

# Abraham Pressburger

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Omer

Israel

Interviewer: Martin Korcok

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*The phenomenon of Central European Jewry rests in the fact that most Jews who were born in this region live in foreign lands. It is no different with Jews that come from today's Slovakia. One of them is Mr. Abraham Pressburger, who was born in Bratislava. He currently lives in the Israeli city of Omer. This interview is also different in the fact that in its contents it stands apart from other testimony gained in Slovakia. It tells of Judaism in this region with a certain amount of dispassion and detachment. At the same time, it encompasses the whole colorful spectrum of pre- and post-war Jewry - from Orthodox Judaism to Zionism.*

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## My family background

My testimony about the past of the Pressburger family is based on a document that was written by my father [Alexander Pressburger], most likely shortly before he died in the year 1976. He was then 82 years old. He wanted to preserve what his family had told him and what he hadn't had time to verbally pass on. Towards the end I added information about my generation. My father divided his document into four generations starting from the year 1810.

The first generation starts approximately in 1810. Akiva Pressburger, my father's grandfather, was born in the town of Cifer. This is a small town near the city of Trnava. He's also buried there. According to my grandfather, most of the Pressburgers came from the town of Cifer. His wife Zelda was named Wetzler before she was married. She was born in Galanta and died there at the age of 91 in the year 1901. She's buried in Galanta. They had two sons, Yisrael and Moshe Cvi.

The second generation of the Pressburger family, Yisrael Pressburger, my grandfather's brother, was born in Cifer. He died at fifty of tuberculosis. He is buried in Galanta. His wife Kati, nee Messinger, died at the age of 75, and is buried in Galanta. They had one son, Max, and five daughters, Roza, Fanci, Janka, Etel and Malvin, who died at the age of 16. Max died at 62. He had two daughters, Ilonka and Erzsi, but had no male descendant who would further carry the Pressburger name. Max is also buried in Galanta. Kati became a widow at the age of 48. She had no property or pension. Her son Max took care of her very conscientiously up until he died, and he even saw to it that his four sisters were married off.

Yisrael's brother was Moshe Cvi Pressburger; he was actually my grandfather. He was born in Cifer in the year 1850 and died in the year 1938, the 28th of Nisan, at the age of 88. [Editor's note: Nisan is the seventh month in the Hebrew calendar, the Gregorian calendar equivalent is March-April.] His wife was named Liebele, nee Messinger. She was the sister of Kati, Yisrael's wife. She was born in Galanta in the year 1853 and died in Galanta in the year 1927 at the age of 74. They had seven children. Five sons: Max, Filip, Jakob, Sandor, Jenö, and two daughters: Janka and Fina.

The third generation is the generation of my father [Alexander Pressburger]. His oldest brother, Max Pressburger, Jewish name Mordechai ben Moshe Cvi, was born in the year 1879. He lived his whole life in Galanta. He was the town's chazzan, shochet, plus he was also on the board of a large insurance company. He had a very beautiful and richly furnished house. His wife was named Julca [Julia], nee Friedman. She was born in Galanta in the year 1882. She died in Budapest, after the war, but is buried in Galanta. They had seven children: the sons Simon, Bebi, Oskar, Bubi and Jenö, and two daughters, Aranka and Ela. The whole family, except for Simon, including Simon's wife and their two small children, were deported in 1944, when they were taking Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz and 17 of them were gassed. The only one to survive was Simon.

The second oldest son in the third generation, the grandson of Moshe ben Cvi, was Jakob Pressburger. His Jewish name was Jakov ben Moshe Cvi. He was born in the year 1889 in Galanta. He died in 1944 in the Sered labor camp [1](#). He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Sered. His wife, Kity [Katarina], nee Weiss, came from Bratislava. She was born there in 1897. She was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 during the Slovak Uprising [2](#), and died there at the age of 47. They had five daughters: Any, Alis, Herta, Vali, the fifth name I unfortunately don't remember, and one son, Hans. Only Any and Herta survived the Holocaust. Hans also died in the Sered camp and is buried together with his father.

The third son, Sandor, in Slovak Alexander, was my father. His Jewish name was Shimon ben Moshe Cvi. He was born on 28th March 1894 in Galanta. He died on 17th January 1976 and is buried in Haifa. His wife was Frida, nee Weiss, the sister of Jakov's wife Kity. She was born on 16th October 1898 in Bratislava. She died on 13th May 1960 in Haifa. They had three children. A son, Heinz - that's actually me, now my name is Abraham Jindrich, but my father named me Heinz. That's what they called me at home. And my Jewish name is Josef Chaim. My two sisters were named Any and Lucy. In 1942 Any was jailed at the train station in Bratislava and deported on the first girls' transport to Auschwitz, where she lasted only a very short while. Lucy survived and after the war started a family in Bratislava. Her husband was named Josef Arimovicz.

Another of my father's brothers, Filip, was born in 1886, and died in 1920. He wasn't married. He lived to be 34 years old and died of tuberculosis.

Jenö was the fifth son. He was born in the year 1896 in Galanta, and died in a Hungarian labor camp during the Holocaust. It's not known where he's buried. His wife was named Mancsi [nee Weisz], she was born in Budapest. They had six children: Richard, Tomi, Trude, Tamara, Judit and Lia. Tomi, Tamara and Judit were triplets. Judit drowned in a garden swimming pool. She was two years old. The whole family, except for the father, survived in Budapest. After the war they moved to Israel, where they started families. The oldest son, Richard, became a high-ranking officer in the Israeli army. He also ran as a candidate for mayor of Jerusalem.

My father's sister Janka was married; I don't remember their family name. They lived in Vienna. They had one son, Emil. When Hitler came to Austria [see Anschluss] [3](#), they escaped to Belgium. Emil survived and then lived in the USA. His parents didn't survive the war. The other sister, Fina, married this one very rich industrialist. She had one son, Kurt. They lived in Croatia, in Novy Vrbas, where they were murdered by Croatian fascists.

The fourth generation, that's the generation of my contemporaries. We'll start with the children of my father's oldest brother, Max. The oldest, Simon, born in 1904 in Galanta, was deported at the beginning of 1945 and returned in the same year. He died in 1997 in Tel Aviv. His wife Ela Rosenblum was born in Bratislava. They had two children. In 1945, at the ages of seven and eight, they were deported to Auschwitz and didn't return. Shimon remarried in Israel. His wife is named Margot. They have a child named Ariel together.

Max's second son was named Bebi. He was born in Galanta in the year 1905. He married his brother Simon's wife's sister. She was named Lili Rosenblum. Both were deported to Auschwitz and never returned. Max's third son, Oskar, was born in 1906 in Galanta. He was married and childless. Deported in 1944, and never returned. The fourth son, Bubi, was born in 1910. Deported in 1944, wasn't married, didn't return. The last, fifth, son, Jenö, was born in the year 1915. His fate was the same as that of Bubi.

Max also had two daughters. Aranka was born in 1912 in Galanta. She was married and had two children. They led them away to the concentration camp at the ages of four and five. No one in the family survived the Holocaust. The second daughter, Ela, was also born in Galanta. I remember her wedding, which was at the Reduta in Bratislava. [Editor's note: the Reduta building, today the home of the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, belongs among the most significant historical socio-cultural representative buildings of the historical city center in Bratislava.] There were about a thousand people there. I was six years old at the time. It was a very luxurious wedding with an orchestra. It was characteristic of my Uncle Max's social standing. After the wedding Ela lived in Galanta, had two children and was deported with her husband in 1944, and they never returned.

Now about the children of my father's second brother, Jakob, who survived. Any, born in 1920 in Bratislava, married a doctor, Dr. Otto Lederer in 1941, who had been in Bratislava shortly, and they left via illegal transport to Palestine. The British intercepted their ship and transported them to Mauritius, where they lived out the war. They then lived in the Israeli city of Gedera. They had two children, Dany and Aliska. Jakob's second daughter who survived the Shoah was named Herta, born in 1924 in Bratislava. She was married in the Sered camp to Mr. Tomas. They had a child that was named Akiva. Herta managed to hide the child with one farmer's family in Slovakia. She was deported to Auschwitz together with her husband. She survived, her husband died. Herta married again in Israel, and she had another three children, Shoshana, Piny and Aliska. She left Israel and today lives in the USA.

Now I want to cross over to my mother's family. While my father's family has its roots in and around Galanta, my mother's family is strongly rooted in Bratislava, or in Pressburg, as the city was named up to the year 1918. My mother's father was named Hermann Weiss. He was the oldest of three brothers. Hermann was born in the year 1865. His wife, who died young, was born Goldberg. I will again return to this family. I don't know her first name. Hermann and his wife had six children. They were my mother's siblings. Etel was born in the year 1890, her husband was Yisrael Gross

from Sered. They had children, first was Erik, who was born in 1924. Erik fought in Israel during the war for liberation in 1948 and fell fighting the Arabs. Chana was born in 1928. She died in the year 2000. She lived in Natania, and was a school principal.

My mother's sister Katarina [Kity] was born in 1895. Her husband was Jakob Pressburger, the brother of my father Alexander Pressburger, who married Katarina's sister. Next was her brother Max Weiss, who died in the Shoah. Erzsi was his wife, she died of natural causes: she succumbed to some disease in 1936. They had two children who survived the Holocaust: Theodor, born in 1930, and Hary, born in 1932. Both lived in America, Hary has since died.

The next of my mother's sisters, Lili, was born in the year 1900. Her husband died in the Shoah. I think in Auschwitz. They used to live in Surany and had three children who survived: Erko, Any and Gerti. Any and Gerti live in Israel to this day. Erko died, also in Israel.

My mother's youngest brother, Yisrael, was born in 1901. He was a big Zionist idealist. Already in 1918 he left for Israel [then Palestine] as a halutz [halutz - Hebrew vanguard, halutzim - pioneers, trailblazers. Jews trained mainly in Europe and America, mostly as farmers, to be prepared for emigration to Palestine] and was one of the founders of the Heftziba kibbutz. I've forgotten the name of his wife, but I think that she was a daughter of the Herskowitz family. I'm not sure, but I know that her father had a bakery in Bratislava. They had three children. A son, whose name I've forgotten, and two daughters, Ziva and Chana. The three children live in Israel, but they didn't stay in the kibbutz.

Now I'm going to return to the siblings of my grandfather on my mother's side, Hermann Weiss. He had two younger brothers. Sigmund Weiss was born in Bratislava in the year 1872. His wife was named Ernestine Langer. It's interesting, that on her mother's side she came from the Pressburger family from Trnava. It's possible that that family was related to our Pressburger family, because Cifer, where we have roots, is close to Trnava. The son of Mrs. Langer was the very famous director Emerich Pressburger. He for example directed the film *The Red Shoes*. It was at the beginning of the color film era. Besides this, his father Arnold Pressburger [Arnold Pressburger: 1885 Bratislava/Pressburg - 1951, Hamburg] was very active in theatrical life in Vienna. In those days Vienna and Paris were the centers of European cultural life. Arnold Pressburger belonged to the same circle of friends as Johann Strauss and many singers and actors in Vienna.

The youngest brother, Max Weiss, was born around the year 1880. According to information he was six to eight years younger than Sigmund Weiss. This Max Weiss lived with this one Christian woman. He had three children with her, but he didn't marry her. The reasons aren't known. We can only guess that in those days in Bratislava it was unacceptable on both sides for a Jew to marry a Christian woman.

There was a quite large difference in attitudes between the Bratislava family and the Galanta family. Galanta was a very Jewish town, I don't know if it's true, but my father used to tell me that up to World War I, Jews made up more than half of the town's population. [Editor's note: according to the 1919 census the town had 3,654 inhabitants. Of that, 2,447 were Roman Catholic, 1,136 Jewish, 48 Protestant, 13 Reformed, 7 Greek Orthodox, 3 other. 98% of the stores in Galanta were at that time owned by Jewish businessmen.] When I was a child there were two Orthodox communities [4](#) - kehillot there. One had a head rabbi by the name of Buxbaum [Jakov Buxbaum], the second a head rabbi named Seidl [Bernard Seidl]. Each of them had a large, beautiful

synagogue and courtyard with Jewish and educational institutions. Both of them placed an emphasis on religious education. There were three levels of education. The basic level, which was named Yesode Toire [Sade Toire, or Yesode Toire are slang names for Yesode Torah, from Hebrew for the foundations of the Torah. Otherwise an elementary school for teaching of the Torah], an intermediate level, which was named Talmud Torah, and advanced education, which was named Yeshivah. I think that Seidl was a little more progressive, and my family belonged to him. Buxbaum was the bigger, recognized theological expert, according to my father.

