

An account of the history of the
Fürth family,
paper manufacturers from
Pilsen, Nestersitz
and Obereggenndorf

by Richard Millward

Written in memory of Peter for Pat and Stephane

Wisbech St. Mary in the late Autumn of 2001



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*“If it is well composed and to the point, that is just what I wanted.
If it is worthless and mediocre, that is all that I could manage.”*

2nd Book of Maccabee,
Chapter 15, Verse 39

Motto at the beginning of Emil's memoirs completed in 1934

I. Introduction

The idea of writing the history of the family tragedy came from a King's Lynn doctor, to whom my G.P. had referred me, as the emotional burden of caring for my wife, Patricia, who had been diagnosed as suffering from atypical Alzheimer's disease in 1997, was beginning to exact its toll. That she should have been afflicted with this terrible disease at the comparatively tender age of 55 was all the more poignant, as my own mother had succumbed to the disease in 1989. The family tragedy was heightened by the situation of my brother-in-law, Stephane, the other living descendant of this family that the Gods have seemingly determined to annihilate in the manner of a Greek tragedy, without any apparent guilt having been incurred – unless the family's decision to convert to Roman Catholicism in the early 1920's had somehow displeased the good Lord?

My wife and I had assumed responsibility for Stephane's care back in 1987, when his father, Peter, was seriously ill and could no longer cope with the situation, following Stephane's having become psychotic in 1986 and attempted suicide on several occasions. At the time Peter, Stephane and his mother were living in the Vosges in France. We were living in Southern Germany, where I had been managing a small private forest since 1979. We found him a place in a local Workshop for the Disabled, which he attended on a daily basis. Our stay in Germany was interrupted by a heart attack I had in 1993. Having been epileptic since the age of 12, I was accustomed to the fact that our existence is time limited. However, this further underlining of the human predicament at the comparatively young age of 47 made me realise how fundamentally at risk we all were and I resolved to return to England, the country of my birth, which we did in 1994. My heart attack had destabilised Stephane – by this time diagnosed as suffering from manic-depressive psychosis – to the point that he spent the six months prior to our return to England in the local psychiatric hospital. However, by some miracle they had him ready for the flight and I had made arrangements for the receivership order to be transferred to the Court of Protection in England. We settled into our new life in the Fens and Stephane, with the help of the Social Services, settled into an establishment very similar to the one he had left behind in Germany. I was lucky enough to find a job translating German for the Department of Social Security, a task which I did from home, which, in the light of my wife's subsequent illness, proved a God send.

Given the progressive nature of Stephane's condition and, no doubt, the unsettling news of my wife's condition, he reached the point where he could no longer cope with life in the community and had to take up residence in a nursing home near Norwich in 1998, after a prolonged stay in the local psychiatric hospital, where all other proposed solutions for resolving his situation had failed. We – that is myself, my wife, my mother-in-law, who came to live with us in 1996, and the family dog – now make the three weekly pilgrimage to visit Stephane in his Nursing Home, some 50 miles away, where we are confronted with figures broken by psychiatric and neurodegenerative diseases, looking and behaving, presumably, very much in the same way as my mother did prior to her death in 1989 and as Pat will in due course.

Such was the back-cloth to my referral to the good doctor in King's Lynn. She informs me that my pre-occupation with the family tragedy in the years 1938-1945 is a diversion that has the effect of compensating for the powerlessness I experience in the face of the medical conditions of my wife and brother-in-law, for which there is no cure. The diversion does have its positive aspects! The feelings of anger engendered by the family's horrific fate – encompassing not only their murders in the concentration camps of Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz but also the family's fate in post-War Communist Czechoslovakia and the defrauding of Peter, when he emerged from behind the Iron Curtain in 1967 during the Dubček era, at the hands of his own family – serve as an antidote to the feelings of depression that may overcome me in the face of the respective fates of Pat and Stephane. It was indeed the fact that, following my mother's having been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in the 1980's, my father suffered increasingly from depression, undergoing electro-shock therapy and being prescribed lithium, like my brother-in-law too.

Subsequent to writing this account the confirmation arrived from the Red Cross Tracing Agency that the transport in question in fact went to Majdanek, near Lublin. Reference to Sobibor should thus be understood accordingly.

The good doctor also feels that recording the family history will be therapeutic for me and will at the same time provide a fitting memorial to a fine family that suffered so terribly. We have, in the past, reflected on the possibility of erecting a memorial to the family. The last member of the family to receive a normal burial was Peter's great-grandfather, Heinrich Fürth (Peter was given his forename as a second forename), who died in Pilsen on the 19.10.1911. Heinrich also had a handicapped daughter, Helene, who was struck down with polio as a child and spent the rest of her life in a wheel-chair, dying in Pilsen in 1921, aged 53. Heinrich's son, Emil, who, together with his wife Sofie, died in exile in Nice on the 18.9.1943 left a Will, expressing the wish to be buried next to his parents in Pilsen, a wish that, given the post-War situation in Czechoslovakia, could never be fulfilled. The cemetery authorities in Pilsen advise us that the graves no longer exist.... There are now various schemes afoot in what is now the Czech Republic to erect memorials to the former Jewish population of the country. Such a scheme exists in the town of Usti, near to where the family had its paper and pulp mill at Nestedice on the River Elbe. There are also family graves from an earlier era at Sušice, a town south-west from Pilsen, where the family lived from the mid-eighteenth century until 1866. Would memorials placed at these locations run the risk of being desecrated in the future?? As the good doctor points out, the written word does not fade like the inscription on a memorial stone. And thus it is that this endeavour to record the family history may well prove a more effective and enduring way of remembering a family that was crushed under the wheel of history in the Twentieth Century, and at the same time serve as a last defiant gesture from the last representatives of that family before the Gods close in for the kill.

II. PETER's DEATH

It may seem strange to commence this narrative of a family history which I can trace back to the middle of the seventeenth century, i.e. to around the end of the Thirty Years War, to the 6th March 1988, the day my father-in-law died in Vecoux in France. That was, however, the date when our age of innocence came to an end and we were confronted with the enormity of what had been done to the family.

As we were later to learn, the date itself was of significance. Gertruda Fürth, the widow of the other Fürth survivor of the Holocaust, Peter's Uncle Stefan, remarked on the coincidence of Stefan's having died on the 5th March, 1978 and Peter almost ten years to the day on the 6th March, 1988. Emil had three sons, Eugen b. 25.12.1886, Stefan b. 5.10.1893 and Hans b. 4.8.1898. (Peter was Eugen's only child). Eugen and Hans were in exile with their parents in Nice together with Hans's wife, Irene, and son, Heinz. At the end of the War they were all missing persons. Doubtless it was assumed that their deaths had not been of natural causes, but there was no evidence of their final fates. Imagine our astonishment to discover in 1996 from the French Government, following an enquiry submitted in 1994, that Eugen, Hans and Heinz had been handed over by the French authorities to the Gestapo in February 1944, interned at Drancy and deported to Auschwitz on the 7th March 1944. Irene had preceded them along the same route in 1942 on the transport on the 2nd September, 1942. Was it mere coincidence that all Emil's sons and grandchildren should have passed from this world – a fair description I believe of boarding a train in Drancy destined for Auschwitz – on almost the same day of the year?

