

My father's memoirs of his childhood and growing up in Russia

Florence has been bugging me to write down my memories of my childhood and of my growing up in the old country, up to the time me and my family left for the USA, so that my grandchildren may learn something of their roots.

The earliest I can remember is going with my father to swim in the river that was outside our town, and that was the center of local social life in the summer months. I can remember the long walk from our house, and I can see the streets leading to the river as if I was just there yesterday. Usually we would go there early in the morning, when the dew was still in the ground, the air was clean and I can still hear the birds singing. Father, who as a good swimmer would swim to the other side of the river and I hung around in the shallow waters, wondering whether I would ever be as good as my dad.

As I keep reminiscing certain events come to my mind and I am becoming convinced that I probably am a few years older than I am officially. Because some of the things I remember I could not possibly remember if I was actually born in the year that I am supposed to have been born. Now it is possible that some of the events, such as the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romanoffs Dynasty, the sinking of the Titanic, I picked up later as if it happened in my time. I really do not know. The more distinct memories are of my father taking me to cheder, so that must have been when I was at least five years old. Then come the memories of the two 1917 revolutions, and that is the time when I am positive that I was part of that picture. Up to that time I do not remember much of the war except for incidents when recruits sometimes ran wild before being shipped off to the front. As far as I can remember no one from the family was in the armed forces, so we were not directly involved. Then came the February Revolution, and apparently I was much too young to remember that particular event.

At this point I am going to concentrate on individual incidents. I do not think dates are of any importance. Maybe later with the help of my brothers I will be able to put them in chronological order.

Sometime, I believe it was in the spring of 1922, we started getting mail once more, and that is when we found our father passed away in the summer of 1919. It seems that while the Civil War and the pogroms were taking place in our part of the country, an item was published in the Forwards, stating that our towns' Jewish population was completely wiped out by the bandits. Father could not take it and suffered a heart attack.

Following the famine of 1922, the cordin sanitaire to which the Soviet Union was exposed by the Allies, was lifted, and we were once more able to get news from the outside world. It was then that we received 4 packages of food sent to us by our relatives through the ARA (American Relief Association). To say that it was like manna from heaven, would be putting it mildly. Literally, we were slowly starving to death. Except that, mother and I had to go to Kharkov to get the packages, and considering the chaotic state the railroads were in, it was quite a task. Anyhow, mother and I (the "held") started on this epic journey hoping for the best. First we had to get the main line to pick up the train to Kharkov, and if you were to ask me how we got there, I really have no idea.. However we did get there and when the train came managed to squeeze aboard. As to where we stayed in Kharkov, how we got to the ARA office, my mind is a complete blank. All I can remember is that we managed to sell most of the stuff, and then headed back for home. It was not that simple. We had to fight our way to the train, after having slept on the station floor for a couple of nights, and seeing people being carried off, who died from hunger. Finally, we got back to Koristovka. The station of the main line, but we could only get a ride for mother. So we had to walk in a miserably freezing rain. Fortunately there was a peasant woman going our way, and she helped us with the packages. I cannot help but laugh now, but it was not funny then. I had to empty my bladder. I did manage to open my fly, but my fingers were frozen solid, and I could not button up my pants. So I came home with my fly wide open.

ALEKSANDRIYA, town in Kirovograd oblast, Ukrainian SSR. The first Jews

Settled in Aleksandriya at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1864 they numbered 2,474, and in 1897, 3,735 (26% of the total population). The community had five synagogues, a talmud torah and communal school. The main occupation of the Jews in Aleksandriya was garment manufacturing. On the Day of Atonement of 1904 (Sept. 6), three Jews were killed and several injured in a pogrom. During the Civil Wars of 1919-20, the Jews in Aleksandriya endured great suffering. Aleksandriya being the headquarters of Ataman Grigoriev, leader of the Ukrainian pogrom bands. They were also attacked by Denkin's "White" army. In 1926 the Jewish population in Aleksandriya numbered 4,595 (23% of the total). The community was annihilated after the German Army occupied Aleksandriya in 1941.

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How can I possibly put some life into the few short sentences that describe the birth and death of a small town in the Ukraine. A town that until 1923, the year I left for the USA, was my home and the home of my family. I get scared, when I think of the enormous task before me, but still it is worth a try.

My family is after me to put together some of our family history to pass on to my grandchildren, and even my children who know very little of their roots. I do not know whether the result of my efforts will satisfy their expectations, so here goes.

The favorite story in our family is that of my grandfather, who I did not know. When the Tzar Alexander the third, for whom our town is named, visited Aleksandriya, grandfather was one of the towns' grand old men who greeted the Tzar with bread and salt and water. This experience was so overwhelming that he developed a stutter, which lasted until his death.

