both Jews and non-Jewish boys. In 1941 he finished elementary school and would have gone on to secondary school, but he was not allowed due to the anti-Jewish laws. In 1941 they were forced to leave their apartment and move to a little three room one in an undesirable location which they had to share with two other Jewish families. In 1942 his parents were taken to Auschwitz where they were murdered. His brother and hi lived alone till they were relocated to Terezin. They were there till October 1944, till they ended up in Auschwitz-Birkenau. There they had nothing to eat at all and there were no places inside to sleep and outside it was winter and freezing. In June 1945 he got back to Czechoslovakia where he found only his brother still alive. His brother finished his studies and then immigrated to Germany, but he didn't want to join. His brother later ended up in Brazil and had a large family there. He stayed in his homeland and started to work in the National Gallery in Prague. In 1951 he married his wife, a non-Jewish woman. They had two sons, but they later divorced. He was a member of the Communist Party but he slowly lost faith in it since they were anti-Semitic to him and other Jews within the Party and by 1989 was very supportive of the revolution.

"Actually, all these events sped up the process of growing up, at least psychologically and spiritually. We witnessed our homes being uprooted and our parents' powerlessness. Marked with stars and transport numbers, in quarantine and in sluice, we saw the fall of conventions, the fragility and impermanence of human relationships, selflessness and selfishness, we listened to the heavy breathing of the dying and to the breathing of couples making love."

Name: Ladislav Porjes
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/ladislav-porjes-0
Birth Year: 1921
Birth Place: Žilina
Occupation Post-WWII: Journalist/editor
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Vlasta Porjesova (nee Krestanova)
Spouse's birth place: Skalsko
Number of Children: 2 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Salamon Porjes (1858-1933)
Birth Place: Pruzina
Occupation: Toll collector
Paternal Grandmother: Julie Porjesova (nee Zlatnerova) (1865-1930)
Birth Place: Rosina
Religious type: Neolog Jew (kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Armin Moskovic
Birth Place: Michalovce
Occupation: Had a general store
Maternal Grandmother: Fany Moskovicova (nee Weissova)
Birth Place: Michalovce
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Arpad Porjes
Birth Place: Zilina
Birth Date: 1880
Death Date: 1924
Death Place: Zilina
Occupation: Lawyer
War Service: Austro-Hungarian KuK army WWI
Mother: Ilona Porjesova (nee Moskovicova)
Birth Place: Michalovce
Birth Date: 1901
Death Date: 1922
Death Place: Zilina
Marriage Type: arranged (to marry her sister, but chose her instead of older sister)
Religious type: Neolog Jew (kosher)
Class: Upper middle class

<u>During the War/Holocaust Related:</u>
October 1941: Sixth Labor Battalion Svaty Jur
1942: Bratislava Prison
1942: Poprad Prison
1943: Sered labor camp
1944: Auschwitz-Birkenau
March 1945: Krakow Sloboda Army

In Hiding in Michalovce (m. grandmother)

Lost Family Members:
Survived: m. grandmother,

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes
Pro-Communist: No (NA if party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Not Positive (against religion and orthodox/religious people)

Interviewed by: Dagmar Grešlová January 2006 in Praha, Czech Republic

Ladislav Porjes Summary:
Ladislav was born in 1921 in Zilina, Czechoslovakia to an upper-middle-class Neolog Jewish and Kosher family. When he was three, he became an orphan. He grew up with his maternal grandparents. He liked to read a lot, but he didn't have money for books, so he delivered soda bottles for the grocer after school in order to have some pocket money. Then he would read these books secretly by candle light at night, since his grandparents were very strict. He didn't really believe in religion as a child, but he attended a Neolog school, so he was very exposed to it, but there were a few non-Jewish children at his school still. He finished high school before the anti-Jewish laws came into effect, but they still stopped him from attending university. So, he joined the Slovak army, but the Jewish soldiers were navy blue uniforms and the non-Jewish dark green and the Jews had completely different rules. Later he was able to get false Aryan papers and lived in Bratislava. He worked on these false papers, but in 1944 he was informed on by another coworker. Then he was sent to the central military jail in Bratislava. Eventually, the prisoners and him were all transported to Auschwitz. He planned to escape. When he got back to Czechoslovakia after the war, he was still technically in the army. He got out quick though, they were very anti-Semitic still and he had no desire to remain. He finished his studies and started working as a journalist for the paper Pravda. In 1947 he married a non-Jewish girl named Vlassta Poriesova and had two daughters. He was not a Communist member nor supporter.

"I remember the arrival in Auschwitz. They dumped us out of the transport, which stopped on a spur line. I did something wrong; I don't know any more what it was, I didn't greet a member of the SS loudly enough, or something like that. That person gave me a horrible cuff, but that wasn't the worst – the worst was, that my glasses fell to the ground and broke. I was disconsolate, because I needed the glasses. I remember one older prisoner consoling me, perhaps between 20 and 25, who had already been in the camp for a longer time. He consoled me very much, was very kind to me, petted and kissed me. It wasn't until later that I noticed that he had a pink triangle: he was a homosexual."

Name: Liselotte Teltscherova
List: https://www.centropa.org/biography/liselotte-teltscherova
Birth Year: 1921
Birth Place: Vienna
Occupation Post-WWII: Biologist
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (but Jewish religion classes)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Slavomil Hejny (1921-2001)
Spouse's birth place: Vysocina
Number of Children: 2 (sons)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Not very

Paternal Grandfather: Bernard Teltscher
Birth Place: Mikulov
Occupation: Wine wholesaler
Paternal Grandmother: Johanna Teltscherova (nee Spitzerova)
Birth Place: Miroslav
Religious type: practiced (kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Gustav Abeles
Birth Place: Mikulov
Occupation: Owner of shop
Maternal Grandmother: Adela Abelessova (nee Drillova)
Birth Place: Austria
Religious type: practiced (not kosher)

Father: Bedrich Teltscher
Birth Place: Mikulov
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1978
Death Place: San Francisco
Occupation: Wine wholesaler
War Service: Lieutenant in Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Hertha Teltscherova (nee Abelesova)
Birth Place: Mikulov
Birth Date: 1899
Death Date: 1969
Death Place: San Francisco
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Upper middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1938-1940: Family had to move to Brno
1940-1946: In Jerusalem studied biology
1946: Returned to Prague

Brno, Opatija, Shanghai (father, mother, sister)
Brno -> Treblinka (m. grandfather & m. grandmother [died 1942])

Lost Family Members: maternal and paternal grandmothers
Survived: sister, father, mother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (was a Party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: Yes (returned after the war wanted to come home)
View of Israel: Positive (but not her home)

Interviewed by: Eva Pressburgerová June 2003 in Prague, Czech Republic

Liselotte Teltscherova Summary:
Liselotte was born on the 18th November 1921 in Vienna, Austria to a Czech/German upper-middle-class secular Jewish family who lived in Czechoslovakia. Her younger sister, Kitty, was born three years later. Her family was quite well off and they had a cook, a servant, and a governess who all lived in their house with them and were like part of the family. Their cook was not Jewish though and they never ate typical Jewish foods. She didn't go to a Jewish school, but a normal state school, though she had friends from the local Jewish school too. She loved sports, most of all skiing, but she also liked cycling. In 1938 her parents were forced to stop working. Then they had to leave their home, so they moved in with her grandparents. She then started going to a Jewish high school in Brno as she had no other choice under the anti-Jewish laws. Her family knew they had to get out, but there were not many options to go. Her parents and sister managed to get to Shanghai and she went to Jerusalem to study biology. She joined the Communist Party in Palestine, but it was an illegal party there, so she had a lot of trouble from this. She returned to Czechoslovakia after the war. Her sister met her future husband in Shanghai and they moved to America. She met her husband at work. His name was Slavomil Hejny and he was not Jewish. They had two sons and did not raise them Jewish. She was not a Zionist, but she was happy when Israel was established and she always dreamed of going back there. Later, she became a member of the Prague Jewish community and was an active member. She worked there mainly in the social department. Her husband and her divorced, The Revolution in 1989 didn't affect her life in any way, but she is glad that it happened.

"I was considered a Zionist just because I had been to Palestine, and to be a Zionist was worse than to be an imperialist. There were no particular reasons, but the communists were trying to get rid of everything that was a little different from their way of thinking. I wasn't a Zionist, otherwise I wouldn't have come back. However, I knew it was nothing to be ashamed of because I knew what it meant to be a Zionist."

Name: Ludmila Rutarova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/ludmila-rutarova
Family Name nee: Ludmila Weinerova
Birth Year: 1920
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Pre-WWII: Bookkeeper
Occupation Post-WWII: Bookkeeper
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (only Jew in school)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Karel Rutar (1917-1966)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 2 (daughter, son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Simon Weiner
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: Frantiska Weinerova (nee Ledererova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Jachym Winternitz
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Glazier
Maternal Grandmother: Aloisie Winternitzova (nee Vocaskova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Augsburg Evangelical Christian -> converted to Judaism

Father: Alfred Weiner
Birth Place: Modlikov
Birth Date: 1879
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz-Birkenau
Occupation: Retail Merchant
War Service: None
Mother: Helena Weinerova (nee Winternitzova)
Birth Place: Cernovice
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1964
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular (not kosher)
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939: Had to leace Sokol gymnastics group
1939: She was baptized catholic in order to flee to Canada (but didn't flee)
1942: Terezin Ghetto (her, husband, father, mother, brother)
May 1944: Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp
(her, father [died 1944], mother, brother, Auntie Zofie, Cousin Inka)
1944: Hamburg forced labor camp (her, mother)
1944-April 1945: Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp (her, mother)
July 1945: Arrived back home

Lost Family Members: Father, aunts, uncles
Survived: Brother, Mother, cousin Inka

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (not a member of the party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: NA

Interviewed by: Dagmar Greslova February 2007 in Prague, Czech Republic

Ludmila Rutarova Summary:
Ludmila was born in 1920 Prague, Czechoslovakia to a secular Jewish family. She had a brother who was two years younger named Josef. She was a very skinny kid and often sick. So, her parents sent her to live with her aunt and uncle who lived in the countryside on a farm, so she would have fresh air. After a year she moved back with her family and started elementary school. She was the only Jew in the class, so she went to Catholic religion class with her classmates, since there was no Jewish one. Her parents had a general store that sold various goods and food stuffs, they worked there. She also joined gymnastics and loved it. In high school she did go to a Jewish school and finished her schooling there. Then she started to work as a clerk for a company. Since she had a pretty good education and knowledge of Catholic and was then dating a Catholic man, she first thought of moving with her boyfriend to Canada and was therefore baptized a Christian and converted to Catholicism. But then her and her boyfriend broke up and she was not allowed to go alone, also the boarders were already being closed. In 1942 her family was sent to Terezin where she mostly worked in agriculture there. She met some really good friends in Terezin and that helped her get through it, relying on each other and helping each other out. Then in 1944 her family was transported to Auschwitz, where her father died. From there, her mother and her were sent to Hamburg to work and then ended up in Bergen-Belsen till they were liberated. After their liberation she got typhus and almost died, it took her along time to recover. She had no documents or records after the war and so tried to get them from the Jewish community like her family members, but since she had converted to Catholicism, they had sent them to her new church. So, she had more trouble, but the priest sent her all her documents and a very kind and nice letter. In Prague she met her future husband Karel Rutar and married in 1946. He is Jewish and they still live together. She worked as a bookkeeper and also had two children. She was never a Communist Party member or supporter. She had her Auschwitz tattoo number removed when her kids were young, she didn't want them to see it and she didn't want to be reminded. She is not very religious but she attends Terezin Initiative events and other Holocaust remembrance actives. She thinks people need to remember the past.

"In Auschwitz they tattooed us, and I got No. A 4603. I'd counted the line as it walked in front of me, and positioned myself so that the sum of my number was 13. I'm superstitious, and I said to myself that if the sum of my number's digits would be unlucky 13, I'd survive the war."

Name: Magdalena Seborova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/magdalena-seborova
Family Name nee: Magdalena Kleinova
Previous Family name: Magdalena Fuskova (remarried in 1970)
Birth Year: 1940
Birth Place: Surovce
Occupation Post-WWII: Office Clerk
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No (after the war there were none)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: 1st Yes, 2nd No
Marriage type: Not arranged
Spouse 1: Pavol Fuska (nee Pavol Fldmar)
Spouse 2: Pavol Sebor
Spouse 1's birth place: Bratislava
Number of Children: 0
Integrated Pre-WWII: No

Paternal Grandfather: Mr. Klein
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Owned a general store
Paternal Grandmother: Mrs. Kleinova
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Orthodox

Maternal Grandfather: Julius Weisz (1878-1954)
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: A Painter
Maternal Grandmother: Hedviga Weiszova (nee Quittner) (1888-1940s)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Maximilian Klein
Birth Place: Surovce
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1969
Death Place: Bratislava
Occupation: Farm superintendent/ on disability
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Edith Kleinova (nee Weisz)
Birth Place: Vienna
Birth Date: 1911
Death Date: 1952
Death Place: High Tatras
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Orthodox
Class: Upper Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1944: Sered Labor Camp (her, brother, father, mother)
1944-1945: Terezin Ghetto (her, father, mother)

Lost Family Members: Brother, p. Grandfather, m. Grandmother
Survived: father, aunt, mother, m. Grandfather

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes (at work)
Pro-Communist: No (not a party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive (but not much changed)
Emigrated: Yes in 1988
View of Israel: Very positive (emigrated there in 1988)

Interviewed by: Pastorkova & Pokreis June 2005 in Brno, Czech Republic

Magdalena Seborova Summary:
Magdalena was born on 16th February 1940 in Surovce, Czechoslovakia to an upper-middle-class Orthodox family. In 1944 her family was sent to Sered labor camp, but soon was transported to Terezin Ghetto. She was so small that she does not remember much, but when she was five the Russians liberated the camp and drove them back to Prague. She remembers her dad holding her so she could watch out the window as the car drove along, she was so impressed by seeing so much world after growing up only in the ghetto. Her mom had tuberculosis and remained in bed with fevers till soon she was taken to a sanatorium to be treated but after 7 years there, she died. Her father was also sick and unable to take care of her. So, she was sent to an orphanage. Her father remarried and she lived with them till she finished high school but she did not like her step-mother. Then in 1969, when Magdalena was 29, her father died too, leaving her without any relatives. After the war she and her family had no money and they lived in poverty for a long time afterwards. There had been a local Jewish elementary school in her hometown before the war, but there was no point afterwards, so she went to public schools. After high school she got a job with the post office. At work she still experienced anti-Semitism. She retired after 26 years there in 1984. She had an issue with her hip and that affected her ability to continue working. She was married twice. Her first husband was Jewish and her second was not, religion did not play a part in her decision to marry, she herself does not practice any faith. She never had any children. In 1988 after she retired, she moved to Israel, she likes the warmer weather and she feels at home there.

"During the war people had taken Jewish property, and were afraid that they'd have to return it to Jews that had returned from the concentration camps. Many Jews told me about it, my aunt from Galanta also told me about one incident. After the war she went to ask for her cupboard back, and people said to her, indignantly, 'But they said that they'd murder you all in concentration camps! Why, more of you have returned than left!' These people had a guilty conscience, and we were the only Jews in Mocenok."

Name: Marietta Smolkova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/marietta-smolkova
Family Name nee: Marietta Blochova
Birth Year: 1921
Birth Place: Teplice
Occupation Post-WWII: Vice-director in Strojimpot company
Religious type: Practiced
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Jaroslav Smolka
Spouse's birth place: Bernartice
Number of Children: 0
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Bernard Bloch
Birth Place: Meclov
Occupation: Owner of ceramic/porcelain factories
Paternal Grandmother: Jenny Blochova (nee Koretz)
Birth Place: Volduchy
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Adolf Bruml
Birth Place: Strazov
Occupation: Businessman
Maternal Grandmother: Ida Brumlova (nee Abeles)
Birth Place: Lochovice
Religious type: practiced (not kosher)

Father: Artur Bloch
Birth Place: Uncin
Birth Date: 1880
Death Date: 1949
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: Owner of a porcelain factory in Dubi
War Service: None
Mother: Katerina Hahnova (nee Brumlova) (Blochova in 1st marriage)
Birth Place: Duchcov
Birth Date: 1894
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz-Birkenau
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular (practiced only Yom Kippur) (not kosher)
Class: Upper Middle Class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939: had to leave Businessschool with one year left till graduation
1941-1944: Terezin Ghetto (her, father [sick there till died 1949], mother, sister, uncle)
1944: Auschwitz Concentration Camp (her, mother, uncle, sister)
1944-1945: Oderan Labor Camp (her, sister)
1945: Terezin Ghetto (her, sister)

Lost Family Members: m. Grandmother, mother, father (after, but due to)
Survived: sister

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: Yes (as a member of Jewish-community)
Pro-Communist: No (never a member of the party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive (but not Zionists)

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner April 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

Marietta Smolkova Summary:
Marietta was born in Teplice, Czechoslovakia in 1921 to an upper-middle-class secular family. She and her cousin were the only two Jews in her elementary school and they only had religious studies once every two weeks and they mostly choose just to talk about music instead so she didn't have a good understanding of feeling of Judaism till high school where there were more Jewish students, though there were mainly protestants and Catholics. She switched though after a few years and instead the business academy because she thought it was a more practical education. She felt different before the war, because she didn't like dolls and normal girly things. She liked sports and hammers and it caused her grandmother and mother a lot of stress. She once used her allowance to buy a hammer and a pair of pliers. In September the workers at her father's porcelain factory protested and wanted to join the German empire and all that meant. Her family picked up and moved almost the next week from their small town to Prague, thinking that would be safer. In 1941 her family was sent to Terezin ghetto. Her father got ill and was in hospital there till he died in 1949. Then in 1944, the rest of her family was transferred on to Auschwitz, where her mother was murdered. Her sister and her were sent on, till they ended up again in Terezin Ghetto where they were eventually liberated from in summer 1945. She had met her future husband in Terezin and then met him again on the street in Prague after the war. His name was Jaroslav Smolka and he was Jewish. They married n 1954 and lived happily together. They didn't have any children and he was quite a bit older than her, but they were great friends. They divided all the housework and chores evenly, which was uncommon for the time and they both focused on their careers and worked a lot. They ate breakfast together each morning and talked the whole time, they really took that time to care for each other and then during the day they focused on their own lives, that was perfect for them. She was never a Communist or a Party member and she was very happy when the Revolution occurred. She was still religious after the war and still practices her Jewish faith. She also worked in the Jewish community.

"We didn't know what was going on in the ghetto, and they what was happening to us. Besides that, the day was long and we weren't allowed to break rank. But we thought up a way to be able to get around it. Someone would take off their cloak, and would always hide the person that needed to go to the toilet. This experience came in handy later as well."

Name: Martin Glas
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/martin-glas
Birth Year: 1931
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Manager
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Hana Glasova (nee Mazankova)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 1 (son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Rudolf Glas (1860-1942)
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation: Bank clerk
Paternal Grandmother: Riesa Hoffmann (nee von Reiss)
Birth Place: Italy
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Carl Fischer (1861-1934)
Birth Place: Mlada Boleslav
Occupation: Head clerk at a sawmill
Maternal Grandmother: Charlotta Fischer (nee Kollek)
Birth Place: Zdanice na Morave
Religious type: NA

Father: Julian Glass
Birth Place: Trieste
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Bank Clerk, laborer
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Gertruda Glasova (nee Fischer)
Birth Place: Dreveny Mlyn u Jihlavy
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1973
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1944: Terezin Ghetto (him, parents, p. grandfather, m. grandmother, brother)
1944: Auschwitz Concentration Camp (father, brother)

Lost Family Members: p. Grandfather, father
Survived: m. Grandmother, mother, Brother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (never a member of the party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: NA

Interviewed by: Lenka Koprivova August 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

"Today our building is no longer standing, after the war it was one of the few that was demolished. When I lead tours through Terezin, I go to at least show people where it stood. I at least have a key from its door, which is no longer, and its lock, which is no longer, which I always carry on me."

Martin Glas Summary:
Martin was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1931 to a middle-class secular Jewish Family. His brother was older than him, his name was Hanusz but the family called him Budi. His mother fell ill with tuberculosis in 1928 and actually started to get better after his birth. He was a very neat and orderly child and always took very good care of everything, which other kids felt was weird about him. His brother was seven years older than him and they never fought or had any problems. He actually never fought any boys, so much that his father was worried that he would be a target of other boys, but no one ever bother him. In 1939 his family actually converted to Roman Catholicism and practiced it, thinking it may save them or allow them to emigrate, but they were deported all the same in 1942. He was an altar boy for the St. Ignatz church in Charles Square until the anti-Jewish laws prevented him from taking public transportation and he could no longer go. He was actually happier in Terezin than he had been in Prague because he had friends and could see others of his age. However, they didn't have much food and he was always hungry and terrified. People who worked in agriculture were protected from transfer and their children under 16 years old were too, so, his mother and him stayed in Terezin the whole time. But his father and brother were sent to Auschwitz in 1944, where his father was killed. There was a teenage Jewish girl always assigned to look after the boys, they had a few and the ones that left never returned. One they liked most used to read Huckleberry Finn to them every night before bed. After they were liberated, he and the other children were sent to a convalescence home. His brother and mother lived at home in Prague, till he was allowed to rejoin them. He went back to school upon his arrival home and life was quite normal again. But his mother was never the same. She hated the Germans so much, that even when he had his friends over, who would have been only small children during the war, she would be very cold to them and not kind. His mother had a widows pension and he had an orphans pension since his father was murdered, but his older brother had nothing, and there was not enough money to send him to school, so he had to find a job right away, which was hard on him because he had always dreamed of university and was an academic at heart. He met his wife Hana Glasova, she was not Jewish but that didn't matter. She worked in the Prague cultural center and he worked at the Prague central television studio. Together they had a son. Martin was not a Supporter of the communists nor a member and got away with it alright since he avoided all social events at work and never tried to make friends with anyone, then they didn't care about him personally or get to know him much. He felt it was better to be safe, especially since he never experienced any anti-Semitism after the war, but he didn't think it was smart to get into any kind of trouble or draw attention, he didn't feel that safe.

