FROM RUSSIA TO AMERICA:

A Modern Odyssey

by

Martin D. Kushner, M.D.

DORRANCE & COMPANY
Philadelphia

Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2026

Also by Martin D. Kushner, M.D.
FREUD–A MAN OBSESSED

Copyright © 1969 by Martin D. Kushner, M. D.
All Rights Reserved
Standard Book Number: 8059-1357-2
Library of Congress Card Number: 73-80114
Printed in the United States of America



The author (center) in Constantinople.

Dedicated to
my brothers and sisters who perished
at Babi-Yar in Kiev during the Hitler
Holocaust.

CONTENTS

PART ONE – My Life in Pre-revolutionary and Revolutionary Russia

Chapter		Page
1	My Childhood in the Village	3
2	My Father and My Brother Shammai	23
3	My Career as a Bookkeeper	37
4	The Idylls of the Village	49
5	Bookkeeper to a Junk Dealer	55
6	My Teen-age Social Life	63
7	The Kulaks	66
8	I Am Caught in a Raid	72
9	Military Service and the Jews of the Pale	74
10	I Go into Business for Myself	79
11	My Business Career Ends Abruptly	89
12	I Am a Foot Soldier in the Tsarist Army	95
13	On the Russo-Austrian Front	101
14	Fraternization	104
15	The Storm Battalion and Its Officers	108
16	The Front Disintegrates–Lenin and His Bolshevik Agitators	115
17	Petlura Invades the Ukraine	126
18	Handyman to a German Farmer	135
19	Exit the Noble Class–What Price the Lenin Revolution?	142
20	The Privations of the City Dwellers	150
21	The City of Kiev Is Invaded	154
22	My Decision to Leave Russia for Palestine	166
23	Over the Border to Roumania	172
24	Pioneers (Chalutzim)	175
25	Fiasco	183
26	Constantinople	193

PART TWO – My Life in the United States of America

Chapter		Page
27	A Citizen of the United States of America	211
28	My Decision to Study Medicine	215
29	My Uncle's Family–The Londons	218
30	My Struggle as a "Greenhorn"	222
31	I Enter Temple University Pre-medical School	231
32	I Become a Hebrew Teacher	240
33	The Radical Family X	245
34	The "Lost Generation" of Jews	254
35	I Enter Temple University Medical School	258
36	My Professors	264
37	The Township Hospital and Its Physicians	272
38	I Marry	287
39	Zionism	299
40	The Practice of Medicine among Various Ethnic Groups	304
41	I Remarry	317
42	Research and Pseudo-research	326
43	Random Thoughts	333

PART ONE

MY LIFE IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY AND REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

Chapter 1

MY CHILDHOOD IN THE VILLAGE

I was first conscious of myself as an individual when my mother, a beautiful slender woman, left for a walk with a guest of ours, a tall man. I was running after them, wanting to join them. My father, a very serious and somber man, ordered me to return to the house. That was the first inhibition that I remember being subjected to, and I mildly resented it.

The next thing that I remember from my very early childhood was one late summer afternoon on a Friday. The skies were foreboding, covered with dark clouds, and a funeral procession was approaching our house. A peasant neighbor was burying his two children who had died on the same day from diphtheria. There was a great temptation for us children to take a peek at the procession and, despite definite instructions from our father to stay indoors and prepare for the eve of the Sabbath, we sneaked out to the street. My father brought us back into the house and, with the leather strap of his pants, flogged me several times with great force and effectiveness. I still remember the swishing of the strap and the pain felt with each stroke. This was the first and only time, as I remember through the years, that I was bodily punished. I disliked the pain, but I never associated it with resentment against my father.

I accepted it as people accept punishment inflicted by God, with a fatalistic attitude and no resentment. It must have made a deep impression on me, the sensitive child, as I do not remember ever again provoking Father to such an extreme.

My mother, suffering from tuberculosis, died a year or so afterward. The day before her death she asked my aunt to bring my older brother (one year older) and me, at that time about five years old, to her death bed. Her face was impressed on my visual memory only twice; the first time, when she turned back as I was running after her to join her on her walk with the stranger. Her face was fine, beautiful, intelligent and calm. She was happy in anticipation of the pleasure of the impending walk with somebody who must have interested her. The second time

was the face that I looked upon when called to her death bed. Again, it was a calm face, but pale and drawn with sunken eyes expressing deep sadness. In a low voice she asked my brother and me whether we would remember her. We remained in the room only a few minutes and, as far as I remember, this moment, agonizing to my mother, hardly made much impression on me. I was apparently completely unaware of the significance of it all. We children continued to live our own lives, at least as far as I was concerned, and neither our father nor the family tried to isolate us and protect us in any way from the realization of our great loss; or perhaps I was just too immature to be aware of it.

The next memory that comes to me is of a new face that appeared in our house to take the place of my mother. Father married a very beautiful girl, about 15 years his junior, comely, roundfaced with very pleasant dark brown eyes, exuding goodness and friendliness. I was completely won over by my stepmother, and became more and more attached to her as the years went by, and this devotion was very much reciprocated.

We lived in a village which was a combined village of two different groups of peasants. One group of about 500 families were regular Ukrainian peasants, descendants of freed slaves. They were crude and ignorant and made no pretence to culture. Their only goal was to acquire more land and to be more successful farmers. Some of them succeeded in acquiring additional land and cattle by sheer hard labor and thriftiness and became in later years, after the revolution, the targets of Stalin *et al*, as "Kulaks." Most of the peasants, however, lived in abject poverty and, as generations multiplied, the plot of ground of the father was divided into smaller and smaller parcels which were hardly worth cultivating. There was no prospect of making a living out of them, and they were finally sold or rented to the more successful, rich peasants.

The other half of the village was a community of peasants who claimed to be descendants of the Polish "Shliachta" (impoverished Polish noblemen). As Poland, in its days of glory, repeatedly invaded the Ukraine, some of its people and soldiers mixed with the local population and settled in communities which had a flavor all their own, unlike those of the peasants who were descended from freed slaves. These peasants dressed in more urban dress, tried to speak a more refined language, were more interested in going as workers into the few factories that existed at that time, or engaged in local, very primitive

industries, such as ironsmithing, pottery, and horse-trading. They looked down upon the plain peasants, avoided mixing with them, and held their own holiday entertainments which had more of a Polish flavor. They also, as a rule, avoided intermarriage with the common peasants. They were in general more sophisticated.

My father had a flour mill which stood at the edge of a pond separating the two villages and serving the needs of both; as a child, working and helping my parents in that mill, I had an opportunity to observe the relationships of these two groups of peasants. The so-called Shliachta group looked down upon the plain peasants, considering themselves superior. On the other hand, the peasants considered these people half-breeds, mongrels, neither Ukrainian nor Polish. However, they felt honored if one of their sons married one of the daughters of the Shliachta, and a girl of a poor Shliachta family usually tried to marry the son of a successful and rich peasant.

The third group in the community were the Jews. There were only 11 Jewish families, and each family head was either a storekeeper, a tradesman, or an artisan. These families were scattered throughout the village and each was conspicuous in its neighborhood. Our family, consisting of three households–my father's, my uncle Joseph's, and my grandmother's–derived its livelihood from a flour mill which actually belonged to the "Grafini" (countess), but which was run by our families on a monthly rental basis. This business was handed down from father to son as an heirloom. My grandfather, a prolific man who was married in succession to four wives and had children by three of them, left this mill, when he died, to his children, together with many debts; my father, honoring the memory of Grandfather, would not even think of marrying my mother until all the debts were paid off. In time, all three families made a nice living out of this mill. They considered it almost as their own. The countess, who lived in Paris, had an estate of about 40 or more villages ruled by an administrative establishment in the city of Belaia-Tserkov (White Church). This countess had a well-established policy, strictly adhered to by her faithful administrators, never to take away a rented business from the people who made a living out of it, even when offered a higher rental by competing Jews. The Grafini, thus, had a cadre of very dependable and faithful families who tied their fate to hers and watched over their rented properties with the care and faithfulness of dogs to their masters. This policy paid off handsomely during the last decades of

pre-revolutionary brewing and unrest in Russia. The advent of Communism destroyed this structure to its very foundation.

And so our three families were engaged in a business and an industry which by its very nature brought them in contact with every peasant in both villages. They used to come periodically to the mill to grind their grains to flour. The richer ones would come less frequently, perhaps once in two or three months; they would load a large deep wagon with sacks of grain, processing at one time corn or wheat for several months' use. In contrast, the poor peasant would bring half a sack to the mill, carrying it on his (or her) shoulders and spending sometimes two or three hours waiting for his turn to grind his corn to flour. He would then carry the flour on his shoulders back home, sometimes a distance of several miles. We children had a good chance to observe and to learn the ways of the peasants as, waiting for their turn to process their grains, they would sit together in groups and discuss their personal affairs as well as the affairs of the world as these concerned them.

Peasants, like most primitive people, are very observant. They knew every member of our three families and established definite relationships with each one of us, depending on their astute observations of the character of each individual member of our families. They called my father "Honest Dud" (honest David). My father was a serious man, very tactful and correct in his relationship with the peasants. He was a silent man, never promising much, but once he made a promise or a statement he would live up to it absolutely. The peasants had much respect for him and believed in his word implicitly.

On the other hand, his brother, the other partner in the business, my uncle Joseph, was considered in a different vein by the peasants, and they related themselves entirely differently to him. Uncle Joseph had no definite principles in life and was not a thinker. In our Jewish life my father was a *maskil* (intellectual) who read Zionist literature, Hebrew novels, and at times also "got in" a Russian novel. My uncle Joseph was a *Hasid* (mystic). He was a follower and devotee of the "Hornostapeler" Rabbi, Twerski; had the Saturday and Holiday services in his home, where the Torah Scrolls were housed, and was the leader of the morning services on Saturdays (*Bal Shachris*). He was not, however, interested in reading Hebrew newspapers or books. On Saturday, the day of rest, he would read the *Perek* (Talmudic ethics). He had a wife, Traina, who "wore the pants" and, although he was devoted to his children, he did not get too much of their respect.

In dealing with the peasants in the mill he had no definite policy and received as compensation for grinding their grains what the traffic would bear. He was especially disliked and held in disrespect by the poorer peasants, and for good reason. The rich peasant, who brought a wagonful of grain, had his grain weighed on the scales and paid per "pood" (forty pounds), either with money or in kind. My uncle was not averse to cheating them a little on the scales, if he could. This was not very often, as the richer peasant was generally careful and watchful. However, the poor peasant usually brought only half a sack or less. There was not sufficient grain to be weighed, and my uncle retained as compensation one-tenth of the grain, using a wooden container and judging the amount by eye approximation. You may be assured that he did not mistreat himself, always removing a larger amount than was due to him, arousing the indignation and protests of the mistreated peasant in every instance. These protestations made absolutely no impression on my uncle, who repeated the same procedure with the next poor peasant, man or woman.

The third partner was my grandmother and her children. The surviving fourth wife of my grandfather, she was a very dominating woman with five children, two by her previous husband. She ruled her roost with an iron hand, yet was an extremely devoted mother. She did not participate directly in the management of the mill, leaving it to her youngest son, my uncle Benny, preferring to be the power behind and the very suspicious and watchful comptroller of the business.

Uncle Benny was the youngest man in the family. My father and Uncle Joseph considered him just a boy, although he was already 24 or 25 years old. He was a single man, able and well educated in Hebrew and well versed in Russian literature, but was rather immature in life in general and, in particular, in his relationship with other people. He was the typical example of a child spoiled and dominated in his formative years by his mother. There was nothing positive or decisive about him. He was sociable, likable, and loved to enjoy life, but not to get too involved in it. He liked women, and there were one or two very attractive peasant women whose names were linked to his by the peasant boys, who apparently knew what they were talking about. Our families, however, were entirely oblivious of (or they wished to be) and impervious to these occasional rumors.

My mother and my aunt Traina (Uncle Joseph's wife), Benny's elder, settled sisters-in-law and, of course, my grandmother, were trying to

marry him off. They were benevolently disposed to him and, anyway, he was old enough to marry, by all standards of the Jewish society at that time. He resisted passively all their plans. Once their attempts went as far as to have him engaged to a girl in a near-by small town. I remember I once had a chance to see her. She was a tall girl with an elongated oval face and rather a washed-out look. It was said that she came from a fine family, corresponding in *yichus* (prestige) to our family. I liked my uncle Benny, thought much of his abilities, and I remember thinking that this girl to whom he was engaged did not come up to him. "If I were Benny I would not marry her," so I thought. And, indeed, Benny did not marry her. Somehow he wiggled out of this engagement, although at that time a broken engagement was a rather rare occurrence. This meant a terrible blow to the prestige of the girl as a marriageable woman. It carried with it a definite stigma for her future. In spite of the consternation, shame, and embarrassment that the breaking up of the engagement brought on our three families, Benny stubbornly refused to see or visit his bride-to-be again. Thus, this attempt at marrying him off failed miserably, and Benny remained a bachelor for the rest of his life. A maverick, to be sure, by all standards of our Jewish society, but a free man, nevertheless.

This stigma of immaturity, stamped upon him by our families, was also the attitude to Benny of the peasants at the mill. They treated him as a boy, often poked fun at him, but were rather proud of the rumors that he was interested in peasant women. The young peasant boys knowingly and encouragingly alluded to his mysterious escapades.

During the years of the revolution, when our mill was taken away by the peasants (expropriated), they offered Benny the job of manager of the mill. He refused. It was too drastic a change to work as an employee of peasant masters. I lost track of Benny. The last I heard of him was that he became a worker in a factory in the city of Kiev.

The rest of the Jewish families were mostly storekeepers. The two most prominent familes were those of Rabinowitz and his son. The father, *Motel der Geler* (the yellow-bearded Motel) was a man of about 75 years. Long before my time his yellow beard had changed to white. He and his wife lived, half-retired, in a solid, old house. At times an old customer would ring the doorbell, and they would come into the store to sell him some merchandise. His son, Friedel, a man with a typical patriarchal, handsome beard that you see on Carmel wine labels, depicting two Biblical Jews carrying a huge bunch of grapes, had a new

house and general store built next to his father's house. He was the active storekeeper; his father apparently did not mind this and even encouraged customers to go to his son's store.

It was a sight to see *Motel der Geler* and his son, Friedel, and the rest of the Jews of the village stroll on a Saturday morning to my uncle Joseph's house for Saturday services. They had to traverse practically the whole village. They wore the dark, long *lapserdacks (capotas),* spotlessly clean, with white or red handkerchiefs tied around their necks, as religious Jews do not carry anything in their hands on Sabbath.

They were walking with a slow, measured walk in a festive mood, proud of their observance of the Sabbath or of a holiday, and paying no attention to the curious peasants peeking out from their homes or yards. On Sabbath, the Jews lived a life all their own which had nothing to do with peasants, business, or worries.

They were a distinctive group of people and, as such, were looked upon by the peasants, who on other days were not aware of their being different, both as human beings and as a race. On weekdays they considered them only as vendors and suppliers of the things that they, the peasants, needed; but, on Saturdays, watching them walk as a distinctive group, they had a different attitude toward them. Some peasants admired the Jews for their adherence to a certain way of life different from their own, for their maintaining a certain discipline and steadfastness in their observance of their spiritual life. Others, less sympathetic, thought in a resentful vein–the Jews have nice clothes, they can afford to be superior and exclusive, all because they exploit us, the ignorant peasants, through their business ability, and so on.

Arrived at the house of worship, my uncle Joseph's house, where the scrolls of the Torah rested in a rather crude, ordinary box attached to the eastern wall of the largest room, the congregation, consisting of these 11 families, spent a few moments in greeting each other and talking over current news items. *Motel der Geler* seldom participated in these talks. He was a silent, dignified man. He was the *Hazan* (Cantor), the *Bal Musaf* (Reader of the more important prayers). My uncle Joseph was the *Bal Shachris* (Master of the Morning Prayers). He had no special voice and ran hurriedly through the morning prayers, preparing the way for the real attraction, *Motel der Geler.* Motel had a sort of hoarseness in his voice, which nevertheless was unusually sweet and dramatic. You could not listen to him without immediately falling into

a religious trance, a feeling of being suddently transferred into a sphere of deeply religious emotions; you became an insignificant mortal human presenting himself before the Lord, the Master of the World. Motel's booming voice forced you to descend with him into the depth of spiritual feeling and up again onto the heights of heavenly ecstasy. When *Motel der Geler* finished, you were all as exhausted as he, himself, was, but you felt that you had experienced important moments in your life, far-removed from everyday cares and worries into a world transcendent in glory and exaltation. You were led up to the very abode of the Almighty and realized your insignificance before Him. After this deep religious seance, you looked upon the world around you with more tolerant eyes, with a feeling of greater nearness to your fellow Jews, to the nature around you, to the peasants, all part of this vast universe.

Friedel, who on occasion replaced his father, also had a pleasant baritone voice, but there was never that depth of feeling and drama as was in his father's voice.

In time I left the village to seek my fortune in the big city of Kiev. I lost track of *Motel der Geler*, and only years later I learned that the lives of *Motel der Geler*, his wife, and his daughter, a woman of about 50 years, had ended in a tragic way. The rebellious, wild peasants, during the height of the Russian revolutionary upheaval, hanged all three of them on trees on the road to Kiev to which they had attempted to escape.

When I was a child I heard the story of how Friedel and his wife, Annie, the son and daughter-in-law of *Motel der Geler*, were frustrated in their great desire to have children. The story goes that they even visited *Dem Guten Yid* (the Holy Man) in Harnostopel to intercede on their behalf with the Almighty. *Der Guter Yid* listened to them with great attention. His face expressed deep concern and silent concentration. Finally, the great man said, "Annie, go home and prepare a crib." With these words he dismissed the couple. They went home, their hearts overflowing with deep happiness. On their arrival home they immediately bought a very beautiful crib as behooves the new arrival into the home of a well-to-do family. This took place long before I was born; when I was already a Bar Mitzvah boy, the people around me, whenever they referred to Annie, Friedel's wife, called her "Annie the *Bezditna*" (the childless Annie).

That reminds me about my uncle Joseph, who was also a great *Hasid* and a devotee of *Der Guter Yid* from Harnostepel. The Holy Man used

to make perennial visits to his devotees, the *Hasidim*, in the distant towns, and once every few years, even to such God-forsaken places as our village, where the only real devotee was my uncle Joseph. I remember one day when a cavalcade of packed-with-*Hasidim* peasant wagons descended upon our village. The Rabbi, the Holy Man, was always accompanied by a retinue of his court officials and was always joined by the *Hasidim* from the surrounding towns and villages who accompanied him when he appeared within their bailiwicks. One group of admirers would accompany him for a certain distance, where they would be replaced by another group from the neighboring but more distant towns lying on the route of his triumphal march.

On this memorable day the Great Man was greeted by my happy uncle Joseph and invited to his house, where a table was set for the Rabbi and all his *Hasidim*. A fine repast was spread, and the Rabbi, an old man with a thick beard, almost completely white, and deep-set penetrating eyes, overhung with thick, bushy eyebrows, and with a rather large thick nose, sitting at the head of the table, spoke very little and ate very little. His eagle-eyes would sweep majestically the table, around which clustered his devotees, and he would make a remark to one or another of his staff members, who would immediately contact this or that *Hasid* and communicate to him the "word" of the Master.

The Rabbi would start a dish, eat but a token of it and push it aside. Immediately the *Hasidim* would pounce on the dish and, with bare fingers, struggle to get their share of the *shiraim* (leftovers) from the dish that the great man touched or ate from. Of course, it was the greatest day in the life of my uncle Joseph.

My father, who was not an official *Hasid*—in fact, he was a *maskil* (free-thinker, by the standards of those days)—considered it a great honor when the great man consented to visit our house also, which was located quite a distance from Uncle Joseph's home. The whole coterie, headed by the venerable old man, pushed into our house. He was seated at the head of the table, and spent about twenty minutes as my father's guest.

I remember that my father brought up to the Rabbi my older brother and myself. With trepidation I approached the great man, who put his hands on my brother's head and mine and apparently blessed us silently, or maybe he said something which I was too overawed to hear. Shortly afterward the whole noisy and excited crowd left our house on the next leg of their journey.

On that very day my little sister, Miriam, and her cousin, three or four years old, preparing mud cakes in honor of the Rabbi, tried to bake them in an improvised oven in back of the straw barn of my grandmother's house. They lit a few matches and threw them away on the ground, which was covered with dry hay and straw. A fire swept the barn, the surrounding buildings, and Grandmother's house, which was burned to the ground. The children, naturally in great panic, ran away and hid themselves. They were found hours later. As this happened in the morning, when nobody was home, none of Grandmother's family was hurt.

As a result of the fire, my grandmother who was, as I mentioned before, a very domineering and garrulous woman, and who used to be especially unfriendly to my uncle Joseph and his family, had no place to invite the great man. It was said by some people, the source probably being my uncle Joseph's wife, Traina, a great antagonist of my grandmother, that the catastrophe of the fire which befell my grandmother that day was an act of the Almighty, *Etzba Elohim* (God's finger), significantly coincident with the visit of the Holy Man, who was sympathetic to the cause of his *Hasid*, Uncle Joseph.

My grandmother's antagonism to Uncle Joseph did not extend to the same degree to my father who, although he was, like Uncle Joseph, her stepson, was also her son-in-law, the husband of her late daughter, my natural mother.

Unlike my father, Uncle Joseph was not a man to analyze problems and think over things. He acted first and spontaneously, thinking afterwards, if thinking was necessary or, when failing in his action, was reproached mildly by my father. He would not hesitate, however, to acknowledge failure or, when necessary, to apologize. He had none of what you would call self-esteem, willingly taking upon himself blame even if it was a mistake in which others shared the fault. He would easily forgive and forget, and he acknowledged the supremacy of my father, his younger brother, in thoughtfully planning and executing the problems of their common business. He was unquestionably loyal to my father as a partner and a brother. This loyalty was fully reciprocated. My father, who was a few years younger than Uncle Joseph, suffered in the last years of his life with bronchiectasis, to the cause of which the flour mill with its constant dust and particles of flour floating in the air contributed a great deal. He died a few years before Uncle Joseph, and his death was especially hard on Joseph. My

uncle was like a ship without a rudder, buffeted by the harsh ways of life without the steadying balance of a strong hand. Unfortunately, his life ended very tragically.

During the great upheavals of the Russian Revolution, when the small towns and villages were completely at the mercy of marauding bands of robbers and murderers parading as revolutionary elements I, who lived in Kiev at that time, came to the village for a few days. One night, at about two or three A.M., I was awakened by the sound of someone frantically banging on our door. Uncle Joseph's younger son, white as a ghost, breathlessly begged us to run to the help of his family, which was being attacked by a band of guerillas. I quickly dressed, grabbed the German rifle which I had brought back from the Western front where I was a soldier during the war, and ran toward my uncle's house, about half a mile away. It was rather isolated from the village, surrounded by an extensive orchard which belonged to the Grafini and was adjacent to the mill. I was shooting in the air as I ran toward my uncle's house, followed by his son. When I reached the house, there was complete silence around it. I opened the door and stumbled in the hallway on the dead body of my cousin Anna. In the large room which served as the prayer room lay the dead, bloody body of my uncle. A little farther lay the body of his new son-in-law, the husband of his eldest daughter, Haike. It was the silence of a battlefield after the battle is over. I called out, and the rest of the members of my dead uncle's family, his wife, two daughters, and three sons, came out from their hiding places.

The murderers had approached the house in the dark of the night as the family was seated around the table in a lighted room. They shot a few bullets through the windows and plunged through the doors, which apparently were not locked (nobody locked doors in villages in the olden times) and began to plunder the house as the remaining members lay trembling in their hiding places. Who knows what would have happened to the rest of the family had they been discovered? My shots in the air had scared the murderers off. They ran through the orchard, scattering on their way the clothes and other articles that they had grabbed. Apparently it was just one of the many bands of robbers and killers who were roving all over the countryside in those times, taking advantage of the Communist government's being too busy fighting off counter-revolutionary elements to pay attention to civil disorders.

When I think of the tiny Jewish community of 11 families living its

own social, religious and ethnic life in a sea of Ukrainian peasants with entirely different social and religious traditions, I marvel at the ability of the Jewish group to preserve its peculiar, distinctive character, like a speck of oil floating on the water but not mixing with it. Of course, a great deal of this was due to the laws and limitations imposed on the Jews by the old Tsarist government. Jews were not allowed to own land. In business, their activities were confined mostly to barter or to small-scale peddling. Only a few *Pervoy Gildiy Kuptze* (first-rank business men) were allowed a wider scope. The Jews were very limited in the professions by the expedient of "numerus clausus" (quota in the colleges) for Jews.

In our village, for instance, the Jews could not use the elementary school. My father, being a well-respected and prominent man in our village, tried to arrange with the school principal to have me attend the elementary school. I remember my looking forward with great expectation and pleasure to being a pupil in our village school. Father bought me a couple of Russian primary textbooks and a little shoulder bag in which to carry them. I attended classes one day, as a little boy of six or seven years. Every event in class, the teacher, the pupils, the desks, the blackboard, even the atmosphere in the room, made an indelible impression upon me. However, this was destined to be the only day of my Russian schooling. The Orthodox Priest of the village church, which stood across the street from the school, got wind of the fact that a Jewish boy was admitted to the school, and the principal apparently received definite orders to get rid of me. In Russia at that time the schools, especially in the villages and small towns, were dominated by the clergy. This priest in our village maintained a sort of tolerant attitude toward the Jews. He often used the facilities of our flour mill for his personal needs, and as far as I remember he was not stamped in our Jewish circle as a definite anti-Semite, *Soune Israel* (enemy of Israel). However, the law is the law. Since the school was under his jurisdiction, he apparently did not wish to involve himself in any irregular procedure. As a result, I was gently separated from the school.

That does not mean that I did not get any education. The Jews had to depend on their own means to educate their children. Our three families, being the leading families in our small community, took the initiative in providing education for the Jews of our village. My father, who was considered the most learned member of the community, was

unofficially conceded the leadership in educating our Jewish children. He was the one to hire a Jewish teacher, to arrange for a special room in one of the family houses for the school, and to suggest in a general way the curriculum of the school. He was not a religious fanatic. He was well educated in Hebrew. He was a *maskil* (enlightened Jewish thinker).

Nevertheless, my father was a deeply provincial man, a "village philosopher," a little distrustful of the younger generation of Hebrew teachers, assuming that they were not sufficiently versed or interested in the old traditional Hebrew lore. A teacher who could combine the knowledge of the old traditional Hebrew and be interested also in the new Hebrew literature and new methods of teaching–a teacher such as this would command a higher fee, naturally. Somehow, my father, who could well afford such a fee, considered it prohibitive. He would hire a *melamed* (teacher), usually an old man, for the season. There was a summer and winter season or *Zman* consisting of five months each. The two months between the seasons the *melamed* would go to his home, usually in not too distant a small town, to celebrate *Pesach* (Passovèr) and the *Yomim Tovim* (Holidays) with his family. Sometimes the *melamed*, if he was capable and willing, would serve as a *Hazan* during the High Holidays, for a special consideration, of course.

These *melamdim* usually were well versed in the old Hebrew lore, *Tanach* and *Gemara*, but were not much interested in the newfangled, modern Hebrew language and literature. They were usually religious fanatics, not regular Hebrew professional teachers, who resorted to teaching for an income in their retirements. They did not command high fees, but they considered their teaching good enough for the fees they received, which included board and room. Their methods of teaching were highly individual. One of the most typical of these *melamdim* was Rabbi Gershon David, who was our *melamed* for about two years. He would start early in the morning–say about nine o'clock, no strict time–and end at sundown in summertime and about nine o'clock in the evening in wintertime. During the summer the classes were usually held in a barn and, about noontime, after our noon repast, Rabbi Gershon David would take a "little nap" in a pile of hay for a couple of hours and we, the class, would gather in a shady, hidden spot in back of the barn, where my cousin Buli would tell us wonderful stories culled from his imagination–how we were chased out of our houses by our parents and went into the deep woods, and how we stumbled upon a hidden treasure in a little house belonging to robbers

who were always away to accommodate, of course, our story-teller, Buli; and how we, laden with riches, came back home and were greeted, of course with joy, by our worried parents, who, relieved, forgave our transgressions, and how we lived ever happy ever afterwards.

Suddenly we would hear the rustling of the straw or hay in which the *melamed* slept, and we would reluctantly return to our long wooden tables in the barn. We would take our usual places, and the *melamed*, yawning and rubbing his somewhat puffy eyelids, would resume the interrupted pre-lunch study of the Bible, or Prophets, or Kings.

This course of Hebrew study continued over the years from the age of four to the age of thirteen. When I was eight years old, my father decided to send my older brother, Shammai, and me to a very good teacher, well known in the surrounding villages, a Mr. Rabinowitz, who had organized his own Hebrew school at his home in the small town of Romanovka, about eight or nine miles distant from our village. This teacher, about 35 years old, a dark-complexioned, handsome man with a high forehead and a well-cultivated beard, was a serious teacher, differing from the type of *melamed* that we usually had as, for example, Gershon David, whom I have described. Mr. Rabinowitz appeared to us as rather a disciplinarian. He demanded that we know the assigned work. His methods were modern. He concentrated less on *Tanach* and more on modern Hebrew literature. He was teaching us not only to read and write Hebrew, but also some reading and writing of the Russian language.

We boarded at his house during the week, coming home only on weekends. We usually walked home Friday afternoon and returned on Sunday morning. I remember those trips back and forth. My brother and I had to pass a small village where the peasants looked with curiosity on two little Jewish boys trudging home. However, we never had any unpleasant encounters. We also had to pass a long, deep ravine on our way home. And I still remember the fear of the unknown as we descended into the ravine, overgrown with old trees and bushes, and the fear of robbers, wild beasts, or poisonous snakes lurking in the cool shadowy places of the ravine. We felt great relief as we passed the deepest part and began the ascent to open, spacious fields surrounded by distant forests. The gentle summer breezes caused the tops of the ripening wheat to move wave upon wave.

The horizon was broken up by hills and glens, among which, here

and there, we could catch a glimpse of a shiny strip of water. These were the waters of our river, the river that was flowing in the direction of our village, where it expanded into a large mass of water, harnessed by the dam, making the wheels of our mill turn.

It was heartwarming to realize that we were on our way home to our parents, to our brothers and sisters and cousins and friends. In an exhilarated mood we passed the dangers of the ravine, we quickened our pace, and soon the tops of the willow trees surrounding the estate belonging to the flour mill and the tall elm trees jutting out of the orchard appeared in sight. We were practically home, wonderful home, for the long, long weekend.

But how short the weekend actually turned out to be when we were returning back to school on Sunday morning, trying to remember the verses of the poem which the teacher had assigned and which, somehow, we could never find time during the whole weekend to memorize. All the poetry and beauty of the same fields and woods that we again traversed went somehow unnoticed. The road was rather long and tiresome, and when we finally approached the distant Romanovka we were again in a very plain, unromantic, business-like mood. We were again in the presence of the cold, objective, demanding master teacher who was interested only in work and knowledge—well, not even a bit poetic.

Looking back at the years of my early Hebrew education I hardly thought that I had learned anything. I remember the teachers very well. It seems to me that every teacher impressed me in one way or another. I shall never forget them as human personalities. Little did I realize that they actually imparted knowledge to me, so much was I taken up with them as individuals, and so little did I think of the subject matter that they no doubt tried to inculcate in me.

When my father, almost every Saturday afternoon, called my brother and me to give him an account of the knowledge we had acquired during the week, it seemed to me that I was always a little deficient in my knowledge, and I felt I was never a complete satisfaction to my father. Yet these days when, after about 40 years of being completely away from a synagogue and from contact with Bible studies, I have taken on the task of being *Bal Korea* (Master of the Reading) in our synagogue, I am surprised at the depth of knowledge of the Bible that those teachers conveyed to me. Every word comes back to me with all the wealth of the nuances and interpretations that the

different teachers apparently impressed upon my mind and feelings. I am returning to an old, deeply felt and familiar subject, which in my young, formative years apparently enmeshed itself deeply in my emotions.

Our *heder* also included a few children of the other Jewish families in our village, who were not regular attendants. The children of our uncle Israel and aunt Pessie, a large family of thirteen offspring, did not attend classes regularly, and early in their life were sent away to the big cities to make a living for themselves. They were finished with school at about the ages of eight to ten and began to look for *tachlis* (a living). My aunt Pessie, the sister of my father, and her husband lived in abject poverty in a small house on the other side of the river. Except for producing children, my uncle Israel was an obscure person, completely overshadowed by Aunt Pessie. Their children were known to us, the family, as Pessie's children. Aunt Pessie was a very fine, good-natured, motherly woman who was proud of her brothers, the learned and important men, but who also loved and was devoted to her husband, insignificant as he was. They had a small store, but could not make enough of a living to supply the minimum needs of such a large family; she was often supplied with flour and other victuals from the flour mill of her brothers. This act of charity, or subsidy, was performed in a most tactful way, and we children were not aware of it at all. Pessie and her family had a little plot of ground around their house on which, in the summertime, they would grow vegetables for the table: cucumbers, onions, scallions, and tomatoes. As the need was great and the family was big, they could hardly wait for the tomatoes to ripen. They would tear them off green and put them on the window sills to ripen. This sight of mottled tomatoes looking out the windows of an old, shabby house remained always in my memory as a symbol of poverty and want. And I confess that I, the pampered-with-an-abundance-of-food boy, thought that tomatoes were the food of poor people and I, therefore, had no relish for them.

The children of Aunt Pessie started their struggle early in life; they would be glad to get any kind of employment anywhere in order to leave their home, where they hardly ever had enough to eat. They were a happy group when they were together, attached to each other, respectful to their parents, and trying in diverse ways to relieve the pressure of over-population in their house. Some of them became clerks in the city of Kiev. One–he had higher aspirations–became a Hebrew

teacher. Leibel, the second oldest, ended up as an employee in the very distant Baku, located on the Caspian Sea in Caucasia, the region of the riches oil wells in Russia. It was always a mystery to me how Leibel could even conceive of being thousands of miles away, and for years, from his home. I do not know to this day what he actually did there. Years later he came back to the village for a short time. He was a good-natured man, mild and unaggressive, his face–sunburned by the tropical sun–radiating friendliness. It was rather incongruous to think of this mild-mannered, soft-spoken, accommodating old boy as a man who had uprooted himself from his mother's nest, traversed, I do not know with what means, a continent, and who had lived such an entirely different, exotic life in the legendary, Oriental city of Baku, beyond the misty Caucasian Mountains.

He again left the village shortly afterward and went to the big city of Kiev, where he worked in a more acceptable, to my young mind, position as a clerk in a big store.

His younger brother, Moshe, was a more down-to-earth fellow. He worked as a clerk in a wholesale store in Kiev, went into the army as a private, even worked himself up to corporal–a big achievement for a Jew in the then Tsarist army–came home and, not finding steady work, was selling canes on the streets of Kiev. I remember that when I, myself, struggled in Kiev to get a job, I helped him out a few times. He would get the canes on concession from stores, all kinds of fancy canes, with embellished heads of all styles, and would hawk them from a stand on a street. After a whole day's work he would realize a few "kopeikas" (pennies) and would return the unsold ones to the store. He was not a great success. I, being one of his lieutenants, can testify to that. He was, however, fairly well satisfied with his lot and probably dreamed of a better future when one day, during the great Russian revolutionary upheaval, he and one of his friends were met on the street of a small town by soldiers of some counter-revolutionary army and were murdered for being Jews.

His younger brother, Motel, a boy of my age, also left his mother's abode when he was nine years old. He succeeded in landing a rather lucrative position in Kiev with a man who was a transportation man or moving man. The moving at that time was done by horse and wagon, of course. It was said that Motel was very efficient and became the manager of the business, a position of trust. Whether the high position went to his head or whether he fell in with a bad company of card

sharks and gamblers, he embezzled the monies entrusted to him, something unheard of in the annals of our village. Motel disappeared from Kiev, his boss made a trip to our village to his parents to inquire as to what had happened to Motel. Of course, his parents could hardly give a proper explanation. Motel certainly would not confide to his God-fearing parents what he was up to. Rumors had it that he had absconded with a sum of money and left for the distant shores of America, and this was the first time that I heard the word, "America." It had rather an unpleasant connotation. For a long time America meant to me the distant mysterious country to which lawless people run away. Later in life America was pictured to me in a different image—also not very flattering. I shall come to that again.

Only one of the numerous members of my aunt Pessie's household was what you could consider successful. The oldest son, Joseph, was a very energetic, happy-go-lucky boy. He was full of life and ambition. When he was younger, being good-looking, adventurous, and a "lady's" man, he was often talked of as being a transgressor and a bane to the neighboring peasant husbands, but somehow he never got in trouble. Once, when he was caught by the suddenly returning husband of an attractive peasant woman in the very act of committing adultery, the greedy husband lunged to tear off the golden watch from Joseph's vest, giving Joseph a chance to vanish, feeling as if he had been punished enough for his indiscretion. A few years later the face of a younger Joseph appeared among the numerous children of this prolific peasant wife. They lived across the street from my uncle and aunt, and it is remarkable that the relationship remained rather friendly between the two families.

As Joseph matured he became more or less a settled man. He married a Jewish girl from a distant town, who was fairly nice looking, devoted to her husband, granting him children once a year according to the tradition of the Goldiches, the family of my aunt Pessie and uncle Israel.

With the assistance and help of my father, Joseph started the business of processing lumber from the woods, which the government was auctioning two or three times a year in our vicinity. He was successful and moved to a nearby town, Fastov, with his family, built himself a fine house by the standards of that time and was moving into the high circles of successful business men. He never contributed anything to his poor parents. It is remarkable that Aunt Pessie always

used to justify him on the grounds that he was, after all, trying to "work up," and that he had a family of his own which increased yearly.

During the holocaust of the Russian revolution, the town of Fastov was attacked many times by different roving bands. The Jews were decimated, robbed of everything they had, and scattered as refugees to the distant large cities. Joseph and his family suffered this fate. Everything was taken away from them and they were lucky to flee for their lives to the city of Kiev. They were in absolute poverty, not even having bread in the house. I remember having to supply flour to his family as my father did to his mother's family. And so the wheel of fortune turned a full turn.

There was one more family in our village of whom I should like to say a few words, the family of Shimmel. Some evil tongues—of course, behind the shutters of their houses—called him *Shimmele der Gonif* (Shimmele the Thief). He was a flamboyant personality. His past was a deep mystery to me. It was rumored that in his young days he was an agent for horse thieves. At the time when I knew him he was a tall, handsome man of about 40, with a rather small head on a straight back, and the bearing of a Russian army officer. His ruddy, oval, highly mobile face and readily smiling gray eyes showed the effect of outdoor life, being weather-beaten like the face of a captain of a small vessel.

He lived in a nicely built house, one of the "modern" houses in our village with a wrought iron railing around the elevated porch, and carved enamel fancy door and windows. The floors of the house were of pine wood and the rooms were filled with small, rather crude knick-knacks. He liked to ride in a colorful phaeton, drawn by a well-groomed horse. Shimmel gave the appearance of a country squire. His wife was a heavy-set brunette woman with hair almost completely turned gray. She always busied herself in the house, working hard to keep it shiny, and seldom appeared in public. They had a daughter of about sixteen years, a fat girl, with a good-looking but rude, aggressive face. She must have absorbed the crude expressions and the slang of her parents and shocked us, her contemporaries, by her crude manners and rough speech. She tried to impress us with her maturity.

Shimmel, well dressed and groomed, used to be the first one to come to the synagogue on Saturday. He loved to engage in conversation, talking about the current news, assuming the airs of a knowledgeable man who knows about the latest events in the village and the world in general. People would listen to him with a certan awareness, not being

sure of what was fact and what fancy. Some doubted outright every word he said, but still enjoyed the glibness and smoothness with which he spun his yarns.

Somehow the conversation would always end on horses, of which subject Shimmel professed a deep knowledge, undisputed by his skeptical listeners. He was always disappointed when Uncle Joseph, the *Bal Shachris*, would start *Ma Tovu Oholecho Yaakov* (*how good are thy tents, oh Jacob*), interrupting the conversation. During the Torah reading, Shimmel would again be the center of a little group in the corner of the room, continuing his conversation.

I, as a child, was rather impressed by Shimmel as a colorful personality, and I loved to listen to his smooth talk full of imaginative flights, even though I was cautioned by my elders about his spurious character.

After all, liars are pretty close to the imaginativeness of poets, the difference being only in how people relate themselves to them. Unfortunately, in later years Shimmel lost the use of his legs. Whether it was a mild stroke or, as some unkind people suggested, the result of a social disease, who knows? Shimmel sat on a rocking chair the whole day. He could not come to the synagogue. He could not go anywhere. He became fat and sloppy as a result of his immobility.

He ended his life very tragically. A company of White Russians invaded our village; most Jewish families fled the village. Shimmel could not move. To show what they do to Jews, the White Russian beasts pulled out Shimmel from his house, tied his legs with a rope to a pair of horses and dragged him on the streets until his lifeless body was a horrible mass.

His young, aggressive daughter tried to fight off these wild beasts. She was attacked and abused by these ogres and taken away with them to their camp. Some hundreds of miles away she was abandoned, a bewildered, half-crazed remnant of a human being, broken in spirit and body.

Chapter 2

MY FATHER AND MY BROTHER SHAMMAI

During the great Russian revolution all the lands and enterprises of the Russian nobility and wealthy people were confiscated. The flour mill and the lands and properties surrounding the mill, which belonged to the Grafini, and from which our three families derived their livelihood, was in due time also confiscated and given to the peasants.

There was nothing left for us to do but to abandon our old homestead. My father and mother and grandmother had died before these events took place. My uncle Joseph and part of his family were killed by bandits. Our families, little by little, withdrew to the protection of the big city of Kiev, abandoning the place where we had lived for three generations and tried to adjust to a new changing world.

My older brother, Shammai, and I had left the village years before the revolution. My brother, Shammai, was physically strong and aggressive even as a boy. He was a fearless fighter in the village gang wars; I, as a rather timid younger brother, leaned heavily on his protective hand. He was an individual, strong-willed, and had ideas of his own. As he grew older his will met head-on with the strong will of my father. An interesting battle ensued for years, in which the final victory was my brother's. And it was acknowledged by his ideological adversary. As I mentioned before, my father was a village philosopher. He was interested in learning *per se*. He read a great deal of Hebrew literature, as well as some Russian literature, which he picked up in an unorganized, self-taught manner. He subscribed to the Hebrew newspaper, *Hamelitz* (*The Advocate*) and later, *Hatzfira* (*The Observer*), edited by Nahum Sokolov. My father believed that a good Hebrew education should include the Tanach, Gemara and secular Hebrew literature, especially the Hebrew authors of this time, such as Mendele Moher Seforim, Chaim Nahman Bialik, and others. He was much interested in Zionism, although in a passive way. I do not remember his ever actively campaigning for Zionism or even contributing money to any Zionist organization. I probably would have known it as I, even at the age of eight, used to collect on High Holidays in our synagogue small donations of two or three rubles for the Jewish

National Fund, which I would send to Mr. Usishkin in Odessa, receiving from him a postcard acknowledgment signed by his own hand.

My father was deeply provincial in his actions, although perhaps not in his imagination. He was a rich man by the standards of his time, although he never considered himself so and always worried about the economic future of his family, realizing all the possible things that could happen to families deriving their livelihood from an enterprise that did not even belong to them, a business which was rented and depended on the whim of the Grafini.

He was always aware of the rumblings of the revolutionary forces gathering underground to explode any time against the mighty ones, the "have-nots" against the "haves." He lived among the peasants, knew their moods, was familiar with the great poverty that existed among them and the instinctive desires of these poor masses to improve their lot in some way. This natural desire was constantly being spurred by a clandestine underground activity of revolutionary forces. Yet all this philosophizing and doubting made my father a man of inaction. He stubbornly resisted innovations. As a business man, for instance, he knew that there is such a thing as insurance. Yet, in spite of the fact that he owned thousands upon thousands of "poods" (forty-pound sacks) of all kinds of grains and flour, stored in two very large wooden buildings, our old mill, he never insured it.

When a disgruntled peasant set fire to the mill, father lost a fortune, even by the standards of our time. He lost about 25,000 poods of grain, valued at about 15,000 rubles or more. One has only to realize what 15,000 rubles meant when an average cow at that time was valued at 30 rubles, and 20 pounds of beef could be bought for one ruble. The money lost could have given my father security for life, yet this did not teach him a lesson.

When the Countess built a new mill with the insurance money that she received (of course, the mill was insured by her managers), and this new mill was burned down again one year later by the same peasant (or by his son-in-law), my father lost again in the second fire about 10,000 poods of grain. He failed again to insure his grain, as this meant parting with cash money for premiums for the prospect of future compensation.

Despite such a deeply provincial outlook on life, my father considered himself wise. It is remarkable that our family and the rest of the Jews in our village as well as the peasants were also of the opinion that *Dud* (David), my father, was a wise man.

From early childhood I was aware by osmosis, no doubt, through hearing his conversations with other people, of his insistence on absolute honesty and integrity as the most important principle in life. He would deride and hold in contempt anybody who was a fourflusher and a liar. He dressed modestly and tried to live very unostentatiously although he could afford a more abundant life.

He was always aware that the standard of our life was so much above the standard of life of the peasants that he felt an embarrasment when he put on a new suit or bought a new carriage for our family. He always tried to minimize his economic superiority over the peasant. Whether he thought that his business, which was growing more and more prosperous, was a moral offense against the condition of the mass of the peasants, his customers, who were becoming poorer and poorer, or whether he had an innate feeling against display in general, he always gave the impression of being apologetic for his economic well-being.

Although my father was not a religious fanatic, he followed closely all the traditions of religious Jewry. He prayed every day with phylacteries and attended synagogue regularly. Despite his intellect he underestimated his capabilities and the capabilities of his children. He set for himself limited goals in life and planned for his children in the same vein. A severe jolt to him was the "revolt" of my older brother Shammai, who decided to be a physician. My father could not even have dreamed of such a possibility and, therefore, assigned in his mind a more modest goal for my brother's future, the profession of bookkeeping. After that revolt, my father became even more cautious in advising his children about their choices of any career or occupation. He felt that his only duty was to give me an education, which he assidiously did by hiring private teachers and following the course of my studies. Also he felt it his duty to inculcate in *all* his children a sense of duty to their parents, as well as to society in general, both Jewish and Christian.

As I mentioned before, his father, Reb Moishe Pinchas, a very respectable Jew but a poor business man, left upon his death the flour mill to his children and his widow. It was a good business, but it was encumbered with numerous debts. My father was at that time about 25 years old. He was deeply in love with my natural mother, Tuba, the daughter of the late Rav of the town of Bucky. He postponed the marriage until all his father's debts were paid off. He then married, and soon children came in succession, every year a new child.

It was said that as a result of continuous pregnancies at very short

intervals, my mother developed tuberculosis. This was diagnosed after the birth of her fourth child, my brother Eli. The family was highly disturbed and ascribed to my brother Eli the cause of my mother's illness. As a result, Eli became sort of an accursed child in the eyes of the family. For years his presence reminded the family of the early tragic death of my mother. Eli was shunned, stigmatized, and looked upon with disfavor.

It is a remarkable thing in the psychology of certain groups of people. A certain attitude, which to begin with was a false premise, was adopted by the numerous members of our family–uncles, aunts, etc.–as a fact. This spurious fact created an atmosphere of animosity toward my brother Eli, which probably affected his whole life and his relationship with the family and people in general. He became a recalcitrant, obstinate, deeply distrustful person who acquired a queer psychologic twist of mind that prevented him from happy relationships with others.

My mother died at the age of 27 shortly after the birth of my younger sister Miriam. After a year or so my father, who was at that time about 35 years old, remarried. He married a young, very beautiful girl, an orphan, whose both parents had died a few years before. From a nice Jewish family, she was not well educated, but very good natured, with a very pleasant personality. It was an honor to her to marry a well-educated, successful business man, as my father already was at that time, from a highly respectable Jewish family–*yichus.* This amply compensated for the fact that she was to assume motherhood of the five children of her husband.

My grandmother, Rivka, the mother of my natural mother, became an embittered and frustrated woman after losing two husbands (both very outstanding people in the Jewish community), as well as two of her children. She announced that my father had no right to marry so soon after the death of his wife, her daughter. She took it as a personal insult to herself and to the memory of her deceased daughter. She vowed that she would never accept this new woman as the mother of her grandchildren, let alone as her daughter-in-law.

Here a strange phenomenon took place. Her house was next to ours, and every morning, or every other morning, as soon as my father dressed and was having breakfast, the door of our house would open and, standing on the threshhold, my grandmother would pour forth a torrent of abuse and recriminations in a most loud and shrill voice. We

children would wake up and listen to that spiel, at first with surprise and then, as the talkathon continued indefinitely, with extreme annoyance and impatience. Why does not our father do something about it? Why does he not push her out of our house, our sanctuary? Our poor stepmother, a very timid soul, would hide in a distant room and would hope that this torture would end soon. But the indefatigable grandmother would continue this filibuster for what appeared to be hours.

Through all this storm my father would sit at the breakfast table, looking into a book or newspaper and, never, never as far as I remember, would interrupt her with a word, let alone engage her in an argument. This would continue for a long time, and finally my grandmother, frustrated by the fact that she encountered no opposition, and talking herself hoarse, would leave the house promising to come again the next morning. To this day I marvel at the restraint and will-power that my father showed through those trying times.

Eventually even the stony heart of my grandmother crumbled, softened by the great devotion, love, and care that my stepmother showered on us, the grandchildren. My grandmother became humane and even friendly to our foster mother. As far as I was concerned, I was–more than any of my brothers or sisters–devoted to her; even to this day she has a place in my heart.

As I indicated before, there was no real rapport between my father and me, as is often the case in father-and-son relationships. All my knowledge of him, I obtained from observation of his way of living and acting. I learned of his optimism in life, of his philosophy of stoicism when I was once present at his conversation with Avrum, the third son of my aunt Pessie. Avrum, unlike his brothers, was more or less an intellectual. He studied Hebrew more assiduously than his brothers, obtained a smattering of knowledge of arithmetic and the Russian language, and was preparing to be a Hebrew teacher. He was already about 24 years old, made hardly a living for himself by his tutoring, but got the urge to marry and have a family. He was consulting my father as to his course of action and whether or not he should seriously consider marriage.

My father said that it is impossible to advise anybody as to the course of events of the future. However, said he, his personal experience might throw some light on the situation. When my father was considering marrying his first wife, it was soon after the death of

his father who left plenty of debts upon his demise. After working hard to pay off these debts, my father had no equity at all. The future looked bleak, indeed, for his plans to marry the girl he loved. Yet he followed his natural call and did marry. And, behold, in a year or so he made enough money to maintain himself and his wife and even to think of building a house. One year later the first child came and, every year since, a new child appeared in the family; with each new arrival his fortunes swelled and his equity grew until at present, with a family of seven children, he has enough means to live in abundance with plenty for everybody.

This was sound advice, but reality proved that it was not applicable to my cousin Avrum. He lacked the optimism and self-assurance of my father. His horizon hardly extended beyond the limitation of his profession, a Hebrew teacher of the Pale. His mind or will was not equal even to the task of widening the knowledge in his field of instruction. Shortly afterward he suffered a nervous breakdown, as the result of his frustrations and inability to cope with the difficult situation of a poor Jewish teacher striving also to fulfill his natural urge for family life.

* * * * *

My father did not believe in pampering his children. He tried his best to instill in us a sense of self-reliance and independence. Like all the children of the village we were seldom given toys to play with. On nice, dry, sunny days we would ride our steeds–rough sticks, which we mounted–on the streets. The rougher the stick the fiercer the horse. On rainy days, barefooted, we would sail our ships–small pieces of wood or straw on the rough seas, the swollen-from-the-rain rivulets on the streets of the village. We would enjoy these sports with the highest degree of enthusiasm. We used our imaginations to create our own toys and means of entertainment. None of us would even think of asking our parents to buy toys. I remember that only once my father, coming from the "Kontracts"–a yearly fair in Kiev where all business contracts were usually made–brought for us children a few toys. There were beautiful porcelain heads of boys and girls, the painted dark hair, blue eyes, and red lips baked into the porcelain. These were for the girls. Also a doll house, a cubic foot in size, fancifully decorated, with painted windows and doors. When you put a candle inside–the whole house would light up and light would pour out of its windows. It was a magic house. It was put in a prominent place in our home, and on

important occasions we would show it off proudly to our friends. These were the only toys that I remember ever receiving from my father or, for that matter, from anybody.

This apparent effort on the part of my father to instill self-confidence and assurance in his children bore excellent fruit, possibly more than my father intended. It expressed itself in the adamant insistence of my older brother, Shammai, on a medical career in spite of my father's plans to make a bookkeeper out of him, which seemed a more prudent and attainable goal; also, my leaving Father's home, without so much as consulting him, to launch into a terrific struggle for an independent life, full of ups and downs, frustrations and successes. To this he was only a witness without as much as a hint on my part for any help or financial support.

As I look back on the relationship of my brother and myself to our father and compare it with the relationship of Sigmund Freud to his father (as I scan it from reading Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, which embodies much of Freud's theories), I am struck by the difference. It is true that my brother and I tried to get out from under the protective wings of my father–a truly patriarchal man–and become self dependent, much as the young birds try to leave their parents' nests at an early age, aided sometimes in this attempt by the gentle nudging of their parents, who push them off the perch. This is a very common process in nature and it is accomplished without resentment or rancor on the part of either side.

I was always devoted to my father, very respectful and loyal. I often thought with horror of the possibility that anything bad or untoward should ever happen to him, sickness or any fatal occurrence. This is a far cry from the unnatural, morbid, and simply false (in my opinion) theory advanced by Freud that the young, as a rule, are antagonistic to, and mortal enemies of, their elders; that the sons hate their fathers with a hate based, in Freud's opinion, on a sexual antagonism. The sons resent, in Freud's view, their fathers' possession of their mothers, to whom the sons are bound by the Oedipus complex. It is conceivable that the sexually maturing boy or girl, suppressed for a time in exercising this natural urge, might sometimes think in terms of resentment against *any* male who has the power to exercise and satisfy his sexual urge. In the abstract the boy might include even his father as a male, or, in the case of a girl, her mother. But to state that every child is *naturally* a mortal enemy of his parents is, in my opinion, a false

theory based perhaps on the personal relationship of Freud to his own parents.

From my acquaintance with Freud through his writings, he was a highly gifted and imaginative person. He was a practicing physician in the city of Vienna, the city whose inhabitants had attained in Freud's time an advanced civilization. Some of its citizens were distinguished for exquisiteness of mind and a depth and variety of emotional feelings. On the other hand, the rich and overabundant life of the city led others to the perils of oversatiation and, hence, to social and moral decadence.

This has been historically the case with metropolitan cities from ancient times to this day. Nineva in Biblical times was denounced by our prophets in disgust. Rome in its later era was drenched in excesses of pleasures and vices which led to its downfall. Similarly, other historical cities ended in decay after reaching their pinnacle of economic and cultural success.

Freud practiced among the sick and degenerate, in body and spirit, denizens of the city of Vienna. This atmosphere of satiation and degeneracy could not but affect–by osmosis, let us say–the thinking, emotions, and attitudes toward life of this intellectual giant, Freud. His theory of the supposedly *de facto* hatred of the young for their elders is just not true in nature in general. When one observes closely animal life as well as human life, without being befogged *a priori* by a Freudian bias, one can see the fallacy of Freud's assertion.

My father, having had such a fatalistic attitude toward life, and having been so hesitant in accepting new ways of life, carried over these same hesitations and fears in planning the future careers of his children, devoted though he was to them. He considered that under the circumstances of Jewish life in Tsarist Russia there is no sense for a Jewish village boy even to think about such a career as medicine or law, which was the ideal of every middle-class Jewish parent in the towns and cities of Russia at that time. This, in spite of the fact that he had the financial resources to aid us. He decided that the highest career that he could fashion for his oldest son was a career as a bookkeeper. He already even had a promise from Hershel Walteck, the wholesale dealer in flour in the town of Fastov, that he would make room in his office for my brother, the budding bookkeeper, the son of his friend and business associate, David.

For this purpose my father induced my brother, Shammai, to subscribe to a correspondence course in bookkeeping, conducted by a school in Libow, Estonia. My brother, who was a very able student,

successfully passed the final exams in bookkeeping and received a gilt-edged diploma from Libow. He was now officially a bookkeeper. Things seemed to be working out according to the plans of my father when suddenly my brother got other ideas in his head. I really do not know how he came around to these ideas, so strange to all of us. He suddenly decided that he wanted to be a physician. What a wild, impossible goal, according to my father! How can a village boy, with all the limitations existing and imposed on Jewish children in the lower and higher schools, how can he even dare to dream of such a fantastic goal, to become a physician? My father decided that only ignorance of the facts of life and immaturity could lead one to decide upon such an adventure. As a devoted father who was fearful of the frustrations awaiting my brother, he decided to put his foot down firmly upon such an undertaking. He told my brother that, as far as he, his father, was concerned, he decidedly disapproved of this course of action, and that he would not support him with a penny in achieving his goal.

But here my brother showed his mettle. It took great courage to announce openly to my father that he, my brother, was not going to recede from his decision, and, as far as the means were concerned, he was not going to depend on my father. He left our house and hired himself out as a teacher of Hebrew in some distant village. My brother knew Hebrew very well. He turned out to be a well-paid teacher. He had no difficulty in getting a job. In the city of Schwartz-Tume there was an employment bureau or a teachers' exchange under the capable, iron hand of a Mr. Hershel. Hershel was a man of about 70 with a long patriarchal gray beard. He was not a profound scholar in Hebrew, yet he was a remarkably sagacious man, learning very quickly the "worth" of each teacher and finding for him the proper place in the surrounding towns and villages. His three-story house was a regular beehive during the hiring season at the beginning of summer right after *Pesach* (Passover) and in winter after *Rosh Hashana,* when teachers and prospective employers would get together and bargain about conditions and fees. The final arbiter was, of course, Reb Hershel, who knew well both the teachers and the positions offered. He would, of course, get his commission.

Generally, the teachers remained at their positions at least for the "season"; that meant either for the summer or for the winter. In favorable situations a teacher might remain on his job for several seasons.

Thus, Shammai became a Hebrew teacher. He received, as I

remember, about 110 rubles for the season (six months) and board and room from the people employing him. He became an independent man, financially. He taught the children, and in his spare time he became an "externik," which means a self-taught student. He bought himself Russian books and studied high-school subjects, preparing himself for the opportunity that might arise at some time to take the exams which the government, through the Board of Education, offered from time to time to self-taught students to get an officially equivalent high-school credit. These exams were very difficult, as the Tsarist government was highly vigilant, not wishing to let Jewish children get into the colleges through the so-called "back door." Most students were ruthlessly flunked, if not by the written exam, then by the oral exams given by tough, anti-Semitic professors. This did not deter my brother from embarking upon the very difficult road of achieving a formal education for his desired profession. Indeed, he reached his goal eventually, but under entirely and radically changed conditions in Russian life. He became a physician and, later, a prominent surgeon, the head of the gynecology service in the biggest hospital in the city of Kiev, the Alexandrowskaya Hospital.

It took him long years of preparation and hard work, but the opportunity presented itself, albeit in an entirely changed social and political environment, different from the one existing when he embarked upon his difficult climb to his lofty goal.

My father, as time went on, followed with extreme suspense and interest the course of his rebel son, holding his breath at every obstacle that my brother met on his long climb to his goal and, of course, being relieved and happy when his son overcame it. My father did not live to see the final success of his son. He died long before my brother achieved his final goal. My father's last few years were filled with troubles and worries. Those were the years of the First World War. Shammai was drafted and sent into the army, and after a short course in military training was sent to the German front. I remember how the whole family went to the railroad station to meet him as his military train passed our station on its way to the front. I looked at my brother, a very healthy, vigorous young boy, with a sunburned, freckled face and solidly built body. The regular military life and training had benefited him. He was exuding health and optimism. It was a sad and heart-rending thing to see the train pull away with all these strong and vigorous bodies streaming toward the battlefields of the great World War I.

It did not take long for my brother to return. We were shocked and, at the same time, delighted to hear that my brother was being shipped back from the front as a wounded soldier.

We had all kinds of premonitions and fears as to the extent of the wound. The whole family came out to the big city of Kiev to the assembly point from which the wounded were distributed to the different hospitals. I remember the terrific suspense and worry with which I approached the barrack where my brother lay.

My brother was lying on a cot wrapped in his military uniform. I was shocked to see the gaunt, yellow, sickly face of a wounded soldier. His eyes were sunken, his face drawn, his lips parched. The battlefield dirt was not yet washed off his face. It was impossible that this was the same robust, health-exuding countenance of my brother, whom we saw three months ago. Yet it was very comforting to think that my brother was back with us, thrown out on the shore by that horrible, stormy ocean—the war.

A piece of an exploding shell hit my brother in his left ankle and caused a non-fatal wound. He lost much blood and was emaciated, but in a few months he recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital. The wound was septic and would not heal satisfactorily. An ankylosis of the bones of the ankle caused a shortening of the leg and made my brother permanently crippled. For the rest of his life he limped on his left foot.

However, new vistas opened for Shammai now. As an invalid, a veteran of the war, he acquired the rights of a citizen of Russia—which were denied to him before as a Jewish boy. He was allowed certain privileges, including the right to be accepted by a Russian high school. My brother was prepared for that. During his years as an "externik" he acquired enough knowledge in the basic sciences and languages to be admitted to the last grade of the Gymnasium. He spent one year in the Gymnasium in Kiev and was admitted to the university and, by tutoring and studying, he reached the senior year at medical school when the revolution came. During the first years of the Bolshevik revolution the government was too much beset by difficult problems to attempt to introduce their system of stacking the colleges and professional schools with the sons of peasants and workers only, keeping out the sons and daughters of bourgeoisie (capitalists). They had no people from the peasants or workers who were prepared for the colleges. Also, many of the wealthy classes were antagonistic to the regime and, hoping that the revolution would be suppressed soon or would fail in its aims, were keeping away from the schools of higher learning and from cooperating

with the established government. Thus, any of the so-called bourgeoisie who expressed the least interest in collaborating with them were welcomed and given all opportunities to acquire a professional goal.

My brother was, indeed, no son of a capitalist in the true sense and meaning that the revolutionary leaders were fighting against; he readily agreed to accept a job from the Communist rulers of the city in the Housing Department. He was, therefore, given nice quarters free, was allowed to continue his senior year in the medical school, and was even given a small stipend for his expenses. Thus, being graduated as a physician, he reached successfully the goal of his lifetime, which had been considered by our father an impossibility. He continued to advance in the medical field until he became, as I mentioned before, the head of the Gynecologic Department in the biggest hospital in Kiev, the Alexandrowskaya Bolnitza.

Prior to the Hitler holocaust, I was corresponding with Shammai at infrequent and irregular intervals. Then, with the advent of Hitler on Kiev, I lost track of my whole family living there. I suspect strongly that, except for my sister, Basia, the entire family ended their lives in the notorious Babi-Yar, the slaughter place of all the Jews of Kiev, mentioned in the poetry of the Russian poet, Yevtoshenko.

Looking back at, and tracing in my memory the course of the lives of my closest relatives and friends and fellow-Jews of our village, I am appalled to find that most of their lives ended tragically. Whether they were quiet people living ordinary, uneventful lives, or colorful and strong personalities, passing the horizon like a glowing comet leaving a bright trace over the skies of a dark night, they were all extinguished and disappeared, their lives ending violently, cut short by the tragic events of the Russian revolution and the Hitler holocaust. They were doomed beforehand to this fate, although few of them saw it coming. No matter what the causes and effects of this situation were, the fact remains that the vast majority of the Jews in Russia of the Tsarist time were middle class, mostly storekeepers, peddlers and other unessential-to-the-economy people. They were not attached to the earth, by which they would have acquired the stability and dignity of even the poorest farmer or peasant. Rightly or wrongly, the Jews were considered by the masses of the peasants as parasitic elements. Even the poorest and most ignorant Jew was sustained first by his faith in the God of his ancestors and, secondly, by a vitality which was the result of a certain racial adaptability acquired throughout the centuries of

persecution. They considered themselves, and indeed they were, intellectually superior to the mass of peasants and the Russian people in general. They had a desire and ability to improve their poor lot and poverty by trying to reach a higher layer in the social structure–the layer of professional people.

In the ranks of the workers in the small industries of Russia, the few Jews had more stamina and ability to reach the upper layers of the working mass by embracing the idea of socialism and becoming, in a high proportion, social leaders in the preparatory stages of the Russian Revolution. But whether business men, peddlers, professional or socialist leaders, the Jews depended on a society which was foreign and antagonistic to them, that of the Russian peasants and workers.

These Russian Jews were really a super-structure on a false foundation, as the supposed foundation consisted of peasants and workers who were of a different race and who were completely antagonistic to Jews; in fact, they hated them.

Some thinking and discerning Jews foresaw the tragic events of the future and dreamed of a Land of their own, of Zionism, where they would be a healthy body in healthy surroundings, with social layers developing gradually out of the main body and, therefore, having the stability of a normally developing society, a sound base with a developing super-structure as the need arose.

This was still an idea, a far-fetched idea, indeed, dominating the minds of the more vital and advanced elements of the Jewish nation.

Other vital elements among the Jews, adventurous in spirit, spurred on by pogroms and other persecutions of the Jews in Russia, thought in terms of forsaking Russia and emigrating to that alluring, Golden Land of America, where anybody could reputedly develop his abilities and talents in an atmosphere of complete freedom and human dignity. It was said that in America everybody worked and enjoyed equality.

Still other elements in the Jewish society, mostly intellectuals or workers imbued with socialist ideas, thought that the solution to the Jewish problems, as well as to every other problem of the Russian people, would be a classless society. Since the Jews as a rule were more advanced intellectually than the mass of the Russian peasants and workers, it came about that the ranks of the first commissars and Bolshevik administrators were sprinkled with a disproportionate number of Jews, such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, and Bucharin, especially in the towns and the cities of the Pale.

I dreamed of going to Palestine one day to rebuild the ancient Jewish state and, with two other boys, made inquiries about visas to Eretz Israel. When the First World War broke out in 1914 I was deflected by events stirred up by the great war, which left a profound effect on the life of individual people as well as on the fate of many nations and lands.

Chapter 3

MY CAREER AS A BOOKKEEPER

As a school boy my education was in Hebrew only. Reflecting on the amount of Hebrew education absorbed from most of my *melamdim*, I doubt whether it justified the many years that I spent in the *heder*. My basic knowledge in Hebrew extended to the Torah, which by repeated study, year-in and year-out, I knew almost by heart. The Prophets and Kings I absorbed avidly, as I loved poetry and history. Just before the age of 14, when I left my studies and started an adventurous life in the city of Kiev, I was introduced for a short time to the study of the *Gemara* (Talmud). In the Hebrew grammar and in the knowledge of the Hebrew language I was poor, far behind my brother Shammai. I was not fond of grammar and was not introduced to the treasuries of the Hebrew literature by the type of *malamed* who himself was not versed nor interested in these treasures. Somehow, the tradition was to keep a boy in *hedar* until the age of 12 and be satisfied with the amount of Hebrew knowledge he had achieved by that time.

My interest in Hebrew and Yiddish literature and in Russian and World literature I developed later during the years that I was struggling to adjust myself to the competitive world of "making a living."

After the age of 12, with the tacit approval of my father, I was helping out in the flour mill. I learned all there was to learn about the production and sale of flour and about the relationships with peasant customers. I also helped around our house, taking care of the cows and horses that each family possessed. I fed the cows and horses; I cleaned the stables and rather liked the work. I had no advice from my father so far as my future was concerned. Shocked by the resistance of my older brother, Shammai, Father decided to take no part in advising his other children about their goals. I do not remember my father even once discussing with me plans for the future. Things just drifted along. I was helping in the mill, and apparently my father decided that I would remain in the business to continue, in due time, his work in the mill.

When my brother, Shammai, finished his course in bookkeeping and got his diploma he was suddenly, as I mentioned before, imbued with a

powerful impulse and desire to become a physician. He left his bookkeeping correspondence, with all the instructions contained, as I remember, in about 25 or 30 lessons, when he embarked upon his career as a teacher. I decided to make use of this course in bookkeeping and study it by myself in my spare time. I was surprised and rather pleased by this system of logical manipulation of numbers and by the exact balancing of figures.

In a short time I learned the system of double entries of items and, somehow, I also developed a definite interest in being a bookkeeper. I could not get a diploma as I had not paid the Correspondence School in Libow. However, I was satisfied with the knowledge of bookkeeping acquired, and I began to think of ways and means of applying this knowledge in a practical way, and finding a job as a bookkeeper. I communicated my desire to my uncle Motel in the big city of Kiev, asking him to look out on my behalf for an opportunity of a job as a bookkeeper.

I remember that memorable day which marked the end of my era as a village boy and the beginning of life in a big city, a life full of hopes, adventures, and frustrations. I was sitting in the midst of a field of planted and ripened beets, pulling out the ripe beets, chopping off their green crowns, and throwing the beets onto a big pile, when I heard the voice of my sister running toward me, frantically waving a postcard in her outstretched hand. When she handed me this card I quickly glanced at it. It was a short message from my uncle Motel advising me that he had obtained a job for me as a bookkeeper and urging me to come to Kiev as soon as possible to take advantage of this opportunity.

Sitting on the pile of beets in the middle of the big field, I was suddenly confronted with the stark reality that I was invited to go to that big city of Kiev to which very few people in our village ever had an occasion to go. It was the capital of the "goubernia" (province), the seat of the Governor. It was extremely remote, psychologically if not physically–it was only 75 miles away–from our village people. For what business did an ordinary peasant have that he could not with complete satisfaction transact in the nearest town of Fastov? And what business would an ordinary Jewish man have in the city of Kiev where few Jews of the Pale were allowed to reside? Only first-rate businessmen or professional people, such as physicians and lawyers, having formal degrees or diplomas, were allowed to reside there. Also, certain certified tradesmen or mechanics, such as tailors, furriers, and

plumbers could stay there while practicing their trades with special permission from the authorities.It is remarkable that I never considered, even for a moment, this part of the problem when I thought of the city of Kiev. As a village boy, brought up with a certain amount of local freedom and liberty to do whatever I wanted, and being economically more or less independent, I never actually felt any persecution on a racial basis. I was always treated in a rather friendly way by our village people as "their" Jewish boy. I always felt secure, in a way, as all our families enjoyed financial stability and a friendly attitude from the peasants over a number of years, actually over a generation. The thought of Kiev as a place forbidden to me did not even enter my mind. Every Jew who wanted badly to live in Kiev always found some way of doing so, under this or that disguise. In extreme instances there was always such a thing as *schmiren* (palm-greasing), persuading the recalcitrant policemen by the traditional method of persuasion, graft.

My main problem was whether I would be able to cope with the task of being a formal bookkeeper. After all, I had learned bookkeeping through the back door, in a second-hand manner, by using my brother Shammai's course of instruction. I thought that I had learned all the bookkeeping very well, but how would it work out in practice? That was the problem worrying me. I made preparations to go to the big city. I put on my holiday suit. I packed a small valise with underwear, and in a couple of days set out on my journey. I was taken to Kozanka, our village Railroad Station, which was about five miles from our village, and solemnly bought a ticket to the big city of Kiev–third-class, of course.

While I am on the subject of railroad tickets I must say that on short runs, such as from our station to the station of Fastov, very few of our Jewish villagers would buy a regular railroad ticket which was only 28 cents ("kopeikas"). There was a way of paying half or less by a certain method of being in cahoots with the railroad conductor. In the Russia of that time the minor officials, such as policemen and railroad conductors, were paid extremely low wages; yet they appeared to be the elite, the most prosperous among the peasants and ordinary small-town folk. It was almost an unwritten law that every job had its unofficial but nevertheless sure value in actual income many times the wage paid by the government or railroad, which was also government-owned. Peasants were simple souls; they seldom knew about these tricks, but Jews considered themselves more worldly and

more knowing of the ways of life. No Jew in our village would buy a ticket when traveling to Fastov, one run away, or to any place even two or three runs from our station, unless he tried first to strike a mutually profitable bargain with the conductor. It was, to be sure, strictly forbidden by law and an offense against the government to split fees with the conductor as, for instance, getting to Fastov for 14 cents or less, instead of the usual price of 28 cents. You would board the train without a ticket, approach the conductor with the conspiratorial look of making a bargain and give him cash, 10 or 15 cents, instead of the ticket, which money, of course, he would put into his pocket. If you happened to contact a strictly honest and uncorruptible conductor with such a proposal, you would be subject to the danger of being ejected from the train at the next station. However, this possibility was rather remote. Most conductors looked sort of inviting when they spotted a Jewish passenger, and the deal was consummated outside the car on the platform.