I suppose our town was no different than many other provincial towns in the Ukraine. One thing I do know, it was now like any of the shtetlach described by Sholom Aleichem. It had a boy's gymnasium, as well as girls, and another school not quite so fancy, which probably would be something like our middle school. It had a theater, a huge market place and a garden alongside the theater. Also a large hotel and what you may call a department store. A lot of beautifully wooded streets. I can still smell the lovely scent of acacia that pervaded the town in the spring. I will have to look up in the dictionary to find the word for myezd. I have an idea it may be something like a county, then it would compare with Ebensburg. The town was located on the mainline between Ekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk) and Odessa; also a few miles from the connecting RR Line between Kharkov and Odessa and Aleksandriya and Kiev. And the big event of the day was to go to the station and observe the passenger train stopping off. Besides our family, my mother had a brother who had a family of nine, himself, his wife, a son and six daughters. Abroad, my father had a brother who lived in New York as well as four sisters, one of whom lived in Winnipeg, Canada. Father was a tailor, and also had a clothing store. But apparently, he could not make too good a living, and in 1913, he and my oldest brother at the insistence of his sisters, emigrated, first to Canada, and then to the United States. We were supposed to follow him in 1914, and were prevented from doing so by the outbreak of the World War. After the signing of the separate Peace Treaty with Germany, we were completely cut off from all contacts with the outside World. And after the Revolution and ensuing Civil War, the Jewish newspapers in the States carried a lot of horror stories about the fate of the Jews, especially in the Ukraine. One day the Forwards had a story about our town in which it described the pogrom that our town was the victim of, and that the entire Jewish population was wiped out. Father could not take it, and was the victim of a heart attack. The date was May 30, 1919.

We did not find out about his death until the winter of 1922, when the tight ring of isolation around the Soviet Union had somehow loosened up, and the communications have been restored. This was the year of the great Famine, during which millions of people starved to death.

I have just finished reading the first page, and I am not too happy with the results. What I will do from now on, is to record individual incidents as they come to my mind, and then after I am done, tie them up in some kind of sequence.

Today, the sound of an aeroplane coming in for a landing means absolutely nothing, except maybe just a slight annoyance at the noise it is making. So you can hardly imagine the sensation that was created by the landing of a small single engine machine in the summer of 1917. The plane landed on a field just outside of the town, and it created a sensation that would have been created today if an interplanet ship would come in from Mars and landed at our airport. Ours was small town, but I bet every one of its 25 thousand inhabitants found his way to the field to look at the airplane. Eventually, the landing of plane became a common sight, but at that time it created quite a sensation.

In 1917 we had two revolutions. The first one in February was headed by the Social democrats who conducted elections to the Duma and was headed by Kerensky, who made a mistake of not signing a separate treaty with the Germans to end the War. The democratic popularly elected Govt. only lasted until October. Then came the October revolution. At the time the Bolshevicks led by Lenin and Trotsky took over the Govt., signed a separate treaty with Germans, who occupied the Ukraine and stayed there until the end of 1918. As soon as they moved out, the Civil War started, and that is when all the pogroms took place, when thousands of Jews were killed. We were right in the midst of it, and were exceptionally lucky to have come out alive. There were times when it was questionable whether we would live to another day. But we survived.

Before I move on, a few words about the German occupation. I remember very distinctly the day they came to our town. An endless procession of soldiers, horses, wagons, heavy artillery, guns and machine guns mounted on wagons drawn by horses...There really is not much I can say about the German Army of occupation. They were totally correct in their relationship with the population. As a matter of fact, I think I am correct in assuming, that when they conquered the Ukraine in the second WW, the Jewish population having been kept completely in the dark about the Nazi treatment of the Jews, may have welcomed them without any fear or apprehension. And chances are that the general population may have also welcomed the German Army as liberators. As a matter of fact I maintain that Hitler's biggest mistake was that by brutalizing the population (the Ukrainians) they signed their own death verdict. Anyway, the six or seven months that we lived under the German Occupation, were peaceful months. Then the Germans started their withdrawal creating a vacuum which both the Reds and Whites tried to fill in. And so we were embroiled in a Civil War.

As soon as the Germans departed, our part of the country was taken over by the Bolsheviks, then the Whites reorganized their forces and chased the Reds all the way from Crimea to the outskirts of Moscow from the South, and to the outskirts of Leningrad from the north.

