

## Discussing 20th century Jewish history through photographs

**Pedagogical concept:** This exercise is meant to encourage students to look beyond the image. Students should develop **values** such as **empathy** by relating to the people in the photo.

The activity includes a **discussion** about the significance of photos in which students are asked to explain why photos are important in general and why specifically photos shared by Holocaust survivors are a unique historical source.

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Necessary materials:**

- Photographs below with their descriptions

**Level:** Simple

**Description of the activity/methods:**

1. Print out the photos once (ideally in colour, on a regular paper)
2. With your students, discuss categories and key topics (such as emancipation, integration, assimilation, patriotism, identity, religious life etc.) that can be seen in the photographs
3. With your students, discuss the significance of photos now and then. Why were / are photos important? How do photos from pre-1945 differ from photos from today? Do you see any parallels between these old photos and your own family photos?

4. *Optional exercise:* Have students imagine the stories behind the photos; write a letter / social media post. This activity allows students to engage in creative writing exercises while developing empathy for the people in the photos.

*Note:* The teacher should give clear instructions as to what the letter/ social media post is allowed to include, and that the dignity of the portrayed person needs to be safeguarded.

## Photos to be printed

### Family

#### Eshye Galpert's family



This is our family, from left to right: I, my mother Perl Galpert, nee Kalush; my older sister Olga Weinstein, nee Galpert; my father Eshye Galpert; my younger sister Yona Stein, nee Galpert. The photo was taken in Mukachevo in 1927. I think my parents had a prearranged marriage since it was common practice with Jewish families to address matchmakers - shadkhanim, regarding this issue. My parents had a traditional Jewish wedding in 1919 when Subcarpathia belonged to Czechoslovakia. My father had a small store in the biggest room in our house with an entrance from the front door. There were three rooms and a kitchen in the house. We entered the living quarters through the store. My father sold all common goods in his store. He worked in the store alone, there were no other employees. We, children, also helped him in the store. My father earned enough for the family to make ends meet. We were neither rich nor poor. We didn't starve and could afford to support the poor on Thursday so that they could have a decent Sabbath. To help the poor was considered to be a holy duty, a mitzvah. On Thursday contributions for the needy were collected at the synagogue and my father always gave some money to the collectors. There were three children in the family. My sister Olga was born in 1920. Her Jewish name was Friema. I was born on 20th June 1923. I had the name of Arnucht written in my Czechoslovak birth certificate. I was named after my maternal

grandfather Aron. During the Hungarian rule [1939-1945] I was called Erno and during the Soviet rule [1945-1991] I became Ernest, but my close ones always called me Ari. My younger sister, Toby, was born in 1925. She is called Yona in Israel. Yiddish Toyb for Toby means 'dove' and dove is Yona in Hebrew. My father, Eshye Galpert, was a Hasid and dressed according to the fashion. He wore a long black caftan and a black kippah, and a black hat and a streimel on holidays. He had a big beard and payes. My mother wore a wig and dark gowns. We only spoke Yiddish at home. We, children, spoke fluent Czech and studied in a Czech school, but our parents didn't speak any Czech since they were born in Austria-Hungary. The older generation and my parents, too, spoke Hungarian to their non-Jewish acquaintances.

### The Erdelyi family out for a walk in Piestany



This is a photograph of our whole family out for a walk in Piestany. On the left is my father (Arpad Erdelyi), I (Heda Ambrova), my sister (Magda Erdelyiova) and my mother (Ruzena Erdelyiova). The photo was taken around 1926.

My father was from the Eckstein family. They lived in Orava, in the town of Tvrdosin. I can't tell you any more about this family, because my father became an orphan when he was eight. He was born on 22nd December 1889. My father's original name was Arpad Eckstein. When he was in high school he changed his surname to Erdelyi.

My father was one of the best people you could imagine. You could say that he was a do-gooder. After his death, old women would stop me and say: 'We know you. That father of yours, that was some person!' He was very sensitive and retiring. But he had a great deal of knowledge in the area of pharmacy. All the local doctors respected him. He was actually a doctor for the children of doctors. In practice this meant that when a doctor's child fell ill, he'd come and consult with my father as to how to treat him. Everything I know about my father's past is from what my mother told me; he himself never talked about it. When he was having a good day, he'd at most tell us that when he was in school he had 10 kreuzers per day. That was enough for some bread and a bit of 'bryndza.' [Bryndza is a sheep's milk cheese made in the Balkans, Eastern Austria, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.] He'd have no money left for anything else.

