

NEW FARMS SECONDARY SCHOOL GRANDMOTHER DIES ILLNESSES
 PARENTS GET DIVORCED A NEW FLAT 1927 - 1930

The economic climate continued to be favourable but not for long. There were, however, problems for landowners from the start of the foundation of the Republic. The Government was committed to land reform. There was a paragraph 11 in the act which did not permit anyone to own more than 300 acres. (The land measure used was the Joch in German or jutar in Slovak. I don't know precisely how much of a Joch is an acre. I use one Joch throughout as being one acre.) This sounds a lot for English conditions but agriculture in Czechoslovakia was then far less intensive than it is here now. Farms were generally larger. If someone owned more than this, the State took it over in return for a sort of gilt-edged stock which was not saleable and virtually worthless.

This land reform affected different strata of the population in different ways. Father had to give up some, but not much, land in Madunice. The land he gave up was behind the cemetery, stretching towards the river Vah. A number of peasants were allocated strips of this land. But the reform did not always achieve its intention. Some of the new owners were unable to cultivate both the new and their old strips and let it to others.

Thus emerged a stratum of richer peasants, farming perhaps 10 acres and poorer one who stayed with 1 - 5 acres.

The larger landowners like father, who had more than 300 acres, either continued farming on 300 acres or let their land to others as it was permitted to work any acreage of rented land. Father chose the latter course. That is how he got Velké Janíkovce, where he rented two farms. Within 2 or 3 years he rented several more farms in the same area including Velký Lapáš. He ended up farming a total of rather more than 5000 acres. Each of these farms had its own yard and house. The houses were allocated to bailiffs or foremen except the one in Velký Lapáš, which was the most attractive one with an acre of mature garden, which became our residence. Madunice was now only a small part of the total. But its soil was the best and it always remained the most important farm. It was owned by father and had been the family seat for about 75 years. It remained close to father's heart.

Some of the new land was along the eastern arm of the Nitra river and one of its tributaries the Cetín (pronounced Tseteen, Czétényke in

in Hungarian). The land immediately adjoining the river, was subject to annual inundations and only suitable for summer pasture. That is how father acquired sheep. Young cattle were also grazed on this pasture. Exhibit 53 shows cattle by the Nitra river. Exhibit 54 a home made bridge over the small Nitra arm, father and I standing on it. Exhibit 55 some of the sheep. The trough is for meal which was given as supplementary when there was'nt enough grass. Exhibit 56 shows a stable in the upper farm in Veľké Janikovce. This farm was rented in a rather run-down condition. The second farm was lower down on the flat land, ex.57. This was in excellent condition. The chimney stack belongs to the agricultural alcohol distillery. Exhibit 58 shows a pair of Hungarian white race oxen pulling a wooden barrel type water tank. In the back is our open Tatra car. Exhibits 59 and 60 show young cattle and horses respectively.

The size of the business brought about more administrative work which was centred in the semi-basement office in Bratislava. Father always disliked this work and I think it became too much for him. Everything was now on a large scale. More cattle was being fattened and that meant more worry to sell them. The same applied to much larger quantities of wheat, barley, potatoes, maize and sugarbeet. The cash flow increased and so did dealings with banks. Taxes were a nightmare for him and so were any forms and the multitude of regulations, concerning wages, insurances, rents etc. Had father overstretched himself? Had he underestimated the work involved? Has this been a contributing factor to the breakdown of the marriage? He was by now the largest farmer in Southern Slovakia but perhaps one of the most worried ones too. He was an excellent farmer, innovative and successful and generally considered so by his peers. It was his dislike of administrative work and the inadequacy of personnel that put too big a burden on his shoulders. But he was a great optimist and I think would have won, had it not been for the world economic crash which adversely affected farmers the world over in the 1930s.

