

# KALEIDOSCOPE

A MEMOIR

E L L E N T . M E T H

Cover Design by Tamir Lahav-Radlmesser

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**To RICK, BOBBY, DANIEL AND MICHAEL -**

*“Memory, o bonfire, whose golden wind assaults me”*

Boudelaire

The world I grew up in no longer exists. It disappeared, not only because it all happened a long time ago and things evolve and change naturally, but mainly because it was eradicated violently and ruthlessly, wiped out in gas chambers and crematoria.

Memories fade and by now there are but a few of us who still remember; there is no one left to ask about what we have forgotten. Some day you, too, may want to know more about your heritage. By remembering, I am also keeping those whom I loved, cared about, and who influenced my life ‘alive’ a little longer.

# RZESZOW

**I** grew up in Rzeszow, a medium sized town of approximately 35,000 inhabitants, located in a valley in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains. The first documentary evidence about the town occurs in the year 1354, during the reign of King Casimir the Great. The town's position on one of Europe's main trade routes of the Middle Ages linked the East with the West, and the River Wislok, on the town outskirts, was most valuable for transportation as well as for defense purposes.

Originally, the town had no walls and no embankments and, therefore, it developed freely, but it always retained the large, square market place as its center. In the 14th century, the Parish Church was erected on a small hill west of the Market Square and was linked to the market place by a road, which still exists - Kosciuszko Street - where my grandparents lived and owned a store. Fires, plunder, foreign invasions and internal fighting ravaged the town over the years, but the town was able to recover after each successive disaster.

In the 16th century, at the south end of the town, a large stone castle was built, surrounded by a moat. The road leading from the original castle to the Parish Church - today 'ulica 3-go maja' or 3rd of May Street - is still the main artery of the town. The 16th century was also marked by a large influx of Jews into the area; since they were not permitted to settle within the town's limits, they built an extensive suburb off the town's northeast border and erected a large brick synagogue which also

served as the town's bastion. To the west of the town, an impressive Renaissance church, with an adjoining monastery for the Bernardine Order, was built, and this complex, the castle in the south, and the synagogue in the northeast, formed a strong defense system for the town.

Rzeszow attained its peak development at the end of the 16th and early in the 17th centuries. A Town Hall was erected on the Market Square. In the first half of the 17th century, under the rule of the Lubomirski family, the original castle was fortified and a large Piarist monastery, college and church were established; model schools, a hospital and homes for the aged and disabled were constructed. Commerce increased, the town expanded towards the River Wislok, and the so called New City - 'Nowe Miasto' - developed right beside the Old Town. The Jewish population settled there with its own government and certain privileges as well as duties, among them participation in the defense of the town under their own commander.

By the end of the 19th century the number of inhabitants in Rzeszow had considerably increased, most of the buildings in town were made of brick and were two or three stories high, and some industry came into town. A few years before the outbreak of World War II, Rzeszow was included in the Main Industrial District (C.O.P.) of Poland, and industrial enterprises on a large scale were established.

My memories of Rzeszow are vague, but I remember well the Lubomirski Palace, a large 17th century fortress later used as a jail, and 'Rynek', the Old Market Square. The Old Market Square had a 16th century Town Hall in the center and the

statue of Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who fought the Russians for Polish independence in 1795. I also remember clearly most of the streets in town, the lovely municipal park, the P.K.O. Building, (National Savings Bank) the Parish Church and Bell Tower on 'Plac Farny', the Piarist Monastery, and the Bernardine Church. The old market square was particularly interesting on market days, which were held twice a week. Peasants and farmers from nearby villages would start out often in the middle of the night, either by horse drawn wagons or on foot, carrying their merchandise on their backs and on their shoulders. They would gather in the open-air market, some would erect stalls, and others would simply squat or sit and hawk their wares. One could buy a wagon-load of wood or grain, a variety of fruits and vegetables in season, as well as fresh eggs, butter, cheese, live chickens, ducks or geese - in other words, everything that the farmers produced or gathered. The poultry was sold alive and women would take the chicken or the goose, spread its legs and blow the feathers apart to determine how good and fat it was.

We lived in the center of town, on the corner of 3rd of May and Jagiellonska Streets, and my windows faced the Piarist Church and the adjoining College which became one of the two all-male 'gimnazjum' (high schools) in town. The building in which we lived belonged to Mr. Daniec, who originally occupied the first floor, but who switched apartments with us and moved to the second floor after my father's heart attack in 1936. We had seven rooms (not counting the kitchen or the maid's room), and except for my father's study and office,

which faced Jagiellonska Street, all the rooms faced the main street in town - 3rd of May Street. The fanciest stores, one of the three movie houses in town and the most popular coffee house (Androletti) were located on 3-go Maja Street. Most of the stores were owned by Jewish merchants. Directly across from our building there was a large pharmacy on the corner, and next to it three sweet shoppes where one could buy all the confections one could dream of as well as soda water by the glass, mixed to order with a variety of syrups.

This street was also the town's promenade ('korso') where in the late afternoon and early evening people of all ages walked back and forth to see and to be seen. They walked in pairs or in groups, greeted each other, chatted, flirted - teenagers, men and women, young women alone, young men, business men and professionals, members of the military - the social hubbub of the town. Men and women often stopped at the coffee house for tea or coffee and pastries, to read various newspapers, and to socialize; my mother went there almost every day with a variety of friends.

My favorite spot in the apartment was the 'Erkier' - a bay-like alcove at the corner of the building and part of our dining room. It had windows all around, a small round table and chairs, and afternoon tea was served there whenever my parents were home. My friends and I spent many an hour in the 'Erkier' people watching, commenting on who walked with whom, the clothes the women wore, and sometimes squirting small amounts of water on passers-by. We also communicated by sign language with the kids who lived in the building

diagonally across from ours, or with the highschool boys at the 'Stare Gimnazjum' (Old High School) across the street. The 'korso'-promenade extended from the P.K.O. Building to the Parish Bell Tower, and the building we lived in, located half-way, gave us a perfect view.

My room was large, large enough to accommodate a baby grand piano. It was warm and comfortable, the furniture was mahogany, one wall was lined with bookshelves, I had a desk and a small table with upholstered chairs around it, and my bed was literally covered with many beautiful dolls from different countries.

The prettiest room, I believe, was the parlor, ('salon') furnished in the Biedermeier style, and used for special occasions. It had a large curio cabinet, holding my mother's most precious nick-nacks, purchased on our various trips, and - to my mother's dismay - my favorite hiding place when I was little. Since I was very heavy as a child, it is a miracle that nothing ever broke when I climbed under or behind it! I remember so well Rozia's 'Bekook' in our parlor, when her prospective husband, a young physician from Stasnislawow, came to our house to meet her and to subsequently discuss various arrangements with her parents, Uncle Herman and Aunt Fajdzia. In those days, marriages were often arranged with the consent of the young people, and the size of the dowry played an important part as to whether or not the marriage materialized. In the case of a young doctor, for example, if he did not have sufficient means, he almost had to marry someone with a substantial dowry in order to be able to open an office and

practice medicine. (By the way, unkind, biting rumors claimed that Aunt Fajdzia's nagging contributed to his demise a few years after their marriage, shortly before the war broke out.)

But, back to our apartment. Each room had a large, decorative tile stove used for heating, and on a cold winter night it was wonderful to put your comforter against it and warm it up before climbing into a cold bed! You also could lean against it whenever you wished to warm your back. Coal and/or wood were delivered by truck or wagon and put in the basement at the beginning of the season, to be brought up by the maid as needed. It was also the maid's responsibility to make fire in every room each morning, twice a day when it was cold, and to clean out all the ashes. Chimney sweeps kept the chimneys clean and functioning efficiently.

There was a large wood/coal burning stove and oven in the kitchen, and water had to be heated on the stove for almost everything, including laundry. White linens had to be boiled in large kettles filled with water and soap to stay white, particularly during the winter months when the laundry could not be hung outside in the sunshine. We did have running water, but all water was cold and the water heater in the bathroom had to be lit in order to have running warm water there. For many years we had an icebox to keep food cold (ice was delivered in huge blocks every second or third day), but a few years before the war my parents bought the first refrigerator in town, a Norge, and quite a few people came to our house to admire it and to see ice cubes being made!

Some of the rooms were wallpapered, but most of them

were painted with stenciled designs. I remember one of the designs in my room particularly well, chestnut trees in bloom, which had to be redone only after one year since that winter, during one of my many childhood illnesses, I picked off all the flowers from the wall next to my bed - and I really could not comprehend why this made my mother so angry! All the rooms in the apartment had parquet floors, covered by valuable oriental carpets; the furniture was antique and we had many beautiful paintings, among them two large portraits - one of my mother, wearing a black, off-the-shoulder gown with a pink satin collar, and the other one of me, wearing a pale green chiffon dress in which I had performed Dvorak's 'Humoresque'; I wonder who has these portraits now ....

The climate in Rzeszow was moderate, although winter usually started early, around the first of December, and the snow stayed on the ground till springtime; we usually wore boots for four months, if not longer. We went ice skating on frozen ponds as well as on ice rinks, went sleigh riding on local hills, but what I liked best was the 'kulig' - a number of small sleds strung together and attached to the back of a horse drawn sleigh that slid along the roads, in and out of town! Usually, both children and adults participated. Weather permitting, we walked in the large municipal park or the park surrounding the Lubomirski Palace, and in the spring and fall we hiked 'pod Lysia Gore' - a hillside nature trail just outside of town. There were excursions to inns in the surrounding area for a taste of fresh sour milk and black bread with fresh churned butter and cheese, and in the summertime there was swimming at the

beach on the River Wislok.

The main means of transportation were horse drawn carriages, ('fjakier') carts and wagons, although there were trucks and a few cars in town. Our first car was a Rolls Royce, which my mother drove; in order to get a driver's license in Poland one had to be able to repair a car as well as drive it - and I can still picture my mother on one of those impossible Polish roads, full of oil and grime, leaning over the open hood of the car and trying to figure out what was wrong! My father never learned how to drive. The car I remember best was a blue Chevrolet, which we bought a few years before the war. We planned to keep it half a block from where we lived in Uncle Herman's villa, where his unused garage stood empty, but 'Ciocia' Fajdzia claimed that she could not tolerate the odor. Therefore, the car had to be garaged at the other end of town. It was at that time that my parents hired Mr. Cebula to be our chauffeur - cap, uniform and all - most impressive! And, of course. Mother no longer had to fix the car although she continued to drive for enjoyment.

I liked Rzeszow and liked living there, perhaps because my mother liked it. In fact, in 1936 or 1937, my father wanted to liquidate some of his assets and move to the South of France, but my mother refused. Who knows what would have happened, had she agreed.... Rzeszow was a quiet town, but it had a life of its own - movie houses, several nightclubs, restaurants, cafes, 'Sokol' with its concerts and theatrical performances, social clubs, bridge clubs, athletic clubs, tennis courts, and skating rinks. At least twice a week my parents went with

friends to one of the nightclubs. My mother loved to dance, while my father, who did not dance except for the waltz, socialized and drank innumerable cognacs; strangely, he never got high and never drank otherwise. There were gala balls during the carnival season, an active Jewish community life as well as an active social life - and my parents were involved in all of it; they had Jewish friends as well as Christian friends and close family all around. One of their many Catholic friends-acquaintances were the Bikarts and their son, Jan, an attorney, some ten-to-fifteen years younger than my parents; he was a close friend of the family and, I suspect, my mother's admirer. (I corresponded with Janek after the war, we spent time with him and his family in Warsaw in 1967, and he also visited us here in Cranford, when he was sent to the States by the Polish Government to negotiate some business transactions.) Before the war, life in Rzeszow was pleasant, comfortable and safe for my parents, or at least that's how it seemed at the time.

## THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

*“There are no Jews in Poland now; the remaining handful are but a reminder of the community of many millions that lived in Poland before the war.”* -(Aleksander Hertz) For a thousand years Jews have been one of the important elements in Polish life and a physical and spiritual component of the Polish landscape. From the beginning of Polish history, when they minted coins for the Polish kings in the eleventh century, till their extermination during World War II, they were part of Polish life, Polish history and Polish culture. (In 1939, at its height, there were 3.5 million Jews in Poland. More than 90% of them perished.) The Jews were a cultural group and they were a religious and linguistic group. They had definite historical traditions. They had created their own literature, philosophy and art. They had their own legal and legal-moral system. They were merchants and shopkeepers, tailors, shoemakers and tanners, musicians, innkeepers and money-lenders and they were part of the intelligentsia: doctors, lawyers, professors, writers and journalists. The Jews in Poland were poor, pious and downtrodden as well as affluent, influential and emancipated. From 1918, when Poland regained independence and became an independent state, till the outbreak of the war in 1939, many Jews assimilated to Polish culture, i.e. to the culture of Polish nobility, the culture of the leading class. They did this through acquisition of secular education and by giving up many of their traditional religious observances and customs.

Nevertheless, many Jews who may never have picked up the Talmud, remained under the constant influence of the Talmud's ethics and adhered to the teachings of the great Jewish moralists. From 1919, when Jews were elected to the Polish Parliament in the new Polish Republic, till 1937, Jewish religious, cultural and political life flourished, even though Jews often had to face hostility from the Polish population. In a 1931 census, 80% of the Polish Jews designated Hebrew or Yiddish as their mother tongue. Jews were 10% of the total population of the country but were 60% of all those engaged in commerce, 20% of those engaged in manufacturing, 50% of those engaged in law and 46% of all those practicing medicine.

The Jewish community had its own governing body - the Kahal - which was elected by the community. It engaged the rabbi (who was the final authority on 'Halacha'), the hazzan, the 'shames', 'schochet' and the 'mohel' and paid their salaries from taxes collected from the members of the community - a 10% tithe on their income. Special taxes were also levied on kosher meat and poultry, on kosher salt and on wine for religious services. The Kehilla (organized Jewish community) established and maintained synagogues, schools, hospitals, burial societies, loan societies, etc., etc. and maintained contact and unity with other Kehillots throughout the world, thus defending Jewish rights everywhere. The Bet-Din - the Jewish Court of Law - was also appointed by the Kehilla and could withhold marriages, circumcisions and burial rights if the tithe or other obligations to the Kehilla were not met.

These powers were given to the Jewish communal leader-

ship in a Charter of King Sigismund August in 1551, and like in other towns and cities in Rzeszow, too, the Kahal took care of Jewish needs without any financial help from the authorities. Before the outbreak of World War II, the Jews in Rzeszow were approximately one-third of the total population of the town. There were two large synagogues, the Old Temple, dating back to the 17th century, and the New Synagogue, located near Liberty Place, as well as a myriad of 'shtibls' or little congregations that accommodated fine shadings of religious beliefs. Some of them had adjoining 'cheders' (religious schools) with often mean-spirited, knuckle-rapping teachers. There were Jewish cemeteries, a modest old age home, a small orphanage and a small Jewish Hospital, which opened its doors in 1935 with Dr. Teller, our friend and family doctor, as its first director. The Hebrew Elementary Day School started to teach boys and girls in 1930 and a few years later the coeducational Hebrew High School and Public Library opened its doors. There was a Jewish Sports Club, the Bar Kochba soccer team, and a Social Club which was established around 1928 with a membership consisting of lawyers, physicians, leaders of the business world and other members of the intelligentsia.

Late in 1933, the Bridge Club was started as a means of earning a livelihood for the young widow of Dr. Adolf Schneeweiss, who died suddenly of a heart attack that year. The Schneeweisses were close friends of the family, particularly Adolf, an attorney, who was always included in all social gatherings. His sudden death was a great shock to all of us, particularly since there were no provisions and no financial

security for the family. It was my father's idea to refurbish their apartment and adjoining offices and to turn them into a Bridge Club, with Edzia Schneeweiss as manager. All my father's friends became members of the Club, which became a place for socialization and for playing bridge and other card games. I grew up with the Schneeweiss'es only son, Zygmunt, two-and-a-half years my senior, and still remember how badly I felt when his mother, Edzia, cried and reprimanded him harshly for running around their apartment in his socks when "they were now so poor that they could not afford to buy new socks". I also remember feeling most uncomfortable whenever she expressed her wish that Zygmunt and I should marry when we grew up, perhaps not so much out of admiration for my personal attributes as for my father's money.

My parents were not active in the Sports Club, although my mother skated often at the Club's ice skating rink, and my father took me once in a while to soccer games, particularly when Bar Kochba or Resovia (the local Rzeszow soccer team) played.

I did not attend the Hebrew Day School nor the Hebrew High School, which opened its doors one year ahead of the year I started High School; therefore, I was the only Jewish girl in my high school class. I am sure that this was my mother's wish and decision, and I was quite happy about it. As a result, all my personal friends were Catholic, except for the few Jewish kids with whom I grew up and who were the children of my parents' friends. The teaching of religion was a required subject in all Polish schools, and while everybody else was learning the

catechism, a lady teacher came once a week to teach me religion, Jewish history and ethics, but actually she spent most of the time just talking about what was going on in town, and I learned little. When I was about eleven years old, my father hired a rabbi to teach me to read Hebrew and to pray; he came once a week, with his long beard and ‘payes’, (sidecurls) wearing a long, black kaftan and a ‘strammel’ (fur hat) - speaking a barely understandable Polish - and I hated every single minute of the hour he spent at our house! He came for almost two years and I remember being able to read quite fluently, but somehow, I blocked it all out, and to this day I cannot recognize one single Hebrew letter.

The majority of the Jews in Rzeszow was poor, religious and orthodox, and a large percentage of them were Chasidim. I certainly did not realize then that thanks to them Judaism has survived; they created it and they passed it on to their children and grandchildren. I was brought up in a mixed Polish-Jewish milieu and was in closer relation to Poles than to Orthodox Jews. I was ashamed of the Chasidim, embarrassed by their strange garb, strange appearance and language, just as I was embarrassed when my father spoke Yiddish loudly with his brothers on the street. How I wished he would speak Polish instead, or at least whisper when he spoke Yiddish. It was not only the non-Jewish environment but also a significant part of the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia that viewed Yiddish not as a language but as a “jargon” and had a contemptuous attitude toward it - and I was among them. There is no doubt that the Chasidim were strange, different and often self-isolating, but so

were the priests and the nuns, whose vestments never bothered me. The simple truth is that I did not want to be identified with the Chasidim in any way; I wanted to be Polish.

And yet, I was not ashamed of being Jewish and I certainly never denied it. In fact, there were many aspects of being Jewish that I both enjoyed and appreciated. I liked picking up my father at Temple on the High Holidays and the special feeling we shared as we walked home together. I loved Purim and the big parties we always had on that day, since Purim was also my father's birthday and we had a wonderful, double celebration. And I loved Passover and the Seders, with various members of the family around our dining room table as my father conducted the Seder in Hebrew, usually skipping certain parts when he saw me fall asleep. Passover was an exciting time; large baskets of 'matzah' were ordered months ahead and delivered just before the holidays, in time for us to send some as gifts to our Gentile friends. Neither 'matzah' nor other Passover products were available in stores, as they are today; everything had to be made at home or ordered from special kosher places. I loved biblical stories and remember climbing into my father's bed on Sunday mornings when I was little, to listen to the stories he told me in a most dramatic and exciting way - stories that I listened to over and over again. When I asked him about Jesus and all the miracles he performed, my father told me that Jesus was just like the other rabbis at that time who could all perform those miracles, but that Jesus was a show-off and went against G-d's wishes by demonstrating his powers.

My father was definitely my 'Jewish connection'. I knew that he had a great deal of respect for those among the Chasidim who were learned and truly observant, no matter how poor they were, and that he supported many of their endeavors. Not only on Purim but every Rosh Hodesh (the first of the month) hundreds of people came to our door, and no one was ever turned away. There were the poor and the students, scholars, people who needed help with a dowry in order to marry off a daughter, the sick, the elderly, and anyone else in need of a helping hand. My second cousin, Arek Rosenbach, shared with me recently a story related to him by his father, Josiu: It seems that a young man came to my father and asked for help to pay for his upcoming wedding. My father spoke with him at length and asked how he was planning to support himself, his wife and his future children. The young man's answer was that he had no funds at all, and had no idea what he would do. They would have to live with his parents after the wedding, but his dream was to amass sufficient funds to buy a horse and carriage; then he would be able to earn a good living by driving people all over town and particularly from the railroad station. My father gave him five zlotys, and the young man left disappointed and dejected. The wedding took place and when the young couple arrived at their parents' home, there was a carriage with two horses awaiting them - a wedding gift from my father. It was my father who taught me at an early age that we are responsible for one another and that this responsibility extends far beyond our immediate family.

My father was raised in an Orthodox family and was

Yeshiva educated, but gave up most of the religious observances when he married my mother. We did not keep a kosher home, but we bought only kosher meat and poultry - as well as ham and Polish cold cuts from Lesniak. We observed the major Jewish holidays; my father attended 'Shul', the daily routine was different, we always visited relatives and spent time together as a family. Ours was definitely a Jewish home in many respects, even if my mother never lit Sabbath candles. My parents actively supported all Jewish institutions, not only monetarily. They were involved with Palestine and Zionism and were well acquainted with Jewish writing and Jewish thought. I did not study the Talmud, did not really learn the Jewish law and lore which form the basis of religious life, but somewhere, somehow in my home in Rzeszow, seeds were planted and a Jewish tradition established.

The first German patrols entered Rzeszow on September 8, 1939 and soon thereafter a decree was issued whereby all the Jews had to wear an identifying armband. What followed was a slow, gradual process of restrictions, degradations and demoralization. Jewish businesses, apartments and possession were confiscated, there were restrictions limiting access to certain parts of the town and all the Jews had to live in one designated area, several families to one apartment. People were caught at random and forced into labor; there was no end to insults, humiliations and occasional beatings. Their spirit was being broken bit by bit, but people still believed that if they followed orders, everything would turn out O.K. Eventually a formal ghetto was established. New bridges and roads had to be

built and everybody had to do hard physical labor, often followed by brutal beatings for the slightest infringement of rules. In the beginning of 1942, the ghetto area was enclosed by a high fence and only Jews going to work or on special assignment were allowed to leave. There were constant demands for ‘contributions’, hostages were taken, and there were many executions for apparently no reason. Jews from surrounding small towns as well as from Kalish, Cracow and Lodz were brought into the ghetto.

In June of 1942, with the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and the Soviet Union, conditions worsened and ‘resettlement’ transports began to leave the Rzeszow ghetto. Whether one stayed or was deported depended on a special Gestapo permit, which literally meant life or death. Those without the permit went into hiding and when caught were either deported or shot on the spot. More and more people were thinking of escaping, a possibility offered by two young women originally from Rzeszow who were living in Bochnia and had the necessary connections to get false documents and to facilitate an escape to Hungary. One of these young women was caught crossing the entry gate and all those on her list, as well as thousands of others, were rounded up and killed in a mass execution in the Glogow forests. The ghetto was then renamed a ‘work camp’ and divided into two parts, the East Camp for those capable of working, and the West Camp for those who were too young or too old to work. Both camps were separated from each other by a so called ‘no man’s land’ and barbed wire. In each camp men and women were kept apart. There was work

within the camp itself as well as outside of camp; a number of German and Polish firms were involved with excavations and work in the sewers. Deportations continued, the last major one was on November 15, 1942 when everybody from the West Camp was shipped out. The children from both camps were driven out of the camp earlier by automobiles under the pretext of being sent to nursery schools and schools. They were all exterminated.

Conditions in the Rzeszow labor camp improved somewhat when the sadistic camp commander, Bacher, was replaced by commander Schupke. Food deprivation, being robbed of their meager possessions, constant beatings and random shootings ceased. The people worked very hard and lived under most difficult conditions, several families to one room, but there was no real hunger, people traded and bartered, and life was not as horrible as it was in most other labor camps. Still, there were random executions, like the one of twenty young men and two young women on March 22, 1943. Nevertheless, people believed that staying in camp meant staying alive; by that time they already knew that the 'resettlement' transports brought their victims to certain death in Bergen-Belsen or Auschwitz. The final deportation and liquidation of the Rzeszow ghetto took place on September 23, 1943. Less than one hundred people stayed behind, the so called 'Raumungsgruppe', to take care of all the possessions that were left in the camp. Approximately 400 people, mainly young women, were sent to the labor camp Szebnia near Jaslo, where only a few survived. Those who were not killed died of typhus. The others, all of them young and

quite healthy, were sent directly to the crematoria of Auschwitz.

I learned all these details only recently from a memoir written by Mrs. Lotka Goldberg, an active member of the Rzeszow Association in Israel, with whom I have been corresponding for the past few months.

Only a handful of Jews remained in Poland after 1945. Most of those who survived left, taking with them a thousand years of history, definite traditions and attachments, as well as the basic values of Polish culture mixed with memories of anti-Semitism that swept Poland over the centuries. When we were in Rzeszow in 1967 only one Jewish woman still lived there; she was saved by a Polish railroad worker, married him and stayed with him. Today, the Rzeszow Landsmen Association, headquartered in Tel Aviv, tries to keep the memories of the Jews of Rzeszow alive. They erected a monument in the Glogow forest commemorating the 4000-5000 people who were massacred there. A memorial plaque, dedicated in 1997 in the Great Synagogue of Rzeszow, honors all the victims of the Holocaust who came from Rzeszow.

## MY MOTHER'S FAMILY

**I liked** my grandparents a lot, especially my grandfather, who was different from other grandfathers I knew. He was tall, handsome, he came from Silesia, spoke no Yiddish, was fully assimilated, immaculately groomed and always smelled nice. Grandpa smoked all kinds of fancy pipes, including Turkish water pipes, and drank wine long before it was popular, in fact, he had a wine cellar filled with a variety of expensive vintages. I remember sitting on his lap when I was a little girl, playing with his mustache and short, square. Prince Albert beard, and listening over and over again to the tune played by his gold pocket watch. Grandpa kept German shepherd dogs (one at a time) but I was never too comfortable with them.

My grandparents owned a large fabric and ready-to-wear clothing store and they lived in the apartment directly above it, on the second floor of the building. There was a fairly large courtyard with trees and greenery and a long balcony-walkway on one side of it. I understand that the courtyard was completely dug up by the Polish neighbors after the war since there were rumors that my grandparents buried gold and jewelry there, but supposedly nothing was found. I do not remember any family gatherings at my grandparents' home nor ever being invited there with my parents, although, of course, we may have been. I do remember, however, spending a week or two with them one winter, while my parents were abroad, when I was given a choice of where I wanted to stay. I enjoyed my stay with my grandparents and being spoiled by them. I used to visit my

grandparents in their store quite often and remember being fed by them whenever my mother insisted on serving me one of the dishes I hated and refused to eat for three days in a row. I guess Mother assumed that I would develop a taste for the particular dish, but I still don't enjoy goulash, for example, though I did learn to eat everything. (The only thing I did not have to eat was spinach since my mother did not eat it either.) My grandmother, too, was tall, wore no make-up and was dressed simply, especially in comparison to my dapper grandpa. She was the one who ran the business. I enjoyed watching her deal with the customers and appreciated her methods of salesmanship. I will never forget the time when, trying to demonstrate to a customer how strong a particular fabric was, she ripped it into two pieces!

Although my mother never said it, I do not think that Mother cared much either for her parents or for her siblings. I do know that she resented the fact that her older brother, Leon, as well as her younger siblings were college educated, while she - the brightest and most capable - had to stay home and supervise the household while my grandparents ran the business. She may have married my father partially to get out of the house. Uncle Leon was tall, wore spectacles and was an attorney. Our relationship with him, his wife, Ciocia Mania, and my cousin Niusia, two years my junior, was cordial but neither warm nor intimate. We visited occasionally, but they were not part of our daily life. Ciocia Rozia, my mother's younger sister, left Rzeszow after her marriage and for a while lived in Vienna, where she opened a salon as a cosmetologist on

Mariahilfe Strasse. I remember visiting her there on a number of occasions and her trying to convince my mother that all cosmetics were basically the same except for the packaging and the perfume.

I believe that my mother liked her youngest brother, Szymek, best. He was single, fun to be with, tall and rather nice looking, and he used to drop in quite often for short informal visits. Eventually, he was supposed to take over my grandparents' business, but his heart did not seem to be in it; he was hardly ever at the store. He was having a good time socially and seemed to be involved in one deal or another most of the time. Uncle Szymek Ungar spent the last few months of his life in the large Rzeszow bunker. As many as 36 people lived there in a series of underground tunnels created when the Rzeszow sewers were built. The bunker was damp, completely without light, inaccessible except through one or two building basements. I assume that Uncle Szymek escaped the Rzeszow ghetto just before its liquidation on September third, 1943. When he walked out of the bunker on an errand some months later, he was spotted by a Polish policeman and shot to death.

My Great Uncle Aciek, (Artur) my grandmother's youngest brother, was a successful attorney, involved in community and Jewish affairs but a bit of a 'bon vivant'. Uncle Aciek was part of my parents' social circle. He was single, kept company with Lola Lion for years and finally married her after the\*war. We visited Lola and her daughter, Stefcia, when we were in Israel in 1961 and it was at that time that I found out that Uncle Aciek left his Rzeszow apartment house to me and to

my cousin Aron/Adam. I gave up my rights to that inheritance to Robert Wang, Adam's son. All the kids liked Uncle Aciek because he used to kid around with us, and because of it, we were willing to tolerate his continuous, most annoying, pinching, which earned him the nickname of 'wujciu szczypak' - 'Uncle pincher'.

My mother's relationship with her first cousins, Judka and Dora, daughters of Mala Fett, my grandmother's sister, was fairly close. The two sisters were very different both in appearance and in temperament. Judka was quiet, serious, studious and could always be depended on, while Dora was smart, sexy, attractive and flirtatious. Dora married a young, handsome attorney, Zygmunt Radlmesser, and left him shortly after their son, Karol, was born (Karolek was my mother's godson) to marry a young Polish officer by the name of Mroz. I do not remember what happened to him, but I do know that subsequently Dora married another Polish officer by the name of Bielanski, who was commander of a Polish squadron that flew with the RAF in England during the war. Karolek (Kalman) was raised by his father, who lived and practiced law in Rzeszow, by his grandmother, my Great Aunt Mala, as well as by his aunt, Judka, who remained in the picture even after her marriage to a young refining engineer. Judka and her husband, Artur Baron, lived in Wschodnice, near Boryslaw, and my Great Aunt Mala and Karolek went there as soon as the war broke out. Karolek's father, Zygmunt Radlmesser, joined them there as soon as it was possible for him to leave the Polish army, but was killed there shortly after his arrival. Aunt Mala

committed suicide the night before the Drohobycz ghetto was liquidated, and Artur Baron, with whom Karolek spent most of the war years, was shot brutally by the Germans the last day before liberation.

I have spoken to Karolek/Kalman many times about his wartime experiences, usually over endless cups of coffee late in the evening, and I have been able to piece together the tragic aspects of his childhood and the horrors he endured during the war. I believe, that since you know his children well and are close to them, it is more appropriate for you to talk to them directly about it. When Karolek arrived in Israel illegally he was sent to a Youth Aliyah kibbutz where he found love, acceptance and a Youth Aliyah ‘family’, whom he continued to visit regularly throughout the years. Kalman met Bathsheva in the army, they fell in love, married and together were able to make a wonderful new life. His mother, Dora, had no contact with him until a number of years after the war when it was necessary for her to leave Poland. She then came to Israel, started to look for him and to claim her ‘rights’ as a mother. I once asked Kalman why he became the caring, responsible son and his answer to me was, “well, after all, she is my mother”. Kalman died suddenly of a heart attack on March fourth 1998. He meant a great deal to me. I am grateful that his having been a flight engineer for El Al afforded us the opportunity to really get to know each other again and to establish a close, loving relationship not only with him and with Batsheva but also with their children, Orna, Tamir and Asaf.

