

# Marietta Smolkova

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Interviewer: Pavla Neuner

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Mrs. Smolkova is a very pleasant and energetic lady. The interview took place in her apartment, which is located in the center of Prague in the local Jewish quarter. The apartment is small but cozy. It is impossible to not notice several beautiful antique clocks that remain in Mrs. Smolkova's possession from her father's original collection.

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## Family background

My grandfather on my father's side was named Bernard Bloch. He was born in Meclov in the year 1836. He came from a family of German Jews. His father made a living as a horse trader, he went from village to village in the Sumava region; he always slept over someplace, and returned home once a week, for Saturday. On Sunday he'd again leave to go out on the road. My great-grandfather wanted his children to already have some sort of education, so he used to send Grandpa to cheder. Cheder was a school for Jewish children, organized by the Jewish community. After the reforms under Joseph II [1](#) Jews were officially allowed to attend public schools, nevertheless the practice in the countryside was that children went to cheder, where they learned to read and write, studied Hebrew and basic prayers. Cheder was basically a substitute for elementary school. My grandpa had a brother, Adolf, who settled in America. His daughter Stella later married my father's oldest brother, Oskar.

My grandfather found a job with a shipping company in Karlovy Vary [2](#). To this day, kaolin [china clay], which is the basis for the manufacture of porcelain, is mined in the Karlovy Vary region, so naturally there was a porcelain and other ceramics industry there. My grandfather delivered raw materials for that shipper to the local factories, and it was there that he apparently got to know that type of enterprise. Then Grandpa courted a girl from Volduchy near Rokycany, my grandmother Jenny Koretz. I unfortunately don't know much about her family. My grandma was born in 1848. She was a housewife; I don't think that she had any higher education. At the age of 39 she was operated on for breast cancer, she lived to be 69, and died in 1917 in Dubi.

At that time in Uncin [due to the close proximity of the German border, in those days the town was named Hohnenstein], which was located between Teplice and Usti nad Labem, there was a

ceramics factory for sale, which my grandfather was very interested in. He bought the factory with my grandmother's dowry, his savings, and money that his employer lent him. The factory, which had been well run even before him, prospered under his ownership as well.

I never got to personally know my grandmother or grandfather on my father's side. Their mother tongue was German. Both were from purely Jewish families, nevertheless I don't know what their personal relationship to Judaism was like. Judging by the attitudes of their children, I suspect that they were conscious of their Jewish identity but weren't religious. I think that more likely they financially supported Jews that found themselves in need.

My grandparents had all told eleven children, five boys and six girls. Oskar, Olga, Otto, Artur, Adela, Elsa, Bedriská, who they called Frida, Marketa, Helena, Egon and Kamil. The youngest was Kamil, who however died in childhood. Egon was the only one of my father's siblings that we didn't keep in touch with. My grandfather even left him out of his will. Egon would always start something, but never finished it. Once he decided that he was a painter, so my grandma went and bought him art supplies. Nevertheless, in two weeks he decided to start something new. Egon was lucky that he married a good woman, who was very hard-working and supported him his entire life. Thanks to her he also survived the war, because she wasn't Jewish and thus protected him. Adela had three sons; Elsa lived up until 1938 with her family in Karlovy Vary. Frida lived in Teplice and was the only one of the siblings to not have children. Helena got tuberculosis and died at the age of 24. Marketa had two children. All the sisters were married to university graduates. One was a chemical engineer, another a lawyer, another a pharmacist, who had a pharmacy on the Old Town Square. Elsa's husband was a doctor and Aunt Olga was married to the lawyer Karel Glässner. They had a son, Alfred, and daughters Trude and Erna. They lived in Lovosice.

My grandfather on my mother's side was named Adolf Bruml and was born in 1864 in the town of Strazov. His father was named Benedikt Bruml and his mother Katerina, nee Eisenschiml. My grandpa and his three brothers all named their eldest daughter after her. Grandpa and Grandma lived in Duchcov, in Northern Bohemia. He owned a textile store, a shop where they sewed and sold work clothes, like for example aprons or coveralls, which were intended for miners who worked in the Duchcov region. His mother tongue was German; nevertheless, he knew how to speak Czech. Grandpa died of cancer after the end of World War I, in 1920, so I didn't have the chance to get to know him. In his will he left a certain amount in benefit of the poor in Duchcov, with the condition that it be divided equally between the Jewish and non-Jewish residents. In this he actually favored the Jewish ones, because there were far less Jews in Duchcov than the rest of the population. My mother loved him.

My grandmother on my mother's side was named Ida Bruml, nee Abeles. She was born in Lochovice, in the district of Horovice in 1865. Her father died early on. Her mother ran a cigar store in Kostelec nad Cernými Lesy, where she sold newspapers, tobacco and similar things, and my grandmother helped her with it from the time she was small. Her mother tongue was German, but she spoke fluent Czech. My grandmother likely didn't have a higher education. She was an expressly self-taught person. She drew beautifully and knew shorthand; she also knew a bit of French and could read Hebrew. My grandmother Ida was the only of my grandparents that I knew personally.

My grandmother was the dominant one in her and my grandfather's relationship. She was a talented designer. She helped run the store and at the same time designed patterns that were then embroidered into the clothing. I think I still have some bedclothes for which she had designed beautiful monograms. The patterns on bedclothes were hand-sewn by the seamstresses, but for example on aprons it was done by machines. In earlier times every child wore a luster [a type of fabric] apron with some type of color edging and embroidery. It didn't serve as a school uniform, because everyone wore something a little different, but served more as a clothes protector.

The store was named "Adolf Bruml." The original store was located in Duchcov. When my mother later left for Dubi to be with my father, my grandparents moved to nearby Teplice, which was about 20 kilometers from Duchcov. They then also had a few smaller branches in villages in that region. Business went well until the time of the Great Depression [3](#), when they then had to start over from scratch. My grandparents lived in a building where on the ground floor they had their store. I didn't ever see it, but my mother told me that there was a toy store across the street and that my sister would always sit with her nose against the glass and watched what they were selling there.

My grandmother was the most devout person in our whole family. They didn't cook kosher at home, and neither did she wear any special clothing. Nevertheless, she was very familiar with Jewish holidays, and knew everything that belonged to them. My grandparents observed Sabbath and my grandmother prayed, but she didn't attend synagogue regularly. For holidays we'd always go to her place. After Grandpa died, my grandma lived in Teplice with her son Josef and his wife Eli.

My grandmother was a big hiker, when the store was closed she'd set off with her girlfriends for trips into the Krusne Mountains. Every Sunday she'd come to our place in Dubi for lunch, and was very bothered by the fact that neither my sister nor I drank milk. So she'd sometimes take us along on a trip, and purposely order it for us. She would always bring us some work to do, because she was of the opinion that we, children, should be doing something. And so she'd bring us a box of tangled string and say: 'This is how they're sending it to us, and it's a shame to throw it out, and girls, if you do it for me, each of you will get something.' Years later, when we were already bigger, we asked her where she had always gotten so much string from. And she answered: 'Well, now I can tell you, I tangled them up myself, and wanted you to learn to be patient.' And now, when I have to be patient on some occasion, I remember by grandma, who taught it to me.

My grandmother died in 1940 in Prague. She was cremated, and we buried her urn in Teplice in Grandfather's grave in the local Jewish cemetery. The Brumls and the Blochs have a family crypt there.

Besides my mother, my grandmother and grandfather also had three sons, of whom Benedikt and Jan were twins, born in 1896 or 1897. Josef, who they called Pepa, was a year older than my mother, so born in 1893.

Uncle Pepa and his family lived in Teplice, where he took over Grandpa's clothing store. During the Great Depression they were faring very badly, so they moved to Liberec, where his father-in-law, Mr. Seger, a Jew originally from Kolin, lived. Pepa's wife was named Eli. They had two children, a son born in 1926, and a daughter, Mariana. We often spent time with Pepa's family. I liked them very much; we had a lot in common as far as personality goes, too. Pepa used to go to synagogue for Yom Kippur and sometimes during the Sabbath, too. I think that his religiousness was relatively

lukewarm. They definitely didn't have a kosher household.

One sister-in-law of Pepa's got married to someone in England still before the war, and thanks to her help, Pepa and his family moved there at the last moment, in 1939, so they all survived. At first they lived with his sister-in-law and her husband, who was a Romanian Jew by origin and went to England at the beginning of the 1930s. He made a living selling goods to department stores. He gradually entrusted my uncle with one branch of his wholesale business.

Already in his youth, Benedikt was a fervent Zionist. A carpet that I still have, and which comes from the Bruml household, experienced Benedikt marching around on it every evening, and lecturing the family on Palestine. There would usually be some sweets on the table, and when Benedikt was talking, he apparently always walked around that table and when he would stop in a certain spot each time, he would take a piece. He wanted to fire them up for Zionism, and though they listened to him, he didn't infect anyone with it.

His twin Jan was a very jovial, friendly guy, always with a smile on his lips. He liked dogs and small children and people in general. Both of them voluntarily enlisted in the army for the Emperor and Monarchy during World War I [4](#). I don't know if they were such patriots, more likely their youth played a role; it's not hard to inspire a young person. They were both no older than 18 when they enlisted. They finished high school ahead of time, did their final exams, and went to war. Because of their high school diploma, they automatically got the rank of 'teterist,' which was the lowest officer rank.

In the end they didn't serve together, but both fell on the Italian Front [5](#), each on a different battlefield. After the war ended, Pepa left for Italy and began searching for their graves. He went from cemetery to cemetery until he found them both and then took care of their graves and maintained them. Grandma must have had it hard, when she first got the news of one son's death, and then also the second one's. They sent Grandma Jan's and Benedikt's death certificates as well as Benedikt's war diary, in which in one place the entries suddenly cease.

Pepa also fought in World War I, however he didn't enlist voluntarily. He was taken as a prisoner of war in Siberia. He was stuck there for a relatively long time even after the war, because he was in prison in Siberia, and in there they didn't at first know that the war had ended, and even then their release took a long time. He definitely didn't get home until after I was born, so not until after 1921. The Russians had begun to do business with the prisoners, they brought them food and in exchange they gave them their old uniforms and various army things. My uncle had always liked to cook, and he then worked there as a cook, so at least he didn't go hungry. Always when they released someone, the others would give him letters for their families back home, who thus got to know that they were alive.

Grandpa Bruml had cousins in America, some Eisners, who had a clothing factory. Once Pepa got a Russian uniform, and when he put it on, on the manufacturer's label he found the name of exactly that Eisner company. Because America and Russia were war allies, and besides weapons, the Americans were also supplying the Russians with uniforms. The label also had an address, and so he let the Eisners know that he was alive and where he was, and that he'd like to get out of there, but that it was taking a terribly long time. And the Eisners sent him a steamer ticket for the trip to America, but departing from Japan. So in some fashion he then got to Japan, but he was completely without money, when he walked by a barbershop, where he saw a sign reading 'Here we help Jews.'

