



A Coat of Many Colors

by

Philip S. White

(born 1908 in Fürth - deceased 1978 in Jerusalem)

His family and life until 1925

with an introduction by his daughter

Ruth E. White, Ph.D.



Philip S. White in the late 1920s
(photo: private)

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Introduction

My father, Philipp Leopold Seligsberger, left Germany in 1936 with, Anna, his wife of three years, and my oldest brother, Leon, still a babe in arms. Refuge in the United States was facilitated by Sigmund Seligsberger, an uncle of my father's, who had emigrated to the U.S. from Bavaria (Altenmuhr) in 1880 at age 16. After long being cast as the black sheep of his family, Uncle Sigi (as we called him) became a hero and life-saver to my parents.

After traveling nearly two months aboard a freighter out of Hamburg, Philipp, Anna and Leon arrived in San Francisco. Like all emigrants, they came with language, tastes in food, music, clothing and home furnishings that distinguished them from their American neighbors. Assimilation would blur some of these distinctions in the years that followed, but remnants would remain in tact. My father would become Philip S. White, Phil - not Phipps - to his intimates. He and my mother would gradually adopt English, reserving German for endearments, *Gute Besserung* and conversations that kids wouldn't be able to understand. My father's food preferences would remain German with breakfast of a soft-boiled egg perched on an egg holder along with smelly Limburger cheese spread on rye bread; dinner of *Wurst* with sauerkraut accompanied by a local lager, always a favorite. Furniture and Oriental rugs brought from Germany still decorate my mother's apartment. My father's love of nature and walking / hiking continued unabated as well as his penchant for writing verses, travelogues, letters, and in the end, this autobiography. In their 50s and 60s, my parents became season ticket holders at the San Francisco Symphony and Opera, activities they enjoyed in Germany. But no Wagner.

My father became a big fan of American culture including newspaper "funnies", baseball, American musicals, Nat King Cole, and movies. Early on, he subscribed to *The New Yorker* magazine, which he read from cover to cover throughout his life. He liked going to the horse races and playing poker with friends, and lighting up an occasional cigar. In later years, he became president of his temple and active in the local Chamber of Commerce. He stayed in the men's clothing business - first as a salesman and then store manager- until age 50 when he began selling houses in the new suburbs of Alameda County. On Sundays when he held an Open House he would bring along his Olivetti typewriter to take advantage of any lull in activity to write. He began work on this autobiography after having a first heart attack that no doubt caused him to reflect on his life and his own mortality. Fortunately, he still possessed a number of journals written in elegant German script from his boyhood that provided some of the rich detail found in the pages that follow. He also was blessed with a wonderful memory that enlivened these recollections.

In April 1978, less than four years after completing this memoir, my father suffered a lethal heart attack in a Jerusalem hotel room. It was his first trip back to Israel since he and my mother had honeymooned there (then Palestine) in 1933.

As a young man my father wanted to become a writer. His father's death and external circumstances changed the course of his life. But a writer he was, and now in *rijo*'s founder, Gerhard Jochem, and this website, he has found a publisher and hopefully a wider audience for what is both a personal and social history of a German Jew in early 20th century Fürth. It is with deep pleasure and gratitude that my mother, Anna, and brothers, Leon and Dan, and I share this memoir. We wish to thank Gerhard Jochem, whose dedication and generous expenditure of energy, time and personal resources has ensured the publication of this and many other documents written by German Jews that otherwise would never have seen the light of day. He is what Jews call a real *Mensch*; his efforts on their behalf, a true mitzvah.

Ruth E. White, Ph.D.

Berkeley, California, July 2008

Postscript

I woke up quite early on July 5th, but lingered in bed for a while thinking about how I might write this introduction. When I got up, instead of going about my usual morning routine of getting the newspaper, making breakfast and sitting down at the kitchen table to eat, I made some coffee and brought my seldom used laptop to the table and began to write. The next two hours flew by; as I sat at the table thinking about my father's life I also became aware that it was, in fact, his birthday and was pleased to be spending time writing about him.

That afternoon, my almost 97 year old mother emailed me, reminding me that this would have been my father's 100th birthday. Later, just before going to bed, a light bulb went off in my head when I realized that instead of going to my home office and using the computer there which is where I always work, my choosing to sit at the table and type on the laptop was a complete replication of my father writing habits. I was delighted at how, unconsciously, I had entered his reality, in a sense, inspired by him or his spirit. I felt blessed.

Foreword

Youth is a most precious possession; so precious in fact that even the memory of it becomes a treasure, different from other treasures only in that it is willingly shared with one's companions from younger days, the communality enhancing its exquisiteness even more. Sadly, as we grow old, the ranks are thinning of those we can address with "Remember when?" - and there is an uneasy feeling that one day the lack of an echo may still the voice of the teller of tales. This is the moment when one reaches for pen and paper to relive once more that which will never come back, to put down the reminiscences - sweetness and sadness equally bur-nished by the passage of time - so that one can have discourse at least with the pages of one's memories after all the other witnesses are gone. The memoirs thus written are written for one's own sake; the record thus completed is a satisfying experience even if no other reader will ever take time to dwell on it. If, by chance, someone does, it should be acknowledged with extreme gratitude.

In my own case I am willing to abide by that premise. I would, however, like to have the kind reader consider that not only the events described, but also the thoughts and judgments expressed are of the past. It will thus appear that I possessed no greater perception than most of my contemporaries; no apology, I believe, is in order. Time and circumstance alter the perspective.

Set against the momentous events in the period of my youth my story is a table of little significance. I have panned in the stream of time and come up with pebbles of trivia. Yet I can say from the bottom of my heart that I would not trade them for the golden nuggets of those who, making history, rose to fame and immortality.

Philip Seligsberger White
Castro Valley, California.
November 1974

I. Early childhood

I was born on the fifth of July 1908, exactly 4 years and 2 days after the birth of my only brother Ludwig; at the time of my birth my father, the Jewish merchant tailor Leon Seligsberger, was almost 50 years old while my mother Centa (Crescentia), nee Hirzinger, was approaching her 44th birthday. In those days women did not go to the hospital to give birth to their children: the gynecologist and a midwife were summoned to the home when the hour of the delivery drew near; both got there in time. We lived in a modest street level apartment in the town of Fürth in Bavaria which is in the south of Germany. Fürth lies in the Bavarian province of Central Franconia; the people of this area differ from the so-called Old Bavarians around Munich and in the alpine regions in many ways. Not only are they somewhat smaller in stature than their cousins further south but they are also known to work harder and to be less gregarious. The Protestant religion predominates, due to the old rule: *Cuius regio, eius religio* [Latin: he to whom



Ludwig & Philip, ca. 1909

(photo: private)

the territory belongs, decides upon the denomination of its people] - going back to the time of the reformation. The rest of the Bavarian population is overwhelmingly Catholic. At the time of my birth about 65,000 people lived in Fürth; over 3,000 of them were Jews or, as they preferred to be called "Israelites". Proportionately this was almost 10 times the national average: Fürth was host to an old Jewish community which had fared better during the centuries when Jews were driven from town to town like for instance those residing in the neighboring city of Nuremberg. For many decades now, under the well meaning rule of the kings of the House of Wittelsbach, the Jews were secure in their endeavors and their possessions - so much so that in Fürth they represented the elite financially, professionally and culturally. The number of Jewish millionaires was considerable; Jewish merchants traveled all over Europe, to North and South America; their trade connections reached as far as Asia and Australia. Jews were dominant in the export and wholesale trade of toys: Nuremberg and Fürth were the center of that industry - (*Nürnberg's Tand geht über alle Land*'). Most of the countless toy manufacturers were Gentiles but some of the bigger factories were owned by Jewish families. The important glass and mirror fabricating enterprises were almost exclusively in Jewish hands, as were the bronze and aluminum powder producing concerns. Jews dominated the trade in hops grown in Central Franconia, Bohemia and other provinces of Bavaria. I can still remember the peculiar sweet smell of baled hops stored in the warehouses of my hometown. The up-and-coming cannery industry was represented in Fürth by a Jewish-owned factory; Jews were leading in the textile wholesale business; almost all leading retail establishments were in Jewish hands. Jews were the prominent physicians and lawyers. *Fürth, gibt's viel' Juden und viel' Wirt'* (Fürth, full of Jews and innkeepers) was a local jingle which was quoted without resentment. The Jews were respected, catered to, and known as fair employers and supporters of humane and liberal causes.

Fürth, though tracing back its origin to the time of Charlemagne, lacked the scenic beauty of many of the old walled and turreted towns of the surrounding area. Its *Altstadt*, the old section, was drab; the Gothic St. Michael's church could not compete with the splendor of the famous Gothic churches of the neighboring city of Nuremberg. In 1835 the first steam train in Germany was launched from Nuremberg to Fürth, a distance of approximately 5 kilometers. Along the right of way of this phenomenal herald of the great future the prominent burghers of Fürth built their apartment houses, 3 and 4 stories high; in many cases the street floor and the large rear court contained the business offices and storerooms of the owners. The houses were constructed of sandstone; the smoke and soot emanating from the many smokestacks of industrial Fürth quickly gave the facades a dark green patina. The working population lived in the old town or in blocks of tenement houses at the outskirts, many of them built of brick. The socialist delegate to the German Reichstag was assured of a solid block of votes from Fürth at election time. The Jews favored the Progressive, Liberal or Democratic party, whatever the often changing name of that small party of the middle happened to be. Employment was plentiful and regular, and every working man with a moderate savings instinct had a deposit in the *Sparkasse*, the savings institution for the little man.

I was named Philip in memory of my paternal grandfather Phineas; the Hebrew name given to me was *Pinchas ben Elyakim Zwi* (Pinchas son of Elyakim Zwi); my middle name was Leopold, in honor of my father's brother, who lived in Terre Haute, Indiana. My brother had been given the name Ludwig, the name of several of the Bavarian kings, in memory of great grandfather Lekish (Lukas) Seligsberger: at the time of his birth grandfather Phineas was still alive and it is Jewish custom not to name children after their living ancestors. His middle name was Johannes, commemorating our maternal grandfather Johann Baptist Hirzinger.

My father was born in the village of Redwitz, the oldest of 4 children of the teacher Phineas Seligsberger and his wife Helene, nee Linz. After a few years, his parents moved to the little town of Altenmuhr, where grandfather taught school until his retirement. After completing his elementary schooling in Altenmuhr, father enrolled for his further education in a private junior college in Marktbreit where the



Philip, ca. 2 years old
(photo: private)

promising sons of many Jewish families were prepared for a career in commerce in such subjects as accounting, bookkeeping and foreign languages. As a consequence of his English studies in Marktbreit father displayed the words "English spoken" on the door of his tailor shop until some well meaning friends advised him to have it removed after the outbreak of the war in 1914. It should be noted that all these moves took place within a radius of perhaps one hundred kilometers, in the 3 Franconian provinces of Upper-, Lower- and Central Franconia; records in a old family bible establish our family in these parts going back to the year 1700.

My mother was born in the tiny village of Theuern in the Bavarian province of the Upper Palatinate, which borders on Bohemia, now Czechoslovakia, to the east. She was one of the younger of the 8 or 9 children of the Catholic family of Johann Baptist Hirzinger and his wife, nee Spiess. Like grandfather Phineas, Johann Hirzinger moved some time after my mother's birth to the somewhat larger neighboring village of Lengenfeld where he operated an inn, worked in his craft as a cooper, and brewed his own beer. My mother remembered a walk of several kilometers to school; in the winter when the weather was too severe one of the older brothers would hitch a horse to the sleigh and drive the little ones to school. There was one classroom for all ages. It was customary for the daughters of the farmers in the small communities to seek employment in the households of the prosperous city people in the nearest town. When mother's older sister was in line to accept the maid's job with a family in the nearby town of Amberg, she pleaded for another year at home. Mother, barely in her teens, volunteered in her place and was reluctantly hired.



Crescentia (Centa) Hirzinger as a young woman
(photo: private)

She did her job well. Her day started with the crack of dawn and ended at about 10 o'clock in the evening. When the kitchen work was done after dinner mother had to help making candles; sometimes her lady good-naturedly sent her to bed earlier, afraid that her head might fall into the sharp blade set on the table in front of her to cut the wick. In the winter her hands often froze to the bucket when she had to wash the windows of her employer's store from the outside. But she had no thought of going back to the farm.

I am not sure what my father did immediately after leaving school at Marktbreit. Eventually he started to work for a textile wholesaler in Fürth, covering the surrounding area as a salesman. He traveled by train and hired horse and buggy. In 1888 he decided to go into business for himself. He opened a custom tailor shop at Weinstraße 13, in the best location in town, stocked it with woolens from the best English and German mills, hired a cutter and a number of tailors and catered to the growing taste for fine clothes which the prosperous businessmen and professional people of Fürth were developing. He was successful from the beginning. His former employers held him in such high esteem that they became his first customers and remained faithful as long as the store was in existence.



Leon with his two sons Philip & Ludwig in front of the tailor shop at Weinstraße, ca. 1912
(photo: private)

At about that time Herr Otto Obermaier, the owner of the exclusive smoke shop next to father's business, hired a young lady who came well recommended to him. He was a bachelor, liked to travel and wanted somebody to run the business for him. His new *Fräulein* was as pretty as she was reliable; she was, with an all male clientele to wait on, personable without allowing undue familiarity. Miss Centa Hirzinger was a rare jewel. What had happened was that mother had previously moved in with her sister Therese who lived in Würzburg, about 150 kilometers from Amberg. Therese was a widow, making a living for herself and her small daughter as the owner of a smoke shop, and mother helped her run it. After several years her sister decided to move to Freiburg and mother became available for employment elsewhere. A tobacco wholesaler recommended her as an ideal assistant to Obermaier. Mother often told me that at that time she was one of two unmarried young women in Fürth employed in the retail business, a job which in the eyes of some townspeople was hardly fitting for a reputable young lady. It seemed to bother her very little.



Centa in a traditional costume from Upper Palatinate
(photo: private)

It could not fail that the alert entrepreneur next door did not only take an interest in the latest Havana imports but also in the attractive lady who sold them. The steps from mere acquaintance to the enjoyment of each other's company to serious courtship followed, but it was a story that took years to unfold. There was above all the difference in religion; parents who might not understand, which neither wanted to hurt; perhaps also public opinion and its impact on the financial success of a newly started business. There are many diaries, comments on each other's writings, and other mementos which bear witness to the tenderness, the depth of feeling and the patience, unimaginable in our day, with which this relationship progressed until on August 10th, 1903 it finally flowered into marriage. Mother converted to Judaism, and there was high drama when the Catholic priest stopped her on the street

and started warning her about the step he heard she was about to take. “Do you know my fiancé?” interrupted mother. He did not. “Well, if you knew him, you would have to say that there is no finer man, and that is good enough for me and should be for you too!” said mother, and that finished that. Mother kept a kosher household, observed the restrictions of Passover scrupulously; unlike in many other Jewish homes there was never a Christmas tree in our house; the love for her husband took in, unconditionally, all things Jewish he held dear; and in a time of enlightenment and progress the way was clear for a felicitous union.



Leon & Centa Seligsberger, married in 1903

(photo: private)

This, then, was the family history before I was born. Of the first few years of my own life I remember very little. I question the reliability of autobiographies of others going back to their third or even second year. My first memories pertaining to my fourth and even fifth year are faint and sketchy. From the sixth year on when I was enrolled in school they become clear and detailed.

My first impressions are uniformly related to feelings of discomfort, anxiety or actual fear. In 1912 my father’s brother from California visited with his wife in Fürth, and we called on them in their hotel room: they gave each of us kids a small chocolate bar, a very special treat. I ate half of it and put the other half in my pants’ pocket to save it for later; naturally it melted in my pocket. I was disappointed and ashamed when the mess was discovered. The memory of this fiasco is the only recollection I have of that visit from overseas.



Ludwig & Philip with their uncle Sigmund (Sigi)

(photo: private)

In the summer of the same year our parents took us along to a spa called Brückenau, about 100 miles from Fürth, where they stayed with us in a hotel to take the cure. Everybody in Germany took “the cure” then drinking mineral waters which were a sure remedy for whatever ailed you, and taking daily baths in bathhouses into which the wonder-working waters were pumped. In addition a lot of walking was prescribed; obviously this combination resulted in a correction of what the advertisers now call “sluggishness”, coupled with a loss of surplus weight. The trip was made by railroad with several changes of trains. Brückenau was very scenic, and my eight-year-old brother committed the story of this vacation to eternity in the first diary of his life, with many more to follow. It served as a source of great amusement for many years thereafter.

I have no recollection of the train ride, the environment of Brückenau or the weather. I recall however that my brother and I broke out in terrible hives which itched so much that I scratched myself bloody. We used to get hives several times each year: our parents traced it to the first-time consumption of a new crop of seasonal fruit, cherries, prunes, strawberries or apricots. I can also remember having meals on a glass-enclosed veranda and being afraid of the big wasps which were attracted to our table by the food we ate: Ludwig used to contain them under our upturned milk glasses after we had finished our drink. Finally, I can see in my mind’s eye a room in the hotel full of sinister looking men in black suits; I can hear them chanting strange sounding songs in loud and raucous voices, which frightened me greatly. It seems that the hotel, which served kosher food, also provided the facilities for a Saturday religious service, to which I was taken.

Before I was five years old we moved to a large and comfortable flat at Friedrichstraße 17, a couple of blocks from our previous location. I cannot remember anything about the old apartment. Somewhere in the depth of my memory I fathom a sense of concern I held for a piece of furniture, possibly my highchair, which resolved itself joyfully when it turned up in the new location.



Apartment building at Friedrichstraße 17 when Philip lived there
(photo: private)



Friedrichstraße 17 today
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Preceding this move, my parents went to a spa called Kreuznach and we were left in the care of two American aunts, aunt Palmyra and aunt Adele S., and naturally the maid, Babette. Aunt Palmyra who became very dear to us many years later when we were re-united in Oakland, California, would tell me stories from that time: what I had done, what I had said, what I wore, ate our refused to eat: incredibly enough there is not one flicker of recollection left in my own mind and her detailed tales failed to kindle any spark of memory of my own.



Philip with Adele Seligsberger (standing), wife of Leopold Seligsberger who died young and who he was named after (middle name) and Adele's sister Palmyra. Much later, Adele and Palmyra came to Oakland and lived with Sigmund Seligsberger. The two sisters came from Alsace Lorraine. Palmyra lived to be 90.

(photo: private)

Still another strange event - or non-event - appears in the recesses of my mind, vaguely, very vaguely - and as it could not have been reality I must assume that it was a dream: A big black shaggy dog had gotten into my crib while I was asleep one night. I awoke scared to death and the dog was gone; but from this moment on I harbored a fear of canines that has never quite left me for the rest of my life.

The last faint picture from my pre-school days is that of a visit my brother and I paid to the house from which we had moved recently. We are standing inside the large foyer which many of these houses had, wide enough to left a wagon and horses pass through to the rear, with huge double-doors opening to the street and the rear-yard. The doors are closed, there is semi-darkness all around us and I am uneasy. Who says that early childhood is the most carefree time of your life?



The Seligsberger family (Philip, Leon, Ludwig & Centa) at an outing in 1913

(photo: private)

II. The three R's

On July 5th, 1914 I was six years old. Shortly afterwards my mother took my brother and me on the train to Bad Kissingen, about 100 miles from Fürth, which was an internationally famous spa, larger and much more elegant than Brückenau. My father's sister Sophie owned a guesthouse there: during the season, which ran from late spring to early fall, she rented ten or eleven of the rooms in the house to summer-guests who took the cure. Aunt Sophie had 2 daughters, Jenny and Kati, who were in their early twenties. We boys did not give it much thought that there was no uncle in the house: children are inclined to accept circumstances as they find them and consider them the existing order, no questions asked. Only many, many years later we learned that uncle Joseph, due to some youthful indiscretions, was confined in a mental institution. The three of us stayed in aunt Sophie's house as summer-guests, and both

she and her daughters made it their business to spoil us boys very much. This yearly trip to Bad Kissingen became a feature of our youth for quite a few years, and with life at a spa running on a different level from the everyday life at home - more relaxed, more pretentious, elegant, exciting - the Kissingen experience became an interesting, unusual and instructive contribution to our process of growing up.

Aunt Sophie's house was about 1 kilometer from the center of town where the buildings of the spa, the casino, the bandstand, the promenades, the whole apparatus for "taking the waters" were located. This was a vast complex, immaculately maintained with beautiful flowerbeds and manicured lawns: a setting of elegance and wealth. The walk from downtown to the "Villa Engel", (as the house was called) was slightly uphill, with other villas and several hotels along the way, all of them surrounded by well-kept gardens of various sizes, most of them guarded by iron fences set on a parapet of bricks. The Villa Engel was a two-story house with a basement which was level with the garden in the rear of the house. In this basement were the living room, the bedrooms, the kitchen and the pantry for the family, and a room addition in which we boys slept. The first and second floor housed the guestrooms, plus one toilet on each floor. There were two rooms in the attic for the hired help. The guest-rooms contained 2 beds, a wardrobe chest, night tables, a larger table and several chairs, and a chest of drawers with a marble top on which stood 2 china washbasins and 2 large pitchers holding well over one gallon of cold water each. There were also 2 glasses and a carafe so that the guests could brush their teeth after finishing their washing. A large pail by the side of the chest served as receptacle for the dirty water. Some of the less hardy guests had the maid bring warm water in the morning. Colorful rugs covered the parquet floor. I was always impressed by the luxury of these appointments, particularly the nicely patterned porcelain of the washing paraphernalia and even the chamber pots, one under each bed. On certain afternoons, set aside by the spa administration, the maids would take the carpets down to the garden, hang them over a line and beat them, one woman on each side, to clean them from dust. The rug beaters, made of wicker, were about 3 feet long and in the shape of elongated ping-pong paddles. The rhythmic sound of the carpet beating could be heard from all over.

When the guests wanted to take a bath, they could use a freestanding bathtub which was in the bathroom in the basement of the villa. This was usually an exciting affair. The water in the wood-fired water heater had to be warmed well in advance to reach the right temperature, which meant that the heater had to be lit an hour before the great event. We boys rarely indulged in that luxury, and we detested the guests who needed warm water to wash.

A wonderful asset to the villa was the large garden which stretched from the side of the house all the way down to the rural road some 200 feet in back of it, across from which ran the crystal clear Mar creek where one could catch guppies, polliwogs and frogs. The road led to the edge of the tree-covered Ludwigsberg; it continued on as a shady path in the woods, leading fairly steeply up to the lookout-tower on top of the mountain. In later years my brother and I sometimes raced each other to the windswept platform on top of the Ludwig's Tower. The following morning I was usually in bed with a sore throat and high fever, and Dr. Gleissner, the family physician, had to be called.

Aunt Sophie offered her guests the accommodations of the European plan. This included breakfast which on nice days was served on the upper terrace of the garden. It usually consisted of coffee, hard rolls with butter, jelly or honey, and a soft-boiled egg. We ate with the relatives in the kitchen. Sometimes, however, we too got treated to the outdoors breakfast, which was very enjoyable, with a view of the garden with its many fruit trees and the mountain across the valley behind it. Only the ever present wasps could spoil the idyll.

In 1914, as in the preceding years, many of the summer-guests in the spa were Russians. Ethnically they were a conglomeration of Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, and not too many Great Rus-

sians. They were good spenders, although distrustful and apt to bargain: the natives, knowing their habits, saw to it that they got properly separated from their money. Nevertheless the towns-people complained about the loud and uncivilized foreigners, hoping for a day when they would not have to put up with them any longer. Well, toward the end of July of 1914 that day came. Suddenly there was a great deal of commotion all over town: the air had been laden with tension ever since the murder at Sarajevo as the deterioration of the international situation grew more serious from hoer to hour; now, like a thunderclap, the news hit the town: WAR! WAR! Even a six-year-old boy felt the excitement, the explosion of pent-up emotions, the unbelievable exhilaration following the declaration of war on the old archenemy France, on perfidious Albion and on Tsarist Russia, a country of vast hordes of peoples, hardly touched by civilization. At once the Russians in town turned into enemy aliens, their road to the motherland cut off, their rubles of questionable value. Word got out that they were going to be interned at Plassenburg castle. What about their rent? The reservations they had made for days and weeks ahead, the German guests turned down because of the Russians' insistence? I remember acrimony, raised voices, tears and threats. In early August my father arrived from Fürth to help his sister settle accounts with the detainees. The trip had taken many times as long as the usual 3-4 hours as his train was sidelined repeatedly to let military trains pass, carrying troops to the front. After a few days we went home together.

In the late summer of 1914 I entered the first grade of elementary school. The *Ottoschule*, a massive nondescript building at the corner of Otto- and Mathildenstraße, was about 4-5 blocks from where we lived. The classrooms were drab and unadorned, containing no more than the students' benches, a desk for the teacher and a blackboard. During recess we descended to a small side yard where we clustered beneath some tall maple trees. We did not know each other well and were slow to get acquainted. I had not known any of my classmates before school. Boys and girls went to separate classes. When the bell rang at the end of recess we lined up and marched back into the classroom, led by our teacher. My teacher was *Fräulein* Bogner, a kindly lady whose age I could not determine. Like all grown-ups she seemed rather old to me. All the young men-teachers had gone to war. Going to- and from school I carried my satchel on my back; it contained my slate tablet, a box of slate pencils, and my reader. On its side dangled, fastened to the tablet by a string, a sponge and a rag to wipe the slate clean and to dry it. I took pains to keep the sponge wet because I wanted my writing surface to be clean and free from streaks. Broken slate pencils were instantly discarded. Most of my classmates were from homes below the middleclass level: middleclass parents preferred to enroll their children in a private school which supposedly prepared them better for the requirements of higher education. Father believed strongly in universal public education and would have none of the *Heckmann Schule*. I wore short pants, calf-length socks and ankle-high boots; low-cut shoes did not exist. Many of the students went barefoot, as long as the weather allowed it. We learned writing in German characters and reading in Gothic print. Arithmetic was taught with the help of an abacus, on which the strings were arranged horizontally. I got A's in all subjects, which was expected of me. It never occurred to me that I would not. Unlike most boys I did not get caned by the teacher in the first nor the second grade.



The former *Ottoschule*; today the building is privately owned and used for office space

(photos: Susanne Rieger)

After my mother had taken me to school for the first few days, I went alone. I made friends with Schwarzbeck - we used last names throughout *Volksschule* [elementary school] - who lived a couple of blocks from our flat, and we often went home from school together. His parents owned a beer-restaurant and served food; sometimes I went with my friend first to his place before heading home. I was fascinated by the goings-on in the restaurant, sniffed the smell of stale beer with wonderment and was intrigued by the bowling alley connected with the establishment. Frau Schwarzbeck was a friendly woman who had a nice way of asking after a while if my mother was not expecting me home after school. One day on our way home we met a man who told us that we could get some worn-out flashlight batteries for free at a nearby hardware store. We followed him to the store and were delighted with our gift. You could lick the prongs at the top of the battery and get a slightly sour taste on your tongue. Mother said I should never talk to strangers or follow them anywhere.

In the second grade my teacher was *Fräulein* Deininger who was tall and had a high voice. We learned to use pen and ink, moving the pen up and down on the lined paper making hair-lines and fat lines. *Fräulein* Deininger could draw rabbits and cats on the blackboard. She put me in charge of the class when she had to leave the room for a short while. One day I could not find my reader at home; neither did it show up at school. I looked again at home with no success: when I came to class without my reader for the second time the teacher reprimanded me and told me to bring it for sure the next day. I went to my father's store on the way home and confessed under tears what had happened. Father led me by the hand to the bookstore across the street and bought me a new reader, no questions asked. We did not tell mother who frowned on negligence like that. Years later I was certain that somebody had stolen the book and I am sure father suspected it then. We came to father first when we were in trouble; he took our confessions calmly, reproached us quietly and showed us the way with patience and sound logic. Mother's level of tolerance was somewhat lower. We got spanked, once in a while, on the back of our hand or with a slap on the cheek. When we got it from father we knew we had it coming - but that happened hardly ever.

My brother Ludwig and I had learned to play well together. We had some beautiful lead-soldiers, infantrymen, cavalymen, standard bearers, cannons. The Germans were in field grey, the English in khaki, the French in blue coats and red pants. Once in a while we quarreled and Ludwig used to shake me to show me who was boss. I was quick-tempered; one day I threw him against the knob on the armrest of our sofa, bloodying his skull. After that we dealt on equal terms.

In the first few months of the war we could often hear military music from just one block away when troops of soldiers marched to the railroad station. We looked out from our win-

dows or ran to the corner to watch the soldiers. They looked smart in their new field grey uniforms, marching with their gun on their shoulder. Many had flowers stuck on their helmet or in the barrel of their rifle. When the band stopped playing they would sing. I learned all the patriotic songs like *Die Wacht am Rhein* - The watch on the Rhine - and *O Deutschland hoch in Ehren* - O Germany high in honor - and *Siegreich wollen wir Frankreich schlagen* - Victoriously we shall beat France - and *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden* - I had a comrade - which was sad. Sometimes we went to the nearby railroad station to see the troop trains pass through to the front. The railroad cars were covered with humorous graffiti, and my brother copied them off and made a collection of them. They showed the high morale of our soldiers, reading: *Weihnachten in Paris, Ostern zu Hause* - In Paris for Christmas, home for Easter - or *Jeder Schuss ein Russ, jeder Stoß ein Franzos', jeder Tritt ein Brit'* - Every shot a Russian, every push a Frenchman, every kick a Brit - , and there were many, many more. We played war with the 2 younger Felsenstein boys, the sons of our landlord. We had a beautiful rifle made by uncle Hans, who was married to mother's sister in Amberg and worked in a genuine military gun factory! Felsensteins only had toy guns from the store. When we got into hand-to-hand fighting one day, however, the stock of our gun broke off, and we never got it fixed properly afterwards. Mother was mad that we had not taken better care of our finely crafted weapon.

One day my cousin Ludwig Winkler, the son of uncle Hans and mother's sister Babette, appeared at our house to say goodbye. He was tall and very good-looking and had just gotten a promising job with the customs department. Naturally he had volunteered for the service and dropped by before going off to training camp and from there to the front. My mother disapproved: "Couldn't you wait until they drafted you? You are the hope and the sole support of your aging parents!" Cousin Ludwig firmly disagreed. "Aunt Centa, all my friends have volunteered! How could I face their folks, walking down the street in civilian clothes when every young man of my age is in uniform! The fatherland comes first!" - Mother was not convinced.

Cousin Ludwig Winkler took me on his shoulders and ran around the table in our dining room, playing horsie. He was so tall and strong, and he trotted steadily, as I urged him on: "Whoa!" The faint odor of perspiration wafted up toward my nostrils. "Once more! Once more!" Finally mother put an end to it: "That boy would have you run all afternoon, enough is enough!" Cousin Ludwig, his parents and his sister Johanna loved our family dearly and the fact that they were devout Catholics and we were Jewish made not the slightest difference.

One evening, several months later, my mother was called to the telephone upstairs in Felsenstein's flat - father did not want a phone at home to disturb his privacy. A few minutes later she returned, sobbing uncontrollably. The call was from Amberg. Ludwig Winkler had fallen at St. Mihiel, in France. Mother threw herself on the sofa and wept, loudly and in great waves of utter disconsolation. Our mother, whom we had never known any other way but calm, controlled, resourceful. Her body was racked with grief, for Ludwig, his parents, his sister. We wept with her. It was one of the most traumatic experiences of my life, and to this day, sixty years later, I choke up when I recall that night.

From the beginning of the war Germany had achieved victory after victory. True, there were initial setbacks on the Russian front, due to their treacherous attack on us, but *Der Alte Hindenburg* [Old Field Marshal Hindenburg] soon showed the world what die military genius of German planning could do. The debacle of the Russian army in the Masurian Swamps made the old Field Marshal the nation's hero. In celebration of our victories Johann, Mr. Felsenstein's handy man, again and again put the flag out through our dining room window, where the flagpole was connected to the house. Most householders showed the blue and white Bavarian flag but some high-class homeowners had a second pole for the German flag, the proud black, white and red. We boys got our own blue and white flag and managed to display it from our bedroom window. We wore lapel buttons with the German colors, and I had a pen-

holder that was black, white and red. The newspapers admonished us to greet one another with *Gott strafe England* - May God punish England - but mother would have none of it because, she said, Mellin's food, an English product, had saved Ludwig's life as a baby when he could not keep anything else in his little stomach.