Name: Michaela Vidlakova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/michaela-vidlakova
Family Name nee: Michaela Lauscherova
Birth Year: 1937
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Researcher in Nutrition Research Institute
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Milos Vidlak (1922-1992)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 1 (son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Siegfried Lauscher (1865-1910s)
Birth Place: Revnicov
Occupation: Office worker
Paternal Grandmother: Anna Katzova (nee Schwarzova) (1st marriage Lauscherova)
Birth Place: Pribram
Religious type: practiced (not kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Jaroslav Kohn (1871-1930)
Birth Place: Stare Hrady
Occupation: Shoemaker
Maternal Grandmother: Ruzena Kohnova (nee Müllerova) (1881-1942)
Birth Place: Chocen
Religious type: Practiced (lightly Kosher, avoided pork)

Father: Jiri Lauscher (changed to Georg Lauscher)
Birth Place: Terezin
Birth Date: 1901
Death Date: 1989
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: Worked at the Israeli embassy in Prugue
War Service: NA
Mother: Irma Lauscherova (nee Kohnova)
Birth Place: Hermanuv
Birth Date: 1904
Death Date: 1985
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Practiced
Class: Middle Class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1941: family forced to leave their apartment and move in with their Katz relatives
Winter 1942: Terezin Ghetto (her, parents, p. grandmother, m. grandmother, uncle)
1942: Auschwitz-Birkenau (p. grandmother [died 1942], uncle Frantisek [died 1943])
1942: Treblinka Concentration Camp (m. grandmother [died 1942])
August 1945: returned to Prague

Lost Family Members: p. Grandmother, m. Grandmother, uncle Frantisek
Survived: father, mother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No (from husband, yes)
Pro-Communist: No (she was probably not a member, NA)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Positive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner June 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

"Another bit of luck came about because I was in the hospital, because back then there were regulations according to which entire families were being sent, and so my stay in the hospital protected us. However, shortly after my discharge the regulations changed and then on the contrary the entire hospital left on the transport, doctors, nurses and all."

Michaela Vidlakova Summary:
Michaela was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1937 to a middle-class practicing Jewish family. Every Saturday afternoon her father and him went on walks together which was her favorite thing about childhood weekends. In 1941 they had to leave their apartment and give it over to Germans for free. They moved to Zizkov into his grandparent's apartment. She didn't ever get to go to school before the war and her family didn't teach her anything either, luckily, she was able to teach herself how to read a bit. After the war, when she was in school, she knew some boys were anti-Semitic, but they never said or did anything to express it, they simply avoided her, which she didn't really mind. Her grandparents were the first in her family to be forced into a camp, they went to Terezin. They were later sent east and never came back. She actually didn't mind the temporary apartment that much herself, because her parents let her draw on the walls and this was great to a five-year-old. In 1942 her parents and her were sent to Terezin. Everyone knew that what lay eastward was worse than where they were now, so no one wanted to be transported, but there were many terrifying stories that went around that kept them up at night. Her father worked in carpentry and was therefore in a good job, and her mother was a teacher and though teaching was forbidden, she was in charge of children. In the camp she caught typhus, scarlet fever, and measles all at once, so she spent 13 months in hospital. It was such a long recovery because she had to ride out the infections, the camp didn't have medications and what they did have they tried to spare. Right after she left the hospital, the whole hospital patients and its staff was sent East, never to return, so, she got out right in time. After the war she started school and since she was 8 she went straight to 4rd grade without ever having done the prior grades. From 1945-1949 she attended Jewish classes at the community center, but after that she never had much other contact with Judaism, either before or after the war. The Communists confiscated their apartment they had found after the war and they had to move into a friend's apartment. So, life after the war was not easy. Her dad was also arrested and was in jail for a while on political charges. She later was also jailed where she got a serious infection that impaired her health. She married a non-Jewish man named Milos Vidlak but they did not have a happy marriage. She had one son and did teach him about Jewish traditions but he was never religious and never felt very Jewish himself. She is retired now but she still is active, she is a member and leader of the Jewish community.

Name: Milena Prochazkova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/milena-prochazkova
Family Name nee: Milena Kosinerová
Birth Year: 1930
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: works in a Laboratory
Religious type: atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No/Yes (couldn't go after 1939, went to Jewish one)
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Petr Prochazka (1928-1987)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 2 (daughters)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes very

Paternal Grandfather: Eduard Kosiner
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Landowner/Farmer
Paternal Grandmother: Otylie Kosinerova (nee Fischlova) (1865-1944)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: atheist

Maternal Grandfather: Rudolf Stern (1874-1942)
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: had a Farming estate
Maternal Grandmother: Elsa Sternova (nee Dubska) (1884-1944)
Birth Place: Kamberk
Religious type: Secular

Father: Ervin Kosiner
Birth Place: Bukoly ner Kralupy
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1972
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: structural engineering
War Service: served in WWI
Mother: Hedvika Kosinerova (nee Sternova)
Birth Place: Kamberk
Birth Date: 1909
Death Date: 1987
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: atheist (didn't claim to be Jews)
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939: had to switch to a Jewish school
1941: had to move out of their neighborhood
1942-1945: Terezin Ghetto (her, parents, p. grandmother, m. grandfather/grandmother)
1942-1944: Treblinka Concentration Camp
(m. grandfather & grandmother [died 1942], p. grandmother [died 1944])
1944-1945: Wulkow Labor Camp (father)

Lost Family Members: p. Grandmother, m. Grandfather, m. Grandmother
Survived: father, mother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (probably not a party member, NA)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Against it (due to Arab relations and not religious)

Interviewed by: Zuzana Strouhová December 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

"The only thing that I remember from [her children's] early childhood is that when they didn't want to eat something, I always said, 'Hitler on you. You'd eat everything.' And they didn't know, they thought it was some sort of boogeyman."

Milena Prochazkova Summary:
Milena was born on 3rd September 1930 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to an atheistic family. She was an only child. She was born with a heart defect that affected her whole life. She never really liked school or studying, she only attended till the 4th grade, till they kicked her out due to the anti-Jewish laws. She went then to a Jewish elementary school for about 3 months, but then her family moved and the school was shut down anyway. She got scarlet fever, so her family was isolated till she got better. They moved to Vinohrady by force and had to live for about a year with a few other Jewish families in a small apartment. Her mother and another woman with no children who they were forced to live with, made a game of it, one of the two women played "lady of the house" for a week while the other played "servant" alternating each week, as a child this excited Milena. Her family was very social and both her and her parents had many friends that helped them out and were always coming over before the war prevented this. In 1943, her family was sent to Terezin. A year later her father was sent on to a work camp in Wulkow, his work there protected his wife and Milena from being sent to a camp. She reckons this saved her life, since she as a child and one with a heart defect, would have died immediately in any of the camps. After Terezin was liberated her parents wanted to stay a bit and help out their fellow prisoners, many of which were very ill and needed attention. But she was 14 and cared about nothing but going home, so she ran away and they followed her. That's how her family go back to Prague. They first lived with some of her parent's friends, then they were able to secure their own old apartment back, but not their possessions. She went back to school and made many friends; life went back to a new kind of normal. She met her husband Petr at an evening dance hall her girlfriends and her used to go to often. He was not Jewish. They had two daughters and were very happy all the way till 1987 when her husband died suddenly of cancer. She worked many odd jobs, but for the last couple years she worked at the National Gallery until retirement. Then she started working for the Terezin Initiative, encouraging people to remember and supporting survivors. Her and her husband and daughters always loved to take vacations together, to do everything together, and they all loved to read. She claims to have had the perfect family and feels that despite what happened to her while she was a child, she is blessed. She was never a Communist supporter and she also is not a big supporter of Israel.

Name: Ota Gubic
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/ota-gubic
Family Name nee: Otto Gubitsch
Birth Year: 1922
Birth Place: Prievidza
Occupation Post-WWII: Manual laborer
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: Yes
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Terezia Gubicova (nee Schweitova) (1920-2001)
Spouse's birth place: Levoca
Number of Children: 2 (daughter, son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: No

Paternal Grandfather: Moric Gubitsch
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: Anna Gubitsch (nee Steiner)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Emil Fried
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Owned a general store
Maternal Grandmother: Aneta Friedova
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Neolog Jew

Father: Bernard Gubitsch
Birth Place: Urmin (now named Mojmirovce)
Birth Date: 1874
Death Date: 1945
Death Place: Horny Jelenec
Occupation: Owned a stationery store
War Service: NA
Mother: Zlatica Gubitschova (nee Friedova)
Birth Place: Medzibrod
Birth Date: 1893
Death Date: 1946
Death Place: Prievidza
Marriage Type: not arranged (but made by a match-maker)
Religious type: Neolog Jew
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1942-1944: Novaky Forced Labor Camp (him)
1944-1945: Partisan (him)
In hiding in the forest in Horny Jelenec (father, mother)
1938-1945: protected by presidential exception by her son Moric Feied -> then after Slovak National Rebellion disappeared (m. grandparents)

Lost Family Members: m. Grandfather & Grandmother, father, mother
Survived: Brother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive (no desire to emigrate)

Interviewed by: Barbora Pokreis August 2005 in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

Ota Gubic Summary:
Ota was born on 1st of June 1922 in Prievidza, Czechoslovakia to a Neolog Jewish family. He went to the local Jewish elementary school and on Saturdays he went to Synagogue. He was mainly interested in sports as a child, and did well in school, but did not enjoy it much. He liked to play volleyball best. His family celebrated all the holidays and usually fasted for Yom Kippur, but he did not. He even used to eat ham with his friends. His older brother respected the traditions, but more out of indifference than believe, he felt his older brother didn't care about anything but books. His brother and him both had a bar mitzvah. In March 1942 he had to go to Novaky labor camp. From 1944-1945 he was a Partisan in the uprising, and was able to survive because farmers from Bukovec and their wives brought the young men like him food. Afterwards, he worked in a printer's shop as a typesetter, but soon he left to return home because he found out his mother was still alive. His father died, but his mother and brother made it through the war. But his mother died in 1946 the year after the war ended, due to all her suffering and the poor health conditions she had had to survive in. He moved into his own room in a shared flat and started to work in another print shop. In 1947, he met his wife, Terezia a Jewish woman, and they were soon married. He did not have any problems with anti-Semitism after the war. He joined his companies table-tennis league and played in the regional championships. He was a proud Communist and party member. He was even in the secretary position for a while. His wife and him had two children and they had good lives; they never faced any trouble. His wife and him often went to the theatre and liked going to all kinds of social events. He especially liked to go dancing and still loved to play sports. His Children know they are Jewish, but he did not raise them religiously or with any of the traditions. His family is not religious. He is glad Israel was created though he never had any desire to live there.

"I of course felt myself to be a Jew, in my youth I also practiced it, after all I was in Hashomer Hatzair, but in adulthood I no longer cared for it. I had this one slogan: 'One war was enough for me, I don't want to live through another!' I've never been to Israel. In my spare time, I concern myself with history, write my memoirs; to tell the truth, I'd like to publish them."

Name: Pavel Fried
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/pavel-fried
Birth Year: 1930
Birth Place: Trebic
Occupation Post-WWII: Jewish community employee
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Vlasta Friedova (nee Machackova) (1931-1990s)
Spouse's birth place: Brno
Number of Children: 2 (daughter, son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Not very

Paternal Grandfather: Alexandr Fried (1850s-1936)
Birth Place: Trebic
Occupation: Businessman, store-owner
Paternal Grandmother: Mrs. Fried (1850s-1929)
Birth Place: Trebic
Religious type: practiced (not kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Samuel Waldstein (1878-1951)
Birth Place: Prestice
Occupation: owned a mix-goods store
Maternal Grandmother: Matilda Waldstein (nee Vogel)
Birth Place: Dolni Kralovice
Religious type: practiced

Father: Viktor Fried
Birth Place: Trebic
Birth Date: 1879
Death Date: 1950s
Death Place: Trebic
Occupation: Businessman
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army WWI
Mother: Marta Friedova (nee Waldstein)
Birth Place: Prestice
Birth Date: 1899
Death Date: 1993
Death Place: Brno
Marriage Type: not arranged (were distant cousins)
Religious type: Practiced (not kosher)
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939-1941: Trebic at home (family)
1941-1945: Terezin Ghetto (him, father, mother)
m. grandfather, m. grandmother [died 1943/4], sister, sister's husband)
1943-1944: Auschwitz (sister, sister's husband [died 1944])

Lost Family Members: m. grandmother, sister, sister's husband
Survived: m. grandfather, father, mother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (not a party member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very positive, visits

Interviewed by: Martin Korcok November 2004 in Brno, Czech Republic

"My first offence against the socialist state was that my father had a business. Second, I was a Jew, and third, I had relatives in Western Europe. My final transgression was that I always said what I thought."

Pavel Fried Summary:
Pavel was born on 13th June 1930 in Trebic, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class practicing Jewish family. His family never ate kosher, but also never missed Sabbath services on Saturdays. He mostly was friends with Jewish boys, because he lived in a Jewish part of town, but he had some non-Jewish friends from school. After the anti-Jewish laws started in 1938, he had to start attending a brand new Jewish only school and he lost all contact with his non-Jewish friends, because Jews were not even allowed to play in parks anymore. His sister was 7 years older than him, so they were not very close. She got married right before his family was sent to Terezin in 1942. Her and her husband were also sent to Terezin, but they did not see him or his parents much and soon they were sent further East where they both were killed in Auschwitz. His worst memories of Terezin where selection days, because the whole ghetto was terrified of being transferred onwards and people suddenly acted savagely to safe themselves. But he was never sent onwards because he had a good job, he died the German soldiers' uniforms. After Terezin was liberated in May 1945, they still could not leave, because the camp was quarantined due to various infectious diseases there, especially typhus. They were finally allowed to go home later in June and his parents and him returned by train. His parents were able to get their store back (what was left of it), and they got their apartment bac eventually though with nothing in it. They actually noticed that some of their best house-stuff was now in the town governor's office. But they never fought to get it back, they were scared after the war and just happy to be alive. His town had 297 Jews before the war and after it had only 9 (documents claim 281 before and 10 returned). He went back to school, but he was the only Jewish boy in school now, none of the others had survived. He became a scout and went on lots of camping trips with his scout troop. After he finished school he was drafted into military service. He got in some trouble with the communists when they came to power because he had relatives abroad. In the army his main job was to help build military airports. After his service he started work in a Research Institute for Construction Machinery in Brno. He met his wife Vlasta Friedova through a friend from scouts. His wife was not Jewish, but rather a Protestant. They were married in 1956 and had two children. His wife and him were never very religious and celebrated both Jewish and Christian holidays secularly while their children grew up. He feels more Czech than Jewish, but he is proud of his identity. He is glad Israel exists and he has visited.

Name: Pavel Werner
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/pavel-werner
Birth Year: 1932
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Economist
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School:
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: NA
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: NA
Spouse's birth place: NA
Number of Children: 1 (daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

"So we saw those silhouettes of people in Camp B. And suddenly I saw my parents. I recognized them by their silhouettes, that it was them, especially when they were standing beside each other. Both my mother and father were there, we began waving at each other. For a while we stood there like that and then we had to leave again. The next day we again came to the wire and again we saw each other... And the third day there was no one there."

Paternal Grandfather: Mr. Werner
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Businessman
Paternal Grandmother: Mrs. Werner (nee Grünfeld)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Adolf Weissenstein
Birth Place: Nachod
Occupation: Tailor
Maternal Grandmother: Pavla Weissensteinova (nee Pollakova) (1868-1938)
Birth Place: Nachod
Religious type: NA

Father: Karel Chaim Werner
Birth Place: Kopyczynce
Birth Date: 1890
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: traveling salesman
War Service: NA
Mother: Ella Wernerova (nee Weissensteinova)
Birth Place: Nachod
Birth Date: 1906
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Practiced
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1940-1942: had to leave school (attend secret classes at the local synagogue)
1942: Terezin Ghetto (him, sister [died 1944], father, mother)
1944: Auschwitz (him, father & mother [died 1944])
1944: Auschwitz-Birkenau (him)
1945: Mauthausen Concentration Camp (him)
1945: Mauthausen sub-camp: Melk (him)
1945: Mauthausen sub-camp: Gunskirchen (him)

Lost Family Members: Father, Mother, Sister
Survived: NA

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (joined the party at 16)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: NA
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Positive

Interviewed by: Dagmar Greslova August 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

Pavel Werner Summary:
Pavel was born in 1932 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class practicing Jewish family. She liked to read and also go skating. His mother was a housewife and took care of him and his sister. His sister Lenka was three years younger than him. When the Germans came, they had to move in with a man, Mr. Lochmann and live with him in two rooms. He liked this new living condition though, because the house had a garden and since it was further from the city, there were rabbits around and sometimes the other children, though not Jewish, would come to play with them. He only got to attend school for two years before the anti-Jewish laws came in and he was no longer allowed to go. Then he went secretly to the local rabbi's apartment to learn, there all the Jewish children were taught together no matter their age. But a year later in 1942 his family was transported to Terezin. In Terezin they separated them, his sister and him lived with him mother, but his father had to live in the men's barracks. His sister died on tuberculous meningitis soon after arrival, she was only eight. He did not think Terezin was very bad. There were other children, cultural performances, and even school classes of sorts. He can imagine how adults would have suffered there and young children too. But for him and other slightly older children besides often being hungry and scared it was not so hard to adjust to. His family was then sent to Auschwitz in 1944. His mother was quite small and she had scoliosis of the spine, but in Auschwitz she was made to do heavy physical labor. Later his father and him went to a selection and he was separated from his father. He saw his parents from afar once after that, they were together, and then he never saw them again. They were both murdered in Auschwitz. He worked then in a clothing warehouse for a while, which was quite an easy job compared to others in the camp. Finally, in May 1945 the Americans liberated him at Gunskirchen. When he got back, he was looked after by his gradian, Alfred Eisner, who helped try to get his parents stuff back for him, but there was not much to get back. He did find all his family photo albums though. He went back to school and he studied hard. He bounced around homes living in different places with different people. The war made him an atheist; he can't understand how people can believe the Holocaust was part of any god's plan. He joined the Communist party when he was only 16. His guardian was an economist and encouraged him to follow him in this, which is what he did. But while he was studying and young, he had many different jobs, including being a shoemaker for a while. After university he also had to do his basic training for the military. He married and had a daughter.

Name: Petr Weber
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/petr-weber
Birth Year: 1942
Birth Place: Bochnia
Occupation Post-WWII: Nuclear systems designer/programmer
Religious type: Secular (practice high holidays)
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Vera Weber (nee Baderova)
Spouse's birth place: Brno
Number of Children: 0 (1 stepson)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: NA
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Hosef Moshe Königsberg
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Maternal Grandmother: Zissl Königsberg (nee Kellman)
Birth Place: Bochnia
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Aaron Preiss
Birth Place: Bochnia
Birth Date: NA
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: NA
Occupation: NA
War Service: NA
Mother: Lola Preiss (nee Königsberg)
Birth Place: Bochnia
Birth Date: NA
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: NA
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Orthodox
Class: Lower middle class

<u>During the War/Holocaust Related:</u>
1942: born in concentration camp in Poland
1944: smuggled out of the concentration camp and
sent to a Christian Czech family in Slovakia to live as their "nephew"

Lost Family Members: Mother, father
Survived: uncle Schlomo Königsberg, and aunts Toshka & Esther Königsberg.

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (not a member of the party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very positive, visits (family lives there)

Interviewed by: Zuzana Strouhova June 2005 in Brno, Czech Republic

"This is how it is, more or less: in 1942, when I was born, my parents were already imprisoned in the concentration camp in Bochnia. It wasn't an extermination camp, but likely a certain type of ghetto where local Jews were concentrated before being sent to the places of "final solution", like Auschwitz and other camps to the east. So that's where I was born. We were all together until 1944, when a certain group of people managed to escape from that camp, among which was also my uncle [*Schlomo Königsberg*], at that time a young lad of seventeen. And they took me, a two-year-old child, with them. My parents stayed there."

Petr Weber Summary:
Petr was born on March 29th in 1942 in Bochnia, Poland to a middle-class Orthodox Jewish family. He was born in a Jewish ghetto and he stayed there with his parents till 1944. Then his parents and others helped sneak him out with his 17-year old uncle. His uncle took him to a Jewish family in Liptovsky Mikulas who became his adoptive family. He therefore knows nothing about his real parents, he does not even know their names, they never came back. His whole adoptive family was older, his adoptive sister was 30 years older than him. He does not know why his uncle left him with a random Jewish family in Slovakia, but can imagine that as escapes they were unable to and scared of having a small child with them. So, the Jewish family gave the baby (Petr) to a Christian one that offered to take him. They actually probably had no choice, as they were soon interned themselves. The Christian family pretended he was their nephew from Prague who had come to stay with them. What he did learn about his origins and biological family was only from his aunts which when he was older, he was able to find. He liked to play hockey as a child. When he was 17 his adoptive mother died. And after his high school graduation three month later, his father too. So, he started university as an orphan, or a double one really. He got an orphan's pension and lived in the university dorm while he studied Nuclear physics and power systems. Then he went to Moscow on scholarship and finished his studies there in 1965. He went through his military service when he returned from university and then started working. Then some Jewish people started to approach him asking him to join their community. He met his wife on a trip to Israel, when he went there to meet his one biological surviving relative. She was on the same ship and they got to know each other. Her name was Vera she was Jewish and worked as a nurse. She already had a son, so they did not have any of their own children, but he had his step-son. They had a loving family. He has visited Israel many times and he feels very connected to it and it being a safe place for Jews.

