

1941

C H A P T E R 34
THE PARENTS DEPORTED TO POLAND.

Before I had left Vienna on September 30th, 1938, we did not hear about large deportations. When I was already in Cuba, I read about the "Crystallnacht" and mass deportations. But we never heard or read about deportations to Poland. Other refugees, who had read the "Aufbau", knew about it.

It did not take long that we received letters from them from Poland, from a little village, Kunow. We found it on the

relatives there are our good angels, was right when she said that you would prefer a direct letter from us. So, all the love-efforts were for nothing! You could not imagine what Julius, Feldmanns, Neustadts, Terry had tried to do for us. If we only would have sent telegrams two weeks earlier! We hesitated thinking that you would be hindered in your exertions for Lisa. Now we don't know anything about Lisa and Franzerl! I have before me your letter of March 17th. Can you imagine my feelings? Instead of being closer to you, we are now so much farther! We have written to the Northgerman Lloyd in Krakau and have described our momentary situation and also what we possess for our emigration. In the meantime, the beloved good Papa got sick. It is now 14 days that he is in bed. One night he woke up and lamented that he had angina pectoris. I think he had also taken too many sleeping tablets. I asked immediately for the Polish doctor to come. He prescribed medicines for 20 zlotys. He said he had high blood pressure etc. I think the anguish had caused it. After that there developed inflammatory areas in the lungs. He had fever up to 38 - 39 degrees. Two days ago it subsided, but an enormous weakness started, and he declined any nourishment. I am taking him every day out of the bed. Yesterday, suddenly, a kind of vomiting and diarrhoea started. The diarrhoea did not last long, but what he vomited was black. But now, thanks God, the vomiting has also stopped, but he is very apathetic. Fortunately, Karl Neustadt had sent him two oranges, which I have given him just now as juice and he drank it with eagerness. Hopefully, he will not vomit again. I can not tell how all help us, how good all Tchechoslovakian relatives, Hugo Musserl, Julius, are to us. There would not

have been any possibility to live! But dear Papa was very unhappy that all relatives had such expenses. Karl Neustadt1 made special efforts. There is hardly a day that he does not send something. May God reward them for it on their children. Do you know, dear Adolph, how different it would have been, his sick-bed, if you would have been at his side? The doctor did not accept any payment, but he does not come if not called. Not like Papa, who used to come several times to see how the patient was, and instead of prescribing would have helped himself. With us was also a Dr. Jung, whom I had asked once to come (9 Kilometers), who stayed over night and gave a few injections, among others also Coramin. It seemed to have had a good effect, but all the medicines were bought for nothing, since he did not take anything, and Nitroglycerin was also unnecessary, since he did not have anymore an attack of angine pectoris. Now I only wish that he should get stronger again, otherwise I would be completely forsaken. Sometimes he made the bed dirty,, then he was very unhappy. The straw mattress he dislikes very much, although I had covered it with all the blankets, which I have, but he always smells straw. But I have it, thanks God, good, since I am getting many love-parcels, and the people are considerate and leave us the room at least for the night, while the others are 6 to 8 in one room. And they help me also with the kitchen, though I buy everything myself. There are young daughters; one of them got one pair of gloves, one a pair of stockings etc. These are here valuables. And now, my dear good children, I would like to know, what the situation is with Lisa and Franzerl; if they would only be with you already! That worried dear Papa also very much. Perhaps you are already in

New York? You are right, dear Adolph, that the thought of tearing away Franzerl from Lisa and to let him travel alone such a long way (even with somebody accompanying him) excited me very much. But how manage it? The main thing, you would all be together again. Unfortunately, the weather is opposite to yours. Mrs. Runes has us on her conscience. If she would have sent the things in September or October! I am glad, dear Adolph, that you are having news about your Mama. Unfortunately, I can not write to her. You can not do enough for Minny and Grete. I can not say enough what they do for us. So, for instance, we received today for Papa apples and oranges from Karl, also other things. How is the situation with the liftvan? Now I don't know anything anymore. Joszi met Lisa in Mizza. I also don't know anything about Heini and Susi. Hans (John Forster) does a lot for them (Joszi and family), sends money and tries to get them over to him. Very oppressing is also the fate of Raymond. - The utterances of Hannerl were always a great pleasure for us, unfortunately, Papa could not read your letter yet. May God help you and let you live happily with the lovely sweet children in peace. Think also of Lisa and help her always. She had done for Franzerl more than a mother. Never can one be thankful enough for that. If she would only once find happiness for herself! How we would have loved to partake on the happiness of our children; it was not meant for us. I am writing badly, because we Viennese have been vaccinated against typhoid fever, and now the arm hurts a little. Embracing and kissing you three, your dearly loving

Mother.

May 2, 1941. Today I received this letter of your mother via Hugo Husserl, to be sent to you. On account of very little

space I can only send you kind greetings. I will write to you soon. After the last message of April 25th, Papa is feeling better.

Your Julius."

