

## CHAPTER 29

## HEDY'S AND JOHANNA'S ARRIVAL IN HAVANA.

Hedy and Johanna had to take a train to Miami and there a boat to Havana, where they arrived on October 1st, 1940. Unnecessary to say that I was extremely happy to see them again after 2 years. Johanna did not recognize me, of course, She was 2 years old, when I had left Vienna, and now she was 4 years old. She was holding on to her mammy and looked at me. When Hedy told her that I am her Papi, she did not seem to believe it. I lived then still in the same place on the Malecon, and they both moved in into the same room, which I had there. It was not too bad, since we had the whole floor and the big terrace to move about, and also the meals there. And we went out for walks in the streets quite often. Johanna and I became good friends soon, and more, fell in love with each other. In the street, she easily became tired, and I had to carry her on my arm or on my shoulders quite a lot.

I will now continue with the description of the war situation in France. The German troops did not lose much time. While still engaged in the part of Northern France, which was cut off from the rest of France, eliminating English troops, which were covering the embarkation of the British and French forces, the main German forces streamed into France in all directions from an arc between Abbeville and Sedan. On June 14th the Germans entered Paris. A few days before, on June 10th, Italy declared war on France and Great Britain and Italian

I have to insert here a story, not told yet, interesting to my children and grandchildren. I had in my room on the Malecon in Havana for a long time a pet, a white mouse, which I kept in a bird cage. I needed a companion, being alone in my room for two years. It was a very special mouse, somewhat larger than other white mice and quite friendly. I could keep it in my hand and stroke it with one finger and it seemed to like it. Once it bit me and I punished it immediately with a snap with my middle finger against its head and it never did that again. For food it got seeds and it seemed to like it, also bread or crackers and pieces of nuts and almonds. Unfortunately it got quite fat.

I let it crawl into my sleeve and it went up high behind the collar and I could direct it by pressing slightly from behind towards the other sleeve till it re-appeared at the other hand. It seemed to like that game and I did it quite often. It was a very clean mouse, cleaning itself almost constantly. There was no smell from it in the room and it never made any noise. The cage was in the back of my room on top of a trunk. This little mouse was a good medicine for me, calming my nerves like a tranquilizer, when I was in despair.

Shortly before Hedy and Johanna arrived in Havana from New York, I got rid of that mouse, thinking that Hedy would not like to have it in our room. It was a wrong move, I thought later, as I thought that Johanna would have liked to play with that animal. I took it to the laboratory of Vieta-Plasencia, where I had worked almost daily, experimenting with snake venom.

It was an interesting spectacle when I put the mouse into a cage to the other mice, when they all came from all sides to admire my mouse, almost twice as big as they were. There seemed to be no end to it. They surrounded it and smelled it constantly like a world wonder. When I see how my grandchildren like big and also little pets

like hamsters and play with them, I remember my little white mouse, gone for such a long time, almost 40 years.



Interview with Hedy.

I was born on November 15th, 1902, as the first of three children, which my parents had, followed within one year and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  months by Lisa, who was born on January 3rd, 1904, and then, another  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years later by Erich, who was born on September 30th, 1906. We had a very happy childhood, there was love and contentment. I went to public school, a short walk from our home, where I always was a favorite of the teacher, and I liked school very much. My first teacher's name was Mrs. Schwanzer, and I think I was a good student, because I got good marks, and I also remember that she liked the way I kept my school books, my copybooks. Sometimes she put secretly chocolate into my schoolbag, which I then discovered at home, and since I was really her favorite, she invited my sister to come to my class and just sit there and listen. This went on for 5 years in public school and my mother also became very friendly with the teacher.

I also had pleasant memories of summer vacations. We went together with my mother to the country, spent many weeks there, always in beautiful places, where we also met nice people. I learned swimming at an early age, at about 4 years, and was very proud of it. My mother took good care of us. She was a very beautiful woman, much admired and loved by our very large family.