Now on to my family's educational level. Here I'd like to distinguish between the Galanta and Bratislava families. The education of the Galanta family, up to my father's generation I think, was at the elementary school level and perhaps one year of council school. They knew how to read and managed basic arithmetical tasks. The knowledge of the Torah was higher. They all finished Yesode Toire, as they called it, and perhaps partly Talmud Toire [Talmud Torah], and were familiar with the basic halakhah writings. My father's generation was still brought up in this way. The standard of education of my mother's family was higher and more progressive.

I would say that at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, my ancestors in Bratislava and Galanta spoke the same language. Jews used the German language, it wasn't Yiddish but it definitely was colored by Yiddish. My father's generation that lived at the beginning of the 20th century also spoke Hungarian. Slovak was quite foreign to them, and they perhaps didn't even learn it until after the founding of the Czechoslovak state [see First Czechoslovak Republic] [5](#), and only very superficially. The rabbi's sermon in the synagogue was always in German. To illustrate what the coloring sounded like, I'll tell you something that has stuck in my head. Once on Schondorf, today's Obchodnej Street, Bratislava, some woman fainted and many people gathered around. And one man, a non-Jew was asking one Jewish boy what had happened. He answered, 'Gar nichts. A goyte ist schicker.' That means, nothing's happened, one goyte - non-Jewish woman - is drunk. Words like 'oylem goylem,' that the world is stupid, or that all are 'ganoven' - thieves, that was that coloring in the German language that was used. But all in all, it wasn't Yiddish.

When my father was still very young, perhaps twelve years old, they sent him off to be an apprentice in a textile store in Trnava. In those days it was the custom for students to live at their master's. So all week he wasn't at home and worked there. The length of the workday was for sure not limited in any way. His life's story is typical for the other family members of that generation. When he finished his apprenticeship, he moved to Vienna and was a sales clerk in one very well-known store. When after World War I, during which he had been in the army for four years, and fought in Italy and Yugoslavia, when after this war he returned, he settled in Bratislava. He became a traveling salesman for the company 'Kann und Stahler.' They had a huge warehouse and large store in the center of Namesti Republiky [Republic Square]. There he also met my mother, who worked there as a clerk. In the beginning, he did his business travel by train, but later, from the year 1927, he had the use of a car and driver, which in those days was considered to be a respectable position. Especially we children were thrilled by this. The chauffeur would visit us and once in a while would take us for a short drive around Bratislava.

My grandfather, Moshe Cvi Pressburger, was very poor. He had a small dairy. I think that he also delivered milk. He raised seven children in very modest circumstances. The apartment was very small, and the seven children slept in one or two rooms. On the contrary, my father's generation,

those seven children all already lived a middle-class lifestyle. All had apartments with several rooms, where the children and parents slept separately. All of my father's brothers worked as businessmen. The oldest brother, my grandfather's first child, Max, had a leading position in the religious community in Galanta. He was also very rich. At the beginning of the 1930s my father and a partner opened up a very nice store on Schondorf, today's Obchodnej Street in Bratislava. The store was named Stocking Palace and had I think eight employees. In those days that street was the main shopping street, there was no streetcar on it like there is today, and it had many beautiful stores.

As an illustration of life in Galanta I'd like to now describe an experience of mine from Galanta. I'd like to present here how Galanta has remained in my memories. It was an unforgettable month that I had spent at my grandfather's, when I was six or seven years old. It was an unusually beautiful month, according to how I remember it. I spent about six weeks there. I was living with him in his small house. It had two rooms and one small kitchen. With him lived my aunt Fina, my father's sister. From our beautiful four-room apartment in Bratislava I came to grandfather's poor and cozy apartment. In Bratislava we had a washroom with hot water, and as I said, four large rooms. Here I was in an apartment with two rooms. We washed ourselves in a washbasin and would pour water into it from a pitcher. The basin was made of enameled metal, about 50 centimeters in diameter. We drew water from a well in the courtyard with a bucket, which was lowered by hand into the depths on a rope. The toilets were also in the courtyard, they were wooden latrines. We brought very good drinking water in pitchers from an artesian well on the main square that naturally ran without stopping. The other inhabitants also got their excellent drinking water there.

As I said, it was a beautiful month. I had a scooter and ran about Galanta, here and there, free as a bird. I mainly 'scootered' two, three streets away to my uncle Max's, who lived there with some of his grown children who hadn't yet left home. In those days my grandfather was 80 years old. Often he sat outside on the street on a stool, looking around and smoking a cigarette. Once in a while he'd send me off to bring him one. On Saturday I would walk with him to the synagogue. His son Max prayed there, he sang beautifully and often three of his sons would accompany him as a choir. Kurt, the son of Fina, Fina neni as we used to call her, at that time also lived in the house with my grandfather. During the year he lived with my father's other sister Janka in Vienna, because he studied there. In the summer, when school ended, he was also in Galanta. I would go with him to the synagogue courtyard, where often they would be playing soccer or other games. During the soccer games I would watch the other boys play. They were older than I, and I was overjoyed when they would sometimes take mercy on me and put me in goal.

Just a little more about where my grandfather lived. It was a strange house that had two apartments. One belonged to my grandfather and the second belonged to the Markstein family. They even had a pub there. The courtyard was very large. All week there would be chickens and ducks running about, like in a farmyard. When there was a market, a large number of horse-drawn wagons, maybe ten to twenty, would appear there. The wagon drivers would go sit in the pub and they would give their horses food in this bag that hung about their necks, and of course also drew water from the well so the horses could drink.

One more experience from Galanta. There was a brit milah at that time, and my grandfather was sitting with Grandfather Markstein, and the two old men were talking, and we overheard the conversation in which my grandfather asked Mr. Markstein, 'How do you do, Mr. Markstein?' And he



answered, 'I'm fine, but I can barely see any more.' So my grandfather said to him, 'What more do you want to see? Haven't you seen enough?' And among other things he said to him, 'You know, you could be dead, and now you would have a name.' Because according to the Jewish religion during the brit milah a Jewish name from a dead ancestor is given. So he said to him, 'You could have had a name, and what do you have now, nothing!'

My mother's family, just like me, we're connected to the city of Bratislava. I more or less know my mother's family history from the second half of the 19th century. My grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side were born in Bratislava. I would say that the Bratislava family was more modern than the one from Galanta. The education of my mother's siblings was more worldly, not religious and higher than that of those from Galanta in this respect. My mother finished high school, and as a pretty young girl - she was very pretty - was a secretary at the company 'Kann und Stahler.' Her brother Max had a university education. On my mother's father's side, there were three brothers; they distanced themselves a bit from Orthodox Judaism, at least in concept. Although they belonged to the Orthodox religious community. Their concept of life and world view seemed to me similar to the ideals of some sort of mafia, I don't know how I should describe it. Their ideals of honor, affiliation and to a certain degree patriotism, give me that feeling.

The middle brother, Sigmund Weiss, worked his way up to become a factory owner. He had a clothing factory. He was the first to move out of the Kapucinska Street neighborhood and had a nice apartment in a modern building in the city center. He employed my grandfather, but they eventually had disagreements and parted ways, and my grandfather didn't work for him any more. I don't know how at that time he made a living to support five small children, he had at home without their mother, because she died when the children were still small.

The youngest brother, Max Weiss, lived a reprehensible life for the times. He lived with one Christian woman, with whom he had three children. As I've said, he didn't marry her and the family apparently kept it all a secret, so it seems that the news media in those days weren't as evolved as they are today, and that sort of secrecy was maybe possible.

My mother's mother [? Weiss, nee Goldberg] died when her children were still small. The Goldbergs were completely conservatively Orthodox, both by their behavior and by their appearance. Generally they had beards and some of them also had payes. In the Goldbergs' apartment on Kapucinska Street, they had a quite large apartment, there was a small synagogue with a Torah cabinet and every day they prayed shacharit and ma'ariv [Editor's note: during the day Jews recite the Amidah prayer while standing. The Amidah is recited three times a day, in the morning (shachrit), after dinner (mincha) and in the evening (ma'ariv)].

Besides this the Goldbergs were rich merchants. The Goldberg that I remember had a large, well-known second-hand shop at the beginning of Kapucinska Street, where they sold cheap clothes, suits, coats. That store was always full of shoppers. When the Germans occupied the Czech lands and gave Slovakia independence, Goldberg, who had that store, was the first who the Germans and Hlinka-Guards [6](#) jailed and claimed he was a typical exploiter of the people. They said that he was the most typical and worst exploiter of ordinary people, because he was stealing from them in that store. He was jailed for about a week, or two weeks, I don't know exactly, and then they let him go home for a short time. But when they were looking for him again, he and his entire family, with his children - he had four or five children - disappeared and made it all the way to New York.

I don't know how he managed it all - that whole trip to America. Later he also got two of Max's sons [Max was the brother of Frida Weiss, mother of Abraham Pressburger] over to America. Max and his wife didn't survive the Holocaust, but two of his children did somehow. One was named Hary, the second Tedi [Theodor], and he brought them to America. I would also like to remind you, as I've already described, that my mother's youngest brother, Geza [later renamed Yisrael] left in 1918, right after World War I, for Eretz Yisrael and was among the founders of the Heftziba commune. He was a Zionist, a committed halutz [khalutz - Hebrew pioneer, khalutzim - pioneers, trailblazers. Jews trained mainly in Europe and America, mostly as farmers, to prepare them for emigration to Palestine - Editor's note]. In 1918 he walked about the city in short pants and the family was very ashamed of him.

## Growing up

And now I'd like to shortly describe my own youth. I was born in Bratislava, on Panenska Street, if I'm not mistaken it was number 17. I was the second, the middle, of three children. All three children were born at home and not in a hospital. When I was six, we moved to Spitalska Street, close to Marianska Street, into a four-story building. You entered the building through a large gate. The building was at the end of a large courtyard that was about 60 meters long. We lived on the 3rd floor. The apartment was large: it had four very large rooms. Today I'd estimate it at maybe 200 square meters. There was a large kitchen, washroom and balcony. Besides our father, mother and us three children, a maid also lived with us, who worked for us for eight years, and one Jewish governess who we called Fraulein. The three children slept together in one room, and Fraulein in the closest one to us.

Fraulein took us for walks in the park, usually behind the palace [today's Presidential Palace], in which later Tiso [7](#) also lived. In those days the army headquarters of Slovakia were located there, and a general by the name of Snejdarek lived there. On 28th October he would always observe on a horse the army formation on the square, which has since been built over. On Sunday there would be concerts in that park. So usually we went there, or to Petržalka, or to the banks of the Danube, where in those days there was quite a nice park. Or we would also go to the mountain park, which was almost endless, because it continued on into the Small Carpathian Mountains. In those days the mountain park already began at the Jewish hospital.

The Frauleins usually stayed with us for only a short time. About a half year to a year. They were Jewish girls. They came from surrounding towns and considered it to be transitional employment. The servant, who was named Mariska, and as I said, was with us for eight years - we learned Hungarian from her, because it was the only language that she spoke. She slept in the kitchen and had Sunday off. Because she had been with us for a long time, she was like a member of the family. We would learn Hungarian folk songs from her. We enjoyed playing with her and liked her very much.

In Bratislava, Jewish children usually attended Jewish elementary schools. My elementary school was on Zochova Street. When you went up the street, at the beginning there was this 'realka' [technical high school]. The realka, as opposed to the gymnasium [general high school] had seven grades and focused more on mathematics, while in our high school we had Latin almost every day. Next to the building of the Technical High School, on the left, was a Neolog [8](#) elementary school. During the winter they usually poured out water and you could skate. That Neolog school was



German. Then there was an Orthodox German elementary school with five grades. Close by was a hospital, a maternity ward where childbirths took place. I'm describing this so that you know how busy that street was. Across from these four institutions, the technical high school, two German Jewish elementary schools and the hospital, was a big, long building, also with three or four stories, in which were the offices of the Orthodox community. The community president had his office there as well, I think, and there was also a Slovak Orthodox elementary school and council school there. I attended an Orthodox school.

For four grades I attended a German school. In fact, in the first grade, according to my father's tradition, I attended Sade Toire. Sade Toire was this elementary school where we learned Mishnah, as it was called. For a six-year-old child that's a quite incomprehensible set of laws and Jewish regulations. Every Saturday we would have an exam, where several rabbis with beards would sit and ask us about what we were studying. I have to admit that I wasn't very good at it. After one year, my father, who was becoming less and less religious, at least not extremely religious, allowed me to discontinue my Sade Toire studies.

