

# Zuzana Wachtlova

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Brno

Czech Republic

Interviewer: Zuzana Pastorkova

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Mrs. Wachtlova lives on her own in a single-room apartment in Brno, actually not far from her daughter. Almost every Tuesday she comes to the premises of the Brno Jewish Community and the grounds of the Community became the venue for this interview. Mrs. Wachtlova is one of the oldest members of the Brno Jewish Community. She has already had some experience with similar research from the past; however, she admits that students and researchers focused their interest predominantly on the Holocaust. She expressed surprise at what details from the life of her family and her relatives we are interested in and she was quite skeptical about these topics from the beginning. On the other hand, she talked rather openly about the Holocaust and owing to that, we have gained a lot of valuable information. Since a three-hour long interview was very exhausting for Mrs. Wachtlova, it was necessary to shorten the questionnaire, also at her own request.



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## **My family background**

My grandfather on the father's side was Moritz Hertzka and he was born in Slavkov in the period of the Habsburg monarchy. My grandmother's maiden name was Zeni or Jeanette Polak and she came from Uherský Brod. [Editor's note: 1068 Jews lived in the city in 1857, 26% of the total number of inhabitants, their number decreased to 825 (16%) in 1900.] The grandparents probably met in Slavkov where they also got married.

Moritz and Zeni had four children – Alfred, Adela, Emilie and Bedrich. When my father – Bedrich Hertzka, their youngest son – was four years old [in 1897], the whole family moved to Libavske Udoli not far from Frantiskovi Lazne. Grandfather got a job there as a cashier in a textile company and he and his family could move to a company apartment. Grandmother was a housewife bringing

up her four children. I never really asked them where my grandfather worked in Slavkov and why they actually decided to move to Libavske Udoli but they possibly had better living conditions in the new place.

In Slavkov, they lived in a small house opposite the synagogue. [Editor's note: The Slavkov synagogue was built in the Middle Ages. It was completely demolished in 1857 and newly rebuilt at approximately the same place the following year.] When they decided to move to Libavske Udoli, they sold their house. They lived in a family house in Libavske Udoli. The grandparents were not rich and furnishings of their house were rather modest but not poor.

I remember visiting them when I was a child. Grandmother used to cook on a stove in the kitchen and they already had electricity in the house. They did not breed any animals but their house was situated in a garden in which they planted fruits and vegetables for their own need. I don't know whether they had a housemaid or not, I was not interested in it as a child. To tell the truth, I used to visit them together with my parents approximately once a year because they lived very far. When we arrived from Brno by train, they used to pick us up at the station and drive us to their home on a cart that they must have rented. At that time they didn't even have a car.

My grandparents talked to each other mainly in German. They both spoke Czech as well as German and used to communicate with me in both languages. Both of them dressed the same way as other people in Libavske Udoli. It was not possible to recognize their Jewish origin according to the dresses they were wearing. My grandfather didn't have side curls or a moustache and my grandmother didn't wear a wig or a headscarf because they weren't Orthodox Jews [1](#).

Libavske Udoli was a small town. Its inhabitants were mainly workers and employees of the textile factory. They didn't have any synagogue or a place of worship. I suppose that my grandfather used to travel to some close town to go to the synagogue on the major holidays, for example to a present-day Sokolov [former Falkenov] but I'm not really sure about these things. I don't think they kept a kosher household. They probably didn't cook any pork but I don't remember anymore whether they used separate dishes for milk and meat. I don't know how Father's parents spent their leisure time but I recollect they used to travel to a nearby spa, Frantiskove Lazne, to relax and take advantage of some healing treatment.

My father's mother had three sisters but I can remember only two of them. One of them was Adela Perles, nee Polak. She was born in Uherský Brod and got married to a certain Mr. Perles who owned a boarding house in Vienna. After the wedding, Auntie Adela helped him out in the boarding house. Together they had a son, Paul, and a daughter, Marianne. Just like other members of my family, they weren't Orthodox Jews either. After World War II broke out, they fled to London. They all died during bombing of the city in 1944. [Editor's note: The last German air offensive against Great Britain (code name 'Steinbock' - Capricorn) began with overnight air raids on London on 22nd January 1944. The operation, sarcastically referred to as 'Baby Blitz' by the Brits, ended on 29th May 1944 when the last Luftwaffe air raid on the city took place.]

Another one of grandmother's sisters was Rudolfa but everybody called her Rudi. She was also born in Uherský Brod. She got married to Ludvik Schnabel. I don't remember anymore how he earned his living. Auntie Rudi was probably a housewife. They had a daughter, Edita. I suppose they weren't very religious Jews. Auntie Rudi died in the Holocaust and I have no idea what

happened to the rest of them. I know hardly anything about the grandfather's siblings. I think the name of one of his sisters was Linda Hertzka.

My father's father died at the age of 76 in Cheb [491 people of Jewish origin lived here in 1930, i.e. 1% of the total number of inhabitants] before the outbreak of World War II, and Granny died in Karlovy Vary [2](#) in a senior-citizens home shortly after his death.

My grandfather on my mother's side was Simon Kohnstein. He was born in Trebic, probably in 1855. [Editor's note: 1612 Jews lived here in 1848, they made up 20% of the total number of inhabitants.] I don't remember his Jewish name because only the name Simon Kohnstein is engraved on his gravestone. My grandmother on my mother's side was Hedviga Cohen. She came from Germany; she was probably born in Postupim [Potsdam in German] in 1858. I have no idea how they got to know each other but after their wedding, they settled down in Brno.

My grandpa owned a liquor store in Trebic. I don't know what the reason behind his moving to Brno was. In Brno, he opened a fruit juice manufacture. It was located at the former Vienna Street. Today this street doesn't exist anymore because apartment blocks were built in that area. I think my grandfather didn't have any employees and most likely, his own children helped him out. My grandmother was a housewife – it was common at that time. They had four children together: Helena, Alice, Bedrich and Marta.

The Grandparents talked to each other mostly in German. My grandfather's mother tongue was Czech but he also spoke German. Grandmother was of German origin, therefore, her German was perfect but she never really mastered the Czech language in her new home. My grandpa wore average clothes that didn't differ in any way from the conventional clothing of other men in the town. Obviously, back in those days, men wore suits in the streets and other public places. Grandma also wore the same type of clothing as other women in Brno. She never wore a wig, not even a scarf because she wasn't an Orthodox Jewish woman. She used to wear a hat, though, but probably not due to religious reasons. In those days, a hat was part of a fashionable outfit and was worn by women of any confession.

The grandparents lived in Brno, in a small semi-detached house in Kralove Pole. They lost the house during the Holocaust. Since I was very small back then, I don't remember the interior that much. They had a bedroom and a dining room for sure. They weren't that rich and the house furnishings actually corresponded to their prosperity. They already had water mains installed in the house but when I was a child, they lit the rooms with gas lamps and heated the place with a Dutch stove. Electricity was installed later on, approximately at the beginning of the 1930s.

Granny planted flowers in a small garden that belonged to the house. They didn't breed any domestic animals. As far as I know, they took care of their household alone. They didn't have any Jewish neighbors. Their next-door neighbor was a teacher. They used to get along very well together. I presume they never had any problems with the neighbors due to their Jewish origin. I don't remember their friends and acquaintances, I don't know if they took part in some social life or not. I cannot recollect how they used to spend their leisure time and if they went for a trip from time to time. I used to visit my granny in Kralove Pole together with my sister quite often.

The Kohnstein grandparents were not Orthodox. They didn't keep a kosher household. However, they celebrated all Jewish holidays: Chanukah, Yom Kippur, New Year's [Rosh Hashanah], Pesach

etc. On Saturday and on holidays, Grandpa went to the synagogue or a prayer house. Most commonly, he used to visit the prayer house at Prague Street [3](#). I still remember that my grandmother was fasting during Yom Kippur and I used to bring her juicy apples fragrant with cloves to the synagogue. When she smelled them, she forgot about hunger. I'm not sure if they kept the Sabbath. Yet, on Friday evening they lit the candles. I cannot recall everything that clearly anymore because I wasn't interested in these things that much when I was a child, but I have seen candles in their house, that's for sure.

I am not familiar at all with political standpoints of my mother's parents. All I know is that they weren't involved in any political or cultural organization. In fact, politics wasn't discussed in front of children as it is now. I actually don't know much about my grandfather, but I do remember he liked to go to the cinema very much. Even though his sight was failing and he also had some hearing problems, he enjoyed watching silent films. He always used to sit next to a pretty young girl and asked her to read the subtitles for him.

My mom told me her father had some siblings. Unfortunately, I don't remember any of them anymore. I know hardly anything about Grandpa Kohnstein's family. However, I clearly remember my grandmother's sister. Her maiden name was Jeanette Cohen. Everybody called her just Zeni. She got married to an attorney whose name was Freund. Just as my grandmother, she and her husband also settled in Brno. Auntie Zeni didn't work; she was a housewife. She had two children – a son and a daughter. I knew only her daughter, but we didn't visit each other. Since we didn't have Orthodox Jews in our family, I presume also the Friends weren't Orthodox. Auntie Zeni died in Brno, probably at the end of the 1930s. She was probably buried in the Brno Jewish cemetery; we searched for the grave later on, though, but couldn't find it. Both her children died during the Holocaust.

