THE AUTOBOIGRAPHY OF DR. EMANUEL MERDINGER

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PROLOGUE

I first met Dr. Emanuel Merdinger when a mutual friend asked me to give him a ride so he could visit his wife in a nursing home in Gainesville, Florida. It was a day of very heavy rain in the spring of 1997. When I got to his house I found a frail, blind, stooped over man who still displayed an inquisitive, rich and active mind. He asked me many questions about my life and children, and remenbered details of them. Later, when we were in his wife's room at the nursing home, he recounted their ages and names for her. I thought this was quite a mental feat for a holocaust survivor who was in his nineties.

Since that first day I have spent many hours with him, talking about his experiences. I told him that he was living history, much more interesting than written history. I know that Dr. Merdinger has had a burden to see his story be published both for historical record and to warn and elighten those who will follow. When I first heard him tell about his manuscript I enquired about it and was shown a lone copy, partially edited, on paper only, with no computer disk backup. This worried me because if this one copy were somehow lost, it could never be rewritten, since Dr. Merdinger was so frail. I volunteered my time to help get the manuscript edited and stored on disc.

As I write this, he is in North Florida Regional Hospital suffering from congestive heart failure. I believe he will not endure much longer. He has said on several occasions how meaningful it is to him to know that his story will at last be told. Now his story is ready to be shared with any who will listen.

For the Merdingers,

Dr. Craig Henderson

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CHAPTER I

SPROUTING IN THE BUKOWINA GARDEN

My earliest recollection goes back to the time when I was about three years old. I vividly remember the basement apartment we lived in and the small courtyard paved with flagstones where I used to play. The courtyard was surrounded by a stone wall, on the top of which was cemented a tall iron-bar fence.

In the same building in a one-room apartment near ours lived a nice elderly lady. Her name was Rosie, and she used to invite me in occasionally and give me a small lump of sugar, which I clearly remember liking very much. Occasionally I would enter her apartment uninvited if the door was open.

One day in her apartment I saw her drinking something from a small glass, and I asked her to give me some too. She tried to discourage me by saying that it was not good, that it was schnapps and not for small children. However I insisted, and she finally gave in and let me drain the remaining few droplets from the small glass. It was sweet liqueur, and I liked it. The following day, while I was playing in the yard, I remembered the sweet schnapps, but Rosie's solid wooden door was closed. When Rosie's door remained closed for what seemed to me too long a time, I went to the door and banged on it with my small fists, and when there was no answer, I kicked with my heels. Either Rosie did not hear or she did not want to answer. I called, "Rosie, open the door," so loud I knew she heard me. Finally I had a brilliant idea. I shouted, "Rosie, open or I will pee on

your door." This threat did wonders. I immediately heard Rosie's voice, "Nein, nein, Mendele," (my nickname) "do not pee on my door, I am opening right away." Not only did Rosie open the door, but I persuaded her to give me a little of her sweet liqueur.

When Rosie told the story of my strategy to my parents, they had a good laugh and were proud of their son's resourcefulness and inventiveness. My mother told the story over and over again to family and friends. This is why I remember it so well. This was my first experience with alcohol, a product of fermentation. Little did I or my family dream how fermentation processes would bubble throughout my life.

It was not alcohol nor was it schnapps that provided my first experience, an unforgettable, beautiful experience in a tavern.

"Come, Mendele, come, let's go for a walk," said Galina, the wet nurse for my baby sister, as she left for a shopping errand in the center of town.

An obedient boy of four and a half years, I trotted along. We passed a town tavern from which spilled out the sweetest sounds imaginable. Against her will I pulled Galina inside so that I might see the source of the heavenly music. I was enthralled to see and hear a pink-faced man playing a violin, the first I ever heard. Enraptured, I listened with body, mind and soul. Though I wanted to linger on among the drinking men in the tavern, just to absorb the music, Galina pulled at me, with

obvious circumspection, until we stepped out on the sidewalk and walked out of hearing.

That crying, singing instrument made such an impression on me that I kept on talking about it to my parents and asking them to buy me a violin. In my imagination I could immediately play the violin without difficulties. My father would certainly have bought me one if only he had had the money. He comforted me by saying that if he would win in the lottery he would buy me one. Austria had a state lottery, which my father would play when he dreamed of some numbers and thought they would bring him luck. He never won and never bought me a violin.

I liked music and singing. In spite of the poverty in which we lived, my mother used to sing occasionally for her youngest child when she nursed, and I was delighted. She seemed never inclined to sing when I requested it, but she sang spontaneously when in the right mood.

I soon discovered that I myself could sing, and I sought opportunities to sing with others. The first great one came when I entered the first grade of grammar school. A teacher, Herr Lehrer Traber, used to come into our classroom with a violin and play Austrian songs. The children sang to his accompaniment, and nobody was so happy and thrilled as I during these singing periods. We moved into a less expensive apartment when I was about eight. One of our new neighbors was Abraham Lehrer, older than I by two years. He and his older brother were choir boys in the biggest temple in my hometown. Abraham's brother died very

young, because of malnutrition, I think, and Abraham and I became very much attached to each other.

The happiest hours in my childhood were spent with Abraham, and we sang a lot. Because of his experience as a choir boy he could sing an alto voice to any song he heard. The resulting harmony was delightful to my soul. I studied Abraham's technique with the alto voice, began to try it myself, and little by little I became adept at arranging an alto voice for all our songs. We both were happy when several other boys joined our choir. Abraham assigned me the alto part. To make the choir richer he himself began to sing bass. I think his shift to bass accounts for his later becoming a baritone cantor.

We sang on the streets, we sang inside the house, we sang during our daily walks, we sang everywhere. We sang the same songs again and again and grabbed new melodies as fast as they were created. Upon Abraham's recommendation the cantor of the temple, Deutsch, gave me a practical examination, on the basis of which he made me also a choir boy. I must have participated in the choir for about a year before World War I broke out and our cantor went away to Vienna.

The war interrupted also our private singing at home for a while because of the tension and fear of the grownups. Little by little we got used to the idea that Austria was at war; we began to sing patriotic songs, which deeply pleased my father. He went to the store, bought candies, and distributed them among us young patriots as a reward.

The Bukowina (Buchenland), where I spent my first 23 years is one of the most beautiful and blessed provinces in all Europe. A little smaller than the state of Connecticut, it extends over and beyond the east side of the Carpathian Mountains, which contribute to its moderate climate. It has thermal and mineral springs and is known throughout Europe for its many health resorts.

The Bukowina was ceded to Austria by Turkey in 1775 and remained under Austrian rule for about 170 years. At the end of World War I in 1918 it was given to Romania. Austria peopled the Bukowina over the decades with all sort of citizens -- Jews, Germans, Czechs, and other nationalities. Austria spent heart, love and money to the hilt in the Bukowina although taxes and products obtained from there amounted to much less. Until 1910 the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy had only a small number of universities, one of which was in Czernowitz, the capital of the Bukowina.

Czernowitz used to be called "Klein Wien" or Little Vienna, because it was a miniature of Vienna in many respects, including art, music, organization and education. The Emperor Franz Josef I (Francis Josef I) was fond and proud of the Bukowina, and the Bukowinaer loved and revered their Kaiser. To this day the Bukowinaer are deeply moved just by hearing his name. In these feelings of affection and adoration for Austria and its Kaiser, the Jews ranked first because of the freedom they enjoyed under his government.

The Bukowina was inhabited by several ethnic groups, including Germans, Romanians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles and a sprinkling of Hungarians. The rural areas were mostly inhabited by Romanians and the cities by Germans, Jews and other minorities.

All minorities lived in harmony in the Austrian monarchy, and the Bukowina was a true melting pot of nationalities. The inhabitants were diligent and contributed to progress in all phases of life. They pursued education assiduously. The Bukowina enjoyed a fine reputation and wide respect and recognition. It was the garden spot, the gem of the nation. Every Bukowinaer, from the poorest to the richest, was proud to be a Bukowinaer.

I was born in 1906, the second of six children in Suczawa, later Suceava, Bukowina. My ancestors had lived through many generations in this splendid and glorious town. All my relatives who served in the Austrian army felt proud to have served under Kaiser Franz Josef.

From 1918 to 1940 and again from 1941 to 1944 the Bukowina was a province of Romania. In 1940 to 1941 and 1944 the Russians occupied and unlawfully retained the northern part of this province, the heart of which was Czernowitz, later Cernauti, and presently Cernovtzi.

While the Bukowina was under Austria, the Romanians cried over the loss of this territory. Nobody has described better the beauty of the Bukowina than the greatest Romanian lyricist Mihai Eminescu, who lived and studied for a while in Czernowitz at the

turn of the nineteenth century. Today the Romanians mourn the occupation of this choice spot by Russian and sigh with regret that little Romania is helpless alongside mighty Russia.

Suczawa was the southeastern-most city of the Austrian empire. It was about four kilometers west of the small town Itzkany, which was the border town on the Austrian side, as was Burdujeni in Romania, the two towns separated by a strip of no-man's-land only 100 meters long. The Austrians and Romanians had their customs buildings in the respective towns. Burdujeni proper was three and a half kilometers from the Romanian customs building. Many commercial transactions between the two countries took place at the point of contact between Itzkany and Burdujeni.

When World Was I broke out, I was eight years old. Austria needed grain and bought a lot of it from Romania, which sold the grain freely because Romania was neutral until 1916. Then it declared was against Austria and Germany. Romania's entering the war against these two countries was a surprise because King Ferdinand of Romania was of the German royal family Hohenzollern. Be that as it may, until Romania joined the war, business was booming between these two countries. My father was involved in the transfer of grain from Romania to Austria and was well known by the Romanian customs officers.

In 1914 during my summer vacation my father took me along to the border town, and I enjoyed observing people working, unloading and loading sacks of grain, and I had fun jumping over them. Scarcity of food after the outbreak of the war began to be felt by the Austrians, including our family. My parents thought

of a way of supplying us with food by involving me. They knew that cigarette lighters were scarce in Romania but abundant in Austria. My father made some contacts while working in Itzkany-Burdujeni, and soon I became his active agent.

My mother bought some cigarette lighters and put them into my pants pockets and away I went with my father. On the way to Itzkany he instructed me how to cross into Romania and from there to walk to Burdujeni to the home of an acquaintance of my parents. When we got to Itzkany, I followed his instructions to the letter. While my father and his helpers were busy unloading and loading the merchandise in the strip of no-man's-land and everybody was busy counting and weighing the sacks of grain, I crossed the lowered separating barrier by ducking under. Uneventfully I arrived in Burdujeni and went to the house of the family my parents knew. The lady took the lighters out of my pockets and told me to wait until she returned. After a while she came back with a killed chicken, which she then cut up, spread on a long piece of cloth, and after turning and folding the cloth a couple of times she wrapped and tied it around my waist, and I was on my way to join my father.

When I came to the beam, which was high up because of passing vehicles, I crossed the line walking as inconspicuously as possible and joined my father, who hardly took notice of me. When we got home in the evening, I gave a detailed report to my mother while she unwrapped the chicken. My mother was satisfied with the international adventure, and the nicest thing was that

my mother got busy washing the chicken and preparing it to be cooked.

This exchange of packages between my mother and the lady in Burdujeni was not on a regular basis, but only when there was need. Sometimes the exchange commodity was beef. This was cut in thin layers, wrapped, and concealed near the bottom of the lining of my heavy overcoat. I fulfilled my task unaware of the danger involved. The childlike trust I had was to know that my father was close by to rescue me should I be stopped by a Romanian officer. The Austrian officers could not have cared less what I did. Everything went smoothly, and I did this job all year round as needed.

Then came the year 1916. The Austrians were not doing so well. They needed men. My father was drafted, but he worked up to the last minute. A couple of days before he left, we went to Itzkany, and I, loaded with cigarette lighters, went on alone to Burdujeni, on what should have been my last expedition. But when I came to the lady in Burdujeni, she told me that I must come once more because there was a very sick woman who wanted a talisman blessed by the rabbi in Suczawa. She gave me money for the rabbi to use for this service.

In the old country there were two types of rabbis. One studied at universities and afterwards had very respectable and well paying jobs. The other, the so-called Wunderrabbiner, wonder-rabbi, learned only in Hebrew, did not go to public schools and therefore had no formal education. The title rabbi was inherited by the oldest son after the death of the father.

The unschooled son would immediately begin to perform religious services, pray for and bless his congregation, who would accept the new rabbi without hesitation. The superstitious population would turn to the wonder-rabbi in any distress, as when business would go bad, sickness would strike, or marriages would break up, and ask him to bless them, since in the mind of the blessing-seekers he was close to God and could talk to him. The wonder-rabbi was usually paid for these blessings according to the ability of the person, although often he would do it without any compensation.

If the wonder-rabbi was a smart man, and often he was, in interviewing the persons in distress he could find out the causes of their troubles, and would give them sound advice and blessings, and many would be helped. Depending on the wisdom of the rabbi's advice, his reputation would spread, and he would become famous. Many rabbis became also wealthy, and with wealth, like everywhere else in the world, they gained influence and respect. Occasionally gentiles would also seek his advice.

Although not wealthy, but a man of God, the wonder-rabbi in Suczawa was widely respected. The same day I was given that task to go to the rabbi for the blessings for the sick woman, my father left for the army. I was somewhat fearful of going to Burdujeni knowing that my father was not nearby, for I was only nine and a half years old. My mother insisted that I go to the rabbi because a sick woman was involved. To give me courage she told me to ask the rabbi to bless me so that I could not be

caught by the Romanian customs officers. As usual she persuaded me.

The next morning I went to the rabbi and was received immediately. Although I knew him by sight, I was scared when I saw him so close. I told him the whole story and gave him the money. First he asked me whether I had had breakfast. Although I had not, I said, "Yes." My pride would not allow me to accept a free breakfast. Then he got up, took a cane in his hand, which people said was his late mother's cane, walked toward the corner of the room, and began to pray, holding a coin in his other hand. After he finished his prayer, he gave me the coin to take to that sick woman, and before I left he put his hand on my head and blessed me.

After I reported everything to my mother, she put the cigarette lighters into my pockets and I started out. When I crossed the barrier in Burdujeni, a Romanian customs officer became suspicious of me because my father was not there or perhaps he knew that my father had been drafted. The officer ordered a man to follow me. I pretended to go to an outside latrine, hoping that he would give up. When I came out, he was there and came straight toward me asking me to come to the customs office with him. The officer searched me and found the cigarette lighters. I was scared stiff and pretended not to understand anything they asked me. Then I began to cry. Maybe the officer thought that he might be accused of badly scaring a child. Anyway, he put the cigarette lighters back into my pockets, told me never to show up again, and let me go.

Had I come home without the lighters, it would have been the end of our world because my mother could not afford such a financial loss. Scared to death, I told my mother the story after returning home, but there was no need to tell her that I would never again go to Burdujeni. I was even scared to look in that direction. All this happened in spite of the blessings I had received from the rabbi. Of course the sick person in Burdujeni never received the talisman the rabbi gave me for her. I myself carried that blessed coin in my pocket for a long time. One day I climbed a small mountain near Suczawa, took that coin from my pocket, and threw it as far as I could, trying to forget my encounter with the Romanian customs.

In 1916 my father was drafted into the army. We were all surprised that my father passed the physical examination because a couple of weeks earlier a wooden box had fallen on his right leg, which became badly swollen. He limped and used a cane to reduce his pain on his walk to take his physical examination. My mother and I accompanied him. When he came out and told my mother that he was declared fit for military service, my mother began to cry aloud on the streets. My mother's loud crying made me feel ashamed.

We were by then five children, and my mother was pregnant with the sixth. She did not want to have any more children and as far as I can remember and could understand she tried everything a midwife told her to do to bring about an abortion, but it did no good and she resigned herself to reality.

As long as my mother received a government subsidy, we got by. Soon, however, the Russians occupied the Bukowina, we were shut off from the outside world, and no subsidy from the Austrian government could get to us. It was a hard and trying time and lasted for nearly two years.

At the age of ten I felt I had to do something to contribute to the support of the family. There was a large number of Russian soldiers and Russian administrative personnel in our town. One enterprising Russian soldier ordered Russian newspapers from Kiev, and youths participated in selling them to make a small profit. I was one of them. Although I did not make much by selling papers, my effort encouraged my mother and stimulated my family to appreciate whatever we had.

I knew that selling newspapers was a demeaning occupation, but young as I was I did not care what people might think. However, ten years later I found out that the knowledge of my selling newspapers had traveled one hundred kilometers from Suczawa to Czernowitz. One day I had a dispute with a classmate in front of the gymnasium in Czernowitz. Both of us tried to offend the other, the more the better. I appeared to have the upper hand until my classmate retorted, "I cannot be offended by one who sold newspapers."

I could not answer that. I was beaten! His parents made a living by selling alcoholic drinks to hoodlums, hobos and peasants. This was honorable work; selling papers was not. While in the U.S. newspaper boys are honored, in Europe they are deemed to be discredited by the menial task.

My older sister Clara was very enterprising at her young age. She induced my mother to rent a small stand in the park and use it to resell all kinds of fruits brought in and sold by farmers from the nearby villages. For a time my mother and Clara started a Konditorei [pastry shop], which involved almost eighteen hours of work daily. By such enterprising efforts my mother managed to pull us through until the revolution broke out in Russia.

In early spring of 1918 the Russians retreated, opening the way for the Austrians to reoccupy their land. What a celebration the whole town enjoyed! How the people celebrated the return of the Austrians. These included our father, who was dismissed from the service because of age; he was fifty.

During his two years in the military he was wounded in the head. While hospitalized, his head pains were so unbearable that he hit his head with his fists to dull the pain the wound caused. To prevent this he had to be put into a straitjacket.

The war ended with the defeat of Austria. This nation, my native land, was mutilated by the Entente, and the Bukowina was given to Romania. Life became much harder.[1]

The new rulers did not give my father the pension he would have received from Austria had the war not been lost. My father's earnings were very small. Then my mother decided to

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1 It should be emphasized that this account does not deal with Romania of the 1970's and that whatever I shall say does not reflect at all on today's government.

pitch in again, to help feed six mouths, by opening a sort of restaurant. She prepared food in quantity, and customers took away family-sized batches to serve and eat at their own homes.

As mentioned before, my father's earning were lean, and leaner yet were those of my mother. Though we were assured of one relatively good meal daily, the other meals were mainly corn mush with milk, butter, or chicken fat. We children did not mind that. The bad part was that we could not take corn mush to school for lunch. I once took a piece of corn mush, which I had roasted on the stove, to school, and kept it in my pocket in order not to be seen by others. At lunch time I broke up pieces in my pocket and put them into my mouth. The fear of being caught with corn mush, plus the horrible taste, induced me not to repeat this experiment.

We were too proud to acknowledge our poverty. It was a shame to be poor. Our father taught us pride, ambition, honor and love for our country from the day of our birth. After the war our clothes were in pitiful condition. When the school teacher offered clothes which were sent by the American Joint Committee to needy pupils, my sister Clara, who was two years older than I, answered, "No, thanks. We have plenty and don't need such clothes. Give them to the poor." My father was very proud of her. We did not want anybody's pity.

CHAPTER II

GROWING AMONG WEEDS OF POVERTY

Before the ceding of the Bukowina, I was put into an accelerated class because I had lost two years of school due to the occupation by the Russians. The Russians had not allowed the opening of schools; besides all teachers fled when it became obvious that the Russians had broken through the Austrian front line. The time of occupation of the Bukowina was called the "Russenzeit," the time of the Russians.

Although I passed my fourth grade of grammar school with only mediocre grades, I passed the entrance examination to gymnasium, which was very hard, with flying colors. I did so well in the written part that I was excused from the oral. This spurred my parents not to discourage me from going to the gymnasium, even though they needed my earnings. Until then my parents had envisioned my future in a metal-working shop.

Suddenly my father was genuinely proud that one child of his might get through gymnasium. In Austria and elsewhere in Europe, four years of grammar school were mildly compulsory, eight more years was a privilege, attained by only the rich and highly capable.

My sweet and unforgettable friend Abraham Lehrer, whose father had died when he was very small, could not think of attending the gymnasium because his mother could not afford it.

He entered the traditional Austrian apprenticeship in a tailor shop.

We were separated partly by our different interests and partly by a gap in social standing that began to widen in spite of our friendship. During the first year of gymnasium I saw him scarcely at all. However, during my first vacation after the first year we saw each other more and more during the evenings after he left his workshop. One of our finest enjoyments still remained singing. Some other boys joined us.

Following Austrian tradition, we began to serenade girls at 11 to 12 p.m. We were pleased when the serenaded girl came to the window and lit a match, which was her thank-you. As in the past, Abraham was the choir leader.

As we continued with our routine, I in gymnasium, Lehrer at his workshop, we saw each other occasionally in the evening. Together with new members of our group, our not-for-profit, just-for-fun choir sang our troubles, sorrows and shortcomings away. We became known as serenaders, and the girls of the town were jealous of those known to have been serenaded.

Occasionally it happened that Lehrer set the key of the songs a little too high and we could not make it to the end. When that happened we had to break it up and run away, and the poor girl was shamed to the toes because we did not finish the serenade. None of the boys had any schooling in music. Sometimes the harder Lehrer tried to set the right key of the song, the more it turned out to be wrong. But we took it in stride because none of us knew any better.

One day, by chance, something happened that turned the whole choir upside down. On the street I found a tuning fork. In the past I had seen one, but did not know how to use it. My inquisitive mind worked hard, and after a few days of experimenting with the tuning fork not only did I know how to operate it, but I learned at what key to set most of the songs we sang to avoid a premature ending.

When the boys, including Lehrer, saw me with the tuning fork and heard me set every song at a range suitable to our voices, they rejoiced. Tacitly I became the leader of the choir and therefore of Lehrer. That was a victory that I did not seek nor dream of, but it made me feel good. I was proud of having figured out by myself the secret of the tuning fork, and of using it to improve my standing among my singing peers. Lehrer did not resent my displacing him, and he stayed on in the choir.

I was seventeen years old when I met an older youth on the street who told me that he was leaving town and would like to sell his violin cheaply. I understood that it was very inexpensive and went straight home and told my mother. She knew how much I would enjoy trying to play. When I told her the price, she went to the dresser where she kept her money and gave me the necessary amount without saying a word. To this day I believe that she was left almost penniless. I repaid that sum thousands of times later on, but her gesture to give me almost all she had will always be unforgettable.

My parents had no savings but lived from day to day. Social differences in those days weighed heavily upon me. The rich

would not mingle with the poor; even the educated poor were not fully accepted by the rich. In order to become fully accepted by the rich I would have had to break with my dearest friends and become snobbish. I could not and would not do such a thing because it would mean snubbing my own family. There was one such case in my home town that filled me with disgust at the perpetrator. Still I wanted to belong, to mingle, and to have fun as the others did.

There was a recently formed student fraternity which received a great deal of attention from the so-called honoratiores of the town. For a long time I thought of trying to join them, but would they accept me? I told one of them that I wished to join them. He advised me to make an application, and I did. I was bitterly hurt when they decided to give me a hospitium, i.e., a trial period of four weeks in which they might observe me. In fact this meant that they would not say "yes" but could not say "no" either. At that time I did not realize the humiliation associated with the hospitium. The four weeks passed and I became a member. Little by little it dawned on me that I was not one of them, but I thought I should try a little longer.

In Europe, especially in small towns, it was customary to go for a walk [Spaziergang] on Saturday afternoons, on beautiful and warm days, about the center of town. The sidewalks were packed with Spaziergaengern. These walks in the center of town [Hauptstrasse] lasted three to four hours. One Saturday afternoon I went there looking for some fraternity brother with whom to take the usual walk when I ran into Abraham Lehrer. I

had not seen him for quite some time, and we began strolling up and down the Hauptstrasse.

We encountered mostly friends, with and without girls, and the custom was to lift one's hat in respect to the girl even if she was not known. On this particular Saturday afternoon I met a fraternity brother whom I shall call K., accompanied by a girl, and I lifted my hat as did Lehrer, according to the etiquette required.

After a few hours of walking I went home to study for the following week. Half an hour later one of my fraternity brothers came to tell me that I must come immediately to the headquarters [Bude] of the fraternity. I was puzzled. What could be the cause of such an emergency?

When I arrived there, the first person I saw was the fraternity brother, K., whom I had met on the sidewalk with a girl, and whom Lehrer and I had greeted with deference. K. was red in the face and boiling mad. According to the fraternity constitution, he required that I appear before a fraternity court consisting of about five to six fraternity brothers. The ages of the students forming the court ranged from 15 to 19. K. was the accuser. He asked, "How did you dare to greet me in the presence of a girl when you were in the company of a lousy tailor's apprentice?" I was shocked but had no answer, for he himself should have realized that his own father was not so long ago a waiter. Later on his father was able to buy a restaurant, which was a failure. Anyway, waiters did not rank high in the hierarchy of that society.

The verdict of the juvenile court was that "should I be seen once more in the presence of that tailor's apprentice I would be dismissed from that fraternity in disgrace [chassiert]." The humiliation and shame to which K. and the juvenile court subjected me that Saturday afternoon made me realize that actually I had never been a part of them. My heart ached, my soul cried, and in my misery I tried to figure out a way to give them an answer becoming to a person of honor, pride, and dignity. When I left the fraternity house, I went straight to Lehrer and asked him to come with me for a walk again. He gladly complied, and the first person who saw us was the accuser K., in the company of one of the judges of the fraternity court. My answer to the fraternity was unmistakably clear. Because K. and the rest had disgraced themselves, I ignored and defied them.

To date, in thinking of that incident, I am happy to have shown that loyalty, pride, honor and dignity were not the exclusive qualities of the rich. I never told Lehrer about that infamous Saturday afternoon at the fraternity; neither did he ever hear about it from anybody else. Even my own family never knew. My proud and blitz-like response to the fraternity may have caused them to realize how foolish and unjustly they acted, though never a syllable has been mentioned to me to this day.

About the time of the incident of that Saturday afternoon, K. courted a girl I shall call S., a classmate of mine. We boys thought that S. was very beautiful, and everybody was in love with her. It seemed to us young men that a marriage would result from this romance. Fate wanted it otherwise. Upon insistence of

S.'s parents the romance as broken. The reason, as it circulated in town and among us, was that K.'s parents were not up to par in their social standing. The beauty's father was a wealthy and very successful lawyer.

Just a few paragraphs will bring their stories up to date. When I was a student at the University of Czernowitz, studying sciences, K. studied law and we became good friends. K. never finished his law studies but continued to make a living as a fiddler-on-the-roof musician. He played the violin in restaurants, at weddings, for bar mitzvahs, and the like, for a time in Czernowitz and later after World War II, in Israel, where he died several years ago.

In 1970 circumstances warranted my description of the K. incident in an article in a German newspaper in Basel, Switzerland. I made a copy of the published article and sent it to S., who is married to an engineer in Bucharest. S. acknowledged receipt of my article and reacted to it in a few words, "I did not know that K. had blue blood in his veins."

While I was an Exchange Scientist of the National Academy of Sciences to the Romanian Academy of Sciences in Bucharest in 1971-'72, S. and her husband and my wife and I saw each other often. S. is still the democratic person she was as a girl. She would have married the person she loved regardless of his social standing. Nevertheless, one must not underestimate the power and influence of parents on their children, especially parents of half a century ago.

S. lived up to her democratic nature when her single child, a daughter with a professional engineering degree, fell in love with and married an Italian craftsman and left for Italy. S. continues to be the charmer she always was. My wife, an American-born Georgia peach, and S. got along beautifully.

Now let us return to the scene of my boyhood. Lehrer was a very courageous boy, and my endeavor to follow his footsteps nearly cost me my life. One of the great free pleasures shared by rich and poor in my home town during the summer was swimming in the nearby river Suczawa. Swimming places were separated for men and women. Men swam nude and enjoyed refreshing exercises in cool, clean water.

One day a group of striplings, including Lehrer and me, was gathered in a choice spot at the river. Suddenly we saw a head sticking out of the water trying to call for help but quickly disappearing. The daring Nathan Strominger had gone too far into deep water and could not swim. We were all paralyzed by fear.

No grown person was near to rescue the drowning Nathan. It was noble, sweet Abraham Lehrer, half the size of Nathan, who jumped into the water and rescued him, endangering his own life. The irony of fate was that one of the judges of the fraternity court that had condemned me for my friendship with Lehrer was Nathan Strominger, whom Lehrer rescued from certain death. But Lehrer remained the hero among our group. In the years that followed, Lehrer did not mention even once, as far as I know, that episode which could have had a tragic end without his brave performance.

In his twenties Lehrer moved to Czernowitz, and thanks to his beautiful voice he became a cantor in one of the many temples there.

Lehrer's courage had a deep and lasting influence on me, and in trying to follow his example I was almost drowned. Two months after the drowning accident with Strominger our crowd again enjoyed a day at the river, jumping from a high point of the bank into the water and swimming. A springboard belonged in the land of fairy tales.

Suddenly a tall older boy by the name of Zettel maliciously pushed a classmate of mine, Mikusch, into the river. Like me, Mikusch was ten years old, but he could not swim. He surfaced once and sank again. The scoundrel Zettel, who was a good swimmer, did not move to help him.

Seeing that, I jumped into the water, found Mikusch, and grabbed him to swim with him to the shore. But as soon as Mikusch felt me near him, he grabbed me around my neck and made swimming impossible. I tried to loosen his grip by choking him, but everything was in vain. I simply could not get my hands free to swim.

Because of Mikusch's weight on me I was on the bottom of the river and instinctively walked toward the shore. I began to drink water and thought my end had come. During my walk with Mikusch's arms and body around me and my neck in the vise of his hands, I reached shallow water. When Mikusch's head was just above water, Zettel came and took him away from me. Free now, I swam ashore with my last breath and strength.

When I saw Mikusch sitting in the shallow water recovering I walked toward him, hit him in the face as hard as I could with my hand. He did not even feel it. Then I asked him, "Why did you choke me and not let me rescue you?" He answered, "I had only one thought; if I go, you must come with me to death."

Of course I was proud to have saved a human life. But thinking how easily I could have died with the victim, I often asked myself in later life whether I would do it again, but have never been able to come up with a definite answer.

Mikusch failed the entrance examination into gymnasium and began to work in his father's Selcherei [a store selling pork products]. At the age of seventeen or eighteen, about eight or nine years after the accident, I saw him once, passing me by without looking at me. By then he was already a member of the Nazi party, so I was told. Several years later I heard that he committed suicide because of contracting an incurable venereal disease.

With regard to Abraham Lehrer, I wish to add that when the Russians occupied Czernowitz in 1940 in accordance with the Stalin-Hitler pact, they transformed many temples into warehouses, and Lehrer lost his job as a cantor. To make a living he sold beer in an improvised beerhall. After the war I was told that when Hitler attacked the Russians and the Germans occupied Czernowitz in 1941, Lehrer and his wife were shot by the Nazis.

Now I am returning again to the story of my violin. I had no money for lessons. Some classmates who studied violin would

come to me from time to time and give me some instruction. First I learned how to count time. Other hints, such as how to read music and change fingers on the four strings did not seem important to me then; years later the little instruction the classmates gave me came in very handy. I practiced the violin a lot by ear. Soon I could play any song or melody I could remember.

After a while I got tired of playing the same songs over and over and began to play things which came simply floating or dancing through my mind. I could do a tune only once. If I tried to do it again, something else came out. I did not realize that I was improvising new and original melodies. But since I could make them anytime I was in the mood, it did not matter to me whether I remembered them or not.

One day I improvised a tune which was quite pleasing to my ear. I was able to repeat it a number of times until I knew it. When the choir got together, I rehearsed the tune a few times, and it sounded beautiful. The boys accepted it with enthusiasm and I was delighted. The next time serenading came up, with tra-la-la-la we sang this song with great success. I may have composed a few other tunes which I have forgotten by now, although the first one is still intact in my memory. This little insignificant gift of composing melodies came to have an important bearing on my future, which perhaps saved my life.

While I was a student at the University of Czernowitz, I used to come home during holidays for only a few days to see my parents. Nearly all of my old buddies by then had left their

home town for other cities and countries. There remained an old classmate and friend, Karl Grossmann, keeping his mechanic shop, which he and his brother had inherited at the death of his father.

He was usually the first to come to greet me, and he unfailingly asked me to visit his old, feeble, arthritic and retired friend Knop, who used to work in his shop before and after the death of Karl's father. Old Simon Knop had come from Vienna to Suczawa at the turn of the century and worked in the mechanic shop until his strength gave out and he had to quit.

At that time (1925) there was no socialized medicine, no pension, and no insurance. Retirees exhausted their savings, if they had any at all, and then were at the mercy of pitying and compassionate souls and the charity of society. Workers lived from hand to mouth. Karl had a golden heart. There was no one else like him in the whole community. Like the majority of Austrians, Knop was Roman-Catholic and Karl's main self-imposed task was the welfare and comfort of the aging and ailing Knop. Karl provided for Knop's daily needs, drugs, and medical care and was especially thoughtful during religious holidays.

For religious holidays Karl provided goodies and special foods not only for him but also for his callers. With joyful satisfaction I remember contributing quite often to Knop's entertainment with my violin and our choir and some good little chats. I was pleased that Knop knew my father and spoke well of him. Today, being myself of early advanced age, I can understand

how these visits and entertainment brought hours of happiness to good old Knop.

The rest of Karl's life can be summarized in a few lines. Along with many other Bukowinaer survivors of the holocaust, Karl went to Israel and established himself relatively well. There was one thing which made him most unhappy: namely, he had to wear the Jewish ceremonial cap while he was an instructor in a religious school. He was an old-time social democrat and not religious. He was required to wear a cap or else. He took the easier way, to submit. Still he was unhappy to be forced to practice a religious ritual in order to have a job.

While on a research leave in 1967 I visited Israel and found many Suczawaer in Tel-Aviv. In notifying one of my old chums, journalist Martin Haas, of my coming, I told him that although I should have little time to see buddies, I must see Karl. Karl's desire and compulsion to help others was proverbial all through his life; he would give away his last penny just for the joy of helping. I consider myself lucky to have seen him again in 1967 after 26 years, especially because only one year later Karl died.

I was in the second year of gymnasium when the Bukowina was ceded to Romania at the close of World War I. Under the new and extremely chauvinistic rulers, life for the working class and all Jews was very hard. These chauvinists were anti-Semitic and through propaganda they turned the Romanian population of the Bukowina against their former Jewish friends and neighbors. The slogans used were that the Jews were living off the Romanians, the Jews exploited the Romanian population, and the Jews should

go to Palestine. Of course there were some well-to-do Jews, but the majority of them were very poor.

My family belonged to the poor. My father used to work eighteen hours a day, six and seven days a week and could not earn enough to feed his family, and the same thing was true for many, many families in my native town. To be therefore accused of exploiting others did not make sense, and bitterness in the Jews against the new rulers grew more and more. Persecutions made the Jews increasingly unhappy and they longed for the time when they had lived in Austria as free people, even if they had lived in poverty. I still remember the hunger pangs I used to have in school because my mother could not give me anything to take along for lunch.

The greatest difficulty for us young students was the unreasonable demand by the new rulers that we learn to use, in an unreasonably short time, the Romanian language as well as the Romanians. Language deficiency was a means to flunk us out of the gymnasium as quickly as possible. For instance, a Bukowinaer teacher for Romanian was assigned to teach my class in the third year of gymnasium. He did not teach us at all. His job was, as we learned later, to decimate us. That teacher, whose name was Carlan, several years later became a congressman of the "Cuza" party, the object of which was the elimination of the Jews.

One of Carlan's followers told me later that Carlan's job was to flunk as many of us as possible, to eliminate future Jewish intellectuals. There is no doubt in my mind that the newly appointed director of the gymnasium, Burduhos, selected

Carlan for this devastating job. Our dislike and hatred, though hidden, knew no bounds. In the late thirties, speaking our family language, German, on the streets or in other public places was forbidden and cause for arrest. Many, many families and teenagers left Romania for other countries, taking with them the Bukowinaer heritage.

Until the sixth of gymnasium I was in a German section and our instructors lectured and examined us in German. If one of the many who was deliberately flunked out wanted to repeat the class he could do it only by going into the Romanian section, where everything was taught in Romanian. If he could not do so because of the lack of knowledge of Romanian, he was forced to give up his education, which was the intent of the Romanians. There was no German section anymore; we were the last of the Mohicans. Five years after the Bukowina was given to Romania, Romanian educators and politicians demanded of us who studied Latin, Greek, French, and German to master Romanian as well as the native Romanians did, and with one stroke tried to erase the knowledge of the language which we had first learned. That was the new generation and spirit of educators surrounding us.

Without exaggeration I can state that by the time we reached the sixth of gymnasium, 85 percent of the initial 79 students kept in one classroom at the beginning had flunked out. Many of these "failures" went to other countries, especially France, where they continued their studies successfully and became capable physicians, engineers, professors, etc., and devoted useful citizens of their adopted countries.

CHAPTER III

PURSUIT OF LEARNING

In the sixth year of gymnasium there remained only one section, the Romanian one. I tried it for two months, but it was impossible for me to continue. I dropped out in good standing and registered as a private student in a gymnasium in Czernowitz. This was allowed according to the Austrian law, which still existed in the Bukowina. In fact, Austrian civil and criminal law could not be changed overnight but remained in use until the eruption of World War II.

It was known that in Czernowitz the teachers in the gymnasium had more power than they had in Suczawa because the large majority belonged to the old-guard Austrians. For months I studied on my own, although it was very difficult, but I could not afford to live in Czernowitz. Toward the end of the year I went there and took the comprehensive examinations and passed them all.

It would have been impossible for me to study on my own for the following two years of gymnasium; so I made a great decision for my young life -- to go to Czernowitz for the last two years of school, attending as a regular student. There were four classical gymnasiums, one each for Romanians, Germans, Jews and Ukrainians. The toughest was the Jewish Gymnasium. I was in this one, where there was a stronger force of the old Austrian guard and where the instructors dared to use the German language

for their lectures. In Europe the instructors in gymnasiums have the title "professor," which is, however, different from that of "university professor." These gymnasium professors were tough as could be, but they were humane. Their attitude was that only the capable should study, but they did not try to decimate the students.

My gymnasium days in Czernowitz were hard. In the room I shared with an old couple there was not even a table on which I could do my homework. Hunger was my constant companion. Ridiculous iron-clad mores forbad students from doing any kind of work to support themselves. One exception was acceptable. A student might tutor other students.

In Suczawa I was known as a good tutor, but in Czernowitz nobody knew me. I had to wait for my opportunity, which came only toward the end of my first year. My eldest sister Clara, who had gone to America, helped me occasionally with a little money. In my last year of gymnasium I stood almost on my own feet.

How many difficulties a poor youngster had to battle in my time is illustrated by one episode. In the last year of gymnasium, thanks to my sister's support and my tutoring, I had a much better place to live. It was not in a basement as in the previous year, but on the second floor. I shared a room with three other men, but I was the only student and could study when I was in our room. My tutoring took me away from daytime study, and I had to study late into the night. My landlord did not like this because I used electricity.

One evening as I was preparing for the following day, the clock struck ten. The landlord came in with a burning candle, put it on the table, turned off the electric light, and stalked out. He had no right to do this because I was paying for a room with electricity. He just took advantage of my shyness and helplessness. The candle did not give sufficient light, but I managed. In a short while the candle burned out, and I had to quit before completing my preparations. From then on I had to buy my own candles to light my books after ten p.m.

