

Alena Munkova Before Her Departure For Terezin



This is me, before I left for Terezin. So I was 15. It's an artistic photograph, but I don't know who took it. But here you can't see that I was a blond, completely fair-haired. This has to be around 1940.

This fear-filled period lasted up to December 1942, when I myself was summoned to the transport. That's when I saw my father for the last time, he had completely collapsed, because there was

nothing he could do. Even before that he had been living under terrible tension, in terrible fear, and then suddenly... For him I was a little girl, even though I wasn't all that little any more. Certainly he also blamed himself for everything. Because he was so extremely just, so absolutely humanistically inclined and he idealized the world - even though back then it was still possible, today I don't idealize it anymore, and I don't think I'm alone - that he still believed that it wasn't possible for Czechoslovakia to be gone and for the Czechoslovak state to not care for its citizens.

There was this one incident that took place, that after the Anschluss, after the annexation of Austria, some distant cousin of his arrived in Prague, who was then continuing further on. He was at our place, and telling us about the horrors that were taking place there. Well, and when that cousin left, my father said, 'That's not possible. He must be crazy, he needs to go to a mental institution.' He didn't believe it, he didn't want to believe it. He wasn't alone in that, it must have been utterly horrible for those people back then, that powerlessness. What's more, back then a man was still the head of the family, who takes care of his family members. That has changed a bit, after all.