

THE BEAT OF MY HEART

JIRÍ KONTA*

Translated from Czech by Miroslava Christesen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Birth town of Žleby and the Doubrava River through the eyes of a geologist	4
Family	9
First strong impressions	22
Domestic animals	30
Love of non-living nature	32
Student years in Čáslav	33
European forced labor in wartime Germany	44
Gestapo arrest	45
Experiences from the Mauthausen concentration camp	46
Return home, studies, and scientific and pedagogical work at Charles University	55
Study of clays	59
Collaboration with leading scientists and institutions	59
Proposal to establish the journal <i>Applied Clay Science</i>	66
THE AIPEA Presidential election (1985–1989)	67
Staff of the Prague laboratory of sedimentary petrology and argillology	69
Topics often on our minds	71
Conclusion	73
Acknowledgments	74
References	74

Key Words—Geology, Research, Science, Travel, WWII, Concentration Camp.

INTRODUCTION

I am a geologist. My heart belongs to geology and to all people of good will on this Earth. Even though this introduction begins the account of the trials and tribulations of my life, I actually wrote it last. While writing, from time to time, I kept asking myself some burning questions: Why did I actually decide to write about the most significant events that I encountered in the twentieth century? Why did I decide to write about a man from a small town in eastern Bohemia, which, granted, lies in a part of Europe close to its geographical center, but which is quite insignificant otherwise? In this age of information technology, who might be interested in the life of a country boy, who to some readers may even seem to have come from somewhere in the boonies, in spite of the fact that before long, he succeeded in reaching the status of a university professor? Will I be

able to deliver my story in a captivating way, which will be correctly understood? May I hope that a mere life's account may perhaps inspire someone to a creative act? Isn't it a little presumptuous to give an account of just one man's life together with several key events of his lifetime, even though in no chapter have I forgotten the magnificent beings whom fate permitted me to meet?

As a geologist, I was used to writing especially about facts, backed up by concentrated observations, measurements, and analytical data. At the age of almost ninety-five, I do realize that many of my memories have faded and that my feelings and connections regarding the countryside and environment of my youth have been idealized. Today I recall with a smile many of the events that used to upset, anger, or annoy me. With its gentle hills, the countryside at the foot of the Iron Mountains has remained a decisive anchor and great love of my life. Of course, it is inseparable from the people who live there and whom it touches with its beauty and physical gentleness.

In the scientific work of a geologist, the most paramount is always the search for truth and for the

* E-mail address of corresponding author:

jirikonta@seznam.cz

DOI: 10.1346/CCMN.2016.0640101

source of information on which to build. That is initially why I must assure the reader that the account of my life's experiences is based not only on my memories but also on the notes in my personal notebooks, on scientific articles and books published both at home and abroad, as well as on a vast personal correspondence in Czech and other languages. I do not exclude personal feelings and interpretations from my account, but they are always based on the facts presented. It is my wish that from every paragraph, the reader understands that everything – what and how I write – represents not only myself, but also other human beings or parts of the Earth that I have always cared about and that cannot be forgotten.

BIRTH TOWN OF ŽLEBY AND THE DOUBRAVA RIVER THROUGH THE EYES OF A GEOLOGIST

If you set off from Prague driving east on the state highway via Kolín, after about 80 km you will reach Čáslav where you make a turn to Žleby. After an additional 6 km drive with numerous curves, having made the final gradually descending hairpin bend, you will enter an oasis of greenery in which nests a neo-Gothic castle (Figures 1–4). The Žleby greenery is rich in old, mighty and awe-inspiring trees. At the time of my youth, the district road leading from Čáslav to Žleby and then to Ronov on the Doubrava River (Figure 5) and to the town of Třemošnice was a mere smoothly rolled sand road. In Žleby itself it was not paved until the middle of the 1920s. Then paving became necessary mainly due to the increased traffic during sugar-beet harvests and due to the considerably steep terrain leading from the sugar-processing mill lying in the deep valley on the right bank of the Doubrava River. Sometimes the carriage wheels sank into the old, soggy, unpaved road, the carriages being overloaded heavily either by the raw beets transported to the prince's sugar mill or by the white leached cuttings leaving the sugar mill, which were used then as supplementary fodder for domestic animals. The beet harvest typically began at the end of September and ended sometime in January. Its duration depended on the volume of the sugar beets harvested. At the time between the harvests, the traffic on the town road was light to minimal. I still recall myself standing among curious pre-schoolers in the oblong triangular square at the north castle wall, on the flat stretch between the fountain and the road, watching with admiration the noisy unloading of granite cobble stones from the miller's horse-drawn carriages. The fountain drew its supply of drinking water through a pipeline from the forest of Štikavka. Cool water flowed from a forest reservoir lined with bricks primarily to the castle, but some of it ended in the square's stone fountain to be used by the townspeople (Figures 6–9).

It has always been in a little boy's nature to explore anything unknown and exciting. And that is what all of us in our town fulfilled with enthusiasm and children's



Figure 1. The Žleby Castle neo-gothic north walls covered in ivy; bottom right at the clock tower is a walled-in fountain.

courage. We were magically drawn to the piles of granite stones and sand. Sometimes we got in a paver's way. We admired how, using a hammer, the pavers swiftly placed cubic granite paving stones into an established sand foundation with a small admixture of finely crushed lime. Having set a few rows of paving cubes, they evened out the surface of the road holding a tamping tool in both hands. In the end a road-roller reinforced their work. I admired this rock and sand activity very much.

Soon after the completion of the road paving, I began to attend the five-year elementary school in the town square, only about 100 m from our apartment. The surface of the paved road was so masterfully smooth that on sunny days the most skillful of the boys were able to chase their wooden spinning tops with their whips.



Figure 2. The Žleby Castle Main Entrance Gate: north façade of the neo-Gothic castle; Benedict Škvor was the architect of the romantic neo-Gothic modifications of the Baroque castle begun in 1849, implemented by Michal Šel of a Žleby construction company. Architect František Schmoranz designed the neo-Gothic castle Chapel of the Virgin Mary (built in 1853–1858).



Figure 3. Fountain Statue of an Auersperg family ancestor overcoming a bison; another fountain, in front of the main castle gate, is from the Vienna workshop of Anton Dominik von Fernkorn. A larger stone bas-relief sculpture of a bison is also seen above the castle entry gate.

These were cones made from one piece of wood, about 6–8 cm high, equipped on the bottom point with a heavier metal stud. We chased them from school almost to the vicarage and back (a distance of ~100 m). The whiplashes kept the tops rotating on their studded points in a continuous, sufficiently fast rotation. After each correct whiplash the spinning top accelerated its rotation and continued moving in the direction we gave it. The main skill in this game was lifting a spinning top from rest with just one swing into a rotating movement on its point or an individual blast-off to a distance of ~10 m, without an interruption of the rotation after landing on the pavement. This was fun; it was our kids' 'golf.' We did not have a clue about real golf.

At the time of my childhood the road in Žleby was quite peaceful, with the exception of sugar beet harvests and the morning stocking up of the stores done almost exclusively with horse-drawn carriages. At the end of the 1930s, shortly before World War II, there were only about five personal vehicles in our town and two trucks. They belonged to miller Bláha; director of the sugar mill, engineer Teplý; Colonel Havliš; head agricultural administrator of the prince's farm estate with affiliated distillery, Rudolf (my future father-in-law); and taxi driver, Forman, the auto-service owner.

During the beet harvests, the granite road was covered in some places with a fine mud brought from the fields, which released itself from the wagons and



Figure 4. The Žleby Castle courtyard: entrance to the collection of historical weapons and hunting trophies.



Figure 5. The stone bridge across the Doubrava river near the Žleby castle park. The water level shown is ~0.5 m higher than for most of the rest of the year. The turbidity of the water with clay comes from the flooded Hostačovka River.

bouncing beets. The farmers' upholstery was slippery with the mud, which caused the riders a lot of trouble during rainy fall days back then, as the mud did to their beasts of burden – horses, oxen, and cows. It was painful



Figure 6. The 'John Žižka of Trocnov' 1881 monument in Čáslav celebrating the famous 15th century Czech Hussite warrior. Sculpture by Josef Václav Myslbek; pedestal by Antonín Wiehl, 1879.



Figure 7. Town Hall in Čáslav: Jan Josef Wirch led the Baroque reconstruction of the original Gothic Town Hall, 1765–1769. Its Memorial Hall contains Žižka's remains.

for me to see the taut muscles of the harnessed animals, sometimes kneeling and digging their feet helplessly into the slippery mud, with their eyes popping out from the strain and their riders furiously running around, worrying about their animals as well as about their loads. From those gloomy autumn beet harvest months, just a brief



Figure 8. The gothic tower of SS Peter and Paul Church in Čáslav. Visible from far and wide, this is an orientation point in the Čáslav lowland.



Figure 9. The gothic cathedral of St Barbara in Kutná Hora, founded around 1380, honoring the miners' patron saint. The original architect was Matthew of Arras. Several construction stages continued until the 16th century. The long building on the right is a former Jesuit monastery, today the Central Bohemian Region Gallery.

sentence from my mom, who took pride in her farmer ancestry, has stayed engraved in my memory, tinged with sadness and indignation. We were walking home on the sidewalk leading from the sugar mill to the town square. On one half of the road, wagons loaded with beets went down the hill, and in the opposite direction wagons ascended with cuttings deprived of sugar through boiling. The medley of sounds created by the braking of the screeching wagons, the trampling of the hooves, and the falling of the sliding draft animals mixed with the shouting and whip cracking of the riders. Suddenly my mom squeezed my hand more firmly and commented on the racket caused by the riders: "This is not something the animals enjoy. I have never witnessed anything like that in our Elbe lowland." Nowadays, the main road in Žleby and most of the side pathways are covered with a carpet of asphalt. The granite paving remains buried under it.

To this day, our town of Žleby is divided into several quarters with fitting names, although unofficial. Even though these names are not displayed on any street signs, I will capitalize them at their beginning. Downstream of the Doubrava river, roughly from east to west the names given are: Kopec (the Hill), Městečko (Little Town), and Chalupy (Cottages), to which one can add also the adjacent Mršník (Carrion) also called Sibiř (Siberia), for its platform in the western part of the town is whipped by northern winds. Around two thousand people lived in Žleby at the time of my childhood.

The Doubrava River and the geological structure of the Iron Mountains foothills gave Žleby a remarkable appearance of a romantic canyon. Every river, and thus also the Doubrava, is not only a life-sustaining artery of a region, but it is also a mirror of the people who live on its banks. The deep, irregular glen of a valley, in Žleby

cut into a firm rocky base, bears witness to the moulding force of the river. Also the remnants of fallen crags or rock fragments found at the river bottom, sometimes dragged faraway, give a clear testimony about the mutual clash of the river current with solid obstacles. The deeply carved erosive troughs, which changed their direction at times and which the river ground during flooding, recurring many times during several million years, gave Žleby its most suitable name of all suggested.

The Doubrava in the Žleby region is full of shoals, pools, and mysterious nooks. Most of the year it is quite still, barely flowing downstream; in the shallow reaches it makes gentle as well as louder noises, while in the deeper, constricted sections it is tense, and tempestuous during floods. A river has a magical pull on all living things. No plant or animal can resist its virtually magnetic attractive force. The intensity of its force lines increases with temperature and aridity. The changeability and the numerous charms of almost any river together with its invincible dynamics forever remain printed in the minds of the people who spent their young years along its banks. The communities without a river or without at least a year-round stream are lacking in many ways, in spite of the fact that they are spared a fierce struggle with water during floods.

If we take a look from afar at a river flowing through the Czech countryside in the summertime, we will see only a thin silvery ribbon, which meanders through the verdant forests and meadows, and through the changing hues of the fields. Along it, with their weirs, bridges, or fords, villages and towns are threaded like beads. As soon as we get closer to the river, however, we will detect an abundance of detail. At the sight of the flowing stream, a drifting leaf, a jumping hunting fish, or the

gleam of its light side during an intense movement in the pool, of the bubbles forming in the rapids and behind solid obstacles or at the various colors of the moss of the stones near the river banks, we always experience a care-free childhood mood. Different is the scent of water during a sunny summer, different in a foggy autumn, and different after a storm. All of this becomes intimately familiar. Perhaps that is why, with all of its countless transformations, the river remains one of the strongest bonds that bind us with the countryside of our childhood. This can still be deeply experienced today, in this current Internet world of ours.

Let us now descend to the shoal of the Doubrava, which is full of temporarily deposited rocks and sand. Let us pick up at least one pebble stone or flint or a sharp-edged rock fragment. Let us rest our flustered eyes on its surface. The fragment may come from quartz, clear or otherwise colored, or from a rock that is typical of the Doubrava River basin. Let us explore its shape. What or whom does it resemble? Touch will inform us of its surface, whether it is smooth or rough. Also the degree of roundness can vary. It is the highest in the fragments whose surface is without any edges, protrusions, or depressions. From these and other properties, a geologist can determine the transportation history of the fragment. Other mortals do not have to go that far back into the past. They can enjoy the simple beauty of nature or the liberating sensation of the humble victory over the everyday hustle and bustle.

However, we may also linger for a few minutes at the elongated grass straws, at the reeds, or at the violet-pink blossoms of the willow herb, at the yellow petals of the tansy, at St. John's wort or mullein, or at the green leaves of the fern. A lonely butterfly or a pair of dragonflies above the river testifies to its life-sustaining force. The seemingly indomitable viability of the rivers exists also in the rough conditions of our world today. The possibilities to admire the simple beauty of nature along the Doubrava are still endless. According to an expert specializing in the rivers in our country it is the most charming river of Bohemia (Bulíček, 1972).

And what about the rocks and minerals forming the solid, millions- and hundreds of millions-old foundation of Žleby? I wish that no reader would skip over the next few sentences. Please realize that everyone is forced to walk on this earth, and thus should be at least somewhat familiar with its rock and soil surfaces. Rocks and minerals everywhere are a basic natural source of chemical elements in soils from which plants draw their sustenance. As one of the natural segments of the food chain, man is fundamentally dependent on this mineral basis. Moderately steep hillsides with the valley-floor river sediments on one side and the stalwart rock walls on the other bank alternate in bordering the Doubrava of the Žleby region. The highest rocks lie at the northwestern edge of the grove on the left bank of the river and above the former sugar mill in the

Borovičky forest on the river's right bank. This hard rock foundation is composed of dark grayish biotitic and also muscovite-biotite paragneiss, which in addition to the glittery flakes of dark biotite and light muscovite also contains quartz, feldspar, and in some places tiny grains of violet-red garnet. Gneisses belong to the medium-deep level of Earth's crust. They were sediments, altered thermally and by pressure in the distant geological past, immersed to medium depths, ~10–20 m; from there they were carried to the surface by additional tectonic activity. In autumn and winter, after the leaves have fallen off the trees and shrubs, one can spot veins of white quartz ~10–15 cm thick.

On the gently hilly platforms of the local Doubrava basin, which surrounds the canyon of the river, gneisses are primarily overlain by marlite and less commonly by sandstones of the Cretaceous period. In contrast to the hard, non-permeable gneisses, these Cretaceous sediments are permeable, leaking or holding water. The wells dug in yards or gardens of homesteads or farmsteads a long time ago were the main sources of drinking water for the Žlebites living on the Hill and Carion (Siberia). Marlite is a stratified, fine-grained, light-colored rock of white-gray to light ochre shades with a flat to slightly conchoidal shell-like fracture. In comparison with gneiss it is substantially softer, more easily prone to weathering, and its porosity is ~25%, which means that 1 m³ of marlite contains ~250 L of water when fully saturated. The major minerals of marlite are quartz (SiO₂), calcite (CaCO₃), very finely flaky mica and greenish glauconite (silicates containing aluminum, potassium, a bit of iron and magnesium plus water), and kaolinite (containing apart from water and oxygen almost only silicon and aluminum). In minor amounts, marlite also contains goethite (FeOOH), rutile and anatase (both TiO₂), pyrite (FeS₂), and traces of potassium feldspar (KAlSi₃O₈).

Water from precipitation, percolated through and purified by adsorption filtration through soil and the top horizon of weathered marlites, is confined below by a strong barrier of impermeable gneiss, the porosity of which is zero. In some areas, gneisses were finely smoothed by the surf of the Cretaceous sea. The sedimentation of marlites occurred in the Cretaceous (Turonian) sea over ninety million years ago. All sedimentary rocks, including marlites and sandstones, are found in the shallowest layer of Earth's crust.

The deeper crust, composed of igneous rocks, hardened at greater depths, can be found in several locations within <10 km of Žleby. Although granitic magma or basic to strongly basic peridotitic magma solidified deep in the crust, later it was tectonically lifted to the shallower depths and eventually exposed through erosion. In the broader vicinity of Žleby, you will find basic igneous rocks of the gabbroid type in the Doubrava valley before the southern edge of Ronov, then conspicuously light-colored coarse-grained tourmalinic

granite in Příbyslavice, and red, medium-grained biotitic granite at Chvalčovice in the Iron Mountains. One also finds ultrabasic igneous rock (peridotite) transformed into serpentinite in Mladotice near Ronov upon the Doubrava, on the right bank of the river.

The local rocks of gneiss and marlite were convenient building stones in Žleby in the past few centuries, used in the construction of many a house foundation as well as in both supporting and separating walls. In the 19th and 20th centuries, an even harder and heavier local rock, amphibolite, found its use, mined in the Žleby grove on the way to Biskupice and in the nearby Markovice. This amphibolite quarry in the Žleby grove has supplied the rocks also to build the two-to-three meter high walls of the Hostačovka streambed by the pathway along meadow enclosures.

The amphibolite quarry of Markovice (Figure 10) is still up and running as an important supplier of gravel, construction, and decorative rocks popular in its broad vicinity. The harder and more weathering-resistant amphibolite and gneiss stick out as small hills from the gently rippling countryside composed of a soft marlite mantle and its weathered particles. The Gallows hill at the northwestern edge of Žleby is one of those hills that enable a distant view of the Čáslav lowland.

The little Hostačovka stream empties itself into the Doubrava in the park, east of the Žleby castle. Shortly before their confluence, the local manor's former owners, the Auerspergs, had the direction of its riverbed changed to create a romantic waterfall carved into the gneiss rock. Its current, gentle for the most of the year, falls on the peaceful surface of the largest Doubrava weir in Žleby. Constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century, the weir was to hold a sufficient volume of water needed for the hydroelectric power plant of the local manor. It supplied electricity to the castle, sugar plant, distillery, to the buildings of the manor farm estate, forestry administration, and all the apartments included in the adminis-



Figure 10. The Markovice amphibolite quarry view from north to south.

tration of this large property, together with street illumination. Water still flows from the weir to the electric power plant through a man-made surface canal, although the power plant itself has been out of commission for the past few decades. The rock dam of the weir is ~3 m high connecting both banks of the river, ~40 m apart. On the left side of the dam is a narrow footbridge leading above a floodgate, allowing for manual control with a toothed mechanism gear. As schoolboys on hot summer days, we loved to shower in the outlet area below, where the cooler bottom water squirted from the narrow gaps in the floodgate. At times the roaring of the water fall at a higher water level of the Hostačovka or the boom of the overflowing weir on the Doubrava reached such massive levels that two people holding hands near the falling current could not understand each other even when shouting (Figures 11–13).

The exquisite nature of the Žleby region, its noble castle with a well manicured park and a rich game preserve once owned by the Auersperg family, the romantic valley of the Doubrava, and the colorful life of this culture-filled little Czech town at the time of my youth – all of this has had a major influence on my entire life.

FAMILY

I often fondly remember the members of my family – Dad, Mom, and both of my brothers. Each of them possessed a unique character, talent, and accomplished professional achievements. I think that they can be best introduced not only by my providing information about their basic personal data but also by presenting a few anecdotes imprinted in the memories of my childhood.

Dad

My dad, Josef Konta (born March 18, 1881 in Čtyřkoly, district Benešov), was the chief of police in



Figure 11. The Žleby waterfall on the Hostačovka river empties into the big weir of the Doubrava in the castle park.



Figure 12. The Žleby weir on the Doubrava river with a flood gate on the right, and part of the Hostačovka waterfall.

Žleby from 1921. During my almost one-year professional stay in Pennsylvania in the years 1965–1966, I tried to explain to our American friends that the work of my dad was comparable to that of a sheriff of a small town somewhere in the Midwest of the USA. In his youth he went through a tough social training because after the completion of the compulsory eight-year basic school, he literally had to grab life by the horns.

My dad's father Jan Konta was employed by the railroad during the Austrian-Hungarian empire. His family lived in a small watchman's house between Čtyřkoly and Čerčany on the Sázava River. Daddy was the oldest son and had six siblings. He had to take care of himself already at the age of fourteen, after the completion of basic education. He took a train to Vienna and upon the advice of his parents he completed his apprenticeship as a baker. From the very beginning, this trade provided him with food and humble housing with



Figure 13. The row of linden trees leading from Žleby to Markovice, to a former Auersperg tomb and the amphibolite quarry; view from the quarry.

the bakery owner, where he continued to work for a couple of years after his apprenticeship. The business world of Vienna as well as other places in Austria and Germany were quite familiar with the dexterity and golden hands of the folks who came there from the Czech lands in search of employment. Staying in Vienna for about seven years and the subsequent three years of his military duty enabled him to master German very well, spoken as well as written. Toward the end of his military duty, Dad served as a corporal at the main military base camp of the then Austrian-Hungarian Navy in Trieste. During winter evenings I enjoyed listening to my dad's calm and gripping recounting of his life back on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. He recalled, for instance, summer walks, blooming oleanders and hydrangeas, lemon and orange trees, the harvests of walnuts and edible chestnuts, the resin scent of pine growth, or also how to correctly open and eat fresh oysters, which he picked up on the shore with his own hands. He also spoke about other seafood delicacies or catches stranded by the stormy surf in puddles along the shore. He told us about the plethora of varied fruits and vegetables at the markets and about his army friends, often German-speaking Austrians.

As a young boy I admired my dad when, holding my breath, I was experiencing his historic encounter with Admiral Horthy. One day Horthy paid a visit to the Trieste arsenal base. He showed up for the inspection in full Navy uniform, accompanied by a group of officers. My dad happened to be on duty that day and as a corporal he was the commander-in-chief of the guard squad. Together with another soldier, they were standing guard with fully loaded rifles at the main entrance when the inspection group arrived. Holding a lit cigar in his hand, Horthy was to enter first. Dad blocked his way and loudly, while staring in his face, announced in German: "Admiral, Sir, smoking is strictly forbidden at the armory premises." Horthy's reaction was a mere muffled "Damn!" while quickly putting out the fire by stepping on the cigar. He looked at the corporal with curiosity and added, "Outstanding, Corporal!" while explaining to the group of officers out loud, "It was a test." After that he walked with his entourage to the armory's interior. Both soldiers on duty, however, sensed that in fact there was no test, and were astounded how quick-witted the Imperial-Royal Admiral was when "caught with his pants down."

I will never forget an event that happened when I was about six years old and in which my dad played a pivotal part. To this day my heart still warms at the thought of how my dad and myself as a young boy became buddies. It all began in the Žleby square, at the foot of the castle, in a small flat area across from the elementary school where the town hall stands today (Figure 14). There, from spring to summer boys of approximately six to ten years of age played soccer. That day we were trying to improve our technique of shooting at the goal, marked



Figure 14. The Žleby Town Hall: former five-year elementary school in the square at the castle.

by two rocks very close to the road. It was a space defended by three boys, a goalie and two defenders. The Žleby onlookers were enjoying our game and appropriately cheering us on. Suddenly, I noticed my father among them in civil clothes. I thought I detected a smile on his lips, and so brilliantly I passed him the rubber ball, just a little smaller than the ones used to play soccer nowadays. With a dynamic kick of his right instep, my dad shot the ball in the direction of the goal. Instead, it landed straight at a window of the school's ground floor. Bang, the windowpane burst into pieces on the sidewalk! For a moment dead silence ensued, but in no time it was followed by a roaring applause of the onlookers. With a few quick steps, dad crossed the road and proceeded to the entrance of the school, where the frowning custodian was already awaiting him, at the same time suppressing his laughter.

Dad asked him to unhinge the window, and then firmly grabbing the frame with one hand, in a steady step he set out to the local glazier, Mr. Urválek. I trotted along at his left side. The glazier had his workshop ~300 m from school. The path led across the stone bridge above the Doubrava, and from time to time I glanced at my dad's facial expressions to estimate the probable upcoming course of events. To my surprise, I noticed more of a light smile than anything else in the corners of his mouth. That calmed me down so that I plucked up my courage and took my dad by the hand. And so carrying the broken windowpane we reached the glazier. Dad briefly explained the matter and asked him to deliver the repaired window to the school. Right there he paid for everything in advance. Then we returned home together.

My mom was looking out from behind her blooming begonias in the middle one of the three Castle Street houses, where we lived at that time. She welcomed us with a short sentence, "Well, boys, what did you do in front of the school together?" Back then word of all

remarkable events in Žleby traveled from mouth to mouth almost with the speed of today's cell phones, which is why mom already knew everything. Dad gave her a brief account of our joint performance in the square, and then he gently stroked me on my head, down and against my short crew cut, a haircut popular among the boys back then and similarly among the Czech entrepreneurs of today. In his touch I sensed peace and friendly affection. The last word belonged to mommy. She offered us a homemade scallop-edged Bundt cake and freshly brewed tea. With a kindhearted irony she said, "Well, boys, how about some cake to strengthen yourselves? You deserve it after such an admirable performance, so splendidly carried out for the fun of the Žleby community. Hopefully, from now on you will choose a place other than the square full of windows to show off your joint athletic prowess."

When we still lived in the house at the foot of the castle, one day my dad fell suddenly very ill – with acute rheumatism as a complication after a cold. This very painful disease, marked by swollen limbs, lasted for about a year and kept returning for a couple of years. That is why dad decided to go into early retirement. A few years later we moved from Castle Street, to be exact from Little Town to the Hill. I was already a high school student at the high school in Čáslav. Both parents agreed that they would rent a house with a garden and a yard, a place suitable for growing vegetables and fruit and for keeping domestic animals. They did remarkably well. Before World War II and during the hungry years 1939–1945, their decision turned out to be prophetic.

We lived at an end of Štefánik Street. Our utility garden and domestic animals were a source of livelihood as well as fun, but they required also a lot of work and physical activity. Both parents were very familiar with this type of work from their childhood homes and I learned from them quite a bit. Dad and I dug and looked after vegetable beds, and together with mom we sowed, planted, and gradually harvested our vegetables, new potatoes, and various kinds of fruit, in particular strawberries. In the grassy part of the garden we grew cherries, sour cherries, red currants and gooseberries, large round and regular plums, and apples. My dad fastened a huge stalk of a vine onto the southern wall of our woodshed, the grapes of which ripened into a golden hue at the beginning of October. Dad's pride and joy. Dad also built and sometimes repaired sheds for our rabbits, hens, turtledoves, turkeys, a goat, and a pig. Typically, he did all this himself, sometimes with my assistance. Also, before winter it was necessary to insulate some walls with straw and burlap sacks against strong frost. Dad was very skillful with woodwork and had a sense of precision and space. In summer and fall he helped the owner of a nearby remaining estate, Buda, by watching over the ripening crop. In return we received plenty of grain, grout, and potatoes for our domestic animals. When I return in my thoughts to this

life of ours back then, it all seems like a biblical paradise.

Mom enjoyed growing her favorite flowers. She liked especially begonias, dahlias, asters, and large-flowered daisies. It was her wish that our vegetable beds would never be without carrots, parsley, celery roots, radishes, lettuce, cauliflower, kale, cabbage, tomatoes, onions, garlic, chives, dill, large and small beans, two kinds of cucumbers, red beets, and with a melon growing on the compost pile. My dad and I used to water these late in the evening with large watering cans made of zinc-plated metal. There was a well in our garden, dug out of Cretaceous sediments from which we drew very good drinking water with a hand beam pump. A few meters from the well, dad built a smoke shed in which he smoked pork at the end of each winter. For this he preferred to use mature sour cherry wood. For watering we used rainwater from a large barrel placed under a pipe from the eaves of the woodshed and standing water from the well, with which we filled an old pitched wooden washtub. During the summer all of us made sure the water supply would be replenished. Also the well had to be insulated for the winter with straw and burlap.

From all the books we had in our little home library at the time of my youth, dad liked the geographical atlas the most. Especially in winter when he had more time, he would sit over the maps of Austria-Hungary, Europe, and other continents, as well as the sky constellations. He read and wrote equally well in Czech and German and occasionally he had the habit of checking some expressions in the Czech-German and German-Czech dictionaries. In both volumes he had numerous pieces of paper, on which he wrote less-frequently used words that were not listed. He considered German the main language of Europe and often spoke German with me so that I would get more practice. I became thankful to my dad for this training opportunity first when I was

arrested during World War II and found myself in the concentration camp at Mauthausen, in Austria.

Mom

Our mom, Marie Kontová, *née* Rychetská (born October 5, 1887), came from Kostomlátky, a small agricultural village near Nymburk. Her parents owned an agricultural homestead. Like my dad, she too was the oldest of seven children. That determined her destiny to help her mother, our grandmother, Marie Rychetská, *née* Sandholzerová with the chores around the house and with raising her younger siblings. When I was a high school student at the gymnasium (High School) in Čáslav and read school texts out loud at times, sometimes mom expressed her discontent: “It’s a pity that I could not study, I wanted it so badly.” After my graduation from Charles University, I learned something that touched me deeply from mom’s youngest brother, Vojtěch, who stayed at home to care for his aging grandfather Rychetský until his death. Allegedly, several times Grandpa expressed his regrets: “It’s a pity I did not listen to a good old friend of mine, principal at the Kostomlátky school. He approached me several times with the words, ‘Listen, Václav, you should let Mařenka study; never have I had such a smart and diligent student at our school’” (Figure 15).

For all of us four boys, as our mom called us, which included our dad, she was the bright spot in our rural universe. I remember well, when she was still young and full of strength, wearing a smile on her face and always a hint of understanding in her warm brown eyes, emanating energy and love for her family. She dedicated her life to the four of us who, in spite of our efforts, could never quite repay her for all her love and hard work. Whenever I think of the time before World War II and of all that our family went through, first and foremost, I always see my mom. I recall her amazing industriousness and caring



Figure 15. Doctoral Graduation (RNDr. – Doctor of Natural Sciences): in front of the Charles University Faculty of Law, April 1948. From left: future father-in-law, Rudolf Rudolf, Jiří’s mom, and Jiří with his degree certificate.

nature, all the many things, besides cooking, she was able to handle. Especially after our move to the Hill, our living in the little house without electricity and running water required the daily making of fire in the stove, raking and carrying out the ashes. Mom washed our clothes on a washboard in a wooden washtub at the doorsteps and, when the weather got worse, in the woodshed in the yard. I see her carry heavy shopping bags, pushing a cart to manually transport important harvest from the small field in Korčice, and taking care of domestic animals. Together with dad, who focused on the garden, trees, shrubs, vegetable beds, and fuel supplies, we all admired her greatly. Of the three sons, I studied the longest. Thus I spent the most time with our parents. I am thankful that fate had it so. When someone in our family got sick, my mom's unwritten law went immediately in effect, namely that all of us be especially thoughtful, kind, and helpful toward the patient. On such days our mom was filled with special tenderness and kindness. I cannot forget her words "Tenderness and love are the best balm." Sometimes I wished that tonsillitis or flu lasted just a little longer. However, I know my mom would turn that quickly down and it would be followed by one of her time-tested proverbs such as "Early bird gets the worm," "No pain, no gain," "No kolaches without labor," or possibly "Procrastination belongs to the devil." I think that our life in Žleby was immensely beautiful, even though humble, because we lived it unassumingly, in unison, collectively, with true emotions, without any hint of pretense. It is a shame that nothing beautiful lasts forever. But early youth is only the beginning chapter of one's life. In the following ones, involving strangers, everything becomes much more complicated.

In the year 1918, shortly before the end of World War I, my mom fell ill with the Spanish flu. It is said to have been an exceptionally serious pandemic flu, which affected about a quarter of the population within just a couple of years. About fifty million people died from it. For several days, my mom had high fever, $>40^{\circ}\text{C}$. Dad immediately asked for time off from work, saving my mom's life. Tirelessly, he kept checking her temperature and wrapping her up in a wrung out sheet dipped in almost ice-cold water whenever her fever rose to dangerous levels. Also, he repeatedly had her drink freshly brewed rosehip and thyme tea sweetened with honey. As soon as my weakened mom was able to eat a little, he cooked beef bullion with fine semolina and vegetables or served her a soft-boiled egg with rye bread. At that time Dad was also concerned about their little four-year old Pepíček, whom he kept isolated in a small room, where they supposedly daily discussed the worst illness of our mom's life while trying to convince each other that mom was going to make it and meticulously adhering to proper personal hygiene. Perhaps it was thanks to my dad's sense of order, discipline, and caution toward others that the epidemic

passed them by. At least that is how my mother described it when I was a young schoolboy suffering from a regular seasonal flu during which, for about a week, she looked after me at home.

I must also not forget that my mom was an avid reader, even though she did not have much spare time. Back then women in Žleby lent books to one another either from their small family libraries or checked them out from the public library on the town hall's second floor. The library was under the selfless and conscientious care of Mr. and Mrs. Šourek, who checked out books two evenings a week. Apart from an apartment, they owned a small barbershop on the first floor under the town hall offices. My mom began to take me to the library when I was about ten years old. She herself liked to read novels from life, historical novels, or short stories, as well as poetry. As a boy of ten or eleven, I began to check out books in the local library using my own card. I read eagerly, especially adventure books (by Verne, May, Kipling) and later, historical novels (by Jirásek, Rais), and travelogues (by Hedin, Vráz, Holub). In the higher grades it was my high school student library that was the most helpful to me. It housed quite a few translations of foreign authors. My mom read many of the books I had checked out.

As a keepsake from my mother's estate, I received an old alarm clock from my brother Pepa and his wife Růžena, the interior of which, with its small brass toothed wheels, can be seen through its flat glass walls. In addition, I asked for her personal notebooks, in which no one else showed interest. To this day I look daily at the almost a hundred-year old alarm clock, because it was touched by my mother's hands; she was the first one to get up every morning and prepare breakfast for all of us at its resounding waking alarm with two bells. She was also the last to go to bed, after she had first cleaned the kitchen and conscientiously set the time, and wound up the alarm bells with a key hanging on the inner wall of the brass door.

I think that several sentences or quotes, which mom wrote down in the last few years of her life, illustrate well her spiritual wealth, her inner strength, and a true love for her fellow men, especially for children:

"If you wish to be happy, do not ask for a lot from life because the more you ask for, the less you shall get. – Work is the fare of noble souls. – Still only few people know how much a man has to know to understand how little he knows. If all people were educated, life on earth would become Paradise, as only possible under the Sun. (J.A. Komenský). – Everyone needs to realize that there is nothing more precious than life itself and that it is unbelievably short!! How long do three quarters of a century look like when one thinks about them – and how short they really are when one has lived them. Long life is in the hands of sociologists, not biologists. The main longevity requirements include 1. Fulfilling job, 2. Optimism, and 3. Content life. Life's principles are

the same everywhere – always the same struggle for a piece of bread, for glory, and for power of one over another. Thomas Mann always wrote about himself. G. Flaubert said: ‘Madam Bovary – that is I.’ Every hour is a part of life. As one ages, the more one grows to understand that experiencing life’s joy at the present moment is a rare gift, which must be considered fate’s great favor. Do not let anything upset you – tomorrow everything is the past. – Tact is the highest form of respect a person can give another. – The man who submits to evil or to an evil person is making the worst life’s mistake. – To Mirčinka, my dear granddaughter: ‘I gave you the beat of my heart, all songs of the springs I longed for, with you I was a little girl again; who loves is never old.’ – I read this little prayer of a child: ‘Dear God, please, please, put vitamins in ice cream and chocolate and do not put them in carrots and spinach.’”

Ancestors and trouble with family names

Many times my mom talked with me about her ancestors, and, with due reverence, she always emphasized the maiden name of her mother, *née* Sandholzer.

In the family documents from the 18th and 19th centuries, which I received from my mom’s youngest brother, Uncle Vojtěch Rychetský of Kostomlátky, this German family name appears in various forms written in Kurrent or Latin script. Some of my close or distant relatives who lived in the Elbe river region near Nymburk spelled their name differently: Sandholzer, Santholzer, Sandholz, Sandholc, or Santholz. In the family of my grandmother, Marie Sandholzerová, there was the following story about the origin of this family name. The first Sandholzer came to Bohemia from Germany. His father was a gardener in the Potsdam castle near Berlin. Young Wilhelm, also a gardener, came to Bohemia in the 18th century, supposedly brought from Potsdam by Count Špork to the castle in Sadská. From there, Kostomlátky is within a hair’s breadth, lying on the right bank of the Elbe, where the Sandholzer family settled and grew. All the Sandholzers who followed lived here, owned land, farmhouses, or homesteads, and made their living as farmers. Various local priests or notaries in the nearby district town of Nymburk recorded the names of the ever-increasing line of relatives in the parish register. Often, even in the documents of one family, they wrote the names down in different ways as they heard them. That is the origin of the variability in their non-Czech surname. I have marriage certificates from that time period, documents about property purchases, an 1848 announcement about the abolition of forced labor, tax returns, birth and death certificates, and a number of visibly aging letters. In spite of the different spelling, all Sandholzers have known for years that they go back to the one German ancestor and that they are blood-related. Their wives though were of Czech origin with appealing Czech names. In the families of my mother, there were women with last names such as Zajíčková, Jandlová, Matyášková, Nováková, and

Skořepová (chronologically to the most distant one); in the families of my dad, whose name is of Italian heritage, there were, for example, Pazderová, Drožová, and Havlová. Shortly before his passing, Uncle Vojtěch Rychetský gave me, also, apart from the documents already mentioned, several prayer books of his grandmother. He received the oldest one, *Verehrungen Jesu*, (*Veneration of Jesus*) as a gift from his Sandholzer grandfather. It is printed in beautiful, ardently pious German.