It was their and our great misfortune that all that came so suddenly, that they were deported with one of the first transports. A few weeks more and we would have saved them too. It was at the time when I got the visas for Lisa and Francis for Cuba or shortly before that they were detained. Unfortunately, they hesitated, while they already knew that they will be deported, to send us a telegram telling us that they were in danger. They hesitated because they thought that I would not proceed with the same effort in my endeavours for Lisa and Francis. That is what they wrote us from Poland. They were so wrong. I would have used other ways separately for them, perhaps through Dr. Vieta, the owner of the laboratory at which I worked, and Dr. Ituarte directly, by showing them their telegram. They would have been saved. Instead, they sent us a postcard, which took more than two weeks to reach us, and they did not write clearly what their situation was. That was terrible and cost them their lives.

Only now, after more than 20 years, by reading a book, whose title is "Zu wenig Gerechte" (Too few just people) by a Viennese lady, Erika Weinzierl, which Lisl gave me in Australia, had I found out how and by whom the deportation of the Viennese Jews was planned and with great precision executed. Mrs. Erika Weinzierl, a Christian, had written a diary during the entire period of the occupation of Austria by the Germans in great detail. She was one of the few who had helped in many ways some of the Jews to survive and was later greatly honored in Israel

by the Israeli government.

What I want to bring here are short excerpts of the chapter in which she described the deportation of the Jews. At the beginning of that chapter she mentions that Adolf Hitler in his book "Mein Kampf" had said "12,000 scoundrels (he meant the Jews) eliminated at the right time would perhaps save the lives of one million orderly, for the future valuable Germans." The plan of a reservation for Jews was first mentioned by Alfred Rosenberg in February 1939 in a press conference. He thought that Madagascar would be a good place. But soon, after the occupation of Poland, an area in Poland was regarded as more suitable, an area south of Lublin, on account of its swampy character. This alone would decimate the Jews, as the governor Schmidt explained to the Austrian "Anschlusskanzler" Arthur Seyss-Inquart at the occasion of an inspection tour in November 1939. The preparations for the transports of 1941 started in fall of 1940. On October 2nd, in a conference in the headquarters of the Fuehrer and in his presence, the Viennese Reichsstatthalter Baldur von Schirach asked the general-governor Dr. Hans Frank to take care of the 50,000 Jews who were still in Vienna. But Frank rejected that as unworkable. Hitler decided then that all the Jews who were still in Vienna should be acceleratedly deported to Poland on account of the scarcity of lodgings in Vienna. As the leader of these transports Adolf Eichmann was installed. The leader of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Dr. Loewenherz, was notified by the Gestapo on February 1st, 1941 that on the 15th and 19th of February and from then on every following Wednesday transports of 1000 Jews would have to leave for Poland and that 10,000 would have to leave

till May 1941. The selection of the people to be deported was an obligation of Dr. Loewenherz, the leader of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde. Later on, other methods were used to accelerate the process. As the Jews lived in different districts in Vienna and it was time-consuming to gather them for the transports, they ordered them, one day, to leave their apartments within one or two days and move into a certain area of the 2nd district, where they were crowded into already over-crowded houses, from where they could be taken out faster to be sent away in transports, and they took them in alphabetical order, instead of selecting them one by one.

They had them there like in a concentration camp, under constant guard and strict rules. This horrendous story is well described by Antoinette Ziegler, the wife (now widow) of Julius Ziegler, in an essay, which she called "Konzentrationslager Leopoldstadt" (concentration camp Leopoldstadt), which I am attaching to this biography, in order to show the younger generation what these people endured, what was once possible in this world.

From February 15th till March 12th, 1941, 5021 Viennese Jews were deported with only as much luggage as they could carry themselves. They came into small Polish cities and villages, where there was nothing prepared for housing and nourishment. They had at first to sleep in synagogues and emergency quarters on straw, before they could find room in the overfilled small houses of the villages. Food was very expensive. They all had to wear on their arms signs with the star of Zion, and the houses, where they stayed, had the doors painted red.

This was the situation our dear parents found in Kunow.

Shortly after their arrival there and settling in a small apartment, consisting of one room and perhaps also a kitchen, my father-in-law got very sick, and my mother-in-law described very well what had happened. As I see it, it was a heart attack, as my father-in-law had suddenly severe pains and said that it was angina pectoris. And my mother-in-law said that it was caused by anguish. The pulmonary symptoms with high fever which followed may have been caused by pulmonary embolism, as it is often seen in cases of coronary thrombosis, but may just as well have been simply a pneumonia, perhaps a lobar pneumonia, since there was a rather sudden drop of the temperature. It was a dangerous situation and it was the devoted nursing of my mother-in-law that he survived. There was a long period of weakness which followed.

I have a great collection of letters from them, written during the next year and a half, which I will attach to this biography to be translated later, as doing it now would interrupt for too much time my continuation of the writing of the biography. But I intend to translate later all of them, if I will live long enough. But I will bring here the translations of at least two of them, to show how they lived there, how their thoughts were always with us, their worries, longing, hopes, and fears, my father-in-law showing more firmness, applying his buddhistic philosophy to everything that happened, but my mother-in-law often unable to restrain herself, due to her fine, tender nerves, her goodness, her heart full of love.

