

“FROM MY BALCONY”



By Helga Szmuk

Translation of the original in Portuguese by

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Introduction

Many of my friends and my sons, have been for a long time, telling me to write my memories. I finally decided to take their advice. Why not? After all, they are very dear to me. I took my time though, trying to gather so many deeds of my crazy life of tribulation, which was not very easy considering I am in my 80's. As soon as I had finished the first couple of chapters, I asked them to correct my Portuguese errors. However, not one of them volunteered. Nevertheless, I understand. I know how tedious the work can be.

My English students, or even my astronomer friends, often ask me to correct their English texts. It is pure suffering. I would rather write the articles all over again (which is handiwork) than correct what is completely wrong. The same applies to my Portuguese; someone else would have to re-write my texts I am sure.

My great new friend, **Bob Sharp**, never told me I should write my memories. Then I sent him a few pages to read and see what he thought of it. Being a Journalist, writing and analyzing texts is what he does every day. He made the corrections in record time and offered to work on the entire book.

We met in strange circumstances and at the same time humorous.

I wrote to the Newspaper, more specifically to the Department in charge of taking readers' complaints, about the terrible habit of smoking in public places, like Shopping Malls. Bob was the one who wrote the response to my complain saying I was intolerant. Of course, he is a smoker. Soon enough, there were two groups of readers, one writing in my defense and the other agreeing with Bob.

In the end, the Newspaper benefited from the debate. However, so did Bob and I. We had a lot of fun and I found a great friend - and so I think – the same thing happened to him.

On the November 12, 2002, he came to my house to pick up some pictures and

writings to scan and add to my memoirs. I felt I could express to him my gratitude by showing videos of my great passion, the Solar Eclipses, to share with my new friend some precious moments of my life.

I told Bob a few more episodes and coincidences of my life and he said I should keep writing about those fun and exciting events. I knew it would be more work for him, but he insisted.

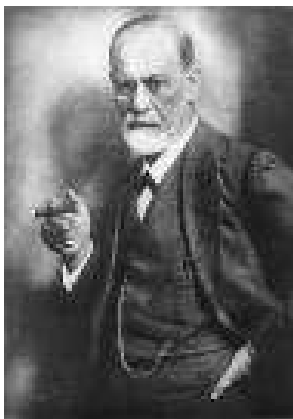
Our encounter was one of those happy events in our lives. If he had not written the response to my letter to the paper, this book probably would never been modified from the initial draft. Alternatively, it would have taken longer to be finished.

The fact is that it is finished and I am very happy. Happy to remember so many facts, so many adventures, people who are still here, people who are gone, everything, memories that came to me, right here, ***from my balcony.***

I - Austria from 1922 to 1938

I was born in Vienna, in the beginning of the Great Depression that shook almost the entire world, but I do not remember the affects of it. Years later, my brother would tell me that the difference between us was that I was a poor family's child and he was a child of wealthy parents. He was born in 1918, at the end of the World War I, in Trieste, which belongs today to Italy, but it was still Austria's grounds then; I was born in 1922 in the “small” Austria, a Socialist Regime.

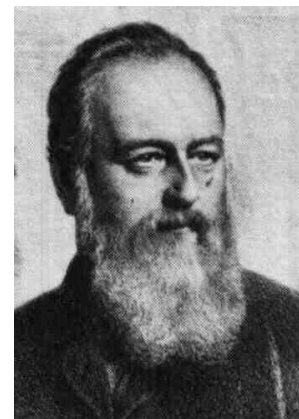
My mother, **Grete Löwy**, was from a traditional Vienna family and was friends with **Sigmund Freud**, **Gustav Mahler**, **Erich Korngold**, **Dr. Albert Billroth**, **Hanna Arendt** and many other personalities of arts, science and music. Music was at everyone's reach, which was the reason, why it was almost mandatory to like and appreciate it. The Vienna Opera House, the Philharmonic Orchestra, Theaters and the Salzburg Festivals were part of everyone's and mine lives. In our house, we spoke several languages. We always had at our table a guest who spoke English, Italian or French.



1.Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)



2.Erich Korngold (1897-1957)



3.Dr. Albert Billroth (1829-1894)



4.Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)



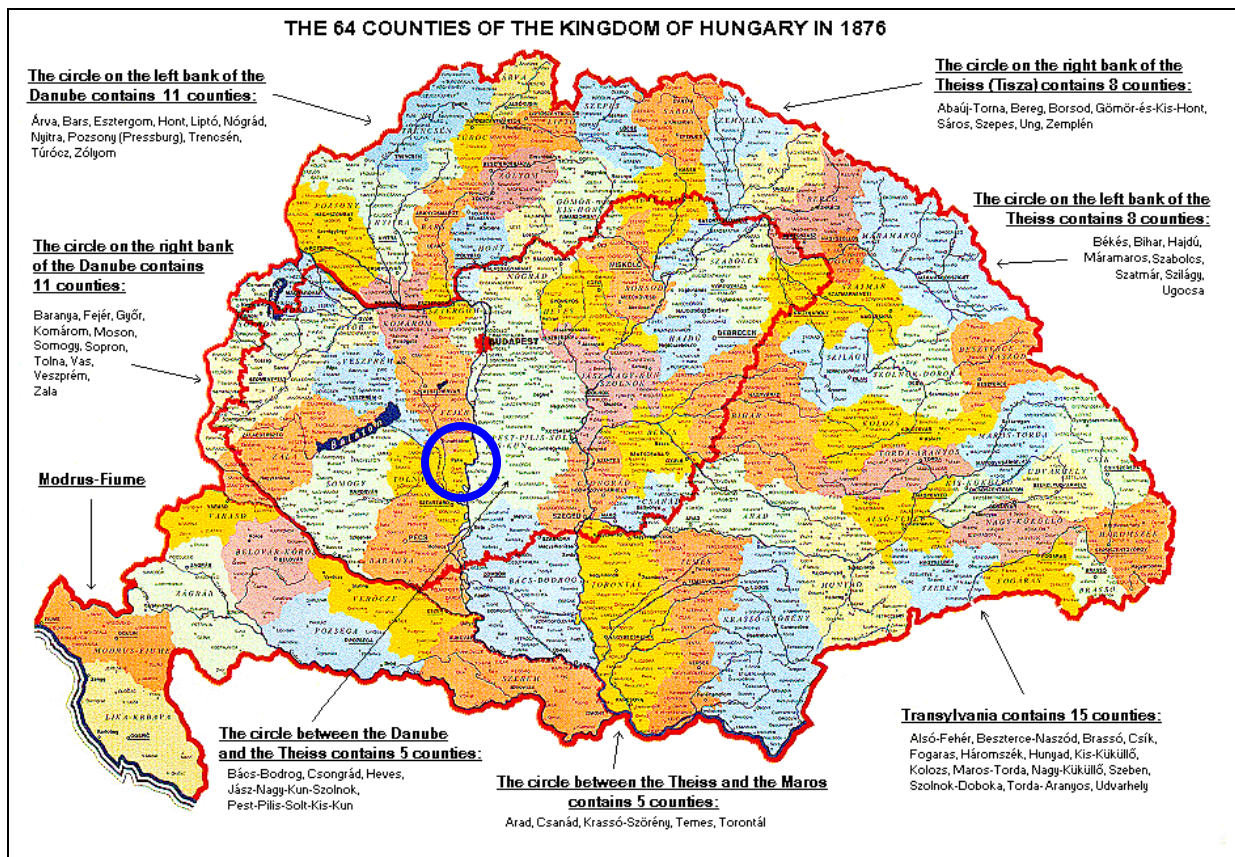
5.Hanna Arendt (1906-1975)

My father, a Marine Captain, hated Vienna. I spoke English with him and German with my mother. He used to compare Vienna with an old and experienced prostitute, wearing excessive make up and talking about her past triumphs. Everything was about the past, a glorious past, a gleaming part of luxury and splendors.

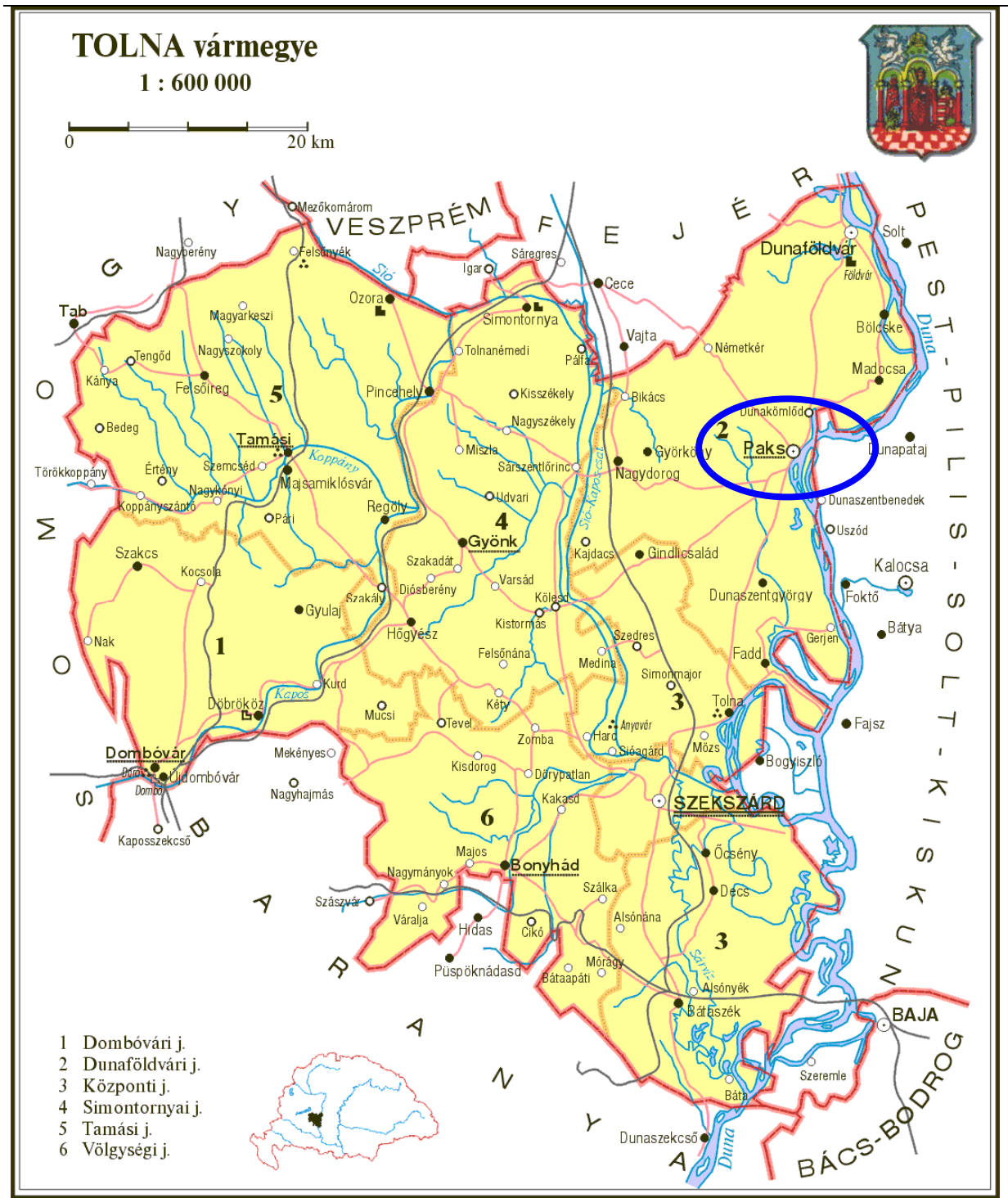
II - My father My father, **Aladar Roth** (1884) was the son of a lawyer in Paks, a tiny town in Hungary's suburbs, before the Trianon Treaty divided the Country. After the end of World War I (1914-1918), the Treaty divided the Country into to Romania, Czech-Slovakia and Yugoslavia.



6. PaksCoat of Arms



7. Map of the Austro-Hungarian Kingdom, showing the Tolna province location



8. Map of the Tolna province, showing the town of Paks location



The Dismemberment of the Kingdom of Hungary in Trianon, 1921

He used to tell me he had never seen the ocean and the **Great Danube bend**, seen from **Visegrad**, was the source of the fantasy that brought the thoughts to him. There was a bank at the Danube shore and there he used to sit, looking at the water and imagining that every drop of water would reach the **Black Sea** and mix in with the salt water.



10 - 11 - Stairs in the Danube bank in **Paks** .



12. *The Danube Bend*, seen from Visegrád.

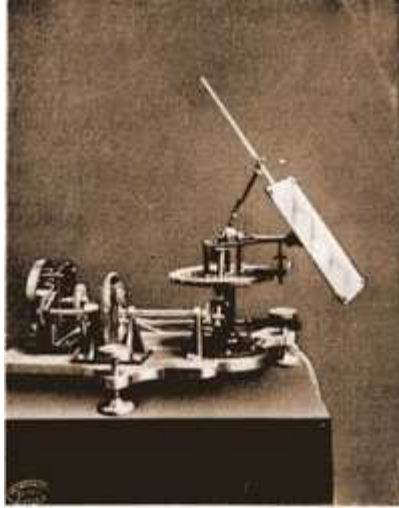
He would have never imagined what life would bring, that almost half of a century later, he would help 2.000 refugees of a concentration camp, through the same path, to freedom.

His father, **Zsigmond Róth**, planned his future well; he would go to Law School, inherit and take over his practice. However, that dream never came true.

He met a Slovakian-Hungarian Scientist, **Miklos (Mikulás) Konkoly-Thege** (1842-1916), who built telescopes, clocks and sun clocks. My father helped him and became fascinated with this man and his patience to teach him his work.



13. Miklos Konkoly-Thege



14. Konkoly's Heliostat



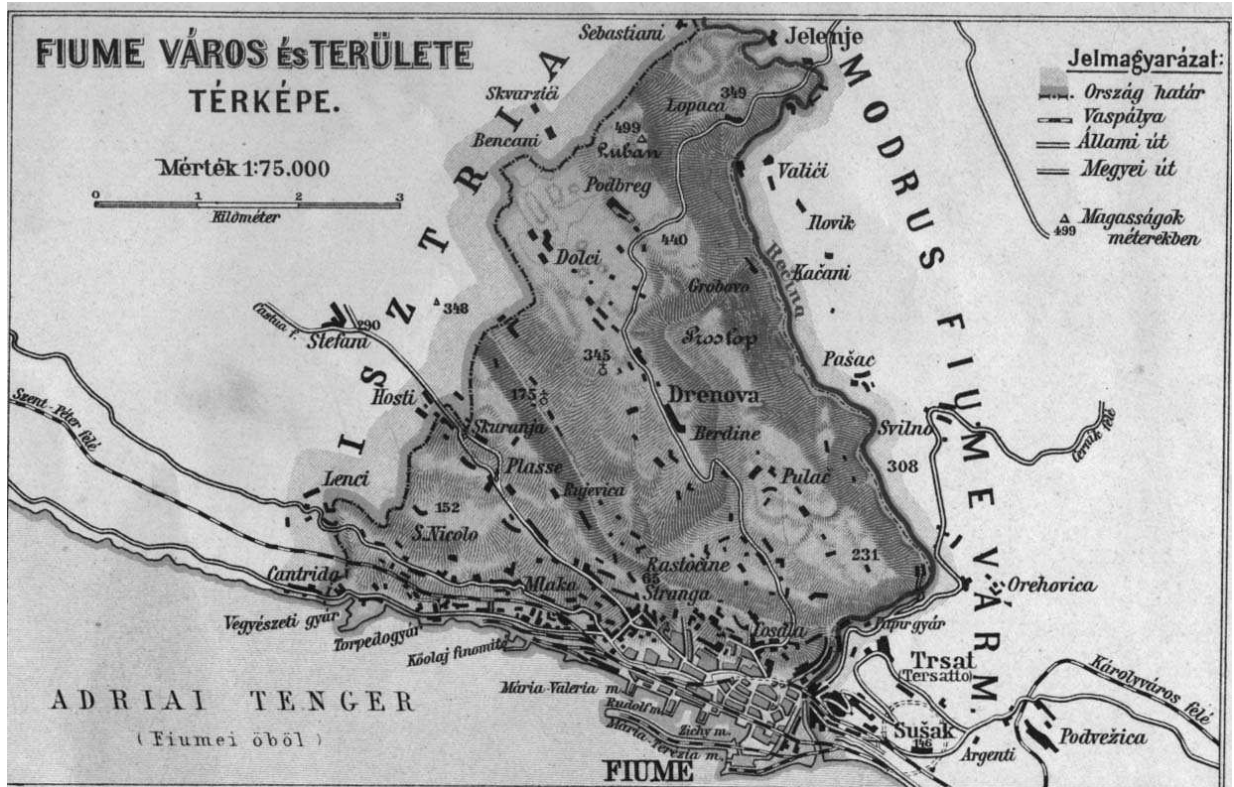
15. Konkoly's Telescope

He told my father, "Follow your heart, do what you want to do, even if it's against everyone's wishes."

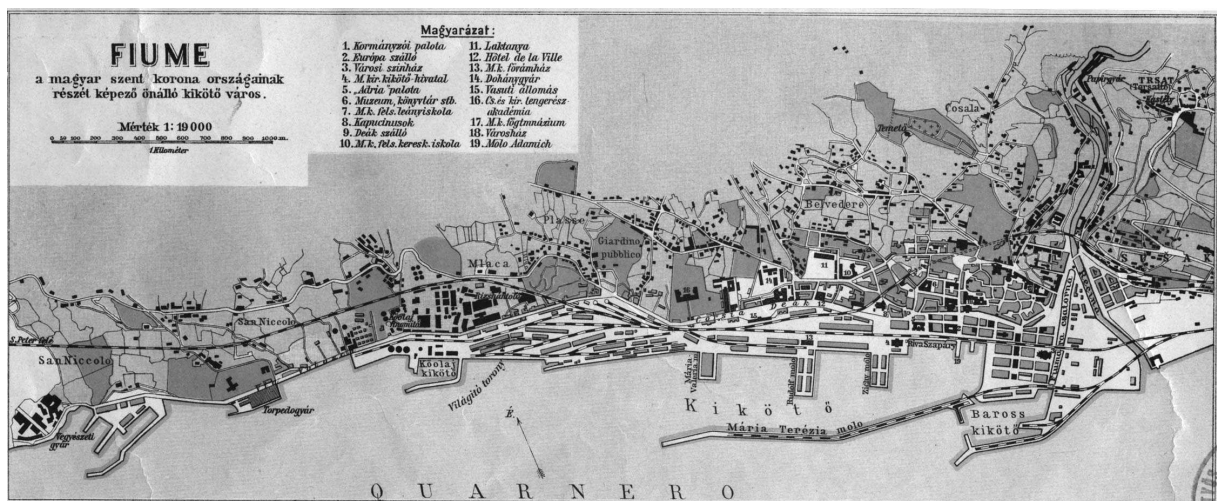


16. The port of Rijeka / Fiume, before WW2

He helped my father get a scholarship to the Nautical Academy, in the Old Italian City of **Fiume** (today we know it as **Rijeka** and belongs to Croatia, former Yugoslavia)



17. Old hungarian map of Fiume



18. Old hungarian map of Fiume

At 14, my father left home to go to school and follow his dream. His father, my grandfather, did not agree with his decision and said he did not want to have anything to do with him anymore. My father told him:

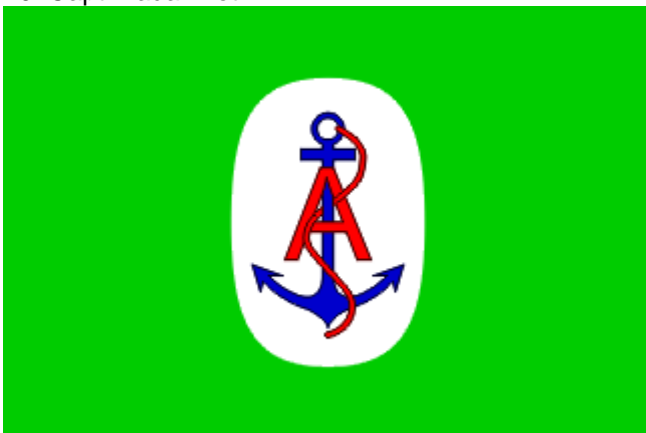
“I will not bother you any longer. But promise me that when I'm in command of my first ship, you will be there with me.”



19. In the Nautical Academy, **Aladar Roth**, the 4th. from right to left, wearing white soes



20. Capt Aladar Roth



21. The flag of the *Royal Hungarian Sea Navigation Company*.



FIUME

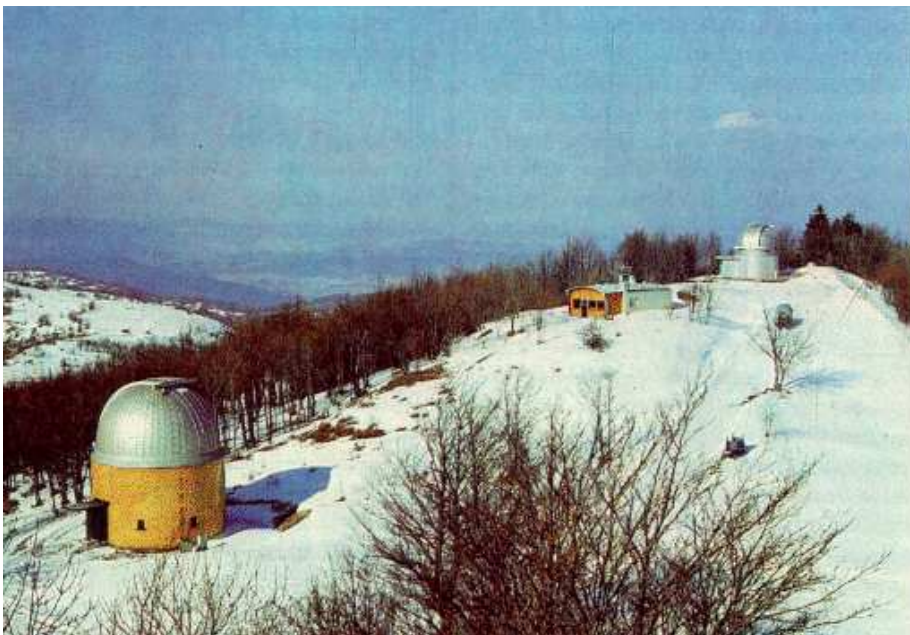
22. The flag of the Fiume County, during Kingdom of Hungary

With this promise made, he did not write to his parents until he was 23. He graduated

as a Captain, the youngest captain in the world, and his father was a passenger on his first trip as Captain. My grandfather told me this story many times and he was very proud of his son. It was because of that man, Konkoly, the mentor of his accomplishment and named after the **Observatory of the Hungarian Academy of Science**, of Budapest, as well as the Observatory of the old city of **Hurbanovo** (today's Slovakia, province of Komárom, but before also called **Ogyalla** and **Stará D'ala**,).