Our flat at Friedrichstraße 17 was comfortable and roomy; it was less than 2 blocks from father's store, and within easy walking distance to my elementary school as well as to the high school, the *Gymnasium*, where my brother had been enrolled in the summer of 1913. We lived on the second floor; the landlord, Mr. Felsenstein, lived with his wife and 4 sons above us. Eight windows of our apartment faced the street: one in the children's bedroom, two in the parents' which adjoined ours; three in the dining room, where we dined on holidays and special occasions only, and two in the drawing room, where we received social visits. Doors from the long corridor opened onto the drawing room, the dining room and the master bedroom, and on the opposite side onto the pantry, the bathroom (which contained the tub and a water heater but no stool) and the kitchen. We spent most of our time in what we called the *Wohnzimmer*, the living room, where we ate, did our homework and played with our friends. To reach the living room one had to walk through the kitchen. An iron balcony looking out over the backyard could be reached from the living room but it was not used for any purposes of recreation. Ludwig and I kept our terrarium there and made observations of the stars from it. Our bedroom could be entered either from the parents' bedroom or the living room. The house was an L-shaped building like many of the burgher houses in the neighborhood. Our corridor thus stretched around the corner at the opposite end of the living area to an additional number of rooms which served as the guest room, the maid's room, and two rooms which were mainly storage facilities, one of them quite large and windowless. Here mother kept her preserves, various household utensils and articles of clothing which needed seasonal storage. Off one of these rooms was the toilet, also windowless. It had an airshaft as well as a glass transom above the door. An inside window of the above mentioned storeroom faced the toilet door at a slight angle. This window had a sturdy iron grill on which we boys used to climb up and look through the transom into the toilet. When one of us sat on the stool the other often perched at the top of the grill just for conversation; when our cousins from Kissingen used the toilet they reacted violently when one of us suddenly spied on them from above.

Our living room as well as three of the front rooms of the house and the guest room had almost ceiling-high glazed-tile stoves which could be stoked with anthracite coal in the winter. Actually the only one kept in constant use was in the living room. The fire was started in the morning and left to die late at night. Our bedroom had an iron stove which was never lit. When we were sick we were moved into the parent's bedroom during the day, and during severely cold weather the stove in that room was lit also. Sleeping in cold rooms was considered healthy. The bedrooms were furnished with washbasins and a pitcher; once in a while on an extremely cold January morning the water in the pitcher had a slight crust of ice. Everybody had a chamber pot; it would have been a 90-foot walk from the bedrooms to the toilet. We boys liked the layout well; most of the time we could use the guest room as our playroom where the toys we had set up during the day did not have to be put away every night like those of most of our friends. In bad weather the long corridor could be used for playing ball, and, with many doors opening from it, for tag or cops and robbers. All rooms had electric ceiling lights, except the "good" rooms which had chandeliers. When we had moved in the living room still had gaslight. Once, when we returned from Kissingen, our father surprised us by having electric light installed while we were away. For a while we actually missed the peaceful white glow of gas. But it was a nuisance to adjust the mantle every so often when the gas pressure changed and the light started flickering.

Every house had a cellar. From our apartment to the main floor we descended 2 flights of stairs of 14 steps each; it took an additional flight of 24 steps to get down to the cellar level.

The cellar was dark; a small opening to the street, equipped with a hinged coverlid, served as the only source of light. Through it the coal haulers dumped the anthracite in the fall, along with firewood and soft coal. Through it also were shoveled the quantities of potatoes which were stored in a bin in protective darkness after the harvest in late summer. Perishable foods like milk, butter and cheese as well as leftovers were kept in a cupboard, and the maid took many trips to the cellar, particularly in the winter with the coal buckets. I liked to go down with the maid at times; it was fun to strike a match and light the candle which served as illumination when a closer look was required. For several months during the most rampant inflation many years later mother shifted for economy reasons without help. At that time my brother and I fetched coal.

Aside from canning time the most exciting moments in the run of the household were the hours of washday, about once a month. A special washerwoman was procured to help the maid. In the morning the 2 women went down into the yard to fire the furnace in the wash-house, a single-story structure with 2 windows, about 40 feet long; the wood had to be carried up from the cellar. When the water in the huge vat atop the furnace was hot enough the washing process began. All the dirty linen from the bedrooms, the shirts, underwear etc. that had been carried in baskets from the flat got laundered that day. The pot was stirred with a long wooden stick; after the initial washing the laundry would be hand scrubbed on a washboard, and returned for a rinse to the vat in the end. The wash-house was a steaming inferno, the women were excited and red-faced from the heat. In the end the plugs from all buckets were pulled and the water flowed through a hole in the wall into an outside drain while the wet laundry was carried in baskets up into the attic to dry. In the wash-house the women wore wooden shoes because the floor was awash constantly. When the laundry had dried, the sheets and pillow cases were passed through a hand-turned mangle; at times I was allowed to turn the handle. The pressing was done with an iron heated with coal. Swinging it high from side to side from time to time kept the embers glowing. Needless to say that changing the bed linen, your shirt, the dishcloths was done when they really needed washing, and not before.

Almost every middle class household had a maid. The rich, like our landlord, had a cook in addition. The proficiency of the maid was usually in line with the pay she received. With more experience gained a girl could move up into better paying positions where she would wear a black dress and white apron on Sundays to open the door for visitors, a silver tray in her hand for the calling cards. The cards were presented to the lady of the house for the decision whether the *Herrschaft* - master and mistress - were at home or not. Our maids usually stayed with us for a number of years. It was harder to find good maids during the war as many girls preferred to work in the munitions plants where the wages were higher. Villages in a 100-mile radius supplied the labor force working in the urban homes. Many of the maids in Jewish homes were Catholic, and the menu for Friday was fish. Some of the Gentile housewives resented the Jewish competition: the girls favored Jewish houses where invariably the pay and the treatment were better. Many of the maids had illegitimate children, cared for by their parents or a sister back home.

Mother did the cooking in our house. We were sure that she was the best cook. Father used to say that some of his friends had to eat what the cook thought good enough for them, while all of his meals were cooked with love and affection. Our kitchen was equipped with a gas range and a hearth. There was also an oven which extended from the kitchen into the glazed-tile-stove on the other side of the wall in the living room. On Friday the hearth was fired and the Sabbath meal was cooked on it. It was hot in the kitchen then, and we boys were shoed out quickly. The hearth had, next to the cooking surface, a receptacle that held several gallons of water, which got heated right along with the food on top of the hearth. There was always plenty of hot water on Friday. Since we kept a kosher household we had separate dishes for milk and meat dishes, separate pots and pans, silverware and even separate pans to wash the

dishes in. There was one kitchen buffet for the milk dishes, another for the meat-ones. Milk, or anything containing milk, could not be served along with a meat course; one had to wait 3 hours until milk could be had. All of these restrictions are derived from the Torah commandment: Thou shalt not cook the calf in the milk of its mother.

Our front door and the doors to the living quarters had a mezuzah affixed to one of the posts, a tiny capsule containing a parchment scroll inscribed with verses from the book of Deuteronomy. On Friday evenings, before supper, father *bensch* us (*benschen*: to bless, from the Latin word *benedicere*) by laying his hand on our head and saying the Hebrew words of Jacob's blessing: May God make thee like Ephraim and Manasseh, to which we answered: *Gut' Schabbes* - a good Sabbath. He did not wear the customary Yarmulke on his head but an old English-style travel cap, the same cap that he wore when he put on the phylacteries and said his prayers in the morning. I liked *Benschen*; it made me feel good. When we got older we asked father to follow *Benschen* with Kiddush, the benediction over wine and bread which precedes the Friday evening meal. Thus father poured wine into a glass, said the *Berachah* over it praising God for growing the fruit of the vine, and after taking the first sip himself, passed it around for everybody to partake. Mother had baked the Sabbath loaf, braided and made of white flour, which in Franconia was called *Berches*, and which American Jews call *Challah*. From it father cut a small piece for everybody, dipped it into salt, and after saying the *Berachah* pertaining to it, he ate his slice and we ate ours.

We did not light Sabbath candles, nor did we observe the custom of *Habdalah*, the concluding rite at the end of Sabbath. Father maintained a religious position halfway between most of his liberal friends who observed few, if any Jewish customs, and the Orthodoxy which practiced all of them. He looked at some of his ostensibly orthodox brethren with a somewhat jaundiced eye, remarking now and then that "one could be pious and yet good!"

In the summer of 1915 we went to Bad Kissingen again. Father took us, mother picked us up after 4 to 5 weeks, each one staying a few days in the process. Much had changed since last year. The disgusting Russians had disappeared; all the guests were German nationals, most of them from northern Germany, especially Berlin and Saxony. Some of the leading hotels had been turned into hospitals for wounded soldiers, and cousin Jenny had volunteered as a nurse, as had many of the local young girls. Jenny was smart; she did not speak the ungrammatical local dialect which we boys despised hearing from aunt Sophie and cousin Kati; she had traveled abroad before the war and worked as a nanny; she was headstrong, not to say a bit eccentric, and she hated the room renting business at home. As a child she had broken her nose which gave her face an oddly attractive look. She had a man's laugh and did not mind off-color stories.

Postcard to Philip from his cousin Jenny (center) surrounded by the staff and the patients of the military hospital in Bad Kissingen, 1915

(photo: private)



The physicians at the hospital as well as her fellow-nurses agreed that she was an excellent and untiring worker. The young women competed for the hardest, the most exhausting jobs; Jenny attended the most seriously wounded cases, washing the men who soiled themselves and their beds, enduring their most agonized outcries, seeing many of them die. We adored her. Sometimes we were allowed to visit with her at the hospital and to talk to the inmates recovering from lesser wounds. The men kept themselves busy and, incidentally, in some pocket money, by cutting beer bottles off below the neck, spraying them with silver paint and attaching a postcard with the pictures of a national hero to one side with a layer of gilded seal wax. The finished product was a patriotic flower vase. I learned songs from the men. One of them I remember to this day:

<i>Wie kommen die Soldaten in den Himmel? Kapitän und Leutnant? Auf einem weißen Schimmel Da kommen die Soldaten in den Himmel! Kapitän, Leutnant, Fähnrich, Sergeant Nimm das Mädels, nimm das Mädels bei der Hand - Soldaten, Kameraden, Nimm das Mädels, nimm das Mädels bei der Hand!</i>	<i>Wie kommen die Offiziere in die Hölle? Kapitän und Leutnant? Auf einem schwarzen Fohlen Wird sie der Teufel holen! Kapitän, Leutnant, Fähnrich, Sergeant Nimm das Mädels, nimm das Mädels bei der Hand - Soldaten, Kameraden, Nimm das Mädels, nimm das Mädels bei der Hand!</i>
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Ho do the soldiers go to heaven? Captain and Lieutenant? On a white horse The soldiers go to heaven! Captain, Lieutenant, Ensign, Sergeant Take the maiden, take the maiden by the hand - Soldiers, comrades, Take the maiden, take the maiden by the hand!	How do the officers go to hell? Captain and Lieutenant? On a black foal The devil will call for them! Captain, Lieutenant, Ensign, Sergeant Take the maiden, take the maiden by the hand - Soldiers, comrades, Take the maiden, take the maiden by the hand!
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The song speaks for itself, but that was as far as the resentment went. When I appeared in my artillery officer's uniform, I was received good-naturedly and there were no snide remarks.

My patriotic father had this uniform made for me in his tailor shop in the fall of 1914, and on a photo, showing me in military and my brother Ludwig in civilian dress he wrote to his brother in America: Philipp salutes smartly ... It was a dark-blue dress uniform with red piping around the edges of the tunic, a stand-up-collar, shiny brass buttons and a wide red stripe down the side of the trousers. I wore a stiff visored cap with it, and a black belt from which dangled my sabre. In addition I had a cape, made of the most elegant dove-grey cloth with red trim, which hung splendidly from my shoulders. It beat everything other kids had, like the false fronts one could buy in toy shops and tie to one's chest. I loved it and wore it without the slightest trace of self-consciousness, returning graciously the occasional salutes I received from lowly privates.



Picture postcard of Philip & Ludwig sent to uncle Sigmund in Oakland (CA), November 1914
(photos: private)

One day an excited guest came to aunt Sophie's villa with word that a flying machine had landed in the meadow by the Saale river. Everybody ran to see this new Weapon in our arsenal. I quickly put on my uniform and went with my brother to see the airplane, only to find that the area had been roped off and the crowds stood already ten deep. However, the miracle happened: The cry went up: "Let the lieutenant pass!" - and the crowd opened up giving me a chance to walk right up to the front. I do not remember anything about the plane, but I well recall the heady feeling of accepting the tribute to my uniform.

Our mornings in Kissingen were often taken up with running errands for the folks, while in the afternoons we were mostly on our own. The spa, situated in the valley of the river Saale, was surrounded by gently rising wooded hills, and many well marked paths led to the scenic points in the environment. My brother was a natural explorer, and on our visits to Kissingen over the years we took in the sights in an ever widening circle. There was the Ludwigsberg with its look-out tower; walking on beyond it one could hike to the Hunting Lodge where the summer guests would sit on a terrace overlooking the spa and refresh themselves with coffee and torte after the exertion of their walk. Father back in the woods were the cascades where a silvery creek ran fast over slippery rocks. For a short hike we could climb the Altenberg, which offered a view from a couple of gazebos, shelters against sudden rains. There you could carve your initials into the wooden boards as hundreds had done before you. On the far side of the river was the *Bodenlaube*, the ruins of a small castle from which brave knights had sallied forth down to the plains for whatever reasons brave knights sally forth. Farther up the river was the Trimbürg, a somewhat larger castle, also in ruins. Everywhere the woods were sprinkled with "emergency stations" for the relief of those walkers who felt the beneficial effect of the waters in the middle of nature. Right in the valley, at about a twenty-minutes'-walk from the center of town, was the Saline, a wooden structure, three stories high and perhaps three hundred feet long; it consisted of an elevated walk circling a thirty foot wall of bare tree branches, piled horizontally on top of one another and packed tightly, over which saline waters dripped in a constant drizzle filling the atmosphere with a salty mist. Walking around and around and inhaling deeply did wonders for people suffering from sinus infection and asthma.

We liked to go to the Saline on hot days: the cool breeze emanating from the dripping waters gave welcome relief.

Over the years, under the urging of my brother, we got to know every nook and cranny within 10 miles of the spa, shaving the walking time by a few minutes every year as I got older and my legs got longer. I enjoyed our hikes every bit as much as he did and kept well up with him, of which he in turn was very proud. A battle had been fought in the area around Kissingen in the war of 1866 between Prussia on one side and Bavaria and Austria on the other; we looked for the scattered wooden crosses in the hills around the *Bodenlaube* and read the inscriptions with awe and the sadness of the young facing disasters of the past: two Prussians buried here, three Bavarians there, another Prussian, another Bavarian further down the hill, casualties of an internecine war that seemed curiously incomprehensible to us. We spent little time on the beautiful grounds which surrounded the official buildings of the spa or in the spectacular flower-decorated colonnades where the summer guests promenaded with their water glasses, taking occasional sips through slender glass-pipes.

Across from aunt Sophie's house was the "Villa Enszner," almost twice as large but lacking the spacious garden which the Villa Engel had to offer. The place was owned and managed by the widow Enszner and her daughter Frau Pesel; Herr Pesel was an electrician and ran his own shop. The Pesels had 3 children: 2 daughters, Hansi and Toni, and a son, Paul. Hansi was about Ludwig's age, Toni a little younger than I; Paul was in between. Over the years, we became fast playmates. "Our" garden, on its lower level, presented an ideal spot to play store, or catch, or war, or house, whatever we felt like. When we got tired of playing in the yard, we went on walks together, or accompanied the trio to a large vegetable garden which their family owned at the outskirts. Hansi had long braids, Toni's hair was short, and she was the prettier of the two sisters. She was my bride, Hansi Ludwig's. One year we held a regular marriage ceremony in the large arbor in aunt Sophie's garden. Cousin Kati was delighted to prepare a snack and invite those guests in the house to the wedding who wanted to come. Paul officiated, Ludwig had written the sermon for him. We kissed and sat down for the meal. It was very solemn. Frau Enszner, I believe, took a dim view of it, good Catholic that she was. She did not approve wholeheartedly of our friendship and was likely to say that Toni had work to do, when I came over to ask if she could play. Once when we were older, Paul came to visit with us in Fürth for a few days, and Ludwig took him to the Germanic National Museum and the famous churches in Nuremberg: he was an experienced tourist guide. Paul was good with his hands, serious-minded and obedient. There were also 2 children in the "Villa Julia" next door: Lizzie Maier and her brother. We rarely played with them. Herr Maier ran a small lumber business from his house, and the muffled noise emanating from his cellar, where he kept a buzz saw going, led to complaints from aunt Sophie's guests. This had its effect on the diplomatic relations between the neighbors.

In the fall of 1916 I entered the third grade. Now, for the first time, I had a man teacher, Herr Schlegel. He was a red-faced, grey-haired choleric old man, who used the Spanish cane to excess. Even I was slapped once or twice on the palm of my hand which one had to extend without flinching. One of the students, whose father was at the front, was so unmanageable that he made the old teacher fly off in a rage every so often. He would seize him by his collar, drape him face down over a desk, pull the trousers tightly over his backside and hit him on it until his arm got tired. The boy would try to kick with his legs, yell his head off and finally return to his seat sobbing quietly, hardly able to sit down. The cane was elastic and stung. I did not like Herr Schlegel.



The Seligsbergers - Centa, Ludwig, Philip & Leon -, ca. 1916
(photo: private)

Some of the schools in town had been requisitioned by the armed forces for use as hospitals, and there was talk that ours would too. It never came to it; but during the last semester of the third grade our school was so overcrowded that classes were forced to alternate every other day. By the end of the year I was pretty proficient at spelling, composition, addition, subtraction, long multiplication and short division. Since I wanted to enter high school - *Das Gymnasium* - from the third grade instead of the customary fourth, like my brother had done 4 years earlier, I enrolled in a special prep-class which met once or twice a week to prepare us for the entrance examination required by all high schools. All the students in the prep-class were girls; I was the cock of the walk and felt like it. I excelled in composition, but not in long division. My brother helped me with it; by the time the entrance exam came around I was able to pass it without any problems.

In the third grade I had religious instruction for the first time. For the Jews this was co-educational, and the girls outnumbered the boys. While I cannot remember the names of my regular classmates with perhaps one exception or two, I recall those of the religious class students to this day. There was Seligmann and Oettinger, Bernstein, Lischner and Rosen; the latter were *Ostjuden*, Jews from Poland, whose parents had migrated during the war to Germany.

Among the girls was Marie Hollerbusch, the daughter of our family doctor. There were also several girls from the Jewish orphanage who were very simply dressed and had their hair cut short like boys. The other girls said it was because they had lice. I did not care for them but I liked to escort Marie to her house after school; she lived just one block away. She was also one of my brides, though she did not know it.

In the meantime the war went on. It was already a long time since I had given my silver coins which I had polished so carefully every week to keep them nice and shiny to the war effort. Ludwig and I had taken our lead soldiers to school to be collected by the Government which needed lead for bullets to kill the enemy. Mother had parted with her brass *Kugel* form, and now made the *Kugel*, a traditional Jewish Saturday dessert - something like a heavy bread pudding - in a cast-iron form, if and when she had the necessary ingredients to make one. The landlord had the brass knobs on all doors in the house changed because the army called for brass. More and more foodstuffs were rationed and available only on an allotment basis. The nice breakfast rolls with butter and honey were a thing of the past, as was the chocolate which we had drunk with them. I wore wooden sandals to school to save my only pair of leather boots for the winter; the song went:

Klipper - klapper, klipper - klapper
Hoch die Holzsandalen-trapper!

Click - clack, click - clack
 Cheers for the wooden sandals-clatterers!

Some of the barefoot kids in class mocked me on the way home, beating on my satchel and calling me *Judenstinker*, a stinking Jew. I was afraid and sought refuge in my father's store which was halfway between school and home. Several times Christmas had come and gone and we were not in Paris yet, but we were deep in Russia, and the flags went out at intervals when another city with an unpronounceable name had fallen. We sang with determination the last verses of "O Germany high in honor:" "Hold out, hold out, let the banner wave proudly; show the enemy that we are firmly united ..."

Father had subscribed to a book series called *Der Krieg*. As the war went on the number of volumes increased, and there was no end in sight. Ludwig and I liked the books very much; I believe he read them cover to cover. I was fascinated by the beautiful colored pictures on the hard cover, depicting our brave cavalry storming a Russian battery, or a German infantry man shooting his rifle side by side with his Austro-Hungarian brother-in-arms, or one of our fine battleships sinking an English cruiser. The books featured articles about the high morale of our troops, Allied lies, maps and descriptions of important battles, biographies of the leaders on both sides, humorous anecdotes and many, many pictures. I liked to copy the pictures of the enemy soldiers on stiff paper, cut them out and color them to augment the clay-type soldiers we were now playing with. Most of their heads had come off but we continued playing with them anyway.

The back page of the local newspapers displayed black-rimmed announcements every day reporting the death of a service man: it is the custom that the bereaved family puts a notice in the paper, its size commensurate to the circumstances of the advertisers. So it went, day after day: Our dearly beloved husband; our only son; our brave father - the wording always the same, only the places varied where the soldiers had fallen. Some of them were the sons of friends of the family, and their loss was keenly felt by our parents. I remember the name of one young man in particular, a Lieutenant Baerlein, a special favorite of my father's, who had been repeatedly decorated for his bravery. He shocked father deeply when he, going back to the front after a furlough, answered father's optimistic *Auf Wiedersehen* gravely: "We shall not meet again, Herr Seligsberger - nobody comes back from Verdun ..." - The announcement of his death appeared in the papers a short time afterwards. There is a memorial service in the Synagogue during the High Holidays, when the congregation remembers and praises the piety and steadfastness of the many martyrs of the Jewish people, and each family says a prayer in memory of the departed members, read in solemn unison. Now the names of the fallen heroes of the congregation were read every year in greater numbers from the pulpit, and the sobbing was audible throughout the temple when the venerable old Rabbi Neubürger's voice faltered as he pronounced the name of his own son.

It could not fail the father's business was affected by the war. Most of his younger customers were in uniform; he was cut off from his resources in England and the German mills were busy turning out fabrics for the needs of the military. Father had in the years preceding the war built his business to respectable size; his was the best and the largest tailor shop in town, attracting customers not only from Fürth itself but from the neighboring Nuremberg and other communities as well. One of the reasons for his success was a unique form of multiple-sales promotion, which he called *Abonnement*; he had observed a similar plan on one of his travels as the head of the local employers' association and built the idea into a winning sales-tool for his business. Customers were offered, at a reduction of approximately 20% in price, a lease-wear wardrobe of from 5-9 garments per year - poignant proof of the affluence of his clientele

- usually including two overcoats, and, in sales of 6 or more units, one or two dress suits, lined with pure silk. The customer had the use of this wardrobe for one or possibly two years during which time the garments would be maintained in first-class condition by father's shop at no expense. After termination of the contract the clothes had to be returned; usually a new agreement was entered into for another *Abonnement* while the returned suits or coats were sold to a ready clientele of working people at prices which made up for the discount the original purchaser had received.



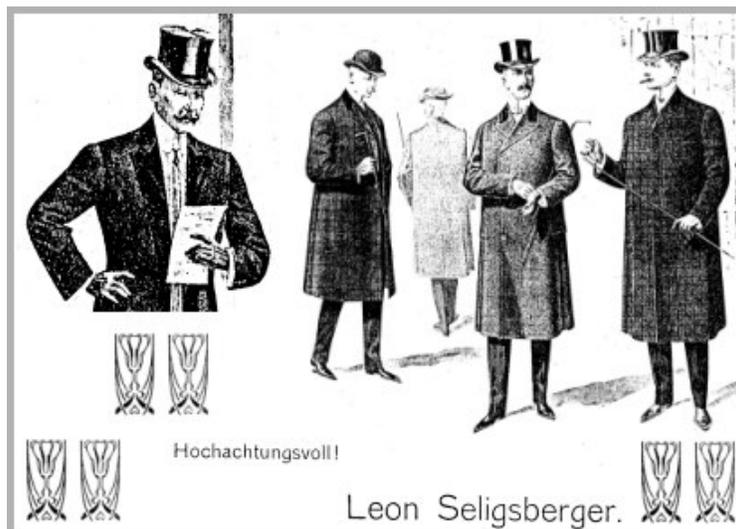
Cover and last page of Leon Seligsberger's catalogue for the fall and winter season 1905/06, advertising his *Abonnement* pricing system (photos: private)

This plan kept the subscribers in the latest of fashions at a savings and eliminated an accumulation of outdated clothes in their closets. For the firm of Leon Seligsberger it meant greater freedom of planning for future purchases by virtue of a guaranteed volume, assured patronage by the subscribers for the duration of the plan, ever growing popularity and prestige. Father skillfully promoted his multiple-sales plan by printing its schedule in handy little notebooks, which also contained such useful information as the names of the members of the City Administration, the councilmen, and the members of important committees, most of whom were his clients and loved to see their name in print. To one issue he added the genealogy of the ruling House of Wittelsbach and historical data on the growth of the town of Fürth since its foundation in 793. At another occasion he commissioned a memorial booklet for the celebration of the centennial of the death of the great German poet Schiller, enumerating the events planned and containing fitting remarks written by a respected local historian. This booklet brought him also some unexpected notoriety: the local Labor gazette, at loggerheads with him about his stand in a wage dispute, accused him of turning the Schiller Anniversary into a piece of blatant advertising. Actually, his fellow-employers criticized father at times for being soft on the union. I have heard him say that increased wages will never break a good businessman. He considered the function of the Employer's Council in great part as the assurance that no competitor would reap an unfair advantage by paying his journeymen below the prevailing wage scale.



Graphics from the 1905/06 catalogue, in the left corner the tailor shop at Weinstraße
(collage: *rjio*)

In this connection I should mention the curious fact that in Germany and Austria as well, in an economy based on the principle of cash and carry, the tailor's bill was always paid last. Father used to mail statements quarterly or semi-annually; even then the response was often slow. It was an accepted custom for young Army officers to present their father-in-law to-be with a clothing bill covering several years as the price for the privilege of giving the hand of his daughter in marriage to a member of the uniformed elite. Once, sitting with his wife in the front row of the theater during a performance of Wagner's Ring, father was asked, why he indulged in such extravagance, usually reserved for the very wealthy. "Because", he said, "I would hate to have the evening spoiled by figuring the many thousands of marks owed to me by the patrons sitting in front of me."



Graphics from the 1905/06 catalogue
(collage: *rjio*)

Now, as the war dragged on, this plethora came to an end. The shelves in the store became emptier; no new merchandise was obtainable to replenish the dwindling stock. Eventually, along with all the other commodities, the Government imposed rationing in the clothing business. Father's customers, mostly well supplied from former years, rated low on the scale for clothing coupons. Thus it came about that little by little they would bring their fine, but by

now well-worn suits to the shop to have them turned, switching the backside of the fabric to the outside. Suits and coats thus regained a like-new appearance; only the breast pocket, sporting the obligatory white handkerchief, was on the wrong side of the chest. This operation kept the tailors busy and the store open. People used to say: *Man wendet sich so durch* - the word *wenden* interchanged with the word *winden* in a play of words, meaning: "One manages to wriggle through" - which was what people did.

When my brother and I returned to Bad Kissingen in the summer of 1917 things there had changed much from the previous years. The character of the clientele was different; many of the middle class guests of former years could not afford the expense of the cure any longer; in their place the bars, the casinos and the big hotels were crowded with a new class of heavy spenders, the war profiteers. On the other hand, a new type of wartime casualty was in evidence: a uniformed man, with no outward sign of injury, sitting on a bench in the colonnades, his head, his arm, his leg shaking violently, incessantly: the shell-shocked. It was not a pretty sight, and embarrassing to watch. We went on our customary hikes but found that aunt Sophie had more errands to run for us; word got around that the butcher had meat or the baker bread and somebody had to make a quick trip while it lasted. The guests had to hand over their ration coupons for whatever food was served them; many of them came from shortage-plagued Berlin and expected to find a little bonus beyond their allotted quantities. Another wartime phenomenon had sprung up: the black market. The farmers in the outlying villages saw their opportunity, and the housemaids, cooks and porters who were their children served as intermediaries. Naturally all produce thus traded was illegally withheld from the regular Government-prescribed channels of delivery. It was fun, mixed with excitement, to walk in the dusk after supper with aunt Sophie or Marie, the maid, to the neighboring village of Garitz where we had a "source", and to come home with some milk, a few eggs, perhaps a pound of butter hidden in a large shopping bag, always on the lookout for the gendarme who might show undue curiosity. On other days friendly farmers from the village of Aura would show up with similar goodies. Aunt Sophie had no qualms about her unpatriotic activities. The guests expected the extra treat and were willing to pay for it. It resulted in recommendations to their friends, which filled the house; besides everybody did it. There was also the wonderful harvest from aunt Sophie's garden. She never begrudged us boys any of the fruit we wanted to eat, and there were 3 different kinds of apples and pears, there were plums and prunes, strawberries, gooseberries, currants and hazelnuts. And over the fence there was Mrs. Franke's garden, and Mrs. Franke was a recluse and a witch. Her plums were even sweeter, and she never caught us climbing over her fence.



We went on our hikes, with or without the Pesel kids, saw cousin Jenny at the hospital and sometimes took part in public victory celebrations. We sang now: *Der Gott, der Eisen wachsen ließ, der wollte keine Knechte* - The God who made iron grow, did not want us to become slaves." And we went home after somberly finishing up with the last verse of a choral: *Wir treten zum Beten* - We are assembled for prayer which ended with the ardent plea: *Herr, mach' uns frei* - Lord, set us free!

In the fall of 1917, over 3 years into the war, I entered the *Königliche Humanistische Gymnasium* in Fürth.

Philip and Ludwig in Hindenburg Park, ca. 1917
(photo: private)

III. *Fuimus Troes*

The “King’s Humanistic High School” in Fürth, as it was designated by a plaque above its entrance, was an undistinguished boxlike 4 story building, inconspicuously located between an apartment house which housed a scrap metal dealer’s business in the rear yard, and the town’s firehouse. It was a 10 minutes’ walk from where we lived. On its main floor were the living quarters of the custodian who did various chores, from maintenance to ringing the bell indicating the start and end of study periods; his wife did the janitorial work. A laboratory located on the same floor, equipped with burners, faucets and sinks, served as the study room for classes in physics and chemistry. On the second floor were several classrooms as well as the offices of the principal, called *Rektor*, the vice principal, and the teachers lounge. There were more classrooms on the third and fourth floor; the latter also contained the music room and the drawing workshop. A big center staircase connected all floors. From the basement, which served mainly as storage, one walked out into the yard, about 150 by 300 feet in dimension, which had a soft gravel-and-earth surface. An additional cobble stoned side yard, adjacent to the firehouse, faced the street but was cut off from it by a high iron fence. The *Turnhalle*, which would rate the name gymnasium in English, closed off the rear of the schoolyard; bordering on it at a right angle was a low building which contained two or three toilets and a wall-length urinal. There was a faucet and sink on its outside for washing hands.

The classrooms, with whitewashed walls and high ceilings, were not much different in their Spartan simplicity from those in elementary school. The students’ benches seated two; instead of into a slot on top of the desk you placed your satchel underneath. Each place had an inkwell with a sliding lid. Aside from the teacher’s desk there were a small bookcase and a showcase for exhibits, supplied either by the school or by eager students trying to make a good impression on the teacher. A few pictures, mostly of classical subjects, decorated the wall. The windows opened onto the Königstraße in front; looking out from the back one had a view of the schoolyard and beyond it the valley of the river Pegnitz, which flowed only a few feet from the rear of the *Gymnasium*. At times, the noise from the next door scrap yard interfered with the conduct of our studies, to the students’ delight and the teacher’s chagrin.

The Humanistic High School in Fürth was at that time the main preparatory school for the University, particularly - as expressed in its name - the study of the humanities, and, in addition, medicine and law. A small but growing number of students opted for physics, chemistry or mathematics. The educational alternative for those young men who contemplated a career in business was the *Realschule*. The *Gymnasium* offered 9 grades to graduation, the *Realschule* 6. After successfully completing the sixth grade of either school students received a much coveted document, the so-called *Einjährige*, a report card which conferred on the holder the privilege of serving only one year in the armed forces instead of the 2 years’ compulsory service for everybody else. By the time I got to the end of the sixth grade the Weimar Republic, under the terms of the Versailles peace agreement, had done away with the service and the privilege. Meanwhile the *Realschule* had added 3 years of supplementary courses for those students who wished to continue on to college, especially in the field of economics and some of the sciences. Girls customarily went to a girl’s high school which was a six years’ affair. The first girl ever to enter the *Gymnasium* in Fürth was in the class below mine; a few others followed afterwards. They had to be hardy specimens: there was not even a powder room for them.