I wonder how much Robert Wang knows about his

immediate ancestors . . . . he was too young to have known any of them, too young to remember. My mother's uncle, Eliasz Wang, married my father's oldest sister, Surcia, (nee Wang) but, to the best of my knowledge, the two families were not related. It did, however, create a double relationship for our two families through my mother as well as through my father. Uncle Eliasz had a long, black beard and was the only one who was Orthodox among his siblings. He owned a furniture store, located on 3rd of May Street - the main street in town - on a corner, not far from our home. Uncle Eliasz was stern, had a bad temper and was supposedly mean, while his wife, Ciocia Surcia, was truly a unique person - kind, warm, good, patient, understanding, giving and forgiving - and beloved by all. She never complained, although her life was not an easy one. Their daughter, Sydzia, was melancholic and considered by many 'not quite normal', a condition most likely caused by a fall from a tree or off a swing when she was very little, which no doubt caused a certain amount of brain damage. With a large enough dowry, a marriage was arranged and they had three children. Lusiek was the oldest, named after my Aunt Surcia's father and my grandfather, Layzer. He was adventurous and rambunctious. There were also two beautiful, golden-haired twins, Jadzia and Rozia, born two-and-a-half years later. They were nine years old when the war broke out in 1939. With the birth of the children, Ciocia Surcia's responsibilities increased from taking care of her daughter, Sydzia, to raising another family, her grandchildren, which she did quietly and lovingly till the end.

In 1921, the Constitution of the new Polish state officially

granted equal rights to Jews as Jewish life was undergoing increasing secularization. Knowledge of the Polish language was growing, old forms of dress began to disappear and Jewish customs were modernized, but the assimilation did not prevent discrimination and anti-Semitism. From the circle of highly assimilated Jews came many of Zionism's leaders and ideologists as well as those who were attracted to the Communist ideology: a significant number of young Jewish intellectuals became the leaders of the Communist Party of Poland. Among them were the sons of Wujciu Eliazs and Ciocia Surcia. Szymek, the younger one, was killed in Paris by the French police during a student demonstration in the early 1930's; I remember the shock and grief felt by the entire family at the time of his death. We visited his grave when we were in Paris in 1936 at the Colonial Exhibition, and it was then that I found out that he did not die of pneumonia, as we were told at the time of his death.

Like Szymek, his brother Aron/Adam, was brilliant. My father and Aron had a close and very special relationship, based not only on mutual affection but also on mutual respect - the capitalist and the young communist, talking, sharing, arguing and planning. Aron had a degree in mechanical engineering but had a difficult time finding a job due to his political activities, which intensified after his brother's death. He was imprisoned for short periods of time and as far as I can remember worked in his father's store. Before he married Rena Wistreich, also a Party member, he spent a great deal of time at our home, and although twenty years my senior, spent much time with me as

well. I remember his taking me for walks “Pod Kasztanami” - ‘Under the Chestnuts’ - a park around the Lubomirski Castle, playing ball with me there, carving out baskets from chestnuts, and telling me lots of interesting things, among them all about magnolia trees, since the only magnolia tree in Rzeszow grew there. I loved Aron...

Aron’s and Rena’s little son, Szymus, died from complications during an influenza epidemic in 1937, and then, in 1938, just before the war, Robert was born. When the Russians marched into Eastern Poland, Aron got a top engineering job in the interior of Russia from where he sent my father an unforgettable letter comparing life in Russia to a continuous holiday: people dressed like on Purim, lived in homes reminiscent of Sukkoth, ate like on Yom Kippur, etc., etc. And yet, he continued to believe and to work for the cause and for the system. In a letter to my father, written in 1958, he wrote, “following the beliefs of my youth I am working to make the world a better place to live in”.

Aron/Adam became Minister of Economic Planning in post-war Poland and continued to work 12-14 hours a day, despite a serious heart condition; he died ‘of a broken heart’ on January third, 1963 at the age of sixty. When did his disillusionment begin? In 1957, just before the new mass immigration of Jews from Poland, my father offered to bring Robert to the United States and to subsidize his stay and education here, but that was declined with thanks. Rena said little about Adam’s feelings during her visit with us in the summer of 1962, although the CIA agents, who visited us several times during

that period of time, claimed that due to anti-Semitism Adam did not and could not reach the position he should have attained in Poland. Subsequently the CIA tried to persuade me to arrange a meeting with Adam in Paris so that I would influence him to defect to the United States. I did not know what to do, particularly since I was quite certain that it would be to no avail, but before I could reach any decision, Adam died suddenly.

Rena's stay with us in the summer of 1962 was memorable not so much because she insisted on sleeping on the living room floor, (she claimed that our beds were too soft) drank only warm orange juice, criticized practically everything we showed her, but mainly because of the unexpected visits of the Polish Ambassador and his entourage. He would arrive unannounced from Washington in his official black limousine, distribute small Polish flags to the neighborhood children, assure them that Poland loved and admired the United States, and then, around our dinner table, expounded in glowing terms the accomplishments of the People's Republic of Poland. My main problem was where to feed the chauffeur, but since we had no maid with whom he could share the meal separately in the kitchen, he usually wound up eating with us in the dining room, I believe, much to the discomfort of the Ambassador and of his wife.

In pre-war Poland millions believed that if the Jews left, all the country's problems would disappear. After 1945, only a handful of Jews remained in Poland, and most of those also left in the new mass immigration of 1957. Following the Israeli victory in the 1967 Six-Day-War and the anti-Jewish purge in the Communist Party, most Poles applauded Israel's victory, not

because they loved the Jews but because the Soviets were on the side of the Arabs. In 1968, the government unleashed a campaign against those who were not “real Poles” and whose loyalties supposedly lay elsewhere. And so, the few Jews who still remained in Poland left in 1968; among them were Rena, her son Robert and his wife Ewa, who ironically were practically forced to leave for “Zionist beliefs”. Raised by parents for whom Jewishness was an opiate for the people, Robert certainly was not and is not a Zionist; even today he does not seem to have any emotional connection to Judaism or to the past, or at least that is what he claims. Nevertheless, it was Robert who established and who maintains contact with us - his family and his connection both to Judaism and to the past. Robert contacts us and visits us whenever he is in the States and we have also hosted his children, Irene and Philippe. I really like Robert and always enjoy the time we spend together - and when I look at him, I see Adam. Ewa and Robert live in a suburb of Paris, Wissous.

I do not know the exact relationship to the Weissberg family, but believe that Edka Weissberg was my grandmother Gizela’s sister. I do not remember Edka at all, since she died at a very young age when I was very little; her two small daughters, Niusia and Izka, were my mother’s first cousins. Our relationship with Pinkas Weissberg and with the two girls was a close and personal one. My father also had a business relationship with Uncle Pinkas, who was co-owner of the estate Jarocin. Uncle Pinkas, Niusia and Izka were frequent guests at our house. My mother liked the girls and tried to help them and

I, in turn, spent many hours in the beautiful, lilac surrounded garden of their villa on Jagiellonska Street, a few houses from where we lived. I always had free access to their garden, played there with my friends, practiced French with my ‘mademoiselle’, until Uncle Pinkas sold the villa to my father’s brother. Uncle Herman. Once that occurred, according to Ciocia Fajdzia’s orders, I was no longer welcome there. The bunches of lilacs, which used to fill every vase in our house during the month of May, also ceased to arrive.

The Weissbergs moved from Rzeszow to the south-eastern part of Poland, both Nusia and Izka got married - and the last time I saw Izka was during the war in Lwow, where she lived with her husband; they were only married a short time and had no children. I guess I am the only one left who remembers them....

Since Robert Wang is related to us through my father’s as well as through my mother’s family, in actuality the only surviving member on my mother’s side was Kalman. We were close and cared for each other. It means a great deal to me that we had a loving relationship with him and with his family and I hope that you will maintain it with Orna, Tamir and Asaf.

## **MY MOTHER'S FAMILY**

**(Gizela WANG married Jacob UNGAR)**

(My maternal grandmother's maiden name is Wang, the same as my father's, but to the best of my knowledge the two families were NOT related to each other. I have no information about my grandfather's family, but there were five siblings in my grandmother's family.)

**ARTUR /ACIEK WANG**  
married **LOLA LION**  
in Israel after  
the war

**GIZELA WANG\*** married  
**JAKUB (Jacob) UNGAR\***  
had four children:

**Leon Ungar\*** marr.  
Mania Kleinman\*  
Daughter: Niusia\*

**Rosalia (Rozia)**  
**Ungar\*** married  
Szymon Tocker

**Szymon Ungar\***

**Emilia /Mila Ungar\***  
marr. Szymon Wang  
Daughter: Edwarda/  
Tuska (now Ellen)  
Wang married  
Walter R. Meth  
Two sons:

Robert J. Meth

Richard M. Meth  
m. Susan B. Fleisig  
(divorced)  
2 sons:  
Daniel Simon  
Michael Gregory

**ELIASZ WANG\*** married  
**SURCIA WANG\***  
had three children:

**Sydonia /Sydzia**  
**Wang\*** marr. Mundek  
Goldfluss\*  
Son: Lusiek\* and  
twin daughters  
Jadzia\* and Rozia\*

Szymon Wang  
(died in the 1930s)

**Aron /Adam Wang**  
m. Rena Wistreich  
Son: Szymon Wang  
died in 1937

Son: Robert  
marr. Ewa  
Nalberczinska  
Two children:

Irene Wang

Philippe Wang  
m. Veronigue

**MALA WANG\*** married  
**Mr. FETT**  
had two daughters:

**Judyta (Judka) Fett\***  
marr. Artur Baran\*  
Daughter

**Dora Fett** married  
Zygmunt Radlmesser\*;  
m. Mr. Mroz  
m. Mr. Bielanski  
Son: Karol Radlmesser/  
Kalman Lahav marr.  
BatSheva Levi  
had 3 children:

Tamir Lahav/Radlmesser  
and Tally have son  
Nimrod

Orna Lahav m. Ephraim  
Jeger: have two  
sons, Ilan and Doron,  
and daughter, Mor

Asaf Lahav/Radlmesser

**EDKA WANG** married  
**PINKAS WEISSBERG\***  
had two daughters:

**Niusia Weissberg\***  
married\*

**Izka Weissberg\***  
married\* (had  
no children)

\* Perished in the Holocaust

Please Note: ELIASZ WANG, my grandmother's brother, married SURCIA WANG, my father's sister.  
The three 'Szymon Wang's' mentioned above (my father, Surcia and Eliaszes son, and Adam's  
and Rena's son) are obviously different people.

## MY FATHER' S FAMILY

My father's family was large and close-knit - five brothers and three sisters, who grew up in a well-to-do observant Orthodox family in the village of Rakszawa, near the town of Lancut, approximately twenty kilometers from Rzeszow.

Lancut was famous for the world renown Palace, owned first by the Lubomirski and later on by the Potocki families, and I believe that the role my father played in protecting the contents of the palace during World War I was an important factor in my father's future financial success. To show his appreciation, count Potocki was instrumental in my father's becoming the director of an agrarian bank before he and my mother married in 1920. Intelligence, initiative, drive and leadership made my father head of the family after my grandfather, Eliezer, died during the 1918 influenza pandemic. My father, born in 1890, was the third oldest son, and when he moved to Rzeszow, his siblings followed. (My father's youngest sister, Hannah, died during the 1918 influenza epidemic.) All the Wang children were brought up with a basic secular education and a thorough Jewish education, spoke Yiddish at home, but except for the two oldest, Uncle Moses and Ciocia Surcia, they gave up the strict Orthodoxy, and spoke Polish at home. All of them assimilated, the men were clean shaven, the women had their natural hair (not wigs, as was customary in Orthodox families) and they all wore western, fashionable clothes.

Uncle Moses, the oldest brother, owned a lumber yard on the outskirts of Rzeszow. He was a short, slight, soft spoken, gentle man, who gave up the side curls and 'kaftan', but kept his religion as well as a short, well trimmed beard, and a head covering at all times. He was considerate and tolerant to such an extent, that when I once spent a week at his home during one of my parents' winter vacations, he allowed my governess to bring ham into his house - on double thicknesses of paper, to be sure,- so that I would not feel deprived! I spent the week there by choice, since I was obviously always made to feel comfortable and welcome there, not to mention the fact that there were many strange and exciting things going on in their house, like my uncle laying phylacteries and observing other religious rituals, which I had never seen at our house. My grandmother, Blima, lived with Uncle Moses and his wife, Bercia, until she died peacefully in a chair, with an open prayer book in her lap. I was very little when she died and I really do not remember her....

Ciocia Bercia was a fastidious housekeeper, who wiped the floor after each step you took into the house. She had a long, pointed chin and was the least attractive and least outgoing of all my aunts, but she must have had a heart of gold since she allowed not only me but all of my friends to spend hours in their lovely garden on 'ulica' Krakowska. We not only played endless games there (including 'war' or performing 'plays' for which we charged our parents and relatives admission), but we also picked gooseberries, currants and strawberries, climbed the trees to pick apples, cherries and chestnuts, trampled on flower

beds and came up to the house for a drink of water, soda with syrup, and, of course, to use the bathroom. I still correspond with one of my childhood friends, Zygmunt Schneeweiss, who often refers to the afternoons we spent together and the fun we used to have there. Thinking of it now, it is hard to believe that my Aunt Berta not only tolerated us and allowed us to come, but in fact accepted us graciously and hospitably.

I had little contact with their children, Szmulek, Sydzia and Rumek, who were much older than I. Szmulek studied medicine in Italy since it was almost impossible at that time for a Jew to get into medical school in Poland; he married Lidka during the war and was killed shortly thereafter on the Russian front. Sydzia was a quiet, shy, not particularly attractive nice young woman, for whom a marriage to a personable, handsome young doctor, Szymek Ehrenreich, was arranged. Uncle Moses enabled him to open a pediatric practice in Rzeszow, and after their marriage, all the children in the family became his patients. After the birth of their son, Julek, Sydzia devoted her life to the child and to the home, while Szymek was the socially active member of the household. They seldom went out together. In my eyes, it was a sad, mismatched union, but then, in those days, marriages were often arranged and the financial aspect was an important factor; without a dowry, Sydzia may have never found a husband, and Szymek Ehrenreich could not have established himself as a physician. The last time I saw Szymek Ehrenreich was during the occupation in Lwow, while Ciocia Bercia, Sydzia and Julek wound up in the Zaklikow ghetto, (see 'Poreby Kupienskie and other Estates'.)

Rumek, the oldest son, was a Hashomer H'atzayir Zionist, who after graduation from 'gimnazium' (high school) left with his girl friend, Ewa, for Palestine. Viewed in the light of the world situation in the 1930s, the Zionist program appeared fantastic, utopian: Palestine was a British mandate, populated by Arabs - a small scrap of land, mostly desert, economically and culturally backward. Elements of Polish romanticism and the ideals of service and sacrifice had a profound influence on Zionism at the time: young Polish Jews, carried away by the mystical, messianic substance of Jewish cultural tradition, found faith, hope and purpose for their lives in Palestine. Rumek and Ewa, with a number of other young Jewish idealists from Rzeszow, established kibbutz Ein Hamifratz, where they spent the rest of their lives. Rumek's departure was quite a shock to my aunt and uncle, who had hoped that Rumek would go into my uncle's lumber business and stay close to home, as it was customary at the time. Palestine was 'on the other side of the world', not to mention the danger and the hardships that awaited them there. I still remember when Rumek, Ewa, and their little son, Yoram, came to Rzeszow to visit in 1936; there were endless parties and festivities and a variety of inducements and bribes was offered them to stay in Rzeszow! No one could have predicted then that they would be the only ones who would be safe and after the war offer a haven to Uncle Moses, who was the only survivor from their immediate family. I am grateful that I had an opportunity to see Uncle Moses again in 1960 in Ein Hamifratz, when he was eighty years old. He was the same warm, kind, tolerant man whom I remembered from Rzeszow,

proud of Israel, the kibbutz, Rumeck and Ewa, his grandson, Yoram, Yoram's wife Shlomit, and his great grandson, Ejal. He was leading an Orthodox life in a leftist kibbutz, and only sorry that Yoram and Shlomit changed the family name from Wang to Tomer. (He did not know at the time that with that name change there will be no Jewish Wangs left from our family, since neither Leszek's nor Robert's offsprings are Jewish, and all the other surviving Wang men had daughters.)

My father's eldest sister, Surcia, married my mother's uncle, Elias, whose family name was also Wang, but to the best of my knowledge the two families were unrelated in spite of the same name. I have written about that branch of the family under "My Mother's Family" since there is a double relationship to me with Surcia's and Elias's descendants - through my father as well as through my mother.

Uncle Herman, my father's brother, was the jolly one in the family, good natured with twinkly eyes, a bit rotund and easy going. I guess he had to be, since according to all reports, his wife, Ciocia Fajdzia was not easy to get along with. My childhood recollections of Ciocia Fajdzia are all negative: being thrown out from their garden with threats of sicking her dog on me should I return (come to think of it, considering what we did in Uncle Moses's and Ciocia Bercia's garden, I don't know if I can really blame her), not allowing us to keep our car in their garage a few houses away from where we lived, and her refusing to donate clothing or help the German Jewish refugees of Polish descent, who passed through Rzeszow after being forced out of Germany by Hitler in 1938. She had a handsome,

stem face, and I can still see her strutting down the main street of our town, arm-in-arm with her daughter, my cousin Rozia. Could I have been influenced by my mother, who was not particularly fond of her? No doubt. I must also admit that she was no longer stem or foreboding when we met again after the war in New York. In fact, she was warm and hospitable and especially fond of Walter, though still rather despotic to her immediate family, particularly to her daughters-in-law and to her son-in-law. I appreciated the fact that she never reproached me for not having called sooner, but always welcomed my telephone calls or visits most graciously. (Ciocia Fajdzia and Uncle Herman lived in the apartment house my father used to own on Van Sicklen Avenue in Brooklyn, and after my father's death, Walter used to go there weekly to take care of whatever needed attention.)

There is no doubt that Ciocia Fajdzia held the reins in that family, and the fact that Uncle Herman was the only one of the five brothers in business for himself and by himself, was due to her influence. Uncle Herman was in the lumber business as well, made railroad pilings and tressles from raw material for export abroad, primarily to Germany. He had a number of lumber mills - one of them in Przeworsk and another one in Bogumilowice, near Tarnow, I believe - and was successful. He did not have a percentage in any of my father's enterprises, as the other brothers did. Although all the brothers were extremely close, we did not have much contact with Uncle Herman's family, and I really got to know him better during our trip to the United States in 1939. Likewise, I only got to know

Rozia better here in the States, since before the war she was already married to Dr. Arbeit, a tall, intelligent looking young physician from Stanislawow. (see: “Rzeszow”) After the war, Rozia remarried and moved to Havana, Cuba, with her second husband, Simon Menchel, where Sigi was born. A few years later the Menchels moved to New York. Rozia and Simon now live in Miami Beach and Sigi, a forensic pathologist, lives with his family in Manlius, New York.

I barely knew my cousin Stefan/Shlomek in Rzeszow. He, too, studied medicine in Italy, and during the war was supposedly forced to get married by the Germans. I was told that Stefan was living with a Polish girlfriend in whom one of the German officers was interested; since the Germans needed Stefan’s medical services he was given the choice of getting killed or getting married to a Jewish woman within twenty four hours. Stefan chose Mina, who was quite attractive, a pharmacist by profession, but about whom he knew nothing else. Although both Stefan and Mina survived the war, Stefan had a most tragic life. Mina was emotionally ill, their beautiful, talented daughter Victoria, born on V.E. Day, suffered an aneurysm in her early forties and is blind, totally paralyzed and unable to speak. Their younger daughter, Irene, who was gifted and brilliant, also became emotionally ill in her early twenties and recently committed suicide. After the war, Stefan and his family settled in Toronto, Canada, where Stefan practiced medicine. Vicky married a neurosurgeon and moved to Vancouver, where she is still living in a nursing home, since she is totally disabled. (At the time of her aneurysm she had four

small children; a few years after her illness, her husband divorced her and remarried.)

Sydzia, Fajdzia's and Herman's younger daughter, looked like a Gypsy; she had black, shiny, wavy hair, her complexion was dark, her large, black eyes sparkled, she was smart and witty and full of life. Although she was five years my senior, we had some contact through our cousin Hela with whom we were both friendly and who - age wise - was just in the middle. Sydzia's romance with my friend Marian Verstandig's cousin, who was studying medicine in Italy, was the talk of the town, particularly since shortly before the war broke out, Sydzia unexpectedly married Michal Landes. Young Verstandig was tall, handsome and poor, while Michal Landes was short, stocky, red faced, and came from a very wealthy family in Lwow. Of course, such things happened all the time in prewar Poland - marrying money and family - but then, Sydzia truly did not need to marry for money since my uncle was quite wealthy, and the Verstandig family was more than respectable. Family background and reputation was something that mattered very much, it was often by far more important than money, and was a considerable factor in arranging introductions. Sydzia, Michal Landes and young Verstandig all perished in the Holocaust.

Karol/Kopek was the youngest in that family, and although he was invited to my birthday parties, we did not socialize otherwise. Growing up he was a quiet, rather dull boy, and till this day he seems to be totally under the influence of his Russian born wife. Mania. Karol, Mania, their daughter Sylvia and her family, live in Melbourne, Australia.

Uncle Herman, Ciocia Fajdzia, Rozia and Karol, like the other members of my father's family who survived the war (Uncle Moses, Edek and his family, Ciocia Henia, Hala and Leszek) spent the war years in Russia. (See "The War Breaks Out") The hardships and deprivations they endured in exile were basically the same as those suffered by the Russian people: they lived cramped together, several families to a hut, they worked hard, did physical labor to which they were not accustomed, (Ciocia Henia, for example, mixed cement), had sparse, very simple food, but their children did go to school, and their suffering and lifestyle, for which they were ill prepared, was no different from the rest of the Russian population in the area.

At first they were interned as an enemy element, but after the Sikorski Pact of 1941, restoring diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR, was signed, they were transferred to better locations within the Soviet Union and given the same basic rights as the rest of the population. They were never persecuted as Jews. (Wladyslaw Sikorski became premier of the Polish Government in exile after the fall of Poland in 1939 and was Commander in Chief of the Polish forces that continued to fight alongside the Allies throughout the Second World War.) I still remember Uncle Herman reminiscing about their life in Russia, how they picked ferns and branches during the day to cover the holes in the roof of their hut, only to have them eaten up by animals during the night! And that's where Karol met Mania - in Russia. I only met them once when they were here together with Stefan and Rozia and her family at the time of

Ciocia Fajdzia's unveiling, when they all stayed at our house. Karol's and Mania's daughter, Sylvia, also visited us once with her family many years ago.

My father's sister, Aunt Matlusia, her husband Szymon, and their two daughters, Rena and Hela, did not survive. My Aunt Matlusia was a wonderful, warm and giving person, who, I believe, suffered from depression, since there were many times when she was not well enough to receive us or to visit, but I never heard of a physical ailment. Our relationship with my father's sisters and their families was a close and intimate one, and although both Ciocia Surcia and Ciocia Matlusia were very different from my mother in lifestyle and attitudes, my mother liked and appreciated them. My uncle, Szymon Grubner, owned a large, successful furniture business in Rzeszow, he was tall and fairly nice looking, and I believe that both girls, Rena and Hela, inherited his outgoing nature. Rena, the older one, although not really beautiful, was very attractive, poised, quite sophisticated and always beautifully dressed and groomed. Hela, two-and-a-half years my senior, was vivacious, outgoing, warm, very popular and had a wholesome attractiveness. She had a way of tossing her short, shiny brown hair in a way that never failed to catch ones attention. She had graduated from the 'gimnazium' but had no plans for further study: she was 'at home', waiting to get married, as so many young girls did at the time. Despite the difference in our ages - and it was a fairly large one at the time - Hela and I were quite close; she was a wonderful source of information on dating and on whatever was going on in town, particularly in the generation

of all my older cousins. I loved Hela. Rena got married shortly before the war to Alexander (Olek) Neuman, a good looking, charming young cardiologist, who survived the Holocaust and practiced medicine in Haifa after the war. I spoke to Olek once over the telephone during our first trip to Israel in 1961, and we reminisced about his and Rena's wedding in Tarnow, which all of us attended. Unfortunately, I did not get to see him. I was told that his second wife, who supposedly looked just like Rena, did not want him to resume old family relationships.

The relationship between my father and Uncle Fulek was an extremely close one, perhaps too close. From as far back as I can remember. Uncle Fulek followed my father, both literally and in every other respect. I can still picture all the brothers walking through our apartment, one following the other, with my father at the head, arguing and discussing in Yiddish, and yet, it was somehow different with Uncle Fulek. Perhaps my father overpowered him and did not give him the opportunity to develop on his own, but the fact remains that Uncle Fulek was always totally dependent on my father, loved him unquestioningly, perhaps even more than his wife and his children. I know that Uncle Fulek would never do anything my father would disapprove of, and I also know that my father loved him and took care of him all of his life. This in itself, no doubt, created a problem for Ciocia Henia, bred resentment and hostility, and although not expressed openly, it existed and perhaps to some extent still exists as far as Hala is concerned, if only on a subconscious level. Fulek and my father were inseparable to the extent that when my father and I left Poland in 1940 Uncle

Fulek came with us, leaving Ciocia Henia, Hala and Leszek behind, while Uncle Herman, who had the same possibility to leave as we did, chose to stay with Ciocia Fajdzia and the family. But, more about that later.

My mother and Ciocia Henia did not particularly like each other but they tolerated each other; their relationship was strictly limited to family occasions. Ciocia Henia was extremely close and devoted to her own family, particularly to her two sisters, she had a close relationship with Szymek Ehrenreich, Uncle Moses's son-in-law, and she socialized with Aron/Adam and his wife, Rena, with whom she played bridge. She liked to associate with local physicians and other intellectuals, she was vivacious and very pretty, particularly after she dyed her hair blond, shortly before the war — I really thought that she was beautiful then! I don't think that Henia and Fulek had much in common and she most likely married him for financial security. She continued to help her siblings, in fact, one of her brothers-in-law became my father's secretary, no doubt at Uncle Fulek's suggestion, after the secretary my father had for years married and moved out of town. My father's secretary was a lovely woman with whom I had a friendly relationship, and I was not too happy with her replacement, particularly since Henia's brother-in-law was an unpleasant, rude man, at least to me!

Just like Ciocia Fajdzia adored and was devoted to her children, Ciocia Henia, too, was a wonderful mother to Hala and to Leszek and had an extremely close relationship with them, particularly during and after the war. Hala and I played a lot together when we were little, but once we started school

(I attended Polish schools and Hala the Hebrew Day School), we more or less went our separate ways, although of course we continued to see each other. Family life was different then: we visited on all Holidays and celebrated birthdays together. Blanka told me during her visit from Australia, that my father insisted that all the brothers and sisters-in-law visit Ciocia Surcia every Friday afternoon, before the onset of the Sabbath. We all lived in the same town and really did not have any choice as to whether or not we wanted to visit any family member or participate in a family function — we simply went, and most of the time enjoyed it. We also formed and maintained family relationships in spite of age differences. When Leszek was born there was general rejoicing in the family since there would be one more Wang to carry on the family name. I do not know how happy Hala was about her new baby brother, particularly since Leszek turned out to be an adorable and smart little boy. Hala and I developed a close personal relationship after the war, we corresponded extensively and I visited her in Montreal before she was able to join her family in the United States. We are friends in addition to being first cousins. As far as Leszek is concerned, I really got to know him and care for him here in the United States, when the difference in our ages no longer mattered. I admired many of his qualities and appreciated the fact that he did not seem to transfer family resentments to me, even if Uncle Fulek occasionally expected Leszek to treat me the way Uncle Fulek treated my father. I truly regret the fact that there is virtually no relationship between Leszek's children and mine.

Blanka, my father's youngest brother's daughter, was one month younger than Leszek, I remember her as a cute little girl with dark blond spiral curls a la Shirley Temple, who was the rage at the time. Blanka was also the only person I was ever jealous of because my father, who was not a demonstrative person, showered her with affection. Blanka was really adorable. (It also seems that my father only lost his inhibitions with little children, as I subsequently saw with Ricky and Bobby. Could he have been afraid of rejection?) The only thing I remember about Blanka's parents' wedding is my beautiful pale blue dress with ruffles, bought for the occasion at Bittman's in Vienna, and that I had a wonderful time finishing everybody's drinks while the adults were dancing! Or did my mother tell me about it?

I liked Edek, my father's youngest brother, and his wife, Frydzia, a lot. Prior to their marriage I saw Edek daily since he always ate dinner at our house, and later on he came to our house several times each week to discuss Poreby with my father. Edek spent a lot of time in Poreby, particularly when the ponds were being built and the fisheries established. He supervised the fish operations and dealt directly with all the peasants on a one-to-one basis: he got along with them, worked with them, and on more than one occasion got his hands dirty in the process. Occasionally, when I was in Poreby, he even let me 'help'. Edek always found time to joke or play with me. His wife, Frydzia, was sweet and nice and cheerful and had the capacity to enjoy even the simplest things in life, including food! She savored, with true delight, mushrooms prepared with

cream, dark peasant bread with butter or scrambled eggs cooked by Mrs. Skrzypek, the forester's wife. Frydzia never had a bad word to say about anyone, and even my mother liked her for her lack of pretentiousness and for her basic honesty. Edek, Frydzia and Blanka spent the war years in Russia. Blanka married Henry Klein in Germany after the war, and afterwards they all emigrated to Melbourne, Australia. Today, Blanka's and Henry's son, Ron, is running the family's business there.

As a child, I never questioned my father's role in the family and considered it normal that he would assume the responsibility for everyone's welfare and well being. I knew that there were many cousins who worked for my father, but since they did not live in Rzeszow, I really only remember well Uciu Rosenbach, and to a much lesser degree, Salek Stein. (See 'Poreby and other Estates') Uciu was the youngest of the Rosenbachs. (See chart of the Rosenbach family) When he was orphaned at the age of 13, he moved in with my grandparents in Rakszawa and lived with them until his marriage to Ewa Pinkas. Uciu and his family then lived in Bogumilowice, near Tarnow, and he visited us a few times each year. I welcomed his visits with great pleasure since Uciu always saw to it that I had at least one, but usually two canaries. (I believe that Uciu bred canaries as a hobby.) In fact, one year I had a male as well as a female bird. The eggs hatched and there were baby birds, but they did not last too long for reasons unknown to me. I was heartbroken. Anyway, thanks to Uciu, I had a cage with singing canaries in my room during most of my childhood, and really enjoyed having them there.

I met Uciu's two sons, Asiu/Arthur and Lejziu/Larry, (see 'Poreby and other Estates') in the United States after the war. Asiu was the first one to come and settle here from Germany and Lejziu jumped ship in 1953. After consulting with my father, who I believe helped both of them, he too stayed in New York. Both of them managed to make a new, quite successful life for themselves, married, had children, and I am still occasionally in contact with both of them. We see each other at weddings and funerals and occasionally talk over the telephone. It was with their help that I was able to reconstruct our relationship with the Rosenbach branch of the family.

