

Jiri Franek's Graduation Photo



[Editor's note: Upon Mr. Franek's request we publish his biography using small letter "j" for the word "jew" and the like.]

Graduates of the Jewish Reformed High School (Hebrew name of the school: MITBAGREJ GYMNASIA REALIT MITKANET BEBRUN TESHEA) in Brno, 1941 - plaque rests in the Terezin Memorial.

Mirjam Blanova, I - Jiri Frischman and Vera Jilkova came to the school in the year 1940, in the last (eighth) year.

Students from the entire Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia came together here, as they were not allowed to attend Czech schools.

Upper row at far left: high school principal Dr. Eduard Drachman, beside him a photo of eighth-grade home room professor, Dr. Filip Block (mathematician, physicist).

We had one single woman teacher - third from left - Prof. Mullerova (Latin), next in the row, Prof. Hrdlicka, who wasn't a Jew (Chemistry), Prof. Weinstein (Physical Education), Prof. Dr. Epstein (French, German), Prof. Ungar (Art), Prof. Eisinger (Czech), Prof. Zwicker (Philosophy, History).

Graduates:

Girls from left: Vera Sommerova, Helena Rosenfeldova, Marie Pollakova, Vera Schulzingerova, Mirjam Blanova, Nella Reissova, Hana Beckova, Hanna Schmolikova, Vera Holznerova, Vera Naglova, Hilda Schonova

Boys from left: Jindrich Wertheimer, Oldrich Gross, Josef Weiner, Jakub Flinder, Jan Allerhand, Jindrich Bloch, Rafael Fuchs, Petr Münch, Jiri Frischman, Uriel Drechsler, Hanus Schafer

Bottom row from left: Richard Tauss, Herbert Glaser, Mario Helfgott, Evzen Weinberger, Oskar Meitner, Petr Neugebauer, Felix Bass

Survived the Holocaust: Professor Weinstein, out of the graduates:

Jiri Frischman - today Prof. Jiri Franek, Vera Sommerova, Mirjam Blanova - married name Mirjam Klimesova, Vera Holznerova - married name Vera Jilkova.

Prof. Weinstein gave us our graduation certificate on the basis of our eighth grade marks.

I managed to finish seventh grade. Then in 1940 Jews were forbidden to study in Czech schools. Our family conference once again decided: 'He has to finish his studies.

Without graduation he'll never get anywhere in life.' Someone in our family found out that there was a Jewish high school in Brno, where I could finish my last year and graduate.

So I had to go there. I came to know Jewish life at the Jewish high school in Brno, I have many Jewish friends from that time, and from post-war times as well.

We would meet and talk about Judaism. I and my classmate Jindrich Wertheimer tried to run away out of the Protectorate, it didn't work out because we didn't know how to go about it, we didn't know what to obtain and how, and then the Germans were advancing so quickly and we didn't know where we should run to.

We wanted to go via Switzerland to France, but France was already occupied. It was quite naive, we didn't realize it, but today no one takes that seriously.

What was most evident on our Brno class was its enormously high standard. It's of course natural that everyone isn't stupid, but if we ignore that, then the thing was that only the select went there, those that really wanted to finish their studies.

So knowledge of German was taken for granted, there were only a couple of us that didn't know German.

One classmate, Bekova, a poet, spoke it fluently. I was one of those that didn't speak much, but even those who weren't bilingual had a certain knowledge of German.

I can't tell you a percentage, but it was a lot, certainly over 50 percent, and a lot more than half already knew French, from studying it at home, so just as an example, the knowledge of languages there was exceptional.

I finished my last, eighth form, year at the Brno high school, but right before graduation the Germans forbade us from graduating. I got my graduation confirmation after the war, even though I never did the exams.

The only professor to survive the Holocaust, Professor Weinstein, got the right after the war to give out these diplomas to those that survived - out of 29 classmates there were only four of us left.

So we four got a report card signed by Mr. Weinstein that we had absolved our schooling with such good marks that it was clear that we would have passed the final exams. I then later got two more

report cards, without any final exams!

This was because later I had to go to this school in Vysoke Myto and take this course for those that couldn't finish their studies.

There they didn't forbid us from doing our final exams, but they were afraid that some of the Communists and their children that were there because of connections wouldn't be able to pass the exams, so they said that we would be able to graduate without them.

Then the high school principal in Vysoke Myto gave me a high school diploma on the basis of a Ministry resolution, because I had had completed seven grades in Vysoke Myto with excellent marks.

So I have three high school diplomas and didn't do a single final exam, which is quite the rarity!