

Jiri Munk After The War



This photo of me was taken right after the war. It was taken by my brother-in-law, Jiri Kovanic. At that time we were utterly poor, we didn't even have anything to wear. Back then lists of war damages were being put together, and who for example knew how to bribe also got some reparations, but our mother didn't know how to arrange things like this, so we didn't get a thing. She only got 300 crowns for me, she herself used to get 600. After the war I was the poorest in my class. Our mother ended up selling our house to some butcher. She sold it for about 160,000 crowns, but right after that, about a half year later, the currency reform took place and money completely lost value, so we were left with nothing. We simply don't and never have had luck with

things like that. And despite the fact that they tried to talk my mother out of selling the house, in the end she did it anyway, because it was a constant source of worries, the tenants always wanted us to fix something, and the entire rental income then went towards these repairs. In Prague, on Truhlarska Street, lived some relatives of the Lustigs, the Pavelkas, who were so kind as to take us in after the war, and so we moved into their not very large apartment in Prague. Mr. Pavelka, an engineer, wasn't a Jew himself, but had married a Jewess by the name of Vilka, and apparently she was a distant relative of ours. They had a daughter, Emina, who was about two years older than I. I was 13 back then, and she was 15 or 16. She slept in this little servant's room, and they'd always make a bed for me on the floor beside her. I remember that under my head, instead of a bolster, I had Palacky's 'History of the Czech Nation', but not much of it penetrated into my head. If it hadn't been for Uncle Pavelka, I probably wouldn't even have started attending school. Right away, still in May of 1945, Uncle took me to the nearest school on Sanytrova Street, to be more exact, at the corner of Sanytrova and Dusni, right across from the Church of Simon and Judith. Today this school is right beside the Intercontinental Hotel. I began going there right away, in May, so I only attended six weeks of the first school year. At first I had some problems, because I was missing four or five years of studies, and I basically started right off attending second year of council school, but due to the fact that I was evidently open to new ideas and attended school with the poorest children in all of Prague, who didn't study at all, in the end I used to get straight A's on my report card. This was because my classmates were children from Frantisek, that was a neighborhood close to today's Convent of St. Agnes, where the scum of Prague lived - thieves, prostitutes, pimps. The writer Geza Vcelicka wrote about them, today that name probably doesn't mean anything to anyone anymore. Compared to them, I was truly a model student, the principal even took me on as his helper, so I would for example announce things on the intercom, or go help teachers, who back then after the war were just beginning to study at university, to write down lectures and so on. My classmates were incorrigible scoundrels of the worst sort, sometimes I couldn't believe my eyes. For example they'd even make fun of President Benes. Nothing was sacred to them. They were armed from the revolution. They were 13-year-old boys, but had pistols and grenades. Once when the police came in the middle of class, they collected a whole basket of these weapons. It's interesting that no one dared try anything with me, evidently they knew about what had happened to the Jews during the war, and that's probably why they respected me. Otherwise, though, they were always fighting amongst themselves, they behaved like animals.