23. Ogyalla / Hurbanovo Observatory



24. Observatory of the Hungarian Academy of Science

The astronomers' site is also named after Konkoly. I learned that life is unpredictable

and insignificant things and ordinary people can change our lives and even history. By the way, I also remember something interesting. On my father's first year in the Academy, he had a fellow student named **Miklós Nagybánya-Horthy** (1868-1957). He later became Admiral of the Austro-Hungarian fleet. By that time, they did not have a sea, for they controlled the Coasts of Dalmatia, Adriatic Sea, in today's Croatia.

When **Horthy** came to Brazil, almost at the same time my father came to visit, he signed some documents as Admiral. A high-ranking clerk of the Brazilian Immigration asked him,

-“How can you be an Admiral of a Country without a sea?”

He responded,

-“Doesn't Brazil have a Justice Minister?”

The clerk stared at him for a long moment, meant to say something, but luckily said nothing.

This was my life of opposites: My mother from Vienna and my father the adventurer.

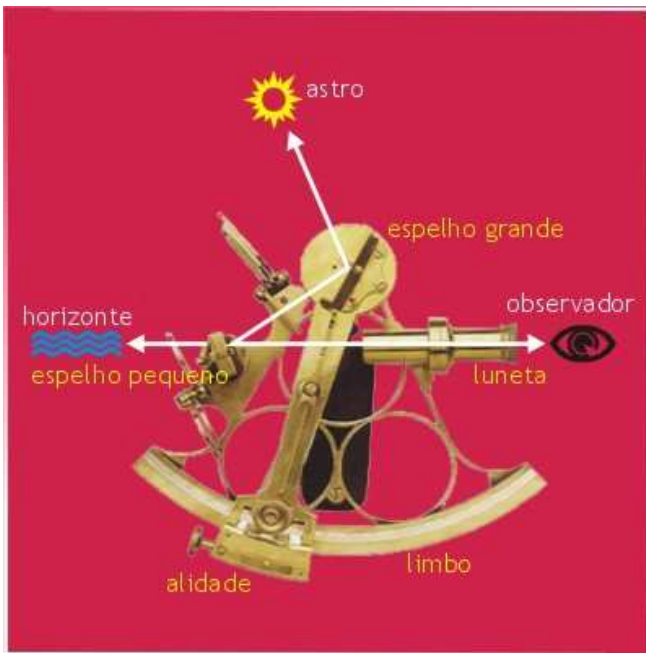
III - Childhood



I studied ballet in the Vienna Opera House. I took the admission test at age five. To everyone's surprise, I was accepted. I studied with famous people like **Willy Fränzel**, **Tony Birckmayer** and **Max Reinhardt** (1873-1943) who later had to flee from the Nazi regime, went to Hollywood, and became famous with the production of **Shakespeare's**, *Midsummer Nights Dream*.

26. Max Reinhardt

My father used to travel and many times, he would take me along. It was during these times when I was truly happy. On dark nights he would show me the stars (navigation was almost exclusively visual), I learned to use the sextant, but always continued my studies with a teacher on the ship.



27. Sextant

The sextant consists of a triangular frame, the bottom of which is a graduated arc of 60°; a telescope is attached horizontally to the plane of the frame. A small index mirror is mounted perpendicular to the frame at the top of a movable index arm or bar, which swings along the arc. In front of the telescope is the horizon glass, half transparent and half mirror. The image of the sun or other body is reflected from the index mirror to the mirror half of the horizon glass and then into the telescope. If the index (or image) arm is then adjusted so that the horizon is seen through the transparent half of the horizon glass, with the reflected image of the sun lined up with it, the sun's altitude can be read from the position of the index arm on the arc. By reference to navigational tables, the geographical position can then be determined. A sextant may be used on land with an "artificial horizon"—a small, shallow receptacle containing mercury, which gives a truly horizontal surface. In aerial navigation, a bubble octant—sometimes called a bubble sextant—is used, in which a spirit level is reflected into the field of view in such a way that the center of the bubble indicates the true horizon.

When I came back from the trips, I had to take my exams in a Public School. My mother, who thought Vienna, was the center of the world, insisted for me to come back and continue my studies at the Opera House, ice skating, etc. My life was full of contrasts, but very fun.

My career as an actress was very short. One fine day my friend **Romy Schneider's** mother, who was a famous actress and friends with **Magda Schneider** (1909-1996), invited me, along with her daughter Romy, to go see the Festivals in Salzburg. Here, we worked together as extras in a movie with **Magda Schneider**.

It was fantastic! I saw the festivals, the Vienna Philharmonic and we stayed together filming for a few hours. The action was aboard a ship on a lake and we had to wave with a handkerchief to say goodbye. We had to shoot the scene several times.



28. Magda Schneider (1909-1996)

When the movie was finally completed, my parents invited all their friends and relatives to watch the movie and see Helga as an actress. But we were surprised! They omitted the scene I was in and they never saw me. That happened in the 30's and I even forgot the name of the movie.

Some time ago - and 68 years later - I visited Austria with my son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter and in Salzburg, I saw the friend who had been in the filming with me. Finally, that day, she told me the title of the "famous" movie: "**Drei Mädels Haus**", House of the three girls.

CHILDHOOD, REVOLUTION AND CALM DEATH

IV - Childhood, revolution and death

Life continued in Vienna, as if nothing had happened; the empire did not exist anymore, the government was Socialist, life was comfortable and the government took care of everything...or almost everything. There was free school for everyone, health insurance, theaters and music. Nobody talked about a former house painter who the world would later know as the dictator of Germany in 1933. Although it was only 520km (324 miles), it seemed it was so far away.

In Germany, from the 1930s, the Nazi Movement of Adolf Hitler gained importance, taking advantage of the public displeasure with the economic and politic crisis. The *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (The German National-Socialist Work Party, NSDAP, "Nazi"), was anti democratic, anti-Semitic and of an exaggerated nationalism. With a pseudo-revolutionary speech, it became the most powerful political force in 1932. With the dismiss of **Franz von Papen** (1879-1969), the last Chancellor of the so called "Weimar Republic", the president **Franz von Hindenburg** (1847-1934), then 85, called Hitler to constitute a new government. Right after taking charge, in January of 1933, Hitler started to form a dictatorial system characterized by the repression of all who were not convenient to him. Persecution of the Jews, motivated by an anti-Semitic ideology and by the military and territorial expansion, preached the necessity to obtain "vital space" for the German population spread to the East. Due to religious and political wars, migration was stimulated, since for many centuries there were expressive minorities of Germans in Poland, Czech-Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine and even in Russia. Hitler considered the Chancellor position only a step ahead of taking over the absolute power and started immediately to form a Dictatorial system. He promptly got rid of the allies who permitted his ascent, giving himself full power. Through a law approved by the middle-class parties, he prohibited all political groups, with the exception of his NSDAP. The Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party were dissolved as well as other parties who were forced through threatening to auto-dissolve.

One day my father went to pick me up at the Opera, but he was two hours late.

There was no light (lantern Street light) in the city. The tower clocks stopped and the city barricaded. However, we arrived home, unharmed. A revolution was at hand: the workers were on strike, but the Military used force and shot at the houses. Those apartments were rented to the workers at a reasonable price. They were very comfortable, with a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, drinkable water, and a playground, etc. Many of my school friends lived there.

At home, I talked to a friend who lived and still lives in the same building,

"It's wonderful; there will be no school tomorrow, or the day after, only in two or three

weeks!”



But, on July 25 of 1934, the Chancellor **Engelbert Dörfuss** was assassinated. Many of my friends lost their fathers and the popular houses were bombarded with bullets.

29. Engelbert Dörfuss (1892-1934)

V- An estranged marriage

I was still very young with no experience in life. Little did I know how many revolutions I would live to see in my existence? Lucky for me, we did not know the future.

That episode was like “the beginning of the end”. The workers, who thought they lived in a Social Democratic Country, became fascists or right-wingers. It was such a disappointment to see the government shooting the workers! Such cruelty! However, life went on. I went on a trip with my father and my mother cried again because she was alone again. She used to say I was a victim of my father's career. Yet she married him knowing him all too well.

Many years later, somebody told me the story of my parents wedding.

It would have been a joke if it were not so serious. The Commander of a ship full of a sick cattle shipment once told me that when my father arrived at the Port of Liverpool, the authorities did not allow the ship to anchor at the Port and my father had to let the anchor down 3 miles from the shore. The smell had taken over the entire ship.

He asked this man, who also had anchored his ship, to take care of his vessel, because he had to go to Vienna to get married and that he would come back soon.

The old sailor told me that when he saw my parents returning, he knew that it would

not work out. My mother had twenty-five suitcases full of dresses, high heels and a very precious piano called a **Bosendorfer**.



30. Bösendorfer – reproduced in an austrian stamp

She imagined she was marrying a Commander of a luxurious ship; never of a boat full of sick animals. My mother told me she called her father and said,

“I want to go back. I can't take it.”

She lived on the ship for four years! Now I can better understand her sad and unhappy face. What was heaven for me many times for her was hell.

Although this is what makes life interesting and fun.

VI - The Jews in Austria

The Jews in Austria did not even know they were Jews. They have always been good patriots. They fought in the wars and lost their sons and husbands defending their Nation.

My maternal grandfather, **Heinrich Löwy**, was the attorney for the Emperor **Franz Joseph I** (1848-1916) and had free access to the Castle (he was present in January 30 of 1889 when the Emperor's son **Rudolf Joseph** killed himself). He also defended the **House of Habsburgs** when the Emperor's other son was killed during the ship's disappearance with all its crew. In Austria of my time, nobody asked anybody about his or her religion or faith. In school, theology was not required and very few attended classes. Jews were high-ranking government officials, scientists, musicians and artists.

The Jews contributed to the progress of the arts (later they continued to do it in the United States)³.

³Among various examples, it is the case of several producers, directors and scriptwriters from Hollywood. **Louis B Mayer**, the first "M" of MGM, was of Jewish origin (born **Eliezer Bert Mayer** in Minsk, in today's Belarus, in 1885); **Samuel Goldwyn** (born **Schmuel Gelbfisz**), the "G" of MGM, was born in Varsovia, Poland in 1882; **William Fox** of Twentieth Century Fox (born **Wilhelm Fuchs**) in Tulchva, Hungary in 1879. **Benjamin Varna** (1828-1908), born in Krasnashiltz, today's Poland (then part of the czarist Russia), was the father of the "**Warner Brothers**": **Harry (Hirsch)** (1881-1958), **Albert** (1884-1967), **Sam** (1888-1927) and **Jack (Jacob) Warner** (1892-1978). There is also **Ehrich Weiss** (later **Harry Houdini**, the great magician, 1874-1926) born in Budapest. After those men, others came, already the second generation born in America: **Woody Allen (Alan Stewart Koenigsberg)**, **Tony Curtis (Bernard Schwartz)**, **Kirk Douglas (Issur Danielovich Demsky)**, **Jane Seymour (Joyce Penelope Frankenburg)**, **Mel Brooks (Melvin Kaminsky)**, **Charles Bronson (Charles Buchinsk)** and others.

Then the big mistake came that I would learn about much later. The smiles and the "tolerance" of the Jews, was all a lie. Each Jew had one or more friends who declared to be anti-Semite. They would exclaim,

"BUT YOU ARE DIFFERENT!"

Later, our homes were deemed, "*der Haus jude*", or Jewish House. In Hungary, there was what we called *numerus clausus*. That means only a small number of

Jews could go to school. Until today, I cannot understand why they tolerated it and did not leave at once.

They were once Hungarian, but then just Jews. Many of them went to school in Austria, where nobody knew about their religion.

My husband **Imre** was also Hungarian; he was born in 1913 in the region of Carpathians, northeast of the Country, **neighbour of the Galicia and Transylvania, and** bordering with **Romania, Slovakia** and **Ukraine**, where many other Jew families lived.

Galicia (Polish: Galicja; Ukrainian: Halycyna; German: Galizien) is a historic region of eastern Europe (in present-day Hungary, Poland and Ukraine). When Poland was first partitioned in 1772, eastern Galicia, together with the territory to the west, between the San and the Vistula, was attached to Austria; and in 1795 further lands, both west and east of the Vistula, passed also to Austria. From 1786 to 1849 Austria administered the territory of Bukovina as part of Galicia. After the adjustments of 1815 (Congress of Vienna), Austria's Polish possessions were called the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria; and the 1815 Republic of Cracow was added to them in 1846. Bukovina (in present-day Romania and Ukraine) is an eastern European territory consisting of a segment of the northeastern Carpathian Mountains and the adjoining plain. Settled by both Ukrainians (Ruthenians) and Romanians (Moldavians), Bukovina acquired its own name and identity only in 1775, when it was ceded to Austria by the Turks, who then controlled Moldavia. Austria, which regarded Bukovina as a strategic link between Transylvania and Galicia, administered it first as a part of Galicia (1786-1849) and then as a duchy and a separate crown land.

Transylvania is a historic eastern European region (in present-day Romania). When the Turks decisively defeated Hungary at the Battle of Mohács (1526), Transylvania effectively became independent. Its voivode John (János Zápolya), who was elected king of Hungary (November 1526), engaged Transylvania in a 12-year war against Ferdinand I, the Habsburg claimant to the Hungarian throne. Afterward Hungary was divided between the Habsburgs and the Turks, and Transylvania was transformed into an autonomous principality that was subject to Turkish suzerainty (1566). During the next century Transylvania played off the Turkish sultan against the Habsburg emperor to retain its independent status. During the reign (1648-60) of György Rákóczi II, the Turks, trying to curb Transylvania's growing power, stripped it of its vital western territory. Shortly afterward, the Turks were defeated before Vienna (1683). The Transylvanians, their land overrun by the troops of the Habsburg emperor, then recognized the suzerainty of the emperor Leopold I.

He went to medical school in Italy and never came back. He did not care about his fellow citizens. I asked many of them after it was all over why they stayed in a Country where they were not welcome. The response was usually the same: we had just bought an apartment, a car, a refrigerator, an antique ceiling lamp, etc. We called that "refrigerator's politics".

Many of those men paid with their lives for that 4. We always have more to learn from those difficult times. I learn not to "love" things that are worthless or have no

value. Only human lives have values. However, money can be a valuable commodity at times.

4The Germans invaded Hungary in March 1944 and of the 100,000 Jews living in the region of Carpathians only 10,000 survived. The others died of hunger and diseases in the ghettos where they were segregated or in the concentration camps such as Auschwitz (polish: Oswiecim), Treblinka and Sobibor in Poland, Buchenwald, in German or Mauthausen-Gusen in Austria. Only to Auschwitz, between May 15 and July 9 of 1944, when suddenly the deportation stopped, 434,351 Hungarian Jews were sent in 147 trains. The Hungarian authorities, afraid that the bombing over the capital was ally retaliation; they declared the end of the deportation, miraculously saved the Jews who lived in Budapest - more than 200 thousand.

One year, back then, we wanted to rent a house in Tirol, in the Austrian Alps. My mother wrote to a recommended real state agency and told them, among other information and conditions, that we were Jews. We did not want to have any unpleasant surprises once we got there. The agent responded that since it was summer everything would be all right. Of course, the Jews' money was very important in the summer. Since that time, every time my brother and I did something wrong, we would say, "In the summer it's all right", meaning, anything is acceptable.

VII - Calmness

After that, there came the calm before thunderstorm. **Dr. Kurt Von Schuschnigg** (1897-1977) was elected as a new Chancellor. He was a cultured and moderate man and professor of the University of Vienna. He was married to a Jewish woman. Everything seemed to be resolved. What a mistake!



It is strange that some people never want to believe in bad things. **Schuschnigg** was a weak man who liked to give “the other side of his face”; he never believed that to keep the peace it is necessary to be prepared for the war. That was a great truth! The English also were not prepared and became vulnerable. Years later, we learned with the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, that only with superiority of weapons we could avoid the war, unfortunately.

For a few years, we went back to our routine: school, ballet, friends, concerts, theater, Salzburg. My father used to tell us about his trips and us, my brother and me, listened attentively and wishing we could live like him.



32. Salzburg, in winter



33. Salzburg, in summer

We used to spend our vacations in the Austrian Alps. When I was three years old, my parents left me alone, playing near a frozen lake. I was throwing rocks in the water lost my balance and fell in the freezing waters. But on that moment, God, or Allah, or Jehovah, changed many people lives. An eighteen-year-old country boy, who was riding his bike close by, saw me falling. Without hesitating, he threw himself in the

water and saved me. Only a while later, my parents realized what had just happened. After the scare had passed, my father asked the boy what he most wanted in life, since money could not pay his great deed. The boy did not have to think for too long and said he would love to study in Vienna and learn a career.

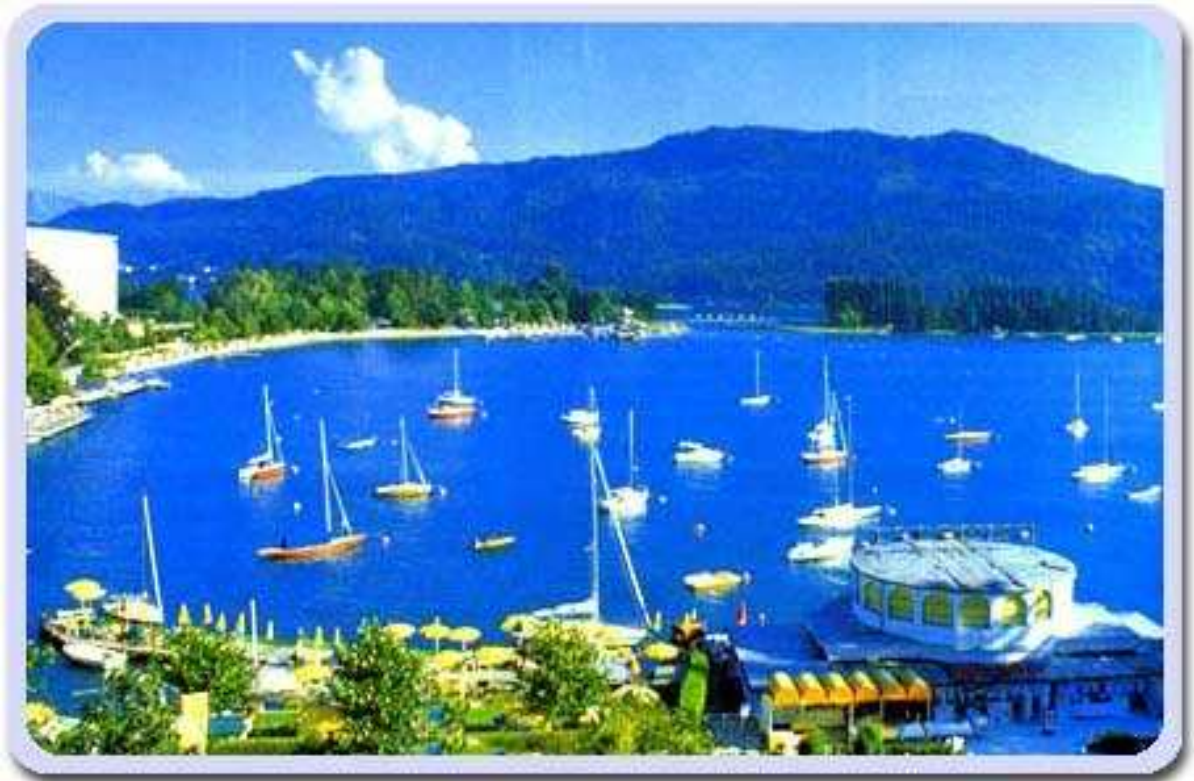
My father had friends in the Police Force (he used to have a factory in front of the Police Headquarters, just like myself today, I also live in front of the Police Headquarters of Sao Paulo - what a coincidence). He told them the story about the country boy and asked for advice. They immediately offered a scholarship to the boy, to learn how to decipher and analyze fingerprints. Years later, the boy became a well-known specialist in the subject and the entire Europe consulted him. It was also he, who later saved my brother's life from the Nazi.

One day, I checked myself in a small hotel by the road and the owner, an English man, looking at my documents, asked me if I was really born in Austria, because he was from England and had spent many vacations in Austria, in the Alps. He told me the name of the village: **Portschach am Worthersee!** That was exactly the place where I was when I fell in the frozen lake.



Seventy years later, I traveled to Texas, US, to attend a **StarParty**, a festival of the stars. That is when many astronomers get together mainly to observe eclipses, in a desert place away from everything, in the top of **Davis Mountains**. That man was my brother's age. He remembered exactly what had happened. My brother called him and they found out they played together in the same summer, in the top of a mountain in the Alps.

34. Star Party



35.The *Portschach am Worthersee* resort

TRAINING

March 13th, 1938

VIII - Training

In Vienna, the worship to arts, theater and classical music, was part of everyone's lives. It was common for my mother to have discussions with our housekeeper about a play or an opera singer. The housekeeper also accompanied me to the Ice Rink, where all the ballet students needed to practice artistic ice-skating. Many times, I had to listen to her criticism for making a wrong move or taken a move off the rhythm.

I remember one time, when we had a presentation and the Chancellor was present. I was the youngest of the group and at the end we had to form the number 25, (it was the anniversary of something, I cannot remember). I had to do a pirouette and then get down in front of the Chancellor with a leg stretched backwards and my hand in the front, on a deep bow to the Chancellor. However, after I did the pirouette I lost my direction and did not know which was front or back, left or right and ended up doing exactly the opposite of what I was suppose to do. The bow was my leg stretched backwards, almost in the face of the Chancellor and I faced the other way. It was a disaster, but he did not care. He was very understanding and even gave me a big kiss and a hug.

We lived very close from where **Ludwig Van Beethoven** (1770-1827) wrote his **Ninth Symphony** 5.

5 Although born in Bonn, Germany, Beethoven, in 1791, at age 21, left to Vienna to study with **Franz Joseph Haydn** (*1732, Rohrau, † 1809, Vienna). The study with Haydn was short and Beethoven established in the Austrian Capital as a Concertist and composer, and continued his musical studies with other teachers. In 1823, Beethoven finalized a play that would demand more work and that was the dearest to him: The Ninth Symphony. Worried with a possible bad reception from the people of Vienna, Beethoven intended to open the play in Berlin. The news, nobody knows how, was spread around the city. Immediately, the "thinking heads" of Vienna, addressed a request, almost like a plea, that he open his piece in Vienna. They planned the concert, in the Kärntner Theater, in May 7, 1824. Besides the Ninth Symphony, the Solemn Mass was presented along with other pieces. Beethoven was dissuaded from accepting the role of conductor, but had a special place besides the conductor.

