

Pavel Potocky With His Brother And His Wife



This is me, my wife, and my brother Ruben when he came from the USA for a visit in the 1990s.

My brother joined the Communist Party after the war. He always took everything he did very seriously. And so when he believed in Communism, he believed in it completely, let's say even uncritically. At that time, in the beginning, Communism was a religion, the same as let's say

Judaism or Christianity. A religion that promised that a person can become better, he can become a decent person, who won't steal and won't murder and won't take the name of God in vain and I don't know what all else. But then they gained power, realized how nice it is to be able to do with people whatever I want, and ideals fell by the wayside.

My brother also had problems connected to Slansky. He actually stuck out twice, not only that he was a Jew, but during the war he'd also been in the army in the West. At the beginning of the 1950s he was working as an official at the Central Committee, and in a 'polite fashion' they told him to leave - that apparently he needs to come to know the life of the working class. So he ended up in the Ostrava region in the mines, where he worked for two or three years. Then Krushchev shook him, and the intervention in Hungary was the last straw, which led him to leave the Party. It took a huge effort, because they didn't like to let someone go from their ranks, so it must have been immensely stressful. Ruben told me how many meetings they called him to, and tried to convince him to say... But, as I've already said, when Ruben did something, he did it properly. At that time he had the advantage that he was already a laborer, so they couldn't fire him.

After 1968 the situation in Czechoslovakia became unbearable for him, and so he decided to emigrate with his wife and two children. They first flew to Vienna, and Ruben was afraid that he might draw some attention to himself, because in the summer he had a winter coat on - so that he'd be prepared for the raw fall weather. Then they were in Italy for some time, and finally they managed to get to the United States, where they bought a house in Denver.

We didn't keep in touch very much, neither he nor I were letter writers, so we exchanged about three a year, where we described what all had happened and that was it. Ruben began coming back again to his native land after the revolution.