Milena Prochazkova

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Mrs. Milena Prochazkova, nee Kosinerova, comes from the large Kosiner family, of whom basically only she and her parents survived. This is because during the war her father worked in the Wulkow labor camp, and thus protected his wife and daughter from further transport to Terezin 1. It wasn't until after the war that the arrival of her husband, Petr Prochazka, and his siblings, breathed life into the family. Mrs. Milena Prochazkova worked originally as a lab technician, but because she was found to have a congenital heart defect, she had to leave this occupation. Later she worked for the Association of Invalids, for Druteva, and then for the National Gallery, where she stayed until retirement. Even now, despite her age and heart problems, she still works, for the Terezin Initiative 2. She has two children, Jana and Lenka; in the 1960s Lenka immigrated with her husband to Vienna.

Family background

I know virtually nothing about my grandfather on my father's side, Eduard Kosiner, because he died in 1930, and I had just been born. I don't even know the date of his birth, because we don't have any of his documents. We lost everything during the war, and afterwards we of course occasionally had problems due to this, because the authorities want to see documents for all sorts of things. Of course, my grandfather is not in the Terezin Memorial Book either. [The Terezin Memorial Book records only the victims of wartime deportations.] From what I was told I know that Grandpa and Grandma used to rent some sort of farm in Kralupy, where they lived and worked. They were farmers; they grew grain and so on. Neither do I know anything about my grandpa's education, but for sure he didn't have a degree or diploma. That was a hundred years back and he was from a village. He probably only had some sort of elementary school. I don't think that he had any siblings.

I know more about my grandmother on my father's side, because she is in the Terezin Book. In 1942 she was put on the transport to Terezin and then in the same year to Treblinka 3, where she died. Especially in the case of Treblinka, which apparently was something horrible, the date of the transport's departure is taken to be the day of death. Because right upon arrival they went into the gas.

My grandma was named Otylie Kosinerova, nee Fischlova, and was born in July of 1865. She lived with Grandpa somewhere in a village near Kralupy, but later, when the children were married off, they brought her to Prague, because my grandfather had long since died. As far as I can remember, she always lived in Prague, in the Vinohrady quarter. And I even remember the street - Na Svihance 11. She had her own apartment there. Evidently she had sold the farm and lived on the proceeds as her pension. In light of the fact that she was from a village, she probably only had elementary school. She never went to work; she and her husband had that farm and then also eight children. So they had their work cut out for them. As far as I know, she didn't have any siblings either.

On my father's side there was no Jewish upbringing. My grandpa and grandma didn't observe any holidays, that I know for sure. In those eight families - when each of their children already had their own family - they observed only Christmas and Easter. Neither did their ancestors, as far as I know, live religiously.

My grandfather on my mother's side was named Rudolf Stern. He was born on 1st November 1874, and died in 1942 in Treblinka. Grandpa and Grandma Stern went to both Terezin and to Treblinka on the same transport. My grandpa lived with his wife Elsa in Kamberk, near Trebon in Southern Bohemia, where they had a huge farm estate. So my mother's parents were also farmers. My grandpa probably had some sort of agricultural high school, because as a farmer he was very successful. But it was terrible drudgery. That estate was really very large, because twelve families lived there. They worked for them in the fields and gardens, basically whatever was needed. And got a salary for that. They had horses, cows, poultry, everything.

From 1928 onwards, when my mother, Hedvika Kosinerova, was married, Grandpa and Grandma lived in Prague. They sold the farm and bought half of an apartment building on Veletrzni Street, and lived on the rent from it. I don't think that this transaction was connected to my mother's wedding in any way, more likely they were toil-worn and wanted to retire. What's more, it had probably been planned for a long time, because they bought the building with some distant relative of my grandmother's, and Grandma had half and they had half, so it must have been agreed upon long before.

But once I went to Kamberk to have a look. Once when my mother was still alive, and then with my cousin from England [Vera Joseph, nee Faktor], the daughter of my mother's sister Marie, who wanted to see where we were from. The only thing remaining of the farm was this large building, where they had lived. The stalls and all that, that was gone. Now there are houses there.

No old photographs of the place have survived, but by chance, when we arrived there, some old lady - she must have been at least ninety - was cutting grass in a ditch. My daughter stopped, I got out and asked whether she by any chance didn't know where the Stern farm used to be. And she looked at me in this way and says: 'You're Hedvika's, aren't you? I used to go to school with her.' I thought I was going to faint. When a lady you don't know looks at you, and says: 'You're Hedvika's.' And I don't really look like my mother. Then she called through a gate to someone inside: 'Mania, come here, Hedicka's and Marenka's [Hedviga's and Marie's] children are here.' So then they showed us exactly where the farm used to stand. The grannies remembered everything.

As far as religion goes, my grandfather on my mother's side regularly attended synagogue. At least once a month. But mainly he always observed the New Year [Rosh Hashanah] and the Long Day

[Yom Kippur]. He was brought up that way at home, likely by his father, because his mother didn't observe anything. You know, what could you observe in those villages. Both his parents were Jews, just like my grandma's, they were generations of Jewish families. But they were village families. I suspect that they tried to live in such a way so as not stick out too much from the other villagers. Some sort of attending synagogue was of course not possible in a village in those days. Nevertheless neither did my grandfather live in some sort of Orthodox fashion, he observed only the High Holidays, didn't eat kosher and on the contrary, spent Christmas with us children. Neither did he try to exert some sort of religious influence or pressure. No one talked about it in that family. He lived his own internal life, but without us.

As far as I know, he had two brothers. But I don't remember anything else about them. He had no sisters.

My grandmother was named Elsa Sternova, nee Dubska. She was born on 28th January 1884 in Kamberk, and same as her husband she went to Terezin in 1942 and then on the October 1942 transport to Treblinka, where she died. I think that she finished junior high. She worked on that farm - they slaved away there - and also took care of the children. She had five of them, but three died in 1918 or 1919, when the Spanish Flu was at its peak. She didn't live in any particularly religious fashion.

Grandma Elsa had two sisters and three brothers. The older sister was named Berta Budlovska - I remember her from when I was a little girl - and the other was Fanynka [Fany] Polakova. They had a farm in Kyje; I remember that we used to go on trips there, as if we were going out to the countryside. She was the only one of the siblings that was still alive during the war, and in 1942 went to Terezin. I remember her very well from there, because she helped me a lot there. She worked in 'Landwirtschaft' [agriculture] so occasionally brought me something, a carrot for example. But she watched to see if I was all right and whether I didn't need anything.

Aunt Fany survived Terezin, but shortly after her return to Prague, in 1946, she died suddenly of stomach cancer. On 12th September 1944 her son Karel was jailed in the Little Fortress 3 for attempting to escape from Terezin, until the end of the war, upon which he returned home.

Berta Budlovska lived with her husband in Humpolec, she didn't live to see the war, but her daughters Stefa, married Hallerova, and Gusta, married Reiterova, with their families were in concentration camps. Stefa and her daughter Helena survived, but the Reiters all died in Auschwitz.

The Reiters lived in Kutna Hora before the war. We used to go there frequently for visits - Jewish families keep close ties. They had some sort of textile factory there, these fancy goods, it was named Respo. My father's siblings from Benesov used to go there a lot, too, his sisters Anna and Marie, because these two were the closest to my mother in age. So that's why they were close. Also with those Hallers.

As I've said, my grandma also had three brothers. One was named Vilem, they called him Vilik. The second was named Samuel, or Samy. He lived in Vienna. The third was named Eduard. But I don't know anything more about them. You know, back then I was seven, eight years old. As a child I, of course, didn't ask about anything, it didn't interest me and neither could we suspect back then how it would all end up. All three of them were much older than Grandma. I know only that my mother

used to say that whenever her uncles came to Prague, they brought sugar candy for each child.

I don't know anything about the childhood of my grandfathers and grandmothers; I don't remember anyone ever telling us about that. Both grandmothers seemed terribly kind to me. Grandma Sternova was generous, but was stricter with us. On the other hand, Grandpa Stern spoiled us rotten. And Grandma Kosinerova, she had so many grandchildren that she would get us confused. I remember, that when she was already quite old, she would at first not know who was who and whose, from what family of those eight children. I don't remember Grandpa Kosiner; he died the same year that I was born.

My father was named Ervin Kosiner. He was born on 16th June 1900 in Bukoly, near Kralupy, and then attended Czech Technical University in Prague [CTU]. He studied civil engineering and worked all his life as a structural engineer - he designed large chemical plants. That's why during the war he was transferred to the Wulkow concentration camp as chief engineer. He died in October 1972 of his fourth heart attack. He had the first and second in Wulkow and the third in about 1947. The whole time he was being treated at IKEM, in Krc [IKEM: Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine, in the Prague 4 district].

When my father died, we spent a year looking for a place in whatever cemetery, because my father had explicitly said: 'Don't you dare put me in a Jewish cemetery.' That was his explicit wish. He didn't say why, he simply didn't want it and we respected his wishes. Though simplest of all would have been to bury him at the Jewish cemetery. There, there's tons of room. Finally we found this little spot on Letna, where we first laid to rest Dad, then Mom, and now my husband is also with them. In any case, none of our family is buried at the Jewish cemetery, except maybe for Aunt Fany. Because most of our relatives died in concentration camps.

During World War I my father was in the army as a gunner. From 1917 to 1918, so he was 17 when he joined up. I don't know what front he was at. The only thing he talked about was how horribly he hated it. His butt was constantly sore, because the gunners pulled cannons around with horses, so he was permanently on a horse. But he didn't recall it in a particularly negative fashion, we're a family that doesn't return to what's past. Neither did my children, Jana and Lenka, for years know what we had suffered through during the war. He would usually tell funny stories - which runs in the family - about the food, what they cooked for them there, and about the horses and how he couldn't stand it and how he was horribly afraid of horses. But where exactly he was, he perhaps didn't even talk about that. It, of course, wasn't his wish to be in the artillery, they stuck him there, due to the horses he probably wouldn't have picked it voluntarily.

As I've said, my father was one of eight children. Grandma was a trooper. The oldest of my father's sisters was named Berta, married Baumova. She was born on 16th December 1891. She and her husband Rudolf and children Hanus and Milos lived somewhere in Vinohrady [a neighborhood of Prague]. She and her husband and her son Hanus went to Terezin in 1942. In 1944 they then transported them to Auschwitz, where all three died. The other son, Milos, was arrested on 17th October [1939], right at the beginning of the occupation, and shot along with other students 5. I think that he studied civil engineering at CTU.

The second sister was named Marta, married Steinerova. She was born on 9th July 1983. That was quite an unhappy marriage. Her husband, Ota Steiner, worked as superintendent of the cemetery by Zelivskeho in Prague. Up until the transport they lived at the cemetery - to this day there's an

apartment for the superintendent there. I remember that at the beginning of the war I would still go visit them there. The Steiners were financially very badly off. I know that we used to go visit them with some sum of money in an envelope. In December of 1942 they and their daughter Anita left for Terezin, and from there in September 1943 for Auschwitz, where they all died.