Name: Ruth Goetzová
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/ruth-goetzova
Birth Year: 1923
Birth Place: Chemnitz
Occupation Post-WWII: Accountant
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Jiri Setina (1918-1989)
Spouse's birth place: Prague
Number of Children: 2 (daughter, son)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

"For me the hardest times began when the September transport went to the gas chambers, in March 1944. Then some transports arrived, from Hungary I think. The crematoriums couldn't keep up, so they burned people in piles soaked with gasoline. I'll always be able to see those horrible, huge greasy ashes that sometimes flew all the way to our camp. It was the most horrible feeling that I can remember. And throughout it all, my mother kept repeating: 'I'll return, I'll survive, I'll return.'"

Paternal Grandfather: NA
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: NA
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Maternal Grandfather: Jindrich Krauskopf (1872-1944)
Birth Place: Otice
Occupation: Owner of a cap/hat factory
Maternal Grandmother: Anna Krauskopfova (nee Glucksmannova) (1870-1932)
Birth Place: Horni Litvinov
Religious type: Practiced

Father: Georg Goetz
Birth Place: NA
Birth Date: NA
Death Date: 1934
Death Place: Chemnitz
Occupation: Raced and raised horses
War Service: NA
Mother: Hilda Lasova (nee Krauskopfova)
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1963
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: Not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Upper Middle

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1942-1944: Terezin Ghetto (her, mother, m. grandfather, sister)
1943-1944: Auschwitz-Birkenau (her, mother, m. grandfather [died 1944], sister)
1945: Dessauer Ufer (her, mother, sister)
1945: Bergen-Belsen (her, mother, sister)
April 1945: Liberated by the English

Lost Family Members: m. Grandfather
Survived: Mother, sister

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (never a member)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Supportive but skeptical

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner October 2004 Prague, Czech Republic

Ruth Goetzova Summary:
Ruth was born in 1923 in Chemnitz, Germany to a secular Jewish family. But soon after her parents got divorced and, in a custody, battle it was decided she would be given to her maternal grandparents to raise. Her mother lived in the same building as her but with a new husband and she had another daughter, they did not see each other much. Her mother thought it was easier to just focus on her new family. So, Ruth became very close to her grandfather and in a way, he became her mother and father in one. She had an easy and nice childhood. She had a nanny and a governess. She went to a normal Czech school and was the only Jewess there. She liked gymnastics and ballet, but was not really that athletic. She only got to attend the first 5 years out of 8 of secondary school due to the anti-Jewish laws. Her family talked of emigration but her grandfather was stubborn. He believed that since he was born there and he never did anything wrong, that they could not make him leave. She was sent to Terezin with her mother and her step-sister. Her grandfather was sent to Terezin a few months later but she never knew this till after the war and she never saw him there. He died in Auschwitz alone. In December 1943, the three of them were sent on to Auschwitz, where her job was carrying heavy rocks. With a lot of luck her sister and her mother were selected for transport to the workcamp with Ruth even though they were not in the best shape or age. The family was liberated in April 1945 by the English. She had to care and provide for her whole family when they got back, because her sister and mother were badly off and someone needed to make money. They had nothing after the war and everything was gone. Soon her sister married an older man and moved away to Israel. She got her mother woke in a document warehouse and she herself worked in a textile cooperative. Later, she got a better job as an accountant. She was never a member or supporter of the Communist Party. She married a non-Jewish man named Jiri Setina and they had two children. Her husband traveled a lot for work and they divorced in 1972. She has grandchildren in America.

Name: Ruth Halova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/ruth-halova
Family Name nee: Ruth Adlerová
Name from Previous Marriage: Ruth Eisnerová
Birth Year: 1926
Birth Place: Česky Krumlov
Occupation Post-WWII: Working in natural and technical sciences
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No (forced to leave 1940 after year 2 of high-school)
Married Jewish: 1st Yes, 2nd No
Marriage type: Not arranged
Spouse: Milan Hala
Spouse's birth place: NA
Number of Children: 2 (son, daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Jakub Adler
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Paternal Grandmother: Josefa Adlerova
Birth Place: Sobeslav
Religious type: Practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Mr. Kohn
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: NA
Maternal Grandmother: Marie Kohnova (1872-1942)
Birth Place: Kostelec
Religious type: atheist

Father: Leopold Adler
Birth Place: Ceske Budejovice
Birth Date: 1892
Death Date: 1926
Death Place: Cesky Krumlov
Occupation: Office Clerk
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Zdenka Adlerova (nee Kohnova)
Birth Place: Protivin
Birth Date: 1900
Death Date: 1976
Death Place: Teplice
Marriage Type: not arragned
Religious type: Atheist
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
In exile in UK in Birmingham and Rugby (her)

Terezin Ghetto (p. Grandmother, mother)
Trevlinka Concentration Camp (p. Grandmother)

Lost Family Members: m. Grandmother,
Survived: mother, sister

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (member, but only due to husband and family reasons)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very supportive, visits

Interviewed by: Lenka Koprivova April 2007 in Holubov, Czech Republic

Ruth Halova Summary:
Ruth was born in 1926 in Česky Krumlov, Czechoslovakia to an atheistic Jewish family. She had an older sister who was born five years before her. Her father died soon after her birth. So, her mother, needing to provide for the family worked as a secretary in a factory and Ruth's grandmother took care of the girls and the house. Her grandfather died that same year as her father, so it was just the women. As a child she loved nature and trees. They swam in the summer and went skating and sledding in the winter. In 1938, when she was in 6th grade her one other Jewish classmate and her were kicked out of school. Her sister and her managed to both escape to England. She was 13 and her sister was already 18. They arrived in London and all the children waited for their foster families to come take them away. She stayed with this old couple the Joneses who lived in the suburbs of Birmingham. She went to school and adapted to her new English classmates and surroundings. After finishing primary school, she had to transfer to a secondary school, which cost money, so she moved to Rugby another town and stayed with another family who was able to support her schooling. Her mother had survived the ghetto and in 1945, Ruth left England and went home. Her grandmother was gone, but her sister and mother welcomed her home. She went to university in Prague and studied microbiology. Her first husband was Hanus Eisler who had grown up in America and they had a son together. They had another child and she balanced work and children. But her and her husband's young love did not last and they eventually divorced. She remarried later. She retired when she was 55 because she started getting sick. She was diagnosed with cancer and tuberculosis. She started painting and continued to read for pleasure.

"On 1st July we arrived in London. It was by coincidence my mother's birthday. Before our foster parents took us our separate ways, we were sitting in this large, green room, maybe a gym. We had name cards hanging around our necks, and I clearly remember my feelings, not so much of sadness or tragedy, but of absolute helplessness. This is how calves must feel, when they're separated from the nourishment and protection of their mothers, put in human hands and at the mercy of human beings, I said to myself. My young friends gradually disappeared, leaving with their new parents to their new foster homes, until finally a few of us for whom no one had come remained in that whole big room. You can imagine the anxiety we little pilgrims sitting on our suitcases felt."

Czech Interviews

Name: Toman Brod
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/toman-brod-0
Birth Year: 1929
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Historian
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No (had to leave in 1940)
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Libuse Brodova (nee Kvasnickova)
Spouse's birth place: Breclav
Number of Children: 1 (daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Alois Brod (1850s-1920s)
Birth Place: Vrdy-Bucice
Occupation: Owner of mixed-goods store
Paternal Grandmother: Marie Brodova (nee Friedlanderova) (1850s-1920s)
Birth Place: Vrdy-Bucice
Religious type: Practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Eduard Pick (1850s-1920s)
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Owner of a sawmill
Maternal Grandmother: Anna Pickova (nee Kernova) (1850s-1931)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: NA

Father: Arnost Brod
Birth Place: Vrdy-Bucice
Birth Date: 1878
Death Date: 1938
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: Merchant
War Service: didn't serve
Mother: Olga Brodova (nee Pickova)
Birth Place: Ledec nad Sazavou
Birth Date: 1890
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: NA
Religious type: Secular
Class: Upper middle class

<u>During the War/Holocaust Related:</u>
1939-1942: At home in Prague (him, mother, brother)
1942-1943: Theresienstadt Ghetto (him, mother, brother)
1943-1944: Auschwitz (him, brother [died 1944], mother,)
1944-1945: Gross-Rosen (him)

Lost Family Members: Mother, brother, uncle Jundrich Brod and aunt Berta
Survived: NA

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: Yes (joined the party before 1948)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: supportive (but lost jobs, daughter's life affected)
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Supportive but critical, visits

Interviewed by: Lenka Koprivová April 2005 in Praha, Czech Republic

"The paradox of Terezin was that on the one hand people were dying of hunger, desperation, dirt, disease, hopelessness, but on the other hand people played soccer, there were concerts, operas such as Brundibar, The Bartered Bride and so on."

Toman Brod Summary:
Toman was born in 1929 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to an upper-middle-class secular Jewish family. His family had a nice large apartment that was well decorated and taken care of. His brother and him shared a room, so they were relatively close siblings. His favorite things to eat were ice cream with whipped cream and roasted chestnuts. His favorite subjects in school were drawing and writing. He went to an all-boys school, which was normal. His brother and him were also huge soccer fans and loved to play and watch the World Championships. He and his brother even had their favorite team sweaters and wore them with pride everywhere. His brother and him also both loved to read and often when they fought, they fought over books. In summer his mother and the boys would go to their summer house in the country and other relatives and friends would come to join them and stay with them there. His father didn't go since he had work, so he would be separated from the family, but as a boy Toman still loved going out there. In 1938, him and another Jewish boy actually raised a huge sum of money for the national defense of Czechoslovakia as it seemed war was approaching. They were super patriotic and wanted to help defend and support their country, not knowing how their country and fellow countrymen were about to treat them. In 1938, both his father and one of his uncles died, his father had gotten ill. After their father's death they had money problems so they had to move out of their apartment. Then they were forced out of their apartment by the Germans and had to move into a small old apartment in the Old Town along with two other Jewish families. But luckily their cook had them over to her apartment during the day almost every day, so they still had some standard of living. In 1942, his family was sent to Terezin Ghetto, where his brother and him as young boys found enjoyment in the little things they got. They had classes, had their first romances, and lived with other boys who became their best friends. In December 1943 they were transported to Auschwitz, there it was not at all barrable, Terezin seemed a paradise in comparison. In Terezin there had been no prisoner uniforms or forced haircuts, they still looked like themselves, something that felt most horrible to Toman about Auschwitz was when you got there, they took not just your possessions away, but your identity too. His brother was sent to a labor camp and was never seen again. But his mother and him were considered unfit for work so they stayed in Auschwitz. Then one boy asked if there could be work for some of the children and by some luck about 90 boys were selected out right before the rest of the children were put into the chambers, Toman was one of these 90 boys and therefore saved. His mother however was murdered around that same time. He got very sick in the work camp and eventually was left to die, but he somehow managed to hold on and the war managed to end while he did. So, he was taken to a Polish field camp to recover and then once he had he had no one and nothing, so he took the train back to Prague to see if he still could find a home there. He then spent the next two years in hospitals due to health effects from the illnesses. In 1950 he finally was able to register for university and studied political and economic sciences. He then worked in the Military Historical Institute, but he earned very little money. He joined the Communist Party because he saw it as opposite to Nazi Fascism. He met his wife at school, Libuse Kvasnickova who was not Jewish. Together they had one daughter.

Name: Tomas Kraus
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/tomas-kraus
Birth Year: 1954
Birth Place: Prague
Occupation Post-WWII: Lawyer
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: NA
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: NA
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Zuzana Krausova
Spouse's birth place: NA
Number of Children: 3 (2 sons, 1 daughter)
View of Israel: NA
Integrated Pre-WWII: NA

Paternal Grandfather: Robert Kraus (1876-1964)
Birth Place: Uhlirske Janovice
Occupation: Traveling salesman
Paternal Grandmother: Matylda Krausova (nee Kollmannova) (1877-1955)
Birth Place: Ceske Budejovice
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Otto Flusser (1889-1943)
Birth Place: Teplice
Occupation: Butcher
Maternal Grandmother: Elsa Flusserova (nee Hackelova) (1889-1943)
Birth Place: Teplice
Religious type: Secular

Father: Frantisek Robert Kraus
Birth Place: Prague
Birth Date: 1903
Death Date: 1967
Death Place: Prague
Occupation: Journalist, reporter, writer
War Service: NA
Mother: Alice Krausova (nee Flusserova)
Birth Place: Teplice
Birth Date: 1916
Death Date: 1988
Death Place: Prague
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: NA

During the War/Holocaust Related:
October 1941: Terezin Ghetto
(father, p. grandfather, p. grandmother, mother, m. grandfather, m. grandmother)
1944: Auschwitz (father, mother, m. grandfather & m. grandmother [died 1944])
1944: Auschwitz sub–camp: Gleiwitz (father)
1945: Auschwitz sub–camp: Blechhammer (father)
1944: Gross Rosen sub-camp: Merzdorf (mother)
1945: Sub-camp: Kudowa Zdrój (mother)
May 1945: Russians liberated the Camps

Lost Family Members: m. Grandfather & Grandmother
Survived: p. Grandfather & Grandmother, father, mother, stepbrother

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (not party member, nor more relevantly was his father)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: NA

Interviewed by: Dagmar Grešlová September 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic

Tomas Kraus Summary:
Tomas was born after the war in 1954 in Prague, Czechoslovakia to a secularly Jewish family. His story then is rather based on his parents' accounts. His family was forced into the Terezin Ghetto in October 1941, this included his paternal and maternal grandparents as well as his mother and father. Then his maternal grandparents and his parents were all sent to Auschwitz in 1944, where his grandparents were murdered. His father and mother were then separated and sent to various labor camps until the end of the war. By some luck and their determination, his paternal grandparents and his parents survived. His father when he got back had the desire to write a book about what happened and he wrote about his experience. After this his father had some notability to him and thereby came to be the main contributor to the Jewish Religious Communities' Newsletter and head of a commission there. Then in 1968 many of the prominent community members emigrated to ovoid occupation. Tomas was one of the few of his generation to have a strong connection and knowledge of Judaism from a young age, since many Jews did not practice after the war and did not always even tell their children when they were young that they were Jews or anything about what happened in the war. But he attended the Jewish community events with his father. His parents were never Communist supporters.

"He wanted to bear witness. Because he was never alone. He was with the dead, who he had survived. He was with the echoes of those killed, which he couldn't drive out of his ears. He couldn't give up the memory, which he perceived as the foundation of further existence. He was with his dead, with whom he had lived four years of the war in various camps."

Name: Viera Slesingerova
Link: **https://www.centropa.org/biography/viera-slesingerova**
Family Name nee: Viera Pollakova
Birth Year: 1924
Birth Place: Kosice
Occupation Post-WWII: teacher
Religious type: Atheist
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: Yes
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Jaroslav Slesinger
Spouse's birth place: Chocen
Number of Children: 2 (son, daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Ignac Pollak
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Businessman
Paternal Grandmother: Julie Pollakova (nee Steinerova)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Secular

Maternal Grandfather: Bernat Paszternak (1850s-1936)
Birth Place: NA
Occupation: Shammash in Kosice
Maternal Grandmother: Berta Paszternakova (nee Schon) (1860s-1936)
Birth Place: NA
Religious type: Orthodox (kosher)

Father: Otto Pollak
Birth Place: Klatovy
Birth Date: 1884
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Lodz Ghetto
Occupation: Supreme Financial Counselor and Head of Tax Revenue Bureau
War Service: Served in KuK in WWI
Mother: Helena Pollakova (nee Paszternak)
Birth Place: Buzica
Birth Date: 1896
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Practiced
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1941: had to leave their apartment and move
1941: Lodz Ghetto (her, father [died 1944], mother)
August 1944: Auschwitz (her, mother [died 1944])
Winter 1944-May 1945: Mezimesti labor camp (her)

Lost Family Members: father, mother,
Survived: aunts, uncles

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (but joined the party on husband's insistence after 1960)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Supportive but critical, visits

Interviewed by: Pavla Neuner January 2004 in Prague, Czech Republic

"After three months in Auschwitz, I was picked during a roll-call and taken away in a cattle car, along with some other people. I didn't know what would happen."

Viera Slesingerova Summary:
Viera was born in 1924 in Kosice, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class practicing Jewish family. Her family did not eat kosher, but mainly ate typical Hungarian-Czech cuisine. Her dad had to work on Saturdays, so their biggest mean was on Sunday. They only went to synagogue on high holidays and fasted on Yom Kippur. She hated Yom Kippur though because she had to sacrifice a chicken for her sins and she had such trouble following the tradition (kapores). Viera was an only child and she was quite pampered and spoiled from it. She was in hospital once as a child over Christmas and was the only one without a present under the tree, so a doctor gave her an extra toy car, but she was proud to announce that she was Jewish and that was all. Her family moved around a lot and so she went to different schools, but she liked school and reading. Some of the schools she went to were Jewish and some were not, it depended on where they lived and what was most convenient. She had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends and so did her parents. Her hobby was to collect photos of actors and put them into albums. Her parents thought of emigration and put in an application for the USA but they never heard back, so they were going to send Viera alone to England, but she didn't want to go. She left school in 1940 and took an apprenticeship in hat-making. In September 1941 they were moved to a Jewish ghetto Lodz. Her mother luckily found all of them jobs in the ghetto which helped them not be transported on. But her father suffered muscle deficiency and became unable to work, and soon he could not take it. He committed suicide. Her and her mother then stopped working and hid in attics so they would not be deported, but in 1944 her mother gave up. She wanted to stay together so they both turned themselves in and soon were put on transport. After three months in Auschwitz she was sent to a labor camp, she never saw her mother again. Then in 1945, she was liberated, but she already knew she had no family left. She was picked up by a truck on its way to Czech, and they could not believe she was 21 with how skinny she was. She was able to get her parents two-bedroom apartment back, but she gave it to another family with a child in exchange for their smaller apartment since she was alone. She married a non-Jewish man named Jaroslav Slesinger and had two children. She worked as a teacher after she finished her education. She only joined the Communist party because her husband insisted on it, she never believed in the regime. She was never religious after the war, she did not raise her children Jewish, but she did attend synagogue on most New Year and Yom Kippurs. With the children they celebrated Christmas but not very religiously.

Name: Zuzana Minacova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/zuzana-minacova
Family Name nee: Zuzana Silbersteinová
Name Change in Hiding: Zuzana Severová
Birth Year: 1931
Birth Place: Bratislava
Occupation Post-WWII: Photographer
Religious type: Secular
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: No
Marriage type: not arragned
Spouse: Jan Minac (1926-1963)
Spouse's birth place: NA
Number of Children: 2 (sons)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes, very

Paternal Grandfather: Adolf Silberstein
Birth Place: Betlanovce
Occupation: Farmer
Paternal Grandmother: Maria Silbersteinova (nee Hexnerova)
Birth Place: Betlanovce
Religious type: Orthodox (kosher)

Maternal Grandfather: Emanuel Löwy
Birth Place: Nitra
Occupation: Farmer
Maternal Grandmother: Janka Löwyova (nee Neumannova)
Birth Place: Nitra
Religious type: Orthodox

Father: Dezider Sever (nee Silberstein)
Birth Place: Betlanovce
Birth Date: 1894
Death Date: 1961
Death Place: Bratislava
Occupation: Doctor
War Service: NA
Mother: Pavla Severova (was Silbersteinova) (nee Löwyova)
Birth Place: Nitra
Birth Date: 1898
Death Date: 1947
Death Place: Bratislava
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Secular
Class: Upper middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
In hiding: (her, sister)
Sered Labor Camp (her, sister)
1944: Auschwitz-Birkenau (her, sister, p.grandmother [died 1944])
1944-May 1945: Hohenelbe-Vrchlabi Labor Camp (her, sister)

In hiding elsewhere: (father, mother)

Lost Family Members: p. grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins
Survived: Father, mother, sister, great-great-uncle Hexner

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (never in the party)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: Yes (to Czech Republic from Slovakia in 1993)
View of Israel: Supportive, Visits

Interviewed by: Dagmar Grešlová July 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic

Zuzana Minacova Summary:
Zuzana was born in 1931 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class secular Jewish family. Her sister and her had a Christian nanny and many Christian friends. Her father was a beloved doctor and had his own practice. During the war her mother and father hid with friends. Her sister and her were hid with other friends, who her father had paid to hide them, but they ended up giving up the girls to the Germans. The sisters went on to a concentration camp, first to Sered and then to Auschwitz. Her sister and her were liberated from Vrchlabi by the Russians. Her parents and her sister and her all survived, but none of her relatives did. After the war she went back to school, she was about 14 years old. She did not have much patience for school after what she had been through though, so she took on an apprenticeship to become a photographer. Later she studied the applied arts, which allowed her to work in film studios in Bratislava. She married a writer Jan Minac, who was not Jewish. They had met at a Youth Union meeting, but she saw through Communism quite quickly and was not a big supporter. They had two sons, she didn't raise them Jewish, but they are proud of who they are. She still loves photography and film. She also worked on digging up old photographs, films, and artifacts of the Jewish situation during the war and worked with archives to make sure the memory lives on. This project was called "The Reconstruction of a Family Album". She was very supportive of the Velvet Revolution and after it in 1993 she moved from Slovakia to the Czech Republic.