My father was one of 17 brothers and sisters, and there were many nieces and nephews, and my parents were sort of a center of the family. Whenever somebody had problems and needed advice, they came to my parents for it, because they were considered as very outstanding people with a very sensible outlook on life.

Besides, they had a very active social life, with many friends around all the time. They went out a lot, before the

First World War especially; they really enjoyed social life. My mother was a gay person, very friendly, had a great sense of humor and everybody loved her, and she had visitors all the time. I remember that all the cousins came and adored her. There was a great difference in age between my father and my mother, about 19 years. My father also enjoyed company and a pleasant way of life. He was a general practitioner, who liked visiting his patients at home, was very friendly with them, and they appreciated him very much and loved him.

He had many very clever and somewhat funny utterances, which made the round in the family, which showed much wisdom. He was called "Uncle Beni". He was a very modest man, never a spendthrift, and loved his family life and his home, and his office and his friends. My mother just the same. She was unusually pretty.

We were very good children, we never were naughty, and had also a good reputation as the best brought-up children. No problems of any kind. After grammar school, I had to take an examination to be admitted at the Beamtentochter Lyceum, which was not easy to get in, but I made it. From then on, I had to travel by streetcar, leave very early in the morning, which was quite a hardship for me, to get up so early. It was quite a long trip, an hour, I think, to that school. There I learned French and English. In many subjects I was a good student, but in mathematics I was not so outstanding, as it was my worst subject. My geography and history teacher, I remember, later owned the hotel "Zum weissen Roessel" (White Horse) on the Wolfgang See, as she married the owner of that place. I was also her favorite student. Only with mathematics I had trouble. There was a professor Zeeman,



who always was picking on me, although I tried very hard to please him, but I was not very successful with him. But in English I was good. The teacher's name was Bendorf, who became later one of the leading Nazis in Vienna, which surprised me, because she was a very intelligent and educated person. I went to that lyceum for 8 years, took the last examination, which was called Matura. Lisa went later to the same school, and we travelled together in the morning and came home together. We had a professor there who became much interested in me and he encouraged me to take a course in chemistry which he had started. So, I studied chemistry. There was a professor Grafe and a professor Feigl. Later I studied at the Vienna University chemistry, but as a non-ordinary student, since I had not learned Latin. I tried to make up for it, but it did not work out. But I studied anyway at the University for a few years.

I then got a job in Tchechoslovakia as a chemist, where my cousin, Ernst Goldschmied, was Generaldirektor of one of the biggest sugar refineries. I worked there in a laboratory, where I made analyses of sugar, which was made from beets, also made analyses of the molasses. I lived with my relatives there, who had a wonderful home, a big house, very elegant. Adolph visited me there quite often on weekends, and once or twice my mother and Lisa visited me there too. I worked during the summer sugar campaign, which lasted 3 months, for 2 or 3 years.

Here I interrupted the interview with Hedy to avoid duplication. I had written already in detail about our marriage, our home and office in Vienna, in the Taborstrasse, the birth of Francis in 1931 and then of Johanna in 1936, the invasion of Austria by the Nazis in March of 1938 and in consequence of it the breaking

up of our pleasant family life by the emigration first of Lisa in May, then of Erich and Lisl in August of that year, and finally my emigration with Francis on September 30th, 1938. What I wanted Hedy to tell is what happened afterwards, how she continued living with Johanna after we left.

Here is what she said: It was a very sad moment, when I saw that I had to send my child away. The situation in Vienna had become more and more dangerous for Jewish children. Francis had to leave the school and was put into a Jewish class. He could not play anymore with his friends in the street; they always offended him and we saw that it got worse and worse for a Jewish child, that there was no way to live and to be educated.