My cousin Josef Košťř (born March 25, 1907 in Hronětice, District Nymburk) had another version of the origin of the name Santholz. He was a biochemistry professor at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Charles University, whose mother’s maiden name was Santholzová. Back when we became colleagues at the faculty, he mentioned to me, among other things, that the correct family name of our common ancestors was Santholz, because our family came from Alsace, along the border between France and Germany. This means that the first half of the name is French while the second half is of German origin. (Santholz means “saint wood”). In the Kostomlátky Sandholzer families, the first two born sons were traditionally baptized Vilém (Wilhelm, William) and Bedřich (Friedrich, Fred). My uncle Vilém Santholzer of Kostomlátky was the head of the Physics Department at Charles University’s College of Medicine in Hradec Králové.

As for the origin of the family name of my father, his family knew that its original bearer came to Bohemia from Lombardy, in the northern part of Italy, in the middle of the 19th century. At that time the first railroad was being built, Linz–České Budějovice–Prague. Giuseppe Konta (in Italian, Conta) worked on the railroad as a laborer. His son, Jan Konta (born on February 20, 1854 in Čtyřkoly, district Benešov), was a state employee of Imperial-Royal Austrian State Railways in Bohemia. That was my grandfather, whom I have, however, never met.

Long ago, as a professor at Charles University, I visited the University of Pavia, Italy, at the invitation of its professor of mineralogy and petrology, Fernando Veniale. He was not only author of remarkable studies on clay materials and the weathering of building stones, but, with his original research of the foundations of the slanting Tower of Pisa, he also contributed to the preservation of this famous monument. At the time he told me that the local tennis club had an outstanding player by the name of Conta. When my dad served as a soldier at the Trieste base, he picked up a little bit of Italian, and he explained to me when I was a kid that in Italian the word “contadino” meant farmer, countryman. Perhaps this word, somewhat shortened in the registers, gives a clue about our family name, whose origin is covered by layers of time.

My non-Czech last name has also contributed to two short anecdotes, which deserve to be mentioned, because

they are connected with the names of two important figures in Czech culture and science. To the amusement of my classmates, my new teachers in school tried to make my name sound more Czech and pronounced it ordinarily as Kouta or Koula when reading it. I must admit, though, that such corruptions of my name were closer to our native language. (In Czech “kout” means a corner, “koule” is a ball.) When I was a prisoner in the concentration camp at Mauthausen, Austria, during World War II, I met there in 1944 the well known Czech writer Josef Kopta (1894–1962), author of legionary prose. As a member of the *Aufnahme-kommando*, the commando for the registration and record keeping of new prisoners, I registered him on his arrival in Mauthausen. He remembered it, and told me smiling one day in the tenth block of the camp, that when he was in Russia during World War I, he signed his name in the Cyrillic alphabet and it looked the exact same way as mine in the Latin alphabet, *Konta*. We were sitting at a table in the central room of the block. I pulled a small pencil stub out of my pocket and signed my name on a piece of wrapping paper saying “Konta.” He took the stub from my hand and signed his name in Cyrillic, which looked the same way my name did in Latin and read slowly “Kopta,” while pointing to each letter with the pencil. In the labor camp environment, where a plethora of bizarre activities was happening, this particular bizarre case was a perfectly casual thing.

Another anecdote connected with my family name took place much later, in England. In 1960 I was asked by the chancellor of Charles University to participate in an official cultural visit to a number of important universities in Great Britain. Our delegation of five included two deans, two vice-deans, and a professor. The renowned professor of English and vice-dean of Philosophical Faculty, Professor Ivan Poldauf, was appointed the group leader probably because, in contrast to the rest of us, he had an excellent command of the native tongue of Shakespeare. At Cambridge University, where the anecdote took place, Professor Poldauf kept introducing me as “Professor Jiří Konta, the youngest dean of the oldest university of continental Europe north of the Alps.” Seemingly, this somewhat roguish introduction, accompanied by friendly smiles, won me popularity with our English colleagues and especially with the ladies present who were inquisitively examining this then thirty-eight-year old professor from head to toe.

During the festive banquet in one of the historic halls of Cambridge University, where delicious courses were served together with several kinds of excellent wines, I was accosted by one of the professors, whom everyone involved in a lively conversation addressed as – let us say – Sir Henry. He introduced himself as professor of internal medicine and exchanging small talk he asked, “Do you know Professor Khervt from Prague?” Having tried to call the name to memory I answered, “I don’t think so, but perhaps if you spelled it for me?”

Sir Henry: “Oh yes,” and began to spell “c, h, a...” I immediately figured it out as Charvát and said, “Of course, Professor Charvát, the head of the clinic for internal medicine in Charles Square.”

Sir Henry: “An outstanding physician and an admirable pedagogue. How did you pronounce his name?” Slowly breaking down the name into syllables while focusing on Sir Henry’s face I said, “Char-vát.”

Sir Henry: “What a strange pronunciation!” I shrugged my shoulders, and with a conciliatory smile I agreed to a toast with a glass of *Mateus rosé*. Our discussion about table wines ended with Sir Henry’s friendly statement, “Would you give my best regards to Professor Khervt and tell him about this meeting?”

Nodding melancholically I added, “Certainly, I’ll do it with pleasure.”

On the day following my return to Prague, I called professor Charvát at the clinic. After introducing myself, I said I needed to speak with the head of the clinic. The voice of a young assistant said, “The senior physician is not here at the moment, Dean Konta, but you can ...” From the receiver a voice boomed like thunder: “But the senior physician is on his way. Give me the receiver!” After introducing myself again, I extended the friendly greetings from Sir Henry with an explanation, how thanks to the spelling I figured out the identity of Professor Khervt.

Professor Charvát replied jovially: “This is also proof that living matter is complicated and difficult to control. It can never happen that the members of different nations read the same letters the same exact way. In Bohemia I am Charvát, but I will always be Khervt to the English. I suspect, however, that you, Dean Konta, have it a little easier with the English... Anyway, thank you for delivering the friendly greetings; it made my day.” “It was a pleasure for me, too.” Both of us hung up and I said to myself, “Easier with the English, true, but in Bohemia some find a way to make my name sound more Czech, for the amusement of others.” I left the desk with a polarizing microscope and a set of thin rock sections, which I needed to take a look at that day, and thought “How strange human society is in contrast to stones and minerals!”

Brother Pepa

I grew up as the youngest of three brothers. As a little boy, I admired my oldest brother Pepa (born on June 16, 1914 in Malá Skála, Little Rock, near Trutnov), where my dad worked as an Imperial-Royal police officer of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the time. He taught me how to play soccer before I entered elementary school. It was at the Grand Walls at the Castle where he showed me various soccer ball tricks, right and left foot loops, back passes with the sole of the foot, and instep shots carried out at full pace. He could easily hit the ball with his head more than ten times without any interruption. I tried to copy him in everything back

then, but to no avail. When I was about nine years old, he chose me to be his sparring partner. Together we would go to the Grand Walls to practice on the peaceful wide sand road behind the castle gate, scarcely 150 m from our apartment. As instructed, I passed the ball to Pepa from various angles, evenly on the ground or bouncing up and down, gently or forcefully, while he shot the ball in full run into a small goal marked by two stones. When we had enough of this practice, we put the rocks into the hedge along the road and harmoniously set out on the way home. His concise, just a little winded words, "You are doing a good job, bro." were the best reward to me.

My very favorite thing, though, that Pepa and I did together was fishing in the Doubrava River. He taught me to prepare various baits, to attach hooks correctly, or to make pretty-colored floats with the help of grinding paper from cork stoppers or goose feathers. During hot summer days, we fished with our hands or with forks for small lings, which we carefully lifted from under rocks in the shallow water below the church. Beside other small fish, we used them as bait to catch hunting fish. Pepa and dad taught me to recognize all types of fish living in the Žleby stretch of the Doubrava. Among our frequent catch were chub, roach, two kinds of bass, sometimes carp, pike or eel, occasionally barbel and tench. We called the smaller fish minnow, stone loach, and the aforementioned ling which live under rocks. Some of these may not be zoological terms, just words used by local anglers.

Fish as a meal was popular in our family only with my dad and brother Miroslav, who may not have ever caught a single fish. Mom did not eat it at all, not even at Christmas. When asked why, her answer was always the same, "I don't know, I just can't." Even though Pepa loved to catch fish, he too preferred not have to have baked fish on his plate; he preferred fried pork schnitzel with potato salad. I could eat fish baked on the grill or marinated in different ways, or smoked; however, I preferred simple meatless country meals, which contained vegetables and fruits. When I brought home a really nice catch and mom prepared it superbly for dinner or supper, in solidarity I always joined my dad and Miroslav at the table.

Pepa was an athlete, body and soul, all of his life. Having been an excellent swimmer, in the summer time he enjoyed swimming in the Doubrava and diving from the old cracked alder tree in Korčice or from the rock where the waterfall on the Hostačovka flew into the big weir in the park. Of field sports, he favored the discus and javelin. He used to compete in throwing these against several of his friends either in the park or at the empty soccer field many a time until dusk. During the summer vacations, they opted for boxing on a tightly mown lawn near the sluiceway on the left bank of the weir, often times in front of a large audience. Pepa told me once that they were always just training rather than

getting engaged in real fighting. Among them ranked the Dempseys and Hrabáks of Žleby as well as Eda and Jan Rudolf, much older brothers of my future wife, Helenka. Preserved among the set of old family pictures, there are still documentary snapshots of Eduard and Pepa dressed in shorts and wearing their boxing gloves.

All of these sports were done merely by Pepa to contribute to strength building. His real passion was soccer, to which he devoted almost his entire spare time and, in fact, much more. Actually, it went so far that he was prohibited by our parents to play soccer for a whole season so as not to neglect his studies at the Agricultural Vocational School in Čáslav, where he was already in his third year, after graduation from the four-year secondary school in Ronov on the Doubrava. At that time he was a right wing defender of the SK Žleby club, highly celebrated and popular with the girls. Soccer was almost the national sport in Czechoslovakia then, and many Žleby citizens lived for it. It was always exceptionally lively at the soccer field on Sunday afternoons, first in Borovičky "Little Pines" and later in Pod Jablunkem "Under the Apple Tree." The Žleby fans of both genders knew how to root for their team. However, when the team was unsuccessful, there was whistling, and even cusswords were heard at times. I did not appreciate the brutality on the field nor the foul mouths in the crowd, which sometimes escalated into fights or attacks on the referee. I enjoyed the witty game with the ball, quick reactions of the players, and admirable play of the goalies on both sides of the field. When we were already retirees, my brother-in-law, Jan Rudolf, an attacker of the SK Žleby club of long ago, remembered, with delightful humor, the cheering of the fans both at home and at other soccer fields, which ended in heated fighting and sometimes even in cross-country running to let off steam!

I was disgusted by the following incident. I think it happened on a sunny day in Spring when Pepa was about eighteen and I ten years old. He invited me to take a walk at the Grand Walls. There he asked me if I could do something for him. Pleased by his trust in me, I loyally agreed. He said, "Jiří, you know about our parents prohibiting me to play soccer. You also know that I love both parents as much as you do. I do not want to make them sad, but I cannot accept this punishment. I have to be at the field tomorrow, on Sunday, there is an important game." I was not able to say a word as Pepa continued, "My dress, shin protectors, and soccer cleats are in a suitcase in my room. When I go out after lunch, I won't be able to take my things with me. Everything has to stay put; I have new cleats here at the banks from the club and I will need you to bring them to me tomorrow, to the road above the soccer field. They are here in an old satchel hidden in the castle wall." He carefully looked around, and quickly stepping to the amphibolite wall, where a couple of stones were missing, he touched a worn satchel inserted into a hollow recess and well

camouflaged by high, climbing ivy. I said merely in a whisper, “But where do you have the other things?” “Don’t worry, everything will be prepared for me at the Blažejovskýs, where I will also change. If we don’t meet on the road, I will be at their place.”

The entire undertaking succeeded exactly as Pepa had it thought out. When he was leaving the house on Sunday after lunch, I saw a glimpse of my dad making sure that Pepa’s suitcase with all the soccer equipment was in his room. Satisfied, he smiled at me bidding me to also go for a run. With a little bit of fear and a bad conscience of a kid experiencing the first cracks in his family’s idyll, I took off for the walls and then, clutching the satchel, I dashed off to the pre-arranged spot. After handing the cleats to Pepa, I slowly dawdled to the field already densely lined with spectators. This time I was able to watch the unfavorably developing game only to the middle and then I left. I did not stop until I found myself at the weir in the park, where I sat down on one of the many rocks, picked up a handful of small pebbles, and, with my other hand, I threw them onto the flat water surface. I listened to the plopping sounds and watched the miniscule circular waves spreading on the water mirror by the landing of each of the small stones. When several of them met, the circles became contorted interfering with one another. Somehow, I had a funny feeling that that day’s game was going to come to an inauspicious end for SK Žleby. That is also what actually happened. In the evening, saddened Pepa briefly announced, “SK Vrdu wiped us out.” He was sitting in his room over his school notebooks, which were spread out on his desk. I could tell he was exhausted and had no more energy to study. I think this incident and its aftermath were the beginning of my critical evaluation of everything wrong, which I inevitably encountered later in life.

The SK Žleby soccer club kept an information bulletin board in the square next to the old school. The club secretary used it to announce game and training schedules, scores, and also the list of players’ names for the upcoming Sunday games. Pepa was well aware of our father’s thoroughness and anticipated that he might come to the bulletin board to check if the name of his first-born son was by any chance listed among the players for the upcoming game. That is why he chose the pseudonym Garis, under which he then successfully appeared in the Žleby soccer team. It was the second half of the name Caligaris, which belonged to the famous soccer player of the time on the Italian national team. This deception worked for Pepa for a number of months. Granted, my brother Miroslav and I uncovered the bearer of the name Garis in the SK Žleby in a jiffy, but we acted as if we had no clue. Our parents became aware of Pepa’s football playing toward the end of the season, when Pepa got hurt on the field and barely hobbled home with a serious ankle sprain. He walked with a cane for about a fortnight and with this injury he also commuted

to Čáslav, where he had to tackle a very long and painful walk from the station to school and back. In the mornings he had to take the first train, which meant getting up before five o’clock. Regularly, our mom applied or exchanged bandages for him and reminded him to finally make his studies a priority. Thanks to this sad incident, soccer lost its attraction for me. I fell in love with other sports, but more about that later.

In 1934 Pepa graduated from Agricultural Vocational School and soon after he was drafted into the Czechoslovak army. He began his military service in Čáslav with the Twenty-First Infantry Regiment. At that time I was a high-school student at the town gymnasium, and from time to time I would deliver a package from mom with his favorite “buchtas” or “kolaches” yeast-dough pastry to him at the Prokop Holy barracks. Later, when he became a platoon sergeant, the guards at the entrance always knew about his whereabouts so that I did not have to wait very long and would not miss my train home. In the lovely, large square of the then district town of Čáslav, I was sometimes stopped by soldiers who said with beaming faces, “Hey, aren’t you Jiří, the brother of Joseph, our Prokop barracks comrade-in-arms? You look like his spitting image. Yeah, Jirka, that’s what you’re called, right, don’t forget to tell your mother she makes the best plum buchtas and kolaches.” When I gave their message to my mom, she smiled and remarked in an ironic, lower tone of voice, accentuating the last word, “Well, thank you very much, but I’d like to know if they ever let Pepa taste a product baked by their mothers.”

The fame of my mom’s large plum-filled pastry really reached beyond our mere family circle. In fact, it is still alive in the 21st century. I spent my student summer vacations in Žleby with my childhood friends mainly at the Doubrava River. Among them was Fanouš Dibelka (František Dibelka, MD, CSc, professor of dentistry at Charles University). He would regularly come from Prague to his parents’ birth town for a visit. When I met him shortly after the year 2000, this eighty-year old gentleman still never forgot to bring up the plum pastry with a nostalgic smile, “Oh boy, whenever I think of those beautiful summer vacation days in Žleby, I always envision those golden plum “buchtas” of your mom. And the way she served them to us, still warm, on rainy days when we were playing cards or chess in Pepa’s room. The moist sweetness of those buchtas has somehow stayed with me to this day, I just can’t forget it.” If my mom were still alive and able to hear these words, she would most definitely be pleased. She might even add playfully, “Look at that! Here you are! Could it be that even professors and associate professors are not immune to the famous *Love goes through the stomach* when expressing their admiration for women? Of course, every smart woman knows that quite well.”

The years 1934–1939 were not favorable for the building of one’s own existence. Young people, who

were graduating and ready to enter college at that time, found themselves in an atmosphere of a subsiding world economic crisis and at the beginning of a new military rearming all over Europe. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and prisoners fell victim to the Spanish Civil War raging in the south. They involved primarily antifascists from various countries of Europe and America, who fought against the insurgent army of General Franco, heavily supported by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. These amounted to tens of thousands. On the other hand, antifascists from Germany and Italy also joined in protecting their republics. In Germany, humiliated after the loss of World War I and having rebuilt a new modern army longing for revenge, it was Adolf Hitler together with the Nazis who seized power after the democratic elections of 1933. Hitler and his state administration – built with German precision, thoroughness, long-time vision but also blindness – made it their goal to create a thousand-year Third Reich at any cost, and as quickly as possible, to eliminate several adjacent countries including Czechoslovakia. Their general plan of the geographic expansion of Germany called partially for the Germanization of the non-German citizens in Central Europe, partially for displacement (in the case of the Czechs to Siberia or Patagonia), and partially for liquidation in prisons and concentration camps.

In its second decade after the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia seemed weak both economically and militarily. It was writhing in the proletariat dictatorship controlled by revolutionary groups of intellectuals and workers determined to do practically anything. However, it was undermining itself through merciless political repressions and purges in the state administration, army and police, and everywhere where the Bolshevik regime felt disagreement or criticism. Millions of Soviet citizens were executed or forever silenced in prisons and gulags. Skilled labor, in particular officers, was painfully missing at the beginning of World War II.

With its almost fifteen million inhabitants, Czechoslovakia was then the only true democratic republic in Central Europe. A gradual implementation of the visions of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš should have led to a humane, social democracy. These men cared deeply about national liberation and democracy, in which every citizen could live in freedom and work and do business within democratic laws. The attribute “humane” or “social” emphasized solidarity and excluded selfishness or unbridled greed. This was the hope of the majority of the citizens of Czechoslovakia back then.

The disadvantages of Czechoslovakia lay in two main factors: its multinational composition and its geopolitical location. During the First Republic, there were fewer than ten million Czechs and Slovaks, about three million Germans, and over half a million Hungarians. Also Carpathian Russians lived in the east of the country

while thousands of Polish families called Silesia their home. With the bombastic plans and promises of the Nazi administration, the German propaganda coming from Berlin soon won over the majority of gullible and zealous Czech Germans. Certainly, it was also the Great Economic Crisis of 1929–1933 that drastically impacted upon the lives of predominantly the German residents in the industrial areas along the border where unemployment was the highest. The leading politicians of the German Henlein party, who operated particularly in the Czech border areas, often went directly to Berlin to receive advice and further orders. The outcomes of the party’s systematic activities were numerous street provocations, which often ended in violence and even in armed attacks on the Czechoslovak customs and police stations. After 1934 this pressure grew constantly and led to the escalation of tension between the Czech and German citizens in Czechoslovakia. Soon the Hungarian minority in Slovakia adopted similar provocation methods, taking advantage of nationalistic sentiments. On the colorful, global power-chessboard, the Czechoslovak Republic became a mere pawn to be sacrificed in the interest of stronger nations.

The democratic superpowers that won World War I were giving in to the pressure of the fascist dictatorships. The governments of France and Great Britain were not sufficiently prepared for another war and their signing the degrading Munich Agreement in the fall of 1938 essentially was a result of their apprehension about the decisiveness of the German and Italian negotiators. It was a terrible betrayal, which shocked the entire Czech nation. In another victorious democratic nation, the USA, it was referred to fittingly from the very beginning as the “Munich Betrayal.” In his book, *They Betrayed Czechoslovakia* (1938), G.J. George described exactly, day by day, the dishonest, cowardly, and vile negotiations of the European politicians involved. The book was translated into Czech by Jiří Hronek under the title *Září třicet osm, (September '38)* (Hronek, 1945). Edgar A. Mower is the author of its admirably apt preface. Besides other things, he condemned the Munich dictatorship and in his commentary on the entire preceding negotiations, he captured the feeling of all decent British and Frenchmen as follows: “I cannot imagine any right-minded person in France or Great Britain reading his story without burning cheeks!”

The inconsiderate and fanatical political moves and propaganda of the Nazis, infiltrating the German minorities of the surrounding states, unleashed hell on earth. The German Nazi and revanchist aggression fell heavily on the youth bound by defense duty. During World War II, the Germans themselves lost millions of men in combat, on the one hand, and hundreds of thousands of civilians during bombing and relocation, on the other. Yet more Germans were either taken as long-term prisoners abroad or suffered war injuries. However, the unfortunate and innocent Europeans from the

countries attacked by the German military machinery perished in even larger numbers or became seriously wounded or disabled. In Europe it was Russia, Poland, and Yugoslavia that suffered the greatest sacrifices in terms of human life. To the Europeans and the rest of the world, the memory of the sixty million lives lost is a constant reminder of the non-justifiable, criminal aggression, or revanchist expansionistic appetite of the nation that started World War II. If some individuals today forget the endless horrors of that time or even falsify history, by interchanging aggressors with victims and denying Nazi atrocities, they run the risk of a similar threat or an even more ghastly apocalypse.

My oldest brother Pepa was entering adulthood in an atmosphere of frantic increase of armament, of hate among nations instigated by criminal propaganda, of deceitful proceedings of the superpowers over our fate, and of despondent hopelessness. When he finished his basic military training and was to become a second lieutenant in the civil reserve, his commander offered him an extension of military service, as there was a need for graduates acquainted with construction work at that difficult time. Pepa accepted this offer and was assigned to a group of officers in charge of the development and final inspection of the rapidly constructed small border fortresses, not only in the Czech lands but also in Slovakia (in Rimavská Sobota). From Čáslav he was transferred to the second battalion of the frontier guard in Trutnov, which required a lot of skiing. Pepa appreciated that and took part in the skiing competitions in the nearby mountains.

A German-speaking population was prevalent in the town of Trutnov. Clearly, the athletic handsome second lieutenant could not remain unnoticed by local girls. Soon he met Rita, a ravishing twenty-year old. Their mutual affection had only one flaw, but it was significant. Rita was very well brought up, optimistic, and friendly, spoke both German and Czech, but she was German. After a number of personal discussions and a visit with their family, Pepa came to the conclusion that their German patriotism with an overwhelming emphasis on their German nationality and their admiration of Hitler were incurably exaggerated. The Munich Agreement, signed on September 30, 1938, followed by an immediate secession of Sudetenland (including Trutnov) and the stormy tension in the rest of the mutilated nation accompanied by the deafening Nazi propaganda, meant the end of the loving relationship between the two beautiful young people. Their fatal breakup forever marked Pepa's subsequent work and life odyssey, filled with many turns, surprises, and hardship. He was happiest as a sports reporter at East Bohemia Radio in Hradec Králové and as a correspondent of the *České slovo* (*Czech Word*) and *Práce* (*Labor*) newspapers, which reported on events in East Bohemia. He passed away on November 1, 1998. Although he was a heavy smoker, he lived to be eighty-four years old, almost our mother's age.

After the breakup with Rita, Pepa dated a number of girls until in 1941 he married lovely Růženka, the widow of a young owner of the Fotochemy Company in Hradec Králové. She was seven years older than my brother, had a sense of family life but could not give him children. They rented a large apartment on the right bank of the Elbe in Hradec Králové, across from the Art Nouveau-style museum on the left bank of the river. After our dad's passing (November 23, 1953), mom left the house they had been renting and continued to live in Žleby in an apartment she rented from Mrs. Špacírová. Pepa and I agreed to move mom to his apartment in Hradec, where she would have her own room with a separate entrance. One of the previous winters I brought mom from Žleby to Prague, to spend the cold days in our more comfortable apartment with central heating. In our smaller apartment with two school children, however, we did not have a spare room. I tried in vain to find a larger apartment in socialist Prague. Upon my request, Růženka set the amount of the rent for the room, which I continued to send her regularly by mail until the end of mom's life. I often went to Hradec to visit mom. A fast-train trip to Hradec took only two hours. When I finally bought a car in Czechoslovakia in 1966, my first trip was to visit her in Hradec Králové. Several months later I drove her to our cottage at the Seč Lake. From there we also made a short trip to Žleby. Mom was in Prague once more when I arranged a two-week clinical check up for her with M.D. Jiří Venta at the Charles University Cardiology Clinic in Charles Square. I made the acquaintance of this rare and highly respected physician at the university Science Council, where he represented medical doctors as a vice-dean and I, natural scientists, as their dean. At his recommendation I arranged that mom would receive a regular supply of Serpasil, a drug to reduce blood pressure, unavailable in our country back then. She had a regular supply due to my kind and helpful colleagues abroad, Leo van Wambeke from Belgium and Robert Robertson from Scotland. Both were avid stamp collectors, so in return I sent them a series of frequently published Czechoslovak stamps which they admired. Mom passed away of pneumonia on May 20, 1970, after a three-week stay in the hospital. With my own hands, I put the urn with her ashes next to our dad's urn in their common resting place at Kukleny near Hradec Králové, in the presence of both Pepa and Miroslav.

Brother Miroslav

My brother Miroslav (born June 8, 1920, in Leština, district Čáslav, in yet another location of our dad's police service) was closer to me in age than Pepa, so that as boys we played together every day. At times, we also got into brotherly wrestling matches on the sofa in the living room. I was the physically stronger and more aggressive one. Miroslav was more docile and considerate. He had a beautiful, gentle, friendly disposition. At

the house on Castle Street, our family had a small plot of land with a lawn, a couple of plum trees, and a heap of sand for children to play. Over a low wall, which dad extended with a firm wire fence to reduce the danger of our falling over, Miroslav and I often watched the human hustle and bustle below, in the yards of several houses in the street called V Engliši. During sugar beet harvests we were sometimes fascinated at the sight of a gray-whitish smoke, rising like Baroque angels from two high factory chimneys. In the winter, together with other children, we went sleighing down the hill in front of our house. After short showers on hot summer days, barefoot, and only in shorts, we made a special effort to capture the water running in the shallow side drain. From deposited clay matter, we built dams for little pools. Sometimes their water level reached halfway to our calves.

As the sphere of our childhood universe expanded, we were finally welcomed by the elevated rock formation directly at the base of the castle wall in the square. This place enthralled literally every boy of Žleby and even several daring girls. In the spring we shot marbles and beans or played hopscotch on the figurines sketched on the ground. This took place at the feet of the Baroque statue of the Virgin Mary shaded in its corners by four fully grown, sometimes pruned, linden trees. Finally, we were getting to know intimately the local muscovite-biotite paragneiss. The foundations of the castle ramparts are anchored in a gneiss rock. The smooth, slanting surfaces of the rock with glittery flakes of muscovite and biotite have an incline of $\sim 50^\circ$ to the north, facing the square. It was easy for barefoot boys running at full pace to run slantwise up and down the rock. Beginners, in whose ranks we, too, soon belonged, would slide down the smooth gneiss surface on their pants or shorts. Of course, no textile could tolerate this for very long. Right at the beginning, our mom figured out the reason for the accelerated thinning of the sitting pant parts of her active sons. After our guileless confession, she went to the square to check on our beloved rock sliding. Her solution of the problem was quite original. She concluded correctly that our new entertainment corresponded with the needs of a boy's self-fulfillment and was not hazardous to our health. Among the discarded remnants of old clothes, she found something called "indestructible cloth," cut out the pieces needed, and on her sewing machine thoroughly sewed them on the back sides of our summer pants. Using the especially heavy-duty packthread, in addition, she sewed square patches on, as if quilting, so that they resembled crossword puzzles. These tough summer pants received a family brand, "crossword pants." The mothers of other boys in Little Town soon came by to find out how to make "crossword pants." Mom was visibly having a lot of fun when giving instructions, and when demonstrating her indestructible design on her two little models. Many years later, when we were both retirees, I often visited Miroslav in his small

summer apartment in Žleby and he usually escorted me to my car parked in the square. We never forgot, at least fleetingly, to stroke the smooth surface of the gneiss rock to check on the depressions, which some boys made with a hammer a long time ago (Figure 16).

After elementary school Miroslav continued his education at the four-year secondary school in Žleby. Nature equipped my brother with extraordinary dexterity, imagination, and resourcefulness. When he was about twelve years old, he built a portable marionette theater from wood and hard cardboard. He painted a sliding curtain and exchangeable sets, and he carved out his marionettes from linden wood, accentuating their facial details with color paint. He also designed and sewed their clothes, caps, colorful scarves, and hats. I helped him a little, following his instructions. Miroslav skillfully controlled his marionettes with the nimble, slim fingers of both of his hands, which operated the wires and strings connecting the heads, arms, and feet of the characters he made come alive on the stage. For his marionette theater, somehow he got a hold of short printed fairy tales, which he soon mastered by heart. He was able to change voices admirably, from Kašpárek (Casper), to the princess, prince, and the king, to dwarves, robbers, and Honza (John, popular hero of Czech fairy tales), to the waterman, gamekeeper, miller, Little Red Riding Hood, grandmother, and even to the wolf, the devil, and Beelzebub. He had a little workshop in the woodshed in our yard, where he kept his equipment, various and sundry items, glue, paints, emery paper, broken pieces of glass with sharp edges for shaping the soft linden wood, and also pliable wires, nails, and screws. He already used small bulbs of various colors for artificial lighting, attached to dry batteries. On fall and winter evenings, he played for the children of Little Town. To Miroslav the lit-up faces of the Žleby kids were the most precious reward.



Figure 16. The rock with hammer imprints: a permanent reminder of the Žleby boys' active childhood, southern part of the square on the way to the neo-Gothic castle.

One of our good childhood friends was Láda Loukotka, who was my age. We often played together with other boys at the river, in the square, in the park or at the ramparts. He had a six-year younger sister, Květuška (Little Blossom). At their home Miroslav played marionette theater for several other children as well. Láda and I helped him move the most important parts from his little marionette studio in Castle Street to their house, where Mr. Loukotka ran a butcher shop. I think that my brother had the biggest joy from the genuine excitement on the faces of little Květuška and other children, from their jubilation, laughter, and also from a bit of sadness he created with his marionette characters. I need to admit here for myself and Láda that when sometimes Mirek stepped outside for a while, we would try to show the critical little audience some of our own marionette skills, but we were loudly being corrected according to the sentences they remembered from the presentations so masterfully delivered by Mirek. Sometimes, though, our little numbers were so effective that the kids rolled with laughter. I remember that even Mrs. Loukotka, who was watching our marionette performance from the back of the room, was laughing out loud in all of the uproar. When Mirek returned, sacred silence always set in. Having first sent somewhat admonishing glances to Láda and me, he then said gently to us and to his young audience, "Jirí and Láda, thank you for filling in the intermission. And now, children, we will continue." All, kids and adults, always rewarded him with an honest applause.

Miroslav loved winter sports. He enjoyed ice-skating, playing hockey, skiing, and sledding. He was hardier than other boys and his creative hands were always warm, even when it was freezing. I was in awe at his musical talent, his playing the violin, mandolin, and later mainly his Gibson guitar "Gibsonka," which he bought from his first pay as an apprentice of technical dentistry. He used *The Ševčík School* course guide for violin, which he learned to play from the Žleby band director, Mr. Arient, under whose baton Mirek also played in a small string ensemble at various cultural performances and dance parties. He learned to read and write sheet music very fast, found literature on harmony, and started writing song compositions for four voices for The Žleby Foxes, his future singing quartet, which he led with his innate authority. In the quartet he sang the lead voice, second tenor. To me, musical notes were always a mystery, even though I liked melodious music, and later I was even accepted as a member of Miroslav's quartet as the fourth voice, bass.

Miroslav was able to utilize his exceptional talent to produce many beautiful, useful, surprising, and extraordinary creations also in his profession. After graduation from secondary school, he entered his apprenticeship with the dentist Oldřich Žižka in Žleby. Within a few months, however, our dad arranged that Mirek was able to attend a better-equipped dental

facility in Kutná Hora. After six months Mirek went there and completed his dental technician apprenticeship with the well known dentist, František Netopil. Even though Mirek lived in his apartment from the age of fifteen, he often commuted home, because the train connection was convenient both financially and time-wise. Thanks to his dexterity and work ethic, he was earning money already as an apprentice. Admirably, he was able to take apart and repair table and wall clocks of various brands for us as well as for our neighbors. In the spring, none of the Žleby boys was able to braid, from fresh willow twigs, such beautiful Easter whips with decorative grips as our Miroslav.

At the beginning of World War II when Miroslav was nineteen years old and already had his dental technician diploma, somewhere he got a hold of the necessary parts and assembled an earphone radio for our dad known as 'Krystalka' (crystal radio). It ran on dry batteries and was controlled manually by a flexible spiral wire on a galenite crystal. During the war, when listening to London and Moscow was strictly forbidden and severely punished in Germany and occupied countries, including the Protectorate, having a headphone radio was quite useful. Dad's crystal radio, stored in a small shoebox, was hardly noticeable and not easily heard even during operation. In the case of an unwanted sudden visit, it could be turned off or switched to Prague in a heartbeat, by a mere move of the spiral wire. Headphones on his ears, our dad would sit at his radio in the morning and evening every day, to follow the course of the beginning of another world war, the second in his lifetime. I can still picture him at our table at the window, when one morning he swiftly took off his headphones, straightened up, and said in a hushed voice, "Germany has attacked the Soviet Union. That will be the end of Hitler!" The terrible war lasted four more years, but Dad's spontaneous prediction was right on the money. At that time, however, no one in our family anticipated all the suffering the Czech nation and our family would have to go through.

After his apprenticeship, sometime in the year 1937, Miroslav began his work with Josef Valenta, the dentist at Zábok on the Elbe, from where on October 1, 1940, he managed to return to his beloved Žleby. Again he resumed his work, this time at the dental laboratory of Mr. Žižka, where he stayed until November 25, 1942. From there by the order of the occupation authorities, he was sent to forced labor in Germany. He began his work at the dental laboratory of Otto Müller in Dresden, where he was employed from November 26, 1942, until August 5, 1943. Among the similarly enslaved professionals from various countries of Europe, the French were the majority in the Dresden lab. After less than a year of poorly paid labor, Miroslav was arrested there on August 6, 1943, by the Gestapo for assisting prisoners of war in Germany. At the beginning of November 1943, he was deported to Concentration Camp Buchenwald after

several months of tough interrogations. There he was assigned to the commando in the salt mine of Billrod, where he suffered a serious injury to his right eye when a “capo” (supervisor) hit him in the face with a chunk of salt. For several years after his return home, Mirek tried to cure his torn retina, but in old age he lost vision in his right eye. He returned from concentration camp to Žleby at the end of May 1945.

After his return to his liberated homeland, for several years Miroslav worked in the dental laboratories of Dr. Rybáková and František Netopil, a dentist in Kutná Hora. From March 1949 to August 1963 he worked as a dental technician in the Regional Institute of National Health in Hradec Králové. From September 1963 until his retirement in 1992, he was a professor at the Hradec Králové School of Medicine.

As a devoted son and brother, Miroslav gently took care of the teeth of all of our family members. All relatives in need of prompt, quality, and painless dental care, went to see their brother, brother-in-law, or uncle in Hradec, well aware of the fact that nowhere else would they be better cared for.

Miroslav was also a good writer. This came through occasionally, in his beautifully written letters, full of humor and love for those close to him. From the age of about twenty he was keen on watercolor painting and he even entered some of his work in exhibitions of amateur painters. After the death of his wife, Hedvika (*née* Seidlová from Žleby), he had to walk using one and later two French canes to keep balance. His only child, Ivana Kontová, M.Sc. (married Kubínová), an architect, who graduated from the Czech Technical University in Prague, looked after her dad until the end of his life. When bedridden in the last year of his life, Miroslav was under the exemplary care of the medical personnel of the Motol Hospital. Ivanka visited him almost daily. Whenever I came for a visit or spoke with him over the phone, he always spoke lovingly about her and never complained about anything. His great loves were also his granddaughters, Jitka Kubínová, a student of architecture, and Martina Kubínová, who studied at the College of Agriculture in Prague. I know that they will always remember their grandpa with loving affection. Miroslav’s life came to a close on September 11, 2009, three months after reaching the age of eighty-nine (Figure 17).