So, by dogged persistence, and my sister's occasional contribution, I got through gymnasium. The last examination, the "maturity examination" for the baccalaureate, was most terrifying. In Czernowitz there were 207 candidates for this milestone examination. By chance I overheard the president of the maturity examination committee say that he had received only 100 diplomas from the Ministry of Education in Bucharest and that at least 107 had to be flunked. Even so, only 78 passed, and among these I ranked twelfth from the top.

I was determined to pull myself out of poverty and to be able to help myself and my family. This could be accomplished, I knew, only by getting a university degree. I had wished to study medicine since I was knee-high, but family circumstances forced me to abandon this ambition. It was only by a miracle, as I realize now in looking back at my struggle through deprivations, that I even finished gymnasium.

Among Jews in Europe there was a tradition and an unwritten law that when a girl became engaged, someone in the family had to

promise a dowry to her fiancé. This was usually the father of the girl. In the case of my sisters, what could my poor father promise if he did not own anything? It sometimes happened that a bride's father would promise a dowry and later refuse to keep his promise, but this was the exception. Any father who broke his promise was despised by everybody who learned about it. In our family I was the one who had to take the obligation of a dowry for three sisters. I often thought myself lucky that one sister lived in the United States and that I did not have to worry about a fourth dowry.

It was in September of 1926 that I passed the maturity examination, and I had to plan quickly for my future studies. My hope to study medicine was blocked by lack of money for myself and the burden of a dowry for my sister Anna; otherwise I most likely would have gone abroad to study medicine.

Under the existing circumstances I registered at the University of Czernowitz, department of science, and enrolled in some chemistry and biology courses. The "liberta academica," the freedom of a student to attend the lectures or not, came in very handy. It gave me the freedom to tutor nearly all the time except for the laboratory periods, which I had to attend. I tutored gymnasium students in mathematics, Latin, French, Romanian, history and geography, and a few in Greek.

My reputation as a first-class tutor grew and grew, and I was so busy with this work that many times I even skipped laboratory work. At the end of the year I took examinations in only half the subjects for which I had registered, but passed

these with average grades except in chemistry where my grades were better.

During this year I had amassed most of the amount of money I had promised to give to Anna. The second year at the University of Czernowitz continued in the same vein. In this period I not only had completed Anna's promised dowry but had saved enough money to leave the country in order to finish my studies at the German University of Prague.

At this German University, most people from the Bukowina flourished, because this city had also been a part of Austria and we felt so much at home. I passed nearly all my examinations "with distinction," and in 1931 I took my M.S. degree with a major in pharmacology. Unfortunately, foreigners were not allowed to work in Czechoslovakia. I had to live very thriftily, not being allowed to tutor. I had enough time to study and wanted very much to continue my graduate studies in Prague, but my finances did not allow this. Occasionally I made an extra penny by taking pictures of groups of students and professors with my camera and charging a few cents per picture for my time. This enabled me to get an occasional decent meal.

On the basis of information I gathered about studies in other foreign countries, I decided to go to Italy, because I was told that the tutoring system was alive and that the authorities did not object to such work by foreigners. After my graduation in June 1931, I made plans to go to Italy in the fall. During the summer I was in Czernowitz tutoring to raise enough money to last me a couple of months in Italy.

I studied a little Italian after deciding to go to Italy, especially with my unforgettable friend who had studied Italian, Leo Mader. Italian was easy for me because I knew Romanian, French and Latin very well -- all of them Romance languages. Since nothing is better and more helpful for studying a language than living where the language is spoken, in almost no time I was ready to begin studies at an Italian university.

The first university I visited was in Pisa. Foreign students, especially Bukowinaer, were everywhere. The presence of many foreign students made the living expenses so high there that I decided to seek better conditions in Modena. There I found the situation the same as in Pisa.

I inquired about universities having only a few foreign students. The university in the nearby city of Ferrara was just what I needed. The reason for this university's having a very small number of foreign students was that most foreign students came to Italy to study medicine and the curriculum here had only two years of medicine. To finish, students had to go to another university after two years in Ferrara. Today Ferrara has a complete faculty (school) of medicine, and foreign students are as abundant as in any other Italian university.

My desire was to study for a Ph.D. degree in chemistry, and Ferrara had such a faculty of science, including chemistry, pharmacy, natural science, mathematics, engineering and physics. I came to Ferrara, and upon consultation with a professor, I was told that with my master's degree in pharmacology it would be easier for me to take first a doctorate in pharmacy. One year

after that I could get my Ph.D. in chemistry, because these two degrees could be coordinated according to the curriculum of the university. I agreed to follow this scheme and undertook the two doctorates as recommended.

I registered and began to attend the required courses. The money I brought with me went very fast, mostly for my room, and I could not find any source of earnings. I was getting hungry and poorly nourished. All I could permit myself to buy was bread. For three months my three meals a day consisted mainly of slices of bread spread with some chicken fat that my mother gave me when I visited home on my way to Italy.

This diet apparently brought on a severe diarrhea that lasted three days. Something had to be done. I went to the president of the Ferrara Jewish Community Center, Professor Magrini, and asked him to find me some work. He refused and harshly so. But I did not give in to him.

I went to the president of all Italian Jewish Communities, who happened to be located in Ferrara, and explained my situation. He was very nice and offered me a free meal daily at the Ferrara Jewish Community Center. I refused it, for I could not stoop to being a beggar, and I appealed for honest work to be able to live.

He was impressed by my refusal to accept the free meal and asked me to come back after a couple of days. I did so and the president told me to go back to Professor Magrini, with whom he had talked, and that he would give me some work.

When I came to Professor Magrini, he was a little nicer, and gave me a German book to translate into Italian. He assured me that he was interested in the book and gave me an advance of fifty lire. This corresponded to about five dollars and tided me over for approximately ten days. My expenses, including my room and tuition, amounted to not more than three hundred lire a month if I lived frugally.

In the meantime I had written to my sister Clara in the United States and asked her to send me a loan of $30 each month for a little while until I was able to support myself.

Unexpectedly an instructor of German in a gymnasium sent me a student for tutoring three times a week. The going rate for tutoring a high school student was ten lire an hour. That was a break. Then I began to tutor in German some colleagues of mine at the university; they paid two lire an hour. Suddenly in a short time, my private students increased until there was no need to go hungry anymore.

This was about the time $30 from Clara arrived, which I no longer needed. I wrote her of the improvement in my financial situation and told her to let me know what to do with the $30. She never answered, and several years later I gave the money to my parents.

Things went well for a time. I attended lectures, studied and spent all the rest of my time tutoring, for little by little my reputation as a good teacher spread all over town.

In 1934 I passed nearly all my examinations with the highest grades and got my doctorate in pharmacy with the highest possible

number of points. On the basis of my high grades, all my tuition and laboratory fees were refunded to me according to Italian university laws. This money was used for my Ph.D. degree in chemistry.

In the fall of 1934 I registered for my doctorate in chemistry. I felt grateful to Italy, to Ferrara in particular, and to everyone for the opportunity I had there. I wanted to show my appreciation and gratitude to the university and to Ferrara and tried to think of something to do that was important and worthwhile.

Before long an idea came to me, and I hoped it would be well received. The University of Ferrara had no language department. Relations between Italy and Hitler-Germany began to warm up, and the demand for studying the German language increased daily. I proposed to the University that I teach a couple of evening classes in German and that the resulting tuition money be given to the poor.

Fascism, however, did not recognize that there were poor people in Italy; so this latter part of the proposal was not acceptable. Then I proposed that the money be used for the pre-fascist traditional Christmas packages to make Christmas merrier for some. This was accepted with grace and gratitude, and the packages provide food to the poor of Ferrara.

In the fall of 1934 I began to teach two courses of German at the university, each twice a week, and the result was excellent. Because of the great demand, I increased the German courses to four a week in the following years. The gift of money

for Christmas was appreciated by the Roman Catholic Archbishop Bovelli, whose personal secretary, Don Bassi, was one of my dear students in German. My contribution was brought to the attention of the Archbishop by Don Bassi and by the newspaper *Corriere Padano*. In recognition of my service Archbishop Bovelli invited me twice for an audience, although he knew that I was Jewish.

Both times I was accompanied by an outstanding Roman Catholic, my unforgettable friend, the late Alighiero Paparella, whom I had befriended during my studies of pharmacy. Alighiero, eighteen years my senior, was a gymnasium instructor. He studied pharmacy part-time because he thought he would someday inherit a pharmacy from an uncle. As we studied together, I tutored him so that he could pass his examinations, and a great friendship developed between us and between his family and me. I considered him closer than a brother. He knew all about me and sympathized with me for the difficulties I had gone through. I appreciated his friendship and his advice as a native Italian.

In 1935 I attained my doctorate in chemistry and began to teach in the University School of Engineering. My desire to go on and study medicine was still alive, but again many circumstances restrained me from doing so. At this time I had saved enough money and paid for my second sister's dowry, even though she had already been married for some months.

Now my youngest sister began to press for her share through letters from my father.

I was tired of dowries by now and resented being asked. The resentment came from my need to give of my own free will, not to

be pushed and forced. I finally gave in to the insistence of my married sisters and paid out a third dowry. I did it for the sake of my parents. Again I scraped the bottom of my little savings barrel.

Another factor bore down hard on me. My parents, who had gone to my sister Clara's in the United States, came back because my mother could not adapt herself to a new world at her advanced age. The main barriers were the lack of knowledge of English and the consequent lack of neighbors to talk to.

Many times I wrote to my parents to stay there, because one did not need to be a prophet to foresee an oncoming war. Mama argued that she had brought all her children through "the World War" and that if another war occurred she could bring her family through again. She failed to consider that she and Papa were already old and that her children were adults accountable to governmental authority. My poor father really wanted to stay in the United States. My strong-willed mother was determined to go back to Suczawa. I was not happy that in spite of all my attempts to make them stay there Mama prevailed over both Papa and me, and they came back.

Both my parents were at that time in their late sixties, and I felt that they should not be working anymore. Therefore, in agreement with my sister Anna, who was the eldest at home and who had become the leader of our family there, I sent my parents monthly a sum adequate for their needs.

These were the circumstances that made my going in for medicine impossible. For all the cumulative courses I had passed

I would have obtained four years of credit in medical school, and in two years could have finished. I would have been obliged to leave Ferrara because the University then had only three years of medicine, and I would have been reluctant to give up the prestigious position as a faculty member in the School of Engineering. Besides, as mentioned before, I was without funds and had taken upon myself the obligation to help my parents.

Blocked off from a career in medicine, I registered for a doctorate in natural sciences, but as a part-time student because of my heavy work schedule. I did not think that my studies in natural science would drag out until 1939, as they did because of unpredictable events.

CHAPTER IV

WAR CLOUDS OVER FERRARA

Three years after my registration for the studies of natural science the Hitler-Mussolini pact came into being and the whole European situation began to look pretty sad. German emissaries were sent to Italy. They began to foment and instill anti-Semitism in all kinds of ways. Also there were enough Italian opportunists to try to climb the ladder by opening a campaign of hatred and abuse against their Jewish compatriots loyal for centuries to their country.

Another aggravating factor intervened. I made the greatest mistake of my life by persuading my sister Anna to lend to a person in Czernowitz the money I had given her for her dowry, for a moderate amount of interest. The money was insured by a first mortgage. I assured Anna that she would not lose her money, because I would return it if something should go wrong. In fact the borrower soon stopped paying interest. The piece of real estate on which Anna had had the first mortgage is still in Czernowitz, but the despots there are now the Russians.

Anna was not worried about her money, she was only disappointed that I had put myself into such a situation. Had she kept the money, she would have lost it the same way my sister Lotty lost hers when they all went to a concentration camp. Only my third sister's money was used up with lightning speed by her husband's mismanagement and ignorance long before they went to

concentration camp. What about my own savings? The story about that will follow very shortly.

In spite of the increasingly hostile situation against Jews in Italy I continued my work at the university at the school of engineering and my evening courses in German four evenings a week. I faithfully continued to turn over the tuition money paid by the students to the catholic committee, which took care of the Christmas gifts for the poor.

One day the vice rector of the university, whose very capable son I tutored privately, asked me to help a friend of his family, the widowed Duchess Massari of Ferrara. She was sick, and since she could afford it, she called a physician from Germany for advice. The physician did not know Italian and the Duchess only a little German. I would help by interpreting. I did it gladly since I appreciated the fact that the vice president chose me for that task, which remained confidential as far as I personally was concerned. The vice rector was not a member of the Fascist Party.

The duchess, a highly cultured person, decided to take private German lessons from me to make it easier for her and the German physician in case she needed him again. Although the duchess was in her fifties, she learned surprisingly well, and I was happy to have a prominent socialite as a student. It gave me prestige because the duchess spoke well of me with her prominent friends. Only a few years later she would help dissipate the fascist-Nazi clouds for a while.

My name became a household word in Ferrara. The city had about 150,000 inhabitants and a letter addressed to me with only my name and city was sufficient to reach me without delay, while the lack of an exact address on a letter to some well-known Italian in Ferrara would cause the letter not to reach its destination.

As a foreigner I had to go from time to time to the police to fill out certain documents. On such occasions the police officer, Panebianchi, would run out from behind his desk, offer me a chair and talk in the most polite and nicest possible manner. How long would such deference last?

From time to time the leading newspapers, *Corriere del Sera*, *La Stampa*, etc., would drop an indication that there was nothing good in store for Jews in Italy, especially foreign Jews. My private students would inform me confidentially about Mussolini's ties to Hitler and the deluge that would not be long in coming. It was hard for me to believe that Mussolini, who had many important Jews in his administration whose loyalty he never questioned, would cooperate with Hitler to such an extent.

Many important posts and political jobs were held by Italian Jews. The mayor of Ferrara, Ravenna, who had occupied this post for many years, was a Jew and a childhood friend of the Minister of Aviation, Italo Balbo. Balbo accomplished the transoceanic flight with 24 airplanes in 1933, which was considered an extraordinary feat. An active general of the armed forces, who participated in the Ethiopian war and whose daughter was a private student of mine, was a Jew stationed in Ferrara. He told

me confidentially of his apprehension about things to come. The comforting thing, however, was that the people with whom I was always in contact did not approve of Mussolini's ties with Hitler.

In January 1938 I had the first taste of trouble to come in the not-too-distant future. While I was lecturing one day, a group of students outside in the courtyard began to scream and holler, calling my name in chorus, so loud that I could not hear my own words. I felt embarrassment and humiliation, which emotions were quite obvious to my students. I could not tell what was going on in their minds. During the screaming outside, from time to time I could see a smile on some of their faces. Today, after more than 35 years I can say that these students were put up to this demonstration by an opportunistic fascist, who in turn had got orders from others higher in the fascist hierarchy. I will admit that some of the demonstrating students did it with pleasure.

When the demonstration was repeated twice more, I notified the administration (they, of course, were very well informed about it) that I was ready to stop my teaching if the demonstrators were not stopped. This helped. To save face the administration asked for help, because had I stopped teaching -- and I was dead serious about it -- it would have been a slap in the face of the fascists. To prevent me from quitting, fascist militiamen were put as guards to disperse would-be demonstrators.

I have to say that my own students did not participate in, nor did they approve of, the demonstrations. Among my students

in my last year of pre-war teaching at the university, there were several from foreign countries. One was from Yugoslavia. The Italian students did not like him because it was known that Yugoslavia aspired to some Italian territory. Most of the time I saw him in the court of the university standing all by himself. He was very nice, polite and quiet, and being myself a foreigner, I felt sorry for him. Unknowingly he was to play an important role in an episode of my life several years later.

Toward the end of May 1938 all the Nazi laws against Jews were adopted in Italy. Overnight, Italians were declared to be Aryans, as announced in all morning newspapers. This announcement was an irony and scientifically unfounded. If there is a typical non-Aryan nation on earth, it is the Italian nation. In walking on the streets in Italy, one is inevitably reminded that Italians are the descendants of many nationalities. They are a blend of Turks, Arabs, Moroccans, Austrians and other nationalities from Europe, Africa and Asia with whom they had commercial relations for centuries, making Italy a relatively rich country.

About the same time, I was notified orally that I would be teaching no longer at the university. Panic and sadness could be seen on the faces of the loyal Jewish citizenry. The Jewish business people had to turn over their inventories to the fascist state and were never compensated for their financial losses.

No Jewish children could attend public schools or universities beginning September 1938. The Jewish community in Ferrara was in despair. Mayor Ravenna of Ferrara was deposed,

and the same fate was shared by all state employees. All Jewish military career officers were dismissed from the armed forces. To date I still can see the tears of that Jewish general friend who told me, "Can you imagine the hurt, shame and humiliation I am suffering not to be entitled to send my child to school, while the Abyssinians, our enemies, whom I fought against in 1936, and the criminals and murderers can!"

Under the leadership of the deposed Mayor Ravenna, the Jewish Community Center improvised a gymnasium where all Jewish children in Ferrara could continue education. I was in charge of teaching chemistry and science. My private teaching was booming. My replacement at the university was very strict and demanding, and his students came to me for tutoring and paid good money. During the year 1938-'39 the police did not disturb me too much, because of my assignment at the gymnasium. A militiaman would come frequently to my place and ask me the same question over and over again, "Sempre a Ferrara?" [Still in Ferrara?].

According to the new law, all Jewish foreigners, including practicing physicians, dentists, engineers, pharmacists, etc., received warnings from the police in the various cities of their sojourn, that within a certain time limit, usually thirty days, they had to leave Italy. If they stayed on, they would be arrested and their belongings confiscated. Many of them left precipitously, others stayed just within their time limit, trying to sell whatever they could. Many of them succeeded in going back to their country of origin.

An unspeakable tragedy happened to all those Italian Jews who were naturalized after 1918. All of them lost their Italian citizenship and became now stateless in a state governed by immoral and unscrupulous opportunists. They could not return to the countries of their origin because they had had to give up their citizenship before becoming Italian citizens. I did not receive such an ultimatum and thought I would remain undisturbed as a *persona grata*.

Because of the financial burden of the Jewish gymnasium on the Jewish community in Ferrara, it was decided several months before the end of the scholastic year that it would be dissolved. The students would have to go to Milano, where there was a much larger Jewish community and therefore greater financial support for a Jewish private gymnasium. At the end of June the Jewish private gymnasium ceased to exist.

The war clouds became bigger and bigger on the horizon until finally, on September 1st, Hitler, living up to his reputation for deception and falsehood, claimed that the Poles attacked Germany, and undeclared war broke out. September 23rd I wrote a letter to the French Consul in Florence expressing my desire to join the French army as a volunteer. He replied that he had no instructions to enlist foreigners and he would let me know if it became possible for me to do so later.

I did not know then that this application to volunteer for the French army was the cause and the beginning of my odyssey that is related in this book. I learned in June, 1945, that this letter to the French Consul was intercepted by the fascist

police. At that moment (June, 1945) I decided to write and publish the events of the war as I had experienced them. But when the Iron Curtain came down, shutting off Eastern Europe from the rest of the world, two of my sisters and their families were caught there. Because of the uncertainties and dangers of communist oppression, I dared not write these true stories for fear of what punishment might befall any or all of my relatives there. Finally on December, 1972, the last of them were able to emigrate to the U.S., although details are best omitted for the sake of the safety of other individuals still there.

Near the end of September 1939 I was called to the police. This time I waited quite a while in the antechamber before Officer Panebianchi received me. When I finally entered his office, his attitude was drastically changed, from politeness to hostility and nastiness. He remained seated, offered no handshake, and did not invite me to sit down. I remained standing like a little boy before a teacher. He informed me that I would have to leave Italy if I did not want to wind up in jail or in a concentration camp. In addition, that I was forbidden to teach Aryans at home. I asked myself then which was the real Panebianchi, the one before or the one after the declaration of war by Hitler on France and England. It did not take too long to find the answer.

Returning to my apartment I immediately wrote a letter to Clara in the U.S. explaining all that happened. I talked to some of my Italian friends about my situation, and they advised me to speak to the Duchess Massari. I called her and made an

appointment. When I was there, I told her just how things were. I explained that during the scholastic year 1938-'39 I had gone to many foreign consulates and embassies, including the American, requesting immigration visas, and that all had denied my requests. Also I told her that I would be hard-hit financially as well as humiliated if I were not allowed to teach privately in my own apartment.

The duchess was visibly moved and told me that although it was against the rules of etiquette for her to visit a man, she would ask for an audience with the prefetto, who was the highest governmental representative in the city.

There was another angle. According to the new fascist law, any Aryan who tried to help Jews could be punished by ten to twenty years in jail. This part did not matter to the duchess. She was mostly concerned about etiquette.

Since the duchess had to wait for an appointment with the prefetto, I was in an awkward predicament. If I had stopped teaching and had told my private students to wait until the outcome of the meeting between the duchess and the prefetto, many or all would have been scared and would not have come back again for private lessons. While battling with this dilemma I encountered a good friend of mine, Don Grata, one rank below monsignor in the Roman Catholic hierarchy. I used to favor him by recommending him to my students as an instructor of Latin, Greek and philosophy when they needed help in these subjects. When I told him about my plight, he offered me the use of his apartment in the church until things could be straightened out.

I accepted his offer, and by word of mouth I notified my students to come to their lessons to Don Grata's apartment. I also informed the duchess that I had accepted Don Grata's offer and was teaching at his place. How naive of me to believe that I had succeeded in tricking Panebianchi! I did not know until June of 1945 that I had been followed step by step by a fascist police dog. I realized then that had I committed the slightest wrong, Panebianchi would have known about it immediately and he would have gotten rid of me instantly.

Why did he not proceed when I tricked him with Don Grata? First, a priest would have been involved -- I was in Archbishop Bovelli's favor, and it would have caused irritation against the police. Secondly, it was Panebianchi's own scheme to forbid me to teach in my apartment and would have cause criticism against him. And thirdly, I was still remembered by many whose children or relatives I had taught, and some courageous man may have found enough guts to protest. In my mind, these must have been the reasons why he did not proceed against me.

After her meeting with the prefetto, the duchess called me to her palace and told me that she had succeeded in persuading the prefetto to help me. The prefetto promised the duchess tacitly to inform the chief of police to close an eye and not to disturb me. On that basis I changed my center of activity again to my own apartment Even though the prefetto could not or would not prevent my future disaster, my gratitude to Duchess Massari can be easily understood.

Two paragraphs, interpolated here, tell of my last expressions of thanks.

I was already an American citizen when a friend sent me the death notice of Duchess Massari in 1956. It was a sad day for me, because the duchess had tried to help me at the cost of disobeying the rules of etiquette so important to the aristocracy, and by endangering her own life, to help Jews in defiance of the fascist law.

I wrote an article in Italian for the newspaper *Corriere del Po*, published in Ferrara. I gave an account of what the duchess had tried to do to prevent my imminent disaster, when I was abandoned by nearly everyone else. The editor did something very special with my article. After each paragraph he made a comment to clarify for young readers with the obituary was all about. He took pride in emphasizing that there were many Italians who had tried to help Jews in trouble. At the end I was proclaimed "The Adopted Son of Italy." It was a royal acceptance.

A few days after I resumed teaching in my apartment, the unforgettable Don Grata dropped in to find out how things were. He seemed greatly pleased with the result of the duchess' intervention with the prefetto.

After beating around the bush Don Grata finally said, "Professor, I am sorry to tell you, but I was informed that there will be very difficult days for you. I would very much like to help you if you let me. I am offering to you an official document from my church that you were converted to Catholicism, but you do not have to perform the act of accepting the Catholic

religion. Just please accept my offer; the document may be useful some day." I was deeply moved by this voluntary offer. I had heard many times that Jews paid large amounts of money to get such certificates, with which they were able to emigrate into many countries from Italy. Later on, persons having such certificates escaped concentration camps and likely even death.

With regard to the generous offer by Don Grata, I replied, "Don Grata, if it were not for the esteem and deference I have for you, I would accept your offer, but in view of these feelings, I cannot do it." He understood and did not insist. How often did I regret later on having refused his offer. But then it was too late.

One day in October of 1939, I did not feel well and thought I needed a medical consultation. The question then was to whom to go. I had some physician acquaintances, but they were gentiles. To go to them could result in embarrassment for both them and me because they were Aryans, who by law were not allowed to help Jews. I did not want to impose danger on them and probably expose myself to a humiliating refusal.

There was in Ferrara a famous former professor of medicine, about ninety years old, by the name of Minerbi. He was called upon when a physician would be uncertain of a diagnosis or treatment for a patient. Ordinarily his fee for a consultation or examination was high. I decided to go to him, not because I considered my illness so serious, but because I knew no other Jewish physician in town.

Without appointment I went to his office and was examined by the renowned professor very thoroughly; he found nothing abnormal. He knew who I was through his grandson Giorgio Bassani, who today is a well-known Italian writer, for he had been a private student of mine and they had talked occasionally of me. Before leaving the office, I stopped at the receptionist's desk and paid the usual high fee for the consultation. I was wondering why I did not get a courtesy or professional discount.

Several days later I received a letter from Professor Minerbi containing a check for the same amount I had paid for the examination. In that letter Professor Minerbi wrote that because for years I had helped so much to elevate the cultural level of Ferrara that he considered it a privilege to examine me and could not accept any payment from me.

This kind of consideration boosted my drooping morale, especially because it came from such an authority as Professor Minerbi. The boost would have been higher, however, if such a letter of encouragement had come from Aryans, who were the real beneficiaries of my work and not from a Jew who himself faced the same troubles.

At the beginning of October I received a letter from Clara in America telling me that DePaul University of Chicago had agreed to send me a contract to teach full time in the chemistry and German departments and that I should receive it in a short time. A few days later I received the contract, a copy of which I sent with a letter to the American Consulate in Naples. A few

days later I left for Naples to show the Consul the original contract. I never got to talk to the Consul, only to the Vice Consul, Mr. Jandry.

The Vice Consul raised the most impossible questions and objections. One of his objections was that I tried to obtain a student visa in 1938, that now I was trying to get a visa as a professor, and that if I did not succeed as a professor I would try as a rabbi. These were the three preferred quotas then for immigration visas. The Vice Consul tried very hard to find reasons to refuse the visa rather than to help giving it. In vain did I try to explain that I had both the qualifications of a professor and of a student, since I was a part-time regular student in natural science. I went back to Naples many times afterward in the hope of moving or persuading that unyielding and unfair Vice Consul Jandry. His answer was always negative because he did not want to contribute to the admission of Jews to the U.S. He had good reasons to issue the visa, but looked for reasons to refuse it. This was and still is my conviction. I hope Mr. Jandry is alive and well and will read this account.

With all my hopes shattered through the ill will of Mr. Jandry, to leave Italy for somewhere, anywhere, I lived from day to day under frustration and fear of expulsion to nowhere, or to a concentration camp. In spite of the promise of the prefetto to Duchess Massari to leave me in peace for a while, the police came to my apartment constantly to check on me. The usual questions were, "Sempre a Ferrara? Non ha fatto ancora il fagotto?" ["Still in Ferrara? You have not packed yet?"]

At the beginning of my life in Ferrara I was happy to study there while being one of very few foreigners. Now I was the single foreign Jew and was therefore a welcome prey for the notorious Panebianchi in his desire to show his cooperation with the Hitler-Mussolini pact, that he was a good fascist.

In Milano, where there were many foreign Jews, the pursuit of Jews was more difficult because of the reaction against the persecution of Jews by a greater number of decent Italians. I bore more than one man's share of persecution in Ferrara. What was at first an advantage for me as a student under Mussolini turned out to be hell under the Hitler-Mussolini regime. I did not dare to go outside my living quarters, for it was dangerous to be seen, especially by police. Today I am convinced that I was under a 24-hour surveillance by Panebianchi's henchmen. Panebianchi could afford such a surveillance in Ferrara for one Jew, while in Milano such a thing would have been impossible for the many Jews there.

My private students by now knew exactly what was going on. Some became scared and some were threatened for going to a Jew for lessons, and they stopped coming. Others were really sympathetic and courageous, continued to come for their lessons, and reported always that the overwhelming majority of Italians did not like the Nazis and did not want a war against France.

In March of 1940 I was summoned to Panebianchi. How scared, frustrated and humiliated I felt when I received a summons to go to that henchman Panebianchi. At the police headquarters he told me that I had to leave Italy. I explained to him that since

Page
Missing
or
Unavailable

On the 20th of May, 1940, I was giving a lesson to a student when the doorbell rang. I opened the door and before me stood a policeman in plainclothes, a man I had known since my arrival in Ferrara. His name was Rubini and he had always been kind an gentle. When I was still a student, Rubini used to come regularly every other month to where I lived to check on me, as the law required. He was a plainclothes man working for the police in the department dealing with the sojourn of foreigners in Ferrara. I was very surprised to see Mr. Rubini because I knew that he had retired a couple of years previously. My first thought was that he wanted me to tutor some of his relatives or acquaintances. He volunteered that he was called back for duty because of the political situation.

Rubini said, "I am sorry to interrupt your lecture, but you have to come with me to the police headquarters." Since he did not seem in a hurry I asked him to wait about twenty minutes, until I finished my lesson. He agreed to wait. It did seem to me a little strange that a policeman should come to take me to the police station because in the past I had been notified to come on my own at a given hour on a certain day. I realized only later that I was under arrest.

After I finished the lesson I went with Rubini to my nemesis Panebianchi. At the headquarters he was at his worst. With a loud voice he said I was under arrest and expelled from Italy. I would have to take the first train going to Trieste, in about an hour and a half. He allowed me only half an hour to pack. I begged and pleaded with him to give me 24 hours to arrange my

affairs. But, true to his evil nature, Panebianchi was unyielding and hard as stone. He could have given me one day to get ready, as I was told by the policeman who accompanied me to my apartment and on to Trieste. When I ask myself today why Panebianchi refused to postpone my expulsion for 24 hours, the only answer I can conceive is that he was afraid that some of my friends might have intervened and prevented my deportation. He was determined in his diabolic way to be done with me once and for all and maybe get a promotion for handling my case so humanely. Panebianchi played this role perfectly well. I cannot resist speculating about his life after his exit from my own life drama.

At the end of the war Panebianchi's superior, Gueresi, who was as bad as or even worse than Panebianchi, was killed by Italian partisans, but Panebianchi saved his skin by escaping into another city, in northern Italy. Irony may have it that Panebianchi is now in the U.S. claiming to have been a victim of the fascists and to have helped many Jews escape from certain death. Or perhaps this noble soul is in the service of the Italian communists teaching them what he so perfectly learned under the fascists. It is most unfortunate and sad that many war criminals have succeeded in outwitting American immigration authorities and have received visas to come to the U.S. where they are leading a happy life after causing so much sorrow and despair to so many people.

When I arrived with the policeman at my apartment to pack, I called my friend Alighiero Paparella, who was teaching school,

and told him what was happening. He said he would be there immediately, and he was. He had somehow managed to notify his wife Gianna, who was teaching at another school, and she too was there in fifteen minutes. Oh, that scene should have been filmed!

Alighiero and Gianna walked into my apartment. Seeing the disarray and chaos, Gianna broke down with uncontrollable crying and sobbing. She had been an interested witness as to how hard and how long I had worked to build a decent life for myself, and now by one stroke she saw everything destroyed. I believe, in fact, I am sure I saw tears in the eyes of the policeman.

When I turned around to ask Alighiero something about my packing, he was not there. After a short while he came in with two new suitcases. He had looked over the situation with a glance and realized that I had nothing in which to put the most necessary and indispensable things for my uncertain journey and future. So he went out and bought two suitcases, which went with me through the war years, and which after 35 years are still in my possession. They are material testimony to my troubles and tribulations then just beginning.

There was not time to arrange my affairs. My students were not notified to look elsewhere for help. They did not pay me for my work, as they ordinarily paid on the 1st of each month. I had no time to withdraw my money from the bank and to pay a small debt. I left my money, 20,000 lire, my furniture and all personal assets with Alighiero. These were a few big things, but many little things had to be forgotten.

My first home in a foreign country was broken up and I was deprived of all I had saved. To this, my chosen country, I had shown my gratitude for my education by serving as an educator and especially by contributing for years sums of money for the poor, although I myself was not much above that level. Now nobody intervened, nobody could help. Those who wanted to were afraid to expose themselves for a Jew. With a few strokes I was reduced to a level lower than that at which I had arrived in Italy. Where was the fruit of my endless hours of work, of my frugality and thrift? It just disappeared, and only a few others drew material advantage.

CHAPTER V

PRECARIOUS PREPARATIONS

The arrest at home by Rubini, the hollering and screaming of Panebianchi, the signing of papers at the police station, the walk to my apartment from police headquarters, packing, disposing of all my possessions, saying goodbye to Alighiero and Gianna, and arriving at the railroad station took just one and one half hours. We made the train as Panebianchi planned it. The accompanying policeman in plainclothes appeared to be sympathetic, though today I cannot feel sure whether he was sincere or as false as his boss.

On the train I remembered that I owed money for the daily milk delivery to the milkman, whom I paid by the month. I gave money to the accompanying policeman and asked him to give it to a neighbor, who in turn would certainly pay the milkman. After the war I learned that the milkman indeed received the money.

When the train arrived in Trieste, the policeman told me that I should try to pass the Yugoslav border or I would be taken by the Italian police into a concentration camp near Trieste. If the Yugoslav customs would not let me pass, they would send me back to Trieste and this would go on for a while winding up in the concentration camp near that city.

I did not want to go to Romania, which already had as head of the government the notorious Antonescu, a devoted puppet of Hitler's. Antonescu had been imposed on Romania by Hitler. But

all in all I had no other choice. I took the train which was supposed to go through Yugoslavia to Romania. When I arrived at the border and the Yugoslav customs official saw no Yugoslav transit visa, he ordered me to get off the train. It was night, the darkness pitch black. I went to the waiting room, which had no light, and had plenty of time to bemoan my fate and to consider ways to avoid Mussolini's concentration camp.

I thought I would try what appeared then to be the lesser of the evils, to go to the Romanian border. And if the Yugoslav customs officer would reject me again, to try to bribe him. It was a dangerous thought, but I had to try it. The worst that could happen would be removal from the train, I thought.

When the next train arrived, I boarded it, and although I showed the customs officer my passport, he ordered me to leave the train. But a 100-lire bill canceled his order, and I stayed on the train. The trip to Jimbolia, the border town between Romania and Yugoslavia, was uneventful, lasting about nine hours, a normal length of time.

When the train arrived in Jimbolia, Romanian customs officers mounted the train to control passports and luggage. When I presented my passport, they told me that I needed a Romanian visa, "Bon pour se rendre en Roumanie," ["Valid for entering Romania."] I knew that, but I had been refused one by the Romanian embassy in Rome several times. As a result, I was taken down from the train and the passport was confiscated. I was allowed to go to the nearby village to look for a place to

stay until my situation could be cleared by the Romanians or until I could be sent back to the Yugoslav-Italian border.

In the village I sent a telegram to my parents indicating where I was, and after 24 hours my sister Lotty arrived in Jimbolia. After she heard the whole story, we agreed that she would go back to Bucharest and try to obtain an entry permit through a lawyer. Within three days an order came from the ministry of the interior to let me enter Romania.

I took the first train to Suczawa and stopped in Bucharest for a few hours between trains. I used the time to look for Lotty, a task similar to looking for a needle in a haystack. By pure chance I found her standing still on a sidewalk in the center of the city, and she was overjoyed to learn that I had been legally admitted to Romania.

In Suczawa I had to register with the police, as did everyone. In no time I was ordered to appear before the draft board, since Romania was in a state of military preparedness because of the current political situation. I did not dare to say that I was not a Romanian citizen anymore lest I face expulsion again.

In 24 hours I was notified that I had to report to an Army sanitary unit in Transylvania, with the rank of first lieutenant. My Ph.D. in pharmacy merited this officer rank. Life in the army was absolutely unbearable, mainly because of the anti-Semitic policies, which were a faithful continuation of what I had known in my early years. Somehow I learned that because I was Jewish I would be dismissed. After about a month I asked for and received

a short furlough to visit my parents, and went to Czernowitz where my real last domicile had been before I left Romania for good. I looked around for work, but in a few days I found that there was no chance of getting a job commensurate with my qualifications. With resignation I returned to my assigned function in the army. One morning shortly afterwards, the newspapers announced that the northern part of the Bukowina including Czernowitz had been occupied by the Russians. This action was in full agreement with the Nazi-Russian friendship pact. The furor and anger of the Romanians was not directed so much against the Russians as against the millennium-old scapegoat, the Jews living in Romania.

Romanians threw Jews from moving trains. The legionnaires and other anti-Semitic partners stormed apartments of Jews during the following night and killed many of them mercilessly. The "Death Train" in Romania will remain in the memory of Jews and non-Jews as much as the gas chambers and incinerators of Hitler's Germany, and even more so. The Death Train was organized in the city of Iassy and 1,500 prominent Jews, among whom was a former professor of mine, Dr. Eisig Feuer, were packed in cattle wagons with only standing room. This train moved in circles for eight days in June until these unfortunate human beings died of heat, dehydration, starvation and suffocation. The screaming, the crying, the praying of these innocent victims of sadism and unfounded hate were heard everywhere the train passed, but no mercy was shown. All these cruelties were carried out with the consent of the Romanian government. Many of these murderers and

sadists have evaded justice by escaping from Romania into other countries by the end of World War II, and perhaps some of them live in the U.S. claiming to have been victims of Antonescu, or Hitler, or the communists. What a pity that these criminals and gangsters have not yet been unmasked and punished.

Every Jew was afraid that he might be next on the list to be killed. There were confidential orders, which in fact were open secrets, to eliminate all Jewish officers from the army. Upon the demand of the Russians, the Romanians had agreed to allow all former residents of the Northern Bukowina now living in other parts of Romania to return there if they wished.

Under these circumstances I decided to disregard all the bad things I had read about Russian communism and to ask for dismissal from the army to go back to my last domicile in Czernowitz. My application for dismissal was granted. Again I prepared my suitcases and went toward Czernowitz. At the newly created border between Romania and Russia there was a collecting point for those waiting to go to the Northern Bukowina. There were thousand and thousands of people waiting for the moment to be allowed to go into the land of "liberty and dictatorship of the proletariat." I was among them. After many formalities I finally passed the border and was in the Russian "paradise."

When I arrived in Czernowitz, I found out that all my sisters had fled from Suczawa and were in Czernowitz, leaving our old and ailing parents alone. Had I known that, I would have waited until my official dismissal from the army and would have stayed with them, never going to Czernowitz. To date I have

heart cramps from thinking how sad that one year must have been for them. My father was very ill with prostate cancer and my ailing mother now had to take care of him alone. She was used to being surrounded by her children, but now everyone was gone. It was a hardship and heartbreak for both of them.

When the Russians occupied the Northern Bukowina, I was told later, people danced on the streets with joy. People thought that the Messiah had arrived and that they had nothing to worry about. But soon they awakened and saw the falsehood of Russian communism and tyranny; they soon learned about the big lie.

First the Russians instituted centers for exchanging foreign currency, including Romanian money into rubles. The population soon became aware that with the exchanged rubles they could buy much less than with Romanian money, to say nothing about foreign currencies. For this reason many refrained from exchanging their currency into rubles. For a while I considered giving to the Russian government power-of-attorney to collect my money in Italy and pay me rubles in Czernowitz. But I dropped the idea when it became clear that the deal would have been to the advantage of only the Russians.

