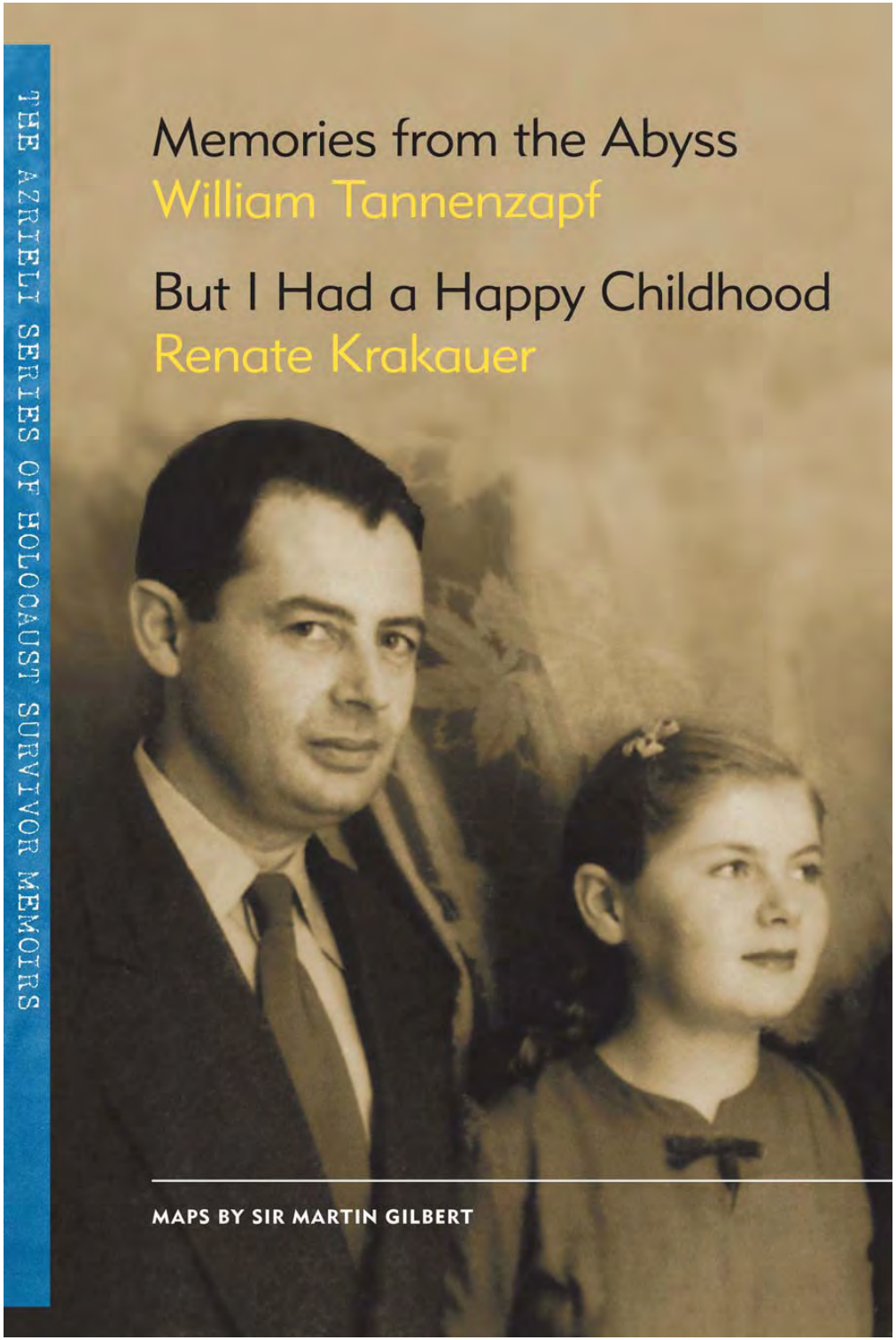
THE AZRIELI SERIES OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR MEMOIRS

Memories from the Abyss
William Tannenzapf

But I Had a Happy Childhood
Renate Krakauer



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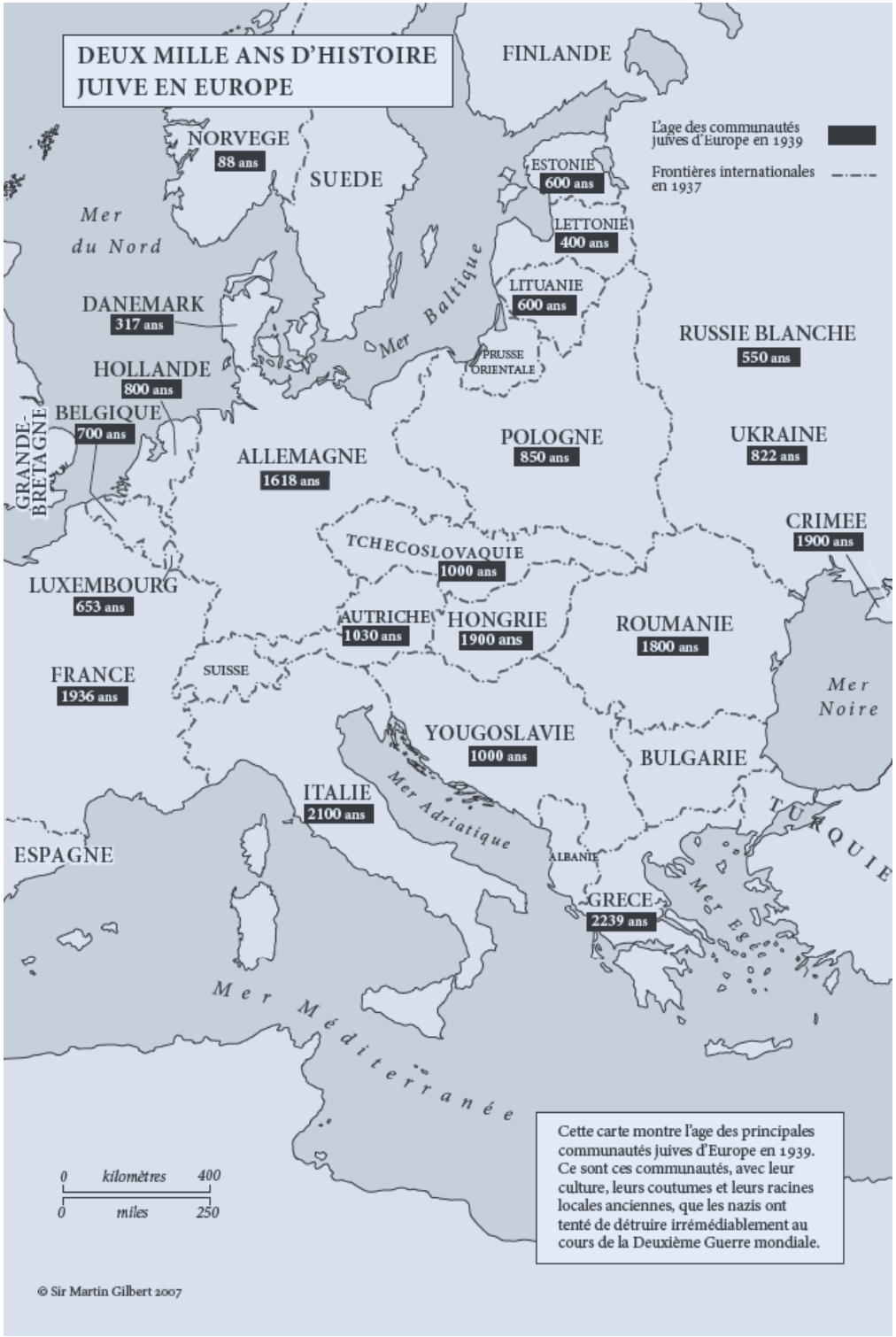

Memories From the Abyss & *But I Had a Happy Childhood*

TWO MEMOIRS

Memories From the Abyss

William Tannenzapf

But I Had a Happy Childhood

Renate Krakauer

FIRST EDITION

The Azrieli Foundation
164 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 503
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M4P 1G4
www.azrielifoundation.org

Cover and book design by Mark Goldstein
Cartography by Karen van Kerkoele

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Tannenzapf, William, 1911–
Memories from the abyss/ William Tannenzapf. But I had a happy childhood/ Renate Krakauer.

(Azrieli series of Holocaust survivor memoirs. Series II)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-897470-06-0

1. Tannenzapf, William, 1911–. 2. Krakauer, Renate, 1941–. 3. Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) – Poland. 4. Jewish children in the Holocaust – Poland – Biography. 5. Jews – Poland – Biography. I. Azrieli Foundation II. Krakauer, Renate, 1941–. But I had a happy childhood. III. Title. IV. Series: Azrieli series of Holocaust survivor memoirs. Series II

DS134.7.T35 2009 940.53'180922 C2009-901378-9

Mixed Sources
Product group from well-managed forests, controlled sources and recycled wood or fiber
www.fsc.org Cert no. SW-COC-002080
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Printed in Canada

The Azrieli Series of Holocaust Survivor Memoirs

SERIES II: SENIOR EDITORIAL BOARD

Contents

Series Preface:
In their own words. . .

In telling these stories, the writers have liberated themselves. For so many years we did not speak about it, even when we became free people living in a free society. Now, when at last we are writing about what happened to us in this dark period of history, knowing that our stories will be read and live on, it is possible for us to feel truly free. These unique historical documents put a face on what was lost, and allow readers to grasp the enormity of what happened to six million Jews – one story at a time.

David J. Azrieli, C.M., C.Q., MArch
Holocaust survivor and founder, The Azrieli Foundation

Since the end of World War II, over 30,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors have immigrated to Canada. Who they are, where they came from, what they experienced and how they built new lives for themselves and their families are important parts of our Canadian heritage. The Azrieli Foundation-York University Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program was established to preserve and share the memoirs written by those who survived the twentieth-century Nazi genocide of the Jews of Europe and later made their way to Canada. The program is guided by the conviction that each survivor of the Holocaust has a remarkable story to tell, and that such stories play an important role in education about tolerance and diversity.

Millions of individual stories are lost to us forever. By preserving the stories written by survivors and making them widely available to

a broad audience, the Azrieli Series of Holocaust Survivor Memoirs seeks to sustain the memory of all those who perished at the hands of hatred, abetted by indifference and apathy. The personal accounts of those who survived against all odds are as different as the people who wrote them, but all demonstrate the courage, strength, wit and luck that it took to prevail and survive in such terrible adversity. The memoirs are also moving tributes to people – strangers and friends – who risked their lives to help others, and who, through acts of kindness and decency in the darkest of moments, frequently helped the persecuted maintain faith in humanity and courage to endure. These accounts offer inspiration to all, as does the survivors' desire to share their experiences so that new generations can learn from them.

The Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program collects, archives and publishes these distinctive records and the print editions are available free of charge to libraries, schools and Holocaust-education programs across Canada, and to the general public at Azrieli Foundation educational events. Online editions of the books are available on our web site, www.azrielifoundation.org.

The Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies has provided scholarly assistance and guidance in the preparation of these memoirs for publication. The manuscripts as originally submitted are preserved in the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections at York University, and are available for review by interested scholars.

The Azrieli Foundation would like to express deep appreciation to Tamarah Feder, Managing Editor and Program Manager 2005–2008 for her contribution to the establishment of this program and for her work on Series I and II. We also gratefully acknowledge the following people for their invaluable efforts in producing this series: Mary Arvanitakis, Elin Beaumont, François Blanc, Aurélien Bonin, Florence Buathier, Mark Celinscack, Nicolas Côté, Jordana de Bloeme, Darrel Dickson (Maracle Press), Andrea Geddes Poole, Sir Martin Gilbert, Esther Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Elizabeth Lasserre, Lisa Newman, Carson Phillips, Susan Roitman, Judith Samuels, Randall Schnoor, Erica Simmons, Jody Spiegel, Mia Spiro, Erika Tucker and Karen Van Kerkoerle.

To my dear wife, Charlotte Tannenzapf z'l, who was my constant companion for 69 years;

To my daughter, Renate, and her children, Rob, Lianne and Shulamit (Susan) so that they may never forget;

To my sister, Ester Mieses, in Israel and her family;

And in remembrance of my mother, Gisella, my sisters, Klara, Shancia and Nitka, who were murdered with their families in the Holocaust.

Introduction

Scale and scope are two of the unique aspects of the Holocaust. Its Jewish victims number some six million. The hands-on perpetrators, Germans and their collaborators in eastern and western Europe, may number more than a million. The bystanders in Europe and the Americas who knew what was happening and remained silent are countless. The numbers alone overwhelm us. So, too, does the unprecedented geographical range of the Holocaust: from the English Channel to the Ural Mountains, and from Norway to North Africa.

But if the massiveness of the Holocaust engulfs us like a tidal wave, we need to remain aware that it was not, in fact, a natural disaster, not an unstoppable earthquake nor a tsunami. It was a singular event in human history. And while the Holocaust was a mass happening, every victim was an individual with a unique story, with his or her own reaction to the particular evils encountered or, on occasion, committed. Every act of brutality, moreover, every murder – even every act of silent acquiescence – was the result of a conscious decision by an individual. As Daniel Mendelsohn has said, everything that happened in the Holocaust "happened because someone made a decision. To pull a trigger, to flip a switch, to close a cattle car door, to hide, to betray."[1] The Holocaust is an event that was caused by individuals and that affected individuals.

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1 Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 479.

The two memoirs in this volume are by William Tannenzapf and Renate Krakauer, a father and daughter who recount much that is familiar to students of the Holocaust. To some extent, what they have to tell echoes what we read in other accounts about that monstrous event, perhaps in different words or with different names attached to people and places, but essentially the same story. The German "beast" appears in Tannenzapf's memoir in the guise of Hans Krueger, a commanding officer in the occupation force serving in Stanisławów, then in eastern Poland and now in western Ukraine, where the Tannenzapfs lived. The helpless Jewish victim is personified in the beautiful, dark-haired young woman whom Krueger, on horseback, took by the hair and dragged through a construction site over sharp, pointed rocks until she expired. What happened in Stanisławów was typical for eastern Poland in the Holocaust period.[2] In just over sixteen months, some 70,000 Jews were shot in Stanisławów and nearby communities and another 12,000 were deported to the Belzec death camp by the Germans with the assistance of local collaborators.

There is more to these two memoirs, however, than a retelling of events that are, alas, not unknown to many readers. At the same time that the books present themes and characters in situations and locations familiar to many, they recount the unique experiences of three individuals and the people they encountered in particular places during the Holocaust and its aftermath. What happened to them happened only to them. And their tale, like that of others, must be told, if we are to know the event that was the Holocaust and the people who were caught up in it.

There is an additional significant aspect of these two stories, beyond their uniqueness as accounts of individual Jews in Nazi Europe. Tannenzapf is Krakauer's father, and, in fact, the memoirs tell the

2 Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost* provides a useful comparison. Mendelsohn tells of Bolechow, another small city then in Poland, now in Ukraine.

same story but from different perspectives. The father's memories are mostly those of hardship and heartbreak, although he is careful to document humanity and decency where he finds them. (The Poles, Russians, Jews, Americans, and Canadians here are a mixed lot, some admirable, some not. There are almost no Germans or Ukrainians who act decently, and presumably that was Tannenzapf's experience. He refrains from sweeping categorizations, preferring to highlight particular encounters and individuals.) On the other hand, Krakauer reports having "had a happy childhood." In what is most unusual, if only because of the small number of families that survived intact, we get here two perspectives on many of the same events, sometimes two different evaluations of the same people.

Tannenzapf was born before World War I in Stanisławów, a small city of some 65,000 residents, Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. The Jewish population exceeded 25,000 at its peak in the late 1930s; only some 1,500 were alive in 1945. More than fifty synagogues and prayer houses, as well as schools and a variety of other institutions ensured a rich cultural and social life for the town's pre-war Jewish community, a community which no longer exists at all.

The Tannenzapf family was cultured and well-to-do. Three of William's four sisters were teachers, and he graduated as an engineer from the Deutsche Technische Hochschule in Prague in 1936. He was strongly identified as a Jew and was active in the community, especially in the Revisionist Zionist movement.[3] His wife, Charlotte (née Mandel), was born in Stanisławów in 1911, the same year as her husband. An independent woman, she left for Prague to study pharmacy in 1929, telling her father only the night before her departure. She and William were married in 1939. Their daughter, Renate, was born in Stanisławów in 1941, just before the Germans occupied the city.

When their home town and the surrounding territories were tak-

3 For more on Revisionist Zionism, see the glossary.

en over by the Soviet Union following the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement in 1939, William and Charlotte adjusted to the new reality. Although he had been an active Zionist and had a sister living in Israel (or Palestine, as it was known before 1948), and although he came from a "capitalist" family, William's and Charlotte's education stood them in good stead. He found employment in the local power plant and she in a pharmacy. They continued to enjoy the support of family and friends in their native town, despite the strictures of the Stalinist regime. After the Germans arrived, however, just staying alive became a struggle.

It is not difficult to understand why, apart from differences in age and temperament, father and daughter give differing accounts of the Holocaust period and beyond. When the German army conquered Stanisławów, Krakauer was barely three months old. What she knows of her earliest years, she knows from others; memories of her earliest experiences have been safely buried, and in any case, she was shielded from the greatest dangers and insecurities of the harshest years by her family and by benevolent gentiles. When the Red Army reconquered the town in 1944, Renate was not yet four. When the family that had been hiding her returned her to her parents, Charlotte and William were strangers to her. Soon, however, she "called this new place home and these new people mother and father."

The parents, however, were left with vivid, painful "memories from the abyss." Providing milk for their newborn baby when the malnourished Charlotte was not able to produce enough, securing a safe place for the infant to stay while the parents were at work, handing over for care and hiding a fifteen-month-old to former servants who were only half trusted, hiding for long periods in a low-ceilinged hayloft, being rejected by their daughter who did not want to leave her "foster mother" or to return to natural parents, these were traumatic, almost unbearable experiences for them. At one point, William feels that he can't go on. After the war in Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany, Charlotte struggling with the loss of most of her family,

her ill-health and her hearing impairment, embarked with William on rebuilding their lives with their young daughter, Renate.

Their daughter remembers little of all this, except for the unexplained absence of her mother for a time, and thinking her father was the "bogeyman," when she first saw him after the war. Her memoir relates the largely "normal" experiences of early childhood in that place and that time. Once, when the family was living in the town of Brzeg nad Odrą, Renate wandered off in a cow meadow attracted like any child to the lowing animals. As it turned out, there were still land mines in the meadow, and a cow detonated one causing an explosion. For the little girl, the event was an exciting adventure. Fearing that she had been killed, however, her parents were at first very agitated and then very angry with her for wandering off. On another occasion, one of the large tents which housed the refugees blew down during a storm. William remembers the discomfort suffered by the tent dwellers; Renate remembers splashing around in the puddles as a lark.

Although the mass murder of Jews ended with the defeat of the Germans, the Tannenzapfs experienced the "long reach" of the past "into the present." Still in Poland, the family that had hidden them in their hayloft insisted that they leave quietly at night, because neighbours might exact revenge, if they were to learn that they had been hiding Jews. A Russian soldier who helped them along the way admitted that he was Jewish but insisted they not reveal his identity to his antisemitic comrades. Even some of the Americans who administered the DP camps were less than friendly to the Jewish refugees.

In Canada, all was not smooth either, although Tannenzapf has little to say about that and ends his memoir with the family's arrival in the New World. Interestingly, Krakauer has a fair bit to say about the difficulties of acclimating to North America. To be sure, some of the problems she recounts are those that any newcomer anywhere can expect to meet, but immigration, too, is both the experience of masses and of individuals. Renate had to overcome her "different" appearance, and their first landlady did not like having children in

the house. Undoubtedly the most serious problems the family had to confront were Charlotte's adjustment and recurring nightmares.

That said, it may be noted that William Tannenzapf enjoyed a successful career in Canada, working at Westinghouse in Hamilton inventing new technologies for which he earned several patents. He worked to the age of seventy-two, and in the last ten years of his working life, he headed a group of electronic power engineers who developed a solid state airfield lighting control system for congested airfields. In 2009, he is still living independently.

Although Charlotte's career as a pharmacist was interrupted by war and immigration, she eventually returned to it. She requalified at the University of Toronto, beginning her studies there when she was fifty-nine years old. She worked at the dispensary at Shoppers' Drug Mart until her retirement, and died on August 16, 2008, at the age of ninety-seven.

Renate followed in her mother's footsteps, obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from the University of Toronto and a Masters of Environmental Studies from York University. She has worked as a pharmacist, an adult educator at Humber College, commissioner of Human Resource Services for the city of York (now part of the city of Toronto), director of the Human Resources Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Health, and president and CEO of the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences in Toronto. In 2001, she received a doctorate of education degree from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Renate was also awarded an honorary doctorate of health studies by Charles Sturt University in Australia. Since her retirement, she has been writing essays and short stories, a number of which have been published.

Both memoirs, then, have a happy ending. They are ultimately tales of triumph over adversity. Tannenzapf concludes his "memories" by noting that with arrival in Canada, "the tragic decade of our lives … came to a close. We entered a new era with great hopes." His daughter sounds a more sober note, but ultimately shares her father's perspective: The "long shadow of the Holocaust certainly [has] touched my life," she writes, but the "impact has dimmed over the years.… I have had a fulfilling and interesting life, which continues to hold many rewards and surprises."

Michael Brown,
York University

NOTE: Some of the biographical material in the introduction, as well as the glossary and many of the footnotes in the body of the text (although not in the introduction) were prepared by the editors of the Azrieli Foundation.

Memories From the Abyss

Author's Preface

For a long time, my daughter kept after me to write my stories about the time we lived in Poland under German and Soviet occupation. My standard response was, "Cui bono?" (For whose benefit?) When she gave me a computer, I was eager to learn how to use it, so I decided to practice typing by recording episodes in which my wife, Charlotte, my daughter, Renate, or I were personally involved or observers. I did not then have in mind a chronological account of events, just isolated incidents not tied to any fixed date. To contextualize my accounts, however, I should mention that the following events happened in the city of Stanisławów and, for relatively shorter periods of time, in other places that I will identify. These events directly affected us, either individually or as a family. During World War II, Stanisławów was invaded first by the Soviets; for a short time, it was occupied by the Hungarian army, followed by the Germans, and finally again by the Soviets. Today it is part of the Ukraine.

William Tannenzapf
Hamilton, Canada
December 12, 1999

Under the First Soviet Occupation

When Soviet troops entered Stanisławów in the autumn of 1939, I was an unemployed engineer. It was a time of great ideologically driven upheaval as our occupiers set out to "sovietize" their new territory.[1] As soon as the Soviets arrived, some of my colleagues created a sort of engineering council to assign people to the positions that had become vacant for political reasons, but I was never considered for assignment because several years earlier I had been a member of the Revisionist Zionists.[2] In fact, the reason that I was unemployed was that my cousin, who owned the factory where I worked, had replaced me with a communist friend of his.

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1 The USSR's policies of "sovietization" throughout the territories in its sphere of influence included confiscation, nationalization and redistribution of private and state-owned Polish property, and discrimination against and outright persecution of capitalists and others considered dangerous to the Soviet regime.

2 Revisionist Zionism, one of several competing strains of Zionism that emerged prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, maintained a single-minded focus on Jewish statehood in biblical Palestine. Its proponents believed that military and political power ultimately determined the fate of peoples and nations and emphasized the need for Jewish self-defence. These tenets of Revisionist Zionism made it particularly suspect to the Soviets. The Revisionists were the most popular Zionist party in Poland before World War II.

Eventually, I did find a job. When the Soviets organized a radio station in the city with programming authority, the station's boss, Eventov, a Russian Jew, requisitioned a room in my mother's house. He was a very young man and enjoyed talking to my mother. He told her that he badly needed a technical manager, and when she mentioned me, he hired me on the spot.

Before the Soviets entered Stanisławów, I had been very worried that somebody might inform them of my Zionist associations and that the Soviets might harm me. Trying to protect me, my mother ran to her *rebbe* (Hasidic rabbi) for advice. Many Jewish and non-Jewish women trusted him. The *rebbe* gave my mother a *kameha*, a coin he had blessed, telling her that I should carry this coin always so that no harm would ever come to me. I, of course, rejected this idea as mumbo-jumbo, but my mother, through my wife, Charlotte, twisted my arm, and I allowed her to sew the coin into a pocket of my pants. Much later, after we were liberated from the Nazis, Charlotte remembered the coin and asked me to show it to her, assuming that it had contributed to our miraculous survival. I had to admit that I had discovered that it was missing only a few months after I had received it, but preferred not to tell her so she wouldn't worry. It hadn't mattered to me – I never believed in it anyway.

Charlotte was a pharmacist, but before the Soviets took over the town, most young Jewish pharmacists had been unemployed. Polish universities restricted the admission of Jews to study pharmacy, and graduates from foreign universities – Charlotte, like me, had studied in Prague – frequently couldn't obtain a licence to practice in Poland. Since the Soviets did not recognize distinctions between locally and foreign-educated pharmacists, the pharmacists organized a meeting and assigned the unemployed to various vacant positions. A supposed friend of Charlotte's said that during a time of few job vacancies, Charlotte could afford to wait. "After all," she said, "you wear a Persian lamb coat." But Charlotte did get a job in a pharmacy, albeit with a miserable supervisor. Fortunately, a few months later she was transferred to another place with a really nice supervisor.

I was satisfied with my job at the radio station. I certainly enjoyed the fringe benefits. My department received a shipment of radios from the Soviet Union for distribution among the members of the local amateur radio club I had created. I "distributed" one powerful short-wave radio to my home, where I would secretly (and frequently) tune in to Jewish Radio Jerusalem.[3] This was not permissible under the Soviet regime and was something the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) watched for. Like most of the locals, I was constantly tense and alert not to let any authority know that my father was a wholesaler – he was in the steel business and the Soviets would have considered him to be a capitalist – that my sister lived in Palestine, or that I had been a Zionist before the war. These were regarded as major sins against the Communist state and the punishment could wreck one's life. But I couldn't resist hiring a young former officer in the Revisionist Zionist youth organization (Betar), as an instructor for the amateur radio club, when he couldn't get any other job. Things got more complicated when, a year later, Rosenau was called up for service in the Red Army. As his boss, I had to make a speech in front of all the employees of the radio station, recommending him for acceptance into the army as a patriot of sterling character.

Soon things grew even more complicated for me. All department managers were asked to assemble in the boss's office after work on designated days to study a new book, *A Short Course on the History of the ACP(b)* – a history of the Bolshevik movement.[4] If my memory serves me right, it stated in the seventh chapter (apparently written by Stalin himself) that quantity could change quality. The managers latched on to this idea, arguing back and forth. I was normally a silent

3 Likely the Voice of Jerusalem, broadcast by the Palestine Broadcasting Service under the supervision of the British Mandatory Authority.

