

HW Speech at ECP, November 2019

It is customary on academic occasions in the Czech Republic for academic people to wear full academic robes – and their robes are magnificent in their historic medieval splendour.

I, therefore, on this academic occasion, make no apology for wearing my own academic robes. These lack any great splendour, but they do have their own distinction, as equally rooted in medieval history.

It was on the morning of 6th September 1994, in this gymnasium, that I spoke for the first time to an audience of 117 pupils, eight full-time and three part-time staff.

Over ninety of the pupils were Czech: there were some twenty different nationalities represented in the total audience, an international school re-created in Prague.

What I said to that gathering was:

“I am delighted to welcome you all here today, the first full day of the English College..... All I want to say to you is ‘Go to it’ – and God be with you.”

That was twenty-five years, two months and three days ago. It is presumptuous to say that it was God, but someone, something, has been on our side.

To say that it has succeeded beyond my wildest dreams is an understatement.

That it has succeeded is thanks to the hard work put in by my successors as Headmasters, by the teaching and administrative staff, by the Governors, the English College Foundation in London and by the local Town Council here in Vysocany.

That it has succeeded is thanks to the very hard work put in by very many people, academic and administrative, both at the English College here in Prague and at the English College Foundation in London.

A large number of people, too many to name individually, but I must mention Jana and Vladimir Klouda, Bill Jefferson of the British Council, Anne Lewis and Martyn Bond of the English College Foundation, Milan Lukes, the first Deputy Premier of the Czech Republic, Ladislav Venys instrumental in finding for us this magnificent building here in Prague 9, many former pupils of the Prague English Grammar School, (known by everybody as PEGS), George and Mariana Horvoka, at whose apartment off the Castle Steps we gathered on our first flying visit to Prague....

A very large number of people, all dedicated to the re-incarnation of PEGS as the English College in Prague.

All I can say, all I need say, is 'Well done, all of you, and thank you'. It has been a worthwhile endeavour.