

Richard Fischer At The Opening Ceremony Of The National Assembly Of Czechoslovakia



This photo is particularly interesting. I will have to take care of it. This is the official opening ceremony of the National Assembly [of Czechoslovakia] on 28th October 1918. And there, second from left is my dad, Richard Fischer, with a camera. He must have photographed something there. My dad's hobby, which he had avidly pursued since childhood, was photography. In the army he was with the 28th regiment, which was based in Prague. During World War I he was in Bruck an der Mur, and in Carinthia, Austria, which was where he served. He was a graduate of the Commercial Academy and a 'one-year volunteer'. That was an Austrian institution for graduates who volunteered to an army for one year and by that made their service shorter. He was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant and, what's more, he became the regiment photographer. He took photos of the officers riding horses, infantrymen, of course, their wives and children, and of various celebrations. In time he became indispensable. Although World War I was under way, he wasn't sent to the front, so he survived it all hidden away in Styria. Photography became his fate. After World War I, he managed to get an agency as a representative of a German optical works, where he sold cameras, lenses, binoculars, microscopes, and such like. My dad sympathized with the social democrats. They were liberal, slightly left-leaning. The First Republic is hard to understand these days; take, for example, the fact that my brother and I were named after the Masaryks, Herbert and Jan. Masaryk was a great idol. So why Czech, Jewish and German national sentiment? Nationality didn't count. After all, there's nothing at stake in a democratic state. Of course, things turned out slightly differently, but people believed in it at the time. Progressive thoughts, too. Religion was respected but it wasn't necessary to observe it. Democracy really worked and we believed in it for a long time! We lived a bilingual life, which seemed normal to us. If anyone came out with the odd comment, either against Jews or against Germans, it wasn't a democrat, so wasn't worth paying attention to. Our faith in the new republic was firm. We finally had the chance to show what we could do, to show that we were on a par with all other nations of Europe.