First a letter written on the 11th of July, 1941, by my father-in-law:

"Dearest children, dear Adolph, dear Hedy, most beloved

Hannerl, and if they are already there with you, dearest Lisa, and Franzerl, and if not yet for when are there the prospects that you will have them there with you and what are your further plans and chances? The globe continues circling, undisturbed by human destinies on its surface, around its axis in its yearly orbit around the sun. The cosmos is unalterable and eternal, the bustle of life of men arrogant and transient, good luck and bad luck transitory. One has to be firm. You have passed the test well, withstood with toughness. You are still young, have life still before you. I am at the limit of life, my longing and the purpose of my life is only to see you again. Perhaps we will have good luck and it will happen. I have, in spite of my high age, withstood the worst insult of a so-called evacuation from Vienna to Poland. The weakness and tiredness of thinking which had come over me has given way, thanks to the sacrifice and nursing, which your mother conferred to me. Our chances of returning to Vienna and further the re-union with you depend upon the developments in the world. You should be grateful that you are far away from political disturbances and could see much of the world. A good fate may steer the further way of life of all of you. So long, my dear children. I embrace you and kiss you in my mind across the ocean and half the globe. Write to dear Erich. Report about all of you.

In hot love, your Papa."

And on the same day this letter of mother:

"My dearly loved children:

It would be nice if Lisa and Franzerl would already be with you. There is not much to report about us. We are well and there is summer here, which is for us very pleasant. But I

took the risk and jumped into uncertainty - I rented a small room for the two of us. The desire to be once again alone, drove us to that. But I am enjoying so much sympathy that I can return any time, as I was assured in many love-declarations. For here, you can not imagine what it means! Now I want to confirm that the package, which you had sent to us, has arrived, undamaged, and at the right time since Papa loves the coffee now more than ever before, and our coffee had just come to an end. We are well, thanks to the loved-ones and since we are alone, still better. Unfortunately, we have lately very few news from you and also from Lisa. We think more of you than we talk, because that I can only with tears. Instead of coming close to you, we got further away. I had prepared everything and now we are real beggars, who have no home anymore, and that at that age. You will never be able to thank enough all those who helped us. Minny and Grete are sending almost daily valuable love-parcels, which sustain us, so that we can live, are able to live at all. Our desire is to see you again and to be able to embrace you. God may help us in that. Thanks to the endeavours of Julius and Rosa we finally got our valises after $4\frac{1}{2}$ months. Embracing and kissing you all,

your heartingly loving Mama.

Write to Erich."

I had not mentioned till now that my father-in-law had written, while in Poland, two scientific papers, titled "Analytic des All" (Analysis of the universe) and "Religionsweg der Menschheit" (Mankinds path to religion), filling great many pages. These are astonishing papers, which he had started to write in Vienna and taken along, written on very bad paper

and sent to Julius, who had re-written them and sent to us after the war. I had asked Paul Bruell in Boston to translate them into English, which he did, an excellent job, and they will be attached to the biography. These papers show, perhaps more than anything else, what a great person my father-in-law was.

I also had not mentioned yet that I had offered our parents several times, when they were still in Vienna, that I will try to get Cuban visas for them. But they declined and wrote that they will stay behind until Lisa and Francis were out of France. They did not seem to realize that they were in great danger in Vienna, and we were not aware of it. Even when they knew that they will be deported, they wrote it on postcards, and it took more than 14 days to get to Cuba, and at that time they were already detained. The relatives there and in Tchechoslovakia made great efforts to get them free, but it was too late. Even if they would have accepted my offer of help, it would have been extremely difficult for me to do anything for them, because a sum of over \$ 6.000.- was necessary to get the papers for 2 people, for each person \$ 500.- as landing deposit, \$ 2.000.- as bank deposit, and an amount of about \$ 500.- for the return trip, also as deposit. That was an astronomic amount for me at that time. Were it not for the miraculous appearance of Mr. Agramonte at the right time (a little later would have been too late, on account of the conditions in France), I would not have been able to save Lisa and Francis either. I may have had to go again to Dr. Ituarte, the director of the Immigration Department, for a visa for Lisa also, and he would probably have complied, since it was still

my child that had to be saved. But the parents declined, and neither they themselves nor we in Cuba were aware at that time that they were in great danger. A few months later, it was a different story and then it was too late. When I got the visas for Lisa and Francis through Mr. Agramonte, it was in March of 1941 and at that time the parents were already detained and a few days later deported.

We were not sure for quite some time what had really happened to them. There was no mail for a few weeks and we had to fear the worst. They were in Poland already for a few weeks, my father-in-law very ill, when my mother-in-law, encouraged by Minny Landler, wrote us the truth. This first letter, dated April 20th, 1941, arrived in Cuba probably in the 2nd week of May. These were many exciting weeks for us, ending with quite a shock, when the sad news came out, and on top of everything the serious illness of father. Now we had at least an address where to write.