In the first grade I had a teacher named Buxbaum, Weiner in the second grade, Seidl in the third grade, and Einhorn in the fourth grade. When I was in the fourth grade of the Orthodox German school, that was in 1934, Hitler had already been in power in Germany for a year. Anti-Semitism started to spread, especially in the German part of the population of Bratislava. My parents decided that I have to learn Slovak. They hired a teacher for me, who taught me together with other children whose parents had decided similarly. We studied Slovak for almost a whole year. At the end of the year we transferred to a Slovak school, where a teacher by the name of Gero taught. At that time, in that year, he also prepared me for the entrance exam for technical high school. At the end of the fifth grade I began studying at the technical high school on Grosslingova Street, which was named the Technical High School of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk [9](#). I'd like to note that at the high school there were only men teachers. There wasn't even one woman teacher at the Jewish Orthodox High School.

In high school most of the teachers were also men, but there were exceptions where women also taught. In high school there were about forty students to a class, of which about ten were Jews. We had to go to school on Saturday as well, but we were allowed to not write on Saturday. Sometimes we made use of this, but it wasn't to our advantage. So we rather wrote. Religion was also taught. Catholics had religion during normal class time, one hour of religion, I think twice a week, and Jews and Protestants had to go after lunch for an hour or two of religious studies.

A person could register in those days as having no religious affiliation and they would then free him from religious studies. But I don't think we had even one case of those without affiliation in our class. While the Catholics had their hour of religion before lunch, we were free and almost always we went a few streets away to this one small playground, where we played soccer, Jews against Protestants. Or other times we were divided according to fans of two leading clubs in Czechoslovakia, young people in those days were always divided into fans of Sparta [10](#) and Slavia [11](#). One of my home room teachers was Professor Sykora, who at the beginning of the Communist regime, or after the liberation of Czechoslovakia, was responsible for education in the Slovak autonomous government.

Practically my entire childhood is tied to Bratislava. But it was my Bratislava, I'm saying mine, for mine was different than today's. As far as I know, today Bratislava has more than half a million inhabitants [according to the 1995 census Bratislava had 452,053 inhabitants], in those days it had 140,000 [according to the 1921 census Bratislava had 122,201 inhabitants]. A beautiful city. Bratislava was only on the left bank of the Danube, in it Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Jews lived in peace. On the opposite bank was the town of Petržalka, but it was quite distant from the river. By the riverbanks there were only fields, a park and a large swimming pool that was named Lido.

There were 20,000 Jews in Bratislava [according to statistics in 1940 there were 15,102 persons of Jewish faith living in Bratislava], about 15 percent of the inhabitants. As I've already mentioned, the city was on one side of the Danube, on the other was Petržalka [today a part of the city of Bratislava]. By the Danube there was a beautiful, huge park, similar to Stromovka in Prague, something similar. A person could either get from Petržalka to Bratislava across the one bridge that at that time spanned the Danube. It had a steel frame, but a wooden floor. Besides this you could get from one side of the Danube to the other on a small boat. It was a steamboat, which would always, when it filled up with people, cross over to the other side. It traveled in this arc, because it went against the river's current, and always actually ended up directly across. The boat was named Propeller.

There were soccer fields in Petržalka, and when soccer was being played, the bridge was completely overflowing. Also the boats were completely packed; they almost sank in the water. The biggest field belonged to SK Bratislava [12](#). Slovan didn't yet exist in those days, and their field had room for 10,000 people. It often filled up. Once, SK Bratislava made it into the finals. There was a very tense atmosphere during the matches, derbies or how they're called, with the Bratislava team named PTE - Pozsony Torna Egyesület, that was a Hungarian soccer team that competed with SK Bratislava. The Maccabi [13](#) also had its soccer team, and I remember that I played in it, and so did my cousin Bubi Pressburger from Galanta, who was about 15 years older than I.

There was also a beautiful swimming pool named the Lido on the banks of the Danube. SK Bar Kochba Bratislava [14](#), who were the swimming champions of Czechoslovakia, trained there. It had 60 percent of all swimming records. There were famous swimmers like Foldes, Baderle, Dr. Steiner, who was the head of the club. He was a medical doctor. We young ones also trained there. In the year 1936, Bar Kochba received a penalty. For a year it couldn't compete, because it had refused to go to the Olympics in Berlin, where it had been supposed to represent Czechoslovakia as the best swimming club.

Our situation at home was, up to the occupation of the Czech lands by the Germans, up to the creation of the Protectorate [of Bohemia and Moravia] [15](#) and the creation of the Slovak State [see Slovakia] [16](#), good. After the creation of the Slovak State they closed our store [see Jewish Codex] [17](#), the Stocking Palace. We owned it together with the Morgenstern family from Brno. There were two stores, one in Brno and one in Bratislava. When the occupation happened, both stores were closed and at that time our father began to live from savings or by doing business in other ways. Our, young people's, reaction to Nazism and to what was happening in Germany and events that followed, such as for example the occupation of Austria and later mobilization and almost beginning of war between Czechoslovakia and Germany was that we became more conscious of our Jewishness. Generally, young Jews, Jewish youth in those days joined organized Zionist youth

movements.

When I was 15 we were actually thrown out of the schools. But before we start on this, I would like to talk a bit about religious life in Bratislava, which seems to me to be important to describe the environment in which I grew up. Although we weren't very religious, Orthodox, there was a certain influence. Even though in the end I became a non-religious person, experiences from childhood have their influence on one's world-view.

There were three large synagogues in Bratislava. One of them was the main Orthodox one, which was on the road to the castle [Zamecka Street]. The castle was closed to the public in those days. The second synagogue was on a street parallel to Spitalska Street, I think it was named Preiss Schul; it was also a large synagogue. The third large synagogue was a Neolog one, on Rybni Square. That Rybni Square was at the entrance to Zidovska [Jewish] Street. The rabbis were Rabbi Schreiber, who was the fourth generation to have inherited the Chief Rabbinate in Bratislava after Chatam Sofer [18](#). Rabbi Schreiber was a recognized authority. The most respected rabbi at that time in Bratislava, due to his knowledge and due to the religious writings that he left behind, was Rabbi Vesely. I don't know what his fate was. The chief rabbi of the Neolog synagogue was Dr. Munk. My father liked to go listen to his sermons on Saturdays, though he claimed that he wasn't completely normal: 'Der ist ein meschugener.' Rabbi Vesely had only a small synagogue on Zidovska Street, which was also his yeshivah. There were many minyanim, many small synagogues, and each synagogue had its own rabbi. My uncle, my father's brother, used to go to visit the various minyanim, and sometimes he took me with him.

I would just like to note that the position of Chief Rabbi was hereditary. The chief rabbi in Bratislava in the Orthodox kehila [community] was to be the oldest son of the reigning rabbi. It was like a monarchy, the chief rabbinate was inherited from the father and so Chatam Sofer was the first, and Schreiber, who had the position during my childhood, was the fourth after him.

## During the War

Now back to the position of Jewish youth in the pre-war period. I had joined the Maccabi Hatzair. In those days that movement, as a youth aliyah, created training centers: they were named Miha, Mitl Hachsharah, and one such was in Liptovsky Mikulas, in which I was as well. I developed a lot there. It was a beautiful life. Forty young people. A time of my first love, but also a time of getting to know many ideologies, many dogmas. It was the year 1939. After being there several months, I returned home. One small group really did leave for Israel. In those days I was greatly influenced by the ideal of socialism and I saw in the Soviet Union an ideal, classless society, which would in the end defeat Hitler and ensure that the world would be beautiful. When I was 16, I joined the underground Communist Party, the Communist Youth. It was organized into cells of three people that knew each other, and always one of them had a connection to another three, with another such illegal cell. The purpose of this type of organization was that if they caught and jailed someone, that they couldn't catch everyone all at once.

I remember one time, when I was 16, we were putting up illegal posters in the dark. We didn't live in our apartment any more, which we had had to move out of, according to Nazi regulations, and had to move into this one small house at the beginning of the mountain park, on a road that led to Zelezná Studienka. There I used to go home by bus. We didn't feel very good there at night, because there were Germans living in the area, and at night they would throw rocks at our

windows, and we had to put boards in the space between the two windows so that the rocks wouldn't injure us. At that time Jews were forbidden to go out after 6pm. I remember that I returned home at 11pm. My father, completely beside himself, stood in the doorway, upset, tense, wondering where I had been. Of course I didn't talk to my parents about my activities. But when I entered the house, my father in his agitated state gave me a big slap on the face, and that was the first time, perhaps the only time, that I remember him hitting me like this. I think that I deserved it.

Then some from that underground organization were arrested, including one of my connections, and I was very afraid that I'd be arrested. At that time I talked about it at home, and together we searched for everything that could be used against me, and in the end my parents arranged for me to leave home if they would come looking for me. The underground organization sent me to Hashomer Hatzair [19](#), so I could organize additional boys into an underground organization, but the result was that in time it all fell apart, and I became a very good and dedicated member of Hashomer Hatzair. In Hashomer Hatzair there were young people of my age, many of my friends, who are friends to this day. We formed a group and decided to teach ourselves various high school subjects, history, literature, mathematics. Each one of us took it upon himself to prepare a lecture from textbooks. Every day we met, and studied together.

My father was in a work camp, from which he came home every week. He was doing manual labor. His co-workers elected him to represent them before the government and before the Jewish organization, before the Jewish Center. And so my father began his career, if you could call it that, as a public servant. In 1942 they proposed to my father that he transfer along with his family to the Sered camp, so he could take over responsibility for the purchase of food for that labor camp. That labor camp, as it later turned out, was built as a way station, from which transports left for Poland. So in 1942 our family moved - at that time I was already 18 - to that labor camp. I did manual labor. My father and mother had positions of responsibility there. My oldest sister, Any, didn't come with us. In 1942 she was among the first to be caught in Bratislava and sent to Auschwitz, where she died soon after. [Editor's note: on Saturday 27th March 1942 at 6:55 pm the first transport with Jewish women left Bratislava for Auschwitz.] How, we never found out. Some people told us that she was executed. The thing is, at that time I don't think the gas chambers even existed yet.

The Sered camp is in itself one broad topic for discussion; in any case, my father became the chairman of the Jewish Council there. He got this position before the end of the transports to Auschwitz. [Editor's note: on 20th October 1942, the last transport left the territory of the Slovak State. According to available sources, in 1942 around 58,000 Jews were deported from the Slovak State, so about 65 percent of Jewish souls that inhabited the territory of Slovakia on the eve of the deportations. The deportations were on hold up to the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising, on 20th August 1944. After the suppression of the uprising they were renewed once again, with the difference that they were no longer governed by Slovak but by German authorities.] My father was chairman of the Jewish Council at a time when life was easier and I think that his position saved my life. When I had pneumonia, my father even arranged that I was with Rabbi Frieder in Nove Mesto nad Vahom for a month, and then even for a month in the High Tatras. In those days it was believed that mountain air helps pulmonary diseases.

The Jewish Council in the Sered camp was composed of six or eight functionaries, each of which was responsible for something. One for supplies, another for work groups. There was for example a large woodworking shop, a third one was responsible for the police and so on. In the beginning my

father belonged to the Jewish Council as the one responsible for supplying the camp with food. That was very important, for there were a thousand people there, who every day got dinner and supper, and cooking was done centrally. You stood in a long front and everyone got their dinner, just like in the army. In 1943 my father became chairman of the Jewish Council. I think that he was named by the Bratislava Jewish Center [20](#), where he had contacts with Dr. Winterstein, Oskar Neuman and Rabbi Frieder. As I've already mentioned, there was a certain time during which I even spent a month with Rabbi Frieder after being sick. My father was popular in the camp, and I think that he was named chairman of the Jewish Council because of the fact that he was popular.

The task of the Jewish Council was to on the one hand help the camp's organizers. On the other hand it was to try as much as possible to lighten the burden of the camp's occupants. It's too bad that no one's written a more detailed treatise on Sered. I only watched it from afar and wasn't too interested in the details. I would say that there were debates within the Jewish Council. The conditions in the Sered camp in 1943 and at the beginning of 1944 were good. A swimming pool was even built and races were held. My father was well-liked, as I've said, and what happened in that Jewish Council I don't know. But for sure there were also battles for positions there, and it's strange that even during the Holocaust and in all places these battles for positions always took place, despite the fact that the situation was so horrible. But no one ever talked about my father's position, that it should be changed.