FIRST STRONG IMPRESSIONS

When I was born at home in Žleby on an early February morning (February 15, 1922), the ground was supposedly covered with a white blanket of snow reaching knee-high, and fine snowflakes were slowly coming down all day long. The town midwife, Mrs. Kořínková, assisted during the delivery. I know this from my mom, who told me the story many times before tucking me in bed. I think I was the one begging to hear her tender story as much as if she were to read one of my



Figure 17. The Konta Brothers in their Žleby yard: (from left) Miroslav, Pepa, and Jiří.

favorite fairy tales. Eventually, mom lowered her voice and slowly, one by one, started counting the falling, white, velvety soft snowflakes. To me it was reminiscent of another sleep-inducing fairy-tale, in which a number of sheep were crossing a narrow bridge and the sleepy little one had to patiently wait for the continuation of the story until the very last one crossed. It was a beautiful way of going to bed, which I understood and gladly accepted. Supposedly, I happily fell asleep somewhere after the tenth falling snowflake.

While writing this story of my life and remembering the many endearing people whom I was destined to meet or even live with, I began to realize more and more the complicated number of factors that have an impact on the life of each individual. Some factors are natural and inevitable. These involve our origin, heredity, the time period into which we were born, our environment and its history, the invisible forces of near and distant surroundings, as well as our upbringing and education. Others can be quite accidental, for example, meeting other people and their positive or negative influence on us in various segments of our lives. Also the fact whether we spent our youth without animals, trees, bushes, plants, and flowers. The unpredictable clash with dangerous germs, viruses, or other microorganisms is significant, as are various injuries both physical or mental. All of these factors, perhaps even a few more, might have been important also in my life.

My initial strong impressions, which I shared with the children and adults outside of our family, are connected with the local kindergarten. As I read later, this “care facility for little children” developed gradually from the year 1836 thanks to the princess and prince of Auersperg. A small group of congregation nuns looked after its successful operation. After all these years, however, the name of their Catholic order slipped from my memory. Every day, from Monday to Saturday, two

or three nuns took care of several tens of children. Clad in long, pleated skirts reaching almost down to the ground and protected with freshly washed and ironed dark-blue aprons as required when working, they moved briskly and quietly, always ready to provide assistance. Other parts of their uniforms were either white or black. The large, one-story building of the kindergarten, with its adjacent yard and a small garden then also owned by the Auerspergs, was located near the park, close to the sharp turn leading from the Hill to Little Town. Right after the end of World War II, this very useful house became the seat of the district physician.

At the time of my childhood, every child in the kindergarten received a free snack, typically a quarter liter of warm milk or hot chocolate with a “houska” (breaded bun) or a “rohlík” (roll). All children who attended this building looked especially forward to Christmas and their presents. Then each child received a new sweater with long sleeves for the winter from the prince’s fund. The children of the employees of the prince-owned enterprises, particularly those who worked at his main estate, also got high, laced-up leather boots. All of us loved those, but they were out of reach for most kids.

The nuns, for the most part young women and their older and stricter mother superior, were very kind, mainly of a cheerful disposition, and able to engage our attention. In a large room with windows facing the yard, we learned to pray collectively, sing, recite, and also play theater. During prayer or recitation we stood, but most of the time we sat at our long, massive, dark-green school bench-desks, where we were required to keep our palms down. In the winter, we plucked pieces of cloth or rests of materials pulling out thread, wool, or cotton. Then a nun entered the room and swept off the fluffy pulled-out material from the desks into a big bag, rewarded the kids with the largest heaps with a smile, and finally we were able to speak, laugh, and sneeze again. The nuns used the fluffy material plucked by children’s little fingers as a filling for their pillows, various figurative stuffed toys, and decorations. They delivered their handmade products to a number of charities. In the summertime, our little fingers learned to fold hats from newspaper to protect us against sunstroke or we made various paper animals, which we glued onto larger cardboard pieces. Popular also were boats folded from thicker paper, which we launched onto the waves in a large washing basin. In good weather, we played in the yard at a sand heap with toy equipment. First we had to bring the toys from a large woodshed and return them neatly to their original places, as instructed by the nuns who watched us very closely.

As most children around the age of five or six, I also wanted to find out the truth about how babies were born. I hoped to learn about it at home, in the kindergarten, or from other children. From adults back then we always heard the same answer, namely that boys were brought

by a stork and girls by a crow. The kindergarten nuns provided us only with generic answers such as, “All of us are the children of the Lord. Everything on this earth, living or non-living, comes from the Lord.” One day when daddy was at work and Pepa and Mirek at school, allegedly I cornered our mom who was cooking lunch with a question, “Maminka, can you tell me, I mean really tell me, the truth about how a baby is born? I don’t believe the stork and crow story anymore. After all, I was born in February, when all storks, swallows, and other warmth-loving birds are in the warm countries because here they could freeze to death. The boys who recently had a new baby born in their homes told me that midwife Mrs. Kořínková came by with a suitcase.” I was sitting at the kitchen table when mom became serious, pushed the dishes to the edge of the stove, sat down next to me, and having put her arm tenderly around my shoulder, slowly she said, “Jiříček (Georgie), I know that lately you have done a lot of thinking about how you were born. For every mom it is an amazing miracle of nature. Every mommy carries her baby in her belly, right under her heart. If a baby is to be born healthy, there must be someone present – either a midwife or a doctor. And remember this for the rest of your life: This carrying the baby under the heart is an amazing love, the strongest bond in this world, the bond between a mother and her baby that nothing can break.” This secret, until then hidden and now so simply divulged, made a very strong impression on me. I felt that this information was the truth I longed to hear, and I never forgot those tender words of my mom, filled with love.

After almost 90 years, this little episode from my childhood may seem a little out of date to the present readers, but our world was like that. That is why I am writing this, so that our generation is remembered the way we were. Unfortunately, the world is also a place of eternal misunderstandings, altercations, and fights. Soon after the memorable conversation with my mom, I shared the secret of human birth with several boys of Little Town – with a good intention of enlightening them – but it was the stone that shattered the window. When I went to the square to play with other children as usual, I was called by one of the local mothers to the bench at the statue of the Virgin Mary where mothers usually gathered to chat. Suddenly, I was surrounded by three or four women who began their cross-examination: “Jirka, how dare you tell our...? Where did you find out? Who told you that? Under no circumstances are you to tell any of our children about it. Just you wait! We will tell the nuns about it.” I neither wanted to listen to this stupidity and malice, nor to their hasty questions and threats. With my teeth firmly clenched, I swiftly forced my way past the bulwark of their bodies and dashed home. Somehow I understood there was no need to confide in anyone at home. This all fizzed out as quickly as it came about. Our childhood games in the square continued with an unreduced intensity and I was

experiencing growing respect both from the boys and their parents. Perhaps the women were even somewhat ashamed for their little lies and hypocrisy.

It was almost a daily occurrence to see my old school in the square and the commotion around it. Sometimes I watched flocks of school kids storming out after noon. I could hardly wait to be one of them. It finally happened in September of 1928. According to my parents, I knew all letters and numbers already at the age of six, before I began school. Most likely it was thanks to the influence of my older brothers. My dad often allowed me to look at his maps, which he sometimes spread out on the living room table. Very early in life I learned from him that our planet Earth travels through the universe around the Sun and that the continents are surrounded by even larger oceans. These facts captivated my attention immensely. I remember well my first teacher, Josef Prchal, who taught me in the first grade of the elementary school in Žleby. He was young, slim, and like a friendly father to us. That is why he was popular with both the Žleby parents and children. He began his teaching career in our town at the foot of the Iron Mountains shortly after graduation from the Pedagogical Institute. Much later I found out from him how I first presented myself in contrast to other elementary school children. During a short break on the very first school day, an ordinary boy approached his desk with a short crew cut above his clear brown eyes and struck up a conversation, “Mr. Prchal, the Earth is turning around the Sun and rotating, right? That’s why we have day and night.” “Well, yes, and who told you that?” “Why, my dad, of course!” “And what’s your name?” Allegedly, I gave a quick-witted answer, including the address, as I was taught at home: “Jiří Konta, Castle Street, number 120!” I learned of this incident from my teacher, Mr. Prchal, when I had become a student at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Prague and when one Sunday morning he stopped me at the Žleby post office in the square, on one of my frequent visits to my parents. In his unique way as a teacher of the Czech language, his interest obvious, he asked, “Jiří, I heard you have a special fondness for Helenka Rudolfová, don’t you?” “Yes, I like her.” From that time, whenever we met, he answered my greeting with a friendly smile and added, “The Earth is turning, how are you, Jiří?” He paid me a visit in the school year 1960–1961 to congratulate me, when I was Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Charles University. The last time I met with him was in my office at the faculty in June 1967. Prior to that he called me on the phone, to comply with the request of a friend of his whose son wanted to study biology and needed to know the extent of the preparation for the entrance exam. At that time, my first teacher was a school inspector and a successful published author of books about nature directed especially toward young adults. He brought me his book *Máma Čiryk (Mother Chiryk)* about the life of a partridge and her children, in which nature is touchingly

anthropomorphized. When saying good-bye, he told me that he often had fond memories of Žleby, especially of the school children, among whom I occupied first place, of the fishing in the Doubrava, and also of his always imagining me having a professional career.

The winter of 1929 in Bohemia and Moravia was very harsh and long. The temperatures in some places plummeted to -42°C . The fountain in Žleby soon froze over. It was necessary to carry drinking water in watering cans from several far-away yards with deeper wells and special straw and burlap insulation against frost. People brought from the river non-potable water for washing and laundry in barrels or other big containers on carts or sleds.

My brother Pepa, already fifteen years old at the time, brought water home from the river usually himself, so that he had our vat filled only half way. Once he told us he could bring more water if we helped him with the cargo. Outside it was freezing cold, and Miroslav and I sensed in this challenge a bit of adventure we longed for. We had to dress properly for the cold. Pepa tied woolen scarves around our necks, we put fur caps on our heads with elongated ear flaps, and all of us put on woolen mittens, our mom’s creation. And so equipped, at a slight trot, we set out on the white, frozen snow, pulling our sled burdened by a voluminous wooden vat with two handles on top firmly fastened by ropes. We called it “štandlík” at home. We ran down to the river below the church where the stream was quite shallow. The wintry Doubrava surprised us with its silence and motionlessness. Gone were its summer rapids, now frozen to the bottom. In their place scattered white, crushed icy fragments lay with hardly any running water. With our shoes we shuffled the fragile fragments all the way to the hard gravel bottom. Only along the left bank of the Doubrava were several deep holes dug out by sand workers. Pepa took out an axe from the vat and after punching through the ice armor, he quickly poured water into the vat with a metal pot. Miroslav tried to steady the sled and I, fully involved with the fluffiness and crunching of the frozen rapids, suddenly stepped on something slippery. I bent, seized the object with both hands and announced victoriously, “I have a big fish.” It was bone-hard and frozen. Pepa inspected it and said, “Nice barbel, more than half a kilo. But we don’t know how long it has been lying here, so the meat can be spoiled. We’ll leave it here. Starving wildlife or crows will take care of it.” Then, with almost a full vat, we set out on our trip home. Mirek and I pulled the sled; in the back Pepa tried to keep the balance with his hands and push it up the hill. When we stopped for a moment to stretch and check the ropes, the water level in the vat began to cover with a thin, transparent icy crust, continuously breaking during the ride.

Before we got home, the outer sides and the vat handles were covered with ice, which crystallized from the splashing and rapidly freezing water. We quickly

took the load together with the sled all the way to the house hallway, which had a paved stone floor. Our legs and hands were numb with cold, and so Pepa ordered, "Let's go to the kitchen, fast! Take off your gloves and shoes and rub your fingers. Put both hands on your head and run them through your hair. Don't be afraid to press harder, like this." He took our hands in his and sped up the rubbing motion. We continued to rub our fingers in our hair until we could make a pinching motion with our hands. By the time mom arrived with a can of drinking water, we warmed up and hastily told her about our adventure. Without being asked, Pepa picked up the empty can and went for more drinking water. Mom evaluated our activity briefly and cogently: "Thank God I have such three healthy boys like you, or I don't know how we would survive this winter."

The aftermath of this tough and long winter was really very sad. Frost killed many fruit-bearing trees in Žleby. Not even one walnut tree remained alive from the long row of massive walnut trees that once lined the road from Žleby to Zehuby. It was Čeněk Crkal, the caretaker of the town Nursery for the Growing of Fruit-Bearing Trees, who for many decades took care of the fruit and forest trees in the Žleby land register and into whom I ran almost daily in Little Town. He owned two houses in the town square, one of which contained a small general store. Thanks to his leadership, many new trees were planted in local orchards, rows, and gardens. He personally assisted with the planting and was also successful in grafting perhaps thousands of trees and shrubs for the local citizens. His selfless efforts in the beautification of Žleby after the devastating frosts of 1929 should never be forgotten. Žleby and its surroundings were lovely in any season of the year. However, it is still the most appealing when trees and shrubs are in bloom with flowering that adorns orchards, gardens, rows of trees, wood covers, and the rest of the town as far as the eye can see.

As young schoolboys we loved to skate on the Buda pond every winter. It was not much more than a shallow pool of still water, about 50 by 60 meters large, adjacent to the buildings of the former Buda homestead. Its owner, Karel Křivský, kept carp there, the fishing of which took place annually at the end of the fall. The usual autumn rains and a small stream flowing from the north were sufficient to fill the pond before the first frosts. The children of the Hill and Little Town always enthusiastically welcomed the first ice on the still water of "Budák," even though oftentimes it was initially very thin. Still water froze over faster than flowing water in the river. We knew that on the Doubrava, which first froze over in calmer sections with deeper water, such as under the Kučeras or at the weir in the park, we should not start skating until the ice was at least about 10 centimeters thick. We were allowed to do so only when we were a little older. The children of the better-off families had skates of the Kolumbus label called

"kolumbusky," which had to be attached to the leather shoes on the sides with clutching clips. They were fastened to the shoe soles and heels with a simple system of screws, which had to be tightened with a removable little handle. Less fortunate children had to put up perhaps with just one such skate, which they might have found somewhere forgotten or set aside, sometimes even rusted. Finally, there were those children whom fate allowed just to slide on slippery pathways on the ice along the riverbanks.

As everywhere, also on the Buda pond, one could encounter dangerous youngsters eager to show off on the first ice. They are referred to worldwide as "teenagers." Three or four of them formed a row and, with excitement in their eyes, they skated across the pond, at times slowly, at other times faster, putting their weight fully on the foot that just hit the ice. The insufficiently thick ice bent under them, reminiscent of running on a mattress or a mat. This was called "ice matting" We, the little boys, in about the second grade of elementary school, Láda and myself, had no clue and together on our Kolumbus skates entered such a matted ice and fell through. Fortunately, we were close to the bank, but we had to break our way through ice with our legs in boots, with the screwed-on skates that sank into the mud. After having fought our way through to the bank, drenched with muddy water, with mud behind our ears, the self-preservation instinct made Láda cry out loud, "Jirka, take off the skate, we're dashing to our house!" Each of us had the skate handle in our pocket, so screwing off the skates was a matter of a second. Actually, I was one of the beginners with just one skate.

It is not the easiest thing to run in wet freezing clothes, in boots full of splashing water thickened with mud, and with teeth chattering from cold. I guess the distance from the pond to the Loukotka family house, which ends in "Deadman's Path" at the bottom of a slope, is about 400 meters. We covered it at the speed of lightning, giving it all we had. We were so fortunate that the gracious Mrs. Loukotková, Láda's mother, was at home and able to take care of us. Without any preaching and wondering, she helped us get out of our clothes and boots, which were almost stuck to our feet. She brought a vat with warm water, in which we had to immediately wash with soap, then dry ourselves, and then she prodded us to further action with her maternal "and now off to bed, boys, quickly under the covers!" This unforgettable woman, who so wonderfully understood us boys, then washed my clothes and boots in warm water. The boots happened to be new so that they had to be rid of the mud thoroughly. She put everything up on ropes and chairs near the heated stove. Then she carefully ironed my almost dry outer garments and I was able to trot home, about another 500 m.

When I reached home, it was already getting dark. My parents asked me to give them a detailed report on everything that happened. The following day I accom-

panied my mom to thank Mrs. Loukotková. In her motherly way, my mom especially emphasized to Láda and me, that we should be wary, because danger lurked for boys at every corner and “one could never be careful enough.” What if the ice had broken under us at a much deeper place?

This little incident from my boyhood together with the inconspicuous but ever-present care, unobtrusive concern, and natural involvement in the happy and unhappy moments of our lives that followed, including the later experiences from the concentration camp, convinced me that Czech women are not only beautiful on the outside, but above all amazing, marvelous mothers. They love their children with an infinite, strong, and yet humble love. They are always ready to look after them, protect them, and even in adulthood bring sacrifices on their behalf. That may be why perhaps the most impressive antimilitaristic novel, *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk* (in Czech *Švejk*), was written by a Czech author. An until then unknown writer of newspaper stories rose in his creative effort to the ranks of world-class authors of the humorous novel thanks to having captured a desperate defiance of the unbearable humiliation, dismissiveness, and ostentatious superiority of the Austrian-Hungarian ruling circles. This defiance was felt especially in the subjugated nations during World War I, in which women suffered perhaps even more than men. For loving mothers, awareness that their sons lived a miserable Svejk existence and in the end perished like animals in a slaughterhouse, often suffering incredible pain and despair, was unbelievably gruesome. In 1929, the Žleby community built a fitting monument to all its men who lost their lives in the bloody battles of World War I. It is located in the town square, near the castle walls, straight across from the elementary school attended by practically all children in town. The low-statured obelisk is the work of the Podpěra Sculpture Factory in Světlá on the Sázava, made of the polished Sázava granite. The monument was paid for by voluntary donations of the Žleby citizens amounting then to 14,000 Cs crowns. Its construction was ensured by the town's old native residents, František Schulz, Adolf Červený, and Josef Čuda. The names of the fallen are engraved in the three granite slabs, which constitute the bottom third of the obelisk: Josef Auerswald, Karel Auerswald, Bohumil Beránek, Jindřich Biber, Josef Biber, Václav Biber, Jan Brom, Jan Čuda, Bedřich Dobrý, Rudolf Dolejška, Vojtěch Dolejška, Vojtěch Dolejška Jr., Ladislav Fink, Antonín Franc, František Hanousek, František Hlaváček, Jindřich Holánek, Karel Husák, Josef Hyhlán, Josef Janda, Arnošt Jelínek, Jan Jelínek, Josef Jelínek, Jaroslav Kocourek, František Kořínek, Karel Kouba, Alois Kroužil, Václav Kroužil, Josef Křížala, František Lebduška, Josef Lebeda (fallen in Slovakia), Antonín Linhart, Václav Myslivec, František Němec, Josef Němec, Bohumil Nesládek,

Václav Pavlík, František Peca, František Pokorný, Čeněk Pospíšil, Václav Pospíšil, Josef Procházka, Rudolf Procházka, Viktor Procházka, Josef Rajsík, Antonín Růžička, Josef Schreiber, Antonín Slavík, Karel Slavík, Václav Slavík, Václav Sochůrek, Josef Ševčík, Josef Široký, Jan, Šnaidrvint, Antonín Špínka, František Štajnc, Eduard Stoček, Bohumil Švadlenák, Josef Táborský, Antonín Tlamka, Karel Uřídil, Josef Veselý, Emanuel Vojtíšek, František Vozáb, Josef Vozáb, Alois Zajíc, and Josef Zajíc.

From this rather small Czech town, which had a population of about two thousand before World War I, including children, grandmothers, and grandfathers, sixty-seven promising young men – sons, brothers, and husbands – lost their lives for the Kaiser and his family. Their remains were most likely buried somewhere on the countless battlefields of this enormous bloodbath. Some Žleby families lost two, some even three men. The situation was similar in other Czech communities and also in the other countries pulled into the senseless war. I do not know how the mothers in Germany, Austria, or Hungary, the countries that started the war, sustained the war massacre of their sons. Czech mothers mourned in endless grief and sorrow. How can anyone today wonder why in 1918, under the pressure of the popular masses, the mighty European empire of Austria-Hungary had to come to such an inglorious end? It is sufficient to visit the monuments to the fallen of several dozens of similar-size towns as Žleby to understand the defiance and disgust of the Czech citizens towards the wars of the mighty of this world. However, the Czech nation had the good fortune to have exceptionally qualified men leading then both its foreign as well as domestic resistance, who succeeded in capturing the spirit of the popular masses and negotiating with the leaders of the victorious superpowers about their own free nation, in the newly rearranged world.

The World War I monument erected in honor of the Žleby citizens fallen in the war was, from the spring to the fall at the time of my childhood, beautifully adorned with flowers brought mainly by women. I have a feeling that when the mothers of the perished men were still alive, the most flowers were laid there.

As with every river, the graceful Doubrava occasionally also claims its victims. In Žleby it is unpredictable during the winter months, especially at the winter's end.

When I was in the “septima” (seventh) year of the Čáslav “Gymnasium” (comparable to the twelfth grade of high school), three eleven-year old boys fell into the melting ice of the river, near the footbridge above the weir. Two of them drowned: Libor Kořínek and Jiří Vondráček. Not even the summer Doubrava is completely safe in some sections. The pre-spring melting of snow and ice usually increases the flow of the Doubrava and Hostačovka rivers. The ice armor on the rivers breaks and amidst finer floating ice, the forceful stream carries forth larger blocks of ice. One day two teenage

boys jumped up on two blocks of ice lugging along the bank near the church. I heard that finally after a wild ride on the surging river, ~200 m long, they managed to jump back onto the bank in one of the gardens of the factory houses.

The safest places for our childhood summer games on the Doubrava were the mild rapids by the church and in the calmer shallow water upstream by the stone bridge at the Koříněks' garden. Happy and carefree, here we spent most of our summers running barefoot and on hot days only in shorts. After many years, I still gladly admit with a smile that never, not even as a respected college professor, have I ever overcome the memories of our washtub races and sea battles on a 100 m stretch of the river beyond the bridge.

At the time of my childhood, the wooden washtubs were a very important, one might say indispensable, tool in every country household. In the wooden tubs, the entire family's clothes and linen apparel were washed, back then still by hand on washboards; in tubs people took baths at home; in the tubs of the homes of successful avid anglers sometimes carp and other fish were swimming; finally, old, pitched tubs would be rendering their final services in gardens as water-reserve containers used for watering, their water warmed up by the sun. For us, boys living on a small river, the washtubs were an amazing invention of the human spirit and dexterous hands, fabulously satisfying our adventurous imagination during the summer holidays. The boys from Městečko (Little Town), for whom the shallow water by the bridge was not far, constituted the majority in our water games. But also our classmates from more distant parts of Žleby took part. It was the huge and massive butcher tub of Láda Loukotka that won the most fame and our admiration. Several times during the summer, Láda's father assigned him to give the tub a thorough scrubbing with a mixture of sand and water, which required pushing down heavily on a firm birch broom. Usually, Láda brought the tub on a cart or a wheelbarrow down to the river only ~60 m away from their house. We willingly helped him with the washing and the transportation back to the house. When its lightwood sparkled with cleanliness, two or three of us were allowed to join Láda in the coveted battleship. For rowing, Láda had prepared wooden oars homemade from laths of a dilapidated crate. I was glad I did not have to beg my mother to lend me our washtub and especially not to have to drag it with someone's assistance to the river from as far as Zámecká (Castle) Street. On his battleship, Láda always considered me an inseparable shipmate, perhaps also because I was boiling over with imagination, inconspicuously making the rules of our summer water games with him. Actually, since early on, I needed to be crystal-clear about everything of which I was an author or coauthor. Of course, I must not forget to state that Láda's battleship, unique among the boys' vessels, had a name, no less a Latin one, "*Viribus*

Unitis" (Joined Forces). It did not receive it by accident. The father of a boy from Chalupy served on a warship named *Viribus Unitis*, anchoring in the Boka Kotorska (Black Mountain, Montenegro), a strategic harbor of the Austrian-Hungarian navy. When he was telling us about it once, at the river, I thought that it would be the most fitting name for the most impressive vessel plowing the shallow waters of the Doubrava in the central part of Žleby. Láda and the other boys spontaneously agreed. After all, my father also mentioned the ship with admiration when remembering his military service in Trieste. When I described our beloved super-tub to him, the name we christened it with, and that we hoisted a Czechoslovak national flag with the blue wedge, which Láda had from a Sokol festival, he smiled with the words, "Well, you Žleby boys have really hit it. That would have knocked down even Admiral Horthy."

Some of the boys fished with small fishing rods in the shallow current of the mild rapids by the church, while others swam in deeper areas formed from occasional mining of sand and clay. On the days of the thorough cleanup of the big butcher tub, all boys were ready to pitch in with the launch of the spick and span *Viribus Unitis* onto the river. Then they swiftly headed home to get their own washtubs while orally spreading the exciting news: "Get wash tubs readyyy, *Viribus Unitis* is sailiing to the briiidge!" A typical family washtub carried two boys under the age of ten, but some only one. We paddled using our hands.

Our games always started in the middle of the river current at the pilaster of the stone bridge, the place illuminated by the sun. The summer water of the Doubrava was warm there and our faces red-hot, ready for a bit of boyish battling. When Láda on the *Viribus Unitis* concluded that the entire potential washtub fleet was assembled, he gave a command to set out to sea. The super-washtub crew gave a sharp paddle move and its bow darted forth against the mild current of the Doubrava. Other washtubs followed us. After <100 m of calm sailing, we stopped; some crews crawled out of their vessels for a moment into knee- or thigh-high water. Then the lining up of the vessels took place. In the front row, usually consisting of fewer washtubs, each tub contained only one single sailor; in the denser second row, each tub had two crewmembers. The first row was given about a 10 m head start before the second row. During the battle, the competitors were allowed to splash water into other competing washtubs to weigh them down and to reduce their speed. The most coveted battle mission, though, was to send a rival's washtub to the river bottom, thus disqualifying him from the race. This was only permitted by splashing water or making waves, but never by a direct hand contact with other vessels. If in the heat of the battle, however, someone did touch another vessel, he was disqualified from the race.

After the line-up of the washtub fleet, *Viribus Unitis* majestically returned to the bridge pillar and the naval

battle began. With excitement, all awaited our command from a cardboard loudspeaker: "On your mark, get set, go!" Calling the last word, Lada also waved a white flag, which he held high above his head. In all the washtubs, the muscles of the competing boys stretched to the maximum; around the washtubs, the water of the Doubrava seemed to have forcefully started to boil; the noise caused by the paddling and mutual hand splashing, accompanied by sporadic shouting, was rapidly approaching. The winner was the ship that sailed first through the arch of the bridge, always closely supervised by the crew of *Viribus Unitis* anchored at the pillar. Quite often the winners were the Koberas or the Čech brothers, hardened by physical work and hand in glove with each other. There were no prizes; pure amateurs were satisfied by the knowledge of a clear victory.

After the end of such a washtub navy battle, supervised by the flagged battleship *Viribus Unitis*, there would be lots of activity at the small pier and at its nearby gate of the Kořínks' garden. Having left the washtubs anchored at the riverbank, their crewmembers stood or sat at the pier engaged in a heated discussion. The topics were the course of the race or the person who, in the heat of the battle, might have broken the rules by leaning his arm against a competing washtub, thus filling it unfairly with more water. Some boys swam or just warmed their bodies in the sun, as a prolonged contact with water gave them goose bumps. At times even their teeth chattered from the cold. By huddling up in their wet shorts, they tried to keep their bodies warm, their legs crossed and firmly embraced by their hands, resting their wet chins on their knees. When one of the most eager warriors began to act a little too cocky, or when he did not want to admit breaking a rule, or was unable to accept criticism well, he might have been unexpectedly put into place by someone who, with the speed of lightning, pulled down his shorts. This rather humiliating transgression was usually accompanied by group laughter. In this way, the boys were enforcing their sense of collective justice, sometimes even with cruelty, which they might have regretted later. The biggest disgrace for each washtub owner, however, was when one of the defeated rivals peed in his tub. As rare as such revenge was, it was hard to forget. Sometimes Láda and I took turns in teaching some of the younger boys how to paddle correctly on the *Viribus Unitis*. When they had enough, they enjoyed jumping from the supertub into the water, then laboriously climbing back in, and with open joy threatening its amazing balance. It was due to the fact that the butcher tub was cut out from one piece of tree and its massive bottom was a lot thicker than its sides.

Our tub sea battles took place only several times a year, but during the summer vacations they were an extraordinary, mesmerizing, and bonding experience for most of the boys. Their popularity corresponded with the characteristics typical of and valued by healthy boys:

strong muscles, cleverness, fast reflexes, litheness, physical fitness, and the ability to know how to handle unusual situations. In addition, all the boys who took part in our tub battles in the shallow section of the Doubrava soon learned how to swim. They made friends with the water of the river without fear. Practically everyone began with the "doggie" stroke, during which quickly alternating arms push water under the body, creating quite a bit of splashing. Having learned that, every boy then moved onto a calmer, more stretched out beginning style of the sidestroke. Soon those with more perseverance and with assistance from the older boys also mastered breaststroke, backstroke, and free style. Cork floating belts, or especially treated dried bladders from slaughtered pigs, were used with beginners only infrequently. Láda had strong leadership potential and a sense of prompt decision making in his genes already as a schoolboy. After his maturity exam at the end of high school he chose to become an officer in the Czechoslovak Army, where he achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was very popular among the men of his unit for his amiable disposition and extraordinary valor. Having specialized in parachute jumping, he became an instructor for beginning paratroopers. In addition, he became known and respected as author of the successful Spartakiad exercise routines for soldiers.

In the languid late afternoons of the summer, we enjoyed playing soccer in the deserted Kotkova garden at the graveyard's south wall. We used various balls from a smaller soccer ball to a worn-out tennis ball, and at times also a soft rag ball. Most of the time we played barefoot or wearing tennis- or other cloth shoes, typically on seven-member teams. Other boys, and frequently also girls, were loudly rooting for us. Whenever I tried to figure out later why the garden had such a powerful attraction for us, I always arrived at the same conclusion. It was our undying desire for absolute freedom, a wish to do something without anyone else's control, lecture, or restriction. This unquenchable will to live in freedom and abandon is characteristic also of the *Homo sapiens* species. We experienced it in our childhood, and the youth of this generation are no different. The only difference I see is that in my time people were a little more modest and humble, our fun times a little healthier and less expensive than today's pop-music concerts, discos, etc. In comparison with the situation today, also the Czechoslovak crown was a hard and scarce currency back then.

As schoolboys from five to eleven, we also had our assigned chores at home. Whenever possible we liked to combine them with roaming through the Žleby countryside. In the summer time we collected wild berries. Usually we succeeded in picking a one- or two-liter can of raspberries while only a half-liter or more of wild strawberries. My mom showed us the most plentiful raspberry bushes and wild strawberry patches at the

Štikavka. Blackberries ripened a little later and we picked them in Borovičky and Korčice. If you have not tasted warm “lívance” (pancakes) topped with freshly picked, crushed, and mildly sweetened wild strawberries, their scent wafting from the hallway all the way to the doorstep, you don’t know much about delicacies and what tastes good. Our mom used to fill her terrific “bublaninas” (sponge cakes) with raspberries and blackberries.

Shortly after the grain harvest, we helped our mom pick broken ear spikes of wheat, barley, and rye, which were always appreciated by our flock of hens, kept by our family for their high-quality eggs. When growing up on a farm, mom got to like especially two chicken breeds, which she also had in Žleby: the reddish-brown Rhode Island chicks and the speckled Leghorns. From all the useful wandering in the summer or autumn countryside, it was our mushroom-picking expeditions in the woods and in the park that most suited our innate boyish behavior, the desire to always make a new discovery, a new find, or revelation. We went mushroom picking especially in the Žleby grove, which was accessible then to everyone in its entirety, with an entrance passageway from Biskupice. Before World War II, we did not have to worry about ticks being carriers of encephalitis. My dad taught me to recognize edible and poisonous mushrooms. He also made me aware of how it is possible to tell what mushrooms may be found during the picking season and in which clearings and places based on the kinds of trees, shrubs, grasses, and types of needles and moss that grow there. We brought home mostly brown-cap birch boletes or cossacks, king boletes, or penny buns found in the oak and spruce areas, orange-cap boletes found in high grass with a thin pine growth, chanterelles or forest gold from mature spruce woods, russulas, shaggy parasol mushrooms, and from two places at Štikavka also milky caps and champignons. Some of the mushrooms we fried or used in soups, and mom preserved others, especially milky caps and young boletes in vinegar, while she thinly sliced the older ones, drying them for our winter supply. When we heard that people were returning with full baskets of quality mushrooms from the Mladotice forest, or from the Iron Mountains, we did not hesitate to set off on foot into these more distant places. Our dad was a terrific walker with an impressive knowledge of the neighboring pathways. We took off during the mysterious early morning dusk and entered the forest at sunrise. We never got lost when dad was leading the way.

An important chore for us three sons was to make sure we never ran out of the family supply of drinking water kept in the large enameled pot in the hallway, always covered with a lid. It was no easy task for a family of five, but we were dependable taking care of it because we were taught to do so from early childhood. Pepa took us to the town fountain before we were school

age and he taught us to be careful and tidy when filling up our smaller or larger cans, and to carry water home without spilling, while taking a short break half way through. Mom very seldom went to get water, which we did not like to see. That is why the first thing I did when I got home from school was to lift the lid in the hallway to check the level of the drinking water.

Another personal chore, for which I was responsible from eight or nine years on, was the delivery of fresh milk from the Buda cowshed, about a kilometer from our house. I used to get it with a two-liter milk can on Thursdays and Sundays, when there was no school. The milk was on sale only at noon. With an empty can I jogged most of the way, but on my way back I had to walk carefully to deliver the milk safely home. I had to walk through Deadman’s Path at the bottom of the slope where school principal Mr. Kostka owned a house at the gneiss rock. Already retired at the time, he lived with his wife and grown daughter Zdenka. Later I always hoped that Miss Zdenička would appear stepping out of the house at the top of the steep staircase. She, too, was assigned the task of regularly bringing milk to her parents from the Buda cowshed. She was the first beautiful woman I admired. I was about ten years old and she a little over twenty. When she did appear, I greeted her politely and struck up a conversation, “Good morning, can we walk to Buda together?” No one in the entire town of Žleby had such a dazzling natural smile as she did. I think she understood that this little boy admired her deeply and was doing everything in his power to run into her as often as possible. On the way to Buda she kept asking about school, our river games (which she apparently watched from her yard), or my fish catches from the Doubrava. She also tested my knowledge of the flowers in bloom or of the butterflies flying around, which was fine with me. I enjoyed describing everything to her with a child’s imagination. Is it at all possible not to recall the times when my boyish infatuation was received with such a radiant smile and tolerant understanding? After a number of years, when I was finishing my studies at the Čáslav High School, I learned that Zdenička took care of her sick parents until their passing and that soon after she moved to Prague where she had a married older sister. She might have gotten married then. Never have I forgotten her lovely face, figure, bright eyes, and her kind, naturally friendly demeanor.

At the end of the summer and fall, it was not uncommon for boys and girls after school to go to some of the family fields to glean scattered potatoes, which we baked in hot gray ashes of the bonfires made from heaps of dry potato stems. Some children were asked to graze geese and goats at the stubble field by the Šibeniční vrch (Gallows Hill). From here it was just a few steps to the small orchard in Korčice, where one could easily fetch a couple of fallen pears or apples. Around the bonfire we would sit on folded burlap bags, which served as

raincoats on windy or rainy days. When pulled over our heads and shoulders, they reached down to our knees.

With a group of three to four classmates, I used to pick up sugar beets that fell from the jolting wagons on the road close to the hairpin bend between St. John's statue and the distillery. Several creative boys from poor families made "grabbers," long sticks ending with a big sturdy nail. They used them skillfully to spear a beet from the back heap of the fully loaded vehicle heading for the sugar mill. It was theft and I knew that I could not bring a beet with a nail hole home. My dad, who had zero tolerance for any theft, would not waste any time to closely inspect every washed beet that made it to our kitchen. It got to his attention from the coachmen who had to crack their whips to chase away the thieves from time to time. Mom washed and thinly sliced the beets I brought, which released sugar after being boiled in a big pot. Then she poured the thick brown syrup obtained this way into a smaller stoneware pot. At breakfast time we scooped it up and ate it with bread or other baked goods. In addition, finely grated sugar beet was used to thicken the grated poppy seed filling for "řepánky." After constant activity, boys did not refuse the pastry made with this filling, but this fall treat was no match for the plum-filled "buchtas" of the summer.