The disadvantage in exchanging currency for rubles, plus the need for buying daily necessities, stimulated the population of the occupied territory to look for jobs. Everyone wanted a position corresponding at least to, and possibly beyond, his or her qualifications. If normal procedures did not produce results, people resorted to gifts and other attentions to the job assigners.

All of a sudden, a pandemonium of bribery and corruption erupted in the competition for preferential and better paying jobs. This system of bribery and dishonesty was a way of life in Russia and was so deeply rooted from top to bottom that no attempts were even made to change it.

One of the greatest blows administered to the population of newly occupied territory was the requirement of knowledge of Russian. The official language became Russian overnight, and very, very seldom did a Jew know a Russian language except for Russian Jews who spoke a yiddish that contained a lot of Russian words. The best jobs everywhere were given to Russians, who flooded the occupied territory.

Job hunting was a continuous and altogether necessary obligation. Because I had no money to change into rubles I could buy nothing to fill my empty stomach. I was overqualified as to education, it seems to me today, and underqualified as to the knowledge of Russian. The University of Czernowitz, to which I applied for a teaching position, refused me because the more honorable and better paying jobs were given to the incoming Russians. For a lesser service, such as assisting in the chemistry department, which I would have done gladly, I was considered overqualified.

I tried to get a minor job in the sugar factory in Juczka a few kilometers from Czernowitz. Here I was also refused although I offered good experience in this field, having worked as a chemist in sugar factories every summer for six years in Italy. Since I knew that the better paying jobs were given only the

imported Russians, regardless of their qualifications, I asked only for lesser paid jobs, but with not much success.

My application to teach chemistry in high school had no more success than the others. However, I was finally offered a teaching job in the first four years of a grammar school in a village, a job of insultingly low prestige for a university professor. That I was completely and utterly unqualified for teaching young children did not occur to the Russian job assigners.

The inspector of schools who made me that offer thought that because of my considerable education in science I would be very good in teaching youngsters of ages six to ten. I refused this job and continued my search for something more suitable.

It is not my intention to belittle or to exaggerate in relating these facts. Later I shall relate the confusion which was caused by an imported Russian chemist involving tens of thousands of rubles. It took a Bukowinaer chemist to unravel the confusion. Many well-educated natives of the Bukowina, experts in various fields, had the same experience as I. In spite of their exceptional qualifications they could not get jobs. And yet employment was essential for buying indispensable things, especially food. The only way to live was to get rubles.

Then it was found out that for suitable gifts, such as jewelry, watches, cameras, etc. to the various heads of departments, jobs became available. The hiring staffs in keen competition for gifts began to offer well-paying jobs. Many positions were beyond the abilities of the applicants. But if

the imported untrained Russians could get jobs beyond their qualifications, why should not the gift-bearing natives give it a whirl? As a natural result, quite a few natives began to eat better. I had nothing to offer in briberies, and my chances of getting a job became slimmer and slimmer as time passed by.

CHAPTER VI

TO DISTILL OR BE DISTILLED

One day a friend advised me to look for work at a small distillery in the village Lujan, about fifteen kilometers from Czernowitz, where a chemist was needed. Since that distance would not jeopardize my possession of my one-room apartment if I took a job there, I decided to try my luck.

When I arrived at the distillery, so small and neglected, and took a look only from the outside, I could not understand how a chemist could be used there. But as I found out later, the requirements for personnel in every factory were the same -- fixed and unalterable regardless of needs.

I went to the office and asked for the director. I do not recall how long I waited, but when he received me I had a definite feeling that I would be hired.

The interview was in Russian, of course, since it was expected that every job seeker must know that language. The director, named Homenko, asked questions, and I answered them in my very limited Russian, which I had learned during the short period I lived in Czernowitz. My past efforts in the self-study of Russian now paid off. The director seemed satisfied to see that I was learning his own native speech.

After the first part of the interview concerning my curriculum vitae, which apparently impressed him, he asked particulars about my industrial experience in sugar factories,

for I had worked six summers in research laboratories of sugar factories in the region around Ferrara. It was a struggle to answer these technical questions in Russian, but I was either clear enough or confusing enough to affect this interviewer favorably.

As a climax Homenko asked me how much alcohol is obtained from beet molasses. I was hit hard by this question, as I had no idea whatsoever. Despair almost invariably worked for me. My brains squeezed out some answer that was acceptable, although it was not at all an answer to his question. I asked for a pencil and a piece of paper and wrote down the following chemical equation:

$$C_6H_{12}O_6 \Rightarrow 2C_2H_5OH + 2CO_2$$

This was completely beside the point of Homenko's question, but without saying a word he folded the paper with my formula and told me that I was hired as distillery chemist.

On the way back to the city I wondered what impressed him so much in my answer to his single technical question. Did the chemical equation have such an effect on him that he was satisfied? Did he have no understanding of what I wrote on the piece of paper nor the slightest idea of chemistry and was afraid to reveal his ignorance? I think the latter interpretation was correct.

A couple of days later I returned to the factory to get acquainted with the people there, to learn what my duties would be and to inquire about living and working conditions. My position had to be confirmed by a central office, and the

confirmation required a week. Meanwhile I was not on the payroll.

Director Homenko introduced me to the chief engineer, Dimitrov, from White Russia. He told me that his wife was a chemist still in Russia and that she was expected to arrive here after two months. Dimitrov informed me that he would be my direct superior, that I would share a room with three other employees, and that my first assignment would be to organize and equip the laboratory.

The space destined to be the laboratory was a room nine by 16 feet, with a board table two feet wide along the side wall. When I asked how and where I could get pieces of equipment for the laboratory, I was told to buy them privately and that the distillery would provide the money.

After the Russians occupied Czernowitz in June 1940, those people who had stores and did not flee from the city carried as much merchandise as they could to their homes, because they knew that their stores and everything in them would be confiscated. After the occupation one could hardly buy necessities because no stores were open. Nobody had jobs, and everything was in chaos.

The black market flourished. The trading currency was of course the ruble, but where did rubles come from? They came from private Russian citizens who were sent in with the occupying forces. They had lots of rubles and bought nearly everything offered for sale. They paid very little for anything because the sellers so badly needed rubles to buy food that they had to part with merchandise for practically nothing. The Russians looked

eagerly for watches, and I often saw them wearing two watches, one on each wrist.

Slowly and naturally resentment set in among the population. But since arrests were made constantly and the jails began to overflow with prisoners, people were so afraid that they did not dare say anything. Those courageous ones who did rebel were jailed, and many of them were never seen or heard from again. The NKVD men, secret police, the devoted servants of Stalin in whose name so many crimes and injustices were committed, were the heroes in those days.

To equip the laboratory I began to extend feelers, in all secrecy, among the people. I was assured of getting what I needed if I would pay the price and promise not to divulge the seller. I reported this to the director, and after some hemming and hawing he agreed to pay. Even before beginning to work officially, I had lined up a number of people willing to sell me enough pieces of equipment to enable me to perform the most important control work.

After my job was confirmed, I was given a horse and carriage and a coachman to go to town and pick up all I could get for the money Homenko had given me for that purpose. Within a month I had a laboratory equipped so that I could perform a limited number of analytical control tests.

Along with nearly all the other white-collar employees I continued to live in Czernowitz. The blue-collar workers were from the village, having been trained and employed in the production of alcohol for many decades.

The small room I shared with three other male employees six nights a week measured only about nine by twelve feet. To enter our bedroom we had to pass through a room in which four other men had their beds. In the center of our room were a table and four chairs. We each used a chair to put our clothes on before going to bed. On top of a small wooden stand were placed a pitcher of water and a white enamel pan for washing and shaving. Built in a corner was a wood-burning brick stove for warming the room in winter. The latrine was located in a distant corner of this apartment building, and to use it we had to go down from the high first floor and across the courtyard through fair weather or rain, sleet or snow.

The occupants of our room worked on different shifts. Always somebody was sleeping, and any social gathering there was next to impossible.

Director Homenko occupied the nice apartment of the former owner of the distillery, while Chief Engineer Dimitrov had the apartment of the former administrator of the factory. Both their apartments had private inside toilets. In another comfortable apartment lived Homenko's in-laws, whom he had brought from Russia. The father-in-law was well paid as a minor clerk, though his job could have been easily filled by a village native.

Homenko's wife worked in Czernowitz for the Ministry of Education, commuting daily by train. The Homenkos had two sons, 17 and 15 years of age. The older bow, Yuri, was brilliant but had a congenital heart defect and could not go to school. He had studied nearly all his life at home with the help of his mother.

At the end of each year he always took the school examinations and passed them brilliantly. The younger brother, Lionia, was a healthy boy but a weak student.

One day the director invited me to his apartment and introduced me to his wife and sons. During our conversation, in which Yuri and Lionia were the main topic, Mrs. Homenko asked me whether I would mind helping them with some tutoring in mathematics. Because of my limited Russian I could not have helped in any other subject anyhow. Under the prevailing conditions I would not have dared to refuse. I jumped at the idea anyway because I wanted to be in the director's favor and to have him on my side if a need should arise. Besides, I genuinely wanted to help the sick boy. There was no mention of payment, and I was glad because I would have refused it anyway.

While tutoring Lionia was hard and therefore not pleasurable, I thoroughly enjoyed working with Yuri because he grasped everything easily.

One day Yuri saw my fountain pen, and he left me in no doubt that he would like to have it. Somehow I ignored all his hints about it, the single pen I had left from all my possessions and a sentimental memento from Italy.

Yuri must have talked to his father about the pen. Under ordinary circumstances Homenko would not have given in to Yuri's pressures. But now because he was so proud of his son, who was at the same time mentally capable and physically weak, he gave an unmistakable hint about the pen. I had to sacrifice it, for I was afraid that otherwise Homenko might do me harm.

One day Yuri told me, "You know you are like us. You always wear the same suit."

The other employees had not gone through a tragedy like mine in Italy, and had many suits of clothes. My other suits, abandoned in Italy, were probably being worn that minute by other men. I could not tell Yuri why I had only one suit.

In Russia the salaries for all university graduates had been and continued to be the same, with increases granted at intervals of five years. My salary was not sufficient for me to live as when I was a professor in Italy. I could squeeze through a month only by watching every penny and by not spending for extras like soap, toothpaste, and sometimes black-market drugs.

In the factory we were relieved from having to buy food at high black-market prices. We had a cafeteria-like eating place where all employees could eat simple nutritional foods at reasonable prices established by the government. With winter setting in, it was also a relief to live six days a week in the factory because wood was furnished for keeping our rooms warm.

But when I remember the weekends, from Saturday 3 p.m. until Sunday 6 p.m., or, according to the shift I had, until Monday 6 a.m. during the long winter months, I still shiver and get goose pimples. On weekends I went to Czernowitz to take a bath and change my underwear and shirt. Yet it was too cold to take a bath because I did not have wood to heat my apartment. I had no money for wood, and there was no wood to buy. On the black market a seller of wood was easily caught by the ever-present

NKVD. The result was an impossibly high price for an almost nonexistent product.

My apartment consisted of a medium-sized kitchen with a brick stove for cooking, a bedroom with a ceramic wood-burning stove in a corner to warm up the whole place, and a bathroom provided with a cylindrical copper heating tank to warm enough water for one bath. But preparing and taking a bath without warming up the apartment would have been calling for pneumonia.

This situation forced me to think of a way out. Every day during the week I hid one or two pieces of wood taken from our room in the factory, and before I left for Czernowitz I put the wood into my large briefcase that I always carried with me. In two weeks I accumulated wood sufficient to warm the room and heat the water one weekend.

The guard at the gate of the distillery yard could have stopped and searched me, but he never did. If I had been caught with several pieces of wood in the briefcase, I would have gone to jail. The guard did not search me as he did others because he knew that I was tutoring the director's sons and assumed I was in excellent standing with Director Homenko.

For the tutoring lessons I gave to Lionia and Yuri I paid my self with enough wood from the factory to take a luxurious warm bath every other week. I felt lucky to get a biweekly bath and was much better off than the employees living in the village without any bath facilities.

My work in the laboratory was not too demanding since I did not have equipment to carry out all the required control tests.

I waited weeks for a much-needed polarimeter to measure the sugar content in the molasses used in the preparation of alcohol. The amount of sugar in molasses determines the amount of alcohol obtainable therefrom. Molasses rich in sugar yields more alcohol per pound than that poor in sugar. Finally the polarimeter arrived, and I was delighted to get it. I put it in the laboratory at a specially reserved place and unpacked it.

In just a few days the wife of Chief Engineer Dimitrov arrived to join her husband. Seventy-two hours later I was told that she would head the laboratory and that I would work in the factory as a shift leader. I was shocked. I had built up this laboratory from nothing, and I resented having the same job in it as other shift leaders with an education hardly beyond the sixth grade.

The chief engineer demoted me in order to give my job to his wife. However, I was afraid to voice one word of objection to anyone, because Dimitrov would have found ways to send me to jail. Jail was a constant threat used by our liberators, who set up the same regime of tyranny and terror in the newly-occupied territories as existed in all Russia.

Although as a shift leader I learned all the minute details of alcohol production, I dislike the job because it involved changing shifts every week. The shifts ran from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. As a further insult, I had to stoop to punch a time card at the beginning and the end of my shift like all common laborers.

The responsibilities of a shift leader were many, and my failure in any detail could have sent me to jail. If, for example, any worker on my shift would spill a little molasses, I was responsible and had to pay for it with my own money. The group realized that, and when an accident happened, everything possible was done to make the evidence of any damage disappear as quickly as possible. I hated the pesky responsibilities of this demeaning assignment.

It was my hope to find a job with less responsibility and more dignity in Czernowitz. I went to Homenko and asked him to release me from the distillery. He knew why I wanted to leave, and he explained that unless I had a better reason he could not let me quit.

Boldly I threatened, "I simply will not return to work."

He answered, "In that case I shall have to act according to law and file suit against you for deserting your work."

Such desertion called for a penalty of one year in jail. Of course he could have let me go if he had wanted to, but his sons would have lost a gratis tutor. Whatever angle I tried to apply to leave this factory proved to be useless.

Suddenly I was elated to be sent back to the laboratory when Mrs. Dimitrov, the new chemist and specialist in alcohol production, took sick. I hoped to stay there indefinitely. But after one week she came back, and I had to return to the despised shift work. At that point I began to search earnestly for some way out.

One day in February 1941 Homenko called me to his office and asked me to go to the nearby sugar factory which furnished the distillery with molasses. He wanted me there to find out how the chemists determined the sugar content of the molasses and whether there was something wrong in their procedure. This factory determined the sugar content of all molasses sent to the distillery. The chemists reported to the distillery a sugar content of 45%, while the regular reports made to Homenko by Mrs. Dimitrov, the chemist and alcohol specialist, showed a sugar content of about 30%.

This great discrepancy had important bearings on the amount of money the distillery had to pay to the sugar factory for the molasses. The higher the sugar percentage the higher the cost because the alcohol yield was higher. I wanted to ask Homenko why he did not send his alcohol specialist instead of me, but on second thought I discarded the idea because I wanted his support in leaving the distillery.

The following day I went to the sugar factory, and the well-trained chemists performed before my eyes flawless tests. They confirmed that the samples of molasses I had brought with me from the distillery contained indeed 45% sugar.

When I reported my findings to Homenko, he was very upset. He asked me to go to the laboratory and find the cause of the discrepancy.

Mrs. "Specialist," I observed, was not her usual arrogant, fresh and challenging self, but was subdued and meek. I asked her to perform a sugar determination before me, hoping to detect

her error. After certain preliminary steps she obtained a correct solution of molasses. When she poured the solution into the polarimeter, I asked her to make a reading of the sugar concentration, which she did. She said that the reading was about 30%. I checked and found that her reading was correct.

Now it was my turn to be puzzled. I knew that somewhere there was a mistake, and I had to find it. Suddenly I had the idea of asking this woman whether she had calibrated the polarimeter after unpacking it, and whether she had set the instrument on zero before making any reading. She did not know what I was talking about. Then I asked her for the key to the polarimeter so that I might calibrate it. Again she had no idea what it was all about.

She had unpacked the polarimeter after her arrival and had worked with it daily for two months without calibration and without putting the instrument on zero. I began to look for the key and found it in the place where it ought to be. My examination of the instrument showed an indication of 15 degrees less than zero and demonstrated clearly why a polarimeter has to be set at zero every day at the start of work. Although Chemist Dimitrov had never seen a polarimeter before, I am sure she never again failed to put the polarimeter on zero before starting to work.

The ignorance of this specialized-in-Moscow chemist caused irritation and confusion between two factories, trouble which a mere shift leader from Italy had to straighten out. Tens of thousands of rubles were involved when the sugar factory sent

bills on the basis of 45% sugar content and the distillery paid on the basis of 30% sugar. If "Mrs. Specialist" had not been a Russian and the wife of the chief engineer, she would have been kicked out of her job and would have been held responsible for all the bureaucratic damages she caused.

After I reported to the director the cause of the discrepancies, he was rather relieved, because he could then justify the higher amount of money to be paid to the sugar factory.

Fervently I hoped to be called back to the laboratory as chief chemist, and to be done with shift changing and card punching, but nothing like that happened. Director Homenko would have liked to reward me in this way, but apparently he was afraid of his chief engineer, Dimitrov.

By now I especially wanted to leave the distillery because my Russian had improved enough that I could aspire to a better-paying and more dignified job. Also, commuting back and forth was very unpleasant and became constantly more so from lack of humane cooperation by the Russians.

For example, the train to the city left the village at 2:10 p.m., while my shift finished at 2:00. If the train was on time, we missed it and had to wait for the train next day -- that weekend was ruined. We used to sneak out often at 1:45, but had we been caught, we surely would have spent the weekend and more in jail among rats and lice. Homenko and Dimitrov applied the rules stringently to us employees, but disregarded regulations applicable to themselves. Even if I turned over all my

responsibilities to the next shift leader at 1:45, I dared not leave before 2:00 if the director or the chief engineer was around. Is it any wonder we hated them?

While I was thinking of ways to get away from the distillery with all its annoyances and dangers of jail, I was busily hunting a job in Czernowitz on weekends and on occasional service trips there. Most of the jobs I knew of or heard about were taken before I got to them. Eventually I found one which was in the process of being created according to Russian plans. While those plans were still taking shape, it was imperative for me to create some situation that would result in my release from the distillery.

One day I took an opportunity to talk to Mrs. Homenko and appealed to her for help in getting separated from this place. I promised her that I would tutor her son Lionia, who was attending school in Czernowitz, every day in the city gratis if she would persuade her husband to let me go. By allowing me to quit work without justification he would make himself guilty of a crime and be taken to task for it. He was especially afraid of Chief Engineer Dimitrov, with whom he did not get along well. Still, if some opportunity should come, he might be willing to help. I had to be satisfied with this tentative promise.

The opportunity which Homenko soon found was for me completely unexpected. It was in the middle of February 1941, with snow knee-deep and temperatures down to -40°C (-40°F). The director called a meeting in the distillery of all employees free from shift work at that time. He told the group that because of

danger of sabotage by the enemy and its agents, every night the shift leader would have to check at least twice outside the territory of the factory. He would have to go up to the railroad station at midnight and again at 2 a.m. Someone asked the director whether the shift leader would be provided with a gun to use in case of attack by an enemy or by a wolf, the latter being frequent during the winter in that part of the Bukowina.

He answered, "No."

I objected to this illogic, also to the extra responsibility of the shift leader.

I stood as tall as I could stand and protested, "If one cannot defend oneself in case of an attack by an enemy or a wild animal, it would mean sheer suicide. We could save our lives by carrying a gun."

My sincere innocent objections brought about a preplanned attack against me by Homenko. He called me a coward and said that he did not want people like me in the factory. I was fired then and there!

He was quick to accept a free tutor for his son. I kept my end of the bargain and tutored Lionia until the outbreak of the war, when all Russians escaped as fast as they could, including the Homenko family. Occasionally Mrs. Homenko brought me some cow cheese in appreciation for my work with Lionia.

I was elated to leave my demeaning work. What a relief to get out from under that young Chief Engineer Dimitrov, who could have been my student, and away from his wife, who as a chemistry student I certainly would have flunked. My work was taken over

by two men on the other shifts, whose education was on the sixth-grade level. My eighteen-year-old replacement had only eight years of school. I did not care. I was out of it. Hurray!

CHAPTER VII

PIED PIPER OF CZERNOWITZ

At the beginning of March I found a job that paid a little more and did not require commuting. The nature of the work brought me a nickname, including the German title of aristocracy "von." "Von" in English means "from," but it also precedes the name of an aristocrat in German and Austrian countries. "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" is translated in German as "Der Rattenfaenger von Hameln." People poked fun at me, calling me "Herr von Hameln," implying that rats followed me as the fabled Pied Piper of Hamelin. This nickname stayed with me for quite some time.

I was put in charge of eliminating rats and mice throughout the whole city of Czernowitz. This service would be performed for those firms and enterprises such as bakeries, factories involved in the production of foods, storage centers for grains, etc. It would be done on the basis of yearly contracts with the newly created Health Office for the control of rats and mice. The money from these clients would be used for the maintenance of the laboratory, where the poisonous baits were prepared, for traps, for legal service of preparing contracts and advising in case of need, for a salary for the head of the laboratory, and most importantly, for salaries of the crew of workers.

Before accepting the job I realized that again it was not something I could be proud of nor commensurate with my education

and past accomplishments, but there was nothing else available. I must put my eyes and hands to work despite my snobbish European academic prejudice.

All the instructions for the creation of this health service branch I received from the Health Office Director, a Russian, of course, who would be my future boss. I plunged into this new job by first looking for customers in order to get money to start the laboratory, and by hiring workers. It was evident that this proposed enterprise was to be self-supporting, and if excess earnings should occur they would have to be transferred to the Central Health Office.

I soon found out that the heads of various enterprises, especially the natives of the Bukowina, who were unfamiliar with such a service, were reluctant to spend money. The Russians, however, heading such enterprises, quickly took advantage of our services. Within a few weeks I had enough contracts to justify this branch of the Central Health Office. The Central Health Office advanced the necessary money for initiating services.

My function was to head the laboratory, prepare the various baits, handle complaints, bring in enough money to keep the work rolling, hire and instruct the working crew, and make regular reports to the boss.

It was no easy task to find people for jobs I had to fill because working with rats and mice was considered shameful. Yet I offered a certain amount of protection against the NKVD. Usually every man in every enterprise was investigated by this feared and most-hated organization. As a rule, persons who

worked at menial jobs, as in my case, were left alone. A lawyer was willing to accept the job I offered, because he was guilty of being very capable, successful and wealthy and had worked very hard all his life. A wealthy lawyer, for the NKVD, was a guilty man and an exploiter. After some struggle I was able to hire enough laborers to begin.

The work involving the battle against rats was and still is very interesting, and the Russians continue it even now. First, I learned from my boss that rats have an extremely fine sense of smell and that if the bait has the slightest hint of human smell they will not eat it. For this reason we had to work with rubber gloves, which were very hard to get. I finally succeeded in getting some from a friend working in a hospital. The basic poison was barium sulfate. It is fatal to rats but harmless to humans. In fact, X-ray examinations of the upper and lower digestive tract in man are preceded by an intake of a proper suspension of barium sulfate. Because of its high insolubility it can be used for this purpose.

The barium sulfate was added to various bait preparations such as cheese, meat, sausage and always flour as the basic ingredient. The baits had to be changed every other or third day, for the rats recognized a poison after a short time and would no longer touch it. In addition to poisonous baits, the old fashioned and still reliable mechanical means was used, the trap with the many variations produced in Russia.

At the beginning everything seemed to go well, according to the reports by the working crew. Every man had to give a report

at the end of the day and in turn I had to report at the end of the week to the head of the Health Service Office. But the smoothness of our operation did not last long.

Soon a complaint came in that the rats were still the masters in the enterprise. People there wanted immediate and total results. They did not take into account how many rodents were destroyed; they saw only that damage to their products continued, even though to a much smaller extent.

I went to various complainants and discussed the reasons of their dissatisfaction, but some were still not pleased with the results and complained to my superior. He then ruled that I should check twice a day all those places in which the crews worked. This responsibility I had not anticipated when I accepted my job. My budget did not allow for a foreman who could take on this responsibility. I felt it most humiliating to have to check personally on my crew.

I was considering giving up my job and talked about it with the legal consultant, a friend of mine. Now he became afraid that if I were to leave, troubles with the NKVD could begin for him. To prevent my leaving he told me that he would come with me to check these various points, if it would make me feel less miserable. I gave in and stayed on the job.

This arrangement no doubt benefitted my lawyer friend, Leo Mader, more than it helped me. Because the NKVD seemed to have an allergic antipathy for successful well-to-do lawyers, Leo walked day after day in danger of being snatched away and sent to a slave-labor camp in Siberia. Among the many lawyers who were

routed this way to their ultimate deaths by exposure and starvation, I knew personally Josef Thau, Benedict Kaswan, Max Diamant and dozens of others.

But Leo's work with me avoided this trap. After the war he went to Israel and served many years as lawyer for the government before he was killed in a traffic accident.

One day a crewman reported that in a bakery which had a contract with our laboratory five pigs were taken sick and one of them had died. The head of the bakery stated I was responsible for it because the pigs had eaten the poisonous bait strewn for the rats. He asked for payment of damage to the bakery. I could not sleep that night because the NKVD could intervene here too, especially if they were bribed by the head of the bakery.

Fortunately I was saved by my superior who found a legal answer to my predicament. He argued that the pigs should not have been allowed to run around in the courtyard of the bakery but should have been kept in a fenced enclosure. My friend and legal adviser Leo kept me company on my daily visits to the places where my men worked, and tried to persuade me to lay aside my pride and prejudice.

CHAPTER VIII

TRAVELING LIGHT -- DESTINATION UNKNOWN

The political horizon darkened and heavy rumors got around that the Germans would attack Russia soon. Although some people did not want to believe it, on June 22, 1941, war broke out. Rumors circulated that Stalin had been warned that his friend Hitler would attack Russia, but he had dismissed these warnings as unfounded. A well-planned attack by Hitler's Germany against Russia began the cataclysmic events of World War II for Russia.

The following four years were for me one continuous struggle for survival. In this strife tens of thousands of Bukowinaer lost their lives under the most cruel conditions. If not for the kindness of Providence I would have died many times.

The Germans beat the Russians out of every position in the first part of the war very easily because the latter did not want to fight for their own government which they disliked. They surrendered by the hundreds of thousands without firing a shot. A large number of these prisoners was led through Czernowitz, and we could witness the maltreatment they received from the Germans, who promised them before their surrender that they would be freed from the yoke of communism. But Hitler did not keep his promise and let these "subhumans" starve to death in the prison camps.

The mass surrender of Russian soldiers enabled Hitler to make incredible progress in the shortest possible time and to occupy vast Russian territories. Hitler's hordes entered Czernowitz toward the end of June. By order of the Nazi

commander no Jew was allowed to leave his living quarters lest he be shot on the spot. In the meantime the SS drew up plans to annihilate the Jewish population in Czernowitz. The city of Czernowitz, which was once a flourishing center of German culture and commerce because of the efforts of the Jews for decades, was now a deserted place.

At the outbreak of the war it was clear to everyone that the SS would soon be in Czernowitz. Thousand of Jews and non-Jews decided then to retreat with the Russian army, because it was known that the Nazis were merciless savage killers.

My sister Lotty, six years younger than I, and her husband decided to retreat with the Russians. I begged her to stay with us, arguing that what would happen to all the rest of us would happen to her also. But her husband had worked as an administrator of housing for the Russians in Czernowitz and, not being able to do everything people had asked of him, was afraid they might denounce him to the Germans. He thought he had better go with the retreating Russians. His sister insisted that Lotty retreat with him. She did not understand that he would be drafted into the Russian army and that Lotty would remain alone even if they could keep ahead of the Germans. Many inhabitants of Czernowitz decided to do the same and were overtaken by the Germans and massacred by machine guns. When we found out that the Germans were entering Czernowitz, Lotty was already gone.

Jews once filled Czernowitz with joy, laughter, culture, poetry, commerce and trades of all sorts. They contributed with their taxes to the worldwide fine reputation of this beautiful

city, of which all minorities were very proud. Now the Jews were "Frei Wild," free game, and could be shot without the gunman's having to answer to anybody.

In the middle of July the SS surrounded preselected neighborhoods and loaded all male Jews, young and old, on trucks and hauled them to the river Prut. There they were ordered to dig their own ditches and were mercilessly gunned down. Many of the slaughtered victims were veterans of World War I. They had been high ranking officers in the Austrian army and had fought for Austria and Germany.

Several days later Hitler's cohorts surrounded many sections of my neighborhood. I was in my apartment stiff with fear when I heard boots tramping toward the door. When I opened the door, there stood before me a husky six-foot SS man with his revolver pointed at me. He ordered me to come with him. Outside were trucks and a number of old and young Jews on the streets. Several SS men with machine guns watched them so that no escape was possible. After some more Jews were taken from their homes, we were herded into the trucks and driven away. Since the trucks were covered, we could not see where we were driven and could not be seen. But through small openings I could see that the trucks went in zigzag fashion to make it impossible for any of us to see where we were being taken.

We were unloaded in front of a building erected by the Romanians and called "National Palace". It so happened that the people in our truck did not move fast enough for the SS man who ordered us to descend. Because there were a few elderly men in

my truck who could not move faster, the SS man got more and more angry at us. Since I had the misfortune, or the good fortune, to be the last man down, he delivered a blow to my face with his fist. The blow was hard, and instinctively I covered my face with my handkerchief and did not realize that I was bleeding freely.

We were taken into the big hall of the palace, ordered to sit and were prohibited from looking back. Everyone knew that a number of us or all of us would be killed by these wholesale murderers. After about two hours of deadly uncertainty we were ordered to get in line and were taken one by one to what I would call a death committee, who examined documents and asked questions.

When I appeared before these "supermen" I had to stand at attention exposing my face to them. One of them asked me what happened to my eye. At this point I realized that I was still bleeding. I told him that I was hit by one of his men. After a short glance at my identity document he told me to go to a physician, and I was free.

I went as fast as I could to several ophthalmologists, but found nobody in his office until I came to Dr. Rosenblatt, a well known specialist whose office was on Kochanowski Street. He only washed off the blood and looked at my eye. This was the only treatment I had, and the days that followed were so full of fear and anxiety that nobody thought of a physician.

Grave days were ahead of us, days that have entered the history of the Bukowina as the period of death sentences of tens

of thousands of Jews. It was a judgement decreed by a psychopath a couple of thousand kilometers away and executed by his servants who saw in him the salvation of the German nation by the slaughter of countless non-Germans.

What happened to the others arrested I do not know exactly. Over the years during and after the war I saw some of those who were taken to the National Palace with me. All I can say with certainty is that a number of them were killed, others put in jail, and still others finished in concentration camps where they died.

In the meantime the Romanians began to flood into the territories occupied by the Germans, glad to receive back the northern part of the Bukowina and the province of Bessarabia which had been grabbed and occupied by the Russians in 1940. The Romanian fascist government of Antonescu, the vassal ally of Hitler, gave a strong hand to the Germans in helping them to carry out the extermination of the Bukowinaer Jewry.

One morning an order was given out by the fascist government that Jews had to wear a yellow six-pointed star on their coats. Those caught without it would be shot. It was not that Jews were ashamed of being identified as such. It was the intent of offense and humiliation which hurt all. But it would not take long until the wearing of the yellow star of David would be a minor consideration.

In the middle of October an order was issued by the Romanian government under Hitler's dictate, that within twelve hours all Jews had to vacate their apartments and move into certain

designated quarters, a ghetto. People were advised to take only what they could carry with them. Those found in apartments not within the sections allowed would be summarily shot.

In writing this episode, the famous verses written by Virgil in Song Two of his Aeneid come to my mind. I think of the quotation by Aeneas when Queen Dido ordered him to tell her all about the destruction of Troy, "Infandum regina iubes renovare dolorem" ["You order me, oh Queen, to renew the unspeakable grief"].

No phrases, no quotations can be used to describe the despair, the crying, the running to and fro on the streets, some carrying their belongings, others trying to find for themselves a place to stay within the ghetto. Most of the apartments were so crowded that there was room to sleep only on the floor. After the twelve hours were over the ghetto streets were cordoned off with barricades of boxes and furniture and were guarded by police. Nobody was allowed to leave the ghetto. I found refuge with my sister Anna, who happened to live in the ghetto section.

After a certain number of days, toward the end of October, an order came that those in the ghetto had to prepare their luggage to consist of only what they could carry, for they were to be transferred by train to Transnistria, the region beyond the River Dniester, and "relocated" for work. Those found in apartments after the evacuation would be shot. The account of Virgil's description of the destruction of Troy is nothing in comparison with what followed in Czernowitz. People cried, they screamed, many wished they had not been born, or died earlier,

some committed suicide, and I myself got a number of vials of cocaine to end it all should despair become unbearable. Only one fact kept me from committing suicide: my sister Anna with her two children aged two and six depended on me to help them, especially because her husband in turn relied on her guidance and decisions.

Although I was told that all specialists could apply for permission to stay on, I decided not even to apply because of my sister and her family.

Since the ghetto was very large and as we found out later, the number of cattle wagons for transportation limited, the leaders of the evacuation divided the ghetto into sections to be evacuated on subsequent days. We were in the section to be transported first.

Because many people had left their belongings in their apartments in the hope that they would return here, they did not have even an extra dress or suit or coat. For this reason they went from house to house and apartment to apartment to ask for suits, coats, and dresses to wear or to take with them. These people who always lived in the section which became the ghetto gave away a lot of things so that they should not fall into the class of the hyenas and wolves about to chase and to murder us.

A friend of mine for whom I had done more favors than he deserved nearly forced me to accept his gift of a pair of knickerbockers. I could have gotten many other things from people who were leaving nearly everything behind because they were not allowed, nor could they carry, any more. But I was

loaded to the hilt, and could not take even what I had and needed.

While I was waiting for the day of deportation, a Romanian boyhood friend from my neighborhood in Suczawa, Adicu, dropped into the ghetto to say goodbye. He kissed me, thinking it was the last time he would see me alive. When he expressed this thought to me before leaving I told him in his Romanian mother tongue, "Mendel [my nickname] may die, but he will not perish." I meant that before I would die I would put up a hell of a fight. I offered him the thing which had bound us together as youngsters, my sweet violin. He refused to take it because he was afraid his colleagues might think he was accepting bribes from Jews.

From him I found out that all Jews including my parents had been deported from Suczawa some time before to the concentration camp that was waiting for us. When I asked him whether he was sure that this fate had happened to my parents, he promised me to call Suczawa by phone and let me know the following day. I told him that I could not believe that these torturers would do this to my parents because it was known in that little town that my mother had breast cancer, diabetes and severe arthritis, and my father advanced prostate cancer.

My father had served in the Austrian army as a youth and had fought as an Austrian soldier in World War I, in which he had been seriously wounded. The Romanians to whom the Bukowina was given after the war refused to give him a pension to which he was entitled, because he had fought against them. And now his

destiny was that the very people, the Austrians and Germans, for whom he had fought in the war should hand out to him the death sentence.

The next day I learned from Adicu that my parents had indeed been evacuated. Though stunned, I could not afford the luxury of grief. This information was another reason not to apply to remain as a specialist in Czernowitz. I thought I could help my parents in the camp and therefore I wanted to be in the first transport. I began, what I did not know then, my greatest battle for survival.

The day of departure came. It was a beautiful, warm and sunny day at the end of October. It would be beyond my ability to describe the sad uncertainties in the scenes we saw and were part of. Not only were the adults loaded down with their bare essentials, but children had to do their share by carrying rucksacks, many of which were improvised in the last minute.

The line of people was at least one and a half miles long and moved quite slowly. Only when we arrived at the railroad station did we find out that we were to be loaded into cattle cars without even a bench around the walls of the car. No definite number of people was determined for each car, but these scoundrels jammed and packed us so tightly that we were not able to move.

I do not recall how long it took us to get on the moving train after we left the ghetto. After half an hour in the cattle car I felt a sting in the back of my neck. When I touched the spot with my finger I recognized that it was a louse. I

remembered these parasites from World War I -- when my father fought for Hitler's superhumans.

This parasite brought back memories of the time we were separated from our father while he was fighting in the war and the time my mother could not obtain support to which she was entitled from the Austrian government because of the occupation of our town by the Russians. Under those circumstances my mother was glad if she could provide a piece of bread for her six children, but she could not cope with all the other needs, such as keeping us clean too.

Our mother was most of the time out of the house doing business -- buying and selling petroleum, soap, etc. We children, aged several months to twelve years, were left to ourselves, and cleanliness, especially for two boys, became strictly secondary. This is the way it was, and now in the cattle car I remembered these parasites. I found out later that the same cars had been used for deporting into the camps of Transnistria people from all the other cities of the Bukowina, and that they were the sources of the parasites.

The lice were carried by the deportees into the various camps, and epidemics and typhus broke out in every camp. A great majority of the deportees who contracted typhus died of it. Only the strongest survived. Lack of drugs and want of cleanliness hastened the spread of epidemics, which were really an intentional technique of homicide and genocide.

I remember well that we traveled by train the whole night and arrived at our destination the next morning. We were ordered

to leave the filthy cars and were gathered at the railroad station of a little town, Ataki. From here we were marched to a Sammellager [collecting camp], not far from the River Dniester, through which thousands of people from all cities of the Bukowina had gone, after short waiting periods of a couple of days in Ataki. The waiting was necessary to permit these bandits to give priority to those who had been waiting for several days. What surprises me to this day was the confidence everybody had, including myself, that on the other side of the Dniester shelter would be found and that one would survive. For 80 percent of us it was only an illusion, a hopeful but empty dream.

I tried to reach the other side of the Dniester as soon as possible to find my parents. It was two days before it was our turn to cross the river by an improvised ferry. Before crossing I was thoroughly searched by some lieutenant using a walking cane. He took every document away from me. When he grabbed my diploma of my maturity examination I begged him to leave that to me, but he refused. At that point he asked, "What is your profession?" When I answered, "I am a doctor of chemistry," he answered, "You were." Then I retorted, "What I have in my head nothing but death can take away from me." At this point he lifted his cane and was ready to strike me; mysteriously and miraculously he suddenly changed his mind and let his hand go slowly down.

The territory east of the Dniester was given to the Romanians as a sphere of influence by the Germans after they took it with almost no resistance from the Russians. All the Jews

there were slaughtered by the Germans within eight days. The Romanians called this territory, the gift from Hitler, Transnistria. Although the civil administration was left to the Romanians, every city, town and village of strategic importance had a German Kommandantur. The size of the Kommandantur depended entirely on the localities and their strategic significance. The Romanians thought that they could retain that territory if the war should end in Hitler's favor. If Hitler had won the war, the Romanians would never have been allowed to keep that territory. At best they would have been poor sharecroppers.

