

# Pavel Fried

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Brno

Czech Republic

Interviewer: Martin Korcok

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The interview with Mr. Fried took place in his office at the Jewish community in Brno. This is because Mr. Fried had become chairman of this organization a few days earlier. Our meetings took place in a friendly atmosphere replete with a significant dose of humor. During the interview one could not help but notice the author's rich life experiences and broad perspective. Mr. Fried answered all our questions obligingly and openly. Thanks to him we obtained an interview enriched by many amusing, but also tragic events of his life.

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## **My family background**

My grandfather on my mother's side, Samuel Waldstein, was born in 1878 in Prestice near Pilsen and his wife Matilda Waldstein, nee Vogel, in Dolni Kralovice. Dolni Kralovice doesn't exist any more, as it was flooded during the building of a dam. [Editor's note: The interviewee is referring to the Zelivska reservoir dam, today called Svihov. Finished in 1976, it is used as water-supply for Prague.] Both towns mentioned were located in south- western Bohemia.

I can only with great difficulty estimate how many Jews lived in Prestice. But the village had a synagogue, and so I think that their number may have been around a hundred. There was a rabbi there as well, whose name I don't remember. Mother used to always reminisce about him. He taught her German. The rabbi required perfect command of grammar of his students. When she was 93 my mother still wrote in flawless German and Czech. She always said that it was thanks to

that rabbi. [Editor's note: according to the 1921 census, Prestice had a population of 3,456, 40 of who were Jewish. The town's rabbi at that time was Leopold Singer (1868-1934), who worked there for 41 years, and is buried in the local Jewish cemetery.]

My mother's father was a merchant. He had a so-called 'colonial' store. He sold everything that people in the village needed, for example flour, eggs, spices, coffee, peanuts, petroleum, whips etc. My grandmother used to help out. The store consisted of one large room, with an entrance from the street. The entrance door had a small bell. Behind the store was a kitchen with a fireplace where my grandparents usually spent their time. No-one was in the store all day, only when the little bell rang, one of my grandparents would come into the store and serve the customer.

My grandparents' house was more or less in the middle of the main street, which ran up a steep hill. Prestice was built around only one long street. As I already said, the store was in the first room; behind it were the kitchen and a room they slept in. Upstairs was a living room for special occasions and two small rooms where we, the children, used to sleep when we were visiting our grandparents. Next to the house, on the left-hand side, was a driveway from the street into the courtyard. In the driveway there were bags of flour that was sold in the store. From the driveway one entered a small courtyard measuring eight by five meters. The courtyard was paved and kept neat and tidy. In the courtyard were outbuildings for storage of grain and coal. Grandpa never had any farm or domestic animals. Neither did they have any fields or servants. In the 1930s Prestice already had a sewage system. The town didn't yet have water mains. They fetched water from a public pump that stood across from the house. Electricity wasn't brought to the village until the post-war period.

The house was furnished with simple furniture, because my grandparents weren't rich. Besides, they had four daughters and had to save for their weddings and trousseaus. I don't remember them having a library.

My grandparents dressed according to the times. They didn't wear the very latest fashions, but dressed solidly, like other townspeople. Grandpa didn't wear typical Jewish clothing; he didn't even wear a black cloak like some Jews did. He only covered his head in the synagogue and at the cemetery; otherwise he went without a hat.

There were no Jews in my grandparents' immediate neighborhood. Grandpa spent his free time in the town pub, where there weren't only Jews. He was friends with Jews and non-Jews alike. He went to the pub every Saturday night. He went there to play cards with his friends. During the week he didn't go to the pub, because he took care of the store, and on Friday he didn't go either because he observed the Sabbath.

I can only with difficulty say to what extent my maternal grandparents kept Jewish traditions and how religious they were. Friday and Saturday services in the synagogue were however a matter of course with them.

My grandparents on my father's side came from Trebic and were born in the 1850s. Grandpa was named Alexandr Fried. I don't remember Grandma's first or maiden name. I didn't get to know her at all. She died before I was born. They buried her in the local Jewish cemetery in 1929.

My father's parents lived with us in one large house that was divided into two parts. One apartment in the house belonged to my grandparents. It had its own kitchen, dining room, bedroom and a maid's room. We lived in the second part, that is, my father, mother, sister and I, as well as my father's brother. We had a fairly large apartment with five rooms and a kitchen. One of the rooms was for the maid. We didn't have a balcony but a courtyard gallery where the bathrooms were, so things were much less convenient and comfortable than they are these days. Below the living quarters there was a store with hardware and household goods. There was also a scrap salvage business. Everything belonged to my grandfather and father. Another commercial space that was part of the building my father rented out to a certain lady. In it she opened a shop selling fruit and vegetables. The last room, which wasn't suitable for a store, was rented to Mr. Novotny, who opened up a barber shop in it. Electricity was installed in the house before I was born, and we had running water from 1933, up until which time water was brought in from public pumps.

The house had an extensive courtyard, where there were warehouses for the store. Father and Grandpa had a steel and oil warehouse and a large garage. In the garage a smaller company truck was parked as well as Father's new six-seater Tatra. For those days it was a fancy car.

There was a library in our house, which didn't contain any typically Jewish literature. The books belonged mainly to my mother and sister, so it was modern Czech literature, which they preferred. We also had a few German books, because Father's mother tongue was German. In fact Father wrote poems in German, which I have carefully stored away at home. He also used to subscribe to a daily newspaper, but exactly what, that I don't remember any more, but it was more or less literary news.

Just like my grandparents, my parents also had maids. They were young girls who cooked and cleaned. They lived and ate with us. We had good relationships with them and visited each other even after the war, when they were no longer working for us. They even used to bring us gifts, such as butter and poultry, because after the war there was a shortage of food. I don't remember their names any more. In any case I used to call them all the same name, Marenka. For the laundry we used to hire washer-women, who also ironed.

There's one charming family anecdote about my grandparents on my father's side: Grandpa brought Grandma to the local bar, where people were dancing the tango. As they were watching the dancers, Grandpa after a while asked Grandma how she liked it. And Grandma answered: 'Yes, it's nice, but that's something we used to do in bed.'

## **Jewish history in Trebic**

At the beginning of the 1930s Trebic had around 18,000 inhabitants, around 300 of who were Jews. [Editor's note: according to the 1930 census Trebic had 17,555 inhabitants. This statistic is calculated based on the current town boundaries.] Before, there used to be Jews in the ghetto, which was located at the bottom of Hradek Hill, on the left bank of the Jihlava River. The ghetto was built in such a way that you could enter and exit through only one gate. It was made up of around 150 residential buildings. All of them have been preserved to this day. It's fair to say that it's something unique in Europe, having been included on the UNESCO World Heritage List as the largest preserved Jewish ghetto in Europe. In my day the gates were already opened and Jews spread out into the rest of the town. Many of them moved away because of work, mainly to Vienna and surrounding Czech towns and cities. Despite this most Jews still live in the former ghetto, which

became a Jewish quarter. Better-off families, seeking business opportunities, left this area. They moved to the busiest parts of town, meaning the square and main street, because their prosperity depended on the number of customers.