The task now remained of avoiding the supervisor who, once in a while, would board the train to check up on the conductor. Here again the supervisors were often as not part of the conspiracy, getting their share from the conductors, and thus glossing over the ticketless passenger as they passed by, led by the conductor. Only in the rare instance of an unbending, unbribable supervisor did the conductor alarmingly signal to the little Jew, the co-conspirator, to seek refuge from the oncoming storm under the long benches of the third-class car. But the relentless enemy, the knowing supervisor, often had eagle eyes to look into the darkest corners of the underbenches. The culmination of this tragi-comedy was the embarrassing climbing out of the culprit from under the bench and the handing over of the "criminal" into the hands of the supposedly surprised and astonished conductor to be given over to the railroad police at the nearest station for the deserved punishment, which was generally the payment of a double price for the ticket.

I was now securely seated in the car near the window and, with a sense of righteousness, reached once in a while into my pocket, feeling the magic ticket, and waited calmly for the conductor to enter. The fields, woods, stations and oncoming trains passed by the window kaleidoscopically. My thoughts were filled with the prospect of being an independent job-holder. I reflected upon all kinds of surprises awaiting me and in my mind went over all the rules of good and correct

bookkeeping, according to the instructions from my Libova course. I arrived in the big city of Kiev for the first time. The masses of people swarming back and forth in the big station impressed me with their sense of business-like purposefulness. There was none of that hazing and loitering that could be seen in the city of Fastov. Everyone was intent upon quickly getting his baggage and packages and leaving the station in a hurry. I, too, caught this atmosphere of business-like intensity, quickly left the station, found the proper trolley car, and boarded it. The car was wending its way through many wide streets, dominated on both sides by tall buildings, with the lower floors set with tall glass windows through which all kinds of shiny merchandise was displayed–everything in a very dignified, high-class style.

The sidewalks were filled with an orderly; moving crowd. There was none of the informal, home-town-like display of merchandise on the sidewalks that you saw in Fastov. The crowd, all dressed in what seemed to me holiday garments, were streaming in two opposite directions, seemingly with a decided purpose, cold and indifferent to each other, as if they were not even aware of each other. We passed the main street, Kreschatic, the center of the city, and circled around "Tsarskaya Ploschad" (The Tsar Square); the trolley descended into the lower city–Podol–where the buildings were still tall, but the stores displayed none of the glamor that we encountered in the center of the city. Here the stores were packed solidly with merchandise. These were the wholesale houses of the city. We continued to wind our way through long streets, approaching sections of the city less and less glamorous, until the trolley brought me to a residential section which was not more distinguished than the familiar sights of the town of Fastov. This was the poor section of the city, where stores and dwellings were interspersed, and you could even see the familiar display of food and merchandise on the sidewalks.

In one of these two-story houses was the residence of my uncle Motel, a fine Jew with a well-trimmed, well-cultivated reddish brown beard on a benign and wise face.

My uncle Motel was a widower with a family of six daughters and one son. He was an urban Jew with none of the philosophic introverted outlook of my father. He was a great extrovert, knew many people and socialized widely. People liked him and sought his company for all kinds of advice.

His wife died when he was relatively young. Unlike the usual

custom, he did not remarry and decided to devote his life to the upbringing of his family. I never knew how much Hebrew education or any other education my uncle had, but he always gave the impression of a worldly, urban man who combined with his personal integrity a wide knowledge of people and things. He possessed a certain personal magnetism and charm which made a lot of folks seek his company and advice about their problems. It was said that he was once very, very sick and on the verge of dying. The doctors gave him up as a hopeless case. His body was reduced to a mere skeleton, and only the advice of a health-food faddist saved him from sure death. He was advised to subsist on only the squeezed-out juice of raw meat and, if I am not mistaken, on raw eggs, which regimen he adhered to for a long time; and behold, he began to improve and recovered from his illness. In spite of the failure of official medicine to come to his rescue in the critical days of his illness, my uncle, nevertheless, was a progressive man. When one of his children began to show any sign of illness he immediately called in a doctor. My uncle was a regional sales representative of one of the big national oil and lubricating oils companies. His income was modest, yet he knew how to live. His house always showed a degree of opulence which was lacking in my father's house, although my father had, no doubt, a much better income as well as money put aside for security. Uncle Motel never thought of security as such; he lived from hand to mouth. His house was visited socially by all kinds of people, and his main efforts were directed toward marrying off his daughters.

His oldest daughter, a very beautiful woman, was married to a solid home-loving Jew; of all people, a German Jew. He loved his wife and was a little jealous of her. He was very sentimental, and I remember that I was once surprised to see a tear rolling down his ruddy, immobile face because of a minor occurrence—a precocious word uttered by his four-year-old son. He loved his family dearly. Max, for this was his name, was the second husband of my uncle Motel's oldest daughter. I never found out who her first husband was, whether he was alive or dead. I suspect that she was a divorcée. However, this rather rare phenomenon among the Jews of that period was kept a secret from the younger generation; at any rate, it was never discussed.

My uncle's second daughter, not so beautiful, was married to a very interesting man, Mr. Asbel, with whom I later had many contacts. They lived in a small town, Bristol, near Kiev.

The third daughter, Braina, was a rather unseemly looking girl with a

big mouth, large beefy lips, but very good-natured. She was almost on the verge of becoming an old maid when a young man, poor but rather good-looking and much younger than she, came to her rescue. He admired my uncle Motel, was taken in by the motherly solicitude of Braina and, possibly, by the prospect of getting a push in life from my popular uncle. Thus, a fine marriage with all the traditional Jewish trimmings took place. The couple lived happily afterwards, at the house of my uncle, of course, Braina being sort of a housekeeper for her widowed father. Two beautiful children followed.

The fourth daughter, Geni, had a beautiful, noble, pale Semitic face. She was always surrounded by Jewish intellectuals, teachers, aspiring writers, "eternal students," and similar types. But somehow things never jelled; some of the suitors pulled out at the critical moment; with others, she was reluctant to commit herself. Once a handsome Jewish-Polish refugee from the First World War, a protegé of my uncle, spent some time courting the gentle Geni, but some "urgent" business suddenly came up, demanding his departure to the Far East of Russia. That was the end of that courtship, leaving my cousin Geni in the role of a grass widow mourning her lost love.

The fifth daughter, Sonia, was a very beautiful, vivacious, aggressive girl. Her lack of, and disinterest in, education was masked by an eternal restlessness and search for romantic adventures. She was secretly the object of my admiration, but my attentions, which were no secret to her as a woman, she decidedly rejected for a long time.

The sixth daughter, Nehuma, who was still an infant when her mother died, remained the baby in the house. By the time that I met her she was already a girl of 14 or 15 years. Tall, not good-looking in my estimation, with a rather long nose on a colorless face, she was babied by the whole family. She was the only one of the bunch to attend regular high school and had not yet entered the arena of husband-seekers.

Moishe, the only son of Motel, my uncle, was rather a disappointment to him. As the only boy, he was treated with kid gloves by everybody in the family. As a result, he was very much spoiled from childhood. He dropped schooling early in his life and became a shiftless young man, interested only in girls and embarrassing my uncle with his escapades. There were all kinds of ugly stories about his behavior with women, and my uncle was a happy man when a rather fine girl of substantial parents responded to Moishele's momentary interest in her.

The wild colt was finally caught on the hook, subdued, and soon domesticated by an abundance of children following one another in rapid succession, and by the responsibility of business thrown on him by the heads of both families.

Into this seething caldron came I one day, a shy country boy with his meager baggage, to claim the job which my uncle had found for me. The house was a stormy sea, always full of people, coming and going, with diverse interests and purposes to their coming. The girls were always frantically busy in grooming themselves to meet their different suitors. Poor Uncle never had peace of mind. There was complete disorder in the house most of the time, and even the privacy of my uncle's room was disregarded and invaded by his daughters for all kinds of trivial purposes. The girls were utterly anarchic in their housekeeping. They never kept things in their proper places, and my uncle had to tie his towel to his bed, else it would disappear immediately when one of the daughters needed a towel, knowing that the only sure place that she could find one was the towel tied to my uncle's bed.

I was given a corner in one of the rooms with a bed for an overnight stay, and the next day my uncle introduced me to my future employer. He was a short, dark-complexioned man of about 30 years of age. He was rather quick in his actions, businesslike in his dealings, coming quickly to the point and explaining the functions of the job. He had a wholesale glassware store, one of the smaller businesses of this kind in the city. He had established this business about two or three years previously. He employed three clerks to help with the sale and shipping of the merchandise, and he needed a bookkeeper as the business had expanded and needed more orderly bookkeeping. He did not ask me about my qualifications, taking the word of my uncle, a respectable man in the community, that I had had a course in bookkeeping and would fit his offered job. He figured that I would probably amply justify and deserve his fee of three rubles per month with board and room in his house. As for trustworthiness and honesty, he was satisfied with the fact that I was the nephew of Motel Kushnirovitz; therefore, my reputation was guaranteed.

Indeed, I mastered the job easily with the amount of bookkeeping knowledge that I had, and I soon fell into the routine of the business, doing a satisfactory job of balancing credits and debits.

My first encounter with the city was a success. I spent about three

months in the place, working during the day in the store and at night at the house of my boss, balancing figures.

A curious incident happened to me during this time. It was on one of the first days of my arrival in the big city Kiev from my village, Pivni.

I was boarding a very crowded trolley car. The car was over-crowded, people hanging on to the straps overhead. I was standing on the platform, which was packed with people like herring in a barrel. Suddenly I felt a hand pushing past my right side and, when I cast my eye downward, I saw the nimble fingers of that hand extracting a wallet from the pocket of the man next to me.

My blood rushed to my head. Aha, the thief, the contemptible pickpocket about whom I had heard so much and had been warned so much!

Without the slightest hesitation or reflection I slapped the youngish thief over his face with great vigor and self-righteousness. Suddenly my head and face were showered with blows from the gang–partners of the pickpocket. A great commotion arose. The conductor stopped the trolley car. A policeman came over. Pointing to the victim, I told the policeman that the pickpocket had stolen his pocketbook. But a strange phenomenon happened. The victim looked about him in obvious fear and, without even reaching for his pocket, hastily walked off the platform and disappeared. Whether he was an "illegal resident" in Kiev or whether he did not relish an entanglement with thieves and informers and police, I do not know, but he vanished in a hurry. The policeman ordered the thief and me to get off the platform. Three of the thief's friends got off, too.

The policeman ordered the pickpocket and me to follow him. "They will find out at the police station what's what," said he. After walking thus two or three blocks, one of the pickpocket's friends, who was following at a short distance behind, came up to the police officer and had a friendly chat with him. The policeman turned toward me and asked me whether the thief had taken something from my pocket. When I said that I had simply done my duty defending an innocent victim, he asked me again whether I was now willing to press charges against the thief.

I reflected for a moment on the behavior of my protégé–the victim, who had disappeared so ignominiously, leaving me, the Don Quixote, to "face the music"–and said to the policeman that I did not wish to press

charges against the thief. At that, the policeman advised me to proceed peacefully to wherever I was going. He was left behind with the gang, apparently to collect his reward for resolving the conflict so ably without the assistance of a magistrate.

I was aching from the blows I had received from the gang, but I was definitely a wiser man after the encounter. When, a few days later, I met again on the platform of a trolley car the same gang, I received a friendly, knowing wink from the leader, acknowledging my heroic tendencies, but expecting me also to respect the sphere of their professional interests.

This tendency on my part to hastiness did not always end so peacefully.

I was happy with my work and with the wages, but unhappy about something not concerned directly with me, personally. Mr. B, my boss, was a short fellow, wiry and quick, with a dark, thick mustache covering his upper lip. He was an uneducated man, who had worked his way up to be the owner of the store from the lowly position of a messenger boy in one of the big glassware wholesale stores in the city. He had achieved this by sheer hard work and natural intelligence. He was an intense man, quick of temper, trying to be fair to the three clerk-salesmen in his store, whose ranks—as an employee—he had so recently left. At the same time he begrudged them the disinterestedness and easy-going manners with which they handled his customers. Somehow he expected them to hold on to every customer and to make the sale on any terms, the way he himself would have done it, having the pressure to meet bills and obligations.

The clerks, in the usual manner of clerks, were rather lackadaisical about sales, as if the wages they were getting did not depend on their efforts to bring in business. He felt that they did not deserve their wages, but he used his will power in restraining himself from rubbing them the wrong way or criticizing them. He had left their ranks too recently, although he was sure that as a clerk he had taken a greater interest in his bosses' businesses. Indeed, he probably did, judging by his meteoric advancement in the business world.

He walked around the store, especially on dull business days, like a wolf in his cage, sniffing around the dark corners and seething within himself, ready to explode at any moment. His poor wife was the victim of the release of his pent-up emotions and bitterness. She was a woman of about 33 years, older than he, not good-looking at all, with a sharp

nose on a dark, thin, pale face with rabbit's teeth protruding from under an upper lip covered with a fine fuzz of dark hair. She was near-sighted and wore golden pince-nez attached to a light gold chain.

It was said that she came from a family of better circumstances than her husband's; in fact, rumors had it that her money was instrumental in establishing the business. She spent most of her time in the store, supervising the sales from an elevation in the corner of the store serving as the office. Here my desk was also located. Her husband was busy outside the store with purchasing and other business requiring his personal attention. Whenever he would stop into the store for a moment and find the three salesmen standing idle with their arms folded, he would immediately find some trivial excuse to annoy his wife. He would find some minor infraction of the office routine, would explode and blame her for her inefficiency. At first he was a bit restrained by my presence, but as time went on he completely disregarded me. Raising his voice to a high pitch he would abuse his wife with all kinds of crude invectives and would walk out from the store in a huff and in disgust, leaving his wife in extreme embarrassment before the clerks and me.

This bickering and strife continued in the privacy of their apartment almost every night, especially after a day of dull business or when creditors would press him with their bills. The explosion would occur in the middle of the meal, when we were sitting at the table. The poor woman would abandon the table, leaving me, the unsophisticated boy, ignorant of the ways of the world, in deep embarrassment. Mr. B would finish the meal in complete silence and would leave the table without a word, oblivious of my presence.

Those nights I tossed around in my bed unable to fall asleep. This discord was a novel experience to me. Nothing of this sort was ever witnessed by me in our house. My father was the patriarch in his house. His word was law, but law respected and followed with realization of its ultimate benefits to all of us. My mother never argued with my father, acknowledging his authority and, only in rare instances, interceded on behalf of us children with a plea for mercy if she thought the judgment or the punishment too severe. On the other hand, my father did his best to enhance the authority of my mother, always related himself to her with a most tender feeling and assumed the complete protection of her against all odds.

I suffered almost physically in the strained, explosive environment

of my employer's home. I felt like a prisoner in a jail, suddenly deprived of the beautiful world of mutual tenderness, respect, and love, and plunged into this gloomy, suspicious and intolerable atmosphere of hate and strife.

One evening when the couple was away, I packed my belongings in a hurry and stole my way out of the house. I did not have the courage to notify my employers of my intentions before my flight from their abode. I breathed the air of relief and happiness when I found myself on the street. It was the feeling of freedom and extreme satisfaction of a prisoner released from jail. I went directly to the station, bought a ticket and boarded the train for home. A few days later I wrote to my uncle, explaining to him the circumstances of my flight and asking his forgiveness for my precipitate action. After all, he was the one who got me the job.

Chapter 4

THE IDYLLS OF THE VILLAGE

I stayed for a few months with my parents in the village. My first venture into the great world was not a success. I returned to my work in the mill and around the house. The village had a tremendous charm for me. I was born and raised to the age of 14 in the bosom of nature. The village was surrounded by fields and woods. Our house was located at the edge of the river. We children had something to do all year around and amused ourselves. Summertime we were in and out of the river practically the whole day long, bathing in its clear waters, fishing from the banks. When we became older we would get up at dawn and, providing ourselves with bait and angles, would spend the whole morning in a row boat fishing in the clear spaces among the tall reeds, surrounded by complete silence and peace, unless a fish would splash on the surface of the calm waters or a wild duck would suddenly break the quiet by its mate-calling.

Wintertime the river would be covered with a dark green, smooth, icy cover, and we had a field-day skating on the glassy, smooth surface of the ice. Our skates were made by ourselves from a piece of wood, boat-like in shape, to the convex side of which a smooth, thick wire was adjusted. This wooden skate was fastened by pieces of rope to our shoe, and it was ready for use.

We children developed great skill in using these simple, wooden skates. We would chase each other with lightning speed, taking in stride an occasional fall, sliding on our rears for a distance when the rope broke or loosened. The steel skates of today were in time introduced into our village, but they were used only by rich people and by some of our villagers who had already tasted the life of the city with its new-fangled ideas and conveniences.

Our very few Jewish families who lived in the village could not help but be influenced by the simple, almost primitive life of the peasants. There was a certain direct, immediate approach to nature and its grand simplicity. The peasants' philosophy of life was not complicated by any doubts or fears of the unknown. Their nourishment was derived from the fields in which they worked during the day and in which they slept

with their horses at night.

The young boys courted their girls at certain public places, one of which was near our river, where a bunch of singing boys would approach a bevy of spruced-up girls at the end of a long day at work. Soon the combined voices of the whole crowd would be heard all over the village, echoing to the distant shores of the river and dying gradually away in a nostalgic call, with heart-throbbing emotion.

And, when the night would descend and the songs of the youths would be replaced by a chorus of softly croaking frogs and the piercing of the air by an occasional chirping of a bird settling itself for the night, the boys and girls would split into couples and disappear in the darkness of the evening to their private rendezvous to spend the rest of the night in getting more closely acquainted with one another.

This was the romantic phase of the village life, ending shortly at the altar of the church. Thus began a new peasant family. It was a simple, uncomplicated life, punctuated at times by the pomp of weddings and Sunday street dancing, where boys and girls would dance to the tune of a self-taught fiddler. At times gatherings would be held in private homes, to which close relatives and friends would be invited and at which a lot of vodka would be consumed, and everybody was happy and in a very expansive mood.

This routine, idyllic life was only occasionally disturbed by an unusual event, such as a fire at night when the deep quiet would suddenly be broken by the foreboding, alarming voice of an awakened peasant crying, "Fire! Fire!" This voice would soon be picked up by dozens of similar cries in the night and, in the glow of the distant fire, silhouettes would soon appear of running peasants with their buckets in their hands attempting to extinguish the fire.

Or the peasants would gather solemnly on Sunday in their communal house—usually the large house of a well-to-do peasant—to discuss some "ukase" (government order) received from the district authority. The older, respectable, usually better-to-do peasants would sit solemnly about the long wooded table, chaired by the headman usually appointed by the government authority, flanked by the scribe, and would discuss the ukase. Everybody would talk at the same time. Some on the periphery of the crowd would discuss subjects entirely unrelated to this business: their neighbors, horses, cows, swine, and so on. Finally the headman would give his signal to stop the "discussions" and a resolution would be adopted—of course, one that had already

been prepared by the headman and his associates beforehand.

The crowd would then disperse to end up in the homes of their friends, discussing the events around a bottle of vodka and a dish of pickles, criticizing the headman and his henchmen in the security of their homes.

There was a certain friendliness, openness, and directness of approach when a peasant would meet a stranger. After greeting one another, they would engage in a conversation without any preliminaries, as if they had known one another a lifetime. If one should call another a "fool", the other would immediately counter with "What did I fool you about?"—implying that a fool is one who takes advantage of somebody.

Once the village was treated to a very exciting "zrelische" (spectacle). It seems that a Don Juan, who was well known in the village as a "heartbreaker," was caught by a posse consisting of the betrayed husband and his friends, in the act of adultery. Both the peasant's wife and the culprit were detained in the house until daybreak and then, tied by thick ropes to one another, back-to-back, were led through the streets of the village followed by a mob of youngsters and adult onlookers, with the husband and his friends leading and closing up the parade. And that was the punishment meted out to the offenders. Following this the husband apparently forgave his wife, for they continued to live in the same house, going about their usual business as before.

It was a relief to come back to the village, to the natural, unsophisticated life, having acquired some experience in the faster moving life of the city and now having a chance to compare the differences between the life in the big city and the slow, quiet life of the village. In reality I was not yet "spoiled" by the city. I had hardly participated in the real life of a city dweller. The city to me, so far, was a constant struggle with rather frequent unpleasant features attached to it.

It was quite a contrast to the busy life of the city to watch the peasants moving slowly, free of the superficial excitement of the city, relating themselves philosophically to events and, in a friendly manner, to people. Peasants, like any other group of people, include a great variety of individuals: some smarter, some duller, some very active, others indolent. The same conditions of life activated some to hard work, thriftiness, and acquisition; others, to frustrations, resignation,

TUTTLEMAN LIBRARY OF GRATZ COLLEGE
Melrose Park, PA

and drunkenness. There were some naturally intelligent peasants who would end up as leaders in the councils of the community. Others were rather dull, mentally retarded, in differing degrees, from high-grade morons to outright idiots. There was an unwritten law of responsibility of parents to children and children to parents. Only very seldom would a delinquent father forsake his family and leave to a mother or grandparents the responsibility for his children. A divorce was a rarity. The parents, getting older, depended on and received the care of the children; even an outright idiot had somebody to take care of him, whether a parent, grandparent, or a close relative. There was no "Society" to underwrite the duties of the irresponsible, and no "Society" to assume the responsibility of the forsaken child. Somebody close in the family assumed the responsibility of rearing the child by taking him in as a member of the family with all the care given to him and all the responsibility of work expected of him as a member of the family. Hence, there were no delinquents to plague the community.

All peasants liked a drink, but there were very few really degenerate drunkards or alcoholics. A healthy humor was used by peasants to chastise the deviates from the accepted standards. It was potent enough to affect even the most odd individual or eccentric. The latter usually was saddled for life with a properly fitting nickname which essentially characterized the outstanding trait of the deviate.

Peasants are highly observant. It was a great treat for me to listen to a group of peasants waiting for their turn to grind their sacks of corn late in the evening in the semi-darkness of the mill. The imaginative among them and the spellbinders would tell all kinds of stories about people and events. Nobody cared whether the stories were authentic or not. It was the manner of relating that mattered. And everybody was disappointed when the story-teller's turn came to process his sack of corn and he left the crowd. Little by little, one by one, the crowd became smaller and smaller, and the enchanting story-telling would come to an end.

There were other simple pleasures in the village which left a lasting impression on me—a walk late in the evening on the dam past our old mill; the full moon would throw its magic pale light over the village, the distant reaches of the river, the darkish silhouette of the mill, and would get lost in the rows of willow trees on both sides of the dam. You would not see a soul around, and the stillness of the night would be broken only by the soft croaking of the frogs among the water lilies

or, occasionally, by the very distant, nostalgic, soft whistle of a railroad locomotive coming from way beyond the woods on the horizon and leaving you with an irresistible desire to join that great, immense world beyond the confines of your village.

Sometimes a crowd of us children and teenagers, all cousins, brothers and sisters, would walk *en masse* to our railroad station on a rumor that a great man–Tolstoi or Sholom Aleichem or a public figure–would be passing by our station. Nobody expected the train to stop, as our station was much too small and God-forsaken. Yet we were all filled with a great swelling in our hearts, a feeling that we would be in the presence of the "great" when he would pass our station. And we would throw our hats into the air as the "right," or what we thought was the "right," train passed by. We would walk home with a great sense of a mission accomplished. This walk to and from the station was repeated by me numerous times from childhood until I became an adult. It was a distance of about five miles through fields and woods, which I traversed mostly alone, and which always was an experience of great suspense coupled at times with fear.

You would come to our station, Kozanka, back from the city of Kiev in the deep of the night, about two or three A.M. You alight from the train, glance into the almost empty station, and, looking suspiciously about to make sure that no one is following, you step into the narrow path leading into the dark woods bordering the station. You grope your way in the darkness, walking cautiously. Here and there the stillness is broken by the noises of trains approaching the station, or by other sounds peculiar to a railroad station. You are still sort of "near" the security of the station. The woods end soon, and the road winds itself through the distant field separating the two woods. The road is clear and visible for a long distance. Not a soul can be seen. You traverse bravely the field and again approach the woods. You have already travelled about one-third of the distance. You enter the deeper and darker forest. There is an absolute silence, broken occasionally by yourself accidentally stepping on a dried twig, which breaks and disturbs the quiet, to your great annoyance. You continue to walk and are suddenly startled by the piercing noise of a night owl descending on its victim, a hare or some other small animal. You are stunned and the blood rushes to your head. In a moment everything is silent again.

You continue cautiously through the woods. Suddenly you are aware of the soft noise of approaching footsteps. Your suspense

heightens. The footsteps are getting louder. You hold your breath. There is no turning back, no escape. You have got to face the inevitable. A dark figure appears in the distance and approaches you fast. Your heart almost stops beating in great suspense. The inevitable occurs. The man is in front of you and, behold, it is Ivan the railroad man. Ivan, your friend, to whom you spoke only a few days ago when he brought his sack of flour to the mill. It is Ivan going to assume his job on his shift. You completely relax with a deep sigh. You greet Ivan in the most cordial manner, as your brother, ask him a few routine questions, and bid him good-bye. You are now completely at ease. All that suspense that began at the railroad station and deepened and reached its climax when you stumbled upon Ivan is completely gone. With a light heart you quicken your steps and soon you are at the outskirts of the woods and the home fields, with the sleepy village in front of you. The pre-dawn light reveals the individual roofs and houses. You are entering the village, which is still not awake. You pass the familiar houses and, here and there, your walking steps wake up a vigilant dog who sleepily registers, by a lazy bark or two, his protest at being disturbed.

You are approaching your home. It is almost morning. You sneak into the back door, which is never locked, work your way quietly to your room and bed, and cover yourself happily with the blanket.

Chapter 5

BOOKKEEPER TO A JUNK DEALER

After remaining in the village for a while, I began to think again about going to the city in search of employment. I was already somewhat familiar with the big city, and I thought that I should try my fortune again. I did not want to impose on my uncle's hospitality. I was too proud even to eat a meal there. I wanted to try to find a job for myself. I communicated with my cousin Motel, the younger son of Aunt Pessie, who was a clerk in the moving business. All the "trucking" was done by horses–burden horses, pulling long, deeply set, iron-trimmed wagons. There was a large roomy barn for the horses, their equipment, and the wagons. In the loft was hay for the horses. I conceived the bright idea that this barn would be a safe place for my stay in the city of Kiev, where ordinary Jews were prohibited from living.

My cousin Motel thought it a good idea. He was the manager of the place, and the one who had the key to the place. We figured that the vigilant police would hardly bother to make raids on that barn. And, indeed, I spent several summer months there, retiring for the night to the top of the loft on the fragrant hay and sleeping peacefully, never disturbed or bothered by any fears of the police. During the days I wandered about the city looking for a job. I followed up every lead suggested by Cousin Motel or his friends. The few rubles that I had melted away very quickly, and I was too proud to write to my family for additional money. I walked the streets, tired and hungry, here and there making a few kopeikas by helping Cousin Motel or my cousin Moishe sell canes on the Bazaar. Food was very cheap. You could walk into one of the public restaurants, on the order of Horn and Hardart's, pay a couple of pennies for a plate of good vegetable or meat soup; the bread was offered free with it and, as I remember, a cup of good strong coffee could be obtained for another penny–the sugar offered free. But it was very hard for me to get that "piatak" (nickel). There were very few industries where one could get employment. Besides I did not even

think of labor work. I was a bookkeeper, definitely a white-collar man, a professional. I remember that my uncle Motel once suggested visiting a friend of his, an architect, who had mentioned to my uncle that he had some prospect of a job for me. The architect lived in a fashionable house in the richer part of the city. I never thought of calling him up. To begin with I had no money to squander on telephone calls. I walked the whole distance from my barn in the outskirts of the city to the address given.

I came to a beautiful apartment house. Elegantly panelled white doors led to the apartment directly from the street. A shiny brass plate with the engraved name of the architect beckoned invitingly to me but, I, a village boy, was too overawed to ring the bell at once. After lingering awhile I timidly pressed the button. After a long pause somebody approached the door with soft steps, apparently walking on thick rugs. The door quietly opened and an elderly woman, obviously the housekeeper, asked me what I wished. She said that Mr. M was now in his office but would be at his home from five to seven P.M. In a way I was a little relieved that my meeting with the important personage was postponed. Instinctively I felt the great psychological distance between myself, the simple village boy, and the urbane, polished, and cultured man whom I was to meet, and was glad that the encounter was postponed. I had an inner pride, based no doubt on an inferiority complex that always accompanied me in my encounters with city people with whom I was not familiar. I wandered about, gazing at the shiny displays, went into the public park, where I spent a few hours, and was promptly back at the architect's apartment at five P.M. I waited another ten or fifteen minutes and rang the bell. The architect, himself, opened the door, glanced at me with a critical look, taking in my pose, my clothes, and asked for my name. When I told him that I was sent to him by my uncle Motel, and the purpose of my visit, he relaxed and pleasantly invited me into his study. He was a well-built, pleasant looking man, dressed in a fashionable, made-to-order suit. He invited me to sit down at the table, a large square table with a shiny reddish-brown top on which were arranged in nice order all the implements of an architect. He asked me for my qualifications and what kind of job I was looking for. I told him that I could be a bookkeeper, but that any clerical work would be acceptable to me. He thought for a moment and said that at present he had nothing in mind, but that he would be glad to help me out if an opportunity of a job

should present itself. He thought very warmly of my uncle and would be glad if he could favor him in some way.

He got up, and I realized that this was the end of our interview. He courteously accompanied me to the door, opened it, and bade me goodbye. I went home to my barn a little disappointed that no immediate job was offered, but satisfied that there might be some prospects in the future. After all, the man had displayed an interest in me and a warm feeling toward my uncle Motel. I was always an optimist.

This feeling of hopefulness never left me. Shortly afterward I visited our distant cousins, the Zukowskis. They were a family of distinction. The old mother of the two brothers—one of whom was an up-and-coming lawyer and the other an actor-singer in the Kiev Opera House—used to come at very infrequent intervals in the summertime to our village to visit her relatives, our three families. She was always accepted with great warmth and deference. In our family they talked with great esteem and admiration of her two sons. Wandering around endlessly in the city in search of a job, the idea occurred to me to visit these distinguished cousins of mine. You never know how fate works.

For this occasion I spent a few pennies to make the telephone call, and I made appointments to see my cousins. My older cousin, Isaac Zukowski, the lawyer, was a man of about 35, tall, rather slim, with a straw-yellow beard, well-trimmed in the manner worn at that time by professional men. He had a high forehead and a serious, intelligent face. His wife was a pale-looking, tall woman of about his age, well dressed, although modestly, with a friendly manner. They had three children; the oldest one, a girl of about 15, had some trouble with her spine and wore a brace. They asked me about the well-being of our family in the village, complaining that life in the city was tough. They were rather discouraging about my finding employment in the city, implying that I would probably be happier if I would stick to my father's business.

My cousin, the lawyer, was a hard-working, struggling man, beset by family and by a sick child. He came of parents with moderate means, had no wealthy clients, and was hardly able to make ends meet, although he was apparently very able and was considered by his professional brethren as an up-and-coming man. Sympathetic to the struggling, working, and revolutionary class, he was one of the lawyers who defended some young students accused by the Tsarist government of sedition.

When the Revolution took place he was rewarded by the Communist regime by their giving him a responsible position in the local city government.

If my hopes for a job were not enhanced by my visit to Isaac Zukowski, I was downright humiliated when I visited my other cousin, Abrasha Zukowski, the actor-singer. I visited his apartment one day at about six P.M. and found my cousin Abrasha and his wife having supper at the table. I was not invited to have supper with them. I might have declined anyway, hungry as I was. Abrasha was of average height, rather well-rounded and stocky, with a fine artistic face, an aquiline nose, and a closely shaven chin and upper lip. He had a crop of hair, well-trimmed in the back, revealing a rather thick neck.

Actors and singers in Russia at that time considered themselves as a special breed. They expected the public to place them on a par with writers, artists, and similar people whose talent gives them undisputed prerogative in the top crust of society.

Abrasha was in a jovial mood bantering with his wife, a short, youngish woman in college uniform. He looked me over curiously, at my baggy clothes, lacking the city style of that time, my rather awkward, clumsy manner of walking and sitting. Sardonically, he asked what my father planned to do with all the money that he was making. Apparently, like many of the city "slickers" and minor, poverty-stricken singers and artists, he was sure that he could use money to better advantage than those village cousins of his. And I suspect that he was not far from being right. I was extremely embarrassed, found a convenient moment to bid them goodbye, and left them. I was very much discouraged and resented the definitely insulting reference to my parents. I never met the Zukowskis again.

Those were days of extreme frustration. For months I did my best to find a job, following up the slightest lead with never any prospect of success. I was half-starved most of the time. Once a very funny incident happened to me. I considered it a moral lesson for the rest of my life. It was a rather cloudy summer day. I was coming down the hill leading from the upper city of Kiev to Podol, the lower part of the city. I was hungry. On the sidewalk I noticed what appeared to me to be a penny. I picked it up, and indeed it was a copper penny, but the imprinted letters were so smoothed off its surface by the shoes of pedestrians that it could hardly be negotiated as a coin. I held on to it. A little farther on I noticed a man selling apples from a stand on the sidewalk. An idea flashed into my mind to buy an apple with my "penny." I asked him

for an apple and put the penny into his hand and, fearing that he might object to payment with such a damaged and probably worthless coin, I swiftly grabbed the apple and quickened my pace almost to a run. When I turned around the corner, out of the sight of the peddler, I examined my apple and, behold, it was a rotten apple. Thus, it was a well-matched transaction and a practical lesson in my life that "you cannot buy something for nothing." It was a brilliant illustration of the maxim of our peasants that "he is a fool who tries to fool others."

Those months of struggle, search, and frustration left an indelible impression deep in my consciousness. Even now, after years of being a successful medical practitioner, quite secure materially, I often dream that I am hunting for a job, with all the feelings of despair and frustration that I experienced in those days; awakening, I am mightily relieved that it is only a dream.

I do not remember for sure who helped me to my second job. I believe that my cousin Motel, transporting merchandise to the outskirts of the city, stumbled upon this situation.

A successful junk dealer expanded his business and acquired a big, barn-like building on the farthest outskirts of the city of Kiev, among the marshes and dump places. Ragmen and derelicts collected rags and pieces of metal and bones on the streets of the city on trash days and brought their finds to this depot. There was a terrific stench around the place from the collected bones which were being cooked in big vats to remove the fat from them to be sold to soap manufacturers. There were large piles of all kinds of metals, rags, bones, and papers, which were sorted out by derelicts and drunkards and prepared for shipment. Apparently the business was a financial success, and the owner was looking for a bookkeeper, in addition to his two or three clerks, to help him with the business. I was hired for five or six rubles a month beside my board and room in his house. My job was to spend a couple of hours a day on bookkeeping in the house and a few hours a day on the business premises collecting data for the bookkeeping.

Mr. P, the boss, was a rather quiet man, dark-complexioned with a dark mustache and small, pleasant features. He had none of the aggressiveness and crudeness of the typical junk dealer. He could easily have been accepted as a Jewish teacher or *Yeshiva Bocher* (student). One wondered how this quiet, scholarly-looking man got into this business, always surrounded by derelicts and tough degenerates, and made a success of it.

His wife was exactly the opposite of this apparently modest and

retiring man. She was a large, fat woman with a pretty but crude face, always ready to engage her husband in a quarrel and to heap abuses on him in the most insulting and vile manner.

I had a small room of my own in the house. After a period of struggle in finding a job, it was quite a lucky break to get into a fine house with my own room and plenty of food. There were only two things that bothered me after I had become established there. My travel to the place outside the city was always an ordeal to me. I simply could not stand the terrific stench of rancid fat being boiled out of the old bones, which hit your nostrils a mile away from the barn. Apparently the derelicts and the drunken degenerates swarming around the place did not mind it at all. They would eat their sandwiches and drink their beer or vodka, apparently entirely oblivious of the physically nauseating atmosphere.

I was also struck by the apparent indifference to this stench of the chief clerk of the business, a young man of about 25 years with a benign, round face and a congenital hare-lip, who was always laughing and was very friendly. He had worked in this place for a few years, was getting a decent salary and, I understood, was about to be engaged or married, thus apparently building his future life-career on the prospect of a permanent position here.

The other thing that riled me was the frequent assaults of my employer's wife on her husband. Her voice carried all over the place. She did not consider it necessary even for a moment to voice her criticism of her spouse in hushed tones. She used the most provoking, dirty language. Sitting in my room over the balancing sheets, I felt myself blushing for the poor man.

I stuck to this job, however, for many months. This job was not a permanent one, as a bookkeeper was needed only during the spring and summer, when the weather was nice and the business was open for processing all the trash accumulated on the streets of the city. My job came to an end in deep fall, when the barn outside the city closed up for the winter.

I was not particularly saddened by the end of my job and again returned to the village to rest up from the hustle and bustle of the city. I had gained some practical experience in the bookkeeping profession.

* * * * *

My uncle Motel invited me again to come to the city. He had a job

for me. His son-in-law, Asbel, married to his second daughter, was organizing, together with a few other enterprising townspeople, a cooperative bank. Mr. Asbel lived in a small town, Bristol, about 70 miles from Kiev.

A bookkeeper and an assistant-bookkeeper were needed. A man by the name of Berlin was already hired as the chief bookkeeper. My uncle Motel suggested me as Mr. Berlin's assistant.

I went to the city of Kiev and stopped for a few days at my uncle's house where I was introduced to my superior, Mr. Berlin. He was a slight, blondish man, with a short crop of receding grayish hair on his forehead. He had a pleasant, intelligent, round face, quick eyes, and a straight small nose. He wore gold pince-nez. Despite his grayish hair he looked boyish. His high forehead and scholarly demeanor gave him the appearance of a *privat-docent* (assistant professor in a Russian university).

I found out presently from my uncle that Mr. Berlin had never been a bookkeeper. It was rumored that he had been active in the "Revolutionary" movement and was now on the sidelines, covering up his former activities and looking for a haven in an innocent, safe job, such as that of a bank bookkeeper.

By all my early upbringing I was completely indifferent to political activity and was not even inquisitive enough to find out the veracity of these rumors. I liked Mr. Berlin from the moment I met him, and we had a few conferences relating to our future activities as bookkeepers. I found out that he knew nothing about bookkeeping. He had obtained a manual in bank bookkeeping and was studying it assiduously when I met him. He was interested to know the extent of my knowledge in practical bookkeeping. He frankly asked me to share with him my experience in bookkeeping so that both of us could apply it in our new situation as bookkeepers in a cooperative bank.

In a few days we both left the city of Kiev for Bristol. I was invited by my cousin Asbel to stay in their house for a reasonable rent and board. Mr. Berlin rented a small apartment for himself and a woman companion whom I later met, and who was rumored to be his common-law wife or "great and good friend." She was a fine looking woman, much younger than Mr. Berlin, and they apparently were much attached to one another.

The Bank was opened with proper aplomb by the local tycoons, and Mr. Berlin and I were installed as chief bookkeeper and assistant,

respectively. We also had about three or four clerks, the sons of the members of the Board of Directors.

At the end of the first month, when the business of the bank had to be summarized and reported on a balance sheet, my friend, Mr. Berlin, and I spent two or three nights in hard work balancing the sheets. My master and chief frankly acknowledged that if not for my practical experience in bookkeeping he would have had a rough time, and his unpreparedness for the job would have been detected by the members of the Board with dire consequence as far as his job as chief bookkeeper was concerned. As it was, we sort of muddled through successfully the first couple of months. As an intelligent, educated man—he was a college graduate—he learned enough from the textbook and through my practical knowledge in bookkeeping to sustain his reputation in the eyes of the members of the Board, who were themselves amateur bankers.

He made frequent trips to the city and sought the acquaintance of experienced bank bookkeepers. He presented them with his difficult problems and learned enough to become, in a few months, a true bank bookkeeper, the master of his situation.

He also appreciated my help. We were very friendly.

Mr. Berlin, however, was powerless in helping me when, in a few months, one of the sons of a Board member, a very industrious and ambitious young man, cast his eyes covetously on my job as assistant bookkeeper. After all, I was a stranger to the community, an outsider, and this was a local institution. Local patriotism and loyalty to one's friends induced other members of the Board to see eye to eye with the father of the contender, and I was given a few hints that the end of my usefulness to the bank was near. I tried to enlist the support of my cousin, Asbel, and appealed to the sense of gratitude of my chief, Mr. Berlin, but my adversaries were too powerful. They had the support of most members of the Board and, bowing to the inevitable, I agreed to tender my resignation and was rewarded, as far as I remember, by a month's wage and expenses of travel back to the city. Thus, my third venture in bookkeeping ended. I never regretted this experience. As an uncouth village boy, I felt that I had gained much experience in meeting different types of people while an assistant bookkeeper in the bank. I became a little more sophisticated and self-reliant, and I looked forward with more assurance to carving a niche for myself in the world of business and service. I also gained a little experience in another field, my relationship to women.

Chapter 6

MY TEEN-AGE SOCIAL LIFE

My sexual awareness started early in my life. I grew up, so to speak, on the bosom of nature in an almost primitive atmosphere of the relation of the sexes: in the village, where sex is not suppressed as it is in a more cultured society, and at almost every step you come across and are witness to practices of sexual relations. You see a pack of dogs following a bitch and, after a struggle among the males, the victor is rewarded by the bitch to be the subject of her favors. The sexual process takes place right in the middle of the street, witnessed by a bunch of little boys and girls. Your cow is in heat. She is taken to the bull, and their sexual relations are witnessed by everybody. The same thing is true of other animals. You walk in the park and stumble upon a man and woman embraced in a blissful union, behind a bush, perhaps, paying practically no attention to passers-by. Young boys and girls are helped to sexual maturity and incited to it in an open, natural way.

As a young boy, perhaps seven or eight years old, I felt a certain predisposition and attraction to girls. I would feel a certain throbbing of the heart and pleasant sensations when I would touch the body of a girl and would instinctively seek the opportunity to do so. Our families had quite a big bunch of boys and girls, and there was plenty of opportunity to satisfy this early desire for sensual proximity.

However, this was an earthy, natural desire for physical contact which, under the conditions of village life, was easily obtainable. Groups of boys and girls, peasants as well as Jews, were always in contact with each other in the open, on the streets and in other public places. However, early in my life, possibly at the age of ten or twelve, I became aware of another kind of sexual craving. It was a craving for the "female image." It was a feeling, no doubt based in essence on physical sexual desire, which had a more complicated spiritual and emotional manifestation. A high-school girl from the city was a guest in my aunt's house. She was a girl of 16 years, fairly good looking and feminine. Somehow, her pale, tender, city face, so unlike the crude, sun-baked faces of our village girls, made a deep imprint upon me. I was deeply infatuated with her. The sight of her face, her every movement, every word spoken by her, struck a deep chord inside me. Even the sight of

her dresses hung up in the corner excited my imagination. It was not a physical craving–it was not a desire to touch her–it was rather a strong, overpowering, abstract craving for her "feminine image." I do not know whether she was even aware of the fact that the little boy passing by her was completely emotionally enslaved by her, and that the mere sight of her made his heart beat faster and stronger. She left the village at the end of her vacation and, for a long time afterward, I cherished the memory of her image, and when I would come upon a dress that resembled hers I would experience the same deep emotional upheaval.

Two or three years later, when I was about 15 years old, another young girl of about my age came to visit my grandmother. She was her grandniece. She came from Shpola, a small town a few hundred miles away. She was very vivacious and somewhat flirtatious. I instinctively sought her company, and she responded. We spent much time together, taking long walks and playing different games. I never touched her by design. I was attracted by her face, body movements, and feminine prattle. She was rather coquettish and liked to dress in new dresses trimmed with fur, which I thought looked exquisite on her.

When my uncle Benny, an experienced bachelor, would pinch her sometimes, in a sort of fatherly way, I would deeply resent it. I was definitely jealous.

Soon she was about to leave the village. She was sure of at least one conquest–myself. The evening before she left, desiring to clinch her conquest and, as a woman, although still young, having definite, more serious designs for the future, she boldly provoked me to kiss her on the lips. I enjoyed the warmth of her lips and the aroma of her body, but a strange feeling took hold of me. I suddenly lost interest in her. Her "feminine image" was swept clearly out of my inner world of emotions. That night I slept soundly, free from the presence of her being which for weeks had dominated me when I was awake or asleep. She left our village and sent me letter after letter to keep up our ties, but I never answered any of them. She went completely out of my existence.

A somewhat similar situation occurred when I was assistant to the bookkeeper in Bristol. I was at that time about 16 or 17 years old. I devoted most of my time and energies to my job. Once, through my cousins, the Asbels, I met a distant relative of theirs, a girl of about 17 years. I believe she had dropped out of high school and had a temporary job as a clerk or a typist. She came from a poor working

family. She was not beautiful, but had a nice graceful body, and she made a definite bid for me as the assistant to the chief bookkeeper in the bank. She no doubt had definite, serious designs for the future, although I never considered even for a moment our rendezvous as more than a pleasant get-together of a boy and a girl. I looked forward to seeing her on the days that we were supposed to meet, but without in the least being in great suspense or agitation. We would take walks and stop in for refreshments, and I would take her home without any great desire for physical contact. To me it was a nice feeling of companionship. When I had to leave the town of Bristol in our last evening together, apparently desirous of cementing our friendship in a more formal way, the girl let me hug her and kiss her, a fatal mistake as far as her designs were concerned. I suddenly felt a complete freedom from any desire to continue our friendship and never once answered all her letters to me. My experiences with these two girls were no doubt the result of my sexual unpreparedness.

Years afterward, when I became intensely interested in literature in general, I was very much impressed by the writings of Knut Hamsun, the Norwegian author. All the heroes of his novels were pining away for the unattainable "image" of their beloved woman, and became suddenly disappointed when that image turned into reality, the reality of a woman who demanded the physical fruit of a ripened love, the actual embodiment of an abstract ideal.

Chapter 7

THE KULAKS

Here I am again, a "guest" in my village. This is a village in the Ukraine in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The peasants were given fairly large plots of ground when they were liberated from serfdom by Tsar Alexander II in 1861. A portion of the land-owners' estates was taken from them and distributed to the peasants. There was, originally, enough ground per family to derive a livelihood from it even by primitive peasant farming of that period. However, when the numerous children in each family inherited the farm from their parents, the plot was divided into several parts and, in the next generation, it was again subdivided, leaving for the peasant in my time only a very small plot, the size of two or three acres (one-half to two "desiatin"). This size plot was already not sufficient to maintain a family of six to ten children. The peasant was getting poorer and poorer in equity. The able-bodied peasants were gradually leaving the villlage for the city to eke out a livelihood. Those who remained were making a very poor living by hiring themselves out as farm-hands to more prosperous peasants or, as they were called by the Bolsheviks, "Kulaks" (fisted ones). How did these peasants become more prosperous? By hard work, intelligence, and thriftiness, they gradually advanced over their neighbors, the more indolent and less capable peasants. They bought off small parcels of land from other peasants, for whom it was already not profitable to farm such small lots, and, adding these odd lots to their farms, they became more and more prosperous, acquiring several horses, cows, sheep, and other livestock.

The Kulaks possessed on the average ten to twenty "desiatin" (30 acres) and naturally became the conservative, stable leaders in their villages.

As far as the landlords were concerned, they retained the good portion of their estates and continued to exploit them in agriculture and forestry. The actual owners of the estates were the higher nobility in Tsarist Russia of that time. They were the counts and the dukes, who possessed scores and hundreds of villages with the surrounding fields and forests. Some of them were absentee landlords, spending most of their

lives abroad in cultured Europe or as courtiers at the Imperial Court. The estates were managed by executive managers or given as concessions to minor nobility to exploit the estates for themselves as agricultural farms. In our village the "Pan" (Polish term for "Lord") lived with his family in a beautifully built palace surrounded by gardens and orchards and numerous other buildings and barns for the hired help and the herds of horses and cows and agricultural implements of that time (much more advanced than the peasants' primitive implements) needed to cultivate the hundreds and thousands of acres of land possessed by him. Once or twice a day the streets of the village would echo to the noise of the hoofs of the herd of horses driven by horseback riders to the river near our flour mill to quench their thirst in the cool, crystal waters of the river. And once in a while a beautiful, elegant carriage, drawn by six horses, three pairs in succession, would whiz by our houses carrying the beautifully dressed Pan and his family for a little pleasure drive out into the fields and woods surrounding the village.

The peasants, who resented the showy dresses of the Jewish women and the nice, festive suits of the Jewish men, never so much as uttered a word of criticism about the Pan and his family. That was a different matter entirely. It was considered a "natural" thing, ordained by Providence, that the Pan was different from other people. In fact, many considered him a benefactor who employed many an impoverished peasant. The Pan's estate was a local industry. Some peasants acquired permanent jobs there as foresters, foremen, and chambermaids. These were considered a special hierarchy of underlings, looked upon by the plain peasants with envy and with a certain measure of respect and deference. They were the "Pan's people."

The Pan's people were, of course, loyal to the Pan who employed them and made their life much easier than that of the ordinary peasant; they were given certain privileges of raising their cows on the estates' grazing lands, or building their houses from the lumber of the estates' forests, special privileges much appreciated by them. During the pre-revolutionary agitation that filled the underground air at that time, these people were dubbed the lackeys of the Lords, and were expected to share the fate of their overlords when the hoped-for Revolution came. And, indeed, when the Revolution did come, they had to run for cover, and shared in a measure the fate of the Kulaks during the Stalin era.

Our three families, deriving our livelihood from the flour mill which belonged to the Grafini–the Countess, the Lordess–and which was given to us as a concession, in a way were also considered the "Lord's people." We also considered it our duty to be loyal to the owners of our mill. We watched jealously that the peasants should not encroach upon the properties belonging to the Grafini and tried in a diplomatic way to discourage the peasants who had their plots of ground on the banks of the river from encroaching upon the bed of the river by building dams and thus increasing the size of their plots, or, by trying to graze their cows or horses in the orchards or meadows given to us to use and look after.

However, the peasants did not look upon us as lackeys of the Grafini. They realized that we were only renters of the mill, and they expected us to have a certain amount of loyalty to the owners. After the Revolution they even offered Uncle Benny the privilege of continuing as the executive in the mill.

I remained in the village for awhile. During this time my father had another child by my mother–the third baby. Of all my brothers and sisters, I was the most attached to my mother and was wild about the baby, a little girl. Her cute little features brought joy and inner happiness every time I looked at them. I took every opportunity to give her the bottle and watch after her. My mother had by this time the care of seven other children and was, indeed, very busy. Unfortunately, the baby, at the age of two months, became ill. Whether it was a respiratory or gastro-intestinal illness I would not be able to say now. She was running a high temperature, was very hot, and breathed heavily. I do not remember whether a doctor or a "feldscher" (semi-doctor, a specially designed class of professional healers in Russia of that time) was called in the evening; however, a prescription was left for the pharmacy, which was in a small town, Stavischy, about eight miles away. It was already about one A.M. when I set out on foot to get that prescription filled in the drug store in Stavischy. I walked alone through the fields and forests, always thinking about the poor baby and hoping fervently to bring her the magic help.

I reached the town at dawn when the roosters on the outskirts of the town were announcing the arrival of the morning. I approached the pharmacy with quickened pace, but it was closed and would not open until eight A.M. I sat on its outside steps, waiting patiently for the pharmacist to come. He arrived about eight, opened the pharmacy,

took my prescription with a detached, professional look, went in back of the room and compounded it. He handed me a three-ounce bottle, corked properly and covered on top with a rounded corrugated paper tied neatly with a multi-colored string, as was the custom of the time. I took the "magic" medicine carefully in my hand, put it gingerly into my pocket and, with quickened pace, went home. I arrived home about eleven A.M.

The poor baby was given only one teaspoonful of this magic elixir; it came up promptly. The baby made a few more attempts at deep breathing, and then a deep calm settled on her pretty little face–the peace of death. I was extremely agitated, went to a corner and cried bitterly and disconsolately. I refused to admit to myself the stark reality of this being the end of a living soul so dear to me. For a long time afterward, and to this day, I relive the desperation that I felt at that time.

I had no particular desire to begin again my search for a job in the city of Kiev. I helped with the work in the flour mill and around the house. Soon I became occupied in a new, more challenging job. From time to time my father bid in the government auctions of forest plots to be processed into lumber. It worked this way. There were big stretches of forest belonging to the government. When the trees became old and had matured to a certain specified size, the government would assign alternate sections to be sold to private entrepreneurs for processing into lumber and firewood. Auctions would be held in different sections of the country, to which crowds of tradesmen and processors, mostly Jews, would flock.

The government would prepare, in advance, information about the availability of the sections to be bought, their size, number of trees, and the posted minimum prices. Each tradesman or lumber dealer would visit these sections and estimate the amount of money that he might be able to extract from these plots by using the best, in his mind, methods of exploiting the different potentials of the trees for construction lumber or for firewood.

Accordingly, he would bid a certain price to the government, allowing himself a certain profit. As a rule, the government price gave ample room for profits if the tradesmen, in their anxiety to buy, did not outbid each other to a height which left no room for profit. At times they would end up with a loss.

On several occasions, attempts were made by the well-established

traders to organize this crowd to bid a final minimum price and then to distribute the available forest thus obtained to each trader according to his previous known record of purchases. However, since most of the traders in our part of the country were Jews—too individualistic, needy, and envious of each other—it was almost impossible to accomplish this so-called conspiracy against the seller. Being forced under centuries of ghetto life to keen competition among themselves for the sake of survival, these Jews, no doubt, also carried over this tense way of life into this field of activity, to their obvious disadvantage, of course. The government was aware of these possible fixing schemes and did not worry much about them, being rightfully sure that they could not be carried to fruition. Only very seldom would the government cancel an auction, being suspicious that the impossible fixation plot did occur.

Once in a while my father would also succeed in getting a small share of one or two forest plots for processing. Before bidding for it, my father and I and my cousin Buli, the fourth son of my aunt Pessie, who would be the supervisor of the processing of the forest plots if we would get them (the same Buli who, when younger, used to tell us those enchanting stories about robbers in the woods) would investigate these plots. All three of us would visit the forest plots assigned for sale and would count each tree on the plot, noting its size, height, and relative freedom from side branches which would increase the amount of knots in the trunk and thus make it a poor prospect for cutting into boards; then we would figure out what it was worth bidding for, considering the amount we could derive by exploiting the different parts of the tree for boards, construction lumber, and firewood.

Giving ourselves a very small margin of profit, we would at times succeed in outbidding more important and more prosperous traders whose overhead was bigger and who, therefore, could not meet our bid price.

I loved this business of forestry processing. After obtaining a plot at the auction, we would prepare to work on it for a whole year. We would build a mud hut, half-buried in the ground in the center of the plot, so that we could watch and supervise the work going on. We would insulate the hut well, install a little cast-iron oven with a chimney leading out through the roof of the hut. We would install a crude table and beds made up of the first boards cut from the tree trunks, provide ourselves with food, chiefly potatoes, bread and dried herring (*kaptchonka*), and would feel very cozy in the little hut in the

midst of the woods, often during a stretch of a Russian winter with severe cold and flurries of snow. The auction would be held usually in the fall, so that the processing could be completed during the winter when firewood would be in demand.

Sharing the hut with us would be the wooductters, usually peasants with some skill in sawing up tree trunks into boards for flooring. They would roll up the heavy, thick lower part of the tree, free from branches, on specially prepared high trusses and would use long two-handled saws to cut boards out of it in a specified thickness, marked with black charcoal. One worker would stand on top of the trusses and another beneath the trusses, working the saw up and down in measured rhythm. It was a slow process, but a remarkably accurate one, and the boards came out nice, smooth and even.

They were placed in separated rows to dry and season through the rest of the year. The upper top of the tree and the branches would be chopped up for firewood, placed in regular heaps, and sold to the peasants of the surrounding villages; or it would be transported in wagons for sale to the surrounding small, predominantly Jewish, ghetto towns.

I loved to watch all this work and to participate in it. I would spend, at times, whole weeks in the forest, enjoying the activities going on there, the bonfires started by the workers over which they cooked their food in sootcovered kettles and large, cast-iron pots, hung over the fire on transverse iron bars resting on both sides of the bonfires on ingeniously contrived supports. The smoke during the days and the glow of the fire during the evenings indicated the spots where the workers worked on the plot, at times a mile or two in length.

The same peasant yarns that I heard in the mill would acquire still more enchantment in the magic surrounding of the forest covered with deep snow and lighted by the glow of the fire in the darkness of the night. Only the piercing shriek of a night owl or the noise of a prowling, wild animal would disturb, from time to time, this solemn, all-absorbing, idyllic atmosphere.

Chapter 8

I AM CAUGHT IN A RAID

When the forest business ended, after the processed lumber and wood had been sold, I decided to try my luck again in finding a job as a bookkeeper in the city of Kiev. This time I stayed temporarily with a friend of my uncle Motel, who had an extra bed in his house in downtown Kiev (Podol), not far from my uncle's house. I again wandered the streets of Kiev following up any lead for a job.

One night, at about two or three A.M., I was awakened by my host who, frightened, communicated to me in a whisper the unpleasant news that the house was being raided by the police.

As I mentioned before, only certain classes of Jews could reside in Kiev permanently. These were the first-rate merchants, professionals with university degrees such as physicians and lawyers, and certain officially approved mechanics, such as plumbers and furriers, when there was a need for them. The mass of the Jews from the Pale were not allowed to reside in Kiev. If they had some official business to transact in the city of Kiev, which was the capital of the Province (Goubernia), and the seat of the governor of the Province and his staff, the Jews would have their passports (with which every Jew in Russia was provided) stamped at the police station on the first day of their arrival, indicating also the place of their stay. They could remain in the city for three days, and they were obliged to go back to the police and check out at the end of this time. Thus, the police knew when every new arrival came, and where he stayed. Ordinarily, in the good old custom of the old Russia, riddled with graft, the police were paid "protection money" by the small hotels and lodging places, which were always filled with illegal residents. If an official raid was to take place in those places, the chief of the district police would "leak" the information to his "clients," and the illegal residents would clear out of the place for that night, or the timid ones or those who could not find a place for the night would appear that day or evening in the police district and have their passports registered as "just arrived" for a three-day stay. Apparently my host was not a professional lodging-place owner, or else the police chief was disgruntled over an insufficient bribe; a raid took

place without tipping off the victims. Before I was completely awakened from my deep sleep and aware of what was going on, the police burst into my room and asked for my passport. Since it bore no mark of registration, I was motioned silently to follow the police officer. There was no unnecessary talk, no admonitions from the officer, nor any protestations on my part. Each one understood the other perfectly well, and the procedure was quite a routine one. I was led to a large room of the apartment (in Kiev most of the houses were large tenement houses with many apartments in them), where I joined half a dozen similar birds caught in the net.

When the raid was over, we were all led a few blocks to the police station where we were put into prison cells overnight. The next day each one was sent to his home district with a police convoy. My home district was about 125 miles away; thus, I spent the next three days in a prisoners' convoy, manacled wrist-to-wrist with my partner, a similar "offender," until I reached my destination, a county police district. After proper identification and an admonition not to repeat this offense, I was let loose to go home to my village, about 50 miles away. Thus, my first skirmish with the Law ended peacefully except for a little discomfort and temporary association with hardened criminals on my route home. I must add that never again was I caught in a raid in Kiev, although shortly afterward I again went to the city and spent a few years there. I was a little more circumspect, chastened by this experience, and I was more careful in selecting proper places to reside.

Chapter 9

MILITARY SERVICE AND THE JEWS OF THE PALE

The First World War was going on. I was soon to be called and ordered to appear before the Selective Service Board for induction into the Army. The Jews in Russia of that period had a special dread of this procedure. Very few Jews had a taste for military service in the Russian Army. The well-known legend about the "Nickolai soldier" circulated among the Jews, handed down from generation to generation. The Nickolai soldiers were the Jewish children snatched from the Jewish communities during the reign of Nickolas the First, inducted into the Army and made to serve 25 years without being allowed to communicate with their parents or relatives.

Army life, with healthful physical conditions, good food, plenty of fresh air, and wholesome exercises, was in general entirely foreign to the Jews of the Ghetto. The Jews of the Pale were confined mostly to small towns. The villages were also considered outside the Pale; hence, few Jews were allowed to live there.

The towns in which Jews resided were very cramped and unsanitary. In compensation the Jews stressed spiritual life and search for knowledge. Also, there was the question of *treif* or non-Kosher food in the Army, and the fact that you were deprived of the "proper" praying to God or studying the Jewish lore. Besides, why should a Jew wish to serve in the army of a government that deprived him of all the privileges of the citizen, limiting him in places of residence to ghettos, depriving him of the right to move freely, to work, to study, and to enjoy all the other blessings of a free citizen?

No wonder that it was almost a tradition for every Jewish boy to try his best to avoid going into the army. The months of October and November of every year, when the Selective Service Boards had their sessions, was a time of extreme anxiety and torture for those families whose children were up for induction. Those were the days when almost every Jewish family involved looked for every opportunity to approach the different members of the Board, and especially the doctors of the Board, to find some excuse either to defer their child for another year or to put him in some category of defective health, barring him from immediate induction. The affected boys, themselves, would

attempt by all kinds of horrible means to impair their health. One method was to eat lemons exclusively for a couple of weeks before the induction, which, presumably, would give them tachycardia, a fast-beating heart and pulse, during the examination. At this pre-induction examination, candidates would appear naked to be examined by the physicians in front of the whole Board. With the aid of a "sympathetic" doctor, the candidate would be announced as one who suffers from a heart ailment and who was, therefore, unfit for service. There would be two or three doctors examining each candidate at the same time, and it was the business of the "sympathetic" doctor to convince his colleagues that this is a genuine case of heart trouble. The other doctors, who had no interest in the candidate, would sometimes object. Medical arguments would ensue which, most of the time, would end in giving the candidate an extension of half a year or a year to "improve" his health. Thus the "sympathetic" doctor would prove to the family that he had worked honestly for his pay, and the family would console itself with at least a partial reprieve; in the next session the whole process would repeat itself.

Some very determined Jewish boys would even go to the extreme measure of artificially crippling themselves. They would rupture their eardrums with a nail; they would induce artificial inguinal hernias by rupturing the membrane of the inguinal ring on one or even both sides. The extreme measure of crippling themselves on both sides would usually be done by Jews who wished to become Rabbis who wanted to be positively sure of rejection, as their whole career would be ruined by military service, being contaminated by *treifs*.

Some Jewish candidates would continue the struggle of evasion for two or three years, going through a hell of a life during those years. Their families would ruin themselves financially to achieve the goal of avoiding the army service. It did not always end successfully. Despite these efforts some boys would end up in the army anyway, being–on top of it–defective for the rest of their lives.

It was said that the Selective Service Board members, and especially the doctors, became rich helping out the "poor Jews" in their predicament. My uncle Benny, a healthy man otherwise, succeeded in avoiding military service by the help of a slightly defective ear and "sympathetic" doctors. There was also the factor that he was the only son of my grandmother, a widow whom, presumably, he had to support. My grandmother had an extremely strong will and fought like a lioness for her son.

My grandmother, who was known as the *Almuna*, the widow of my grandfather, Reb Moishe-Pinchas, was indeed a double widow. Her first husband was The Buckier Rabbi, the father of my natural mother. When my grandfather, the Rav, died she was left with two children. My grandfather from my father's side, Reb Moishe-Pinchas, a fine patriarchal Jew, with five children on his hands from three previous marriages, considered it an honor to marry the Rabbi's widow. They added three more children to their previous brood, two girls and Uncle Benny.

This fourth wife of my grandfather, Moishe-Pinchas, as I mentioned earlier, became the third partner in the mill, although she always considered herself entitled to a half of the partnership; this was a bone of contention between her and my father until the time she died.

She was a rather short woman with a thin, fine nose on a smooth olive-skinned face which had retained its beauty through her old age. Her small, dark brown eyes expressed stubborn determination. Small wrinkles began to gather around her eyes and an air of sadness settled on her face after the premature deaths of her older children. When she met with any provocation–and it was easy to provoke her–her eyes and her whole countenance flashed defiantly; a stream of fiery invectives in rapid succession overwhelmed the provocator. She was fearless in fighting her cause and had no hesitation in carrying her case even to the very governor of the Province of Kiev in her appeal for "justice" when her son, Benny, was not excused from military service by the local draft board. To her way of thinking, Benny was her "only" son, as her oldest son, my mother's brother, had died–she never considered for a minute my father and Uncle Joseph as her sons.

On the other hand, most of the boys of my aunt Pessie, a very poor woman, ended up as soldiers of His Imperial Army, served faithfully, and were honorably discharged in excellent health, with the additional experience of having become more urbane.

This peculiar situation of the Jews did not exist among the peasant population. To the peasant boy, who never left his village and who worked hard all his young life, military life was an attractive and welcome prospect. He would be sent either to the army or navy, live a healthy, regular life, pampered with good food and dazzling uniforms with brass buttons, and even a few pennies of soldier pay. He would be sent to distant places of which he had never dreamed, and would even be given some smattering of knowledge and taught elementary literacy.

Sailors would have, in addition, a chance to travel to distant lands, see the world and become in a sense "cultured" people.

No wonder the peasant boys looked forward to the year of their induction. A few weeks before the induction, the affected boys would band together in large groups, walk the streets of the village, half-drunk, jubiliantly singing their songs. The Jews in our village dreaded these days. Some of the peasant boys, nice and peaceful up to this time, would change their personalities completely. Using the excuse of the forthcoming "crisis" in their lives–which actually they welcomed with inner joy–they would get drunk and, as is always the case with a mob, would commit all kinds of hoodlumism. They would usually be "bought off" by the "sophisticated" Jews with a ruble or two which they would use to buy some more vodka, supposedly to "drown their sorrows in drink."

One day such a mob approached our house; some of them jumped over the fence and invaded our grounds. I foolhardily met them with a club in my hand. Not expecting resistance from a Jewish boy, a few of them rushed toward me. I hit the first one with my club. The other boys immediately reciprocated with a few blows on my head and body. The mob, however, quickly surged away from our home, and I was left a beaten but victorious defender of our grounds.

My father never stooped to the general methods of the Jewish community. My older brother was a healthy boy and was accepted by the Selective Service Board at his first appearance and sent away into the army. When my turn came my father and I travelled to the town Brusilow where the selection took place for our district.

My father was completely surprised and in a way disappointed when the Board unconditionally rejected me and gave me a "white" paper which meant complete rejection. What had happened? It appeared that due to lifting of heavy sacks of flour in our mill I for years had had an inguinal hernia on my right side. I never told my father about that, and by the time I was examined by the doctors of the Board I had a complete inguinal hernia, far gone, disqualifying me absolutely from service.

My father was startled when he was confronted with the fact of my unexpected release from military service. It was like one trying to force himself into a supposedly locked door and finding it open. On the one hand, he was glad that I would not have to serve in the Russian army; on the other hand he was vexed at my being a physically defective boy.

After the shock of this revelation was over, he advised me to correct this defect immediately by an operation. He took me to a well-known surgeon in the city of Kiev, and a day was arranged for my operation. The surgeon was a man of about 40 years with a countenance that lacked the spiritual quality of a healer. His small eyes, with a fixed stare, were set in an immobile face, rather gruff and determined. He gave the impression of a man who had coped with all kinds of grave situations and had come out unscathed. His was the expression of a field commander who had lived through many battles and had seen horrible sights. He was a typical surgeon.

He examined me with a critical, professional eye and said that I was in good health and apparently stable emotionally and that, therefore, he would perform the operation with a local anesthetic. During the operation, since things were progressing smoothly, he decided to remove my appendix also.

Apparently the anesthetic was not sufficient for the appendectomy, and when he was separating the appendix I felt terrific pain, causing nausea. The two husky nurses who were holding me pressed more firmly against me. I cried out that I was about to vomit. Alarmed at this, the surgeon shouted at me with all his might: "Shut up, you bastard!" It is remarkable how this gruff treatment had its desired effect. As if by magic the terrific pain and nausea left me, and he continued his work to a successful conclusion. I recovered very quickly. I rather liked the attention paid to me by the surgeon and the nurses. I spent about ten days in the hospital ward writing poetry and odes to my doctor and the nurses in the pleasant atmosphere of extreme optimism which usually accompanies a recovery from an illness or an operation.

Chapter 10

I GO INTO BUSINESS FOR MYSELF

I received a letter from my uncle Motel to the effect that he had a job for me. I immediately left the village and went to Kiev. There was a vacancy for a clerk, or yard manager, in one of the local branches of the Caucasian-Volga Oil Company. This company was a national, possibly an international, oil company in Russia, which was headed by a Mr. Kahan, a very religious Jew, so it was said, who had organized this company for production and distribution of crude oil and oil products. This company, like others of its kind in Russia at that time, had oil wells in Caucasia, around the city of Baku, for producing or extracting crude oil. It also had numerous branches in the larger cities of European Russia for distribution and sale of its products to local customers. The Home Office, from which all the branches were managed was located in Petersburg (now Leningrad). Every branch had a manager and an office force consisting of a bookkeeper and two clerks as well as a yard manager. The latter supervised the unloading of the oil cisterns from the nearest railroad sidings, transporting the oil, in specially built metal cylinders on chassis, to large tanks in the yard. From these tanks the oil was sold to individual users in the city or to stores for resale to retail customers. This job of yard clerk was offered to me by Mr. D, the manager of the branch, a fine, Jewishly educated and religious man about 35 years old. Mr. D was a trusted employee of Mr. Kahan, the boss in Petrograd. He was also a friend of my uncle who, by the way, was a regional salesman for this company.

It was said that this Mr. Kahan, the Big Boss, personally knew the managers of his branches throughout Russia, whom he chose for their integrity and unquestionable loyalty to his company. He also tried to learn and scrutinize the minor personnel in his branches, their capabilities, honesty, and measure of interest in the business. Thus, every employee, big and small, had a special dossier in which an analysis of his personality and work habits was noted. In this way, Mr. Kahan had his finger on every phase of his business and its personnel.

I was offered a wage of 25 rubles a month, from which I was supposed to pay my board and room. To me this was a big

advancement over my previous jobs, especially the prospect of working for such a big national concern. I plunged with all my energy and eagerness into this work. Soon I learned all there was to be known about my work as a yard manager. I liked the work and did a yeoman's job far beyond my assigned duties.

The manager was delighted and highly satisfied with me and, after three months, he raised my salary to 35 rubles per month. This was an unusual thing for the Caucasian-Volga Oil Company. Ordinarily an employee had to work at least five years to get an increase in salary, and longer years to get a promotion to a higher position. My immediate boss, the manager of the branch, wrote a special personal letter to Mr. Kahan extolling my virtues and recommending me highly as an up-and-coming, young, honest, vigorous and reliable worker who was proving to be an asset to the business, and who should be encouraged in his work by an early promotion. I was eagerly assuming more and more responsibility in the yard and, in my spare time, I was even helping the office clerks with their paper work.

This was the year, 1915, the second year in the First World War. Our branch manager, who had a wife and two children and thus was temporarily deferred from military service, was suddenly notified that his exemption had expired, and that he should get ready to be called soon for military service. In the usual way of the Jews in Russia at that time, he went underground into hiding. I, who by this time knew the business very well, assumed temporarily the duties of the absent manager. Apparently he wrote another personal letter to Mr. Kahan relating the situation and, pointing out that the whole business of the branch rested largely on my shoulders, recommended an increase of my salary to 50 rubles a month. Thus, within a short space of half a year my salary was raised twice, hitherto unheard of in the organization. I continued to devote all my time and energy to the job and now took on the full work and responsibility of the branch manager, in fact if not in name.

After a few months, when the prospect of a speedy end to the war dimmed, and the manager found it more and more difficult to hide in the city of Kiev, a new manager was sent to assume his duties. He was a man about 45 years old, an old hand in the main office, who until now had been doing only office work, and who was not familiar with the so-called field work of managing a local branch. His wage was 75 rubles a month, which he had reached after years and years of drudgery as an

office clerk in the main office in Petrograd. As he knew practically nothing about the business of the Branch he was in the beginning completely dependent on me for information and advice as to the smallest detail in the workings of the Branch.

As with all young and ambitious people, the rapid advancement in my position went to my head. I was intoxicated with my successes and resented the fact that a "stranger," a man who knew nothing about the business, should be placed as my superior and paid a higher salary at the time that he depended on me for every single step in managing the business. I notified my friend, the old manager, at the first opportunity, that unless I was advanced in salary to at least the level of the new manager, 75 rubles, I planned to leave the job. Mr. D was shocked by these demands. He said that he would be embarrassed to write to Mr. Kahan about a raise so soon after the previous two raises. He pointed out that this was an unheard of thing in the annals of the Company. At any rate, even if Mr. Kahan would eventually agree, the correspondence with him would take several weeks. Mr. D implored me to continue my work in the meantime under the old conditions. I was, however, set on my demands. I gave him a month's time to correspond with Mr. Kahan and to decide one way or another about my proposition. The month passed without a positive answer from Mr. Kahan, and I resigned.