" Our parents had no idea that they'd nabbed my sister and me and dragged us off to Sered and subsequently to Auschwitz. Those people ratted on us, but kept taking money from our father for purportedly concealing us. During the whole war, my sister and I didn't know either what our family was doing, whether they were even alive."

Name: Zuzana Wachtlova
Link: https://www.centropa.org/biography/zuzana-wachtlova
Family Name nee: Zuzana Hertzkova
Birth Year: 1920
Birth Place: Brno
Occupation Pre-WWII: Seamstress
Occupation Post-WWII: Seamstress, office worker
Religious type: Secular (practice holidays, member of Jewish community)
Kosher: No
Attended a Jewish Elementary-School: No
Attended a Jewish Secondary-School: No
Married Jewish: Yes
Marriage type: not arranged
Spouse: Jiri Wachtl (1910-1983)
Spouse's birth place: Velke Mezirici
Number of Children: 3 (2 sons, 1 daughter)
Integrated Pre-WWII: Yes

Paternal Grandfather: Moritz Hertzka
Birth Place: Slavkov
Occupation: Cashier at a textile factory
Paternal Grandmother: Jeanette Hertzka (nee Polak)
Birth Place: Uhersky Brod
Religious type: practiced

Maternal Grandfather: Simon Kohnstein (1855-1932)
Birth Place: Trebic
Occupation: Owned a liquor store
Maternal Grandmother: Hedviga Kohnstein (nee Cohen) (1858-1944)
Birth Place: Potsdam
Religious type: practiced

Father: Bedrich Hertzka
Birth Place: Slavkov
Birth Date: 1893
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Occupation: Traveling salesman
War Service: Austro-Hungarian Army in WWI
Mother: Marta Hertzkova (nee Kohnstein)
Birth Place: Brno
Birth Date: 1887
Death Date: 1944
Death Place: Auschwitz
Marriage Type: not arranged
Religious type: Practiced (not kosher)
Class: Middle class

During the War/Holocaust Related:
1939-1941: at home in Brno (her, sister, father, mother, m. grandmother)
1941-1944: Terezin Ghetto (her, sister, father, mother, m. grandmother [died 1942])
1944: Auschwitz (her, sister, father & mother [died 1944])
1944-1945: Merzdorf Labor Camp (her, sister)

Lost Family Members: m. Grandmother, Father, Mother
Survived: Sister

Integrated After War: Yes
Troubles with being Jewish after WWII: No
Pro-Communist: No (didn't care about politics)
Feelings on the Velvet Revolution: Very Supportive
Emigrated: No
View of Israel: Very Positive, visits (sister lives there)

Interviewed by: Zuzana Pastorkova November 2004 in Brno, Czech Republic

Zuzana Wachtlova Summary:
Zuzana was born in 1920 in Brno, Czechoslovakia to a middle-class practicing Jewish family. Her family had a big library with many old books and her parents both loved to read, and her and her sister did too. Their parents let them read anything and everything. On holidays they went to synagogue, but otherwise not usually. Her family were Zionists even before the war. Her sister and her were also members of the Jewish Youth Movement before the war and often went out for collection from other Jewish families. In December 1941 her family was transported to the Terezin Ghetto. She had the job there of being a courier for the guards, this allowed her to walk around a lot and even through town, so she didn't feel so imprisoned. After three years in Terezin all of her family by chance were sent in the same transport to Auschwitz, they arrived October 1944. Her parents were separated from her sister and her and they were gassed. From there they were sent on to work in labor camps and in factories till the war ended. The two sisters survived and went back home, but had nowhere to go. They tried to find someone that would take them in, but no one did. So, eventually her sister had the idea of going to the police. The police were not very kind, but did find an unoccupied apartment for them and that became their home. Her sister and her worked as tailors and sewed clothes to live off of. She married a man named Jiri Wachtl who she had met in the Terezin Ghetto. She didn't want to marry a non-Jew and she actually was more religious after the war then before, unlike most other survivors. Her husband and her had three children and they all went to school and did well. She was not a Communist supporter, she never cared for politics one way or the other and did not care to participate in any way. She was very happy when the Velvet Revolution came. Her sister did not stay in Europe but rather emigrated to Israel, so Zuzana visits Israel often and she strongly supports there being a Jewish state and homeland. She is part of the Brno Jewish community and also took part in speaking to children in schools about the Holocaust and her life.

"Women that stayed in Merzdorf came off much worse. They were so grateful for the liberation they would even kiss the feet of the Russian liberators. One cannot wonder at it because people experienced such great euphoria. In the evenings, the soldiers played the accordion, sang and afterwards raped the majority of women. We found out about it only later on."

INTERVIEWEES

Agi Sofferová

Alena Munkova

Alexander Gajdos

Alice Klimova

Anna Hydrakova

Anna Lorencova

Anna Mrazkova

Antonie Militka

Artur Radvansky

Asaf Auerbach

Bedriska Felixova

Chava Pressburger

Dagmar Lieblova

Dagmar Simova

Eva Duskova

Eva Meislova

Gabriela Brodska

Harry Fink

Helena Kovanicova

Herta Coufalova

Jan Fischer

Jiri Frankek

Jiri Munk

Kurt Kotouc

Ladislav Porjes

Liselotte Teltscherova

Ludmila Rutarova

Magdalena Seborova

Marietta Smolkova

Martin Glas

Michaela Vidlakova

Milena Prochazkova

Ota Gubic

Pavel Fried

Pavel Werner

Petr Weber

Ruth Goetzová

Ruth Halova

Toman Brod

Tomas Kraus

Viera Slesingerova

Zuzana Minacova

Zuzana Wachtlova

Interesting Quotes from Czech Interviews:

Agi Sofferova:

"When I came into the world, I was this ugly duckling, and my poor mother was embarrassed. Back then her neighbor said to her, 'Don't cry, Miriam, they'll all leave the nest and she'll be the only one to stay.' And it really did happen, they all left the nest and the two of us went onto the transport together."

"At first, she [her sister Rozi] was in Terezin, there she became pregnant and to punish her they sent her to Auschwitz, as I've already told you. Well, I hadn't even gone through the camp gates, and already some people I knew were there and told me, 'Your sister is there, your sister is there.' It hadn't even occurred to me that she could be there. And so, we met there by the barbed wire, where she showed me her baby too. Rozi had it in her arms."

"Apparently she [her sister Rozi] wanted to return in this fashion. But she had bad luck, the poor thing. Those that were with her and survived, then told me about how good-natured she'd been, how she'd kept their spirits up, despite having it so hard, child and all. She had wanted a child so badly; if she hadn't gotten pregnant, she could have survived. But with a baby she had no chance. Also, very few kids survived. Maybe still in Terezin, but in Auschwitz? And there were so many beautiful children there, who knows what they would have been like if they'd grown up. They were truly beautiful and talented."

"We were all dragging those bags along with us, it was quite far, they were driving us along across the whole city to the brick factory. My poor mother, she was quite kosher, but when she saw that there wasn't anything, she bought me a piece of sausage. She herself didn't eat it, but bought it for me. Some things dig themselves down into your memory and you can't get them out."

"During Communism I didn't have any big problems. Life of course was no rose garden. My salary wasn't very big, my husband also didn't make much. From a distance Communism didn't even look that bad, because I'm socially conscious, one didn't know about those atrocities."

"And for a thousand shillings you could already buy all sorts of things. Back then there was nothing here, and when you saw those things there, those cheeses and meat and all, that was something. You had five pounds or something like that, here you paid tons of money for them, and there you imagined that you'd buy half of England for it. I remember that we brought back a TV, a microwave oven, some bedclothes. Well, we had all a huge load when we were returning, and the customs officials let us in without any problems. They were amazing. We didn't even have to hide anything."

"As far as religion goes, after the war my husband and I didn't observe it that much anymore, perhaps certain holidays, Chanukkah, Passover and so on, but only half-heartedly. The kashrut, for example, where could you keep it here? That means you wouldn't be able to eat anything, meat, milk, that didn't exist at all here. Not until later, in Brno."

Alena Munkova:

"My childhood is much interwoven with Letna, where I lived. I really was rooted in that sidewalk there… And the loss of that place where you grew up - and certainly it's different for everyone - can't be renewed again. A person pretends a bit, but it's gone. After the war I did return to Letna, but everything was different. But to this day, when I walk by Letna, I feel a twinge. To this day, I smell that aroma, what it smelled like there. I remember colors a lot, and smells perhaps even more. I think that childhood forms a person, whether he wants it or not. Or also deforms."

"I have memories from the beginning of the war, and they're still quite sharp, because I wasn't brought up in the spirit of some sort of Jewish consciousness, and so it was something new for me at the time. Besides that, I was in puberty. Suddenly came this blow from nowhere, in the sense that the war was actually the beginning of a feeling, at first not completely conscious, but then of course more and more an intensely conscious feeling, that I didn't belong in the society that I lived in."

"I remember that a prohibition, or a bylaw came out - it was one of the first Nuremberg Laws - that the word jew had to be written with a capital J. That was something that I didn't understand at all anymore, I only understood that it was supposed to be pejorative. It had never been written like that before. I haven't accepted it to this day, here jew with a big J is used all the time, though I've asked in my articles for it to not be that way. Because I think that it's very, very wrong, because from that

stem other things. Everyone uses only a capital J, but that's nationality, not religion, and why is it always taken as a nationality?"

"Of all the prohibitions, the thing that bothered me the most was that we weren't allowed to go to school, and that the normal course of things was interrupted. It's not so much about the studies, but about the fact that you were suddenly deleted from society. You couldn't go to the movies, nothing. I didn't even mind the shopping, but the fact that I didn't have the possibilities other girls had. I didn't even have a substitute in another collective."

"Suddenly the fact that we were Jewish was an issue. No one had concerned themselves with it before. No one had even known that my father was a Jew, he had nothing Jewish in his appearance, and even the name is Czech. In fact, when he first remarried, he also married a dentist, a non-Jew, who however looked a bit Jewish, so his patients would say to him, 'Why, Mr. Synek, you've married a Jewish woman?' Not until right before the occupation, when papers like 'Arijsky boj' [Aryan Struggle, a magazine put out by the Czech fascist movement Vlakja (Flag)], then we were. Suddenly my father was 'That Synek Jew.'"

"In Terezin I wasn't all alone anymore, some sort of society formed there."

"I of course also experienced love in Terezin. And not just once. I think that I fell in love there at least five times. I never counted the times, and I always also soon got over it. It never lasted very long for me, which was still the case long after the war."

"Terezin was an amazing education for me. First of all, I wouldn't be the person I am now, but that's normal. But mainly I was introduced to values there that I would never have had the chance to know. For example, what friendship can do for a person, but not only that, also how important the influence of art is. There, the people that had come to Terezin, and they were professors, artists, all of them truly tried to convey what they knew."

"Understandably, we also had fun in Terezin. And those love affairs. Everything was experienced intensely, because there you couldn't count on having time."

"For about the first two years, until I got my bearings, I really didn't know how I should behave. I knew that you should say hello to people, and what I should say when I enter a shop, but I couldn't at all grasp other people's way of thinking. They were all foreign to me."

"According to me, faith is a philosophical question, it doesn't relate only to Judaism. And that's something I don't think I have resolved to this day. Faith is a gift, and I didn't get it. So, it doesn't mean that I condemn it. On the contrary, I think that maybe those people's lives are easier, I don't know. When I found out something about Buddhism, if that can even be considered a religion, that's the only one that's sympathetic. But I don't know if it's like that in practice. But if it helps someone, that's fine. Subconsciously, some sort of searching is of course in everyone, and it doesn't matter what it's called. Certainly, everyone asks themselves questions about the meaning of life, more or less deep ones."

"So, I had to penetrate that Jewish environment. But I myself am secularized, I can't do anything about that, and also don't know why I should suddenly put on a false front, just because it's suddenly in fashion. I am first and foremost a citizen of the Czech Republic, and then by chance, thanks to Hitler, I was put into some other pigeonhole. I think that any sort of extreme direction leads to a certain undemocratic manifestation, and to restricting others. That basically often elicits in me such an exaggerated reaction that I don't want to let myself be classified anywhere, and that I want to be independent. It leads to a certain aloneness and loneliness. When you don't want to belong anywhere, you have to come to terms with yourself. I'm not too successful at that."

"I've got to say, that many times movement saved me from deep depression. And that it gave me more than all words, even more than all literature. When you start moving, you refresh yourself a bit, and it cleanses a bit."

"Further enumeration of my various activities isn't important, because at the end of all activity, a person asks himself the question of their relevance. Did I at least partly preserve my father's legacy? My mother's legacy, whom I missed so much, and who luckily didn't live to see the horrific war years? More and more questions without answers pile up around me. So only one difficult effort remains. To come to terms."

Alexander Gajdos:

“They expelled me from high school in third year, after that I wasn't allowed to attend school in Zilina anymore. But otherwise nothing special was going on, I just couldn't go to school. We weren't discriminated against in some way. Just some snot-nosed kids in the street would yell: 'Poo, smelly Jew!' at us, but that wasn't anything new.”

“Life during that time was really quite bearable. I even used to go into town. I didn't even wear a star [10], I never ever had one. I never even heard of a case where someone would have ratted on someone for that. Those of us that were from the Zilina camp didn't wear stars.”

“Eventually we learned that the traitor had been the man who'd taken charge of us after our arrival in the village, and who'd fed us the cakes. If he wouldn't have sent us up to the gamekeeper's lodge to the partisans, I wouldn't be here today. He de facto saved us.”

“After World War II, the activity of the Jewish community in Karlovy Vary was renewed as well. After all, there were enough Jews here. But in time many of them moved away. The left mainly for Israel and America. The ones that stayed here always quarreled amongst each other. In the end, just like in all communities.”

“As far as holidays go, now we don't observe anything, because she [second wife] even abolished the Christmas tree that my previous wife and I used to have at home. In the beginning we used to go to the swimming pool together, and now mostly out in the garden.”

Alice Klimova:

“My mother's lifetime achievement was a wall tapestry that she'd embroidered. Oddly enough, I got it back after the war.”

“When we were in England, Mimka was more of a mother to me than a sister. I don't remember us ever arguing there. There were more of us who had a sibling in England, but I don't think that anyone had a sister like I did. She was absolutely unique in how she took care of me.”

“What really bothered me was that at Christmastime we weren't allowed to have a tree at home. So, I'd go visit my girlfriends, and felt terribly sorry for myself.”

“When we arrived by the water tower on Vinohradska Street, there were tanks sitting there. I'll never forget what it's like for a ten- year-old child to walk by tanks, when he has no idea why and what is going on, and now those muzzles are aiming at him. I walked by German soldiers; they had these hats with peaks on them. It didn't make a pleasant impression, definitely not.”

“My parents apparently did what they could to protect me from everything unpleasant. When the opportunity arose for me to go to England, they said with a smile, 'That's amazing, you're so lucky, you'll go to England, we'd like that too, for sure you'll go to the sea.' They basically made it into something sensational for me, and I looked forward to it. Of course, not even they could suspect that we'd never see each other again, if they'd have suspected it, I don't know if they would have managed it.”

“Everyone had their necks craned out the window, and as soon as the train started moving, I saw that my father started weeping. He simply could no longer hold it in, no one had any idea for how long we were saying goodbye. My last words to him were, 'Dad, don't blubber here and don't embarrass me!' That was the last thing I said to him.”

Anna Hyndrakova:

“I asked mum and she went to the Vinohrady Sokol Hall, sometime in 1938 or 1939, to sign me on. However, the woman in charge said she was sorry but they didn't accept Jews.”

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

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

"I cut out their heads [from family photos] with manicure scissors and wrapped them in cellophane and hid them under my hair- clip. We were searched to see if we were hiding anything. I kept shifting the photos. I had them in my mouth when I was examined by a Slovak woman, who said: 'What's in your mouth, you goose?' 'Photos,' I replied. 'Who of?' 'Mum.' 'Go on then.' So,I smuggled them through. I was there about a fortnight and it was sheer hell."

Anna Lorencova:

"At home we were brought up in the conviction that we were Jews. That was paramount. The company my parents kept was completely Jewish."

"As children, we didn't find all the anti-Jewish measures and restrictions as difficult as adults did, for we just adapted to things. When we were no longer allowed to travel by tram, we went to the Hagibor sports grounds by foot, although it was pretty far from where we were living."

"In communism I saw a solution to the Jewish question. Even before the war I was inclined towards communism, for there was a kind of omnipresent salon communism about, especially in literature and the humor of Voskovec and Werich."

"In the past, we all did menial work but we had plenty of time for each other. Since the revolution everyone has got involved in different projects or tried to catch up on things, but all those wonderful social contacts have been broken off."

Anna Mrazkova:

"First was the decree that Jews had to hand over animals. For me, as a young girl, that was terribly sad. I took it very hard, because I loved our animals very much, we had these clever and very good dogs. To me they were friends, I believe that animals have intelligence, and that they're capable of experiencing, when they feel something, they're able to express it."

"I remember that once this peculiar thing happened in the family - when my cousin Franta Kraus was born in Caslav, as a baby he was seriously ill, he got an ugly case of pneumonia and was apathetic and breathing laboriously. Back then it occurred to my aunt that she had to think of something to break through my cousin's apathy, something to get his attention. She decorated a Christmas tree with lots of candles and lights - and it really worked, and the lights got my cousin's attention, so in the end he got well. Thanks to a Christmas tree he survived a serious case of pneumonia, but of course later the poor guy ended up in the gas because of Hitler anyways."

"I must admit that I took it all fairly optimistically, I was even looking forward to Terezin, because there were no young people in Luze, and I was hoping that I'd meet someone there I could talk to."

"The room was full of bedbugs; it was terribly unpleasant. One night my cousin and I could no longer bear it, and took our mattresses outside, where we laid them down on these small stools. We thought that we'd sleep better outside, and that the bedbugs wouldn't torment us. We didn't improve our lot very much, however, because someone poured a bedpan out the window above us right onto where we were sleeping... As I say, there was no shortage of excitement in Terezin!"

"As a young girl I was hungry for culture, I attended all the various cultural events I could."

"They were selecting young girls, and my father was terribly afraid of what they were going to do with me there. I was calming him down, and saying that I was lucky that I was a Jew, that because of that no Nazi would dare do anything with me, because he'd be afraid of 'Rassenschande,' so-called 'racial defilement.'"

"Once during a roll-call, when we'd been standing a long time, I fainted. They dragged me off a ways and were trying to revive me. I remember that I was already coming to a bit, and I heard a girl standing above me saying: 'Uh oh, she's not going to see another day!' As I was coming to my senses and heard her words, I was suddenly filled with this amazing strength, and to myself I said: 'You know what, you stupid goose, I will, too!'"

Antonie Milika:

"When we were little, at that time we didn't experience any anti-Semitism. But when the war began, then we felt it. Our parents' friends even avoided them. We, as children, also went through our share, though we didn't really understand what was happening around us. Some children, but also adults, would try to humiliate us."

"I was weeping profusely. One girl came over to me, later she became my best friend, and said to me: "I don't know why you're crying. I'm here three months, and I haven't cried yet. And yet, when I look out the window, I can almost see Litomerice, where I was born and grew up. I can't go there, but despite that I didn't cry.""

"We were very careful with ourselves, as far as cleanliness went. Our surroundings too. Alas, despite our efforts, we were tormented by stink bugs and lice. Each day we battled for cleanliness."

"That was my greatest wish, for me to not lose my mother, or her me… When the Russians arrived in their tanks in the morning, they futilely called out to us. We were afraid to come out. Only when people we knew arrived, and said that they were Russians, did we come out. We knew that soldiers had arrived, cars and tanks, but we still didn't believe that the war was over, and that they were Russians."

"When Mom and I returned from Terezin, it wasn't easy to start living everyday life again. It's true that we were all alive. My brother had survived too, people helped him. As for my father, they brought him without legs. We'd all lived in very tough conditions, but we'd managed to escape with our lives. My father was terribly unhappy that he was no longer of any use, now that he had no legs. We consoled him, up to now you took care of us, now we'll take care of you."

"I couldn't abandon my parents. It was out of the question; it wasn't at all to be considered."

"This hate seems to be endless. Today priests come to us and ask for forgiveness, that this hate towards Jews had been there since it's been mentioned in books. That nation was persecuted for it didn't do, and Hitler took advantage of this thought, which was very bad."

"I told my son about what took place during the Holocaust. I was very careful, just fragments, so he had to put it together himself. It wasn't like now, when we're sitting here and I'm telling you everything. I wanted to protect him, because it's been proven that the fear gets passed on up to the second generation, that even his children would still have been afraid... I wanted to protect him from that."

Artur Radvansky:

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

"It goes without saying that the Gestapo beat us brutally both at home in front of my mother, and at the base in Ostrava. In Ostrava I found out that an acquaintance of ours had given us away, who had pretended to want to get someone across."