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For me school was of course the most important matter. The real gymnasium which I attended was the only one teaching in German, in Bratislava. There were three types of secondary schools: a "Bürgerschule" or citizens' school where anybody could go after primary school without an entrance exam until the official school leaving age of 15; a Gymnasium for which an entrance exam was needed and where both Latin and Greek were

tought and which generally tended towards the humanities; there was no such school in Bratislava; and the Realgymnasium. In this Latin was taught but not Greek and there was more emphasis on mathematics, the sciences and modern languages. In the gymnasia one could stay until 18 when the Matura exam was taken, though quite a number of pupils left at the age of 15. Apart from these three types there were also some specialised schools which gave a diploma. These were either technical schools or the Handelsschule, or business school, where Leslie went. It was just across the street from the realgymnasium.

There were about 1000 boys and girls in my school. The building was much larger than that of the primary school. It had three floors. One ascended several steps from the pavement to a large imposing heavy double door (see exhibit 97) which led into a lobby. A broad staircase opposite the entrance doors led half way up to the next floor and split on a landing into a right and a left staircase. The same repeated itself on the next floor up. Classrooms opened on each of the three floors from the right and left corridors. The headmaster's office and the staff room were on the top floor.

School started at 1.45 pm on Monday - Wednesday and at 8 am on Thursday to Saturday. We had generally 5 periods a day of 45 minutes each, a total of $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours including a 15- 20 minutes half-time break and shorter breaks between other lessons. Thus we left school at 6.15 pm, respectively 12.50 pm.

The reason for this curious arrangement was that the same building also served the Hungarian Realgymnasium. The Government were accused by some of not spending sufficient money on educating the minority ethnic peoples. Yet no one could really blame the Government seriously. Their policy for the minorities was very enlightened and one had to appreciate that good schools were provided at all for the minorities. Ironically the Government received no support from the Germans and instead of thanks for their efforts were rewarded with a vicious irredentist movement of the Nazis which ultimately broke up the Republic.

The building had to be vacated completely every day and one could not leave anything behind. We took all our clobber with us.

We had special chemistry, physics and natural sciences auditoria of the amphitheatre type. The benches were on steps so that one could get a good view of the demonstration table in front of the class room. Adjoining these auditoria were store rooms for chemicals and apparatus, for stuffed animals, butterfly and minerals collections, a human skeleton and other educational aids. These were also shared with the Hunga-



55. Sheep at the meal trough

58. Hungarian white cow-dog pulling water barrel. Taken out in tank.



56. Stable in the upper farm in Velké Janíkovce



57. The lower farm yard in Velké Janíkovce.
Note the chimney stack of the alcohol distillery



58. Hungarian white race oxen pulling water barrel. Tatra car in back



59. Young cattle



60. Young horses.

rians. Everything had to be cleared away after each lesson and it was difficult to establish any culpfit in the case of breakages or damage.

In the first 1 - 3 years we were split up into three parallel forms, both boys and girls. For the higher forms there were only two as many left school when they had reached the age of 15. In the last year we were 20 boys and 10 girls in the form and the parallel one had about the same number. There were about 20 forms altogether but there were not enough class rooms. Consequently there were always 3 - 4 forms - usually those in the last 2 years - which had to move after every period into another room. The reason why there were empty rooms was that its occupants had gone either to the gym or one of the science auditoria. The homeless forms were called "Wanderklasse". There were other complications. We took all subjects together in our form except for religious tuition. For this we split into three groups: protestants, catholics and Jews and joined our co-religionists from the parallel form. All this moving about made the time table very complicated. During the 10 minutes intervals between periods, hords of boys and girls, carrying their books and satchels (and coats in the winter) as battering rams, stampeded along the corridors and up and down the staircases. As the Wanderklassen were always the older pupils and always stampeded en masse at maximum speed, they presented a serious hazard for the younger pupils. Any collision left the younger boys and girls in a state of shock, disarray and with bruised limbs. This certainly bothered me in the first years until in the last two years I became a stampeding teenager myself - but I always managed to be in the rear of the gang.

Despite of these handicaps it was a good school. There was virtually no truancy and I never missed a day except when ill.