Around the year 1930, at the end of the World Economic Crisis, the lives of children in many families changed dramatically. Businesses in Bohemia went gradually bankrupt or uncompromisingly had to cut down the numbers of their employees. People lost jobs and soon it was also the sugar mill's turn. The prince's sugar mill in Žleby, until then prosperous and reliably supplied with sugar beets from the fertile fields of the Čáslav lowland farmsteads, became one of those to close down. Suddenly, tens perhaps hundreds lost their livelihood, and so the final shutting down of this one factory in our small town affected many families, who were directly or indirectly connected with it. A large number of jobless men, family breadwinners, depended on social welfare in the form of so called "beggars' passes" – pieces of paper in the amount of twenty crowns per week provided by the state for the families of unemployed workers. I remember feeling uncomfortable at my own powerlessness, when occasionally I was allowed to bring just a couple of my less fortunate classmates home to enjoy a proper meal. Sometimes numerous families had to find drastic ways to sustain themselves. For example, in order to slow down the use of the children's shoes, some boys went to school barefoot, braving the cold weather from mid May and then again in September. Teachers did not like to see that, but what could they do? They were happy that these children attended school regularly and that their parents cared about education. The Great Economic Crisis lasted for several years and indelibly entered the hearts of hundreds of thousands of people in Czechoslovakia. It also disrupted the carefree childhood of many school children in Žleby.

Our early perception of nature and its gradual recognition with the help of parents, teachers, and sometimes through somewhat bold explorations was intensified by the beauty of the environment, systematically created by the prince's employees. The carefully kept roads and pathways, lawns, and hedges in the spacious park, at the castle walls, in the Borovičky grove, in the factory gardens on the right bank of the Doubrava, and on the left bank by the church, in addition to the well kept fruit orchards lining the town or the linden tree row stretching from Žleby to the former Auersperg tomb in Markovice – all of these determined the lifelong esthetic perception and self-awareness of those born and raised here.

Gradually I got to know Žleby and its vicinity quite well. As a boy I loved fishing in the river with my fishing rod, from Kopaniny and the Bláha mill to the weir in Korčice, often with my good friend Zdeněk Pfeifer, who used to come to Žleby during the summer vacations to live with his grandmother. With my brother Miroslav and several other boys at the creek between Štikavka and Ohrady, we watched the frogs and their development stages from the jelly-like egg clusters, through the swift tadpoles, to the croaking frogs with their pop-out eyes. We built a windmill under a small floodgate on the creek near the Hájek's garden, propelled by a spring of water swiftly gushing from a crevice between two boards. There was a small pool that formed in the depression from a mined-out, water-impermeable rock at the Gallows Hill. I discovered it together with two classmates in the fourth or fifth grade, Jirka Musílek (later a teacher, talented draftsman, and watercolor painter) and Pepík Arient (later engineer, Dr. Sc. director of the Research Institute of Organic Syntheses in Pardubice). After school with keen interest and quite absorbed, we watched the life of water beetles – great diving beetle, clavicorn, halíplus, and monochamus – in total silence. One day we were so captivated by their engagement in combat that we were late for the optional German session. Ms. Rokosová, however, attentively listened to our excuse and asked us to tell her about our observations in more depth.

I succeeded in making a herbarium of pressed, slowly dehydrated plants only with the types blooming in the spring months. Then we were always overwhelmed by the plethora of herbs blooming in the summer. We gave up this botanical hobby born in the spring because boys were offered so much more fun in the summertime, including the ripening fruit we had to taste and eventually help harvest.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS

Young human beings living in the country are in daily contact with domestic animals. The dominant four-legged one in our home on Castle Street was a stately German shepherd female. Dad trained her himself from a

puppy, so she obeyed his every command. Often and gladly she enjoyed accompanying dad on his police rounds in Žleby and the nearby vicinity. He always called her “Stela” while mom and we, the boys, called her “Stelička.” Her young life was mainly filled with work for the police station. When our neighbor, Mr. Jelínek (an older, retired accountant from the sugar mill) fell ill and became bed-ridden, he complained that he could not sleep at all due to Stela’s howling, especially on clear nights. Our family members knew each other well and sought ways to resolve the unpleasant situation. At that time dad had already applied for early retirement to cure his rheumatism, and Stela lost her beloved job. When Mr. Jeníček, who was just building his new carpenter workshop at the Hill at the northern edge of Žleby, found out about it, he asked dad if he would let him have Stela. Apparently, he was in need of a strong, well trained dog to watch a fenced lot including his workshop filled with machinery, tools, and costly wood supplies. Saying good-bye to Stela was hard on the entire family. Visibly moved and with a quiet seriousness, dad explained to us one day that Stela would be in good hands and that he knew carpenter Jeníček to be a caring man. Besides, our dear dog would have a useful job again, would never have to worry about food, and Jeníček also promised to build her a sturdy dog house.

On an early morning about three months later, Stela was scratching on the door of our apartment in Castle Street, whimpering softly and beseechingly. The owner of the workshop arrived shortly. Dad then summed up what happened this way: Early in the morning when Mr. Jeníček and his employees came to work, they found out that the gate made from the same wire netting which surrounded the entire yard was freshly dug under and Stela was nowhere to be found. Then dad explained to us how during the night Stela gnawed through the bottom part of the old wooden door from Castle Street to our yard and squeezed herself through the opening: “I have never seen anything like it. This can only be the work of a police dog, trained for loyalty and action.” Dad, who had a good understanding of the mentality of his German shepherd, told Mr. Jeníček that it was necessary to take Stela back the same day so that she understood that she did something wrong. Then father stayed with her on the carpenter’s property until late in the afternoon when he definitely said his final good-byes.

After about two or three years, I accompanied mommy to the Hill and on that occasion we decided to go by Mr. Jeníček’s workshop to see if we could catch a glimpse of Stela. It was a still summer afternoon. As soon as we came to the fence, Stelička appeared in all her beauty and strength from who knows where. She stood on her hind legs while resting her front paws on the wires and looked at us in a friendly way while barking, especially at my mom, and powerfully wagging her tail. Smiling, mom calmed her down with a few soothing words. Suddenly Stela dropped down on all

four and ran to the roomy doghouse at the entrance to the workshop. In a moment she was back, this time with her puppies. With her eyes filled with tears, mom said: “So, you see, Stelička, you are happy after all.” It was a very touching moment. After that we never saw Stela again. We did not want to be the cause of a mutual heartbreak.

In contrast to our well trained police dog, our dear house cats were critters somewhat lazy and inclined to leisure. In succession, each of them was named Mindík or Minda. We mostly had the dark gray tabby breed with striped coats. When Miroslav and I were still of pre-school age and had Mindička, we enjoyed playing with kittens. Play was their main activity. When field and garden mice moved into people’s homes with approaching winter, each proper grown cat showed its usefulness. Soon it spotted every little mouse which immigrated into its territory; this was important because mice reproduce exceptionally fast. Occasionally, we observed our cats, when fully focused and as still as a statue, they waited for the appearance of a mouse. Then they caught it in their front paws with a brisk jump, pushed it to the ground, bit and killed it right in front of us, and finally carried it away in their teeth like a true feline. The weaned kittens of our Minda, who already ate from dishes, were very cute. It was no problem to find them nice new homes with other families in Žleby and the surroundings, especially when the new owners found out about the hunting skills of the striped tabbies.

Domestic animals in the country back then were valued not only for their looks and sweetness, but, above all, for their usefulness. After our move from Little Town to the Hill we had various four-legged animals and birds. My mom prepared bran cones for the fattening of our geese. For the other poultry, it was enough to just sprinkle some seeds, especially wheat or barley, on the ground and to open the wooden gate and let them go from the yard to the lawn of the fruit-bearing part of our garden, where there was a stone drain which provided enough water for all of them. A stone trough embedded in the ground always stood in one corner of the yard. We also kept several rabbit breeds, a hobby of our dad, and a white goat that supplied us, and our new pig, with milk. We fed them with grass and freshly plucked, juicy weeds, clover and beets, at times also with leftover stale bread or other baked products. For each winter we had the necessary supply of hay, coarse meal, bran, beets, potatoes, and oat straw or dry leaves for animal bedding. After all these years, I hope I can admit to my weakness – incomprehensible to the countrymen of my youth; I enjoyed feeding all those animals, looking at them, and touching their coats or ears more than later the pot roasts from their meat.

Our family pig occupied a special place among our domestic animals. Each grew from a small piglet my dad bought every year from a farmer up to a fattened pig of ~100 kg, and was kept in a roomy pigsty. Three times a day mom fed the piglet freshly prepared hogwash from

cooked potatoes and grain groats with a bit of goat milk. Dad and I occasionally improved our pig's food diet with beet stalks, fresh acorns, and occasionally also beechnuts. We picked those up at Borovičky, in the park, and at the grove's edge. The pig slaughter had to be properly arranged with a butcher, typically for January, the coldest month of the year, because refrigerators were a rarity in villages of that time period. In winter we always put pieces of ice in the coldest section of the cellar, where we stored meat, milk, and butter. We also kept eggs in the cellar, which mom conserved with water glass (Na_2SiO_3) in five-liter bottles.

Fresh and smoked meat, lard, and cracklings from well fed pigs were an important life-sustaining provision for most country families during a large part of the year, especially during World War II and shortly after. Dad mastered the salting of fresh meat, its two-week thoroughly checked ripening, and its final smoking in a self-built smoke-shed so well that no butcher shop products could match his home-made ones. Finely ground cracklings between two slices of homemade bread, with a handful of dried apples or pears, were quite a tasty lunch during my high school years in Čáslav.

From 1938, mom often prepared bread dough at home from our rye flour, which we received from the mill in exchange for the rye grain, obtained from the grain spikelets, picked up on the Buda fields after harvest. In our family two large bread loaves lasted for a week or longer. In the afternoon I carried the bread dough loaves in big baskets, covered with a linen cloth, to Mr. Bláha's local bakery. I picked them up late in the day, when they had a beautiful ocher color and were baked to perfection. I can smell their fragrance to this day. From Mr. Bláha we also had a bread starter, necessary to prepare the dough. My mom mastered the art of bread making from her grandmother Rychetská at her Kostomlátky home. In the fall we stored, on the shelves in the basement, the harvested vegetables and apples I plucked from a ladder. At the bottom of the steps in the basement stood the large wooden container called "šandlík" full of pickled cabbage. The Czech and Moravian basin, protected by the mountains against northern and western winds, with its fertile soils along the rivers, including loess in the gently hilly areas, has been a self-sufficient storehouse of foodstuffs for centuries. During World War II the German occupation administration used this Czech territory as its important, forcefully appropriated pantry. That is why most of the Czech population turned to at least humor as its weapon and converted the fraudulent German term "Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren" into a more close-fitting "Protektorát nehmen und berem." (The German "nehmen" means "we take" and "berem" is the Czech word for "we grab" used to emphasize the helplessness of the small, occupied nation in the face of the powerful occupiers.)

LOVE OF NON-LIVING NATURE

When I was about ten years old, I discovered yet another extraordinary beauty of nature, quite still, motionless, but certainly fascinating. It occurred at the gravel and building-stone quarry in Markovice. I knew the long row of the full-grown linden trees lining the road from Žleby to Markovice quite well from my visits to Mr. Křížala, the grandfather of one of my classmates, Josef Březina. We stopped by his house to say hello a couple of times during the summer vacations, as Josef always put it, to make his grandparents happy. They lived in a little house on the grounds of the prince's crypt, which was taken care of by Mr. Křížala as an employee of the vast Auersperg manor. After Josef, whom I called Pepíček, passed away after a prolonged pulmonary illness, one day I found myself heading for Markovice by myself. The idea of visiting the quarry was on my mind. Several men worked there, mainly from Žleby. I knew some of them by name. Mr. Jelinek was the father of my classmate Jindra. Occasionally, Jindra stopped by our house on Castle Street or I went to his home in a small apartment house near the Buda pond. We had a special connection, a common youthful interest in chemistry and the possibility of making simple chemical experiments at home. For example, we produced hydrogen from the hydrochloric acid (HCl) reacting with snippets of zinc metal sheets, and we ignited the pure H_2 gas; we tried to find out the impact of water diluted with HCl on gneiss or on pure, unadulterated limestone (release of CO_2); in warm water we dissolved crushed blue vitriol ($\text{CuSO}_4 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$, pentahydrate of copper sulphate, occurring in nature as the mineral chalcantite), which is used as a pesticide to spray plants. During its gradual cooling, we observed the formation of pure crystals of the copper salt, sometimes several centimeters large. We also made distilled water at school in a small apparatus with a spiral cooler. Later, Jindra went off to study at a chemical industrial school, I believe, in Pardubice, from which he graduated.

The workers sitting at the quarry bottom were having a snack break when I arrived. They responded to my greetings with a friendly welcome and Jindřich's father was the first one to address me with unconcealed curiosity, "Jirka, what brings you here? It isn't an interest in our rocks, is it?" He stood up, and without a word, he motioned me to follow him to a flat block of rock, on which lay several pieces of rock with beautiful crystals of minerals then unknown to me. "Do you like any of these?" I touched a couple of the pieces with almost holy reverence and blurted, "Every one of them!" "You may have two of those. We have to save the others for our inspector from Čáslav." This was my first encounter with several minerals of the Alpine paragenesis, which crystalized in gorgeous shapes in hollow or solid veins, filling the cracks in amphibolite. After this day innumerable visits to the Markovice quarry fol-

lowed, and I always found some beautiful or remarkable minerals to add to my student collection of local minerals and rocks.

However, it was not only the Markovice quarry that I visited. My native Žleby and the nearby town of Čáslav, (the district town at the time of my youth) were surrounded by several easily accessible gravel or building-stone quarries. I continued to collect my other mineralogical finds in the local amphibolite, gneiss, and tourmaline granite near Přibyslavice. These were fantastic expeditions for a boy of ten to 15. I thought about them a great deal and they occupied quite a bit of my time. The first time my hands or bare feet ever touched the Cretaceous sea bottom was near Starkoč, on the fine-grained hornfelsic gneiss with large almandines (purplish red garnets). The rock, smoothed by the ocean surf about eighty million years ago, had a surface like silk. The light-colored fillings, consisting of the Cretaceous sediment, clung to the potholes in the Starkoč gneiss, reminiscent of the surface of the sea-abraded amphibolite in Markovice. There were times when, sitting on a rock with my eyes closed and with my hands touching its surface, finely smoothed by the sea-surf entrained sand and gravel, I pictured the roar of the falling waves or the long extinct creatures living in the Turonian sea. I was able to explore any of these well known mineralogical localities on foot or by bike within a single day or less. I collected most of my rocks in the Markovice quarry, at Horky, in the Žleby grove, at Přibyslavice, Bambousek and Starkoč. Yet, I did not look down on the less appealing minerals from the serpentinite quarry in nearby Mladotice. In the canyon valley of the Doubrava River in Žleby, somehow, in my childhood I was especially fascinated by the gneiss rocks. On the platform above them lay sediments of the Cretaceous sea, occasionally with glauconite and red clay in erosive troughs. It was so rich in "limonite" which at times centuries ago was mined as iron ore. My attention was similarly drawn to the various stones that besprinkled the Doubrava riverbed in Žleby. From the river bottom, my other classmates and I extracted clay, which was used in elementary school for modeling during our handwork elective. So, you could say, Žleby and its surroundings were a little geological paradise. I used to compare my first mineral and rock finds with the exhibits on display in the District Museum in Čáslav. Several years later, I tried to identify them with assistance from my high-school science teacher, RNDr. Antonín Culek, or with a friend of mine, Jiří Vtělenský from Čáslav (later an engineer and a successful scientist at the Institute of Raw Materials in Kutná Hora), whom I first met in the Markovice quarry.

STUDENT YEARS IN ČÁSLAV

With my entering Čáslav "Realgymnasium" in 1934, my carefree childhood came to an end with my

completion of elementary school, and I began my eight-year period of systematic secondary education. We had school six days a week, Monday through Saturday, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. I got up before six o'clock with my mom's selfless assistance. The train left from the railway station in Chalupy shortly after seven for Čáslav, where daily we crossed the bridge over the track system of the local railway station. From there it was only a couple-minute brisk walk to our school.

From the very beginning, the school environment in the district town of Čáslav seemed somehow richer, more radiant, and more modern than that of my native little town bound by tradition to the prince's manor. However, the two visibly different settlements displayed many similarities. They shared the same visible pride and care about their appearance, nowadays called nature conservancy. Back then one did not yet talk about the environment very much, but it was nevertheless created as a harmony of shapes, colors, and a sense of cleanliness and care of the local trees and ornamental shrubbery. This care was invisibly ensured by the will and a strong sense of purpose of the elected town representatives as well as volunteers, who were respected and trusted by local citizens.

At that time, I finally realized with certainty that I lived in a splendid countryside, where every piece of land was regularly beautified by human hands. I also happened to set my eyes on a person who would become especially dear to me, whose striking appearance radiated naturalness. I was about 13 or 14 years old and she was seven or eight, when I entered the country bakery of Mr. Důrčánek in Žleby's Little Town. It was located across from the main gate of the sugar factory. Prior to him the shop belonged to Mr. Žďárský, a renowned baker, whose products delivered to the castle during the prince's family visits in Žleby were known far and wide for their outstanding quality. As usual, my entrance was announced with the ringing of a bell on the top frame of the door. A young girl stood at the counter, who, apart from the baked goods, was buying a couple of other small things. Having placed everything in a bag very carefully, she looked at me with her curious blue eyes, her face framed by dark hair, and with a quiet "good bye" and the jangling of the bell, she left the store. Inquiringly, I looked at Mr. Důrčánek. Before I had a chance to utter a word, I heard, "That was Helenka, little Miss Rudolfová, a pretty creature, right?" I had to smile at the last three words, but this first encounter has stayed engraved in my memory forever.

Čáslav High School was a two-story building with spacious classrooms and high windows and ceilings. The big and bright gym was added later on a smaller section of the large yard at whose entrance also stood the principal's residence. To enter the gym one had to go down a couple of steps directly from the ground floor of the main building. Behind the gym there was enough space left for a volleyball court, broad- and high-jump

sand landing areas, as well as for running and warm-up exercises, which alternated in the gym two hours each a week.

On the ground floor, we could visit the student library looked after by our homeroom teacher, Jaroslav Pacák. There was also a science room with beetle, butterfly, and other insect collections, cabinets with various stuffed animal exhibits, several microscopes, and working tables. In a small room at the main entrance to the building, our custodian sold warm sausages with mustard and “houškas” (braided rolls). Adjacent was a room for the commuting students, who, during inclement weather, sometimes waited here for voluntary afternoon instruction. I was especially fond of the art room, always full of light, with tables and chairs instead of the typical school desks, with several cupboards and plaster models, and also drawing and watercolor equipment. In the school hallways were clothing racks for students from the eight years of our secondary school. Beneath them were benches to sit down and change shoes – freely accessible to all, without any lockers or locks. We just had to remember the place where we left our outerwear. Throughout those eight years, I do not recall any instance of anything ever getting lost from the racks or benches. I enjoyed physics and chemistry, which were taught in the rooms on the second floor, with rows of elevated seats leading to the highest one at the top, which enabled students to easily observe the demonstrations or experiments taking place on the sturdy table in front of the sliding blackboard. In the “quinta” and “sexta” (the fifth and sixth year of the Gymnasium, corresponding to the 10th and 11th grade of American high school), I enjoyed taking part in the optional practical lab exercises in chemistry, which took place one afternoon a week in the laboratory adjacent to the chemistry lecture room.

Our school day had short and main breaks between the five instructional periods, which started and ended with the clear sound of the bell. During the major ten-minute breaks, the students would walk alone or by twos down the hallways, chattering or silent, inconspicuously being supervised by someone from the teaching staff. It was a daily opportunity for us to express our fondness or friendship, to meet someone from another grade level, and to admire the pretty girls, who resourcefully provoked targeted country bumpkins with their appeal. I’d like to think that I was among them, but due to my upbringing, life goals, and the constant involvement in my home responsibilities in Žleby, I was unresponsive. After all, I was happy when later, during the dance lessons, I held some of these charming girls in my arms, at whom I liked to look and with whom I liked to speak at school. That included our extended dances during which I sailed with them confidently across the Čáslav Grand Hotel dance floor.

The dance lessons of the Čáslav High School students of those days were wonderful, although the surrounding

world already had begun to experience the climate of an occupied nation and the beginning of World War II. The cotillion lessons took place late Saturday afternoons in the hall of the local Grand hotel in the main town square. They were organized and led by the renowned dance instructor, Mr. Hejman. Typically, in attendance were students of the 10th and 11th grades of my school and the second-year students of the local Agricultural Vocational School, as well as the girls from the Housekeeping Vocational School in Čáslav. I did not attend the cotillion until 12th grade for a very prosaic reason. In the years prior to the cotillion, I grew quite a bit and put some flesh on my bones. At the beginning of 11th grade when it was time to sign up, I realized with dismay that I did not own any dark suit required to participate. When my brother Miroslav found out about it, he said he was going to have a suit made to measure in Zábोří, where he was employed as a dental technician and received a very good income. He said that I could borrow it for all of my dancing lessons. We had a similar stature, but, unfortunately, the tailor was unable to take care of our order in time. I was left with no other option but to postpone my dance course by another year. I took it easy. The dancing lessons began around the middle of October and ended shortly before Christmas. It was important for me to catch the last evening train from Čáslav to Žleby. I always managed to do so walking briskly, sometimes jogging. We had two to three extended lessons, attended by some of the graduates of the previous courses, and on these occasions I got to dance also with the girls from our grade level, whose smiles, questions, and innuendos made our conversations quite lively and fun. On the days of the extended lessons, which lasted until about midnight, I was able to spend the night at Blahomír Borovička’s or Jiří Vtělenský’s homes, with whose younger sisters I also danced. Both were nice and intelligent girls.

My eight-year secondary education in Čáslav was a direct prerequisite for my dream of studying at Charles University in Prague. Having described briefly the environment in which it took place, I have now reached a more important component, which influenced our thinking, decision-making, work ethics, and self-determination as citizens. On the one hand, there were our teachers, with their human qualities, pedagogical talent, thoroughness, consistency, and knowledge of the subject matter, but, most importantly, with their personal example. On the other hand, the students influenced one another as well, with their varied character qualities, their demonstrations of solidarity, and friendship, but also competitiveness.

The most influential teacher for me and most students he taught was Mr. Jaroslav Pacák, our homeroom teacher throughout the eight years of secondary school, from the sixth to the thirteenth. He was highly educated, respected, admired, friendly, with a sense of humor, fair to all students, and with unfailing integrity.

Throughout all the eight years he taught us Czech and German. In the lower grades, his lessons included predominantly teaching grammar, giving dictations, and discussing our mistakes, sometimes in a funny or slightly ironic way; he also involved us in short story analyses, and poetry recitations by heart; in Czech, he emphasized writing our quarterly compositions on a given topic, required reading and its discussions. In higher grades, an emphasis on literature grew, on the analyses of the stories, poetry, and novels read, occasionally also on dramas, in connection with lectures or discussions of the time period when the works originated. In accordance with the Ministry of Public Education ruling, after 1939 the higher grades occasionally subscribed to the Austrian daily newspaper, *Welt-Blatt*. Reading this paper helped us expand our German conversational vocabulary, but we were also astonished at the news attesting to the German Nazi expansionism, the open will to totally control other European nations, and perhaps the entire world, via the united Berlin–Rome–Tokyo axis.

Already then our knowledgeable teacher, Mr. Pacák, explained to us that the rules of the Czech orthography must reflect the natural development of the language and simultaneously solve the growing necessity to adopt words from foreign languages, in particular Latin. His lesson is valid today: “Also in this section of the Czech orthography it is necessary to honor the clear and single spelling rules and not accept a double spelling possibility. For example, adopted words, where there is double “ss” in the original language, such as *discussion*, *commission*, *recession*, in Czech these words must be written and pronounced as *diskuse*, *komise*, *recese*, not *diskuze* etc., because no one says or writes *komize* or *receze*, but *komise* and *recese*.” He also surprised us with his explanation of how to decline the word, Čáslav. Mr. Pacák: “All of us are aware of the fact that the word Čáslav occurs in our conversation daily. Is it correct to write and say “into Čáslav” – as *do Čáslavě* or *do Čáslavi*, “at Čáslav” as *u Čáslavě* or *u Čáslavi*, “in Čáslav” as *v Čáslavi* or *v Čáslavě*, “from Čáslav” as *z Čáslavě* or *z Čáslavi*, “with Čáslav” as *s Čáslavou* or *s Čáslavi*, “around Čáslav” as *okolo Čáslavě* or *okolo Čáslavi*, etc., in all other cases? As far as this is concerned, today I am going to share with you, already mature twelfth graders, a convincing paradigm, which I know, from my own experience, to be quite simple and unforgettable. It is a little crude (at this point, we were all ears), so it is important to also provide its source. I have this paradigm for the declension of the word “Čáslav” from the mouth of a Charles University professor of the Czech language and grammar, from one of his engaging lectures I so diligently attended. So, the noun paradigm for Čáslav and similar proper nouns (such as Boleslav, Sobeslav, or Zbraslav) is *prdel* (in English *ass*). And that is why precisely as in the case of *pr...*, the correct forms of the word *Čáslav* preceded by

the various prepositions are: *do Čáslavě*, *u Čáslavě*, *v Čáslavi*, *z Čáslavě*, *s Čáslavi*, *okolo Čáslavě*, etc. It is my hope that you will apply this paradigm correctly from now on, although only in your minds without abusing it.” In the perked up class, after everyone tested briefly the usefulness of the new paradigm, a voice was heard, probably Láda Chroustovský’s, who sat behind me at the last desk. “That’s what I call an eternally useful grammar paradigm! Are there any other like that?” Mr. Pacák: “I think this is quite enough. If you were not from Čáslav and had no trouble declining the name of our own town, so dear to all of us, even this helpful rule would have remained hidden from you. So, be happy that starting today you are infallible masters of the declension of the proper name *Čáslav*.”

Mr. Pacák was a rare pedagogue also because he succeeded in making a rich connection between our study of the language and the Czech literary culture in a broad historical span, connecting it at the same time with history interpreted not only by those in power, but also in social terms. He wanted us to understand the lives and thinking of ordinary people and of the entire nation at the time described by the writers. When in the tenth or eleventh grade we were rehearsing the cycle of stories in verses “*Ve stínu lípy*” (“In the Shade of the Linden Tree”) by Svatopluk Čech (1846–1908) under Mr. Pacák’s guidance, he entrusted me with the character of a young beginning teacher, Mr. Zajiček. One of our homework assignments was to think about our verses, the time period, and the environment, and then present either our own interpretation or a critical analysis in front of the class. I remember that I was happy when Mr. Pacák’s smile and his positive nod suggested that both of us had the same understanding of the text by the important Czech poet of the second half of the nineteenth century. The lessons with Mr. Pacák always somehow seemed short, because they were intense, always interesting, hands on, never purely encyclopedic.

About four times a year, in good weather, our entire class under Mr. Pacák’s guidance participated in power-walking exercises in the vicinity of Čáslav. Usually we walked by twos or in a single file on one side of the road, through Církvice almost as far as Malín. From there one could see a bit of Kutná Hora, during the Middle Ages the second largest town after Prague in its importance and size (Figures 18, 19). Sometimes we took walks nearby, in Vodranty, a small forest in Čáslav with a sports-field and a set of pathways suited for jogging. We were instructed to observe the beauty of nature in the fall or spring and then be ready to discuss it. At the end of the school year, we went on one- or two-day field trips, together with Mr. Pacák and another teacher. These trips were always well planned and had a connection with Czech literature and history. With its historic buildings, Kutná Hora made the strongest impression on me, in particular the Gothic cathedral of St. Barbara (Figure 9), the patron saint of miners, Italian Court with the mint of



Figure 18. The Italian Court in Kutná Hora, originally a mint and royal seat (since the time of the Přemysl dynasty). Here, Italian coin makers minted silver and gold coins from local mine materials. Reconstruction and expansion took place from the 13th – 20th centuries.

the Czech kings, and a museum with numerous mineral exhibits. Surprising and impressive was the trip to the Sázava monastery, to the remnants of the original masonry (made from red arkose to be more precise), where St. Prokop worked as an abbot. I also remember a two-day trip to Hronov in northeastern Bohemia, where we spent some time sitting in the auditorium of the Theater of Alois Jirásek listening to Mr. Pacák's lecture on the importance of drama in Czech culture. The trip was crowned by a visit to the Broumov rocks.

In his spare time Mr. Pacák worked at the Pokrok (Progress) Movie Theater, which belonged to several charity organizations including the Organization of Disabled War Veterans. He also took to liking the Dusík Theater and promoted its activity among the high school students. I remember his offering me a book in the library once, saying, "Jiří, I would love for you to



Figure 19. Kutná Hora: another view of the Italian Court.

read this book about the life of the Čáslav native, musician Ladislav Dusík and to write a couple of pages about it to share with class." I opened the book and softly read the title page, "Zatoulaná píseň" ("The Lost Song") by Alois Vojtěch Šmilovský"; I had never heard of the author before. I found out much later that his original name was Alois Schmilauer (1837–1883). He was a high school professor and school inspector and in his prose he drew distinctive characters emerging from the Czech nation endowed with remarkable creativity. In his fatherly way, Mr. Pacák made it his mission to acquaint the older grades with additional literature, apart from the required books from our very well equipped student school library. Many students of the higher grades of Čáslav High School, where Mr. Pacák taught, could certainly corroborate a similar experience.

Our homeroom teacher often encouraged us to read more. He loved books and considered them a fountain of wisdom and every nation's great treasure. After the war (1939–1945), when he was no longer alive, I learned that his widow, Mrs. Lidmila Pacáková, donated to the high school from her husband's extensive private collection, a long row of German classic and modern works bound the same way. To me this act was sufficient proof of my impression of Pacák's lectures in the Czech and German lessons I witnessed as a student, namely, that, to a certain extent, they were a comparative study of two languages. His love of literature extended also to his care of the school library, which he did in cooperation with students. All books lining the tall shelved cabinets gradually received uniform covers of light brown wrapping paper. We printed large serial numbers on the spine and inside of each book. The main benefit of this wrapping and printing job for students was above all to get acquainted with the names of the most important Czech authors, with their book titles, and also in some cases with the graphic art at the time of publication. Students also got to know translations of world-renowned authors, especially European and American. Sometime in eleventh grade I read my first novel in German, *El Hakim* by John Knittel, about the life of a physician in Egypt. I really enjoyed the author's style, his narrative of the protagonist's encounters with his patients and villagers, and his innermost experiences when facing diverse adversity.

As I advanced in the highest grades of Čáslav High School (Figure 20), I developed my long-desired dream of dedicating my life to scientific research or to medicine. With keen interest I devoured the marvelous pages depicting such life filled with rewarding work described, for example, by Paul de Kruif in *Microbe Hunters* or by Sinclair Lewis in his novel, *Arrowsmith*. I fell in love with Martin Arrowsmith's realization, at which he arrived through his personal experience with research: "The most important part of experimentation is not doing the experiment but making notes, very accurate quantitative notes." It accompanied me



Figure 20. The 1942 Graduates of Čáslav High School: Top left: Jaroslav Pacák, homeroom teacher and František Pulkrábek, assistant principal Grade 13, from top left to right: Jan Egjdy, Jiří Jankovec, Václav Dymák, Jaroslav Mynář; Věra Klečková, Marie Lesseová, Jarmila Malátková, Vlasta Císařová, Eva Hořejší, Hana Konopásková; Ladislav Chroustovský, Blahomír Borovička, Ludmila Linhartová, Jiřina Komárková, Jiří Konta, Jiří Kovanda; Vladimír Kučera, Ladislav Loukotka, Miroslav Louda, Josef Dvořák, Miloš Branč, Josef Marcilis; Olga Malátková, Věra Hübschová, Vlasta Hlavová, Věra Jarolímková, Marie Hofrichtrová, Libuše Jarolímová; Miloš Konvalina, Josef Arient, Josef Duben, and Ladislav Mašek.

throughout my entire life, supporting my own research as well as that of my students.

The frequent reports on the books or stories studied in Mr. Pacák's lessons were not just busy work. He was trying to teach us how important it was, already in one's early years, to capture accurately, clearly, and succinctly the essence of any work, including of one's own ideas. He used to say that every educated person had to be able to do so and to prove it in both spoken and written forms, over and over again. That is why he kept correcting his students or adding information, and providing encouragement or appreciation with his nodding. For all of that, his pedagogical skills, his talent not only to teach but

also to educate, for his love of literature and his native language, during the days that followed Heydrich's assassination, he had to pay with his life, so tragically cut short. In Čáslav, an orderly district town where daily activities did not go unnoticed, Mr. Pacák soon fell under the radar of the ruling occupiers and their Czech minions. This bright beacon had to be extinguished forever in the interest of the Third Reich¹.

Among other professors, whom I highly respected and who had an influence on my work, were especially

¹ See page 43.

science teachers RNDr. Antonín Culek and in the lower high school grades Otokar Holländer, physics teacher Karel Buben, mathematics teacher Václav Kučera, Latin teacher Marcela Pinkasová-Wurmová, and art teachers Karel Liška and Antonín Pospíšil. When later at the end of the war, I returned from the German concentration camp and was getting reacquainted with my hometown Žleby, Mr. Pospíšil paid us a visit. As I was not at home and my dad was somewhere in the fields, he had a talk with my mother. He told her that he was my art teacher and that he heard about my return from Mauthausen and wanted me to apply to the Academy of Arts in Prague because, in his opinion, I was made for this kind of work. When I returned home that evening, visibly moved, my mom described his unexpected visit and said that it pained her to have to tell such a caring young educator that I decided to study science and chemistry at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and that I had already applied there. I made a decision to devote myself especially to geology and to graduate with the best possible results as soon as possible. I wanted to be able to take care of myself financially and also to help out my beloved aging parents. Whenever I recall the years of my studies at Čáslav High School, I always think of the quality of the teaching staff we had back then.

We went to Čáslav High School daily except for Sundays, by a passenger train, which was full of students, apprentices, and other people from the communities located around the railway. Most of the passengers had Čáslav as their final destination, with the exception of a few individuals who changed there to continue in the direction of Sedlec, Kutná Hora, and Kolín. Typically, the two-o'clock train was less crowded, carrying mainly students returning home from Čáslav. In those eight years of secondary school, four of us classmates commuted together: Pepík Arient, Láda Loukotka, Pepík Marcilis, and I. Gradually, we made other friends within our class and in other grades close to us in age.

From my classmates, I was closest with Honza Egidy, who shared our two-seat desk with me. He was endowed with a friendly disposition, clever rhetoric, and a sense of humor. His dad, JuDr. Egidy, was a secretary of the district town of Kutná Hora. Honza was an only child, and sometime in the ninth grade he told me that his parents wanted to meet me and expected my acceptance of their invitation to join them in Kutná Hora for a few days. That is how, during the summer vacation between ninth and tenth grade, I found myself, with my parents' permission, as a guest in their big apartment, formerly a town licensing office. Jan had his own room and his own desk, something quite luxurious and out of reach for me. In our pretty little house with a garden in Žleby, I always studied during my high school years in our kitchen or living room, always with an immense understanding from my parents and brothers. After our move to the Hill in 1936, where there was no electricity installed, I wrote

all my homework assignments on the kitchen table, where I also did my drawings with India ink on large sheets of sturdy paper stretched over a portable drawing board. In the winter I used an oil lamp we called "bleskovka" (flash lamp). I never felt wronged or disadvantaged. On the contrary, I loved our modest, simple way of life. I think I was loyal to my heritage and well aware of the importance to assert myself through hard work. I was also constantly influenced by my mom's words about the power and necessity of education as a prerequisite to be able to soar high.

The Egidy family inherited a cottage at the Bahno pond, less than an hour's ride away, where they would often go by train to spend their summer weekends. Naturally, on the following Saturday I joined them on their family trip. The name of the pond, Bahno (meaning mud in Czech), says quite a bit about its bed. Having immersed myself in the refreshing summer water of the pond, I found that with every step we took farther from the banks, the water became more and more cloudy due to the fine particles being lifted from the pond's muddy bed. There I formed even a stronger bond with the graceful Doubrava. I thought about its predominantly gravel- or sand base and its water, which was hardly ever murky, staying clear most of the year. On the way home by train, finally returning from the few-days' visit with the Egidy family, I was immersed in quiet reverie; I decided that whatever I would do, create, or be responsible for one day would have to be extremely useful, appreciated by many, and at the same time of such quality that I could create a better and richer life for myself. With surprising astonishment I realized for the first time in my life and quite unexpectedly, although understandably, that I had critical feelings towards my existence handed to me by fate. However, I immediately decided not to speak about my willful defiance of fate with anyone, but instead to put forth even more energy towards my goal. From then on, I was on the lookout for and read with great enthusiasm and self-reflection the biographies and news of creative individuals, each one deserving to carry the label "self-made man" such as Edison, Pasteur, or Marie Curie-Sklodowska.

Three of my classmates in the very first grades of Čáslav High School helped me discover the attractions of scouting and find enjoyment in spending exceptional years in harmony with the wonders of nature. I spent them in the vicinity of the district town or in games with like-minded youths in Čáslav and later in Žleby. They were Blahomír Borovička, Ivo Engländer, and Pavel Mikysek. Blahomír and Ivo were more intellectual while Pavel was a handyman with admirable dexterity and productivity. One day after school, they took me to the Formans' villa in the Balkán quarter, where the meetings of troop and patrol scout leaders took place. I was introduced and assigned to the troop of Bláža Forman, the oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Forman. Soon after I was nominated first as the Beavers' leader and in 1937 as the

Wolves' leader. Mr. Forman and Bláža were terrific teachers with an amazing understanding of young people and with a rare ability to engage them through their many activities. The patrols met alternately in one of the low cylinder-shaped bastions of a middle age fortification, which was turned into a clubroom. There were so many meetings, new games, trips about town or its surroundings, and so many varied experiences, including how to make different types of fire in a thrifty and careful way, extinguish them safely, quickly put up various types of tents, master tying various knots, and how to make plaster molds of animal- and human feet. Equally memorable were also our collecting rare wood specimens, testing our knowledge of the Morse code and first aid, as well as taking the required scout fitness tests and earning scouting badges, including the coveted "Eagle Scout" ("Three Eagle Feathers" recognition). We felt a connection not only by our shared desire to experience, at least occasionally, the woodsmen's romanticism described by authors of the likes of Seton, Grey, London, and especially Jaroslav Foglar, but also by having in common the wish to spend our free time in a more meaningful way.

