

Alice Klimova's High School Graduation Photo



This is my high school graduation photo. It was taken in Prague in 1947.

After the war I did another two years of high school. I attended a so-called repatriation class, which meant that everyone there was missing a year or two. They'd either been doing forced labor, then

there was one young man who'd been in Terezin, and there were about two classmates who had been in England with me. Everyone thought that because I'd returned from England that I must have who knows what, all sorts of clothes...

I know that there weren't any dance classes during the war. And so the mother of one of my classmates decided that we'd attend dance classes together, that she'd take me with them and that she'd be a sort of chaperone for me. I thanked them nicely, saying that I couldn't go anywhere because I didn't have a dress to wear. She couldn't understand that at all, I, who'd come from England. But I really didn't have anything. Not only had everything there been rationed, we didn't even have any way to get those rations, because we had no money. We did get a bit of pocket money from a fund that was called the Czechoslovak Trust Fund, none of us remembers how much it was any longer, but that was just about enough for toothpaste, and maybe some postage stamps. Most of my clothing were secondhand things my sister had gotten from people who no longer wanted them. We were also able to go to the Red Cross, but I was there perhaps only once, for some knitted blankets. Then I unraveled them, the wool got used for something else, which I still have, I think.

Basically no one was capable of comprehending that we were really badly off financially. I was this outsider. Years later, when we had a class reunion from that postwar high school, one classmate, who had emigrated after 1948 and had ended up in Vienna, told me that it was only now that she understood what it must have been like, how I must have felt, when I'd returned as an emigrant. And in order for her to understand it, she also had to become an emigrant, besides her no one else understood it. I lived a life completely different from others.