So he went in and they bought him a ticket so he could get to the ship.

When he landed in America, he again didn't know what next. He heard someone talking incessantly from a loudspeaker, but didn't understand a thing. So he went to the information office and when they found out his name, they told him, 'They keep calling out your name, Bruml, Bruml.' Pepa had no idea why they were calling his name, but in the end he found out that it was because the Eisners had left some money for him there, so he could get directly to them.

Pepa stayed in America for about a year and a half, and he would certainly have wanted to stay permanently, but his father died and he had to return, to take care of the store. After his return he got married. I think that if he could have had his choice, Uncle Pepa wouldn't have been a businessman. He sang very nicely and liked all beautiful things, the same as my mother. He had originally studied law, but couldn't finish his studies because the war came, and then they needed him at home for the store. I can imagine him as a judge or lawyer, but that store was probably completely against his nature. But he had to handle it.

My father was named Artur Bloch, and was born in Uncin in the year 1880. From the age of ten he rented [a place] in Prague, where he was attending academic high school. In Prague he later studied at and graduated from a German business academy. He subsequently left for Paris for two years, where he studied French and spent a year in England because of English. His first work experience was then with some shipping company in Hamburg.

In 1909 my grandfather died, and so they called my father home. My grandfather owned three prospering factories, and had left instructions as to which of his children was to run them. My father got the largest one, the porcelain factory, with the caveat that he must pay out a dowry for all his unmarried sisters, which back then they all were, save for one. So he got into financial difficulties and was forced to find a partner. His brother-in-law, Josef Freund, who had a pharmacy on the Old Town Square in Prague and made a lot of money, then invested into the factory, as well as his brother Hugo, who lived with his family in our building part of the year.

So my father then had partners, which took care of the financial side of things, which was something that my father didn't understand that much. He was responsible for the operation of the factory as such. My grandfather's original three factories, including the porcelain one, were named 'B. Bloch.' The Porcelain factory was then named 'Bloch a spol' [Bloch & Co.]. It produces to this day, under the name of 'Czech Porcelain.'

My father's brothers inherited the other two factories; Oskar got the factory in Dubi and Otto the very first one, in Uncin. Otto however went bankrupt due to the Depression. Otto's wife was named Josefine, they had a daughter named Doris, who was born the same year as my sister, and my three years older cousin, Honza. Josefine was very good friends with my father's second wife, Aunt Gusti.

Oskar died quite suddenly in his sixties, he fell down in our garden and never got up again. His wife, Stella Blochova, who was his cousin that he had brought with him from the United States, then ran the factory. They had two daughters together, Ilsa and Liza. But during the Great Depression the factory went bankrupt, so of the family property, only my father's porcelain factory remained. After Hitler's rise to power <sup>6</sup> Stella was warned by her brothers who lived in America, and already in 1936 she left with her younger daughter for America. Her older daughter got

married and lived in Teplice, nevertheless she also left in time, in 1938, before the Germans occupied the border regions.

My mother was named Katerina, born Brumlova in the year 1894 in Duchcov. After elementary school her parents sent her to a girls' boarding school in Dresden. She probably didn't have any other education. As opposed to my father, my mother spoke Czech very fluently and well, although her mother tongue was also German. This is because there was a relatively strong Czech minority in Duchcov and Most. My mother was a merry, beautiful and emancipated woman.

My parents met in Teplice. They were married in 1915, and I think that they had a Jewish wedding. A year later my sister was born, and in 1921 I came into the world. My father was a pleasant and intelligent person, and definitely didn't only make an impression on my mother because he was 15 years older. My mother's parents and my father together bought a villa in Dubi, which today is a relatively disreputable place, nevertheless back then it was a beautiful small spa town.

My mother admired my father very much, and always spoke of him as a very honorable and decent person. Later, when I was old enough to understand, she explained to me why it couldn't work between them. Their personalities were too different, my father was a loner and my mother was on the contrary a social being. My father educated himself a lot his whole life, but no one ever knew how much he actually knew. He was very much an introvert, the same as my sister. The Blochs and Brumls were actually very different families in terms of character. The Blochs were in general more reserved, a person had to know them well to understand them. The Brumls were smiling, open and always cracking jokes, and even though they were sometimes badly off, no one ever realized it.

My father was as a matter of principle against all associations. He made one exception and became a volunteer fireman, because he considered this group to be useful. I don't think that he ever actually helped with a fire, he really just took care of their accounting and administration, and probably also contributed financially. But otherwise he didn't approve of any associations or parties. Surprisingly for a factory owner, he voted for the Social Democrats.

My father associated most often with his relatives, but what he liked the most was to spend time with his closest family, and as far as possible in such a manner so that he wouldn't have to talk much. He was a downright introvert. His big hobby was collecting old clocks. He read German, English and French. He studied Czech, but didn't do very well at it. My mother, on the other hand, was very gregarious. She had a best friend in Teplice, 'Auntie' Steli, who often used to come visit us in Dubi. For long years she wasn't able to have a baby, and so spoiled my sister and me. After some twelve years of trying, when she wasn't even expecting it any longer, she became pregnant and had a baby girl.

My parents were divorced in 1929. My mother then married Dr. Viktor Hahn, who had divorced a year earlier. First, right after my mother's divorce, they had a Jewish wedding, and then, after the couple of months required, they also had a civil wedding. My mother knew Doctor Hahn from about 1920, and about a year later he brought me into the world. Doctor Hahn worked as a gynecologist, he spent seven years at a gynecological clinic in Vienna, where he lived with his first wife Greta, and where in 1818 his son, Jindrich Hahn, was born. After World War I times were tough in Vienna, there wasn't even any food, so they moved back to Teplice, where in 1891 he had been born. He had a very good reputation as a doctor there, so my mother also began going to him. Uncle Viktor was a very merry and sociable person, my father's opposite.



During the divorce my parents came to an agreement, that my almost six year older sister would stay with our mother, and that I'd go live with my father. When I was already around 19, I asked my mother why I, as the younger one, had gone to be with my father, when at that time I hadn't even been eight years old. And my mother explained to me that she hadn't wanted to hurt my father even more, because she knew that if my sister had lived with him, they would have both withdrawn into themselves and would have become disaccustomed to talking. Each of them would have his book and his records with music and they wouldn't need to communicate with each other. So I remained with my father in Dubi, and my sister lived with our mother in Teplice with 'Uncle' Viktor.

My 'uncle's' son lived there with them for some time. Viktor's ex-wife didn't like it, so they agreed that Jindra would live halfway between, in Usti nad Labem, with some professor. Jindra's studies had gone very well in Teplice, but he must not have been very happy in Usti, and there his results weren't as good. Greta kept insisting that he should come to Prague to be with her. She had also remarried, she had married my future husband's brother, who was the director of the Unionbanka bank. They both had a very busy social life, which was also given by his job, so there wasn't that much time left over for Jindra.

Jindra's studies again didn't go very well, finally he managed to graduate and they agreed that he's to go to England to learn English. This is also what saved him. During the war he served as a pilot in the Czechoslovak Army, in the famous 311th Squadron. [The 311th Czechoslovak Bomber Squadron, belonged among the best and most famous Czechoslovak army formations during World War II. It was created in July 1940, and on 30th July it moved to the RAF air base at Honington. Its air and ground personnel were Czechoslovaks. From September 1940 until June 1945, it flew approximately 3,160 missions. The 311th Squadron finally ended its activities at the beginning of June 1945.]

My father really wasn't overly talkative, but he loved us very much. I remember how I used to wait for him to come home for supper. He knew that I was crazy about fresh walnuts, which you could crack. But I was never patient enough to crack them. On the table there would be napkins in rings with our names, and each one would put his cracked nuts into those rings. My father would then say, 'Close your eyes' and swap the piles.

My father also remarried. His second wife was named Augusta, born Diehlova in 1894. She had converted to Judaism when she had married her first husband, Mr. Neumann, who however died. He was a member of the B'nai B'rith Society, where there was this custom that upon a member's death, one of the others would be designated as the widow's guardian. And by coincidence her guardian became Josef Freund, who was the husband of my father's youngest sister, Marketa. And this Mr. Freund realized that he had a divorced brother-in-law in Dubi, who should probably get married, when he's raising a little daughter. There used to be a sanatorium in Dubi, which is around to this day, Tereza's Spa, which used to rent out rooms when there weren't enough patients. And so Augusta arrived there for a week to inconspicuously check things out.

My 'aunt' was a very merry creature, and I liked her very much, and she also looked upon me as a daughter. She didn't have children of her own, her first husband had been almost 20 years older, and I guess they hadn't been able to have them. She got along better with my father than my mother had. Although she and my mother were both the same age, it was as if each one was from a different century. And 'auntie' from the century in which in short everything was done so that the

husband would like it, so it wouldn't burden him and so he wouldn't have any worries. While our mother was from the century where more equal partnerships already existed. When my father and auntie were married, I had only one condition: that I won't have to call her Mom. So for me she was Aunt Gusti. I used to call my mother's second husband Uncle, because I had addressed him that way since I was small.

My aunt spoke German with my father, but she also knew how to speak Czech. Uncle Viktor was a German Jew, the same as my father. My mother spoke fluent Czech, because she was from Duchcov, and in that part of Northern Bohemia there was a relatively strong Czech minority, while my father was from the Teplice region, where on the other hand there were very few Czechs.

My father's Judaism was very lukewarm. The only people in our family that observed the Sabbath were Aunt Gusti and Grandma Brumlova. Everyone used to go to my grandma's for seder. I remember that I was awfully glad when my younger cousin started saying the mah nishtanah, and I didn't have to any more. My grandmother went to synagogue, but neither my mother nor my father did. We didn't cook kosher at home. For Yom Kippur my father would also fast by not turning on the radio that day, which for him was worse than not eating. He was a big music lover.

My sister was born in 1916 in Teplice. We called her Hanne, but her real name was Hannerle. My mother's brother Jan picked this name from the book 'Die Geschichte von der Hannerl und ihren Liebhabern' ['The Story of Hannerl and Her Lovers']. My uncle knew that my mother was pregnant, but he never saw my sister, because he fought and fell at the Italian Front. In a letter to my mother he wrote that he'd read that book and that Hannerle was a nice name, for them to give it to her.

## Growing up

My sister and I grew up in relatively well-off families. Uncle Viktor's father got rich during World War I, when food was rationed, and he got an idea and started manufacturing artificial honey. The honey was made from sugar beets, which were grown in large quantities here. This artificial honey was sold outside of the ration system, and was bought by virtually all families. It even tasted similarly to real honey. He made a lot of money on this idea, which though after the war lost value, but in the meantime he managed to buy some buildings, which he then rented out.