On the way to school, we played, talked, laughed, etc., but every time we passed by

Beethoven's house, we were silent and nobody raised their voices. Every year, we attended the Midnight Mass in the Saint Stephan's Church to listen to the Vienna Boys. They had such angelical voices and an incredible discipline. So did the chorus of the opera ballet. The master of the ballet was a semi god! Nevertheless, he was truly a great master and deserved all our respect and admiration.



36. Saint Stephan's Church outside

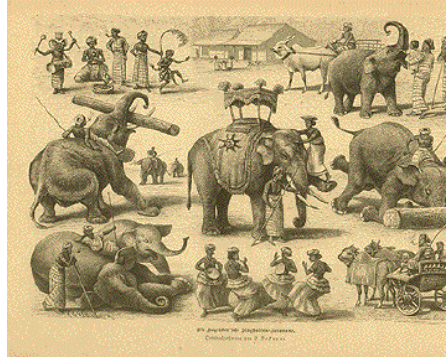


37. Saint Stephan's Church inside

We also had to work as trainees in the Circus, to learn all the sides of the stage and to learn the art of the dance and acting. I learned a lot that time.

I have a great admiration for the Circus people. Their discipline, hard work and perfection are amazing! I have a certificate that I keep with pride, showing that I lived with those wonderful people and a diploma that allows me to work in any part of the world. We were not only students of the Vienna Opera; we were also employees.

Many say today that I am a lucky woman for having a life pension from Austria, but what they do not know is that I rarely played as a child. I learned discipline and punctuality since I was five years old. The career itself is very short but mine did not even start for I had to cut it short and run.



38 - 39. Circo Hagenbeck posters

My father also had ties with the circus: he transported the famous **Circus Hagenbeck**, with lions and elephants in the ship. I also traveled once along with them and even on the trip, everyone practiced daily. Sometimes however, this kind a life can bring tragedies. Hagenbeck lost his son in the circus, killed by a lion. It was horrible.

In school we needed to study the life of all composers and the worse was **the** operas of **Richard Wagner** (1813-1883), with the complicated names of the ***Nibelungens*** **6** saga, which I could never memorized. Until one day, a relative of our building's owner died and he sent us the death notice with the names of sons and cousins of his. There it was, all the heroes of the Ring of *Nibelungen*: Astrid, Siegfried, Siegmund, Sieglinde, etc. We had a lot of fun with it.

6 The Nibelungen consisted of one or more groups of dwarves from the German Mythology. They were also called *the sons of the mist*. The Nibelungen owned a treasure that cursed anyone who tried to steal it. The name Nibelungen was later applied to whoever owned the treasure. In the epic poem *Nibelungenlied*, written around 1200's the Burgundian kings were called Nibelungen.

IX - Elite

My mother belonged to the elite, but the elite of intellectuals. In Vienna, the “new rich” still did not exist. On the opposite, the “motto” was to show the least of what you had, to spend less of what you could and never wear jewels during the day. However, there was another kind of snobbery. My mother was not thrilled with my friendship with Ruth, who lived in the same building, simply because her mother used to listen to popular music on the radio. Popular music in Vienna was **Johann Strauss** (1804-1849), **Joseph Lanner** (1801-1843), etc.

A friend of hers was engaged to a dentist and my mother was shocked with the way he pronounced the word *hunger* with a polish accent. They were married and lived together for more than 50 years. But my mother was a leftist, which also was “chic”!

My grandfather, who used to sit together with **Sigmund Freud**⁷ at the public school, told us with pride, that he was arrested in college, for being a leftist.

⁷ **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939), psychoanalysis pioneer, was born in **Freiberg**, in **Moravia** (german: “**Mähren**”), region of important ethnic German languages minority, then part of the **Austro-Hungarian Empire**, but currently called **Přibor**, in the **Czech Republic** (**Tschechische Republik**). His father, Jacob, was born in **Tysmienica** (also called *Tusmjenica e Tismenits*), city of then Austro-Hungarian province of **Galicia** (“**Halyczyna**”, **Galizien**”), where the majority of the population was from Polish and Ukrainian origin, after being passed to Ukraine, the city is now in Poland grounds. His family moved to Vienna when he was a child.

When my brother brought bad grade from school, my grandfather used to say:

- I used to study at night under candle light!

My brother used to say that our worst sin was to have electric light.

On the other hand, my mother, who was born in 1896, used to say with pride that she had never lived without telephone or hot water. She studied at the Vienna music conservatory and her teachers were great masters.

She and her classmates were invited by **Gustav Mahler**⁸ to watch his concerts and applaud. In our house, there was always chamber music, quartets, trios and famous musicians like **Erich Korngold** frequented our house.

8 **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911) was born in **Kalischt**, in Bohemia (german: "*Böhmen Koenigreich*", Austria, during the Austro-Hungarian **Empire**), which now is **Kaliste**, in the Czech Republic.

My brother **Paul** was obligated to study violin and I always heard that he was a second Mozart. Years later, in New York, he told me that he hated the violin and was not talented at all. When my mother was about to have my brother, Korngold took her to the hospital, because my father was fighting in a ship at the World War I. She told me that they were playing in four hands when she started having contractions. My brother and I always thought that Korngold was his father, reason why we always thought Paul was a genius... We will never know. Korngold was very different from my father who never went to concerts or operas and he hated all that snobbery. I thought it had its charms though.

Paul George Roth died at New York in dec, 4, 2006. He was 86 years old.

X - March 13th, 1938

Thirteen of March 1938. The day when everything changed, our lives sank and the impossible happened. But let me start from the day before, 12th of March. In the morning, I went to school and in the afternoon, I had ballet classes at the Opera. At 7:00 PM that day, I left the Opera for the last time in my life. But nothing, absolutely nothing seemed different on that day. At the trolley, I saw less people than usual, but I did not think much of it. It was my father's last day at the marble factory too. Our family dinner at the balcony of our apartment was also the last one that night. I wonder why the clairvoyants did not see that anything was about to happen. They are supposedly so clever!

A week later, there would have been elections in Austria, but everybody already knew that the social democrats were going to win again. There were advertising banners and chalk writings on the ground with the social-democrats propaganda. Very little people knew about the radical change that would take place the next day.

The Nazi Party was illegal, nobody knew how many members they had, and yet we thought it was an insignificant number. The owner of our building who also owned the building next door was one of them. Although we knew about him, we did not tell on anybody or minded somebody else's business. He could not make us leave and we had little to talk about with each other. We sent him the rent check every month and that was it. It was him who later warned us that my brother was in danger and we should hide him. Our building was one of the first ones to have a Nazi flag on the window.

He knew about everything. He was an educated man and taught German at the University. He wrote books and he was different from the common people who yelled at the streets "Out with the Jews!" Now, let me talk about the day after, March 13.

XI - Anschluss, annexation

Austria did not have an Army but it did not need one. The Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, a great friend of Austria and friend of the assassinated **Chancellor Dörfuss**, promised that in case of a German invasion, he would send his troops to *Brenner Pass* to defend Austria's independence. It was a good joke for he was the first one to declare his loyalty to Hitler.

We went to bed on the twelfth and awoke the next day with an enormous swastika flag touching our terrace. What did that mean? We turned the radio on and we heard: the German troops had crossed the borders and had called the Austrians!

Schuschnigg was arrested and a substitute - a *Gauleiter* - was nominated. His name was **Artur Seiß-Inquart** (1892-1946).

The Jews were famous for telling the best jokes in the most serious situations of their history. They called the *Gauleiter Seiß* the "*Scheiß*" (shit) *Inquart*. His speech makes me tremble up to this day (64 years later). "*The capitalists Jews ruined the Country but all is going to change*". He made a serious grammar mistake that only Freud can explain. He was a rude uneducated man and he meant to say "Gather together to finish with the enemy".



In German that would translate *Tretet alle zusammen*, but he said "*Tretet ALLES zusammen*", which means: "Let's finish with everything".

40. Artur Seyss Inquart poster

The prophecy had become truth.

It is strange how a person can behave differently when they belong to a group. All of a sudden, the Vienna people who were happy, pacifists, classical music and art lovers, became ferocious beasts. I have to admit what everyone noticed, the women were the most radicals and fanatics.

A few days later, Hitler was giving a speech in a public place and I saw women throwing themselves at his feet and screaming "*Heil Hitler*". One of them yelled: "*I want to have a son of the Fuehrer*".

It might have been from this day on that I started to distrust women. Who knows, maybe somebody will be able to explain. The great actor **Charles Chaplin** tried: in the movie "The Great Dictator", the Hitler's character, (personified in *Hinkel*, a fictitious name) did not say anything meaningful, only incoherent words and still people applauded. That satire was the best one I have ever saw in my entire life.

My father wanted to go to his factory but his accountant who worked for him for twenty years barred him at the entrance. He had taken ownership of the factory. I was barred at the entrance of my school, all of that right on that first day. But the worse was still to come.

XII - The day after

From that day on, I learned many things. First, I learned about what I am. I am a Jewish and will always be. It is no use to try to deny it. The genes and roots will pass to the future generations until the end of humanity. You could have had many litters of holy water but it would have been of no use. I know many descendents of **Marranos***, baptized for many generations but... they do not eat pork, the women light candles on Fridays. They do not drink alcohol and many other things. Strange enough, we never went to a synagogue, never were discriminated and coincidence or not, all of my friends were Jews and my parents and grandparents married Jews (all said to be atheists).

***Marranos** (Spanish and Portuguese, probably from the Arabic *moharrama* or *muharram* or *ma'ram* meaning "a forbidden thing"), were Sephardic Jews (Jews from the Iberian peninsula) who were forced to adopt the identity of Christians. Either through coercion because of the persecution of Jews by the Spanish Inquisition and Portuguese Inquisition, or who, for form's sake, became Catholic converts. Many Marranos maintained their ancestral traditions as crypto-Jews, by publicly professing Catholicism but privately adhering to Judaism.

My sons always made Jewish friends at the park without knowing they were Jews.

Many situations, some even comic, occurred because of that. Here are some examples. Our super who also cleaned our building, had a son a little younger than me. We played together, despite my mother's discrimination. On March 14, two days after the *anschluss*, he came to our house and told us he was a Jew (has an employee of a building owned by a famous Nazi) but his wife was not and he was going to disappear so his wife and son would not suffer because of him.

I saw him in Israel some time later. He was a Jewish activist and member of the **Betar** (extremist Zionists) and reason why he was able to flee so fast is that the organization helped him. My father was an English citizen and so were we but my mother insisted in keeping her Austrian citizenship. How is it possible men like my father, independent, successful to be so influenced and dominated by a woman? I never had the answer.

I had a friend, a classmate whose name was **Kitty Pasternak**. Her family had a small

grocery store on a street near my house. They sold kosher chicken and geese. My mother did not tolerate my friendship with her, “with those people”.



A few days later, an American flag was on the top of the building they lived. The girl's uncle was the Hungarian **Joseph (Joe) Pasternak** (1901-1991), the great Hollywood producer who discover **Deanna Durbin** (1921) and many other movie stars. He simply bought the whole building and nobody could touch his family who was protected by the United States government.

41. Joe Pasternak (1901-1991)

But he was wise and left Austria much before everything happened. Prejudice was the time's flag. Another friend thought her father was a Jew. Her mother told her that she had been adopted and was not a Jew, but she said:

- If my father never let me feel like I was not his daughter now I will not let him feel I am not his daughter. They ran together. She was lucky for not going through the war in Austria.

XIII - Pasternaks

The Pasternaks left quickly: the uncle sent the visas, the money for the tickets and “those people” were gone. The United States flag remained on the building.

Many years later, I went to a synagogue in Los Angeles and asked the rabbi if he knew the Pasternaks. He promptly helped me to get in touch with them.

It was a joy! I still had a school picture where we were together, **Kitty Pasternak** and I and I gave her a copy.

The scheduled elections never happened. But the Jews were obligated to wash the streets and sidewalks to remove the chalk propaganda. It was a terrible sight: older men and women, on their knees washing the ground.



42. Jews forced to wash the pavements at Vienna, march / 1938

Many of the elite of Vienna including the artists put the *Star of David* on their chest and joined the Jews to wash the streets. **Magda Schneider** (1909-1996), **Theo Lingen** (1903-1978), **Raoul Aslan** (1886-1958), the great *Mephisto*, **Dagny Servaes** (1897-1961) and many more.



43. Theo Lingen
(1903-1978)



44. Magda Schneider
(1909-1996)



45. Raoul Aslan
(1886-1958)



46. Dagny Servaes
(1897-1961)

I will never forget that! They were the class of the artists from the theater, opera and circus. They were the elite of humanity. They, who always represented the pain and joy of the world, now were overcoming themselves.

Seiss (*scheiss*) Inquart who screamed against the Jews: “moneylenders, bankers”, now screamed: “the communists Jews”. Again, there came the Jews with their jokes. A saying that remained was “*If there's little rain, lots of rain, earthquakes, anything bad, the cyclist is to blame*”. But the Jews’ only concern then was to leave the Country, but how? All the money, the jewels, everything had been confiscated and nobody wanted to shelter the poor Jews.

THE DOORBELL TRAUMA

GOODBYE TO AUSTRIA

XIV – The doorbell trauma

Only the Jews who had rich relatives abroad or famous people like **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939), **Albert Einstein** (1879-1955), the writer **Stefan Zweig** (1881-1942) did not have problems finding a place to emigrate. Even Einstein said that at the time of the war that he was afraid that a spy could have infiltrated in the conferences they had in *iidiche*. Many refugees were scientists Jews who were involved in researches.



The great choreographer and master **Max Reinhardt**, was invited by *Metro Goldwin Mayer* ("MGM") to work in *Hollywood*, where he became a famous and rich man. Pasternack also hired the actress **Hedy Lamarr** (Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler, 1913-2000) star of movies like *Ecstasy* and *Samson and Delilah*. Her father, **Emil Kiesler**, was a banker in Vienna and a friend of my father.

47 - 48 Hedy Lamarr (1913-2000)

One day our landlord's son rang our doorbell, which it had not happened in sixteen years. Scared, my mother opened the door. That was one of the traumas that never left us. Every doorbell ring meant panic. Is it the **Gestapo** 9 ? Are we going to be sent to a concentration camp? We called that "the doorbell trauma". Nobody who has not gone through that can imagine what it is. But the man had simply come to warn us that we should hide my brother because the next day they would come to search the building for Jews or hidden communists.

9 **Gestapo** is the German acronym for **Geheime Staatspolizei**, which means "the secret police of the state". It was the politic police of the Nazi Germany; created in 26 of April of 1933 by **Hermann Goering** (1893-1946) and reorganized in 1936 by **Reinhard Heydrich** (1904-1942). It passed under the control of **Heinrich Himmler** (1900-1945) in 1934. The police worked without a court, deciding all the sanctions that should be applied. It became known first in Germany and in all occupied Europe, by the relentless terrors of its methods. The Gestapo represented the arbitrator and horror of the Nazi forces.

What a strange thing. He was a first hand Nazi but still had a conscience. At that moment, everyone was in panic and Paul needed to leave the Country right away (he was twenty-one and a left-wing sympathizer). In fact, on the next day, they came for my brother - but he was not there anymore.

I never understood why our landlord's son warned us about Paul. We warned Ruth's father, who left on the same night. The person who warned us was a known Nazi, for a long time, to whom Jews or communists were synonym of swear words. Why did he do that? Did he have a conscience? Or was that a common thing at that time: "all Jews are pigs, but you are different, you are house Jews"? (*Haus juden*) I will never know. Who knows, maybe a psychologist could explain. The fact is that an anonymous hero saved Paul.

Communists: everyone knows my opinion about communism or any other totalitarian regime. But in the years 1938 - 1939, the communists saved many people. They risked their lives to shelter people who were in danger. I can understand why Hitler always talked about communists Jews. There was not any other alternative: fascism or communism.

Paul had a friend and his adopted father sheltered many young people. He was suspected to be a friend of the communists. Nobody knew exactly who was or had been a sympathizer, it was too dangerous. But he sent his son to Sweden with the help of the king of that Country so not to risk his life. Nobody there was a Jew.

Many years after we crossed the Austrian's borders, we often went to the house of that Paul's friend. His adopted father had died. But in Israel, I received from him many letters of support and encouragement. His name was **Dr. Rieder**, a psychiatrist doctor who treated delinquent youngsters. He was a hero.

Then my parents remembered of my savior who worked in the police force. He had an idea: my brother's name was **Paul Georg Roth** or **P.G. Roth**; P.G. was the initials for *Partei Genosse*, member of the party. Without having to fake anything, he used this name **PG Roth** and got the passport, but the next problem was to get the visa. But where would he go? Here is another Jew's joke: "a Jew went to the office supply

store and asked for a globe, he turned himself all around it and asked: do you have another one?"

There was no place to go. Everybody felt sorry for the Jews but nobody opened their doors for a Jew with no money. Then my father had a great idea: an act that saved not only our lives, but thousands more.

He offered it to the Israel government, which was at that time the Palestine under English domain. Every year, only a small number of Jews could emigrate to Israel (to please the Arabs), a very small number. It was almost impossible to be chosen. My father offered to take the Jews on a boat through the **Danube River** to the **Black Sea** and then to Israel (all illegally). In exchange, he wanted a visa for his son and daughter. The offer was accepted but my brother did not receive his visa. They took him illegally out of Austria and then to **Palestine**. Paul had a visa to enter the US waiting for him there (through the Masonry). But the quote was complete and was necessary to wait six or eight months. Anyhow, he could wait safely in Israel. I received a visa and a scholarship for two years in one of the best boarding schools for girls with all expenses paid.

We lived on the second floor. On the third floor, there was a vacant apartment where a family of Jews used to live until they were evicted. Soon, a friend of our landlord moved to that apartment, a Nazi in the illegality. He had a wife and a daughter younger than me. Predictably, they did not talk to us.

One night I was looking out the window to the stars, as always. The window faced the north side and the Ursa Major was right in front of me. I could hear the train coming and always checked the time with my sidereal time clock. My father taught me how to read through the stars which is the more precise way to see the time in the universe. I did that every night and always discovered something beautiful and new in the sky.

On that night, something bizarre happened. I heard a loud noise coming from up above, the window from the apartment on the top floor opened and something big and heavy fell down in the dark. It was the new neighbor who jumped out the window

on an attempt to kill himself. He thought he was going to be called to serve on a high ranking position. But the Germans did not trust the Austrians and nobody got a high position. He did not die though. He fell on top of a tree that kept him from falling hard on the ground, but he never walked again.

Later my friend **Ruth** wrote me saying that unfortunately that man was lucky and did not have to serve in the war. I like to think that his real punishment came later when his daughter went to England after the war and married a Jew. His grandchildren were Jews. The worse punishment he could have gotten.

XV - To leave home

Now it was our turn to leave home. Paul had left thanks to my father. I will never forget the day **Ruth** and I watched **Paul** and her father leave. Her father never came back. Ruth's mother was catholic and her parents had been divorced. It was not uncommon. There had been many mixed marriages, arranged in hope to save their children. But that did not always happen.

Ruth's father had a brother in **Antwerp**, Belgium. He was a businessman who worked with diamonds. Few had the luck of having a rich brother living abroad! He crossed the border illegally and arrived safe and sound to Antwerp. But after the German invasion in 1940, almost all Belgian Jews were killed.

I liked him very much. He was always ready to help us with our homework. I loved to be with **Ruth** and her family who were a modest and close family separated by the Nazis. But they were not the only ones.

I went to live with an old man who had been married to my aunt. They were divorced before I was born but still he was nice enough to invite me to live with him. He was a grumpy old man whose only love in life was his stamp collection. My parents went to live with my mother's cousins. Her two cousins were married although first cousins between themselves and their union resulted in a problem child. Their boy was nineteen then and until about 18 he was a straight A's boy. But he spoke with difficult

and wet his pants.

He was one of the few chosen for a scholarship for the University of Jerusalem. It was for the English to choose and not for the Jews. When the boy went to get his passport, they made him sign a document waiving his rights to come back to Austria. I had to do the same. The boy asked them "But what if one day the regime changes?"

They shot him right there and called his parents to come and take his body. My parents never recovered from that shock. His parents did not want to live anymore.

They refused to emigrate but with my mother insistence, they agreed to spend the rest of their lives with a relative in **Riga**, capital of **Latvia** in the Baltic Sea by Russia's border. The German also entered that Country in 1941 and killed almost all Jews. I do not know how I could take all that. When I hear teenagers complain about their parents being so protective or someone whose boyfriend forgot their birthday I confess I feel envy of having the luxury of complain about banalities.

XVI – Lack of Food



I lived with my uncle at the **Schwartzenberg platz** in downtown Vienna, which was also the place where Hitler used to give his speeches. He stayed in a hotel where my father was hired to renovate the marble work. The sign with the hotel's name made of bronze is still there.

49. Schwartzenberg platz in 1938

My father said if he only knew, he would loose the screws that held the sign so the bronze and marble would fall on the *Fuehrer's* head.

Again, I should have sued the clairvoyants who did not warn us. Many fled to Czechoslovakia and Hungary but my father always said, that was nonsense because soon they would also be seized. Sure enough, a year after Austria it was Czechoslovakia's turn. It always happened on a Friday.

Why was that? Was it superstition maybe? No it wasn't. It was simply because the parliaments of the other Countries closed on Fridays afternoon until next Monday.

Then they would gather again to make decisions for the next few days. It's the price of democracy. But was it worth it? Yes it was. The same way that ingratitude is the price of generosity, which is also worth having. Poland was invaded on a Friday, January 9, 1939, the beginning of the World War II.

In Vienna, the women yelled *Wir danken unserem Fuehrer* (we thank our fuehrer). But soon after when butter, milk, eggs and cheese disappeared from the market (The German brought all to Germany) the same women carried empty baskets on their heads and screamed, "Be thankful to our *fuehrer*".

XVII – Goodbye to Austria

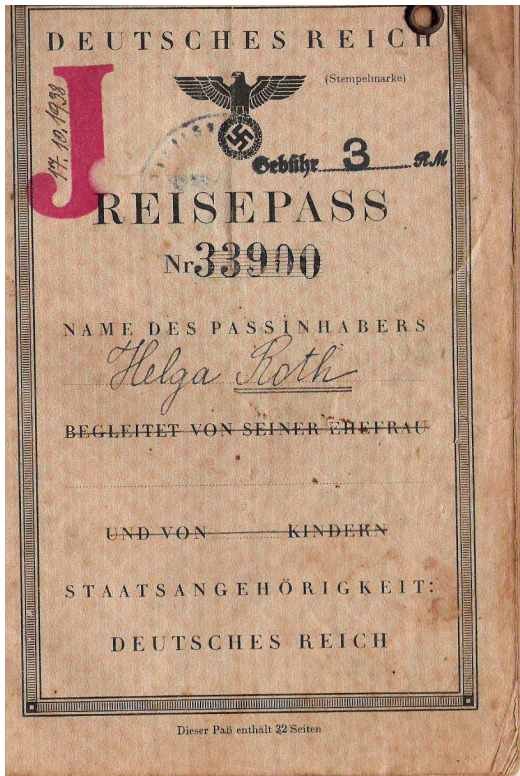
Our time finally came, the time to leave Austria. My parents lived in **Trieste**, which was also part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, before it became Italian grounds. **Paul** had had a babysitter from Italy. He always kept her picture at his bedside table.