One can't say that there were typical Jewish occupations in Trebic. Jews in the town did various things: there were craftsmen, furriers, merchants and factory owners. After the ghetto was opened some Jewish individuals took up farming. The Zubak family was among the richest Jews in town; they were factory owners. The Ornsteins owned a wholesale grain business and others sold coal. One member of this family lives in the USA to this day. Furthermore there were wholesale businesses owned by the Tausigs and Frieds. [Editor's note: the wholesaler Fried was not related to the interviewee.] Mr. Fried had a wholesale textiles and cloth business. The Grünbergs were in the coal business. My grandfather Fried and my father owned a hardware store and employed ten people. In those days it was a respectable business.

My father was a businessman. He owned a hardware store. Originally it belonged to his father, who in the beginning used to visit surrounding villages and collect scrap iron, bones and hides. For a long time my father had to do it as well, because grandpa insisted on it. After the gates to the Jewish ghetto were opened, my grandparents bought a house near the main street and started up the hardware store that I remember, with a collection of scrap iron, bones and hides. In those days the street was named Starecka, then Nezvalova and finally Stalinova. After the year 1989 it got its present name, Nezvalova.

There were two synagogues in pre-war Trebic and one prayer hall. One of the synagogues wasn't in use any more by the 1930s. The second, which we used to attend, was closed around the year 1942. Men and women used to sit apart, which however doesn't mean that it was Orthodox. [Editor's note: In Orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately; see Orthodox communities [1](#).] I would say that the town's Jewish community was conservative. For example, by the beginning of the 20th century, Trebic didn't even have a mikveh. Despite the fact that after the year 1945 neither of the synagogues was open for services, both still stand to this day. One of them is used by the Czechoslovak Hussite Church as a church. The last rabbi in the town was named Ingber. He came from Ruthenia [see Subcarpathia] [2](#). He came to Trebic around the year 1935 and in 1942 he was put on a transport with the town's other Jewish inhabitants. He didn't survive World War II.

## **My parents**

My parents, Viktor Fried and Marta Friedova, nee Waldstein, met at their relatives' wedding. The situation in our family is therefore that we are all twice related, both on my father's and on my mother's side. We spoke Czech in our family. In fact my mother came from Western Bohemia, which is as Czech as you can get. My father's family in Trebic preferred German.

Our family's financial situation was on the whole pretty satisfactory. We had a nicely furnished home. My mother liked to buy porcelain. To this day I have some pieces of that porcelain, because it was hidden away at our friends' during the war. That was the one luxury that my mother occasionally allowed herself. In the end we also had a car, which was a rarity in pre-war Trebic. My parents always dressed well. I'm not an expert on it, but judging by photographs they dressed according to the fashion of the 1930s. Despite this I remember my father's words: that the most important thing is how many pockets a suit has. When he went to the tailor and was asked how he wanted the suit made, my father answered: 'A pocket here, and here, and here, and here, and the

rest you can make however you like.'

Father had friends in several social circles. Since he spent most of his time in the store, he was on friendly terms with some of his regular customers. For example, he supplied blacksmiths from all over the region. These blacksmiths didn't have a lot of money and couldn't pay right away; they were dependent on the farmers that bought their products. First the farmer had to harvest his produce, and after it was sold he could pay the blacksmith. The blacksmith would then pay my father. It was a society in which the livelihood of one person depended on another, and out of this personal relationships also arose. Many of these continued in the post-war era, when my father no longer had his store. Many of my father's friends were from the Jewish community, because it was natural for Jews to meet. They had their own cafe in the town. It was called U Ceplichalu. In their free time they would go to this cafe, where they could always find someone to talk or play cards with. My grandfather also went to U Ceplichalu. He also used to visit a local restaurant, which wasn't kosher. Men used to go there for a 'gablik' [light meal].

My father and I never spoke about politics. Despite this I would say that he was inclined towards tradesmen, to the Tradesmen's Party. This was a party that you couldn't really even call political; it was more of a professional association or guild. I couldn't imagine my father being in some sort of national political party, such as the Social Democrats or Communists. The latter had significant support in the town before the year 1939, because Trebic was a working-class town.

My mother didn't go out and socialize very much. She mainly stayed at home, where she used to meet with other Jewish women from Trebic. They would sit around and gossip, knit and trade recipes. In later years, when there was a strong Zionist movement in town, they collected money for Keren Kayemet Leisrael [3](#). She and her friends used to go out into Jewish social circles and collect money using blue and white cash-boxes. Ladies of her generation devoted themselves to the aforementioned activities, but of course taking care of the family and the household and bringing up children had top priority.

## **Our family life**

Family vacations weren't a habit in our household. We would only travel once a year to visit Grandfather in Prestice. Father used to go on business trips, most frequently to Dresden in Germany. After taking care of business matters he would stay there a day or two longer, and that was his little vacation.

We used to keep Jewish customs, with the exception that we didn't eat kosher, but we did keep all religious holidays. On Friday evening my mother lit candles and Father said broche. On Friday and Saturday our whole family would go to synagogue. Besides this, my mother took her prayer book and prayed every evening. When my father went away on business trips and didn't come to the synagogue, his friends would immediately ask him where he'd been and why he hadn't come to the synagogue. Services were in Hebrew. In Trebic we didn't have sermons, but only later in Brno, where Mr. Feder was the rabbi. The rabbi in Trebic was named Ingber. He came to the town at a young age from Ruthenia. He died along with his entire family in concentration camps.

Sabbath was kept to the degree that it wasn't possible to go to the U Ceplichalu cafe until Saturday evening. I do have to note though, that it wasn't a very significant day for us children, except that we had to go to the synagogue. After services we ran off with the rest of the children. Worse was

when our parents took us out for an outing. We had to stroll around with them, which was of course immensely tedious for us.

Each year Father led the seder; Mother prepared for it. Chanukkah was quite interesting in our household. In one room we had a chanukkiyah and in the other our maids had a small Christmas tree. Our family was always very tolerant of other faiths. Similarly tolerant were all of our maids; after all they did work in a Jewish household. They ate together with our family. Since they did the cooking, we kept all Christian fasts while they observed the Jewish ones. On Friday we never ate meat, because they cooked Christian meals. And on Saturday we all ate Sabbath meals. Our family never ate together except for on Sabbath. My parents both worked downstairs in the store, so first one went for dinner, then the other. They couldn't leave the store unattended.