My grandfather [Simon Kohnstein] died in Brno before World War II, probably in 1932, and is buried in the Jewish cemetery. I was only twelve years old at that time that's why I don't remember much from his funeral. Grandmother died in Terezin [4](#) in 1944 at the age of 86. I couldn't even take part in her funeral because I got sick.

In fact, Brno was a smaller town at the beginning of the 1920s. Gradually, new housing estates and neighborhoods were growing around the town. I don't know exactly how many Jews lived in Brno. I remember, though, that 10,000 Jews were deported from the city at the beginning of the 1940s but I am not sure whether this figure included also Jewish people from the adjacent villages. [Editor's note: 9064 Jews were deported from Brno and its surroundings, only 684 survived.]

My grandparents told me that in the past there used to be a ghetto next to the present-day Brno railway station. However, when I was a child the ghetto didn't exist anymore and the majority of Jewish families lived at Vlhka Street. Several religious Jewish families also lived at Krenova Street [5](#). Their synagogue was also on this street; the synagogue was very simple and sober, almost gaunt, because it had no ornaments whatsoever. A passer-by wouldn't even recognize from the outside that it actually was a synagogue because the building looked like an average house. Maybe also owing to this the Germans didn't destroy the synagogue during World War II.

Besides this synagogue, the Great Synagogue with a cupola and beautiful ornaments stood behind the recent Brno railway station. On 15th March 1939, the Germans put it on fire and the synagogue

burned down completely. [Editor's note: The Great Synagogue was built in 1855 on the spot where Spalena and Prizova Streets meet. It was burned down and demolished by the Nazis in March 1939.] Our family preferred to go the synagogue that was referred to as the Small Synagogue. It was at Vlhka Street. This synagogue was preserved during the war; it was used for storage purposes.

The seat of the Jewish Community was in the same street as now but in those days the street was called Legionarska [today Trieda Kapitana Jarosa 3]. I still remember that my parents, even though not being actively involved in the Community, supported its activities with financial donations. As a matter of fact, Brno had quite a large Jewish community. During Simchat Torah, the Jewish children used to walk around with lanterns, the trams were full of these children particularly during this holiday; it was so visible how many Jews lived in the city.

I remember two rabbis from the period before World War II. The chief rabbi, Louis Levy came from Alsatia and spoke fluently German and French. He was a well-built and handsome man with a small beard. He preached in German language in the Great Synagogue. His wife was probably also from Alsatia. She was an attractive and elegant lady but, unfortunately, I don't remember her name. As I've heard, Rabbi Levy managed to flee back to France during the Holocaust where he survived World War II.

The other rabbi that I remember was Rabbi Glaser. Doctor Glaser preached in the Small Synagogue that we used to visit most often. Rabbi Glaser was probably liberal but I'm not quite sure. I don't even know whether he lived in a kosher household. I remember he had two daughters about my age. I only knew about them but we weren't friends. The Brno Jewish Community was very large, therefore, really familiar relations between the rabbi and the members of the community could not be established. I didn't even know our rabbis in person and we never actually visited them with my parents.

In the second half of the 1930s, Brno also had its cantor whose name was Ingman. He probably came from Romania. He had a beautiful voice and sometimes I went to the Small Synagogue only because I wanted to hear him singing. He had several children and one of his daughters went to Palestine. Maybe he also managed to flee there but, to tell the truth, I don't know what happened to him and his family during the Holocaust.

Brno had its mikveh [probably since 1942] apparently at Krenova Street where Orthodox Jews lived. Since I didn't visit the mikveh, I don't know for sure where exactly it was. The city also had a Jewish elementary school and a Jewish secondary grammar school. Ivrit was taught in Jewish schools and in comparison to the state schools, in history classes, more attention was devoted to the history of Judaism and Palestine. The Jewish secondary grammar school ended with a school-leaving examination and its main objective was to prepare students for further studies at university. I am not sure, if there was a yeshivah in Brno; I attended the state schools and didn't know much about the Jewish schools.

People of Jewish origin owned several stores, taverns and restaurants directly in Brno as well as in the surrounding villages. Some Jews even owned factories while others were skilful craftsmen, shoemakers, tailors etc. Before the outbreak of World War II, position and living conditions of the Jewish inhabitants substantially deteriorated. As a consequence, many young Jewish boys decided

to take up professions of which they could make a living also in unfavorable conditions. A quite popular occupation those days was for example a plumber.

Czechoslovakia belonged to the developed countries already before World War II. Water supply and electricity were installed everywhere in Brno, trams traveled along rails laid in its streets. Some roads were flagged, some were already paved, the city was constantly developing, and new town quarters were created.

My father's name was Bedrich Hertzka. He was born in Slavkov on 30th March 1893. My mother's maiden name was Marta Kohnstein. She was born in Brno on 27th June 1887. She was older than my father.

My dad attended schools in which German was spoken. At first, he went to elementary school in Sokolov, former Falkenov. After completing four grades, he spent four years in a textile school in Brno at the end of which he probably must have taken a school-leaving examination. My mom completed four grades at the elementary school in Brno. She was a very talented painter and singer.

My father was injured in World War I - a bullet wounded his calf and he therefore returned from the front already in 1917. I don't know at which front he was fighting. His injury caused troubles to him mainly when swimming because he couldn't move his leg properly. Often, he used to tell me stories about it but the military experiences never left deep traces in my memory. In 1917, the Austro-Hungarian Army [6](#) employed him in a depot in which uniforms were issued. This depot was located at Stefanikova Street. He worked there until the end of World War I.

At the end of 1910s, my father became a salesman. He offered goods of various companies and producers. At that time, this occupation was referred to as traveling salesman. At first, in 1930, he bought an old Praga car and later on a Skoda car. He traveled also to Slovakia and to Subcarpathian Ukraine [7](#). Sometimes his business trips lasted for six weeks. Every now and then he used to bring Mom some jewelry or something nice that he caught sight of on his business trips. When we grew older, he used to take my mother with him.

My parents first met in the Brno Jewish Sports Club Maccabi [8](#) where they used to come and do sports. They got married on 11th February 1917 in the Great Synagogue in Brno and I believe it was Rabbi Levy who tied the wedlock. Unfortunately, I don't know any details concerning my parents' wedding.

We spoke mainly German at home. My father went to German schools, that's why his Czech wasn't that good. My mother was proficient in both Czech and German. My parents used to wear average clothing that wasn't any different from clothes of other people living in the town. Dad usually wore a suit because of his work. Mom didn't have many dresses, in spite of that she liked to dress nicely and tastefully, she was an attractive lady. I don't remember her wearing a scarf on her head or a wig. My parents weren't Orthodox Jews.

## **Growing up**

When I was born we lived in Brno in a two-room apartment at Prazska Street No. 59. Some Jewish family lived in each house at this street. At the beginning, we only had some old pieces of furniture

that my parents got from their parents. Later on, my father had better earnings and gradually, they bought new and more up-to-date furniture.

We moved from Prazska Street to today's Masaryk's neighborhood when I was ten years old. We lived in a very nice four-room apartment in this suburb. We had a kitchen, dining room, bedroom, a room for us children and a living room. The Masaryk's neighborhood was quite far from the center of the town and it was always a long trip for me and my sister to get to the town and take English lessons, do some sports or go for a swim. Usually, we returned home alone very late in the evening. Therefore, my parents decided to move directly to the center of the town – to what is today Janska Street. This was a four-room apartment as well. Since my sister got married soon, only the three of us lived in the apartment.

Most of our neighbors were not Jewish. However, all of them knew we were Jewish simply because we didn't try to conceal it. To tell the truth, we never experienced any conflicts or misunderstandings. As children, we used to play with other children from the neighborhood. Sometimes, we would go to the Brno Veterinary Station together to look at the animals.

When the Sudetenland was annexed to the Third Reich [9](#), my father thought the best thing to do was to sell the relatively large four-room apartment and move to a smaller one on Obilný trh [the Corn Market]. We lived here in two rooms, but it was rather sufficient for us. Later on, German doctors came to the maternity ward just opposite and my father somehow anticipated that they would want to get hold of our apartment. So, we had to move again. For a short period of time, we lived in a small house in Reckovice. Unfortunately, we were forced by the Germans to leave the house approximately in 1940 and move to a house in Zabovresky. It was called 'Einquartierung' [i.e. forced accommodation of several families into one house or apartment]. We had to squeeze in this small semi-detached house together with two other Jewish families. One of them was the Holtz family that had two rooms assigned. Originally, Mr. Holz was a secondary grammar school teacher. Later on, we were dragged away to the transport directly from the house in Zabovresky.