During the years 1943 and 1944, when conditions in the camp were more or less good, people learned what was happening in Poland, those horrible things. At that time people already knew about it and were preparing themselves for the transports to begin again. Generally they were looking for some sort of hiding place, if it was to get worse. My father found a hiding place in one of the villages near Sered, with this one farmer from whom he was purchasing food for the camp. And when during the uprising the camp gates were opened, my father along with my mother, my sister Lucy and her boyfriend, who later became her husband, hid there. The men were hidden in the barn under some hay, and my mother and sister were hidden upstairs in the house, under the roof.

After about two months that farmer - I don't remember his name - came to see my father and told him that he's putting himself in great danger. In order for him to keep on doing it, he had to get some money for it. At that time my father had no money, and so he sent him to a Czech friend of his, who had at one time had a store beside my father's store. The store was called Prvodev. I don't remember the man's name, but in any case my father sent that farmer to him with a letter and pleaded with him to help him with money, saying that the farmer didn't want to hide him any more without being paid for it. That friend gave the farmer quite a nice sum, so in fact this friend saved the family. He helped to save the family. The strange thing is that near the end of the war that Czech friend committed suicide. The cause of the suicide was strange. It was said that they had found out that he was in some way collaborating with the enemy and was about to be arrested. Rather than let himself be tortured to death, he committed suicide. But I don't know if it's the truth and if that's the real reason.

After the war, as soon as my parents returned they lived in one small apartment, at first they rented a room in a hotel and Joint [21](#) gave them money for it, then they found some small apartment in the Old Town, and then they found quite a nice apartment on Rybne Namesti, a large apartment, with several rooms. In fact they started to run a business in part of the apartment, from which they then lived, the whole family: my sister, her boyfriend and my parents. My father



continued being publicly active. Immediately after the war, he and Rabbi Frieder and Dr. Winterstein went to see the president, Dr. Benes [22](#), as a delegation of Jews that had returned. Benes told them that he would help in having their property returned. But at that time he requested for Jews to not speak German in public, because there was a severe anti-German mood. After a certain time my father even became the head of the Jewish religious community in Bratislava, for a short time. Then he resigned, because he wanted to devote himself to business. He stayed in the Jewish religious community committee and very actively participated in public life. Their economic situation was good. The business was going very well. They went on vacations to Karlovy Vary [23](#) and lived very well after the war, both my parents and my sister. I remained living on my own.

I didn't live with my parents in the Sered camp. We had dormitories, where there were 20 to 30 people. Of that number there were seven of us boys of the same age from Hashomer Hatzair. We arranged it so that we were all in the same room. So we shared everything and lived as a commune. When I was in the High Tatras for a month, I discovered a source of weapons. I brought revolvers and all sorts of other weapons to the Sered camp. That was a very adventurous, risky trip, and we prepared ourselves that if necessary we were going to defend ourselves, and had weapons there. In the year 1944, during the Slovak National Rebellion the camp gates were opened. I wasn't in the camp when the gates opened, but in Nove Mesto nad Vahom. I and a few of my friends were building an old-age home for Jews there. We had it prepared ahead of time that we'd join the partisans. I was a partisan in Liptovsky Mikulas.

Partisanship, that's a long story. As I've already said, I became a member of Hashomer Hatzair. This movement wasn't liquidated, even during the war. People remained in contact. We tried to organize and help each other during the war's entire duration. For example at a certain time ways to escape to Hungary were found, where it all didn't begin until 1944, and members of Hashomer Hatzair would help each other by exchanging information and so on. You could leave the Sered camp on a so-called permit, but these were rare. We taught ourselves to forge permits and climbed over the fence. The forgery was more for the event that if we were asked for papers outside, we wouldn't be caught. I was even at the theater in Bratislava once with such a permit. At other times we would meet with former members of Hashomer Hatzair.

In 1943 we organized a meeting of active Hashomer Hatzair members at the apartment of Bertold Klug in Sered. We went over the fence to his apartment and there we met. Bertold Klug was later also with us in Sered; he himself was a member of Hashomer Hatzair. His parents had a large hardware store in Sered, which had of course been Aryanized, but they still were involved in some way. In the end his parents died in Auschwitz. Berci [Bertold] and his sister survived. During this meeting we agreed on several things for the future. We discussed obtaining forged documents for everyone, in case we were to escape from the camp. We also agreed that two would escape from the camp and that they would prepare bunkers in the mountains in case the situation got worse and the transports began again. So we discussed that we'd escape and hole up in the mountains. And we also agreed on what to do if a rebellion broke out in Slovakia. We said that in that case we'd join the uprising collectively, as one whole group. For this purpose we arranged a rendezvous on one bridge on the Vah River. I think that we discussed the bridge in Nove Mesto nad Vahom. That we'd all meet there on the bridge at 6 in the evening. When the uprising began the plan wasn't realized. It became apparent that it wasn't realistic and only two people arrived at the



bridge. We ourselves didn't arrive there, you see, the uprising caused such nervousness that some plan of a calm meeting on the bridge was unrealistic.

At the time of the outbreak of the uprising I was in Nove Mesto nad Vahom. The army in Nove Mesto nad Vahom joined the uprising. A sign of this was for example that the soldiers took off their ties. In those days Slovak soldiers were required to wear ties. They had unbuttoned shirts and open jackets and rolled-up sleeves, and that was a signal that it was actually a revolutionary army. Generally the army in Slovakia joined the uprising, in the beginning, the first few days. We thought - I was with Berci Klug - that the simplest thing would be to immediately join the army. So we went to the Nove Mesto barracks. We announced our intentions, they accepted us. They were already preparing uniforms for us, and when we were already dressed and sitting on our beds, a soldier came up to us and said: 'Guys, run away as fast as you can, because our commander has decided to not join the uprising, and has decided to hand both of you over to the Germans.' We ran away as fast as we could, over the fence and escaped from the barracks. It was evening.

We spent the night in the forest. The next day we decided to set out on the road to Liptovsky Mikulas where our friend Gabi Oren lived. He was named Gabi Eichler in those days, he's renamed himself to the Hebrew name Gabi Oren. He's still alive, and lives in Naharia. He's 83 years old, but is sick and has Alzheimer's. But back then he was a big hero. I'll be talking more about his heroic acts. He lived in Liptovsky Mikulas with the Schon family, this one Jewish family, because the daughter of that family was his lover and later his wife. And he used to go alone into the forest; he'd go quite far, several hours' worth. He also had some quite huge and adventurous experiences. I can't talk about all of it, but he built a bunker there, and had some non-perishable food supplies there and a place to sleep. This was planned still before the uprising, so that when times would be bad we'd hide there. We set out by train. The train traveled through the region where the uprising was taking place. We passed through the Novaky camp [24](#), where we slept over and finally we got to Liptovsky Mikulas.

We gathered in Liptovsky Mikulas: there was Otto Simko, who was the only one of us to stay in Slovakia after the war. He's a lawyer and lives in Bratislava. Berci Klug, who became a doctor and lives in Australia, was there. Jano Rosenblum, who later lived in Paris, was also there and of course Gabi and I. At the Schon's we found out that staying in the next village, whose name I don't remember any more, was a squad of partisans. So we all went there to join up. We got weapons. In brief I would say that there were two combat missions - once we attacked an airport not far from Liptovsky Mikulas. Then once we attacked a German army garrison near Liptovsky Mikulas.

Otherwise we moved about here and there. We guarded those towns. Neither the Slovak army nor the German army was in those towns. They were ruled by the partisans. The result of partisan activities was that the villages around Liptovsky Mikulas were in many cases under partisan control, and the Germans didn't enter them, and neither did the Slovak army. In one such town, which was on the border with the German army, Gabi Eichler and I were stationed as this advance guard, so we could warn if the Germans were approaching. Of our own initiative we actually decided to carry out an assassination. The need to prove to ourselves that we won't constantly be only the victims of persecution, insults, beatings, but that we will also participate in the fight against the Germans, was very strong in us. Gabi had a huge hatred towards Germans, because he felt the need to revenge himself for the fact that they had murdered his entire family, leaving only him alive. Gabi was very strong, tall, handsome, and brave, unusually brave. I would say a heroic

type, and also otherwise very moral, with strong character.

So we decided to assassinate the German commander. We found out where he lived. We found out when he left home and that this one photographer lived across the street from him. We went to see that photographer, who was a deaf-mute, and had him take our pictures. We told him that we were waiting for someone else, so that he would let us sit by the window. As we were sitting and looking out the window, we saw the commander with his bodyguard coming out of his house and approaching the photographer's house. When he was close to the house, we ran out, shot at him and began our escape. As we were making our escape, his bodyguard was shooting at us. We ran from one courtyard to another. We were jumping over fences, and during my last jump from a high wall, I broke my leg. I tried to keep running further through a plowed field, and in that moment my left leg broke completely apart. The lower part of the leg completely broke, as if a new knee had been formed.

I remained lying there and called out, 'Gabi, I'm hurt.' During the first few moments I thought that I had been shot in the leg, because they had been shooting at us. Gabi stopped. He was about 20 meters ahead of me, turned around. Maybe he hesitated a bit, whether he should keep running further, or what he should do, but he returned to me and took me on his back. He was very strong, unusually strong, and he ran carrying me. I myself was 180 centimeters tall, I weighed about 75 kilos, and luckily at that moment there was a horse-drawn wagon approaching from the mountains. Gabi pulled his revolver on the driver. He forced him to turn the horses around, put me on the wagon and on it we escaped to the mountains.

They brought me a doctor, who made a mixture out of plaster. He straightened my leg and wrapped it in the plaster. The result is that my left leg is three centimeters shorter. Later the cast that he made got wet in the snow and fell apart. So they had to put my leg between two narrow boards, wrapped it in a bandage and the leg slowly mended. For a long time I walked on crutches. During that time, probably due to several partisan acts, the Germans began to be more active, they went to villages and performed searches, to see if there weren't Jews hiding there and also whether there weren't partisans there.

My friends put me up with one family, and when the Germans started performing searches in that town, they took me away on a horse. Again it was Gabi, who held the horse and led it. It was quite risky and not an easy task. It's interesting, that the commander of our partisan squad, Mr. Feltscher, who was from Poprad, always disappeared for a few days when the Germans attacked us. I think that after the war he was even put on trial as a spy, as a traitor. He collaborated with the Germans. The worst time was when our squad was moving to a cabin high in the mountains, somewhere around the mountain Banikov above the village Konske. Feltscher wasn't with us, and the Germans attacked the cabin. So it seems that they knew where we were. First they shot at the cabin with cannons. They were careful; they didn't want to enter into personal combat. Then they burst into the cabin and murdered everyone that was still in there. I on my crutches and my two friends, Otto Simko and Jano Rosenblum managed to escape. We escaped in the direction of the mountains above the cabin. It was the right decision, because the Germans, when they entered the cabin, didn't continue further into the mountains. We went over a high mountain that was completely covered in snow. We slept in the snow; I on crutches and on one leg. We walked in the forest for two days, and then we got to one village, and this is where the odyssey started.

Once we also slept at some gypsies', and the gypsies, when we were sleeping there told us in the morning that we had to leave, because they had got a report saying that the Germans were coming to cut their hair. They used to shave the gypsies' heads. In the evening those that I was hiding with brought me to the mayor, and there was a big discussion whether they should give me to the Germans. I was sitting on a bench in the corner, and suddenly a Russian scout squad came into the room. The Russian army was already close to Liptovsky Mikulas, and so sent out scouts behind German lines, across the Slovak mountains, which wasn't difficult. When they came in to see the mayor, the unit's commander saw me. They were about five soldiers. The commander of the scout squad came over to me and asked me in Yiddish: 'A Yid? - Jew?' And he asks, 'what are you doing here?' So I told him what was going on. First he gave me all cans of food, everything he had, everything he could, what he thought could help me. Then he turned to the mayor and said, 'Be careful, nothing's allowed to happen to this young man. We'll come to check if he's all right. We're going to come here, and the first place we're coming to is here, and if something happens to him, I'll burn this entire house down.'