"We had to carry heavy rocks uphill, for the construction of army barracks. I always tried to give my father the lightest ones, to make it easier on him. While we worked, the SS and capos beat us. When we'd be scurrying by the SS, sometimes an SS soldier would snatch someone's cap from his head, throw it behind him and say, 'Get the cap!' And when someone set out to fetch it, they'd shoot him for attempting to escape."

"Once they punished me by tying my arms behind my back, and behind the camp they hung me by those arms on beech trees that stood there. Of course, my arms were immediately dislocated. After I returned to the camp I could neither eat nor wash

myself, and if I hadn't have had good friends that took care of me in this situation, I wouldn't be here today. Recovery took about two months."

"Once we also stood on the assembly square for 36 hours, because one German prisoner had tried to escape. After 36 hours they found him, half dead, and hung him right before our eyes. I think that after that beating, he didn't feel much anyways. While we were standing on the assembly square we couldn't even go to the toilet, and of course eat or drink."

"I went to the Jewish Community. There I found out that my entire family had died. About my father I knew. My mother died in 1942 in Maly Trostinec in Belarus. As far as my brothers are concerned, I had suspected that they didn't survive, being deaf-mute."

Asaf Auerbach:

"Hitler's speeches on the radio, which my parents listened to, which while I didn't understand, I could tell from his manner of hysterical bellowing that it won't be anything pleasant, the occupation of Austria [19], Munich [20], the Protectorate. And when the danger could already be felt in the air, air raid drills began, sirens wailed and we had to go hide in the nearest building and wait until the siren sounded all clear."

"The train to London wasn't leaving until noon, so they took us to a playground, we played soccer. Well, and in the afternoon, we were already in London, at the train station they led us off to some hall, and there our future guardians picked us apart."

"I didn't experience any bombing, just once a bomb fell on a nearby house and completely demolished it, most likely some German plane had been hit and needed to jettison some weight. But all the while, it was an industrial town, coalmines, machining companies and so on. But we experienced enough air raids during the Battle of Britain; practically night after night bombers flew over Stoke, aiming somewhere further north. Sirens would begin to wail, they woke us up, we quickly dressed and ran to a nearby air-raid shelter, which served the entire orphanage. Well, and when they flew over again on the way back, they sounded the end of the air raid and we could go back to bed. Quite often it even happened more than once a night."

"My brother was the oldest of us eight, and at the age of 18, in the summer of 1943, he volunteered for the Czechoslovak Army. After him, gradually the other boys, except for me, I was the youngest, I wasn't 18 until 1946."

"So now you want me to say something about our family's relationship to religion, to Judaism in the wider sense of the word, to traditions. We were almost all atheists."

"So, you want to at all costs know what my Jewishness consists of, how I perceive it, what it means to me. Don't you have some simpler question? Why is it always asked of us, Jews? Or of us so often and others only sporadically? What's more: why do we ask it of ourselves? When you ask ten Czechs what being Czech means to them, they'll all give you approximately the same answer. Similarly, when you ask ten Germans, ten Frenchmen and so on."

"On the other hand, I think that my feeling of fellowship with Jewishness would have in time quite faded, if what happened hadn't happened, and life after 1937 would have calmly continued on like it had before, and I wouldn't have had immediate contact with anti-Semitism."

Bedriska Felixova:

"Each synagogue had a different rabbi. I remember only a cantor who had an amazing voice and everyone listened to his beautiful singing with delight. Mother used to reminisce that Brno also had a mikveh. My grandmother on my mother's side maybe used to go there, but my mother certainly didn't. She used to say 'Nothing's better than your own bathroom.'"

"Mother explained the situation by saying that bad people had come, who wanted to harm us. I was mainly affected by the fact that I had more things forbidden than allowed. I felt quite limited."

“My mother wanted to spare me the response 'you're not allowed', so she always told me: 'you can't'. I therefore spent most of my time in our apartment. I remember my mother crying uncontrollably when she was sewing the yellow Star of David on my dress.”

“Trains with prisoners from the liberated concentration camps began arriving at Terezin train station full of wretches that had been forced to take part in the death march. Being a little girl, I ran about between those wagons searching for my dear father.”

“We got off the train in a Brno suburb, because bombing had damaged the railway to the main train station. Mrs. Matouskova was already there waiting for us. When they were tearfully hugging each other, she asked: 'And where's the little one?' I was hiding behind my mother's skirt. She looked at me in horror, because at the age of eleven I weighed maybe at the most 16 kilograms.”

“After World War II we went from one totality to another. We felt like we were in a cage. During the Fascist regime the Germans persecuted us, but during socialism we harmed ourselves.”

“In Leeds we found well-kept streets and buildings, shops full of goods and customers. People weren't afraid at all; they could say whatever they wanted; they could even shout it. They were truly free. I was quite ashamed of my crudeness. When we were getting out of our taxi in front of our hotel in Leeds, a hotel employee wanted to take in my luggage, and I started a tugging match with him over it. The hotel elevator in those days already had an automatic sensor, and I wanted to exit it every time the doors opened. In short I felt stupid.”

Chava Pressburger:

“This decree was very cruel, and I'd say that for mixed families often worse, because the family couldn't stay together. The Germans tore from a family a child, which then had to leave alone, which was horrible both for it and for the rest of its family. I remember my feelings when I was waiting to turn 14 with the knowledge that my parents were going to have to give me up to the Germans. The feelings of my parents, their fear and helplessness were similarly indescribable.”

“The girls had gotten a small Christmas tree from somewhere, because there were a lot of half-breeds there. These were children that often had been brought up in a completely Christian fashion, and the Germans had sent them to the concentration camp only due to racial reasons. They were used to the Christmas holidays and so put the tree in the middle of the room. Then Willy Groag, who was a big Zionist arrived and got horribly upset, grabbed the tree and flung it on the ground.”

“People have asked me, how it was then possible that Petr was transported further on. But he wasn't the only half-breed that was sent from Terezin to the East. Though the explanation causes me great pain, I can't hold it against anyone, that when he tried to save a member of his family and had the opportunity to put a half-breed, though usually only a child, on the transport instead, he did it. It was a matter of life and death. I think that that's the way it happened, but I can't condemn it, because if I had been in that situation and could have saved my brother in this way, I maybe would have also behaved similarly.”

“After the war, like many other Jewish children, I had a strong desire to learn, because for five years I hadn't been able to go to school.”

Dagmar Lieblova:

“Once, when I was no longer allowed to go to school, I met a former classmate who spat in front of me. That was the only specific case of anti-Semitism I can remember coming across. But I didn't take it seriously, in fact I thought it was quite funny. I don't know if my parents were afraid of Hitler, but dad probably thought nothing could happen to him as he was a Czechoslovak citizen.”

“Mom did what she could to help us, so she found work carrying out huge barrels of soup. The advantage was that those who distributed the soup could scrape what was left from the bottom of the barrel. But it was difficult work for mom, so she then stood guard over the toilet in the block which was for those who hadn't the strength to get to the outside latrine.”

"My father was a doctor in Terezin and when we arrived in Birkenau, he was told to see the chief physician who asked him if he had studied at a Czech or German university. My father was very patriotic, so naturally he said he had been to a Czech one. He was asked another two times but kept saying he had been to a Czech university. If he had said he had been to a German university, he could have been a doctor there as well, but he would never have said that. Instead, he had to go around checking the inmates to see if they had flees."

"But then the block leader came and read out the numbers of those who were to go through the selection process. My number was called out - 70788. I said it was a mistake, but it was on the records, so I had to go, which was lucky for me. I don't know who made the mistake, but it was a mistake that saved my life."

"From the station in Celle we then went to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. It is hard to describe what it was like at that time.
In the barracks that we went to, there was a bare floor where we had to sit as we were so crammed. The hygienic conditions were shocking, as there was no water or anything. Piles of dead bodies were lain everywhere between the blocks. A few days later the SS-men escaped because at that time you could hear cannon fire everywhere. There wasn't any food left at all."

"I had a very nasty affection of the lungs. The doctor arranged for me to stay in a sanatorium in Zamberk, where, as I later found out, the only reason they accepted me was to give a doctor's daughter a decent place to die. I stayed in the sanatorium for two and a half years, until February 1948."

"I have never forgotten that I am Jewish. My children, too, have always known. It has always been taken for granted in our family. My children were not brought up in a Jewish way, because I myself had not actually had such an upbringing, but they are very interested in Jewishness."

Dagmar Simova:

"Once I made this big blunder. We had a Christmas tree at home, and I thought it was a matter of course, so out of great love, this was probably in Grade 1, I invited the rabbi to come to our place to have a look at it. He didn't come, of course, and to top it all off he was horrible about it. So thus, ended my great faith, even though I had to keep on attending religion, which was mandatory."

"My sister was also supposed to go, and we'd been picked out by some family, that we'd be staying with them. But then my sister broke her leg, and what then happened is something I'll never forgive my parents. They said that she can't go anywhere with a broken leg, and that she won't leave until the September transport, when she's well. As is known, the September transport never left."

"Finally, my two cousins from my father's side returned, from my mother's side, no one. The last thing I found out, about a year after the war, was that my father had died in Auschwitz."

"Before the war I never met up with anti-Semitism, neither did I meet up with it after the war. I didn't maintain any sort of contact with the Jewish community. I of course follow the events in Israel, but in the same fashion that I follow the situation in Darfur [Sudan], for example. I'm sorry that they've got unrest in Israel, but I definitely don't feel that I should be living there."

Eva Duskova:

"My uncle was single, but it was said that he was platonically in love with my mother, and perhaps said that he would get married only if he found a girl like my mother. But that couldn't happen anymore, because my uncle apparently left on the first transport from Terezin to Auschwitz and there he probably remained."

"After the war, only three of us children returned to Litomysl, what's more, of various ages, so the school offered us this possibility, but we had to prepare ourselves on our own."

"As an adult I was at the synagogue on Friday evening, and it seemed to me to be foreign, impersonal, so I said to myself that I have no need of it. But because as a child I was used to going to the synagogue on the high holidays, somehow, I attended

the whole time, even during Communist times. Because I'm a librarian, I also had official errands to run, so I combined it with some official errand. And no one knew anything. Probably I was lucky."

"I grew out of Judaism, or more I grew up in it. That doubt whether I should accept it never came upon me, I don't think that I ever thought about anything like that. I simply took it as a given. And I never asked anyone whether I should believe or not, not even during times of Communism, which promoted atheism. I believed, but never advertised the fact. People even asked me, how it's possible that I didn't stop believing after the Holocaust. But I know that that's how it had to be, so I go on believing."

Eva Meislova:

"I had a lot of Christian friends and didn't feel very Jewish, so I didn't notice the growing anti-Semitism. I was entertaining myself in the same way as the others, even some of my suitors were Christians. Step by step we were excluded from our previously normal life, and the Jewish youth began to mingle with people of their own only."

"At the beginning of the war I fell sick and couldn't do as much as before. The pain started in 1939. The doctors said that it was the appendix and sent me for surgery. But the pain remained, and in 1940 I was diagnosed with a tumor on the ovary. I had my last period in Terezin. But we got food with quinine in it there, and it stopped the menstruation of most of the women in the camp."

"There wasn't enough food. In the evening we got a quarter of bread and my mum said to me, 'You must not eat it all, you have to save half of it.' So, we were saving part of the bread but our co- prisoners stole it. From then on we were eating everything at once."

"I was and I am a believer. I believe that there's someone who directs our life. I think God is 'human', and he's not only there for Jews or Christians but for everyone. However, I cannot imagine that I would ever pray. I believe that when someone is born his destiny is already written. What happened to us probably had to happen. Our fate is to be Jewish."

Gabriela Brodska:

"The Jewish youth withdrew into its shell and so it brought us together, that we only met amongst ourselves. Well, and it was for these children that we made those puppets and performed plays for them. We tried to somehow culturally occupy ourselves, because we didn't go to the movies anymore."

"In Roznava there was a high school, and his parents were poor and couldn't afford for the boy to go somewhere for dinner and couldn't last all day on just a piece of bread. So, before the start of the school year, either the mother or father would search out six families, because there were six school days in the week. So, from what I remember, we always had one diner. He would come on a certain day, say on a Monday, and to the other families on other days, up until the end of the week. They were only Jewish boys. In this respect there was this solidarity. Jewish families held together, they really tried to help those that needed it."

"We arrived in Auschwitz on 13th June. I went to the left and my mother to the right. Back then I didn't know what that meant. We were without water, there were about ninety of us in one wagon and they gave us one pail of water. We had food with us, but didn't eat at all. Our mouths were so dry that we couldn't swallow. So, everything that we had with us stayed there."

"My mother noticed - I didn't even see them - that standing on the right side were young women and that older people were going off to the left. My mother wasn't old, she was 48, but her hair was completely white. She let go of me and inconspicuously nudged me. She said, 'Go there, with the young people!' I just managed to kiss her hand and said to her, 'Mommy dear, be strong!' This was all as if in a dream, I stood there and realized that I'm not holding my mother by the hand. So, I stood there helplessly for a while, and wanted to take a step to the left. One SS soldier jumped over to me, I was wearing a coat and skirt, and he took me by one corner of that coat and threw me over there. By doing this he actually saved my life."

“I was crying constantly, and my girlfriends were becoming annoyed with me, saying, 'Hey, we're in the same situation as you! Stop crying, you'll cry your eyes out!' I said, 'I'm not crying because I'm thirsty, hungry or because I'm sleeping on the bare ground, and that instead of a pillow I've got my clodhoppers that I wore on the trip here, but because I've got this horrible feeling that something's happened to my mother!'”

“We hid where we could. For example, we managed to hide in a different block. The older prisoners, well, the girls that had been there from 1942, said that there was only one road out of Auschwitz: up a chimney. There's no other way out! That's how they said it. I don't know what we were hoping for, but at the end of October they began to deport the entire section of the camp where we were. We were the last block and there was no longer anyplace to run, no place to hide.”

“In Roznava the Jewish population was very assimilated. To this day I don't really know what I am. I live in this vacuum. And if it was possible to write 'nationality human,' or 'person,' in questionnaires, I would most certainly write 'nationality human.' I feel myself to be a person. I'm not saying that I'm a cosmopolitan, but I love this country, because I live here. I love my native city, my native land and I don't know if I could get used to being someplace else, but in no way am I nationalistically or chauvinistically inclined, in no way whatsoever. Neither with respect to Judaism, nor with respect to the other side.”

Harry Fink:

“In Auschwitz we began to recognize what was hunger and misery, and what cold was.”

“In 1944 various selections took place; the whole camp was going into the gas. Then after they sent us off, I managed to meet up with my father one more time. Somewhere he had organized some short corduroy pants and somehow got into the men's camp and brought them to me. That was the last time I saw him. My father and mother stayed in the family camp for another day or two, and then went into the gas.”

“I'm in touch to this day with those boys, with those that are still alive, of course. To this day we study how it was and why they actually took those 97 from the family camp.”

“It was the 'Strafblock,' a penal block, and those that went in rarely came out alive, and he deserved it. We did all sorts of things there. We had abnormal standing, we had hair. And to have hair in the concentration camp, that was something! The whole camp loved us. They didn't call us by any other name than Pepiks.”

“And so, a friend of my father's, some Mr. Stumpf, became my guardian. In the first place, because we looked horrible, they put us in the Stirin chateau, me they put into a recovery camp in the Krkonose Mountains. I was there the entire summer, six weeks. They turned me into a human being.”

“After the war I tried to catch up with everything that I had missed. I attended the movies like crazy. I had to catch up with everything that I had missed. I managed to go to Prague for a week, buy tickets, and in that week that I was there I saw 21 movies. Then I returned, contented, to Jachymov. It was this thirst that I had to quench, and we didn't have it in Jachymov.”

“I was very conscious of the coming of Communism in the year 1948, because I was a direct participant. At that time, I was in Prague often, so I absolved all those demonstrations and conflicts in Prague.”

“The years 1988 and 1989 [see Velvet Revolution] were also interesting, because no one knew ahead of time what was really going on. Because the revolution started with the students, they began to stand guard in front of the schools and so on, and talked to people, tried to convince them. And when that was going on, a person really only slowly and with difficulty came upon what it was really all about. Anyways, it ended up the way it ended up. I think that it was a big mistake that the Czechoslovak Republic was split up after the revolution.”

“My relationship to Judaism didn't really change, even after the fall of Communism. To tell the truth, I've never had much love for those Orthodox ones. I never could stand them, and I can't stand them today either. By me they aren't normal people, they're the same types of lunatics as those Muslims, who are capable of anything and will never think in a normal fashion.”

Helena Kovanicova:

“I wasn't too interested in boys. Once in high school, when I was in third year [Grade 8] some boy came up to me and wanted to borrow my German textbook. They called him Sextan, because he was in Sexta [Grade 11]. When he then returned the book to me, he'd left a letter in it. It was horrible. He was asking me out on a date, but I guess I don't have the courage for these things, it didn't at all occur to me to go on it.”

“I was very much looking forward to going to dance classes, I even grew my hair out because of them, because before that I had short hair. Unfortunately, I never managed to go to any dance classes before the war, because soon we had various prohibitions and limitations imposed on us, and we weren't allowed to associate with anyone.”

“I managed to finish my fourth year of high school [Grade 9] but then I wasn't allowed to go to school anymore, so I actually didn't graduate. Unfortunately, neither did I finish any school after the war, because I was awfully afraid of math.”

“People from Brandys weren't allowed to associate with us at all. They weren't allowed to say hello to us, and when we went shopping, we had to be served last of all. During the war even our neighbors from across the fence, before we were supposed to leave on the transport, came to our house by the back door and took duvets and curtains home, with the excuse that after all we can't leave them there.”

“Everyone then hoped that we wouldn't return, so that they wouldn't have to return anything to us.”

“They sent me to some warehouse with men's shoes, so I could pick some different shoes as a replacement, so I picked some boys' shoes, and that's what I then walked around in, even for some time after the war. After the war I was even married in them, because I didn't have any others!”

“For sure our father went directly into the gas. Because back then he was 58 years old, and apparently, they sent everyone from 55 up into the gas. My husband had two brothers and two sisters-in-law with beautiful little children in Terezin, but both mothers with the children went to Auschwitz and there directly into the gas.”

“My brother's friend from Prague died there by the morning and my brother was found by the Americans, who dressed him and sent him to a hospital, where spent a long time. Apparently, they found him as a human skeleton, he weighed 28 kilograms.”

“I think that both the war and the post-war times marked my husband a lot. But outwardly he was always calm and never showed anything. Obviously, he suppressed all the bad experiences in himself. Maybe that's also why he died very early; he wasn't even 64.”

“During Communism we never had a lot of money. We paid the price for the fact that neither my husband nor I ever joined the Communist Party.”

“My brother never talked about what he had lived through in the concentration camp, only when he returned, he would constantly draw nothing but barbed wire and guard towers. It wasn't until he fell ill with leukemia that he began to tell us about what he had experienced. It's stayed in my memory, how he was saying that right before the liberation, when the Germans had already run away, the Hungarians had made a campfire somewhere and were roasting potatoes, and my brother wasn't capable of walking, so he was crawling and begged them to give him one potato, and those Hungarians kicked him in the face.”

Herta Coufalova:

“Passover, that was a beautiful holiday. Before the holiday started, we would clean the entire house. The Passover dishes would be brought down from the attic. We would put the everyday dishes in a box and carry it upstairs. The whole house was always topsy turvy.”

“We didn't have any immediate Jewish neighbors, only Christians. They were very decent people, who treated me very well after the war. Those, about whom I thought who knows what they're really like, helped me very much. Conversely, those I

expected would help me, would even have denied the nose between their eyes. We never had any problems with our neighbors due to our being Jewish."

"The Gestapo arrested my father in 1941 and took him away to Jihlava. We never saw him again. We never found out the reason for his arrest."

"The SS women in the camp were horrible beasts; the men were all right."

"On 23rd January 23, 1945, on the day of my 19th birthday, I got a wonderful gift. They sent us out of Kurzbach on a death march; of course, we didn't know at the time that it would later be known by this name. What an unforgettable birthday gift!"

"They carried me off to the field hospital. I always said to myself: 'My God, what are they going to do, we're so dirty and lice-ridden.' In those days there was the miracle of DDT powder, they covered us in it, and truly even deloused us."

"Our neighbor was a pious Catholic. He had hidden away a lot of our things, among them also our prayer books The Five Books of Moses, Machzor, tallit and tefillin. As I told you earlier: After the war he defended the fact that he had to burn the History of the Czech Nation because he was afraid of the Gestapo. But he didn't touch the prayer books because he was such a deeply religious Catholic. There were decent people, but there were also hyenas among them."

"When I returned after the war, no one cared that I had no place to stay. A clerk at the town hall told me that I should change my name, because Glasner sounds Jewish."

"When you walk around Trebic today, just imagine that the entire main square, especially the lower square, those were all Jewish houses. No one talks about that today."

Jan Fischer:

"Every morning we had to stand up and, Jews and non-Jews alike, start with the prayer: 'Lieber Gott, steh mir bei, dass ich recht, brav und fleissig sei!' -'Dear God, stand by me, so hard-working I'll be!'"

"In 1938 my dad's German agency was taken away from him. At the time he had debts, since German products were obviously not selling as well. As an honest businessman, he couldn't bear the fact that he had debts that he wasn't able to repay. So, he committed suicide in 1938. That morning I woke up by the sound of crying of our charwoman."

"My parents were big supporters of President Masaryk... I have told my children this numerous times. What had happened was a bigger shock to us than the German occupation! Because it was a betrayal from within. You suddenly realized that you had been standing on thin ice... that there was something underneath that you could only sense or guess by instinct, because it wasn't official. What came later was only the consequence of this disintegrated image of humanity. After that, things only got worse and worse. But it was no longer anything new."