So the Hahns and we were doing very well, but despite that we lived very frugally. I remember that originally I didn't have an allowance at all. I only began getting it when I once managed to run up a five-crown debt. In elementary school in Dubi I had a girlfriend that ate a lot, and though she used to get a snack just like me, she would go to the variety store next door for pickled fish. I love them to this day and always have some in the fridge. But she had money for them while I didn't have an allowance. And so I said to the lady at the store, 'Mrs. Liebscherova, could you please sell me a half a roll and put some of those pickled onions on it? And how much would it cost?' She said, 'Well, 10 halers for half of that roll, and for 10 halers I'll put those onions on it.' And by 20 haler increments I gradually built up a five-crown debt.

It came out into the open completely unexpectedly one day, it was my aunt that found out about it. I was used to giving my aunt a kiss when I returned home. And my aunt smelled something and asked, 'What did you eat?' So I confessed. She almost fainted and immediately went to pay my debt. And from that time on I used to get three crowns a week, which wasn't a lot, but it was more



than enough for those pickled fish of mine. But I don't think that I was ever so extravagant as to buy a whole roll with a whole fish.

The town of Dubi was divided up into two parts, Upper and Lower. Lower Dubi was more industrial, and in Upper Dubi private villas surrounded the local sanatorium. Upper Dubi and Lower Dubi are connected by a road that leads to the German border. When they were married my parents bought a villa across from the sanatorium, and the factory was located in Lower Dubi, where my father walked every day for half an hour to the office. When it was raining too hard, he took the streetcar one stop, but then had to walk a ways more. We didn't have a car.

We lived on the middle floor of our villa. Below us lived in-laws of one of my brother's sisters, and the apartment above us was rented to some family of teachers. Our apartment had a terrace, where we usually ate in the summer. There was a large chestnut tree in the garden, whose branches reached up to the terrace. We looked out into greenery on all sides. At home we employed a cook, who also sometimes took me out in a baby carriage. But otherwise my mother brought me up, though my sister had had a nanny. On top of that we had one or two household helpers.

The apartment was made up of large rooms, we had a den, which was actually a library, where my father also had his collection of old clocks, of which three have remained in my possession. Further there was a relatively large dining room and living room, then a bedroom, washroom and kitchen with a larder. In my parents' bedroom I remember there being a large wardrobe and a bureau made of light-colored polished wood. I remember being fascinated by the quantity of drawers in that bureau. One had ties in it, another handkerchiefs, another socks. Back then it seemed like in a store to me.

As very small children my sister and I had our room downstairs with our relatives, who however had two sons, so when we were big enough, my parents thought it better to move us to a room up on the third floor, beside the teachers, that is when their daughters got married and left home, and the room was then free. I remained in it, alone, when my mother and sister moved to Teplice in 1929.

At home we had running water and electricity. We had a telephone at home as far back as I can remember, I recall that already as a little girl I liked talking on the phone. It was mounted securely on the wall, and I had to bring a chair and climb up on it to be able to use it. We had parquet floors; in the dining room, which was this fancy room, there was textile wallpaper, like in some palace. The other rooms were painted white.

We heated with a ceramic tile stove, which was made in one of my grandfather's three factories. My father had them rebuilt, and installed a slow-burning stove. It had the advantage that in the morning it was still warm and you could stoke it again. In the kitchen the cook cooked on a normal stove. It was already the time of the Great Depression when Auntie came to live with us, at that time we had only a maid, with whom my aunt was however fairly friendly with, and they more or less took turns cooking.

The Great Depression was truly an awful period. I remember the huge numbers of unemployed, and I remember how twice a week some of my classmates would come over for lunch, so that they would get a warm meal. On other days they went someplace else. It must have been horrible to

wait like that until someone gave them something. My father's hair turned white overnight, because they had to let people go and he felt responsible for them and couldn't help them. So life during the First Republic [7](#) wasn't again as rosy as they say today. It had the potential to be ideal, however the depression hit it quite hard, if only because it was an industrialized country.

The market where people bought vegetables was all the way over in Lower Dubi. Near our house there was a variety store, where we used to go for flour, oil and butter, occasionally for bread. The store was run by one of the few Czechs that lived in Upper Dubi. I liked going shopping there, because I loved fresh bread. I never brought it home whole, on the way I'd nibble away at it. Each evening a butcher would come to our place for our order and the next day he'd bring fresh meat. We'd call the baker to tell him how much bread and rolls we'd want, and he'd then put it in cloth bags and hang it on our gate latch. We drank tap water, which was very tasty and on festive occasions we'd have wine with our meal.

We observed Jewish holidays as well as Czech holidays. We'd always celebrate things twice. Though my father had a large factory, he had no car. But as a doctor, Uncle Viktor had a car, so that he could pay calls on his patients in the region. So the way celebrations always took place was that first my sister and I would be at the Hahns' and then they'd take us by car to Dubi, where we'd continue.

Seder suppers took place in my Grandma Brumlova's and Uncle Josef's communal household. At home we had matzot, which everyone liked to eat, except for me. We also made some sweet foods from matzah meal, which I liked. For Chanukkah we lit candles in the menorah. To this day I make the soup that we used to cook the evening before Yom Kippur. It was hearty, but easy to digest:

I boil one whole smaller chicken with root vegetables and a bit of Savoy cabbage and onion. To this I add one or two cubes of chicken bullion. When the vegetables are tender and the meat separating from the bones, I remove the onion, which serves only for flavor, cut the vegetables into pieces and pick the meat from the bones. I also add dumplings to the soup, which I make from grated rolls (bread crumbs) and during Passover from matzah meal. You have to add some fat to the dumplings so that they're soft. The fat boils out of them and the dumplings remain nice and tender.

I make baba cake, which we'd have as our first food after fasting, today as well:

I use icing sugar, fat, which I combine with three yolks and the sugar, plus I add smooth flour, into which I add some baking powder, then I stir in some milk, beaten egg whites and two or three handfuls of raisins.

I remember it all as being serious and dignified. Fun belonged in between Christmas and the New Year.

At Christmas we had a tree at home, but we didn't hang crosses or angels on it, but glass globes. Instead of carols we sang neutral songs. We always did it in part because of our servants, who always got some gifts underneath the tree. I liked Christmas, all the children had a tree, and so it was natural for me to want one, too. We also had a smaller tree and gifts over at the Hahns'.

Our relatives, Hugo Freund and his family, who used the apartment downstairs, were from Trebic in Moravia, and didn't stay with us for the entire year. They spent the time between Christmas and New Year's at home in Trebic. They employed a Jewish maid, Hermina, who stayed alone with us

for the Christmas holidays. Once she brought over a dog, which in that quiet and in the candlelight began to growl. Back then my sister as a joke remarked ironically: 'Quiet, you Jewish dog, don't interrupt a Christian celebration.'

All of my father's sisters lived in Prague, and all of my cousins from Prague used to spend Christmas holidays at our place. In all there were 27 of us cousins of various ages, so there was always a big commotion at our place. My father's two brothers also lived in Dubi, so together all told we had three large apartments at our disposal.

On New Year's Eve we'd make punch, play cards and listen to the radio. At midnight, besides a toast we'd also pour molten lead, and one of the cousins would always predict the future from it. He also read our palms. And then my father would peel apples, he knew how to peel them so that he'd make one long strip of peel. We'd then throw it at each other, and according to what letter or shape it was similar to, we'd guess that person's suitor. During the Christmas holidays my sister would stay with us in Dubi. The Hahns were on the order of 15 years younger than my father and used to go skiing to the mountains. Uncle Viktor loved sports, my mother went along more just for the ride. My father also liked sports, up until he got a hernia during gymnastics exercises.

I attended five grades of elementary school in Dubi, then another four grades of high school in Teplice. In elementary school in Dubi, my cousin and I were the only two Jews. Before that it had been my sister and my cousin Doris. Once every two weeks, Rabbi Herzl would come to Dubi, and when the rest of the children were already at home, my cousin and I had a religion lesson with him. However he wasn't only a rabbi, but also a music critic. He wrote concert and opera reviews in the papers. And because all three of us liked music, the way it went was that for a little while we'd devote ourselves to Judaism, and then he'd tell us about music. Sometimes he didn't even manage it all, so our religious education was very spotty.

In high school in Teplice I had a lot more Jewish classmates. There were a lot of us born after World War I, so that there were 35 of us students in the class. We had two classes in our year, in one were Protestants, and in the other Jews with Catholics, where there were more Jews than Catholics. Of the Catholics another couple of children came from mixed marriages and had either a Jewish mother or father at home. I loved going there, it was this intellectual, pleasant time. I had decided that I was going to study law. The high school was focused on the humanities. We had Latin every day. History and geography was taught by a Jewish teacher, Mrs. Maiselova. She lived alone, and committed suicide before she was scheduled to be transported to Terezin [8](#).

My sister, who as opposed to me graduated, had gone to the same high school before. Back then my father told me, 'These are serious times, and you need a practical career, and if everything ends well, you'll work with me in the factory.' Because my father wasn't at all a businessman at heart, and saw one in me. And so I transferred to business academy in Teplice, so that I'd gain practical knowledge.

At school I belonged among the best students. At business academy I was the only Jewess. In my class there was this one German girl, who was also a very good student and had basically the same grades as I did. Nevertheless, when someone got praise, she was usually the one to come first. Already I could feel that something wasn't right. However, that unpleasant feeling stemmed mainly from the fact that my classmates whispered to each other in front of me, and suddenly I was kind of left out.

I remember how on Mondays the boys would come to school all worn out, and I would say to myself, what could it be from. Later I found out that on Fridays the Turners [9](#) drove them by car to Germany, someplace by Dresden, where they trained them, maybe even taught them to shoot. These boys then later went about yelling and shouting 'Sieg Heil.'

I never got to graduate, because the Germans arrived and occupied the border regions in 1938 [10](#), and at that time I was in only my third year of a four-year program. Afterwards I never got to some comprehensive sort of education again. After the war I took English lessons and so on, but I never actually finished my studies. I didn't even graduate from high school, because right after the war I needed to start making money.

It's about five kilometers from Dubi to Teplice, today a bus goes there, back then it took me about three quarters of an hour to get home from school in Teplice by streetcar. I managed to do my homework on the streetcar, so when I then got home, I could devote myself to my pastimes. I spent a lot of my free time in nature. There was a stream behind our house where I liked to play a lot. I made boats from matchboxes and floated them down the stream. I didn't mind being alone at all. I loved the forest, where I often went for walks, in winter on cross-country skis.

Back then we didn't buy skis for each generation, my sister and I had skis handed down from our father and one of our uncles. Even our boots were from my mother's brothers, the twins. They had ski pants and shirts sewn for us from some old uniform, it was dark blue. There where the boot ended and the pants began, you'd wrap your leg with a piece of material about two meters long, embroidered with a Nordic pattern, so that snow wouldn't get in your boots. And when there was a lot of snow, we'd even ski to school. I loved walking in the freshly fallen snow, where there weren't yet any tracks, only here and there from some fox or hare. I loved being by myself in nature, with the beautiful air and blue sky.

