

I will now abandon the story in chronological order and resume it further on in 1935. 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 flat I think about.

FOURTEEN

PASTIMES AND SPORTS FIRST VISIT TO SWITZERLAND

There were several cinémas in town, one was the Adlon, another the Urania. On Sunday mornings were special shows for children. They were popular and every child received a little present such as a green frog which had a flexible sprung steel plate fixed to its belly and if pressed with the finger made a loud "quack - quack" noise. Balloons and little trumpets were other popular gifts. Later I went to adult films. There were regulations about the minimum age of admittance to adult films but I was tall and entered without difficulty when I was 14 or 15. Films which showed Pat and Patachon, Harold Lloyd and Chaplin were open to children anyway. I usually went with my friend Peter or one and two other boys. Films were silent and black and white. A pianist accompanied certain passages of the film. One I remember was "The white hell of Piz Palu". This is the name of a peak in the Italian Alps and there 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 the engine noises reverberated in the cinema. There were many Austrian and German films, mostly musicals such as "Zwei Herzen im $\frac{3}{4}$ Takt" (Two hearts in $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm) and "Drei Männer an der Tankstelle" (Three men at the petrol pump) which starred Dolly Haas. French and American films were popular too and I remember Clara Bow, Danielle Darieux and Lillian 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

in "The Kid" opposite Charlie Chaplin in 1920 when he was 6 year old. (There was an obituary of his in the Times of 3 April 1984. He died on March 1st aged 69).

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We had a large and well equipped theatre in Bratislava, shown in exhibit 66. It was used for opera, ballet and straight drama. Except for the summer months there was always something on. Monday evenings in the winter months were reserved for German theatre (the other days for Slovak). Companies from the Burg or other Viennese stages came on Monday evenings and I attended nearly every show from about age 15. Behind the last row of the stalls was a railed off area for about 50 standing-places. Tickets for these were very cheap. About half of these were taken by boys - rarely girls - from our school. My sisters and other girls usually went with their parents and had seats. I saw many of the German classics as well as Shakespeare in translation and other playwrights. One memorable performance was with Fritz Kortner as Shylock. After the show we went to the stage door for autographs. I still have Kortner's signature as well as those from then famous names on the German stage such as Karl Moser, Fritz Grünbaum, Gisella Wfbezirk and others.

We discussed amongst ourselves each play very thoroughly and analysed it into every detail. Some we had read beforehand at school or at home. Our involvement in German literature was total and seeing plays by Schiller, Lessing, Hauptmann, Wedekind and others were almost part of the school curriculum. When extras were needed our school was phoned to provide them with only a few hours notice. We were asked to be at the stage door an hour or so before the curtain went up. These were exciting and sometimes hilarious occasions. On one such evening Schiller's "Räuber" (Robbers) was performed and I was dressed up in the smelly and musty uniform of a medieval soldier, complete with helmet and my face was made up to look older. I was given a belt to which a scabbard was attached, inside of which was a sword. At a particular cue we were to storm unto the stage, draw our swords and shout war cries. I fixed my scabbard so that it was hanging on the right which meant that I couldn't have drawn the sword with my right hand. Just as I was ready to run onto the stage, an irate stage manager stopped me and re-girded me and I nearly missed my battle. Once a year our school took over the theatre for three days. All actors were pupils from our school and a play was presented to the public. We had a play reading group at school for 15 - 18 year olds, but most of the time the group spent preparing the annual event at the theatre. One or two teachers participated in these activities to guide and advice.

I was active in the group but never got as far as having a part on the stage. Once the group performed a shortened version of Goethe's "Faust", once "Hansel's Himmelfahrt" (Little Hansel's ascension to heaven) by Bernhard Hauptmann.

I also indulged in amateur theatricals. Exhibit 67, taken in February 1929,



66. The theatre in Bratislava

girls from that school were the only performers. The public were offered a variety of dramatic plays. ... afterwards the very funny comedy "Teacher, I must go out badly" by Otto Spiegelberg was performed by the pupils Schmidt, Hegyi, Weissel, Farges, Schwitzer and Wolff. They played their parts with great devotion and obvious entertainment of the guests. In between the acts due homage was paid diligently to dancing. After the programme ended, dancing under the

glow of the lanterns and in view of the glittering waves of the Danube took place. ... the student ... It will ... of their ...