I met the other Rosenbachs, Josiu, his wife Bronia and their two children, Regina (Gina) and Arek, after the war here in the United States. Before the war they lived in Przemysl and Josiu used to work for my father and for Uncle Herman; they survived the war years in Russia. For a while, while my father was alive, we maintained contact with them through my father. Then, for a number of years, we exchanged New Year cards and met at other peoples' weddings and funerals until we ran into Gina and Arek accidentally in the restaurant of an Atlantic City Casino in August of 1995. As a result of this meeting, we attended Gina's son's wedding, we talk to each other occasionally over the telephone and we keep in touch.

At that wedding, we also renewed our acquaintanceship with the Coopers. Hannah Rosenbach, Uciu's and Josiu's sister, was married to a Mr. Czuper. She was killed tragically in 1920 during a pogrom after World War I, leaving behind three small children, among them Tobias. Prior to World War II, the

Czupers lived first in Przeworsk and then in Przemysl. When they came to the United States from Poland in 1969, Tobias changed the family name from Czuper to Cooper, they settled in Chicago and began a respiratory supply business, which became extremely successful in a very short time. I met them for the first time at the Plaza Hotel in New York. Since the few surviving family members lived in the New York area, Tobias decided that the actual wedding ceremony and family reception for his son, Roman, and his beautiful bride, Barbara, a Polish movie actress, will be held in New York and not in Chicago. Tobias died five years ago, but his wife Regina and his son, Roman, seem to be continuing the family business most successfully. (See chart of the Rosenbach family)

Another branch of the family, my father's cousins, the Spiegels (children of my grandfather's sister, Rivka Wang Spiegel), grew up in the village of Rakszawa where the children of both families spent their childhood and youth together. Their relationship seems to have been a close one since they maintained contact for many years after the Spiegels moved to America. The Spiegels were among the 18 million immigrants who arrived in the United States from southern and eastern Europe between 1881 and 1910. To them, America was the square mile on the Lower East Side of New York, where they settled. Like thousands of other adolescents they were here alone, unsupervised, uneducated and poor, but determined to make a life for themselves. They were a one-generation working class; eventually, the sweatshop workers and pushcart hawkers became entrepreneurs—from worker to contractor, to jobber,

to wholesaler, to manufacturer. Regardless of the degree of their personal success, however, and whether they succeeded or failed financially, they all had one thing in common: they all educated their children for something better.

I first met that part of our family during our trip to New York in 1939, when we were the ‘wealthy visitors’ from Poland. The affection, warmth and hospitality extended to us then, was no different when we returned to New York in 1941 as no longer wealthy immigrants. Over the years, Aunt Goldie often reminisced about my grandparents’ home in Rakszawa, my aunts, Surcia and Matlusia, and their childhood together. She corresponded with both of them till the outbreak of the war, in fact, she was the one who told me about Sydzia Wang’s-/Goldfluss childhood accident. Aunt Goldie gave me my parents’ wedding picture, which they had sent her at the time of their marriage. (See chart of the Spiegel family)

Coming to America during the war, being here alone with my father, trying to adjust to a new country, a new way of life, new language and customs, was not easy, but the Spiegels tried their very best to create a sense of family and a sense of belonging for us. I am forever grateful to them. We were always included in all the Holidays and family celebrations, not only by my father’s cousins, the Mandlers, the Reichs and the Spiegels, but also by their children who showed us warmth, affection and acceptance and who truly became family in every sense of the word. Most of them are gone by now, but I will always remember them fondly for their support and for their kindness.

**M Y F A T H E R ' S F A M I L Y - - T H E W A N G S**

**BLIMA CHANA nee KERPER and ELIEZER (LEIZER) WANG had eight children:**

**MOSES** married  
**BERTA/BERCIA\***  
3 children:

**Sydonia/Sydzia\***  
m. Dr. Szymon  
Ehrenreich\*  
1 son Julek\*

**Abraham/Rumek**  
married Ewa  
1 son Yoram  
m. Shlomit and  
changed name  
from Wang to  
**TOMER** –  
4 sons:  
Ejal m. Nili  
1 son  
Nave married  
Catherine  
Amir  
Ori

**Shmulek\***  
m. Lidka

**SURCIA\*** married  
**ELIASZ WANG\***  
3 children:

**Sydonia/Sydzia\***  
m. Mundek Goldfluss\*  
3 children:  
son Lusiek\*  
twin daughters-  
Jadzia\* & Rozia\*

**Aron/Adam**  
m. Rena Wistreich  
2 sons:  
Szymon - died  
in 1937

Robert m. Ewa  
Nalberczinska  
2 children:  
Irene  
Philippe  
m. Veronique

**Szymon** – died  
in the 1930s

**HERMAN** married  
**FAJDZIA** nee **ORBACH**  
4 children:

**Stefan/Shlomek**  
m. Mina  
2 daughters  
Victoria who  
had 4 children  
& Irene

**Rozalia/Rozia**  
m. Dr. Arbeit  
m. Simon Menchel  
1 son:  
Sigismund/Sigi  
m. Susan  
2 children:  
Sare & Zachary

**Sydonia/Sydzia\***  
m. Michael Landes\*

**Karol/Kopek**  
m. Mania  
1 daughter Sylvia  
m. Dr. Noel Alpins  
3 daughters:  
Fiona, Venessa &  
Martine

**MATILDA/MATLUSIA\***  
m. **SZYMON GRUBNER\***  
2 daughters:

**Renata/Rena\***  
m. Dr. Alexander  
(Olek) Neuman

**Helena/Hela\***

**SZYMON/SIMON**  
married **MILA**  
**(Emilia)** nee  
**UNGAR\***  
1 daughter:

**Edwarda/Tuska**  
(now Ellen T.)  
m. Walter R. Meth  
2 sons:

Richard Martin  
m. Susan Fleisig  
divorced  
2 sons:  
Daniel Simon  
Michael Gregory

Robert Jay

**RAFAEL/FULEK**  
married **HENIA**  
nee **BOTH**  
2 children:

**Halina/Hala**  
m. Martin Igel  
2 children:

Gerard/Gary

Tamara  
m. Bruce Karp  
divorced  
1 daughter:  
Ilana

**Leopold/Leszek**  
m. Beatrice Delattre  
2 children:

Styvie  
m. Scott Sayer  
2 children:  
Keenan & Chesla

Gregory  
m. Loanne Phom  
3 sons:  
Michell, Mathew  
& Garrett

**JUDA/EDEK**  
married **FRYDA**  
nee **DRUCKER**  
1 daughter:

**Blanka**  
m. Henry Klein  
1 son:

Ronald  
has 2 sons:  
Jarod & Jason

**HANAH**  
died in 1918  
of influenza

\* Perished in the Holocaust

Please Note: My father was SZYMON WANG; his sister, SURCIA WANG, married my mother's uncle, ELIASZ WANG. To the best of my knowledge, the two families were unrelated to each other in spite of the same name. Therefore, there is a double relationship to me with Elias' and Surcia's descendants – through my father as well as through my mother.

**T H E R O S E N B A C H S - RIVKA/REBECCA KERPER, sister of my grandmother BLIMA CHANA KERPER, married SELIG ROSENBAACH and they had five children -**

**ARTUR/Uciu ROSENBAACH\***

m. Ewa Pinkas\*, lived in Bogumilowice near Tarnow; 2 sons:

**Asiu/Arthur**

married Dora - 2 children:

Evelyn

Alan - married

**Lejziu/Larry**

Married Sonia - 2 children:

Arni m. Renata

Amy m. Noam

**Joseph/Josiu ROSENBAACH**

m. Bronia Haas, lived in Przemyśl and had 2 children:

**Arek** m. & divorced

**Regina/Gina**

m. David Garfinkel - 2 children:

Eva m. Jess Drabkin  
3 children

Jamey m. Naomi

**Hana ROSENBAACH**

m. Mr. Czuper\*. Was killed in 1920 pogrom; 3 children

**Sydonia/Syda**

**Zekda**

**Tobias** m. Regina, changed name to Cooper; 3 children:

Mila - 2 children

Joseph

Roman m. Barbara  
2 daughters

(The Coopers live in Chicago)

**Blanka ROSENBAACH\***

m. Salek Stein\* lived in Zaklikow and estate Irena.  
1 son

**Tadek** now living in Israel

**Duwciu ROSENBAACH\***

married Mania\*; 1 daughter  
**Lusia\*** who was married\* and had 1 son\*

\* Perished in the Holocaust

**THE SPIEGELS - RIVKA WANG, sister of my grandfather LEIZER WANG, married HERSH SPIEGEL**

and they had 4 CHILDREN - the SPIEGELS, who immigrated from Rakszawa, Poland to the U.S.A.

**Wolvish/William SPIEGEL**

m. Rae; they lived  
in Kingston, NY

**Sidney Spiegel**

m. Sylvia;  
2 sons:

Samuel Spiegel

Elliot Spiegel

**Harry Spiegel**

m. Dorothy (Dot)  
2 daughters:

Carol & Marjorie

**Karl/Kopi Spiegel**

m. Ada Serota  
Twin sons:

Lawrence & Louis

**Martin Spiegel**

married Nancy;  
2 sons:

Albert & Steven

**Bea Spiegel**

m. Ed Wetterhahn;  
had no children

**Hannah SPIEGEL**

m. **Samuel REICH**  
3 children:

**Harry Reich** m. Bea

3 sons:

Melvin Reich, MD

Daniel Reich, MD

married Gina

Howard Reich, Atty.

m. Kathleen

2 children:

(The three Reich

brothers live in  
Southern California)

**Norman Reich**

m. Rosalind

3 sons:

Arthur Reich

m. Susan; they  
live in Chicago

Bruce Reich m. Enid

They live in

Allentow, PA

3 children:

Steven Reich m. Gail

They live in NJ

**Sylvia Reich**

m. Milton Sklar

2 daughters:

Audrey Sklar; m.

Millard Biloon

2 children

Shari Sklar - divorced

2 children

**Goldie SPIEGEL**

m. Izzie MANDLER  
3 children:

**Meyer (Mike) Mandler**

m. Barbara

2 children:

Phyllis Mandler m.

Gary Elden;

2 daughters, Roxana

and Erica. They live

in Chicago

Steward Madler

Ruth Mandler m. Ted

(Theodore) **Fishkin**

3 children:

Steven Fishkin

m. Vivian;

2 children:

Andrea and Nathaniel

Elliot Fishkin

m. Barbara;

2 daughters, Melissa

and Jennifer

Sue Anne Fishkin

m. Michael Hurwitz;

3 children, Miriam,

Max and Goldie

**Harry Mandler** m. Enid

2 sons:

Glenn Mandler

Peter Mandler m. Susan

Twins

**David SPIEGEL**

m. Bess; 1 daughter

**Ruth Spiegel** m. Sidney **Miller**

3 sons:

Harvey Miller m. Gigi

1 daughter, Michelle. Michelle

is married and has 1 daughter.

Peter Miller m. Patti

3 daughters: Allison, Tami and

Jackie. Patti and the girls

became Born-Again Christians.

Peter committed suicide.

Patti remarried; she and the

girls now live in Florida

Jonathan Miller married Ellen

2 children

## EARLY CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

**I remember** my childhood with the vagueness of a half forgotten dream; in fact, I am not sure how much I actually do remember and how much of what I remember was told to me at one time or another. By now there is no one left who can verify my memories or add to them, who can tell me which details are wrong. I know that I was a scrawny, ugly infant, and some kind soul told me when I was old enough to remember, that when my Great Aunt Mala saw me for the first time, she assured my mother that I must have been exchanged at the hospital and that she better do something about it, “since I simply could not be a child of hers”. I was named Edwarda, a man’s name with an “a” added at the end to make it feminine, but no one ever called me that. Did my parents want a boy or did they want an odd, unusual name for their daughter? Everybody called me Tuska or Tusia, supposedly the diminutive form of my name — Edwarda, Edwarduska, or Edwardusia - Tusia - but someone told me that shortly before I was born my mother read a book she liked, entitled “Corka Tuski”, (The Daughter of Tuska) and named me after its heroine.

For the first three years of my life I was on a very strict diet, probably due to a celiac condition, but once cured, I dove into the world of food with great gusto and enjoyed it to excess for the next ten years or so. I was definitely plump, or to be more exact, roly-polly, into my early teens. Many of my earliest pleasurable memories are food-connected.

We spent the first few summers of my life at the beach resort Zopot, near Gdansk, on the Baltic sea, and I can still see in my mind's eye the 'Konditorei' (pastry shop - coffee house) and the wonderful pastries we had there every afternoon. It was the highlight of the day for me! That memory is almost as vivid as the large expanse of sand and the hours I spent on the beach playing in the waves. My love of the ocean, no doubt, comes from those early summers spent at the seaside. During those years my father logged large tree trunks on the Vistula river to Gdansk for export to England and to Switzerland and he was in Zopot on business, supervising the operation. Zopot had a well known casino and three or four times a week my father left the hotel in the evening with \$100.00 (which was a lot of money in the late twenties), to play roulette or baccarat. If he lost, he was back in a relatively short time, but when he won, he would come back every hour or so, bring the winnings back to my mother and return to the casino with the same \$100.00. One Summer he bought 1/2 of a large apartment house in Gdansk with the winnings.

I also think of food whenever I think of Sanatorium Guttenbrun in Baden, near Vienna, where we spent a few vacations later on. Both my parents were young and in good health, and I guess that spending a few weeks at a sanatorium during the summer was equivalent to going to a spa for pampering and social activities. There were mineral baths and massages, an Olympic size swimming pool, tennis, bridge games and excursions, five o'clock tea dances, concerts and plays, but what I remember best are not these activities of my parents, nor

those in which I, too, participated, but the wonderful food and desserts. I remember particularly well our waitress, Fraulein Bertha, who took special delight in getting me seconds of the things I liked best. Or, did she do it in hopes of a more substantial tip?

I had a governess as far back as I can remember and spent most of my time with her at home as well as on vacations. Most of my governesses were German-speaking, particularly since neither the French Mademoiselle nor the Polish-Jewish governess I once had seemed to have worked out well. I remember best Fraulein Kaethe, perhaps because on one of our Austrian vacations she convinced my mother to buy me a boy's outfit - 'Lederhosen', knee-high socks, etc. - and I spent most of that summer pretending to be a little boy! Fraulein Kaethe stayed with us for quite a few years. She was friends with Fraulein Anni, my friend Gerda's governess. Gerda Feiwel, the daughter of my mother's childhood friend Resia Feiwel, was a dark-complexioned little girl my age, the only one who wore braces on her teeth at that time. Mr. Feiwel, a small, ugly man with a sharp mind and good sense of humor, came from a rather prominent family. It was common knowledge that he often betrayed his wife. He was an attorney, but did not practice his profession; they owned a fabric store on the Rynek, where they lived. (After Mr. Feiwel's business went bankrupt in 1930, they moved to Katowice.)

Gerda, Zygmunt Schneeweiss, Gerda's cousin Heinz Wilner, and I grew up together. Marian Verstandig joined our close-knit circle a bit later and soon thereafter became one of

‘the gang of five’. Mila Wilner, Resia’s sister, had none of Resia’s beauty, but she had a wonderful figure and dressed exquisitely. Her husband was a real dandy: he always wore a bowler hat, white spats, carried a fancy cane - and looked like no one else in Rzeszow! Heinz was two years younger than Gerda and I, a precocious little boy; his birthday was in December and we always enjoyed St. Nicholas’ visit at his birthday party. (The Wilners, too, moved away in the early thirties.) The Feiwels and the Wilners were among my parents’ closest friends. We also played occasionally with my cousins Hela and Hala, as well as with Ala Fruehling, a short, square-looking little girl with big, pale-blue, slightly bulging eyes, who was fun to be with. Staszek and Fela Fruehling, like all the parents of my early childhood friends, were friends of my parents. At large parties the governesses supervised our activities, and special entertainment was provided for us, such as pony rides, clowns and magicians. The parents came in once in a while, but were otherwise undisturbed in whatever activity they were involved in. Resia once told me proudly that she considered herself a very good and devoted mother, since she was always there in the evening when her children, Gerda and Jerzyk, were being bathed. We did not bother with Jerzyk at all, he was much younger and a real pest. Resia married my father in 1951. Heinz Wilner survived the war on Christian papers under the name of Zdzislaw Fedak; we saw him in Warsaw in 1967, where he still lives. Ala Fruehling and Marian Verstandig lived in Israel after the war and are now deceased. Zygmunt Schneeweiss and his wife, Sabina, lived in Israel until his

retirement, then moved to Bad Schwalbach in Germany. After Sabina's death, Zygmunt moved back to Tel Aviv.

One of my favorite childhood games was 'having a party'. I had a well equipped toy store and toy kitchen, and while the boys were merchants engaged in the selling of provisions, the girls did the party planning and preparations. At one of those parties, witnessed by my mother and subsequently stopped, I actually made the kids eat whatever we prepared - a concoction of grains, flour, raw food, vegetables and syrups - but usually, we just made the stuff and then substituted it with goodies from the kitchen. I loved to spend time in the kitchen, particularly in the late summer and fall when all kinds of preserves were made, and of course I had a chance to taste them all! My mother's favorite was green tomato marmalade, but I preferred gooseberry or red currant preserves. We also made blueberry wine, 'wisniak', (a cherry liqueur) a variety of syrups from berries, as well as canned vegetables, in which I was less interested.

I was sick a lot as a small child and spent a good part of the winter in bed, not only with the usual childhood illnesses, like measles, chicken pox, German measles, mumps, but also with endless colds and ear infections. I still remember when on one occasion they used hot cups on my back to relieve a severe case of bronchitis. I was fascinated and petrified at the same time, since they used a flame to heat the air inside the cup before placing it on my back (as the air cooled, it created a vacuum in the cup). Whenever I was ill my mother always spent a great deal of time with me. My favorite pastime was to play with paper dolls, which my mother drew, colored, cut out and

then created endless stories. I had a tremendous amount of toys (although I doubt that I had half as many as Daniel and Michael), but I treasured my mother's cut-out dolls and saved them from year to year. My favorite toy, however, my pride and joy, was a bright, red, battery-operated car which I could actually drive and which created quite a sensation in town. I got it from my father when he returned from one of his business trips abroad; he always brought back special and unusual gifts for me, especially when I got older.

Like all little girls I liked to dress up, and my mother's beautiful gowns and accessories were any child's dream. I usually did it on my governess's day off, early in the morning, when my mother was still asleep. My mother had her clothes made in Vienna, Lwow and Paris, and her out-of-season things as well as her gowns were stored in a walk-in closet, down the hall from my room. It's amazing that I could unwrap the tissue paper and don her gowns and high heeled shoes without doing terrible damage, particularly on the occasions when I got bold enough to use her make-up as well. It is even more of a miracle that my mother never really got angry but feigned amazement as how her gowns 'managed to find their way and land on my back'. I can still picture her reflection behind me in the full length mirror, 'advising' me what hat or gloves I should wear in order to accessorize the outfit properly. I adored my mother. I thought she was the most beautiful, most charming, most vivacious, the wittiest, the smartest, the most talented and the worldliest woman in the entire world. In retrospect, although she was not the most beautiful (Resia, on the other hand, was a

really beautiful woman at that time), she was most attractive, had a sparkling personality, was witty, smart, charming and sophisticated. Though denied a formal higher education, she was well read and well informed. She opened a new world for my father - a world of art, of music, of theater and travel, a world that otherwise would have remained unknown to him.

I imagine that like most marriages of that generation, their marriage was not exactly a love match but rather a marriage of convenience, but I do know that my father loved and admired her. Originally, he was engaged to my mother's aunt, two years her senior, who died of influenza during the 1918 epidemic. I was named after her. Overall, their marriage seemed to be quite compatible, in spite of occasional arguments and the fact that my mother was always surrounded by admirers, which did not seem to bother my father. In their social circle infidelities were not uncommon, but to the best of my knowledge, the only time my mother was seriously involved with another man was when I was quite young. I remember him well: he was Catholic, a lieutenant in the Polish army, tall, with a ruddy complexion and light brown hair, charming and suave. I guess he courted me as well, because I often spent time not only with my mother and with him, but also with him alone, going sleigh riding, attending horse shows and other special events. I liked him and enjoyed being with him but was totally devastated when I was presented with the possibility of my mother leaving my father and their getting a divorce. It was the only time I ever saw my father cry. I can still see him standing in the 'Erkier' of our dining room, tears running down his face, his arms around me,

holding me so tight that it almost hurt, and saying 'I will never let you go'. I was frightened, desperate, and saw my entire safe world collapsing. At the urging of my grandparents, I begged both my mother and father to stay together, they did, perhaps for my sake. The young lieutenant left Rzeszow either of his own accord or perhaps he was made to transfer, since nothing remained secret in a town like Rzeszow; at that time divorce was practically unheard of and marriage between a Polish officer and a Jewish divorcee rather scandalous. For me, it was beyond doubt the most terrible and traumatic experience of my otherwise happy and carefree childhood.

The only one my mother could possibly confide in at that time was her best friend, Peppa Lion. I often wondered why my mother and Peppa were best friends, but they grew up together in Rzeszow and were devoted to each other even though they were so very different. Peppa was rather quiet, tall, average looking, and neither particularly sophisticated nor interesting: she was a caring and decent human being. She came from an impoverished family of four sisters and one brother, remained single either because of lack of dowry or perhaps by choice, though I doubt that. Her sister, Lola Lion, was divorced and for years kept company with my uncle Aciek, until she married him in Israel after the war. (see: 'My Mother's Family') My mother and Peppa were inseparable: she was included in most of my parents' social activities, occasionally accompanied us on short trips or excursions, and often slept over at our house even though she lived in the same town. She was an integral part of our lives and of my childhood. (After we visited my friend,

Krzysia, in Rzeszow in 1967,<sup>1</sup> wrote her and asked if she knew anything about my mother's fate or the fate of those near and dear to me. In a letter of October 5th of that year Krystyna wrote that in June of 1942, she witnessed one of the early 'relocation' transports from the Rzeszow ghetto. Both Peppa and my friend, Olga, were on it, headed directly to the crematoria.) I loved Peppa dearly, confided in her, sought 'justice' and consolation in her arms whenever I felt that I was treated unfairly - and, of course, I could do no wrong in her eyes!

The snail incident is a good example. I was a collector of things, ranging from flowers, pebbles, chestnuts, bugs to snails, which I kept in boxes with holes to provide proper ventilation. At one point I had so many snails that the boxes would no longer house them and I shifted my collection to the space between the double window panes in my room, where they thrived for a number of days to my total delight. I fed them leaves and watched them for hours, especially since some of them were shedding their shells. (I wonder where my governess was during that time?) And then, one day, low and behold, the maid opened the window and there were snails crawling all over the apartment! If it had not been for Peppa's intervention, I guess I would have been punished most severely, but I got away with just a reprimand. As I grew older I continued to collect things, but switched to photographs of movie stars, magazines and postage stamps.

Peppa was also my biggest fan at dance recitals, where I often had a solo. I remember particularly well the time when I wore a pale green chiffon dress and danced to the music of

Dvorak's 'Humoresque'. Gerda Feiwel, too, had a solo and, wore a magnificent costume of a butterfly; I desperately wanted to switch solos with her! I started rhythmic dancing quite early and did very well in spite of my weight. Ala Fruehling was part I of the group as well, and we must have been pretty good since we often traveled out-of-town to Tarnow or Przemysl for "guest performances". It was quite a production; our costumes were custom made by special seamstresses, we wore make-up, we enjoyed being 'stars', and most of all enjoyed the out-of-town overnight stays. I was less accomplished in my piano performances; I neither had the talent nor the desire to practice, and after taking private lessons for two years, my parents finally gave up, at least temporarily. I took piano lessons again when I was about ten or eleven years old, with the same disastrous results, but at least then I could tinker popular songs for pleasure.

Vague as my memories are, they are of a happy childhood, and except for the time of my parents' threatened divorce, it was a childhood without much stress or trauma. Or, is it nostalgia for a past that perhaps was never quite as sweet as remembered? I was an only child in an affluent family, enjoyed being an only child, I was cared for, pampered, surrounded by family and friends, with a safe and secure future ahead of me.

## SCHOOL DAYS

**Saint** Jadwiga Elementary School was at the end of Jagiellonska Street, a few blocks from where we lived. It was an all girl school, (all elementary and secondary schools in Poland were segregated by sex), a melting pot for children from all walks of life. I spoke mainly German at home, both with my governess and with my parents, my knowledge of Polish was far from perfect when I started school, but I soon overcame any language difficulties I may have had, and I befriended many of the girls in my class. My childhood friend, Gerda Feiwel was in my class, but my newly formed friendships made me forget her rather quickly when she and her family moved to Katowice. I remember Niunia Friedrich particularly well. She was the daughter of the mayor of our town, lived in the mayor's residence diagonally across the street from our house, a tomboy, who had many brothers and sisters; we played cowboys and Indians for hours in their garden. Niunia and I were good friends for a couple of years until her father was transferred to another town. (Mayors-'starosta' were appointed, and not elected.)

My only other elementary school recollection is that my teacher usually ate my lunch, and since I was too embarrassed to tell my mother about it, I always came home starved. Actually, it was the 'second breakfast', eaten around ten o'clock in the morning, since lunch was the main meal of the day, served around one o'clock. There were five meals served every

day: a small breakfast, consisting of tea or coffee and rolls with butter and cheese or marmalade; a second breakfast of eggs, cold cuts and cheeses; the main meal of the day; afternoon tea with canapes and pastries; and finally a light supper. Mother was served breakfast in bed, as was I on special occasions. We always ate our main meal together, but my parents were usually out for supper. Afternoon tea was often a social get-together, either in someone's home or in a coffee house.

After six years of elementary schooling, one had a choice of continuing there for an additional two years - eight years of schooling was compulsory - or of going to the 'gimnazium' - high school - for four years. There were no electives and every one had to follow the same curriculum, except for a choice of a modern language - German or French - since in my school everyone also had to study Latin. Anyone who failed more than one subject had to repeat the entire school year and was not promoted to the next grade. After completing four years of study at the 'gimnazium' we had to pass an exam covering these four years - the small 'matura', comparable to New York's Regent exams - and then had the choice of attending a specialized 'liceum' for two years, with emphasis on either the humanities, science or commerce. At the end of those two years came the 'matura', a dreaded State examination. Education at the 'gimnazium' as well as at the 'liceum' was on a high level, geared only to the brighter youngsters, and although the girls' school in Rzeszow was a private one, there were many scholarships available for children who could not afford to pay the tuition. All boys and girls wore uniforms in Middle Schools in

Poland, thus eliminating visible differences between the rich and the less affluent.

At the time I started 'gimnazium' the Hebrew Day School was already in existence and, therefore, most of the time I was the only Jewish girl in class. As a result, all my school friends were Catholic: Irka Koncewicz, the daughter of the Chief of Police, my best friend Jaska Sakowska, whose mother was a widow and barely eked out a living, Irka Elgas, Jola Krzyzanowska, Olga Pelc, (who visited us in Cranford many years ago and wanted to be Rick's and Bobby's governess), Zoska Magdziarz, whose father was a career officer, and Krzysia Kowalczyk. I don't really understand why Krzysia and I became friends, she was older than the rest of us, a struggling student whom I often helped with homework, sweet, unassuming and unquestionably devoted to me. Our relationship was uncomplicated and undemanding and I liked the warm, unsophisticated atmosphere in her home. Krzysia married Judge Trybula shortly after the war broke out and we visited and stayed with them in Rzeszow in 1967.

I was friends with most of these girls since elementary school, although the degree of our closeness varied from year to year. For years Jaska Sakowska and I were 'best friends' and extremely close; each year, at the beginning of the school term, we would come to class at least one hour ahead of time just to make sure that we would get adjoining desks! (We did not move from our homeroom; the teachers changed classes.) Jaska was very pretty, very smart, intelligent, well read and fun to be with. In spite of the differences in our backgrounds we under-

stood each other well and shared everything - our thoughts, our dreams, our disappointments and even our clothing, although that was pretty one sided, since Jaska's family was very poor and she had very little. My mother liked Jaska and often bought her presents under one pretext or another. We had special code names for each other and secret hiding places. It was also thanks to Jaska's sister's influence (Jaska's sister was in charge of the Regional Girl Scout Division) that I was able to go away with the girl scouts one summer, a difficult task to accomplish, since membership in the scouting movement in Poland was closed to Jews. And what an experience it was! Living in the woods in tents without sanitary facilities, eating from mess kits food cooked on an open fire, telling scary stories and singing songs around the campfire - all these were exciting things that I had never experienced before. We had to stand guard alone at night, and were petrified of the slightest sound. At least once a week we had to go to the nearby village to perform good deeds. The first time Jaska and I went to the village on our good-will mission, the peasant woman handed us a pail and brush and asked us to scrub out the entire hut. From then on, we simply went down to the village, but instead of asking how we could help, we relaxed and feasted on fresh bread, cheese, milk and berries; I was lucky to have extra cash on hand. My parents and my family thought that I was crazy to give up a summer abroad for a camping girl scout vacation, but that experience was more important to me at the time than anything else - and I was grateful to my parents for understanding and for allowing it, perhaps against their better judgment.

I wanted desperately to be like every one else in spite of being the richest, the fattest and the only Jewish girl in the crowd. Today I am not quite sure whether I was actually in the 'in crowd' or on its peripheries; I felt as Polish and as patriotic as my friends, I was well-liked and fully accepted by them, and yet I knew that I was different. I still remember the discomfort I felt at public occasions, particularly those held out-of-doors, when as far as the eye could see people were kneeling during prayers while I stood erect. I also remember the times when my friends were protective of me. In the second half of the 1930's, particularly during the years 1937-1939, the signs of the approaching war coincided with a rise of nationalism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism, encouraged by political journalism. This often led to acts of violence, particularly at universities, where gangs of students attacked their colleagues. When these college students came home to Rzeszow during school vacations or before holidays, they too occasionally engaged in verbal Jew bashing, and at those times my friends made sure to walk with me on the 'korso' arm-in-arm and confront potential hecklers. I also believe that many of my friends asked their brothers or cousins to dance with me at school dances or cotillions so that I was never a wallflower at those events.

My friends and I spent countless hours together, doing what all school girls have done and are still doing - talking, listening to records, particularly to our idol, the crooner Mieczyslaw Fogg, going for walks, skating in the winter and swimming in the summer, discussing books, movies and boys. When it came to boys, I usually just listened, for although I had

friends who were boys, particularly Marian and Zygmunt, I did not date. Zygmunt, one of my closest early childhood friends, started to absent himself from our crowd once he fell in love with Sabcia, but Marian and I spent a great deal of time together and were close friends. Marian's mother, Runa Verstandig, my mother's childhood friend, died at a very young age. After her death, Marian assumed a great deal of responsibility for the care of his father, who was blind as a result of advanced syphilis. I was told that Mr. Verstandig was actually not Marian's biological father, a fact most likely unknown to Marian who was devoted to him and who spent many a Sunday afternoon taking his father for walks instead of being with us. Many of my friends claimed that Marian had a crush on me but I had no romantic interest in him. I was heavy, considered myself unattractive, and except for my relationship with Marian, my mother was extremely strict. I could not understand why she enrolled me in ballroom dancing classes and insisted that I attend them, when the curfew she imposed on me made it practically impossible for me to attend my friends' parties. I was always the first one to leave, just as the party got under way. Instead of experiencing it, I created a fantasy world of romance and excitement and told myself endless stories of adventure and love. The earlier stories of boarding school hardships, the tales of heroism displayed by the teenage underground prior to the rebirth of Poland, were now replaced in my vivid imagination by new fables of glamour, splendor and romantic involvement. I continued to tell myself these stories at bedtime for many years, and occasionally even spoke them

out loud, particularly when I was in my early teens.

