

# Alica Gazikova

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Bratislava

Slovak Republic

Interviewer: Martin Korcok and Barbora Pokreis

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Mrs. Alica Gazikova is a very obliging and punctilious lady. Her life story is interesting also in the fact that it reveals Jewish life in five Czech- Slovak towns and cities (Pezinok, Bratislava, Zvolen, Banska Bystrica and Brno). Mrs. Gazikova's husband, Albert Gazik, actively participated in the functioning of the Jewish religious community in Bratislava up until his death in 1995.

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## My family background

I can't remember my great-grandparents on my father's side, as even his parents died in the years 1934 and 1935, when I was six years old. My father's parents were named the Adlers and came from Pezinok. My grandfather, Ignac Adler, had a house in the center of town. A part of this house was also his general goods store. The house was very large, for the Adler family was also large: they had nine children. Because they had so many children, my grandma [Anna Adler, nee Berger] was a housewife. Back then women didn't go to work. The first floor of the house had five huge rooms. Besides my grandfather's family there were also two other families living there. On the ground floor there were four rooms for commercial purposes. The house was truly spacious and beautiful. But I remember these things only from recollections of my father, Arnold Adler. That house is currently around 400 years old, and is designated as being of historical importance. It has a very unusual facade. It's been renovated, but unfortunately no longer belongs to our family.

After World War I, as they say, still during the time of the First [Czechoslovak] Republic [1](#), my father's parents moved from Pezinok to Bratislava. It was on the cusp of the years 1918/1919. One of their daughters, Vilma Sebestyen [nee Adler], whose husband was a veterinarian, moved into their empty apartment. Besides them, a family by the name of Reisner also lived there, who rented

the commercial spaces on the ground floor. They had a fabric business. A very poor Jewish family, the Lampls, also lived there. Mrs. Lampl sewed bedding and underwear, and Mr. Lampl made the rounds in surrounding villages and bought up animal skins. An older family, the Friedmanns, also lived there. Old Mr. Friedmann taught children religion.

My grandparents likely moved from Pezinok because my grandmother couldn't get over the fact that during World War I two of her sons [Jozef and Eduard Adler] had died at the front as soldiers. At which front they fell, I unfortunately don't know. That was the first thing, and the second thing was that approximately in the year that they moved there was large-scale looting in the town and their store was looted. So they bought a building in Bratislava, on Lodna Street No. 2, and as they say, they retired there. The building on Lodna Street stands to this day. The commercial space they left behind then fell to my father.

I almost don't remember my grandparents at all, as I've said, I was around six when they died. But for sure they weren't hyper-religious, and my parents weren't that religious either. I'm assuming that their mother tongue was German. Pezinok, otherwise in German Bosing, in Hungarian Bazin, had by my estimate about a 30 percent German population, which by and large concerned itself with cultivation of vineyards. Before World War II, Pezinok also had a very strong Jewish community. But there were also very many poor Jews. The poorer ones were, I'd guess, the more religious. There was also a class of richer ones. So I can say that we belonged to the richer ones.

Jews in Pezinok concerned themselves mainly with business. I'd say that we had the largest store, actually my father and his partner did. It was a store with general goods, that is, with groceries, and was named Adler & Diamant. Besides this retail store we also had a so-called wholesale business. That means that we supplied those groceries to smaller shopkeepers in surrounding towns and villages, and besides this we also had a mill right in the town. Back then they called it an automatic mill. An automatic mill means that it ran on electricity and not water. You know, back then mills were usually run by a water wheel.

My dear father, Arnold Adler, was born on 24th May 1895 in Pezinok, and had eight siblings. The two oldest brothers, Jozef and Eduard, died in World War I. Another of my father's sisters was Aunt Ema Adler, married Weider. She lived in Zilina and had two daughters, Olga and Ilus. Olga married a man by the name of Frankl and had one son, Alex, who was born around 1930. They all moved to England before the Holocaust. Ema's second daughter, Ilus, wasn't married. She lived with her mother in Zilina. In the year 1944 they deported them and they died in Poland.

Another of my father's sisters was named Tereza [Terezia], so Tereza Adler, married name Reichenberg. Her husband was named Bela, and they lived in Dioszeg what is today Sladkovicovo. They had two children. Their son was named Jenö. In 1939, together with his uncle Oskar, another of my father's brothers, he moved to Israel, at that time Palestine. There he married Edith and they have a son, Micki. He was born in 1944. Tereza's daughter was named Grete. Grete married a man named Klein. They had two children. They all died in concentration camps, their parents Tereza and Bela Reichenberg as well.

My father's sister Vilma had a husband named David Sebestyén, who was a veterinarian in Pezinok. Later they lived in Bratislava, and right before the deportations, in Zilina. They had two children. Lilly married Stefan Frankl. Her husband comes from Zilina. Lilly and her husband survived the war and in 1946 they had a daughter, Zuzka [Zuzana], who after graduating from high school moved to

England. There she married a Czech by the name of Nesvadba. Lilly died in around the year 1988 in Zilina. Vilma's son was named Pavel. During the war they caught him together with his parents at the Zilina train station. From there they deported them somewhere. None of them survived the war.

Another of my father's brothers was named Richard Adler. His wife was named Malvina, nee Quittova. They had one daughter, Bozsi. When the Hitler era began, they sent her as a young girl to England, where she survived the war. She married a man by the name of Roubicek, by origin a Czech Jew. After the war they returned to Prague and had a son, Franta. After the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, in the year 1948 [see February 1948] [2](#), they returned to England. After the death of Roubicek, her husband, Bozsi married a widower by the name of Seelig in Israel. She currently lives partly in Israel and partly with her son in England. Bozsi's parents, Richard and Malvina, died during the Holocaust.

Another of my father's brothers was Rudolf Adler. He was born around the year 1898. During World War II he lived in Sladkovicovo and Nove Zamky. During this time he married a widow by the name of Ella, nee Reichard or Reinhard. Ella had a son, Tomas, from her first marriage. Together with the little boy she died in a concentration camp. Rudolf, or Rudi, got married for a second time in Zilina, around 1947, to Erna. Erna was from Poland and came to Zilina because of her brother-in-law, Pista [Stefan] Braun. Rudi died in 1973 and Erna in 1988 or 1989.

The last of my father's brothers was named Oskar Adler. Before World War II he lived for a long time in Germany. After the year 1933, when Hitler seized power, he came to Bratislava. In 1939 he left for Israel with his nephew, Jenö Reichenberg, where he lived up until his death. He married Ruth, who moved there still before the war with her aunt. They had no children.

My mother came from the Baumhorn family. My grandfather was named Bertalan Baumhorn, and was from Zilina, from a well-known family of bakers. He was born on 26th October 1867. People in the town still remember the family to this day. My grandmother was named Paula Baumhorn, nee Neudorfer. She was born on 11th June 1873. I'm not sure where exactly she was from, I think from Kezmarok. They settled in Zilina. My grandfather died on 22nd October 1904 at the age of 37, he was still very young. My grandmother became a widow with three children. As she didn't have a house of her own, she had to sell her husband's store. She put the money in the bank and lived off the interest. But my grandfather's family helped her a lot. So you could say that she and the three children lived modestly, but decently.

