

Michaela Vidlakova



This is most likely a studio photograph, and is of me at around the age of five. It was taken in Prague in 1942.

I don't know exactly when it was, but I think that sometime during 1941 the Germans forced us out of our apartment. We moved to Zizkov, a Prague neighborhood, into an apartment with Grandma and Grandpa Katz, who lived in a zone where they weren't evicting Jews. It was an unattractive quarter and an old, uninteresting building. But because they had a large apartment, we had to move in with them. While we were still living there together as a family, it wasn't all that tragic. My father, mother and I had the use of one room. I think the other grandmother or someone else from the family was also living there.

When we then lived in Zizkov, Grandma and I would at least walk along U Rajske Zahrady Street, which led along Rieger Gardens; I was no longer allowed into the park itself anymore either. There was this open area there, now it's been built on, where boys used to play soccer. But it wasn't an official park. It was one of the few places where Jewish children could go. Then we also used to go to the Jewish cemetery in Zizkov, and used to play amongst the graves; there was even some sort of Jewish musical event there, the audience would sit on the edges of the graves.

I didn't start attending school until after the war. Before the war my mother didn't teach me, I was completely self-taught. I learned to read from signs that I saw around Prague. I think that at the age of five I was already normally reading books.

I didn't classify my friends according to origin or religion. The fact that I used to get gifts for Chanukkah and others for Christmas I just took as that everyone's got their own thing. From the pre-Terezin period I remember my Jewish friend Pavel Fuchs, who was the son of Mr. Fuchs, and engineer who was later the chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities in Prague. I've known Pavel since I was little. He now lives in Seattle.