

The Czech writer Josef Škvorecký is born in Náchod, Czechoslovakia, in 1924. Škvorecký graduated in 1943 from the Reálné gymnasium in his native Náchod. During the War he spent two years as a slave labourer in a German aircraft factory. After the Second World War, he started studying at the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague. Having finished the first term, he left the Faculty of Medicine for the Faculty of Arts. He studied English and Philosophy. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1951. In 1952 - 1954, he performed his military service in the Czechoslovak army. He wrote his first novel, *Zbabělci* (The Cowards), between 1948 and 1949. Set during the last days of the Second World War, the novel was criticized when first published in 1958 for not depicting this historical event in a more heroic, Socialist-Realist manner. As a result, Škvorecký was unable to publish again until the early 1960s. Škvorecký received his doctorate in English literature at Charles University in Prague in 1951, after which he took up a career as a teacher and editor.