In Čáslav it was the entire Forman family who dedicated themselves to the scouting organization (later Junák). Apart from Mr. and Mrs. Forman and Bláža, also their second-born son Pavel was involved; he was just a little older than I, a very talented artist, who later, after World War II, emigrated to Australia. The baby of the family was Miloš, about ten years younger than I, today a world famous filmmaker, who immigrated to the USA at the end of the 1960s. Back then, just before World

War II, Milošek kept us supplied with biscuits and cookies of the "Jína" brand, during the scout leaders' meetings at the glassed verandah of their corner villa while his mom served us tea. It did not take me long to gather about forty boys in Žleby and establish three new scout patrols there: the Beavers (first led by me, then by Karel Kučera), the Chamois (first led by my brother Miroslav, then by Karel Křivský), and the Seagulls (led by Zdeněk Jirák). By then the unstoppable, approaching Calvary was imminent, not only for Czech scouting, but for our entire nation. It definitely marked the end of our carefree, idyllic youth. I was barely 17. The second half of the war years of 1940–1945, I first spent at the forced labor in Germany and later as a prisoner in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. When I returned home, I learned the sad news that Mr. and Mrs. Forman were arrested by the Gestapo and died later as martyrs for free Czechoslovakia in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. I am sure their sons would be more suited to write about that, also with more accuracy and more in depth than I. As if there were not enough family tragedy, soon after also Bláža, the leader of a group of Čáslav boys, perished together with several other participants in a summer excursion in the Low Tatras, where they were surprised by a blizzard and a sudden plummeting of temperature. I do not have any more information about the tragedies in the Forman family, who were highly respected and revered by the East Bohemian scouting family (Figure 21).

In the rest of Czechoslovakia, occupied from March 15, 1939, by Nazi Germany, all scout organizations were prohibited by the end of the year. Some scout officials



Figure 21. Žleby Scout Troop and Patrol Leaders, 1938–1939 and 1945–1948: *Standing*, from left: Karel Kučera, Jiří Nesládek, Láda Musílek, Bedřich Valtr, František Šmejcký, Milan Veselý, Jiří Konta (troop leader), Kája Štefec with Miroslav Konta's mandolin, and Jaroslav Havlíček. *Kneeling*, from left: Karel Křivský, Miroslav Konta with guitar, and Jaroslav Štefec.

managed to emigrate to the West before the occupation invasion. Those who stayed were closely watched by the Gestapo and its Czech informers. During the war, an organization like scouting that had a cultural origin in or a potential connection with Great Britain or the USA and that supported national sentiment other than German, was unthinkable in Hitler's Germany and its occupied countries. After the candidate screening at the scout center in Kolín at the beginning of 1939, I was nominated leader of the first Žleby troop, the three groups of which already founded earlier were quite successful. With a friendly understanding, Mr. Händel let us use the clubhouse for free, which we were able to furnish with several donated pieces of furniture, tents for camping, and a small bookcase where we displayed specially formed wood specimens and castings. This room was located on the ground floor of a factory house at the foot of the steep Borovičky slope, where Mr. Händel lived and also had his workshop where he pursued his upholstery business. In July 1939 we managed to spend three gorgeous weeks camping in tents on a meadow near the Chrudimka River in the Iron Mountains. It was close to a small village called Travná, where we had a vast, beautiful forest behind us. The sequence of events that followed took place under the pressure of the systematic despotism of the Nazi German authorities. In the second half of July 1939, when we were getting ready to return home, all outdoor camping was strictly forbidden.

At the end of September, suddenly the door of our 11th Grade A classroom flew open. Our assistant principal walked in with a solemn, slightly frightened face and announced to Mr. Pacák the arrival of two gentlemen from the district office, who requested to speak with Jiří Konta. I was told to pack my things, that we were going to Žleby. Having cast a quick glance to the hallway, where there were two middle-aged men, Mr. Pacák approached my desk, and gently pressing my shoulder, he escorted me to the open door, my first encounter with the Gestapo. Next to the Gestapo agent wearing a gray leather coat, stood a Czech citizen in civil clothes, who introduced himself as captain Consolascio. His Italian name, however, brought me no consolation. I answered their question, whether we should go first to our house to get the scout clubroom key, by saying that there was no need for it because there was only one key to the room, which was permanently kept in an opening above the top edge of the door.

In about fifteen minutes we were in Žleby. They parked their car at the factory bridge at the left bank on the Doubrava. We covered the rest of the distance, a little over a hundred meters, on foot. We stayed in the clubroom only for a few minutes. The Gestapo agent cast an experienced glance at the folded tents and scouting equipment, touched a couple of books in the bookcase, and smiling he kept staring at the front wall of the room with a color oil landscape painting I completed about

two years earlier with Mr. Händel's permission. After his inquiry "No weapons?" and my terse, "No," we left the clubroom. Then they locked the door, sealed it with a tape and a stamp, and kept the key. On the way back to the car, the satisfied Gestapo agent commented on the "beautiful quartz veins" in the gneiss rock. That was a surprise to me considering his line of work, and that he also thought that the countryside was "gorgeous." In a nutshell, this is how I remember the conversation between the two men on the way to the car. They were sending me signals that I did not exist for them any longer and that the entire incident, as far as they were concerned, was taken care of. At the car they returned my school bag to me with the following warning: "Today, your scouting activities are definitely over. Any careless continuation would have tragic consequences for you and other participants. Starting today any contacts with the Čáslav leadership or members of the scout center are considered a crime. Everything is under our control, and forget your clubhouse." Then overconfidently they got in their car and left, and I slowly walked home through a narrow pathway above the factory houses, just a few steps away from my beloved Doubrava.

I was contemplating my future actions over the river's calm surface with softly floating leaves. First, I would have to inform the three patrol leaders and all scouts of the Žleby troop about the incident. Then we would have to hide anything that had to do with scouting I still kept at home – my diary, written records and other literature, the scouting oath to the Czechoslovak Republic neatly written in large letters by my brother Miroslav, several flags, and my scout uniform. What am I going to say to my parents and how am I going to explain it? Above all, I must prevent any harm that may come to them and my brothers.

When I opened the gate, my dad greeted me after my somewhat hesitant "hello" with the words, "What happened, Jiří, that you are back so early?" Mom, who heard our voices, came out to the doorsteps and immediately suggested we all discuss it at home, behind a closed door. At the kitchen table both parents listened attentively to what I had to say. Dad put his tanned hands on the table, palms down, lifted his head slightly, and thought aloud, "Alright, above all, we have to keep a cool head. There are too many scouts in Bohemia and Moravia for the Germans or the Protectorate police to keep an eye on. However, son, the Germans, the way I got to know them, especially those in uniforms, are very thorough and precise. They check, observe, and investigate everything several times. It is not out of the question that the Gestapo could pay us a visit here. That's why we have to get all things connected with scouting out of our house as soon as possible. You saw yourself how the Gestapo lost no time in talking to you. If you want to graduate in Čáslav, you have to give up scouting or postpone it for a while. Germany cannot

forget the loss of World War I and the humiliation by its conqueror enemies, especially England, USA, and France. Besides, scouting has its roots in England and North America. Also, don't forget the way we were treated by our allies, France and Great Britain, in the face of another war with Germany. It is also partly thanks to them that a democratic Czechoslovakia no longer exists. We had to accept the demeaning Munich Agreement without a fight in order not to be considered the cause of a new armed conflict." Dad questioned, "Or are we already at the beginning of World War II, which broke out on our territory without an armed encounter?" It was clear that I had to be vigilant and take immediate action: to find a secure hiding place for my remaining scout paraphernalia and to keep communication with the scouts. That very day I put my scout literature and other items into an old canvas backpack and, with my father's permission, put it in the deserted apiary in our garden, where I was building a collection of local minerals and rocks on repaired load-bearing benches. In one of its corners were two old wooden beehives with dilapidated frames used for the fastening of honeycombs. We placed the backpack in a dry space behind them and covered both beehives with a short massive board, which was covered, in just a couple days, with more mineral specimens.

The news of Czech citizens being arrested by the Gestapo, the persecution and destruction of our people of Jewish heritage, the exclusion of their children from schools, and the confiscation of their property and housing – all of these were escalating from the summer of 1939 with increasing intensity by the actions of the occupation authorities. My classmate Ivo Engländer, in tenth grade, whose dad worked as an engineer for the state railway in Čáslav, managed to emigrate to England just in time. After the war I found out that after his high school graduation there, he decided to study at a technical college in Birmingham. In 1941, when the air attack on Great Britain was raging, he signed up as a cadet with the British Royal Air Force. He was assigned to the anti-submarine "Liberator" bombers and trained as a navigator. In June 1942 he was reassigned to Czechoslovak aviators because there was a need for someone fluent in English who was a Czechoslovak citizen. As a sergeant he participated in numerous search and combat flights first in the Bay of Biscay and later in the North Sea, where it was necessary to protect ship convoys on their route from the USA to Russia and back under attack from dozens of German submarines. However, fate was not good to him. On January 1, 1945, just a few months before the end of the war, his plane crashed during an emergency landing on the rocky shore of one of the Orkney Islands. The bomber's entire crew perished. Only several of Ivo's small items were recovered and returned to the airport barracks; they eventually reached his parents when delivered to his mother by some of the lucky Czechoslovak pilots who

returned home. It was only thanks to Mrs. Engländer's extraordinary effort, her love and selflessness that saved her husband from transportation to a certain death in a one of the many concentration camps from which for a person of Jewish descent there was no return. Mr. Engländer never left their house during the entire war.

An even more tragic fate was that of another classmate of mine, Jiří Eisner, the son of the physician Dr. Josef Eisner. I knew him only briefly because his family moved to Čáslav after an escape from the occupied border area of Czechoslovakia near Liberec in 1938. The general practitioner rented a house including his practice in the street leading from the railway station to our high school. Immediately following the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, in March 1939, the German authorities issued a ban for all Jewish children to attend school and also an order for Jewish citizens of all ages to wear the six-point star of David with the inscription "Jude." My classmate Jiří Eisner was working as a concrete worker at first for builder Bláha, after whose arrest he found a job as a gardener in the Coniferous nurseries in nearby Žehušice. Other fatal blows followed. Jiří's mom passed away in June 1941 of a brain tumor. His dad was arrested in March 1942 and tortured to death in the Terezín concentration camp, perhaps because he was on friendly terms with the already arrested builder Bláha. Massive arrests of Jews and Czech citizens followed Reinhard Heydrich's assassination at the beginning of June 1942 thanks to the Kolín Oberlandrat initiative, which controlled the districts of Kolín, Český Brod, Nový Bydžov, Čáslav, Kutná Hora, Nymburk, Poděbrady, Ledec nad Sázavou, Humpolec, and Německý (Havlíčkův) Brod. The arrested also included Jiří Eisner and his three-years younger brother, Miloš, also a student at Čáslav High School. The Nazis and their minions certainly wasted no time. First, they sent both brothers to the Terezín ghetto for a few days and already in June 1942 to some of the Nazi death camps in occupied Poland, where they perished, as did hundreds of thousands of other concentration camp prisoners (Marek, 1980).

Only one of my classmates, Blahomír Borovička, joined the ranks of the partisans and participated in fighting against the occupation for several months before the end of the war. He was wounded during a skirmish with a German unit somewhere in the Iron Mountains. After the war he finished his studies of architecture at the Prague Technical College and later held the position of the head architect of the city of Prague.

After the closing of our scout clubroom in Žleby by the Gestapo, the former local scouts met at the volleyball court or at the big weir in the park when swimming in the summer or skating and playing hockey in the winter. We were watchful, responsible, and vigilant – according to the scout slogan "Be prepared." As we took part in these sport activities together with other Žleby youths

before the occupation, our frequent friendly interaction with one another did not seem suspicious. We often played basketball during physical education lessons in the school gym, and, in good weather, we participated in high and broad jump in the big yard behind the school, under the friendly supervision of our teacher, Bohumil Böhm. I took part in several training sessions in the middle-distance events, held in the afternoons, which meant returning home on the evening train. In the eleventh grade, Láda Loukotka, the excellent and brave goalie of the Čáslav High School hockey team, asked me to join because they were in need of a defenseman and a good skater not afraid of rough body checking on ice. I accepted this challenge rather hastily, without much thinking, at the beginning of the winter. However, soon I realized that my Sunday hockey games and my spring afternoon track training sessions in Vodranty were in conflict with my major, long-term future goal. I woke up from my amateur team-sport visions when I received my report cards showing only “passed” instead of my usual “with honors.” Needless to say, I gradually gave up all those extra-curricular physical activities. Instead, I went running by myself in Žleby on the roads and pathways in the park, or skated on the frozen Doubrava between the weir and the Yellow Bridge. I loved the feeling of absolute freedom, with the knowledge that I enjoyed the most thorough exercise without team responsibilities and competitions. After all, I got plenty of exercise helping out at home, which together with my studies was my top priority.

Miroslav and I were able to make some money already in elementary school. In the fall, we collected fallen chestnuts that throughout the winter provided supplemental feed to the deer in the prince’s local game preserve. After every strong wind in September and October, we hurried to the place where massive chestnut trees grew. We put their brown shiny fruits into a small basket or a light tin pot, then poured them into a bag on our cart, and transported them home. When we collected about 50 kilos, which our dad helped us estimate, we divided the chestnuts into two to three smaller bags and delivered them by cart to the local game-park keeper, Mr. King. In front of a woodshed in his yard, stood a decimal weighing scale. Our collection was weighed carefully by the gamekeeper, Mr. Puhoný, who paid us immediately. After helping him empty our load on top of a pile in the woodshed, we set out for home with empty bags on our cart. We were always saddened about getting rid of such beautiful chestnuts so quickly, which took us quite a while to collect, but self-made money was warming our palms. The running rate for a kilo of chestnuts was twenty halers, so for fifty kilos we received two silver five-crown coins, quite a bit of money for boys back then. I was earning a lot more, though, by tutoring, starting at the age of 14, throughout the year. At the recommendation of local teachers, I was tutoring both boys and girls of several Žleby families.

They needed assistance especially in mathematics, Czech, German, and later in physics. During the summer vacation harvests from the age of sixteen, I also began to make some extra money at the Buda farmstead, only a ten-minute walk away. Typically, I carried bags of thrashed grain. I would carry them from the steam-thresher across the yard to the silo, and from there up the wide steps to the designated level. There were two young men in our group and two sturdy women. When there was a lot of grain harvested, later in the day it was necessary sometimes to grit our teeth in order to keep up with the fast pace.

In 1936 the Olympic Games and the international soccer championships were held in Berlin. One day I was sitting with my friends at the Kings’ family porch where Robert and Čalda (short for Charles in Czech) were immersed in a stormy discussion of the Czechoslovak sportsmen’s chances. Being the youngest there, I preferred to keep quiet, because I knew those here in attendance accepted me only thanks to my decisively beating them as well as all the other table tennis players in Žleby. The table tennis matches took place in the restaurant “Na Hrázi” (At the Embankment), then suffering from the sugar mill shutdown. I was among the pillars of the Žleby team, which played against the local clubs in Třemošnice, Ronov, and a couple of other places. Suddenly, the brother of the forest administrator King entered from the kitchen. He was a member of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, whose seat was in Prague near the eastern end of Charles Bridge. Seeming quite friendly with his clerical collar, he said, “Guys, just listening to you I am not quite sure that you have a clue about the time we’re living in. You should think about the growing Nazism in Germany next door and about what consequences it may have for our country.” All of us paused, taken aback by surprise, and I thought the best I could do was to go home and not to forget his words. This unexpected challenge from the knight of an order supported by the Czech kings, whose English ancestors entered the service of the Auersperg family in Žleby a long time ago, resonated with me later on, returning with every tragic event of the following years: 1938 – Munich Agreement and the division and curtailing of Czechoslovakia; March 1939 – full occupation of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia; October 28, 1939 – a demonstration of students and other youth in Prague brutally suppressed by shots in Žitná Street, killing and wounding demonstrators led by the Czech student of medicine Jan Opletal; November 17, 1939 – the repression of Czech students in the wake of Jan Opletal’s funeral, nine shot dead, over a thousand two hundred arrested and sent to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, followed by the closing down of all Czech colleges; after 1939: extensive arrests of Czech citizens of Jewish heritage and a thoroughly planned liquidation of entire families in German

concentration camps; end of May 1942 – sanctions following Heydrich's assassination including more arrests, interrogations, torture, and executions of Czech patriots fighting for freedom and democracy.

On May 27, 1942, two Czechoslovak soldiers serving abroad, the parachutists Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš from the Operation Anthropoid special mission group, carried out an order to assassinate the Reich protector Reinhard Heydrich in the Kobylisy curve in Prague 8. This unexpected courageous act shook up the occupying authorities and sparked immediate retribution. At that time, any slight suspicion was enough to get Czech patriotic citizens and fighters for freedom and democracy in front of a court of law, which in most cases meant a death sentence without the need of any proof, based on mere accusations; the executions took place in Prague, Pardubice, Brno, and in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp to name a few.

During these tense days, charged with a stifling political atmosphere, thirty two students of Čáslav High School, Grade 13A, were taking their oral graduation "maturity" exams. May 29th was the worst day. I was sitting on guard at the "sweat-desk," a desk where we had a few minutes to prepare ourselves. Hana Konopásková, who came directly before me in alphabetical order, was already called to approach the exam table, around which sat our homeroom teacher, Jaroslav Pacák, and other examiners. At that moment, we could hear a distinct fuss from the hallway and as the door opened, two men entered the room. It was our assistant principal Mr. Pulkrábek, visibly frightened, and the German inspector for German and history in Czech schools, a certain Werner. After brief introductions, he sat down at the head of the exam table. Speaking exclusively in German, he ordered Hana and the rest of us graduating seniors to speak only German in all the subjects with the exception of the Czech language. I remember that Hana was asked to show the location of Potsdam on the map. When nervous at the regulation to speak only German, she could not remember, Werner pointed at me. He asked me to approach the map hanging on a stand next to the chalkboard and point out Potsdam (which happened to be the supposed place of the origin of my German ancestors, Sandholzer or Santholz, whose location I often verified on my dad's maps). I stood up and said in German, "Potsdam lies southwest of Berlin." Then I approached the map and showed exactly where it was. Without wasting any time, Werner also stood up, approached the map, and after reading Potsdam, he said, "ja" and returned to the exam table. I answered the following questions in all of the other subjects in German, except for the Czech language. In science I pulled the topic "Main Rocks and Soils in the Čáslav Region" and in German "RAD" (Reichsarbeitsdienst, or the Work Force of the Third Reich). The other questions have escaped my memory. Even though I received "with honors" on my final report card from Grade 13, my

maturity exam read only "passed" because of my "sufficient" in German. The testing drama that day continued with the letters "L" and "M." When Mr. Pacák saw what was going on, he asked Werner, "Herr Inspector, are we perhaps doing something wrong here?" Furious, Werner jumped up yelling, "Something wrong? No way! Everything is wrong here! This nation has to be cleansed from top to bottom, like washing windows!"

The requiem of our high school studies was coming to an end. Immediately following the maturity exam, without any summer vacation, I took on a job with the First Medical Insurance Office for the Self-Employed with its seat in Prague. I joined its branch in Hradec Králové, which was led by my older brother Pepa. He told me, "If you want to make some good money, I'll send you to Semilsko in north Bohemia. There is a beautiful countryside there and enough businesses including small glass-makers. This job, however, needs to be taken in the summer months, because in the autumn and winter it would be impossible to plod from Semily to Zásada or Držkov." Unlike today, all trips and visits with potential customers then were conducted on foot or by train, not by car. I left Žleby for Hradec Králové and headed north before the last days of our beloved homeroom teacher, Mr. Jaroslav Pacák. From hearsay or newspapers I learned more of the aftermath of Heydrich's assassination¹: June 10, 1942 – extermination of Lidice, mass execution and arrest; Professor Jaroslav Pacák arrested by the Gestapo; June 16 – Prof. Jaroslav Pacák sentenced to death by shooting for high treason(!) and approval of the assassination. The verdict carried out on June 17, 1942, in the morning, at the Zámeček execution ground in Pardubice. Together with him other Čáslav citizens were also executed on the same day, including his colleague Alexander Hliněný, a Germanistics and Bohemistics graduate of Charles University teaching German and Czech at Čáslav High School, JuDr. Ladislav Kolář, JuDr. Antonín Munzi, Roman Prouza from the Agricultural Vocational School, Judr. Čeněk Vančura, and JuDr. František Šrámek. Prof. Pacák passed away tragically at the age of 37. He left behind his widow, Lidmila Pacáková, and two children of pre-school age, daughter Milena and her little brother Aleš.

Thus, the perverted and vindictive Nazi Werner's notion of the necessity to destroy the Czech intelligentsia first, "from top to bottom, like washing windows!" was accomplished. We were also constantly troubled by the trauma of the shutting down of all Czech institutions of higher learning. In December 1941 and in the months that followed, however, the German Nazi military adventure with its highly glorified blitzkrieg experienced an unexpected turn of events. Following Hitler's 1940 order, General and Chief of the Operations Staff Jodl conceived the Barbarossa operation, a plan to attack the Soviet Union, in spite of an agreement between the two nations not to attack each other. Impertinently, Wehrmacht crossed the Soviet border on June 22, 1941.

In the Barbarossa plan, Jodl wrote confidently, "In three weeks the Soviet Union will fall like a house made of cards." Operation Barbarossa encountered relentless resistance in Moscow. The Red Army's deadly counter-attacks followed one after another. From the almost daily reports of the Moscow and London radio stations, we learned that the Moscow defenders stopped the German army divisions on the outskirts of the city and were pushing the aggressors back into Russia's frozen and endless countryside. At that point, the militarily inexperienced Hitler and his henchmen did not yet grasp that the miraculous blitzkrieg was possible not only due to the extraordinarily strong armament of his armies, but also thanks to the tactical maneuver of the Russians to pull the enemy deep into their wide-raging countryside, cutting him off from his supplies. This tactic had previously broken Napoleon's back. The German trains and convoys carrying ammunition, food, gas, medical supplies, clothing, and shoes insufficient for the harsh Russian winter, were attacked, slowed down, and seized by partisans led by the Red Army. At Christmas 1941, Moscow and London radio stations broadcast to the world that additional well trained Red Army divisions continued reaching Moscow from Siberia, including the more than a million-strong Kazakh army, which played a decisive part in Moscow's defense. Much later in 1985, when participating in the Soviet National Conference on Rocks and Clay Minerals in Alma-Ata, the then capital of Kazakhstan, I witnessed a military parade in front of the massive monument in the city's main square. Briefly, the monument bore the inscription, "They fought and died to save Moscow." The soldiers in khaki-colored uniforms, wearing scout-like hats, similar to those of the Canadian mounted police, stood at attention or followed orders with astonishing discipline and accuracy. It also caught my attention that all were almost of identical height and a slim, athletic build. I learned from Dr. P.T. Tazhibayeva, an outstanding Kazakh geologist of the local Geological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, that almost a million young German prisoners of war were permitted to stay and work in Kazakhstan on the condition they would marry Kazakh girls, for whom, due to the devastating war casualties, there were not enough young men to marry. This was a crushing blow to Hitler's racism.

At Christmas 1941, Guderian, the general in charge of the attack at Moscow, had such heavy casualties in the numbers of dead, wounded, and frostbitten troops that he gave the order to retreat. This move infuriated Hitler, who, in his fighting fury, was willing to sacrifice all Germans and Austrians, even young boys just turning 15. That is why on December 26, he withdrew Guderian from his command of the Second Panzer Division. However, nothing changed. The Red Army continued to dominate the strategic initiative and, within just under two months, pushed the decimated German divisions back several hundred kilometers west of Moscow. The

news from foreign radio stations warmed our hearts, for this was a definite turnaround in World War II on the eastern European front. In addition to that, the German militarism suffered yet another blow at the beginning of December that struck quite unexpectedly like lightning: without declaring war, in a manner similar to the Germans half a year earlier in Europe, the Japanese launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, the largest USA military port in Hawaii. This attack meant the involvement of the USA in the war against the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis. For Czech citizens, this was another important news development bringing hope. Brainwashed by their own destructive propaganda, Hitler and his Nazi cronies were unable or refused to notice the already then enormous military and economic potential of the USA, fueled by its raw material wealth, strong manufacturing, and advanced scientific research. They were convinced that by their increasing reprisals and brutality and with the contributions from collaborators who, whether voluntarily or by coercion, betrayed their own nations, Germany would be able to continue to control the already enslaved countries of Europe and to keep them working for the glory of the German Reich.

EUROPEAN FORCED LABOR IN WARTIME GERMANY

My work for the First Medical Insurance Office for the Self-Employed was quite successful, but it ended a lot earlier than I expected. During those summer months I earned over twenty thousand crowns. My brother Pepa told me with a smile that he did not expect me to have such success at insurance and added, "Our parents will be very happy for sure." My contract with the insurance company was until December 31, 1942, but, at the beginning of September, I received German occupation authorities' call-up papers. Starting immediately, I was assigned by the German Reicharbeitsdienst (employment office) to the ammunition factory in Rtyně near Teplice. Before leaving for the forced labor assignment in wartime Germany, I presented my parents with more than half of my summer vacation earnings. It was a good feeling, and I was happy that I was able to help to provide for them in the upcoming winter. I was also convinced that I would be able to support them from my earnings in Germany until the war was over.

Mainly young people from France and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were sent to Rtyně. There were also Yugoslavian prisoners of war working there, dressed in their original uniforms. Under constant supervision, we were producing anti-personnel mines and big bombs for the German bombers. The only thing there of personal interest for me was the local basalt rocks with exquisite columnar jointing. After about two months, in the middle of November, I was sent with a group of Czechs to Berlin to work in a small mechanical-blacksmith's business of F.W. Müller. Thus,

five Czech students, most of us having only just recently passed maturity exams, replaced the German installers and blacksmiths who transferred to the front.

From morning to evening six days a week, we shaped steel Gewindeschneiders (screw-cutters) of various diameters, which were used to drill openings for screws needed in other operations, especially in tank-, submarine-, and ship production. In spite of the check up visits from various military office inspectors, I never saw any of the company owners (two older men and their sister) greeting them with the Nazi salute. There were also two Berliners working with us, an older foreman Heinrich and circus performer, hired worker Willy, doing the same work we did. They too treated us in a friendly, correct manner and neither of them used the Nazi "Heil Hitler" greeting. Twice they took us to downtown Berlin on free Sundays. Together we visited the Kaiser palace and a museum of nautical ship models. Shortly after another defeat of the German army in Stalingrad in December 1942 and after the final capitulation of General Paulus in January 1943, an all-black mourning pavilion was built on the Unter-den-Linden Boulevard, with the inscription STALINGRAD. For us, members of the occupied nations forced to labor in Berlin, this was another beacon prophetically signaling the end of Nazism. When passing the pavilion, Heinrich and Willy warned us, "Do not slow down, please, it's dangerous." Judging from the age of the workers in the Berlin work camp and other places, I gradually determined that the German authorities from the occupied countries of Europe selected single men and women within a nine-year birth span. That meant those born between 1915 and 1923 were the young people supposedly dispensable in their own countries' labor markets.

Then the spring of 1943 arrived and with it the first big bombing of Berlin. We lived in low wooden barracks in a camp for foreign forced labor workers, near the Olympic stadium. We slept on wooden bunk beds, one worker above another. Each of us had his own personal belongings locked in a suitcase under the bed and the most frequently used items in a narrow metal box next to the bed. We took a tram to work, about half an hour. During the massive bomb attacks on Berlin by the British Air Force, we refused to go to a shelter to hide. Instead, we watched the tens and hundreds of planes sailing across the night sky, sometimes picked up by the anti-aircraft searchlights. The explosions of the dropped bombs could be heard for another hour or two. The drone of the planes, the fire of the anti-aircraft artillery, and the morning pictures of horrible destruction, which accompany any war, these were the phases of the air-strikes proving the correctness of the Czech proverb, "Who sows wind, harvests a storm." After one such airstrike, no streetcars were in operation because of the rail lines having been destroyed or buried under the ruins. Sometimes when walking on Friedrichstrasse on

Sundays, near big hotels, we met confident German submarine officers dressed in their black uniforms bedecked with war military recognition medals. They wore their dress rapiers hanging freely from their belts and their war cross decorations visible on their chests, sometimes the Ritterkreuz Order with oak twig around their necks. The German militarism was in full swing, bringing destruction to the millions of Germans, their children, and possibly the entire nation.

GESTAPO ARREST

I was arrested in the Berlin camp for forced-labor workers on August 24, 1943, by two Gestapo officers. They confiscated all of my personal belongings and drove me to the Moabit prison. I lived a miserable existence in a large dilapidated prison cell together with approximately three hundred prisoners for about a month. All of us slept on the floor. I was eventually transported to the main Gestapo headquarters in Dresden. At that time I had no idea that they also arrested my brother Miroslav twenty days earlier.

I was transported in a barred prisoner wagon being on my guard, not knowing what was going to happen. I was taken to a one-man cell, where I was able to focus my thoughts on my predicament. Occasionally, I could hear the ship horns, an indication that the prison was near the Elbe River. About three weeks later, a guard came to tell me that I received a package from my parents and that I should go and pick it up. That surprised me because I thought there was no way for my parents to know of my arrest or whereabouts in the prison in Dresden. However, the package from Žleby was indeed waiting for me and I got half a loaf of home-made bread, a braided sweet yeast dough pastry (vánočka), a bag of dried fruit, a couple of apples, tooth brush, tooth paste, and a cake of soap. (It was only after the war that I found out from my parents that immediately after my arrest the owners of the F.W. Müller mechanical-blacksmith business sent a letter in German to my dad, describing exactly what happened.) The prison guard then cut the bread and pastry in half with a knife to make sure nothing was hidden inside. On my way back to the cell, escorted by my warden, suddenly my brother Miroslav appeared walking toward us with another guard. I immediately thought this encounter was arranged by the Gestapo. I stopped and told my guard in German that I would like to give my brother half of the food. Both guards glanced at each other and at us carefully and then agreed. I lifted the top of the box and handing it to Miroslav, I told him to take half of the food, already conveniently cut. At that moment Mirek whispered, "They found my scout photos." That was enough information for me to know why I was there, that they had no evidence against me, and that my arrest was groundless and against the law.

Ten more days went by before I was escorted into the interrogation room. There were two Gestapo officers and

a female typist present. The interrogation was not pleasant. On their table I sighted several pictures of mine including one showing me in my scout uniform saluting with the scout salute. Also in the picture was a smiling Miroslav, wearing his scout uniform. In the center between us there was our brother Pepa in his white tennis outfit, holding a racket. Having pointed at the photograph, the examining Gestapo officer then said in Czech, "Well, this scouting activity over here is totally unlawful. We want to know where you continue to meet." I said, "Nowhere. These pictures were taken at the time when scouting in Czechoslovakia was a legal educational organization for young people. You probably found them on my brother, who had them as a keepsake." Although my words were quite truthful, I received a blow to the head and under my waist. The interrogation went on similarly for another hour or two. It ended with the Gestapo agent yelling, "Alright, we'll end it right here. We're going to prescribe another type of "legal education for young people" for you. You will go to Mauthausen!" A warden was immediately called in, who escorted me marked by a few bruises back to my cell. There I was reflecting, living as a prisoner, not sentenced, but still doomed by the Gestapo, and for another two to three weeks listening to the sound of the ship horns on the Elbe. In the middle of November, I was sent on a prisoner train, via the Cottbus prison (Lusatian Chotěbuz), to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp located near the Danube River in Austria.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

I arrived in Mauthausen with a group of six prisoners on November 20, 1943. The SS men took us to a large washroom and ordered us to remove our clothes, shoes, and underwear and place them into prepared bags. Our hair was shaved, we took a shower, and slipped into tow-cloth shirts and long underpants, over which we put on the striped prison uniforms. Instead of having socks, we bandaged our feet with foot rags and slipped into wooden clogs. Everyone was tossed a blanket and then we were sent to Block 16. There, one of the prisoners of the *Aufnahmekommando* (registration commando) filled out a form with my basic personal data. The next day we met Czech prisoners who came to visit us at Block 16, where we spent the night sleeping on the floor under our blankets. They brought us warm *Steckrübe* ("turnips that stick in the throat" as this most common concentration camp meal was called by the German prisoners) with a piece of bread and asked us where we were from and what we did to be arrested by the Gestapo. I was taken care of by a Čáslav countryman, Tomáš (Thomas), who told me that before he was arrested, he worked for the Sigma company in Olomouc. In turn I let him know I took my maturity exam at Čáslav High School shortly after the assassination of Heydrich, and soon after I was

transferred to forced labor in Germany. "I have heard about the maturity exams and the executions that followed from my cousin, who is a student at Čáslav High School," said Thomas. He was my age, a very friendly guy who came from a blacksmith's family. It made me smile a little and say, "I may not come from a blacksmith's family, but my mom has often told me 'Jiří, you have a blacksmith's hands. Be careful not to grip someone too hard.'" Thomas also smiled and said, "Okay, let's test it! Keep increasing the grip together with me and when you have had enough, just say 'Stop!'" We locked our right arms and began to increase pressure. After barely a minute, Thomas cut off the suggested test with the words,

"Okay, it's over. I guess your mom was right."

The third day we, the newcomers, were assigned to blocks. I got Block 10 and met my bunk-bed buddy, political prisoner František Šidák, a native of Kraskov, only ~12 km from Žleby. Four prisoners slept on narrow, two-level bunk beds, always two men sharing one straw mattress. In order to fit in the narrow space and be able to sleep, we had to lie in such a way that I had Franta's feet next to my head and my feet next to his head. To keep warm we covered ourselves with our two blankets on top of us, which proved to be a good idea because there were no heating stoves in the concentration camp barracks. Almost throughout the entire winter, there were single windowpanes covered with a thick layer of ice crystals, which melted at times only to refreeze. Franta Šidák was a very kind, levelheaded, and hard-working man. He was a tailor by trade, which he learned at the Nehera Company in Prostějov. About eight years my senior, he had a tailor salon in Prague, where he also left behind his wife and his little boy. In Mauthausen he worked in the tailors' workshop, together with other prisoners who repaired SS men's uniforms. He was well read and able to express his thoughts calmly and clearly. In the evening, Thomas returned to check on me and to find out where I was assigned. I noticed he personally knew Franta Šidák well and the friendly care with which I was received was their doing.

It is not easy for me today to speak or write about one of the many Hitler torture chambers in which I was thrown in the last third of the war, although almost seventy years have passed since. When I stepped out of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp gate in May 1945 (May 5 was the day of the arrival of the first US Army jeep to the main gate, after SS men left the camp the day before), I gradually met numerous civilians who never entered a Nazi prison and it became clear to me that they could not relate to my daily camp experiences, for they found them unimaginable and unbelievable. Soon I understood that one could not speak about such atrocities in the world of free people who did not experience Nazi prisons. I felt that these luckier citizens were unable to grasp the brutal behavior of the governing Europeans, which greatly surpassed any grotesque bestiality of the

literary or visual art works of horror, as known from the writings of Dante or Dostoyevsky or from the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. It was clear to me that I would have to adapt to living a normal life as soon as possible, for when the war was finally over, these people wished to enjoy life in full gulps without being burdened with the history of Nazi torture-chambers. In fact, some did not even want to hear about them at all. I admit, actually, that in the deepest corner of my soul I did not want to rehash old memories of the many details from my prison days, the Nazi interrogation, and especially from the concentration camp. I did not want to think of them any longer myself. But there were other reasons. Whenever I received a blow under the waist from my countrymen after 1945, the following night or for several nights in a row I would have nightmares about my deadly experiences with the SS men and their dogs in the camp trained to maul their victims. I could not prevent this from happening. Also, when I caught a cold and had just a slightly elevated temperature, these horrible scenes from Mauthausen returned in my dreams with surprising detail. This lasted for over twenty years. Fortunately, I fell sick only a couple of times in the first half of my life. I was also lucky in this respect in the concentration camp. Although we slept in unheated rooms and were not allowed to wear sweaters or undershirts under our shirts, I never caught a cold.

