

## Jiri Munk's Classmates In High School



Our class in the courtyard of the high school in Dusni Street. I'm standing in the second row, at the far left. At the top right is my friend Petr Rossler, who also spent time in concentration camps during the war. He had left on the first transports to Lodz, and he and his brother had survived Auschwitz. He'd lost his parents, and because after the war orphans had the possibility of moving away, both brothers moved to Australia, probably in 1948. This was because after the war there was a relatively high interest in Jewish orphans. Jewish families, mainly in Australia or Canada, were offering to take them in. Petr and his brother succeeded in moving away, despite their having an uncle here. Both brothers established themselves in Australia, and founded families. My classmate became a chemist and his brother a famous architect. Not long ago they received some property of their uncle's in restitutions. Rossler was my only Jewish friend in our class. Our high school was in Dusni Street, today there's a business academy there. Back then high schools were going through a chaotic transformation period, they were changing their nature, and were always moving. I couldn't make heads or tails of it. Just during the time I was studying we merged with about four other high schools. At first we were a boys-only high school, then we merged with a girls' high school, subsequently the girls' section was separated off again, and in the end it was a mixed high school again. Uncle Pavelka, who we lived with after the war, registered me for high school. We lived with him because after the war we were so poor that we had nothing to wear or anyplace to live. This was because our mother had sold our house in Brandys, and we the lost the money we got for it because of the currency reform. A person can't imagine what sort of situation she found herself in. For a long time after the war, Mother believed that Father would return, even when he had already been declared dead. My mother didn't have any higher education, not even a high school diploma. She only had mercantile school and some business courses, and was completely helpless when it came to the practical things in life. She had been used to our father doing everything, and she was completely lost without him. Luckily the Pavelkas took us in, so we moved into their not very large apartment in Prague. If it hadn't been for Uncle Pavelka, I probably wouldn't even have started attending school. Initially he took me to council school, and then also registered me for high school. My mother maybe even didn't know where I was going. She never even came to the high school to ask how I was doing. All she had to do was sign the class record

book. That why I was already completely independent in high school, and due to our financial situation, I did brigade work during summer holidays to make money.