67. Taken in February 1929 in the Munk flat. Pista is standing. From left: I, Franz as a girl and Peter Wolff.



one type of great "cultural" events about a great variety of different political situation, an art history a painter about impressionism, a critic about Mozart etc. There existed speakers who travelled from town to German language countries who drew

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I also indulged in amateur theatricals. Exhibit 67, taken in February 1929, shows Pista Munk standing, his brother Franz dressed up as a girl and me on his right, Peter on his left. This performance was given at the Munk flat and attended by parents and friends.

When I was 17 I performed with the school in a summer fête. A long write-up appeared in the local "Grenzbote" of which a copy is appended. I give below a partial translation of the long report:

" Summer fête. On Wednesday a summer fête was held in the garden of the Café "Kölln" which was organised by the boys and girls of the 7th form of the German State Realgymnasium under the Honorary Patronage of the school's head Dr. Karl Meznik. The weathergod was on best of terms with the lively lot of young people who had assembled for this happy event. Thus the varied programme was held under a clear sky and without interruption. The boys and girls from that school were the only performers. The public were offered a varied programme of musical, dance and dramatic plays. ...

Afterwards the very funny comedy "Teacher, I must go out badly" by Otto Spiegelberg was performed by the pupils Schmidt, Hegyi, Weinzettl, Porges, Schwitzer and Wolff. They played their parts with great devotion and obvious entertainment of the guests. In between the acts due homage was paid diligently to dancing. After the programme ended, dancing under the glow of the lanterns and in view of the glistening waves of the Danube became even more lovely. After 10 o'clock a torch procession took place in which the boys and girls of the 7th form participated. The student song "Gaudeamus igitur" rose gustily from many happy throats. Thus ended a successful fête in jolly togetherness and excellent mood. It will remain for the young people in years to come a happy memory of their student days".

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One type of great "cultural" events were public lectures by famous people about a great variety of different subjects. A journalist on the current political situation, an art historian about classical architecture, a painter about impressionism, a professor about philosophy, a music critic about Mozart etc. There existed then some well known professional speakers who travelled from town to town in Germany, Austria and other German language countries who drew big audiences and were well remun-

rated. There was Roda Roda who wrote funny books in the genre of "Three men in a boat" who was also an excellent speaker, witty and entertaining. Another was Anton Kuh, a Viennese, who spoke about the advent of Hitler and the Nazi "no-culture" and the imminent destruction of tradition and values. I met his daughter later in Student Movement House. These were highly stimulating evenings, sometimes funny, sometimes serious, always thought-provoking. For days afterwards we discussed these lectures. They helped me in formulating ideas and kept us in touch with current affairs.

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Amongst the great social events in town were the balls between January and lent. They were not as lavish as in Vienna or Munich but were both "socially important" and fun. To cut a good figure at a ball one had to be a good dancer. I started going to dancing lessons with Anni when I was about 13. The dancing teacher was a Mr. Bérczy, a Hungarian, he had a constant professional grin and a white carnation in his lapel. My initiation to Terpsichore was a ballet class where inter alia I was taught to dance to the music of Coppelia, dressed in a blue velvet suit which I thought was sissy. Later I attended ballroom dancing classes and learned the waltzer, the English waltz, foxtrott and tango. When they became fashionable I also learned the shimmy and charleston. I became quite adept at all these. The novelty of these classes was that one met girls and held on to them. These classes were organised by the school so most of the boys and girls I knew. There were also dancing classes organised by other bodies where quite a number of ethnic German, Hungarian and Slovak young people went, so that in our classes there were a great many Jews. I wasn't happy with this and two or three times I attended classes for ethnic Germans. Nothing was said the first time but on the next occasions I was told that I was "gate crashing" and that I must not come again and that despite of the fact that I knew quite a few of the boys and girls. By 1934/35 the "racial awakening" had reached a point where I was made to feel unwelcome. I had met a girl, Edith, younger than I and shorter at these German dances with whom I got on well. We used to go for long walks along the river Danube. I only attended 2 or 3 of the public balls when I was 16 - 18. They were the student balls held in the Redoutensaal, a palatial building near the river which served a variety of purposes such as concerts and lectures and also housed the corn exchange which father attended. There was a public restaurant and cafe.