In Mauthausen you could meet prisoners from practically all nations of Europe. The longest kept prisoners were the proud Spaniards, fighters against Franco's dictatorship; the Czechs, Poles, Yugoslavs, Greeks, French, Belgians, and Dutch (some from operation "Nacht und Nebel" - Night and Fog); but also German and Austrian anti-fascists, some since 1934 when Hitler rose to power. Soviet prisoners began to arrive from 1941 and 1942, not only from the European part of the Soviet Union, but also from Asia. There were also several American and British men. A USA officer, Jack Taylor, got assigned to us Czechs on Block 10 somewhere in the middle of April 1944. He was assigned the bed under me and František Šidák, which he shared with a Czech barber. In the last year of the war came the transports of Italians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and Romanians. One can read more in depth about the criminal elements from the ranks of the Germans and Austrians, some of whom served the SS as leaders of commandos in charge of the liquidation of political prisoners, and about the Europeans of Jewish descent in books on the German concentration camps. When I arrived in Mauthausen, these dangerous commando leaders were no longer in leadership positions because the well organized Czech political prisoners who spoke fluent German succeeded in taking over some of the administrative leadership in the camp and remove the criminals from their privileged positions.

All citizens of Jewish descent were persecuted in the worst possible way. While non-Jewish prisoners such as

myself *could* die by the will of the SS men at any time, day, or hour, the Jews *had to* die. The SS men of Mauthausen fulfilled the brutal plans of the Nazi ideology one hundred percent. A rare exception among the prisoners who escaped certain fate was Artur London, an interbrigadist who fought for the Spanish republic, well known and popular among the Mauthausen Spaniards. Several Czech political prisoners risked their lives to change his personal documents so that he lived to see the end of the war. A few years later, however, he fell into harm's way and came short of losing his life in a high government position in socialist Czechoslovakia (London, 1969).

Prisoners in Hitler's concentration camps might as well have forgotten their names. Everyone had to report everywhere he went by his number; everyone was also treated as a number, and we were all reduced to mere numbers. Above all, this had a degrading purpose. Whenever I was addressed or reported leaving the main gate or returning to the camp, I always had to say, "Häftling Nummer 39275" (prisoner number 39275).

In the concentration camp I worked in all weather conditions, first in the Strassenbau (road-building) Commando 2 on the construction and repair of the roads in the Mauthausen area. Later I was assigned to the night commando in the quarry, at the bottom of which we picked up large, broken, sharp-edged pieces of granite with our bare hands and loaded them onto trucks. Then, for about two weeks, I was sent to the forest sawmill, where a Yugoslav Ljubiša was the head prisoner, always alert, watchful, and friendly. From there, the camp prisoner leadership assigned me as a load bearer to the SS-Nahrungsmittelmagazine (a food-stuffs warehouse). There a small group of prisoners including myself carried boxes of canned food and bags of various foodstuffs on our backs or over our shoulders. We carried them down the steps into an underground storage area and sometimes we carried them up the same steps, where they were loaded onto trucks supplying a local SS-garrison or several other Aussenkommandos (commandos working outside the camp). I spent several months doing these tasks.

Finally, the day arrived when I became a member of the Aufnahmekommando, (a group assigned to register and keep records of newly arriving prisoners), where I remained until the end of the war. There were six of us at the most. On this commando were mainly Czechs because we knew several European languages quite well including, of course, German. To this day I remember the Yugoslav Bora Tasić from Belgrade; a French and Serbian high school teacher; Italian Mario Vespa, corvette captain from Genoa; František Závíska, Charles University professor of theoretical physics from Prague (who was transferred rather quickly to a much larger group, consisting of scientists ordered to solve the production of the Nazi atomic bomb; this remarkable Czech physicist, whose brother-in-law and nephew were

also imprisoned in Mauthausen, died during a retreat march when the victorious allied armies were pushing German divisions out of France and unstoppably advancing to the heart of Germany); Josef Horn, an economist in his fifties, after the war a Member of Parliament and general director of the Czechoslovak Trade Chamber; and Josef Čuhel from Brno, who spoke perfect Italian, because he spent several years in Italy as a schoolboy with his parents, where his father was a Czechoslovak consul.

From the prisoners who were in the camp longer, I heard stories about the infamous 186 steps leading to the quarry of Mauthausen, where exhausted prisoners lost their lives under the hands of SS men or camp leaders, about mass murders, executions in the gas chamber or by shooting on the execution ground, gas injections into the heart, heroic antifascist deeds, voluntary or forced suicides of several prisoners in the electric wires of the fence surrounding the camp, and other stories documenting the history of this place of torment and death. However, I have chosen not to write about these former instances. I have made my decision that I will share about Mauthausen only what I have experienced personally, what I saw with my own eyes, and what has remained engraved in my memory. Although these segments from my concentration camp life will be brief and succinct, they will provide glimpses into the very bottom of the human soul – of both the prisoners and their captors.

First experience: American aviators – prisoners of war

On a sunny day at the end of spring or at the beginning of summer 1944, I witnessed a massive American air-strike on the arms factory in Steyr, ~30 km south of Mauthausen. The drone of the airplanes kept increasing. I ran out of Block 10 because there was nothing to do on the Registration Committee that day, and in the southern sky I noticed a huge number of bombers and fighter planes flying and attacking a specific place where there were continuous bomb explosions and a stream of dark smoke mixed with the flashes of fire. I had a feeling that apart from the loud noise, the very ground was shaking. That day there was excellent visibility. Pressing against a barrack wall, I noticed that this devastating spectacle was also being watched by the SS guards on the towers of the camp's inner Postenkette (guard chain). As I was not quite sure what place was targeted (Steyr was only my guess), after about an hour or two I decided that I was going to stop by the administrative center of the camp prisoners in Block 1, and find out. It was located in the room of the camp scribe (Lagerschreiber). I quickly returned to Block 10 to pick up a folder with several sheets of paper, and having resolutely crossed the distance of a hundred meters, I entered the scribe's room, where the Austrian Czech confirmed my suspicion that the place of destruction was indeed Steyr, with the biggest Austrian

factory for the production of armored vehicles or tanks. That information was enough for me. I was almost ready to leave, when the main gate of the camp flew open with a big racket. The sight almost curled my blood. Screaming SS men were pushing thirty to forty American Army aviators, probably arrested after their planes were shot down. They kicked them to a small concrete plateau by the left side of the gate. Here all prisoners had to kneel. Reckless kicking and hitting continued. When I was telling my daughter Mirka about this over twenty years ago, she asked me, "What color were the American aviators' uniforms?" I paused in surprise because I first thought of brown, but somehow I had the shades of blue coded in my memory as typical of army aviator uniforms. I tried to recall other details and answered simply, "Some had short jackets just under the waist with light fur collars, but the uniforms were definitely brown." The American war aviators, terribly humiliated but unbroken, were kneeling or lying at the feet of the SS men, who were seething with hatred, ruthlessness, and cruelty. The following day I overheard that the aviators were taken away on a bus especially equipped as a gas chamber. It happened to American war aviators in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp less than a year before the end of World War II. This incident was not even mentioned during the war atrocity investigations in the Nurnberg War Trials, probably because the Cold War was already setting in and the USA did not want to make an enemy of the new government leadership in West Germany (Bard, 1994).

Second experience: abruptly assigned to the punitive death commando

Today, after over seventy years, I will attempt to describe briefly and truthfully an event which many in central Europe will find unthinkable. It is indeed so unimaginable that I hesitated to speak about it for almost sixty years. Yes, I was afraid that many of my countrymen would not believe such uncivilized behavior occurred. Apart from that, I was ashamed to tell a story in which one group of Europeans in SS uniforms tortured another group of Europeans who were unjustifiably thrown into the striped prisoner garbs.

I am awakening unusually early. It is sunrise of another summer day. Has something unusual happened or is it about to happen? Out of the window, I notice the electric wires of the inner guard chain. A thin yellow light of one of the dim lamps, hanging from concrete columns, is still shining unsteadily on the northern side of Block 10. Twenty blocks, basically long one-story wooden barracks, are built parallel to one another in four neat rows of five. About five hundred prisoners are jammed into each block. Now they are sleeping on bunk beds. On one side of the barracks stretches a large, rectangular assembly platform, called Appelplatz in German. On the eastern side, it is surrounded with barracks containing group showers for newly arrived

prisoners, a laundry room and a kitchen, a gas chamber, and the inevitable crematorium with several ovens. During World War II, German police were sending political prisoners here from all over Europe, including Germany itself. Prisoners of categories other than political prisoners form only miniscule groups. Still in 1943–44 some Austrian citizens in neighboring towns and villages believed that German prison guards, assisted by the Gestapo and SS divisions, had all this time been transporting to Mauthausen dangerous criminals and political opponents of the Third Reich. We find out about it from accidental encounters with civilians in various labor commandos outside of the camp and are sharing experiences. Could it be that the locals are apprehensive that they might give away their own humane feelings? From one another, we know that in our Gestapo protocols, typically, there is a final note stating, *Rückkehr unerwünscht* (return denied). Most likely, the totalitarian propaganda of dehumanized power-hungry Germany, to which Austria was annexed by force in 1938, did not permit local citizens to do much thinking about the reality of the crimes committed by the prisoners at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. These prisoners' transgressions were, first and foremost, their love of democracy and their country, their courage to express disagreement with the criminal behavior of German occupation authorities, or their attempt to protect themselves through limited means before succumbing. Fighters for the freedom of their nations, who were in possession of actual weapons when arrested, had not been given a chance to survive as prisoners. They were either killed on the spot or condemned to death and executed, oftentimes also in Mauthausen. On the chest of the prison uniforms of alternating dark blue and white stripes, every political prisoner in the camp has a conspicuous red triangle, next to an identification number. It's a stamp of identification spelling out ethnicity. For example, a Czech has a "T" in the triangle for the German word *Tscheche*, a Frenchman has an "F," a Greek has a "G," etc. Both the numbers and letters are black.

At this break from night to day, the silence in my barracks is disturbed only by sporadic movements of sleeping bodies followed by an occasional faint crack of a bunk bed's wooden frame. The deep breathing of my bedmate, František Šídák, is regular. "We are still alive and one day we will be free," says my optimistic subconscious. Under the influence of the concentration camp reality, however, skepticism starts to sneak in. Is it at all possible to escape from the clutches of a perfectly construed and organized brutal machinery? From a stern, cruel, inhumane treatment of thousands, even tens of thousands, of individuals without a chance of ever returning home? Is there really any hope whatsoever for an escape? Occasional reports from battlefields, which get through, and the solidarity among prisoners serve as a soothing balm in this environment. Two other political

prisoners sleep on the bunk bed under us. Everyone keeps the striped prison uniform and a pair of wooden clogs on his bed. The rows of bunk beds are separated by narrow aisles. We keep a couple of necessary personal toiletries such as a tooth brush, towel, aluminum spoon, dish, and a metal cup in narrow metal lockers in the dayroom of the block called *Hauptstube*, adjacent to the dormitory. Before you enter the *Hauptstube* is a hallway and a shared bathroom of about a dozen toilet bowls, without any privacy. Today, August 24, 1944, exactly one year has elapsed since I was arrested by the Gestapo and dragged off for interrogation.

The whirlwind of my thoughts is suddenly interrupted by a curt "Six o'clock, get up!" The block immediately turns into a beehive. A quick washing in cold water follows, an even faster taking care of one's needs on the cold toilet bowls from brownish ceramics, always without toilet tissue. Water will do the cleaning trick, together with a right or left hand. This is one of a few concentration camp acts allowing you the freedom of decision-making. The customary breakfast consists of a warm substitute for black "coffee," made from roasted rye perhaps with a little bit of chicory, and from a piece of dry dark bread, sometimes even with a spoonful of margarine. Then tens and hundreds of pairs of feet accompany the rushing clacking of clogs from various blocks to their commandos. Some commandos leave the *Appelplatz* already at seven o'clock, others between seven and eight. Every commando is met at the main gate by a group of SS-men armed with sub-machineguns and pistols. A number of commandos stay in the camp to carry out the duties as determined by the SS command.

Fortunately, "my" commando for the registration of new prisoners answered directly to the camp *Lagerschreiber*, Czech political prisoner Kurt Pány, who spoke several European languages fluently. For each newly arrived prisoner, we fill out in German a one-page form including basic personal information: first and last name, date and place of birth, date of imprisonment, and profession. I will never forget the order of the terms in Czech and other languages: first name, last name, *křestní jméno, příjmení, Vorname, Familienname, prénom et nom de famille, imya i familiya, nome e cognome*; date of birth, *datum narození, Geburtsdatum, date de naissance, data rozhdeniya, data di nascita*; place of birth, *rodiště, Geburtsort, lieu de naissance, mesto rozhdeniya, luogo di nascita*; date of arrest, *datum zatčení, Datum der Verhaftung, date de votre arrestation, kagda vzyat pod arrest?* *Quando estato arrestato?* and profession, *povolání, Beruf, professiya, professione*. The New Prisoners Registration Commando does not have a typical commander. We are fortunate that we are taken care of by Czech political prisoners from the office in Block 1 and their leader, the *Lagerschreiber*. The scribe is an intelligent, even-tempered, yet resolute Czech able to communicate with the SS men in fluent German both

shrewdly and carefully. Can you imagine how much patience, intelligence, and long-term effort were necessary on the part of the Czech and Viennese-Czech political prisoners, in order to take the prison-camp leadership somewhat in their hands and gradually organize a more tolerable existence? Yet, it is crystal-clear to every prisoner that he has to be constantly on the alert to avoid any possible confrontation that might end his life's journey in some of the ovens of the camp's crematorium. Every day, every hour, and every minute the life of each one of us hangs on a fine thread.

The Aufnahmekommando has irregular working hours, but usually does not start until nine o'clock a.m. Its operation, however, can last until late in the evening. It all depends on the number and physical state of new arrivals. Since mid 1944, the Germans have been transferring prisoners to Mauthausen from more distant concentration camps, which were evacuated in the face of the approaching allied troops. The primary advantages of "our" commando are having more time for the morning wash after breakfast and more privacy on the toilets. The main disadvantage is contact with new prisoners, whose destitute condition presents an increased danger of infection.

Today, August 24, 1944, we are starting shortly before nine o'clock. As ordered by the SS-men, we load several desks and chairs onto a wooden cart and at the sound of the words "Mützen ab!" (Caps off!), we set off through the main gate of KZ Mauthausen to a nearby grass-covered platform, where the prisoners of the firefighting commando, Feuerwehr, are building huge tents. The Feuerwehr of Mauthausen is the only commando in which the prisoners wear single-colored uniforms. They are light blue, with a red band on one sleeve. The commando consists mainly of Austrian citizens including several Viennese, speaking German with the typical dialect and a singing accent, in which the vowel "a" resembles a wide "o". The well built rugged guys train and exercise regularly at the camp's assembly platform. In the past few months, they have been called to extinguish fires more frequently because of the increased intensity of air strikes on Austria by the units of the allied air forces. Needless to say, Fire Fighting Commando (Feuerwehr) is a privileged one.

As instructed, we push the desks closely together and place the chairs at the side of the road leading to the area with the gigantic canvas tents. Then we stand behind the chairs waiting. With a smile, one of the SS-men is explaining to several hundreds of civilians that it is important to create a list with their basic personal data. He says there is a special commando, which should complete this necessary assignment in a couple of hours. A form must be completed for everyone including children. All of this is being translated from German into Russian. For us it is surprising to see that the SS-men in charge are unusually obliging to the newcomers, even though these are speaking Russian among them-

selves. We assume our seats at the desks and are slowly approached by an irregular line of haggard and mostly frightened folks. Our routine scribe registration work begins. The tent area is located in the concentration camp inside the outward Postenkette, occupied by SS-guardsmen armed to the teeth. They cannot be seen, however, from the road along the large tents. A couple of SS-men with pistols are standing behind us to supervise the beginning of our recordkeeping. For a while they go to look at the newly erected tents. The Feuerwehr boys are meanwhile relocating collapsible metal beds and straw-mattresses. Then the SS-men leave but none of us knows where.

There is a certain tension among the newcomers. According to our records, we soon understand that these are mostly families. After a long time, we see beautiful women and young girls again, radiant in their youth and grace, who have appeared in front of us as if from another world. Some try to strike up a conversation with us. We learn with surprise that we are registering the members of families of long-time emigrants from Russia, who fled in horror from bolshevism shortly after World War I to find a new homeland in one of the Slavic countries of the Balkans. Now they are running again, this time from the advancing Red Army. Are they entering into the same river again? One of the men with a full gray beard insists on better accommodations for his family than in a tent. First, he speaks Russian, then, his frustration mounting, in poor German. Unable to help we just shrug our shoulders. The Russian emigrants have no clue that we were given strict orders by the SS Commander not to start any conversation with these civilians other than asking the questions in the registration questionnaire. This even increases the emigrants' tension because they think that we are being purposely indifferent. Having registered, the unhappy refugees are heading for their tents carrying their limited possessions in hand bags. The heat of war knows no mercy.

With the last registered individuals, today's work is done, and we are ordered back to the camp. We are leaving with mixed emotions of compassion and anger but also with joy from the imminent end of the war. At about four o'clock in the afternoon, we are passing through the main gate in the camp's stonewall, with the order "Mützen ab" and a brief report on how many men are returning. We are in a hurry to get back into our blocks to gulp down a cold soup with a piece of dark bread, our entire daily dinner. The organization in the camp has to work under all circumstances and in great detail. We note with gratitude that no one has eaten our Steckrübe or ran off with our ration of bread. Right after that, I head for the washroom, take off my clothes, and thoroughly soap down myself with a cake of SS-men's brown soap, which I keep hidden with Frank's consent in our mattress. I found it once forgotten in the bathroom of the SS-food warehouse, when I worked there as a member of the SS-Nahrungsmittelmagazin. With

ice-cold water, I flush off the summer sweat and with it also the hopelessness shared by the emigrant families. I barely manage to dry and dress myself, when I hear the Blockälteste, the block commander, scream "Aufnahmekommando sofort antreten!" (Registration commando, line up immediately!)

Three SS-men await us in front of the block. Two other members of our commando run toward us. The SS-men are forcefully herding us together with the butt ends of their sub-machineguns, herding us to the assembly platform. Here, with his legs unflinchingly apart, stands a visibly furious vice-commander of the concentration camp, SS Hauptsturmführer Bachmayer, with two huge mastiffs and two SS dog-handlers. A murderous hatred is glittering in his eyes. He is screaming in a wheezy voice at the six of us, members of the Aufnahmekommando: "I will show you, you Bolshevik sons of bitches, what hell looks like! And it's not ending today either. Tomorrow morning the Strafkommando is waiting for you in the quarry." (This is the "Sentence Commando," which in Mauthausen always ends with the death of all of its members.) "I will show you what happens to all in KZ Mauthausen who dare to spread anti-German propaganda among the poor civilians. First, you will have some fun with my mastiffs. I have a bullet here in store for anyone who doesn't immediately carry out my order, 'Runter!'" (Down!) With a sure hand, he draws his pistol from the case on the left side of his belt and orders us to run around the periphery of Appelplatz. With the order "down," all of us throw ourselves onto the ground falling on our hands with the chest pressed to the hard surface. The dog-handlers release their barking and panting mastiffs. Soon, the screams of the afflicted cut the air. Pepík Čuhel from Brno has a torn ear and is bleeding. The Yugoslavian high school teacher of French and Serbian, Bora Tasić, is bleeding heavily from his leg and neck. I perceive with horror that Josef Horn from Prague has a torn muscle on his forearm. From time to time, a Bachmayer's revolver shot is heard and a bullet sparks as it hits the hard soil or it swishes past our heads. Again and again we fall to the ground. Most of us have been bitten by now. I too feel a wet, moist snout of an attacking mastiff and even a lick in the back of my neck. I await a clinch of its bare teeth followed by a pull of its powerful body. However, nothing like that happens. When Bachmayer fires all the bullets from his chamber and is of the opinion that the "sons of bitches" are bleeding and dirty to his satisfaction, he gives the order to put a stop to this show. The dog-handlers are ordered to leash the excited dogs. The remaining SS-men are to escort us to the granite wall at the entrance gate into the camp. Here we have to stand, several meters apart, facing the wall all night long until the morning, which is to be our last.

I guess it is about 7 p.m. by now. The Czech man on my right is praying loudly, begging the Lord for help and forgiveness. Boro Tasić on my left is eloquently quiet. I

also hear Josef Horn, an economist in his fifties, making several Czech prisoners (who are moving behind our backs between Blocks 1, 2, and 3) to swear an oath to report truthfully on everything they saw upon their return home. He adds, "Don't forget to avenge us." I hear his words before the armed SS-guards with their submachine- and machine guns in the roof-covered space above the main gate order an immediate departure to several brave souls, who have brought us metal dishes containing water. Our thirst is great and not even the coolness of a beginning August night can mitigate it. (During Bachmayer's "educational act," the prisoners who returned from their work in commandos had to stay locked in their barracks. Nevertheless, especially prisoners from the windows of the barracks 1, 6, and 11, were able to watch our beginning departure to eternity. With the approaching darkness, some of our friends came out from the blocks and tried to help the wounded.)

A kaleidoscope of disarrayed thoughts is circling in my mind. First, I try to analyze what has actually happened, but I am unable to find a satisfying answer. I know for sure, though, that no one from our commando was able to discuss anything with the "poor civilians." Then I try to solve the puzzling mystery of how it is possible that I am the only one unharmed by the mastiffs. Suddenly, the explanation comes in the form of the intense fragrance of the SS-men's soap, which I used all over my body just prior to the line up before Bachmayer. I see the faces of my parents and both brothers and wonder how they will take my fate. What about my plans of studying at Charles University in Prague after the end of the war? How is it possible that my experiences with the Germans are so diametrically different from those of my dad, one of the most honorable men I have ever known, a man of integrity, so mild-mannered and considerate? I was sixteen years old at the time of the shocking Munich Betrayal by the West European allies. I was seventeen when the Germans shamelessly occupied democratic Czechoslovakia. I was twenty when they were shooting hundreds of mostly innocent civilians after Heydrich's assassination and executing people in the nearby town of Pardubice and in other places in the Protektorat of Böhmen and Mähren, including my fondly remembered high school professor. When I was arrested by the Gestapo and thrown into the concentration camp without a trial, I was twenty-one years old. My brain, overstimulated by the nearness of certain death, is desperately searching for a steady point to hang onto under the twinkling star canopy of an August night. Now, at the age of twenty-two, I am waiting at a cold granite wall of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp to spend the last day of my life on the Death Commando. It is almost dark, when I take a glimpse of the Czech camp scribe leaving the main gate twice while accompanied by two SS-men. Each time, after about an hour, he returns. On his second return, he directs a few steps towards us and

says in an earnest voice, “We’ll see what happens in the morning.” Then he disappears, with a vigorous step, behind Block 1.

In the morning after a sleepless night spent standing, we are waiting for the Sentence Commando, hopeless or perhaps with a tiny grain of hope. The silence of the dwindling night suddenly changes into the uproar of the awakening barracks. It’s six o’clock. It takes just a moment to hear the clack of the clogs. Several boys are bringing us a bit of warm “coffee.” The work commandos are gathering at the assembly platform. Then the camp scribe approaches us in his brisk step saying distinctly, “Boys, you may go back to your blocks; everything will be explained later.” In the marrow of my bones I feel despair evaporating. Our rebirth is beginning. We are back at the blocks, still clueless.

Only a few hours later, we find out what happened last night from another Czech, who works in the camp registration Schreibstube of Block 1. Apparently, our camp scribe, responsible for the Prisoner Registration Commando, requested a more thorough investigation of the prison offence from the SS-Commanders, through a direct verification with the Russian emigrants. The SS were not opposed to continue the investigation. He managed even to pose questions in their presence to the gray-bearded Russian, who bitterly complained to the Germans the day before. Camp scribe Kurt Pány asked: “Who spoke with you?” In his broken German, the Russian supposedly repeated, “In front of the tents during the registration, two men with red stripes, whose faces I do not remember, asked us, Russian emigrants, ‘ironically, ‘Where do you, White Guards, think you’re running? You know that the Red Army will catch up with you sooner or later, even here!’ Then they left briskly.” The camp scribe, blessed with an attorney’s brain, then asked, “Can you specify where exactly the men who spoke to you had the red stripe?” The answer was, “On the sleeve.” “Not on the back?” “No, on the sleeve of the light blue uniform.” The astonished SS-men supposedly just stared at the Czech scribe, who only calmly explained in his perfect German, “This Russian has mixed up the expression ‘red stripe’ with ‘red band.’” The prisoners on the Registration Commando have a ‘red stripe’ on the back, while the firefighters have a ‘red band’ on their sleeves.

The same morning the firefighters’ commando, consisting of about thirty men, was called to line up at the assembly platform. The men were ordered “to the ground, up, and forwards,” over and over again for about an hour. This time, however, the SS soldiers abstained from shooting and sending their mastiffs at them. It would have been imprudent to destroy the trained fire brigade. Especially at a time of frequent air strikes, these men were indispensable.

We are at the end of a story of a Mauthausen prisoner that took place on a war day far beyond the front line, at a place where life and death fought an endless wrestling

match. Our lives constantly hung on very fine threads and depended on the whims of the SS. What is this miniscule story in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of stories of the prisoners of other concentration camps and prisons of Nazi Germany, which ended more tragically and usually with death! None of these victims tortured to death will ever be able to testify about their own path to martyrdom. Today, about seventy years later, allow me to say just one thing: Europeans of all nations, World War II survivors who are still alive, and family members of the perished, try to forgive, but never forget!

As a professor of geology at Charles University, I had an opportunity from 1960 to 1990 to work with German colleagues at the universities in Tübingen, Freising, Heidelberg, and especially in Greifswald and Hamburg. Our cooperation involving the importance of clay minerals and the international research project “The River System of the World” involving a study of big river waters of five continents, was one of the most rewarding chapters of my professional life. The attitudes of these colleagues give me hope that the German nation, with its impressive and admirable cultural foundation, will not allow anything reminiscent of Nazism or revanchism to rise to power ever again. As one of the few still living fighters for my country’s freedom during World War II, I am convinced that most citizens of smaller and economically weaker countries surrounding Germany share this belief and hope with the rest of Europe. May “Return Denied,” the label stamped in the official paperwork of political prisoners in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, forever change into return denied or inadmissible to national primitivism, neo-Nazism, or neo-revanchism anywhere on this earth.

Third experience: end of the war and registration of prisoners forced to forge British pounds

One day in the winter of 1945, Pepík Čuhel and I, the two youngest members of the Prisoner Registration Commando in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, were called to the registration room. There we were told by scribe assistant, Honza Maršálek, that we had to go to Block 20 to register a group of special prisoners that has just arrived. We knew that this block, quite isolated from the others, was the block of horror and death. Duly shaken, we just managed to realize that we were going to a place of possibly no return. Approaching the corner of Block 16, we were received by several heavily armed SS men. Their leader curtly told us to follow him to Block 20. Before entering, he emphasized that we were not to speak about anything with the prisoners to be registered other than the data on the official forms. Otherwise, “You’re going to the devil.” He made his statement crystal clear by energetically tapping his pistol case with his hand. Lined up in rows in the area between Blocks 19 and 20, stood prisoners in Soviet army uniforms, judging from their shoulder insignias, mainly

officers. The sound of our steps only accentuated the complete silence and the impression of something absolutely unforeseen ahead. The guard tower machine guns were also directed at these captured Soviet prisoners.

I do not recall the exact number of these prisoners, but from their appearance I did notice they were well fed. My guess is there were about twenty of them, for our work ended very quickly. What surprised us was that they mostly stated engraver, printer, painter, artist, or photographer, etc. under the “profession” in the questionnaire. After a moment of terrible tension, Honza Maršálek and I were relieved to return to our blocks. A few days later it occurred to us that what might be on Block 20 was the forgery workshop, about which there were only timid whispers in the camp. We did not know, however, that immediately after registration the SS men transported their precious prisoners, although predestined to death, to the concentration camp branch in Ebensee, in the Salzkammer region, about seventy kilometers southwest of Mauthausen. For a while, the administrative camp leadership sent our Registration Commando to Ebensee, where we had to register a large number of prisoners who were moved there from other camps, which were gradually vacated before the advancing of the victorious allied armies. The truck, in which we were transported by armed SS men through Gmunden, suddenly skidded on one of the sharp bends in the snow and rammed into a stone house. The house that saved our lives from a certain death in a deep mountain precipice below bore the sign “Kindergarten.”

I did not personally go through the events described in the following paragraph. It is important, however, for an understanding of the criminal German Nazi mentality, with all its thoroughness and cunning. I think it is sufficient to present the gist of a discussion following the premiere of Stefan Ruzowitzki’s film *Devil’s Workshop*, made in an Austrian-German coproduction. The film was shown on September 12, 2007, in the Prague movie theater Atlas. According to Adolf Burger, the author of the book by the same name, which is the basis for the film, the SS men had a forgery workshop on blocks 18 and 19 in the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. It was given the undercover name “Bernhard Company,” because it was led by SS-Sturmbannführer Bernhard Krüger. The production of forged bank notes was strictly classified. Not even the concentration camp leader was privy to these blocks’ activities. It was British pounds that were forged there, and according to Burger, a hundred and thirty-two million were printed. The German Nazis were not only brutal murderers, but also criminal counterfeiters. Here is Burger’s testimony from the discussion with students of the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague: The Nazis could have killed us back then in Sachsenhausen, but they wanted also dollars. That is why, shortly before the end of the war, they transferred us to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Austria. From there they took us

to the Alps, where we were to produce dollars. However, that did not happen because on May 5, 1945, Americans liberated the camp. To the questions whether the forged pound bank notes could be recognized from the originals, Adolf Burger said that not even the forger-prisoners themselves were able to tell them apart. It took the English two years before they pulled them out of circulation replacing them with color banknotes.

Immediately after the end of World War II, on May 29, 1945, Adolf Burger went to the forgery section of the police station in Prague. He admitted to the officials on duty that he forged pound notes in the concentration camp and for two hours he went on sharing his unbelievable story. He appealed to the police to call the State Bank to check if they had any forged bank notes. The bank director said it was not possible, but he still brought all the pounds the bank had at that time. Adolf Burger briskly stepped to the window and proceeded to check one banknote after another against the light. He pulled eighty out as forgeries. One could hear the comments: “What kind of show do you think you’re making? How can you tell forgeries from the real thing just by looking against the light?” At that moment, he had to divulge his secret. It was generally known that the pound banknotes were large and the English wore them in their pockets pinned together. That is why two prisoners had to prick the forgeries gently on the side so that they would look used. The prison-forgers had no way of letting the world outside of the camp know about what was going on inside. That is why they added one more little inconspicuous prick, namely in the queen’s eye. This is something no Englishman would do. That was also the only way to detect the forgeries from the real bank notes.

The terrible war in Europe was finally over. In the Pacific, on the other side of the Berlin–Rome–Tokyo axis, however, the wartime slaughter still continued. The two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by USA planes also ended definitively World War II in Asia. The overall reckoning on both sides of the conflicting enemies was appalling. I would like to believe that *Homo sapiens* will avoid a similar self-destruction in the centuries to come. I jotted down the following story in one of my notebooks, providing testimony of a research institute in Japan during its days of unconditional capitulation.

In the school year 1965–1966, I was a visiting professor at Penn State University in State College, Pennsylvania, and at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) in Massachusetts. In a research study of global ocean muds, I was apportioned the muds surrounding the Arab Peninsula, known for its world’s-largest supplies of oil and natural gas. The institution had a magnificent library, which I occasionally visited at night. The library is the foundation of any scientific or technical workplace, because every such workplace produces only a small fraction of the new data and discovery. Other valuable information is gained else-

where. Who does not have accurate and timely information about what others have discovered, oftentimes works in vain and at a high price. A true expert needs to know where and when to step in and what to follow up. In addition, also a methodical approach towards solving thousands of problems or issues can be found in specialized literature. The last four weeks at the end of my professional stay in the USA, I was finishing up my research report in Woods Hole. The well lit library gleamed through the night. It was open twenty-four hours a day, throughout the entire year. I am pretty sure this non-stop service has paid off to the rational Americans, for sometimes an idea is conceived at an unusually late hour, and, not to sink into oblivion, it needs that very assistance right then. In the entry room of the WHOI, my attention was drawn to a sign written in large letters, as if with a brush:

*This is a marine biological
station with her history of
over sixty years.*

*If you are from the Eastern Coast,
some of you might know Woods Hole or
Mt Desert or Tortugas.*

*If you are from the West Coast,
you may know Pacific Grove or
Puget Sound Biological Station.*

*This place is a place like any of those.
Take care of this place and protect
the possibility for the continuation
of our peaceful research.*

*This is a marine biological
station with her history of
over sixty years.
If you are from the Eastern Coast,
some of you might know Woods Hole or
Mt Desert or Tortugas.
If you are from the West Coast,
you may know Pacific Grove or
Puget Sound Biological Station.
This place is a place like one of these.
Take care of this place and protect
the possibility for the continuation
of our peaceful research.*

*You can destroy
the weapons and
the war instruments
But save the civil equipments
for Japanese students.*

*When you are through
with your job here,
Notify to the University and
Let us come back to our
scientific home.*

The last one to go (Figure 22)

You have just read the imploring plea of a Japanese biologist, Katsuma Dan, scribbled on a piece of brown wrapping paper, which was attached to the door of the Tokyo University Marine Biology Station. It was found by the crew of the American Submarine Squadron Twenty, upon its disembarkation on September 2, 1945, at the dwarf submarine base, where the station was built. The commanding officer of the submarine squadron happened to come from Woods Hole. After returning to the USA, he forwarded the plea to the WHOI, where it was framed and put on display in the main library as a permanent memento of World War II and of the touching belief in the peaceful future of science. The plea is a testimony of one of a million similar dramas that occurred in the final hours of the gigantic war inferno. It is also evidence of the hope of the defeated and of the expected behavior of the victors from the finale of the war in the Far East.

At the exit from the library stood several Xerox copy machines. Any one of us was allowed to make copies of anything one needed. We only had to put down our

*You can destroy
the weapons and
the war instruments
But save the civil equipments
for Japanese students
When you are through
with your job here
Notify to the University and
Let us come back to our
scientific home
The last one to go*

THIS NOTICE WAS FOUND POSTED ON THE DOOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO MARINE BIOLOGICAL STATION LOCATED AT A DIBNET SUBMARINE BASE, MORISO KO, JAPAN, ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1945, BY UNITS OF U. S. SUBMARINE SQUADRON TWENTY.

Figure 22. The appeal of the Japanese Natural Scientists from the final hours of WWII: document shows the hope of the defeated and the anticipated reaction of the victors, September 1945; on display in the WHOI library, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, USA.

names in a notebook, the number of pages copied, and the number of the research project.

The last winter of my camp existence, and also after my return from Ebensee to Mauthausen, I saw large heaps of unclothed dead human bodies near Block 16 almost daily, which the crematorium workers were unable to burn at a faster pace. These were bodies of terribly emaciated, wretched prisoners, mostly of European Jews. We registered them in the record-keeping documents the day before. They were brought to Mauthausen from other camps vacated before the arrival of the approaching allied armies. A special commando took them to a mass grave on a nearby hill above the camp. Thus, in the very last months of the war, the Mauthausen SS men were still systematically and hatefully fulfilling Hitler's bloodthirsty criminal vision.

RETURN HOME, STUDIES, AND SCIENTIFIC AND PEDAGOGICAL WORK AT CHARLES UNIVERSITY

After my return from concentration camp (Figure 23), I hurried to the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Charles University in Prague. In the main building at Albertov I found a written message from Professor Josef Kratochvíl. It was attached to a bulletin board by the steps on the ground floor, asking me to see him. He told me that he found out about my decision to study natural sciences in Žleby and that he would like to offer me the position of a research assistant in the Petrography Institute. I would be making at least some salary, although minimal. I knew Professor Kratochvíl from his



Figure 23. Jiří in the yard at home, several weeks after his return from Mauthausen, summer 1945.

summer stays in Žleby. Evidently, he did not forget the student who also admired the rocks along the Doubrava. Thanks to his kindness, I found a more peaceful haven in the chemical laboratory of the Petrographic Institute during my years of study from 1945–1948. It was the time when I was experiencing three intense passions: my selfless parents, my girlfriend Helenka Rudolfová, and the geological sciences. I was very interested in getting to know the then leading scholars of the geological sciences in Prague; devoted myself to an intense study of rocks; and acquainted myself with the various research methods for studying them. The research methodology of rocks was very simple in my country back then, but thorough. It encompassed a careful macroscopic description in the field and laboratory, the study of thin sections of rocks and their minerals under the polarized-light (petrographic) microscope, and a detailed final description, supplemented with drawings or photographs and chemical analyses. In the Mineralogy Institute chemical tests were done with a blow pipe and crystallographic measurements using a reflectance goniometer, later also X-ray crystallographic analysis.

At this faculty I signed up to study natural sciences and chemistry. After earning my RNDr. (Doctor of Natural Sciences, in Latin *Rerum Naturalium Doctor*) in April 1948, I had to go through five months of compulsory military service. Before starting the military I went to introduce myself to the director of the Central Geological Institute (G) in Prague, Dr. Ladislav Čepěk. There was no available opening at the faculty at the time. He promised me an upcoming placement in the Ore Deposits Department, where I would work as a petrologist. However, in the summer of 1948 Alexander Orlov died unexpectedly at the age of forty-eight. Professor Kratochvíl sent me a letter to the military service basically telling me that the passing of Professor Orlov meant that there was a new opening at the Petrology Institute. That meant an apology to the Central Geological Institute and on October 1, 1948, starting my new job at the Petrology Institute of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the place where I felt most at home.