When we were little girls my mother always used to employ one young woman that helped out with the household chores. She was sort of our friend. When we got slightly older, Mom came to the decision that she could manage alone in the household.

My parents had an abundant library with German and Czech books and, of course, Jewish literature as well. My dad liked to read Max Brod [10](#). My mother preferred to read novels. We were subscribers of Prager Tagblatt [11](#), Jewish newspapers written in German language. Both my sister and I could read whatever we wanted, our parents didn't prohibit anything nor did they influence us concerning the selection of books. I still remember that during the Protectorate [12](#), it was prohibited to read 'Lady Chatterley's Lover,' but I just couldn't resist the temptation. [Editor's note: a novel by English author D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930), written in 1928. Printed privately in Florence in the same year, it was not published in the UK until 1960. The book caused a scandal due to its explicit sex scenes, and perhaps because the lovers were a working-class male and an aristocratic female.]

We were not an Orthodox [Jewish] family. My parents, though, were very conscious Jews. They weren't ashamed of their origin and never denied it. Our household wasn't kosher and we would easily eat also ham. We didn't even have a mezuzah at home. Sabbath wasn't strictly observed in our family, either. Sometimes we would light the candles on Friday evening but I don't remember

either of our parents making us stay at home and have a big dinner together. On holidays we usually went to the Small Synagogue at Vlhka Street but, of course, sometimes we also went to the Great Synagogue that was behind the current main railway station.

As a matter of fact, we celebrated holidays also at home. We celebrated Chanukkah, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Pesach, Sukkot and Simchat Torah. My father used to light a new candle each day of the Chanukkah holiday and presented the brachot [Hebrew for 'prayers' or 'blessings']. At the end, all eight candles were always lit. We also got some presents such as shoes, some pieces of clothing, etc.... mostly things that we needed.

On Yom Kippur, we had a day off school. My mother always kept the fast. I still remember how I used to bring her apples fragrant with cloves to the synagogue. When she smelled them she forgot about hunger. As a young girl, I also fasted but after I returned from the concentration camp, I abandoned this tradition. On Rosh Hashanah, we always had a beef dinner together and afterwards, we all went to the synagogue.

Pesach was the time of the year when my mother's father came to visit us and he prepared the Seder plate, on which he placed lamb bones, parsley tops and a bowl with salty water. [Editor's note: Seder - a home prayer and prescribed ritual during the first night of the Pesach holiday. A Seder plate is placed on a festively set table and according to this plate, the events that made the Israelis leave Egypt are discussed. Ritual items - bitter herbs (maror), boiled eggs, lamb leg and sweet medley charoset are placed on this dish and salty water should always be on the Seder table as well.] The youngest member of the family - in case of our family it was me - had to read the Pesach story from the Haggadah. I read the German translation because I didn't speak Ivrit.

We also celebrated Sukkot but we never built a sukkah. I think it was built in the yard of the synagogue. My favorite holiday was Purim. When we were children, we used to prepare some performance. Once we did ballet dancing. On that occasion, my mother sewed an oriental pair of trousers from organdy for me. In the evening, masquerades were held. I loved to attend these balls when I was a young girl.

When my father's parents had their death anniversary, my father went to the synagogue for the Kaddish. When he was on business trips, he possibly also went to the synagogue, for instance in Bratislava in Slovakia.

Generally speaking, we considered ourselves Zionists [13](#). A blue-and-white box bearing a map of Palestine and the inscription KKL [14](#) was hanging on the wall of our apartment. This inscription stood for a Jewish fund for purchase of land in Palestine. When my sister and I became members of the Jewish Youth Movement, we received a small portable moneybox made of paper. It had a slit on the top and a canvas hanging underneath. Everybody could make a donation for KKL into this box.

As I have mentioned before, our father was a sales man and he often used to travel to Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ukraine. He always took this moneybox with him and when someone, possibly also a person of different confession, wanted to give him something in reward for some favor such as giving him/her a ride, my father refused to accept payment, instead, he said that this person, if he/she really wanted, could contribute to KKL. He then handed over the money that he collected to the Brno Jewish Community. He himself didn't serve in any position in the Jewish Community simply because he didn't have any time for it due to his business trips.



My sister and I, as members of the Jewish Youth Movement would sometimes visit Jewish families and collect the money from their moneyboxes. We always had to empty the boxes in front of witnesses; we recorded the amount of money in the moneybox and gave a copy of this receipt to the respective family. In accordance with the other copy, we then handed in the money to the fund at the Jewish Community.

Even though we were Zionists, we never immigrated to Palestine. We stayed in Brno and in 1941 we ended up in a transport. Before World War II, my father voted for the Social Democratic Party. In those days people used to say that almost all Jews in Brno were social democrats. My father knew also a Jewish political representative whose name was Angelo Goldstein [15](#) and he was active in Ostrava.

My parents spent much of their time mainly in the company of Jewish people. They were members of a Jewish fellowship the name of which I don't remember anymore. Besides other things, the fellowship concentrated on charitable activities. For example, it provided financial support to poorer widows. The fellowship also organized various lectures and cultural events. The members used to meet on a kind of regular basis, approximately every other Saturday or once a month. My parents would usually go there for about two-three hours in the evening. They also took part in balls and dance parties that were organized by the Jewish Women Association in Brno and other Jewish organizations.

The majority of my father's friends were from Maccabi but, obviously, he also knew many other people. He didn't have much time, though, to keep friendly relations because he had to leave home for business trips very often. My mother had friends mainly among women of Jewish origin. She had one friend that used to visit us regularly together with her daughters that were approximately the same age as my sister and I. I remember that they always were very elegantly dressed and used to wear white stockings. There were days when our place turned into a 'Kinderhaus' [German: play site for children] - that was when several children together with their mothers met in our house.

Our parents would sometimes take us to the cinema and theater. From time to time, we went to a cafe where my parents met their acquaintances. In the holiday season, we used to travel abroad, for example to the lakes in Austria. When my parents got older, they preferred to go to a spa and take advantage of medical treatment whereas we favored various trips organized by the Jewish Youth Movement. Once a year, the whole family traveled by train to Libavske Udoli to visit my grandparents. My father's sister, Adela Goldberg, lived close to them so we usually spent several days at her place. Possibly, we had some friends there as well, but I really cannot bring to my mind those visits anymore because I was a young girl back then. Since we didn't have a car in those days, we had to travel by train. Most of the time I felt very sick and had to spend the whole journey lying down.

My father had three siblings - they were all born in Slavkov. They weren't Orthodox Jews either. The oldest of them, Alfred Hertzka, was a teacher at a secondary grammar school in Brno. He married Cecilia Strakosch. They settled in Litomerice therefore my father didn't get to see much of them. They had two daughters - Lizbet [Elizabeth] and Truda [Gertrude]. Auntie Cecilia was a housewife. Uncle Alfred died in the ghetto in Lodz [16](#) in Poland. Truda was deported in September 1944 and died in the concentration camp in Auschwitz. Lizbet survived the Holocaust and at present, she lives in Berlin.

Alfred was followed, I believe, by Adela who got married to Max Goldberg. Max Goldberg came from the Mlada Boleslav area and worked as an accountant in one of the factories in Brno. They had two sons – Rudolf and Karel. Rudolf married a non-Jewish woman. Auntie Adela died in Terezin and her husband in the concentration camp in Auschwitz. Karel was imprisoned in Riga [today Latvia], but, fortunately, returned after the war. He later died in Karlovy Vary and Rudi in Prague.

Another of my father's sisters was Emilie Hertzka. She never got married. She worked for her Auntie – Adela Perles, nee Polak, her mother's sister, in some guesthouse in Vienna. After the outbreak of World War II, they fled to London where she died during bombing of the town in April 1944.

My mother had two sisters, Helena and Alice, and a brother, Bedrich. They were all born in Brno in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The oldest of them was probably Helena Kohnstein who never married. I don't know what her occupation was. Auntie Alica was single, too. She gave private French lessons. Bedrich Kohnstein was the owner of a fruit juice manufactory in Brno. He married a Jewish woman, Elisabeth Fischer, and they had a son, Pavel. They divorced afterwards. Pavel lived with his mother. None of my mother's siblings was an Orthodox Jew. Eliska and her son Pavel Kohnstein were deported to Minsk where they died probably in 1944. My mother's siblings died during the Holocaust as well. In 1942, they were in the transport that went to Riga in the Soviet Union and nobody ever saw them again.

My name is Zuzana Wachtlova. My maiden name was Zuzana Herztkova. Unfortunately, I cannot remember my Jewish name. I was born in Brno in 1920.

I started to attend a public school in Brno in 1926. All subjects were taught in German at this school. The school was located at the corner of the street where the conservatoire is today [Avenue of Captain Jaros]. I had several Jewish classmates. The Jewish children didn't have to take part in the Catholic religion classes. Instead of that, we, the Jewish kids, had Jewish religion classes in the afternoon. After the public school, I continued my studies at the secondary grammar school. After four years, I successfully completed my studies and enrolled in Vesna, that is, a school where women's occupations were taught. [Vesna: women's educational fellowship, established in Brno in 1871. It organized various educational activities and courses and at the same time supported the development of cultural and artistic activities.]