I can still remember the day the Bolsheviks retreated from our town. For a while there was no organized government at all. The town was full of rumors. But no one really knew what was going on. The noises of distant artillery guns could be heard and close by some desultory rifle shooting. But the town was at anyone's mercy and waited with bated breath for what was to come. All we knew was that for the first three days of occupation, the town was at the mercy of the soldiers, who were let loose on the Jewish population to pillage, loot, and rape and even murder.

And so came the fateful day. Our landlady was a good Christian soul, and she always tried to do everything in her power to protect us from the mobs of peasants that would surge on the town taking advantage of the disorders, and they were no better than the soldiers. Because of that we were known for having a safe house and so many of our relatives, who could make it through the streets would come to our house for protection. I am going to draw up a sketch of our house to give you an idea of what it looked like.

My mother and two sisters slept in the bedroom, and my two brothers and I slept in what was known as the dining room, sitting room and bedroom. And into this house there were cramped in, anywhere from twenty to twenty five people.

The Whites moved into the town sometime during the night. When we got up in the morning we found our yard full of soldiers camping all over the place. Sometime in the morning a Sgt. accompanied by a soldier walked into the house and started checking everyone's papers. First they checked the men who were sitting in the living room and the kitchen, then the Sgt. looked in the darkened bedroom, took one look inside, the room was full of frightened women, said "nichevo", closed the door and walked out. We could not comprehend as to what happened. Instead of having whole bunch of soldiers attack the women, they just walked out. It was not normal. Later we found out, that the landlady was questioned, whether any of her Jewish tenants were communists, whether she had any complaints against us, because here was her chance to get even with us. She and her son who was a doctor in the Czarist Army, and who put on his uniform in anticipation of this questioning, succeeded in convincing the soldiers that we're good citizens, and succeeded in persuading the Sgt. to leave us alone. In the morning I went into the street and saw what happened in town. There were broken doors and windows and merchandise strewn all over. As a matter of fact I even saw a soldier stop a civilian and strip him of a pair of shoes right there in the broad daylight. Six months later the Reds returned and we were victims of another series of pogroms initiated by the retreating soldiers of the White Army. This time we had to leave our so-called safe house, because the old woman was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

All through the summer, the fortunes of war kept on changing, first in favor of the whites and then the Reds. And then at the height of the bitter winter months, the tide turned in favor of the Reds, and we were exposed to the raging fury of the retreating White Army. One day when a band of the soldiers was going through the town, we all sat in the darkened and shuttered dining room waiting for the worst to happen. As a matter of fact I was reading a book to while the time away. All of a sudden there was a banging on the locked gates, and since the gate was not opened, the soldiers started climbing over it. As soon as we saw that, all of us climbed out through the bedroom window and hid in the yard behind the barn. There we waited for the soldiers to leave. There was not much else we could do. The bandits threatened our mother to kill her, because there was not much left in the house for them to take except for mother's wedding ring. She had trouble taking it off, and the soldiers threatened to cut off her finger in order to get it. She tried awfully hard and finally with a super human effort succeeded in taking it off her finger. Eventually the situation became so unbearable that we decided to go over and stay with our uncle who lived a couple of blocks away. My youngest brother was suffering from scarlet fever and could not walk. We wrapped him up in blankets and carried him. Somehow we managed it, but it was not easy. We did not dare to walk in the streets, for fear of being attacked by stragglers, so we had to make our way through the yards, and to do that we had to actually hand him over the fences from one yard to the other. We finally made it to our uncle's house, and just as we settled down, a couple of stragglers broke into the house. Again I have to draw a sketch. They turned to the right, and as they progressed through the rooms, we proceeded them from room to room, and finally fled into the yard to hide. The soldiers ransacked the house, and warned those who were there that the worst was yet to come, because there was another regiment behind them following in their footsteps. And so it was. Another wave of retreating soldiers came through, cleaned the town out completely, and then came the miracle.

When the Red Army retreated, they were a bunch of recruits completely unaware of army routine. Poorly educated and poorly dressed. As a matter of fact when they were issued a set of new underwear they were so thrilled that they paraded through town in their clean underwear, acting like kids who were given new toys. And there they were. Our liberators, no more a rag tag mob, but a well disciplined Army, led by an officer on a white horse. For a while things quieted down. But not for long. Demobilized soldiers returned home organized themselves into bands of marauders, and once more we were exposed to the horrors and excesses of a bloody Civil War.

December 1980

Somehow, I feel that time is getting short. Taking into consideration of what happened to me physically in the last six months, I better hurry before the curtain goes down. So here we go again.

In looking back, there is always one event in your life that had it not happened, your whole life would not have been the same. And I am positive that had not the incident I am about to describe happen as it did, the whole family would not have gotten out of Russia when we did. So I am picking up from the day when I arrived in Moscow after a long and tedious journey, that lasted, if I remember correctly a couple of days. I do remember when we had a stop over in Kharkov, I met two daughters of my Hebrew School teacher, who were on their way to visit their family in Alexandria.

