



**Choosing to be Jewish
Family Education Program**

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Post-War Descriptions of Jewish Life for Part III

This collection of post-war photos and interview excerpts should be used in Part III of the Family Education Program, Choosing to be Jewish.

Print out the entire collection - you may want to laminate them - and hand them to program participants (parents *and* teens) to read aloud to the rest of the group as part of the discussion of how Jewish life changed for people (or not) as a result of the war.

Please note: some, though not all, of the photographs come from the same interviews people saw photos and read excerpts from regarding pre-war Jewish life. The facilitator should draw attention to these in particular so participants can see how Jewish life changed for specific people.

If you would like more of these excerpts and photos, please feel free to look at our database at www.centropa.org or contact Lauren Granite at granite@centropa.org or (301)787-0052.



Jakob Mikhailov, Russia, 2004

This is me (to the left), with the comrade from my regiment, former company sergeant-major Nikolay Tolkachev. The picture was taken on 9th May 2004 near the Grave of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow.

On 9th May, Victory Day our whole family goes to the Grave of Unknown Soldier, where we meet with front-line soldiers. My grandson Artyom has attended since the age of three.

During perestroika the [Moscow] Council of the Jewish War Veterans was founded in Moscow. I became its member. It was about 15 years ago. I have been the presidium member of this council for many years, and worked in the group of assistance to the needy. I paid a lot of attention to seeking those who needed help.

The first time I came to the synagogue was also during perestroika. There was only one synagogue for the entire city of Moscow after the war. The most ancient synagogue, and the only acting synagogue during the Soviet regime, was located in the heart of Moscow, on Spasoglinichevskiy Lane. The synagogue was ceremoniously opened in 1989. Now it is called 'Sinagoga na gorke' ['Synagogue on the hill' in Russian]. Then another one was restored at Malaya Bronzy. I've been very aloof from religion all my life. It was the way I was brought up by my parents and it was too late for me to be re-nurtured. I got to know our rabbi. He is a very interesting man and we both enjoy each other's company. We don't broach religious subjects, there are other common topics we find. PHOTO TAKEN IN: MOSCOW, RUSSIA, 2004. INTERVIEWEE: JAKOB MIKHAILOV.



Ruth Greif, Romania, post-war 1940s

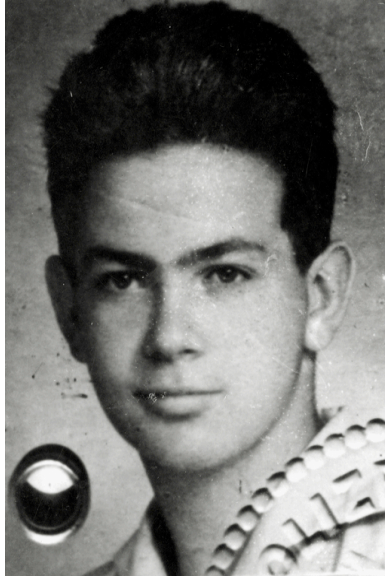
This is a photo taken in the synagogue here, in Brasov, in the 1940s, after the war. Rabbi Deutsch - you can see him in the photo - did something for a group of girls, I was among them as well, which was called confirmation, like it is for the Hungarians. It's the exact equivalent of bat mitzvah, but I don't know why everybody referred to it as confirmation back then. We were a group of girls, of different ages, and the ceremony took place in the synagogue with the rabbi.

Each of us had to know by heart a prayer in Hebrew on that occasion. I am the fifth from the right in the photo. After the war, I studied religion with Rabbi Deutsch, here, in the community's headquarters in Brasov, two hours every week; those were compulsory religious classes from school, but since we were Jews, we studied with the rabbi. I was also in a Zionist organization right after the war, but I can't remember if it was Gordonia or Hanoar [Hatzioni]; I think both. In any case, every day, after school, we were there, playing ping-pong, or dancing traditional Jewish dances, like lulala. It's a dance very similar to the Romanian ring dance, the hora. It was danced in a large circle; you had to take two steps to the right, one to the left, and lift your foot. In the middle of the circle there was a boy who chose a girl from the dancers and danced with her in the middle, then the girl would be there alone and choose a boy, and so on. It was nice. We made friends, fell in love... we were young girls. I also participated in some classes held by a sheliach, about Jewish history, about religion, about making aliyah to Palestine because Israel didn't exist back then. PHOTO TAKEN: BRASOV, ROMANIA, 1940S. INTERVIEWEE: RUTH GREIF, BRASOV, ROMANIA



