

**The Address by Dita Krausová,  
survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp,  
On the Occasion of  
The Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity  
Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,  
27th January 2023**

Dear Sirs, Ladies!

I am very honored to be invited to the Senate of the Czech Republic. I heard about the Senate of the Czechoslovak Republic at home when I was still a preschooler. My parents showed me the Rudolfinum building, the former seat of the Senate, where my grandfather, Professor Johann Polach, was a senator for the Social Democratic Party. I even have his photograph from his membership card with the stamp of the Senate. It was preserved thanks to my grandmother, who survived Terezín. However, my grandfather died in Terezín.

I grew up in a Jewish family, but I didn't know we were Jewish. My parents did not observe any Jewish customs, did not celebrate Jewish holidays, and did not go to synagogue. I learned that I was Jewish only from a classmate in the second grade of elementary school.

For almost three years, I was imprisoned in concentration camps, where I lost my parents and most of my relatives. I was 16 when I returned alone to Prague in June 1945. I had no home and I lacked years of education, for I had been forbidden to go to school from the age of ten. I was one of the youngest Jewish children in Czechoslovakia to survive the war.

In 1947 I married Otto Kraus, who also survived the concentration camps, where his parents and brother died. As a young man, he wanted to emigrate to Palestine, to help build a Jewish state. When the State of Israel was created in 1948, the opportunity arose to fulfill this dream. In the meantime, we already had our first-born son Peter-Simon and in 1949 our little family left for Israel, together with a group of other Jewish survivors.

The first few years we lived in a kibbutz where our daughter Michaela was born. Then we moved to the children's village Hadassim, which was founded after World War II, in order to provide a home for Jewish orphans from Europe. Otto and I worked there as teachers. Our son Ronny was born in Hadassim. When we retired, we moved to the seaside town of Netanya. I still live there today, now alone, Otto died in 2000.

As a child, I didn't think about why we Jews were being persecuted. That's just the way it is. Only in later years I started dealing with the topic of anti-Semitism. By the way, anti-Semitism is actually a misnomer. Arabs are also Semites, but anti-Semitism is not directed against them. Properly, this attitude should be called anti-Judaism.

Judaism, unlike other faiths, is both a religion and a nationality. When a Jew converts to another faith, he remains a Jew by nationality. The Jews experienced this fatally under Hitler's Nazi regime. Even if they were baptized to escape persecution, they were still considered to be Jews and were sent to their deaths.

But why are Jews so hated? I do not see any fundamental differences between us and other nations. Jews are rich and poor, decent and nasty, gifted and stupid (I know this because I was a teacher), honest and crooked (I know that too, because they have also robbed me). We are just like any other nation.

Since 1989 I have been coming to Prague quite often. It's a beautiful city that I love. This is where I was born, here people speak my mother tongue, here the lilac blooms in spring and the chestnuts ripen in autumn. What's more, both countries, Israel and the Czech Republic, have been cooperating intensively for a long time and the relations between them are more than friendly. I feel safe in the Czech Republic, I have friends here, it is my home.

But I also have a second home, Israel, where I have been living for more than seventy years. There too I am at home, there I have a son, 2 daughters-in-law, three grandsons and one granddaughter, 4 great-grandchildren, the graves of my loved ones, the sun, and the sea.

I often go to schools and tell students about "my" Holocaust. They always listen attentively, and at the end they often ask: "What would you like us to learn from you? What is your message?"

And I beg them: "When you have children, educate them against hatred. Don't tell them they mustn't play with a boy because he's black or with a girl because her eyes are slanted. Hatred is evil, it only causes suffering and war."

I thank the esteemed Senate of the Czech Republic for their invitation and for listening to my story.