The third sister, Vlasta, married Alferiova, was born on 3rd February 1895. The Alferi family was rich. They had some sort of small bank, and her husband, Josef Alferi, worked in it. They moved about in slightly different income brackets than the other families. But they were great, they weren't stuck up and for example helped the Steiners a lot financially. They were the first to leave, on 26th October 1941 they went to Lodz 6, where they all, including their 14-year-old son Franta, died.

My father's brother, Karel Kosiner, was childless. Him I remember very well. He was born on 8th July 1896, and with his wife, Valerie Kosinerova, lived in the Prague 1 district. They were both lawyers. Valerie came, as opposed to Karel, from an Orthodox Jewish family. I don't know how they met, apparently thanks to their common occupation. They observed holidays and at home he had to eat kosher, so that she could eat her fill properly, and wouldn't have to eat only hard-boiled eggs, like when she occasionally came to our place to visit. The lived in an Orthodox fashion, she steered him towards it, but he wasn't too enthused by it. But he was fond of her, and so tolerated all sorts of things. But for sure she couldn't get him to go to synagogue. But she was from a very Orthodox family, so nothing against that. And he was of Jewish origin, so neither could her family object to her marrying him. Always at Christmas he would come visit us, because he wanted to see the Christmas tree. And he would also bring us presents.

The next of my father's sisters were Anna and Marie. Marie was born in 1903 and Anna in 1904. They married two brothers, Arnost and Josef Fürth, and they all lived in Benesov, where together they had a large textile factory. As a little girl I used to love going there for weekends and holidays. At the beginning of the war, Arnost Fürth, Anna's husband, was arrested by the Gestapo and no one ever heard anything about him again. Anna and her son Franta left for Terezin in 1942 and further on to Treblinka on the October transport. Both of them died there. Marie with her husband and two children, Jirina and Irena, left in 1942 for Terezin and from there right away to Maly Trostinec 7, where they all died. I've been told that I should rather not ask anything about Maly Trostinec, as apparently after that I'd never sleep well again.

The only one of my father's siblings who returned from the concentration camps after the war was Milos Kosiner. He was born on 11th October 1905. They didn't go to Terezin until the February transport until 1945, because his wife wasn't Jewish. But I don't know anything about him or his wife, because after his return they both left the country and we never heard of them again.

My father was a big joker, he loved humor. He worked very hard all his life, today they call it being a workaholic. That's exactly him. I would never see him until the evening. From prewar times I remember that we all, his entire family of Kosiners, would spend weekends in Benesov at the Fürths', his sisters' place, or in Kutna Hora at the Reiters', my mother Hedvika's relatives. When one of our relatives from Benesov arrived, I already had my bag packed, would be standing in the front hall and would go to Benesov. The Kosiner family kept very close, mainly the Fürths, the Alferis and my parents. They used to go on holidays together, for example in the summer my father's sisters and my mother would go to Yugoslavia with their children. Back then it was very

cheap, vacations there were even cheaper than here. Back then the crown was worth a lot, and the dinar was completely in the hole. We used to go there by train. I remember that they'd stuff the bags between the seats, put blankets on them and we children would sleep on that.

My mother was named Hedvika, nee Sternova. She was born on 25th February 1909 in Kamberk in Southern Bohemia. She died in November 1987 in Prague. She fell and broke her hip, but because she was a serious diabetic, she didn't make it. She actually died of diabetic shock. She attended elementary school in Kamberk and then for three years traveled to Tabor for family school.

Very early on, in 1928, she then married my father. They were married at the Old Town Hall in Prague. They met through my mother's sister Marie. Her future husband, Frantisek Faktor, who was my father's classmate from university, used to go to Kamberk to see her. And one time Frantisek says to my father: 'They've got this nice looking younger girl, come there with me.' And that's all it took. They went out for about three years, my mother was 19 when she was married. So it wouldn't even have been possible sooner than that. My father was nine years older. By the way, my son-in-law is ten years older than my younger daughter, Jana, and it's doesn't matter at all. The same as my father, my mother wasn't at all religiously inclined, they didn't practice anything at all. She had a generous nature, absolutely unselfish.

Before the war and also after the war my mother worked in my father's office. And afterwards, when they took it away from them, she worked as an accountant for Remos - where among other things they manufactured Remoskas [a type of electric cooker] - up until she retired, which was around 1965. She helped me, because in 1953, when I was pregnant with my older daughter Lenka, I was found to have a serious heart defect and then soon after I had a second daughter, Jana. For a long time we lived with my parents, and then when the children were already grown, we found a bachelor apartment for my mother, and we kept the apartment on Letna, the large one. Back then there weren't apartments, if we would have waited for that to have children, we would have had that around the age of fifty. But we understood one another perfectly, we got along excellently. They loved my husband and he loved them. Later, when my mother was already in quite poor health, she again lived with us.

My mother had one sister. She was originally one of five children, but three of them died during the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918 or 1919, and only my mother and her five years older sister, Marie, were left. She also survived the war, and this thanks to the fact that she and her husband Frantisek Faktor escaped to England in 1939. Before the war, Marie attended the same family school in Tabor as my mother. But afterwards she didn't work, she was at home with the children. Her husband was a mechanical engineer. They were married in 1924, and up until the beginning of the war they lived in Prague in the Vinohrady quarter, where they had some sort of factory.

In 1939 Uncle Faktor left on a business trip to England, to London. My aunt and their children then moved away to be with him, and in London they then remained. Thanks to his work my uncle had contacts and work there, and my aunt sewed gloves at home, so that the family could make ends meet. And because due to this reason my aunt didn't go out among people at all, they had to speak English at home, so she would also learn to speak it.

The Faktors have two children. The son is named Petr, he was born in 1931, and the daughter is Vera, married name Joseph. She was born in 1925. Both of them live in England today, Vera in Sussex and Petr in London. Now they're both already retired, but before that Petr and Uncle Faktor

had a photo equipment company. They even did business with Japan, where they often traveled. The company still exists, because Petr's son took it over. Vera soon had children and stayed at home with them. Her husband, who we call Joe - that came from his surname, Joseph - is an engineer and worked for some company. They've got three children, two boys and a girl. And four grandchildren. My cousin also has three children, but nine grandchildren. I'm no match for him, with my three, of which I'm so proud. So many grandchildren, it's beautiful. I'm horribly envious of him.

When the Faktors were leaving for England, their son Petr was five years old, so his home was already there. After the war they didn't even consider returning. As far as it was possible, meaning as far as the Commies permitted it, we would see each other and to this day every little while one of them is in Prague. My cousin Vera to this day speaks Czech beautifully, because she was already ten years old when they emigrated, and so she's got the foundations of Czech from a Czech school, while Petr doesn't. If he had a little bit of 1st grade, that would already be a lot. But at home, as I've mentioned, they spoke only English. My mother's sister and her husband also for a long time kept it a secret from their children that they're actually Jews. I don't know why. I don't know to what degree their friends are conservative, I didn't ever ask them about this. What's more, my mother's sister never lived in any particularly Jewish fashion.

Growing up

I was born on 3rd September 1930 in Prague. Besides the time I spent in Terezin, I've never lived anywhere else. I've got a high school education, I graduated from academic high school in Prague. In 1950 I finished school and got married.

I didn't have any siblings. Though in 1934, when I was four, my parents had a baby boy, Jan, but he had a serious congenital chest defect and died while still a baby. He lived to the age of five months. It was evidently some sort of genetic defect. I've most likely also got it, a congenital heart defect, but in my case it's somehow been overcome. It's possible that I've got it from my father, even though a heart attack doesn't have anything to do with a congenital defect. My mother never had any problems with her heart, even though she was a heavy smoker. But in her case they never found anything, that I know for sure. I retired as soon as I was able, so that I could take care of her, because she was already quite badly off.

I myself was on disability pension from the age of 25 due to my illness. When I began working I let it go, and actually had a partial one. The fact that I've got a congenital defect was discovered early on, during my first pregnancy. I then had my second daughter on a release, back then I had to sign that I wanted her. By chance she was born two months prematurely, so she was small and thus everything turned out well. After the first child nothing could be done, the child was already growing and I insisted on carrying it to term. Already back then Professor Herles said: 'You'll live to see the day when they'll know how to operate on it.' He used to say this to me around the year 1955. And in 1968 I underwent that huge operation. During it they gave my heart a Teflon aorta, it was completely plugged up. My heart was working under terrible pressure, so during pregnancy my blood pressure was 260 over 120, and this is actually how they discovered my problem. The operation lowered my blood pressure and I could then, thank God, start a normal job, and even leave that partial disability pension. But, of course, I've still got problems to this day, and every

year I go to the spas in Frantiskovy Lazne.

As a little girl I didn't go to nursery school, my mother was at home with me and we also had a maid. In 1936 I went straight into 1st grade. In light of the fact that my mother then worked for my father in the office, the maid took care of the household, took care of me, the shopping. I remember Lida, she stayed with us until the war, and was with us after the war, too, before she got married. But we kept in touch with her afterwards as well.

I remember when I started going to school. Back then I was this sickly child - that was due to my heart defect. At school they said that I had to weigh at least 19 kilos for them to take me into 1st grade. So my parents were constantly stuffing me with something. In the end I did go into 1st grade, and had a very kind man for a teacher. But I have to admit that as far as being fired up over school and over spiritual enrichment, that wasn't the case with me at all. I really wasn't into school, and my younger daughter, Jana, has it after me.

I was always annoyed, because school usually started on 3rd September [1st September was a Saturday] and that was my birthday. From morning I was looking forward to coming home, and for something to take place. I never took a liking to studying, as opposed to my older daughter, Lenka, who from the age of ten used to say that for all she cares we can eat potato soup every evening, the main thing is that we'll be able to support her in university. While the little one, we had to slap her silly all the way to high school graduation. When she was 18 - at that time she was already going out with her current husband - she decided that she won't go to school any more and would rather get married. Because my son-in-law is ten years older, and already had an income. I looked at her, completely horrified, and said: 'There's no way you're leaving school, you're graduating, even if we have to...' or: 'Go ahead and get married, at least Gabriel [her husband-to-be] will go to PTA meetings and I won't have to sit there and listen to their jawing anymore.' Well, she was so mortified that I'd send him to PTA meetings, that they didn't get married until after graduation.

Singing certainly didn't belong among my favorite subjects, I had problems with it. I always liked history, but in that elementary school it wasn't separated like that, and I actually only attended up until 4th grade. Then I had to stop going to school 8.

During the war

During the war I went to Jewish school for some time, for about three months, right here in Jachymova Street, where today I work at the Terezin Initiative. Before the war broke out, I didn't know at all that I was Jewish. But that Jewish school didn't influence me at all, neither positively nor negatively. Then we moved to Vinohrady and that was too far away from here. In any case they soon closed it anyways.

From the wartime period I remember the mobilization 9 in 1938. Back then my father had to join up. At that time I was on vacation in Radisovice, and got scarlet fever. So we were in complete isolation, we had no idea what was going on, because we couldn't go out among people. Then they dissolved the mobilization, 1940 arrived, and it began. In the meantime, my mother's sister Marie escaped to England with her family, and then it was chock-full of events.