We were, of course, aware of the broad outlines of the family tragedy. We knew that they had been victims of the Holocaust and that only Peter, his Uncle Stefan and a maternal uncle, Frederick Polt (Pollatschek), who had escaped to the USA with his wife and two young children via Switzerland and Cuba in 1938, had survived. There were portraits of his mother and maternal grandparents hanging in the house, a painting of the family paper and pulp mill at Nesticice made in the early 1930's too. Strangely there were no photographs of his father or father's side of the family, although I had always falsely imagined that the portraits of his maternal grandparents were in fact those of his paternal grandparents! There were also certain events that were spoken of. For instance, how the family chauffeur, who had been with the family for years and of whose comfort the family was always mindful when the family undertook long journeys (Eugen always checked personally that he had a comfortable bedroom at the hotels where they stayed!), refused to drive Eugen and his wife, Helene (Lene), to Prague when the Germans occupied the Sudetenland in October 1938, calling Lene a "dirty Jewess". On hearing that Peter had survived the War and was on his way to Nesticice, he committed suicide by hanging himself. Then there was the tale of how Peter had gone to France at the end of 1946 to try and trace his father and other family members and the substantial assets they had with them in exile. All that he found were his mother's furcoats that had been placed in storage at a famous Paris furrier's, Revillon's, in 1939. The fees hadn't been paid! He sold the coats, paid the wretched fees, went off down to Nice and blew the lot in a casino. And then how he had refused to take up residence at the family villa in Nesticice, preferring to live in one of the worker's cottages near the factory - he told my mother-in-law how he couldn't bear the villa, as he could see and hear his mother around every corner that he went....

We also knew that, after proceedings that had gone on for over ten years (the period for reporting the family assets to the German authorities in October 1938 was, I believe 48

hours!), he had obtained some kind of compensation from Germany in 1978. The sum in question bore no relation to the value of the mill – valued by the Foreign Compensation Commission in London after the War at £404,998.--. He was paid DM 188,050.10 for his 68.75% share in the mill, half made up of interest that had accrued strangely from 1952 and not from 1938. He had to pay his own legal costs of ca. DM 30,000.--....! He accepted this sum in a noble minded way and it did in fact represent something of a life line for him, as he had not had much time to build up any pension entitlements in the West after his arrival there from behind the Iron Curtain in 1967. Uncle Stefan had recovered some kind of compensation for the family's losses in Austria – a paper mill at Obereggendorf near Vienna. They had had a gentlemen's agreement that they would share anything recovered 50:50, an agreement entered into in London during the War, where Stefan and his wife and Peter had flown in 1940 following the fall of France, Peter with the Czechoslovak Army that he had joined in September 1939 in France on the outbreak of War. The money had been disastrously invested in a plastics factory in Paris (subsequently moved to Vecoux in the Vosges), managed by a nephew of Auntie Gerty. Three years after emerging from behind the Iron Curtain Peter was left holding 45,000 shares worth 1 FF each, after having invested FF 1.08 million in the enterprise.

I was not actually present when Peter died – in fact nobody was: he died on his own. Peter had suffered a very severe heart attack about one year previously. Later we were to question whether the doctors had done him a service by reanimating him. He was a very independent man and it was pitiful to see how he breathlessly staggered around the place in his last year of life, the very opposite of what he would have wanted. When his end was clearly nearing, my wife went over to help her mother and I remained at home in Germany, looking after our daughter and Stephane. He seemed to rally somewhat and my wife was planning to return home. She packed her case and the car early in the morning and, prior to leaving, went in to say goodbye to her father. He lay there dead on the bed, holding a photograph of his mother in one hand and one of my brother-in-law, Stephane, in the other hand.... This image was in itself a preparation for what we were to discover after his death. He had famously drawn a line under the past in 1945 and never looked back – that, he had said, was the only way he could cope with his family's tragedy. But, as the image that my wife was confronted by on his death bed indicated, deep down no line had been drawn: he carried the emotional burden and scars all his life, no doubt refusing to discuss the tragedy with his family in the hope that they could lead normal lives unburdened by it all. As the photograph in the other hand indicated, his other concern in his hour of death had been his handicapped son, a son who had been born behind the Iron Curtain in 1952 in the darkest days of the Stalin Era following a protracted delivery and sustaining corresponding brain damage through lack of oxygen. His development was retarded and then in 1986 he became psychotic – he never had a chance.

I made the journey from Germany to France by train with Stephane (named, of course, after Uncle Stefan) and with our daughter, named Lene after her great-grandmother. Peter had left a letter stating that he wished to be cremated and have his ashes scattered down by the River Moselle. There was also a Farewell Letter he had written to all his friends in several languages, in which he remarked that, if there was some kind of reincarnation, he would like to return to this earth as a particular type of cherry tree (a morello cherry tree, *Prunus cerasus*, I believe) which grew in the Elbe valley where he had grown up at Nestersitz. As luck would have it, deep snow lay down by the River Moselle, representing a not inconsiderable impediment to scattering his ashes down by the river! We could, of course, have waited until our next visit! So taking up the theme of reincarnation in the form of *Prunus cerasus*, we bought such a tree, planted it in the garden and scattered his ashes beneath it with the strains of Dvorak's New World Symphony playing in the background. As luck would have it, the tree

died the next year....

Having disposed of Peter's mortal remains in what we had considered an appropriate manner, we all proceeded to the lawyer's office to hear his Will read. I was, I suppose, prepared for something unusual, as for the previous two or three evenings I had been struggling to understand all the documentation he had left behind on his death and, thirteen years later, am still trying to make full sense of it! My surprise was, however, complete when the lawyer passed me a letter which Peter had left appended to his Will and which it was his wish that I should read aloud. I quote the following excerpt:

"To the present time Plastijo has not yet been sold. As you will see from the included hand written protocol, I have been left with 45,000 shares and not 75,000, as I have always let your mother believe. There is no other excuse for my not seeing through the machinations of Herbert Könitz – perhaps simply because I have never in my life met scoundrels of this type – not even under Communism. In the meantime you have written proof, that the entire Fleischer family have been a lot of crooks, who never returned a single item of whatever was confided to them by my father and grandfather. Do not be too severe in your judgement with regard to my father try to imagine the state of mind of a man, who had never been in the war and whose entire life had been totally and fully disrupted: no more home, no more income, no safe place to be in, a wife who did not want to leave her mother, parents whom he greatly admired, much in the same situation as himself – little wonder therefore, that he trusted those who, after all, were the brother and sister of Gerti Fürth."

A few words of explanation: Plastijo was, of course, the factory in which Peter had lost his share of the moneys recovered by his uncle from Vienna. Gerti Fürth's maiden name was Fleischer. Her brother was one Rudi Fleischer, her sister Hedwig Könitz, the mother of Herbert, the factory manager. The letter had been written in 1979. The factory was, in fact, sold in 1986, Peter realising ca. FF 230,000.-- , a pathetic return on the FF 1,08 million that had been invested some 20-25 years previously.

We asked the lawyer what we were to make of it. Our understanding had always been that Peter had had bad luck with the investment – Auntie Gerti was later to say, "We all lost money". The lawyer, wiping a tear from his eye (!), said that, whilst regrettable, Peter had lost his inheritance in a wholly legal manner and that there was nothing that could be done about it all. We let the matter rest at that, for the time being at least. Peter's estate consisted of a 50% share in the family house, on which there was still a small outstanding mortgage and a 50% share in the family investments at the bank of ca. FF 460,000.-- , which basically represented the remnants of the compensation received from Germany in 1978 and the money he had received on the sale of the factory. In time we were to learn that the FF 1.08 Peter had invested or had invested for him in Plastijo was only about one quarter of his share of his Grandfather Emil's inheritance, that should have awaited him in the West in 1967 and that the family's Czechoslovak fortune, confiscated by the Nazis in October 1938 and never returned by the Communists after the War, was of the order of RM 5 million, 40 million Czech Crowns!

More important, of course, was Peter's relationship with his father, which by the time of Peter's death had undergone a transformation. A letter we were later to receive from Peter's American relations, written by Peter in December 1946, presents a different view. I quote: "I do think you (= Uncle Frederick) are slightly mistaken, when you think that a fit of bravery prevented my mother from leaving. She would not leave her mother who refused point blank to be a nuisance to anyone out there, and also hated the idea of spending years in a little room with my father. I do not know, whether it is known to you, but in the last years of their life at

Nestedice they did not get on too well together. My father proved to be a weakling – just during those worst days of 1938, and sat at home worrying and even crying – instead of being a man, putting his foot down, and getting out – with my mother, naturally. One could then buy visas to almost anywhere – mine to France cost 15,000 Crowns. HE was the one who could have saved his wife, and I was never so disgusted in all my life – and have never written to my father during all this war."

