

Jiri Lauscher And Irma Lauscherova With Their Friend Greta Bieglova



First on the right in this photo is Greta Bieglova, whom my mother and I lived with when we returned from prison in 1953. The photo was taken somewhere in Prague on a walk in 1951 or 1952. The other people in the picture are my parents, Jiri Lauscher and Irma Lauscherova, nee Kohnova.

My parents were planning to leave for Israel. When the Slansky trial began, my father said that it seemed to him that things were getting bad, and that it would be good to get out at any cost. So my parents decided that we'd try to leave illegally. Our departure back then was organized by the Israeli embassy. Other people left with us, Helena Bejkovska, and Mrs. Pavla Ehrmannova, the mother-in-law of Zeev Scheck. I don't know if the mistake was on the part of Mossad, which was allegedly organizing our departure out of Vienna, or if someone here made a mistake. The fact remains that in April 1953 they caught us at the border. Later they got Helena Bejkovska out through Germany and Sweden, but one person can get across the border more easily than an entire family. Mrs. Ehrmannova was officially a citizen of Austria, so they got her out later in an official manner. But we had to stay here.

We had a trial, but luckily in the meantime President Gottwald died, so when President Zapotocky took office there was an amnesty. I was 16, so I was still a minor, but even so the Communists tried to make a big political trial out of it. The Israeli embassy, espionage and so on. This bubble luckily burst, and all that remained was an attempt to leave the republic. I spent a half year in remand

custody in Bartolomejska Street and then in jail in Pankrac. I got a half-year suspended sentence, which was very mild for the times. My mother got one and a half years hard time, but they subtracted a year due to the amnesty and she'd spent a half year in remand custody, so she also went straight home after the trial. My father was sentenced to two years, so after the trial they put him in jail in Valdice for another half year.

Probably the worst thing was that they confiscated our apartment, even though they didn't have the right, as there was nothing like that in the sentence. When my mother and I were leaving the courthouse, we thought that we were going home, but we found out that some Mr. Liska was living there, apparently an employee of the StB. Our things were piled up in the cellar and we had no place to go.

So a couple of good friends moved us both into their not overly large apartments. One was Greta Bieglova, who lived on Veverkova Street. She had a room and a kitchen, where she lived with her son and where she had a home workshop, and despite that she took us in as well. Her son was a friend of mine from back during the Terezin days.

Then we lived with the Webers; Mr. Weber was a friend of my father's from Terezin from prewar times. His wife, Ilse Weberova, a children's nurse and a Terezin poet, perished in Auschwitz along with little eight-year-old Tomik. We also lived for some time with the family of my classmate from English school, Jaroslav Svab. For some time I was also with Jindra Lion, a journalist with Svobodne slovo, and his wife Hanka.