When Hitler came, she called us from Italy to let us know her doors were opened to all of us. She called almost every week. I took the train to **Trieste** and the ship from there. When I got onboard with twenty other children, I sat by the window and my friend **Evi**, came to me and gave me a little souvenir. It was a little silver box with my name engraved.

50. Trieste railway station



We could not take anything with us except the clothes on your back. Neither money nor jewelry. This box was the only thing that I took and I gave my daughter Piri recently. She will keep it to the Marina, my granddaughter. We found Evi last year (2001), in Salzburg - also at the train station! An Israeli man was sent to Israel to seek and follow. What courage and heroism! Log in hell 20 girls to help him escape.



51. The **Deutsche Reich**, passport, valid by three days, and the big J of *juden*.

The annual visa quota they gave was established by the English. Each visa in the passports was good for an entire family.

The Jews wanted to save as many people as possible, so each of the girls received a “new family” who would use their visas.

The “family” I received was entirely stranger to me. Even though I was 16 and not allowed to be married, they gave me a fourteen-year-old “daughter”. I met the girl again, much later, in **Haifa**. She was happily married and pregnant.

Before we got to the border, the *shliach* (sent) boy begged us to throw out the window anything we might have brought, money, jewelry or anything else prohibited, otherwise we would be sent to the concentration camps. I put my little box in my underwear.

We crossed the border and breathed pure air for the first time after a year and one month of hell. It was April 1939. In Trieste, **Gusti**, the former babysitter, was waiting for me weeping. My parents stayed behind, but they were happy that their children were safe. That reminds me of a saying from the greatest German philosopher (in my opinion), **Wilhelm Busch** (1832-1908): “To become a father is the easiest thing in the world; but to BE a father is a great challenge”. My parents were proof of that.

NEW FRIENDS

MY FATHER ARRIVES

XVIII – New Friends

I was happy to have escaped from hell, but sad for having lost my friends, my parents, my teachers. The father of my brother's friend who was a psychiatrist said to me *"The friends we find later in life are not necessarily less valuable than our old friends"*. That is true.

I found friends, I lost them, I found new friends along the way, I reunited with my old friends, and it has been very nice.

In my family it is normal to be physically distant from one another. But we still love each other. However at that moment I didn't know that. When we were kicked out of our house, my mother had to leave some of her precious possessions with Ruth's mother. She left behind family pictures, engraved silverware, a wedding gift from Ruth's father and a painting of my mother when she was pregnant with my brother.

Ruth's mother worked in the Postal Service so she sent all that treasure to Paul in packages full of dirty laundry and a fake sender address, in case the packages were opened by the authorities. Everything arrived. My brother and I divided the things and I still have it all.

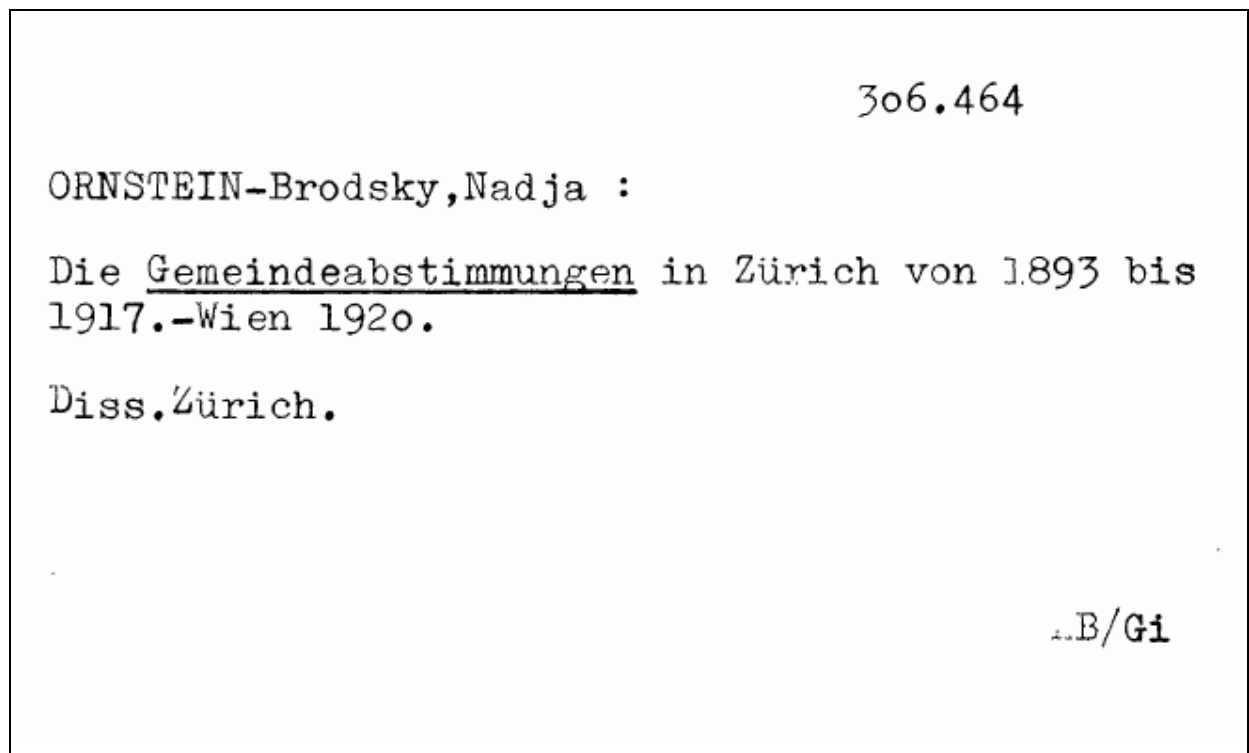
We arrived in Israel in April 1938, on the *Passover* holiday (***Pesach**** the Judaic Easter) after a six days trip. That meant the beginning of a new chapter of my life.

To Christians, Easter represents a dramatic sequence of facts that defined the beginning of a new faith, the followers of Jesus Christ. But ironically its origin is confused with the costumes of a religion that was abandoned by them, The Judaism. The dates were a coincidence. The Passion of Christ occurred during the *Pesach*, one of the most important Hebrew religious holidays. The word means "passage" and refers to their crossing and freedom from Egypt. The Old Testament says that once free from the Pharaoh's power, they started their journey through the desert, guided by Moses, to Israel. According to the Torah, when the Israelites were leaving Ancient Egypt, they had no time to wait until their bread rose, so they baked it before it had a chance to rise, and the result was matzah, a flat bread, made of plain flour and water. It became an essential component of the Passover menu. The Pesach celebration lasts eight days and starts at dawn of the fourteenth day of the month of Nissan in the Hebrew calendar. During that week the Jews follow their traditions as remembering the enslavement of their people and giving up fermented foods and the matzah. It was the same matzah

Jesus and his apostles were eating when the Roman guards came on that supposedly spring night in 33 B.C. That's because Jesus was born and raised in Hebrew territory and he followed his people traditions. The last supper, immortalized and told in the Testament as the Holy Supper would be the celebration of Passover. The Jewish "Pesach" which means to largely pass or to skip, got to the Greek as "paska", through a crossing of the Latin "*pascuum*" (pastures, in reference to end of fasting). The Greek word was assimilated by the Latin as "pascha" which in the Iberic Latin became "Pascoa". There is no fixed date for Easter because it depends not only of the Sun cycles but of the lunar calendar. Since the Nicaea Council, summoned by Constantine in the years of 325 A.C., Easter is celebrated on the Sunday after the first full moon posterior to Spring Equinox, which occurs on March 21st and marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

XIX – In Israel

I finally arrived in **Erez**, Israel. Paul was there waiting for me. I felt endless joy to see him. All the children were taken to school in **Talpiot (Talpiyyot)** a town between **Jerusalem** and **Bethlehem**. But I had permission to stay with my brother and an aunt for a day. My brother was a cab driver on the evenings and his friend from Vienna drove during the day. We went to my aunt's house. She was my father's cousin. Her name was **Nadja (Orn)Stein-Brodsky** and she was the president of the WIZO (*Women's International Zionist Organization*). She also worked hard to save me and chose the school I would go to. **Nadja's daughter, Michaela, still lives in Israel.**



A library card in University of Zürich shows a Nadja's schoolwork thesis.

She traveled a lot around the world giving speeches and trying to change the attitude of Nations towards immigration acceptance, especially in Israel. It is sad that this have to be done. If a ship sinks, everybody helps to save the people without asking; if someone has a climbing accident, helicopters and trained people will be sent to help. But during the *pogroms*¹¹ in Poland, Russia, Romaine and now in Austria and Czechoslovakia, nothing was done.

My father told us that when he served in the ship ***Ultonia*** from ***Cunard Line*** in 1907/1908, they took many Jews from Russia and Poland illegally to the United States. Cunard Line was a competitor of ***White Star Line***, which built the *Titanic*¹².

It was also prohibited to take pregnant women since once they had the baby in American grounds the child would have American citizenship. Or if the baby were born in the ship, which occurred many times, the child would be English. My father favored those women. Who knows how many millionaires and famous people here today came from those women. Unfortunately nothing changed. My brother was illegal and he wished to go to the United States

¹¹The term “pogrom” used practically in all languages to describe the attacks to the Jews and their properties. It is a Russian word that means “storm” or “destruction”.

¹² The history of this vessel started with the attempt made by **J. Bruce Ismay**, president of White Star Line and the famous American banker **John Pierpont Morgan** (1837-1913), the major shareholder, to compete with Cunard Line on the Atlantic route. Cunard Line owned vessels like the *Ultonia*, the *Mauretania* and *Lusitanian*. In 1907, both companies built two and later three large port and luxurious vessels to operate in the Great Britain – United States route. Those would be the *Olympic*, the *Titanic* and subsequently the *Britannic*. Onboard, for the first trip, was the elite of the elite: the mining tycoon *Benjamin Guggenheim* and his mistress the French singer *Leontine Pauline Aubart*, *John Jacob Astor IV* (1864-1912), then the richest man in the world and his young wife *Madeleine Talmadge Force*, five months pregnant; the family of *Isidor Strauss* and his wife *Ida*, owners of Macy's New York; *George Dunton Widener*, banker and owner of railroads in Philadelphia. The rest of the story is well known.

On the day after that, my brother took me to **Talpiot**. The school was brand new and there were some bathrooms still to be finished. In each room four German-speaking girls made us feel more at ease. But soon they figured that we would not be able to learn *Iwrit* that way so we had to move until there were four girls of different nationalities on each room. We learned fast, we had to. There was no common language but the *Iwrit*. It is funny that I have learned all languages I speak (and they are many) that way, because I had to. Never went to school for any of them.

XX – Difficult period, but fun

The principal of the school was the wife of **Ben Zwi**, Minister of Labor. I arrived a day before the *Pesach*, but there was no *Mazot*, only bread and other “prohibited” items. The majority of the girls came from Central Europe and did not mind. We studied four hours a day and worked a few more in the fields and gardens. We worked with the chickens (I used to take the eggs to the Commissioner daily). He was Scottish and lived in a palace right in front of the school on a hill. We had a view to the Dead Sea and in the middle was the desert. Many caravans passed during the day and we gave them water. But at night they threw rocks on us and sometimes even shot at us.

Each girl had to be in *Symira* (observation) along with a *Gafir* (guard). The *Gafir* was either a student of the Jerusalem University or from the Music Conservatory of Jerusalem. There was always a dispute between us about who was going to be in *Symira* with certain person. Each one of us had a favorite. It's funny how youth can take everything as a joke. We all escaped from hell, didn't have parents or relatives around, all separated by the war, but we fought about whose company we wanted when defending our school.

The Commissioner had a Scottish guard with soldiers in *kilt* in front of the building patrolling all around it. We used to lie down in the ground on our backs, for hours trying to find out if they wore underwear. That was a happy time!

We worked a lot. Under the hot desert sun, heads bowed down with heavy tools on the hard ground. But we planted everything we needed to survive. Fruits, vegetables, we sold tulips, roses and eggs. It never rained, all the water had to be brought from deep ground. We had chickens and all. We were self-sufficient.

The sky was beautiful. We could see a good part of the south and north hemisphere. I could understand then why the Arabs who “navigated” in the desert looked at the sky. Almost all stars have Arab names – *Antares*, *Aldebaran*, *Deneb* and others.

The sky was always blue. But it became boring. Nothing ever changed, no clouds,

the sky was sterile and monotonous. Nature in general is variable and unpredictable, but not at this place.

On the radio, there was no weather forecast, because there was no need for it. It was always the same. A friend of mine called the clouds “Metro Goldwin Mayer clouds”. In the movies, the sky is never all blue; there are always a few white clouds in the background. What a contrast! Our school was an oasis in the desert. There was nothing around it.

The Arabs begged for a living, they were homeless, but their leaders, oil wells owners in neighborhood Countries like **Saudi Arabia** or **Iraq** lived in abundance and luxury. I learned for the rest of my life how water is precious. We can live with very little water and still live well.

XXI – My father arrives

We could never leave school alone. It was too dangerous. Sometimes we went together to Jerusalem to listen to music in the Conservatory and many times the music students came to the school so we could be delighted with the music by **Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert**, etc. The doctor also came to visit us regularly! My mother’s friend, who was a chemistry professor at the university, had permission to take me out many times.

We went to visit Bethlehem, the supposedly birthplace¹³. It was a charming little town and it seemed that it had never changed, despite the fact that they still sold pieces of the cross for 2.000 years! I cannot imagine how big that cross was! They had Madonna’s in gold, silver, stones in all sizes. Religion will always be good business. But I didn’t see Santa Claus! Or Jesus, or snow or sleighs, no Christmas’ trees and there’s no pine trees growing on that region. There weren’t for sure any Santa Claus’ costumes on a 40 C° (104 F°) -degree heat.

Christmas celebration is also a festival as in all festivals related to astronomy. In Brazil, as it is in **Portugal**, **Saint John's festival** is celebrated in June 14. That's the winter solstice. People put up campfires and dance around it.

In the Northern Hemisphere the same phenomenon occurs on December 21. In **Norway**, **Sweden** and **Finland** they celebrate it on the solstice the same way. They greet the first sunrays. With time it became the celebration of Christ's birth. Snow stayed, and so the sleighs; but Christ¹⁴ did not have anything to do with it.

One day they called me at the school's office: a phone call. My father's ship had arrived but he had been arrested. Somehow that didn't upset me. He was a prisoner of the English with a lawyer and all the Jewish community on his side.

13 According to the Sacred Scriptures of Christians, Jesus Christ was born at the city of **Beth Lehem** (in English Bethlehem, in Portuguese Belem) city of the old Judea. Bethlehem had only about 900 inhabitants by that time (the "great" Jerusalem had about 20.000). The region was then dominated by the Roman Empire and today is situated in the explosive "autonomy strip" of Palestine authority in the State of Israel. Possibly the birth took place four or five years before what had been conventionally said as to be "year zero" of the Christ era (that was because the beginning of that era was in reality declared 600 years later by "Dionysius" the little). It is known in confirmation of that hypothesis that he was born before "Herod the great" died – and that what took place in the year of 0749 of the Roman calendar (which corresponds to year 0004 of the current chronology that used B.C "before Christ" and A.C. "after Christ". It's believed that on the year 0028 A.C. Jesus started to preach, in Judea and especially in **Galilee** (where **Nazareth** is located, reason why he became known as "Jesus of Nazareth"). He went to Jerusalem five times (90 km, or **56 miles** from Nazareth) always in religious festivals. Jesus probably never traveled more than 100 km far from where he was born (Bethlehem was only 18km from Jerusalem or "three hours on a mule").

14 The name "Christian" was given to the disciples of Jesus, four years after his death, in Antioquia, in the actual Syria (Acts of the Apostles, 11:26). That is because they affirmed "*God resurrected Jesus and made him Christ and Lord*" (Act 2, 6). The name meant in ancient Greek "*Christos*". It is approximately the equivalent to the Hebrew "Messiah" (= the savior), whom the Jews waited (and still wait). The initial profession of faith of the Christians was: "Jesus is Christ" **The first Christianity identity crisis was related to Judaism from which it was born. Jesus ("Yoshua" in Hebrew) was a Jew. He always lived among his people and frequented their synagogues and Temple. He chose his disciples among the Jews.** However, the Jewish authorities, aware that his doctrine was a radical novelty, declared him as enemy and condemned him to death. The apostles on their turn started announcing to their Jewish brothers the "good news" (in Greek, the Testament) of Jesus resurrection. Many believed and as a consequence a community was created. Being persecuted in Jerusalem, it dispersed and spread all over, proclaiming the Testament. For their surprise even non-Jews joined in. Anyhow, it's impossible to determine exactly when Christianity separated from Judaism and follow their path – even because this imaginary "breaking point" occurred gradually in different times.

SAVING JEWS

JEWS AND UNITED ARABS

XXII – Saving Jews

I had permission to travel to **Haifa** and meet with my parents. My father was released with the help of the Israel authorities. It was the first time our family was reunited again but not for long. My mother said:

- We should never complain again about anything. We're all here together again, safe and unhurt.

That sure didn't happen. I just complained about bad toilet paper. It is part of human nature: we forget the bad things, become more demanding and become needy. It is wonderful how time (the more precious thing in the Universe) cures almost everything.

My father then told me his great adventure. He had feared for the passengers' destiny in case of getting caught. He thought about destroying all the documents so that way they could never find out their identities. However, he could not trust that all the passengers would be willing to destroy their documents. There would be someone who would try to hide something, maybe a letter from a loved one. So he asked them to keep all their documents until the end of the trip.

As soon as he had them all, he threw everything in the ocean.

It is better to lose one's documents than one's life.

After that, he taught the young ones how to row. He calculated that at dead of night about ten miles from the coast he could send everyone on the lifeboats with the young ones in the front rowing and the older and children on the back. He also taught them how to guide through the stars; to follow **Polaris** until a point previously assigned by the Israel authorities. But before he gave orders to abandon the ship, warning signals from an English destroyer gave them orders to stop immediately. My father

stopped the engines. The English came onboard... with a list of ALL THE PASSENGERS, with names, origins and everything. Nobody knew how that happened. The English secret service is not just famous in the movies and books about espionage; they are really efficient.

The passengers were not sent back because Israel compromised in letting them in the Country as long they deducted the number of people in the ship from next year's allowance (which was already very little). Even so, they were considered illegal aliens until the creation of the State of Israel in April of 1948.

My future husband and father of my sons were among the passengers. He was a doctor but was not allowed to practice. Only after having served the English army he was "forgiven". Ridiculous! The only Country in the world they could enter even illegally to escape from the concentration camps and death.

His father sent his four sons to study abroad to escape from the ridiculous Hungarian laws – and yet there is people who say money does not bring happiness... Maybe not happiness; but you can buy education, visa to every Country in the world, and much more.

XXII – Again in charge

All the passengers were taken to a *Kibbutz* and received clothing and food. They could stay as long as they wanted. Everyone was eager to start a new life. My father taught to raise carps in the *Kibbutz* on a Country where they almost didn't have any cattle raising, very expensive to maintain. Fish in tanks is affordable, needs little space and one can get enough protein in a fish diet.

My brother got a visa to the United States. We had to say goodbye again. He went with the last passenger ship that traveled through the Atlantic Ocean before the war.

My parents never saw him again and I, only twenty eight years later. I had learned that a sailor's daughter never cries – another disappointment. I cried a lot. Until this

day I feel the pain I felt when he left again.

My father soon received the command of another ship of the line, ***Porchard***. I stayed in school a little longer and then went to **Haifa** on the north coast border with Lebanon, about 20 km (13 miles) from **Nazareth**. I missed the Ocean a great deal.

My father had a colleague, a non Jew German, captain of the Israeli's fleet. He had two sons also naval students. Their father gave them a yacht as a gift called *Precuria*. On the same day my father had received the command of the ship I was invited for the inauguration of the yacht. There was fine food and drinks onboard. I had planned with the two sons of captain Peach (or Pitch, I don't remember very well) to go with them to Beirut on the first trip of the yacht. At night, my father and I would throw food and drinks from the ship in the little yacht, for our trip.

We left the next day and anchored in **Beirut**, a beautiful city, the "Paris" of the middle orient. We returned the day after to a great surprise.

Again, warning signals from the English fleet, shootings on air. What was wrong? Oh nothing, only that the World War II had broken out and my sailor friends were German!! They were arrested and I could not enter the Port. Their father was also arrested. Life has its turns... My father took responsibility for them and guaranteed they were not enemies and so they were released. But they could not work because German was the enemy. It was war time! The best friends became official enemies against their will.

XXIV – Jews and Arabs, united

Life's turns. Just a few months earlier my father was a prisoner in the same prison and now, the English government accepted his word as guaranty to free his friend. But this big turn wasn't the only one. We used to receive constant attacks from the Arabs in school in **Talpiot** but now they stopped. My brother had come to visit one

time, on a Saturday and some Arabs and also fanatics Jews threw rocks on the cab he was on, because it was the *Shabbat*.

The refinery in **Haifa** was mined and they never found the culprit. Because of that the English decided to apply a collective punishment. For every littler of gas we paid one cent more to compensate the lost. One time we were at the bus stop with my father to catch the bus and my father refused to pay the extra cent. The bus didn't leave the stop. Many offered to pay the extra money for my father but he said:

- Collective punishment doesn't exist in the law code. You people once more get down and do what you are told even knowing that isn't fair. That is why your relatives died in the concentration camps. I will not pay and will not allow any one to pay it for me.

A few months later they found the culprit: an English man dressed as Arab was discovered by Israel's secret service. He did it to instigate hatred between Jews and Arabs.

The slogan of the **Roman Caesar** (100 B.C. – 44 B.C.) was "*to divide and to govern*"! But it was over quickly, the English interests now were different. Jews and Arabs should get together and fight with them.

The war began and I was the only girl in school whose parents were in Israel. There was another girl from Vienna whose parents were taken from **Cyprus** to **Shanghai**, in **China**, but at least they didn't stay in hell.

The girl was **Bronner**; many years later, at 2005, I've found news about his son, Oskar ("Ossi") Bronner, which lived in Vienna, as a successfull own of a newspaper, "Der Standard".

From then on there wasn't any communication with Europe anymore. **Poland** was invaded (09/01/1939) and finally the English declared war to German.