4 The ACP(b) was the All-Union Communist Party (bolshevik), later re-named the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or CPSU. The "short course" was one of the many ways that occupation authorities sought to spread Soviet ideology.

participant, but as the meeting dragged on, I got hungry and wanted to go home. So I piped up and pointed out that when water is boiled, a quantity of heat/calories changes the water quality from a liquid to a gas/steam. The assembly applauded and the managers unanimously agreed that I understood communism better than many, and that I should become a member of Komsomol, the youth organization that was a stepping stone to membership in the ruling Communist Party. It is worth mentioning that before they accepted a "candidate" into the Komsomol, they would thoroughly investigate his or her past – which was something I did not need. Thanks to a lucky break, I was able to wiggle out of the predicament.

The city power station used steam-turbine generators to produce electric power. The high-pressure, superheated steam came from sophisticated high-speed boilers that required careful supervision and the running of feed-water tests. I had had a year of work experience in the power station before the war, and I was familiar with the requirements, but when the Soviets took over and the engineer in charge left for Germany, a local communist engineer got the position. He wasn't familiar enough with the routine and, in due course, one of the boilers blew up. Consequently, he was fired and I was approached to take over. I was delighted but had to wait a few days for the politicians to authorize the transfer. I became manager of the power station's electrical department and was welcomed as a saviour.

In the midst of the political upheaval in the world and right around us, the most significant change in our lives came on March 12, 1941, when Charlotte gave birth to our baby girl, Renate. Presiding over her birth was Dr. Kozak, the daughter of an Orthodox Jewish bookstore owner who sold Jewish religious articles and books in several languages, as well as books on Jewish history, literature and Zionism. Dr. Kozak had converted from Judaism when she married a Ukrainian doctor, but she remained very friendly to her numerous Jewish patients. The delivery took place in Dr. Kozak's private clinic, which was subsequently nationalized by the Soviets. Renate was a healthy baby,

but all skin and bones, and it quickly became evident that breastfeeding was not adequate for her. Fortunately, Charlotte found a reliable supply of milk from kind and helpful Jewish neighbours who owned a cow. The baby accepted the milk enthusiastically and she rapidly filled out beautifully. It wasn't a simple matter to compensate the neighbours for their milk, since Polish currency was obsolete at that time and the value of Soviet currency was, at best, unpredictable. Charlotte, however, had pretty clothes in her trousseau that by then could only be obtained on the black market, so a barter satisfactory to both Charlotte and the owner of the cow solved the problem.

Despite the happy event of Renate's birth, life under the Soviets continued to be full of pitfalls. Once, on my way home from work, I met a man named Kerzner on the street. We had been members of the same Revisionist Zionist organization a decade earlier, but had had nothing to do with each other since then. Kerzner greeted me with great enthusiasm and seemed interested in my job. Then he asked whether I was going to join the group at a memorial service they were organizing for the recently deceased Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky. I explained that I had given up politics a long time ago in order to concentrate on my primary interest, engineering. He responded that he was aware of my significant professional reputation and understood my position. Several months later I found out that that conversation saved my life. I didn't know at the time that Kerzner, a lawyer and Zionist, had become a Soviet *agent provocateur*.[5] He ratted out the people who went to the memorial service and they were arrested. Later, when the Soviets retreated before the advancing Germans, they were executed. Feuer, a boy I had known well for a long time, miraculously escaped the murder and told me that when he and the other arrested participants had been taken to court, Kerzner was the star witness for the prosecution.

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5 Someone employed to work undercover to incite individuals or groups to commit illegal acts so that they can be arrested and punished.

May Day was the big holiday for the Soviets, and on that day in 1941 the Soviet general manager of the power station awarded bonuses to top performers. Even though I was considered a star performer, I got nothing. I was called into the office of the general manager who was a Communist Party member. He told me he couldn't give me a bonus because a co-worker had informed him I had been a Zionist before the war. Consequently, I couldn't be honoured on the patriotic holiday. But he assured me that he would give me a larger bonus a few days later, which he did. The name of the co-worker, he told me, was my long-time school buddy, Brenner.

The western part of Poland had been occupied by Germans in 1939, and many Jews moved east to escape persecution. As they arrived in Soviet-occupied territory they described Nazi atrocities, which local Jews, including us, considered exaggerated. After all, Germany was the country that had produced such minds as Goethe and Schiller. Among the refugees who arrived in Stanisławów were Charlotte's brother, Jacek, her sister, Mańka, and Mańka's husband. Jacek, a Communist, immediately got a very good job. The others also found employment quickly. Our relations with them were fairly cool since Charlotte's brothers (including Içio, who lived in Stanisławów) appeared not to be eager to associate with us, the former "Zionist fascists."

In spite of the occasional problems and scares, the general situation under the Soviet administration was fairly stable. Cynics said that the basis of this stability was that everyone knew the Soviet by-word: "You'll get used to it, and if you don't, you'll croak!" So it came as a great shock to us when Soviet commissars explained at a company meeting that the "invincible Red Army" might soon have to retreat from Stanisławów for a while.[6] Everybody rushed home in a panic to

6 On June 21, 1941, the Germans moved eastward against the USSR, with whom they had signed a non-aggression treaty (the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939).

discuss with their families what to do. We agonized over the available alternatives. Realizing that it would be impossible to secure a constant supply of fresh, digestible milk for the baby during an evacuation, Charlotte couldn't leave town. We expected that the "civilized Germans" would not harm a nursing mother with a newborn infant. The consensus in the family, however, was that the Nazis might treat me badly and I should flee to Russia.

My Soviet boss handed me special papers that I was supposed to present once I arrived at the headquarters of the electric power system in Kiev or Moscow in order to be placed in a proper position. Charlotte contacted her brothers who were fleeing to the east and asked them to let me join them. They agreed and then promptly reneged. I was torn, worrying how Charlotte would be able to cope by herself with the baby and about how helpful I could be when facing constant personal danger from the Nazis. Eventually, I decided to join the other people in the power station who were waiting for transportation to the Soviet Union. I went through heartbreaking goodbyes to my family, mounted my wobbly bicycle and started on my way to join the transport eastward. Two blocks into it, I couldn't go on. I turned around and rejoined my wife and child, for better or for worse.

An additional worry at that time was our financial situation, which was dismal. The Soviet ruble had instantly turned worthless; assets we had deposited in a bank were "nationalized" by the Soviets (i.e., disappeared), and we had let our elderly Jewish neighbour bury our modest jewellery in his garden, trusting his "mature experience." The only worldly possessions under Charlotte's and my control at that time were our clothes and our furniture.

Surprisingly, not all local Communists had fared well during the Soviet occupation. A newspaper vendor, who had befriended me and let me peruse the latest editions for a moderate fee before the war, was a long-time Communist. As soon as the Soviets arrived, he left for the Soviet Union to enjoy his dreamland. After about six months, he came back bedraggled and told me that the Poles who jailed him for

two years to cure him of communism had failed, yet the Soviets who jailed him for only two weeks had succeeded completely. Another example was my cousin, Nuchim Schapira, who had earlier replaced me with his Communist Party soul-mate at his factory. When his plant was nationalized, he removed a single barrel of vodka from the premises before leaving. The police considered this stealing (even though it was his property), and he was jailed and then exiled to Siberia. The family was shattered. Strangely, his story ended with a quirk of fate: his wife and child were killed by the Nazis, but he survived and after the war returned from the Soviet Union with a new wife.

The Soviet occupation of the city ended rapidly in late June 1941, as the Red Army retreated in a frenzy. I saw some barefoot soldiers on top of tanks that were racing out of the city. I continued to go to my office in the power station by bicycle. On my way, I saw dead bodies on the road but never found out who they were or how they had been killed. Once Soviet soldiers could no longer be seen, Ukrainians began to harass recognizably Jewish men by pulling their beards and knocking them around.

Under German Occupation

On the heels of the retreating Red Army, the Hungarian army marched in. About a month later, they were replaced by the German invaders.[1] The Hungarian military behaved somewhat ambiguously. They restrained the Ukrainian excesses somewhat but did not demonstrate any overt protection of the Jews. For example, they didn't prevent two Ukrainian military officers from entering our apartment and simply taking away our skis. There was obviously no police or similar authority that could be called on for help. This was wartime. Some Hungarian officers showed up at the power station, visiting different departments. They came into my office and we had a brief professional conversation. Before they left, they told me they knew I was a Jew, explaining that this made no difference to them but that they would soon be replaced by Germans, at which point I could expect extremely bad times. They suggested it would be safer for me to stop working and not come back to the office. I agreed.

The Hungarian army left Stanisławów in late July of 1941 and was replaced by small contingents of German special operations units. Among them was the Gestapo (the Geheime Staatspolizei, a branch

1 William Tannenzapf first described these events in an article he wrote in 1947 entitled "Churbn Stanisławów" (The Holocaust in Stanisławów), published in Munich in the *Jidisze Cajtung* (February 1947).

of the German secret police with a reputation for extreme cruelty). They made their headquarters in the vacated Polish district courthouse building. Along with heavily armed German police in heavy jackboots and large helmets, they patrolled the streets and intimidated the entire population. The Jews felt like the breath of death was coming their way – a feeling confirmed within hours of the Germans entering the city. They rounded up former members of the city's *kahal* (the local elected body authorized by the Polish government before the war to represent Jewish communities), which had been dissolved by the Soviets. The Germans began by beating up those gathered, breaking the arm of one man named Seibald. Then the Germans established a Judenrat (Jewish Council) and appointed a former banker named Lamm as its deputy chairman. To demonstrate their contempt, they called him "Lämmchen" (little lamb). The Judenrat served as the intermediary between the Gestapo and the Jewish people, in other words, it transmitted and executed Gestapo orders.[2]

The first order that affected us directly came just two days later when all Jewish professionals and leaders of the community were ordered to assemble in the Gestapo headquarters building at specific hours, organized according to their professions. Failing to comply would be punished by death. My sister Nitka's husband, Nusko Feld, a high-school teacher, and Charlotte's sister, Mañka, a pharmacist, both complied. Charlotte, being a pharmacist, wanted to join her sister. But I had been educated in German schools in Prague and didn't trust the Germans, so I definitely refused to go and tried hard to persuade Charlotte not to go. Eventually I threatened her that if she left the baby, who was unwell at the time, I wouldn't look after her. This worked and she didn't go to the Gestapo headquarters. Only a few doctors were later released, including a dentist friend of ours who

2 The practice in Stanisławów mirrored that in Jewish communities all over Nazi Europe. For more information, see the glossary.

trusted us and told us what happened. The rest were detained without explanation and no communication with them was allowed nor was information released about why they had been detained.

We heard from our friend that the detainees were viciously beaten and psychologically abused by the Gestapo, who used sophisticated torture methods. Soon, rumours (most likely planted) were spreading that food parcels for the prisoners would be accepted. Family members delivered them in spite of the extreme difficulty in obtaining food and despite the absence of confirmation that their loved ones actually received them. A few months later we found out that not a single parcel had reached the prisoners, who had all been starved and tortured. Some were killed and some died; those who were still alive were transported in trucks to nearby woods, where they were executed. Nusko Feld, Nitka's husband, was one of the victims.

The Gestapo followed up with a campaign of terror and intimidation, issuing a deluge of orders via the Judenrat. Jews were prohibited from using any kind of engine or animal-propelled transportation. Assembly of more than two Jews was not permitted. Religious observance was banned and so was putting on *tallis* or *tefillin* (the prayer shawl and phylacteries worn by Jews at prayer). Jews were not allowed to own dogs or horses or any other domestic animals. Jews were forbidden to possess or use any bicycles, radios, jewellery, gold, silver, precious stones, fur coats, fur gloves, fur accessories or ski equipment. Jews were ordered to deposit all these prohibited articles at specified times in designated collection areas, and the Judenrat then had to transport them to a German receiving authority. Anybody who didn't comply would be shot. Another order demanded that male Jews remove their hats when they came close to a German on the street and that they stay off sidewalks and walk only on the road.

Jews were deprived of all the most basic civil rights. There was no penalty for Germans, Ukrainians or Poles who killed a Jew. Every Jewish man, woman and child had to wear a ten-centimetre-wide white armband on their left arm with a blue Star of David stitched

on it with red thread. The penalty for removing the armband was death. Germans addressed male Jews with the name "Paul" and Jewish women as "Paula." They used the German pronoun "Du" for "you" instead of the more respectful "Sie" that is usual when addressing strangers. There is no equivalent in the English language. Two Gestapo men, the Maurer brothers, took "sightseeing" tours around town in a horse-drawn carriage, relaxing comfortably on the upholstered leather seats while forcing the head of the Judenrat, Lamm, to sit on the hard bench next to the coachman.

Every day Jews were killed, in small groups and individually. They were often first dragged from their homes through the streets of the town. It was illegal to have more than the bare minimum of food in the house. Somebody fingered Charlotte's brother, Jumko, for having several kilograms of meat in his kitchen. He and his wife were arrested and taken away by the Gestapo. They never returned.

The first *Aktion* was perpetrated by the Gestapo on October 12, 1941, under the command of the infamous Hans Krueger.[3] It was rumoured that the Jews would be "resettled," so we put together a few bundles containing only the essentials. We dressed warmly and prepared to be picked up for the transport. Charlotte went to the neighbour around the corner to get milk for the baby. As our apartment was located in a non-Jewish district, she didn't wear her armband. When she returned, she was frightened out of her mind. She told me that she had seen gun-toting, uniformed Germans and Ukrainians chasing Jews, savagely beating them and dragging them away. We didn't know what to do, so we waited until the end of the day. Nobody called for us. Death just passed us by.

There was no resettlement. The Jews who had been rounded up

3 The term *Aktion* (plural: *Aktionen*) was used to refer to the brutal roundup of Jews for forced labour, deportation to ghettos and death camps, or to be killed in shooting operations. Hans Krueger was the SS captain in charge in Stanisławów from July 1941 to 1943.

were assembled in front of the city hall, then rushed with whips, bayonets, and barking dogs to the New Jewish Cemetery. There they were pushed against long open pits that had been prepared. They were shot and dumped into the pits. The crowd panicked and started pushing back from the pits, which resulted in many of the people being crushed to death. One victim was my Aunt Salcia (wife of my father's brother, Fishel). Her daughter, Wisia, most of the family of my Aunt Necha (my mother's sister) and Charlotte's father were among those rounded up and herded to the cemetery. The executioners would grab their victims' necks using the hook side of a walking stick, assault them, and shoot them. Finally, they would kick the victim – dead or alive – into the pit.

The horror of the massacre and mental torture is beyond the imagination of a normal person. Krueger singled out the town beauty, Lisa Drach, and told her that she could leave. She pleaded with him to release her parents as well, but he refused. Nevertheless, she survived.

Doñka Bilgraj, Charlotte's best friend, was assigned to Krueger as a maid. Once, when she was in his home alone, she opened one of his photo albums. In it she saw pictures of young women posing naked in various positions, and Krueger shooting them with a handgun. At the cemetery, knowing what this sadistic murderer was capable of, she took her father by the hand and pushed the two of them forward so they could end their lives as quickly as possible. The rest of the family followed. The horrors continued all day. As soon as it got dark, a trumpet was blown and Krueger, riding on a white horse, declared the *Aktion* complete; whoever was still alive could go home. Wisia returned, as did Charlotte's father. Our other relatives who were there perished. Twelve thousand Jewish men, women and children were massacred on that day.

German and Ukrainian looting, assaults and random killing of Jews continued unabated. On one occasion, we spotted through our window two young German soldiers roaming the street, when

a woman directed them to our building. We understood the implication, and as soon as they came close to our door, I escaped through the window. Simultaneously, our Polish Christian neighbour from the adjacent apartment came in just before the soldiers entered. The soldiers helped themselves to some bric-a-brac, had a conversation with the Polish neighbour and left peacefully.

Even more traumatic was the following episode. I was standing in a long line for entry into the *Arbeitsamt* – the labour office created by the Germans where Jews were required to register to do forced labour for the Germans – to receive an identification certificate so that I could get work. The bearer of such a certificate was supposed to be protected from being picked up in an *Aktion*. The third person ahead of me in the line was a good-looking young woman. Krueger was riding lazily along the line on a white horse, dressed in a white turtleneck sweater and bareheaded, when he stopped beside the woman and said something to her. She released her beautiful, long, black hair. He bent down and slowly patted it, and then wrapped her hair around his hand. Suddenly, he took off in a wild gallop, dragging the woman by the hair over a layer of sharp broken rocks on a road under construction. When he returned, he dumped her dead body at the feet of two Jewish ghetto policemen from the Ordnungsdienst, Jewish ghetto police that had been formed by the Gestapo when they started organizing the Stanisławów ghetto. They were uniformed and armed with heavy wooden clubs. As a result of these experiences, I was a star witness for the prosecution against Krueger at the Court of Assizes in Muenster, Germany in 1966.[4]

After the mass execution at the New Jewish Cemetery, food became scarce and it was a problem to get to it without being picked up by the Germans or Ukrainians. Somehow I got to know a Pole who operated an apparel store. He badly needed suits and I badly needed

4 Krueger was found guilty and jailed. He was released from prison in 1986 and died in 1988.

food. I had a fair number of good made-to-measure suits, which I bartered, one after the other, for food. The exchanges had to be made in his store, which was located right in the centre of the town full of Germans and Ukrainians, where a Jew had a good chance of getting caught and killed. Since we were hungry, I removed my armband, defied the odds, visited the store as needed, and survived.

An ethnic German neighbour from across the street liked our furniture, which the manufacturer had built from our own design. I offered to sell it to him for the ridiculous sum of one hundred pre-war Polish złotys, paid in food at the same pre-war prices. He agreed, and we ate reasonably well for several months. After he had paid back the equivalent of about eighty złotys, it became too expensive to supply food and I had to agree that the barter had been properly completed. Regardless, this coincided with a Gestapo order that all Jews had to leave their homes and move to the newly established Stanisławów ghetto that was separated from the rest of the population by a fence.[5]

Since Jews were only allowed to use pushcarts, we realized we would be able to transfer only part of our belongings to the ghetto. We couldn't possibly take my extensive library, much of which I had inherited from my father. This included a complete German Brockhaus encyclopedia (some eighteen heavy volumes); several editions of the Tanach (Hebrew Bible), each with different commentaries; a leather-bound set of the Talmud; Hebrew and Jewish religious, historical and literary works; the complete works of the German poets Schiller, Lessing and Goethe; and Shakespeare in German translation. It also

5 The Stanisławów ghetto was established soon after the Bloody Sunday massacre of October 12, 1941, in the traditional Jewish quarter, also the oldest and most rundown part of the town. Any Jews who lived outside the boundaries were required to move within by the middle of December. The ghetto was officially sealed on December 20, 1941. Encompassing only one-eighth of the total area of the town and holding at least 20,000 Jews by the time it was sealed, the ghetto was densely overcrowded and the living conditions were terrible.

included many valuable German, English and Russian books that related to my profession. Since I could not allow these treasures to fall into the bloody hands of our mortal enemies, I burned them all. It took quite some time to do and a good measure of luck not to get caught, but we made it.

Before we moved to the ghetto, several situations arose that significantly affected our survival. Charlotte's cousin, Jakob Mandel, was a scrap dealer and the least-respected member of the Mandel clan. That changed completely under the German occupation. The Germans established a government-owned company called Rohstofferfassung (commonly known as Rohstoff) that was responsible for collecting scrap metal and other recyclable materials for the war effort. The German head of the Stanisławów operation, who had been doing business with Mandel for many years, nominated his Jewish friend as his deputy. The company's employees wore a two-inch-diameter metal shield embossed with the words "wirtschaftlich wichtig" (economically important) on their jackets. This was (arguably) considered protection against random killings. Jews who had money paid Mandel to hire them as workers, and overnight he became the most important and feared person in the community.

Charlotte used Mandel's affection for her to have him take me on as a worker at the recycling yard, but he carried a grudge against my brother-in-law, Nusko Feld, who had failed Mandel's son in school and thrown out another relative who offered a bribe to reverse the student's failure. I was not even remotely involved in those events, except that Nusko was married to my sister Nitka. Nevertheless, Mandel, having acquired the status of a "big man," couldn't resist taking a bit of revenge out on me. At the start of the recycling-yard operation, the rather small number of workers at that time lined up on the premises each morning, and Mandel personally assigned work to each. When it was my turn, he called out in a loud voice, "And for you, engineer, I have this (such and such) job." He knew perfectly well that it was curtains for me if the Germans found out I was an engineer, as most Jewish professionals had already been rounded up and killed.

Just before the completion of the ghetto fence, ramps and police booths, the Gestapo set up a classification process for all Jewish families. The head of each family, including myself, lined up in front of the *Arbeitsamt*, which was patrolled by the Jewish ghetto police. We had been standing there for over an hour when Oskar Brandt, the second-in-command of the local Gestapo, arrived. On his way into the *Arbeitsamt*, he saw a young boy around ten or twelve years old moving out of the line, probably going to one of his parents. Brandt ordered two of the Jewish police to grab the youngster by his arms. Then he beat the boy murderously with his riding whip. The youngster screamed until he either fainted or died. Brandt turned around and went calmly on his way.

Inside the *Arbeitsamt* building, Gestapo soldiers roughly directed each person to one of several rooms where Gestapo officers were sitting behind desks. I was sent to the room where Brandt was seated. He looked at me for a few seconds, then barked two questions at me: "Profession? Health?" I answered, "Mechanic and good." He reached to one of three piles of small paper squares on the table marked A, B and C, and handed an A to the attending soldier, who led me out of the building and released me. I learned that A meant that my wife and child and I were headed for the ghetto, B meant detention in a temporary auxiliary ghetto, and C indicated immediate detention and internment in the Rote Muehle (Red Mill).

The Rote Muehle was a working but incomplete mill owned and run by a Jewish man named Rudolf, and some people called it the Rudolfsmuehle (Rudolf's Mill). Before the war, Rudolf had planned to install a modern grain mill, but his plans were interrupted when the Soviets invaded and nationalized the plant. When the Germans took over they immediately converted the empty building into a detention centre. They probably named it Rote Muehle because the red bricks on the outer walls of the building remained unfinished. There was an open creek connected to the building. The first Jews imprisoned in the Rote Muehle had been expelled from Hungary because

they had been born in Poland. They were followed by Jews rounded up in the small towns, villages and hamlets surrounding Stanisławów – the category C Jews – and those captured in various *Aktionen*.

Some results of the atrocities committed by the Gestapo inside the Rote Muehle were heart-wrenching for me to hear and see when I passed by. I could hear anguished cries of "Wasser! Wasser!" (Water! Water!) from the windows. The water in the creek below was red from the blood of slaughtered victims. Those who were still alive were *einwagoniert* – pressed into sealed railway cattle-cars so full there was scarcely any breathing room and deported. The train had no food, no water, no toilet facilities. People were transported to the murder camp in Belzec, where they met their death. Many, of course, died in the trains. A few younger and stronger individuals somehow managed to break through openings in the cars and jump to freedom from the moving train. With nowhere to hide, they returned to the ghetto and disclosed the truth.

The Germans employed different methods of killing Jews in pursuit of their "Final Solution." These methods were applied to the Stanisławów ghetto by the Gestapo or the Schupo (the German municipal police or Schutzpolizei), who conducted periodic *Aktionen* assisted by Ukrainian auxiliary police (Hilfspolizei) and Jewish ghetto police. They hunted down Jews on the street, dragged them from their homes and collected them in a central place. First they would stun prisoners by striking them on the head. The victims were then herded to the Rote Muehle or directly to the railway station and pressed into cattle cars for transport to Belzec. Charlotte's sister, Frydzia, was one of those delivered to the Rote Muehle and the family immediately tried to have her released. The internees there were guarded by the Jewish ghetto police, so the family bribed a ghetto policeman to set her free. Sometime later we found out that the Jewish ghetto police were strictly accountable to the Gestapo for the exact number of inmates at any one time, so the ghetto policeman had to catch the first Jew he could as a replacement for Frydzia.

I now worked outside the ghetto walls at the recycling yard, separating metals.[6] This included removing iron from aluminum scrap, removing gunpowder from scrapped brass artillery shells and similar jobs. Once a Sonderdienst (German special service) officer came to the scrap yard and had me lay out fifty or sixty scrap shells on the ground with gunpowder in them in sort of a narrow triangle with a line of gunpowder attached at the peak. Then he ignited the gunpowder tail and dropped fast, to the ground. I followed him instantly. At the same time all the shells exploded with a terrific bang and metal shards shot into the air. When everything calmed down, the officer got up and with a smirk on his face said, "You survived?"

When we had to move into the ghetto we agreed to join Uncle Fishel and his family in his apartment. It was located close to the border of the ghetto with a direct view of one of the *Schleusen* (sluice gates) that served as entrance ramps into the ghetto. There were three such entrance ramps supervised by police posts and manned by the Schupo, the Ukrainian police and the Jewish ghetto police. Through Uncle Fishel's apartment window we saw macabre atrocities committed on Jews by the men of the police post. We lived with Uncle Fishel's sons, Muño and Dolek, Muño's wife and baby, and Uncle Fischel's daughter, Wisia. His other daughter, Dziunka, was a music teacher who had gone to a convention in Kiev just before the German invasion and never returned. She must have been killed there.

Jews in the ghetto were so overwhelmed by German military power that they could not imagine a German defeat. When Charlotte suggested we should still try to survive, Muño, who was an architect and worked as a slave-labourer for the Schupo, responded, "Charlotte, I always considered you a smart person, but now I think you should take a hammer and knock the silly ideas out of your head."

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6 Jews who did forced labour or work considered economically important were the only ones permitted to leave the Stanisławów ghetto after it was sealed.

The Germans steadily increased restrictions on the supply of commodities and food to the ghetto. They cut off electricity, shut down major communal water pumps and stopped deliveries of fuel. To get a little bit of light at night, we made a *kanizel*, which consisted of a small bottle with naphtha (a flammable liquid) and a steel cap holding an improvised wick. When lit, it produced a faint flickering light. To keep warm in winter, we dressed the same indoors as outdoors. On particularly cold nights, we used the furniture for heating fuel, including Uncle Fischel's concert grand piano, which we broke apart.