Our building contained one classroom for each grade. The classroom teacher, called *Ordinarius*, gave instruction in German composition and grammar, and, in the first grade, in Latin, geography and history. Different teachers would teach mathematics and natural science; they would come to our classroom according to the course schedule. As we advanced and our program grew, the classroom teacher taught Greek as an additional course; another professor instructed us in French starting in the sixth grade, in English in the seventh. English was an

elective. We left the classroom only to go to the music room, to the drawing workshop and the lab. Jews and Catholics went to a different room for religious instruction which we received twice a week in the afternoon. For physical education we went across the yard to the *Turnhalle*, where we changed clothes in a small dressing room. It never occurred to anybody that showers could be installed for our use after the workouts. The smell in the dressing room was overwhelming.

Ours was a very large class numbering close to 40 students. Attrition would reduce a class after a number of years to as little as half its original size, give or take a few. The total number of students in the *Gymnasium* never exceeded 250. Teachers addressed students by their last names; the pronoun was the familiar *Du*. From the seventh grade on the formal *Sie* became the rule. We called the teacher *Herr Professor*, which was his rightful title (there were no women-teachers). Only the choral teacher was a *Oberlehrer* plain and simple and did not rate the professor's title. In fact he did not rate at all and we treated him with a total lack of respect. Among students teachers were referred to by their nicknames: the Swan, the Frenchman, the Dachshund, the Master etc. After a few weeks in school almost every student had acquired a nickname also, some of them not too complimentary. We had the Butcher, the Mouse, the Stinker, the Cactus, to name a few. I was called the Vulture. This had nothing to do with the rapaciousness or any other characteristic of that bird; it was simply because I was the youngest in my class. Students in school were divided into vultures and upper-vultures: everybody in a grade below you was a vulture, in a grade above you an upper-vulture. In the first grade we were the lowest of the lowest and thus all vultures. With me, the nickname stuck throughout my time in the *Gymnasium*. No student, by the way, ever referred to his school by any other name than the *Pennal*.

One of the most exhilarating moments of my young life occurred on the day before school opening, when my father took me to the store of Hierteis and Sons, Hatters to the King of Bavaria, to buy my new school cap for me. It was a black visored cap with silver piping around its top, which was stretched tight by a metal spring wire inside its rim. A blue and white ribbon around the side denoted the first grade. In later years we took the elastic wire out and shaped the front of the cap with 2 notches in the manner of the officers of the Air Force. We wore our caps to school and for all dress occasions. We lifted the cap to all of our professors whenever we passed them on the street. I once walked past the Catholic priest, who taught catechism in school, without giving him the proper recognition, thinking that he would never teach me and I therefore could pretend not to know him. He stopped me, reprimanded me and threatened with disciplinary action should it ever happen again.

The students of the *Realschule* wore green caps. We looked down on them as not quite in our class, and they retaliated with an occasional street fight when they outnumbered us by a large margin. That was the kind of cowards they were. There also was a Jewish *Realschule* in town, a private institution, supported by the orthodox Jewish community for the benefit of those Jewish students who would not go to school on the Sabbath and wanted to receive a more complete religious education. They wore sky-blue caps, and nobody bothered about them. Once a year the students from all 3 high schools competed in a track meet. We were sending only one third as many contestants as the *Realschule*, which had a much larger enrollment, but we always gained a victory, though at times it was just a moral one. The Jewish high school furnished few athletes. Long after I had left school, however, it came up with a prize winning runner, an Abyssinian student, whose attendance was sponsored by a number of Jewish organizations, preparatory to his studying medicine. He was the only black in our city and known as the *Negerjud'*, the Negro Jew. The meet took place shortly after Hitler came to power; the exclusion acts had not been drawn yet, and the black Jew walked off with several trophies, to the double chagrin of his Aryan competitors. He left town shortly thereafter and

went to Hamburg where the climate was for a while still more cosmopolitan. What became of him and whether he ever returned to his native land as a physician I shall never know.

School was in session 6 days a week, from Monday through Saturday. Classes were from 8-12; at noon everybody went home for the main meal of the day. On several afternoons we had additional classes from 2-4, and sometimes, as we added electives, until 5 or 6 p.m. As time went on the administration initiated changes in the scheduling making for an earlier start and shorter periods, turning the morning into a five instead of a four period time frame. This eliminated some of the afternoon classes, and we liked it. During intermission we went down into the yard to eat our sandwiches. Most of us brought 2 slices of rye bread with something on it that passed as marmalade. The lower classes played tag or similar games; the upper-classmen formed groups in certain spots and did not bother to mingle with the "vultures".

Our first grade teacher was a professor with the nickname "Helmes". He was tall, had reddish-blond hair, a mustache and short beard of the same color, and was very patriotic. All of the teachers had mustaches of various size, and many of them beards also, with the exception of Cantor Lübeck who taught religion to the lower semesters of the Jewish students. He was clean-shaven, which struck me as very strange. The longest beard was sported by the gym teacher, whom we called the Master. Evil tongues whispered that he dyed it with shoe-polish to keep it looking black. He copied the appearance of *Turnvater Jahn*, the freedom fighter of 1813 and originator of gymnastics in Germany.

When the professor entered the classroom at the beginning of a period the class rose and remained standing until he gave the signal to sit down. The heavy wooden seats were swinging on strong iron hinges; standing up and sitting down we managed to raise an impressive degree of noisy clatter. The teacher opened first period with a short prayer ending with the words of Isaiah chapter 40, verse 31:

But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength -
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk, and not faint.

To this we responded with a resounding "Amen". Sometimes the professor caught us in the midst of a raging turmoil when he walked into our classroom; we soon learned to post a lookout at the top of the staircase to give us a timely warning. Next followed the roll call, day after day, until the sequence of names was indelibly imprinted in the mind: Ammon! Angele! Bengl! Bernsdorf! Blanz! Brinda! Bügler! Dürbeck! Endler! Englert! Fassold! etc. We answered "Here" with an astounding tonal diversity.

I had become a poet. It started when I had barely learned how to write. I made little jingles, and since I was not given to preserve the scraps of paper they were written on, my brother copied and collected them in a notebook as neatly as he kept all the other collections he was engaged in and in which he joyfully allowed me a proprietary interest. Thus, at one time or other, we collected postage stamps, food stamps, advertising stamps, picture postcards, war posters, paper money printed by municipalities as an emergency measure during the war and the inflation following it, infantry shell casings, rocks with the imprint of petrified snails, frogs, lizards, snakes, guppies, bird-feathers, walking sticks (insects having a thin twig like body), cock-chafers, June bugs, and stuff which does not come to mind right at this moment. But back to my Muse!

There was no dearth of subjects for my verses. I started out with poems about mice, deer, hawks: I loved to read animal stories and got my inspiration from them. Later, understandably, I switched to poetry about the war: our infantrymen attacking, our U-boats sinking and enemy ship, a mother weeping for her dead hero-son. On the lighter side there were rhymed

birthday greetings for our cousins in Kissingen, father or mother; poems about the need for food ration stamps for everything, about dumb farmers, smart con-men, classmates, teachers, the love affairs of our maid. Ludwig and I came out with a little newspaper called "Poetry and Prose", handwritten on one or two sheets of paper with a carbon copy: It contained my latest literary output including a few home-made jokes and sometimes a poem which my brother had authored. He labored at his, mine flowed easily. Father, in his bachelor days, had written some verse and taken bows for some clever acrostics. In school we had to learn many famous poems by heart and declaim them in front of the class. Once in a while I got to read one of my own. We sold one subscription of our "Poetry and Prose" to our parents and another to aunt Sophie in Kissingen, and made our talents pay off. Father wrote to his sister every Friday, and she in turn replied at the beginning of the week. Ludwig and I had to add a few lines of our own. When my letter was written too hurriedly and therefore badly, father tore it up and had me rewrite it, saying that I could do better. There was no argument with that. All our writing was done in Gothic script except our Latin lessons which called for the use of Roman characters. I do not recall when I was taught the Latin alphabet but I believe it was in the third grade of elementary school.

During our first few years in the *Gymnasium* we wore knee length pants and rolled-down black stockings, exposing our bare knees to any kind of weather from early spring to late fall. We took great pride in our hardiness and swore that we would never indulge in the folly of the grown-ups and wear those idiotic stovepipe trousers they dressed in. Mother took us to a seamstress who made our outfits. They usually consisted of a blouse, to be slipped over the head, and trousers held up by a sleeveless camisole to which they were buttoned. The blouse featured a detachable white collar which could be laundered separately so that the entire suit did not have to be washed when the collar was dirty. The seamstresses were always busy and one had to make arrangements long in advance. We hated their polite babble, the trouble slipping in and out of the clothes for a try-on, the loss of valuable play time. Some mothers were very secretive about the names of their sewing ladies, especially if they combined chic with reasonable prices. Mother found their reticence disgusting.

Every so often a dressmaker or seamstress would come to our apartment for one or two days' work. Mother's wardrobe was to be enlarged by a new dress, older garments needed remodeling; shirts were made for us boys and alternations and repairs done. The visit of these good ladies entailed a protocol as rigid as that of a minor dignitary: coffee or warm beer at 10 in the morning, luncheon meats at the strike of the clock at noon; coffee cake in the afternoon and something to take home at the end of the day besides their wages, which were reasonable enough. In return *Fräulein* Köpplinger or Frau Weber not only kept the treadle of the sewing machine running busily but also gave an insider's report of the latest gossip from the various homes they had been to within the last few weeks, revealing intimate glances into the life of their clients: their financial and marital problems, troubles with maids, children and mothers-in-law. It was a fine and dramatic account and every bit as gripping as today's television entertainment.

I loved the smell of leather and shoe polish permeating the front room of a third-story flat where we had our high laced boots made by the shoemaker Herr Zellhöfer. He was a quiet man who nodded politely when he outlined my foot on a piece of paper and mother cautioned him to make the shoes big enough so I could grow into them. He also soled shoes, put heels on and did everything he could to make a pair of precious shoes last as long as possible. When leather became increasingly scarce he hobnailed our shoe soles to add to the wear. Hobnailed soles were great for sliding on ice in the winter.

Meanwhile the World War went on. It seemed like we had never known anything else. In the west trench warfare had long supplanted the quick thrusts of the early months of the war; the Felsenstein boys, Ludwig and I had dug a short trench in the backyard from which we fought

the imaginary French attackers and put them to flight again and again. In school periodic appeals were made to the students to sign up for war-bonds. Father never let us down. I was happy that I could always pledge money for the war; I was not quite clear in my mind whether the bonds were a donation or an investment. A wooden "victory pillar" was erected on the grounds of the "Hindenburg Park", which used to be called the English Gardens and had been renamed along with the adjoining Weinstraße after our great Field Marshal. One could drive nails into the pillar and thus contribute money to the war effort: a black nail for one mark, a silver nail for five marks, a golden nail for twenty marks. We pestered our parents to let us hammer some nails in. After all nails were driven in, their different colors outlined iron crosses, turning the victory pillar into something like a patriotic totem pole. Students could also collect money for the Red Cross on the streets of Fürth in little cans with a coin slit on top, which I did enthusiastically. I saw the first moving picture of my life, showing the Army Medical Corps in action, helped by wonderfully well trained German shepherd dogs. The dogs wore a Red Cross banner around their middle marking them for their humane missions. They located the wounded soldiers in the field and led the medics to them. The picture looked like it rained all the time.

Father belonged to the German Language Association which made it its business to cleanse the German language from foreign words. The protagonists of this purification divided the German language into 3 categories: German, Germanized, and foreign. Little did anybody realize then that not quite 20 years later a man named Adolf Hitler would divide the German people in a similar manner: Arian, half-Aryan, non-Aryan. The consequences were worse for people than for words. As a matter of fact Germans showed a preference for the use of alien words to document their good education. This had to change! Now the French "adieu" became *Auf Wiedersehen*, the English "Raglan" became *Schlüpfen*, the classical "Telephon" became *Fernsprecher*. Every issue of the German Language Association paper slew a number of foreign words. We went along eagerly and proselytized fervently for the German substitutions.

There was also another kind of substitution called *Ersatz*, a word which has become familiar to Americans many years later. As the war went on shortages developed in more and more raw materials, and the German genius was employed to come up with suitable substitutions. The first genuine articles to disappear were imports: one drank *Ersatz* coffee and cocoa, ate apples instead of oranges or bananas. One washed with *Ersatz* soap, baked with *Ersatz* eggs. Eventually even the *Ersatz* materials became scarce and fell under the rationing rule. In 1918 we had some underpants made from *Ersatz* cotton - people said they were made from nettles - which scratched our skin and left us with red splotches every night. The great synthetics industry started from humble beginnings.

In the spring of 1917 a tremendous event occurred in Russia: a revolution ousted the Tsar! Renewed hope surged through Germany; the shaky socialistic Government in Russia would not be able to hold out much longer. Toward the end of the year the miracle happened: the Kerenski regime was overthrown by the Bolsheviks, and the armistice of Brest-Litovsk ended the war with Russia. Imperial Germany did not feel too comfortable dealing with these abominable reds, many of whom were obviously Jewish, leaders of a radical mob which in the end killed the Tsar and his whole family in a bloody massacre. But the Bolsheviks accepted terms which were highly favorable to us, a great reward for our heroic troops which would now turn to the western front and finish the war there victoriously in a short time. *Die Miesmacher* - the prophets of doom ought to crawl down into their rat holes in shame! Finally one could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Not everybody shared this enthusiasm. America had entered the war against us in the spring of 1917 and many people feared that this new enemy might turn the tide of battle decisively against Germany. The newspapers made lightly of the American soldier, describing him as

undisciplined and soft, the spoiled child of a spoiled nation. “We shall have won the war before they get over here,” said father. “They are here already and they are young and healthy and strong - we are lost,” said mother. As much as our parents saw eye to eye on everything else there was no agreement on that subject, and the war became a moot issue around the house. Mother had never been impressed by the *Obrigkeit*, the Government and its bureaucracy. When she took us once to look at a parade from the window of the house of an acquaintance she would not get up from her chair to see the Kaiser drive by. She had never lost a farmer’s distrust of the officialdom and had a few old saws handy to describe her feelings. Now, after 3 years of bloodletting, she was done with the war. She did not want to talk about it, arguments were useless because everything you heard and read was *Schwindel* - lies, lies, nothing but lies. The word swindle was whispered more and more. When after the collapse in 1918 the last volume of the book-series we subscribed to called “The War” (this one ominously #13) investigated the reasons for our defeat, it admitted that censorship and outright lies had contributed their share in breaking down the morale of the people.

In the meantime life went on, school went on, and we made the best of it. Occasionally we went on little Sunday excursions with our parents, taking the suburban train to surrounding points of interest, hiking in the countryside, learning the names of the villages, streams and mountains, historical landmarks and the story behind them. More often, we boys walked off into the immediate neighborhood of Fürth, and over the years we explored every road, path, creek, pond or quarry. As the saying goes: we knew the fields and woods around our hometown like the palm of our hand.

Feeding a couple of growing boys in the winter of 1917/18 and thereafter became a difficult and nerve wracking task for mother. Everything was on ration coupons; but that did not mean that it was available. Bread had become so black that people suspected it was mixed with wood bark or straw. We boys loved it anyway and ate it with Ersatz marmalade; butter was almost unobtainable and what little there was would be given to father. Even potatoes were scarce, and we ate turnips, turnips and more turnips. When we had meat the parents had a small slice, father’s larger than mother’s; Ludwig and I got a sliver. I swore I would eat all the meat that would go on a plate once I was grown up and the war was over. For dessert we sometimes had an *Ersatz* pudding. Long after the war had ended we found a package left over and had mother make the old favorite dessert again: we spit the first spoonful out, it tasted like wood shavings; we threw the rest away. The farmers had some eggs and milk and flour although they were forced to deliver most of their products to the officials for distribution. Sometimes our cousin Johanna came from Amberg with meager supplies obtained from members of the family who were farming in that area and selling some of their produce on the sly. Father thought everybody should get along on the government rations but he tolerated what little extra we got. Friends who owned gardens sometimes had fruit to spare, and aunt Sophie supplied us with apples and pears. Mother confessed after the war that in the last few months she was often close to fainting from hunger, having given to us boys a slice of bread or a bowl of soup which was her ration. She was in her menopause then; perhaps that had something to do with her spells also. We never felt close to starvation but were rarely ever real full; we hungered after the things that were not to be had; in our diaries we went into great detail describing some luscious meals we were served during a vacation in Amberg and on the nearby farm of distant relatives. It only took white bread, some simple homemade breakfast rolls, pancakes made with real eggs, the choice of 2 vegetables to make us feel like gourmets. Father suffered because the cigars which were for sale were an unconscionable mixture. He was an inveterate cigar smoker and could rarely be found in his store without puffing a cloud of smoke into the air.

We had no Babe Ruth, De Maggio or Lou Gehring to worship. Our heroes were pilots, their names were on everybody’s lips, we kept track of the number of their “kills”. We fantasized

of being Immelmann, Bölcke or the great Baron von Richthofen. Fürth was one of the cities privileged to have an airdrome built at the outskirts, and my brother and I spent many an afternoon walking 3 miles to it and watching the planes take off and land as the military pilots trained for combat. The airfield was a vast expanse of gently rolling meadow on which the planes bounced along for many thousands of meters before lift-off. They were propeller-driven, canvas-covered flying machines, mostly of the double-wing variety. At times, coming in for a landing, the engine would start sputtering and the plane would hit the ground hard. Rabbits, once the undisputed sole owners of the grassy plain, would scatter in panic. The Military had built a new road to the airport; every time we went there we counted more hangars. After the peace treaty of Versailles all but one had to be razed. While most of the cargo in town was moved by horse and wagon the traffic to the airport brought on a fleet of heavy trucks which ran on solid treads, due to the shortage of tires. Houses shook when they thundered by and people were afraid of the damage they might cause. We were very proud that Fürth had been chosen as the site for the airfield and not the much bigger city of Nuremberg. With the growth of commercial aviation after the war the hub of flying eventually moved the neighboring city. It never occurred to me that flying would one day be a mode of transportation for the masses.

No enemy attack ever penetrated the air space beyond the borders of Germany to any appreciable extent; however in 1918 our relatives in Freiburg, close to the French frontier, wrote to us of bombs dropped and damage done. There had been a rumor at the beginning of the war that French planes had bombed the vicinity of our hometown, but it was never verified and seemed highly improbable.

As the end of my first year in the *Gymnasium* drew close I had established myself firmly as one of the top students in class. I liked school and did my homework diligently. When I dawdled at times mother would inquire soon enough if I had no homework to do. Some of it, in Latin and mathematics for instance, was in writing; a good part of it like in geography, history and natural science consisted of memorizing. It easily took 1 ½ to 2 hours a day to do one's homework properly. Grades were based on the quality of your homework, your facility to demonstrate at the blackboard in front of the class that you could handle the subject on hand, and the ability to give an oral account of the data you were supposed to study at home. Every so often we had to undergo written tests which were said to account for one half of the credit toward your term grade. Two of the Jewish students in my class, Marx and I, did not write on Saturday for religious reasons. To accommodate us no written test was ever held on Saturday. Our mathematics professor was the only Jew on the faculty, and strictly orthodox at that. His schedule was arranged so that he had his classes after 10 o'clock on the Sabbath, when *shul* was over.

I made friends easily among my classmates. While during my 3 years in elementary school I never went to anybody's house but my friend Schwarzbeck's, I now visited with several of my fellow students and they in turn came to our house. Most of the students came from middle class backgrounds, and the official yearly roster showed the occupation of their parents as well as their religious denomination. Protestants ranked first, Catholics second, Jews third. One student was recorded as "Free Christian", meaning that he did not belong to any organized church; he was obliged to attend religious instruction with the Protestant students. Another one, registered as "non-religious", got off free. His parents were Jewish-born but avowed atheists. At that time we did not pay any attention to each other's religious affiliation.

Early in the summer of 1918 we were done with the first grade. I went to Hierteis and Sons and got the red and white second grade ribbon for my cap, indicating that from now on I could look down on one class of "vultures".

Our *Ordinarius* in the second grade was the con-rector, the assistant principal, a fine looking old gentleman, past retirement age but staying on because all the young teachers were at the front. He was gruff but had a sense of humor, and we liked him fine. Our class had shrunk a little; among others we lost one student who had won the admiration of all of us by running away from home, taking the train to Nuremberg and staying away for a couple of days. We had a closed campus; now and then somebody might slip out to buy a pen or fetch a book from home he had forgotten in the morning. One day in November 2 boys from the third grade came back from such an errand and brought word that leaflets were being distributed in town by the local newspaper (this was done instead of extra editions) that the King of Bavaria had abdicated! It was incredible news. When I came home after school mother had cried and father was stunned. It was still another, and very decisive jolt in a series of discouraging and increasingly shocking blows that had fallen upon the Fatherland in the last few months.

In the spring of 1918, after the Russians had signed the peace treaty of Brest Litovsk, the German armies had won a stunning victory on the western front. Our troops had been successful in the Balkans; our staunch allies, the Turks, fought the English bravely; Austria stood firm. Peace, victorious peace seemed close at hand. True, the government was drafting 17 year-olds and men of advanced age, and the home front was creaking, overworked, undernourished, saddened by the loss of so much young life at the far-flung fronts of the war. Even women had died: in our hometown an ammunitions factory blew up and dozens of the almost all female work force had been killed. Accidents like that happened here and there. Yet the spring offensive of 1918 did not knock out the enemy nor did the Italians quit after their stupendous defeat at Caporetto. Victories, victories, 4 years of victories, celebrations, flag-bedecked houses, sacrifices, privations, hundreds of thousands of prisoners in our hands - and still no decision! And then the French and the British counter-attacked, and even the Americans got into the front lines. Our armies fell back to prepared positions, as the official reports put it. The momentum was gone, and the morale of the front soldier dropped to rock-bottom. Rumors had it that officers were shot from behind when they urged their men to attack. The *Heimatschuss* was what everybody hoped for: an injury sufficiently serious to cause release from the service yet not permanently disabling. People told of thousands of soldiers in hospitals so gravely wounded, gassed, shell-shocked, legless, armless, faceless, that the Government would not let anyone ever see them. The officers were sending home fine linen, silver, champagne from the front; the enlisted men got none of the booty. The people were embittered. How much longer? Don't believe one word you read in the papers, we cannot win, not any more.

The Turks got beaten in Palestine. Bulgaria sued for peace. Even the Italians, lousy fighters that they were, pushed ahead. Field Marshal Ludendorff told the German chancellor that the front could not hold much longer. Rebellious sailors stages demonstrations in several ports. Prince Max von Baden, the new German chancellor, sued for an armistice. The King of Württemberg, along with our King Ludwig III. of Bavaria, renounced his throne. The Kaiser abdicated and went in the dark of the night into exile in Holland. A socialist government took over in Berlin. Germany was declared a republic. So was Bavaria and all the other kingdoms and principalities which made up the Reich. On November 11th an armistice agreement was signed. President Wilson of the United States issued a declaration, the so-called 14 points, destined to bring a just peace to the world.

It was an awesome change, an unbelievable letdown. We were bewildered, relieved, curious. The town became the scene of demonstrations, raggedly dressed men and women marching, protesting the lack of fuel, food, milk for their children. The government had not much to give. Privates stopped officers on the street, tearing off their insignia of rank. Long queues formed in front of stores selling cigarettes. The *Internationale* was the tune everybody became familiar with.

During the bitter cold winter of 1918/19 we were sometimes awakened in the middle of the night when columns of tattered soldiers, stumbling tiredly alongside wagons and cannons drawn by emaciated horses, clattered past our house, coming from the nearby railroad station. It was a depressing sight; it seemed ages since the days when the troops had marched to the terminal singing, their helmets, their guns decorated with flowers, a jubilant population lining the sidewalks bidding them a cheerful good-bye. Later in the year there was one more joyful occasion when the local infantry regiment, the 21st, returned home and marched smartly from the station to their barracks. For days the town was full of anxious anticipation; the flags were out like in the days of the victorious past; the new colors of the republic, black, red and gold had supplanted the old black, white and red. Banners were strung across the streets en route and tens of thousands of cheering people lined the sidewalks, giving the returning heroes a rousing welcome. It was almost like a victory celebration. Yes, it was true, said the conservative papers, our troops came home from the field of battle undefeated, not one enemy soldier stood on German soil at the end of the war.

Great events changed the face of Germany as we had known it throughout our young life. A National Assembly in the city of Weimar gave the country a new constitution, guaranteeing equal voting rights for all people, men and women alike, forbidding discrimination, opening unlimited career opportunities for everybody. Friedrich Ebert, a master saddle maker, was elected President of the republic. How could a saddle maker be President? We lost all our colonies, and agreed to reparations which would bankrupt us over and over. There was to be no more standing army; the jobless officers became insurance agents and salesman; some of them joined secret paramilitary organizations which sprang up here and there.

War, peace, revolution - yet life goes on for 2 boys, 10 and 14 years old, and many of our important concerns were barely touched by the stark realities of history. Hikes are taken to the woods, books are read, homework has to be done, grades are to be kept up. Our clothes were shabby, our diet was monotonous, but we did not feel deprived; all our friends were in the same boat. Besides, our life never lost the trappings of middle class existence; we stayed in the same comfortable apartment; we had with the exception of a few months' time the services of a maid; our meals were on the table at the appointed hour; the government did not force a sub-tenant on us to relieve the growing shortage of housing; father went off to his store at the same hour every morning. There was upheaval all around us, but we felt secure in the stability and tranquility of our home.

For a while the main floor of the leading hotel in town, next door to the building which housed father's store, was taken over by the newly formed council of soldiers and workers. We passed it on our walk to school and watched the armed guards, the display of a red flag, the comings and goings with curiosity. After local government shifted back to a duly elected city council one of the commissars, helped by his pretty wife, sold fruit from a cart at the best corner in town: the well-to-do ladies patronized the new venture with fervor, paying high prices and smiling sweetly. Father was amused to see many right-wingers in town flock to the meetings of the Democratic Party in which he was active and which took on added significance as a party of the middle vis-à-vis the socialist left. Mother became interested in the women's group and attended public meetings. Party luminaries from other parts of Germany appeared before the assembled crowds, hecklers arose in opposition, chairs were overturned, bedlam ensued, the hall was cleared in hurry. Unemployed workers, veterans demanding jobs demonstrated in front of City Hall. Angry women paraded through the streets shouting for food and fuel. Yet the streets were safe by day and by night, there were few purse snatches or burglaries, and a murder which occurred in a house next to that of one of my classmate's was an unheard-of event. Consequently our buddy became for a few days a celebrity in school: he had heard an outcry in the early dawn, the police had interviewed him, he held the key to a dreadful mystery. It was never cleared up.

Father had always been active in social causes. Now mother volunteered also to serve on a committee for the relief of the elderly. She went to sessions in City Hall and was made secretary. Father lovingly helped her with the business of writing the minutes of the meetings. Every week half a dozen of her elderly wards, men and women, came to our house to pick up their meager assistance monies. They slowly climbed the stairs, wheezing and coughing, to sign their name on a list mother kept in our living room. I still remember old man Etzel, who coughed and coughed until I thought his throat would burst, and Frau Kaag, who was so crippled with arthritis she could hardly hold the pen. There were others who limped; all of them dressed in the shabbiest of shabby clothes, their eyes red-rimmed and watering. In the cold of the winter they stayed for a while until they stopped shivering, and the women had a cup of hot chicory coffee. I watched the old people sign the list with shaking hands and pitied them very much. They were courteous and grateful, and you could see that many had seen better days. Father told of families who needed beds for their children: they had hacked their furniture in pieces and burned it to fight the winter cold. In the midst of so much privation a miracle happened one day in our house: a big box arrived from my father's brother in America, containing all kinds of wonderful foodstuffs we had not seen for years: rice, coffee made from genuine coffee beans, cocoa, sugar, snow-white flour! What a feast we had for a while! Mother baked *Berches*, the traditional twist for the Sabbath, and we praised God and uncle Sigmund in far-away California.

My brother kept a diary of the events of those years, and if I had it handy I could fix the dates better than my kaleidoscoping memory can do it. There was the day when Minister-President Eisner was gunned down in Munich by a Count Arco, a half-Jew himself, who could not bear the thought that a Jewish newspaper man from Berlin should head the Bavarian government. There was the *Räterepublik*, a coup of the radical left, which assumed power in several Bavarian cities and established itself for a few days in Fürth also. The putsch was brought off so suddenly that we had no knowledge of it when we went to school in the morning, and we were wondering why the custodian burst into the classroom a half hour after the opening bell, whispering excitedly with the *Ordinarius*. Minutes later we were dismissed for the day. Ludwig and I promptly went on a hike with some friends, caught some fish and brought them triumphantly home for our aquarium while in town a mob marched on City Hall, shots were fired, somebody was killed. We were naturally sorry to miss all the excitement and looked in vain for bullet holes or broken windows when we passed the scene of the riot on the weekend on our way to the synagogue. The *Räterepublik* went out of business a few days later in Fürth but Munich, the state capital, remained in the hands of the revolutionary council. A paramilitary outfit, the so-called *Freikorps Epp*, marched to its liberation. The beleaguered reds arrested a number of prominent citizens as hostages to bargain with the attackers. Communications broke down, the hostages were summarily shot, the free corps retaliated with a bloodbath which not only did away with the leaders of the revolutionary council but many known leftists, writers and intellectuals also. I made a poem and dedicated it to one of our teachers who had volunteered for the *Freikorps*, congratulating him in the name of the second grade for thrashing the Bolsheviks. The students of the *Gymnasium*, and their teachers, wanted no part of the *Spartakisten* [communist faction], communists and assorted reds who were trying to turn Germany into another Soviet Russia.

In the summer of 1919 I was allowed to visit my aunt Babette, mother's sister, and her daughter Johanna in Amberg, about 80 kilometers to the east of Fürth and close to the little village where my mother was born. Amberg was a picturesque old town of about 30,000, with cobblestoned streets and stretches of ancient fortifications, walls, moats and towers. The folks lived in a modest 2-story house they owned, part of which they rented out. It was a world in every way different from that at home. Aunt Babette was a devout Catholic who went to church every day as did many other people in this almost exclusively Catholic town. Even the local

dialect was so different that I could hardly understand it. I made friends with a couple of older boys in the neighborhood who impressed me greatly because they had personal cards with their name printed on them. My hosts allowed me a good deal of freedom and I made a nuisance of myself. After roaming the surrounding hills and woods with my new-found pals I conspired with them in all kinds of pranks: Shooting arrows from my bow after the neighbors' dogs and pigeons, tying newspaper to their cats' tails, painting "ox" and "donkey" with watercolor on little kids' foreheads. Still, I also made myself useful running errands, going to church with my aunt, accompanying cousin Johanna on foraging train rides in the country. The highlight of my stay was an excursion to the remote farm from which my maternal grandmother Hirzinger, nee Spies, hailed. There I found real country life; the folks did not fuss but put me right away to work binding bales of wheat, following the oxen with the plow, keeping them going round and round thrashing wheat in the barn. The true test of my courage came when late in the afternoon I was sent out to drive a couple of bulls grazing nearby back to their stable. Man, were they big! And I was only eleven! what do you say to make them go? Should I use my whip? Well, the animals knew it was feeding time and headed back for the stable eagerly, just as in Fürth the horses that sometimes got loose in the streets, their driver running after them, red-faced and swearing loudly. Family and hired hands ate their meal together at a long table but not before the eldest son had said the Lord's Prayer while everybody stood with folded hands and bent head. I stayed overnight, and was put up in a newly built upstairs bedroom, having the whole floor to myself. In the early part of the night a terrible thunderstorm broke loose with constant flashes of lightning, deafening thunderclaps, heavy rain that hit the roof above me like drumfire. Frightening noises came from the outside: men shouting, horses neighing, the clatter of hoofs on cobblestone, the screeching of wheels. The neighboring farmer had been late loading his hay and was trying to bring it into his barn before it got soaked. I did not know what was going on, I thought of fire; here I was all alone in the upstairs part of the house; the electric light had not been connected yet, the stairs were not finished, I had come up on a shaky ladder. My bed was all feathery downs, in the cover on top of me, in the mattress underneath it was hot, I was scared, I lay there bathed in perspiration. Finally the noise subsided, I went to sleep. I told nobody the next day, I did not want them to think that I was chicken. Everybody was very nice to me; Max, one of the "cousins" who was studying for the priesthood, fashioned a bow and arrow for me from a young ash, helped me gather blueberries in the woods, checked on my Latin. I got back to Amberg with a load of potatoes; Max lugged the rucksack to the station, I carried it home after I got back to Amberg. - I stayed about 10 days in Amberg. I never got homesick for one moment, I felt at ease in the Catholic milieu, I had a very good time. I wrote a diary just like my brother, setting down the events of each day in detail, adorning it with picture-postcards and, quite importantly, the personal cards of my friends Ernst Richter and Johann Grosch.