And Peter never knew that his father had perished in Auschwitz. France, the country he so admired and where he was defrauded of all his fortune, didn't have the decency to tell him what they had permitted to happen on their soil.... And yet the humbling experience of his own financial losses made Peter by the end of his life more tolerant of his father in the realisation that he too had failed. The absence of any portraits or photographs of his father from the family home and the fact that he chose to name his son after the uncle (who defrauded him!) rather than his father do clearly demonstrate, however, that he was never fully reconciled with him.

My knowledge of the family history thus derives from the papers Peter left behind on his death and the results of various enquiries I have made over the years of the French, German, Austrian, Czech, Swiss and even Swedish authorities. It is also based on Emil's memoirs, written in 1934, that Auntie Gerti finally handed to us in ca. 1993 together with a bust of Emil made by his son Hans – inexcusable that she should not have given these to Peter during his life time! Also on our having traced via the Internet descendants of Emil's uncle, Samuel Fürth, living in Sweden – Samuel's grandson Theodor emigrated to Stockholm from Vienna in ca. 1910, surely a wise move! Theodor's daughter Vera married the later Austrian Chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, during his years of exile in Sweden during the war. These descendants were able to fill in the family history prior to Heinrich Fürth – in his memoirs Emil had merely stated that Heinrich was the youngest of four brothers and that his parents had died young. Thanks to the Stockholm branch of the family, we can now trace the family back several generations further back in the past, presumably to the time of the Thirty Years War....

To return in conclusion to Peter, of whose death this chapter deals, I should point out that there is one final work of reference that was available to me, namely a rather laddish account Peter wrote of his life from the time of his birth in 1914 up until the end of the war, narrating his boy time escapades in the Elbe valley, his sexual encounters and his war time experiences in France up until 1940 and then, thereafter, in England and in Europe following the D-day landings. Quite what his motives were in writing this, I am not sure. I think that possibly, after his commercial failure in the matter of the investment in the plastics factory, he saw this as one desperate last attempt to restore the family fortunes by writing a best-seller. As in so many other things, he was to be bitterly disappointed, as no interest was shown in what is, frankly, a rather rambling and difficult to fathom work (rather like the present endeavour!). It was probably only to be welcomed that the work was not published, as my mother-in-law was rather outraged by Peter's narration of his sexual encounters on his passage through life - apparently a friend had advised him that it was important to stress such escapades, if he wished to see the work published! What is interesting about the work in the light of all that we now know, is how Peter failed to tackle the aspects of his life that touched him most deeply, namely the loss of virtually all his family at the hands of the Nazis, above all the loss of his beloved mother, a sense of loss that certainly involved elements of guilt (why not me?) and a desire for self punishment arising from that sense of guilt. This latter aspect no doubt goes a long way to explain his total lack of interest in matters material and how the loss of the family fortune left him totally unmoved. How could he have enjoyed the material benefits that

possession of the family fortune would have entailed in the knowledge of how his mother and, unbeknown to him apparently, his father had died? The only thing that a man of sensitivity, like Peter, could have done was what he did with his mother's fur coats in Paris: sell the lot, pay off the "canaille" and gamble it all away in the nearest casino. The other interesting aspect of the book was Peter's virtually total ignorance of his family's history, no doubt explained by Auntie Gerti's withholding from him Emil's memoirs on his uncle's death in 1978 and her skillfully ensuring that Peter was never left alone for long with his uncle to discuss family matters after his arrival in the West in 1967, a fact of which he bitterly complained in many of his letters to his uncle. Peter's lack of information about his family's history is, of course, explained by the fact that he was only 24/25 when he last saw his parents. At that kind of age, the last thing you interest yourself in is the family history. The very mention of great-aunts and great-uncles by the older generation tends to have a switching-off effect with the younger generation! When the time of life came to show an interest in his roots, there was no one there to tell the tale.... The book was also written under the pseudonym of "Kilian Fidermutz", vividly demonstrating that the only way that Peter could confront the trauma that befell his family in the years following 1938 was at a safe distance. That he only achieved this distance on a superficial level, was tragically made manifest by the image that confronted my wife, when she found her father dead in his bed on the morning of the 6th March, 1988, holding the photograph of his mother in his one hand....

III. ORIGINS OF THE FÜRTH FAMILY - THE SUŠICE YEARS

We know from Emil's memoirs that the Fürths originally came from Fürth, a town near Nuremberg, that is now virtually part of Nuremberg. He was of the opinion that the family had been expelled from Fürth during the reign of Maximilian I of Bavaria, i.e. presumably around 1810, had crossed the frontier into what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, settled in the Bohemian town of Sušice and assumed the surname of Fürth, partly to indicate the town of their origin and partly to comply with the demands of the Austrian authorities that all families should have a surname, apparently not widespread amongst the Jewish population of the time.

An enquiry of the Fürth Archives in 1993 revealed that the expulsion of Jews was regulated by the Matriculation Laws, which required that, when the Jewish population of a town exceeded a specified level, those surplus to requirement had to leave. Given the date that Emil assumed that his ancestors had been expelled from Fürth, we assumed that it was probably his grand-parents who had been expelled – the unnamed grandparents, who "had died young".

It was only in 2000, when we made contact with the Stockholm branch of the family, the descendants of Emil's Uncle Samuel, that we realised that we were incorrect in this assumption and that the date Emil had given for the family's expulsion from Fürth was clearly wrong. The father of the four sons, of whom Emil's father, Heinrich, was the youngest, was one Seligmann Fürth, who was born in Sušice (German: Schüttenhofen) in 1788 and died there on the 18.7.1847, some 13 years prior to Emil's birth in 1860. Seligmann's wife Rebeka Rosel nee Stern was born in 1786 - the date of her death is not recorded in the Register.

Having been born in Sušice, it is clear that Seligmann cannot have been the family member to have been expelled from Fürth pursuant to the Matriculation Laws. His father, one David Fürth, was born in 1742. We have as yet been unable to discover when he died. One assumes, however, that this must have been in Sušice. Unfortunately all the grave-stones in the old Jewish cemetery of Sušice are inscribed in Hebrew and also scarcely legible any more. It is certainly in the old Jewish cemetery that all the Fürths of Seligmann's generation and before are buried, as burials in the new Jewish cemetery, where the gravestones are inscribed in German (a few post-1918 in Czech), commenced at roughly the beginning of the twentieth century.

We will probably never know with any absolute certainty whether it was David Fürth who was expelled from Fürth, presumably some time between 1760 and Seligmann's birth in 1788. However, this does seem likely, as the Archives in Fürth contain a publication by Leopold Löwenstein, dating from 1974, about the history of the Jewish population of Fürth. This records the existence of one Seligmann Löb Fürth, who transcribed a hand-written work by the Hamburg doctor, Abraham van Oven in London in 1789. Whilst we will probably never be able to prove it with any certainty, it seems likely to me that this Seligmann Löb Fürth was the father of David Fürth. I have frequently observed how, in the Fürth family, forenames have skipped one or more generation, for instance how Peter bore the second forename of Heinrich after his great-grandfather, who died three years prior to his birth in 1914! David's son was named Seligmann, Seligmann's third son was also named David Löb Fürth. This recurrence of the names Seligmann and Löb cannot have been mere coincidence?

Quite when Seligmann Löb Fürth would have been born, one can only speculate. One must assume that his transcription of the Hamburg doctor's work was made towards the end of his life. With the exception of Seligmann, the Fürths do appear to have been a long living family,

all surviving into their 80's. It is, thus, not unreasonable to assume that he may have been born in Fürth around 1715-1720, sired David in 1742 and that it was David and his brothers (see below!) who were expelled from Fürth.