As many times before and also later, the rule is: better a scary end than a scare without an end. When the atomic bomb fell over Japan (08/06/1945), we felt the same way.

JEWS, NOT

DEBT: A PAIR OF PIJAMAS

XXV – Jews, not

Now, there came many “illegal” ships. It was the only chance to escape, but the English became even more rigid. The **Struma**, a small boat full of refugees was sunk in the Turkey coast. They all died. Many were sent to Cyprus and treated as prisoners. My father saved many people from the island “smuggling” them to Israel. Where were the defenders of the human rights? The Cleric did not do anything. The Americans did not change any immigration laws and the English sunk the **Struma**.

Argentina only took who was Catholic **15**! The others could die in the ocean, on the ships. They were guilty! On the Forgiveness Day they should ask for forgiveness to Jehovah but I think they will never forgive them. Many people ask me now: how can you not forgive? NO, I cannot and nobody gave me this right. I did not lose anybody, I did not suffer, but the mother who lost their children, their husbands, their friends, they didn't give me permission to forgive.

15 History studies as the one from Uki Goni (2004) indicated that the Nazi from SS were enemies of the Catholicism and of the Vatican. They were pagans and probably would've ended with Catholicism if they had won the war. For many Catholics nationalists in Argentina though, Nazism somehow purified the Old Continent by finishing with what they considered their real enemies: capitalism and communism. On their way of seeing it, both were bad because they were materialistic. If Nazism eradicated communism and capitalism in Europe, it would open the way for their greatest goal which was to take the world to a situation prior to the French Revolution. This is why the important role of the envoy Argentinean **Juan Carlos Goyeneche**, a Catholic Nationalist who met with **Joachim Ribbentrop** (1893-1946, Minister of Foreign Relations), **Joseph Goebbels** (1897-1945, Minister of Advertising), **Heinrich Himmler** (1900-1945, Chief of SS) and apparently with Hitler. Goyeneche said to Himmler that if the Nazi wanted the South American Countries support, they would have to reconcile with Catholicism because America is a catholic continent. As Goyeneche would meet the Pope Pius XXII, Himmler asked him to say to the Pontific that he was open to religious talk. Besides, high officials from the III Reich, ensured to dictator **Juan Domingo Perón** (1895-1974) that Argentina, due to its loyalty to Nazism during the war, would receive a special economical treatment. Mussolini and Ribbentrop told him that they would probably recognize Argentina's sovereignty over the Malvinas islands and the connection between the Country and Spain. Once the war ended, Perón and some Vatican agents were convinced that there would be a third world war in 1948 or 1949, this time between Moscow and Washington. Therefore, the idea was that the Nazi went back to Europe to fight against the communism.

Many Jews answered to the allies appeals and joined the army. My husband (I hadn't met him yet) also, joined in serving as a doctor. He was trained in a military quarters

in Jerusalem and became member of the *Royal Army of Medical Corps*, the medical Corps of the English army. My father joined the Royal Navy and soon he took the command to the same ship that he brought to Austria illegally and was re-baptized and again later.

Hanna Szenes

Hannah Szenes, a 23 year old Jewish girl, poet, from Hungary, was sent as a volunteer in 1944 to Europe as a spy. She spoke several languages and was the right person for the difficult task. She was sent down to an enemy territory (Yugoslavia, occupied by the Nazi) on a parachute. Soon after she was caught and sentenced to death. In her honor, my father asked to name the ship "Hannah Szenes".

XXVI – Israeli medicines

When my father traveled, nobody ever knew his destinations for security reasons. The location of the ships was unknown. Before set sail the captain would receive the sailing orders, a sealed document which could only be opened by the commander after they left. Even so, the ship never followed its directions straight ahead, but tried to confuse the enemy by going in zigzags.

My mother, in **Haifa**, received a nice salary from the English government and rented an apartment in a distinguished neighborhood. It was a one bedroom with balcony and kitchenette. To me it was luxurious! However she did not want to share the room with me but helped me paying my rent. She found a family who wished to rent half of their daughter's bedroom.

The girl and I became great friends. She had lost her brother, killed by an Arab attack to the bus he traveled. Later I moved to another apartment on the same building where the family rented a bedroom for four girls, which made it even less expensive.

All the girls were from **Prague**, former **Czechoslovakia**, very intelligent and educated.

All communications with Germany, Austria, Hungary, etc., were completely interrupted and first necessity items like medicines started to scarce. **Bayer** and **Hoechst** were German, from **IG Farben** ¹⁶, and their products did not make it in the Country any longer. An Israeli company, **Hillel**, took over and produced the same items.

¹⁶ On 12/2/1925, the most important chemical industries from the German Reich, among them Bayer, a *Badische Anilin & Soda Fabrik* (BASF) and *Hoechst*, created the so called *Internationale Gesellschaft Farbenindustrie* (groups of interest of the paint industry), or *IG Farben*, which headquarters was in Frankfurt. It was the largest chemical company of the world. During the Nazi regime (1933-1945), 350 thousand people were forced to do labor work and at least 20 thousand died working, in the factory built in 1941, nearby the concentration camp Auschwitz. In the year it was founded, *IG Farben* had 37 factories and 91 point of sales in German territory, reaching a profit of 68 million *Reichsmark* (German money from 1924 to 1948). In 1932 *IG Farben* created the "Circle of the friends of Reichsführer SS" and fired all of the Jewish directors. The company profited also with the Nazi's preparative for the war. In 1939, there was 250 thousand employees who produced 43 types of weaponry. In the end of the war, the group had participated in 244 national companies. Subjected to the Ally's control – who confiscated all German capital goods, the multinational was subdivided, in the beginning of 1950's in *Bayer*, *BASF*, *Hoechst*, *Agfa Camerawerke* and so called "*IG Farben in Abwicklung*" (in dissolution) with actual capital of 10 million Euros. *IG Farben* today is only a shadow of what it's been in the Nazi past. It has maintained itself up and going only to give continuation to its own legal claims and with that generates polemic. The stock owners refuse to hand over the companies remaining assets to the victims of forced labor. For that reason, the stock holders annual meeting is traditionally heated with the ex-slaves claiming for justice.

I got a job as an advertiser to educate doctors about the meaning of the new names given to the medicines. I spoke several languages therefore I could explain it all to the Arab doctors in English or German. There weren't any medic schools in the Middle East which led people to study abroad. For that reason, it was easy to find a common language. I liked my job; it allowed me to travel in the Country. It was safe now in the Arab cities.

Many times I had to stay over the doctor's houses. Some of them had three, four or more wives. I slept with the women and it was very strange to me that they did not mind each other. They did not fight. Their children got along well, despite the small fight between in laws and cousins.

In the morning I would have breakfast with the doctor. The women spoke only Arab. When the server would bring coffee and wanted to serve the head of the house first, the women would protest telling them to serve the guest first. At first the surprise expressions, then the laughs, it was a constant thing. A woman served first? I talked a lot with the doctors and they would tell me:

- You from the West, have mistresses and the children who come from those relationships and not recognized. In case of a man's death, the concubine is left with nothing. In our case, it is a much fairer situation.

Until this day I think about those wise words.

XXVII – Imre and Edith come into my life

Many lives have been lost: sailors, pilots and soldiers. They died all very young. One day, my father's friend, **Capitan Sagy**, invited me to go to a charitable ball in benefit to the sailor's widowers. The Capitan's children, **Vera** and **Gyury** were about my age.

Many years later, Gyury would become a national hero, as one of the most important participants in the rescue of the hostages in **Entebbe, Uganda** 17.

17 In 06/27/1976, four terrorists forced an Air France airbus to land in Uganda, Central Africa, ruled by the dictator **Idi Amin Dada**. They immediately demanded for Israel to free 53 convicted terrorists, releasing the French crew and non-Jewish passengers and kept 105 Jews and Israelis. They gave them 48 hours before the executions started. The Israel government announced they would start the negotiations, trying to gain time for a possible military intervention. A new ultimatum was established at 13h00 on Sunday July 4th. The Entebbe airport, where the hostages have being kept, was built by an Israeli firm, which supplied the project to the operation commander, General-Brigadier **Dan Shomron**. More over, the released hostages could also describe the terrorists, their weapons and their positions. The Defense Forces in Israel decided to send 200 of their best army soldiers, heavily armed. The planes (4 Hercules and 2 Boeing) took off at 13h20 on July, 3rd, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel **Yonatan Netanyahu** (brother of Prime-Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu**). They also had two Jeeps and a black Mercedes, perfect copy of the personal car of **Idi Amin Dada**. They landed in Nairobi, neighbor of Kenya. Going around a storm over Lake Victoria, The Hercules' approached without being detected at 23h01 (local time) only one minute later than expected. The soldiers freed the hostages in a flash attack, killing all the terrorists. Tragically, the Force Commander Yonatan Netanyahu was killed in action. Another two hostages were killed in the cross fire inside the airport and another who made it to the hospital, was killed by the Uganda police. At 23h59, the planes were on their way home – the operation, which should have taken one hour maximum, took in reality 58 minutes.

I didn't feel like going to the ball. The situation in which we were didn't motivate us to have fun, but **Sagy** insisted that I should come and sit with him and his family. I decided to go.

I learned with my father to never say no to an invitation. You will never know what you could miss. It's better a not so exciting event than no events at all. Very true! My friends who I lived with also insisted that I'd come.

Many things changed that night! I didn't stay long. I didn't like it and decided to go back home and sleep. A little while later, **Vera** called me and told me to go back to the party. It was great and there was a young doctor at their table who had met my father and had been a passenger of the *Liesl*. I got dressed and went back. There he

was, **Imre**, my future husband and father of my children.

We danced and talked a lot. He told me he lived in **Jerusalem**, in *King David Hotel* (which was exploded later), but he had a small apartment in **Tel Aviv**, near the ocean. However, the rented apartment was shared with his brother.

Haifa suffered a great deal with air attacks and **Tel Aviv** is an open city. I thought it was a good idea to spend a weekend there. He gave me a key and we promised each other to meet again. I went to **Tel Aviv**, opened the door with the key he gave me, but for my surprise, there was a girl living in the room. I was sure she was his lover (she thought the same thing about me), but his brother also gave his key to people. The girl's name was **Edith** and until this day I don't think I will find a better friend. We spent the war time together and had our first sons in Israel. We came to Hungary together, crossed the border practically together (with a 24 hour difference). My granddaughter still wears her granddaughter's clothes.

Imagine if I hadn't gone to that ball. **Peter** and his family spent a weekend with her and her family in 2002.

XXVIII – Debt, a pair of pajamas

The bombings in **Haifa** were intensifying and we decided, with **Edith**, to stay in **Tel Aviv**. **Haifa** was the German's target. There were refineries, a port and English troops stationed in **Haifa**. We found an apartment and moved in along with my *fox terrier*. **Imre** went to see me every day and **Jotzo**, the **Edith**'s future husband came too. But I still went to Haifa to work. Even with the war and all the problems we had, there were still funny situations. One of the Czech women with whom I used to live was very pretty and all the boys were crazy about her. One day she told us with her Czech accent, about one of her boyfriends: *my boody he possessed, but my sooooul, neeeveerr!!*

Imre also had a cousin who lived in a Kibbutz, whose finance was a doctor. He was

also Czech and Imre's friend. They had been together a long time but didn't get married because the Kibbutz couldn't afford the wedding expenses. Then she got pregnant and so the Kibbutz got together 20 couples and married them in a single ceremony. We went to the wedding but for our surprise to see the groom under the *hipa* with another woman. We were very disappointed and then we saw Imre's cousin watching everything and ... laughing! Later she told us: - "we didn't want to offend the Rabbi with my eight months pregnant belly so my friend went on my place to receive the blessing."

It doesn't matter who receives the blessings, it feels good anyway. Interesting enough, we always found ourselves laughing about something. One day, in **Tel Aviv**, despite being declared an "open city", there was a bomb attack. One fell near our house and because of the pressure it caused; our door got distorted and couldn't open. An English soldier got in the apartment through the window and got us out of there taking us to a safer building. But he left the dog. I cried and begged him to go get **Daisy**. He went and saved Daisy but in her desperation she ripped **Edith's** pajamas.

Until this day when I see **Edith** she stills asks me for a new red stripes pair of pajamas I owe her.

She finished her Chemistry Engineering degree in **Budapest** after the war. She had started school in **Czechoslovakia**, but had to stop when the German invaded the Country in 1938. After we returned to Hungary, she worked with Imre in the hospital lab.

Imre was her boss. One fine day she told him she didn't feel much like working and wanted to spend the day with me talking like the old times. But she needed to fake being sick.

Imre explained to her, in details, how to fake this certain kind of pain that could lead to suspect appendicitis. He described it to her how to behave in front of a doctor, how to react on his touch and all. They had a plan, Imre would send the doctor in the morning to see her and give her a paid sick day.

The doctor arrived at seven o'clock and after examining her he attested she suffered from appendicitis. He advised her to use an ice bag for the pain and stay in bed to see how the symptoms would progress.

I arrived at her house at two in the afternoon and she was still in bed with the ice bag on her belly. I yelled at her:

- Quick, get up, we still have a couple of hours before the kids come home.

She answered:

- But the doctor told me to stay in bed...

She believed in her own lie!

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

IN A FAMILY HOME

XXIX – Letter of recommendation

Imre was transferred to **Haifa**, to work in the refinery as a doctor. We decided to get married because there was a possibility that Imre would be sent to Asia. Our way of thinking was completely different from the couples from a normal time. Today they think of getting married so they can have a future together. We thought, as thousand of others couples did, that we should get married before the eminent separation which could be forever. My father was on an absent leave for a few days and we got married without ceremony or guests. There was only the rabbi, in 1941.

On the wedding day, something funny happened. My father didn't want to have to listen to a long sermon so he offered to give the rabbi more money to make the ceremony shorter and also wanted the bride and groom's vows to also be shorter. But it was the law to ask the question the rabbi inevitably asked: what was her dowry? My father, in the urge of being done with all that, responded quickly: "500 camels, 200 sheep, etc." All the information was registered and documented as required the law. Many years later, already living in **Brazil**, my husband remembered that in case of us getting divorced; he would have to give everything back to my father: the camels, the sheep...

But where he would find so many camels and sheep? Fortunately, his friends promised to help him find all that in case he wanted to get rid of me...

We rented an apartment in **Haifa**, near the Port, in an ugly neighborhood, almost exclusively Arabs, some living in huts (*sukim*), but it was cheap. We also had our time to be happy and laugh.

I will always remember and I'm sure many others will about this Jewish girl, from Hungary. She wasn't a very bright person. She lived on the same floor with an Arab

man. He physically abused her and she would show her scars to **Imre**. He asked her why she was still with him.

Her response was she couldn't live without him and didn't know what to do. **Imre** advised her to join the army and do something good for herself. She said she would like to join the Royal Air Force but not the Infantry. There was impossible for the RAF only accepted high influence and rarely anybody from the colonies. But Imre, jokingly (he never thought anyone would take it seriously) said: - I have a cousin who's a General and he can give you a letter of recommendation.

His cousin, **Lazy Nemes** was a private. One day he came for dinner and the girl was at our house. Imre asked **Lazy** (always joking): - *Would you give our friend a letter of recommendation?*

He soon understood the humor of things and said: - Certainly.

He wrote a letter on an army prescription pad that Imre used to order stool and urine tests. He signed the letter **General Lazy Nemes** and gave it to the girl. She did not understand it was all a joke. She left and showed the letter to the authorities and... was accepted! Nobody has ever had the courage to ask who this "general" **Lazy Nemes** was. She served the RAF, married and English official gained her English citizenship and years later we met in Budapest. She was there with her husband visiting relatives. Nobody ever found out about the case, which would be the case for a court martial. The dumbness of people has no limits. In order not to show ignorance, nobody had the idea to ask...

It's funny how we felt like laughing and be comic in a situation like ours. Bombing was ever night, my father was in the ocean and we never knew where and Imre was to be sent away anytime. General **Erwin Rommel** was near, the Arabs wanting for him to cross the **Suez Canal** and occupy Israel. None of the Arabs joined the army to help the Jews.

I got pregnant of **Peter** and soon Imre received the *movement order*, to be sent far away. I was expecting **Peter** to be born at the end of February, 1943 and because of

that, they delayed my father's departure. We waited until the beginning of March and **Peter** wasn't born yet. Imre left and I was alone for a few years. Peter was born in March, in **Singapore**, at the 14th General Hospital. His father was already far away and we didn't even know where. They kept his whereabouts a secret and only many years later he would tell us his letters were censored. They had to be opened and written in English.

XXX – Peter

Peter was born in March 14th, 1943, after Imre left. It was a difficult twenty four hour labor and they had to use the forceps. I was alone. My mother came to the hospital and wept by my bed. How horrible!

- My poor daughter, why women have to suffer so much?

I had to ask the doctors to send my mother away. I had an infection and very high fever and was one of the first in the world to receive penicillin, after **Winston Churchill** who had to take because a pneumonia. The antibiotic, which was still a secret and only the English army had a small stash, saved my life. I went back home with a newborn baby. I had the help of an institution that I will never forget, called *tipat chalav*, "a drop of milk". Peter was big and I needed the help to have enough milk for him.

In each neighborhood, nurses and doctors dedicated themselves twenty four hours to the newborns. They gave advices, weighed the babies and if the mother would get sick, they came to visit her. It was all free of charge, done with love and competence. I fully trusted Peter to their hands and advices. They even advised me to let him sleep in the baby stroller in case of an air attack. That way I wouldn't have to wake him up and he wouldn't know about the bombs. I wonder if any of those nurses are still alive. I would like to know.

One day, a judge came to my house saying that I had to leave the apartment in twenty four hours. I rented the apartment, as well as many other people, from a very

rich Arab man, but only that day I came to find out he didn't own anything. It was German property and was now in the hands of the English and nobody had the right to occupy those properties. What now? My mother said there was no room for us but offered to take care of the dog, temporarily. She found a good place for small children where Peter could live, in **Mount Carmel**. It was very expensive. It took all my salary from the army. I had no choice. **Peter** lived there and I went to live in a cheap motel which was mainly occupied by prostitutes.

Edith also lived there. It was the cheapest place in **Kingsway**, near the port and vulnerable to bombings all the time. I could look for a job during the day and be with Peter at night. But it was an impossible life.

I decided to leave town and look for a place in a small town called **Nahariya**, thirty kilometers north of **Haifa**, near the boarder with **Lebanon**. It was hard to find a place for a single woman with a baby and a dog. I found a place but I did not tell the owner about the dog. That's how I moved with **Peter** to **Nahariya**.

XXXI – Nowhere to go - again

Once more I learned that things can get better after the storm.

In **Nahariya**, I found a bedroom in a family home, for us three, **Peter**, **Daisy** and me. They also allowed me to use the kitchen once in a while. They had two twin girls and in no time we developed a relationship that would last for a long time.

The girls loved **Peter**. They didn't eat well so Peter, who was always hungry, was a good role model to them.

They introduced me to a neighbor doctor who also helped me, as the nurses in Haifa. He had a small son, but his wife didn't have any breast milk to feed the baby. I gave them mine and so Peter and their son became "breast brothers".

The doctor was the brother of a famous composer **Kurt Weil** 18 (1900-1950), who

composed for the musical pieces of **Bertold Brecht** 19 (1898-1956) as “The Threepenny Opera” and many more. After the war was over, he came to visit his brother many times and we met and also **Berthold Brecht**.

18 **Kurt Julian Weil (1900-1950)** was born in Dessau, “lande” (province) of Sachsen-Anhalt (High Saxony), German. He was educated by his parents as a Jew and his religious fervor increased with the Nazism ascension at Germany’s power. His Semite roots, ignored by other biographies, explain a lot about the artistic process of Weil, who could successfully work in three different Countries. He died in New York, USA.

19 Eugen **Berthold Friedrich Brecht (1898-1956)** was born in Augsburg, region of Swabia, province of Bavaria, German. In 1933, time of the ascension of the Nazism in Germany, at age 35, he abandoned his Country, and took asylum in several cities of Europe. His works, in Berlin, were burned in a public square along with many other famous works from other famous Artists from that time. On the day Germany invaded Denmark, Brecht, who was in that Country, fled to Finland. From there to Vladivostok, Russia’s extreme east where he embarked to the United States. In the exile, which ended only with the end of the World War II, he published several poems that contributed to his literary glory as so many theater plays. He never tired to persecute the Hitler’s figure, showing to the world the Nazi crimes. Back to Germany, after the fall of that regime, he continued to fight, as a Marxist, for the working class cause, **until the death**.

My father was in **Tobruk** (Egypt) and **General Rommel** was about to invade Israel. He told me later how he helped the English to decipher codes from German ships. He used a tactic similar to the one used to decipher hieroglyphs. If an enemy ship sent a message, it was custom to ask: did you understand? If the response was affirmative, they did not repeat the message; if it was negative, they did. So they knew the letters of *Ja* (yes) and *Nein* (no) and so forth. That was when there were no computers and it was very efficient. Many enemies’ routes were found out that way.

My husband served on the famous **Burma Road** with the *forgotten army*.

The letters were few and we were always afraid to open the envelopes and find a fearsome message: *we regret to inform you...*

The envelopes were all the same, with the letters **HMS**, on the sender address, *his majesty service*, nothing else. Peter had his father’s picture at his bed table, dressed in his uniform. Every night, when he went to bed, he kissed the picture, but had no idea of what was to have an ABA, dad. When we walked on the streets and he saw an English soldier with the same hat his father had on, he run and hugged the soldier and said: Aba! The soldiers would get emotional, for they also had their children, far

away from them.

On the beach, there was a small restaurant. Well frequented by the soldiers. The owners loved Peter and called him a publicity boy. He was always sitting on somebody's lap and they would buy him ice cream or candy. Many years later we met again, in Sao Paulo.

A day before the new Christian year, a ship full of immigrants arrived. The mayor let us know that the ship was going to anchor a few miles away from the beach and each one of us had a task. We had to invite some English officials for dinner on the 31st. The City provided everything including lots of whiskey, to get them very drunk and tired. The **Gärtner's**, owners of the restaurant, had to open their doors to the wet passengers and to provide new clean clothes. A bus would be waiting for them to take them to the *Kibbutz*, close by.



Me and the kids (Peter, the Gärtner's, Ossi Bronnet and others), at **Nahariya's** beach

Everything went as planned and everyone was safe the next day, January 1st. There

wasn't any English on the streets, they were all sleeping. The boat was empty, abandoned right under their noses. But again we underestimated the English secret service: the commander of the troops in **Nahariya** was Jew. He knew about everything. I also had some English friends in Nahariya who were radio operators. They would be the first radar operators of the world. No one would ever think of that. The equipment number one was situated in Nahariya. That way they know about the arrival of the ship even before we did.

Penicillin, insecticides, DDT, radars and at the end the atomic bomb, were some of the things that came out during the war. There was threat of bubonic pest in Haifa which was eradicated with the use of the DDT to kill the rodents in the port.