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. After passing the final exams, we got a tailor's apprentice certificate. Afterwards, I spent a year as tailor's apprentice in one department house that had a tailor's workshop on the top floor. Its recent name is Petrof. After passing the qualification exams I became a professional tailor.

I think that one of my favorite subjects was geography. I also took piano classes. Together with my sister, we either visited our teacher or she would come to our apartment. We practiced quite often and sometimes we played the same song over and over again. I remember a neighbor from the Masaryk's quarter stopping my mother on the stairs and asking whether we would also play some new pieces.

We used to speak German and Czech at home. I spoke both languages fluently. Besides that, my auntie Alica Kohnstein, my mother's sister, tried to teach me French but it is almost impossible to learn something with a relative. Particularly in my case, since I used to be such a naughty and restless girl. My father paid for my private English lessons. In the period of the First Republic [17](#), I attended English classes at the English Institute in Brno. I had classes almost daily because I didn't go to school anymore. In 1939, I was even supposed to travel to England as an au-pair but the war foiled all my plans. Today I don't speak English as well as I used to back in those days.

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.

Once, a girl at the public school told me 'You stupid Jew!' As a child, I was very sensitive and therefore, came back home crying and felt miserable. My mother went to school and explained to that little girl that I am the same like she is and asked her never to outrage me again. Obviously, one could hear people say things like that, even various anecdotes and proverbs about Jews. Today I, of course, know they shouldn't be taken so seriously. Later on, I even regretted that my mother went to talk to her because her mother died shortly afterwards.

In Vesna, I had a similar experience. Once I was cutting a fabric and one schoolmate told me my hands were shaking like the hands of an old Jew. So I replied, 'I actually am Jewish but I think all old people's hands are shaking.' I at least had an opportunity to declare my origin and then all my classmates liked me and I came to terms with everybody.

In my private life, I made many friends predominantly with Jewish girls that were members of the Jewish Youth Movement or the Jewish Sports Club Maccabi. In the summer, we used to go swimming to Zabrdovice [the swimming pool in Zabrdovice near Brno was opened in 1879 and is still open to the public] near Brno or we went swimming to Bar Kochba [18](#).

Together with my sister, we were members of the Jewish Youth Movement Maccabi Hacajir [19](#). Its seat was in the same building as today's Jewish Community in Brno [Avenue of Captain Jaros], on the ground floor. I don't know exactly how many members this movement could have had but there was quite a group of us youngsters. We used to wear blue shirts and a blue-and-white scarf around our necks.

We also used to go to the Maccabi sports club that organized various sports activities. These sports activities included exercise, tennis, skiing in winter and later on also horseback riding. I wasn't very good at tennis but I was quite keen on skiing. However, my most favorite was horseback riding. Unfortunately, I could devote myself to this sport only for a relatively short time because Maccabi ceased to operate after the outbreak of World War II.

The Jewish Youth Movement organized summer camps and trips also to Slovakia, Hungary or to Subcarpathian Ukraine. We had an opportunity to travel to places every weekend. We weren't picky and fastidious; we sometimes even washed ourselves with water from a well. But we didn't mind at all because as a reward, we could visit beautiful places.

My sister's maiden name was Marketa Hertzkoval. She was born on 2nd January 1918 in Brno. She attended the same public school as I did, but she was two grades higher than me. I remember one teacher once saying that he taught 16 Jews out of 24 students in my sister's class and that he had never had such an intelligent class. Marketa continued her studies at a secondary grammar school and afterwards got enrolled in Vesna. After passing the apprentice and qualification exams, she became a professional tailor.

Marketa had three husbands. She married her first husband - Herbert Strauss - on 13th August 1938. They had a civil wedding and no children were born in their wedlock. Herbert worked as a managing clerk in some factory in Prostějov. He died in the concentration camp in Auschwitz in 1944. After World War II, Marketa got married again and her husband was Ervin Hirsch who later changed his surname to Holan. Ervin came from Brno and he and my sister knew each other already before World War II. They got married on 9th October 1946. My sister and I got married concurrently, on the same day, at the City Hall in Brno. Marketa and Ervin decided to stay in an apartment that my sister and I managed to obtain shortly after the war. Ervin owned a shop with fountain pens.

In 1948, the State of Israel was established [20](#) and Jews could legally move out to this new country. [Editor's note: At a Zionist conference in January 1949 in Piestany, the last one to take place in Czechoslovakia, 20 thousand Jews got permission to emigrate. This practically meant emigration of all Jews from Czechoslovakia that were interested in moving to Israel.] Marta emigrated together with her husband and settled in Herzlia, a small town close to Tel Aviv. Ervin continued in his business with fountain pens and pencils. They had two children together - Hana and Gideon. My sister didn't work; she took care of the children. Ervin died of cardio-vascular problems in the 1950s.

After her second husband's death, Marketa found a job in a home for disabled children. Two years after her husband's death, she got married for the third time - she married Ernst Berner who was originally from Prague. Mr. Berner was divorced and had a daughter from his previous marriage. He and Marketa didn't have any more children together. Ernst liked his stepchildren - Hanka and Gideon - very much though. Ernst Berner died in Herzlia in 1985. My sister also died in Herzlia, in 1998, and was buried in a Jewish cemetery. Regrettably, I wasn't present at her funeral. Illnesses and diseases devastated my sister's body and her wish was that I shouldn't see her in such a bad condition. She wished to remain healthy and happy in my memories.

### **During the war**

When Hitler came to power in Germany [21](#), we started to be more wary of the situation. In spite of that, though, until the very last moment we didn't believe those terrible things could ever come to us. After Hitler annexed the Sudetenland - the border area with the Czech Republic - to the Third Reich [on 30th October 1938], we knew what to expect. We had heard about the Crystal Night [22](#) in Germany and also about the Jews being persecuted in Austria. My parents counted on the necessity of emigrating and they therefore immediately applied for Panama visas that were obviously later annulled. My father attempted to get us abroad, he wrote letters and sent parcels to various people. Unfortunately, nothing helped and we all ended up in a transport.

The Americans were parsimonious. In my opinion, they could have taken action and saved much more human lives. 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 [23](#) 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.'

After the outbreak of World War II on 1st September 1939 [24](#), no Jew was allowed to leave the country. In accordance with the Anti-Jewish laws [25](#), we had to hand in all our jewelry to the bank. Since everything was registered, we didn't have the courage not to give in the jewelry and object to the orders. Later on, also fur coats and musical instruments were handed in. We were prohibited to enter a confectionery. The Germans weren't even in the town yet and the owner of the confectionery at Freedom Square already hung up a board with the inscription 'Jews are not welcomed' in his store. In fact, we weren't allowed to go to any restaurants and cafes.

We, youngsters, managed to put up with these regulations, we at least used to go swimming together until it was possible and we used to visit each other. The restrictions applied also to public transportation. We couldn't sit in the trams, we had to stand on the front platform. Once I traveled like this and the guide told me to take a seat since there were places vacant. Since I had blue eyes and blond hair, I probably didn't look Jewish at first sight. He couldn't believe that both my parents were Jewish. I obviously explained this to the guide and remained standing for the rest of my trip. At the beginning of the 1940s, the Jews had to wear a yellow star [26](#) on a visible place. My parents received the fabric and sewed the stars themselves. None of us dared to object to the directive because we could have had great problems for it. Some Jews were taken to the concentration camps right away.

The janitor hid my suitcase with bed sheets and she returned it to me after the war. All our furniture and Persian carpets that my father liked to buy remained in our apartment though. 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.

Together with my parents, I was taken in the first transport to the ghetto in Terezin on 2nd December 1941. [Editor's note: 1000 people were deported in the first transport from Brno that arrived in Terezin on 2nd December 1941.] First, we had to hand in our luggage in the Small Synagogue on Vlhka Street in Brno. Afterwards, we were assembled in one school and from there taken directly to the transport after two days. At night we were taken by tram to the railway station where we got on a passenger train. We obviously didn't know where we were taken. We heard about the concentration camp in Lodz and from time to time, we heard some rumors about Terezin and Jozefov. When we arrived in Prague, we felt relief because we realized we were not heading eastwards. One of the railway staff revealed to us that we are being transported to Terezin. We were even happy that we would be staying in our country.

We got off the train in Bohusovice because the railroad tracks didn't lead all the way to Terezin yet. Each one of us was dragging at least 50 kg heavy luggage several kilometers. The next day men and women were divided. Women went to the so-called Dresden barracks. I stayed with my mother. At the beginning I worked as a courier for the guards. My task was to bring messages from one barrack to another. I got a permit and could freely wander in the town where the original

inhabitants lived. It was fairly good work; at least I didn't feel imprisoned. The others had tasks assigned and worked in groups.