At that time, everybody tried to get away as fast as possible and whoever could escape and run, did it. Adolph had the wonderful opportunity to go to Cuba, through the help of my uncle Josef Feingold, who was already in Paris, who had given him tickets for a boat trip, and through the help of my cousin Suzanne, who was working at the Alliance Israelite, he got 500 dollars landing money as a kind of a loan. We had then different options, of course. We figured that it would be wise that Francis get out of Vienna with Adolph, and that I and Johanna stay on. I thought that I will get my American immigration visa, since we had a very good affidavit, very soon and will go then right to the United States with Johanna, on the way pick up Francis in Paris. I thought that in the meantime it would not be so dangerous for us than for a doctor and a school child. Johanna was then 3 years old - she was called then Hannerl - and I thought I can stay on with her and pack up all our belongings. I also thought of my parents, did not want to leave them, thought I could help them



in some way. May be it was good that I was there; and in the meantime I started to learn different things. I knew I will have to make a living in the United States, which would help me after I arrive there with a little child, without money. I learned sewing, I took courses, I learned baking and making candies, and whatever courses were offered. I even tried to become a maid. Young women were admitted as maids in England, but they had to pass a test and therefore had to learn certain things. That I did too, I scrubbed the floor, and washed. I don't remember what else. I passed the test too, and if I would not have gotten the American Immigration visa, I would have been able to leave for England as a maid with my little girl. Then finally, I had packed all my things, and the furniture and everything was put in a lift-van. The Nazis who did that were even very nice to me, allowed me to take silver along, which usually was forbidden to Jews. I also remember a little incident, when they were friendly towards me, for instance in the streetcar, when one Nazi jumped up and gave me his seat, which was really amazing. Or when my parents were supposed to give up their apartment, because there was a law that Jewish people were not allowed to live in apartments facing the street and had to live in the rear of the buildings, I went to a very important Nazi, who was a former patient of Adolph and told him the story that the neighbors wanted to throw out my parents of their apartment, where my father had lived already for 40 years in that apartment, when he was a bachelor, before he got married. He gave me a paper on which he wrote that Dr. Ziegler can stay in this apartment. The Nazis could not understand how we managed that. So, they could stay and they were glad, but it was not for a long time. When I was gone, they lost their place.

When our furniture were packed in a liftvan, I moved with my little girl to my parents' and lived together with them. It was a very sad situation, as there were very strict laws instituted. When it came to food or to get out into the street, everything was so arranged that the Jews couldn't go on living anymore. The meat they got was so bad that you wouldn't even give it to a dog here.

I had to wait for our visa over a year, after Adolph had left. When he got his passport, he also got one for me. But when the Nazis saw my passport they said: "My God, you haven't left already?" I had to appear many times in the Rothschild palais, where there was the passport office, and they told me that they will send me to Poland if I will not leave soon. They punished me by having me stand there with the face towards the wall. I had to go to other places to get proof that I did not owe any taxes, also to a place where they took my picture and fingerprints, like a criminal. The American consulate was not in a hurry to give me the visa; there was a quota system and they made things difficult. Many of our friends were ready to go, but the American consulate found something to delay it, or to deny the visa. Friends of ours, a Dr. Pollatschek and his wife, committed suicide, when the doctor in the consulate denied them the visa, because he had a kind of eczema on a foot, which resisted treatments.

Finally, when I went to the American consul with Johanna - she was the cutest child you can imagine, with big blue eyes and rosy cheeks, blond hair, looking more like a child the Nazis adored, the Nordic type - everybody liked her and smiled. She was an asset to me, and the American consul examined her and wanted her to count. She was about 4 years old and she refused to open



her mouth, would not speak one word. But they just accepted it and laughed and loved her, because she was so adorable. So, we got the visas, and the consul told me that he will send the papers for Francis to the American consul in Paris, so that he could get his visa there.