Then my friends found me again. Simko and Klug had been captured. They managed to escape. They made it to Bratislava and survived on false papers until the end of the war. Jano Rosenblum, Gabi and I stayed in the mountains together with two Jewish families that were hiding there. Gabi and Jano Rosenblum would go down to the villages and bring food so we would have something to live on. I with my leg didn't do much walking any more. In February 1945 the Russian army advanced through our position. I got into the hospital in Presov, so they could fix up my leg, but there wasn't anything more to be done. It was already mended. It's not that bad, you almost can't see it. Gabi was mobilized into the Czechoslovak army, which was there together with the Russian army at that time. He was even wounded in fighting in Poland and ended up in a hospital in Kiev. Actually all of us that had been partisans there, survived.

During the war I had two encounters that had a great influence on my partisan activities: two encounters, in which I received information about what was really happening in Poland. The first encounter: once I got a message in Sered from a friend in Hashomer Hatzair, saying that several young people had come to northern Slovakia, who had survived the uprising in the Vilno [Vilnius] ghetto [25](#). I met these people, and heard about the horrible things happening there. The second encounter was with my best friend from my high school days, when we'd seen each other every day. It was Rudo [Rudolf] Vrba, one of six that had escaped from Auschwitz. As far as I know, only six people managed to escape from Auschwitz. Rudo and another young man named Wetzler escaped from Auschwitz. When he got to Slovakia, he sent me a message to the Sered camp that he'd escaped and that he'd like to meet up with me. I went with a forged permit and Rudolf Vrba, who up to then had been known to me as Walter Rosenberg, told me horrible details of what was happening in Auschwitz.

I got out of the Presov hospital quickly. I passed the entrance exam for the eighth grade of high school and I also graduated there. I lived in a Protestant student residence. That was in February of 1945. Bratislava hadn't been liberated yet. After Bratislava's liberation I had the opportunity to get from Presov to Bratislava in a car, when one of my friends told me that he was going there and that he had one free place left in a small car. There wasn't any public transport yet. I began to look for my family. At first I looked for them in Sered. In Sered they told me that they're alive and that they had gone to Trnava. In Trnava they told me that they had already left for Bratislava. In Bratislava I

went to Joint and asked whether they knew anything about Mr. Pressburger and they told me that he had just been there. So I ran down into the street. Almost a year after the Slovak National Uprising I met my father. He didn't know whether I was alive, neither did I, and it was a meeting that isn't easily described.

## Post-war

How did I feel in Bratislava, when I returned from the Shoah, the war? Of course I found a different Bratislava. The Bratislava of my youth exists in my memories. It was, today I say, it was my Bratislava. My relationship to Bratislava is of course subjective, not objective. Without a doubt there were problems there, but their analysis isn't the subject of our interview. I only want to say: my grandfather, when he talked about Austro-Hungary, about the Austro-Hungarian era, up to the year 1918, when he was 68 years old, when he reminisced after the war about the period from 1850 up to 1918, he always talked about the Friedenszeiten [German for 'time of peace']. 'Ja in den Friedenszeiten,' he would say. I would describe the years in Bratislava from the year of my birth in 1924 up to 1938, when very bad times began for us in exactly the same way, as the time of my Bratislava. While remembering Bratislava, various images appear to me, one that I recall: when as a small child I was standing on Zidovska Street, it was Purim and a carnival procession was going down the street. In front on a fat horse sat young Muhlrat. The Muhlrat family were movers, furniture movers, and had a large wagon pulled by four horses and on it was written in large letters: 'Muhlrat Moving.' That young Muhlrat sat in front on one of the horses, dressed like King Ahasveros and behind him, in the coach the beautiful Queen Ester and behind her in tattered clothing, pulled along on a rope Haman as prisoner. Then there were the most varied costumes, a long parade, masses of people were standing on the sidewalks. Christians were watching how Jews celebrate Purim.

My Bratislava had an intensive Jewish life. Bratislava after the war was different. People were happy that the war had ended, because everyone suffered in it, but hatred, vengefulness dominated. Thirty thousand Germans were moved out, Hungarians had to be disowned as well, and mainly after the extermination of the Jewish inhabitants, the city became foreign. It's no wonder that a large portion of the Jewish population moved away after the war, because for them life in Bratislava really began to be life in a foreign city. Just like in any other city in the world. Later, I don't think that I regretted leaving, though I was often homesick for that beautiful countryside, for Slovakia and for a certain atmosphere that was completely different here. But I didn't regret it, because here [Israel] a new society was formed, and what was happening under the Communist regime in Slovakia is something I really didn't envy the people that lived there.

I returned from Bratislava to Presov. I intended to go to university, but then the worldwide leadership of Hashomer Hatzair discovered me. They gave me quite a large sum of money and asked me - actually they convinced me - to found a home for children that had returned without their parents, from the ages of 14 to 18. And in that home they would study for a half day and work for a half day, and we would prepare them for the trip to Israel, to a kibbutz.

I really did found such a home in one old Jewish school in Kosice. I ran it together with one chavera [female comrade] from Hashomer Hatzair. She was named Miriam Weinfeld. We were very successful. There were 40 children there. Among them were also children from families where the father and mother had also returned, but were convinced that the right thing to now do was to

leave for Eretz Yisrael. In those days it was also a battle. It was a time of debates as to how to deal with the problem in Palestine. There wasn't peace in Palestine, but everyone hoped that a Jewish state would be founded there. With this I have to note that Hashomer Hatzair founded three such homes in Slovakia. One was in Bratislava, one was in Nitra and one was in Kosice. Besides this there were also other organizations, Maccabi Hatzair and Mizrachi. Mizrachi was a religious Zionist organization, which founded a similar home in Kosice.

The Czechoslovak Hashomer Hatzair was a very beautiful time of my life. There was a certain hierarchy in Hashomer Hatzair. There was the so-called main leadership. Then there were regional leaders. Then there were madrichim, who each were either in charge of one town or organized youths in small groups with which we then worked. The atmosphere was very idealistic. We believed in complete equality. Property was supposed to be completely the same among people. There were certain ideals that were of course valid only during that period. We organized summer camps for all the young people in Czechoslovakia; summer and winter camps. During winter camp there was skiing. It was a very intensive life.

There was also a special summer camp for madrichim, which I led in 1947. There I instituted a principle that I won't give orders, but that instructions were going to be given in a new spirit. Certain work would be announced and it would for example be said, 'It's necessary to do this and this...' and people would volunteer for the given work. For example, it's necessary to sweep the courtyard, or take out the trash, or cook something, or prepare a party, various tasks that existed, you weren't supposed to say, 'You and you do it!' you were supposed to say, 'It should be done.' And right away there have to be volunteers that sign up to do it. One comrade, chaver, who had been head of the leadership before me, took a stand against this. That we can't do this, because it doesn't teach people to deal with real life. We had a debate where he represented his opinion and I represented my opinion. In the end we voted and my opinion was accepted 80 percent against 20 percent. So that was the atmosphere in Hashomer Hatzair.

In 1948 the world congress of Hashomer Hatzair took place in Prague. Actually, the world leadership of Hashomer Hatzair had been founded in Prague. One very well-known official from the Merchavia kibbutz, where many of the Hashomer Hatzair leadership lived, came there. He was named Jakov Maius. Hashomer Hatzair wasn't that strong in the Western states outside of Central Europe. There were mainly members from Poland, Hungary, Austria, Germany and Romania, where the movement was very strong, so European members. One or two were from France, I think that that was it. In any case, each movement gave a report as to what was happening there, how it was progressing. I made the report for the Czechoslovak movement. I think that that report was very interesting. It had a different character than the others. I concerned myself with experiences with education in youth homes. I expressed the opinion that all teaching is actually self-teaching, while the task of the teachers is to help each person self-teach. Without self-teaching there is no teaching. It seems that it made a good impression. It had a cultured aspect to it, and the world leadership thought that my attitude and relationship to things was very suited for the atmosphere of French youth. That's why Jakov Maius suggested to me after the congress that I fulfill my mission in France, and for me to not leave for Israel yet. I laid down the condition that I was willing to go to France only if Eva Ginzova, who was my girlfriend, joined me as well.

So we actually spent a beautiful year in France together. At first we were in Vienna for a month, because there was a certain problem with our French visas. The movement issued visas to France



and it took about a month before we got them. In Vienna we participated in the movement's activities. There was a camp of Polish refugees that were waiting for the aliyah to Israel. They were gathered in the Rothschild hospital. It was a very large hospital and there were many people there. We often joined them, we often talked with them. All in all, the position that I had in Hashomer Hatzair usually provided us very comfortable accommodations in hotels. They were paying us; we had some truly wonderful times.

Across Europe in the subsequent months and years, thousands and tens of thousands of people gathered, who were prepared to leave for today's Israel. To Eretz Yisrael, there were illegal boats going there. We were somehow a part of it all, in that we prepared the youth for the trip. The creation of the state of Israel was a great joy for us. A big concern of course, because the Arab states attacked the young Israeli state, but we did celebrate it very much. There were public celebrations as well. One was in the National Theater in Bratislava, which I attended, and one was upon the proclamation of the Jewish state in the Reduta where I also gave a speech in the name of the youth, because I was the youth delegate in the central leadership of the Zionist organization whose chairman at that time was Dr. Winterstein and members were among others Mr. Krasnansky and Oskar Neuman. I spoke beside Mr. Husak [26](#). I expressed what, in my opinion, was the meaning of the creation of the Jewish state for Jewish youth in Europe. In those days Czechoslovakia very much supported the creation of the Israeli state. Mainly Haganah [Haganah - defense, Jewish defensive armed forces. In 1948 it was absorbed by the Israeli Armed Forces] got weapons from Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovakia also trained the first pilots of the Israeli army. When the Israeli state was founded, it was publicly celebrated.

I think that in the post-war atmosphere there were no expressions of antagonism between Zionists and Orthodox Jews in the wider circles of the general Jewish public; we didn't feel it. Maybe in certain positions of leadership in religious communities, that had begun to reorganize. Maybe there was opposition between religious Zionists and Orthodox Jews, who viewed Zionism quite negatively in those days. But even this negative attitude of Orthodox Jews to Zionism changed a lot over the years, mainly after the founding of the Jewish state, except for some isolated cases. There were various supporters of completely anti-Zionistic rabbis, but in general we didn't feel it. There was quite a unified Jewish atmosphere.

After completing my tasks in Czechoslovakia, I was sent by the world leadership of Hashomer Hatzair to France for one year. I went to France with my future wife, the 18-year-old Eva Ginzova. We were together for several months in Paris, Strasbourg, and in the summer of 1949 in the French Alps. A summer camp of the French organization was being held there. In September of 1949 we 'aliyahed' [emigrated] to Israel, to the Shomrat kibbutz. We were in the kibbutz for only three months, and left it. One of the reasons was that my wife didn't see in it the life that she would have chosen. I, on the other hand, justified my leaving in that I didn't accept the ideology of Hashomer Hatzair, that my opinions had changed, because Hashomer Hatzair at that time believed in Communism in a very orthodox fashion, and believed in Stalin, for example. One of the debates that I had was about Stalin. I claimed that Stalin was no personage, that he was a murderer and ignoramus - claims that in their eyes completely discredited me.

Another thing that I criticized was the so-called collective ideal. Whoever doesn't have this collective ideal, can't be a member of a Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz. Later it of course developed a bit, but in those days it was quite orthodox. Actually in those days children didn't yet sleep at their



parents', but in a collective home and all sorts of things that changed in time, but my main claim was that where there wasn't freedom, there wasn't development and there wasn't creativity. I also doubted that war would end when the proletariat rules the world; I said that Russia would be the first to start some war. All sorts of things like that, which were completely unacceptable for them. I and the leaders of the kibbutz had a very long discussion at that time. All night long they asked me questions, and I them. In the end we mutually said goodbye.

My wife comes from Prague. Her father is of Jewish origin, her mother of Czech origin. Her mother, when she married her father, converted to the Jewish faith and led the household in a Jewish spirit. Her brother had a bar mitzvah. They observed Jewish holidays. The children fasted at Yom Kippur. During holidays they went to the synagogue. According to my wife's opinion, they ate kosher.

After my wife's return from Terezin [27](#), she registered at the age of fifteen in high school in Prague. I met her when she was in her eighth [final] year. At that time she came to the Hashomer Hatzair winter camp in the High Tatras. I saw her in that winter camp. I recall that people were skiing on a meadow and only she kept on climbing to the top of one nearby hill and skied down in nice serpentine turns. The rest of us were practicing on the meadow below. So I went up to her and said, 'Girlfriend, chavera, don't you think that your an egotist? You're such a good skier and here everyone's just learning. Come on, and be their teacher.'