I went to the balls with Peter, separately from my sisters who went with Mother. They had a table booked with friends as had many other families we knew. We boys wore evening jackets and the girls pretty long dresses. The ball was opened with a dance by selected couples. It was an honour to be one of these couples. Afterwards the floor was open to all. The girls had little cards on which they wrote down the names of the boys in the order in which they were asked to dance - though one suspected that some girls might push up the list, their favourites. These dances were called cotillon (though cotillon in French is a sort of country dance). Girls aimed at having a long list of names. After they have finished a dance they pinned a "cotillon" on the boy's lapel. This was a tiny posy with a colored ribbon or similar decoration.

The highlight of the evening was the Soupe' Waltz or Soupe' Csárdás. As many couples as the floor could accommodate started to dance at about 11.30 pm. The band played uninterruptedly and one ^{couple} after the other left the floor in exhaustion. In the end only a few couples were left. The music became faster and frenzied. Onlookers stood around the floor, cheering them on until the last couple emerged as the winner among much cheering and applause. Anni was a great success on these occasions. After the band had stopped, supper was served. Dancing continued about an hour later and continued until the early hours of the morning. On the way home we called on a small cafe which served hot bean soup and fresh rolls. I got finally into bed at perhaps 7 am.

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Drinking was very limited, though we boys liked to show off about our ability to hold liquor. In one street in Bratislava were a number of "Heuriger" i.e. places where the wine-growers were allowed to offer their young wine; (heurig means "this year"). The wine was rough but cheap. One sat at plain scrubbed wooden tables and in the summer in the open air. These places also sold a vile green, so called, Chatreuse in little pitchers and a few small glasses of this stuff made one more tipsy in shorter time than wine. I must have been about 17 when I first went to one of these Heurigers. Usually 2 - 5 boys went together and there were never any girls there. Jenö Rees' uncle had a liquor distillery, so Jenö was well stocked with brandies and liqueurs. He had his own flatlet on the top floor of his parental house and from time to time he held parties there. Peter and I were two years younger than him and his cronies and were not usually invited. But once he asked us up and the three of us got a little tipsy. In his la-

vatory was a long handled brush to clean the bowl. I got hold of this and carried it into his room for no apparent reason. This has become a mythical story and whenever Jenö and I meet and refer to this incident, we still laugh. I don't know why.

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Mother was keen for me to participate in various sports, partly to reduce weight, partly to counterbalance my natural inclination to neglect "body building" at the expense of "intellectual activity". I played tennis moderately. There were several private courts and for a short time I was coached. Mostly we just made up our own tennis parties. Amongst the girls who played were Judy and Katka.

- - - I started taking riding lessons when 15 or 16. There was a covered riding school for use mainly in the winter. In the summer we rode out-of-doors. During the first 3 days of the week, when school was only in the afternoon, the riders in the morning were all ladies except I. The riding master was an ex-cavalry officer called Pistorius. He was a good teacher and had a loud barrack-square voice. There was one recalcitrant (white) Lippizaner gelding who could be quite ferocious. None of the ladies dared to mount it, so usually I had to ride it. One thing the beast couldn't stand to see itself in the mirror which took up almost the whole of one of the walls. We rode round the school and passed the mirror every time and I had to keep his head down. When riding the figure 8 it was almost impossible to prevent the beast to see itself in the mirror with me sitting on his back. It reared and kicked, threw up the saw dust, Pistorius shouted at the horse and at me, the other horses got into a panic and pandemonium broke out. I managed to control the situation but some times I found myself in the saw dust. I had rather mixed feeling about riding. I liked it, providing I had a steady horse.