The situation had changed in the meantime. The original plan was that I would pass through Paris and pick up Francis. I had even tickets for the boat "Normandy" for all of us. But the war had started on September 3, 1939, and I could not go to France anymore, and we had to leave from Rotterdam, Holland. Correspondence between Austria and France was also not possible anymore on account of the war, but indirect contact through Anny Lux in Amsterdam or Maurice Ziegler was possible, though difficult and insufficient, and I hoped that Francis had gotten his visa in France and would join us in Rotterdam. Lisa had told me later that the consul in Paris had denied Francis the visa, when Suzanne went to the consulate and that he had said that Francis needed another affidavit, and that he could leave later with another boat.

After I got the visa for me and Johanna in Vienna, there was the problem to get the tickets for the boat. A very good friend of mine, Mr. Lazarus, got them for us under most difficult circumstances for the boat "Rotterdam", it was just a miracle. He was such a wonderful good person that nothing was too much for him.

So, I went with Johanna to Amsterdam and it was there like a different world, where the Germans did not have any influence yet. It was a peaceful, beautiful country, the people so friendly and lovely. We couldn't get over it, we were so impressed. We came from a place, where we lived like in hell, in fear all the

time from one hour to another; we didn't know what would happen to us, what sadistic plans the Nazis had, and now we were in the most friendly country and there were preparations for Christmas celebrations, Saint Nicholas was there and Johanna got so many beautiful gifts. They brought us coffee when we arrived at the station. My cousins, Max and Annie Lux were there and received us with open arms. I got invitations to the finest homes and most exquisite parties and dinners. There was also my cousin Maurice Ziegler, I remember, in Amsterdam. In Holland there was still abundance and wonderful food and wonderful things to see. My great disappointment was that Francis did not come. There was no contact possible with France on account of the war and up to the last minute, when we left Holland, I did not know what had happened. This was very sad for me, because he was in great danger there.

When we went on the boat, it was also a great impression, the lights, gayety, music. I remember the wonderful food, which I hadn't seen for a long time. The voyage lasted 12 days, but I became seasick very soon. People prayed on the boat, as there was the danger that the boat may hit a mine, which the Germans had laid, which would have killed all the people on the boat.

I was most of the time seasick and lying in bed, while my little girl had a good time. She looked gorgeous, with rosy cheeks, and ran around the boat, a friend of everybody. But I thought I would not survive, I felt so miserable. My body got colder and colder and my hands blue. It was a very bad sickness and the doctors didn't do much for me. I was lying there, very miserable, didn't eat anything until we arrived in New York. At that time, I think, I felt already a little better, and got



ready to get off the boat, where so many of my cousins and friends waited for me, Maurice Ziegler and Hansi Hilkwicz and Dr. Lazarus and Dr. Holzer. All together, I remember, there were 9 people waiting for me and they had everything ready for me, a home and a job, money they gave me, everything. I must say I always had the best of friends.

So, we started life in New York. I could work right away, crochét-ing gloves. But, of course, it was not enough. I also got from the Council of Jewish Women some support. I had a little apartment in Manhattan on West 89th Street near the home of Hansi Hilkwicz. Maurice had given her money for food for us and we went there for meals, but only for a very short time, when she told us that she could not give us anything anymore for the amount of money she had gotten. I did not believe my ears. I had thought that I had understanding and helpful relatives there, but instead she became very nasty and very hostile and treated me really bad, as if I had no right to be there. She told me that I had no right to live in a good neighborhood, things like that.

Johanna got very sick, had a severe tonsillitis, and they thought it was diphtheria, but it was not. Life was not easy for me. Johanna went to a Kindergarten, to which I brought her every morning and on my way back from work, I did my shopping and picked her up. Prices were so low, I remember, that I could buy a chicken for 60 cents, a whole big chicken, a basket of strawberries for 8 cents, a pound of coffee for 15 cents. So, I managed. I had always good friends around, like Dr. Lazarus, Dr. Lindenfeld, Dr. Holzer. Then some friends offered me a place in Queens, where I could take care of a house. So, I did that, I moved with Johanna to Queens. It was a nice little house, it was even offered

to me to buy it for \$ 5,000. I could have bought it, but there was no hope that Adolph could come and live there. He stayed in Havana for years and years. Else, I could have managed very well. But he wanted us to go there, to Havana. It was frustrating for me. I was all the time trying to do something for my parents in Vienna, find somebody who would give them an affidavit.