Egon Lovith, Romania, 1952

This is a photo that was taken in Kolozsvar just before my graduation from the Institute of Arts in 1952. None of the people in the picture are Jewish. Three of them are Romanian and the fourth one is Hungarian. They were my mates at the Institute of Fine Arts, it was a very jubilant group. I am the first from the left. This is a picture of us wrestling with Stefanescu Mircea, second from left, who is hanging on. My other friend, Inica is in the white shirt. Sandor Puskas is the first from the right. I don't remember the name of the fourth person. PHOTO TAKEN IN: CLUJ NAPOCA, ROMANIA, 1952. INTERVIEWEE: EGON LOVITH.

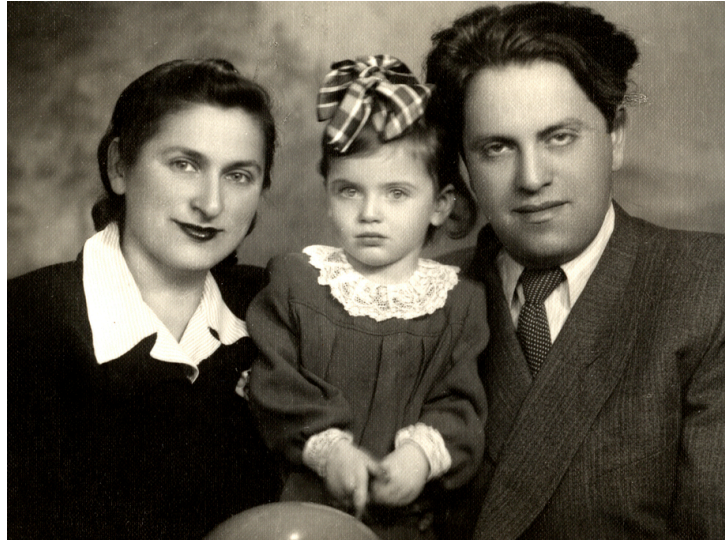


Rosa Rosenstein's son, Vienna, 1960s

This is my son, Zwi Bar-David. The photo was taken in Vienna in the 1960s.

Zwi was born Georg Rosenstein in Budapest on 27th June 1945. My husband was already 47 years old and didn't think he'd become a father any more. He was very happy about Georg's birth. Unfortunately my husband died in 1961.

After his final exams in Vienna, my son went to Israel. You see, the whole family lived in Israel: his sisters Bessy and Lilly, his grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins. Georg He lived in a kibbutz there and studied psychology. He changed his name to Zwi Bar-David. He married Ilana, whose family on the mother's side is also from Berlin, from Scheunenviertel, and they had two daughters and a son. PHOTO TAKEN IN: VIENNA, AUSTRIA, 1960S. INTERVIEWEE: ROSA ROSENSTEIN