My aunt came to the conclusion that since I was a girl, I should have dolls and gradually bought them for me and sewed very nice dresses for every occasion for them. I played with them for a short while, but it didn't amuse me. I remember that I constantly washed one of the dolls until the newspaper it was stuffed with began coming out of it.

As a child I had interests that were quite different from other girls. While the others embroidered and played with dolls, I played with a hammer. Back then they were building the road from Dubi to Cinovec, the one today so notorious for prostitution, and a little ways away from our house the construction workers had some sort of portable blacksmith's workshop. There was an open fire where they heated hoes and shovels and straightened them again with a hammer, so that they were once again usable. I was utterly fascinated by it, I was capable of standing there for an hour after school, and they would sometimes allow me to try it and straighten the tools with a hammer.

In Teplice there used to be a fair, where with my allowance I bought for example pliers and a hammer. Then I also had to have a crown for artificial honey. I always spent three crowns for the first cherries [of the season] for my mother. It was this piece of wood wrapped with cherry leaves and maybe five single cherries, but the first ones. Once I wanted very much to buy them for my mother, but I didn't have the money for them. The Hahns had a large yard without any flowerbeds, and the entire perimeter of the property had been planted with dark red roses. And so once when they left for a vacation, I at the age of ten made a deal to sell the roses, of course at far below market price, so I could make money for my mother's cherries.

I attended German schools and at home we also spoke German. The First Republic was so tolerant that Czech wasn't enshrined as a compulsory language. From 3rd grade of elementary school I attended elective Czech classes. We used a Czech textbook about 'Kulihrasek,' but thanks to it we knew absolutely useless sentences, it didn't teach practical Czech. [Editor's note: 'Kulihrasek' was and still is the name of a character in children's books and textbooks.]

When my aunt from Prague came to Dubi to visit, she found it inconceivable that I didn't know Czech. Back then she and my father came to a decision and took out an ad in the paper looking for a Czech family with children, where I could stay and learn conversational Czech. To this day I remember that 198 people answered that ad. In the end they picked two families from Mseno, near Melnik. However when they visited the first family it was found that the three daughters mentioned were already about 30, and I was only 14. So we went to the second family, who had a 13-year-old son and two girls, one and two years older.

Initially my father and aunt sent me to be with them for four weeks. At their place I learned things that I didn't know how to do from home, like for example knitting. We were always going swimming, and I learned to play tennis. I remained lifelong friends with one of them, Lidka Kozlikova. Right from that first stay I brought Lidka over to our place, which was for her on the contrary German conversation. We would go on outings together, and due to the fact that the things were coming to a head, we felt ourselves to be great patriots. We for example went to the border with Germany, where on the other side a flag with a swastika was hanging. With great enthusiasm we would spit across the border barrier and thought that we had really done something brave. Always, when a truck with Czechoslovak soldiers would pass us, we were conscious of the fact that we were Czechoslovaks, although in my case a German-speaking one.

As soon as Hitler came to power in Germany, the once united and intermingled populace began to divide. And so the young people also belonged to various sports clubs. The Zionists had Maccabi [11](#), which I didn't attend. Then there was the German Deutscher Turnverein club, whose motto was 'Frisch, fromm, fröhlich, frei ist die Deutsche Turnerei.' That means 'Fresh, devout, merry and free are German athletics.' Their symbol was already reminiscent of the swastika, it was four 'F's' which overlapped at right angles. So of course I didn't go there either. And Sokol [12](#) was somehow distant to me. Later I used to go to Sokol with my cousin for 'sibrinky,' these dance parties. There was a private gym in Teplice, which was run by two women, one was Jewish and the other was an immigrant from Czarist Russia, and I used to go take gymnastics from them. The mother of Tomas Kraus also used to go there, today he's the secretary of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the CR.

There were only four Jewish families living in Dubi, ours and those of two of my father's brothers, Oskar and Otto, and then there was some Parizek family. They weren't local, they bought a villa in Dubi, and didn't settle there until they were retired. Dubi had a population of around 2000. In Teplice, on the other hand, there lived many Jewish families, about 15 percent of the population was Jewish. Next to Prague, Teplice was the largest Jewish community in Bohemia. Due to the large number of German-speaking inhabitants, bilingual signs were used, so Dubi was also named Eichwald [Oak Forest] and Teplice Teplitz.

Before 1933 we didn't feel any tension or anti-Semitism. Everyone lived more or less together, it wasn't until Hitler assumed power that society started differentiating itself. Which group you

belonged to was demonstrated mainly during 1st May marches. The Hahns, who lived in Teplice, had wooden blinds on their windows, which they would roll down in case some rock came flying over. People tend to be brave in a crowd. I remember the last 1st May march, in 1938, when the Communists and Social Democrats walked separately from the Turners, who already had drums and knee socks.

We had always considered ourselves to be Czechoslovaks, and we loved Czechoslovakia. If someone would have asked whether I was a Czech, a German or a Jew, I wouldn't have been able to answer. We felt ourselves to be Czechoslovaks, we had Jewish origins and spoke German. We never avoided anyone and never belonged to any party. In the street in Teplice where the Hahns lived, there were five villas and in each one lived some doctor and his family. Everyone mingled, regardless of origin or religion.

In September of 1938 the workers in our porcelain factory went on strike to protest the fact that the border region was still Czechoslovak. By doing so they wanted to support Henlein [13](#) and his efforts to have the so-called Sudetenland [14](#) annexed by Germany. That day we left Dubi for Prague, and never again returned. We had only what little would fit in a small suitcase. It also meant saying goodbye to attending school at the beginning of the 3rd year of business academy, it was goodbye to our home and for my father also goodbye to his career and family business.

I don't remember that the workers somehow actively went against my father. Nevertheless, we didn't know what was going to happen next, because the local Germans were already beginning to arm themselves, going across the border for weapons. We didn't know anything, it was more of an apprehension. At that time it wasn't only we that left, but a number of other Czech and Jewish families. Then it was only another three weeks until Munich actually happened, and to the ceding of the border regions.

Thus we arrived in Prague, where my father's mother-in-law from his second marriage lived. She was named Frantiska Diehlova, born Jiraskova in 1855, she was a cousin of Alois Jirasek [Jirasek, Alois (1851-1930): Czech novelist and playwright]. Her apartment was too small, and so only my aunt stayed there and my father lived with his wife's brother for a while, who with his Jewish wife had a slightly larger apartment in the Vinohrady quarter.

Then they found an apartment near the Olsany Cemeteries and in 1939 they moved into a rented apartment in a villa in the Holesovice quarter, near the Troja Bridge. The owner and his family lived on the ground floor of the villa, my father and aunt rented the first floor, and then there was one more small apartment, where this one teacher lived. In that year, 1939, the owner accepted my father, aunt and her mother very willingly, when he didn't have the house paid off yet. After the war he then did everything to try to oust us.

My aunt may have converted to Judaism already due to her first marriage, nevertheless she came from a Christian family, her father was a German from somewhere in the Rhineland. For Germans she was therefore of Aryan origin and thus also protected my father until almost the end of the war. Her mother died right after the war, in 1945.

My mother moved to Brno with her second husband and my sister. There wasn't enough room at my father's mother-in-law's place, and so I went to the Hahns. I lived in Brno from October 1938. My sister was working there in a children's hospital and we both studied English, learned to sew, do



the laundry, iron and cook. Actually, we were preparing for emigration. I don't know how seriously they had spoken of emigration at home earlier, but I think that in reality my father didn't want to emigrate. In Dubi he had a Jewish head clerk, Mr. Wagner, who was preparing to emigrate. He said to him, 'Mr. Bloch, you speak French, after all; I'm going there to work for a porcelain factory, don't you want to as well?' But my father didn't react to that.

The Hahns definitely did want to emigrate. In 1938 Uncle Viktor's son went to England to learn English, and he then stayed there. The Hahns were attending English courses and preparing to leave for England and then for the United States. Our relatives, who had a clothing factory in America, even sent affidavits for the Hahns, my sister and me. My sister and I had work arranged in one Jewish house in London, she as a cook and I as a chambermaid. We even had black dresses with white caps and aprons made, like proper servants. My sister already had all of her papers, but I wasn't 18 yet, and so my work permit wasn't valid until from August 1938. However, the war already began on 1st September [15](#), so my sister waited here with me, and then it was already impossible to leave. The Hahns also didn't leave, so in the end we all stayed here.

## During the war

The way we found out about the German invasion in March of 1939 [16](#), was that in the morning we leaned out of the window, and hanging in front of our window there was a flag with a swastika, which had been hung there by the building superintendent. At about 10am the commander of the Brno Gestapo arrived and at first wanted to occupy the entire building. Then he changed his mind and occupied only one floor. So for one month we lived under the same roof with the commander of the Brno Gestapo. It took a month before we found an apartment in Prague, packed our things and moved. In Prague we then lived in the Podoli quarter, and Grandma Brumlova and Uncle Viktor's father, Robert Hahn also moved in with us, so three generations of us lived together. 'Grandpa' Hahn died a week before we boarded the transport to Terezin.

We lived off our savings, and partly by selling things that we didn't need. I remember a large carpet, which due to its size not everyone could use. It was bought by one industrialist's widow, and we had an agreement with her that she'd officially transfer part of the money to a sealed bank account, which Jews had to have, and that the rest she'd give us in cash, which would have helped us very much, and would have hurt only the Germans. In reality we never got the remainder, and I'd be interested in knowing whether it laid on her conscience in any way. On the other hand, other people helped us very much, they hid our things for us so that we wouldn't have to give them to the Germans, and then after the war they came and returned them on their own initiative. Of course not everyone was like that, but they were to be found.

We had to move from our apartment in Podoli to Prague 1, to a neighborhood designated for the Jewish population. In the meantime my grandmother and grandfather had died, and we moved to an apartment in Parizska Street. It was a four-room apartment, in which originally one family had lived. With our arrival, however, the number of families living there increased to five. We got one room, which however had two doors, and so there was room for only one bed. In it slept my mother, and my sister, Uncle Viktor and I slept on mattresses that during the day were stacked in some corner, and would be laid out for the night. The rest of the perhaps 14 residents of that apartment would walk through our room to the bathroom, which was beside us. Here we stayed up

until the moment we received our summons to the transport.

I never occupied myself with the question as to why we went to Terezin so early on; I always basically considered it to be a question of fate. We arrived at the gathering place in Prague, Veletržní Palác, on 11th December 1941, and three days later we were transported to Terezin. My sister and I were young and strong, nothing was difficult. I remember that we were helping move hundreds of suitcases and trunks, and they all seemed to be light to us. My sister, with her experience from the hospital in Brno, began helping my uncle, who already worked here as a doctor. Then in Terezin my sister worked the whole time as a nurse.