The Germans tightened their prohibition on bringing food into the ghetto. I tried as hard as I could to barter with the Polish and Ukrainian scrap traders at work, trading some of our clothing for food. It was difficult and dangerous and I had limited success. Like others, I even bartered clothes in good condition that had been scrounged from the rags delivered by Germans to the recycling yard for baling. They had been taken from victims forced to shed their clothes before the Germans killed them. Whatever food I could get I put in a can, which I sneaked past the entrance ramp to take home. I limited my share of the food and ate before I left work, so that the contents in the can could be used only for Charlotte and the baby. But all this was not enough, and the three of us were starving. Once, when one of the Germans noticed that I had swollen ankles, I had to persuade him that I had hurt my ankles loading metal. Had he been convinced that the swelling was the result of hunger, he would have shot me, as they eliminated sick workers.

The *Aktionen* proliferated, and the starvation in the ghetto worsened. It became harder and harder to get food for my family past the ghetto entrance. One day on my way home from work, a Ukrainian policeman stopped me at the gate, pointed at my can of food and asked to whom I was taking it. I knew it was forbidden to take food in, so I told him that I had to take my supper home with me because I had been working late, which delayed my group meeting. He ordered me to eat my supper in front of him, depriving Charlotte and the baby

of their minimal daily ration of food and leaving me in excruciating pain from forced overeating on a shrunken stomach. This episode brought the problem of starvation to a head, so Charlotte went to her cousin, Jakob Mandel, and asked for help. He agreed to take her on as worker at the recycling yard, giving her a better chance to get food for herself and the baby. And, of course, I would be better positioned to help her since I was working there as well. While Charlotte was at work, we left our baby in the care of Bincia, my cousin Muño's wife.

To escape the *Aktionen,* Jews created hiding places for themselves, which they called bunkers. During one *Aktion*, Uncle Fishel was in a bunker with a starving stranger. As soon as he thought it safe, Uncle Fishel left the bunker to get some food for the stranger from his apartment in the same building. Unfortunately, the last soldier to leave the building spotted him and shot him.

A number of new German commercial and service organizations, the railroad, tailor shops and others, took on Jews as slave labour, as did the recycling yard and even the Schupo and the Gestapo. Jews were eager to obtain these jobs, even if they sometimes had to pay for the "privilege" – they felt safer outside the ghetto where there was at least some chance of getting food. The Schupo only permitted Jews to go to and from work in groups in military formation led by an "Aryan." I was in a group that followed a route through a street where a Polish technician named Russel lived. He had worked for me during the Soviet occupation. Sometimes, when the group passed Russel's home, I managed to slip out to his place, where his mother insisted on feeding me and having me rest on their sofa. They also tried to help me with some barter. I spent time there resting and exchanging friendly conversation until I had a chance to slip back into the group on its way back to the ghetto.

While the groups waited in formation at the ghetto entrance to leave for work, Schupo officers would check us for any extra item we might have that could be traded outside the ghetto. When one officer wet his finger and slid it along my chest to feel if I was wearing

two shirts, I felt like death was touching me. On another occasion, one particularly miserable member of the Jewish ghetto police found that Charlotte had a bedsheet wrapped around her and reported it to Seidel, his Schupo boss. She was taken to the police post. Aware of the deadly consequences, I left my group, found Mandel and begged him for help. At the same time, a subordinate brought to Seidel's attention a woman under whose armpit they had found a bundle of American dollars and some documents. This got Seidel so excited that he forgot about Charlotte and she walked out without anybody stopping her. It may have been that Mandel had a hand in it.

In late August 1942, a Jew in Stanisławów attempted to burn a Ukrainian policeman and in the "revenge *Aktion*" that followed, ten Jewish ghetto policemen were hanged. For a week, the Schupo expressed their sadism. Each day they assembled us in groups for work close to the bodies of the Jewish ghetto police hanging from the lamp posts. This *Aktion* reduced the ghetto population, while the Germans tightened the perimeter of the ghetto.[7]

In spite of a reduced workforce, the recycling yard expanded and a new branch opened on Słowackiego Street, with the headquarters remaining on Halicka Street. Charlotte continued to work on Halicka, while I was transferred to Słowackiego, where I sorted metals and served as the unofficial general handyman. My boss was Edzio Holder, with whom I had good relations. Edzio was the husband of Charlotte's sister, Geñia, who had been killed with both their children. In the Słowackiego branch, Edzio had with him the remnants of his family – two brothers, a nephew and his nephew's fiancée. He also lived there with a Jewish woman named Mrs. Wert, and her young daughter. Mr. Wert had been killed earlier.

On my return to the ghetto from work, my first duty was to get

7 Tannenzapf's 1947 article gave one of the earliest and most detailed eyewitness accounts of this *Aktion*, which began on August 22, 1942. In addition to the public hangings, more than one thousand Jews were shot.

water from the public pump for my family. The pump was located several blocks from our dwelling. There was always a line-up of people waiting impatiently to fill their pails, while looking around nervously for signs of danger. Consequently, there was significant water spillage around the pump and in the winter it inevitably froze. Once, I slipped on the ice and fell. Despite my great pain, I managed to drag myself home. It was critical that I recover as I had to be mobile to provide food for my family. Charlotte got in touch with Dr. Boltuch, the son of my father's cousin, who came over immediately and diagnosed a sprain. He insisted that I could walk it out and, in spite of the excruciating pain, I walked, first with his support and finally alone. He stayed with me the whole time.

On another occasion, my efforts to get water almost cost me my life. One quiet evening I was on my own, carrying two pails of water. I was almost home when I suddenly came face to face with two big, heavily armed German soldiers in helmets and jackboots. They were patrolling the area to enforce a recently decreed curfew – a curfew I was aware of. "It is past curfew, you lousy Jew!" they barked and then hit me with their rifle butts. I passed out. When I came to, there was nobody around, my right foot was stuck in an empty pail and all the buttons had disappeared from my overcoat, which was torn. Miraculously, I was not injured. I assume the Germans thought I was dead, so they ignored the "body" and proceeded with their patrol duty. When I got home, I found Charlotte worried over my long delay in returning from the pump.

The Jewish ghetto police became, with few exceptions, arrogant, corrupt and dangerous. They protected their own lives by helping the Germans to kill Jews more efficiently. At intervals, they were ordered to collect a specific number of Jews for transport to Belzec. They took bribes from people who hoped to be exempted from the quota and grew rich and more arrogant. One nasty ghetto policeman who maintained this practice was someone who had been a member of the same youth organization as me before the war, although

I had been his superior officer. I once saw him beating a poor Jew who resisted selection for transportation to Belzec. I tapped him on the shoulder and said, "What are you doing? You are not hitting an enemy but a fellow Jew!" He turned around and responded, "If you don't like it, OK, I can take you with him." I believed him and got out of his way fast. At the same time, however, I also witnessed another ghetto policeman behaving very differently. Gosiu, a lawyer who was Nusko Feld's brother, was gently leading an old woman to the same destination, but tears were flowing down his face as he did so. The tragedy is that the nasty policeman survived the Holocaust and Gosiu perished.

Beating, whipping and shooting Jews at the ghetto entrances was almost a daily routine for the Germans and Ukrainians. But it was Officer Kuhn of the Schupo who thoroughly enjoyed the victims' terror. Once, he picked out a good-looking woman from the line of workers returning from work and ordered his big German shepherd dog to attack her. The dog, obviously trained for the job, snarled at the woman, lunged at her and ripped a strip off her dress. He backed off and then went for another strip and another over and over again. The terrified woman screamed in agony until, entangled in her shredded dress, she dropped soundlessly to the ground. She may have fainted or died. Kuhn had one of the ghetto police drag her away. A beautiful girl who worked for the recycling yard became Kuhn's lover, believing this would save her life. Unfortunately she got caught in an *Aktion*. Not long after, Kuhn came to the recycling yard and told her co-workers that his beautiful lover didn't suffer very much because he had given her the "mercy shot."

The work I did at the recycling yard was not hard. I had learned the characteristic properties of all kinds of metals at university and was able to apply this knowledge to my advantage. But this was of no help when the Germans would drop by the recycling yard and order us to load scrap metal and bales into railroad cars. Each bale of rags was in the shape of a cube weighing over a hundred kilograms. I had

to get it on my back and trot up the ramp to the car and unload it. Some scrap metal pieces were quite heavy and I had to throw them inside from the entrance of the car so as to distribute the load on the floor evenly. All this had to be done at the same tempo as the man in front of me and the man behind me, as the German yelled, "Schneller! Schneller!" (Faster! Faster!) And all this heavy labour had to get done on an empty stomach. It was hell, but fear created strength in me. The hardship was compensated by the benefits I derived from working with scrap. I had access to a furnace installed to separate metals, which I used clandestinely to cook food.

When a big transport of scrap wheels with solid rubber tires arrived, we used the furnace to remove the tires. Using a saw I had modified for the purpose, I cut some of the tires into brick-sized pieces that the women burned in the kitchen stove to bake maize-flour pancakes. We were aware that if the black smoke coming out of the chimney were to be noticed by one of the Germans, it could be fatal, but we were too hungry to care. And we got away with it! Whenever I could make use of the furnace to cook food, I would put the food into a can and ask one of the Polish drivers who were transporting scrap to deliver it to Charlotte at the Halicka recycling yard. The drivers were properly paid and obviously had no problem getting food outside the ghetto, but on several occasions they displayed a lack of compassion and did not deliver the food to Charlotte. With the help of Edzio Holder, whose requests Mandel respected, I was able to get Charlotte transferred to the Słowackiego branch with me.

Although the Germans didn't make daily visits to the recycling yard, their visits were frequent and dangerous. Edzio ensured that one worker was always posted at the gate to watch for their arrival. Upon seeing a German approach, the worker would sound an alarm, to which everybody instantly responded by jumping to their workstations. The alarm couldn't be heard outside. Once, when it was my turn at the gate, I was eating an apple when I saw a German approach. I immediately sounded the alarm and opened the gate. The German

asked me why I was eating and I replied that it was my midday break. He barked, "Jews have no breaks! Get back to work!" and hit me on the chin with his riding whip. I jumped to my workstation and grabbed the heaviest tool at hand, watching his every move carefully. He stared at me for a while, but then decided to leave it alone.

On another occasion, a German came in and asked me to search through the scrap silver to find a decoration for the horse that pulled his sleigh. I found something that he liked, so he gave me a loaf of bread and told me to share it with my co-workers after he left. When I cut the loaf, I discovered it was completely green with mould and inedible. Such was the nature of a German reward.

The Germans accelerated the deportation of Jews to Belzec by organizing a mass deportation on Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) 1942.[8] My mother was one of the victims. She had donated her sewing machine to the German owner of the tailor shop for the "privilege" of being accepted as a slave labourer. After a while, the workers from the tailor shop were rounded up by the Germans at the entrance ramp to the ghetto and deported in cattle cars. Although I was aware of what was happening, I was unable to help my mother in any way. Schlosser, a ghetto neighbour of ours, was in the same transport, but he managed to jump from the moving railway car and make his way back to the ghetto. He told us that Mother had died in the railway car. She had been hiding jewellery in her dress that she hoped might buy her life. Ironically, Schlosser was killed soon after. He was hiding in a bunker when his mind must have snapped and he walked out. He was shot on the spot.

Charlotte's father lived alone in a room on the second floor of a building in the ghetto. His nephew, Jakob Mandel, supplied him with

8 On September 12, 1942 – the start of the Jewish New Year – approximately 4,000 Jews were deported from Stanisławów to Belzec. Many *Aktionen* continued in the days and weeks that followed, and another mass deportation of an estimated 5,000 Jews took place on October 15, 1942.

food. He was old, abused by the Germans and gravely worried about his children. He would sometimes bring a spare piece of bread to Charlotte and watch to ensure that she ate it herself. He died quietly. The Judenrat sent people from the burial department to dispose of his body, but before they arrived, to avoid any dangerous surprises, we searched his room and found an exquisite broadtail Persian lamb coat that had belonged to his daughter, Mañka. Possession of such an item by a Jew was absolutely illegal, so we had to get rid of the coat fast. I cut and ripped it to pieces while Charlotte stuffed it in the oven and burnt it. Nobody seemed to notice the thick black smoke coming from the chimney, and we managed to complete the job before the burial people arrived. The two men who came, undressed and washed my father-in-law's body and, with our assistance, redressed it in clean underwear since the traditional Jewish shroud was obviously not available. As we prepared to carry the body down the stairs, they ordered me in Yiddish, "Chap un!" (Grab on!) They wanted help carrying the load downstairs. When we got down, we laid the body of Charlotte's father on the cart with corpses on it. There was a rumour that since a two-wheeled cart required only two people to pull it, a passing German would shoot any "surplus" men with the words "Geh mit!" (Join them!) So I quickly retreated back into the building after leaving Charlotte's father on the wagon.

As the freequency of *Aktionen* increased, people began to stay at work overnight. They felt safer at their factories than in the ghetto. Charlotte, however, had to return every evening to feed and clean the baby, so she transferred back to Halicka where it was easier to find a returning group she could join. At this time the situation on the Soviet front began to deteriorate for the Germans, and they became more vicious inside the ghetto. In desperation, Charlotte spoke to Mrs. Poliszowa, a Polish next-door neighbour from before the war, and through her contacted Józia, who had been a maid in her brother's house. Charlotte offered Józia a substantial reward to take our baby to stay with her and her sister for the duration of the war.

They lived about forty kilometres from Stanisławów in the village of Pozniki (Puzhniki in Ukrainian) with her sister's two small sons. Józia agreed and a date was set for her to pick up the baby at Mrs. Poliszowa's home.

The day before, Charlotte bundled up the baby, went to the entrance ramp and slipped out of the ghetto behind the broad shoulders of Mandel who, despite being surprised, behaved in an outstanding manner. Charlotte then removed her armband with the Star of David and carried the baby some three kilometres across town to Mrs. Poliszowa's house without being recognized by anybody. The next day, Józia picked up the baby and brought her to her sister Marynia who was to take care of her, and Charlotte returned to the recycling yard, again managing to elude detection. Miracles do happen. The child was a little over eighteen months old at that time, and we hoped that Charlotte's action would enhance Renate's chances of survival, even if we were killed. A few days later Józia came to the recycling yard to retrieve the remainder of Charlotte's trousseau, which included several elegant suits, dresses, lingerie, bedsheets and tablecloths, all as an advance reward for her help in protecting our child.

The Germans continued to increase their pressure on the ghetto. They now stopped the deportations and established a Jewish burial group charged with digging mass graves for the victims of *Aktionen* that followed one after the other at an accelerated rate.[9] Among the victims of one of these *Aktionen* were my cousins Muño and Dolek. Muño's father-in-law, Eisenberg, who was in charge of a burial detail, knew Officer Grimm, the local Schupo boss. Eisenberg begged him to spare the life of his son-in-law, but Grimm refused, telling Eisenberg that he could find an easy replacement in the ghetto for his daughter. Then Grimm carried out the executions. After this tragedy, Eisenberg and his second daughter moved in with us.

9 These *Aktionen* of January 1943 were shooting operations that took place right in the town – at the Rote Muehle, Gestapo headquarters and the Jewish cemetery.

Józia visited Charlotte at the recycling yard and urged her repeatedly to escape to Pozniki so she could be closer to our baby, Tusia (the Polish diminutive for Renate). Józia's pleading succeeded when she told Charlotte that Tusia had developed whooping cough. Charlotte approached Mandel and asked him whether she should leave. He thought it was a very good idea and offered help by giving her two ten-dollar American gold coins and some money. We added the money I had and Charlotte set a date for her escape. She and Józia arranged that she would stay in Pozniki with Joasia, a neighbour of Józia's widowed sister, Marynia, who was looking after our baby.

In preparation for leaving, Charlotte ordered several bundles of clothes from a member of the Jewish ghetto police. He delivered only a portion of what she had paid for. Since I knew the man was dangerous, I convinced Charlotte not to press him too hard for the balance. On the designated day, Józia came to the recycling yard with Joasia's daughter, Janka. Charlotte joined them, carrying the bundles of clothes, the value of which was much greater than money at that time. They went to the railway station, where they boarded a train of crowded pre-Christmas travellers. Charlotte wore a peasant-type kerchief on her head and was referred to as the aunt who had a toothache and so couldn't join the animated conversation about the hated Jews.

When they arrived in Pozniki and went to Joasia's house, Charlotte noticed at once that only Joasia, who was a decent person, wanted her there. Joasia's husband and Janka kept the secret of Charlotte's identity, but they, as well as their boys, were not in favour of keeping the newly acquired "aunt." But Joasia was the dominant person in the household. As soon as she arrived in the village, Charlotte gave Joasia the two gold coins and some dresses from her bundles. She went to see Tusia and worried about her whooping cough, which faded over time. The undernourished baby who had never been taken out of her crib in the ghetto and had only spoken a few words was now walking and talking like any normal child her age.

For a few days in early 1943, after the defeat of the German forces at Stalingrad, the Germans covered all of Stanisławów with black flags and made even greater efforts to reduce the size of the ghetto. To this end, they ordered the companies that employed Jews to quarantine them by locking them in labour camps on the workplace premises. The recycling yard locked in its workers and provided prison-like rough plank beds partially filled with straw and stacked three layers high. At the same time, the Germans stepped up the pace of killing. As people slept, Germans came in and picked some men to help with an "emergency," a stuck transport. The men never returned. This happened several times.

I went to bed later than the others as I looked after the horses that the scrap-transport drivers left overnight at the yard. Because I also removed the water pump plunger after the end of the workday on cold winter nights to prevent it from freezing, nobody noticed that I slept under my workbench and placed a dummy in my assigned bed. In addition to my regular handyman jobs, I also did extras for Edzio when required. For instance, I was the only one Edzio's older brother allowed to shave him. I was also the one Edzio asked for help in retrieving some diamonds he was hiding in a rat hole but couldn't get out.

The violence against the Jews in the ghetto exploded on February 22, 1943. The Gestapo and their associates launched an assault on the inhabitants, murdering every Jew they could find on the street or hiding in buildings. This was the final liquidation of Stanisławów ghetto.

There was a wounded, partially invalided Austrian soldier who often came to the Słowackiego recycling yard and was friendly with everybody there. He said he had been a hearse driver in Vienna before the war, had had a good life and had always hated the Nazis. Everybody trusted him. After Stalingrad, he brought newspapers with him and asked me to read them and tell him whether he had read correctly that the Germans were in full retreat in the Soviet Union. I confirmed

it and when he brought the next day's papers, it was evident that there was a rapid retreat out of the Soviet Union. I calculated that at this rate, we would see the Red Army in Stanisławów in two months. Big strategic expert – me! They actually came a year and a half later.

In the meantime, Józia continued visiting me and bringing me scraps of letters from Charlotte that were so mutilated that I couldn't make head nor tail of them. I couldn't get her to explain why all the letters were in such bad shape, but she insisted I should come to Pozniki and I would find out. I was convinced that if I were to survive for another two months I would be free, so I decided it was the right time to escape and join Charlotte. I went to Halicka and asked Mandel for permission to borrow a recycling-yard horse and wagon for a day, saying that I needed to grab the chance to save my life. He refused and quipped, "Better people than you could not save their lives!" I replied, "It is up to God who will survive." On my way to and from Mandel, I read placards announcing that Stanisławów was finally *judenrein* (cleansed of Jews).

The next time Józia came to the recycling yard, I told her that we were going to Pozniki. I took off my armband, wore my belt over my overcoat and pulled my cap down halfway over my right ear with some hair hanging out so that I would look like a young working farmer. I stole a horse and wagon, and sat on the seat with one arm around Józia, holding the reins in my other hand. At the city limits we had to drive up a hill on top of which was a Ukrainian police station. Trying to get past the police station as quickly as possible, I whipped the horse, but instead of speeding up, it turned its head and stared at me. This made me both scared and furious. I jumped off the wagon, grabbed the bridle at the bit and dragged the white beast up the hill, beating it constantly on its legs with the butt of the whip. The police came out of their station and, finding the episode hilarious, laughed and clapped their hands. Luckily, we passed the station with no further problems and kept on driving until we reached a bridge we had to cross to get to Pozniki.

From that point, we could see several German soldiers on their knees, repairing holes in the bridge floor. This meant that we could not drive over the bridge and we didn't dare wait, so I unhitched the horse, took off its harness, smacked it and sent it on its way, free to roam. I crossed the bridge, holding Józia by the hand and carrying a bundle tied to the end of a stick in the other hand. We crossed without trouble, but as soon we were on the other side, Józia led me through a deep forest, which she said she was doing in order to ensure that nobody could follow us.

When we arrived in Pozniki, a horrified Charlotte took me aside and declared that I had just signed the death sentence of all three of us by not paying attention to the letters she had written to me. I explained to her that I couldn't read them because Józia had mutilated them to the point where nothing could be gleaned from them. Charlotte wasn't surprised and told me that she had found out that Józia was a slut and kept company with dangerous people. She was often drunk, as was her boyfriend, a killer who pretended to be a partisan of the Polish underground. In a drunken stupor, Józia had spilled the beans and some people in the village now knew that the "aunt" was Jewish. Consequently, Charlotte had had to go into hiding. She interpreted Józia's behaviour as a scheme to find out where we had "stashed our gold" because she assumed that all Jews had lots of gold. Once she had it, she would allow her boyfriend to kill us.

These disclosures disturbed me deeply, but I couldn't change anything at that point and had to stay in Marynia's house at least until I could think of an alternative. She put me up in a storage space located above the living area on a large shelf under the roof. The distance between the shelf and the gable of the sloped roof was approximately one and a half metres. The shelf wasn't very high off the floor, so when Józia's friends visited, they just reached up and placed their guns on it. It was excruciating for me to have to listen for hours at a time to their mean and dirty conversations and witness their behaviour. I could only move when it was absolutely necessary because I had to avoid even the tiniest noise.

A short time after I came to Marynia's house, I heard, as did Charlotte in her hiding place at Joasia's, that some Jews in the village of Monesterzyska (near Pozniki) had paid a Polish partisan leader to join his group. But as soon as they reached the partisan band, they were shot. A few days later, Joasia told Charlotte that Józia's friends wanted to talk to us about joining their band. We immediately left our shelters and ran to hide in a cornfield. The "friends" tried to find us for a long time without success and finally gave up. We returned to Joasia's house at the end of the day and Joasia agreed that we could both stay in her "attic," which was a little bit larger than Marynia's. During the day, we could see our Tusia through a little hole. She was mostly in the company of Marynia's boys, but sometimes she was alone, with her thumb in her mouth. She was always followed by a big black dog who occasionally nudged her with his head and whom she smacked on the snout. The dog seemed to hate Germans and barked furiously if any one of them inadvertently moved in the direction of our child.

Our situation in Joasia's attic was precarious to begin with but deteriorated in proportion to the delays in the Soviets' progress on the front. The quality and quantity of food rapidly diminished to a starvation diet. Our collection of clothes was also being reduced. First, I agreed that I didn't need my custom-made overcoat in the attic, and then my suit as well. Later, due to the absence of any washing facilities, we had to ask Joasia to wash our underwear. She did but never returned it to us. Whenever Joasia felt some danger that our hiding place might be detected, she would say to us, "Róbcie tak by bylo dobrze." (Do something to make it right.) This was her way of telling us to leave the premises. Our reaction was to immediately escape to the nearest woods for at least a day. Once when we returned, we found that our shoes and socks had disappeared. Finally, I ended up with only a worn-out work coverall and absolutely nothing else except legions of lice. Charlotte was left with only a flimsy dress and nothing else. Probably because we hadn't been able to wash for a long

time, both my arms became covered with running sores. We managed somehow to get some potassium permanganate crystals from Joasia that we dissolved in water and applied to the sores. The affliction was miraculously healed.

I was in a state of deep depression and despair. One night, as Charlotte slept, I rigged up a sort of garrote and I was just about to end my misery when she woke up. She saw what I was doing and started to berate me. She accused me of thinking only of myself and ignoring my responsibility for my child's future. She was so outraged that I had to pacify her to avoid alarming Joasia. In the process, I started to see things her way and gave up my original intention. Since we had no access to shaving facilities, I grew a long square beard, which had a grey stripe in it, and my hair grew long. It made me look like Charlotte's father. Charlotte braided her hair in two pigtails, one on each side of her head.

The Germans were in full retreat and the withdrawal of some of their forces led through Pozniki. Some soldiers bedded down for the night in Joasia's house. As they went to sleep they began talking. I was fascinated to overhear how they were in awe of the Soviet army and described its soldiers as being almost like supermen. More Germans came to Pozniki on a run, and their officer rewarded the best runner with an orange. A few days later, we faced another crisis. Soviet partisans were attacking the retreating army, so the Germans threatened the villagers with wholesale resettlement if they fed the partisans. Joasia asked us to leave and when we returned, she didn't want us back in the house. As she expected the Red Army to arrive in Pozniki within a week or two, she offered to let us wait for them in the hay storage loft in the cowshed, above the cow. We had to accept her offer. The space was so low that we could only sit or lie down in it and the stored hay cut off most of the light. Joasia continued to feed us but on an even further reduced diet that we shared, eating alternate spoonfuls. I suspected Charlotte only pretended to eat the odd spoonful, so I did the same, and the balance was maintained.

One night somebody planted a bundle of explosives under the eaves of the cowshed, about a foot from our bodies. The wick was lit, but the spark was extinguished as it went halfway up toward the explosives. Joasia's family discovered the explosives in the morning and removed them. Then, a few days later, Ukrainians from the next village attacked Pozniki, which was a Polish village, by torching the straw roofs. Sparks flew, igniting adjacent roofs until the whole neighbourhood was burning. Marynia's house was in the middle of the inferno but not a single straw caught fire. This was the house where Tusia was living and it sustained no damage. Joasia's family was deeply religious and very superstitious. They believed that no harm came to Tusia and us in these two episodes because Jews possessed supernatural powers. As a result, they somewhat improved their treatment of us and the pressure eased.

As the front advanced, the war raged all around us. We learned to recognize the different sounds of land and air attacks as well as counterattacks. The most nerve-racking were the slow, noisy mortar bullets that whizzed by our hiding place and ended in a tremendous explosion. They seemed to pass directly over our heads and we felt like sitting ducks. Joasia, Marynia and their families left for a safer location, staying with friends in town, taking Tusia with them.

On one occasion, I heard someone give a command in Russian to shoot toward the church. I believed that the Soviets had finally arrived, but Joasia told us they had withdrawn. It took another three months before the Soviet army entered Pozniki for good and during those weeks, we came closer to death than at any other time during the war. After the Red Army withdrew, the Germans entered the village again, joined by a force of Soviet traitors loyal to General Vlasov.[10] Some of them stayed over in Joasia's house.

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10 Soviet general Andrei Vlasov played an important part in the defense of the USSR 1941–1942, but renounced his allegiance to the Soviet Union and collaborated with the Nazis after he was captured in June 1942.