The Romanians ran their concentration camps in Transnistria differently from the way the Germans did. There were no massacres, no organized slaughters. Only in Romania proper the legionnaires, an illegally organized group of murderers and criminals, with the tacit consent of the military and the government, planned and executed mass murders of Jews. It is known all over the world how the legionnaires rounded up about 150 Jews one night in Bucharest, carried them by trucks to the cattle slaughterhouse and killed them one by one. Then they ran cattle hooks into their necks and hanged them up like cattle. These same murderers killed Nicolai Yorga, the greatest historian Romania ever had, in spite of the fact that he was a well-known anti-Semite. Only the leaders of the legionnaires know the reason for Yorga's murder.

In Transnistria the Romanians chased the deportees by foot in convoys from one concentration camp to another. The result was that the old, the sick, the weak, and many women and children

died because of exhaustion, hunger and cold. Once the inmates arrived in the concentration camps, the Romanians let hunger, cold, filth and especially disease take over. These factors eliminated the inmates quickly and economically.

The inmates, who were allowed to bring with them whatever they could carry to the concentration camps, could survive for a while if they had valuables, furs and household goods. Since Transnistria was in the Ukraine, the inmates first sold or exchanged things to the Ukrainians for food. These exchanges were made though a barbed-wire fence separating the parties. Of course the owners of the food took advantage of these unfortunate people and squeezed from them as much as they could. In fact, it often happened that the Ukrainians pretended to examine the merchandise and then ran away without giving anything to the inmates. Sometimes they would snatch the merchandise and run away. One can easily imagine the despair of the deportees when such things happened. When the small things of the inmates were exhausted, the more valuable things were offered for sale for money in order to buy food. And when everything was gone, they just had to wait for death to liberate them.

Before crossing the Dniester we had been told that on the other side of the river soldiers and gendarmes were waiting for deportees to take them on foot to a big collecting camp and, after 24 hours, to chase them further to some other camps. We were also told that many had died in that collecting camp and the dead bodies were simply thrown in nearby open ditches. To escape that collecting camp was a good fortune for some.

The first leg of the uncertain journey was the Ukrainian city Mogilev, which lay across from the city Ataki. We were lucky because when we reached the other shore of the river there was nobody to chase us to the collecting camp. I took it as a good omen. We carried our few things from the shore and put them in a non-conspicuous place. A dental technician, Fuhrer, and I searched for a place to bring our things and stay overnight.

Mogilev had been bombed out by the Germans, and only a few houses and buildings were intact. In the neighborhood of the Jewish community, full of deportees, I saw a big empty room which had no windows but a large eight-foot-tall iron double door. This room must have served as a storeroom for some merchandise. We decided to bring our relatives and a few friends to that place and take our chances. The luxury of that room was that it had a floor of boards and cement or clay.

Unobserved we returned with our luggage and relatives and after unloading our things in that room I went to the Jewish community headed by a Russian Jew and was able to borrow a giant lock, by leaving my watch as a guarantee and giving a gift to the lender. The lock fit exactly the latch of that giant door to our temporary refuge.

The Romanian gendarmes and Germans were hunting for Jews everywhere to form convoys and to chase them to camps located farther away. The hunted hid themselves wherever possible in order to stay on in Mogilev. If caught, they bribed the hunters with jewelry or other valuable things if they possessed any. These raids were organized regularly, firstly because the

gendarmes had the order to do it, and secondly it was a good way for them to get rich. If the deportees had nothing to offer they were taken to the collecting center and subsequently chased in a convoy to another camp.

Several days later the gendarmes would catch the same victims again and transactions went on until nothing was left to bribe with, and finally they were caught and sent to other camps where most of them died of cold and hunger. Many times the gendarmes turned to plain extortions. A small group of them would decide to make raids without any order from their superiors. After getting their bribes from those who had anything to give, they freed them and also those who gave them nothing because there were no convoys in which to chase them to distant starvation camps.

Pretty soon these extortions came to the ears of the head of the gendarmerie and the prefect (same as Italian prefetto) of Mogilev. Greed and shamelessness soon allowed them to get in touch with some representatives of the camp; an agreement was worked out whereby permits to stay in Mogilev would be issued on the basis of gifts made to them.

An active trade began now, giving permits in exchange for jewelry, fur coats or foreign currencies. That a very limited number of Jewish intermediaries got their shares from these transactions is beyond any doubt. Permits were issued by both the prefect and commander of the gendarmerie. Soon a competition between these two developed, leading to enmity, for which the deportees had to suffer.

So an order was issued that no permit to stay in Mogilev or anywhere else in Transnistria was valid unless it had the signatures of both the prefect and the commander of the gendarmerie. This meant that all existing permits had to be reissued and that additional briberies were required for these aristocrats. These transactions were carried out by Jewish intermediaries later called "capos."

Soldiers and gendarmes, however, continued their extortions on less rich people with smaller gains, which occasionally led to murder by these brutes. The following incident will illustrate the above assertion. One of these legally armed bandits demanded of a young deportee, whom he escorted to a camp, his only boots, which he was wearing. When he refused to give up his boots, the gendarme marched him behind the barracks, shot him and took away his boots.

In this account the chronology of events must occasionally be interrupted for the sake of clarity because the stories intertwine. Let us return to the giant lock and the iron double door. I put the lock on the outside to deceive the raiders, who would think that state property was there in that room, which must not be opened.

My main thought now was to look for my parents. I met people from my hometown who told me that my parents had been seen in the collecting camp. After putting the lock on the gate Anna and I went there, taking the risk of being caught and put in the collecting camp. When we got there, in entering the camp there was no problem, only when leaving it. We looked on every floor

and finally found father. He was so weak he could hardly walk. He had a slow shuffling gait.

Because of his prostate cancer, a urinary drainage tube had been inserted into him several months before, and during the chase the tube had fallen out. He was in a terribly pitiful and painful, critical condition aggravated by diarrhea which no drug would stop. He had brought with him some drugs from home for that purpose. When we asked him where mother was, he told us that since he was not able to walk, they chased her with another large group of deportees to another camp, on foot of course.

My sister and I told him that we would try to take him out of this camp the following day. But events did not allow that. The following day I was informed by a cousin in the collecting camp that father had died during the night. The details of his death I prefer to take with me to my grave. They are too horrible, too painful, for me to share with the reader or anybody.

In analyzing now the situation as it existed then I must say that it would have been impossible for me to have taken my father from that camp. Because of his illness and complete disability and also because of his loss of control of his bowels and urinary tract, he should have been in a hospital, where he would have died with dignity.

I was able to get his body out of that camp and put it on a horse-drawn cart and to take it to a Jewish cemetery in Mogilev. There were only about six men to go with me. With only a simple ceremony we buried this good man, whose life had ended so

tragically. There were not enough people to meet the Jewish requirement for the burial ceremony, but just the same I said for him the traditional Jewish prayer.

Fear of coming uncertainties every minute made us soon forget our father, but the fate of my mother remained very much on my mind. Still, I was unable to do anything. My main job in the morning was to lock the iron double gate with that big lock and then to go around to find out from other people which camp of the many in Transnistria was the least dreadful and where I could use my skills effectively for survival. Usually I left as quickly as possible after everybody in that room had done all necessary things. I opened the lock only after the raids were over for the day. The brutes never raided twice a day.

Most of the time I was lucky not to be caught by the raiders. During the raids I was always outside because I had to put on the lock. I exposed myself to all this for the sake of the children. Had I been caught by the raiders I think that my savoir faire, which worked most of the time, would have brought me through again. I was lucky to have retained by mere chance an identity card containing a picture of me as a first lieutenant in the Health Division of the Romanian army. This identity card worked miracles in several tight situations. I used this with my picture as a first lieutenant very carefully.

I was lucky not to have used it at wrong times, because it could have been confiscated. About a week after my arrival in Mogilev I was caught, on one of my investigative trips, by a group of soldiers. They set me to work at clearing bricks and

debris from a certain quarter of the town. I really did not mind carrying bricks on my shoulders after I saw a number of intellectuals doing the same thing. A few of them were emaciated because of starvation. Typhus began to spread among the deportees, and every day we kept hearing about the deaths of friends, acquaintances and relatives.

It was impossible to keep clean no matter how hard people tried. The living and sleeping spaces were so crowded that while at first if only one of the 40 people living in the room with me had lice, in no time all of us had them. We all put up a continuous and terrible fight with these parasites, but we did not succeed in getting rid of them completely; we could only diminish them. A former classmate of mine in Suczawa, Nuchim Perlmutter, an instructor of history in high school, who was in a nearby camp, after many unsuccessful attempts to get rid of the parasites gave up and was literally bled to death by the lice. Fortunately, not all the lice were carriers of the typhus germ; otherwise only a few would have escaped death.

While carrying bricks I observed and heard the commander of this cleanup outfit talking to a lieutenant colonel.

The colonel said, "I need a specialist for an alcohol factory ten kilometers from Mogilev."

Without hesitation I threw down the bricks, approached the two men, and said, "I am a specialist in the production of alcohol."

CHAPTER IX

ALCOHOL "SPECIALIST"

Both men became interested. They told me to go to a certain point of the camp the next morning, where a gendarme would be waiting for me. Immediately I took advantage of the situation and told them, "I need a document to show the raiders in case I am caught by them."

The colonel took me to his office where his secretary made out such a life-saving document for me and the seven members of my family. For such a piece of paper many had paid gold. I made a serious mistake by including two certain people in that document. Had I not included them, I would have been spared later on the horrors of a punitive concentration camp and would not have lost two diamond rings.

With this document in my hands I returned, without fear of being caught by raiders, to my refuge and began to make plans for the following day. My only apprehension was that since I knew nothing about machines, the distillery that needed a specialist might have machine troubles. Although I could have kept the iron gates of our room open now, I did not do so because with us were about 32 other people who could and would have been taken away by the raiders. Caution was continued for all the time I was part of that group.

The following day at the established time I met the gendarme at the designated place. He drove me to the director of the

distillery, by the name of Storosczuk, a Russian collaborator of the Germans. Storosczuk had been a supervisor of a distribution center for vegetables during spring, summer and fall, and the pickling of cabbage, carrots and cucumbers during the winter for many years. During a conversation of half an hour we decided to go to the distillery immediately. It was in the village of Bronitza, a health resort for Russians. We left in a wagon with two horses. When we arrived at the distillery, we were met by the chief engineer, a fairly young man, by the name of Komarinski. He showed us around the factory. It appeared to me that the factory was in perfect shape and that we could start producing alcohol.

Finally Komarinski told me with a sarcastic smile that everything was in perfect order in the distillery, they had in stock large quantities of molasses, sugar beets, and very importantly, coal. They could begin to produce alcohol if they had yeast to start the fermentation of the molasses.

Before retreating the Russians had drained all mashes in the fermentation tanks, knowing that lack of yeast would make it impossible to produce alcohol, at least for a while. The German war machinery needed alcohol very badly as an additive for fuel in Diesel motors.

The task Storosczuk gave me was to prepare yeast. The sad part was the attitude of Komarinski, the newly created chief engineer, who used to be a technician in the distillery before the war, and who thought it natural for me to prepare a "living thing," if it were true that I was a specialist as I claimed.

While I could understand how Storosczuk, who was an uneducated man, would expect me to prepare yeast, Komarinski showed bottomless unforgivable ignorance and incompetence although he was educated in the communist system. The well-established biological fact that "omnia viva ex ovo" did not seem to have reached the latter. In plain language, they wanted me to produce a living thing. The lack of understanding of what it was all about explains why Engineer Komarinski had told Director Storosczuk that he needed a specialist for alcohol production and why the director transmitted this to the military responsible for the concentration camps.

I did not even try to tell them that it was impossible to prepare yeast as it would be to produce a dog or a cat without a male and a female animal. In their eyes, if I could not prepare yeast, then I could not claim to be a specialist. While I was not too much concerned about what the two Russians might think, I was afraid of the colonel who had given me that document prohibiting my removal from Mogilev.

I despaired. I knew that if I did not produce yeast by some means I would be deported to some camp where death was a certainty. I was most concerned, however, about my sister's two children. As at many other times in my life, despair again stimulated ideas. First I thought of grapes. But I had to drop this thought quickly because in that part of Russia one could not obtain grapes even in the right time of the year because of very limited transportation. Now it was November, past the grape season, and the country in the midst of a war, which had begun

with the Russian army abandoning the front lines and deserting en masse. The constant flow of these Russian deserters filling the roads would have made it impossible to send any vehicle even the shortest distance around Mogilev to look for grapes. In addition, German, Italian, Romanian and Hungarian troops were in constant movement in all direction, and would have made a search for grapes unthinkable.

In my mental torture I considered all kinds of possibilities, which were successively discarded until I thought of apples. It was just a blind guess. I told Storosczuk that I needed two unwashed apples, just as they came from the trees. He took me to the supervisor of fruits in that village, who led us to the storage cellar of apples. I had not had an apple for many a moon and would have stolen at least one, but my mind was on survival. In the cellar I picked two apples which appeared to be unwashed and returned to the distillery.

What was the line of reasoning to think of grapes first? I observed once, several years before, how an Italian peasant prepared wine in his home. He dumped the harvested grapes into a barrel without washing them. Then he took off his shoes and socks, rolled up the legs of his trousers, and stepped into the barrel. He then began to tramp on the grapes until he thought that all the juice had been squeezed out. After that he covered the barrel with a cheesecloth and let it stand, as I was told, for three weeks. The son of the peasant, whom I tutored privately, brought me a bottle of the wine his father had prepared. The wine was good, although a little turbid. The son

filled me in on the rest of the wine-making operation. His father drained the wine, at the end of the fermentation process, into containers also covered with several layers of cheesecloth to retain all bigger particles during the filtration and let the fermented mash stand in the containers for another two weeks during which the fermentation and clearing by sedimentation continued. I never again thought of the home type of wine-making until now.

In my desperate situation, the above episode came suddenly back into my mind. I remembered distinctly that the Italian home wine maker added nothing to the barrel after squeezing out the juice from the grapes. I knew that without yeast, fermentation cannot take place. Therefore the yeast must have been either on or in the grapes. Since, however, grapes were unavailable, I asked myself whether the same could be obtained with apples. Having no alternative, I decided to try it with the two apples.

After I returned to the distillery with the two apples, I asked to go to the laboratory to make my trial experiment -- for my life! The laboratory was cold, as it is in a Russian November, and I asked that it be heated because the experiment had to take place at 30°C at least. While wood was burning in the brick stove, I began my preparations.

I cleaned a mortar and a pestle, removed the stems from the apples, and prepared a two-percent solution of some glucose I found in the laboratory. I began to triturate the apples with the skin in the mortar with the pestle until a homogenous pulp resulted. Then I covered the pulp with the glucose solution and

let the preparation and fate determine whether I was "to be or not to be" deported to an annihilation camp. I put the preparation close to the stove and covered the mortar with a glass to prevent dust and dirt from falling into the pulp. The presence or absence of yeast cells on or in the apples would be determined in a matter of several hours.

Such a fermentation attempt, if positive, should begin to produce carbon dioxide bubbles after six hours. When after six and seven hours no sign of fermentation appeared, the gloom and discouragement inside me was nearly intolerable. I did not move from the laboratory but anxiously watched the surface of the glucose solution covering the apple pulp, while Storosczuk and Komarinski had a good time in the latter's apartment, drinking and eating.

My despair reached its apogee after about seven hours and forty minutes when still no bubbles were visible. But after about fifteen more minutes the life-saving bubbles began to appear and my hopes grew effervescent. My assumption about the presence of yeast cells on or in the apples was correct. The explanation for the tardiness of the bubble formation was the low temperature in the laboratory, as I realized later.

I sent a worker to get Storosczuk and he came with Komarinski. I told them everything and showed them the dancing carbonation on the surface of the solution. Even Komarinski understood that in a short time the distillery could go full blast and that the production of the first tank of alcohol was only a few weeks away. Of course the yeast in the mortar was not

of the type used in distilleries but a so-called wild-type yeast. To prepare a culture of pure yeast from it was not a serious problem. The single, or more precisely chief, difference between a wild yeast and a proper type of yeast was a lower yield in alcohol, especially in the beginning. Months later I was provided with a microscope brought from Romania. It enabled me to prepare a pure yeast culture which gave a normal yield, higher than that obtained with the wild yeast.

I went back with Storosczuk to Mogilev. On the way he told me about the poor quality of life in Russia and how he was more hopeful for a better one. Since he was the director, I indicated that only he could make it possible for me and my close family to come out and live in Bronitza while working in the distillery. He was agreeable to this but hinted that he would like to improve his lot as soon as possible.

He said, "I would like to have some better clothes for my wife and daughter."

I understood he wanted money.

Since I came back late that night, Anna had thought that she would never see me alive again.

The following day I reported to the lieutenant colonel. He was very happy with my report and took me in his car to Bronitza to verify my assertions. The fermentation by now was a wild dancing carbonation, as it should have been, and from there Komarinski could take over. The colonel wanted me to move to Bronitza as soon as the documents were made. To take a number of people out of the camp required a lot of red tape, but the

colonel thought I was a magician and so did all the workers in the factory who were now officially hired for the various jobs. The colonel wanted to act fast to prevent the raiders from deporting me to some annihilation camp.

After we returned to Mogilev I went to Storosczuk to report about my second visit with the colonel. Now Storosczuk became quite frank and told me that many Russian collaborators had become rich by doing favors to deportees who paid them in gold, clothes, and furs. I therefore told him that I would try to find some people willing to pay for their transfer to Bronitza where there would be crowded conditions but a chance for survival. But without the approval of the colonel this would not be possible, and Storosczuk knew it.

Two days later I was called to the colonel who was about to get the approval for the transfer of myself and my family to Bronitza.

Daringly I told him, "To keep the factory running I need specialists not available in the village." I pointed out that the specialists I needed were a malt maker, a refiner of crude alcohol, an agronomist, several good mechanics, etc. To have these specialists come to Bronitza, I claimed, their families would have to come too; otherwise they would refuse to move without them. The colonel accepted anything I said.

I had to assign to each head of a family his specific function or specialty. This was not difficult. To ascribe to people specialties which they had never had previously was not difficult before the colonel, but the director of the distillery,

who had to give to each family food rations was harder to satisfy. The colonel told me to go back to the camp, select the people, and specify the number in each family and their specialty.

When I returned to Storosczuk and reported about my agreement with the colonel, he (Storosczuk) told me that no more than 25 people could be housed in the factory. I began my unpleasant job of selecting people who had money to be given to the director. It did not take long until I had a number of people willing to give some money, but indeed I needed a few specialists to make my word good. The actual specialists would not have to contribute anything to Storosczuk. There were more specialists than contributors, though every family head was one or the other.

It took several days to arrange the matter. To each name, as head of a family, a specialty required by the authorities and factory was assigned. Many of these specialties attributed to the people on the list were fabricated, of course. One outstanding falsehood was when I gave to a waiter the craft of malt maker and to a lawyer, the friend who had given me the pair of knickerbockers, the position of an agronomist. Neither contributed anything to Storosczuk.

When I was ready with my list, there were 35 persons besides me. I went to Storosczuk with the collected money but pointed out to him that we were 35 and not 25 persons as he suggested. Since he had already accepted the money, he had to add another

place as living quarters, with facilities to heat the place and to cook a little.

Initially he figured that a kitchen and two small rooms would suffice for 25 persons. So he told me that he would arrange to have a hearth for the rest of the colony in an additional room. He obtained that room by reducing the office space.

Storosczuk told me that as soon as he had made arrangements, he would notify me of the day to move with the group to Bronitza. Every family head in the group received papers to the effect that he could not be removed by the raiders.

Several days later I received word that the following day we should go to Bronitza. The night before our transport we all gathered in a big room of some official building used by the Russian-German collaborators to spend the night. It was toward the end of November when my group made this move, the weather being very cold during the night and pleasantly warm during the day. Of course everyone slept on the floor, but it was parquet, clean and, nicest of all, warm.

Early next morning a wagon and two horses came to take us to Bronitza. The luggage and the five children were loaded on the wagon. We grownups walked on each side and behind the wagon. It was a pleasant day, and after two hours we arrived in Bronitza.

The first discontent among us arose when we came to deciding who was going to stay in which location. Those who paid wanted their choice. The others claimed to be specialists and wanted their say in the matter. In the house with the two rooms and the

very small kitchen 22 agreed to stay, while at the other location 14 remained. We all agreed on our permanent places to sleep on the clay floor except that one short couple decided to sleep on the table, the single piece of furniture. With time I began to press Storosczuk for beds. The first bed was for me, but I gave it to Anna, her husband and the two children. As time went on we finally all succeeded in obtaining one sort or another of plank-beds so that we did not have to sleep on the clay floor.

The biggest problem was to get fuel for keeping us warm, and wood for the kitchen to cook whatever little there was to cook. Near the entrance to the two rooms was the door of the brick stove, which was located so that both rooms were heated by it. The one-room place had a combination stove for heating and cooking. At the beginning Storosczuk gave us coal, but when there was an order from the authorities not to give us fuel, Komarinski saw to it that we did not get it, although he took plenty for himself.

I thought of a trick that worked for a while. After dark I would go into the factory yard and distract the guard by conversation, when he was quite far from the coal bin. While I engaged him in conversation, others filled up containers with coal and carried them to our living quarters.

We all knew that survival depended on fighting the Russian winter by trying to find fuel for the stove. Thousands of deportees lay down in the evening in their unheated refuges and covered themselves as well as they could, but the following morning they were found frozen to death. While the food

rationing given by Storosczuk was far from sufficient, one could survive if the cold did not gain the upper hand. The most important thing was the survival of the first Russian winter, and it is my great satisfaction that everybody in my group did survive.

The fate of my mother was very much on our minds. Wherever and whenever I saw an opportunity I inquired about her or transmitted word to acquaintances in other camps to let me know if they had heard anything about her. Since all my inquiries and searches resulted in nothing, I assumed that she was no longer alive. Today I know that if some people had known about her end, they would not have had the heart to tell me. One thing I found out was that she was chased in a convoy on foot to the concentration camp in Djurin, about 150 kilometers from Mogilev. I looked for an opportunity to make a trip there, but none could be unearthed.

During a lull in my work at the distillery I went to Mogilev and by chance I found out that a truck was about to leave for Djurin. In a short time I arranged for the German truck driver to take me along for some compensation, I do not remember what. It was December 12, 1941. This was the day rumors spread that America had declared war on Japan and Germany. We knew nothing about Pearl Harbor or any other reasons for the declaration of war by the U.S.

The truck arrived late in the afternoon in Djurin. I got off the truck close to the camp and went straight to the capo to find out whether he knew about my mother. He knew nothing. Most

of the inmates were from different places of the Bukowina and did not know her. I met a few people from Suczawa, and they assured me that they had no idea what had happened to her and that she was not in the Djurin camp. I finally ran into a man a little younger than I, who knew my mother very well and who used to be our next-door neighbor in Suczawa, by the name of Rosenberg. He also told me that he had not seen her.

Since it got dark I looked for a place to spend the night somewhere. By chance I ran into a fraternity brother of mine by the name of Zloczower. As students we had belonged to the same fraternity in Czernowitz, and he offered to share his sleeping cot with me for that night. He was always a sweet, charming and good-hearted person, a lawyer by profession. In the camp he was supported by a younger brother who previously was a dental technician but who in the camp became a dentist and worked for the inmates, who paid whatever they could, so that the Zloczowers were able to stick it out.

The following morning I got ready to hitchhike back to Mogilev. On my way I put my hand into my jacket pocket and felt a paper which I had not put there. I took it out and saw my name written on it. As I unfolded and read it, my knees became rubbery. It contained a description of the death of my mother.

It said, "The first day on which we were chased in the convoy to Djurin, it was cold and it rained unceasingly. The gendarmes chased us mercilessly and did not allow anybody to rest. Our clothes were soaked wet from the rain. Suddenly I saw your mother collapse; when I tried to help her, she was dead.

All the gendarmes allowed me to do was to put her body on the side of the road so that people would not trample over it. I could not bring myself to the point to tell you this myself." There was no signature. I suspected that the note was written by our neighbor Rosenberg, who knew how deeply we loved our mother.

Although shocked beyond description about the way mother died, I had suspected it since the last time I had talked to my father. I remembered when half jokingly, half seriously, she used to say to us children, when she could not fulfill some of our desires and we showed disappointment, "Are you going to put a golden tombstone on my grave?" I could not even say a prayer, as I did at my father's grave, because I did not even know what became of her body.

I was able to get a ride in a car driven by two German soldiers, to whom I gave some old gold coins I happened to have with me. Before Mogilev, they let me out of the car because they were afraid of being seen giving a ride to a camp inmate. In Bronitza, with a heavy heart, I told Anna what had happened to our mother. She was not surprised; still she was dissolved in tears.

Nobody in our group of 35 persons except me contracted typhus, for I was the only one who worked with and came into contact with lice-ridden people in the laboratory. Many of them were the carriers of typhus, and were already immune to it.

I contracted typhus in January 1942 and had the privilege of getting a small but unheated room, which had been the first-aid station under the Russians. Anna was a master in feeding us but

she was a poor mattress maker. She brought from the place where we lived everything she could spare to make a comfortable place for me to lie, but the bed proved to be the most miserable I ever slept on. Whichever way I turned, my pelvis was always lower than my legs and shoulders. This position worsened my misery and seemed to weaken me more than the disease itself. Anna tried many times to rearrange the rags on which I was lying, but it was in vain.

The high fever which is characteristic for typhus made me occasionally delirious for a short time, but otherwise I was always alert and remember to this day everything that went on. The camphor injections the physician put in my upper legs were very painful and made me scream every time. A small hard lump developed in my left leg, and several years later a biopsy was made to determine whether it was malignant, but it was not.

Everybody in the group was scared because they knew that should I die, as tens of thousands had died, all of them would be evacuated from the distillery, and because it was still at the very beginning of the Russian winter, they would perish.

In my group there was a young and inexperienced physician who did not know the first thing about treatment of typhus. After consulting with some other physicians from a nearby concentration camp, he treated me with camphor injections which were obtained with great difficulties in Mogilev and did not do anything against the disease. The lack of drugs and knowledge of how to treat typhus could be helped by the physician now. The

whole sad situation was the fault of the criminals who chased us there to die under the most inhumane conditions.

During my ninth day of illness the Russian specialist of alcohol distillation, Kolesnik, who lived in the territory of the distillery, came to see me. He was an elderly person who preferred living under the czar because he was very religious and was free to go to church. Under communism he could not do so and therefore abhorred the communist rulers. Now under enemy occupation he was happy again because he had freedom of worship.

During my conversation with Kolesnik something happened that scared Anna terribly. Because in my extreme weakness I exerted strenuous effort to converse with the man, my lower jaw began to chatter very strongly, beyond my control. To hide this sign of my disease, Anna extended her hand, put it under my chin, and held it there to avoid the chattering. She did that, she told me later, in the hope that Kolesnik would be unaware of the chattering, because she was afraid he would spread the rumor that my disease could spread and infect the villagers, who might demand my removal from the factory. But, as time confirmed, her fear was unfounded.

Anna faithfully nursed me until I gained enough strength to stand on my feet again. After the crisis on the 14th day of my typhus, there seemed to be for one night the onset of a complication, but the following day the fever disappeared for good. I had become skin and bone, but my recovery eased the tension among the people in my group.

Since the distillery kept on working full blast, all the raw materials for making alcohol were used up, and the coal supply reached an end also. The factory stopped working in spite of Storosczuk's desperate efforts to obtain more raw materials such as molasses and sugar beets and, more importantly, coal.

During the months when the factory was in production, everybody in the compound received food rations, and although they were by far not sufficient, we had a roof over our heads, and our rooms were warm. In order to supplement food, some of those who had things to sell traded with the villagers for groceries. The trading partners could accept or refuse the deals. There was no barbed-wire to separate them. Others received money from relatives in Romania, who had not been deported, with which they could buy food from the villagers. Still others bought alcohol from the super-thief of alcohol Komarinski, left the factory at their own risk against my advice, and went to Mogilev where they sold the booze with some profit. Word got around that the people of the compound in Bronitza were trading with Mogilev. The consequences of this independent and competitive trading showed up at a later date.

The people whose lives I had saved listened to me at the beginning, but soon they went their own ways, acting independently. Of course I was not happy about it then, but today I realize that everybody tried to improve his own lot by taking risks without hesitating, even when others were put into danger.

When Komarinski found out what the people in my compound did with the alcohol he sold them, he decided to do the same by taking it himself to Mogilev to make more money. He was an insatiable super-thief. One day he was caught by the gendarmes, and it cost him plenty to buy himself out of jail.

Komarinski, who had never attended a university, was trained by the Russians to work in an alcohol factory. In order to improve his outlook for advancement, he had married a much older woman, a divorcée with two big boys 14 and 16 years old. She was a member of the communist party. Komarinski's wife kept herself behind the scene during the German-Romanian occupation, to avoid clashes with the villagers such as occurred before the war. She tried to give the villagers no cause to denounce her to the occupation forces. Had the Germans or the Romanians known that she was a member of the communist party, they certainly would have killed her as they did other members. It turned out that Komarinski's wife gained more by the marriage than he did.

With regard to the living together of 23 people in such a small space, I must say that Anna did wonders in smoothing out differences which arose unfortunately too often. She was a diplomat in the truest sense of the word. There were in our living quarters nine families, each consisting of at least two, while Anna's consisted of four persons. Clashes occurred, which under ordinary circumstances would never have happened. The kitchen was small and so was the cooking range. To date it is a puzzle to me how Anna managed to keep those in charge of cooking in peaceful spirits. On the very first day I put Anna in charge

of the kitchen and she did beautifully in avoiding or diminishing clashes among the women.

The clashes which took place because of the impossibly crowded conditions led to one case of switching wives and husbands, which otherwise would not have occurred. One of the switching couples separated several years after the war, but the second has remained together. I have asked myself many times whether the woman whose marriage lasted has ever regretted initiating the switch.

As to the feeding of my inner circle, Anna was a magician. She was able to make a meal out of nothing. When she prepared the first soup from sugar beets that I brought from the factory, I could not eat it after tasting it, in spite of my hunger. But the second time she managed to do so well that I kept on bringing sugar beets. Of course I was not supposed to do that, but the greedy Komarinski closed an eye and did not object.

While the distillery was working, I got my share of alcohol by collecting the leftovers of samples brought into the laboratory for analysis. But Komarinski saw to it that I did not get one milliliter of alcohol in spite of my contribution to the distillery. When I wanted to buy some of the alcohol stolen by him to resell it, he refused. He saw in me a competitor, and it was very hard for me not to blow my top. Anna prevailed and kept me from denouncing him and his thefts to the colonel. If I had talked to Storosczuk about not getting my share of alcohol, it would not have done any good because he himself depended on the handouts of alcohol by Komarinski. Komarinski had the advantage

of living in the territory of the distillery, while Storosczuk lived in Mogilev. For this reason Komarinski was put in charge by the civil authorities of the occupying forces.

One day Komarinski's wife took sick and the physician who was in my group wanted to make a urine albumin determination, which calls for acetic acid. When Komarinski asked me for some acetic acid, I told him that there was none in the laboratory but that dilute sulfuric acid would be as effective as acetic acid. There was no other acid in the laboratory. I tried to explain to Komarinski the function of the acid in that test but neither he nor the physician would pay any attention to my suggestion. Both Komarinski and the physician took the attitude that I was responsible for the lack of acetic acid in the laboratory.

During my work in the laboratory I did not receive supplies of chemicals even to the value of a cent. For my tests I used the chemicals I had, and if I could not prepare other chemicals needed, I just did not perform the tests. The control tests were very superficial, and I did not worry about the tests too much. After all, the alcohol was for our enemies.

In all my conversations with Komarinski he never called me by my title of doctor because he did not want to accept the fact that I had a doctorate in chemistry. He challenged me now to prove to him this title. This challenge reminded me of the task to prepare yeast for him to begin the production of alcohol. Therefore I must prove my degree by producing acetic acid. I knew that there was no ordinary way of preparing it because of

lack of equipment. Therefore I used a trick for both "scientists," Komarinski and the physician.

I took sodium acetate, dissolved it in water and mixed it with a very dilute solution of sulfuric acid. In the reaction of these reagents acetic acid is set free, the odor of which is very discernible. Had I a condenser, I would have distilled the solution, and the acetic acid would have distilled first because its boiling point is lower than that of sulfuric acid. As a result, the solution obtained contained both acetic and dilute sulfuric acids. I gave the solution to Komarinski to smell and he was very satisfied since he smelled acetic acid, the reagent he wanted. He began that day to call me doctor. The albumin test was negative and stayed so on daily testing for several weeks. When I later obtained some pure acetic acid for the same test, it remained negative.

In spite of great efforts by all the authorities, new raw materials were not supplied, and the factory stopped working until the reoccupation of the territory by the Russian army. Immediately the distribution of the food rationing also stopped, even for me.

CHAPTER X

TRICKS AND TRADE

One day I was told that a nearby town, Yampol, about 40 kilometers from Bronitza, was under the jurisdiction of Romanians, Italians and Germans. Therefore I decided to go there, breaking the imposed law on deportees not to leave their camps or compounds on the penalty of being shot on the spot if caught. On my way to Yampol I soon found a man driving a wagon with two horses to Yampol and for a couple of German occupation marks I got a ride directly to the commander of the Italian garrison, a major by the name of Prada from Milano. It did not take me long to enlist all his sympathy by telling him my story. Major Prada told me to stay overnight in the barracks with his soldiers because he wanted to take me the next day to the prefect, the highest official of that city and its surroundings.

Sitting and eating with Italian soldiers, and talking the language I had used exclusively only one year before and in preceding years, I forgot completely that I had been humiliated in and expelled from Italy and was a deportee in a concentration compound. I felt like a human being again. Oh, what a feeling that was, just knowing that for the few hours to follow I was not in danger of being killed, I was safe! What a freedom, to sleep with common soldiers in a big room.

The following day I had breakfast with the soldiers. Then I was called by the major, who already had made an appointment with

the Romanian prefect for ten o'clock. In my conversation with Major Prada I asked him whether it would be possible to get a pair of soles for my shoes from an old car tire. He immediately sent me to the Italian soldier shoemaker who found the ideal tire for soles and put them on my shoes. These tire soles lasted throughout my remaining years of concentration camp, and if I had not discarded the shoes in 1945, the soles would have been good yet.

A few minutes before ten o'clock the major and I walked to the prefect, since he was not far from the Italian barracks, and were received by him, a Romanian colonel. Major Prada talked to the colonel in French and I in Romanian. After listening to my story the prefect told me that he would gladly receive me in his city and that he would give me housing outside the concentration camp in Yampol. Later I found out that inmates in the concentration camp in Yampol under this prefect were treated humanely and that only a small number of the deportees died. The prefect assured me that my family would be allowed to live with me. To show his sincerity he offered me a wagon with two horses and a man to drive me back to Bronitza, and if I decided to accept his invitation I could load my belongings and family and come back to Yampol the following day. The driver would stay overnight in Bronitza to give me time for packing. These were the instructions given to the coachman.

The only thing which left some uneasiness and fear in me was the fact that when I requested of the prefect a statement to show to gendarmes in case they stopped us on our way back to Yampol,

he declined. He claimed that Bronitza was not in his territory and that giving the statement would overextend his territorial power. Although he was right, I still think he could have given me some document of protection covering a couple of driving hours. Before leaving, I went to say goodbye to the major and to a few Italians with whom I had had such a nice time. The major and the soldiers came along to the wagon and put a lot of things in it, such as two old tires for soles, pots and pans, which Anna was so badly in need of, and some more things that could have been used by us or sold to the villagers of Bronitza.

On my way to Bronitza I did a lot of thinking as to whether or not to accept the offer of the prefect. One circumstance that left me a little wavering in my decision was that Major Prada told me that within two weeks all Italians would be gone to the front line. Had the Italian garrison not been scheduled for removal from Yampol, I would not have hesitated one second to accept the offer of the prefect even if Anna had refused to come along. At the same time, the fact that the prefect in Yampol promised that he would assure my protection weighed heavily on my mind.

After I came back to Bronitza I unloaded the many gifts the Italians had bestowed on me while the coachman took care of the horses with water and hay. I discussed the prefect's offer with Anna, but she failed to support my move. Leaving Anna with her two children and her passive, unresourceful husband, a tailor, would have defeated the purpose of my rush into the first convoy to get to the concentration camp. If something would have

happened to any of them I could never have forgiven myself. In fact, she had later on a little taste of my not being around, when I had to leave Bronitza because of the waiter, whom I had registered in the list for Storosczuk as "malt maker." Her refusal to come along and the consequences for me which followed several months later stirred a deep-seated resentment in my soul.

My strong desire to leave Bronitza was to get rid of the constant frictions in that compound and above all to set myself free once and for all of that waiter.

That waiter could be humble, submissive and without any pride if he was in need, but would turn arrogant, provocative and fresh when he felt secure. I certainly would not have taken him along. It was my destiny to have the waiter on my back for years. To this day I am not sure whether Anna refused to come to Yampol because she knew that I would not have taken the waiter along or because she thought that Bronitza was the best place for her. It is ironic that I cannot refer to the waiter by name because he would suffer deep trouble even today should I do so. In view of Anna's attitude and my self-imposed obligation to take care of her and her family, I sent the coachman back to Yampol alone.

My dislike for the waiter began with the following event. After the occupation of Czernowitz by the Germans and Romanians, the single function of the Germans was to think of ways and means to murder the Jewish population, while the civil administration of the reoccupied territory was left to the Romanians. After several murder sprees by the Germans there was a relaxation by

them and the Romanians before the storm to follow. People began to appear on the streets with their yellow stars, and their need for bread forced them to stay in line for many hours to get one loaf. Since I ate at Anna's, I felt that I had to contribute something and succeeded several times in bringing several loaves of bread.

One day Anna was without bread, and I decided to get some. There were certain stores for Jews and other stores for non-Jews, the latter having very small lines; so I thought I would try my luck in a non-Jew store. I was caught, arrested and put in jail. Attempts to get me out were successful only when some pieces of my old gold jewelry were given as a bribe.

After I got out of jail, ten days later, Anna told me that the waiter, who was working in a kitchen for Romanians as a cook, had gotten the day before many loaves of bread from the Romanians, and that he and his wife sold them on the black market although they knew that Anna needed bread and that Anna had done favors for these two ingrates for years. My contempt for these two increased the more I got to know them. It was Anna who imposed them both on me and for her sake I put him on the list to Storojenko.

Anna's refusal to come along and my reluctance to go alone to Yampol would soon be regretted by her first and later on by me too after I rescued her, her family and, to top it off, the waiter and his wife, from the annihilation camp in Skazinetz. Details of the annihilation camp in Skazinetz are given later.

Because my salary, however small, and my food ration had been stopped when the distillery was closed, it was now necessary to find some earnings in order not to starve. From time to time I could buy some alcohol from Komarinski and from the man responsible for the distillation column, and take it to Mogilev where I sold the beverage with some profit. Had I been caught, I would have paid a grave penalty. I relied on my papers from the military authorities and good luck to keep me out of trouble; however, this source of income soon dried up also.

Komarinski continued to draw his salary and food rations and continued to steal alcohol and to sell it through other channels. With the money he got, he bought through some people of my compound a lot of clothes for his family from deportees in Mogilev. In fact all the other Russian workers kept on getting their salaries and food rations for a while. Had Komarinski wished, he could have obtained payment for me too, but his good altruistic Russian heart did not go that far. He considered me his deportee also.