Studying in 1945–1948 required great effort, maximum concentration, a critical assessment of the importance of each subject in my study plan, and the necessity to make the right choices. The problem was that our schedule had too many required subjects, lectures, practical exercises, excursions, seminars, and field mapping. We passed dozens of required colloquiums and other exams. In his attempt to pass on his extensive knowledge, every pedagogue, from professors to senior assistants, delivered well prepared texts. But their approach was encyclopedic rather than creative. The excellent modern textbook *General and Inorganic Chemistry* (*Obecná a anorganická chemie*) by Professor Otto Wichterle of the Czech Technical University Institute in Prague was not published until 1950 at the

Publishing House for Natural Sciences (Přírodovědecké nakladatelství). Especially useful for the students of all geological science disciplines were the practical exercises on “Rockforming Minerals,” prepared and led conscientiously and meticulously by Professor Kratochvíl several hours a week. As the only handbooks available in our libraries on this subject at that time were published abroad either in German, English, French, or Russian, Bohuslav Hejtman and I decided to write the first Czech textbook – *Rockforming Minerals (Horninotvorné minerály)*, published by the Publishing House for Natural Sciences in 1953. We dedicated our book to our mutual college professor, Josef Kratochvíl. The production and a careful selection of colors before the printing of the Newton scale (visible during the sliding of a quartz plate between crossed nicols in the polarizing microscope) in the Prometheus printing office, as well as the creation of quality drawings, were additional tasks demanding of our time and technical talent. The first edition sold out quickly, the second appeared in 1959.

I worked with my two most influential college professors, Josef Kratochvíl and František Slavík, at the end of their active careers and in the first years of their retirement. They lived and worked in a totally different era from the one of my generation. Professor Slavík, who was actively involved in university politics, or, shall we say in its administrative matters, as Charles University Chancellor shortly before the war, became a prisoner in Auschwitz and Buchenwald during the war. His wife, Ludmila Slavíková, director of the Mineralogical Department of the National Museum in Prague, was tortured to death in an Auschwitz subsidiary camp. Another of Slavík’s life tragedies was that his two best students did not survive the war. Professor František Ulrych passed away as a result of injuries inflicted upon him during his Gestapo arrest, and associate professor Radim Nováček perished as a political prisoner in Mauthausen in 1942.

Of the pedagogical faculty, both “senior” professors were the most genuine. As soon as the war was over, they began an intensive reconstruction of their institutes, which had been occupied and moved by the Nazis. We, their young assistants, helped them. Also RNDr. Bohuslav Hejtman played a big role in the “resurrection” of the petrographic institute, first as an assistant and later as its director.

In the years 1945–1948, Mrs. Jelínková, the mother of Jindra, a good friend of mine from our school years, was a frequent visitor with us at the Hill in Žleby. She always had the same question as to whether I heard any news of her son’s fate in bombed Berlin. I was always saddened by her grief and the tragic fate of the talented young chemist. This tragedy brought to my mind the despair of the Czech women, their love of their sons, victims of World War I, whose names later appeared carved into memorial monuments and tombstones.

Where is Jindra’s name now and those of many other young Czech men or other European nationals who never returned home from the slave labor in Germany during World War II?

The time period between 1948–1951 was exceptionally important for me and for my family. On November 6, 1948, I married Helenka Rudolfová in Žleby (Figures 24–27). Soon after, on August 22, 1949, shortly before midnight, our daughter Mirečka was born in the Čáslav Hospital, and on November 16, 1951, in the evening, Helenka was born in the Vinohradská Hospital in Prague. I was a little surprised by my paternal feelings, love of my children, and the new responsibilities. However, a feeling of up until then unknown happiness definitely prevailed. During summer vacations together with our children, we took the train from Prague to Žleby (Figures 28, 29). Grandpa Rudolf always used agronomist terminology for the splendid stay of his big city granddaughters in the rural Žleby countryside – “the much needed paddock for strengthening bones and cleansing lungs from the city air.”

In our family lineage there seems to be a hereditarily anchored predisposition for natural sciences, pedagogy, and visual arts. These special fields are also enhanced by linguistic talent. I was curious to see if any of these talents would demonstrate themselves in the school years and also later in the lives of our daughters. In the broader Sandholzer family (with variations in spelling), there were several college professors in Bohemia in the twentieth century: my uncle Vilém Santholzer (physicist, head of the Physics Department at Charles University’s College of Medicine in Hradec Králové); cousin Josef Košťiř (biochemist, the head of the Biochemistry Department at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of



Figure 24. A stroll in Prague: Helena Rudolfová and Jiří Konta on Na Příkopě street in 1947.



Figure 25. Newlyweds: Helena and Jiří Konta, spring 1949 in Žleby.

Charles University in Prague); uncle Václav Příhoda (who lectured in pedagogy at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague). The mothers of the past two professors mentioned were women of the Nymburk branch of the Santholzer (Santholz) family. My aunt, Antonie Santholzerová-Urbanová, was a notable sculptress and painting artist. I think that it is fair to also include both of our daughters, Mirečka and Helenka, among the group above determined by the infinitesimal genes. Also my dad, although he had no college degree or any official background in natural sciences, was close to this field, admired nature from the bottom of his heart, and always paid close attention to it and spoke about it with remarkable accuracy.

The original monograph by Miroslava (=Mirečka, married to Robert Christesen) entitled *Character Kaleidoscope: A Practical, Standards-Based Resource Guide for Character Development* (with Susan Wasilewski, 2000) is a result of long-time, goal-oriented work. Mirečka, who has been living in the USA since 1985, analyzed with her students in Raleigh, North Carolina, folklore of a large number of various nations of all continents and determined that people, regardless of global cultural background, value basically the same

character traits. This is valid not only geographically but also historically across the millennia. Attesting to that is the literary heritage written in various types of scripts in different parts of the world. The admirable traits everywhere especially include courage, perseverance, integrity, good judgment, kindness, respect, responsibility, and self-discipline. In the case of smaller nations



Figure 26. Helena and Jiří at Seč Lake, summer 1955.



Figure 27. Helena taking a break from recording notations of an observation dictated by Jiří, in a quarry of hydrothermally transformed granite, south slope of Hlidka Heights, ~1.5 km north of Rosnice, northeast of Carlsbad.

also adequate vigilance is important. These values are absorbed by young people all over the world at the beginning of their development, above all in their family and their immediate surroundings. In some cases, however, the family fails or may even have a negative effect. Then other institutions may step in instead, such as school, work place, the church, various youth groups (Junák, Sokol, Scout, YMCA), and sports teams, as well as personal role models. Unfortunately, in modern times, it may also be a gang that draws the young person in. Thus the differences in the upbringing of individuals may be enormous in every nation. It does not really matter in which country a person grew up. The citizens of our relatively small country should adopt the following mantra: try to better ourselves every day, not only in sports but also on the job and in our interpersonal relationships. It is necessary to consistently appeal to the citizens every day and make them understand that this is an integral part of everyone's self-fulfillment. Let us keep this constantly in our minds. An average Czech, whose cultural maturity or intellectual wealth is fairly high, should be able to handle the incessant onslaught of the current media. That is under one condition – provided, there is an existing high quality, stable environment. Perhaps, that is why I have always



Figure 28. Our precious daughters: on the beach at Seč Lake: Mirka (6) and Helenka (4), summer 1955.

considered my pedagogical mission at Charles University my highest calling. It makes me happy that my daughter succeeded in creating such an impressive monograph, designated for teachers who are responsible for the education of young people in various types of schools. I myself enjoyed learning new things when reading it, albeit in retirement.

Our second daughter, Helena, married the founder of the world known magazine on modern art, *Flash Art*, published in several languages in Milan, Italy. Helena kept her maiden name, although written without the length mark above the “a” in Kontova. She and her husband Giancarlo Politi are exceptionally active people. They write professional articles, interview current leading artists, gallery owners, and art critics, organize exhibitions including among others four Prague Biennales featuring works by young artists from all over the world; they open important exhibitions of cultural institutions in different parts of the globe and support creative artists in need of assistance.

I think that the hereditary factor is evident also in our granddaughters. Jana Christesen of Raleigh, married Xanthakos, is a graduate of UNC at Chapel Hill and USC in Columbia, South Carolina. Currently she resides in



Figure 29. At the Grand Walls of Žleby Castle: from left: Mirečka, Jiří, Helena, and Helenka.

Columbia, where she teaches Business Marketing at USC as adjunct professor. Gea Politi graduated from Goldsmiths College in London and runs her own *Conduits* gallery of modern art in Milan. She cooperates professionally with leading galleries of contemporary art in various countries of the world.

STUDY OF CLAYS

At the beginning of the 1950s I became more clearly aware of the fact that humans encounter clay matter at every step they take. Clay minerals are a common part of soils and have a significant impact on their properties. They dominate the sedimentary lithosphere and residual rocks, which together cover ninety per cent of the Earth on dry land as well as under the oceans. In the geological sciences section of our faculty, there was no X-ray diffractometer, no thermal analysis equipment, nor any other apparatus important for the study of clay deposits. With great enthusiasm, I began to study foreign literature, in particular journals such as *American Mineralogist*, *Mineralogical Magazine*, and *Mineralogical Abstracts*. Thanks to these publications I

acquainted myself with methods enabling us to increase our knowledge of clay minerals, clays, and clay rocks. I remember a beautiful statement by Professor Kratochvíl from that time period, who first followed my efforts with limited confidence. He often approached my desk in the chemical laboratory of the Petrographic Institute, adjacent to his office. One day, bending over my separated clay material with his arms typically folded behind his back, he softly remarked, “Dr. Konta, I wonder what you see in this jumble. Everything is so drab and formless.” I showed him a couple of thermal-analysis curves, X-ray diffraction patterns on film, and thin sections glued with Canadian balsam, while briefly explaining what it was about. He paused in surprise and after a moment, he added, “Well, carry on, something may emerge from this.”

I also share an incident with Professor Slavík that is worthy of mentioning. At the end of 1953, he asked me to review the manuscript of his book, *The Origin and Occurrence of Minerals* (*Vznik a výskyt nerostů*, 1954). It was a thin book clearly written, based on his life-long experiences. Among several minor suggestions I had for his manuscript, I mentioned that in the Chemical Elements Table one element was missing. We were sitting in my office and I said: “Professor Slavík, germanium is missing in the table.” Without moving a muscle he said calmly, “Then, add it on to it, I guess.” He suffered so many losses during World War II, that apparently he just could not write the word himself. I suppose that my writing this element in the table made his most likely deliberate oversight just a little easier.

Both of these professors shared a common pedagogical characteristic: they took a high interest in supporting the creative initiative and originality of their students.

COLLABORATION WITH LEADING SCIENTISTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Encounters and personal conversations with leading world scientists in the area of argillology (clay minerals and clay deposits science), sedimentary petrology, and geochemistry always supported my own scientific initiatives. I had a large number of professional and personal contacts with numerous scientific institutions abroad. Of exceptional importance to me was an invitation to Moscow (The Institute of Geology of Ore Deposits, Petrography, Mineralogy, and Geochemistry of the Russian Academy of Sciences) and two invitations to the USA, the first to a conference in Texas in 1961 and the second involving my collaboration in the oceanographic muds research at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Later, an extraordinary invitation came from West Germany, resulting in a nine-year collaboration with the University of Hamburg (1981–1990). I especially cherish my long-time, friendly collaboration with colleagues at my home faculty at Albertov and with the

outstanding professional staff of Professor Bárta at the Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague.

Meeting Rudolf Bárta and requested collaboration: the importance of clay and other raw materials in the service of mankind

At the beginning of the 1950s I met an amazing scholar, who left deep footprints in the area of silicate research and technology in Czechoslovakia. It was Professor Rudolf Bárta from the Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague. First in 1951–1953 he asked for my collaboration with the research of Algonkian cherts (very fine-grained quartz silicites of exceptional hardness), which were to serve as a replacement for the dwindling supplies of refractory metallurgical quartzites, the ideal raw material for the production of silica refractory used in the brick lining of shaft furnaces. It did not take long before he asked me to prepare a semester lecture course with practical exercises for his coworkers and students at the then Department of Technology Silicates, which I titled *The Microscopy of Minerals and Rocks with Respect to Non-Ore Raw Materials (Mikroskopie minerálů a hornin s ohledem na nerudní suroviny)*. In 1953 I gladly took care of this non-remunerated but conscientiously conducted task as then associate professor of the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Among the colleagues of Professor Bárta I met some outstanding specialists and I also acquired new professional literature for the study of material- and structural composition of non-ore raw materials in practice other than geological. This encounter and collaboration led to more intensive research, called “material science” (science about the properties of minerals and their use). I was surprised to see a similar specialization focus during my 1961 and 1965 visits at Penn State University in the USA, where I studied ocean muds at the College of Mineral Industries.

Together with my coworkers, I spent almost half a century working in the Institute of Petrography (later of Petrology) of Charles University's Faculty of Natural Sciences, in the field dealing with hydro-silicate products of the earth's surface decomposition. Their miniscule crystals have been forming throughout the long geological history through interaction between the lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere. Since long ago also the biosphere has taken part in this process. As a residue of volumetrically enormous, global decomposition, erosion, transport, and deposition processes, clay minerals are, after water and air, the most common material in the surface spheres of the Earth. During chemical decomposition that forms clay minerals, a certain part of rocks reacts with water, with some elements entering solution and through the rivers getting into the world oceans, lakes, or bodies of various organisms. In addition to weathering processes, layered hydrosilicates, including all clay minerals, are formed also by hydrothermal and metamorphic processes, always with the presence of water.

Argillology is a natural science with a large outreach and interdisciplinary significance. We were happy knowing that we followed the most prevalent and volumetrically extensive sediments from various theoretical vantage points and their varied applications.

Mankind noticed some of the fabulous properties of clay matter and used it a long time before the birth of argillology. The first clay amulets are about twenty-five thousand years old. The most primitive ceramic vessels made from clay soil appeared barely ten thousand years ago. Soon after followed the first writing, cuneiform, engraved in small clay tablets in the Near East. Production of the first fired bricks from various types of clay soil is of more recent vintage. The beginnings of the production of white porcelain or faience in China go back to the seventh century A.D. It seems that the widespread and abundant surface localities of white kaolinite and black coal, required for high temperature firing, have contributed to this in the eastern half of China. In Europe, the technology of the initial porcelain production following the Chinese example was introduced only about three hundred years ago. The first paper, industrially filled or coated with clay, dates back to the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth century. The white copier filled with an adsorbed-dye clay mineral, enabling copying without the carbon copy paper, was discovered barely fifty years ago. The mass industrial production of the most successful building material, Portland cement, based on the controlled firing of clay matter with limestone, started only at the end of the nineteenth century. More information about the many applications of clay matter in dozens of industrial production areas, including chemical and oil industries, agriculture, food-processing, construction, transportation, environmental remediation and protection can be found in my monograph, *Clay and Man: Clay Raw Materials in the Service of Man*, published in Czech (*Jíl a člověk: Jílové suroviny ve službách člověka*) in 1994, thanks to the Society for Clay Research and Application. A somewhat extended version appeared in English in 1995 thanks to the Elsevier publishing house as a monograph in the *Applied Clay Science* journal published in Holland (Konta, 1995).

My collaboration and multi-year friendship with Professor Rudolf Bárta and his coworkers is an example of how petrology, mineralogy, and especially argillology can support and enhance one another, together with ceramic and cement technology. Via mail, Professor Bárta regularly received the programs of our seminars at the Faculty of Natural Sciences. He enjoyed his participation in these seminars well into his advanced years, especially the lectures on non-ore raw materials. Also, he was a very active participant in the discussions at national conferences on clay minerals and petrology, as evident from his notes and questions (see the anthologies from 1959 and 1961, when discussion minutes were still recorded).

Moscow, I.I. Ginzburg, 1957–1960

His office in the Academy of Sciences, at 5 Staromonetnyj pereulok, was a spacious one. This rather short, tremendously animated man in his seventies, during my visit, had his work desks in the middle of the room. Other scientists widely known for their prolific research were seated at desks along the walls of this large room, serving simultaneously as a laboratory. I was surprised to see that the room was full of visitors. Prof. Ginzburg briskly approached me introducing himself and several of his coworkers. With his fresh, short steps, while pushing me through the crowd to one of his desks, he signaled with a slight movement of his arm that he needed complete silence and said in Russian: “Professor Konta, today we have all the Moscow clay-experts gathered here together. We look forward to your lecture on and practical exercises in imbibometry.”

From my little suitcase I took out pipettes, two small bottles of ethylene glycol and distilled water, emery paper, and a wide brush for cleaning the surface of each sharpened dry clay piece I brought. Then I pulled out several samples of clay raw material from Czechoslovakia. Ilia Isaakovich, as he asked me to address him later, swiftly pushed all my Czech samples to the side and then putting them back into their little bags he said staring at me with amusement, “We have prepared several local samples for you. We want to know exactly how your rapid method works.” In the suspenseful silence that followed, I took my time picking up the whitest of the samples and within a few minutes I had its surface sharpened for imbibometric testing. It turned out to be kaolin, in this case from Gluhov in Ukraine. “Well, this is an easy sample. Take, for example, this gray clay and we’ll see.” With these words, Professor Ginzburg handed me a solid piece of dry, darker clay. While continuing my presentation I identified bit-by-bit the presented material in question, “In this clay piece, kaolinite is predominant, apparently very fine, accompanied by illite as we can see from the prolonged time of absorption; the surface area left after the absorbed drops is significantly larger and the surface area after ethylene glycol even has a promontory border; the slightly swollen or rough surface left after a drop of water and a drop of ethylene glycol shows a smaller admixture of montmorillonite or a mixed structure of illite and smectite.” From the lips of those bending over my desk, one could hear, “Great, wonderful!” (“Ladno, prekrasno!”) Professor Ginzburg interrupted this murmur with the words, “I did not expect this. Dear Professor from Prague, do you know what sample this is? It is the Tchasov Yar clay, in which slightly ordered kaolinite is somewhat prevalent, accompanied by illite and mixed-layered illite and smectite. Tchasov Yar is our important deposit of bound heat-resistant clay. For a long time, we considered this fine material a specific clay mineral and gave it the name monotermitite. But here

are some more samples for you.” So, I continued my rapid determination of mineralogical composition of the other unknown clay samples from the Urals and from other regions of the then Euro-Asian superpower, the Soviet Union. The test prepared by Ginzburg for me in Moscow, in 1957, showed me once again that even a seasoned boy scout, in accordance with the scouts’ motto, has to be “Always prepared.”

A few hours later, Professor Ginzburg was telling me about his beginnings as a geologist in the Czar’s Academy of Sciences. In the spring of 1914, the young mineralogist Illia Isaakovich was sent to Karelia with a small geological expedition to explore pegmatite deposits rich in large crystals of mica. They were taken by riverboat to the area, together with their camping equipment including guns, because there were no roads yet in the vast, hitherto unexplored northern region of European Russia. One of the group of geologists determined the exact geographical location of the deposits by time (established by the position of the sun and the stars). Just before departing for the wilderness, the geologists and the boat captain agreed that the same boat would pick them up at a pre-arranged spot on a certain day at the beginning of the fall. The work was going well all summer long, except for the large swarms of mosquitoes. During that one summer, they were able to discover large geological supplies of mica and feldspar pegmatites. Before the return trip they reached the river a little early to wait for the promised boat. They spent their time fishing in the crystal-clear water of the river. However, the waiting for the boat took longer and longer. Meanwhile, several weeks elapsed from the pickup date originally agreed upon. The daily temperatures were dropping rapidly, mainly at night. More and more frequently, ice fragments began to appear at the riverbanks. One day the river froze over and it began to snow. At that point everyone knew they would not live to see the return of the boat. It became necessary to build a wooden cabin from the huge trunks of fallen trees. The group had more than enough dry fuel to last through the winter. It lay in the all-encompassing forest, where most likely no wood was ever harvested. Many times they wondered what might have caused their being forgotten in Moscow. There was no post office anywhere close and transportation by land was impossible. No radio connection was used in expeditions back then. Finally, a long-desired boat appeared in the spring of 1915, after the river-ice melted. Thus, by winter and through backwoodsmen’s approach to life, hardened geologists could be lifted at last from the bosom of Karelia’s wilderness. During the entire time spent there, neither Ginzburg nor his colleagues had the slightest idea that in the summer of 1914 World War I had begun. The sudden enlisting of several million people in the Russian army is said to have shaken up the organization in the country’s civil services so badly that a couple of geologists sent on a mission, somewhere in the far north, were indeed

forgotten. This expedition became later known as the "Lost Expedition."

Ginzburg's contributions to the development of Russian and international argillology are well known among scientists. His findings about the minerals of the weathering crust in the geological history of the Urals have a lasting value. They appear in his book, *Minerals of the Ancient Weathering Crust of the Urals (Mineraly drevnej kory vyvetrivaniya Urala, 1951)*, written together with I.A. Rukavishnikova. Ginzburg was also an initiator and editor of the outstanding anthologies *Weathering Crust (Kora vyvetrivaniya)*, published since 1952 by the Moscow Academy of Sciences. Our cooperation with the geologists of the Academy lasted for many years.

USA: Urbana, Illinois, Summer 1961 and Fall 1965 and State College, Pennsylvania, Fall 1965

The year 1961 was professionally quite remarkable for me, marked by new opportunities to work with and personally get to know international argillologists. Quite unexpectedly, I was invited to participate in the 10th Anniversary Conference of the American Clay Minerals Society in Austin, Texas. In attendance were professors from various states of the USA with whom I was able to speak and set up an exchange of scientific literature: R.E. Grim, W.D. Keller, W. Bradley, H. Murray, J. White, and many others from universities and research institutes. On a hot Texas day during a field excursion in mid October, Bill Bradley, Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, asked me, "Jiri, do you realize that yards in Texas are much longer than in the Far North of Europe?" That was an invitation for me to befriend American argillologists, who later became increasingly more interested in our research in Czechoslovakia. Perhaps I may add that placing Czechoslovakia on the map of Europe at times presented quite a challenge to our American friends.

For the conference I prepared two invited lectures. The first day I presented *Identification of Clay Minerals and the Study of Argillaceous Rocks by the Imbibometric Method*, and my second lecture took place at the end of the conference, entitled *Research Work on Clay Minerals and Argillaceous Rocks in Czechoslovakia*. After my second presentation, two colleagues from Texas told me that in the South there was an old large colony of Czech immigrants from the time of John Amos Comenius. After the conference I flew to visit Professor Grim at the University of Illinois at Urbana, south of Chicago. Size-wise his office corresponded to the modest proportions of our Petrology Institute in Prague. In American colleges I liked especially the unostentatious and modest behavior of important scholars I encountered, their systematic work ethic, and selflessness. Grim made a substantial contribution to American and international argillology, not only with his original work but also with his superbly written books,

Clay Mineralogy (1953, 1968) and *Applied Clay Mineralogy* (1962).

In 1965 I visited the workplace at the University of Illinois a second time. As I was asked to present a lecture, I came to the Institute of Natural Sciences a little earlier to look at the auditorium and acquaint myself with its acoustics and slide projection technology. I did not realize I was in a different time zone and had the wrong time on my watch. Having just arrived from Pennsylvania, I forgot to set my watch back one hour. Whoever let me into the building where Grim's department was located must have wondered about my very early arrival. Professor Grim had not yet arrived, and so I thought I would look at the exhibits showcased in the hallway. For a long time, I was standing fascinatingly glued scrutinizing one of them. This one featured the original certificates from the state exams of Gregor Mendel, the founder of plant genetics. From these documents I learned that the required topic of his written petrology exam was mainly metamorphic rocks. He failed the state exam in natural history at the University of Vienna at the time when he was already making his famous botany experiments in Brno. Even on his second attempt he was not successful on his state exam. I had to read everything twice to make sure I was not mistaken. The text was written in German with energetic strokes of the penmanship. The professors at the University of Vienna were relentless with Mendel. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned around to see a smiling Professor Grim. We exchanged greetings and as I was still completely immersed in the unfavorable state exam grades of Gregor Mendel, I asked surprised, "I have just read about the state exam failure of a famous countryman of mine at the University in Vienna. How did these valuable documents get here?" Professor Grim: "That I don't know, but I do know another famous scientist who flunked four times when getting his driver's license in Pennsylvania," and whispering in my ear, he clarified, "George Brindley." I was not sure if I should look serious or laugh out loud. I could not imagine Professor Brindley – a meticulous scientist, with his enormous talent to explain the most complicated crystallography and structure of the phyllosilicates (layered silicates, including clay minerals) with admirable accuracy – struggling with traffic regulations or driving at the wheel of a car. George W. Brindley was also the editor and co-author of the unique book on clay minerals, which appeared in two editions (Brindley, 1980).

When I returned from the Xth Conference of the Clay Minerals Society in Texas in 1961, I got to know Brindley more closely at the small University Park college town in Pennsylvania, where he invited me for a brief lecture visit. I received a warm welcome from three remarkable colleagues: Professor George Brindley, a white-haired, energetic man of medium built; Professor Rustum Roy, originally from India; and

W.O. Williamson, visiting professor from Australia. After our arrival from the airport, we sat down in Williamson's office. All of them showed me an optimum way of making introductions among scientists – by presenting their latest publications, with their pencil-written notes, question marks, and future plans. Affably and clearly, they spoke about their achievements, responding to my questions in a very respectful manner. Author notes in their reprints were a testimony to the fact that scientific work is a continuous, actually, never-ending process. When a task is solved, usually new and more numerous issues arise than there were initially. It resembles a chain reaction.

W.O. Williamson introduced my afternoon presentation, *Identification of Clay Minerals and the Study of Argillaceous Rocks by the Imbibometric Method*, in a completely full auditorium. He reminded all in attendance that while their Pennsylvania State University recently celebrated its centennial, Charles University in Prague is over six hundred years old and well known all over the world. After my lecture, there were quite a few questions. In this respect, Professor Brindley was quite active. For example, he asked, "How does an aggregate composed of 50% kaolinite and 50% illite behave during imbibometric testing? Have you researched artificial aggregates compressed under a certain pressure? What is the cause of the characteristic promontories on the absorption periphery? Has the method been tested in the ceramic environment?" I was able to deliver satisfying answers to all those questions (Brindley and Brown, 1951). When, after the lecture, I tried to apologize for my English, in his tactful way W.O. Williamson announced in front of the full auditorium that no apologies were needed and that many of those present might agree with him that my English was better than that of many in the audience who were born in the USA.

In 1965 when I landed in the USA, accompanied by my wife and daughters, almost simultaneously a plane from Rome carrying the Pope landed at JFK. As the streets of New York were filled with onlookers, we had to continue to Princeton University in New Jersey with a small air taxi. Our trip, from September to November, was organized by Professor Earl Ingerson from the University of Texas at Austin. In Princeton, where I had my first lecture, (and where Albert Einstein also worked during WWII) an older Chevrolet was waiting for us, very comfortable, with a spacious trunk for luggage. This vehicle enabled us to visit thirteen universities and a large oil company research institute on the way to Texas and from there to Los Angeles, California. In Austin the Ingersons offered us a week-stay in their big new home with a terrace and a beautiful view of the city. Although I had only driven several hundred kilometers in Prague and its surroundings shortly before our USA trip, I managed the driving on American roads quite easily. From the East coast to the South and West and then back east again, we covered seven thousand four

hundred and seventy-seven miles, that is eleven thousand nine hundred and sixty-three kilometers, from October 6 to December 1, 1965. I lectured at the following nine universities and two scientific institutes: Princeton University; University of Illinois in Urbana; Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana; University of Missouri, Columbia; University of Texas at Austin; California Institute of Technology, Pasadena; California State College at Los Angeles; Union Oil Company of California, Brea; University of California in Los Angeles; Pennsylvania State University, State College; and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts. On our journey across the USA in our old dependable Chevrolet, we would stop at motels, where spending the night would typically cost only between twelve to sixteen dollars for all four of us.

USA: Penn State University and WHOI (1965–1966) and West Germany: University of Hamburg (1980–1989)

My new and unexpected collaboration with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in the 1965–1966 school year was associated, first and foremost, with Penn State University and the names of three now deceased researchers: G.W. Brindley, J.C. Griffiths, and E.T. Degens. At that time, Brindley and Griffiths were professors at Penn State University, while Degens had worked as a visiting geochemist from West Germany at WHOI for several years. I was invited to this institution to be part of the research of deep-ocean muds in the northern part of the Indian Ocean surrounding the Arabian Peninsula, the largest reserves of oil and natural gas in the world. Clay minerals dominated in these muds. To be able to get intensively involved in this project, I applied for a nearly yearlong sabbatical. Deep-ocean sediments were already topics of my lectures at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Prague, but I had not yet seen them in person. They cover enormous surfaces of our planet. The invitation to the USA fulfilled my long-lasting dream to study the sediments that are the most widespread, but at the same time the hardest to reach.

I did experimental research at State College, a small town in the geometrical center of Pennsylvania. At that time, the most important clay mineral scientist of the 1960s–1970s, Professor Brindley, ran a laboratory there which employed graduate students and visiting professors both from the USA and abroad, from theoretical physicists to field geologists. Every day I made a point to attend his scientific seminar on clay minerals, required for post-graduate students and scientific researchers in the department. Lecturers alternated daily. Invited guests, such as myself, had to present at least one lecture. I chose "Quantitative Determination of Minerals in Sediments" as my topic. Here each seminar participant gained comprehensive and critically evaluated information about the latest discoveries published in prestigious international scientific journals.

We worked in the same building at the College of Mineral Industries. Even though we never spoke about it, gradually a friendship developed between us. It continued in spite of my not accepting the professor of sedimentary petrology position offered to me at the university. One day after several months of my employment at Penn State University, Professor Brindley together with the department head, Professor John C. Griffiths, well known author of the book, *Scientific Method in the Analysis of Sediments* (1967) paid me a visit. As soon as we sat down, Professor Brindley told me, "Jiri, call your wife, I think we'll need her agreement." Then they told us that the institute leadership decided to offer me a position as a tenured professor in sedimentary petrology at Penn State University. I replied that I could not accept the offer. Immediately, I realized their surprise and disappointment. I explained to them very tactfully that we had two sick, aging mothers at home to whom we promised to return. Also, my coworkers expected my return from America to the Petrology Department of Charles University, where I was going to continue with my research and pedagogical work. To all of them my emigration would be a bitter disappointment.

Some readers may think that the environment at the College of Mineral Industries did not quite appeal to me. Not at all, it was ideal for my way of life. I was happy to be able to spend at least half a year in such an environment studying the delivered hundred and twenty-two mud samples. Immediately after my arrival in Pennsylvania I was allotted the laboratory of the recently deceased Professor Paul Krynine, an outstanding sedimentary petrologist, who worked there for several decades. I visited Woods Hole from there twice, by plane and by car. It took from early morning to late afternoon to drive the distance of almost a thousand kilometers.

The working atmosphere at both Penn State University and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution was magnificent. Everyone genuinely endeavored to attain the highest degree of originality possible. All preliminary results arrived at on each individual project were discussed in a smaller group of experts with the department head present. After the three-month work on the material from the Indian Ocean in Krynine's laboratory I was invited to Woods Hole to present my preliminary results including interpretations. One morning I got a phone call from the director of the Chemical and Geological Department of the Oceanographic Institution, Dr. John M. Hunt. He said, "Next week we are expecting the preliminary report about the state of your research. You have your air ticket at Mid-State Airport. It is a small airport about fifteen miles from you. In New York you'll have to take a plane to Boston. At the airport there will be a car waiting for you. It takes a good driver about two hours from Boston to Woods Hole. You will be staying at the institution hotel. So,

drive directly there. O.K.? I'll see you next week, on Tuesday, at nine o'clock."

After this brief conversation, I immediately called the airport in question. Indeed, they already had a ticket waiting for me. Four days later, on a Monday, I took a small plane, stopping at several other little airports on the way to New York. From there I was to continue on a bigger plane to Boston. When I was disembarking at La Guardia airport, a flight attendant from Eastern Airlines approached me and asked me softly, in her American-accented English, "Are you Professor Konta? Follow me, please. I'll escort you to our plane leaving for Boston in a few minutes." I was taken a little by surprise, because I thought I would have to look for my connecting flight at the busy New York airport by myself. When I stepped out of my plane in Boston and no one was waiting there for me, I thought I was far away from my starting point, so it would probably be the end of this well organized trip. The pleasant aroma of warm food wafted from a small cafeteria near the airport hall exit. I thought that after several hours spent in the plane and being served only drinks, I should have a bite to eat. I entered quickly and ordered a warm hamburger with onions and mustard. Meanwhile dusk set in at the airport and I headed to rent a car. Its colorful neon sign caught my eye already from afar. Holding my air ticket in my hand, I introduced myself and said where I was going. I wanted to add that Oceanographic Institution made a reservation for me, but with her wide, well practiced smile, the clerk cut me off saying, "Yes, Mr. Konta, your car is ready. Jim will show you where it is." Nearby, Jim promptly responded, took a hold of my suitcase with one hand, and grasped the car keys with the other, while still managing to grab an envelope from the counter. Then sailing elegantly through the revolving door, keeping a perfect distance ahead of me, he headed for the parking lot. He opened an unlocked car, carefully placed my suitcase in the back seat, pressed the car key in my hand and the envelope containing a car map of the area, and remarked politely, "Have a nice trip, sir." In a couple of minutes I found myself being carried away in an almost brand new Chrysler on a highway from Boston to the little scientific town of Woods Hole on the Atlantic coast. I caught myself singing at the steering wheel. I think it was the tune *Hej, Slované* (*Hey, Slavic Nations*). The road through this unknown countryside was lined with signs at the most opportune places, attracting attention from far away. After following the names of various towns and villages on the map, finally, I passed the Falmouth sign and, after just a little while longer, Woods Hole welcomed me by late night.

The laboratories and offices of the Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole are scattered in several buildings. One of the most frequently visited places is the library. Those who attended my lectures or seminars at Charles University know very well that I evaluate every professional workplace and every creative expert

in a scientific field, among other things, also according to their libraries. The library is an important center of every scientific or college institution and a business card of any individual. It mirrors how serious one is about science. With its most important books, professional journals, and dictionaries, each specialist's personal library must be gradually and systematically built. Over time the personal expenses of just one university geologist, as far as the creation and upkeep of his own professional library are concerned, exceed the cost of a new luxury automobile.

I arrived safely at the Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole to present a report on the partial results of my research of the deep Indian Ocean muds. When I finished my presentation, there were a few questions. The highly respected Egon T. Degens, one of the leading scientists of that time, for example, asked me how much magnesium was present in the biogenic calcite in the muds studied. I pulled out additional diffractograms from my folder and a pencil-drawn graph of the variation of the respective X-ray calcite reflection. I referred to the method of J.R. Goldsmith and D.L. Graf (Goldsmith and Graf, 1958) regarding the relationship of the relevant diffraction peak to the chemical composition of calcium-magnesium carbonates. I noticed that the inquirer was stunned by my explanation. Later he shared with me that he sincerely planned on teaching me something new, but I messed up his plans. That same year he informed me that, together with John M. Hunt, he used my research data for certain correlations for the determination of organic matter content and calcite in ocean muds (Degens and Hunt, 1968). I think that our mutual trust in each other's work became the basis of our friendship. Also, our new collaboration on the international project *World River System*, starting fifteen years later, in 1981, at the University of Hamburg, was the fruit of this mutual trust. Hamburg University suffered a major blow

when Egon Degens passed away in 1989. He was an outstanding scientist, founder of the Institute for Marine Biochemistry and Chemistry, frequently sought after by students and colleagues alike as a teacher and advisor, abounding with thousands of ideas and invincible optimism.

I was quite surprised when in 1980 I received an exceptionally significant invitation from University of Hamburg, with which Charles University had an agreement for mutual cooperation. The typical bureaucratic formalities were taken care of very quickly. After my arrival in Hamburg that very year, Professor Degens told me, "Jiri, within the framework of the agreement between our two universities, I am asking you to participate in the international research project, *Transport of Carbon and Minerals in Major World Rivers*. The research will take place under the auspices of SCOPE (Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment) and UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)." In work-related conversation and in our notes and minutes, however, we soon referred to this project simply as *World River System* (Figure 30).

I was entrusted with the study of fine raw material transported in the suspensions of twelve of the forty largest world rivers: Mackenzie, St. Lawrence, Orinoco, Caroni, Parana, Nile, Niger, Orange, Indus, Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Padma and in one smaller river, Waikato in New Zealand. Partly, I worked with the instruments in the Geomaticum building of the Geological-Paleontological Institute at the University of Hamburg and partly with the instruments at Charles University in Prague. The Geological-Paleontological Institute was generous about letting me use their library by providing me with a personal key, which meant that, as I once did in the case of the large library in Woods Hole, I was able to use this one whenever and as often as I wanted.



Figure 30. The opening of the 'Geology in Pictures: Nature and Art' exhibition: a collaborative project between Charles University and University of Hamburg at Prague's Carolinum building, May 31–June 30, 1988. Exhibition authors from left: Prof. E.T. Degens, Prof. G. Hilmer (outstanding catalogue author), Prof. Jiří Kouta, and Dr W. Weitschat.