As soon as I got off the train, I get some transportation to take me to my cousin's house, and after a few hearty greetings, I took off to make contact with the office of the White Star line, the shipping company that had our boat reservations. When I got to the office in Teatralnaya Ulitza, I joined a long line of people who were there waiting to get to the office to be registered. It was a long wait, and I was beginning to wonder if I would be lucky to get in the same day. Finally my turn came, and I was finally inside waiting for the clerk to take my papers. And here comes the once in a lifetime happening that affects the course of your life. The clerk who took my papers was headed towards the table where he was typing up the applications for an exit visa. And just as he was about to take my application and put it on the bottom of an enormous pile, his attention was diverted by someone from the inner office who needed some information. And the clerk absentmindedly dropped my papers on the top of the pile, instead of the bottom. Then when he returned to the desk, he picked up my application and started processing it. While standing in the line before I got into the office, I talked to some people and they told me it takes a few days for the papers to come through. But nevertheless, I was back at the White Star office the next day, and you can imagine my surprise when my name was called out, and I was told to bring my family, as soon as possible, because they were not quite sure as to how long the borders would be open for us to leave. I could not believe my good fortune, and the people whom I had gotten to know, could not quite understand how it happened, that while they were still waiting for the visas, I had mine already. Anyway, I ran to the telegraph to tell my mother to come to Moscow immediately.

I cannot tell you the sensation that my telegraph created at home. Because even though the time had come for the disposal of all our household possessions, we still held onto the bedding and some of the furniture that was essential to keep to the very last minute. So when mother received my telegram everything had to be disposed of in a hurry. To make the story short, they did, and a week later, arrived in Moscow. It was quite a saga in itself, because mother became sick and authorities were looking for her to take her off the train, because of a typhus and typhoid epidemic. Somehow she eluded them, and finally arrived, and I met them at the station, having met every train that came from Kharkov, daily from the time I sent off the cable. As soon as they detrained, I sent the whole family to my cousin's home, and mother and I went to the White Star Office to pick up our visas, because the word was out that any day the curtain would come down, and if we were still there, that was the end. And so we rushed over to the office. The papers were there ready to be picked up, but mother had an infected finger, and it had to be removed before they would release the papers. So we rushed to the doctor's office to have it removed, and after all that hassle, we were given the papers, and were told that it was absolutely imperative that we get on the train the same evening because this was the last train that would be allowed to leave the Soviets. Do I have to tell you, that we did not waste any time rushing back to my cousin's to get the family and the luggage and head for the train. When we got back to the house, we found out that my sisters put a whole accumulation of clothes from the long trip through the wash, and they had to pick up everything as it was, without waiting for it to dry, and pick it up. But that was not so bad. The crowning blow was the fact that my younger brother could not wait and had to go sightseeing and there was absolutely no way for us to contact him. So, with a heavy heart we got all our possessions together and headed for the railroad station, hoping that somehow he would get back in time to catch up before we boarded the train. And as fate would have it, or as it would be shown on television, just as we were about to board the train he showed up just before the final whistle, and we were together once more. At the border we had any easy time with our luggage because the inspectors took one look at the wet clothing, and that was enough for them. And so ended one of the chapters of our long journey to America. We spent 6 weeks in a camp in Latvia, then to Riga, where we

spent another couple of weeks, before we were sent to Libau, to board a boat for our trip to England, where we arrive in London on November 8<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. From there we went by train to Southampton, where we spend five and a half years waiting for our American visas. And looking back I still believe that had it not been for that episode at the White Star office, the course of lives of all our family would have been changed.

PS. RE: The name of our hometown. I have just come across a landsman from our town, and found out, that the name of Aleksandriya was changed to Zaporozhye.

1917 to 1921

The third wave of pogroms occurred during the years 1917-1921, in scope and gravity far surpassing the two previous outbreaks. These attacks on the Jews were connected with the revolutions and the civil war, which took place in Eastern Europe during this period. At the end of 1917, pogroms had already occurred in the townlets and towns within the proximity of the war front. The riot was headed by groups of soldiers from the disintegrating czarist army, and consisted of unruly acts against Jews by drunkards and looting. Many pogroms of this type occurred in the Ukraine after the declaration of its independence in 1918. The first pogroms to be accompanied by slaughter of Jews were, however, perpetrated by units of the Red Army, which retreated from the Ukraine in the spring of 1918 before the German Army. These pogroms took place under the slogan of "Strike at the bourgeoisie and the Jews". The communities of Novgorod-Seversky and Glukhov in northern Ukraine were most severely affected. After a short period of confusion, the Soviets adopted stringent measures against pogromists found in the ranks of the Red Army. In addition to the fundamental and comprehensive information campaign, severe penalties were imposed not only on the guilty individuals who were executed but also on complete army units, which were disbanded after their men had attacked Jews. Even though pogroms were still perpetrated after this, mainly the Ukrainian units of the Red Army at time of its retreat from Poland (1920), in general the Jews regarded the units of the Red Army as the only force which was able and willing to defend them.

