

Bernard Knezo Schönbrun At A Demonstration In The Streets Of Bratislava



This photograph was taken in 1946 in Bratislava in front of the building of the Slovak National Museum. My wife [Anna Knezova Schönbrunova, nee Krajcova] and I took part in some demonstration. We're standing together in the center of the photo. After the war, several institutions were formed in Slovakia, such as for example the Federation of Slovak Partisans, the Federation of Anti-Fascist Prisoners and Illegal Workers [SPROV], the Federation of Foreign Soldiers, the Federation of Soldiers-Rebels [SVOJPOV] and the Federation of The Racially Persecuted. You could say that every political party needed to have someone 'behind them.' That someone were these federations. The Federation of Anti-Fascist Prisoners and Illegal Workers, SPROV, was leftist-oriented, the same as the Federation of Slovak Partisans. The Federation of Foreign Soldiers, those were leftists as well as rightists, depending on if they had been at the Eastern or Western front, and what sort of upbringing they'd had. The Federation of Soldiers-Rebels was created by the Democratic Party, as a counterweight to leftist-oriented federations. This is how it gradually evolved. I joined SPROV, as its ideals corresponded with my thoughts and ideas about progressiveness. Back then I thought that only socialism can be progressive, and I wasn't alone, even more mature and grown-up people thought this way. The most influential federation was the Federation of Slovak Partisans. Unfortunately, this federation was partially anti-Semitic. In 1946 they demonstrated against Jews. They wanted to break windows in Jewish homes and shouted slogans: 'Jews out!', 'Jews to Palestine!' Many Jews had been in the partisan ranks during the war. That's why members of this federation didn't condemn everyone. Their principle was: 'My Jew friend is a good Jew, but not the others!' Partisans approached all things in a military fashion, in the style of: 'Damn it, I'll get my machine gun...' Of course, there were also people of high principles among them. Not long ago Mrs. Hana Malatkova-Potocna died, that was a real partisan! Among other things, she expressed pro-Jewish sentiments. Another influential federation was SPROV. Its top official was first Andrej Bagar and then Viliam Siroky, later the premier. We had a lot of economic and political power. For example, the national administration was portioned out. That

means that our people were installed into companies belonging to Fascists and collaborators. Very many important politicians also came from these circles. In those days I was the general secretary of SPROV. There were many Jews among our membership. We published the newspaper Hlas Oslobodenych [Voice of the Liberated], which our people liked a lot, as we promoted their demands. Jews were secretaries in many regional towns. For example in Kosice it was Braun, in Michalovce Dr. Goldstein, in Dunajska Streda, Steckler. Mr. Steckler was a very honest person. Without a recommendation from the resistance elements, nothing happened. SPROV was politically a very strong organization. The largest federation in terms of numbers was SVOJPOV. They accepted almost anyone into their ranks, even former Guardists. SVOJPOV was connected to the Democratic Party, who needed to show boost their numbers.