These Soviet soldiers used horses that they had to feed, so they went to the cowshed, pulled down hay from storage and, in the process, came face to face with us. We begged them in Russian to leave us in hiding, but they ordered us down and called the Germans. We told them that we didn't understand German. One German soldier looked at us and asked another one, "Was macht die Junge mit dem Alten, er krapiert doch eh bald!" (What is the young one doing with the old one? He's going to croak soon anyway.) They considered what to do with us, speculating that we were either Jews or spies and concluded that they should shoot us. We were led out to stand beside a wagon and a few of them had already positioned themselves about ten or fifteen metres in front of us with guns at the ready when an officer came along and stopped the action. He told them that the Gestapo would be coming the next day to interrogate us and so they needed to keep us alive. They moved us to Marynia's empty house with an armed sentry posted at the door.

Later, a soldier brought in a large chunk of meat, made a fire in the stove and started cooking it. In a broken Slavic language, he told us that the meat was for us and that we would be facing Gestapo torture the next day. After he left and the meat was cooked, I ate it, but Charlotte wouldn't touch it and resented that I could. I explained to her that I had to think and that I couldn't do that when I was starving. The sentry peeked inside from time to time, so I tried to give him the impression that we had escaped by both of us lying prone on the bed frame covered with a layer of straw. The ruse didn't work. I continued to monitor what the sentry was doing and noted that although the sentries changed, their vigilance continued all night long.

After daybreak, the soldiers took their horses to the creek for water and to wash them. The sentry struck up a conversation with them and stepped a little closer to his mates, away from the door. I quickly grabbed Charlotte by the hand and we slipped out the door and around the house. It occurred to us that I might have left the door open and that this would arouse the sentry's suspicion. Foolishly, I

crawled back to close it. Then I rejoined Charlotte and we raced up the hill behind the house, fully aware that at any moment we might get shot in the back, although that would be preferable to Gestapo torture.

When we reached the woods, I noticed that I had cut my toe on a rock and, rather than bleeding, it was oozing some translucent liquid. Scared and cold, I found a depression in the ground lined with leaves. Both of us lay down in it and covered ourselves with fallen autumn foliage. I covered Charlotte's face and neck easily, but had a very hard time doing the same for myself. The leaves provided some insulation from the cold but had some stinging insects in them. Once, when we saw German soldiers with dogs obviously looking for us, we forgot about the insects and prayed that we wouldn't be detected. I assume that the strong odour of the rotting leaves prevented the dogs from picking up our scent.

We stayed in the woods for three days without food or water. On the second night, we witnessed a deadly yet fascinating war episode. Not far away from where we were hiding, we heard the unmistakable sounds of the German army in retreat followed by Soviets attacking from the air. The Soviets cut the engines of their biplanes and glided over the targets, dropping powerful flares suspended from parachutes that lit the area almost to daylight level. Brilliant tracer bullets indicated the direction of the attack. The Germans tried to shoot down the flares, gauging the direction from the tracer bullets. The strong light from the flares created dark shadows against the trees, where we suspected Germans might be hidden, so we distanced ourselves from them as fast as we could. Small animals were not afraid of us and came pretty close.

On the third day, our craving for water became so intense that we decided to return to the village, come what may. That night, we walked toward Pozniki. Partly thanks to my scouting experience as a youngster, but mostly due to luck, we got there very early in the morning. We dropped to our knees at the creek and drank a lot of

contaminated water. It tasted wonderful. Then Charlotte knocked delicately on Joasia's window and begged her for some food. Joasia was flabbergasted we were still alive, so she reached into the dish with food for the chickens, made a ball out of it, and handed it to Charlotte. She also told her that we could hide temporarily in her empty winter-storage dugout. Nobody was around that early in the morning, not even a dog, so we ate the food and drank more creek water. Then we crawled into the dugout, an excavation in a mound of earth with a front entry. We found enough straw there to lie down on and cover ourselves so that people walking by couldn't see us. Joasia mercifully brought us some food a few hours later.

After lying there beside Charlotte for a few days, I told her that I thought my mind was slipping. I said, "It is playing tricks on me. I hear a clear Russian voice ordering, 'Vperiod, vperiod, vozmite sebia nemetskie konservy!' (Forward, forward, get yourselves some German canned food.)" Charlotte was distressed and tried to calm me down. Then Joasia came running and shouting in rural Polish, "Jesteście wolne!" (You are free!).

The words I had heard were real. The Red Army had chased the Germans out of Pozniki and their offensive eventually moved along the whole front. Joasia took us into her house, where we washed and got into clean old clothes that Joasia gave us, and I shaved off my beard. The numerous red marks from the louse bites did not disappear.

We wanted to go right away to see Tusia, but Joasia insisted that it wasn't safe before nightfall and suggested that we rest in the attic in the meantime. That night, as soon as we thought it was safe, we rushed over to Marynia's house. Tusia hadn't seen us for so long that she treated us like complete strangers and called me *dziad*, or old beggar, but we managed to hug her. We asked Marynia to keep her until we had a home for her in Stanisławów and returned to the attic to sleep. The next morning Joasia fed us regular food, but told us that we would have to leave right away. She was sorry, but she was afraid that her neighbours might hurt her family for hiding Jews. She gave

us a bundle containing some bread and fruit. When Charlotte asked for a sweater, she gave her an old one. We said our goodbyes, were given directions to Monasterzyska, the nearest town, and left.

We didn't see a single member of the Red Army on the way, but everybody was well aware of the new order and the peasants in the villages we passed didn't do us any harm. They only voiced their amazement at seeing live Jews, exclaiming, "Szcze zewut!" (Some of them are still alive!) We were easily recognized as Jews. Our emaciated bodies and our whispering voices, not used to normal speech, could deceive nobody. Some villagers looked into our bundle, asking where the gold was. It was strange how they still believed that every Jew had gold and how they were completely devoid of any shred of compassion.

We eventually arrived in Monesterzyska and soon met other Jews who had come out of their hiding places. We also saw the first Soviets and the first German prisoners of war. I tried to hit at least one of them, but their Red Army guard told me this was not allowed by some international agreement. The Jews we met were in much better shape than we were, except for their children, whose faces and behaviour were very sad. The Jews hugged us and, in view of our pitiful condition, collected money for us and bought a large bottle of vodka for the officer who was in charge of a truck and promised to take us to Stanisławów.

We waited at the truck for the crew to finish loading. Then the officer got in and left us behind, driving off with his bottle. We were stranded. Fortunately, a very sleepy soldier passed by with two horses and a wagon full of wooden boxes. I offered to drive the team so that he could catch up on his sleep. He accepted the offer and I drove until the soldier decided to stop in a little town for the night. He found himself lodging for the night and we found a place where we could sleep on the floor. The next morning we went to meet the soldier who was already preparing to leave, but he wouldn't take us with him because the boxes in the wagon contained live artillery bullets. The

slightest bump on the road could cause them to explode. He said that he hadn't been thinking straight the day before because he had been so tired. When we asked him why he was endangering his own life, he responded that this was war and he was following orders, doing his duty at the front. We were stranded again.

We tried for a long time to get a lift on a very busy highway, but no one responded. In desperation, we started to walk but after only a few kilometres, my feet, swollen from hunger, couldn't carry me any further. I sat down on the edge of the road and told Charlotte to try get a lift on her own since I was unable to continue. As she was thinking about what to do, we spied a broken-down truck being repaired about fifty metres away. Charlotte went over to ask for help. She met an elderly Soviet officer who asked her where she, the poor woman, was going with her bundle. She told him that she was Jewish, liberated by the Soviets, and wanted to go home. He responded with compassion, telling her that he was also Jewish, although his crew didn't know, and he wanted to keep it that way. He offered to take both of us on his truck. After the truck was repaired, they picked us up. The crew was made up of Siberian soldiers who were very nice to us and tried to make Charlotte comfortable on top of their big load. On the approach to Stanisławów, something happened that prevented the truck from crossing the river Bystrzyca. We had to get down, but the Jewish officer arranged for us to be taken to town by a heavily armed half-track that brought us to the city limits. We arrived in Stanisławów on foot.

Under the Second Soviet Occupation

We entered the city on Sapierzynska, the main street, where a pharmacy was located close to the city limits. As we walked past, Charlotte looked inside through the open door. The pharmacist saw her and crossed himself as if he had seen a ghost. We kept walking until we reached my parents' house where I entered our orchard and picked an apple. A tenant rushed out of her apartment and started shouting at me that I was trespassing on private property. Just then, the very old former caretaker of the property dragged herself outside wailing, "To jest nasz panicz!" (This is our young master!), and the commotion died down. When we knocked at my parents' apartment, our former maid opened it. She was occupying the apartment, which she had taken as her own, and asked us in. She served us a nice meal and let us stay overnight. We left in the morning and went to meet Charlotte's friend, Rutka, a pharmacist. Rutka told us that Edzio Holder – my former boss at the recycling yard – had survived and gave us his address. She also gave Charlotte an oversized but acceptable dress, which she smartly adjusted to her size with a belt. We went to the apartment where Edzio lived with his nephew and his nephew's bride. He wasn't exactly enthusiastic to see us but agreed to let us stay at his place until we could find a source of income and some other accommodation. He gave us a chance to clean up and some food and money, but he never invited us to join him and his family for a meal.

The next day we went job hunting. I went to the power station and was promptly re-hired as manager of the electrical department. Charlotte went to the *aptek upravlenia,* the central headquarters for all the pharmacies in the region. My first assignment was to organize repairs of the power-generating equipment damaged by the Germans during their retreat. Charlotte's first assignment was to take inventory at the Piotra-Skargi Street pharmacy. This was followed by her appointment as manager of the store. At the power station, I received clean clothes, which consisted of a freshly laundered second-hand military uniform and high military boots. They also offered me a furnished room on the premises. Charlotte was also offered a partly furnished room attached to the pharmacy and accessible through a door that led directly into it. We decided to take the room next to the pharmacy and add furniture that I was allowed to take from the room at the power station. This inadvertently created a brief traumatic experience for Charlotte, when some German soldiers jumped through the low window of our new room, leading Charlotte to think that the Germans had returned to the city. But they were actually prisoners of war working for the power station and were unloading furniture for us. We both received advances on our salaries to make it easier for us to adjust while the war was still going on.

It was only several days after I started working at the power station that the general manager called me into his office and told me that I had to go for an interview with the NKVD, the Soviet secret police. I went to their headquarters and was interrogated by a civilian who started the interview with a hostile question about how I had managed to survive when almost all other Jews had been killed. I said that it wasn't possible for me to explain it because I didn't believe in miracles, but that I could give a brief review of our odyssey under the Germans if he wanted to hear it. He told me to proceed and listened very attentively. It turned out that he was also a Jew and asked if any antisemite at the power station had tried to hurt me. I could only think of the treasurer who had refused to pay my outstanding salary

when the Germans entered the city. I mentioned it to him and then forgot about the whole interview. Many weeks later, the treasurer suddenly disappeared.

Different military units were stationed in and around the city and because many required services from the power station, I met the officers negotiating the specific details. One was a colonel and the head of a military hospital, a Tartar surgeon and scientist who had published several medical books. He expressed interest in my health and that of my family. He was aware of the many survivors who suffered severe illnesses due to changes in their diet after the liberation, and he strongly recommended that Charlotte and I drink a glassful of liquid yeast and a glass of vodka every day. He supplied both and frequently visited me at the office and Charlotte at the pharmacy to make sure we benefited from his prescription.

After a few weeks at work, we felt that the time was right to bring Tusia back from Pozniki. At that time, however, the area was infested with *banderowcy* (Ukrainian nationalist guerillas) who were killing Jews. Fortunately, Marynia decided it was safer to bring the child to us. By this time, Tusia was calling Marynia "Mama." She clung to her and insisted on sleeping with her. It took more than a week for her to get used to Charlotte and to like the new comfort, the better food, the pharmacy environment and, of course, the profound love. Marynia stayed with the child patiently during the transition and Charlotte rewarded her to the maximum of our ability at that time.

The profound change from German to Soviet rule demanded an enormous adjustment, both mentally and physically. The Germans had stated, "Das Jude ist nicht Mensch, nicht Vieh nur Ungeziefer." (The Jew is neither human nor animal, but vermin.) They had tried to murder us as quickly as possible, warning, "Du gehst doch bald aufs Himmels Kommando!" (You will soon be under heaven's command!) In sharp contrast to the Nazis, the Soviets entrusted us right after liberation with the management of people and equipment of great value for the war effort. At the time of liberation, our emaciated, skel-

etal bodies were far below our normal weight. We had virtually no possessions and struggled to raise our minds from an abyss of deep despair. It was essential that we rapidly build up our physical strength so that we might cope with the demands of our jobs and create the basic conditions for family life. Our progress was quite speedy, but it still took time. It helped that Charlotte's assistant was very supportive and that I had good relations with the employees at the power station, half of whom knew me from before the German invasion.

Survivors were slowly coming back to Stanisławów. One man, Helman, made it his business to write down all the names, and survivors were anxious to support his effort to find out how many of us were still alive. The last total I heard was 103 people. This figure included several people who had lived in the small towns and villages surrounding the city before the war. The estimated pre-war Jewish population in Stanisławów and the surrounding district was 25,000. Among the survivors were several doctors whose practices brought them in contact with the pharmacies. Some of these professional contacts developed into friendships and quite frequently there would be doctors sitting on our bed enjoying a social evening, since we didn't have enough chairs in our room. One of them was Dr. Tiger, the medical examiner for the Soviet military induction board. I was burning with hatred for the murderers of my mother, my sisters and their families, and others, so I wanted an opportunity to kill Germans. I walked into the induction centre and told them that I wanted to join the army. Dr. Tiger asked me to take off my boots, pointed to my still-swollen feet and recommended that the board reject my request.

Not long after the liberation, I visited the Russel family and thanked them for their help during the German occupation. They returned some clothing to me that I had asked them to sell, saying they had failed to find a buyer. Then I went to the businessman who had taken my suits in return for bread. He opened a large cupboard and asked me to take whatever I wanted. I took only a pair of light shoes in order to get my sore feet out of the heavy military boots I had been given. I tried to retrieve my bicycle from another Pole, but without success.

We soon discovered that our salaries were worth only what they could buy. Food and necessary clothing were sold at officially priced government stores. Every store with anything to sell, however, had long line-ups, where one had to wait several hours. By the time one got into the store the merchandise was often sold out. We hated standing in line and didn't have time for it either, so we were forced to buy everything on the black market at prices that were several times higher than the official ones. We couldn't afford it on our salaries, so we started to think about how other people in the same predicament managed. There was a Polish expression at that time, "Nie będziesz kradł, nie będziesz jadł." (If you won't steal, you won't eat.)

During the German retreat, local people burgled pharmacies. When the incoming Soviets finally got around to establishing some order, they failed to ensure a minimum supply of vital drugs to the pharmacies. This meant that all sorts of people, even nuns, had some of the stolen drugs, which they offered to pharmacists who knew patients in need. Charlotte bought these drugs and had to pay for them at black-market prices, but she was still able to make a reasonable profit selling them to patients who needed them and who were happy to get them at any price. In the Soviet system this was considered illegal trade, but after our experience with the Germans, we were not prepared to starve by applying to ourselves a different moral standard from the prevailing one. Business increased when the Red Army decreed that Soviet officers who contracted venereal diseases would be dispatched to the front. To avoid the dangers of the front line, afflicted officers went to a Jewish doctor who prescribed the appropriate medication and referred them to Charlotte's pharmacy. The physician shared in the profit.

I supported the pharmacy as best as I could. For example, my department had lots of Vaseline and castor oil used to lubricate bearings and coat sensitive equipment. We received these products from

military units in appreciation for services rendered. We also had a lot of distilled water from the steam turbine operation. The pharmacy needed these materials and could sell the excess. I also assumed the duties of store accountant. In order to avoid suspicions about the lively activity of the pharmacy, we recorded a bigger profit than that which was actually obtained from the sale of merchandise supplied by the government.

As I have mentioned, before the Germans retreated, they had tried to disable the power station by damaging the equipment. The local workers pretended to help them and clandestinely took home vital parts of the power-generating equipment. When the Soviets took over, the workers brought back the missing parts. They were delighted to see me there to provide the know-how that they lacked to re-integrate and test the equipment. They were also happy with the paid overtime that I provided by pushing ahead the restoration of equipment needed to assist the Soviet war effort. I trusted some of the men to deliver the distilled water and other items to the pharmacy, which they liked to do because Charlotte tipped them with medications like a popular headache remedy.

My relations with the other department managers were very good since their operations depended to a great extent on my judgment. I decided when a generating unit ought to be shut down for repairs or maintenance. I also decided which section of the city could or should be disconnected from the power supply to enable the city power-grid manager to plan repairs or maintenance. I was able to handle all my extended engineering duties primarily by delegating all administrative duties to my secretary. She was a middle-aged university graduate, the wife of an engineer working in a different department. She was bright and respected by the staff. I never heard a single complaint about the way she handled her assignments. Neither did I hear any complaints from any station employee about the way that I handled my job.

It was a different story with some of the high-ranking Soviet officers, however. Although we worked hard to restore full operation of the power station, its capacity wasn't sufficient to satisfy both local needs and the requirements of the Soviet army hospitals and other military services. Therefore it was necessary to plan outages. To be fair, we implemented a rotating pattern of disconnecting some city sections on different days of the week, while providing continuous supply to what I considered essential facilities. These facilities included, first of all, hospitals, factories involved in the war effort, food distribution centres and (you cannot blame me for a little personal bias) Charlotte's pharmacy. This practice made a Soviet colonel who lived across the street from the pharmacy very angry. He barged into the store demanding to know who was responsible for his not getting electricity on some days while the pharmacy was continuously illuminated. I happened to be there at that time and told him that I was responsible and that his situation wouldn't improve if the dispensary were plunged into darkness. Furthermore, if he wasn't happy with my operation, he should complain to the general manager of the power station or to the secretary of the Communist Party, both of whom I knew would support me. I didn't hear from him again.

On another occasion, it was necessary for me to have a department electrician disconnect power to the city jail. The Soviet officer in charge of the jail promptly had the electrician arrested and thrown in jail. As soon as I heard about it, I went to the general manager and asked him to intervene. He refused, saying that since the man reported to me, it was my duty to handle the case. He suggested that I warn the jail manager that if he didn't release our man right away, I would cut off the power to the jail permanently. I didn't believe that the important Soviet officer would yield to threats coming from a local person who only spoke Russian badly, but I did as my boss suggested and it worked.

I had an even more revealing encounter with the first secretary of the Communist Party, the highest government official in the territory. One day I received an urgent telephone summons from my

general manager to come to his office right away. When I arrived, my boss introduced me to the first secretary, a big man with an overpowering personality. He told me that he knew about my sterling work for the station but wished me to assign one of my good electricians to sort out the complicated circuitry in the villa he had taken over so that he could operate the sophisticated gadgetry. The previous owners of the villa, the Margosches family, had been the richest family in town. I made it clear that, with all due respect, I didn't own any electricians and had no authority to order anyone to do work outside of my department. I also said that I couldn't spare any of my men during working hours without detriment to our war effort. The boss blanched and the first secretary seemed somewhat shaken, and changed his request, explaining that what he really had in mind was for me to recommend a qualified person. I told him I could only do that without jeopardizing my relations with any of my employees if they were willing to do the work outside company time and would be paid. The first secretary and I presented his proposal to the men. When the meeting was over, the first secretary and I left the office at the same time. He slapped me on the back and said, "You are quite a fellow. How does the general manager treat you? He may be your boss today, but if he doesn't treat you right, I will have him sweep your office floor tomorrow." I told him that we got along fine. One of our electricians did the job, was properly paid and thanked me for recommending him.

Security guards posted at the entry gate to the power station registered the time each worker came to work in the morning. Tardiness was considered sabotage of the war effort and was severely punished, possibly, depending on the perceived severity of the offence, by exile to Siberia. Members of my department who were late for work got away with it by telling the guard that I had asked them to do some work for the department in town before reporting to work at the station. The guard would phone me for confirmation, which I always gave, even if it wasn't true. The workers deeply appreciated this. Two

Jews, pre-war members of the Revisionist Zionist organization Betar had a hard time getting decent jobs, so I hired them and because they were smart, they blended in very well.

Not long after the Soviet forces had liberated eastern Poland, they renamed the territory Zapadna Ukraina (West Ukraine). They issued everybody who lived there a Soviet passport and made them all Soviet citizens, which, of course, also included the "privilege" of being drafted into the Red Army. I was drafted and given an officer's commission with the rank of captain, but as my work at the power station was considered important to the war effort, I was designated *bronirovany do okonchania voiny* (exempt from military service) until the end of the war. Charlotte was also drafted and given an officer's commission with the rank of lieutenant; she was exempt from military service because she had to care for a small child.

We made new friends among the military people. A lieutenant nurse who loved to play with Tusia visited us often, bringing sweets and toys for her. An elderly captain was another regular house guest. One morning he came in complaining of a bad headache and asked for a Koguteg – the brand name of a popular drug for headaches. Tusia promptly declared, "Mama zarizala kohuteka!" (Mother killed the *kogutek*!), referring to the chick Charlotte had received in payment for some drugs and that she had had killed to prepare for dinner. "Kogutek" was both the brand name of the headache remedy and the Ukrainian word for baby chicken.

I got to know a Jewish captain and his wife, who asked me to accept her young brother as an apprentice in the department, which I did. He was then offered two jobs – a high-paying manager's job in a machine-tool factory and a much lower-paying job as supervisor in a food distribution centre. They finally decided in favour of the lower-paying job after considering the illicit corollary benefits of both jobs (i.e., machines vs. food).

During that period, we were not especially happy with the presence of one particular Jewish officer as a regular house guest. He was

very critical of the Soviet regime, which under the circumstances made us quite uneasy. Another time, I responded with some caution to the efforts of an NKVD captain who tried hard to become my friend. He maintained that he had joined the outfit only to avoid action at the front and would leave it as soon as the war ended. He insisted that I visit his mother, who surprised me with her cordial, old-fashioned, aristocratic behaviour. She offered me cookies and fresh milk from her own cow and expressed joy that her son associated with me. She considered me cultured, something rarely encountered in Stanisławów at the time. Nevertheless, I didn't change my attitude toward her son.

Charlotte continued with her business, which proved to be quite profitable albeit dangerous, since some of her trade was considered illicit by the Soviets. On one occasion, two NKVD men entered the pharmacy and she had a real scare, thinking that they wanted to investigate her practices. Fortunately, they were after her assistant, whom somebody had denounced as having been cozy with the Nazis during the German occupation. A much more dangerous situation arose some time later when an NKVD major came into the pharmacy and asked for the anti-venereal-disease drug that was Charlotte's illegal bestseller. She obviously denied having it. He explained that he needed it for himself and denying it to him would ensure him a deadly future. He insisted that she sell it to him or he would destroy her by exposing her for selling the product illegally. He told her to think it over until 10 a.m. the next day, when he expected her to have the medication for him.

We didn't sleep the whole night thinking about how to get out of this nasty predicament. If Charlotte provided him with the drug, he would have further proof she was doing something illegal. If she didn't, he could put our lives in danger. We eventually decided on a strategy: When the major came in the next morning, Charlotte told him that she had been moved by compassion to help an obviously deserving citizen, so she had purchased the drug for him and would

charge him the legal price. He snapped it up, paid and ran, never to be heard from again. It was certainly worth the loss of the markup Charlotte usually charged.

The Tartar doctor who had contributed to our physical recovery from the Nazi period was a different type of person. One day he walked into my office and told me he was very disappointed in my behaviour. He said he had always respected me as a decent human being, but now found me to be heartless, letting one of my employees die when I could easily save his life. He was referring to a technician who had suffered a leg injury at work and was developing gangrene while being treated in the city hospital. I replied that I had no idea how I could help. He asked me to sit down and then dictated an application to have the man transferred to the military hospital. When I asked to whom I should address it, he said to address it to himself, the head of the hospital, and then took the application from me. The man was transferred within hours, operated on by the Tartar personally and recovered rapidly. He thanked me for saving his life.

When Berlin fell to the Red Army and Hitler killed himself in April 1945, my boss told me to order the fifty prisoners of war working for us to assemble in front of the administration building so they could be told. I asked him to let me do the honours and he agreed. I stepped up on a sort of raised platform and started by telling them that I was a Jew who considered Germans the most despicable creatures infesting the earth. I told them the "good news" that the criminal German Reich was *kaput* (finished), that Berlin had fallen, that Hitler was dead, and that the German Wehrmacht – the German army – had surrendered unconditionally. It was one of the most glorious moments of my life.

Soon after Germany's surrender, the Soviet Union re-drew the borders of Poland, annexing the eastern territories of what had been Poland to the USSR and renaming it West Ukraine to compensate, they incorporated some parts of German East Prussia and Silesia into Poland, expelling the local population of these areas. The Soviets

announced that in Western Ukraine, which included the town of Stanisławów, any local non-ethnic Ukrainians could renounce their recently acquired Soviet citizenship and move west to the new Poland after procuring official releases from their current jobs. When Charlotte informed her supervisor at the *aptek upravlenia* that we had decided to move west, the supervisor tried to scare her by saying that she would come to regret leaving such a good and secure position. Nevertheless, she gave Charlotte the official paper required to release her from her job.

I faced a different situation when my boss firmly rejected my application for release, having relied on my skills to run the power station for about two years. I went to a lawyer for help and he outlined the strategy I was to follow. I did as I was told. I prepared a written application for release, walked into the boss's office and started an argument, taunting him that he would have to shut down the station when I left. It made him so angry that he grabbed my paper and signed it. I quickly had the secretary enter it into the registry of incoming mail and brought a copy to my lawyer. He then obtained a court order instructing my boss to issue the official release from my job.

As soon as this problem was solved, I started making arrangements for transportation westward. At the railway station, my family was assigned half a freight carriage in a train for evacuees. I received an identification number for the carriage, but when I found it in the railway yard I noticed that it had no roof. This worried me, as it was autumn and it was possible that it would rain during the week of travel. So I chose a departure date that would give me time to find a way to protect us against inclement weather. My mood, already sombre, was further aggravated when I became aware of an NKVD man who followed me saying, "You were so anxious to leave and now you are dragging your feet." Another person who annoyed me was the Jewish officer who, as I described earlier, used anti-Soviet expressions. He noticed my troubled behaviour, asking what was wrong and offering to help, which I rejected. He persisted and, to get rid of him, I described my problem. He told me that he was the manager of a lumber

sawmill and could have a wooden roof built for my half of the carriage as soon as I gave him the carriage number. Two days later he took me to inspect a perfect roof. Talk about luck!