Ever since I had learned how to read and write, my brother had become an additional teacher, tutor, mentor. He was possessed by a compelling and insatiable quest for information; the need to assort the newly gained knowledge by setting down the data in his own writing, drawing his own maps and tables, and lastly imparting it to me. Though I was his junior by 4 years he never doubted that I would readily grasp and cherish the information passed on to me; for me the knowledge thus gained beyond the scope of that of most boys of my age meant a marked increase in self-esteem, a heady feeling of acceptance as an equal in intellectual conception and capacity. It created new interests, opened new vistas which I readily entered into. We became closely bound by the mutuality of our explorations; the intimate sharing of intelligence at times approached an almost exclusionary and conspiratorial level which we found hard to bare to our uninitiated friends. We read Brehm's "Animal Life" a volume of many hundreds of pages, from cover to cover, copied, colored and cut out many dozens of its illustrations of mammals and played with these self-made papier-mâché toys in a manner that was practically inaccessible to outsiders. How would they know that the simians could outwit the

tiger, that the elephant commanded unquestioned authority, that the hyena was untrustworthy and the giraffe conceited? After we had gone to bed, Ludwig would hold forth in a hushed voice on one subject or another, occasionally interrupting himself with: "You understand?" and he would insist when I was too sleepy to answer: "You understand? You understand? Why don't you answer?" Once in a while our parents would hear us whispering and knock at the door: "Time to go to sleep!"

We had started a terrarium. We did for a while with grocery boxes until our parents commissioned a cabinet maker to make a beautiful glass-enclosed terrarium for us which we kept on the veranda adjacent to the living room. Equipped with cigar boxes and a small net we roamed the countryside hunting for inmates; often Robert and Stefan Felsenstein, who had started a terrarium of their own, and Ludwig Baumann, my friend, would come with us. We knew where lizards, blind-worms or snakes could be caught, which pond or creek would yield this or that kind of frog or toad. We read books on the life, the feeding habits, the care of amphibians and reptiles, and Ludwig would fill notebooks with our own experiences and conclusions. We set up a table in the living room and put one aquarium on it, then another one and still another to the mild uneasiness of mother. We went to the local pet stores to buy tropical fish and caught domestic species in the streams and creeks of our surroundings. We kept three different species of water salamanders; you had to catch them early in the spring when the water in the ponds was still cold and the elusive little newts were slower in escaping the net. When we went on vacation we would return with lizards or a spectacular black and yellow fire salamander which did not dwell on the soil of our area. We kept a pair of walking sticks and watched their rapid propagation and the fast growth of their young - the walking stick is a small insect with a twig-like body, not native to Germany. We installed a Macedonian turtle in an enclosure on our balcony. It lived on lettuce and survived repeated falls from the second floor to the cobble stoned yard below. To feed our hungry zoo we had to take regular trips to nearby meadows to catch dozens of grasshoppers; we had trained our lizards to a point where in response to a knock at the wall of their cage they would run up a little ladder and take an insect from our fingers through a small door without trying to escape. I became deadly expert in catching flies with my bare right hand; when the grocer whose store was on the main floor of our house hung a skinned rabbit in the yard to air, I collected a rich harvest from the swarms of fat blue flies that settled on the carcass. We dreamed of building a concrete pit for guinea pigs like in the Nuremberg Zoo, but that dream never came true.

Our interest in nature had been instilled by our father when we were younger. On nice summer days the family often took a suburban train to the edge of the woods and then walked on a gently rising path to the top of a hill called *Alte Veste* - Old Fort - where we had something to eat and drink in the tree shaded garden surrounded by the walls of the old stronghold. After we had our refreshments we took a leisurely stroll in the Municipal forest keeping our eyes peeled for wildlife; father had a standing reward: the first to spot a hare was to receive 5 pfennigs; it went to 10 pfennigs for a deer and 1 Mark for an elephant. Although the woods were alive with Sunday promenaders and the animals kept their distance we saw a hare or a deer now and then, but never an elephant. We never gave up hope that one would escape from a circus and find his way to the woods around *Alte Veste*, but to no avail.

The Old Fort had served as the headquarters of Count Wallenstein during the 30 years' War, when he camped there with his forces waiting to engage King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in battle in the valley of the river Rednitz between the fir covered woods around the *Alte Veste* and the town of Fürth where the king and his army were entrenched. The inn, in which the king stayed, had not changed much in 300 years, and as a young man I had a beer there occasionally playing a game of chess with a friend who lived nearby. The battle between the opposing armies was bloody but inconclusive. Count Wallenstein, unable to forage any longer in the plundered countryside, marched north. Gustavus Adolphus, facing the same problem, fol-

lowed shortly afterwards, but not before he had inspected the Old Fort and dined at the massive round stone table on which his foe had been served his meals. *Der Schwedentisch* still stood where it had stood then. It looked like an uncomfortable piece of furniture.

There was an underground passage that ran from the *Alte Veste* to an exit several hundred feet away in the woods. We boys thrilled to the table that the present owner of the beer garden had the upper entrance walled in because drunks would sleep off their overindulgence in the cave like opening. Sure enough, a few days after the workmen had finished the brick wall, a low moan from behind it scared the passersby out of their wits; the wall was opened up and a half-dead tramp found behind it. Ludwig and I entered the passage from the opposite end in a little quarry where it was still open, but one could not advance very far into the mountain side before it became impassable.

Father, like most of the burghers of Fürth, liked to drink a glass of beer in one of the innumerable beer restaurants of the town or, on a warm summer's day, in a beer garden at the outskirts. Mother, like most ladies, drank her own glass and liked it. There were 4 or 5 breweries in Fürth and many others in the surrounding towns. Various restaurants served different brands; the good citizens could tell them apart with their eyes closed. One drank light or dark beer as one was inclined at the moment; in the spring the breweries made a special event by serving bock beer brewed in the preceding fall. It was a stronger, darker, maltier beer, enjoyed by thousands sitting at long wooden tables in gaily decorated beer halls to the accompaniment of a brass band in Bavarian attire, leather pants and all. Father had some great stories to tell from his bachelor years when he had a *Stammtisch* - a regular social meeting with his cronies at the same table of a restaurant - on practically every evening of the week. He had bet a drinking companion that he could pour a glass of beer into his - the other fellow's - pocket without getting his clothes wet: when the unbelieving friend accepted the bet father emptied his glass into the man's pants pocket, put up his money and left before the "winner" recovered from his shock and, in his soaked trousers, could lay hands on him.

I was more impressed yet with another tale from the good old days. The talk at one of the round tables had turned to robberies which had recently been committed in the municipal forest - late travelers held up in the dark of the night and parted from their money. Bets were offered that nobody would dare walking through the woods to the distant city of Cadolzburg alone! Well, in German folklore the tailor often appears as a man small in stature but big in courage, and true to that image father took the bet and walked off into the darkness. He described to us boys his solitary walk in the moonless night, tramping miles and miles through the woods, the quiet only broken by his footsteps, the hooting of an owl, a deer crashing through the underbrush, strange whistling sounds - from man or beast? - heard from afar. In the wee hours of the morning he caught up with a lumberman's wagon and rode the remaining miles of open country with him; in the town of Cadolzburg he woke the Mayor and had him certify his arrival. Thus the bet was won and once again the local paper printed the story of the brave tailor.

The time around the turn of the century produced many similar stories of quixotic exploits and practical jokes perpetrated by a host of young entrepreneurs carving their niche in business or the professions, heady with success in a town growing rapidly along with the increasing affluence of its citizens. One of them, particularly funny, deserves mention. Restaurateurs in Germany hold a special feast for their patrons from time to time by slaughtering a pig and offering the different delicacies from it as a dish called *Schlachtschüssel* which they advertise by hanging a pig's bladder prominently from their display sign. One night a bunch of orthodox Jewish young merchants made off with one of these bladders and tied it to the shingle above the door of the town's kosher restaurant. Considering the horror which observant Jews profess for pork one can imagine the consternation and near-apoplexy of the poor owner and his pa-

trons in the morning! Sorry to say it did not in the least diminish the huge amusement of the cruel jokesters!

Even the reigning House of Wittelsbach became the butt of a joke. When the mentally deranged King Otto of Bavaria was confined to an institution and a prince regent took his place the Jewish community was faced with a dilemma: Should the prayer in the Synagogue asking God's blessing for the country's ruler be said for the mad king or his surrogate? Jewish law forbids the recitation of 2 prayers! Disregarding his illness, the sages decided for the King. It was said, from then on, that *In Fürth meschugas ist kein chalas* - Madness is no disability in Fürth.

Mad or not, the Bavarian kings enjoyed the love and affection of their subjects, and unlike the sabre rattling Kaiser Wilhelm II they did little to offend the sensibilities of anybody. Father was present when at the opening ceremony for an exposition our Royal Personage called the Rhine "German from beginning to end," a remark that could not fail to shock the Swiss in whose country the river originates, and the Dutch who control its final part until it flows into the North Sea. It was a royal blunder but no correspondent rushed to the phone to broadcast it, the papers covered it up, the loyal burghers pretended they had never heard one word. Thus the Bavarians rallied to save the King and most of them were truly saddened when King Ludwig III renounced his throne in 1918.

Mother possessed no equivalent treasure of tales but I liked to hear a story from her early childhood again and again, the day she played with a few other little girls around the draw-well in the little village of Lengenfeld. They had pulled up the water bucket and mother had clambered up on the low wall surrounding the opening to reach for it when suddenly her playmates let go of the rope: down went the bucket and mother right with it, desperately holding on to the rope, coming to rest deep down in the stone lined shaft; the bucket below the water's edge, mother's little legs bravely braced against it, her hands clinging to the lifeline with all her strength. Above the girls scattered, yelling that "Censer!" had fallen down the well. The village blacksmith was hurriedly summoned; shouting encouragement to the watery depth below, he put on his climbing irons, carefully lowered himself down the well and returned triumphantly with a wet and frightened little girl in his arms. "Won't you give her a healthy spanking when you get home?" the village women asked my grandmother. "I'll thank God for saving my child," said she, and mother never forgot that beautiful answer. When the bucket was lowered for the first time on the next day the rope broke. The blacksmith received the king's life saving medal. I strongly felt he deserved it: didn't I owe my life to his heroism also?

After the armistice had been signed we stopped playing World War games. No longer did we extend the living room table, hand a couple of tablecloths over each side, put a chair on top for a conning tower and play submarine, four or five boys huddled closely in the marauding U-boat. Mother sometimes wondered: why did all the kids always have to come to our house? The answer was simple enough: nowhere else could we have taken over the living room like we could at home. Neither did she ask those inane questions other mothers did: "Are you allowed to do that at home?" or "Does your mother know you are doing that?" Naturally, when supper time came, she had to inquire at what time a visiting boy was expected to come home. After all, we had no phone and boys never know when to leave. All, that is, except the Felsensteins: they watched the clock and left in the middle of the most exciting play.

Ludwig and I got permission to put a big table-top which was used for ironing on a table in the guest room and to set up our toys on it. We built the historic city of Athens with its harbor Piraeus, using blocks, cigar boxes and wooden boards which came from inside the bolts of fabrics in father's store. It took no wave of a magic wand to turn our World War soldiers into hoplites and the dreadnoughts which we had made from blue notebook covers into Greek tri-

remes sailing forth to the battle of Salamis. The Athenian Empire lasted for several weeks, and the most crucial danger to its existence came from Stefan Felsenstein and his friends playing ball in the backyard. There were times when I could not resist joining. My brother who had no interest in ballgames took it graciously. We followed our classic epoch with a highly topical event: the battle of the loyalist troops against the *Spartakisten* in the city of Berlin. Law and order was restored but not without whole city blocks going up in flames. Everything was stark realism, and some of our blocks got pretty badly blackened. Repercussions had to follow as word got mysteriously to the living room although the guest room was at the opposite end of the corridor. Playing with fire was misdeed enough to be dealt with by our father. We were well prepared to defend our case: The Berlin fire brigade had the blaze at all times well under control; there was no damage to the table-top. But father's reproach hit us at a different level: weren't we ashamed to start a fire on the Sabbath when no good Jew would break the law and strike a match; when mother did not light a fire in the stove nor he, father, smoke a cigar? We were ashamed. We had been thoughtless and deserved chastisement. With this debacle our playing with toys came to an end in a blaze, though not exactly of glory: we had now reached the age when we preferred playing games like checkers, chess, lotto, cards and the many dice games that test your patience. And above all I liked to play ball.

Uncle Sigmund had sent 3 tennis balls from America for me. The rubber shortage during the war had resulted in the disappearance of all rubber balls from the shelves of the stores and it took a long time before they were back. I was rich: I had three bouncing balls in my possession, and I tried to guard them carefully. Of course they finally went the way of all balls: One of them rolled downhill into the waters of the river Pegnitz and got carried away by the current; the second bounced over the fence of a lumberyard too high to climb over; bad boys, too tough to tackle, made off with the last one.

Eventually the soccer craze affected me and almost all my friends. Few boys owned soccer balls, and the possessor of one was a powerful tyrant. He decided who could play and who could not, what position and on whose side, and he would fix it so he would never lose. If things did not go his way he could take his ball and walk off. But it was worthwhile submitting to all these indignities for the ecstatic pleasure of running with the ball, outfoxing the goalie, landing it in the extreme corner of the goal, being a hero. Soccer was not considered a proper game to be played during physical education at the *Gymnasium*. But throughout Germany everybody went wild about it.

Not too long after the end of the war the *Spielvereinigung Fürth* - the local soccer club - imported an English trainer to teach the short low pass to the team which had relied on long high kicks along the sidelines, giving the opposite team a chance to get close to the ball as fast as the player for whom it was destined. With their new strategy the Fürthers played cat and mouse with their adversaries and wound up with the German Championship at the end of the season. The town went wild. The home-coming players received a rousing welcome as they rolled in open cars and carriages from the station to a formal reception by the authorities. The parade went by our house, and every window in the street was taken by fans straining to get a look at the proud victors while the sidewalks were packed with cheering milling crowds. Mounted police had to be called in to control the surging masses. Things got so far out of hand that in some places rocks were thrown at the cops who in turn wheeled their horses around and charged the unruly mob. After the tensions of the war, the shame of defeat, the drabness of a shortage-plagued life the exhilaration over the victory of the hometown eleven was understandable.

Another craze swept the country: Dancing! Offended patriots sounded off in the papers against a youth that danced without inhibition in Germany's darkest hour and, worst of all yet, danced the Shimmy, an abominable creation of decadent American negroes! We were too young to be a party to the dispute but I considered dancing pretty silly. There was one excep-

tion: once in a while, in a gay mood, mother put her arms around me and two-stepped with me around the living room table singing her favorite polka:

*Polka, Polka tanz' ich gern
Aber nur mit feinen Herr'n -
Hab'n die Herrn kein' Handschuh' an
Ich nicht Polka tanzen kann.*

Polka I would like to dance
With some gents of elegance -
If you fail to wear your gloves
I won't dance with you, my loves.

Mother had a sweet clear voice and a repertoire of many popular, often sentimental songs which she sang to me. Many, many years later, when I took my wife and young son on the long boat trip to America some of these melodies came hauntingly back to me as I tried to sing my little boy to sleep: *Hänschen klein*, the song about little John who goes out into the wide, wide world, leaving his weeping mother behind, and *Kommt ein Vogel geflogen*, a sad tune about a little bird bringing a mother's greetings to her faraway son.

The big hit-song in the winter of 1919/20 was called *Bummel-Petrus* and it started out: Everywhere there is a great shortage of coal - even in the heavens they are freezing to death ... and that just about told the story. Public buildings, schools, homes were often uncomfortably cold. We suffered from chilblains on our fingers and toes but we went to the hills with our sleds anyway, had snowball fights in our backyard or on the way to school and got through the winter just as we made it through the wave of the Spanish Flu in the previous year.

Now that the war was over and the manpower shortage had given way to unemployment many municipalities embarked on modernization projects which had been delayed by the war-time emergency. Our city finally got around to extend its sewer system to our street and many others that had not been connected into the network. Working crews dug up the roadbed in front of the houses on Friedrichstraße, and when they hit solid rock explosives were used to blast the obstruction out of the way. Often the early morning hours were shattered by loud detonations. While the work went on all of the horse-drawn vehicles which loaded and unloaded in front of the export house of Ullmann & Engelmann next door to us lined up on the sidewalk, and pedestrians had to walk past them in the space of 4 or 5 feet between the wagons and the front of the buildings. The huge drayage horses, impatient and plagued by flies and the heat of summer, swished their tails back and forth, stomped their immense feet, moved their heads up and down violently and snorted fiercely. I was truly scared to death when I had to pass them 3 or 4 times a day. Finally the enormous sewer pipes were put in place, the excavation was filled up and the plasterers settled down on their low one-legged stools to put the cobblestones back on the street. The new sewer system was a distinct improvement over the previous method of pumping the contents of the septic tanks through long flexible pipes into a tank car, an operation so smelly that we called it *Parfümerie stinkoria* [stinky perfumery]. During the war Johann, Herr Felsenstein's handy man, regularly used a long handled dipper to skim night soil off the septic tank to fertilize his employer's victory garden. He worked surreptitiously after dark as it was against the law; we could tell by the muffled clatter and the unrefined smell. The carrots did well and tasted delicious.

With so many equines on the streets of the town, my classmates and I played a game that called for counting white horses. The first girl you shook hands with after counting one hundred nags was the girl you would marry. However, the count had to be started all over if a chimney sweep crossed your path before you had reached the magic number. I shall never know if it would have worked. When I met Lotte M. who was the prettiest girl on the block I

was too bashful to shake hands with her. Merely passing her with a smile and a faint hello was evidently not enough. As things turned out it was all to the good.

Things went well with me at school. Our class had established a pecking order, and I belonged to the peer group. We formed a club called "Flora" while the lesser elements organized something under the name "Fauna" which had neither class nor standing. I became the secretary of our club, a job which has fallen to me many times in my life ever since. We had important meetings drawing up the rules and regulations; we went on nature hikes, met socially in each other's apartments, debated admissions of new members or dropping some who did not show proper regard for the privilege of belonging. It was very thrilling.

Two or three of our classmates offered themselves up as the official clowns. They tried to curry favor by acting like imbeciles, limping, stammering, making grimaces, forcing a laugh in every way possible. The real leaders had to do nothing to attain their favorite status. They were usually good athletes, not necessarily good students; they wore their caps at the right angle, used the right words, made the right decisions. The girls in the Lyceum knew their names, as did the students in the upper semesters. I was very proud when some big guys from my brother's class chased me all over the schoolyard during recess one day and finally brought me into their circle for a bit of cuffing, telling Ludwig: "We got your brother, Selu" - which was his nickname - they knew me! I had arrived!

Ludwig and I never talked to each other in school - perhaps I should say almost never; it was not being done, it would have been demeaning for him. We never walked to school together during the five years in which we went the same route nor did we ever meet to go home. A boy named Hans rang our bell every morning to pick him up; I left either before or after. When Hans was late Ludwig did not wait. We were never tardy, being tardy was inconceivable in our house. We had been wakened early enough to get ready, our breakfast was served in time, our satchels had been packed with the right books the preceding night. Rain, hail or snow made no difference. In later years Ludwig traveled by train to the University of Erlangen, a commute of about 20 minutes: in four years he never missed his train in the morning. Father was never late opening his store in the morning 5 days a week but did not mind being a half hour late for *Shul* [Yiddish synonym for service or synagogue] Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoons, when he played cards with his cronies, he sometimes kept us waiting at the coffee table beyond the appointed hour. We were anxious to go for our customary walk in the Municipal Garden. Well, he had been winning and one of the losers did not want to quit: no fair player can walk off in a case like that. Father went every afternoon for one half hour to the hotel next door to his shop for a game of tarot with the same group of friends before reopening the store for business after the noontime closing. He loved the game, the company of the other businessmen, the relaxing atmosphere of the coffee house. The stakes were small and incidental. My brother never took an interest in card games. I sometimes played "Sixty-six", a two-handed game, with my mother who had a good head for cards.

In the summer of 1920, after the worst after-effects of the war had worn off, I was again permitted to travel to aunt Sophie's "Villa Engel" in Bad Kissingen. Many changes had occurred there: Cousin Jenny had married one of her soldier-patients and moved with him to Berlin (The wedding had been performed in our house in Fürth two years ago!). The wartime-hospitals had been converted back into hotels, the wounded soldiers were gone from the streets and voluble crowds of fat North-Germans filled the spa: war profiteers, black market operators, speculators, big businessmen, heavy spenders. I followed the old routine: walks to the woods and games around the house with Toni and Hansi Pesel, errands for my folks, visits to the outlying restaurants with some of the guests. Another girl, Dorle, a friend of the Pesel girls, became my playmate also; her father, a German baron, now a penniless refugee from the Baltic, lived in the Villa Enszner, an ill-dressed, pathetic figure of a man, scratching out a living nobody knew how. Dorle, a baroness, was as poor as a church mouse. Yet we had lots

of fun, committing all kinds of pranks, running into trouble now and then with the neighbors, doing favors for the guests and earning some rewards in turn. The highlight of the summer was a competition for some of Germany's most famous horsemen and women featuring jumping, trotting, various gaits in perfect execution. Most of the participants belonged to the nobility, and while the country was a republic and all titles had been abolished the program and the local papers could not do enough to emphasize the noble background and the former military rank of the contestants. It was a good summer, although at times I missed my brother who was spending his vacation with relatives in Munich. There were moments of loneliness. I remember sitting one afternoon in the garden all by myself. It is around 2 o'clock and all is quiet, eerily quiet. It is siesta time for the summer guests and all noise has to stop. The weather is hot, the silence unbearable. Suddenly it gets darker; a big black cloud hides the sun, a gust of wind has come up and whips through the trees and bushes around me. A cloud of dust rises from the Mar Road below. Where is everybody? I have a sudden feeling of doom, of the world coming to an end, another planet crashing into Earth. I am frightened and I run back into the house. The maid is drying dishes in the kitchen, the folks are resting. Everything is all right.

There was always a contradictory note to the end of my stay in the beautiful spa: I was sad when the day of leave-taking came, I was happy as soon as I was home again. A calm, reassuring routine prevailed in our house while in Kissingen things went easily from commonplace to crisis. It was exhilarating to return to school one grade higher and to look down on a new class of lowly vultures. Best of all, on the first Sunday in October Michael's Mass started or, as it was called in the local dialect: *Die Fürther Kerwah (Kirchweih)*. There had been no celebration during the war years, and the first postwar Michael's Mass in 1919 was an unforgettable event. The excitement began when the first wagons and trucks appeared on the city streets where the fair was going to be held, unloading boards and canvas for the construction of the merry-go-rounds, tent shows, shooting galleries and the many dozens of booths and stands from which the fair people would sell food, drinks, sweets, notions, kitchen utensils and various other goods to the throng. Up and down Königstraße we went after classes, the street on which the *Gymnasium* was located, speculating what attractions would rise from the contents of the lumbering vehicles. Hey, man: they are putting up a carousel right in front of the *Pennal*! The Rex - the principal - won't like that! Gee, I can hardly wait until Sunday!



90 years later: the *Fürther Kerwah* in Königstraße, in the background the tower of City Hall
(photo: Susanne Rieger)



The carousel is still standing in front of Philip's high school, today the *Heinrich Schliemann Gymnasium*
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Tens of thousands filled the streets at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning when the fair officially opened; it lasted for 10 glorious days.

You started out at the eastern end of the Königstraße, where the street vendors' stands began. The one that you did not want to miss, the one that drew the biggest crowds was the inimitable *Billige Jakob* - Cheap Jake. I was fascinated by his spiel. He would stand behind his counter in shirt-sleeves, gesticulating forcefully, moving from one end of his display to the other, selling with almost hypnotic persuasion. "Have you ever seen, ladies and gentlemen, a pair of suspenders, genu-i-ne elastic," and here he would stretch them, "topnotch quality, the very finest - hey, sonny, yes, you back there: wipe that stupid grin of your face, we know your wife wears the pants and you need no suspenders, - ladies and gentlemen, these galoshes are being worn by policemen, firemen, businessmen who want to look neat, people who know quality when they see it, and what would they expect to pay for a pair like these? Ten marks? Eight marks? Seven fifty? My good friends, we not only want you to have the best pair of braces for the money, we are offering you something in addition at no extra cost: a pair of suspenders worn invisibly underneath your shirt, hooking onto your trouser buttons from the inside; you can wear a belt and feel secure! Ladies and gentlemen, we have decided to be good to you today, God knows you don't deserve it, but we will sell you both pair - and absolute must for any man - don't crowd me, boy, I said MAN - for five marks and ninety-five pfennigs! Did I say SELL? Thank you very much, Sir, here is your nickel change! We are giving these suspenders away while they last, Jacob needs money to pay the rent - thank you, Sir, thank you Madam! Let the gentlemen pass, he came all the way from Nuremberg - you are asking me about scissors? Stick around, we have the finest steel from Solingen - who else for 2 pair of suspenders for five marks and ninety-five pfennigs? You need both hands to hold up your trousers, buddy? Hand me the money with your left hand, that's the boy, watch out for him, honey, he got both hands free from now on! Thank you very much, thank you, I have three more sets left, two more ..."



The *Billige Jakob* is also still around and amusing, though not the same man but the branding name
(photos: Susanne Rieger)

Gosh, if you stay here much longer, you won't see the rest of the fair!

So you sauntered on and stopped at the shooting galleries a little distance down the street, where a couple of buxom ladies in Bavarian garb tock your money, loaded the guns and smiled encouragingly at all comers. You could aim for the bull's eye, and hitting it or close to it on the concentric circles of the target win a prize: a teddy bear, a doll, a bottle of cheap perfume, depending on how high a score you achieved with three shots. Or you could shatter clay pipes or celluloid balls dancing up and down on a stream of hot air, or hit a target which would set off a ballet of tiny figurines dancing to the tune of a tinny organ. Walking on you find a crowd collecting at a ring-toss stand watching some frustrated throwers trying to ring

the square base below a bottle of sour wine in a manner that the ring would not come to rest on any corner of the base, a very difficult thing to do. All along you would pass sellers of food and drink - non-alcoholic - and the air was tantalizingly fragrant with the smell of wienies - not kosher! not for you, Philip! - pickled herrings and sardines. On you walked to where the people gathered in front of the tent show featuring “Leona, the lion woman” listening to the barker inviting them to see “this unfortunate creature, half lion, half woman - see her as cruel nature has made her - grownups only, ladies and gentlemen - with a huge mane and covered with hair from neck to toe -“ and while the roar from inside the tent chills your bones to the marrow you walk on, excluded and muttering that Leona was a fraud anyway!



Chairplane in front of the court building, the Catholic St. Mary's Church & the Municipal Theater during Michael's Mass

(photos: Susanne Rieger)



Now you arrived at the spot where the Königstraße opened into the wide Hallplatz (which you traversed daily on your walk to and from school) flanked by the Catholic church in the east, the Bavarian State Court building in the south and the Municipal Theater in the west. Here you faced some of the real big guns of the fair. Here was the Ferris Wheel, or, as it was called in Germany, the Russian Wheel; and on a dare from some of your friends you rode it, dreading the descent when your stomach seemed to float right up into your chest. Once, twice, three times up and down it went until it finally stopped and you walked off, a bit dazed: oh, it is great, nothing to it, I could ride it all day long! And a moment later you stood convulsed with laughter in front of a mechanical obstacle course, featuring super-fast escalators, moving carpets, bucking bridges; men and women trying to make it across, stumbling, falling and finally coming down on a chute, the girls' skirts flying up while they shrieked with fear and embarrassment! Watching was often more fun: that was the way I felt at the Hippodrome, to which our parents took us one year, I don't remember when. One paid to get in and sit on long benches under the big tent, the horses going round and round in the sawdust covered arena,

the band blaring, the air heavy with the smell of stables. Only the better class people went to the Hippodrome, and the smart set rode the horses - the ladies side-saddle -, I turned down father's offer to pay for a ride, but Ludwig accepted bravely and trotted around proudly.

Across from the theater a short walk led down to the river Pegnitz. Crossing a footbridge you arrived at a playground set up with long tables and benches where open air "Restaurateurs" sold the greatest delicacy of them all, the culinary hallmark of the fair: barbecued herring! The little fish were roasted on braziers, the cooks keeping the fiery coals red hot by waving fans made from goose feathers back and forth; everybody, rich and poor, sat down at the wooden tables eating the delectable sprat, hot and crisp, washing it down with a glass of beer - everybody except me; when it came to fish I chewed and chewed, and I spit and spit, and, since I could not swallow the smallest bone, I ended up with more stuff on my plate than I had started with.

Well, you could always make up with other delicacies: you could buy a bit of Turkish honey, handed to you on a piece of waxed paper, or have a slice of cocoanut or a bag of peanuts, shelling and eating them as you walked along. For on you went: past the *Gymnasium*, with the merry-go-round in front of it full of little children - riding wooden horses and chickens is kid stuff - and on to the Three Kings' Square, where another important part of the action was.



The merry-go-round at the *Gymnasium*, in the background the adjacent fire station
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Hypnotism was one of the big postwar crazes; no wonder then that the tent-show featuring Hugo, the magician and Sonya, the medium, attracted one of the biggest crowds of the fair. The new performance will start at any moment; you can still glimpse the tuxedoed miracle man, the beautiful blond medium - why so pale? it must be a terrible strain on the poor girl - standing in front of the canvas tent while the barker promised a show unlike anything you have ever seen before: incredible exploits performed by Sonya in a trance, people chosen at random from the audience cast under a hypnotic spell: come and see for yourself for the first time in your life ...

There were other shows beckoning: a family of dwarfs; wild aborigines from the innermost jungles of Africa "untouched by civilization in a wilderness where few white men have ever set foot;" a sullen strongman, his bare torso covered with fearsome tattoos "who will enter before your eyes a cage housing 6 bloodthirsty alligators, these savage man-eating beasts from the shores of the Amazon river: he will fight these monsters with his bare hands, monsters which are known to cut off a man's leg with one snap of their awesome jaws" - the bark-

ers barked, the savages stayed hidden behind the curtain of the tent no matter how hard you tried to spot them, and the strongman threw a blanket around his chest to ward off the cold. Somebody broke the spell and stepped up to the cashier to buy his ticket. Soon the rest of the curious followed while the diffident and the indifferent walked on, holding on to the money in their pockets.

Three Kings' Square! A couple of carousels, one of them featuring airplanes suspended from chains: you sat in them and they would fly way out as the speed increased. What if one of the chains would break? You took your chance, and you got dizzy as hell, and you wouldn't go back because they only gave you a one-minute ride and that was a gyp if there ever was one ...



The "Park Hotel", dubbed by Philip as "the leading hotel in town" close to his father's shop, during the fair
(photo: Susanne Rieger)



Contemporary "Hill and Dale Railroad" in Königstraße
(photo. Susanne Rieger)

Besides, at the other end of the plaza was the *Berg-und-Tal-Bahn* - the Hill and Dale Railroad. Not only was this the most elegant of all the merry-go-rounds, with its white and gold carriages, its plush-covered seats, its liveried ticket takers; it also possessed the most fantastic organ, standing high and majestic out in front, lavishly decorated with hand carved figurines;

fitted with gilded pipes, timpani resoundingly struck by mechanical drumsticks, cymbals clanging with ear shattering noise. What music it could play! Never in my life shall I hear the overture to “Wilhelm Tell”, to “Poet and Peasant”, to “The Merry Wives of Windsor” played like this again! Here a student was among his peers; and in later years it was here where you met the girls from the Lyceum, who rated a high school student’s attention. You bought a string of tickets and you learned to nonchalantly board the carriage just as it started out running; when you jumped off before it came to a full stop you had to do it on the downhill trail or else you landed smack on your face. If you had no money left you could just stand and watch; even standing and watching was an exhilarating pastime. You could buy some paper streamers and throw them at the girl you were sweet on so the red, green and yellow streamers would trail after her carriage like the tail of a comet.