In June or July 1942, the original inhabitants were forced to leave the town due to a rather high number of transports arriving in Terezin. Some time before World War II, I took a course on small babies care. Owing to this, I started working in a children's house in the ghetto. Mothers relied on us and believed we would take good care of their babies and treat them properly. It was a rather sad job because children that were born at home and brought up in a family had great difficulties with getting used to the conditions in the ghetto. Children already born in the ghetto got accustomed to this way of life easier because they never knew anything better. Many children died. I worked in the infant's barrack until the October transports in 1944.

My sister and her husband came to Terezin in a transport from Brno approximately in June 1942. Her job was to look after pre-school and school children that were also assembled in one place. My sister's husband was deported to Auschwitz in a transport before us, in October 1944, we never heard of him again.

After almost three years spent in the Terezin ghetto, in October 1944, we were deported to the concentration camp in the Polish Auschwitz. By pure coincidence, my mother and sister were in the same transport as me. My mother was already were skinny, three years spent in Terezin left harsh traces on her. On our journey in a stock car, we seated her between us.

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.

People of our transport didn't even get the numbers tattooed on their forearm. The elder people went to the gas chambers and we, youngsters, were apparently needed as costless workforce. The invasion of Normandy took place in October 1944 and Hitler sent almost all his people there. The Germans needed some workforce for sure. I remained together with my sister. That was the only positive thing in that horrible situation because we at least had somebody to live for.

In Auschwitz, all our clothes were taken away, we received some shabby togs and had to take a shower. We had absolutely no idea that gas chambers exist. The other people were also told that they were going to the shower and they actually ended up in the gas. We spent the nights in a thousand-block [a block in which 1000 prisoners were accommodated]. We stayed there for probably ten to twelve days but we gradually lost track of time. Metaphorically speaking, we held each other's hands, my sister and I, so that nobody could separate us. A line-up took place consisting of groups of five women and when the number reached 100, the whole group was transported somewhere. This way my sister and I ended up in a transport that went to Merzdorf. We had to hurry to the train station late at night and had to do everything 'schnell, schnell' [German for 'quickly, quickly'].

In stock cars, we arrived in the German Merzdorf that is located near the border with the Czech Republic on the German side of the Giant Mountains. This small village was home for staff of the linen processing plant. Besides the hundred of us, there were two hundred Polish Jews and one hundred Hungarian Jewish women arrived later on. A huge concrete room with three-story bunk beds was located above the factory plant. All of us stayed in this big room but at least, we didn't have to freeze because the room was heated. People of some transports lived in much worse conditions.

We partially worked in the factories and besides this there was also 'Aussendienst' [German: outside service]. During this service, we worked outside when bricks or coal arrived. The factory head assigned a job in the heating plant to me and one other young girl. This work was extremely hard; we had to rake over smoldering coal with iron bars. Once we had to chop the coal in freezing weather and transport it from the yard to the heating room. I dared to tell the 'Leiter' [German for 'leader'], that it was awfully hard work for women. He immediately asked for my number. I was terribly scared that he would send me to the concentration camp. I don't know why but I stayed.

We had to work very hard but we could manage. About eight women from the hundred of us died either due to illness or just because they couldn't get used to the food. A young woman whose name was Eva, also lived with us. In these harsh conditions women commonly didn't have their period and for this reason Eva didn't even notice that she was pregnant. One suspicious guard in Auschwitz sent her to the doctor. In the hospital, though, one woman underwent surgery on her inflamed finger – Eva had terrible experience seeing the pus coming out of the wound and got frightened she would get infected. Therefore she escaped. This is how she got to our transport.

For some time we managed to hide her pregnancy. At our work, a special semi-product was created in the process of linen processing – some kind of fleece. From time to time, one of us would bring her a handful of fleece that we used for stuffing her dress so that no one could notice her belly. However, after some period of time everyone knew that there was a pregnant woman in the camp. The guard made us line up and ordered the pregnant woman to step forward from the line. Eva finally stepped forward and received two strong slaps in her face from the SS-guard. This SS-guard immediately wrote a report to Auschwitz and later on also to other concentration camps but she never received any answer, probably because in the meantime, they were liberated. In the end, Eva gave birth to a healthy boy.

On our way out, we used to see a board with the inscription 'Trautenau 40 km,' or in Czech: 'Trutnov 40 km.' We said to ourselves that if we survive, we would go home on foot. This wish actually came true. We were extremely lucky we didn't have to take part in the death march [27](#). Heavy battles near Vratislav lasted for a long time. We could hear the cannons. At that time, the Territorial Army, consisting of older men who were wounded in the battles, was on guard in our place. Once they disclosed information that they were forbidden to shoot prisoners who would try to escape. When the SS-guards made us line up and wanted to load us in a transport we refused to get on. They suspected that they had lost the war and were terribly afraid of the approaching Russian soldiers.

One morning we got up and there was no 'Aufseher' [German for 'guard']. Uniforms were thrown in their rooms as if they had stripped of their own skin. They deserted to the other side and let the Americans take them captive. We stayed in the camp without any supervision and in order to

prevent chaos, we organized this 'Appell' [German for 'roll-call'] ourselves until the arrival of a young boy on a bicycle and with a star on his cap [i.e. in the Red Army uniform] who announced the end of the war. The factory head had a calf killed immediately in order to impress us.

### **After the war**

Some prisoners formed groups and went home on foot. We were a group of about seven women and Eva pushed a baby carriage with her little son in front of her. We thought we would walk those 40 kilometers and slowly get to Trutnov. A baker prepared a loaf of bread for each one of us to take on the journey. When we were tired after a whole day trip, we took a rest in a deserted house. We took some food but besides that we never took anything else.

After some time we arrived at a house with some inhabitant. We asked him whether we could spend a night there but he said that the local women preferred to hide in the forest so that the Russians wouldn't find them. But we were not afraid so he let us stay overnight in one room. Some Russians arrived on their horses but left us alone. 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.

The next day we arrived in Trutnov. The National Guard was already there. The Guard registered us. We were accommodated in a hotel and it was after a very long time that we could sleep again in a white bed. A truck drove us from Trutnov to Nachod where the Red Cross was drawing up a list of repatriates. Eva had a sister in Zamberk so she and some other girls got off the truck on our way to Nachod and went home. We were registered in Nachod and the Red Cross provided us with money for the train ticket. We took a train to Prague where we met my cousin Rudi Goldberg who got there from Terezin. He first asked us whether we had lice. It was probably the only thing we didn't catch in Merzdorf because we could shower in hot water. We stayed in his place for two days and afterwards together with my sister I set off for Brno, for our birthplace.

We didn't even have a place to return to. Our parents and my sister's husband died in Auschwitz. I don't know what happened with our parents' apartment. We were accommodated in a hotel for repatriates. Since my sister and I wanted to live alone, we were looking for an apartment. Nobody opened the door to us, though, and our feet started to hurt and were completely swollen from all that walking.

My sister came up with the idea that we should get a police escort since that would elicit greater respect in people's minds. We went to the police station and said we had returned from the concentration camp and in fact, it was visible on us at first sight because we had very short hair. My sister explained that it was impossible for us to find accommodation because nobody opened the door to us. A policeman was finally assigned to us and owing to this, we managed to find a small two-room apartment that had originally belonged to a deported woman.

We earned our living as tailors - we worked for one Jewish woman who sewed clothes unofficially. Our parent's property was irrecoverably lost - we had to provide for ourselves. During the Holocaust, we lost our parents and experienced awful things but I think all that suffering strengthened our faith even more.



I first met Jiri Wachtl – my future husband – in the ghetto in Terezin. After World War II, my acquaintances from Velke Mezirici organized a meeting of friends in Brno. Jiri was also from Velke Mezirici so he came to the party. We met again and the sparks of our love began to fly. Ever since my childhood I spent most of the time predominantly in company of Jewish people, I couldn't even imagine I would marry a non-Jew. Obviously, as people say, love works miracles, and I have absolutely no prejudices against goyim whatsoever. I just considered his Jewishness being so close. We got married on 9th October 1946. We had a double civil wedding together with my sister and Ernest Holan at the Brno City Hall.

My husband was born in Velke Mezirici on 15th December 1910. His mother language was Czech; German wasn't spoken much in Velke Mezirici. In spite of that, Jiri spoke some German.

My husband attended elementary school in Velke Mezirici. Afterwards, he attended a secondary grammar school and finally some business school in his home town. After graduating from secondary school, he had to work in his father's restaurant and couldn't continue his studies.

During World War II, he was imprisoned in a camp in Lipa. Afterwards, he was deported to Terezin and from there to Auschwitz and later on to a labor camp. He returned with a severe leg injury.

After World War II, my husband got his family restaurant in Velke Mezirici back. In 1951, the restaurant was nationalized and he couldn't continue to work in the restaurant, not even as its head. The restaurant staff asked him to at least keep the books because nobody from the staff was capable of doing it. After some time, though, the whole administration was moved to Trebic and later on to Zdar nad Sazavou. As a consequence, my husband became a waiter in a restaurant previously owned by us. He worked in this position until 1978 when he retired.

