

Plášilová, Marta
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Abstract

Marta Plášilová was born December 12, 1930 in Prague-Libeň, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic.) Libeň had a strong Jewish community. Many families, most poor, lived in the town's Jewish quarter.

Her school had about four Jewish students. She remembers especially Helga Weis. They were 16 years old the day they said goodbye and Helga was sent to a concentration camp. Helga survived the camp, moved to Palestine and became a painter.

Before the war, Marta didn't feel any differences between herself and Jews. Her family was friendly with a Jewish family, headed by "Uncle Frýba," whose children were Johan and Esther.

In 1939, after the Germans invaded, everyone was constantly scared. Her teacher explained what was happening and warned the children to avoid the Germans. After 1943, Jews could no longer go to regular school, playgrounds, other neighborhoods, movie theaters, stores, or ride trams. Signs saying where Jews may and may not go were all over the city.

In 1941, 1942 and 1943, Jews, mainly women and children, were transported to concentration camps. Marta's father took her to see Jews being herded like cattle onto the train cars. She saw chaos everywhere and heard children crying and mothers screaming. She could not sleep for a long time.

Marta's father and Uncle Frýba helped the Jewish families whose fathers were arrested or deported. Mr. Plášilová and Uncle Frýba employed mothers to enable them to support their families. Also, they hid valuables owned by the Jewish families.

Her father received threatening letters, some written in Czech and others in German. Marta saw them. Once, the Gestapo came to their home to look for a girl.

Eventually, Uncle Frýba's family was transported to a concentration camp, while he was arrested for anti-state activities and forced to clean around the city. Marta tried to greet him once, but he warned her away.

After the war, the man who had written threatening letters in Czech was arrested. But they never found out who had written the German letters.

The hidden valuables owned by Jewish families were returned to them, or to their relatives, or to the Jewish community. Nothing got lost and nothing was stolen.

Oral history interview with Marta Plášilová

1-10 min.

Marta Plášilová was born December 12, 1930 in Prague-Libeň, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic). In her second grade elementary school class, she had about four Jewish classmates and remembers especially one of them, Helga Weis. Helga was sent to a concentration camp, which she survived and then moved to Palestine and became a painter.

Libeň had a strong Jewish community, with a whole Jewish quarter, which had a good reputation. Many Jewish families, most of them poor, lived in the quarter. Marta and her family often walked there. She didn't feel any differences between herself and them. Her family was friendly with a Jewish family. She remembers especially "Uncle Frýba," father of the family whose children were Johan and Esther. She knew that they were Jewish because they often went to a synagogue.

In 1939, their life turned around. Everyone was constantly scared, especially when the Germans came. Their teacher explained what was happening and warned the children to avoid the Germans. After 1943, Jewish children could no longer attend regular school or go to other neighborhoods.

10-20 min.

Father and Uncle Frýba helped the Jewish families, the ones where the father was arrested or transported. They employed women so that they would be able to support their families. Also, they organized the departure of families before being deported to a concentration camp. They also hid valuable objects owned by Jewish families, so that the Germans wouldn't be able to confiscate them. Her father received threatening letters, written in both Czech and German, which Marta saw. Once, the Gestapo came to their home to look for a girl.

Jewish children had to leave school, they were not allowed into trams, cinemas, onto the playground or into the stores. A day before their departure from school Marta saw them cry. The day after, when the teacher told the whole class, everybody was crying.

In 1941, 1942 and 1943 Jewish families were transported to concentration camps. Signs that showed where Jewish people may and may not go, were all over the city. Sometimes Jewish children would violate the rules.

Martha did realize that the transports took the Jewish families to concentration camps. She saw it happening several times. Uncle Frýda was arrested for anti-state activities and the rest of the family was transported. It was awful.

20-30 min.

Her father took her with him to see what was happening. Together they watched the Germans forcing Jewish families into train as a herd of cattle. Marta estimated that there were altogether about seven or eight train wagons. People were not allowed to watch, so they watched from an apartment window. Because of this Marta could not sleep for a long time. She did not recognize anyone in the crowd. There were a lot of people, chaos everywhere and she could hear children crying and mothers screaming. The transports were meant mostly for woman and children. Marta did not see the train leave because they had to go, but a lot of people took photos of the scene. Unfortunately she never saw them.

A Jewish woman cleaned their house. Her husband died in a concentration camp and her children moved to Israel. Her father was in contact with other Jewish people, such as Mr. and Ms. Bek. When Mr. Bek was deported to a concentration camp, Ms. Bek started helping them out.

30-37 min.

Uncle Frýda was not transported to a concentration camp, because he was arrested. The last time she saw him was two days prior the arrest. The Jewish people were forced to work around the city (cleaning and sweeping). Marta had seen it many times. The last day she saw Uncle Frýda, he was working. She wanted to greet him but he told her not to, because Germans had him under surveillance.

After the war, Marta didn't see any revenge toward Germans in the city. The person who had written the threatening letters in Czech was arrested. They never found out who wrote the German letters.

During the war, she would often go with her mother to shop for food outside the city. When they would re-enter the city, the Germans would take most of the food for themselves. So the driver began stopping at the city border, where the Germans would not be waiting. Once, when Marta and her mother got lost, she was forced to ask the Germans for directions. Ironically, they helped and took no food.

37-53 min, Additional information

The hidden valuables owned by Jewish families were returned to them, or to their relatives or to the Jewish community. Nothing got lost and nothing got stolen. Marta remembers going with her father and searching for the Jewish families with him.

Her father was a great man with lots of Jewish friends, that's why he wanted to help.

She remembers exactly the day that she said goodbye to Helga Weis. They were both 16 years old and Helga wrote a quote in her diary saying *Sheep go in herds, eagles fly alone.*

Before the Jewish families were transported to concentration camps, they were forced to move from their homes into an old hotel. Their homes, houses and apartments were demolished.

The Germans did not split the crowd of Jews while forcing them into the train wagon. The divide occurred at the camps.

The guards were all Germans, there were no Czechs.