Even assuming this to be the case, this does not trace the family back to the time of the Thirty Years War! The Stockholm branch of the family did however send me documents showing that David Fürth was married to one Rosalia Janovsky b. 1762 (i.e. 20 years his junior). Rosalia's mother was one Rachel nee Duschenes, the daughter of Löbl Joachim Duschenes and Chaile nee Popper. Chaile's father was one Wolf Popper, whose son Joachim Popper was ennobled, presumably around the middle to end of the seventeenth century. I anticipate here but, following Emil's move to Vienna in 1915, he was managing director of a large Austrian company, Leykam Josefstal AG, whose board chairman was one Baron Popper von Artberg – could it have been that Emil was descended from Chaile Popper and Baron Popper from Joachim Popper?

One, can but speculate....! Emil himself was, according to his memoirs, certainly not aware of any such family connection, but, for reasons that will later become clearer, he, like Peter later, was to draw a line under an event that occurred in 1866 that was to result in his father's branch of the family leaving Sušice for Pilsen and that was possibly so traumatic in nature that memories of the family's origins in Sušice were expunged from the superficial level of his consciousness.

Seligmann's four sons were Samuel b. 27.12.1810, Marcus b. 8.1.1813, David Löb b. 4.1.1824 and Heinrich b. 11.9.1825. As indicated above, the Stockholm branch of the family descends from Samuel, and his second son Moses, who had no fewer than seven children (Emil in his memoirs, when narrating his visit to Stockholm and to Moses's son Theodor, who had emigrated there around 1910, wrote of his cousin Moses, who had never piled up any great riches on this earth but, instead, had to provide for a very large family!). This branch of the family emerged comparatively unscathed by the Holocaust and descendants are now scattered all over the world in North and South America, Sweden, Israel and the United Kingdom – none surprisingly in the Czech Republic, where the family had its origins. Surprisingly, in view of Moses' s efforts, only the Stockholm branch still bears the family name of Fürth! David Lob died on the 23.11.1906 and is buried in the new Jewish cemetery in Sušice, described as a leather manufacturer and as having been bemoaned by his wife and family members. His wife, Fanny nee Hahn, who died on the 7.9.1913, is buried in the grave next to him. There is no record of what became of their children. There are comparatively few grave-stones bearing the name Fürth after ca. 1920. The last one is dated the 18.2.1939, when one Bedrich Fürth died – following this there are no other grave-stones bearing the name Fürth....

Quite whether Marcus moved from Sušice, dying elsewhere or died early and was buried in the old Jewish cemetery is not known – I don't suppose we shall ever find out. We know from the documents from Stockholm that Seligmann was one of David Fürth's sons. We also know from Emil's memoirs of a visit to Sušice, when he had to attend a medical in connection with possible military service in 1881 and visited a second cousin of his father Heinrich, one Albert S. Fürth. Albert must therefore have been a son of one of Seligmann Fürth's brothers. Albert's grave in fact stands in the new cemetery – he died on the 6.3.1910 and was described as being the longstanding head of the Jewish Community in Schüttenhofen and member of the Council of the Royal Borough of Schüttenhofen. His brother Josef, who died on the 6.1.1898, is buried nearby. Emil records in his memoirs that Josef gave him the tip to buy the family's second paper-mill at Budweis, named the "Fürstenmühle", due to the abundance of straw in

the region (in those days paper was made from straw!). There can be no doubt that many of the other graves in the cemetery bearing the name of Fürth are the resting places of other descendants of brothers of Seligmann or David Fürth.

One of the most famous Fürths from Sušice was one Bernhard Fürth, who founded the famous match factory, named "Solo" or at least provided the capital to set it on a sound commercial footing. Apparently one Vojtech Scheinost had started production but needed a backer. Bernhard's son Daniel carried on the business after his father's death in 1849. Daniel and his wife are buried in the new Jewish cemetery with grave-stones of a size that I suppose must have indicated the family's wealth. Daniel's sons, Ernst and Bernhard, continued the business from Vienna. Quite what became of this branch of the family, I have no idea. Indeed Emil was of the opinion that Bernhard's family was not connected to his family. The papers from Stockholm appear to indicate that there was a connection. I can only imagine that Bernhard may have been a son of a brother of David Fürth, i.e. David Fürth was expelled from Fürth around 1760-70 together with other members of his family and they all settled in Sušice.

The circumstances of Heinrich's leaving Sušice are well documented. Heinrich married Charlotte Augstein in Sušice on the 1.9.1851. Charlotte was daughter of a tenant farmer on an estate at Kaut (Czech: Kout na Sumave) to the north-west of Sušice near to Kdyne and Domazlice south of the Furth im Wald – Pilsen road, not far from the Czech-Bavarian frontier. A daughter Eugenie (Jenny) was born on the 5.4.1856. Emil followed on the 5.4.1860, exactly four years later. Heinrich owned a colonial stores in Sušice. In 1866 there was a pogrom in the town. When we visited Sušice in ca. 1993, a local historian informed us that the instigator had been an evil old lady who went around in some kind of a cart pulled by a goat – I seem to recall that she was called "Ziegenmarie" (goat Mary)! The outcome of this agitation was that some local louts forced an entry into Heinrich's stores and ransacked the stores and the family home. The family were able to escape to neighbouring premises over the garden wall. By the time the police quelled the uprising, it was too late – the only thing that the family found undamaged the next day was the family piano, which one of the louts had apparently played, whilst his friends tore the family home and stores apart. The Mayor of the town apologised to Heinrich on behalf of the town and implored him to stay and rebuild his business, but Heinrich refused and resolved to move to Pilsen, where Charlotte's parents were living in retirement.

The move to Pilsen was in fact going to bring great wealth to the family, a fortune which continued to prosper until March 1938, when the Nazis annexed Austria. I cannot help but think that the events of 1866 must have had a profound influence on the six year old Emil. Probably it was for this reason that in his memoirs he did not dwell long on what happened prior to 1866 or research the family's Sušice history in more depth. When the terrible events began to unfold in 1938, the memory of the events of 1866 must have returned to haunt him and cause him to reflect on whether the period of prosperity from 1866 to 1938 had just been an interlude. The difference in 1938 was, of course, that the persecution was being orchestrated not just by a few village louts, but by the state itself, a whole nation....

IV. Postscript to chapter III

Information unearthed by Thomas Fürth from Stockholm, a descendant of Samuel Fürth, in Prague has revealed the need for some corrections and additions.

The name Fürth was first mentioned in the archives of Bohemia in 1616. A document dating from the beginning of the 18th Century reveals that one Smüel Fürth and his wife Gürtel lived in 1630. Lazar Fürth and his wife Anna were living there in 1690. In 1696 Samuel Fürth and his wife Jettla and Isak and Hennele Fürth lived there. It remains to be seen whether David Fürth, the first Fürth to whom we can trace the family back, was related to any of these people.

David was in fact born in 1752, not 1742. David's mother was Rachel Fürth, who was born in 1715 and died in Sušice on the 7.2.1791. David was probably born in Sušice but, according to a census of 1783, he wasn't resident there at that time. There was only one Fürth living in Sušice, Daniel Fürth, a "Schnittenwahren- und Tabakhändler" (a trader in wood carved products and tobacco). However, according to a 1793 census he was living there with his wife Rosalie and children. A widow lived in the same house with her children, one Rachel Lederer nee Fürth. It seems probable that she may have been a sister of David. The family must have been comparatively well-off, as a house-teacher, Natan Bamberger, also lived in the house.

David and Rosalie had three sons, Moises b. 1785, Seligmann b. 1788 and Bernhard, whose date of birth is unknown. Moises married one Maria Stein in 1806 and they had four boys, Abraham b. 1808, Wolf (Wilhelm) b. 1814, David b. 1819 and Sigmund b. 1820 - all cousins of Heinrich Fürth.