My grandmother was a person whom I loved perhaps most of all. And I can say, though it's unusual, that I put her in first place. No, the first place during my childhood years belongs to my father, then my grandmother, and only then my mother after her. Because my grandmother was fantastic. For the times she was a very wise, progressive and modern woman. I remember how she would discuss politics with my father. She had a fantastic rapport with children. She was simply fantastic. For example, I never wanted to eat soup, and she knew how to go at it with me. She would say, you don't have to eat, just taste it, and so she slowly taught me to eat everything. I was picky, but she changed me in this way that was acceptable to me.

Because we lived in Pezinok and my grandmother in Zilina, we couldn't visit each other often. But I think it was in 1934, when she moved to Bratislava, to live with her son Pavel, who was still unmarried at the time. During that time I visited her often. I spent my summer vacation with her,

and she would teach me how to make preserves. She was simply an exceptional homemaker and very punctilious. She was everything to me.

My mother lived with my grandma in Zilina until she married my father and moved to Pezinok. My mother was born on 29th June 1899. As I've already mentioned, she had two siblings. Her sister was named Erzi [Alzbeta Baumhorn]. She was born around the year 1895 and died very young, at the age of seventeen, of tuberculosis. She got it from some infected boy.

My mother's brother was named Pavel Baumhorn. He was born on 2nd October 1902 in Zilina. In 1937 he married Eva, nee Schwarz, from Pezinok. They lived in Bratislava and had a daughter named Viera. But they called her Junta. She was born in 1938. My mother's brother inherited half of a carbon dioxide factory in Bratislava from some uncle. He then ran the office in that factory. In 1944 they sent the entire family, together with my grandma, who lived with them, to the Auschwitz concentration camp. When they were conducting the selection, with women and children to one side, my grandmother took the child and thus saved the bride. That bride is still alive today: she's 88 years old and lives in Bratislava. My uncle's death was later described to us by one of his fellow prisoners. Before the war he weighed about 100 kilos, well, and in the concentration camp he shrank down to 50. He died during the transfers from one camp to another in a freight train. Besides Aunt Eva, who was born on 6th December 1917, they all died.

My father was born in Pezinok. He graduated from a two-year business school, likely in Bratislava, as there was no school like that in Pezinok before World War I. My father attended German schools, as his mother tongue was German, but he also spoke Hungarian and Slovak. Well, and my mother, though she lived in Zilina, attended Hungarian schools. I and my brother [Juraj Adler] spoke Slovak with our parents, but what language we spoke with my father's parents, that I don't remember any more.

## My parents

My parents met each other in Pezinok. My mother's uncle, Mr. Neudorfer, worked in a brick factory in Pezinok, which in those days was a classy business. He had a beautiful company apartment there, and my mother would go visit him. That's where she met my father. They were married on 29th June 1922 in Zilina, as that's where my mother was from. I'm assuming that it was in the synagogue courtyard, but I don't know for sure, as my mother wasn't at all religious. In Zilina there was a large modern Neolog [3](#) community. Pezinok had an Orthodox [4](#) one. So my grandmother's family from Zilina didn't keep kosher. Because my mother moved to Pezinok, where there was an Orthodox community, she had to adapt. So we therefore kept kosher at home.

My father owned a store, several warehouses and a mill, together with his partner, Mr. Moric Diamant. They worked from morning till evening. Besides this, one day a week my father would make the rounds in surrounding towns like for example Svaty Jur, Raca, then still Racisdorff, and take orders from smaller merchants. Then they would deliver it all to them. Besides this they also had a small truck, a 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, with which they would distribute the ordered goods. They of course employed a driver, and also an assistant driver. My mother and Mr. Diamond's wife, Frida, worked in the store itself. They were, as they say, the ladies behind the counter. They served customers, everything was still hand-wrapped back then, there weren't any packaged foods. Flour also had to be weighed. They were in that store from morning till evening. Besides them there was also one journeyman in the store. They also employed people at the mill. I don't know exactly how

many of them there were. But they didn't pick workers only from among Jews.

Mr. Diamant also had a brother in Pezinok. He actually came to live there because of his brother. The Diamant brothers were from a very numerous family. They came from a village near Topolcany named Oponice. Here they made friends with my father and agreed among themselves that they'd reopen the store that my father's father had left him. Diamant had some money, my father had no money but an empty store. So they went into business together. They divided the responsibilities, and there was 100 percent trust between them.

Mr. Moric Diamant had a very unusual relationship with my father. They weren't related, they were only friends. We shared everything with the Diamants. The store was shared, the house was shared. Everything was shared, like for example coal, wood... Everyone took what groceries they needed from the store. Simply put, perhaps not even the best family lived like we did. We had everything half and half. The Diamants had three children: two daughters, Gerta and Liana, and a son, Zigmund.

My father, if I'm to be objective, as far as is possible, was the most fantastic person. I loved him terribly. He was very just. He had not even a speck of animosity in him. He was very tolerant and kind-hearted. I can't tell you anything specific about his political opinions. I do know, though, that my father was the only one of the siblings who didn't serve in the army. Because he took care of supplying the army, he was exempted from army service. I didn't like my mother as much. What I can say about her is that she was a very good homemaker. She loved that store, it was everything to her. Simply put, she was completely absorbed by that store. Our household was very well-run and everything was in the utmost order. Nothing was wasted. And the only thing that I felt was that she liked my brother more than me. She didn't even hide it very much.

## Growing up

My brother was named Juraj Adler and was born on 14th June 1923, in Bratislava. Five years later, on 4th February 1928, I, Alica Gazikova, nee Adlerova, was born. I was also born in Bratislava, on Telocvicna Street, at that time Zochova, but only because Pezinok had no maternity hospital and my mother didn't want to give birth at home. It was a small, private maternity clinic.

We lived in Pezinok, where my parents bought a house together with the Diamants. It stood across from a church and at one time there had been a restaurant in it. My parents renovated it a bit. We had a four and a half room apartment. Huge rooms. The dining room had Jugendstil furniture. Jugendstil, that's Art Nouveau. There was also a piano in the dining room. Then there was our parents' bedroom, that was the second room. The third room was our children's bedroom. We children together with a young lady, our governess, lived and slept in the largest, the children's room, which had at least 7 x 5 meters, two windows and two large double doors. One set led into the hallway and the second into our parents' bedroom. The furniture was white with black trim. Also Jugendstil. The most beautiful was the stove, a so-called American one, with little slate windows at the front and sides. Heating with them was very complicated, so that's why our parents exchanged it for a normal cast-iron one. So much for romance. When the lights went out, and only the little slate windows were shining, our governess would tell us a tale, or about some event in her life. It was amazing to see that stove, or actually oven. It was very valuable. More than one nouveau-rich type would have liked to have such a thing in his multi-million crown house. The fourth room had a radio and an armchair. Then there was a huge kitchen, and one more small

room where the cook slept. Besides the cook we also had a governess who slept with us in the children's room.

We had several governesses. The last one was from Opava. She graduated from a school, the kind that today nursery-school teachers attend. She was even from a very good family. Her father was a judge. His wife died, however, so she was a half-orphan. She was German, but not a Fascist. She was named Mitzi, but I don't know her surname. She took care of us, the children, and our upbringing. She slept with us, took us for walks, taught me handicrafts and so on. We had a good relationship with her. Then we also had a cook that cooked and cleaned. There was a certain rivalry between them. Because the young lady, she thought herself to be a little better, and the cook as something a little less.

