

Prewar Terezin



My husband, Karel Rutar, brought this photograph back with him from Terezin. It's a picture of prewar Terezin. The first from our family to leave for Terezin was my brother Pepik. My brother left in November 1941 on the second transport to Terezin, AK2, or "Arbeitskommando." From that time on we didn't have any news of him, because the men from AK1 and AK2 weren't allowed to write home. When someone wrote home, they were shot. I, along with my parents, went on the transport in April 1942. I remember that as soon as we arrived, some guys I didn't know were calling out my name, "Liduska" and immediately started helping me with my suitcase. They were guys who worked for the "Transportleitung" helping the arrivals with their luggage. They recognized me right away, even though they'd never seen me before, as I supposedly looked a lot like my brother, who was already in Terezin. My brother Pepik was living with them in the Sudeten barracks. At first they put us up in the basement of the Kavalir barracks, just on some straw. We were there until they placed us somewhere. You just picked a spot, and that's where you slept. My father then stayed there, and my mother and I went to the Hamburg barracks. Initially we were living on the ground floor, where I got sick, I had some sort of flu, and spent most of my time in bed. They then moved us to the first floor to room No. 165, where about fifty of us women lived together. Terezin had a special currency, so-called "Ghettogeld" I think they were ten, twenty, fifty and hundred-crown bills which we'd get for doing work. There were a couple of shops in the ghetto where you could get things that had been stolen from people that had arrived in Terezin. We could buy these goods for example bed sheets, towels, and dishcloths with "Ghettogeld." There were grocery stores, but all you could get in them was vinegar and mustard, basically nothing. I bought myself a pair of beautiful high leather "Cossack" boots there, I loved wearing them, and finally took them with me on the trip to Auschwitz but we went there in May, and my feet were terribly hot in them, so I cut the tops off. Before I left Terezin, there was a Red Cross visit being planned, and we had to do so-called "Verschönerung" or beautification. Terezin was to be decorated, for the sake of appearances, to fool the Red Cross delegation. However, I wasn't there to see the Red Cross visit. I was in Terezin from April 1942 until May 1944, when I left with my brother for Auschwitz.