There was a law, probably part of the Matriculation Law, that only permitted the first son of a Jewish family to marry. The logic of such a law was presumably to restrict the size of the Jewish population of a town. It also no doubt led to only the male children of a family being recorded in what was called a "Familiantenbuch" (family register?), a register doubtless needed to record and control the growth of the Jewish population and to which we strangely owe all this information about the family! This legislation was repealed following the revolution in Europe in 1848 and the wave of liberalism that ensued. So when Heinrich and his generation came to marry there were no such restrictions on their ability to marry.

Seligmann was, however, obliged to leave Sušice and move to nearby Schlüssenburg, where he bought a permit to marry from a Jewish couple without children, or at least without sons. This was apparently a quite legitimate practice! He first married one Elisabeth Roth in 1807 and then Regina Rebecka Rosel Stern in 1809 – one assumes that Elisabeth probably died in child-birth in view of there only having been an interval of two years between the two marriages. In addition to the four boys, Seligmann's second wife also bore him a daughter, Fanni b. 6.11.1814.

David Fürth died of gangrene in 1818. Seligmann moved his residence and marriage permit back to Sušice in 1819. One assumes that this move was somehow linked to his father's death – maybe the reduction of the Jewish population resulting from the death made the return home possible? It would seem, however, that Seligmann did not live in his father's house, as a map of 1837 revealed that he lived in rented accommodation in the "Judengasse" (Jews' Lane) owned by the Schwartzkopf family. Seligmann's first three children, Samuel, Marcus and Fanni, were thus born in Schlüssenburg (apparently correctly written Schlüsselburg, Czech: Lnare, north of Sušice near Nepomuk), David L. and Heinrich Fürth were born in Sušice. Recalling that my wife Patricia was born on the 18.9.1941 and that Emil died in Nice on the 18.9.1943, we were astounded to discover that Heinrich was circumcised on the 18.9.1825 as

a seven day old boy.

David's third son, Bernhard, was also obliged to leave Sušice to marry. He moved to Brzeznitz to obtain his marriage permit. Enquiries are being made of the Familiantenbuch of that town to enquire what became of his branch of the family. Brzeznitz (Breznic) is interestingly the town where Wolf Popper, the father of Chaile Duschenes (Rosalie Fürth's grandmother), came from. One wonders whether Bernhard's move may not have been connected with this family association? The dates of Wolf's son, Joachim Edler von Popper, are 1731-1795 – a large gravestone is erected to his memory in the Jewish cemetery in Zizkov Fibichova Street, Prague 3. Wolf himself lived from 1680 or 1690 to 1767 and was married to Rela Harfemer d. 1757. Given the fact that Rosalie Fürth was born in 1762 and that she was Chaile's grand-daughter, one assumes that Chaile must have been born some considerable time before her brother Joachim.

It still remains unclear, whether Bernhard Fürth, the founder of the Solo Match Factory, was in fact related to the family. His date of birth has, however, been established as 1796 and he was the son of one Daniel Fürth, after whom Bernhard named his own son. There is also mention of a Lazar Fürth in the middle of the 18th Century. It remains to be seen whether David, Daniel and Lazar may not have been brothers, or at least cousins. I notice that in the third paragraph of page 11 of my account of the family history, I erroneously stated that Albert S. Fürth, whom Emil visited in 1881, must have been a son of one of Seligmann's brothers. Emil described him as a second cousin of his father Heinrich. Heinrich's cousins were, of course, the children of Moises and Bernhard (David Fürth's sons). His second cousins must have been the grandchildren of a brother of David Fürth. One way of establishing who David's brothers were – and who his parents were – may thus be of searching the archives for the birth certificates of Albert S. Fürth and his brother Josef, which should provide us at least with the name of one of David's nephews, Seligmann's cousin! If it emerged that David was a younger son, that could possibly explain his absence from Sušice at the time of the 1783 census – like his son Seligmann later on in 1807, obliged to leave the town of his birth to marry! Alternatively maybe David was the first Fürth in the family to settle in Sušice?

V. The Pilsen Years

Emil describes in his memoirs, "Rückblick auf mein Leben", in great detail how the family paper mill was established in Pilsen and how it prospered until he left the firm on the 31.3.1914. We placed a copy of the memoirs in the Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York in 1993/94, if anyone is interested in reading in detail of the family rise to fame in Pilsen. The purpose of my chronicle of the family history is to trace the rise and fall of the family and I shall, therefore, confine my attention to what I perceive to be the major events.

Heinrich's wife was one of three sisters. Her Vienna sister Rosa was the mother of Sofie, who was to become Emil's wife in 1885. The other sister was married to Leopold Gellert. Heinrich Fürth had the idea of establishing a paper mill in Pilsen. His mother-in-law persuaded him to create a joint venture with her other son-in-law, Leopold Gellert, trading under the name of Fürth & Gellert AG. A small bank formed part of the company. Building work commenced in Spring 1867 and presumably production would have commenced in 1868. The company was fortunate to survive the Vienna Stock Market Crash of 1873. Heinrich, who had been reticent in the wave of speculative investment that preceded the crash, was one of the few bankers in Pilsen to meet all his obligations, for which Emil wrote in his memoirs that he was eternally grateful to his father, as this formed the basis for the family's good reputation.

After studying for some time and doing practicals at various paper mills in Germany, Emil joined the family firm on the 15.8.1879. A second paper mill was purchased in Budweis in 1881, the one Josef Fürth had recommended to Emil. Leopold Gellert managed the Budweis mill with his son Rudolf, and Heinrich the Pilsen mill with Emil. Quite when wood pulp replaced straw as the basis for making paper is not clear. Emil was successful in creating a new type of paper, which he called "Alfa" paper. He writes of a very successful sale of paper to the Victoria Porcelain Works in England in 1883/1884. It was in these years that the firm made its best profits. Shortly afterwards the Swedes came into the market with wood pulp paper, which dealt a bitter blow to straw based paper, which was from then onwards principally used for packaging purposes.

Emil's disabled sister Helene was born in 1868. He movingly writes of a canary she had, which never sang. Apparently the first time the bird ever sang was on the day of her death in November 1921. The family interpreted this as her soul being released from the physical confinement to a wheel-chair that had been her life. Two other sisters Hermine and Frieda (Fritzl) were born on the 21.1.1871 and 8.8.1873 respectively. Jenny was the first to marry in 1876 – she married a Pilsen lawyer, Dr. Ignaz Grüner. Emil married his Vienna cousin, Sofie Lemberger on the 4.10.1885 – later in life they were to discover that Lemberger was not her natural father but that he had always brought her up as such. Papers we obtained from the Vienna State Archives in 2001 concerning the notification of the family's Austrian property to the Nazi authorities in July, 1938 reveal that Sofie's real maiden name was Pollak. Hermine and Frieda married two brothers from Nuremberg, Josef and Hugo Friedmann in 1893 and 1895 respectively.

I shall anticipate events at this point and briefly outline what became of the families of Emil's sisters. Jenny was widowed very early in 1901 and Emil assumed the role of father for her family of five, Edwin, Otto, Gretl, Paula and Hedwig. Edwin fell in action in the First World War in 1916. Otto (later to become the company secretary of the paper and pulp mill in

Nestedice) and Paula died in the concentration camps. Gretl apparently married one Emil Kohnstamm and there may be descendants living in England. Hedwig, who died in London in 1945, may have descendants (a daughter?) in the USA. Jenny herself remained in Pilsen up until 1939, when she emigrated to London, dying there in 1943. Hermine was widowed in 1926. She had two children, Mathilda and Ernst, who were in Brussels in 1939. In one of his letters from Nice Eugen (Emil's son) spoke of his aunt Hermine Frye and his cousin Grant. Whether this means that Hermine remarried and that Mathilda married Grant, I have no idea. Grant was supposed to live in "St. Louis MO, USA". Frieda's eldest son, Richard, fell in action on the 25.3.1918 – he was in the same company as Adolf Hitler! Frieda and her daughter Charlotte (Lotte) emigrated to London together with Hermine in 1939. Lotte has descendants living in the UK. (We recently learned that Cousin Grant's forename was Henry. Mathilda born 11.9.1896 married one Hugo Gutmann. As the initials of Hugo Gutmann and Henry Grant match, it appears more than likely that Hugo changed his name to Henry Grand on arrival in the USA, much the same as Friedrich Pollatschek changed his name to Polt. One assumes that the same motivation was behind Hermine's change of name to Frye.)