I had 8 years of Latin, Slovak, mathematics, geography, history, Vaterlands - kunde ("Patriotic teaching"), German, zoology and botany, chemistry and mineralogy including geology, natural sciences, religious tuition and PE. In the last 2 years we had philosophical propaedeutic (i.e. preliminary or introductory study; see also chapter 17) and projectional geometry.

There were not enough suitable teachers in Slovakia, so some came from the German Sudeten parts of Bohemia. One of these was our head master Dr. Karl Meznik. He was very short and had a high pitched voice. He was nevertheless much respected and even feared. To be confronted with him

over some misdemeanor - as I have been on two occasions - was no light matter. Rumour had it that on one or two occasions he was not spotted in good time by a Wanderklasse stampeding along and that he had come to grief.

Our form master was Anton Gratzner (no relation of my fellow pupil of that name) for the whole of the 8 years. He was one of the old school, a teacher before the first world war and spoke Hungarian fluently. He was well built, had a round head, thin fair hair and a soft expressive voice. He hesitated a little when he spoke and when excited his voice rose but he was never irate nor did he lose his temper. When searching for the correct word, he closed his eyes, his lips started to tremble faintly and at last he enunciated the word triumphantly. Latin, the subject he taught us, was my worst one and I nearly failed one or two annual exams. Though I was fairly good at other subjects, failing Latin would have meant repeating one form and losing a whole year. Despite of my bad performance in Latin, Gratzner was always very understanding and helpful and urged me on to work harder, so in the end I scraped through.

Our French teacher was Kommers. He was tall, had thinning and constantly dishevelled hair, a moustache and wore rimless (or very thin framed) glasses. His nose up in the air, he constantly sniffed quite audibly as if saying "What is this stench?". The sniffing became louder when he got excited. He walked up and down in the aisle between the benches, his toes turned out and with his baggy trousers gave a vaguely Chaplinesque performance. He was a bit of an anti-semitic and I never hit it off with him, especially after I had returned from Vevey and my colloquial French had become as good or better than his. He made me always fail on grammar.

One of our teachers was an odd character and hardly fitted into the room. Mr. Fisher was short, moved fast and jerkily, had a high pitched squeaky voice and usually a dirty shirt and collar and a greasy crumpled tie. He was a bachelor and suspected to be gay though there is no hard evidence. His nickname was Busi, which is short for the German word for gay. He was about the only teacher who did not command respect nor was he able to enforce discipline. He was particularly helpless and embarrassed when confronted with a girl - hence perhaps the origin of his nick name. More tricks were played on him than on any other teacher. On one occasion a rope was slung along the coat hooks which were fixed to a board which ran all along the wall where there were no windows. We had hung our coats on the hooks and thus the rope was concealed.

The coat in front was tied by its loop to the rope. At the back of the room one boy held the other end of the rope. When Mr. Fisher's eyes happened to be in the direction of the coats, the boy in the back pulled the rope which made the front coat jump down and up again. Mr. Fischer said nothing, though we had all seen the coat jump. When he looked again the coat jumped again but this time an increasing distance. This was repeated a few times more. Finally the coat reached the floor and then smartly jumped up again. It was a great success and Mr. Fischer and we roared with laughter. He taught us German and Slovak but did not last long in our school.

For many years and up to the Matura, our maths teacher was Mr. Bacharach, the only Jew on the staff. He was a big lanky man. The movements of his arms and legs were not co-ordinated and he had a nervous jerk of his head. He had curly, greying hair, was jovial, had a good sense of humour and was generally liked. He was widely read and sometimes discussed in class philosophy, literature even politics and anything that he was interested in at the time. He often lingered on after the end of a period for a chat. We had a number of girls who were good in maths and he threw them special smiles. I had a reasonable relationship with him though I was not very good in his subject. A few days before the Matura exam he predicted that I would fail "with drums and trumpets". In the event I got a "good" mark and he was genuinely pleased and congratulated me.