"Everyone pretended not to see you. I wasn't allowed to go in cafes, pubs, the cinema or the theater. On the tram I was only allowed to use the rear carriage, and I had to be home by nine in the evening, and so on, and so on. I moved with my mom to an even smaller apartment in Vrsovice [on the outskirts of Prague]. I slowly started to get the feeling that something had to happen soon. This was not life; it was something makeshift."

"I longed to do something active. I hated fascists and Nazis from the bottom of my heart and Communists were their arch-enemies. One day I asked Mr. Weil if I could become a member of the Party. I wanted to fight. But I wasn't asked to join."

"One day they lined us up in the yard. One of the SS commanders had a few words to say: 'We have found several letters that some of you put into mail boxes in the town, even though this is strictly prohibited. Those who committed this offence, take two steps forward.' They knew our names anyway. I was one of the sinners, as I had wanted to send a letter to my mom in Prague. I was about to step forward when the person standing next to me held me back. 'Don't be an idiot,' he said, 'if they know the names, let them call them out.' I thought he was right, so I didn't step out of the line. Nine lads stepped forward. 'Take them away!' Then they disappeared into the slammer. A few days later we were officially informed that those nine lads had been hanged for gross breach of orders. One of us had had to carry out the execution. It was an ambulance man from the pathology section who set about this terrible task. He thought he could get over it better, since he was used to death. He was

evidently mistaken. I found him one day in a large empty room, sitting on a straw mattress, crying. It was a brutal psychological trick the Germans had played as a way of ensuring discipline. A lot of things were to happen later but this terrible execution was a singular case."

"Suddenly everything changed around us. The normal world disappeared beyond the horizon. The lives we had been leading until then came to an end and the new, horrifying reality showed its face. We were in the hands of madmen and murderers and, from then on, no-one could be sure of his life. Amen."

"I loved Hana so much that I have to admit to an ethical indiscretion. I haven't yet mentioned that my mom, Julie, was also in Terezin by that time. She had come over at the beginning of 1944 and worked in a warehouse full of clothes that had been stolen from people. We saw each other occasionally; I went to see her in the barracks, but I really had little time. Work, theater, love, it was all too much."

"I hated fascists from the bottom of my heart. I identified them with all that was German. Since 1939-1940 I had finished with the German language and no longer spoke it. Not a single German word came out of my mouth. That's another thing - changes in nationality. For many years I was of the opinion that fascism and the Holocaust were a German matter. It took me a long time to realize that this was not the case, and that other nations were of the same opinion. Of course, it changed my relationship with Germans, as I found out that not every German was a fascist. It wasn't an impulse; it was a long process of realizing the sad reality."

"After Stalin's death information slowly began to spread. I had realized that communism wasn't all that different. It also created 'SS-men'... Once a person got released from the communist influence, he suddenly realized he had also been on the wrong side, just like the Germans. Nobody had known that Stalin was a murderer, a murderer of millions. Slowly one understood that it isn't a nationality but rather social and political conditions that help to create an 'SS-man'. Of course, some ideology must come along with it, some poison added to the soup. Today everybody knows what I discovered back then, sometime in the 1960s."

"We didn't talk very much about this topic with our children until they were older. They were both very positive about it. My wife suffered a lot of postwar trauma. You couldn't mention the words 'Jew' or 'concentration camp' in front of her. Otherwise I didn't hide it from the kids; they knew about it."

Jiri Franek:

"Sometimes a 'religious battle' would break out in our class, and we would taunt each other – 'Jew, jew, the devil's gonna come for you.' 'Catholic, Catholic, sat on a stick.' And 'Evangelic,' [Protestant] – now came a rude word – 'shit in a kbelik [pail].' After that things began to quickly change, as soon as Hitler came to power. At the same time, our jewishness, which had been on the decline, began to experience a resurgence."

"At high school I fit in well. I would say that I didn't have to realize my jewish roots, because I knew them despite the fact that I lived a non-jewish life. But there I did somewhat reflect on them. We would meet and talk about Judaism."

"When someone was in Terezin, he would say that it couldn't be lived through, how could such horrors exist. But when he then came to Auschwitz, he then said, 'blessed Terezin, how wonderful it had been'. And how terrible Auschwitz is, how great a horror it is. From a distance Terezin still resembled life, perhaps by the fact that after work you really had time off."

"In Terezin at least the young and middle-aged people survived, you could manage to not die of hunger there. But Auschwitz really was about dying of hunger. It was known that Terezin was much better than what awaited us in the east, but no one suspected that it was the end of life."

"Young Ari Edelstein did a lot for me; he was plucky and took a liking to me. He gave me some money, which got me cigarettes, and that meant food, and so on and on. But the Edelsteins ended up badly. After a short time, they led Jakob Edelstein, his wife, even little Ari away. First, they shot the son in front of his parents, then they shot the wife in front of Jakob Edelstein, and finally they shot him too."

"We also organized a rebellion in Auschwitz. It also had various ups and downs, though with the realization that a rebellion would be hopeless. I was a member of the resistance in Auschwitz. A large portions of jews and Czechs didn't trust the German-Russian agreement [19], they suspected some sort of fraud, and rightly so as it turned out."

"You see, people changed a lot, because they had the impression that their particular faith had let them down, so Zionists became Communists, Communists became Czech jews, Czech jews became Zionists and so on. Avi Fischer, who was in my 'troika,' was a big Czech jew and then later left for Palestine, but he was a swell guy."

Jiri Munk:

"After the war I went straight into third year of council school [10]. I didn't know how to read and write properly; I was missing four grades. I didn't know grammar, math, the basics. Even by university I didn't know fractions and had to make up for it. So, I didn't get much schooling during my childhood."

"Of course, the worst was that we had to give away the animals. We had a cat, dog and even a tame jackdaw, who luckily someone finally shot."

"I remember that the biggest scenes took place when Nanicka [nanny] had to leave. She wanted to take me with her, and was offering Father that she'd hide me during the war, that she'd pretend I was her illegitimate child, that her whole family would help her, so that no one would find out about it. Father refused, saying that our family had to be together under all circumstances. At that time no one suspected what awaited us."

"This extortionist used to come to our house, he had a briefcase and in it fake candy, I don't know what it was made from. Because back then during the war, there was no real candy. He'd always open the briefcase, where he had the candy in boxes, and sold them to us for a high price. Our father then used to say that that man used to even threaten him, that if he didn't buy the candy, he'd turn us in."

"I also remember, that some time before when we went to the concentration camp, several people came to our place. I think that they were mainly women, who had gone over to the Germans. At a time when we were still normally living in the house, these women came and said, 'I'll take this...I'll take that...I'll take this...' They came in and divided it all up amongst themselves."

"The smarter Jews soon smelled danger, converted to Christianity and had their children recorded in Christian birth registers. It wasn't of any help to them, because the rule was you had to prove the non-existence of Jewish ancestors two generations back. Thus, the efforts of some priests to give Jews false affidavits of belonging to the Christian faith were also useless."

"I remember that we all had fleas there. That was completely normal, but worse were the bedbugs. When you fell asleep at night, they began dropping down and biting horribly. Getting rid of them was a problem, because when you squashed them, they gave off an awful stench. So, we had to burn them with candles. Often at night people would light candles and burn bedbugs. There were also lice there, at the end of the war even ones infected with typhus."

"…I was living among hundreds of women, and I was only eleven years old. There were still 'washrooms' there back from the army barracks days, which were basically troughs about ten meters long, with taps above them. They were huge washrooms, big enough for about a hundred people. Naked women of all possible age categories were washing or bathing there. They of course weren't embarrassed. I was an 11-year-old boy, and all around me were women - old, young, all together, it was a real shock for me."

"I felt very lonely in Terezin. I don't remember there being another boy in the Hamburg barracks. Apparently somewhere right by the Hamburg barracks there was a children's home, where children were together, but my mother didn't put me in it… Occasionally I'd meet some other boy, but they all eventually left on the transports."

"In the beginning my mother did cleaning. It must have been horrible for her, because she cleaned toilets. She was this 'lady' from a good family, where they had maids, and now she had to wash toilets, and on top of that she had a fanatic boss, a Jewess, who tormented her."

“Mainly in 1945, I did so-called 'ordonantz,' which was a messenger-boy between the ghetto leadership and its residents, or between the ghetto leadership and the German command. I used to be afraid, because I occasionally had to take some document or report to the SS headquarters. My hands would shake when I had to go among the SS-men. True, most of them were more indifferent than anything else, but there were also sadists, who used to for example drive around Terezin on a bike and beat people.”

“What's more, it's becoming clear that many American Jews didn't feel any particular empathy for European Jews. They only saw the masses of poor Jews, for example from Poland, and were afraid that they'd immigrate to America, where they'd have to support them.”

“My brother then lived through horrible things. Our father evidently went straight into the gas in Auschwitz, but my brother passed through Auschwitz and got into another concentration camp...”

“When we arrived in Brandys, Mother went to have a look inside our house, and found someone else living there. Alone, without our father, our mother wasn't able to deal with anything and so let those people keep on living there.”

“One of the Soviet soldiers had borrowed a bicycle somewhere and didn't return it, basically he stole it, and when the owner went to complain to an officer, the officer shot the soldier on the spot.”

“Or a long time after the war, Mother believed that Father would return, even when he had already been declared dead. She was completely lost without him. A person can't imagine what sort of situation she found herself in. My mother didn't have any higher education, not even a high school diploma. She only had mercantile school and some business courses, and was completely helpless when it came to the practical things in life. She had been used to our father doing everything.”

“They were armed from the revolution. They were 13-year-old boys, but had pistols and grenades. Once when the police came in the middle of class, they collected a whole basket of these weapons. It's interesting that no one dared try anything with me, evidently, they knew about what had happened to the Jews during the war, and that's probably why they respected me. Otherwise, though, they were always fighting amongst themselves, they behaved like animals.”

“The Americans and Brits, who were going out with local German girls, were told various horror stories by them about how Czechs were raping and misusing German girls after the war, and thanks to this the Americans despised us Czechs. It even happened once that when a group of scouts went to a village, the Americans gave them a beating. All of us at that scout camp were suddenly aghast, that the Americans actually didn't like us.”

“After the war most Jews no longer professed the Jewish religion, many even changed their names. They claimed that the reason was their German names, but in reality, they more likely probably wanted to forget that they were Jews. Despite being a typical assimilated Jewish family - our father was a Czech patriot - we never hid our Jewishness.”

“We were one of the few Jewish families where there wasn't even one Communist. We held on through the entire Communist era, even though it of course had a strong influence on our careers. It basically never occurred to us to join the Party.”

Kurt Kotauc:

“I remember going to visit a friend. His mother opened the door a crack and said, 'He isn't home!' The same thing happened the next day. Later, some feeling inside told me that my friend was not home for me because I was a Jew. I came home and because I felt shame, I didn't even tell anyone about it.”

“Actually, all these events sped up the process of growing up, at least psychologically and spiritually. We witnessed our homes being uprooted and our parents' powerlessness. Marked with stars and transport numbers, in quarantine and in sluice, we saw the fall of conventions, the fragility and impermanence of human relationships, selflessness and selfishness, we listened to the heavy breathing of the dying and to the breathing of couples making love.”

“There our kapo 'greeted us' with the words: 'Damit ihr wisst, wo ihr seid. Ihr seid in Auschwitz! Bei uns stinken die Toten nicht!' and at the same time he pointed at the chimneys. [German: So that you know where you are, you are in Auschwitz! Here the dead don't stink!].”

“Like many survivors, I didn't tell my children much about the concentration camps. This is because, a person who went through a concentration camp lived through the complete devastation of a human's character and that is an extremely humiliating experience.”

Ladislav Porjes:

“During the Holocaust I lost 28 of my close relatives in Auschwitz, so I’ve actually got this private Yad Vashem”

“Once in the winter, all of us Jewish 12th graders, there were eight of us in all, found that the buttons had been cut off of our coats. Nothing similar had happened to the rest of our twenty non-Jewish classmates. I was elected as the avenger. The next day I purposely came to school a little later, after the first class of the day had already started. I had equipped myself with a razor blade. I got into the cloakroom, which was empty because the rest of my classmates were already in class. I cut the buttons off the coats of all non-Jewish classmates. None of them complained, because they very well knew that they had done the same thing to us before. With this the first phase of anti-Semitic assaults ended.”

“I arrived in Michalovce and fell ill, the head doctor at the Michalovce hospital, a staunch opponent of the Tiso regime, Zdenek Klenka, diagnosed me with pleurisy, and announced that I have to immediately go to the hospital…Because this embarrassing incident happened. Sister Zita was once again holding the urinal for me, and somehow my manhood unexpectedly welled up in me. Basically, though the urinal was still half empty, its orifice was suddenly filled. Zita was startled, in her terror let the urinal go and ran out of the hospital room in a panic. My more cynical fellow patients were guffawing until their bellies hurt, but I was quite mortified. Because shortly upon that, the head nurse burst into the room, in a snit, an older nurse along with an orderly. She bawled me out in an un-Christian fashion, that I’m a disgrace and lout, and that I’m apparently confusing the hospital with a brothel. I couldn’t even imagine what words the chaste Zita had used to describe that faux-pas, but the Mother Superior’s choice words sounded so comical in the context of the whole episode, that I burst out laughing, which understandably was the last straw in the whole affair.”

“I remember the arrival in Auschwitz. They dumped us out of the transport, which stopped on a spur line. I did something wrong; I don’t know any more what it was, I didn’t greet a member of the SS loudly enough, or something like that. That person gave me a horrible cuff, but that wasn’t the worst – the worst was, that my glasses fell to the ground and broke. I was disconsolate, because I needed the glasses. I remember one older prisoner consoling me, perhaps between 20 and 25, who had already been in the camp for a longer time. He consoled me very much, was very kind to me, petted and kissed me. It wasn’t until later that I noticed that he had a pink triangle: he was a homosexual.”

“In 1953 the era of all-out struggle against Zionism in the CSSR hadn’t yet ended, but surprisingly I got an invitation to the secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The secretary received me, who informed me that hey, when you’re making an omelet you have to break a few eggs, but that now nothing more stood in the way of my again working as a journalist. He offered me a job in the radio.”

“My clothing, seemingly so practical, was however soon to become my greatest handicap. For I didn’t suspect that leather coats were somewhat of a uniform of the otherwise plainclothes members of the Hungarian secret police. The rebels of course despised them, often they hunted them like wild game, caught and tied they poured diesel or gasoline over them, and like this hung them head down from the street lamps, so that they would slowly roast over fires that they built under the lamps. And so it happened that I walked into a pub, hung my coat on a hook and in fluent Hungarian without the slightest trace of an accent I ordered some paprikash and a glass of wine. At that moment two men got up from the next table, bellowed: ‘Move your ass, you whore!’ and dragged me outside. I had no idea what was going on, I thought that it was some sort of asinine joke or unpleasant mistake. Luckily, I managed to convince them to hold off, and pulled my international press ID from my pocket, where luckily my identity as a special ‘war’ correspondent was written in several languages. I have to admit that the two aggressors turned out to be two gentlemen, they explained their blunder to me, that they had mistaken me for a secret policeman. They even didn’t let me pay for my food, with the words that I was their guest. I decided not to boast of my adventure to my wife. The poor thing would probably have gone mad with fear, if she would have found out that the Hungarians had wanted to roast me alive! All I did was ask her to send me a different coat. I lied to her, that the weather had suddenly improved and that I was hot in my leather coat.”

“Within the scope of pre-holiday contemplation, I happened upon a noteworthy quote by the almighty Ludwig van Beethoven on the theme ‘what is love.’ Here is the genius’s somewhat prosaic opinion. ‘Love means to decide unconditionally for a certain type of imperfection.’ Somewhat immodestly I’ve taken the liberty to confront this quote with my own experiences.

In rhyme, even, here: Often and long I've groped my way in life's history, from defeat to victory, and from victory to defeat. Until I got married. After all it's over a half century that I'm with the same girl. And we've got, if you please, two daughters and five grandchildren as well, I the eternal wanderer, am not certain, in which of both extremes, whether in victory or defeat, have I actually till life's end moored."

"Once upon a time I had tried to write poems for my wife, but back then she slandered me horribly, that she didn't like them, that they were horrible. And so, the whole sixty years that my wife and I have been together I've never written any poem for fear of her. This is actually the first after sixty years. But I've got to say, that everyone liked it very much. When I think about my life, full of dramatic reversals of fortune, full of escapes and tragedies, in the end I have to admit that I've managed a lot of good things after all."

Liselotte Teltscherova:

"When I started to go to school, we used to have religious classes. We were taught by the rabbi and he said that Jews had to eat kosher. The children didn't know what that meant, so he explained that, for example, we weren't allowed to eat ham. When I came home that day, we had ham for dinner. And I told my mother, 'Mum, we aren't allowed to eat ham. The rabbi said that Jews aren't allowed to eat ham'. And my mother answered that it was beef ham, and that we therefore had no problem eating it. I believed her for some time."

"When I went to school to Breclav, I got money for lunch from my parents, but I bought books instead of food."

"I became a member of the Communist Party in Palestine. The party was illegal, so it was impossible to tell anyone, 'I'm a member, come and join us'. They just talked with you about social things etc. but they couldn't say they were in the Party because it was dangerous; you could have gone to prison or even be expelled. It was no fun. They were always telling me, 'Talk quietly, why are you shouting?' I answered, 'I come from a democratic country, everyone can say what he thinks there, I'm going to say whatever I want and as loud as I want!' I didn't realize the danger."

"I was considered a Zionist just because I had been to Palestine, and to be a Zionist was worse than to be an imperialist. There were no particular reasons, but the communists were trying to get rid of everything that was a little different from their way of thinking. I wasn't a Zionist, otherwise I wouldn't have come back. However, I knew it was nothing to be ashamed of because I knew what it meant to be a Zionist."

"Jewish life in Prague has become more intense and I have joined in - I still do some social work. I go to visit people who need some help. I didn't want to have any official functions. I find this kind of social work very important. I'm still a member of the Council of Women and of WIZO. I go to the synagogue on high holidays and I light candles for the dead. I don't live kosher. Religion doesn't mean much to me; these things are more family tradition than religion for me."

Ludmila Rutarova:

"I was the only Jew in the entire school, so when we had Catholic religion class, I could choose whether to go or not. But my aunt didn't know where I could go during that time, so she asked Father Vesely if I could attend Catholic religion class together with the other children. The priest didn't object, so for two years I attended Catholic religion class. I was always a model student, and so thanks to Father Vesely, I know all the prayers perfectly. Our Father, Hail Mary! After three years of life in Nadejkov, I returned to Prague to my parents."

"Once, when my brother and I were small, we also went to the synagogue together with our father. I remember that when the rabbi was singing, we found it funny and were killing ourselves laughing, so they threw us out of there."

"During the war, my knowledge of Catholicism that I had gained in school in Nadejkov came in very handy. This is because I was going out with a young man who wasn't a Jew, but we did want to escape Hitler together, to Canada…He asked me if it wouldn't upset me if he tested me anyway. It was no problem for me of course; on the spot I recited all the prayers for him, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Lord, I Believe one after another. He was completely flabbergasted, and said I knew it so well that I didn't need any book of his, and that he'd go ahead and arrange my baptism… However, in the end I didn't leave for Canada anyway, because my young man and I had broken up!"

“In Terezin I got to know Regina, a girl I worked with in the staff garden, where we cultivated cucumbers and other things. We used to steal the cucumbers, but I didn't know how to steal much, I was bad at it. Regina on the other hand was clever, she'd always pluck one for me and tell me: 'Just stick it in your bra!' So, I'd stick it in my bra, and could smuggle something into the ghetto for my parents.”

“In Auschwitz they tattooed us, and I got No. A 4603. I'd counted the line as it walked in front of me, and positioned myself so that the sum of my number was 13. I'm superstitious, and I said to myself that if the sum of my number's digits would be unlucky 13, I'd survive the war.”

“Children got somewhat better food than the others, somewhat thicker milky soup and milk… None of these small children, of whom I was responsible for about twenty, survived. Only several older ones survived, boys of about fifteen who walked around Auschwitz during the day and called out various information - they for example called out in German 'bread' or 'soup' when food was being distributed. These boys passed the selection prior to the destruction of the family camp, and were transported from Auschwitz to other concentration camps, thanks to which they lived to see freedom.”

“After liberation the English distributed canned pork. My mother confiscated it from me, told me that we won't eat that, and allowed me to eat only crackers and powdered milk. Many girls ate from the cans and got dysentery. After the liberation we went to go have a look around the camp, we for example discovered a building full of prosthetic limbs, there were artificial arms and legs lying around everywhere, elsewhere there were buildings full of glasses, or of clothes. There were bundles of skirts, dresses and shirts lying around. In another place I found an office full of money from all sorts of countries, but it didn't even occur to me to take some of it, because I didn't know what I'd do with it in Bergen-Belsen. For me, clothing and a bite of food were of more value than money.”

“Imagine that there were loads of blueberries in Bergen-Belsen. I loved picking blueberries, so after we were liberated, I kept going to pick berries. I exchanged them with the girls for cigarettes that we used to get in Red Cross packages. I didn't smoke, but was hiding them for my brother, from whom I'd gotten a letter that he'd survived. I got three cigarettes for a liter of blueberries - and in the end I managed to bring my brother 1500 of them! Boy, that was a lot of blueberries, my brother's eyes bugged out when I brought him 1500 cigarettes. Because after the war, American cigarettes were worth a fortune.”