My mother was born on 2nd November 1892, as my grandparents' seventh child. She had beautiful blond hair and blue eyes. As my grandfather was building houses, she took a distilling exam and ran a distillery. My mother was engaged to some physicist who fell during the first weeks of World War I. In those days it wasn't usual for girls to graduate from high school, it wasn't in fashion. But my mother was headstrong and graduated. She was only allowed to attend a Catholic school, part time. She attended school once a week. When they were going up the stairs she had to go last, so that they wouldn't see her ankles, and when they went downstairs she had to go first. She was the only girl in the class. Right at the beginning of the semester they told her that she'd never finish school. That the boys wouldn't allow it. She had a hard life there. During anatomy class someone put a finger on her exercise book. After that incident she left medicine and transferred to pharmacy.

After being forced to leave medicine, my mother began working in one pharmacy in Ruzomberok. There she met my father, who apparently was also working in Ruzomberok. They were married on 1st July 1919, probably in Ruzomberok. From the beginning my mother had someone to help her with the household, because she was very active. Not only did she found the Maccabi in Piestany, but she also gave free courses in making carpets using Persian knots, and net-making.



## Wedding

### Alica Gazikova going under the chuppah



The photograph shows my clerical wedding. Leading me under the chuppah are my mother, Valeria Adlerova (on the right) and the mother of my husband-to-be, Zaneta Ganselova (on the left). We had our wedding in Bratislava in an Orthodox synagogue on Heydukova Street on 9th September 1954. At that time there was still this one rabbi here, by the name of Izidor Katz. He later left to go abroad somewhere. The way it was in those days was that you first had to have a civil wedding, which was at the Town Hall, and then on the same day in the synagogue, the clerical wedding. Our wedding reception was at the Carlton Hotel. There weren't a lot of guests, 21 I think.

## Alica Gazikova and Albert Gazik



This is our civil wedding photograph, which shows me, Alica Gazikova, and my husband, Albert Gazik. Our wedding took place in the year 1954. I met my husband-to-be by complete chance. At that time I was working at the Ministry of Food Industries on Vajanske Nabrezi, now the Tatrabanka bank is located there. He came there to see some colleague of mine on a work-related matter, she wasn't there and I was filling in for her, and that's how we met. My husband was of Jewish origins, but I don't know if that was a deciding factor in our relationship. Well, maybe there was some sympathy due to that. We had our wedding in Bratislava in an Orthodox synagogue on Heydukova Street on 9th September 1954. At that time there was still this one rabbi here, by the name of Izidor Katz. He later left to go abroad somewhere. The way it was in those days was that you first had to have a civil wedding, which was at the Town Hall, and then on the same day in the synagogue, the clerical wedding. Our wedding reception was at the Carlton Hotel. There weren't a lot of guests, 21 I think.

## The Fischers' wedding photo



This wedding photo shows my mother's sister Rozalia Fischerova and her husband, Adolf Fischer, who was a typographer. They had two daughters together, Edita and Lydia. Besides my cousin Edita, the whole family died during the Holocaust.

The following few sentences are related to this part of our family, from the period of anti-Jewish persecution during the war. Relationships in our family were always on the level. Our parents always told us what was happening. For example, I knew how much our father made in the store, I knew about his relationship with the Aryanizer. We knew what the political situation was. Many people and family members used to come to our place. They played cards and at the



same time discussed politics. Actually, we knew about everything. My two uncles, Perl and Fischer, worked in typography, as typesetters. They worked for the underground. They printed flyers and various exhortations against the regime. My father wrapped goods in these flyers. So besides persecuting us for being Jews, they were also after us because of this.