Everybody had fun, even the older people who had seen many a fair in their life. The leisurely crowds, the hoarse voices of the barkers and hawkers, the music of one pipe-organ mixing with another like of so many bands in a parade, the smell of the barbecued herrings, the blue cloud of smoke drifting up from the braziers in the river valley - all of this gave the *Kerwah* a flavor, a sensuality that got into your blood and stayed with you for the rest of your life.

Naturally there were some very earthy and practical aspects to the fun like having money to spend. Every boy got some fair money from home; how I envied those lucky classmates who had grandparents or uncles or aunts around to bolster their spendable cash! One year one of my father’s friends spotted me in the crowd and handed me a big bill! I was almost too overwhelmed to thank him and hastened to tell at home; the only trouble was that I could not tell who it was as all of my father’s friends with their bushy mustaches looked alike to me. And there was another thing bearing on the enjoyment of the fair: the Jewish holidays! Whenever the holidays came late in the calendar year, they would interfere with our pleasure. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and during the 10 days between them one was not supposed to engage in frivolous entertainment and had to stay away from the fair. For half a mile the way to the Synagogue paralleled the streets on which the fair was held but we marched straight on to *Shul* and waited until the holiday was over before we took our first stroll through the wonderful world of the *Fürther Kirchweih*.

The weather was usually clear and crisp during these early days of fall. The Gentiles would watch us walk to services and say: “It’s going to be nice and sunny, the Jews have a holiday.”

The Jewish holidays were an event hardly to be overlooked in our city. Not only was a goodly number of retail stores and offices closed (though fewer of them as time went on), but in the morning and around noon the streets leading to the town’s synagogue square were crowded with Jewish families going to or coming from services, wearing special holiday garb. The older men were dressed in oxford grey cutaway coats and vests, contrasted with striped trousers, their headgear the elegant silky top hat, while the younger people wore black sack coats with their striped trousers, or, more relaxed yet, double breasted blue suits. Bowlers and even soft hats were permissible, but there was no such thing as going bareheaded and picking up a skullcap in *Shul*. Many women were resplendent in expensive black seal or Persian lamb coats; a furrier would have figured the wealth of precious furs on display into many, many thousands of marks. Like their mothers, even the young girls wore hats, while the boys sported their school caps, with the black color of the *Gymnasium* preponderant, the sky blue of the Jewish *Realschule* a close second. Although the walk to the place of worship took from 15-20 minutes for everybody, few people - none of them orthodox - took the streetcar; in later years, when cars became more common, some of the rich owners had their chauffeurs let them off, unseen, a block from the temple; only after sundown, when the holiday was over, would the automobiles park right in front of the portals leading to the synagogue yard.

The *Schulhof*, the synagogue yard, a cobble stoned area of better than an acre, was located in the old part of town, on the same spot where in 1617 the first house of prayer had been erected. It is assumed that the first Jew, named Männel, settled in town in 1528, over the protest of the burghers of the neighboring city of Nuremberg; the second, by the name of Michel, followed 10 years later. The building of the first *Shul* was accompanied by the construction of a Yeshiva, a Jewish university which soon achieved an enrollment of several hundred students. Now the *Hauptsynagoge* - the Main Synagogue - stood in the middle of the ancient *Schulhof*, surrounded by smaller buildings housing other congregations, the Jewish Community Offices and the Ritual Bath. A 10 foot high stone wall separated the yard from that part of the outside where no building formed a barrier. High portals opened to the 2 streets passing the yard.

The Main Synagogue, built, rebuilt and remodeled over the centuries, was in neo-Gothic style, looking somewhat like a church without a steeple. It offered a "liberal" service, in contrast to the other prayer houses which were orthodox; in American terms one would have to call it conservative; the Hebrew text in the liberal prayer book was almost identical with that in the book used in American conservative services. Like the other *Shuls* the Main Synagogue featured strict separation of the sexes, the men occupying the ground floor, the women sitting in the balcony. Its total seating capacity approached 800 people, but only on the High Holidays did the attendance exceed the number of available seats. In contrast, the orthodox temples recorded an equal number of congregants throughout the year, on Saturdays as well as on holidays, and enough worshippers on weekday mornings and evenings to hold a service. There was the *Neuschul*, the New *Shul*, where my friends, the Felsensteins went; another small congregation called the *Mannheimer Schul* and a third one called the *Klaus*, the den. Family traditions, minute differences in ritual, old jealousies kept the various little congregations going. Away from the *Schulhof* there was a synagogue connected with the Jewish Orphanage which had its regulars; services were also held in a room in the Jewish Hospital. Still another group made up of Polish Jews, recent immigrants to Germany, conducted their prayers in a converted stockroom. The state of Bavaria levied a tax, called *Religionssteuer* on all citizens, from which the three denominations derived their income. Because the Jewish Community Governing Board was dominated by a liberal majority, the Orthodox complained that they did not receive their rightful share of the funds; they made up the deficit by pledging contributions when they were called to the pulpit to witness the reading of the Torah. During the inflation in the early twenties, when the value of the German mark fell from day to day, some young entrepreneurs made paper millions in the export business. They astounded the congregation by pledging an English pound sterling, or five dollars, or ten Dutch guilders, sums running into fabulous amounts translated into worthless German marks. To pledge money in that manner was called *Schnudern* - pronounced shnoo-dairn - if you did not want to publicize your gift, you said *Matonoh* - the Hebrew word for donation; thus you kept the curious guessing.

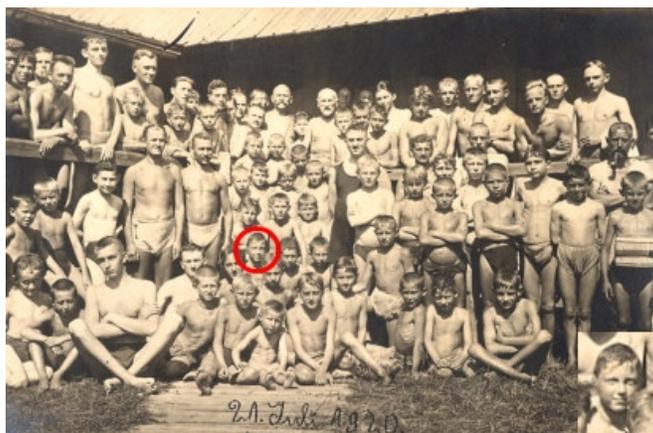
We went to the Main Synagogue, the organ synagogue, as the Orthodox called it somewhat deprecatingly, where father, like most of the congregants, owned his seat. The pews were made of hardwood, painted a dark brown, uncomfortable to sit on: it never occurred to anybody to ask for upholstered seats. The Rabbi, Dr. Neubürger, was a fragile old man, highly respected, and, because of his advanced age, fully excused for the repetitiousness of his sermons. He taught Jewish religion to the upper grades in the *Gymnasium*; the students, less respectful, took advantage of his extreme nearsightedness. Some of my brother's classmates tied strings to the handles of the gas fixtures in the classroom in the late winter afternoons, and, pulling on them slowly, turned the flame down to where reading became impossible and class had to be dismissed. The good Rabbi could not see the dark thread and agreed with his students that the gas shortage was an awful thing. Eventually the scheme was discovered and

all of the students were disciplined. Father really took my brother to task for taking part in the prank; he thought that the boys took advantage of the failing eyesight of a venerable old man disturbed him deeply. In 9 years at the *Gymnasium*, this was the only time that Ludwig gave cause for a severe reprimand at home.

Cantor Lübeck, who taught the Jewish pupils of my class, to this day remains the finest Chazan I have ever heard in any synagogue. He was a true tenor with a fine, cultured voice, beautiful enunciation, singing with feeling yet restraint; his choice of melodies for the Sabbath and the holidays showed his outstanding musicality; he was credible, he never sang for effect.

I have never been able to come to a conclusive judgment whether an organ and a professional choir are a true asset to a Jewish religious service. Most of the worshippers in the Main Synagogue preferred it to the “uncultured” chanting of the orthodox congregations. It also tends to become a performance, turning the listeners into an audience rather than participants in the prayer service.

In the summer of 1921 I became Bar mitzvah, I went through the ceremony which turns a Jewish boy at the age of thirteen into a full-fledged member of the community. In our synagogue, it was a comparatively easy task. I said the benediction before and after the reading of my portion of the Torah, and from the scroll I chanted that particular paragraph which constituted my *Parashah* - the Cantor did the rest. The Rabbi always read the *Haphtarah*, the respective chapter from the prophets, in German. Ludwig had done the same thing 4 years ago, although, because of his lack of musicality, with much greater effort. Relatives came from out of town to attend and help celebrate; mother served an especially delicious Sabbath dinner, but there was no thought of offering refreshments in *Shul* (no synagogue had facilities for serving food); renting a room in a hotel for the celebration was unheard of. The biggest thrill was the steady stream of visitors which came to the house on the day of my Bar mitzvah, the following Sunday and the weekend after. They were received in the drawing room and the dining room; the dining room table was stacked with gifts the well-wishers had brought. Most callers gave books, and books were what I appreciated most. I happily garnered volumes of the classics, travel stories, art books, historical tomes. Uncle Sigmund, who lived in Oakland, California, sent a couple of dollars, a fantastic gift! Cousin Siegfried from Berlin, who had married his wartime nurse, my cousin Jenny, gave me his old wristwatch which he had worn in the trenches, and which still ran perfectly well. My parents, together with father’s cousins, who were in the furniture business in Würzburg, gave me the most wonderful present of all, a huge bookcase. Some people came around bringing such useless articles as pen and pencil sets, manicure sets, wallets: we suspected they were passing on gifts their children had received previously. All in all, July 17th, 1921 had been the occasion for a great haul, and my brother wrote in his diary that I was “richly bestowed upon.” He also noted that I had been somewhat hoarse. And that was the element of another story.



**Philip & fellow swimmers at the
Knabenfreibad, July 21, 1920 ...**
(photo: private)

I had failed to learn how to swim when the *Gymnasium* provided swimming lessons in the municipal installation along the river Rednitz. This establishment, by the way, with cabins on one side of the river, a meadow (do not step on the grass!) on the other, and pontoon bridges marking off the swimming area, was a showpiece of German orderliness and morality. It started, upstream, with a pay section for women, followed by a pay section for girls, shut off from view from the next division by a couple of extra large cabins built across the river: steps inside these cabins afforded access to a few square feet of river for those lady bathers whose modesty would not allow them to expose themselves in bathing suits to the public eye. Next came 100 yards of the pay section for men; immediately adjacent was the pay section for boys, taking up about 50 feet of the river, where my friends and I went. A second row of across-the-river cabins for super chaste men separated “our” division from the next which was for women - no entrance fee required, to be followed by one for girls, equally free. The no-pay section for men and boys came at the end. Justifiably, the purity of the water decreased somewhat from the *Frauenzahlbad* to the *Knabenfreibad* way downstream. Eventually the decadence of the Weimar Republic reached into these sacred institutions also, and the men’s sections in both the fee and the free pool were converted to family use. Worse yet, part of the meadow across the stream was included in the family area, and couples stepped on the grass without inhibitions. No wonder then that it was here where the purification of Germany in 1933 under Hitler resulted in the ban of all Jews from swimming and where my former classmate Rudi, in full Nazi uniform, chased the Jewish bathers out and threw one man, who was slow to leave, fully clothed into the water.

In the spring of 1921 my brother had taught me swimming. He did a better job than the official instructor, who suspended the students from a pole, an air filled metal life preserver around their chest, making them do the breast stroke: one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three. I hated the cold air canisters, and after I got dunked once by a mean bigger boy and almost choked on all the water I had swallowed, I stayed away for years. Now, at age thirteen, I could swim, I had learned to love the water, to dive in head first, to swim under water for long distances with my eyes open. I went swimming with my friends as often as time permitted in the afternoon after school. During the week before my Bar mitzvah I had done so much diving and swallowed so much water that on the eve of the great day I had lost my voice completely; I could barely whisper! Fortunately I was better the next day. But while I really had a good singing voice and knew my *Parashah* well, Ludwig noted in his diary that I only did “quite well” - strict judge that he was. The scripture of the day dealt with Moses’ failure to heed God’s word: he hit the rock to bring forth water while the commandment was to speak to it to achieve the miracle. Moses, for the sake of self-aggrandizement, had disregarded God’s word. Cantor Lübeck, my teacher, knew of my poetic talent; he expressed hope that one day I would write a great dramatic play for the theater based on that episode. I did not live up to his expectations.



... and one year later (after he learned how to swim) August 3, 1921
(photo: private)

Jews of all ages, from schoolboys to men in their seventies were the most frequent bathers as well as the hardest. On a cold and rainy day often as much as one half of the few people braving wind and weather were Jewish. To get a deep suntan was what everybody strived for; we boys scratched the butter from the 2 slices of bread our mothers had given us for an afternoon snack and put it on our chest to get tan faster. Suntan lotions were unknown to us and would have been beyond our means anyway. Several years after my Bar mitzvah my brother and some of his classmates went swimming in the river throughout the winter, when the establishment was closed. They climbed over the fence, put on their swimsuits, took a dip, and got dry playing soccer in the snow. One of the toughest in the group was a Jewish boy, who had been excused from physical education because of a heart murmur. He went to England in the beginning of the Hitler regime, served in the British Home Guards during World War II and is at this time over seventy and in excellent health. Ludwig came down with pleurisy and had to quit; our parents never knew the reason for his illness. I did not mind a water temperature of sixteen degrees Celsius on cols summer days, bit in the winter I preferred to go ice-skating.

I was a voracious reader. From animal stories I had gone to Robinson Crusoe and all the other Robinson books. Next I discovered James Fennimore Cooper's "Leather-stocking" and "The Pathfinder" and above all Karl May's incomparable tales of the resourceful trapper Old Shatterhand and his faithful Indian sidekick Winnetou. Later, historical novels full of iron-clad knights battling foreign invaders, cruel infidels, caught my fancy; eventually I was enthralled by the Romantics and especially the greatest of them all, Eichendorff. In my poetry I mirrored their stories of valiant knights desperately in love with beautiful maidens, whose virtue was threatened by powerful knaves; splendid castles, surrounded by lovely rose gardens, where under a silvery moon melodies of eternal devotion sounded from the strings of zithers; grand tournaments, where the scheming villain was unhorsed by the lance of the fearless knight in white armor, a victory which gained the hand of his beloved for him. Some of my friends - not from the Orthodoxy - shared my enthusiasm: we fashioned shields and swords from wood, cut saplings for bows and strutted about as medieval knights. More playmates could be found, however, for playing *Räuber und Schander* - robbers and gendarmes - or cowboys and Indians. Now we made our bows from the stays of an old umbrella, wrapped tightly with twine: with it you could shoot an arrow twice the distance of that from a wooden bow. We shifted the action to the huge lumberyard of one of my classmate's parents at the outskirts of town, where we could range over acres of ground, hide behind high stacks of boards, turn a dolly running on narrow tracks into a train, ambushed by bad men, defended by intrepid militia. Mother was afraid that we might get killed by falling lumber like the son of an acquaintance at another yard, or that we might shoot somebody's eye out with our arrows, but we ended up with torn pants or bloody knees at worst. In the end our activities centered around an abandoned pigeon loft atop the horse stable: thieves had been stealing wood from the yard at night, and we hatched elaborate plans to set up a watch in the loft from dusk to dawn, install an electrical alarm system and catch the crooks red-handed. Although none of us ever got permission to go on watch, we had a glorious time as would-be-defenders of the law.

Because I had skipped the fourth grade of elementary school I was one year younger than most of my classmates; thus, while I was ahead of the majority in grades, I was a little behind in another area. I became the laughing stock of my buddies one day, when I remarked as we were admiring the statue of a nude woman in the window of an art shop, that "there was something missing." It took me longer than others to understand the meaning of pertinent graffiti and detailed drawings which adorned the walls of the *Gymnasium's* restroom. The curriculum in school was long on classics but devoid of family planning; no information was forthcoming at home. But good friends enlightened me: I learned about boys going blind or insane from the effect of things they did to themselves; as time went on I understood the meaning of the big house number above the door of a home in the Fischergasse. I was let in

on the secret that Betty S., a baker's daughter, had "done it" with a couple of boys from our class and that my friend R. "did it" with his sister! It was exciting knowledge for me yet it remained just that: while girls - geese - as we called them, made the scene with me and I with them, I liked them in a romantic way, I guarded my infatuation with some of them from a careful distance; it was fun to meet and greet them here and there, to have a girl friend of your own gave you status, your "steady" was accepted by your friends. Still, for most of us kissing was the height of intimacy and slightly embarrassing at that; it happened as the consequence of a game of forfeits in somebody's house, when your friends made you kiss your girl as your punishment.

We started meeting the girls in the winter on the frozen surface of the pond in the Municipal park, where the smart set went ice-skating in the afternoons. It was a pretty setting. It was here where in the summer the burghers used to drink their 4'o-clock coffee on the grounds of an open air café, shaded from the sun by tall maples and oaks, while a couple of swans drew lethargic circles on the lake. In the winter the tables and chairs were stored away; the swans disappeared with them. Thick white snow turned the turreted restaurant building into a story-book castle, covered the branches of the trees, the lawns and the low iron fence that enclosed the pond. Blackbirds, jumping from twig to twig, set off clouds of snow floating gently to the ground. We ran home after school, got our skates, hurried to the lake and started out doing circles and figure-eights as best we could. We wore mittens and scarves and earmuffs, and our breath made small misty clouds when we talked. The girls skated round and round the little island in the middle of the pond, and the boys cut in and out. Messages were exchanged through intermediaries. Hilde told Willie that Ilse liked Rudi. Rudi was the Adonis of our class, Ilse the trendsetter among the girls of the Lyceum. I was in exclusive company, peer group versus peer group. Boys and girls came separately and left the same way, but the excitement lingered on and rumors of who liked whom were endlessly discussed.

In the spring and summer the sidewalk along the Hindenburg park in the middle of town was the spot where on Sunday morning after church old and young promenaded up and down the street, back and forth, while the Lämmermann brass band played marches and waltzes and ear-shattering Wagner potpourris in a pavilion under the trees. Everybody wore his Sunday best, gentlemen sauntered along with their friends, ladies with theirs; we students appeared in groups of three or four, and so did the girls. At noon the music stopped and the great moment had arrived: the girls would say good-bye to each other and start for home, and we would follow our "love" and ask her politely to let us escort her on her way. Naturally, when I walked Hilde H. home for the first time, it was not a spontaneous happening, but the result of careful previous communications - a boy friend, a girl friend, a sister, a brother carrying messages back and forth until the lines were cleared, something like the preparations for a summit meeting. Hilde was blond and has rosy cheeks, she wore a pink dress and a pink hat. She was pretty, petite, and agreeable: while we went together she accepted my fiery poems with equanimity. Her friend Helene went with my pal Willie; I could have really gone for her, with her dark hair and dark eyes and classic Roman profile. But it was not that important. Hilde had a brother, Walter, who was a classmate of mine and also a member of our "group" - some time earlier he, Willie and I had sworn friendship for life; we called each other *Brüderchen* (little brother), although some stupid kids snickered about it. In the forest, under some tall pines, we had torn off the perennial scab on our knee to let our blood run into each other's bloodstream, pledging blood-brotherhood with a proud oath: a Protestant, a Catholic and a Jew, an ideal triumvirate, Germans all, equals in noble thought and purpose.

We were in the fourth grade by this time; "Helmes" was again our classroom teacher. We were well along with Latin by now and starting with the study of ancient Greek. The previous year, our *Ordinarius* had been a professor we called "Crassus." He was short and heavyset, and we liked him for the mystery stories he used to tell with just a trace of rural old-Bavarian

dialect in his speech: of a coffin that had been carried into the upstairs bedroom of a house in his native village, but would not pass through the door any more after it had been nailed shut with the dead body in it; of a horse and wagon getting stuck in a muddy road just as an old woman had predicted it; of strange happenings in an old farmhouse next to the one he was born in. "Helmes" offered us no intimate glance into his early life. He was a pedant and a bore; he lisped and sounded ridiculous reading poetry to the class. We acknowledged one redeeming feature about him: he had a beautiful daughter, Rotraut, who was 2 grades below us. We gave her the eye and pulled her long tresses during choir lesson when she could not complain to the teacher without interrupting practice. "Helmes" lived on the fourth floor of a corner house: we stuck a pen point into the button of the electric bell at the door of his house, which would ring his bell continuously until someone came down to pull it out. In the meantime we had long lit our around the corner, laughing all the way home.

In the north of Germany high school classes are not numbered 1 to 9, but in Latin numerals: starting with *Sexta*, you proceed through *Quinta*, *Quarta*, lower *Tertia*, upper *Tertia*, lower *Secunda*, upper *Secunda*, lower *Prima* until you graduate from upper *Prima*. We were now *Tertianer*, the magic age of the hero of all German high school novels.

The rise in the cost of living in the first couple of years of the twenties was steady, but there were periods when it seemed to come to a stop, and father thought the time had come to renew the old Wardrobe Plan. But there was no extended stability; between January of 1921 and January of 1922 the American dollar rose from seventy-four marks to one hundred eighty-six marks; before the war it had been four marks and twenty pfennigs. Retailers faced difficult times. Father, as the head of the Tailors' Employers' Association, was again and again deep in wage negotiations, and he often raised the question at the dinner table: What came first, rising prices or rising wages? How could the vicious circle be stopped? The answer, if there was one, was beyond his understanding, and everybody else's also, it seemed. Nevertheless, life was incomparably more enjoyable now than during the preceding war years; the killing had ended, shortages had somewhat eased; while there was no full domestic tranquility the Weimar republic managed to chug along like a suburban choo-choo-train.

My brother and his classmates had reached the age when they were allowed to have their official *Ausgang* - their night out at a beer restaurant, sponsored by the school and supervised by a teacher or, in his place, a trusted innkeeper. They were Big Men on Campus now. Next came, also in the established tradition, *Tanzstunde* - instruction in social dancing, given by the urbane Herr Streng who had held that privilege and obligation for many years. Every student had to find a partner from the eligible young ladies of Fürth, and those who did not have any female acquaintances like my good brother were matched up properly by their friends. They learned the waltz, the fox trot, the polka, the *française* which is a square dance, very intricate and stately. They were a heart-warming sight marching on to the dance floor with the polonaise, the young gentlemen in black cutaway coats and striped trousers, the ladies in beautiful formals. I had the feeling that Ludwig did not fully savor the pleasure of squiring a young lady to a dance, showing up with an expensive corsage on the day of the Grand Ball, making conversation with a partner with whom he had not much in common. But he went bravely through with it. Our parents enjoyed the whole thing very much. It was the local version of the American cotillion, a coming-out party of the hometown debutantes escorted by the most promising young men. Interestingly enough, Jewish high school students were expected to pick Jewish girls for their partners. It was not an act of discrimination; just a practical and satisfactory arrangement.

Toward the end of their junior year, as it would be called in U.S. terms, the upperclassmen engaged in another activity - forbidden but benevolently tolerated by the school administration -: they joined the "secret" fraternity of the *Gymnasium*, the "Abituria". It was patterned after the real thing at the universities, except that it naturally did without dueling. There was

some hazing and of course a lot of beer-drinking and the observance of time-honored rites and customs, and everybody came away feeling that the last barrier to manhood had fallen. As for my brother, it satisfied his need in the realm of fraternities, dueling or not, when he went to college after graduation. As a matter of fact Jews were excluded from the general fraternity life of the university; a number of Jewish students however, not to be outdone in machismo by anybody, had formed their own fraternities, some of them dueling with sabres; their graduates sported scars no less impressive than those of their gentile counterparts. Ludwig resisted various intensive rushing attempts steadfastly. The exercises that marked his graduation from the *Gymnasium* were simple. The school orchestra played the overture to Gluck's "Iphigenie on Aulis," the graduating class put on a scene from Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell," a drama which appeared to have a relevancy to Germany's present plight and therefore kindled the patriotic fervor of the audience. The *Rektor* spoke some fitting words and received an equally appropriate expression of gratitude and solemn promise from the top scholar of the graduating class. Parents and fellow students applauded. Diplomas were handed out; Ludwig ranked third or fourth from the top.

In the summer of 1921 I entered the fifth grade. During the school year the Bavarian Ministry of Education decided to shift the start of the new term to the spring; we therefore had to cram a full year's curriculum into the short span of 2 trimesters, not an easy task for teachers and class. We had "Helmes" again, who had been our *Ordinarius* in the first grade as well as in the preceding fourth. I resented having a lower grade teacher back at this level, and many of my classmates shared my feelings. "Helmes" was a fanatical nationalist who collected money in class for the Association for Germans Living Abroad, an organization trying to transform citizens of German descent in foreign countries, especially North- and South America, into pressure groups for the purpose of fighting the conditions of the Versailles peace treaty and lobbying for the return of German territories and colonies. I do not know how instrumental he was in establishing a chapter of the reactionary German National Youth Bund in our school; in any event he not too subtly favored those of my classmates who wore the black, white and red lapel button of that group. He was careful not to show any prejudice against the Jewish students. He called on me repeatedly to read my compositions to the class as an acknowledgment of superior writing; yet there was a certain wariness on either side, an undercurrent of undeclared antagonism. Some of my friends from the days of the "Club Flora" had joined the German National Youth Bund but Jews were not invited to join nor do I believe any of them would have: there was an anti-Semitic flavor to all right wing groups although my friends showed no trace of it at that time. It was clear that we disagreed in our feelings toward the Weimer Republic and its colors, but not enough to let it seriously interfere with our friendship.

From the fall of 1921 on and all through 1922 the political and economic situation in Germany worsened drastically. The industrial complex in the Ruhr valley, the heart of German iron and coal production, could not or would not keep up with the tempo of reparations demanded by the Allies under the terms of the peace treaty, and in December of 1922 the French occupied the area with their troops. The reaction in Germany was predictable and immediate. A wave of indignation and nationalistic fervor swept the country, skillfully exploited by the parties of the Right for an attack on the Socialist Government. A tale evolved that "a dagger plunged into the back of our fighting forces" was responsible for the loss of the war; leftists and Jews had held that dagger and were now selling out Germany to the international financiers and their henchmen, not even shrinking from loosening French Senegalese, black savages in uniforms, on the terrified women of the occupied zone. The German Government, to prove its patriotism, encouraged the industrialists and workers of the Ruhr region to meet the French demands with passive resistance; the resulting shutdown brought economic chaos to the country which was still weak and tottering at the brink of financial disaster from the loss of the

war. The cost of the non-cooperation with the enemy was astronomical and fell on the National Government. To meet the mounting obligations it had no other choice but to set the printing presses to work turning out more money every week. The American dollar was quoted at over seven thousand marks early in January 1922, forty times its value of one year before. It now doubled and tripled from week to week, sometimes from day to day. German banknotes, printed today, were obsolete tomorrow, and a quick overprinting job raised their denomination a hundred or perhaps a thousand times their original value. In Munich, a funny looking ex-soldier with a little mustache and black hair falling into his face found more and more people coming to meetings he held in beer halls where he shouted vile and fantastic accusations against the international Jews as the source of all evil. His followers wore armbands with the picture of a hooked cross, and greeted each other with a stiff-arm salute, yelling: "Death to the Jews." Anti-Semitism had always been below the surface in Germany. We felt it as kids when street gangs mocked us calling us *Judenstinker*, stinking Jews; there was economic or just plain gut resentment, but the Jews had regarded it as a receding phenomenon bound to disappear under the benevolent spirit of the Weimar Constitution. Now they turned to their anti-defamation league, called the National Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Persuasion to disprove these intemperate attacks and furnish examples of their patriotism, publish statistics showing their bravery in the war, the large number of medals received, the impressive total of their war-dead. Nobody in his sane mind could take this crazy man Adolf Hitler seriously, but the old established German Jews looked with apprehension and distaste on the business practices of some of their Polish and Lithuanian co-religionists who managed to turn the inflation into a boon for themselves. They felt that the new wave of anti-Semitism was largely caused by newspaper accounts of fraudulent business ventures reported from the nation's capital and the provocative display of new-found wealth by speculators and shady operators, whose names often revealed their Jewish identity and their eastern origin. In the local papers persons with Polish sounding names advertised day after day with offers to pay the highest price for gold and silver coins; people, formerly of means, sought them out to sell their treasures, deeply resentful of their reduced status and blaming the advertisers for taking advantage of their plight. The hotels, the bars, the eating places of Berlin were crowded with foreigners from all over the world buying real estate, works of art, oriental carpets, rare antiques for a song: dollars, pounds, guilders, francs discovered unheard-of bargains in anything priced in the rapidly deteriorating German currency. The word *Valuta* - foreign money - became the password which would open any door, by anything ...

Actually few of these transactions were criminal or illegal. They were the result of a shrewd appraisal of the existing conditions by opportunistic strangers or newcomers to the local scene who were not hampered by sentimental attachments or considerations of their standing in the esteem of the marketplace. All in all, their profits were puny and ephemeral compared to those of big business, heavy industry and big landowners, who saw their indebtedness of many hundreds of millions of marks in bonds, shares or mortgage obligations completely wiped out with the destruction of the German mark, while their plants, their mines, their vast East Prussian manors survived the inflation at full value. It was the middle class which took the full brunt of the onslaught. A businessman like my father was mortally wounded by the insane daily rise in prices which robbed him of his purchasing power and his stock, turned his war bonds into so many pieces of worthless paper and pauperized him at a time in his life when he should have been thinking of safe retirement.

In the summer of 1922, in the midst of this financial turmoil, I was again invited to spend part of my vacation in Bad Kissingen, and as in previous years I marked the events of my stay carefully down in a diary. The cast was the same as in preceding years. Toni was my faithful companion, we walked to the old familiar places in the spa's beautiful surroundings; our

friendship still glowed warmly, we could take up with ease where we had left off the previous year.

The great event of my visit was the benefit performance and dance at one of the leading hotels put on by the local Jewish Welfare Association in conjunction with some of the summer guests. One of aunt Sophie's guests had a hand in it and got us involved also. We came early to help: as the audience arrived I was amazed and goggle-eyed at the display of glittering dresses, the sight of bare shoulders and daring necklines of the ladies; afterwards I was stunned at the recklessness with which boisterous men bid in an auction for prizes of questionable value. It was a warm summer night, the champagne flowed freely, couples danced in tight embrace, their cheeks flushed; when the music stopped the babble of voices was deafening. I was delegated to pick up the performers for the evening's entertainment in a horse-drawn carriage. At the fashionable casino I called for Janos and Olivia, the pale Hungarian dancer and his platinum blond heavily made-up partner who were the sensation of the season. Later I went to get Anny Schulhoff-Wilkens and her pianist; she was a statuesque, voluptuous singing star who delighted her audience with clever and highly suggestive songs. Riding through the dark streets seated across from these glamorous women in the slow moving landau I was entranced and rendered speechless by their provocative beauty, accentuated by the wonders of make-up as the streetlights we passed brought their face into full focus. I hated their companions who seemed slick and degenerate. In my diary, however, I would not admit to myself my true feelings; instead I moralized indignantly about the ridiculousness of powder and lipstick.

When I returned to school in the fall my brother commuted by train to the University of Erlangen; our relationship did not change. While I showed no curiosity in the field of chemistry, which was his major, we had many other interests in common, among them literature, art, astronomy, politics and the more lowly pursuits of collecting the vagaries of inflation as they manifested themselves in the realm of postage stamps and paper money.

One morning in the spring of 1923 mother woke my brother and asked him to run across the street and fetch Dr. T. - father had apparently suffered a heart attack and was in severe pain. Our family physician was out of town. Dr. T. concurred in mother's diagnosis, ordered complete bed rest, prescribed medicine and cautioned against any exertion, excitement or aggravation. Father was very ill. We went around in a daze. In school I could not bring myself to spend intermission with my classmates in the yard but stood in solitude at the window of our classroom, gazing out disconsolately over the river valley, fighting back tears. The next few days were like a bad dream, but fortunately father improved and, although he suffered a slight setback which caused renewed anxiety, he recovered after several weeks to the point where he walked to the nearby park across from the railroad station and sat on a bench in the sunshine. Gradually he returned to work in the store; mother had looked after the business in his absence reassuring the customers and keeping an eye on the cutter who attended to the day by day routine. Dr. Hollerbusch, our family physician, advised father to cut down on smoking and alcohol and to relinquish the many trade and welfare activities which took much of his time and his strength. Father, without a word of complaint, stayed away from his beloved cigars and his occasional glass of beer, but after a while he resumed most of the chores in Jewish welfare work and the trade organizations in which he was holding positions of leadership. His smoker's cough which had been troubling him for years, practically disappeared. He had always been a moderate eater retaining the slightness of his built and thus a youthful appearance in spite of his almost totally bald pate; soon, showing again his customary alertness, ready wit and cheerful manner he appeared to us fully recovered.