Several weeks before our departure, we had to leave our room next to the pharmacy since Charlotte was no longer an employee. The family of our friend Arthur Fink, the brother-in-law of Jakob Mandel, lived in a spacious apartment, so they agreed to let us to move in with them. We only had to buy a bed for ourselves. We bought an iron bed with an ornate brass pipe headboard. From her extracurricular work in the pharmacy, Charlotte had earned a good number of rubles, the Soviet currency, some of which we decided to carry on our bodies during the trip. I stuffed the rest of it into the brass pipes of the bed. Some people were surprised that we took our bed with us to the West – they probably thought, oh well, everyone has their hang ups.

On the day of departure, we finished arranging everything we had brought into our railway carriage. Then I ate my lunch, which consisted of a cold fish sandwich, while Charlotte and Tusia went out along the train to look around. I usually drank some vodka after eating fish, so I found a properly labelled vodka bottle and took a good slug out of it. I immediately started foaming from my mouth.

Just then Charlotte returned. She was shocked when I told her what I had drunk – it turned out that the bottle actually contained concentrated 30 per cent peroxide. We ran outside and fortunately found a Russian woman doctor who said that I must immediately drink *maślanka* (buttermilk) to induce vomiting. In response to our emergency call for help, somebody brought the *maślanka*. I drank it, vomited profusely and in a short time the foaming from my mouth stopped and I felt better. Nevertheless, the doctor, who stayed with me the whole time, said that I would have to continue drinking milk products for at least several hours, explaining that an injured esophagus does not heal. Miraculously, although a single drop of 30 per cent peroxide can cause instant burns on human skin, I seem not to have sustained any permanent injury to my esophagus.

In Brzeg nad Odrą

We were on our way to our next destination. The steam-engine driver and his crew were very polite Russians. They stopped the train every few hours to allow people to relieve themselves, as well as to clean up and get cold, hot and boiling water for tea. The train always stopped in desolate fields or woods and never at a railway station. When people asked for the name of the train's destination, they were given evasive but diplomatic replies. We noticed the names of cities we were passing and knew we were west of pre-war Polish Silesia when the train stopped in the middle of nowhere and the Soviet locomotive crew informed us they were not going any further. Several groups of strong men headed out in different directions to explore the area. During the train ride, we had gotten to know the few Jewish people travelling with us on the same train. Among them were the three Feuer brothers, who also went exploring. They returned after several hours with a wagon drawn by two big horses and a German driver. They told us that there was a town named Brzeg nad Odrą (formerly called Brueck an der Oder when Silesia had been a part of Germany) not very far away and that they were taking their belongings there. They said that if we wanted, they could come back and move us there, too.

We accepted their offer enthusiastically and they moved us to Brzeg. We got out at an empty building, selected an apartment on the second floor and moved in. It was clean and well furnished. The

previous occupants – almost certainly Germans – must have been in a great hurry to leave, since unwashed plates were still on the table and dirty pots in the sink. They also left clean bedding, linens, towels, brooms, brushes and the other items required for normal housekeeping. A Jewish soldier serving in a Czech military unit contacted us the next day; he provided us with beautiful fresh bread from the military bakery every day until we got settled in. The Red Army soldiers happily found some former peasants to milk the cows they were transporting so we also got free fresh milk.

At first, the Germans who remained in the town were petrified of the new settlers and stayed locked in their homes. But after a few days, they relaxed, particularly in their relations with German-speaking people like myself. They agreed to sell us fruit, vegetables and milk and were satisfied that we paid for it properly. A black market soon developed, first for the supply of cigarettes to the Germans, then vodka for the Soviets, yeast for the Poles and various products for other people. I had to make a living, so I was sucked into this trade and got to know the sources of supply and places of demand. This included meeting others involved in illegal activities under the eyes of Polish government officials, who were themselves all corrupt, without exception.

This business involved a lot of travel to larger centres, primarily Kraków, on the insecure and disorganized transportation system. It was also essential to have good relations with captains of the illegal trade and with Red Army officers and military truck drivers. It was dangerous, but the profit was good and I was glad to remove the burden of being the prime illegal income producer from Charlotte's shoulders. Travelling became more and more dangerous by the day, however, so we looked for another way to earn money. I applied for a government license to buy and sell alcohol legally. I supported my application by masquerading as the son of my uncle, who was well known for his wholesale liquor business in Poland before the war. A bribe helped to get me the license. I found a suitable empty store with a nice empty apartment on top of it in an easily accessible location.

Before we could move into our new apartment, another problem arose that had to be solved. One room had a large land mine and an antitank weapon (a Panzer Faust – a German army bazooka) lying on the floor. Since I didn't know whether these were live munitions, I rushed to the local Polish army headquarters to ask them to remove the weapons. They sent two soldiers who demanded that I watch them while they did their dangerous job. I agreed and they carefully disarmed and removed the weapons. Charlotte offered them a drink and snacks, which they appreciated.

We were looking for some domestic help and when a pretty, young German girl applied, we hired her. She was very pleasant and Tusia liked her right away. We had the furniture and all our other belongings transferred from our previous dwelling to the new apartment, arranged everything with the help of the girl and the building's caretaker, and moved in. Then we started organizing the store. We purchased the merchandise and placed it on shelves and counters to please the eye, and put a few tables and chairs in a room at the back. We were open for business, selling alcoholic beverages, cold refreshments and deli products for take-out or consumption in the back room. The store was a success from the very beginning with Poles and Soviet military personnel and their German girlfriends. Then I accepted a business partner. For the life of me, I cannot remember what motivated me to do this. It was a regrettable decision.

Among our steady customers were several Soviet majors and captains who were in charge of a large depot located one or two kilometres from the store. After some time, we got to know each other and they told me that the depot stored large quantities of valuable products that the Nazis had looted and subsequently lost to the Soviet army. They hinted they would like to sell some of these items for their personal benefit if it could be done safely and discreetly. They assured me that they trusted me and I promised to look into it. I put out cautious feelers among my black-market acquaintances and eventually found a safe, prospective buyer. I developed a scheme, negotiated

with both parties separately, as requested by the officers, and firmed up an agreement on the product required by the buyer, the required quantity, the price, the timing, the procedure and my commission.

The scheme worked as follows: the black-market buyer came to Brzeg with a ten-ton truck and stopped in front of our store. He then entered the store, gave me the total amount of money for the purchase and stayed inside. I put the money away safely and got into the truck beside the driver and guided him to the depot where sentries let us in and directed us to a shack. There, my two friendly officers were waiting with a crew of soldiers who loaded the truck. Then we left, stopped in front of the store, where I got out of the truck, the buyer got in and the truck was on its way out of town. The load was made up of bales of beautiful typing paper, which, I was told, was sold to the Polish government.

Shortly after the truck left, the two officers came to see me. Satisfied that I had the agreed-upon money, they asked me to keep it for them for two or three weeks. They mentioned in passing that if we heard a shot while the paper was being loaded, we would have to leave immediately because this would be a sentry shooting in the air to signal that the military police were approaching. When the two officers came to claim their money, they counted it and, satisfied, stuffed it into their boots. I was pleased with my considerable commission. We successfully repeated the whole procedure several more times until one day the loaded truck broke down at the city limits. The Polish and Soviet police got involved and it cost the buyer and me a significant amount of money to get out of the mess unharmed. As a result, I decided not to continue with this activity.

Tusia made friends with local children and they liked to play in the backyard behind the store where Charlotte worked and could keep an eye on her. Once, while we were attending to customers, we were suddenly shaken by a very loud explosion. We ran outside and found that a cow grazing nearby had stepped on a land mine, killing several animals. We frantically looked around for Tusia and to

our horror couldn't find her. I rounded up a few German urchins, promising them sweets and rewards if they found her and brought her home. They spread out and after a short time came back with Tusia, and we rewarded them as promised. When they told us they had found her not very far from the dead cows, I was shocked. I was terrified that she might get into a similar situation again, so I spanked her until her bottom was red, telling her she would be punished more if she dared to leave our premises without her mother or me. It was the only time in my life that I have ever hit a child, any child.

In the meantime, more Jews, mostly those returning from the Soviet Union, settled in Brzeg and organized a sort of community that included a *hachshara* (training farm) for young Jews planning to go to Palestine as soon as they could get immigration certificates. We and several other families, referred to as the "rich Jews," did not join so as to avoid the heated personal and political quarrels that I was sometimes asked to smooth over. When we were approached with a request to finance the wedding of two *hachshara* members, we agreed and also gave them a nice wedding present.

Two Jewish soldiers from the Polish army often visited us. On one occasion, they told us that their boss, a colonel, would very much like to meet me. I went with them and was cordially received. The officer told me right away that he was a Russian ordered to masquerade as a Pole, a people he disliked. His job was to identify extreme nationalists and antisemites in the army so that they could be dealt with appropriately.

When the war ended, Charlotte's brother Içio was demobilized from the Polish army. He stayed with us in Brzeg for a while and then with his brother Jacek in Gliwice (formerly Gleiwitz). Jacek had settled there with his daughter and his ethnic German Christian wife whom he had married before the war. Upon his return from Russia, he found her sweeping streets by order of the retaliating Poles. Jacek procured her release with money Charlotte had given him. As Içio didn't have any money when he returned from the army, we gave him

enough to start something that would generate income. Jacek held a senior post in the government as an engineer, but couldn't make ends meet, so we helped him as well. However, when he picked up a free sack of flour for his associates from our store and I helped to load it on the truck, he begged me not to disclose that Charlotte was his sister or that I was an engineer. He was embarrassed by the way we were making a good living.

We felt good about our financial situation but were extremely worried about the still-rampant Polish antisemitism. In Kielce, more than fifty Jews had been killed that July in a pogrom fuelled by the age-old canard of ritual murder. In Brzeg, I was boarding a bus when a Pole grabbed me from behind and pulled me off. I managed to beat him off and jump on a Soviet truck whose driver had noticed the incident and stopped to offer help. He drove me to the Polish police station to lodge a complaint. The commandant, who was often seen riding his horse around town, listened attentively to my report and then asked me to follow him into an adjacent office. He locked the door behind us and moved to a second office. I followed him, feeling a bit concerned when he locked the door again. He asked me to sit down before explaining that he was just making sure that his subordinates would not hear what he said, that is, that he was a Jew from Drohobycz and that his real name was Schenkelbach. He wanted to know more about us, was sorry not to be able to react to what had happened to me because of the lack of pertinent information, but asked me to keep in touch as he wanted to help whenever he could. We parted cordially.

When I got home, I had the entrance door to our apartment reinforced with thick wooden planks. At night I now locked and secured the door with two heavy iron crossbars. A customer who lived across the street and was a member of Bezpieczeństwo, the Polish secret police, assured us that he kept an eye on our apartment whenever he was home. But other members of the same police force had other ideas. A group of them raided our store and apartment, claiming that

we were hoarding excessive amounts of money. They didn't succeed in finding our "secret vault," so before they left Charlotte treated them to free drinks and a lecture on harassing Jewish survivors. All this motivated us to look for a way out of Poland.

My first concern was to convert the considerable amount of money we had saved into usable Western currency and transfer it out of our communist-dominated area. Two business associates shared my concerns and we began to search for a solution. I eventually found a Red Army captain I trusted and made a deal with him. For a price, he would provide me with official papers stating that I had been hired by the Soviet army to provide engineering supervision on repairs to European cars assembled near Berlin, and that I was to be accompanied by two assistants. The captain would give us a Mercedes car for transportation, a sergeant as a driver, and accompany us himself. My two associates exchanged the money we had for "occupation marks" on the black market and hid them in the car – we hoped to be able to buy American dollars with these occupation marks when we got to Berlin.[1]

The drive to Berlin was uneventful. When we got to the city, we drove to a Jewish Displaced Persons (DP) camp we had heard about and asked the captain to come back for us in about an hour. Inside we found our way to a room where a burly, poorly dressed man confirmed that he could sell us American dollars. All the furniture in the room was typical, basic camp quality. When he found out what amount we were talking about, he asked us to sit at a primitive table and seated himself on the other side. He then called to his wife in Yiddish to bring him something, "Gib mir di chazerlech." (Give me the little pigs.) She brought out a small, apparently heavy bag. The

1 Although the eastern part of Germany where Berlin is located was occupied by Soviet forces at this time, the city itself was occupied by the Americans, the British and the French in addition to the Soviets. There was therefore a much better chance of getting Western currency in or near Berlin.

man placed a handgun beside him and emptied out of the bag a pile of gold coins that included American and Russian imperial gold coins. We explained that we were after paper currency, but would think about his offer and left. We were picked up by the Red Army captain, who insisted that before we visited any other places, he wanted to go to the Brandenburg Gate to buy a leather coat and an accordion for the driver.[2] We agreed. As soon as we arrived, we were stopped by two armed Soviet military police who asked for our papers. We showed them our credentials, but they were not satisfied. We argued with them and when our driver started the car, they turned their guns on us. They got into our car and took us to a military police station. The soldiers made a brief report to the officer in charge, who turned to me and barked, "Sdavai oruzhie!" (Surrender your weapon!) I responded that I was not armed. He then ordered his men, "Obyskaite mashinu!" (Search the car!) They found the many packages of occupation marks and brought them to the officer. He inspected them and noticed that they were consecutively numbered bills, which could only be obtained from the central bank. I could not explain how my associates had purchased them, so he arrested all three of us. I found out later that the central bank had been robbed and my associates had purchased stolen money on the black market.

I was separated from my two associates and put in a cell together with a bunch of cutthroats. They asked me to give them my new riding boots, but I refused. When they advanced on me, I grabbed a chair and fought them off, yelling for a guard to help. There was no response and my cellmates overwhelmed me, taking my boots and my socks. Only then did the guard appear. He determined that I was the one who had caused the disturbance and was responsible for injuring the inmates. He took me to the warden, who dismissed my account and accepted the guard's report. He ordered me punished, but did have my boots returned to me.

2 The area around the Brandenburg Gate was the centre of black-market activities in Berlin after World War II. For more information, see the glossary.

I was locked up in a windowless cell with a concrete floor that measured about one and a half metres square. There was only a small electric bulb that hung on a wire from the ceiling. There was no furniture, only a bucket. Since I couldn't see daylight, I don't know how long I was locked up. The space was so small that I could either stand or sit, but I could not lie down. Once when a guard looked in through the spy-hole and saw me sleeping, he kicked the door and yelled, "Na kurort priekhal?" (You think you are in a spa?) But when another guard saw me rubbing my naked feet, he brought me two squares of soft cloth and showed me how to fold a square over one foot and slide my foot into the boot for comfort and warmth. (They called these squares *onuce*). When they released me from solitary confinement, they took me to another jail some distance away, marching me down the middle of the streets of Berlin surrounded by four soldiers with their automatic weapons at the ready. The leader warned me that if I made one false step forward or backward, to the right or the left, he would "apply his gun."

In the new jail I was put in a large cell with many other inmates. There were, if memory serves, six bare boards that served as double-tier bunks. At night the bunks and the floor were completely covered with bodies sleeping side by side. I occasionally slept on one of the bare boards with my boots folded under my head for a pillow. Most of the people in the cell were there for committing financial crimes against Soviets laws. Some were professional men. The food was all right for a jail and, with the exception of one individual, the guards were also reasonable. Every day a few inmates were selected to bring the food from the kitchen. Once, when it was my turn, I spilled some soup from the two pails I was carrying. This so annoyed my armed escort that he handed me his rifle and picked up the pails himself! He carried the pails while I carried his rifle until we came close to our destination, and we switched.

Life in jail was no bed of roses, particularly the days waiting to be released or at least to face a jury. I felt hopeless. Many of the inmates had been there for months without any progress. I became friendly with a jailed Polish major who was being prepared for release. He promised me that he would let Charlotte know about my arrest and imprisonment. I learned later that she had received an anonymous telephone call informing her of my whereabouts, so I assume the officer kept his word. As soon as she heard what had happened to me, Charlotte sent her brother Içio to Berlin to contact me, but the mission failed. He couldn't even get confirmation that I was alive.

After six weeks in jail, I was approached by a Red Army sergeant who offered to release me illegally at night if I agreed to forget about the money and valuables I had surrendered upon my arrest. I would also have to leave Berlin at once to avoid getting re-arrested. I agreed and was released at dawn. I was quite surprised to see my two associates released at the same time and on the same conditions. We were free but had no money and no documents, so we headed to the Jewish Community Centre. As soon as it opened, we told the receptionist who we were and asked to see the chairman. He had heard about us and we were promptly ushered into his office, where several members of his staff joined the meeting. We explained the conditions of our release and were told to ignore the orders to leave. We were advised to contact a particular Soviet colonel who worked with them on Jewish issues. They believed the money could be recovered if they intervened, which they would be happy to do if we were willing to donate a part of it to the Jewish community. We agreed and they set up a meeting for us with their contact at Soviet military headquarters. They told us his name, the location and time of the meeting, and the password for the sentry. The chairman gave us some money for food and other necessities and offered to arrange free transportation to the American-occupied sector of Germany. We explained that we had to return to our families in Poland.

When we met the colonel, we told him what happened. He was furious, saying that the money had been illegally confiscated. He asked us to wait while he made some phone calls to straighten out the mess. After waiting several hours we told the colonel that we had to leave for food and attend to some personal needs. He angrily ordered us to return, warning us that if we didn't, he would find us and shoot us. This didn't sit well with us, so we went straight to the railway station and boarded the first train out of Berlin, which just happened to be going to the Polish border.

When we arrived at the border, we found out that getting across to Poland was not a simple matter. Soviet military patrols were everywhere and we had no documents. At some point I noticed a pretty girl watching us. She approached and told us that she was looking for protection from the Soviets, whom she feared. We asked what her problem was and she told us she wanted to go to her relatives in Poland. She knew the way, but was concerned that a woman travelling alone might attract attention. We promised to protect her if we could join her. She was delighted with the arrangement. She led us across railroad tracks, sometimes under railway cars and finally onto a train destined for Poland. We picked an empty compartment and sat down with the girl between us. Nobody asked for tickets or documents. The train picked up speed. Red Army soldiers walked back and forth in the corridor. They looked into our compartment and asked who we were and who the girl was. We told them in Russian that we were liberated concentration camp inmates and the girl was ours. They said that we wouldn't be bothered if we minded our own business, saw nothing and heard nothing. About fifteen minutes later, a terrible commotion broke out. The Soviet soldiers were beating and robbing the German passengers and raping the women. One woman screamed, "I serviced five today already!" They slapped her and threw her out of the speeding train. Finally they pulled the emergency brake, stopping the train in the middle of nowhere. After a while, the train began to move again. On the Polish side, the girl left us and we took a train home to Brzeg. Again no one asked us for a ticket. When

I walked into the store, Charlotte was so shocked to see me alive that she almost fainted. She was sure that I had either died or was in exile in Siberia.

It didn't take long for us to face reality. When I had left Brzeg, we were rich. Now all the money was gone. The store provided us with a living, but it wasn't worth staying in the antisemitic environment of the new Poland that we had grown to hate. So it was opportune that Bricha, a clandestine Jewish organization, had begun providing Jews with illegal transportation out of Poland and into Palestine, despite the cruel determination of Britain to prevent it. I got in touch with Bricha, and they were happy to accommodate me. They even refused to accept any money for their expenses, as I had helped several of their members get jobs in the power station during the second Soviet occupation of Stanisławów and they felt they owed me something.

Having decided to leave Poland, we gradually sold off our store's goods, setting aside the things we could carry with us in accordance with Bricha's restrictions. We were given a time and place of departure from Poland. The location was not far from the border, but it was necessary for us to take a train to reach it. Since we knew the dangers Jews were exposed to from antisemitic hooligans on trains, I sought help from the police commandant who was Jewish. He gave me an official document stating that I had served meritoriously during the war for Poland's liberation. This assured me the right to any assistance I might require from any government agency. It did not, however, prevent Poles from harassing and verbally abusing us on the train. Had we not reached our destination in time, the verbal abuse might have turned into physical attacks.

The men from Bricha instructed departing Jews to destroy their documents, as we would be crossing the border as Turks. They told us that our luggage would be transported separately and that we would cross the border in sealed railway cars. We did as we were told and when we arrived in Czechoslovakia, we retrieved our luggage and boarded a train to Austria. The train stopped in Vienna, where

we were taken to an empty military barracks, sprayed from head to toe with the insecticide DDT, and provided with sleeping accommodations for the night. The next day we continued our journey to Salzburg, where we were again sprayed with DDT and taken to a huge hall where the whole group of travellers bedded down for the night on a floor covered with dirty blankets. The smell of DDT and urine was overpowering, but we stayed there only two days.

From Salzburg, we travelled to Germany, to a tent city that was administered by the American army. Each family was assigned a separate tent. They sprayed us again, of course, with DDT before we were allowed to enter the tent. They fed us a near-starvation diet and vaccinated us against a whole range of diseases. American military guards were posted around the perimeter of the camp and they denied us exit from or entry. I managed to sneak out to buy food for my family to prevent real hunger. Life in the camp was generally miserable and even worse for children. One night the camp was hit by a severe rainstorm with strong winds, lightning and thunder. Most of the tents collapsed; people panicked and all hell broke loose. Our tent withstood the storms, as we had applied the scouting experience from our youth, reinforcing the tent anchor and digging a drainage ditch around it.

After the stormy night, everybody tried desperately to get out of the camp as soon as possible, even if it meant leaving the Bricha group. The sentries around the camp were withdrawn and an opportunity presented itself for us to go our own way when some residents of a nearby DP camp came to visit the newcomers in our camp. Among them was an acquaintance of ours from Stanisławów, Schoenfeld, who told us that there were concentration camp survivors in a DP camp in the nearby town of Eggenfelden. The residents had organized themselves with an elected governing committee whose members were Revisionist Zionists, as we had been before the war, so we should have no problem getting accepted into their community. The next day we packed our meagre belongings and went to Eggenfelden.

In Eggenfelden

When we arrived in Eggenfelden we went to the Jewish police station at the DP camp and inquired about the procedure to become residents. The cold response was that they didn't accept new residents at all. We insisted that we wanted to hear this from the committee and were taken to meet the chairman, who was more diplomatic, telling us it was up to the UNRRA officer supervising the camp to decide. UNRRA – the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – was the department of the United Nations that created the DP camps and handled their supply, financing and supervision. I agreed with Charlotte that she should talk to the officer alone with the child and appeal to his compassion, pointing out that the only alternative for all of us would be to sleep on the street.

Charlotte met with the officer for about fifteen minutes and when she came back she was crying. She told me that a Jewish doctor there had been responsible for the officer's rejection of her petition. She pointed at a man who had just come out on the street and said, "That is the doctor." I recognized him immediately and went over to him to refresh his memory. His name was Albert Gleis and we had been students at the same Jewish high school in Stanisławów. He was happy to see me alive after such a cataclysmic decade. When I told him that the woman with the child was my wife, he was embarrassed and assured me that he would straighten things out right away.

Minutes later we were installed in a large comfortable room that had been requisitioned by the American occupation authorities. The apartment belonged to a prominent German couple who had been Nazis during the war and were still living there. We were also officially accepted as residents of the Eggenfelden DP camp. When things calmed down, Charlotte told me that upon seeing the UNRRA man, Tusia had exclaimed, "Mama! Mama! Murzynek!" referring to a diminutive black person from a Polish children's picture book that our five-year-old daughter was reading. The UNRRA man was in fact a high-ranking black American army officer who was over six feet tall.

Albert Gleis had survived the war in Belgium. He told me that his brother, Alter, a dentist, lived with his wife and child in the camp and gave us their address. They had been our close friends and had survived the Stanisławów ghetto. We went to visit them as soon as we had unloaded our belongings. Alter, his wife, Wanda, and their young son, Keda, lived in a cozy, medium-sized apartment where we spent many hours together during our two years in Eggenfelden. Although we had problems getting into the camp, we discovered that many refugees from the Soviet-dominated territories, both Jewish and Ukrainian, had not had trouble despite the housing shortage. The American authorities were reluctant to requisition private buildings or apartments. For camp use, they preferred to turn over buildings abandoned by German organizations, especially those with big halls and a few small rooms for offices. To make these buildings usable for housing families, the Jewish camp committee subdivided the halls with flimsy wooden partitions into individual rooms, assigning one room per family. The partitions didn't block sound, including conversation and snoring, which caused much discomfort and tension.

I was aware of the housing problem. Like several other residents, however, I felt that an even greater problem was the lack of schooling for the younger members of the camp's population who were growing up illiterate. We decided to do something about it. We talked to the camp committee and got their agreement to provide premises

for a school. I contacted the district leaders of the UNRRA-supported Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) trade school system and obtained full support for a vocational school in Eggenfelden with myself as principal. In the camp, we also organized an elementary school and designated a staff of teachers and a principal. I managed to get school supplies from the nuns at a local convent and had a carpenter make simple school benches and blackboards. As soon as the school opened, the children rushed in. I taught mathematics to senior students at the elementary school.

The ORT school started with a machine shop that was located on the ground floor of the building, and on the floor above there were people living in a big subdivided hall. The students were eager to work on the machines and kept themselves busy in the shop even after regular hours. The residents complained bitterly about the constant noise and joined others who strongly opposed the opening of both schools before they were provided with decent housing. The children loved the grade school, but many parents joined those who complained and turned their hatred against me, the project's most active and visible individual. I knew I was doing the right thing and ignored their anger, but Charlotte couldn't take the demonstrations of hate and fell ill. A doctor ordered her to be taken to a private hospital in Munich where, even after a series of tests, they couldn't come up with a diagnosis. So they gave her penicillin, the new "wonder drug." She recovered almost immediately.

It was amazing how the old ex-Nazi couple in whose apartment we lived behaved toward Tusia while her mother was in hospital. They baby-sat her, gave her dolls and toys, took her outdoors for walks and attended patiently to her personal needs as if she were their own grandchild. This made it possible for me to spend time in the hospital and deal with critical problems in the schools. When Charlotte returned from hospital, she thanked the German couple for their help during her absence and our relations relaxed; they continued to treat Tusia lovingly.

Soon after this – probably prodded by the students – the parents recognized that providing schools was a priority in camp life. The pendulum swung from hatred to popularity. At a general meeting of the camp's governing Revisionist Zionist party, I was unanimously elected president in spite of my unwillingness. I did not and could not accept the result of the election in view of my workload at both schools, so I asked the district leadership to intervene, which they did. My tenure ended after a week.

The schools grew. We organized a preschool class and found a professional teacher whom the children and mothers adored. Tusia quickly learned to read Hebrew and German and to write a bit too. The teacher taught the children to sing and dance, and they produced a complete show that, of course, all the parents and friends came to see. Everybody enjoyed the performance of the preschoolers, but when our five-year-old Tusia came on stage holding the hand of a cute, tiny three-year-old girl and singing, "Buba, Buba, Bubati…" (Doll, doll, my dolly…), she brought down the house. The students made excellent progress in the grade school in all subjects, even absorbing material designed for higher grades in other camps. The ORT vocational school was rapidly expanding, too. New courses were added and were well attended by teenagers and adults. Charlotte took a course in machine knitting. We found a suitable electrical engineer who took over the teaching of my classes to release me for supervising and organizational tasks.