Before World War II we had a widely branched-out family. My father had two sisters and a brother, Rudolf. He was a kind-hearted person, of whom people made fun because he was a bit slow-thinking, mentally retarded. He lived in our house with my grandparents. He helped my father and grandfather in the store. Since we had a large courtyard, he would watch to make sure that no one was stealing there, or in the store. He was the first from our family to be deported in 1942. He died during the war somewhere, between 1942 and 1945. No one knows exactly when and where.

My father's sisters were called Hilda and Zeni. I didn't get to know them very well. The last time I saw them was when I was nine. Both of them lived in Vienna. Zeni's husband was named Nadelstecher. The only thing that I know about him is that in pre-war times he performed on stage in Vienna, at the Ronacher Theatre. [Editor's note: the Ronacher Theatre was built by F. Fellner Sr. in 1871-72. It regained its original appearance in 1991-93 when it underwent complete reconstruction]. They had one son together, whose name I don't remember either. They were all killed during World War II.

Hilda was married to a Mr. Waldstein, who was most likely an insurance agent. They had two daughters, Lilli and Dita. Both of them were sent by their parents to England in 1939. A wave of anti-Jewish sentiment had risen up in Vienna and my mother's sister wanted her children to be somewhere safe. In those days my cousins were 16 and 18 years old. They went to families that had been picked out beforehand. At the beginning of the war they both took a nursing course in London and joined the British Army, which also ensured their livelihood. I met them a few times after the war. Both have Jewish husbands. The older one's husband comes from around Trebic. The younger one is a descendant of Polish Jews that emigrated to Great Britain in pre-war times.

Before World War II my father saw his sisters only rarely. He used to visit them during business trips to Vienna. More often, though his sisters would visit us in Trebic, around once or twice a year. Our house had seven rooms, so there was always room for relatives. His sisters used to come without their husbands, because in those days men didn't take holidays. Most of them were employed and their work didn't allow it. After the year 1945 we couldn't meet any more because they had all died.

My mother had three sisters, Hedviga, Marie and Valerie. Hedviga married a man named Glückauf. They had a son named Karel who was an excellent swimmer. He swam for Maccabi [4](#). Glückauf worked in Brno for a company named Placek, and later he opened his own fur store. They called the second sister Marenka. She married Fredy Pick, who worked as a dental technician. They had one daughter, Veruska. My mother's youngest sister, Valerie, was married in Prague to Mr. Roth,

who was a traveling salesman. My mother's sisters observed Judaism only in the sense that they had Jewish husbands. They went to the synagogue only on the major religious holidays, which I don't consider to be religiousness. It's really every Jew's obligation.

I practically don't remember a thing about my aunts on my mother's side. I only met them once a year at my grandfather's in Prestice, where we spent vacations together. Like me, my cousins on my mother's side were in those days very young, so we didn't have a lot of common experiences. I do remember, however, that they sent me as the youngest to Grandpa's store to steal peanuts. Grandpa would pretend that he didn't see me. Besides this we used to play cards with Grandpa, but that's all that I remember. All of Mother's sisters died in concentration camps together with their children and husbands. Only Marenka's husband Fredy Pick survived, who then remarried and settled in Varnsdorf. Among those few lucky ones that survived was also my mother's father. Each year after the war he spent the winter with us in Trebic, and when it warmed up he returned to Prestice, where he had a house. There he would spend summer in the company of his friends and then would return to us again for the winter.

## Growing up

I was born in Trebic on 13th June 1930. I don't remember much of my preschool times, except that we would always go to Grandpa's in Prestice. I never went to nursery school. Besides having maids, my mother also hired a nanny who took care of us. She was a girl from a Christian family, and later she married a Jew. Her husband died during World War II.

I would say that I come from a typical Czech Jewish family, which means something between conservative and liberal Judaism. In practice it meant that we never ate kosher and never missed Sabbath services. I think that these two extremes characterize Czech Jews of the 20th century. I studied Judaism in school, and never with my father. Only at Passover I would say the mah nishtanah and I have it memorized to this day.

My favourite holidays were Pesach and Sukkot. I like Passover because it's a nice tale and I've always liked history. For Passover we never looked for chametz, and as I already said, we didn't have a kosher household. We never changed kitchen utensils, we just didn't eat anything fermented. I liked Sukkot because as children we got lots of coloured pastries. The adults would set up a tent [sukkah] in a little square between the synagogue and rabbinate. It stood there every year. It wasn't large, just enough for about twenty people. They did it mainly for us children. After services in the synagogue we would stop by and stay there for about an hour. Rabbi Ingber led a prayer in it and then would tell us tales. At the end we got pastries. Through a child's eyes I saw it as a nice social event.

As I grew up, I also had more friends. They were mainly Jewish boys, because they lived in the immediate vicinity, which means the neighbour across the street and to the left of us. We walked to and from school together, and also got up to mischief together. Nearby was the Jihlava River by which we used to go play. Whenever the ice froze we would go and test the thickness of it. A little ways away was a generating station, from which warm water flowed into the river, so the ice was thin. Occasionally we fell into the freezing water. Our parents were afraid for us and used to go see whether we were playing by the river. We, however, knew all the surrounding houses and yards, so when they would come from one direction we would escape in another. When they returned home we would already be there waiting for them. They would always praise us and say how glad they

were that we were at home while all the other scoundrels were running about on the river.

During my school age days I used to go to German lessons. An older Jewish lady used to teach me. Her husband had died and she didn't have a large pension, so to help her my mother would send me to her for German lessons. So I took German. I very much liked visiting her, because her son was the goalkeeper for the local football team. In the eyes of local boys my prestige escalated because I knew the local goalkeeper, Neiner.

In the time of my early youth Trebic was a working-class town. After the ghetto was opened, the wealthier Jews moved out of it. They were replaced by the Christian poor. After that the Jewish and Christian poor lived side by side. Demonstrations of anti-Semitism, without exaggeration, were mild. It can't be said that we had larger problems, at least I don't remember any. The coming of the Germans to Trebic changed the entire situation. A few individuals perceived an opportunity and rode the wave brought on by the occupation. Among these was our driver, Koudelka. He was the only person from our neighbourhood that joined the Germans. After the war he joined some church and repented his sins. Otherwise I think it was a town rare in its tolerance. Wealthy Jews could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Socially and economically, Jews didn't stand out from the town's population.

The first anti-Jewish laws [in the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia] [5](#) affected my life in that I couldn't go to school, then to parks, the cinema, theatres and football. We had to be at home after eight in the evening, while other children were still running about outside. Once I didn't obey this rule, and it was then that I got a slap from my father for the first time in my life. These were the main changes I felt as a child. Due to not going to school and not being able to play in public parks, I lost contact with my non-Jewish friends. Only two friends remained neighbors on the left and right, as the saying goes. I no longer had the chance to meet my other friends. Also in those days the first Jewish school in town came into being. It was in the building of the winter prayer hall, the so-called Temple, as we used to call it. On some stores the sign 'Juden unerwünscht' [German for 'Jews not welcome'] appeared. In other stores Jews could shop only between 3 and 5pm, when everything was already bought up. We had worse ration coupons. We had to wear a star. I have it hidden away to this day. Anti-Jewish laws were passed practically as soon as the Germans came. In 1942, when we went to Terezin [6](#), the persecution of Jews was in full swing.