The results we gradually acquired from our study of various particles, captured on special filters by groups of local enthusiasts in several stations on every river, were quite fascinating. Soon I figured out that this research harbored a key to further progress in sediment petrology and geology. After several years, our study showed that the composition and properties of the parent rocks and their minerals in the weathering crusts of river basins, the altitude, and topography of the areas of origin, together with climatic conditions, have a decisive impact on the weathering intensity, erosion, and the resulting composition of fine phyllosilicates (sheet silicates), including clay minerals.

The exceptional accumulation of phyllosilicates in the Earth's sedimentary deposits is influenced especially by their high to extremely high stability in water-rich environments. The fragmental material eroded from weathering crusts and transported in the rivers contains predominantly phyllosilicates inherited from parent rocks. In geological literature, however, for a long time newly formed phyllosilicates crystallizing in weathering crusts, including soils, were overrated, that is as a predominant global source of the Earth's clay and dust accumulations. Furthermore, I found out that during the weathering and crystallization of newly formed phyllosilicates, the dissolving of the original silicates in various dense parent rocks is strongly influenced everywhere and over a long period of time by the chemical microenvironment in every clay pseudomorph (the space left after the replacement of the original mineral with argillized mineral). Phyllosilicates and accompanying detrital minerals in the present-day and recent muds, which cover enormous sea-, ocean-, and lake-bottom surfaces, correspond to the transported material in river suspension. The results of this research and other reports written by a large number of scientists gradually appeared between 1982–1990 in the volumes *Reports of the Geological-Paleontological Institute of the University of Hamburg* (Mitteilungen aus dem Geologisch-Paläontologischen Institut der Universität Hamburg). It took me much longer to publish the final work, *Phyllosilicates in the Sediment-forming Process: Weathering, Erosion, Transportation, and Deposition*, which contains the results of additional, more extensive research (Konta, 2009). Here I presented evidence of how coarser fragments of the eroded clay accumulations and crystalline phyllosilicates from various weathered materials and soils are very sensitive to the impact and pressure of harder and denser rock fragments, including their minerals, carried together in the turbulent river- and similar streams. This important mechanical phenomenon is supported by an enormous accumulation of clay particles and dust grains in phyllosilicates of an overall fragment size smaller than 0.063 mm. More important, however, was the fact that the research of the mineral matter carried by the rivers and the research of rocks in historic monuments, launched a few years

earlier, captivated the attention not only of my co-workers but also of Charles University students, who focused on similar topics in their dissertations.

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH THE JOURNAL *APPLIED CLAY SCIENCE*

At the VIIth International Clay Conference (AIPEA) held in Italy (Pavia and Bologna) in 1981, I presented the invited opening lecture, *The Present State and Development Trends of Clay Science*. It was published the following year (Konta, 1982). The final lecture was written by Professor George W. Brindley (1982): *The Teaching of Clay Mineralogy*. However, as he was seriously ill at the time and receiving cancer treatments he was unable to attend the conference. At his request, his lecture was delivered by Belgian Professor J.J. Fripiat, then living and working in the USA.

In my forty-five minute presentation, I referred to two introductory plenary sessions by authors published in the previous international conference literature. I knew both of them well, personally and from correspondence. The results of their work, published in prestigious scientific journals, and their outstanding books had a major influence on international argillology. George W. Brindley authored the text *Current and Future Trends in Clay Mineralogy – a Review* (1976). Later, Dr. Robert C. Mackenzie of the famous Macaulay Institute for Soil Research in Aberdeen, Scotland, processed this still pressing theme as a question: *Clay Mineralogy – Whence and Whither?* (1979)

My new statistical overview, backed up by specific figures, of the then state of clay science and clay deposits contained the following plea: readers of argillological journals needed their own journal focused on practical applications. Articles on clay minerals and their deposits used in various industrial areas, agriculture, and ecology were scattered over a large number of journals connected with both production and application. A representative of the Elsevier publishing house for science and other professional literature in Holland was immediately interested. After my lecture, he asked me to jot down a concept of such a journal and submit a list of world scientists appropriate for the editorial board. My written answer from Prague followed including the suggested title, *Applied Argillology*. The result appealed already at the following international AIPEA conference. This was briefly described, among other things, by Dr. R. Kühnel (1997) in the editorial introduction to one of the following journal issues, “The journal *Applied Clay Science* was founded in 1983 on the initiative of Professor Dr. Jiří Konta from Charles University in Prague, Czechoslovakia. The first issue was presented at the International Clay Conference of AIPEA (L'Association Internationale pour l'Etude des Argiles) in July 1985, in Denver, Colorado, USA.” It is the only international scientific journal published abroad on the



Figure 31. Closing the 5th Euroclay Meeting at the Palace of Culture, Prague, August 31–September 3, 1983, Jiří Kouta with his immediate coworkers and several colleagues from abroad.

initiative of a Czech geologist, perhaps even of a Czech scientist (Figures 31–33).

THE AIPEA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (1985–1989)

At the beginning of 1985, I received a letter from the acting AIPEA President, Professor Heller-Kallai (Israel), informing me that I was nominated as one of the next AIPEA President candidates by the AIPEA nomination committee consisting of Dr. G. Pedro (France), Professor K. Nagasawa (Japan), Professor L. Stoch (Poland), and Professor M.M. Mortland (USA). If I accepted the nomination, I would have to attend the election at the general assembly of the VIIIth AIPEA International Clay Conference in Denver, Colorado. My participation depended on the Czech Ministry of Education's permission to obtain US dollars for a round-trip air ticket and to cover my stay at the Marriott hotel, as well as my meals and personal expenses for a week. About a month after submitting a written application to the ministry, supported by Charles University Chancellor's office, I was surprised by the friendly response I received together with the travel permission. I received most of the dollar checks for the trip from the ministry, a smaller portion from the UNESCO Science Committee, and the air ticket was financed by the Charles University Faculty of Natural Sciences from the funds, for the most part earned by geologists, including myself, who next to teaching also worked in geological research. I personally only paid ten percent of the expenses to the Faculty. In addition, it was necessary to register for the conference, to prepare my lecture, *Mineral and Chemical Maturity of*

Suspended Solids of Some Major World Rivers, and to send an abstract to the organizing committee.

I arrived in Denver on July 27, 1985, a few minutes before midnight. At about 1:00 a.m. I was falling asleep with the thought that it was about 9:00 o'clock Sunday morning at home in Prague. Shortly after eight I got up, registered in the hall, said hello to a couple of colleagues from around the world, and glanced through the written packet with the program for the VIIIth Conference.

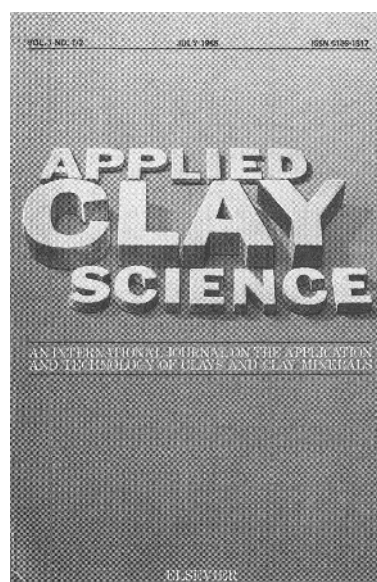


Figure 32. The first issue of *Applied Clay Science* founded at the suggestion of Jiří Kouta.

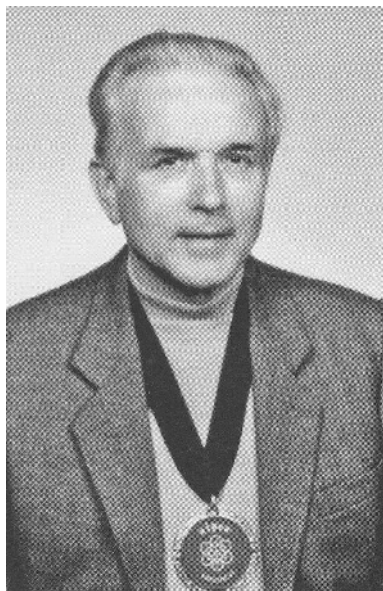


Figure 33. Jiří Konta as AIPEA President after election in Denver, Colorado, 1985.

The AIPEA board session, of which I was a member, took place on July 28th from two to five o'clock. We went over the then state of the AIPEA and future activities. The secretary general informed us that 435 delegates from thirty-nine countries were attending the conference. The sixth point on our agenda was the nomination of new board members and the AIPEA president. During the hearing I was asked to leave the room. After about twenty minutes, Professor S.W. Bailey walked out of the room with the words, "Please come back, Mr. President."

The following day Dr. J.B. Hayes of Marathon Oil Company in Colorado, as the main American organizer of the VIIIth AIPEA Conference, opened the plenary session. About four short speeches followed given by other important organizers or sponsors. When it was the turn for the acting AIPEA President, Lisa Heller-Kallai, to take over, she asked all present in the packed auditorium to stand up in honor of deceased Professor George Brindley, a friend and an outstanding scientist. In order to bring this unique personality closer to the reader, I will present at least a brief part of the deeply moving obituary by Dr. William F. Moll, published under the title, "George William Brindley – In Appreciation," in *Clays and Clay Minerals* (1984):

"George Brindley died at his home in State College, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of October 23, 1983. He is survived by his wife, his son and daughter, four grandchildren, a brother, hundreds of mineralogists, thousands of others whom his work touched, and a body of research of lasting value. [...] He attended Manchester University in the 1920s, studying in the laboratory of Sir Lawrence Bragg and R.W. James, and

earning BSc and MSc degrees. [...] [Later] he moved to Leeds, where he obtained his Ph.D. [...] The reason for his unique position is as complex as the clay minerals he so loved to study. [...] Projects [in his laboratory] ranged from crystallography and kinetics of high temperature solid-state reactions to clay-organic interactions. [...] He was the archetypical scientist who set high standards for truth and showed others how to attain it. He was an understanding human being."

The two days that followed were filled with highly valuable lectures and studies of the posters displayed. The election of the new AIPEA board took place on July 31, from 10:00 to 11:00 p.m. At the general assembly, the acting AIPEA president read the proposal by the nominating committee and emphasized that the nomination was "purely personal," that is focused entirely on the individuals, regardless of where the colleagues came from: "J. Konta, President (Czechoslovakia); A.J. Herbillon, Secretary General (Belgium); C. de Kimpe, Treasurer (Canada); S.W. Bailey, Chairman of Nomenclature Committee (USA); and several other members of the upcoming board. Yes, I was elected into this honorary acting position and together with me also all the other candidates proposed to the AIPEA board, one of the twenty-two geological sciences organizations globally under the umbrella of the Geological Union. During the applause I was thinking about the reaction of my coworkers on my return back home to Czechoslovakia. Will my election motivate someone to an even more intensive creative endeavor? That would be my sincerest wish. Then one of the conference chairs asked me for a brief speech. I approached the podium, just a few steps away, and said:

"Dear Colleagues and Friends of Clay Science,

First of all, my thanks go to the Nomination Committee and to all of you here for your votes. I am happy to be elected today as the President of the AIPEA by the experts and colleagues feeling that it does not matter how diverse our languages and countries are if our hearts beat for the same science. In the history of my country, there ruled a king by the name of John Luxemburg who lost his life in the battle at Crecy, France, in 1346. Two words were engraved in his shield, "Ich dien," in English, "I serve." These two words were adopted as a motto on the emblem of the Prince of Wales, the son of the King of England, who won the battle. The idea behind these words was to always serve the highest cause. As a newly elected President of the International Association for the Investigation of Clays, I too want to accept this brief sentence as a guide for my future activities."

On the last day of the AIPEA conference (Sunday, August 2) at 10:45 a.m. after the Bradley Award presentation to Dr. Herrero, came the final speech delivered by the outgoing President of the Clay Minerals Society, Wayne M. Bundy, the author of the remarkable book, *Innovation, Creativity, and Discovery*

in *Modern Organizations* (2002). For about three quarters of an hour, he spoke about the importance of interconnectedness between industry and the mining of raw materials with science. He especially emphasized that a concentrated attempt was made in the USA to build laboratories in close proximity to industries already before 1970. After a while, however, it became clear that industry needs primarily original ideas, which deeply affect industrial processes. At that point they were convinced that a connection between industries and universities is much more effective, and that is why investing in this connection is of primary importance. Innovation is based on invention, on originality of thoughts and their realization; mere commercialization is not enough.

It was then time for students to receive prizes for the best projects and posters. Shortly before my final presentation, the outgoing AIPEA President put a ceremonial President's medallion made of blue Wedgewood English porcelain around my neck. I began as follows: "Ladies and Gentlemen: It is not easy to speak after such a magnificent speaker as Dr. Wayne Bundy. It would be hard even in Czech, my native language. I know, however, that I have to speak in English, or better said, Czenglish (namely Czech English)." Then I thanked all organizers, conference participants, and especially the presenters for their new discoveries and fruitful discussions. In the end, I thanked The Clay Minerals Society and the country hosting the conference, the USA.

After my presentation, which ended the conference, I received numerous personal congratulations. To capture the friendly atmosphere of the science world at that time, I wrote down three of them in my notebook right after the conference. Dr. Christopher Jeans (Great Britain): "Both of your speeches were excellent, very similar to English thinking." Professor Warren Huff (USA): "You have a clear, perfect pronunciation." Both of these scientists have family connections to Czech heritage. Mrs. Gude, wife of geologist A.J. Gude III of the United States Geological Survey in Denver: "Your both presidential speeches were perfect, the best of all. Where did you learn English?" That surprised me because the foreign languages I had in school a long time ago were German, Latin, and French. However, they did serve me well as a solid basis later in life when I took private English lessons. "You made only one mistake, in the second speech. May I give it to you straight?" continued Mrs. Gude. I nodded. "You said United State Geological Survey, and there should be States. But this was nothing compared to the ideas in your speeches. I am a correction fanatic."

The small ore-mining town nearby, where we were taken for a geological excursion the next day, has a fitting name as far as my AIPEA President election is concerned. Its name is Georgetown and my name Jiří is George in English. After checking out of my hotel at

about 11:00 a.m., on August 3, 1985, I took a flight to JFK in New York and from there I continued with Pan American Airlines to Frankfurt. I arrived home in Prague on August 4 in the morning.

After my arrival in Prague, however, there was a rather embarrassing incident that occurred during the customs inspection. The customs officers on duty were drawn to the presidential medal made of richly gold-plated Wedgewood porcelain bearing the suspicious inscription AIPEA PRESIDENT. They confiscated the special case containing the medallion with a brief comment that everything would have to be properly investigated. All of my explanations were in vain. My Denver story did not seem genuine to them. At home I was thinking of what to do to get the medallion back. Thankfully, about two weeks later, I received a phone call from the customs office: "Mr. Konta, you can pick up your medallion. Everything is in order." Until then I had not mentioned this incident to anyone because the medallion was a rotating one, meaning that every four years it had to be passed on to the next AIPEA president at the plenary session. To make sure it was safe, I took it to my personal safe at the bank. I exhaled deeply when I handed it on to Dr. José María Serratos of the Madrid Institute of Material Science at the IXth International AIPEA Clay Conference in Strasbourg. The newly elected President noticed my relief and asked softly, "What's so demanding about this position?" To my mind came the collegial encouragement, "The four-year protection of this precious medallion, getting it through customs, and finally the required handing it over."

STAFF OF THE PRAGUE LABORATORY OF SEDIMENTARY PETROLOGY AND ARGILLOLOGY

In our laboratory we tried to inspire our students to produce creative scientific work in a number of different ways. This included daily student and teacher encounters, their interactive discussions, participation in my lectures (which always ended with mandatory student-prepared questions), as well as topical seminars and follow-up discussions. As far as instruction is concerned, this type of environment is more effective than mere lecturing.

During 1952–1989 we assisted with the dissertations of sixty-five young men and women in Czechoslovakia at the master's, doctoral (RNDr.), and candidate of science levels. Assistants from abroad also learned our methodology and wrote their dissertations under our guidance: from Bangalore University in India, St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and the University of Zagreb in former Yugoslavia, the Polytechnic Institute in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and from the University of Ernst Moritz Arndt in Greifswald, Germany. In addition, hundreds of students from other geological science departments at our Albertov labora-

tory in Prague attended our lectures, practical exercises, and seminars.

The following scientists and pedagogues participated in the education of young people and in scientific research at the Petrography Department, which in 1975 changed its name to Petrology Department:

Engineer Zdeněk Borovec, CSc. (research methods, electron microscopy, study of natural clay deposits and their minerals, sorption and ion exchange, trace elements in clay minerals, interaction of uranium and radium with minerals, natural glasses, and the impact of microorganisms on raw materials);

RNDr. Ludvík Čichovský (stone weathering of historical monuments, newly created minerals in the pores of rocks exposed to weathering, and clay minerals in sedimentary facies);

RNDr. Ladislav Mráz (chemical analyses of numerous minerals, rocks, and natural glasses and quantitative chemical analysis methods of both silicate and non-silicate raw materials);

Associate Professor, engineer Josef Neužil, CSc. (research methods of raw materials, kaolin, and other weathering crusts, geochemistry of weathering processes, heat-resistant clays, historical monument building stones, and hydro-thermal kaolinization);

Associate Professor, RNDr. Jan Šrámek, CSc. (diagenetic carbonate concretions in sedimentary rocks, clay minerals in various sedimentary rocks, rocks and their minerals in historical buildings and their weathering, and quantitative pore dispersion in building stone including methodology);

RNDr. Vladimír Tolar (chemical analyses of Czech river rocks, minerals, and water, imbibograph construction, uranyl sorption with humus acids, and weathering of building and sculptural stone in historical monuments).

The number of personnel in our laboratory typically ranged between ten and fifteen, depending on the number of candidates working on their graduate dissertations or trying to improve their qualifications by working on their doctoral or candidate of sciences degrees. At least for several years, they conducted their experiments with rocks and minerals in our lab, attended seminars, used the geological science or chemistry libraries in the adjacent building of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, and discussed their progress with myself and other pedagogues.

During both research and instruction, the collaboration of technical and laboratory assistants was very important. The following coworkers proved to be especially helpful over time: M. Cieslarová, I. Fischer, J. Hlavsa, M. Chladová, V. Kodl, L. Pařezová, M. Reichelt (RNDr.), M. Šimková, and J. Válková. With photographic documentation we received external assistance from Mr. and Mrs. Hatlák, RNC. M. Králík, Dr. Č. Mrázek from Hradec Králové, and V. Šilhanová. Over several years M. Chladová, M. Kopecká, J. Kortanová, B. Nedvěďová, A. Procházková-Benešová, and M.

Erdeová devoted themselves to picture- and graph drawings with the necessary care and precision. As far as other important collaborations are concerned, without which our endeavor would not have been so successful, I referred to them before (Konta, 2007). During the regular national conferences on clay minerals and petrography (or petrology), attended by numerous scientists from abroad, we received assistance also from J. Šindelářová and RNDr. J. Pešková.

My gratitude and heartfelt thanks belong also to several outstanding translators, to whom, granted, I provided the English geological terminology ahead of time, but whose final products I always admired and only rarely corrected. At the very beginning, it was Associate Professor J. Moschelesová and later Dr. J. Košáková, J. Newton (native Englishman), RNDr. M. Rieder, and Dr. L. Trejdl. In the past over twenty-five years, however, the most helpful with my English texts was my daughter, Miroslava Kontová-Christesen, who together with assistance from my American son-in-law Robert Christesen, corrected most of my texts, written by me primarily in English, including all my extensive monographs.

For decades I served as an active member of editorial boards of the following scientific journals: *Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Geologica*, Praha (1954–1990), *Silikáty (Ceramics-Silikáty)*, ČSAV, Praha (1962–); *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Earth Sciences*, Great Britain (1979–2003); *Clay Minerals: Journal of the European Clay Groups*, London (1981–1995); and *Applied Clay Science*, Elsevier, Amsterdam (1985–1994). The bibliography of our laboratory's scientific and pedagogical personnel can be found in the Institute of Petrology and Structural Geology or in the main library of Geological Sciences at Albertov in Prague, Czech Republic.

As a professor at Charles University's Faculty of Natural Sciences, I gave the following weekly lectures (L), practical exercises (P), and a seminar: *Petrology of Sedimentary Rocks*, in Czech *Petrologie sedimentárních hornin* (2L/1P in the winter semester for students of geological sciences); *Petrology and Geochemistry of Sedimentary Rocks*, in Czech *Petrologie a geochemie sedimentárních hornin* (2 L/1P in the winter semester for students of geochemistry); *Petrology of Glass and Ceramic Raw Materials*, in Czech *Petrologie sklářských a keramických surovin* (2L/1P in the summer semester); *Physico-chemical Methods of the Rock Laboratory Research*, in Czech *Fyzikálně chemické metody laboratorního výzkumu hornin* (1L/3P in the winter semester for graduates); and a petrology seminar for students of geological sciences including petrology: *Conversations about the Progress in Petrology of Sedimentary and Residual Rocks*, in Czech *Rozhovory o pokrocích v petrologii sedimentárních a reziduálních hornin* (1L/2P in both the winter and summer semesters) (Figure 34).

TOPICS OFTEN ON OUR MINDS

Anthropologists have discovered that *Homo sapiens* separated from hominids of the *Homo erectus* type, whose remains are barely two million years old and were found in Africa in the 20th century, about four hundred thousand years ago. He led a simple life reminiscent of an animal, mainly in the strongly fluctuating low temperatures throughout several ice ages until the present favorable temperature maximum. He depended largely on the gathering and hunting of surrounding natural products. Gradually, his resourcefulness and his dexterous hands enabled him to invent instruments, weapons, and various helpful tools made of wood, rocks, hides, intestines, hair, bones, antlers, or horns used predominantly in hunting, making fire, and in protecting himself against the cold. The latest research indicates that he was able to interbreed with other hominids.

The most recent ice age, between a hundred thousand and fifteen thousand years ago, enabled the *Homo sapiens* to spread over land including America and Australia. The cold world was globally drier, with a smaller area of forest growth and with more widespread deserts than today. Also, crossing the distance between the continents and reaching the islands was easier, thanks to the long-term decreasing of the ocean- and sea levels or thanks to the possibility of travel on solid ice. Huge volumes of snow precipitation covered land and sea, from which formed mighty icebergs. The global atmosphere temperature maxima were caused, for the most part, by the increased solar activity. However, other cosmic influences cannot be totally excluded. A more thorough explanation is available in Czech in my article, *Zrychlené oteplování atmosféry spojené s acidifikací oceánů: Aktuální celosvětové téma a velká rizika (Accelerated Warming of the Atmosphere Associated with Ocean Acidification: A Topical Global Issue and Major Risks) Informátor ČSVVJ, Nr. 41 (2009), pp. 8–14.*



Figure 34. Jiří in his office at Charles University Faculty of Natural Sciences, Albertov, 1975.

In the most recent temperature maximum, mankind gradually realized that it could improve the quality of life. Man began farming and growing grains and other useful crops only about ten thousand years ago. Later yet, man began the domestication of certain animals. Almost simultaneously with farming appeared the first ceramic vessels. *Homo sapiens* succeeded in building the first stone walls about eight thousand years ago, while it required modern science, controlling all the stages of energetically demanding production and application, to apply cement and use the stability and durability of concrete in various environments. About six thousand years ago, *Homo sapiens* discovered how to gain and process several metals (copper, lead, and gold). This development continued at a faster pace in the subsequent millennia and centuries.

In the fourth century A.D. Aristotle created “Primary Philosophy,” in which sense perception is the beginning of all knowledge. His empiric-speculative construction of nature, according to which the world consisted of four major elements (Earth, Water, Air, and Fire), endured for two thousand years until the Renaissance. It was only between 1500 and 1700 that several remarkable scientists produced the beginning of scientific research methodology and succeeded in confirming the results of their work (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, Gilbert, Huygens, Guericke, Boyle, Leeuwenhoek, and Harvey). In the 18th century, other pioneers of the modern experimental approach to investigation followed (Lavoisier, Priestley, Cavendish, Faraday, Watt, Volta, Lomonosov, Hutton, and Lyell). In the 19th and 20th centuries, scientific research and an introduction of new experimental methods and technologies in all areas of human activity were continuously accelerating, including the geological sciences and eventual raw material mining. This was the time of great scientific discovery and experimental research (Dalton, Avogadro, Berzelius, Liebig, Cannizzaro, Maxwell, Hertz, Schwann, and Schleiden, Mendel, Pasteur, Koch, Darwin, Mendeleev, Thomson, Roentgen, Curie-Sklodowska, etc.). The most important discoveries, which influenced the development of clay sciences, are connected with the names of other amazing scientists (physicists Einstein, Rutherford, Bohr, Max von Laue; climatologist and geophysicist Wegener; William Henry & William Lawrence Bragg, structural crystallographers; chemists Mauguin and Pauling, and hundreds of others, who entered the scene after 1930). We were especially aware of the heritage of the thinkers living and working in the Czech lands: G. Agricola, physician, natural scientist, and metallurgist; J. Barrande, geologist and paleontologist; G. Mendel, botanist and geneticist; F. Pošepný, geologist; E. Bořický, petrologist and mineralogist; B. Brauner, chemist who made remarkable discoveries in the group of rare soil elements; J. Janský, psychiatrist and serologist; V. Strouhal, experimental physicist; J.E.

Hibsch, geologist and mineralogist; K. Terzaghi, the founder of soil mechanics; J. Heyrovský, physical chemist, Nobel Prize recipient; and O. Wichterle, chemist and inventor of organic eye lenses. For the staff of our laboratory, many of these scientists were our shining role models.

Mankind gained enormous strength from the invention of steam machinery, electric, and other motors, as well as the discovery of nuclear decay. Research methodology was enhanced by the inventions of new radiations, released from atom disintegration (Raman and Mössbauer), infrared absorption spectroscopy, and an unparalleled development of equipment for X-ray diffraction, electronic microscopy, and electron diffraction. New scientific fields have emerged and within them the specialized branches such as bacteriology, experimental and industrial pharmacy, new branches of medicine, atom physics and its special applications, new construction methods and equipment, agriculture and selection breeding, food processing industry, transportation, environmental protection and creation, and near- and far-cosmic research, etc.

The development of early agricultural settlements in favorable parts of the Earth was understandably followed by the birth of trade used for tool production and repair, and in dwelling construction. With the gradual rise of entrepreneurship *Homo sapiens* felt the need to record, communicate, organize, and count. No entrepreneurship can do without mathematics. Thus *Homo sapiens* invented the first cuneiform script, probably inscribed as line grooves, notches, or impressed imprints. Then he moved from pictorial drawings to hieroglyphs, and Chinese and Japanese types of writing. Varied sets of alphabets, numbers, and culture registers were developed later. The current electronic information service, spread globally has so far led to connecting via I-phones and the Internet. Mechanical counting devices were replaced with a rapidly developing range of electronic computers.

Books, magazines, films, theater, music, visual arts, in fact all the “true arts” create the cultural superstructure of present-day mankind. It would be hard to live without them because it is no easy feat to be a part

of mankind and at the same time the animal realm, assigned to us by nature. If we do not become wiser and a little more modest and responsible, in the end nature will decide whether the current life style or the achieved stage of civilization is sustainable or not. Ultimately, it has always been and always will be nature that, with its powerful forces, gets the upper hand. There are four predominantly anthropogenic risks threatening our planet: 1. An increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere due to growing fossil-fuel consumption (coal, oil, and natural gas) and simultaneous global atmosphere warming (greenhouse effect). 2. The rising ocean-water acidification (the increase of hydrogen ion concentration), which threatens photosynthesis of oxygen-producing ocean algae; if this ocean photosynthesis stopped, oxygen in the atmosphere would gradually be totally consumed for organic matter oxidation. 3. The geometrical growth of human population shows that by their production of solid, liquid, and gas waste, humans are heading towards self-destruction. 4. Mass production of new, modern, and even more destructive weapons, whether classic, nuclear, and other physical, chemical, or biological types; mutual irreconciliation may lead to the creation of a monstrous global arsenal potentially capable of a manifold destruction of mankind.

We are in dire need of the creation and careful observation of laws preventing an exemption from punishment for anyone harming any living creature, man, animal, or nature. In the world of modern mankind, human life has to be of the highest value. Wars always bring destruction and immeasurable suffering and must, therefore, be prevented at any cost. Hopefully, *Homo sapiens* has learned his lesson and is ready to begin a new era of coexistence.

Just recently, using new analytical methods, natural scientists have been able to prove that mankind is currently living close to this widened point of temperature maximum, prevalent for barely fifteen thousand years (Figure 35). Each of the four temperature maximums in the past four hundred thousand years was followed by a strongly fluctuating global cooling, lasting about a hundred thousand years. It was always

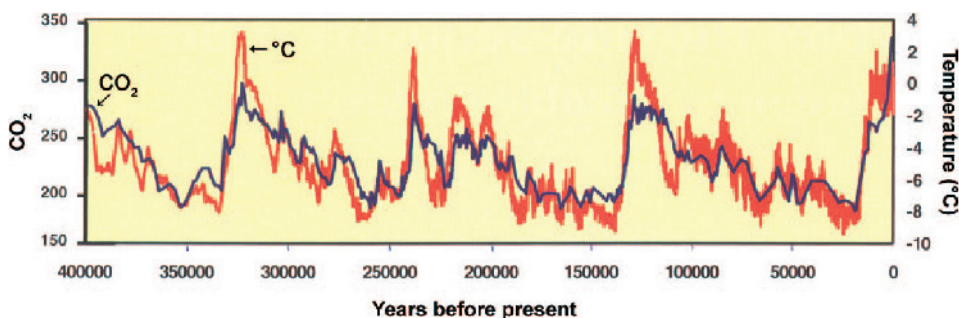


Figure 35. The fatal curve graph for life on Earth: atmospheric concentration of CO_2 (ppm vol. = parts per million) in correlation with global temperature; ($^{\circ}\text{C}$, obtained from data received from ice analysis of Antarctic iceberg drilling core samples, Vostok Station, accumulated during the past 400,000 y). Reproduced with the permission of Nature publishing group.

followed by another ice age with a few milder interglacial periods. The two curves (CO₂ and average global temperature, derived from the ratio of two determined volumes of the most frequent oxygen isotopes in the H₂O molecules of an Antarctic iceberg), show that we are headed for another ice age. If the current production pace and the population explosion are not curbed and the energy demands continue, *Homo sapiens*, who multiplied immensely on five continents in the past hundred years, has geologically verified fuel supplies to last for only several hundred years. This is true of the nuclear energy resources reservoir, the known deposits of which can be expanded by additional geological research and by uranium mining from the warmed ocean water. During the short upcoming period of a continued use of traditional fuels, mankind has to find new more economical, less harmful energy sources and supplement them with the existing renewable resources. The successful work of geologists and the resulting raw material extraction, respectful of a healthy environment and based on most recent scientific knowledge, are a basis for future efforts to sustain the current upward effort of civilization.

CONCLUSION

The most precious and unforgettable basis for my work since my early childhood was my family environment. I am convinced that both of my parents were the source of human values on which I lived, loved, and worked throughout my life. To my mother, I am not only thankful for her giving me life, for her perennial care and her lasting, immeasurable love, but also for her ongoing support of my youthful desire to study, learn, and go out into the world in search of knowledge. Her favorite saying, “Only through education is it possible to gain wings to soar high,” still rings in my ears. To my father, I am grateful for his example to always work precisely, reliably, and orderly; for his exhibiting humility, responsibility, and integrity in his behavior; for being able to face both victory and loss with dignity; to always exhibit fair play; and to be loyal to one’s family and oneself.

Also my later environment was exceptionally favorable for my creative work. For that I am especially thankful to my wife, Helena Kontová, whose kind heart equipped with extraordinary tolerance, love of family, and a realistic outlook on life provided me with the highest support, on which I could always depend, both in my family and scientific life at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Prague. By fate we were determined to live in the twentieth century, in a world deeply wounded and disrupted by World War I. The dreadful slaughter was crowned by the lethal Spanish-flu pandemic. After a mere decade, the World Economic Crisis followed, throwing a large number of families into misery. Almost sixty million people lost their lives during World War II.

Slaughter was going on everywhere, on land, in seas and oceans, above and under the sea levels, in the air and from the air, in prisons, and in concentration camps. Members of the *Homo sapiens* species calling themselves human beings were killing one another globally and unscrupulously.

As most people after the war, we too wished to live peacefully, to have friends, to love and be loved, to get to know the world and to discover its beauty and secrets. We did not want to just vegetate, to hate, or to be jealous. We believed that mankind learned from its mistakes and would be wiser and more willing to share this planet. However, this belief was not fulfilled because of inflexible leaders and their henchmen. It is a paradox that my concentration camp imprisonment enabled me to live the post-war years without major obstacles or blows. It was in Mauthausen where I met important future government dignitaries. Even some of my closest friends happened to be in this camp of death. They have my gratitude because, thanks to mutual solidarity, we were able to survive Mauthausen. Soon afterwards, the world became divided into irreconcilable blocs as a result of the Cold War. When it ended, it was replaced with yet another inhumane phenomenon, terrorism. Does any of this make any sense? Is there any hope in today’s world that *Homo sapiens* could learn a lesson?

On November 6, 2008, my wife and I celebrated our sixtieth, diamond anniversary. Both of our daughters joined in the celebration. I thanked everyone for a very special family gathering. My most sincere thanks, however, went to my wife because she helped me live a magnificent life as a Czech geologist and because we were able to keep a mutual spiritual connection, respect, and love – feelings worth living for.

The following day, our older daughter Mirka joined me in visiting my brother Miroslav, who had been bedridden in the Motol Hospital in Prague since September 2008. I felt that both knew it was their last farewell. Before we left the hospital room, Miroslav squeezed my hand and said, “Jiří, thank you for coming and bringing Mirečka. I will always remember this good-bye.” My brother Miroslav managed to remain his own man until the end of his life.

Our respect and admiration always belonged to people who sincerely took care of the weak and sick, as it is in the faculty hospitals in Prague and in other hospitals and institutions. Our thanks are also directed to charity institutions around the world, although many today believe in the importance of a systematic solidarity among people and nations in order to eliminate the abysmal differences now in existence. Genuine humanity requires the solidarity of the healthy and the infirm, of the young and the elderly, of the wealthy and the poor, of the love of every human being for the surrounding nature, and the willingness to maintain a healthy environment. The main priority

among all nations should be the ideal of an open society, with equal freedom for all, providing an adequate education to everyone who has the talent and the necessary desire to study, as well as responsibility and integrity. Hopefully, leaders at all levels, sooner rather than later, will realize that ruthlessness, selfishness, and empty cunning rhetoric lead only to destruction. Whatever our convictions may be, let us grant – everyone, everywhere – the right to always freely listen to the beat of his heart.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Phyllis Laking Hunt of Woods Hole for kindly providing me with basic information on the research stations on the USA Eastern and Western coasts. My heartfelt thanks go to my former student, RNDr. Martin Šťastný, Sc. for the acquisition of several photographs. I am also thankful to my classmates from Čáslav High School, above all engineer Eva Vtělenská (*née* Hořejší) and Miluška Chodanová (*née* Čápková), and also to Jaroslav Kostecký and Maruška Kostecká (*née* Růžičková) of Žleby who provided me with valuable data.

My special thanks go to the *Nature* journal (London, UK) for permission to print an important graph (Figure 35) capturing the past four hundred thousand year fluctuations of short warm periods with the long ice ages on our planet.

REFERENCES

- Bulíček, J. (1972) *Povrchové vody v Československu a jejich ochrana*. Academia, Praha.
- Marek, M. (editor) (1980) *Sborník gymnázia v Čáslavi: 1880-1980*. Čáslav: Ředitelství a SRPŠ gymnázia a SPgŠ v Čáslavi, Czech Republic.
- London, A. (1969) *Autobiografie. Doznání: V soukolí pražského procesu*. Československý spisovatel, Praha.
- Bard, M.G. (1994) *Forgotten Victims: The Abandonment of Americans in Hitler's Camps*. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, USA.
- Konta, J. (1995) Clay and man: Clay raw materials in the service of man. *Applied Clay Science*, **10**, 275–335.
- Brindley, G.W. (editor) (1980) *X-ray Identification and Crystal Structures of Clay Minerals*. Mineralogical Society, London.
- Brindley, G.W. and Brown, G. (editors) (1951) *Crystal Structures of Clay Minerals and their X-ray Identification*. Mineralogical Society, London.
- Konta, J. (2007) Pošetile odvážná a snad poučná úvaha o vlastní bibliografii. *Informátor ČSVVJ*, **35**, 12–13.
- Goldsmith, J.R. and Graf, D.L. (1958) Relation between lattice constants and composition of the Ca-Mg carbonates. *American Mineralogist*, **43**, 84–101.
- Degens, E.T. and Hunt, J.M. (1968) *Data on the Distribution of Stable Isotopes and Amino Acids in Indian Ocean Sediments*. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole.
- Konta, J. (2009) Phyllosilicates in the sediment-forming processes: weathering, erosion, transportation, and deposition. *Acta Geodynamica et Geomaterialia*, **6**, 13–43.
- Konta, J. (1982) The present state and development trends of clay science. Pp. 1–14 in: *Developments in Sedimentology*, **35** (H. van Olphen and F. Veniale, editors). (Opening Lecture of the VII International Clay Conference AIPEA, 1981, Bologna and Pavia, Italy).