

High School Graduation Photo



This is my high school graduation photo.

After the war I had almost no photographs, and so I went to the Mindszenty Photo Studio in Bratislava, where they'd taken our graduation photos.

It was my photo for the class graduation tableau, and I asked them for it.

In my youth I was a member of Mizrachi in Bratislava. The youth group was named Bené Akibah, Akiba's Sons.

Its name was based on the following historical event: During the Roman occupation of the Jewish state they were the students of the largest Talmudic school, most of which died in some epidemic.

To this day, the Com Akibah fast is held in their honor. The members were mostly Orthodox Jews. It was basically the same as Hashomer Hatzair. The only difference was that the shomers weren't atheist leftists.

The program of both was emigration to the Palestine, to participate in hachsharah, prepare oneself for a certain profession and subsequently for the aliyah [aliyah: moving to the land of Israel – Editor's note].

The only difference was that they were leftists, and Mizrachi was also religiously oriented. The celebrated rabbi of Mukachevo, Shapira, for example, was an anti-Zionist.

He was constantly making speeches and battling with Zionism. In Mukachevo things began to come to a head when they founded the first Hebrew high school there.

Shapira, on the other hand, had a famous yeshivah in town. I'll tell you one anecdote from Mukachevo. People there were poor.

National elections were being held, and a large part of the population there was Jewish. There was a lot of poverty, which is why they were supporters of the Communist Party. That was all over the East.

Well, and the state purposely set the elections in the town on the Simchat Torah holiday [Simchat Torah: the main significance of the holiday lies in the continuation of the Five Books of Moses. The cycle of reading from the Torah ends and begins on the same day, and the public celebration connected with this expresses the joy inspired by this process – Editor's note], so that Jews wouldn't come and vote.

The religious ones really didn't go, either.

Everywhere in the town hung large posters saying: „JIDALECH HOBT KEJN MOJRE, HAIT IZ SIMCHET TOIRE, ·TIMT OF DI NIMER FINEF ALLE ANDERE ZENEN A TINEC.“ Which means: "Jews, don't be afraid that today is Simchat Torah, vote for number five, all the others are shit."

Because No. 5 were the Communists.

They purposely set the elections during Simchat Torah, so that they wouldn't go vote and the Communists would get less votes.