In the spring of 1919, at the time of the retreat of the Ukrainian Army before the Red Army that occupied Kiev, units of the Ukrainian Army carried out organized military pogroms in Berdichev, Zhitomir, and other towns. These pogroms reached their climax in the massacre at Proskurov on Feb. 15, 1919, when 1700 Jews were done to death within a few hours. On the following day, a further 600 victims fell in the neighboring townlet of Felshtin (Gvardeiskoye). Those responsible for these pogroms went unpunished and hence forward the Ukrainian soldiers considered themselves free to spill Jewish blood. The Jews regarded Simon Petlura the Prime Minister of the Ukraine and commander of its forces, as responsible for these pogroms in 1926 he was assassinated while in exile in Paris by Shalom Schwarzbardt. The general chaos, which reigned in the Ukraine in 1919, resulted in the formation of large and small bands of peasants who fought against the Red Army. The commanders of these bands (atamans) occasionally gained control of whole regions. The Jews in the villages, townlets, and towns were constantly terrorized by the peasants who extorted money (contributions) and supplies from them or robbed and murdered them. These atamans included Angell, Kazakov, Kozyr-Zyrko, Struk, Volynets, Zeleny, Tutenik and Shepel. The ataman Grigoriyev, (see note #2) who in May 1919 seceded from the Red Army with his men, was responsible for pogroms in 40 communities and the deaths of about 6000 Jews in the summer of 1919. He was killed by ataman Makhno, who led a peasant rebellion in Eastern Ukraine and endeavored to restrain his men from attacking the Jews. One of the most notorious pogroms carried out by the peasant bands was that of Trostyanets in May 1919 when over 400 people lost their lives.

In the fall of 1919, there was a wave of pogroms in the wake of counter-revolutionary "White Army" under the command of General Dinikin, and its advance of Northern Caucasus in the heart of Russia. This army, which sought to restore the ancient regimes, proclaimed the slogan: "Strike the Jews and save Russia". Its officers and soldiers attacked the Jews in every place they occupied. The most sinister of these pogroms was in Fastov at the beginning of September 1919, in which about 1500 Jewish men, women, and children were massacred. The soldiers of the "White Army" also perpetrated similar pogroms in other regions of Russia, in Siberia, where they were led by Admiral Kolchak and where the Cossack battalions of Baron B

ungern-Sternberg gained notoriety for the systematic destruction of many communities in Eastern Siberia and Mongolia; and in Belorussia, where Bulak-Balalchowich was in command in 1920. During 1920-21, when the Red Army gained control of Ukraine, the armed Anti-Soviet bands still retained their full strength and the pogroms. And the brutalities against the Jews assumed the character of revenge, such as the massacre in Tetiev, in which about 4000 Jews were put to death and the whole townlet was set on fire. The anti-Jewish movement set the total annihilation of the Jews as its objective and destroyed whole townlets. Only the military weakness of the attackers prevented a holocaust of Ukrainian Jewry.

During the period of pogroms, Jewish self-defense organizations were formed in many places throughout the Ukraine. The Jewish Militia for War against Pogroms of Odessa was renowned; it prevented pogroms in the largest community of Ukraine. Such groups were created in many towns and townlets but they were not capable of withstanding military units of large armed bands. It was only after the consolidation of the Soviet regime that they received its support and played an important role in the suppression of the armed bands movements.

It is difficult to assess the scope of the pogroms during the civil war and the number of victims they claimed. Partial data are available for 530 communities in which 887 major pogroms and 349 minor pogroms occurred; there were 60,000 dead and several times that number wounded. The pogroms, which occurred in the years 1917-21, shocked East European Jewry, as well as World Jewry. On the one hand, they rallied many Jews to the Red Army and the Soviet regime. On the other hand, they strengthened the desire for the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people and a power full and independent Jewish force.

#### SUMMARY

The period of 1917 to 1921 covers a period that was marked by a constant wave of pogroms to which we were exposed and were fortunate enough to survive.

#### NOTE #1

Simon Pelura's soldiers band was in our town, but they didn't begin to slaughter Jews until they moved out. Then they went on a rampage.