There was, however, one fundamental change to come about in the direction of my life that was caused by my father's illness combined with the effects of the galloping inflation on our family finances: while my brother was to continue his studies at the university it was decided

that, rather than pursue an academic career also, I would go into the field of commerce with an eye on the eventual take-over of the family business. I had finished the sixth grade of the *Gymnasium* by now which at one time had been a landmark in cutting the military service obligation from 2 years to 1 and was still considered by many employers as a special recommendation for the hiring of an apprentice or business trainee. Some of my classmates, under the pressure of economics, had already dropped out at the completion of the sixth grade and taken positions in order to help with the family budget. Father explained his ideas to me: he would find a suitable apprenticeship for me in Fürth; after passing it he would have no problem placing me as a trainee with one of the leading tailor shops in Berlin or Hamburg to learn how the most prominent people in the business conducted their trade. There was no great rush; he wanted me to be with a reputable firm where I would have the Sabbath off which cut the number of openings considerably. In the meantime I was to continue my schooling while he made the necessary contacts.

I found that entering the seventh grade brought several significant changes into the routine at school. The familiar *Du* with which the teachers addressed us in the lower semesters now gave way to the formal *Sie* - the pronoun used in conversation between adults. Latin, Greek and French continued as required courses but the study of additional languages, like English or Italian, became optional. I took English. The class was permitted to have an evening out once a month at an acceptable beer restaurant; smoking, however, was still frowned upon. The two-tone ribbon on the school cap changed to a triple stripe. Some of the guys had to shave. We sang in the men's chorus, although at times the new tenors and basses cracked in the most embarrassing manner.

Our classroom teacher since the start of the sixth grade had been professor G. - nicknamed "Stift" - a word which, in German, denotes both a pencil and an apprentice: he went about with a pencil stuck over his ear in the manner trainees show up at work. He was said to have been a rather dapper dresser at one time and his wife was rumored to have money; alas, the inflation was eating away her fortune and his salary never caught up with the rising prices of the early twenties. So he presented a rather shabby appearance by now. We soon found out that the stock market quotations absorbed as much of his interest as the ancient classics. He was desperately trying to preserve some of his substance by playing the market, and knowing the latest quotations or passing on a sure-fire tip could land you in very good graces. It was a game for us, a deadly serious matter for him.

By now we had read Caesar's *De bello Gallico*, the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, the writings of Curtius in the original Latin, Xenophon's famous report of the march of the 10,000 hoplites, Homer's *Iliad* in Greek. We had gone from Math to Algebra and were now into logarithms; we had acquired a fair knowledge of French; we were past the easy part of physics, had received some instruction in chemistry, covered the animal world from mammals down to the amoebae in natural science, all the continents in geography. We had written innumerable compositions, learned countless poems by heart, read some of the pearls of German literature aloud in class, a procedure that destroyed all their beauty and made them plain odious to me. We had studied the history of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the fall of the West and East Roman Empire, the Merovingian and Carolingian kings; it was a history of heroes and villains, and quite often the heroes did not receive the gratitude of their ill-advised subjects. We despised the Athenians for sending some of their finest leaders into exile, suspecting them of dictatorial ambitions; we could not condone Brutus' and Cassius' reasons for murdering Julius Caesar; we hated Pope Gregory for humiliating a German emperor at Canossa. We revered Charlemagne, who was *Karl der Große* to us, but suffered with our professor trying to understand and excuse his traitorous slaying of thousands of Saxons. Why was our first great German emperor tainted by senseless fratricide? The Reformation was a difficult subject to teach without taking sides for or against the Roman Catholic Church. The implication was

unmistakable that Rome was rotten and Martin Luther clean. In over six years of studying Western history the Jews were never mentioned. I hardly gave it any thought. Jewish history was taught by the Cantor and the Rabbi, and it seemed to be running in separate channels not worth mentioning when you talked about the mainstream of events.

I played second violin in the school orchestra. I had violin lessons for years, both in school and by a private teacher, yet I never mastered the instrument well enough to stay with the score when it came to long passages of eighth and sixteenth notes. In the *Gymnasium* our P.E. teacher, the “Master” taught music, and the clumsy finger work of a student could send him into fits of wild rage. One ice-cold winter evening I stood bare chested at an open window of our apartment for a long time trying to catch a cold so I would not have to face him the next day stumbling miserably through the allotted homework. I stayed exceedingly well. I liked music and I would have loved to play my instrument well; the frustration of knowing that I would never achieve perfection discouraged me. After I left school I did not practice for a long time. When I looked for my violin one day I found that mother had given it away. “You didn’t miss it all the time,” said mother, “All those lessons were a waste of money.” I felt her judgment was too harsh; perhaps I deserved it. I have picked up a violin once or twice since and played it with some nostalgia. Anyway, the world has not lost a Yehudi Menuhin on me.

Non scholae sed vitae discimus, our teachers told us. We do not study for school but for the life that follows school. We bailed to see it that way. We studied because our parents expected us to; we studied because we liked certain subjects, sometimes in spite of our teachers; above all we studied because we wanted to get good grades. I wanted A’s and B’s badly. Once, in elementary school, the teacher handed me another boy’s report card by mistake, and looking at C’s and D’s before I discovered the error brought tears to my eyes. I did my homework because I could not stand walking into class unprepared. Students who did not achieve good grades were dumb, I despised them. Our mathematics teacher delighted in calling a student to the blackboard to solve a problem which he knew was beyond his ability; the poor fellow would stand there, chalk in hand, speechless, witless, friendless and mortified, exposed to the ridicule of professor and class: I found it hilarious. The *Primus* - the top-student of our class, was a reserved and solitary boy; I resented him as a *Streber* [striver] who strove for the achievement of good grades to the exclusion of all other interests, for the approval by his teachers rather than his peers. I disliked another classmate of mine who was not too bright but made up for the lack of intelligence by learning his lessons by rote, reciting the textbook word for word in history and the sciences. His well-to-do parents arranged for a private teacher for him after school, which made him that much more detestable. Many students were tutored by upperclassmen or college students; my brother kept himself in pocket money and paid part of his college expenses through many years of diligent and successful tutoring. We used any and all means to get good grades; the secret use of a “Pons” - a booklet containing the right answers; *Spicken* - which meant clandestinely looking at another student’s paper during a test; whispering answers or slipping notes to a classmate in trouble. “Helmes” surrounded me with members of the German National Youth Group in one school year: I gut all of them safely through the fifth grade.

Now all of this was to come to an end, along with father’s dream of spending his retirement years in the beautiful city of Freiburg, close to the Black Forest, while both of his sons would go to college there. However, no position had been found for me when summer vacation rolled around and I was permitted to accept an invitation from relatives in the city of Würzburg, about 100 kilometers from Fürth, and to go from there for a couple of weeks to Bad Kissingen. I was now 15 years old and able to manage on the train by myself. My brother had received a bicycle as a graduation present from our parents with the proviso that I was to have the use of it also. I was allowed to take it along. On the train it was, together with dozens of others, transported in the baggage car.

Würzburg, halfway between Fürth and Kissingen, was a colorful university city of about 100.000, situated on the broad Main river, surrounded by vineyards which stretched from the river valley upward on the terraced slopes of sun drenched hills. Their broad summits carried several well-known landmarks: an ancient fortress crowned one, a church, called *Käppele* the other. A steep path and innumerable steps leading up to it were flanked by monuments denoting the 12 stations of the Cross. Pilgrims from the surrounding villages or the city itself followed the path up to the shrine at the top, kneeling and praying at every station, some of them doing the entire journey on their knees. Contrition gave way to joie de vivre in the many taverns of the town where the good burghers drank their wine, every one a connoisseur of the grape. Many fine churches including the majestic Dome, a number of impressive public buildings, particularly those of the university, and above all the world famous palace of the noble family of Schönborn gave the city a special, almost Italianesque flavor. The scenery changed from quarter to quarter. There was the old town with picturesque narrow alleys; a business section with elegant stores and shops; the quiet stateliness of tree-lined residential streets; the restful serenity of public parks. The Main river was alive with barges and boats, the streets of the city throbbed with the hustle and bustle of people; some of them, from the countryside, in their local costume, some of them students sporting proud scars testifying to their dueling bravery.

Our relatives lived in a historical landmark, a house which had been the home of Johann Balthasar Neumann between 1720 and 1744, while he directed the construction of the *Residenz* - the palace of the wealthy bishop Count Schönborn, by many experts considered the finest example of baroque architecture in Germany. My hostess, the widow Sohn, was a cousin of my father's by marriage. She was short, dumpy, one of the homeliest women I have ever met; but her warmth, her intelligence and her quick wit made you forget that soon. Two of her 5 children, all grown by now, still lived with her, and of these, Jacob, who was a high school mathematics teacher, became my companion and mentor. Math teachers were the only Jewish professors to be found in the Bavarian high school system. We went bicycling in the lovely countryside, swimming in the broad Main river "all the time keeping a sharp eye out for Jacob's pants at the river's edge with 50 million marks in them" I wrote in my diary, an indication how far the inflation had progressed. We went to synagogue services Friday night and Saturday morning: the Sohns were strictly orthodox and never missed going to *Shul*. The staircase in their house, the one authentic remnant from the time of its original owner, led to an open platform on the roof. I spent hours up there, sunbathing, reading E.T.A. Hoffmann, admiring the magnificent panorama of the Residence and the wide plaza in front of it, seen from a vantage point no other tourist could enjoy: the very spot from which the builder had watched the progress of his masterwork. A walk of only a few minutes would take me to the palace; its opulent interior, its richly ornamental rococo décor, wide sweeping staircases, its magnificent painted ceilings by Tiepolo took my breath away. I did not fail to visit the Dome, the Museum of Franconian history and art, the hilltop fortress, the ancient *Käppele* - I even found time to watch a regatta on the river and was highly amused by the loud and passionate fervor with which an enthusiastic rooting section urged on the local contenders, unfortunately to no avail.

Father had three other cousins living in Würzburg also: Simon and Sigmund Seligsberger and their spinster sister Ernestine, who owned a renowned antique shop which, together with a division for modern home furnishings, occupied the ground floor of a large building fronting the full length of the Johanniter Square. The brothers and their families lived in the upstairs apartments while *Tante* [aunt] Ernestine, as we boys called her, had a house of her own in the residential part of town. The business had started as a small second hand furniture store which their mother had opened after losing her husband early in life. Ernestine, the oldest of seven children, took a hand in the business as soon as she was old enough, acquired a knowledge as

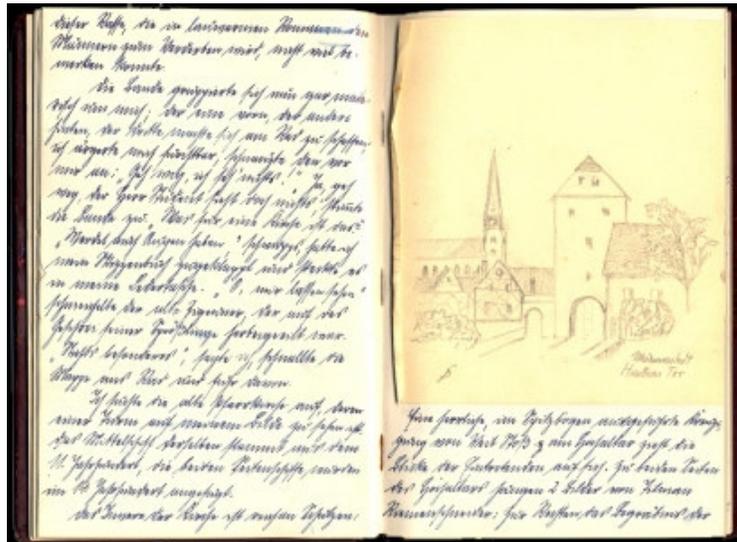
well as a taste for antiques in an environment that held many often unrecognized treasures; as her erudition increased so did the scope of the enterprise into which her brothers had come by then; at the height of her career she was considered as probably the greatest living authority of Dutch faïences. She was a very beautiful woman in her youth and at ease with the nobility, the international collectors, even the Bavarian Royal house that patronized the firm of “S. Seligsberger Wwe. [widow]” but unable and unwilling to subordinate her strong personality to any of her numerous suitors. Even now, just a year short of being sixty, she made a fine, aristocratic appearance, mellowed by an occasional twinkle in her eyes when she made a sly and poignant remark. She was retired from active participation in the business, though not gracefully, bewildered by the mathematics of inflation, resentful of the privileges enjoyed by employees. Sometimes she would sneak into the store during the noon-hour closing, when everybody went to dinner, keeping the doors open and causing her brothers worry about her safety amid the immeasurable treasures of the vast store. In the shops of the town she would bargain about the price of her purchases; buying meat she was not above telling the butcher to sell it cheaper to her and charge the difference to her sisters-in-law who had no qualms about spending their husband’s hard earned money! Simon Seligsberger, married to a statuesque former actress, was childless; Sigmund and his wife had 2 small boys. I visited with all three relations during my stay. Everyone of their rooms was a small museum, filled with treasures not only from Germany but other European countries, oriental rugs, Chinese and Japanese porcelain, and other art objects. The brothers were self-assured, gregarious and jovial man who liked good food, good wine and strong language. I was made to feel at home everywhere. The brothers had approached my father with an offer to take me as a trainee into their business: I could stay with aunt Ernestine in her large house. It might have opened up a promising and interesting career. Mother turned the proposal down quickly, afraid that Ernestine “would let that boy starve to death ...”.

Thus my one week’s stay in Würzburg went by fast, and I carried away pleasant memories for a lifetime when I left on the 9th of August for Bad Kissingen.

“Foreign currency is God” - I wrote in my diary a few days later, commenting that the spa’s visitors, not as numerous as in previous years, were mostly foreigners: Poles, Lithuanians, Galicians, many of them Jewish - “They all have dollars.” I doubted that God would find ten righteous men among the summer guests, the currency and stock market speculators who were the only ones able to afford taking the cure that summer. I felt not very charitable toward them. Seeing them promenade behind the wire fence of the *Kurgarten* which kept the hoi polloi out, I reversed the situation in my mind: they were fenced in like animals in a zoo: “Apes, peacocks and sheep, oxen, hyenas and bloodsuckers” I called them disdainfully.

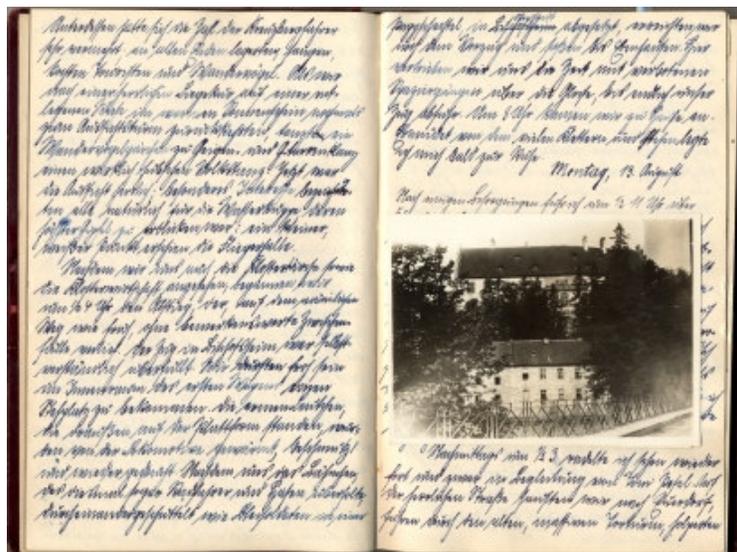
Nevertheless I enjoyed my visit of 3 weeks; my bicycle gave me a chance to range further than ever before. One day I pedaled on a dusty highway to the little town of Münnerstadt, where a small church, started in the 11th and finished in the 14th century, housed some of the most exquisite treasures of regional art: an altar by the great master Veit Stoß, flanked by 2 works of Tilmann Riemenschneider, one of Franconia’s most famous wood-carvers, and a painting by Michael Wolgemut, an artist of equal distinction. After visiting the church and strolling through the cobble stoned streets of the multi-gabled town I sat on a low stonewall outside its ramparts sketching a picturesque archway through which all traffic had to pass, when I had a curious adventure. Suddenly I saw myself surrounded by a family of gypsies, young and old; one looking admiringly at my drawing, another pulling out a pocket-watch and offering to trade it for mine, a third inspecting my bicycle which was leaning against a tree nearby. I had not noticed that a trailer was parked a few feet away, the customary horse-drawn mobile residence in which the *Zigeuner* traveled all over Europe. They did occasional work like sharpening knives and tools; others passed the hat around while putting on a show in which a bear danced docilely to the tune of a fiddle played by one of the band. They were said

to steal anything that was not tied down, from chickens to horses and even little babies. I found it impossible to keep my eyes on my sketch and my bike at the same time and so, knowing their reputation, I hurriedly packed up and left.



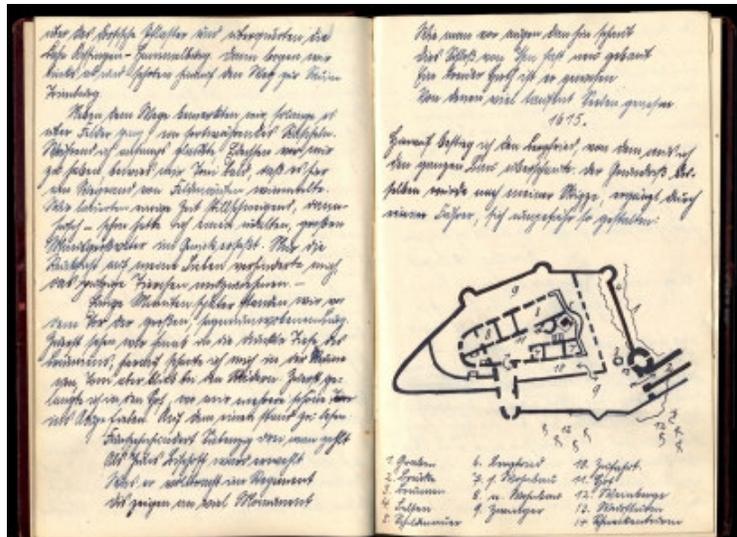
Pages from Philip's diary describing the incident with the gypsy family and a sketch of Münnerstadt
(photo: private)

I made friends with the son of one of my aunt's lodgers from Berlin: we went by train to the foothills of the Rhön mountains, a chain of barren hills reaching elevations of about two thousand feet. From there we started climbing the steep Kreuzberg, the Cross Mountain, named after a huge cross which, together with a church and a monastery stands at the top. A multitude of hikers took the same route; others set out toward a different summit, the Wasserkuppe, a few miles away. A faint white dot visible on top of it from our vantage point denoted a hangar, built there to house a fleet of gliders which soaring enthusiasts from all over Germany flew from those windy heights. As hard as we tried we could spot none of them in the air. The peace treaty of Versailles forbade military flight training in Germany; it was on the up winds of the Rhön mountains where the future officers of Göring's Luftwaffe first took to the air.



Diary pages describing the visit to the Kreuzberg, August 1923
(photo: private)

My new-found friend had a pretty sister, about my cousin's age, a sharp dresser and what one called a typical *Berliner Pflanze* - a sophisticates Berlin lass. Kati admired her nonchalance but could not understand why on her nights in town she preferred the company of fat old men to that of fellows her own age. "You know what she tells me," Katie complained: "You are well of," she says, "you are such a sweet simpleton ..."



Entry about the Trimburg in Philip's diary

(photo: private)

Rail and bike carried me to several of the crumbling ruins of once proud castles, melancholy reminders of a time of brave knights and noble ladies which held a magical attraction for me. I visited the familiar *Bodenlaube* and rode my bike to the Trimburg and a castle called Saal-eck where centuries ago Queen Amalberga of Thuringia had let her lovers die of hunger in the dank cellar of a tower after she got tired of them. I walked reverentially over the acres of tumbled walls, foundations of once stately halls and proud towers of the imperial castle of Saal-burg where Carolingian and Saxon emperors held court in times long past. I traced the decay-ing ring wall of the *Eyringsburg* which really was no *Burg*, no castle, but rather an old Ger-manic fortress in the round. Sometimes my old friend Toni Pesel accompanied me; most of the time I went just by myself. I walked alone in the woods, flipped flat stones across the wa-ters of the Saale river like my brother and I, together with the Pesel girls, had done years ago. I was in a strange mood, I liked the solitary excursions, I sensed the end of one period in my life and the uncertain beginnings of another. I did not feel depressed, nor did I avoid good company when it offered itself. I made friends with some of the guests of the "Villa Engel" and learned a few Russian expressions from them: I love you, very cheap, very expensive, till we meet again. I learned to read the Russian alphabet from the cut-up sheets of Russian lan-guage newspapers serving as toilet paper in aunt Sophie's house. I gave my relatives a hand when needed, and I shared their outrage when Mr. Renner, the leading jeweler in town, dis-played an emblem in his show-window which rejected their future patronage as well as that of their Jewish friends and a good many of the spa's affluent visitors: a black swastika on a white background with a red border.

IV. *Soll und Haben*

Four weeks after my return to school in the fall of 1923 I dropped out overnight. An apprenticeship had been found; the new bosses wanted me to start immediately; there was no reason to delay the changeover. My employers were cousins, Menki and Sigmund Zimmer, co-owners in the toy export and wholesale house of S.D. Zimmer. The business occupied the greater part of a three-story building close to the center of town. I could walk to work in but a few minutes. One half of the main floor was taken up by offices, the other half by a huge display room, receiving- and repacking facilities. The mother of one of the partners lived on the second floor; the rest of the house as well as its large rear extension served as a warehouse. A spacious plastered yard, partly roofed over, was used for shipping and the stacking of wooden packing cases in which our goods would travel all over the world.

I left school on a Saturday and reported for work the following Monday morning at 8 o'clock. I was given a plain stand-up desk as my work area and introduced to some of my co-workers. There was Herr Scheinin, the controller, pious, soft-spoken and conscientious; Herr Prüfer, the diminutive peripatetic merchandise manager with the computer brain that retained the information on hundreds of items in the toy line; and Herr Eisenstein, his young assistant, who had a fine sense of humor. Like the bosses they were orthodox Jews. Nobody bothered much to get me acquainted with the rest of the crew but over the next few bewildering days or weeks I got to know them by name and position. There were 3 or 4 young women who worked in bookkeeping and invoicing, a couple of typists, 2 junior secretaries and a young girl about my age who seemed to run errands for the other women. I let it be known pretty quickly that I had no intention to contend for her job. The receiving department was managed by a gruff ex-sergeant who treated his wrappers like so many recruits; the poor women were deadly afraid of him. As my duties brought me more and more in contact with him I learned that there was more noise than substance to his regimen. As the son of a "better family" friendly with the bosses I was a suspicious insider to him whom he did not know whether to humor or harass; after a while he found out that I was just one of the boys and we became friends. The 2 packers, dressed in blue overalls, red-faced, tough-talking, easy-going, became my special buddies. They knew their business. They looked at the stacked cartons, scratched their head and, without using a yardstick or cube book, picked the right size packing case, with hardly any empty space left over or any packages left out, which was quite an art. They were the only employees who were called simply by their last name. Everybody else was "Herr Prüfer" or "Fräulein Winkler". Not even the junior employees addressed each other on a first name basis. In the office, the men took their coats off and wore grey smocks over their vests; the women wore them over their dresses. The bosses kept their coats on.

The cousins shared an office and not much else. Mr. Menki Zimmer handled the firm's English business; Mr. Sigmund the rest of the foreign markets and the domestic clientele. Mr. Menki who had spent some time in London as a young man, spoke a flawless English and was proud of it; his dictation was marked by careful elocution, his style was elegant and concise. I was put under Mr. Sigmund's tutelage, yet my work would overlap into the other partner's jurisdiction also. The number of items which the company dealt in was fantastic. The long rows of shelves loaded with samples in the display room gave me an idea of the diversity of our operation. There were windup toys, push toys and pull toys; dolls, felt animals, musical tops and wooden blocks. From small mountain hamlets in central Germany we featured paper toys, garlands, lanterns, Christmas decorations, chinaware for doll kitchens, mouth organs and toy accordions; from Czechoslovakia: fake jewelry. We sold tin trumpets, claxons, whistles and horns; Christmas trees made of goose feathers painted green; party favors, pistols, guns and souvenir items. We supplied the world with shaving sets, pocket mirrors of any size and description, some of them backed by a trick-game testing your patience like tiny balls, under glass, which had to be manipulated into a minute opening. A shaving set consisted of a mug

attached to a stand carrying a round, two-sided mirror, one side of which gave a magnified reflection; a shaving brush was clipped on to it. Countless manufacturers, large and small, in the neighboring town of Zirndorf made a living turning out thousands of these sets annually. We kept a card file on hundreds of manufacturers, each card in turn containing a record of dozens and sometimes hundreds of articles they made. Experts in the business could tell a great number of items as to resource and price; it took me about one year to compete with the best of them.

The manufacturer's card file was the only such in our office; all other records were kept in huge folios which the bookkeepers carried back and forth from safe to desk and from desk to safe. Our only office machines were typewriters. Invoices were written by hand in copying ink, and thus duplicated for our records. Later on we switched to indelible pencils hard enough to produce one or two legible carbon copies. Goods were sold by the dozen or by the gross; the invoice clerk had to be able to figure well to come up with the right amount for say 3 ½ dozen at 3 shillings 9 pence a dozen. An English pound was 20 shillings, a shilling 12 pence. It was easier to bill in currencies based on the decimal system like dollars, guilders or francs. As for German marks, progressively more zeros were left off at the end; after all, it was a waste of time to write RM [*Reichsmark* currency] 1,000,000.00 when that was actually just a fraction of one cent.

My initial chores consisted of filing and recording. It was boring. My desk adjoined that of 2 young girls; their constant chatter about clothes and men, men and clothes annoyed me greatly. When the bosses were out of the office the women would often go at each other hammer and tongs: the quarrels were frequently about religion - Catholic versus Protestant - sometimes about dress or work load. Now and then the father of one of the owners, a heavyset senile old man, put in an appearance: he usually picked on Mr. Eisenstein, because he disliked Eastern Jews, and yelled at the younger girls, while he was not above pinching them at the same time. He did not bother me since the families were on friendly terms; nevertheless I resented his grossness. I was resolved to do a good job, to learn as much as I could as quickly as possible; I was reconciled to my future in the business world but the change from academic surroundings to the petty trimmings of my new environment caused me some unhappiness. I embarked on writing a novel about a young man who had to quit school and give up his aspirations for a literary career in order to come to the assistance of his ailing father. The novel never progressed beyond the first 30 or 40 pages but it helped me in working off my frustrations; as my job became more demanding and I was given more responsibility I got over the minor annoyances and enjoyed my new status. For one thing, I did not miss the numberless hours of homework nor the pressure of tests; for another, there had been a mounting estrangement from my former friends in the last months of school, an ominous change in the atmosphere of the classroom. It had its beginning when a 3 ft. high swastika, accompanied by the words *In hoc signo vinces* (Under this sign you will be victorious) was chalked one day on the wall of a cabin which our class had rented in the Municipal bathhouse. The Jewish students, and their parents, demanded punishment for the perpetrator who, it turned out, was none other than my old friend Rudi. While the investigation into this misdeed went on, another politically inspired incident occurred: almost the entire class including, I must admit, myself pummeled one of our fellow students, Tony K., quite badly in retaliation for his statement that the old Field Marshal Hindenburg was "a dumb ox!" Tony was something of an outsider in class; his father had a reputation of being a political radical. The school administration, leaning to the Right and yet unwilling to be accused of partiality, seized on this second outrage to force the issue: either all were going to be punished or none. It was a clever decision, resulting in a standoff, but also in the gradual erosion of old friendships and a realignment along political lines which found me eventually close to the very people I had shunned before: Tony, who once in a while kidded me good naturedly about the "Hindenburg

affair” - and a couple of my Jewish classmates who had quit school at the end of the sixth grade, Henry H and Theo S.! I never met with anyone of the other boys after I left school. For a while Henry and I talked about working privately toward the graduating exam which would entitle us to enroll in college; we never took a serious step in that direction. For a lifetime, however, a recurrent dream has put me back in the classroom: the desks are there, the blackboard faces me, the lesson is about to begin but I am frustrated and distressed - I have no schedule of my courses, no books - I must meet the teacher ill-prepared, with no excuse Perhaps I punished myself subconsciously for never opening a schoolbook again? I did continue my studies of English with a private teacher, and Henry and I took lessons in business Spanish. We were greatly impressed by the flowery ending of a Spanish letter: “Your most affectionate and faithful servant who kisses your hand ...”

The first days, weeks, months on the job went by, and both at work and at home the monumental problem which overshadowed all other considerations was the insanely accelerating tempo of the inflation. The midday course of the American dollar at the Berlin exchange was the moment of truth, and the country and its economy reacted instantly to the stupendous announcement. I went to the Dresdner Bank daily at noon to pick up the fateful figure, and I ran past my father’s store to give him the news before I returned to the office. Some stores closed at 11 o’clock and reopened after 2 p.m. with prices raised to reflect the rise of the dollar. Farmers demanded trade, not cash for their products. Now mother understood a puzzling prediction her father had made many decades ago: Hard times will prevail in the country when the farmer’s maid walks to the stable in silk stockings. Father sold a suit today to find out that the price quoted did not cover the cost of the labor of his tailors tomorrow. A new term was coined: *freibleibend* - open-ended - the price of goods to be determined at the time of delivery rather than when the order was placed. People connected with the export business could quote their prices in the currency of the country of destination; retailers could not. The union to which some of the employees of S.D. Zimmer belonged notified us of the percentages of increase over a theoretical base pay figure we were to receive as our salary: 5,000 %, 10,000 %, 100,000 %. We got paid once a week, twice a week, as quickly and as often as the collapsing value of the mark called for additional raises. It was a futile effort to bring our salary in line with the galloping rate of inflation. One of the girls and I went to the bank with a laundry basket to carry back the bundles of banknotes that made up the payroll. One original denomination was overprinted with another, many times higher, the number of zeros growing beyond peoples’ knowledge of the figure they represented. A one followed by six zeros: 1 million. A one and nine zeros: 1 milliard. A one and eleven zeros: 100 milliards. Still the zeros would march on.

As soon as we got paid the office would be deserted. Everybody ran to buy something before the stores closed, to spend the cash before the next day, perhaps the next hour would cut its purchasing power. I went to a grocery store to buy a couple of cans of condensed milk, or a pound of butter, or some eggs; and I was proud and happy to surprise mother with my clever purchases. It was clear that only merchandise of any sort was inflation safe, and we told father to buy any and all goods he could lay his hands on. My mother, my brother and I were of one opinion on that score, but father was possessed of a nagging fear that one day the spiral would be halted and prices would drop. I don’t know how he kept his sanity, even his equanimity, seeing his substance, his war bonds, his stock of merchandise, built up laboriously after its depletion during the war, dwindle away to nothing. Mother worried deeply: she saw younger competitors in the business beat the game successfully by going into debt and letting the erosion of the currency take care of paying off the bills with pocket money. Some of father’s friends who had retired on the income from their capital survived on dollars, or pounds, which their overseas relatives sent them. People in fancy neighborhoods sub-leased rooms. Elderly pensioners committed suicide. Everybody lived from day to day; we young people thought

nothing of it, as long as there was a meal on the table every day. We did not care about clothes; somehow there was enough money for train fare to go on a hike in the country on Sunday or to take a streetcar to Nuremberg for a visit to a museum. My brother financed a hiking trip through the Black Forest for two weeks from one American dollar which uncle Sigmund had mailed for his birthday. He and his college friend Max did not stay in fancy chalets but in the cheapest country inns, and one night even in jail (for free!) yet they enjoyed their excursion greatly. Max was the nephew of a kosher butcher in Fürth and his rucksack was loaded with delicious salami and corned beef.