Since Bronitza was on the east side of the Dniester and was inspected only occasionally by the occupying authorities, the Romanian peasants on the west bank of the river began to smuggle to the east side, during the night, various kinds of merchandise and sold them to the villagers of Bronitza. Among the most valuable items was sunflower oil.

One day I bought a certain amount of oil from a Romanian smuggler and somehow managed to transport it to Mogilev and made some profit. This encouraged me to continue to buy and sell oil,

and Anna played an active and important role in these dealings. Once I was caught by a gendarme who refused to accept anything, even a good wristwatch, to let me go. He took me with the merchandise to his superior, a first lieutenant. It did not take me long to give some excuses, invented on the spot, and to get free with the oil. The following day I brought to the first lieutenant a bottle of oil, and the whole matter was settled in a gentlemen's agreement.

Many times I discussed with Anna what might have become of Lotty. The thought that she had been caught by the Germans and savagely killed tormented us throughout the years of concentration camp. On our commercial trips to Mogilev and back to Bronitza, Lotty and her fate were our main topic of conversation. Anna understood my psychological torment and tried to encourage me by insisting that nothing had happened to her. Although neither of us was convinced, Anna succeeded in diverting my thoughts from worry about Lotty. In turn I reiterated my unshaken belief that according to the book of our fate and providence we would survive these terrible times, and, although I myself was full of doubt, I succeeded in convincing Anna completely.

In the meanwhile the whole village of Bronitza began doing business with the Romanian neighbors. In order to make more money, the villagers took the merchandise to Mogilev and sold it at a good profit. But there was a hook in their dealings. The villagers sold the merchandise for German occupation marks, while the Romanians could not use them in Romania. Therefore a change

in the currency had to be made and this was possible only in Mogilev. The villagers were not allowed to enter the camp where the change could be made.

When some traders complained about the difficulties they were having to me, I suggested that if I could make a little profit, I would exchange their currency for them in Mogilev. Several people agreed to that, and I carried out a simple but dangerous task of taking German occupation marks from people in Bronitza, changing them for Romanian currency in Mogilev, returning to Bronitza with the money and paying to each person his share. All this for a little profit. Should I have been caught, confiscation of the money and jailing would have been the consequences.

Nearly all villagers doing commerce with the Romanians came to me for the exchange of currency, and I was satisfied that they took over the buying and selling completely. Indeed I was pleased with my part, for it provided enough money, together with that earned by Anna's husband, who repaired clothes for the natives, to have a piece of bread plus something with it for all of us.

One day in May I was notified by a gendarme to appear before the commander of the gendarmerie, a major, in Mogilev. I was dreadfully afraid of what he might have to say to me and discussed with Anna all thinkable possibilities that may have been the reason for my being summoned to the commander. We discussed the likelihood of sending the whole compound to a recently-formed annihilation camp in the village of Skazinetz.

If the latter should be true, I knew that I would not have been included, since I was listed in the gendarmerie as a highly-classified specialist, whose stay in Bronitza was confirmed by the governor of Transnistria.

According to rumors, the commander of the gendarmerie and therefore the commander of all concentration camps around and in Mogilev, received an order from a higher official to create that camp, fill it with deportees, and hasten their extermination by allowing no food to enter clandestinely, and by keeping food rations low to accelerate deaths by starvation.

The following morning I went to the commander.

The first question he asked me was, "How many children do you have?"

I sensed something threatening, thought of Anna's children, and had the presence of mind to say, "Two.

Then he said the whole compound would be deported to Skazinetz except "you and your children." He excluded also a former lawyer favored by the governor of Transnistria, his own former professor at the University of Czernowitz.

Since I had been placed in the distillery by the military authorities and worked there, I could stay on in the house of the factory. The lawyer would have to move to another place and work in the fruit orchard, also under the supervision of Storosczuka. After that communication I was released.

I was shocked by the prospect of Anna's deportation. The trick to have saved the children from going to that annihilation camp did not diminish one bit my dark apprehension.

In walking back to Bronitza, the question tortured my brain, "What shall I tell Anna and the whole compound?" Anna and her husband had taken on the attitude that I could and must take them out from any tight spot they ran into by chance or design. This attitude was even more pronounced in the waiter and his wife.

I was spared of having to tell Anna and the compound what I heard during my conversation with the gendarmerie commander. When I came back, I learned that a delegation of gendarmes had already been there and instructed everyone in the compound to be packed the following morning to go to the camp in Skazinetz. Anna was glad to hear from me that the children would not have to go through the ordeal of that camp. I assured her that I would do everything possible to get them all out of Skazinetz as soon as possible.

The next morning, a gorgeous day in May, the compound was dissolved, and Anna and her husband were solemnly separated from their children. These little tykes were too young to realize the seriousness of the situation and were sure that their mother would come home toward evening, as she so often did with me, when we were away "on business."

The lawyer moved out, much to my regret, for his estranged wife would certainly have taken care of the children, especially of Sasha, the four-year-old boy, while I began the battle for the release of their parents. The situation with Sasha was serious because he suffered from prolapse of the rectum which had to be pushed inside after each bowel movement. I tried to teach his seven-year-old sister to help when I was not there, but his

squeamish sister refused to cooperate. Therefore I had to beg a Ukrainian neighbor to help, promising of course some compensation.

The same day I ran to Mogilev to try to find ways and means to get them out of that camp. What I learned in Mogilev was not encouraging. Nonetheless I put my shoulder to the wheel and pushed as hard as I could. I had to use caution though, because by pushing too hard I might have irritated some of these henchmen and consequently would wind up in Skazinetz myself.

The first document for their release I obtained from the Bronitza gendarmes. A Ukrainian militiaman in the service of the occupying forces went with me on foot to Skazinetz, where I presented the document to the internal commander of the camp, a capo, a Jewish servant of the gendarmes. He refused to release the family because the required document had to be from Mogilev and not from Bronitza. Of course this was only an excuse not to release them.

These Jewish internal commanders of concentration camps, known the world over as capos, were often worse than the killers themselves. That capo, Samet by name, was just as wicked a criminal as any of the rest, perhaps even more so. I dared not even get angry with that dog but had to accept this defeat and humiliation for fear that he might do harm to Anna. While in Skazinetz I had a chance to talk with Anna and her husband, and all I received were blame and reproaches for not taking them out of there.

Now a few words about the capo Samet. I had known him by sight in gymnasium in Czernowitz. He was a little man and was known as a weak student. Now I was seeing him again after more than fifteen years. His craving for power was now satisfied by being the commander of an annihilation camp and by having become a capo. If the account I received years later was correct, Samet immigrated to Israel, where he was severely beaten up by some former inmates of Skazinetz and where he had some trouble with the Israeli courts. I hope that Samet is alive, reads this account, and enjoys it as much as I enjoyed his sadistic denial of reuniting parents with their children.

I began now to look for other avenues for getting Anna out of Skazinetz. Everything I undertook was very dangerous because it required that I appear near or at the German and Romanian headquarters and a deportee was not allowed to be seen there.

Every approach, every attempt to find out how to proceed, cost money to induce people to help with even a little information. And money was scarce. We lived in that compound from day to day.

Every try required days. I had to go to Mogilev in the morning and come back in the evening, walking 22 kilometers daily on just the round trip from Bronitza to Mogilev and back. And how many kilometers I walked in Mogilev itself only Heaven knows. Simultaneously I continued my currency-exchange transactions with the villagers, because I needed money. Everything worked out well in that respect. I had to think also of the approaching winter although it was now the middle of June.

Fuel for the winter had been a priority ever since I could remember. I did not believe that the distillery would receive coal enough, although a small load of it had been delivered by the end of May. Thus while I was in Mogilev waiting days for an opening, I made the acquaintance of the forester responsible for the supply of wood for heating all administrative and military establishments.

The forester made several good deals through my suggestion that he send a number of carloads of wood to a few factories and a bakery in the camp. For this wood he was very well paid. Since these deliveries were made furtively, he cashed in the money, and everyone was glad. To show his appreciation for my part he sent me three carloads of wood, which should have been sufficient to carry us through the winter.

When I got back from Mogilev every late afternoon or evening, I ate with the children. During the day the seven-year-old girl took care of her brother, and in case of need she went to the Ukrainian neighbor, a widow with one boy. The boys were very good playmates. The things that hurt most now were the offensive and needling messages I constantly recieved from the relatives in Skazinetz. Somehow they got the idea that I had to do everything for them, including the waiter, for whom my contempt grew constantly.

One day I was able to wriggle myself into the office of the prefect of Mogilev, of the name Nasturash. I pleaded the case of my relatives with him for several minutes; then he called his secretary and told her to write an order to the capo Samet at the

concentration camp in Skazinetz to set free the people whom I had included in my original permit. Simultaneously he gave me a permit for them to go back to Bronitza. This time I was sure I would be able to get them out. I was too late that day to go to Skazinetz; so I had to go back to Bronitza and start my journey the following day.

The next day early in the morning I was on my way to take Anna's bunch out of the Skazinetz camp, saving their lives once more. I was so glad and happy to be able also to bring back the mother to her children that I do not remember how long it took me to go on foot to Skazinetz. When I showed the order to the capo Samet, he reluctantly consented and gave the order to his policemen to let them go.

Suddenly he recalled his militiamen. He negated his own order saying the document from the prefect had to be countersigned by the gendarmerie commander. The gesture reflects sadly upon his whole personality. It hurt him to let people out while he stayed there. Of course he could have let them go since their names were on the order given to him by the prefect. But little Samet wanted to show how smart and powerful he was.

It is better that I do not put in writing what I felt and how outraged I was.

Samet was the capo of the annihilation camp. And I could do absolutely nothing. He was triply protected. He knew that I had declared that Anna's children were mine. The harm he could have done can be easily understood. The children could have ended in Skazinetz and I in jail if I had harmed Samet. The second

protection he had were his policemen in the camp and the third, outside the camp he was protected by Ukrainians carrying rifles that were given to them by the gendarmes to guard the camp.

These young Ukrainian thugs were notorious killers, who grew up under the communists. They killed more Jews in Transnistria during the years of concentration camps than the Germans, Romanians, and Hungarians combined, as recorded by Simon Wiesenthal who has studied and written about the concentration camps in that part of Europe. He described in his book, *Murderers Among Us,* similar slaughtering in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania of Jews by natives of these countries.

While I am writing this account, I recall how unspeakably hard it was for me to go back empty-handed, after thinking I solved the problem. The pain, frustration and anger come back undiminished and as vivid as if the event had happened today. I wonder what capo Samet thinks today of his bravado. I had promised the children that their mother, for whom they constantly asked, would be back that day, and then having to tell them to wait longer was almost unbearable.

I did not go back to Bronitza but to Mogilev, the center of all intrigues by the capos, to tell them about Samet. They were outraged and proposed that Samet be removed and that I become the capo of Skazinetz camp. To get even with that evil character I would have liked to accept the proposal. When I consulted Anna about it through a courier, she opposed that idea; she did not want her children in that annihilation camp.

To go back to the prefect and tell him about the unfortunate happening would not have helped matters. He would have been outraged and would have held it against Samet and me. I still depended on his good will to get the people out of Skazinetz. The chief of the gendarmes and the prefect were not on good terms, and the prefect could have initiated reprisals against Samet that would have made matters worse for inmates in Skazinetz.

I hesitated to go by myself to the chief of gendarmes, because he had given the order for the deportation, while the prefect had created the Skazinetz camp. Therefore other ways had to be found to resolve the situation.

In the meanwhile Anna's husband kept on sending bitter messages through a courier he knew, and the waiter induced his wife to leave the camp furtively and to come to Mogilev, where in the camp dwelling of some acquaintances in Mogilev she got hold of me and accused me of not doing anything to get them out of Skazinetz. I was too slow in evaluating whether this group of people was worth the risk in my exposure in such dangerous and hazardous intrigues and then having to endure their reproaches and accusations. My blood boils every time I remember how the waiter later dared to do things against my express orders and cause my deportation into a punitive camp, most unfortunately with Anna's support.

Family relationships in the concentration camps varied a great deal. Some would help each other, some would take advantage of the others, and others would be contemptibly

egoistic. Anna told me later about a case she witnessed in Skazinetz which was typical of many. Among the inmates from Suczawa was a woman, Mrs. Klueger, with her eleven-year-old daughter. Her husband, Toivje, whom I knew, had emigrated to Palestine, but the war had prevented her from joining him.

In Skazinetz the food rationing was kept low to bring about emaciation, low resistance, and death. Mrs. Klueger was so emaciated that she had no strength to stand in line for her piece of bread, and she charged her daughter to take her ration and bring it to her. Two days in a row the girl came back to her mother stating that she could not get any bread for her.

Anna knew Mrs. Klueger, and after Anna's arrival in the camp Mrs. Klueger said to her, "Anna, please watch my daughter that she brings me my piece of bread because for two days she ate it herself, and I am dying with hunger."

Mrs. Klueger indeed died several days later.

Through the grapevine I found out that the prefect Nasturash had a relationship with a young Romanian woman. I found out where she lived, went to her, and offered her in exchange for a favor a gold ring with two diamonds, which I had hidden in soap by melting and reshaping the bar of soap. She accepted the offer and induced the prefect to write another order for Anna and her brood to leave the camp and an authorization for them to live in Bronitza. Through this woman I also gave Nasturash a piece of material for a suit for himself. This time the order was written so that capo Samet could no longer refuse their release. After my gifts of a diamond ring and a piece of cloth, all four were

released from Skazinetz and again I gave them shelter in my living quarters. For the waiter and his wife it was the most natural thing to expect me to give my last treasure for their safety and well-being. I was soon to regret very bitterly that I allowed the waiter and his wife to set foot in my living place in Bronitza again, which was assigned to me by the civil authorities.

Now that Anna was back, my worries about the children were over. I resumed my trips to Mogilev three to four times a week to change money. If occasionally there was a good buy in merchandise, I would buy only reluctantly because too much danger was involved. Between my earnings from the exchange of money and what Anna's husband earned with tailoring we could pull through without starving to death. I even plowed the ground in front of the house and planted sweet corn, of which I was fond.

Everything ran smoothly and our stay in the village was assured. One day Anna told me that the waiter intended to buy salt to sell in Mogilev. I angrily replied that he should not dare to do it. If a Jew was caught with merchandise, it was confiscated, a small fine was charged, and the perpetrator was turned over to the Jewish commander, a capo, of the camp in Mogilev. Generally the capo would do no harm to the perpetrator, especially if he received a small bribe. After a person was a day or so in the camp jail, the capo would let him go.

But if a man were caught with salt, which was a monopoly of the government, that was a serious crime punishable by confiscation of the merchandise and jail with hard labor. I did

not think again about that incidental conversation with Anna because my answer to the waiter through Anna was definite and final.

Four or five months before my stern warning about buying and selling salt there was an episode which involved a loss of money caused by the waiter and Anna. The waiter came up with a proposal to buy a pig from a villager in Bronitza, to kill it, and to take it to Mogilev and to sell it for a profit. I had strongly advised against it but both did it anyhow while I was working in the laboratory of the distillery. This was an unintentional hint by Anna to the waiter that my word did not have to be respected, even though I was the leader of their group.

The waiter took the cut-up pig to Mogilev, but he could not sell it. Not knowing anybody and lacking know-how, on his own he used a mediator who sold the pig at a loss. And to top it off, the mediator, named Kugler, wanted a commission. When I heard about it, it made me furious just to look at the waiter's expressionless face. He had hired a mediator and expected me to pay for the loss! My anger raged even though such things had often happened in our family for years.

There was so little money in our reserve that I felt we could not afford to pay a commission for the loss. The waiter had of course no objection to that as long as I appeared to be the bad boy. Kugler resented this deal, although I explained to him in vain that if he had sold the meat at a profit, he would

have been entitled to a commission. I learned too late that on whatever the waiter put his hands there was a curse.

One afternoon I returned from Mogilev after accomplishing a money transaction. Suddenly I saw the truck of the distillery going toward Mogilev, and the waiter was in the back of the truck. A feeling that he was up to something flashed through my mind. I stopped the truck and climbed on it. I could do that because I was the chemist of the factory. There I saw several sacks of salt. That unteachable scoundrel had not listened to my warning transmitted to him by Anna, and Anna herself had not heeded my advice. She must have helped him in the salt deal, since he was incapable of doing it by himself. Anna denied having any part in it, but to this day I do not believe her.

Since there were other people in the truck, I could not begin talking to the waiter about the salt. In an instant I evaluated the situation. The people in the back of the truck would never have permitted the unloading of the truck without informing the authorities. It was now a question of whether they would denounce me too, since I was an employee of the distillery.

It was a gamble and a risk to which the illiterate waiter had subjected me, although I, whose protection and shelter he enjoyed though Anna, had given him an order not to deal with salt. I never talked to the waiter directly, for I sensed his perfidy since the day I went to jail for a loaf of bread, while he sold bread on the black market. Anna was our go-between.

The waiter gambled on the correct assumption that if he were caught, even in my absence, the deed would be traced to me in

Bronitza, and I would be responsible anyway. The waiter and Anna's family were my responsibility before the military authorities, and he had no permission to leave the place of shelter I gave him.

Anna maintained that she had given the waiter the order not to deal with salt. However, as much as I wanted to accept her assertion then, and would like to at the present time, it is impossible for me to do so. The waiter would never have been able to perform that stunt alone behind my back. Anna must have helped, for the waiter had no money. All the money I brought in was given to Anna. The waiter had to pay for the salt, and the money had to come from Anna. The waiter did not contribute one penny for his keep. He only caused losses of money.

When we arrived in Mogilev, the driver stopped in front of a bakery to unload the salt. During the unloading one of the Ukrainians in the back of the truck collected some of the salt pouring out from a small hole of a sack and showed it to a lieutenant who was sitting in the cab with the driver. A protocol statement was made declaring me the perpetrator of the crime. I made many attempts to escape punishment by giving to the man who claimed to be able to fix the matter my last diamond ring. The man kept the ring but did nothing. I was ordered to get ready to go to the penal concentration camp in Shmerinka.

CHAPTER XI

BARBED-WIRE DISCIPLINE

The question naturally arises as to why I did not go to the proper authorities and explain exactly what happened. Today I deeply regret that I did not do precisely that. The reason I did not do it was that Anna hammered into me the same song that the waiter's wife was sick and that he would abandon her. Why should Anna be in a position to prevail on me so successfully! She was a smart woman, an energetic go-getter, a clever twister, and an aggressive strong-willed leader, as well as a compassionate person and self-sacrificing sister.

The final knock-out blow of the nefarious actions of the waiter came from the man who had helped the waiter to sell the pork at a loss, Kugler by name. He foiled my attempts to buy myself out of the punitive camp. As I was told in Mogilev, he had heard about my involvement with the salt and bribed somebody to prevent me from buying myself out. If I regretted leaving Bronitza, I was glad not to see constantly the waiter's face and eyes, and I hoped not to see him again for the rest of my life.

At the beginning of the war Shmerinka was administered by the Germans, Romanians and Italians. After the capitulation of the Italian army on the eastern front, the Italian garrison was dissolved. The Germans remained the military rulers and de facto absolute rulers. The civil administration was in the hands of the Romanians in name only. The city was full of a most brutal

branch of the SS called "Heeresstreife," who carried out the murders of Jews in that part of the Ukraine. Nearly all supplies for the eastern front of the German war machine went through Shmerinka, an important railroad center and the site of the punitive concentration camp.

Saying goodbye to a place which had sheltered 35 other people during the most critical time of the first year of concentration camp was not easy but sad. To have to go far away to an unknown place about which I had heard most discouraging stories was deplorable and piteous, especially since I was manipulated by a snake supported by my own sister. Even while writing this account 34 years later, I am enraged to have allowed my own people to push me around so hard.

In Mogilev I went to the gendarmes, who were informed about my deportation to Shmerinka. One gendarme was assigned to accompany me on the trip because no Jew could travel by train according to the law for deportees. We departed from Mogilev at about four in the afternoon and arrived in Shmerinka at midnight. It was quite obvious to the travelers in the train that I was a prisoner, and they must have wondered why the gendarme treated me so politely. It should be said that when the military and the civil authorities found out who I was, they treated me respectfully.

When we arrived in Shmerinka, the gendarme left me in the waiting room of the station, and he went to sleep in the gendarmerie. In the station hundreds of German soldiers waited, as they were going to, or coming from, the eastern front line.

Most of these soldiers had had at least one drink too many and did not take any notice of me. It was toward the end of October, the nights were very cold, and I was glad to be in a warm place in spite of the thick stale smoke from rank cigarettes and pungent cigars.

At eight a.m. the gendarme who had accompanied me from Mogilev returned, and we walked to the headquarters of the gendarmerie. In a short time a Jewish militiaman from the concentration camp came to get me.

When we arrived at the camp, I was conducted through a gate of barbed wire and was shocked to realize that the entire camp was enclosed with barbed wire. It was my first time in a barbed-wire camp, and a sobering feeling of confinement settled over me. The young militiaman, a former medical student, took me to the camp headquarters. The camp was commanded by a capo, Herschman by name, who used to be a lawyer in Czernowitz. A capo was a Jewish administrator in a concentration camp.

Herschman did not have a good reputation in Czernowitz, I had been told back in Mogilev. But in Shmerinka he was a powerful man. He had constant direct contacts with the German and the Romanian commanders, to whom he delivered workers from the camp daily. Many of the deportees had given him gold, jewelry, furs and other valuables in order to be in his favor and not to be sent to strenuously hard work. Herschman in turn bribed the German and Romanian authorities to remain in their favor. Thus he created a model concentration camp, of which he was the absolute ruler.

I was told as I settled in the camp that at the formation of this penal establishment another inmate criticized Herschman and opposed his becoming the capo. According to the rumor Herschman ordered one of his militiamen to shoot this critic. In the camp was a prison for deportees, and those who misbehaved were sentenced to this prison by Herschman. In my position I heard nothing good about him, and everyone was afraid of falling into his disfavor.

After arriving at the headquarters I waited quite a while for Herschman. Finally he came and called me into his office. I told him everything about myself including the reason for being transferred to his camp. Just as it has been my misfortune many times in my life to be suspected of wanting somebody else's job, Herschman saw in me a potential threat to his job. He applied the well-known strategy: offense is the best defense.

He assigned me to a room where five people were already living. At the end of my conversation with this capo I felt he had no sympathy for me and that I would have to work and scheme in order to live. I found out later from his right-hand man Teffner, a well-known actor at one time in the Jewish theater in Czernowitz and later a successful rebel against Herschman, that there were several decent places in the camp he could have given me to live.

The camp was organized so that each inmate received a food ration to prevent death from starvation. The food, however, was insufficient and of very poor quality. When I received my ration the next day, the bread was so bad that I could not eat more than

one bite. Although I never found out what the bread was made of, I am sure it contained sawdust, because when I gave a piece to a poor hungry dog whose ribs I could count, even he would not eat it.

I must give the devil his due. Herschman gave me the privilege of leaving the camp at will in order to look for work outside. The third day after my arrival I thought of visiting the mayor of Shmerinka and proposing that he increase the income of the city by building an alcohol factory. He saw me at once.

As soon as I mentioned my name, he said, "I have heard of you. You are the one who sold salt in Mogilev."

After some further conversation with him I found out that Herschman had told him about my illegal activity and consequent transfer to the camp in Shmerinka. This was the tactic Herschman would use to make his potential adversary into a persona non grata. The last thing in the world I wanted to be was the head of a concentration camp jail. Herschman need not have bothered, for in spite of his ill intention in depicting me as a bad boy, the mayor became cordial during our conversation and assured me that he would think about my proposals and let me know.

Every morning groups of prisoners gathered at the barbed-wire gate. German gendarmes led them from there to various working places, and brought them back in the evening. As a rule intellectuals were not taken to do ordinary labor, unless Herschman had personal reasons to force them to do hard labor. Since slave-labor assignments were at the discretion of Herschman, he kept the whip over those intellectuals of whom he

was most afraid. As a result of his connections with the Germans and the Romanians, intimidated intellectuals became totally submissive to his power. He enjoyed that.

When people died in the camp, the capo was notified first. He was the first to make inspections of the belongings of the deceased, and he selected their most valuable things and took them for himself. This was how he amassed a fortune in jewels, diamonds and furs. The rest of the belongings were distributed upon his orders to various inmates of his choice.

Weeks passed. I lived by stretching the few marks I had brought with me. From time to time rumors spread that the Germans were going to exterminate the camp as they had massacred another camp the year before in the nearby town Bardiczev. Everybody was alert in case that would happen, to try to escape or to fight back. In the camp there were several partisans. I befriended one of them, and he told me that the partisans had weapons and ammunition, which they would distribute like a blitz among the inmates in case such an action by the Germans would begin. Such rumors brought me close to despair and were a constant reminder of the circumstances that had brought me to this camp.

By hook or crook I succeeded in sending a telegram to Anna to remind her of our agreement for her to work on the prefect through the woman who had helped me get her out of Skazinetz. At the time I did not know that she had been removed from the factory and now lived under constant fear of being discovered and sent to the camp in Mogilev. Later I learned that she did

receive the telegram but could do nothing about it. She had no more diamonds or other tradeable assets. Everybody in my family always called on me to move mountains for them, but no one could offer help when I needed it.

About that time the German and Romanian authorities demanded more and more prisoners every day to work for them, and Herschman had to oblige. He had to impose on more and more women to do heavy work. This situation brought more income to Herschman as people dug out whatever they still had and gave it to him to avoid back-breaking calorie-consuming work on the roads. The bribery system in the camp was an open secret. As a result elderly persons were used to make up the required number of laborers.

Herschman had spies everywhere, and he rewarded his informants well enough for them to continue their spying. The inmates dared not open their mouths in the presence of persons whom they suspected of being the capo's spies. Trouble was waiting if Herschman found out from a spy that somebody has spoken badly about him. He would call the accused to his office, subject him or her to cross-examination, and cleverly find ways to punish where it hurt most. Many times the informers lied, and when the victims would swear not to have done or said what he or she was accused of, Herschman believed his informers.

When I thought of what would happen to him if he survived the end of the war, the outcome of which was clear by now to everybody including the Germans and Romanians, I felt sorry for

the man. The tides of war by then had taken a definite turn against Hitler and his cohorts in this area.

In the middle of January 1943 Herschman notified me that the mayor of Shmerinka wanted to see me, and I hurried to his office. The mayor told me that the German commander needed my help, and he sent his guard to take me to his headquarters near the railroad station. My earlier audacious visit to the mayor with my imaginative proposal was about to pay off.

The commander, a major in the German army, told me that the potatoes given him for his soldiers in Shmerinka had not been covered well and were frozen. Those spuds nearly dissolved when boiled, and the troops refused to eat them.

"Could you do something with these potatoes to raise money to buy some fresh ones for my men?"

I assured him, "From your frozen potatoes I can produce alcohol and sell it for a good price. With that cash you can get more potatoes than your garrison can eat."

It was obvious that to transform the potatoes into alcohol I would need a small plant and adequate personnel. As soon as the commander heard my proposal, he rose to his feet and said he would give me all the mechanics, plumbers, pipe fitters and carpenters I needed. I promised him that there would be no difficulty in selling the alcohol to the taverns.

Taverns in the occupied Ukrainian territory were abundant and lucrative for the owners since Russians are drinkers, as is generally well know. They drink not for the enjoyment of drinking but for the "high" they get. Russians, in contrast to

Europeans, do not sip their drinks but pour them into their stomachs in big swallows. I have seen Russian men pour down one-fourth of a liter, more than nine ounces, of 95% alcohol in one big swig. They were trying to reach high spheres as fast as possible.

The first concern in this project was to find a place suitable for a factory, also all the equipment required for a distilling operation. A building which had been empty for several years was soon located. Immediately I began to plan the construction of a small distillery and the layout of equipment. Several skillful mechanics were rounded up, and we met for several days to work out plans. In no time our work was under way in the cold month of February.

The first great advantage for me was that during the day I was in a warm room, and at both noon and evening I always brought home several pieces of wood for warming up my room in the camp. I was paid the wages a prisoner was entitled to, and I received my food ration, which was much, much better than that of the previous camp given to the nonworking inmates by Herschman.

The mechanics and I worked hard on the installations of the plant, the most difficult challenge being the plumbing that connected the building with a water supply. The German commander inspected the building daily, and he gave me credit for the plumbing and pipe fitting although I had no idea about what the mechanics did. This incident made me often think of how unfair many things in life can be. Because I was in charge of producing

alcohol, I was given undeserved credit for plumbing and other work.

In less than one month the factory was ready to operate on a small scale. The commander could easily get wood for the operation of the factory, and he accelerated everything he could, for he was anxious to sell alcohol and to buy fresh potatoes to feed his men. After the first batch of potato mash began to ferment, the operation went as smoothly as could be expected in a distillery of that size.

Still, there were a few little problems with the setup. The mixed odors of cooked potatoes, alcohol and pungent carbon dioxide brought no major complaints although they filled the vicinity around the improvised factory. The hole in the factory yard where the slop from the distillation was to be dumped was too small, and the slop contributed to the nontoxic but unpleasant odor. I had expected that the slop would be taken away from the factory as fast as it was made, by the citizens having cattle and pigs, because slop from potatoes is excellent cattle feed. Not so -- for quite a while.

The factory was producing alcohol which would be bought, I was sure, as quickly as it was offered for sale. Several young men from the camp worked with me, and every day I gave them each one liter of alcohol to sell for money to buy a little decent food to supplement the starvation ration doled out by Herschman.

One day Herschman called me to his office. He told me that "people" (his spies) were complaining to him that in my work I regularly use the same three young men, and that others also

wanted to work with me so that they could receive the daily bonus of alcohol. Not wanting to antagonize Herschman, who was telling me exactly whom to use, I had to change two workers the same day, but I retained one, Feldman, who was very good and reliable. Although Herschman did not say it, I understood that he also wanted some of the alcohol, and I sent him some that same day by one of the new young inmates he had recommended.

At the beginning I worked 18 to 20 hours a day in order to finish the work with the frozen potatoes before warm weather set in. Warm weather would have thawed the potatoes and turned them into a watery mass that could neither be transported from the storage house nor used for alcohol production. The factory had to work 24 hours a day, and Feldman took over after I left for my room behind the barbed wire.

The German commander did not want our daily production to be sold in dribs; so it was stored in big glass containers until the last batch of frozen potatoes was processed. Neither did the major want to have anything to do with selling, and he turned that duty also over to me. I had no objections since I would certainly guarantee myself a share too.

After the first few batches of potatoes were cooked, treated and converted, and the slop left over from the distillation was pumped into the hole in the factory yard, the slophole was completely filled up.

Even before production started, I spread word through various persons that slop would soon be available for cattle feed. Slop always represented part of the income of a

distillery, as it was sold to people keeping cattle. I had hoped to get some milk, butter or cheese for it. But the hole was full of slop, and no customer showed up.

I was about to ask the commander to haul it away when an elderly citizen came with two pails to take some for his cow. He raised my hope that word was spreading and people would be coming for slop.

About three hours later the old man came running back out of breath, hollering, "Your slop has killed my cow! You are responsible for it!"

I could not understand how this could be. I concluded that his cow must have died just incidentally after eating the slop. Knowing that something terrible was wrong if the distillery slop would kill a cow, I tried to calm the man and told him I wanted to see his cow.

We scudded over to his place, both of us out of breath, and on to the stable. The cow was stretched out on the floor with her eyes closed. She was breathing regularly, though slowly and almost imperceptibly. When I stooped down to examine her, I smelled alcohol. The animal was in a drunken stupor and was sleeping it off. I explained the diagnosis to the owner, and he was satisfied. We both could stop worrying.

The explanation of this episode was simple. The factory was improvised, and so was everything in it. The distillation apparatus was far from satisfactory; therefore, a large amount of alcohol remained unextracted in the slop and caused drunkenness in the cow.

How surprised was I the following day when there formed a long line of people with pails in front of the distillery to buy slop, not for their cattle and hogs but for themselves. What was good for the cow was good for them. From then on the slop was taken away by the Ukrainians faster than it could be produced. Some brought milk, cheese, butter or bread in exchange for the slop; others paid with money. I think I kept or spent the occupation marks but shared the produce with my factory workers. The commander had no objections to these little transactions.

The work with the frozen potatoes lasted about six weeks. While it was still going on, many tavern owners came to find out when they would be able to buy the alcohol. As there was no law against selling it to tavern owners, I could notify all the buyers as to when I would begin to sell. The commander insisted that I myself be in charge. As soon as the work was finished, I began to market the coveted beverage and in two days the whole supply was gone.

I turned over a good portion of the money to the commander and kept the rest for myself. He was very happy to be able to buy fresh potatoes for his soldiers. I am sure that the commander spent only part of the money for the potatoes and kept back for himself a sizeable amount.

Because the commander praised me wherever there was talk about me, my stock went up with Herschman. The capo felt that I, one of his vassals, had done a good thing for the German officer and that he himself had received tangible advantage from the project.

I thought this would be the end of my income. As soon as I stopped working, my wages and food rations stopped. But luckily something unforeseen happened soon that allowed me to continue to work, although at a much slower pace and for a shorter time.

The mayor of Shmerinka invited me to come to his office. He was the man who had been informed by Herschman, the day after my arrival in the camp, that I had sold salt in Mogilev. When I went there, the mayor told me that he had been informed that a large number of apples had gone bad in the city storage house. When he had inspected the apples, he judged that the number of good ones was so small that if he would remove the good ones the recovery would bring in less than the whole amount would if fermented and sold as alcohol. Of course I was all in favor without even seeing the apples. Then he asked me whether I would start to work right away. The factory was there, fuel could easily be obtained, and customers galore were ready to buy the end product.

I accepted the assignment, although I knew I would have to reduce the helpers to one man and there would not be much left for me after turning over the alcohol to the mayor. The mayor was a smart man; he wanted to sell it himself through his own employees. The quality would be much better than that obtained from potatoes, and would bring in more money per liter.

After several days I was active again. The process of converting apples to alcohol did not involve so many steps as transforming potatoes, and in about two weeks my helper and I finished the work. However, the mayor kept me on the payroll

even after everything was finished, because of the praetor, an official of smaller title than that of a prefect, but with exactly the same function. He liked the taste of the alcohol from the apples very much and congratulated the mayor for his decision to use the apples for fermentation. The mayor, who was directly responsible to the praetor, was pleased to send him by me five liters of the whiskey. The praetor thought that it was I who had improved the quality of the alcohol over that obtained from the potatoes and did not attribute the betterment to the raw material used. Naturally I raised no argument. The praetor and I became really good friends.

After the production of alcohol from apples was finished, the factory was closed. I remained on the payroll and received food rations, and by supplementing with some food I could buy on the market I could get along satisfactorily. But the recurring rumors that the SS were about to exterminate the inmates of the camp put me back into a state of fear, frustration and anxiety. These constant rumors of an imminent action by the Sonderkommando and Heeresstreife, the most cruel special units with the task to exterminate Jews, made me recall how brutally I was thrown into this punitive camp, and how in Bronitza I did not live behind barbed wire. I, who had saved 35 lives in the first and most critical year of our internment now had to go through these mental tortures because of two people who I saved twice -- the waiter and Anna. I wanted to leave this terrible camp, but I did not know how to go about it.

CHAPTER XII

FERMENTATION -- BEER AND WARFARE

By now it was about the middle of June, and I still did not know that the waiter and Anna's family had been evicted from the distillery in Bronitza. I decided to talk to the praetor. Now it was my good luck to have received, before beginning work with the frozen potatoes, a permanent permit to leave the camp at will, a document signed by both the German commander and the praetor.

When I was received by the praetor, I told him that since I had made my contribution to Shmerinka, I would like to go back to Bronitza. However, the praetor had the idea of sending me to a brewery sixteen kilometers from Shmerinka. He told me that lately he had received many complaints about the quality of beer produced there and that he wanted me to go there and try to improve it.

While I was familiar in general with the process for the preparation of beer, I had never been in a brewery as an adult. My father had taken me once to the brewery in Suczawa when I was eight years old, and I remembered that the beer a man gave me there tasted bitter and cold. The praetor was convinced that I would be able to bring about an improvement. I did not want to object since I saw a chance to leave the barbed-wire camp. I accepted his proposal and the praetor sent a Ukrainian-speaking

messenger to the director of that factory to inform him about his decision.

Two days later, when again rumors of the imminent extermination of the inmates filled the hearts of the prisoners with panic, a wagon with two beautiful horses arrived in the camp and stopped before the door where I was living. I was ready with my few things, which were put on the wagon by the driver. I had not been used to such courteous treatment since the days of Panebianchi and my expulsion from Italy. We had to pass by the office of Herschman, and I asked the driver to let me stop for a few moments to bid farewell to him. I did not like Herschman at all, but to avoid his rancor I had to perform this little farewell ceremony.

Other inmates, seeing me go, felt great sadness, despair, fear and jealousy because they could not also leave the camp. Every inmate was in constant fear of being selected for slaughter. These were times when every person looked for his own survival, as sad and selfish as it may sound. The general feeling seemed to be that if one must suffer hunger and death, he wanted others to share his misery. My remaining in the camp would not have improved their chances. But now I had hope of improving my own lot.

I later saw Herschman, the last time ever, in the most pitiable and humiliating conditions. After the Russians reconquered Shmerinka nine months later, they arrested him because of the many complaints about him by former inmates. I saw him at the railroad station in Shmerinka in pants twice his

size and with torn slippers on his feet. With a worn-out broom he was sweeping the sidewalk and the floor of the station. He was pathetic, and I wanted not to talk to him in order not to humiliate him. This was the destiny of Herschman, the once-powerful capo-dictator of the concentration camp in which he himself was now a prisoner. In the concentration camp of Mogilev he was called by the Jewish capos "The king of Shmerinka." Sic transit gloria mundi!

The road to the village of Czerniatin, where the brewery was, was partly a very bumpy road of cobblestones and partly a smoother dirt road, the distance from Shmerinka being 16 kilometers. Once we were out of town, we were in the beautiful countryside that I had not seen since my arrival in Shmerinka.

When we reached the factory, a gate was opened by a guard. From the smile on the guard's face and his friendly greeting, I gathered that he knew that a Jewish engineer from the Shmerinka camp was expected. My title at first had been "engineer," later on it was "doctor," according to my credentials from the praetor to the director of the brewery. For the Russian, the title doctor is associated only with a physician. I tried once to explain the Western concept of doctor, but I did not succeed.

I met the director, by the name of Storojenko, and he showed me the room that was to be mine. How lucky I was! The room had been a kitchen of a two-room apartment, but it had been separated from the other two rooms by a wall to accommodate some employee years ago. The hearth in a corner near the door would serve both for heating and for cooking. There were a table, two chairs and

an iron bedstead with boards on which a used straw mattress waited for me. A small window in the wall opposite the door allowed the entrance of daylight. About five feet beyond the wall with the window there was a very high wooden fence, which separated the territory of the brewery from the main road of the village. Since the fence was so very high one could not see the road. My room was a private royal suite as compared to my previous living conditions in the barbed-wire camp. And all this for myself!

While fermentation chemistry was my specialty, I had never been exposed to the art or science of making beer. But by observing and participating in the preparation of beer for a couple of weeks, I found that the excess of acidity in the beer, about which the civilian commander had had many complaints, was due to the director's ignorance of basic principles of fermentation.