We arrived in Terezin, which at that time wasn't that organized yet. We lived in the Dresden barracks. I remember that there weren't even mattresses there yet, which got there only much later, from Prague. We had colored bedsheets with us, and there was a bit of wood wool there, which isn't anything nearly as good as straw, because wood wool makes these hard wads, so that one slept badly on it, but slept. My mother had a highly developed sense of beauty and esthetics, so she immediately began to organize and build a makeshift couch out of suitcases, which the others then copied from her. Then it looked a bit like home.

I sorted potatoes in the Dresden basement, and my sister worked with Dr. Hajek as a nurse. In the beginning my mother also used to go to the basement to sort potatoes. Uncle Viktor lived in the Magdeburg barracks in a doctor's room, and was allowed to visit us, once a week, I think. As additional transports arrived, the ghetto administration freed up additional barracks and later also private homes. Uncle Viktor became the head of the medical department in the Hamburg barracks and had the opportunity to move my mother, sister and me, so we once again lived together.

I began working in the head doctor's office, registering new cases. In the afternoon individual doctors came to the office and consulted about particularly difficult cases, about the progress of their illnesses and about the incidence of new cases. Roughly fifteen doctors would get together there and discuss further steps. I think that from this one can judge that given the primitive conditions, medical care was at a relatively decent level. Besides this, doctors from all of Central Europe were gradually concentrated in Terezin, so people with various experience.

There were also doctors that had experienced World War I, and knew the conditions of collective illness, infections and disease and emergency conditions, which sometimes helped resolve the situation, especially during times of jaundice, diphtheria, scarlet fever, typhus and dysentery. These were all very infectious diseases. I myself had diphtheria, scarlet fever and jaundice. Back then Terezin didn't have a functional infectious disease hospital yet, so I always had to suffer through it in isolation.

Life in Terezin went on, and there was nothing left for us to do but accept it with everything that went on there. For example there was the roll call in the Bohusovice Hollow, known from literature. In the morning they led us out of the ghetto, where only necessary medical personnel and bedridden patients remained. We walked to a large meadow, and there we stood and the SS guarded us with dogs. No one knew why we were standing there or what was going to happen. We thought that someone had escaped, that they were going to count us. In reality no one counted us and towards evening they led us back again.

It seems like a pleasant outing, however to this day I remember the huge uncertainty that we had to live through there. Our parents had stayed in the ghetto, and my sister and I were there alone. We didn't know what was going on in the ghetto, and they what was happening to us. Besides that, the day was long and we weren't allowed to break rank. But we thought up a way to be able to get around it. Someone would take off their cloak, and would always hide the person that needed to go to the toilet. This experience came in handy later as well.

Transports left Terezin in irregular intervals. Our family was on Professor Dr. Strauss's 'Schutzliste' [German for 'protected list'], who had been deported to Terezin from Berlin at a very advanced age. The 'Schutzliste' was one of the benefits of prominent residents of Terezin. It was a list of people that a prominent person [an important scientist or meritorious and decorated officer of the German army from World War I, and so on] wanted to protect from the transport and thus keep them in Terezin. The protection worked only sometimes or only for a certain time span. Sometimes even the prominent ones themselves went onto the transport.

Uncle Viktor found Professor Strauss somewhere in an attic with pneumonia and because he knew him as a respected name, he took care of him and he paid him back by then protecting us. One day Uncle Viktor went to have a look into the so-called 'sloiska,' where, however, no one was allowed to go. [Sloiska (schleuse): the first building into which arrivals were herded and where they were stripped of all valuables.] The SS soldier there slapped him around, and likely on the basis of this incident my uncle and mother were put on the list for the second-last October transport in 1944. My sister and I volunteered to go along with them.

Thus it was that we were all deported to Auschwitz together. There were many of us, stuffed into the wagon, people were agitated, so they had diarrhea and we had only one pail at our disposal for this purpose. We arrived in Auschwitz and had absolutely no time to think, because right away the men were already separated from the women. We couldn't even say goodbye to our uncle, and we never saw him again. He was shot right after arrival, as I later found out. My mother looked relatively young, so she stayed with us, while women that were perhaps even younger in years, but looked worse, went to the other side, designated for death right off.

I don't remember the camp that we got into in Auschwitz. I know that there were eight of us lying on one bunk, and the first night our mother and we were sorry that we hadn't taken our own lives. Because we said to ourselves, that no matter what life would be like, that even if we survived, that it's not worth this kind of suffering. But fate didn't take our desires into account, and life went on. After three days came the selection. They didn't let our mother go with us, after the war I found out that she had died of dysentery about two weeks later.

My sister and I were then transported for about three days via Breslau and Dresden to Öderan, near Saska Kamenica [Klingenthal]. There, there was a textile mill that had been converted into a munitions factory. Two transports from Poland had arrived there ahead of us, one from Warsaw and the other from Krakow. All told there were five hundred of us girls, two hundred of that from Terezin. We lived there in one of the factory buildings, the drying rooms, which had the advantage that it had central heating and we didn't suffer so much from the cold. We slept, however, on three-story bunks, and because there weren't enough of them, two girls slept on each bunk. The boards were weak, and one day my sister and I fell through and so had no place to sleep. I'll never forget how two girls lay down together so that we could get some sleep. One was Dr. Freudova and the

second was named Reisova, neither of them is alive now. I considered it to be an immensely good deed, that someone gave up the advantage of having a bed all for herself.

We worked in the munitions factory in alternating shifts, we worked on metal-shaping machines, unfortunately my sister and I weren't in the same workshop. We were constantly accompanied by that uncertainty, whether we'd see each other again after the shift. During weekdays the shifts were eight hours long, and on Sunday twelve hours. There was progressively less and less food. Even the German population didn't have much to eat, which we judged from the lunches of the German workers. One of the foremen used to occasionally give us soup that he brought from home. Otherwise, I think that the workers in the factory were convinced that we must have done something wrong, to be jailed, and that we were being rehabilitated, so they spoke to us very shortly and with disdain. Perhaps only that foreman realized what was really going on.

We had all been shaved bald from Auschwitz, and as time went on, our hair grew out and we needed a comb. One of the workers, an Italian war prisoner, made us a comb from a piece of aluminum, but he wanted three days' bread ration for it. My sister was far more disciplined than I was, and managed to save up one whole ration by eating a little less each day. And at Christmas we each got an extra ration, so for these three rations she bought that comb, with which several hundred girls then combed their hair.

I had tiny pearls in my ears, which were so small that in Auschwitz no one had spotted them. In the factory I sewed them into my dress, and looked upon them as financial security, that when the end of the war would arrive, we'd use them to pay for the train and go home. One girl had a sewing needle and there was enough yarn around, in light of the fact that it had been a textile mill before. When we arrived in Öderan, we unstitched the lining of the coats that we had been issued upon our departure from Auschwitz, and from that lining we would make bras, washcloths, towels and bits of rag for cleaning our teeth. We weren't allowed to wear underwear in bed, and my sister, who was fanatically hygiene-minded, rather slept without any underwear, than to have the same shirt on at night as during the day.

Each morning we had 'Zählappell' [assembly for enumeration] and everyone had to assemble. The one that was the first to arrive waited the longest, because he was then also the last to leave. We were used to discipline from home, and so when they said 'Zählappell,' we got up and went and stood in the corner where one waited the longest. We always said to ourselves that we're dumb and that we'll walk slowly, but during all those months never managed it.

Then news of the fact that the Germans were losing the war began to filter through. We observed how the SS women guards were whispering among themselves, and they allowed us to put on something like an evening of culture. In short, each one of us sang or recited something, according to ability. It was really a very nice evening, and then in closing one of the girls sang a German song, it was actually this hit back then: 'Eines Tages war alles aus, es ruhten endlich die Waffen.' [One day it was all over. Finally the weapons fell silent.] I remember that during this song we were very happy and the SS women were crying. The news that was reaching us buoyed us. We also heard that a peace conference was being planned in San Francisco in February, and we said to ourselves that a peace conference could only take place after the war. We had concrete hopes and began to count a bit on surviving. But there was still a long road ahead of us.

On the day the Americans arrived in Dresden, we had to abandon the machines, at noon they loaded us onto cattle wagons and carted us off. Later we found out that the Americans had occupied the factory four hours later, and then handed the territory over to the Soviets. Unforgettable for me is my memory of one of the foremen, who when we were leaving, when everyone knew that no one would ever make munitions there again, was fixing the machines. His task was simply to fix machines, so he did it even at a time when the war was practically over.

Each day they took us a few stations further in the direction of the Czechoslovak border. It was apparently this order that no train was allowed to stand at a station for longer than 24 hours. So we'd always arrive somewhere, spend a few hours there and then the train would start moving again. In this fashion we got to our hometown of Dubi, and thought about escaping. Unfortunately we had no one there who would have hidden us. So we stayed on the train and after seven days and eight nights we arrived in Litomerice, where they unloaded us and we proceeded on foot to Terezin. In Öderan we had gotten a loaf of bread for the road, plus one more during the trip, after that it was only turnips and the last day we had nothing to eat. When we had been stopped in the border region, in Bilina, the railway employees had brought us pails of tea, and the Germans didn't even protest any more, and let them give it to us.

When we arrived in Terezin, the first people we saw were Dr. Springer with a woman, it was our cousin from Rumburk with her husband. They took us all to a building by the Sokol club, they isolated us because they didn't know whether we have some infectious disease or not. As soon as we got our first food, we had diarrhea. We weren't used to food, much less to warm meals. I think that two days after our arrival, Mr. Dunant from the Red Cross arrived in Terezin, and with that we actually stopped being endangered by the Germans and were put under the protection of the International Red Cross. We got new clothes and fancied ourselves to be very elegant. Many reunions took place, among others we also saw our father again in Terezin, who had been protected by his 'Aryan' wife for most of that time, but three months before the end of the war he was transported to Terezin. There Father got pneumonia, of which he actually died four years later. What's more, he basically spent that entire time in bed.

## Post-war

When on 9th May 1945 we found out that Prague was already liberated, I was gripped by a mania and had to go there. I was convinced that my mother was in Prague. So we agreed that my sister would remain with our father and I'd somehow get to Prague. So I and three other girls from Öderan left with some partisans that had appeared in Terezin. We went on a truck with benches and a barrel of lard. We then found out that the truck had originally belonged to the Gestapo in Kladno, and had been confiscated by the partisans, who then took off along with that barrel of lard to go help Prague. But before we got to Prague the revolution was over, it was the morning of 10th May. I went to Aunt Gusti's place, and with this the war was over for me.