Very soon when we arrived in the United States, a Mrs. Ray Bruell visited us. Her husband, Max Bruell, was a brother of Sami Bruell, a banker, who had arrived in the United States as a refugee from Vienna shortly after me. His son Paul had arrived there a few months before him. To come back to Mrs. Ray Bruell, she was very friendly towards me, took me and Johanna once out to the Radio City Music Hall and invited us to her home in Woodmere, Long Island. Her husband, Max Bruell, liked and respected my father very much and promised me that he would write an affidavit for him and my mother. I was very happy about it and counted very much on it. I waited for quite some time. But one day, I received a letter from him, in which he told me that he could not give me that affidavit, since he had to take care of his family. It was a terrible blow to me. I was quite sure that his wife Ray was the one who had influenced him, and that he could not help it and had to retreat from his promise. I had lost valuable time. I then tried to find other people. A rabbi from a synagogue gave me then an affidavit, and I myself wrote one too. But both these affidavits were rejected by the American consul in Vienna as too weak.

And then there were other very bad news, when the Germans invaded France and occupied the northern part of France, just that area, where Francis and Lisa were. I had lost all contact with



them and was very worried about them. Just at that time Adolph became very insistent that I leave New York and join him in Havana. So, I finally had to give in and leave with Johanna for Havana. We left New York by train to Miami, and went from there by boat for Havana, arrived there on October 1st, 1940.





My dear Nedy:

Habana, August 26,

The last time I wrote to you that if I would send to you messages by Clipper, if possible, in case there would be something very important to report. I am using that way now to get contact with you, only because it looks as if war will break out any moment and then we would be cut off from each other for a long time. It is naturally very questionable whether this letter would get to you and so it is this time only a trial, in which one had the feeling similar to the one polar explorers had, who sent messages in bottles. But I do it anyway, we may have luck and you would have these lines already in 5 days. What I would like to tell you and what my heart told me in the last few days when I read the newspaper, is difficult to tell you and you can imagine it. My thoughts are day and night with you and my worries have no end. Everything came so suddenly, so that we had no time anymore to discuss everything and to make the right decisions. To the worries about you comes also the worry about Lisa and Franzi, who is in the country and probably had to get in a hurry back to the city. And from there they probably had to get away and went possibly to the Plateau, in order to leave together with them. All that worries me terribly, but the thought that they are together with Suzanne and the others calms me down. Raymond is probably not with them and so they will have their own worries too. The day before yesterday I wrote to Lisa. The letter goes today with the Mauretania from New York, addressed to Sysanne's bureau, which seems to me more reliable. But you are my main worry. How terrible that all our planes had come to nothing and that that happened just before you should have gotten your American visa. You could have been already in France. But one has to ask oneself whether it is not better for you and Hannerl to be at home together with the parents, as you would have had to move away from Paris and would have gotten into strange and unfavorable situations. And then there are so many other members of the family in the same quandary and together it would be easier to endure



forces invaded Southern France. On June 15th the French fortress of Verdun was captured. On the Baltic, Russian forces moved at that time into Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, provinces, which had gained autonomy after the Russian revolution. Now they were swallowed up by Russia again. And another province, Bessarabia, which Russia had lost to Rumania at that time also, was taken over by Russia together with the northern Part of Bukowina, including the capital Czernowitz. The Russians demanded it and the Rumanians had to do what they were told, and on June 28th, Russian troops occupied that territory. My people in Czernowitz had to live now under the Communists. So, after all, it was not as bad as it seemed, when our house was sold and torn down, and three apartments sold. At least a small part was rescued in that transaction. Later, the Communists would have confiscated everything anyway. The Rumanians lost also, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, a large area of Transylvania, which was taken over by Hungary. These reverses caused a political overturn in Rumania. General Antonescu became premier and King Carol fled from Rumania and was replaced by his son as Michael V.