20 DDT (**dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane**) was the first pesticide halogen-organic to be developed. In the first years of its use, the DDT was considered a great contributor for human health and its use was highly encouraged. The effects of the accumulation of the DDT in the human organism were not noticed until about 20 years later when the first pathogen symptoms started to appear. Today it's known that DDT is not biodegradable, has carcinogenic properties, among others harmful properties, and side effects like fetus malformation.

Many other ships bringing immigrants arrived and were captured and the illegal immigrants sent to **Cyprus**. Food in **Nahariya** was easy to obtain. Almost everyone had a small garden with fruits and vegetables. I received from the English army, packages from the **NAAF**, *Navy Army Air Force shop*, the supply store for those forces. I received first quality cigarettes, scotch whisky, etc.

I didn't drink or smoke so I could trade those precious items for food, eggs, butter, etc. **Rommel** was already on the other side of the **Suez** Canal and the Arabs were celebrating. They didn't know that if the German won, they, who were Semites, would be considered an inferior race. But publicity is the soul of a business. From May of 1944, starting from **Normandy** (northwest of France), the allies invaded all borders of Europe; the soviets arrived at the German regions in January 1945. **Hitler** committed suicide in Berlin in April 30th, 1945 and on May 9th, 1945 Germany surrendered, unconditionally.

The End, but not for us! **Imre** was fighting with the Japanese and there would be many more fights to come. My father came back, retired and bought what was the greatest dream of his life, the *Shipchandler Shop*, on **Palmers Gate**, in Haifa. That

way, he could get in touch with the Navy without having to travel.

The couple with whom I lived needed the room because they had relatives coming from Europe. Again, I had nowhere to go.

XXXII – In a family's home

Every time I was forced to move I thought about a friend in **Vienna** who used to say: *“the friends we make later in life are not any less worthy. The owners of the house helped me to find another home”*. They knew everybody. They were one of the founders of the small town. We found a place for all three of us but this time with much more comfort. There were two rooms, one with a stove which I called bedroom-kitchen. On another room, there was a woman who lived with her child and a boxer.

Our landlord loved **Peter** too. He gave him a car made out of a cigar box, with four wheels and a string to pull. With time and use, the wheels fell off, but **Peter** would still pull the car around, without wheels and brought the car to his bed when he went to sleep.

One time the landlord's rabbits, which he raised in his backyard started to disappear and later be found dead. He came to me and said he thought it was Daisy, since that didn't happen before we moved in. I asked him to build a higher fence with a latch. If it was she, she wouldn't be able to open the latch. He did that, but still, the rabbits kept disappearing.

- So **Daisy** is innocent. She couldn't possibly open the latch.

But the landlord still insisted that he never had to lock anything, because that never happened before. Until one day, he called me:

- *Helga, please come with me.*

It was about five in the morning. **Peter** had gotten up and taken Daisy to the rabbits. He opened the latch so she could serve herself. He was two years old.

On the beach, **Daisy** watched **Peter** for me. When I went in the water, I would put Peter away from the water and Daisy with him. She wouldn't let him move, like a perfect nanny, maybe even better. I remember also of an episode on the beach which touched me deeply. I used to bike ride to the beach with Peter on the front basket and Daisy following behind.

One day at the beach, I was in the water and felt the only button that secured my bathing suit brake. The beach was crowded with English soldiers and I was in a very embarrassing situation. I could hold my bra with one hand, but how would I pick up Peter, put him on the bike and carry the entire stuff home with only one hand? I was expecting to see all the soldiers laughing and having fun with the situation. But again I under estimated the English. A young soldier approached, got down, took one of his shoe laces off and very gently, tied my bathing suit for me. That reminds me of *The Order of Garter*, the higher order that the French queen granted to an official in a similar situation. When the official got down helping the queen with her garments without looking at her, she said: *honi soit qui mal y pense!* (Evil be to him who evil thinks).

Things like that give the due respect to an army. Unlike the red army, the soldiers kidnapped and raped women in Poland, Romania and Germany.

My next door neighbor had a child, whose father didn't know about his existence. A **Frau Pauker** didn't want him to know. He served the army and wanted to have a child on her own. A very courageous woman! I just hope they made it.

We helped each other taking care of the children. I worked during the day teaching gymnastics in the local school and she watched Peter for me. At night she worked cleaning the schools and I watched her child. It wasn't easy but we didn't feel it so.

There weren't washing machines or fuel in the kitchen, but the children were always clean and well fed. I believe they were happy too. Of course, the fathers were very much missed. Many kids were in the same situation. But the majority of them were starting to come back, from **Italy**, **Egypt**, etc. Imre was still very far.

COMMANDER ROTH'S COURAGE

IMRE AND PETER, DIFFICULT DIALOGUE

XXXIII – Commander Roth's courage

Now my parents came to visit every weekend. They'd come on a Friday and stay until Saturday night. Peter got many gifts and the love of his grandparents, which compensated the absence of his father. He had a wooden horse we named Diogenes but **Peter** called it "galgal". It was nothing but a wooden wheel. But it meant the world to him. In his magical imagination, the wheel became the stirring wheel of a car, the controller of a plane, or a ship. **Peter** went around the world only with his imagination and that wooden wheel. Many times I think about it when I see his children today, who have expensive toys and don't have to use their imagination much. But today things are different. We have easy access to things that make our lives easier.

My father, who was very known to everyone, could come in and leave the port with just a wave. They didn't ask him for identification. He made daily trips to **Cyprus** Island (200km, or 124 miles of **Haifa**) with his crew. There were many Jews that had been sent to the Island without hopes of going back to Israel. They had no faith in the "**Balfour Declaration**", in affect since 1917²¹. But my father was determined to help. Using his own and his crew's identifications, he was able to send hundreds of Jews to freedom.

He also helped the children. With the help of Israeli children who along their parents agreed to help, they could bring the children in Cyprus back home. The Israeli children would take the boat to the Island, then stay there and give their documents to another child there waiting to take the boat back. The plan was for them to start crying after the boat left, saying their parents left them behind. Since they only spoke Hebrew, the authorities believed them and brought them back. Their mothers would be waiting for them at the **Palmers Gate** crying: "My babies, you were left behind! The boat left without you! The boat's crew was all Jews and one of the officials always stayed with the children.

²¹Although the dream of the “Promise Land” of the Hebrews and Jews come from biblical times, the idea of the Jew State started to gain strength in the year of 1897 (5657 on the Jewish calendar). On that year, the Hungarian lawyer, journalist and dramaturge **Benjamin Zeev** (later **Theodore Herzl** 1860-1904), published a book called “The Jewish State”, which was sub-titled “Attempt to a Modern Solution for a Jewish Matter” and promoted a congress in Bâsel, in Switzerland of great repercussion. Twenty years later, in 11/02/1917, **Lord Arthur James Balfour** (1848-1930), the English secretary for Foreign Relations, published the “Balfour Declaration” which offered support to the Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in the region and affirmed: *nothing will be done to harm the civil and religious rights of the existing Jewish communities* – in a reference to the Arabs, who then represented 92% of the population.

My most important friend at those times was the mail man. We all waited for him anxiously but had mixed feelings on the days he didn't stop. We were happy for not getting a letter with the words: *we regret to inform you...* But I wanted to hear about him. Even Daisy enjoyed seeing our mail man. Our neighbor's boxer and Daisy didn't get along. But they sure forgot about their own problems to greet our friend.

Letters, life evolved through letters. Sometimes we waited for a long time and only got a few words: “I'm fine but I miss you! Hope this will end soon”. But those were important words. I knew he was well. Later he told me how anxiously he had waited for my letters. I wrote everything about Peter's development, every new tooth, every new step. Imre didn't receive my letters for a while though. Until one night when he was laying on his bed and his roommate, a doctor, was reading his letters on his bed.

Imre noticed that the hand writing was familiar. The letters were from ME! How was that possible? The man told him he had been receiving those letters about a son and he didn't understand, he didn't even have children. Then they figure it out. Imre was **Captain Szmuk 14th** GH (General Hospital) and the other man was the son of General Smuts 17th GH. My “4” was similar to my “7” which helped the confusion. To make the coincidence even more evident is that both were at the same camp in *Burma Road*, in the end of the world, the *Forgotten Army*!

XXXIV – Almost over

Finally, the big news came. It was Aug/06/1945 and the Americans dropped the **first** atomic bomb. That meant the end of suffering and the rescue of thousands of English and Americans. Here is again, a great and sad truth: better a scary end than a scare without an end. For us it was salvation.

My husband later told me how the Japanese were cruel. A hospital with its big red cross on the roof was bombed. Navigating in a convoy, my father witnessed a Red Cross ship being sunk. We needed to know the details before judging.

For us it was the end of the eminent danger but not the end of separation. Because of the cruelty and inhumane treatment given by the Japanese to the war prisoners, there were still many sick and wounded in hospitals and it took them almost an entire year before they could return.

I got a letter from **Imre** saying he was returning home. We have been waiting for four and a half years. Peter wore his new outfit especially saved for that moment. The moment he was going to meet his father. I was sure he was going to recognize his father right away for I had always showed him pictures and read him the letters. We went along with my father to the train station in **Haifa**. My mother stayed and prepared a lunch reception.

The train from **Suez** arrived. Many soldiers came out; we looked everywhere and waited until the last soldier got off the train, but nothing.

What a deception!

At that time, telephones worked precariously and cellular phones did not exist even in the most fertile imagination. We went back to my parents home sad and disappointed and could not explain to **Peter** what had happened. My mother opened the door with a big smile and asked about Imre. Nobody knew. We could not eat. Then about five o'clock in the afternoon the doorbell rang. It was **Imre**! Since the war started, the

communication between Countries had been interrupted as well international phone calls.

What had happened? Again, despite the serious and sad situation, the deception of all of us, especially Peter's, there was a funny explanation, almost tragic comic.

The inspection before one boarded the train on the Egypt side, in **Suez**, was very strict. The English feared an attack from both sides, Jews and Arabs. The Jews who now wanted to collect the promise of the **Balfour Declaration** and the Arabs because they did not want an Israel State. But the Arabs were the owners of the petroleum.

Imre bought a small wind-up toy car made of tin can. It seemed that Imre might have played with the car before putting in a box, because when the customs officials opened the box, the car, which had been wound up and ready to go, made a huge noise and started working. Imre said that at that moment, Arabs dropped under tables, jumped out of windows or just took off running. The "heroes" lost their composure... With all that confusion, Imre ended up missing the train and the next one was only hours away.

XXXV – Imre and Peter, difficult dialogue

The problem was that Imre and **Peter** could not speak a common language. Peter spoke German with me and his grandparents and *iwrit* with the neighborhood children and at school. He was a very intelligent child and always knew which language to use. My father was always confused about that. He always spoke the wrong language. He spoke Hungarian with the Arabs and Arab with me and so on. He called me in German *DER* Helga, which is masculine and my brother he called *DIE*, the feminine. But not Peter, he was never wrong.

Imre spoke Hungarian²² badly, and for many years, he only spoke English. He was only 18 when he left Hungary and never returned. It was the same with his brother **Lazy**. They came to Israel in the same ship; they both joined the army and then met

in **Singapore**, by coincidence. **Lazy** returned much before Imre and he liked **Peter** very much. He was a second father to him. After many stories to tell, we went to **Naharia**. My mother cried. It was interesting the fact that she never showed affection towards us, but she adored **Peter**. He loved to spend time with them in **Mount Carmel**. He was allowed to do anything he wanted without limits or restrictions. Who knew my mother would change so much. She was always very strict with us, always punishing and humiliating us. **Peter** could knock all the books out of the shelves, throw everything out of drawers and my mother still thought it was cute.

²²Considered one of the most difficult languages to learn in the world, Hungarian belongs to the uralo-altaicas language family. It is represented in Europe also by the Finish and Estonian, from which it only approaches in similarity in the grammatical structure. They do not have any similarity between words and they are distant related to few dialects that survived in remote areas in the North of Siberia. In the Hungarian language, suffixes solve what in other languages it depends of two or more words. One singular musicality results in vocal harmony that conditions to the suffixes the same resonance that vibrates in the vowels of the roots. To have an idea of the difficulties, the tonic syllable of all words is always, without exception, the first one; and the words starting with *cs* (which sound like *tch*), *sz* (the *s* as in *saved*), *zs* (*g* sound), *ő* and *ű* (as in the German language) are separated in exclusive sessions that follow the letters *c*, *s*, *z*, *o* and *u* respectively. The same applies to *dz*, *dzs*, *ny*, *ly*, *ty* and *gy* (it appears in *Magyar* – it's said that to know if someone is Hungarian, you only have to hear the encounter of this two letters). This way, the Hungarian alphabet is formed of 44 letters – some “double” or “triple” – of which 14 are vowels. In Hungarian, there is only one conjugation to express the past. Verbs do not conjugate in the future. There are no prepositions in the Hungarian language.

Why did she change so much? I asked her and she said that now she did not have more responsibilities. But I do not think that was the reason. She never felt responsible for us. We were always under the care of nannies or housekeepers who were great to us. We loved them and they loved us. I think that my mother was just unhappy in her marriage. My father did everything he could to please her until he renounced to the sea. But still, she was never satisfied.

In **Nahariya**, we committed the first big mistake. **Peter** always slept with me in the same room; he was very attached to me. Even when I went to the bathroom, he would burst the door open and come in. Now Imre was anxious to be alone with me.

Peter was transferred to another room. I will never forget his desperate crying all night long. From that originated a competitive feeling of jealousy between the two of them.

In **Nahariya**, there was not any possibility of work so we moved to **Haifa**. **Edith** was

happy; she lived in **Haifa** and was pregnant again. **Jotzo** was also away in **Aberdan**, on the Middle East. We rented an apartment with an office and **Lazy** came to live with us. **Edith** worked with a veterinarian doctor who was friends with my parents. I remember when they “fabricated” vitamin A and **Edith** used her hairpin to push the mass inside the bottle.

Imre started his practice. He had many Arabs and Jews patients. Sometimes, when he needed to go to a dangerous Arab neighborhood at night, they would come to get him. The *Moraot* were again in effect, shootings everywhere. One time **Imre** was almost shot when looking out of a window.

In the same building there was a couple named the **Moscovits**. All day long patients would bring feces and urine samples for testing. One day somebody came with a package and said it was for the Moscovits. I thought they were not home and offered to deliver the package. At night, I went to their door and delivered the package. They opened it and for their surprise it was full of sample “materials” and the stench was unbearable.

It seemed unbelievable. We were all living in the same city, **Imre**, **Peter** and I, **Lazy** and my parents. How long since that happened? But it would not last too long. Almost everyday Jews or Arabs dropped bombs near the Port. There was a curfew at eight o'clock at night and nobody could be out in the streets. My father's *Shipchandlershop* was near the Port's entrance and the glass cracked every week because the bombings. The insurance company refused to keep paying the damages.

Besides that, everything else seemed to be in perfect peace. Until one day, in March of 1948, there was a letter in our mailbox, this time from **The State of Israel**: Imre was been called to serve in the **Hagana**, the Israeli Army²³.

²³ Fifty years after the first World Zionist Congress, the General Assembly of the UN, approved the division of the Palestine and the virtual birth of a Jewish State. This took effect through an agreement between Jewish Leaders from the “English occupied Palestine”– like **David Ben Gurion** (*David Yosef Gryn*, born in Plonsk, Poland, 1886; died in Israel, 1973) and **Golda Meir** (*Golda Mabovitz*, born in Kiev, Ukraine, 1898; died in Israel, 1978) and the UK. In 05/14/1948, Britain left the Palestine and the Jews proclaimed the State of Israel, which was immediately recognized by the United States and

Russia. The Arabs from Palestine and from the neighbor Countries of Egypt, Jordan, Iraqi, Syria and Lebanon, resentful of the decision, declared war to the newly created State of Israel. With Israel's victory in 1949, new borders were established. Around 75% of Palestine became Israel's territory. The South 'strip from Gaza until the border with Egypt, became Egypt's control. The rest of the territory was annexed by the **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**. Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. The Arab-Palestine State ceased to exist. Almost 2/3 of the Arab population left their homes and became refugees. Hundreds of thousands of Palestines immigrated to the Arab States where they lived in precarious campgrounds. The ones who stayed became refugees in their own Nation. Jerusalem and all **Cisjordan**, divided between Christian, Jews and Muslims, became conflict poles, which last until the present day. The conflicts became epidemic and the war broke out once again in 1956, 1967 and 1973. The most important one was "**The war of six days**", in 1967 when Israel incorporated the **Sinai Peninsula** and the Gaza Strip, the Cisjordan and the Syrian territory of **Golan Heights** and intensified its political ideas of construction of housing for the Jew immigrant's settlers. The State of Israel has today only an area of 27.800km² (17.200 sq. miles). What we today call **Cisjordan** is a small area of 5.000 km² (3100 sq. miles). It involves several cities to the west of the Jordan River (the "Transjordan" is on the east), on a strip that from north to south take to the eastern bank of the Jordan River. From the Mediterranean to Jordan, on the north, around 48km of width and on to the Dead Sea is about 80km (49 miles). The length is 250km (155 miles) from Dan to Beersheba or 320km (200 miles) from Dan to Cades-Barnea, including the **Neguev Desert** in the latter. The main cities of the region, besides Jerusalem formed the old region of Judea (where *Bethlehem* and *Jericho* were located), Galilee (where Nazareth was) and also Samaria (where *Gaza* and *Magdala* were).

AN EVENTFULL TRIP

IVAN

XXXVI – An eventfull trip

Edith went to **Budapest** to visit her parents but asked **Jotzo** not to go, because they would not let him out of Hungary. But with **Jotzo** in Israel, they could not separate the families. However, **Jotzo** could not stay behind and went along. We thought that we have given our part to the war and enough was enough! But what could we do? **Imre** did not know anything about his family, letters were too difficult to get.

We then decided to go to Hungary in the beginning of March 1948. We wanted to stay two or three weeks until the peace returned to Israel and then go back to **Haifa**. But Imre was unable to leave the Country legally, unless he enlisted. Imre was then *honorably discharged from the British Army* and he received a major post. With this document, we got a ride in an English Army truck to **Lud** airport and boarded the first plane to **Cyprus, Rome, Prague** and finally **Budapest**.

The plane was a small **Dakota** (a military version of the Douglas DC-3) with two turbines that only flew during daylight. We arrived in **Cyprus** and stayed overnight and the pilot said he was not feeling well, his arm hurt and he could not continue the trip. Imre bought him medicines for the pain and we left the next day to **Rome** stopping in **Athens**. Peter liked the trip, he met some South African children, but I was not happy with that. The small plane shook at every wind gust and the trip to **Athens** that should take six hours, took ten. We stayed there overnight and then headed for Rome.

As soon as we landed, we were told that the plane could not continue to **Prague** because **Czechoslovakia** was in the midst of a revolution. The communists had taken over. Well, that was my third or fourth revolution. But it was certainly not the last.

We did not have visa to stay in **Italy**. Another couple aboard the plane was in the

same situation. There began another friendship that lasted until her death not long ago.

The authorities allowed women and children to stay in a hotel in **Rome**. The campaign paid the expenses but the men were detained in the **Csampina** airport.

Eva, my new friend, and I, shared a room, along with our children. We did not speak a word in Italian and that is how our friendship started.

We called the airport and a voice responded:

- *Pronto?*

Eva said:

- *No, Csampina!*

And so it went three or four more times until we learned what “PRONTO” meant. We fixed the kids a bed with blankets on the floor. Later the hotel’s concierge told us that he thought, “This people never slept in a bed before”! On the door, there were buzzers for different services, room service, bar service, etc. **Peter** found them out and pressed all at once and we had six servers at our door. Evidently, **Peter** loved the game.

XXXVII – Life in Budapest

The situation in Prague did not change and it seemed our place was not going anywhere. They were afraid to have the plane confiscated in **Czechoslovakia**. The men finally got a three weeks visa but we did not know what to do. My father called us and told us not to continue. **Jotzo** was been detained and could not leave. Edith had been right. Imre still wanted to go, he was anxious to see his family. One of his brothers had disappeared since the end of the war and nobody knew his whereabouts.

We left Israel with an English safe-conduct and nobody could detain us in Hungary.

Eva cried all the time; she wanted to see the yellow tram once more before she died. We talked about that many times later, about everything being her fault, only because she missed the yellow tram. The **Ferenczi (Eva Gula and Tomy)** left right away by train. We stayed for two more weeks. Imre had studied in **Rome** so knew every inch of the city. We went to Venice and from there we took the train to **Budapest**.

We arrived in Hungary, **Imre** with English documents and Peter and I with Palestine documents. We had no problems, BUT when we arrived in **Budapest**, they told us that Imre had never renounced to his Hungarian citizenship therefore he, his wife and child were HUNGARIAN. **Peter** and I did not speak a word in Hungarian.

We went to **Nandor's** house, **Peter's** brother. He was married to **Ilonka** and they had two daughters, **Flori** and **Szilvia**. **Flori** and **Peter** got into fights right away. They could not understand each other, speaking different languages. Peter cried all the time. We arrived in March 14, 1948, **Peter's** fifth birthday. But March 15 was a national holiday and all the houses had the national flag on the posts. Peter was sure it was all for his birthday.

A month later, on April 17, 1948, the UN declared **The State of Israel** independence. My parents were very happy and everyone celebrated. I was sad because I had to stay in Hungary, but Imre did not care. Soon he started working after revalidating his diploma for the second time. The first was before he joined the English Army and now here in Hungary, because his diploma was Italian. That was not even the last time he had to do that.

We looked for an apartment to rent and in the beginning of 1949 I got pregnant with **Ivan**. When we arrived in Hungary, we only had a small suitcase for we never thought we would stay for eight long years. My father sent us clothes and other belongings and asked me to go to the navigation company and ask if anyone knew Commander Roth, so they could release the luggage. Suddenly, the director of the **Maszovlet** came out of the room, looked at me and asked:

- *Are you his daughter?*

I said I was and crying, he hugged me, kissed me. He was the one who told me about my parents wedding. It was he who took care of my father's ship while he went to get married. He said he felt sorry for my mother and always wanted to know what became of her and my father. These encounters are typical of seamen families and they are all very emotional when they happen.

XXXVIII – Ivan

Ivan was born in October 24, 1949 and again **Imre** was not present. I went to the hospital alone and left **Peter** with out neighbors. **Peter** went to see a movie with tem and in the movie there was a hero called Ivan. **Peter** wanted me to name the baby **Ivan** and his middle name **Nandor**, the name of **Imre**'s brother who was missing. At that time, we could not know the sex of the babies in advance.

On the same bedroom I was in, there was a woman who had lost a son in the concentration camps and now she had given birth to another. She and her family were very happy. Unfortunately, she died two months later of breast cancer. She had gotten pregnant against doctors advices.