Director Storojenko was a Russian defector and German collaborator. I made suggestions to him on how to cope with this and other problems to improve the quality of the beer. He was not eager to accept my suggestions for two reasons. One was that he neither like me nor wanted me there. The other was that by accepting my suggestions he would have admitted that I was more knowledgeable than he in spite of the fact that he had been involved in the preparation of beer for many years. Yet he used my ideas, and the quality of the beer was improved. As a professor of chemistry of the fermentations I was pleased that classroom chemistry was found applicable in practice.

Storojenko's resentment increased even more when word got around that I improved the beer. Storojenko did not like Jews and did not want a concentration camp inmate in the territory of his brewery. But the civil commander in Shmerinka, under whose jurisdiction the brewery was, had put me there and Storojenko was forced to tolerate me. He could not even have told that to the commander without an interpreter since neither the commander nor Storojenko knew the language of the other.

The brewery was a very lucrative set-up for Storojenko. The civil commander in Shmerinka knew little or nothing about the administration of a brewery. He did not know how much beer was produce daily, nor how much raw material was brought in by the Russian peasants as their tax on the crop they harvested. Neither did the commander know how much beer Storojenko sold every week.

The beer was mainly for the military and civil administration of the occupying forces (Germans, Romanians, Italians and occasionally Hungarians) and to a small extent to the various local restaurants and taverns in the district of Shmerinka. For the restaurants and taverns there was strict rationing.

For some time before the commander sent me to investigate and remedy the deteriorating quality of the beer, Storojenko had worked out deals with the many restaurant and tavern owners. He gave them more beer than their permits called for, or without permits, and they had to pay not in German occupation marks, but with Russian gold rubles. The occupation marks he received for

beer were turned over in full to the commander, plus some gold coins as bribery. These transactions took place every weekend or every Monday. Having been instrumental in the improvement of the quality of the beer I was glad to justify my being in Czerniatin.

In my first talk with Storojenko, knowing nothing about his wheeling and dealing, I assured him that my single aim and wish was to survive the war and to return to Italy where my tragedy began. But he mistrusted me, as he would have any other person sent suddenly by the civil administration. The praetor and the German civil commander informed Storojenko about my coming only two days before I arrived.

The pay I received as a working prisoner was miserable. The food allotment was insufficient so that I had to use my savings of four hundred to five hundred occupation marks that I had brought from the Shmerinka camp. Although Storojenko volunteered a promise that he would supplement my official pay to cover my needs, he did not do it, and I never asked him for anything. He did not trust me. On the basis of accounts about him given to me by a few workers who became my friends and trusted me, I had good reasons to be terribly afraid of Storojenko. Naturally I profited nothing from our forced association.

The reports to the commander about the improved quality of beer kept on coming in, and he was so pleased that he told me about them. This gave me the opportunity to tell him that the amount of food I received was not sufficient. Then he gave an order for me to receive every day three liters of milk and to be allowed to gather all the potatoes I wanted from the land

administered directly by the civilian administration. I certainly had not expected so much.

Since all of a sudden I was a rich man with food to spare, I began to share my food with a Russian brewery worker Sasha and his wife Irene. We used the same entrance to our respective living quarters. My generosity was highly appreciated by this Russian family, because the pay Sasha received was also not sufficient for his family of two. The Russian workers under the occupying forces were paid with food and money. In reality they were as underpaid and undernourished here as under their own Russian rulers. Sasha, who was about 35 years old, and I became good friends, and he opened his simple good heart and mind and confided to me many things about his life under Stalin. All Russians hated communism but hated as intensely the enemy occupying their land.

The first event that had shaken Sasha to the bones happened in the mid thirties. His father and mother lived in a nearby village, Severinovka, about three miles from Czerniatin. Both parents worked about 160 days during the year in the fields for the state and were compensated with grain and vegetables according to the communist law. One night, in 1936, secret police, then called NKVD, broke into his parents' home and arrested his father without giving any explanation. He was never seen or heard from again. His family never found out why he was torn away from them, and assumed that he had been put in a camp in Siberia.

Sasha was hurt, angry, and bitter about the horrible injustice to his father and would speak about it only occasionally. These occasions came about when he was tipsy. Sasha's mother was afraid that he might share his father's fate and reminded him of advice everyone gave each other, "When you get up in the morning take a mouthful of water and spit it out before going to bed at night". I heard hundreds of similar stories where relatives and friends were arrested during the night and disappeared forever.

One morning in the middle of August Storojenko called me to his office and told me that the military commander in Shmerinka wanted to see me as soon as possible. Storojenko said that he would give me a man to drive me with horse and carriage to Shmerinka. I was scared. Scared was my middle name! What did he want of me? This nagging question I kept asking myself over and over but found no answer. In no time I got ready and we were on our way.

Storojenko did not give me the elegant carriage and beautiful horses he used to travel with. The horses provided were used to pulling heavy loads and freight for the brewery. The same was true for the carriage. Since the horses were slow and the carriage quite heavy, it took us about two hours to get to Shmerinka.

We went straight to the commander where I was announced by a doorkeeper. He accepted my bow with a friendly smile, which immediately dissipated my fears. Then he asked me, "How do you explain the fact that the Vatican is interested in you?"

Instantly I put two and two together and thought possibly there is a chance of being taken out from the concentration camp. Occasionally people talked about such cases.

My truthful answer was, "I was a university professor in Italy, and I helped the poor for many years at Christmas-time in the city where I lived and worked. Since there were practically no poor Jews, only the Catholics benefitted from my pecuniary contributions." I thought I saw in the eyes of the commander human compassion, but his words and actions showed nothing to that effect.

The commander finally told me that a letter from the Archbishop from Ferrara via the Vatican in Rome had arrived for me through the Red Cross. The Archbishop only inquired of my whereabouts. Ordinarily no mail could ever reach an inmate even if there had not been such a chaos. Jailers and capos kept no rosters. Nobody knew in which camp any prisoner was, nor who was alive or dead. Clandestinely one could send a letter outside by bribing a guard or a soldier. However, a letter from the Vatican could not so easily be discarded.

It was an uplifting and most encouraging occurrence. My hopes went wild with the thought of being taken out of the camp. Nothing of the sort happened. However I had the satisfaction of seeing the effect of that letter on the commander. His respect for me rose sky-high.

One day in October of 1943 Storojenko left for eight days, and I remained the puppet in charge. The commercial director of the brewery, by the name of Schubert, was of Austrian ancestry

and claimed to be a descendant of Franz Schubert, the famous composer. He had a two-room apartment across the entrance hall from my room and lived there with his wife, a son named Olec, eight year of age, and a daughter six years old. He wanted to convince me of his Austrian origin by showing me that among his few books he had a German edition of "Der Graf von Monte Christo." But he did not know more than two words in German.

After we got well acquainted, I borrowed the book and read and reread it innumerable times in my free hours. I found some comfort and hope in reading it so many times, because my own fate appeared to me similar to that of Monte Cristo, with the single difference that I could have been shot any minute, any hour, any day.

Director Schubert, a man in his early fifties, a heavy smoker with a weak heart, urged me to prepare moonshine in the absence of Storojenko. All the raw materials as well as a still were available. I accepted his suggestion and prepared well over 150 liters of alcohol and gave to each worker who helped me at least one bottle of it. Russians are known to love alcohol, and I conquered them all with these gifts. Alcohol was almost impossible to obtain, and if found on the black market it was enormously expensive. Of course, the lion's share of the alcohol went to Schubert and me, fifty-fifty. After that, Schubert and I were buddies.

Because of his famous name and most likely German origin, the Germans promoted Schubert from commercial agent, which he was under the Russians, to commercial director. One day Schubert and

I took a walk in the territory of the brewery, which was a beautiful and huge place. On this walk he told me that prior to becoming commercial agent of the brewery he had been an agronomist and worked in this specialty. As an agronomist he had been responsible for delivering to the state the amount of harvest required by the Russian norm. This he had done in the past and lived a normal rural life. Suddenly something happened in Russia which resulted in a requirement for a large increase in the yield of the harvested crops.

In 1935 the Russian newspapers announced with great pomp that an agronomist-farmer named Stakhanov had produced on his collective farm an astonishing yield of sugar beets. Stakhanov became the idol of the bureaucrats because of his efficiency and was named to a very high political post. As a result of this achievement and the political propaganda in the newspapers, pressure on the bosses of the farms in Russia was mounting to produce more beets per hectare than in the past. Schubert felt this pressure quite a bit, and he grew as many beets as he possibly could, yet his yield in beets was, at best, the same as in the past.

Schubert's bosses recognized that it was impossible to improve the yield of beets, still they were afraid to admit it. Therefore, the bosses, in agreement with Schubert, decided to decrease the grazing area for their cattle and to use some of this land for additional cultivation of beets to have a greater harvest. This trick backfired, because the cattle, in eating less, produced less milk, and a serious mess was created.

Schubert was deathly afraid that this fraudulent scheme would soon be discovered, and he did not want to share the fate of his brother-in-law, Sasha's father. Therefore he did everything possible to be transferred to another job. With the help of friends and bribes and gifts he tried very hard to obtain the desired transfer, even if it meant a lower salary.

This was very difficult because once a person was on a job he had to stay with it, unless the boss wanted to get rid of him. But Schubert pursued his request so hard that with the help of some very "special" friends he was finally sent to the Czerniatin brewery as a commercial agent, a lesser-paying job. I am sure that Schubert, of age about 50 in 1944, a smoker with heart trouble, must be dead by now. His son Olec, his daughter, and his much younger second wife could be alive yet.

When Storojenko saw me occasionally talking to some of the workers in the yard of the brewery during my free time, he disliked it very much and told me so. When I asked him why, he said that all Jews around there were killed by the Germans and that the workers did not care to have Jews in that territory. I became suspicious of him since I felt sure that the people with whom I was in contact inside and outside the brewery did like me. When I told Schubert what Storojenko related to me, he just smiled and invited me to his home. I could enter his apartment without being seen since we shared a common entrance hall. Schubert saw how disturbed I was and he revealed to me the following story.

The Russian army retreating before the Germans in the summer of 1941 had strict orders to destroy everything that could be useful to the blitz-like advancing Germans. Before retreating from Czerniatin two Russian envoys in military uniform came to Storojenko's apartment and told him that they had orders to blow up the brewery. Storojenko, who was a shrewd man, evaluated the situation realistically and saw a golden opportunity to put himself in the limelight and in the favor of the inexorably advancing Germans. Quickly he worked out a plan in his head to outwit the two NKVD emissaries.

In Russian fashion he invited them to have food and drink, of which he had plenty since he exchanged beer for food with the peasants in Czerniatin. It was in that interim period between Russian retreat and German conquest when he was the sole boss of the factory and could do anything without being responsible to anybody. Storojenko kept on pouring drinks for the envoys until he got them completely drunk. The two emissaries did not object to Storojenko's repeated offers of drinks because, as I was told many times by Russians, a perfect host must get his guests drunk.

It was hard for a Russian host to live up to this tradition during the war because of the scarcity of alcohol (vodka) and the high price one had to pay for it. But the Russian "genius" found a way to maintain Russian tradition with only a little alcohol. The Russian host served vodka in five-milliliter thimbles, and twenty of them were sufficient to cause the guest to get drunk. The physiological reason for this effect was that these small amounts of alcohol did not reach the stomach because they were

absorbed from the mouth, throat and esophagus and carried by the blood to the brain. So, with twenty such treats at small time intervals the host lived up to his tradition. The men laughed very heartily when they told me this trick.

After rendering the two envoys drunk, Storojenko disarmed them, led them into the field a mile from the brewery and shot them both with his revolver. Nobody saw him perform the killing, but a week or so later a hungry dog must have smelled flesh, dug a hole in the ground and uncovered the body of one of the dead soldiers. Some people passing by saw the body but they were afraid to say or do anything about it because everybody was afraid to breathe a word to Storojenko.

Schubert also told me that a woman of the village who was a village councilor came to Storojenko hours before the arrival of the Germans and demanded that he set the brewery afire. His answer was a shot of his gun that silenced her forever. Is there any surprise that Storojenko was the hero of the Germans?

CHAPTER XIII

MEANS AND WAYS AMONG RUSSIANS

As already mentioned, Storojenko did not want me to talk to the people in the brewery. He was afraid that they might tell me things about him. It was, however, very hard to go from my room to the brewery about 100 feet away, and after finishing the work to go back, without stopping to talk to someone I met. People in the factory would have considered such an attitude snobbish and would have resented it. They knew very well that I was a prisoner. I would also have created ill will among the people there, and some were collaborators of the occupying forces.

There was a guard with the name of Sidletzki, about sixty years of age, whom I loved dearly. His job was to check the permit of each person entering the factory at the gate for the shift beginning at four p.m. Since the gates were closed at five p.m. except for the days when beer deliveries were made, Sidletzki had in reality very little responsibility.

During the hot evenings in June, July, and August I used to sit with him at the gate, and he would tell me all kinds of stories. This simple man, as he appeared to be, had a sound mind, and when I was with him I pictured myself to be with a typical good-hearted Russian peasant, described so brilliantly by Tolstoy in his various novels.

I learned interesting things about Russian farming under communism from this peasant. The Germans, after their blitz-like

conquest of the Ukraine, gave to the Russian villagers a certain amount of acreage as their very own, provided that they deliver to the Germans a definite quota of products as taxes. The peasants were satisfied because the pride of ownership was a tremendous psychological stimulant, and they were happy with the results of their labor. The harvest was sufficient for providing the Germans their share, for satisfying the peasant's need for food and also enough to sell on the market for money to buy whatever the peasants needed. In addition they could keep a job and make a salary, since the farm work could be done before or after the regular job. Sidletzki was a very happy man with the new setup that was so different from what he had experienced under Lenin and Stalin.

According to this typical Russian farmer there were shortcomings in the Russian kolhoz [collective farm] worked by the people in all villages. Every man had to work about 165 days a year on the fields, and they received a certain amount of the harvest and other products as pay. The government expected a definite amount of the harvest to be shipped to the cities. This set-up, according to Sidletzki, was most irritating to the workers because they felt like robots serving at the convenience of the commissars. Because of this dissatisfaction the workers had no interest or enthusiasm for their work, and the yield was barely enough to satisfy the commissars and their bosses.

During our many and long discussions Sidletzki told me that if the Russians would turn over to him a definite portion of land, he would be able to give to the government the amount of

harvest expected without its having to return anything to him. If the acreage of ground were his, he would take care of everything like his own child, from seeding and fertilizing to harvesting, and the harvest would be very plentiful. Both he and the government would profit from this arrangement. Working land that belongs to somebody else is no stimulant for devotion to work. The workers therefore worked just enough to produce the quota that the government had established.

Sidletzki did not exaggerate one bit. Under the German occupation the Russian farmers gave the enemy forces the same amount of products as they previously delivered to the Russians; yet they retained nearly two and a half times as much as they used to get from the harvest produced under the Russian government.

Another episode in connection with my faith in Sidletzki happened soon after our liberation from the Germans by the Russians. Several days later the Russians retreated from a nearby western position because of strong German counterattacks. Rumors spread that the Germans were coming back. I packed my things hurriedly and turned them all over the Sidletzki. We agreed that should I not return, if I fled with the retreating Russians, after two weeks my things would belong to him. Luckily the Germans never came back, and I did not have to leave and lose my things. Upon my request he returned my belongings.

One day in October, 1943, the military commander of Shmerinka came to the brewery and sent a gendarme to bring me to the yard where he and two of his soldiers were waiting. There he

accused me of trying to convince one of his soldiers that the Germans had lost the war and of making other anti-German remarks. I was shocked to hear the accusations, which were completely untrue. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that the Germans had lost the war, but this remained an unspoken fact. My declaration of complete innocence did not make any difference to the military commander.

In desperation I boldly commented, "Can you believe that I would be so stupid as to carry on a conversation like that with a common soldier?" He was impressed with the question and did not harm me.

After thirty years of being a free man in a great and free country, today I wish I could say that I had tried to demoralize that soldier, but for the sake of the truth I cannot say it.

Two weeks later a gendarme came into my room and began to ask me some uncorrelated and stupid questions. I could not understand why he was pounding on the table. When he began to curse, I raised my voice considerably, knowing very well that he could kill me, and told him that the following day I was going to ask the civilian commander to take me back to the barbed-wire camp.

"Are you threatening me?" the gendarme asked.

"No", I said, "I just state what I am going to do tomorrow."

It worked. Without saying a word he turned around, walked toward the door, opened it, stepped through it, and slammed the door so hard that he broke one of the two door hinges. I never saw him again.

Of course I talked about it with the people in the brewery who saw the gendarme entering my room, but nobody seemed to know the reason of these two incidents. I could not find a logical explanation for these two frightening episodes at an interval of two weeks no matter how much I strained my reasoning power. The explanation came only one week after my liberation.

A Ukrainian from the Bukowina, who was in charge of the storage depot for barley and malt, and who had deserted from the Russian army, spoke Ukrainian, some German and Romanian. He worked for the Romanians and sometimes for the Germans as an interpreter in the brewery. He told me that he had been the interpreter between Storojenko and the military commander; then between Storojenko and the gendarme who had accused me of saying that the Germans were losing the war. According to him, Storojenko first wanted me removed from the brewery. When this failed he arranged with another gendarme to kill me for a certain amount of beer. Storojenko's reason was that he thought I might interfere with his wheelings and dealings.

Through a slight turn of events, Storojenko desisted from trying to get rid of me. It came to his attention that I could play the violin. He asked me whether I would teach his eight-year-old son Lionia to play. Although I played only by ear, not having had a single violin lesson in my life, I accepted the challenge.

How did Storojenko find out that I could play the violin? While he was on one of his business trips in Shmerinka to bring a

share of gold coins to the praetor, the following episode took place.

On a hot day in August 1943, walking from the brewery toward my room, I saw near the gate a young short German solider trying to say something to the guard. Because the guard did not understand German I stopped to interpret. Although it was evident immediately that the solider was tipsy, I was fascinated by what he had in his hand. A violin!

It seemed to me an eternity since I had held one in my hands. I talked to the inebriated soldier a little while and found out he was very unhappy with Hitler and his war. My heart pounded with joy! I asked him to give me the violin for a while, and the German obliged. It had all four strings and a bow, but it was out of tune.

It took me a little while to tune the violin. Then all of a sudden, forgetting that I was a prisoner, I began to play Austrian songs that I used to sing and play as a boy. The soldier knew all these songs and was especially nostalgic and saddened by a tune with the refrain, "In der Heimat, in der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehen." [In the homeland, in the homeland, you see your folks again.] Everybody who passed by stopped to hear me play, because the Ukrainians also had not heard music for several years. As all good things have to come to an end, so did this little interlude, when I handed back to the soldier his violin. This little episode would in the not-too-distant future shape events of my life and my very existence.

While a teenager I had picked up from my boyfriends a little knowledge of reading music. So long ago! However, Storojenko agreed to let me have his son's violin and some sheets of music to practice for a few hours twice a week. I prepared myself and then taught Lionia to the best of my knowledge and ability, the latter being at a higher level.

Through a strange and lucky coincidence I became the owner of a violin in December of that same year. Lionia and I then learned to play duets, much to the delight of Storojenko. His boy was highly talented in music. I had a hard time keeping up with him.

This coincidence was great luck for me. The ultra-rich Storojenko paid me for my efforts the amount of marks that he would have ordinarily paid a better qualified teacher. But there was no violin nor any music teacher in the little village of Czerniatin. However, I spent endless hours at preparing and teaching Lionia to read sheet music. The money Storojenko paid me was about three times as much as the salary I earned as a prisoner. It made the difference between gnawing hunger and a workingman's survival ration. Besides, I could not get potatoes anymore because every last one had been gleaned and eaten already.

Beer was distributed to the military forces and restaurant owners on Saturdays, sometimes on both Saturdays and Fridays. On the day preceding the distribution, hired peasants arrived with horse-drawn carriages loaded with empty barrels, and parked their vehicles outside the brewery on the streets. Those restaurant

and tavern owners who had connections with, or did favors for, Storojenko, were allowed to park their carriages inside the courtyard of the factory. The drivers usually spent the night in their vehicles while the horses munched on hay. The streets were full of these carriages. Trucks came on the day of distribution.

When I found out that Storojenko did not want me around during beer distribution I stayed in my room and read "The Count of Monte Cristo." One Friday afternoon a worker came into my room with a German soldier and told me that the director wished to know what this German wanted. In a short time I found out that the soldier had had an accident with his truck and therefore arrived late. His superiors were going to have a party, and if he should not come in time with the beer, his superior's anger would be boundless, and he would be put in jail.

I felt sorry for the man and wanted to help him without giving Storojenko the impression of interfering in his affairs. If Storojenko had heard the soldier's story he would not have complied with his wish, because he had his own favorites, who paid heavy rewards to him.

I invented a trick. I advised the soldier to go about a mile and a half to a certain farmhouse in the territory of the brewery where there was a phone and to call Storojenko. Since Storojenko did not talk German I assumed that he would call me to answer the phone. And so it was.

After telling the German soldier on the phone to come back, I went to Storojenko and told him that the man who called was some commander who asked us to deliver the beer to the soldier

immediately. Storojenko had no special misgivings, and he gave the beer to the soldier. The German wanted to kiss me for joy, and as a sign of appreciation he gave me a package of cigarettes. Since I gave up smoking a long time ago, I put the cigarettes in my room to give them to someone in exchange for food.

From that time on I somehow became the favorite of that German soldier, who regularly came for the beverage. Every time I was able to get the beer for him quickly and he gave me unfailingly a package of cigarettes. Over a period of time I accumulated about three thousand cigarettes. I tried to sell them in exchange for some food, but nobody wanted them because they were too mild for Russian smokers. Russians prefer cigarettes strong enough to choke an American smoker.

One morning early I heard a knock at the door. I jumped from my bed to see who it was, and here was my German soldier excusing himself for coming in so early because his schedule demanded his prompt return to Shmerinka. In a few moments I was dressed, and when I was about to leave the room, he apologized that he would not bring the usual package of cigarettes because of his great hurry.

Then he took out his own pack and offered me one. I took it and was about to stick it into my coat pocket when he lit a match for me to smoke. I could not say that I was not a smoker since I had already accepted so many cigarettes over the months. I had to smoke on this occasion, my first puff since I quit smoking 16 years before.

This was a disaster, because this cigarette was the beginning of the end of my nonsmoking. Nicotine got the better of me and, before I knew it, I finished all the cigarettes I had accumulated. After I was hooked again on nicotine, I had to provide tobacco for myself. I joined the Russians in their way of smoking. I would buy fresh tobacco leaves from the peasant growers, dry them, cut them, roll the tobacco in newspaper cut to size for cigarettes, then light up and smoke.

When I came to the U.S., I was still a smoker and began to enjoy the heavenly-fine American cigarettes. It was the supreme pleasure I had in those difficult two years in a new culture. In 1951 I quit completely and no conceivable circumstance could induce me to take up the dangerous habit of smoking again. As a scientist I know that had I not stopped when I did, I would have died a long time ago. I am blessed by the fact that my wife not only dislikes but abhors smoking. From time to time I dream of beginning to smoke again, and when I awaken, wringing wet with perspiration, I thank Providence that it was only a dream.

After about four months in Czerniatin, I had established myself with a good reputation in the eyes of the praetor, and Storojenko had given up the idea of having me removed from the brewery or killed. On the contrary he wanted me there for the sake of Lionia, who otherwise would have no music teacher. These facts gave me courage to ask the praetor for a favor.

It had been nine or ten months since I had left Bronitza and I had a craving desire to see my little niece and nephew. Therefore I asked one of the praetor's subordinates, who came for

beer, to arrange for me to see the praetor in his office the following week at a time I was not working. At the appointed time I appeared there.

After a few formalities were exchanged, I asked him to help me go to Bronitza to see Anna and the children. He told me that he would gladly give me permission; however, Jews were not allowed to go by train, and if caught they would be executed. I was inspired to suggest that he could send me as an arrested person with a gendarme. To my great relief the idea seemed acceptable to him; still he needed to check on the availability of a gendarme, which would take some time. After several days the praetor notified me that a gendarme was available and that I could go any time I wished.

Now in 1975 it seems to be unbelievable what I did accomplish. Luck, circumstances, and last but not least, a little savoir faire were on my side. On the agreed day I came to Shmerinka and was told by the praetor's secretary where to go to meet and talk to the gendarme, which I did. I would like to point out that everything was done with the full knowledge and consent of Storojenko. I even promised to look in Mogilev for a book with sheet music for his son and therefore I had his blessings too.

The gendarme and I agreed to meet at the railroad station at a given time. Since I was an "arrested person," a seat for me and the gun-carrying gendarme was assured. Of course, no train ticket was necessary either. I was so excited and proud of my accomplishment with the military and civil authorities that I

cannot remember what time we started or how long the trip lasted. I remember that We arrived in the morning in Mogilev. The gendarme and I agreed to meet after two days, at the headquarters of the Mogilev gendarmerie, and we parted.

My first task was to find a book with sheet music. I was lucky to find one and bought it. This was fortunate because I would continue to live with Storojenko for some time. After taking care of a few other things, I set out on my hike for Bronitza. I had proper documents from the praetor indicating that I was in Mogilev in the interest of the brewery. Besides, in this territory on the Dniester in September 1943 the reverse of the tide of the war was felt considerably. The severity of the authorities had slackened and the gendarmes closed their eyes at irregular happenings in and around the camp. Only a year before they would not have done so. By now they were having second thoughts about the brutalities they committed. The sensed that they would retreat sooner or later and wanted to retreat alive.

The way to Bronitza was a familiar one, in fact, too familiar. The weather was very pleasant, and after a comfortable walk of one and a half hours I was there. On my arrival in Mogilev I had asked friends in the camp about Anna, and found out that she did not live in the house of the factory. In Bronitza I asked an acquaintance where Anna lived and was told the exact place. Before I entered the house, I encountered Anna's older child, Sidi. When she saw me, she was so full of emotions that

she became pale like a ghost, burst into tears, and ran into the house of a Ukrainian neighbor.

Of course Anna was glad to see me, and we had much to tell each other. Anna reported to me that the day I left Mogilev in 1942 to go to the punitive concentration camp, the waiter took over my room even before I arrived in Mogilev. The very next day all were evicted from the house of the distillery, because the house had been given to me and to nobody else. Anna could not make use of the wood I had accumulated under so much sacrifice, fear, and contrivance.

Anna had rented one room from a peasant, and since her husband tailored for the villagers, her family could get by. Sasha, her five-year-old boy, and Sidi, her seven-year-old daughter, were kept away from school and did not recognize one single letter of the alphabet. The children of Bronitza did not go to school either, for no school was open during the years of occupation.

After my two days were over, I said good-bye to them and was on my way to Mogilev. At the indicated point and time I met the gendarme, and we went to the railroad station to wait for the train. The train arrived on time and we climbed into it and traveled all night. In the morning we arrived in Shmerinka where the gendarme got off, and I continued toward Severinovka, the train stop nearest Czerniatin.

On our way to Shmerinka from Mogilev I had persuaded the accompanying gendarme to talk to the locomotive engineer and to give him a package of cigarettes to induce him to slow down the

train when we passed the brewery so that I could jump off and avoid walking five kilometers back to the beer factory. At a short distance from the brewery the train slowed down and I could safely, uneventfully, jump down from the train.

Storojenko was pleased to get the sheet music for his son. The new I brought him about the rapid advancing of the Russian army and about the German soldiers surrendering in masses certainly did not make this German collaborator happy. And I -- what an irony -- had to pretend to share his unhappiness, for I needed to stay in his good graces.

As a result of my conversation with Anna, who during my visit had worked on me to come back to Bronitza, I began to try on various occasions, to induce the praetor to give me a permit to "escape" to Bronitza in case the Russians advanced so rapidly that there would be no time for me to get such a permit. I talked then with the praetor very frankly about the war situation, and he realized that the Germans had lost the war.

CHAPTER XIV

"INSTRUMENTAL" MUSIC

In the evening of December 21, 1943, I heard a knock on my door. Opening it I saw an armed gendarme who entered my room without invitation. He told me that I had to come with him to the village commander, the military boss in the village, the equivalent to an American master sergeant. He was in charge of seeing to it that the peasants delivered their products on a regular basis and that these were sent to Shmerinka.

To all the questions that raced to my mind and that I dared to ask the gendarme, he refused to say more than, "You'll see".

I had heard several weeks before that each commander of concentration camps had orders to kill all inmates of concentration camps upon a German retreat. For the past month we could hear the rumbling of cannons, especially during the night and since the Russian army was advancing rapidly, liberating their occupied territories, I thought my end had arrived.

While I was walking in front of the gendarme in the cold dark night of Russian winter, I thought I would try to run away and be killed attempting to run away rather than be shot by the commander or be sent by him somewhere and be killed there. But the snow to the left and right was three meters high, and there was only a narrow pass to walk in. It would have been useless to try to escape because the gendarme's bullet would have hit me after five seconds. I resigned myself to my fate.

When I arrived at the local "Kommandantur" I was soaking wet from pure fear. The master sergeant was sitting in a soft comfortable chair in a very warm room. He smiled.

"Was that a good omen?" I asked myself.

Indeed it was.

Without offering me a seat, he asked, "Do you play the violin?" Admitting it reluctantly, I wondered with what crime he would associate the violin.

He told me that the military German commander in Shmerinka would like me to play on Christmas eve at the party he was giving for the military and civil administration. As soon as I realized why they called me so late at night, a heavy burden fell from my shoulders. Naturally I accepted, but I told him that I had no violin.

The sergeant told me, "The commander in Shmerinka will take care of that."

I suggested that if I had one more musician, the music would be much nicer. The sergeant told me that he would report fully to the commander.

On Christmas Eve I was brought in a truck by a gendarme to the party. There was a violin waiting for me. The other musician was a drummer from the concentration camp in Shmerinka. The exercises which I had practiced with Lionia now came in handy. We played for the Germans all the songs and dances I had known and played as a boy. The Germans were especially pleased with the old waltzes, and they danced merrily with the neighboring Russian women, their temporary wives. The mixture of

beer, women, and violin-drum music made the wartime Christmas party a resounding success. The Germans in all their gaiety had a worried look; they knew that the tomorrow and the near future would be everything but gay.

The commander was pleased with my performance. So was the three-hundred-pound cook, who pushed into my pocket an unwrapped piece of Kuchen as an expression of satisfaction and perhaps even friendship.

Before I left, the commander told me that he wanted me back for the evening of December 31 to play, and he gave me the violin to practice in my room at the brewery. I was overjoyed to bring back a violin to my room. The dream and hope of keeping it gave me a tremendous thrill.

I recognized that the strings of the violin were taken from a piano. Therefore, there was no reason to fear that the strings might break. In fact these piano strings lasted twenty-five years, and had they not been replaced with good American violin strings in 1969, they would have lasted forever.

Back in the brewery I practiced in my free time. I had plenty of time because the brewery was on a three-day workweek due to short supply of fuel. I quickly regained some of the dexterity I had previously enjoyed.

I played whatever came to my mind, and little by little I fell into my old habit of composing a tune. I composed a sad piece. I tried to make it express all my feelings of woe and despair. I wanted to express my protest against the whole universe for the injustice done to my fellow men and me. By

playing and replaying it, I discovered that the song could be played in tango time, a very popular rhythm in those days. I gave it the title "Tango of Hope".

My constant thought from the beginning of my concentration camp days had been to survive. All the time I was so sure that the monster Hitler and his cohorts would disappear sooner or later, and I fought against disappearing before they did. Gradually during that week between the parties, the idea come to my mind to try to survive a little longer with an attempt to flatter the commander. By then he had already received the order, in case of a German retreat, to exterminate all the inmates of the concentration camps, including me. My flattering trick would be to announce at the beginning of the New Year's Eve party that I had composed a tango which I dedicated to the commander.

When New Year's Eve arrived, I was picked up by a gendarme from the brewery and taken to Shmerinka, where the party was to be held. It was a big, beautifully decorated room at the railroad station in this huge railroad center used for dispatching troops to the eastern front. Although the battle front was still far away, I could hear even above the pulsating, noisy Shmerinka, the thunder of cannons from the battle front.

When I entered the room with "my" violin, I saw the fat cook. He gave me a cordial welcome and asked me whether I liked the piece of Kuchen he had slipped into my pocket. In this moment a new idea come to me. It would be better that not a Jew, but the Aryan cook, make the announcement that I had composed a

tango in honor of the commander. The cook was plainly pleased when I asked him to make the announcement after the drummer and I had played for a while.

The cook stopped the festivity and announced with his (Baerenstimme) voice as loud as a bellowing bull, "The engineer has composed a tango in honor of our beloved 'Kommandant' and will play it now".

The composition was so well received that I was ordered to play it again and again, while the German officers and their Russian women danced and danced.

That evening an incident occurred which raised sky-high my hopes of being liberated soon from my imprisonment. A group of German soldiers arrived from Germany to be sent to the battle front. They dropped into the room where I was playing. They demanded to have some of the food that was piled up on a large table. But the local Germans refused to allow them to partake of their substantial refreshments.

They all began to holler and offend each other, and many of them exchanged fist blows. For me it was a delightful sight, and I was jubilant. The decay of the morale of these nonhumans was obvious and eloquent. At the peak of the brawl one officer cried out loud, "Es ist eine Schade, Deutsche unter Deutschen" ["It is a shame, Germans among Germans"]. The intruders were finally pushed out, and with them my hope of freedom now. The party continued as if nothing had happened.

At three o'clock in the morning the party finally broke up and I was taken back to the brewery by the same truck which

brought me to Shmerinka. I did not ask the commander whether I could take the violin with me, but just took it. Some German must have stolen or taken it away from somebody. I was never asked to return it. After my liberation both from the occupying Germans and the liberating Russians, I left the violin with my sister in the Bukowina and departed for Italy. I often thought and dreamed of that violin, but I never dreamed of being able to get it into my possession again.

With a hope of retrieving my violin, as well as seeing some relatives, I tried several times to get a Romanian visa before 1967, but I was always refused. The political situation in Romania under the leadership of President Ceausescu, changed drastically after the Russians overran Czechoslovakia in 1968 and President Nixon visited Romania in 1969. Visitor's visas became readily available.

While I was on a research leave as a University Professor in 1969, I received word from the Romanian Embassy in Washington that if I came to Romania I would be received by the president himself. This invitation came in response to a letter of complaint from me to the Romanian president that a Romanian scientist, to whom I had written a letter expressing the desire to meet him while in Romania, did not answer my letter.

I did go to Romania and was received by Vice President Statescu, with whom I had a very hearty talk, especially about cultural exchanges between Romania and the U.S. I never told anybody in Romania the name of the scientist who did not answer

my request to meet him because I did not want to make trouble for him.

From Bucharest I went to Suczawa, my native town, to visit my sister and nephew, who had played on my violin for a number of years. I saw my violin exactly as I had left it. The same piano strings, the same bow, and the same beaten-up cardboard case. I took the violin away with me, luckily having no difficulties at the customs. Needless to say, I was thrilled to get back that violin, the use of which probable had saved my life.

From Romania I went on to Tel-Aviv, Israel. There I played for two boyhood friends for whom I had played often as a teenager in my home town in the early twenties. Sweet nostalgic vibrations stirred us all. I have the violin here in my adopted country, and when I play on it, all these memories sweep over me in waves.

When the tides of the war turned against the Germans, they were in constant retreat before the victorious Russian soldiers. At the time the Germans abandoned the area where I was a prisoner, a standing order was to execute all camp inmates.

Many of the inmates who did not escape from the camp in Shmerinka by hiding in the woods and mountains were mercilessly executed by the Germans who were the single bosses of the camps, after the Romanian civil and military authorities had fled. I feel absolutely sure that the commander showed his gratitude for my composition and the music I played on my violin by sparing my life.

After my arrival in the U.S. and my marriage to Raidie, we wrote lyrics to the tango and retitled it "'America' we love". We tried to express my appreciation for the freedom and opportunities I have enjoyed here -- in sharp contrast to the restrictions and perils of war-torn East Europe. In 1960 this song was sung at the Christmas program by the Nurses Chorus of Augustana Hospital School of Nursing in Chicago under the direction of the well known professor, Dr. Harry T. Carlson. It was received with great empathy and enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XV

LIBERATED, YES?

I remained Lionia's music teacher until the first retreat of the Germans through Shmerinka, when Storojenko fled with his family in his recently-purchased truck. It was a puzzle how Storojenko could buy a truck from the Germans because everybody knew that the Germans had practically lost the war and needed every vehicle for themselves for retreating or escaping.

After the Russian administration was reestablished in that part of the Ukraine, I was told by an NKGB officer that the Russians caught turncoat Storojenko with his truck and found two sacks of gold coin rubles he had accumulated with his wheelings and dealings.

I was afraid to show any interest in him because the NKGB would have immediately suspected me of being his friend. Besides, by that time I already knew that Storojenko wanted me dead. I did not incriminate him, neither did I help him. I assume that his own Russian brothers executed him without trial for the murders he had committed.

In February 1944 there raged a bloody battle between the retreating Germans and advancing Russians on the Eastern front at Jitomir, ending with the retreat of the Germans. The repercussion of the Russian victory at Jitomir was so devastating for the Germans and so far-reaching for the Russians that both civil and military authorities of the Germans and Romanians

abandoned Shmerinka and therefore also Czerniatin. Storojenko fled with his truck with the Germans and Romanians.

A counterattack by the Germans at Jitomir a few days later caused a significant Russian retreat. This temporary German victory brought back a few German and Romanian civil authorities to Shmerinka, but I never saw any of these authorities again in Czerniatin. About three weeks later the Russians attacked again and annihilated the Germans there. During these three weeks of respite I was recognized by the Russian workers as the de facto leader. I displayed great activity in the interest of the brewery. I prevailed on the workers to continue their regular work and to bring in from the nearby frozen river, in this critical late-winter season, the ice supply that was absolutely essential to beer production.

At the end of each day I distributed beer to every worker. This pleased them immensely, and during these three weeks of personal freedom the storage for ice was filled to capacity, with enough for a whole year. Meanwhile I got word from the partisans to do everything to keep the brewery ready to function after the arrival of the victorious Russian army.

March 15, 1944, the German army was in disarray and retreated in great disorder. However, on the 18th of March the brewery and its territory were occupied by 200 retreating SS men. They had more than 20 tanks, heavy guns, trucks and all kinds of ammunition. It seemed that they would engage in a battle with the oncoming Russian soldiers. Luckily, the Russians had been informed about it and began to encircle the territory to avoid a

battle with the SS in order to prevent the destruction of the brewery.

Completely unaware of the Russian strategy, the SS soldiers began to relax and drink beer. The SS did not suspect that I was a camp inmate, and since no Russian in the brewery talked German, I served as interpreter for them and the Russian mayor of the village.

The 20th of March the commander of the 200 SS men told me that he had orders to blow up the brewery. I persuaded him and a second lieutenant, who wanted to shoot holes in the tanks to let the beer run out, to postpone it for the following day. I assured them that the Russians could still be driven back and that they would have destroyed a good thing for the Germans, a beer factory for beer lovers. I succeeded with this and other tactics until the morning of March 22nd, when the SS commander received an order to abandon the factory and to retreat immediately.