We also went through several cooks, so that's why I don't remember them all that well any more. But I'll tell you the truth, that with us, as they say, they had it good. My mother was very generous to them. For example at Christmas, they would go home, and would always get a large bundle. Normally my mother would buy for them, if they were single, things for their trousseau: clothes, dishcloths and so on. So they had it very good with us. They could eat as much as they wanted and weren't limited in any way. In this respect there was no problem at our place. But they didn't eat with us. When they finished their work during the week, they could go out, and on Sunday they had time off.

## Our religious life

We observed holidays in our family. But what for example my father very much regretted was that the store wasn't closed on Saturday. Normally, one would, as they say, 'fool' God, and that in a manner that the store was for all appearances closed, but things would be sold underneath the gate. And when the persecutions during the time of the Slovak State [5](#) arrived, he regretted that very much, because one way or another he lost everything anyways. My parents of course attended the synagogue. Father went on Friday evening, Saturday morning and on holidays. But normally during the day my father didn't cover his head. Jews have a custom that women attend the synagogue only on the high holidays. So my mother went only on those occasions. Sabbath was never observed much in our family. Only in that beforehand barches were baked, and our father, upon returning from the synagogue, would recite the Kiddush. For Saturday we would also prepare chulent, which would be taken across the street to the baker's, and on Saturday we would pick it up. Otherwise, my brother and I attended a public school, where there were classes on Saturday as well. That day we would go to school as usual, but we had an exception, we didn't have to write and draw.

I myself liked Passover the best, that was a holiday for me. It's a spring holiday, so I would usually also get new clothes. During this holiday you also have to change dishes. During this holiday you aren't allowed to eat leavened foods and bread is replaced by matzot. In the evening the entire family sits down at the seder table, which is set according to strict rules and those present speak about the significance of the Passover holiday. Back then schnorrers [beggar, the Yiddish term shnoder means 'to contribute'] from Poland would also come by, but they wouldn't sit down at our table. We weren't kosher enough for them: although we did have two separate cupboards in the kitchen, one for dairy products and the second for meat. We bought kosher meat, but even so we weren't kosher enough for them. Most of the time they would go into the store, and there my

mother would wrap something up for them. I of course didn't participate in the housecleaning before the holiday. For Yom Kippur we of course fasted. Our parents were in the synagogue the whole day and we as children would also attend.

There was only one Orthodox synagogue in town. During the holidays you definitely had to pay for a place in it. That was like it is now. There was also a religious tax. That was set according to one's earnings. They knew people's income and it was according to that. We, of course, belonged to the richer ones. So we also paid a higher tax. But you understand, you have to take into consideration, that I really can't remember how much it was. Our rabbi was named Dr. Jozef Schill. He had a PhD. in theology. Otherwise his name is also engraved in the Jewish Museum [Editor's note: one of the rooms in the Museum of Jewish Culture in Bratislava serves as a Holocaust memorial room. One of its walls has a list of names of all rabbis from the territory of today's Slovak Republic that were murdered during the Shoah]. Now, he was religious to the point of bigotry. He was exceptionally, exceptionally religious and very poor. They had six children. One very handicapped child, it had the so-called English disease [English disease, or rickets: caused by a deficiency of Vitamin D, is a disease specific to childhood. Food intake can be a factor in its occurrence - insufficient intake of Vitamin D and also calcium and phosphorus]. Back then it was simply a disease caused by a lack of proper food and unhealthy living conditions. I think that he had three daughters and three sons.

One of his daughters was self-taught. She even prepared my brother for his bar mitzvah, which was unusual, for a woman to do this. She knew both spoken and written Hebrew. She taught me as well, but languages. At first German grammar, back then still in Schwabisch [Old German, or Suetterlin] script. To this day I can still write in Schwabisch. Last of all, she was also teaching herself English. One day a week she would come over to our place and give me English lessons. So those were my foundations of English. As well, one day a week I would have German with her. For that I would for a change go to her place. In this fashion she earned a few extra crowns.

I remember my brother's bar mitzvah very well. It was a grand event, a little humorous as well, Juro's [Juraj] bar mitzvah was. If I remember correctly, it was on 14th June in the year 1936, at least the closest Saturday to that date. As far as the religious aspects of this event was concerned, that was prepared by the daughter of the rabbi, Dr. Jozef Schill. I was eight years old at the time, but I remember everything. Of course this event couldn't take place in just any old way, the only son of Mr. Adler, not the poorest Jew in town, was having his bar mitzvah! In order for everything to be as it should, our entire huge apartment was repainted. The windowsills were painted, the apartment was renovated and furniture purchased. I know that we also bought new curtains and a modern writing desk. We used to call the living room the 'Radio-Zimmer' [German for 'radio-room'] in those days because it had a radio. Paradoxically, the living room was the smallest room.

So I'll return to the bar mitzvah. Now came the dilemma as to who to invite to this magnificent celebration. In the end they emptied out our huge children's room. In it were nothing but tables and chairs for about thirty or more people. The selection was very difficult, in the end it was announced in the synagogue that everyone's invited. The large shelves in the pantry were filled with cakes, barkhes and so on. On the evening before the big day the back then still numerous family got together for a celebratory supper. The culmination of the evening was a swan made of parfait, that's what today's ice cream was called. They brought it in a box packed with ice all the way from Bratislava, from some fancy restaurant. I can't remember its name. In any event it doesn't exist any more today. I didn't have anything of that delicacy, they sent me to bed early and

in the morning it was all gone. Not everyone who came touched their food, because for some we weren't kosher enough. The next day my mother sent to those, who were mostly the devout poor, an envelope with money. The rabbi Dr. Jozef Schill also came. And for this reason he didn't even touch a glass of water.

In connection with this event there was suddenly a problem with Juro's clothing. Up to this time he had never had long pants. And because a bar mitzvah is supposed to show a man who has the obligation to uphold religious customs, his clothing was also supposed to be appropriate, that is, covering his body. Up to then in the winter he had mainly worn knee breeches together with stockings. But this also wasn't appropriate, because it was sports clothing, not suited to the occasion. In the end he had a dark-blue suit, but with short pants after all. God probably didn't care one way or the other, and the rabbi looked the other way.

We had good relations with the people in town. In the house that we lived in also lived the Diamant family. Besides this, in the back in our courtyard there was this tiny little apartment. Poorer Jews used to live in it. On one side of our house we had no neighbors, and on the other we did, they were old maids, teachers. All of them were German, but in those days that wasn't a problem. But there was no time for big friendships, because my parents were fully occupied. The closest family relations that my parents kept up was with the Sebestyen family, who lived in my grandparents' original house, as I've described. That was my mother's sister-in-law, my father's sister. Then my mother and her brother, Pavel, who had moved to Bratislava, were in touch. My father also had in those days two unmarried brothers, Rudolf and Oskar, who used to come visit us. So the family would meet up.