I said that clothes were no concern of ours and I must mention one exception to that statement. In the spring of 1923, when friendships with my classmates had began to cool off, I had joined a Jewish youth group called *Die Kameraden* - the comrades. This was a nationwide organization of liberal (in the religious context) young Jewish boys and girls and part of the general German *Wandervogel* [hikers] movement. We went *auf Fahrt* - hiking - on Sundays: a number of boys from Fürth, among them my old friend Ludwig Baumann, and some people from Nuremberg, and the garment de rigueur was the windbreaker. For once I wanted something to wear so badly I could taste it; it was nothing which the parental shop could furnish. Well, my good father took me to a friend of his who ran a ready-to-wear store and I got permission to pick out the windbreaker I wanted: made of heavy sailcloth, double-breasted, with slash pockets and side pockets, a double yoke and a collar that could be turned up and buttoned to fit tightly around the neck. It was warm, windproof, water-repellent, a hiker's dream, the coat all the boys wore! I never treasured any other jacket as much as my windbreaker which made me one of the boys: weather did not keep us from our hikes, we slogged along in the rain, braved the thundershowers, the ice winds of the early dawn, we were tough. We learned to sing the old *Wanderlieder* - somebody had a guitar or a zither and we sang merrily as we marched:

When I was a young bachelor
 I took a stone-old wife
 Oh dear Death of Basel
 Bee - Bah - Basel
 Relieve me of the ancient crone,
 Take the ancient crone away!
 or we sang another song:
 When we were in Regensburg last
 We crossed the Danube flowing fast;
 There was many a beauty
 Keeping the skipper on duty!
 Swabian, Bavarian maidens - yoo-hei-sa-sa
 Does the boatman ferry!

We had monthly club meetings, we celebrated the Jewish holidays; we wanted to combine the best of two worlds, Jewish and German; we believed in the simple life, in respect for nature, love for the beauty of our German land. We looked up in awe to some of the older members who told about Youth Movement meets they had been to, camping side by side with delegates from Catholic, Protestant, Socialist youth groups setting goals for the future of the *Wandervogel* movement. They were sunburned guys who worked with their hands, you could not picture them in coat and tie ever; they had hiked in the Harz Mountains, the Taunus and the Black Forest, slept outdoors in sleeping bags, in youth hostels all over the country, they knew song after song without ever looking in the songbook; they were friendly and soft-spoken and made nothing of their greatness. I spent a few exhilarating months with the *Kameraden* but my job put an end to all that; the Jewish employees were expected to come to work Sunday morning for 3 or 4 hours to make up for the Saturday closing of the office. One could beg off

occasionally without raising eyebrows as long as one realized that it was part of the job; and for a young trainee it was actually a privilege to work on Sunday mornings with upper management, a group comprised of the owners, the senior and junior executives. It was then that manufacturers' deliveries were checked against purchase orders, and notes taken on those which were overdue. From this procedure sprang a new and important duty for me: on the following Monday and Tuesday afternoons I had to call on the laggard fabricants in person in order to obtain a firm delivery date. In Fürth I made the rounds walking from place to place; I took the suburban train for a half hour's ride to Zirndorf and then made my way on foot from factory to factory. The manufacturers in Nuremberg were visited by the merchandise manager; those further distant were contacted by mail. It was interesting and instructive to watch the small home industries where often the entire family was employed running the lathes, drills and polishing wheels; I got on well with the little independent owners but had a hard time explaining to them that I was not the son of the boss. I hated to call on the single big factory in town where I was met by gruff older employees in a huge office and made to understand that our small order ranked way below the big orders they had on their books from giant overseas buyers. Now and then I skipped this call, the reception was intimidating and the result negative anyway. The owners of this concern, incidentally, were good customers of my father's shop but I never tried to appeal to them directly, not knowing whether it would hurt his cause or mine. I perceived that one does not lightly go over the underling's head. - Sometimes I missed the train in the late afternoon and had to walk back to town which took a good hour. It was a lovely and refreshing finale to a warm summer day. Besides I could collect train fare and really make out!

It was in November of that year that a political bombshell hit Bavaria: Adolf Hitler, the anti-Semitic rabble-rouser, and several hundred of his followers including the famous war hero General Ludendorff staged a putsch and marched on the government in Munich. There was a confrontation with the military forces, perhaps the result of a double-cross; when the troops opened fire the Nazis were seemingly not prepared for that kind of reception. A few fell, the rest scattered in panic. Hitler vanished for a few days but eventually was arrested, tried and sentenced to a brief period of incarceration, not in jail but in a Bavarian fortress; he spent his time there writing his political credo in a book which he called *Mein Kampf*. Few people read it, it was supposed to go beyond reason in its assertions, its political outlook and goal.

In December of 1923 Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, the president of the German *Reichsbank* [State Bank], stabilized the mark, basing its value first on a commodity, rye; then on real estate, and finally on gold. The dollar had climbed to 4,200,000,000,000.00 marks; the next day it was 4.20 marks again like in 1914 before the war. It seemed as if the country had finally woken up from a terrible nightmare; the merchant, the farmer, the worker heaved a sigh of relief; the old virtues thrift, prudence, industry ceased to make you the laughing stock of slick operators but paid off once again in financial success and public respect. The Nazis kept on yapping their familiar tune; their newspaper, *Der Völkische Beobachter* went on attacking the government, the peace of Versailles and above all the Jews, the source of Germany's misfortune. The majority of the people disregarded these rantings and shunned the paper's cartoons picturing Jews with big hooked noses and slobbering mouths, drawings so evil and poisonous as to be beyond belief. Only crackpots and eternal failures followed the swastika further.

For my father the newly won stability was a lifesaving tonic. "I have nothing left but my good name," he said, "but at least I know again how to conduct my business" - and in his 66th year he started all over with vigor and undaunted optimism. His suppliers extended him as much credit as he wanted but he bought cautiously so that he could discount the bills when they came due. His customers were starved for fine fabrics just as the whole country was craving honest goods of any sort. Within a short time the shelves of the firm of Leon Seligsberger displayed a respectable assortment of fine domestic and imported woolens, the accounts re-

ceivable ran into thousands of marks again, the tailors were busy, 1924 promised to be a banner year. I often picked up father at his store at dinner time - which was shortly after the noon hour - and we walked home together. He stepped briskly, setting the right foot down a little harder than the left one which gave his walk a slightly uneven clicky-click, lifting his hat every moment to this acquaintance of that. We had a lot in common now, we were both in business; I enjoyed the brief walk, the conversation, the old-fashioned grace of his greeting: *Habe die Ehre* - I have the honor. Ludwig was not at home anymore at dinner time, he ate his meals at a kosher *Mensa* [commons] in Erlangen; we were only three for dinner, I was a full-fledged member of the family at the table.

Father liked to talk about the business of the morning; he was particularly happy when one of the traveling salesmen calling on him guessed his age wrong, thinking him years younger than he actually was. Mother opined that Gentile merchants had survived the ravages of inflation in better financial shape than their Jewish counterparts, because many of them owned their places of business while Jews mostly subscribed to the philosophy of renting and keeping their capital working in the business. Father, at one point during the inflation, had purchased the property which contained his store with a large mortgage from his bank, granting it in return the right of first refusal in case it wanted the property for its own purposes; it was thought that he could obtain a lower purchase price than the bank. When the inflationary increase in repair costs outraced rents by such a margin that the monthly income from 2 stores, 3 apartments, 1 office and a warehouse did not pay for a plumber's bill, he asked the bank to take the building off his hands. He was not cut out to be a landlord and to turn a deaf ear to the tenants. Mother never criticized his decision, although holding on to the end of the inflation would have wiped out the mortgage and left him the owner of a highly desirable piece of real estate, free and clear.

The table talk always touched on politics. We subscribed to 2 local newspapers, both liberal; counting in the Nuremberg papers there were 6 major dailies serving the twin cities. On weekends father liked to spend time in the reading room of the Merchants Association to which he belonged, perusing the editorials of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Berliner Tagblatt*, considered 2 of the finest, best informed and most enlightened newspapers in Germany. My brother and I often visited the reading room also, especially since it was connected with a lending library. Most of the avid readers were Jewish; one of the exceptions was a retired manufacturer by the name of Lotter, a slightly built gentleman, always dressed in an old-fashioned cutaway suit. He was a well-known figure in town, somewhat of an eccentric whose foible it was to come to the Sunday morning band concert with his camera and to ask some of the prettiest girls for permission to snap their picture. The town had a few characters. Everybody knew the "Pfeifendorla" - Dora the pipe - who collected cigarette butts on the streets to smoke them in her pipe; or the "Gnadenzieher" - not translatable - a philosopher and cynic whose motto was often quoted: *Sitzt im Glück, sitzt im Glück - sitzt im Dreck, sitzt im Dreck*, which, liberally translated means: You either got it made, or you'll keep striking out. There were a few other oddballs whose names and special traits I have forgotten; all of them were elderly and seemed to belong to a bygone era.

The return to a stable currency enhanced my lifestyle. Instead of running to a grocery store to spend my paycheck, I now saved my money and after 5 or 6 months bought a bicycle of my own. After supper I rode it to a friend's house, whistled our signal, and he would appear at the window and give the answering whistle. We might just sit in his room and talk, or go for a ride or a walk in the park or to a tavern for a glass of beer and a game of chess. My classmate Henry, who now worked in a bank, lived close to the inn where king Gustavus Adolphus had stayed during his siege of the *Alte Veste* in the 30 years' war; we battled with kings and knights in the same whitewashed pub room in which he had tasted the local brew 300 years ago. My friend Ludwig Baumann quit school in the spring of 1924 to become a trainee in a

manufacturing concern whose owners were friends of his parents and mine; Stefan Felsenstein went to Berlin to learn the metals business. Through the *Kameraden* I got acquainted with a boy nicknamed "Uhli" who was an apprentice in a company which made and exported games for children and adults. My friend Theo, the grandson of the rabbi, had become a trainee in an electrical supply house. He had never been a good student; the only A he ever got was given to him by a startled professor when Theo appeared in class with an exact scale replica of Julius Caesar's bridge over the Rhine about which we were reading in *De bello Gallico*. He was good with his hands, building models, rigging up contraptions, fixing the electrical wiring. After about 2 years on the job he came home with many feet of copper wire which he strung in the attic of the house in which he lived, bringing one end down into his room - he called it an antenna - where he led it into a box in which he had assembled all kinds of wires and electrical bulbs. He put on a set of earphones, connected to the mysterious box, fiddled with a number of dials on its front, and when he put a second set of earphones on your head, you could hear all kinds of howling and exploding noises which he called static, and the faint sounds of music which he said emanated from a radio station in Daventry, England. Every now and then, clipped British accents could be heard. It was a startling and marvelous new invention, few people were knowledgeable enough to assemble an apparatus like that, but eventually they would turn up in more streamlined models in the electrical shops. A less complicated receiving set found its way into our house as time went on. It was a cylinder, about 4 inches high, with thin wire tightly coiled around it, mounted on a small base; from it rose a finger-long metal rod, on which a pyrite crystal could be moved up and down, its prongs making contact with the cylinder. Two wires extended from the set, one to an antenna which we had strung up across the yard from attic to attic, the other one to a water pipe on the outside of the house, coming up from the ground. When the set was not in use a switch could be thrown to connect the antenna directly to the "ground" - thus lightning would not hit the receiver. Earphones, plugged into the set, brought the sound of the transmission to your ears as clearly as your telephone. A radio transmitter had been put into operation in Nuremberg; the programs originated in Munich, part of the German Radio Hour of Bavaria, with stations in Munich, Nuremberg, Augsburg and Kaiserslautern. We could hear news, classical and light music, drama and light comedy. Listeners paid a small yearly fee to the state for the privilege of owning a set. There was no advertising. The proliferation of radio sets proved a great boon to the spread in the popularity of hit-songs, many of them imported from America.

The circle of my close friends consisted now of those young people who, like myself, were working in apprenticeship positions towards a career in business. The only one of my former classmates remaining in school whose friendship I still actively sought and enjoyed was Tony, who planned to study law. He was also my only gentile friend left. His father was a liberal; in the past he had successfully dodged frontline-duty in the war - he spent his time in uniform in the administration of a military hospital in Fürth - and become a member of the soldiers' council during the first weeks of the revolution. At a time when all local authority had come to a standstill he had tried to provide a modicum of leadership and orderly government. Disillusioned, he had switched from the majority Socialist party to the Independent Socialists. Even there he did not find the response that satisfied his idealistic and ideological needs, and so he had finally dropped out of the political arena altogether. He was now the comptroller of a Jewish owned company; in private life he was an avid reader, a numismatist, linguist and amateur historian, a great raconteur and gentle cynic. He told amusing stories of his life in the Bronx at the time when he and some of his friends had run away to America to beat the draft; he knew many Jewish expressions and kept almost exclusively Jewish company. He enjoyed conversing with his son's friends free from condescension or lecturing, sitting at the table in his shirt-sleeves and polishing his coins. (He was the only one among my father's friends I ever saw with his coat off, an American custom, I found out many years later!) Tony had a younger sister, Anna, who also attended the *Gymnasium*. She wore her hair long and falling

over one side of her face like Elisabeth Bergner, the actress, and two or three of the fellows were always in love with her. Tony's mother was friendly and quiet. She never failed to offer a piece of cake, cookies or fruit from their garden to her young friends. The K.s owned a large garden outside the city, partly cultivated, partly wilderness. On Saturday or Sunday afternoons a few of our group often met there to play tarot. The stakes never exceeded a few pfennigs. When Tony and his father wanted to give me a special treat, they sat down at the piano in their living room and played Schubert's *Marche Militaire* fourhanded. To this day, whenever I hear it played, I am reminded of those long-ago afternoons at my friend's house when I first listened to the strains of this strange march, so sparkingly gay and so hauntingly sad at the same time.

At other times we spent our Sunday afternoons visiting the attractions of the countryside on our sleek bicycles. All my friends loved bike riding, and there was always one or the other who would come along. Places which we had formerly reached by train on leisurely excursions with our parents were now within easy riding distance. At cherry blossom time we never failed to make the customary pilgrimage to the little hillside town of Cadolzburg, famous for its glorious setting amidst acres and acres of cherry trees pink with the bloom of May. In the heat of the summer we, along with thousands of hikers and bicyclists of all ages, sought the coolness of the romantic gorge of the small river Schwarzach, carefully winding our way between tall firs and towering rocks on one side and the steep bank of the river on the other. At least once in the course of a summer we trekked to the hamlet of Eltersdorf to feast on the delicious white radishes which grew in that vicinity. A rural inn with a huge tree shaded garden provided the setting for a delightful supper. One used a knifelike blade with a corkscrew at one end and a ring at the other to slice the mouth-watering root. The screw went into the top of the radish, the index finger into the ring: a rotating motion made the sharp blade cut the *Rettich* from top to bottom in perfectly even layers. Salt was poured between the slices, which were then broken off and eaten with a piece of generously buttered rye bread and washed down with sips from a glass of cool beer. Not even the pesky gnats could spoil the enjoyment of this luscious meal. The footpath to Eltersdorf ran along the tree lined embankment of the *Ludwigs-Donau-Main-Kanal* - proudly proclaimed as the watery link between the Atlantic Ocean and the Black Sea. In former years we had often hiked the stretch with our parents, and returned by train in the evening. The canal was a modest 40 - 50 feet across, barely wide enough to accommodate the shallow bottomed barges which we encountered now and then on our walks. A tired looking horse, following the footpath at a slow gait, pulled the boat on a long rope, its driver leading it by the halter. At a distance of several kilometers sluices were built into the system to allow for the slight fall in the surrounding countryside. The water level on one side of the sluice gates differed by several meters from that on the other. As children, we became rooted to the spot whenever we came upon a barge entering a gate. The giant doors would close behind it, and, with water slowly flowing into or out of the space between the gates, the vessel would gently rise or drop to the level on the other side. Meanwhile the horse would graze contentedly at the side of the embankment, while the sunburned driver stuck his whip into a slot in the nag's collar and refilled his pipe. After ten or fifteen minutes boat, horse and driver were ready to resume the unhurried voyage. The watchman, who had maneuvered the sluice gates, vanished from sight.

At the outskirts of Fürth an aqueduct carried the water of the canal across the river Pegnitz some thirty or forty feet below. Nor far from it was the canal port, where the waterway bulged to almost three times its normal width, allowing barges to pass one another. A stone quay on one side of the canal provided the berth to tie the vessel up for an overnight stay. There was a stable for the horse; the boatman, and sometimes his family, stayed in a small compartment aboard his barge.

On hot summer days children from the nearby workingmen's districts sometimes splashed around in the shallow waters of the canal. We never did: not only was it verboten but also below our dignity. Much of the winter the canal was frozen over and all traffic had to come to a stop. It is not recorded that the Strait of Gibraltar or the Bosphorus experienced a noticeable increase in freight tonnage passing through at that time, and it appears highly doubtful that they did.

At some time in the early twenties the dear old hometown went through one of the greatest perils it had faced since its founding. In an era when centralization had become the password, politically as well as economically, a group of citizens propounded a merger of Fürth with the neighboring city of Nuremberg as a matter of mutual interest. Meetings were held in which the resulting benefits were recited, the newspapers took up the pros and cons of the issue; Nuremberg was willing, and so it was up to the burghers of Fürth to decide whether they wanted to merge or not. A date was set for a public referendum, and as the time for the decision approached tempers grew hot and hotter, lines of combat were drawn clearly, men jumped into the breach who had never sought the limelight, new heroes wrote their names into the annals of local patriotism. Father considered the creation of a powerful twin city as a move in the right direction, but when the ballots were cast *TREU FÜRTH* - the defenders of independence - won. The victors were a strange coalition of old-established local families, small businessmen afraid of big-town competition, city employees fearing for their jobs, and an extremely vocal contingent of the Jewish Orthodoxy under the leadership of a white maned old eccentric named Weiskopf who, among his peers, was not considered the most learned of Talmudists but acclaimed as the voice of wisdom in the cause of the defenders of the faith. I was amused and puzzled by the display of militancy by the orthodox Jews of Fürth who in matters of national politics were far less involved and articulate than their liberal brethren. Only years later it occurred to me that in defending the status quo they were bent on preserving the security of their religious customs. Fürth, situated on the confluence of 2 rivers, was according to Jewish law a town where a divorce could be obtained: would that have to be extended to Nuremberg? Fürth had age-old established boundaries within which the Talmudic prescriptions of "carrying" on the Sabbath were defined: I remember my brother showing me a wire strung inconspicuously along the side of a house in the eastern part of the town, the so-called *Erub*, signifying an imaginary gate beyond which a key, even a handkerchief, much less a woman's purse could not be carried on the Sabbath; certain natural landmarks constituted the line in other directions. Clearly, a merger would have created utter confusion and hardship in the observation of this custom. Last but not least the carefully guarded independence of the various small congregations might have been endangered seriously. Fortunately the dilemma was avoided. The wounds of combat healed, and Herr Weiskopf returned to his position of *meschuggener Kopf* [weirdo].

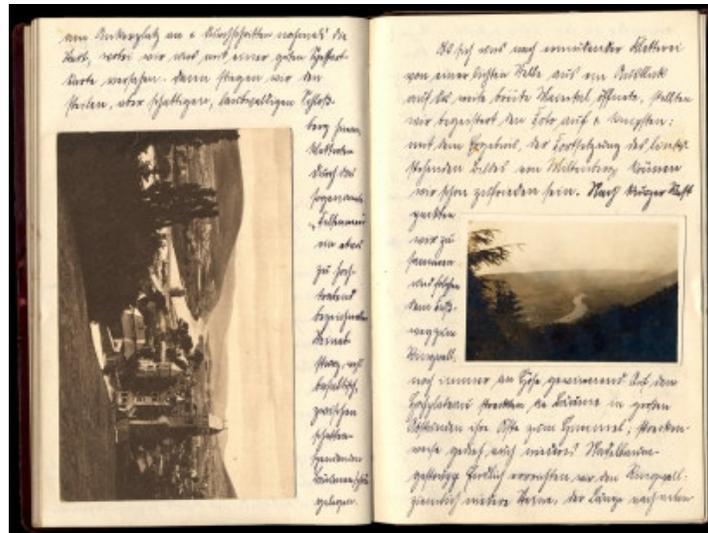
Not so happy and ending climaxed a hardship which befell a handful of Polish-Jewish families residing in Fürth. I became aware of this event when Mr. Eisenstein, one of my fellow employees at the firm of S.D. Zimmer informed us one day that he would have to leave in a few weeks time. The reactionary Bavarian government had unearthed a minor infraction of the law which his parents had purportedly committed in one of the preceding years and used it to revoke the residence permit of the "perpetrators". Rationing, rent control, price regulations and currency restrictions had created an unimaginable tangle of laws in the postwar years which almost everybody had violated at one time or other; palms were greased, officials looked the other way; few people were ever taken to task, fewer yet convicted. Some of the Eastern immigrants had been accused and found guilty; they were outsiders in an economy beset by troubles beyond anybody's experience, they had to sink or swim, they had done things which self-preservation demanded and the law forbade. Now these closed cases were reopened once more, and the result was expulsion. The local Jewish community did little to

help the unwelcome foreigners other than assist them in leaving the country; it was embarrassed by their “Galician” accent, their alien dress and manner; it feared that coming to their defense might fan the flames of smoldering anti-Semitism. A gentile official in the local hierarchy was the only person of any consequence to come to the aid of the unlucky foreigners, and he succeeded in nullifying the expulsion orders in a couple of cases. The Eisensteins had to leave, to their sorrow and to my shock: I liked my colleague very much. Not more than 10 years later it turned out to be a blessing in disguise for him and his folks.

One impression which stands out vividly from the memories of that year relates to the day at the office when suddenly the deep hum of a powerful motor was heard coming from the sky. We were prepared by newspaper reports for what was to come, and ran out into the street in eager anticipation. We were not disappointed. Emerging above the roof of the State Court building the giant hull of a Zeppelin came into view, gliding majestically through the air, the cabin beneath the grandiose superstructure so clearly visible you almost wanted to reach for it. As the airship flew overhead it seemed to fill the whole sky. It was a tremendous spectacle; the thought that it would have to be delivered to the U.S. as part of our reparations filled us with sadness. In America it was later known as the “Los Angeles”.

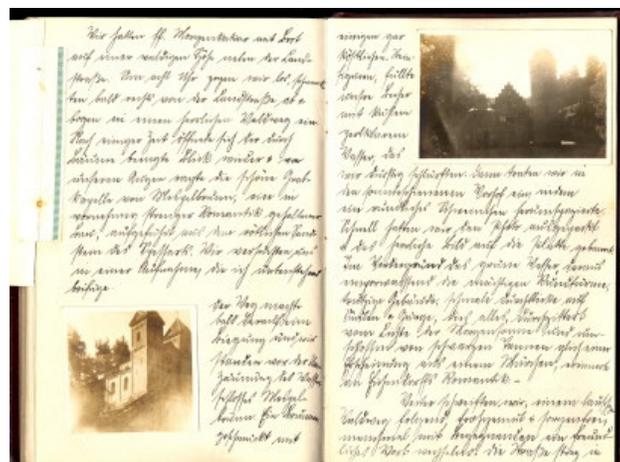
In the summer of 1924 I had earned my first vacation. My friend Uhli and I had arranged to take our holiday at the same time, and when the great moment came we were well prepared for a thoroughly planned hiking trip along the Main river and through the majestic forest of the Spessart, a chain of moderately high mountains, bordered on 3 sides by the meandering water way, and made famous by the German writer Hauff in his novel *Das Wirtshaus im Spessart* - the Spessart Inn.

We were a couple of happy fellows when we met on a drizzly June Sunday at half past three in the morning to board the slowest and therefore the cheapest train for Würzburg; it was almost noon and several changes of trains later, when we hit the road in the little town of Wertheim on Main. The sun had broken through, the broad river valley lay before us, wooded mountains - the Spessart to the north, the Odenwald to the south beckoned with the promise of peaceful solitude: we struck out singing, stepping smartly in our trusted windbreakers, knee-breeches, hobnailed boots, our heavy rucksacks a proud burden, the mark of the hardy hiker carrying his supplies, ready to march and to rest as the spirit moves him, cook his meal on a petroleum burner with the birds of the wild as dinner companions, fill his canteen with the water from the clearest springs. We hiked for five days, about 25 to 30 kilometers every day: from Wertheim, following the broad expanse of the Main river valley west to Miltenberg; the next day, turning south to Amorbach in the foothills of the Odenwald, and, reversing our direction, to Klingenberg on Main. On the third day we broke out of the valley climbing steadily into the forested region of the Spessart, heading in a northeasterly direction until we reached the small town of Heimbuchenthal, where we stayed overnight. On the fourth day, going east and passing the famous Spessart Inn at noon, we traversed the most extensive and deserted stretches of pine forest where wild boar is still hunted; fortunately we encountered none of the potentially dangerous beasts. When we reached the castle of Rothenfels, looking down on the Main river from up high, we were only a few miles north from our starting point, the town of Wertheim. The fifth day saw us going in a northerly direction until we reached the unglamorous town of Neustadt on Main. On the sixth day we hiked just a short distance of about 10 kilometers along the river; the weather had turned blazing hot and we were glad to desert the dusty country roads for a slow train which took us to Bad Kissingen, my old stamping grounds. We spent a couple of days as honored guests at the Villa Engel; I showed Uhli the attractions of the spa, said hello to a still friendly Toni. Sunday in the late afternoon we stepped off the train in Fürth, sunburned, lean and swelled with pride at the successful conclusion of our first great hiking adventure.

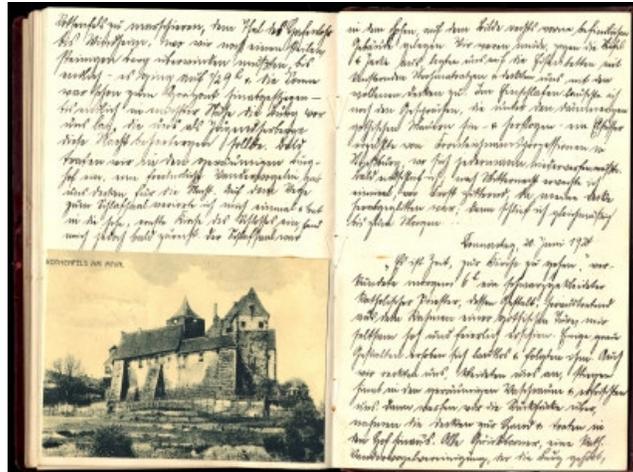


Diary entries from Philip's hiking tour through the Spessart hills in June 1924:
 Miltenberg and the Main river valley
 (photo: private)

In the days following our return I wrote a diary with the colorful impressions of our hike still fresh on my mind. I illustrated it with the precious, though overexposed snapshots Uhli had taken here and there, added some sketches of my own of a low Celtic stonewall, of a farmer carrying a load of hay carefully balanced on his head, pasted in postcards with pictures of the castles and towers and churches we had seen. Above all I tried to recapture the exuberant spirit in which we had marched along, taking in the gentle beauty of the Main valley; waving to busy steamers crowded with carefree travelers; pausing admiringly in front of baronial residences, baroque elegance asleep behind untrimmed hedges, guarded by stately horse-chest-not trees. Once more I swam the broad river, climbed steep hills, sweat running off my face in salty streams, stood in the courtyard of Rothenfels castle watching the Corpus Christi procession far down in the village while the church bells were ringing near and far. I had to put it all down on paper; I did not want to forget the glass of wine we drank in the inn in Miltenberg nor the ants that chased us from our picnic ground on a hill above the little town of Eschau. I was an apprentice in an export house, making entries in folios, checking deliveries, figuring markups; for one week I had been a wandering poet, free as a bird, and I had to have a record to keep that spirit alive. *Schön ist die Jugendzeit - sie kommt nicht mehr*, we had sung: Beautiful is the time of our youth, it will never come back ...



The moated castle Mespelbrunn
 (photo: private)



Rothenfels castle on the Main river

(photo: private)

Since he had started commuting to the town of Erlangen to attend the university, my brother had taken his meals at a kosher *Mensa* where he made a number of new friends, mostly orthodox young students from Fürth. As a consequence of this association he became interested in the activities of the orthodox youth organization, the *Agudath Israel*, which was the most active Jewish youth group in town. The liberals had failed to maintain a local chapter of the *Kameraden*, and the young Zionists, mostly members of *Mizrachi*, could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The *Agudath*, with the objective of enhancing the quality of observance of the Law through education and knowledge rather than the mechanical practice of ancient customs, promoted *Schiurim* - the study of the Torah and the Talmud by young people under the guidance of qualified elders. In addition, lectures and discussions were featured Friday night after supper in the loft of a building close to the center of town. At times I accompanied my brother to these Friday evening meetings. Sometimes the disputations were so lively they ended only when the electric time-clock suddenly turned out the lights in the room: no orthodox Jew will touch a switch on the Sabbath; the Law forbids the lighting of a fire. We groped our way down the narrow stairs in the dark and did the same thing in reverse when we got home. Invariably the debaters walked the dark streets of the city for a long time after the meeting had broken up, escorting each other home over and over: conversation was precious, arguments were marshaled often just for argument's sake, everybody contributed with spirit and ready wit. Everyday politics rarely entered into the topics. I remember, however, one meeting at which a traveler spoke about the sad state of affairs for the orthodox Jews of Russia, the restrictions imposed on religious services, the threat of reprisals. I was shocked to learn that economic conditions were so horrible that people had to work at two or three jobs to keep alive, that Jews were forced to appeal to their foreign relatives for monetary help or face dire consequences for failure to do so: it was the Bolshevik regime's way to obtain valuable foreign currency. Ludwig brought the blue-and-white savings bank of the *Keren Chayemeth* to our house just like we found it in the living room of our orthodox friends; though nobody intended to emigrate to Palestine, the fate of the settlers in the Holy Land was a concern of every orthodox family. All of my brother's friends treated me as their equal despite an age difference of 4 years or more. I became especially fond of two of his most intimate companions: Max, a short, curly headed dentistry student with an artistic flair, a nose for a buck and an eye for a pretty girl; and Alfred, a clerk with wavy black hair, a broken nose, an excited manner and an interest in politics. Father had reservations about him, considering him a radical and a rather uncouth young man who flung himself on our sofa as if it were a place for people his age rather than his elders'. I remember only one incident where I was "put in my place" - Ludwig and his 2 friends had made the home and garden of a family with an attractive

daughter named Fanny their favorite hangout; it was a pretty spot halfway between town and the *Alte Veste*, and Fanny had a way with boys. One summer Sunday afternoon, with nothing else to do, my friend Henry and I barged in at Fanny's place, and the reception we received from the trio of Ludwig, Max and Alfred was far from friendly. Well, I learned that if not three then four is definitely a crowd when it comes to sharing a girlfriend.



Ludwig & Philip, February / March 1925
(photos: private)

My work became more and more interesting and absorbing as time went on. I was entrusted with filling orders for samples of merchandise our clients were interested in. I assembled the desired lines carefully choosing the most competitive manufacturers, priced them in the currency of the country of destination, and was proud when my offer resulted in a sizeable order. Once I made a bad error in my calculation which brought in response a huge order at the prices I had mistakenly quoted below our actual cost. The boss called me on the carpet although sotto voce; still my pride was wounded. Subsequently I spent one week going from factory to factory, playing one maker against another, finding the manufacturer most hungry for a big order. In the end I had placed every item at a price which allowed my firm at least a modicum of profit.

Fridays were the busiest days in the shipping department, especially in the fall and winter at the height of the Christmas toy season. Many manufacturers made deliveries toward the end of the week, which in turn led to the greatest number of orders getting ready for packing on Friday. I loved carrying the delicately stacked cartons from the upstairs warehouse down winding steps to the packing yard, lending a hand in the hustle and bustle of crating; begging, cajoling, threatening the packers to get "my" shipments ready in competition with Mr. Prüfer's who handled the English business. In the end all of us nailed crates shut, marked them with stencils and ink-brushes for their destination, rolled them out on the sidewalk, yelled at the teamsters who loaded them on to their horse-drawn wagons. Sometimes, I suspect, we infringed on the holiness of the Sabbath which starts early in the afternoon at that time of the year: when I arrived at the synagogue, breathless after a quick trot, the service was almost over.

On Saturday morning I went to services with my father; my brother joined his friends Max and Alfred in a small *Shul* on the premises of the Jewish hospital. I treasured these mornings: the slow walk through the streets of Fürth, frequently interrupted when father paused in front of a men's store to point out how stylishly cut even the cheapest ready-to-wear suits were. "You cannot get these old custom tailors to change from the way they cut a suit twenty years ago," he complained often. In the synagogue he was many times called to the pulpit to say the

B'rachah over the Torah, as one of the eight men thus honored at the reading from the scriptures on the Sabbath. Attendance was low, the worshippers were mostly men of father's age, I was usually the only representative of my age group. Old rabbi Neubürger had retired and we had a new rabbi by now; his sermon was discussed on the way home in the company of one or two of my father's friends and contemporaries.

