

Jiri Lauscher With His Daughter, Michaela Vidlakova



This is a photograph of me with my father, Jiri Lauscher. The photo is from 1937 or 1938, and was probably taken at home.

My father's name was Jiri Lauscher. He was born during the time of Austria-Hungary in 1901 in Terezin, so actually as Georg, but all his life he then used the name Jiri. He was from a German environment, and his mother tongue was German. My father graduated from a German council school and then took a two-year business course. Something like less advanced high school, but without a leaving exam. More advanced high school was four years with a leaving exam. I don't know the official name of the school. Even though my father was from a German-speaking environment, he also spoke Czech.

My father was very Zionist-oriented. Already during World War I, when he was about 15, he led a group of younger boys, Tchelet Lavan. For some time he also organized hakhsharachs. His youth was composed of two directions. On the one hand, he supported his widowed mother and his older by two years brother in his studies, and on the other hand he worked very intensively for the Zionist movement.

My father was 17 at the end of World War I, so he didn't have to join the army. In 1920 he left for the United States of America. He wanted to study the establishing of orange groves in California, so he could later transfer this experience to Israel. But he couldn't stand the climate there, so after a year he returned home.

Then in 1925 he moved to what was then Palestine, and became one of the founders of the Sarid kibbutz, which today is a medium-sized kibbutz close to Nazareth. There were other Czechs living there as well back then. They were starting from scratch in the swamps, living in tents, and the first thing they built was a calf barn, the second was a house for the children, and only then did they start building the rest.

After five years of building the kibbutz, my father returned to Prague for my mother, whom he knew from Tchelet Lavan. He was planning a wedding and then for them to return together to Palestine. My parents had a Jewish wedding; they were married by Rabbi Sicher, back then the head rabbi of Prague. But for various family reasons the return to Israel kept being postponed. Once it was the death of my mother's father, then my mother was pregnant, but alas lost the child. When my mother got pregnant again, my parents finally decided that the conditions here for the birth of a child from a high-risk pregnancy were after all better. But before my parents had the chance to nurse me somewhat into shape, Hitler arrived and the jig was up.