These people met at our place daily. Practically every day we also experienced banging at the door, kicking at the door accompanied by loud shouting. The Guardists were arriving. Our visitors would be sitting at the table playing cards, and the Guardists would say: "Do you know that you're not supposed to be meeting?" Well, then they'd have a shot, take an envelope and leave. But they were insatiable. It would happen that they'd even come more than once a day. If there was an arrest warrant out on someone present, they'd take him with them for interrogation. Those were perilous times.

## Children

### Judita Schvalbova at a Purim celebration



The photo is from Purim in 1941, I don't know who took it. Before the war I used to attend the large Neolog synagogue with my parents. I don't remember the details of what the interior looked like. A faint memory of Purim from the year 1941 has remained with me. I remember walking in a procession, and people up in the gallery showering us with candies. I know that the Purim celebration was held for us children. As a small girl I sang very well, so I performed there. I had on a pink knitted dress that was embroidered with small flowers. One copy of this photograph has a very eventful history. In 1942 they sent the first transport of young girls from Zilina. The Guardists appeared at our place too, and wanted to take me with them. At the Hlinka Guard headquarters I was mistakenly registered as having been born in 1926 instead of 1936, so according to them I was 16 years old. My parents had to prove at the Hlinka Guard

headquarters via various documents that they only had the one six-year-old child. In hiding with us was this one girl, Ilonka Steinova. Ilonka was from Ruzomberok or Liptovsky Mikulas, I don't exactly know any more. She was staying with us, to take care of me, as if she was my nanny. Ilonka suffered from epilepsy. On that occasion, when they came for me, they saw her and counted her in, that is, took her to the camp instead of me. During the transport, or right after her arrival at the camp, she must have had an epileptic seizure, because they sent her to the other side right away. She went straight to the gas chambers. She had luggage with her, which was being sorted by young women. My photo fell out of her luggage, and the girls from Zilina recognized it. They took it to my aunt, who was also there from 1942. This photo served as a talisman for my aunt. She used to say that she wore it on her breast up to the time of liberation. She brought it home to Zilina completely fallen apart, and you could barely recognize that it had been a photograph.

## Jewish Holidays

### Daniel Vidlak celebrating Chanukkah



This photograph is from 1967, and is of my son, Daniel Vidlak, during Chanukkah celebrations.

We lived with my husband's parents in a house on Na Vetrniku Street in Prague. Milos may not have been a Jew, but in the beginning he gave the impression of a big Semitophile. But after the wedding that began to gradually change, until he began to behave practically like an anti-Semite. My husband was very much an anti-Communist, and would for example throw in my face that it was actually the Jews that began with Communism. In the end the Jews were even responsible for scorched soup.

I don't know whence it came in him and why. Before we were married, he'd even attend synagogue with me. But I think that it wasn't so much an expression of anti-Semitism as of compensation for certain complexes. Back then he wasn't a university graduate yet, and I was already working at a research institute. I think that he simply didn't feel good, and compensated for that by attacking me in an area that he knew was the most sensitive for me. Thanks to that we became estranged, of course. We didn't get divorced, because in the meantime, in 1963 our son Daniel was born. Back then I had practically no place to go, I wouldn't have been granted an apartment anyways.

While I was still living with my parents, we'd observe Jewish holidays, like before the war. After my wedding we'd go to my parents' for holidays, in which my husband participated at first. But later he stopped associating with my parents, and so I'd take our son to my parents' for holidays, as we'd all go to the Jewish community. After the February putsch, Chanukkah and Purim were celebrated at the Jewish community. When my father began working at the embassy, we began to celebrate holidays there. We had limited contacts with the community, so that our family wouldn't harm the community, that they associated with Zionists. By then the times were very anti-Zionist. At Christmas we'd go to the mountains as well as at Easter.



## Music

### Frida Palanker



I, Frida Palanker, violinist of the Jewish Musical Theater in Chernovtsy.

When I was to go to the 6th form a 10-year music school was established at the Conservatory. My teacher of music suggested that I took exams to enter this school. After finishing this school children were admitted to the Conservatory without exams. I passed exams and was admitted to the 6th form. This school was in Kreschatik street near the Conservatory. We studied general and special music subjects: musical literature, solfeggio and harmony. My violin teacher was Professor of Conservatory Bertie. There were 10-15 children in one class. I can't say that we were all friends, but there were no demonstrations of anti-Semitism.