Our vacations were very limited, as my parents didn't have time for vacations. In those days it wasn't really the custom. When we did go, it was usually only with my mother. I remember only one vacation, when we were in Luhacovice [the spa town of Luhacovice lies in the southeastern part of the Czech Republic]. Back then people didn't go on vacation much.

## **My school years**

My brother and I never attended nursery school. We had an educated governess. We'd go to the park with her, and when I grew up a bit, she taught me handicrafts. I began attending a Slovak public school. I started school in the year 1934. Now that was a big dilemma. In that single school building there was one German class and three Slovak classes. By this I mean first grade classes, and because I had a German governess, I spoke better German than Slovak. But in those days Fascism had already begun, so my parents immediately refused it and put me into a Slovak classroom. I don't want to boast, but I was a good student and I loved all subjects equally. We had an excellent teacher, Mrs. Maria Bencurikova. In the second grade Mrs. Bencurikova left to become a nun, and after the second grade we got this one teacher. He was actually a Czech by origin, or a Moravian, and knew how to draw beautifully. He was named Komanec. He was a fantastic teacher. I remember that he drew something very nice for me in my diary, which I no longer have.

When I was already attending school, my mother signed me up for piano lessons. My mother brought to the marriage one large piece of furniture, and that was a Viennese Bosendorff piano. I'm not familiar with the brands of those days, but it was really a first-class brand. The piano stood in our dining room. It was a large, black grand piano, its top decorated with golden lines and moreover decorated with beautiful mother of pearl. When the lid was lifted, inside there were



wooden parts like for example a music stand and also flat candleholders that slid out, made out of beautiful white sanded, not painted, wood. At one time my mother's sister had played on the piano, and my mother a little as well. I rarely saw her play though, and for many years her fingers didn't even touch the piano.

But since there was a piano, and a daughter, me that is, it was necessary for it to once again be played. A piano tuner was called in, as I later learned, it was never possible to properly tune the piano, so even back then there used to be lemons. They took me to see Miss Edita Mikulikova, a piano teacher. Pezinok had no music school. Miss Mikulikova was an old maid. She lived with her mother, and her father had at one time been the mayor of Pezinok. She wore horrible hats and always had a bow tied under her chin. She had quite a few students. I don't even know whether besides her there was anyone else in Pezinok that taught piano. They bought me Bayer, that was beginner's music for piano. Then followed Cerny I and Cerny II and I began to learn. Back then it wasn't the custom to take off your shoes, there [at Miss Mikulikova's] you had to take off your shoes or galoshes, as the kids would have brought in tons of mud. Her mother, Mrs. Mikulikova, had the biggest joy not from the students' success, but when she could slander a student that had just left. The furniture was terribly old-fashioned, but covered in white sheets, mainly the upholstered parts, so that the sun wouldn't fade them. When a fly buzzed by, Miss Mikulikova would jump up, leave the piano be until she caught the fly and then stuck it into a flower pot. Apparently flies make good fertilizer.

OK, I've gotten a bit off track. I plinked, I plunked, but besides taking piano lessons, it was also necessary to practice. During the summer and fall everything was fine. My musical successes weren't above average, but beginnings were the same with everyone, so I didn't really stick out much in any negative fashion. As much as our piano stood in the dining room, which wasn't heated, and heating it just because of my playing the piano would have been exceptionally unprofitable, my musical career was put to an end. Miss Mikulikova was so angry at me, that when after the termination of our teacher-student relationship I met her on the street and said 'hello ma'am,' she didn't answer and sailed off in front of me with her chin in the air. That's how I ended up. And how did the piano end up? In the year 1952, when we were moving from Pezinok to Bratislava into a small two and a half room apartment at 47 Cervene Armady Street, before that and later Grossling Street, the piano wasn't moved, as it would not have fit into the small apartment here in Bratislava. My parents sold the piano for 4,500 crowns. A year later there was a drastic currency reform [6](#). Currency was exchanged at a ratio of 1:50, only regular savings deposits were changed at 1:5. So out of 4,500 crowns for the piano we ended up with, if I'm counting correctly, 90 crowns.

Anti-Jewish laws [see Jewish Codex] [7](#) began to appear when I had finished the fifth grade of elementary school. I went into the first year of council school, that was still normal. It was the year 1940 and then I commenced my second year of council school, and two weeks after the beginning of the school year they threw us out of there. In one word they told us that students of Jewish origin weren't allowed to attend. What did we do after that? The parents in Pezinok simply got together and found a teacher in Bratislava who commuted daily. He taught all the Jewish children from first up to eighth grade. Once every three months we then went to Zochova Street in Bratislava, where there was a Jewish school. There we wrote exams. This is how I studied for two years: seventh and eighth grade. What came after that, that's a different story.

## **During the war**

In 1942 I got into a Protestant boarding school in Modra. That was already illegal. After I finished the eighth grade I was 14 years old. My parents arranged for me to be accepted into that Protestant boarding school. They accepted more of us Jewish girls, under the condition that we become Protestants. Since I wasn't, they quickly christened me and I spent two years in that boarding school, where they treated us well. There were about 20 of us Jewish girls there. That is, some of us left and there were also those that arrived. It was all organized by the local Protestant minister in those days, Mr. Julius Derer. He was the administrator of the boarding school. We attended school normally. The residence was on the upper floors, and the school was below on the ground floor. We of course couldn't move about outside of the boarding school. We couldn't show ourselves very much and communicate with the outside world. Not even any visits. We were hidden away there, but within the confines of the boarding school we moved about, were fed, studied. And we even got a report card.

For the two years I was at the boarding school, my parents stayed in Pezinok. My father had an exception, which protected him. [Editor's note: during the time of the Slovak State, there was a so-called Presidential Exception [8](#) and the Economically Important Jew exception; those were given to Jews performing work activities that weren't easily replaced. The father of the interviewee fell under the second of the aforementioned exceptions.] And you could say that we also had a decent Aryanizer [Aryanization - the transfer of Jewish stores, firms, companies, etc., into the ownership of another person (Aryanizer)]. What I can tell you about the Aryanizer is that he was named Jozko Slimak. His wife was a teacher. The strange thing was that she had some sort of Jewish origin, which no one knew about. Despite this, he was the decent one and she was quite devious. Well, she constantly wanted money and more money. But Mr. Slimak behaved decently. As an Aryanizer he had a quite difficult position in that every Aryanizer was allowed to take one of the former owners as an adviser, that is, one Jew. Here though there were two, because my father and Mr. Diamant were partners. Mr. Slimak didn't want to do either my father or Mr. Diamant any harm, and juggling between those two wasn't that easy. But how he managed to hold on to both of them, I don't know.

When I left the boarding school in 1944, my mother was very farsighted. She arranged a hiding place for our entire family in Pezinok with Mr. and Mrs. Zaruba. First we were hidden away in a room. One day they summoned Mr. Zaruba, the reason being that he and his wife live alone, childless, and have a two and a half room house. They needed to place a German officer with them. He didn't protest, so the German officer was moved into the room that we had been hiding in, and he moved us into the cellar. He was so generous that he didn't throw us out. So the German officer lived above us and we below him in the cellar. On the one hand, it was very secure, in that it would never have occurred to anyone that there could be Jews hiding where a German officer is. You can imagine that it was all very complicated and in the end he was fantastic that he didn't throw us out and hid us until the last moment: until the end of the war. Then we started to have bad luck. That's a story all in itself. A week before the liberation of Pezinok we had to leave there and in the end we found a safe haven in Pezinska Baba. One day there were still Germans there, and the next day the Red Army arrived, who liberated us.