My favourite teacher who probably had the most lasting effect on me was Mr. Orthman, who took us in natural sciences. Tall, elegantly though casually dressed, fair haired and young, an immigrant from Bohemia, he had embraced the Jewish faith after having married a Jewish girl. He was an excellent teacher and his style was very modern. He ran the class almost like a university seminar. In the final year we did human anatomy and with the help of a skeleton we learned all bones with their German and Latin names. He had his favourites, of whom Katka was one and I was another one. We were amongst a small select band who carried the skeleton and other educational aids to and from the store room. This gave us a good opportunity to chat with him.

Mr. Szekeres (pronounced Sekeresh) took us in Chemistry. Not until I was about 16 had I thought of studying chemistry at University. I had thus no particular reason to shine in this subject for the first 6 years.

Szekeres was tall and slim, had a high forehead and was feared for his temper. He spoke with a strong Hungarian accent and like many Hungarians was

rather excitable. He was not above hitting a boy or pulling him by the ear or what was even worse: twisting the short hair around the ear until it really hurt. He never tortured a girl. Once he caught me talking to my neighbour while he was lecturing and punished me by making me sit between Katka and another girl, called Mimi. The idea presumably was to make me being ashamed of being seated with the girls but I must confess I rather enjoyed it.

Another teacher feared for his temper was Mr. Winkler who took us in geography. He was always immaculately dressed in sports suits and wore a short winter coat with a fur collar and a soft chic hat. Of middle height, a bit of a dandy and snob but a good teacher. Though he never liked me I was keen on the subject. I was never amongst his favourites who carried the wall maps to and from the store. On one occasion he got very cross with me and said (I can't remember the exact words) that my bread-basket was too close to my mouth. This was totally uncalled for and I resented his remark, made in front of the whole class. Elegant he was but a vulgar chap behind that facade.

The catholic priest who took us in religious tuition was called Lang or Langer or something like that. He spoke with a strong Czech accent, always wore a dog-collar, had a clear, loud voice, was self-assured and friendly. In our first years we did the bible, discussed the various parts of the mass, the significance of the sacraments etc. In the last years we did no more of religion in the narrow sense of the word but ranged wide and far afield. He was a very erudite person and obviously enjoyed introducing us to many subjects he himself was interested in. In comparative religion we did Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. In church styles Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, baroque etc. We also did some Italian, Spanish and German painters and sculptors. In history we did the early schisms, the struggle of the papacy, the crusades, the monasteries and various orders, reformers such as Hus, Luther, Calvin and Zwingli etc. There were no exams in his subject and therefore no set curriculum. Once I had an argument with him and must have been a bit cheeky. This was not at all my normal behaviour with teachers and he reported me to the head who gave me a good dressing down. The matter was soon forgotten again and we got on well afterwards. Through the efforts of this teacher I obtained a wider view of religion and it was quite natural for me to be confirmed. I was prepared by a Capucine monk and confirmed at Whitsun 1928.

In the 8 years we had a number of PE teachers. PE was separate for boys and girls. I was far from enthusiastic and whenever I could I had an

excuse not to attend. When I did attend I had the satisfaction of being the tallest boy. At the beginning of the period we had to line up like organ pipes according to height and for years I was the first boy in the line. We wore black trunks and gym shoes. In the winter a shirt, in the summer we were topless. The last teacher we had was young and rather plump but despite of that an excellent athlete on the horse, the bars and any other apparatus. He was a trained PE teacher and rather given to marching and singing German songs of a military character. One had the refrain "Gloria, Gloria, Viktoria, mit der Waffe in der Hand, für's Vaterland" Gloria, Gloria, Victory, with a gun in the hand for our fatherland. I guess he has gone far under the Nazis.

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In the classrooms we had solid wooden benches for two which were all of one piece with a sloping desk, the top of which could be lifted. unless one took great care they closed with a loud bang. If the classroom was large, the benches were ordered in 3 or 4 rows, with aisles between the rows which was very convenient for teachers to walk up and down and to control the work. In small classrooms two benches were pushed together, leaving sometimes only one aisle between them. In the smallest, there were no aisles between the benches, only narrow passages by the walls. One had to scramble into one's seat as well as one could. All rooms had windows on one side and a brick wall on the other where the coat hooks were. The desks had elaborate graffiti carved into them, mostly initials of past pupils and the year. The teacher sat on a wooden platform or podium on which there was a table and chair. On the wall was a huge blackboard.