Originally we lived on Letna, but around the year 1941 the Germans moved everyone out of the Letna neighborhood, because Germans came to live there. My grandma and grandpa [Stern] went to live with Grandma Otylie Kosinerova in the Svihanka neighborhood, and we moved to Vinohrady, where we lived for about a year and a half with some other families. The apartment belonged to the Geshmays, who were a lot younger then my parents and had no children. I have very fond memories of our stay with them. I think that back then at the Jewish community they offered three names, they went to visit the families, took a liking to them and said: 'Here we'll stay.' And truly in the end this beautiful lifelong friendship was born.

And I'll tell you one more thing, for which I admired them during that wartime period of those horrors. My mother and Mrs. Geshmayova had an agreement, that each one of them would be a servant for one week and the other would be the lady of the house, and that after a week they'd trade places. So the way it worked was then one would go do the shopping and cook, I helped clean a bit, and the other had polished nails. After a week she'd remove the nail polish and wash dishes and do the shopping, and the other was the lady. And they had a hoot with this. Sometimes it went so far that they'd say: 'Listen, am I the servant today, or the lady?'

We had food stamps for just bread, flour and potatoes. My parents tried to round up some food, and would take it to that Svihanka neighborhood to my grandmas and my grandpa. At that time we had already been moved out to Vinohrady, we lived on Moravska Street, so it wasn't far. As I've said, both families had a farming background, during the war those farms would probably have come in handy. As it was though, we bought food from farmers that used to come to Prague. They made a bundle. They accepted paintings, silver, gold, carpets - they'd take all this in return for a goose. But nothing else could be done, otherwise you couldn't survive.

I have one beautiful memory. This one farmer used to come see my mother regularly, and bring flour, poppy seed and butter. He took some painting and so there wouldn't be a big empty spot on the wall, my mother bought a picture, 'Oldrich and Bozena' at a stationery store for 10 crowns. She put it in a frame and next time the farmer came, he took a huge liking to it, and wanted it. I know that my mother negotiated for so long that the next day he brought us a goose for this piece of kitsch worth 10 crowns. I won't forget that.

But I have to say that we more or less didn't meet up with anti-Semitism. My parents had excellent friends. Only one classmate of mine from elementary school on Letna, always, when she was walking towards me - at that time stars 10 were already being worn - crossed the street to the other side. But she was the only one. Otherwise not at all. On the contrary, there were a lot of Jewish families in the building on Veletrzni Street, and because going out after eight in the evening was forbidden, in the evenings, while it was still nice out, we could sit outside - there was a large garden by the building - and the adults would play cards and talk, and we would run around the garden and play.

I was used to a very social life, for one in our family and for another also in that building on Veletrzni Street. But as far as the star goes, I remember how stupid I was. I had this feeling that I had to say hello to everyone I met that was wearing a star. Even if we didn't know each other at all. So everyone looked at me incredulously, and my mother would tell me to stop being silly, that it doesn't mean that we're relatives. I was around 10 years old at the time.

What's more, my parents had lots of friends and they helped us a lot. I can tell you one interesting story. Before the war, my father designed the Salesian House in the Kobylisy neighborhood. There was a Dr. Trochta 11 there, which is a well-known name. I think later he was the bishop in Litomerice. And he was a great friend of my father's. At that time we were already living in Vinohrady, and he would regularly, about once every fourteen days, come by with cigarettes and chocolate. And I remember that once he came by and told my father that their bell tower in the street Na Prikopech - I think that the Church of the Holy Spirit is there - was falling down, and whether my father wouldn't come have a look and figure out what needs to be done with it. And my father said: 'Are you crazy, how can I go into a church wearing a star?' Well, in the end they covered the star up somehow or removed it, and I know that at nine in the evening, even though we were supposed to be home by eight, they went to go have a look at that bell tower and Mr. Trochta then brought him home again without any problems. All the while my mother and I were sitting at home, stiff with fear.

The Kozeluh brothers, Karel and Honza Kozeluh, were also excellent friends of ours. Karel was a world champion in tennis. [Kozeluh, Karel (1895 - 1950): three-time member of the Czechoslovak national soccer team, European Champion in ice hockey in 1925. World champion in professional tennis in 1929, 1932 and 1937. From 1947 - 49 the non-playing captain of the Czechoslovak Davis Cup team.] Dad was building a villa for them somewhere in Kobylisy. And then some Professor Menzl, who was a colleague of Dad's from university. All of them helped us a lot during the war.

We lived with the Geshmays until 11th September 1943, when my father, mother and I left for Terezin. From there my father went in the spring of 1944 to the Wulkow-Zeesen concentration camp, which is not far from Berlin, where he stayed until the end of the war. He worked at the 'Baustelle' [German for 'construction site'] there, which was a labor camp. They originally belonged under Terezin, where about 150 men had been picked out, whom my father managed as a construction engineer. And there, in Wulkow, in the winter they started putting up buildings from scratch - buildings for the RSHA, the main security office of the SS, which fell directly under Himmler. They were building it for the SS, either Eichmann 12 or Himmler were constantly traveling there. Because under the buildings there were some special alterations being made for them. Thanks to that I survived. Because in Wulkow they told them that if no sabotage takes place, we in Terezin would be protected from transports to the East. And they kept their word. Which was huge, incredible luck, because I can't imagine how I, in my state of health, with a congenital heart defect, would have survived. My mother and I were protected by that work of Dad's, by that horrible toil in the horrible conditions in Wulkow, against further transport.

In Terezin even children had to work. In the summer I worked in the 'Landwirtschaft,' in the gardens. Between the ramparts there were these big gardens, where all sorts of things for the SS were grown. We would lug watering cans there. I was all kaput from that. And in the winter we would peel mica in these special unheated wooden shacks. This was called 'Glimmerspalten,' which in English means peeling mica. It was in this block, the mica, and peeled off of it were very thin sheets for airplane windows. It was fiddly work and mainly it was cold there. I remember that our hands would be completely frozen.

My mother lived and also worked somewhere else. For some time she was seriously ill, she had meningitis and then didn't even recognize anyone. But somehow she got over it. Then she worked in the 'Putzkolonne' [cleaning squad], i.e. washed the barracks, toilets and these tubs in which we

could wash. Then, which saved my life, she slaved away in the bakery. From there she brought home, officially, one bun and one meatball a week, occasionally she managed to steal something. She still had burn marks from the heavy baking sheets on both wrists for a good five years after the war.

Post-war

Before the end of the war, my father returned from Wulkow to Terezin on foot - all the way from the city of Hof, through Plavno. It was some sort of transport that was being accompanied by some SS soldier. During some bombing the SS soldier ran away, and they remained there alone, without food, without anything. They were on the road for a week. And when they arrived in Terezin, sometime at the beginning of May - that was already close to the end - they had a wheelbarrow with them. When we asked them what it was for, they had no idea at all as to why they had lugged it along with them the whole time. They were completely out of it. The SS soldier had probably given it to them, he probably had his things in it, and then when he left them standing somewhere, they lugged it along with them without thinking about it. I'll never forget that. When the Russians arrived in Terezin - it was during the night from 8th to 9th May [1945], my father was already there.

But my parents didn't want to leave and go back to Prague for anything in the world, because there was typhus in Terezin, and they said that they have to help out. That they have to save those poor wretches in Terezin. But at the age of 14 and a half I didn't care who they wanted or didn't want to save. I wanted to go home at all costs. Adults have a certain sense of responsibility that children don't have. And so on the morning of 20th May I said to them: 'OK, I'm going by myself, and you stay here.' My parents took fright, I went out onto the road, to get home in some fashion, and they ran off after me.

We left there sometime around noon, some vegetable merchant picked us up. The afternoon of the same day, quarantine was announced in Terezin. By then we would not have gotten out of there. So they can thank me that I pulled them out of there, because given their physical state, they would have gotten typhus for sure. But I had gotten into a funk, and simply said that I'm not going to wait there for anything, and that I'm going to Prague.

And so we returned home. We had absolutely nothing, only wooden shoes and some rags on us. For some time, until everything somehow settled down, we lived with the Geshmays again. By the way, they had a daughter born secretly in Terezin, towards the end of the war. She was named Maruska. And for six years she actually lived illicitly, because no one thought of the fact that she should have some documents. Suddenly the little girl was six years old, and was supposed to go to school, only she had no birth certificate. So they went to a government office and they gave them some on the whole reasonable advice, for them to take two witnesses, who were my parents, and to go to Terezin, since she had been born there during the war, and ask them to issue a birth certificate there. Which they did. But I don't know what they did during those whole six years, because back then there were food stamps. But maybe it didn't occur to them that they should get some for the child. All I remember is my parents going with the Geshmays to Terezin to show Maruska to them there.

Then after some time we were able to return to the apartment on Letna, where we had originally lived, and tried to begin leading a normal life. But of course absolutely nothing was the same as before. When we returned, there was a huge homecoming welcome in that building on Veletrzni Street. I remember it well, how I was horribly sick in the evening. Because our neighbors said: 'Come for dinner.' And then the others, too. I know that it's a wonder that I didn't die that first evening. I couldn't control myself.

Before the war about twenty families had lived in that building, and many Jewish ones. But of those no one returned, no one at all. After the war about six, seven families remained in the building. Gradually other people were added, who were given apartments there from the ranks of the needy by the National Committee. There was some furniture in the apartment left behind by Germans, nothing at all of ours had remained. I can tell you this interesting detail, that we had to make payments on the furniture the Germans had left behind. It was on the basis of some decree. Back then the National Committee set a price, and because we didn't have any money to pay for it, we had to make payments on it to the committee. The last payment was in the year 1953, when the currency reform 13 took place. I'm not making this up.

After returning from Terezin, I was first in some sanatorium, because I, like everyone, had gotten tuberculosis. Due to the state of his health my father spent a lot of time in hospitals, but my mother had to go to work right away, so that we'd have something to live on. But people tried to help us with all their might. I, for example, remember some Mr. Benc, who had a corner store. He'd often come to visit us, and we'd then always find maybe a hundred or five hundred crown bill under something.

My father began working in his little company that he'd already had before the war. There were three of them, two took care of finding business, and Dad just calculated and calculated. He lost his business sometime in 1951, I think. The Communists took it away from them. But he didn't make some sort of tragedy out of it, he took it as a matter of fact. Because he had such trials and tribulations behind him, that some little company couldn't upset him.

My father had no problem finding work, he was an expert in heavy structural engineering, so they immediately hired him to work for Chemoprojekt. [Chemoprojekt, a.s. is a Czech project, engineering and supply company, which is active in the chemical industry since 1950, as a leading supplier in this area.]. He then worked there his whole life as a chief engineer. In Slovakia he built all of Duslo, those are huge underground oil tanks. [DUSLO, a.s. is after SLOVNAFT the second largest chemical company in Slovakia. The government of the CSR on 8th April 1958 began the initial project of its construction. Currently DUSLO a.s. exports its products to more than 40 countries worldwide.]

My father died in 1972, the day before he and a whole group of engineers were supposed to fly to Sweden. He was supposed to work there as a chief engineer on some project. He never spent even one day in retirement. By the way, I'm also still working. And I think that that's what keeps us afloat. Even Dr. Bergman, who had treated my father at IKEM, and who I later also visited, said that if he had retired earlier, as I had wanted, and rested a bit, that he wouldn't have lasted longer, but quite the opposite. That he would have gone a lot sooner.

In January of 1946 I wrote entry exams for gymnasium [academic high school], and was there for four years. After the war I terribly looked forward to school, but then got over it quickly. I only liked

going there because of my friends. I went to high school with Anita Frank, because at one time she lived with us on Letna. Our parents had been friends for years. Her father had a heart attack in 1939, when he read in the paper what had happened [the shooting of students on 17th November 1939]. After the war she originally lived on Letna with her mother, but when she also died, she lived with us in our apartment for about a half-year. We were adults by then, we were about to graduate. She was always terribly fond of studying, and was good at it.

It wasn't my cup of tea, I could have done without school. I had tons of girlfriends and was already going out with my future husband, Petr Prochazka. So I didn't have much time left over for things like school. For example, I was never good at mathematics. I remember my father getting horribly upset with me once - I was in Grade 10 or so, and had brought home a D in Math. He said: 'How can you be so stupid? Who do you take after?' And I answered: 'Probably after Mom, it's not from you.' I got such a whack, that how can I say that I'm stupid after my mother. Well, and then I worked as an accountant my whole life.

My husband, Petr Prochazka, was born on 15th May 1928, in Prague. We met at dance evenings when he was 19 and I was 16 or 17. On Narodni Trida [National Avenue] there used to be the Metro cinema and a dance hall. We used to go there, I remember that the dance-master was named Oplt. I know exactly what on him first caught my attention. I used to go to dance evenings together with Anita Frank. Back then a few of these guys would always come up to me and say: 'Listen, tell that Anita, that my parents don't want me to go out with a Jewess. But say it to her so that she doesn't feel hurt.' But on me my Jewish origins were never apparent.

Then, when I met my husband and we were together for about the third time - we were walking around Prague, and this was on the Lesser Town Square - I said to him that I'd just like to tell him that I'm a Jewess. And he turned to me and said: 'Well, I'd like to know why you're telling me this.' And that was the beginning. It's terribly dangerous to fall in love, and then a half year later find out that... well, it also used to happen, that a boy would come and say: 'My parents would like to meet you, but you can't say that you're Jewish.' Well, I then got to know his family and he, because he had lost his mother, became close to mine. You can't choose whom you fall in love with, but what I'm saying is that the first impulse, that this could be it, was that sentence of his.

In school my future husband helped me get through physics, math and especially Latin. He always somehow pushed me, so that I learned it. What's more, because he liked to draw, he'd draw something for me in all of my exercise books. So I exactly remember a drawing of the Winter King from my history exercise book, because he was on skis, a scarf fluttering in the air behind him, wearing a stocking cap. And then I was once called to the head of the class during physics, the teacher opened my book, and there spread over two pages was a drawing of a cow - but beautifully, he drew beautifully - its tail up over a pulley, a boy was standing on this box and was looking up its behind. And in the front stood another boy on a box and was peering in its mouth. And underneath was written: 'Venca, can you see me? No? Then it's probably constipated.' And that saved me from a D in physics. Because our teacher said: 'I've never seen an exercise book like this before.' And so he was looking through it, and it was full of my husband's drawings. Some other teacher would have been cross, but my physics teacher, he took it sportingly. He said: 'Can I tear it out and keep it?' And I said: 'No, you can't.' So tomfoolery like this, this is what my husband surprised me with our whole life.

We were married on 10th March 1951 at the Old Town Hall, same as my parents, and then also our daughters, Jana and Lenka. My husband has unfortunately already died, on 17th September 1987. He had brain cancer. It was a sudden death, it didn't show in any way.

We've got two children together, two daughters. Lenka was born on 4th August 1953. She graduated from economics university, computer science, and worked as a systems engineer for one private company. My other daughter is named Jana, married Madasova. She was born on 1st August 1956. She graduated from high school in Prague, and because already back then she was going out with her future husband, Gabriel Madas, she announced that she's never going to go to any university. Today she lives with him in Vienna. Jana doesn't work, in light of her husband's demanding job she remained a housewife.

My husband wasn't of Jewish origin, but in light of the fact that we didn't live in a Jewish fashion either, it wasn't a problem. On the contrary, our children are even baptized, as he had wished. He was baptized, but he wasn't religiously inclined at all, and didn't go to church. It was more I who dragged the children to midnight mass, so that they'd see it. When I was still a little girl, when I lived on Letna, down on the ground floor lived some family, the Mareks, and their Marie used to go to midnight mass. So I would go with her. I even sang with her in the organ gallery at St. Anthony's Church on Strossmayerovo Namesti [Strossmayer Square], where we used to go. My husband used to say that his mother, if she had been alive, would for sure have wanted them to be baptized. He often reminisced about this mother. He lost her as a young guy, when he was about sixteen. And he said that it would certainly have made her happy. So why wouldn't we make her happy? After all, it's no big thing. But even his mother wasn't particularly religiously inclined.

His mother worked anywhere, she was a housewife, and his father was the general director of the Steam Navigation Society of Prague, so he was the first one they fired when 1948 14 arrived. So they were basically without an income. That's why my husband couldn't attend any school. We had to help them out financially, and what's more, as the son of a former general director, he wasn't even allowed to attend university. His father also soon died, in 1955, five years after we were married.

After high school I took this lab technician's course. For about two years I worked in a lab in the State Health Institute, but back then they discovered that I've got a serious heart defect, and I could no longer work in the virology department. So then for years I worked for Druteva and then for the National Gallery. [Druteva Praha is a manufacturing collective with long years of tradition. It was founded on 1st January 1950 as the first collective to permit work placement of persons with various types of health problems.]

Druteva was an invalids' collective. I was on disability from the age of 25 due to my heart defect, and so that's how I got there. In Druteva they didn't only do handicrafts, but also various types of manufacturing. From blind people that made baskets and suchlike, through fashion and on the whole beautiful fancy goods. Back then I worked at home with cardboard, I folded and glued boxes. You know, I was so happy when I could stop doing that. It was horrible. Besides the war, the worst period of my life. I worked at night, and to make any money at all, I had to do a lot of it. They were often huge boxes. Then I was unfortunately so good at it, that they started having me make boxes for silverware holders. It was horrible. Everything had to be lined with silk, all those slots for spoons, forks and knives. When it was finished, they'd either come collect it, or I'd bring it to them.

Depending on how big it was.

When I was 40, I started at the National Gallery. And I was there until I retired, until 1984. One lady had come to see me, that her husband is starting at the National Gallery, and that he'd need some clever and capable person with him there. And so he got me in there. From the beginning till the end I worked in the collections inspection department, where they trained me back then.

Currently I work for the Terezin Initiative, at least twelve, thirteen years now. When the revolution arrived, in 1991 some people that knew each other got together, and realized that something should be done. For example at that time in Terezin there was some partisans' museum, something that seemed unbelievable to us. So the Terezin Initiative was founded. At first I used to come here to help out, and then I settled in full time. We all work without being paid, so whoever comes and has arms, legs and his head screwed on at least a little, we can use him. For one, a person at least keeps busy with something here, and for another I think that it's terribly important and necessary work.

In the beginning my husband had only vocational high school, because he wasn't allowed to go to university, as I've said. He worked back then for various companies, also in Remos, where he did mainly electrical work. It wasn't until later, when our children were already in school, sometime in 1964, 1965 I think, that he began studying at CTU while working. Already during his studies he was working as a programmer for a computer technology company, where he then worked until the end of his life.

Those studies of his, that was torture, let me tell you. But a person manages everything when he's young and has the will. We had only one problem, which was in 1968, when I was at IKEM for a huge cardiological exam, and they wanted me to immediately undergo an operation. But in December my husband was handing in his thesis and graduating. So I postponed the operation until after he finished it, because otherwise we wouldn't have managed it at all. And right between Christmas and New Year's I got a telegram, that I'm to report to the hospital on 4th January, and on 8th January they operated on me. I was one of the few back then that survived it. At that time heart surgery was still in its infancy. I guess I'm lucky. I remember that back then the doctors were saying: 'One day we're going to have to beat her to death with sticks.' Because they see that life force in a person. It's either there or it isn't. You exchange a couple of words with them, and right away they know what they've got in front of them.

My husband had two siblings. His brother Pavel is still alive and his sister Zuzana, married Jirickova, has since died, it's been about four years now. Pavel was born on 17th May 1930. Due to his being younger than my husband, he graduated. At first he struggled a bit, he was in the army. And then, when he was around 22, he went straight to university, also to CTU. But he studied architecture and made a living as an architect. He married Hana Prochazkova, a dentist. They live here in Prague and have one daughter, Marta, who graduated from economics university, the same as my daughter Lenka. And now a second grandchild has been born.

My husband's sister Zuzana was born on 25th April 1924. She had a high school education. Though she started studying medicine at university, when their mother died she stayed at home and took care of her grandfather and two brothers. She then never finished her schooling, and worked in the accounting department of various companies. In the year 1948 she married Dr. Zdenek Jiricka. They met during the war doing forced war labor here in Prague at CKD. [The brand CKD was born in

1927 and in the field of mechanical engineering and electrical technology belongs among the most significant and oldest of Czech brands.] Yeah, those are these wartime love affairs. They've got two children together: Dana Mrakotova and Vojtech Jiricka. Dana's husband is named Otta Mrakota, he studied at tech college and has this tiny little company. For about 12 years now. They've got two children. And Vojtech is a painter. He's got one son.

My husband's siblings are great. To this day we often see each other and like each other a lot. With the fact that I had lost my family, I was happy and grateful for his family, because since that time we're very close. That's probably also exactly why he wanted our children baptized, because that sister-in-law of mine, Petr's sister, was the godmother of our first girl, Lenka. She really wanted it. And neither is she particularly religious. Well, it's all fun, I know, but basically it's not that important. She was our girl's godmother, and my husband did the same for their Vojta. They're a normal Christian family, and just like we don't cultivate Judaism, they don't cultivate Catholicism. This was only some sort of exception. Don't forget that in those mixed marriages, the culture of one of them always predominates. And because I was never brought up in a religious way and don't believe in absolutely anything either, which is maybe a minus of mine, I accepted that wish of his to have the children baptized.

Even my parents, when I brought my husband and his relatives into the family, it was like they came alive again. Because both of them had been terribly changed by the war, and our life after the war was kind of a sad one. Until I got married, no one for example wanted to celebrate Christmas. During the time of the First Republic 15 we celebrated Christmas in a big way in our household. We each had Christmas Eve separately [i.e. each family celebrated Christmas Eve separately], but during the other days of the holiday we would get together.

After the war it was suddenly kind of sad, suddenly there weren't enough people. I remember that before the war my mother always dreaded visits by my father's brother Karel and his wife Valerie. As I've said, she was an Orthodox Jewess, and when she'd come and saw the Christmas tree, she'd almost faint. My mother always dreaded when they were supposed to come over, because she knew that we don't observe a kosher kitchen and at our place all she ate were hard-boiled eggs. We then often thought of them, what those poor wretches must have done in Terezin, how they could have observed it. But all of those families were incredibly gregarious, happy.

One of my father's sisters, Vlasta Alferiova, the one that was married into that wealthy family, they had a villa in the forest in Kostelec nad Cernymi Lesy. And there we would get together. I know that there was even a pool there - back then that was something incredible for all of those children. We also spent vacations there.

The Kosiners were a very close family, and with the fact that after the war no one returned, my parents never recovered from it. My father bore the death of all those children and siblings very heavily. After the war no one talked about them any more, as soon as Dad heard one of their names, he started weeping and refused to say anything more about it. They were all relatively young. It wasn't until when I got married, that my husband brought new light and activity into the family, and thanks to him they recovered a lot of their spirit. Life returned to its regular rhythm. But the time from 1945 to 1950, when I got married, that didn't go very well. They tried their best in front of me, so as not to spoil my youth, but once could see on them that it cost them a terrible effort.

I had a perfect life with my husband. I really recall with gratitude all of the years that we were given together. Unfortunately we didn't make it to our golden wedding anniversary, but nothing can be done about that. It lasted us our whole life. The whole family didn't call my husband anything else but Pluto, because once he was reading the paper and said: 'Hey, that's funny, look, I'm the same age as the dog Pluto.' Because Disney had started drawing Pluto in 1928. And the name stuck with him. [Editor's note: We don't know when exactly Norm Ferguson started drawing Pluto, but he was named after the dwarf planet Pluto which was discovered in 1930, the same year that the character was first introduced.]

The two of us were always together. We spent practically all our vacations with the children and with his family. Occasionally he would travel to give lectures - he lectured on computer technology - but otherwise we were together. He always said that he was terribly looking forward to coming home. To the girls and me. He liked his work, but he was also a very much a family man. He lived only for those children. For him the first thing in the world was his family, and only after that all sorts of entertainment.

We also spent all vacations with the children. It was unheard of that we'd leave the children at Pioneer camp and the two of us would take off by ourselves on a vacation. They were always at Pioneer camp so that we'd cover those two months, and then we went by car together to the sea, to the Baltic Sea, around Bohemia or Southern Bohemia. My daughter Jana, who lives in Vienna, has lots of girlfriends, and when they talk about their childhoods, she says that those girls' mothers never worked, but it was absolutely unheard of that they'd go on vacations together.

My husband was a passionate hobbyist. For a long time he acted in amateur theater, and as I've said, he drew beautifully. It's probably somewhere in the genes, because his sister's son is a master painter and my granddaughter also draws beautifully and makes beautiful ceramics. So every free minute he was doing something. But when I needed something fixed in the apartment, I was at the bottom of the list. He liked reading sci-fi, that really fascinated him. But my cup of tea it wasn't. Otherwise we were in a book club. And also thanks to the fact that my parents lived with us and we thus had someone to baby-sit, we'd go at least once every fourteen days to theaters.

My husband was a cultural officer of the ROH 16 at that computer equipment company. Back then the ROH gave out theater tickets. They bought them and were glad if someone went. My husband couldn't stand opera, he was absolutely tone-deaf. He couldn't tell one tone from another. But plays, that we could manage. He didn't like going to ballet either, I used to go by myself. Especially when they put on Romeo and Juliet at the National Theater, then I just sat on the steps and listened to that beautiful music.

What he was good at was handing out praise. When the girls were married, or when our daughter was graduating, he was very proud. When we went someplace dressed to the nines, he always called everyone together and would say: 'Girls, come see how good Mom looks in that.' My daughter would then say to me: 'That's not something that Gabicek [Gabriel, her husband] knows how to do.' He also was capable of making great fun of himself and me. Everyone always looked forward to it, and I was the one that always fell for it. And he was incredible at making up these gags, this situational comedy.

I myself was never teeming with hobbies, and don't teem with them now. When the children were younger, I went to work and in the evenings I sewed for everyone, including winter jackets. I

actually did it up to the time everything here turned around [i.e. up until the revolution in the year 1989. During communist times stores were poorly stocked and in many families this shortage was addressed by, for example, sewing at home]. Back then I sewed a lot, and knitted a lot, for my children and husband. But that wasn't a hobby as such, it was more or less a necessity.

But we all, my husband and my children, are terribly fervent readers. I took two books to Terezin with me in my rucksack, even though there was little room in it. I had two books by May [Karl (1842-1912): German writer, author of popular adventure books about Native Americans and the Wild West], I think it was some book about Winnetou, but I don't remember any more. I guess I was in love with those Indians, it's this adventurous reading. But it's nothing compared to our adventures. But back then we didn't know that yet. I know that I often even read under my duvet with a flashlight. As a child I gobbled up those adventure books and didn't like those girls' books and romantic literature. I didn't like dolls either, and never played with them. I read books by [Jules] Verne. 'Captain Nemo,' that really gripped me. But I didn't have my own book, I had to borrow it from a girlfriend. During the war, though, I was terribly afraid to ask that girlfriend, who went into the transport earlier than I did, to leave it for me. So in the end I took the books by May.

Back then we had a huge library at home. My parents were members of ELK [European Literary Club]. It was contemporary Anglo-American literature. My mother, as opposed to my father, lived very culturally, loved books, theater and concerts. My father, he lived for mathematics and other things annoyed him. He didn't like going to the theater, and on the contrary, was a fervent Sparta fan 17. I remember that once when my mother was cross that he wasn't going to the theater with her, he told her: 'If Sparta ever plays at the National Theater, I'll be sitting in the front row. Until then, I'm not going there.' But my father didn't himself play soccer, he was only a fan. You know, Jews aren't so into sports, they belong in coffee shops. So my mother used to go take in culture with girlfriends, or then after the war with me.

My husband was, on the contrary, very culturally minded, we often went to theaters and dancing to balls together. My husband and I were passionate dancers. We danced away countless evenings, even when we already had children, small and big. We were always somewhere. We had a great group of friends, where I was the only Jewess. We would go play cards together. Some of my girlfriends have already died, but their husbands still come over to my place for lunch, about once every three weeks. And also the rest of my husband's family. As far as sports go, my husband and I used to go skiing a lot in the winter. But then it all fell away when things started being crummy with me.

But then after that we did a lot of walking around in the forests around our cottage, which we had by Jevany, a short ways away from Prague, about 30 kilometers. We'd walk for hours on end, we were these pedestrians. We bought the cottage in 1950 and had it until my husband's death in 1987. I then sold it. It was always hectic there on Saturdays and Sundays. We all used to go there together and had tons of fun there. The cottage is in the middle of the forest, so we were always running around picking mushrooms. And there was a beautiful place to swim there. We really spent very nice days there, and my husband's sister and her family would always come out to be with us. You could say that our children grew up together. Friends of my mother and my father often also came out to the cottage.

As I've said, my husband and I have two daughters, Lenka and Jana. My parents loved them dearly and never spoiled any fun. My father especially loved the younger, Jana, and she did what she wanted with him. She had Grandpa eating out of the palm of her hand. The thing that touched me the most, I won't forget it, the younger one, Jana, was three and the big one, Lenka, began going to school. And there they told her that there's no Santa Claus. And so the six-year-old had something for everyone, and the little one was looking at her and said: 'What's that you're doing?' 'I'm getting gifts together.' The little one didn't have anything, and so in the end under the tree each one of us found toilet paper tied with a silver ribbon. And when my father died and we were going through his things, he had it in his wallet. The whole time. The toilet paper with the silver ribbon. He used to say that nothing in his life had touched him like that had.

Little Jana was terribly wild, so he, when for example a window was broken somewhere, he'd pay everything for her. And when she broke something in a grocery store, he paid for everything and didn't bat an eyelash. And he couldn't stand it when I was angry with them. He loved those children. And they then really brought joy and life into the family. And also my husband's siblings and their families. We became very good friends with them and my parents also liked them very much. They replaced the family that we had lost during the war.

How many times did we go camping for a week with my husband's sister, Zuzana Jirickova, and her husband Zdenek, and my parents took care of all the children. And then they said: 'Good thing you're back, they've eaten everything that was here. And we were here without the car,' - because we had the car for the week we were camping - 'and we've already had to make the rounds to the neighboring cottages, to see who's going shopping, because everything's been eaten.' I, if I would have been healthy, I would have had at least four children. My husband would have also wanted it, but the doctors said that it would have been a terrible risk, so it wasn't possible.

The older daughter, Lenka, has quite a complicated life. She married Mirek Duda and they had a daughter, Kristyna, together. She was born on 13th March 1980, and in May he escaped to Germany. He's perhaps hardly ever had a job, he's this lost soul. So neither did he have anything to pay for Kristyna from, and to this day he's not paying. We took care of them up until Kristyna was eight years old. They lived with us in the Southern Town, and that was an additional burden for us. Well, it's this sad, unsuccessful love story with a bad ending. Lenka never found anyone else, she devotes herself to her work and expended a lot of energy on her child. She had tons and tons of troubles with it.

Kristyna's father got married in Germany and has two gorgeous little girls, who love us. But he left them as well. It's terribly hard for me to talk about it, but he's irresponsible. But what can you do, he's Kristyna's dad. I'd be the last one to beat her about the head with the fact that Dad's a lay-about. You can't do that, I don't think that it would help her. She gets along with him excellently, now he was here for my birthday and for her graduation ceremony. But my younger daughter, who lives in Vienna, says: 'Just wait, when Kristyna's going to be in university after graduating, her dad's going to visit and boast about her.' Which is exactly what's happening.

Last year Kristyna graduated from the Faculty of Natural Sciences. She studied genetics and now works in a microbiology institute and is working on the PhD. Unfortunately she's quite seriously ill. It's probably also genetic, but with her it's showed up as a thyroid disorder. But mainly she got rheumatism during puberty. Doctors call it juvenile arthritis. She's already got a lot of operations

behind her, knees, arms and everything. But she's a terribly brave girl, who can't stand people feeling sorry for her and doesn't want to talk about it. Today she's 25, she lives with her mother in Zbraslav, but she's in love, and he's already living with them, and that's what keeps her going. Hopefully she'll come to grips with life somehow. But it's not easy for me, when I see her. She's really gotten the short end of the stick. She's even got problems walking. It's undeserved, but one has to accept it as it is.

My younger daughter, Jana, met her future husband when she was 16 and went camping with the Pioneers to the Tatras. My son-in-law has a twin. His brother Norbert's girlfriend was going there, too. And Gabi went with them and saw Jana there and in a week he was already in the Tatras at the Pioneer camp and that's how it started. For a long time my daughter kept his age a secret. When we were curious as to what he was all about, she said: 'Well, he plays in some band.' My husband turned pale, because he was imagining one of those rockers with his vest turned fuzzy side out and a guitar. 'In what band?' we asked. And she said: 'Well, the Czech Philharmonic.' So we calmed down, that it's not a rocker. They were married when Jana was 20, i.e. in 1976, and right after the wedding they left the country. The currently live in Vienna and my son-in-law's brother in Switzerland.

The things we went through with those twins! They're identical and both of them play the same instrument. Everyone got them confused, even their parents. They were an attraction in Prague, because they used to fill in for each other in the Philharmonic. My son-in-law was telling us how they were playing with some German conductor, and he kept looking at him strangely. Gabi was saying to himself: 'Jesus Christ, have I screwed something up?' Then the conductor came up to him and said: 'How is it that you're here today, when I was conducting in Basel yesterday, and you were there as well?'

Before emigrating Jana started working in television, in the news. He was in the Czech Philharmonic and his twin in the FOK [Film, Orchestra, Concert]. The FOK let him go to Switzerland for a three-year engagement. And he stayed there. Jana and her husband went there to visit him. It was supposed to be this honeymoon, their emigration wasn't agreed to beforehand in any way, it was a spur of the moment decision of my daughter's. At that time she was already pregnant, she had only a trench coat and a nightshirt with her, and we had to then send it all to her. They didn't even have documents with them, nothing. Mainly my son-in-law, all of his diplomas. So if they would have been planning it, they would have stuffed something into the car. But they probably did the right thing. When they were leaving, I told them to do as they see fit. I'd never want it on my conscience that would have to be in this crap here because of me. No, not that, never.

The main reason why they left was that here they really didn't have anyplace to live. In 1975 my son-in-law won all the first prizes at the Prague Spring. [The Prague Spring International Music Festival is a permanent showcase for outstanding performing artists, symphony orchestras and chamber music ensembles of the world. Its first year was 1946. The contest of the same name was founded a year after the festival was born, and takes place every year in various instrumental categories.] And one of the prizes was the Prize of the Mayor of the Capital City of Prague. Back then the mayor was Zuska. When they were giving him the prize at the Old Town Hall, he asked him if he had any wishes. And Gabi said that he needed an apartment, a bachelor apartment, whatever. Because at that time he was living in a dormitory. And he promised it to him, on the condition that he's got to be married. He sent him a marriage notice, and asked him if he'd be

marrying them. Well, he wasn't marrying them, but what my son-in- law was actually saying with this was: 'See, I've fulfilled the condition.' When the then came a half year later to ask, they told him: 'Well, it's not possible, you're childless.' And he replied: 'We're already expecting a baby.' But there was nothing for him anyways.

My husband and I otherwise also had problems with a place to live. Actually, they threw us out of our apartment. When our older daughter got married, when she finished university, my husband and I remained alone, just the two of us in that big apartment. Well, big, it was about 130 square meters, but for two people that was unimaginably huge. They simply told us that the apartment is too big for us, that we should find a smaller one and gave us two months for the exchange and to move out.

And so we moved to a 'panelak' [prefab apartment building] in the South Town. But we didn't fret over it, there's no point in fretting over something that you can't change. Otherwise it'd be impossible to get through life. I knew that I had to leave, so we packed up, found a place in exchange and went. You can't go through life in any other way. Not taking into account, honestly, that we lived on Veletrzni Street, it was a terribly noisy street, full of cars. But the South Town, that's peaceful. Now we've got a beautiful view, everywhere there are trees, lawns. We got used to it there right away. As far as a healthy environment goes, we were certainly better off. On Letna it was like in a gas chamber.

So my daughter and my son-in-law spent a year with his brother in Switzerland. And then there was an audition for the Vienna Philharmonic, which my son-in-law luckily won - now he plays first trombone there - and so they all, by then with their first son Robert, who was born in Switzerland, moved to Vienna. But he knew that they'd take him there, because he won all of the prizes in the Prague Spring, so they asked for him. But the Czech Philharmonic had strictly refused, with the excuse that they won't let go their best musicians. Well, these were things that caused the emigration, drop by drop. When they were leaving, they didn't speak a word of German. But they made their way up fantastically. In Vienna they were starting with a child, at home they had orange crates and that's what they sat on. In 1979 their second son was born. He's named Oliver. Now he's also a member of the Vienna Philharmonic, he plays all the drums there. Robert is an engineer, he graduated in international business in Vienna.

My son-in-law Gabriel is an incredible person, in his character, education, and nature. In the love that he so often shows to us, we who are in Prague. He comes to visit as often as he and Oliver can because of their work, while our daughter is here every little while. Musicians, that's not a normal job, it's complicated for them, because either they're on tour or have various obligations. For this reason Jana is a housewife, she doesn't work.

I've never been able to imagine what sort of life it is with musicians. Saturdays and Sundays don't exist. Holidays don't exist. And when he's on call, he's on call, he's got to go. And because the Vienna Philharmonic also has obligations in the Vienna Opera, so they've got their own concerts and besides that daily obligations in the Opera. Each chair is occupied by two musicians, and they have to cover everything. It's very hard to agree on something with them, who's going to have time off when. Even now, for my birthday, Jana came by herself, the poor thing, because the men were in England on tour.

Well, I've founded a fan club for my son-in-law here. And I've appointed myself as its president. He's got a fan club in Vienna, too, there it was started by Jana's girlfriends. When it's possible, I go to Vienna. But there were times when we didn't see each other for years. The communists didn't let me go anywhere. Back then we could at most write or call each other. I was always asking for them to let me go visit them, but they always refused. That it's not in keeping with the security interests of the Czechoslovak Republic. That was all the reason that was given.

We also became very close with his twin brother. He's named Norbert, and is a great guy. He's in Switzerland with his wife, and daughter Melanie. With both of those families, the biggest problem is time. They, for example, only have time off on 24th and 25th December. They even play on New Year's Eve, and on New Year's Day they've got the New Year's Concert. That one's broadcast on TV. This year they were actually both on TV, so I really enjoyed the New Year's concert. It was great.

As soon as our daughter and her husband remained outside the country, my husband and I were constantly at the STB 18 and they were constantly filling out some papers with us. It wasn't easy, a family full of emigrants, what's more our daughter worked in TV, her husband had a name in the Czech Philharmonic, and actually escaped along with his twin, who played for the FOK. But luckily we didn't have problems at work because of it. Though my husband had his promotions blocked, but he said that it after all doesn't matter, the main thing is for them to be healthy.

At the National Gallery, where I worked, it didn't matter, there was no threat there. Professor Kotalik was excellent. However, back then it was a certain era, which today the Communists praise, and that we had the responsibility to support our daughter and that baby and also my mother, who was already old and retired. So we tried as hard as we could. Then they somehow decreased my husband's taxes on the basis of that.

I myself never considered emigration, I could have never left my mother. I would never have left her here. And they would have never left here. They already had such a life's journey behind them and my father had had all those heart attacks. Luckily my husband was such a dear that he didn't object to us staying. Because when 1968 19 happened, they were sending us messages from England that they'd take care of us. I went to visit them in 1965 with my husband. When we left the children here, the Communists made an exception and gave us permission. We were there for about 14 days. And once I was there by myself still back in 1947, right after the war. Now due to pressure changes I'm not allowed on planes, so when they want to see Prague and me, they come here.

As far as my daughter's emigration goes, I was terribly sorry that I didn't see those boys of hers grow up. Before the revolution my daughter came for a visit with the children because of my mother, when she was still alive, around the year 1986 or 1987. But for a change the Vienna Philharmonic didn't let her husband go. Luckily it's behind us now, we waited through it and lived through it. I hold one thing against all of them, that I'm not a great-grandmother yet. I'd like it so much. And they, no way. But well, perhaps I'll still live to see something. I told them not to annoy me, or I'll make that great-grandchild myself somehow.

My parents took Communism very hard. They'd always been national socialists. They weren't party members, but both of them were sympathizers. Already their parents had been 100 percent right-wingers. I remember that, perhaps due to a premonition, my mother and father didn't let me join the Youth Union. At the age of 17, 18, I was saying to myself that it maybe wouldn't be bad, I'd get

out of the house, into some brigade work and so on. But they said 'No way.'

After the war my parents very much wanted me to join the Scouts. One girlfriend of mine was in it, so I was there two or three times with them. But at the age of 15 we were already grown up. It seemed terribly childish to me, when they were playing at having to survive for two hours in the forest without food. I simply couldn't stand it. I couldn't handle it. Those wartime experiences in some fashion quite separate you from your peers. My husband, for example, was a passionate Scout, and my granddaughter Kristyna is a passionate Scout. But back then, it seemed horribly childish to me.

Everything was raining down on us, nothing but one heavy blow after another. At the beginning of the war my parents lost everything, when the Communists came, they lost everything again. And in 1953, when I was pregnant with our older daughter, the currency reform came. Back then we were at our cottage with the whole gang. In the evening Zapotocky 20 said that everyone's money was safe, and by the morning it had all changed. They threw my father, who had refused to enter the Party, out of university, where he had lectured from the beginning. In light of the fact that neither he, nor my mother, nor I were in the Party, we knew that no financial benefits would apply to us.

I was the most afflicted by the currency reform, because we didn't yet have anything bought for the baby, and suddenly we lost all our money. That was in May, and in August our daughter was born. My sister-in-law already had a two-year-old boy, so luckily she lent and gave us all sorts of things. It was this merry-go-round, mothers today aren't familiar with this any longer. But back then in all families, things made the rounds from child to child. Those were different times, I think that the mutual support between people back then was likely much higher than now. We even got to a samizdat 21 by Skvorecky [Skvorecky, Josef (b. 1924): Czech writer, essayist and translator] and things like that, which we devoured. And Medek 22 and the Voice of America 23, those are unforgettable moments. That can't be forgotten.

I didn't even meet up with anti-Semitism after the war, under Communism. My parents didn't have positions where political cadre officers would have been investigating them. My mother worked her whole life in an office and my father was such an expert that they forgave him absolutely everything. Reactions to my origin were mostly neutral. The only one that was wonder- struck was my husband, but more because I had even started to talk about it. Neither his family nor our friends made a big deal of it.

Neither did we ever pester anyone by constantly talking about the suffering that we had endured, and wanting some sort of special treatment. Not at all. And maybe that's precisely why all our friends took what we had gone through as a matter of fact, and no one talked about it any more. In fact, some of my friends' lifelong desire was for me to take them with me to Terezin, so they could see it. And when there's a memorial ceremony at the Pinkas Synagogue, my brother-in-law occasionally comes. After all, I myself talk about it more only from the time that I've been in the Terezin Initiative. Up till then I didn't know much, didn't pay attention and neither did I want to know. I closed my eyes to what had been.

I've never been to Israel, none of my relatives or friends emigrated there. And I've never felt the urge to go see it. I'm not very well off as far as my heart goes, and as much as it's possible, I consciously avoid emotions. Something like Yad Vashem 24, that would probably slay me. It's enough for me to hear Brundibar, and I cry. [Editor's note: The children's opera Brundibar was

created in 1938 for a contest announced by the then Czechoslovak Ministry of Schools and National Education. It was composed by Hans Krasa based on a libretto by Adolf Hoffmeister. The first performance of Brundibar - by residents of the Jewish orphanage in Prague - wasn't seen by the composer. He had been deported to Terezin. Not long after him, Rudolf Freudenfeld, the son of the orphanage's director, who had rehearsed the opera with the children, was also transported. This opera had more than 50 official performances in Terezin. The idea of solidarity, collective battle against the enemy and the victory of good over evil today speaks to people the whole world over. Today the opera is performed on hundreds of stages in various corners of the world.]

Or when we're in the Pinkas Synagogue, where every year on 8th March there's a ceremony to commemorate the extermination of the family camp in Auschwitz. During one night, 3,500 people went into the gas. That has a big impact on me. So, honestly, I consciously avoid any emotions whatsoever, because I've already gone through so much at the cardiology ward.

I've laid in the coronary unit so many times, where I had to have myself taken immediately, and where they gave me electro-shocks. I've been in the hospital with my heart so many times, and you've got the feeling that you don't know if you'll draw another breath, whether it'll start up or won't. After that, a person somehow subconsciously knows what's bad for him and what isn't.

But I do concern myself with what's going on in Israel. Very much so. I'll tell you, completely honestly, that when I was reading an article two or three years ago - it had been a hundred years since Herzl 25 had founded Zionism 26 - so they were asking him what he'll do with those Arabs. His answer was: 'It'll get done somehow.' And that was the beginning of the catastrophe. And that's why I can't understand Zionism. I very much condemn it.

I also remember that when on that 14th May 1948 the state of Israel was proclaimed 27, my father said: 'That's the most horrible and catastrophic thing that could have happened.' He was a very smart and educated guy, and said: 'It's is a catastrophe, it's going to end very badly.' And see, unfortunately his prediction came true. Well, after all, right away there was the Six-Day-War 28. And everyone who lived there before the war says that they used to be great friends with the Arabs. After all, there used to be amazing ties between the Arabs and Jews, they protected each other. Up until the proclamation of the state of Israel touched off that catastrophe. So don't anyone ask me to go there.

And then I was once very offended - I'm in the WIZO 29 here, which is the Czech Association of Jewish Women - when there was some symposium here, they uttered this sentence, over which we had a big disagreement. She said at first that there's nothing better than the state of Israel, and that we're only living in the diaspora. So I protested, that I live in my native land, that I absolutely don't feel to be an exile in any diaspora. That really offended me.

Then there's another thing that they claim. That they're heroes, but that we went like sheep to the slaughter. People that go there a lot say that they hear it from all sides. That they fought with arms in hand and that we let ourselves be loaded onto transports. So there are a lot of things that those living in Israel say, that I disagree with. But that's just my personal opinion. Even though I work for the Czech Association of Jewish Women as treasurer, and we collect money for Israel, my heart isn't in it. There wasn't any reason for the state of Israel to be created. I was born as a Czech girl in Prague and I'll die as a Czech girl in Prague.

I myself have many times pondered about how it is with Judaism and me. But it's never particularly attracted me. Maybe that's a mistake, maybe I missed out on something, but those are simply the facts and I can't do anything about it. Our family, perhaps with the exception of my father's brother, didn't live according to Jewish rituals. Basically I've come to the conclusion that it's caused by upbringing. Because I've got girlfriends in the Czech Association of Jewish Women that are from Slovakia, and all of them over there in Slovakia lived in a much more Orthodox fashion than Prague Jews.

The Prague Jewish community wasn't Orthodox for 200 years. It's only Sidon that's started with that now. [Sidon, Karol Efraim (b. 1942): from the year 1992 the Prague and national rabbi] So we here knew that we were Czech Jews and some charitable association did exist - I remember that my parents were in it - it was named 'The Czech Heart.' But it was solely an issue of charity. The Jewish community was never Orthodox. And especially Prague Jews weren't at all Orthodox. But as far as Sidon goes, to his credit let it be said that he's very tolerant and doesn't hold it against anyone that they don't live in an Orthodox manner. In this he's ingenious, he takes us as we are. And whenever I need for him to come pray, when there's some memorial ceremony, one of those rabbis always comes.

You know, of course a person often thinks about how it might be. I for example, to the great displeasure of those girlfriends of mine from Slovakia, don't even go to synagogue. All my life people either didn't talk about it, or were ashamed, that they're Jews, and now it's in vogue. So now they're making Jews of themselves and they can't be without that synagogue. I don't want to throw anything in their faces, maybe it simply wasn't socially acceptable, and so they held back. But the fact is, that for years on end they went without it, and no one missed it.

With the young converts, I once had a big debate on the theme of if, God forbid, something similar happened as during the war, that they can leave it, that Judaism. Because it's solely a religious matter. But we, who have Jewish roots as such, we'll be stuck in it up to our ears. That's a big difference between the converted ones and us. And it's not a minor problem. But all right, they want to have lots of young people, let them have them, no problem. How many we actually have in the community, that I don't know, I'd be making it up. I only know that that Jewish youth lives its life. They're praised, of course, because they're important for the further existence of the Jewish community, but we old ones, when we have any sort of memorial ceremonies and remembrance events, or if we would need help, there's absolutely no interest. When we ask them, please come with us to Terezin, there's only a few of us now that manage to stand on their feet, no, not that.

During all these years they haven't helped us, with neither a word nor a deed, even when we ask them to. That's also wrong. When you go to the Pinkas Synagogue on 8th May, it's all old grannies, we barely drag ourselves up the stairs. Because it doesn't interest the young ones at all. They concern themselves with whether the Jewish community will give them dough to go skiing, for trips and so on. I don't want to do them an injustice, but that's how I see it.

For example, in that Czech Association of Jewish Women we tried to start an Aviv, that means another generation. We weren't successful. Which is sad, when there's so many girl converts. No one's got the time, no one's interested. I understand that they're either studying, or it's just Judaism for the sake of appearances, now it's all the rage, that Judaism. We're all old people and they won't get anything out of us. So we really don't interest them. It's sad, but that's the way it is.

Yesterday we were at a beautiful two-hour concert in Terezin. It's all old grannies, nobody young will come there. It's in Rosh Chodesh 30, it's advertised in our newsletter [the Terezin Initiative newsletter]. Every year on 16th October. When you ask them what happened on 16th October, they don't know. [On 16th October 1941, the first transport was sent out from the Protectorate.] But if they're interested in their roots and live in Prague, at least the fate of those Czech Jews should interest them.

During Communist times no one talked about Jews here at all. Neither did my children find out in school what had happened during the war, nothing at all. And in our home after the war, it was almost never talked about, and then when I had small children, the war wasn't talked about at all. For years my children didn't know what we had gone through. They didn't find it out until they were a little older, around nine, ten years old.

The only thing that I remember from [their] early childhood is that when they didn't want to eat something, I always said, 'Hitler on you. You'd eat everything.' And they didn't know, they thought it was some sort of boogeyman. What did seem strange to them was that they didn't have any aunts and uncles on my side. They always wondered about that. But thanks to the fact that my parents survived, they at least had a grandma and grandpa.

When we first told them that they're Jews, they had no idea what it was. They had no clue as to what they're supposed to imagine by that. And I think that they also quietly envied me that I didn't have to go to school. But with the passage of time, around 13, 14, suddenly everything of course became clear and they understood. Today they take the fact that they're of Jewish origin as a matter of fact. I would say that my granddaughter Kristyna has the greatest interest in it. She's actually a quarter Jewish and her young man, with whom she lives, is as well.

One thing is true, that the children in Vienna learned much more about the Holocaust in school. Because there they constantly discussed it. Those schools even had compulsory trips to Israel. Once I was in Vienna right at the time when my grandson was returning from Israel. Their entire class flew there with their religion professor on a compulsory trip. It was just before graduation, he was 18. And my grandson is a very good writer, so he then wrote this seminar paper, which I've got stored away at home. In the evening at supper, when we were asking what and how it had been, he said that what made the greatest impact on him was the children's museum at Yad Vashem. That it wasn't until there that he realized how terribly lucky I had been to survive.

And so as not to do an injustice to local schools, for example my granddaughter here attended a German high school from the age of 14, which was led excellently by only German teachers. They learned a lot there. And when they had history - they had all subjects in German - they had only Czech and math or Czech and history in Czech, their history teacher began talking about it, and she spoke up, that her grandma had gone through it. I then, at his request, went there to tell them something about it.

My granddaughter has my star at home, in this little frame, and so she brought it to school and their teacher wore it that entire hour. That was terribly touching for me. It wasn't at all unpleasant for me, because he talked about it wonderfully, without emotions. Even about the guilt that Germans, their children and grandchildren feel. So those Germans are returning to it much more than Czech schools. Right now I'm preparing requests for some grants here, because we, as the

Terezin Initiative, pay Czech schools to go visit Terezin. Which is a horrible disgrace.

Glossary

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

2 Terezin Initiative
In the year 1991 the former prisoners of various concentration camps met and decided to found the Terezin Initiative (TI), whose goal is to commemorate the fate of Protectorate (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) Jews, to commemorate the dead and document the history of the Terezin ghetto. Within the framework of this mission TI performs informative, documentary, educational and editorial activities. It also financially supports field trips to the Terezin Ghetto Museum for Czech schools.

3 Treblinka

Village in Poland's Mazovia region, site of two camps. The first was a penal labor camp, established in 1941 and operating until 1944. The second, known as Treblinka II, functioned in the period 1942-43 and was a death camp. Prisoners in the former worked in Treblinka II. In the second camp a ramp and a mock-up of a railway station were built, which prevented the victims from realizing what awaited them until just in front of the entrance to the gas chamber. The camp covered an area of 13.5 hectares. It was bounded by a 3-m high barbed wire fence interwoven densely with pine branches to screen what was going on inside. The whole process of exterminating a transport from arrival in the camp to removal of the corpses from the gas chamber took around 2 hours. Several transports arrived daily. In the 13 months of the extermination camp's existence the Germans gassed some 750,000-800,000 Jews. Those taken to Treblinka included Warsaw Jews during the so-called 'Grossaktion' [great liquidation campaign] in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. In addition to Polish Jews, Jews from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR were also killed in Treblinka. In the spring of 1943 the Germans gradually began to liquidate the camp. On 2nd August 1943 an uprising broke out there with the aim of enabling some 200 people to escape. The majority died. 4 Small Fortress (Mala pevnost) in Theresienstadt: An infamous prison, used by two totalitarian regimes: Nazi Germany and communist Czechoslovakia. It was built in the 18th century as a part of a fortification system and

almost from the beginning it was used as a prison. In 1940 the Gestapo took it over and kept mostly political prisoners there: members of various resistance movements. Approximately 32,000 detainees were kept in Small Fortress during the Nazi occupation. Communist Czechoslovakia continued using it as a political prison; after 1945 German civilians were confined there before they were expelled from the country. 5 Opletal, Jan (1915 - 1939): A student at the Faculty of Medicine at Charles University. Fatally wounded during a demonstration against the Nazi occupants on 28th October 1939 in Prague. His funeral on 15th November 1939 turned into an anti-Nazi demonstration. In 1945 he was posthumously awarded the title MUDr. by Charles University. In 1996 President V. Havel posthumously awarded Jan Opletal with the Order of TGM. At the same time as the coffin with Jan Opletal's remains was being laid to rest, Hitler commenced in Berlin an emergency meeting with one point in its program - the persecution of Czech students. The campaign was named "Sonderaktion Prag vom 17. November 1939.". In Prague, on 17th November 1939 the Nazi forces of repression attacked universities and dormitories, where the Nazis arrested and beat hundreds of students. Nine selected people were executed without trial in Ruzyne. Drastic was also the immediate dragging off of 1,200 students to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. This German lightning operation was performed on the basis of Hitler's decision in Berlin on 16th November 1939 according to the Reich "Sonderbehandlung" decree from 20th September 1939, where arrested persons could be executed without a trial. Thanks to the servility of President Hacha the majority of Czech students left the concentration camp by the end of 1942, the last in January of 1943.

6 Lodz Ghetto

It was set up in February 1940 in the former Jewish quarter on the northern outskirts of the city. 164,000 Jews from Lodz were packed together in a 4 sq. km. area. In 1941 and 1942, 38,500 more Jews were deported to the ghetto. In November 1941, 5,000 Roma were also deported to the ghetto from Burgenland province, Austria. The Jewish self- government, led by Mordechai Rumkowsky, sought to make the ghetto as productive as possible and to put as many inmates to work as he could. But not even this could prevent overcrowding and hunger or improve the inhuman living conditions. As a result of epidemics, shortages of fuel and food and insufficient sanitary conditions, about 43,500 people (21% of all the residents of the ghetto) died of undernourishment, cold and illness. The others were transported to death camps; only a very small number of them survived.

7 Maly Trostinec

Village in eastern Belarus located near Minsk, camp and site of mass murder of Jews. About 200,000 people were murdered in the Trostinets area. During 1942, Jews from Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Austria, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were brought by train to be killed in Maly Trostinets. Most of the victims were lined up in front of large pits and shot. The prisoners in the camp were forced to sort through the victims' possessions and maintain the camp. They occasionally underwent selections. This happened more frequently during 1943. In the fall of 1943 the Nazis began to destroy all evidence of mass murder by burning bodies. As the Soviet army approached in June 1944, the Germans killed most of the remaining prisoners. On 30th June the Germans completely destroyed the camp. When the Soviets arrived on 3rd July, they found a few Jews who had escaped.

8 Anti-Jewish laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

In March 1939, there lived in the Protectorate 92,199 inhabitants classified according to the so-called Nuremberg Laws as Jews. On 21st June 1939, Konstantin von Neurath, the Reich Protector, passed the so-called Edict Regarding Jewish Property, which put restrictions on Jewish property. On 24th April 1940, a government edict was passed which eliminated Jews from economic activity. Similarly like previous legal changes it was based on the Nuremburg Law definitions and limited the legal standing of Jews. According to the law, Jews couldn't perform any functions (honorary or paid) in the courts or public service and couldn't participate at all in politics, be members of Jewish organizations and other organizations of social, cultural and economic nature. They were completely barred from performing any independent occupation, couldn't work as lawyers, doctors, veterinarians, notaries, defense attorneys and so on. Jewish residents could participate in public life only in the realm of religious Jewish organizations. Jews were forbidden to enter certain streets, squares, parks and other public places. From September 1939 they were forbidden from being outside their home after 8pm. Beginning in November 1939 they couldn't leave, even temporarily, their place of residence without special permission. Residents of Jewish extraction were barred from visiting theaters and cinemas, restaurants and cafés, swimming pools, libraries and other entertainment and sports centers. On public transport they were limited to standing room in the last car, in trains they weren't allowed to use dining or sleeping cars and could ride only in the lowest class, again only in the last car. They weren't allowed entry into waiting rooms and other station facilities. The Nazis limited shopping hours for Jews to twice two hours and later only two hours per day. They confiscated radio equipment and limited their choice of groceries. Jews weren't allowed to keep animals at home. Jewish children were prevented from visiting German, and, from August 1940, also Czech public and private schools. In March 1941 even so-called re-education courses organized by the Jewish Religious Community were forbidden, and from June 1942 also education in Jewish schools. To eliminate Jews from society it was important that they be easily identifiable. Beginning in March 1940, citizenship cards of Jews were marked by the letter 'J' (for Jude - Jew). From 1st September 1941 Jews older than six could only go out in public if they wore a yellow six- pointed star with 'Jude' written on it on their clothing.

9 Mobilization in Czechoslovakia in 1938

The coming to power of the Nazis in Germany in 1933, in connection with unsuccessful negotiations at the disarmament conference in Geneva that same year, represented a fundamental qualitative shift in Czechoslovakia's foreign-political standing. The growing tension in the latter half of the 1930s finally culminated in 1938, when the growing aggression of neighboring Germany led first to the implementation of exceptional measures in the period from 20th May to 22nd June, and finally to the proclamation of a general mobilization on 23rd September 1938. Czechoslovakia's security system, laboriously built up over the years, however at the end of September 1938 collapsed, and the country found itself in strong international isolation.

10 Yellow star - Jewish star in Protectorate

On 1st September 1941 an edict was issued according to which all Jews having reached the age of six were forbidden to appear in public without the Jewish star. The Jewish star is represented by a hand-sized, six-pointed yellow star outlined in black, with the word 'Jude' in black letters. It had to

be worn in a visible place on the left side of the article of clothing. This edict came into force on 19th September 1941. It was another step aimed at eliminating Jews from society. The idea's author was Reinhard Heydrich himself.

11 Trochta, Stepan (1905 - 1974)

Roman Catholic priest and clerical dignitary. Member of the Salesian Congregation. For helping members of the resistance and fellow Jewish citizens who were in danger, he was arrested by the Gestapo in 1940, but soon after released. In 1942 was again arrested and jailed in the Mauthausen and Dachau concentration camps. From 1947 the Bishop of Litomerice. From 1949 - 1953 interned in his residence in Litomerice. In 1954 sentenced on the basis of construed accusations, received amnesty in 1960. In 1968 was rehabilitated and again took up his position of bishop. Named cardinal in 1937.

12 Eichmann, Adolf (1906-1962)

Nazi war criminal, one of the organizers of mass genocide of Jews. Since 1932 member of the Nazi party and SS, since 1934 an employee of the race and resettlement departments of the RSHA (Main Security Office of the Reich), after the "Anschluss" of Austria headed the Headquarters for the Emigration of Jews in Vienna, later organized the emigration of Jews in Czechoslovakia and, since 1939, in Berlin. Since December 1939 he was the head of the Departments for the Resettlement of Poles and Jews from lands incorporated into the Reich. Since mid-1941, as the Head of the Branch IV B 4 Gestapo RSHA, he coordinated the plan of the extermination of Jews, organized and carried out the deportations of millions of Jews to death camps. After the war he was imprisoned in an American camp, he managed to escape and hid in Germany, Italy and Argentina. In 1960 he was captured by the Israeli secret service in Buenos Aires. After a process which took several months, he was sentenced to death and executed. Eichmann's trial initiated a great discussion about the causes and the carrying out of the Shoah.

13 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.

14 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.

15 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. 16 Revolutionary Unionist Movement (ROH): 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). 17 Sparta: The Sparta Praha club was founded on 16th November 1893. A memorial of the first very famous era of the club's history are first and foremost two victories in the Central European Cup, which in the 1920s and 1930s had the same significance as today's Champions League. Sparta, usually with Slavia, always formed the foundation of the national team and therefore its players were present during the greatest successes of the Czechoslovak and Czech teams.

18 Statni Tajna Bezpecnost
Czech intelligence and security service founded in 1948.

19 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 Smrkovsky became president of the National Assembly, and Oldrich Cernik became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubcek, 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.

20 Zapotocky, Antonin (1884-1957)

From 1921 a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC), from1940-1945 imprisoned in the Sachsenhausen- Oranienburg concentration camp. 1945-1950 president of the Central Union Committee (URO), 1950-1953 member of the National Assembly (NS), 1948-1953 Prime Minister. From 21st March 1953 president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

21 Samizdat literature in Czechoslovakia

Samizdat literature: The secret publication and distribution of government-banned literature in the former Soviet block. Typically, it was typewritten on thin paper (to facilitate the production of as many carbon copies as possible) and circulated by hand, initially to a group of trusted friends, who then made further typewritten copies and distributed them clandestinely. Material circulated in this way included fiction, poetry, memoirs, historical works, political treatises, petitions, religious tracts, and journals. The penalty for those accused of being involved in samizdat activities varied according to the political climate, from harassment to detention or severe terms of imprisonment. In Czechoslovakia, there was a boom in Samizdat literature after 1948 and, in particular, after 1968, with the establishment of a number of Samizdat editions supervised by writers, literary critics and publicists: Petlice (editor L. Vaculik), Expedice (editor J. Lopatka), as well as, among others, Ceska expedice (Czech Expedition), Popelnice (Garbage Can) and Prazska imaginace (Prague Imagination).

22 Medek, Ivan (b

1925): Czech journalist, music critic and publicist. 1978 - 1993 a regular contributor to the Voice of America in Vienna, 1978 - 1990 contributor to Radio Free Europe and 1978 - 1990 the BBC. From 1993 - 1996 the director of the Department of Internal Politics of the CR. From 1996 - 1998 the head of the Office of the President of the CR.

23 Voice of America

International broadcasting service funded by the U.S. government through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Voice of America has been broadcasting since 1942, initially to Europe in various European languages from the US on short wave. During the cold war it grew increasingly popular in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe as an information source.

24 Yad Vashem

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

25 Herzl, Theodor (1869-1904)

Hungarian-born Jewish playwright, journalist and founder of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). His thought of realizing the idea of political Zionism was inspired by among other things the so-called Dreyfus affair. In the polemical essay The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat, 1896) he declares that Jews aren't only a community of believers, but also a nation with the right to its own territory and state. He was of the opinion that in the anti-Jewish mood extant in Europe, it was not possible to solve the Jewish question via either civic emancipation or cultural assimilation. After a significant diplomatic effort he succeeded in the calling of the 1st International Jewish Congress in Basil on 29-31st August 1897. The congress accepted the "Basel Program" and elected Herzl as its first president. Herzl wasn't the first to long for the return of the Jews to Palestine. He was, however, able to not only support the idea, but also to promote it politically; without his efforts the creation of the new state of Israel in the Palestine on 14th May 1948 would not have been possible. Theodor Herzl died in 1904 at the age of 44 and was buried in a Jewish cemetery in Vienna. In 1949 his remains were transported to Jerusalem, where they were laid to rest on a mountain that today carries his name (Mount Herzl).

26 Zionism

A movement defending and supporting the idea of a sovereign and independent Jewish state, and the return of the Jewish nation to the home of their ancestors, Eretz Israel - the Israeli homeland. The final impetus towards a modern return to Zion was given by the show trial of Alfred Dreyfuss, who in 1894 was unjustly sentenced for espionage during a wave of anti-Jewish feeling that had gripped France. The events prompted Dr. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) to draft a plan of political Zionism in the tract 'Der Judenstaat' ('The Jewish State', 1896), which led to the holding of the first Zionist congress in Basel (1897) and the founding of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). The WZO accepted the Zionist emblem and flag (Magen David), hymn (Hatikvah) and an action program.

27 Creation of the state of Israel

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

28 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

29 WIZO

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920 with humanitarian purposes aiming at supporting Jewish women all over the world in the field of education, economics, science and culture. A network of health, social and educational institutions was created in Palestine between 1921 and 1933, along with numerous local groups worldwide. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. WIZO became an advisory organ to the UN after WWII (similar to UNICEF or ECOSOC). Today it operates on a voluntary basis, as a party-neutral, non-profit organization, with about 250,000 members in 50 countries (2003).

30 Rosh Chodesh

A magazine of Jewish religious communities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, published by the Jewish Community in Prague, the only Jewish periodical in the territory of former Czechoslovakia. The magazine's name Rosh Chodesh is the Hebrew expression for "new moon": every month the magazine brings current news about the life of Jewish communities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, features interviews with interesting local and international personalities, comments on events in Israel, publishes literary, historical and art-historical studies, discusses the basics of Judaism, informs about religious services in Prague synagogues, about cultural events and new books, and provides classified ad services to its readers.