I knew that Kiev Jewish Musical Theater was evacuated to Kokand. Before the war this theater was located in Kreschatik street. I can't remember the details, but I met someone that worked at this theater, and they suggested that I went to work in the orchestra of this theater. I was auditioned by the conductor of the orchestra and was admitted. It is written in my employment record book that I was "employed by the theater as a musician at the orchestra. 10 August 1944". I also got accommodation. I had little experience to play their complicated music. A famous Jewish composer Shteinberg composed music for their performances. I was rehearsing and studying a lot. Performances in the theater were in Yiddish.

## Soldier

### Bohumil Steiner during World War I



This is my grandfather from Kolin, Bohumil Steiner, as a soldier. It's clearly World War I. My grandfather on my mother's side was born in 1871 in Kovansko, Nymburk region. But back then it fell under Kolin. He lived in Kolin, where he was in the textile business, I remember the store. He died on 20th October 1932, a year before the death of my mother, his daughter Marie. Probably in Kolin, because somewhere I had some documents about what Grandma had paid the funeral service, and that was all in Kolin. So he's most likely got to be somewhere in the old Jewish cemetery in Kolin.

## Camp

### Suitcase of Jana Johana Kowanitzova



While I was working for the Jewish Museum in Prague, we once had a visitor from the Holocaust Museum in Auschwitz in Poland.

She brought a lot of pictures of the suitcases they have in the museum and asked if we could identify which suitcase came from Terezin following the numbers.

That's how I found the suitcase of my baby niece Johana Kowanitzova, who was born in Terezin.

In October 1941, my sister married the Jewish man Frantisek Kowanitz in Vinohrady Town Hall. Frantisek was born in 1916; he was a distant relative. He was really good-looking and clever. He was a fine person. But we didn't know each other too well.

My sister and me didn't understand each other too well either, on account of the big age difference between us. By the time we had started to see eye-to-eye, we were in Terezin.



They obviously got married quickly because deportations were already taking place at that time and they wanted to go together. Immediately after the wedding, Frantisek was sent to a work camp [forced labor camp] in Lipa and then to Terezin.

My sister went to Terezin in December 1941.

In Terezin Frantisek was in the disciplinary service; I don't know what my sister did.

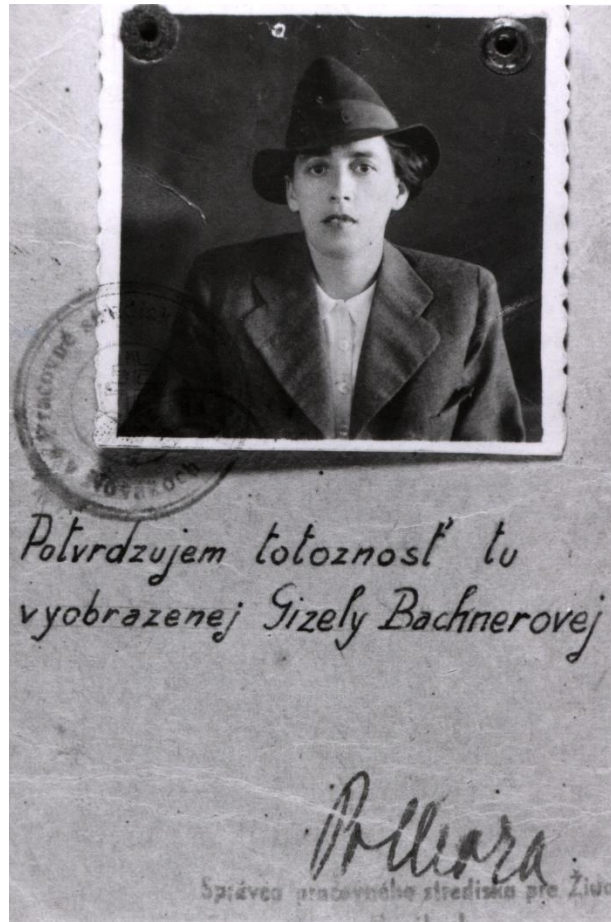
At first, my sister lived apart from her husband, but they later built a kind of closet out of wood-wool slabs in the attic of a house, and there they lived, which was a big advantage.