For a time I had a horse in Velký Lapaš. It was an oldish red mare which had the disconcerting habit of letting its long tongue hang out on one side of its muzzle. Perhaps it didn't like the taste of the bit. It was a docile animal, never played any tricks. I rode perhaps for two hours before breakfast along our fields or, after the harvest, right across them on the stubble. Both, the horse and I, were too lazy to do a lot of galloping so we just trotted along happily. Often I just let it walk with the reins hanging loose. Exhibit 68 was taken in Velký Lapaš in August 1932 when I was just over 15 years old.

None of my friends joined me for riding but Peter and I took fencing lessons together. I must have been about 16 when I started. I did not



68. Taken in Velky Lapas in August 1932. Note the horse's tongue hanging out. In the back the vegetable patch in the garden



69. Passenger ferry on Danube, bridge in background

70. Katka (Pughe) and I in ferry ticket kiosk, 1934



own my equipment except for a white fancy fencing suit and plimsols. The rest was supplied by the fencing school. One needed a padded vest, tied in the back, and a heavy leather mask with a rigid wire mesh to protect the face. Both were impregnated with sweat and other odoriferous humours of generations of fencers. I used only foil (we called it Florett) which is a spriny steel rod of a diameter less than a cigarette and a small steel ball at its end to prevent piercing the protective padding, not to speak the stomach, of ones sparring partner. The foil could be bent into an arc, such was its elastic property. I never learned to use the sword which was frowned upon because of its use by the German student fraternities who fought without mask, hence the face marks of many an elderly Herr Doktor. The first lessons consisted almost entirely of learning the proper foot work. Fencing is a combination of fast, nimble and precise foot work, a good eye, steady nerves and well co-ordinated movements of the right arm (or left arm if left handed). I made reasonable progress and soon fought short bouts with Peter and others.

At the start of about one has ones helmet in the crook of the left arm, faces the opponenet and waves the foil in greeting. Then one dons the helmet, gets into the ready position inside a circle and on a sign from the master/umpire the fight starts. Initially the movements with the tip of the foil consist of small circles, quivering oscillations and attempts to touch the opponent's foil tip. At the same time both partners move their feet in what looks like tiny dancing steps. This serves to assess the opponent's nerves and perhaps to find a weakness in his defence. As the bout proceeds one tries to touch the opponent's padded chest with the foil tip and watches his defensive strokes. One is not allowed to touch below the padding nor the arms nor the face mask. Both partners might stand quite still for a moment; then one might retreat a step or two; the opponent follows but remains on his guard; a step sideways, a step forward, the foils engaged at their tips or just below. When one judges the moment to be auspicious, the opponent being perhaps off guard for a split second, a lightning step or two forward (making sure not to fall) and with a mighty cat like jump, launging forward, the foil is driven into the opponents padding; the foil arcs and the attacker shouts in simulated ecstasy - like the cricketer's "howzat!" If the opponent is well prepared he steps back, parries, the attack by deflecting the opponent's foil with his and if he is clever, he immediately counterattacks with a shout to confuse the opponent. Throughout the whole contest one must not step out of the circle which serves as a moral barrier to prevent cowards from running away.

Swimming I learned when 10 or 11. There was only one covered pool in Bratislava, in the Grössling street. Our school was allocated a certain number of hours per week. I was a slow and somewhat reluctant learner. One was attached to one end of a rope which at the other end was fixed to a long wooden pole which was placed against a railing, the swimming master putting his legs and weight of his body on it. He kept on saying "Eins aussernander, zwei zusammen, drei". (One, spread apart, two, pull together, three). I also took some lessons in the river Nitra during the summer vacations. The river was fairly fast flowing in Nitra and deep. A large floating "cage" was suspended in it. It was made of wooden slats on its sides, so that the water could flow through. This pool was quite a social focus and I used to meet Magda, Terri, Paul Verö, Dodo Stark, Schnuki and others there.



