

Memair from Rose Truk ~ 1980

My Parents

My father died in Luniniec; he died of natural causes after a long illness. He died a happy man - at that time 1940 - all his children were safe.

Mama lived in Luniniec (Poland) with three of my brothers, Yakow, Fishl, and Mendel (Manny). In July 1939, she visited me in Danzig. I begged her for that visit. It was not her first visit. She was in Danzig before - I think three times..

There were already ominous signs, and she left my father who was ill, so the visit was short. She liked to go to the synagoge on Shabes, but they all were burned after Kristall Night. I took her with me to the American Consul. I visited the Consulate often while waiting for my Visa. I wanted her to see the atmosphere there. While in Danzig, she got acquainted with Malve's family and Ben. Malve snapped a picture of her while she was on a train going back to Poland. Shortly before the war started, my brother Yakow decided that Mama should leave Luniniec which was already in Russian hands. She thought that she was going to Odessa to join Uncle Solomon. It was not so. The Russians were sending people deep into remote parts of Russia - Asiatic Russia, even Siberia.

Mama was crying in her letters that she left alone, that she left the children, she was also afraid of the cold climate, and had no warm clothing. I had two letters from somewhere in Siberia, and then they stopped coming.

When Mendel was in Central Russia (Asiatic Russia) he wrote to me that he was searching for her and the brothers. The brothers were taken to the Russian Army - Fishl was wounded and Yakow was in Tashkent in a military hospital - I had three cards from him. Manny wrote, when he found them they were all gone. It was in the Forties.

American Visa

I was waiting for the American Visa for 8 months. Every six or so weeks, I would dress nicely and go to the Consul to ask about my visa, and the secretary would tell me to come in six weeks. When I finally got it, it was as if it was a surprise, and I had to get out as soon as possible. Once I was summoned to come and I had to tell the Vice Consul about myself and what would I do in America (also to fill out a questionnaire; how many languages I know - a printed form - whether I am or was a Communist and other questions) under oath. I was given a paper that my papers were accepted. That paper was a real protection. When I got the American Visa, I had to get out as soon as possible. I needed a transit visa to cross Germany to Holland. I needed a Holland visa to cross to England, and I needed a British Visa to enter England to board my ship. I also had to make a list of my belongings to present to German authorities, to get permission to take the things out (it was required from Jews leaving Danzig). Yelwe could not take out her new Singer Sewing machine.

I got the German visa from a very belligerent German official; I got the Holland visa easily. When I came to the British Consul, he demanded to see my ship's ticket which I did not have yet. I ran to the Cunard Line, they sent me to the agent to his home - he refused to sell the ticket, he said: he needs confirmation from London, England and that the time is too short. Back I run to the British Consul and again he said go and get the ticket. Danzig is not a very big city and one could run back and forth. I felt I have to take the matter in my hands. I firmly demanded from the agent the ticket. He was seemingly demoralized; it was a tense situation in Danzig with hostile propaganda from Nazi Germany day after day. He said the ship is booked already. I told him there will be a next ship, he ^{said} said more expensive and he does not know the date of departure. I told him leave the date open and I told him the British Consul demands that he should sell me the ticket. I got the ticket for SS Aquitania (date open. Again I went to the British Consul, I got the Visa.

I was allotted by the Germans a sum of 10 German Marks - that is all I was allowed to take out. I did smuggle out 30 dollars which I sewed in the belt of my skirt. I had 40 guildens in Danzig money (lets say 40 dollars worth not really). Those I could not exchange

nor could I spend because most of the stores, Department Stores, Shoes , even Grocery etc. had a sign "Juden Eintritt Verboten". Jews not allowed to enter. That day was August 30, 1939 in the afternoon I left Danzig. All the transit visas were stamped August 30, 1939.

When our "OSE" clinic was demolished and the windows broken by frenzy Nazis in the "Kristoll Night" and our clinic was closed in 1938 I knew that I have to get out, to leave Danzig. At the same night I was aroused from sleep by a loud knock at my door in my room, and Nazi uniformed men entered and searched my room and correspondence I had and I had to give account of photographs in my room . They did not beat me up as they did Malve the same night, when she tried to protect a man who was a boarder in her mother's house. They knocked Malve over the back with a club and she fell down to the floor.