Those who went on the first transports to Terezin had certain privileges. They lived with their daughter, Jana Ivana, who was born in Terezin in June 1943. We called her Honzulka.

My sister's friend was on one of the last transports to go through camp Christianstadt where I was imprisoned, and her friend told me that my sister had gone with her little girl on the last transport from Terezin in October 1944 straight to the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

Her husband died in 1945, somewhere on the death march. He had phlegmon in the leg.

## Gizela Bachnerova ID card in the Novaky labour camp



This is a photo of my brother Dezider's wife, Gizela. This photograph is on a document with which we had to prove our identity in the Novaky labor camp. In the lower part of the document, in the right corner, is the signature of the camp commander - Mr. Polhora. My oldest brother was named Dezider and was born in 1903 in the town of Dezerice. He apprenticed as and became a master tinsmith. He had a tinsmithery workshop in Topolcany. During World War II he was deported to a labor camp in Novaky, where he was head of a tinsmithery workshop. Unfortunately, he didn't survive the war. He was murdered along with this wife Gizela and three children, Judita, Ruzena and son Jozef in Kremnicka.



## Work

### Hannerle Blochova with fellow nurses



In this photo my sister, Hannerle Blochova, is standing in the middle, she worked as a nurse in the Teplice hospital. The photo is from 1952. My sister was born in 1916 in Teplice. We called her Hanne, but her real name was Hannerle. My mother's brother Jan picked this name from the book 'Die Geschichte von der Hannerl und ihren Liebhabern' ['The Story of Hannerl and Her Lovers']. My uncle knew that my mother was pregnant, but he never saw my sister, because he fought and fell at the Italian Front. In a letter to my mother, he wrote that he'd read that book and that Hannerle was a nice name, for them to give it to her. She survived the war with me, we went through it all together. At the end of the war, she was 29 years old. She worked her whole life as a nurse, after the war in the Teplice hospital. During one operation she caught polio, which very much influenced the state of her health. After that she even had one leg paralyzed. She also suffered from diabetes and other diseases.

## Religious life

### Committee of the Orthodox Jewish religious community in Galanta



This photograph shows the committee of the Orthodox Jewish religious community in Galanta in 1932. My grandpa Moshe Cvi Pressburger is sitting in the first row, second from the left. On grandpa's right is his son Max (Mordechai ben Moshe Cvi) Pressburger. Galanta was a very Jewish town, I don't know if it's true, but my father used to tell me that up to World War I, Jews made up more than half of the town's population. When I was a child there were two Orthodox communities - kehillot there. One had a head rabbi by the name of Buxbaum, the second a head rabbi named Seidl. Each of them had a large, beautiful synagogue and courtyard with Jewish and educational institutions. Both of them placed an emphasis on religious education. There were three levels of education. The basic level, which was named Yesoide Toire, an intermediate level, which was named Talmud Torah, and advanced education, which was named Yeshivah. I think that Seidl was a little more progressive, and my family belonged to him. Buxbaum was the bigger, recognized theological expert, according to my father. Max Pressburger, whose Jewish name was Mordechai ben Moshe Cvi, was born in the year 1879. He lived his whole life in Galanta. He was the town's chazzan, shochet, plus he was also on the board of a large insurance company. He had a very beautiful and richly furnished house.



## School

### Children of the Orthodox Jewish school in Bratislava



I think this is a historical photograph, a beautiful picture of the Orthodox Jewish school on Zochova Street in Bratislava. I studied there in my first and second year. Vilma Lowyova was my teacher. The lady standing with her back against the wall should be her. I think this photograph could have been taken in 1940-41. I remember one girl from school. She was an orphan; her name was Kaufmanova. She died in the Holocaust. We weren't friends. The children played together in groups according to their social status. Children from better-off families were grouped together and didn't know the others. My best friend was Sulamit Nagelova. Her father had an antique shop on Kapucinska Street, but a library is there nowadays. Sulamit was a blonde girl with blue eyes and I loved her very much. She also died in the Holocaust. One girl survived; she was called Ullmanova. One of her relatives was a journalist. She had wavy hair, was so beautiful and so self-confident? even as a child. I cannot remember the other children because I grew up in quite some isolation. I had a nanny and wasn't allowed to play with other children. I always had to play alone.