Once I had mastered the art of swimming I enjoyed it. We used to go in the summer regularly to the public bathing establishment ^{in Bratislava} across the bridge. On hot days this was a great social meeting point with often perhaps 30 boys and girls from our school congregating there. The Danube is far too big and fast flowing to venture into. There was a sidearm where swimming was safe. ^{There} was also a concrete pool. There were cabins for changing, a cafe and table tennis facilities and on some days dancing in the afternoon. Beyond the formal establishment one could walk into sand dunes and over patches of rough grass which offered a degree of privacy. Here one could hold hands with the opposite sex, sunbathe and watch the clouds, take a dip in the sidearm and munch ones picnic. If one felt energetic one could join the crowd in a game of ball or just sit around and talk about our teachers and learn the latest news of who was dating whom. Trekking home in the evening with ones skin burning and sand still clinging to knees and arms aroused a feeling of contentedness and well-being.

Peter and I joined the German rowing club together when we were perhaps 16. Jenö, Leslie and other older friends were already experienced oarsmen and impressed this fact on us novices in no uncertain terms. There were three rowing clubs: a Slovak, a Hungarian and ours. Ours was the most modern. It was built in concrete and was all white. It had a roof terrace, changing rooms, showers, a cafétéria, bar, club room with lounge chairs and

a boat store on the ground floor. Up to 5 pm women were not allowed. At 5 pm was "Adjustierung" i.e. one had to be dressed in at least white shorts and a shirt. Invited young ladies drifted in, in light summer clothes, some sporting long cigarette holders, perfumed and their hair freshly shampooed, taking tea and cakes and giggling animatedly. That was the moment when we younger members disappeared.

To reach the three clubs, which were on the other side of the river, one could cross by the bridge but this was far away and virtually nobody ran a car. There was a little ferry boat which frequently made the crossing in a few minutes. It landed next to the "Kölln" open air café, in which the fête took place which I described above. From there it was only a few minutes' walk to the club. The little ferry is shown in exhibit 69. Exhibit 70 shows Katka and me in 1934 (I was 17) in the waiting kiosk of the ferry.

Because the Danube is so fast flowing, the first lessons were in a sliding seat fixed to terra firma, simulating the real thing. Later I rowed in six's and eights. The only way to row upstream was to be close to the bank where the water flowed slower. To cross the river we rowed a mile upstream close to the bank, kept the bow pointing upstream and rowing furiously thus drifting diagonally across and arriving perhaps 2 m below the point we started from. To row right across would have meant to capsize and being swept away for miles into Hungary. Further up there were some sidearms

of the river and depending on how much water the river carried, one could row there quite comfortably. These sidearms were, however, not very wide and were mostly used by skiffs. Jenő was a master of the solo skiff.

We enjoyed a form of water skiing. To the down stream corner of the landing stage a long cord was fixed. At the other end

was a wooden board about 2 x 3 ft. A looped cord was fastened to it. One had to scramble onto the board, stand up, hold on to the looped cord and coax the board at an angle into the unrushing current. It needed some experience to stand up but once erect it was great fun to swing right out into the river and back again. The effect was the same as being pulled by a speed boat.



After I had gone to Prague and spent my holidays on the farm I gave up rowing.

The open air café "Kölln" was a favourite meeting place in the summer.

After rowing I sometimes met Mother and my sisters there. The front row of tables was near the water's edge, about 20 ft above the river. From

there one had a good view of the old castle, the spires and houses of Bratislava. The view was very much like the one in exhibit 50.

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Of all sports, skiing became my favourite, not least for the fact that we usually went en famille. Only later, when in Prague, did I go skiing with friends instead of with the family. After my start on the Semmering we went nearly every year, usually during the Christmas vacation, but after the 25th, to Starý Smokovec in the High Tatras mountains in northern Slovakia. On two occasions we went to Austria. Once to Igls and once to Murau. We were away for the Sylvester i.e. New Year's^{eve} celebrations.

In Starý Smokovec we stayed in the largest and most luxurious hotel, the Grand. We took the train for about 200 m to Poprad. Even the fastest train took about 6 hours, passing Madunice and Piešťany en route. From Poprad one travels some 8m by narrow gauge railway or by horse drawn sleigh. The bedrooms were large and well furnished; there was a big dining room, lounges, a table tennis room and a children's play room. Heating was excellent. On the south side of the hotel was an open-air terrace where one could enjoy the winter sunshine and drink hot chocolate. On New Year's eve there was a special dinner, dancing and entertainment. Several families came year after year like Peter Lax and his widowed mother and sister. I introduced his sister to her future husband there. Exhibit 71 shows us children on the terrace in December 1935. I had come home from Prague for the Christmas vacation.