## Post-war

The fact that we had to abandon our hiding place a week before the liberation is a very complicated affair. The parents of Mr. Zaruba, with whom we were hidden away, lived in a

neighboring village. And they were also hiding Jews, by coincidence our partners, the Diamants. We didn't know that they were there, and they didn't know about us. The son didn't know that his parents were hiding someone, and the parents didn't know that their son was hiding someone. His parents had a store in that village, a pub, fields and cows. Once, by coincidence, a German woman from Pezinok came to them for milk and saw the Diamants. She right away went and turned them in. The parents and children were hidden there. As soon as she informed on them, they came for them. One little girl was on the toilet at the time and the parents didn't say, "You know, we've also got a daughter." And that little girl was brought here by another of old Mr. Zaruba's sons. The man that was hiding us expected though, that when they discovered that there's a little girl missing, they'd go looking for her at his place. During the night Zaruba had to eliminate all signs of our hiding place. We had to leave. Mr. Zaruba loaded us into a car and drove us up to Pezinska Baba. There, there was this one cabin-dweller, Mr. Ossko. We knew him, as he used to shop in our store in Pezinok. He let us stay with him up until the liberation. They took the Diamants together with their son to Terezin [9](#). That was already near the end of the war, so they were in Terezin for only a very short time. They all survived. Their little girl Lianka and son Zigmund to this day live in Israel.

Zigo [Zigmund] Diamant was a very good friend of mine. We were friends from childhood and were better friends than when two girls or two boys are friends. He lived in the same house and we had a huge garden, and he was this 'thinker-upper'. He was always thinking something up. Even though his parents were quite religious, Zigo was modern. He liked hiking and camping. He could draw very well. After World War II he went to Banska Stiavnica to study at a school specializing in the timber industry. In 1949, after he graduated, their entire family emigrated to Israel. There he got a university education. In Tel Aviv he had an office with another friend, originally I think from Austria. They were interior architects and mostly did the interior design of buildings. For example they also worked on the Tel Aviv airport. Today he lives in Natania, near the sea.

The way we ended up at the Zarubas' place was that his parents had a store in Kocisdorf, today Vinosady. My father and Mr. Diamant supplied their store with goods. So somehow in this fashion we ended up with them. The Diamants ended up with his parents in a similar fashion. Everything happened independently, so that one didn't know about the other. I can even say that not even my mother's brother, not even her family, knew where we were. For the fact that they hid us, that family has also been registered among the Righteous Among The Nations. [Editor's note: the title Righteous Among The Nations is granted by Yad Vashem to people of non-Jewish origins that during World War II saved or helped save Jews.] Mrs. Zarubova was at that time only a year older than me. She still lives in Pezinok. We still communicate with each other, phone each other, visit. They saved us in very dramatic circumstances.

It's hard to say how many members of the Jewish community survived the war. My estimate is about ten percent. In 1949, well, that's only what I think, a wave of emigrations began. Whether the government gave people that wanted to leave problems, I don't know. I only know that when someone wanted to go to America, he needed a letter of invitation from there. That means that his family or friends that already lived there guaranteed that they'd take care of him financially and so on; basically that the person that's arriving won't become a burden on the state and won't ask for any government support. My best friend was named Magda Sproncova, now Gross. She lives in Israel, in Haifa. I keep in touch with her via letters and the phone. I also went to visit her, and by coincidence she had married a Pezinokian, who she maybe didn't even know before. He left for

Israel with his parents already in 1939. She went there in 1949, first she was in a kibbutz for a year and then her parents and brother also arrived and he lives there to this day. Their parents have already died, but her brother lives there.

Luckily my parents survived the war, and my brother as well. At that time I was 17. We returned to our original apartment, where only a couple of things remained. Everything had been stolen, and I'll tell you, we started anew. My first concern was school. There was a commerce school in Pezinok, so I immediately registered. My classmates were already in second year, so I tried to as quickly as possible to learn what I had missed. I managed it, and in September 1945 I wrote the entrance exams and was accepted into second year. In those days commerce school had two years.

My parents once again began to do business in the store, together with their partner, Mr. Diamant. It was more or less distribution, for example of flour and sugar. We had warehouse space and so began to supply smaller stores with goods, flour, sugar and so on. They rented vehicles and that's how the goods were distributed. Later they nationalized it [see Nationalization in Czechoslovakia] [10](#) and in its place opened a Mototechna. [Editor's note: state-owned company with headquarters in Prague, founded in 1949; buys, sells and repairs motor vehicles and accessories.] My father then worked in it. His partner, Mr. Diamant, with whom he as they say cooperated, left with his family in 1949 for Israel. My brother got a job in Bratislava at the Gestadtner firm. Maybe it was a German company, or maybe a Jewish one, I don't know. They concerned themselves with copy machines and copy technology. My mother was a housewife.

My parents also intended to move to Israel. When my father's partner left in 1949, I know that we already had made a list of our clothing. At that time Pezinok fell under Trnava, there was some government office there, and I know that they even certified that list of clothing there. To this day I don't know why we didn't leave for Israel. It's hard to say whether I regretted it at the time. I began to regret it much later, really. Not until 1990, when I was in Israel for the first time, and met up with that girlfriend of mine, Magda. It was quite a bit later.

In 1952 we moved from Pezinok to Bratislava. We lived on Grosslingova Street. Later it was renamed to Ceskoslovenske Armady Street [Czechoslovak Army Street], and today it's once again Grosslingova. My father worked for Mototechna. Mototechna had a store in the Royko Passage, where they sold bicycles, sewing machines, and he worked there as the manager. My mother was at home, but here and there helped my father out in the store, because she enjoyed it.

## **My husband**

I met my husband-to-be [Albert Gazik, born Gansel] by complete chance. At that time I was working at the Ministry of Food Industries on Vajanske Nabrezi, now the Tatrabanka bank is located there. He came there to see some colleague of mine on a work-related matter, she wasn't there and I was filling in for her, and that's how we met. My husband was of Jewish origin, but I don't know if that was a deciding factor in our relationship. Well, maybe there was some sympathy due to that. We had our wedding in Bratislava in an Orthodox synagogue on Heydukova Street on 9th September 1954. At that time there was still this one rabbi here, by the name of Izidor Katz. He later left to go abroad somewhere. The way it was in those days was that you first had to have a civil wedding, which was at the Town Hall, and then on the same day in the synagogue, the clerical wedding. Our wedding reception was at the Carlton Hotel. There weren't a lot of guests, 21 I think.

My husband's father was named Armin Herman Gansel and his mother Zaneta Ganselova, nee Reif. He also had a brother, named Jozef. Their family lived in Banska Bystrica. During the war Bystrica was the center of the uprising. My husband and his brother joined as soldiers of the Czechoslovak Army. They weren't partisans, but soldiers. As soldiers they captured them during the night in one cabin, I think that the place was named Kozi Chrbat. It was a cabin in the mountains. Someone betrayed them to the Germans, and they attacked them during the night, captured them and took them away into captivity. They were somewhere in Germany. My husband's brother was two or three years younger and wasn't as physically strong. He didn't survive captivity. My husband was very strong. My husband's parents survived the war hidden in the mountains somewhere, under very dramatic conditions, as it was horribly cold and they bore it very badly.