This job had given me a sense of self-reliance. I matured somewhat and began to feel my powers and potentialities. I had all kinds of plans and ambitions to go into business for myself. From my acquaintance with the crude oil business I knew that there was a shortage of wooden and metal barrels and containers for the retail sale of oil. Due to the war efforts a shortage in materials and manpower had been created. I rented a shed, very cheaply, on the outskirts of the city and hired the carpenter who did occasional work at the Branch Yard to fix and put into good shape old barrels that I bought cheaply from different oil yards and stores. However, after about two or three weeks I had used up all the potential supplies of old barrels and had to close up shop for lack of materials.

Things were getting tougher on the domestic front in Russia at the end of the second year of the First World War. The terrific demand of the Front for soldiers and material supplies taxed the railroads and all other means of transportation to capacity. There was a lack of railroad facilities to supply the usual demands of the big cities for food, provisions, and other daily needs. There were scarcities in food, edible

oils, and crude oil and its products, for the daily consumption of the big cities. These supplies, especially those that came from distant parts of the country, even when they were loaded in carloads or cisterns at their places of origin and sent out, were usually shunted to the railroad sidings at the big centrally located crossroads stations when more urgent war traffic had to be given priority. These railroad cars, loaded with provisions and destined for the civil population, would remain standing undisturbed and forgotten for weeks, while the populations in the cities waited impatiently for their arrival.

My cousin, Herschel Asbel, the son-in-law of my uncle Motel, who, like his father-in-law, was also a regional agent for the Caucasian-Volga Oil Company, was a brilliant business man. Herschel Asbel was what would call an odd man. He was a tall man who walked with a decided forward stoop, making him appear shorter than he was. His big head with a large forehead was covered with receding thin blond hair turning gray. His deeply set, steely gray eyes, half closed by thin eyelids with colorless eyelashes, were overhung by thick, arched, bushy eyebrows. His long aquiline nose rested on a thick mustache covering his upper lip, which practically hid his small, thin-lipped mouth. The whole face narrowed down to a small receding chin, giving his face the impression of an owl.

When he smiled, which was very seldom, his lips would part at an angle exposing his small teeth, giving the impression of a crooked smile. He was rather slovenly in dress, apparently paying no attention to his external appearance; his long overcoat was soiled at the edges with glistening grease picked up at his warehouse. He spoke very little and, when he *would* say something, he blurted it out from under his mustachioed lip, making it indistinct. Yet when you caught its meaning you would be struck by its wisdom.

Herschel had a family of five children, the oldest being a boy of about 12 or 13 at the time I was in their house. Watching Asbel at his home in Bristol, where I boarded while I was assistant bookkeeper in the Bristol Cooperative Bank, I was struck by his apparent indifference to the upbringing of his children. He left this business to his wife, Bella, my uncle Motel's second daughter, a plump, good-natured and motherly woman. Generally, he was away from home on business; when he was home, he was a sort of guest. He would sit at the head of the table during a meal, concentrating on his food, apparently immersed in deep thought, paying no attention to the carryings-on of his children, as if they were non-existent.

He was very tight in his budgeting, to the despair of his wife, Bella, who had been accustomed in her father's house to more generous allowances. She was aware that, in spite of his grumblings as he handed her her meager allowance, he was becoming more and more prosperous financially. Indeed, he was not what you would call a miser; he just hated to part with money. He was a shrewd business man and had his fingers in many business pies. He was one of the organizers of the Bristol Cooperative Bank. He also had investments in valuable real estate in the city of Kiev, of which I became aware only indirectly when the temporarily established Soviet Government in Kiev–it was shortly afterwards expelled by counter-revolutionary armies to return soon triumphantly and permanently–introduced as one of its first reforms the system of "Tenant Soviets," committees made up of the tenants of each apartment house. These committees were the bane of existence of Herschel and all the landlords in the city. The Soviet Government did not expropriate the houses outright, but left the landlords temporarily as owners of the houses, in name only, of course, responsible for the repair and maintenance of the houses, while the rent was placed in escrow for future disposition, after the Communist Regime had entrenched itself permanently.

To top this calamity for Herschel, his oldest son, Yankel–Yaakov Herschkovitch–a gangling youth of about 17 or 18 years, joined the Communist Party, became one of its most rabid members, and was entrusted by the party with one of the most dangerous assignments–to penetrate the counter-revolutionary army camp for Party activity. He was caught, jailed and tortured, but succeeded in escaping in a miraculous way. As a reward he was appointed to a high civic post by the Communist Regime–who knows whether he was not the master of the plan dealing with the landlords, including his father.

Asbel and I decided upon an ingenious plan to exploit to our advantage this scarcity of daily needs in provisions in the city of Kiev. There was no difficulty at all in selling any product at a time of such scarcity. The problem was how to get the merchandise, obtained in distant places, to the market in Kiev; how to shorten the transportation time from the place of origin to the place of distribution. My cousin rented a warehouse in Kiev, and I traveled to the distant places of supply to buy the merchandise; in our case, edible oils and crude oils. The scheme worked like this. I went to the city of Baku, in the Caucasus, whose oil wells supplied crude oil and oil products to most of European Russia. I would buy a few cisterns of oil from a local dealer,

pay him in cash, and have him load the oil in the cisterns at the local freight yard. There I would get the invoice and all the railroad transportation receipts with the numbers of the loaded cisterns.

The merchandise would generally leave the place of origin—in this case, the city of Baku—in a day or two, and travel to the next crossroads station—in this case the city of Rostov-on-the-Don—in another day or two. Arriving at the big crossroads station it would usually be shunted to a siding where it would have probably remained for an indefinite time. However, I was in Rostov-on-the-Don already ahead of my merchandise, having traveled by passenger train. I would visit the freight station-master of the yard, explain to him the fact that I was very much interested, personally, in having my cisterns, numbers such-and-so, moved in the shortest possible time on their way of destination. The yardmaster would be very sympathetic, realizing the need of the city of Kiev for oil and, for a generous consideration on my part, would see eye to eye with me the justice of my demand to move on the merchandise. I would bid him goodbye and would continue on my way to the next crossroads railroad station, Kasiatan, where the same procedure would repeat itself, and where the yardmaster would also be very well disposed toward me.

As a result of this effort our merchandise would reach Kiev in about two weeks, a speed unheard of in Russian wartime transportation. My cousin would dispose of the oil long before it reached the city of Kiev. After a short rest I would set out for another part of the country, where another product in sharp demand in Kiev could be easily and plentifully obtained. The same process, with the same successful conclusion, would follow. I can state as a fact, without fear of contradiction, that I did not meet even one recalcitrant yardmaster. They were all highly sympathetic and understanding.

In the short time of about three or four months, I traveled the length and width of European Russia from as far north as Nizhni-Novgorod, a few hundred miles north of Moscow, to as far south as Baku in the Caucasian Mountains, from Zitomer to the west of Kiev to far-east Saratov on the Volga.

I visited the city of Nizhni-Novgorod, famous for its perennial international fairs where, not being aware of the extreme cold there, which dropped to 32 degrees below zero centigrade, I froze the tip of my nose and both ears by walking only two blocks of the city streets. A passer-by called my attention to the fact that the tip of my nose and

my ears are turning dead white, a sign that they were frozen. He, himself, had ear muffs and a nose-protecting pad extending from his winter fur hat down his nose. He advised me to rub the nose and ears with snow immediately. That helped the situation somewhat, but I nursed a festering nose and ears for weeks.

Three days after that I approached the nearly sub-tropical city of Baku in the Caucasia, where people were bathing in the warm salty waters of the Caspian Sea, where the city is located.

I visited the cities of Kursk, Oriol, and others–cities in the heart of Russia where people, especially the business people, spend their days in teahouses. Most of the business transactions are consummated in these teahouses. You sit down with your business partner at a table where two large glasses and saucers are provided, as well as a big, twenty-glass white porcelain teakettle full of hot, steaming, boiled water, on top of which rests a smaller kettle containing tea essence.

A few clean linen towels are supplied as well as a bowl with lump sugar. You sit down with your business partner, a local man, and you pour the tea and the water into your glasses. You bite on the sugar, you drink your tea and talk business. You notice with wonderment that your partner has already emptied the tenth glass of tea and is ready to ask for another pitcher of boiled water. The sweat is pouring down his face and neck. His shirt is getting wet but he keeps on drinking tea and wiping his face with the towels provided for that purpose.

I found those Russian business men to be shrewd, but honest, reliable and generous. I was always successful in concluding deals to our mutual satisfaction.

I visited Rostov-on-the-Don, where I bought three carloads of edible sunflower oil from a local manufacturer. He was a large man, about 60, with a wide benign Russian face, deep-set eyes overhung by thick grayish eyebrows, a big nose and a thick gray mustache with a wide gray beard half covering his mouth. He was very friendly, showed me around the plant where the oil was being produced and invited me to his house for supper. I do not remember his having his family at the table. We had a drink of vodka and consumed an abundant meal of Russian borsch, meat, and plenty of bread with some fruit dessert. It was a simple, healthful meal, none of the refined cooking and serving that one would expect in a house of a rich manufacturer.

Since I had to wait a day in Rostov for the loading and shipping of my merchandise, I went to explore the city.

Rostov-on-the-Don was a nice, middle-sized Russian city. The houses were only a few stories high, solidly built and neatly kept. The streets were rather wide and clean. The city impressed me as lacking the hustle and bustle of the cities in the Pale–Kiev, Zitomer, Odessa–cities having a large Jewish population. You felt the calmness and solidity of life here. The waters of the River Don, not too wide, flowed calmly by. Little did I anticipate at that time the terrific emotions that this name, *Don*, would arouse in me years later while reading the great Sholokhov's novel, *Tichi Don (And Quiet Flows the Don)*.

I came to the city of Saratov on the Volga in the evening. It was very cold, in the middle of winter. The streets were lighted very poorly. I stopped at a hotel for the night. The next day, after transacting my business, I went to the River Volga, famous in Russian history, sung about in Russian ballads and folk songs. The river was very wide, covered as far as I could see with ice. A storm was brewing, and snow flurries obscured the distant view. The sky was dark and foreboding. Whenever I think of the Volga I have this rather somber picture of it.

The city of Baku impressed me very much. I had heard a great deal about it. Knowing that it was the center of the oil industry I had pictured it as drenched in crude oil. I was surprised to see a beautiful city with streets teaming with people. Baku is almost a sub-tropical city. I was for the first time that far southward in Russia. The people were a mixture of Russians, Georgians, and other Caucasian races, and Orientals, dressed in gay, colorful, flowing robes. Here and there you could see a turban-covered head.

For the first time I saw the flat-top Oriental houses and people riding on donkeys. Some loaded baskets of sub-tropical fruits and vegetables on their donkeys' backs.

I was in a world and atmosphere entirely different from the average Russian city. The stories of Count Tolstoi about the conquest of the Caucasian tribes, and especially his famous story about the Russian officer captured by the Tartars and thrown into a dark dungeon and liberated by the fair-eyed daughter of the chieftain, were always on my mind. It was indeed an exotic city. I visited oil fields for the first time in my life, and here the drenched-in-oil black ground and the air filled with gasses and oily odors had a rather depressing effect on me. I saw the origin of the crude oil, a product which I had bought and sold without ever thinking of the efforts going into the process of obtaining it.

I visited Moscow several times on different occasions and in quite different circumstances. On my way back from Nizhni-Novgorod I stopped for a few days in Moscow, the great historical city almost deified by the true Russians and avoided assiduously by the Jews of the Ghetto as a city forbidden to them. Legally I was allowed to stay there three days by registering in a hotel. This I did. I managed to visit the Kremlin, which as a Jew I was forbidden to enter. My face had little resemblance to that of a Jewish boy, giving me many opportunities throughout my years in Russia to go places where Jews with "typical" Jewish faces would not dare to be seen. From reading Russian history textbooks I was familiar with the grave events that had taken place in the Kremlin–the gory murders in the Tsarist family; Peter the Great choking his son to death; Ivan the Terrible pinning down to the floor with his spear the foot of an ambassador when he, Ivan, did not like the message delivered to him by the ambassador from his king; and similar grisly stories.

I had always pictured the Kremlin as a dark, forbidding dungeon. Now, as I moved with the crowd into this historical building, I was surprised at the spacious light rooms and halls with smooth, pinkish white walls hung with classic pictures in golden frames and decorated with tapestries and other beautiful ornaments. The furniture was roped off and protected with dust covers much as in a museum. The mixed crowd of peasants and city people from all over Russia streamed by in reverent silence. All in all, the place and the crowd was reminiscent of the same place and the same crowd that I was to see years later visiting the White House in Washington, D. C.

I visited the Tertyakov Galleries. The painting that still lingers in my memory is that of "The Foot Soldier" by Vereschagin. I was much impressed by the classic paintings, not anticipating that painting would later become not only a hobby but an integral part of my life.

The city of Moscow impressed me in general as a solidly built city, ancient in some places and bearing the grave imprint of historical events; or was it my imagination influenced by reading Russian history?

I visited some "Jewish" cities in the western Ukraine, Zitomer and Berditchev. Berditchev was a typical Ghetto city. It was nicknamed the Jerusalem of the Ukraine and Russia. There you could see narrow, dirty streets crowded with masses of Jews darting back and forth, their minds and faces intense in the economic struggle for existence (*dagas haparnassah*). I remember the street of the book stores (*moher seforim*)

crowded with the intense, emaciated faces of bearded Jewish men, young and old, avid for learning. The religious books and religious shawls were the predominant merchandise in the stores and shops. Berditchev was a Jewish city where Jews did business, mostly among themselves, undisturbed.

Chapter 11

MY BUSINESS CAREER ENDS ABRUPTLY

I had spent about four months of most intensive traveling and business activity, when suddenly my activity was crudely interrupted by a summons received at my home in the village, where I was supposed to be residing. The Government invited me to appear before the Board of Selective Service to re-examine my physical condition. The war was going into its third year. It was a bloody war. Russian soldiery was decimated in the long struggle on the German and Austrian Fronts. New replacements were constantly in demand. They were reaching the bottom of the barrel in search for new soldiers and were re-examining previously rejected draftees. For some reason, irrational as it may seem, the thought had never occurred to me that I might be re-examined.

I was shocked when the doctor, after carefully examining me, announced that my operation was a great success, completely healed, and that I would be a perfect soldier.

In disgust and disappointment at such a sudden turn of events I wound up my business with my partner, my cousin Asbel. My share of the business amounted to 3,500 rubles, which I had earned in less than four months, a far cry from the 50 rubles a month which I had been getting from the Caucasian-Volga Oil Company. I handed over the money to my father, quit the city and went to the village, completely ignoring the little slip handed to me by the secretary of the Selective Service Board, ordering me to appear in three to seven days at the Military Assembly Point.

It was remarkable that I went to the village without any thought crossing my mind for a moment that I was a fugitive from the Law. Like an ostrich hiding his head in the sand, I submerged myself in the life of the village, staying in my father's home, enjoying and participating in the village life as before. Thus, the Officer of the Law who, in the usual Russian bureaucratic way, after a delay of several months had received instructions to hunt for me as a fugitive from service, was pleasantly surprised to find me, in his first attempt to locate me, soundly asleep in bed in my own home.

The summer that I spent in the village at this time had been very

pleasant. I was fishing and bathing and reading literature. I was fond of literature, Russian and foreign. Beside reading avidly all the Russian writers, old and more contemporary, I also read some English, French, Spanish, and even American authors in vogue at that time in Russia–in translation, of course. The American writers, Jack London and Mark Twain, were very popular in Russia at that time. I remember reading *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain till four o'clock in the morning by the dim light of a kerosene lamp. I read also Shakespeare, Dickens, Dumas, Moliere, Balzac, Rousseau, *Candide* by Voltaire, and other French writers. I also read a few Spanish novels.

I was impressed by the Scandinavian writers, Henrik Ibsen and Strindberg, and I was especially attracted to the works of Knut Hamsun. I read most of his novels with great avidity. His heroes in *Pan, The Growth of the Soil*, and other books were always attracted by unattainable goals as their objects of love and striving. No sooner was the goal achieved or about to be achieved than they became disappointed as the most important part of the love affair–the struggle and the suspense and the longing–came to an end. It was something akin to my own experiences and feelings at that time and at that age.

I was very much attracted to the German literature of Goethe, Heinrich Heine, and Schiller. I decided to read the German authors in their original language and presently acquired enough knowledge in German (self-taught) to read–with some struggle, of course, and with the constant companionship of a dictionary–the plays of Schiller, which I most enjoyed, as well as the poems of Heinrich Heine (*Lorelei*, etc.).

I thus spent a few very profitable months in educating myself and in giving myself over to the great pleasure of literature. I loved to sit on the wide branches of an apple tree in our orchard or to climb to the top of the stately elm tree, seat myself comfortably, surrounded by a wide horizon of fields and woods, and spend hours immersed in reading the great literatures of the world.

That spring was a hectic time as far as the affairs of my father's business in the flour mill were concerned. Every spring when the snow in the hills, through which our river wound, was thawing, the waters in the narrow bed of the river for about 200 to 300 miles of its extent would swell and finally overflow the river banks. All the millers along its length would look with anxiety at the sudden increase in the river's volume. Near each village, along the course of the river, dams were

constructed, forming lake-like masses of water which, in ordinary times, would be funneled to a narrow outlet at the flour mill to make its wheels or turbines turn rapidly, thus supplying power to revolve the grindstones for the processing of grain into flour.

There were also special sluices built for an emergency. Those sluices would be opened at the first appearance of the excess water in the river, and you could hear the roar of the water passing through those sluices and dropping to a lower level, just like a small waterfall. However, in a winter with exceptionally deep snow and a sudden spring thaw, the water would accumulate so rapidly that the sluices were not sufficient to release that mass of water in an orderly manner. The water in the river would rapidly rise to a level above the dam or causeway. It would overflow and, finding a soft spot in the dam, would erode it and finally rush through the opening, widening it and sometimes destroying and carrying off with it large sections of the dam.

My father, as well as all the other millers along the long course of the river, would look anxiously at this powerful display of natural forces. They were responsible for maintaining the dam, or causeway, as a means of preserving the level of the waters of the river for power to serve the flour mills.

The question of whether the dam would withstand the force of the water assaulting it was not an academic question to my father, as it was to the multitudes of peasants watching this display of nature, as spectators at a sport. To him it was a question of dollars and cents. The break-through in the dam meant a big expense; the greater the damage, the greater the expense. It was almost a calamity in a way. This spring the water level reached an unusual height, and the force of the onrushing waters was so great that a large part of the dam was swept away.

There was a tremendous hole in the dam, forming a deep dark abyss after the water of the river drained to the lowest level. What was a misfortune and blow to my father was a boon to the whole village. Every peasant possessing a wagon and horses was mobilized to fill in that gap with earth and to re-establish the dam as a causeway so that the pond would be refilled and the water level elevated, in order to be able to work the wheels of the flour mill.

The peasant would remove the top of his wagon from above the chassis, would place one wide board on the chassis and two boards at its side, forming a temporary trough; he would ride to the hill about half a

mile from the dam, fill this contraption with earth by means of shovels, ride back to the gaping abyss, empty the trough of earth by pulling up the side boards and tilting the bottom board. He would then return for the second load. Each trip took about 15 or 20 minutes, and the peasant was paid five cents per load. Some made as much as one to one-and a-half rubles by working hard the whole day. This was an unforeseen source of income. Some peasants, especially the well-to-do, contrived to build two such vehicles, and doubled their income by having their sons help them. I had the job of being the teller or the counting clerk. I would give each one who emptied the vehicle a slip of paper signed by me. By presenting these slips of paper to my father in the evening the peasants were paid in cash, or in flour if they wished it.

The work advanced very rapidly as every peasant tried his best to make use of this unusual and temporary opportunity, which happened once in a few years. Within a few days the hole was filled, the gap disappeared, and peasants' wagons again started to roll over the dam, and herds of cows and sheep again wended their way over the dam mornings and evenings to and from the pastures.

Our flour mill started again to grind flour and to catch up with the accumulated bushels of corn and wheat and oats for the horses. The interrupted activity in the mill was resumed, to the delight of our three families dependent upon it for their daily needs. The peasants were happy with their windfalls, and life in the village settled into its even, unexciting existence.

I spent a few very peaceful months among these Idylls, when one night I was awakened from a deep sleep and saw the Law staring into my sleepy eyes. For a few seconds, I did not realize the significance of this, but then the stark reality of the situation decidedly wiped the "Sandman" from my eyes. This was it. I knew that my number was up, as they say and, without a word, looking at my distressed family, I followed the cop.

The officer ordered me to climb into the police wagon, where two more "fugitives" were sitting. He took us all to the nearest district-police station, where we were identified and sent to a detention house in the regional city. There I and the other fellow fugitives from military service were assigned to a convoy of prisoners of all kinds, from incorrigible killers, arms and legs chained, to petty thieves. There was also an assortment of other kinds of law violators who were being transported to another prison, chained by handcuffs in pairs. We were

surrounded by a heavy cordon of guards armed with loaded pistols and rifles, arousing the curiosity of masses of people in the cities through which we passed, and on the railroad stations on the way to our destination.

It took me about two weeks or more to travel the distance from Kiev to Kovrov, a small city near Nizhni-Novgorod, about two hundred or more miles north of Moscow. This distance I had made in three days as a free person when I travelled to Nizhni-Novgorod in the "old days" of my business adventures.

Our convoy moved very slowly. We would come to a big city, such as Kiev, and we would be taken *en masse* to the local central prison. There we would be handed over by one set of guards to another. The old chiefs of guards would make sure to get from the new captain receipts that every prisoner in the convoy had been handed to him in good shape and form. The new guards would look over the new flock of sheep, would familiarize themselves with the faces and "personalities" of the more conspicuous and dangerous criminals entrusted to them, and make plans to frustrate the apparent constant striving of these birds to escape their cages. They were responsible for each and every individual man in the convoy; therefore, regardless of the type of prisoner, each man was given attention and vigilance to forestall any attempt to escape from the convoy.

Arriving at the gates of every prison, the identity of each one of the members of the convoy was verified. The dangerous criminals would be assigned to special cells in the prison. The *hoi polloi*, minor thieves, A.W.O.L. soldiers or fugitives from military service, would be assigned to common large quarters, the "camera"—a spacious room with specially constructed boards, elevated from the ground, around the wall for "guests" to sleep on. A large, long oak table in the middle of the camera served as a place to eat the food, consisting of a vegetable soup in which, here and there, floated a piece of beef or pork. A large copper vat filled with steaming soup would be carried into the room by a couple of husky prisoners. The cook would ladle out the soup into canteens carried by the prisoners, who formed into long queues of hungry people. A piece of dark bread would be handed over to each one by the cook's helper. On Sundays and holidays we would also get "kasha," a yellow cereal cooked with pork fat, the famous national food in Russia. "Borsch da kasha pischa nasha," the popular Russian slogan means "borsch and kasha is the mainstay of our existence."

A day or two later we would leave the prison and, forming the convoy, would walk through the streets of the city to board the train. We would be placed in specially adapted prisoners' cars with iron-barred windows, to make the next leg of our journey to the next big city, where we would undergo the same processing, counting, and close supervision in its main prison.

I remember approaching the famous Lubianka prison in Moscow. We were led on a downward incline towards the main prison gates–tall, wide, forbidding iron doors. The somber, heavy doors opened slowly with a clang, and we entered the dark hallway. Passing through long passages, dimly lit, we came to a large room where officials sitting at long tables examined our papers. We proceeded in groups to our place of lodging for the night, a very large room, spotlessly clean, with solid boards built in a semicircle around the walls for sleeping. We spent the night and the next day there. On the following morning we were led to the railroad station and boarded the train on our last leg of the journey, to the city of Kovrov, my destination. Only a few of our convoy alighted in Kovrov. The convoy proceeded on its way.

Chapter 12

I AM A FOOT SOLDIER IN THE TSARIST ARMY

A military police officer met me at the station. He signed for me with the chief of the convoy. Silently, without a word passed between us, he motioned to me to climb into his jeep and took me to the main military base office. The officer to whom I was delivered looked at my papers in a matter-of-fact way, without a word of recrimination or condemnation. He gave me the number of the barrack to which I was to go and present myself to the officer of the day.

Apparently this business of attempting to avoid military service was so common that it aroused no one's special interest. The important thing was the fact that I was finally brought in and presented to the army. The stigma of the fugitive ended right there and then. From now on I was no longer a civilian but a soldier. It was up to me to prove that I would be a capable trainee and a good soldier, and that was all that mattered. The past was forgotten and a new life was beginning, the life of a free soldier who would be judged only by his performance as a soldier.

Whether I would have been prosecuted later on by the authorities for avoiding military service for a time, had the Tsarist war ended in victory was a question that proved to be academic when the life in Russia, established for generations, was suddenly revolutionized and completely, radically changed. Traditionally, after a successful war, such cases of transgression by civilians, or even minor transgressions by soldiers that did not involve actions of treason or other grave seditious acts, would be pardoned in a general amnesty at the end of the war. In my case there was no time to reflect upon the future. The new situation that confronted me was so compelling and absorbing in its intensity that there was no time left for idle reflections.

The sergeant to whose care I was presented was a man of about 40 years. He had seen combat and was now transferred to the rear to train new recruits. He was short and stocky, with a nice, rather fatherly face. I was assigned a place on a lower bunk, given my military uniform, rifle and ammunition. In a day or so I fell into the routine of training and marching. The city of Kovrov is in the far north of Russia. The winters

there are long and rough. During the winter the snow is deep, and the cold is often 32 degrees centigrade below zero. I came to Kovrov at the end of the fall. After a few days of rainy weather, snow covered the ground, and it became really cold.

We would be awakened by the bugle at six in the morning, rush into formations for morning calisthenics, and return to the barracks for breakfast. After a light meal we would be marched into the snowy fields where we would get the most intensive military training in the ways of formation, marching, running, etc. Then we would be marched in formation back to the barracks, singing our soldier songs and looking forward to our meals, as those field exercises made us very hungry. After a good meal we would rest a while. Then we would be given lectures and instructions in handling our weaponry, chiefly rifles, and in military discipline and appreciation of rank.

I found the food good and wholesome and the training, although intensive, not overtiring. Of course we were all young and healthy, and physical exercise was good for us. There was only one fly in the ointment. We were given, to begin with, old uniforms and shoes, and as our marches and field exercises were stepped up our uniforms and shoes were becoming shabbier and worn out. Some shoes began to show holes which were stuffed with rags, as the snow was deep and the cold was severe. There were rumblings among the rank and file. Some intimated that the "brass-hats" were selling the new uniforms, assigned by the government for us, on the black market and replacing them with old second-hand uniforms obtained cheaply on the market. Of course, nobody would dare say so openly, fearing severe reprisals from the "Higher-Ups," or even accusation of sedition.

From time to time the whole "polk" (regiment), which consisted of about 10,000 personnel, was arranged by "rotas" (companies) for a general inspection. War-time training polks were swollen to enormous proportions, and so was ours, the 309th Vasilkovski Infantry Polk. The commander of the polk, General Betticher, was of German extraction. He was a bulky soldier of about 60, with graying hair, his large head covered with a "papakha," a high, round hat of grayish dark lamb fur. His wide face with prominent features was reddish-copper, as if snow-bitten or sunburned, and the top of his large nose had a somewhat bluish tinge, attesting to his long familiarity with good living and abundant drinking. His face was clean-shaven except for the upper lip, which was covered with a thin, well-cultivated, grayish mustache

extending out on both sides of his mouth to the middle of his cheeks. Sitting on his white steed and sweeping the formation with his eyes, he was a picture of solidity and grave, commanding majesty.

He was known as a strict disciplinarian. During inspection he would ride by on his white horse between the rows of the rotas arranged in precise order with the front soldiers placed in an even row cascading from the tallest to the shortest in height, standing gravely at attention with their rifles at their sides. The General would salute the rota and would ask loudly, "Everything in order?" A thundering reply of "Yes, Sir, your Excellency!" would follow, its echo coming back in measured loud sounds from the nearby woods. The General would ride in front of the rows looking with an eagle eye at the soldiers, their posture, and the way they handled their rifles. Each soldier would lift his rifle in front of him, looking straight at the General, salute him with it, turn his head gradually in the direction in which the General was riding, and then lower his rifle back to its proper position.

When the General passed the last soldier in the row, a deep sigh would relieve the pent-up, extreme suspense of the lieutenant and sub-lieutenant and sergeants of the affected rota. With great satisfaction they would give the order, "Rota, relax!" These inspections would be held several times during the course of training of each contingent, a period of about three or four months in the last years of the war.

One morning while our rota was arranged for inspection together with the rest of the polk, the familiar clipped, sharp, short, loud greetings of the rotas to our right were rolling through the hills and dales and woods of the countryside as the General and his retinue approached our rota. The warrior on his white steed appeared before us. In the familiar way he greeted us and asked, "Is everybody satisfied?" and before the usual thundering reply took place a voice from the middle of the first row exclaimed excitedly, "No, your Excellency!" A dead, sinister silence ensued. The surprised General bellowed, "Who is it? Step out!" Out of the row came I, made a step forward, right-faced toward the General and saluted. "What is wrong?" asked the strict General. "They don't give us our new uniforms and shoes," said I. A few confirmatory voices began to be heard from the rows of our rota, but the General scotched these voices with a threatening, strict tone: "Shut up, one at a time!" He motioned to me to get back into my place, which I did, reversing my steps. The General continued on his way to inspect other rotas. It was a great blow and

disgrace to the lieutenant and his assistants of our rota. The inspection ended, and all the rotas returned to their barracks. The air in our barrack was full of whispering and foreboding expectations. Different groups of soldiers discussed the fateful event in diverse ways. Everybody expected something grave to happen. A group of Jewish soldiers, headed by a slick theatrical personality who anxiously awaited his "papers," postponing his shipment to the Front, and who never had so much as noticed me in the barrack, suddenly approached me and with great venom said "It takes a Jew to start trouble." And, behold, toward evening new uniforms and shoes appeared for distribution in our barrack.

The soldiers were pleasantly surprised, and immediately a scramble ensued to pick the best uniforms and fittest shoes from what was left after the sergeants and their favorites satisfied their needs. My uniform was a bit baggy and the shoes a bit spacious, but I was satisfied that they were new. Although I was pleased that my daring plea was heard and acted upon so rapidly, I nevertheless awaited, with a sense of dark foreboding, future developments.

The next day our lieutenant led our rota out to the field. The snow was deep, and it was very cold. He kept us for hours at our training, repeating each maneuver endlessly for unusually long intervals, making us run and fall to the ground and crawl in the snow several times more often than in previous days and giving us practically no time to catch our breath.

The time to return to the barrack finally arrived. The exhausted soldiers were marching home in sinister silence. The usual hilarious songs would just not come from their throats. There were loudly expressed suggestions to bayonet that S.O.B., that soldier Kushnirovitz, that disturber of the peace, that outcast responsible for the plight of the company.

Nobody, of course, criticized the young lieutenant, usually a benign, modest and mild-mannered commander, who had this time gone berserk. It was understandingly assumed that he had acted only naturally, as every other normal person would have acted. My personal record was no doubt scrutinized very carefully by the authorities. As I found out indirectly, the lieutenant, who later accompanied us to the Front, watched me very carefully expecting me to go A.W.O.L. or to commit some other indiscretion against the military rules and discipline, which would have given him an opportunity to punish me.

Weeks later, when we were unloading from the military train at the boundary with Austria and starting out on foot to the Front, through what had recently been enemy territory, when there was no longer any question in the lieutenant's mind that I was contemplating escape, this lieutenant came up to me one day, shook my hand, and said, "You are a brave man, Kushnirovitz. I am appointing you as a platoon leader until we arrive at the Front." That was a tribute from a just and magnanimous commander.

I encountered all kinds and types of soldiers in my brief time of training. The polk had a cadre of old, experienced, battlescarred non-commissioned officers, who acted as trainers. The rest were a mass of recruits of varying ages obtained from the cities and peasant villages. Due to the contingencies of the war and the great need for constant replacements, the training period was shortened and confined exclusively to field training in simulated battle conditions, the use of the rifle and marksmanship. There were practically no showy parades or military exhibitions. Still, here and there you would come across a soldier who was a so-called "natural" leader. One such fellow in our rota was young Sergeant B. Tall, dark and handsome, he had a resounding voice fit naturally for command. He quickly rose to the rank of sergeant and acting commander of our company in its marches to and from the training field. It was a delight to see him, a straight military figure, self-confident and conscious of his magnetism, commanding in a strong melodious voice, "Rota, at attention! Rota, stop!" or "Rota, relax!" or "Hey there, soldier in the second row, midpart, pull yourself up!" Everybody expected him to be a real leader in battle. He continued this imposing posture all throughout our travel to the Front.

When the rota was broken up into smaller units at the Front to be distributed among the different battle units, Sergeant B happened to be part of our unit and, having in our midst this remarkable "leader," everybody felt better and more reassured in our impending confrontation with the realities of war. Everybody in our unit except the "leader" himself. Somehow he shrank in stature as we approached the Front. He lost his boisterousness. He spoke in a rather low voice, avoided any display of leadership and showed extreme anxiety and fearful restlessness at the distant roar of the field artillery. One night, about a mile from the Front, when a stray shell burst not far from our group, he disappeared and was gone from our midst. The hero went

A.W.O.L. Rumors had it that months later he was seen haranguing a mob of Revolutionary soldiers on the streets of Moscow about the great suffering of soldiers at the Front, implying that he was one of them and advising his hearers to throw off Kerensky and to join the Bolsheviks.

Chapter 13

ON THE RUSSO-AUSTRIAN FRONT

We were now approaching the Front. For many days we marched on foot, covering about 40 miles a day and relaxing at intervals. We passed the city of Lvov (Lemberg) and headed in the direction of southwestern Austria to the Bukovina district and the Carpathian mountains near the confluence of the borders of Austria, Roumania and Hungary.

Our regiment was broken up into smaller units which were directed as replacements to the different polks holding the Front. As we approached the Front, more and more traces of a devastating struggle were encountered. The roads were crowded with military vehicles and units of soldiers streaming to and from the battlefields. The small towns along the road were crowded with soldiers; civilians became scarcer. About two or three miles from the battle lines, our units were broken up into still smaller groups which took to the fields during the day, avoiding open roads where we could be spotted by enemy aeroplanes and enemy field-observers placed on high elevations. Here and there a group would be spotted, and a few artillery shots would be directed toward the group, which would scatter and seek natural cover. We arrived toward evening at a wooded section on the slope of a mountain, the rear of the battle lines, the trenches being dug and manned on the other side of the mountain facing the enemy. A wide dale separated our trenches from the opposite mountain, where the enemy positions were discernible.

We were placed temporarily in hastily erected wooden bunks constructed like tents and camouflaged with branches to avoid detection by enemy planes. During the night our section was subjected to a violent artillery barrage. There were about 20 or 30 soldiers in our bunk. It seemed as if the shells were bursting right over our heads. Some of the soldiers knelt and prayed loudly and fervently to God for succor. Others lay on the ground wrapping their *shinels* (overcoats) tightly about themselves as if to protect themselves in this way from the fateful shell. Others were simply stunned and remained where they were in a stupor. I sat on the floor leaning against a pole, pushing my back violently against it, and waited momentarily for the fateful thing to happen.

This agony of suspense continued probably for about 20 minutes, but to us it seemed an eternity. Gradually the noise of the bursting shells shifted away from our bunks. In another 20 minutes it suddenly ceased. That was our first battle experience. It made a violent impression upon all of us, the newcomers. Since then I was subjected many a time to this experience, but it never affected me so deeply as this first time. You gradually get used to it and your senses get duller as the same condition repeats itself. In fact, many a time afterward when an artillery barrage begins, you figure out in your mind its direction, and if it does not strike directly over you you just continue your assigned work or job, paying almost no attention to it.

The next night after this first barrage, we were led through dug-in-the-ground passages to the other side of the mountain into the open trenches to replace the contingent that had occupied these trenches for a few days.

It was a cold winter with a deep snow on the inclines of the mountain. Our trenches were half-filled with snow, and only the posts for the sentries covered with wood and camouflaged, were free of snow. You could not make a fire to warm yourself during the day on account of the smoke which would reveal our position, and you could not make a fire to warm yourself during the night as the glow of the fire would surely be a fine target to the sharpshooters or to the enemy artillery poised against us. And so our Russian soldiers, who were reportedly called "The Manure" by the Tsar, bore the brunt of the terrifying cold winter. In his ukase to the nobleman class who constituted the upper crust of the officer corps in His Imperial Army, the Tsar, the titular head of the nobleman class, exhorted its members not to expose themselves unduly and unnecessarily to the hazards and danger of the War, thereby making their ranks thinner and thinner by battle fatalities. He advised them rather to dispose with the plain soldiers, "The Manure," whenever fatalities were inevitable, thus saving the vitality of the noblemen class for future leadership.

And so the Russian plain soldiers, I included among them, had to keep warm and alive by lying in a heap, one on top of the other, warming themselves by their own bodies. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers were frostbitten; some lost their limbs, which became gangrenous, in order to save their lives. I spent several days and nights in these trenches until relieved for a time by the next contingent of soldiers when our stint ended. During these vigils in the trenches, we

would be subjected from time to time to an artillery barrage which was not as serious as the ones to which we were subjected when in the reserve. The trenches were a narrow line extending along the Front with soldiers at infrequent intervals, not crowded as in the rear; hence, it made no sense for the enemy to expend ammunition, unless in preparation for an immediate attack.

We would look out from our covered sentry posts to the positions of the enemy trenches and, here and there, would see indistinctly an occasional movement which immediately ceased when a pot-shot from a zealous soldier was directed to that place.

In general, we spent "dull" days and nights, enlivened at times by nightly raids and nightly rendezvous when we were appointed as liaison messengers to maintain contact with the neighboring posts and positions. On one such night, when a comrade and I were appointed and directed to contact a neighboring position, we were working our way in the darkness through the wide space of two or three miles between the war camps and trenches. We were descending a hill and passing an open field broken up here and there by a smashed-by-shrapnel tree or a dark bush when, suddenly, the whole area was lit by an exploded rocket. The rocket exploded high over our heads and, coming down in a bright light, revealed us as though pointing a fiery finger at us.

We instinctively turned into immovable stones or statues as we leaned against one another holding our rifles. Those were a few seconds of fateful suspense. We expected every second to be mowed down by the vigilant enemy. Whether our figures appeared to the enemy sentries as another broken tree, or for some other Providential reason, after a few seconds, which seemed to us an eternity, the rocket suddenly burned out, leaving us protected by an extremely welcome dark mantle. We quickened our pace to a run and stopped behind a bush to catch our breaths.

Chapter 14

FRATERNIZATION

This dull routine was interrupted by an unusual event which took place on an Easter morning. There were rumors circulated by old veteran soldiers that a strange phenomenon takes place at Easter time on some sectors of the Front. It was called "fraternization." It was hard to imagine that, in the midst of a mortal struggle between two giant armies posed against one another with the sole aim of destroying one another, a phenomenon of even "temporary peaceful co-existence" could possibly take place. And yet this phenomenon did happen right on our sector of the front line, initiated by a brave sergeant only a few hundred yards from my position.

It was a fair Easter morning. The Front was quiet. Each army apparently engaged in sentimental unwrapping of the gift packages sent from their distant homes to celebrate the Easter Holiday. Everyone looked forward to the special Easter Holiday meal, a pleasant change from the routine fare of everyday life on the Front, which was traditionally given to the soldiers on Holidays.

I noticed to my right, a few hundred yards away, a big husky soldier climb out from the trench, stand up erect to his full size and, waving a white rag over his head, shout in a loud voice: "Hey, You, out there, I am coming!" I was astonished to watch the man apparently subjecting himself to an obvious mortal danger of being a perfect target to the enemy sharpshooters.

Nothing of the sort happened, however. It was evident that thousands of eyes from both mountains peered from behind the security of the trenches, glued to this figure of the brave soldier. After a short moment the soldier began to descend the mountain, walk through No-Man's Land, and finally climb the slopes of the opposite mountain headed towards the indistinctly visible enemy positions. Everybody watched every move of this figure with breath-taking suspense. When the soldier reached the middle of the mountain we saw a few enemy soldiers climb out from their dugouts and surround him. They all disappeared into the enemy trenches.

A flood of soldiers from all parts of our extended positions suddenly

appeared climbing out from the trenches and followed the footsteps of the original pioneering brave soldier.

I was among the crowd. We descended our mountain, passed the separating valley, and were approaching the German positions. We were met by the enemy soldiers, reserved but rather friendly Austrian soldiers. They invited us to their trenches which were, by the way, much more securely built, more spacious and covered up on top like the redoubts built on our side for officers only.

They treated us with wine, cake, candy and other delicacies which these soldiers also apparently had received from their families back home.

This fraternization continued the whole afternoon. Some of our soldiers appeared to be getting "tipsy" from the friendly offerings of strong drink by the enemy soldiers. I noticed that a few soldiers asked and received asylum as war prisoners, which ended their mortal fears of the future.

Toward sunset we suddenly heard artillery bursts high over our heads directed to the enemy rear. This apparently was a signal from our commanders to end this abnormal situation, the spontaneous outburst of peace in the midst of a mortal struggle. The wave of our soldiers rolled backward to their positions. The holiday was at an end. The warring armies resumed their usual business of destroying one another by all ways and means at their disposal. From what I was told later, this "abnormal" phenomenon of hardened enemies suddenly becoming "humane," peaceful, and fraternal, did occur on different sections of the long extended Front. It happened on important holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, and was looked upon with indulgence by certain humane commanders. There is no question that the "higher-ups" were aware of the impending breach in the combat situation, but it was looked upon as an innocent, harmless tradition, which it did prove to be on every such occasion.

After awhile we were moved from the trenches to the rear or reserve, about a mile behind the lines. It was, of course, a relief from the immediate danger that you were subjected to when in the trenches–the bombardments, the stray bullets. However, as time went on it became extremely dull; there was none of that continuous suspense that kept you on the alert 24 hours a day every minute and every second, your eyes glued to the opposite slope of the mountain watching intensely every manifestation of life or movement there. There was a let-down,

an anti-climax, to a great and tense emotional experience. After a day or so of relaxation the soldiers became bored. They were looking for some way to occupy their minds and to kill time. Due to the limitation of movement imposed by the conditions of the Front and the lack of any entertainment, the soldiers naturally took to playing cards as the only feasible recreation. They played for money. Most of them had money, either sent by their devoted kin, or saved from their government pay, meager as it was. It could not be spent anywhere here on the Front and was dangling in their pockets. The soldiers started to play for small stakes, but as the gambling spirit took hold of them they increased their stakes until some of them put all their money on a card and lost it. Some very enthusiastic and inveterate players would end up by staking their bread rations and losing them. They would go hungry but satisfied that there was now absolutely nothing else left with which to gamble until the issuance of the next ration or few pennies of soldier's pay.

I had never played cards except for Rummy and other innocent games that children play. I sometimes watched these players and became intrigued by the complete abandon that some card players display and the great absorption that characterizes the player when the stakes are high. At times I was urged to take part in a card game but declined, pointing out that I did not even know the rules of the game. However, my neighbor in the cot next to mine, one of the most intense card players and gamblers, prevailed upon me to take part in a very simple game, "Black Jack" or "Twenty-One," as it was called in Russia.

On one occasion when there was no "quorum" and another player was needed, my neighbor explained to me how simple the game was and how you did not need to know anything about it in order to play and even win. I finally agreed to play one or two games. As is often the case, "beginner's luck" won for me the first two games. I gained a few rubles which I promptly lost, plus some extra rubles from my pocket, in the next few games.

Subject to all the ways of players I wanted to try my luck once more, but I did not have anymore money on hand. I asked my "buddy," the one who had induced me to play, and who, by this time, had won a pile of money, to lend me a few needed pennies. He refused outright to do this. He had good reasons, as he explained to me later. It is a tradition and superstition adhered to rigidly by inveterate players that you do not lend money in the middle of a game, especially when

you're winning, as you will surely break your winning streak by such a "rash" act. You would displease the "Goddess of Chance" by such a sacrilege. I, however, was too ignorant to know the tradition. I was ignorant of any of the intricacies of the game. I felt insulted by this crude refusal on the part of my buddy to lend me a few pennies, since I had lent him on numerous occasions small amounts to continue his gambling when he had reached the end of his rope and was "financially ruined." I was highly incensed by such ingratitude. I found another backer among the onlookers crowding around the table.

With a fresh supply of money I joined the play again and, as "Dame Luck" would have it, I began to win. A continuous winning streak spurred me on to play game after game. We sat up all night playing. Piles of money accumulated in front of me. I was becoming bolder and bolder and increased my stakes continually to bigger amounts, and each time I won. I knocked out more and more players, emptying their pockets one by one. When the game ended on the morning of the next day, I was the one who had garnered all the money from most of the players. I accumulated the staggering sum of about 350 rubles. When I got up from the table I realized the great temptations to which such an unexpected outcome of gambling exposed me. I generally abhorred gambling and feared its effects on my morale. The forceful but completely unproductive strain that this activity imposes on its followers, although relieving their minds for a time of any other worries or any depressing thoughts, leads them nevertheless into strong dominating habits which are hard to overcome later. This is particularly true for people who have no other higher and more attractive goals in life. To the surprise of all my brethren, the family of gamblers and card players, I announced that I was ready to distribute my unexpected gain, acquired by sheer luck, to those who had lost it to me. I told them that I had decided not to play cards any more. So that they should not interpret my decision as mere greediness and a fear of losing my hoard, I offered to give back my winnings to those who had lost to me. Of course, my comrades protested vigorously such an unusual procedure. They would not take money from me that I had gained rightfully according to all the rules of fair play. They would bear their loss stoically as good, genuine worshippers of the "Goddess of Chance" should do. So the money was left with me, and I have never played cards since.

Chapter 15

THE STORM BATTALION AND ITS OFFICERS

One day, while we were resting at the rear of the battlefield in our bunks, an officer came in. He asked for four volunteers from each rota to enlist in a newly formed Storm Battalion. The soldiers in this battalion were to be taken about 20 miles or so to the rear of the Front and be trained in the use of diverse weaponry, such as machine guns, exploding grenades, and mortars. This course was supposed to last for about five or six weeks, after which our battalion would be used as the vanguard in any assault and as covering rear in a retreat.

To the horror of my friend, Springer, a Jewish man, who was a rather timid soul and who ended up in the trenches for the sole reason that he did not have the courage to go A.W.O.L. on his way to the Front, I volunteered, along with three others from our rota, for this Storm Battalion. A few days later we volunteers were "pulled out" from our military units and assembled about 25 miles behind the Front for a few weeks of training.

Each one of us was taught the use of the sub-machine gun, the skill of pulling out the pin of a grenade and quickly throwing it before it exploded in our hands, the use of the mortar and other weapons. We became self-sustaining individual fighters able to use different kinds of weapons as the situation and emergency might arise on the battlefield.

I parted with my old polk, the 309th Vasilkovski Infantry Polk, and became part of the new, more glamorous military unit. Our unit was mobile, shifted from one part of the Front to another in support of this or that entrenched polk as the occasion arose. Our battalion consisted of four rotas with a major in command. This officer was a man of about 45, rather good-looking with a thick, blond mustache and short spade-shaped beard. He was above average in height, broad-shouldered with a tightly drawn-in belly—the posture and bearing of a well-groomed Tsarist officer of the old school, probably belonging to the noblemen class.

His next in command was a captain who had apparently worked his way up from the ranks. He had none of that aloofness which

characterized his superior. He ate and drank in company with the minor officers, the lieutenants and junior lieutenants who, at the end of the First World War, were almost exclusively men of the people and not of the noble class.

I was assigned to the First Rota, headed by Lieutenant Ivanov, a very brave officer. Finding me more literate than the rest of the soldiers under his command, he appointed me to be his clerk.

Soon I was transferred to the office of the Colonel, as the only soldier available who was literate enough to conduct the business of this office. I had been working for about two weeks in the office of the Colonel, in a room adjacent to his, when I heard, through the half-opened door between the rooms, the Colonel discussing with a visitor of his the question of Jews in the army. The discussion was not very flattering to the Jews. They were accused of avoiding military service and particularly of avoiding the Front. Apparently the Colonel was completely unaware of the fact that I am Jewish, as their talk was free, not hushed, completely unmindful of the clerk in the next room. I was extremely agitated. It is remarkable that, although I knew that the facts stated by them were true concerning the Jews' avoiding military service–although they did not analyze the causes of it–I just could not accept those facts when spoken by the Colonel and his visitor. Every statement of theirs I considered a personal challenge, although I knew that they were not even aware that I was Jewish.

When the visitor left I walked into the Colonel's room and, in extreme agitation, bursting with pent emotions, I told him that I was a Jew and that I had heard with dismay his talk about Jews. I begged him to send me forthwith to the ranks of the soldiers from which I had been assigned to his office; I told him that I did not wish him to think for a moment that I was trying to avoid the battlefield in the protected confines of his office.

The Colonel, a gentleman, was somewhat embarrassed and surprised at this unexpected turn of events. He assured me that he was highly satisfied with my work in the office, that he never thought of me as Jewish, and that now that he knew that I was Jewish, it was perfectly all right with him for me to continue my work; he said that he certainly did not think, and never would think, of me in a derogatory manner, as a Jew.

I still begged him to send me back to my unit. He replied that if I insisted on it he would do so. He filled out a form for me to give to the officer of my rota and bade me good-bye.

I joined my rota that afternoon. Apparently the story had spread rapidly among the officers and soldiers in our battalion. When we were marching the next day in the mountains to occupy positions in a certain sector of the Front, the soldier next to me, a man of about 30, redheaded and with a freckled face, suddenly turned toward me and said, "It is a shame you, Kushnirovitz, returned to our ranks. It looks as if you are deliberately courting death." I admit that those words, said with apparent sympathy but with thoughtless simplicity, made a deep impression on me. They were words full of foreboding. We continued to march in silence.

We marched that day and through the night, and early in the morning we reached a small mountain village. Apparently the village people were rather surprised by our appearance, as they hardly had a chance to gather and hide their chickens and little pigs. Soon the smell of roasting pigs and chickens filled the air. Those were the chickens and small pigs caught by the hungry soldiers and put to patriotic duty to feed the army.

That afternoon we reached a mountain; climbing over it, our battalion spread in a chain and occupied a position in the middle of the slope. The place was overgrown with tall grass and underbrush. At the base of the mountain, about a mile directly below us, was a grove and, to the left of it, an open field stretched about two or three miles in the distance. From our high position in the mid-mountain we could see and hear a battle developing.

It was a rather cloudy and dark afternoon. At times a mild drizzle made the tall grass wet. After a short artillery barrage we could see rows of advancing soldiers, running short distances through the field, met by devastating fire from the enemy and falling to the ground. The attacks were repeated numerous times, each time ending in failure. The loud, blood-curdling voices of the attacking soldiers would reach our ears once in a while and leave a sense of deep disturbance and depression.

Our staff was headed by the Captain, serving in the capacity of Acting Colonel. I found out later that, whenever a battle was shaping up, our Colonel somehow suddenly had very urgent business to attend to in the division or corps headquarters about 20 or 30 miles from the Front. That was one way of surviving and fulfilling the request of the Tsar to his noblemen-officer class to take more care of themselves.

The Captain's headquarters were located on the top of the mountain about a mile above the Front line. I, with another soldier, was

appointed as liaison between the staff and the front line. It was getting dark. An attack by a German unit was expected on our positions that night. I was returning to our staff with a message that everything was quiet on our part of the Front which I had just left about 20 minutes ago, when suddenly I noticed a terrific commotion at the staff quarters, which was located in the loft of a barn.

It appeared that an urgent message had been received from the neighboring command post that the Germans had clashed with the neighboring unit and had dislodged it from its position and were attempting to encircle us. The Captain gave orders to retreat and had already sent word to the Front by another liaison pair. The Captain mounted his horse and left the place with his staff, pointing in the direction he was going.

We soldiers had no map of the terrain. It was very dark. Two other soldiers and I started out to run in the direction indicated by the Captain. The terrain was rough. We climbed high hills and were descending along steep inclines overgrown with tall grass and underbrush. Deep furrows cut into the mountain by cascading, gurgling waters of the narrow mountain creek impeded our flight. My two comrades, city people, became increasingly tired and exhausted. They threw away their rifles and heavy knapsacks.

Suddenly an idea flashed through the mind of one, whom I knew to be anti-Semitic. He turned to his comrade and said, "Kushnirovitz is leading us into the German camp. Let's dispose of him."

I turned to him and said, "You S.O.B! You even threw away your rifle. I have the rifle, not you. If you don't want to continue in this direction you can help yourself by going in any direction, even to the Devil."

I continued in the same direction, carefully watching them. They lamely followed me. After midnight we heard voices of soldiers and the clatter of military vehicles on the road down the mountain. Approaching them cautiously we heard Russian talk, and we joined them. It was one of the units of our division. We followed them for several hours until daybreak, when we entered a town and encamped on the main street.

I was dead tired. I climbed under a parked vehicle, stretched myself out on the hard cement road and immediately fell asleep. I slept soundly for several hours until late in the afternoon when I was awakened by the driver of the vehicle, who was about to drive it off.

We were about 10 miles behind the front line. After some inquiries I finally found and joined the staff of our unit. It took about two or three days until all the soldiers of the unit finally rejoined us.

It turned out that the whole affair was a farce. On the evening of our precipitous retreat we were all in extreme suspense, awaiting the German attack. Through faulty liaison one of our neighboring Russian units clashed with another Russian unit whom they mistook for Germans. Shooting occurred from both sides, and both units retreated. This broke the continuity of our front line and, fearing encirclement by the Germans, our Captain ordered our battalion to retreat. The retreat turned out to be anything but orderly, breaking up our unit.

A day or two after our dispersed battalion had finally gathered in all its soldiers, it was again given an assignment to occupy a sector in the front line. The chief of our rota, Lieutenant Ivanov, hard pressed to find a literate soldier to conduct the clerical part of the work of the rota, again asked me to assume "temporarily" the office of the clerk.

Ivanov was a man of about 35, of medium height, with a wide, extremely mobile face, protruding chin, and a large blond head which was half bald. His face and all his body exuded extreme intensity, his nostrils alternately expanding and contracting when he spoke. His walk was that of a cautious cat or tiger.

He came from one of the big Russian cities and was well aware of what was going on in Russia at that time of Revolutionary upheaval. He apparently came from a middle-class family, was conservative in his political outlook, and took seriously the exhortations of the Kerensky provisional government of Russia at that time to establish an active Front and to make a concerted effort at a powerful advance on the Eastern Front in order to help our Allies in the West and, thus, to conclude the war in victory against the Germans. The soldiers in our rota liked him and felt confident and secure under his leadership.

Being a clerk in Ivanov's office, where the officers gathered for consultations and private chats, I had a chance to listen to the conversations of the officers of our battalion. The Captain, the Acting Commander of the battalion in the absence of the Colonel, was a man of about 40, rather slight, with a short reddish beard on an energetic face. His beautiful brown eyes were prematurely set in a sort of frozen look, from the horrors experienced in the War. The officers were discussing the affairs of their units and their immediate objectives.

From their conversation I gained the impression that they were rather critical of their chief, the Colonel. They mentioned the fact that the Colonel was called out to the divisional staff offices. They intimated that this forecast an impending order to advance.

The lieutenant commanding the second rota was a man of about 23 years, tall and well-built, with a boyish face in spite of its owner's effort to appear serious. He was a native of the wide spaces of Siberia, probably the son of a well-to-do farmer, and had youthful ambitions of advancing in his rank. Unsophisticated, he expressed openly his grudge that he was not adequately rewarded for his last feat of heroism when his rota accomplished a successful sortie. Confidently he predicted that in the next advance his efforts would be acknowledged more justly, and that his reward would be more in line with his accomplishments. Unfortunately that very night he was given an order to advance his rota and to capture the wooded hill opposite their sector. The Germans entrenched on top of the hill were well prepared. Before the lieutenant and his soldiers reached the middle of the hill, they were mowed down and actually decimated. Only a few soldiers returned to their old position. The majority, together with the lieutenant who was intrepidly marching at their head, were left on the battlefield dead or seriously wounded. The lieutenant was killed outright by the first bullets.

Two days later our rota was ordered to advance in our sector. The terrain was less hilly. Our positions were at the bottom of a low, wooded hill. The advance took place in the afternoon. Apparently the Germans were aware of our impending attack. An artillery barrage covered our positions. In the midst of this, however, Lieutenant Ivanov, with the rota, made the attack through the wooded section of the hill. I was told by a soldier who was close to him during the battle that the Lieutenant, holding a pistol in each hand, plunged intrepidly forward at the head of the rota, springing forward like a tiger, shooting and killing and advancing so rapidly that the German soldiers retreated in panic, leaving their wounded and fleeing in disarray. The task was accomplished, and our soldiers moved to the newly won positions.

This was in the middle of the year 1918, at the height of the so-called Kerensky advance. This was the last battle in our sector of the Front. After that, the Front remained frozen in the same position for several weeks. The disintegration of the Front occurred under the successful barrage of Bolshevik propaganda, exhorting the battle-scarred

soldiers to stop fighting the Germans and come home to fight the Landlords and the Bourgeoisie.

When one talks about bravery and heroism, it is well to remember that a great number of brave and courageous soldiers did not live to receive acclaim for their heroism. It is the irony of fate that the recipients of medals and crosses for heroism were quite often the cooks and the so-called staff-rats, soldiers and officers serving as auxiliary help in the rear. They received those medals and crosses undeservedly only because very few of the real heroes were left to get them.

A polk would advance on an enemy position and be decimated. After a few such unsuccessful or successful sorties there were only a small number of the original soldiers of the polk left. The polk would be refilled by newly arrived soldiers. After a few weeks or months a number of crosses and medals would be assigned to this particular polk for heroic action by the polk as a whole. Who would get these crosses and medals? Of course, the original people of the old polk who were left. And who were those that were left? Mainly the cooks, the staff officers, etc.

I remember a young soldier of about 25 years with a pleasant, handsome face, a village boy from the Ukraine. He was very brave and undaunted in battle. He had been on the Front for about two years, a long time in wartime for an active soldier. He was already a sergeant and was the possessor of two medals and a cross for bravery in battle. He was just returning from a month's visit to his native village, a favorite of the girls and the envy of the boys in the village. As Fate would have it he arrived back from his furlough on the eve of our last advance. As a battle-scarred soldier, he looked upon the next engagement as another of the numerous previous engagements in which Providence watched over him and had seen him through unscathed. He discussed the forthcoming event with the calm and self-confidence of a beautiful girl offered another date. This boy never came back from the last battle. As they say, his number came up, and that was the end of a hero.

Chapter 16

THE FRONT DISINTEGRATES– LENIN AND HIS BOLSHEVIK AGITATORS

I must confess that politically I was a "babe in the woods." I was born into a traditional Orthodox background. My father, although not a religious fanatic, followed all the time-honored rituals of Orthodox Jewry. He brought me up, as well as the other seven children, in the same spirit and tradition. I prayed three times a day–mornings with phylacteries, afternoons, and evenings. I observed all the rituals of *Kashruth*, eating only Kosher food served with Kosher implements. On Sabbath and Holidays I attended Synagogue and prayed fervently. On Sabbath I refrained from making fire and carrying things. When the *Hazan* would sing *Va Anachnu Koirim Umishtachavin Umodim* ("And we kneel to you and confess to you, Oh Lord") I, together with the rest of the Congregation, would fall to my knees and prostrate myself on the floor, and I found great spiritual satisfaction in doing so. I endeavored to follow strictly all the precepts of our great religious leaders, commencing with that "Man Moses" down to the sages and Holy Men of the later generations.

As an Orthodox religious Jew, I was somehow inculcated with respect for authority, including the authority of the Tsar and his government. I considered the Tsarist regime as something permanent, ordained in its form by the Creator of the Universe. I remember that, in my days of struggling to find a job in Kiev, I read in the papers that the Tsar was to visit the city and pass on its streets. I joined the thousands of other people lining the main street. I climbed a tree and took a peep at the passing Tsar, and I felt that I was in the presence of a Supreme Being.

The oppressive edicts of the Tsarist Government against the Jews I considered as an affliction of God on the Jews of the Diaspora. I saw the solution to it in my daily prayers, *Va Aviyenu Lishalom L'Artzenu* ("And thou shalt bring us in peace to our Land") and *L'shana Abaha B'Yerushalayim* ("Next year in Jerusalem").

I believed in Zionism and the establishment of Israel on its own land

as the solution to the Jewish question in Russia. Living as I did during my youth in the village in a rather privileged position, I did not feel to the same extent the oppressive measures of the Tsarist Government as did the rest of the Jews in the Ghetto. On the other hand, watching the group of our Jews in the village, living a life completely differing from the surrounding sea of peasants, I could not but help think that we Jews were a foreign element within the body of the Russian people–at best, guests visiting with other people and refusing to integrate. Hence, my early desire and aspiration to go to Palestine. I dreamed about going to Palestine and made inquiries about obtaining a passport or visa to emigrate. The war and subsequent events interrupted this design on my part.

As I said before, politically I was completely undeveloped. Although I read avidly later in life the literature of different, diverse nations, I was never attracted to writings of a political or socio-economic nature.

Most of the Jews with whom I came into contact were middle-class people having no roots in the Russian soil. Whatever weighty causes brought about this precarious position of the Jews–their being so-called *luft menschen* (deriving their livelihood from thin air, as they say)–you could not expect the masses of the peasants or other Russian people to analyze this situation. The majority of the Russians resented the fact that many Jews were mixing unduly in politics, and that some were even among those instigating the masses of the peasants to revolt. The animosity of peasants, expressed in taunting the Jews and in laughing at them, I accepted as a natural phenomenon of people disliking anything strange and foreign.

On the other hand, I felt that the reluctance of the Jews to serve in the Russian army and to fight in the war was justified by the restrictions imposed upon them in business and other phases of life and by confining them to the Ghetto. On my part it was by no means the docility of a slave who accepts the oppression of his master. It was the acknowledgment on my part that I was a foreign body, temporarily residing in the Russian land, aspiring to go soon to his own land in Palestine.

I was almost dumbstruck when, one morning three months after the fall of the Tsar (the Generals kept the news away from the Army as long as they could), I heard that there was no more Tsar, that he had abdicated. It was as if the sky had fallen. I could hardly imagine such a possibility. From time to time rumors spread in the Army–they were

brought into the Army by soldiers sent home for a rest–that all kinds of political upheavals were taking place in Russia. The Generals tried to keep the Army on the Front sealed from these disruptive influences.

Presently, orders and edicts of the new Provisional Kerensky Government began to be published in the Army on the Front. There were exhortations by the Government to the soldiers to make a new, fresh effort to defeat the Germans and bring victory to our country and the Allies. There was exciting and inspiring news heralding freedom from the tyranny of the Tsar and the old regime. People were finally given a voice in their own affairs through their duly elected representatiaves to the Duma (Russian Parliament). I thought of the Tsarist regime in the spirit of our daily prayers, *Vetaavor Memshelet Zodon min Ha Aretz* ("and thou shalt wipe the wicked government off the earth"). I hoped for the blessings of a new life of liberty for the Jews in the Ghetto, pronouncing them as rightful citizens in a democratic country.

Now the Jews finally would have a stake in the government, composed of their own elected representatives, a cause to fight for a country that offered them the same freedoms as the rest of the citizenry. I read avidly the speeches of the few Jewish representatives in the Duma and felt proud of them.

Soon, however, disturbing news reached the Army that a band of Bolsheviki headed by Lenin and Stalin, with a preponderance of Jews, such as Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Radek, were conspiring to topple the government of Kerensky.

Agitators from the leaders of the Bolshevik party were sent into the Army and were haranguing the masses of soldiers, urging them not to fall for Kerensky's appeal to renew the advance, exhorting them to leave the Front and go home. The General and all the officers tried to interfere with this flood of propaganda, and General Miller (if I correctly remember), the commanding officer of a neighboring army corps, actually tried personally to break up such a meeting. The enraged soldiers lynched him right then and there.

My chief, Lieutenant Ivanov, a very brave and loyal Russian officer, apparently approved the policy of Kerensky and his Government and was ready to lead his soldiers on command from his superiors. He was dismayed and horrified to watch the discipline in the Army melt away and the soldiers getting out of hand.

"I can discuss this matter with you," he once told me. "You are

Jewish and apparently a loyal man. How do you explain the fact that the leadership of the Bolsheviki, challenging the Government, is composed largely of Jews? Trotsky, Kamenev, Sverdlov, Radek are all Jewish. I am a loyal, patriotic officer, as you well know, ready to shed my blood for the victory of our country. And here, your brethren, the Jews, are trying to introduce disorganization in the ranks of our Army which can only weaken it and hand it over without a struggle to our enemies, the Germans. You are a loyal Jewish soldier. Why don't you write to the newspapers as a combat soldier repudiating the actions of your brethren, the Jewish Communists, and explaining the harm they do to our Front and to our country?"

I must admit that he spoke my thoughts on the matter. I saw with my own eyes the deleterious effect that the Bolsheviki propaganda had on the morale of the Front. I was ashamed and suffered, and I took it as a personal affront as a Jew that the names of Jewish leaders were prominently displayed daily in every newspaper discussing the political events of the time.

I wrote a long letter to the editor of a newspaper in Kiev, setting forth the terrible effect the Bolshevik propaganda was having on the integrity and morale of the Army locked in a mortal struggle with the enemy. As a Jewish soldier I decried the fact that so many Jewish names were connected with the Bolsheviki leadership, and I assured the Russian people that there were many Jews in the Army, like myself, who thought in terms of the country first and foremost, and not in terms of political partisanship, and who were ready to follow the leadership of the Kerensky Government, our rightful Government, to continue the War to a successful conclusion.

I gave this article to Lieutenant Ivanov, who promised to see to it that it would reach its destination. I never knew what happened to this article. I assume that the editor, if he was not a Communist–and chances are that he was not at that early stage in the Russian Revolution–looked upon it as a very naive letter which possibly deserved reading for curiosity's sake, but was hardly worth printing. It attempted to stem the onrushing flood of the Bolshevik stormy waters against the Kerensky Government by a mere admonition and protest. From a purely Jewish standpoint, it was so self-deprecating because of the author's inferiority complex. I learned later, when I became a little more informed and objective and began to look upon the world from the bird's-eye view of an individual human being and not merely as a

Jew, that there were in Russia a great many Jews who did not consider themselves primarily as Jews, but as citizens of Russia. They demanded equal rights and opportunities to live, think, and act as everybody else in the great land of Russia.

The great majority of those Jews also supported their representatives in the Duma and the Kerensky Government, being convinced that this democratic government was the proper regime, not only to emancipate in an evolutionary way the Jews of the Ghetto, but also to introduce the Russian people, who had been for centuries under the domination of an absolute monarchy, to the principles of democracy and freedom in self-government.

As far as Trotsky, Kamenev, Sverdlov, Zinoviev, Radek, etc. were concerned, they just happened to be of Jewish descent. Not only had they lost every contact with the Jews and the Jewish people as a nation, they did not even consider themselves Russians. They considered themselves Citizens of the World, cosmopolitans who happened to descend from the Jewish people and happened to live in Russia. They considered the world at large as one country, one people. Their primary objective was to arrange the economic life and structure of the world in a way they, the Communists, considered most just and efficient. They were the creators of a new religion, "World Communism," in which social and economic reforms were the philosophy underlying this religion, and class struggle was the mode of worship.

Looking retrospectively at those days and those events and those people, one cannot but come to the conclusion that the leaders of Russian Communism such as Lenin and Trotsky, were pure visionaries, unrealistic people. By their great energies, daring, and abilities they succeeded in organizing a powerful state so much unlike the state they destroyed in some respects, yet paradoxically, so much like the Tsarist Regime in its dictatorship and absolutism.

In their zeal and fanaticism they tried to short-cut the processes of historical evolution which had developed the human race gradually from a primitive individual life to tribal organization; from tribal organization to organization of feudal states; from feudal states to domination of a great portion of mankind by militant religious fanaticism, as expressed in Mohammedanism and medieval Christian zeal; from the weakening of the religious hold to the development of nationalism, the phase in which our generation now finds itself.

To answer the question of whether the Communists succeeded in

changing or even quickening the pace of historical development one has only to read, in the daily press, about the friction and the developing antagonism between the U.S.S.R. and Tito's Yugoslavia, for example–both Communist states–or about the differences between the policies of the U.S.S.R. and Communist China, which to an objective, impartial observer could not be anything else but a struggle between different nationalisms. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, etc., except for a few purely mercenary and selfishly motivated leaders, were visionaries and idealists. They were people of great fanaticism, trying to convert the Russian people to their "Religion"; by their forceful leadership and their one-track minds, they did succeed like all fanatical, militant leaders–Mohammed, Saul of Tarsus, Torquemada, for example–in putting over their way of thinking in a world that was not ripe, in a historical sense, for their ideas.

As far as the Jews of Russia are concerned, and the effect of the Revolution on them both as a Jewish national entity and as individual Jews, the thesis of Judd L. Teller (in his book, *Scapegoat of Revolution*) that historically the Jews are always the scapegoat of a revolution was fully confirmed at this historical moment. Also, according to our information and according to the vivid description of the same Judd L. Teller in a later book, *The Kremlin, the Jews and the Middle East*, the same process continues today of making the Jews serve as the scapegoats for the failure of the Communist millennium.

* * * * *

The Bolsheviks did succeed, only too well, in disorganizing the Russian Eastern Front. Thousands and tens of thousands of soldiers all along the front line began to desert *en masse*. After all, consider the situation. A man lies in the trenches subjected every second to the possibility of death or maiming. He endures this for different reasons: a few, from patriotism; many, from a sense of duty combined with a fear of punishment for desertion; and the majority, from pure fear of military reprisals when caught deserting the front lines. All these rationalizations are based on the assumption that a strong centralized government watches and enforces its ideas and ideals on its individual citizens. Suddenly a dent, a break occurs in this total government. Its authority not only is weakened but completely succumbs to another authority, this time an authority of a determined minority of forceful leaders whose policies are completely at variance with those of the

deposed government; who, through agitators and constant propaganda, tells those soldiers in the trenches that this whole thing of war was a hoax, a device of the ruling clique to keep them in bondage by decimating and terrorizing their ranks; that the war was simply a conspiracy of the capitalistic class to enrich themselves with war profits, to weaken the masses by bleeding them cruelly to death, thus perpetuating their hold and rule on the populace.

The agitators stressed that there is no such thing as patriotism. It is only another, more subtle way of making the conscientious soldier sacrifice his life for the benefit of the ruling class. Furthermore, they announced that the challenging Bolshevik Leadership–whose only concern is the weal of the masses–will finally dispose of the Ogre, the bloodthirsty animal that eats its own children; and this new leadership calls upon everybody on the front line to abandon and break those chains of fear or false patriotism by which they were chained to the trenches. They exhorted the soldiers to defeat the cunning purpose of their masters to exterminate them by degrees; to go back home and help the Bolsheviks to accomplish their objectives; to decapitate the many-headed Hydra, the rich and the mighty; to liberate the oppressed masses and to give them back the riches and the fat of the land which by right belong to them and which were stolen from them by their bloodthirsty masters.

By this approach, the Bolshevik Leadership broke up the Front, introduced anarchy in the ranks of the Army, destroyed all vestige of authority and, on the ruins of the destroyed organization of the Tsar, built a new organization, their own. The new Communist State is an ideal society, so the Bolsheviks assured themselves and all those who would believe them. It is a state whose aim is nothing but the welfare of the masses.

The Front was disintegrating. My chief, Lieutenant Ivanov, took leave from us one day, ostensibly for a long deserved rest. But I suspect that, being an energetic, patriotic man, he left to join the organization of officers that was building up to counteract the Bolshevik Regime.

The ranks of our rota were thinning by the hour. Soldiers disappeared, one by one, and never returned to their barracks. One day I took my rifle, went unhindered to the nearest military post in the rear, climbed on a military vehicle heading away from the Front and reached the railroad station nearest to our sector. Nobody stopped me. Nobody was interested in asking me any questions as to why I was

leaving or where I was going. There was not a military policeman in sight anywhere. Arriving at the railroad station, I found a mass of soldiers in different uniforms and from different units of the Army, loitering around in complete disorder with none of the accustomed supervision of any "authority" on the platform of the station and in its halls, waiting apparently for the next train to come.

When the train arrived it was completely filled with masses of soldiers of a similar character. There was absolutely no space within the boxcars or on the side platform to push yourself through, let alone sit. A few enterprising soldiers began to climb on top of the boxcars, where there was still room to sit. But by the time I came to the conclusion that it was not a bad idea to join them, the tops of the boxcars were also well populated; with difficulty, I found one unoccupied place and seated myself there, never parting with my rifle. As the train pulled into the next station the whole train with its numerous boxcars had the appearance of a beehive covered completely from top to bottom with sticking-to-it bees. There was not one vacant space. The mobs of soldiers in the next station were disappointed and frustrated at finding no place to push in after waiting for hours or days on the station. We reached the Roumanian boundary. There, most soldiers were deprived of their rifles by a cordon of military police. Somehow I succeeded in hiding my rifle and finally bringing it home.

After traveling this way on the roof of a boxcar for three days and three nights near the border of Roumania and Russia, I managed to change from the roof of the boxcar to the roof of a passenger car which was much higher and had plenty of small chimneys to hold onto. I finally reached my home station, Kozanka, climbed off my high perch, and headed home to our village.