Manta Jackov moved into town late in 1937, and for a year-and-a-half she and I were the best of friends, until her father was transferred and they left Rzeszow again. How this must have upset and disappointed my long-time friend, Jaska Sakowska! Manta was brilliant, beautiful and different. She was Ukrainian, Greek Orthodox, she lost her mother in early childhood and her father, a professor of Greek and Latin at the boys' 'gimnazjum' ran an unorthodox, progressive household, without specific rules of conduct. And.... Manta had a gorgeous brother. Kola, three years our senior, who had all the girls crazy about him. Can you imagine how thrilled I was to be invited to their Christmas Party, with all of Kola's friends, high school seniors, and Manta and I the only girls from our class? And can you imagine how devastated I was when a few minutes before ten o'clock a horse-drawn carriage and driver picked me up and I had to leave the party? In my early teens I no longer adored my mother; I was angry, frustrated, envious and critical - frustrated and envious because I felt that I could never compete successfully with her on any level, and critical because, in my newly awakened social awareness, I considered my mother self-indulgent and pleasure seeking. I blamed her for having a hairdresser come to the house every morning to do her hair, totally ignoring the fact that my father had a barber come daily to shave him. I blamed her for washing her face in milk when there were so many hungry people, and I blamed her for wearing a two-piece bathing suit, when in my estimation, at the age of 41, she should have been in a rocking chair knitting! I

I was angry because when boys came to our house they seemed to flock around her, instead of courting me, and because everything she did, she did so well. She could draw and paint, she knew how to sew, did beautiful needlepoint and petit-point, (the two small needlepoint pictures I still have were given to me by Janek Bikart during our visit to Warsaw in 1967; Mother had made them as gifts for his birthdays), she knew how to cook and bake - all the things that I needed help with in my school assignments. I stopped going ice skating because my mother figure skated gracefully, while I just about managed to keep my balance and skate around the rink. I guess in many respects it was the typical mother-teenage daughter relationship. Only during the war, in Lwow, did I begin to understand my mother and realize the sacrifices she had made throughout her life. We talked a lot then and our relationship became very close once again. In Lwow she also tried to build up my self-confidence, encouraged me to date, and shared her extensive wardrobe with me whenever I went out and needed something 'special' to wear.

Being athletic was definitely not my forte; gymnastics, playing volley ball or 'palant' (a game related to baseball), were things I definitely tried to avoid as much as possible. On my last birthday before the war, my parents bought me a beautiful, fully equipped two-wheeler, but in spite of repeated attempts, I never learned how to ride it. Instead, I concentrated on being 'smart'. I was a straight 'A' student and read indiscriminately. My mother never censored my reading material, whether it was pulp fiction, romances, the classics or even x-rated novels. She never

stopped me from reading Van Der Velde, the most popular sex manual at the time, when I was only about eleven or twelve. I also read Rostand's 'L'Aiglon', and Racine in French as part of my lessons with Mrs. Hakalla, (a lovely French lady who married a local lawyer), and Burnett's 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' in English, when I started to take English lessons from Mr. Freundlich late in 1938. In my teens I became interested in many different things and spent more time with my father. As a special treat for both of us he and I often went to the movies together on a Sunday afternoon, and both of us also enjoyed going to soccer games when either the local team, Resovia, or the Jewish team. Bar Kochba, played.

But, my special friend and confidante was Olga Perl. Her real name was Golda, but like so many young people with Yiddish names, she too wanted to 'Polonize' it. She belonged to the generation of young Jews with a powerful drive toward freeing themselves from the yoke of superstition imposed by rabbinic law, which governed the ghetto. Once out of the ghetto, these Jews broke with traditional customs and obtained a secular education, usually through a tremendous effort and often personal sacrifice. Olga was four to five years my senior and was engaged by my parents to be my tutor and companion when I became too old to have a governess. When I met her, Olga was a student at our 'gimnazjum', and after obtaining her 'matura' in 1938, she attended Law School; one could study law while living at home and only go to the university in Krakow for examinations. There was no father in the family of four women, all of them tiny, and they were barely able to survive

on the earnings of Olga's two sisters. I know that the refreshments were always more substantial on the days when Olga came and I also know that my mother often gave her gifts of fabric for holidays and special occasions so that she could have a new outfit made by the local dressmaker. (Buying ready-to-wear was not customary: there were all sorts of dressmakers and seamstresses, who either came to the house or did the sewing at home, from the least experienced seamstress to dress designers in the capital cities of Europe. Bed linens and tablecloths were also made to order and were often hand embroidered or appliqued.)

At first, all Olga and I did together was go for walks or do some homework - science did not always come easy to me - but soon our relationship changed and we gossiped about goings on in town and talked about our attitudes and feelings, about our hopes and plans for the future. She firmly believed that she would pass the bar examination and make a new life for herself, that she would be able to escape the environment she had been born into and thus, not only help herself but also help her family. I admired her fortitude, her perseverance, her drive and optimism, I trusted her judgment, appreciated her intelligence and sense of fairness, and I know that she, too, liked and appreciated me. In spite of the age difference and all the other differences, our relationship was a close and important one to both of us, I believe. She even tried to fix me up once with a boy, who I thought was gorgeous, but he was so intimidated when we met that he hardly opened his mouth and kept his eyes lowered to the ground. Needless to say, we only met once. I

talked to Olga about my plans to study agriculture, so that I could take over the management of our estates, and about the fact that I would not marry, since I would never know whether the man really loved me or my father's money. I wanted to study abroad, and while my mother thought that I should first attend a girl's finishing school in Switzerland, I thought of going to France or to England instead. Olga and I spent two or three afternoons a week together, but I also invited her to one of our estates, Poreby Kupienskie, which was a mini-vacation for her and gave us additional time together. She meant more to me and had more influence on me than all my other friends; I still think of her ...

## **POREBY KUPIENSKIE and OTHER ESTATES**

**As far back as I** can remember Poreby was my most favorite place in the entire world. If I close my eyes I can go back in time, pretend that I am there now, see myself there, as I was so many times in my youth. Why don't you come and join me...

I woke up early, dressed quickly, and with a small bucket under my arm, almost ran the few hundred feet that separated the house from the woods. The rising rays of sunshine painted intricate pictures of light and shadow, kissed the dew on the wild flowers and followed the path of small animals - raccoons, hares, squirrels and deer. The air was crisp and fresh and the aroma of the pines hit my nostrils with delight each time I took a breath. The sound of the dry pine needles under my feet blended with the buzzing of insects and the chirping of birds as they greeted another day. I could walk east, where the clumps of birches shimmered in the morning sun, and on the way I could pick wild strawberries, which grew freely around the stumps of large trees, cut down a few years before. Later in the season raspberries and blackberries would grow abundantly in that area, and nothing would ever taste quite like the ones I picked there. Or, I could wander among the pine and fir trees and pick wild mushrooms, though I was never quite certain which were edible among the many varieties that grew there. Or, I could just wander around aimlessly, without a specific goal, and come upon a spring or brook, which I had not seen before. To me it was an enchanted forest, an enchanted place to

dream, to think, to plan . . . . . a place where I was truly happy, a place that I loved as far back as I can remember.

It was too far to walk to the area where my father built a network of fish ponds after he retired, following his heart attack in 1936. His doctor suggested that he develop a quiet, relaxing hobby, like fishing, and since we lived inland, where no fishing was possible, the first large ponds were built and stocked with fish to enable my father to go fishing, alone or with friends. This 'hobby' developed into a large and most successful business venture - a fish hatchery, where carp and pike were bred, raised and distributed. Everybody in Poland ate fish on Fridays and on holidays, Jews and Catholics alike. It was fascinating to watch the growth and development of this project, and later on, to watch the process of emptying the ponds and transferring the fish from one pond to another, depending on their stage of development. My father's youngest brother, Edek, was actively involved in this business and often supervised the various activities. We also grew our own fish food - acres and acres of aromatic, yellow flowers, a variety of lupine, that produced kernels which had to be ground to almost a pulp in a machine pulled by a team of oxen. Once the fish reached a desired size, they were shipped in specially equipped trucks for distribution throughout the state.

When the ponds were completed, we also had a place for swimming, but we always had to check beforehand which of the ponds could be used for recreation. My parents did quite a bit of entertaining in Poreby, and each outing ended with a sumptuous dinner in the forester's lodge. His wife, Mrs.

Skrzypek, was a gourmet cook, who prior to her marriage worked for a local count. I truly enjoyed all the special delicacies she prepared not only when we had company but also for me. There were chickens and geese, cows and horses, a small orchard and a large vegetable garden, which provided all the produce for the household. Bread was baked on the premises, butter was churned, cheese made, herbs and mushrooms dried for the winter, vegetables and fruit put up in jars, preserves, honey, syrups and wines prepared and stored in a special underground storage cellar. The forester's lodge had neither running water nor electricity, but it was spacious, comfortable, and was surrounded by a large garden, filled with a variety of flowers.

At the far end of the garden, behind the lilac bushes, was a large, sandy area and that is where my cousin Hala, my childhood friends Gerda Feiwel, Ala Fruehling and I dug an imaginary Wislok river one summer when I was about five or six years old; we spent hours playing there, much to the dismay of our governesses, since we brought all the sand back into the house! They liked it much better when we played 'bakery' and made fancy cakes out of mud, flowers and leaves, which they had to 'buy' from us.

Two rooms in the lodge were reserved exclusively for our use and I stayed there for short periods of time, first with my governesses, and then, in my early teens, just with my friends, with Jaska Sakowska, later on with Olga, as well as with other girls. What did my mother think of when on one of these occasions, a year before the outbreak of the war or so, my

friend Marian Verstandig appeared one morning to spend a few days with us? Did she perhaps regret her being so strict when it came to my association with boys? Or, did she consider Marian completely harmless? We read, we played the Victrola and listened for hours to current hit tunes, we walked, swam, and we flirted with and tormented Niunius Skrzypek, the foresters' only son, a shy, pale boy, a few years my senior. My friend, Krzysia Kowalczyk's (now Trybula) father was forester on a nearby estate belonging to count Tyszkiewicz, and through her I met a number of young people from the nearby town of Kolbuszowa. We went to Kolbuszowa occasionally by horse and buggy to eat ice cream at a local ice cream parlor and to socialize. Krzysia and her friends visited us to go swimming in our ponds, for picnics and for barbecues, and we usually ended the evening by sitting around the fire and singing, while Niunius accompanied us on his guitar.

Poreby Kupienskie, the village, was very small, a few miles of dirt road from the village of Kupno, which was on the main road leading from Rzeszow to Kolbuszowa. The scattered peasant houses had thatched roofs, earthen floors, small yards with household animals, and adjoining pieces of tillable land of various sizes. The villagers were comparatively well off since all of them worked for us in one capacity or another, as lumberjacks, woodsmen, loggers, they worked in the hatchery or helped with a variety of chores at the forester's lodge. They tipped their caps every time they saw me and called me 'panna dziedziczka' - miss heiress - a custom that, no doubt, went back

to the old feudal system.

Some of those peasants did help a group of 125 young Jews from Kolbuszowa, who were hiding in our woods in Poreby for almost two years after escaping from the Kolbuszowa work camp in the autumn of 1942. Only six of them survived the war. They trapped animals, ate berries and mushrooms and, to a great extent, survived on the fish from our ponds. Poreby Kupeinskie became the headquarters of the A.K. ("Armja Krajowa"), the nationalist Polish underground, and starting in the fall of 1943, the young Jews were in constant danger, caught between the Germans, the hostile Poles and the A.K. which began to roam the forests and proved as dangerous as the Germans. I heard about it from one of the survivors, Naftali Saleschutz now Norman Salsitz, whom Rick met at a meeting recently and who now lives in Springfield, N.J. He has written a number of books about Kolbuszowa and about his war-time experiences.

In 1921, the Polish Constitution granted equal rights to Jews in the new State, and assimilated Jews attempted to adopt the lifestyle of the Polish gentry and nobility: they acquired land and in some instances even adopted the landowners' way of life. According to a statement by Uncle Fulek in April 1961, my father purchased 50% of the estate Poreby Kupienskie in 1926 from Jerzy count Tyszkiewicz for US\$50,000.00 - and the other half for an equal amount in 1928. Only in 1937 did he deed 22.5% of the estate to Uncle Fulek (Rafael), 15% to Uncle Moses and 10% to his youngest brother, Edek (Yuda/Edward), retaining control and ownership of 52.5%. According to Uncle Fulek the hatcheries were completed in 1936 at a cost of approximately US\$120,000.00. Around 1934/1935, a summer house for the family was built a short

distance from the forester's lodge. I know of at least one summer when Ciocia Surcia, her daughter, Sydzia, with her children, Aunt Frydzia and Blanka, Ciocia Henia, Hala and Leszek, and Rena and Hela Grubuer vacationed there.

The next business venture in Poreby was to establish fruit orchards and several acres of apple and pear trees were planted two years before the war broke out. I remember riding on 'my' horse around the peripheries and watching the first blooms with awe and delight. Do these trees still exist? Were they taken care of properly and did they ever bear fruit? It was such a long, long time ago....

The only other estate that I ever stayed at was Irena, near Zaklikow, in the province of Lublin, where I spent a few weeks one summer. The forester and his wife, the Steins, were Jewish and related to us (Salek Stein was my father's cousin: his mother was my grandmother's sister), but I did not care for them much. They had a baby son, Tadek, but the only clear memory I have of the time spent there is riding through the woods in a horse drawn carriage at great speed at night and Salek Stein saying over and over again: "don't be scared; I am scared enough for all of us".

When the war broke out on September 1, 1939, many of the women and children in the family left Rzeszow for Irena - Ciocia Surcia with Sydzia and her children Lusiek, Jadzia, and Rozia Goldfluss, Rena Wang, her mother, and Robercik, (little Robert), Ciocia Henia with Hala and Leszek, Edek with his wife Frydzia and their daughter, Blanka, and Uncle Moses. In a few weeks' time, Edek and Salek Stein left Irena on bicycles to cross over to the Russian occupied part of Poland; from there they sent a horsedrawn wagon for their immediate families. Uncle Moses,

Rena, her mother, Robert, Ciocia Henia, Hala and Leszek, also left shortly thereafter for Lwow in the Russian occupied zone, where Rena was reunited with Adam and Ciocia Henia with Wujciu Fulek. Ciocia Bercia, Uncle Moses wife, and their daughter Sydzia Ehrenreich and baby Julek, came to Irena later, after Uncle Moses and the others left for Lwow. They were joined there by our cousins, the Rosenbach family, who lived in the nearby town of Zaklikow - Uciu, his wife Ewa, and their two little sons, Asiu and Lejziu. They thought that they were safe in Irena and the women and children remained there.....

Lusiek Goldfluss and Uciu Rosenbach were hiding in the woods for almost three years, but when Uciu learned that his wife, his children, and all the others were taken from Irena to the Zaklikow ghetto, he returned. He was promptly denounced to the German authorities, tortured, and then shot by the Germans. The Rosenbachs had lived in Zaklikow for only two years prior to the outbreak of the war, they were assimilated, the children did not speak Yiddish and, therefore, they found no support in the Zaklikow ghetto. When everybody else from the family perished, the two boys, Asiu and Lejziu, were alone and shunned by the other local Jewish kids - (Asiu and Lejziu met Kalman accidentally in a concentration camp towards the end of the war and they became quite friendly there, since they were both related to me). What exactly happened to Lusiek Goldfluss I do not know, but he did not survive.

The flat, Lublin Region bore witness to Sobibor, Belzen and the Majdanek extermination camps and only Asiu (Arthur) and Lejziu (Larry) Rosenbach are here to remember the years spent in Irena.

## ESTATES

### **POREBY KUPIENSKIE** - County KOLBUSZOWA -

app. 1100 hectares\* (which included forests, ponds,  
pastures, tillable land and orchards)

½ purchased by my father, Simon (Szymon) Wang in 1926 for  
app. US\$50,000.-

½ purchased by my father, Simon (Szymon) Wang in 1928 for  
app. US\$50,000.-

Built fish hatcheries in 1936 at the cost of app. US\$120,000.-

In 1937 my father gave by deed -

22.5% to Rafael Wang

15.0% to Moses Wang

10.0% to Juda (Edward) Wang

retaining. . . . . 52.5%

(In the Foreign Claims Settlement Application my father  
claimed 77.5%, which included percentages of his brothers  
Moses and Edward)

### **IRENA** - County ZAKLIKOW, State LUBLIN -

app. 1200 hectares\*

37.5% owned by my father Szymon (Simon) Wang

15.0% owned by Rafael (Fulek) Wang

10.0% owned by Moses Wang

7.5% owned by Juda (Edward) Wang

(My father's notes and original application for restitution indicate my father owned 70%, and it is possible that he meant all the percentages listed above; who owned the remaining 30%? possibly uncle Herman? or, did my father own 67.5%?)

**JAROCIN** - County NISKO - app. 1300 hectares\*

(which included forests, tillable land, pastures and meadows)

Simon (Szymon) Wang owned	36%
Pinkas Weissberg owned	21%
Hirsch Wistreich owned	25 %
Antoni Ilgner owned	18 %

**SURMACZOWKA** - County JAROSLAW -

app. 400 hectares \* (belonged to Russia at the time the Polish Claims were made and, therefore, was not included in the Claim)

Simon (Szymon) Wang owned	25%
Rafael Wang owned	12.5%
(have no knowledge who owned the rest)	

\*1 hectare = 2.471 acres or approximately 2-1/2 acres

## REAL ESTATE

### KATOWICE

- ul. Kosciuszki 33 - four-story apartment building owned  
by Szymon and Emilia Wang
- ul. Zwirki i Wigury 1 - three-story apartment building
- ul. Zwirki i Wigury 3 - three-story apartment building
- ul. Gliwicka 4 - one-half (1/2) of four-story apartment  
building owned by Szymon Wang

### GDANSK (DANZIG)

- Pferdetrnk Str. 1 - one-half (1/2) of three-story brick  
building owned by Szymon and  
Emilia Wang

### RZESZOW

- ul. Jagiellonska 17 - Corner Orlicz & Dreszer (Skarbowa)  
(Listed also in Three-story brick apartment building  
error as #8 completed in 1937 at a cost of  
US\$50,000.00 owned by:  
1/3 Szymon Wang  
1/3 Emilia Wang  
1/3 Sonia (Henia?) Wang - Rafael  
Wang
- ul. Turkienicza 26 - One-story brick residential building  
(Formerly with garden, owned by Jakub &

Krakowska 22, also      Gizela Ungar and by Rozalia

listed erroneously      Tocker nee Ungar  
as Kraszewskiego)

ul. Kosciuszki 13      - belonging to Jakub & Gizela Ungar,  
supposedly **SOLD in 1948 to Julia  
Szpara, I assume by Juda  
(Edward) Wang -**

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All the buildings, with the exception of the property in GDANSK and the house in RZESZOW located at ul. Kosciuszki 13, were part of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the United States, Washington, D. C. decision of January 26 1966.

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Please note also that I relinquished my inheritance rights to part of an apartment house in Rzeszow, left me by my mother's uncle, Artur Wang, on behalf of Robert Wang, Wissous, France.

## VACATIONS

**O**ur family vacations were different from what most vacations are in this country. As far back as I can remember, we spent at least two months away from Rzeszow, first in the seaside resort of Zopot, on the Baltic Sea, (see ‘Early Childhood Memories’) and later on in various locations abroad. The last two weeks in June were usually frantic with preparations, not only to get the winter clothing put away and our vacation wardrobe ready, but also to get the apartment thoroughly cleaned, and ‘summerized’. The carpets were cleaned with sauerkraut, rolled and wrapped, the parquet floors polished, the furniture covered with slipcovers and white sheets, and all the knickknacks were wrapped and put away.

When I was little, my governess came along to take care of me, and I still remember my parents annoyed amusement when I complained that our room was not as nice as theirs in the beautiful health resort, Badgastein, situated amidst the overpowering panorama of the Salzburg Tauern mountains. Like an enormous amphitheater, this resort, with its wealth of watering establishments, villas and luxury hotels, surrounds the foaming, roaring Gastein Torrent—the water fall. We spent a few summers there, first when I was little and then, later on in my early teens, and I still remember the shady, beautiful, well maintained walks, with benches along the way, the air fresh with the scent of grass and flowers, or hiking along a ridge or along trails. We took many excursions and day trips from there—the most magnificent of them to the Gross Glockner!

Whatever man could do to add to the gifts of nature was done in Austria. The lovely scenery with its many mountain ranges, lakes, rivers and forests, the radio-active thermal waters, sulfur springs, mineral waters and carefully controlled therapies for drinking or bathing cures, made Austria a favorite vacation destination. The towns and villages, with their variety and originality in design, decorative house murals, the riot of color from window boxes filled with flowers, the farmsteads with their own orchards, flower gardens, pastures and haystacks, made the entire countryside picture pretty and a joy to behold. We often visited the Tyrolian Alps, where tiny villages looked like toy towns beside the steep mountains. In the mountains there were funiculars, cograils and chairlifts that took one close to the glaciers; there were endless hiking trails where you could occasionally spot ibex, chamois or a marmot, and pick Alpine flowers in bloom - gentian, artemesia, columbines, anemones and even edelweiss. Excursions and hiking were our favorite pastime; hiking stick in hand, we walked to the Sonnenblick with its meteorological station near Badgastein and the Gross Glockner Road to the top, climbed the Rax near Reichenau and countless other hills and mountains - and there was always a wonderful cafe or restaurant on top of the mountain to reward the effort with delicious pastries or ice cream.

At the lakes there was rowing, swimming, sailing, diving, and of course the bathing beach. We vacationed on Wolfgangsee and I learned how to swim in Poertschach on Woerthersee in Carinthia, after endless, unsuccessful attempts and swimming

lessons in various pools. Was it the lake and the surroundings that made me succeed - or was it the fact that this time, my father was my teacher?

When the weather was poor, my parents played bridge or we spent our days in a local museum, a cafe, at a concert, in the movies or in the theatre. I guess my love of the theatre began then, during our vacations abroad. I will never forget the performance of “Jederman” (‘Everyman’) in Salzburg - a tale of life and death not only of ‘Everyman’ but rather of man and his achievements in general. The world renowned Salzburg Festival, dedicated to the music of Mozart, is still identified with the greatest names in the world of music. I loved this town with its spacious squares and rich decorations and fountains, the Mirabell Palace, the Mozart Museum, (originally his birth-place), and the castle-fortress Hohensalzburg, on a sheer rock, high above the Salzach river; the observation tower of the castle offered a magnificent panoramic view of the city and of the countryside. Above all, I enjoyed going with my parents to theater performances, serenades and solemn cathedral concerts, and was grateful that they took me along even before I was perhaps old enough to truly appreciate it! I know that many of my parents’ friends often questioned their decision to let me vacation with them during the summer, saying “what will she do when she grows up?” - to which my mother always replied, “she will do it again her own way”.

Most of our trips started with a few days in Vienna, Austria’s capital, and I got to know the city fairly well. The Burg Theater on the Ring, the Opera and St. Stephen’s Cathe-

dial formed the architectural triangle of Austrian spirituality. We visited the Albertina and other museums, the Belvedere Palace, various parks, Schoenbrunn Castle, Kahlenberg, where my king, Jan Sobieski, with the armoured Polish cavalry defeated the Turks, but primarily, my parents did most of their shopping for clothes there. My father had his suits custom made at Knize, a fashionable men's clothing establishment, my things were purchased at Bittman's, and my mother usually attended a number of fashion shows and ordered her wardrobe for the next season there. We visited my Aunt Rozia and other friends, went to the State Opera, to the Burg Theater and to many other theaters where we saw numerous plays and operettas. By the time I reached my teens, these plays became the basis of 'theatrical productions' which I wrote, staged and directed upon our return home. They seem to have intrigued my friends, who gladly participated in the performances, although occasionally they objected to my playing the lead. I particularly enjoyed playing crazy women, no doubt, based on some play where the heroine went mad, even though that often frightened my girl friends, particularly when we were very young. And when I was very young my greatest enjoyment was, of course, going to the Prater, The Prater was a large area of woods and meadows along the right bank of the Danube, once the hunting ground for the aristocracy. The part that fascinated me, however, was the 'Wurstelprater' - the fun fair - with its Great Ferris Wheel, the Punch and Judy Show, the many amusement rides and the great meal that topped it off in one of the many open air restaurants.

Food was beyond question one of the pleasures of vaca-

tioning in Austria and in Vienna. While my father enjoyed the famous 'Beinflfleisch' (boiled beef) at the Bristol Hotel, where we stayed, or going to the Kosher restaurant, Neugroeschel, I gorged myself on 'Strudel', 'Sachertorte' or any other 'Torte' covered with delicious 'Schlag' - whipped cream - at Sacher's or Demel's. Even as a youngster I enjoyed people-watching in one of the many coffee houses of the city. Coffee houses originated in Vienna after the liberation of Vienna from the Turks in 1683; great quantities of coffee beans were found there, and it is from Vienna that coffee set out to conquer the world. The coffee house was a place to meet, to play cards or chess, read newspapers and magazines, discuss politics, socialize - and all for the price of 'Melange' or 'Kapuziner', Vienna's special coffees of the time! To make the enjoyment complete, one could also order a piece of pastry or a 'Kipfel' - a crescent roll baked in the half-moon shape of a Turkish saber. And, of course, there was always 'Eiskaffee' - coffee ice cream covered with whipped cream.

Vienna was also the first stop on our trips to Italy. It is surprising that the things I appreciated and enjoyed as a child are still the things I enjoy now. Italy was always one of my favorite countries. Whether it was the plush elegance of Merano, the health spa, known for its thermal waters, (where my mother took the then popular 'grape cure' consisting of grapes, not wine), or the then little known, sleepy, Cortina D'ampezzo, (Cortina catapulted to fame by hosting the Winter Olympics of 1956), there was always much to do and to enjoy. Set in a lush meadow amidst dense forests, Cortina was

surrounded by magnificent, rugged mountains, so very different from other Alpine ranges. My father and I used to go for long, long walks and watch as at dawn or at sunset the craggy peaks of the Dolomites seemed to be props for a lighting display, as pink and purple reflections danced over huge rocks. The heady aroma of wild flowers and the unspoiled, untouched beauty of Tre Croci, as well as the jewel-like Misurina Lake below, is something I never forgot.

Riccione and Rimini on the Adriatic Coast were summer resorts full of fascinating signs of its long and turbulent history. Although there were many things to see there, I really remember only one day-trip, which I really enjoyed, to the small and ancient independent republic of San Marino in the Apennines. The capital of the same name was built on a precipitous rock with a lovely view over hills, plains and the sea. My parents had an active social life and we spent most of our time relaxing on the beach, and the beach was just wonderful. I loved the sand and the sea ... .

The water at the world famous Lido, on the other hand, was lukewarm and rose only 12” at high tide so that you could walk out into the sea for half a mile before it came up to your hips. Nevertheless, we always made a few excursions to the Lido whenever we visited Venice. This island had, no doubt, the very best beaches for sunbathing as well as a famous Casino, where my father could enjoy winning or losing, while Mother and I had fun at the shore. I must have been quite outgoing when I was small for I clearly remember an incident which greatly annoyed my father for reasons I could not

understand at the time. I picked up a young, handsome Italian on the beach, who was quite obviously flirting with my mother. I told him that we were sisters, traveling with our uncle, who was spending the day at the Casino. We had lunch together, he took us sailing, which I loved, and he paid quite a bit of attention to me, which I also enjoyed. When we parted, he handed me a slip for my 'sister', in which he asked her to meet him that evening at a cafe on St. Mark's Square. Needless to say, that meeting never took place. My other vivid memory of the Lido is the time when my mother agreed to 'dine' with me at the best ice cream parlor on the island instead of going to a fashionable restaurant, as we usually did. That was so out of character for her! Mother and I tasted every flavor and ate dish after dish of wonderful 'gelati' till we could barely move; it was a fun evening that I will never forget, special for me in more ways than one.

To me, Venice was always a fairy-town, unbelievably strange and lovely. I don't think that I really appreciated the beauty of the palaces or churches with their glorious paintings, statues and mosaics, but I was impressed and awed by Piazza San Marco, (St. Mark's Square) the Basilica and the Doge's Palace. I also liked wandering over the many footbridges and along narrow alleyways away from the Piazza and stumbling on an unexpected square or little church. That's how we found a pretty square with a fountain - the site of the first Jewish Ghetto, set up in the beginning of the 16th century. Even shopping for glass, lace or old prints was fun since it was part of exploring the city. The open-air fruit and vegetable market

at the Rialto Bridge, with its adjacent fish market, was colorful and animated in the morning when housewives came to pick over the day's offering and haggle with vendors. It was fun to watch the glass blowing when we went to Murano or the hourly display on the clock tower in St. Mark's Square when the bell is struck by the mechanical figures. I liked feeding the pigeons and liked just being there in this huge square in the heart of Venice, always filled with people, where at night orchestras at various cafes competed to see which can draw the biggest crowd.

One had to walk everywhere in Venice, and where one could not walk, one went by water. Our hotel, the Bauer Gruenwald, was located on the Grand Canal, which loops through the city, passing under bridges and between palaces dating from the 14th to the 18th century. Large and small boats criss-crossed its waters, but the 'vaporetto' was the most popular and efficient way to get around. But, no trip to Venice was ever complete without a gondola ride, particularly at night. Long, thin gondolas bobbed along the slow-moving, dark waters, silvered with wobbly reflections of marble bridges and stairways that led down into them, as the water lapped at the boat and the doors of old palaces. The gondolier sang romantic, Italian songs, and all was well with the world. Or, at least, that's how it was then

One summer, instead of spending a few weeks in Rimini or Riccione, we traveled from Venice to the French Riviera by train. In order to get there we had to change trains, and as I was exploring the railroad station during a two or three hour layover

I noticed two young men reading one of Poland's leading newspapers, 'Kurjer Krakowski'. I got all excited, started to talk to them and subsequently introduced them to my parents. Wladek Runcewicz, a tall, blond, handsome young Pole, was vacationing with his best friend, Iziu Lederman, a rather frail looking, bespectacled young Jewish lawyer from Chelm. They were on their way to Provence but were planning to visit the Riviera later, and since the young men and my parents obviously developed an instant rapport, it was agreed that they would visit us there.

Champagne, caviar and money seemed to flow on the Cote d'Azur, a coast of light, of warm breezes, of sun-drenched beaches, vibrant colors, blooming oleander shrubs, palms, silvery olive trees that sheltered roses and mimosas, and dazzling pastel villas that rimmed a remarkably blue sea. We stayed in Nice, an ancient town that became the grande dame of the Riviera. Our hotel, the Negresco, with its Empire and Napoleon III decor, was the grandest of all the hotels built at the turn of the century. It had its own casino and a restaurant considered among France's finest, where I sampled many foods previously unknown to me, such as 'bouillabaisse', frog legs and snails. The Negresco is located on the Promenade des Anglais, which stretches the length of Nice's waterfront and narrow rocky beach; the beach in Nice has no sand - just rocks, rocks and more rocks. When we wanted a sandy beach, we went to Cannes, where one of the additional pleasures was lunching at a beachside restaurant, or to Juan-Les-Pins, where we also enjoyed outdoor jazz concerts performed on a stage that

bordered the beach.