### **My sister Erika**

Besides me my parents also had a daughter, Erika. My sister was born on 8th January 1923. Erika and I don't have a lot of common experiences. We didn't play together, mainly because of the large age difference of seven years; when I was seven, my sister was already a young lady of 14. She was friends mainly with Jewish girls. This was due to the ethics of the time. Girls in those days had to socialize differently, because they were interested in finding a Jewish boy. Despite this Erika met a non-Jewish young man from Pilsen. In the times of the mobilization he was assigned as a soldier to the barracks in Trebic. In the end their relationship ended, because my parent's didn't like that he wasn't Jewish. If in those days she would have married him, maybe she would have survived the war. After 1945 that young man contacted us again and asked after my sister.

Erika graduated from high school in Trebic, and after that she went to language school in Prague. During her studies in Prague she stayed with my mother's sister Valeria. After a year she had to interrupt her studies because a law was passed forbidding Jews from studying. She got married



shortly after returning to Trebic. The selection of Jewish partners in the town was quite clear. The wedding was decided on between the parents and a wedding ceremony followed. She married Arnost Felix, whose parents had a distillery and a house on the main square, which was some sort of sign of social standing. I remember almost nothing of the wedding. It was a so-called 'wartime wedding'. They got married before they sent us to Terezin, so that they could stay together. They were married by Rabbi Ingber under a chuppah, which was inside the synagogue. I don't know how many wedding guests they invited. For me as a young boy it wasn't anything important.

My sister and her husband were deported together to Terezin in April 1942. In Terezin we met only sporadically: they were chance, short-term encounters. A year later they deported her and her husband Arnost to Auschwitz, where she perished in 1944, in the gas chambers. Arnost had two siblings, a brother and a sister who was the only one of their family to survive the war. In the concentration camp she gave birth to a child which fell into a latrine. As a result of these occurrences she lost her mind and spent the rest of her life in a mental asylum in Prague.

### **During the war**

In the early years of the war I didn't experience any anti-Semitism in Trebic. Firstly, the town wasn't anti-Semitic and secondly I was relatively young. I and my ten-year-old contemporaries didn't really concern ourselves with it, and we didn't associate with children of Fascists. Interestingly enough, in 1940 a non-Jewish friend came over and showed me some sort of map. It had a German concentration camp marked on it. It described conditions that I later myself experienced. I don't know how it came into his possession, and I don't know what it really was. The only thing he said was that it was a Jewish ghetto. From that time I recalled that map many, many times.

The first anti-Jewish incident that struck our family happened in the year 1940. They Aryanized my father's store. A German came to our place and pulled out a document that said that he was going to be the administrator of Father's hardware store. In practice it meant that he confiscated the store. Subsequently we had a visit from the Gestapo from Jihlava who proceeded to search our house. My sister was already married and lived with us along with her husband. I remember that during the search, when they were arresting my father, the Gestapo found some cans of food. They opened them and one of them had gone bad. It spurted its contents out onto a Gestapo officer's leather coat. My sister brought some after-shave lotion and cleaned his coat. They arrested my father and took him away to jail in Jihlava. There they presented him with a sales agreement that he was selling his store. Instead of the money they were supposed to pay him for it they sent him directly to Terezin. He was very lucky, because the Gestapo usually sent people from Jihlava directly to Auschwitz or executed them on the spot. After my father's arrest we associated only with Jews.

Before they deported us to Terezin we had to hand over all valuables such as gold and porcelain. To this day I have the receipt from the watchmaker who took them. Of course I never got anything for it. After that they gathered us in the Trebic high school. Each person could have up to 50 kilos of luggage. Many old women couldn't even take that much, for how could they have carried it. We walked from the high school to the train station. They sent us off in two transports. The first was called AV and was used to deport only residents of Trebic district. The second was called AW and contained Jews from Trebic and Jihlava districts. In the first, on which I, my mother and my father's

parents were, there were 720 people. I know this because I had number 719 and was second-last. We left on 23rd April 1942, directly for Terezin. My sister and her husband went on the second transport.

## Terezin

Our arrival at Terezin was followed by security checks. We had to open our luggage and the Germans looked to make sure we didn't have any valuables. After that they divided us up and sent us to the barracks. In those days the town still had its Christian residents, so we weren't allowed to move about in all of Terezin. After they were moved out, the entire town of Terezin became a ghetto. The number of prisoners varied between 20,000 and 64,000, depending on the departure of transports to Auschwitz.

They put us into barracks that had no beds. We were lying on the floor. Each person had 70 centimeters of space for sleeping and a narrow aisle where he could walk about. The luggage we had brought with us was stacked up behind our heads. I lived together with my mother. With the departure of the original inhabitants of Terezin [the original inhabitants of Terezin (3500) were moved out in the middle of 1941 and were replaced by Jews] the camp's capacity increased. They started to build buildings that contained triple bunk beds. Later we, children, lived in a so-called Kinderheim, which was a former school. There were around forty of us to a room, aged twelve to thirteen. The room was led by an older boy, who could have been around 18 years old. He was responsible for us and of course also educated us, so that we didn't become completely wild. Besides regular schooling he also led us to Zionism. There were two main schools of thought among the Jews in Terezin. One inclined towards assimilation and the second consisted of Zionists. Zionists completely rejected assimilation and their goal was emigration to Palestine. Whether there were also amongst us devout Jews, is hard to say. Religion wasn't the problem of the day. The problem of the day was to find bread and potatoes.

Terezin was originally built as a fortified town, surrounded by two massive walls. In the past, when the town was in danger, water could be let into the space between the two walls from the nearby Labe [Elbe] River. During World War II the space between the walls was used for raising vegetables for the German guards. Jews were strictly forbidden to step onto this territory. There was a morgue on one of the crossings and we, children, used to go and steal vegetables and potatoes around that morgue. The ghetto had a lot of organized work details. For example, I used to spray uniforms for the Wehrmacht, with white paint so that the soldiers would be camouflaged in winter. Before the war's end I was a delivery boy. A friend and I distributed groceries with a two-wheeled cart.

