

Bernard Knezo Schönbrun As A Draftsman



This photo was taken in Bratislava in 1943. After the dissolution of the Sixth Labor Battalion, the army kept a few of us. We however didn't belong directly to the army any more, but to the Ministry of the Interior. In the photo I'm on the right. I worked as a technician under Major Franz. On 31st May 1943, the Sixth Labor Battalion was officially disbanded. The guys from the battalion were assigned to the Sered and Novaky camps. A number of them stayed to work on the regulation of the Sur River. Many of them later joined the SNR and many of them also fell in it. They kept 48 of us in the army as necessary ones. Among us were doctors, lawyers, builders, surveyors, tradesmen and guys with qualifications that were useful for the Slovak Army. Strangely enough, even here there were two people to be found that didn't wish us well, the Protestant priest Rolko and the notary Reiskop, who railed against us. Luckily we already had our kindhearted protectors who were in our favor and helped us. Until the rebellion broke out, I worked with the surveyors as a draftsman. After some time I got to Bratislava. I worked in one warehouse for a certain non-com by the name of Valko. On payday, he'd send all the guys under him home on leave, and took their pay. But the soldiers were glad that they could go home. He also did other things, like for example selling military materials - blankets. At that time I was doing the recordkeeping, which was dangerous both for him and for me. He knew that I knew what was happening. He needed to get rid of me, so he made me available [for transfer]. This section was under Major Franz, who had a Jewish wife. He asked why they wanted to get rid of me in the warehouse: 'Don't worry, you can tell me.' 'Major, Sir, if you want to know the situation, there's black-marketeering going on there. The commander knows that I know about it. He needs to get rid of me.' The major asked me, 'What do you know how to do?' 'Everything.' I wanted to save myself from the fate that would have awaited me, so I had to know how to do everything. 'Do you know how to type?' 'No, but if a sixteen-year-old girl can do it, I'll learn it too.' I became a typist. At that time they were bombing Bratislava. Major Franz had an apartment in the center of the city, and during one raid was hit. We went to help them pull out their things from underneath the rubble. He and his wife became fond of me. I'll say once again, his wife was Jewish and he was a German. See what coincidences happen in life? After the war he left for Czechia, where he had big problems due to his being a German. At that

time I was in SPROV. I wrote him an assessment as to how he had behaved towards me during the war. You can imagine what an assessment from SPROV meant in those days. Thus I saved him from being expelled to Germany.