There was still a Hias office in Danzig-an organization (Jewish) that assisted with emigration. I knew the director. I went there and we talked about Australia (he later went there). I told him if only I could find Tunia in America. He said why don't you write to the former boss of Tunia. I despair that I do not know his address, nor did I know that he is in America. He gave me the address and it was Hias on Lafayette Street in New York. I wrote to Mr. Verosul (he knew me from Danzig), he in turn sent my letter to Tunia Ziv - they were friends. She answered and asked what can she do for me. I wrote her - and my first line was send me an affidavit to come to America. She immediately answered that she will be happy to do that and she does not remember my age or the city where I was born - she guessed it though. The correspondence lasted 6 weeks and I received an affidavit - (also signed by her husband whom, of course, I did not know). I went to the American Consul and he said that the papers are good and that I'll get the visa. I had the Russian quota. When I wrote about it to my parents in Luninac - my father and his brother got drunk from joy.

DEPARTURE

It was a lovely afternoon in the yet, Free City of Danzig on August 30th 1939.

The bus was almost full when I arrived with my three suitcases and a coat over my arm. The suitcases with their labels "White Star Line" "Cunard Line" on which it was boldly stated Southampton - New York. After being for months as inconspicuous and anonymous as possible, it was a daring revelation from me.

The bus would take me to a German city Marienburg, where I'll board a train to Berlin, Germany where an agent from the Cunard Line will be at the station. At the bus a small anxious group of dear friends Malve, Abram and Malve's youngest sister Claire were seeing me off. At that time to my delight and surprise, I saw two young beautiful blond German women approach the bus. I knew them when I was buying medical supplies for our clinic where I worked. They worked in the store. They came to wish me a good trip and they brought me regards from their boss, who sent me a snapshot of her herself and a lovely box of chocolate. A day before I was in the store and told them that I am leaving. I also told that to people in a drugstore where they knew me, and there the Germans envied me. It was courageous of the women to come and to talk to a Jew. I kissed them good-bye, I was the only passenger outside the bus, and it was time to take leave of my people. I entered the bus, it was very crowded, hardly place to stand. I sensed that the atmosphere was tense. A small darkish man with a distorted face and black eyes, full of hate was sitting near an immobile stout woman. He shouted and cursed the Jews. I braced myself and tried not to brush against the passengers near me when the bus was rolling. I noticed a few familiar faces. Standing in the passage was a woman with a backpack holding the hand of a small boy; also a business man with a young companion - this small group were Jews. The man never stopped shouting - there was otherwise silence by other passengers.

We arrived in Marienburg in the evening at 7 o'clock. We left Danzig at 4:30 P.M. A group of Nazis in uniforms were checking passports - the man from the bus was pointing at us, however, the Nazis ignored him. A short stout man with a friendly red face - a porter - came over to me and took my luggage. I followed him to the waiting room at the railroad station; he told me that the train to Berlin, Germany, will be leaving at 4 P.M.

and that he'll call ~~for~~ me and bring my luggage. I sat down at a table where the woman and the young boy (from the bus) were sitting; she told me that they are going to Italy (she of course, was leaving Danzig). A waiter came over and when I asked for tea and a roll, he said that he does not serve (on) Jews. At that time on the radio was the voice of Boebbels - a Hitler - I think Minister of "Culture" - those talks were daily also in Danzig (at 7 P.M.) voice of hate and cursing the Jews. The man from the bus was sitting in the waiting room facing us.