Their haste in leaving did not permit the destruction of the factory. Because the Russian workers told me that the second lieutenant was asking all of them, "Wo ist der Ingenieur," I hid myself in the cold cellar of the brewery behind a beer tank. Had that lieutenant (the meanest Hitlerite ever) found me, he would have shot me on the spot because it had dawned on him that I was a Jew. The Germans had not enough time to blow up the factory as they had been ordered, but they did the next best thing to comply with Hitler's order to raze everything to the ground. They set the brewery on fire and escaped.

When I smelled smoke in my hideout, I ran out and saw the wing above the ice storage afire. The straw covering the ice was burning, but the melting ice produced water, which was absorbed by the straw and retarded the burning. It was just a happy coincidence that the Germans saw straw and thought it to be the ideal thing to burn the factory and the houses around to the ground. Quickly I began to carry water in a pail from a nearby well and poured it on the fire. For fifteen minutes I carried water to the fire by myself. Finally I was joined by two workers of the factory and we were successful in extinguishing the fire. The reason that nobody was in the brewery was that everybody was hiding everywhere but in the brewery, because they knew that the Germans wanted to blow up the place. Another reason for not being in the factory was that people were afraid of being killed by these vicious SS killers even if they were not Jews. The 18-year-old son of the brewmaster, Kabarovski, was viciously killed by those mad dogs. [The accompanyingn Russian document, signed by three Russian witnesses, testifies to my account.]

The damage done to the factory was minimal. Without me and my pails of water it would have burned to the ground, for there was no fire-extinguishing equipment in the factory or the village. The brewery was in full production within a few days. Not only could all 150 workers of the factory continue their regular jobs, but by salvaging the brewery I saved the German government $4,000,000 of additional war damages.

Since we were not paid for our work during the three weeks between the retreat of the Germans and the takeover by the

Russians, the commercial director Schubert, the head accountant, the gate guard, and I got together in a huddle. We decided to do on a small scale what Storojenko had done for years. We sold certain amounts of beer for our own pay and benefit. To the workers I gave, in spite of Schubert's warning, generous amounts of beer, which they sold to the villagers of Czerniatin for food. I asked for and received gold coins for my share and in three weeks I accumulated twelve gold coins.

When I came to the U.S. in 1947, I brought with me six of these coins, leaving the other six with Anna. In the U.S. at that time, such a coin would have cost $18.

Many times since then have I regretted endangering my life to save the factory twice, by outwitting the SS in their plan to blow it up, and by extinguishing the fire. Very soon I learned from my liberators that threat, injustice, suppression and dishonesty in the highest degree were their trademarks.

March 22, 1944 was an unforgettable day in the brewery in Czerniatin, Ukraine. I was liberated by the Russian Army from my status of an inmate of Hitler's concentration camp to the status shared by 200,000,000 Russian citizens. Like them I would live in constant fear of doing something that would make me end in a Russian concentration or labor camp or even jail.

Small groups of Russian soldiers stopped at the factory and demanded beer. Since I was the unofficial and involuntary head of the brewery I gave them small amounts. I did it gladly because I thought I would gain my freedom through their sacrifices. A day later while in my room I was told that a

commissar wanted to talk to me. When I came outside, I saw a man in uniform sitting on the biggest horse I have ever seen. He told me that he was a commissar and that if I gave one more drop of beer to a soldier, he would shoot me on the spot. When he left the factory the soldiers besieged me and threatened to kill me should I refuse to give them beer.

It was a hell of a situation. All my attempts to get out of my dilemma failed, until overnight the Russian civilian authorities were reinstalled in Czerniatin. Only then, after I threatened to leave the territory of the brewery, several armed militiamen were delegated to the brewery as guards. They took over my responsibility of dealing with the Russian soldiers or commissars.

One week later I was called by the Russian Food Authorities to the headquarters in Vinnitza, which had jurisdiction over the Czerniatin brewery. Traveling 250 kilometers to Vinnitza was a major undertaking, because no trains carried civilians. By hitchhiking from one military train to another I arrived in Vinnitza in three days. There the super-boss, called Deinega, officially gave me the function and title of Chief Engineer of the brewery in Czerniatin. As chief engineer I was responsible for the quality and quantity of beer production. The photo of the document, which by only a miracle has remained in my possession, testifies to my appointment.

This promotion, which gave me a lot of power, flattered me because only yesterday I was hated like a pariah. Now I felt again like a useful human being. But soon enough I would find

out that the danger of landing in jail was much greater with increased power. My new boss in Vinnitza warned me that control checks of the brewery would be made from time to time and that an excess or shortage of beer represented a serious crime.

My boss, Deinega, expected from a ton of barley a certain amount of beer of standard quality. When I told him that I could produce more beer of standard quality per ton of barley by my new procedure, he rejected my proposal. The reason for his rejection was that other breweries under his jurisdiction did not know my procedure, and it might not be workable in some of his other factories. I would put them in a bad light because they would not produce the same quantity of beer per ton of raw material. So I was expected to produce less, in Deinega's way.

After receiving my new assignment from the Vinnitza office as chief engineer of the brewery, I moved into a regular one-bedroom apartment assigned to the chief engineer before the war. During the years of German occupation, Storojenko had allowed a relative of his, a fine painter, to move into this place with his wife and two children. The praetor in Shmerinka, whose portrait he had painted, was very pleased with it and had authorized his stay in that apartment, because there was no chief engineer in the brewery throughout the occupation years.

I am sure that the painter, with whom I had been very friendly, had known nothing about Storojenko's plots to have me removed or killed. When Storojenko escaped, hoping to avoid being caught by his Russian brothers, the painter had also left. His reason to fear was that nearly all subjects of his paintings

were Russian persecutions, concentration camps in Siberia, and the dreadful famine in Russia in the thirties when millions died of hunger. The victims, so portrayed, had refused to join collective farms and consequently paid for their refusals with their lives. I neither saw nor heard about that painter again.

Two weeks after receiving my new title, I was in the courtyard discussing some matters with the commercial director, Schubert, when I suddenly had a feeling of being observed. I slowly turned my head and saw at a distance of about 100 feet two women whose faces, in my surprise, looked faintly familiar.

I was almost stunned with disbelief when I realized that one of them was Lotty. While various thoughts and questions raced through my mind, I walked toward them as if hypnotized. Halfway toward them my stupor disappeared, and I beheld my long-lost sister, a living Lotty. I hurried to her, threw my arms around her, and only then I realized that the other woman was Anna. Of course, both had been liberated about the time I was.

Needless to say, it was Anna who had arranged the Herculean trip to Czerniatin. There were no passenger trains, because the war was still going on and it was still a long way to Berlin. It was May 1944, a year before that most monstrous criminal in history committed suicide. When the miracle happened that Lotty returned safely, Anna, knowing well of my unconquerable distress on account of Lotty's uncertain fate, could not bear the thought of their leaving for Czernowitz without my seeing her. Therefore they hitchhiked on military trains to Czerniatin to see me.

I forgot that I was on duty now in the brewery, and without excusing myself to Schubert, I took them to my apartment. There Lotty, thin but happy, related her odyssey. Briefly, this is what had happened to her.

On their retreat with the Russian army she and her husband were many times bombed by the Germans. Though many fellow-refugees were killed, miraculously both of them were not hurt. They marched and hitched rides on trains, wagons and trucks until they arrived at a collecting center of refugees. From there her husband was drafted into the Russian army and was sent to the front at Leningrad.

Lotty was sent east to Uzbekistan to work. Until her recent return to Mogilev she had worked in the fields, plowing, seeding, harvesting and loading sacks of grain -- all this barefooted. This work was too heavy for her, and the consequences would show up a few years later.

On her way back to Mogilev she heard about the massacres and the dying from hunger, cold and sickness in Transnistria. She learned that Mogilev had been a collecting center of all Bukowinaer being sent to various concentration camps. She had clung to the hope of finding me alive because I was her darling brother with savoir faire, an intellectual, a specialist. She was happy and pleasantly surprised to find us all alive except our brother. He had worked in the Donbas region in Russia, where he was drafted into the army; he was soon killed in the battle for Harkov.

Anna and Lotty stayed two days with me. I was glad I was not living in a single room any longer and could now provide them an acceptable place to stay. What irony that on her way to Mogilev Lotty had stayed nearly 24 hours in the station at Severinovka, waiting with other home-goers for a ride on a military train. This station was only five kilometers from the Czerniatin brewery. I could have walked there to see her, and what a relief it would have been!

Before they left, I gave Lotty a German army blanket, which I had purchased with beer from a German solider before the Germans left the area. Anna wanted to take along beer to sell in Mogilev. After searching a long time for a suitable container, I gave her twenty liters, all she could carry. I took them to Severinovka, and when a military train came along I gave some beer to one of the foremen, enticing him to arrange for my sisters' comfort all the way to Mogilev.

For weeks I kept busy getting ready for my new task.

One day an NKGB [later called KGB] man in plainclothes came to the brewery for an inspection and some talk about Storojenko. I did not dare to offer him a bottle of beer for fear of committing a bribery. I was summoned to go the next day to the NKGB chief at his headquarters in Shmerinka. Paralyzed with fear I got through the sleepless night with the worst possible apprehensions as to what the NKGB wanted of me.

I dared not take the horses and carriage to which I was entitled as chief engineer, to travel the 16 kilometers to Shmerinka, because the NKGB could have found fault with my using

state property for private use. So I went on foot to Shmerinka. The weather was not severe in the month of May. Wearing shoes weighing three pounds each with soles of auto tires, I made it in three hours.

On arrival at the NKGB headquarters I entered the hall leading to the room indicated in my summons. A few people were waiting. I gave my summons to a man in uniform, who took it into an office. Returning, he told me to wait until I was called. I waited for about two hours, continuously examining the situation for clues as to what they might want of me or why I should be arrested. And arrested I was. I could not leave the hall at all without being followed, like a prisoner, by the man who had taken my summons. He followed me even when I went to the men's room outside, and waited until I came out.

During my waiting an NKGB major came out from the office and threw looks at me that could make my blood clot. This drama he repeated several times.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, that same major came out and called me into his office. He was the NKGB commander. He began with telling me that, because I worked for the Germans and produced beer for them, I could be sentenced to jail. But he would take into consideration the fact that I saved the factory from destruction, and he would overlook my German connection. This was an intimidation in order to extort something from me he was reluctant to express. However, from his astutely suggestive remarks it suddenly dawned on me that he wanted beer for himself and his staff on a weekly basis.

Under ordinary circumstances our beer was distributed only to stores and restaurants that had a special permit issued by the headquarters of the food authorities in Vinnitza. Although I knew I would commit a criminal act in giving beer without a permit, I knew that an indictment could come only from and through the NKGB. Solely to wiggle out of that predicament, I promised that I would give them 25 liters of beer weekly. The NKGB major promised that he would send the money for the beer with a carrier and would provide a barrel with the capacity of 25 liters. We agreed on the first pick-up and he let me go.

Although relieved of the scare and anxiety of this day, I kept on wondering how long it would take the NKGB to catch me and impose impossible extortions. On my way back to the brewery I came to the conclusion that I could not remain in that place very long without ending up in jail or in Siberia.

I decided to immediately seek for ways to obtain my release from the beer factory. But to obtain a dismissal from a position as high as mine was as difficult as getting out of jail without finishing one's sentence. Impossible! Yet, how right I was to come to that decision, even unilaterally, the following account will show.

On Friday, the day of beer distribution by orders from the headquarters, the NKGB messenger, himself an NKGB man, arrived with a barrel having the capacity of 60 liters, not 25 as agreed. Sending the barrel was a well-calculated trick. To transport beer any distance on such bumpy roads as existed then the barrel had to be completely filled; otherwise the dissolved carbon

dioxide would escape, completely ruining the beer. The NKGB major knew that; so I had to fill the barrel with 60 liters, instead of 25. Then the second trick was that when I asked the messenger for the money for 25 liters of beer, he said the commander did not give him any money. How cunning the Russian Secret Police, and how dishonest! I spent sleepless nights in fear of being trapped by the NKGB and winding up in jail. Since no new director for the brewery was named yet, I had to carry responsibilities beyond my ability and authority as chief engineer of the brewery. I requested insistently that the district director nominate a new director. After long dickering a new director, A. Ivanko, finally arrived.

The new man recognized my merits for saving the factory from dynamite and fire and for having raw materials for the production of beer. However he soon began to sell and give away beer without proper authorization and kept the money for himself. If the NKGB had discovered the cheating, according to Russian law I would have been as much responsible as the director.

The NKGB had an effective system of checking. The driver of any vehicle loaded with beer was apt to be stopped by the NKGB at any point on the road. They asked the driver for the bill of lading and checked the number of barrels with their contents of beer; each barrel had an engraved number indicating the number of liters. Barrels larger than indicated on the bill of lading, or an excess of barrels, revealed fraud.

There were two alternatives if caught -- either confess and go to jail or bribe the NKGB man. Offering bribes to NKGB men

was risky and temerarious. Once somebody was in the clutches of the NKGB and made a deal with them, his fate was sealed. The NKGB men became leaches and blackmailers. Beware if you even once did not do as they wanted. Not complying would be equal to one's end.

In a short time tension developed between me and Ivanko. He had to steal beer and sell it to support his two children and wife since his salary was not sufficient for his family to survive on. The director in Vinnitza, as Ivanko told me, was given a good portion of the money he obtained from the stolen beer, and he wanted to slip me also a few nickels. I was very upset about the paucity of the rubles he gave me as my share because I could not possibly live on my salary either. The day soon dawned when Ivanko and I almost came to blows. I determined to leave the brewery and to move on to a city close to a border, hoping to escape. To make such a decision was easy, but how could I carry it out?

Mine was a tremendously difficult problem. One could not quit a job in Russia, but one could be fired via jail. The common way to be fired in Russia was not to show up for work for three days. The employee was taken to court and sentenced at the defendant's choice either to continue to work at the same place for three months without pay or to go to jail for the same period. In jail at least he had board and room, although he had to work there also without pay. Afterwards, he did not have to return to his previous place of work and could look for another job.

Then there was another difficulty. To move to another city one needed a permit from the NKGB. Therefore I had to overcome two hurdles -- to be allowed to quit the job but not via jail and to obtain the propusk [permit] to leave my place of residence.

The disagreement I had with Ivanko was a blessing in disguise. When I mentioned that I would like to return to Czernowitz, from where I had gone to the concentration camps, Ivanko was overjoyed. He saw a chance of getting rid of me, who exerted a certain degree of power by virtue of having saved the factory.

Ivanko promised he would help in any way he could. Indeed he put his shoulder to the wheel to help straighten out my affair with the NKGB in Shmerinka. He promised to continue to deliver beer without pay every week. He was so helpful also because my replacement at the brewery would not be a "chief engineer." Ivanko told me that my replacement would be only an "engineer," whom he would easily and completely manage and who would not interfere with his cheating the government to amass a lot of money.

Ivanko told me that after my resignation had been accepted in the Central Office in Vinnitza and the propusk from the NKGB had been obtained, he would allow the only truck in the factory to take me to Czernowitz, in recognition of my efforts to save the factory. This was a real tribute. Both the Central Office and the NKGB complied with my requests to them, and I was allowed to leave the brewery.

The day of my departure finally came, June 20, 1944.

All the workers and employees were gathered in the yard of the brewery to say goodbye. I was dressed in my best -- a well-worn suit, shirt and tie, and my almost-new custom-made black shining boots, acquired with money Storojenko paid me for Lionia's violin lessons. Although Sasha did not say anything, I could see he was disappointed because I did not leave him my tire-soled shoes that I had worn three years. I dared not leave the old shoes because I did not know what problems I might have to face in the future.

CHAPTER XVI

FREEDOM BOUND

The gates of the brewery opened, and I began a long winding journey to freedom. We were hardly 50 feet away from the brewery when gun salvos boomed from the factory yard. It was a farewell salute from the people who had a place to work because I had prevented the Germans from destroying the factory. Needless to say, I felt honored, and breathed a mixture of regret and happiness.

When we were about 1000 feet from the factory, two NKGB men appeared on the road and waved their hands for the driver to halt. The driver stopped, and one of them approached me with a document, an order to search my luggage and me. I was frightened to death because in my luggage were the twelve gold coins. The day before, I had hidden them in a small watch pocket under the belt of a dirty old pair of work pants and fastened them in with a safety pin. The gods had mercy on me, and the NKGB men did not even search the dirty pants, perhaps because they smelled bad.

Had the searchers found the gold coins, I would have been locked up within an hour. Some man in the factory must have said something to Ivanko, who in turn notified the NKGB that I had gold coins. The NKGB consequently ordered the search, which lasted about an hour. Since no contraband was found, I was permitted to continue my journey, and we arrived in Czernowitz after eight hours of traveling.

Before I could enter the city, another group of NKGB men searched my luggage as they did with everyone else arriving in the city. To my great relief they also failed to find the concealed coins. The driver drove me to Lotty's house. She had returned to Czernowitz soon after her visit to me in Czerniatin and given shelter to Anna and her children.

Soon I moved into the apartment from where I was taken in 1941 to the concentration camp three years earlier. Luckily it was not occupied, and a government regulation was that those who escaped the holocaust were entitled to get back their apartments and their belonging if they could find them. I found in my apartment 30 volumes of the Mayer's Konversations Lexikon [encyclopedia] and some other books. Every book appeared to me as a long-lost friend.

Some neighbors told me that a recently arrived Russian, editor of a Ukrainian newspaper, who lived nearby, had removed from my apartment my wardrobe and china cabinet. These had been given to me by a former private student, when he inherited them from his parents, because his apartment was too small to keep them.

Therefore I went to that Russian and asked him to return my two pieces of furniture. However, knowing his authority and power as editor of a newspaper, he arrogantly refused to return them. My threat to take him to court left him completely unaffected.

Indeed I went to a lawyer, who used to live in the same student dormitory as I and told him the story. His answer was astonishing and wise.

"I advise you to drop your intention to go to court with that Russian. The same thing could happen to you that happened to so many others. One night the NKGB could appear in your apartment to arrest you, and nobody would ever hear from you again."

He was persuasive! Such a thing had happened to Sasha's father. Such was and is the pattern of communist justice and the application of Russian law and order!

Because it was my intention to stay in Russia as briefly as possible, I was glad to obtain a first-hand demonstration of how justice was administered there.

Besides the illegal and dangerous gold, I had not a penny to my name. I had to look for a job to provide the minimum necessities for living, especially one which would allow me to quit easily whenever I could leave Russia, legally or illegally. Czernowitz was near the Romanian border, a good place from which to slip into Romania, which was at that time still a monarchy under King Michael.

After hunting all around for a suitable job, I was offered a temporary job in the Veterinary Bacteriological Laboratory as head of the Toxicological Section. It was only temporary because with my three Ph.D. degrees I was not qualified for a permanent position. According to Russian regulation only a veterinary technician or a veterinary physician could occupy this position.

The director of the Veterinary Bacteriological Laboratory, and especially his superior, could not understand that a chemist is better qualified to determine the presence of arsenic, strychnine or other organic and inorganic poisons in animals than a veterinarian is. But I was very satisfied with that insecure job, since my chief aim was to say goodbye to Russian forever.

Czernowitz was full of former inmates of concentration camps liberated by the Russians. Many returnees were caught by the Russians on the streets or in their homes and were sent to central Russia to work in coal mines and factories. Many of my friends so taken died prematurely in faraway places in Russia. This was the saddest tragedy for uncounted former concentration camp inmates. After surviving the Nazi holocaust, they were driven to their deaths by their liberators. Those used for military or paramilitary duties had a better fate.

All these weary wanderers wanted to leave Russia. Many who succeeded sneaked out clandestinely, since the Russians then, as today, would not let people go.

Many jokes originated among these former inmates, which are characteristic for that time. Here is one of them.

One former inmate met another on the street, and he asked, "Do you know, Stalin is coming to Czernowitz?"

"Why?"

"Because Stalin heard that from Czernowitz one can easily escape."

The way the Russians hired employees in the Bukowina was most absurd. This absurdity resulted from a lack of

qualifications in the hiring personnel. In one high school a man with a university degree in French was hired to teach mathematics, and a woman with a degree in mathematics was hired to teach French. Such ridiculous assignments were common in any establishment they created or took over from a previous management. The Bukowinaer, who have a worldwide reputation as highly cultured people, were shocked by this chaotic management. Many of them, who had been either communists or supporters of communism in the past turned away now in disgust from this kind of communist order. Since they made no bones about their feelings and their change of heart, many of them were put in jail and taken from there to Siberia.

In a short time I realized I could not live on my salary of 600 rubles a month. The salary I received could cover only rent and eight days of modest living expenses. What about the remaining days in the month? Here in the Bacteriological Laboratory I could steal only microorganisms. The Russian civilians seemed to have plenty of money and were ready to buy anything one wanted to sell. So I sold some of my few possessions because I had to live. Soon I remained with just my indispensable things and had nothing else to sell.

By chance I was introduced by a friend to a Russian officer who told me that he badly wanted certain drugs to take with him to sell in Kiev, where his relatives lived. Under Russian law this would have been a treasonous offense, but he would take his chances. I was able to get him some of the drugs and thus earned

some food money, but it was a one-time affair. Another turn of events led to better earnings.

Because very few toxicological analyses were required, the director assigned me to work in the bacteriological section. I soon became his most reliable bacteriologist. He was pleased and offered me a steady job as bacteriologist, a position I was entitled to hold with my degree in chemistry. The irony of Russian logic! A Ph.D. degree in chemistry did not qualify me as a toxicologist but qualified me as a bacteriologist. Working in bacteriology, I soon discovered that there was a lack of microscopes. The Germans had destroyed or taken with them everything of value and usefulness including the microscopes in this laboratory. The same thing was true in all other laboratories, where microscopes were needed badly.

One day I passed by a flea market, where people sold their own things to buy food. To my surprise I saw very valuable parts of microscopes, such as lenses, oculars, stands and mirrors. The sellers had collected these parts from the streets, where the Germans, not understanding the true value of these parts, threw them around on Hitler's order to destroy everything. I bought many parts with a hopeful intention of using them in the construction of a microscope that I could sell.

In my free time I began to put the pieces together, but some essential parts were missing. For this reason I went to various laboratories to inquire about spare microscope parts. In some cases I paid for parts; in other I gave in exchange some of my

own excess parts; and many times I went to a mechanic and paid him to work in his free time to construct missing parts.

After a good amount of time and struggle I succeeded in making a complete good microscope and sold it with a profit of 1,800 rubles. The buyers were very grateful because they could do what was expected of them, making their jobs secure. The greatest portion of this money went to support Anna and her children, for her husband had been drafted into the Russian army.

These earnings, corresponding to my salary of three months, stimulated me to build more microscopes. Indeed, I put together nine microscopes. One of these I sold to the Veterinary Laboratory, though to do so I had to share my receipts with the director.

There is a justifiable question as to how the Russians themselves managed to live. Although I do not know all the tricks they employed to get more money to supplement their salaries, the Russians are masters in resourcefulness and tricks. An example is the way the director of the Veterinary Laboratory supplemented his salary.

A part of his job was to inspect a number of butcher shops and also the free market, where peasants brought their slaughtered animals to sell. The butchers generously provided him with the finest meat in exchange for letting them make their deals with the public to supplement their own salaries.

On the free market he was the absolute boss. He could send the seller of contaminated meat through the courts into jail for years. The peasants knew that, but for bribery with money (he

would not take their unclean meat), he let them do their nefarious business. If some days the yield from meat sellers was not good, he could use me as a good source of income.

He would come into the laboratory and tell me to order some alcohol. As director, he could not order it because alcohol there, as everywhere else, was under strict state supervision. Only the heads of sections could order alcohol. One day the director told me to order ten liters of alcohol and I did. Three days later I found one liter and a half left. The rest he had undoubtedly sold. Nobody would dare to ask him where the alcohol had gone. Every Russian had his own conniving and contriving scheme to scrounge some extras.

One day while I was working in the laboratory, tow NKGB men in uniform walked in and asked to see the director. After a short conference with him in the office they came out with the director, who pointed me out to them. The NKGB men told me that I was under arrest and that I had to come with them.

They had no means of transportation and asked me to take them to my apartment. There they searched everywhere, even in the ashes of the woodstove, but they found nothing.

Nonetheless I had to go with them to their headquarters. On the way I tried to find out why they had arrested me.

They would say only, "You'll find out."

When we arrived at the NKGB headquarters, they searched me, removed everything from my pockets, and then put me in a cell with about nine or ten hardened criminals, one of whom was awaiting trial for murder.

The dimensions of the room were ten by twelve feet. There were no beds. There was some loose straw by two opposite walls, which was spread out on the floor before prisoners went to sleep.

To describe the frustration, anxiety, fear and despair I lived through, although for only a few hours, is impossible. I was not even told why I was arrested. At once I saw myself already transported to Siberia and lost all hope of being a free man outside Russia. My mental torture can be understood only by those victims who have experienced Russian tyranny. My thoughts kept on racing around everything and everybody trying to figure out why in the world the NKGB had arrested me and why they did not want to tell me the reason.

After a half hour in the cell, at about 4 p.m., I felt a stinging itch behind my neck. Instinctively my hand reached to scratch the place and my fingers felt something on the itchy spot. I grabbed it with two fingers, and looking at it I was not surprised to see a louse. Ah, such a filthy place! One comforting thought was that I was immune to typhus, the disease which seemed to be the weapon of a louse against man.

As I had read many times in the newspapers before the war, but not believing it then, the NKGB interrogates only during the night. So it was with me. At eleven p.m. I was called for interrogation. The interrogator and torturer must have heard my heart pounding when I appeared before him. I was stiff and pale.

He asked me first, "What did you sell?" I had sold many of my personal possessions, the microscopes and the drugs, on all of

which I had earned some money, and I did not know what he was referring to.

I was afraid that he might have heard of the drug deal, which was a very serious crime, as I had found out from the supplier. Regardless of how much the interrogator insisted and pressed, I did not give in until through a little mistake he made, I understood that he was concerned about the microscopes. Through my persistence he unintentionally hinted that he was referring to a place where I had sold two microscopes within two months.

I admitted selling two microscopes. He did not know about the other seven, although, as I learned later, it would have been better if he had known. He asked me where I got them. I told him about buying parts at the flea market, a Russian bazaar, about exchanging parts with other laboratories, and about working with a mechanic for parts I could not find. His mind was set on the idea that I had stolen the microscopes; he thought no one single man was capable of assembling such a complicated, so-called factory-made piece of equipment.

Now I felt that I had the upper hand. Although I had obtained an unusually high price for each microscope, I could have asked for even more. According to Russian law I could have asked any price I wanted for any object if I had made it on my own time. To verify my story the interrogator asked me for names and addresses of the people in the various laboratories where I had exchanged microscope parts. Under no arguments did he believe that I had bought most of the parts at the bazaar, and I

could not prove that. According to Russian law the burden is on the accused to prove his innocence. After two hours of interrogation I was led back to my jail cell.

My fear now was that there could pass three months and even more before the NKGB would handle my case. This fear was based on the facts that I was not a Russian citizen and that I wanted to go back to Italy. I claimed that my home had been there for the last fifteen years and that I had lost my naturalized Italian citizenship on account of the law in Italy after the Hitler-Mussolini pact in 1938. My claim was a bluff to get out of Russian, while in truth I was never an Italian citizen. Suddenly the Russians considered me a fascist because I wanted to go back to Italy.

Back in my cell I lay down on the straw, dressed as I was, and I could hear my heart hammering with despair. Maybe I slept one hour. At six a.m. the guard came to tell us to get ready to go to the washroom. What sight! What a stench! There were no doors in the washrooms, and the toilets were lined up, one close to the other. I will never forget that.

After we returned to the cell, one young man told all us prisoners why he was arrested. In order to make a living he had bought merchandise in one province and transported it by train to another to sell it for a profit. He was caught.

When he was asked by the arresting NKGB man where the merchandise came from, he insisted, "I stole it."

For stealing he would have had to spend one year in jail. For merchandising, the penalty was fifteen years.

My sister Lotty, who had discovered that I was in jail, and the director of the Veterinary Bacteriological Laboratory independently began moves to hasten the process of investigation. The director was concerned especially that the NKGB could squeeze out from me a confession that he accepted half my profit when he bought a microscope for the laboratory. I was unaware of the efforts made to speed up the investigation. The hours spent in jail seemed to me years of desolation. I gave up all hopes of every leaving Russia. Only suspicion is sufficient in Russia to put one in jail.

Suddenly a military guard opened the jail door at about eleven a.m. and called me to come to the investigator. The investigator had, as before, a poker face. He told me that he had inquired in the various laboratories and found that my claims were correct. Therefore I was free to go back to work. How I felt cannot be described. Mostly angry. If I desired before to leave Russian, now I wanted to leave it quickly, or not to live any longer. After receiving from the guard my things which had been taken away when I was thrown into jail, I was ready to leave the country legally or illegally, no matter the sacrifice.

The interrogator accompanied me to the door and said, "You did very useful things for our country; please continue to assemble microscopes."

My literal answer was, "May my hand dry up if I ever use it to assemble microscopes at home." I later had the opportunity to put together a microscope, but I kept my promise; I never touched the parts.

In spite of the fact that Anna had two small children to take care of, she was supposed to have a regular job. Although she worked a little as a seamstress, she could not support herself and the children. I could not contribute anything to Anna on a regular basis. But Lotty got a fine position for herself as Director of Housing Administrators, and she assigned Anna an official job as a cleaning woman in her office; thus Anna was saved and had to do very little work. Since Lotty had such a responsible position, she was given a very beautiful bungalow with enough room for Anna and her children. Both their husbands were still in the Russian army. Lotty gave Anna most of her salary, and with the gifts she received for doing favors, they all could make ends meet.

Many former inmates of concentration camps were in Czernowitz in the hope of obtaining a permit to leave Russia. They did not want to take jobs because they would have been pinned down to their work, unable to get propuskas to leave without bribing the NKGB. Most of them now had no valuables, only hope.

The NKGB organized regular raids on the streets and in the living quarters all over the city. If they caught anyone without an identity card, the equivalent of a passport, he or she became liable to be sent deep into Russia to work in factories or fields. It did not matter to the NKGB that the liberated inmates of concentration camps were only waiting to go back to their homes outside Russian territory. Many of these weary souls were caught like dogs and shipped away, and a considerable number of

them soon died because they were not physically fit for heavy work.

CHAPTER XVII

IDENTITY PROOF

The war finished with the defeat of those who had begun it. Rumors circulated that offices had begun to open in Czernowitz for the registration for exit of those who were not born in Russian-occupied territory. It was a dangerous and a rash decision to register, but I took my chance. The Russians spread the rumor that all those who registered would be arrested and taken to Siberia as enemies of Russia. Many, many were scared and did not dare to do so, but I registered, come what may. How long would it now take to get a permit to leave if they really were ready to let a certain number go? This was a constant worrisome question of those who registered. Nobody knew.

It would be impossible to estimate the briberies given to, and accepted by, the NKGB. I had no money to give, but I had a three-room furnished apartment in a choice location, which I promised to an NKGB major if he would help me get permits for myself and my sisters, whose husbands were still in the Russian army. The waiter had deserted the army while the war was still going on. He came to Czernowitz and hid himself, waiting for me to bail him out again as I had in the past. He knew what kind of feelings I had for him. Were it not for the persuasions of Anna and Lotty, whose husbands served until honorably discharged, I would never have moved a finger to get him out of Russia. The

grief he had caused me was more than I could take. But true to his trade and character he had no pride.

To succeed in getting a permit for that ingrate, I registered him under the name of Lehrer, my boyhood friend, who had been killed by the Germans. If the police had caught me and found out that he was a deserter, that would have been the end of me. He most likely would have told the Russians that everything was my fault.

The offer to have a three-room furnished apartment in the center of the city was too good not to be accepted by the NKGB major at the registration center. The officers were so corrupt that they feared to refuse the major's request, and he obtained permits for us to leave.

On the Saturday following my successful battle to leave Russia, I started out to visit Anna to discuss the final plans for our departure. About two doors this side of her home, I saw a group of people in a circle in the middle of the street, which happened to be a quiet one. Getting closer, I noticed two Russian drunks pestering an elderly rabbi by demanding to examine his personal documents.

This was an obvious abuse. The two drunks might have done it even if they were sober, because the anti-Semitism then, as today, was strong, and because the Bukowina was foreign territory and was exploited and treated as such. The Russians' annexation of the Bukowina to their empire was only one of the many acts characteristic of these masters of century-old tyranny, despotism

and annihilation of the weak, be it one person, ten, a million or a nation.

When I observed the abuse by these two Russian drunks, I got almost into a rage, and pushing the people aside, I confronted them. I asked them in a loud and obviously challenging voice what they wanted of the rabbi. Knowing the character of drunken Russians, I expected that one of them, the more inebriated, would start a fist fight. Indeed, instead of answering my question he lifted his hand to hit me in my face. I dodged just in time and hit the man so hard that he fell to the ground. He was lucky that his companion was with him.

Even now I am not too proud of what followed. Because they were two, I did not stay there to fight to the finish according to the code of honor I was brought up with, but did a wiser thing. I ran away, quite far away. Had these men recognized me and denounced me to one of their militiamen, my hope of leaving Russia would have gone up in smoke. In that blow to that Russian drunk I gave vent to all my contempt for their culture and education, as well as for their governmental system and tyranny. I waited about two hours before I slipped back to Anna on that street. Then we all had a good laugh about my defending the rabbi and coming through the fracas unscathed.

The NKGB major topped off our gladsome departure, after he obtained also some furniture from Lotty, by arranging for a truck to take us as far as the collecting center near the border, even though trucks were scarce. The driver of the truck and I agreed on the amount I would pay, including transportation for the

deserter. It was a beautiful warm day in May when we left Czernowitz.

At the collecting center every person and his luggage were thoroughly searched, as we had anticipated. Before we left Czernowitz I had to do something to hide the twelve gold coins and some jewelry my sister had skillfully hidden during the years in concentration camp. Anna had the idea to loosen the thick rope to be used to tighten a sack with pillows, to insert the coins at various distances, and then to stretch the rope again. To make sure that the coins would not fall out she deftly sewed a few invisible stitches around each coin.

For her jewelry my sister had to take a chance. No gold, not even a wedding ring, could be taken out, even if one could prove that it was one's property before the days of concentration camp. My inspiration was to play the magician and to turn the gold into silver. Silver jewelry was allowed to be taken out from Russian territory.

The evening before our departure I broke a few thermometers I had bought for this purpose and separated out the mercury. With a small piece of cloth I painted the mercury on the jewelry pieces. They became silvery immediately because of the quickly formed amalgam. Nobody would have ever suspected that beneath the silvery luster everything was solid yellow gold. When the NKGB searchers saw the jewelry, no objections were made, nor did they suspect that rope of fortune. We could hardly contain our great delight.

It was at least two more miles from the collecting center to the border, and I had to rent a horse and carriage to bring our few things to the borderline. All in our group passed the Russian borderline, and we waited for a while in the small strip of no-man's-land, to be taken over by the Romanians.

In no-man's-land there was an improvised desk behind which Romanians sat, where each person had to sign his or her name on the same sheet of paper. The Romanian authorities then compared the list received from the Russians with their own list, just signed by the refugees. All of a sudden the head of the Romanians cried out loud, "Where is Lehrer, whose name appears on the Russian list?" That idiotic waiter-deserter had put down his own real name. And the Russian NKGB soldiers were there and heard the Romanians calling the name of Lehrer. Had the Romanians made an investigation immediately, the Russians and the Romanians would have detected the fraud, and that ingrate would have expected me to take the blame as in the past, so that he could be free. I do not remember what I told the Romanians to persuade them to let us pass, but whatever it was, it worked.

That ingrate could have caused us all to be returned to the Russians. Ever since I have known the waiter, he had always been trouble for me.

Trying to calm me, Anna said, "Now is the last time that he has caused you trouble." How wrong she was. In my book of life it was written that he will be on my back for many years to come.

After entering Romania, we all thought we were in heaven. We were all refugees, but the sweet word of freedom made us

jubilant. We were no longer afraid to speak, to laugh and to sing. We feasted again on luscious white bread, chocolate and butter. Friends who had previously crossed the border clandestinely gave us shelter in my hometown Suczawa, where my family was born and our ancestors had lived for generations. Soon I forgot the frustrations and anxieties caused by the waiter.

The first thing I wanted to do was to remove the mercury from Anna's jewelry with a hot flame. I had at my disposal only a gasoline burner, the flame of which was not strong enough to change the mercury to mercury oxide upon holding the jewelry over the flame. The mercury oxide is a powder and easily brushed off. Because I could remove only part of the mercury, I promised my sister that some day I would remove the remaining mercury.

This day, however, newer came. In fact, I wish I had left the mercury coating on the jewelry. Several years later the Romanian government ordered that gold in the possession of citizens be turned over to the authorities and that citizens caught with gold be summarily shot. People having gold were afraid to turn it over because of harassments and being suspected of having more gold in their possession. Anna put all her gold coins and all her jewelry into a toilet and flushed them away. I found this out 25 years after my reverse-alchemy experiment.

I did not stay more than two days in Suczawa because I wanted to go back to Italy as quickly as possible. I was able to find a truck going to Bucharest, the departure point for Italy, and the driver gave me a ride for reasonable pay.

In Bucharest I went to the Italian Consulate and was lucky to be received by the Consul General Dominici, who showed a lot of understanding and empathy. I had no proof that I had applied for Italian citizenship before 1938, but the facts that I had a document showing that I had done research in sugar factories for a number of years and that I talked Italian fluently were indirect evidence that I told the truth. By sheer luck I found an old note from the bursar of the University of Ferrara notifying me to pick up some money for the examinations I had given to the students of the school of engineering of the University of Ferrara. The consul was forbidden to give visas to foreigners, but my evidence was so impressive that he gave me a document "in lieu of a passport," stating that I was returning to my home in Italy.

Once I was in possession of that valuable document, the question arose as to which route to take to Italy, via Hungary or through Yugoslavia. In Hungary, I was told, Russians were everywhere, and I did not want to come into contact with them again. In Yugoslavia I might face the danger of arrest if I did not have a Yugoslavian transit visa. My Italian document might be to the Yugoslavians as a red flag to a bull, because during the war Italians had occupied a part of Yugoslavia in less than gentlemanly fashion. After intense reflection I decided to go to the Yugoslavian Consulate to try my luck in pleading for a transit visa.

At the consulate of Yugoslavia I explained to the receptionist in Russian why I needed a transit visa. I told him

that I had just been released from four years in a concentration camp. He said that he would take my document to the consul and try to influence him to give me the visa.

While I was waiting, two employees of the consulate worked on a translation from German into Russian or vice versa, I do not remember which. Their backs were turned toward me, but I could not help hearing the translation word for word. At one point they translated a Russian word so badly that I felt compelled to call their attention, though apologetically, to the true meaning of that Russian term. They realized immediately their mistake and thanked me without turning around.

A few moments later one of the two men looked at me inquiringly, got up from his chair, and walked toward me.

Suddenly he cried out, "Are you Professor Merdinger?"

When I confirmed his identification, he said, "I was your student at the University of Ferrara at the School of Engineering."

I did not recognize the tall balding, quite heavyset man and asked what his name was. As soon as he said "Miletich," I knew all about him. I told him then that he was a Yugoslavian student of mine in 1938 but that he had changed greatly because of his weight. We both laughed.

