

Jiri Munk With His Scout Friends



This photograph was taken during the time of my enthusiasm for scouting after the war. I'm walking on the left, in the middle is my friend, the Croatian Ante Peresin, and on the right is the leader of our scout troop, who was named Bohutinsky. We were photographed by a street photographer on Narodni Avenue in 1947. I experienced my nicest years after the war among scouts, up until the Scout movement was forbidden. Already in 1945, Erich and I went together to a scout camp in Pobežovice, near Domazlice, in the Czech Forest. We lived in a former Hitlerjugend camp. It was a relatively large center, with room for about 200 scouts. It wasn't a completely ordinary camp, because we also performed guard duty. This is because at that time in the border regions there were still Germans that hadn't yet been expelled, and we watched to make sure that they handed in their entire harvest, as it was right after harvest time. They drove me to some German farm and I kept watch by the scales. The Germans gradually brought in grain, and I kept records, checked the scales and so on. Pobežovice was located in the part of the country that was

jointly occupied by the American and British Army after the war. The Americans and Brits, who were going out with local German girls, were told various horror stories by them about how Czechs were raping and misusing German girls after the war, and thanks to this the Americans despised us Czechs. It even happened once that when a group of scouts went to a village, the Americans gave them a beating. All of us at that scout camp were suddenly aghast, that the Americans actually didn't like us. In the morning at roll call, we'd always hoist a Czech and Soviet flag, and the Czech and Soviet anthems would be played. One day at roll call, when we'd just hoisted the Soviet flag and were listening to the Soviet anthem, an American patrol came to our camp. It was a group of American soldiers. First they walked up to the flagpole, cut down the Soviet flag and one of them stuffed it in his pocket. Then they went over to the record player, picked up the record, went over to our leader, whacked him over the head with it, and left without saying a word. We stood and stared, dumbfounded. On the other hand, once we were at some meeting in a forest school in Rybníky, not far from our camp, and General Patton also came to this meeting with his officers, who were actually former American scouts, and they, on the contrary were very friendly towards us. They sat with us around the campfire and sang, they even put their small plane at our disposal, so we were able to fly around up above the countryside, and they also lent us a car and driver. The American command, as opposed to normal soldiers, probably knew what the real story was as far as the Czech nation was concerned. Overall, you could say that where the Germans hadn't been expelled, there the Americans had an anti-Czech attitude, while there where there were Czech girls, like in Domazlice, there the Americans liked us. During the time we were at the camp in Pobežovice, there were armed members of the SS on the run, so-called 'wehr-wolves,' wandering in the forests, and this is why when we'd go to German farms and dwellings, older armed scouts who were called rovers had to guard us. The region around Pobežovice was all German, we were the only Czechs in the entire area. I remember that we used to walk in processions, at the front of the procession we'd be carrying a Czechoslovak flag, and we'd be singing loudly. The Germans would come out of their houses to see what was going on. They had various hats on their heads, and when someone didn't take off his hat, our rovers would run over and beat him up, slap him around, because he hadn't taken off his hat before our flag. Already back then I didn't like that very much. It was right before their expulsion. But otherwise I really found myself in the scouting movement. After the war I felt like I didn't belong anywhere, I was suddenly practically without relatives, without anything. I think that basically all the survivors felt uprooted and yearned to fit in somewhere. They had no property, families, relatives, jobs, they didn't have those things that normally make up a person's collective and supports him. Later some people found this support in the Communist Party, I chose the Scouts. In scouting I found a new way of self-realization as well as a replacement collective. I accepted the ideals of scouting as my own. Unfortunately it all ended after 1948, when the scouting movement was forbidden.