I remember that Terezin used to produce dried potatoes for the German army. The potatoes were sliced into thin slices and dried. The result was moldy discs that the soldiers at the front would cook. At that time I used to feel sorry for the German soldiers, because it was more suited for pigs than for people. Potatoes intended for drying were stored in a cellar. A friend and I obtained a cart and two sacks and set out to go steal. He climbed through a window into the cellar and put potatoes into a small sack, which he would then pass up to me and I would dump its contents into a large sack that was on the cart. We continued like this until we filled up the large sack. It was an extremely bold act, because even in Terezin it was forbidden to go out after 8pm, and stealing of course was completely out of the question. We risked our lives. We pushed the full bags over to my grandfather's, who praised our cleverness. My mother was of course distraught, she was afraid that

someone would split on us. In the end we were big heroes. Grandpa got some flour from somewhere and made us skubanky. These were made in the following way: he would cook the potatoes, mash them, and mix in flour. The dough was then grated and you had skubanky. It was quite a delicacy in Terezin because what we used to get there to eat couldn't be called food.

The worst times in Terezin were when they announced the transports. A list would be drawn up and the Zimmerälteste [German expression for the person responsible for order in the room] would read from it which people were to be deported. In the spring of 1944 I was also included on one of the transports. The fact that I was spraying the uniforms of German soldiers saved me from being transported to Auschwitz. The Germans agreed that I should be taken off the transport list because I was working for the Wehrmacht.

While I was in the concentration camp I reached the age of 13. Just like all Jewish children in Trebic, I had also gone to religion lessons to Rabbi Ingber. He gradually prepared us for our bar mitzvah. Before I was to have it, I ended up in Terezin, where this ceremony was performed secretly in a makeshift prayer room in the attic. The guards of course knew nothing about it. I recited what was necessary and that was the end of it. No celebration took place. It was just a formality that you had had your bar mitzvah. There were only a few people at the ceremony, the rabbi and my parents.

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

A few months later my father was offered the position of Hausältester [German expression for the person responsible for order in the entire building]. A person in this position was responsible, for example, for distribution of food in the building and for ensuring that blackout curtains were in place in the evening. Mother once again asked her friend for advice, who advised her against my father taking it. She told her that someone won't black out their window and her husband will then be put on a transport or shot. Mother told my father that she had already once given advice and advised to her own benefit. Father therefore took the position of Hausältester, as a result of which he was along with his family exempt from the transports until the end of the war. In this way, also thanks to my mother's friend's advice, we were saved. A worse fate met my sister and her husband, who died on 8th March 1944 in the Auschwitz gas chambers.

Terezin was liberated in May 1945. However, we prisoners couldn't leave. We were quarantined because various infectious diseases had spread mainly typhus and spotted fever. These were brought by people evacuated by the Germans from various concentration camps as the Allied armies advanced. These people were in exceptionally bad condition, not only were they half-dead, but many of them had gone insane from hunger. They had absolutely no hygiene and brought many diseases, mainly spotted fever, which is very dangerous.

## **Our return to Trebic**

We were released from quarantine on 6th June 1945. At that time the trains were running again, so getting home was simple. We got on the train at the station in Bohusovice, because Terezin didn't have a station for passenger trains. The Germans had only built a provisional platform for the arriving transports. From Bohusovice we traveled straight to Trebic. There wasn't much waiting for us in our home town. The first few days we even had to stay in hotels, because our house had been sealed by the police. During our absence a German who had Aryanized my father's store had been living there. It took several days until we could move back into our original home. We found almost nothing of the original furnishings. So we used furniture that had been left there by the German. My parents got their store back, but in devastated condition. As one of the returnees, my father was greeted in Trebic by the regional governor himself. In his office he offered a seat to my father, who immediately recognized that his lordship had furnished the room with our chairs. We were glad that we had returned at all from the concentration camp, so my father overlooked such trivialities.

Out of 297 members of the Jewish community that had been in the town before 1939, only nine of us remained. [Editor's note: the Trebic town chronicle states that 281 Jewish citizens had been deported from Trebic. After the liberation ten returned to the town. One more had survived, but he never returned. The rest of the Trebic Jews became victims of the Holocaust.] Our family returned to its original home and my father restarted his business activities.

My parents never considered emigrating. My situation was different. I received a permit to enter Palestine, and everything was prepared for my emigration. In the end nothing came of it. After all, my parents weren't young any more, my sister unfortunately never returned and besides me they had no one. It was decided that I would stay with them in Trebic; of course at fifteen one doesn't make his own decisions.

In the middle of June 1945 they registered me in school. I was in the third year of council school. Despite having studied only two weeks, the teacher gave me a report card. It had only three B's. My good marks were a result of my stories from Terezin, because everyone was curious as to how we had lived there. I didn't have Jewish classmates in school any more. Basically I was the only one left of all the Jewish children that had lived in Trebic before the war.

In 1946 I became a scout. There were regular weekly meetings and on Sundays we went on trips. Our scout troop numbered between 20 and 30. We learned to make a fire, cook, and track and did all sorts of other activities. At Easter, when we had more days off, the camp leaders, among whom I later belonged as well, would go off to find a suitable summer campsite. They had to discuss with farmers and forest rangers where we would be allowed to camp out. It wasn't that hard to negotiate with them because they also benefited from us. In the summer we would help in the fields or clear brush in the forest. In exchange we got fed.

I studied at the technical high school in Brno, from 1946 to 1950. After I completed my studies I was drafted into basic army service. I was assigned to the Technical Assistance Battalion [7](#), the so-called Black Barons, which meant doing your army service with a pick and shovel in hand. We were divided into three approximate categories: 1. politically unreliable individuals, 2. priests and clergymen, 3. students expelled from school. I got put there for multiple reasons. My first offence against the socialist state was that my father had a business. Second, I was a Jew, and third, I had relatives in Western Europe. My final transgression was that I always said what I thought. During

the draft they asked me if I had relatives abroad. I said yes. They probed further, whether I was in contact with them. I started to have enough of their questions. I could no longer restrain myself and told them to please not be angry with me, but I couldn't exterminate them, and I couldn't deny them either. They didn't say anything, just assigned me to the Technical Assistance Battalion.

## My army service

There's another little story connected with my entry into army service. Just like in every interview, there was a torrent of questions. They asked me whether I had ever been in jail, I said yes. The next question was, how long? I said three years. They made a note of it. Then I told them that it was in a concentration camp during the war. They said that it didn't matter, it was all the same. Finally I was assigned a room with a soldier of the Wehrmacht, who was supposed to get Czech citizenship. Despite having behind him the Russian campaign, he had to undergo basic army service in the Czechoslovak army. Besides him there were also two priests in the room.

We practically spent our whole time in the army building military airports near Pilsen, Pardubice, Caslav and Line. I didn't mind manual labor; the only problem was that instead of two years we had to serve 32 months. The army as such wasn't so bad; it's just that afterwards a person was socially 'marked' for the rest of his life. The work wasn't difficult, despite that it was degrading for many. During schooling they made idiots of us. The truth is that our officers were also assigned to us because of their political unreliability. Maybe that's why they never treated us badly; after all in the end we had a common fate. The only different ones were the political leaders, so-called 'politruks' or politicians, who were placed there by the Communists.