I saw the Jewish businessman and his companion leaving the waiting room; the woman and the boy left, and I, too, went outside. It was dark already - it seemed that the station was on the outskirts of the city - there were a few buildings - no lights. I did not dare to go far, I went to the end of the station building and I was standing there near the wall all night long - nobody outside. Toward the dawn I dared to go inside the waiting room where in a short while my porter came to me demanding where was I - he was looking for me. In a while he took me to the train platform which overlooked the city down below; he told me not to move away until he'll come for me. I bought a magazine at the news-stand: Die Berliner Illustrierte and waited. I never saw the others (Jewish passengers) anymore. The train was arriving - the porter took my luggage and to my horror, he was going to the compartment where the man from the bus entered. I begged the porter to take me to another compartment. Why? he asked. I told him da sind schlecht menschen (evil people) "Aber, Fraulenshen da sind keine schlechte menschen" he said. I followed him. A while later he returned and said that I am right (I suppose my suitcases and the labels were recognized). I got a seat near a window, my luggage in place; I buried my face in the magazine - nobody bothered me. The train was passing many dark stations. From the opposite directions, trains with open platforms loaded with motorcycles and on each platform a figure of a SS Nazi man in uniform and swastikas, heading toward Poland and Danzig. There was a unique thing. After the city Marienburg, there was a stretch of land; cities, ~~urg was of course, Germany and the dark stations Poland~~ - railroad which actually belonged to Poland, and was called ~~and then Germany again. When German People from Danzig were traveling to Germany they~~ "The Polish Corridor". ~~Marienburg was of course Germany and the dark stations Poland~~ needed a Polish transit visa to cross the Polish Corridor. I reached Berlin, Germany,

it was still daylight. There was no Cunard Line agent on the station. I was on my own. A porter took my luggage down to the railroad station. The Berlin railroad is elevated and crosses the entire city.

I went to the waiting room and sat at the table; a waiter came over; I asked for tea and rolls and I was served. I had to wait for several hours for a train that will take me to Hannover, Germany. I went to the street which was in the center of the city. I knew Berlin when I went there on vacation from Danzig in 1930 visiting friends. In the evening a porter took me to the train - I paid him 2 marks from my allotment of 10 marks for the journey. The train was almost empty. It was still light outside. A woman with a 4 or 5 year old child was explaining to the child the sights; the zoo, the monuments, Die Verbrante Synagoge - I asked the child - She did not answer. In the Kristall Night in 1938, all the synagogues in Germany and in Danzig too were hurred down by the Nazis and their followers.

I arrived in Hannover, Germany at night, and had to wait several hours for the train that will take me to the Dutch border. Again I was sitting in the waiting room of a railroad station. Toward the morning a porter took my things to the train and found me seated in an already crowded train. A man in the train asked me where I was going, I told him to the Dutch border, he said that I was in the wrong train, that I should take the next one. I took down my luggage and left the train. The platform was empty, all the windows and the doors in the train shut and the Diesel engines working already. I saw the city of Hannover, in the early grey morning, down below; the big factory chimneys smoking heavily; and I was wondering whether there is an American Consul in the city.

I saw a man running from the opposite side of the platform. What are you doing here he shouted. I told him that somebody said I was in the wrong train. No, he yelled. There is no other train. He knocked at the window in the train, the window was lowered (the Germans obey a command). He lifted my suitcases, one after one - Three of them - and made them to take them in; he grabbed me between my legs, lifted me up and up I went to the window and somebody pulled me in. There was hardly time to thank the man - a porter; the train started rolling. There was silence in the train.

In a few hours the train stopped at a checking point in Germany where the passport

and things were examined, and where the Nazis shouted: Juden Zur Zeite. I noticed a group of German Jews. One young Jewish woman with a face as of porcelain Chinese doll with black eyes that were moving from side to side constantly. She was accompanied by her husband, who it seemed, was just seeing her off to the border. He was questioned rudely by the Germans, was ordered not to move, and later on from the train, we saw them leading him away. This group of Jews was going to England.