When the teacher entered the room we all rose. The lesson sometimes started by us handing in essays given the week before or the teacher handed back essays and other home work which he had marked. Most of the time was spent by the teacher giving a fairly formal lecture during which we were encouraged to take notes. At the end of the period there was discussion or the teacher put questions to us. There were frequent oral tests, particularly in the language lessons in which we also had dictations and translations. Generally we had good textbooks for all subjects including an atlas.

There was a considerable amount of homework, 2 - 3 hours every day which was not too burdensome as we had half days in which to do the work and there was still time left for leisure activities.

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My maternal grandmother died some time in 1928/29. She had never recovered from the shock of her son's suicide. She was very good with us children as only a devoted grandmother can be and we loved her. She was elegant

in an old-fashioned way and I have never seen her in anything else but black. She had quick movements and being small, made her appear for ever active. She had tiny feet and small delicate hands adorned with rings. If I remember rightly she had greyish-blue eyes which were smiling when she was with us children, telling us nursery rhymes or playing with us. She was afflicted by a nervous rash which was irritating and itching and caused her to scratch her skin. This rash, I believe, was a legacy of her shock at Pista's death. Grandmother was very religious and attended mass regularly.

When she became very ill she was brought from Hlohovec to our flat and was given my room. She stayed with us the last weeks of her life. She was attended by several doctors including a Dr. A. Brdlik who hailed from Bohemia and spoke a broken German. While she was ill I often saw her and she suffered a great deal. Boris also came while she was with us. She died in my bed. By that time the relationship between my parents had turned for the worst. Grandmother may have worried about this. The beautiful, happy Hajos girl died a saddened lady. Mother was deeply affected. She lost weight and wore black for a long time. Exhibit 61 was taken showing mother in mourning. Note how fat I am.

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Apart from being obese there was nothing wrong with me except that I suffered from tonsillitis from time to time in the winter. This complaint lasted 2 - 3 days and confined me to bed. I had therefore my tonsils removed in the sanatorium Dr. Loew in Vienna. I had been given a complete anaesthesia from which I recovered quickly. For the first two days afterwards I was unable to swallow solid food and virtually lived on soothing gorgeous icecreams.

I had mumps and some other children's diseases but not chicken pox. I got this later from Laura just before I was due to travel to Chicago. I had a job hiding my pink scabs on the forehead by brushing my hair down.

Once, however, I became extremely ill. I got diphtheria, a very dangerous disease and very contagious, affecting the tonsils and respiratory parts and which according to the encyclopedia "was formerly one of the chief killing diseases in childhood". The disease also can affect the heart and the blood stream. I was treated by Dr. Brdlik who administered a serum obtained from horses. For about two days I was paralysed. Whether this was due to the illness or to a side effect of the serum I don't know. I could not move, could not eat and ran such a high temperature that

I had to be wrapped in wet cold sheets, which were renewed several times a day. After a few days I recovered and soon regained complete control of my limbs and body.



61. Bratislava, I have no date but mother was in mourning after grandmother's death. Note how fat I am.

PARENTS GET DIVORCED

Our parents got divorced on 17th May 1929. That is the official date shown on their amended marriage lines. I have it, however, firmly in my mind



62. Parents last picture together 1928 or 1929, taken I believe in Nice. -

had christened me. He was tall, powerfully built, had a smooth rasy face, blue eyes and a shiny bald head. A Slovak, he spoke good Hungarian but virtually no German. He visited us 2 or 3 times during the period up to

I had to be wrapped in wet cold sheets, which were renewed several times a day. After a few days I recovered and soon regained complete control of my limbs and body.

Mother also fell very ill once but I can't remember whether before or after grandmother had died. She suffered a thrombosis and her life was in danger. She lay for days very quietly, without moving, in bed and was very pale. We children were allowed into her bed-room only for short whiles and tpp-toed in and ou and were frightened. Fortunately she recovered completel though it took ^{her} some time to recover her strength. Ever after she had a weak heart and was not allowed to do strenuous work. But she became well enough to go for long walks.