In my husband's family Jewish traditions were kept up quite a bit, as my husband's parents were from devout families. My father-in-law came from around Komarno and my husband's mother was from Topolciany. Before the war Topolciany had a very strong, devout Jewish community. After the war, though, they abandoned keeping kosher, but they observed all the holidays.

After our wedding, in 1954, my husband and I settled in Zvolen, as my husband was from Banska Bystrica and at that time worked in Zvolen. I found a job at the Central Slovakia Poultry company in Zvolen, and I was there for thirteen years, and for thirteen years we lived in Zvolen. I worked in the same place the whole time. It was a relatively prosperous company. It had plants outside of Zvolen as well. We served as the company directorate, and at one time I was the sales manager and then supply manager. I never became a member of the Communist Party [of Czechoslovakia (KSC)] [11](#). I was only in the ROH [12](#). My husband had to be in the Party, but not due to his convictions. His father was according to the views of the time a wholesaler, so my husband had to compensate for it somehow. Otherwise he would have had big problems finding work.

In the year 1956 my husband and I changed our name. Before, my husband had been named Gansel, and he changed it to Gazik. I became Gazikova. At that time I was expecting our first daughter, and that's how we decided. It was, as they say, in fashion. But I always said at work, but also everywhere else as well, that I'm of Jewish origin. I never hid it in any way. According to me that's the worst that can be, because in the end, they would have found out about it anyways. I always had good friends and they didn't make any exceptions, neither at work nor anywhere else. During that period, mainly in Zvolen, I didn't perceive anything. That's why I said in Zvolen, because you know, in a small town people aren't as rotten as in a big city.

In Zvolen in those days there was a small Jewish community. They were mainly older people. My husband and I used to go visit them. We associated with them, but otherwise, I can tell you, there were five families there. Older than we were, even then. Maybe only one younger couple and that was all. So basically one can't talk about some sort of Jewish community functioning in Zvolen after the war. In this environment we didn't observe holidays, only among ourselves in the family, but officially it wasn't possible. You know, at that time you had to also go to work. The community didn't even gather for holidays like Yom Kippur. Close to Zvolen lies Banska Bystrica, where there was a Jewish community, and a prayer hall. My husband's parents were also there, but we didn't go visit them for the holidays much either. My parents in Bratislava didn't keep kosher, but they did attend the synagogue and also observed the holidays.

My older daughter Eva was born exactly two years after our wedding [1956]. She was born in Bratislava. I went to Bratislava to give birth, because my parents lived there and I was with them for two months after giving birth, with the little one. Then we returned to Zvolen. My second daughter wasn't born until seven years later [1963] in Zvolen. I was on maternity leave for three and a half months both during the first and the second child. Back then that's how it was. Maternity leave was four and a half months. Of that one month could be taken before and three and a half after giving birth. In those days the job situation in Zvolen was so bad that no one dared extend it. So when one and then the other was three and a half months old, I went to work and left the child with a lady who was a complete stranger. I didn't have any family in Zvolen, so I had to find someone to take care of the children. But they took good care of them for me. Everything was fine.

My parents and brother, who lived in Bratislava, tried hard to get me to move there. But first my husband had to find work in the city. By coincidence one of his former colleagues roped him in to work with him in Bratislava. At that time they were putting together the head office of the Prior department stores. That colleague was a deputy, and he also promised him an apartment. Though a co-op one, the kind they were building in those days. That company, that is, those department stores, had four co-op apartments at their disposal. So an apartment had also been secured, as well as work. In 1967 we moved from Zvolen to Bratislava. My husband worked at the head office until he retired. As a pensioner he then worked in the administration of the Jewish Religious Community in Bratislava at 18 Kozej Street. For example he took care of kosher meat and its distribution. He issued documents when someone died and so on. He worked there until his death in the year 1995.

I have to say though, that life in Zvolen was quite good, though boring. Very quickly I found friends there. We would always spice things up a bit by going to Sliac. [Editor's note: the spa town of Sliac is in central Slovakia, in the Zvolen district. In 1970 it had 3286 inhabitants.] It was only a couple of kilometers away. We had beautiful walks with the children in Sliac. Then, in the Hotel Palac, there was a so-called 'tea at five,' though it was at 4 o'clock, and children could eat there too. So my husband and I would dance a bit there. My husband loved to dance very much. Later they built a chalet there. They had haluszky with bryndza [haluszky are somewhat similar to potato gnocchi, and are usually served with bryndza, a creamy sheep cheese] and the children chased each other about there. It was simply a beautiful place. During summer vacation we would go on holidays around Czechoslovakia. They were those advantageous ROH recreational activities. So we were for example for cultural recreation in Prague, all ROH. We were in the Krkonose Mountains, we were in Marianske Lazne [Marienbad] [13](#) around two or three times. In fact even for our honeymoon in 1954 we went on a ROH trip to Marianske Lazne.

My husband and I used to attend the theater. He had many friends. You know, I wasn't, as they say, the coffee-shop type. For example, later, when we were already living in Bratislava, my husband would meet every Sunday morning with friends at the Hotel Devin. We didn't choose our friends from only Jewish circles. We had both those, and others. Religion didn't matter. We had friends from work, from childhood. It was a mixed group.

During totalitarian times we didn't go abroad much. The first time I went abroad was to Balaton, around the year 1958. I was the ROH treasurer and as a bonus I got a holiday at Balaton. Once we were with our friends, that was probably in 1966, in Vienna, but for only about three days. The car we drove belonged to our friends. At that time we didn't have a car. They had this Skoda and they

were these terribly meticulous people. They had everything planned out in advance. They also planned that trip to Austria, to Vienna. In the evening we went for a walk around Vienna and suddenly we came up to one display window that measured at least three meters. It was 10pm and the display window was full, full of gold, I don't know, rings, chains, and so on. When I got home, I pinched myself, whether I had been dreaming, or if it was true that such a thing existed. Because here, in those days, if a jeweler's got even one little pendant, people queued up. That's how it was, it's ridiculous, but it's true.

As I've mentioned, my husband's parents lived in Banska Bystrica. Around 1952 or 1953, I can't tell you exactly, there was this campaign, that they moved richer people, or people that had once been business owners, out of their own apartments or houses. During 48 hours they had to abandon their own house. This also happened to my in-laws. They had to abandon their own house and they moved them to Spania Dolina. Into horrible, horrible conditions. I can't be described. Into this one horrible house. A wet, moldy one. It had a kitchen and one room. But they had to live on something, so my father-in-law, that was during the time I was getting married, so in 1954, did shift work in the Harmanec paper mill. He didn't have a demanding job. He was in some electrical room and recorded from some gauges how much electricity was being used. But he had to do shift work, at night as well, and so on. What was also horrible, my husband's mother took the death of her son very hard, the one that hadn't returned from captivity. She had serious psychological problems because of it. My husband's mother died on 4th February 1967. They buried her in Banska Bystrica in an Orthodox cemetery.