On the High Holidays father, my brother and I walked together to the Main Synagogue, father proudly keeping pace between his 2 sons, both a good deal taller than he. Mother rarely went, although she felt at home whenever she attended: she jokingly maintained that she had never been more royally received and entertained than on the day of Stefan Felsenstein's Bar mitzvah, when she visited the orthodox *Neuschul*. Our whole family fasted from sundown to sundown on Yom Kippur as did most of the people even in the Reform - Synagogue; after all, few of the adults were more than two generations removed from orthodox practices. It was told that on Yom Kippur noon the *mâitre d'hôtel* at the "Park Hotel" discreetly announced: "For the gentlemen, who are fasting, lunch is being served in the back room" - but that was unproven hearsay. While religious services on Yom Kippur went on without interruption all day long there was a constant coming and going and the synagogue yard was full of people. A few of the extremely pious went about dressed in their white burial shroud to acknowledge the frailty of human existence. At times, passing the *Neuschul*, you could hear a strange ear shattering chorus of voices, those of the *Cohanim* gathered in front of the congregation, wrapped in their prayer shawls, giving the worshippers their priestly blessing. Nobody was supposed to look at the chanting descendants of the sons of Aaron during this benediction, called *Duchenen* lest God's punishment might strike him. In our temple the rabbi performed the rite, standing with outstretched arms on the pulpit, and following the Hebrew words with the German translation: *Der Herr segne Euch und behüte Euch* - May the Lord bless you and keep you. You could look without fear.



Philip & his mates at Stefan Felsenstein's Bar mitzvah, ca. 1921

(photo: private)

On Rosh Hashanah, we sometimes accompanied our orthodox friends to the bank of the river, where they cast bread on the waters, a symbolic rite called *Taschlich machen* - signifying the hope that true contrition during the 10 days of penitence would carry away a person's sins like the current swept away the bread.

The High Holidays were followed by the Feast of Tabernacles. Many of the observant Jews had their own gaily decorated hut, a reminder of the dwellings their forefathers had occupied while wandering in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. Felsensteins turned their living room into their *Sukkah* - the ceiling was equipped with shutters which could be opened

like a skylight, and closed in case of rain. Others ate their meals in gazebos in their yards. You could see Jews in the streets of Fürth carrying their *Esrog* - a citrus fruit - and their *Lulab* - a bundle of twigs from 4 different trees, palm, myrtle, *Esrog* and willow - to and from the synagogue. On the last day of the holiday cycle, *Simchath Torah*, the day of rejoicing in the Torah, a special honor was bestowed on 2 worthy members of every congregation: the distinction of saying the blessing for the reading of the last chapter of *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) for the *Chusen Torah* - the bridegroom of the Torah - and for the first paragraph of *Bereshith* - (Genesis) for the *Chusen Bereshith* - the bridegroom of Genesis. It was customary, particularly among the observant, to pay a courtesy visit to the men thus honored after conclusion of the service, and a stream of visitors rolled through the streets of the town between the hours of twelve and two to congratulate the chosen and partake in whatever refreshments were offered in their homes. Comparisons were made and special delicacies recommended by the callers as they met in their merry gallop. Over the years, Ludwig and I grew to know more and more of the pillars of the Jewish Community; our participation in this merry chase increased from *Simchath Torah* to *Simchath Torah*.

For years the friendship with the sons of our landlord had extended the circle of my friends to the orthodox youth of the town; many of my liberal friends had not even a nodding acquaintance with that segment. This contact had resulted in more than just games and play. At the height of the Postwar emergency I had joined a group of orthodox youngsters in a move to alleviate the suffering of less fortunate Jewish kids of our age by obtaining food, fuel, toys and clothing in addition to the provisions the Welfare Federation furnished. We called ourselves the Jewish Children's Aid Society; I was the secretary. We scrounged with fierce determination and really did some good. Now, through my job, a new link to the Orthodoxy had been forged. I made my poetic and acting talent available for the Chanukah celebration of the Association of Jewish Women in their annual fund raising event and enjoyed the acclaim I derived from it. Ludwig and I also joined in another religious custom of a somber and solemn character; we attended the private prayer meetings which were held in the house of a bereaved family that had suffered the loss of a loved one and was keeping the ancient rite of "sitting shivah" (shivah - seven) for one week after the burial. A *Minyan* - a group of at least 10 adults would assemble twice a day, in the morning with their prayer shawls and phylacteries, one of them acting as the *Chazan* - the cantor. At the end of the service the mourners would say *Kaddish* - a prayer sanctifying the name of God, an indication of accepting His kingdom even at the time of unfathomable grief. Afterwards one kept company for a few minutes with the mourning family members who were seated on low chairs, signifying their state of lament. Conversation was in hushed voices and of a general nature with no mention of the dead; one left without a greeting.

I was as comfortable with my orthodox friends and their customs as I was with my liberal hiking companions and their *Landsknechtslieder* [mercenaries' songs] - if there was a contradiction, I did not feel it, much less an obligation to opt for one or the other exclusively.

I found the fall of 1924 a busy time for the toy trade. The push to get merchandise shipped in time for the Christmas business gets harder from week to week. Immediately after the last shipments have left, an exciting new activity grips the industry: the assembling of a fresh collection of novelties from the manufacturers who make up the toy business. Hundreds of makers have to be contacted, shopped, their lines looked over, selections made, best-sellers sniffed out, prices compared, exclusive rights discussed. Every wholesaler and exporter wanted his agent in England, in Holland, New York, Buenos Aires, Berlin or wherever to be the first one on the road with the new line. At S.D. Zimmer the bosses, the department heads, the clerks worked feverishly at this pressing task, holed up in a huge room on the third floor, surrounded by mountains of samples. Article after article had to be ticketed with the selling price in code which only the members of the firm and the authorized agents could read. To arrive at the

proper sales price each item had to be weighed, the type of packing case considered, the freight calculated, even the insurance included before the necessary markup was added to the cost; the English in particular had to know the exact cost of the goods when they were unpacked on their receiving dock. It pleased me greatly that I was found worthy of helping in the preparation of the samples, which was quite a recognition for a mere apprentice; upon my urging I was even permitted to return after supper to work with the rest of the men until late at night. On a bitter cold Christmas eve we were done: just as I left the office, the bells of the church across the street summoned the faithful to midnight mass.

At the end of February 1925 I had been with the firm for one year and a half, and I reminded my bosses of their initial promise to limit my apprenticeship to eighteen months instead of the usual 2 years if I showed sufficient promise. Thus in March at the age of sixteen years and 8 months I became a junior clerk. My salary almost doubled, although, if I remember correctly, it did not quite amount to one hundred marks a month. I felt so rich that I offered my mother a payment of twenty marks a month for room and board which she accepted with amused surprise. I owned now a suit with long trousers, but I still liked my breeches and windbreaker better. I could not see spending much money for clothes. My shirts were made by a seamstress; with 2 detachable collars and 2 sets of equally detachable cuffs one could wear a shirt for a whole week. I bought my first pair of low cut shoes when my friend Uhli invited me to a party in his home which he gave for the boys and girls of his *Tanzstunde*. I did not have any fun. I did not know how to dance; besides I found the fellows boring and the girls neither pretty nor witty.

Business was good throughout the country. In the previous year new international arrangements had been made reducing the amounts of German reparations; the occupation of the Ruhr area had ceased and the heart of German industry beat again strongly. With the free flow of foreign credits came an expansion of business; private firms went public and the owners, as members of the board, enjoyed hearing themselves addressed as Herr *Direktor* or even Herr *Generaldirektor*. The government of Bavaria reinstated a custom by which formerly the king had honored some of the outstanding leaders of commerce: in return for a sizeable gift to a good cause - rumored to run into 20,000 to 30,000 marks - a businessman was given the title of Herr *Kommerzienrat* (Councilor of Commerce); later on an additional contribution could elevate the title holder into Herr *Geheimer Kommerzienrat* (Member of the Secret Council of Commerce). The town possessed a goodly number of pre-war councilors of the Jewish faith; new additions to the ranks followed now promptly. Two sets of brothers, business partners but not on speaking terms, rivaled with each other over the years to come in seeking the coveted title; as soon as one of them blossomed out with it the other followed suit, forcing in turn his brother into going him one better until finally all four and especially their wives could enjoy being called Herr or Frau *Geheimrat*, the customary contraction of the unwieldy full title. Doctors and lawyers, upon many years of honorable service to the community, were honored with the title *Sanitätsrat* or *Justizrat* respectively. It was said that no monetary consideration was involved.

Automobiles replaced the horse-drawn carriages of the affluent. It was always a proud moment for father's shop when one of two motorcars parked in front of his establishment, the occupant entering the store while a liveried chauffeur held the door respectfully. Eventually only the widow of a brewery owner retained her landau. When she visited with a neighbor of ours we could hear the stomping and snorting of the horses for hours in the quiet of the evening while the carriage waited out front, the coachman, top-hatted and white-gloved, an immobile figure high up in the driver's seat.

My friend Ludwig Baumann and I were crazy about motorcycles, although it was to be many years later before Ludwig ever rode one and I clung to seat behind him. We knew every make by the sound of the engine: Ardie, German Triumph, the heavy Mars, all manufactured in

Nuremberg; BMW and NSU; the light Ju-Ho, made in Fürth; the fabulous imports called Indian and Harley Davidson. Motorcycles were a popular means of transportation for a rapidly increasing sector of the population; some of the owners attached sidecars to them so that a family of three or four could travel together.

Around Easter my bosses surprised me with the revelation that I would be going along to the Leipzig Spring Fair. The *Leipziger Messe* was the biggest sales event in Europe; merchants from all over the world came to it to shop the many hundreds of exhibits of toys, household articles, leather goods, cutlery, stationery, paper products, toiletries, novelties and other lines that were on display in every hotel, office and exhibition space in the center of town. Orders were placed that ran into the millions; the success of the Leipzig Fair was highly important for a considerable part of the German industrial complex. With the exception of my friend Ernest G., who was almost twenty years old, none of my cohorts had ever been given the opportunity to attend this tremendous sales event! I was very excited when I boarded the train Saturday night - well after the end of the Sabbath - in the company of Mr. Sigmund Zimmer; Mr. Menki und Mr. Prüfer had proceeded us 2 days earlier to set up the display of samples for the opening on Sunday morning. The train was crowded and overheated; sitting up for 7 - 8 hours I got little sleep, but managed a few winks in the early morning hours in the simple room I shared with my boss in a private residence not too far from the downtown area. Our sample room was on the main floor of a busy building. The number of visitors fell short of expectations which was all right with me: I was scared to approach any of the potential buyers who drifted in and out. One of the older men was always free to handle them. I had never met a customer before and had no idea how to address a prospect, much less how to get him to place an order. It was, however, an interesting and enlightening experience to make the acquaintance of some of the importers whose orders constituted a significant part of our business. I was surprised to find out that almost all the faces behind the English, the Dutch, the Rumanian sounding names of our clients were Jewish! I am sure that the Messrs. Zimmer wanted me to have a "feel" of the fair more than they expected me to do business; they were very jovial, introduced me to the buyers whenever possible and were most concerned that I would eat in the strictly kosher restaurants, where I found the food and the crowds abominable. I managed to meet my friend Ernest G. for dinner one day in an establishment which catered to a less doctrinal Jewish clientele yet still displayed the "kosher" sign. Here I enjoyed eating the most delicious Wiener schnitzel without the slightest moral pangs. Ernest was an old friend and related to my pal Ludwig Baumann. He had been a less than mediocre student in the *Realschule* and was by now already for two years on the road for his company, living proof for his mother's contention that the poorer students often make the best businessmen. My mother frowned a bit on our friendship, declaring that Ernest was too old for me. But a boy needs a mentor: after all it was Ernest who slipped me my first cigarette and who could come up with stories of experiences none of the boys my age could boast of! Now the old friendship proved invaluable. We made an appointment for supper that same night, and after eating we "did" the town, and what a town it was!

The crowds on the sidewalks were enormous. The huge cafes were filled beyond capacity. The din of voices, the impatient patrons shouting over the blaring of the band, threatened to shatter your eardrums. No headwaiter in his right senses would try to find a seat for a couple of young innocents like Ernest and myself. All the men, young and old, seemed prosperous, important and full of purpose to me. When it came to the women, I was overwhelmed, flabbergasted, torn between open-mouthed wonderment and shivers of awe. Everyone of them was a film star, a gorgeous fur-clad diva; make-up, lipstick, coiffure turning her into a siren of irresistible beauty. In their luxurious black seal coats and high boots they were everywhere; on the streets, in the cafes, in the historical "Auerbachs Keller" restaurant, many of them escorted by dapper young men, others by red-faced heavysset old tycoons, others alone, some-

times in groups of two or three, smiling, winking encouragingly at any man who crossed their path. The whores from all over Germany, from Berlin, from Hamburg, from Frankfurt had come to the fair in droves, nay in battalions, in regiments; I was walking dazedly in a monumental den of iniquity and it was great good luck to have a man of experience like Ernest on my side to guide me securely around the rim of the abyss that opened, alluring and scary at the same time, before my eyes. I found it advisable to tell the bosses nothing of my “adventure” - when it was all said and done, there was really nothing to report. I returned to Fürth on Tuesday and handed back a small part of my travel allowance unspent; I doubt that that happened very often.

An event of great importance occurred while I was in Leipzig: Friedrich Ebert, the old master-saddle maker turned president of the Weimar Republic, died suddenly, mourned by the parties of the left and unforgiven by those of the right. The prestige of the Social-Democrats had suffered measurably since the early days of the Republic, and they could not field a promising contender of their own. Consequently, they decided to support a middle-of-the-road candidate put forth by the *Zentrum* - the powerful, conservative Catholic party, in the person of Wilhelm Marx, who was the chancellor and head of a coalition of Social-Democrats, Democrats and his own *Zentrum* party governing Germany at that time. The Nationalists opposed this rather lackluster candidate with a clever choice of their standard bearer: they trotted out none other than the old war-horse, the legendary victor of Tannenberg, the unbeaten hero of an unbeaten army, General Field Marshal Hindenburg. It was an uneven contest; earnest, plodding politician against military idol, somber cutaway against glittering uniform. What made things worse was that the Communists, more spiteful toward their socialist brethren than even the parties of the right, ran a candidate of their own, with no hope of winning and every possibility of furthering the election of a Nationalist president. Hindenburg won. His victory was a profound disappointment for my father, comparable only to the agony he felt when in 1922 Walter Rathenau, the brilliant Jewish foreign minister, progressive industrialist, patron of the arts, fervent patriot and leading exponent of the credo of the German citizen of Jewish persuasion was assassinated by right-wing extremists.

Before these momentous political upheavals shook Germany, a minor crisis in our house was successfully overcome. My brother and his friend Max, travel companions of many hikes through the forests and fields of Southern Germany, had saved scrupulously every mark, every pfennig they earned tutoring, every birthday check that had come their way: now they were ready to realize a dream that every German student harbors with an ever increasing desire: a trip to Italy! Their plans were modest in the extreme. They were going to ride the slowest, least expensive trains, travel fourth class, stay in the cheapest hotels, forego the “luxury” of adequate meals as long as they could visit the land that had inspired every painter of note, every poet, every composer who had made his pilgrimage to the sacred ruins of ancient Rome, to the land of Michelangelo, Dante and Verdi. Father had serious reservations. “Good friends” had set their tongues wagging: “Business must be good, Herr Seligsberger, I hear your son is planning a trip to Italy.” Talk like that might hurt the business; people are envious and stay away. Mother spoke up for Ludwig, damning the disgusting critics, talebearers and meddlers all! So a compromise was struck: the boys would go but Rome was to be the southernmost limit of their travels. And so in early March a couple of happy tourists took off on a 2 weeks’ journey to Venice, Florence and Rome, cities whose name make the heart beat faster, the mind grow wings. They missed none of the sights, none of the treasures, having studied for weeks every available guidebook like the Holy Bible. They stood on the Via Appia and looked longingly south towards Naples and the Isle of Capri. But they kept their promise.

In my second year of employment I was entitled to a “fortnight’s holiday” as Mr. Menki would have put it. I decided to take my vacation in June, and Ludwig Baumann, who was to be my traveling companion, coordinated his vacation with mine. The state of Thuringia bor-

ders Bavaria to the north: it was the Thuringian Forest, a wooded saddle with elevations up to 2700 feet and about 100 kilometers long, which was our destination. We set out with our rucksacks full of provisions and a wallet lined with our hard earned money: what cost the world? Getting there by train, we walked the length of the mountain chain from southeast to northwest in 6 days of smart hiking, staying overnight in clean and friendly inns along the way, located in the small towns which nestle in the foothills and clearings of the vast forest. In the southerly part we found much industry in either sense of the word. There are makers of toys and musical instruments, glassblowers, even a factory producing bicycles and automobiles. In one place the world's most famous mouth organs (Hohner) are manufactured, in another chinaware: we watched busy women paint delicate floral designs on cups and saucers which had just passed through the hardening process in huge ovens. Toward the north the picture changes and the tourist trade becomes the main source of revenue for places catering to summer guests and winter sport enthusiasts as well. The weather was fine with the exception of the fifth day of our hike when we made it up to the top of the famous Inselberg (Island mountain) in a thunderstorm and cloudburst which our trusted windbreakers could not handle. We dried off at the fireplace of the fashionable Inselberg Café, which the majority of tourists present had reached by car, motorcycle or bus. It cleared up the next day when we reached Eisenach in the late afternoon.

Ludwig Baumann and I got along well. We were buddies from way back; our parents had been friends for years when we were still toddlers. We were of the same height and build and each other's equal in sports. He was 4 months younger and had been one full grade below me in the *Gymnasium*, which meant that we did not talk to each other in the schoolyard, but on our Sunday afternoon hikes he was one of the steady companions. Now as a trainee in the world of business Ludwig immersed himself in the role of the junior executive. He dressed conservatively in his South-African uncle's hand-me-down business suits, slicked his shiny black hair smartly to the back, carried the *Vossische Zeitung* rolled up under his arm. The *Vossische Zeitung* was a Berlin newspaper renowned for its outstanding news coverage, its clever editorials and last but not least its well informed trade pages. Even in the midst of the Thuringian Forest, in the resort town of Oberhof, Ludwig located an issue of his favorite gazette containing an article about Hugo Stinnes, originator of the first vertical trust in Germany, whose exploits my friend followed with an admiration bordering on idolatry. He had his career planned for years to come: he would go on the road for his firm in a couple of years and, a successful and well-heeled traveling salesman, join the Lawn Tennis Association first, the fashionable Tattersall, the riding club, the year after.

Richard Wagner made Eisenach's Wartburg world famous: we approached the German shrine with due reverence. We trooped through its high-ceilinged rooms and hallowed grounds along with hundreds of other tourists, many of them youthful wanderers, admired the treasures on display and bought the obligatory postcards. Yet I must admit that I remember little of the Wartburg nor can I conjure up its picture before my mind's eye like that of other castles, churches and fortresses I have seen. Perhaps I lacked concentration because my friend and I had a falling out that day - a thing that seems to occur without fail even between the most congenial fellows sometime on an extended journey. We hardly spoke to each other all day but had forgotten our mutual aggravation the next morning when we boarded the train for the town of Erfurt.

We stayed in this city for a short while between trains but long enough to carry away a repugnant and ominous impression. We noticed that large crowds lined the sidewalks, while the colors of the old imperial Germany flew from many buildings. Pretty soon military music was heard, drawing nearer, and up the street came marching columns. Thousands of young men in military dress, wearing black, white and red armbands passed us in parade formation, black,

white and red banners fluttered in the wind, brass bands and drum and fife corps drowned out the cheers of a wildly enthusiastic population. When the music stopped, the marchers sang:

*Hakenkreuz am Stahlhelm,
Schwarz-weiß-rotes Band:
Die Brigade Ehrhard
werden wir genannt!*

Swastika on the steel helmet,
Black, white and red armband:
The Brigade Ehrhard is what
We are being called!

It was the first time that I personally witnessed the resurgence of the spirit of militarism and anti-Semitism which manifested itself in the emergence of various so-called free corps, this one led by a former army officer called Ehrhard. It was barely two years after the abortive Hitler Putsch in Munich, and here the sworn enemies of the Weimar Republic could take again to the streets defyingly and to the cheers of a fanatic crowd. In our hometown as well as in the neighboring Nuremberg, citadels of the Social Democrats, a demonstration like this was unthinkable. We watched it, telling ourselves that time and a return to sanity would eventually do away with the remnants of the reactionary forces.

We were glad to take the next train out of Erfurt for the city of Weimar, one-time residence of Germany's greatest poets Schiller and Goethe, now dear to the German republic as the birth-place of the Weimar Constitution. We found lodgings on the grounds of the residence of the former Archduke of Weimar and Eisenach: it was as romantic a youth hostel as that of Reinhardsbrunn Castle near Friedrichroda, where we had stayed a few nights before. We slept in a converted stable, where a pair of simple cots between the walls of every stall afforded rest and privacy. In the morning we made the customary pilgrimage to the houses where the titans of German literature had lived and worked, now restored as closely as possible to their original state. Large and small groups of visitors made their way through the historic shrines, and like them we gazed in awe at the sacred mementos. This was what we had stopped for in Weimar, yet it was somewhat like performing a duty: you must walk in the footsteps of Schiller and Goethe after 6 years of humanistic education, steeped in the classics; having learned Schiller's poems by heart, having watched his and Goethe's dramas performed with pre-determined admiration. Yet I must admit that at home the volumes with the name of the great poet in gold leaf on the cover stood unread on the shelf since I had left school. The new generation, once on its own, worshipped at new altars, venerated new idols. My brother and I had discovered the exciting Russians, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Gorky, Turgeniev; we suffered with Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, were captivated by Knut Hamsun. We devoured book after book by the fantastically creative contemporaries, Thomas Mann, Stefan and Arnold Zweig, Bruno Frank and Leonhard Frank, Lion Feuchtwanger, Klabund and many others. For thrills we read Jules Verne and Mark Twain and Arthur Conan Doyle; an English detective story writer named Edgar Wallace was one of my favorites, but below my brother's dignity. In general, what he read, I read, with one notable exception: Oswald Spengler's monumental work *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* - the Fall of the Occident - was too learned and philosophical for me.

On the last day of our journey we visited the huge salt caves near the town of Saalfeld on the river Saale. A guide, carrying an acetylene torch, led us through miles of underground passages, enormous domelike caverns alternating with narrow slippery ledges; now and then, whenever we reached an especially grandiose formation of stalagmites and stalactites, the leader set off fireworks which bathed the giant icicles in dazzling greens, pinks and blues. It was cool in the innards of the Earth, a pleasant relief from the oppressive heat outside, but I

shivered more than anybody else, and continued shaking on the train, wrapped up in every bit of warm apparel we had between the two of us while the rest of the travelers threw off their coats and opened their shirts as far as decency would permit. I came home with a raging fever and an infected throat which had to be lanced a couple of days later to give me relief. Getting sick prevented me from writing a diary. I was so anxious to get back to the job that I started working before I was fully recovered. My first errand took me to the customs office; I suddenly felt dizzy and fainted into the arms of a customs officer. Back home and to bed I went once more, and this time mother would not let me go to work until I had recuperated fully. The bosses were a bit upset.

Earlier in the year my father had received a letter from his brother Sigmund, who lived in Oakland, California, telling him that he, Sigmund, had won an award from the insurance company for which he worked, which gave him a free trip to New York to attend a meeting at the headquarters of his firm. He was contemplating stretching the trip out further to include a visit to his brother and sister, my aunt Sophie in Bad Kissingen; he was anxious for a reunion after a separation of more than 13 years; in addition he had lost his wife in the previous year and was somewhat at loose ends at the moment. Naturally, if conditions were still unsettled in Germany and the fare money would do more good than his visit, he would postpone the voyage and send the cash instead. The answer from Fürth as well as from Bad Kissingen was a quick and unqualified "Do come." And so in early August our family lived in a state of growing excitement in anticipation of the visit of the legendary uncle from America, until one Saturday morning we went from the synagogue directly to the railroad station to welcome the traveler.

Uncle Sigmund, my father's youngest brother, had been the black sheep in the family when his parents sent him, still in his teens, to join his older brother Leopold, called Lee, in Terre Haute, Indiana, where he was supposed to work in a store as a stock boy and handyman. Unlike my father, he had little education; he was naïve and trusting. He suffered his first great disappointment in human nature when, on the boat to the promised land, he swapped his cabin ticket for some dollars and an accommodation which a slick fellow passenger described to him as plenty nice for a young kid. Thereupon he suffered the rigors of a rough voyage in steerage. He was so scared of further pitfalls that after docking in New York he walked off last for fear that some stranger, posing as uncle Frankel, might abduct him into a life of crime. Uncle Frankel, a distant relative, finally took his reluctant nephew in tow and sent him on his way to Indiana. He was lonely and homesick in Terre Haute and the confinement within the four walls of the store made him sickly and weak. Eventually an old German doctor told him to either get into an outdoor occupation or face an early demise. Sigi, as he was being called, headed south: we next find him working for a German-American cattleman in the Texas Panhandle, a Jewish cowboy, riding the range with a sore behind, staking out and losing a claim for oil, getting in and out of all kinds of mischief like the typical greenhorn he was; some of his misadventures are described in a collection of local anecdotes titled "Longhorns and short grass" by a Texas lady-author of minor fame; at a much later time my brother prevailed on him to put down the story of his colorful and multifaceted life, the report of which, in his own handwriting, is now kept in the Jewish Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio. During the Spanish-American war he joined the U.S. Quartermaster Corps, contracted typhoid fever in Cuba and was given little chance to live by the medics; fortunately he recovered and, having been paid off by the army, he went to San Francisco, where he got promptly rolled. He sold patent medicine to the Indians and pianos to ladies of refinement; he stoked furnaces, worked on the railroad, cooked in gold mining camps and told many a boss to shove his goddamned job when his pride or his religious feelings were offended. I knew some of his life's story before his arrival in Fürth in 1925 and learned more of it during his stay, but I heard the bulk of it many years later after he had facilitated mine and my family's immigration to the U.S., thus

enabling us to escape the horrors which the Hitler regime inflicted on those hapless Jews who had no one to turn to and no place to go. He had never gotten rich but by now was a respectable insurance salesman; his late wife had called him Bismarck, a name that stuck to him and gave him an aura of unwarranted competence and authority and to which, I am sure, the Iron Chancellor would have strenuously objected.

In the postwar years Americans had become a common sight in our area. They descended in droves on the neighboring city of Nuremberg, gawking tourists, herded about in town in groups by fast talking guides whose erudition my brother and I seriously doubted, but whose explanations were listened to with rapt attention by the overseas visitors. They were mostly men and women beyond the prime of life, attired in clothes much too light and flashy for their age, the elderly ladies looking grotesque with lipstick and powder and rouge turning their faces into something funnier than the funniest clown's mask. Comedians and humorists used the visiting Americans as their target, zeroing in on their naiveté, their constant quest for the *Beschwerdebuch* - the complaint register -, their bragging about American efficiency. Uncle Sigmund reflected none of these qualities. He was rather humble, respectful to his older brother, anxious to cause none of the commotion which a house guest usually produces. Mother found him likeable, and so did my brother and I, although we could not understand why he, like all the other visiting "Americans" we had met, spoke his native German tongue with a strong Yankee accent and started every other sentence with "Well."

Several days after uncle Sigmund's arrival the two brothers left by train for Bad Kissingen to spend a few days at their sister's house. A couple of pictures, taken by a professional photographer, shows the trio facing the camera proudly, the brothers flanking their sister on either side, each one sporting a cane, which was very much the style. Father, approaching his 67th birthday, is the oldest, almost bald, his sparse hair totally white as he appears hatless on one of the photos, wearing his customary oxford grey cutaway coat and striped trousers. His neck is enclosed by a high stand-up collar; a watch chain leads from the top vest-buttonhole to the lower vest pocket, where he kept his pocket watch. On the second picture he wears a bowler on his head and a short light topcoat made of covert cloth, much like the cutaway suit a garment worn by the older generation only. Uncle Sigmund, 6 years younger and a little taller, has wavy grey hair parted neatly on the left side of his head. He wears a single-breasted dark sack suit, turned down collar and tie, horn-rimmed glasses. Aunt Sophie, who is the youngest, is also the shortest; although a bit dumpy, she looks quite distinguished in an all black coat and dress, a chain with a *lorgnon* [glasses with a handle] attached to it dangling clear down to her knees. She wears a dark wig. All three display strong family resemblance.



The last pictures of the Seligsberger siblings: Leon, Sophie & Sigmund, summer 1925
(photos: private)

Father returned home on Friday, after either 4 or 5 days in Bad Kissingen. He had even managed to call on the relatives in Würzburg between trains and was truly elated about the joyful reunion he had attended. I went on an all day excursion the following Sunday with 2 friends, and he received my report of various little tricks we had played on a farmer, who accused us of playing soccer on his meadow, and on a gendarme he had sent after us, in high good humor that evening. *Bleib' nur noch recht lang ein Lausbub'*, he said laughing (I hope you will remain a little rascal for a long time to come), while mother raised her eyebrows in slight disapproval, and he repeated the admonition, notwithstanding her questioning look.

At work the next day, August 24th, 1925, I received in the early afternoon a telephone message to come immediately to my father's store. An odd feeling of inexplicable panic kept me from calling back; instead I left abruptly and ran the few blocks in a fast trot. There were several people in the shop, when I opened the door, my mother among them. She came toward me ashen-faced, her pale blue eyes red-rimmed from weeping; even her fine grey hair seemed thinner and snowier. She said: "Our father - ..." as I fell into her arms. Over her shoulder I saw the still form of my father, laid out on the cutting table in the back of the store. I burst into tears. The days of the little rascal had come to an end.



Grave of Leon Seligsberger on the New Jewish Cemetery in Fürth
(photo: private)

Postscript

Nobody could have foreseen, even in his wildest imagination, that less than 8 years after the end of my narrative the world described therein would come to an end; that my more fortunate friends and I would flee the Hitler regime, that the synagogues of Fürth would be burned to the ground.



Centa Seligsberger in her later years
(photo: private)

Of the 4 sons of our landlord, Stefan went to Buenos Aires, Robert to Palestine, the two older brothers to London, England, as did Max W. who achieved fame and fortune as a dentist. Henry H., after a stint in a Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, swam the Rhine river to freedom, made his way across Europe and finally to the U.S. Uhli and Theo S. settled in New York. Ludwig Baumann emigrated to South Africa, where his uncle found him a job in a small country town far from Johannesburg. He joined the South African Expeditionary Forces at the beginning of World War II and was killed at Tobruk, fighting the Desert Fox, General Rommel. He left me 10 guineas in his will, a moving token of friendship beyond the grave. Fanny G., like many others, settled in Israel. Anton K., who would not join the Nazi party, went to England, only to be shipped back days before the outbreak of the war. Luckier than his father, who died in a Nazi prison, he survived assuming the protective coloring of an army uniform.

My mother died a natural death in 1946 at the house of my cousin Johanna in Amberg. Almost all of the Jews remaining in Fürth were deported to the infamous death camps and perished like millions of their brethren in the cattle cars and gas chambers of the Third Reich.



Philip and his uncle Sigmund in the U.S.
(photo private)

My brother and I have lived in the United States for the last 38 years, happily married and blessed with wonderful children and grandchildren.

A small Jewish community has reestablished itself in Fürth, composed of survivors of the Holocaust and returnees from abroad.



Advertisement of Leon Seligsberger Tailoring in "Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt" (Newsletter of the Jewish Communities in Nuremberg and Fürth), November 1933

(photo: Gerhard Jochem)

the door. I am painfully aware that the old clients are gone forever. The new generation recognizes neither the sound nor the prestige of the name which appears above the door.

Now and then in the last 15 years, a recurring dream keeps transporting me back to the old hometown. I am strolling on the sidewalk of a broad and busy boulevard; the silvery waters of the river Pegnitz are on one side, tall buildings with elegant storefronts on the other. Everything appears new, spacious and bright, quite unlike the narrow streets and weather-beaten facades I remember. After a while I reach the downtown area; it bears no resemblance to the one I know. Only the dimly lighted hallway through which I walk up to the back door of the old tailor shop is unchanged. The store is not mine any more, but I still have a key that fits the lock. Secretly, I open the door to see if the postman has dropped any letters through the mail-slot, just as I had done every Saturday morning for so many years when I managed the store after my father's death. At other times I find myself in the salesroom in the front part of the store which now belongs to me again. The floor plan is the same but the art nouveau fixtures have been replaced. I feel strangely uncomfortable in the unfamiliar surroundings. Nobody opens



"Everything appears new, spacious and bright, quite unlike the narrow streets and weather-beaten facades I remember. After a while I reach the downtown area; it bears no resemblance to the one I know." - Friedrichstraße 17 (to the left) in 2008

(photo: Susanne Rieger)

I wake up knowing that I shall never go back.

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