

## Kurt Kotouc's Class Portrait From The Jewish Gymnasium In Brno



This is a picture of our class in the Jewish gymnasium in Brno. In the center there is our professor, Arnost Gerad. I am the first from the left in the second row. The picture was taken in 1941.

In 1941 I completed elementary school and was supposed to start gymnasium on Na Porici Street, but it wasn't possible anymore. I started attending the co-educational Jewish gymnasium. There were only two in the whole country: in Brno and in Prague. The Germans allowed teaching to happen but on the report cards it read: this report card is not a valid public school report card. Before the war, the school didn't have enough Jewish teachers because the Jewish community was so emancipated and assimilated. When Jewish teachers and students were forced to leave all other schools, our secondary school experienced a short renaissance. The school was the last place where many Jewish pedagogues could teach, among them was sociologist Dr. Bruno Zwicker, previously an assistant at Masaryk University in Brno, Valtr Eisinger, previously a teacher at a secondary school in Kyjov and Orlov, Otto Ungar, Arnost Gerad and others. Everything was carried out under an atmosphere of nervousness and fear, so discipline and teaching slackened. In May 1941 the Nazis took control of the building and so teaching stopped. The Jewish Community tried to keep some improvised teaching going in Valeji Street for some time. At that time, I would go to Mrs. Stefi Fiserova to learn English.