Later, when I stayed for a few weeks at the Hashomer Hatzair agricultural training center in Unhost, near Prague, I often had rendezvous with her. We grew close and became a couple. She was 17 and I was between 22 and 23. I have to say that these sorts of boy-girl pairs often formed in Hashomer Hatzair. It used to be said about them that they were zug, in Hebrew it means a couple. But they were almost platonic relationships, because in Hashomer Hatzair we were officially against raw sexuality. We were of the opinion that sexuality should be postponed, because it was completely openly proclaimed that the sublimation of sexual energy leads to higher culture, a higher level of humanity. We didn't get our official wedding certificate from the rabbinate until we were in Israel, in the kibbutz. There, in the kibbutz it was the custom that when a boy and girl decided to become husband and wife, there was a big celebration. It was a real wedding, but the official marriage document was made once in a while, when there were already ten such cases. They brought in a rabbi and one pair after another went under the chuppah and underwent the so-called official wedding. I was the only one who had a wedding ring and that wedding ring made the rounds from one to the next, when one pair was leaving the chuppah, the next pair would enter the chuppah and I always gave the ring to the pair that was going into the chuppah.

Besides studying at high school, my wife attended a school of applied arts in Prague. Later, when we had been in Paris for almost a year, she also studied painting there. She also improved by studying under various artists in Israel. In the beginning she worked for a while as a technical graphic artist, and that only so we could make ends meet. Later she became quite a famous Israeli painter. She had a lot of exhibitions. She taught at an art school, which received university status a few years ago. She taught painting there.

Her brother, Petr Ginz, became quite well-known, because in the Terezin ghetto he edited a youth magazine which was preserved and was published in book form. Petr had a great talent for drawing. Later he died in Auschwitz, but many of his drawings were preserved, and are kept in the Yad Vashem [28](#) museum. One of his friends that survived brought them there. It was also later

partly supplemented by his parents with drawings that they had in their possession. His parents survived. His father was protected for quite a while by the fact that his wife wasn't of Jewish origin. In the end he also ended up in Terezin, but the parents survived the Holocaust, the Shoah. One of Petr's drawings got to Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut, who died tragically. The way it got to him was that he approached Yad Vashem saying that as the first Israeli astronaut, he would like to take into space with him various things that symbolize Jewish history and have a certain significance in Jewish life. He approached Yad Vashem with a plea for something that symbolizes Shoah. Yad Vashem picked a drawing by Petr Ginz, my wife's brother, which showed a view of the earth from the moon. It's interesting what fantasy and thoughts Petr had in such horrible conditions.

In Israel I in the beginning did heavy physical labor, in various jobs, so we could support ourselves. At night after work I studied as an external student at the British Institute of Engineering Technology, which had a branch in Jerusalem. After three years of studies I passed my exams and became an associate member of the Institute of Engineering Technology. In Israel it allowed me to pursue an engineering career. And I also had a very nice engineering career. First I worked for six years in one chemical factory in Haifa. Later I was an engineer at a company that worked in various branches of industry. It was by far the largest company in the construction field in Israel. I think that it had more than a thousand employees and I was the head engineer for the south of the country. I also had a very central position during the construction of the nuclear reactor in Dimona, where I led the technical department that prepared detailed plans. About 250 of our firm's employees worked there.

Then one other engineer and I had our own firm. My partner was a native Israeli. For interest's sake, when he was studying, he got to Prague as the representative of the Israeli student youth organization and at that time debated with Yasser Arafat about the rights of Jews and Palestinians in the country.

For organizational and archival purposes we numbered our projects. From the year 1968 until the year 2000, when we closed shop, because I had turned 76, we completed 1,370 projects. Most of them weren't very large. Among them, though, were large, notable projects, like for example the hospital in Beer Sheva. We also did the projects for many hotels in Eilat and by the Dead Sea. We did the project for a hotel for Christian pilgrims by Lake Kinneret. The investments came from Germany.

We followed the Slansky trial [29](#) from Israel just like any other locals. That was an interesting trial. A lot was written about it in the newspapers. We saw in it a certain Communist anti-Semitism, and also the fact that Stalin actually wanted to get rid of everyone that knew how to think freely, in his own way. Later one of my former neighbors from Spitalska 29 in Bratislava came to Israel. His family, the Friedmans, lived on the ground floor and we on the third floor. Friedman had been in England during the war. The Communists jailed him a year before the Slansky trial began. He told me about how they jailed him, why they jailed him. They basically made an English spy out of him, because he lived in England during the war. Slansky [30](#) was in the top position as the secretary of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia when the Russians were already beginning to prepare his trial. Already almost two years before they arrested Slansky, he was being interrogated [the interviewee is referring to the interrogation of this former neighbor Friedman] by a Russian and a Czech, who because Friedman didn't know Russian very well, was translating. They asked him

whether he had met with Slansky in London. Where had he met with Slansky? What did they talk about? In which café? Where did Slansky live there? Did they visit each other? When Slansky's trial was taking place, during the trial they asked Slansky: 'Did you meet on 22nd February 1943 in this or that café with the spy Friedman?' 'Yes.' He remembered. And you talked about this and that. So that was the evidence against Slansky.

How did we perceive those trials? Of course, for those that believed in communism and socialism it was a terrible disillusionment. You know, they also arrested some Hashomer Hatzair members, who used to go visit the Czechoslovak socialist state with great fondness. One of them was named Mordechai Oren and was jailed for several years with no cause. Mordechai Oren used to meet with communist representatives and tried to arrange cooperation between socialist states and Israel.

In Israel I had and have many relatives. I had various contacts with them. Relationships were always very good and at certain times very intensive with this one or that one. In the beginning, when we arrived, it was my uncle Yisrael, my mother's brother, who was in the Heftziba kibbutz, who certainly saw a personal victory in the fact that we were now coming to Israel after all these years, that his life's path had been correct. He helped us very much when the time came for us to buy an apartment. He arranged for the Heftziba kibbutz to give us a guarantee for a loan so that we could buy it.

Later I had very good relations with my cousin Shmuel Pressburger, who was a high-ranking officer in the Israeli army. He was one of the commanders during the liberation of the passengers on the airplane of the Belgian airline Sabena from the grip of terrorists. He also commanded a brigade in the Six-Day-War [31](#) with Egypt. He was also a prominent figure after the war ended. He ran for mayor of the city of Jerusalem. During the elections he ran as a candidate for the Likud party, in which I very much disagreed with him. When Sharon [Ariel Sharon] founded his own party, before Likud existed, my cousin was fourth in the candidates to the Israeli assembly, the Knesset. I also had a very good relationship with Simon [Pressburger], my cousin, who was twenty years older than me. He had a very good dental practice in Tel Aviv and he was also my dentist. He died in 1997. Lately my daughter and I have been planning to realize a worldwide reunion of the Pressburger family. If it will be successful, if we'll have enough energy for it, I don't know yet. In any case we've already sent out a notice of this idea of ours to various family members, and in general it has been well received.

Very few of my friends stayed in Czechoslovakia. The only one, who was a partisan with me - and after the partisanship period I wasn't in contact with him, but certainly those common experiences tie us together - was Otto Simko, the lawyer from Bratislava. A few years ago he was in Israel and visited us, but otherwise we didn't really keep in touch.

The situation in Czechoslovakia, that was always something close, important to us. Our roots are there, and we followed it mainly in the papers. We also had a lot of information from the Christian side of my wife's family, which had stayed in Prague and lived a completely normal, intensive life there. For example, my wife's cousin was the well-known actor Ota Sklencka: he acted in films as well as being an actor in the Vinohrady Theater. He also taught at an acting school and had the title of National Artist. There were other cousins and other relatives and uncles' wives. My wife and daughter were actually in Czechoslovakia, I think it was in 1972, before our daughter entered the army.

During the pre-war era in Bratislava, our father observed holidays in a very orthodox fashion. For Yom Kippur he fasted. During Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah he was in the synagogue, from morning, from 7am., until Neila [Neila - conclusion; the term for the ceremony that concludes public prayer during Yom Kippur], up to the last moment. During Sabbath he didn't always go to the synagogue, I would say at different times with different frequency. During the week he didn't go to the synagogue, as opposed to for example his brother, Jakob, who went daily, morning and evening.

I of course practice religion much more liberally, less strictly. I do it from tradition. Not long ago my very talented granddaughter asked me a question. We were writing letters to each other about it and I'd like to quote what I answered her. I wrote it like this, 'We were born into a Jewish family. We belong to a Jewish family, we belong to the Jewish nation, we belong to the Jewish religion. Man is a creature of belief. I am convinced that God, if there is a God, then there is only one God, and he's the same Christian god, the same Jewish god and the same Muslim god, and the same Buddhist god. But I like the Jewish tradition. I believe in the moral values that are contained in this tradition, and the values that make up the Jewish spirit.'

My family isn't religious, but we participate in Jewish holidays in Israel. Once in a while we go to the synagogue during holidays. However, the Jewish religion definitely has something to say to us, and is near and dear to us. Despite this we aren't religious, except for my daughter, who has somehow returned to that piety. She goes to the synagogue, keeps a very kosher household, observes holidays, and fasts at Yom Kippur. She was influenced by my father, whom she liked very much. It was her grandfather that taught her to pray every evening before bedtime. To this day, and she's already 50, every evening when she goes to bed she says the evening prayer. Her son had a very nice bar mitzvah and her daughter celebrated her bat mitzvah. Her daughter attends a conservatory in Jerusalem, and there, when they were supposed to sing some cantata, by Bach I think, that had a very religious theme and Jesus Christ appeared in it, my twelve-year-old granddaughter announced in school that she's not willing to participate in that singing. Though she had a very prominent place in that choir.

My parents died of natural causes in Israel. My mother was quite young; she got cancer. They found out about it very late, when she already had tumors in her entire body, and she died at the age of 62 in 1960 after an operation in the Rambam hospital in Haifa. My father lived to be 82; he also died in Israel, of lung cancer.

My wife and I have two children. Our daughter is named Tamar and our son Yoram. Tamar was born in 1954 in Haifa. Yoram was born in 1960. For the last fifteen years Yoram has been living in America, and Tamar in Israel since her birth; momentarily in Jerusalem. They were raised as Jews and identify themselves as such. When I was in the Six-Day-War, and my children were small, I was of the opinion that it was going to be the last war and that my children won't go into the army, that they won't have to fight in wars. But that wasn't the truth. Both of my children were in a war, both Tamar and Yoram, and now Tamar's son has joined up. He'll be serving in the army for three years.

I wanted my children to study the Arabic language as well, because I knew how important it is. I succeeded. There were three students for whom the school hired a private teacher and each day they had Arabic and then got diplomas in the Arabic language as well. It was made use of in the army as well, Tamar was in Sinai and her task was to listen to the Egyptian army's

communications. She was also there during the Yom Kippur War [32](#). The Egyptians had it well planned out, how they're going to catch us with our pants down. At that time they gave my daughter leave to come home for Yom Kippur. I remember how they were calling her back to the army, and I was upset, because I thought that it wasn't serious, why were they disturbing her. Really, it was awful chaos and it was a very unpleasant surprise, that Yom Kippur War. In any case she served in Sinai in one very well-known place, in the Israeli counterintelligence service.

After the army Tamar studied at the university in Ber Sheva. Later she did a Master's and a PhD at the university in Jerusalem. She studied sociology, and works in one institute that's financed by the American Joint [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee]. It's called the Brookdale Institute of Social Research. She's the head of one department there, which concerns itself with social conditions, education, mainly the education of backwards children and the education of homeless children. She does research in this. They did research into medical services in Israel, and she is often invited by various ministries to meetings where such problems are being dealt with.

My son Yoram was also in the army. He voluntarily signed up with the parachutists, which surprised us very much and didn't make us happy. In the end it all went well. He was even decorated. The unit to which he belonged - it was a reconnaissance squad of six soldiers - caught five terrorists that wanted to cross over from Lebanon to Israel. There was a battle between them; two they caught and three they shot in battle, but it really was one on one combat and he distinguished himself there.

Besides this he also took part in the Lebanese War [see 1982 Lebanon War] [33](#). We were in Germany at the time, where my wife had an exhibition in Frankfurt. We quickly returned home, right when he was leaving, when he was to go into service. He fought on the front lines and got all the way to Beirut. At that time I went to the Ber Sheva town offices, because I said to myself, that if Yoram survives, I'll give 50,000 Israeli liras - in those days it was liras, and not shekels - and 50,000 liras, that was quite a nice sum, I'll give it to the poor as thanks to God that he lived. They were very, very surprised, it was hard for them to grasp it, and I asked them to please divide up the money amongst poor people. So, one clerk whom I trusted took it upon himself. My condition was for those people to not know where the money came from.