“When the children were small, I decided to have the number tattooed on my forearm removed. Circumstances forced me into it. I used to often take the train to our cottage with my children. In the summer, when I'd be wearing a short-sleeved dress, I'd often notice people looking at my forearm, and then whisper amongst each other. It used to happen that they'd turn to me and begin to feel terribly sorry for me, and keep repeating what a poor thing I was, how I must have suffered during the war. I don't want anyone's pity. And it definitely wasn't at all pleasant for someone to tell me what a poor wretch I must be… I arrived at the dermatology ward, and the lady doctor asked me what was ailing me. I told her that I'd like to have a tattoo removed. She looked at me with an annoyed expression and began berating me: 'And why did you get a tattoo in the first place? You could have realized that one day you'll change your mind, and now all you're doing is making more work for me!' So I told her that I hadn't exactly been overly enthused about getting this tattoo, and if I'd have had a choice, I would definitely have not let them give me a tattoo. Then I rolled up my sleeve. The doctor immediately did an about-turn and began to apologize profusely; the poor thing had had no idea of what sort of tattoo it was.”

Magdalena Seborova:

“I don't even know what my mother's character was like, as during visits a person had to look at her like at a picture, because tuberculosis was infectious. So, when we came, we could only see her from a certain distance, and she also tried to not breathe in my direction, so as not to infect me.”

“During the war people had taken Jewish property, and were afraid that they'd have to return it to Jews that had returned from the concentration camps. Many Jews told me about it, my aunt from Galanta also told me about one incident. After the war she went to ask for her cupboard back, and people said to her, indignantly, 'But they said that they'd murder you all in concentration camps! Why, more of you have returned than left!' These people had a guilty conscience, and we were the only Jews in Mocenok.”

“We also performed the Havdalah, but we didn't have one of those nice colored candles, only a white one. My father poured some slivovitz [plum brandy] over something, lit it on fire, and we enjoyed the aroma of that 'spice box.' Then we went to

have a look at those three stars. We didn't have a Jewish calendar. At our house we did everything, but I can't say that I had some sort of love for it, because on the other hand my fellow citizens humiliated me. I took it as some sort of punishment."

"During Communism they took everything away from us. We had a small farmhouse to which belonged a granary and stable. They let us keep the house and stable, we kept goats in it. We couldn't get into the granary, but lots of rats could. The whole house was swarming with them. I was tough, and when the rats were leaving the granary, we went to kill them ourselves. We killed dozens and dozens of them."

"I was hard for me to ask my father for money, when he didn't have any. When there was a [school] trip, I'd rather tell them at home that the school was being painted and that we didn't have to go to school."

"What did my husband read? Trash. Detective stories. We didn't subscribe to any newspapers, as I'd had enough of them when I'd worked in that post press service. There I was able to read everything for free. In 1968 [21] there was already some sort of freedom of the press, I grew disgusted with it all because one day they'd write something and the next they'd take it back. I don't even read the TV program we buy. Even this bores me most of the time. Now, radio and TV, that I listen to and watch, but newspapers don't interest me at all. Even now, when I buy some, I always know that it was exaggerated and that it's actually different. It's misleading."

"When I was leaving for Israel in 1988, my cousin told me that Communism would fall. He was the son of one of my father's brothers who hadn't survived. He and his mother had survived, and immediately immigrated to Israel. He used to claim - 'Communism will fall.' In 1988 I arrived in Israel, and the very first day they introduced us. When he said that sentence, I thought to myself: 'Sure, it'll fall 300 years after I die.' And within a year it really did fall."

"What do I think about the division of the republic [the division of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic in 1993]?! There's always been more swine than troughs. I'm not a minister, or an ambassador, but those that wanted it, they're the ones that divided the republic. Normal people didn't want it, because after these 70 years we're so mixed around that everyone's got children here and parents there."

Marietta Smolkova:

"The Great Depression was truly an awful period. I remember the huge numbers of unemployed, and I remember how twice a week some of my classmates would come over for lunch, so that they would get a warm meal. On other days they went someplace else. It must have been horrible to wait like that until someone gave them something. My father's hair turned white overnight, because they had to let people go and he felt responsible for them and couldn't help them. So life during the First Republic wasn't again as rosy as they say today."

"As soon as Hitler came to power in Germany, the once united and intermingled populace began to divide. And so, the young people also belonged to various sports clubs. The Zionists had Maccabi [11], which I didn't attend. Then there was the German Deutscher Turnverein club, whose motto was 'Frisch, fromm, fröhlich, frei ist die Deutsche Turnerei.' That means 'Fresh, devout, merry and free are German athletics.' Their symbol was already reminiscent of the swastika, it was four 'F's' which overlapped at right angles. So of course, I didn't go there either."

"The way we found out about the German invasion in March of 1939 [16], was that in the morning we leaned out of the window, and hanging in front of our window there was a flag with a swastika, which had been hung there by the building superintendent. At about 10am the commander of the Brno Gestapo arrived and at first wanted to occupy the entire building. Then he changed his mind and occupied only one floor. So, for one month we lived under the same roof with the commander of the Brno Gestapo."

"We arrived at the gathering place in Prague, Veletrnzni Palac, on 11th December 1941, and three days later we were transported to Terezin. My sister and I were young and strong, nothing was difficult. I remember that we were helping move hundreds of suitcases and trunks, and they all seemed to be light to us."

"We didn't know what was going on in the ghetto, and they what was happening to us. Besides that, the day was long and we weren't allowed to break rank. But we thought up a way to be able to get around it. Someone would take off their cloak, and would always hide the person that needed to go to the toilet. This experience came in handy later as well."

“I guess that in all of us there was a certain gratitude towards the Soviet Union for liberating us, but I definitely wasn't all fired up over Communism. In the machine tool department, I had one colleague, who was ten years older, wasn't Jewish, but her husband had died in Terezin in the Little Fortress [21]. She lived alone with her daughter and had a boyfriend whose husband had also died in the Little Fortress. She was a party member; I think that she liked me. Once she told me, 'It's not out of the question that the committee will invite you to join the Party. Do what you want, of course, but if you want to preserve at least a bit of freedom, think it over, because otherwise you'll be limited by party discipline.' That was also one of the reasons why I decided to not join the Party.”

Martin Glas:

“We also observed Passover, which is like Easter. I believed in the Easter bunny and always found some presents behind the window, and so would shout, 'Thank you, bunny!' in German.”

“Along with my parents, I believed that by my birthday in June I'd be back home. This faith, that by the summer, by Christmas, and again by the summer and so on it would be over, this conviction buoyed us the whole time in Terezin.”

“We survived on faith in the future. After the war I brought this trait with me back from Terezin, I need to constantly be looking forward to something, perhaps I was born with this trait. I always say that the only thing I don't look forward to is the dentist.”

“The practically permanent stress that a small child in Terezin had to endure led to the fact that I peed myself every night. I was terribly ashamed of it, an eleven, twelve-year-old boy!”

“In the 'Heim' we were tormented by fleas and bedbugs. Bedbugs may have been bigger and so drank more blood, and when you squashed them, they stank, but they were easier to catch, because they just crawled, while fleas jumped. We learned to find, catch and reliably kill fleas - you gripped them between your nails and tore them in half - otherwise there was the danger of them jumping away and continuing to bite.”

“We practiced the Hatikvah [17], the Jewish hymn, and I also remember the song 'My Homeland is Palestine.' I knew that I was of Jewish origin, I was, after all, imprisoned in Terezin because of it, but from the time I know Czech, I feel myself to be a Czech, and ever since then the Czech lands have always been my native land.”

“When I go to talk with students, I say that everyone is born as a human being, but if he'll really be one, that that's not something that his mommy and daddy can arrange, that's something that depends only on him. And right away I add that I don't know how to define 'human being,' except perhaps anthropologically. It's especially difficult in recent times, when you can't even preclude the existence of child criminals and even [child] murderers and soldiers. Because of my experiences in Terezin, I'm very hung up on protecting children. So, it's then horrible when children do each other harm.”

“I learned all sorts of things in Terezin. That food is sacred is something I learned in Terezin. That loving someone is sacred. That you shouldn't cause anyone pain. Even unwittingly, that's the saddest thing, when you don't want to, and you cause someone pain. In Terezin, and then after the war, my mother explained to me that not just anyone could offend me, only a person of my own standing. To which I've added, why should a person of my standing want to offend me, unless by mistake, but that doesn't count.”

“Today our building is no longer standing, after the war it was one of the few that was demolished. When I lead tours through Terezin, I go to at least show people where it stood. I at least have a key from its door, which is no longer, and its lock, which is no longer, which I always carry on me.”

“But despite these unpleasant things, I remember this time as being full of euphoria from new-found freedom. On the square in front of the former barracks - a remnant of the beautification - Jewish electrical technicians had stationed a radio truck, which played dance music and broadcast radio news. Back then people were posting obituaries that 'after twelve years, the Great German Reich had finally died, to the great delight of those left behind' in Terezin, too.”

“If I'm not overly mistaken, I was in the convalescence home until 15th August 1945. In the morning they said that I was going home, so I went. The others still stayed there, I was supposed to go because I was supposed to start school in September, and was supposed to devote the coming time to 'civilize' myself in some fashion. I surprised Mother; she had no

idea that I was going to appear that day. It was right around noon, and my mother was all flustered because she didn't know what to feed me. Finally, she pan-fried some cooked potatoes in some butter for me, and I remember to this day how I was sitting at the table and saying: 'Mom, these potatoes are so good...'"

"My mother was unhappy, because she thought that I'd be eating well in that convalescence home. But there wasn't much food there, and we used to make fun and say that they were saving up for World War III. We didn't have much food, and neither was it particularly tasty, I remember us once ostentatiously eating paper, saying we were hungry. But that was more of a provocation. So, I finally properly ate my fill with my mother at home."

Michaela Vidlakova:

"I bore our own summons to the transport considerably better. I remember that at that time my parents allowed me to do something that I'd never been allowed before, nor since. And that was to draw on the walls in the apartment. Earlier, when I'd tried to do it with a pencil behind my bed, a huge to-do ensued. I remember that I was so preoccupied by this drawing on the walls that I completely forgot that the next morning we were going to the transport"

"Back in Prague I had seen some child at the Jewish cemetery with a wooden dog that had strings running through it that you could use to manipulate it, make it wag its head and tail. I liked that very much, and my father traced it and during his lunch break he made that Disney dog Pluto for me on a lathe in the workshop. I took Pluto, my favorite toy, with me to Terezin. While still in the shloiska, my father showed them this toy and demonstrated with it how to utilize wood remnants. That saved my father as well as us from immediately being sent further on, because part of our transport didn't even leave the shloiska, and was transported away. That took place towards the end of December 1942. The dog was saved and became a family relic, and today sits on my bookshelf."

"Another bit of luck came about because I was in the hospital, because back then there were regulations according to which entire families were being sent, and so my stay in the hospital protected us. However, shortly after my discharge the regulations changed and then on the contrary the entire hospital left on the transport, doctors, nurses and all."

"The interesting thing about this place was that Karl Bernman's choir used to practice nearby. So, every night I would go to sleep to the sounds of 'Blodkovo,' 'In The Well,' or 'The Brandenburgers in Bohemia.' Those are my childhood lullabies."

"My first feeling of freedom is connected with a young soldier from the Russian army, who passed by the garden on a horse. We children were joyfully waving at him, and he came over to us, and pulled us up into the saddle with him, one after the other, and took us for rides. For me that was a truly fantastic feeling of liberation, when I was sitting with that young man on that horse and we were riding around in the Bohusovice basin."

"To this day, Artur Radvansky and I travel together to schools and speak to children about the Holocaust. I base myself on the experiences of a Terezin child, and he's got the worst prison camps behind him. So together we provide the children with a relatively comprehensive impression of the Holocaust… Sometimes we'd make some fun and we'd say: 'Well, look at Hitler. Dark eyes, dark hair, not too tall. And now look at Artur. Light brown hair, blue eyes.'"

Milena Prochazkova:

"My mother and Mrs. Geshmayova had an agreement, that each one of them would be a servant for one week and the other would be the lady of the house, and that after a week they'd trade places. So, the way it worked was then one would go do the shopping and cook, I helped clean a bit, and the other had polished nails. After a week she'd remove the nail polish and wash dishes and do the shopping, and the other was the lady. And they had a hoot with this. Sometimes it went so far that they'd say: 'Listen, am I the servant today, or the lady?'"

"But my parents didn't want to leave and go back to Prague for anything in the world, because there was typhus in Terezin, and they said that they have to help out. That they have to save those poor wretches in Terezin. But at the age of 14 and a half I didn't care who they wanted or didn't want to save. I wanted to go home at all costs. Adults have a certain sense of responsibility that children don't have. And so, on the morning of 20th May I said to them: 'OK, I'm going by myself, and you stay here.' My parents took fright, I went out onto the road, to get home in some fashion, and they ran off after me."

“Neither did we ever pester anyone by constantly talking about the suffering that we had endured, and wanting some sort of special treatment. Not at all. And maybe that's precisely why all our friends took what we had gone through as a matter of fact, and no one talked about it anymore. After all, I myself talk about it more only from the time that I've been in the Terezin Initiative. Up till then I didn't know much, didn't pay attention and neither did I want to know. I closed my eyes to what had been.”

“But I do concern myself with what's going on in Israel. Very much so. I'll tell you, completely honestly, that when I was reading an article two or three years ago - it had been a hundred years since Herzl had founded Zionism - so they were asking him what he'll do with those Arabs. His answer was: 'It'll get done somehow.' And that was the beginning of the catastrophe. And that's why I can't understand Zionism. I very much condemn it.”

“I also remember that when on that 14th May 1948 the state of Israel was proclaimed [27], my father said: 'That's the most horrible and catastrophic thing that could have happened.' He was a very smart and educated guy, and said: 'It's is a catastrophe, it's going to end very badly.' And see, unfortunately his prediction came true. Well, after all, right away there was the Six-Day-War [28]. And everyone who lived there before the war says that they used to be great friends with the Arabs. After all, there used to be amazing ties between the Arabs and Jews, they protected each other. Up until the proclamation of the state of Israel touched off that catastrophe. So, don't anyone ask me to go there. And then I was once very offended - I'm in the WIZO [29] here, which is the Czech Association of Jewish Women - when there was some symposium here, they uttered this sentence, over which we had a big disagreement. She said at first that there's nothing better than the state of Israel, and that we're only living in the diaspora. So, I protested, that I live in my native land, that I absolutely don't feel to be an exile in any diaspora. That really offended me.”

“The only thing that I remember from [their] early childhood is that when they didn't want to eat something, I always said, 'Hitler on you. You'd eat everything.' And they didn't know, they thought it was some sort of boogeyman. What did seem strange to them was that they didn't have any aunts and uncles on my side. They always wondered about that. But thanks to the fact that my parents survived, they at least had a grandma and grandpa.”

Ota Gubic:

“They probably came to sniff out what Jews thought about the solution to the Jewish question. Pecuch came up to my brother, and asked, 'What will happen to us after the war?' At that moment my brother was working on a machine that was processing cardboard. He didn't answer him, but drew a hammer and sickle on the cardboard. Pecuch asked him again, 'Well, and what will you do with us?' My brother answered him, 'You'll hang!'”

“I lived through democracy as a social order, I had the partisan movement behind me as well as illegal Communist work. For me it was a matter of fact that after the war I remained a Communist. In the 1950s they threw me out. I didn't accept it very easily, so I tried to get them to take me back, which I finally succeeded in doing, but then [32] they threw me out again. I was too much of a democrat for their tastes.”

“I of course felt myself to be a Jew, in my youth I also practiced it, after all I was in Hashomer Hatzair, but in adulthood I no longer cared for it. I had this one slogan: 'One war was enough for me, I don't want to live through another!' I've never been to Israel. In my spare time, I concern myself with history, write my memoirs; to tell the truth, I'd like to publish them.”

Pavel Fried:

“I liked Sukkot because as children we got lots of coloured pastries. The adults would set up a tent [sukkah] in a little square between the synagogue and rabbinate. It stood there every year. It wan't large, just enough for about twenty people. They did it mainly for us children. After services in the synagogue we would stop by and stay there for about an hour. Rabbi Ingber led a prayer in it and then would tell us tales. At the end we got pastries. Through a child's eyes I saw it as a nice social event."

"Despite this Erika [his sister] met a non-Jewish young man from Pilsen. In the times of the mobilization he was assigned as a soldier to the barracks in Trebic. In the end their relationship ended, because my parent's didn't like that he wasn't Jewish. If in those days she would have married him, maybe she would have survived the war. After 1945 that young man contacted us again and asked after my sister."

"I remember that Terezin used to produce dried potatoes for the German army. The potatoes were sliced into thin slices and dried. The result was moldy discs that the soldiers at the front would cook. At that time I used to feel sorry for the German soldiers, because it was more suited for pigs than for people."

"After our arrival in Terezin my mother was offered the position of Küchendienst [German for kitchen service]. Her job was to watch that no one carried out and stole food. Of course whoever had this job was the first to steal and on top of this got extra food. My mother asked her friend from Trebic for advice, whether she should take the offered position. Her friend recommended that she not take it. She explained to her that it was very dangerous and that she would constantly be under the scrutiny of the Germans. So my mother turned the job down. In the end her friend, the advisor, took the job, along with all of the aforementioned advantages."

"My parents got their store back, but in devastated condition. As one of the returnees, my father was greeted in Trebic by the regional governor himself. In his office he offered a seat to my father, who immediately recognized that his lordship had furnished the room with our chairs. We were glad that we had returned at all from the concentration camp, so my father overlooked such trivialities."

"My first offence against the socialist state was that my father had a business. Second, I was a Jew, and third, I had relatives in Western Europe. My final transgression was that I always said what I thought."

"A part of army life are stories, some of which have to do with alcohol. For example politicos, that is politically dependable officers, had one weakness: booze. Because they weren't exactly Einsteins, but dunces, they needed for people to appreciate them."

"The creation of a state meant a feeling of pride. Jews were always looked upon as people that either didn't know how or didn't want to fight. You could beat and kill Jews for no reason, without fear of reprisals. They used to say in Bohemia: 'Jud gehört ins Kaffeehaus' [German for 'Jews belong in the coffee shop']. The birth of Israel ended this era. It was a major event for all Jews all over the world."
"A person gradually remembers places and names. We simply don't live in the past. We live in the present and the past is somewhere in the subconscious, and it isn't until one talks about it that memories start to float to the surface. I admire some ladies for how much they're able to remember. Either they have a better memory, or are less sclerotic than I am."

Pavel Werner:

"Life in Pardubice was nice, up until the Germans arrived. Of course even as a child a person felt that atmosphere, I personally was afraid and was quite scared of the boys from the Hitlerjugend. When they used to march around, they evoked terror; they wore these dark corduroy pants and brown shirts. At that time I wasn't even wearing a star yet, but already I was afraid of them, and when they marched, I would quickly hide somewhere."

"The trip from Pardubice to Terezin was on the whole good – at that time they were still normal passenger wagons; they weren't some sort of cattle wagons. However at that time there wasn't yet a direct track to Terezin, that they built only later. So we had to get off at Bohusovice, which was still about three or four kilometers from Terezin. That doesn't seem like much, but I was wearing a lot of clothing, I had a winter coat on, so I was sweating a lot, I was dragging a bag – I can't exactly remember what I had in it. It was too much for me; I was sweating and crying that I can't go any further. At that time my father started in on me, told me to look at Lenka, how brave she is, that she's not crying and is walking on, and at the same time she was younger than me. So I have a vivid memory of this experience, that I was this weakling boy."

"There were ten women and three children living there in one room. When I later considered it, life in Terezin wasn't again that cruel for me. Though my sister died there, but at the time, as a child, I didn't feel it as much, as opposed to my parents, for whom it must have been a horribly cruel blow, to have a young child die."

"Auschwitz was cruel, there a person experienced something. I remember the shouting, our 'Lagerkapo,' the former Terezin executioner Fischer, who was always on a rampage. Once he even hit my father with a cane, I don't even remember why any more. Fischer was the only executioner in Terezin, he performed the one or two executions that took place in Terezin. Before the war he'd been a butcher and then worked in an autopsy room. Fischer was a deformed person, both physically and mentally. He was hunchbacked, he walked around hunched over, his face also looked horrible – he was this monster."

"The selection was in July 1944, when they were liquidating the family camp. I went to the selection with my father, because for some reason I was with my father the entire time, I wasn't like most of the other boys in the children's block. I didn't know anything about my mother; naturally the women's selection took place separately. We all stood naked in a horribly long queue in front of Dr. Mengele, who organized it all. While we were still standing in the queue, my father, who probably sensed that we won't be together, told me what I should do in case I should by chance return home earlier than he."

"So we saw those silhouettes of people in Camp B. Even though it was hard to see, you couldn't see faces, because it was quite far. And suddenly I saw my parents. I recognized them by their silhouettes, that it was them, especially when they were standing beside each other. They recognized me as well. Both my mother and father were there, we began waving at each other. For a while we stood there like that and then we had to leave again. The next day we again came to the wire and again we saw each other, recognized each other and waved at each other. And the third day there was no one there."