At this moment the man with my document came down the stairs from the consul's office and told me that the consul refused to give me the visa specifically because it could be applied only to an Italian passport. Now Miletich asked eagerly what my problem was. Of course our conversation was carried on in Italian.

After I told Miletich my story, he said, "Professor Merdinger, if it were not for your help, I would not have graduated. Now I will try to help you."

He took my document and went upstairs to the second floor, and within five minutes he returned with the transit visa. Who could have asked for more!

Before leaving, I asked Miletich what his function in the consulate was, and he answered, "Legal Counselor."

An engineer had turned out to be a jurisconsult. The Russian system, where a graduate in French would teach mathematics and vice versa, had already taken roots in Yugoslavia.

How had I helped Miletich at the University of Ferrara? It was under the war clouds of June 1938. On the basis of the Hitler-Mussolini pact the Italians had declared themselves Aryans. Most of the Italians could not have cared less. As mentioned earlier, demonstrations against me at the University of Ferrara had begun in February 1938, and a few months later I was notified orally that after the examinations in June, I could no longer teach at the university.

In Europe university examinations were oral and were held in June and in September. The examination committee was and still is composed of three instructors. Questions were asked by the instructor who had taught the course, although the other two might ask questions also. The examinations went on six days a week for four weeks or more.

On the day of the examination of my students, in June 1938, the chairman of the mathematics department declared himself a member of the examination committee, and in order to humiliate me he examined my students himself. This was for me a humiliation that was obvious to the third member of the committee and also to the students. However, after two hours of humiliating me, he got tired of examining students and asked me to take over.

Among my last group of students before the outbreak of World Was II there was the Yugoslavian student Miletich. Miletich approached me in April and told me that he had decided to take my examination in September because he needed more time to be well prepared. Not knowing that I would not give examinations to my own students in September, I had told him that the date was entirely up to him.

At lunch time the examinations were interrupted, and we went out to eat. My head hurt, I was intentionally and cruelly humiliated by that professor of mathematics as never before, and my students had seen me debased. By chance I saw Miletich, a sweet likable foreign student in Ferrara. A scheme flashed through my mind. Since Miletich belonged to a nation that aspired to territory occupied by Italy, I was sure that he would be bitten in September by some fascist dog like my chairman. I wanted to help him take his examination now, with me.

There was nobody close by; I approached him and told him exactly which pages to study and when to come in for his examination. He followed my instructions and answered well, and

I passed him. In September the new instructor would certainly have flunked him.

This was my vendetta, of which I am not now proud. But right or wrong, it brought me Miletich's gratitude, which obtained my free transit through Yugoslavia at a critical moment.

With a Yugoslavian visa in my hands I quickly packed my few things, hurried to the railroad station, and bought a ticket to Jimbolia, the border station between Romania and Yugoslavia. When the empty train entered the platform, a spectacle developed which is hard to describe.

People ran after the train before it stopped and tried to get on it. People fell, got hurt, pushed, screamed, and hit each other. Nobody wanted to be left behind, as so often happened in those days. I had the idea to crawl into the train through an open window. A friend who had accompanied me to the train helped me in this attempt, and I succeeded. Once I was in the train my friend handed me my luggage, and lucky me, I got a seat also. The friend knew nothing about the Yugoslavian visa until several years later.

Nobody was happier than I when the train began to move. It was like a dream come true -- going back to Italy, where I had left an apartment with furniture and a sum of money with a friend. I hoped to be retroactively compensated by the university and by the Italian government for years of trouble. I longed to be reestablished at the university and to see my devoted friends who hated fascism as much as I did. I imagined seeing, without saying a word, those false friends who had

forsaken me in time of need. My reappearance would remind them of all the nice things I had done for them, and how they had not lifted a finger to help me nor uttered a word to comfort me when trouble struck.

We must have traveled about halfway to Jimbolia when the sudden stop of the train jolted me out of my daydreaming. A Russian soldier with an automatic gun entered the car where I was, and ordered us all out with our luggage. I was apparently the only one to understand him, because the rest of the passengers were Romanians who did not understand Russian. When they just sat there, he grabbed them one by one and indicated with his hand that they had to leave the train. We all left the car, and with great difficulties we were able to get into another crowded car of the same train.

Why did this happen? An hour later I found out that four Russian soldiers wanted to sleep, and decided to evict all passengers from that car. Any opposition would have meant being shot to death. This was quite a reminder of the nature of Russian society. I felt very happy not to have given in to the insistent pleas by the Russians in Czernowitz not to leave Russia.

Finally our train arrived in Jimbolia. By then we were very few passengers. Getting off the train in Jimbolia I recalled my last passage through there, in the opposite direction. The Romanians had taken me off the train because I had no entry visa, and held me for several days before allowing me to enter the country, five long years before.

At the station of Jimbolia I found other refugees who wanted to go to various Balkan countries, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Israel, and some going to Italy like me. The Yugoslavian militia took us over, and I was led to a refugee camp under the supervision of the International Red Cross to spend the night.

The following day I was interrogated by a Yugoslavian officer of the militia, who was a very nice man. He told me that many of us refugees would have to walk long distances, and that only the luggage would be loaded on a carriage drawn by horses, because the railroad tracks were badly damaged during the battles with the defeated Germans. Thankful that I would not have to carry my luggage, I did not mind walking at all. The charge for carrying the luggage was paid by the Red Cross.

By changing from carriage to train and train to carriage a number of times, I arrived in Zagreb, called by the Austrians Laibach. I spent another night in a refugee camp, where I was told that from Zagreb a train to the border of Italy was supposed to leave the following day.

Next morning, when I took a walk through the streets around the camp, I was stopped by a militiaman. He asked me for documents, and I showed him my Italian certificate. Then he asked me where I got the document. When I told him from the Italian Consulate, he said that I was arrested and would be taken to jail. Then I got angry and began to holler, showing him my Yugoslavian transit visa, but my act was in vain. Along with several others picked up before me, I was taken to jail.

There I was interrogated by an officer of the militia, who let me go as soon as I called his attention to the Yugoslav visa. I asked the officer why the militiaman arrested me and brought me to the jailhouse. He shamefully admitted that the arresting militiaman did not recognize my documents because he could not read. I came back from the jail in time to catch the train for the Italian border.

When I arrived there, June 1945, we refugees were taken in American trucks to a camp in Udine, where I spent one night. Being taken to the place to spend the night, every refugee was sprayed with some insecticide on the naked body, and the same thing was sprayed on our clothes. The following day a truck brought me to Ferrara. I was still wearing the same heavy shoes, long since resoled with auto-tire rubber, because I had somehow lost my Russian boots in Suczawa. Matching them were my German military pants, bought with beer from a German truck driver in Czerniatin. All my clothes were in shreds, from five years incessant wear.

I was so taken by my emotions that when I descended from the truck at the corner of a once-familiar street, I did not recognize where I was. After the driver gave me my luggage, he left with his truck. I looked around and gradually reoriented myself among the bombed buildings and general destruction in the city I had longed for since my expulsion by the fascists in May 1940. I had yearned to come to Ferrara again, but I had not actually expected to return to the city I had grown to think of

as my home. In a few minutes I realized I was not far from one of my favorite streets.

CHAPTER XVIII

PICKING UP THE PIECES

A man with a pushcart brought my luggage as I walked to the home of my dearest friend, Alighiero Paparella, where I was generously welcomed to stay. The Paparella family had thought they would never see me again. Within one week the city fathers arranged that I receive back my old apartment, but it did not contain one piece of the furniture I had left.

I had left with Alighiero the key to my apartment and a document declaring him the owner of my possessions during the half hour the fascist police had given me to get ready to leave. I had had no other choice. He had to dispose of them quickly, and without much ado, to avoid being accused by the fascists of helping a Jew. Such help was prohibited by a new law of the freshly self-proclaimed Aryans. A very rich woman instructor in a technical school, by the name of Calleri-Pizzo, who had taken her master's degree in education in the U.S., bought the whole kit and caboodle of my things from my friend for a song.

The principal of that technical school where Calleri-Pizzo taught tried to make her return the furniture upon my repayment of her money. She refused. If I had declared before a judge that Alighiero had no authority to sell my furniture, Calleri-Pizzo would have been forced to return it. Then she would have taken action against my friend, who would have been in deep trouble. So the rich woman kept my furniture. Little by

little I bought some second-hand pieces until my apartment was again comfortable and nicely furnished.

Three days after my arrival the Rector of the University sent me a letter of welcome. Since it was June and the examination season was to begin in a few days, he invited me to take over the examinations of the students in the courses I had previously taught. This unexpected recognition moved me deeply because the academic and social standing of a professor was and still is prestigious in Europe. It diminished but did not undo the financial, moral and psychological wrongs the fascists had heaped so heavily upon me.

I did participate in the examination committee and passed all students. They seemed to know more than I. Four years in camps, during which I was in danger of being killed almost any minute of every hour every day, made me forget everything I knew; so it seemed.

Among the students whom I examined was the wildest protester against my teaching at the University in 1938. Mostly on account of him the school authority had had to obtain military guards to prevent disruption of my lectures. He was the last among a group of students to stop throwing snowballs at me as I left the University one day in February 1938. When the bombardment of snowballs stopped and I looked back to see my offenders, he was the single one outside the University building. Having just hurled his last snowball, he was still lowering his hand as I watched him.

When he saw me at the University for the first time after my return, he overdid his bow of respect, which every European student used to make routinely for professors. I could not help wondering which was the true character of this man, the one shown in 1938 or the one in 1945. Occasionally I still ask myself this question, but I cannot answer.

The university authorities immediately requested back pay for me from 1938. Some extent of my financial losses can be seen from a few obvious calculations. Over a period of nine prewar years I had worked hard ten to twelve hours a day, and saved 20,000 lire in the bank. This was half the full market price of a two-story brick house with ten rooms and full basement.

Being afraid in 1937 that the fascists would confiscate the money from me, a Jew, I entrusted Alighiero with the money then. After I moved back into my apartment in 1945, he wanted to return the exact amount of money I had left with him. I did not accept it, however, because inflation had reduced 20,000 lire to the equivalent of about four pairs of shoes.

It was nice that I had received my apartment back, but it was imperative to earn some money. Tutoring at home was out of the question because nobody knew I was back; besides, each student had already engaged a tutor. One way remained -- to seek some less-dignified work. I accepted a temporary job as an interpreter between Italians and German prisoners, who were reconstructing a bridge over a river. In retreating, the Germans had blown up that bridge.

Every morning an English jeep picked me up from my place and took me to the bridge. I received daily a welcome free meal from the English Engineering Corps, under whose actual supervision the bridge was built.

Among the German prisoners I dealt with most was an older soldier, who won my sympathy with his sad story. I felt sorry for him especially when he told me that his daily ration of bread was insufficient. I was moved with pity, and he assured me he knew nothing of the killings in the concentration camps. As a gesture of sympathy I was glad occasionally to bring him my own meager ration, 200 grams of bread. His gratitude exceeded my sacrifice. If someone had told me while I was in the concentration camp that someday I should give my own ration of bread to a German, I would have called him insane.

My work with the engineering corps lasted about a month, and in a short time I spent all that I had earned. The Jewish community in Ferrara was reduced to one-tenth of what it had been before the war, for most of the Ferrara Jews were taken to German concentration camps, and only a few escaped the gas chambers. The rabbi of Ferrara returned, and he recieved at that time food for needy refugees from some organization. Although he offered me some groceries, I was unable to accept charity, and declined.

But when my stomach began to gnaw and hurt, my pride soon dropped. One day soon I decided to put my pride in my pocket and asked the rabbi for some food, which helped a lot. The rabbi got food to distribute only once in two weeks, and I went to him maybe two or three times altogether.

The need to fill my stomach forced me to go through another great humiliation, namely to ask for public welfare. I stood in line with paupers once a month to receive each time about 500 lire, the equivalent then and now of less than a dollar. I received welfare money three times. Six months after I drew aid the third time, I had saved enough money so that I could send back to the welfare organization the 1,500 lire, and could request that my name be removed from the list of welfare recipients.

The time for school opening came closer, and my clothes were in pitiful shape. I was told that in Bologna, about twenty kilometers from Ferrara, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) distributed used clothing for refugees. Since I was already involved in asking for help, still wearing my German military pants I went to Bologna, and UNRRA gave me some used clothes. These adequately helped me through the first and most critical year.

High schools (gymnasiums) and universities in Italy began in October and November respectively. Because of a shortage of instructors I was offered, and accepted, a part-time teaching job in a gymnasium. I kept the job along with that at the university. Since my teaching at the university did not involve laboratory work, I could manage both jobs satisfactorily.

It was not much of an honor for a university instructor to teach in a gymnasium, but I needed the money to buy furniture and to pay off a debt I had made by buying two special wood-burning stoves and wood to keep my apartment warm for the coming winter.

The apartment had a central heating system in the kitchen, but I had not enough money to buy the required special coal, which would have been more expensive, for it. The most costly items were the furniture.

Late in December of the year of my return I was paid by the university retroactively for seven lost years at prewar rate, the value being more or less the same as that of my 20,000 lire. Four pairs of shoes for seven lost years. I accepted the money because I was, and still am angry at the Italian government for doing nothing to compensate all those who suffered so much punishment by their fascist predecessors. In this respect the post-war Italian government differed little from the fascist Italians; they did not want to right the wrong committed by the fascists. Germany however, the cause of the holocaust, showed their atonement to the world by paying compensations for the crimes committed by Hitler and his like cohorts in the name of Germany.

At the university no research could be done because nearly all the windows had been blown out of buildings by the bombings and were not yet replaced. Laboratory equipment was almost entirely unavailable. Because of the post-war situation no significant research could be performed for several years.

Expecting to spend the rest of my life in Ferrara, I tried to build a firm foundation for my life there by improving my own lot and by contributing to the social well-being of the city.

During my two post-war years in Ferrara I worked hard at teaching and tutoring in order to make up for my devastating war

losses. I started at six o'clock in the morning and finished at eight in the evening and sometimes even later. Similar to my ante-bellum charity contribution to the city of Ferrara, again my courses in German and Russian were given without pay for two years, now at the new "Popular University." The Popular University became more popular and had more students than the century-old University of Ferrara, where Copernicus studied in his time. I suppose my no-pay work uplifted society as much as the Christmas-gift baskets of food in days gone by.

CHAPTER XIX

BEGINNING AGAIN

One day in May 1947, I received a complete surprise, a latter from the U.S. containing a one-year contract from Roosevelt College of Chicago. Since the word college was unfamiliar to me and I did not know that it was the equivalent to a university, I was about to discard the letter and contract. *Collegio* in Italy is identical with high school, and I certainly would not have made such a change. After knowledgeable persons explained that it meant *university*, I considered the contract seriously. I knew that my sister Clara, who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1922, was behind this as much as she had been instrumental in the two-year teaching contract from DePaul University in 1939.

Now, however, the situation was fundamentally changed. In 1939 I was constantly harassed by the fascist police, who threatened me with expulsion or jail. In 1947 I was the rehabilitated professor, was teaching at the University of Ferrara and Popular University, had my nicely furnished apartment, was about to become an Italian citizen, had been given the honorary title of "Veteran of Foreign Wars," and was nominated to become the delegate of this organization to the Italian Parliament. I had many friends and, most importantly, I already had some savings.

That contract from Roosevelt College threw my thoughts into a turmoil, because it indicated a salary of $3,300 a year, a lot of money then in the European perception, and because Clara must have made a prodigious effort to succeed in the undertaking. Had I known then the unwritten conditions of the contract, I would have used it to wrap that day's garbage.

All my friend inside and outside both universities begged me not to go. Their great argument for not leaving Italy was that I had just established my job and home, both of which I loved and which suited me exactly. They reasoned that after all the vicissitudes of war I had wriggled through, I should not choose, or let myself into, a dubious adventure with new people, whose language I could read and write but could not speak or understand.

On the other hand, my sister in the U.S. probably was thinking she had accomplished the greatest thing in her life by getting her brother to America. I myself thought that with a good salary I would be able to settle there comfortably in a short time. Of all sacrifices I would have to make in accepting the contract, the greatest would be to give up my rating at the University of Ferrara as the best teacher of that institution. It had taken many years to earn this rating, and I wondered how long it would take me to obtain such a rank in the U.S., if I ever could.

It was one of the hardest decisions in my life. Had a stranger or even a friend been instrumental in obtaining the contract for me, I would never have left Italy. But somehow, for

Clara's sake, I felt impelled to accept the contract. So I signed and mailed it.

What followed next was hard work with the consul, this time at the American Embassy in Genoa. In juxtaposition to the Vice Consul Jandry in Naples in 1939, Vice Consul Knight was very correct, nice and friendly. Only once was I unhappy with his demand. Although I brought him an official document of my educational and employment qualifications, stamped with the seal of the university and signed by the rector of the university, Consul Knight wanted to see the original diploma of the Ph.D. degree. No matter what I said to change his mind, no matter the next-to-impossible traveling conditions in the overcrowded trains, he was adamant in his demand. I had to make the trip once more to show him my diploma; then he was satisfied. He told me to come back after one month for the medical examination and other formalities, and he would issue me the visa then.

The visa, as is commonly known, is applied by rubber stamp on a passport. But I had no passport, because I had been stateless for a number of years. Still I had to get one somewhere. I decided to try my luck with the post-war Romanian Embassy, and traveled to Rome to talk to the Romanian Consul. There I claimed to be a displaced person of Romanian citizenship who had an opportunity to go to the United States, and asked for a passport. Although my conversation with that Romanian diplomat was in flawless Romanian, he refused to give me a passport, but gave no satisfactory reason.

My friend and former classmate, Meier Greif, a dentist, lived in Rome. I told him the outcome of my conversation at the Romanian Embassy, and he put me in contact with a man who was ready to obtain a regular Romanian passport for me for the sum of 30,000 lire (about $50) This amounted to my monthly salary, before taxes.

But I was committed to a game and had to play it at any cost. I accepted the offer, and in two days I received the passport. Dr. Greif loaned me the money, which I sent back to him after my return to Ferrara. How that man got me the passport is a matter of speculation.

Throughout the month of August I kept tutoring and studying English and preparing myself for my greatest adventure yet.

On the appointed day in August I went to Genoa, where consul Knight was helpful in every respect. After all required formalities were finished came the time for receiving the visa, and I gave the fifty-dollar passport to the Consul. He rejected it on the ground that the American government did not recognize the Romanian government. He himself issued me a document in lieu of a passport, on which he applied the immigration visa.

This was irony. Later I tore the Romanian passport to pieces.

The Romanian Consul probably had known that his passports were unacceptable to the United States, but if a sucker wanted to pay $50 for one, he could use the money.

I was supposed to begin my job September 1st, and it was now the end of August. I had learned before receiving the visa that

it was very hard for a private person to get a boat ticket, because all boats were booked for GIs returning home. Consul Knight advised me to go to a certain place and explain my situation; maybe I could persuade the responsible person to accept me. And so I went and tried.

The gentleman with whom I talked understood the pressure I was under and said that if the Consul would okay the boat ticket, he would accept me.

Back in his office I told the consul, "There is a European proverb which says, 'If you have built the church, finish it by putting the cross on the top.'"

After laughing heartily he picked up the phone, and I had my reservation in two minutes.

As to my belongings, I did not sell anything, not even a penny's worth. I distributed everything free among friends and the needy, but this time of my good will. In my spare time I went around to say goodbye to nearly everyone, for I held a deep affection for several close friends, and prized warm relations with many acquaintances.

With such mixed feelings I arranged for my final departure. By self-persuasion I had accepted my life in Ferrara as safe, secure and satisfying. Nevertheless, now that I was leaving, unerasable bitter memories of people, places and events now starkly arose again, signifying that it was good to get away permanently. In the depth of my soul I discovered a determination never to return.

August 15, 1947, I boarded the boat *Marine Shark*, and after thirteen days, with apprehension I beheld the welcoming Statue of Liberty. Since we arrived in late afternoon, we had to stay in the boat overnight. The following morning I passed the customs control and stepped upon the land that was to be my own. Like millions before me I sought a new and better life in this country of opportunity. I was met by my cousin Fred Merdinger, who took me to his house for dinner and then to an acquaintance from Suczawa where I spent the first night in America. Fred came to take me to the train for Chicago.

The following day I arrived at Union Station, where I joyfully saw Clara for the first time since she had left Suczawa for Chicago 25 years before. Since my big wooden trunk also came on the same train, Clara had to phone her husband, who was working alone in their store in Oak Park, to come with his car to get us and the trunk. He had to close the store and drive ten miles to pick us up from the railroad station.

In Oak Park I saw Clara's house. It was a bungalow in a nice residential section on a street corner across from the Longfellow grammar school, where Clara's daughter, June, had attended for eight years. Clara's house comprised her grocery store on one street, and around on the other street, her apartment. There were a small kitchen, a bathroom, a dining area, two small bedrooms, and a medium living room. Her beautiful Oriental carpet and hand-carved French-type furniture surprised and impressed me. The kitchen had a door to the store as well as one to the dining area. The arrangement was good for

small-scale living and business. I saw June when she came home from high school in the afternoon.

For several weeks Clara and her husband slept on a roll-away bed in the kitchen, relinquishing their bedroom to me. It gave me a pressing, guilty feeling to accept their sacrifice. Finally I told them that we would switch the sleeping places. Clara suggested we put the roll-away bed in the living room at night for me, and I agreed.

The shock of my life came after several days when Clara told me that she had agreed with the president and the dean of Roosevelt College that if they would offer me a contract to teach, I would return my monthly paycheck to the college for the whole first year. I was so shaken up by that disclosure that I nearly fainted.

To this day I occasionally reproach my sister for accepting such a condition from those college officials and for not notifying me so that I might make my decision accordingly or at least know what sacrifice and humiliation awaited me in the land famed for liberty and equality. I would never have dreamed of leaving Italy if I had only had the slightest inkling of Clara's agreement with the president and dean of the college. Without a doubt that is why she did not tell me.

I could not understand how a college president, in the most prestigious position a person could achieve in Europe, would sign and send out a contract with such unethical strings attached, even though Roosevelt College, then only two years old, needed money badly. Did I not go through enough humiliation and

deprivation from 1938 to 1945? Did I come to the U.S. to work hard, to readjust, and to adapt to normally difficult conditions for newcomers, while not being paid any money for board, room, transportation and cigarettes?

I was then 41 years old. I saw my colleagues in the chemistry department enjoying life without a care, while I did as much as they did for the students. I had to borrow money for all my expenses. Inwardly I felt deeply hurt, ashamed and humiliated.

Pride and honor had always occupied first place in my ambitions. These moral principles were the leitmotif for my honoring Clara's acceptance of the unreasonable conditions to get her brother to America. I promptly returned every monthly paycheck for twelve months. Ignorant of keeping personal financial records in the U.S., I kept no account of these "donations" and had to pay income tax on my full salary.

Since I was deeply ashamed of that make-believe contact, I confided it a couple of years later to only one man who became a member of the chemistry department upon my recommendation, and still several years later to a friend in the department of psychology. To both I emphasized that the matter was highly confidential.

Apart from the devaluation to my person, I was afraid to reveal the true nature of the Roosevelt College contract. How would the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization look upon it? Could it be interpreted as a fraudulent scheme to gain entrance to the U.S.? I imagined myself going to jail or being deported.

One might say I had become allergic to police, for at the sight of one my hair stood on end.

In the first several months I was depressed and so unhappy that I wanted to go back to Italy. In assessing the situation, however, I came to the conclusion that it would be detrimental. I had severed my contract with the University of Ferrara. I had given away all the furnishings in my apartment. My apartment had been rented, and I would never be able to get another because I had given up mine voluntarily. And I had spent all the money saved during the last two years. Therefore in accepting that contract from Roosevelt College, I had burned by bridges to Italy and the past. I had to make the best of a bad situation.

During the first unforgettable year at Roosevelt College I used to pay my student assistants one dollar an hour, and I envied them the opportunity they had to make a dollar. I tried to get a part-time job in a laboratory in a hospital, but I was always turned down. It was not suitable to offer me the low pay of a technician, and there was no reason to give me more money when help was available for less. I would have gladly accepted the pay of a technician, but it was never offered. There remained only one thing for me, to add to the seven years lost in Europe one more, lost in America.

As mentioned previously, my knowledge of English grammar, reading and writing was good, but in speaking and understanding I had some difficulty. To this day I am grateful to my students for their patience and understanding of my limitations with the English language. From time to time some of them would approach

me at the end of my explanations in the laboratory, or after my classroom lectures, and call my attention to ways to improve my English and accentuation. I always thanked them and encouraged them to continue to correct me. When occasionally I saw a benevolent smile from a student, I knew that somewhere I had made a mistake. This was a sign for me to repeat what I had just said, trying to avoid the error in English. These little interludes took place only in the laboratory where there was enough time.

I felt that I needed more conversation in English. After eight days I told Clara that no matter how difficult it would be for us to converse in English, we would use no more German as we had during the first eight days. She cooperated, and I made rapid progress despite her own European accent.

My niece June, who was born in America, was a freshman in high school. I tried with little success to induce her to talk to me, so that my ear would get used to a natural American pronunciation. When I helped her regularly with her mathematics and Latin, the burden was on me to speak, and she just listened and learned. Upon Clara's suggestion, I invited her for a walk expecting that she would open up and talk, but she opened her mouth only to insert sticks of chewing gum.

I carried the conversation, but she would not correct my mistakes.

I asked her, "What happened in school?"

She answered, "Nothing."

Then I asked her whether she had read a novel lately.

She replied, "Yes."

Then I insisted that she tell me the content of the novel. This is how she did it.

"A boy and a girl met, fell in love, and got married."

How could I have wished for more in my desire to learn English?! Just the same, I improved little by little, and within three months I was sailing along. English was my sixth language, not counting classic Greek and Latin, which I can quote at length. With never an English lesson I can claim to be self-taught in English, as well as in Italian and Russian.

CHAPTER XX

UP BIOCHEMISTRY HILL

In the course of my 25 years at Roosevelt College, renamed Roosevelt University in 1955, I worked very hard in the development of this new school. I can cite certain accomplishments, which are matters of record. I was one of the first, if not the first, to suggest that the name of the college be changed to Roosevelt University, and worked to promote the idea.

I tried to convince the chairman of the chemistry department at that time that in order for the department to be recognized, research facilities should be created. He was not interested in research and did not even discuss my suggestions with the administration of the college. I had to look outside the university for some chance to do research.

First I tried at the Hiktoen Institute, headed by Dr. W. Hoffman. He appeared satisfied with my credentials and ready to let me begin research there, when someone persuaded him to change his mind. Then I turned to the department of dermatology at the University of Chicago, the head of which was the late Professor Rothman. There I worked in my spare time on skin lipids, first without and later with pay, during the years 1953 and 1954. Then, for reasons I never found out, the chairman of the chemistry department at Roosevelt made me understand that if I

wanted to do research, I would have to do it at Roosevelt where I was employed "full time."

I got permission to set up my research in an old for-years-unused laboratory. The clean-up I performed myself was an Augean task. Over a short period of time I introduced research in the chemistry department at Roosevelt University.

Recognition of this fact was assured and confirmed by a grant of $5,000 from the Mogen David Foundation, which was the first grant ever for the chemistry department at Roosevelt. The grant was used to purchase the most-needed laboratory equipment. Soon, a yearly grant from Abbott Laboratories, through the sponsorship of Dr. Walton F. Grundy, was sufficient to keep my research going until I retired from Roosevelt in 1972, when I began to do research at Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine in Maywood, Illinois.

It is generally conceded that significant research can be proved only by publications in first-class journals; I had the good luck that after my first grant I began to publish one to three articles a year. These contributed much to making the chemistry department of Roosevelt University known wherever pertinent chemical research was done. My publications brought me high praises from the president of the university, who later appeared to have forgotten my value and contributions to Roosevelt University. Until 1971, when I was selected by the National Academy of Sciences as an Exchange Scientist for the first time, and when in fact I ceased to work at Roosevelt, no one else in the chemistry department had a single publication in

an American scientific journal produced in the laboratory of the chemistry department.

Chiefly for lack of publication, among other reasons, the chemistry department for over two decades was not accredited by the American Chemical Society. One of the *conditio sine qua nons* was publications by the entire staff. In 1963 the department chairman, the internationally-known researcher, the late Dr. Eugene Lieber, attempted to obtain the accreditation. But the examiners of the American Chemical Society refused it for several reasons, among which was that publications of one man in a department was not enough. Several years later the department representative dealing with the American Chemical Society for the accreditation succeeded in persuading the examiners that my publications alone were sufficient, and accreditation was accorded.

The Roosevelt alumni in 1961 awarded me a small grant for my research. In 1964 and again in 1965 the chemistry department nominated me for an award as the best teacher for undergraduate chemistry. In the American Chemical Society I served as a member of the National Committee on Biochemistry Examinations for several years, and was twice chairman of the local American Chemical Society Examination Committee.

In the Illinois State Academy of Science I was elected twice chairman of the chemistry section, several times chairman of the Contributions and Nomination Committees, twice First Vice President and in 1973, President. I was made an Honorary Member of the Union Médicale Balkanique (Bucharest) in 1972, and an

Honorary Member of the Illinois State Academy of Sciences in 1974.

Three times I was selected as an Exchange Scientist by the National Academy of Sciences, to the Romanian Academy of Sciences for 1971-1972, to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for 1974-1975, and to the Romanian Academy of Sciences again in 1975. My biography appears in *Who's Who in the Midwest, Who's Who in the United States, Dictionary of International Biography, Two Thousand Men of Achievement, Men and Women of Science,* and *Illinois Lives.*

UP TO DATE

Anna and her husband, and Sidi and Sasha and their families, came in the 1960s to live in Chicago. Lotty and her husband were the last to leave Europe, and started their new life in Chicago in December, 1972. The waiter, whom I saved by calling him a malt maker, and his wife live in Chicago also. They all came out of Romania under fascinating circumstances and almost impossible conditions. It is a pity that for personal and political reasons I am not yet at liberty to relate their intriguing stories, which would be of wide interest currently.

The lawyer, Simon Stein, whom I registered as an agronomist among my 35 essential "specialists," has lived many years in Sydney, Australia; I exchanged several letters with him a few years ago. His divorced wife settled in Tel-Aviv, Israel.

Also among the famous 35 were a couple, the Weinsteins, who now live in New York. They physician Meltzer also lived there, until he died a few years ago, so I was told, and it is presumed his widow is still there.

For the safety of my relatives behind the Iron Curtain it was not feasible to write this book until after they had all extricated themselves from beyond the reach of communism.

EPILOGUE

Three decades after my war-time worries and wanderings, my feelings are a mixed bag. For the generations born during and after the Hitler era I hold absolutely no blame nor bitterness. Rather I attribute praise and admiration for the attitudes and actions taken by many thinking Germans, young and old, to show their recognition of the wrongs committed by Nazi leaders. Many pre-Hitler Germans, probably most of them, have tried to understand the magnitude of Nazi devastation of lives and property and have attempted to rectify damages done to certain categories of people, especially Jews. But the true criminals among Nazi leaders are horses of another color.

Their guilt was beyond forgiveness, their debt beyond recompense, their sins beyond acceptance or comprehension. Hitler, Himmler and Goering never acknowledged their own unthinkable wholesale carnage, massacres, and genocidal destruction. They confirmed their consequential unworthiness to live on this earth, although each committed suicide to escape a judgment of guilt, disgrace and just punishment. Hess, Schirach, Doenitz and others had their punishments meted out to them at the Nuremberg trials.

How can guilt be measured? Or punishment? Or forgiveness and reconciliation? Since ancient times laws have been written to spell out offenses among people and to set suitable discipline or penalties. Every man and woman and every situation is

different from every other person and situation. For this reason societies have maintained courts to hold trials with the idea that each man's punishment will fit his crime.

Making the punishment fit the crime -- ah, it cannot be done in a vacuum. Intentions, contemplation, awareness, surprise elements, purpose and circumstances -- all have a bearing on the weight of guilt. Among those tried and condemned at Nuremberg is one contrite repentant who has won my total forgiveness.

The fourth week in October 1975, the television programs announced that an interview with Phil Donahue given by Albert Speer, Hitler's Minister of Armaments, would be shown October 30 and 31. I decided to watch it, because now and then I still dream of being in a concentration camp, and waken scared to death and wringing wet with perspiration. I was curious to find out more about a man who served Hitler so devotedly, maybe to hear something new about Hitler himself, and how he wrought so much disaster over the world, including Germany.

Phil Donahue's skillfully directed questions put Albert Speer more than once into a most embarrassing corner. But Speer answered all of them without hesitation, truthfully, sincerely and honestly. I believe that even the most hard-boiled adversaries of Hitler and his servants could not but feel warmth for the interviewee. Even his victims would feel sorry that he had to spend twenty long years behind bars while he intensely regretted his participation in the war scheme that brought about the great holocaust.

The impression I received from that interview was so overwhelming that I decided then and there to write to Speer to express my feelings of sympathy for him.

To me the highlight of that interview was that only near the end of the war did some friend call Speer's attention to the terrible happenings in East Silesia's concentration camp (Auschwitz). On television Speer declared himself guilty for not having gone there to see for himself. Had he done that, he certainly would have talked to Hitler and Himmler about it. Not having acted, he claimed, constitutes his fault and guilt.

Another item of discussion was Speer's intention to kill Hitler by introducing a poisonous gas through a pipe on the roof, leading to Hitler's room in his bunker. An examination of the chimney and the roof made him realize that it would be impossible to carry out this plot to get rid of Hitler.

Following my urge, I wrote to him; not knowing his address, I mailed the letter to "Albert Speer, Heidelberg, Germany," with a request to forward it. From the television interview I had learned that Speer lived in Heidelberg. The content of my letter in German to Speer is translated and quoted here.

October 31, 1975

Dear Architect Speer:

Several times I have seen you on television (World at War) Every time I have felt the need to send you a few lines to tell you how impressed I have been and am by your sincerity (Aufrichtigkeit). I have your book (*Inside the Third Reich*) and read it from time to time. However, as is the case with all written confessions, and as Goethe says in his *Faust*, "I hear the message, but it is hard to believe it." When I saw and heard you on television, however, all doubts were dissipated. I did not implement my intention to write because every time something intervened.

This time, after having heard your interview in its entirety, I have decided to "take my pen in hand." I personally thank you for the interview that you gave to Mr. Donahue and assure you, also on behalf of my American-born wife, that our sentiments go out to you with all warmth.

I am writing as a former inmate of several concentration camps in Transnistria. I assume that you have heard about these camps in the Ukraine. There I spent three years, and after my liberation I was able to leave Russian only under the most difficult circumstances.

Thoughts run through my head, but in vain. I do not find the proper words to tell you that you have my entire sympathy, and that you have paid in full your share for that most unfortunate time with your imprisonment of twenty years.

In spite of the occasional cropping up of, "Yes, but why?" I declare to you with equal sincerity that you do not owe anything to society anymore. I only hope that your six children will not carry any grudges against us because you were separated from them for such a long time.

With my best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Emanuel Merdinger.

With this letter I thought of giving him comfort and some encouragement to stop accusing himself and to begin to enjoy life. It never occurred to me that I might receive a letter from Albert Speer, because I expected so many of my kind would write him as I did, he could not consider answering.

However, December 11, 1975, I received a letter from Speer. He confirmed what I had observed clearly when I heard him on the Phil Donahue Show, that he sincerely is carrying a great burden of guilt today.

Here is the translation of Speer's letter, which I am glad to include in this book.

Heidelberg, 12/3/1975

Dear Dr. Merdinger:

My deepfelt thanks for your letter of October 31. I am very sorry that I let you wait for the answer so long, but your letter got snowed under a stack of mail and I am getting to answer you now.

I am deeply moved that you got in touch with me. I myself would not have known how I came out in that interview with Donahue, since the concentration which a television interview requires leaves in me a peculiar vacuum. After that I cannot remember either the questions or the answers. Of course I tried to be honest even with all subjectivity. Because who is free of it (subjectivity)?

I find great happiness that we differ in one point: *you* believe that I have paid my share with twenty years, and *I* cannot get rid of the thought that I must continue to bear justly this burden.

Great parts of *Inside the Third Reich* and also *Diary of Spandau* were written with the purpose to let my children know in what negative light I see the past, and that my imprisonment was just. Be assured that all my six children have accepted this teaching.

Allow me to send you a copy of my book *Diary in Spandau*.

With cordial greetings I wish you all the best.

Signed: Albert Speer

P.S. I have sent you the book under separate cover. it will take several weeks to reach you. If not, please write again.

What were the reasons that led me to forgive whatever Albert Speer may have done or not done? Should I have a sense of guilt about his long incarceration, because he was actually not involved directly or indirectly in the mass murder carried out by Hitler's and Himmler's orders? Although somewhat late, Speer recognized the evil which pervaded Hitler's mind and deeds, and tried to wipe it out by attempting to poison him.

When Speer saw films taken at various concentration camps and heard about the sufferings and tortures of the inmates at the Nuremberg trial, he was overwhelmed by terror. He wanted to atone for the crimes committed by the Nazi government to which he lent his genius. He felt an urge to declare himself guilty and accepted punishment for whatever he did or did not do about the atrocities.

I do not know the details of Speer's trail at Nuremberg, and even if I knew, it would be difficult to pass judgment on what his sentence should have been. Still I would say that the sentence of twenty years of jail was stiff. Many Nazi leaders who committed crimes against humanity throughout Eastern Europe were never brought to trial. They either changed their names and disguised themselves skillfully or escaped to other countries.

As much as it hurts, we know from the book *Murderers Among Us* by Simon Wiesenthal that many war criminals not only from

Germany but also from other European countries have entered the U.S. under falsehood and found a haven here. They enjoy life here in spite of the crimes and murders they committed, and forgotten are the victims they tortured unspeakably until death took over mercifully. Only once in a while is one caught, and the punishment is merely deportation. Can such mild punishment be compared with twenty years of jail?

Albert Speer declared publicly and convincingly many times after serving his jail sentence that he was never an anti-Semite. Speer has my forgiveness for everything he has done during his tenure as a member of Hitler's government. His sensitivity, his generosity of spirit, and his courage have gained him my appreciation and respect. All these attributes account for his continuing burden of self-blame.

While writing this book I have looked many times into my past with mixed emotions. They defy assortment. They conflict. They change with the passing years.

I came out of the war with a feeling of bitter blame for the suffering and death my family and friend endured. Many of the insults and hardships stemmed not from war necessity but from satanical hatred. Especially in the early post-war years it has been hard to distinguish between them.

As time went by, and as people and places were revisited, old rancors took shapes less harsh. During times of peace my mind was free to look back at the force of fear and the pressure of propaganda. Powerful political movements had swept away historical institutions, dissolved deepest friendships, and upset

everybody's world. Like tidal waves, they were bigger and stronger than I or the countless other individuals in their paths of destruction.

When I take a 30-year perspective on the big picture of a world in an upheaval of war, every individual's behavior is more understandable. One must be sympathetic. And realistic. The world has changed drastically. I have changed too. We must go on for the better sake of one another and all our fellow men.

While remembering the events narrated in this book, I have become increasingly convinced that the full story of World War II must be made a part of the psyche of the present generation and those of the foreseeable future. Only an embedded awareness of how it started, the way it developed, and what the results were can prevent a worse conflagration in the unknown future.