After the army Yoram studied at the university in Ber Sheva. After his studies in Ber Sheva he was accepted in Rochester [USA], to do his Master's and PhD. He studied a specialized science called finite element analysis. This science can be performed only thanks to the fact that computers today make feasible certain calculations that would in the past have taken years and were in fact impossible. After his studies, when he got his doctorate, he was hired by one company that creates computer programs for use in 'finite element analysis' in the solution of complex practical problems such as for example the strength of airplane wings. This program is purchased and used by the largest companies, such as General Motors, Boeing, Airbus, Volkswagen and so on.

I have three grandchildren: two granddaughters and one grandson. Tamar has one daughter and one son. Her daughter is named Ela and her son Eden. Ela is especially talented. She was accepted to high school, a musical academy. She has perfect musical hearing, beautifully plays compositions for piano, for example Chopin and Bach. She has those long compositions memorized, and is also an excellent student in other subjects. She's not trying to be a virtuoso; she doesn't devote enough hours to it every day, because she has very broad interests. Eden is already six months in the



army. He's in the tank corps; he's training to be a member of the tank corps. I hope that God will help him in that army and that there won't be a war and that he returns safe and sound. Yoram has a daughter named Narkis. Narkis is going to university to study psychology.

We go to Czechoslovakia often. In the last ten years, we've been in Prague twice a year on average, sometimes more. Mainly in the last year, when a book of Petr's [Petr Ginz], my wife's brother, was published, we've been there several times. Actually, a stamp was even published in Petr's memory. In fact, Petr has become very popular in the Czech Republic. So we go to Prague often. We also like Prague. We like to go to see theater performances in a language that we understand.

We've been to Bratislava only once, about a year after the regime changed. It was quite a difficult encounter for me. Bratislava, which I left fifty years ago, as I've reminisced, was different. Petržalka is different, Zidovska Street disappeared, the main synagogue was torn down. The stores also functioned in a very communist fashion, they were dark. I got a very unpleasant feeling, though I tried to show my wife a little of Bratislava's beauty. We were at the castle, where I could never go in the past. During the First Republic, the first Czechoslovak Republic, the castle was closed. It wasn't open to the public. So after such a difficult impression nothing draws me to Bratislava any more. I really didn't have anyone in Bratislava, no one remained there, while in Prague there were relatives that accepted us warmly. Bratislava doesn't really entice me.

I'm giving this interview right after making good on my intentions to show Bratislava and Slovakia to my son and his family. It was an interesting and moving visit. Especially encounters with remnants of Jewish life there and outings in that beautiful countryside and a visit to the region of my partisanship. Bratislava is very different from my Bratislava. Somehow I didn't fall in love with the new one. Even the beautifully restored old town with countless restaurants failed to enthuse me. I think that everyone of my generation, when it comes to the question how Bratislava should have evolved to have stayed beautiful, pleasant and express its spirit, would agree that it should have been different.

My father, when the Czechoslovak state was created, once told me, 'You know, Heinz, the biggest misfortune was really the division of Austro- Hungary. Really, Austro-Hungary, there were various nations there. They could live together. It was a beautiful country. A large country. Why was it broken apart? They could have given all nations freedom, autonomy. Each one of them would have led themselves, but the state should have remained whole.' Really, Austro-Hungary already was that what Europe is trying to create today, it was already half complete. And when Czechoslovakia split up, I regretted it. It wasn't an intense experience for me, because I've been far away from Czechoslovakia quite a long time, but I regretted it a little that Czechoslovakia split up. I had the feeling that it belongs together, why not? But when the politicians saw it differently, I understood and accepted, though regretting it.

In Israel we went through many battles. I was in a war. My daughter was in the Yom Kippur War. My son was a parachutist in the war in Lebanon, and now my daughter's son has joined up. My Slovak citizenship was renewed in 1990, but to the question whether I would return the answer is of course negative. But it's a good feeling. It's the expression of a certain reality, because in a certain fashion I sometimes feel that I belong to both, to the Jewish state as well as to Slovakia.

## Glossary:



## **1 Sered labor camp**

created in 1941 as a Jewish labor camp. The camp functioned until the beginning of the Slovak National Uprising, when it was dissolved. At the beginning of September 1944 its activities were renewed and deportations began. Due to the deportations, SS-Hauptsturmführer Alois Brunner was named camp commander at the end of September. Brunner was a long-time colleague of Adolf Eichmann and had already organized the deportation of French Jews in 1943. Because the camp registers were destroyed, the most trustworthy information regarding the number of deportees has been provided by witnesses who worked with prisoner records. According to this information, from September 1944 until the end of March 1945, 11 transports containing 11,532 persons were dispatched from the Sered camp. Up until the end of November 1944 the transports were destined for the Auschwitz concentration camp, later prisoners were transported to other camps in the Reich. The Sered camp was liquidated on 31st March 1945, when the last evacuation transport, destined for the Terezin ghetto, was dispatched. On this transport also departed the commander of the Sered camp, Alois Brunner.

## **2 Slovak Uprising**

At Christmas 1943 the Slovak National Council was formed, consisting of various oppositional groups (communists, social democrats, agrarians etc.). Their aim was to fight the Slovak fascist state. The uprising broke out in Banska Bystrica, central Slovakia, on 20th August 1944. On 18th October the Germans launched an offensive. A large part of the regular Slovak army joined the uprising and the Soviet Army also joined in. Nevertheless the Germans put down the riot and occupied Banska Bystrica on 27th October, but weren't able to stop the partisan activities. As the Soviet army was drawing closer many of the Slovak partisans joined them in Eastern Slovakia under either Soviet or Slovak command.

## **3 Anschluss**

The annexation of Austria to Germany. The 1919 peace treaty of St. Germain prohibited the Anschluss, to prevent a resurgence of a strong Germany. On 12th March 1938 Hitler occupied Austria, and, to popular approval, annexed it as the province of Ostmark. In April 1945 Austria regained independence legalizing it with the Austrian State Treaty in 1955.

## **4 Orthodox communities**

The traditionalist Jewish communities founded their own Orthodox organizations after the Universal Meeting in 1868- 1869. They organized their life according to Judaist principles and opposed to assimilative aspirations. The community leaders were the rabbis. The statute of their communities was sanctioned by the king in 1871. In the western part of Hungary the communities of the German and Slovakian immigrants' descendants were formed according to the Western Orthodox principles. At the same time in the East, among the Jews of Galician origins the 'eastern' type of Orthodoxy was formed; there the Hassidism prevailed. In time the Western Orthodoxy also spread over to the eastern part of Hungary. 294 Orthodox mother-communities and 1,001 subsidiary communities were registered all over Hungary, mainly in Transylvania and in the north-eastern part of the country, in 1896. In 1930 30,4 % of Hungarian Jews belonged to 136 mother-communities and 300

subsidiary communities. This number increased to 535 Orthodox communities in 1944, including 242,059 believers (46 %).

## **5 First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938)**

The First Czechoslovak Republic was created after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy following World War I. The union of the Czech lands and Slovakia was officially proclaimed in Prague in 1918, and formally recognized by the Treaty of St. Germain in 1919. Ruthenia was added by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. Czechoslovakia inherited the greater part of the industries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the new government carried out an extensive land reform, as a result of which the living conditions of the peasantry increasingly improved. However, the constitution of 1920 set up a highly centralized state and failed to take into account the issue of national minorities, and thus internal political life was dominated by the struggle of national minorities (especially the Hungarians and the Germans) against Czech rule. In foreign policy Czechoslovakia kept close contacts with France and initiated the foundation of the Little Entente in 1921.

## **6 Hlinka-Guards**

Military group under the leadership of the radical wing of the Slovakian Popular Party. The radicals claimed an independent Slovakia and a fascist political and public life. The Hlinka-Guards deported brutally, and without German help, 58,000 (according to other sources 68,000) Slovak Jews between March and October 1942.

## **7 Tiso, Jozef (1887-1947)**

Roman Catholic priest, clerical fascist, anticommunist politician. He was an ideologist and a political representative of Hlinka's Slovakian People's Party, and became its vice president in 1930 and president in 1938. In 1938-39 he became PM, and later president, of the fascist Slovakian puppet state which was established with German support. His policy plunged Slovakia into war against Poland and the Soviet Union, in alliance with Germany. He was fully responsible for crimes and atrocities committed under the clerical fascist regime. In 1947 he was found guilty as a war criminal, sentenced to death and executed.

## **8 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into to (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions. The third group, the so-called Status Quo Ante advocated that the Jewish community was maintained the same as before the 1868/69 Congress.

## **9 Masaryk, Tomas Garrigue (1850-1937)**

Czechoslovak political leader and philosopher and chief founder of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

He founded the Czech People's Party in 1900, which strove for Czech independence within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, for the protection of minorities and the unity of Czechs and Slovaks. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia. He was reelected in 1920, 1927, and 1934. Among the first acts of his government was an extensive land reform. He steered a moderate course on such sensitive issues as the status of minorities, especially the Slovaks and Germans, and the relations between the church and the state. Masaryk resigned in 1935 and Edvard Benes, his former foreign minister, succeeded him.

## **10 Sparta**

The Sparta Praha club was founded on 16th November 1893. A memorial of the first very famous era of the club's history are first and foremost two victories in the Central European Cup, which in the 1920s and 1930s had the same significance as today's Champions League. Sparta, usually with Slavia, always formed the foundation of the national team and therefore its players were present during the greatest successes of the Czechoslovak and Czech teams.

## **11 Slavia**

on 21st January 1896 at a general meeting of the Slavia Praha club a soccer union was formed. Slavia already played its first international match on 8th January 1899 against Berlin with a 0:0 result. Up to the start of WWI Slavia won the Charity Cup in the years 1906, 1920, 1911 and 1912. This very strong team won the Czechoslovak League in the years 1930, 1933, 1934 and the Central Bohemia District Cup in the years 1922, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930 and 1932. Subsequently Slavia were league champions in 1935 and 1937 and won the Cup in the year 1935.

## **12 SK Bratislava**

founded on 3rd May 1919 as the first Czechoslovak sports club under the name I. CsSK Bratislava. From 1939 it was called SK Bratislava. After its founding it belonged to the poorest clubs. Became the amateur champions of Czechoslovakia in 1927 and 1930.

## **13 Maccabi World Union**

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

## **14 SK Bar Kochba Bratislava**

the most important representative of swimming sports in the First Czechoslovak Republic. The club

was a participant in Czechoslovak championships, which it dominated in the late 1930s. The performance of SK Bar Kochba Bratislava swimmers is also documented by the world record in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, which was achieved by four swimmers: Frucht, Baderle, Steiner, Foldes. They also won several Czechoslovak championships in relays. SK Bar Kochba was also the most successful from the standpoint of number of titles of Czechoslovak champion in individual disciplines. In 1936, despite being nominated, athletes of Jewish nationality didn't participate in the Olympic Games in Berlin. The Czechoslovak Olympic Committee didn't recognize this legitimate protest against the political situation in Germany, denounced it in the media and financially penalized the athletes.

## **15 Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

Bohemia and Moravia were occupied by the Germans and transformed into a German Protectorate in March 1939, after Slovakia declared its independence. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was placed under the supervision of the Reich protector, Konstantin von Neurath. The Gestapo assumed police authority. Jews were dismissed from civil service and placed in an extralegal position. In the fall of 1941, the Reich adopted a more radical policy in the Protectorate. The Gestapo became very active in arrests and executions. The deportation of Jews to concentration camps was organized, and Terezin/Theresienstadt was turned into a ghetto for Jewish families. During the existence of the Protectorate the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia was virtually annihilated. After World War II the pre-1938 boundaries were restored, and most of the German-speaking population was expelled.

## **16 Slovakia (1939-1945)**

Czechoslovakia, which was created after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, lasted until it was broken up by the Munich Pact of 1938; Slovakia became a separate (autonomous) republic on 6th October 1938 with Jozef Tiso as Slovak PM. Becoming suspicious of the Slovakian moves to gain independence, the Prague government applied martial law and deposed Tiso at the beginning of March 1939, replacing him with Karol Sidor. Slovakian personalities appealed to Hitler, who used this appeal as a pretext for making Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia a German protectorate. On 14th March 1939 the Slovak Diet declared the independence of Slovakia, which in fact was a nominal one, tightly controlled by Nazi Germany.