Anni had been away at a convent school (see chapter 21) in Austria. Jean reminded me of an incident which I had forgotten. While mother was tied to her bed, Anni had contracted scarlet fever and was very ill. Mother was frantic and that was dangerous in he condition. Eventually a friend travelled to see Anni who fortunately recovered quickly.

PARENTS GET DIVORCED

Our parents got divorced on 17th May 1929. That is the official date shown on their amended marriage lines. I have it, however, firmly in my mind that we were not told about it until I was 13 i.e. after 12th February 1930 - but I may be wrong. Anni would have been not yet 12 and Jean about 9½. It would not have been surprising if we were not told straightaway as the formalities and settlement of financial and other affairs do take some time. It was also necessary for mother to find another flat and to furnish it. Father was in any case spending more of his time in Velky Lapas so that his absence was not surprising. There could be another reason but I am not sure: perhaps mother wanted some time elapse after grandmother's death before she told us.

Exhibit 62 is the last photo I have of my parents together. It was taken in Nice I believe.

The divorce required a special dispensation from the Pope. This was obtained through bishop Bubnic, who used to be vicar in Madunice and who had christened me. He was tall, powerfully built, had a smooth rosy face, blue eyes and a shiny bald head. A Slovak, he spoke good Hungarian but virtually no German. He visited us 2 or 3 times during the period up to

the divorce. We were made to kneel in front of him and kiss the pastoral ring. It was somehow reassuring that a bishop came to visit us though we did not guess the reason.

Mother told me first and then the girls, Anni being at home. At night, when it was completely dark, and I could'nt sleep, I wandered to the girls' room unnoticed by any adult and we had a heart-to-heart talk in the dark. Naturally we were distressed and did not understand what was really happening but Mother had been very reassuring and we had no worries about our future. We could'nt possibly understand why the parents got divorced and trusted them both that they knew what they were doing.

Mother moved into a new flat, not far away, in Zrinského ulica, occupying the ground floor of a villa belonging to Dr. Willi Blumenthal who lived with his family on the floor above. (Joan and I met Willi later in Paris together with Bela whose friend he was. Willi's wife Valerie was a daughter of another sister of Mrs. Munk and Peter's mother. A 4th sister was

Ferri Roth's mother. The Blumenthals had a daughter who died some years ago in France, also a son who is still in France. Valerie's brother was Gyuri Baan who emigrated to the USA where I used to meet him.)

The arrangement was that I would live with mother except for the vacations which I would spend with father. After my 18th birthday I would live with father. My sisters were going to stay with father in the old flat with nanny and Mariška and spend their holidays with Mother. Anni was still away at the convent school so that Jean was alone in the old flat.

The new flat was smaller than the old one. I had a bedroom with attractive modern blue furniture. Mother's bedroom was next to mine, then there was a small sittingroom with a divan-bed and a big book case, then a large sitting room with the piano and then the dining room. All furniture and furnishings were new and elegant.

A few weeks after Mother and I had moved out, Jean, carrying a small suitcase and crying bitterly, arrived ^{one evening} at our front door and declared firmly that she was not going back. Although the two flats were not more than 15 - 20 minutes walk apart it meant nevertheless a great effort for Jean to cover this distance with her suitcase and all on her own. It was a most heart-rendering episode in our lives. Father did not object for both girls to stay with Mother. She gave up her room to the girls and henceforth used the small sitting room as her bedroom. We were a little cramped but happy to be together. We had a cook called Eszti and another maid so there were 6 of us in the small flat. Eszti stayed on with mother when she moved to Budapest during the last war.