Heinrich together with Emil built a very fine house at Jungmanova 43 in Pilsen in 1883 and it was there that Emil lived following his marriage to Sofie in 1885 together with his parents and three unmarried sisters. Eugen was born on Christmas Day 1886, and was certainly named after Emil's eldest sister Eugenie, to whom Emil was very attached. The birth was in Vienna and not Pilsen, as Sofie's mother didn't trust the Pilsen doctors! By the time Stefan arrived on the 5.10.1893 and Hans on the 4.8.1898 these grand-maternal concerns had abated and both were born in Pilsen. Heinrich's wife, Charlotte, died first on the 22.9.1898. She was asthmatic, which explains her comparatively early death. Emil describes touchingly in his memoirs, how they had always considered that she was something of a spend-thrift, as she was always running out of housekeeping money. She had in fact been saving for her children, who all received a small bequest from her! Emil and Sofie will by this time have been left alone in the house with Heinrich and their children and Emil's handicapped sister, Helene. When Jenny was widowed in 1901, she returned to the family home to look after her father and sister. I believe she stayed there until her emigration to London in 1939.

Emil became a prominent member of the business community in Pilsen and an associate member of Pilsen Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Board that ran the famous Pilsen Brewery's affairs. There was a German and a Czech faction in the town. Emil was of German origin and, like most Jews, a German speaker. It followed that he was a spokesman for the German faction but, notwithstanding, he had a reputation as an honest broker, a man of compromise. His opinion was correspondingly sought. His powers of mediation were no more sought than in the family business, as both Leopold and Rudolf Gellert were notoriously irascible. Most of his time was spent smoothing over disputes between his father and the Gellerts! All this was prejudicial to his health and he only remained in the firm out of respect for his father. In fact by the time of his father's death on the 19.10.1911, he had acquired all his father's shareholding in the company but could, of course, not sell out, as long as his father lived – it was, after all, the company that his father had created and that they had built up together. Fortunately for Emil, it was in fact Rudolf Gellert, who offered to buy Emil's shares in the company at the beginning of 1914. Emil heaved a sigh of relief and accepted.

We have two mementos of Heinrich: a photograph taken with Eugen as a teenager in Pilsen, presumably around 1900, and a small Jewish Prayer Book dedicated to Eugen by Heinrich in Pilsen on the 12.01.1906 with the following poignant words: "I dedicate this Prayer Book to my grandson, Eugen Fürth. May the Good Lord bless you. May He let His countenance shine down upon you and be merciful unto you. – From your dear grandfather, Heinrich Fürth."

In view of Eugen's fate it would appear that the "Good" Lord's ears were deaf to this grandfather's intercession on behalf of a cherished grandson.

Eugen had met Helene Elisabeth Pollatschek (Lene) at the home of mutual friends in Usti (German: Aussig) in 1912/1913. The couple married on the 25.5.1913 and initially lived with Emil and Sofie in Pilsen, where their son Peter was born on the 26.3.1914. When Lene and Eugen were visiting Lene's parents in April/May, Lene's father, Hermann, a company secretary with a large coal mining corporation in Usti, drew to Eugen's attention that the paper and pulp mill at Nestedice (German: Nestersitz), belonging to one August Brune, who had founded it in the 1880's, was for sale. Brune had begun to behave in a rather strange way, apparently setting fire to his own works, and the whole place was run down and the creditors were banging at the door. Emil and Eugen saw the mill's potential, located as it was on the River Elbe with trains running along the river bank and acquired it for 420,000.-- Austrian gold crowns on the 27.6.1914. The very next day came the news of the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo. The Thirty Years War of the twentieth century with its uneasy truce lasting from 1918 - 1939 had commenced. By the time of its end the Fürth family, and the Pollatschek family into which Eugen had married, would have been physically annihilated with the exception of Peter, his paternal Uncle Stefan and his maternal uncle Frederick and family, all that Heinrich and Emil had built up in Pilsen in the period 1867 - 1914 and that Emil and Eugen were to build up at Nestersitz in the period 1914 - 1938 would have been irretrievably lost.

VI. THE POLLATSCHEK / HELLER FAMILY

At this juncture, following the marriage of Eugen and Lene, it would seem appropriate to give a short description of the family Eugen had married into, a family whose rise to prosperity had been no less remarkable than that of the Fürths and which was to suffer an equally horrific fate at the hands of the Nazis.

According to an account I have of the life of Hermann Pollatschek (Lene's father) written by his son, Frederick (Friedrich) in the USA in 1948, the Pollatscheks (also written Polacek in Czech) had lived in Kolin on the R. Elbe (Labe) in the heart of Bohemia since the middle of the sixteenth century. The family had been extremely wealthy spice traders, reputedly so refined that they did not touch gold but used little rakes to count it and shovel it into their chests! By the time Hermann was born in 1858, the family had fallen on hard times. Hermann had an early experience of what the Prussians were capable, when the area around Kolin became tied up in the infamous battle of Königgrätz between Prussia and Austria. The family was so hard up that Hermann obtained a certificate stating that his mother, the widow Charlotte Polacek, was destitute. This enabled Hermann to attend commercial college. There followed a one year trip to Belgium and England. Hermann then intended taking up a job in a shoe factory in Johannesburg, but a cousin Ignaz Petschek (the son of his mother's sister), who had up until then been a salesman for the coal magnate Weinmann from Usti, decided to set himself up in business as a competitor of Weinmann and invited his cousin Hermann to join him as company secretary. The firm traded under the name, "J. Petschek, Aussig". Hermann stayed with the company from 1881 up until his death in 1926 and saw it grow to a vast enterprise employing 1200 office staff in Usti and many thousands of clerks and miners in mines and sales offices all over Bohemia, Germany and Silesia. He also became an associate judge with the Leitmeritz District Court and assumed the title of Commercial Counsellor (up until 1918 when the monarchy fell and Czechoslovakia was created, Imperial Counsellor!). He had suffered from diabetes for some time, but in 1924 became very ill and was retired shortly afterwards on a full salary with, according to Peter, a golden hand-shake of KC 1 million and a car plus chauffeur. He was buried in style in the Jewish Cemetery in Usti – the Nazis desecrated his tomb taking all the bronze and metal for ammunition, the Communists finished the job off in the 1950's when they levelled the Jewish Cemeteries and the war Graves from the First World War, incinerating any bones they found in the local crematorium and tipping the ashes on an unceremonious pile in the grounds of the crematorium. Apparently a small monument was erected on the spot in 1993 following the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. As tragic as Hermann's early death was, it was as nothing to that of his brothers, sisters and cousins and their descendants, who all remained in Kolin in 1938 – there was not a single survivor, according to Frederick. He alone and some of the Petscheks, I believe, escaped to the USA.

Hermann married Henriette Heller (Jettla) b. 16.2.1870 on the 26.1.1890 in the New Synagogue in Prague. She bore him four children, Hans b. 5.4.1891, Helene Elisabeth (Lene) b. 24.4.1893, Fritz (Friedrich/Frederick) b. 24.5.1896 and Wilhelm b. 3.11.1899. Hans fell in action in the First World War fighting for the Austro-German alliance, Willi died in his mother's arms of the Spanish flu in 1918/1919. Frederick was severely wounded in action. Was it a wonder that Jettla refused to believe that the Germans would do her, a mother who had sacrificed so much, no harm....?