On June 16th, Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain replaced Paul Renaud as head of the French government, and asked the Germans for an armistice. It was signed on June 22nd at Compiegne. It provided that the French forces were to be disarmed and that three-fifth of France be surrendered to German control. On June 24th, an armistice was concluded between France and Italy. On July 5th, the French government at Vichy severed relations with the British government, after the British had sunk French battleships, which refused surrender, among them









the Dunkerque (26.000 tons), the Provence (22.000 tons), the Bretagne (22.000 tons), and an aircraft carrier (10.000 tons). After the fall of France, the Germans intensified their bombardment of England, by blasting the airports and vital industries with over 1000 German airplanes. The British responded with heavy raids on Berlin, Duesseldorf, Essen, and other German cities. England had already received before large supplies of war material from the United States. Later 50 American destroyers were transferred to Britain to combat the air and submarine menace. Intensified bombing of London was retaliated by the British by bombing continental ports, including Antwerp, Ostende, Calais, and Dunkerque to frustrate German invasion preparations. Improving British defense measures inflicted heavy losses on German air raiders, 185 invading planes crashing in one day. In a supreme effort at crushing British industrial resources and demoralizing the population, the Germans blasted the industrial city of Coventry with destructive effect. Thereafter the air attacks became more sporadic.

The British had survived the worst of the aerial Blitzkrieg. German losses in aircraft had been heavy. An official estimate placed them 2375 German to 800 British planes destroyed in the period August 8 to October 31. 14.000 civilians had been killed in London alone. British losses at sea had also been heavy. German air attacks on Britain resumed after May 1941 with shattering result on London. One home in every five was damaged or destroyed, factories shattered, and transport, gas, and water systems disrupted. The battle of Britain subsided with the opening of the Russian front in June 1941.

But the German submarine blockade remained a grave menace to British supply services throughout 1941 and 1942.

The description of the course of the war was necessary for the understanding of the situation, in which Lisa and Francis were at that time in France and Hedy's parents in Austria. Further developments in the war will from now on only be mentioned occasionally, since they are well known or can easily be found in history books and, anyway, do not belong and should not be included in this family biography.

As to Lisa's and Francis' whereabouts, all we knew for a long time was that they were in Le Touquet and well. What we did not know and found out later was that they had to move from there, as they were in danger of being registered as foreigners and perhaps sent away by the Germans. They had the good luck to know a rich man, Mr. Roi, who had two Polish girls as servants, who were also in danger, and the next day they all moved in two cars to the Bernerie, a little village on the Atlantic coast, where this man had a few houses and where they could live more or less in peace for a few months. Then, one day, there was a similar situation as before, when they were in danger and Lisa and Francis took off by train for Paris. There Lisa was successful in getting the permission to move to the unoccupied zone of France, vividly described by her in the interview, and they settled in Vichy, where they endured a very cold winter and lived in precarious conditions. Francis got there very sick with measles.

At about that time, something very interesting happened in Havana. A friend of mine, Dr. Besner, met me in the street and told me that he had received a letter from a friend, Paul



Rosegg, from France, in which he asked him, whether he knows me, who was the brother-in-law of Miss Lisa Ziegler, who is somewhere in France, and whose whereabouts he would like to find out. Paul Rosegg was my schoolmate in Czernowitz, about 26 years before, but I had only a faint remembrance of him. Anyway, I wrote to my inlaws in Vienna about it, gave them the address of Paul Rosegg, and since they had Lisa's address in France, they wrote her about it and gave her Paul's address. This seemed to have been the way Lisa could get in contact with Paul, who was at that time in Nice. It did not take long that Lisa and Francis also moved to Nice and that they found Paul there. From then on, we got also in contact with them in Nice.