I never knew my husband's parents. I only know their names were Antonia and Max Wachtl. My husband's father died before World War II. His mother was deported to Terezin from where she returned to Velke Mezirici in 1945. She died shortly after the war. Jiri had two real sisters and several stepsiblings. I knew only his sister whose name was Marketa Korinkova, nee Wachtlova. Her husband wasn't Jewish. She lived in Prerov before the war. During the war she was in Terezin. She died in Velke Mezirici in 1988.

My husband died in Brno on 11th November 1983. In spite of the fact that according to the Jewish tradition, the dead should be buried in the ground, he was taken to the crematorium. That was his last wish. I have no idea what influenced his decision. At least, he had a Jewish pass-away ceremony. Together with the other mourners, we stood around his coffin and one of the mourners held a valedictory speech. After the cantor sang his song, the coffin was transported to the crematorium. I had my husband's urn fit into my grandfather's – Simon Kohnstein's – gravestone. Every year, on the day of my closest family's death anniversary, I honor their memory by lighting up a candle on their grave.

I have three children. Two sons and a daughter. My oldest son's name is Petr Wachtl and he was born in Brno in 1947. My second son Michael was born in Brno in 1949. My daughter's name is Marta and she was born in Velke Mezirici in 1954. My sons were not circumcised. My husband didn't agree with it because he supposedly almost bled to death at his brit milah.

My children were very smart and had no problems at school. Petr attended elementary school in Velke Mezirici and continued his studies at a secondary school and he graduated after passing the school-leaving exam. Later on, he started to study economy at university in Prague but he interrupted his studies because in 1968, he received a permission to travel abroad. Michael graduated from secondary school of chemistry after passing the school-leaving exam and Marta studied dentistry at Masaryk University in Brno.

During the Prague Spring [28](#) in 1968, Petr and Michael as students received a permission to travel abroad. They never intended to emigrate but in the meantime, August 1968 [29](#) came and they decided not to return. Michael finally settled in Basel in Switzerland. He received a scholarship at a local university and started to study chemistry. Petr followed his brother to Basel where he enrolled at the economic university. They both graduated from university. They got employed in the chemical plant Ciba-Geigy [today Novartis]. Petr works there to this day; Michael has his own business now. He purchases and sells dried mushrooms. Petr and Michael got married to Swiss partners. Petr has two daughters – Miriam and Jana. Miriam got married to a young man whose family is from former Yugoslavia. She kept her surname at birth – Wachtl. Janka is single. She studies sociology. Michael has no children.

My daughter married a man of non-Jewish origin. They had a civil wedding at the Brno City Hall. I sewed her wedding dress myself. Actually, I wished she had found a Jewish partner but after the war there was not such a large young Jewish community in Brno anymore. I am very satisfied with my son-in-law. Even his family got to like Marta. They have two sons – Jan was born in 1980 and Jiri in 1984. Neither of my grandsons was circumcised. Jan studies medicine at Masaryk University and this year [2004], Jiri was accepted to this university as well; he will study dentistry. After turning 18, Jan became a member of the Brno Jewish Community. His room is full of Jewish artifacts and on one of the walls he even hung an Israeli flag that my nephew, my sister's son Gideon Holan, brought from Israel. He is very proud of his Jewish origin.

After the emigration, Petr and Michael automatically became dissidents and enemies of the political regime in Czechoslovakia. We, their family members, had to cope with the persecution by the state bodies. Secret police used to visit us regularly and questioned us about the children – what did they write from abroad etc. My husband was a very straightforward kind of person and once he responded to the policeman, 'You know earlier than we do because you read the letters that they write.' We couldn't see our own sons for seven years. Due to unknown reasons, after all those years the restrictions loosened slightly and we could travel abroad to meet them. We phone each other a lot now. I am already old now and wouldn't make it all the way to Switzerland. But I have wonderful children; they come and visit me often.

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.

We wanted our children to be aware of their Jewishness so we brought them up with this intention. When we had a feeling that they were already mature enough, we told them that we had been in concentration camps. Obviously, I didn't go into details describing all the horrors that we had lived

through. I remember them asking me about my return to the Czech Republic. They wanted to hear the story about my trip to Trutnov. Later on they studied literature and watched documentaries from which they've learned more about the Holocaust. Today I can talk to them about everything. I wanted them to know about their Jewish origin and about the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust. I knew one family in which the parents decided not to tell their children that they were Jewish. The children heard other kids at school outraging each other by calling each other Jews and brought this behavior home. They didn't understand what this term actually meant. I never wanted to experience such a situation.

After the wedding, we moved to a small house in my husband's home town - Velke Mezirici. Until 1951, I helped out in our restaurant. As long as our sons slept in a baby carriage in front of the restaurant, I helped out in the kitchen, served the guests and worked as an accountant. This was until 1954 when my daughter Marta was born. I stayed home with her for some time. At the beginning of the 1960s, I went on supply for one woman who left on maternity leave in a dental care center in Velke Mezirici. I worked as a clerk responsible for administration. Later on, I got a job as a stock-keeper in a hospital not far from Velke Mezirici.

In 1969, I retired as a disabled pensioner because I suffered from inflammations of varicose veins. After my husband retired [in 1978], we returned to Brno and rented a three-room apartment in a housing estate. After my husband's death in 1983, I moved into a smaller two-room apartment in Kohoutovice [a quarter in Brno] in order to be closer to my daughter.

No other Jews lived in Velke Mezirici besides us. We had to travel all the way to Brno to meet our Jewish friends. My husband and I were members of the Brno Jewish community. We had some friends, though, in Velke Mezirici as well. However, we didn't have any time left for maintaining of our friendly relations because we had to work so much and I had to bring up three children. From time to time, all our family would join them on hiking tours and camping in the surrounding mountains. In 1963, we bought a small chalet surrounded by beautiful countryside and the kids loved it there.

We didn't have a kosher household. We used to visit the Brno Synagogue only on the high holidays. Our family didn't particularly celebrate Jewish holidays but there was no Chanukkah without lighting candles and exchanging presents and no Pesach without matzot. In fact, we never decorated a Christmas tree. We always considered ourselves Jewish.

At home, we subscribed to Lidove noviny [30](#) and Slobodne Slovo, now I read Mlada Fronta [31](#). The salesperson in the Kniha bookstore knew me very well; she used to immediately show me the latest Jewish literature. My favorite author is Lustig [32](#). During the Socialist era, we regularly listened to broadcasting of the Austrian radio station Vienna. News on the Czechoslovak radio were one-sided, people had to read between the lines.

In the communist era, I didn't care much about politics. Even though I was never prosecuted, I know many people paid much too high a price for their 'subversive' acting. The greatest restriction for me was the prohibition to freely travel abroad. Our children had to wear red pioneer scarves and were taught poems at school about people in the old times not having a place to live and rich people owning vast palaces. The regime brought up children this way and it didn't make any sense to persuade them of anything else. On 1st May, the youngsters as well as other people marched in the town center with banners in their hands. My husband and I never took part in the 1st May

March. The Holocaust was such a severe school of life for us Jews that we didn't even perceive communism so skeptically. We always used to say that we had lived through even much worse times.

The Prague Spring embodied some tiny sparkle of hope and promise of a better future. I remember many people believed that Dubcek [33](#) would succeed in implementing reforms. Unfortunately, he faced too strong an opposition and failed in his endeavors. The Russians came in 1968. The biggest tragedy for us was that our sons didn't return from abroad. After all, my husband and I said to each other they lived their lives and we had no power of preventing them from doing what they decided to do.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, I was tremendously happy. Obviously, I was happy that the idea of Theodor Herzl [34](#) came true and the Jews finally got their territory back. There was no peace, though, for a long time, many people, both Jews and Muslims, paid the highest price during the two wars in 1967 [35](#) and 1973 [36](#).

Ever since my youth, I had been a member of the Zionist youth movement and I grew up predominantly in Jewish environs, so obviously I was thinking about emigrating to Israel. My sister and her husband settled in Israel in 1948. My husband Jiri somehow couldn't make up his mind about this. In 1947, our son Petr was born and Michael was born two years later. Jiri considered it too risky to move to Israel with two small children. Since we couldn't travel abroad, I could just exchange letters with my only sister that lived in Herzlia. I visited her for the first time in 1964 when I got permission to leave the country. I traveled individually with my younger son Michael. His name was recorded in my passport since he wasn't 15 years old yet. After our arrival, we tried to see as many sights as possible. I liked the whole country very much and I felt like at home there as if among own peers mainly because so many Jews live there and also because I could finally meet my only sister. In 1967, I visited Israel again but we had to return earlier due to outbreak of the Six-Day-War.

After 1967, when the Warsaw Pact countries [37](#) – that means also Czechoslovakia – broke up the diplomatic relations with Israel, we couldn't even speak about Israel. Officially, it was an enemy state. For me personally, nothing changed, I continued to exchange letters with my sister. She and her husband came to visit us during the Prague Spring and we spent some time together in Slovakia in the Piestany spa.