The Germans in the town of Eggenfelden had a convoluted sense of values. They refused to sell anything to the camp inhabitants for the official price in Deutschmarks and would not accept double or triple the official price either. They claimed this would make them guilty of supporting inflation that would destroy the economy. Yet they greedily accepted barter offers of coffee or cigarettes that supported the black market. They twisted the truth and complained to the American authorities that the camp was breeding and supporting the black market. This prompted the American military governor of the area to advise the camp committee that in response to the German complaint, he was considering moving the camp out of the city. This caused panic, so the committee called an emergency general meeting of all residents to come up with a plan for changing the governor's mind. The community unanimously agreed to elect a delegation of three people to represent them and request a meeting with the governor – I think his military rank was that of general – to present our side of the issue. The chairman, vice chairman and I were elected members of the delegation.

When we arrived at our appointment with the general, we were kept waiting for more than half an hour. Without shaking hands or explaining the delay, he arrogantly remained seated behind his desk and gestured toward the chairs across from him. His German secretary translated his speech – a tirade about how black-market activity was tied into organized crime – into German. He claimed that the criminal leaders were Jews; that he could see the merit of the Germans' complaint and had to do something about it.

I was asked by my companions to respond. I started by thanking him for agreeing to listen to our view on the subject. I explained that with the exception of a very few individuals, all the camp residents were active every day as students of the ORT trade school, the general school, the administration of the camp, including serving as police and in the kitchen, or were employed by UNRRA. They plainly had no time to get involved in other time-consuming activities like the black market. I assured him that being an engineer with a pre-war German diploma and a survivor of German slave labour who had been liberated by the American military, I could vouch for the fact that the Jews of the DP camp were decent people and had experienced enough German atrocities without wanting to expose themselves to more trouble, such as false accusations caused by continuing racial hatred. The governor changed his tune and asked a few reasonably pertinent questions like the number of students in each school, the system for academic supervision, the adequacy of UNRRA distribu-

tion and so on. He told us not to panic as a decision was not imminent and would only be made after further study and consideration. As the meeting came to a close, he stepped around his desk, tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You are quite a smart fellow. I enjoyed the conversation." We had obviously concluded a successful mission.

The German craving for coffee and cigarettes, which at that time were only available to Germans from American sources, and which the school received from UNRRA instead of currency, helped me to hire first-class professional German teachers for various ORT courses since equivalent Jewish teachers were not available. I explained to the Germans that I expected their students to acquire accurate knowledge rapidly and make up for time lost while they had been in concentration camps. I told the students the same and promised to fire any teacher immediately if I heard a legitimate complaint. The school's reputation rose quickly at ORT's headquarters in the American sector of Germany.

Some time later, the students at the second largest DP camp in Germany – located in Pöcking, not far from Eggenfelden – felt their time was being wasted in classes, so they rebelled and beat up the principal. The chairman of the ORT system in the American sector appealed to me to take over as principal in the hope that I would be able to handle the situation. The school was the largest in Germany and probably the largest in Europe, with some four hundred students in twenty-five classes housed in an abandoned German air force hangar. I accepted the challenge. The school had the use of a military Jeep and a Dodge van. I started by firing the incompetent teachers and some corrupt ones as well and replacing them with German professionals hired on the same conditions as those in Eggenfelden. I also assured the students that I would pay attention to their complaints if the teaching didn't improve quickly. I regularly inspected the progress of all the classes to ensure that necessary improvements were being implemented. I unloaded almost all of the administrative functions by transferring them to a popular vice principal. Everybody

agreed with the changes I made and I had excellent co-operation from students and teachers. Since Pöcking and Eggenfelden were not far apart, Charlotte and Tusia stayed in Eggenfelden and I commuted in the Jeep. This arrangement didn't last very long.

By this time – early 1948 – Jewish underground activity and armed resistance to British anti-Zionist actions were in full swing in Palestine. So was the Aliyah Bet, the movement devoted to bringing Jewish refugees to Palestine in defiance of British restrictions. The creation of the State of Israel in May 1948 and the war of liberation fought against the neighbouring Arab countries soon followed. Many young people left the DP camps to join the struggle for a Jewish state, and whole families left the camps with Aliyah Bet. Almost all the camp residents tried to emigrate, if not to Israel, then to the United States or some other country. We did the same. My position as principal in Pöcking was no longer necessary, as the number of students was diminishing, so I gave it up and returned to Eggenfelden to focus my energies on emigrating.

We rejected the idea of joining Aliyah Bet with our young child after having miraculously survived the war. My cousin Mendel Scharf, a prominent Israeli lawyer, tried to get me a job in the new state, but was unsuccessful. My sister Ester, who had gone to Palestine in 1939, warned me not to come to Israel without a job since she felt that we had suffered enough and might not survive the harsh struggle and political rivalries in the young state. My cousin Willi Karliner, a psychiatrist in New York, could not get us into the United States because of the quota restrictions on Polish immigrants, but he wrote us that he might be able to arrange entry visas into Canada, an appealing possibility. Willi's mother, my Aunt Balcia, approached a relative in New York whose cousin, Abraham Schwartz, lived in Montreal. She asked if he could find an appropriate sponsor to help us settle in Canada, someone who could apply for an immigration visa for my family and me based on his need for my special engineering skills – skills that were not otherwise available in Canada. Mr. Schwartz approached the

son of his friend Mendel, who ran a consulting electrical engineering office and was glad to help a Jewish refugee. He agreed to make the proper application and support it with a guarantee of employment. The application was approved, and I was advised by the Canadian consulate in Bavaria to present myself with my family at the immigration offices in Amberg, 175 kilometres north of Eggenfelden. There we would be checked to ensure that we met the requirements for entry into Canada.

In preparing for departure, we discovered that it was illegal for an immigrant to bring gold into Canada. We remembered our dormant "treasure" of several gold coins that I had bought long before we got to Eggenfelden, where I had had no contact with the black market for two years. I was, therefore, completely ignorant of the exchange rate for gold dollars. Under pressure to get to Amberg on time, I accepted the one-to-one exchange offered, although I suspected I was being cheated. The people who remained in the camp wished us well. They hugged and kissed us and expressed their gratitude for the great benefits the children and adults had received from the school system we had created.

In Amberg, we met many Jews from other camps, all either furriers or tailors. We were subjected to a series of sometimes repetitive and often silly health and fitness tests. We had to complete numerous repetitive questionnaires and finally I, as head of the family, was told to come for an interview with an immigration official referred to as "consul." Before I reached his desk, one of his staff whispered to me in Polish, "Tell him you are a furrier or a tailor, not an engineer, if you want to get accepted." I ignored him and when the consul asked me about my profession, I told him that I was an electrical engineer. His next question was whether I was familiar with Ohm's Law. Against my temptation to the contrary, I treated the question respectfully, replying, "I assume you are referring to the equation $I = E/R$, which describes the most basic relation in circuit performance, but doesn't include the effect of inductance or capacitance on the circuit." The consul rose to his feet, shook my hand and said, "We need people like you. Welcome to Canada."

We were taken by Canadian immigration personnel to the harbour at Bremerhaven, where we boarded the huge ship *Samaria*. It had eight decks. I was assigned the upper berth of a two-tier bunk in a large, communal, male-only sleeping room in the hold of the ship, a level without portholes. All my acquaintances were also assigned there. Charlotte and Tusia were assigned similar quarters – a huge room with bunk beds for all of the women and girls. We were allowed free access to the other decks, so Charlotte took Tusia to the highest open deck every day to play with other children and get some relief from seasickness. Charlotte concentrated so much on the task of helping Tusia with her perpetual seasickness that she wasn't touched by it herself. I had a bad day or two at the start of the journey, but no problems later. We synchronized the times to go to the dining room so we could eat together. We also spent time together on the open deck.

There was a library on the uppermost deck of the ship, where I found information on Canadian cities and could read up on Montreal, our destination. Discovering that Montreal was a great modern city with an extensive public transportation system and a substantial number of highly developed industrial and commercial enterprises was good for our morale, since the large number of furriers among our fellow passengers had led us to believe that Montreal was merely an expanded fur-trading centre.

Because we sailed in late November, we experienced a severe storm on the North Atlantic. The big vessel rocked and the waves knocked at the walls of our sleeping quarters, producing creaking noises that sounded as if the ship was breaking apart. During the storm, passengers were barred from entering the open deck where the crew worked tied down, so that they wouldn't be swept overboard. It took more than a week before we saw land. As the ship approached Halifax harbour, the passengers were requested to be patient, as it would take

several hours for the crew to complete the landing formalities and make arrangements for us to disembark.

We eventually left the ship and were shepherded by representatives of JIAS, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, to a train for Montreal. We arrived in Montreal late the next evening after a long and tiring journey during which we tried to catch some sleep on the train benches. People milled about looking for the travellers they were expecting to meet. In the crowd, we saw a man and a woman walking down the aisle of the train, repeatedly calling out, "Tannenzapf! Tannenzapf!" We approached the pair and introduced ourselves. The man explained that he was Mr. Schwartz, the person Mr. Mendel had asked to sponsor our immigration, and the woman was his sister Ray Smeltzer. Since they didn't know what we looked like, they had called out our name, hoping that we were on the train. We thanked them heartily and accepted their gracious invitation to go to their home. With that, the tragic decade of our lives during the war and its immediate aftermath came to a close. We entered a new era with great hopes.

Yizkor

In memory of my closest relatives.

Gisela Tannenzapf, my mother, was transported to Belzec and may have died in one of the cattle cars on the train.

Klara Billig, my oldest sister, her husband, Zygmunt, and their two children died in Luck, Poland.

Schancia (Jeanette) Karliner, my second oldest sister, and her husband, Jonas, died in Drohobycz, Poland.

Nitka (Johanna) Feld, my sister, and her son, Milek. I don't know the details of their deaths.

Nusko Feld, my sister Nitka's husband, was killed in the roundup of all the professionals.

Fishel Tannenzapf, my uncle, and his sons Muñio and Dolek – my cousins. I don't know the details of their deaths.

Salcia Tannenzapf, my uncle Fishel's wife, was killed in the first major *Aktion* on October 12, 1941.

Wolf Karliner, my uncle, and his wife and three children died in Auschwitz.

Moyshe Karliner, my uncle, and his family. I don't know the details of their deaths.

Lea Shapira, my aunt, and her family. I don't know the details of their deaths.

The family of my cousin Tulo Wuhl was killed in the October 12 *Aktion*. Tulo Wuhl emigrated to Israel with his wife and sister-in-law.

Leb Mandel, Charlotte's father, died in the ghetto but wasn't killed.

Mañka (Amalia) Treibetz, Charlotte's sister, was killed in the round-up of all the professionals.

Jumko (Benjamin) Mandel, Charlotte's brother, his wife, Erna, and their two children. I don't know the details of their deaths.

Geñia (Evgenia) Holder, Charlotte's sister, and her two sons died in Otynia, Poland.

Frydzia (Frederika) Kaswiner, Charlotte's sister, and her husband, David. I don't know the details of their deaths.

Reuven Tannenzapf, my father, and Reizel Mandel, Charlotte's mother, died before the war.

Maps & Photographs


SWEDEN
LITHUANIA
DENMARK
North Sea
Baltic Sea
EAST PRUSSIA (GERMANY)
FREE CITY OF DANZIG
SOVIET UNION
Bremen
Berlin
Warsaw
POLAND
SILESIA
Wrocław
Kielce
Brzeg
Gliwice
Kraków
Bełżec
GERMANY
Drohobycz
Stanisławów
Rozniki
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Eggenfelden
Munich
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
SWITZERLAND
ITALY
YUGOSLAVIA
1937 Borders
0 kilometres 300
0 miles 200
© 2009 The Azrieli Foundation

1

2

3

4

1 William Tannenzapf, 1929.

2 Charlotte Tannenzapf, 1929.

3 William's sister Nitka (Johanna) Feld.

4 William's eldest sister, Klara.

Nitka Feld's husband, Nusko, and son, Milek.

William's youngest sister, Esther, with her husband, Mordechai, and daughter, Nili, in Israel, 1948.

1

2

3

4

1 Charlotte (seated on the right) with the Menorah girls in Scout uniforms, 1927.

2 Charlotte (back row, left) and William's cousin Tulo Wuhl (front right), with their Menorah group, Stanisławów, February 1932.

3 Charlotte's mother, Raizel Mandel, 1926.

4 Charlotte and her sister, Mańka Mandel, Prague, c. 1930.

Left to right: Charlotte's brothers Içio and Jacek, Charlotte and Jacek's wife, Halina. Zakopane, Poland, July 1935.

Left to right: Mańka (Halina Mandel's sister), Charlotte, Mańka (Charlotte's sister) and Halina (Charlotte's sister-in-law) holding her daughter, Sylvia. Łaziska Górne, 1937.

1

2

3

4

1 Renate, age four, in Stanisławów, September 1945.

2 Charlotte and Renate, Brzeg nad Odrą, 1946.

3 William, Charlotte and Renate at the Displaced Persons camp in Eggenfelden, Germany, 1946–1947.

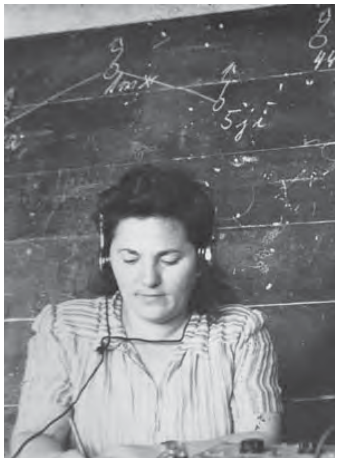
4 Renate and William going on a picnic, Eggenfelden, 1947.

Renate on stage, Eggenfelden, 1946.

Renate (centre row, second from right) with her preschool class and teacher, Mrs. Silber, Eggenfelden, 1946.

Renate (second from right) with her best friend, Bogusia (far left) and other friends in Eggenfelden, 1947.

1



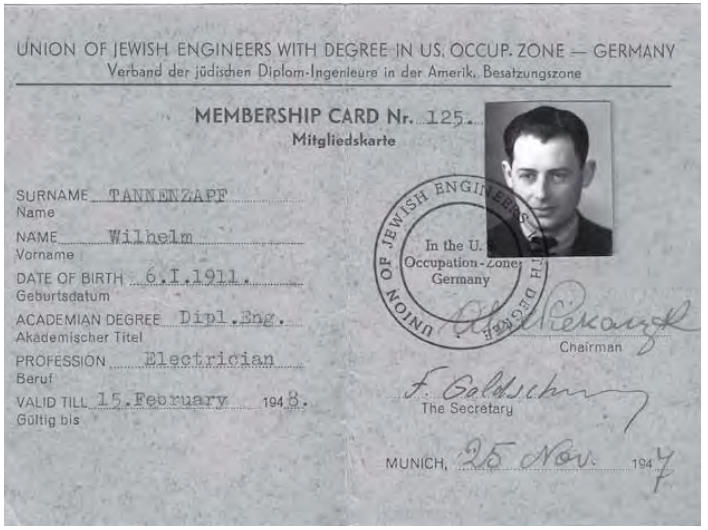
2

3

1 William Tannenzapf (second from the right) in front of the ORT school, Eggenfelden, 1947.

2 An ORT vocational student training in communications at the Displaced Persons camp in Pöcking, Germany, c.1947.

3 William Tannenzapf (third from the right) marching in a parade to celebrate the declaration of the State of Israel, Eggenfelden, May 1948.


UNION OF JEWISH ENGINEERS WITH DEGREE IN US. OCCUP. ZONE — GERMANY
Verband der jüdischen Diplom-Ingenieure in der Amerik. Besatzungszone

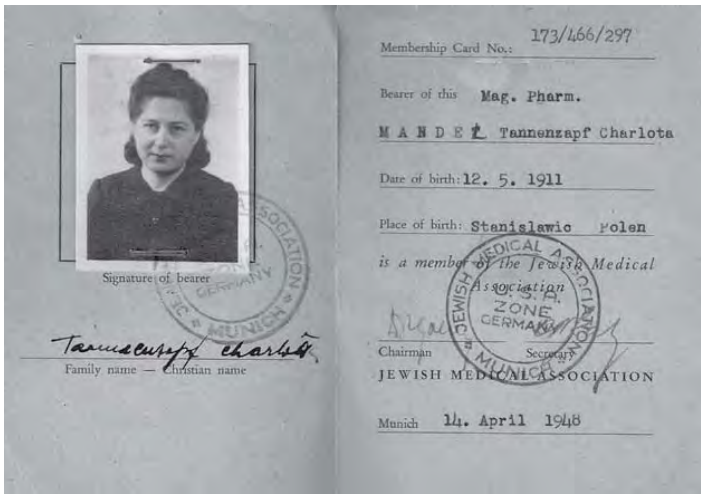
MEMBERSHIP CARD Nr. 125.
Mitgliedskarte

SURNAME TANNENZAPF
Name
NAME Wilhelm
Vorname
DATE OF BIRTH 6.I.1911.
Geburtsdatum
ACADEMIAN DEGREE Dipl.Eng.
Akademischer Titel
PROFESSION Electrician
Beruf
VALID TILL 15.February 1948.
Gültig bis

UNION OF JEWISH ENGINEERS WITH DEGREE
In the U.S. Occupation-Zone Germany

Chairman
The Secretary

MUNICH, 25 Nov. 1947


Membership Card No.: 173/466/297

Bearer of this Mag. Pharm.

MANDEL Tannenzapf Charlota

Date of birth: 12. 5. 1911

Place of birth: Stanislawic Polen

is a member of the Jewish Medical Association

Signature of bearer

Tannenzapf Charlotte
Family name — Christian name

U.S. ZONE GERMANY

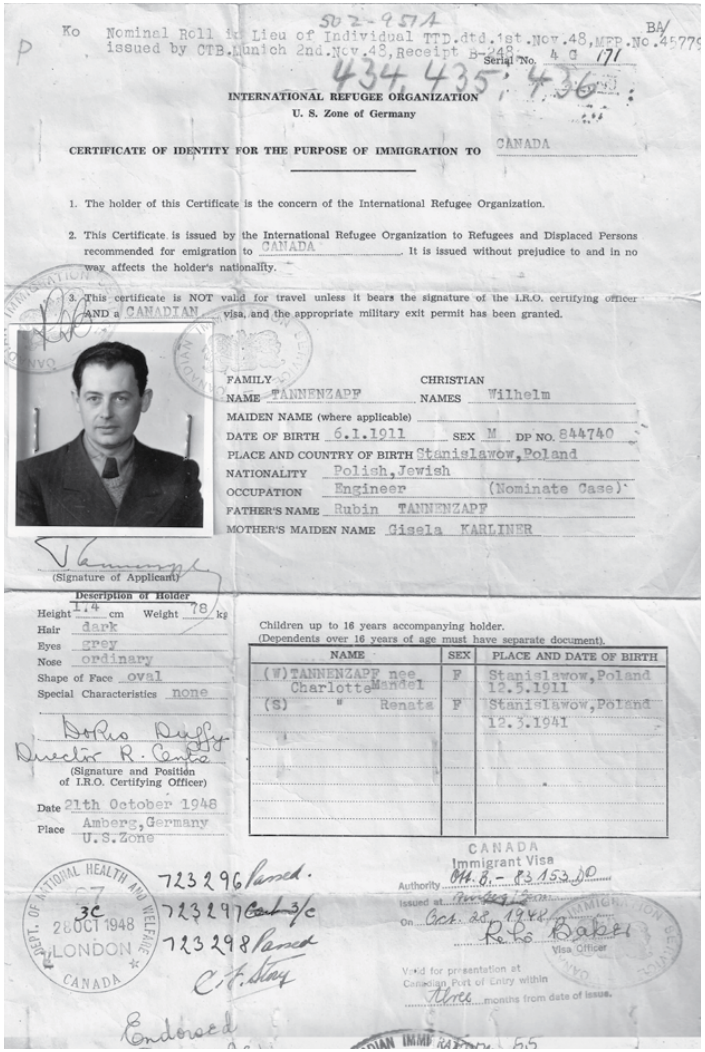
Chairman Secretary

JEWISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Munich 14. April 1948

William Tannenzapf's Union of Jewish Engineers membership card, US Occupation Zone, Germany, 1947–1948.

Charlotte's Jewish Medical Association membership card, Munich, US Occupation Zone, Germany, 1948.



Ko Nominal Roll in Lieu of Individual TTD. dtd. 1st. Nov. 48, MFB. No. 45779
issued by CTB. Munich 2nd. Nov. 48, Receipt B-148: 4 C 171

502-951

434, 435, 436

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION
U. S. Zone of Germany

CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

1. The holder of this Certificate is the concern of the International Refugee Organization.
2. This Certificate is issued by the International Refugee Organization to Refugees and Displaced Persons recommended for emigration to CANADA. It is issued without prejudice to and in no way affects the holder's nationality.
3. This certificate is NOT valid for travel unless it bears the signature of the I.R.O. certifying officer AND a CANADIAN visa, and the appropriate military exit permit has been granted.

FAMILY NAME TANNENZAPF — CHRISTIAN NAMES Wilhelm
MAIDEN NAME (where applicable)
DATE OF BIRTH 6.1.1911 — SEX M — DP NO. 844740
PLACE AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH Stanislawow, Poland
NATIONALITY Polish, Jewish
OCCUPATION Engineer (Nominate Case)
FATHER'S NAME Rubin TANNENZAPF
MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME Gisela KARLINER

(Signature of Applicant)

Description of Holder
Height 174 cm Weight 78 kg
Hair dark
Eyes grey
Nose ordinary
Shape of Face oval
Special Characteristics none

(Signature and Position of I.R.O. Certifying Officer)
Date 21th October 1948
Place Amberg, Germany U.S.Zone

Children up to 16 years accompanying holder.
(Dependents over 16 years of age must have separate document).

NAME	SEX	PLACE AND DATE OF BIRTH
(W) TANNENZAPF nee Mandel Charlotte	F	Stanislawow, Poland 12.5.1911
(S) " Renata	F	Stanislawow, Poland 12.3.1941

DEPT. OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE 3C 28 OCT 1948 LONDON CANADA

723296 Passed.
723297 Passed 3/c
723298 Passed

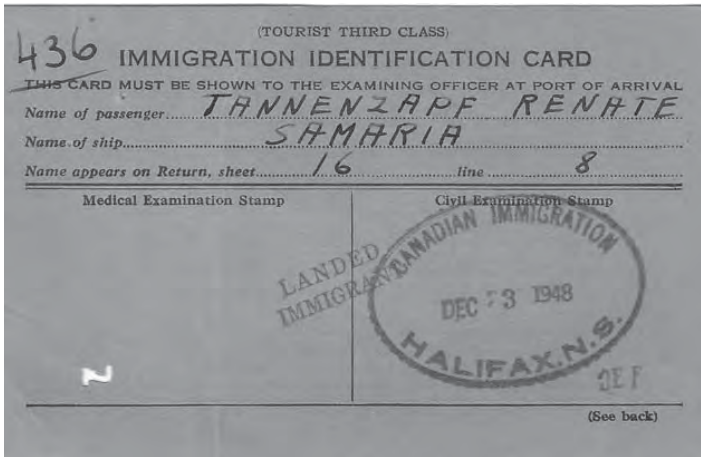
C. F. Sloey

CANADA
Immigrant Visa
Authority HQ. 8. - 83153 D
issued at
On Oct. 28 1948
Visa Officer

Valid for presentation at Canadian Port of Entry within Three months from date of issue.

Endorsed

William, Charlotte and Renate's Canadian immigration papers, 1948.



(TOURIST THIRD CLASS)
436 IMMIGRATION IDENTIFICATION CARD
THIS CARD MUST BE SHOWN TO THE EXAMINING OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL
Name of passenger TANNENZAPF RENATE
Name of ship SAMARIA
Name appears on Return, sheet 16 line 8

Medical Examination Stamp
Civil Examination Stamp
LANDED IMMIGRANT CANADIAN IMMIGRATION DEC 13 1948 HALIFAX, N.S.
2E F

(See back)

Renate's Canadian immigration card, 1948.

William, Renate and Charlotte, Montreal, c. 1950.

Left to right (back): Fellow Holocaust survivors Mr. and Mrs. Ackerman and Charlotte; left to right (front): Renate, Maxie Ackerman, (unknown) and Renate's friend Charlotte, Val Morin, Quebec, 1953.

Charlotte Tannenzapf, Montreal, 1955.

$500 patent award to S & C man

Bill Tannenzapf, working in Switchgear & Control, recently earned himself the company's third Special Award of $500 issued by the Patent Department. Bill's inventions embraced a variety of Division products. He's seen here with a testing block he designed for airport lighting control.

William (Bill) Tannenzapf in a *Westinghouse News* article announcing his award for one of three airport lighting control patents, Hamilton, Ontario, July 1979.

Rob Krakauer's bar mitzvah, Toronto, 1978. Left to right: (back) Charlotte and William Tannenzapf and Renate Krakauer; (front) Lianne, Rob and Susan Krakauer.

Rob Krakauer and Jill Nurse's wedding, October 8, 2008. Left to right: (standing) Lianne Krakauer, Susan Krakauer, William Tannenzapf, Jill Nurse, Rob Krakauer, Hank Lobbenberg and Renate Krakauer. Seated in front: Charlotte Tannenzapf.

Renate Krakauer with her husband, Hank Lobbenberg, Toronto, 2008.

But I Had a Happy Childhood

To my beloved parents, Charlotte and William Tannenzapf

Author's Preface

My mother calls me her "miracle baby." As a Jewish child born in 1941 Poland to Jewish parents, I'm one of a rare breed who has survived to tell about it. Most of my contemporaries were murdered or starved to death. Those who, like me, lived, were hidden by kindly Christians or passed as Aryans.

The Nazis invaded Stanisławów, Poland in September 1941; I was born there in March of that year. The chaos of the next three years didn't touch my conscious mind. I have no memories to recount, but I'm convinced that they do reside buried deep inside my psyche. First, however, I'll tell about the things I've been told.

Hiding and Surviving

I was barely seven months old when the first mass *Aktion* occurred in our city on October 11, 1941. Nazi soldiers and their Ukrainian allies, fortified by alcohol, vicious dogs, and their own sadism, went on a rampage, killing 12,000 Jews at the Jewish cemetery. By sheer accident, my parents and I were spared because the anticipated knock on the door never came in our predominantly non-Jewish part of town. By December, a two-metre fence had been built to confine the Jews in a ghetto and we were no longer spared.