Arriving home I found that our "quiet" village, ages old in tradition, was already touched by the magic wand of Revolutionary changes. Soldiers were arriving daily home to their families with new ideas implanted in them by front-line agitators. They looked with different eyes on all the old established landmarks. Revolution was in the air. They were talking about themselves as being dupes and victims of the Old Regime; about a "new order" arriving; about being the real bosses of the lands and forests and everything belonging to the "Pan" (Landlord); about an order to "take over," expected at any moment. A "village nucleus" consisting of the poorest of the peasants had already been formed by the Communist organizers.

Their first act was to take over our flour mill. A young peasant of about 30 years, a capable man and somewhat literate, with plenty of natural intelligence, was appointed the manager of the affairs of the mill for the community. My uncle Benny was offered the job of being assistant to the manager. Of course he refused. It was still early in the Revolution. It would have been a disloyalty to the "Grafini," the Countess, from whom all our families had derived their sustenance for generations. Besides, from the practical point of view it would have been ill advised. Many still considered the "new system" very shaky, as it was surrounded by and faced so many formidable difficulties. What if in a short time this whole Revolutionary movement should be stopped, or even reversed, the Old Regime re-established, and all these Revolutionary leaders hanged? Even Lenin, himself, admitted this possibility. I remember reading in the newspapers when he admonished the Communist party to get rid of the dishonest and criminal elements that invaded or attempted to invade the victorious Bolshevik Government in the early days of the Revolution. He warned that else "we will all be hanged on the same trees."

Whatever the outlook for the future, our personal source of sustenance was from that moment cut off, and all our three families were left "high and dry" to struggle as best as we could for a living. By the time I returned from the Front my father had already passed away. His condition—as I mentioned earlier, he suffered from bronchiectasis—had been aggravated by worries over his three sons who were at the Front; he was shocked by the crippling of his oldest son, Shammai (whom he no doubt loved in spite of their early running battle over Shammai's career), the first of his three sons to be brought back from the Front badly wounded.

All this, no doubt undermined completely his health and he died that very winter when I was lying in the trenches under a heap of soldiers trying to save my life from the bitter cold in the mountains. No one in our family wrote to me about his death, for the understandable reason that they did not wish to add to my trouble. I found out about it quite by accident. I was walking from our camp to the nearest town on some errand for my commander when I stumbled on two soldiers sitting and resting at the curbside. Approaching them closely, I recognized them as two of the older peasants from our village who were in the army in the same sector that I was. We greeted each

other and they innocently mentioned "your father, Dud, bless his memory." Seeing and becoming aware that I was ignorant of the fact of his death, they were somewhat embarrassed and apologized for being the harbingers of such bad news. I parted quickly from them, walked a short distance and then had to sit down, overfilled with and weighted down by deep emotions. I must confess that I cried, and this relieved the terrific pressure of mounting emotions and memories of my beloved father.

To return to the village, marauding bands were becoming more and more characteristic of the Ukraine "paysage" (countryside) as time went on, and anarchy spread during the struggle of the Bolshevik Regime with the counterrevolutionary armies which beset it from all sides. These were the armies of Cornilow, Denikin, Kolchak, and Petlura, etc., and the more organized armies of Poland and former Allies of Russia. The marauders were the bane of existence of the people of Russia, particularly the Jews, as well as of the organized armies, whether Communist or counterrevolutionary. The great Russian novelist, Sholokhov, describes the origin, development, and the behavior of mode of actions of these bands in his book, *And Quiet Flows the Don.*

The peasants in our village, being deprived for a time of constituted authority due to the numerous invasions of the different armies which took place in our region, finally broke loose. One day they invaded *en masse* the "palace" of the "Pan" or Landlord, breaking it to smithereens, and carried away everything in it. They led away the horses, cows, pigs and other livestock. They dismantled the buildings and carried away even the boards and bricks, in characteristic peasant fashion considering everything of some use some time, deeming this a rare opportunity to take something for nothing. In their competition to snatch something out of this free-for-all, one peasant would get one wheel from a vehicle for which he eventually had no use, since the other three wheels were looted by three other peasants.

I went to the city of Kiev to prepare the ground for our family to move there, and I was immediately cut off from our village by the invading Petlura Army, or the Army of the Ukrainians.

During those fateful days my beloved foster mother, Hannah, died. She was still a young woman of about 37 or 38 years. She contracted a cold and developed a pustular infection in one of her ears, which apparently became complicated by acute mastoiditis and, finally, acute

meningitis. There was no medical aid available, and she died in a few days. She expressed in her last days a strong wish and hope to see me and to obtain a promise from me not to abandon her two young children, Basia and Joseph. The poor woman died without her wish to see me fulfilled. It was, of course, unnecessary. I dearly loved my half-sister, Basia, and my half-brother, Joseph, and did my best at all times to protect them and to guide them until my departure from Russia. Later on, after my arrival in the United States of America, I corresponded with them and sent them food packages and clothing.

Chapter 17

PETLURA INVADES THE UKRAINE

A few days after my arrival in Kiev, the city was invaded by the Army of Petlura, made up of the dissident Ukrainian elements. The weak hold on the city by the Bolsheviki was broken when the Petlura Army approached; the Communist Administration fled. The city was occupied by Petlura almost without a struggle.

The Southwestern states, or goubernias of Russia, including Kiev, Podolia, Volinia with its main city of Zitomer, Chersonia with its main city of Odessa, had been independent of any constituted stable authority at the time of the Cossacks-on-the-Dnieper, the river flowing southward from Kiev. Those Cossacks were immortalized by the great Russian classic writer, Gogol, in his story, *Taras Bulba*. In time, when the Turks from the South and the Poles from the West were encroaching on these Cossack lands with regular armies, these independent marauding warriors under their famous leader, Bogdan Chmelnitzky, came, by a sort of mutual agreement, under the protection of the Great Tsar in Moscow. They were incorporated into the Russian State as a semi-autonomous territory. These Cossacks proved good hardy soldiers who defended the periphery of the Russian State from the onslaughts of the Turks and the Poles.

As is usually the case when a weaker nation joins a stronger, the latter in time starts to dominate its weaker member not only militarily and administratively, but also culturally. The Ukrainians have a rich literature and fine poets, such as the famous poet, Shevtchenko, and others. Yet, in the big cities of the Ukraine the Russian language, culture, manners and literature began to supplant the Ukrainian. Gogol wrote the epic *Taras Bulba* and other literary gems describing the life of the Cossacks and of the Ukrainian people in the Russian language. In the villages of the Ukraine the peasants spoke the Chochlatsky language, a dialect decidedly different from the Russian language, a mixture of modified Russian, Polish, and local idiom, which could be easily understood by any Russian. In the cities, however–in Kiev, for instance–in my time the ordinary citizen and especially the intellectuals, particularly of Russian and Jewish extraction, were somewhat embarrassed to talk Ukrainian. It was a mark of plebeianism

and ignorance.

However, a nucleus of pure Ukrainian Nationalists from parts of the Ukraine and Eastern Austria and Galicia and Pre-Carpathian and Carpathian lands, with the city of Lvov as a center, existed continuously. This nucleus persisted clandestinely in the Ukraine, but openly in Austria, with its policy of tolerance to the cultures of its numerous national minorities. This group, although not large, never gave up its aspirations to become independent of Russia and, for that matter, Austria, too. These nationalists organized themselves into Ukrainian societies, "cultural," under the difficult conditions of Imperialist Russia, and political as well, in the freer atmosphere of Austria. They tried to achieve a rebirth of their Ukrainian language, social ways, and culture. The strong Russian monarchy frowned on all this, but was confident of its political strength and of the all-pervading power of the Russian language and culture to eliminate in the course of history this renascent dissident nationalism.

In the year 1918 the German Army invaded the Ukraine, and in order to be able to hold on to it as part of their conquest they attempted to inflame the nationalistic, dissident Ukrainian elements by appointing a Mr. Skoropodski as "hetman" (hetman is the Cossack word for chieftain). Of course, Hetman Skoropodski was a pure puppet of the Germans, supported by the bayonets of the German Army. The military Governor, a General of the Army, the real power in this newly organized nation, was soon afterward assassinated on the streets of Kiev. I do not remember clearly the circumstances of the assassination nor which element of the different warring factions perpetrated the assassination. Apparently the Germans could not retain this occupied province, due to a very active guerrilla campaign of the Bolsheviki, and they soon abandoned the Ukraine. Together with them vanished also Hetman Skoropodski. The Bolsheviki occupied the seat of government in Kiev until forced out by the advancing Petlura units.

Petlura was the leader chosen by the Ukrainian Nationalists, who were originally organized, as far as I remember, in Ruthenia, the Ukrainian part of the former Austrian Empire, near the Carpathian Mountains. This movement might have had the covert support of Germany. Such a dissident nationalist movement would achieve better results in weakening the mighty Russian state by dismembering it than the method of appointing a Hetman Skoropodski as the nominal head of a fictitious Ukrainian State—a hetman who was a pure puppet, not

having any support from the Ukrainian masses. Whether this was so or whether it was a genuine separatist movement I am unable to state.

There is no doubt that after the Bolshevik "peace" with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk, where Lenin and Trotsky *et al.* signed on the line for the Russian people, the Germans, who still had a war on their hands in the West, could not but look with favor on any separatist movement along the periphery of Russia which tended to weaken the already weak Colossus of the East. I suspect that the former allies of Russia–England, France and the United States of America–also did not object to creating difficulties for the New State of Lenin–Communist Russia.

Favored by the extreme disorganization of the Russian Army at the Front–in fact, by its falling to pieces–the little band of these Ukrainian patriots appeared in the cities of the western part of the Ukraine, under the leadership of Petlura. He had no difficulty in putting to flight the local administration consisting of the newly created Soviets of peasants and workers. Petlura, after establishing his own military authority, immediately began to draft into his army the young people, the local soldiers who had just arrived from the disintegrating Front.

When Petlura's vanguard reached Kiev I was one of the veterans of the old Front who was caught in his dragnet. As an Ukrainian veteran of the old Russian Army, I was ordered by the new military commandant to appear at a certain date and a certain place to be drafted into the Ukrainian Army, under the threat of severe reprisals if disregarding this military order. To this day I do not remember what considerations made me follow this order and appear at the appointed time and place before the Selective Service Commission. Perhaps it was the fact that the economic life in the city was getting worse from hour to hour due to the various, continuous upheavals, so that a bread ration was becoming an important thing, essential to survival; whatever the reason, I joined the Petlura Army.

At that time the relationship of the Petlura forces to the Jews was rather favorable; until these forces had obtained a hold on the region, they certainly could not afford to antagonize the Jews, who constituted a great slice of the population in the Ukraine, especially in the towns and cities.

I was appointed to a "sanitary," a Red Cross train which shuttled between the front lines of battlefields, where we would pick up wounded soldiers, and the big cities, where we would unload them to

the care of the local hospitals. I rather liked my new assignment. The head of the train, a para-medic, not a regular physician, was a pleasant young man, apparently a trusted Ukrainian Nationalist. I learned that his father, a prosperous butcher in some city, and his whole family were imbued with the sentiments of Ukrainian dissident nationalism. He, the commander, was an intelligent and tolerant man. He liked me. We would at times discuss political problems in an amicable way. He knew that I was not a Communist, but rather a victim of Communism insofar as my family and I were deprived of our livelihood by the "New Order."

We had difficulty in supplying our units with food and other provisions, due to the fact that provisions everywhere became scarce. The peasants were hiding their food supplies for fear of requisitioning from the different armies, friends and enemies alike. Due to the extreme inflation that plagued the country, caused by different factors, chiefly the lack of a stable government and, hence, an unstable currency, the peasants refused to sell their farm products for paper money, which was becoming more and more worthless. They demanded hard currency, such as gold or silver coins, in which they placed more faith, and which could be easily hidden in the ground without fear of its deteriorating.

The military warehouses in every city were being depleted rapidly by the raids of different armies. It was becoming more and more difficult even for commanders of military units to obtain food and provisions for their soldiers from these warehouses. I was familar with the procedures in procuring supplies from military superintendents, as I had served at one time as a clerk in our battalion in the old Tsarist Army. I knew all the tricks, official and unofficial, of obtaining provisions. I was therefore chosen by our commander to be the purveyor of foods and other supplies. We would stop at a city, and I would be sent to the local military warehouse to get the necessary supplies. I would inspect the interior of the warehouse, become chummy with the sergeant and other minor personnel, find out from them what was available, and then talk to the chief. Thus, my requests corresponded to the materials available, and I would obtain an order to get them. My chief was highly pleased and praised my "talent" in getting things that could not be obtained in the ordinary way of Army bureaucratic red tape.

Our Red Cross unit consisted of a Pullman-type dining car adapted as an office and two other cars with cots for wounded soldiers. The unit

would be hooked on at different stations to different trains, passenger or freight, for its runs from city to city. Once we were hooked on to a military train. As I walked along our train standing at a station, I took notice of a couple of open platforms on which a military kitchen was placed, with the cooks busily engaged in preparing meals for the cavalry unit in the adjacent boxcars.

As the cook in our office car was preparing a meal for the chief, he complained that we had no potatoes, necessary for the meal. The chief kidded that I was a poor purveyor for not providing our boys with potatoes. Our long train was moving very slowly, in the manner in which most trains at that time moved along. The locomotive engineers lacked good fuel and coal due to the general slow-down in everything and the disorganization in supply of fuel to the locomotives. A train, whether passenger, freight, or military, would sometimes spend hours to cover a short distance between stations. The train would suddenly slow down and stop in the middle of a field or woods and would remain standing for hours until the proper fuel was brought up or some other revealed deficiency was corrected. The train then would start to move and finally reach the next station.

Our train at this time was moving up a steep hill and slowed down almost to a standstill. I left our car, jumped off the train, went to the platform where the kitchen stood and asked the cook to please give a few potatoes for our officer. He did. I caught up with our car, climbed up the steps, and appeared before our astonished officer and cook with the longed-for potatoes. My reputation as a wizard in the affairs of supply was now firmly established.

One day our train was approaching the city of Kiev. When we pulled into the station we noticed a big crowd on the platform in a state of great excitement. We inquired as to the cause of this and were told that Petlura, himself, and his staff were expected momentarily. The platform was decorated with Ukrainian Nationalist flags. A festive mood prevailed.

I placed myself in a strategic position at the point where the guests were expected to alight. Soon a train decorated with flags and other Ukrainian Nationalist insignia pulled into the station. Petlura and his staff appeared and alighted from their cars onto the platform. A delegation from the city met them, and a torrent of welcoming speeches poured forth.

I was standing a few feet from Petlura, himself. He was a man about

35 to 40 years old, of average height, rather slight in build, but holding himself erect. His face was serious. His profile with his cleanshaven, protruding chin, dark blondish, rather long hair, resembled more the face of a successful energetic lawyer or actor than the face of a military leader. He answered the greetings in a firm voice, speaking slowly and deliberately with none of the flair of a street orator. Petlura and all the others soon left the platform and were taken to the city; I returned to my train, sharing with my chief my impressions of the man Petlura.

The regime of Petlura did not last long. The Bolshevik Army was soon reorganized and began its pressure on Petlura and his cohorts. Guerrilla units organized by the Bolsheviks were harassing Petlura's Army. In the cities–populated mostly by masses of Jews, Russian intellectuals, professionals, business people, and tradesmen–Petlura and his Army were not much welcomed. Many of the Jewish youth were imbued with the new spirit of freedom and were naturally inclined to sympathy with the Communists, who at that time were the only army who welcomed them and accepted them on equal terms with other nationalities.

Petlura changed his policy towards the Jews. He discharged from his army all the Jews who were drafted in the beginning of his invasion of the Ukraine. Whether by implicit order or by silent acquiescence, his army units began to stage pogroms against the Jews, especially in small towns. His Army Intelligence units began searching out and persecuting Bolshevik sympathizers and Party members. Ths could not have but a worsening effect on the relationship between Petlura and the Jews, as well as between Petlura and the Russian residents in every locality in the Ukraine.

The Jews looked upon Petlura and his Army as another, bigger band of robbers and killers, which had lost any resemblance to an organized disciplined army. People lost hope that this Army of Petlura could eventually introduce orderly government into the chaos that spread over the Ukraine. Their original caution in appraising Petlura and his Nationalistic movement turned into definite rejection and hatred of a regime which was failing and had reached the point where it could not even control its own soldiers, who were looting, killing and pillaging the countryside.

I was discharged from my place in Petlura's Army and from my military unit, along with all other Jews. I returned home as a civilian to become subjected to the hardships of eking out an existence for

myself and my family. Aside from the economic hardships caused by the instability of the government, inflation, and the slowing down to a standstill of the business and industrial activity of the country, there was also constant fear of the terror of the disorganized Army of Petlura. Everybody dreaded the immediate future developments in the struggle of the Communists and their adversaries.

Shortly afterwards Petlura and his disorganized army were swept away from Kiev and the eastern cities of the Ukraine by the victorious Bolshevik Armies. The deteriorating Army of Petlura lingered on for a while in the western part of the Ukraine, continuing their ghastly work of killing Jews and pillaging the countryside. Presently their last units retreated into eastern Galicia, where they disbanded. Petlura and his staff fled to Paris. Petlura was finally assassinated in Paris by an avenging Jew, Schwartzman.

The stay of the Bolsheviki in Kiev after the expulsion of Petlura and his cohorts was short, lasting only a few months. They were dislodged from the city by an invading Polish army. I was not present in Kiev during this invasion as, just prior to it, I had gone by train to the city of Odessa on the Black Sea.

Travelling to Odessa was a hazardous enterprise. Odessa was about 300 miles distant from Kiev. Railroad travel at that time was a daring experience. The railroad management worked under the most trying conditions, being subjected at short intervals to the most taxing demands of different armies and different rulers. The Civil Service management of the railroads was under constant threat of reprisals by the advancing and retreating army commanders to supply the necessary trains and the personnel to run them. The railroad workers, depending on their personal political thinking or affiliations, often had to work for an army whom they considered to be their enemy. They had at least to make a show of loyalty to a cause not their own. In addition, the railroads in Russia were always run by the government with all its customary slow bureaucratic ways and traditions. Also, coal and oil and other fuel materials were getting scarcer and harder to obtain. There were also some inevitable acts of sabotage as the countryside changed hands so swiftly and abruptly from one enemy to another, locked in mortal combat.

The railroads were naturally the most convenient means of travel for the advancing and retreating armies; hence, the fights were concentrated mainly along their arteries. They were most desirable

prizes for the struggling armies. All this made travel by a civilian almost an impossible task, fraught with all kinds of complications. The very process of obtaining a ticket was a feat. You had to prove by all kinds of weighty testimony that your travel was in the interest of the public and not just a personal affair. You had to have all kinds of documents filled by local bigwigs attesting to the extreme emergency necessitating your travel, if it was personal, etc. Otherwise you could just "steal" a ride from station to station, in danger of being thrown off the train at the next stop, even if it should happen to be in the middle of a field, and letting you work your way back home or to the desirable goal in any way your imagination and strength could devise.

I set my mind to go to Odessa and find out if I could leave the country for Palestine in some way. In the olden times Odessa was the port of embarkation for Palestine via the Black Sea through the Bosporus, Constantinople, the Dardanelles, and then through the Mediterranean Sea to Palestine. Arriving in Odessa, however, I found out that no ships were now plying from Odessa to Palestine, or to any place for that matter. The port was practically dead. The whole Russian Bolshevik coast was blockaded and, except for small military coastal craft plying along the shores, you could not see any ships at all. While in Odessa I read that Kiev was occupied by the Polish Army. And so I got stuck in Odessa for good. Odessa was always talked of in our part of the country, in the small towns of the Jewish Ghetto around Kiev, as a happy-go-lucky city.

Odessa was, as far as I remember, part of the Jewish Pale. Jews could live there and move about freely; therefore, it attracted a great number of Jews. As a child, I remember when talking of Odessa, one always added humorously, "Odessa is a city of 'Zhuliks' (cheats) and pickpockets." Somehow this remained subconsciously in my mind all those years and, coming to Odessa, I was surprised to see a nice, lively city, full of Jews, the streets packed with crowds, the markets overflowing with milling throngs of buyers and sellers, and the whole city justifying the reputation of being a happy-go-lucky city, in spite of the fact that it was now blockaded from one side, the sea side, and from the other side, very close to the city, surrounded by fighting armies of the Bolsheviki and the Whites.

Those enemies of the Bolsheviki were Denikin and his Army of Officers and other unorganized bands, free-lancers and plain bandits. The city, like all other big cities, suffered from lack of food and other

necessities of life. Black markets flourished, but the prices were prohibitive for persons of moderate means. The workers who belonged to unions and Communist Party members were given out food and provisions on special cards from government or city stores or warehouses. But the mass of unorganized middle-class people who had lost their businesses or those who, retaining their businesses, were very much restricted in conducting free enterprise, had to worry about feeding themselves and getting the minimum of clothes or shoes available at black-market prices. They were forced to lead a very poor existence as best as they could. To many families a diet of bread and vegetables alone was "roskosh" (luxury).

The family at whose home I stayed on the recommendation of their relatives in Kiev was a family of three, a widowed mother and two boys. The younger boy was about 16 years old, a dark-complexioned boy with fine features; underweight and undernourished as he was, he looked like a boy of 12. The mother could hardly provide food in adequate amounts for her family, and the situation in the city was going from bad to worse every day. I was half-starved most of the time. We were all thinking all the time only of how to increase the supply of food.

Chapter 18

HANDYMAN TO A GERMAN FARMER

I do not remember who suggested the idea that perhaps we could find some employment on the nearby farms, where there was an abundance of food. I thought it a very good idea and asked the widow's younger son to accompany me. As a city boy it was a novel experience for him to go look for work on a farm, but the prospect of an abundance of food beckoned very attractively to him. So the next morning we set out on our quest of work among farmers and peasants.

Not far from Odessa, a few miles away, was a string of German farms and villages. The story of these settlements and villages goes back to the time of the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great, so I was told. It seems that Catherine the Great, following in the footsteps of her great predecessor and reformer, Peter the Great, was trying to improve the agricultural economy by teaching the peasants of that time the modern methods of agriculture practiced by the more advanced Germans. She induced German farmers, offering them free land and other privileges, to come and settle in Southern Russia among the Russian peasants. They were given lands in the vicinity of the Port and the City of Odessa. These lands are among the most fertile in Southern Russia and the Ukraine.

Whether Catherine the Great succeeded in her design to make better farmers out of the poor, ignorant and downtrodden peasants of her time is a question that experts in the agricultural field can answer. I can only state, as an eyewitness, that I found a village of German farmers, each one of whom was very well established and prosperous. The houses were well built and very nicely and cleanly kept. Each household was well supplied with agricultural machinery, modern at that time, large barns, and places for horses and cows. The fields were spacious, well cultivated, planted with all kinds of grains, predominantly corn, which is the most popular staple in those regions in the sunny climate of Southern Russia. The houses were surrounded by lush vegetable gardens and fruit trees. It made a very good impression on me, coming as I did from a peasant village in the region of Kiev, more to the North, and familiar as I was with the more primitive agricultural implements of our peasants and their methods of

conducting their farms.

During the Second World War and the invasion by the Nazis of Southern Russia in 1941-42, in order to nip in the bud the foreseeable disloyalty, as assumed by Stalin, of these German colonies to the Russian cause, and in order to prevent their strengthening and assisting the German Army, these colonists, I was told, were uprooted from their generations-old habitations, lock, stock and barrel, and exiled to Siberia *en masse*. Thus the epic work of the Dictatress Catherine the Great was undone by another ruler of the great Russia, Dictator Stalin. I am unable, without a little research into these historical events, to ascertain the authenticity of the above-stated stories.

That these German colonists left Germany in the time of Catherine the Great or in the seventeenth century could be also deduced from the fact that their German language was more similar to the Yiddish language than to the language of modern Germany. The Jews spread from Germany into Russia and Poland at that same period in history; hence they, as well as those German farmers, speak the German language as it was spoken at that time. A language grows and becomes modified as time goes on. The modern German language is an advance in which the German colonists and the Jews could not participate, as they were away from Germany.

In the year 1919, a pair of young Jewish boys from the city of Odessa approached one of these colonies one early morning in search of employment. My young friend and I stopped at the first farm house in the village and asked whether there was work for us. The farmer had no need of any additional help, and we went to the next house with the same request. After we had spent about two hours in a vain attempt to find employment, we approached a farmhouse where a man of about 35 was busy fixing his gate. We stopped hesitantly to ask him our accustomed question. Since the house did not appear as big as some of the other houses, and the farmer was relatively young, we expected a routine negative answer. The farmer looked up from his work, sized us up from top to bottom and, without answering our question immediately, invited us to come into his house. We entered a rather cleanly kept house filled with an enticing odor of freshly cooked food which was being prepared by the wife busily engaged in the kitchen. Very hungry and tired, we were pleasantly surprised when the farmer asked us to sit down at the table and partake with him of the lunch

being prepared by his wife.

The woman put on the table a cooked cereal, some pancakes, and a big pitcher of fresh milk, fresh cheese, and plenty of home-baked bread and home-grown vegetables. On my part I consumed a great deal of food, partaking with a ravenous appetite of every kind of food on the table.

After we finished our lunch and got up from the table, the farmer announced that, indeed, he needed one helper and could employ only one of us. He pointed at me and said that he was willing to employ me and would tell me later the conditions of my employment. My poor partner, the young boy, was very much disappointed, but there was nothing else we could to. He was tired of all this quest for work in an environment distinctly foreign to him, a city boy. He bade me goodby and went back to Odessa.

Weeks later, after working satisfactorily as a farm hand, apparently in the favor of the farmer and his wife alike, I asked my boss what consideration affected his choice of me rather than my partner. He reminded me that when we came up to him and asked him for work he did not give us an immediate answer. Instead he invited us for lunch. "I was watching," said he, "your eating habits. You ate ravenously while your partner just nibbled at food the way city people do. I decided right there and then that you would be a better worker than he. If you eat good chances are that you will work good." And that was the fine and original observation of a practical farmer. Apparently he was not disappointed in his choice, as I proved to be a good, conscientious farm hand. I was, after all, familiar with the work and chores of a farmer, being born and raised in a village. I attended to his horses, feeding them and taking them morning and evening to the nearest river for a drink of water. I helped him in the fields, planting corn; using the different agricultural farm implements to weed out the wild grass between the rows of corn; to remove the ripened corn from the stalk and later to cut the dried stalks for fuel; to plow the fields; to plant potatoes and dig them out of the ground later in the season; and in other numerous chores of a farmer.

We would get up with the sunrise, would eat something light and repair to the fields. After working to about ten A.M. we would sit down in the midst of the field for our morning lunch, would eat a good fresh meal, mostly dairy stuff, prepared and brought to the field by the

bustling housewife. We would continue our work until about one thirty or two P.M., then have a light bite or a drink of milk, work until about four or five P.M. and leave the field for home. After washing up and feeding the cattle, we would have a big supper and go to bed with the sunset. My place of sleep was in the barn on the nicely fragrant and soft bed of hay or straw in the loft. After a day of hard work I would fall asleep immediately and, after a relatively short night, would begin the work all over again at sunrise. At first I could not get used to the hot sun. One day, a very hot day, I went out to the field with a weed-removing machine. I provided myself with a full bucket of water, covered up and placed at one corner of the plot on which I was to work. It was becoming hotter and hotter as I was working, and I was getting progressively thirstier. I drank that water with relish every time I came close to it. I was sweating profusely. I was surprised that by the time the sun was beginning to decline in the sky that full bucket of water was empty, the water going through my body like water through a sieve. In time my body system got used to the hot weather, and I stood it relatively well.

There was very little time spent on rest or relaxation except on Sundays, which was a day of complete rest. I would get up early in the morning, ride the horses bareback to the water and, bringing them back, would feed them. I was then free to roam around in the village. After a Sunday breakfast made a little more fancy by our German housefrau, I would go to the bank of the nearby river. The water would be calm and stretch into the haze of the farthest distance. The quiet of the village would be broken only by the distant chimes of the village "kirche" (German word for church). Here and there you would see a fisherman throwing his line, and you would hear the splash of the sinker in the quiet waters. It was an almost idyllic state. You would sit and reflect on the terrific contrast between the turbulent life that was going on in the cities at this very moment and the almost ideal tranquility in which this countryside was enveloped. You would wonder how long this oasis in the midst of a stormy ocean would be safe from the onrushing waves of the Russian Revolution.

I spent the whole summer in the role of farmhand. The farmer was highly pleased to see how I adjusted so well to the life of the village. He suggested the possibility of my remaining in the village for a longer time. However, I was anxious to return to my family in Kiev. I heard that the Polish Army was driven from Kiev by the Bolsheviks, and that

the road to Kiev was free from enemy occupation. The farmer figured out that my fee for the season in terms of money would be a sum equivalent to a couple of sacks of corn. Money was getting cheaper and cheaper. I toyed with the idea of taking the sacks of corn to Odessa and giving part of it to the family of my friends from whence I came to this village, but the farmer refused to take my load to the town, suggesting that it might be requisitioned by the hungry, zealous Commissars at the nominal price which the government paid to farmers. I therefore sold back to my employer my load of corn, bade goodby to him and his good frau, and returned one day to Odessa.

After spending a couple of days there, where I again looked with longing at the stretches of the black ocean surrounding the Port, those very waves that I hoped to sail on my way to Palestine, I managed to get a ticket back to Kiev as a refugee from the aggressive Polish Army. I returned to Kiev and my family. I found everybody in good health. The Polish Army was a disciplined army. The soldiers were not permitted those excesses that were the order of the day with the struggling armies of other invaders, both revolutionary and counterrevolutionary. The Poles retreated in good order and left the city as they found it.

The economic life of the city was going from bad to worse. The population became swollen with tens of thousands of refugees from the countryside driven into the confines and relative security of the big city by the marauding armies of both sides. These refugees suffered particularly from the acts of murder, pillaging and destruction of the roaming stray bands which did not belong to and were equally decried by both the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary armies. My family was very glad to see me, as after the death of our parents I had assumed the paternal responsibility. My older brother, Shammai, was now a senior medical student, as the Bolsheviki Government needed physicians and other professionals. Previously these professionals came from the middle classes in the Tsarist society. Many of them were, therefore, reluctant, afraid of reprisals if they were to serve the Bolsheviki. Consequently, masses of them moved away or went into hiding until the storm blew over. There was a scarcity of loyal physicians, lawyers and other professionals to give their services to the Bolsheviki Regime. The Government, therefore, encouraged students to finish their medical education by paying their tuition. The Government also provided the students with part-time jobs during the academic year and full-time jobs during their vacations.

My brother had a job in the Housing Department of the city, which gave him nice quarters–requisitioned, of course, by the Government when their rich owners fled–and the privilege of buying his food and clothing from government commissaries at very nominal prices. I must state that my older brother, Shammai, did not evince the same sense of responsibility towards his brothers and sisters that I did. He was like a stranger in the house when he visited us. He would inquire about what was going on, stay in his room occasionally overnight, and then depart without offering any help whatever and without contributing anything toward the family maintenance. To be fair to him, he had to concentrate on his studies and his job. His influence in the government, as far as helping out in the economic plight of his bourgeois family, was nil. My younger brother, Eli, who was still young, was interested more in girls and dates than in concentrating on the needs of his family. He would get up late, after coming in late from his date, and would spend some time on his toilet. A handsome boy, he loved to dress nicely and to sport all kinds of shiny brass buttons and insignia of his student uniform, as was the custom of Russian students at that time. He was not a regular student of a high school or college; unlike my older brother he was not studious. He belonged to the type of Russian youth at that time that, in fun, I and my older brother, Shammai, would call the eighty-percent shifters ("schmarkotches"). He joined, in fact, the "mass or popular universities," which the Bolshevik Government had established for the ignorant masses in order to elevate their educational level, for the sole purpose of having the right to wear a student uniform with the shiny buttons and insignia which made him popular among the girls. I looked upon all this with great indulgence, just as a father would look at a beloved son who is shiftless and not serious at all. Occasionally my brother would join me in our trips to the village to get our food supplies. Once a band of mischievous peasants threatened violence to him, and after that I was very reluctant to take him with me.

We were a family of seven people. The youngest, Joseph, my half brother, was about six years old. We all hovered over him and watched him like a lioness her young ones. He was a very fine, good-looking little boy with big gray-blue eyes like my father's, and blond hair. After the death of his mother, our stepmother, we were especially solicitous to compensate for the early loss of both his parents. We made certain that he would get his meals in abundance and on time and showered

him often with presents and confectionery. One day, when I went to my drawer to get the two paper-money rubles that I had left there a few hours ago, I did not find them; after inquiries and interrogation of my sisters and my brother, Eli, we came to the conclusion that the only one who could possibly have taken them was Joseph. After questioning he readily admitted that he had taken the two rubles. I was shocked and dismayed. That Joseph, our precious child over whom we hovered so lovingly and showered with an abundance of everything even at the time when we were short of food, should "steal" the money was a great disappointment to me. I could not help looking upon this as a "theft" in spite of the comforting advice of some psychiatrists that children go through such "stages." I blamed myself in not fulfilling the wishes of my deceased stepmother, the good soul, who left word for me to take care of her young child. I had obviously neglected to guide Joseph in the "right" path of honesty and integrity. For the second time in my turbulent life, my emotions overcame me. I went into my room and cried in silence.

I began to take more notice of Joseph's behavior, the friends he played with and, in general, his upbringing and education. In this I had, of course, the cooperation of all my brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, about a year later, I had to leave my family with the object of going to Palestine to establish myself first and then take them over to a better life. So I thought and planned in my innocence and ignorance of the exigencies of life. I left the family one day, never to return or see them again. From my correspondence with them in later years, however, I learned that my brother, Joseph, grew up to be a prominent man, a judge in the land of the Soviets.

Chapter 19

EXIT THE NOBLE CLASS. WHAT PRICE THE LENIN REVOLUTION?

The people in the great Soviet land underwent a few years of the hardest privations that could beset a nation which, only a short time before, had been a country of abundance and wealth. The mammoth efforts expended in the prolonged First World War; the loss in people killed and maimed by the millions; the destruction of materials and equity, which is an accompaniment of every war, especially in the area of military operations; the disorganization in the orderly processes of life and of the economy of a nation which had strained to the utmost its industrial, agricultural and transportation capacities in order to achieve victory—in most cases only a Pyrrhic victory—all this was going on in Russia, as well as in other countries participating in the Great War, and brought the normal life of these nations to the point of exhaustion. In Tsarist Russia, however, to all these grave factors was added the cleavage in the social structure, which had been going on in the previous few decades in Russia, erupting at frequent intervals in revolutionary upheavals, as in 1896 and 1905, after the unsuccessful war with Japan.

These revolutions were suppressed by the still well-entrenched Monarchy by putting to death or imprisonment of some Revolutionary leaders, exiling their followers to Siberia, and putting to flight the very capable and daring leaders, such as Lenin and Trotsky, who scattered all over the world, licking their chops and waiting in their dens for the favorable moment to spring on their weakened adversaries.

Russia until then was dominated and ruled by the class of the nobility, whose representative head was the Tsar. For centuries this class, which originally was formed from among the most capable, aggressive, strong elements of the nation, gathered unto its greedy, acquisitive hands all the wealth of the nation—the lands, the forests and, finally, even the lives of the plain folks, turning the "plain" people into serfs. This majority of the Russian people became the private property of the nobility, their lords. The nobles made the serfs live, work and labor exclusively for the lord; everything the serfs had belonged to the lord, including their very lives. The lord could dispose

of them as his chattel, at any time and at his will, much as he could dispose of his horses, dogs and other private property. Russian literature reflects brilliantly both the lives of the nobility as well as the lives of their serfs. The great Russian classic writer, Gogol, in his immortal work, *Dead Souls*, describes this "normal-for-those-times" state of affairs, where even the dead souls of the peasants were the subject of trade by the brilliant entrepreneur and speculator, Chichikov.

For generations the intellectuals and even the conscientious men among the nobility were trying by peaceful propaganda, evolutionary measures, and even revolutionary outbursts, to pry loose this iron hold of the noblemen's class on the vast majority of the Russian people. It was a very uneven, uphill battle, as the noble class was still virile and had in its possession the chief means of holding power: education and organization. The noblemen were the only class that had access to the means of education. They were able to attend schools, or hire private tutors, to travel overseas and become familiar with the progress of civilization in literature, technology, science, and art. The masses were kept too busy laboring, eking out a mere existence, to aspire to education and learning. As a result the mass of the Russian people were illiterate and steeped in ignorance. They were kept in this ignorance by a powerful ally of the nobility–The Russian Orthodox Church–which worked hand-in-glove with the Tsar and his nobility class by misdirecting the aspirations of the more vital elements among the peasantry toward a religious and spiritual ideal which looks upon earthly privations as a minor inconvenience compared to the great, everlasting blessings of the free spirit in the eternal afterlife.

Besides this powerful ally, the noble class sought to perpetuate itself by the very expeditious measure of appointing to the leadership class in the Army, the officers' class, only people of noble extraction. No soldier of peasant extraction could reach, during peacetime, a higher rank than that of sub-lieutenant. Only during a war, if he was one of the most capable, brave, and intelligent soldiers, could he reach, as far as I know, the rank of colonel.

Any human institution, whether it be a small, local organization or a state-wide organization such as a monarchy or republic, is subject to the same laws of nature that an individual human being is subjected to: namely, it is born, grows, matures, reaches the zenith of its strength, begins to decline, weaken, and finally dies. The nobility class in Russia

(as well as in other lands) was vigorous and aggressive in its young days when it was still nourished by the capable and strong people who originated it. In time, generations later, the constant luxury–the life of assured overabundance in wealth and power of their descendants–could not but have a degenerating influence on them. They were oversatiated, overindulged in every pleasure in life. They accepted their status, which was originally based on a pure, unadulterated power-grab by a physically and mentally strong and aggressive people, as a status ordained by Providence, as a class anointed by God into leadership: hence, their claim of permanence for this status by Divine Right.

The overindulgence in all the human blessings in life actually weakened both the physical as well as the mental capacities of this once-powerful class. The story of Rasputin and the powerful hold of this ignorant but sexually erudite monk on the household of the last Tsar, Nicholas the Second, testifies to the depth of mental degeneration into which this once powerful class of nobility had lapsed.

In order to maintain its hold on the masses, the Tsarist Government was obliged to organize a powerful security force, the "Ochrana," something on the order of the F.B.I., but using much more cruel and unscrupulous methods in order to ferret out revolutionary and seditious activity. This naturally increased the resistance movement tenfold, as more and more innocent as well as guilty people felt the heavy hand of the Ochrana and became mortal enemies of the regime that created it.

The utmost degradation and weakening of the Russian Government, composed of the Tsar and the ruling nobility class, ended in an explosion when the Tsar was forced to call a Duma, a representative assembly of the middle classes, to help him hold the awakening masses in some form of order. As the War continued and brought more disorganization and suffering to the masses, the hold of the Tsar weakened still further until he had to abdicate and hand over the government into the weak hands of Kerensky, a moderate revolutionary, who attempted to hold on to a democratic government in Russia, the Russia that had been ruled by a dictatorship of the Tsars for generations, a Russia that had no middle class worth its name, which is generally the mainstay of a democracy. No wonder Kerensky was soon ousted by a group of determined, organized, and hardened revolutionaries–Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, *et al.*–who had been biding their time in the mountains of Switzerland, waiting impatiently for their chance to come and lead the Russian masses.

The time arrived. Lenin and his Bolshevik organization moved in. They were obliged by the cagey government of Germany, who offered them a special train (a sealed train, it has been said) and transported them via their railroads from Switzerland into disintegrating Russia. Of course, the Germans had their own calculations and weighty purposes in helping Lenin and his cohorts to reach Russia. They expected Lenin to bring with him still more anarchy into the disorganized country, and they hoped that when he seized the Russian Government he would make peace with the Germans on terms dictated by them.

Events proved the Germans to be right, at least as far as the immediate course of history was concerned. A peace treaty was signed at Brest-Litovsk. What happened in the long range of events is known to everybody now. It was Stalin, the immediate successor of Lenin, who brought about the downfall of Hitler and his Germany. It was Stalin and now his successors who rule Eastern Germany, an important part of a divided Germany which, as things stand today, has a very remote chance of reuniting.

This man Lenin and his disciplined workers knew the Russian masses better than did Kerensky and his government. They knew that the Russian people were used for centuries to a dictatorship. Visionary as Lenin was, he knew well that his vision, if it was to be translated and implemented into life, needed the extra strong hand of a dictator, and he did not hesitate to introduce his "Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

This was not a palace revolution as, to a certain extent, was the revolution of Kerensky. This was a deep social revolution, a cleavage, a class struggle, a setting up of one part of society against another. Lenin was not satisfied just with replacing the rule of the nobility with the rule of the people. The noble class died its own death, rotted from within. There was really no middle class worth its name in Russia, consisting of industrialists, agrarians, small landlords, business men, professionals, tradesmen, and freedom-loving plain individuals who ordinarily constitute a middle class. The vast Russia was composed of a mass of illiterate, ignorant, and superstitious people, and of a ruling class of the rich nobility. These latter constituted the lords of the vast stretches of land in Russia even after the freeing of the serfs by Alexander the Second, the Tsar-Liberator, as he was known in the history books of that time, who gave part of the land to the freed peasants. There was a small class of newly arrived at the top industrialists and business men, but they were a small, insignificant

minority devoid of any worthwhile organization, hence having no appreciable influence on the Government of Russia.

In spite of the theories of Karl Marx and other visionaries that the new social order of the masses and by the masses would follow in the wake of a highly developed capitalistic society beset by insurmountable contradictions and the destructive competition of one capitalist against another, Lenin saw his chance to accomplish this social revolution by a shorter route. He decided to skip the capitalistic stage outlined in Karl Marx's classical manual for social revolution. Lenin took advantage of the anarchy created in Russia by the toppling of the Tsar and his nobility class and the leaderless state of the masses to move in and introduce his own brand of leadership, namely the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." While in the saddle, why not shortcut Karl Marx's manual and lead the masses immediately into the Utopia of his vision, into Communism?

Of course, the majority of the Russian people had never even heard of this word, "communism." The majority of the peasants were people with the ideology of proprietors, people longing for their "own" piece of land, their "own" house, their "own" horse or cow. They were individuals as peasants always have been all over the world and at all times. Lenin and his band of fanatic visionaries knew that education is a powerful tool in molding the minds, habits, and thinking of the masses; especially if the means of education–speech, the press, the radio–are in the hands of a determined group who are not averse to using dictatorial means and brute force to achieve their purpose of influencing the masses to live as the leaders want them to live.

This naturally led to a struggle between Lenin and other new elements in the country aspiring to leadership after the demise of the Tsar. These elements consisted of the following groups:

1. A few generals and many officers who, although they were the descendants of the succumbed class of noblemen, nevertheless had, as individuals, the vigor, ability, and love of freedom to resist a complete dictatorship such as Lenin advocated.
2. A class of intellectuals that was fairly large in Russia and whose members valued highly the personal liberty to think and act as they liked and to choose their own representatives to lead them.
3. A small but powerful class of peasants called, or nicknamed later by the Bolsheviki, "kulaks," people of ability, thriftiness, and industriousness who, even under the Tsarist Regime, had already succeeded in establishing themselves as free, economically independent people.

Lenin foresaw all these obstacles in his way, but the stakes of achieving a Communist society based on his visionary principles were too great to be deterred by those obstacles. The great suffering of the people in general and the deprivations which were sure to follow this course of revolutionary change were but a small price to pay toward the achievement of a future, ideally organized Communist society.

Thus, the great struggle of the classes in Russia began with its attendant destruction of any semblance of an organized, civilized society. It was more than just a civil war where people in the same country are divided into two camps fighting one another on a certain set of political principles. This was a struggle between and within classes of people. The old officers of the Army, descendants of the nobility class, could not depend in their struggle against the Red Army on officers and soldiers, descendants of the peasantry and middle class who, although as individuals hated Communism and were fighting it under the leadership of the old generals, still, paradoxically as it may seem, dreaded the complete defeat of the Red Army, as this would bring back the "Old Regime." This situation was well described in Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, wherein he portrays the definite antagonism and cross purposes between two groups fighting, as temporary allies, against the Red Army.

The group of Russian intellectuals were looked upon with suspicion in the ranks of the Red Army and were maligned in no uncertain terms by the Communist Party, which was especially antagonistic to the "old socialists and liberals" who in some cases had spent their lives rotting in the prisons in their struggle against the old Tsarist regime. This is vividly portrayed in Pasternak's book, *Dr. Zhivago*. The weak middle class, consisting of small merchants and shopkeepers, were temporarily shunned and completely ignored by the Bolsheviki and left to fend for themselves in their struggle for a bare existence in these completely disorganized and chaotic times. Even the workers, themselves, the wards of the Communist Party, were antagonistic to the peasants, supposedly their natural partners in the "Workers' and Peasants' Revolution," for being selfish and withholding from them, as city people, the products of their farms: bread, milk, vegetables, and meat.

In this time of rampant inflation, when you had to pay a dollar for a box of matches, or several hundred dollars for a suit of clothes, the peasants were highly reluctant, understandably, to sell the products of their labor at the nominal prices set by the Government.

They had an opportunity to sell these products on the black market for prices ten times higher than the government nominal price, thus being able to obtain industrial products. Although in edicts of the Communist rulers these industrial products were to be sold to the farmers also at nominal prices, the crafty and practical peasants knew better than to depend on the empty promises of a new regime. The factories and shops producing agricultural implements were at a standstill during these Revolutionary times. What was left of the industrial products from previous times fell into the hands of black marketeers, and the peasants had to pay high prices and, therefore, had to exact higher prices for their farm products.

The Communist Government, beset by the indomitable problems of establishing itself firmly as a government, did not have as yet the ability to produce consumer goods to satisfy the demand of the farmers; it had to concentrate on producing war implements so vital in the struggle for victory over its adversaries. In the Government struggle to obtain farm products and provisions for the Army, requisitions and armed expropriations of these farm products from the peasants were not sufficient. The peasant would hide his products, his cows, or his horses. The Communists had to combat these tactics by introducing an apple of discord, a split within the peasantry, itself. They organized village Soviets, appointing as commissars or rulers the most destitute and poor peasants, who were willing tools in the hands of the Communists, as they could never have expected in the traditional development and life of the old village to become the leaders of the village. They were not averse to delivering to the Government, whose protégés they became, possessions of others. They had to be loyal to the Government as they became the "informers" of the Government, acquiring the enmity of the substantial people in the village, who ordinarily molded the opinions of the villagers.

By a powerful stream of propaganda, the Government presented the kulaks as the enemies of their own class–the selfish people–who would rather see the "Old Regime" re-established than share with or help their poorer co-villagers.

These unfair methods of "divide and rule" by the Government provoked local resistances by individual farmers and groups of farmers. The Government suppressed this protest with the most cruel methods of imprisonment, exile to Siberia, and murder, of the most vital segments of the peasantry, the most constructive and productive

elements in the village. Millions of these hard workers were eliminated in one way or another in the attempt to communize the villages.

The villages were bled white by Stalin and his fanatical workers. Were the results obtained worth all these terrible sacrifices in human lives and superhuman sufferings? History may give an answer to this question, provided the historian will be objective, and able to evaluate and counterpoise the sum total of the superhuman sufferings of millions of people against the results achieved or benefit obtained for the betterment of the economic condition of a future society.

Chapter 20

THE PRIVATIONS OF THE CITY DWELLERS

I came back from Odessa and plunged into a daily routine of providing sustenance for my family and myself. Inasmuch as my older brother, Shammai, was concentrating on his goal to become a physician, which was always an uphill struggle, leaving him very little time to help the family, I assumed the responsibility of being the head of the family after the death of our father and mother. When the flour mill was taken over by the peasants our source of income ceased. The situation in the village with bands of robbers roaming the neighborhood, pillaging and killing peaceful people, and especially Jews, became dangerous.

We transferred to Kiev whatever we could from our home in the village and, after we had sold the house at a ridiculously low price, the whole family moved to the city. Except for clothes and furniture and other household belongings, we had a few thousand rubles which we realized from the sale of the house. Due to the inflation, which was getting worse, the cash money that we had was quickly melting away. I tried to find some source of fresh income. There was no question of getting a job. Due to the revolutionary zeal of the early Communist government in trying to take over big industry, as well as small, there was a steady contraction of the industrial and business life in Kiev until it almost came to a standstill. Big industry and shops were taken over by the government or continued to be worked by the old management under the strict and deadening supervision of the commissars. Big hotels and apartment houses were requisitioned and given to the army of government employees which was steadily growing in size. Even small landlords were deprived of their house and apartment houses which were taken over by the committees of tenants in each big house and apartment. Unless you joined and became an employee of the Government, there were no jobs available. Most of the small storekeepers and shopkeepers became black marketeers, who obtained foodstuffs and farm products from the farmers who would rather sell at black market prices than deliver their products to the government at

prices dictated by the government, which were several times lower than the prices obtained on the black markets.

Clothes and shoes could not be obtained except from government stores, as the government confiscated all the industries producing them. And you could get them from a government store only when you were a government employee or a soldier. The rest of the people, which at that time was a majority, had to be satisfied with the clothes they possessed, wearing them with great care and as long as possible, as there was no prospect of obtaining new ones even if one had the money.

There was a black market even in clothes, probably obtained in some illegal way from those reserves which were now in government hands. Families of people who were once wealthy and opulent, who had several pairs of dresses and suits, began to sell the excess of their needs little by little to farmers and other suppliers of food either for money or, more often, as an exchange for food. This barter, as in the good old days before money was invented, was especially in vogue in obtaining farm products from farmers. The peasants preferred clothes to money. The trains were packed with people carrying their clothes to the farms and returning to the city with bags of flour and other farm products.

Those who had disposed of all their clothes and household belongings and did not have any reserve money had very bleak prospects for the future. Intellectuals, old people, and former white-collar people, unless they joined the ranks of the government employees, were doomed to starvation; and, indeed, thousands of people of these above categories were starving in all the big cities of Russia at that time, as described by Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*.

Those who were against the government of the Communist State in general could only live with the hope that the Communist State would be overthrown sooner or later, and that they would return to their old way of living. And who would be the new government? Cornilow, Denikin, or Kolchak? They all were representatives of the old regime, the monarchy. The prospect of their return was fraught with pogroms, persecution of the Jews in general, and blind revenge for everybody suspected of contact with the Bolshevik government even if only through an innocent job to avoid starvation. The future of the so-called "middle class" and Jews was dark no matter who the rulers would be.

As the responsible head of our family of seven, I felt that I had to do something in order to earn something and thus stave off starvation. Somebody told me that it was possible to make artificial chicken fat by

a certain method. This ersatz chicken fat would smell and taste and look just like genuine chicken fat. I followed up the lead and soon became a manufacturer of artificial chicken fat. I rented a place in some warehouse, built a fireplace, acquired some copper vats, and was ready to manufacture a new product for the market.

The process was a simple one. I bought some beef fat in a wholesale slaughter house, and cooked it together with some onions for some time and let the yellowish, clear, hot liquid, after the removal of the onions, cool down in a cool place. The resultant mass was very similar to chicken fat. It smelled like chicken fat, but it tasted slightly different. I figured that in the great scarcity that existed in food stuffs in the city of Kiev I should be able to find a market for my product. I offered samples of it to different groceries and food markets, but the response was highly unenthusiastic. After tasting it cautiously, the grocer would shake his head and decline to buy it, although the price was one-fourth the price of chicken fat. I tried to leave it in the groceries and delicatessen stores on a concession basis, but the business was a complete flop, and I had to give up my undertaking, losing a few dollars on this venture.

Life in the city was becoming very difficult for our family. There were also rumors that the situation of the Communist Government and the Red Army defending the city was becoming precarious. The Army of the White General, Denikin, was pressing from the South. Rumors and stories in the papers about the behavior of that White Army, composed mostly of former officers of the Tsarist Army, were very disquieting. Stories of murder, pogroms, and pillage, especially of Jewish communities and individual Jews, were filling the air and bringing terror to the Jewish population. Many who were able were trying to leave the city and go deeper into the territories occupied by the Red Army, especially those Jewish or Gentile elements of the population who had in any way cooperated with the Reds, even if they had only minor, white-collar positions, such as clerks in the offices. They had the stigma of collaborators and did not wish to take any chances of remaining in the city.

In their places the city swelled with masses of Jewish people running for their lives from the small towns and villages which were attacked and pillaged, and the Jews subjected to murder *en masse* by roving bands of murderers and killers or by local out-of-control-of-any government mobs who took advantage of the interim government

disorganization to commit all kinds of crimes, claiming to be adherents of one party or another, but disclaimed by both the Bolsheviks and the leaders of the White Armies. The situation was completely out of hand.

Chapter 21

THE CITY OF KIEV IS INVADED

The White Army of Denikin finally fought its way into the city of Kiev. All the Jews were confined to their houses waiting in terror for developments. A day or two after the Whites occupied the city I left our house to see what was going on. I took advantage of the fact that I did not look Jewish and could hardly be expected, as a Jew, to roam the streets of the city occupied by Denikin. The streets were empty of people. Here and there were lying corpses of Jewish people, civilians, not yet removed by the authorities.

I passed by an empty lot and saw the body of a Jewish soldier in the Red Army uniform sprawled face-up on the ground. The contrast between the calm face of this young, athletic-looking youth, killed by a stray bullet, and the faces–disturbed with the terror of anticipated death–of the numerous older Jews lying on the streets was striking.

I was walking along Kiev's main street, Kreschatik, when I was attracted by a gathering of people at one place, which turned out to be the headquarters of the "Tcheka," the security arm of the Red Regime. A low two-story building was set back some distance from the main street with a spacious yard in front of it. A crowd of people was standing in front of the building, some digging with spades into a freshly formed mound of earth. I walked through the widely opened doors on the first floor of the building into a spacious room which had the appearance of an old-fashioned, dirty butcher shop. The walls and the floor were splashed with blood, as well as the few pieces of furniture in the room. The walls were pierced with small bullet holes. It was a ghastly sight, and I quickly left it; coming back to the yard I saw that the diggers were uncovering hands and feet as the earth of the low mound was removed. The faces of the crowd were grim. Here and there a woman would scream when a part of a body was uncovered.

This was the execution place where the arrested counterrevolutionary prisoners were quickly executed and thrown into one big, freshly dug grave by the fast-retreating Reds. The assembled mob was probably made up of the relatives of these unfortunates who came to look for the remains of their beloved ones.

The atmosphere was charged with explosive emotions of despair and desire for revenge. Curses on Communists and Jews were pronounced in the same breath. The great power of suggestion and mob hypnosis! After all, I had nothing to do with this, this utter brutality of this speedy execution of ideological enemies, probably without any trial, simply because the Reds had to retreat and since there was no time for any processes of law, even if such were contemplated.

I was a man who did not belong to any party, a Jewish citizen, who performed my duty towards the State and the people in times of peace and war. Yet I felt as if the eyes of everybody here in this mob were fixed upon me as the cause of all the misfortune that beset these anguished relatives of the victims. I felt that at any moment an explosion would occur and I, the Jew, fixed in the minds of this ignorant, fanatical mob as the cause of all their troubles, would be lynched and added to the heap of these victims of the Tcheka. I hastily withdrew and speedily went home to my family to await in our retreat further developments in this charged atmosphere.

The Army of Denikin held the city only a short time—a few weeks, if I remember. A new wave of a reorganized Red Army was approaching the city. Whatever organized persecution and tracking down of the hidden sympathizers of the Communist Regime in the city was possible in the short time of Denikin's stay in the city was unquestionably carried out. But Denikin was an old general who knew full well that anarchy in the places occupied by him would contribute to the disorganization of his own army: therefore, the city of Kiev during his stay enjoyed at least an outward calm and order.

But in the countryside and in the small towns, the state of anarchy and complete lack of order and organized government continued to exist. Jews were being killed and subjected to all kinds of torture by the stray bands of bandits, as well as by small units of Denikin's own army, over which there was no control from the central authority.

I did not dare leave town and use the railroad to get to our village for food and provisions for fear of falling into the hands of these marauding bands. Besides, Denikin brought with him renewed freedom for business and individual enterprise. Peasants brought their products more willingly to the cities, hoping that the "old" order had come back with that former stability for which most plain people now longed. If you had anything to barter you could do so right in the city markets to which the peasants brought their products.

Just a few days before the retreat of the Denikin Army and its exit from the city, I saw in the local paper an appeal from the mayor of the city for volunteer militia to protect the city during the interim of a few days, between the time when the Denikin Army would leave the city and the Reds would occupy it. Generally, this period was the moment the peaceful citizens of the city dreaded most, as the underworld of every city looked forward to this time of interim government to do its nefarious work of robbing, looting, and killing without fear of organized military or police protection.

I joined this civic militia, and was immediately armed and assigned to a militia unit. The next day the last remnants of Denikin's Army left the city and, while retreating, they took the opportunity of releasing the criminal prisoners of the city jails in order, it was said, to increase the chaos in the city with which the Red Army would have to contend.

Our unit received an order from the militia commandant to go immediately and occupy the biggest prison in Kiev, the "Lukianska" jail. We were armed with rifles and had a machine gun on wheels with us. We approached the dark hulk of the big building of the prison toward dusk. The tall wide gates of the prison were open, and we cautiously entered the yard. The few electric lights in the yard threw their light on bodies of slain prison guards scattered here and there, the work of revenge by the released hardened criminals. Most of the population of the jail was gone and were no doubt at that very moment busy looting the unprotected parts of Kiev. There were a few minor criminals and petty thieves who did not see the sense of leaving the prison and thus join the army of hungry citizens in the city. They were herded back into the prison cells by our captain. Placing the machine gun at the gates and posting ourselves at different positions we remained there the whole night, being replaced in the morning by the reorganized prison guards.

As our detachment was plugging its way back to the City Hall, we encountered the advance unit of the Red Army entering the city–a motley group of fierce looking soldiers headed by officers on horseback dressed in the tattered uniforms of soldiers fresh from the battlefields. It was early spring. The snow was melting slowly on the ground. It was still very cold. The soldiers had all kinds of warm, civilian overcoats over their uniforms, no doubt requisitioned from civilians in the towns through which they had passed. Some of these soldiers looked very young, peasant boys in their teens. All of them had the proud look of a

victorious army entering the conquered city, looking down upon us, the local militia or police "rats."

Our detachment reached City Hall, the headquarters of our militia command. Toward evening, when the Red Army had securely occupied the city, our command headquarters began to receive all kinds of telephone calls from different parts of the city, especially from the more substantial sections where the wealthier people resided, with appeals for help against the excesses committed by the victory-celebrating Red Army detachments. Individual soldiers and officers of the Red Army invaded private residences of rich people looking, ostensibly, for hidden counterrevolutionary officers of the retreated White Army, and committing all kinds of crimes, including raping and looting.

The corporal in charge of us was given an order to repair to a certain place. He picked about seven militiamen, myself among them. We seated ourselves in an army jeep and sped through the streets to the place indicated in the order. We were armed with army rifles, the corporal was armed with a carbine. It was about dusk when we arrived at that house. It was a big, city apartment house, several stories high. We alighted quickly from the jeep, surrounded the entrance to the apartment in a chain, with our rifles ready for action. The corporal was about to enter the place when three drunken Red Army officers ran out of the house, the first one, fierce-looking, with pistol in hand, heading straight for the corporal. The corporal discreetly retreated behind me, leaving me with my rifle in my hands as the target of the advancing drunken officer. In great anger he muttered, "You police rats attacking us, Red Army officers!" He aimed the pistol directly at my face. I saw and felt death staring in my eyes. Instinctively, directing my rifle against him, I exclaimed, "Do not dare! We were sent by the Commandant. You must obey the orders of the authority!" A moment of hesitation on the part of the officer occurred, during which time his friend, the second officer, who was less drunk, grabbed his outstretched hand, thus misdirecting the pistol and making him lower it. The enraged first officer was cursing violently as he and his friends left us, the bewildered militiamen still outstretched in a chain.

The whole thing happened so quickly that we were stunned, and, it took us a few minutes after the officers left to catch our breath. The corporal gathered us back onto the jeep, and we went back to our headquarters. On our way the corporal came up to me, pressed my

hand, and said, "You are a brave man." Was it bravery on my part or just a stubbornness which prevented me from retreating in the face of mortal danger? I was pondering over it when we reached our quarters and prepared for a night of restless vigilance.

The corporal, as I found out later, was a Jewish boy, a member of the Communist Party. He apparently related the incident to the head of the Tcheka which, immediately after the entry of the Red Army, took over the function of the temporary militia. He approached me the next day with an offer to join the Tcheka. This was surely a tribute to my brave conduct as evaluated by our corporal. This invitation to be one of their inner confidantes meant, under the prevailing conditions, great confidence placed in me by the sophisticated and powerful arm of the Red authority.

I remembered the scene of carnage that I had witnessed the day of the entrance of the Denikin Army in the headquarters of the Tcheka on the main street of Kreschatik, the blood-spattered walls of that building, and the hands and feet of the victims being uncovered from under the fresh earth of the mound in the yard. Also, I was still under the impression of the stark reality of death, which had missed me yesterday by seconds. I figured that another such encounter and manifestation of my stubbornness would probably be the end of me as an individual and as the responsible head of my family. I politely declined the offer, stating that I had joined the militia temporarily and had to go back and assume the responsibility for taking care of my family.

I returned, indeed, to the worries of day-in-day-out existence.

Some time later—I believe a few weeks later—I met this corporal walking on crutches on the streets of Kiev. He told me that he had been wounded in the leg while encountering a roving band of counterrevolutionary peasants, had been confined for several weeks to the hospital, and had recently left the hospital, unable to walk as yet without crutches.

This final occupation of Kiev by the Red Army became permanent. Denikin and his army were repelled and finally destroyed, its remnants placed on ships to depart for Constantinople where, some time later, under entirely different conditions I met some of them. The final days of the tragedy of the Denikin Army, its disorganization, and departure from Russia are brilliantly described by the great writer, Sholokhov, in his masterpiece, *And Quiet Flows the Don*.

Things in Kiev began to settle down after its final conquest by the Red Army. The interrupted communization of the life of the city, as well as the country, began anew with vigor. The big businesses and factories had already been either closed down or taken over by the Communist Regime in the previous days of its rule. Now the turn came for the small businesses. Due to lack of sources of supply, transportation facilities, and destruction of the credit system, the small businesses and shops had to close down, and what business remained was in the hands of black marketeers.

Due to the disorganization and chaotic conditions of life following the constant ebb and flow of the fortunes of war between the Revolutionary and Counter-revolutionary Armies, regular industrial and business activities had come to a standstill. Yet people had to live and maintain themselves somehow. The need for food, the elementary requirement of life, was a must. The government used all its available sources and apparatus to supply the crying need of the Army, the workers in the expropriated shops, and the civilian employees in the numerous offices which had sprung up overnight to help the government track down private business and industry to take over their functions.

The imperative needs of the rest of the population, which was left to shift for itself by the Government, had to be met in some way. And here a whole class of "speculators" and black marketeers was created. These were the former small shopkeepers and clerks, who risked imprisonment and other severe punishment, such as the ban to Siberia, to keep up this lucrative occupation. After all, they were deprived of a livelihood by the Government's social reforms, and, there was no room for them, for the time being at least, in the Government's institutions. They were persecuted by the Government, which looked upon them as disrupters of the normal processes leading to achievement of the social reforms initiated by the Government, hence as counterrevolutionaries and passive resisters. Yet, farmers and peasants sold their products willingly, and people in general, even workers and government employees, made use of their services when the supply by the Government of most necessities was inadequate. In fact, as is well known,even Lenin announced a temporary expeditious policy–the "Nep," or a slow-down of communization, and cooperation, in a way, with private enterprise until a more propitious time for his social reforms.

The resources of my family were being exhausted. None of the members of our family except our older brother, Shammai, had any prospects of being employed by the government, for the time being at least, as we were considered as belonging to the capitalist class or as former "exploiters of the masses." I tried to find any kind of employment. I saw an ad in a newspaper, if I remember correctly, that the Military Engineer Corps was in need of civilian employees in its works outside the city of Kiev. This Engineer Corps was busy erecting fortifications outside the city limits in case the Red Army should have to retreat again and defend the city. I applied for a job and, after being identified as a recently discharged soldier, I was accepted and given a job as a clerk in the field work of this paramilitary organization. I had to stay most of the week at the headquarters of the Engineer Corps about 15 or 20 miles outside the city, moving with the headquarters as the need arose.

I was appointed to the office of the chief civilian supervisor of the works. There were several other clerks, each one having a special assignment. My work was mostly in the fields, collecting statistics about the number of workers and the materials used in digging mile-long ditches and fortifying them with all kinds of wiring and other obstacles to the march of an aggressive enemy, should it appear. After a day's work the chief, a tall, youthful man of pure Russian descent (not Ukrainian) who had all the earmarks of a playboy, would gather a few members of the staff and set out for an evening of relaxation and gayety and night-club adventures. He would come back the next morning with an air of boredom natural in a man returning to dull, everyday work after a night of interesting and highly stimulating encounters.

This continued almost every night. A woman clerk in our office, who was working there together with her husband, a rather sickly looking man, was making obvious overtures to the chief and was rewarded once in awhile by an invitation to spend the evening in the chief's company. I often reflected upon this situation and could not understand why the husband did not react in some way to his wife's behavior. I could not understand how their relationship as husband and wife could continue apparently undisturbed when even a stranger could see the apparent overtures of his wife to the chief. I still had in me the spirit of the village boy, brought up in a patriarchal home, believing in unquestioned loyalty between man and wife; this manifestation, new to

me, of a relationship which could be so easily weakened by a mere favor or promise of entertainment by the chief was contrary to all my upbringing and thinking.

An authority apart from our chief, but working in collaboration with him, was our Commissar. The Commissar, a typical Russian man from Moscow, was assigned, as a Communist Party man, to this outfit to supervise the political life of the organization, to prevent it from any deviation from the assigned policy of the Government in its attempt to consolidate its position, and to prevent counterrevolutionary activities even within its own organization.

This Commissar was a solidly built man of below-average height, with a wide, sunburned, freckled face expressing determination and resoluteness. He was armed with two pistols and was always ready and wide awake to any sudden surprises. His job was the watchful awareness of everything that was going on around the place. After a short time his vigilance toward me relaxed completely. Apparently he was convinced that I was completely apolitical and was just here to make a living. He would complain to me about his dangerous and strenuous job, in which the main trouble was to watch out for unexpected surprise attacks of all kinds of Ukrainian bands and irregulars lurking in every place around the city. He felt as if he were in strange, foreign, enemy territory.

I was employed in the job for about three months. The work of fortifications being accomplished, as a temporary hired man, I was discharged and returned to the city and to my family. The economic plight of the middle classes was getting worse and worse. It was becoming more and more difficult to get the minimum food essential to life without going through great hardships, even if you had something to dispose of in barter.

I would usually travel to our village about 75 miles from Kiev to get some foodstuffs. I knew my way around and knew the peasants who would be interested in bartering foodstuffs for this or that suit, dress, or home furnishings. We would bring these items to the village, barter them for flour, and bring the flour home to bake home-made bread, or get other products from the village, such as butter or eggs.

The difficulty was in getting to the village by train. No tickets were sold unless you showed an official reason for the need to travel. I and the rest of the numerous neutrals or non-Party people–the middle-class people–could not obtain these permits. The authorities would not issue these permits to private people. They discouraged travel in general as

they needed the railroad facilities for military and government use. The Communist Government was trying to reorganize the economy along Communistic plans and looked upon private enterprise, even if it was obtaining food for mere subsistence, as interfering with these economic plans.

Private people had to take a chance, hopping from station to station among the masses of soldiers and other people on official business, and running the risk of being chased off if detected.

I and thousands of others did just this and were able to get foodstuffs directly from the villages and from the peasants. Having nothing to do aside from these trips and finding plenty of time on my hands I decided to join a Folk University and take courses. The faculties and students of medicine and engineering and other sciences were encouraged by the Government to continue their studies, as they needed practitioners in these fields. The Government was not particularly interested in the fields of law and liberal arts. Most of the students in these courses belonged to the aristocracy and the richer classes and, for one reason or another, left their studies. Some were fighting in the counterrevolutionary armies; some left Russia altogether; some saw no sense in taking courses or degrees in law, economics, or social sciences, when all these studies and curricula would soon be radically revised, as the whole life in the country was changing.

As a result, the universities were practically empty of their former students. The same thing was true about the teaching staffs and professors. Many of them could not accept the new order and, under one pretext or another, left the universities. The Government in the beginning tried hard to persuade the teaching staffs to remain and encouraged the students to continue their education. It urgently needed doctors, engineers, chemists, and those with degrees in the other basic professions; special privileges were offered to students and professors. Such was the case with my brother, Shammai, a senior in the medical school, and even with my sister, Basia, a high school graduate; although of bourgeois descent, they were not only allowed to continue their studies but were offered stipends.

About three or four years later, when the Communist regime had consolidated itself and become sure of its rule, the whole background of these students was gone over with a fine-toothed comb. Their activities and the life and activities of their parents as relating to the new regime were investigated and, if there was even a suspicion of their

resistance or the resistance of their parents to the new rule, they were dropped from the lists of students and were not permitted to continue their studies. This happened to my sister, Basia, when she was a sophomore (if I remember correclty) in the medical school. She was found to be the daughter of a bourgeois father and of a capitalistic background. She was about to be expelled from school.

I do not know the exact reason for her being permitted to continue her studies: perhaps it was the fact that she had already cost the Government much capital in subsidies to bring her that far in her studies; or the fact that the Government needed doctors badly, and she was already approaching her junior year in the medical school; or, perhaps my brother, Shammai, who was by that time a practicing surgeon in the biggest hospital in Kiev, the Alexandrowskaya Bolnitza, had some access to the authorities deciding her case. Whatever the reason, she was permitted to continue her studies and became a nose-and-throat specialist, a specialty rather unpopular here, in this land of the United States of America, for women.

In the first years of the permanent establishment of the Communist rule in Kiev, in order to encourage education of the masses, all the universities were opened up wide for everybody who wished to become a university student, whether he had any formal high-school education or not. Courses in economics, social studies, and similar disciplines were offered free to anybody who wished to sign up for them. They were conducted by professors and "privat-docents" (assistant professors) available and willing to teach in the new conditions under the aegis of the Communist Government.

At the end of each semester special committees of the teaching staffs were assigned to go over the records of each student and to give him written and oral examinations to find out how much knowledge he had absorbed during the semester. This would determine whether or not he would be permitted to continue his studies.

This arrangement was fair enough. Many people with no formal education joined these open folk or mass universities. I also joined the university and took a course in economics and social studies under a young professor, a Mr. Goldsmith, as I remember. I became quite interested in the subject as it was delivered by this very capable teacher. He was a fine lecturer and apparently liked the subject and made it interesting to the students. For the first time in my life, aside from my Rabbis and Hebrew teachers, I was attending a formal teaching

institution and listening to lectures given by a regular professor.

I became a very attentive student, absorbed every word of the lecturer, and read diligently all collateral books on the subject suggested by the professor. I even attempted, on the suggestion of the professor, to write a thesis on a certain subject lectured upon by the teacher, with an assignment to investigate different sources on this particular subject and get the various versions and commentaries on the subject by different authors. I spent two or three weeks preparing my thesis and handed it over to my professor. He was apparently pleased with my "original" work, not expecting such a thorough investigation of the different authors writing on the subject and the voluminous quotations of their opinions.

When the semester was over I, like everybody else, received a notification to appear before a Board of Examiners. When I entered the Board room I saw my professor and two other men sitting at the examining table. My professor greeted me in a very friendly manner and, turning to the other two men, said, "I am happy to say that in respect to Kushnirovitz we don't have to subject him to any exams. I vouch for his competence as a student. The thesis which he wrote and which is here with his record testifies conclusively not only to his ability to absorb the substance of the subjects but also to his ability to pursue further successfully his studies in the course of economics and social studies."

His colleagues courteously assented to let me proceed in my further attendance at the "Mass University." And so the clouded, dark skies of my existence with all the worries and responsibilities of the family in its day-in-day-out struggle for mere subsistence was brightened by an unexpected ray of light.

I was always interested in literature. I was even interested in studying foreign languages and acquired a fair, "self-taught" knowledge of the German language. I read literature prolifically, as was the habit of most Russian people of the middle classes and of the intellectual classes. There was probably not one Russian author of any prominence whose full works I had not read. The works of Tolstoi, Turgeniev, Gogol, Tchechov, Necrasov, Pushkin, Krilov, Lermontov–well known classics–were read very widely in Russia. I doubt whether you could find any literate man or woman in Russia at that time who was not familiar with some of the works of these Russian classic writers. But even the "contemporary" authors of that period, such as Maxim Gorki,

Leonid Andreev, were widely read by most people, including myself.

I was also interested in and read, in translation of course, American, French, Spanish and Scandinavian authors. I was also interested in some Jewish and Hebrew authors, such as Sholom Aleichem, Peretz, and especially Mendele Moher Seforim.

