

Asaf Auerbach With The Other Children In Front Of Their English Home



This photograph is from the year 1939, and in it are we children who Mrs. Strasserova saved. We're standing in front of our English home in Stoke-on-Trent.

The first on the left in the top row is my brother Ruben, beside him Mrs. Strasserova and then Bedrich Schwarzkopf. Standing from the left in the second row are Petr Feldstein, Hana Franklova, Ralf Strass, I and the siblings Raja and Pavel Strass. And the little girl is Lizinka Dashova.

My brother and I were among the children whose departure for England was arranged by Nicholas Winton. But he and his role in it all were unknown to me until the 1990s. For me the person who had organized it all was Mrs. Hanna Strasserova. Mrs. Strasserova was a friend of my parents', they knew each other from the kibbutz times, her family had also returned to Europe. Before the war they lived in Teplice, and left for England about a half year before us. Mrs. Strasserova had a talent for organization. When she decided to go for something, she stood her ground until she got it. At the same time I don't know how she managed it, she probably didn't know much English at that time, I don't know. In England Mrs. Strasserova managed to round up other people and found the Czech Children Refugee Committee. With the help of unions and many of the inhabitants of the town they lived in, Stoke-on-Trent, they collected the necessary amount of finances and thus made it possible for us to come to England.

Mrs. Strasserova managed to find us accommodations in this facility that today are called SOS Children's Villages. The axis of the property formed a tree-lined avenue, on each side stood five duplexes, in each house lived a so-called Mother, who took care of roughly ten children of mixed sex, mixed age, which really did create these families. At that time they perhaps didn't have many

orphans or something, one of the duplexes was empty, and so the city decided to donate it for refugee children. We didn't pay any rent, we simply got it to use. Then all that was necessary was to continue collecting money, so there'd be something to feed us from.

Through Winton, Mrs. Strasserova opened the way to England for nine children. Eight of us arrived in July, a little girl, three or four years old, her best friend's daughter, was already with her. One more child, a girl that I knew, was supposed to have arrived on the transport that was supposed to have dispatched from Prague on September 1. Here, I didn't know any of the children except for my brother. But as is known, the September transport didn't arrive, the war began. So Mrs. Strasserova succeeded in directly saving nine children.

Besides my brother and me, there was one more pair of siblings among us, Pavel and Raja Strass, and their cousin Ralf Strass. Then there was Bedrich Schwarzkopf, Petr Feldstein and Hana Frankova, and the youngest, Lizinka Dashova, who was only three. The oldest was my brother, who was almost 15. I liked Bedrich the best, with him it was always a gas.