

## Ferenc Leicht In Israel With His Cousin



I am in the picture with my cousin, Miklos Rosenberg (in the left), in front of a military tent in Pardes Hanna, in 1949.

At the beginning of 1946 a young man called Frici Lusztig (he is now the director of the Safed Hungarian Museum in Israel) came to Nagykanizsa. This Frici Lusztig was the organizer of a leftist Zionist movement, who called together all the Jews he could in Nagykanizsa and explained that not those were the Zionists who wore a badge, but those who were willing to risk their lives so that the

Jewish state would be built. And he explained that if someone was Jewish and felt Jewish should take part in this and help. This was like an irradiation for me, and right there and then I joined one of the youth Zionist organizations of social democrat character called Habonim Dror.

Then I went to Pest for 6 weeks' training, to a seminar. The Zionist movement was still legal at that time, we were in a Jewish villa, its owner had been killed. We lived there, too, there was about 40 of us, 20 boys on bunk beds in one room. There were girls there, too, they were equal with us, moreover they were often the cleverer, they were often the bosses. On the 29th November the UNO voted that they would divide Palestine in two, and the Jewish state would be established there. As soon as the Jewish state was voted the fights started in Israel. And then boys and girls of my age volunteered immediately, we wanted to go to fight, and in that fall, at the beginning of the fall 1947 we enlisted to the Haganah and waited to leave. At the end of January or beginning of February 1948, we went to Austria. The entire company, about the 40 of us.

We arrived to Haifa on the 17th September. They immediately gave the volunteers on the ship army ID cards, and we signed it on the ship that we had joined the Palmach [Editor's note: These were the shock-troops of the Haganah during the British mandate, then during the war of independence.] And they took us to a camp called Tel-Mond, and the combats were about 8 kilometers from there. They drilled us there

I was in Israel for 2 and a half years. While I was a soldier and there was war I took part in the attacks. I was demobilized exactly after 2 years, on the 17th September 1950. Miklos, the child of my father's sister, Frida Leicht, my only cousin who survived, was also in Israel. We liked each other with Miklos, because we were very similar in thinking. He also had a strong Jewish identity, even though later he had a Christian wife. He went to Israel already in 1946 at the age of 16 with a youth group and he lived for a while in Pardes Hanna [town in Israel] in a kibbutz. When I was on holiday I visited him. In 1951 he returned.