

## Michaela Vidlakova's Class Photo



This is our class photo from English elementary school. I should be in the first row, second from left. It was taken in 1946 on Old Town Square in Prague.

In September 1945 I had to go to school, so at the end of August we returned home to Prague. I was eight and a half at that time, so I actually already belonged in Grade 3. We went to the elementary school under Letna, where I belonged according to my address. But there they said that if I knew how to read and write, the most they could do was put me in Grade 3. But I'd already known how to read and write even before Terezin.

My mother felt sorry for me, she knew that I'd be extremely bored in Grade 3. Then she heard about a language school in Charvatova Street, which was supported by the British Council, and where they taught English. Because it was a selective school, you had to pass an entrance exam. Right when my mother and I arrived, they were doing entrance exams for Grade 5, and the examiner offered that I could try it with them, that what I'd manage, I'd manage. The exam was composed of dictation, composition and some math, and I easily passed it with straight A's. The teacher began apologizing to my mother, that they couldn't let a child of eight-and-a-half into Grade 5, that I couldn't be among children that much older than I. And so they accepted me into Grade 4.

I attended English school for about a half or three quarters of a year, when one of Winton's children returned to Czechoslovakia. It was Eva Schulmannova, who was two years older than I. Her father had served in the army in England during the war, and her mother had died in Auschwitz. Doctor Schulmann remarried in England, I think he married a girl from the family that had been taking care of Eva. They returned to Czechoslovakia and Eva, who'd left here as a little girl, didn't know a word of Czech. My mother was preparing her for entrance into a Czech school. As I already knew a few words of English, they put us together, so I could teach her Czech. But Eva had liked it in England a lot, was unhappy here, and so refused to learn Czech, thanks to which I on the other hand learned English quite well. Later Eva of course managed to learn Czech, and we also became friends.