When Runcewicz and Lederman came to visit us we explored the old town, Vieux Nice, away from the beach, where the streets were so narrow that the buildings crowded out the sky. The winding alleyways were lined with 17th and 18th century buildings and with flowers cascading from window boxes on pastel-colored walls. We visited baroque churches and sat in outdoor cafes on a Venetian looking square. Together we went to the hilltop site of Cimiez, occupied by the Romans 2000 years ago, saw the old foundations of the Roman town, the thermal baths and the ancient amphitheater, where we listened to a concert. We also visited the ‘perched villages’, which seem to grow out of the hillside stones and cling precariously to the flanks of the mountain, digging their toes into the rock; we drove along dizzying gorges with magnificent views and visited medieval towns, perched on mountaintops high above the sea, where craftspeople made and sold their wares, as their predecessors did in the Middle Ages. Together with Runcewicz and Lederman. we went to Monaco, just outside of Nice, and to the casino at Monte Carlo, where Mata Hari once shot a Russian spy. Surrounded by gardens, the casino sits elegantly on a hillside terrace overlooking the sea and the coast. I was too young to be allowed inside the casino, but my mother told me that the interior was a paragon of 19th century extravagance with red velvet curtains, gilded ceilings and gold and crystal chandeliers. The world’s wealthiest, tanned and tuxedo-clad, arrived there nightly to play, and my father must have lost heavily playing ‘baccarat’ and ‘chemin de fer’, since he was

quite upset when he had to cable home for money to pay for the rest of our stay.

The chance meeting at a railroad station was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between my parents and Wladek Runcewicz. They stayed in touch long after our return from France and a few years later my parents attended his wedding to a titled young woman, who inherited an estate near Lwow; I know that my father was of great help to them in managing and developing that property. I was told that during the war Mrs. Runcewicz offered to hide my mother on that estate, but that my mother refused in order not to endanger them, or did she perhaps feel 'safe' enough at the time? I guess we will never know . . . . Wladek Runcewicz spent the war years with the Polish government in exile, we met him in Japan, where he was working in the Polish Embassy, and after the war he came to New York to meet his wife and their two daughters when they arrived here from Poland. The Runcewicz es settled in Canada, first in Montreal, where once again they spent time with my father and with his wife, Resia, and eventually in Vancouver, where they owned a mink farm. Wladek sponsored the immigration of Resia's son, Jerzyk, from Israel to Canada, and he and my father remained friends until the end. In fact, even after their deaths, Mrs. Runcewicz kept in touch and called us whenever she was in New York; I guess she, too, is gone by now.

My parents' friendship with Wladek Runcewicz was not the only one that had its beginnings during a summer vacation. We were on our way to the Colonial World's Fair in Paris in

1936 when my mother caught her dress in the door of the train compartment. Since it was too late to unpack and change, she asked the lady in the next compartment if she could help her fix the dress before we reached our destination. It turned out that the lady, Mina Herzog, was a well known couturiere from Lwow, headed for Paris to attend a number of fashion shows. My mother and Mrs. Herzog spent the remaining few hours on the train together, Mrs. Herzog invited my mother to a number of fashion shows, we saw her a few times in Paris, and their relationship continued after we returned to Poland. Subsequently, my mother had a number of things made by Mrs. Herzog, and the following summer we spent a few weeks together in the Polish resort town of Krynica, where her daughter Sylvia, who was my age, and I became fast friends as well. Our families spent a lot of time together after the outbreak of the war in Lwow, and I know that my mother continued to see Mrs. Herzog after we left. The Herzogs had immigration papers and, like my mother, remained in Lwow long after most of the Jews were deported. Eventually, the Herzogs were put on an old ship which, they were told, would take them and hundreds of other Jews to their destination, but the ship was deliberately sunk by the Germans a few miles off shore, and all the Jews perished; only the crew was allowed to board the few lifeboats and go back to shore.

But, back to 1936 and our trip to Paris. For centuries people had been fascinated by Paris, sung her praises, painted her portraits and immortalized her in songs and film, and I was excited and thrilled by the prospect of actually going there.

From the very first moment I loved this city marked by a turbulent past and a rich intellectual, artistic and religious heritage, which survives in museums, galleries, churches and landmarks. We took the ‘bateaux mouches’ riverboat down the river Seine, a beautiful boulevard for barge traffic which flows languidly from east to west and forms the heart of romantic Paris. On the Ile de la Cite, the birthplace of the city and the symbolic center of the nation, we visited the cathedral of Notre Dame with its massive pillars, rounded arches, flying buttresses and gargoyles that looked as if they could frighten away demons. We climbed hundreds of steps to the tower of Notre Dame for a commanding view of Paris, and even more steps up the hill of Montmartre, which rises dramatically above the city. The basilica of Sacre Coeur crowns Montmartre like an enormous white meringue, and there, too, we climbed to the top of the dome for a view of Paris.

For another view of the city we took an elevator to the top of the Eiffel Tower, an iron monument with metal girders, a triumph of engineering if not aesthetics, and Paris’ best known landmark and symbol of the City of Lights. From atop the Arc de Triomphe, Napoleon’s monument to his invincibility, we looked at Paris and the twelve avenues radiating from the Etoile, the star. The Arc de Triomphe looms gloriously above the Champs-Elysees, with the Tomb of the unknown Soldier resting beneath it; we watched the eternal flame being rekindled there in the evening. The ten-lane tree-lined Champs-Elysees flanked by cafes and luxury shops, is perhaps the most famous street in the world. We walked on the Champs-Elysees,

watched people people-watching as we relaxed in one of the cafes, and then walked to the Place de la Concorde, an impressive combination of imposing statues, allegorical fountains, beautiful streetlamps and of course the gargantuan, rose granite Obelisk, a gift from the viceroy of Egypt, Paris' oldest monument dating back to the 13th century BC.

We stayed in that area in a lovely hotel at the side of the church of the Madeleine, modeled after a Greek Temple. There were many flower stalls in the surrounding square, and since my mother loved flowers our hotel room was always filled with them. My mother's favorite flowers were tuberoses, heavily fragrant waxy white flowers, which were not readily available in Poland, and whenever we were in western or southern Europe, my father always bought them for her. Only a block or two from our hotel, parallel to the Champs-Elysees, was the highbrow and high-priced rue de Faubourg St.-Honore, full of art galleries, salons, and boutiques of 'haute couture', and my mother and Mrs. Herzog spent quite a bit of time there. Shopping in Paris, it seems to me, was not so much an exercise in consumerism as an education in style and taste. To some extent that applied to food as well. Clustered around the Madeleine were some of Paris' most luxurious food shops where culinary delights awaited us - 'fois gras'. Beluga caviar, truffles, out-of-season tropical fruit, exotic teas, a vast selection of cheeses and, of course, frothy 'patisserie'. Shopping there was something all of us enjoyed and on occasion, instead of going out to dinner, we would 'picnic' in our hotel room on these delicacies.

I often stayed at the hotel at night, with one of the chambermaids occasionally looking in on me, but on many occasions my parents did take me along. I do not remember what opera we saw at the Paris Opera, but I do remember an enormous golden foyer and grand staircase. Gobelin tapestries, gilded mosaics, a riot of marble and statuary, and a great hall dominated by a huge chandelier; everybody wore evening clothes and lots of jewelry. The Opera de Paris is located on the place de l'Opera, the centerpiece of Napoleon III's scheme to make Paris the "most beautiful capital in the universe", and directly across from it is the famous Cafe de la Paix, a favorite place for watching people and for relaxing. My parents also took me along to the famous 'grands spectacles', forerunners of Las Vegas shows, which featured the worlds most beautiful young women, dancing gamely without the benefit of tops and balancing enormous gaudy headpieces or dragging long, glittering capes. Men, usually in supporting roles, also appeared in outlandish costumes. I was enthralled by the lavish scenery, the amazing special effects, the singers, the vaudeville acts, the song and dance numbers, and the 'can can'. We went to the Moulin Rouge, the Lido, and the Folies Bergere, and I will never forget seeing Josephine Baker there, wearing a sarong in a scene on a tropical island and singing 'J'ai Deux Amour, Mon Pais et Paris'. Prior to our arrival in Paris I had only seen black people in films, and those whom we saw when we visited the Colonial Exhibition were nothing like Josephine Baker.

We went to the Colonial Exhibition a number of times and interspersed it with sightseeing and going to museums. We

visited Musee d'Orsay, a temple to the Impressionists, the Rodin Museum, where we saw 'The Thinker' and many other sculptures in the sculpture garden, and to the Louvre with its monumental staircase crowned by the 'Winged Victory', which is a foretaste of the masterpieces to follow. Like everybody else we saw the 'Mona Lisa' and the 'Venus de Milo', French and Italian art, a priceless collection of Flemish and Dutch painters, extensive Greek and Roman holdings and the large Egyptology department. Although we were there a number of times I appreciated the fact that we never stayed long. We also went to Les Invalides, originally a veterans' hospital and Louis XIV's legacy as a humanitarian, later a museum honoring French soldiers, but principally known as the mausoleum of Napoleon Bonaparte, the greatest soldier France has produced, and symbol of the country's grandeur.

We relaxed in the Jardin du Luxembourg, a large expanse of greenery, and watched Parisians sunbathing, writing, playing chess, romancing, strolling, or just gazing at luscious rose gardens. We walked in the Bois de Boulogne and admired the combination of colorful flower beds and peacocks, or did absolutely nothing in the formal French garden of the Tuileries, with its pools, elevated terraces and statuary unerringly lined up by landscape geometers. We traveled to Versailles, where the gardens are breathtaking and enormous, perfectly scaled to the chateau which is huge, imposing, imperial and still conveying Louis XIV's message of French omnipotence and his own glory. Versailles is virtually a museum of French history, full of gilt stucco, painted ceilings and marble sculpture, and we

visited the Grand Apartments and the famed Hall of Mirrors. In the evening we attended a musical and fireworks extravaganza, when all the fountains were illuminated and in full operation to the accompaniment of music. It was a sight to behold! We also made an excursion to the Chateau Fountainbleau, whose warm yellow exterior, accented with red brick, hides the splendor and extravagance within. This chateau provides a lesson in the history of French architecture and decorations with its frescoes, stuccowork and Empire furniture.

We spent the rest of that summer relaxing in sophisticated, chic Deauville, located on the English Channel on the northern edge of the Normandy coast. Deauville attracted an international elite to its broad, gorgeous beaches, grand casinos, famous racetrack, yacht basin, regattas, and designer boutiques. There was always something to do there, including spending time on the boardwalk or going to the open-air market full of wonderful products from all of Normandy. I spent a lot of time on the beach, even though the water was very cold and only the young and hardy would venture in. We made a lot of side trips from Deauville, but the only one I remember is our excursion to Honfleur, believed to be the cradle of Impressionism, with its beaches and picture-postcard port. It was truly a memorable summer!

One of the most enjoyable vacations though was our Scandinavian cruise, the only cruise we ever took. We left from the Polish port of Gdynia on the Baltic Sea and I spent the first few days of the voyage exploring the ship and meeting the other children aboard. It was a new and exciting adventure for me and

I almost resented having to interrupt it when we arrived at the first port of call, Copenhagen; perhaps this is why I was never impressed by the city which everyone else likes so much. I was disappointed in the statue of the Little Mermaid but I did like the sound of the city - bicycle bells, ship bells, and church bells seemed to be playing a song to this red brick city with green copper roofs, red coated mailmen, and blue trolley cars. We took many walking tours, and like all of Copenhagen strolled and shopped in Stroget, five streets strung together into a pedestrian mall, a Danish cornucopia of silver, furs, toys, porcelain, jewels, books, art, antiques and teak furniture. Bustling cafes, restaurants and fresh fruit stands lined the sidewalks and gave these pedestrian streets the festive air of a street fair. Not far from Stroget is Tivoli and I did enjoy spending time there, although I did not like it as much as I liked the Prater in Vienna. Tivoli is more sophisticated than a mere fun fair or amusement park. It is a combination of fantastic flower displays, fountains, Japanese lanterns, a pantomime theater, puppet shows, bandstands, dance halls, frequent classical and jazz concerts, games, roller coaster, and ferris wheel. In the evening it becomes a spectacle of colorful, illuminated gardens and swan-filled ponds, and the elaborate fireworks are truly impressive.

We left Copenhagen for Norway, which I believe is the most beautiful country in Europe. I really loved this green-gray-granite kingdom, thick with hills and mountains and creased by rivers and fjords. From Norway's rugged coast. Vikings roved the sea, fierce Norsemen spread across the Atlantic, and stave

wooden churches and preserved Viking ships still survive, while sagas chronicle their adventures and myths in poetry and epics. The sea is Norway's highway; from the sea, Norway seems uninhabited except at the water's edge with handkerchief-size farms and small fishing boats. All along the entire length of Norway mountains erupt wildly, snowcapped peaks reflect in glimmering fjords, and the further north we traveled, the more rugged the landscape became - endless miles of wilderness were marked by an occasional dot - a lonely cabin or a herd of reindeer. We landed first in Bergen, whose scenery exalts it above most cities in the world, and I fell in love with this 900-year-old port, surrounded by seven mountains and fishboned by seven fjords. I liked the tiers of wooden houses clinging to the green slopes, the cobblestone streets, the boisterous fish market and the row of old Hanseatic buildings, painted red, blue, yellow and green, and neatly topped with triangular cookie-cutter tops, all facing the ocean. In the evening, when the harbor was illuminated, these buildings were reflected in the water and provided a lovely cityscape. We walked along Bergen's crooked streets and narrow passages, took the funicular to Floyen, a lookout point high above the sea, and walked back to town along wooded trails. We visited the aquarium with its wide variety of fish, but I was primarily impressed by the penguins and the seals.

Bergen is the gateway to the fjords and traveling by boat gave us the advantage of seeing the contrast between the fjords and the mountains at sea level. Many of the fjords reach far inland; they are actually mountain valleys along the coast which

sunk beneath the level of the sea and have been flooded with sea water. Some of them look like rivers which have drilled their way through the mountains, while others are more like lakes which have reached out to the sea. Their mirror-still waters, the rearing height of the rocky sides, veined with waterfalls and studded with enormous boulders, radiate a majesty and tranquility that to me, at least, exceeds that of any other place in the world. Sognefjord, the longest of the fjords, snails over 100 miles into the heart of the country; it is so deep that it appears black, and some of its sections are so narrow that they look as if they have been sliced from the mountain. Perhaps the most beautiful of Norway's fjords is the Geirangerfjord, whose green-blue water reflects stunning cliffs and waterfalls. On the way to the two tiny towns at opposite ends of the fjord, we watched the drama of the 'Seven Sisters', the powerful surge of the 'Suitor', and the mist of the 'Bride's Veil'. We visited the Nordfjord, wedged between the mountains and twisting over many kilometers to the foot of Europe's largest glacier. We hiked in some of the wildest scenery, rode ponies to the foot of glaciers whose blue ice hung ominously overhead, we climbed over crevices, or rode mini buses which spiraled down the steep descent of mountains. We stopped at Trondheim, with its weathered old wooden structures which lean against each other, and visited the great stone bulk of the Nidaros cathedral, built on the grave of St. Olav who formulated a Christian religious code for Norway.

There was much to do aboard the ship as well. There were many organized activities for children and we also had fun on

our own. In Europe, it was customary to put ones shoes in front of the hotel room door at night, to be polished by the staff and returned the following morning, and one night we decided to sneak out when everyone was asleep, and to move the shoes around. There was quite a commotion the following morning when no one could find their footwear. My mother's shoes turned up in front of a cabin a few doors away from our suite, occupied by a Polish bishop - and thus began a strange friendship between my parents and one of Poland's bishops, which continued till the outbreak of the war. In fact, when the bishop came to Rzeszow a few years later to officiate at a church dedication in our town, he stayed at our home while his entourage stayed at the church residency. We hosted him at an elegant dinner, and the following morning the procession started at our house, much to the consternation not only of the Catholic Church and population but also of the Jewish community. After all, it was 1937, a time when Polish foreign policy swung towards the Axis powers under the guidance of colonel Josef Beck, and the idea of a close relationship between an Orthodox, though assimilated, Jew and a Polish bishop was inconceivable!

Surprisingly, too, both the bishop and my parents were more amused than annoyed by the shoe prank during our Scandinavian cruise. All the kids were reprimanded and subsequently 'punished' during the Arctic Circle crossing ceremonies dedicated not only to Odin, the chief god in Norse mythology, but also to Neptune, Poseidon and the Norse gods of the sea, Aegir and Njord. Those of us who could swim were thrown into the swimming pool, and all of us were dunked

repeatedly as the “gods” - crew members appropriately dressed and made up - pronounced their displeasure accompanied by roars and ‘thunder’. There were other ‘punishments’ as well, followed by a huge ‘smorgasbord’ and dancing, and we all had a wonderful time. We even got our Arctic Circle Crossing Certificates which they threatened to withhold, and I had it framed upon our return home!

We had traveled up the fjord-riddled coast with its thousands of islands standing off shore like sentinels, guarding the mainland from the fury of the Atlantic storms. Once above the Arctic Circle, by comparison, the landscape became much more subtle and unexciting. What was exciting, however, was being in the ‘Land of the Midnight Sun’ where the sun rises but forgets to go down, so that life is lived in perpetual daylight. In order to be able to sleep the windows had to be covered with black curtains, but it was really difficult for our parents to get us to bed at any time. We cruised as far north as Narvik, uninteresting except for our meeting some Lapp people who had settled on the Norwegian coast. From there it was a short trip to the Lofoten Islands, where jagged, green-gray mountains sheltered fishing villages, farms and grazing sheep, and where red wooden shacks clustered around the beach. What I remember best is that we went swimming there on a shallow white beach, truly amazing considering how far north we were. The cruise to Scandinavia was definitely one of the most enjoyable and most memorable vacations for me

Whatever our vacation destination, we always traveled by train. There were few major places in Europe that could not be

reached by train since the rail networks were woven long before the advent of the automobile. Rzeszow was on the main railway line connecting Warsaw, Cracow, Lwow and the political and industrial capitals of the Continent, and we were, therefore, able to get to our destination without changing trains. Whenever the train crossed an international border, the coal burning steam locomotive and the operating crew were changed to those of the country entered, however, the train itself, as well as the service personnel remained the same. There were customs and immigration checks which occasionally involved a search of baggage or the compartment berth, but when we traveled at night, we usually just turned our passports over to the sleeping-car conductor and had an uninterrupted night of rest.

We traveled in sleeping cars, which had bedroom-style compartments with one or two berths and full washing facilities. There was an attendant who made up the beds and served continental breakfast and drinks. I liked being rocked to sleep by the clatter of the wheels, liked going to the formal restaurant car for our meals, or lowering our window and hailing a platform hawker in one of the larger stations for a snack. And I liked looking out the window and watching the world go by. The engineers who laid out Europe's railroads often drove their far-flung rails through breathtaking scenery, but Europe is not one continuous panoramic postcard and there were occasionally stretches that may have seemed uninteresting to some. Not to me though; I always found something new and different. All passenger facilities were provided by Wagon-Lits, which operated the international trains and a number of grand 'named'

express trains, such as the famous Orient Express. On most trains there was both first and second class, but the difference between them was usually not substantial. All the carriages had a narrow corridor on one side of the carriage running parallel to the individual compartments, which were comfortable and luxuriously appointed with deep-cushioned seats. I spent hours in the corridor in front of our compartment looking at the passing scenery or playing with other youngsters, who were also traveling with their parents. For me, the journey itself was an enjoyable part of the vacation.

The trip from Rzeszow to Czechoslovakia was a comparatively short one. We often spent three or four weeks in one of the famous spas of Bohemia, the playground of Central Europe's rich and famous, and the annual haunts of everybody who was anybody. The springs of the Czech spas beckoned the icons of the 19th and 20th centuries to sample the waters in an attempt to cure assorted ailments and enjoy the air of Victorian luxury and grandeur. In the spa colonnades, the healthy and the not-so-healthy sipped liberal quantities of hot and warm waters containing a variety of chemical elements used in medical treatments, and then paraded up and down, socialized and enjoyed daily outdoor concerts and other special events. Thermal baths and massages were also part of the daily routine. My parents often arranged to meet various friends at whatever spa they were "taking the cure".

Franzensbad, with its restful air, many large parks and mineral springs, especially beneficial for treatment of rheumatism and heart problems, was the smallest and the quietest of the

spas. In Karlsbad, the oldest and largest, 19th century houses with decorative facades lined the streets, and the elegant colonnades and boulevards complemented the many walks in the surrounding parks and in the picturesque river valley. There were also places to visit, such as the house where Goethe used to stay, castles, museums and churches. At night the streets filled with steam escaping from cracks in the earth, giving the town a slightly macabre feeling. We stayed at the Grandhotel Pupp, meeting place of the European aristocracy, perched on the edge of the spa district. Like Karlsbad, romantic Marienbad, Czechoslovakia's most famous spa, had many famous guests take the cure from its mineral springs, among them Britain's Edward VII, Chopin, Beethoven and Mark Twain. The hillsides and open spaces around the massive Victorian bath houses, grand hotels, sanatoriums, stately mansions and casinos were landscaped into parks and walks. Special walking trails of all difficulty levels surrounded the resort in all directions. In the evening, in addition to the casinos, there were concerts featuring Czech and international composers and orchestras.

Staying in the spas, whether they were in Austria, Poland or Czechoslovakia, was quite enjoyable, but neither particularly exciting nor memorable. When I was little, I was there with my governess, and later on, when I was older, I often met kids my age from different countries, children of people with whom my parents associated. I do remember vividly and pleasurably, however, our visit to Prague, one of the loveliest cities of the world, a city of a hundred spires, of soaring cathedrals and lavish 14th century palaces. Looking down from Hradcany

Castle whose silhouette has dominated Prague for many centuries, the city's towers made me think of medieval knights guarding the Castle, with their spears pointing toward the sky. As young as I was, I fell under the spell of this mystical city, full of religious fables and tales, and was mesmerized by it.

The Golem is the most famous of Prague's mystical legends. Created by High Rabbi Loew, a student of the Cabala who lived in the 16th century, the Golem was a clay robot who became alive when the Rabbi put the 'shem' (a capsule containing a magic formula) into the Golem's mouth. The robot could then perform endless tasks without being fed or having to rest. The Golem legend fascinated mystagogues, cabalists, scholars, poets and historians and it certainly fascinated me! Some books claim that the Golem's remains are concealed in the attic of the Old-New-Synagogue, the oldest preserved and functioning medieval synagogue in Central Europe. Legend has it that when they were excavating the site in the year 929, workers found the remains of a wall and a Holy Bible written on parchment, which would indicate that a synagogue had existed there at the time of the Second Temple; other sources, however, claim that the Old-New-Synagogue was built in 1270 and that it is the remnant of the old Jewish ghetto. In order to reach the Old Jewish Cemetery and visit Rabbi Loew's grave, we walked past the Jewish Town Hall with a Hebraic clock that runs counterclockwise. The oldest tombstone at the cemetery goes back to the 15th century. As the Jewish population increased, the cemetery became too small and there was no more horizontal space left for burials. The only solution was to cover the existing graves

with soil and put new coffins in. After a few more centuries there were twelve different layers of graves, one on top of another. The Hebrew inscriptions are simple: the date of death, the name and sometimes a simple image indicating the profession and social status of the deceased - a lance for a surgeon, a pair of scissors for a tailor. The sandstones - gray, reddish, dark, black - continue to wear off slowly and inexorably. The tombstones lean against each other and sometimes fall on top of each other. Every century, the tombstones sink ten centimeters, of some, only the tops remain visible. (When we were back in Prague in 1989 I helped a Chasidic Rabbi, who was there on a pilgrimage from Israel, locate Rabbi Loew's grave; nothing had changed in fifty years.)

Whenever I traveled with my parents, we seemed to have endless time to spend in each location. We enjoyed exploring each place at leisure, learned the history, admired the architecture and soaked up the atmosphere. We spent hours walking on the tiny streets of Mala Strana, prying into secrets of old houses and the interiors of mysterious courtyards. It was a timeless fairytale world of churches, monasteries and palaces, of towers and cupolas, of streetcorner saints that were placed there to remind the poor sinners of heaven and hell. We visited the Gothic St. Vims Cathedral - the spiritual heart of Prague with its graceful, soaring towers, and the high Baroque St. Nicholas Church, whose full-bodied dome with the slender bell tower is one of the many striking architectural contrasts that mark Prague's skyline. We marveled at the unique beauty of the medieval Charles Bridge, whose heavy Romanesque foundation

stones contrast with the elegance of the Gothic arches and the bridge towers at both ends of the bridge. The Charles Bridge is decorated with sandstone statues and sculptured groups of saints, among them a gilded bronze cross with the Corpus Christi and a Hebrew inscription. In 1696, a Jew had scoffed at the cross, was sentenced to pay a fine and have the words “Holy, Holy, Holy God” inscribed. We spent time in the Old Town Square, a tiny capsule ringed by medieval and Baroque structures, with the monument of Jan Huss in the center. Jan Huss was a 15th century religious reformer who fought against a corrupt Catholic church and the foreign domination of Bohemia. We stood below the astrological clock of the Old Town Hall and waited for the clock to strike the hour; the little windows opened, the small statues of the twelve Apostles and of Christ filed past the windows followed by a bell-ringing skeleton representing death. I liked to spend time in the arcades of the Old Town Square, with their meter-thick walls and stone floors which must have been there when the Bohemian nobles were executed in 1621. Now children were playing on the sidewalk while we rested and relaxed in the cafes, beerhouses and sausage shops under the arcades.

Prague’s early history reaches back into the stone age. During the next one thousand years, assassinations, bloodshed, strife, political, social and national conflicts dominated its fate, yet, this city of mysteries and miracles produced some of the greatest poets, writers and composers. In the 1930s, before German tanks rumbled into Prague in March 1939, Czechoslovakia was called “the America of Europe”. Under president

Tomas Masaryk, a great humanist and philosopher, there was freedom of speech and of the press, religious and political freedom, and nearly everybody had work and enough to eat. It was not only a great country to visit, but also a great country to live in.

## VISITING NEW YORK -

**It was** our last vacation, a vacation that would affect our fate and the rest of our lives. It was probably in 1937 or 1938 that the Polish Government asked its citizens to declare any money they had abroad in order to replenish the Government's dwindling gold reserves. My father had large bank accounts both in England and in Switzerland resulting from his exports of lumber to these countries. Since these transactions were legal and official they could easily be traced. My father, therefore, declared our holdings abroad, the Polish Government transferred the funds to the national treasury and my father received an equivalent amount in Polish zlotys. (At that time, the official exchange rate was approximately 5.00 zlotys to one US dollar.)

Being aware of the political situation, my father wanted to continue to have some of his assets outside of the country and made arrangements for an illegal transfer of funds, this time to the United States. Diplomats could be found who were willing to smuggle out money in their diplomatic pouches, no doubt, for a substantial commission. The first 'transfer', I believe, was US\$50,000.00 which arrived in the U.S.A. in the Spring of 1939; Uncle Fulek and Uncle Herman also had small amounts added to that 'transaction'. It was now necessary to come to the United States to invest the money, and what better excuse for making a trip to New York than visiting the 1939 World's Fair, particularly for people who traveled as extensively as my parents! But my mother refused to go on the trip; she had no

interest in America, “a country without any culture and full of gangsters”, and she certainly could not help my father with the investments since she had no knowledge nor interest in money matters. She decided to spend a few weeks in southern Italy and in Sicily during the time he was away and suggested to my father that he invite me to accompany him, particularly since I had some knowledge of English and could be of help to him. Boy, was I excited! The ocean crossing, the World’s Fair, America with all the glamour and movie stars - it all sounded just wonderful!

We left Gdynia on the luxury ship M.S. Pilsudski on July 1, 1939. I did not spend too much time with my father, who had his two brothers. Uncle Fulek and Uncle Herman, to keep him company. They soon became acquainted and spent time with the many wealthy Polish Jews making the trip; most of them had no intention of returning to Poland in the foreseeable future because of the uncertain and potentially dangerous political situation in Europe. Uncle Herman, jolly and easy going, discovered Coca Cola, unknown in Europe at the time, drank it incessantly, and soon acquired the nickname of “Mr. Coca Cola” among the passengers. We also met and became quite friendly with the Haitian Consul to Germany, who boarded the ship in Hamburg. He was returning to his country accompanied by his younger brother, Jacques, who had been an engineering student in Germany. He was just a few years older than I and we spent a great deal of time together. Coming from Poland, the fact that he was black had no effect on us whatsoever; we were not atune to racial prejudices at the time - just to anti-

Semitism.

We sailed into New York harbor on July 11th and were awed by the skyline of lower Manhattan outlined against a cloudless blue sky. I had seen pictures of New York's skyline before, but what we saw surpassed every expectation. We stared at the Statue of Liberty, facing us as she did welcoming the immigrant ships that sailed in from Europe, holding the torch up to them. There were quite a few relatives awaiting us as we disembarked, strangers to me, but people my father and uncles grew up with and corresponded with all these years. There were hugs and kisses, tears and laughter. Someone, very wisely, made arrangements for us to stay in one of the hotels in the Rockaways, a narrow peninsula facing the Atlantic ocean. Not only was it much cooler there than in the city, but there was a long boardwalk along the white beach where we often walked in the evening; I also had an opportunity to occasionally spend some time on the beach and to swim in the surf.

I remember most vividly the first family invitation to a brunch at Jacob Wank's house. He was the offspring of my grandfather Leizer Wang's brother, Moishe, and had changed the spelling of the family name in order not to be confused with the many Chinese Wangs who lived in the New York area. Besides Jacob, there were his brothers Peretz/Paul and Yidel/Julius, their sister Rose, their spouses, their assorted children, and a half-brother, Leizer. They served what I now know is a typical Jewish-American brunch: bagels, 'bialys', lox, whitefish, herring, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc. At that time this combination of food was rather unusual for us and

I was particularly surprised that they served salad and vegetables, not a staple in the lower class Polish-Jewish household. The Wanks owned and lived on a milk farm on Wortman Avenue in Brooklyn, and after lunch they proudly showed us their cows and milking facilities. They were simple and unsophisticated, warm and pleasant, and they seemed to be doing well financially, which was not the case with the rest of the family.