In the middle of my army service the Slansky trial [8](#) took place. At the beginning of the trials I was a mechanical engineer at Line airport and worked in the technical department. I supervised the maintenance of construction machinery. During the trials they called me in and reassigned me to manual labor as a worker. Officially I never found out the reason for my degradation. When I went to the politico to find out what had happened he told me to go do my work and that I could be glad that they didn't throw me in jail. Those were the consequences of the Slansky trial. Now with the passage of time, those Communists seem quite comical to me.

A part of army life are stories, some of which have to do with alcohol. For example politicians, that is politically dependable officers, had one weakness: booze. Because they weren't exactly Einsteins, but dunces, they needed for people to appreciate them. Quite often they let themselves be tempted and it ended up that they would drink with us. You see, we had money and they didn't because their wives took it after payday. During a booze-up we slipped one politico money that the soldiers had collected for Korea and he spent it on drink. As punishment he was immediately transferred. [Editor's note: the soldiers of the Czechoslovak Army collected money intended to help North Korea in the Korean War (1950- 1953).]

Another incident has to do with the battalion commander and the chief of staff. Our commander was a laborer from Ruthenia who joined the Red Army and towards the end of the war became a mortar commander, this means of two men and a pipe. Because he was politically orthodox, he made it all the way to battalion commander in Czechoslovakia. The chief of staff was a staff sergeant from the First [Czechoslovak] Republic [9](#), therefore a trained soldier. Once he came to me and assigned me a task. The battalion commander was supposed to go to staff training and bring along a completed map of battle positions. The poor wretch didn't even know how to properly hold

a pen, much less fulfill his orders. My task was to draw this map. At this time I was working with a pick and shovel and so my hands weren't much good. Here and there I made some ink-stains and I had to scrape the ink off with a razor blade like we used to do in school. The staff sergeant saw this and told me not to be stupid, that I should just add four legs and make it into a kitty cat. I gave the completed map to the commander, who was happy with it. He went off to staff training, and when he returned, I asked him how it had gone. He answered that when he showed them the map they had one look at it and sent him home. He never found out if the map was any good. The fact remains that a month later the battalion commander was transferred to the post of commander of a recreational resort in the Krkonose Mountains [Editor's note: mountains on the border between Bohemia and Poland. In 1963 the Czech side of this region was made into the Krkonose National Park. It thus joined the existing Polish Karkonoszki Park Narodowy, established in the year 1959]. The chief of staff was envious of his new position. We experienced many similar incidents. It was a tin-pot army.

After the end of my basic service I got a job at the Research Institute for Construction Machinery in Brno. Along with my work I of course also had to display a certain amount of politically cultural activity. I was editor of a so-called bulletin board magazine, in which we criticized conditions in our workshop. Our criticism offended the Communists that worked there. They became upset and problems began. Shortly after this incident came political screening. Because I was the son of a Jew and capitalist, they wanted to push me out of the institute. Our party cadre official took my side and said that my dismissal would be looked upon as vengeance for my criticism of workshop conditions and as a display of anti-Semitism. It was the first time under the Communist regime that being a Jew worked to my advantage. Besides my work I also studied at university, from which I graduated at the age of 38.

In 1968 [see Prague Spring] [10](#) we didn't perceive any anti-Jewish sentiment. On the contrary, I was happy because I had managed to finish university, the Faculty of Economics of Factory Management of Brno Technical University. And so at the institute where they had originally wanted to throw me out they ended up promoting me to the post of Deputy Director of Economics. I was in this position until 1972, when they realized that a person with my past wasn't right for that job and removed me. In those days one never found out the real reason for being removed. In my case though, it was quite clear. Before 1968 I was the chairman of the company ROH [11](#) committee, and so they came up with the idea that as ROH chairman I supported antisocialist elements in the country with a resolution against the occupation. Luckily the institute's director was a man of character. He told me that I had tried out the position of deputy director of economics and now I was going to be involved in the planning of technical development, forecasts and conception as Technical Development Manager.

## Married life

I met my wife, Vlasta Friedova, nee Machackova, in an interesting way. I had a female friend in Trebic who used to go out with a boy from Brno named Zdenek. They met each other at scout camp. At one time I used to work as their postman. Usually after I delivered their letters Zdenek's parents would invite me for dinner. In the end there were so many of these dinners that I didn't know how to repay them, so I took Zdenek's sister as my wife. My delivery activities ended up being a bit less successful, because Zdenek broke up with his girlfriend.

My wife was born in Brno on 14th June 1931. She came from a Protestant family. Her mother was especially devout. Her father was a Catholic who had converted to Protestantism. My in-laws were both very tolerant. We got along well. We respected each other's beliefs and that was the most important thing. My wife wasn't from a wealthy family. Her father worked as a civil servant for the railway postal service. He accompanied the mail wagons. In his later years he became a worker at the post office. Her mother was never officially employed, but did work as a masseuse. We were married in 1956 at the Brno city hall.

The Trebic Jewish community never renewed its activities in the post-war years. For the major holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover I and my parents went to the synagogue in Brno. As far as my children go, my family and I discussed how they should be brought up. To put it simply, my children didn't get much religious education. My wife and I were of differing faiths, but mutually respected each other, so neither of us wanted to influence the children in one direction or the other. It ended up that my son has very weak religious feeling, practically none. However my daughter goes to the synagogue and has many Jewish friends. In fact even my wife went to synagogue during the major holidays.

In our family we celebrated Christmas, mainly because of the children. After my wife's death Christmas also disappeared from our home life. Of the Jewish holidays we still celebrated Chanukkah and Passover. Each year we had seder. My daughter learned it from her grandmother and so to this day prepares the seder schüssel [bowl]. We also observed Yom Kippur. Before this fast we would have supper. On our part it was because of the holiday atmosphere and not because of it being a deeply religious holiday. I think that the disease of modern times has affected Judaism the same way as it has other religions and beliefs.

I never picked my friends according to their religion. The important thing was the person's character and opportunities to spend our free time together. In the past there were few chances to spend time in Jewish company. In the end I don't see Judaism in Jewish society but in synagogues and religious life. However it's still pleasant for me to meet Jews. I would say that they are close to me in their thinking and character, but I wouldn't go see an exhibition of paintings at the Jewish community just for this reason. I'd rather go to the Arts Centre where they have nicer and better pictures. Everyone perceives their Judaism differently. Really, I think that I feel more Czech than Jewish, but as far as religion goes I feel Jewish.