Among German authors I liked Goethe, the poetry of Henrich Heine, and especially the prose of Schiller in his drama, *General Wallenstein*. German authors I read in the original German language.

All this reading was done over the years in an unorganized way and without any guidance. My adolescent years spent in the village offered me plenty of leisure time for reading the great literatures of the world undisturbed. Paperback books were usually available, cheaply acquired in second-hand bookstores or borrowed from libraries or from friends. Throughout my life in Russia I had an opportunity to see a movie only twice and became acquainted with the great world mainly through reading the literature of each nation.

Now attending a University for the first time, even though a "Mass University," I had the opportunity to approach a subject, such as economics and social studies, in a so-called organized way, with the work assigned by an instructor, and having discussions on the subject with someone who was an expert in this particular field. Whether this stirred up in me the later, powerful, irresistible desire to continue my studies in a more organized way when I arrived in the United States of America, or whether I assign to it only retrospectively and without any basis the cause for changing my whole outlook on life, I cannot determine now with assurance. I can only state that these studies and my relationship to my professor made a very deep impression upon me.

But the struggle for existence of our family was becoming more and more acute. The trips to the country were becoming more and more difficult, and the situation was hopeless as far as finding a solution without looking for Government employment in a system radically different from the old system. In desperation I began to think of emigrating and leaving this country of my origin where my ancestors and I had lived all our lives and in ways so different from the life which was now in prospect for me.

The idea of going to Palestine ran as a red line throughout all my life.

Chapter 22

MY DECISION TO LEAVE RUSSIA FOR PALESTINE

Several times I was very close to leaving Russia for Palestine. My previous attempts were the result of idealism–the desire to go to Palestine as a pioneer to build up the Land of our Ancestors. Those ideas were the result of my Orthodox, traditional upbringing as a religious Jew in the Diaspora, who considered his stay in Russia, a country oppressive for Jews, as only a temporary situation brought about by the dispersion of the Jews among other nations by their angry God in order to expiate their sins.

This idea was hammered into me daily by the Book of Prayers, which I devoutly read two or three times a day, and which says definitely that the day will come when the dispersed nation will be ingathered and led to Israel, the rightful Land of the Jews, to be again a nation among nations. At every festive occasion the sentence, *The next year in Jerusalem!* was the finale of every prayer, and *If I shall forget you, O Jerusalem, I shall forget my right arm!* was devoutly whispered by me with grace after each meal. As I was growing up and began to read the *Hatzfira*, the Hebrew newspaper, these religious sentiments were gradually displaced by nationalist, political aspirations to build up Palestine as a Jewish country, as a Home for the Dispersed and Persecuted Jewry where they would not be a persecuted minority existing and living by the grace and sufferance of their host nations, but as an independent, free nation among other free nations where the Jew, as a free, independent person, could have his own government, and organize his own way of life as he saw fit.

These "secular" ideas of a "Jewish Homeland" gradually replaced the religious aspirations, derived from my Orthodox upbringing, to go back to Palestine and the "Holy Jewish Land" in order to worship God at the most fit place; to come to Jerusalem as the place of the "Holy Temple" of yore and thus be nearer to God.

I did not belong to any Zionist group, such as the *Hovive Zion* (the lovers of Zion) or other similar, scattered groups in Russia, during my childhood. I absorbed Zionism from reading some periodicals devoted

to Zionism. In my first serious attempt to go to Palestine, just before the outbreak of the First World War, when I was in my teens, I did not even consult any Jewish agency or organization, if one existed at that time. I applied for a visa to go to Palestine as an individual. My idea was to go to Palestine and then act as the circumstances indicated.

I was completely naive and unsophisticated and ignorant of conditions in the world at large in general, and in Palestine of that day in particular. An irresistible desire to go to Palestine was my sole mover and motivator. Before I could get the visa the First World War broke out and for a stretch of four years–very turbulent and fatal years–diverted my attention to the local scene in Russia. The War and its aftermath, the Revolution, transformed Russian life, more or less stable over centuries, into an erupted volcano spilling its burning, destroying lava over the countryside, burying under its massive outpouring the apparently peaceful landscape and radically changing the surface of the earth.

In the midst of all this Revolutionary upheaval I made another attempt to go to Palestine when I travelled to Odessa, formerly a traditional exit from Southern Russia to Palestine. The Black Sea was tightly blockaded by the Allied fleet and there was no possibility at all of leaving Russia by this route. In addition, I got stuck in Odessa and its countryside for a few months as Kiev was occupied by the Polish Army while I was in Odessa.

Now, when life in Kiev had been more or less stabilized under Red Army rule, and the economic plight of the elements of the population outside the layer of the "Communist devotees" was almost unbearable and hopeless in its future outlook, the idea of going to Palestine started to dominate my mind more and more. There were, of course, many, almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of its execution. To begin with, our family treasury was almost depleted. We had already sold or bartered away all our extra clothes and home furnishings to the peasants in exchange for bread. We had about 25,000 rubles, which could not last for very long, considering the rampant inflation. There were difficulties in leaving the city of Kiev for a man of military age, as I was. A permit was necessary to move from one place to another.

This was not the "Old, Oppressive Regime" of the Tsarist Government where Jews, although restricted by law to the Pale only, still, in fact, managed to go any place they wished and reside in any city of their choice for as long as they wanted if only they shared with the

local police and authorities some of the products of their gainful occupations. This was the "free" government of the masses of formerly underprivileged people. Yet, in the name of "freedom" in preparation for the future paradise, the new rulers restricted in the meantime not only the freedom of the old bourgeoisie but also of the masses, whose guardian they claimed to be.

They condemned everybody to an immobility of movement, residence, and choice of desired occupations. Nobody could move from place to place without a special permit, and permits could be obtained only by the devotees of the Revolutionary Regime, the "inside" people. Of course, to be fair, the government of the Communist Regime was still engaged in a deadly fight for existence. The principles of "security" demanded a strict vigilance and a watchfulness for any possible counterrevolutionary plots. Restricting the movements of the enemies of the State prevented successful plotting against the government.

Nevertheless, the curse of every bureaucracy, including the Soviet bureaucracy, was to place its heavy, deadening hand on the whole life of a people, making both its friends, as well as its enemies, feel the burden of it.

Then there was the question as to what my family would do in the meantime without me, its chief supporter. As I said before, my brother, Shammai, decidedly threw off the burden of responsibility for the family's economic existence, as he was engaged in the difficult task of achieving his goal to be a physician.

My younger brother, Eli, did not show any particular sense of responsibility in respect to the family. He would help me to go to the country for provisions and minor tasks. He had also helped me in my attempts to earn a living by trying my hand in the production of "chicken fat"; but all this was under my leadership and by my initiative. He would rather enjoy his youth in arranging dates and having good times.

Things were running along rather precariously and hopelessly, when an extraordinary event put an end to my hesitations and launched me on a course that radically changed my whole life and my future. With Eli, I was returning from a trip to the village, where we had bartered away some of our home belongings for two *poods* of flour. It was in the midst of a very cold winter. The snow was piled up several feet high on the countryside. We carried our two half-filled bags of flour on our shoulders from the village to the station, a distance of about five miles.

Then we hopped on the outside platform of a passing freight train, carrying our precious load with us.

On the train there were masses of other city people returning from other villages. At every station new "meshachniks" (baggers), city people with bags of flour on their shoulders, obtained from their villages in the same manner and for the same purpose as we did, joined us, and the train began to look as a beehive, covered up, as bees cover up a beehive, with us and our bags. We had already passed Boyarka, the last station before Kiev, and were on our last leg to our goal, our home.

Suddenly, in the middle of the field, about ten or twelve miles from the city, the train stopped and was immediately surrounded by a troop of military police who had apparently boarded the train and occupied one passenger car unnoticed by the majority of us "baggers". They forced everyone of us who had no permit or ticket, and that meant the vast majority of us, "illegal" passengers, off the train, confiscating all our bags of flour as "contraband."

The train moved on, leaving all of us supposedly counterrevolutionary elements of the New Soviet Land standing on the bare railroad tracks surrounded by fields of deep snow and in a very cold, in every sense, and unfriendly world.

We continued our trek on foot to the city of Kiev and to our homes walking along the bare railroad tracks, embittered beyond description at this act of inhumanity. My nebulous plan to leave Russia came to a definitive, clear, and final decision. I must leave Russia forthwith. All my hesitations vanished and, on reaching home, I began immediately to work on the execution of my decision.

I made preliminary inquiries through the underground–who the underground was I cannot tell you definitely, as I do not remember clearly. It was probably a group of Jewish people who, under similar conditions and circumstances, were investigating tangible and practical ways to leave Russia "illegally" (according to the laws and rules of the New Regime).

It was said in these circles that Kamienietz-Podolsk, a city on the Dniester on the boundary then between Russia and Roumania, is a place where one could find an organization of "smugglers" who, for a few thousand rubles, would get you through to the other side of the River Dniester into Roumanian territory. The "organization" had its counterpart, their friends on the other side of the river, who would

guide you to a place safe from the Roumanian police, from which you could continue your travels.

The chief difficulty, to begin with, was to get from Kiev to Kamienietz-Podolsk. It was most difficult to get a permit from the Government to travel to the latter city, since it was on the boundary of Russia and Roumania. I considered different ways of getting a visa and finally decided upon an ingenious plan. As I was a student of the Folk University and more or less a favorite of my professor, I decided to ask him as one in an official capacity to give me a leave of absence for a few days. I indicated in my application that I was going to visit my relatives, who resided in Kamienietz-Podolsk, for the Easter vacation.

When I announced to my family my irrevocable decision to leave Russia and to go to Palestine, assuring them that in a short time I would send for them to join me in Palestine, Eli–suddenly, and as a complete surprise to me–announced that he wished to accompany me. I was disappointed because I had planned a different role for him, figuring that, in my absence, he would assume responsibility for the household. He would be forced to worry more about the day-in and day-out existence of the family than was the case now, when he took it for granted that I, as an older brother, was more obliged to assume active responsibility, and that he could be a passive co-helper in this task. However, Eli was very insistent, and I reluctantly agreed to take him with me.

To my great satisfaction Professor Goldsmith obtained for me, on the University stationery, the leave of absence. On the strength of this paper I succeeded in buying a ticket for the city of Kamienietz-Podolsk. I bade goodby to my family in a remarkably light mood. I was so sure that our separation would be of short duration; that as soon as I reached Palestine I should make arrangements for bringing them over to join Eli and me. My assurance and deep faith in the future was apparently transferred to them. It was as if I were leaving for a routine trip to our village. Little did I know or anticipate that this would be the last time I should ever see them.

Looking back, I cannot explain how a notion of this sort, based on ignorance of life and the world at large could so completely take possession of me and transfer itself to them. After all, young as I was in years, I had already gone through, by that time, a life full of dangers and frustrations. I had seen with my own eyes the stark realities of life in a pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Russia. I went through the

experiences of a cruel World War and the wars of the revolutionary period. How could I embark on an adventure of this sort, fraught with all kinds of unknown complications and obstacles, without any doubts as to its final success? How could I even assure my family that in a very short time I should relieve them of their precarious situation? Was it mere adventurousness that took possession of me, or great optimism and abiding faith in my future that caused me to accept wishful thinking as a reality?

Chapter 23

OVER THE BORDER TO ROUMANIA

After saying goodby to my family in such a matter-of-fact way, kissing my sisters and little brother, Joseph, and asking Shammai to try to keep an eye on the family and to assume temporarily more responsibility in the household, Eli and I boarded a train on our way to Kamienietz-Podolsk. I do not know whether this permit from the University would have been honored by the military police or the Tcheka if they had had an opportunity to examine it. As it turned out, nobody except the conductor approached us on the train during the two or three days of our travel to Kamienietz-Podolsk. Those entrusted with the security of the State were apparently too busy celebrating the Easter Holidays, Godless though they claimed to be, and thus we safely reached our destination, the boundary city of Kamienietz-Podolsk.

We stopped in a hotel and, in a day or so, got in touch with a person who was supposed to be the liaison man between us and the band of smugglers. It was agreed that for a certain amount of money which we gave this person forthwith that we would be helped to the other side of the river on the next moonless night. The man could not tell us definitely which night, but promised to let us know a few hours in advance before the propitious moment arrived.

My brother and I remained in the hotel most of the time, not wishing to chance an accidental encounter with the authorities. Once in a while we would go out for some fresh air. A short distance away from our hotel we saw the rather wide river flowing by the city. The river appeared much wider than it really was. I used to enjoy watching the calm flow of water in our village river or the more rapid flow of the waters of the Dnieper when I was looking down upon them from the Tsarist Gardens in the city of Kiev. But now the same waters, the same type of river, appeared to have an ominous look, and it seemed to be so terribly wide. The two or three days of our wait appeared to be endless.

Finally, one afternoon, our liaison man came and told us to be prepared for that night. Early in the evening he returned and took us from the hotel to a house on the outskirts of the city, where we met a large number of other "customers," about 50 people, old and young,

men and women. There was an air of conspiracy about the place. People talked to each other almost in a whisper. Children were constantly warned by their parents not to make any noise; to sit quietly in their places, which was an impossible task, as everybody was in extreme suspense which transferred itself to the children.

The evening hours passed at their usual pace, but appeared to everybody to be dragging on endlessly. Finally, about midnight, our liaison man divided us into small groups and advised us to follow him. We walked a short distance and came to a deserted beach. It was very dark. On the river we noticed through the darkness a few silhouettes of rowboats. These approached us quietly, and the men rowing them jumped off and ordered the groups to climb into the boats. There began a scramble to be the first ones to jump into the boats. As is often the case in such circumstances all traces of chivalry were gone with the wind. Big, husky men were pushing back the women and the children in order to board the boats first and to reach the "safety" of the inside of the boats. Here and there you would hear a suppressed scream of a woman indignant at the lack of civility of the man who pushed her aside. The boatmen were urging and helping everybody to speed up and get settled. Finally the boats sank in the sand from the weight of the masses of the people and had to be pushed off, and there were very few volunteers from among those already settled in the boats to get out and help push the boats off. Finally the boats moved off the ground and began to float on the soft waters of the stream.

In helping push off our boat, I was nearly left behind when the boat finally and with great ease plunged forward into the river. I had to run a few yeards in the shallow water to catch it. Being dragged in the water a few feet, I finally succeeded in climbing into it. Our caravan continued on its course. The gentle sounds made by the oars rubbing against the iron locks appeared to all of us as loud noises, echoing far off and capable of attracting the attention of the guards on either side of the river. These sounds struck terror in the hearts of the passengers. However, we proceeded without any incident whatever. Whether it was a mere coincidence or whether the guards on each side were part of the conspiracy, our caravan proceeded undisturbed until the avant-garde boats hit the opposite shore.

There followed another scramble to be the first to leave the boats. However, it lacked the intensity of the struggle to get into the boats. The safe and undisturbed voyage through the long stretch of the river

calmed agitated spirits. The counter-climax set in. The crowd was led again through an empty beach and a field overgrown with weeds to a fishermen's shack, where a few peasant wagons were waiting. We were seated onto the wagons half-filled with straw, and taken to a nearby town to a place arranged for that purpose, I believe, by the officials of the H.I.A.S., the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

We were now in the State of Roumania. Each one was interrogated as to his desired point of destination. In the meantime we were given quarters and food and an opportunity to rest and get in touch with the different relatives and friends abroad to help us to determine our future courses of action and itineraries.

After a short time we received an invitation from our uncle and aunt in Pennsylvania, to whom we had written concerning our whereabouts, to come to America. They also sent us about 200 dollars for immediate expenses.

Chapter 24

PIONEERS (CHALUTZIM)

There were all kinds of contradictory notions among the Jews of the Pale about the United States of America. It was said that America was a *Goldene Medina*, a Golden Land. To the inflamed imagination of the Jewish masses living in extreme poverty and oppression in the ghettos of Russia, America was a country where gold was literally shovelled from the streets into the pockets of the people.

America was a safe haven for young Jewish boys reaching the draft age. It was an accepted fact of life among the Jews of Russia that, unless you had a serious physical defect disqualifying you from military service or were an only child of a widow depending on you for support, which would defer you for a time, there was no other choice but to flee to America if you were determined not to be a Russian soldier.

On the other hand, all kinds of swindlers, embezzlers, and even murderers, looked to America as a safe haven and refuge from the jaws of the implacable law, closing in on them.

The case of my cousin Motke who, after embezzling his employer's money disappeared from sight and showed up in America, confirmed this last notion about the United States of America.

All these attitudes towards America were known to me as a Jewish boy. However, I had also an image of America all my own. As I mentioned before, throughout all my life before leaving Russia I saw only two movies; it happened that the last movie was a picture of a coal mine in America, during an explosion. It showed the dark passages of the mine and the miners with their headgear and ropes and hatchets digging into the black wall; and later, the explosion, with thick billows of smoke darkening the air under the gloomy dome of cloudy skies. I always had the impression of America as a country where the sunshine was unknown, where the grounds were devoid of green grass, like the terrain of the coal mines as seen in that picture, a "Dark Land" where all those criminals and runaways from Russia found a haven not unlike their own shady characters.

I definitely had no desire to go to America. I thanked my good relatives for their generosity in sending us a few dollars and for their invitation to come to America, explaining to them that my goal was

Palestine, the land of my lifelong dreams. In the meantime we found out that in the city of Galatz, in Roumania, representatives of the *Hachalutz*–the pioneer youth movement under the sponsorship of the *Histadruth*–were organizing and forming groups of young men and women, imbued with the great spirit of pioneering, to form *Kvutzoth* (collective groups). These groups were being trained for a short time in farm work and other manual labor to be sent as organized bodies of *Chalutzim* to Palestine.

We immediately went to the city of Galatz and contacted the office of the *Histadruth* and signed up as *Chalutzim*. We were assigned to the *Kvutza* currently being formed, the Sixth *Kvutza*. This was a group of about 100 young volunteers, mostly men 20 to 25 years of age, a few of them older. We were indoctrinated in the purpose and goal of our work, which was to go to Palestine and form *Kibbutzim*.

Most of the land available at that time for Jewish immigrants was desert land. Its reclamation was a gigantic task, considering the fact that most of the Jewish immigrants were middle-class business people unfamiliar with farming. It was thought that by organizing the farming on a collective basis, by forming *Kibbutzim*, it would be easier to overcome these difficult conditions. Besides, a *Kibbutz*, or collective body, could absorb more easily than individual farmers fresh newcomers, continuous waves of immigrants expected to storm the gates of Palestine for admission. The subsequent events indeed justified this line of thought and planning.

We were urged in the meantime to start, right here in Roumania, as a collective group; to live together in a place designated for us–a big, old building; to prepare our meals and dine together in a community hall; to share with the group the money received from our temporary work in the city of Galatz by putting it into one treasury. The boys would go out into the streets of Galatz and try to find some temporary employment, such as chopping wood, helping in stores, and similar menial work. The girls would cook our meals and serve as waitresses at our tables.

After the extremely disorganized and precarious life in Russia for the last few years; after the hazardous act of smuggling ourselves through from Russia to Roumania; after my constant worries about the well-being of our family;–after all these difficulties, my life here in

Galatz seemed like a song. The freedom of movement, the association with other boys and girls who, like myself, were imbued with the same ideals and strivings to go to Palestine, to build up its ruins and to create a Jewish Home, the inner contentment with which a struggle for an ideal fills all the fibers of your existence—all these factors transformed me entirely. I became a carefree person, working with alacrity at the hard physical labor of chopping wood or carrying loads from place to place. I sought out jobs energetically and worked with great enthusiasm in order to be able to add my share to the treasury. I still bear the scars on my left thumb, the result of my inept handling of a saw in cutting wood.

When, at the end of a hard day's work, the whole group sat down at the long wooden tables to have our fresh meal served by the girls, who cooked and prepared it according to their abilities, which were far from expert, we all enjoyed ourselves tremendously. Before our repast and throughout the meal, and for a long time afterward, we sang with great enthusiasm the newly learned Hebrew songs, taught us by the obliging Palestinians, the organizers and officials of the *Histadruth* office in Galatz.

These were the memorable days of mystical satisfaction in an atmosphere of zeal experienced by new converts to a cause. Most of the members of the group, whether boys or girls, belonged to the middle-class Jews in the Ukraine, such as Eli and I. Many of them were boys just from the Gymnasia in the big cities, where their studies were interrupted by the various edicts of the Communist Regime which gave preference to the sons of toilers and laborers in Russia. Most of them did not belong to any party in Russia, as was the case with me, and were brought up in homes of Orthodox or Zionist background.

This was just the human material that the organizers of the *Chalutzim* groups sought and found. These were people over whom the stormy waves of the Russian Social Revolution passed without making any perceptible impression upon them, as they were passive members in this struggle of the classes that shook Russia to its very foundations. These young boys and girls were nurtured by an overpowering ideal to go to Palestine and build their own Homeland, a specific Jewish Homeland free of all the depressing psychology which plagued the Jewish minority in the midst of the Russian majority.

This group of boys and girls refused to serve as "scapegoats"–the role assigned to Jews historically by the dominant class, whether it be the class of the nobility or the class of the proletariat, as was now the case. This is poignantly described by Judd L. Teller in his book, *Scapegoat of Revolution*.

There was also a very small minority among us, maybe a dozen young men, who had definite Socialistic ideas. They were the sons of Zionist parents who, though sympathizing with the Socialistic ideas of building a classless society (or rather, a society built on the ideas of one Socialistic class) still had enough Zionist aspiration instilled by their parents not to participate in building such a state in Russia but rather to try to accomplish it in Palestine, on Jewish soil, in a Jewish state. These few people were really the ideological backbone of every *Kvutza*. They conscientiously participated in the collective life in which we were now involved, as a prelude to their planned life in Palestine in the future.

But no matter what the past background of the members of the group was, we all enjoyed the warmth and the happy spirit that goes with association in a common cause. We were all young, healthy, and full of vigor and optimism, and no amount of immediate obstacles or difficulties was capable of damping our exuberance and enthusiasm. It was a sight to see us sitting around the tables and singing *"Boker, Boker"* ("Morning, Morning"), or jumping off our seats and forming a circle dancing the *Hora*. It was the same mystical fervor with which some of our ancestors and parents sang and danced to the Hasidic songs. It is interesting to note that during those few weeks I was completely unaware of things that ordinarily would have interested me. For instance, I can hardly describe the city of Galatz or its people, subjects that would have interested me in my previous extensive travels in Russia. I was as though in a dream, in ecstasy. And so was every other member of our group, as far as could be seen and observed.

As in every group of people, there were a few individual members who crystallized as leaders after a very short time. There was Zeiger, a well built man of about 25, of average height with wide shoulders and massive arms, hands and legs, which made him appear as solid as an oak tree. He had steely eyes in a rather wide, immovable face. He had a commanding voice and manner, and the group instinctively followed him and fell under his invisible domination. Without being elected or appointed he became the leader and spokesman for the group.

He had with him two girls of about his age; one, a blonde, a rather mannish girl with strong, unpleasant features. The other one was dark-complexioned, feminine, attractive, with beautiful dark eyes exuding friendliness. It was assumed that these were his two wives. Although it was a rather novel experience for a group brought up in the Jewish tradition, everybody accepted this arrangement as a fact in life not to be questioned. A leader is *ipso facto* different, and his behavior is all his own requiring no explanation or apology.

There was also a fellow, Shabbatai, the "life of the party." He had a big head, slightly bald, although he was probably only about 25 years old. His face was wide open, very mobile, with extremely mobile, laughing eyes. He knew all the songs to know and was the song leader on all occasions.

There were a few other so-called "personalities" with less claim to primary leadership, but capable and ready to step into the shoes of the leader when an occasion would arise.

We had also an opposition leadership, two or three fellows, including my brother, Eli, who would say nay no matter what the decision of the leadership was.

There was a group of about five or six young fellows and about two or three girls who attached themselves to our *Kvutza* merely because they were "joiners." They shared neither the aspirations nor the idealism of the group, but derived satisfaction in merely being part of it, even though in a passive way.

No matter what the background and the individual characteristics of each member of our *Kvutza*, we were all imbued with an irresistible desire to reach Palestine and to start a fresh, new life. We were chafing to move on. Every day we remained in Galatz was a day lost and robbed from our future; in fact, was trying to our patience. Finally, the word got around that in a few days we would leave Galatz. A few things had to be ironed out with the English mandatory power in Palestine, and our visas had to be prepared. We went in groups to the local consulate to get our visas.

It happened that members of the same family–like two brothers, or two sisters, or a brother and a sister–could get a common visa or one visa with two photographs of the individual members attached to the same visa. This meant a saving of one Roumanian "lira" (about 50 cents at that time) on the cost of the visa. Naturally, my brother, Eli, and I, as well as three or four couples–brothers and sisters–who were members

of our *Kvutza,* took advantage of this "bargain" and obtained one visa for two people. This apparently insignificant incident proved to be of very great crucial importance in determining the course of my whole future life.

In the meantime, every one of us was very happy in removing the obstacles to our moving ahead. Finally, one day, we left our quarters, each one of us with a very small package of our minimal necessities in clothes and other trifling belongings and, arranged in groups, went to the Port of Galatz to board ship.

Before leaving our quarters, our leader, Zeiger, with his characteristic decisiveness and arbitrariness, divided our *Kvutza* into three units, appointing a leader for each group. In his little speech to the *Kvutza* he pointed out that we were going to wrest a place for ourselves from the Arabs, who at that time were the majority in Palestine. Like our ancestors in the time of Moses, we were to be ready for any eventuality in case of a reluctant welcome by the Arabs. We should be prepared even for armed resistance should the Arabs oppose our landing. There were rumors to that effect apparently emanating from the headquarters of the *Histadruth*, our sponsors, who knew what was going on in Palestine at that time.

This proved to be correct, as events developed later. Zeiger appointed me as one of the leaders, finding out in a little talk with me about my past military experience. The two other leaders appointed by him had had similar experience. He promised to supply us with weapons when the time and opportunity for their use arrived. He urged us in the meantime to become familiar with the qualities and stability of the members of our particular group, and to assign to them certain duties and functions in the event of an emergency.

Our quarters, in the steerage of the ship, were spacious but rather dark and not too clean; however, that mattered very little to past soldiers, as many of us were, re-mobilized for another march to another goal of attainment.

The ship was an Italian liner out on its course to the different cities and ports of the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, including Constantinople, Smyrna, Beirut, Haifa, Jaffe, and Port Said and Alexandria in Egypt. The upper decks were assigned to the passengers of first and second class, and the steerage, or the lower deck, to our group.

Before reaching the ship in the Port of Galatz, as I was passing the

turnstile I felt a tug on my pants in the back; when I turned around I noticed a young man, nicely dressed, walking away hurriedly. I took him to be a fellow passenger who, before passing the turnstile, turned back to get something that he had forgotten. However, a moment later an idea crossed my mind. I quickly felt for my back pocket and, indeed, it was empty. The few dollars that were left of the money sent to me by my uncle and aunt in America were gone, expertly extracted by that nicely dressed gentleman, the pickpocket, who had placed himself at a very advantageous position for the plying of his nefarious trade. The victim, once past the turnstile, is deprived of the possibility of immediately pursuing and catching the predator.

I, and hence my brother, Eli, were left without a penny and were, indeed, now members perfectly qualified for the collective life, which frowns upon a member possessing personal equity.This was also one of the valid reasons of criticism heaped upon my head by my brother, Eli, whenever he would dispute my right to leadership. He always accused me of assuming "unjustly" a paternalistic attitude toward him. Later, in the course of our sojourns, he resented and assailed in the most vile manner my stewardship in the *Kvutza.*

Our liner continued on its course. We passed the beautiful city of Constantinople, which came later to be so familiar to me, and plied our course to the ports of the Mediterranean Sea. At one of the ports, when the liner stopped for a few hours, we began to feel the warm sub-tropic air. The sun was in mid-sky and a hot wind was blowing and making us rather uncomfortable in our steerage. A group of us suddenly decided to take a swim in the Mediterranean. We were all good swimmers, young, strong, and enduring. We descended a few rungs of the ladder and, completely naked, dove into the refreshing waters of the Sea. We were swimming, frolicking, and having a good time, when suddenly we noticed a terrific commotion on the upper decks of the ship. Groups of people looking down upon us, men and women, some with dainty lorgnettes and some with dark binoculars in their hands, were gesticulating and talking in agitation, pointing us out to the officers of the ship.

Now, all my life in the village we bathed in the waters of our river—boys and girls, men and women—without bathing suits, and we never thought of it as a horrible thing. The boys and the girls would undress behind a bush, at a short distance from each other, then wade into the waters of the river, and the two groups would join one another

and bathe and swim together, taking it as a natural way of life without in the least being conscious of the difference in sex.

All the members of our swimming party had the same background and the same experiences, coming as they did from small towns and villages of the Ukraine. We could not understand what all the excitement was about. However, in a few minutes two boats from the liner were lowered and, approaching us hastily, the sailors, with gesticulations and exhortations, ordered us to immediately get out of the water and get back to our places on the liner.

They expressed indignity, the basis of which was not understood by us until we were later given a lecture by one of the officers of the ship, who pointed out to us that we acted as complete savages, and that in a civilized society, bathers wear bathing suits; that our behavior was shocking to the members of the upper decks, civilized and highly cultured European city dwellers. This was my fellow travellers' and my first encounter with representatives of European civilization, and we failed miserably in this encounter.

Our liner continued on its voyage, and we reached the port of Smyrna. Here our leader, Zeiger, with two comrades, left for the city for a few hours and came back to the ship loaded with pistols and ammunition which he distributed to the different members of the group. I, as the leader of my group, was supplied with a small pistol and several rounds of bullets. We were now a more or less armed group ready to fight Arabs if the need should arise.

However, to our great and deep disappointment, we were never able to use these weapons. We were not even given a chance to encounter our adversary, although as a matter of historical development the need did arise. And our services for the repelling of the riotous mobs of Arabs bent upon killing and pillaging of the Jewish minority at that time would have been welcomed by the Jewish population.

Chapter 25

FIASCO

When our Italian liner approached the port of Haifa, rumors spread among us, probably fed by the upper decks, that Arab riots against the Jewish population were now taking place in the city. These were the first Arab riots against the Jews, staged in 1921, as a protest against Jewish immigration and particularly against young Jews, those very elements which constituted our group.

The English Government, who held the mandate over Palestine at that time, no doubt was the instigator of these riots in its traditional policy of "divide and rule." The riots gave them a perfect opportunity to halt immigration, for the time being at least, the excuse being that too rapid an implementation of the Balfour Declaration could spell only riots and undesirable friction between the hitherto peaceful segments of the population in the Holy Land.

As things were, the captain of our ship announced that our group of passengers, consisting of our *Kvutza* of about 100 boys and girls and another group of about 100 Jews, were not permitted to land. That night, we remained confined to our places in the ship, which was anchored about a mile or so offshore. It was the greatest disappointment and shock tc me and to all the members of our group. Like fierce animals in an iron cage we walked around the edges of the ship wondering if we could, in the darkness of the night, slip overboard and swim to the shore. But the ship was tall, the shore far away, and there was a sharp vigilance over our group. An ominous darkness covered the city on the slopes of Mt. Carmel, the terraces of which were outlined by the twinkling lights of the street lamps, here and there.

We spent a restless night in the very shadow of the shore of our destination, and in the morning our liner took off on its way to the next stop, Jaffe. Arriving there, it anchored again about a mile or two offshore. There were riots in the city of Jaffe, too, and they continued for about three days and nights. The city of Jaffe appeared in the distance to our right, with the buildings and monasteries nestled in the bare cliffs of the shore. Right in front of us, about a mile from the shore, appeared the desolate dunes stretching far into the distance, piles

of gray-white sand, devoid of any green except for little, dried up clusters of hardy vegetation, here and there. It was a desolate view.

Eventually, the bustling city of Tel Aviv was built on this site. In 1962, when I visited Israel with a group of tourists guided by Histours, Mr. Isaac Hamlin, the former executive head of the *Histadruth* in America, pointed from the eighth floor (if I remember correctly) of the headquarters of the Histadruth organization to the city of Tel Aviv lying in front of us and stretching to the sea and stated that all this terrain was just desolate dunes a few years ago. I can verify this statement, as I was here at the time described by him.

We remained here another day, and our liner with its cargo of Jews, continued on its way to Port Said and further to the city of Alexandria. Arriving at the port of Alexandria, our group was put on smaller vessels and taken to military barracks for British soldiers, which were vacant at that time. Egypt was still under the domination of the English Government. The barracks were located near the shore and were devoid of any comfort for civilians. But for most of us, young people–some of us veterans of battling armies in Russia, some of us preparing for a life of hardships in Palestine–the physical accommodations were of no particular importance. We were still under the influence of our recent fiasco and depressed by our failure to reach the shores of the Holy Land and by the ruination of all our plans and castles built by our inflamed imagination.

We remained in Alexandria only a few days. A perennial Revolutionary upheaval took place in Egypt at that time, directed against the English rulers. These disorders and minor uprisings were always easily suppressed by the British Army and Navy. However, the presence of a group of strangers in the military barracks at such a time was apparently deemed inappropriate by the English authorities.

One afternoon our group was told that we could not remain there any longer and would be shipped to another place. Our place of destination turned out to be Constantinople. Most of the members of our group, and particularly the members of the *Kvutza*, lacked any means of sustenance and were given some food from the military kitchen at the barracks, possibly obtained from the local Zionist organization. As we had to move in a hurry, the Jewish community at Alexandria sent us about 100 loaves of dark bread, which came to about half a loaf per person.

A short time after the evacuation order was received, a freighter

loaded with sacks of onions, shipped from Egypt to Constantinople, pulled up to the docks where our barracks were located and our whole group was commanded to board this freighter. Every one of us picked any vacant place available, and we set out for Constantinople.

As our journey back to Constantinople lasted about three days on this very slowly moving freighter, the half a loaf of bread could not last for too long, and we maintained our hungry bodies on the available onions, whether it was ethical to do so or not.

Hungry, half-starved, we finally landed in the port of Constantinople and were taken from there by ferries to the city of Skutari, situated on the opposite, Asian side of Constantinople.

We walked from the city of Skutari a few miles to a place called Messilla Hadasha, a Jewish colony inhabited exclusively by Jewish farmers. The Zionist Organization, with the help of the H.I.A.S., had established in Messilla Hadasha a special camp of tents for the temporary maintenance of transient Jewish travellers who, for one reason or another, were stranded in Constantinople and were temporarily unable to proceed to their permanent destinations.

Some members of our *Kvutza*, including myself, had only one suit of clothes to our names. Our shoes were torn and our hats lost. We looked like hobos and tramps when we finally reached a quiet, although temporary, haven in Messilla Hadasha. There was plenty of food for us and special tents which accommodated three or four people each. We rested for awhile, ate and drank at common dining rooms where we continued our group existence singing and dancing at our meals and afterwards, although with much diminished enthusiasm due to our depressed state of mind and the frustration suffered after being at the very gates of our Promised Land and turned away so ignominiously. A certain spirit of disorganization crept into our *Kvutza*. To begin with, the self-discipline imposed upon ourselves on our way to Palestine, when we were imbued with high hopes and the aggressiveness that goes with a singleness of purpose, suffered greatly after our debacle. Members of the group began to drift apart and disintegrate into little cliques and factions working at cross-purposes and finding faults with each other.

Besides our *Kvutza*, other organized *Kvutzoth*, following ours, could not proceed to Palestine and were also temporarily diverted to Messilla Hadasha. At least several hundred civilians, as well as members of the different *Kvutzoth*, accumulated in Constantinople and in this Jewish

colony. The *Kvutzoth* held themselves more or less apart and, as a rule, were organized into definite units, trying to maintain some sort of discipline and to subject themselves to some sort of rule by their chosen representatives. But there were always, as is the case in any organization forced to idleness and stagnation, discontented individuals and their followers who, at times, merely for the sake of diversity and to break up the monotony stirred up trouble.

There were instances of quarrels among the members of the group over trifling matters. There were complaints about the inadequacy of the food as well as its quality, although in truth there was an abundance of food. There were insinuations that the officials of the H.I.A.S., distributing the food and other commodities, dressed too well, spent money freely on their entertainment, thus gaining more favor from the girls in the camp than did the poor, penniless boys of the *Kvutzoth*. There were implications that the transient people for whom the H.I.A.S. was organized were mistreated. Some accused the officials of the local H.I.A.S. of being corrupt and diverting for their own use the money being contributed by sympathetic people all over the world, and especially America, for the alleviation of the sufferings of the transient Jews. They pointed to one particular official who always gave lavish parties where, it was said, all kinds of debauchery took place. Whether all this was true or whether it was the idle imagination of a few malicious souls, these whispered rumors could not help but affect depressively the masses of young, active people confined to the limited grounds of the camp and forced to an idle, unproductive existence. The influence of the strong man, Zeiger, on the group waned. As there was no need of a disciplined unity under these idle, purposeless conditions, some free spirits finally became dissatisfied with Zeiger's arbitrariness. They started to question his right to leadership and finally pointed to the fact that nobody elected him anyway, and who gave him the prerogative of leadership to begin with? Zeiger, himself, seemed to have lost his particular zest to lead. He withdrew into himself, spending his time unseen in his tent together with his two wives. The group held meetings sporadically and elected as their chief representative a fellow by the same of Sandler. I was elected to the very important position of distributing the food and other provisions given by the administration to our group and to other *Kvutzoth* as separate units in the camp. During the elections the only opposition to my candidacy (supported by the majority of our members) was the sharp diatribes against my

ineptness, and even my integrity, by my brother, Eli. In an impassioned plea, full of poisonous outpourings, he warned the members not to elect me to this responsible position as, knowing me as he does, he would not trust my judgment in anything, no matter how trivial. Of course, I was overwhelmingly elected. The bias of my brother, Eli, was obvious to everybody. In my partial stewardship of the *Kvutza*, the members observed my complete devotion to the interests of the group. In every dispute, I always helped to reach an amicable solution between the opponents. In the distribution of food and other things sent to the *Kvutza*, I was always the last one to get my share, often getting only what was left and what nobody else wanted. In work sought by the *Kvutza* in our earliest formation in Galatz, I was the one who worked hard and contributed most of my earnings to the treasury of the group. In fact, I was highly reluctant to assume the responsibility of the distributor and overseer of the food to the group. Since I knew well the low spirits of the group and the suspicions of the group of any authority, I shunned this job, but I was really drafted into it by the overwhelming majority of the members, to the chagrin of my brother and a few others, his co-conspirators, akin to him in spirit.

Now my relationship with Eli was undergoing a complete metamorphosis. From the very early days of our lives in our childhood years in the village, as I remarked before, Eli was subjected to highly unfair taunting by some of the stupid and malicious members of our three families. They pointed to him as the cause of the death of our natural mother, who became seriously ill shortly after giving birth to Eli. As a sensitive child, Eli apparently was not immune to these preposterous accusations and, as a result, he apparently developed an inferiority complex. He became embittered and saw evil in everything and everybody. Being busy with my own life and struggle, I was not even aware of this situation. I was much closer in years and in common interests to my older brother, Shammai. We went to *heder* together. We played together. My older brother, who was more of a fighter, quite naturally considered himself as my protector. Such a relationship did not exist between my brother, Eli, who was about two years younger than I, and myself. I paid less attention to him while our father was alive than to my younger sister, Basia, and the little Joseph, our youngest child, the offspring of our foster mother, Hanna, simply because they were the youngest members of our family of seven children.

When my father died and I undertook the responsibility of the household, I assumed a paternal attitude towards Eli, as a younger member of the family, for whose well-being I felt responsibility. As I explained before, the very adventure of leaving Russia to go to Palestine was conceived by me without ever thinking of taking Eli along. I was surprised and unpleasantly shocked when he expressed a desire to accompany me in my travels. I tried to dissuade him and only reluctantly gave in to his insistent demands to join me.

The strain of our smuggling through the boundary of Russia, the hardships of our stay in Roumania, the austere life in the *Kvutza* were compensated for by the prospects of eventually reaching the land of my dreams. This gave me a tremendous uplift and rewarded me for all our difficulties on our way to Palestine. Eli apparently did not share with me these compensatory spiritual rewards. The whole concept of Palestine, which had been built up in me from childhood, was apparently strange to Eli, who just did not aspire to things in my way, although he had been brought up in the same environment. He apparently lacked any enthusiasm for Palestine as a place of destination for the Jews.

Eli had followed me to Palestine much as he had followed me in Russia in my business adventures or in my travels back and forth to the village. As we were frustrated in our attempts to reach Palestine, were forced back into Constantinople, and as our future was beclouded with uncertainties, he became more and more disappointed in my leadership, which he had always followed uncritically. He looked back at a life of ease in Russia, where all his thoughts were directed toward good times without any real responsibilities. As he became more and more apprehensive of the future, he became more and more critical of me and my way of thinking and acting; and he tried at every opportunity to relieve himself of his frustrations by attempting to discredit me in the eyes of our comrades.

Being obsessed with the idea of reaching Palestine under any circumstances and assuming some responsibility in leadership of the *Kvutza*, I simply did not notice the crisis in the life and thinking of Eli. I was, therefore, crudely awakened when, out of a clear sky—at least that is how it appeared to me at that time—Eli attacked me at our *Kvutza* meeting with such vehemence and hate.

I just could not understand what had happened. I just could not see any valid reason or cause for his behavior. I was plainly puzzled by it

and deeply affected by Eli's relationship to me, much as a parent would be puzzled by a sudden, malicious criticism, unjustified in his opinion, by his child of everything the parent had done for that child in good faith and with good intentions and fatherly love. Where and in what did I fail in my relationsip with Eli? What did I do or fail to do to justify this personal, savage assault on my character and integrity?

We remained in Messilla Hadasha for about two months. The locked-up energy of a bunch of young men and women keyed up to the prospect of a very active life in Palestine and electrified by daily new experiences on their way to reach that goal–this bursting energy was suddenly brought to a halt. These energetic people were hemmed in by the narrow confines of a camp in a Jewish settlement in the midst of a strange land inhabited by Turks and Greeks, of different cultures and different ways and ideals in life. The forced idleness of these masses of young people could not but affect their behavior in a most undesirable manner.

Things came to such a point that a group of prominent Jewish writers, with the poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik, at their head, who stopped here on their way to Palestine, were asked by the administration to visit the camp and admonish the restless *Chalutzim.* I remember Bialik talking to our group with *Agmas Nefesh* (sadness) at this manifestation of rowdiness and lack of discipline among the members of the *Kvutzoth.* He exhorted our group to maintain its previous discipline, overlooking minor discomforts for the sake of the Great Ideal, the building of a Jewish Homeland. He implored us to behave in a dignified and worthy manner as behooves *Chalutzim*, the Chosen Youthful Builders of a Jewish Land.

How much effect the admonition of the great man had on the group was hard to evaluate at the time. Shortly afterward the situation resolved itself for the better when rumors spread that an English official was coming to Messilla Hadasha to look over the groups and to give them permission to continue their march to Palestine. And, indeed, in a few days an official did come to the camp, a typical, cold, indifferent and aloof English representative of the Colonial Office. He seated himself with his staff of secretaries at a table, and the group formed a queue; each member then passed by the table, having prepared and holding in his hand his visa. The official would look at the visa, compare the photograph attached to it with its owner, and would motion to his secretaries, who affixed a stamp of approval.

When my brother, Eli, and I appeared before him, he looked first at the visa with the two photographs on it and then at Eli and me, and motioned to us to step aside and not to follow the line of approved members. In the course of the inspection about four more couples, brothers, or brothers and sisters, joined us, motioned aside for further instructions. After the inspection was over the group set aside was told that the official did not approve of our going to Palestine for the reason that we had no individual visas, hence we did not comply with the strict rules of the English administration relative to immigration into Palestine. This was the final blow, the fatal *coup de grâce,* which our group received at the hand of the Colonial Office of the English government. It was an end to the aspirations of a lifetime for me. It was a deadly blow to my dreams of a new life in Palestine and to the ideal nurtured all my life to be a builder of a Jewish Homeland. My friends in the *Kvutza* tried to console me, saying that this was only a temporary setback, that the rules of immigration might change soon, and that I might find some way of reaching Palestine even against the wish of the English government.

But I felt that all this was just idle talk of friends and wellwishers. My road to Palestine was blocked by a hand which for the time being was all-powerful, and I thought that I had better reappraise realistically and coldly the whole situation and my further actions. What made the English official deny us, the few pairs of close relatives, a visa to Palestine? There were all kinds of unofficial explanations. One that appeared most likely was the English government's fear of Communist infiltrators from Russia. The fact of the matter was that the whole of our group was made up of young men and women coming directly from Communist Russia. We were of the age especially susceptible to the spell of Communism. And there were rumors that Communist Russia was "slipping" through abroad, into foreign countries, its agents of propaganda under the disguise of tourists, travellers, or *Chalutzim.*

The Immigration Officials of the Colonial Office watched carefully for such agents, scrutinizing closely every traveller or immigrant. Any, even very minor, irregularity in visas and travelling papers was looked upon with great suspicion. In our case, as in the case of our other friends, where two members of the same family used one visa, the suspicion aroused by such an apparently irregular act was sufficient cause for the official to deny us a further visa. If the above reason was the cause of our being denied a visa, one could surmise that the

representative of the Colonial Office no doubt congratulated himself upon his astuteness in discovering a needle in a haystack and on his success in stemming the pernicious propaganda of Bolshevism spread through clever undercover agents like my brother, Eli, and myself.

* * * * *

As things were, I was confronted with an acute problem: "Whither goest thou? What next?"

This problem had to be resolved quickly and decisively as, a few days after this debacle of ours at the hands of the English authorities, my brother and I and a few others of our group who were not permitted to proceed to Palestine were called to the city to the office of the H.I.A.S. A Mr. Reisner, who was at that time the manager, invited us into his office and in all solemnity announced to us a decision, "very unpleasant to him," in his words, that since we were no longer transients, as our way to Palestine was barred indefinitely, we, therefore, were not entitled any longer to the benefits in food and lodgings provided by the local H.I.A.S. to transients. When we remonstrated that we could not go back to Russia, from which we had fled illegally, and that we were completely penniless and destitute, the good Reisner, the true servant of the H.I.A.S., stated in his turn that he was only an employee of the H.I.A.S. who must abide by the constitution and rules of the organization. These rules forbade him the use of the resources of the organization for any other purpose than to help stranded Jewish travellers on their transit through Constantinople. We had lost our transient status as we were not permitted to travel further, to Palestine.

However you look upon it abstractly, the practical aspect of Mr. Reisner's philosophy was that he ordered the superintendent of the warehouse in Messilla Hadasha not to give our group any more food supplies from that day on. A few days later his assistant, accompanied by a strong-arm man, came to throw us out of the tent belonging to the H.I.A.S., which was originally assigned to us. My brother Eli, myself, and a friend of ours, a Mr. Goldisch (a big, athletic man of about 27 years), were in the tent discussing our problems and ways of meeting this situation by finding some employment. We had an axe with us, in preparation for our future careers as woodchoppers. We came out of our tent, and one of us–I do not remember whether it was Mr. Goldisch or myself–warned the approaching strong-arm man that

another step on his part would see "heads rolling in the sand." One close look at our determined faces made the strong-arm man change his mind and retreat gracefully to safety, together with his boss, the assistant manager.

After that, nobody ever bothered us again to reclaim the tent.

Chapter 26

CONSTANTINOPLE

A few days later we voluntarily gave up our stronghold and transferred to a room in the slums of the city of Constantinople, where we were closer to the source of our sustenance, wood-chopping. Conditions of labor in Constantinople were very difficult at that time. There were very few trucks or cars in Constantinople. There was no particular need for them, as a matter of fact. All loads, light as well as heavy, such as forty-gallon barrels, for instance, were carried by laborers called "hamals." One could see four or six husky laborers carrying a heavy barrel or other load attached with ropes to long horizontal poles and shouldered by mighty, strong shoulders. The laborers would move with extraordinary speed, even up-hill. The pay was nominal, only a few piasters (five cents). Fruit vendors would carry very big, woven straw containers, filled with all kinds of fruits, attached by transverse wide cloth or leather belts to their shoulders.

There were no industrial plants worthy of the name where people could find work. To compete with the hamals as transportation vehicles was impossible for people not strong enough or not used to this type of work. We conceived of an idea for earning our bread and avoiding starvation. In Constantinople the weather is mild, almost sub-tropical. The winter there lasts only a few weeks, when it is somewhat chilly but not really cold. There is some dampness from an occasional rain and, to keep comfortable, the *effendis* (rich men), who have nice houses, have a sort of fireplace in one of the rooms. In order to keep the fire going they provide themselves with logs during the summer. As lumber is rather scarce and dear in Constantinople the frugal effendis buy freshly cut logs and store them in piles in back of their houses. These logs, a yard long or more, have to be cut into smaller pieces for use in the fireplaces.

We conceived the idea of going from house to house wherever we saw piles of wood and asking the owner if they wanted the wood cut. We learned two Turkish words for our working armamentarium—"odun kissigek," meaning "wood to cut"—and we soon found a need for our services. We were young and strong. We carried on our shoulders our

tools, the axe, the saw, and the sawhorse, on which we would place the long logs in order to cut them. All three of us worked from morning to evening, making a sum equivalent to about 20 cents. This was sufficient to buy about two pounds of lamb and one pound of bread. In Constantinople at that time, bread was more expensive than lamb as the country around the city had extensive pasture lands for breeding the Angora lamb and very limited spaces of land suitable for cultivating different grains or cereals. We thus found a means of sustenance.

The reward for our long hours of hard labor was, it is true, very meager, but we had enough food to eat during the working day. The rent for our room in the city slums, although very cheap, was sometimes hard to save, and at times we had to spend a night or two in some "flop house," free or for a few pennies. But we were independent, living from the labor of our hands and finding compensation in walking through the streets of one of the most interesting cities in the world at that time.

We were intrigued by the local color of an ancient city, bearing the landmarks of a long history, a city that changed its appearance somewhat each time a different conqueror became its master and a different culture replaced the old one: the Christian "St. Sophia" Cathedral changed to the "Mosque of Omar," Mohammedanism superimposed on Christianity; the Greek and Roman cultures replaced by the Mussulman culture of the Turks; Greek and Turkish people living side by side, though in incessant tension and rivalry; European Western culture with a Parisian flavor concentrated in one part of the city, Perru, and an Asian-Oriental culture concentrated in Istanbul, the Turkish part of the city, separated by a natural barrier, the waters of the Bosphorus; a city where the refinements of European civilization in the Perru district degenerated to a very low stage of human depravity in the lower part of Perru, in the Galata, where semi-naked and naked women sat at their open windows and doors in the narrow streets and alleys, much like chickens in a coop, plying their trade of prostitution in the open and almost forcibly dragging in the unwary passerby—a section of the city where sailors and soldiers of almost every nation helped themselves to their hearts' content to cheap enjoyment on their days off. This took place across the narrow waters of the Bosphorus, a stone's throw from the Turkish Moslem district where women still wore their veils over their faces, hiding them from the inquisitive and "unclean looks" of the eyes of a strange passerby, and being careful not

to be contaminated by the chance touch of a strange hand or body in a crowded narrow alley.

Once our comrade, Goldisch, who usually carried the sawhorse, was nearly lynched by a menacing crowd when the leg of his wooden horse accidentally touched a veiled woman passing by. The crowd cooled off only after convincing themselves that it was an unintentional contact and the contact of a wooden leg only.

We had a chance to see the inside of *effendis'* homes, where the women of the harem were free to remove their veils in their own sanctuary. Of course, Goldisch and my brother, Eli, and myself were only laborers and foreigners, something akin to animals, and it was not necessary for the women to feel as if they were "exposed" without their veils. We apparently did not count as "men."

* * * * *

After refusing outright the invitation of our uncle and aunt to go to America after we left Russia and came to Roumania, we had not communicated with them for a long time, being too much involved in all our travails to Palestine and back. However, as the prospect of going to Palestine waned and we were left drifting aimlessly in the city of Constantinople, with return to Russia a definite impossibility and no other place to go, we began to wonder whether America would not be the only place for us, and hoped that our relatives had not changed their minds in the meantime. We had written to our uncle in America, explaining our plight, and anxiously awaited his reply.

Meanwhile we continued our daily struggle to keep alive in the most difficult conditions. Constantinople was at that time the least desirable place in which to be stranded. The city was under occupation by the Allied Armies of England, France and Italy. The different national uniforms of their police patrols were seen everywhere in the city. The Turkish Seat of Government had retreated to its new capital, Ankara, in the heart of Asia Minor.

The city of Constantinople was filled to capacity with all kinds of transient elements, and particularly the remnants of the White Army of Deniken. You could see the bedraggled former colonels and generals walking the streets in rags and trying to find some occupation to eke out an existence, much as our small group did. Their wives and daughters joined the army of prostitutes in the fashionable quarters of Perru and even the plebeian, depraved part of the city, the Galata. What

else could a mass of women do in such circumstances? There was no employment available and any resources which they might have had melted away; and there was no prospect of leaving this place. Hunger will force people to modify the standards of ethics and morality of a civilized society if the desire to live on is strong enough.

One day we heard that workers were needed in a certain shop. Going there, we found that there was temporary work available for a number of people. A Jewish manufacturer had received an order from the Allied Command to produce, as quickly as possible, sheet-iron tubes of different sizes for a certain military project. The work did not require special skill. There were about 100 White Russians–majors, colonels, and generals of the Denikin Army–standing in line, waiting to be hired as laborers, faces showing the greatest anxiety. Goldisch, Eli and I were hired, among others, and worked there for a few days at the high rate of 50 cents a day. Since this was about seven or eight times as much as we made chopping wood in one whole day, it was a windfall for us.

It was a sight to see the proud nobility of yore, the colonels and generals, working eagerly for a Jew at plain labor. Only a few short months before, when they were in power, advancing in the Ukraine against the Red Army, they could have caused, and did, with one word or stroke of the pen the destruction of whole towns of peaceful, defenseless Jews. This was possibly the first day of honest, constructive work that many a general and officer of the Denikin Army ever did in his life.

All good things eventually come to an end. The work created by the enterprising Jew for the unemployed colonels and generals, as well as for former *Chalutzim*, ended. We returned to our usual occupation, woodchopping, and the nobility to their accustomed occupation, walking the streets in hope of some other life-saving employment. Now and then, as we walked through the streets, we would recognize the faces, by now familar, of these people. I did not follow the further history of the disposition of these masses of the former Russian nobility. But reading Sholokhov's novel, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, and coming to the part where his hero, Gregor, was not permitted to board the last departing ship of the Denikin Army from the port of Rostov-on-the-Don, I thought that Gregor Melekhov did not miss much, and that I could have given him some information as to what happened to the "fortunate" ones who did succeed in embarking on the departing vessel.

Once, walking the streets of a section populated by Jewish elements, we came across a small synagogue. We were curious to see the interior and, finding the doors open, we entered. There was no one in the synagogue. In the semi-darkness we walked up to the pulpit, and I noticed on the lectern a sheet of white paper. There was a list of eight numbered names with four spaces left for additional names. The legend on the top of the paper read: "Candidates for Election to the Society of Russian Jewish Emigrees, Proposed by the Nominating Committee." Apparently the elections were about to take place for officers of a newly organized society. I wanted to have a little fun and, picking up a pencil lying on the lectern, added the name, Moishe Davidovitz Kushnirovitz, my Russian name, as all the names in the above list were also Jewish-Russian. My name was thus the ninth on the list. Being familiar with election procedures and techniques, as I had chaired a few of our *Kvutza* meetings, I realized that the forthcoming election was being engineered by a group of politically active leaders. The emigrées they were attempting to organize were an amorphous mass of individuals not knowing each other personally. This list of nominees to the board was no doubt the list of names of these organizing leaders, themselves, who desired to represent the emigrées and speak in their name.

I wondered what would happen when the meeting took place. At about eight P.M. I returned to the synagogue which was now full of Russian-Jewish emigrées occupying all the seats. I seated myself on one of the last benches, watching sardonically for further developments. The chairman of the meeting, greeted by applause, explained to the assembly the purpose of this meeting. The scattered Jewish emigrees in this city, who numbered in the thousands, had no organization to represent them until now. The problems of these people stranded in this city were numerous. This was an Ashkenazi group of Jews, foreign to the local Jews who, as Sephardic Jews, were well organized under the leadership of the "Haham–Pasha," Minister-Plenipotentiary for Jewish Affairs, acknowledged by the Turkish Government as the official leader of the Jews.

The Haham-Pasha was invested with great powers by the Turkish Government over the life and welfare of the Jewish Community of Sephardic Jews. He might, possibly, also help his co-religionists, the Russian Ashkenazi Jews, in their terrible plight, if these Jews could be organized and had an official spokesman to represent them in

negotiations with him. And this was the purpose of this meeting: to organize the Ashkenazi Jews as a definite unit and elect a Board to represent them in official negotiations with the Government of Turkey through the Representative of the Jews, the Haham-Pasha.

There was a highly sympathetic approval of this idea, signified by loud applause. After a short discussion period answering and clarifying some moot points by the Chairman, the Assembly began the election of a Board of Representatives. The Chairman of the Nominating Committee picked up that same list of prepared names which still lay on the lectern and announced the name of each candidate in order of his appearance on the list. After pronouncing each name separately, he paused, and the Assembly, by raising their hands, approved each candidate.

When the Chairman of the Nominating Committee reached my name, the ninth candidate, he seemed to strain his eyes to read this unfamiliar name. He exchanged significant, puzzled looks with the Chairman of the meeting. However, the name had been spoken already and, as was the case with the previous names, was unanimously approved by the Assembly.

The Chairman then called for nominations, from the floor, of three more candidates in order to appear democratic and to give the Assembly, also, the satisfaction of offering their own candidates to complete the composition of the board of twelve members.

As is usual in such cases, there were hesitant, timid offerings of names from the floor. This was an assembly of people who were strange to each other. If there were two or three people who knew each other, each offered the name of his friend. There was none of the unanimity with which the previous candidates, including myself, offered by the Nominating Chairman were elected. Few wanted to vote for someone they did not know (apparently placing complete confidence only in the candidates offered by the Nominating Committee), and the last three candidates were elected by a very small number of votes. They just squeaked through, so to speak.

And so, by a mere prank on my part, I was suddenly catapulted into leadership of a group of people whom I met for the first time in my life and who knew nothing of me. Their problems, however, were well familiar to me, as I was in exactly the same position as they were, stranded in a strange city and country. I knew, also, that many of these people were without any means of earning a living in this industrially undeveloped city.

When the Executive Board met in a day or two to discuss the problems of the group and our course of action, the eight other members of the Board nominated by the Nomination Chairman, who apparently were the only members of the group who knew each other intimately, looked with puzzlement and extreme curiosity at the ninth member of the Board, myself, who was so overwhelmingly elected to the Board by the electorate. They were very anxious to ask the question in the minds of each: "How in the devil did you get here, when nobody apparently knows you?"

They were gentlemen, however. Most of them were intelligent, well-versed in public affairs in their Jewish communities in Russia. They were apparently first-class business people and industrialists from sections of Russia outside the Pale who, as a result of the Revolution, had lost their wealth and, together with the reactionary White Russian generals and nobility—their former friends in many instances—had fled to Constantinople from the Red Army. They now appeared to be in a condition similar to that of the Russian nobility here. The emigrant group which they now represented were professional and business Jews of the same background who still considered their present plight as temporary, hoping eventually, after the expulsion of the Bolsheviki, to return to the "Old Russia" that had been so good to them.

None of them had any Zionist background or aspirations. Many of them could not even talk the Yiddish language. They considered themselves part of Russia, or a religious sect in Russia, much as Rosenwald and the American Council of Judaism consider themselves at the present time in the United States of America. However, they were Jews, and much more virile and adaptable to new conditions than the degenerate nobility and former officers of the Monarchy.

Here in a strange country, they suddenly remembered their Jewish heritage: after all, they were Jews and, hence, had a right to appeal to their brethren, the Sephardic Jews in Turkey, to help them in their plight. And their plight was indeed great. They did not even have the hope of looking for a haven in Palestine, as was the case with the Zionist Jews. They were business people and professionals accustomed to a life of wealth and leisure. Their wealth was gone; there was no business here for them on which they could use their talents for new profitable enterprises. They were left only with their leisure which, as it was endless, was very depressing. They were people accustomed to energetic activity. They organized their co-religionists in this Society of

Russian Jewish Emigrees in order to be able to approach the Haham-Pasha in the role of representatives of a Jewish group and not as individuals. They rightfully figured that the organizational voice might be heard sooner and with more effect by the Haham-Pasha than would the voices of individual Jews.

There were certain problems that had to be called to the attention of the all-powerful Minister of the Turkish Jews. First of all there was the problem of social welfare for the group, which was destitute. Then, there was the problem of facilitating the procuring of visas to lands which would be willing to admit these people. There was also the problem of housing, and the question of helping those who might be willing to remain here permanently. Also, the Jewish women and girls in the group were exposed to the same hazards of falling victim of the white-slave traders as was the case with the White Russian women.

All these problems were posed at the Board sessions. The immediate question was how to get to the Haham-Pasha. The members of the Board spoke and understood only the Russian language, while the Haham-Pasha spoke Turkish, Spanish, and Sephardic Hebrew, but not Russian. Here, to the amazement and delight of the Board, the unknown quantity, the stranger in their midst, Moishe Davidovitz Kushnirovitz, turned out to know the Hebrew language. I was, of course, brought up on the Bible and Hebrew literature, of which I had a reading knowledge. But the few months in the *Kvutza*, where *Rak Ivrith* (only the Hebrew language) was enforced in our preparation for a life as *Chalutzim* in Palestine, I mastered, to a fair degree, also the spoken Hebrew–with an Ashkenazi dialect, it is true, but the difference is a minor variation for those who know the Bible and the Hebrew literature and language.

And so, one day we made an appointment with the Haham-Pasha, and I was the translator from Russia into Hebrew and vice versa. The Haham-Pasha appeared to by a typical, dark-complexioned, somewhat graying, Sephardic Jew of about 65 years, with sharp, penetrating dark eyes and a rather friendly attitude. Sitting in his chair at the head of the table, a rather bulky man, he exuded authority and assurance of his power and, with an air of benevolence, like a strict father listening to the pleas of his children, asked pertinent questions as to who we were, whom we represented, and what our wishes were.

In the name of the group I answered all these questions and laid before him some of the problems of our organization. He listened

attentively and, after a short while, let us know by a motion of his head that the audience was over. He assured us with smiling sympathetic eyes that he would look into the matter and would get in touch with us through his secretariat in the near future.

Thus, to my surprise my accidental election to the Board appeared to be highly useful to my new organization and, after a few weeks when I, receiving my visa to the United States of America, bade goodby to my newly acquired friends and comrades, the President and Members of the Board gave me a testimonial letter testifying to my useful role in conducting the affairs of the Society of the Jewish-Russian Emigrees.

In the meantime our little group, Goldisch, Eli, and myself, continued our daily work of making a living by chopping wood and of buying and cooking our own food. Since I was never a good cook, I did all the other necessary kitchen work and cleaning of the room.

This hard life was compensated for by our complete freedom to go wherever and do whatever we wanted. Our daily bread did not depend on dispensation by a charitable organization, the H.I.A.S., which by necessity had to set up certain rules of conduct and discipline over its beneficiaries. We roamed the city at will, choosing different sections of the city every day. We became familiar with different types of Turkish and European inhabitants of the city of Constantinople and its environs.

The Turkish women in Constantinople, seen by us at close range, appeared to us very beautiful: mostly brunettes with oval faces, clear velvety skin, proportionate features, straight nose, full lips and large, round beautiful dark brown eyes—all this on a well-balanced, supple body of about medium size. They seemed to me perfect physical specimens of womanhood. The men were also very handsome, dark, above average height with well-balanced and manly features. Contemplating this phenomenon of an unusually large number of handsome men and beautiful women encountered by us in Constantinople, I came to a conclusion which appeared logical, at least to my mind. This unusual concentration in one place of so many beautiful women and handsome men could be due to the fact that for many generations during the invasion of Constantinople by the Turks and their subsequent raiding of the mainland of Europe, the Balkans, southern Russia and the Caucasian Mountains, the prettiest women were captured and taken as prisoners of war to be distributed into the harems of the *effendi* conquerors in Constantinople.

These women produced beautiful children, thus gradually changing the physical characteristics of the Turkish racial stock, which originally comes out of middle Asia, a mixture of Tartar and Mongol races. These latter races with their wide, crude faces, narrow eyes and broad noses do not appeal to the European sense of beauty. My observation was strengthened when, passing by Turkish villages on the shores of Asia Minor on my way to the Jewish colony of Messilla Hadasha–a distance of about 20 miles inland–I found the physical appearance of the Turkish peasants quite different from that of the city people of Constantinople, resembling the type of Tartar-Mongol race described above.

Eli and I had an opportunity on several occasions to pass by those villages on our way to cut and chop logs in a small forest. I do not remember who hired us to do that job, but we were at it for several days, removed completely from the city and enjoying the majestic quietude and peace of the forest. One afternoon, hitting an iron wedge placed in a split of a hard knotted log in order to widen the gap and separate the two halves, the wedge rebounded suddenly, slipped out like a rubber ball from its place in the log and hit Eli in the mouth, knocking out one lower incisor tooth and cutting deeply into his lower lip. Blood was running profusely from his mouth. In alarm we pressed a towel soaked in our half-bucket of drinking water to stop the bleeding. Both Eli and I ran for medical help to Messilla Hadasha, a distance of about two or three miles, all the while dipping the towel into the cool water of the bucket, which I carried, and applying it to his bleeding mouth. We finally reached the dispensary, and a medical man stitched up the split lower lip and stopped the bleeding from the hole in the gum, left when the tooth was knocked out. For some reason Eli never in his life replaced that tooth.

Around Skudari (Oskudar), the sprawling city on the shores of Asia Minor as you approach it by ferry from Constantinople, there are a number of villages inhabited either by Greeks or Turks. There was always tension between these two nationalities, at least at the time we were there. Apparently these villages were constantly raided by parties of aggressive villagers from either side. The villagers were armed and always on the alert for attacks by these raiding parties.

Once a group of our *Chalutzim,* coming from the city of Constantinople on our way to Messilla Hadasha lost their way and wandered off the road in the deep darkness among those villages until about two A.M., when we noticed a light in the distance and approached the

buildings of a village. A number of peasants, with their rifles in their hands, waited in great suspense for our approach. Apparently the sight of us walking in disorder like lost sheep, with one or two leading men approaching very informally the bastion of the village, had a calming effect on the alarmed villagers. They put down their rifles, recognizing us as peaceful strangers lost in the deep of the night, and greeted us in a very friendly manner. This was a Greek village.

We were invited to spend the night in their village, but politely declined their invitation. They gave us precise directions, and in a short time we reached our destination, the colony of Messilla Hadasha.

I do not know whether the tempo of city life in Constantinople has changed since then, but at the time of our wandering through the streets of this ancient city we were impressed by the slow pace of life there. It seemed as if everybody had plenty of time on hand. You would see an *effendi*, still relatively young, walking the streets of the city in a very leisurely manner, his body somewhat stooped, with his hands behind his back, leisurely counting his beads. Everybody in Constantinople counted beads made of all kinds of materials, from the plain, wooden beads tinged brownish or black in the hands of the poor Turk to the beautifully made beads of materials such as ivory, or wood inlaid with beautiful smooth ivory bone. This was a phenomenon entirely new and unfamiliar to me, a Russian, which puzzled me much as I was puzzled later by the peculiar American phenomenon of chewing chewing gum.

It is remarkable how a phenomenon in behavior, taste, and conduct, adopted by a certain segment of humanity, becomes a national characteristic of the people in that part of the world. No matter what the origin of this phenomenon is, in subsequent generations it becomes a tradition followed religiously and almost as a matter of necessity and inner compulsion. This universally accepted phenomenon becomes in time a habit. People who never knew this phenomenon fall under the influence of the all-powerful mass psychology. They become victims to the same way of acting and, rather than resisting this apparently foolish and aimless thing, will act the same way and finally fall in line with the mass of people around them. It is possible that the life of leisure and contemplation that the Oriental lives, especially the upper classes of Constantinople, induces him to use some physical, muscular action, which in his case expressed itself in moving the beads from hand to hand and exercising the fingers in counting and separating them.

Similarly, the eating of soft, concentrated foods, such as chocolate and candy in America, compelled the people to exercise their teeth and gum muscles in chewing gum, a natural instinctive reaction, in order not to allow their gums to atrophy and their teeth to become weakened from disuse.

In a very short time I, myself, became a victim of this local custom of bead-counting. I bought for a few piasters a bundle of cheap wooden beads and began the endless counting and separating of the beads, much as everybody did. And it is remarkable that I found it a great means of relaxation at times when I was free from the physical work of woodchopping.

Possibly, had I stayed much longer in Constantinople, I might have even joined the army of apparently carefree effendis and just plain people sitting in circles outside coffee houses, sipping strong coffee from minute, fragile, china cups. They listened attentively to the tall tales of a magic spellbinder while smoking their curved, fancily inlaid pipes, or "narghiles," attached to long tubes passing through water in crystal clear glass bowls, which purifies the smoke to the satisfaction of the refined taste of the effendis. This was the usual pastime of the Turks.

The Greek population, in the Greek sections of the city, followed a more European way of relaxation. On Sundays or holidays you would see them flocking with their families, much in the manner of other middle-class people, to restaurants and cafes with outdoor gardens and tables. They would greet each other loudly and profusely and sit down with their families to tables laden with all kinds of victuals and fruits, drinking their favorite drinks from large glasses and enjoying a hearty meal and loud, friendly conversation. You could tell at a glance whether it was a Turkish or Greek cafe by looking at the outside of the cafe and observing the behavior of its guests.

Of course, our very limited means and ragged clothes prevented us from joining either group or participating in their national, characteristic way of enjoying themselves. We never had a chance to see the inside of a restaurant or to eat a meal prepared in Turkish or Greek fashion, having to be satisfied with external, superficial observation of these two nationalities.

In all my travels in Russia and abroad until that time, and even later in the United States of America, I did not meet a city more beautiful and picturesque than Constantinople. I might consider San Francisco in

California the nearest to it in majesty. The city of Constantinople is divided into two sections by the waters of the "Golden Horn," the bay formed by the Bosphorus: the European section, or the Perru, with a sub-section, the Galata; and the purely Turkish part, Istanbul.

The European part is situated on fairly high hills, dominating the whole countryside. From its high elevation you could see a beautiful, unforgettable sight, on one side villages and small towns hidden mostly by flowering gardens and orchards and, on the other side, at the very foot of this section, the Golden Horn–a wide, beautiful bay in the form of a horn separating the European continent from Asia Minor.

This stretch of water is filled, especially near its shores, with all kinds of large and small boats, sail-boats and fishing vessels. On the European side of its shore you could see the white marble colonnades of what had once been the Palace of the Sultans, surrounded by luxurious gardens and orchards.

Separated by bridges from the European mainland, over the narrow waters of the Bosphorus, is the Turkish city of Istanbul, dominated in the center by the magnificent dome of the Mosque of Omar. This was the former Christian Cathedral, Saint Sophia, changed by the victorious Sultans of Turkey into a Mosque.

We visited this Mosque. The yard outside the building was full of Turks of all descriptions, poor and rich, washing their feet at the specially arranged faucets in preparation for their entering the Holy Place. The interior was an extremely spacious hall with a very, very tall, domed ceiling above. The walls glistened in the semi-darkness with golden plates and other decorations with all kinds of inscriptions of the Koran, apparently superimposed on the former inscriptions of the Old and New Testament. The place was impressive with its majesty. It was relatively free from altars and other pulpits which clutter, for instance, the famous Mexican Cathedral in Mexico, which I once visited.

It impresses you with its majestic severity, and you feel that you are in the presence of history, itself, the history of changing generations and civilizations. The Cathedral or Mosque stands in the midst of a purely Turkish population, at least so it appeared to us.

The austere and Oriental way of life of these Turks is quite different from life in the bustling and bubbling sections of Perru and Galata. I was always intrigued when, in the deep of the night, I was awakened by the chanting of the Mullah, or Turkish Priest, his melodious, soft voice pouring down from the towers of the Mosque, calling upon the faithful

to remember their Creator, Allah–and his Messenger, Mohammed. It always aroused in me deep emotions and a mood of contemplation of the vastness of the Universe, and my part in it as a small, insignificant speck.

* * * * *

At last we received a letter from our uncle and aunt in America. It was a very friendly and sympathetic letter, accompanied by a few dollars and informing us that they were trying to get visas for us to come legally to the United States of America. We would be notified as to our future course as soon as the visas were ready. This was good news, promising an end to our hopeless struggle here. Our friend and comrade, Goldisch, received a similar letter from his relatives in Boston, Massachusetts.