In Banska Bystrica, a few months after the death of his wife, my husband's father met a former, very rich, resident of Bystrica, who before the war had owned a big distillery. He was named Lowy and he convinced him, which we didn't find out until later, to go to Brno, that there's a Jewish old age home there. He told him how fantastic it was there. That he'd even have kosher food. That he could even bring his own furniture. In Brno he'd be able to live a religious life, because there was a decent Jewish community there. Imagine that my father-in-law moved away without saying one word to us. In the meantime we had been looking for an apartment in Bratislava for him, because he wanted to be independent. Some one-room apartment, however with central heating. Well, you know, in those days it wasn't that easy. Back then you couldn't find an apartment just like that, like today. My father-in-law, without telling us anything, packed up his household and went to that old-age home in Brno.

It's true that there were many people similar to him living there. A certain Mr. Klimo lived there. Then some rich guy from Liptovsky Mikulas, who before the war had had a fur factory there. There were many well-known furriers in Liptovsky Mikulas, among non-Jews as well. So that old-age home in Brno was a gathering place for, as they say, high society. So he packed himself up and went to Brno. Then, when he was already there, my husband went to help him. But he arranged it all himself. So we began to go to Brno. We would drive there every third, fourth Sunday. We'd pick up my father-in-law and go out, for example to a restaurant. He was quite mobile, and also would come here, to Bratislava. Regularly for winter holidays, he was always here for two weeks. But you know, people slowly died off and the old-age home was transferred to the state. It wasn't even kosher any more, but at least they upgraded it a bit. They installed an elevator, which until then hadn't been there.

My father-in-law still felt great about being there. You see, he had at one time been a businessman. He'd had a textile and fancy goods store in Banska Bystrica. In Brno it was as if he'd returned into his past. He performed services for the old-age home residents. More or less in the fashion that in the morning he would sit down in the hall, and the residents would come to him, 'Please Mr. Gansel...' - that was his name - "...please Mr. Gansel, I need a postcard for someone's name day. And I need some toothpaste..." He'd write it all down and go into town and return with the things he'd written down. Then after lunch, at one o'clock, he'd sit down again and distribute it all. When there was a larger amount to be bought, he borrowed a car that delivered food to them from one larger old-age home. The load would be brought with that car and he'd be completely ecstatic that he was a businessman again. Always when he came to visit us, he'd show us his orders and was proud of it.

In Brno my father-in-law made a close connection with the Jewish religious community. He went there every Friday and Saturday, to the synagogue. When he died, in 1975, the official part of his funeral was in Brno: a very nice, very well done funeral, that my husband and I attended with the children as well. During the night the funeral service then drove him to Banska Bystrica and the next day they buried him in Bystrica, in the Orthodox cemetery beside his wife, with us in attendance.

Observance of holidays went without saying with my parents. My father attended the synagogue regularly. My mother also attended the synagogue; she had her own place there. After my husband, the children and I moved to Bratislava, we also attended the synagogue with my parents during the holidays. In those days Bratislava had a quite large Jewish community, because they were all moving here from the surrounding villages. So we of course attended. But my brother was quite distant from religion, already from childhood. He wasn't very religiously inclined. Despite this he married a Jewess. For a long time she couldn't get pregnant, but after thirteen years she finally succeeded. And then they had two nice and healthy sons. My brother died on 15th October 1989 in Bratislava.

We moved to Bratislava in August of 1967, and by the beginning of October I already had a job. I began in the Detva manufacturing co-op. [Editor's note: in the year 1948 Detva was socialized into the Folk Art Manufacturing Center. In 1953 it was transferred to the Slovak Union of Manufacturing Co-ops as a Folk Art Manufacturing Co-op. In 1973 Detva had 806 workers.] I was there the whole time, practically until retirement. While already of retirement age I transferred to another co-op, Univerzal. [Editor's note: the Univerzal manufacturing co-op was located in Bratislava. Its activities were in the sphere of electro-technical and metallurgical industry.] Here I also worked in supply. Finally I became the caretaker of my own grandson, Daniel. I took care of him for two and a quarter years.

## **Our daughters**

Both of our daughters did very well at school. There were no problems with them. Both of them were straight-A students. The older one, Eva, began to take accordion lessons while still in Zvolen, but as they say, she didn't become a virtuoso, which she later regretted. Both had a talent for languages. After elementary school Eva attended high school and then graduated from medicine with honors. The second daughter, Viera, also went to high school and then studied economics at university. She became an engineer. She graduated at the age of 22, because in those days



economics was a four year program. After university she devoted herself to the English language. For three months she studied in America. She then left to study for seven months in Melbourne, Australia and did two months of work experience with one renowned American company located in Sydney. That was far from all. For a certain time the University of Pittsburgh had a distance study program in Bratislava. Professors from Pittsburgh would come every second week to Slovakia to lecture, in English of course. She finished this school and was awarded an MBA degree. The graduation ceremonies took place at the City Hall in Bratislava.

Eva got married a year before she finished her university studies, in 1980. Her husband comes from a Jewish family. They were married in a synagogue in Brno. The synagogue was completely crammed full, I don't know how everyone found out about it. The wedding didn't take place in Brno due to the fact that my future son-in-law was from there, but because at that time there was no rabbi in Bratislava. There was this one here, by coincidence also Katz, who before had been in Dunajska Streda. Not that I didn't like him. But he de facto wasn't a rabbi, he only let himself be called that. I think that he was a shochet. In Brno Mr. Neufeld was the cantor. He also did the wedding and together with his two sons sang at the wedding. He was from Banska Bystrica, the same as my husband. They sang beautifully. What more, which is strange, the synagogue wasn't full of Jews, but non-Jews came to have a look. For around twenty years there hadn't been a Jewish wedding there, and everyone was curious. In those days there weren't too many religious activities going on in Bratislava.

When my daughters left home I didn't feel sad, nor did I regret it in some way. They weren't going out of the country, not even out of the city. Eva and her husband have two children: a daughter, Dagmar, and a son, Daniel. Viera didn't get married. She's a single mother. Not long ago she had a daughter, Valeria, and now she's on maternity leave. Both of my daughters were brought up in a Jewish family, so also in a Jewish spirit. I don't know what the younger one is doing now, but the older one, along with her family, is a member of the Jewish religious community. She even has some sort of function in the community, but I don't know what. She attends the synagogue, and even my son-in-law is from a relatively devout family. He isn't so much, but his father was very devout. My grandson Daniel is momentarily studying in Israel.

Viera and I see each other almost daily, she lives relatively close by. I see the older one, Eva, about once, twice a week. She's very busy in her work. But we call each other almost every day. What sort of a relationship do I have with my grandchildren? Well, they like me, but do what they want. In the end, they have their own lives, and I can't burden them, something like that.

How did I experience the radical political changes in 1968 [see Prague Spring] [14](#)? The year 1968 affected everyone, even if not directly our family, but the atmosphere and so on. Of course a person was devastated by it, because already before 1968 there had been a certain loosening-up in the air, at least it seemed that way. But in 1989 [see Velvet Revolution] [15](#) my husband and I regretted that we aren't younger. We can't enjoy ourselves as much, traveling for example. My husband would for example liked to have gone into business. You know, he had it in him. Maybe he was also saddened by the fact that he saw that none of our children have it in them. He would have very much liked to be in business.