We were forced to leave our home and move into one room with my father's cousin, Muño, his wife, Bincia, and their baby boy, Milek. When my mother was there, I was blissfully unaware of the terror going on around us. But when she was conscripted into a forced labour battalion, I spent the days confined to a crib, dirty, neglected and hungry. Bincia looked after Milek and me while my mother worked. My mother's cousin Jakob Mandel helped both my parents get this kind of work. Going outside the ghetto to work had its advantages. My mother was able to trade some belongings for food, which was becoming increasingly scarce inside. She shared it with Bincia. But coming back early one day, she discovered Bincia feeding the gruel meant for me to Milek. She understood a mother's instinct to feed her own child first.

Every day when my mother returned from work, I stretched out

my arms to her to be lifted out of the crib. She claims that my joyous smile at seeing her almost broke her heart as much as my mournful face when she left in the morning. I wonder if my sadness was tinged with hunger and my happiness with the expectation of getting something to eat.

The shadow of death stalked the inhabitants of the ghetto daily. One day in 1942 it brushed perilously close to me. I was sleeping in the crib alone in the room, when the silence was cracked by the rat-tat-tat of shots exploding in the streets below. This *Aktion*, which took place on March 31, 1942, was accompanied by the shattering of glass, screams of terror, wailing of babies and children, and stomping of jackbooted feet up the stairs. I may have heard the commotion through my slumbers and even fluttered my eyelids and grimaced, but I didn't wake up.

"Juden raus! Juden raus!" (Jews out!) the Schutzpolizei (German ghetto police) shouted as they flung doors open, dragging Jews out of their hiding places. They broke into our room and one of them pointed his revolver straight at me.

"Don't shoot!" his pals said. "That's Muño's child. Leave her alone." Mistaken for Milek, I slept on. Muño was an architect doing valuable work for the Nazis. They weren't ready to kill him or his family yet. That would come later. Had they known that I was merely a relation, they would have shot me on the spot. Sadistic behaviour from the Gestapo, the police and their Ukrainian henchmen was common. Emi Weitz describes the mass murder and deportations of Rosh Hashanah 1942 in his 1947 account: "They caught small children by the legs and threw them into the flames. They smashed small children's heads against walls."[1]

1 Emi Weitz, "From your ruins, Stanisławów: Evidence of the destruction of Stanisławów and its surroundings from attested witnesses," published by the Committee of Former Stanisławów Residents in Israel, Tel Aviv 1947, translated by Meir Weiss with Mike Joseph, 1966, 51. A copy of this book is held in the library of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Bincia, who had been hiding in an alcove behind the wardrobe with Milek during the raid, reported to my mother later that day, "Tusia slept through the whole thing. Thank God you left me the phenobarbital to give her." My mother was a pharmacist and the drugs she had salvaged from her pharmacy helped in my rescue on this and other occasions as well. Babies were a huge liability in the ghetto. One infant had already been stifled by its parents with a pillow in our building during an *Aktion*.

People were dying like flies in the ghetto, not only in the daily *Aktionen* but also in mass executions at the Jewish cemetery, where the victims had to dig their own graves before being shot. Others were taken away in carts to trains bound for the death camp at Belzec. There were also those who died from disease, primarily typhus, due to the complete lack of sanitation. And then, of course, there was always starvation. Bodies in the streets became a regular fact of life, even though carts came around to remove them.

The liquidation of the ghetto was imminent. By the end of February, the Stanisławów ghetto was declared *judenrein,* cleansed of Jews.

Prior to that fateful time, however, my mother had sensed that she had to do something before it was too late. By December 1942, she had lost most of her family and her baby looked sadder and thinner every day. I was almost two and I couldn't walk yet. I barely talked. One cold overcast morning, she wrapped a comforter tightly around the two of us and approached the main *Schleuse*, or gate to the ghetto, where she saw her cousin Jakob Mandel in charge. He was a tough stocky man who had had business dealings with the Germans before the war. His position of authority was a reward for loyal service. Later he too was executed by the Nazis. On this particular occasion, there was a quick exchange as the eyes of the cousins met before he turned away, allowing my mother and her precious bundle to slip behind his broad back.

Once outside the ghetto walls, my mother ripped off her blue-and-white Star of David arm band and ran down the cobblestone street,

fully expecting a bullet in the back. By this time I was well trained to be quiet. Just being so close to my mother was enough to make me happy. We reached the safety of the apartment of a former neighbour, who pulled us in quickly, no doubt fearing for her life. That night I was nestled in between my mother and Pani (Mrs.) Poliszowa on her bed.

My happiness didn't last long. The next day, my mother handed me over to Józia, who had been a maid in her brother's house, to take me to her widowed sister in Pozniki, a neighbouring village. Marynia and her two young sons were my new family for the next eighteen months. With my blond hair, blue eyes and button nose, I fit in easily as the baby sister. Suffering from malnutrition and one childhood illness after another, it took a while for me to become a healthy normal toddler.

Marynia treated me like her baby girl and I even began to call her Mama. I can imagine that her two boys, aged six and three, must have felt some resentment at this little Jewish impostor suddenly parachuted into their poor little home. But in the same way that my own preschool daughter used to trail her adored older brother, I can see myself following the boys around, perhaps to their annoyance, on my newly sturdy legs. They knew I was Jewish. The older boy, Vladko, apparently claimed that he had proof – he had seen the stamp on my bum!

Teasing me must have been another favourite pastime until perhaps Marynia put a stop to it. One day, when they were smoking some of the discarded butts in the yard and I pestered them to give me one too, Vladko obliged and handed me the lit end. I still have a dark spot on my lower lip as a reminder of that incident.

But these were minor annoyances when I consider how the boys soon began to show their affection for me. The first and last serving in the communal bowl on the table was always reserved for me whether it was potatoes, pierogi or cabbage soup. At night they squeezed over on the bed they shared to make room for their new "little sister," Tusia. I'm sure that it made the little boys feel important to be my

protectors. They could have but didn't betray me to the Nazis and Ukrainians who came on regular inspections of the village. And on Sundays, I can see us all trooping off to church as a family, the cute little blond girl holding the hand of each brother. The priest knew I was Jewish, and people found out after the war that he had been hiding a Jewish woman.

Unbeknownst to me, both my parents had escaped to the village before the ghetto was liquidated, one hidden in Marynia's hayloft and the other in the attic of her neighbour on the other side of the creek. From their vantage points, they were able to see me through the cracks, running around barefoot all summer, holding my tin cup under the goat that my parents had bought so that I could have fresh milk every day, and relieving myself at the pit outside that served as a family toilet. My father claims that I was by nature so fastidious that I trained myself, since cleanliness was not exactly a priority in those primitive conditions.

The goat that gave me milk wasn't a friendly creature. She regularly butted me to the ground if I got too close. I had better luck with the family's vicious-looking black dog, who became my constant, long-suffering companion. I toddled around, repeatedly swatting him on the snout if he followed me too closely, and he didn't make a sound. But when German soldiers or Ukrainian militia came looking for hidden Jews, he barked and growled, baring his teeth and not letting them get near me.

There was great animosity between the Polish and Ukrainian people in this part of Poland. The Ukrainians had nationalist aspirations and had allied themselves with the Germans in the war. This left the Poles to face two enemies – the Nazis and their Ukrainian neighbours. One day Ukrainians from a neighbouring village attacked Pozniki, which was a Polish village, by torching the straw roofs. All the homes went up in flames except Marynia's. How was this one cottage spared? The peasants must have muttered and whispered that it was some kind of Jewish black magic.

The village priest knew that his people were frightened, uneducated and superstitious. They could easily use this event as an excuse for exposing the Jewish child in their midst. But the priest also believed that they were God-fearing people, so on the following Sunday he preached about the protective hand of the Lord, who shields the innocent from danger. Anyone who betrayed an innocent was courting the wrath of God. The villagers understood that the veiled reference to the Jewish child hidden among them and they kept silent.

My parents, however, were getting to be too much for Marynia and her neighbour. They were turned out into the forest with a handful of potatoes, in rags and without shoes to face the elements, to flee from soldiers looking for Jews and to hide from the local children picking berries.

Finally, on July 27, 1944, the Red Army pushed through the German lines and the few remaining Jews were liberated. Emaciated, bedraggled people emerged from hiding places, labour and death camps, and forests, including my parents, who headed for home, hitchhiking rides on military trucks and wagons. The Soviets gave my parents jobs right away and once they were settled in the living quarters beside the pharmacy that my mother was managing, they arranged for Marynia to bring me back to them.

On our first meeting, I saw a couple of strangers. My father's thick black hair scared me so badly that I ran and hid behind Marynia's skirts, screaming, "Bogeyman! Bogeyman!"

Marynia and the boys stayed with our little family for a few weeks to help me get adjusted to my new surroundings. When they left, I never saw them again. The sadness that must have engulfed me at this loss eventually dissipated, and soon I called this new place home and these new people mother and father.

Home Again

By the time I was reunited with my parents, I was three and a half. I was fascinated by my mother's work. My favourite place was the pharmacy counter where I could sit watching my mother for hours mixing ointments on the marble slab with a back-and-forth slapping motion of her spatula, or rapidly tap-tap-tapping powder into empty capsules, or measuring out small amounts of powder onto little squares of white paper and folding them efficiently into little packets all the same size. Clients coming in would usually make a fuss over me as they talked about their ailments with my mother as she prepared their medicine.

But most of all I loved seeing my mother weighing things on her scale, adding or taking away small amounts of powder on the little pan on one side with the tip of a spatula while adjusting the other side with weights made from lead, brass and slivers of metal. First one side went up, then the other, until finally the pans stopped moving and the pointer on the balance was exactly in the middle. Under my mother's watchful eye, I was sometimes allowed to play with this magical instrument, handling the weights with a cunning pair of tweezers and weighing some innocuous powder. How grown up I felt!

My mother's pretty young Russian assistant helped her to take care of me when she wasn't needed in the pharmacy. She pampered me with treats, took me for walks, and told me stories. Sometimes

when both women were busy, my mother dressed me in coat and hat and sat me outside the window of the pharmacy on the step ladder to get my obligatory daily dose of fresh air and sunshine. After their war experiences, my parents considered these, along with healthy food, to be top priorities for a child. I watched the people passing by and going in and out of the pharmacy and, as often as not, nodded off for a nap until I was brought in.

When the war officially ended in 1945, my parents decided to leave their native city, which, like the surrounding area, had been annexed to the USSR. The threatening clouds of communism and antisemitism were beginning to mass again on their horizon. The Soviet Union was pressuring people in that area to become Soviet citizens and my father, a rabid anti-communist, refused. The only alternative was to leave. Besides, the local population was still hostile to Jews, even though most had been killed by the Nazis. Especially the uneducated peasants thought that all Jews had lots of money and hidden gold, and that they had killed Christ. My parents' fear and suspicion of their Polish and Ukrainian neighbours' behaviour was based on a complete breakdown of trust: Had these people been collaborators during the war? This animosity extended to my aunt, a Polish Catholic married to my mother's brother, even though she had helped her husband survive the war. The crucifix over their bed was a sign to my father of only one thing – his brother-in-law's betrayal of his own people.

My parents packed up a few belongings, wrapped me in an eiderdown and loaded me onto the wagon that took us to a baggage car of a train to Brzeg nad Odrą, a town near Wrocław (Breslau) on the river Oder. We were starting on the next stage of our journey.

The First Transition

In Brzeg life seemed to settle down to normal, at least as far as a five-year-old child was concerned. Little did I know that my parents were still dealing with the trauma of their wartime experiences, that finding work and food was a challenge, and that to them, things were in a very precarious state. Shortly after our arrival, my father found a partner with whom to open a store. There were rooms upstairs for us to live in. To me it was all fun and play. I delighted in sticking my hand into the large round glass containers of coloured candies on top of the counter at one end of the store. Under the counter, there was also a variety of cold cuts and cheeses in glass cases. Customers sat at small tables eating and drinking, usually vodka or beer. Soviet soldiers often came in for a drink. Sometimes they would smoke and party till late into the night and my mother loved to dance with them. It must have been one of her coping mechanisms to dampen her grief at the loss of most of her family in the war.

An ever-present danger for all inhabitants of Brzeg at that time was the menace of land mines. One was found in the attic of our house. My father was forced to stand by while a Soviet technician neutralized it so that if the mine blew up, they would both die. It was the Red Army commander's idea of equality.

I had my own close escape from these terrible weapons. My parents had hired a German girl to look after me while they worked.

One day, when she was busy, she left me to amuse myself. We usually played in the garden behind the house. In the summer, there were juicy currants and gooseberries we could pick and eat right off the bush. Once she pulled up a white radish, wiped it off and gave it to me to taste. I remember that crunch and tart flavour to this day.

But on the lovely summer day in question when she was not watching, I played with my ball alone outside to take full advantage of the sunshine as my mother insisted. I was lonely and bored. When I spied the cowherd coming down the street, I asked him if I could come along. He just laughed at me.

The cows ambled by swishing their tails, their rumps swaying from side to side. Without a thought, I followed them. When we reached a flower-strewn meadow, the cowherd stopped to let the cows graze. I sat down beneath a tree at a safe distance so the boy wouldn't see me and send me home. I didn't know the way back. Leaning against the solid trunk of the tree, I soon fell asleep under its green canopy.

Meanwhile the cows wandered away toward the river. The explosions of the land mines they stepped on could be heard all the way into town. My parents were frantic. They had no idea where I was. They sent out a search party. One of the men found me a few yards away from the dead cows, rubbing my eyes, confused about where I was and what had awakened me. When I returned home, there were no grateful hugs and kisses for my safe return. Instead, my father gave me the spanking of my life.

It wasn't until I was an adult and a parent myself that I understood the full impact of this event on my parents. After surviving the Holocaust with their only child, to come close to losing her again must have driven them very near to the edge.

Making up for the depravations of the Holocaust for his family obsessed my father. Commodities were scarce in post-war Eastern Europe. In order to stock the store and to give his family what he thought they deserved, my father got involved with the black market. Delicacies of all kinds found their way into our store and onto our

table. But I was a child and didn't have a refined palate. It didn't impress me when there was pheasant or venison for dinner. I would sit and stare at my food and no amount of persuasion, cajoling or bribery would get me to eat if I didn't feel like it. Even if I consented to put the food in my mouth, I wouldn't swallow. This enraged my father. He just couldn't understand how a child provided with the finest of food wouldn't eat when during the war he had had to make do with potato peelings as hunger gnawed at his insides. In frustration he would turn me over his knee and spank me while I howled as much in outrage as in pain. My mother couldn't stand the ruckus and would block her ears and run out of the room.

It didn't take long before my father's black marketeering got him into trouble. After taking many risks, he finally got caught and was thrown in jail. As I child, I knew nothing about this. What really bothered me was my mother dancing with the Soviet officers while he was away for six weeks. I'd sit with my arms crossed, a frown of disapproval on my face, chastising her: "Mama, you don't need a boyfriend. You have my daddy."

My father eventually escaped from jail by bribing a guard to change uniforms with him, and he came home. My mother and, I suspect, he too, had had enough of this precarious existence. They wanted a normal life and began a search for our next destination.

The Second Transition

What followed were long train rides to Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Austria and Germany. In one of them, we lived in a tent and when other tents started to collapse during one rainstorm, ours stayed snug and dry because my father had dug a trench all around it. That didn't stop me from splashing around in the muddy puddles with the other children. For us it was fun and not an indication of the precariousness of the living arrangements that must have worried and depressed our parents.

We finally settled in the DP camp at Eggenfelden, a small town near Munich. Because my father was appointed director of an Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) school, we were permitted to live privately in an apartment building rather than communally in the camp. Our accommodation consisted of one room with a bed for my parents, a cot for me and a small tile stove for warming up food or doing simple cooking. The bathroom was down the hall. Compared to the tent, this was luxury indeed.

On Fridays, my mother made a braided challah (egg bread) for Sabbath dinner and took it to the baker down the street to put in his huge oven, as did other women in the camp. I made my own little one to sit beside hers. The breads were made with egg powder provided in packages to the refugees by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) since no real eggs were

available. Our packages also consisted of canned soup, Spam, peanut butter, and Chiclets – food we had never seen before and that, when we arrived in Canada, my mother would never allow in the house again. Although we were given powdered milk, my mother and I often stood in long line-ups at a local store with our pail to get the real thing. Once a nice man gave me an orange while I was standing in line. What a marvel! I had never seen or tasted one before, and I savoured every sweet, tingling bite.

This was the town where I first discovered the joys of friendship. My best friend was a girl my own age whose parents had thrown her out of the train on the way to a death camp. A Polish woman found her in the woods, nursed her back to health and raised her as her own. She named the baby Bogumilla (beloved of God in Polish) or Bogusia for short. Her father survived and came to claim her after the war. My mother took pity on this motherless little girl and became her surrogate mother during the two years we lived in Eggenfelden. Bogusia and Tusia, we were inseparable.

On Sundays in warm weather, we joined others, by the river, where we would eat our picnic of hard-boiled eggs, bread, pickles and apples. The men, bare-chested or wearing undershirts and shorts or rolled up pants would set up a volleyball game. The women, decked out in light summer dresses or bathing suits, lay or sat on blankets gossiping and getting a suntan, while we children splashed in the shallow water at the shore of the river. After the game, some of the adults joined us to cool off. One boy's father showed us how he caught fish with his bare hands. As the sun went down, the adults wrapped up the leftover food and blankets, the mothers went home to start dinner, and the fathers headed for the beer parlour with the children trailing behind. There we ran in and out among the adults, with an occasional stop at our fathers' sides for a sip of brew.

But my father was not satisfied to leave well enough alone and just wait for papers to emigrate. In the meantime, he saw his daughter and the other children languishing without an education and began organizing a school. Negotiating with the local German school, he

obtained desks and supplies. Somehow he managed to get the use of a small stone building just outside town and he even found teachers. He must have had some help from other parents, but not everyone was delighted with his efforts, especially people who saw no need for a school. Perhaps they didn't think it was necessary because they were planning to leave the DP camp as soon as they could. For them it was just a way station en route to somewhere else. They had no desire to put their energies into my father's obsession, which was not their priority. My father had little patience with people who didn't appreciate the value of education. He achieved his goal and soon the Jewish refugee children were spending their days in school, where my father taught a couple of hours of mathematics a day to the higher grades. At the same time, he was appointed principal of a second ORT school in a neighbouring town. As a result, he was given the use of a Jeep so that he could travel between both schools. When I rode around with him with the top off, I was the envy of all my friends.

I loved that little stone schoolhouse where I started my early education. I shared a black wooden desk and bench with Bogusia, who would become my best friend. At recess we children chased each other in and out through the windows and doors, since our class was on the main floor. Our poor teacher, a mournful-looking, middle-aged man whom we called *moreh* (teacher in Hebrew), would indulgently wait for us to settle down before he started the next lesson in his soft voice. I learned reading, writing and arithmetic quickly and with pleasure, but for an only child the experience of being part of a group of friends was the highlight of my life in this town.

During my carefree days in Eggenfelden, my parents still lived under their wartime shadows. My mother disappeared twice to go to a hospital in Munich. I stayed with an elderly German couple while she was gone. It wasn't until years later that I learned that one hospital visit may have been the result of stress caused by the community's initial condemnation of my parent's drive to start a school. I think, however, that it may also have been the result of the community's hostility when my mother unmasked a man posing as a doctor in the

camp. After a child died from this man's treatment, my mother used her pharmacy connections and knowledge of how doctors are regulated to investigate where he had done his medical studies and found out that he was a fraud.

I have wondered whether the second visit to hospital could have been the result of a miscarriage or even an abortion. In her later years, my mother regretted not having had more children. In those days, many women would have referred to such incidents as "female problems." At a time when the future looked so insecure and unpredictable, many of them were relieved not to bring more children into their bleak world.

But I was completely unaware of these problems. The elderly couple who looked after me were like the grandparents I never had. She was plump with a puff of white hair in a loose bun at the back and his hair was white, too, but more sparse. He was a solidly built man not much taller than his wife. Both had ruddy complexions. She taught me to wash my face with a facecloth before going to bed at night. What luxury to sleep in a regular bed instead of a couch, with down pillows and a featherbed in a room all to myself. The old woman took me shopping to the market and introduced me to the women at the stalls. This was how I learned to speak German fluently.

After two years, it was time to move on. Out of all the applications to emigrate that my parents had made, the one from Canada came through first. My parents packed up one of their most important possessions – an eiderdown featherbed for me so that I wouldn't freeze in the frigid temperatures of Canada, a land of ice and snow. In addition we were all outfitted in new heavy-duty woollen coats. I also got woollen pants and ski boots. The coat was beige with a houndstooth pattern in brown and black. My hat and mitts were navy. My mother knitted sweaters to go with my outfits. Then we made for Bremerhaven to board the SS *Samaria* for Halifax, where we arrived on December 3, 1948.

Ocean Crossing

The ocean was iron grey; the waves tossed the ship from side to side, and every day my mother took me up on deck with a smelly blue bag with a drawstring into which I'd vomit. Her philosophy was that in order to have something to throw up, you had to eat, so I was herded into the dining room three times a day. Food was the last thing I wanted to see when I was feeling nauseous almost all of the time. Only one thing appealed to me – the pink, white and chocolate rectangles of ice cream that were served for dessert. I never turned down this treat that I'd never tasted before.

My father, too, suffered from seasickness. Since the men and boys were separated from the women and girls, my poor mother was kept busy running between my father and me, and she claims that this is what kept her from feeling any ill effects of the ocean voyage. We would all meet in the dining room, where my father for once was having as much difficulty eating as I was and there was no scolding from him about my lack of appetite. The room where we ate was lovely and large with windows allowing in lots of light and tables covered with white tablecloths. How different it was from the dimly lit dungeons in steerage to which we were confined during the night. But our sleeping quarters had one major redeeming feature – bunk beds. With childish glee I clamoured for the upper bunk and was thrilled when my mother consented.

In between bouts of sickness, I found a friend. She and I sewed clothes for our dolls and made up stories about their escapades. My mother taught me to knit and that kept me occupied, too. I also had my books – one in Polish about a goat and one in German with fairy tales. I spent many pleasant afternoons in the library knitting or reading, curled up in a large green leather armchair and was lost to the world.

We landed in Halifax on a cold, wet, grey day. After what seemed like hours in a huge hall filled with clamouring children and overheated bodies, we got on a train for Montreal and arrived in the middle of the night. People were crowding on the platform and pushing up into the train to claim relatives. One man, a total stranger, came walking down the centre of the car we were in calling out our name. This was the man that my father's cousin in New York had contacted to arrange sponsorship for my father. He hustled us out of the train and into a taxi. Except for the Jeep in the DP camp in Eggenfelden, I'd never been in a car before. I discovered early on that the motion of an automobile had the same effect on me as the ship. The window had to be opened and I had to be encouraged by my mother not to throw up. I managed to do it then, although there were several instances later on when, much to my mother's embarrassment, I wasn't so successful.

The Schwartzes were not related to us, but they welcomed us into their home as if we were the closest of family. They were our link to our new life. But a price had to be paid – an unfair one in my seven-year-old mind. Their four-year-old boy spied my favourite and only doll that had accompanied me all the way across the ocean and he wanted it. My grateful parents insisted that I give it to him – I didn't forgive them for a long time.

School Days

When I showed up at Guy Drummond School in the Montreal neighbourhood of Outremont in my special outfit made for the Canadian winter, I felt like I had landed on the moon. I looked so different from all the other girls. Besides I couldn't understand a word anyone said. My beautiful new woollen pants and leather ski boots made me as ungainly as an elephant next to the little girls in short dresses with Peter Pan collars and hankie triangles pinned at the waists. Their feet tripped lightly in shiny black Mary Janes and white ankle socks. They must have disposed of their outer clothing in the cloakroom like snakes shedding their skins. Their blond or black or brown or red hair was curled in ringlets held up by pink or red ribbons and fell gently around their shoulders. My two blond braids hung down my back with a little braid on the top of my head held tight to my scalp with a blue barrette.

On that first day, Mr. Schwartz's sister, Mrs. Smeltzer, a wonderfully kind woman, had taken my mother and me to Guy Drummond School to register me. She acted as translator for my mother and helped her to fill out the required forms. In the meantime, the school nurse took me to her office and examined my hair and fingernails. I now realize she must have been checking for lice and dirt. How offended my mother, a meticulous woman, would have been had she known!

I had loved school in Eggenfelden and made friends easily. What a shock this new environment was. I smiled hopefully at the little girls who looked like they'd stepped right out of the Dick and Jane readers used in my school. I was the centre of attention as they milled around me, chattering, gesturing and touching me like I was a pet monkey. But within a couple of days, they tired of their exotic new pet and left me to figure out how to survive in this strange world on my own.

My parents had their own problems. The streets of this new country were not paved with gold. Jobs were hard to find and their professional qualifications from Europe weren't recognized. While my father eventually found work as a draftsman – a major comedown for an engineer who had held high positions under the Soviet regime – my mother couldn't practice pharmacy and could only get employment in a fur factory. But before she could start, she had to take me to school every day. On the way there the second morning, she urged me forward to show her if I knew the way by myself. I trudged through the hard-packed snow on the sidewalk lined with three-foot snowbanks until I came to a traffic light. Then I turned around to see if my mother was coming to cross the street with me, but she was nowhere to be seen. I panicked and started to cry. Suddenly nothing looked familiar. Which way was I supposed to go? Where was my mother? What about the boys across the street who started pelting me with snowballs from behind the snowbank? I didn't duck in time and got hit on the arm and shoulder.

Just then my mother stepped out from behind a tree and yelled at the boys in Polish. They laughed but stopped throwing the snowballs. She chastised me for being a crybaby and that I was old enough now – almost eight – and I had to learn to walk to school alone. After a few more days of practice, I managed to find my own way, taking elaborate detours to avoid the snowball-throwing boys.

Although I still had no idea how difficult life was for my parents, I was beginning to lose the innocence of my early childhood. An immigrant child's life had some of its own hurdles. For example, the first

place we lived in was Mrs. Solomon's apartment on De l'Epée Avenue. This old lady lived alone and rented out two bedrooms to us. She didn't like having children around and regularly held up the example of her only child, now a grown man, as a model, well-behaved, brilliant boy. I, too, was a well-behaved, bright and relatively quiet child. I preferred reading to any other activity, but Mrs. Solomon threatened my mother on an almost daily basis to throw us out if I made noise.

Soon after our arrival, I was confined to bed for two weeks with the blinds drawn on the order of the doctor who came to the house. It seemed that I had contracted German measles, which I had likely caught on board ship. If the health inspectors at Le Havre, where we had stopped for medical checkups before being allowed to proceed to Canada, had known, I would not have been allowed to continue on the journey.