Father soon gave up the flat and moved his furniture to Velky Lapaš. He came from time to time for a meal and a chat. He felt rather lonely. Ami and Jean spent the odd week in Velky Lapaš but after a year or two gave up visiting there. I, on the other hand, spent most of my summer vacations with them.

and I are sitting on a wooden bench in the garden. A table with a white cloth is in front of us. Father is smoking a cigar. Mother had a headache and was sitting on the other side of the table. Mother, he was smooth and managed the manager in Kugelchen, Budapest. to do with in Piešťany. Neither of them had one or two liaisons later but they counted for little. He had always been shy and withdrawn and remained that way during the years I knew him up to my departure to England.

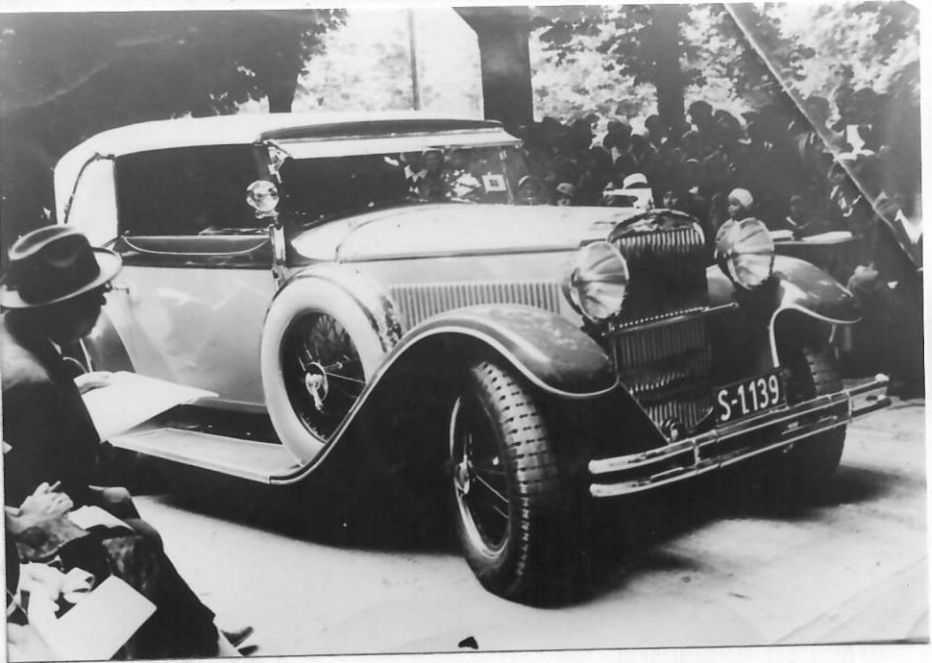


63. Summer 1929 in the garden in Velky Lapaš

(64 is on page 114)

65. Our Walter car being judged at a Concours d'Elegance in Piešťany in May 1933.

when mother furnished the chairs with soft cushions of different natural colors inlaid. Over the piano hung a picture and the Elders". Henri (some mystery about this). One used to be in the village in Shugborough, the home of Staffordshire (5) x 62. Gallery also has a picture.



Father soon gave up the flat and moved his furniture to Velky Lapas. He came from time to time for a meal and a chat. He felt rather lonely. Anni and Jean spent the odd week in Velky Lapas but after a year or two gave up visiting there. I, on the other hand, spent most of my summer vacations with him. Exhibit 63 was taken in the summer of 1929. Father and I are sitting on a canopied swing which had two benches facing each other. A table could be clamped between the benches. Father smokes a cigar with a disposable paper holder.

Mother had a friend, Ernö weiss. He was short, fairly stout, had a large head and was always immaculately groomed and dressed and his black hair was smoothly brushed back. A bachelor, perhaps a year or two younger than Mother, he had an old fashioned flat a short distance away. He was a Jew and manager of a reputable bank. Anni, now Reiman's, father was the general manager in that bank. Because of his shape my sisters invented the nickname "Kügelchen", which means a small sphere, for him. He was a great support to Mother throughout the troubled years and later they lived together in Budapest. I am convinced that the reason for my Parents' divorce had nothing to do with him. They had discovered their incompatibility as long ago as in Piešťany.