Very soon, **Imre**'s other brother **Andor**, who had a fur factory that belonged to his parents, lost control of his business. A former employer who did not know anything about the business took over the direction and the factory was nationalized as many others. Soon enough it went bankrupt. We rented an apartment near the hospital where **Imre** and **Edith** worked. She lived right in front of the hospital.

Soon after that we moved to **Mátyásföld**, suburbs of Budapest. Imre had a colleague doctor whose wife was also a doctor and they had the same problems we had: our children on a city where they could not play outside. We all decided to rent a house together. The house belonged to a rich family and the communists did not allow them to live in such "luxury" alone.

We built one more bathroom and kitchen and moved in. Imre took the bus or tram to

work. He left early morning and came back at night. I didn't speak Hungarian and was very unhappy. **Peter** also didn't speak the language so we put him in a school in the building of the hospital Imre worked (when we still lived in Budapest). After a while we asked the teacher if **Peter** had any progress with the language to what she replied:

- No, but all other children already know how to curse in Arab!

Peter never lost the guttural "r" of the Hebrew.

Many years later this subject of language would make us laugh. We always found it funny the fact that we could not express ourselves on one common language. There are words that I know better in German and **Peter** know some words better in Hungarian or English and so forth.

When we were in public, people would be curious about which language we were speaking. Of course we liked to take advantage of the situations and tried to confuse them even more.

Once in the United States, we started speaking in Portuguese; people soon noticed that we were speaking a Latin language. But we soon changed to Hungarian and laughed at people's confusion.

Another time on a plane I was speaking in Hungarian with my husband and a curious person finally asked us:

- *Forgive me, but where are you from?*

My husband replied:

- *We are from Brazil.*

She then said:

- I knew you were speaking a Latin language!

It was really funny.

Winters were hard on us and the heating system was not enough to keep us warm. We turned it on in the afternoon only when the children were back from school. In the mornings it was off. It was very hard to have to clean the snow at dawn; otherwise we would get ticketed by the city. **Magdi**, a young woman who also lived in the house, helped with the chores and sometimes watched the children. We met in 2001 in Hungary. It was an emotional encounter.



Meeting in Budapest, 2001

I hated life under the communist regime. You never knew who was your friend or enemy. People were false and you could not trust anyone. Since I could not read in Hungarian, my father sent me books and magazines in English about astronomy and other banal subjects. But one day they called me to the hospital direction and told me I was receiving “subversive material”. I never knew who came up with it. It could only have been one of those “friends” of ours.

We went to the movies once with friends. Movies at that time were all Russian; there were no American, French or German movies. It was one of those boring films. When it was over they asked me if I liked the movie. I said that I had not liked it. Right there on the sidewalk they pointed at me and called me fascist, reactionary.

Every night, almost everyone sat by the radio and listened to **Free Europe**, an American program. It was prohibited to listen to it but nobody cared. At that hour, the streets were empty. One day, **Peter's** teacher told us that when she was teaching them geography about the East, North, South and West of Europe **Peter** asked her:

- *Where is the free Europe?*

The teacher was disconcerted and replied:

- *Well, that Europe does not exist.*

But **Peter** insisted:

- *But my parents listen to a radio program from there every night?*

Lucky us the teacher also listened to it. From then on, we watched what we said in front of the children.

My mother came to visit but not my father for his was well known and he did not want to risk. My mother got a thirty-day visa. We were very happy. But then my mother met with the man who was the president of the navigation company. He was almost deaf.

They met in a public place and talked very loud against the communist regime. On that same day the police came to our house and gave my mother forty-eight hours to leave the Country. That made me very sad and unhappy.

I worked as a teacher at the school and at home. It was the only thing I liked to do. The wife of Imre's cousin who was a communist told us with pride that once she was in a public swimming pool and heard two women who worked there talking bad about **Stalin**²⁴. She approached them, asked for their identification and they lost their jobs.

24 **Iossif Vissarionovitch Djughashvili** (1879-1953), aka **Josef Stalin** ("men of steel") a politician born in **Gori**, Georgia, governed with iron hands for 30 years the Soviet Union. He took the power in 1924 and did not give it up until his last breath. Documents show that on the contrary of what it was believed, his mind and objectives were not clear at the end. He was cruel and cunning and he didn't trust anyone nor allowed anything to slip out of his control. He knew how to manipulate everything and everyone around him. More than being guided by an ideology, his political tactic depended of the circumstances and of his opportunist's interests. One of his more dangerous qualities was to know how to wait patiently for the right moment to attack the enemy. He was responsible for the worse period on the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ("USSR")** history. His government, a bloody totalitarian regime, was marked by public executions and expurgations. Millions of Russians died. Some historians believe that the number of victims of the Stalin era can be close to twenty million. All the weapons were utilized to eliminate the enemy and the power was maintained through two main mechanisms: conspiracy and brutality. Besides that, the surviving of the power system created by **Vladimir Ilitch Ulianov ("Lenin")** and Stalin depended of the existence of "enemies". If they were real or imaginary, that wasn't important. As Lenin, Stalin believed that the enemies were more valuable than the friends, to the Soviet power. In the wave of violence in the 1930 decade, known as the Great Terror, millions of people were arrested, cross examined, executed or sent to the concentration camps ("*Gulags*") by the political police, the **NKVD** (later **KGB**).

We always felt insecure around friends, which was the consequence of us not being able to really trust anyone. It seemed everyone was in favor of the regime as everyone was in favor of the Nazism in German and of the Austria's Emperor before that. They were people who used to serve and used to be submissive and fake. Very typical of low life and ignorant people who think they are better than anyone else because they can kiss the hand of the ones who have the power. Small they are, little they know.

We were so suspicious of everyone that Imre decided to prohibit our sons to play with the neighbor's blond hair, blue-eyed children, the stereotype of a Nazy. Until one day, on a Saturday, we saw them, all dressed up, going to the Synagogue. I saw them later, many times, when I went to visit my brother in New York.

Edith had a little girl, **Edna** and **Edwin** stayed with us while she was in the hospital. He came to our house alone, holding a bag and said:

- I am going to have a new sister but I need to stay with you for now.

He was four and a half years old. His mother put him in a bus and told the driver where to drop him off. After that, he learned the way.

We still had time for games and jokes. Once, on Imre's birthday, our neighbors and friends gave him a huge statue of Stalin. They knew he would have a hard time

getting rid of it. He could not take the risk and throw it out in the garbage. If we hid in the house, a guest would eventually find it.

There was only one way to go. On a dark night, we rolled the statue in a cart back to the person who was so lovely to have the idea of giving us this gag gift. We left it in their porch. It was their problem now. Nevertheless, there is an end for everything. Therefore, there was one for **Ivan**.

The garden was enormous, spacious with frond trees, well designed with many mysterious places do hide. A boy and a girl played in this magical place. As they have during all those years. When it was cold, they came in. There was silence in and around them. It was autumn and they were friends.

They heard shots in the distant town. A large black car stopped in front of the gate. The boy and the girl came running. "Ivan, – called the boy's parents – come"!

They got into the car. -*"See you soon"*, said the boy to the girl, and they left. The girl stood there, watching them go, in a numb state of incomprehension. She only started crying at night, when the shootings intensified and sounded closer. The tanks appeared from a corner of the garden.

The boy was gone. He was eight years old. The girl would turn ten a few days later.

They were in the cellar with no bread to eat. Only shots they could hear and they were afraid. But in her dreams, **Ivan** always came back. And they played windmill and hide and seek. They were always together.

Ten years have passed and a letter came:

"I would like to see you" – wrote **Ivan**.

And then the replies:

"I would like to see you too" - **Jutka**

"I forgot Hungarian" – **Ivan**.

"I'm sorry, I haven't" – **Jutka**.

Twenty more years passed and no more letters or encounters. The dreams did not come true.

Only in her vigilant conscience the boy remains. It was the boy who spoke Hungarian, her dear friend, her only friend. The windmill, the handshakes, the hide and seek games and the rose bushes. Then a phone call from his mother came. Ivan was waiting for her. And he was still waiting for her, thirty years later. But now she was pregnant of her seventh child. She did not dream of **Ivan** any longer. Only a vague lighting of memory, the leaves of the chestnut trees and a call in the distance "**Ivan!**" remained forever under the autumn trees...

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

IN AUSTRIA, FREE

XXXIX – Revolution and Counter Revolution

One fine day we awoke to the scary sound of shootings. Again. Yes, again. It was October 23, 1956, the day before Ivan's birthday. It was another revolution! The Hungarians stood up against the Russian occupation. Stalin's immense statue was torn down in pieces and the people on the streets, the students; they were all singing patriotic songs. The people whom we thought were communists now were on the revolution side. People were burning communist documents and everyone showed their real faces. It happened very quickly. There was no resistance and the tanks left. Cardinal **József Mindszenty** (1892-1975) talked on the radio. He or any other cardinals have never said a word during Austria's occupation. **Imre Nagy** (1896-1958) was declared to be the next prime minister and everything seemed to be going well.

We had a sense of disbelief though. We were afraid of this people, known to be anti-Semites and have been living in submission for hundreds of years. Soon enough the tanks returned in full power. They now knew friends for enemies. It was a "first class chess movement".

There was no food. Lines for bread, milk and even matches were long. Peter went once at daybreak, to stand in line for bread but by the time he got back home, the bread was almost gone. He was so hungry he could not keep from eating the bread. I will never wish for anyone to have a hungry child.

We counted with a little luck though and were able to give Ivan a birthday party. We had cake and candy but it was all gone in no time. Imre's brother **Andor** (**Flori** and **Szilvia's** father), was in line for bread, when a Russian tank came shooting everything and everyone in sight. He was seriously wounded and taken to the hospital where he worked, but unfortunately, he did not survive. Another brother was

gone. It was because of him, Imre wanted to come to Hungary. Andor's daughters stayed with us where they would be safer than where they lived. I thought of Imre's parents and of how much they would have suffered if they were still alive. It hurts deeply. Imre was devastated.

Lazy had come to Hungary some time before we did. The brothers were always together. They arrived in the same ship in Israel, met in **Singapore** but sadly they died, one following the other. But there was still time ahead of them. **Lazy** could not take the communist regime anymore. His parents' factory was gone and he was alone. It would be easy to walk across the border. He went to **Belgium** where he married a girl and they had a son named **Charly**.

I never met my father and mother-in-law. However, my sister-in-law lived for many years with them and she remembered the stories involving our husband's family. My husband's mother was born **Antonia Braunstein**, but in some of her documents, her name read Bronstein or Branstein.

Imre was born in **May** 9, 1913 in a small city that belonged at that time to Hungary. Later it belonged to Romania, Austria, Russia, etc. When already in Brazil, people asked where he had been born but he only knew the name of the city – **Marmorossziget** – however he did not know from which Country.

Same thing happened to the documents. They had been translated in so many languages along time that nobody really knew how to pronounce the name of the city correctly.

His mother used to tell that her brother who was the “black sheep” of the family had simply vanished. For a long time, they wondered what had happened to him, until years later when the family received a letter saying, he was alive and well and had changed his identity. He was now Trotsky, **Leon Trotsky**²⁵.

²⁵ **Lev Davidovich Bronstein (later León Trotsky)**, was born in Bobrinets (in German, Bobrynets; In Polish Bobryniec), near Yanovka (Яновка, today Bereslavka), in Ukraine Galicia in October 26 1879. Son of David and Anna Bronstein, Jewish agriculturists. At seventeen, he began his political activism in opposition to Czarism. He was arrested and deported to Siberia. In 1902, he got away from the prison and became Trotsky. He traveled to London where he met Lénin and several other Russian

exiles. In 1903, with the merging of the Russian Social Democratic Party between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Trotsky took an independent position towards those two factions, supporting one or another, always agreeing with his own convictions. In 1905, he returns from exile at the moment when the workers revolted against the Russian Monarchy. He assumed the Presidency of the Soviet Petrograd, where he stays until the revolution's defeat in 1905. Arrested again in 1906, he was again deported to Siberia, running away again in 1907. He lived the next years in the exile, in Paris where he was expelled in September of 1916. From there he went to New York (January 1917) and returned to Russia in March 1917 when he reassumed the Soviet Petrograd. With the victory of the Revolution in October, he became Commissary of Foreign Affairs and sign a peace agreement with Germany in **Brest-Litovsk**. In 1918, he assumes the Commissary of War position where he stays until 1921 and organizes the Red Army for a civil war. In 1923, he organizes a Leftist Opposition, which goes against the ideas of the communist party, and Stalin. The next year, after Lenin's death (1924), the Central Committee of PCUS begin a process against Trotsky under the accusation of counter-revolutionaries activities. Banished from talking in public he's expelled from the central committee party in 1927. The next year he was sentenced to exile in Alma Ata, in Turkistan. Being banished from the Soviet Union in 1929, he departs to Turkey in that same year, then later to France and then Norway. In the exile, he joined his followers who had been deported from the Soviet Union and edit the "Opposition Bulletin" that circulates around several Countries. From Europe, he goes to America, arriving in Mexico in January 1937. He continued his political activities of opposition to Stalin and organized a new Communist International, the IV International, founded in 1938. In August 1940, Trotsky was betrayed and killed by Ramon Mercader, in Mexico. [See more about the Trotsky/Bronstein's family birthplace in http://www.region.in.ua/bobrinets/btr_e.html](http://www.region.in.ua/bobrinets/btr_e.html)

The rest of the story everyone knows, however many other tragedies followed to this day. In Hungary, nobody ever heard about him during Stalin's period. Stalin had been his archenemy until his death in 1940.

XL – Escape in mind

We were now thinking of escaping. We were much more afraid of the Hungarians than of the Russians. Cardinal **József Mindszenty**, who had talked so much during the few days of "freedom", was now exiled at the American Embassy, the place in which he stayed until the definite end of the communist regime.

Eva, with whom we flew to Hungary, spent every vacation with her family; her husband **Lazy Wessel** and her children **Janos** and **Istvan**, in our neighborhood, right across the street where they rented a house. They had a meat distribution business. We were good friends, our children got along. Their landlord worked at the railroad company and he traveled daily to Vienna on the trains. He helped **Eva** and her family to escape to Vienna.

We wanted to follow her steps but never without **Edith**. We planned everything to the very last detail. We would spend our last night at Edith's house since she lived near the train station. Once we crossed the border, we would send half of a handkerchief through the guide to my sister in law. It was the signal saying we arrived safely. She would save our family photos and other belongings. We did not say anything to Ivan afraid that he would tell anyone. The English Consul took care of Imre's diploma and some jewels. He took them home, then later to **Ruth**'s house in Vienna.

Finally the day came. We slept very little and then a man came to get us (everything cost us a lot of money). We ripped the handkerchief in two and left half with **Edith**. The guide was not aware of any of the plan.

XLI – In Austria, free

We went to **Keleti** train station that was close to **Edith**'s house. We had no luggage, except the four or five change of clothes, the children were wearing one on top of the other. It was a cold December in 1956. It was a long trip and we were quiet. Right before the border we got off the train and the guide took us to a house in the country. The family who lived there received a large amount of money to take us in their home. The children were exhausted and went to bed early.

Before midnight, the guide woke us up and we walked the way to the border. It was a cold snowy night and we could hear shootings from the distance. It seemed an endless road through the dark and snow. I do not even remember how long it took. It felt like eternity. We then finally saw light! It was the Austrians! We were safe!

One of the officers told Ivan:

- Do not be afraid, we are here to help you.

They gave us all chocolate and warm milk and we continued until we arrived at an army campground where we could finally rest. I then told Ivan what had happened

and his answer was:

- I knew it all along.

We gave the guide the other half of the handkerchief and on the next day, Edith and her children followed us through the same path. We had spent all our money to get to Vienna. The Hungary money “forint” had little value. We got to **Ruth’s** house. It was the same building where I was born and from where I left in 1939. It was December 1956.

We got some rest and **Edith** called the next day. They also arrived safely and they were staying at the house of one of Joco’s uncles. The uncle was a very rich man, owner of a well-known highfashion shop. I never saw anybody so cheap in my life.

He gave them old and used clothes. Later we used those clothes to clean our floors.

We decided to go to the United States. My brother **Paul** convinced us to go and we were anxious to start a new life. **Edith** and **Joco** had no one in the States to help them go so they joined a group who was being sent to the US.

We were confident that the meeting at the Consulate would be quick but again, that was not so. It was the time of the “witch hunt” in the United States, which was led by Senator **Joseph R. McCarthy** (1908-1957) from the Republican Party. It was at the time that **Charles Chaplin** (1889-1977) was deported by the accusation of being a communist and the couple **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg** was condemned to death for spying for the Russians.

The scientists couple, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg was accused of revealing secrets about the atomic bomb to the then Soviet Union and therefore to collaborate with the communists. Both were trialed with extreme rigor and were condemned to death on the electric chair in July 19 1953. About their case, the French Philosopher **Jean Paul Sartre** made the following comment in the newspaper: *“Libération: You Americans are collectively responsible for these assassinations, some, for having sponsored it and others for having consented it. You permitted the United States to become a “cradle” to a new fascism.*”

The Consul asked us if we had ever belonged to a communist party. Imre said yes. It was obvious, in Hungary you could not find a job if you were not a communist. They

denied us the visas. A friend of my father's offered us to live in his vacant apartment. He furnished the apartment so we could stay there. The other immigrants had to stay in campgrounds but **Edith** and her family moved in with us and so did some of our friend's children while they could provide the visas they needed.

It was fantastic the way my father's friend treated us. He gave us the apartment to live in and even brought many toys for the children. He did not mind even when his floors got scratched and damaged with the children playing all the time.

Now, was there any other Country that could help us? It would be difficult but not impossible. The majority were taking refugees from the communism but not from the Nazism. It was a strange thought, but it was true.

Children could go to school. The *Joint*, a Jewish organization paid it all; meals at restaurants and new clothes for everyone.

Then something funny happened. Many Jews had converted to the Catholicism in Hungary, but the Catholics did not help anyone here so the ones who were Catholics now had to pretend they were still Jews in order to get help. That was the first time I ever saw anyone to want to be a Jew. But those people could never find their place in the community. They were not accepted in either the Jewish or the non-Jewish communities. It was a conflicting situation but years later many of those children grew up to be good Jews.

Edith and her family left and we stayed. My brother was sure that soon enough **the Senator Joseph McCarthy** was going to be removed. But Imre did not want to wait. We had two children and it was about time we started a new life. We got a letter from my father suggesting we tried Brazil, a "Country with future". He had been in Brazil on a sailing trip, in the *Charles Dickens*, in 1903. But he forgot it had been more than half a century since then. We went to the Brazilian Consulate and there we heard the first lie. Imre asked if his diploma could be accepted in Brazil and they said it would. But it was not true.

My father used to have his factory right in front of the city jail and he always brought

cigarettes and chocolates for the inmates. Later my mother went through embarrassing moments when the inmates would shout from the jail windows “good morning commander”. The “fruits” of popularity still exist to this day: my friends here in Brazil still remember how we were privileged in Vienna.

BRAZIL, A COUNTRY OF THE FUTURE

A SCARE BEFORE THE TRIP

XLII – Brazil, a Country of the future

Edith and her family were in the United States and they thought we would soon be there. When we finally decided to go to Brazil, we intended to use the money my father had given us, the money he had in Vienna. It would be enough for four tourist class tickets. But when Imre handed the money, they would not accept *schillings* from Austria. They would only take US dollars and we only had forty-eight hours before the ship departed. If we missed it, we would be stuck in Vienna for a few months longer.

We were very anxious to start a new life and our sons needed to go to school and very soon. Imre went to the Brazilian consulate and told them our story. A man listened to him closely and asked:

- Is your name Szmuk?

Imre confirmed and the man went on:

- I knew your father very well. I also knew he sponsored three Jewish students in Rome, besides his four children. I'm pleased to help you, how much do you need?

My husband wouldn't believe: he said it was a lot of money (I think it was about US\$1,500.00). The man picked up his checkbook wrote a check of US\$2,000.00. He gave it to Imre along with his name and address in Vienna; he was staying in a hotel there, but he lived in Rio de Janeiro. Imre knew we had the same amount but in *schillings* (the Austrian currency). He accepted the check but since later he managed to exchange our *schillings* and buy the tickets, he went back to return the dollars.

However, Mr. **Ronai** had already left to Brazil. Imre ripped the check, put the pieces in an envelope and left it with the hotel's manager.

¹ In fact, this is the famous philologist and translator Paul Rónai (1907-1992), who was saved from Nazi persecution in 1942 thanks to an invitation from him to the Brazilian government, self-taught, he learned Portuguese and published in an anthology Hungary poems by Brazilian authors. After an enforced break in Lisbon arrived in Brazil in 1941. Unable to save his girlfriend Magda with whom he was married by proxy, trying to get her out of this hell. She was murdered by the Nazis, like almost all his friends had left in Budapest. He landed in Rio de Janeiro, Praça Maua along with a couple of Hungarians and off to a Paissandú Hotel where he stayed only one night because the hotel was too expensive for your finances. He got a pension on Rua das Laranjeiras ten times cheaper. Two months later, he was working in two schools, the Metropolitan, in Meier and the Lycée Franco-Brazilian, in Laranjeiras. Hearing of the magazine in Brazil, decided to write an article, but timidly composed in French. Taking it to the newsroom, Aurélio Buarque de Holanda knew that, after asking for the translation of the article Portuguese, Rónai be admired as well as writing the vernacular after only two weeks in Brazil, the beginning of the friendship between these two and why Rónai change to Santa Teresa. When, in 1945, came the relatives of Hungary, all moved to a house on Governor's Island, where he only went after her marriage to D. Nora. With her daughters and lived many years in the neighborhood Peixoto, Copacabana, and finally, in Nova Friburgo, the site it is, with its "brilhoteca," so named for the granddaughter Beatrice, dubbed as the grandson air conditioning, protecting 10,000 books moisture, "air with dictionaries." Later, in 1952, Rona married Nora Tausz, Jewish Italian from Fiume, who had arrived in Brazil on the same ship Cape Horn Company's Ybarra in which he had traveled, two months later. Naturalized Brazilian in 1945, dismissed the legal deadline for the relevant cultural services to the country. Here, as well as dictionaries and grammars of Latin and French, books on linguistics and the art of translation, Hungarian anthologies of short stories, published in collaboration with Aurélio Buarque de Holanda the "Sea of Stories", a monumental collection of tales of world literature. Translated into Portuguese "Boys of Paul Street" ("The Pal Utcai Fiuk") by Ferenc Molnár, juvenile novel, directed the publication of The Human Comedy of Balzac and poured into French *Memórias de um sargento de milícias*.

Many years later, that same gentleman was out on a walk when he passed in front of our laboratory, "**Laboratorio Bioclinico**", on Peixoto Gomide Street in Sao Paulo, and saw Imre's name on the sign. He walked in and saw Imre. Imre was incredulous!