The first trip after the regime changed was in April of 1990 to Israel. It was a four-day trip, there and back. At that time President Havel [16](#) was there. Two planes went. We didn't go with Havel, but

in the other one. I traveled with my husband, our son-in-law and our younger daughter. I was enthralled by Israel. I hadn't imagined that it's that built-up. People are self-confident there. They don't have to be afraid that someone's going to discriminate against them due to their Jewish origins. Every country of course has its pluses and minuses. It depends on what eyes you look at it with. A minus is for example their relationship with the Arabs. That's not normal, and I don't know if it's at all possible to resolve.

## Glossary

### **1 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.

### **2 February 1948**

Communist take-over in Czechoslovakia. The 'people's democracy' became one of the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. The state apparatus was centralized under the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC). In the economy private ownership was banned and submitted to central planning. The state took control of the educational system, too. Political opposition and dissident elements were persecuted.

### **3 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions. The third group, the so-called Status Quo Ante advocated that the Jewish community was maintained the same as before the 1868/69 Congress.

### **4 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 %).

## **5 Slovak State (1939-1945)**

Czechoslovakia, which was created after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, lasted until it was broken up by the Munich Pact of 1938; Slovakia became a separate (autonomous) republic on 6th October 1938 with Jozef Tiso as Slovak PM. Becoming suspicious of the Slovakian moves to gain independence, the Prague government applied martial law and deposed Tiso at the beginning of March 1939, replacing him with Karol Sidor. Slovakian personalities appealed to Hitler, who used this appeal as a pretext for making Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia a German protectorate. On 14th March 1939 the Slovak Diet declared the independence of Slovakia, which in fact was a nominal one, tightly controlled by Nazi Germany.

## **6 Currency reform in Czechoslovakia (1953)**

on 30th May 1953 Czechoslovakia was shaken by a so-called currency reform, with which the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) tried to improve the economy. It deprived all citizens of Czechoslovakia of their savings. A wave of protests, strikes and demonstrations gripped the country. Arrests and jailing of malcontents followed. Via the currency measures the Communist regime wanted to solve growing problems with supplies, caused by the restructuring of industry and the agricultural decline due to forcible collectivization. The reform was prepared secretly from midway in 1952 with the help of the Soviet Union. The experts involved (the organizers of the first preparatory steps numbered around 10) worked in strict isolation, sometimes even outside of the country. Cash of up to 300 crowns per person, bank deposits up to 5,000 crowns and wages were exchanged at a ratio of 5:1. Remaining cash and bank deposits, though, were exchanged at a ratio of 50:1.

## **7 Jewish Codex**

Order no. 198 of the Slovakian government, issued in September 1941, on the legal status of the Jews, went down in history as Jewish Codex. Based on the Nuremberg Laws, it was one of the most stringent and inhuman anti-Jewish laws all over Europe. It paraphrased the Jewish issue on a racial basis, religious considerations were fading into the background; categories of Jew, Half Jew, moreover 'Mixture' were specified by it. The majority of the 270 paragraphs dealt with the transfer of Jewish property (so-called Aryanizing; replacing Jews by non-Jews) and the exclusion of Jews from economic, political and public life.

## **8 Exemption and exceptions in the Slovak State (1939-1945)**

in the Jewish Codex they are included under § 254 and § 255. Exemption and exceptions, § 255 -

the President of the Slovak Republic may grant an exemption from the stipulations of this decree. Exemption may be complete or partial and may be subject to conditions. Exemption may be revoked at any time. In the case of exemption, administrative fees are collected according to § 255 in the following amounts: a) for the granting of an exception according to § 1, the sum of 1,000 to 500,000 Ks. b) for the granting of an exception according to § 2, the sum of 500 to 100,000 Ks c) for the granting of an exception according to single or multiple decrees, the sum of 10 Ks to 300,000 Ks d) a certificate issued according to § 3 is charged at 10 Ks § 255 enabled the President to grant exceptions from decrees for a fee. Disputes are still led regarding how this paragraph got into the Jewish Codex and how many exceptions the President granted. According to documents there were 1111 Jews protected by exceptions, including family members. Exceptions were valid from the commencement of deportations from the territory of the Slovak State, in 1942, up until the outbreak of the Slovak National Rebellion, in the year 1944.

## **9 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.

## **10 Nationalization in Czechoslovakia**

The goal of nationalization was to put privately-owned means of production and private property into public control and into the hands of the Socialist state. The attempts to change property relations after WWI (1918-1921) were unsuccessful. Directly after WWII, already by May 1945, the heads of state took over possession of the collaborators' (that is, Hungarian and German) property. In July 1945, members of the Communist Party before the National Front, openly called for the nationalization of banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and industrial enterprises, the execution of which fell to the Nationalization Central Committee. The first decree for nationalization was signed 11th August 1945 by the Republic President. This decree affected agricultural production, the film industry and foreign trade. Members of the Communist Party fought representatives of the National Socialist Party and the Democratic Party for further expansion of the process of nationalization, which resulted in the president signing four new decrees on 24th October, barely two months after taking office. These called for nationalization of the mining industry companies and industrial plants, the food industry plants, as well as joint-stock companies, banks and life insurance companies. The nationalization established the Czechoslovakia's financial development, and shaped the 'Socialist financial sphere'. Despite this, significantly valuable property disappeared from companies in public ownership into the private and foreign trade network. Because of this, the activist committee of the trade unions called for further nationalizations on 22nd February 1948. This process was stopped in Czechoslovakia by new laws

of the National Assembly in April 1948, which were passed in December the same year.

### **11 Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC)**

Founded in 1921 following a split from the Social Democratic Party, it was banned under the Nazi occupation. It was only after Soviet Russia entered World War II that the Party developed resistance activity in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia; because of this, it gained a certain degree of popularity with the general public after 1945. After the communist coup in 1948, the Party had sole power in Czechoslovakia for over 40 years. The 1950s were marked by party purges and a war against the 'enemy within'. A rift in the Party led to a relaxing of control during the Prague Spring starting in 1967, which came to an end with the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet and allied troops in 1968 and was followed by a period of normalization. The communist rule came to an end after the Velvet Revolution of November 1989.

### **12 ROH (Revolutionary Unionist Movement)**

established 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).

### **13 Mariánské Lázně/Marienbad**

a world-famous spa in the Czech Republic, founded in the early 19th century, with many curative mineral springs and baths, and situated on the grounds of a 12th-century abbey. Once the playground for the Habsburgs and King Edward VII, as well as famous personalities including Goethe, Strauss, Ibsen and Kipling, Mariánské Lázně has been the site of numerous international congresses in recent years. [14](#) 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 Smrkovský became president of the National Assembly, and Oldřich Černík became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubček, 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.

## **15 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. [16](#) Havel, Vaclav (1936- ): Czech dramatist, poet and politician. Havel was an active figure in the liberalization movement leading to the Prague Spring, and after the Soviet-led intervention in 1968 he became a spokesman of the civil right movement called Charter 77. He was arrested for political reasons in 1977 and 1979. He became President of the Czech and Slovak Republic in 1989 and was President of the Czech Republic after the secession of Slovakia until January 2003.