The scenery was breathtaking. High rugged peaks in the north, liberally sugared with glistening snow and dense pine woods further below. Looking southwards, the Poprad lake nestled in the valley. It is 1513 meters (ca 4500 ft above sea level). In the winter it is frozen and one can ski on it and even cross it in a sleigh. Exhibit 72 shows this view. I sent this card to mother on 27th August 1936 when I was on one of my walking tours with Peter.

Skiing was very different from what it is now. There were no ski lifts. Near the hotel were a couple of small nursery slopes, but I hardly used them. To get to the mountains one had to go 4 m to Lomnice where there was a one-carriage narrow gauge railway which was pulled up by a steel rope while another carriage came down. This only went up part of the way. It has now been extended to nearly the top of the Lomnický Štít (štít means peak) which is 2632 meters (c. 8000 ft) high. Steven, Laura and Mike went up there.



71. On the terrace of the Grand hotel in Starý Smokovec, December 1935

72. Poprad lake in the High Tatras. I sent this card to mother on 27th August 1936

73. Mother in the High Tatras. Date not known, probably mid 1930s



72. Mr. Fritz Hans, Magli Mandula, I, René, Peter



73. January 1936 in Poprad Tatras near Gynagya on occasion of visit to Boris



*Navy - Lushovee.
9. II. 1938.*

74. Note mother wears identical suit as in exhibit 73

(see photo 153 of Ammi on p. 325)



77. 1933 near Bratislava. From left: Fritz Haas, Magdi Mandula, I, Renée, Peter



76. Father on terrace of Grand hotel, mid-1930s



75. 10 February 1936 in Kékes hills near Gyöngyös on occasion of visit to Boris

The most common form of skiing was touring. A group of 10 - 15 skiers set off with a guide in the morning. We slogged uphill in Indian file, step by step, gaining height slowly. If we had to cross terrain strewn with big stones and boulders we carried the skis on our shoulders. To facilitate climbing, seal skins were stuck with hot wax to the bottom of the skis in such a way that the long tough bristles of the skins pointed valleywards. This prevented the skis from backsliding on steep slippery slopes. Once on top, the skins were torn off, rolled up and stowed in our rucksacks. The bottoms of the skis now exposed the wax layer which made for speed during the descent. Lunch consisted of a roll and a tangerine or similar refreshment. One had the choice of several descents, though none as good as in the Alps. One could ski down through woods on narrow paths which were quite dangerous because of tree roots. Or down a treeless shoulder but there was the danger of hidden rocks. It was necessary to go with a guide.

The attraction of touring was that on clear days one enjoyed the ever changing magnificent scenery. Skis were made of simple wood boards, no laminates then. The best were made of hickory which was somewhat elastic. (This is a type of American walnut). The length of the skis had to be about one inch longer than ones outstretched arm and fingertips. Boots were not very different from strong climbing boots but had a groove round the heel for the strap of the binding, which was of the simplest type and positively dangerous. The skiing style was also different. Snow ploughs and "christies" were used but the distribution of the body weight was the opposite as it is now. "Wedeln" was invented in Austria in the 1950s.

The faster one skied the more one had to bend one's knees into a crouching position until one touched the skis with one's bottom. There was a turn useful in very deep snow called the Telemark, after the Norwegian province of that name, but it was used little and soon got out of fashion.

Mother did learn to ski but stayed on the nursing slopes and after her thrombosis gave it up. She enjoyed walking and the sunshine and fresh air. Exhibit 73 shows her in ski clothes. The date of the photo I don't know.

Exhibit 74 was taken in Nový (new) and not in Starý (old) Smokovec. It is dated 9th February 1938. Mother wears the same suit as in exhibit 73, so it was taken either on the same occasion or a year or two earlier. Mother was without us children in Nový Smokovec as I would have been in Prague and the sisters at school. Exhibit 75 is earlier. It was taken on 10th February 1935 in the Kékes mountains near Gyöngyös where she was on a

visit to Boris. (was she away for my birthday?).