He asked him is he had received the check back. Mr. **Ronai**'s answer was:

- I don't remember. But I really don't care.

He was just happy that our family had found the right place to live.

Imre's father had helped strangers, sponsoring their studies, which nobody around him knew. Now his son Imre and his family were receiving the gesture back.

Something like that had happened to me before. When already living in Brazil I inherited a small amount of money from a cousin in Germany. I didn't want to go to Germany so I asked my brother to do it for me. But I needed to go to the German consulate and sign a document, so I went there and parked my car at the shopping

Mall near by. On the way out, I stopped at the **Lojas Americanas** (a famous Brazilian department store) to buy a few things and came back home. When I got home I realized I had left my bags at the Mall. Imre went back with me to look but we did not find anything at the parking lot. We went back to the store I had gone and found out that a lady had found my things and took them to the “lost and found”. All my documents were in that bag. I asked if they knew the lady, they said no.

Many years went past, my Imre had passed away and I went on a trip to Paraguay with friends for the New Year's. At the airport I found another friend who was on the same trip with her friend. They went to the free shop and I went along. I didn't buy anything but I noticed that the other lady had paid her things but forget to get them and left. I took the bag and yelled at her to come back but she couldn't hear me. Since I knew we were at the same hotel, I thought I could bring the things to her and so I did. We were talking and she was saying how happy she was that I had brought her bag to her, so I told her the same thing had happened to me before. She asked me:

- Was your bag blue?

I said yes and with great surprise discovered that it was HER, the lady who found my bag eight years ago.

There is another similar story. One day, I drove to Imre's lab to pick him up after work. I was driving at **Avenida Paulista**, when I got a flat tire. It was pouring rain that day.

Imre was waiting for me and I did not know what to do. A young man stopped, and changed the tire for me. I didn't know how to thank him, he said I didn't have to. When we got back home that night I told Peter the story, he said he had done the exact same thing: he helped a lady and changed her tire, about the same time it happened to me, in the rain.

It IS the honest truth. Maybe it was only a mere coincidence, but it did happen. I do not know what strange “compensation law” it that I hear. But I do believe in it. Of

course we should not do good deeds just thinking of the rewards right? It has to come from the heart otherwise it does not count.

When we were in Vienna, Imre was going crazy for not being able to work. He couldn't without a license, so he did it for free at the hospital **Allgemeine Krankenhaus**. Forty-eight years later Ivan, his family and I went to Vienna. He had a fall there and was very achy. We went to the same hospital Imre work back then and a Ukrainian doctor, who was a refugee, helped Ivan but didn't charge us anything.

XLIII – A scare before the trip

The day had arrived for a new trip. Every past trip had thought to be the last one. We took the train to **Hamburg**, Germany and stayed the night at a small hotel near the port. The ship **Claude Bernard** was to depart the next day.

On that evening, we had dinner at the hotel. Ivan had to go to the bathroom so Imre took him, showed him how to get back to where we were sitting and left him there. As he did not return, Imre went back to check on him, but he was not there. We ended up having to call the police, since we could not find him anywhere in the hotel. Luckily, they had found him walking around the port and the only thing he had told them was the name of the ship, **Claude Bernard**.

In less than five minutes, a police patrol brought Ivan back to us. It was the last scare on our last day in the old continent. Nowadays when I remember of that day, I think of how much important it is to teach our children to trust the police. I also went through a similar situation in Vienna and was the police who returned me safely to my parents.

The ship was beautiful, very big, but we stayed down below, with many other refugees from Spain, Portugal, many children. It was very dirty and noisy. Then a waiter came bringing flowers and asked us to follow him. He took us to two first class cabins: my father had written to the ship's Commander and he acted promptly.

Ivan and Peter crossed the Atlantic Ocean swimming! Well, that is, in the ship's swimming pool. They swam all day long. We started to learn a little Portuguese but it was the Portuguese from Portugal, with a few little differences from the Brazilian Portuguese. But it helped. We would have to start over another language and fast.

We arrived in **Santos**, but we passed by **Rio de Janeiro**, which was an unforgettable spectacle. I have passed through many ports in my life, but Rio de Janeiro, seen from the sea, is unforgettable. There we were, with all our problems, starting a new life with two children, we didn't speak the language and didn't know anybody, but this pleasure we had, to see the most beautiful city in the world.

IN NEW LAND

XLIV – In new land

We only had five dollars. But the **HIAS – Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society**, our guardian angels, were there to help us. They helped us with everything, school for the boys and even a free membership to an athletic club where they could practice sports. They lend us money and did everything possible to help us to get back in our feet. I always think why only Jews can help each other. I cannot stand those stupid *slogans* like “Christmas without hunger”. Why do they only help on Christmas? What about the rest of the year?

Nobody should ever be hungry. My husband never charged a dime to a patient who had a letter from HIAS or any other Jewish organization. That was very little comparing to all the help we had along the way.

Well, we were taken by bus to *Bras*, to a refugee camp. A woman from HIAS accompanied us. She never lost sight of us. At the camp, men and women were separated. The place was dirty and very noisy with women nursing their screaming babies and changing their diapers. There were people from the northeast of Brazil, from Spain, Portugal and many Jews from **Egypt**. Their former president **Gamal Abdel-Nasser** (1918-1970) had expelled them from their own nation, but they had some money. We had nothing.

One day, a doctor came to examine everyone in the camp. When he was seeing Imre, he recognized his name, (Imre had published many articles in the *Lancet*, a famous medical publication) and asked:

- What are you doing here?

Imre told him our story. We did not have any money and he could not work here.

The doctor said:

- Starting tomorrow, you are hired to teach nuclear medicine at the *Hospital das*

Clinicas.

The doctor was **Dr. Decourt**. Not long ago he was honored for his 90' birthday. Later he introduced Imre to the owner of a laboratory clinic who was looking for a partner. We lent the money from the Jewish organizations and were able to pay it off in six months.

¹ Luiz Venere Décourt (1911-2007), he gained in his professional environment for the development of a new work on rheumatic fever. In characterizing the reactions blood that identify the presence of this disease, developed an appropriate methodology for the accurate recognition of the most acute moment of infection, which can cause permanent heart damage. It's creating an outpatient at the Hospital of the University of São Paulo to meet with rheumatic fever patients, mostly children. Graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, University of São Paulo, was a professor in the Department of Medicine and the Scientific Director of the Heart Institute, this college. In 1972, Louis V. Décourt publishes the 2nd edition of his book "Rheumatic Disease", particularly studies in which the concept of disease and the diagnostic value of laboratory tests. It became a classic of rheumatology. Another contribution made by Luiz V. Décourt and colleagues, was the "biopsy of the Human Heart." In his thirty years of academic life, directed 897 trainees from various countries who have gone through this institution. Luiz Venere Décourt was a founding member of the Brazilian Society of Nephrology and the Brazilian Society of Cardiology, which also served as president.

I read in the paper about this English school that was looking for English teachers and it was not necessary that they spoke Portuguese. I went for it and they hired me. Now we even had a housekeeper. The children were in school; Ivan in a public school and Peter had a scholarship in *Santo Americo*. It was a Hungarian school and they helped Peter with the transition to a Brazilian school.

In school, they knew we were Jewish and still, never made distinction between Peter and the other students. We will never forget this as it was another generous help to us.

Soon we rented an apartment in *Higienópolis* and financed the furniture.

That was the first and second last time we bought something financed. A friend of my mother's friend co-signed the loan for us. We bought a sheet set for every bed.

We had to wash and iron on the same day. I worked evenings so I could take care of the house and the children during the day. Nevertheless, I liked that very much. I made good friends and learned a lot teaching "linguistic". It was a very nice

environment for me.

Until this day, I cannot feel sorry for poor people. You are only poor if you want to be poor! We did not have anyone, no money, did not speak the language but we were never poor or even blamed the government for our failures. I also cannot forgive some rich communities, Churches, etc, when they give a bowl of soup and think that's help. "Do not give the fish, teach them how to fish".

The second and last time we financed something was to buy the little house in *Vila Olimpia*. In the beginning, it was very hard to keep up with the payments. All my paychecks went to pay the mortgage. Imre's salary was for food. Soon enough the inflation hit, but since we had a fixed rate mortgage we did not suffer. We had suffered loses so many times in the past that the fact we had gained with inflation felt deserving.

My father died in Israel. My mother came to live with us but soon passed away. Imre and Lazy also left us that same year, 1986.

Everything I went through in my life come to me in waves, in vague thoughts sometimes, others very strong. One of those waves made me remember of the anonymous heroes, people who help without asking for returns.

When the building **where** Edith and I lived in **Tel-Aviv** was hit by a bomb, an English soldier saved us, pulling us out the window and came back to save the dog, still in the midst of the bombings. The dog would be the joy of my sons's life later.

I never knew the soldier's name nor ever saw him again. But this shows that not every soldier in uniform goes to war to kill.

I personally never liked any uniforms. I hate looking at people on uniforms, including those club members defending their shirt colors. However, it was a police officer from Hamburg, who brought Ivan back to us when he got lost before out trip. A German officer! I also have my prejudices.

One time, we went on a boat trip **by brazilian cities** from **Santos** to **Manaus** with stops in **Salvador, Recife, Belem**, etc. My sons had asked me to bring them a “berimbau” from **Bahia**. The boat was chartered by a group of doctors, for a “floating convention” (Imre and I had the idea).

When we arrived in Salvador, we saw a vendor waiting for the boat. He was an ambulant vendor, the kind that has everything you can imagine.

But he didn't have a berimbau. He said he had one at home but he could not leave his spot and lose the earnings of the day. So Imre, not wanting to disappoint Peter and Ivan, offered to watch his things and sell them for him while he went to get the berimbau. He was reluctant at first, suspecting of Imre's intentions, but decided to trust and went for the berimbau. Imre then, put on every necklace and every bracelet and carried baskets full of knick-knacks, and started his sales.

All the passengers of the boat knew Imre and they knew him as being a serious doctor, a famous researcher but looking at him then, they had a blast with it.

Every one of them bought something but since Imre didn't know the price of anything, he ended up charging three or four more times the real prices. They all wanted to be photographed with Imre selling the bracelets and necklaces and paid the prices without complain.

When the man came back with the berimbau, certainly worried about his “business”, he almost fainted when he saw all that money in his little box and all the stuff sold and gone.

That was Imre's only good business deal he ever made in his life!

And there was the story of the Szmuks in a **brothel...**

One day we were coming back from a ferry trip to **the town of Ilha Bela (“Beauty Island”)**. As always I stayed in the commander bridge with the pilot – a thing the daughter's of boat commanders do – and Imre was somewhere else in the boat,

asking around if they knew a good hotel in **the town of São Sebastião** and somebody gave him a name and address. We found the hotel, checked in but left right away for lunch, before going to our room.

When we came back, the hotel didn't seem like we expected. There were semi-nude women looking out the windows and other odd things. I told Imre I would not stay there. He went in to pay the bill, they charged him "an hour and a half stay", and my name was there, in the register book.

Imre said:

- If our sons ever come to this place, at least they will know their mother was here!

We never laughed so hard!

A STRANGE STORY – OR IS IT FUNNY?

XLV – A strange story – or is it funny?

My mother once told us the story of her uncle. He was seventeen years old when he stole money from his father's safe who found it out soon. In my mother's family (**the Schultz**) that was very unacceptable and nobody forgave him. His father (my mother's grandfather) bought him a one-way ticket to Argentina (**South America**) and ordered him to change his name. He changed his name to **Lutz**.

Some time later he was a partner of a large company, bought land and got very rich. In 1903, when my mother was fourteen, he invited her to visit. She went alone on a boat to Argentina and stayed with him for one year.

She soon learned one more language, Spanish; besides the many, she already spoke. When she came to Brazil to visit us, she had no problem understanding the language. She read the paper everyday.

After that year, she had a fight with her uncle and went back to Vienna. He deserted her. When later the "rich uncle" came to Vienna, they took him to see me ice skating, imagining he would "fall in love" with me and change his mind about the desertion. But that did not happen.

Some time ago in New York, my brother told me:

- You are a terrible ice skater! We did not inherit anything!

Many years later when my father died and my mother came to live with us, we went shopping and she saw an eye care products store name **Otica Lutz Ferrando**. She said it was her uncles' business and Ferrando was his partner. Then she told me she had fallen head over hills in love with this Ferrando and that was the reason her uncle sent her back home.

When uncle **Schultz** went to **Bueno Aires**, he wanted to forget his past of being an

ex-Jew and having stolen from his father and became a devoted catholic. But he was the only thief of the family and the only one who became a rich man. When he died, he left his inheritance to my aunt and she went to Argentina to receive it, escaping from the Nazi regime in Vienna. His daughter – my cousin – married an American and moved to New York, close to my brother.

She told me many stories, as the one about uncle **Rudolf** always sitting on the first row in church to receive the body and soul of Christ. Evidently, our both families broke relations. My mother never again talked to her sister after she knew she was uncle Rudolf's only heir. That's what happened when money is not earned honestly.

My uncle had become blind and my aunt died very young of breast cancer. Later he remarried – it had not been too difficult to find someone to take care of a blind old rich man. However, the money swiftly vanished. As one would expect it to happen.

Before that though, they were vacationing in a five-star hotel in the **Austrian Alps** and we went to meet them there. When we arrived, we saw the police asking for identifications. My aunt had lost her diamond ring in her room and they suspected foul play. I was very young and did not care very much, to what was going on so I walked to a window to watch the snow on the mountains. When I looked down to the roofs in front of me, I saw something shining. It was the ring! She must have dropped it when she was by the window.

When I was in New York once, her daughter, my cousin, reminding us of the story, gave me the ring she had with her and told me:

- This ring should have always been yours.

I still have the ring to this day; it is all it's left from a great fortune from split families.

COINCIDENCES

EPILOGUE

XLVI – Coincidences

Personally, I don't believe much in coincidences but I have to admit sometimes they're undeniable. The owner of the hotel in **Texas** and our childhood vacations in the Alps, that I can say is pure and clear coincidence.

As for the encounter with the Commander who watched my father's ship, I would not swear on that one. Sailors always end up bumping into each other but I think too that extroverted people can more easily talk their way around therefore they have more opportunities to see people in the most unthinkable places.

For instance; I used to go to **Guarujá**, a beach in the **São Paulo** coast, every week. But instead of taking the bus straight to Guarujá, I took the one to Santos. The trip was longer, but it was worth it. Passengers going to Guarujá were usually "paulistas", from São Paulo, very reserved and quiet people and the ones going to Santos were beach natives, more upbeat, easygoing people.

I used to love the crossing in the ferry and in one of those occasions I met someone very interesting. A lady asked me about places to go in Guarujá, she was the wife of the commander of a English cargo ship anchored in Santos. I invited her over to my house and she came. We went out sightseeing in a cab tour and I could show her a little of Guarujá. A few days later I got an invitation in the mail from her, to come along with Imre, to cruise around Rio de Janeiro and Salvador.

Another time on a bus to Santos, I started talking with the man sitting beside me and he introduced himself as Eckermann. That name to me sounded like a dream! The great German writer **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** (1749-1832), my idol and one of the great names in German literature, had a friend called **Johann Peter Eckermann**. I used to love to read the letters exchanged between the friends that had been published. I asked the man if he knew who Eckermann was in history but

he didn't. He told me his grandfather was German from a city called **Weimar**. Unbelievable! That is where Goethe was born. He was the parliament minister there.

I suggested to him to get in touch with the **Goethe Institute** in São Paulo and the German consulate and find more about his ancestors.

Not long after that, I got a call from him saying he had found out he really is the great-grandson of **Johann Peter Eckermann** (1792-1854). Mr. Eckermann was invited to represent his family at a celebration for Goethe's death anniversary, in Weimar.

In my opinion, things like that are not just coincidences, but a combined effort to expand our circle of friends.

I had once the honor to receive in my home the great **John Dobson**, the inventor of the famous telescope that has his name. Right after he left, I received an e-mail with an article about a Brazilian astronomer who lives in Guarujá and has one of those telescopes. I just wished I could have put them in touch. I went on to find the name of the person from the article in the phone book, which was not difficult task, being his name Polish; it was the only one on the list.

I called the man and told him about John's visit and we talked for a while. He asked me about my accent and we ended up speaking German.

He told me he was 86 years old and still took his telescope out on the street, so everyone could have a chance to look at the sky. Something like **John Dobson** would do.

Few days later, I went to the dentist but took the wrong bus. The driver stopped the bus and directed me to the right route. I took the bus, but forgot to get off at Augusta Street, as the driver had instructed me, so I got off at the next stop. Someone else had gotten off the bus, a man holding a bouquet of flowers and he was about to cross Paulista Avenue away from the crossing lanes. I held him by the arm and said"

- Please, do not do that!

Surprised, and because my accent, he asked where I was born.

I told him I was Austrian and he told me he was Polish and we could speak in German. *Dejávu!* The same talk on the phone. He said he lived in Guarujá. He was the man in the article about the Dobson telescope.

It seems I had to miss the right bus in order to meet with him. It is really too much of a coincidence. But WE TALKED. If we had not talked and heard our voices, we would not have known/

Another time in New York, I went to **Haydn Planetarium** to buy a book but the library was closed for lunch. A nice young man offered to buy me the book and leave it at my hotel. I thought he was being too nice which is not what New Yorkers are known for; until he told me he was an astronomer. Now it was all explained.

A few days later there would be a solar eclipse over the Atlantic Ocean and Roger Tutthill charted a plane to observe the phenomenon. On occasions like that my house was always full with worldwide astronomers. It was something I looked forward to every time. Good for them, for they can save money staying with me and good for me, for I can share my home with intelligent people who added so much to my knowledge in astronomy.

For that occasion, Roger brought a few people from NASA, all carrying their precious and accurate equipment to make sure we could follow the shadow of the moon for as long as possible. Odd enough, one of them was my newly made friend from New York.

The flight over the Atlantic was perfect and we could experience night precious minutes in the shadow, which no human being had done until then. After we landed, we went out for dinner to celebrate. Everyone still had their laptops, evidently. When the waiter brought us the check, none of us could divide the number by 32! Not even with paper and pencil at hand. We had such fun!

I showed a picture once to someone, of all of us who were at the reception of the ship that arrived at the New Year's Eve: the owner of the restaurant, the radio operators and the first operator of a radar in history, and some others as well as Peter. His person told me that the lady in the picture, who owned the restaurant, was in Brazil, living in São Paulo. She had remarried and changed her name.

She also told me the woman had bought a men-clothing store on São João. Peter took the picture and went in the first such store he saw, still holding the picture. A woman in the store looked at picture and asked how he had that picture. Peter said to her:

- Do you see that boy in the picture? That's me!

The woman was thrilled and invited us for dinner to meet her family. Her son, also named Peter is about my Peter's age.

The next day we went to her house and brought flowers. The excitement was overwhelming for we wished for that encounter for over twenty years. We rang the bell and a man opened the door, looked at Peter and said:

- Peter, what are you doing here?

Peter responded:

-We were invited for dinner!

They were very surprised! They went to USP together, they knew had been acquainted for a long time but they never knew much about each other.

When I went to the Star Party in Texas, I bought at **McDonald's Observatory**, educational toys for my two friends' grandsons. They didn't know each other. I bought for each of the boys an inflatable ball with the constellations and a solar system building set.

Some time later one of my friends invited me over and told me this story; she took her grandson to the “Clube Hebraica” where he was showing around his new treasure, the inflatable ball I gave him. A boy approached him and said he had the exact same ball!

Her grandson thought the other boy was lying since his ball was the only one in Brazil or even in South America. (Only McDonald’s Observatory has those kinds of astronomy educational toys)

The other boy also thought he had the only ball, and then HIS grandmother came and said her grandson was not lying and that her friend had bought him the same ball in Texas. That was when my friend came and said the same thing.

Possibly those two boys were the only ones who had that ball and they had to meet!

Astronomy brings people together. The two grandmothers became friends forever.

We went to Miami another time and at the hotel Imre met a man from Canada, and they spoke in Hungarian. Then Imre went to get some postcards to send to his friends. But he bought too many and left some on the table. A young woman came to sit at the same table and looking at the postcards left there, asked in loud voice:

- Did someone forget those postcards?

Imre did not say anything thinking she could keep them if she wanted. His new friend nearby said in a good loud voice in Hungarian:

- Come on Imre, tell her they are yours and you will have a good opportunity to start flirting with her. It’s worth it, I can see her from the front.

Imre responded also in a loud voice:

- I’m looking from behind and I can tell you it is not worth it.

The young woman turned around and speaking in HUNGARIAN, asked matter of factly:

- Are you two from Budapest?

Imre said no and that we were from São Paulo, to what she said:

- So do I ! I live at Alameda Casa Branca.

I still avoid that neighborhood.

Epilogue

I wish from now on Peter and Ivan would keep writing the family's memories. It is very gratifying, like living it all over again. I learned a lot in my life, unfortunately it was always much too late. First, never let opportunities pass by because you do not know the consequences that could come from letting them pass; like when that country boy rescued me or when I went to that ball and met Imre through whom I met Edith.

I do not regret anything I did or lived. I do regret though the things I did not do and the things that did not happen to me. I would rather have an eventual failure than have nothing, or not reciprocated feelings of love than no feelings at all. I would rather have my sons and grandchildren far away from me, then no family at all. Emptiness is scary. Chaos is something normal in the Universe but it is only apparent. Things adjust and go back to normal. Even us, we are so small in size, we have small lives and the darkness before our births and after our deaths, it is all only a flash of light, yet a very important one.

A cell from our liver, if it dies, kills the rest of our bodies. We are less than that, yet we are a very important part in the evolution of the Universe. Just like a single atom of a star that joins others until they form a star and planets and life, until it explodes and spreads through the Universe and it will all become other stars, other planets and new life. We are part of everything, no exception; we are "stellar material" and had permission to contemplate all that, for a fraction of time of the Universe.

Time is the most precious thing of the world. Everything evolves around time. We do not have the right to waste a second of this preciousness. The expression "to kill time" is a sin. Time passes even without you, only you are wasting each precious second.

I have done 80 revolutions around the sun and it was a wonderful trip. On that trip, I witnessed the discovering of the planet **Pluto** (1930), the return of the comet **Halley** (1986) and about twelve more comets that were visible to the naked eye, the impact of the comet **Shoemaker-Levy** with **Jupiter** (1994), a **supernova SN** 1987. I registered eight solar and many lunar eclipses, the first man in the moon.

Nobody should miss anything. The only price we pay is experience and old age.

When we get old, people close to us tend to go away and then we are alone. I am not afraid to die, nevertheless, I am afraid to die alone. Perhaps I still have one or more revolutions around the sun to go. The future... no one knows.

I'm glad we don't.