Life in a totalitarian regime didn't prevent us from following political events in the world. The creation of Israel was a positive event for my circle of friends. We greeted it with great enthusiasm. Israel was born in a time when memories of the Holocaust were still very painful. We saw in it the possibility of sanctuary among one's own if we were again persecuted. It was for this that the state of Israel was born. The creation of a state meant a feeling of pride. Jews were always looked upon as people that either didn't know how or didn't want to fight. You could beat and kill Jews for no reason, without fear of reprisals. They used to say in Bohemia: 'Jud gehört ins Kaffeehaus' [German for 'Jews belong in the coffee shop']. The birth of Israel ended this era. It was a major event for all Jews all over the world. In the beginning Czechoslovakia had a positive relationship with Israel and this of course also showed in the relationship between Jewish communities and the Czechoslovak state, as well as the relationship of Czechoslovak Jews with Israel.

From here, a person viewed the wars in Israel in 1967 [see Six-Day-War] [12](#) and 1978 [the Lebanon War] as a spectator. We rooted for them and hoped that the Jews would successfully defend themselves. We couldn't do any more than that. In those days I watched and listened to only Viennese television, Viennese radio and Radio Free Europe [13](#), the newsletter of Jewish religious communities, was however never missing from our household.

I visited Israel for the first time five years ago [1999]. Last time was this year [2004]. It may seem funny to you, but the thing that surprised me the most in Israel was an ad for Coca-Cola. When I was getting off the plane I saw a Coca-Cola billboard written in Ivrit. It may seem funny, but we were used to Hebrew and Ivrit as the language and writing of prayers, not advertising. There and then I realized that Hebrew isn't only a language of prayer but also of a nation. A child has to use it to say that he's constipated an old man that he's thirsty. People use it to ask what's on in the cinema, in the theatre. I only realized this during my first visit to Israel.

Before 1989 [the fall of the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia] I managed to visit my cousins in London a few times, to which they had escaped from Vienna at the beginning of World War II. I always had big problems getting an exit visa. In fact for a few years in the 1970s I had no passport. The confiscation of my passport was caused by the following events: In 1968 I received a letter written in broken Czech. It contained anti-government proclamations. Suspecting that it was a provocation I handed the letter over to our director for him to do with as he thought best. He gave it to the police. Years later, the phone in my office rang and a certain Mr. Voslejsek introduced himself. He wanted to arrange a meeting at the police headquarters in Brno. I didn't know if someone was trying to play a joke on me, so I began to investigate. When I called the police headquarters they told me that they didn't know any Mr. Voslejsek. Therefore I didn't come to the agreed upon meeting. In the end he called me again and asked me to come. He explained that he was new there, and wasn't even really named Voslejsek and that's why they didn't connect us, which of course wasn't the truth.

At the police headquarters he led me off into a room and began asking about the letter I had received years ago. I had no idea where he was leading with his questions. In the end he told me that I was a very capable person and that they needed this type of person. At that moment I realized what they wanted of me [to sign a collaboration agreement with State Security - StB]. My answer was in the sense that I would be glad to help if they ever need advice with reporting company results or doing an economic analysis, but otherwise I had no idea how I could be useful to them. In the end we parted ways because he realized that they couldn't put anything over on me.

A short time later they summoned me to the passport office. They started to explain to me that they didn't have to renew my passport. That really got my goat and I told them to shove their passport somewhere. They really did stick it somewhere. I remained without a passport for about three or four years. Paradoxically, at that time I worked at the Heavy Machinery Works. The company director in Dubnice was going on a business trip to West Germany and needed a technician that spoke German. He called me and told me that I was going with him. I answered: 'No I'm not.' 'Yes you are.' 'I can't, they took my passport.' 'Who took it?' 'The cops.' 'Fuck your cops, you're going and that's that!' It took only a few days and in Bratislava they gave me a new passport, without my having to supply any sort of confirmation or document. From that time on I traveled in the world using a passport issued in Slovakia.



## The Velvet Revolution

The Velvet Revolution [14](#), a transition from a totalitarian regime to democracy, was at first an adventure for me. An honest person will admit that it was an adventure. In the time of totality one was forced to obey. Entrepreneurship had been unthinkable and suddenly new opportunities began to open up. Capitalism had been for everyone some sort of scarecrow, a swearword, a pejorative against a systematically organized society. It wasn't until people started to openly say, 'we're going to build capitalism' that we began to realize that this capitalism wasn't some sort of capital crime, but only a way of organizing society. My revolutionary act consisted of the fact that at a directorial meeting I openly supported striking. Everyone looked at me as the local hero in those days. With the passage of time I see it as a comedy. It was about comical conflicts. If someone claims that he sees the time as a heroic battle, I won't believe him. People that stood in the squares and jingled their keys [during the Velvet Revolution people symbolically expressed their dissatisfaction with the Communist regime by jingling their keys during demonstrations], saw the situation as an adventure, some sort of diversion. What's true though, is that everyone had had their fill of the Communists.

My life started to change immediately after the revolution. In February of 1991 I and some friends started up a company. We had 'big' capital: 180,000 crowns. We rented out four rooms, bought a computer and started doing business in the sphere of planning and forecasting for companies. We were working under the assumption that people in company management were going to be changing and the new ones won't know a thing about planning and forecasts, so they'll hire us. In time our naivety became apparent. The people that got into management weren't ones that needed our concepts and forecasts but fortune hunters that wanted to get rich quickly. So we returned to design and made use of our contacts in Germany. After a series of similar activities we progressed to our current business in a natural way. We import truck trailers and spare parts from Great Britain. There are five of us in the company and we have a decent turnover.

During the last decade the Jewish community in Brno, which has around 300 members, has come to life. It should be noted, that for example the Brno community, especially under the leadership of Mr. Weber, has done a lot for Jewish solidarity. Cultural activities and trips take place on a regular basis. Every Tuesday the older ladies have a coffee circle where they can meet and talk. On Fridays there are usually lectures, discussions or exhibitions.

However there are less and less religious Jews. Religious feeling is weak. It has to do with people's overall alienation from religion. It hasn't left out Jews either. The major Jewish holidays will fill up Brno synagogues, but not Sabbath. Until recently we didn't even have a minyan. Since 1970, when Rabbi Feder died, the community has been led by a cantor, Mr. Neufeld. In the last few years, cantor Neufeld's son, Arnost, has led the services. About a year ago we engaged Rabbi Koller. For some time the cantor and rabbi served together, but then Mr. Neufeld fell ill. Since then the services have been led by Rabbi Koller, who is more orthodox. He's currently working on having a minyan at the synagogue. He's having some success, because this Saturday we will have a minyan for the fourth time in a row. Young boys from the Jewish Youth Union in Brno have also started to appear among us. Now they're learning to read from the Torah, and we hope that it will catch on and appeal to them.