The Wank's financial security made my father seek their advice in connection with investing the proceeds of the first transfer of funds from Poland. He knew that he wanted to invest in real estate and on Jacob's recommendation contacted a Mr. Blaustein, who was an attorney and involved in real estate; he and my father remained friends until Mr. Blaustein died. My father always bought all his real estate properties for cash. I really do not know whether this was only his way of conducting business or whether buying on mortgage was not customary in Europe, but with the proper advice my father could have purchased a large apartment house in Manhattan or Queens, using the available cash as a down payment. Instead, he paid outright for a 23-apartment brick building on the corner of Van Siclen and Blake Avenues in Brooklyn. At the time, the neighborhood was Jewish lower middle class, the Manufacturer's Trust Company Bank was across the street, the building was definitely the best apartment house in the area, and the building rents would provide a comfortable income. As soon as the purchase of the building was completed, a deed was issued giving full ownership rights to me as well as to my mother, or

to any one of the three of us who would survive. My father insisted on this deed to the property, fully aware of the possibility of an impending war; he wanted to make sure that if any one of us survived, we would be provided for. Mr. Michaels, vice-president of the Manufacturer's Trust Bank Company, who was involved in most of the transaction, spoke German and could therefore discuss things with my father in that language, but since others did not, I was always present and always involved; my father wanted to make sure that nothing would get lost in the translation. We also opened a joint checking account at Manufacturer's Trust, which I had with my father until he died in 1959. Before our return to Poland, my father gave Jacob Wank Power-of-Attorney to manage the building.

All this took quite a bit of time, but there was enough time left for sightseeing. The fastest and safest way to get anywhere was either by subway or by one of the elevated lines. The trestle-work of the "els" brought twilight to miles of streets; from the vantage point of a window seat, one could survey the East Side, middle-class Tudor City, Chinatown, the Bowery, the Wall Street district and any other part of Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens or Brooklyn. While we were in New York the Sixth Avenue "el" was being razed to be replaced by a subway. The three existing subway systems, the IRT, the BMT, and the newest most modern one, the Eighth Avenue Subway (Independent), carried thousands of passengers daily for a five-cent fare, regardless of how far they wished to go. Riding the subways was new and exciting for us, and riding a subway during rush hour was quite an experience. There were crowds

everywhere: crowds storming the turnstiles, swamping change-booths, wrestling with closing train doors, riding elevators, escalators, running up and down staircases to different subway levels while nickels jingled, signal bells clanged, turnstiles banged and footsteps thundered. All through it all, trains arrived and departed, delivering and removing crowds, lifting gum-papers and clouds of dust, and jarring the sidewalks of the city above. Beneath the sidewalks of New York the subways have created a second city; some of the thoroughfares between the turnstiles and the streets had lunch counters, barbershops, shoeshine stands, florist shops and telephone booths. Beggars, banjo-players and sometimes a bright singing troupe asked the passengers for a few pennies.

Outside, the crowds were even greater. Thousands of people seemed to be rushing, pushing, shoving; wherever we went, it was crowded, noisy, hot and humid. We had to wait in line to climb on stools at Chock Full o’Nuts where we sipped coffee and munched on cream-cheese sandwiches and doughnuts. We discovered the jam-packed Horn & Hardart Automat where individual dishes were displayed in cubicles with glass doors. Armed with nickels, dimes and quarters, which we inserted into slots at the appropriate cubicle, we could buy whatever we wanted without having to ask for it in English, a treat for my father and uncles. There, we sampled pies, yams, Boston baked beans and other foods unknown to us. We also enjoyed ice-cream sodas, sundaes and banana splits -- new to us as well and oh, so rich - at the soda fountains in drugstores - and what an amazing place an American drugstore turned out to

be! Nothing like it in all of Europe, where prescriptions were sold in pharmacies and all other items in different specialty stores. We spent hours browsing in Woolworth's Five & Ten Cent stores where almost everything could be bought for a nickel or a dime. I bought lots of cosmetics and little mementos for all my friends back home.

We visited my father's friend from Rzeszow, a Mr. Schneeweiss, (his name was now White), who owned a dress factory and gave me a dress as a present, the first ready-to-wear item I ever owned. The garment district was full of fur trolleys and heavy racks of dresses being pushed along the sidewalk as people hurried back and forth. Times Square, a few blocks away, seemed like a jungle of tall buildings, antiquated and remodeled, commercial structures topped by huge skeletons of electric signs, surrounded by a sea of people. It looked so much better at night when at midnight the streets were more brilliant than at noon and the lights created a glow over Times Square like that of a dry timber fire. The crowds at night exceeded those of a large town carnival. Streams of shoppers - stores were open till the wee hours - movie-and theater-goers, and tourists moved across the sidewalks watching a wall of light and color urging us to drink beer, smoke Camels and see the world's most beautiful girls. We watched the belt of white electric light bulbs which still girds the Times Building, spelling out news in moving letters that can be read several blocks away. That was the Great White Way, the theatrical center of America we had read about and had seen in so many movies.

The East Side had glamour and skyscrapers. I looked up

at the skyscrapers, glass, steel and chrome towers rising in a single vertical line, each built at different times and in unrelated architectural styles, and yet somehow forming a single, harmonious composition. It was awe inspiring. We strolled down Fifth Avenue with the famous department stores, we looked at New York from the top of the Empire State Building, and walked up Fifth Avenue again to spend some time in Rockefeller Plaza, a group of skyscrapers set around a green plaza with the RCA Building rising in the background. We walked down the beautifully landscaped pedestrian passage, which slopes down to stone steps leading to the lower level, and had lunch in the outdoor cafe. We admired the huge bronze figure of Prometheus which rises above spouting streams of water and marveled at the play of forms and light and shadow created by the pattern of windows and wall surfaces. The beauty of the abrupt, stark, jagged and powerful silhouettes of the buildings around us was not only impressive but unique.

Evenings and weekends were usually spent with family. We were invited several times to my father's cousins on his mother's side, the Kerpers, but never established a close relationship with them. Perhaps that is why I have no clear recollection of them. (To the best of my knowledge, my father had no contact with them when we returned to the United States, except for the Glatts. Reverend Josele Glatt was a 'shochet', his wife Reisel was my father's first cousin, and his daughter, Shirley Himmel, and her family, lived in the building we owned on Van Sicien Avenue. My father purchased our cemetery plots through Rev. Glatt, and his family tombstone

adjoins our plots there.)

Our relationship with my father's family on his father's side, however, was a close one from the very beginning. Before our trip to America, I started to correspond with Ruth Spiegel, only daughter of my father's first cousin, David. Ruth had just graduated from college with a degree in Spanish, was about to start teaching, and was engaged to Everett. Everyone seemed very happy about their upcoming marriage and we were invited to the Spiegels for dinner to meet their future in-laws. It was a nice dinner party, Aunt Bess was a marvelous cook, and till this day I am not quite sure whom Aunt Bess wanted to impress more: us, with their educated well-to-do son-in-law-to-be—or them, with the rich European relatives visiting the World's Fair! (Ruth never married Everett; she married Sidney Miller instead). Aunt Bess was regal, considered herself more sophisticated than most of the members of the family she married into, which she probably was; she ruled the household with an iron gloved hand. Uncle David was warm, loving and kind, just like his siblings Wolvish, Goldie and Hannah.

Wolvish Spiegel and his wife Rae had four sons, Sidney, Harry, Kopi and Martin, as well as a daughter, Bea, who were all quite a few years older than I, but close enough in age so that I had a pleasant tune when we spent a weekend with them in Kingston, N. Y. where they lived. The Spiegel boys had a band and played for us in the evening, which was a real treat for me. (For years, they often joined whatever band was playing at a family wedding or Bar Mitzvah and I always enjoyed listening to them.) Wolvish, like David Spiegel and Goldie's

and Hannah's husbands, were all in the paper business, but Wolvish seemed to be doing much better than the others. His sons were college educated but expected to go into the family business.

Aunt Goldie and the Mandler clan, Uncle Izzy, Meyer, Harry and Ruthie, embraced us with such warmth and affection that it was impossible not to be touched by their genuineness and simplicity. From the moment we met there was no doubt that we were family; we were invited there a number of times and always felt comfortable and at home. Harry, the youngest son, was finishing high school, Meyer was already in college; both expected to go into Uncle Izzy's paper business. Ruthie, some five years older than I, had some sort of job. Although I did not have too much in common with any of them, I did like them. Izzy and my father hit it off well and they, too, seemed to like each other. And as far as Aunt Goldie was concerned, both she and her sister Hannale reminded me of my favorite aunts, my father's sisters, Ciocia Surcia and Ciocia Matlusia.

Hannale, or Aunt Annie, as she was called, was married to Sam Reich. They lived in a row-house on Kent Street in Greenpoint, a Polish-Jewish neighborhood where immigrant families from the overcrowded Lower East Side of Manhattan settled after the opening of the Williamsburg Bridge. They had a daughter, Sylvia, and two sons, Norman and Harry. We spent a lot of time with Harry, a young lawyer, and with his beautiful young wife, Bea. They were married a short time, Bea was in her early twenties and Harry quite a few years older than Bea. They were good company and seemed to have much more

available free time than the rest of the family. We got to know them quite well and really liked both of them a lot. Bea and Harry took us to Chinatown, where we visited a Buddhist Temple and walked on Mott and Pell streets where huge Chinese signs hung from upper-story tenement windows and dwarfed the Chinese restaurants and vegetable markets huddled below them. The vegetable markets were patronized exclusively by Chinese and sold such things as bok toy, Chinese cabbage, fresh ginger, black, hundred-day old duck eggs, bitter melons, smoked squid, dried ducks, shark fins and leechee nuts, which were not nuts at all! We had lunch at a Chinese restaurant and tasted won-ton soup, egg rolls, chow mein and an endless variety of foods we had never heard of before. It was almost like being in China - strange and exciting!

Harry and Bea took us also to Harlem, the spiritual capital of Black America, another startling and memorable experience for us. Because black Americans were barred from most residential areas in the city, Harlem was the home of Negroes from southern states, the West Indies, and Africa. Everybody around us was black, all shades of black, and the streets were even more crowded than the rest of New York. Built up solidly with tenements, old apartment houses, brownstones converted into flats, and occasional small frame residences, Harlem looked i like poor man's land to us. The overall drabness of the area was relieved by some nice residential sections with elaborately decorated apartment buildings, impressive churches, and wide boulevards which contrasted with the most dreadful slums we ever saw. We drove along Seventh Avenue, lined with apart-

ment houses, retail stores, beauty parlors, restaurants and corner saloons, and along Lenox Avenue, shabby, flanked by cheap shops, bars, lunchrooms, pool parlors and ‘gin mills’. The sidewalks were crowded with loiterers and strollers who bought popcorn, sweet potatoes, peanuts, sausages and other tidbits from rickety mobile lunchstands. We visited an Orthodox synagogue serving American-born Negro converts and Ethiopians, who traced their descent from Judah and Benjamin. (Those living in Ethiopia claim descent from King Salomon and the Queen of Sheba.) We felt safe in Harlem even though Harry told us that crime and juvenile delinquency have germinated in the tenements despite periodic police cleanups. In the evening, we listened to soapbox orators who drew crowds with their lectures on everything from occultism to communism, had a bite to eat in one of the local restaurants, and then attended a spectacular all-Negro revue at the Apollo Theater, which Harry called “Harlem’s opera house”. The audience was mixed and really seemed to enjoy the outstanding orchestra and the wonderful performers — and for me, hearing hot jazz, the blues, swing, watching the “Lindy Hop” and “Shim-sham” was just like being right inside a Hollywood movie set that had an all black cast!

Going to Radio City Music Hall, the largest theater in the world which opened a few years before, was also an experience straight out of Hollywood and equally impressive. Everything about the Music Hall was tremendous, its capacity, the spectacular modern auditorium, the orchestra, the screen, the stage and the world’s largest organ. I remember it as if it were yesterday.

First the lights went down and we heard the organ; we could not see it, we just heard it. Then a light came up over one side and we could see the organ and the organist sliding slowly out of the wall in a glow of light. Then the orchestra rose slowly up out of the pit and the stage show began - acrobats and animal acts, a singer and then the ballet. And finally, the Rockettes, whose claim to the title of “the world’s finest precision dancers” has seldom been challenged. The Rockets, sumptuously costumed against a background of resplendent scenery, snapped their heads to the left or right at the same second and when they went tap-ta-ta-tap, every knee was in an exact line with every other knee. What a show! The movie that followed the stage show was an extra added attraction. We had seen spectacular variety shows in Paris, but nothing could compare to Radio City in size and scope.

I believe that Harry had a good time showing us the things he liked in New York and that he enjoyed being with us as much as we enjoyed being with him. He was warm and friendly, fiin to be with, intelligent and open minded. Perhaps that is why I was amazed at the expression on his face when he met our shipboard friends, the Haitian Consul and his brother Jacque; we never mentioned that they were black. We met them for drinks and dinner at an elegant hotel on Central Park South where they were staying and it was quite obvious that Harry and Bea were delighted not to have been included in our plans. Our close relationship with Harry and Bea continued when we returned to the States in 1941. Harry represented us when we bought our Cranford home. He died young, at the age of 48,

and Bea was left alone, without any means of support, to bring up their three sons. Bea eventually remarried but died a few years later when she was 52 years old.

We also spent a considerable amount of time with Harry Bier and his red-headed wife, whose name I no longer remember. Was it Bertha? I believe that he was Goldie Mandler's cousin and not related to us. Harry Bier was worldlier than our other American cousins, a few years older than my father, and he was retired. The Biers and my father got along very well, they visited us a number of times in Rockaway and drove us around New York. They showed us the Wall Street district, took us to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with its impressive Fifth Avenue entrance facade, and they were also the first ones to take us to the World's Fair. "Building the World of Tomorrow" was the theme, and the massive symbols of the Fair were the perisphere, a huge steel-framed globe, and the trylon, a slender, tapering three-sided pillar. Both stark white, they "meant to represent perfect order and to symbolize the global aspirations of democracy and of commercial and industrial enterprise". There was a pool set below the bottom of the perisphere, and everywhere there were other pools, lagoons, waterfalls and fountains. There were countless indoor and outdoor sculptures and murals, some abstract, most in the Art Deco style. Circling the Lagoon of Nations and flanking the Court of Peace were the League of Nations buildings, among them the Japanese pavilion, the Russian pavilion, the Italian pavilion and the Tower of Poland representing peoples that were soon to experience their own personal hell, wrought by the war.

We stood in line for the World of Tomorrow pavilion dedicated to business and industry, for The Wonder World of Chemistry with General Electric's stainless-steel lightning bolt, and for The World of the Future, sponsored by General Motors assembling before our eyes what can be done and what we will be able to do in the near future. Walking along the Fair's streets we became aware of and - like everybody else - longed for the material goods displayed in the name of progress. Spending the evening at Billy Rose's Aquacade, the watershow extravaganza, was a perfect way to end an evening at the World's Fair. Once again we were amazed watching the show's star, the Olympic backstroke champion Eleanor Holm, with hundreds of aquabelles, aquabeaux and troupes of aquaclowns perform in perfect unison. We were invited to the show by Abe and Fanny Wang, a childless couple who owned a liquor store in Astoria and were comparatively well-off financially. Both were short, skinny, a bit caustic, and although they really extended themselves to make our stay in New York enjoyable, I did not care much for them. To the best of my knowledge, their relationship to us was through my maternal grandmother, Gizela Wang Ungar, but they maintained a relationship with the Wang families on my father's side because of the same name. (My father, and later on Uncle Fulek and Ciocia Henia, continued socializing with them when we lived in Astoria in the 1940s).

The month we spent in New York passed quickly. We hosted a 'bon voyage' party for all the relatives who came to see us off aboard the luxury ship M.S. Batory, returning to Gdynia on its maiden voyage. Everybody brought us gifts, and

once again, there were hugs and kisses but this time there were more tears than laughter. I had a wonderful, exciting vacation, was impressed by the size of the city, the streets, the skyscrapers, the constantly rushing crowds, the multi-racial, multi-cultural makeup of the population, the tempo and diversity of New York - but I certainly wouldn't want to live there!

## THE WAR BREAKS OUT . . . .

**I**t was six o'clock in the morning, September first, 1939. We woke up to the persistent sound of air raid sirens, but somehow they sounded differently from those we heard throughout the previous week, the last week of August. We had just returned from our trip to the United States, and sharing the excitement of our vacation in America was intermingled with constant talk of war. Would the Germans invade Poland? And if they did, what would happen then? Reserves were being called up for service, but we were confident that Poland would defeat the German Army in a short period of time; after all, what other country had a cavalry like ours, and once the rains came, how would the German tanks be able to travel on our muddy roads? We believed that the Germans were aware of it as well and would want to avoid actual fighting, particularly, since they have always accomplished whatever they wanted by 'peaceful means'. Was the cession of Gdansk (Danzig) and the creation of an extra-territorial German Corridor across the Polish Corridor (a strip of Polish land between Germany and East Prussia which provided Poland with access to the Baltic Sea) worth going to war? After all, Poland had guarantees from both England and France that would protect us against aggression. The period of 1937-1939 had been an ominous one, as the signs of the approaching war went together with self-imposed blindness. The two camps which characterized the political life of Poland at the time were the liberals and socialists on one

side, and the nationalists with its chauvinism and its anti-Semitism on the other. The paradox was that Poland felt threatened by Fascism and Nazi Germany and determined to defend itself against it, yet the majority of Poles did not seem to realize that they were undermining their strong principles of democracy by following some of Germany's beliefs and actions. The air raid sirens persisted ominously, and by the time we joined hundreds of other people on the street, there were planes overhead, darkening the sky. It was war. We went back into the house, turned on the radio and started to pack. Meanwhile, my father was making arrangements to obtain the necessary papers from the Mayor's office that would allow us to use the car and to have it refilled with gasoline as needed. I barely had time to make some telephone calls to my closest friends, but then, "I would be back within a few weeks", I assured them, and would write as soon as I knew where we were staying. My mother packed one large suitcase for each of us, the maids prepared food and thermos bottles filled with hot tea for the trip, and within a few hours our chauffeur, Mr. Cebula, was loading our car. I still remember that just as we were about to leave, my father went back into the house to pick up 'something important'; he came back with three pairs of boots, one for each of us. None of us thought that we were leaving our home forever, that we would never see it again ....

We drove East, toward the Russian border, not only to escape war, but primarily to escape the Germans. The roads were already crowded with soldiers and with refugees, on foot or in wagons, and every once in a while, a low flying German

plane would buzz over the people and shoot at random, killing and maiming for no obvious reason, except to cause fear and havoc. When the plane was gone, we scrambled out of the ditches and resumed our journey. It all seemed so unreal, so macabre. I can still feel the way I felt then - "this simply isn't happening; I must be having a strange nightmare;" and, "I just know that nothing bad can happen to me!" I wasn't frightened at all. The sun was shining brightly, and in between climbing in and out of the car to avoid bullets, we ate lunch, listened to the radio and talked.

I don't remember how long it took to get to Rowne on the Polish-Russian border, a town of approximately 40,000 inhabitants, many of them Ukrainian. No wonder that when the Russian Army marched into Poland on September 17th it was welcomed by enthusiastic crowds with flowers and the traditional Polish welcome - bread and salt. The mood was jubilant. We were unaware of the secret non-aggression pact, signed by Germany and the USSR in August of that year dividing Poland and defining the sphere of influence for Russia and for Germany, and believed that the Russians were there to save us from the German columns. The German army was advancing through Poland with spectacular speed. England and France had already declared war on Germany on September 3rd, and we believed that now, with Russia on our side as well, we would be home in no time. In reality, however, with Germany and Russia in alliance, Polish resistance was crushed within six weeks and Poland was partitioned between Germany and the USSR. The border was in Przemysl, and Rzeszow remained in the German

occupied zone.

Mr. Cebula, our driver, and the car stayed with us in Rowne for a little over two weeks. There was no fighting in the area and our trip to Lwow was uneventful. Lwow, one of the major Polish cities in the northern foothills of the Carpathian mountains had a population of over 300,000, one-third of them Jews. It was a major transportation center in Poland, had numerous industries, a university and several technical institutes. We went there occasionally for a few days to visit my parents' friends, to go to the theater or to have some clothes made for my mother by Mrs. Herzog, with whom my mother developed a close personal relationship after our meeting on the train to Paris.

We found lodgings in the large apartment of my friend Marian Verstanding's cousins, Jozef and Wilma Frost, who, like so many at the time, rented rooms in their homes to Jewish war refugees. Mr. Frost was a successful attorney, and the couple had one son, Adziu, a few years younger than I. We had one large room and the use of the dining room and of the kitchen at specific times; we all shared the bathroom. It was crowded but bearable, although I imagine that it must have been very difficult for my parents. The Frost's sleep-in maid took care of all the housework and of the laundry, but my mother cooked our meals. She even baked a birthday cake for me, which was quite an accomplishment under the circumstances, and we had a small party for a few of my friends. My parents and the Frosts had known each other before the war and they seemed to get along, at least I have no recollection of any major

conflicts or disagreements. Mr. Cebula returned to Rzeszow with our car, and over the next few months made several trips back and forth, bringing us winter clothing and many other necessities, until our car was confiscated by the Germans. Crossing the border did not seem to be too difficult at the time, and many young people went back and forth fairly frequently. I remember my mother's younger brother, Wujciu Szymek, visiting us once or twice and assuring us that "things in Rzeszow were O.K. and that there was no reason for him to stay in Lwow for the time being".

All hostilities had ceased in that part of the country, a sense of 'normalcy' returned, and life in Lwow settled down to a new routine. The shortage of food continued and there were long lines for provisions; Marian often stood in line for hours to bring us a pound of sugar or a pound of coffee, and my mother reciprocated by inviting him to join us for dinner, which his cousin, Wilma, never did. Perhaps she resented the fact that he would stand in line for us and not for her. There was not much heating fuel to be had either and it was often cold, particularly since there were many broken windows, and not enough glass to replace them. The city was teeming with refugees, and my parents often ran into old acquaintances, not only from Rzeszow but also from Krakow, Katowice and other towns in the German occupied zone. The Feiwel family was there from Katowice, the Wistreichs from Krakow, the Fruhlings from Rzeszow, Ciocia Henia, Wujciu Fulek, Hala and Leszek, who lived in my cousin Izka nee Weissberg's apartment, my friend Marian Verstandig was there, as well as

countless others. People started to go out, to socialize, to go for walks, and soon found their favorite coffee houses, where they met for tea and conversation. Before long, movie houses reopened and there were even performances in the theater and at the opera.

The Russian occupiers seemed unobtrusive, non-threatening and even friendly. There were no restrictions that I was aware of and the Russian soldiers were pleasant and even helpful; they often offered to help my mother carry packages and tried to make conversation with us girls or to pick us up, under the pretext of wanting to learn to speak Polish. Whenever we pointed out the many shortages since they “liberated” us, their favorite answer was “vsio budjiet”, which means “there will be plenty of everything” in due time. They were unsophisticated, bought up everything in sight, and seeing Russian women wearing nightgowns at the opera, in the belief that they were evening gowns, gave us a chuckle and a feeling of sophistication. On the other hand, some former Polish-Jewish Communists, who under the new regime often served in the militia, felt that their time has come and became mean and vindictive. I will never forget coming home with my mother from a wonderful afternoon performance of Tchaikovsky’s ‘Pique Dame’ and finding our room being ransacked by three militia men. The room was in shambles, everything we owned was on the floor, and the men kept asking my father in broken Polish where he kept the gold and the US dollars. They were hostile and threatening, yelling that ‘capitalism was dead and that capitalists like my father will have to pay for their crimes’. My father

seemed cool and composed, but I was petrified convinced that they would drag him away, particularly since I knew that some of the major industrialists have already been incarcerated by the Russian authorities. I also assumed that we had not only jewelry but money in the apartment. Arresting my father, however, seems to have been beyond their jurisdiction. My father found out later that they were small-time hoodlums, originally from the vicinity of Rzeszow, without authority, acting on their own and out to enrich themselves.

I was not unhappy in Lwow. I saw a lot of my friend, Marian, and of Ala Fruhling from Rzeszow, and once school started, made new friends there, all of them Jewish. The educational system was changed to follow Russian guidelines and, compared to Polish standards, was quite low. The final exam in Polish literature, for example, was transcribing dictation from one of the famous authors, although in the sciences the standards were somewhat higher. Latin was eliminated from the curriculum, but German remained as a required subject. I was the star pupil in that class and much admired by the teacher, an old German lady, who did not seem to realize that my knowledge of the language was not acquired in school; I still have the book of Heine poetry, which she gave me as a sign of her affection. There was little homework, if any, and the only problem I had was trying to learn both the Ukrainian and Russian languages at the same time. Not only did I have to learn a new alphabet, but both languages are very similar. Since Lwow has had a large Ukrainian population, most local girls were quite familiar with Ukrainian, but to those of us

who were transplanted from central and western Poland, distinguishing between Russian and Ukrainian was extremely difficult if not almost impossible.

Stella Wagschal came to my aid, tried to help me with Ukrainian, and became my first new friend. She was the typical 'A' student, a little on the heavy side, a bit insecure, kind and friendly, but not among the most popular girls in the class. She was an only child, she read a lot, played the piano quite well, and I enjoyed being in her company almost as much as spending an afternoon in her lovely, warm home and having delicious refreshments served by her doting mother.

Rena Aszkenazy, on the other hand, was fun to be with and always on the go. She was small, wiry, not good looking and far from intellectual, but she was part of a fun crowd and often took me to local 'in' places. Rena had a very handsome boyfriend, Milek, and there were always other boys around. Her father was a well-to-do merchant, and rumor had it that Milek was courting and planning to marry Rena in order to get into the family business. At least, that's what Stella used to say; she was envious of Rena and of my relationship with her. My mother had Mrs. Herzog make me two new dresses and a new winter coat, Mother also often lent me some of her own clothes - by that time I had lost a lot of weight and could fit into my mother's clothes - and at least as far as appearance was concerned, I felt that I fitted into that group of 'golden youth'.

But my best friend in Lwow was Nela Steinberg, tall, pretty and smart. She was personable, good company, an excellent student, well informed, interested in a variety of

things, politically aware, and very popular. We spent a great deal of time together both outside of the house and in her home, which was always filled with interesting people. Nela's family embraced me with warmth and accepted me fully even though our backgrounds were different; they were agnostics, middle class intellectuals and ardent Communists who welcomed the 'new order' with enthusiasm and faith in a better future for all mankind,

Gerda Feiwel, Resia's daughter, was also in my class, but we did not associate at all, although our parents resumed their relationship to some extent. She skipped school often and ran around with a fast crowd.

Weeks and then months passed rather uneventfully. My father was busy trying to find a way to leave Poland, and when the Russians set up a commission to issue exit visas to foreigners trapped in Poland during the war, he managed -- no doubt through 'connections' - to get promises of such visas for the two of us and for Uncle Fulek; Uncle Herman would not consider leaving his family behind. The basis for the Russian exit visas were our U.S.A. tourist visas, provided that we would obtain the necessary transit visas. In spite of the fact that the U.S.A. visas were about to expire on June 15, 1940, and that it would be impossible for us to get to the United States by that time, Turkey gave us the necessary transit visas. My parents spent endless days and sleepless nights arguing back and forth whether or not Dad and I should leave without my mother. After all, we were one of the very few who returned to Poland from America just one week before the outbreak of war in order

not to leave my mother alone. But, my mother argued, if we all stayed we would all be in danger or perish, while once abroad, my father would do everything in his power to bring her out. Besides, she kept assuring my father, she had many good friends in Lwow, enough financial resources, and would manage well. I am sure that the final, decisive argument was that “one must save the child at all costs” - and I guess, that is the reason for my always feeling guilty about surviving. Would my mother have survived had we stayed? Or, would we all have perished?

While the Russian commission was deciding the fate of foreign citizens still in Poland, the Germans set up a commission in Lwow registering those interested in returning to their former homes, now in the German occupied part of Poland. The 1939 division of Poland between Germany and Russia resulted in having a large segment of the population, which fled occupying German forces, trapped under Russian rule. Strange as it may seem today, 90% of the Jews in the Russian occupied zone registered with the Germans to return home, believing that eventually Germany would be defeated and that the western part of Poland would once again become independent. They also feared that “once in Russia, always in Russia”. Only those with Communist sympathies did not register for repatriation and many of them volunteered to go to the interior of Russia, Adam and his family among them. Everyone else viewed those times as an interim period, ‘waiting out the war’. The news from Rzeszow, or other towns in the German Occupied Zone, was not distressing. No ghettos and no camps were set up as yet,

and no one seemed to have realized that the time was approaching when our God, the God of the Jews, would go into hiding.

The Germans repatriated the Poles but not the Jews. They handed the registration lists over to the Russians, who considered the signers pro-German, and in anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and the Soviet Union, decided to take steps to eliminate this 'hostile anti-Russian element' from strategic territories. Beginning of June 1940, lists in hand, Russian authorities began a house to house round-up of those people who had signed up to return to German-occupied Poland. They came in the middle of the night, knocked on the door, and gave the occupants one hour to pack their belongings. Then they took them to the train station, where railroad cars awaited them. The cars were locked, and the people waited ....

Only a limited number of people were picked up that first night, and word of the round-up spread like wildfire throughout the community. People left their apartments for different locations, spent the night in the park, were hiding out with friends or at train stations. The second night of the raids for 'potential subversives' was not too successful, and on the third night the Russians started a house-to-house search; anyone without a Lwow resident's identification card was picked up and taken away.

Like everyone else we, too, were in a state of panic when the raids started. We knew that my father and I were safe since we already had our exit visas, but we certainly did not want my mother to be picked up and taken, as we all suspected, to the interior of Russia. At the time it seemed to be the worst possible

fate, a close to death sentence. My friend, Nela Steinberg and her family, offered my mother asylum. Nela's brother-in-law, who lived with them, was a high Party official at the time and they knew that their home would not be searched; therefore, my mother would be 'safe' there. If only we had known then what we know now.... Had my mother been sent to Siberia, she would have survived the war just like all the others did. Our coming home from the States just before the outbreak of war in order to be together, finding a safe haven for her during a time of danger and upheaval - or, at least that's what we believed at the time - did as little good as anything else my father did subsequently to save her life. Perhaps this is the reason why I believe in fate....

Within a few days, my mother returned to our place and we were together again. The trains were still at the Lwow railroad station and we visited the people there, brought them additional clothing and food; Henia, Hala and Leszek were there, the Fruhlings, the Feiwels, my friend Marian and so many others. The Russians did not stop us. We talked, we kissed, we hugged.... and then they were gone.

We contacted local friends like Mr. & Mrs. Bikart, who moved to Lwow from Rzeszow a few years before, as well as other friends from Rzeszow who somehow escaped the deportation, and they all promised to look after my mother. Mr. & Mrs. Bikart suggested that mother move in with them, which she did a few months after our departure. We were getting ready to leave, particularly since our American visa was about to expire end of June. It almost seemed as if we were about to

go on vacations, another trip abroad. My mother gave me her dressy broadtail fur coat and muff, a few of her dresses, her gold cigarette case, the coral necklace she bought in Venice, one of her large diamonds, and a gold locket with a tiny diamond, which had her picture in it. All the gold pieces, except for the locket, were coated with silver before our departure since we knew that it was not permitted to take gold out of the country. The locket had little value, I wore it around my neck, and we therefore believed that the Russians would allow me to keep it, but they took it away at the border and gave me a receipt for it “so that I could reclaim it upon my return”. The diamonds, my mother’s and my father’s solitaire, were placed in the heels of my shoes. My mother kept all the other jewelry, and anything else of value.

None of us, I believe, felt that we were leaving forever. I kept meeting my Lwow friends, Nela, Stella and Rena, and we promised to write to each other. I gave them Jacob Wank’s address in Brooklyn to make sure that they would be able to contact me through him if we ever lost touch. They never did. (The Soviets attacked Germany on June 22, 1941 and we arrived in the United States in July of that year.) My mother and I had only casual conversations about every day occurrences, just like the previous year when my father and I left for a trip to the United States. Did we really believe that we would be together again within a few months, within a year, within two? I know that I did. Did my parents believe it, too? My mother saw us off at the railroad station - and that was the last time I saw her.

