

Asaf Auerbach At Summer Camp In Sobesin



During summer vacation the days always flowed away like water. The first and last week we'd be at home in Prague, and for the six or so weeks between, at a camp organized by the Communist Party. I was there about twice, but I didn't like it there very much, because the conditions there were horrible. The last year I succeeded in being able to go to camp somewhere else, where they at least had some little wooden cabins. Here in Sobesin we slept in huge tents, ten at a time, on straw mattresses. I, though otherwise it never used to happen to me, used to pee my bed at night. And that embarrassment of pulling the mattress out in front of the tent into the sun so it would dry out...

The camp had a strong ideological flavor. We were educated in the Communist spirit, sang Communist, Russian, Soviet songs, we had our Pioneer hymn, we discussed Marx and Lenin and such things. Like Catholics talk about the Lord God, so they told us these types of fairy tales. A person simply believed it. Our parents used to tell us that it was the right thing, hey, if my parents are telling me, and these ones here are telling me, then it probably is good. Not that I was some sort of fanatic, I was never one of those, not even in later years, but I simply believed it. Back then it was also about something else, you could say that it was this normal religion. People believed in a better life, in that people can become kind and good, that when socialism will be here that there won't be any thieves and that no one will envy anyone anything, and that we'll all try to work for the welfare of all. Basically these types of ideals. Before World War II it was mainly a belief in a better life, in a more just type of society, which then had its roots in the Great Depression, in that terrible poverty that was in Russia back then. Then, as it usually happens, when the Communists came to power, it was about something different, power corrupts people.

Sobesin, where the camp was located, is in the Sazava region. After the war I went there to have a look, by then there was only a sign that reminded one that some sort of camp had once been there. Children from the entire republic congregated there, from the Czech part that is, I don't remember there being a Slovak there. For example my brother had some friend from Liberec there. The whole six weeks we were only with friends, our parents stopped by to see us, as far as I remember, only once, when they were I think on their way for a vacation in the Czech-Moravian

uplands. Suddenly they appeared, spent about two, three hours with us, and went on. They went on vacations alone, without us. How it was when I was little I don't remember, I only remember those three summer camps.