Neither of my parents were happy again and father suffered from loneliness. He had one or two liaisons later but they counted for little. He had always been shy and withdrawn and remained that way during the years I knew him up to my departure to England.

When mother furnished the new flat she employed a Vienna architect, Mr. Schwadron, to advice. It was he who was responsible for the all-glass display cabinet which I have mentioned in chapter 5.

In the sitting room we had an exquisite hand-made settee and two easy chairs with soft cushions and a low circular table which was inlaid with different natural coloured pieces of wood. Mother's initials were also inlaid.

Over the piano hung a full sized copy of Guido Reni's painting "Susannah and the Elders". Reni (1575 - 1642) worked mainly in Bologna. There is some mystery about this painting as there are several versions of it. One used to be in the Vienna museum, one Joan and I saw in the summer 1984 in Shugborough, the home of the Earl and Countess of Lichfield, in Staffordshire (51 X 62½ inches) which greatly surprised me. The National Gallery also has a version and exhibit 64 I obtained from there. I don't

know where my parents got the painting from. As it hung right over the piano I remember it well as I looked at it often when playing.

The cost of all this was high and what with running two homes father must have dipped deeply into his pocket. I believe that a part of the value of the farms was made out in Mother's name but whether this was done at the time of the divorce or whether mother had brought some money as dowry, I don't know. A portion of the farm income was therefore due to her but I cannot imagine that it would have been sufficient. Furthermore, the farm did not earn much after the world economic crisis of the early 1930s.

Father too had perhaps been spending excessively. Just before the divorce he bought an American Packard car, I think the only one in Slovakia. It was a coupé i.e. there was a glass partition between the driver and the passenger compartment. There were two folding seats to accommodate two extra passengers. The upholstery material was an elegant soft grey. There was an earphone through which one could communicate with the chauffeur. The engine had eight cylinders and ran so quietly that one could not hear it in the back seats. But the car was unsuitable for farm roads so father bought a small open 2-cylinder air-cooled Tatra, a Czechoslovak make. Did father hope that this car might cause Mother to change her mind about the divorce? Did he buy it on the spur of the moment as a sort of self-assurance that all was still well? Father was certainly a great optimist and Mother thought of him as having his head in the clouds.

In 1930 the economic world crisis hit rock bottom and farmers were hit particularly hard. One of Austria's leading banks collapsed. Stock exchanges in New York and London and anywhere else crashed. Farmers in England and all over the world went out of business and there were suicides. Father had to borrow from the banks and had not repaid his debts when the Second World War broke out. He lived modestly in Veľký Lapáš, having given up the flat in Bratislava. He sold the Packard and made do with the little Tatra.

He carried on steadfastly in the face of all the adversities. He never complained.

While on the subject of cars, he did buy in 1933 a Walter, another Czechoslovak make. Exhibit 65 shows the car standing in front of judges at a Concours d'Élégance which took place in Piešťany at Whitsun on 5th and 6th May 1933.

I will now abandon the story in chronological order and resume it further on in 1955. I find it easier and more purposeful to relate my life during the period 1931 - 1934 under several subject headings. Throughout this period we children lived with Mother and went to school. If I think of home now, it is this first I think about.

PURPOSE

FASTING AND

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One I remember was "The white hall of Pix Palu". This is the name of a peak in the Italian Alps and these were excellent shots of skiing. My first sound film was the one in which Al Jolson plays a negro and sings the haunting tune "Sonny Boy", passages of which I still play on the piano. It is about a divorce and the death of the young son and it brought tears to my eyes. Another early sound film was "Targa Florio" about a car race in Italy and

64. "Susannah and the Elders" by Guido Reni 1575-1642
born and worked mostly in Bologna, also in Rome
and Naples. This photo from a photo of the painting
in the National Gallery, London. A similar painting
is in Shugborough, Staffordshire, described "After Guido
Reni"

Barlow and Lill Harvey (who despite her name was German). There was a vogue for war films such as "All quiet on the Western Front" from a book by the German Erich Maria Remarque. Child actors were very popular such as Shirley Temple and Jackie Coogan. amongst other films he starred