



BACKGROUND READING FOR **DAVID KORN**

David Korn is a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Canada in 1965 and now lives in Halifax. You can learn about his experiences by reading his memoir, "Saved by Luck and Devotion," in the anthology *At Great Risk: Memoirs of Rescue during the Holocaust*. Below is some background information that will help you understand David's story.

BIOGRAPHY

David Korn was born in 1937 in Brno, Czechoslovakia. He lived with his older brother, Jacob, his mother, Miriam, and his father, Abraham. In 1939, Jews in Brno were pressured by the Germans to leave, so David's family moved to be near relatives in Slovakia. In 1942, David's parents, desperate to spare their family from being deported to Nazi camps, sought shelter in nearby towns and villages. Through contacts in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, David and Jacob received false identity papers and were placed in an orphanage run by Pastor Vladimir Kuna. For the rest of the war, the brothers lived in the orphanage with other children, including other hidden Jews, and were well cared for through illness, threats to their safety and the disruptions of war. In the summer of 1945, David's aunt Libusa found her nephews at the orphanage and brought them to live with their uncle Martin. In 1948, they left Czechoslovakia and went first to Paris, and then to Israel in 1949, where David went to school, joined the army and studied to become an engineer. David immigrated to Canada in 1965 and now lives in Halifax. In the 1990s, David reconnected with Pastor Kuna, who had been recognized in 1972 as Righteous Among the Nations for his role in saving Jewish children at the orphanage.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Central European country of Czechoslovakia was bordered by Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Now this region is made up of two countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Created after World War I, Czechoslovakia was home to several ethnic groups, including Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Jews and others. In 1938, Germany expanded its borders by annexing a part of Czechoslovakia that had a large German minority. The following year, Germany annexed the remainder of the Czech lands, while Slovakia broke off to become an independent state. The Slovak government allied itself to Germany and imposed anti-Jewish measures. Jews in Slovakia were at risk of being used for forced labour, being deported to Nazi camps (including Auschwitz-Birkenau) and being killed by Slovak collaborators. In 1944, the Slovak resistance attempted to fight back against Germany, which then invaded Slovakia and fought both the resistance and the invading Soviet army until liberation in spring 1945. More than 60,000 Slovak Jews were killed in the Holocaust, including David's parents.



"There were seventy children in the orphanage, twenty-six of whom were Jewish. It was superhuman how Pastor Kuna and his staff risked their lives to save ours. If they had been found out, they would have been executed. Nobility should not be hereditary — an individual, based on their deeds, should merit it. Nobility deserves to be bestowed upon Pastor Kuna, Sister Maria and the staff of the orphanage for saving twenty-six lives." (page 124)