

Alena Munkova At Home In The Courtyard



This is me with a baby carriage in the courtyard of our apartment in Letna, at 1 Belcredi Street. I'm playing. I'd say that that's our kitchen window, but I'm not sure, because it could also have been on the other side of the courtyard, where the caretaker lived. Today that street is named Milady Horakove. The building is still there, but unfortunately now there's a KFC on the entire ground floor. In this photo I might have been about three or four years old. My name is Alena Munkova, and I was born on 24th September 1926. I was born in Prague, and besides Terezin, I've never lived anywhere else. My childhood is much interwoven with Letna, where I lived. I really was rooted in that sidewalk there. The way they say a person has roots in land, here it was the sidewalk, with its paving stones. I knew all the store owners on Letna, I used to run to the park there, and to

Stromovka Park. And the loss of that place where you grew up - and certainly it's different for everyone - can't be renewed again. A person pretends a bit, but it's gone. After the war I did return to Letna, but everything was different. But to this day, when I walk by Letna, I feel a twinge. To this day, I smell that aroma, what it smelled like there. I remember colors a lot, and smells perhaps even more. I think that childhood forms a person, whether he wants it or not. Or also deforms. So before the war, Letna was my whole life. I've got this memory of our apartment building's courtyard. It's still there, No. 1, we were on the ground floor, on the corner. Back then it was Belcrediho Avenue, now it's Milady Horakove, if I'm not mistaken. Then they made it into a bank, and now I think there's a KFC there. From bad to worse. Back then, when you entered the building, and I even think that the doors are still almost the same, in horrible condition, there on the end of this L-shaped hallway, was the entrance to our apartment. But on the other side, right after the apartment door, was another door, which led into the waiting room and into the clinic. So the entire ground floor was divided among my father's dental practice and our apartment. Then there was of course a courtyard, where I used to play. People used to hang carpets there, there were these two small trees, and it was all quite grimy. And on the ground floor of the building there was a man with a junk shop, named Andrlé. He was a mysterious figure, and I never had the courage to go down into the basement. By the way, back then those apartments had toilets in the hall, not in the apartments. But the toilet was of course only ours.