Henriette was the daughter of Marcus Heller and Julie nee Kahnova, who had no less than 8 children, three boys, Eugen, Karl and Fritz and five girls, Henriette, Olga, Emma, Tonscha

and Ella. Marcus's rise to prosperity was no less remarkable than that of Heinrich Fürth and Hermann Pollatschek, possibly even more remarkable, given his humble origins. There were a great number of Jews, who worked the land. Marcus, who was born on the 28.2.1841, came from such a family. Marcus and his father Philip were serfs on an estate at Bustehrad. Serfdom was abolished in the Austro- Hungarian Empire some time between 1850 and 1870 and Jews were also granted full civilian rights at roughly the same time, which implied that they could, amongst other things, own land and take tenancies of farm property. This is precisely what Marcus did in 1867, taking a tenancy of an agricultural holding of some 257.5 ha. on the estate of Fürst Karl Trautmannsdorf in Kovac, 1 km from a village called Konecchluini to the South-West of Jičín. To work this amount of land at the time, he must have needed at least 50 employees! The tenancy lasted up until 1879, during which time Julie gave birth to all their children. During this period Marcus accumulated sufficient capital to buy his own farm at Encovany, near of all places Terezin (Theresienstadt)! Marcus handed the farm on to his eldest son Eugen in the course of time, retiring to Prague, where both he and Julie are buried in the Jewish Cemetery at Olsany, Marcus having died on the 8.5.1906, Julie on the 23.11.1919. On his grave it is stated that he was a sugar manufacturer! A grandson of his daughter Olga had inscribed on his tomb all his descendants who perished in the gas chambers: his daughters Henriette, Tonscha and Emma, six grand-children, one great-grandchild and one infant great-great-grandchild, Iva Backova. Mention is also made of three spouses, including Eugen Fürth. Possibly the most tragic case of all was the family of Emma, where all four generations lost a representative, in all instances women or infant girls! Descendants live in the USA, England, Sweden and the Czech Republic. I gathered this information from Frederick's son and a remarkable encounter with Karl Heller's daughter, Lizzy and her husband Josef Povolny, a gentile, in a small village not far from Usti in 1991. Josef had hidden his wife and young family throughout the Nazi occupation and resumed life in Usti after the war, one of the few family members to do so. He had built up an amazing amount of information on the family, even being able to inform me that Marcus was circumcised on the 2.4.1841!

Inser Gebetsbrief
widmen wir unser
gute Eigenheit;
Der liebe Gott segne dich.
Der liebe Gott laß
dich sein liebster
und sei dir gnädig
von jedem wahr
Gegensatz
Heinrich fürst
Pilsch 12 Juni 1908

Dedication to Eugen in the Prayer Book presented to him by Heinrich on the 12.6.1906 (see Page 16)

Fürth Family



Charlotte Fürth



Heinrich Fürth with Eugen and possibly Helene Fürth or Jenny Grüner at table ca. 1900



“Papa Lemberger”



Rosa Lemberger



Charlotte Fürth with Jenny in ca. 1858



Emil ca. 1885



Sofie ca. 1885



Eugen ca. 1906



Stefan ca. 1930



Hans + Irene ca. 1930



Emil ca. 1925



Emil, Sofie + Eugen ca. 1930



Emil, Peter + Sofie ca. 1925



Eugen ca. 1930



Lene ca. 1930



Lene with Peter 1914



Peter ca. 1919



Peter ca. 1930



Peter + Eky's weddig day - 1941



Lene 1939



Pat aged 3 - 11/44



Peter, Lene + Eugen
1939 - Prague



Pat - CS ca. 1948



Peter - ca. 1953



Pat, Peter, Stefan + Eky - 1953



Peter - 1941



Eky - 1941



Pat + Stephane - 1953



Pat + Lene 1969



Peter + Stephane 1952



Eky – ca. 1975



Peter – ca. 1975



Pat + Stephane – ca. 1972



Richard + Pat - 1975



Pat + Lene - 1975



Pat, Stephane + Richard - 1990



Ola, Agnes Just + Stephane – ca. 1996



Pat + Spinek
Emil Just, Agnes, Ola, Spinek's wife



Emil's apartment in Vienna at 7 Schwarzenbergplatz with photographs of Jenny and Ignaz Gröner on the piano





Nestersitz - 1930



Obereggendorf



Grave of Sofie Fürth's parents in Vienna with the memorial inscription to the family engraved in Summer 2002, 100 years after her mother's death

Heller / Pollatschek Family



Karel
Olga

Julie

Tonscha
Gariela

Marcus

Eugen
Emma

Jettla

Heller family ca. 1877 (prior to Fritz's birth in 1879)



Fritz

Lene

Jettla

Frederick

Willi Herman n ca. 1909



Lene ca. 1900



Fritz Pollatschek ca. 1912



Hans ca. 1914



Willy ca. 1916



Hermann Pollatschek



Jettla Pollatschek



Ignaz Petschek 1857 - 1934
Hermann's cousin & employer



Lene, Jettla + Tonscha 1938 /39



Hermann Pollatschek + Peter
ca. 1918



Julie Heller, Lene, Peter + Jettla
ca. 1918



Heller family grave
Olsany, Prague

VII. NESTERSITZ – 1914 - 1938

Emil's family survived the First World War unscathed. As mentioned, his sisters Jenny and Frieda both lost sons, Edwin Grüner and Richard Friedmann. Of Emil's three boys, only Stefan was called up to serve. He was a great cavalry man and was apparently a lieutenant in the Kaiser's body-guard in Vienna, which entitled him to ride one of the Lippizaners from the Spanish Riding School in Vienna on demand for the rest of his life – or at least such is the legend that has been handed down!

Emil spent his time between Pilsen and Usti carrying out the modernisation work on the newly acquired mill at Nestersitz, which traded under the name of Emil Fürth & Son and was owned in equal shares by Emil and Eugen. Emil presented a large sum to Eugen on his marriage, which enabled him to acquire his share in the company without resorting to his wife's dowry. Eugen, who was to be the manager of the mill, moved to live temporarily with his wife's family in Usti together with his wife and son Peter. Before long they were able to move to the villa above the factory following its renovation and this was to remain the family home until October 1938. Emil gave 25% of his interest in the mill to his sons, Stefan and Hans on the 21.10.1930.

Baron Popper from Leykam Josefstal AG in Vienna had been trying to procure the services of Emil as managing director of Leykam for some time. Pressure grew on Emil to take the post from the time he sold his share to Rudolf Gellert in 1914. – (According to information I obtained in 1991, Emil joined Leykam's board of management on the 1.5.1915 and was its general director from the 30.12.1916 - 7.6.1920, after which he remained a member of the board.) – Emil finally accepted the post in April 1915, when he moved to Vienna, where he rented an apartment at Schwarzenbergplatz 7, where he remained until he had to flee Vienna following the annexation of Austria by Germany in March 1938. He steered Leykam through a very difficult period in its history, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This brought him into contact with numerous bounders, who sought to profit from the chaos of the day. I imagine that the task he had taken on was no less arduous than his dealings with Leopold and Rudolf Gellert! Emil left Leykam around 1924. Stefan had worked with him there for a while but left on his father's departure. Both Stefan and Hans lived with Emil in Vienna. Stefan remained a confirmed bachelor. Hans, who had been only 17 when the family moved to Vienna, married Irene Mandl on the 1.10.1927. The couple lived in a house at Kirchengasse 18, that Emil had purchased as an investment in the 1920's. There is something of a mystery about the young couple's son, Heinz. Emil asserted in his memoirs that Peter remained regrettably his only grand-child. Writing of Hans's marriage to Irene, he curiously wrote that his youngest son and not the stork had brought a little daughter into their home. This could, of course, simply have implied that Emil and Sofie had never had a daughter. On the other hand, the date of Hans's marriage is in fact written as the 1.10.1929 in Emil's memoirs and only "corrected" in pen to 1927. The date, the 1.10.1929, was confirmed by the Death Certificates of Hans and Irene we obtained from Vienna some years ago, when we required evidence of their deaths for the Czech authorities. On the confirmation of the deportation of Heinz from Drancy on the 7.3.1944 given to us by the French Government in 1996, Heinz's date of birth is quoted as the 19.9.1928, . i.e. prior to the marriage of Hans and Irene. Could it be that Heinz was a child from an earlier marriage or liaison of Irene or a child born to Irene and Hans out of wedlock and that this was the explanation for Emil's use of the word, "Stork", normally associated with the arrival of children? No Death Certificate for Heinz appears to have ever been issued and searches for a Birth Certificate have also proved in vain. So presumably this is another question which will never be answered. All we had