Father came on some of the skiing holidays with us. He did not try to learn to ski, nor did father ever go to the expense of special ski clothes. He wore brown plus-fours, thick wool^{en} socks, heavy walking boots, collar, tie and jacket. Exhibit 76 shows him sitting on the terrace of the Grand hotel.

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I cannot remember much of our holiday in Igls but I remember sightseeing in Innsbruck. Years later I returned there with Veronika and William.

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More memorable was a holiday in Murau, Austria, in the winter of 1935/36 I believe. One ~~travels~~^{travels} the same railway ^{line} as to the Semmering to a point where the track forks to the left to Italy and to Murau straight ahead, up the valley of the Mur. It is a charming village. We stayed in a friendly and cosy Gasthof. Skiing was excellent and we had a splendid time initially. In the restaurant of the Gasthof was a little stage and a make-shift curtain and for the New Year's entertainment this stage was used. Preparations went on everywhere in the village and we all looked forward to a jolly evening. The restaurant filled up. There was Austrian music, dancing on a crowded tiny floor, glasses were filled and clinked, a chimney sweep appeared for good luck and at midnight the lights went off as is the custom. There was loud cheering and clapping. After a few seconds, when our eyes had accustomed themselves to the dark, a huge silvery swastika appeared on the drawn stage curtain. The locals broke out into a deafening exuberant and jubilant cheer and there seemed to be no end to their hysteria. When the lights came on again we and other guests left the restaurant in disgust. Austria, inevitably, had become infected and it was only a matter of time when it would drop into Hitler's lap like a foul plum. The Anschluss (annexation) occurred 3 years later.

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But skiing was not only reserved for winter holidays. In most years there was enough snow in Bratislava to ski in the hilly region 2 or 3 m from our flat. The little wooded peak was called the kamzik (which means the hill of the chamois; this is a goat like creature inhabiting the Alps but never the Kamzik). It is 440 meters (ca 1350 ft) high. It is shown on the map of exhibit 1. We walked there carrying our skis on our shoulders. Occasionally there was enough snow to tie on the skis at the doorstep of our flat. Here was also a ski jump on which my fellow-pupil Golla made 20 meters.

Exhibit 77 was taken on the kamzik in January (?) 1933.

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78. Peter busy with our primus during a walk in the Lower Tatras



79. The girl we thought was a bear.



80. The rock near Vevey where I used to swim. M. Pilet sits on top, his sons stand on the right.



81. On the Bella Tola 3028 meters

Walking was my obvious summer alternative to skiing, to be amongst the mountains. Peter and I went off with our rucksacks, heavy walking boots and maps into the surrounding hills for a day. Sometimes we were more adventurous and went walking for several days. One we were in the Lower or Nether Tatra mountains. The highest peak is the Dumbier, 2043 meters (ca 6000 ft) and is part of a ridge walk. To the north is the upper valley of the Vah, to the south the Hron river. (Its Hungarian name is Hernad. It flows into Hungary, near Forró Encs ^{where} my maternal grandmother grew up).

There are many small rivers which cut the mountain sides on both the north and south slopes and flow into the Vah and the Hron respectively. The hill tops are rounded and easy to walk on. There are woods further down and villages in the valleys. On top one encounters shepherds tending their flocks. There are simple un-manned wooden huts at intervals of about a day's walk. They contain a stove with plenty of ^{fire} wood and a dormitory. This serves both males and females. Along each of its two long walls runs a continuous wooden platform, leaving a central aisle. On these platforms are some sort of mattresses or paliasses. Men are supposed to sleep on one side, women on the other. It is difficult in the dark to ascertain whether this somewhat arbitrary rule had been observed. A hut could accommodate about 20 people but more if they squeezed up together a bit.

We carried with us tins of sausages, pate, goulash and other delicacies, bread, tomatoes etc. We had a primus stove heated with solid bars of paraffin. Fresh vegetables one could get in the villages, also milk and the shepherds would sometimes let you have a little ewe cheese.