News about the political upheaval in 1989 [38](#) reached me in Vienna. I was just returning from Israel – I had visited my sister there. On my way from the Vienna airport, I felt rather strange about the numerous buses heading from Czechoslovakia to Austria. I asked one man what was going on. He told me many people are traveling to Rome because the Pope shall sanctify Anezka Ceska [39](#). He then looked at me and asked, 'Don't you know what's going on here?' Of course I didn't know what was going on. So he actually explained everything to me.

After the year 1989 I felt like a free person because I could travel without restraint. I believe the situation improved also for Jews because during the totalitarian regime, we weren't allowed to openly speak about Israel. For example, in a lawsuit against Slansky [40](#), the term Zionists was preferred in order to avoid suspicions of anti-Semitism.

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.

We also take part in Jewish funerals. Three members of the Brno Jewish community always wash and dress the dead and prepare him/her for the funeral. The former chairman of the Brno Jewish community, Mr. Weber, several times talked me into giving some kind of interview or into making speeches on the Holocaust at schools. In fact, some Jews who returned from the concentration camps are not able to talk about their suffering and torture. Once I delivered a speech for students of one secondary school in Brno. The audience was very attentive and the interest with which they listened to me surprised me a lot. My speech was also recorded on video.

Later on, I provided an interview to students of the Palackeho University in Olomouc and to Doctor Lorencova from the Jewish Museum in Prague. Everybody was interested only in the Holocaust. Spielberg also recorded interviews in Brno about the Jews who survived the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, I didn't want to stand in front of the camera, so I refused the interview.

In January 2002, on my 82nd birthday, my daughter secretly organized a small celebration at the Jewish community. Mr. Weber – the former chairman of the Jewish community – congratulated me as well as Mr. Neufeld, our cantor. My daughter bought wine and cakes and we spent a pleasant evening together.

After the political upheaval, we started receiving certain financial reparation for persecution and imprisonment throughout the Holocaust. We got some money from an American organization, the Claims Conference, and a contribution from the Czech-German Future Fund [41](#). However, I always say that no money in the world will ever compensate for the loss of my parents who died I don't even know how. People will never free themselves from the terrible memories of the past.

## Glossary

### **1 Orthodox Jewish dress**

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

## **2 Karlovy Vary (German name**

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

## **3 Brno synagogues**

The synagogue from the Middle Ages in the city's historical center was converted to a Christian church in 1453. In the 16th century it was torn down. The so-called Great Synagogue from the years 1853-55 stood at the intersection of Spalena and Prizova streets. In March 1939 it was burned and demolished by the Nazis. The so-called Polish Temple in Krenova Street was built in the year 1993. In 1954 it was adapted into an advertising studio, and later it served as a warehouse. The New Synagogue from the years 1905-1906 in Ponavka Street was destroyed in 1985-86. The New Orthodox Synagogue was built at 13 Skorepka Street during the years 1935-36. Services are held to this day in this functionalist building with a traditionally conceived interior, designed by the architect Otto Eisler. Besides this there were also several prayer halls in Brno.

## **4 Terezin/Theresienstadt**

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

## **5 Jews in Brno**

Jewish residents were present on the site of present-day Brno most likely already in the 12th century. The autonomous medieval Jewish Quarter was formed mainly by the southern part of today's Masarykova Street, and the perpendicular Fratiskanska Street (in the year 1365 there were 30 buildings with at least 600 occupants). This large Jewish community was expelled in 1454. Later Jewish merchants were allowed to stay overnight only in the south-eastern suburb of Krenova/Krona, where in the 8th century a smaller Jewish community (for example, 81 persons of Jewish faith in 1774) with a prayer hall took root. (Also the modern synagogues from the second half of the 19th century were built in Krenova). Starting at the end of the 18th century, several Jewish families gradually gained the right of permanent residency in the fortified city, during the years 1753-1766 and 1778-1816 even an Hebrew printing house was in operation in the inner city (run however by a Catholic businessman). The modern Jewish religious community was founded in Brno in the middle of the 19th century, and its numbers continually increased. From 1885 onwards

the Moravian provincial rabbi lived here. In 1848 there were 445 people professing the Jewish faith living in Brno (slightly less than 1% of the population), in 1880 already 5,498 persons (6%), in 1930 it was 11,003 persons (4%). During the Nazi occupation about 8,400 died.

## **6 KuK (Kaiserlich und Königlich) army**

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal.'

## **7 Subcarpathian Ruthenia**

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

## **8 Maccabi World Union**

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

## **9 Sudetenland**

Highly industrialized north-west frontier region that was transferred from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the new state of Czechoslovakia in 1919. Together with the land a German-speaking minority of 3 million people was annexed, which became a constant source of tension both between the states of Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, and within Czechoslovakia. In 1935 a Nazi-type party, the Sudeten German Party financed by the German government, was set up. Following the Munich Agreement in 1938 German troops occupied the Sudetenland. In 1945

Czechoslovakia regained the territory and pogroms started against the German and Hungarian minority. The Potsdam Agreement authorized Czechoslovakia to expel the entire German and Hungarian minority from the country.

### **10 Brod, Max (1884-1968)**

German writer, lyricist, playwright, essayist, cultural philosopher, literary and art critic from Prague of Jewish origins, a committed pacifist and Zionist. Brod was the organizer of the German literary community in Prague and a promoter of Czech culture abroad. In 1939 he immigrated to Palestine, where he participated in the building of an independent Jewish state. Up until his death he was a literary and artistic director at the Israeli National Theater, from the year 1948 also a music critic. He died in Tel Aviv.

### **11 Prager Tagblatt**

German daily established in 1875, the largest Austro-Hungarian daily paper outside of Vienna and the most widely read German paper in Bohemia. During the time of the First Republic (Czechoslovakia - CSR) the Prager Tagblatt had a number of Jewish journalists and many Jewish authors as contributors: Max Brod, Willy Haas, Rudolf Fuchs, Egon E. Kisch, Theodor Lessing and others. The last issue came out in March 1939, during World War II the paper's offices on Panska Street in Prague were used by the daily Der neue Tag, after the war the building and printing plant was taken over by the Czech daily Mlada Fronta.

### **12 Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

Bohemia and Moravia were occupied by the Germans and transformed into a German Protectorate in March 1939, after Slovakia declared its independence. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was placed under the supervision of the Reich protector, Konstantin von Neurath. The Gestapo assumed police authority. Jews were dismissed from civil service and placed in an extralegal position. In the fall of 1941, the Reich adopted a more radical policy in the Protectorate. The Gestapo became very active in arrests and executions. The deportation of Jews to concentration camps was organized, and Terezin/Theresienstadt was turned into a ghetto for Jewish families. During the existence of the Protectorate the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia was virtually annihilated. After World War II the pre-1938 boundaries were restored, and most of the German-speaking population was expelled.

### **13 Zionism**

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



#### **14 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K**

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box.' They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

#### **15 Goldstein, Angelo (1889 -1947)**

Lawyer, politician, Member of Parliament for the Czechoslovak Jewish Party, which was founded in 1919 at the National Jewish Council conference in Prague. The party worked towards the representation of the Jewish minority at municipal and parliamentary levels, but didn't enter Parliament until 1929 in coalition with Polish social democrats. In 1935, when the Jewish Party participated in elections in coalition with Czech social democrats, Angelo Goldstein and Chaim Kugel were elected to Parliament.

#### **16 Lodz Ghetto**

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

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

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

## **18 SK Bar Kochba Bratislava**

The most important representative of swimming sports in the First Czechoslovak Republic. The club was a participant in Czechoslovak championships, which it dominated in the late 1930s. The performance of SK Bar Kochba Bratislava swimmers is also documented by the world record in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, which was achieved by four swimmers: Frucht, Baderle, Steiner, Foldes. They also won several Czechoslovak championships in relays. SK Bar Kochba was also the most successful from the standpoint of number of titles of Czechoslovak champion in individual disciplines. In 1936, despite being nominated, athletes of Jewish nationality didn't participate in the Olympic Games in Berlin. The Czechoslovak Olympic Committee didn't recognize this legitimate protest against the political situation in Germany, denounced it in the media and financially penalized the athletes.

## **19 Maccabi Sports Club in Czech Republic**

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

## **20 Creation of the State of Israel**

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

## **21 Hitler's rise to power**

In the German parliamentary elections in January 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) won one-third of the votes. On 30th January 1933 the German president swore in Adolf Hitler, the party's leader, as chancellor. On 27th February 1933 the building of the Reichstag (the parliament) in Berlin was burned down. The government laid the blame with the Bulgarian communists, and a show trial was staged. This served as the pretext for ushering in a state of

emergency and holding a re-election. It was won by the NSDAP, which gained 44% of the votes, and following the cancellation of the communists' votes it commanded over half of the mandates. The new Reichstag passed an extraordinary resolution granting the government special legislative powers and waiving the constitution for 4 years. This enabled the implementation of a series of moves that laid the foundations of the totalitarian state: all parties other than the NSDAP were dissolved, key state offices were filled by party luminaries, and the political police and the apparatus of terror swiftly developed.

