

## **Czech Saturday school in London before 1989**

### Post WW2

Established in January 1951 by Father Jan Lang and its first teacher Mrs Jarmila Uhlířová and her husband, Dr František Uhlíř. It was held on Saturdays in the convent school run by the Sisters of Sion in Chepstow Villas with two elementary classes and one secondary class taught by Dr Uhlíř and others, including Dr Karel Brušák. The secondary classes ended when the Uhlíř family emigrated to North America.

In 1955 the school moved to Our Lady of Victories in Clareville Street, SW7. Miss Zdenka Pokorná recalled that there were three classes for children aged six to 13 years with lessons from 9.30 to 4pm with a one-hour lunch break. The Czech shoe company Bat'a based in Tilbury donated £100 monthly to cover the cost of three classrooms and a kitchen which was about £15-20 a week.

In 1975 the school was relocated to Velehrad in Notting Hill. It continued with some breaks until 1990.

### Curriculum

A register of attendance was kept and at the end of the school year each student received a report.

An account by Mrs Alena Kaucká, who began teaching in 1962, reflects the purpose of the school in the earlier years as well. The aim was to teach both oral and written Czech, history and geography that was not covered in their English schools. Their language skills were enhanced through learning traditional Czech songs and carols.

Over the years parents were able to enjoy performances by their children, especially at Christmas, when they recited poems and sang carols often dressed in national costume. In the 1950s Bat'a gave each student a pair of shoes, much appreciated by refugee families

### Summer camp

These were organised from 1950 until 1986 in St Mary's Bay, Dymchurch near Folkestone. It was very popular, especially for those families who could not afford holidays, with from 30 up to 70 children enjoying the seaside in basic accommodation.

From 1957 until 1965, when Velehrad opened in Notting Hill Gate, this was supplemented through the purchase of a house in Folkestone where families could enjoy a cheap self-catering holiday.

### Juventus youth club

In the mid 1960s, Father Lang established a Sunday afternoon club for teenagers. It met at Velehrad in the annexe to play table tennis and also at West End Lane to rehearse two folk dance routines, Česká and Moravská besedy. These were performed by two groups in national costume in Leamington Spa, under the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere in London.

main source: Milan Kocourek *Krajanská farnost v Londýně*, 1994



singing the national anthem



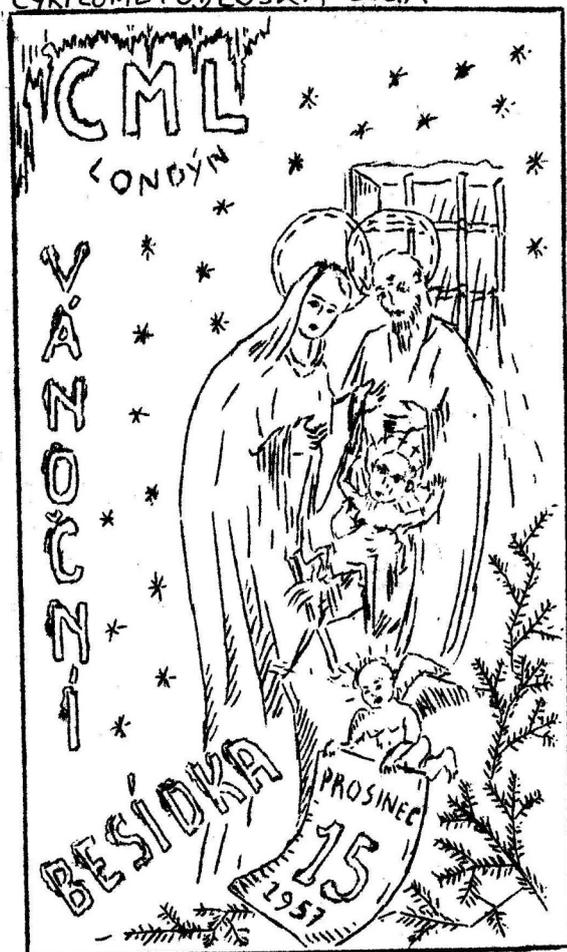
group photo with teachers



group photo with parents



CYRILOMETODĚJSKÁ LIGA



VÁNOČNÍ PÁSMO.

(provedou žáci čs. školy sv. Cyrila & Metoděje - Londýn.)

1. jednání: (na nádrazí v Londýně)  
Odjezd žáků čs. školy do Betlema.
2. jednání: (typická česká náves s žudrem.)  
Říkanky a zpěv koled. Několik žákyn z II. třídy v národních krojích.
3. jednání: (v Betlémě u jesliček)  
Dárky Ježíškovi.

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V přestávce - pohoštění dětí.

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Příchod M I K U L Á Š E a nadílka  
pro v š e c h n y přítomné děti.

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Scenerie a výprava: Ing. J. Nováček & spol.

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U klavíru: pí Čadká.  
Housle: p. Karel Dvořák.

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Na shledanou, d ě t i , v neděli  
15. prosince, o 3. hod. odpoledne,  
v Národním domě: 74, West End Lane,  
Londýn, N.W.6.



Cardinal Beran Caxton Hall



Juventus Leamington Spa