

## CHAPTER 25

## FREEDOM.

At our arrival in Paris, Lisa and Raymond expected us. We saw soon the Eiffel tower and passed along and then across the Champs Elysee and the long way out to the Plateau D'Avron, to aunt Louise, Suzanne, Nicole, and the cook Marie, where I stayed the next 12 days. My stay there was quite pleasant. We were taken almost daily on excursions and saw in these few days many of the more important sights of Paris, the Louvre, the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel tower, and went, of course, up to the top, the Place de la Concorde, the Notre Dame Church, the Bois de Boulogne, the Dome des Invalides, the Mont Martre at night, the Madeleine, the Moulin Rouge, the zoo in St. Vincennes, etc., etc.. All that was shown to me either by Suzanne, Raymond, or Lisa.

During that stay I had to go to the French Line and cancel the trip for Francis, a terribly wrong step, as we found out later. I should have taken Francis along with me to Cuba. A big mistake, but who did not make mistakes in those days. Perhaps it was good and later somehow saved Lisa and Paul. Who knows? I had on the Plateau D'Avron my own room, while Lisa shared her room with Francis in a little back-house. While I was on the Plateau, a package came from Vienna with a smoking, in English tuxedo, which I had ordered at my taylor before I left Vienna, also the right shirt.

I got, while in Paris, a check of \$ 420.- at a bank, money which I had succeeded in smuggling out from Vienna to Sweden. That was all I had and took along to Cuba. The \$ 500.-, necessary for the landing in Cuba, I had received as a loan from the Alliance Israelite through the intervention of Suzanne, who was working there, together with Lucy, the wife of her brother Raymond. He had a production of fine custom jewellery, together with a friend, in the Rue Georges, as I remember. Poor Raymond! About 10 years later, he died in an automobile accident. He was a wonderful person.

There came the day when I had to leave Paris and take the train to Nantes and from there to St. Nazaire. I had to leave on the 13th of October early in the morning, and the evening before I had to say good-bye to Francis, who was already in bed in the back-house. It was the most difficult step for me, and heart-breaking. When I told him that I will leave in the morning without him for Cuba, he began to cry and did not stop. I tried to explain to him that we had to do it this way, he did not even listen and kept crying "Don't do it, Papa, don't do it Papa". I was heart-broken and had finally to end the scene, kiss him many times, and leave the room. I sent Lisa to him to calm him down. It was probably very difficult for her too. The next morning, early, I left and Suzanne came with me. She insisted in accompanying me to Nantes.

In Saint Nazaire, I could go already on the boat, did not have to go to a hotel. Before boarding the boat, I went to a little coffee house. It reminded me of the coffee house, which I knew from a painting by Van Gogh.

The boat left in the evening, and there was a dinner serv-



ed before we left. I got a place at a table, where there were three people sitting. One of them was a young lady, who was the passenger, while another man and his wife were guests of her, relatives, who did not travel. They were Swiss people and spoke French. So, I could not have a conversation with them. The waiter brought the menu and I ordered, among other things, artichokes. Although I had never eaten them before, I knew that they had to be eaten with the hand, leaf after leaf. The young lady, the passenger, asked her relatives in French, whether it had to be eaten with the hand. That I understood, and they confirmed it. After the dinner, I met some people, who spoke German. Soon the boat started to move, and I did not feel too well. I went to my cabin and had soon to vomit, felt sick and went to bed. I was quite sea-sick and could not get out of bed for about three days. We were moving south-west crossing the Golf of Biscaya, known for rough sea waves. Once I felt a little better, got dressed and went for a meal to the dining room. I got a seat at a table, where there were black people sitting. The moment I sat down, I felt nauseous again and ran to my cabin. I sent my cabin man, who was all the time, while I was sick, taking care of me, to the dining room to tell the maitre d'hotel to apologize for me at my table to the other guests, and to explain that I had left so suddenly because I was sea-sick. I didn't want them to think that I had left because they were black people. I later found out that it was the Haitian ambassador to France and his family. While I was sea-sick, I always looked at the curtain hanging down near the door of the cabin and was moving all the time. This way I knew that the sea was still rough. But one day, the curtain

was hanging steady, and I knew that the sea was calm. I got up and shaved and took a shower and was feeling completely normal. I went up to the deck and was soon in the midst of a big crowd of German speaking people, refugees as I, and was in good company. But in general, I was very depressed and was all the time thinking of the dear ones I had left behind in Europe.

The boat took the route to the Azores Islands, which we passed at night, saw the lights of a bigger city, and from there straight to Pórtorico, where we went on land for the first time. The next stop was Santo Domingo, where we visited the cathedral, where there was the tomb of Christopher Columbus. The sea was calm all the time, and we were lying a lot in the sun. I went twice or 3 times for a swim in a small swimming pool. The next stop was Haiti. I had written letters on the boat, and there I went to the post office to get stamps and to mail them. To my astonishment, I met there my friend Lackenbacher, whom I had mentioned before and had said that he had gotten a visa for Haiti. He was very glad to see me again and took me <sup>by</sup> taxi to his home, to introduce me to his wife. They were very unhappy, since he could not make a living there, and his wife had to work as a seamstress, doing mostly repair work. He had to wait in Haiti a long time, till they got their immigration visas for the United States.





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October, 1939 in the garden of the Plateau d'Avron house. Bottom Right: May, 1939

Top, left to right: Lisa, me, Suzanne, Nicole, Lucy.

Top: Nicole, Raymond, Louise, me, Lucy, Suz., Father.

Bottom: Nicole, Suz., Louise, Raymond, me, Lisa, Lucy.

Bottom: Nicole, Suz., Erich, Louise, Fritz, Lisa, me, Lisl