

Pavel Werner With Pupils Of The Secret Classes In The Pardubice Synagogue



This photograph was taken in the year 1942 and shows our improvised, secret one-room class of Jewish children in Pardubice, established after the Germans banned us from attending normal schools.

Officially I couldn't go to the third grade and I began attending these secret classes for Jewish children. We would meet by the Pardubice synagogue and the classes were held in the rabbi's apartment. The Pardubice rabbi was named Feder, if I remember correctly. Children of all ages together in one class - we were this one-room school - this one young student used to teach us, her name was Krasova. I, along with two or three little girls, was the youngest ones, the rest were older. We formed one class, and were taught all at once, which went on for a year, up until 1942, when we had to embark on the transport.

I remember that I had to go to this school via a long detour, because as a Jew I was already wearing a star and wasn't allowed to be on certain streets. From our place on the outskirts it was a relatively long route to the school in the synagogue, which was actually in the center of Pardubice. The way was long and complicated, as I had to go via a long detour; It took me a terribly long time. I had to take various little side-streets, so that I wouldn't set foot on some main street. But I don't remember anyone attacking me or abusing me along the way, I didn't meet up with anti-Semitic

attitudes.

In the photograph I'm the one standing on the far right. I was in love with my classmate Eliska Weisssova, who was two years older than I, she looked more womanlike, that's probably why I liked her so much. But she took absolutely no notice of me, because for her I was much too little. Eliska's family had escaped before the Germans from the border region, from the Sudetenland, at that time her father had bought a farm in Nemosice, not far from Pardubice. I met this Eliska again after the war, in a Jewish orphanage at 25 Belgicka Street in Prague, where she lived for some time. Then we didn't see each other again for around 45 or 50 years, and a year ago I met up with her at the congress of the Terezin Initiative. I suddenly saw her and she was very surprised that I had recognized her. So I revealed to her my love for her at the time, I said that I had loved her, and she - nothing. As a child I was in love with Eliska, and they were trying to foist my classmate Ilona Klaubaufova (immediately beside me on the photograph) on me, who I didn't like at all, they put on this children's wedding for us, the way children play. Ilona didn't return from the concentration camp.

Out of all the children in Pardubice that attended the secretly improvised classes, only I, Eliska Weisssova and our classmate Fiala, formerly Fienberg, returned. His family changed their name still before the war. After the war he immigrated to Israel. And one of the Schwarz brothers, who also immigrated to Israel. The Schwarz boys were from a mixed marriage, Mrs. Schwarz wasn't Jewish. It was an interesting family. They belonged to the poorer class in Pardubice; Mr. Schwarz made a living by collecting rags and hides, you could say that he was this collector. The brother that returned immigrated to Israel and there worked as a maintenance worker or electrician at a hospital, where he met a nurse, an Arab girl, whom he married. That's quite unusual, that a Jew in Israel marries an Arab woman.

I also had a classmate, Karel Fuernberg, whose family escaped before the Germans from the Sudetenland, from southern Moravia. Karel's father was seriously handicapped, when we left on the transport to Terezin, he didn't have even one leg. In Terezin the whole family survived thanks to the fact that they didn't send Mr. Fuernberg to the East, into the gas as they say, to Auschwitz. They didn't transport cripples to Auschwitz, they left them in Terezin. Thanks to this Mrs. Fuernberg and Karel also stayed there, because they were taking care of the old man. After the war, Karel returned to Pardubice. I also lived in Pardubice for a year, so we attended Scouts together, however only up to the time that Karel immigrated to Israel. How he fared there, I have no idea, because after that I didn't keep in touch with him at all. For it was terribly dangerous to correspond with a foreign country, let alone Israel.

I also had a classmate named Ludek Klacer in Pardubice, who was two years older than I; he was even in Birkenau with me. Ludek also returned from the concentration camp, but then emigrated. Of the children that I used to attend the secret classes with and who survived, I was the only one that remained in Czech, everyone else emigrated.