## **17 Jewish Codex**

Order no. 198 of the Slovakian government, issued in September 1941, on the legal status of the Jews, went down in history as Jewish Codex. Based on the Nuremberg Laws, it was one of the most stringent and inhuman anti-Jewish laws all over Europe. It paraphrased the Jewish issue on a racial basis, religious considerations were fading into the background; categories of Jew, Half Jew, moreover 'Mixture' were specified by it. The majority of the 270 paragraphs dealt with the transfer of Jewish property (so-called Aryanizing; replacing Jews by non-Jews) and the exclusion of Jews from economic, political and public life.

## **18 Chatam Sofer (1762-1839)**

Orthodox rabbi, born in Frankfurt, Germany, as Moshe Schreiber, who became widely known as the

leading personality of traditionalism. He was a born talent and began to study at the age of three. From 1711 he continued studying with Rabbi Nathan Adler. The other teacher, who had a great influence on him, was Pinchas Horowitz, chief rabbi of Frankfurt. Sofer matriculated in the Yeshivah of Mainz at the age of 13 and within a year he got the 'Meshuchrar' - liberated - title. The Jewish community of Pozsony elected him as rabbi by drawing lots in 1807. His knowledge and personal magnetism soon convinced all his former opponents and doubters. As a result of his activity, Pozsony became a stimulating spiritual center of the Jewry.

## **19 Hashomer Hatzair in Slovakia**

the Hashomer Hatzair movement came into being in Slovakia after WWI. It was Jewish youths from Poland, who on their way to Palestine crossed through Slovakia and here helped to found a Zionist youth movement, that took upon itself to educate young people via scouting methods, and called itself Hashomer (guard). It joined with the Kadima (forward) movement in Ruthenia. The combined movement was called Hashomer Kadima. Within the membership there were several ideologues that created a dogma that was binding for the rest of the members. The ideology was based on Borchov's theory that the Jewish nation must also become a nation just like all the others. That's why the social pyramid of the Jewish nation had to be turned upside down. He claimed that the base must be formed by those doing manual labor, especially in agriculture - that is why young people should be raised for life in kibbutzim, in Palestine. During its time of activity it organized six kibbutzim: Shaar Hagolan, Dfar Masaryk, Maanit, Haogen, Somrat and Lehavot Chaviva, whose members settled in Palestine. From 1928 the movement was called Hashomer Hatzair (Young Guard). From 1938 Nazi influence dominated in Slovakia. Zionist youth movements became homes for Jewish youth after their expulsion from high schools and universities. Hashomer Hatzair organized high school courses, re-schooling centers for youth, summer and winter camps. Hashomer Hatzair members were active in underground movements in labor camps, and when the Slovak National Uprising broke out, they joined the rebel army and partisan units. After liberation the movement renewed its activities, created youth homes in which lived mainly children who returned from the camps without their parents, organized re-schooling centers and branches in towns. After the putsch in 1948 that ended the democratic regime, half of Slovak Jews left Slovakia. Among them were members of Hashomer Hatzair. In the year 1950 the movement ended its activity in Slovakia.

## **20 Jewish Center**

its creation was closely tied to Dieter Wisliceny, German advisor for resolution of Jewish affairs, a close colleague of Eichmann. Wisliceny arguments for the creation of a Jewish Center were that it will act as a partner in negotiation regarding the eviction of Jews, that for those that due to Aryanization will be removed from their current positions, it will secure re-schooling for other occupations. The Jewish Center's jurisdiction was determined by the scope and regulations of the particular instance it fell under. This fact fundamentally influenced the center's operation. It limited the freedom of activity of individual clerks. The center's personnel was made up of three categories of people. From bureaucrats, who in their approach to the obeying of orders did more harm than good (second head clerk of the Jewish Center A. Sebestyen), further of those that saw the purpose of their activities foremost in the selfless helping of people who were the most afflicted by the persecutions (G. Fleischmannova), and finally of soulless executors of orders, who were really capable of doing everything (K. Hochberg). Besides the Jewish Center there was also the Work



Group, led by the Orthodox rabbi M. Weissmandel, but whose real leader was the Zionist G. Fleischmannova. Though Weissmandel wasn't a member of the Jewish Center, he was such a respected personage that it would be difficult to imagine rescue missions being carried out without him. The main activity of the Work Group was to save as many Jews as possible from deportation. Of those in the Work Group, O. Neumann, A. Steiner and Rabbi Weissmandel and Neumann survived. In the last phase of activity of this underground group Neumann, who also became the chairman of the Jewish Center, lived in Israel. Steiner and Rabbi Weissmandel emigrated to Canada and the USA. Weissmandel and Neumann wrote their memoirs, in which they quite justifiably asked the question if the Jewish Center and especially the Work Group hadn't remained indebted towards Jewish citizens.

## **21 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

## **22 Benes, Edvard (1884-1948)**

Czechoslovak politician and president from 1935-38 and 1946-48. He was a follower of T. G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, and the idea of Czechoslovakism, and later Masaryk's right-hand man. After World War I he represented Czechoslovakia at the Paris Peace Conference. He was Foreign Minister (1918-1935) and Prime Minister (1921-1922) of the new Czechoslovak state and became president after Masaryk retired in 1935. The Czechoslovak alliance with France and the creation of the Little.

## **23 Karlovy Vary (German name**

Karlsbad): The most famous Bohemian spa, named after Bohemian King Charles (Karel) IV, who allegedly found the springs during a hunting expedition in 1358. It was one of the most popular resorts among the royalty and aristocracy in Europe for centuries.

## **24 Novaky labor camp**

established in 1941 in the central-Slovakian town of Novaky. In an area of 2.27 km<sup>2</sup> 24 barracks were built, which accommodated 2,500-3,000 people in 1943. Many of the people detained in Novaky were transported to the Polish camps. The camp was liberated by the partisans on 30th August 1944 and the inmates joined the partisans.

## **25 Vilnius Ghetto**

95 percent of the estimated 265,000 Lithuanian Jews (254,000 people) were murdered during the Nazi occupation; no other communities were so comprehensively destroyed during WWII. Vilnius was occupied by the Germans on 26th June 1941 and two ghettos were built in the city afterwards, separated by Niemiecka Street, which lay outside both of them. On 6th September all Jews were taken to the ghettos, at first randomly to either Ghetto 1 or Ghetto 2. During September they were continuously slaughtered by Einsatzkommando units. Later craftsmen were moved to Ghetto 1 with their families and all others to Ghetto 2. During the 'Yom Kippur Action' on 1st October 3,000 Jews were killed. In three additional actions in October the entire Ghetto 2 was liquidated and later another 9,000 of the survivors were killed. In late 1941 the official population of the ghetto was 12,000 people and it rose to 20,000 by 1943 as a result of further transports. In August 1943 over 7,000 people were sent to various labor camps in Lithuania and Estonia. The Vilnius ghetto was liquidated under the supervision of Bruno Kittel on 23rd and 24th September 1943. On Rossa Square a selection took place: those able to work were sent to labor camps in Latvia and Estonia and the rest to different death camps in Poland. By 25th September 1943 only 2,000 Jews officially remained in Vilnius in small labor camps and more than 1,000 were hiding outside and were gradually hunted down. Those permitted to live continued to work at the Kailis and HKP factories until 2nd June 1944 when 1,800 of them were shot and less than 200 remained in hiding until the Red Army liberated Vilnius on 13th July 1944. (Source: <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/vilnius%20ghetto.html>)

## **26 Husak, Gustav (1913-1991)**

entered into politics already in the 1930s as a member of the Communist Party. Drew attention to himself in 1944, during preparations for and course of the Slovak National Uprising. After the war he filled numerous party positions, but of special importance was his chairmanship of the Executive Committee during the years 1946 to 1950. His activities in this area were aimed against the Democratic Party, the most influential force in Slovakia. In 1951 he was arrested, convicted of bourgeois nationalism and in April 1954 sentenced to life imprisonment. Long years of imprisonment, during which he acted courageously and which didn't end until 1960, neither broke Husak's belief in Communism, nor his desire to excel. He used the relaxing of conditions at the beginning of 1968 for a vigorous return to political life. Because he had gained great confidence and support in Slovakia, on the wishes of Moscow he replaced Alexander Dubcek in the function of First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. More and more he gave way to Soviet pressure and approved mass purges in the Communist Party. When he was elected president on 29th May 1975, the situation in the country was seemingly calm. The Communist Party leaders were under the impression that given material sufficiency, people will reconcile themselves with a lack of political and intellectual freedom and a worsening environment. In the second half of the 1980s social crises deepened, multiplied by developments in the Soviet Union. Husak had likely imagined the end of his political career differently. In December 1987 he resigned from his position as General Secretary of the Communist Party, and on 10th December 1989 as a result of the revolutionary events also abdicated from the presidency. Symbolically, this happened on Human Rights Day, and immediately after he was forced to appoint a government of 'national reconciliation.' The foundering of his political career quickened his physical end. Right before his death he reconciled himself with the Catholic Church. He died on 18th February 1991 in Bratislava.

## **27 Terezin/Theresienstadt**

A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. It was used to camouflage the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a 'model Jewish settlement'. Czech gendarmes served as ghetto guards, and with their help the Jews were able to maintain contact with the outside world. Although education was prohibited, regular classes were held, clandestinely. Thanks to the large number of artists, writers, and scholars in the ghetto, there was an intensive program of cultural activities. At the end of 1943, when word spread of what was happening in the Nazi camps, the Germans decided to allow an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Theresienstadt. In preparation, more prisoners were deported to Auschwitz, in order to reduce congestion in the ghetto. Dummy stores, a cafe, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

## **28 Yad Vashem**

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

## **29 Slansky trial**

In the years 1948-1949 the Czechoslovak government together with the Soviet Union strongly supported the idea of the founding of a new state, Israel. Despite all efforts, Stalin's politics never found fertile ground in Israel; therefore the Arab states became objects of his interest. In the first place the Communists had to allay suspicions that they had supplied the Jewish state with arms. The Soviet leadership announced that arms shipments to Israel had been arranged by Zionists in Czechoslovakia. The times required that every Jew in Czechoslovakia be automatically considered a Zionist and cosmopolitan. In 1951 on the basis of a show trial, 14 defendants (eleven of them were Jews) with Rudolf Slansky, First Secretary of the Communist Party at the head were convicted. Eleven of the accused got the death penalty; three were sentenced to life imprisonment. The executions were carried out on 3rd December 1952. The Communist Party later finally admitted its mistakes in carrying out the trial and all those sentenced were socially and legally rehabilitated in 1963.

## **30 Slansky, Rudolf (1901-1952)**

Czech politician, member of the Communist Party from 1921 and Secretary-General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party from 1945-1951. After World War II he was one of the leaders of the totalitarian regime. Arrested on false charges he was sentenced to death in the so-called Slansky trial in November 1952 and hanged.

## **31 Six-Day-War**

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days' War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began

when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

### **32 Yom Kippur War**

(Hebrew: Milchemet Yom HaKipurim), also known as the October War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the Ramadan War, was fought from October 6 (the day of Yom Kippur) to October 24, 1973, between Israel and a coalition of Egypt and Syria. The War began when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack in the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively, both of which had been captured by Israel during the Six-Day War six years earlier. The war had far-reaching implications for many nations. The Arab world, which had been humiliated by the lopsided defeat of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance during the Six-Day-War, felt psychologically vindicated by its string of victories early in the conflict. This vindication, in many ways, cleared the way for the peace process which followed the war. The Camp David Accords which came soon after led to normalized relations between Egypt and Israel - the first time any Arab country had recognized the Israeli state. Egypt, which had already been drifting away from the Soviet Union, then left the Soviet sphere of influence almost entirely.

### **33 1982 Lebanon War**

also known as the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon, and dubbed Operation Peace for the Galilee (Shlom HaGalil in Hebrew) by Israel, began June 6, 1982, when the Israel Defence Force invaded southern Lebanon in response to the Abu Nidal organization's assassination attempt against Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov, but mainly to halt Katyusha rocket attacks on Israeli population in the northern Galilee region launched from Southern Lebanon. See also Operation Litani. After attacking Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Syrian and Muslim Lebanese forces, Israel occupied southern Lebanon. Surrounded in West Beirut and subject to heavy bombardment, the PLO and the Syrian forces negotiated passage from Lebanon with the aid of international peacekeepers.