## Working in the Brno Jewish community

Last month I became chairman of the Brno Jewish community. I replaced Mr. Weber, who resigned after two terms and wanted someone new to take his place. A young member of the community can't take this position mainly for financial reasons. The problem I see is that the community chairman isn't an employee of the community and so doesn't have a salary, just a regular sum for travel and phone expenses. With this state of affairs there is no way a young person can come and work for just a few crowns. The only paid worker is Mr. Bauer, who is the director of the Jakub special organization. The religious community is 100 percent owner of this organization. The position of community chairman will bring major changes into my life as well. At present I work at my company until lunch and after lunch I go to the community. It's hard to have time for everything, so I've decided to leave the company and devote myself only to leading the religious community.

Besides leading the religious community I'm also the chairman of the Rotary Club for the years 2004 and 2005. [Editor's note: the Rotary Club is a world-wide organization of representatives of various occupations, who realize humanitarian projects, support high ethical standards in all spheres of life and help further mutual understanding and peace in the world.] The Rotary Club was founded approximately one hundred years ago by two American lawyers. It's essentially a worldwide humanitarian organization. There are many programs, but the main one is eradication of childhood polio in the world. That is the strategic goal. There are also a number of other humanitarian activities, from the amelioration of floods to supporting the physically handicapped. Finally, it supports mutual education and promotion of international friendship.

I don't think that research of this type [this interview] can be done over a couple of sittings, so quickly. A person gradually remembers places and names. We simply don't live in the past. We live in the present and the past is somewhere in the subconscious, and it isn't until one talks about it that memories start to float to the surface. I admire some ladies for how much they're able to remember. Either they have a better memory, or are less sclerotic than I am. Personally I live for what happens in the company, what is waiting for me at the community, what I forgot to arrange in the Rotary Club, because our roof is leaking, what I have to do at the cottage, so that we're prepared for winter. A person constantly has thoughts through which he lives in the moment. The past is like a computer's memory, where unnecessary information is erased.

## Glossary

### **1 Orthodox communities**

The traditionalist Jewish communities founded their own Orthodox organizations after the Universal Meeting in 1868- 1869. They organized their life according to Judaist principles and opposed to assimilative aspirations. The community leaders were the rabbis. The statute of their communities was sanctioned by the king in 1871. In the western part of Hungary the communities of the German and Slovakian immigrants' descendants were formed according to the Western Orthodox principles. At the same time in the East, among the Jews of Galician origins the 'eastern' type of Orthodoxy was formed; there the Hassidism prevailed. In time the Western Orthodoxy also spread over to the eastern part of Hungary. 294 Orthodox mother-communities and 1,001 subsidiary communities were registered all over Hungary, mainly in Transylvania and in the north-eastern part of the country, in 1896. In 1930 30,4 % of Hungarian Jews belonged to 136 mother-communities and 300 subsidiary communities. This number increased to 535 Orthodox communities in 1944, including

242,059 believers (46 %).

## **2 Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpatie)**

Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhhorod, Berehovo, Mukachevo, Khust. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until World War I; and the Saint-Germain convention declared its annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1919. It is impossible to give exact historical statistics of the language and ethnic groups living in this geographical unit: the largest groups in the interwar period were Hungarians, Rusyns, Russians, Ukrainians, Czech and Slovaks. In addition there was also a considerable Jewish and Gypsy population. In accordance with the first Vienna Decision of 1938, the area of Subcarpathia mainly inhabited by Hungarians was ceded to Hungary. The rest of the region was proclaimed a new state called Carpathian Ukraine in 1939, with Khust as its capital, but it only existed for four and a half months, and was occupied by Hungary in March 1939.

Subcarpathia was taken over by Soviet troops and local guerrillas in 1944. In 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the area to the USSR and it gained the name Carpatho-Ukraine. The region became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the region became an administrative region under the name of Transcarpathia.

## **3 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.

## **4 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.

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

After the Germans occupied Bohemia and Moravia, anti-Jewish legislation was gradually introduced. Jews were not allowed to enter public places, such as parks, theatres, cinemas, libraries, swimming pools, etc. They were excluded from all kinds of professional associations and could not be civil

servants. They were not allowed to attend German or Czech schools, and later private lessons were forbidden, too. They were not allowed to leave their houses after 8pm. Their shopping hours were limited to 3 to 5pm. They were only allowed to travel in special sections of public transportation. They had their telephones and radios confiscated. They were not allowed to change their place of residence without permission. In 1941 they were ordered to wear the yellow badge.

## **6 Terezin/Theresienstadt**

A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. It was used to camouflage the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a 'model Jewish settlement'. 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 cafe, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

## **7 Technical Assistance Battalion (PTP)**

created in 1948 for politically unreliable persons, such as for example people of noble descent, capitalists, sons of farmers and estate owners that didn't agree with collectivization, clergymen, etc. 'PTP'ers' didn't have a time limit for their army service (basic army service lasted two years). Because of their political unreliability they weren't issued a weapon. They mainly performed arduous physical labor. In the 1950s over 44,000 men absolved the army work camps. In the time of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Technical Assistance Battalion officially never existed. Colloquially they were called the Black Barons.

## **8 Slansky Trial**

Communist show trial named after its most prominent victim, Rudolf Slansky. It was the most spectacular among show trials against communists with a wartime connection with the West, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, Jews, and Slovak 'bourgeois nationalists'. In November 1952 Slansky and 13 other prominent communist personalities, 11 of whom were Jewish, including Slansky, were brought to trial. The trial was given great publicity; they were accused of being Trotskyist, Titoist, Zionist, bourgeois, nationalist traitors, and in the service of American imperialism. Slansky was executed, and many others were sentenced to death or to forced labor in prison camps.

## **9 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.

## **10 Prague Spring**

The term Prague Spring designates the liberalization period in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party and promoted ideas of 'socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied Prague and put an end to the reforms.

## **11 ROH**

the Revolutionary Unionist Movement (ROH) was born in 1945. It represented the interests of the working class and working intelligentsia before employers in the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Among the tasks of the ROH were the signing of collective agreements with employers and arranging recreation for adults and children. In the years 1968-69 some leading members of the organization attempted to promote the idea of 'unions without communists' and of the ROH as an opponent of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC). With the coming to power of the new communist leadership in 1969 the reformers were purged from their positions, both in the ROH and in their job functions. After the Velvet Revolution the ROH was transformed into the Federation of Trade Unions in Slovakia (KOZ) and similarly on the Czech side (KOS).

## **12 Six-Day-War**

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

## **13 Radio Free Europe**

Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central European communist countries and thus

it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

#### **14 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. The Velvet Revolution started with student demonstrations, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the student demonstration against the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. Brutal police intervention stirred up public unrest, mass demonstrations took place in Prague, Bratislava and other towns, and a general strike began on 27th November. The Civic Forum demanded the resignation of the communist government. Due to the general strike Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec was finally forced to hold talks with the Civic Forum and agreed to form a new coalition government. On 29th December democratic elections were held, and Vaclav Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia.