

Jan Fischer And His Brother Herbert Fischer



These are the two Fischer brothers - me and my brother Herbert. He was born in Prague in 1915, so he was six years older than me. I should add that he got the name Herbert from the son of President Masaryk, just as I was named after another son, Jan Masaryk. This photo was taken in Prague in the 1920s. My brother was completely different in nature than me. He was the studious type. At school he always got top marks, and he was great at sports, too. He was excellent at gymnastics, occasionally went mountaineering and had a motorbike that he drove with great vigor. But the thing that most impressed me about him was that he went gliding. He had a good figure,

but was a bit on the small side and, unfortunately, he wasn't very good-looking - he had an extremely large nose. After graduating from high school he studied mechanical engineering at the Technical University, but he didn't finish the course. He then got a job in a workshop, similar to the one I worked in; we were both making glasses at the time. It's quite clear that he never took any notice of me at all, for I meant nothing to him. We spoke German at home and Czech with the staff. I went to a German-language school, for instance. That was probably because my dad was the Czech representative of the German company, Zeiss and Zeiss Ikon Opticians. My brother studied engineering, as he was the intelligent one. I was the stupid one who was supposed to take over the business. So I, of course, had to speak German. Anyway, we were kind of used to the German language at our house. The cultural bent of our family was definitely German: German books, German gramophone records, German theater. From a political perspective, however, our family was strictly pro-Czechoslovakian. Herbert got married to someone called Marta, but I can't recall her surname. I've forgotten it. She said she was Aryan, but it came out later that she was half-Jewish. My brother wanted to save her and get divorced so that she wouldn't have to go to a concentration camp. He went instead and never came back. If they had stayed together he might have been saved, since people from mixed marriages were deported only at the end of the war, as my uncle Oskar. They didn't have any children. He was deported to Auschwitz, apparently from Terezin. He probably went to the gas chamber, but I don't know the details. It was probably some time in 1944 that he was murdered.