Mrs. Solomon wasn't thrilled to have my mother and me at home all day. But my mother couldn't waste an opportunity to give me extra coaching. As soon as I began to feel a little better, she read through all the Dick and Jane readers with me. I practiced printing my letters. I was writing cursive in our little school in Eggenfelden, as well as Hebrew. I soon added English to my repertoire along with Polish and German.

A few short weeks after I returned to school, I was moved up from Grade 1 since I was far ahead of the other children. I spent the next five months at Guy Drummond School, where, along with advancing my academic knowledge, I learned a brand-new skill – playing marbles. The children would make a depression in the snow and kneel or crouch to direct the marble into it with an index finger crooked in just the right way. I became quite good at this game and it helped me make new friends. I invited one of the girls home one day after school to play dominoes. My dominoes were one of the few things I had brought with me from Europe. I loved the silky feel of each of the rose-stained wooden tiles with their natural-wood-coloured holes. I still have this set and have never seen another like it. But Mrs.

Solomon threw cold water over our childlike enjoyment of the game. She complained to my mother that we were too noisy.

"Es toig nisht" (It won't do), she said.

That was the last straw and my parents began to search for a new place in earnest. In short order, we moved into a flat we shared with the Schwartzbaums, another immigrant family with one daughter, on Colonial Street in downtown Montreal, a much friendlier location for the recently arrived displaced people of Europe. The entrance to this apartment was an outdoor curved iron staircase that was so common in Montreal then and quite treacherous in the winter.

In our new accommodations we had only two rooms, but it was a communal arrangement. My parents stayed friends with the Schwartzbaums for many years after we moved out, especially my mother and Mrs. Schwartzbaum, who claimed that my mother had taught her how to cook. Mr. Schwartzbaum had a fur shop in the front room of the flat right next to our "suite." Sara, their daughter, was four years younger than me and, although as an adult she became a highly respected rabbi's wife, a much-loved teacher and a wonderful mother, at four her favourite activity was to shriek "Nein!!!" (Yiddish for no), lie on the floor, fling her arms around and kick with her legs. The climax to her temper tantrums was holding her breath until she turned blue. Next to her, I was considered an angel.

On the second day in our new home, my mother and I made our way to the nearest school. This time Mrs. Smeltzer didn't accompany us and I filled in as translator. My mother explained that she wanted to enrol me. The principal then asked her what parish we belonged to. This stumped both of us until we understood that he was asking for church affiliation and that this was a Catholic school. When we realized our mistake, he pointed us in the right direction – to Aberdeen School, the nearest Protestant school. At that time Jewish children in Montreal attended public schools under the jurisdiction of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal unless they went to Jewish religious day schools.

I soon found several other girls in my neighbourhood to walk to school with every day – Ingrid, a blond German girl from next door who had braids just like mine, and Rosie, a dark-haired Italian girl from the other side of Pine Avenue. During the Jewish holidays, Ingrid and Rosie turned lights on and off for the Orthodox Jewish families in the neighbourhood. And sometimes I helped them!

At Aberdeen School I was in Grade 3. My biggest problem was keeping hair ribbons in my braids. The academic work was easy. After school I joined the other children once a week in the auditorium where someone came in with a very large felt board on which they moved little felt people and animals about in a recounting of *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. I'm sure I understood very little of it, but I was always susceptible to a good story and being in the company of other children.

Sometimes the other children inadvertently led me astray. Playing in the snow in the park after school one day, not only was I late getting home (my mother was worried and furious), but I also lost my glasses – at nine years of age, I had been diagnosed as short-sighted. Glasses cost money that my parents didn't have. It was an all-day excursion to take a bus and a streetcar to the Jewish General Hospital Outpatient Clinic and to sit there for hours so that we could be interviewed by a social worker to determine if we qualified for free glasses before the doctor even had a look at me. And then I went and lost my glasses in the snow! My mother dragged me back to that park and we spent the last remaining daylight hours searching for those glasses. I can't even remember if we found them.

What I do remember is getting carsick on the bus coming home from the hospital. It was early evening. People were returning home from work. The bus was packed and my mother and I were standing tightly squeezed in somewhere in the middle.

"I feel sick," I said to my mother.

"We have only two more stops. Hold it back."

"I can't." With my hands over my mouth, I pushed my way off the

bus, my mother following me and threw up in the snow bank. We walked home the rest of the way. It cost money to take another bus.

We moved from the shared flat with the Schwartzbaums when my parents found one at a rent they could afford on Clark Street. It had many advantages: it was within walking distance of the Rachel Market, where my mother could buy fresh live chickens; it was a block away from Warshaw's, where she could get fresh fruit and vegetables; and it was across the street from Devonshire School. I would listen for the first bell before rushing off to school.

We moved on a sunny spring day, but I couldn't start in my new school because I had the mumps. My mother, a modern woman, an educated pharmacist, still relied on the old remedies. Socks filled with hot salt were tied around my neck. While still with the Schwartzbaums, I had been sick with "the grippe" and was subjected to *bañkes*, little glass cups that are flamed and then laid on the back to draw blood to the surface. (They are a folk remedy used to treat flu and chest infections.) Another one of her favourite remedies was *koggle-moggle*, a mixture of raw egg yolk and sugar, guaranteed to cure a sore throat. I hated it.

When I got over the mumps, I was able to start Grade 4 at Devonshire School. There were other Jewish immigrant children there like me, and I never experienced any distinction between us and the Canadian-born children except from one teacher, a Miss Vineberg. On one occasion, she got very annoyed with me when I asked her why I had lost a mark on an arithmetic test.

"You said the answer (to a question on the test) was 'one bow' and the correct answer was 'one ribbon,'" she declared. "All you people care about is marks!"

It was true that marks were very important to me. My mother actually cared more than I did. She had set aside her own ambition of returning to the practice of pharmacy because she hadn't overcome the language barrier. She was just learning English, but in Québec she also needed French. Added to the hearing impairment that she'd had

since childhood, working as a pharmacist again became an impossible dream that she was only able to fulfill many years later in Ontario. Consequently she kept close tabs on my progress in school, regularly asking me, "Where did you lose one mark?" if I came home with a test score of less than 100. She was not happy with Miss Vineberg's explanation.

Things got worse when Miss Vineberg lost her temper in class one day and threw some test papers that she had been returning to us in the wastepaper basket and stormed out of the room. A bunch of us crowded around to see if we could find our papers, but everyone except a girl named Sheila and I dispersed quickly when Miss Vineberg returned. Caught in the act! Miss Vineberg turned on us with fury.

"You should go back where you came from!" She sputtered her venom at us. Sheila was also an immigrant child.

When I reported this story to my mother that night, she was furious. Although her English was far from fluent, she marched into the school the next day and lodged a complaint with the principal. No child of hers was going to be the victim of discrimination!

I stayed at Devonshire School until I graduated from Grade 7. During those three pre-teen years, my relationship with my parents gradually began to change. I became aware of how different we were from most other people, especially the *gayle* (literally, yellow, like ripe fruit – the term used for people who'd lived for a long time or been born in Canada). We were *greeners* (green, like unripe fruit or recent immigrants). My parents had accents, they dressed in their European clothes, my mother sewed and knitted my clothes, we didn't own a television – the list was long and I was growing into a resentful child. I wanted piano lessons, but we couldn't afford a piano. So my father decided I should play the Hawaiian guitar because he liked the sound. Anyway, he was convinced I wouldn't practice. Did I prove him wrong? Yes and no. I practiced for the obligatory half hour, but left it to the very last thing I did before going to bed. It made him furious!

Adding to my sense of grievance was the fact that I grew very quickly. I guess my parents' emphasis on fresh air, sunshine and good food had its effect because I became one of the tallest girls in my class, reaching my full height of five feet, four inches by the time I was thirteen. Besides, I was what might be described as pleasantly plump or chubby. But I wanted to look like cute little Mary in my class and insisted that my mother take me to buy a proper dress in a store. This was long before pants, let alone jeans, were acceptable clothing for girls at school. My mother finally conceded and we ended up with a dress that met with my satisfaction in size 14X.

As I entered my thirteenth year, my mother decided I needed a brassiere. Off we went to Eaton's, where she picked out a pink satin confection. That night at the dinner table she held it up for my father's inspection and they had a good chuckle about it. This just added fuel to my anger at my parents.

But there was another difference between my family and the families of the other children. When a form had to be filled out for school with a question of father's profession, I knew it was engineer. My father insisted I put "P.Eng." in the blank. He had just received his iron ring and membership in the Professional Engineers' Association and was justifiably proud. I, on the other hand, was embarrassed when the teacher thought it meant "professor of English"! My parents' careers had been interrupted by the horrendous calamity that had befallen them. It was, of course, the least of their losses. In resuming normal lives, however they wanted to return to their professions. But I went to school with the children of tailors, furriers and other tradesmen, many of whom made a lot more money than my father. I understood the distinction, but I didn't care. As a self-centred, increasingly insecure, young teenager, all I cared about was that we couldn't afford what others had.

My mother's homemade efforts to sew me a graduation dress was another source of resentment. It was a simple, light blue, A-line dress that looked good on my chubby frame. She bought me navy blue pumps with Cuban heels to go with it. And the night before, she washed and braided my hair so that the next day, when she attached the ribbon halfway up the braid, the bottom half flared out in lovely waves. But I wanted to look like cute little Mary with her brown curls and ribbons and bows and frills.

Summers

My parents' determination that their daughter should have fresh air and sunshine never wavered. The first summer we were in Canada I was sent off to Council Camp, a camp in St. Hyppolite run by the Jewish Camp Council for underprivileged immigrant kids. Not knowing the ropes of camp etiquette meant that I didn't know that when the names were read out at the flagpole on arrival you had to make a mad dash to your cabin to get the best bed. I trailed everyone else and ended up in the bed in the corner between the door and the window. Both had only screens over the windows and I was forced to sleep in the heavy flannel bathrobes that were distributed to us because of the cold air that blew in at night. That first night I cried from homesickness.

Another error my mother and I made was that we didn't realize that the list of clothes given to us as required for three weeks at camp was the bare minimum. Consequently, I ended up with too few clothes. When I got blueberry stains on my white jersey, I just figured out my own way to deal with it – I turned it back to front.

My braids posed a problem, too. I had to ask the counsellor to do my hair every morning and sometimes there just wasn't enough time. But I wasn't too bothered by any of these early obstacles and quickly embraced camp life. Being an only child, I craved the company of other children and soon felt part of the group.

The following summer my parents rented a cottage in St. Sauveur. That way their darling daughter could spend two months in the fresh air and sunshine rather than just three weeks! It was a miserable summer for me. The cottage was part of a small group owned by a Canadian Jewish family whose children had known each other for many years. I was an outsider and not made to feel welcome. I spent a lot of time that summer picking berries with my mother, making jam, and reading to avoid their teasing and name calling.

In the summer of 1954, my mother gave up on St. Sauveur and rented a cottage in Val Morin, where she knew some of the other people who were also immigrants. My father came up by bus from the city on weekends like the other working fathers. On weekdays, my mother cooked and socialized with the other women while I spent time with the kids. On the weekends my parents took me on long hikes, with frequent stops to enjoy "the view" while I waited impatiently for them. Fortunately another family would sometimes join us and their son, a couple of years older, was good company. When we were on our own, however, the worst moments were when we would return from one of outings going through the village on a Saturday evening. I remember dragging my feet behind my parents, just in case someone I knew saw me with them. Once I even crossed the street. How humiliating it would be that you were with your mommy and daddy, especially in the hours leading up to Saturday night!

My last summer in Val Morin was after I graduated from Devonshire School. It was then that I met my friend Helen, with whom I'm still friends after all these years. She and her parents were from Warsaw and she had spent the war years with a Christian family like me. Unlike our situation with Marynia and her sister in Pozniki, however, Helen's family was helped by a wealthy Polish family who gave her parents jobs in their factory. Interestingly, we never knew the details of our similar Holocaust backgrounds until we shared our stories as adults. As teenagers, all we knew was that we felt some unnamed affinity toward each other that led to a close friendship. The

summer after our cottage experience, her father and my mother got together to plan what to do with the two of us for July and August, and that's how we began our careers as camp counsellors.

But it was during that first summer in Val Morin that I began to check on my mother at night to see if she was still breathing. I don't know why I started doing this, except that I would wake up in the night – the unearthly quiet of the country that is so different from the constant hum of a night in the city – and be overcome with the fear that my mother was dead.

In the city, my mother often suffered from nightmares. When I was awakened by her screams, I would cover my head with my comforter, trying to still the rapid beating of my heart, while my father calmed her down. I don't remember her screaming that summer. I only remember my nightly vigils.

Noiselessly, I would slide out of bed. The cold floor sent chills up my legs and spine. I would tiptoe into my parents' bedroom without turning on any lights and stand in their doorway for a few minutes to listen for my mother's breathing. Slipping over to the side of her bed, I would sit down on the bare floor. The continuing silence was oppressive and my body would become like a block of ice. I would finally get up and lean over my mother to determine if she was breathing. Her warm breath caressed my face. I was reassured that she was still alive. Once, she opened her eyes just as I was leaning over her.

"What's the matter? What are you doing here?"

"I … I … couldn't sleep." I couldn't tell her the real reason for being there. I didn't understand it myself.

"Go back to bed. It's the middle of the night."

I slunk out of the room and climbed into my own bed, pulling the covers over my head. A few minutes later, I pulled them down again. I needed to be able to hear in case my mother had a nightmare.

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My family lived in Montreal for seven years – our post-war "immigrant years." After that I considered myself a Canadian. We moved to Brantford when my father was transferred and spent a year there. My parents finally settled in Hamilton. I left for university in Toronto in 1959 and have lived there ever since.

The long shadow of the Holocaust touched my life and even reached into the lives of my children far more than I was willing to recognize until I was well into adulthood. But it's only been one of many influences in my life and overall, now that I'm in my sixties with three wonderful grown children and my parents still with me well into their nineties,[1] I feel privileged to have had a fulfilling and interesting life that continues to hold many rewards and surprises. Although the Holocaust was a seminal event in my life and has influenced who I am, I have never allowed it to control me. I'm lucky not to have memories of my traumatic early years.

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1 Charlotte Tannenzapf passed away on August 16, 2008.

Glossary

agent provocateur (French) Someone employed to work undercover to incite individuals or groups to commit illegal acts so that they can be arrested and punished.

Aktion (German, pl. *Aktionen*) The brutal roundup of Jews for forced labour, forcible resettlement into ghettos, mass murder by shooting or deportation to death camps.

Aliyah Bet (Hebrew) A clandestine movement established to bring Jewish immigrants without immigration permits to British Mandate Palestine before, during and after World War II. The name, which means "aliyah B," differentiates the movement from the immigrants to whom the British granted permits. Aliyah Bet organized ships to pick up Jewish immigrants from different points on the European coast and make the perilous journey to Palestine. Many were turned back. *See also* Bricha.

Arbeitsamt (German) An office established by the Gestapo to organize and register Jews and non-Jews for forced labour. Jews who performed work considered economically important by the Nazis had some initial protection from being picked up in *Aktionen* and were assigned work outside the sealed ghetto area, which gave them greater access to food and possible avenues of escape.

banderowcy (Ukrainian) The informal term for Ukrainian nationalist guerillas led by Stepan Bandera under the auspices of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military wing, the Ukrainska Povstanska Armiya (UPA. The UPA was formally disbanded in 1949, but continued to have a localized presence until 1956.

bañkes (Polish) Little glass cups that are flamed and then laid on the back to create pressure and draw blood to the surface of the skin. They are a folk remedy used to treat flu and chest infections. This is currently re-emerging as a treatment called cupping and is used by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine.

Belzec Established in 1942 in the Lublin district, Belzec was the first of three death camps built specifically for the implementation of Operation Reinhard, the Nazi plan for the mass murder of Jews in occupied Poland. Between March and December 1942, approximately 600,000 Jews were murdered in Belzec.

Brandenburg Gate One of the original gates into Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate is one of the best-known symbols of the city.

Bricha (Hebrew) Bricha, meaning "escape," was the name given to the massive organized, clandestine migration of Jews from eastern Europe and DP camps to pre-state Palestine following World War II. Estimates of the number of Jews helped by Bricha range from 80,000 to 250,000.

DP camps Displaced Persons camps were facilities set up by the Allies at the end of World War II to provide shelter for the millions of people – not only Jews – who had been displaced from their home countries as a result of the war. In October 1945, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) took responsibility for administering these camps. *See also* UNRRA.

Einsatzgruppen (German) Mobile death squads that were a key component in the implementation of the so-called Final Solution in eastern Europe.

forced labour battalion The Nazis forced millions of Jews and non-Jews to perform unpaid labour, often under brutal conditions. In some cases Jewish men and women were taken out of the ghettos each day and returned at night; in other cases they were transported to forced labour camps in other regions or countries.

Gestapo (German) Short for Geheime Staatspolizei, the Secret State Police of Nazi Germany. The Gestapo ruthlessly and violently eliminated opposition to the Nazis within Germany and its occupied territories.

hachshara (Hebrew; literally: preparation) A training program to prepare new immigrants for life in the land of Israel.

Hilfspolizei (German) An auxiliary police forced in eastern Europe that collaborated with the Nazis in the implementation of the "Final Solution" against the Jews and in controlling non-Jewish opposition to the Germans.

Jewish ghetto police In German, Ordnungsdienst, meaning Order Service. The Jewish ghetto police force established by the Jewish Councils on the orders of the Germans. About one hundred Jews served in the ghetto police in Stanisławów. They were armed with clubs. There has been much debate and controversy surrounding the role of the Jewish Councils and the Jewish police.

Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS) JIAS arose out of discussions at the first assembly the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1919 of the need to help settle Jewish refugees in Canada after World War I. It has provided a variety of services since then to immigrants. In 1955 the organization changed its name to Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada.

Judenrat (German; literally: Jewish council) A group of Jewish leaders in towns and cities appointed by the Germans to administer the local Jewish population under occupation and carry out German orders. The councils sometimes appeared to be self-governing entities, but were under German control.

judenrein (German; literally: free or cleansed of Jews) The term was used by the Nazis to describe a place from which all the Jews had been removed. This word has the connotation of cleanliness and purity.

kahal (kehilla) (Hebrew) Local quasi-governmental Jewish communal organizations that existed throughout Europe and elsewhere.

kameha A coin or amulet that is carried for good luck and protection from harm.

Komsomol (Russian) Kommunisticheskiy Soyuz Molodiozhi or Communist Union of Youth, the youth movement of the Soviet Communist Party established in 1918.

May Day Also known as International Workers' Day. May Day is celebrated on May 1 in many countries around the world, like Labour Day in Canada and the US.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact *See* Treaty of Non-aggression between Germany and the USSR.

NKVD The abbreviation for Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del, the secret police organization in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist era that was responsible for political repression. The NKVD's Main Directorate for State Security (GUGB) was the forerunner of the Committee for State Security, better known as the KGB.

occupation marks The currency used in Germany under Allied occupation from 1948 to replace the Reichsmark.

Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) A vocational school system founded for Jews by Jews in Russia in 1880. The name ORT derives from the acronym of the Russian organization, Obshestvo Remeslenogo Zemledelcheskogo Truda, Society for Trades and Agricultural Labour.

Revisionist Zionism Revisionist Zionism was one of several competing strains of Zionism that emerged in the decades prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. They were influenced by the romantic nationalism of the late nineteenth century and felt it necessary to maintain a single-minded focus on Jewish statehood in biblical Palestine. The Revisionists also believed that military and political power ultimately determine the fate of peoples and nations and focused on the need for Jewish self-defence. The Revisionists were the most popular Zionist party in Poland before World War II.

Schutzpolizei (German) Also known as the Schupo, the Schutzpolizei were a division of the German Ordnungspolizei (Order Police) and were the uniformed municipal police who also controlled the Jewish ghettos.

SS The abbreviation for the Schutzstaffel, the Nazi Party security organization headed by Heinrich Himmler that ran the concentration and death camps. It also fielded its own Waffen SS military divisions, including some recruited from the occupied countries.

Tartar (also Tatar). Refers to a Turkic ethnic group inhabiting parts of Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, and Poland. The term was sometimes used colloquially to refer to anyone from the Central Asian regions of the Soviet Union.

tallis (Yiddish; Hebrew, *tallit*) Jewish prayer shawl traditionally worn by men during morning prayers.

tefillin (Hebrew; English, phylacteries). A pair of black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with biblical verses and traditionally worn by Jewish men on the arm and forehead during weekday prayers.

Treaty of Non-aggression between Germany and the USSR Known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, so named for Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov and German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, who signed the treaty on August 24, 1939. The

main provisions of the pact stipulated that the two countries would not go to war against each other. A key component of the treaty was the division of Poland into Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence.

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was created at a 44-nation conference in Washington, DC on November 9, 1943 to provide economic assistance to Nazi-occupied European nations following World War II and to repatriate and assist war refugees.

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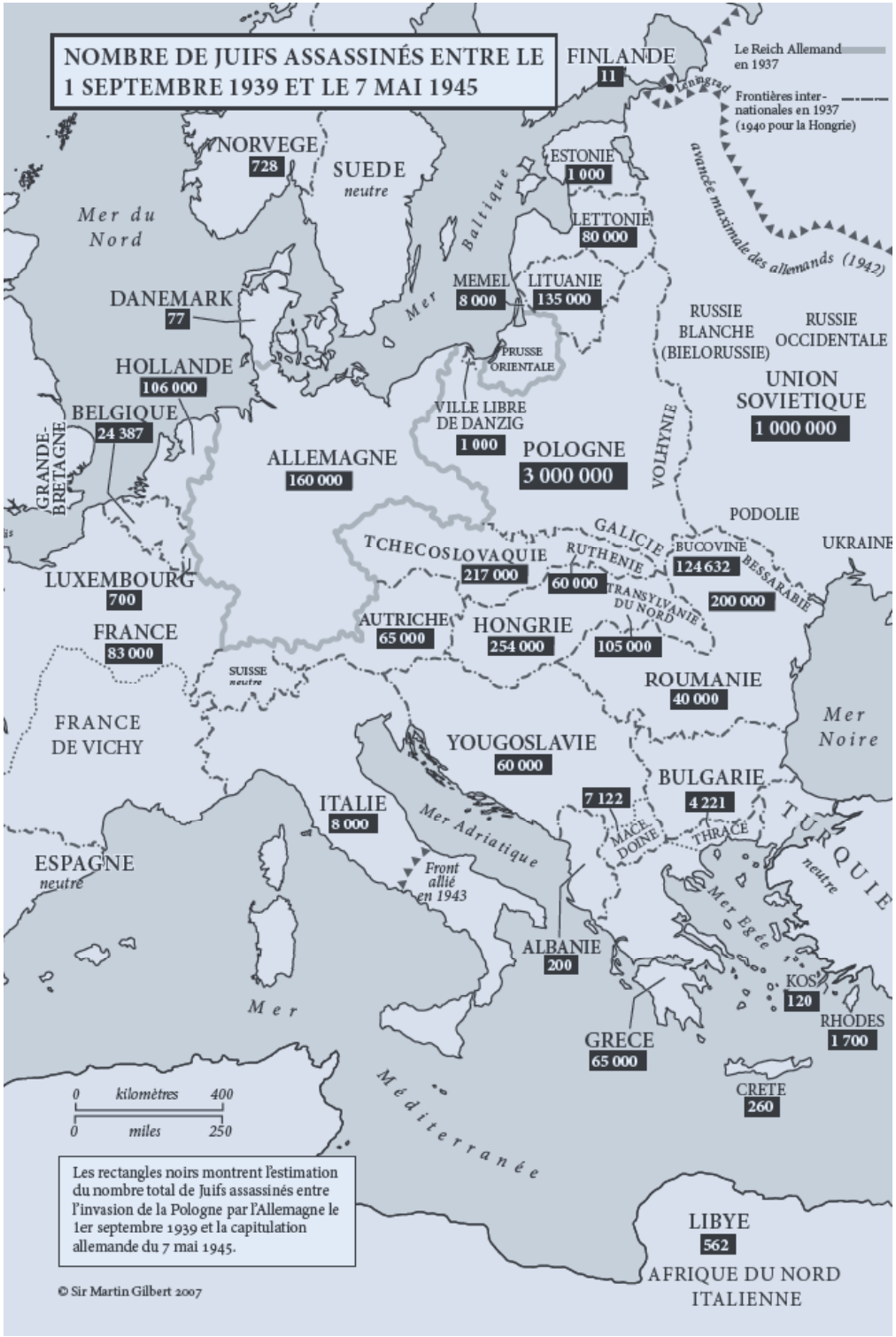
NOMBRE DE JUIFS ASSASSINÉS ENTRE LE 1 SEPTEMBRE 1939 ET LE 7 MAI 1945
Le Reich Allemand en 1937
Frontières internationales en 1937 (1940 pour la Hongrie)
avancée maximale des allemands (1942)
FINLANDE 11
Leningrad
NORVEGE 728
SUEDE neutre
ESTONIE 1 000
LETTONIE 80 000
Mer du Nord
Baltique
Mer
MEMEL 8 000
LITUANIE 135 000
DANEMARK 77
RUSSIE BLANCHE (BIELORUSSIE)
RUSSIE OCCIDENTALE
PRUSSE ORIENTALE
HOLLANDE 106 000
BELGIQUE 24 387
VILLE LIBRE DE DANZIG 1 000
UNION SOVIETIQUE 1 000 000
GRANDE-BRETAGNE
ALLEMAGNE 160 000
POLOGNE 3 000 000
VOLHYNIE
PODOLIE
UKRAINE
GALICIE
TCHECOSLOVAQUIE 217 000
RUTHENIE 60 000
BUCOVINE 124 632
BESSARABIE 200 000
LUXEMBOURG 700
TRANSYLVANIE DU NORD 105 000
AUTRICHE 65 000
HONGRIE 254 000
FRANCE 83 000
SUISSE neutre
ROUMANIE 40 000
Mer Noire
FRANCE DE VICHY
YOUGOSLAVIE 60 000
BULGARIE 4 221
7 122
ITALIE 8 000
Mer Adriatique
MACEDOINE
THRACE
TURQUIE neutre
ESPAGNE neutre
Front allié en 1943
Mer Egée
ALBANIE 200
KOS 120
RHODES 1 700
Mer
GRECE 65 000
CRETE 260
0 kilomètres 400
0 miles 250
Méditerranée
Les rectangles noirs montrent l'estimation du nombre total de Juifs assassinés entre l'invasion de la Pologne par l'Allemagne le 1er septembre 1939 et la capitulation allemande du 7 mai 1945.
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AFRIQUE DU NORD ITALIENNE

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ISBN 978-1-897470-06-0

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