My relationship with Eli worsened from that moment on. Until now our extremely poor economic condition and the necessity of sticking together forced us to work and live together in relative peace, free from any criticism on the part of Eli. But now, in anticipation of our future life, which would be built no doubt on an entirely different basis, Eli started to remind me on every occasion that he was not going to be dominated by me ever again; that he was a grown-up person, free to choose his own manners and ways of life without consulting me. I repeated my views on this matter, that I completely agreed with him, that we were both now grown-up people, and each could live and act as his heart desired. In fact, since we had now come into some means through the generosity of our relatives, we do not even have to live together. He was free to find a room for himself, and I would stay in our present room or if he wished, I would look for a new room. He preferred to stay at our old quarters with our friend, Goldisch, and I found in a few days a room all for myself.

I do not know what the occasion was, but a few days later Eli appeared in my room. He was extremely provocative, starting again his spiel about my rotten leadership which had gotten "us" into so much trouble. I tried to be calm and contain myself but something snapped inside me. I grabbed an ink well that was on my table and threw it at him. I jumped up and threw myself at him with clenched fists. He was stronger than I, and huskier, and warded off my fists by holding my arms. I struggled to get loose from his embrace and, when I finally broke loose, I had already succeeded in controlling myself. I exclaimed, "Get out of here and stay out!"

Eli left my room and, from that time until a few weeks after our arrival in the United States of America, we did not talk to one another. Even when our common visa that arrived from the United States of America had to be presented to the consular offices we managed to conduct our conversation through our friend, Goldisch.

We stayed in Constantinople about 11 months. The crowded Messilla Hadasha, congested with *Chalutzim*, little by little was sending off its guests, whether *Chaltuzim* or private emigrants, who got stuck there temporarily on their way to Palestine. The English Government promised to permit at least these stranded groups to reach the shores of Palestine. *Chaver* (Comrade) Peckman, who headed our Sixth *Kvutza* at that time, rather insignificant-looking but able to deliver a fiery speech to the members of the *Kvutza,* was a very devoted *Chalutz* and intelligent boy. He made a strenuous effort to dissuade me from going to America when I visited the *Kvutza* before their departure. He pleaded passionately with me to wait in Constantinople until some unforeseen opportunity might arise and I would be able to get to Palestine. "Palestine is in need of devoted and active *Chalutzim* like you," he pleaded with me.

I knew that my case, as far as reaching Palestine went, was hopeless. Even people with legal visas were not permitted to go to Palestine except in limited numbers approved by the reluctant English Government. How could I, without any means, even obtain ship passage? The money sent to me later by my uncle and aunt was with the express purpose of going to the United States of America. I bade goodby to my comrades and wished them a happy *Aliyah*, or journey, to Palestine and returned to my hard, unproductive, daily labor, giving me just enough means to survive.

The last days of my stay in Constantinople, due to my accidental election to the Executive Board of the Russian Jewish Emigree Society, I began to meet and associate with an entirely different class of Jews. These had no definite purpose or goal in life except to reach America, North or South, and begin again the lucrative life of business or industry, concentrating exclusively on improving their personal lot. These were sober, selfish, egotistic people, bent on monetary success and thus re-entering that "rat race" of making money in order to make more money, in order to make still more money, *ad infinitum*. They were bent upon renewing their previous activity in life, interrupted by the Russian Revolution, of "dog eats dog" in the competition and

struggle to get to the top of the heap.

This group of Jews was such a striking contrast to the group of *Chalutzim* from whom I was just separated–idealists, dreamers, striving to build a better world not necessarily for themselves, or for their children, but for *Kahal Israel*, for all Jewry. It was this creative dream that inspired them to overcome all personal difficulties and sufferings, looking upon them as minor obstacles on their way to a great goal, the building of a Jewish Homeland. These *Chalutzim* dreamed of creating a Land out of No-Land and reuniting the scattered and persecuted remnants of Jewry into a strong nation capable of exerting its cultural influence upon mankind.

The sole purpose of the organization of the "Russian Emigree Society" was to be able to qualify for some assistance from charitable organizations. It is true that the Joint Distribution Committee, and the H.I.A.S., which were created by men of vision and idealism among their brethren in different countries, were indeed meant to help the plight of such stranded Jews, forcibly dislodged from their centuries-old habitats and scattered to the four corners of the world. Still, this particular group of Jews, even when they were happily prospering in their Russian surroundings, gave very little thought to their national origin or racial responsibilities. The fact is that they were not even interested in knowing their Hebrew or Yiddish language or culture.

There was no elevated mood, no enthusiasm, no songs heard among this mass of ordinary Jews. On the contrary, their mood was depressed. They were constantly complaining and bemoaning their fate. Their faces were drawn, pale, expressing fear and worries, the face of the "Wandering Jew." They were always plotting, manipulating, antagonistic to each other and suspicious of their leaders and of the welfare organizations created to help them. I joined this crowd just in fun; once elected, I continued my activity as their representative as a duty. I enjoyed observing all the small politics and manipulations to which all organizations are subject, but was glad when the time of my departure arrived and I could bid goodby to this group of people, among whom I felt myself a stranger, although our fate and future prospects were similar and, in fact, almost identical.

PART TWO

MY LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Chapter 27

A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The time arrived for my departure for America. I received my visa, certified it at the American Consulate, and obtained the *shifcart*, or ticket, to a ship voyage to the United States of America. I wound up my local affairs, which consisted mainly of my separation from the leadership of the Russian Jewish Emigree organization.

I was ready to board the ship, a passenger liner bound for New York. The liner was supposed to stop in many Mediterranean ports on its way to the United States.

This was very fortunate for me, as it gave me a chance to visit so many places on the Mediterranean Sea about which I had always dreamed. By this time I was a civilian, not a *Chalutz*. Previously, on our way to Palestine, when we stopped at ports of the Eastern Mediterranean I was not permitted to separate myself from the group for the purpose of sightseeing in those ports or cities. Besides, my mind was too preoccupied with my all-absorbing "mission" to leave room for the ordinary curiosity of a traveller. My mind was fixed on the goal of reaching Palestine and would not be detracted consciously, or even subconsciously, from this all-powerful goal.

Now, however, I was a plain traveller, a tourist and, as such, I was curious to go places and see things. The liner moved very slowly, and it took us about 30 days on the high seas and ocean to reach New York, our destination.

The liner was filled with all kinds of people of different races and nationalities. There were, of course, refugees from Russia, finally reaching the last leg in their wearisome trek to the Golden Land of their dreams, the United States of America. They huddled as a separate, distinct group in the third-class quarters of the liner. There were also business people and merchants of different nationalities occupying the first and second classes on the liner, who were travelling on routine business to the United States. These were well-dressed and well-groomed people who kept themselves aloof and did not mix with the *hoi polloi* or plebeian immigrants. Whenever we stopped at a port, they would be whisked away by shiny limousines or private cars to enjoy

the nice hotels reserved for them and other places of entertainment.

There were also groups of peasants in their different national garbs from the islands and mainlands of the countries at which we were due to stop on our journey through the Mediterranean: Turkey, Greece, Italy, French North Africa and Spain. These were mostly pilgrims from those lands on their return from the Holy Land. Each nationality kept itself separate, speaking its own tongue and behaving in the manner and traditions of its own country.

It was a rather interesting multitude of people, and the air resounded with expressions of joy or excitement when friends met unexpectedly or when some special event aroused their curious attention. The only subdued group was the group to which I belonged, the much-suppressed Jewish emigrants who, although happy that they had finally boarded the ship on their long, hoped-for voyage to their final destination, were still full of troubling thoughts as to how the new homeland would welcome them, and what prospects of success or failure the future held for them.

Our liner finally left port and headed in the direction of the Greek Islands. I believe we visited Cypress and Rhodes–a beautiful stretch of lowland in the midst of the Mediterranean, where you could see from the ship mild, summer winds sweeping over the luscious green fields and orchards of the islands. From beneath the thick green vegetation, you could see here and there white, low houses with their multi-colored roofs glistening in the sun. We touched the Greek mainland at the Port of Piraieus, serving as a port to Athens. Groups from our ship left for the city and I was among them. We went by a tourist bus to the Acropolis. I climbed the cliff and visited the famous ruins of the old Greek culture. I had seen the pictures of the Acropolis in Russian textbooks of history when still a village boy. In my imagination it was as remote from my life then as the magic culture and civilization of Hellas actually is remote from the prosaic times of our twentieth century, if our turbulent times can be designated as "prosaic." And now I was wandering among these famous ruins of a great era. I sat on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean. Under the clear sky and the hot brilliant sun, the blue waters shimmered like silvery scales in the distance. I reflected on the passage of centuries and thousands of years and marveled at the uninterrupted contact of the spirit between generations following one another in the continuous march of time.

On our way back we passed the city of Athens. The crowding masses

of people on the streets of the city, intent on their daily business activities, appeared to me as rather an anti-climax to that historic race of heroic people which had made an indelible impression on mankind.

We touched the Greek mainland again at the west-coast city of Patras, which is situated on a rocky elevation. Looking from the ship you could see average-height homes and parts of streets emerging from among trees and vegetation.

From there we departed for southern Italy and stopped for a couple of days at Palermo. There was a decided difference between this Italian city and the city of Athens. The people on the streets were more lively and more extroverted than in Greece. They were in a more festive and happy mood, crowding the city parks and especially the Plaza opposite the Opera House. There was more socializing and exchanging of friendly greetings among the people. In the background of the city, Mt. Etna, with its volcano, dominated the surrounding country bathed in the rays of the brilliant sun revealing villages and white huts nestled on the slopes of the mountain.

The whole countryside appeared, to me at least, to be in a more happy, optimistic mood than the rather serious, frowning mood of Greece, lost in deep troubling thoughts over its past glory.

Many years later, when I visited both countries on my return from Israel and was in better condition to observe and study both countries and their populations, this first impression did not call for any drastic revisions: in fact, it was perfectly confirmed.

Our ship continued on its way, and we came to the city of Algiers on the north coast of Africa. It was a surprise to me to find on the coast of the African Continent such a jewel of a city. In comparison with the cities of the countries that I had visited so far it was by far the prettiest city, and it even compared favorably with Constantinople, although on a different plane. It did not have that cosmopolitan look that Constantinople had. It was not "drenched" in history as that famous city is. It impressed you rather with its external appearance of a blend of sophisticated Paris transported to the native soil of Africa, as a most cultivated European garden in a sub-tropical setting. There were beautiful marble palaces overhung by sub-tropical vegetation or "sunk" in orchards of lemons, oranges, and other sub-tropical, rich, thick vegetation. Wide, straight, European-designed, well-lit streets ended in narrow, crooked Oriental streets resembling alleys, where well-dressed, well-groomed Europeans rubbed shoulders with Arabs in their flowing

multi-color robes, and gallantly stepped aside to let mysterious women, covering their faces with veils and enveloping their bodies with wide black garb, pass.

Among this display of wealth, beauty and color, here and there on the sidewalks you would see groups of old, ugly, and maimed beggars in rags stretching out their cups, clanking with a few pennies thrown in by generous souls, and begging alms with mien most abject and wretched.

From the height of the city a splendid view of the bay lies before you, and behind the city you can see the desert lands of North Africa stretching out endlessly to the very horizon. Next to Constantinople and San Francisco, I think Algiers is the most beautiful city in the world among those cities that I visited. No wonder the Frenchmen, or rather the Parisians, of that time considered Algeria as a resort place for their sophisticated tastes. I wonder whether this city will retain its charm and grandeur now that it has become an Arab city and the French have withdrawn.

We passed the Rock of Gibraltar after we left Algiers and entered the high seas, the waters of the great Atlantic Ocean. The famous Rock of Gibraltar–which, in the imagination of numerous generations of children all over the world, is the acme of immobility and unsurpassable strength–suffered somewhat in its mythical greatness in my eyes. Although it did appear as a big, rather crude mass of rock, almost blocking the way of our ship, the sight of it "in the flesh" detracted from its deep mystery. Still, if you disregard the poetry sung about it in ballads over the ages, it served perfidious Albion very well in its era of world domination. Even at present it acts as a cork to stopper up navigation in the Western Mediterranean, although in our era of the atomic bomb it could be obliterated from the face of the earth by one stroke.

One is intrigued by the vast power of technology. The development of the aeroplane radically changed the role of England which, as the master of the oceans, was the arbiter of the world. Now the invention of the atom bomb and its popularization among powerful nations may advance a new nation in a dominant role, or it may wipe out all nations and all dominations.

Chapter 28

MY DECISION TO STUDY MEDICINE

We were now on the open ocean sailing directly to my future Homeland, the United States of America. An entirely new life was ahead of me. I was about 23 years old. My childhood and many years of my early life I had spent in an environment, culture, and way of life which no doubt differed greatly from the life I was about to enter and from the country and the civilization I was about to join. I knew just a few words of English. While yet in Russia, being interested in foreign languages, I had, once or twice, attempted to learn the English language. I had bought, on the cheap bookmarket in Kiev, a copy of *A Christmas Carol*, by the English author, Charles Dickens. Underneath each line of the English text was the pronunciation in Russian of the English words. Beneath that line was the Russian translation of the words. I learned the alphabet and attempted to read the story. I was dismayed by so many letters that are not pronounced or pronounced differently than in the alphabet as, for example, the word "though" or even "Christmas." I could not understand, also, the meaning of such phrases, "dead as a doornail." I was discouraged in my self-teaching of the English language and finally dropped it. Now, approaching America, I regretted that I had not persevered in my studies.

Although the journey was a long one, I stood it very well. I was never seasick. I ate well and rested well in my preparation for the forthcoming physical struggle. I evaluated my capabilities and reflected upon the kind of life I would really like to lead. I never had any desire, while in Russia, to be a physician, as my brother, Shammai, did. As a matter of fact, except for my half-hearted learning and later practice of bookkeeping–more as an amateur, without any special desire to adopt it as a profession–I had no definite plan for anything in a way of a profession. But now, after the frustration and complete letdown following the extreme enthusiasm of the *Chalutzim* movement, different ideas started to dominate my mind. I suddenly developed a powerful desire to study medicine. It was not a desire to become a physician, a practicing professional, but rather the science of medicine, the knowledge of the human body, its physiology, its biology–being

part and parcel of the knowledge of all living things and organic structures in the universe–was the thing that attracted me.

It was really science in general that interested me, medicine being one phase of it and a practical way of approach. I know many a medical student who originally conceived the dream of studying medicine with the object of being a great healer of men, the benefit to people being the main object of his dream. This was not the case with me. I was interested in medicine as an abstract science. In fact, I was also interested in other phases of science–in biology, chemistry and mathematics. Even literature was to me a certain phase in the activity of the human mind. I thought of the great riches of the mind and emotions that Homo Sapiens had already achieved and the great potential for future achievement. Here before me was a great field for satisfying my curiosity in investigating and learning the accumulated wealth of the world in science. All I have to do is to take possession of it.

I decided to pursue my studies as soon as I was physically able to do so. A firm desire to study, on and on, developed in me, which dominated powerfully all my mind the first decade of my arrival in the United States. The study of medicine by my brother, Shammai, was probably the deciding factor in my choice of medicine as the vehicle of my approach to, and absorption of, science in general. I never for a minute thought of any possible physical difficulty that I might encounter. That was the last thing that entered my mind or worried me. I felt complete confidence in myself to achieve anything I set my mind to.

* * * * *

In the meantime our liner was approaching New York. As we entered the narrows of the New York harbor, the Statue of Liberty appeared before us, but it did not make any impression on me. The truth of the matter was that I was unfamiliar with the history and the noble motives that had created this great American landmark. Besides, I had never really experienced personal persecution and suppression of freedom, even while a Russian resident. Even during the short period of the occupation of Kiev by the Denikin White Army, when not only the freedom but the very life of the Jews was at stake, I walked freely on the streets of Kiev, taking advantage, of course, of my resembling more a Russian than a Jew. Still, I did not have that terrific inferiority

complex which a member of a persecuted minority develops when he thinks and, more important, feels in terms of persecution and has this depressing idea imbedded deeply even in his subconscious mind.

Our ship docked in New York. It was a cloudy day; the silhouette of this great metropolitan city was rather beclouded and obscure. Crowds of people were waiting for their relatives on the docks. Here and there a happy voice of greeting, as a face was recognized on the ship, would be heard from among the steady hum of the crowd. I was led to the immigration offices and, after a short while, handed over to my uncle, who was waiting for Eli and me. He greeted us very warmly and after a few inquiries led us to a taxi which took us through the streets of New York to a railroad station. There we boarded a train which took us to Mount Carmel, a small town in the coal mine region of Pennsylvania, where my uncle and aunt resided.

It is remarkable that the great city of New York left at that time absolutely no impression upon me. It does now, when once in a while I approach the city by car or railroad and see its majestic skyline or pass through its streets packed with masses of humanity. New York has a truly metropolitan, cosmopolitan character, such as you imagine that the great historical metropolitan cities of past generations, such as Babylon and Rome, had.

Chapter 29

MY UNCLE'S FAMILY–THE LONDONS

We were met at Mount Carmel by the rest of the family, my aunt, her two daughters, single girls, and their brother, a teen-age boy. Everybody was very friendly, and we were warmly welcomed. When in Russia, this family of my aunt (my father's sister) was considered by our prosperous families in our village as "poor relations." They would visit our village sometimes and would stay with us for a time, being, of course, very welcome, as our families were very clannish and hospitable. But the opinion in the family was, "It is a shame, nice people, but they will never amount to anything; they just can't make a living."

They lived in Russia quite a distance from our village in a small town, and once in a while we would receive letters or messages of a rather disturbing nature about their plight and hard struggle to survive. As was usually the case, their household was increasing yearly, and they already had five children when they decided to go to America. This was a rather unusual, earth-shaking event in our family. We heard about individual people for different, rather questionable reasons disappearing into America: young boys evading military draft; bankrupt business men avoiding their creditors; embezzlers running from the threat of jail, as was the case with my cousin, Moti.

In all my life in the village, I heard of only one family who went to America and made good. Before I was born, on the very spot where my father's house was built, the legend went, there was a saloon selling vodka to peasants. Those were the "old" times when vodka was being sold by private people and Mordecai Finegold, the Jewish owner of this saloon, was making a nice living. But a new law was promulgated by the Tsarist government. Vodka could be sold only in government stores, which sprang up overnight in every city, town and village over the length and breadth of Mother Russia and dealt a death blow to the livelihood of a great many Jews in the Ukraine who engaged in this business, Mordecai Finegold being one of them.

Deprived of a livelihood, Mordecai conceived of a rather novel, revolutionary idea–to go to America. Apparently he was left with some means after liquidating his business and even selling his house to a

young peasant to be torn down and used as building material for the peasant's new house. Mordecai went to that distant obscure land of America, and rumors had it that he had made rather good there. It was said that America was a land of opportunity, especially for people with many children, since they are given all possible chances for a successful future. All these stories about Mordecai were to me a sort of legend. Mordecai's personality and his exploits were to me something akin to the mythological Ulysses and his Odyssey. I felt proud that our house was built on that same spot where the saloon had been—on a hill at the crossroads of the village—a good spot indeed for a saloon: that I could even sit, stand, or lie on that very spot where that legendary figure Mordecai had been. It was an elevating thought and feeling.

Then we heard that our uncle London and aunt Yetta were going to the same mysterious country, America. That meant we would never see them again. Somehow, the thought prevailed that people never came back from America. It was a novel though sad thought that my uncle had to go to a distant America in order to make a living. On the other hand, it was comforting to know that my father did not have to go to the other side of the world in order to eke out an existence.

Out of all this family commotion about my uncle's emigration, two things remained in my memory after many years had passed. Masia, the older daughter of the Londons, a masseuse (like a practical nurse in America) and a rather urbane girl, who had resided the previous few years in Kiev, left ahead of her family for the United States on a reconnaissance trip, so to say. Also, Uncle London and Aunt Yetta came to our village to say goodby to all of us before their departure. Whether the visit was a purely social one or whether there were also some financial matters involved, such as a loan to help along in defraying the expenses of the trip, I cannot tell, as these matters were the exclusive prerogative of my father.

My uncle London and his family disappeared from the horizon of all kinsmen in the Ukraine, not to be heard of for a few years, as was the case with all those who went to America. Once we received a letter from my uncle and aunt. The letter included a few photographs of themselves and their children. My uncle, who was rather a short man, wore a derby on his head and appeared rather tall, big, and important. My aunt looked quite prosperous, and the children well-dressed, alive and alert and rather aggressive-looking, unlike the numerous children in our families who would sort of cling to their parents and appeared

timid in public. In a long letter of several pages they wrote to us about their successful life in their new Homeland, talking with pride about everything in this wonderful country of America. We discounted some of their enthusiastic reports, for, indeed, how could you be happy being so far away from the real Homeland, Russia. However, we were glad that they were happy after all their struggles in the old country. We never knew the source of their prosperity in America. Judging from their prosperous appearance and the derby displayed by my uncle in his photograph, the same derby that we saw often in the illustrations in some magazines of important people in America–such as Al Smith, President Cleveland and Banker Morgan–we were under the impression that our uncle and his family had reached the high rungs of American Society. Perhaps they were great industrialists or heads of banking houses. We took part credit in the fact that our family supplied America with important leadership.

These were the people that we came to. This is the family that gave us shelter in our first days in this country of the United States of America.

My uncle was a very amiable, good-natured and warm-hearted man. He was sincerely proud and felt great satisfaction that, as fate had it, he was the one who gave shelter to the children of his prosperous kinsman, once celebrated in the family, David Kushnirovitz. He was now a prosperous owner of a grocery store in Mount Carmel. He had not only paid off the debts accrued in being uprooted from the Old World and resettled in this New World, he had also developed a good solid business, enabling him to bring up his children in no want, and even to put away some money in the bank. He was a simple soul, ascribing all this opulence of his to the great new system of things that he found in this New World, the absolute freedom to do whatever one wants, to go wherever one's heart desires, Gentile or Jew. He was, of course, a staunch American patriot, a good citizen, seeing eye to eye with his Republican Committeeman and voting Republican to keep this country prosperous and happy forever.

He was proud of his good fortune to be a host to the children of David, the acknowledged head of the clan in the old country; and, I suspect that with all this economic well-being and the sincere hospitality shown us, there was perhaps, also, a thought nursed in the depths of his mind of renewing the family ties and strengthening them by having one of David's boys marry one of his daughters.

This would have been a quite natural and legitimate aspiration, and it looked as if it was close to happening. He had two fine unmarried daughters, the younger one, Sarah, being quite attractive and about the same age as Eli. Anna, the older one, was not so attractive physically, but she was friendly, sociable and quite intelligent.

After staying in Uncle London's house for about a week, and having rested and recuperated from our travels, our uncle had a little talk with Eli and me, which ran like this: "Now, boys, you have rested and have had an opportunity to look around and observe things. Now is the time to think about and to discuss your future and to lay plans for activities in this new country. You have no doubt observed that I am well-fixed in my grocery business, where the whole family works and helps me out. It is a good business and it could be further expanded to the benefit of all of us if you would decide to join me in this business. This is the only way I can be of help to you in establishing yourselves economically in this Great Land of ours. Ths is the way I started and, as you see, I have achieved considerable success. Well, boys, I will let you think it over. Let me know of your decision. There is no hurry about giving me your answer. Stay here with me as long as you want, and you are very welcome by us all, regardless of whatever you decide to do."

Chapter 30

MY STRUGGLE AS A "GREENHORN"

Of course, my decision was already made long before I reached the shores of this new country. I wished to study medicine. After a day or so, when I found a moment of privacy with my uncle, I told him that I appreciated very much all he had done for us, his generosity in bringing us over here, and the splendid hospitality shown us in his home. However, my plans were different from those offered by him, to become a grocery man. I had decided to study medicine. My uncle was taken aback in real surprise. He let me know in a firm tone that, although he was fairly well off, the study of medicine required much capital, patience, and hard work. He, for one, would be absolutely unable to help me out in any financial way. What he did so far was his duty and good will as a devoted relative, but I must realize that my new plans were entirely at variance with traditionally acknowledged, although voluntary, obligations of relative to relative. I agreed with him heartily that his reasoning was perfectly logical. But, countered I, it was never my intention to ask him for help in carrying out my designs. I would depend entirely on my own efforts to live my life in accordance with my plans. All I would ask of him was to supply me with an address of some person known to him in the city of Philadelphia, where I planned to go and where I would stop for a while until I learned my way around. I, of course, spoke only for myself. As far as Eli was concerned, he had his own mind, and he could decide for himself his course of action.

My uncle agreed that I had the right to plan my life in my own way. However, he felt it his duty to warn me that the road I contemplated taking was full of insurmountalbe hardships, as I would find out when I ventured down that road. As a man of experience, knowing the life of this country, he felt obliged to warn me that I was embarking on a very risky adventure, and that I might regret not following the well-proven and sure way to a successful career which he offered me.

However, he gave me the address of a cousin in Philadelphia with a letter asking him to give me a place of lodging, at least for the first days

of my stay in the city. And so, two days later on a Sunday afternoon, I bade goodby to my uncle and his family, bought a ticket to Philadelphia and, with five dollars in my pocket, without knowing the English language and without having any definite idea as to what I would do in Philadelphia, I climbed into the railroad car. Toward evening, I reached the city, with a very small suitcase containing my meager belongings. I reached the address of the Londons, cousins of my uncle, 1901 North Napa Street, where my new life in this Great Land of Opportunity, the United States of America, began.

This branch of Londons, my uncle's cousins, had a three-story corner house. Their business was a small candy and ice cream store on the first floor of the building, the most common business in the cities, possibly, next to a corner drug store or saloon. I was given a small rear room on the second floor, whose windows looked out into a narrow alley where stray cats and dogs and an occasional drunkard were the only living creatures usually seen. The room was somewhat detached from the other rooms and afforded all the privacy I would wish. The rent was very reasonable, in accordance with my very limited means. The store sold English as well as Jewish newspapers, as was the custom in Jewish neighborhoods. I could not read the English newspapers and, therefore, when I got up early the next morning, I picked up the two Jewish newspapers, the *Forward* and the local newspaper, the *Yiddishe Welt* (Jewish World). Turning to the "Help Wanted" pages, I marked down a few addresses of jobs offered. This, my first action, was a little misunderstood by Mr. Levitt, the local Jewish newspapers distributor, who in a day or two noticed me leafing through the newspaper for the advertisement page and conceived the idea that I was looking for a free ride, the reading of the newspaper without paying for it. After a short investigation as to who this fellow was, he and my cousin London, his customer, came to the conclusion that, as a "greenhorn," I could be excused for not knowing better and "mussing up" the newspaper to be sold to customers. They explained to me my misdemeanor and I, agreeing to their logical arguments, began to buy my newspapers.

At any rate, after noticing and reading in the *Yiddishe Welt* that they needed a boy in a wholesale grocery on Second Street, I found out from Mr. London how to get there and had the fortune to be hired to begin work there the next day. The pay, I believe, was about 15 dollars a week. I thought that it was a quite reasonable wage and accepted the job with alacrity.

It was a wholesale grocery store, and I spent the next two days carrying boxes and bags of all kinds of groceries from one floor to another or loading them onto the customers' trucks. I put in a good hard day's work, but was quite satisfied that on the second day of my arrival in Philadelphia I had found a job. The first two days I would start about eight A.M. and quit about half past five or six P.M., but on Friday the store was open until ten, and on Saturday until about one A.M., finishing up the weekend orders and preparing merchandise for the beginning of next week. I reached home about two A.M. I disregarded the hard work, but was quite disturbed by the long hours. I was planning to enroll in a night school for foreigners to learn the English language, and even had my mind set on a certain school, "The National Preparatory School," recommended by some "knowing" or knowledgeable Jewish people whom I had met in the store and talked to about my desire to start night school. This new job with its unusually long hours deprived me of any opportunity to start my very vital program of studies.

I had already earned about twelve dollars this week. I had ten dollars for my rent per month and a couple of dollars left in my pocket. The next day was Sunday. This time I bought the Jewish newspaper, took it to my room and thoroughly read over the "Help Wanted and Offered" columns. I set my mind on an ad, "Boy wanted" at an ice-cream cone manufacturing shop–conditions of work "light" and time from nine A.M. to four-thirty P.M. That just suited me. I got up early Monday morning and appeared in the office of that shop as it opened. When the young Jewish owner of the shop asked me what I wanted and I showed him the ad in the Jewish newspaper, he smiled and pointed out to me the specific word, "Boy," in the ad. "You are not a boy," he said, smiling. "You are a full-grown man."

I asked what difference that made to him. But he said the difference was that he was prepared to pay the wage of a boy for this kind of work, to clean up the shop, etc., and that I would hardly agree to a wage of eight or nine dollars per week. I said that nine dollars a week was all right with me, and I was hired.

Of course, the work was very light–to clean up the place a few times a day, to put things in order, and so on. After my previous job in the wholesale grocery store, this was really a young boy's job. I worked there one week and got my pay of nine dollars. In the meantime I visited The National Preparatory School one evening and signed up for

evening courses in the English language; and for the next three months I concentrated on reading and writing English.

I continued my job the next week. I was bored by the work, as most of the time I was idle. I watched the two bakers who baked the ice cream cones on special ovens. They would make the semiliquid dough, pour it into special cone-shaped receptacles, or molds, adjusted on a hot iron oven, and remove the cones just at the proper time when they were neither overbaked and burned nor underbaked and still soft. This required skill and experience, though the work looked very easy. You had to use your fingers in manipulating the cones and removing them from the hot iron plates of the stove; and if you were not nimble enough you burned your fingers on the hot plates. Watching the bakers, I thought that here I had an opportunity to learn the trade. These workers were union men and received about 45 dollars a week. It would be a fortune for me, and surely worth the attempt to learn this trade. I asked the workers whether they would mind if I tried to do a little baking. They readily agreed, knowing full well what was in store for me and wanting to have a little fun in watching me burn my fingers and hands. I started to pour the dough, and I used either an overdose and the cones came out thicker and would not come off easily from the forms, or an underdose and they would be too thin and burned. When I tried to pry loose the hot and underdone cones from their molds, I burnt my fingers and hands on the hot iron. By the end of the day, after a few tries at the work, my fingers were thoroughly burned and blistered. This, of course, did not stop me from pursuing my course in baking. With the bakers looking on and having their fun, I continued to try to improve my technique and, in a day or so, I was able to bake the ice cream cones fairly decently. I poured the exact amount of dough, emptied the molds just in proper time, and did it skillfully enough not to touch any hot plate with my fingers. I congratulated myself on acquiring a trade, hoping to get an increase in my pay when, at the end of the week as he handed me my week's pay of nine dollars, the boss announced that I was not expected to come back to work. He explained to me that he was under pressure from the two bakers, both union men; that unless he fired me they would quit work immediately, as they refused to work in a place which used non-union labor. And so my job and with it, my rosy and promising plans, came to an end.

That weekend I was lucky to strike up an acquaintance, in the candy store where I lived, with a Jewish carpenter who came in for a glass of

soda. In the course of our conversation, he told me that he needed a helper on his different jobs of rebuilding and remodeling old houses. I asked him whether he could use me, and he readily agreed to take me on as his helper. The next day he picked me up in his car, and we went to an old empty house which he was remodeling. I was an all-around helper, lugging building materials, breaking down old walls needing replacement, and helping the master carpenter erect new walls. It was an interesting kind of work and familiar to me, since I was accustomed from my days in Constantinople to use a saw and axe.

The generous carpenter also offered me the generous salary of 18 dollars a week. Things looked rosy again. We worked Monday and Tuesday. I knew already where the job was, and on Wednesday morning when the boss did not come to pick me up I went there by foot to meet him there. It was a walk of about 25 blocks, and I came there early enough, but the boss was not there. I waited about two hours and he did not show up. A big, stout, middle-aged man, rather well-dressed, came into the empty building carrying a portfolio. He looked over the rooms, paying special attention to the work already done. He asked something which I did not understand and mentioned the name of my boss. Apparently he asked where my boss was. I only shook my head. He left, and after waiting another hour, I went back home to my place. I told Mr. London, my landlord, what had happened today, and he smilingly said that apparently my boss had gone on another spree. He explained to me that, although my boss is a wonderful guy and has a golden heart, he often gets drunk and does not appear for work for days. I do not remember whether I ever met again this employer of mine, but I never collected the two days' wages that he owed me. I did not know, and nobody explained to me, that I could have gotten my money from the contractor—or could I have? I had no time to delve into this matter as I needed work and the next day I went to work in a hat factory, where they put me to handling a certain machine producing a certain angle in the thick piece of paper used in a paper model hat. This was assembly work. The piece of paper moved to the next worker working on another machine, which did something else to it. The foreman explained to me the workings of the machine. I could not understand him very well, but the part of the work that I was to do appeared to be simple enough. I began to work, and very soon something happened to the machine and I pushed on the stop button. The worker next to me started to grumble that he had no work to do as

I did not feed him the piece of cardboard from my machine. The foreman came back and, busying himself a few minutes, made the machine work and motioned to me to continue my work. A few minutes later the machine stopped again. I had never worked at complicated machinery and either fed the cardboard the wrong way or handled the machine incorrectly. The foreman returned, this time very impatient and gloomy. He spent about ten minutes trying to make the machine go, but something had broken or was twisted, and he could not start it again. He motioned to me to follow him and led me to the Jewish supervisor of the place. They exchanged a few words, and the manager told me that he would give me some other work. This proved to be sweeping the floors and putting things in order. I was at this type of work until the end of the week; when I got my pay, I also was handed a slip saying that I was fired from my job.

During the three or four weeks of my changing jobs, I never stopped attending school for one evening. The days or half-days that I did not work I used to very good advantage in preparing my lessons, oral or written. I was making good progress in my studies of the English language. At the end of the month I was already able to read classified ads of "Labor Wanted" in English newspapers. And here a new world opened for me. No more "Boys Wanted," but men or laborers wanted. It was 1924, not long after the war. There was plenty of work to be found. The columns of "Labor Wanted" were long. The choice was big. I would read the evening paper ads and early in the morning appeared before a shop or other place of employment and joined the line of applicants. It was mostly plain manual labor that was wanted. The foreman, or hiring boss, would look over the line to pick his man. I looked healthy and robust and was still in my European clothes. The foreman never failed to be impressed from my looks that I was the right candidate for the labor he needed and motioned to me to get out of the line and join the line of hired workers.

I never missed one day's work during the first few months of my labor work, although the jobs lasted from a couple of days to maybe ten days or two weeks. I worked mostly in construction, and also in such places as the U.G.I. (United Gas Improvement Company) on street pavements among gangs of Italian and Negro workers and, later on, inside buildings, mostly in shops of iron works or machinery shops. I worked at Baldwin Locomotive Works, when its shops were still in the city, Lipton Company Iron Works, Budd Manufacturing Company,

Cramp's Shipyard, and numerous other smaller steel and iron-works shops.

In the meantime I advanced rapidly in my study of the English language and at the end of three months concluded an agreement with Mr. Zavelle, the principal of The National Preparatory School on Pine Street, to prepare me for a high-school equivalency course for 175 dollars, the length of time depending on my ability to pass the examinations in individual subjects which were offered periodically by the State Board of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As I had had no formal education in Russia, I had to start my formal education in this country from scratch. The first four subjects chosen by me for study and examinations for credits were geometry, algebra, and the English and German languages. The German language was, of course, a cinch for me, as I had a good reading knowledge in German, as well as a good vocabulary. Geometry and algebra were very much to my liking. I enjoyed the logic of geometry and was familiar with numbers from my days of bookkeeping, although algebra was on a higher level.

I had, besides, an excellent teacher in algebra and geometry, Mr. Rosentzweig. He not only knew the subject but was able to impart it to the student in such a clear, logical, step-by-step way that it was self-evident even to the most obtuse mind. The study of English grammar and vocabulary was the most difficult subject for me in the first weeks of my study. However, we had an excellent teacher in English as well as in chemistry and other subjects. The English teacher was M.H. Goldstein, a law student in the University of Pennsylvania at that time. Yale Nathanson, who was later well known as a psychologist, was also one of our teachers. They were young and very enthusiastic; and the hard work and the willingness of the students, mostly foreign-born and recently arrived in this country, constantly fed their enthusiasm and made them better teachers.

At the end of three months I took the State Board Exams in the above four subjects and passed them all very satisfactorily. In three months, I took the next batch, chemistry, hygiene, German II and English, and passed these. During my exam in hygiene I had a funny experience. I sat down at my table, received my examination papers with the questions to be answered, glanced them over quickly and noticed that they were all common-sense questions easy to answer. I noticed, however, one question whose leading word I had never heard and had not come across in my manual in hygiene. The question was,

"What is constipation? And how can you avoid it?"

I had never heard the word, "constipation," from any of my friends and was really stumped. I quickly answered all the other questions, and I came back to this question, pondering its meaning. In my desperation I motioned to the nearest proctor watching over us examinees and asked him in a low voice the meaning of the word constipation. I assured him that I did not want any help in answering the question. If I could only know what the word constipation meant I could no doubt easily answer the question. He looked at me with amazement, utmost scorn, and angrily walked away. For a grown-up man, a high-school student, not to know what constipation means, a word known to babes and young children, was something he just could not understand. I do not doubt that his esteem of all the crowd of threescore people taking the exams suffered considerably, if they could have in their midst such an obvious moron as I no doubt appeared to him. Although I wrote double-talk in answering this question on the exam paper, I did pass this subject. Apparently the rest of the questions were answered correctly and, if this answer appeared very ambiguous and sounded strangely to the examiner, he gave me the benefit of doubt and passed me on the subject.

By this time I was advancing rapidly in my knowledge of the English language, both spoken and written. I acquired a fairly decent vocabulary. I even received the First Prize in English Composition from our teacher, Mr. Goldstein. One of the assignments for the class was, "Why I Am Religious." I paraphrased it as "Why I Am Not Religious." My advanced arguments were that the mystery and vastness of the universe around us requires all our efforts at scientific investigations and knowledge. Religion, requiring blind faith, may perhaps interfere with these attempts at any analytical approach to our universe. I wrote with sincerity and conviction, as this was actually my mood, which made me go through all hardships to acquire knowledge. It impressed my English teacher and, as a first prize, he gave me a three-volume set of the famous novel by Romain Rolland, *Jean Christophe*. I loved literature in general, and English Composition was, therefore, my favorite subject. But I also liked every other subject and was highly enthusiastic in my studies and enjoyed them. As a result I easily passed every exam, and at the end of eighteen months from my start at the elementary school of the National Preparatory School I received from the State Board of Examiners a certificate of my acquiring a

"High-School Equivalent Education."

At the end of the second year I applied to Temple University for admittance and passed the College Entrance Examinations, all the subjects being fresh in my mind.

Chapter 31

I ENTER TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRE-MEDICAL SCHOOL

Of course, all my studies were done evenings and during weekends, as during the day I was doing laboring work. My studies during the weekends were done in the beautiful and spacious Fairmount Park, which was two blocks away from my place of residence. I would leave in the morning on Saturdays and Sundays and find a quiet place in the park and would spend the whole day studying. Where the Robin Hood Dell is now, there was a deep ravine overgrown with bushes and trees. This was one of my most frequented haunts. It was completely removed from the hustle and bustle of the city. You could hear only the song of the birds, the gurgling of the spring waters welling up from the depths of the earth and cascading down the slopes of the ravine to the Schuylkill River, the piercing of the air by the chirping of the cricket and, here and there, a couple of adventurous boys would enliven the solitude of this remote place by their spontaneous, enthusiastic exclamations in coming across a bird's nest or finding a piece of antique wood or odd stone.

Or I would pick for variety, the slopes of the park overlooking the Schuylkill River, being hidden among the trees and bushes overgrowing the rocky slopes. From there I could watch the Sunday crowd swarming through the park, individual families staking out their picnic grounds, and men and boys playing baseball in the adjacent diamond-shaped field.

It was my first acquaintance with the life and ways of the American people, mostly lower middle-class and workers enjoying their days of rest. This enthusiasm for baseball, old and young in their sport clothes pitching the ball and catching it with such relish, was a new phenomenon to me. The noisy crowds of onlookers apparently followed every move of the gladiators, and their approval or disapproval signified by loud comments added additional color to this national pastime.

A thing that puzzled me was the physical appearance of the players. Of course, these were all amateurs. I was accustomed to seeing people participating in athletics who were more or less muscular, well-built

physical specimens. Here I saw people flocking to the fields of play, emaciated and scrawny with arms and legs thin and almost rickety, yet full of play and eager to participate in the game. I also saw the refreshments being sold to them and apparently enjoyed by them, consisting of small bottles of Coca-Cola, or other drinks of all kinds and colors, and pretzels and hot dogs with mustard, eaten sparingly. This explained to me the emaciated appearance of the players, but it did not explain the inexhaustible source of their energy and enthusiasm.

I once watched a family of four picnickers who pitched their camp at a short distance from my hiding place–a young man of about 25, his wife, and two children. The man appeared to me very attentive to his wife. Yet the woman appeared to me most unattractive. Her arms and legs were very thin, long, and angular, her chest flat, and her pelvic bones stuck out from under her thin dress. To me, she was a most unattractive sight of womanhood. Yet she apparently "ruled the roost," was most impatient with her children and inattentive to her husband. She appeared to be quite confident in her powers and charm as a woman. It was a rather new phenomenon to me, accustomed as I was in Russia to seeing women rather on the heavy side, with prominent, protruding breasts, the body attractively curved, naturally displaying their charms and playing up to the men with their femininity.

I was definitely on new grounds and in the midst of a new, strange civilization with different standards and tastes. At least so it appeared to me at that time. Since then I have somewhat revised my views on certain aspects of the relationship of the women to the men in this United States of America civilization. This external appearance of the mass of American womanhood, which struck a newcomer from another part of the world as somewhat against the biological functions of a woman to bear and rear children, this "angularity" of body and the lack of pleasing curves noticed by me at the time of my arrival seems to me to be just a passing stage. This adopted style of wearing suits instead of dresses, of padding shoulders, flattening and compressing of the pelvis by all kinds of devices, the attempt to speak in a gruff masculine voice by so-called "advanced" leaders of the feminine society, and all other attempts to be manly reflected only the first stages of women in a changing economic structure of a highly developing industrial society.

Women, during the last century in the United States, were becoming more and more drawn into the labor force of this country's economy. More and more women were being employed to operate machines in

shops, to do stenographic work in offices, to participate even as executives in managing stores, shops, and industries. All those activities were traditionally male activities in most parts of the world. In my opinion–based, of course, on my personal observation–assuming these formerly traditional male activities caused two definite changes in the United States of America's womanhood. One, which is possibly a passing and temporary change, was her external appearance in dress–resembling the male's–and in her physical bodily structure (angularity and lack of curves), which was an attempt to make a virtue, by creating the proper style, of the necessary body adjustment to the kind of work assumed. The result of this condition was also the curtailment of the number of children born, hailed as a virtue instead of a necessity, in the first half of the twentieth century.

The other change is more fundamental and permanent, and it is in essence the specific characteristic of the United States of America's civilization–the dominance of the woman over the man, which can be observed in all phases of American life (as was the case, by the way, in the ancient Egyptian civilization) and which fundamentally springs from the fact that the American woman has freed herself economically from the dominance of the man.

From my personal knowledge in Russia–and the same was true for most of the countries of the world–the man was the aggressor in courting and wooing in love affairs. The woman played a passive role in general, being the power behind the throne when possible. The woman in this country from her very childhood appears to be the aggressor. You can observe it in a crowd of little boys and girls, where the girls assume the leadership over the boys; among high-school adolescents, the girls seem to be the aggressive ones in class and the ones who, more often than not, call up boys to make dates; it is the young matron who assumes complete domination in the household; and the middle-aged woman inherits the wealth of the husband who has worked himself to death.

It is, of course, an historical process of development attendant on a change in the economic structure of society. The patriarchal Old World (in the Orient and even Western Europe) was built chiefly on an agrarian economy, where the woman's role was confined more or less to the three "K's" (*Kuchen, Kinder,* and *Kirche*); this is being replaced by a new society built on industrialization, where the woman's role is just as important as, and in some industries more so than, the man's.

Women became emancipated and, like all suppressed groups when suddenly freed from centuries-old traditions, for a time misinterpret and abused their freedom to their own disadvantage. But little by little a certain *modus vivendi* takes place. A certain equilibrium is reached and established, in which the natural biologic laws, more enduring than human laws, reassert themselves. This seems to be taking place now in the United States of America in the younger generation, following their suffragette parents; more proper, biologically, feminine dresses are back in style; bigger families are wanted and achieved.

* * * * *

I was too extremely busy working during the day and studying at night and on weekdays to participate in any way socially in the life around me. Since I had left Russia and embarked upon the stormy sea of travel to Palestine, which ended in a fiasco and changed my course to the Land of Opportunity, the Unites States of America, I had hardly bothered even to think about women, or to be physically attracted by them. My last so-called love affair–or rather, infatuation–was with my cousin, Sonia, Uncle Motel's daughter. She was a very beautiful girl, vivacious, feminine and flirtatious, and I dreamed of her in my usual platonic way, underlying, of course, my physical attraction to her. All I desired was to hug her and kiss her and dream of her as a future wife. A secret lover, I had the most tender feeling toward her. I never expressed my feeling overtly, but intuitively she knew about my feelings and pinings, enjoyed it, but kept aloof and did not encourage any hopes in me. It was not a question of dating her. Though I lived quite a few years in the city of Kiev, I still had the shyness of a country boy toward girls, especially those to whom I was attracted. City life was not like country life with its simplicity and closeness of boys and girls, which leads to close bodily contact.

I was thinking of eventually proposing marriage to her and, once or twice, tried to express to her this idea in a sort of veiled way, but she decidedly declined to be involved or to lend a sympathetic ear. Finally, my hopes were dashed to the ground when she announced that she was engaged to a man from another city.

A few months later, rumors spread in our family circle that the romance of my cousin Sonia was on the rocks. To this day I do not know the reason for the fiasco. Whether her fiancé, a business man with advanced socio-economic ideas, found out that my uncle was not so

prosperous as his mode of living suggested, or whether some less mercenary reasons caused the break-up, I am unable to state.

Sometime later this event was openly discussed in my uncle's house, and the beautiful Sonia had her first (I am sure of that) taste of being turned down and "not wanted," a bitter pill for a proud, conceited, beautiful woman to swallow.

Just before I left Russia, I visited my uncle to take leave of him; my cousin Sonia, finding an opportunity to be alone with me, suggested the idea that when I settled abroad she would be willing to join me as my consort. Of course, this unexpected proposal from the beautiful Sonia, unreachable all these years, was a somewhat pleasant surprise to me and a tribute to my enduring patience; but unfortunately, or fortunately for both of us, she missed her boat. By this time I was so overwhelmingly involved in the radical, complete change in all the aspects of my life that there was no room left for the "old" emotions and attraction to my beautiful cousin. If true love is deeper and stronger than were my feelings towards Sonia, then apparently it was not love but rather a passing infatuation.

Being deeply involved in my status as a *Chalutz*, I had no time for women. Throughout my days and years of struggle until I finally settled in Philadelphia I never so much as had a date with any girl. Appreciative as I am of feminine beauty and attractiveness, I had no time for women. I was too involved in my struggle, at first for mere existence, and later on to reach my goal of becoming a physician. During my years of study and preparing my lessons in the park surrounded by mighty nature, filled on every level with manifestations of the powerful bonds between the sexes, my desire for female company revived. Of course, the courting of women by men in this country, and particularly in the big city of Philadelphia, was entirely different from the courting in Russia that I knew. My teen years I spent mostly in the country on the bosom of Nature where boy meets girl as a private affair away from the limelight, and whatever their relationships were, whether little involved or much involved, was their personal affair kept away from public gaze. Watching the dating of boys and girls in this new country of mine, I noticed a phenomenon strange to me: the boys considered just the fact of a date with a girl and appearance with her in public as sufficient proof of their manliness, even though there might be no bodily contact between them as expressed by kisses, and so on. As a result, the boy will try to pick the most ostentatious and dressed-to-kill girl as his date,

even though he would never think of marrying her. And the girl, apparently aware of this, will demand from her date corresponding compensation such as being escorted to an expensive show and restaurant in a shiny car with the orchid corsage and other appurtenances of a successful date.

I, of course, had a different concept of a date. Even if I had had the means of "spending on the girl" I would have had no desire to do so, as to me a girl was a woman first and last, and not a "date." Fortunately for me, there were many foreign girls in my neighborhood who were not sufficiently "Americanized" to see the "advantages" for the pretty and desirable girl of the "modern" way of dating. They just desired the company of a man and, like their sisters in Russia or Europe, considered a date as a stepping stone to a more lasting relationship in the form of marriage. And so my striving for feminine company was easily satisfied, thus being no distraction or impediment to my studies.

About two or three weeks after my arrival in Philadelphia I had a visitor. It was my brother, Eli, who also came to Philadelphia. He apologized for disturbing me, especially after the definite separation of ways that had taken place in Constantinople. He thought that I, as a brother, would not mind giving him a few hints and leads as to finding a room, work, and signing up at a night school for studies, things about which I apparently had already some knowledge. I was somewhat surprised that my brother had left my uncle's house. I assumed that Eli, never having expressed any particular desire for study and often expressing a wish to take up the trade of a dental mechanic in America, would be more amenable to my uncle's suggestion to join him in his business, especially when this would have led no doubt to a marriage with our uncle's younger daughter, the pretty Sarah. At least we both had good reasons to think this way, from certain hints of our relatives suggesting such an outcome. And it seemed to be a natural course to follow.

However, Eli suddenly announced to me that he had also decided to study medicine and wanted to follow my course of action. I, of course, acquainted him with the facts of my life in the city and gave him the address of the National Preparatory School, which he soon also joined. He found for himself a room with a Jewish family which had recently emigrated from Poland and began also to look for some kind of labor work. Our roads often crossed both in school and at certain jobs where we worked simultaneously.

We were both hired as laborers at D. Manufacturing Company. The work consisted of pushing and pulling little trucks loaded with all kinds of iron or steel parts and distributing these parts to the different machines operated by the skilled workers. While Eli was pulling one such truck, heavily loaded, a wheel passed over his left foot and smashed the second toe. He was taken to the dispensary and sent to the surgical service of the hospital. The toe was so badly smashed that it had to be amputated. After a few days in the hospital he was sent home to his room to recuperate. The company surgeon visited him a few times to redress the healing wound. At the last redressing he gave him a certain paper to sign, which Eli did, absolving the company of any responsibility. The surgeon promised Eli to keep him employed in the shop for a long time, but after returning to work and working there only two weeks, he was laid off; and that was the end of his job at the D. Manufacturing Company.

Neither Eli nor I knew until years after about the compensation for the lost toe that he could have secured. Therefore, he did not claim it, and the company, of course, did not volunteer to pay him anything for his toe, much as this money would have helped him in his struggle to make a living at that time. Not only did the company fail to reimburse him for the loss of his toe, but the mercenary doctor obliged his company by getting so easily the release of responsibility from Eli, who was ignorant of his rights. All the rest of his life Eli resented this, and it gave him justified ammunition in his incessant complaints about capitalism and capitalists.

Once Eli and I worked in a furniture shop together. This was a place in which furniture was assembled from already prepared parts made in a different shop. It would be sold as unpainted furniture. After we had worked there for several weeks, we had acquired a fair degree of skill in assembling chairs and tables. This job held promise for a long period of employment when, suddenly, to our chagrin the owner got into financial troubles, and the shop had to be closed for an indefinite time.

I worked at different small iron-works shops whose owners worked as sub-contractors for larger enterprises. We prepared parts to be assembled in bigger shops. My wages ran on the average about three dollars a day. Sometimes, in emergency short-time work, I was paid four dollars a day. My most lucrative work was in a shop at 19th Street and Lehigh Avenue. It was a big factory, where iron parts of machinery of all descriptions, mostly for automobiles, were dyed or painted. There

were big vats of dye on the floor of the shop, and we would dip the cast iron parts in the liquid dye. The pay was about 32 dollars a week. But the work was very hard on me. To stand the whole day long over the vat, breathing in the fumes of the corrosive liquid, caused in me a shortness of breath, which was probably due to an allergic reaction to the vapors of the dye, and I conceived the idea that I was developing a bad heart: hence, the dyspnea. I saw some workers with unhealthy, puffed faces who claimed to have been working at this work for years without, according to them, ill effects. However, I felt that I could not work there much longer. The big money that I was now getting made me postpone from week to week my resolution to quit. Finally I could not stand it any longer and quit this lucrative job with regret, as I needed the money very much. I had to move to a more expensive room as the Londons needed my old room for their daughters, who were growing up. I had to pay for my tuition in the National Preparatory School, and I was sending, regularly every month, packages of food and other minor things to my family in Russia. At that time the Soviet Government allowed these food packages to be sent to the near-starving people in Russia. This 32-dollar-a-week job helped me to meet my expenses and even to save some money in a savings account which I opened in the bank nearest to my place of employment.

I found another job in a big machine shop, where my salary was only about 20 dollars, but I was able to breathe and was not so knocked out at the end of a day's work. I worked there for several weeks until laid off, when the shop had no more need of my labor. I was fortunate shortly afterward to find employment in Cramp's Shipyard, where three Navy cruisers were being built at that time.

I was at first led into the very big shops where the parts were being made for the ships. But the foreman of the place assigned me to be the assistant pipe-fitter on the ship. I was introduced to my boss, a Swedish man of about 35 years, very pleasant and easy-going. His job was to connect with copper tubing the different massive motors and turbines being installed on the bottoms of the many-decked ships. My work was to assist the master in holding the pipes when he cut them and measured them. It took the mechanics who were installing the turbines days to fit and balance the massive turbines in their assigned space, and it took us an hour or two to connect the pipes to the turbines. The rest of the time we were resting, doing nothing.

My job during these long hours of rest was to watch out for any

inspector coming down from the upper decks to the bottom of the shop to check up on the workers. I stationed myself at a strategic point from where I could see the supervisor descending the steps from the deck above us. I hurriedly notified my boss, sometimes waking him up from a deep slumber, and he would immediately grab a piece of pipe and get busy turning it this way and that way and measuring it. This was the easiest job that I had come across so far. My salary was steady. As an assistant pipe fitter, I rated exactly 20 dollars and 25 cents per week. However, it was worth much more to me. I used to take my textbooks with me to work and had an excellent opportunity to prepare all my assignments and to study for all my State Board exams. I worked on this wonderful job for several months until the very day I entered Temple University to take my pre-medical course. The time coincided with the finishing of the three Naval ships and launching them for service in the Navy. I would most likely have been laid off after the completion of these ships, and I had the satisfaction of quitting my job rather than being laid off.

* * * * *

A new era in my life and work began when I entered Temple University Pre-medical School. It was the end of the second year of my arrival in this country. So far things had gone on schedule: I had achieved my high-school equivalent education. I had passed the college entrance examination without any hitch. I had worked all this time without being jobless even for a week. I believe I lost a total of only three or four days' work between jobs.

I had even succeeded in saving up about 175 dollars and paid out of it my first-semester college tuition of about 100 dollars, I think. I spent about 15 or 20 dollars on books and became a freshman in Temple University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Broad and Berks streets.

I even participated in the tug-of-war game and battle of bags of flour between the Freshies and Sophomores on the street in front of Temple University—a grown-up boy of about 25 among 18- and 19-year-old Freshmen and Sophomores. Of course, I was of great help to my co-Freshmen in tugging on the rope.

Chapter 32

I BECOME A HEBREW TEACHER

There was only one dark cloud on my horizon. Until now I had worked during the day and studied at night. But now that I was taking a pre-medical course, which was offered only during the day, I had to forego my day work. True to my principle in life—do first and think afterward when action is needed—I did not hesitate to sign up for the day school. Now the job of seeing my way through financially urgently demanded a solution. For about two or three weeks I lived on my savings of about 30 or 40 dollars and diligently continued my studies. But these savings began to dwindle and were in danger of being completely exhausted. I looked around for night work of any kind but there was none for me or, if there was any, I just did not have the time during the day to locate it. The prospect of dropping out of day school loomed on the horizon. I could not even think of such a possibility after my very smooth-sailing thus far.

I considered all kinds of ways to solve this grave problem, when an idea came to my mind. Sometime previously I had struck up an acquaintance with a nice Jewish family, the Saltzmans, consisting of a widow, her two daughters and a son, who about that time had become a physician and had opened an office for the practice of medicine. The older sister was very kindly disposed toward me; in fact, she showed a definite "bias" toward me. However, I was rather inclined to favor the younger sister, who was very beautiful and feminine. The girls introduced me once to their brother, Dr. Saltzman. Now a thought came to my mind. Maybe this Dr. Saltzman was in need of some sort of assistant in his office to wash bottles and clean instruments. Of course, this idea was a result of my being completely ignorant of the way private medicine is practiced in this country, the hard way, in which a young solo practitioner of medicine builds up his practice. After all I was a complete layman with false notions about physicians and their mode of practice and work. I called up Dr. Saltzman and made an appointment to see him in his office.

Dr. Saltzman, an affable man, quite experienced in the rough and tumble of life, met me in a very friendly manner in his office. He was

wearing a white hospital gown. He moved about his office, full of all kinds of shiny new equipment, of which he was rather proud, explaining to me the function and use of each piece of equipment in a sort of conspiratorial way, as one doctor to a future colleague of his. I was, of course, highly flattered, and my hopes of a job took on new vigor. The office was spotlessly clean, which to a knowledgeable man would indicate that it was not used much; hence, the Good Doctor was not very busy at that time, if at all. But my absolute concentration on my mission gave me no insight into these prosaic things. Finally, with hesitation, I began to explain to Dr. Saltzman the purpose of my visit; my extreme difficulty in continuing my studies; and my hopes that he might help me by offering me a job in his office, even at the lowest fee possible. The doctor looked at me with a look that expressed complete sympathy with me, a perfect understanding of my problem; but at the same time his eyes expressed a wee bit of a smile at my naiveté. He asked me to sit down on one of the new chairs in front of his desk, pre-destined for the expected patients, and launched into a short resumé of his personal life and struggle to reach this present stage of his life as a general practitioner beginning his practice of medicine.

His family were poor Jewish immigrants from Russia, who came to this country about 15 years ago. They did not have the means of seeing him through medical school, but he worked his way through school by tutoring students in the Hebrew language, which he knew very well, and preparing them for their *Bar Mitzvahs*. He said that, as far as helping him in his office, I must understand that he had just started practice, had very few patients, and hardly had any need of an assistant when he, himself, had very little to do at present.

He asked whether I knew Hebrew, and when I said that I have a fair knowledge of the Hebrew language, his eyes lit up, and he said that he would suggest my doing the same thing that saw him through medical school; namely, tutoring Jewish children in Hebrew. I was quite disappointed when my rosy bubble of being an assistant in a physician's office burst and disappeared into air. "But how do you get those students?" I asked him. He replied that personally he had a chance to be a teacher in one of the few Hebrew schools associated with some large Synagogues, but he conceded that these positions are hard to get, as there are so few schools, and there are so many Hebrew teachers among the immigrants arriving from Russia or Poland that apply for them. However, he concluded that there was no reason why I could not

get students as a private tutor simply by contacting the Jewish parents in my neighborhood, Strawberry Mansion, which at that time was a Jewish stronghold, picking up here and there my complement of *Bar Mitzvah* boys who needed to be prepared for this event.

I left Dr. Saltzman's office with a very heavy heart. Somehow I was resentful that he had actually turned me down and rudely awakened me from the pleasant dream of working my way through school by a job which was related to my future career as a physician. And, also, this advice of finding students by simply knocking at the doors of houses and asking whether they need a tutor appeared to me rather degrading. After all, teaching, traditionally a noble and elevating activity, is not selling merchandise, like brushes or dry goods. How could I disturb people by ringing their bells and asking them such an outlandish question: "Do you need a Hebrew tutor for your *Bar Mitzvah* boys?"

In the beginning I decidedly dismissed this idea as foolish and ridiculous. However, days passed by; my money was running out. Under the pressure of necessity I constantly returned to this supposedly ridiculous proposition. Finally, I decided to do something about it—to give it a trial, anyway. One morning I strolled through busy York Street in Strawberry Mansion. It was a street packed with Jewish stores: groceries, bakeries, delicatessens, and butcher shops. The stores were packed with people, and I thought it improper to reveal my odd request in front of so many bystanders. I walked back and forth the length of a few blocks a few times, not daring to enter a store. Finally, I stopped in front of a butcher shop with big words, *Boser Kosher* (Kosher Meat) painted on the windows. Perhaps these two Hebrew words attracted my attention by a mysterious subconscious psychological twist; at any rate, I decided to walk into the store. There was a big mob of women crowding the butcher stand and waiting for their choice meat cuts. I suddenly became faint and was about to walk out, when the butcher, a big rough man in a bloody white apron, noticed me and beckoned me to approach to his table. He asked me what I wanted. In a very low voice, almost in a whisper, I asked him whether he needed a Hebrew tutor for his children. He asked me to talk louder, and when he got the gist of my request he gave me a significant look and, without answering my question, turned around and in a loud voice proclaimed to his wife, who was plucking chicken feathers in one corner: "Well, Bessie, here is your teacher. You were looking for a tutor for your boy Isaac's *Bar Mitzvah* preparation, and here he is! He came right to you!"

The butcher's wife looked me over and told me to come to her house the next day to be introduced to her *Bar Mitzvah* boy, Isaac. I left the butcher shop in an extremely elevated mood, as if a heavy stone pressing on my chest had rolled off. The bright fall day became suddenly brighter, and a wide, pleasant horizon–the future–suddenly stretched before my eyes. I returned to my room to my studies with renewed vigor and optimism.

The next day I visited the house of the butcher, got acquainted with Isaac, a strapping boy of 13 years, looking rather with displeasure and suspicion at me, "another teacher." I agreed with his mother to come twice a week between four-thirty and five-thirty P.M., after the close of the regular public-school day, to give Isaac a lesson in Hebrew and prepare him to read the blessings at the *Torah* during the *Bar Mitzvah* day for the sum of two dollars a week, one dollar per hour.

This unexpected triumph in my first attempt to acquire Hebrew students spurred me on to a renewed vigor in searching for students; and, in about a week or so, I acquired a complement of four or five students, which gave me about nine dollars a week. Since my tutoring started about four-thirty P.M. and could not be stretched later than nine P.M., as the students had to go to bed early or prepare their school assignments, I could not tutor more than six or eight students in one week, including Sundays. Saturday was, of course, a day of rest.

I figured that I could not make more than 12 or 15 dollars a week, at best. As it turned out, I could not make more than eight or nine dollars a week, as often the students would not "be home" or, for some other reason, would not be ready for the lesson when I came. A relative had a wedding in New York, and the whole family had to go there on Sunday; the student had a cold; he was detained after school; and so on–all kinds of "good" reasons for my skipping the lesson and foregoing my dollar.

Occasionally, the student would just get tired of his Hebrew lesson, and no amount of parental exhortation would make him continue his Hebrew studies. "All right!" decided the distraught parents. So he will remain a *goy;* so he will not have the beautiful party which they would prepare for him on *Bar Mitzvah* day! Or the parents would decide to send him to the Hebrew School at the Synagogue. Maybe the reluctant student would be more willing to study among other students. Thus, the number of students fluctuated from week to week.

I needed the money badly, but an hour or so left "vacant" gave me

an extra hour to study or to sleep; I did most of my studying early in the morning before classes.

I would get up sometimes as early as four A.M. and work on my assignments. I never flunked a subject in school as I was always fresh in my studies, having gone over the subject just an hour or so before the unexpectedly "sprung" exam threw the rest of the class into a dither. The rather insufficient money that I was making was enough for my upkeep—room and board—as I lived extremely frugally. But I could save very little, and by the time a new semester rolled around I had to borrow money for my tuition fees.

Chapter 33

THE RADICAL FAMILY X

I became acquainted with a nice Jewish family, the X's. The father was a traditional old Jewish man, religious and attending services at the neighborhood Orthodox synagogue; but the children, of different ages, all born in Russia, for some reason embraced Communism. It was a rather strange phenomenon, watching the old, traditional Jewish father, who just came from the services in the Synagogue, surrounded by a crowd of his children and their friends noisily discussing political themes colored invariably with the ideology of Communism.

Most of those in the crowd were what you would call fellow-travellers of the Communist Party. But Mr. X's children went further. They became actual Party members. There were four girls and one boy in the family. The boy, a classmate of mine through his studies in the National Preparatory School, entered Temple University and also took up a pre-medical course. However, after a few weeks he became engaged to a certain damsel, also a foreign-born girl from the circle of his sisters' girlfriends; whether due to this circumstance or for other reasons, he dropped out of college.

It was not a matter of lack of resources. He lived with his family, who were very anxious to see him through college and have a "doctor" in their own family, the ideal of most Jewish immigrants from Russia or Poland. Besides, his older sister was married to a man who made a "success" in this country. He had established a very successful business manufacturing mattresses and mattress coverings and offered his brother-in-law a very lucrative position in his factory, which would not have interfered with his studies in school. However, Isaac dropped out of college, joined the Communist Party, and even became in a short time "a paid Party functionary", drawing, I believe, about 35 dollars a week which, during the "Depression" days, was a decent wage.

Isaac was a "good boy," honest and reliable in fulfilling his assigned duties as a Party functionary. I do not know exactly what those duties were. I know only that on numerous occasions he spoke to me about the injustices of this capitalistic system and about the blessings that Communism might bring to this highly industrialized country; about

the coming struggle of the working class against their exploiters. It was a repetition of the ordinary propaganda about "class struggle" that had been very familiar to me during the days of the Bolsheviki Revolution in Russia, where I was an eyewitness of that upheaval from the very beginnings.

Having been an eyewitness to, and an actual victim of, the take-over of capitalism by the dictatorship of the peasant and worker, which deprived my families of their accustomed livelihood as millers—all this could not help but have an effect on my thinking. In contrast, I watched, as a private observer, the life and activity in this country where business was going on as usual, where factories were being built, industries being launched by private capital, skyscraper apartments being built by private landlords to derive profits from rents, where banks financed private entrepreneurs, and where business and commerce were in full swing. I often wondered if all these private industrialists and business men had ever heard or knew what a revolution like the Russian Revolution could do to their private businesses and enterprises. However, life here continued in its accustomed way, and neither the capitalistic class nor the American working class was beset by those doubts and fears that occupied my mind and, I am sure, the minds of many fugitives from Soviet life.

I had a certain purpose in life, a specific goal that I was striving to reach, and I was completely dominated by the struggle to achieve this goal. The socio-economic and political life of my new Homeland concerned me only as an objective, non-participating observer.

Nevertheless I often pondered over one phenomenon observed by me. Many of the people whom I met here were, like myself, the children of Jewish, lower middle-class Russian parents who had left Russia when, thanks to the Bolshevik upheaval, their small businesses had been taken away from them. I wondered why so many of these originally bourgeois people were such easy prey to Communist propaganda, becoming either Communist Party members or fellow-travellers. After all, they had had a perfect opportunity to join the Revolution while still in Russia. They had surely been urged by the Communist Regime to integrate with the rest of the workers and peasants in Russia. Yet they "escaped" from Russia to join the Communist ideology in capitalist America, the very country that opened its gates to welcome them as new citizens.

My only explanation of this seemingly unnatural phenomenon was

the fact that they were not really workers with the psychology of workers, who accept the fact that they are workers and will remain so and feel that there is no disgrace in doing honest labor. All they need is to struggle to improve their economic lot by steady pressure on their employers through unionism and strikes–evolutionary means. These children of lower middle-class business people in the former Tsarist Russia never worked as laborers while in Russia, and still retained the ideology of the middle-class Bourgeoisie. When confronted with the reality that, in America, unless you have exceptional opportunities or business acumen you must join the great army of shop workers and laborers, these people could not and would not agree to be "plain" working people. They did not wish to go back to Russia, as they had tasted and become beneficiaries of the high standard of living in this country with the widely distributed benefits of a highly industrialized country, even to the lowest paid workers–the possession of a beautiful house, a car, furniture, even if it was on the installment basis, and free elementary and high school education for their children. These were the benefits about which Russia at that time was still only dreaming. These reluctant workers with a Bourgeois psychology strove to get out of this status of lowly workers even if it meant becoming "commissars" of a new order abolishing capitalism. They would be on the ground floor of the Revolution and get its benefits by becoming the masters of the new order, as had happened to the *have-nots* in the Revolutionary upheaval in Russia.

As a matter of fact, a few of the more aggressive and belligerent Party members, friends of mine, as much as warned me that "when the imminent Revolution in America will come," they, as powerful commissars, would "have my head" for being a counterrevolutionary and a doubter of the inevitable arrival of this "Happy Millennium."

A few American-born, sincere believers in the Communist ideology of building a state on principles of collectivism, such as William Z. Foster, Ruttenberg, Lovestone, Brody, Benjamin Gitlow and others, used this mass of disgruntled people to infiltrate the well-established American unions, to try to disorganize them or influence them to adopt the ideology of revolutionary–and not evolutionary–struggle for the betterment of their conditions. This also explains the rapid build-up of the Communist Party in the Thirties and its subsequent decline in this country.

The children of these same people were more Americanized and

more involved in the life and socio-economic structure of this country. I know personally the sons of certain "Communist" parents who became vice-presidents and members of the Boards of Directors of American business and industrial enterprises, with all their energies and minds directed towards making their businesses profitable for the benefit of their stockholders. As the older generation of these Communistically inclined people died out the Communist movement in this country declined, at least as far as I could observe.

My friend, Isaac, after dropping out of school, worked in his brother-in-law's shop. He organized a few workers to strike for certain conditions which appeared unreasonable to his "capitalist" brother-in-law. After patching up his differences with his old employees, the brother-in-law chased Isaac out of his business. For some time, Isaac, as a paid functionary of the Communist Party, performed his duties in arranging parlor meetings and street demonstrations of fellow-travellers led by Communist organizers. They protested every action of the United States, regardless of whether or not it was acceptable to the vast majority of Americans, so long as it was against the interests of Russia.

The last news I had of Isaac was that he had been called before the Un-American Activities Committee during its session in Philadelphia.

One of Isaac's sisters, Pearl–a beautiful girl, but completely lacking any sense of humor–became a most fanatical and active Communist Party member. She would be seen in those early days "integrating" with Negro boys, dancing with them at street parties. This would not be an unusual phenomenon now, in these days of universal attempts at racial integration; but in those days it could only indicate the strong hold that the Communist propaganda had on Pearl.

As fate would have it, Pearl became an object of veneration and love to my brother, Eli. Of course, her family was flattered by the attention which Eli, a medical student, paid to Pearl, and they related themselves to Eli in a very friendly and encouraging way. But Pearl hardly paid any attention: as a good and devoted, ideologically-soaked-through Communist she was indifferent to the Bourgeois concept: love. Besides, I never noticed in Pearl any ordinary inclination to flirting or other sexually motivated play of a woman. The fanaticism of the "Cause" dominated all her existence–her waking hours and possibly her night dreams, also. The great Russian novelist, Sholokhov, describes in *And Quiet Flows the Don*, a similar

type of woman in the person of Anna Pogoodko, the fanatic woman Communist fighter.

And so, the pining Eli never even made "first base" with Pearl. Unfortunately, a few years later, while still a single girl, Pearl died from cancer of the stomach. To all Eli's frustration was added another deep emotional setback. And to Eli's political outlook, which was basically a deeply ingrained Bourgeois outlook and a tenacious instinct of acquisitiveness, was added another veneer of liberalism; his constant "hot air" talk about Communism and social justice and soaking-the-rich-capitalists–himself excluded, of course–became more vociferous.

The other members of old man X's family did not have the same aggressiveness in actively pursuing the Communist cause. They formed the great mass of "fellow-travellers" which filled all the halls and meeting places arranged by the Communist Party in different parts of the city. They were the ones whom you could see on the streets of Philadelphia on May Day and other labor holidays, carrying placards with the same repetitious slogans of *Hands off Spain!* or *Hands off Cuba!* etc.

The youngest daughter of Mr. X, Lucy, was still a child when her parents arrived in this country. She went through elementary school and high school in this country. The burning flames of social reform of her older siblings affected her to a remarkably less degree. She became a nurse in one of the hospitals and later, I believe, a social worker, with liberal views, to be sure, but with a more mundane and more realistic outlook on life. She spoke and acted more like an American-born girl of her age, being interested in adjusting to best advantage her personal life and the life of her family, than in bringing the millennium of Communism to this country.

Among all this political turmoil in his household, old Mr. X managed to slip into the nearby synagogue once or twice a day, and to conduct with his second wife–a fine, good-natured, matronly woman–a Kosher household.

Mr. X was a secretary to a "Cooperative," or mutually organized fund, lending sums of money to members who could not obtain loans in any other lending agency, due to their complete lack of tangible equity. Having no equity at all, I belonged to this category of poor risks, and I was a beneficiary of this cooperative fund. Trust in my character was the only security which that old, fine man, Mr. X,

accepted in lieu of the loans advanced to me by the Cooperative. This was a great factor in my being able to meet my tuition fees in the college and medical school. For years after my graduation I was still paying off my debt to the Cooperative, as well as the numerous fines in daily pennies per dollar which accumulated due to my tardiness in meeting the repayment dates.

Years later, in my capacity as a general practitioner I would come across those old acquaintances of mine—the devoted Communist members, the fellow-travellers, and their children. It is remarkable what a metamorphosis, not only in their activities but even in their thinking, had taken place among the ranks of these people and their children.