#### NOTE #2

Your grandmother Ida was a seamstress, and I used to go with her to deliver dresses to Griguriyev's wife. They lived on the outskirts of our town.

#### NOTE #3

Denikin was the Commander of the White Army and they were in our town from July 1919 to January 1921.

April 1981

It has been quite some time since I last sat behind the typewriter. Another visit to the hospital, and what not. Just a reminder that time is getting short. However we just went through the Passover Seder. And what a pleasure it was to have the Pittsburgh, as well as the Princeton branch sitting at the table and have Jon recite the traditional four questions, and watch Florence pishing away with happiness. The Lyons' have already left for Charlotte.

Now back to reliving another chapter in the Green sage. Last thing I wrote about was the arrival at the place called Atlantic Park, which was to become our home for close to six years. But now I will retrace my steps back to the arrival at a transient camp in Latvia. We crossed the Latvian border at Sebrzh and after a short train ride arrived at a camp in Rekne. We did not know it at the time, but the camp was a prototype of

the concentration camps that the Nazis built up, where they put the Jews before sending them to the ovens. Tremendous barracks with wooden double tiers of bunks for beds, where we spent about six weeks. We did have a chance to leave earlier when they asked for volunteers to go to Riga on Yom Kippur. But it would not have occurred to us to travel on such a holiday. Little did we know that every extra day spent in that camp would mean a few extra months spent in transit. So how smart could one be, but the fact is that those who took advantage of that offer got to the states at least two years ahead of us.

The camp was situated next to an army camp, and we watched the recruits being drilled in an open field. There was a peculiar thing that we did notice, and that was that each recruit had some wheat and some hay tied to the legs, but when they started off marching the mystery was solved. As they marched the drill sergeant would keep the cadence by shouting "wheat", "hay" instead of right and left.

I don't remember exactly how we spent the time, but I do remember going in a group to a nearby "shtetl" some time in the evening getting together in a recreation hall and the biggest excitement, was being awakened in the middle of the night by a crazy supervisor of the camp to take a shower. The next thing I remember vaguely is getting on a train and finally getting to Riga, where we got our American visas. Two weeks in Riga, and then another short train ride to Libau, where we picked up a boat to go to our next stop, Southampton, England. We crossed over the Baltic Sea to the North Sea by way of the Kiel Canal, and that is where we got a glimpse of the terrible inflation that was rampant at the time, when we saw Germans standing in the banks of the canal trying to see our material things, such as cigarettes and matches. Going through the canal we met boats going in the opposite direction and the sailors would try to convey to us what we were heading into. It was only when we got to the North Sea that we realized that they were trying to tell us how rough the North Sea was. And we sure were surprised. The sea was so rough that most of the time I and a couple of passengers were the only people in the dining room. However, as everything else, that part of the journey was over and we finally docked in London on Nov. 8, 1923. The reason I remember that date is because there in the dock was a Russian ship bedecked with flags, celebrating the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Upon arrival in London, we were put on buses and taken over to the Waterloo station, where we got on a train that brought us to what was to become for most of us lucky ones our home for the next 5 to 6 years of our stay in England. The reason I say lucky is because some of the immigrants had the misfortune to get stranded in other ports and in other places, that were not as comfortable and nice, relatively speaking, as the one we finally landed in.

And now I take great pleasure in introducing you to ATLANTIC PARK, Eastleigh, in the county of Hampshire, Hants for short, England. During the 1<sup>st</sup> WW, it was used as an airport, and consisted of a group of hangers that were converted into dormitories, dining rooms, a recreation hall used for the amusement of the inhabitants, "us", a theatre, offices and other facilities needed to accommodate a group of people who were, by fate, thrown together, for a period that lasted from a few months to a few years. And in retrospect. it was amazing how they adjusted themselves to a situation that no one expected or was previously exposed to.

As I look back, and it has not happened just yesterday, but to be exact, almost 58 years ago, we started our journey last in the summer of 1923. It is almost incredible how we adapted ourselves to conditions that were quite new to all of us. It is true that having lived through the two Russian Revolutions, the Civil War, the German occupations, the Great Famine, and, on the whole, one continuous chain of startling events, just being in England was a revolutionary change. But it is still amazing, how we could have picked ourselves up practically from the ground, and start living it up again as normal human beings. It just proves that the old adage, that you never know how much you can take, and how you will react under certain circumstances, until you are actually exposed to it.