I, having spent almost all of my 10 marks for the porters, started to carry my suitcases myself. There were several stops and several changes of trains. On one of the stops, when I came down with my luggage, two young men approached me and offered to help me to carry my things - all in all - three times. We arrived at the Dutch border in the middle of the night, where in a few hours a train will take me to Rotterdam, Holland, and where I'll take a ferry train to cross the English Channel to Dover, England. The young men who were Dutch offered their apologies that they have to take a bus and cannot help me anymore. We sat at a table in a waiting room that was covered with a white linen tablecloth, the waiter wore a big white apron. I got my tea and white bread with good Holland butter that was famous in Europe. The two men sitting across me at the table, raised their glasses congratulating me with a safe transit to freedom. I arrived in Rotterdam, Holland in the early morning of September 1, 1939. Hardly did I step off the train, when two Boy Scouts and a Dutch Army Officer rushed to help me. But all of a sudden the Dutch plain clothes police stopped and conducted me to a truck - I was arrested. I still do not know why. I was not the only one. Two young English women (one wearing a cap studded with swastikas,) a young Jewish German woman and a young Englishman from South Africa.

We were taken to a police station in the city to a room overlooking a canal, where we were treated rather nicely and fed their good white bread and butter. There I heard that Hitler invaded Danzig - September 1, 1939. World War II started. We spent all day in Rotterdam, taken by bus across the city, a city beautiful with multicolored striped awnings looking like half umbrellas over the windows of the houses; with potted plants outside the windows and no curtains or blinds on the windows - one could glimpse people inside. This beautiful city was bombed severely by the Nazis in May 1940 before

Nazis overran Holland. The police kept us in a kind of barn and later took us in a van to a bungalow at a beach. While in the barn, the young Englishman asked our "jailer" for permission to invite the ladies to a cafe across the street - so while in jail - we had a good time. In the evening, we were taken to ferry boat. An agent from Cunard Line was at hand. We crossed the English Channel and arrived after a restful sleep in Dover, England, from there by train to London. I was taken to an hotel and got a room with private bath, a good bed with snow-white coarse linen and good meals in the restaurant of the hotel (small but cozy) Cunard Line paid the expenses. Next day I went to Cunard Line and a date was affixed to sail on liner "Aquatania" on September 8, 1939.

I spent a week in London, I went sightseeing (by myself). I was in Hyde Park. I was sitting in Kensington Gardens at a pond where ducks and ducklings were swimming, and little children playing. I was riding in double decker buses and I went to Westminster Abbey. I even met with friends from Danzig in London. I stopped in Woolworth and bought the best pajamas that I ever had. I could not see the British Museum it was closed - sandbags stacked outside. One day everybody was issued gas masks and one had to carry them at all times. There was an air-raid one night and everybody half-dressed had to rush to a public air-raid shelter.

England was preparing for war with Germany over Poland; Hitler already invaded Poland. And England declared war on Germany September 3, 1939. September 8th, I went to Southampton, England to my ship. The ship was painted battle-ship gray and cannons were mounted. An English passenger ship was already torpedoed and sunk by the Germans. We were sailing safely, the ship going Zig-Zag to avoid German submarines. The weather was beautiful, the sea calm. Movies every day. I discovered a staircase leading to the second and first class deck, and everyday after breakfast I went there and I was standing at the railing and looking at the sea. At times I saw a jet of water - whales in the distance. I had no fear; Many passengers were afraid of German submarines. Somehow I felt that I'll arrive safely. The two weeks (one in London) were really a "vacation".

I arrived in New York on Saturday September 15th, 1939. I sent a telegram to Tunia that I arrived (she was not home). I was the last passenger to get from the ship.

Y our brother Philip came after somebody found out from me that I have an aunt Mrs. Clara Weingart which they looked up in the telephone book.

When I saw Aunt Clara she was not a stranger to me. She always wrote to my mother. I still remember a particular Shana-Toive that had a picture in it (3 dimensional) opening as a fan'- and fascinated me as a young child many years ago. Later on in Danzig, I corresponded with her and especially when I burdened her with my asking her for affidavit for my brothers, first for Yarkel and then for Abram, and she in her ingenuity and goodness, prevailed on Louis Fogel, and he sent one for Abram.

On September 15th will be 40 years that I am in America. Two weeks after I arrived, I had a job as a nurse companion with an old lady. I became an American citizen 5 years after my arrival and I was proud and very thankful for that.