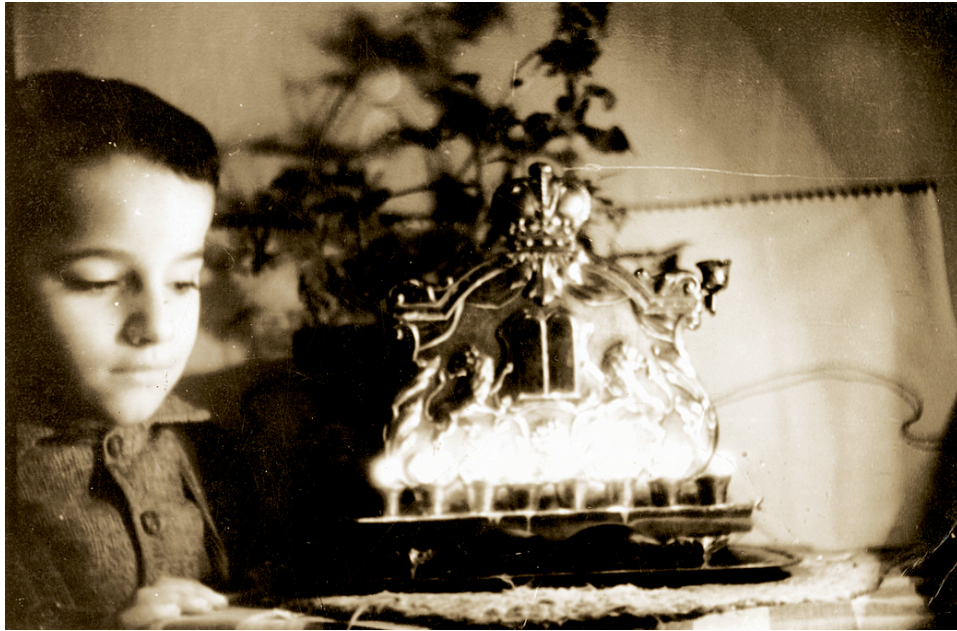
Fania Brantsovskaya, post-war

Here I am with my husband Mikhail Brantsovskiy and our older daughter Vita (Safian, nee Brantsovskaya), photographed in Vilnius in 1953.

In 1945 the factory where my husband was working burnt down. We were very concerned that my husband might get in trouble. There were many people taken to jail for sabotage or negligence. Fortunately, my husband's investigation officer from the NKVD happened to be a decent man. He knew my husband was not to blame.

My husband went to work as chief of department in the Lithuanian Industrial Council and then worked as chief of Department of State Planning of Lithuania for 25 years. He finished Moscow Institute of Engineering and Economics extramurally. We joined the Communist Party following our convictions. We joined it very consciously.

We were given two rooms in a four-room apartment. In 1950 my first daughter, Vita was born in this apartment. This name means 'life' in Latin. This was what my husband and I valued to the utmost and what we paid a high price for. In 1956 we received a separate apartment on Gorkogo Street. This was one of the first houses with central heating in Vilnius. It was very cold in the first year. In 1958 my second daughter was born. We named her Dina after my husband's mother. The children went to a nursery school and a kindergarten. They had no grandmothers to help us raise them. PHOTO TAKEN IN: VILNIUS, 1953. COUNTRY NAME AT TIME OF PHOTO: USSR
COUNTRY NAME TODAY: LITHUANIA.



Pedrag Perisic, SFR Yugoslavia (Sarajevo), 1956

The picture was taken in Sarajevo in 1956. My son Predrag is pictured. We took the picture of him in my parent's house in Sarajevo. He lit the Chanukah candles and felt very honored and important.

My two sisters and myself all married Serbs. My father wanted Jewish son-in-laws, but nonetheless he respected our choices. My husband went to an advanced military school and finished a degree in political science. He is very responsible, he worked hard in the air force war division. He retired as a general lieutenant colonel.

In the meantime we had three children. While the children were small they went to stay with my parents in Sarajevo for the school holidays. My parents celebrated all the Jewish holidays, so that from a young age my children knew everything about the holidays. My grandparents explained all the holidays to them. My husband and I are atheists and in our house we celebrated neither Jewish nor Serbian holidays. My children are from a mixed marriage and feel like both Jews and Serbs.

My middle son, Predrag, finished the technological faculty and has a master's degree. He is married and has two sons Nenad and Mladen both of whom are students. All my children are involved with the Jewish community. PHOTO TAKEN IN: SARAJEVO, 1956. COUNTRY NAME AT TIME OF PHOTO: SFR YUGOSLAVIA, 1945-1991. COUNTRY NAME TODAY: BOSNIA



Egon Lovith, Romania, 1946

This is a festival procession on 1st May. I am on the side, directing the group because I knew the direction of the procession.

The men are in white shirts and dark trousers because we were told to dress like that, the only thing we didn't wear was a tie. This is the street by the Szamos River; my father had a watchmaker store on this street way back in the 1920s. We sang worker songs in Hungarian, of course. We had a Democratic Jewish Youth Organisation march but I don't remember the words anymore. There were also other associations of young people in the procession, for instance there was the UTC [Young Communist Party], and there were the young workers from the factories. On the right side the pedestrians are walking, probably also to the stadium.

We went to the stadium, where every organization had its place and we had to stand in a nice formation. At first, there was a wind ensemble playing and after that the important people of the city appeared and the leaders of the party, on a stage that had been set up for them. We put the flags that we had been carrying down and stood for hours listening to the speeches. We could hardly hear and understand them; the technological equipment was quite primitive. PHOTO TAKEN IN: CLUJ NAPOCA, ROMANIA, 1946. INTERVIEWEE: EGON LOVITH



Avram Scheinfeld, Romania, 1945 or 1946

This is Avram Scheinfeld, the son of Paulina, my mother's sister, so my first cousin, at his bar mitzvah. The photo was taken in Iasi in 1945 or 1946.