## **22 Kristallnacht**

Nazi anti-Jewish outrage on the night of 10th November 1938. It was officially provoked by the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German embassy in Paris two days earlier by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan. Following the Germans' engineered atmosphere of tension, widespread attacks on Jews, Jewish property and synagogues took place throughout Germany and Austria. Shops were destroyed; warehouses, dwellings and synagogues were set on fire or otherwise destroyed. Many windows were broken and the action therefore became known as Kristallnacht (Crystal Night). At least 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau. Though the German government attempted to present it as a spontaneous protest and punishment on the part of the Aryan, i.e. non-Jewish population, it was, in fact, carried out by order of the Nazi leaders.

## **23 Schutzstaffel (SS)**

Created in 1925 as part of the SA as an elite organizations reporting directly to Hitler. The SS had the main responsibility for the mass murder of the residents of occupied countries. The SS was pronounced a criminal organization by the international tribunal in Nuremberg.

## **24 German Invasion of Poland**

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

## **25 Anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

In March 1939, there lived in the Protectorate 92,199 inhabitants classified according to the so-called Nuremberg Laws as Jews. On 21st June 1939, Konstantin von Neurath, the Reich Protector, passed the so-called Edict Regarding Jewish Property, which put restrictions on Jewish property. On

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

## **26 Yellow star - Jewish star in Protectorate**

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

## **27 Death march**

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

## **28 Prague Spring**

A period of democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia, from January to August 1968. Reformatory politicians were secretly elected to leading functions of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). Josef Smrkovsky became president of the National Assembly, and Oldrich Cernik became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubcek, General Secretary of the KSC Central Committee (UV KSC). In April 1968 the UV KSC adopted the party's Action Program, which was meant to show the new path to socialism. It promised fundamental economic and political reforms. On 21st March 1968, at a meeting of representatives of the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia in Dresden, Germany, the Czechoslovaks were notified that the course of events in their country was not to the liking of the remaining conference participants, and that they should implement appropriate measures. In July 1968 a meeting in Warsaw took place, where the reformist efforts in Czechoslovakia were designated as "counter-revolutionary." The invasion of the USSR and Warsaw Pact armed forces on the night of 20th August 1968, and the signing of the so-called Moscow Protocol ended the process of democratization, and the Normalization period began.

### **29 August 1968**

On the night of 20th August 1968, the armies of the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies (Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Bulgaria) crossed the borders of Czechoslovakia. The armed intervention was to stop the 'counter-revolutionary' process in the country. The invasion resulted in many casualties, in Prague alone they were estimated at more than 300 injured and around 20 deaths. With the occupation of Czechoslovakia ended the so-called Prague Spring - a time of democratic reforms, and the era of normalization began, another phase of the totalitarian regime, which lasted 21 years.

### **30 Lidove Noviny (People's News)**

The oldest of the contemporary Czech newspapers, founded at the end of 1893 by lawyer Adolf Stransky in Brno. Before WWII Lidove Noviny became a modern daily of the Czech democratic intelligentsia. Later free-thinking journalists were forced out by the Nazi protectors, and then by communist authorities. In 1959 its publication was stopped. The first attempt at resurrection in 1968 was halted by Soviet intervention. Re-registration of this highly regarded publication took place in 1990.

### **31 Mlada Fronta**

The idea of the creation of a young people's publisher came about during World War II in the illegal Youth Movement for Freedom. For this purpose they selected a printer's oin Panska Street in Prague, where the Nazi daily "Der Neue Tag" was being published, and in May 1945 they occupied it and began publishing their own daily paper. The first editor-in-chief of Mlada Fronta was the poet Vladimir Horec. Up until the end of 1989, the daily paper Mlada Fronta was published by the publishing house of the same name. From September 1990, the readership base and editorial staff were transferred over to the MaFra company, which began to publish a daily paper with a similar name, Mlada Fronta DNES.

### **32 Lustig, Arnost (b**

1926): Czech-Jewish writer. 1950-58 a reporter of Czechoslovak Radio; 1961-68 scriptwriter for Barrandov Film Studios (Prague). Emigrated in 1968, from 1972 he lectured on film and literature at the American University in Washington.

### **33 Alexander Dubcek (1921-1992)**

Slovak and Czechoslovak politician and statesman, protagonist of the reform movement in the CSSR. In 1963 he became the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia. With his succession to this function began the period of the relaxation of the Communist regime. In 1968 he assumed the function of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and opened the way for the influence of reformist elements in the Communist party and in society, which had struggled for the implementation of a democratically pluralist system, for the resolution of economic, social and societal problems by methods suitable for the times and the needs of society. Intimately connected with his name are the events that in the world received the name Prague Spring. After the occupation of the republic by the armies of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact on 21st August 1968, he was arrested and dragged to the USSR. On the request of Czechoslovak representatives and under pressure from Czechoslovak and world public opinion, they invited him to the negotiations between Soviet and Czechoslovak representatives in Moscow. After long hesitation he also signed the so-called Moscow Protocol, which set the conditions and methods of the resolution of the situation, which basically however meant the beginning of the end of the Prague Spring.

### **34 Herzl, Theodor (1860-1904)**

Hungarian-born Jewish playwright, journalist and founder of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). His thought of realizing the idea of political Zionism was inspired by among other things the so-called Dreyfus affair. In the polemical essay *The Jewish State* (*Der Judenstaat*, 1896) he declares that Jews aren't only a community of believers, but also a nation with the right to its own territory and state. He was of the opinion that in the anti-Jewish mood extant in Europe, it was not possible to solve the Jewish question via either civic emancipation or cultural assimilation. After a significant diplomatic effort he succeeded in the calling of the 1st International Jewish Congress in Basil on 29-31st August 1897. The congress accepted the "Basel Program" and elected Herzl as its first president. Herzl wasn't the first to long for the return of the Jews to Palestine. He was, however, able to not only support the idea, but also to promote it politically; without his efforts the creation of the new state of Israel in the Palestine on 14th May 1948 would not have been possible. Theodor Herzl died in 1904 at the age of 44 and was buried in a Jewish cemetery in Vienna. In 1949 his remains were transported to Jerusalem, where they were laid to rest on a mountain that today carries his name (Mount Herzl).

### **35 Six-Day-War**

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

**36** Yom Kippur War (1973 Arab-Israeli War): (Hebrew: *Milchemet Yom HaKipurim*), also known as

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

**37** Severing the diplomatic ties between the Eastern Block and Israel: After the 1967 Six-Day-War, the Soviet Union cut all diplomatic ties with Israel, under the pretext of Israel being the aggressor and the neighboring Arab states the victims of Israeli imperialism. The Soviet-occupied Eastern European countries (Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria) conformed to the verdict of the Kremlin and followed the Soviet example. Diplomatic relations between Israel and the ex-Communist countries resumed after the fall of communism.

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

### **39 St**

Agnes of Bohemia: The daughter of the Czech king Premysl Otakar I. During her entire life Agnes of Bohemia was active as a member of the Clarisian Order, she also significantly participated in the public life of her times, had significant influence on among others her brother, King Vaclav [Wenceslaus] I the One-eyed. Agnes was also behind the fact that the burial ground of Czech kings was transferred from the St. Vitus Cathedral at the Prague Castle to the Clarisian convent Na Frantisku. Agnes of Bohemia died in 1282. Soon after her death Agnes began to be considered a saint by the Czech people, it was believed that numerous miracles were happening at her intercession. The canonization of Agnes was attempted, unsuccessfully beginning with Jan Lucembursky, then his son Charles IV, and later for example Leopold II of the Habsburgs - it wasn't until 1874 that the Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal B.J. Schwarzenberg managed to have Agnes beatified - she was then proclaimed a Saint on 12th November 1989 by Pope John Paul II.

### **40 Slansky trial**

In the years 1948-1949 the Czechoslovak government together with the Soviet Union strongly supported the idea of the founding of a new state, Israel. Despite all efforts, Stalin's politics never found fertile ground in Israel; therefore the Arab states became objects of his interest. In the first place the Communists had to allay suspicions that they had supplied the Jewish state with arms.

The Soviet leadership announced that arms shipments to Israel had been arranged by Zionists in Czechoslovakia. The times required that every Jew in Czechoslovakia be automatically considered a Zionist and cosmopolitan. In 1951 on the basis of a show trial, 14 defendants (eleven of them were Jews) with Rudolf Slansky, First Secretary of the Communist Party at the head were convicted. Eleven of the accused got the death penalty; three were sentenced to life imprisonment. The executions were carried out on 3rd December 1952. The Communist Party later finally admitted its mistakes in carrying out the trial and all those sentenced were socially and legally rehabilitated in 1963.

#### **41 Czech-German Future Fund**

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