My husband was named Jaroslav Smolka. He was born in Bernatice in Southern Bohemia in 1900. We met on the street in Prague after the war, but we'd already known each other from Terezin, because his brother had married Uncle Viktor's first wife. In Terezin I had a friend, Zibrid Busch, whom I would probably have married after the war. Jaroslav had worked with him in Terezin, and knew his fate, because he had departed from Terezin one transport later than I. Along with another

nine men, Zibrid had in Terezin been dumping the ashes of people out of paper boxes into the Ohra. These ten men were then shot by the Germans. When today we go to Terezin in May for the memorial ceremonies, we also go down to the river. Back then on the street, Jaroslav had told me that Zibrid would not be returning.

Jaroslav's father was named Josef Smolka and was born in 1856. He made a living selling farm machinery. His father was named Abraham and my husband's grandmother was Marie, nee Weilova. My husband's mother was named Regina Smolkova, born Finkova in 1863. She died in 1932. Her father was Jakub Fink, born in 1823 and her mother was Barbora, family name Fantlova. The Finks had a textile store, which was on the town square in Bernatice. So my husband's mother and father knew each other from the same village. Both families were Jewish.

Jaroslav graduated from high school in Pisek and continued his studies at the University of Economics in Prague. He had his first final exam, when in 1925 his father died. So Jaroslav returned, to take care of his mother and take over his father's business. His father had still made his rounds to the farmers on foot, to offer them farm machinery. Jaroslav already had a motorcycle. He always told me about how he wished that he wouldn't have to make a living in this way after the war, basically in the role of a supplicant, greatly dependent on how the harvest would end up, and if he would get paid in the end. He said that he'd be a civil servant after the war, which also happened.

In 1927 he married for the first time and moved along with his mother to Mirovice, where his wife was from. She was about two years younger and they had known each other from the age of 15, because both had attended school in Pisek and lived with one Jewish widow, because back then it was impossible to go home each day. The widow made a living by renting rooms, in one of them lived Jaroslav's future wife Zdenka along with her brother, and in the other Jaroslav with two other Jewish boys.

My husband's first wife was named Zdenka Smolkova, born in 1902. They had two children together, Hana, born in 1930, and Eva, born in 1929. The entire family was transported to Terezin, where both daughters died of meningitis, Hana in April of 1943 and Eva in March of 1944. Jaroslav and his wife were then transported further on to Auschwitz. Zdenka was sent straight into the gas. At the end of the war Jaroslav then survived a death march [17](#) and returned to Mirovice.

My husband had one sibling, his brother Arnost, who was ten years older. He had attended Czech schools. He worked as the director of the Unionbanka. He married Uncle Viktor's first wife and moved to Prague, where he then worked as the director of the Associated Glassworks, because his wife's family was one of the main stockholders of this company. They didn't have any children together. In 1939 they left for France right before the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the German army.

Before the war Jaroslav's father had voluntarily run the Jewish birth registry. Back then there were around ten Jewish families living in Bernatice. Jaroslav took over the running of the registry after his father's death, he had to write a registry exam at the Ministry of the Interior in Prague, and received permission to perform the function of a registrar. During and after the war, the Jewish community had some Dr. Freund as the registrar, and I don't know why, but they were looking for another registrar, and Jaroslav applied for the job and so that's how he got to Prague. The Jewish birth register was at first located at the Jewish community offices on Maiselova Street.



It took about six years before we were married. My husband was afraid of the large age difference, but for me, at the age of 21, it didn't matter at all. All my life I had actually gravitated towards older people, from the time I was little I was around older people. So for years we lived separately. In 1949 the Jewish community decided that it would turn a building in Siroka Street in Prague, where it had offices, into apartments for its employees. Unfortunately only for those that lived somewhere and could offer their own apartment in exchange. But my husband was renting, and I was living with Aunt Gusti. A friend of his helped him, who worked at the community and together with Mr. Gutig administered the Jewish community's real estate. In the neighboring building on Siroka Street he found a laundry room right at the top in the attic, and they had it converted to an apartment, which was then given to Jaroslav. I live here to this day.

Our wedding took place in 1954. We didn't have any children, both of us worked very hard, so we divided up the household chores. We had a beautiful relationship. At the beginning of our life together my husband said to me, 'I've got two requests. We'll never argue, and we'll never be without bread at home, because I don't want to be without bread ever again.' We really never argued, and I'd say that in time we melded to the degree that one actually didn't exist without the other. Among my husband's duties were cleaning the ashes from the stove in the morning, and bringing up coal from the cellar. My task was to then prepare everything so that in the evening one only had to strike a match. My husband rose a half hour earlier and would go to the washroom. He would then prepare breakfast, while I did my morning toilet. We purposely left enough time for breakfast and would have a nice conversation during it, because in the evenings we were tired.

Then we both went to work, we had the same route there and worked a little ways from each other. At first we both worked until 4pm, so we both again returned together. But then I got into higher positions, I often had to work overtime. My husband then used to do the shopping and in the evening I'd always cook supper.

Each Saturday and Sunday we'd go on outings in the region around Prague. But sometimes on weekends our place looked like an office, when we had a lot of work and took it home with us. For vacations we took trips around our country, I was familiar with nature in all of Czechoslovakia. We were always drawn more to the mountains and forests than to water.

Once we were on vacation in Yugoslavia, but we used it more to explore the country than to sunbathe. Once we were also at the sea in Sopoty, Poland. My husband didn't ski, and neither did I any more, though in childhood it had been a passion of mine. During that last winter in 1938 in Dubi I went skiing right after school like always, but for some reason my eyes were watering and I couldn't see anything, and I ran into a tree. I came to on the ground, one ski was broken and the other in a stream. And from that time on I was afraid. Besides that, back then we had to give up our skis, for the Reich's army, and after the war we didn't have the money to equip ourselves again.

We attended a lot of concerts, theater and exhibitions. I wasn't until the last two years that my husband's hearing was bad, so we began going to plays that he already knew, so he would at least see them. That last year I attended with only my former colleague from work and Jaroslav would always walk me to the theater and then come meet me afterwards. We used to go mainly to the Rudolfinum, National Theater and so on, which we had close by.

My husband was somewhat similar to my father in that he preferred spending his free time with me, and didn't need to associate with other people. He also read a lot, like my father. He respected the fact that one day a week my aunt would come visit us, and that we would visit her once a week. He liked my sister, who lived in Teplice, but occasionally came here to visit, and we would visit her, too.

After the war I met a person I knew who offered me a job as secretary in the company he worked for. I asked what they required. They wanted the ability to type and at least passive knowledge of some foreign language. Besides this I also knew German shorthand from school, and right after the war I had also taught myself Czech and English shorthand from textbooks. So I started there in October 1945. Sometime in 1947 my former colleague from this company got me into the company 'Rudolf Novotny,' which imported industrial dyes, where I made use of both my knowledge of shorthand and foreign languages. But then Victorious February [18](#) arrived and they liquidated our little private company.

Later, in 1948, I started working as a secretary for the Strojimport company, located in Prague on Wenceslaus Square, which did business internationally. I worked there until I retired in 1977. I started as a secretary in the machine tool department, gradually I worked my way up to departmental manager, then I became a vice-director in the woodworking machinery department and later for some time we had no director, so I managed a group of about 70 people. But I never counted on being named director, as I had never been a member of the Communist Party. They never directly pushed me into joining the Party, but of course offered me membership. Nevertheless, in the meantime the Slansky trials [19](#) took place, which were so markedly anti-Semitic that I refused to join.

An illegal Communist movement had existed in Terezin, so after the war many people automatically joined the Communist Party [20](#) and accepted the Communist ideology. I guess that in all of us there was a certain gratitude towards the Soviet Union for liberating us, but I definitely wasn't all fired up over Communism. In the machine tool department I had one colleague, who was ten years older, wasn't Jewish, but her husband had died in Terezin in the Little Fortress [21](#). She lived alone with her daughter and had a boyfriend whose husband had also died in the Little Fortress. She was a party member, I think that she liked me. Once she told me, 'It's not out of the question that the committee will invite you to join the Party. Do what you want, of course, but if you want to preserve at least a bit of freedom, think it over, because otherwise you'll be limited by party discipline.' That was also one of the reasons why I decided to not join the Party.

They invited my husband to join the Party in writing, but he refused and never regretted it, although it brought him troubles. The StB [22](#) interrogated him many times, they were always looking for some reason and made life unpleasant for him. From his student years he had belonged to the Association of Czech Academic Jews [23](#), which had been founded back around the year 1890. They supported Czech Jewish culture, published books, organized their own balls. University students were always involved, but after the war they didn't have any successors, they had no means of public action. Also only a few of them survived, they always met at someone's apartment, mainly in Holesovice at the Fuchs brothers' who were architects.

But the StB also persecuted my husband because of the Jewish community, I think that their interest was caused by anti-Semitism, that they were more or less looking for a reason to put one

more Jew in jail. The police didn't like the fact that my husband wouldn't let them look into the birth registers, so they could find out who was of Jewish origin. Then, in 1953 the birth registries were nationalized, and my husband moved along with them from the Jewish community to the District Bureau, back then the National Committee, on Vodickova Street. My husband was quite conservative and was used to his chair and desk. When he was leaving, the community lent them both to him, and he took them with him to the National Committee. The police then made a case of it and accused him of stealing the desk and chair, and interrogated him several times because of it. From the year 1950 onwards we were also certain that we were bugged, so we were very careful during phone conversations. That lasted a good twenty years.

At work everyone knew that I was Jewish, I never tried to hide it in any way. I'd say that they quite respected the fact that I had survived the Holocaust. I'd be lying if I said that I was badly off there. In my political profile it stated that I was the daughter of a businessman, a porcelain manufacturer. It was put in a very oblique manner, they could have come right out and written that I come from a bourgeois family and that I'm the daughter of an industrialist, as it was put back then. I even got a state award, 'For Excellent Work,' for which the company had nominated me.

It began with the fact that we were tasked with importing some set of machines for making hardware. It was a purchase that involved a great deal of money. The general directorship had an offer for these machines from one Austrian company, which had good connections here and had lots of contacts, so received a lot of opportunities. But from their offer there was no way of telling who manufactured the machines, the only thing that they told me was that they were from the United States. This was in 1964, when the political atmosphere in Czechoslovakia was beginning to loosen up a bit. People began to receive permission to travel abroad. I told my husband to try requesting an exit permit, because his brother Arnost was in America, whom he hadn't seen in a long time. He said that he wouldn't go without me, but I knew that they wouldn't give both of us a permit, for fear that we'd then stay. My husband got the exit permit.

Working with me as another vice-director was Vladimir Boruvka, a Czech by origin, but born in the Ukraine. At the age of 17 he volunteered for the army and fought in good faith for the Red Army, with which he ended up in Vienna at the end of the war. He then came from Vienna to visit his relatives in Pilsen, where his family was from. And when he saw how good life was here, although he was a committed Communist, he brought his mother and sister here and settled with them in Karlovy Vary.