I met, for instance, a cousin of the X's, Mr. B, one of the leaders of this group, a rabid Communist, who sheepishly told me—with a certain pride, nevertheless—that his son, Martin, whom I knew as a baby, was now a vice-president in a certain commercial company, which did good business and was making good profits to the delight of its stockholders.

Some of those "fellow travellers" of yore contacted me personally, insisting upon my donating a sum of money for the benefit of a certain organization in Israel—a working class organization, to be sure, but well known for its antagonism to Communism in all its forms. These people were now Zionists, the enemies of Communism and Russia. The all-absorbing life in this country, with all the powerful agencies of mass propaganda and communication such as the press, radio, and television; the all-dominating power of the high standard of life; the instinct of human beings to "keep up with the Joneses"—all this eroded the resistance and individualism of foreign elements, manifested in the early years of their arrival in this country. Little by little, they fall in line and become as American—if not more so—than all the Americans who came generations earlier; they become completely integrated in their thinking, living, and actions with the rest of the American people—sharing equally in the great achievements of this country—as well as in certain prejudices and weaknesses, which this country possesses and reveals, at times, to the chagrin of its devoted citizens and friends and to the delight of its enemies.

The philosophy of our great statesmen in the legislative, judicial and executive branches of our government in exercising great restraint and patience before applying brutal police force even to the seemingly most disrupting elements in our country has proved itself to be wise. This policy has been most effective in molding the different elements of the

"melting pot" in the United States of America into a uniformly balanced, strong and enduring democratic society.

* * * * *

In my pre-medical studies, both the sciences and the languages were equally of great interest to me. I loved literature and was, therefore, a most eager student in the class of Dr. Robertson, my English professor. He tried to engage the class in discussions of Chaucer, Milton, and other classics in English literature, but to his chagrin very few students responded. Some of them–usually, those who were taking pre-medical courses–were disinterested because literature did not particularly add to the value of their professional subjects, at least so they thought; others might not have been up to that particular assignment at the time of the discussion.

It became almost a precedent that, after a short pause following a challenge by Dr. Robertson to start discussions, I would raise my hand and we would become engaged in a prolonged discussion of the literary merits of this or that author or masterpiece. The only fly in the ointment was the reluctance of the other students to join in discussions and the fact that I would usually be a few minutes late for class, which was the first on the morning agenda. This chronic lateness of mine was due to the fact that I did my studies in the early morning hours and then had to walk a distance of about 16 blocks to school, in order to save on carfare. I could not gracefully explain this to the Professor. He would take out his little notebook and, meticulously marking down my lateness, would say threateningly: "You are late, Kushner, already the eighth time this semester. Three latenesses are counted as one absence, and after three absences you will not be able to take the final exam for the semester in this subject."

The ninth lateness, however, never occurred as I made it my business to get up earlier the last two or three weeks before the end of the semester. I took the final exam in English Composition and my mark, minus one, was the highest in the class, reflecting, of course, Professor Robertson's displeasure at the inattention of the class and his reward for my upholding the standards proper to "discussions" of the subject.

A few months later, when my friend, Fruchter, and I organized "Student League for Literature," I invited Dr. Robertson to be one of our lecturers on the subject of English literature. This was my acknowledgment of my debt to him as my fine instructor in English composition.

This Student League for Literature attracted a different type of boy and girl from those with whom I had associated during the first two years of my arrival in this country. They were American-born or thoroughly "Americanized"–mostly students of teachers' colleges and the local universities. We hired a small hall in Strawberry Mansion, and held our meetings there, mostly on Sunday evenings, inviting different lecturers to speak on various literary topics. We also had discussions, led by some of our own members, of recently published books.

Here I cemented a life-long friendship with Dr. Fruchter (he received his doctorate later) and some members of his family. Here, also, Fruchter met his future wife, Fannie, who was at that time a student teacher, a very pretty girl.

After the meetings the members would visit nearby Fairmount Park to finish the discussion in a less formal and more sociable atmosphere.

This Student League, like all other similar organizations, lasted only as long as the organizers were active in it. In a year or so the most active members, including myself, entered the professional schools, and the League disintegrated.

I continued my struggle on the economic front. The rapid turnover of my privately tutored student-body, from whom I derived my very limited but steady income, made me think of a more stable source of revenue. I decided to open a Hebrew School in one of the heavily populated Jewish sections of Philadelphia. I hired a small room on top of a butcher shop at Fourth and Wolf Streets, and I began to solicit Hebrew students for classes after public school.

My brother, Eli, joined me in this enterprise as the second teacher. We plastered leaflets throughout the neighborhood with most urgent appeals to Jewish parents not to neglect their duties to their Hebrew heritage and to perpetuate the great Hebrew culture by sending their children to a newly organized Hebrew school, where expert Hebrew teachers were ready and willing to teach them the Hebrew language, and even to prepare them for *Bar Mitzvahs*. When Eli read this leaflet, written in Yiddish with all the pathos of a strongly worded appeal to Jewish-Hebrew consciousness, he remarked sardonically to me, "Do you really believe so strongly in this cause?" I replied, "I am hungry."

He understood well the motives for this appeal.

As it was, this appeal apparently made a strong impression on the harassed Jewish parents. In a few days I succeeded in filling my classroom with about thirty pupils, mostly paid up in advance for a

week or two. I congratulated myself on my successfully launched enterprise, and even Eli reluctantly paid tribute to my "business" abilities. However, in a short time the same factors that plagued my private tutoring job began to assert themselves. I would succeed in enrolling a new student and, at the same time, lose two or three other students. They just would not show up, and inquiring of their parents as to the cause of their absence, the helpless parents would just sigh and bemoan the fact that they had no authority over their children and could not force them to attend a voluntary school, when even in the compulsory public schools they often played hookey.

In less than one month the class dwindled to half a dozen pupils, and I had exhausted the neighborhood sources of enrollment of new students. I finished teaching those who had paid in advance and then discontinued the classes and closed the school before my monthly rent had to be paid again. My landlord, the butcher, an understanding man, commiserated with me, but had to bow to the inevitability of looking for another tenant.

Thus, my first attempt at free enterprise in my new country and Homeland failed miserably. Years later, after I was already in the private practice of medicine and was fairly successful, I toyed at times with the idea of opening up a private hospital, thereby practicing medicine on a larger scale, as a private enterprise. The lesson of my fiasco in opening a tutoring school, however, was always before my eyes, dampened my enthusiasm and guided me to extreme caution, as I considered all the pitfalls and unforeseeable exigencies of embarking on private enterprise in medicine.

Chapter 34

THE "LOST GENERATION" OF JEWS

As I became more and more familiar with the life of the Jewish community in Philadelphia, the city being fairly representative of larger centers of Jewish population in the United States (except, possibly, New York which, as the biggest center of the Jewish populations, is unique in many respects), I noticed a radical difference in the spiritual, cultural, and communal life of the American Jew from that of the European Jew and, especially, the Jew of Eastern Europe.

The Synagogue was the center of the spiritual, social, and communal life in the Jewish cities of Eastern Europe, especially for the Jews of the Pale, due to restrictions imposed on Jews in attending elementary and higher schools of education. The *heder* (Hebrew School) and the *Yeshivoth* were the mainsprings or fountains of learning and Jewish culture. The influence of the Synagogue and the *Yeshivoth* was felt in every phase of Jewish life, both religious and secular.

In the Synagogue, the Jew was announced as a newcomer to this world; it is there he was confirmed (*Bar Mitzvah*) and married; where he prayed daily, celebrated his holidays, days of mourning; and it is there that most social events took place.

The Rabbi, as the Head of the Synagogue, was the unquestionable authority to whom every Jew turned daily on questions of religious matters and rituals, which he strictly observed and followed implicitly. The advice of the Rabbi was sought even in secular matters, especially on questions of intimate family affairs.

The Rabbi was looked upon, not only as a religious leader, but also as the final authority in interpreting the *Torah*, the Hebrew lore, and as the standard bearer of the moral and ethical life of the community. He had the aura of holiness about him, as one who is above the ordinary hustle and bustle of life and who is entirely dedicated to a lofty religious life.

Those Rabbis with whom I had personal contact were this type of religious leader and were, therefore, revered by the masses of the Jews in the Pale.

The other, lesser functionaries of the Synagogue reflected, in a

measure, the glory accorded to the Rabbi.

Although the mass of the Jews in the Pale were constantly occupied with *dagas haparnassa,* the troublesome problem of how to eke out an existence in the very difficult and restrictive conditions of the Pale, they never considered material well-being as their main goal in life. Living up to the highest standards of religion was their ultimate goal.

When Saturday or a holiday came they shed all their mundane worries, acquiring a so-called *Neshama Yethero* (an extra soul). They were happy that the higher goal of observing the Holiness of Saturday, or the Holiday, freed them, even though for a short time, from the pressure of unimportant, though still annoying, daily worries.

The Synagogue and the Torah were the potent factors in maintaining the cohesiveness and the identity of the persecuted Jew and his community.

During my last years in Russia, new social ideals and philosophies pervaded the Russian society and seeped through by osmosis to the Jewish community.

The Communist Regime pointed to the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as to the churches of other religions in Russia, as the cause of evil backwardness impeding the progress for the betterment of human society. Religion, in fact, was proclaimed the opiate of the masses. The younger generation, and even some of the older people, were won over to, and sincerely believed in, this line of thought.

Religion, therefore, was considerably weakened in the hearts of the people. The Jewish communities of the Pale, free from Tsarist persecutions and restrictions, also fell under the spell of this philosophy, and the synagogues lost their attraction for the younger generation.

Losing their religious orientation, the conscious Jews and their intellectual leaders concentrated on ideals of Jewish Nationalism, Zionism, and the further development of the rich heritage of the Hebrew culture and lore. Hebrew and Jewish literature began to flourish, producing such fine writers as Bialik, Mendele Moher Sephorim, Sholom Aleichem, Ahad Ha-Am, and others. The all-pervasive Zionist movement developed strongly among East European Jews.

The Communist Regime, especially its original leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky, looked with a jaundiced eye on "Nationalism" in general, as they were by nature cosmopolitans, internationalists, considering

national aspirations as running counter to their preaching of "class struggle" as the only means of achieving ultimately their goal of a society based solely on the principles of economic equality. These Communist rulers, from the very beginning to this day, were antagonistic to the idea of a distinctive Jewish culture and to Zionism as the vehicle for the development of a distinctive Jewish State. With the strong assistance of Jewish Communists they have almost succeeded in stamping out every vestige of a distinctive Jewish culture in Russia. The picketing by the Conservative Synagogues of America of the Russian Embassy in Washington, taking place currently, is the indignant protest of American Jewry against these genocidal, in a way, activities of the Soviets. The American Jewish writer, Judd L. Teller, expounds on this subject in his book, *The Kremlin, the Jews, and the Middle East.*

In the United Sates of America, the Jewish situation is radically different from that of Eastern Europe. To begin with, compulsory free education of all children met the natural desire of the parents to impart knowledge and give general education to their children. A great majority of the Jewish immigrants who came to this country during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth were not the type of European Jew who was steeped in Jewish lore or was particularly religiously conscious. The religious elements, in fact, shunned the New World as a place where you could not observe strictly Jewish religious rituals; at least this was the widespread opinion of East European Jewry.

Most of the immigrants were poor people and workers. Arriving in this country, they were immediately absorbed in the stream of American labor, where the practice of religion or the knowledge of the Torah and Hebrew lore were not requisites for adjusting to the economic life of the American community. Working long hours in sweat shops left little time for the average Jewish parents to inculcate in their children the principles of religion or the rich heritage of Jewish lore, even if the parents had the desire and knowledge to do so.

The difficulties experienced by many immigrants in adjusting to life in their newly acquired Homeland, while spending most of their time in making a living for themselves and their families, were not experienced by their children. Due to the powerful medium of the schools and the constant intermingling with those of other faiths and nationalities, within a year or two the children had completely adapted to their new environment. Thus, a gulf was bound to be created between the foreign

parents, lagging in adjustment, and their quickly Americanized children. These children were often ashamed of their parents, who still bore the imprint of a foreigner, of a "greenhorn."

These conditions were surely not conducive to establishing the authority of the father and his leadership in the family, even if he had an education in Hebrew or had fine religious sentiments. Thus, a whole generation of Jews arose who lacked the benefits both of Hebrew religion and knowledge.

This generation of Jews, born and raised in the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century, was actually a "lost generation," or rather a generation lost to Jewry. They had no particular interest in Jewishness, whether Jewish religion or Jewish culture or the Yiddish or Hebrew language, carriers of this culture. The less intellectually inclined among them concentrated solely on improving their material well-being, using their energies exclusively in accumulating wealth and in advancing socially in the Jewish community and even, for greater prestige, trying to break into non-Jewish circles. The more intellectual and spiritually inclined among them tried to find an outlet by adopting and promoting new social theories. They filled the halls of the Ethical Culture Society to discover ethics and principles of moral conduct with which their fathers and forefathers were familiar long ago through the knowledge of the *Torah* and the Hebrew treatises on ethics, handed down from their ancestors. Some of them, in search of some religious affiliation (other than that of their parents) even went as far as joining the Unitarian Church–a final step toward ultimate assimilation.

There is a revival of interest in the Synagogue now taking place among the Jews in the United States. The prodigal son is returning to his old home. It is true that, so far, the contemporary Jew is mainly interested in the Synagogue as a social center and as a place for acquiring Hebrew learning, which the "lost generation" of Jews found out so belatedly that it is missing and wanting.

Whether the true religious feeling of their ancestors, who found in the Synagogue and its rituals an outlet for this feeling, will also return to this generation of Jews or to their children is a question that one hesitates to predict.

Chapter 35

I ENTER TEMPLE UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL

I continued my private tutoring, eking out a very poor existence, counting every day that passes as one day closer to my ultimate goal of becoming a physician. As my clothes were getting shabby and thread-bare, I wore my "good" clothes only to school and when visiting my students' houses. In between, I would wear only an open-collar shirt and a pair of old trousers.

Once, after finishing my lesson in the home of a rather well-to-do pupil, I sped home, took off my suit and white shirt and necktie and put on my "park" clothes; I was hurrying to the park with my books when I came face to face with the mother of the pupil whom I had just left. She took one glance at my appearance, and her face expressed almost disbelief that I was the same quiet, respectable and conservative Hebrew teacher who was preparing her boy for *Bar Mitzvah*. She continued on her way, apparently with disgust, without even answering my greeting. A day later I received a note from her saying that, due to unforeseen circumstances, she would have to discontinue my tutoring of her son. Two more dollars subtracted from my weekly budget; another telling lesson in the respectability demanded of a Hebrew teacher.

I was approaching the end of my two-year pre-medical course. My marks were above average; in fact, I could have been considered an honor student, having all A's and B's. I lacked only one subject necessary to complete my pre-medical course, and that was organic chemistry. The only college in the Philadelphia region offering a summer course in this subject was Haverford College. I visited the campus of Haverford College–a beautiful and spacious campus, very pleasing to the eyes of a former village boy, who had been locked for years in the confines of a big American city in the most crowded slums–and signed up for the course in organic chemistry. It took six weeks of very intensive study to pass a year's course. Besides, that July was an extremely hot month. By the time I finished the course, I felt almost completely exhausted. I passed the course, however, and now had all the credits necessary to enter Medical School.

I applied immediately to Temple University Medical School and was promptly turned down. Temple Medical School was at that time still a "B" school. Nevertheless, for the sixty freshmen that they could admit at that time there were six hundred applications. Thus one in ten had a chance to be admitted, and the struggle to be the lucky one was on in full intensity.

As is the usual procedure in these cases, every applicant, determined and hopeful to be accepted, made sure to get an influential sponsor or two to contact the Dean of Admissions or his Committee. The sponsors would insist on the admission of their candidate, claiming that he was the man most fitted to be a true practitioner of the art of Aesculapius. As was usually the case, the candidates of the most influential–politically or otherwise–sponsors were admitted. Those rejected were *ipso facto* considered the least fit, supposedly, to practice medicine.

This horse-trading is probably world-wide in one form or another. In a democracy such as ours–based on principles of compromise and a meeting on common grounds of the contending groups and powers–it is inevitable. It is only human that where candidates are equally prepared, with the same credits for admission, and when there are not sufficient vacancies for all, the one who happens to have access to more powerful sponsors will unhesitatingly use them in the scramble to get to the top of the heap. And so, grumbling to myself at the fact that Temple University Medical School was not particularly favorable to its own Temple College Grads, I was still waiting for an extraordinary occurrence to change the course of my desperate situation.

And such an event did occur. I had become acquainted with a certain girl, a graduate pharmacist, who was a member of the Student Literary League. Once, while strolling with her in the park after a meeting, she asked me what professional school I was intending to enter. I told her that I had applied to Temple Medical School, but had been turned down as I did not have the "proper" sponsors or, rather, had no sponsors at all. She told me that her brother, a lawyer, was a close friend of Congressman "K", who happened to be a member of the Board of Trustees of Temple University. She promised to discuss my situation with her brother and see what, if anything, could be done to help me in my predicament.

Her brother, a fine gentleman with a very quick, practical mind, saw immediately the possibility of my becoming more than just a friend to

his unmarried sister, and he called me and invited me to come to his office, which I promptly did at the appointed hour. He told me in our interview that he had influence with Congressman K as he was one of his political henchmen during elections, and he would see what he could do. He assured me that he did me a very personal favor only because I was a very close friend of his sister. He made an appointment with the Congressman to meet in his office, bringing me with him.

At the appointed hour we came to Congressman K's office, a well-furnished room, and met the Congressman himself. He was a tall, lanky man, impressive in his bearing, very friendly and informal. I was introduced as a graduate of the Temple University College of Arts, Pre-Medical Department, who had all the required credits and was anxious to continue his professional studies at his Alma Mater's medical school. The Congressman listened politely and, before doing anything else, took my sponsor aside and asked him what my relationship to him was and if he was "really" interested in me. My friend assured him that he definitely was. The Congressman promised to contact the Dean of Admissions and see what he could do. He called my friend, the lawyer, a couple of days later and said that unfortunately I was turned down by the Admissions Committee on account of my very poor marks.

That was a fatal mistake made by the Dean who, without investigating my marks, had given the Congressman what was probably his routine explanation to unsuccessful candidates as the reason for their being turned down. When the lawyer communicated these facts to me, I took the record of my final marks received from Temple University Pre-Medical School to his office. He immediately made another appointment with the Congressman, and we both appeared in his office and showed him my marks. Right then and there he called up the Dean, reprimanded him angrily for misleading him as to the reason for my being turned away, and insisted upon my being accepted immediately without any further excuse. When the Dean told him that all vacancies were already filled, he angrily insisted that he should find a place for me, and a place was found for me, in a day or so, just one week before the beginning of the school year.

I received at my address my acceptance papers from Temple Medical School, as well as all other instructions as to the registration and other requirements of a medical freshman.

I immediately called up my sponsor, the lawyer, and thanked him for all he had done for me. He expressed a disappointment that this

notification was not sent to him instead of to me. He invited me to join him the next day for lunch. During our lunch my friend frankly pointed out to me that what he had done was for his sister, and that he expected me to reciprocate by becoming more than just a friend. I understood perfectly well these veiled references. Frankly, I was not impressed by his sister as a possible wife. In our relationship, as acquaintances, I had not given her any encouragement to think that she could count on my becoming more intimate. She, as well as her brother, figured that a poor boy like myself would consider it a great advantage to become a member of their family, which was both wealthy and influential. In order to clear the atmosphere, I told my friend, the attorney, that I had left Russia when already an adult and had some obligations there to my family. He immediately took my statement as confirmation of his suspicion that I had left behind a wife and also, perhaps, children. As a practical man, he decided right then and there that he was "licked."

I never met him again, although I used to meet his sister once in a while. Unfortunately, he died shortly afterward, quite unexpectedly. His sister married another druggist, a foreign boy, and I hoped and wished that her marriage would be a successful one. Apparently it was, judging from the fact that they had two children in a short time.

In my third year in medical school, I had plenty of time on my hands during the summer vacation, as my tutoring took only three or four hours during the day, and I could not find any other work to increase my income. I would hang around the school and the hospital, watching operations and similar work. I met Dr. Frank H. Krusen, the Dean of Admissions, personally, once watching him operate on a foot which had been smashed in an accident. Dr. Krusen, a handsome young surgeon at that time, skillfully gathered the torn muscles and tissues and, stitching them up, tried to get a semblance of order from among the squashed muscles. Fresh from my Anatomy courses, I would ask Dr. Krusen the name of this or that muscle. Dr. Krusen said that frankly he did not remember the name of this or that muscle in this torn-up mass of tissues; he assured me that I, at any rate, fresh from my course in Anatomy, knew at that very moment more of the names and forms of the muscles than I should ever know in the future, unless I specialized in Anatomy or Orthopedics.

He was an honest and straight man, this Dr. Frank H. Krusen. He was really not interested in surgery, but in doing research on ultra-violet

rays and in how they could be applied in physiotherapy. He later became the well-known head of the Physiotherapy Department at the Mayo Clinic. I spent many hours during the summer helping him in a research project on the effect of ultra-violet rays on the destruction of bacteria. We would grow bacteria on petri dishes and then expose the growing colonies to the ultra-violet rays. Dr. Krusen was fond of me, and we became very friendly. I once asked him why he had turned me down when I applied for admissions to the medical school. "Of course," he said, "as a Dean of Admissions, I, as well as the Committee on Admissions, had no sure way of evaluating the quality of applicants as prospects for good, future physicians. We were, in general, guided by a few principles which, although not perfect, still gave us some measure for evaluating an applicant."

For example, if the applicant came from a poor and financially insecure background, he might make the profitability of the medical practice his goal, and thus become a mercenary physician, thinking more of increasing his income than of perfecting his medical work, as a profession. On this basis I was immediately turned down, since there were so many other applicants in excess of the capacity of the school. There was some logic in what he said, although the financial criterion, by itself, is a very unreliable indicator of the future behavior of a physician. In my association with physicians, I have come across many examples that completely nullify this theory. In fact, many a financially insecure physician became a name in the medical profession due to his original work in medical research; and, on the other hand, some children of very wealthy families, after graduating from medical schools, set out on a career of becoming richer than their parents through making the medical profession a source of accumulating wealth, perfection in their professional work receding to a very hazy background indeed.

I enjoyed my Freshman and Sophomore years in the medical school. Both the theory and practical study of medicine fascinated me. Having plenty of time on my hands, I devoted my time to study and was an honor student at the top of my class.

I never forgot the fate of my friend, Spann, a capable boy, who had also decided on a career in medicine. While still in the National Preparatory School, he was making a good salary of 40 dollars a week as a printer. At that time this was a large sum of money, assuring him financial security through his years of schooling. However, while I, the

relative beggar, was already finishing my Sophomore year in medical school, he was still making his 40 dollars a week and debating with himself whether he should give up this attractive income and day-time job and enter the day pre-medical school, thus losing this financial prop and launching upon the hard struggle to see himself through medical school.

Years later, when I was already a successful medical practitioner, Mr. Spann was still making up his mind. By that time he was 45 years old, but the desire to be a doctor still occupied the mind of this frustrated man.

Chapter 36

MY PROFESSORS

Our Professor of Anatomy, a real jolly man, Dr. John B. Roxby, had been a general practitioner for most of his professional life; when he considered retiring, he chose as his career the teaching of Anatomy. His teaching of Anatomy was mostly mechanical, reciting in an uninterrupted current of words the anatomical configuration of different bones; the relationship of one facet of the bone to another, and so on–tiresome facts which you had to remember. His lectures, taken word by word from *Gray's Anatomy*, would have been a complete loss of time and a bore, except that he interrupted them from time to time to tell us of his practical exploits in his practice of medicine, as well as the humorous and ludicrous situations which the practice of medicine often gets you into when you are confronted with certain types of patients. Everybody loved to hear the stories, and the jokes associated with them, which the Good Doctor had culled from a practice apparently rich in such experiences. Everybody anticipated that these and similar situations would no doubt be part of their own future life and practice of medicine and, therefore, felt a kinship with this man, forgiving and overlooking the dry, tiresome part of his lectures.

Among the most popular lectures in our Freshman year were those on Physiological Chemistry given in the morning on every Monday and Friday (if I remember correctly) by Professor Melvin A. Saylor. Professor Saylor was a man about 65, thin and erect and wiry, with a thin, very mobile face, thin lips and nose, and a large well-shaped forehead. When he would get up from his chair to lecture, his glance would sweep the room–his penetrating, somewhat serious, and at the same time benign, eyes seemingly directed into space; a hush would fall on the class, each student freezing in a pose of attention, no matter what he had been doing a second ago, in order not to miss a word from the Delphic Oracle. There was no necessity in calling the roll of attendance. No matter how tardy the student was at any other time, he was sure to be on time here, so as not to miss a word from the lips of Professor Saylor. Everybody watched with rapt attention every

movement of this graceful body, listened breathlessly to every word falling from his lips. He handled his subject as if it were a living, moving colorful panorama spread out before you. Intimately familiar with every inch of space in this scene, he pointed out the origin, significance, and relationship of every protrusion or depression in this vast field, mentally unfolding before his eyes, leading to distant horizons.

There was no necessity for Professor Saylor to keep the attention of the class by artificially contrived devices, such as a joke or a story to break the monotony. From the very beginning to the very end of the lecture the class listened to and looked at the lecturer as if transfixed by a magic wand and suddenly transported to Dreamland, where one follows events without any resistance of consciousness of one's own personality.

When Professor Saylor, almost exhausted, would stop, his lecture finished, and stood still for a moment before sitting down, the class would wake up from that deep enchantment, reacting tumultuously to the abrupt end of the dream. Such was the lecturer, Saylor. For the first time in my life I was in the presence of a great lecturer and teacher, and the impression upon me was deep indeed and has never been forgotten.

During my four years in medical school I came across two more excellent lecturers–the lecturer on gynecology, Professor Frank C. Hammond, and the lecturer on Chest Diseases, more specifically on tuberculosis, Dr. Abraham J. Cohen. Both were excellent clinicians, who loved and actually "lived" their subjects. In a few dramatic sweeps or outlines, they would summarize the gist of their special fields in medicine, pointing out with great skill and brevity the characteristic features of their specialty, vividly portraying related problems, and so impressing the student with the apparent simplicity and ease of their solution that the student felt that he was ready to handle any situation in these special fields without any additional training.

However, the superiority of Professor Saylor over these two excellent teachers lay in the fact that he did not dwell so much upon the practical application of the results already achieved in Physiological Chemistry related to the practice of medicine, but that he was more interested in the study of Physiological Chemistry as leading to still greater achievements and to endless horizons, if the student would only approach it in the spirit of research and inquiry. He inspired the

inquisitive mind of the student to seek further conquests in the virgin soil of Physiological Chemistry. If medicine, as a branch of science, is to achieve further advances in its research, it will no doubt be indebted to the inspiration given to students by such able teachers as Dr. Saylor.

Another impressive personality in our school was the Chief Surgeon, Professor Wayne Babcock. Physically, Professor Babcock was not the typical surgeon. A typical surgeon is usually a bulky, brusque hunk of a man who, being accustomed to making quick decisions in grave situations, acquires little by little the over-confidence and even the overbearing attitude of a dictator. At times this type of surgeon even shows a sense of superiority and a discernible contempt in the presence of a natural indecision on the part of the involved patient when confronted with the question of his future well-being or even life being at stake.

Professor Babcock was slightly below-average height, a lightly built man of about 50 years with a head proportionately a bit too big, with a high forehead. His face was rather pale and drawn from overwork and, from under his eyebrows, a pair of unusually lively, clear and penetrating eyes met and studied you. He was the author of a book on surgery, in which some original and new methods of surgery were described.

He was a hard-working man, very methodical, always on time for his work or lectures. He did not play up to his students in his lectures. He would be absorbed in his lecture as if reminiscing about his work and reflecting upon its success or failure. He handled every case as a challenge and in the spirit of inquiry, weighing whether it fell into the usual category of similar cases or presented a deviation, and, if so, in what form. He never showed over-confidence, approaching his work with humility and responsibility.

When his young son died from meningitis, he personally performed an autopsy on his brain to determine the exact cause of death, revealing the highest degree of objectivity and the detachment of a scientific mind.

Professor Babcock was one of the early founders of Temple University Medical School and Hospital, and when, as is usually the case in a rapidly growing institution, people backed by financially powerful interests were advancing rapidly to the fore, a certain surgeon, Dr. D, was contesting Professor Babcock's leadership in the school and the hospital. Being a good surgeon and having powerful backers, Dr. D

almost succeeded in his ambitions, when the astute Babcock pulled out the rug from under his opponents: he gathered his surgical tools and his devoted assistants and pulled out entirely from the contest, leaving the hospital entirely to his opponents, a move that they had not expected and did not relish, as the hospital grew up on Professor Babcock's reputation. The flow of patients to the hospital surgery department ceased with the departure of that powerful magnet, Professor Babcock.

The story goes that the opposition was stunned. They tried to negotiate a compromise, but Professor Babcock turned a deaf ear to all overtures. He insisted on complete, unconditional surrender; the opposition accepted his conditions, which consisted of discharging or removing from Surgical Services Dr. D and appointing Dr. William N. Parkinson, a devotee of Professor Babcock, Medical Director of the hospital, to institute certain reforms in administration of the affairs of the hospital, according to Professor Babcock's plans. The appointment of Dr. William N. Parkinson to be Medical Director later proved to be a great boon to the Temple University Medical School and Hospital.

The School, which was a "B," or second-rate school, advanced in its standards to be acknowledged as an "A," or first-rate school. Dr. Parkinson made the growth of the school his ideal and, under his leadership, the school became a well-known institution of learning and research by attracting competent clinical as well as research personnel, offering them more advantageous conditions of advancement in work and study than they enjoyed in older institutions, where they were the juniors and, as is usually the case, were held down and restrained in their ambitions and new ideas by those older in hierarchy.

I liked Professor Babcock as a teacher, and years later, when I was in general practice, I would often accompany my patients to see Professor Babcock in consultation. It was a treat for me to be in the presence of this unusual man. He was very friendly to me and, after examining my patient, we would go to an adjacent room and have a friendly talk, Professor Babcock being interested in my professional life as a practicing physician.

Another interesting teacher was my instructor in Pathology, Professor John I. Fanz. He was a very bulky man about 40 years old. He apparently loved his subject and loved teaching it. Talking about mortalities from certain diseases, he would suddenly stop. His little eyes, deeply imbedded in the fatty layers of his face and eyelids, would sweep the room, and he would announce, "Gentlemen! Ten out of you

in this room will not be with us 15 years from now due to this condition."

A dead silence would fall on the class, and the Professor would give each one of us the opportunity to reflect whether or not he would be one of those ten. It was a most effective method of remembering this particular pathologic condition and, with it, the face and the mien of this gloomy Professor in his dark, flowing laboratory gown. Unfortunately he, himself, proved a few years later to be one of those ten predicted victims of this particular disease.

Another professor who is well-remember by me was Dr. Z. He was a lecturer in Endocrinology. It was the man, Dr. Z, not the subject, that impressed me at that time. Besides being an expert clinical diagnostician, he also had organizational, as well as business abilities. He was even a speculator in stocks. He combined many talents in one person. He also did clinical research in his speciality.

With all that, he was a very unattractive personality, greedy, distrustful, and almost repulsive in appearance. When I was a senior, I worked as a volunteer, during my summer vacation, in the Institute of Endocrinology which he organized. I was attending the clinics to gain more knowledge about endocrine disorders. I worked in the Institute's office–in-between clinical hours–helping Dr. Z to collect and organize material for his research work in endocrinology.

I became quite familiar with the man and with some of his private affairs from his talking and sometimes bragging to me about them. He had a good private practice; in fact, for a time he was a leading endocrinologist among the Jewish patients in Philadelphia.

Knowing intimately a few wealthy patients, he prevailed upon them to contribute certains sums of money toward the establishment of the Institute of Endocrinology. This was an unique institution in Philadelphia. These wealthy patrons were rewarded by being appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Institute. Dr. Z was its Medical Director and chief moving spirit.

The Institute was progressing rapidly in establishing itself as a needed institution in Philadelphia. It was said–and I can not verify this statement, but it appears logical to me–that Dr. W. Parkinson, the godfather of Temple University Medical School, had a talk with Dr. Z, in which Dr. Parkinson proposed the affiliation of the Institute of Endocrinology, for teaching purposes, with Temple University Medical School. Dr. Z flatly refused.

The Institute of Endocrinology was Dr. Z's creation, his child. Dr. Z was a bachelor at that time and, quite naturally, had visions that this Institute would be a memorial to his name. As a result of his refusal, Dr. Z was not reappointed as head of Temple University's endocrinology department.

However, this wealthy doctor (he boasted to me once that in the 1929 stock-market crash he lost 200,000 dollars, but that it "won't kill him") was building a memorial to his name by manipulation. He made other people invest their money in his brain-child.

As life would have it, after a few years, the Board of Trustees dropped him as the Director and "boss" of the Institute, apparently becoming tired of this man's machinations. He died shortly afterward. His creation, his brain-child, eventually did join the roster of other smaller institutions and hospitals absorbed by the Temple University Medical School. Thus, for once the cause of "higher justice" triumphed over small, selfish interests.

As to his private life, Dr. Z was very tight with money, almost to the point of being a miser. After working many hours a day at the Institute, gathering information from different periodicals in preparation for Dr. Z's research work, I told him that I would have to stop this work when the school semester began. However, if Dr. Z or the Institute could pay me ten dollars a week for this work, I would drop my tutoring and continue working here. Dr. Z would not agree to this. He welcomed my voluntary services, but said that the Institute had no money in its budget to pay for my work. And, of course, he personally could not afford to pay me ten dollars a week for helping him in his research. This was the reasoning of the rich bachelor, Dr. Z, whose private office was packed daily with patients who were charged five or ten dollars, in many instances, just for one look at their afflictions.

It was an education for me to meet this kind of physician in contrast, for instance, to another physician, Dr. Matthew S. Ersner, about whom I shall write later in the proper sequence of events.

Once every summer I would join the mob of excursionists to Atlantic City. For one dollar or for one dollar and a quarter, crossing by ferry to Camden, New Jersey, we would take the "Sunday Special" train waiting for us there. Packed like sardines in a box, we would ride to Atlantic City. We would rush in a flood to the beaches, hire a locker for a quarter or less, and spend the hot, burning day on the beaches,

packed with humanity, frolicking in the ocean waves. Baked and severely burned, we returned to the "Sunday Special" trains. It took me about two weeks thereafter to nurse my sunburned body.

The whole year afterward I would remember with dismay the evening of our return on the dark trains to the city, unable to find a comfortable place for lack of space and fear of touching people or the bare seats with my hot, burning body. I would promise myself never again to follow the mob and subject myself to such bodily suffering. But the next summer I would repeat the same process; my life was so completely devoid of any form of entertainment or pleasure at that time that I was subconsciously willing to pay such a price for a little adventure, even one as insignificant as this.

Most of my free time during the summer I spent profitably, as far as my acquisition of medical and clinical information was concerned, in the clinics of different hospitals.

I mentioned before my work at the Endocrinology Institute. Twice a week I also attended the Medical Clinic of the Mount Sinai Hospital; the Chief of the Medical Clinic was Dr. David R. Meranze, who later became the chief pathologist of this hospital. He is a very intelligent, well-read and clear-thinking man, with whom I have since become very friendly.

While working in these clinics, I met Miss Helen Genel, who later became my wife. I also worked at the Stomach Clinic of the Jewish Hospital under the direction of Dr. Henry J. Tumen, the Chief of the Clinic. The Department of Gastroenterology was headed at that time by Dr. Harry Shay, who later became the Medical Director of the Fels Research Institute at Temple University, and who, incidentally, was the father of Robert Shay, who later became the husband of my daughter Elaine. I also helped Dr. Frank Krusen in his ultra-violet ray research. I made full use of every day of my vacation.

I was advancing very well in my clinical experience, but my financial situation was, to say the least, bad. I borrowed every penny I could from the Cooperative, until even the generous and understanding and sympathetic managers of the Cooperative could not offer me more credit, already I owed them so much money; the penalties for not catching up in my installment payments already amounted to a huge sum. I thought of all kinds of schemes to raise money for my Senior year, when I heard that the Rotary Club in Philadelphia had a Student Loan Fund. I did not even know what the Rotary Club was or whom it

represented. I doubted that a complete stranger, and a Jewish student at that, could be one of the beneficiaries of its Student Loan Fund. However, I had nothing to lose by applying for a loan. I summoned my courage and made an application for a loan of 300 dollars–my tuition fee. To my pleasant surprise I received an invitation to attend the meeting of the Student Loan Fund Committee on a certain date.

To my delight, a few days after I appeared before the committee, I received a letter advising me that a loan of 300 dollars had been approved, to be repaid in small installments, beginning two years after I had graduated and commenced the practice of medicine. A six-percent interest on the loan was to be paid in due time.

Thus, my tuition fee for my last year of medical school was assured, and the name, *Rotary Club,* became magic words to me and always dear to my heart as a beneficiary of this Student Loan Fund which is made up of voluntary contributions from the Rotary Club members. I was very much impressed by the excellent work it did at that time for students who had exhausted all their resources for credit.

Chapter 37

THE TOWNSHIP HOSPITAL AND ITS PHYSICIANS

I was approaching the end of my long trek toward my goal of becoming a physician. After passing my final school examinations and my State Board examinations, I applied and was accepted as an intern at the B. Township Hospital in one of the outlying communities near Philadelphia.

The internship paid 25 dollars a month besides my room and board. I finally had reached the stage where I did not have to wonder where my next meal would come from or how I should meet my next rent payment.

The year I spent as an intern at the B. Township Hospital was not only a year of acquiring medical, clinical experience, as is the case with interns in general, but to me personally, it was a great opportunity, also, to become familiar with American life and American people as represented by different classes and professions, such as nurses, doctors, and patients—the latter in a more intimate setting than they are ordinarily in life.

When a person is sick he reverts to a more natural state, throwing aside the mask that he usually wears—the so-called social mask—under which he hides his feelings and behavior. In a state of sickness people reveal their true characteristics more readily—all their weaknesses, fears, prejudices, generosity and nobility of character.

When I worked as a laborer before my entrance into college, I met only a certain class of people—laborers, marginal people in American society, some of whom were of the same origin as myself, some of different nationalities and religious affiliations, recently arrived in this country and, therefore, bearing still the image of the country of their origin.

During my college years, my contacts outside of school were exclusively Jewish American people.

Now my contacts were mostly native Americans—or, rather, foreigners who had been Americanized one or two generations ago. They could be considered more representative of America than the people with whom I had previously come into contact. The nurses

whom I met were the daughters of American parents, representatives of American youth, although more or less of a certain class of people–but of a wider variety.

The interns and physicians of the Hospital also represented a larger variety of Americans. Little by little, I was absorbed into the true melting pot of the United States of America, learning the strong and weak points of American life. Of especial interest to me, as a physician, were the relationships established between physicians, as a profession, and their patients–the mass of American people; also, the relationships of the two close professions, the medical and nursing.

B. Township Hospital, being a small hospital on the outskirts of Philadelphia, was more or less a community hospital, and the relationships between the people and their doctors were generally cordial and trusting. Every physician had his following: patients who had great confidence and trust in him, whether justifiable or not. The practice of medicine, also, was on a personal basis, the physician knowing the patient more or less intimately, as well as his or her whole family, and, therefore, relating himself to them as "his" people, having a certain responsibility to them as people as well as patients. This, as it appeared to me, is a more satisfactory practice of medicine–"medicine" being the combination of the "art" and "science" of medicine with the predominance for the time being of "art" over "science." However, even in this set-up there were instances of unscrupulous and downright mercenary behavior of some physicians in respect to their patients, and mean exploitation of the confidence placed in the physician by his patients.

This was exemplified by the "venerable," old Doctor A, who had been a surgeon in B. Township for about 50 years at that time. Dr. A was a short, stubby, old man about 70 years of age, of German extraction, who still had a German "brogue" in his speech. He was a leading surgeon in the community and had the absolute confidence of the population as an expert in his field.

When Dr. A was a young intern at the "Old German Hospital" (later the Lankenau Hospital), he and the surgeon (later famous), John Deaver, also still a young intern, were competing for the position of Chief Surgeon at the German Hospital. John Deaver won and later became "The Great Surgeon, John Deaver." Dr. A, who apparently was also a promising, capable surgeon, retired to the community of B. and became the surgeon at their local hospital.

It was said that he was very skillful and fast in his surgical work; this was one of his principal attributes in controlling surgical mortality. By completing the operation in record time, he avoided the hazards for the patient of loss of blood and consequent shock. This was the principal characteristic and requirement of surgeons of yore before the advent of anaesthesia.

This reputation of Dr. A continued over the years and almost became a local legend. My first encounter with Dr. A was when Dr. T, the Chief of Interns, introduced me to him on my arrival at the Hospital. Dr. A, a rabid anti-Semite, disliked Dr. T exclusively because he was a Jew, in spite of the fact that Dr. T was an excellent Chief of Interns and well-liked by every physician and surgeon, as well as the patients, at the Township Hospital.

When Dr. T introduced me to him as a new intern, Dr. A, without shaking hands with me, simply turned his back on me and went on talking to Dr. T about the status of one of his patients in the Hospital. I was embarrassed, of course, but from the very beginning had an opportunity to size up this warped man. It was said, although I never was interested in verifying this, that Dr. A was interested in music and in other cultural pursuits. If this was true it only emphasizes the degree of depravity and insensibility which races of all nations and all times reach when dominated by the human disease and defect of blind prejudice.

Later on, when my reputation as a hard-working, conscientious intern became established, Dr. A started to play up to me; and, when I became the intern on his Surgical Service, he showed me all kinds of preferences and good will, even to the extent of allowing me to do a complete appendectomy all by myself without any interference on his part except as an assistant in the operation—an unheard of precedent in the annals of the B. Township Hospital, dominated at that time by Dr. A.

While an intern to Dr. A for a few months—I was there longer than three months as I served part-time also as a substitute for Dr. F—I was an eyewitness to a spectacle that I shall never forget: how an old lion is heartbroken when he is already unable to catch his prey and kill the poor deer with one stroke of his mighty paw.

Dr. A was getting old; his fingers began to lose their nimbleness; the rapid movement of his hands began to slow down; during an operation the cut small arteries or veins would bleed and bleed without the

benefit of a ligation, which to A was an innovation of the "upstarts," for which he would not fall; and, as a result, during my service with Dr. A, nine patients died in succession after being operated on for gallbladder disease. Gallbladder surgery is deep abdominal surgery. Old Dr. A, short as he was, standing up on a little stool, would "dig into" the gallbladder area; tear up adhesions; and, not bothering to ligate bleeding small arteries or other small vessels, would separate the gallbladder, remove it and quickly close up the abdomen, leaving the patient to die of shock from loss of blood, or to die later on his cot as a result of excessive internal bleeding. Also–and this was another example of the ethical misconduct of this pre-Nazi "Nazi"–Dr. A would never embarrass his supplier of patients, the good old practitioner, his friend, Dr. L, by turning down a patient recommended for gallbladder surgery on account of a bad heart, hypertention, or other contra-indications to immediate surgery. In fact, Dr. A would immediately, upon arrival of Dr. L's patient, schedule him for surgery without benefit of a thorough physical examination or laboratory studies, relying exclusively on the word of Dr. L that the patient was fit for surgery.

When I, as Dr. A's intern, notified him that his ninth patient had expired–we were walking up the stairs from the first to the second floor–Dr. A sat down on the cement steps and cried in desperation, saying to me in the intervals between crying fits, "I am getting old, Kushner. What in the world has happened to me?"

This did not stop him a day or so later from scheduling another patient, a Jewish woman, for a gallbladder operation. This woman disregarded the exhortation of her family physician, Dr. T, our Chief of Interns, to get another surgeon, whom he would recommend, for her operation, so ingrained in the minds of the local residents was the reputation of old Dr. A. Whether this Jewish woman had the protection of Raphael, the "Angel of Life," or for other, natural reasons, she did survive her gallbladder operation, and after a few stormy weeks of convalescence returned well to her home and husband.

A year or two later, when I joined the Staff of the Hospital, Dr. Edward Shuman, another American of German extraction–at that time Chief of the Medical Staff–forced a resolution, against the weak protests of some of Dr. A's old cronies, to limit his surgery only to his private patients. Thus, the "privileged" ward patients were saved from the shocking fatalities at the hands of the great surgeon of yore, Dr. A.

This Dr. Shuman was the exact opposite in every respect of Dr. A. He was a tall, corpulent man, of the type of German warrior of the Ostrogoths and Visigoths pictured in the history textbooks as being the invaders of Europe and the Roman Empire. He was intelligent, skillful, and had a pleasant, predisposing personality. He was the Chief of Service of Obstetrics and Gynecology in five hospitals, including the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. He was easy-going with his patients, as well as with his Staff members and interns. He would delegate to his assistants as much work as was consistent with their competence in surgery and judgment. On the other hand, if an intern (as usually is the case) preferred to watch the "Chief" rather than his assistant doing surgery on ward patients, he would call Dr. Shuman up in the middle of the night to come out to do some emergency work on a complicated post-operative patient. The conscientious Dr. Shuman would sometimes spend hours on such a patient without any remuneration whatever.

He was an inspiration to an intern contemplating entering the fields of obstetrics and gynecology. It was a great privilege to watch this man do an operation of the uterus for a fibroid tumor. I do not remember any mortality from surgery on his service during my internship under him.

He was also a very fine instructor in obstetrics. One bit of advice he gave the interns in obstetrics was this: "A good obstetrician is one who has a big rear"—meaning one who has the patience to sit it out. Childbirth, he explained, is a very natural process. Give Nature a chance to prepare the female organs for expulsion of the child and it will be accomplished, as a rule, in an excellent, uncomplicated way without any harm either to the woman or the fetus. Only in exceptional cases of abnormal pelvic pathology in the mother should science interfere.

Dr. Shuman also found time for playing golf. One Sunday, a private patient of his was in the delivery room; examining her, he was convinced that no complications were foreseeable, and he ordered me to watch his private patient and deliver her when the time came, without searching for him or disturbing him on the golf course. I, of course, was highly flattered by his confidence in me to deliver his private patient and, of course, delivered her without any complications, as it was a "normal" birth, the type of case that "midwives" had delivered for generations without any setbacks.

One, of course, could argue the question of "ethics" in this case of a

private patient being delivered by an intern. On the other hand, the tendency of patients to think that only "their" physician can do a certain medical procedure is no more than a prejudice and should be taken into consideration when speculating on this question of ethics.

In another instance, Dr. Shuman gave me a little glimpse also into the "remuneration" for medical or surgical services that was current at that time among surgeons of his calibre and in his key position in hospitals. While washing up in a shower room after one delivery, Dr. Shuman told me that he was going to operate the next day on a very rich woman, an heiress of a leading national agricultural machinery corporation. He asked me what I thought he should charge for the operation, a hysterectomy. I suppose Dr. Shuman wanted to brag a little about his type of patient and his fees. I said that I thought about 200 or 300 dollars was the usual fee at that time. "Not for a rich lady like this," said he, "try to up a little your fee suggestion."

I said, "800 to 1,000" thinking that such an enormous amount of money would enable me to open up an office for my private practice.

"You are a 'piker,' Kushner," said Dr. Shuman. "From a patient like this I will get not less than 10,000 dollars for this kind of operation."

Considering the fact that this patient was an heiress to a forty-million dollar fortune, I reflected that this fee was not out of proportion to the capability of the patient to pay. It still appeared to me a "fortune" for an hour's work. And it was a revelation to me about the wealth and concept of values in this new country of my adoption.

I worked hard on this Service of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Ordinarily, my term of service was supposed to be three months but, due to the fact that my co-worker and friend, Dr. F, a Greek intern, was absent most of the time from his internship, I doubled up for him on every service of his during the year. I, therefore, had the opportunity to deliver twice as many babies during my service as had the average intern.

The specialty of obstetrics attracts many young physicians. Medicine, in general, involves working among sick and disabled people, where the physician's ear is constantly bombarded by complaints, and his eyes are constantly exposed to pathologic transformations of a normal body and its parts into an unsightly deformity. In obstetrics there is a refreshing change of scenery. The vast majority of deliveries should be and are normal, unless the mother's pelvis is badly deformed or the obstetrician interferes with the normal processes of delivery by

using oxytoxics or by introducing the murderous forceps–all of this for his own benefit and not for the patient's or baby's, giving the busy obstetrician an opportunity to "deliver" the patient in his good time when he is not busy with another delivery.

In a normal delivery the physician is present at the birth of a human being. He feels as if he is present at the great moment of Creation when a new life begins. This feeling permeates the air of the delivery room and affects all the participating actors in this drama, beginning chiefly with the mother and affecting subconsciously the obstetricians and the nurses. There is a notion current among doctors that obstetrics keeps you young even when you are advanced in age, as a result of the invigorating effect which the birth of a child produces on those present. Like the Phoenix, the proverbial bird that rejuvenates itself every thousand years, the soul of the obstetrician subconsciously acquires a new "kick," acting as a tonic to the aging professional. As young and vigorous as I was at that time, I felt each time the impact of this invigorating experience. Due to the default of my friend Dr. F, my share of these experiences was doubled, and I was sorry when my service as an Obstetric intern ended and I was transferred to the rather dull Medical Service.

Dr. F was a Greek national who had received his medical education on the Isle of Rhodes, if I recollect correctly. Due to some political upheavals in Greece, he came to this country for a time, possibly as a political refugee–though I cannot be sure about this–and applied for an internship at our hospital. He was a rather short, slight man of about 30 or older, dark-complexioned with a high, rather wrinkled forehead and lively, dark, smiling, deep-set eyes peering from under his bushy eyebrows. These eyes, like his very mobile face, could at a moment's notice freeze, reflecting hardness and even cruelty. Apparently Dr. F went through great political upheavals and changes of political fortunes which had left their harsh imprint on him.

At the time of his internship, he was still vastly more interested in Greek politics than in his medical work, spending evenings, and sometimes days, in the neighborhood of Eighth or Ninth and Spruce Streets, where a colony of Greek emigrees concentrated and where discussions of Greek politics occupied all the waking hours of that neighborhood of "Little Greece."

As I was anxious for more and more medical experience, I promised Dr. F to take care of his service when he was away, and he relied

heavily on me. As a result, he knew very little about what was going on in his service; once on returning in the morning from his night off, which he had spent in the "Little Greece" colony, he was paged by the family of a very sick patient on his service to inquire about the state of this patient's condition. Without consulting me first, Dr. F said cheerfully that the patient was "fine and dandy!" when, as a matter of fact, the patient had expired during the night. It took both of us great efforts to explain this "misunderstanding." Dr. F was rather an "oldster" among the American-born interns. He was a man of experience in life and of urban and aggressive demeanor.

The younger interns were restrained and frustrated in their natural inclination to flirt with the pretty young nurses by the appearance of the Chief of Nurses, a tall, unbending, always strict and forbidding-looking woman of about 35 years; Dr. F, however, without interrupting his pleasant conversation and flirtatious behavior with a young nurse, also included the forbidding Chief of Nurses in this pleasantry by giving her an amorous stroke on the rear. And, remarkable as it was, the Chief of Nurses was not a bit offended or displeased, as if acknowledging the fact that she was also a woman and would rather be looked upon as such and not as an old hag or as a dried-up mummy.

I never knew what happened to Dr. F upon his finishing his internship at the Township Hospital. This colorful figure may have buckled down to a relatively dull existence as a general practitioner of medicine in this country, or he may have gone back to Greece, when the "political climate" of that turbulent country again became favorable to his political beliefs.

Physicians are more often apt to be political and social leaders in European countries than here in the United States. Considering the fact that the medical practice in this country is probably the most efficient in the world, one wonders whether the undue dabbling in politics of the European physician is advantageous to his patients.

Another interesting personality that I came across at the Township Hospital during my internship was Dr. Stewart. He was one of the Chiefs of Medical Service during my term of internship there. A tall, well-dressed, and impressive-looking man, he was at first accorded great respect, due to his imposing external appearance, by the interns; but in a short time he "discredited" himself on account of his methods of practicing medicine on the patients of the wards.

As a rule, an intern looks up to his Chief, expecting to get instructions as to the ideal practice of medicine or a novel way of dispensation of relief to his patients. Usually, the most "ordinary" instructors try to impress the pupil, the intern, with their deep knowledge of the most recent theories and scientific approach to this or that disease under consideration. The intern, therefore, was satisfied that the time spent in accompanying the Chief was richly rewarded by learning something new and useful in his future application to his private patients.

But Dr. Stewart apparently did not measure up to the standards of a "good instructor and Chief." In visiting the patients in the ward, the vast majority of whom were old, chronic cases, he would prescribe for patient after patient his usual "remedy," a solution of potassium citrate in some appropriate vehicle, such as wild cherry or syrup of coccillana. This physician of great experience and genuine honesty knew that, under the scientific knowledge then existing, nothing of genuine medical help could be offered to these patients. A great many of them were sent into the hospital by the obliging family doctor to relieve the anxiety of their relations or the burden of ministering to a chronically sick patient by the overwrought family. It would be adding injury to insult to prescribe to these innocent victims the very latest, yet untried, different therapeutic formulas compounded–it is true–with all good intentions by scientifically minded therapeutists, but with possible untoward effects which one could never calculate in their actual application to sick people. Dr. Stewart never claimed to be a "researcher." He was a practicing physician with good common sense and a truly humane heart. He, therefore, found a very innocuous drug, potassium citrate, and dispensed it to all patients of this category. The least he could say was that he did not cause any bodily harm to these people afflicted with chronic illnesses; at the same time he buoyed up their spirits with this "placebo" administered by the "Chief of the Service" himself.

As time went on and I became an "old" general practitioner of the art and science of medicine, I became more and more convinced of the wisdom and good common sense of Dr. Stewart. But, as an intern I joined innocently and foolishly in the chorus of the rest of my brethren-interns, who dubbed Dr. Stewart, "Dr. Potassium Citrate."

And so I missed the benefit of closer association with one of the most interesting instructors at the Township Hospital during my

internship years. Later, from Dr. Stewart's obituary, I learned that he was not only a fine clinical professor at the University of Pennsylvania, but that he was also a man of other cultural achievements in writing and painting (if I remember correctly).

In my eagerness to acquire medical experience while an intern, I also had an opportunity to learn something about the technique of taking X-ray pictures. The X-ray technician, Miss M, a pleasant and sociable girl, was leaving for a month's vacation. I persuaded her to teach me some of the techniques of taking X-rays, and for a whole month I substituted for her in taking X-ray films of different parts of the body, an ancillary activity which served me well when I later began the practice of medicine and installed an X-ray machine at my office.

* * * * *

And now my time of internship was up. I was about to forego the easy life of an intern, provided with meals, lodging, and a few dollars a month. I passed the State Board Exams and became a full-fledged general practitioner.

During the summer of 1931, while waiting for my State Board Examinations, I became a resident physician in the "Baby" Hospital at Seventh and Delancey Streets. This gave me again, for a few months, board and room, as well as an opportunity to learn something about pediatrics.

The Baby Hospital was a tall, six- or seven-story building, the upper floors of which housed a small number of very sick children and babies, as well as quarters for nurses and residents. The first floor was equipped for handling a mass of outpatients.

At the time I was resident, it was said that this hospital handled about 30,000 outpatients a year; this residency was, therefore, a real opportunity, though I was paid nothing for it.

The Hospital also had a summer place in Llanerch for convalescing children. I shuttled between the Hospital and its Llanerch sub-division during the few months of my residency; by the time I left the hospital, I had acquired a fairly good knowledge of handling children and babies, which also served me well in my general practice of medicine.

My problem now was to secure the money necessary to open up an office for general practice. I had saved only a few dollars from my internship, hardly enough. I had, however, already decided on the location for my office—a house at 2445 North 29th Street, in the

middle of a block of row-houses. It seems that a short time previously a car had jumped from the pavement while the driver was intoxicated, and had broken the cement steps. The owner of the house, an old, retired, Dutch or German tailor, who lived the life of a recluse with his young son on the second floor of the house, was willing to rent the first floor. Because of the ruined steps, possibly, or for another reason, I was the only one who inquired about renting the place, and we readily agreed to a rental of 30 dollars a month, provided I would fix up the whole first floor for my office needs and two rooms on the second floor for my residence. The retired tailor did not want to spend a nickel for repairs. In order to fix the house and equip it for a physician's office, I needed about 700 dollars, which I had no prospect of getting from anywhere except by borrowing it from a loan institution. The Mastbaum Loan Association, under the directorship of Mr. Hirsch at that time, was willing to advance me this amount of money but, as security, substantial people would have to assume responsibility for repayment in the event that I could not repay for one reason or another. I already owed by this time more than 2,000 dollars to the Cooperative and the Rotary Club. The problem was to find friends willing to endorse my loan, thus assuming personal responsibility for its repayment.

I knew very few people of substance whose signature would be acceptable to Mr. Hirsch. I, therefore, asked a potentially costly favor of one of my professors, whom I knew only as an instructor, but whose generosity I somehow became aware of through the "grape vine"–Dr. Matthew S. Ersner, my "nose-and-throat" Professor. One afternoon I made an appointment with Dr. Ersner to see him at his office. He graciously accepted me when I revealed to him the purpose of my visit. He unhesitatingly promised to lend his signature for security of my complete loan. I was promised signatures to one-half of the loan by two business men, acquaintances of my good friend Mr. X, the Secretary to the Cooperative.

Years later, when I once visited Dr. Ersner and, in the course of our conversation, mentioned that I would never forget the favor he had done for me, Dr. Ersner asked in all sincerity, "What did I do for you, anyway?"

When I reminded him of the great favor he had done for me in one of the most critical moments of my life, he said, "It might interest you to know that I did this and similar favors for many a student of mine and never lost a penny on it."

If the concept of charity is a noble one, then people like Dr. Ersner are probably examples of the highest type of noble men, in a world in which the selfish interests of many are more familiar to us.

After securing my loan, I first of all fixed the steps to my future office. I then remodeled the first floor, with its bare walls and shabby woodwork, into a reasonably decent-looking setting for my practice of medicine; equipped it with shiny sterilizers, and unnecessary (as I found out later) tools of all descriptions, sold to me while I was still an unwary medical student by an eager-beaver salesman, hung up my shiny shingle and began the practice of medicine, which has continued in this same place to this day.

* * * * *

During the years of my pre-medical and medical training, although I concentrated heavily on my studies, I still found time for social activities. In my first years of study I met mostly foreign girls, recently arrived in this country, the daughters of middle-class Jewish parents. They were, on the average, more intelligent than the American girl of their ages and social strata. Many of them were graduates or students of Russian Gymnasia, which impart more knowledge to their students than an equivalent American high school. They had also more experience in life than American girls of the same age, going through, as a rule, all kinds of experiences in their metamorphosis from Russian to American.

These girls and I had a common language, and I was naturally favored by them in social intercourse.

As I became more Americanized, I began to meet with a different type of girl, who had come to this country as a child and grown up in an American environment but who still had a definite orientation towards the past.

One girl of this type was Miss N. She had come to this country a few years before me, was fairly well-Americanized in her adoption of certain external mannerisms in dress and speech. However, her ideal was a man who did not possess immediate material advantages, such as a car, house, or a good paying job, but who had more or less higher aspirations in life, such as becoming a teacher, social worker, or physician, although he was still struggling toward such a goal.

She was a naturally intelligent and pretty girl. I enjoyed her

company and, little by little, became infatuated with her. I craved to see her beautiful gray eyes and handsome face, and felt an intoxicating feeling in her proximity. We often met in the park and spent hours together, and I looked forward each time to a pleasant pastime with her. I had the same feeling for her, familiar to me in my past infatuations, which although not platonic, excluded any actual craving for sexual satisfaction.

Whether from an unerring female instinct, or from studying me and observing my relationship to her, Miss N came to the conclusion that I was the type of man nurtured and brought up in the spirit of exclusive possessiveness, in relationship to a woman, which is characteristic of a male brought up, more or less, in a patriarchal society. Whether Miss N wanted to confirm her observations or whether she had decided that she would not care for a consort of this type–after all, I suspect that I was the one infatuated, although no doubt she liked me–Miss N brought on the break in our relationship. One wonderful summer evening, sitting in the park, surrounded by an atmosphere conducive to passionate desire, she suddenly told me that I was not the first man in her life. Like an animal sensing danger, I stiffened all of a sudden and became all attention. I suddenly detected a harsh note in her voice, "And what if a man takes physical advantage of a woman, does that mean that he actually took possession of the 'whole' woman as a complex personality with her mind, feelings, emotions and all?"

I barely heard her last words. I was like one stricken by lightning. I was overwhelmed. In spite of my great experience in life, in spite of my advanced, as I thought, ideas about the relationship between man and woman, I met personally, for the first time, this dilemma, and I knew that I was beaten. I knew that I could never live with a woman who had been "despoiled" by another man. Paradoxically, it is remarkable that had this woman been a widow or a divorcée I should not have had that feeling at all. It is a psychological phenomenon which, of course, could be explained (at least, that was my explanation) that in this case I was taken advantage of by another man, with the possible consent of the woman, to deprive me of my "birthright." I felt that I was a "second" man to this woman. Whatever was the psychological, subconscious cause that stirred up this storm in me, it was devastating enough to completely obliterate in one minute my strong feelings for this girl. My infatuation burned out. I took Miss N home in sullen silence, never ever to renew our friendship. Years later, I met Miss N and did not detect in

my heart even a residual trace of my old feeling toward her.

I met Miss V while visiting her brother, a student at Temple Medical School. Miss V was a petite girl with dark black hair and a fine profile. She appeared to me like an exotic Spanish girl. She was a teacher of piano and I, being very fond of music, especially of the piano, was very much attracted to her. She was in the beginning rather cool to my advances, reluctant to my proposal to go with me to a movie. But gradually she warmed up to me and began to take me more seriously, and I began to visit her house more frequently. She was very Americanized, judging by the fact that she refused outright my suggestions to "just take a little walk" in the park. She expected a "definite date," even if only to visit the local movie and return to her house afterward to spend the rest of the evening.

As I became more closely acquainted with her, my original attraction to her gradually diminished in intensity. On the other hand, she became more and more attracted to me. My attraction to Miss V was entirely unlike my attraction to Miss N. I was not "infatuated." I was the master of my emotions and feelings. Miss V attracted me originally more as an "image" of a pretty girl, and as our relationship became more intimate the "image" began to suffer from pure physical inadequacy.

I observed that she was much older than I had thought her, hence, lacking the spontaneity of youth in all her ways as a woman. I became aware that she suffered from "frustration" and had a critical attitude to men in general, apparently the result of her being "overlooked." Her music lacked, I thought, any emotion. She strove for technical perfection, which apparently she did achieve to a great extent. She mostly liked and worked hard on music such as Schumann's—highly technical, but lacking in emotional appeal, at least to me.

On closer contact with her, I found that her beautiful hair was largely not hers, but skillfully worked in and giving the appearance of natural hair. Most of her teeth were not hers.

I regretted my steadiness in dating her and, knowing by this time her disappointments and frustrations, I hated to be an additional man to give her another "kick." On the other hand, I felt that I could not date her any longer.

The situation was complicated by the fact that, as the new school semester approached, Miss V persuaded her brother, a real estate man, to loan me about 350 dollars, if I remember correctly, for tuition fees. I

did not wish them to think that this whole dating business had been a design on my part to obtain money for tuition. I obtained a loan from the Cooperative and, enclosing the check in a letter to Miss V, I told her frankly that I was unable to date her any more for reasons that, perhaps, some day in the future I would be able to explain to her. I did not meet Miss V again for about ten years, when one day I hired her as a music teacher for my son, David.

Chapter 38

I MARRY

I met Miss Genel one morning when, as a student in my senior year, I was working at the Mount Sinai Hospital Medical Clinic during my summer vacation. I wanted to know about a patient's social status and I called up the medical social service for information.

Miss Genel, who was one of the medical social workers, came to the clinic herself with the patient's social service folder. It was rather an unusual procedure, as generally the information was given over the telephone. Miss Genel told me a long time afterward that she was very much intrigued by a doctor who would ask for social information in treating a clinic patient and wished to meet him personally. It was rather an unusual occurrence, as most doctors did not bother to go to all that trouble in the case of a clinic patient.

Miss Genel was of average height, rather well-built, about 25 years old. She was well-informed about this "case" and in a few clear sentences gave me the information I desired. I noticed, looking at her from time to time, her beautiful, large, gray-blue eyes peering from under her arched eye-brows, a beautiful feminine forehead surrounded by a crop of strong, long, sandy-brownish luscious hair. Her lips, I thought, were rather too thin and uneven. Her skin was clear, healthy, and exuded freshness. An occasional smile would light up her serious face like a ray of the sun appearing from under a dark cloud. When she left, I did not give her a second thought but, a few days later, her image would appear again and again in my mind's eye. I thought of inviting her to a football game of my Alma Mater, Temple University. Next time I came to the Medical Clinic of the Mount Sinai Hospital, I called up the social service department and invited Miss Genel to go with me that afternoon–it was Saturday morning–to the football game. She consented. I met her at the appointed place, and we went to the Temple Stadium to watch the football game. I was a football fan in general, and especially of "Our Temple" football team, and behaved like a typical alumnus, jumping up and down, shouting with extreme exuberance all those "Indian cries" at each advance of our team. Miss Genel looked with wonderment and possibly some subconscious

satisfaction at my wild behavior. It was quite in contrast to my usual seriousness and mature approach to patients which she had observed in the clinic.

She did not give me a chance to invite her for a "snack" after the game, as was the usual procedure. She was in a hurry to make a train to her home, she said, and I took leave of her at the next trolley-car station. I did not meet her again for several months, although I often thought of her.

My last year's semester began. I was busy in school and no longer attended the clinics at the Mount Sinai Hospital. I had, therefore, no contact with her. I was too pressed for money to even think of making a date with her. Once, while writing an extra-curricular research paper on Dr. Harvey, the "Father of Cardiology," to be presented at a meeting of the undergraduate Medical and Cardiology Society of our school, an idea occurred to me to invite Miss Genel as my guest to this school affair. It was no doubt a subconscious or conscious attempt on my part to impress her with my abilities as an "author" or a "research" student. To my delight, she agreed to come, and I had an opportunity to show myself advantageously as one of the "lecturers" at this meeting. She watched carefully all the procedures of the meeting and listened attentively to all the speakers. I was elated. Taking her to the station to "catch her train," I asked her for her address. She sort of hedged away from giving me her address directly, but said that I could find it, although it was out of town, in the telephone book.

A few more weeks passed. I thought of her with increasing frequency, the image of her beautiful eyes and gorgeous hair being always in my mind's eye. I tried to find some weak points in her personality in order to free myself of her domination. The lower part of her body appeared to me to be somewhat inflexible, making her walk with a certain, peculiar, heavy gait which seemed to me to detract from her generally pleasing appearance. Suddenly the image of her smile would appear before me and completely erase this attempt on my part to find faults with her appearance. It would flash through my mind like a sun-ray and fill my whole being with delight.

I tried a few times during the evenings to call her at her home—I found out her telephone number—but each time I was told that she was not home. Once I did find her at home. After greeting her and talking to her for a while, I hesitatingly asked her for a date. She said that she was very busy and did not really know whether she would be free in the

immediate future. She suggested instead that maybe I could visit her at her home in three weeks, and she gave me her address, in a suburb of Philadelphia. I, of course, accepted that proposition and was very elated. On the appointed day I was very excited and waited impatiently for the day to pass and the evening to arrive.

It was a very cold, snowy day in February. I took a local train to the suburbs and got off at a deserted platform. Miss Genel's house was only a short distance away. It was a large, solidly built house with some ground around it. I approached it with a thumping of the heart. Somehow I felt that this date had been, in a way, forced on Miss Genel. I entered the house, well-kept and furnished, a far cry from the dingy rooms that I had lived in for the last few years.

Miss Genel met me with an engaging, although controlled, smile. She introduced me to her mother and father. Her father was a big man, rather rough in manners but sociable. Her mother, a middle-aged woman below average height, had a set, impenetrable face, indifferent if not definitely unfriendly. A young, recently married couple was also present, friends of the family. The husband was friendly and deferent. His wife, rather plump and loquacious, a nurse by profession, dominated the talk of the evening with her opinionated views on the various, current subjects discussed. Miss Genel was very warm and friendly to the young couple. After introducing me to them as a friend, she almost completely ignored me, leaving me to my own resources in maintaining my contacts with her guests as well as with her family. I felt very awkward and was, therefore, uncommunicative. I felt myself a fifth wheel, unused and unnecessary for the time being at least, or like an empty row-boat, drifting aimlessly along the bay. I felt that Miss Genel had invited me for inspection by her family and these very close friends of the family, and that I was failing in my exam. When the young couple left, I still lingered on, and I could sense an impatience on the part of the mother and an embarrassment on the part of Miss Genel. It was very unpleasant to me, but my spirit of independence and stubborn resistance returned. I stayed on more to annoy the unfriendly mother than to prolong my visit with Miss Genel. Finally, I left almost at midnight; the mother accompanied me to the door and saw me out into the cold night as if to wish me "good riddance."

It was a strange evening of entertainment for me. At this time of night, the local trolley ran only once every hour. It was very cold, and I was lightly dressed. I set out to walk to the city, about two miles away,

and was almost frozen by the time I reached home. For a long time I remembered that walk of mine, equating it to the Walk to Canossa of Emperor Henry IV to Pope Gregory the Seventh. I was furious with myself for the poor showing I had made. I tried to weaken Miss Genel's hold on me and her power of enchantment over me by trying to find some faults in her. She was not sociable. It was downright unfair to "throw me to the dogs"—to expose me to the unfriendliness and enmity of her parents, especially of her indomitable mother. She was the cause of my nearly perishing in my walk from the suburbs to the city. All these trumped-up accusations would disappear into thin air when I recalled her face and smile. I longed to see her again. I felt myself sucked into that vortex of emotions called "love," which atrophies your will to resist and to tear yourself away from this powerful stream of deep emotions.

I called a few times on the phone evenings when I expected Miss Genel to be home. With a heart throbbing from suspense, I waited to hear her voice, only to be utterly disappointed and frustrated when the harsh voice of her mother would announce almost triumphantly that Miss Genel was not home. I did not dare to call Miss Genel at her place of work, fearing that I was too emotional and might embarrass her. I finally decided to write a letter to her. It was a long letter in which I wrote about myself and my life struggles and ended with a profession of my deep emotions toward her. I foolishly implored her to answer my letter, either to give me some hope or to tell me without pity that she did not care for me. Of course, she never answered my letter.

I lived for weeks in a state of suspense, hoping every day to hear from her and being frustrated each day when no letter was forthcoming. One day I took the trolley-car in the direction of her suburb. I passed the station and platform which I had alighted on my way to her house. I looked out the window of the car toward the cluster of the houses which included hers and, without getting off, I returned on the same car, again passing the same platform and looking wistfully and in great suspense in the direction of her house. Maybe by some miraculous chance she would appear on the street or take the same car to the city. At any rate I had made my pilgrimage to Mecca and this gave a temporary relief to my pent-up emotions.

The winter passed. My schooling was at an end, and I had taken up my residence at the Baby's Hospital. Once, returning to town from the Baby's Hospital summer camp for convalescing children I was about to

take a trolley car to the city. I noticed that I was short one penny for the car fare. I stood in embarrassment at the trolley stop trying to figure out a way to get back to the Baby's Hospital. If I could get to 69th Street, about a mile away, then I would have enough fare to reach the hospital. I began to walk towards 69th Street, stopping once in a while and motioning to a passing motorist for a lift. A battered, old car slowed down and stopped. The driver, an elderly man, opened the door and invited me into his car. He was going in the direction of 69th Street and readily agreed to take me there. We became engaged in a friendly chat. I told him who I was and where I was going. He told me that he was from Lansdowne. Lansdowne was a magic word for me; it was the suburb where Miss Genel lived. I told him that I had some friends in Lansdowne, the Genels. He said that he lived a few houses away from the Genels and knew them very well. He himself was a Minister of the Gospel and was interested in people in general, but this family was of special interest to him, since their daughter, a very intelligent girl, had taken a trip to Palestine, the Holy Land. She had been there for a whole year and was about to return home very soon.

I listened with extreme suspense to this matter-of-fact chat. The minister never suspected the storm of emotions which these innocently related facts stirred up in me. When he let me off at 69th Street, I thanked him profusely for the "lift." I was almost overwhelmed by "news" so vital to me and deeply affecting my whole being. Now at least I know of "her" whereabouts. For a year and a half I had lived with the hope of possibly meeting her somehow, and she had not even been in this country. How strange! Now I at least had definite news of her return.