One incident I remember vividly. We picnicked for one lunch near a little river and had our primus going. See exhibit 78. Suddenly we heard a rustling noise behind some bushes only a few yards from us. We sat up, pricking our ears. We knew that there were still bears in the woods but it would be most unusual for one of them to come so near to humans in the summer. We were petrified. What if it were a bear? What good would a kitchen knife do if confronted with a mighty beast? Should we retreat behind some trees? What protection would they offer? We hesitated. We were indecisive. There was more rustling and out of the shrubs stepped two gorgeous Czech girls. One was tall and fair, see exhibit 79, the other shorter and dark haired. They too had been a little frightened but for a different reason. They had noticed our little, untidy camp and wondered whether we were some dangerous outlaws, so they hid themselves. After a few moments we reassured each other that there was no danger to anybody and for the next 2 - 3 days we walked the ridge together.

SWITZERLAND

This was my first trip undertaken alone. I was 15 or 16. Mother accompanied me to Vienna and I took the night train to Zürich, my money sewn into my jacket, except what I needed for the journey. In Zürich I did some sightseeing and had lunch in an open-air alcohol-free restaurant, run by some women's organisation and located near the river Limmat. I then took the train to Bern, where mother knew a family with whom I stayed for two nights. They showed me the bear pit, Thorwaldsen's lion, the glacier garden and other local attractions. The husband was a member of a flying club and I was allowed to sit in the cockpit of a small machine and handle the controls - but without taking off. Next day I took the train via Montreux to Vevey, one of the most lovely Alpine rail-routes which I did in the opposite direction in September 1983. I stayed about two months with a family to learn French. She was Russian-Armenian origin and he was teacher at the local secondary school. They lived in a flat in a house on the road from Vevey to Clarens. Madame served on the hottest days scorching hot soups, thick and spicy. She encouraged me by saying "c'est très raffrèchissant". They had two boys, the older about my age. We went swimming in the lake every day, sometimes from the picturesque isle of Clarens, then uninhabited, and which we reached with a rowing boat. It was a wide bodied lake boat fitted with double oars. In one such boat the older boy and I once crossed the lake to St. Gingolph in France. I got my first French stamp into my passport and was very proud of it. It took us the whole day to get there and row back. We were told off by the Pilet (such was their name) parents as it is not uncommon for strong winds to roll down suddenly from the icy peaks without warning, churning up the lake and causing big waves. Sometimes we went swimming from the rock shown in exhibit 80. It is just west of Vevey, wild roses hanging down the wall and vineyards behind it.

I visited Chillon, Lausanne and Geneva where I was much touched by the Rousseau monument on the little isle.

The most unforgettable days were walking in the mountains with M. Pilet.

A cog-wheel train ascends from Montreux via Glion and Caux to the Rochers de Naye, 2045 meters, just 2 meters higher than the Dumbier in the lower Tatra. It takes about an hour by train but it took us a whole day to climb up, the last hundred meters being a bit of a scramble. En route there is a steep rock, the Dent Jaman, much photogra-

graphed and very dramatic in appearance. We stayed the night in the hotel on top. The view of the rising sun next morning and the Alpenglühen (i.e. the pink colour of the snow covered peaks and of the glaciers as the first rays of the sun touches them) was an unforgettable experience.

On another occasion we boarded a train early in the morning with our heavy rucksacks, packed with provisions for three days and extra clothing. We travelled up the Rhône valley, beyond Martigny where the river and the valley form a 90° bend, to Sion. From there we walked about 10 m south and up the valley to Evolène, a small Alpine village. The next day we walked across a mountain range and down another valley where we stayed over night in the house of the village priest in (or near ?) Zinal. We got up before sunrise at about 4 am and climbed gradually until we reached the summit of the Bella Tola, 3028 meters (over 9000 ft), at around noon. There was snow on top, though it was August. The view was breathtaking. Innumerable white Swiss and Italian peaks glistened in the sunshine. Monte Rosa was only 20 m away in a straight line. The descent took only about 2 hours. We had to walk down in the valley a few more miles to the station from which we took the train back.

Exhibit 81 shows me on the Della Tola, sitting on eternal snow.