Of course, it did take some time to get adjusted to the new environment, getting around, and getting acquainted with new people. But eventually, just like water that finds its level, we settled down, found some friends that we had something in common with, and established some kind of routine. Of course the most important thing at the time was learning English. - A language that was completely different from Russian, Yiddish or Hebrew. Some classes were started, but I could not see myself sitting down with a bunch of children. Fortunately there were a couple of more people who felt the way I did. We got hold of a self-teacher, established some kind of a routine, and got down to the business of mastering the English



language. I must admit that it was a grueling job. And sometimes we wondered whether we were really on the right track because while we were struggling to put two words together, there were others who were hacking away, and it sounded as if they knew what they were talking about. For the first year none of us dared to open his or her mouth until we were sure that our English was more or less correct. And in the long run it paid off. I believe that as ignorant as we were, we still chose the right method. What we did was to undertake to learn one hundred words a day. Of course we know that it was an almost impossible task. So the first day we took 100 words. The next day we went over the same words, and replaced the first 25 words that we retained with another 25 words, and so on, so that in the long run we did learn at least 25 words a day. Eventually as our memory became sharper we added more and more words to our vocabulary. The success and correctness of our method proved itself because eventually when I did go to school in the States, I had no trouble with the language. As a matter of fact I was able to go to a business college in Southampton where I took up shorthand and bookkeeping.

We had no idea how long we would have to stay at Atlantic Park, and at first we did not know what to do with our time. Eventually different activities surfaced to occupy our leisure, and life at the Park took on the semblance of every day life in a normal community. Different groups emerged, theatre group, literary circle, and other activities, such as a soccer club, cricket club, each one with its own aficionados. And so, at any time of the day something was always going on. We even reached a point when we became annoyed with a lack of variety in our food and pulled off a hunger strike. But the biggest thing we managed to achieve was the publication of the first Atlantic Park Weekly, which was at first received with, a lot of enthusiasm, and later, as time went on deteriorated into a fortnightly, then a monthly, and eventually gracefully exited. The reason was very simple. As time went on, and the population of the Park declined, because every month new visas were issued and the immigrant population declined accordingly.

The weekly was published in three languages, Yiddish, Russian and English, and when the time for its going to press came, the place was a beehive of activity. We did not have any printing presses at the time, but we used a hectograph. Originals were written with special ink, then transferred onto a vessel filled with a gelatin substance, and then made an imprint on the gelatin and from that copies were made. Quite a laborious process, but it worked. I still have of a copy of the first magazine. Anyway, from that we printed so many copies and distributed them amongst the immigrant population. We also organized a drama group, and produced some plays and musical concerts. We also had some happy as well as unhappy love affairs. Our soccer club was well known in the English community, and local clubs were very anxious to play with the foreigners. We were not allowed to work but eventually when the strawberry season came, and there was a lack of local labor, we were given permission to go into the fields to help with the harvest, and were paid at the rate of a penny and a half per basket. It was quite a change of pace. I have a picture to substantiate my claim. What a picture. Before I move on, and so that I do not forget, when learning English, we were helped quite a lot, by going to the silent movies. That was before the advent of the talkies, figuring out the subtitles and wrestling with English newspapers. Eventually the Board of Guardians, persuaded the British Government to allow us to go to work, menial jobs only, and that is when quite a few of us went to London to get some jobs, hoping that whatever we learned would come in handy in the "golden medine". I was apprenticed to a furrier, and the funny thing was his name was Louis Dorf. Get it? Florence's maiden name is Dorfman. Incidentally, for the uninitiated, Florence is my wife.

And just as it has happened before once more, without any notice, there came a change for the best in our lives. Thanks to the pressure that was put on the Immigration Service, by organizations working on our behalf, led by Congressman Louis Dickstein, the parent or what we now refer to as Senior citizens, were to be admitted without waiting their turn, and as soon as they entered the States, they could apply for citizenship. As soon as they did that their children under 21 years of age would be let in without waiting for their turn. And so it happened that I and my two brothers who were also under 21 would be issued visas immediately. And so it came about, that my mother left for New York, and some time in February of 1929 Johnny, Charles and I boarded the SS Majestic, bound for New York. As excited as we were to get going,, it was almost that we did so regretfully. The five years and three months that we spent in England was despite all the inconveniences, a very meaningful experience, especially in the light of some of the letters we received from other immigrants who decided to go to other places instead of waiting for their return as we did. We had an opportunity to go to Argentina, and I always shudder that we almost did. Time and again we were under pressure to go somewhere. The shipping companies whose wards we were considered

by the British Government tried every trick under the sun to get rid of us because they were charged one dollar a day per person for our upkeep. And even through they expected to collect the money from us in the States, in the long run they did not get a single cent.