"When the 'Birkenau Boys' met years later, and we thought back on it all, we agreed that if it had lasted fourteen days longer, we wouldn't have endured it any longer, and would have gone insane. Because death doesn't happen in that a person suddenly falls down and is gone. No, I saw death approaching. First you lose that appetite, you no longer have the desire to eat, you're not even hungry, you're basically not a person any longer, you're only moving about in some way. A person's eyes sink in, his face gets this black color, he doesn't speak, doesn't do anything any more, he simply somehow winds down, in two, in three days he simply drops, without even knowing about it, and it's over for him."

" I left the Jewish faith, because I said to myself that if all of those wartime events could have happened, the Holocaust, that God can't exist, so that I'm an atheist."

"I've worked my whole life in foreign trade. I was actually a traveling salesman, like my father, with the difference that he traveled and offered goods in Slovakia, and I offered goods in various countries of the world, from Asia to America."

Petr Weber:

"This is how it is, more or less: in 1942, when I was born, my parents Lola Preiss and Aaron Preiss – both Polish Jews – were already imprisoned in the concentration camp in Bochnia. It wasn't an extermination camp, but likely a certain type of ghetto where local Jews were concentrated before being sent to the places of "final solution", like Auschwitz and other camps to the east. So that's where I was born. We were all together until 1944, when a certain group of people managed to escape from that camp, among which was also my uncle [*Schlomo Königsberg*], at that time a young lad of seventeen. And they took me, a two-year-old child, with them. My parents stayed there."

"I know almost nothing about the parents of my real mother and father, not even their names."

"So that's about all that I know as far as my real relatives are concerned. My adoptive parents, whom I'm named after, Weber that is, were already of a quite advanced age when they took me in. They must've been married sometime long before the war, I don't know exactly when. They were a Christian, Catholic family, but one can't at all talk about any great degree of religiosity."

"After the war, I don't know exactly when, but for sure very soon after its end, my uncle was looking to re-establish contact, which he succeeded in doing, and tried very vehemently to have me handed over to him, so I could go to the Palestine. But the husband and wife kept the child and then adopted it. So they became my parents. I never knew my real parents, my biological parents. It's likely that some sort of tension developed between my adoptive parents and my uncle regarding my being handed over, I don't know, but the family probably simply didn't want to, they'd already gotten used to the new child. I myself couldn't have had much say in who I'd be with, at the end of the war I was only three years old."

"I met my future wife because of a trip to Israel. At the time I was going there to meet my one and only relative, real relative. It was my first trip to Israel, and basically also my first trip to the "West". When I was getting ready for the trip – which was combined, by train to Greece, from Greece by ship – I got a message from one old lady from Prague that she was going on the same ship, and whether we couldn't travel together. So I said, why not."

"During Communism I maintained written contact with my relatives in Israel on the whole without problems. I'm sure our correspondence was monitored, but I didn't worry about it. I don't know of any problems stemming from it, and otherwise it didn't worry me."

"I myself felt already back then, and feel to this day, that my work at the Jewish community is a bit like the repayment of an old debt. But it's hard for me to evaluate something myself. What's more, it's also a certain enrichment for me. Perhaps primarily in that a person sees at least some sort if tiny furrow plowed behind him. That yes, let that be my reward. But it's terribly hard, hard because working with people is hard. And a person perceives that only once when he's in an executive function and has to make decisions. And he's got to decide against this person and for this one, and next time the other way around. Truly, especially complex decisions? Certainly there were. And not in all of them am I convinced that I decided correctly. But there's another thing that's worse than to decide incorrectly, and that's to not decide at all."

Ruth Goetzova:

"Nevertheless, my grandfather decided that you could still go to school with your leg in a cast. So in the morning the chauffeur would drive me to school, carry me up into the classroom and sit me down at my desk. In those days there were no walking casts. When school was finished, he would carry me down to the car again and drive me home. Everyone thought that I was spoiled, but on the other hand, when the other children had broken legs, they didn't have to go to school and stayed at home. I couldn't walk, but I had to go to school. That's simply the way my grandfather was, he couldn't stand any sort of slacking off."

"In August of 1942 I was transported, together with my mother and sister, to Terezin. My grandfather wasn't transported until a half-year later, but I didn't know about it at all, and never met up with him there. When I found out from the Terezin memorial book in the 1990s that he had also been in Terezin, it was a cruel blow to me."

"In the confusion that ensued during the occupation of Auschwitz, my uncle Rudolf somehow got away and went over to Svoboda's army [11], with which he then returned home. After the war we found out that Mr. Beran's wife had tried to save her husband. They were very rich, and she didn't want him to stay in jail. So she bribed one SS soldier, whom she gave a million crowns, to get her husband out of the Fortress. That SS soldier took the money, led Mr. Beran out of the prison, and on the way to Prague shot him."

"In Terezin I met Ota Himmelreich, who was quite a bit older than I. Ota was a smart young man from Prerov. We fell in love, and for sure would have gotten married after the war. He had a job outside of the ghetto walls, and therefore could stay in Terezin and so also save his family, that is either his parents or wife. His parents wished us well and liked me a lot. They said, 'We're not important any more, simply have the rabbi marry you, and you'll stay here together.' It was a horrible decision to make, whom to sentence. In the end he voluntarily put his own name in for our transport to Auschwitz, and left his parents in Terezin. Neither he nor his parents survived, which is something I'll never be able to get over."

"For me the hardest times began when the September transport went to the gas chambers, in March 1944. Then some transports arrived, from Hungary I think. The crematoriums couldn't keep up, so they burned people in piles soaked with gasoline. I'll always be able to see those horrible, huge greasy ashes that sometimes flew all the way to our camp. It was the most horrible feeling that I can remember. And throughout it all, my mother kept repeating: 'I'll return, I'll survive, I'll return.'"

"The doctor asked my mother: 'Granny, how old are you?' And she answered that she was 45. And he said: 'Granny, you're confused.' She looked horrible. When she and my sister returned, I had already had a bath, it was the first thing I had done. We undressed our mother and put her in the tub, and then we stood there and wept, because we were afraid to even lift her, we thought that she would fall apart on us."

"I've never had some sort of relationship with Israel. I've never been there and didn't even want to. The fact that it's next to Palestine never gave me a good feeling and I've always had the impression that it's not going to end well. I've never had that desire to move there, like for example my sister's first husband. I never understood Zionism or Orthodox Jews. I can't say that I'm not interested in what's going on over there, but I've always felt sorry for people that left for Israel so that they could finally have peace."

Ruth Halova:

"With the passage of time, my mom's face grew more and more serious. I don't know where, but somewhere she'd managed to find out that someone was helping Jewish children get into foster families in England. And so she took my sister and me to an office on Vorsilska Street to register us, then we stood in a long, long queue for passports, and on the last day of June I was leaving Wilson Station towards an unknown fate. I had the luck that one English family had decided to take me in."

"On 1st July we arrived in London. It was by coincidence my mother's birthday. Before our foster parents took us our separate ways, we were sitting in this large, green room, maybe a gym. We had name cards hanging around our necks, and I clearly remember my feelings, not so much of sadness or tragedy, but of absolute helplessness. This is how calves must feel, when they're separated from the nourishment and protection of their mothers, put in human hands and at the mercy of human beings, I said to myself. My young friends gradually disappeared, leaving with their new parents to their new foster homes, until finally a few of us for whom no one had come remained in that whole big room. You can imagine the anxiety we little pilgrims sitting on our suitcases felt."

"While I left for England with one suitcase, I returned home with two. So I could say that I'd actually improved my lot; I'd collected some clothes in England that we used to get from the Red Cross, and then there were some books that I couldn't bear to part with. But it wasn't anything too amazing."

"Because I'd experienced anti-Semitism already in my youth, and believed that my future husband must be as one body and one soul with me, I suffered from a fixed idea that I had to marry a Jew. Not because the Orthodox faith forbade mixed marriages. For one, I'd grown up in a liberal Jewish family, and for another, prohibitions for which I could find no justification had always on the contrary goaded me into defying them. But I couldn't at all imagine that 'part of my body and soul' could ever hold my being Jewish against me. But it's possible that back then the main reason was still deeply buried in my subconscious."

"One day, when I was once again taking the unheated streetcar to Motol, to work, I began daydreaming. Then I woke up and was truly horrified, when I realized what I'd been dreaming about: that World War III had broken out, that they'd drafted Hanus into the army, and I - had felt relieved! It terrified me that I could think of something like that lightheartedly, but on the other hand I forced myself to face the truth. I had to ask myself the hardest and most painful question of all: How is it possible that I don't love him any more? Up until then, I'd believed that love was eternal, that it never dies. It was actually only later that I realized that human love is a feeling, and that it's subject to change, as opposed to God's pure love, which is a state, and nothing can shake it. Slowly I began to realize that during eight years of marriage, my husband through his jealousy had managed to achieve that I no longer felt anything towards him."

"And what's my opinion of Israel? I'm not a politician, and I can just state my subjective impressions. It's a beautiful country, full of holy light, but over which they'll keep arguing until they realize that all humanity is one family, and that we people have to share things. As to why I didn't emigrate there? When I returned home from England after the war, I was glad to be home and had no thoughts of another emigration."

Toman Brod:

"Before the war I practically never met up with anti-Semitism. During my whole time at school I never heard the word Jew, or some anti-Semitic comment. We were Czech boys and we played soccer together, fought together, and I don’t know what else."

"When we had to start wearing a star, it was a real shock for me. Because everything, all those other measures didn’t really affect me that much. I went to the cinema anyways. Though there was a sign saying ‘Juden nicht zuganglich’ [Jews not allowed], it didn’t bother me, no one noticed me, so I kept on going. I didn’t go to the theater, that’s true. After eight in the evening, for example when it was summer and it was nice out, I didn’t pay much attention to it, I still went out with the guys. But when the star started to be worn, that was when I first realized that I’m something that doesn’t belong in society, and that made me weep."

"What the Germans were doing, it was this tactic of whittling down. They didn’t say it all at once, so people got used to it. It was this mentality, though we’re oppressed, second-rate, it’s still livable. If they don’t allow us to shop in stores, we’ve still got some money, so we’ll buy on the black market. You could still get food."

"The paradox of Terezin was that on the one hand people were dying of hunger, desperation, dirt, disease, hopelessness, but on the other hand people played soccer, there were concerts, operas such as Brundibar, The Bartered Bride and so on."

"The longer a prisoner lives in certain conditions, and this doesn't have to do with just Terezin, this is in every jail, the better he is able to make connections, orient himself, find where you can get what advantages, which guard is more sympathetic, which one you can talk to, who will help or how you can smuggle something in. People managed it, and those who managed to stay in Terezin until the fall of 1944, when the transports to the East were stopped, saved their lives."

"By me it was a huge moral failure: in the summer of 1944 there were reports from other sources coming to Terezin, so there they already knew that there were gas chambers in Auschwitz. And they, the leaders of the self-government, they let those people in Terezin, in fact they talked them into it, board the transports. Why didn't they say no, we aren't going to organize the transports any more? Let the Germans do it themselves now. We're not going to have anything to do with it. The Jewish council of elders didn't dare to do this. What was the organization of those deportation transports like? The Germans might have said about someone, this one's going on the transport, because he was smoking or stole something, but the others were to be selected."

"I remember that he was standing on the right, and we, naked with clothes and shoes in our hands, marched past him. He then indicated whether we could survive, or couldn't. He pointed about ninety boys in the right direction. The registrar then recorded their numbers. I had the luck to be among them. He sent us to the neighboring camp. That was our salvation. Not the salvation of all, but of those ninety boys almost half survived. It was this miracle, pure chance. On 10th July there was another mass murder, which was perhaps even bigger than the one in March, about seven thousand people from the Terezin family camp were murdered over two nights. Women with children, old, sick people, they simply all died in the gas chambers. It was the end of the family camp. It was also the death of my mother."

"You can't imagine, what it's like, to be constantly lice-ridden, lice multiply geometrically, you can't exterminate them, you kill one and in a little while there are ten in its place. You sleep under a blanket that moves. And when for example old people can't defend themselves... well, it was simply one big catastrophe."

"After a few days, at the end of January 1945, they took me to yet another camp, so I lost touch with the rest of the boys. Of those thirty boys, only two of us unfortunately survived."

"Those few months before the end of the war, that was a battle for life. I was really calculating what would happen first, whether I'd die or the war would end. It was a matter of weeks, of days, of hours. I was in strategically unimportant Kladsko, which the armies aiming for Berlin and into the Protectorate at first skirted, and only the second wave arrived there. The Germans ran away before them, the evening of 8th May it was empty, and on 9th May the Russians and Polish appeared. The end of the war."

"This all was something unconscious, because what did I, a seventeen year old kid, know about democracy? The fact remains, that in this sense I wasn't one of those enthusiastic, unthinking and herd-mentality types, who at meetings clapped and shouted 'three cheers for Stalin!' and 'long live the Soviet Union!'"

"In 1953, Gottwald [23] died. That was time of deep sorrow in the nation. Of course at school there were official speeches and tears, mainly girls sobbed emotionally at the loss, the horrible wound, moreover it wasn't just Gottwald, shortly before that, Stalin had also died. Everyone tried to outdo each other in expressions of grief, I don't know anymore if black armbands were worn, but in any case laughter was a crime. It really was a time when a person had to very obviously show what a loss had afflicted this nation and the Party and all progressive people in the world. Of course, it was a farce. A farce in a time of horror, when one knew that everywhere there was someone waiting and watching him. Who is making notes of his statements and who is watching his behavior, speech, opinions. We lived in a police state and went to police school."

"At one meeting I imprudently compared the methods of Party politics and police to the methods of the Gestapo. Which the 'politruks' [or political officer, representative of the Czechoslovak Communist Party responsible for politically educational matters] made a note of. It was immediately investigated, the secret police came to see me; they even tried to draft me as a collaborator... They wanted to expel me from the Party. It was a very dangerous situation."

"When she [his daughter] asked me what that number on my arm was, I said it was a phone number. I didn't much want to talk about it; all in all I actually don't like talking about myself. By now I've hopefully managed to partially overcome that, but for a long time before I didn't want to talk about it. Maybe I was ashamed of it. I was ashamed that it was this time of

wretchedness. Humiliation and wretchedness. I came away from the war with complexes: that I'm not an adequate and complete person, that I always have to stylize myself into the role of a full citizen. My remembrances and everything somehow mixed it up and ruined it."

"So I'm not proud of being Czech, but I like this country, I like this language, I like this culture. On the other hand I also know the pitfalls associated with this country and with this people. I don't feel any patriotism, I feel responsibility. So I try to behave like a person who somehow contributes to our good name."

Tomas Kraus:

"About in April of 1945 the Nazis began to liquidate the branch labor camps and were organizing death marches. They also dispatched a death march from Blechhammer, but my father and a couple of other people managed to escape from there."

"He wanted to bear witness. Because he was never alone. He was with the dead, who he had survived. He was with the echoes of those killed, which he couldn't drive out of his ears. He couldn't give up the memory, which he perceived as the foundation of further existence. He was with his dead, with whom he had lived four years of the war in various camps."

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

"My parents were also recuperating from the effects of the war there; although you couldn't see it on them, the years spent in concentration camps had left their mark on them. My father was ill and died early - in 1967."

"What's more, Czech Jews were counted in the official number of Czechoslovak victims, and under the influence of the normalization, consciousness of the Jewish victims gradually faded. Jewish victims were inconvenient for the rhetoric of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Communist propaganda took advantage of Jewish victims for its own ends, and presented them as Czechoslovak victims."

Viera Slesingerova:

"I have a horrifying recollection of Yom Kippur. On the eve of the holiday, I had to pray with a hen in my hand, and with mom's help I swung it over my head in order to sacrifice it for my sins. To this day I can remember the hen flapping its wings and mom helping me to hold it by its legs and calming me down. This custom was called kapores."

"When we were moving, Slovak guardsmen checked all out furniture that we were sending to Prague, to see if we were smuggling anything. That was very unpleasant. Otherwise I didn't encounter any specific manifestation of anti-Semitism directed against me before the war. All I can remember is an incident on a train when I was traveling with my mom from Zilina to see my grandparents in Kosice. We were sitting in a compartment with a man who was calling Jews names. He talked about how young Jewish women were all made up and such like. He then said to my mom who, as I mentioned earlier, spoke Czech without an accent, 'You, dear lady, look like a modest Czech woman.' In reply, mom said, 'Yes, and I am Jewish.' The man then stood up and went straight out of the compartment."

"Poles were not the only ones to be evacuated, however, for many people from the Prague transports ended their lives in the extermination camp of Chelmno [in Poland]. Among them was my dad's cousin, Dr. Emil Benes, who was with us on the transport train from Prague. He couldn't bear the oppressiveness and horror of the ghetto - in general, men found it harder to endure everything. He voluntarily put his name forward for deportation in 1942."

"Afterwards, it wasn't possible to go out to work, so me and my mom started hiding in attics. Among the young people of Lodz, there was a kind of resistance organization, which was structured in such a way that its members only knew the closest people involved. The main idea was for everybody to try and hold out for as long as possible. Later, my mom said that she couldn't stay in hiding any longer. Naturally, I didn't want to leave her alone, so we were deported together to the concentration camp Auschwitz."

"After three months in Auschwitz, I was picked during a roll-call and taken away in a cattle car, along with some other people. I didn't know what would happen."

"I knew that my parents were no longer alive, so I started thinking about what to do next. I was afraid to go home, so I decided to go back with the Polish girls to Poland. Then, one day, a Czech truck came for sugar. There was a Czech gendarme who was sitting inside, so I asked him where they were going and if they could take me with them. They agreed to take me, so I went to say goodbye to the girls."

Zuzana Minacova:

"After the war, I never discussed it with them. I myself didn't want to talk about what I'd lived through and seen in the concentration camp. I didn't have the least desire to return to those wartime experiences, and that's why I didn't talk to my parents about what they did during the war and how and where they lived, either."

"Our parents had no idea that they'd nabbed my sister and me and dragged us off to Sered and subsequently to Auschwitz. Those people ratted on us, but kept taking money from our father for purportedly concealing us. During the whole war, my sister and I didn't know either what our family was doing, whether they were even alive."

"After the war I began attending school, but I didn't enjoy it much. I was almost 14 years old when I returned from the concentration camps. Everything in school and the cares and worries of my contemporaries seemed to me to be terribly trivial in comparison with what I had experienced during those months during the war. I said to myself that I wanted to do something worthwhile in life, to really work, and I didn't much care what it was, as long as it wasn't school."

Zuzana Wachtlova:

"My father was aware of the fact that the situation of Jews was getting more and more serious and harsh, and a growing number of men were unemployed. He therefore wanted to grant his daughters a possibility of acquiring an occupation that would enable them to earn their living even in hard times. Both of us were excellent students; my sister was even smarter than I. In spite of that, on my father’s proposal, we both enrolled in Vesna and became tailors."

"My friends at school knew about my Jewish origin in spite of the fact that I had blue eyes and blond hair. I never tried to conceal my origin – actually, I’ve always been proud of it. Back in those days, I used to wear a small David’s star on my necklace. In fact, I tried to avoid potential unpleasant situations by somehow declaring from the very beginning that I am Jewish. I knew myself and realized that I wasn’t able to tolerate any comments offending Jews without reacting to them. Like this, I prevented misunderstandings and conflicts."

"I wanted to get to England as an au-pair. I already started corresponding with one family in which I would have taken care of a two-year-old girl. I was to travel to England in the summer of 1939. Also my parents wanted me to go abroad. At that time, an SS-office already operated in Prague that granted permits for leaving the country. Obviously, I didn’t get it due to my Jewish origin. I was actually forced to stay in the country. The thing that came to my mind at that time: ‘At least, I won’t leave my parents at home alone.’"

"We didn’t want to endanger any people by storing our property in their places. They could have been persecuted for it, even pay the highest price for it. We could easily live without those Persian carpets but we wouldn’t be able to live with pangs of remorse."

"We arrived in Auschwitz on 8th October 1944. On the ramp, my sister and I were separated from my parents and that was the last time I saw them. My mother had to go on one side while my sister and I had to go on the other one. We objected to it and tried to explain to the guard that our mother was on the other side. He was uncompromising. As a matter of fact, he actually saved our lives because my parents were almost certainly sent to the gas chamber. I have heard from other Jewish women that one of our friends that arrived in Auschwitz in an earlier transport urged the guard to let her go with her mother. He agreed and both of them died in the gas chamber."

"Women that stayed in Merzdorf came off much worse. They were so grateful for the liberation they would even kiss the feet of the Russian liberators. One cannot wonder at it because people experienced such great euphoria. In the evenings, the soldiers played the accordion, sang and afterwards raped the majority of women. We found out about it only later on."

"After World War II, I continued to proudly acknowledge my Jewish origin. I always wore a necklace with a David's star on it. This way, I managed to avoid unpleasant situations. I always tried to create such an atmosphere where it became apparent that I was Jewish. When people discovered the truth about my origin and that I had been in a concentration camp, they kept the jokes about Jews and various allusions to themselves."

"Jewishness is for me an automatic and inseparable part of my life. I'm not an Orthodox Jew, I don't have a kosher household. However, during the high holidays I go to the synagogue at the former Vlhka Street. Almost every Tuesday, I use to go the Brno Jewish community and meet other pensioners there. We talk and recollect memories of the past. Even though I have family, I like these meetings in the community because at least once a week, I have a place to go and a feeling of belonging to a certain group of people."

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Interviewers: Zuzana Strouhová, Terezie Holmerová, Martin Korcok, Lenka Koprivová, Pavla Neuner, Dagmar Grešlová, Barbora Pokreis, Martina Marsalkova, Zuzana Pastorkova, Silvia Singerová, Eva Pressburgerová.