I was familiar with the fact that a certain "liberal" organization, the "John Reed Club," most likely a "front" for the Communist organization, was frequented by many social workers who considered themselves advanced in social thinking. I attended the meetings of this club a couple of times, hoping to meet Miss Genel there. I never spotted her among the crowds filling the halls of these meetings. I knew now that she could not possibly have been there as she was thousands of miles away, in Palestine. However my "hunch" that I might meet her there was probably correct. I decided from now on not to miss any of those meetings. Surely enough, two months later, when I entered the meeting hall of the John Reed Club one evening, I saw Miss Genel sitting on one of the remote benches in the hall.

Miss Genel appeared to be much changed in her appearance. She was much stouter than when I saw her last. She was, however, more lively and sociable, conversing with friends, apparently discussing the speaker's remarks. I passed by her bench and greeted her with a certain amount of reserve, fearing to be snubbed. I was, however, pleasantly surprised when she answered my greeting with friendliness and almost "eagerness," at least it so appeared to me.

At the end of the lecture I found a suitable moment to approach her and to offer her a "lift" home in my recently acquired second-hand Ford. She accepted after a moment of reflection, and I had the full measure of happiness in taking her home in my car. I brought her home, let her out of the car and, bidding her good night, I returned to my house a transformed man.

I had a feeling, somehow, that I had conquered Miss Genel. I could not have said on what evidence I based this conclusion, but I was sure of my conquest. I felt, possibly by mental telepathy, that subconsciously, possibly, even against her conscious will, she felt her fate to be tied with mine. She became passively subordinate to my will.

Whether my perseverance and the attention I showered on her impressed her, or whether in meeting other admirers she never felt herself as passionately loved as was the case with me—as a woman she was flattered and assured (this assurance never ceased throughout our whole married life) and from that moment on she manifested no resistance at all to my advances. Whether I visited her at her home or invited her to a movie or to a play, or just out for a little ride, she was not unlike a "steady girl friend," reserving all her time for me.

We spent many evenings together and both felt great pleasure in one another's company. One evening I asked her formally to marry me. She gave me a positive answer. It was the happiest moment in my life. It is hard to explain the absolute happiness that pervaded my whole being that evening. I was conscious that the greatest moment in my life had arrived; that I could hardly expect to experience another such intense moment of happiness in my life.

Miss Genel was always irresolute and hesitant in doing things. I remember a few days before this irrevocable step of hers, when we were out one day on a little ride outside the city, I told her, in jest, of course, that I was ready to marry. I loved her and adored her, but if she would not agree to be my wife I would "propose" to Miss R, another social worker, a common friend, whom I knew to have a "crush" on

me. Helen, for this was Miss Genel's first name, always reminded me of that statement with a sly reproach, claiming that I actually "blackmailed" her into marrying me.

Shortly afterward, we arranged for our wedding, a simple affair. Rabbi Max Klein of *Adath Jeshurun* performed the simple wedding ceremony in the presence of a dozen people in his chapel, and a dinner followed at Helen's parents' house for the immediate family and friends.

My father-in-law offered me his sturdy Buick for our honeymoon trip to Washington, D.C., for three days, as my old Ford was not very reliable. We spent the few days in a "conservative" hotel populated mostly by old gents and ladies in retirement, who looked rather with curiosity at this young couple, possibly with a certain nostalgia, remembering their young days.

There was no question of my being in love with my wife, Helen. Whether love is a strong physical attraction, or mental state of mind, or a powerful subordination of one's whole being to a dominant emotion directed at the opposite sex, I was no doubt in the throes of this phenomenon and in its power to the very end of my wife's life (she died twelve years later from cancer of the breast). Every part of her physical body evoked an irresistible attraction in me; every image of her personality–whether her smile, or talk, or the expression of her face–impressed themselves on my mind and exerted a powerful pull on me when she was away, even for a short time. Yet I never experienced what is commonly known as jealousy. I was somehow absolutely sure about her. Whether this was the deception of my personal ego, or whether it can be explained in any other way, this absolute assurance apparently was surprising to her too, since she asked me, not once but many times, where I got such assurance about her.

I remember her asking me this question when one of our friends, who apparently had a definite "crush" on her, was treated by me with complete indifference, although his "pining" for her was quite evident to any casual observer. My relationship to him did not change a bit, although I am far from being immune to jealousy in general.

As a loving husband I was completely absorbed by my strong feeling for her. But, as a thinking individual, I disagreed with her attitudes and philosophy of life. As a social worker, she belonged to a group of people of whom I was very critical. The echoes of the Russian Revolution had reached the shores of this country. The intellectuals

and quasi-intellectuals in this country were in the vanguard of those disseminating these ideas of social revolution. These elements, like similar elements in every country the world over, were usually recruits of the middle classes. Lenin, Trotsky, and other leaders of the Russian Revolution were descendants of middle-class families, although they spoke in the name of the workers. Very few actual sons and daughters of peasants and workers have ever been the builders of revolutions. Although the potentiality of a good mind and abilities is not confined to any definite class of people but is evenly distributed among all classes, the working class, having been forced to spend more time and energy in eking out an existence, has had less opportunity to acquire education and knowledge than the more opulent classes that had the means and leisure to widen their horizons through education, travel, good living, and leisure time to think and reflect upon life in general.

The Jewish community in the United States as a rule was recruited in the last century from immigrants from the Eastern European countries, who were mostly middle-class people in their countries of origin. The more or less homogeneous mass of the Ghetto Jewry from the East European countries coming to this country of freedom splintered into diverse groupings, at times acting at cross-purposes with each other. The strong factors sustaining the unity of Jewry in Eastern European countries–the segregation in the Ghetto, religion, *The Book* (Bible), and the Hebrew culture–vanished under the impact of two potent factors. One factor was the wind of social reformism and atheism blowing from the Communist and Godless Russia (I use here the word "Godless" in no derogatory sense, but simply as a statement of fact). The other factor was the complete freedom of the individual citizen characteristic of the United States of America.

Arriving in this country of Labor and Capital, the more entrepreneuring and business-minded turned to their old way of life: trading. These business elements found here an already entrenched Gentile business class. Most of the bankers, industrialists, railroad magnets, and owners of the land were Gentiles. It remained for the average Jewish business man to be in the middle and low middle bracket. This is probably the reason for less anti-Semitism in this country, as anti-Semitism traditionally originates in the upper, ruling class and is transmitted to the lower classes.

The second category of Jewish immigrants joined the labor force in the United States of America. Many adjusted well in the "needle trade"

and similar trades and formed the conservative unions, such as the Amalgamated Union and the Hillman Union. The more enterprising of these workers left the unions at the first opportunity and rejoined the business class of dress manufacturers and other owners of small shops.

Their children were hopefully oriented towards the professions of medicine, law, etc.—the old ideals of the Ghetto parents, when these professions were the only ones accessible to Jews, the military caste and government bureaucracy being barred to them.

But many of this second category of Jews could not adjust well to American life. They floated around in a stormy atmosphere of the dynamic life of the United States in the twenties and thirties, forming that discontented group of Jews who were easy prey for Communist propaganda; forming the so-called splinter unions (from the A.F.L. and C.I.O.) with a Communist orientation.

The more intellectual individuals, literary and artistically inclined, formed the so-called "avant-garde", the carriers of liberalism in the political, social, literary and artistic sense. They swallowed uncritically, hook, line and sinker, every new idea or theory promulgated by a contemporary thinker or artist, whether it had merit or not, and decrying everything of the "past," whether it had value or not. This was true about many groups of writers, artists and even, strange as it may seem, so-called scientists and researchers. The group of social workers to whose membership Helen belonged was, on the whole, one of those "liberal" groups.

This group was typically the vehicle through which new social theories were uncritically propagated and who carried these ideas to an absurd end. They were the ones who picked up the slogan of "emancipation" of women and immediately interpreted it to mean that the ideal of an emancipated woman was to be a "career" woman, who looked down on chores in the home as degrading and detracting from their ideal.

Little by little the "emancipation" included also the freeing oneself from the "burden" of having children in general, and particularly "many" children, or big families. The bearing of one, or the maximum of two children, was conceded as a sort of sop to the "foolish" paternal instinct of the still old-fashioned husband.

When Helen and her girl friends were pregnant they were ashamed to show themselves on the streets, as they considered it a setback to the ideal of emancipation. And when Helen had her first child, David, as

soon as she was able physically she returned to her "job" as a social worker, leaving the "annoying" job of taking care of him to her mother, an old-fashioned woman–according to her "enlightened" daughter–who still enjoyed the drudgery of taking care of a baby, and to me, the very busy general practitioner. She was sure that her "duty" toward my "old-fashioned" paternal feeling was done, and she could now be a pure "career" woman, and was unpleasantly surprised when she conceived the second time.

When Janet was born, a premature baby, I was almost the only one to take care of her during the first stormy months of her life, when she had to be fed by pooled human milk, and I had to go daily to the Hospital to get it. Helen paid hardly any attention to her and, as soon as she was able, returned to her job as a social worker.

This group of social workers, almost all of them daughters of middle-class business men, filled all the halls and meeting places where "radical" lecturers were expounding on new social theories of distribution of wealth. From the economic security of their homes, made possible by their parents, often owners of "sweat shops," they could "afford" the dues and assessments of all kinds of "front" organizations, composed of fellow-travellers.

It was a paradox to see one particular lecturer on social problems, Mr. H, a builder of houses who had accumulated millions from his trade, arranging parlor meetings and "seminars" where Helen and other social workers assembled to listen to the "idealist," the "noble" lecturer, discussing the best way to distribute the wealth of the "exploiting" capitalists among the masses of poor people.

Helen and her friends, the social workers of the welfare agency, also had great respect for the wealthy "Board Members" of this organization and tried to emulate even their mannerisms as well as their contempt for the "poor wretches" to whom they dispensed relief as a private welfare agency by contributing to it "tax-exempt," of course, contributions.

The ideas of Freud, with his sophisticated and rather negative approach to life–so very negative that, in my opinion, it borders on a pathological and perverted interpretation of most natural phenomena–these "ideas" took a strong hold on the social worker class, as a whole, as well as other intellectuals and semi-intellectuals. And, as is usually the case with "half-baked" psychiatrists and psychologists, they extended every concept of Freud to an absurd application in life.

Keeping a room clean in a house was interpreted as some sexual perversity or symbol. A natural and quite healthy attempt of a child to get out from the dominance of the parents to stand on his own feet indicated a "hatred" of the parents. The natural tie of a mother to her son up to a certain time of his final maturity was not just "momism" but the Oedipus complex, and the sympathetic relationship of father and daughter could be nothing else than sexual perversion.

Professional social service was not looked upon as a function of investigation of the needs for money and services of marginal people in the American competitive society, who are unable to take care of themselves for one reason or another. The approach to social work, in general, was but an opportunity to implant the half-baked ideas and notions of this particularly smug and "well-fed" group of people in their victims, the "poor wretched" ones. This was proven later when, under the reforms of the New Deal, these weak groups achieved the "right" to demand their share of abundance from the State (in the form of State Relief, Unemployment Insurance, and Old Age Pensions). This group of "social reformers" did not care to continue on their social service jobs, as the Government was interested only in the eligibility of the applicant for assistance. The most militant ones found jobs with more wealthy private social welfare agencies in New York, a city abounding in wealthy philanthropists. In retrospect, from the vantage point of time, one is now fully aware that all this behavior of the group of social workers was only a passing fad in the historical sequence of events.

This fuzzy thinking of a confused generation was completely reversed in the next generation, the generation of their own children, when the term "housewife" again became an acceptable term and not a taboo word; where the women vie with one another in having or producing more and more children, not just one or two for the satisfaction of the poor husbands.

One could argue that the human society is always, and has been always, subject to fads and fashions and changes in mood and differences in approach to the problems of life and the family. However, this is confusing a passing mood with a fundamental change in the thinking and motivation in life. The principle of reproduction is one of the most fundamental principles in nature, whether in human, animal, or organic life on this planet. It is possibly the second most potent, irresistible urge in the organic world, next to food-sex, in

general, being a means to the end, which is reproduction. (According to Robert Ardrey in his book, *African Genesis*, the territorial principle is second, taking precedence over sex.)

Only an unnatural, confused society, sick in the biologic sense, could consider reproduction as a "burden" and the normal maternal or paternal feeling as a pathologic Oedipus complex.

I came to the conclusion that Helen and her group of social workers, who were Jewish—the same being true in the other big cities where a sizable Jewish population resided—could be classified also as part of the "lost generation" of Jews of the twenties, thirties and forties. Being the children of the first generation of immigrants from the European Ghettos, who were torn off from their traditional base and moorings—religion and the ethnic unity forced upon them by persecutions—these children were floating around aimlessly, subject to pathologic influences as a mass of humanity devoid of any resistance by strength of social tradition or church organization and affiliation.

The dynamic life of this country gradually absorbed these aimlessly floating human "particles" to form an unique civilization based on the amalgam of different nationalities and cultures. Only in the last decade has there been a nascent movement among less confused members of this group and among the children of this "lost generation" to re-crystallize into a specific Jewish identity with the Synagogue as the center of their social and communal life.

Chapter 39

ZIONISM

The advent of the Hitler Era introduced a certain schism in the different groups and layers of the Jewish community in the United States of America. The ideal of Jewish unity through the establishment of a Jewish National Home appealed to some members of the different Jewish groups, economically and socially diverse though their outlooks were. This ideal cut across the different layers of Jewry and began to impart to them some sense of national cohesion in the face of the Hitler conspiracy to destroy the Jews everywhere, lumping together the specific Jew, as he still identified himself with Jewry, and the assimilationist, the Jew who was about to quit Jewry or who had already succeeded in passing into the Gentile world. Many Jews had always believed in the establishment of a Jewish Home as a means of preserving Jewish unity and national distinction. Such a nation would be a component part of a world composed of different nationalities, each one contributing its individual flavors and specific qualities to the human race. These Jewish elements had also another argument in their favor. A National Home would replace the former base on which the Jewish community rested as a distinct community, their religion, which had almost completely crumbled as a unifying factor for the mass of Jewry. The Zionists took heart in the fact that they were in the long run vindicated in seeing Palestine as the only reliable and enduring Jewish Homeland. The disintegration and fiasco suffered by other territorial homes projected by Jewish patriots–Argentina, Brazil, and Uganda–clearly showed the superiority of Palestine. In spite of its disadvantages as a barren land, seemingly not fit for agriculture–the land most favorable for agriculture was already occupied by Arabs–it still is a most likely enduring Homeland for the Jews, by its appeal to World Jewry nurtured for generations (by constantly reminding the faithful ones of their return to Zion).

To these arguments of the convinced Zionist was now added the fact that during World War II in the aftermath of Hitlerism no other country in the world, even the free United States of America, would open its doors to the stateless survivors of the Hitler holocaust. More and more

Jews began to see Palestine as the only place for Jews, and warmed up to the idea of Palestine as a Jewish Home, if not for nationalisitic or religious sentiments, at least as the only place for Jewish refugees available.

The still vital elements in American Jewry found a common rallying point and devoted some of their energies to helping financially the State of Israel to establish itself amidst the most difficult conditions. This interest in Israel as a Jewish Homeland took hold originally, as would be expected, among the older generation of American Jewry, the immigrants, who still had some sentiment of belonging to Jewry, as a distinct group.

The Zionist Organization originally recruited its members from the ranks of middle-class business people and from some Orthodox Jewry (*Mizrachi*). The laboring Jews as a whole did not participate and were rather antagonistic, as were the Jewish intellectuals and professional people, considering it a "narrow" nationalistic and chauvinistic movement running contrary to their beliefs that the millennium of cosmopolitanism and internationalism was at hand, and that all problems of racial tension and nationalistic antagonisms would melt under the impact of a socialistic and communistic society.

Hitlerism and anti-Semitism raising its ugly head even in Communist Russia in the last years of the rule of Stalin had a sobering effect on some of these elements. They began to warm up to the idea of Zionism and the organizing of a Jewish State.

This confounded the dreamers of a just, socialistic society built on the abolition of racism and nationalism. The masses of Jewry in the United States, and in other countries of the so-called "free" world, lent a sympathetic ear if not a helping hand to the emerging Jewish State, although a hard core of irreconcilable anti-Zionism still remains in a good percentage of the Jewish intellectuals, professionals, and even Rabbis (of all people).

Some Jews who immigrated to this country from Germany considered Jewry a "religious sect only" and not a nation. Hitler disappointed these Jews by still considering them and their ancestors as a definite nation and race.

Israel was established by the heroic effort of a small minority of Jewry. By sheer daring against tremendous odds they succeeded in establishing a Jewish State. The founding of Israel buoyed up the spirits of Jews everywhere and, by its very existence as an independent Jewish

State, gave status and human dignity to every Jew in the Diaspora; hence, the great enthusiasm of the masses of Jewry everywhere for Israel.

Some groups of Jews advance all kinds of trumped-up accusations and create false slogans such as "dual patriotism"; "local charity first"; "Israel wants our money but not our advice"; and "the injustice to Arabs." The argument of "dual patriotism" is usually advanced by groups of American Jewry economically or professionally well entrenched in the United States of America. It is possible that they fear anything that might unfavorably affect their status quo. They show the insecurity of all economically advanced classes of people in all eras of human history.

The pre-Hitler German Jew, who was advanced both economically, intellectually, and culturally, but nevertheless insecure, had to profess "more" loyalty to the German State than the Germans themselves; hence, was more fiercely patriotic than the average German. In the United States, these classes fear that any sympathy with Israel might be interpreted by their imaginary "enemies," the rest of the American people, as a sign of disloyalty to the United States and, hence a danger to their entrenched economic and social position. In their insecurity they have to proclaim from roof tops that they are "real American patriots" and lack even a "trace" of disloyalty by being sympathetic to Israel. Nobody but themselves would even think of accusing them of disloyalty to the United States for helping their brothers overseas, for helping Israel to absorb the stranded Jewish refugees and the persecuted Jews in lands antagonistic to them. Nobody in this country, composed largely of emigrees from the different nationalities of the world, could accuse them of disloyalty to the United States of America because of their natural sympathy for a Jewish State, much as the Irishman, Frenchman, German, or Englishman cannot be accused of disloyalty because he is sympathetic to the land of his origin.

The argument of "local charity first"—and they may also add "last"—is usually advanced by local Jewish tycoons. Although actually their "charity" is "tax-deductible," they still love the adulation of themselves as "philanthropists," "great public figures," and "benefactors" by the mass of "poor wretches" whom they can actually see and over whom they can enjoy superiority—an advantage they miss when their help is directed overseas.

The cry of "great injustice done to the Arabs" is thrown in as a

clincher when the above slogans are not enough to explain certain personal antagonism to the "State of Israel".

Every bit of Jewish land in the "pre-Israel State era" was purchased from the Arabs with good money by the Jewish National Fund. It is a well-known fact that the "Balfour Declaration" was only a tactical move by the British Colonial Office in its "imperialist" policy of "divide-and-rule" in its mandated territories.

The Arabs in Palestine, who constituted a majority at the time of the English mandate over Palestine, were by all odds more favored and helped (for the benefit of the mandated Power) than the Jewish minority in Palestine. All the newspapers of the world, including those of the United States, carried the story, during the Israeli War of Independence, of how the Jewish Mayor of Haifa begged the Arabs, with tears in his eyes, not to run away from their homes but to stay put under the protection of the Jewish fighters until the peril of the War was over. These Arabs, nevertheless, left their homes *en masse* and ran away to the lands held by the Arabs, enticed there by the promises of the boastful Arab-aggressor armies that in a very short time the Jews would be thrown into the Mediterranean Sea, and the Palestinian Arabs would be given all the loot belonging to the destroyed Jews.

This wicked dream never came true.

Even after the Israeli State was established, the organizers of the State immediately created a "caretaker" ministry to register and keep intact the former possessions of the run-away Arabs in order to give an account of it in time to come, when real peace would be established between Israel and surrounding Arab countries.

How, therefore, could some of the members of American Jewry talk about an injustice toward the Arabs on the part of Jewry? This canard, an effective slogan in the propaganda war of the warring Arab countries against Israel, sounds stupid and false when used by Jewish elements of the "lost generation" in explanation of their antagonism to Israel. It is an attempt to hide their lack of any genuine feeling of responsibility and concern for their Jewish brethren. A void exists in their lives because of lack of this feeling.

I cannot see any contradiction in believing in a Jewish State and being a good American patriot. When a good Irishman emigrates to the United States of America he transfers his allegiance to his new country of residence. A good immigrant Jew, by the same token, is a good patriotic citizen of the United States of America, his country of

adoption, to the greatness of which he contributes his talents as a member of a distinct race and nationality—the Jewish.

It is the "nationalist" Jew who can be a good patriot of the United States of America, rather than the "internationalist," whether he be a banker or a Communist; the merits of internationalism and Communism, *per se*, as philosophies not being considered in this argument.

Chapter 40

THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AMONG VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS

I started my practice of medicine as a general practitioner in "Strawberry Mansion," which by that time had turned into a solidly Jewish neighborhood. The term ghetto applied to Jewish neighborhoods in the "Old World," signified forced separation from the dominant majority. This separation was accompanied and completed by laws of restriction in residence, business, and means of making a living. This term ghetto could not be applied to Strawberry Mansion or to other similar neighborhoods in American cities. Different ethnic groups found it more convenient and attractive to live in homogeneous neighborhoods because of similarity in habits, ways of talking and thinking, and the carry-over of similar traditions. The newly arrived immigrants, whether Italians, Irishmen, Jews or Puerto Ricans naturally tended to choose residence in a place settled predominantly by people of their own nationality or country of origin. This was part of a natural process of gradual integration of the immigrants of different countries and civilizations into the mainstream of American life.

This modern bugaboo of the Negro people—the fear of the ghetto—expressed by their leaders, when Negroes tend to segregate in places where their racial brethren predominate, is definitely a result of their boundless inferiority complex. We shall not touch here on the well-known reasons for this inferiority complex.

As one who now practices medicine among Negroes and is familiar with their thinking, sentiments, and fears, this slogan of ghetto is, in my opinion, misinterpreted and misdirected by Black leaders; hence, it will prove to be ineffective. It would be more beneficial, in my opinion, for the "emancipation" of the Negroes if their leaders would concentrate on correcting the inferiority complex of their brethren and themselves by explaining and pointing out its incipient causes. This would put the elements of the White Supremacy cult in this country on the defense.

I started my practice on the edges of the Jewish Strawberry Mansion quarter, on 29th Street, which was still populated at that time by old families of German and Dutch extraction, who had resided there for years. I picked this neighborhood for my office, as I had resided in this

neighborhood for the last several years of my student days, and I was familiar with the neighborhood, its streets and its Jewish population, and hoped to use the knowledge as a base for starting my general practice. My calculations proved to be correct in some ways and incorrect in others. Knowing best the Jews, as being closer to them as a Jew and as a recent immigrant, I expected to have Jewish patients as my first patients. As a matter of fact, my first and most dependable patients were the German and Dutch and Irish people of my street and the surrounding neighborhood of Strawberry Mansion, and not the Jews. It was the beginning of the Depression, and these white, marginal people, the Gentiles, were glad to find a doctor who charged very reasonably and seemed to pay meticulous attention to his patients. I was not familiar at that time with the peculiar ways and habits of Jewish patients–which are, as a rule, the ways of middle-class and low middle-class people in general–of being too much impressed by a well-established reputation, advertised by various means, ethical or unethical. The very fact that you were a "local" general practitioner and not a "specialist" or a "professor," even if the title, "professor," was self-assumed, put you in a lower category in the medical fraternity in the minds of the Jewish patients.

The Jewish patient would trust the general practitioner, possibly, with treatment of an "ordinary cold," or a scratch on the finger, in an emergency; but anything more serious he would entrust only to a "specialist" or "professor." I picked up a nice practice among the old German, Dutch and Irish people, to whom a "doctor" who graduated from a recognized medical school was a competent enough professional to treat all human illnesses, unless he himself asked for a consultation in a certain special field, by which he felt that his patient would benefit.

However, due to a well-established pattern in American life–the change of neighborhoods that goes on continuously for one reason or another associated with the dynamic life of an industrialized society and which was accelerated by the Depression–my neighborhood changed almost completely within about two years. The older generation of Germans, Dutch, and Irishmen either died out or, under the impact of the Depression, lost their houses to the mortgage companies and went to live with their children or friends in other neighborhoods. Their homes were sold to newcomers to Strawberry Mansion, mostly Jewish, lower middle-class or working Jews from South Philadelphia, who came to join their religious, national and racial

brethren in Strawberry Mansion, leaving their neighborhoods in South Philadelphia either to Italians, or to Negroes coming up from the South.

Little by little, my practice changed to almost 90 percent Jewish. To the "newcomers" from South Philadelphia I was already the "old, established" doctor on 29th Street to whom they could trust their care for a tiny bit more than just a cold: maybe a sore throat, or an acute stomach ailment, with the understanding that I would provide a "professor" or a specialist when the condition lasted more than a day or two.

I picked up quickly a "transient" Jewish set of patients who, as every doctor practicing in a Jewish neighborhood knows, will give any new doctor a chance to examine them once or twice. Then they will try another "new doctor" who had opened up his office more recently. This floating, transient element fills the offices of any new doctor who opens up in a Jewish neighborhood, to vanish as quickly as it appears. They generously give the neophyte a "chance" and entrust him with the examination of their "sacred bodies" and the opportunity of listening to a torrent of complaints of interminable "aches" and "pains" in "every" part of their body. The conscientious but inexperienced physician is puzzled when he can find absolutely no organic basis to explain this multitude of complaints. He can either treat the patient symptomatically with remedies for every complaint, according to the *materia medica* which he learned in school, or–and this is more practicable and better in the long run for physician and patient alike–can pass on the "deeply ailing" patient to the care of a professor–usually suggested by the patient.

The "experienced" Jewish "professor," who usually came up from the ranks of the "old Jewish general practitioners," is quite familiar with the Jewish patient. He knows that the approach to this "deeply ailing" patient is most effective by the psychotherapeutic route. For this method he is more "qualified" through having reached the status of "professor," which enhances his prestige in the eyes of the Jewish patient. A word from the "Great Man" is more effective than all the examinations and the flood of medication offered by the "little doctor" in their neighborhood.

I succeeded very quickly in acquiring this "wisdom" in treating Jewish patients in my neighborhood. In bowing to the reality of a Jewish practice I soon became the "trusted neighborhood doctor," who would not make a step in treating his charge, the Jewish patient,

without an "assist" from the "high" authority of the "specialist" or "professor." I thus developed a big practice in my Jewish neighborhood, although I could never depend on it as a stable practice, considering the nature of the Jewish patient to "try" other doctors and to "check up" on their current physician.

I found the practice of medicine extremely satisfactory—perhaps, because I chose the practice of medicine as a field which interested me as a science in general; perhaps because I am socially at ease with people and, during the years previous to my taking up medicine as a profession (as a businessman and later as a *Chalutz*), I was always surrounded by people; or perhaps because the practice of medicine is more of an art than a science. I also found personal gratification in the very process of unraveling the mysteries of nature by a scientific approach. I could study human nature at a time when *Homo Sapiens* is closest to his natural state. The layers upon layers of conventionalism and the acquired veneer of manners and behavior, imposed by civilization and the pressure of "co-existence," melt away under the impact of fear for one's life and the instinct for survival.

The more serious the illness, the more the patient frees himself from the "fig leaves" of culture, standing naked before his Creator. The physician, administering his relief through a scientific or artful approach, feels the gravity of his responsibility as the rescuer of a drowning person. Even the most minor illness is always a challenge to the physician to see whether his scientific knowledge or the artful approach to the subject measures up and is sufficient to correct the abnormal situation, where pathology replaces physiology in the complicated machinery of the human body and mind. In the course of treatment a certain intimate relationship is established between the genuine "healer" and his patient, which is different from the customary relationships of two previously unknown-to-one-another human beings. This relationship is characterized by a sincere desire to help on the part of the physician and a complete confidence and hopefulness on the part of the patient.

This type of human relationship is more likely in "general practice," where the physician has the opportunity to study the patient as a whole as a personality afflicted with a certain impairment of his body, whether physical or mental. It is less likely to exist in the treatment of the patient by a specialist, who ideally should also consider first the patient and secondly the afflicted part, but nonetheless, under pressure

of many factors usually concentrates on the minutiae of the presented pathological part, ignoring the patient as a whole or leaving this phase of treatment to the general practitioner.

Somehow, the Jewish patients consider themselves as "more progressive" people, knowing more about the latest in medicine and surgery. As a result, they–and the rest of the middle class, although to a less extent–constitute the majority of "paying" guinea pigs on whom the virtues and shortcomings of the newer drugs and methods are tested *in vivo* instead of *in vitro*.

It is remarkable how the philosophy of the Gentile patient, whether he be Irish, Polish, or Negro, is different in this respect from that of the Jewish patient. They, also, are aware of the existence of a specialist or professor, but they rightfully assume that if one would be necessary the family physician would say so. In fact, in a case of very old age or of a patient moribund from a hopeless sickness, they would ask me, who would be only glad to share the responsibility with another physician, whether, in my opinion, a specialist or a professor would "help" in this case. And when the question is put to me in this way I cannot help but saying that I do not think a specialist would do any more good in this hopeless case. Then they would say, "In that case, Doctor, do the best you can. We don't want any specialist."

And when the patient would die, as was inevitable, they would invite you to the funeral and show you off to all their friends as "the fine doctor" of the deceased person.

Being a general practitioner was very hard work and almost enslaving. During office hours or any other minute of the day and night, the telephone would ring, and all kinds of questions would be asked and advice sought. I would be called out several times during the night on most trivial matters.

Once, at about three A.M. a patient of mine called me to see a neighbor of hers who was apparently "in agony." My patient assured me that it was an emergency. I quickly dressed and sped to the place, and breathlessly ran up the three flights of stairs; I found there four other physicians, each one called by his good patient, who was a neighbor of this "very sick" person. One of the doctors was Dr. Greenwood, a man of about 70 who was almost ready to collapse when he finally reached the third floor, where the patient lived. It turned out that the "dangerously" sick woman was a young woman who had an argument with her husband: to frighten her husband, or to get the

upper hand in the argument, she had thrown an hysteric fit, an old, tried-and-true method with some women.

Every neighbor awakened by her hysterical screaming had called the family doctor, and thus five busy and overworked physicians had a rendezvous at three A.M. on the third floor in an apartment of a patient strange to them. Of course, none of us was paid, as the "emergency case" rightfully argued that she did not call any of us.

In the practice of medicine you come across all kinds of situations, at times tragic and at times humorous, or even ludicrous. A Jewish woman of about 80, apparently in fairly good health for her advanced age except for a slowing of her mind processes, complained at every visit to me about her trouble with her "stomach." When I asked her specifically for her symptoms she said that she did not know why but for the last few years she was not "the same" person. It used to be that when she ate she enjoyed it and never had any trouble with her stomach. But now when she eats exactly the same food that she has eaten for the last 50 years her stomach gets puffed up and she feels very uncomfortable.

When I asked her to tell me specifically what she eats every day, she began to give me her breakfast, lunch, and supper menus, each one packed with lox, herring, sour cream, zharkoa (pot roast), and fried foods that would tax the digestive capacity of a person in his 20's. Her husband (her second), in his 90's, wondered what was the matter with him that he became tired each time he walked a few blocks.

Another great-grandmother in her 80's begged me to help her to good health when she became ill—not so much for herself; after all, she had lived a long life already—but for the sake of her great-granddaughter, a baby, whose crib stood in her room. After all, said the old lady she wants this baby to grow up and enjoy the sight of her old, old great-grandmother. She wanted to live for the sake of her great-granddaughter.

Another old Jewish woman in her 68th year, gray and emaciated, conceived a notion that her husband, a few years her senior, was being unfaithful. She would watch his every step and would find ammunition to substantiate her claims. She complained to me about her husband and the fact that she definitely saw him talking on the street with a woman "friend" of his. When I repeatedly assured her that her husband, who was also a patient of mine, had enough trouble with his heart and coronaries not to think in terms of an amorous pastime, she was not

convinced and continued to "track" down her husband and to "report" to me, willing to pay my office fee and to "relieve" her heart until I finally could not take it any longer and told her not to come back.

Once in a while I would be called in to treat a certain Jewish couple. He was a retired worker. Both were advanced in age and indeed afflicted with a multitude of chronic illnesses. From the moment I appeared in the doorway both of them would simultaneously pour out a stream of complaints, each one of them demanding my complete attention to the exclusion of the other, whom each accused of imaginary illnesses.

On the other hand, at times I came across Jewish couples genuinely and deeply devoted to one another, minimizing their own illnesses in order not to worry their spouse or their children.

In one unusual situation, I had a Gentile patient, an old man who was paralyzed and lived with his daughter and son-in-law's family. In his young days this man, a butcher by trade, was apparently highly successful and wealthy. His family hinted to me that he had been very religious in his younger days and gave away 20,000 dollars to an African Mission of his church. They spoke of this with some resentment. At present it was pathetic to see this speechless, paralyzed man sitting in his chair waiting for someone to feed him and help him from his bed to the chair. He could not talk, but his eyes and his whole attitude during my visits expressed a bewilderment at what had happened to him, a religious man. Whether the members, or religious leaders, of his church ever visited him I do not know, but one morning his daughter called me to see him. I was busy that morning, and when I came to see him about two or three P.M. I found the house empty of people.

Approaching his room, I heard the rattling in his throat, and I was present at the last few labored breaths which accompany the parting of the "soul" from its earthly container, the body.

I stood for a few minutes silently in the room. I felt suddenly a compulsive urge to minister to his departing soul. I folded his hands on his chest, and I made the sign of the Cross over him. After all, I knew he was a religious man, and he had left this world all alone without the blessings of his minister, which he probably hoped and prayed for.

I remember three Irish sisters, the Feeneys, who in their old age lived together in one house. One of them became hopelessly ill. Although she was a great burden to her two sisters, who were even older than herself,

she begged them not to send her to the hospital. The two sisters asked my advice. I told them that their sister was hopelessly sick, and it was just a question of time until she died; that the hospital would only relieve their burden, but would not restore their sister to health. They decided to continue tending to their sister at home, and did so until she died a few weeks later.

They thanked me for the truthful information that I gave them. They said that they never would have forgiven themselves the callousness of sending away their sister to die in a hospital against her wishes. The same thing happened to the second sister. The third sister, who survived both sisters, died also at home among her family.

In contrast to this, the old Jewish woman, Braina, about 90 years old, was dispatched by the "professor"—who knows the psychology of his Jewish patient—to the hospital. She was put into an oxygen tent and tended to by a Gentile nurse, with whom the Jewish patient, unable to speak English, could not communicate. The family was not allowed even to approach the imposing mysterious tent. Old Braina died without saying goodby to her numerous family of children and grandchildren.

I wonder whether the Jewish family that permitted their grandmother to die in a hospital oxygen tent, deprived of the last spiritual contact with her children and grandchildren, did a service or disservice to their matriarch.

I have always considered the function of a good general practitioner of medicine to be primarily that of a healer rather than a scientific researcher. To give a concrete example of what I am talking about, I shall cite the following case, if you can designate a suffering human being as a "case." In my early practice I had an elderly Jewish patient, a real-estate man who had an office across the street from mine. After making the rounds of many neighborhood physicians and not being much satisfied, he finally decided to "try" the new young doctor across the street. It was in the midst of the Depression. He had lost much of his equity in real estate, and business was not so good with him. He was an immigrant from Vilna, from the Jewish ghetto. He had tried his hand in business in New York without success and came to Philadelphia believing that a change of place might change his luck. This proverb did not apply to him, apparently. His numerous failures could not but affect his physical condition as well as his state of mind. He was emaciated, depressed, and imagined all kinds of illnesses which he, as a

matter of fact, did not have. He was a nervous wreck, and it was obvious that no doctor and no professor could extricate him from his financial failure and his maladjustment or maladaptation to American life, which was at the bottom of his trouble and complaints of physical illness. It was, therefore, only a question of offering him some relief, or at least the hope that his condition would in time improve. Despite placebos given him by the previous local practitioners (no doubt good, competent physicians), the patient was still the same suffering patient. His first request when he came to my office was whether I could send him to a good specialist or professor. He was convinced *a priori* that a young physician could not help him after he had already been treated by local physicians in practice longer and better known than I was. He was even reluctant for me to examine him thoroughly. All he wanted was to be recommended to a "good professor." Some physicians would have considered such a demand as an insult to them as physicians. However, regardless of the feeling of the physician, the question here was the welfare of the patient, not the dignity of the physician. As a "healer" my concern was the patient and how best to help him. I recommended him the most popular "professor" among the Jewish community at that time, Dr. David Reisman. I took him over to Professor Reisman myself and, after being prepared for the professor by a few of his assistants–fine physicians themselves–the patient was presented in the sanctuary, or consulting room, to the Professor, himself.

The very experienced Professor Reisman, a wise old man with piercing eyes under his bushy gray eyebrows, invited me, after the examination, to an adjacent room and told me that he could find nothing essentially wrong with the physical condition of my patient. "And," he added, "as you and I well know, the patient's illness is due most likely to anxieties over his financial failures. However, as physicians it is incumbent upon us to give the patient relief and to relax in some way his tensions."

He advised me to give him 40 injections of liver extract, one injection weekly–an innocuous enough procedure, which surely could not hurt the patient and would give him psychosomatic relief. I could not but agree with the wisdom of this very experienced physician, and thus for 40 weeks had a more or less happy and highly satisfied patient coming to my office. This was enough time for financial conditions either to change to a more favorable aspect or for the patient to adjust

in some way to the inevitability of certain conditions, thus blunting the sharpness of his anxieties.

My financial success in my few years of practice among Jews was talked of by a few of my colleagues as being due to my "business" abilities. In the above-cited example, if the concern had not been primarily the well-being of the patient, one could easily argue that it smacks of a business deal on the part of the doctor–which, of course, was not the case.

I once noticed a vehicle belonging to a moving and trucking company with the following very ingenious slogan, "KEEP ON MOVING." This slogan reflects perfectly the dynamic reality of life in the United States, which is always on the move.

True to this principle, my neighborhood, Strawberry Mansion, a specifically Jewish section, and my practice, predominantly Jewish, changed almost overnight to one predominantly Negro.

For years there was a small settlement of very poor, indigent Negroes in the streets back of my office, which gradually turned into a slum area, where poor workers, drunkards, and people on relief were segregated, as the rent for the broken-down and neglected houses was very cheap.

Occasionally, I would have a Negro patient. Thanks to the stimulus and help of the relief program, more and more Negroes were coming to the North, and infiltrated the outlying streets of Strawberry Mansion, where my office was located. I never refused to treat Negro patients.

In a very short time my practice changed from 90 percent Jewish to 95 percent Negro.

The transition from a Jewish practice to a Negro one was rather rapid, taking place within the short space of a few months. The first Jewish patients to leave were, paradoxically enough, my patients who professed to be ardent Communists or liberal thinkers. These same patients could be seen, on occasions, on soap boxes a block away from my office preaching integration and even mixing of races. But sitting in my waiting room alongside a Negro patient, they were somewhat shocked by this personal confrontation with the theories that they preached outside, and they could not take it. They just vanished and never came back as patients to a physician who acquired a Negro clientele. The "fellow travellers" followed suit. Since my neighborhood was populated mostly by these Jewish elements, in a very short time I lost my Jewish clientele, which was rapidly replaced by Negro patients

who appreciated the fact that I opened my doors unreservedly to Negro people. The few remaining Jewish patients who stuck by me were the extremely marginal (in the economic sense) people, many of them on relief or too poor to move out into a "better," or white, neighborhood.

When my practice changed to a Negro practice I was sincerely happy that I could practice a different kind of medicine, a medicine more to my liking, in which the already well-established and proven effective "science" of medicine was blended in a greater proportion to the "art" of medicine. The Negro practice that replaced my Jewish practice was of an entirely different character. Negroes are more natural, less sophisticated. They possess a certain amount of freshness and buoyancy, which protects them from ravages of their inferiority complex.

Among Negroes, most sicknesses have an underlying organic pathology, which is much easier to detect by modern physical diagnostic methods and requires less of a psychological approach to untangle them and get to the bottom of the disease. The Negro patient presents, therefore, the typical conditions, familiar to most physicians, which can be more easily helped by suitable medication.

Beside the satisfaction of more proper diagnosis and, hence, effectively better results *per se*, the personality of the Negro patient was a welcome change from that of the Jewish patient. There is a certain optimism and unrepressed inner vitality which exudes from Negro men and women, no matter how sick they are.

Approaching my office on any day, I was pleasantly met by loud laughter and banter coming from the waiting room, where the sick people apparently forgot their illnesses in the company of other patients and engaged in heated conversations on all kinds of current topics. There were always a few spellbinders to entertain the crowd. There were always at least one or two preachers of the Gospel, men or women, who took this opportunity to implant a word of the Gospel in the assembled crowd. If two or more preachers were present, they would engage in a controversy on the interpretation of this or that passage of the Bible and Holy Scriptures. The ground of therapeusis was already prepared in my waiting room even before the patient entered my consultation room. Optimism and hopefulness, which is not an insignificant component of any therapeutic measure, was already part of the patient before he even entered my office. It remained for me to

seal it by a word of encouragement in a minor illness. And, if the illness was more serious or, at times, even fatal, it helped to cushion the shock of the confrontation.

How different such an attitude is from that seen in waiting rooms of more sophisticated white people, and especially Jewish people. Each of the patients there is sitting solemnly and silently engrossed in introspective brooding, the face drawn, stamped with the seal of doom. The whole place is not unlike the undertaker's parlor. Even when the physician announces a happy verdict this spell of gloom is not completely dissipated, as there is always a doubt as to how correct the physician is in his optimistic prognosis.

As more natural and less sophisticated people, Negro patients are more likely to look upon their physician as a healer and, since most of them are more religious, as a rule, than the white patients, they are more apt to consider the physician as a messenger of God; hence, they have implicit faith in him. This, of course, is an important factor in the prevention of many psychosomatic illnesses. It also helps in bearing the burden of an organic affliction, which often requires great patience and optimism to overcome. Of course, the Negro patient is not free from much superstition, which has deep-rooted causes, sometimes reverting to the primitive conditions of idolatry.

I was once confronted with such a case of deep superstition, when, hurrying to the home delivery of an unwed mother, I was delayed in traffic and came into the house of the patient after a spontaneous delivery had taken place. The room was filled with old Negro women, who were sitting on chairs around the mother's bed in a very solemn and serious mood. I sensed something wrong, and when I looked at the newborn baby, it was motionless. A layer of the placenta enveloped tightly its face and mouth, preventing it from taking the initial breath. And the baby was thus suffocated. I was extremely agitated and annoyed at my unavoidable delay as, had I come a few minutes earlier, I could have removed that suffocating layer of the placenta, and this could have possibly saved the baby.

However, none of the women, including the mother, expressed any annoyance. In fact, I caught a glimpse of what I could define as mystic reverence and a religious adulation on the faces of all those present. From what I learned later, it was supposed to be a sign of "Heavenly favor" for an unwed mother to give birth to a child whose face is enveloped in a placenta, the latter being a symbol of a "Heavenly

Crown" with which the baby was dispatched to the presence of his Creator from this sinful world.

I shall never forget this direct encounter with concepts and ideas of a civilization steeped in primitiveness and superstition. The best that can be said in favor of these concepts, in this particular encounter, was the fact that the unwed, embarrassed mother could bear more easily her bereavement, being elevated to the role of the mother of a "Holy" baby.

Chapter 41

I REMARRY

My life was that of a general practitioner of medicine in a Jewish neighborhood, a life of hard work, being on call twenty-four hours a day, and always filled with some worries about one or another problem connected with the well-being of the patients. There is always some sick patient about whom you cannot help thinking all the hours of your waking. There is always some sense of responsibility for this or that decision in diagnosing a case, wondering what would be the effect of your verdict on the further course of the disease and the patient involved. But for the inner satisfaction a physician gets in having his diagnosis confirmed by the course of the disease and his prognosis accordingly fulfilled, the life of a conscientious physician would be too heavy a burden to bear without impairing his own health. As is the case with a frontiersman, or a soldier in wartime, the physician becomes inured to the constant emergencies and takes them in his stride. But his mind must, nevertheless, be always on the alert and not be clouded by an emotional or a sentimental approach to a patient, especially if this patient is a person close to him.

I continued my hard work in medicine dividing my time between my medical activities and my Zionist activities. During the Second World War, I volunteered my services as a Draft Doctor for the Selective Service. I would examine for the local Draft Board the draftees at my office and send a report of their physical and mental health to the Board for further action by the Army doctors. This free service given the Government was in lieu of my service in the Army or Navy, for which service I was already over-age.

In the midst of all this hectic activity I was struck by a thunderbolt. My dearly loved wife, Helen, became a victim of breast cancer. This calamity came on almost unheralded and unnoticed. A little lump developed in her breast. The great Dr. Babcock was sure it was just a benign cyst and, in order to get rid of it, more for psychological reasons, in his opinion, than by actual necessity, he slated her for an operation. As Helen was on the operating table, however, the biopsy report came as an ominous warning that it looked more like a malignant

tumor. Changing his course during the operation, Professor Babcock did a radical mastectomy. Helen recovered quickly from the operation, but the Damocletian sword of the diagnosed malignancy hung over her for the remaining two years of her short life.

Until this decisive turn of events, my relationship with Helen, in the course of our ten years of life as a husband and wife, began to settle into a certain groove, which was accepted by both of us as a set pattern in our future life. Helen's striving for "freedom" as a career woman, which ran counter to my idea of a wife of a busy general practitioner with two children requiring the care of a mother and not just a housekeeper, often brought us to mild arguments on this point. She would perform passively, not actively, her role as a housewife and a mother, which "riled" me.

I was very busy with my practice and with other activities, such as Zionism. Helen participated in this latter activity to a certain extent, attending meetings with me and arranging parlor meetings for Zionist activities of all kinds.

I thought that these activities and the task of rearing two children would be more than enough to fill the void created for her when she was disengaged from her activities as a social worker. However, being largely under the influence of the coterie of her social-worker friends, some of whom advanced in their careers as social workers at the expense, of course, of their personal family life (some of them remaining spinsters and others having a lusterless marital life), Helen was always dissatisfied and looked upon her function as a housewife, or as a wife and mother, as a definite burden. I fear that this attitude no doubt had a deleterious effect on our two children in many respects.

It did not lead, either, to a harmonious married life. I loved her deeply, of course, and this was the greatest factor in the stability of our married life. However, at times I would be so much provoked by her continuous harping on her desire to return to social work and "freedom" that once I told her point-blank that as far as I was concerned she was free to do whatever she desired. I dared her to go ahead, expressing the thought that she really was not serious; her professions of a desire to return to social work were taken by me with a grain of salt. If she had really and seriously considered a return to social work as a career, I would not have opposed it.

Whether this argument struck home, or whether Helen in her inner self admitted the truth and correctness of my analysis, from that

moment I never again heard a word about an "independent career." And that was the state of affairs of our married life when the calamity of her sickness descended on us. I was a broken man, broken in spirit and even in the lust for life, which had always been part of me. Helen was in the position of an animal trapped in a cage, hopelessly dejected. Even during the few months of her recovery from her operations and improved physical condition, the irrevocable, final verdict hung over her, poisoning every waking hour of her life. All her relationships to people, and especially members of her family, assumed an entirely different aspect, more natural, free from the accumulated crust of layers of conventional behavior and activity. She looked at the children, for the first time, perhaps, with a more natural attitude of a mother to her offspring. She treasured every moment she was with them, although, unfortunately, the children, being used to a different, careless relationship, did not now respond much to her caresses.

Suddenly, for the first time apparently, she discovered me as a close friend—as a lover, in fact—of whom she had seemed to be somehow unaware heretofore. Once, I could read the thoughts in her mind when, as I was driving our car, she turned to me and told me a story that she had read recently (or did she read it?). It seems that the ghost of a wife, a few years after her death, returned to the house where she once lived to see what had happened to her husband after her death. While she was alive, she was a very beautiful, graceful woman and now she found that her husband had married and lived with a fat, clumsy, crude woman, her successor.

Did she expect to hear an interpretation from me? Of course, I was dead silent when she finished her story. I was too depressed at the whole prospect of the Helen now sitting next to me visiting me as a ghost in her afterlife. I felt, however, that Helen instinctively wanted to remain in my life as the beautiful Helen whom I so loved, and that she hoped no "other woman" would replace her image in my mind.

Helen died. For a few months her image never left me, day or night. I was broken in spirit. I lost interest in all my activities; pulled out from all my Zionist activities and concentrated on being a father to my two children. Physically, I developed a nervous gastritis from so much emotional strain, from which it took me some time to recover.

However, life began to assert itself as time went on. I began to seek the company of women, of which I had been suddenly deprived. I was entirely lonely and needed some consolation, some sympathetic and

friendly attitude to fill, at least partially, the gaping void left by the forever departed Helen. My friends were mostly Helen's friends as, by a certain unfriendly attitude, Helen had succeeded in antagonizing and estranging the few relatives and personal friends that I had. These social worker friends of Helen, knowing from Helen my negative attitude toward them as social workers and career women, kept aloof, as if punishing me for my sins of transgression against their chosen mode of life.

I met a few detached women on dates and, coming home from each date, I felt more and more the loss that I had sustained in losing Helen.

Once I was called to see a patient, a young woman in my neighborhood whom I once had seen in my office as a young girl in her teens, for a minor illness. She had sustained a sprained ankle falling off a bicycle and decided to call me as the neighborhood physician to treat her. I now met a young, pretty woman whom I could hardly recognize as my young teen-age patient of a few years ago. Since then she had married a man and had a child by him, a little girl of about six years. Somehow her marriage "went on the rocks," and she was now a young divorcee with a child on her hands, living in her father's house. I treated her sprained ankle and, looking at her beautiful, provocative face, I was attracted to her. I thought of her during the next few days and tried to imagine her as a successor to Helen. Somehow this comparison did not appear to me incongruous. At her next visit to my office, I asked her to permit me to take her out on a date, and she readily agreed. We went to see a show. I began to take her out at more frequent intervals and felt myself more and more attracted to her. In a few months I proposed to her and, after some hesitation, she agreed to be my wife; we were married one day in a very simple ceremony in her father's house. Thus a new chapter in my life began.

Catherine, my second wife, is the antithesis in every respect to Helen. Whereas the bane of Helen's existence was her continuous inner conflict between her desire to be a career woman and her role as a wife and mother, Catherine's ideal was to be a good housewife and mother. She was, for a while, a substitute teacher, a social worker, and even a wife, with very meager satisfaction from any of these activities. She longed for a stable family life and a devoted husband; and, therefore, she was void of inner conflicts.

As a personality, she is more stable than Helen; Helen really did not have the strength and resolution to pursue any course she was

contemplating. Catherine has a definite goal in life, and she has the determination not to be swayed by outside influences against pursuing her ideal in life.

The story of my wooing of Helen, which was strewn with hardships and temporary failure, somehow made Helen always feel her "superiority" in our relationship as husband and wife. After all, she was the one who finally agreed to "dispense her favors" to me; as a woman, she never permitted herself to forget it. In fairness to her, she never expressed this in any way or form to me, although, as far as I was concerned, after the first year or so I had completely rid myself of my original disadvantage in our relationship. Whether it could be attributed to a strong ego on my part or a strong will, I soon felt myself the master of the situation in our household, although lovingly paying due attention to Helen as an equal partner in most respects of our common married life.

My relationship with Catherine was based on an equal relationship of two people who met and found a mutual attraction in one another. Catherine, from the very beginning, has paid respect to my abilities as a provider for the family life that she dreamed about, and she was resolved from the very first moment of our marriage to help me to the best of her ability and to encourage me in my endeavor to build a common home. As a result, my fortunes in every respect–economic, social, and even in developing my innate talent in art–began to flourish and reveal themselves in a most striking way.

My practice developed to a high degree of success due to the fact that I could concentrate on it with a clear mind, free to a certain extent from domestic chores, which were willingly taken over by Catherine. We developed a large circle of friends, entertained frequently, and enjoyed social intercourse with a wide variety of people. Strangely enough, some of those very friends of Helen in whom I was interested as people and whom Helen accused me of estranging, although I am by nature very sociable, have become now our close friends through the efforts of Catherine to cultivate their friendship.

All my life I had a desire to learn to play the piano and to paint. Catherine encouraged me to try both fields of art. After practicing on the piano for several months and not advancing much, I gave that up, and through the encouragement of Catherine began to paint, a field of activity of which I was completely ignorant even in its elementary sense of naming different colors. In the space of a few months I succeeded in

exhibiting several times at the Contemporary Art Association Gallery in Philadelphia and, after the end of my first year of painting, my painting, "Resort," was accepted at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

I am a self-taught painter. My actual introduction to art was through my friend, the fine commercial artist, Joseph Letven, in a most original and effective way. After buying for me the different tubes of colors, the names of which I had no idea, he took me out one sunny, summer Sunday into the country. We came to a field on an elevation, from where a beautiful scene of rolling hills with forests on the horizon stretched out before our eyes, typical of the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside. We climbed over a rustic fence. He gave me a brush, a small canvas and said, "Go ahead and paint what you see!"

I protested that I knew nothing about mixing colors and painting, but he said, "Do the best you can," and sat down to read his Sunday newspaper.

I looked at the beautiful scene stretching as far as the horizon in front of me. I spread some colors from the tubes onto my palette and began to fill the canvas with what I saw of Nature. After working for about half an hour I succeeded in filling the canvas with colors.

Joe took my canvas, looked at it and at the scene spreading before us and, after a few moments of silence, finally said, "Well, you are at least not afraid of painting."

And that was my first and only lesson in the art of painting. Since then I have exhibited several times at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and have made painting my avocation in life, from which I derive my greatest satisfaction next to my practice of medicine.

Upon learning of the exhibition of my paintings at the Academy of the Fine Arts, some of Helen's former friends from the social workers' coterie, who had adopted Freud's theories as the guiding light of their lives and activities, decided that my activities in art were the result of my desire to "escape from reality"–a common cliché of Freudism. Reflecting upon this, I came to the conclusion that Freud had achieved a remarkable thing. (He was, as far as I have learned from some of his writings, specifically his *Interpretation of Dreams*, a man of perverted logic, with a perverted approach to the natural phenomena of life.)

He had succeeded in putting over his perverted ideas and logic and his negative approach to life on masses of people always ready to be the recipients of any idea projected by a powerful personality. He believed

that the actions, pathologic desires and thinking of a few people, who are sick in mind and emotions, are characteristic of all the human race.

The healthy, positive elements of the composite personality of an individual human being–including compassion, love, attachment, integrity, faithfulness, loyalty, respect for and appreciation of efforts done on behalf of us, be it a stranger or our parents or people close to us–all these positive qualities in a personality, which have been stressed from time immemorial by our great leaders of thought and emotions–Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Confucious, Socrates–have been negated by a powerful personality who stressed just the opposite side of the dual personality of the individual. Freud stressed base instincts which, assuming that they do exist in the composite personality of an individual, are an outgrowth of his being developed in the ladder of evolution from an animal being, guided by the instinct for survival. In a human individual these natural, selfish instincts have to be replaced by more altruistic motives if the human race is to survive in the long run as an interdependent organization called civilization.

These random thoughts always passed through my mind as I reflected upon Freud and his theories. Moses, according to Freud, did not exist as a definite historical personality. *Ipso facto*, the teachings in the Bible are not to be taken seriously. Does it matter who promulgated the teachings and great moral principles of the Bible, or whether this or that person who lived in this or that era? The important thing is that these are vital guides in the promotion of a healthy society.

Does it matter that Freud, personally, had a grudge against his father and apparently disliked him intensely? Does that reflect on the normal relationships of parents who, not only among human beings, but even in the animal world manifest a tender care and devotion to their young, devoid of selfishness and proven at times by self-sacrifice for their young? And does the natural, mutual love and devotion of the young and their parents constitute an anomaly to be laughed at and coined the "Oedipus Complex," a pathological phenomenon? Freud considers as an "antagonism to their elders" the natural desire of the young to stand on their own feet and free themselves from their parents' protection. This, however, is welcomed by most parents and is even encouraged, as seen even in the animal world by the bird mother gently pushing her fledglings off the nest to teach them to fly.

In considering my relationship to Helen, her social-worker friends–the same mass of unthinking, uncritical people who swallowed

some of Freud's ideas, hook, line and sinker, looking at simple, natural facts through a cockeyed mirror–looked upon my metamorphosis and advancement in every aspect of life, financial, intellectual and artistic, as an "escape from reality."

Would it not be more natural to consider this radical change in myself the result of being released from a heavy, all-suppressing, depressive force which had prevented the free development of my personality? The removal of this powerfully depressive force–in this case, the blind love of one person for another by the Providential decision of fate, caused my suppressed capabilities and natural talents to assert themselves and to flourish in an atomosphere of freedom. These reflections were a "heresy," as far as my love for Helen was concerned, that I could not even admit to myself during the first few months after Helen had gone from my life.

However, as time went on and events crowded out the strong emotions imbedded in me toward Helen, the objective analysis of my past life and behavior reasserted itself. The receding image of Helen lost the aura of a glowing mist, built up around it by my own emotional imbalance, and I could see her objectively, with all her attraction on one side and her very weak and negative characteristics on the other.

I could compare her, unemotionally, with her successor, Catherine, and see the decidedly different characteristics of each as personalities. Helen, as a representative of the contemporary trend in American womanhood, the trend of the "lost generation" among women–the faltering, doubtful, aimless, unstable woman, falling for any passing fad –encouraged in her desire for emancipation by the decidedly favorable economic conditions for women in this country; yet, overstepping and overreaching herself and achieving, as a result, an extreme imbalance in the equality of sexes, reaching the point of dominance over the male; hence, reaching the same undesirable and destructive imbalance in family life, characteristic of the patriarchal society which they had set out to balance. The resultant outcome, in my opinion, is the multiplicity of divorces and breaking up of marriages, homes and family life, which no doubt plays a great part in the faulty upbringing of children and the crop of homeless, undisciplined, aimless, lawless and destructive young teen-agers who have become the menace of our modern society, and its greatest problem.

On the other hand, Catherine, representative of the traditional Jewish woman, with all her intelligence and intellectual capacities and

capabilities, considers the home as her mainstay, achieves the balance in family life by her devotion to husband and children and by the traditional means of womanhood throughout the ages of being a power "behind the scenes." Our youngest, our son Joseph Jay, particularly, has had the benefit of a devoted mother in his childhood.

In describing the two different types of womanhood, I do not in any way criticize it *per se*. I state the facts as they were, and are, without passing any judgment as to what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable. The progress of humanity, in general, and the progress of woman's emancipation is achieved by trial and error, as is the case of all evolution on this earth of ours. It is just possible that after this, our era–just a passing moment in limitless time–a true balance will be established between man and woman, without dominance of either one to a decided degree and with a more beneficial influence on the product of man and woman, their offspring, the builders of future humanity.

Chapter 42

RESEARCH AND PSEUDO-RESEARCH

Through all the earth-shaking events of the last three decades–the Russian Revolution; the rise of Hitler and his fall; the Second World War; the creation of the United Nations; and the rise to world power of the United States of America–I continued to practice medicine in my neighborhood, in the same house, in the same office. This steadiness once caused an emotional patient of mine to shed a tear. She was a young woman about 24 years old, whom I had treated 12 years before for a minor illness, as I was her family's physician. This was before the Second World War. During the Second World War she volunteered when a teen-ager to be one of the Army's Civilian Corps employees; travelled afar with the Army; married and lived in Hawaii for a time; divorced her husband; lived a few years in misery; and, as a nervous wreck, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, returned to Philadelphia to live with her parents. She had already lived a full life of joy and disappointment, of happiness and misery. She needed a physician for a minor illness and reminded herself of my existence. She called me on the phone, came to my office and found me sitting in the same chair, at the same desk as when she was still a little girl, carefree, happy, and with so many hopes for the future. She could hardly believe her eyes that I was the same man in the same position, and she the same patient seeking my medical aid. Her eyes filled with tears, and I understood the meaning of those tears. They spoke of a turbulent life in a harsh world full of the disappointments already experienced by this still-young woman.

Yet, although this patient found me in the same place at the same desk where she had left me twelve years ago, the practice of medicine in this country had undergone radical changes in every aspect of life in American society. Historically, the practice of medicine through the different eras of the development of human civilization and culture underwent many changes in its external manifestations, but not in its basic philosophy. The concept of the doctor as a healer had never changed from the time of the witch-doctor to the present professor. Even certain basic methods of practice had not changed from ancient times to this day. Medicine, as the application of art and science in the

process of healing, with the element of art predominating, had basically never changed. Even the "witch doctor," in his incantations, practiced the art of psychotherapy and psychiatry and, in his brewing of herbs, practiced a certain amount of science, culled from his empirical observation of the pharmacological actions of different herbs on the body and their therapeusis.

The art of practicing medicine, the bedside manner, basically remained the same. The sophisticated psychiatrist and psychoanalyst is the witch doctor in modern attire, taking care of the old Adam and Eve, living in a modern apartment on Fifth Avenue in New York instead of a cave in a mountain between the Euphrates and Tigris, the old Biblical Garden of Eden. The empirical observations of the witch doctor, reaching the high-water mark in the observations of Hippocrates and his contemporaries, continued through the ages by the observations of Harvey, Roentgen and Fleming, and reaching a low-water mark in the observations of our modern clinicians, do not reveal radical changes, except possibly in the intensity and the accuracy of these empirical observations. What was added is the application of the modern sciences of biology, physics, and especially chemistry, in the control and possible prevention of pathological impairment of the body and its physiologic functions.

The theory of bacteria attacking the body is also an old concept, suggested by the old Greek philosopher, Aristotle, to name one, but in a form acceptable to his contemporaries.

However, the application of modern sciences in the process of healing is still a very minor component in the practice of medicine. To begin with, the science of medicine is still in its nascent stage. The human body, as well as the body of any other animal, is such a complicated mechanism—with its biological, physiological, physical and chemical minutiae, and continuous processes influenced by such a tremendous variety of outside factors—that no human genius could embrace, penetrate, control and master both the body, its functions, and its external influences. Therefore, those who stress the dominance of the scientific approach to the process of healing versus the art of practicing medicine are, to say the least, ignorant of the vastness of the problem.

The art of medicine is still dominant in the practice of medicine and will probably remain so for a long time to come, gradually conceding to science some phases of the processes of healing.

The curricula of subjects in my medical school, Temple University, as far as the practice of medicine was concerned–not surgery or the specialties–rightfully stressed the importance of a correct diagnosis of the illness. The treatment given was based on the application of *Materia Medica*, Pharmacology, as it was handed down from a previous generation with, possibly, some minor modifications in the therapeusis of the diagnosed diseases. This was the pre-antibiotic era in medicine. Drugs, with the exception of a very few really effective drugs such as opium and its derivatives for pain, digitalis for heart diseases, and specific drugs such as quinine for malaria, were a multitude of different formulae, not very effective–so-called "shot-gun" formulae. These formulae were devised, in good faith, by theoretical pharmacologists, who assumed that drugs having certain pharmacologic actions should logically be beneficial in diseases needing such actions. However, it was no more than speculation. The course of the disease was, in most instances, very little affected by these drugs and, often, when used injudiciously or with poor skill by the practitioner, resulted in a worsening of the condition.

A good example of divergence of practical results from theoretical speculation was the treatment of gonorrhea, a venereal disease, with irrigations with Protargol solutions. This was before the era of penicillin and other antibiotics very effective in this disease.

It was thought that a fine antiseptic applied to the affected mucous membrane would be of great benefit. In fact, textbooks were written on this subject, and many an author of these textbooks received the acclaim of their medical brethren. Yet this irrigation method and these excessive manipulations caused complications most damaging to the body. At times, this method made the patient a lifelong victim of these complications. It was postulated, retrospectively, that most victims of this disease would have been cured spontaneously by the natural defense mechanism of the body had the patient been left alone without any treatment.

Yet, generation after generation of physicians, following the authority of a certain teacher who succeeded in spreading his faulty technique or observations by publishing his works in a textbook, continued to perpetuate these faulty practices, being convinced that they did the right thing and helped their patients.

This is true not only of medicine. It is true in every phase of human activity, where the uncritical masses follow their leaders, rightly or

wrongly, simply because this or that leader has succeeded in establishing authority for a time in this or that field, to be abandoned or forgotten as soon as a new leader appears who supersedes the older leader by succeeding in influencing the same uncritical masses.

Loaded with the knowledge of actions of different drugs on different diseases, I began my practice by ladling out this knowledge to patients, more or less uncritically, in good faith. Once I prescribed a certain medicine to a young woman with high fever. According to all the teachings of the actions of drugs that I had obtained in school and that I faithfully followed, I was sure that the patient would benefit greatly and would be well the next day. But, when I visited the sick woman the next day, she still ran a fever, which, of course, was indigenous to the course of this disease (acute follicular tonsillitis) but which nevertheless puzzled me, who expected immediate results from this excellent formula.

I noticed, however, that the three-ounce bottle of medicine that I had prescribed–a teaspoonful every two hours–was practically untouched. When I asked the patient why she did not use more of the medicine from the bottle she answered, as a good Jew would answer, with a question, "Did you taste the medicine, Doctor?"

I was intrigued by this answer; I poured some of the medicine on a teaspoon and tasted it. It was, indeed, the worst concoction that I had ever tasted, that could be suffered by a healthy person, let alone a patient suffering from a disease, without violent protestations. This was my first telling lesson in application of my school knowledge to actual practice on living people.

If anything, I learned from this lesson that a physician should at least know the taste of the drug prescribed by actually tasting it; if the drug prescribed was not effective, at least the doctor could not be accused of adding insult to injury by assailing the taste buds of the patient.

Similar observations on the effect of my prescribed drugs on the course of the patient's illness made me more and more critical of the knowledge absorbed as "gospel" in school. I began to think of the multitude of drugs as mere tools in practicing the art of medicine, as placebos which had a definite place in the practice of good medicine. From my direct observation on the course of diseases, I began to appreciate more and more the importance of optimism, as a healthy state of mind in a patient, to help along the natural defenses of the

body, and the role of a doctor in buoying up at the right place and time the spirit of the patient. In other words, the great function of the physician is his role as a "healer."

In my early years of practice, the word "research" was still confined to scientific laboratories, where men endowed with the great quality of an inquiring mind were delving into the mysteries of nature for the sole satisfaction of revealing another phase of these mysteries.

Theoretical research, as the creation of an inquisitive mind, is something you cannot order to bring forth from the scientist for a consideration, such as a sum of money or other goods. As a matter of fact, the true scientist is a very shy, introspective person who shuns publicity and cannot do creative work with someone hovering over him. The same thing is true about creativeness in every phase of human endeavor, whether it be a composer of music, painter, sculptor, or gifted writer. These are usually modest, self-obliterating personalities who, though possessing an ego and a distinct individuality which characterizes their work, shun the acclaim of the mob which is fickle and superficial.

The true scientist and creative person is too much in awe of the vastness of the field which he is exploring and of the infiniteness of the yet unrevealed mysteries to give himself too much credit for the modest goal he personally achieves. The really creative person just cannot be mobilized and forced to think. He is usually rebellious of conventionalities and already accepted thinking, or he would not be creating new concepts. He cannot be forced into a conventional groove and yet still do creative work.

The great advances in all fields of human activity in the last few decades of this century in the United States were based on the principle of giving to creative individuals an opportunity for creativity by not being fettered by too much organizational red tape, leaving this phase to the enterprising business men, industrialists, and their managers.

In the advancement of medical science such outstandingly gifted men as Salk, Sabin, and Waksman conceived their ideas in the quiet, isolated atmosphere of their laboratories. And, strange as it may appear, the acclaim of the masses and the offered aid by organized foundations, or grants from other sources, sometimes even impeded the further creativity of their minds by forcing upon them and their leisure time the necessity to perform functions of organizational work and activities.

It amuses me, therefore, when in the field of "clinical research," practical physicians, whose every moment of professional life is crowded with appointments and the acquisition of a medical clientele, lay claim to "original research" by a continuous stream of writing on supposedly "original observations."

All one has to do is to get a government grant of money or a grant from a foundation, organize a "team" of physicians, and one is set to do research for pay.

Everybody connected with this "phony" research assumes the pose of a "researcher and scientist." If anybody expects to achieve original creativity from these so-called researchers he is, of course, a very uninformed and naive person.

This "research" degenerates simply into compilation of statistics on patients and diseases already observed by keen clinical minds of bygone days and now chewed over endlessly like cud by a cow. Current medical literature is filled with these—to a great extent, worthless—statistics, tiring the eyes and mind of the serious-minded reader, who has the herculean task of sifting the grain of refreshing original observations from under the overwhelming chaff of statistical compilations—which are very often contradictory in character and do not contribute anything to the real progress of knowledge.

Yet, in spite of all this cluttering of the road to knowledge by a mass of worthless inert statistical data, a ray of refreshing original observation occasionally breaks through the heavy clouds of mechanical pay-ordered work. The discovery of penicillin and a few other drugs in medicine, a few original methods in surgery, can be considered as an original further step in the science of medicine. Of course, in the social and economic system of the United States, those few original discoveries which promise to be of great benefit to suffering society are exploited to the *n*th degree for commercial purposes, modifying endlessly one idea and representing it as an endless multitude of new, different ideas. This is the case with numerous antibiotics represented as different entities when, in reality, they are all similar, applied in an endless variety of forms for the profit of different commercial houses competing with each other for the garnering of profits.

It is said that a few of the great American commercial organizations, such as the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and the General Electric Company, are on the lookout for promising and gifted individuals, whom they are ready to employ and pay a good

salary–leaving them completely free to do whatever they want in any field of theoretical thinking they choose without any strings attached and without the organization demanding from the free thinker that he show immediate practical results from his theoretical thinking. This would be indeed a new approach to the traditional problem of doing research. The traditional man of research, lacking in most cases practical wisdom in the life of the community, usually ended up as a starving idealist, whether a musical composer, artist, or scientist. It remains to be seen whether the modern "free thinker and researcher," well-provided for, will be able to do the same for the advancement of humanity as his ancestor, the starving genius.

43

RANDOM THOUGHTS

As an observer of life in the United States of America, especially in my first years of arrival in this, my new Homeland, and, later on, when I became a practitioner of medicine, I was struck by two phenomena which contrasted so vividly with life in Russia, where I spent my younger years.

One phenomenon of the contrast between life in the United States and Russia is the one that I observed as a professional, a physician. I remember the natural and healthy fear of hospitals and institutions serving the sick, which was characteristic of the individual in Russia. Hospitals were almost considered with the same fear and foreboding as colonies of lepers were considered in ancient times. And people who were unfortunate enough by reason of their impaired physical or mental conditions to land in these institutions eagerly awaited the moment of their release to abandon these "abodes of Hell."

I found an entirely different attitude toward hospitals and toward physicians, in general, in this country. There is a benevolent, almost friendly, attitude toward hospitals here. It expresses itself in the fact that some people ask their physician to send them there for a "general checkup," or even "a short rest." Some educators even send bus-loads of children to become familiar with the structure and functions of a hospital, in the same manner as they would send them to inspect the production of milk in the dairy industry.

The television industry finds it profitable, apparently, to assail the eyes of the viewers with horrible scenes of an operating room during surgery. Many American women find it a very interesting subject to enumerate their operations and the number of stitches at each operation. Many men and women talk about their sessions with the psychoanalyst as if it is a normal phenomenon, like going to a movie or watching a baseball or football game.

I leave it to an objective observer to pass judgment on whether this attitude is a healthful or a desirable one.

The other phenomenon was the political set-up of the two countries. In Russia, as well as in Europe in general, political thinking originates in

the minds of ideologists, people especially fit by their restless minds and overflowing emotions to initiate revolutionary changes in a static and, at times, backward society. These were usually gifted orators and spellbinders who would naturally appeal to younger elements–particularly to the student body of the universities, immature in their political thinking but full of restless energy–in their attempt to implement their theories: hence, the phenomenon of student bodies spearheading all political movements for change; hence, the turbulent, often bloody, clashes between the emotional youngsters, spurred on by eloquent orators, and the established authority; hence, the unpredictable, often undesirable and, at times, damaging results to society, following such leadership.

An example of such destructive leadership was Hitler and his influence on the German society, which brought the great German state to the verge of destruction.

In contrast, politics in this country is in the hands of a special group, the professional politicians. I remember my first years as a citizen of the United States. I once watched Candidate Hoover campaigning for election to the presidency. He read to the assembled audience from a prepared paper without those "earthshaking" and thundering rantings employed by a European political orator, which are designed to appeal more to the emotions than to the minds of his listeners.

I noticed hardly any teen-agers in the audience, most of the student body being at that very moment engaged in the university halls listening to their instructors, preparing themselves for their careers in professional life, leaving "politics" to "politicians." Yet, Hoover was elected and became the Captain of the Ship of the United States. For several generations–as he lived a long life–he was venerated as a great man by the majority of the citizens of the United States of America.

The same unobtrusiveness and lack of ostentation was observed by me watching on television the appeals of President Truman to the American public.

The whole course of the history of the United States of America is based on this fact of leaving politics largely in the hands of experts in politics.

Considering the turbulent course of events in Europe and elsewhere, and the even keel of the American Ship of State, again, I leave it to an objective observer to decide upon the superiority of one system over the other.