## Heda Ambrova going shopping



This is a photo of me, Heda Ambrova, in Piestany around the year 1925. I was born on 12th September 1922 in Piestany as Hedviga Erdelyiova. We lived in what is now Teplicka Street, before it was Wilsonova Street No. 22. We didn't have any animals, not even a canary. My sister's name was Magda. She was born on 16th May 1920 in Piestany, and was two and a half years older. We didn't have nannies as such. We attended Jewish school together, my sister for two or three years and I for only a year. The teacher at the Jewish school was an 80-year-old man named Weiss. It was a one-room schoolhouse. Several grades in one classroom. The principal of the state school told my father that Mr. Weiss is a very good teacher, but that he was 80, after all. It was a big thing for us to leave to attend a state school. I don't even think any more Jewish children transferred.

## Vacation

### Katarína Löfflerová with her girlfriend on the Lido



This is the Bratislava Lido in 1929. The girl on the left is one of my girlfriends at the time, her name was Frida Vertes. She was the first of my girlfriends who was married. She was also Jewish. She magyarized her name sometime - her father could have been called Weisz. The photo was taken by a photographer, who posed us like this. The photographer had a huge camera with a tripod, which he carried around the city, and to the parks. He sent the photograph later, because it took a while to print it.

At that time the so-called Tehelne Pole didn't exist, there was only the Lido on the other side of the Danube. The Danube was clean, and great for swimming. Aside from that there was a 33-meter pool where it was also fantastic to swim. The water was pretty cold, they didn't heat it.



Not far from that was a broad, large guest restaurant and terrace. It was exceptionally comfortable there. They provided guests with cabins also - down on the Danube bank they had square tents for the bathers. You could rent one for a season, to leave your swimsuit and bathrobe, handbag and other things. The rental fee for the tents wasn't very much. It's interesting that at that time they didn't steal. The beach wasn't sand, but boards. You could lay out on the boards. The Danube banks were connected by a bridge. Towards the left, I could get to the Lido in five or six minutes.

During our school years, we'd go down there in the summers two or three times a week. We regularly left before noon, we took food with us, fried meats, kinds of ham, even though there was a restaurant nearby. The best thing we got at the restaurant was raspberries. On the Lido there were a lot of people, but since it was long, about a kilometer, it never felt crowded. The Danube water was pretty clean, we always tried to go in when a boat went by because then there would be great waves.

## Zionism/Maccabi

### Girls from Maccabi in Prievidza



This photo was taken in the 1920s. In this picture you can see girls from the Prievidza Maccabi. On the left is Kovacova; I don't know what happened to her. Beside her is Klara Friedmanova from Topolcany, who graduated from high school in Prievidza in 1928. Standing beside her is Edita Diamantova; I don't know her fate. The fourth is Kata Kohnova, who survived the war and got married to a man named Knöppfelmahler; they lived in Prague after the war.

## Ota Gubic in the gym



This is a photograph of me and my classmates. It was taken by Adolf Kramer or Dezider Braun in Prievidza in the 1930s. From the time I was little, I was very sports-oriented. I used to attend Maccabi in Prievidza, and was also a very good volleyball player. I may be of small stature, but as a setter I was notorious for being able to attack. So, the spikers picked me out as their setter. I liked volleyball in high school as well, and it stayed with me until later years. After the war, in Karlovy Vary, I was still playing volleyball. It was my favorite sport. Otherwise, I was active, I used to skate. When I was older, I also had a bicycle. Not some sort of racing model, but a normal, standard bike. The Prievidza Maccabi had about 20 - 25 members. They were focused mainly on physical education. Boys and girls used to attend separately. The Maccabi had some space at the Jewish elementary school. There was a yard there, as well as a volleyball court, and a horizontal bar. We didn't have our own gym, we used to rent space at the Prievidza high school. We used to practice twice or three times a week, always in the evening. The team probably didn't achieve any larger sports success, just the men participated in the Maccabiade in Zilina, sometime in the 1930s.