My mother, Clara, Jewish name Haia Hinda, was born in Iasi, in the house on Aron Voda Street, around 1902. She had three younger sisters. Paulina, my mother's second sister, was born in 1907 in Iasi. She was a housewife. Her husband's name was Strul; he was a hakham and did ritual slaughters, especially with poultry. They had a son, Avram, born in Iasi in 1932, who currently lives in Germany, and is a light industry engineer. He's married and has a son who's a surgeon. Paulina died in 1993 in Rehovot, Israel. PHOTO TAKEN IN: IASI, ROMANIA, 1945-6. INTERVIEWEE: TILI SOLOMON.

Piroska Hamos, Post-war
(no photo)

Immediately post-war: I hadn't been back home yet from the deportations, when my step-sister signed me up for the communist party in 1945. In 1956, I didn't want to rejoin the party, because by then so much had come out about what they'd done. In the ministry, one of the communist heads of department – we were on good terms, she had been in Auschwitz- tried to convince me to rejoin. Then I said, 'Look, I'm not rejoining because my sister lives in Australia and I will never denounce her. I also have relatives in America, and I'm not going to denounce them either.' I didn't want to rejoin, but the I went to the cemetery many times, to my step-mother's grave, and I also have many relatives in the Jewish cemetery in Kozma Street. So I went out there, and walked among those big gravestones, the common grave of the forced laborers of Balf and Sopronkohida, and then I thought I would rejoin the party in case , god forbid, something terrible like this were to happen again. I rejoined the party at the last party meeting. My party membership was acknowledged without any special vetting, or difficulties. I was a member of the party until the change of regime, I think.

The foundation of the state of Israel didn't mean anything to me at all. I know nothing about the Anti-Zionist court cases. I didn't know that it happened. I know what is happening in Israel, though. We have many relatives out there, with whom it was mainly Etel who corresponded- it was Etel who did the long-distance correspondence- and there were visitors from Israel too. I've never been there. My daughter Judit went to Israel with her husband, who wasn't a Jew. He was game for anything like that, for example he went to the seder with Judit, which was organized by the Jewish community in the eighth district. It really upsets me if I hear unfair things about Israel here at home. And it's not just about Israel, but if I hear the word 'Jew' with a sharp intonation, I could go up the wall; it annoys me a lot. Although I'm not religious, I only trust in god. Concerning where I belong, I still feel Jewish. Not in terms of religion; everybody I love is Jewish. Unfortunately, I must say that to be Christian for a Jewish woman, is somehow not good. My daughters weren't Jewish, but emotionally, they were Jewish, as I am.



Katarina Loefflerova with husband Ladislav and daughter Anna, Prague, 1960

Anti-Semitism. Now I don't want to say that it got stronger and stronger, but it didn't get much smaller. I never came into conflict over my Jewish heritage. During the socialist time, I tried to immediately let them know that I was Jewish, because I've always liked to know what side we stand on, who's the enemy and who's the friend. Once, on 8th March, on the occasion of International Women's Day we got together in a restaurant, where we had lunch. This was still in Nitra. Everybody got a cup, of course not with tea in it, but wine, and a really nice atmosphere ensued. I thought, how could I tell all these people, that I would know who's the enemy and who isn't. The one who didn't come over, was the vice-director. So I asked, 'And so and so, how come that he isn't with us today?' One of the colleagues answered, 'He couldn't make it, because they called him in to the temple [used in Hungarian for Christian church as well].' I said, 'Temple?' - I was totally surprised, as he was such a serious party member - 'but now, in the afternoon? Is he Catholic or Evangelist?' 'Don't be funny, when we say temple, we mean the party center.' I said, 'I thought they really were going to the temple for religion, that's why I go.' They looked at me. As a matter of fact, I had raised my voice, and pretty loudly said, so that those sitting around me could hear and tell the others - 'I'm a Jewish lady. I'm not religious, but I'm a believer. And I make it to the synagogue at least once or twice a year.' I didn't see any surprise, they must have thought, I don't know what, but I had an absolutely good relationship with them all the way until I retired. There I never heard a word [about it]. After retirement, I was a tourist guide at the Cedok travel agency. I guided for a lot of Germans. I bought a Magen David, which I put on a chain, and I always wear it, so from the first moment they see who I am. In this way, I never had a problem my whole life. I always tried to say, be careful, because I'm Jewish.