## THE JOURNEY BEGINS

**The** train was crowded, but since Lwow was the starting point of the trip we found three seats together. Our destination was Odessa on the Black Sea, in the south western Ukraine. I spent hours looking out of the window at the ever changing scenery, slept, ate the food we brought along, slept some more. The train stopped often, and at each station there were hundreds of people trying to get on, pushing and shoving, and trying to hold on to their bundles. It was supposed to be a direct train to Odessa, but on the second day of the journey we were suddenly informed that we would have to get off and wait for another train, since the one we were on would be going north instead. We joined the crowds at a small railroad station and waited; trains kept pulling in every few hours, but none, it seemed, were headed for Odessa. Evening fell, we slept on the floor and saw the sun rise in the East. By that time our food supplies were gone and the only thing we could buy was hot tea. Hours passed. Finally, in the late afternoon, our train pulled into the station. We scrambled to our feet and, holding on to our suitcases, did our best to out-run all the others and to get on. We would have never made it had it not been for a group of young Russians, who literally pulled me up and then helped my father get on. We had no idea where Fulek was, but knew that he, too, got on the train since we did not see him on the platform when the train pulled out again. People were packed like sardines, standing and sitting in the aisles, but the young Russians made

room for me in their compartment and even managed to find a spot for my father's suitcase in the corridor, on which he sat for the remainder of the trip. It was totally impossible to move through the train and we hoped that we would find Fulek once we arrived in Odessa.

From that point on, the trip was a pleasant one for me. My knowledge of the Russian language was limited, but somehow we managed to make conversation. As a rule, the Russians are friendly, jolly and kindhearted, and these young men not only helped us get on board but also shared their food and vodka with us. We talked, laughed, sang Russian songs, and time flew quickly. The only thing they simply could not understand was why I agreed to leave the Soviet Union with my father; they felt sorry for me and for "the fate that awaited me in capitalist America".

Odessa, descending in terraces from a hill to the sea, was laid out in a lovely, regular pattern. It was one of the chief ports of the Soviet Union, an industrial center that had a university, a polytechnic and medical schools, as well as an opera and a conservatory of music. A large percentage of the population was Jewish, although most of them emigrated in the beginning of the century after the pogroms that followed the mutiny on the battleship 'Potemkin' in 1905. During the few days we stayed there, my father and Uncle Fulek met a number of Jews while we walked along the seashore or in the park. It was easy to recognize that we were not Russian by the clothing we wore, and the Russians usually started the conversation by asking if we would sell them some of our things, since there was a great

shortage of consumer goods. They spoke Yiddish well and, when they found out that we were about to leave the country, were quite outspoken about life in the Soviet Union. Before we left my father gave the men he befriended three of his shirts, which was quite a gift, considering the fact that we only had one suitcase each.

Our ship was a Russian freighter laden with grain, sugar and lumber, Odessa's main export. Our quarters were primitive but clean, the food was decent, and the crew was friendly. The weather was good, the sea calm, and under normal circumstances, it would have been a pleasant adventure. As long as I was home I was rather shy and somewhat uncomfortable with men, but I seem to have changed the moment I left my mother; could it be that I no longer felt inadequate? I made friends with a few of the officers and two of them visited me during their next trip to Istanbul.

We arrived in Istanbul late in the afternoon, a sight which, till this day, I believe to be one of the most beautiful in the world. As we sailed from the Black Sea into the Bosphorus (the narrow strait that separates Europe from Asia) Istanbul arose before us in all its beauty. Built like Rome on seven hills, it lies on both sides of the Bosphorus at the entrance into the Sea of Marmara, partly in Asia and partly in Europe. From the very first moment I fell under the spell of the unique skyline of Istanbul - a succession of perfectly proportioned gilded mosque domes broken by the towers of minarets. I enjoyed looking at the palaces, castles, magnificent gardens, villas, and miles of ancient moated and turreted walls that we saw on the way.

We had a few tense moments when the Turkish officials came on board since our American visas had expired, but they stamped our passports routinely for a three-months period of time. (Turkey remained neutral during World War II until January of 1945, when it joined the Allies.) The Russian crew members helped us find a small hotel in the harbor, and the next morning we contacted the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) office. They, in turn, put us up for a few nights in a small hotel until we found inexpensive rooms on the border of the Pera quarter and the Jewish section, Chaskoi. Most of the foreigners lived in the Pera district. There were many refugees in Istanbul at the time, some from Poland, but mainly from Austria and Germany, and the HIAS was of great help to all of them. They provided free meals, lodging, and even passage out of the country for those who could not afford to pay. They were an invaluable source of information and help in all areas. We often ate dinner there, but I know that we did not ask them for other financial assistance, since my father was very critical of people who accepted money from the HIAS while they held on to their own. I never asked my father how much money he had but I knew that our finances were extremely limited and that he counted every penny. How was he able to take money out of Russia? And, if he did not take it out when we left, where was he getting money from? I only began to wonder how we managed and where my father got the money while we were 'en route' (our trip lasted a whole year), years after my father and Uncle Fulek died, when there was no one left to ask. All I knew and cared about was that my father would take care of me - and

he always did.

Within a few days of our arrival I enrolled in the Berlitz School for Languages to continue my studies of English. There were many young refugees there and it was easy to meet them between and after classes. It was there that I met Fritz Kohn. He was from Vienna, 24 years old, of medium height, wore glasses, and looked like an intellectual, at least to me. He supported himself by teaching German at the Berlitz school and by working part-time at the HIAS, which was trying to locate his parents with whom he had lost all contact. His Turkish visitor visa had long expired and his situation was precarious; he faced deportation and had no place to go, not an unusual situation for Jews at that time. Fritz read voraciously, enjoyed classical music, played the violin well, loved nature and was an avid mountain climber. I still have Luis Trenker's book, "Meine Berge", which he gave me. How could this man, an adult, a graduate of the Vienna Polytechnic, be interested in me, a teenager? He had dated many of the girls from the Berlitz school, but after we met, we spent all our free time together.

It was a wondrous, wonderful time for me. Fritz showed me all the sights of Istanbul, one of the oldest cities in the world. We wandered for hours, both in the Asian and European parts of the city, in Stamboul, Turkish in its architecture and atmosphere, where we admired the superb Byzantine decorations of marble, gold and mosaic, and in Pera, the most modern part of the city. We visited the mosques of Bejazet, Ahmed, and Suleiman, the Yildiz Kiosk, Beyoglu Avenue, the former palace of the sultans, Seraglio, and the Covered Market. We sat on the

banks of the black Bosphorus under the Galata Bridge, watching the little Bodrum barques pull out for the night's fishing. We sipped 'raki' on the terraces of little cafes in Taksim, the innocuous licorice-taste running to my head like a series of tiny, lovely explosions. We sat on the steps of the Blue Mosque, watching the vast white shape of Hagia Sophia against the ink-blue sky. It was Summer, and every Sunday we took a boat ride to one of the many islands or beaches on the Bosphorus and spent the day there; our favorite one was Prinkipo. I never ate lunch during the week in order to save money for a Sunday picnic lunch for both of us. Since I did not have enough money to buy another bathing suit, I made a halter top from a scarf and a pair of shorts from a skirt. But, not having money did not matter at all. What did matter was my father's objection to our seeing each other exclusively, and Uncle Fulek's reinforcing his feelings made life very difficult for me. There were many arguments and unpleasant scenes. Today, I can understand better how my father felt. He was, after all, totally unaccustomed to dealing with a young daughter for whom he was solely responsible and who was dating an 'older man'. Above all, I believe, he was concerned that I would not want to leave Turkey.

Leaving Turkey and getting my mother out of Poland were my father's main concerns. Like hundreds, thousands of others, we were safe in Istanbul but had no place to go. Although I was happy on a personal level I, too, felt the stress and anxiety that permeated the very air that surrounded us. We spent our days going from consulate to consulate, waited in

endless lines just to get a visa application or to speak to some official without ever getting any encouragement; no country seemed to be inclined to offer us refuge. We applied for entry visas to countries we never even heard of and exchanged information about immigration possibilities with all the other refugees whom we met at the HIAS. Since my father only spoke Polish, German and Yiddish and I spoke French rather well in addition to having some knowledge of English, I acted as interpreter. I was very much involved in everything that was going on and shared the overwhelming feeling of apprehension, uncertainty and stress. Is it any wonder that under those circumstances my father found it difficult to cope with my dating someone whose situation was worse and more uncertain than ours?

It was by sheer accident that we ran into Mr. Daniec, a young attorney, son of our landlord in Rzeszow, who told us that the Government of Brazil had 10,000 immigration visas for Catholic citizens of Poland. Mr. Daniec and his wife, both of them Catholics, were planning to go to Brazil on those visas. Polish Jews, however, had to have US\$10,000.00 in Brazil in order to obtain the visa. Young Mr. Daniec suggested that we obtain baptismal certificates “just in case” (I still have my father’s ‘baptismal certificate’ stating that my grandmother’s name was Maria and my grandfather’s Joseph), and that he would then take us to the Polish Consulate for further certification of our status. Like Sugihara in 1940, (Japan’s consul in Lithuania who risked his career and his life by churning out Japanese transit visas for almost 10,000 Jews who wanted to

escape the advancing Nazis), the Polish consul in Istanbul issued countless affidavits to Polish Jews trapped in Turkey. He certified under oath that they were Roman Catholics, knowing that they were not, and the only criterion was that they have Polish or neutral sounding surnames. After we had obtained our affidavits, we in turn, like Mr. Daniec in our case, brought acquaintances to the Polish Consul and certified that they were Christian and thus enabled them to get entry visas to Brazil. These people, too, brought their friends and acquaintances to the Polish Consulate for 'certification'. What made the Polish Consul act the way he did? Was it simply an act of goodness, an act of decency? I know for a fact that no money was exchanged. My only regret is that I do not remember his name, for he surely deserves to be remembered and honored for having saved hundreds of Jewish lives.

With a certificate in hand, confirming our status as Roman Catholic citizens of Poland, getting the Brazilian visas was easy. We were the first 'Jewish Catholics' to apply, and part of the routine was a medical examination by the official Brazilian doctor, who simply could not understand why my father and Uncle Fulek were circumcised. At that time only Jews were circumcised in Europe. Istanbul was a cosmopolitan city where the main spoken language, besides Turkish, was French. As always, I acted as interpreter, and we had a few anxious moments when I simply 'did not understand' what the doctor was asking about when he questioned my father's and my uncle's circumcision. We obtained the Brazilian visas end of July and then spent days in the various consulates getting the

necessary transit visas.

We were in close contact with my mother via the mails but the separation from my mother continued to plague my father. Shortly after our departure from Poland, my mother, like everybody else, was forced to accept Russian citizenship, and as a Russian citizen she was no longer allowed to travel, much less to leave the country. The first step, therefore, was to get foreign citizenship papers for my mother, which was not an easy task. I don't really know how my father found the necessary 'connections', but after weeks and weeks of making various contacts, my father finally obtained Nicaraguan 'citizenship' for my mother based on my father's becoming a 'citizen' of Nicaragua. The documents were legitimate, issued by the Nicaraguan consul in Istanbul, however, without the knowledge of the Nicaraguan Government and, therefore, were good enough to leave Russia but could not be used to enter Nicaragua. Knowing that it was impossible to get entry visas to any country for us, I can only assume that my father must have spent a fortune to obtain these papers. They were then sent to the appropriate Government Department in Moscow with a petition to relieve my mother of her Russian citizenship and to allow her to join her Nicaraguan husband. Copies of all the documents and of the petition, as well as the new passport, were sent directly to my mother in Lwow.

Over three months had passed since we arrived in Istanbul. It was the end of October 1940, and it was time to leave. I was heart broken, but I guess sensible and realistic enough to know that I could not stay in Turkey, that I, too, had to leave.

Fritz was still on the verge of deportation, (could they actually send him back to Vienna?) still without prospects of obtaining an emigration visa to any country in the world. We spent the last few days talking, promising to write, and he gave me the address of a Turkish woman, his ‘patron’, should we ever lose touch with each other. She was from a prominent family, quite a bit older than he was, and although I was aware of the fact that they spent quite a bit of time together, I never knew what their relationship really was. Fritz saw us off at the Haydarpasa railroad station and we said goodbye through the tears.

Our first stop was Damascus, the capital of Syria. The white towers of the city rose above the green orchards of apricot, fig, almond and pomegranate trees in an oasis on the desert’s edge. We had an overlay of six hours and spent the time touring this Moslem city. The only things I really recall are the Great Mosque, partly in ruin, and the bazaar filled with silks, furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and swords made by Damascene metal workers.

I was looking forward to our stay in Baghdad, capital of Iraq, located on both banks of the Tigris river. Once, under the caliphs, it was a leading center of Islamic culture, full of wealth and glory, home of ancient scholars and artists, its glory reflected in the “Thousand and One Nights”, which I had read so often as a child. We settled in a small hotel, and the next morning I was ready to explore the town. As I was leaving the hotel, I noticed a group of some 20 young Czechs, who greeted me and urged me to stay. Little did I know that I would be back in less than ten minutes. I certainly did not know at the time that

every white woman walking alone in the street with an uncovered face was viewed either as an entertainer or prostitute and, therefore, shamelessly accosted and touched by every passing male. I was back at the hotel in no time; the Czechs were taking bets on how long it would take me to find out that I simply could not wonder around unaccompanied! We spent the next few days together, exploring the city. Much of it looked as it must have looked hundreds of years ago. Slender minarets and blue and gold domes of mosques rose above the low, flat roofs of gray mud-brick houses, and tattered awnings stretched from roof to roof across many of the busy streets, shielding the people from the sun. The narrow, twisted streets were crowded with people, bicycles, spirited Arabian horses, tired donkeys and an occasional automobile. Along the banks of the Tigris, graceful date palms swayed over patches of green grass, and it was relaxing to sit on the veranda of our hotel and to watch the sun go down. All of it was quite interesting, but certainly not what I had expected!

My new Czech friends were engineers by profession. Their government in exile was sending them to improve productivity in various factories in India and they, too, were waiting in Baghdad for the same boat that would take us to Bombay. We did not have much difficulty in understanding each other and got along quite well. My father seemed glad that I had company and probably felt that there was safety in numbers. When it was time to leave we all boarded the Baghdad Railway for Basra, a port on the Shatt el Arab 75 miles from the Persian Gulf. We then traveled by small boat through the fertile floodlands,

amidst growing date palm trees, and boarded the British freighter that would take us to India.

## EMIGRATION CONTINUES

We were a small but cohesive group aboard the British freighter: the 20 engineers from Czechoslovakia, Uncle Fulek, my father and I, two Poles in their early forties headed for Brazil, Fredek Nadler, and the Sternbach family - mother Klara, the father, whose name I do not remember, and their son Ludwik, a man in his thirties, who was associate professor of Sanskrit at the Jagiellon University in Cracow before the war broke out. I spent most of my time with the Czechs while Uncle Fulek was establishing a relationship with Fredek Nadler, a handsome young lawyer from Cracow, who was also without his wife; subsequently, they decided to room together in Bombay. (Fulek and Nadler got along surprisingly well and after leaving Bombay went to Shanghai together.) The Sternbach family also decided to rent rooms wherever we would stay, particularly since Nadler and Ludwik Sternbach had been long time friends.

We spent a few uneventful days at sea. The first and only stop was at Karachi, one of India's leading ports on the coast of the Arabian Sea. It was a welcome change of pace for all of us. We disembarked while they unloaded the cargo and we spent a few hours in the harbor, watching caravans of camels laden with swaying bales of cotton, and camel-drawn wagons. I had never seen camels outside of the zoo or the Colonial Exhibition in Paris and it was exciting to see them as domesticated animals and especially to ride one - an experience provided right then

and there for a small fee. We also saw rickshaws for the first time in our lives.

There were no rickshaws and no camels in the port of Bombay, a lovely natural deep-water harbor and 'Gateway to India'. We were the first Polish refugees to arrive in India and were met by some officials from the Polish Consulate, which was probably arranged by the two Poles. With the help of the Consulate officials, we were soon settled in an inexpensive boarding house run by an Englishman and his Hindu wife. They met while she was studying in England, fell in love, married and settled in Bombay, where they were ostracized by the English as well as by the Hindus. Since we were unaware and unaccustomed to racial segregation, we were pleased with the spacious, clean accommodations and happy about the reasonable prices.

We soon learned that social contacts between the British and the Indians were rare. British life centered around clubs open to any European, but closed to Indians. There were signs "For Europeans only" on park benches, in railroad carriages, in waiting rooms, and in many other public places. The English only used buses for public transportation, and we created quite a stir when we started to ride the trolley cars which were much cheaper; we were the only white people aboard. The chief posts in government service, the Indian Civil Service, were held predominantly by the British, and although Indians could take the competitive examinations to qualify for the positions, it was made difficult for them to do so. Intermarriage was just as great a problem in Hindu society, where a person was Hindu not

because of any particular religious belief, but because he or she was born a Hindu, continued to live within the Hindu social framework, and regarded himself as generally committed to a “Hindu way of life”. This way of life was in turn governed by the rules and customs of a particular caste or subcaste, and if a Hindu departed from it, he or she became an outcast - a punishment comparable to excommunication.

Staying at that particular boarding house afforded us an opportunity to learn much about life in India. There were innumerable servants in the house, assigned to different tasks, all belonging to the untouchable caste, who performed the most menial and degrading jobs. The untouchables had many subdivisions so that the servant who polished the silver, for example, would not sweep the floor or make the beds - and none of these would clean the toilet; it was another person’s function. This presented quite a problem for us during the first few weeks of our stay in Bombay, since we would invariably ask the wrong person to perform some task for us. The untouchables were not permitted to walk on the sidewalk, so that they would not pollute a member of another caste by touching them. Both Indian and Western scholars have different theories about the beginning of the caste system, which probably began 3000 years ago. Some believe that when the Aryan tribes moved into India they had four classes - “varna” - who divided responsibilities and work among them. It seems that the caste system was developed by the Brahmans in order to make their own superior position permanent. The Brahmans, the priests, came from the head of the Creator; they were the

arbiters of what is right and wrong in matters of religion and caste, and it was their duty to offer sacrifices and to chant sacred hymns. The Warriors sprang from the Creator's shoulders and their duty was to defend the tribe. From his thighs came the artisans and the commercial class, and from the Creator's feet came the "sudras", the farmers and those who did unskilled work. Beneath these four castes was the fifth group, the untouchables.

We ate all our meals at the boarding house; the meals were not prepared by untouchables, since they were not allowed to handle food that others would consume. We were glad that we were served a typical English breakfast, no doubt due to the fact that the owner was English, but all other meals were Indian and strange to us. Curry, which is the basis of Indian cuisine, was not the powdered spice we use here, but a combination of approximately 25 spices which in various combinations produced the flavor of curries. There were vegetable curries, chicken, lamb, and fish curries, and they were usually accompanied by rice. I actually remember only two dishes - "dhal", something like a lentil soup, which was served very often, and "thali", an all purpose vegetarian dish consisting of a variety of curry vegetable dishes, relishes, rice and a bowl of curd. I did not particularly like Indian food, and I am sure that neither did my father, but I never heard him complain. However, the breads were varied and quite good, and we did enjoy all the tropical fruits, papayas, mangoes, bananas, green coconuts and a variety of melons.

Although the owners of our boarding house were ostrac-

cized by traditional society, their home was the meeting place of many university students and young progressive professionals. We were often invited to join them in the evening, and Ludwik Sternbach and I enjoyed the stimulating discussions, even though our knowledge of English was somewhat limited at the time, (the others, my father, Fulek, the senior Sternbachs and Nadler did not speak English) For many educated Indians, English was not only their first but their main language; the many major and minor languages of the country were reserved for daily and domestic use. (The most important of these languages was Hindi.) The introduction of English literature into the school curriculum, particularly its humanism and liberalism, did much for the thinking of the young men and women we met. They admitted that Western thought and education led to the reform movement within Hinduism and that Indians, educated in western type schools, absorbed the new ideas of nationalism, democracy, and socialism, but they condemned British imperialism as a whole and often did so by quoting British writers. They also believed that the root cause of India's poverty was the fact that Britain drained much wealth out of the country and used the Indian economy for British purposes.

It was the time of Ghandi, a time of passive resistance to British rule, a time when Indians were developing a new sense of nationalism as they joined in the civil disobedience movement. There were also those who did not follow Ghandi's policy of noncooperation and nonviolence, and they too courted arrest. The discussions at our boarding house were often animated and

heated, but regardless of their beliefs they all looked forward to a day when all Indians, regardless of region, caste or creed would work together not just against a common enemy, but in the great task of building a united, independent India. 1940/1941 was also the time when the Muslim Legion advocated carving out of India a new nation, Pakistan, and they discussed passionately which territories this new nation should include. The thought that a new country, Pakistan, could appear out of nowhere to cheat not only Hindus but also the Muslims who had pursued with them the goal of India's independence, was totally unacceptable to the young men and women seated around the dining room table at our boarding house.

It was probably due to those evenings spent with the owners of the boarding house and their guests that Ludwik Sternbach took an interest in me. I learned much about India from him and occasionally he allowed me to join him when he was invited by representatives of India's academia. As I mentioned before, he was an associate professor of Sanskrit at the Jagiellon University in Cracow before the war and, therefore, established some connections with the faculty of the Bombay University upon his arrival. Sanskrit, the ancient language of the Aryan tribes who came to India in a series of folk migrations beginning around 1500 B.C., is akin to Greek, Latin, and the Germanic and Slavic languages. The Aryans, related to the European Aryans, composed a great mass of religious literature and passed it down by word of mouth for many centuries before it was committed to writing. When the pastoral Aryans invaded the land beyond the Indus, they found

cities whose splendor rivaled those of Babylon and a civilization that was already old when Greece was young. To me, India was enchanting and exciting; it was poetic and mysterious, shrouded in an aura of beauty and eternity - the oldest continuous civilization on earth in a land that has not yet cut its ties with the world of magic. There were people there who still believed in the stars, who still sacrificed to the gods, as did the Greeks at Aulis.

I was fascinated by the Hindu religion which believes that we will all go through a series of rebirths or reincarnations that will eventually lead to spiritual salvation, which frees one from the cycle of rebirths. The one omnipresent god usually has three physical representations: Brahma, the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer and reproducer. All three gods are usually shown with four arms, but Brahma also has four heads to represent his all-seeing presence. A variety of lesser gods and goddesses also crowd the scene. With Ludwik Sternbach and his colleagues, we visited many temples, dedicated to one or another of the gods, but none were dedicated to Brahma, since I believe that there are only two or three temples in all of India dedicated to him. In front of the temples “holy men” spent much of their time sitting crosslegged in deep meditation, living on whatever small coins or scraps of food were given to them. Most Hindus were followers of Vishnu or Shiva. One of the unforgettable experiences of my stay in Bombay was the trip to the nearby island of Elephanta and the four rock temples. After a short ride by launch from the Apollo Bunder, we climbed the hillside to reach the large caves which

contain sculptured panels relating to Shiva, carved out around 450-750 A.D. They were beautiful and powerful. There was the three-headed Shiva, who takes the role of Brahma the creator and Vishnu the preserver, and many other panels showing Shiva's marriage, the dance that shakes the world, and countless others I no longer recall. Another fascinating excursion was to the Parsi Towers of Silence on top of Malabar Hill. The Parsis held fire, earth and water as sacred and, therefore, did not bury or cremate their dead; instead, the bodies were laid out within the towers to be picked clean by vultures.

Thanks to Ludwik Sternbach, I also had the opportunity to see classical Hindu dances and listen to Hindu music. Classical dances originated in temple ritual and were mainly performed by women who expressed the yearning of the soul by a series of gestures and footwork. They danced bent-kneed, never standing upright. The Krishna of the dances is one of the most popular of Hindu deities; he is the legendary cowherd who combined human qualities with magical powers.

Hindu music was difficult to enjoy. It had two major elements, rhythm and melody, but harmony was non-existent. The musicians were basically soloists who zoomed off in their chosen directions, met every once in a while and diverged again. The main musical instruments were the sitar (among the stringed instruments), and a twin drum resembling the bongo. If I remember correctly, there were three musicians who provided the drone, the melody and the rhythm, and while the audience clapped at the appropriate beat, we suffered in silence and could not wait for the concert to end. Nevertheless, had it

not been for Ludwik's kindness, I would have never had the opportunity to experience it.

Other than the discussion evenings at the boarding house and the excursions with Ludwik Sternbach, I had virtually no social life during our stay in India. There were no contemporaries I could associate with, no one I could really talk to, and I spent much of my free time wandering around on my own. I liked one of Bombay's most popular promenades, the Marine Drive, a boulevard which ran along the shoreline of Back Bay. I went there often to watch copper-colored men in white dhotis and pink turbans sit crosslegged on the seawalk, staring at things unseen. There were tall, turbaned Sikhs and sari-draped women, heads erect under the weight of copper water jars. Often I saw 'holy men', dressed only in ashes, yellow paint and cow dung, mumbling their prayers, and what I thought was a beach tent would turn out to be a Moslem woman peering through the slits of a burnoose. At the end of Back Bay, Marine Drive climbs up to Malabar Hill with the Hanging Gardens, the Parsi Towers of Silence and the charming houses of well-to-do residents. What a contrast to the streets of Bombay where bundles of rags lay on the sidewalks and I remember being aghast to see them move, rise and scrub their bodies at the public spigot. India was a land of splendor and squalor, a land of silken luxury and bareboned misery, brocaded satin and dirty muslin rags, of gods and demons, beggars and holy men. It had mud huts and palaces, bullock carts and London buses. In the shops and in the market place one could buy carved ivory effigies of painted elephants, temple bells, firecrackers, phallic

symbols, jasmine, ginger, rubies and gold, as one walked among the dung and dust. Cows, the holy animals of Hinduism, wandered at will and were allowed to help themselves to supplies of grain. Merchants and food vendors regarded the resulting financial losses as unimportant compared to their religious duty toward these animals. I liked India and felt comfortable there even though I was revolted by the continuous hawking and spitting and by the practice of making every wall a public urinal. I was distressed to see the poverty stricken people wash their clothes and bodies and get their water for cooking from the very same gutter. I hated the pleading moans and cringed from the outstretched hands of the beggars asking “memsahib, rupee?” And, I did not like their habit of fixedly staring at me, even though I was told that it was only their unembarassed interest and that I really should not mind it.

I was alone a lot, read voraciously, wrote letters and waited for mail. Fritz wrote from Istanbul several times a week and I was happy every time I heard from him. I woke every morning and went to sleep every night thinking of him and waiting for the next letter. I had mail from my girlfriends in Lwow, Marian wrote to me occasionally from Russia and we heard regularly from my mother. I had a lot of problems with my teeth and spent a great deal of time in the dentist’s chair having my teeth drilled and filled, which was quite an ordeal but, I guess, a necessity. I knew that we were very short of money but did not really mind it. None of it was spent on recreation and during the six months we spent in Bombay, I only went to the movies once, to see a Charlie Chaplin film. All

the people we associated with were in the same position. My father and Uncle Fulek played cards once or twice a week with other refugees. From time to time we heard from people whom we had met in Istanbul and who were now on their way to Brazil. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. Daniec, who were so helpful to us in obtaining our Brazilian visas. We spent a few days together sightseeing and talking about Rzeszow. Days and weeks passed and I was basically O.K. The only time I felt really lonely and was deeply unhappy was on my birthday. My father did not remember it, no one did, till the following morning when I received a telegram from Marian.

In retrospect, it seems strange that we had no contact what-so-ever with the Jewish community in Bombay although we knew that there was a small group of European Jews who settled there during the British rule. Didn't the HIAS in Istanbul notify them of our arrival? We were never contacted by them and my father did not seek them out either. He never went to 'Shul', and I have no recollection of our observing Passover or any other Jewish Holidays while we were en route. We were totally unaware of the existence of the Bene Israel, the group of black Jews culturally similar to the native Indians, who lived in and around Bombay for centuries.

We were, however, in constant touch with the Polish Consulate which occasionally held small receptions for Polish expatriates. There we met other refugees on route to various destinations, among them Marylka Jortner and her family. Mary la now lives in New York and is a close friend of Hala. She was a cute, precocious little girl and I remember her

reciting poetry at one of the tea parties. The people at the Polish Consulate were outgoing and always helpful. We found out through them that the Polish quota to the United States was now open since no one could leave Poland. The quota system, established in the U.S.A. in 1921, limited the number of immigrants from any European country per year to 3 % of the number of their natives residing in the U.S.A. in 1910. These restrictions were made even more drastic in the act of 1924, which limited the entire number of European immigrants to 150,000 per year and favored north Europeans at the expense of those from southern and eastern Europe. Before the outbreak of World War II, the waiting period for Polish Jews was a minimum of ten years.

With the possibility of emigrating to the United States, we gave up any thought of going to Brazil, where we did not want to go in the first place. All that was needed to get an entry visa to the U.S.A. was an Affidavit of Support, a sworn document by a United States citizen assuming financial responsibility for the support of the potential immigrant. Since we owned an apartment building in Brooklyn that would support us, we did not require an affidavit. All the necessary formalities were completed in a comparatively short time, we received our immigration visas on May 5, 1941, and started making preparations for our departure. We arrived in Bombay in the second half of November 1940 at the beginning of their 'cold' season, when everything was still green and lush and the temperature was very warm but pleasant. We left in May of 1941, almost six months to the day, before the monsoon rains began and the heat

became unbearable.

My father and I left for Japan alone. Uncle Fulek had to write to our relatives for an affidavit, but since getting it took a long time and he could no longer extend his Indian transit visa, he sailed for Shanghai shortly after we left Bombay. Dad and I traveled on the Japanese ship Hakone Maru, stopped in Ceylon, and spent a day in Manila sightseeing, but my recollections of that voyage are hazy. It was a long, unexciting trip that lasted almost three weeks. We landed in Kobe on June 16, 1941. Kobe was an uninteresting industrial city with a business center located near the active port. The nice residential section, with many western-style homes, was located in the hills above the port area. We stayed in a small hotel in the downtown area. On our street, shopkeepers sat cross-legged on their straw mats, sipping green tea, behind mounds of fresh peaches and amid wooden barrels and buckets overflowing with fresh and pickled fish. All day long there was a brisk coming and going of messenger boys on bicycles magically balancing trays of food, and of loudly hooting trucks that seemed determined to run them down. At night it was usually quiet enough after everyone trooped home from the neighborhood bathhouse with towel and soap bowl in hand. Occasionally, through an open window, we heard weird and melancholy sounds of Japanese music played on quaint old Japanese instruments, the Japanese harp or bamboo flute. There was a Shinto shrine a few blocks away, and one night we were lucky to witness a neighborhood festival. The road leading up to the shrine gleamed with pink and white paper lanterns. On a tall wooden platform, male drummers

stripped to the waist whacked a huge drum, and at the base of the platform women danced in kimonos, with paper fans tucked in the back of their brocaded waistbands. The shrine was a wooden structure, blooming with lanterns of all shapes and sizes, and smoky with incense. All around were stalls selling food, goldfish, bamboo flutes, toys and balloons. It was quite an experience!