As a member of the tank corps he had an open door into foreign trade and at first worked in the Soviet Union for Motokov, which was a part of the company that imported and exported cars. He came over to us in Strojimport as a vice-director and sat with me in one office. He didn't like the fact that I hadn't submitted a request for an exit permit, and talked me into writing one up and giving it to him. He then took it and vouched for me, that I wouldn't emigrate. I got the permission, so my husband and I were able to spend four weeks with my brother-in-law in America. Vladimir died on a train from Moscow to Vladivostok after the year 1989. I remember him as a good person, back then I wasn't the only one he helped.

So I was in America, and knew that those machines for the hardware industry were supposed to be from there. I had a copy of the Austrian company's offer. In New York in the phone book I found some association of machine tool manufacturers, who couldn't help me, but who gave me this

large catalog, so I could try to find among the appropriate manufacturers someone who would be appropriate to the size of the order. I actually succeeded in doing so, and I then asked that company for an offer, which in the end was 45 percent lower than the one from the Austrian company. In that same year I then flew to America one more time for a few days, with the general director and his two assistants, so we could negotiate the technical details of the deal directly in the factory in Chicago. The company then nominated me for an award, which I received in 1968.

My husband and I didn't consciously consider emigration, my husband was too old to start over somewhere else, and I was glad that I didn't have to abandon Aunt Gusti, who died in 1972. My husband and I weren't Zionists, so leaving for Israel didn't tempt us either. But we did take an interest in events over there. In 1948 Israel was created [24](#) still with the support of the Soviet Union, it became a problem the moment the Communists realized that Israel wouldn't belong to the Eastern Bloc. So from that time on, all information about events in Israel was very biased.

In 1968 [25](#) we were very happy due to the growing freedom, the possibility of traveling. A year earlier my brother-in-law and his wife had been in Europe, and we met them in London. I won't forget how on Mustek in Wenceslaus Square my husband and I saw the Soviet tanks arriving, it was very ugly. My brother-in-law paid a dear price for the August invasion. He was very frightened by it, he managed to send us a telegram, whether we were all right and what could he do for us, and four days later he died of a heart attack.

I've always been a member of the Jewish community. On Fridays my husband used to attend the Old New Synagogue, and sometimes they'd come get him on Saturday, when they were missing a tenth person [for a minyan]. For Yom Kippur we always fasted, and I do so to this day. For Passover my husband, as opposed to me, ate matzot, as he was used to from the village, he dipped them into coffee with milk. My mother used to drip honey on them. What I do know of Jewish traditions is from Jaroslav. He knew how to pray, we attended the Jerusalem Synagogue together. My husband had a Czech-Hebrew prayer book, and I think that he knew how to read Hebrew. After the war we didn't celebrate Christmas or Easter. At Christmastime we had only some evergreen branches in a vase, because they had a beautiful fragrance, and belonged to the winter season.

My husband died in September 1983 in Prague, he's buried at the Jewish urn grove in the Stránská quarter. Right after the funeral I left to be with my sister, who died at the beginning of November that same year. She survived the war with me, we went through it all together. At the end of the war she was 29 years old. She worked her whole life as a nurse, after the war in the Teplice hospital. During one operation she caught polio, which very much influenced the state of her health. After that she even had one leg paralyzed. She also suffered from diabetes and other diseases.

My sister married a Jew, Kurt Bloch, and lived in Sobědruhy, near Teplice. Her husband was ten years older and they didn't have any children together. Before the war, Kurt's father had a prosperous textile factory in Sobědruhy. Kurt studied at a specialized textile school in Germany, and upon his return started working in his father's factory, but didn't do a lot of work. As their youngest son, his parents spoiled him. He had been the first in Teplice to have a car, which back then wasn't something common. He had a merry little crew that he traveled around Europe with. Apparently his father supplied him with money, and his mother with recommendations.

After the war, after hotels were nationalized, he then worked as an accountant in the state company Hotely, where my sister met him. My sister was renting a place in Teplice, and her landlady worked for Hotely as a lawyer. Back then Kurt was married to his first wife, a German, who suffered from multiple sclerosis. Kurt knew that my sister worked in a hospital, and so he asked her if she could bring the necessary medicines, so he wouldn't have to always go to the hospital. My sister thus took care of Kurt's wife for three or four years, up until her death. Then after some time had passed, she and Kurt were married, in 1957.

My sister died at the age of 67. She had a Jewish funeral in Teplice. After her death Kurt wanted me to stay and live with him in Teplice. That didn't attract me though, and luckily God arranged it otherwise. Back then I slipped on some snow and broke my arm. So I wasn't of any use to him. I left for Prague right away, while the plaster was still wet. From that time on I called Kurt every day and once a month would come and visit him, but as soon as I arrived I would begin counting the minutes until my return. Kurt was a gregarious person and people liked him. He was entertaining and knew a lot. But I had the feeling that he had never appreciated my sister's true worth. Kurt died four years after her, in 1987.

My neighbor in our building used to give me the illegal magazine Listy [26](#), which was published in Rome by Jiri Pelikan. [Pelikan, Jiri (1923 - 1999): Czech journalist and politician. In 1969 requested political asylum in Italy. From 1970 published the leftist-oriented magazine Listy. 1979 - 1989 a member of the European Parliament.] She always said to me, 'You can have it for an hour.' Or: 'You can keep it overnight, but in the morning throw it in my hallway.' I didn't know by what fashion she came by the magazine. It wasn't until after the revolution that I found out that the son of Jiri Dienstbier [Dienstbier, Jiri (b. 1937): Czech journalist, politician and diplomat], who used to bring her the magazine, had been a student of hers. She taught at an industrial vocational school, which to this day is located in Prague's Old Town, and Dienstbier's son also started attending that school, because he couldn't get into an academic high school.

From the year 1987 I read Listy in this manner, and it was then that it first occurred to me that the regime here didn't have to last forever. But I was convinced that I wouldn't live to see the change. So I enthusiastically greeted the revolution, my only regret was that neither my husband nor my sister had lived to see it. My husband would have been even more excited than I.

The revolution [27](#) for me came at a time when I had already long been retired. What changed my life the most was the possibility of travel, which we used copiously. Many new people appeared in my life.

I could finally freely keep in touch with my childhood friend, Lidka Kozlikova. Her son liked bicycling a lot, and often would pass by the Bernstein Chateau in Northern Bohemia, about 14 kilometers from Melnik. And as he was always riding by, he would apparently always say to himself, this is how I'd like to live one day. He studied construction in Chomutov, and then Lidka and her family immigrated to Germany in 1969. Later she and her husband moved to be with her sister in Canada. Between the years 1969 and 1983 our contact was sporadic. Lidka used to write to her mother in Mseno, near Melnik, from where I then sometimes got news and photos. Then in 1983 Lidka and her husband paid to have their Czechoslovak citizenship cancelled, so that they could come visit their aging relatives in the CSSR. They were here for the first time in 1983, only a few days before my husband's death.

After the revolution in 1989, Lidka's son returned to Czech and bought the chateau, which had become quite dilapidated during the Communist years. He found employees in the town, and gradually repaired and improved the chateau, which is a protected historical site. Today he lives there with his girlfriend, and both of them are very hardworking and clever people. They don't have the chateau as a tourist attraction, but offer it for various social and company occasions. But when a person comes there, he can take a walk in the chateau park, part of which is also a golf course, and sit down on the chateau terrace, where they sell food and drink. Lidka died recently, in the spring of 2005. Lidka's widowed husband, who's approaching 90, moved to the Czech Republic to be with his son, and helps out at the chateau.

In 1991 as part of the restitutions I requested the return of the Hahn house in Teplice and of our house in Dubi. The house in Teplice was returned to me, but the Hahns had two more houses, which to this day haven't been returned. It always depends on whether the person that is using the property is willing to return it or not. Over 500 people found work in my father's factory, which was a condition that led to nationalization after the war, according to the Benes Decrees. Lawyers told me straight out to try have the factory returned. I tried only to get our house in Dubi, which my parents had originally bought together, and which the Communists then proclaimed to be part of the factory and also nationalized it. Unfortunately in the meantime the North Bohemia Forests company moved into it, and didn't want to leave it. I'd have to take it all the way to the Supreme Court, and I certainly didn't want to spend the rest of my life going to court and paying lawyers. That was also one of the reasons why I didn't try to get the porcelain factory, either. I basically said to myself that life is too short for things like that.

I got the house in Teplice back, because the director of the Regional Museum, which was located there, was very decent and admitted that the house didn't belong to them. We came to an agreement, and the museum remained on the ground floor for a token rent. In return they allocated one room where our Dubi porcelain was exhibited. The house needed a new facade and other investments that I didn't have the money for, so later I sold it.

## Glossary

### **1 Joseph II (1741-1790)**

Holy Roman Emperor, king of Bohemia and Hungary (1780-1790), a representative figure of enlightened absolutism. He carried out a complex program of political, economic, social and cultural reforms. His main aims were religious toleration, unrestricted trade and education, and a reduction in the power of the Church. These views were reflected in his policy toward Jews. His 'Judenreformen' (Jewish reforms) and the 'Toleranzpatent' (Edict of Tolerance) granted Jews several important rights that they had been deprived of before: they were allowed to settle in royal free cities, rent land, engage in crafts and commerce, become members of guilds, etc. Joseph had several laws which didn't help Jewish interests: he prohibited the use of Hebrew and Yiddish in business and public records, he abolished rabbinical jurisdiction and introduced liability for military service. A special decree ordered all the Jews to select a German family name for themselves. Joseph's reign introduced some civic improvement into the life of the Jews in the Empire, and also supported cultural and linguistic assimilation. As a result, controversy arose between liberal-minded and orthodox Jews, which is considered the root cause of the schism between the Orthodox



and the Neolog Jewry.

## **2 Karlovy Vary (German name**

Karlsbad): The most famous Bohemian spa, named after Bohemian King Charles (Karel) IV, who allegedly found the springs during a hunting expedition in 1358. It was one of the most popular resorts among the royalty and aristocracy in Europe for centuries.

## **3 Great Depression**

At the end of October 1929, there were worrying signs on the New York Stock Exchange in the securities market. On 24th October ('Black Thursday'), people began selling off stocks in a panic from the price drops of the previous days - the number of shares usually sold in a half year exchanged hands in one hour. The banks could not supply the amount of liquid assets required, so people didn't receive money from their sales. Five days later, on 'Black Tuesday', 16.4 million shares were put up for sale, prices dropped steeply, and the hoarded properties suddenly became worthless. The collapse of the Stock Exchange was followed by economic crisis. Banks called in their outstanding loans, causing immediate closings of factories and businesses, leading to higher unemployment, and a decline in the standard of living. By January of 1930, the American money market got back on its feet, but during this year newer bank crises unfolded: in one month, 325 banks went under. Toward the end of 1930, the crisis spread to Europe: in May of 1931, the Viennese Creditanstalt collapsed (and with its recall of outstanding loans, took Austrian heavy industry with it). In July, a bank crisis erupted in Germany, by September in England, as well. In Germany, in 1931, more than 19,000 firms closed down. Though in France the banking system withstood the confusion, industrial production and volume of exports tapered off seriously. The agricultural countries of Central Europe were primarily shaken up by the decrease of export revenues, which was followed by a serious agricultural crisis. Romanian export revenues dropped by 73 percent, Poland's by 56 percent. In 1933 in Hungary, debts in the agricultural sphere reached 2.2 billion Pengoes. Compared to the industrial production of 1929, it fell 76 percent in 1932 and 88 percent in 1933. Agricultural unemployment levels, already causing serious concerns, swelled immensely to levels, estimated at the time to be in the hundreds of thousands. In industry the scale of unemployment was 30 percent (about 250,000 people).