August 1981

Now back to business to pick up another segment of our saga of the journey to the New World. Events are getting hazier from day to day. And I am beginning to wonder whether the whole thing really happened. Some of my friends left Atlantic Park before I did, so the move to London was not quite so bad because I was not quite alone in the big city. Some of the immigrants had quite affluent relatives and they were able to find homes themselves, others like myself were housed in what was called the Shelter, which was subsidized by the Jewish Board of Deputies. That was not exactly the name, I will probably think of it later, meanwhile it will have to do

As soon as I settled down, and even before they found a job for me, I started wandering around town, sightseeing and taking in all the wonders of the Western world, which to a little boy from the Ukrainian steppes, was a revelation in itself.

Thanks to the efforts of the Board I was apprenticed to work in a fur shop and believe it or not my boss's name was Louis Dorf. Who could have imagined that 13 years later I would marry a Florence Dorfman. Of course it happened in the movies, the old cliché "only in the movies: would have been used appropriately. Eventually our lives became more or less routine. We made friends in the Jewish community. And since they lived in Stamford Hall, we were able to learn some of the lives that the Jews lived in the more affluent part of London. It was quite different from the style they lived in the East End.

As we became more acclimated to London, we found out that we could go on forever discovering the cultural treasures of the Big City. First we discovered the Jewish Theatre in Whitechapel, from there we moved on to the theatre district around Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly Circle. From there it was only one step away to the British Museum, the Tate Gallery, and the National Gallery on Trafalgar Square. Then Hyde Park, and its neighbor, the Kensington Gardens. And from there Kew Gardens and Hampton Court. I could go on forever and still not mention all the wonderful things to be seen in London. And it was only natural that we should find out that some of the things that were almost inaccessible to us because it cost too much money could be achieved if you know the ropes. Such as, for instance, Albert Hall which can be compared to Carnegie Hall in New York, and where the finest artists and symphony orchestras could be heard for nothing, if you were able to be one of the first fifty people to stand in line, you were admitted to the balcony free. I can still remember seeing Yehudah Menuhin in Albert Hall dressed in Fauntelroy costume, and listening to Fritz Kreisler and others. Also the unforgettable evenings I spent in the Jewish Theatre on Whitechapel Road.

December 9, 1981

Quite a jump from the last date. Well, many things happened since I wrote the last night. So now I will bring you up to date. Tita, that is Elsie's daughter was getting married on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, and we figured on going to the wedding and then take a side trip to New York to visit with the boys, as well as visiting Jack who was seriously ill in the hospital. However man proposes and God disposes. First mother got sick and had to be hospitalized. So, since Doctor Bloom is a friend of the family, he assured us that he would keep mother in the hospital until we returned from the wedding. Iz doch gut. But not everything is so simple. On August 26<sup>th</sup> I started getting ready for the trip by getting my clothes out of the closet, so that we would not waste any time packing. On August 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 in the morning we had to call an ambulance because I started to hemorrhage, just as I did a year ago, when I wound up with a colon resection. Once again I had a series of tests and could not find any way to stem the flow of blood. To make the story short,

on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, once more I was operated for another colon resection. This time on the right side. By this time I was a veteran patient. Nothing surprised me anymore. At least that is what we thought. And then one evening while I was still in the hospital, I was hit with a cardiac deficiency. And the most amazing thing happened. It was 5:00 in the evening, and it was just about the time Dr. Bloom makes the rounds before he goes home. And as I was thrashing around gasping for breath, in walks my friend. Immediately the hospital was alerted by CODE RED, and just as on television things began to happen. Except this time I was more than just a spectator. It was a close call, but once more I pulled through, and within a week I was on my way home. After a week's stay in the house I developed a shortness of breath, and back to the hospital I went. Another weeks stay in and back home I went, but this time I was provided with an oxygen tank to facilitate my breathing. Today I had them take out the tank and I hope that I will not need it again. It is a little over 3 months since I was operated and I am slowly regaining my health. I already got the green light from the surgeon and last Friday Dr. Bloom gave me permission to drive. So hopefully I am getting back to normal. It will probably take another 2 or 3 months until I recover fully. Meanwhile, Florence has been going through one hell of a time, taking care of 2 invalids in one household. We cannot wait until I am able to travel, and we intend to take off for a few weeks. And do not ask me where. Anywhere will do. I suppose by now, whoever reads this particular segment is all screwed up with the dates so I will attach a detailed schedule of my dates in the hospital and you will get a better picture of the Green bout with the doctors. Frankly there were times when I was ready to give up, but some kind of stubborn streak in me made me fight. Sometimes I wonder whether all the years we were exposed to hunger, starvation, and general deprivation has toughened my body and made me more or less of a "knacker".