We attended the festival with some of the other Polish-Jewish refugees who lived in our hotel. My father had known many of them before, among them Stefa Wistreich and her children, Hala and Leszek. Stefa was the wife of an old-time friend of my father's, Dunek Wistreich from Cracow who, like so many others, went for a visit to the United States just before the war broke out and stayed there. Dunek and Stefa were in the process of getting a divorce, both had other attachments, but once the war broke out, Dunek decided that his first obligation was not to his girlfriend but to his family and he chose to bring Stefa and the children to America. Hala was the child of Dunek's best friend, Dr. Gleicher from Rzeszow. When her mother died in childbirth, Dunek promised that should anything ever happen to his friend, he would adopt Hala and take care of her as if she were his own. Shortly thereafter Dr. Gleicher committed suicide, and the Wistreichs adopted Hala. A few years later, Stefa gave birth to their son, Leszek, and from that moment on, Hala was never quite treated the same - or at least that's how it seemed to all of us. Nevertheless, Hala adored her parents. After their arrival in the States, the Wistreichs lived in Brooklyn and were friends with my father and Resia. For a

number of years I, too, kept in touch with Hala and Leszek. (They are all gone now.) Both Hala and Leszek were a bit younger than I, we became quite friendly, spent a lot of time together, but I always went sightseeing outside of Kobe alone - and happy that my father did not stand in my way. Quite to the contrary; he encouraged me to take advantage of the opportunity and provided me with the necessary funds to do so.

One of the nicest memories I have is my one-day excursion by train to Kamakura, a town full of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Guide-book in hand, I felt as if I were walking through Japan's feudal era and imagined the personalities who lived and fought in the city's glorious age. I visited shrines with ponds filled with white lotus flowers, temples filled with beautiful carvings, surrounded by lovely gardens, and saw groups of kimono-clad laymen sitting on the ground listening to their master. The most memorable single sight in Kamakura was the huge bronze figure of the Great Buddha. It sits in the open, having looked for more than seven centuries with half-closed eyes on the rise and fall of Kamakura as a seat of power. The pose and position of the hands represents the Buddhist symbolism for steadfast faith and the expression on the face is one of great serenity. The figure is huge and unforgettable. I bought a tiny replica and looking at it always brought me a strange sort of comfort.

Another memorable experience was the day I spent at the Kabuki theater, sort of an Oriental opera, with chorus, dancing, and orchestra but non-singing principals. As far as I could tell, the play I saw was a tragedy. The faces of the heroes were

painted white, to show how virtuous and handsome they were; the villains' faces were painted red, for evil. At climactic moments, the actors held up the action while they put themselves in set poses. Such high spots were preceded by a loud clapping of wooden sticks, and then fans shouted out the names of their favorite actors. There was pathos and tragedy, romance and satire. The gorgeous costumes looked as if they weighed a ton, and so did the huge headdresses. Women have been banned from the Kabuki stage and all the parts were played by men, who trained for years to become expert female impersonators. The performance lasted all day. There were frequent intermissions, but throughout the performance people kept walking in and out, and spent considerable amounts of time in the lobby. Those who remained seated ate their meals out of little wooden boxes while women bared their breasts to nurse their infants. It certainly was a unique theatrical experience.

Generally speaking, however, although I found Japanese culture and customs fascinating, I did not particularly care for Japan. The Japanese are, no doubt, a remarkable people. They copied China for twelve centuries and then retired into total isolation for two hundred years. At the end of that period of time they learned to their chagrin that the world was dominated, not by Chinese culture and aesthetics, but by European ships and firearms. They emerged an armed industrial state, and fatefully influenced world history, since it can be plausibly argued that first Russia and then China became Communist after being weakened by Japanese blows. I was uncomfortable among the Japanese people who always smiled and bowed stiffly from

the hips, their arms rigid at their sides. Their smiles seemed placatory and two-faced. I also disliked the food, the standard Japanese noodle soup, rice and fish and pickles, the sliced raw fish, rice balls, lily bulbs and lotus roots, and such oddities as tiny wriggling fish that one was expected to swallow whole and alive, mudfish boiled in bean curd, pigs wombs and testicles. Or, perhaps I only disliked the food in the inexpensive restaurants we frequented?

Shortly after our arrival in Kobe, my father went on business to the Polish Embassy in Tokyo where, to his surprise and delight, he met his long time friend, Wladek Runcewicz. Wladek's friend, Lederman, was also in Tokyo, (see 'Vacations') Subsequently, my father spent a few days with Wladek and Lederman in Tokyo and I, too, joined them for a day of sightseeing and an elegant dinner with Wladek, the Polish ambassador and his wife. It did not turn out to be just the usual, casual, pleasant social evening. The day before, on June 22, 1941, Germany had invaded the Soviet Union without warning, despite their non-aggression pact, and much of the conversation around the dinner table dealt with the implications of that attack. Was this the turning point of the war? The Ambassador believed that the Soviet Union would now join the Allies and that defeating Germany would be easier and quicker. The war would end in no time. Everybody agreed with him.

The three weeks we stayed in Japan passed quickly. On June 26, 1941 we boarded the M.S. Hie Mam which would take us from Yokohama to the United States. Wladek and Lederman saw us off, Wladek brought me some presents and introduced

me to a girl who had done some volunteer work for him at the Embassy and was leaving on the same ship. She and her mother were miraculously released from Russia through the efforts of her father. The family came from Bedzin and their name was Liwer.

My father and Mr. Liwer had much in common, liked each other and spent much time together, and as for Jadzia and me, it was the beginning of a friendship that would last for a lifetime. I was impressed by her and liked her; she was fun to be with, pretty, vivacious and flirtatious. True, there was no one aboard to flirt with, but one of the stewards kept pushing love notes under her door whenever she was taking a bath! My only 'success' was dancing with the ship's captain during the Captain's Ball. Although my father had a first-class cabin and I shared my second-class cabin with an American woman, (the only available accommodations), we had our meals together and sat at the same table with the Liwers. All in all, it was a rather pleasant, uneventful, two-week voyage. The first stop was Seattle. Mr. Liwer, who had a visa for Curacao, was removed from the ship by US immigration authorities and interned in Seattle since there was some question about the validity of his visa. (Eventually, he settled in Albany, N. Y. and brought his family there.) Jadzia and her mother had Canadian visas and continued their voyage to Vancouver. We disembarked in Seattle, and Jadzia and I kissed and hugged and promised to stay in touch.

## A NEW LIFE BEGINS . . . .

**Seattle**, July 8, 1941 - two years, almost to the day, since we sailed home from New York on the M.S. Batory and said 'goodbye' to our American relatives who came to see us off. This time, we disembarked and waited for our belongings alone, one suitcase each, the same suitcases which we put on the train in Lwow one year before, the same suitcases, with the same belongings, which we packed in Rzeszow on September 1, 1939. We looked around the strange surroundings, uncertain where to go, when we were approached by a middle-aged couple; they were there to welcome us on behalf of some Jewish organization, I do not know which one. We had no idea that anyone knew of our arrival or cared, and it certainly made us feel better to see a friendly face. Coincidentally, as they drove us to their home for lunch, it stopped raining and rays of sunshine peeked out from behind the clouds. In the afternoon they showed us the sights of Seattle and then brought us to the railroad station where we boarded a train heading east. It was such a kind, thoughtful thing to do; I wonder if they realized how much it meant to us. The trip to New York was long and exhausting. We changed trains in Chicago and, as it had become our custom, spent the few hours we had to wait for a connecting train, taking a sightseeing tour of the city.

Did anybody await us at the train station in New York? I do not remember, but it certainly was not the welcome we received two years earlier when we arrived by ship. We spent

the first night and the next few weeks in East New York in a house which Jacob Wank rented for us from a Rabbi. The Rabbi and his family were away for the summer in a bungalow colony. We were allowed to use only the dairy kitchen, but that did not present a problem since the only thing we knew how to make was tea, toast and eggs. We spent the next few weeks looking for an apartment. We did not want to stay in Brooklyn, particularly since my father's relationship with Jacob Wank became strained. It seems that during our two years' absence he mismanaged' things and we did not have the amount of money my father expected to find on his account from the rentals of our apartment house. (I never found out what really happened, but after our return to the States, and the money problem, we no longer maintained a relationship with that branch of the family). We moved from Brooklyn to a one bedroom apartment in Astoria, Queens, diagonally across from where Uncle David and Aunt Bess Spiegel lived. Ruthie Mandler, who married Ted Fishkin in June of 1941, also lived in Astoria, a few blocks away from us.

Astoria was a working class Greek-Hungarian neighborhood with ample transportation to Manhattan. Not far from where we lived the large municipal swimming pool was a wonderful place to cool off on hot summer days and evenings. We furnished the apartment as inexpensively as it was possible. My father's main concern was to economize, to save as much as he could, so that "we would have enough money for the family once the war was over". I remember crying bitterly when he refused to buy kitchen curtains, which he considered

an unnecessary luxury. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why I was determined to get some sort of profession, earn my own money and become independent as soon as it was possible. We were still corresponding regularly with my mother who was appalled by my plans. She was in Lwow, seemed to be well and hopeful of Moscow's permission to leave the country based on her Nicaraguan citizenship.

I no longer heard from Fritz. His letters nurtured and sustained my soul throughout our stay in Bombay. When we left India I asked him to write to me to the U.S.A. c/o Jacob Wank since I did not know where and how long we would stay in Japan. There was no mail for me when we arrived in Brooklyn. I wrote to him a number of times as soon as we had our new Astoria address and even wrote to the Turkish woman, who was his patron and friend in Istanbul. I never received a reply. Was he deported? Did he marry that woman? Wasn't she married already? Or, did he meet someone else and simply lost interest? The last time we saw each other was in October 1940 . . . . I was heartbroken.

My father started taking night courses in 'English for Foreigners' at the local school and I started to commute to school in Manhattan. It was a very difficult time for me. I felt totally isolated, totally out of place and lonelier than I had ever been before. My American cousins, Ruthie Fishkin, Ruth Spiegel, Harry and Bea Reich, were warm and accepting, but they were all older and so very different . . . . Norman Reich tried to court me by pretending to want to take Polish lessons from me which, he claimed, "would help him with his

customers” The truth is that I felt uncomfortable with all of them. I will never forget the time I was invited to a shower for Ruth Spiegel, who became engaged to Sidney Miller. When I asked what a shower was, I was told that it was a “party for the bride’s girl-friends”. Can you imagine how I felt when all the gifts were unwrapped among “oohs” and “ahs” and I was the only one who did not bring one? The fact that my father bought Ruth an engagement gift did nothing to ease my embarrassment and sense of shame. I just wanted to disappear, to sink into the ground - and till this very day I dislike bridal showers!

Things were not much better in schools. I was sort of an oddity there and although many of the girls were nice and kind and tried to befriend me, I felt out-of-place and uncomfortable with them. To some extent, I considered myself more intellectual, better educated and more sophisticated and I looked at them as flighty and superficial. Sure, in Poland my friends and I also talked about boys and movies, we listened to crooners and experimented with make-up, but we also argued about philosophy and politics, discussed books and listened to classical music. It is an indisputable fact that the background and experiences of my American schoolmates were totally different from mine, that their lives had run an uninterrupted, normal course, and that they could not possibly understand how I felt nor what I was going through.

Things changed when I met Bianca Wien in school. She was from Vienna, and she convinced me to go with her to a meeting of the Austrian Youth of America since she did not want to go there alone. True, all the people I met there were

from Vienna and not from Poland, but they, too, were forced into emigration, they too were torn from a normal life into a new foreign land and they, too, had a different background from the girls I met in school. Their background was similar to mine. Many of them were here alone, concerned about their parents and their loved ones, and no one had any money. We did not quite realize at the time, nor did we care, that many of the leaders of the Austrian Youth of America were Communist sympathizers. What mattered was that here was a group of young people, just like me, who met once a week in a Club-house on 100th Street off Broadway for socializing and for the type of programs that interested us. We also spent every Sunday together, at Orchard or Brighton Beach during the summer, in Van Cortland Park or some other park in the spring and fall, wherever we could get on a five-cent fare. In the winter, we met on 42nd Street before noon and went to the movies together at the cost of eleven cents. We spent an occasional weekend together at the Nature Friends Camp in Midvale in New Jersey, totally oblivious to the leftist orientation of the camp, and enjoyed the beautiful location and Olympic size swimming pool. Gertie Kohn and Paul Katscher lived in Astoria, just a few blocks away from me, and we spent much time together. Bianca and I continued our friendship for many years. I met all my old-time friends either directly or indirectly through the Austrian Youth - Gertie Kohn and Gertie Klapper, Anne, Vera, Henny, Otto and Edith, Harry Kent, Paul Katscher, the Jackels - and yes, that's how I met Walter....

Years passed. On November 3, 1942 a note, written by

me to my grandfather in Rzeszow through the American Red Cross, was returned stating that it was not delivered since “his address was unknown”. My mother was still in Lwow, seemingly safe on her foreign papers, and living for a time with the Bikarts, old friends from Rzeszow. She was now in the German occupied zone and all our communications were through the American Red Cross, which allowed messages of 25 words or less. Her last handwritten note to us, written in German and dated April 30, 1943, reads: “Thanks for your letter. I am healthy but lonely. As saleslady in a store I earn enough for my livelihood. I am longing for the day of our reunion. Thinking about you. Love and kisses.” In answer to my inquiries, my friend Krystyna wrote in her letter of October 5, 1967 that my very close school friend, Jaska Sakowska, visited my mother in Lwow in 1943 and stayed with her for four days. She did confirm that my mother worked in a jewelry store, seemed to be well and comfortable but very sad. She supposedly told Jaska that she was truly happy that my life was saved. She still believed that her foreign documents would save her and refused an opportunity to escape to a camp in Rumania. Mother had some new close friends, a Ukrainian woman with whom she worked, as well as the wife of a Polish lieutenant, who was also Jaska’s friend. The lieutenant’s wife, a Mrs. Zwanowa, sent Jaska a letter containing my mother’s loving farewell to Jaska as she was supposedly being shipped by the Germans to Oswiecim/Brzezinka (Auschwitz/Birkenau). While under way, my mother also handed someone a postcard for Krzysia advising her that all her belongings were ‘lost’.

I was tormented for years not knowing what happened to my mother. Was she sent directly from Lwow to Auschwitz, as my mother's friend wrote Jaska, or was she sent to Bergen-Belsen first, as someone told my father? Over the years I have sent inquiries regarding my mother to:

- Ministry Investigating Hitler's Atrocities in Poland, Warsaw
- The National Archives Museum, Oswiecim (Auschwitz) Poland
- The Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw
- The International Red Cross - International Tracing Service, Arelson, Germany
- The Polish Red Cross, Warsaw
- American Red Cross War Tracing & Information Center, Baltimore
- Yad Vashem, Jerusalem
- Holocaust Memorial & Education Center of Central Florida, Maitland
- Gedenkstaette (Memorial) Bergen-Belsen, Germany

who all responded that they "regret to inform me that no information is available about the person for whom I am searching" and that they "will keep my case open and automatically let me know if they receive any new information".

Finally I did receive some information from the Niedersaechsische Landeszentrale fuer Politische Bildung in Hannover, Germany, dated May 21, 1996, reading as follows: *"I regret to tell you that I did not find the name of your mother in our register. But we know about some transports with about*

*2500 Polish Jews from Warsaw, Cracow, Radom and Lwow who possessed documents from South America. These transports reached the Bergen-Belsen camp between July and September 1943. The transport from Lemberg (Lwow) reached Bergen-Belsen in July. I am sorry but we possess no name-lists of these transports. Therefore, I cannot confirm the deportation of your mother into the Bergen-Belsen camp. But it could be possible that she belonged in the group from Lemberg (Lwow). After a few months, most of the Polish Jews were deported to Auschwitz where they were immediately murdered in gas chambers.”*

In a book “Bergen-Belsen - From Detention Camp to Concentration Camp 1943-1945”, also sent to me by the Niedersaechsische Landeszentrale, (Central Office for Political Education of the State of Lower Saxony) Eberhard Kolb writes that Bergen-Belsen, a P.O.W. Camp, became a camp for “exchange Jews” late in April of 1943 with SS Captain Adolf Haas as its commandant. Most of these “exchange” Jews possessed Latin American papers which were not passports but so-called ‘promesas’ - letters from consuls stating that citizenship of the state they represented was granted and that a passport would follow soon. Some consuls handed them out generously in order to help people in danger, others made a lucrative business out of selling them. In August or September of 1943, these documents and the people themselves were minutely scrutinized by German authorities, and in the second half of October, 1700 members of this group of ‘foreign Jews’ were ordered to prepare for transport into the “Bergau” camp near Dresden. The true destination of the train, however, was

Auschwitz. I now know that my mother was among them.

I have been tormented for fifty years trying in vain to find out about my mother's fate and finally now, this week, middle of September of 1997,<sup>1</sup> spoke to a woman from Rzeszow who was with my mother in the 'Sonderlager' in Bergen-Belsen. Through the efforts of Mrs. Lotka Goldberg, one of the most active members of the Rzeszow Association in Tel Aviv, I was able to contact Mrs. Tamar Dinnay (nee Tonka Israel) and we spent more than an hour talking over the telephone. Although much younger than my mother, Mrs. Dinnay knew her, as did everyone else in Rzeszow. She told me that Mother looked well, that she wore a detachable braid around her head and a cross around her neck - which sounds reasonable considering the fact that Mother had lived in Lwow on the Aryan side, worked there and, no doubt, 'passed'. Tonka Dinnay came to Bergen-Belsen with her father, who was an American citizen, in April. She did not remember when my mother arrived in Bergen-Belsen but knew that she left camp on the first 'selection'.

It all seems to add up - my mother arrived in Bergen-Belsen mid-July with the 'foreign transport' from Lwow and she was sent to Auschwitz in the second half of October 1943. She spent her 48th birthday, September 15th, in Bergen-Belsen. Did she send the farewell letter to my friend, Jaska Sakowska, while she was on her way there? And what about the postcard she handed someone for my friend Krzysia? Was she already on her final voyage to Auschwitz? Did she know that she was on her way to the crematoria? Was she still hopeful, or was she resigned? How lonely, how frightened she must have been as

she walked into the gas chamber . . . .

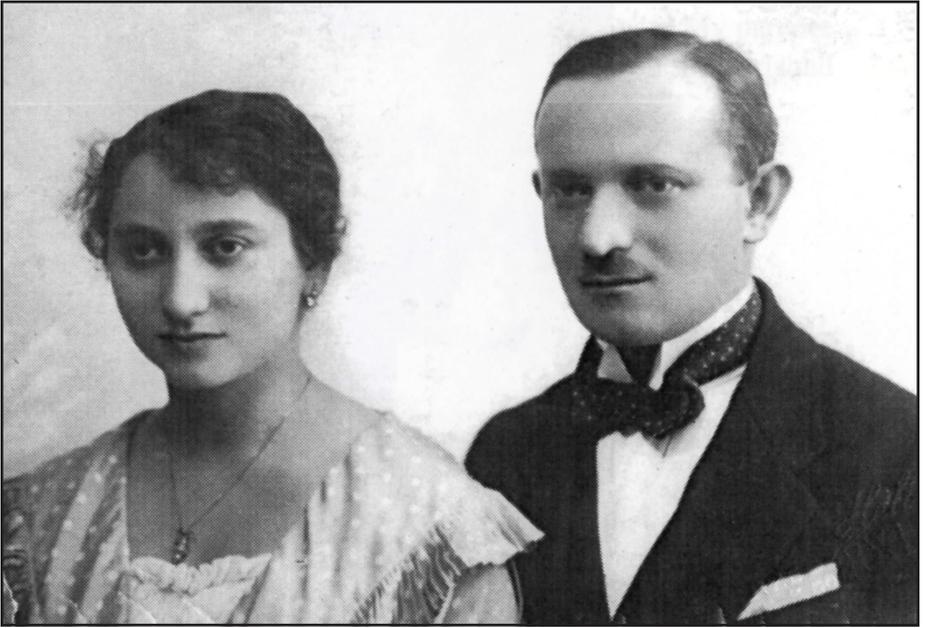
I always thought that knowing how she died and when she died would heal the wounds, that it would help ease the pain, help me to accept. It does not. Somehow, knowing does not make it easier, even after all these years; I believed it would. If the facts are what I now believe them to be, should I be grateful that she was not in a ghetto but lived on the Aryan side until her deportation? That she was in Bergen-Belsen (which at the time was a detention and not a concentration camp) only from July until October? That she was not starving, did not suffer beatings, degradation and torture? That her death was quick? Did all that make her loneliness, her despair less acute? I do not know. The only thing that I am sure of is that forgetting is the 'Final Solution' . . . . .

We did not know any of this at the time. We could not conceive the enormity of World War II, whose battles and atrocities cost 45 million lives and trillions in treasure - more than most minds can encompass. We believed that the surrender of 330,000 Axis troops at Stalingrad in February of 1943 marked the turning point of the war. The Russians were driving the invaders back in an almost uninterrupted offensive and in the late summer of 1944 entered Poland. We believed that it would all end well, that some day soon we would be together again . . . . .

And in the meantime, we were putting together the loose fragments of our lives, piece by piece, trying to create a new pattern. My father started to invest in the stock market in an attempt to substantially increase our cash reserves. Once the

war was over, we would need the money for my mother, for our whole family. My father had never played the stock market before. He started small, with the few thousand dollars left over from the purchase of the Van Sicklen building. I never thought about nor considered how difficult life must have been for my father. He was barely over fifty years old, alone, burdened with responsibilities and worries, torn from a life of success and luxury and thrown into a new foreign world without anyone close enough to share his concerns and loneliness. In his relationship with me he was always positive, always full of hope, always supportive. He was always there to take care of me.

It was so much easier for me to adjust and begin to accept my new life. I was young, working, going to school, I volunteered for the Red Cross, spent time with my new friends - and in love with another boy from Vienna, who also played the violin and loved mountains. I have spent more than three-quarters of my life in this country, and yet, the Atlantic will forever separate the two worlds in me. Mine is a double past - the Polish and the Jewish, and I am twice anchored in those traditions. The past is behind me, but it will forever remain in my very being; it is my cradle, it is for inspiration, and it is continuity. All our ancestors are in us, but we must not live as pall-bearers of a dead past, but rather as creators of a more glorious future. And that future is in your hands—



▲ My parents' wedding - 1920



▲ The house we lived in

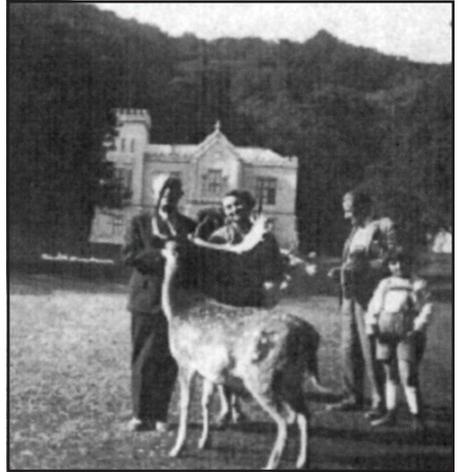


◀ Mother and I



◀ My parents  
in Karlsbad

Vacationing in ▶  
Austria



On the beach in  
Riccione ▼





◀ With Hala, Aron/Adam and two governesses



My mother ▶

Dance recital with (from left) Marta Kleiman, Rena & Giga Szpakowska, Ala Fruehling and Gerda Feiweil ▼



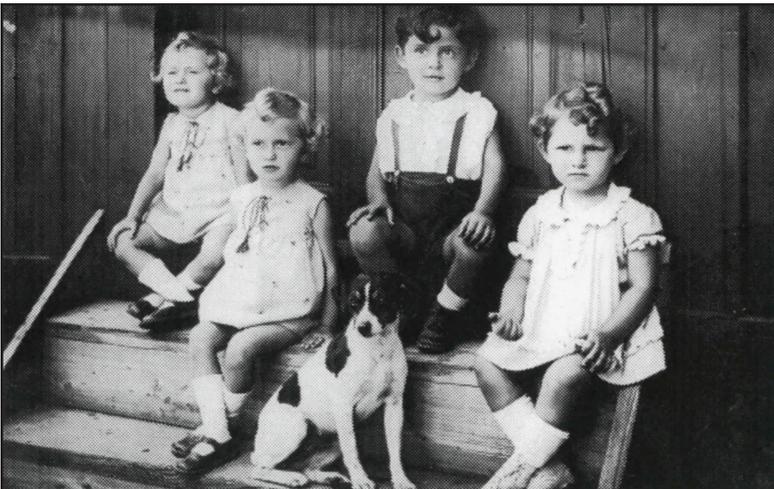


◀ Rena Grubner, Sydzia Wang and Hela Grubner

Wujciu Fulek,  
Ciocia Matlusia  
and Uncle Szymon Grubner  
▼

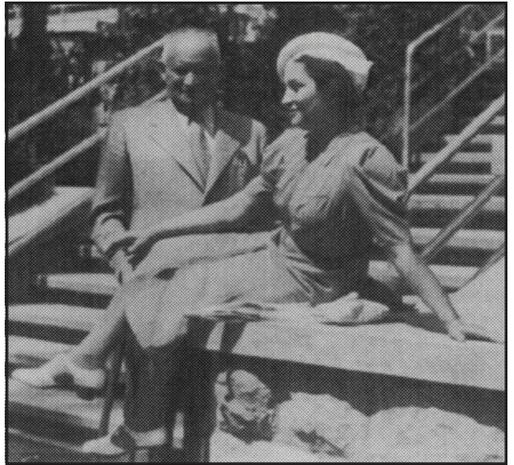


Rozia, Jadzia, Leszek  
and Blanka in Poreby  
▼





◀ Mother and Mrs. Herzog in Krynica



My parents ▶



◀ With Peppia Lion, my mother and Janek Bikart in Poreby



◀ Leaving Japan  
June 26, 1941  
(from right) my father,  
Runcewicz and  
Lederman

Our wedding picture ▶  
February 21, 1946



◀ Our wedding picture  
February 21, 1946

REPUBLICA POLONIA:

Dioecesis: Tarnoviensis

Palatinatus: Lancut

Parochia: Rakawa

Districtus: Lancut.

Nrus: 812

oplate Hempl.  
inversya got.  
k. dom. k.

Testimonium ortus et baptismi

Ex parte officii parochialis rit. lat. Ecclesiae sub lit. Exultationis Crucis notum testatumque

fit in libris matriçalibus naturam huius Ecclesiae destinatis pro Rakawa

Tom. IX Pag. 198 reperiri sequentia:

Annus	Mensis	Dies	Annus Domini	Nomen	Religio	Sexus	Thoris	Parentes:	Patrini
nativitatis	Nrus domus	Locus natus	Religiosi					Nomen, cognomen et conditio	Nomen, cognomen et conditio
1890	VI	VI	1890	Limon	rom - cathol.	male.	legitimi	Leopoldus Josephus (bin) Wang adiunctus fil. Thadæi et Sophiæ Malakujiska Mariæ Leliska fil. Carimi et Annæ Machniewici	Carolus Petrog const. iudic Zofia Kleeka uxor. Christian.

baptisat  
die  
17. VII 1890

Sacerdos baptisans: ks. Stefan Matuzinski

Obstetrix: Sophia Heparnicka

Adnotationes:

Quas testimoniales manu propria subscribo et sigillo Ecclesiae parochialis munit

Rakawa

die



A. D. 19 90

ks. dom. k.

KONSULAT GENERALNY  
RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ  
W STAMBULE

CONSULAT GENERAL  
DE LA REPUBLIQUE DE POLOGNE  
A STAMBOUL

N.682/9/145/40

C e r t i f i c a t .

Le Consulat Général de Pologne certifie par le présent que :

Monsieur Szymon WANG, fils de Józef et de Maria,  
né le 5.III.1890,

Son épouse Emilia Mils, née le 15.IX.1895,

Sa fille Edwards, née le 25.I.1937,

Son frère Rafael Wang, fils de Józef et de Maria,  
né le 15.II.1892, avec sa famille : son épouse Helena, née  
le 15.I.1901,

Son fils Léopold, né le 15.I.1929 et

Sa fille Halina, née le 11.VII.1924

sont des citoyens polonais, de religion romaine-catholique  
et descendent d'une famille romaine-catholique.

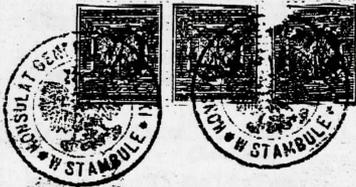
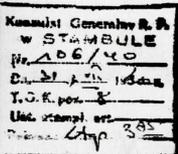
Le Consulat Général de Pologne tient à ajouter que  
les sus-nommés sont des personnes solides, dignes de confiance  
et possèdent des moyens suffisants.

Mrs.Szymon et Rafael Wang sont propriétaires des  
fermes et exportateurs de bois.

Istanbul, le 29 juillet 1940.

Le Gérant du Consulat Général de Pologne

*[Signature]*  
Le Consul de Pologne





Comité International de la Croix-Rouge

Palais du Conseil Général, GENEVE (Suisse)

AMERICAN RED CROSS

Washington, D. C.

CIVILIAN MESSAGE FORM

Sender—Envoyeur

Form 1616  
Rev. April 1942

96732

RECEIVED  
JUL 21 1942  
HEADQUARTERS  
INQUIRY

Name — Nom WANG  
Christian name — Prénom Edwarda  
Street — Rue 28-08 — 35 St.  
City — Localité Astoria, L.I  
State — Province New York

Message to be transmitted — Message à transmettre —  
(not more than 25 words, family news of strictly personal character.)  
(25 mots au maximum, nouvelles de caractère strictement personnel et familial.)

Dearest. Am worried, not hearing from you. Both Dad  
and myself are fine. but miss you terribly. No  
changes in our lives. Kisses and Love

Edwarda— Simon.



Chapter Central Queens, New York. Date July.16.1942.

ADDRESSEE—DESTINATAIRE

Name X WANG  
(Nom)  
Christian name Ellia  
(Prénom)  
Street Fürstentum Nr. 49.  
(Rue)  
Locality Lwow (Lemberg)  
(Localité)  
Province D. Galizien  
(Province)

BIRTH—NAISSANCE  
Place Cracow  
and Date Sept. 15. 1892  
(Lieu et Date)  
Citizen of Poland  
(Country-pays)  
Name Jacob  
of father (Nom du père)  
Relationship to Sender Mother  
(Parenté avec l'envoyeur)

Country Poland Jan. J. Gaudesnem.  
(Pays)

Reply on the reverse side.  
Write very legibly

9 NOV. 1942

Réponse au verso  
Écrire très lisiblement

REPLY—RÉPONSE

Message to be sent to inquirer—Message à renvoyer au demandeur

(not more than 25 words, family news of strictly personal character.)  
(25 mots au maximum, nouvelles de caractère strictement personnel et familial.)

Danke für Nachricht, bin gesund  
jedoch einsam. Als Angestellte im  
Geschäft verdiene fürs Leben.  
Ich ersühe den Tag des Wieder-  
sehens. Danke an Euch. Grüsse  
~~und~~ Küsse Mila

Date — Date 30/IV 1943

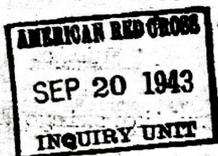
Signature

Emilie Wang



Please write very legibly

Prérez d'écrire très lisiblement



24 MAI 1943