## **4 KuK (Kaiserlich und Königlich) army**

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal.' [5](#) Italian front, 1915-1918: Also known as Isonzo front. Isonzo (Soca) is an alpine river today in Slovenia, which ran parallel with the pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian and Italian border. During World War I Italy was primarily interested in capturing the ethnic Italian parts of Austria-Hungary (Trieste, Fiume, Istria and some of the islands) as well as the Adriatic littoral. The Italian army tried to enter Austria-Hungary via the Isonzo River, but the Austro-Hungarian army was dug in alongside the river. After 18 months of continuous fighting without any territorial gain, the Austro-Hungarian army finally succeeded to enter Italian territory in October 1917. [6](#) Hitler's rise to power: In the German parliamentary elections in January 1933, the National Socialist

German Workers' Party (NSDAP) won one- third of the votes. On 30th January 1933 the German president swore in Adolf Hitler, the party's leader, as chancellor. On 27th February 1933 the building of the Reichstag (the parliament) in Berlin was burned down. The government laid the blame with the Bulgarian communists, and a show trial was staged. This served as the pretext for ushering in a state of emergency and holding a re-election. It was won by the NSDAP, which gained 44% of the votes, and following the cancellation of the communists' votes it commanded over half of the mandates. The new Reichstag passed an extraordinary resolution granting the government special legislative powers and waiving the constitution for 4 years. This enabled the implementation of a series of moves that laid the foundations of the totalitarian state: all parties other than the NSDAP were dissolved, key state offices were filled by party luminaries, and the political police and the apparatus of terror swiftly developed.

## **7 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.

## **8 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.

## **9 The Turner Movement**

An athletic movement with a nationalist and political subtext, propagated in the German states from the 1920s. It was based on the sport system of A. Eisselen (1793 - 1850), it became politicized with a goal of uniting Germany. Its main organization from 1860 became the Deutsche Turnerschaft.

## **10 Munich Pact**

Signed by Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and France in 1938, it allowed Germany to immediately occupy the Sudetenland (the border region of Czechoslovakia inhabited by a German minority). The representatives of the Czechoslovak government were not invited to the Munich conference. Hungary and Poland were also allowed to seize territories: Hungary occupied southern and eastern Slovakia and a large part of Subcarpathia, which had been under Hungarian rule before World War I, and Poland occupied Teschen (Tessin or Cieszyn), a part of Silesia, which had been an object of dispute between Poland and Czechoslovakia, each of which claimed it on ethnic grounds. Under the Munich Pact, the Czechoslovak Republic lost extensive economic and strategically important territories in the border regions (about one third of its total area).

## **11 Maccabi Sports Club in the Czech Republic**

The Maccabi World Union was founded in 1903 in Basel at the VI. Zionist Congress. In 1935 the Maccabi World Union had 100,000 members, 10,000 of which were in Czechoslovakia. Physical education organizations in Bohemia have their roots in the 19th century. For example, the first Maccabi gymnastic club in Bohemia was founded in 1899. The first sport club, Bar Kochba, was founded in 1893 in Moravia. The total number of Maccabi clubs in Bohemia and Moravia before WWI was fifteen. The Czechoslovak Maccabi Union was officially founded in June 1924, and in the same year became a member of the Maccabi World Union, located in Berlin.

## **12 Sokol**

One of the best-known Czech sports organizations. It was founded in 1862 as the first physical educational organization in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Besides regular training of all age groups, units organized sports competitions, colorful gymnastics rallies, cultural events including drama, literature and music, excursions and youth camps. Although its main goal had always been the promotion of national health and sports, Sokol also played a key role in the national resistance to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Nazi occupation and the communist regime. Sokol flourished between the two World Wars; its membership grew to over a million. Important statesmen, including the first two presidents of interwar Czechoslovakia, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Benes, were members of Sokol. Sokol was banned three times: during World War I, during the Nazi occupation and finally by the communists after 1948, but branches of the organization continued to exist abroad. Sokol was restored in 1990.

## **13 Henlein, Konrad (1898-1945)**

From the year 1933, when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, the situation in the Czech border regions began to change. Hitler decided to disintegrate Czechoslovakia from within, and to this end began to exploit the German minority in the border regions, and the People's Movement in Slovakia. His political agent in the Czech border regions became Konrad Henlein, a PE teacher from the town of As. During a speech in Karlovy Vary on 24th April 1938, Henlein demanded the abandonment of Czechoslovak foreign policy, such as alliance agreements with France and the USSR; compensation for injustices towards Germans since the year 1918; the abandonment of Palacky's ideology of Czech history; the formation of a German territory out of Czech border

counties, and finally, the identification with the German (Hitler's) world view, that is, with Nazism. Two German political parties were extant in Czechoslovakia: the DNSAP and the DNP. Due to their subversive activities against the Czechoslovak Republic, both of these parties were officially dissolved in 1933. Subsequently on 3rd October 1933, Konrad Henlein issued a call to Sudeten Germans for a unified Sudeten German national front, SHP. The new party thus joined the two former parties under one name. Before the parliamentary elections in 1935 the party's name was changed to SDP. In the elections, Henlein's party finished as the strongest political party in the Czechoslovak Republic. On 18th September 1938, Henlein issued his first order of resistance, regarding the formation of a Sudeten German "Freikorps," a military corps of freedom fighters, which was the cause of the culmination of unrest among Sudeten Germans. The order could be interpreted as a direct call for rebellion against the Czechoslovak Republic. Henlein was captured by the Americans at the end of WWII. He committed suicide in an American POW camp in Pilsen on 10th May 1945.

#### **14 Sudetenland**

Highly industrialized north-west frontier region that was transferred from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the new state of Czechoslovakia in 1919. Together with the land a German-speaking minority of 3 million people was annexed, which became a constant source of tension both between the states of Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, and within Czechoslovakia. In 1935 a Nazi-type party, the Sudeten German Party financed by the German government, was set up. Following the Munich Agreement in 1938 German troops occupied the Sudetenland. In 1945 Czechoslovakia regained the territory and pogroms started against the German and Hungarian minority. The Potsdam Agreement authorized Czechoslovakia to expel the entire German and Hungarian minority from the country.

#### **15 Invasion of Poland**

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

#### **16 Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

Bohemia and Moravia were occupied by the Germans and transformed into a German Protectorate in March 1939, after Slovakia declared its independence. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was placed under the supervision of the Reich protector, Konstantin von Neurath. The Gestapo assumed police authority. Jews were dismissed from civil service and placed in an extralegal

position. In the fall of 1941, the Reich adopted a more radical policy in the Protectorate. The Gestapo became very active in arrests and executions. The deportation of Jews to concentration camps was organized, and Terezin/Theresienstadt was turned into a ghetto for Jewish families. During the existence of the Protectorate the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia was virtually annihilated. After World War II the pre-1938 boundaries were restored, and most of the German-speaking population was expelled.

## **17 Death march**

In fear of the approaching Allied armies, the Germans tried to erase all evidence of the concentration camps. They often destroyed all the facilities and forced all Jews regardless of their age or sex to go on a death march. This march often led nowhere and there was no specific destination. The marchers received neither food nor water and were forbidden to stop and rest at night. It was solely up to the guards how they treated the prisoners, if and what they gave them to eat and they even had in their hands the power on the prisoners' life or death. The conditions during the march were so cruel that this journey became a journey that ended in the death of most marchers.

## **18 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.

## **19 Slansky trial**

In the years 1948-1949 the Czechoslovak government together with the Soviet Union strongly supported the idea of the founding of a new state, Israel. Despite all efforts, Stalin's politics never found fertile ground in Israel; therefore the Arab states became objects of his interest. In the first place the Communists had to allay suspicions that they had supplied the Jewish state with arms. The Soviet leadership announced that arms shipments to Israel had been arranged by Zionists in Czechoslovakia. The times required that every Jew in Czechoslovakia be automatically considered a Zionist and cosmopolitan. In 1951 on the basis of a show trial, 14 defendants (eleven of them were Jews) with Rudolf Slansky, First Secretary of the Communist Party at the head were convicted. Eleven of the accused got the death penalty; three were sentenced to life imprisonment. The executions were carried out on 3rd December 1952. The Communist Party later finally admitted its mistakes in carrying out the trial and all those sentenced were socially and legally rehabilitated in 1963.

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

Founded in 1921 following a split from the Social Democratic Party, it was banned under the Nazi occupation. It was only after Soviet Russia entered World War II that the Party developed resistance activity in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia; because of this, it gained a certain degree of popularity with the general public after 1945. After the communist coup in 1948, the

Party had sole power in Czechoslovakia for over 40 years. The 1950s were marked by party purges and a war against the 'enemy within'. A rift in the Party led to a relaxing of control during the Prague Spring starting in 1967, which came to an end with the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet and allied troops in 1968 and was followed by a period of normalization. The communist rule came to an end after the Velvet Revolution of November 1989.

## **21 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.

## **22 Statni Tajna Bezpecnost**

Czech intelligence and security service founded in 1948.

## **23 Kapper, Academic Association**

the second half of the 19th century brought with it political conflicts between Czechs and Germans, which also made themselves felt in relations with Czech Jews. A majority of them spoke German, and were more associated with German liberals. In the second half of the 19th century, though, there was also a significant "ascension" of Czech. In 1876 the Association of Czech Academics - Jews was created, later renamed to the Kapper Academic Association. Active within this circle was for example Vojtech Rakous (1862 - 1935).

## **24 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.

## **25 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.

## **26 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).

## **27 Velvet Revolution**

Also known as November Events, this term is used for the period between 17th November and 29th December 1989, which resulted in the downfall of the Czechoslovak communist regime. A non-violent political revolution in Czechoslovakia that meant the transition from Communist dictatorship to democracy. The Velvet Revolution began with a police attack against Prague students on 17th November 1989. That same month the citizen's democratic movement Civic Forum (OF) in Czech and Public Against Violence (VPN) in Slovakia were formed. On 10th December a government of National Reconciliation was established, which started to realize democratic reforms. On 29th December Vaclav Havel was elected president. In June 1990 the first democratic elections since 1948 took place.