until the confirmation from the French Government was Peter's statement that Heinz might be wandering around Europe not knowing who he was. Unless the Heinz referred to by the French authorities is from another family (he was described as being resident in Vence rather than Nice, where all the rest of the family were), it would be hard to imagine that Peter's statement could have any foundation, as a young man aged 15 in 1944 would surely have known who he was? The possibility is, of course, that Heinz could have been born after Emil completed his memoirs in 1934, in which case Emil would have been correct at the time in asserting that Peter was his only grandchild and Peter correct in stating that Heinz could be wandering around Europe not knowing who he was.

Before proceeding with the account of the family's years in Nestersitz, I should perhaps point out the significance of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for the family. Up until 1918 the family had all been subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ruled over by the Kaiser from Vienna. With the creation of Czechoslovakia as a result of the Treaty of Versailles the family became citizens of Czechoslovakia. Whether they opted for this or had it imposed on them by virtue of their place of residence in, for instance 1914 at the outbreak of war, is not clear. By 1918 Emil was, of course, resident in Vienna together with his two younger sons and could, presumably, have opted to become a citizen of the new Republic of Austria. However, he didn't and remained a Czechoslovak national up until his death in France on the 18.9.1943. The only member of the family, who was not a Czechoslovak national by 1938, was Hans and his family. Quite whether this had something to do with his age (he was only 17 on arrival in Vienna in 1915) or with the fact that his wife was Viennese is not clear. I assume, probably, the latter. Curiously the fact of Uncle Hans's having held Austrian citizenship proved an excuse for the German authorities to refuse to pay compensation to Peter for the share in Emil Fürth & Son, that he had inherited from Hans, when Peter's claim was dealt with in the period 1967-1978!

(According to a claim form Peter completed for the German authorities Hans became an Austrian citizen in 1921. Information obtained from the Jewish Community in Vienna in 2002 revealed that Heinz was in fact a child from Irene's first marriage to Paul Klein in 1922. His full name was Heinz Hanns Klein, his surname was changed to Fürth in 1934. He left the Jewish faith in 1933. Whether Irene was divorced or widowed at the time or her marriage to Hans in 1929 is not clear.)

The first major "legal" event in Peter's life was, therefore, that, after having been born a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he became a Czechoslovak citizen in 1919. Peter's mother, Lene, was not quite 21 when he was born on the 26.3.1914 shortly before the First World War commenced. One cannot stress enough the significance that his birth was to mean for his mother and her family, as the terrible events of the War and its aftermath progressed. Lene's brother Hans fell in action in 1914 and her brother Wilhelm died of the Spanish flu in his mother's arms in 1918/1919. The family, in particular the women-folk, were, no doubt, able in some measure to compensate for this awful loss by focusing all their love and attention on the young Peter. This is symbolised by a photograph we have taken in about 1919 depicting four generations of the Heller family: Lene with Peter in a sailor suit and her mother Jettla and grand-mother Julie Heller. At some time after the death of Julie's husband Marcus in 1906, the old lady must have gone to live with Jettla, her eldest daughter, in Usti.

The first major "religious" event in Peter's life must have been his conversion to Roman Catholicism on the 21.8.1920 in Prague. The only evidence we have of the background to the conversion is a letter Peter wrote to his cousin in the USA in 1979, in which he stated that this was a commercial necessity at the beginnings of the 1920's. Is one to understand that it would otherwise have been difficult to sell the paper and pulp?! I have the feeling that there

may have been more to it than this. The Birth and Baptismal Certificate describes Peter's father Eugen as being a Roman Catholic and the son of Emil Fürth, a Jew, and his mother as being the daughter of Hermann Pollatschek, a Jew. It is, thus, not clear whether at this time Lene was in fact Roman Catholic – at least she is not stated as having been Roman Catholic at that time. The older generation – Emil and Hermann – clearly distanced themselves from the conversion. Only Jettla, after fleeing to Prague in 10/38 and presumably at the suggestion of Lene, took instruction in the Roman Catholic faith and was subsequently baptised in the mistaken notion that this might help her situation. On Peter's death we discovered the photographs of his family treasured in a box. In the box was a diary his mother had kept as a young girl between 1907 and 1909. This was partly written in the Gothic script and we never fully understood it until last year, when John Polt from the USA (Lene's nephew) made a type-written copy for us. On more than one occasion Lene recorded in her diary, how she was taunted by the "anti-semites" because of her religion – at school and at the dances her mother took her to. It is, thus, not difficult to imagine that a combination of the legacy of this taunting and of the fate the family had suffered in the First World War inspired in the family a desire to protect the young Peter from the anti-semitic feelings, that were clearly rife even then. Thanks to the efforts of Emil and Hermann on the commercial front, the family had "arrived" both financially and socially – the conversion of the young family may well have been intended to set the seal on their integration into the society of their day.

Lene's diary is fascinating for many reasons other than the religious aspect. There are meadow flowers she collected on her walks, pressed between the pages of the diary, caricatures of the teachers who taught her at a finishing school for girls in Dresden up river from Usti, invitations to dances and a cutting from a paper about an act of charity on the part of her father on the 25th anniversary of his having started work for his cousin, Ignaz Petschek:

"On the impending occasion of his completing 25 years in the employ of the firm J. Petschek, Imperial Councillor E. Pollatschek, general manager of the said firm, has contributed the substantial sum of 1000 crowns to the Aussig Business Association. This sum is intended for assistance, and from it ten truly poor families of independent or employed business people in Aussig are to receive one hundred crowns apiece as winter approaches. Applications for awards are to be directed to the Business Association. Gratitude and recognition are due to the philanthropic donor for this act of beneficence."

The Fürths too were also a very socially-minded family. Peter often spoke of how his family kept the mill going at Nestersitz during the worst years of the 1930's, whilst other employers laid off their work forces, sustaining losses in the process. How Hermann's act of beneficence was to be rewarded in the period following 10/38 by those who had been the recipients of his charitable donations....!

Despite the affection that was showered on Peter by the ladies of the family – he remained the only grand-child until Friedrich's wife Elisabeth produced a son Hans (John) on the 20.8.29 - he showed remarkable character, when he attended the village school, presumably around 1919. The children were supposed to take their own sandwiches for the mid-morning break. Peter correspondingly set off from the family villa above the factory with a mid-morning snack worthy of kings. To his great embarrassment he found that his fellow pupils were not so bountifully provided for, which greatly shamed him. He shared the contents of his tuck box with his fellows and insisted, on returning home, at lunch time, on being in future provided with the same rations as his fellows. These consisted of sandwiches spread with the jam made from the thousands of fruit trees that adorned the slopes of the valley of the River Elbe.

He later progressed to Usti Grammar School. Throughout his years there, he always went to

Grandma Jettla for his lunch. He was not the best of pupils – this, I believe, had less to do with any lack of aptitude and more to do with his interests being elsewhere! He seems to have developed a fascination for the fair sex at an early age (possibly a consequence of having been brought up by doting mothers and grandmothers??). He was a great swimmer and often swam downstream from Usti to the family home at Nestersitz (unthinkable when one looks at the colour of the water today!). Apparently, slightly away from the river bank, were pontoons on which were erected changing rooms, divided according to sex. He wrote in his memoirs of how his first encounter with the splendours of female nudity had been when he furtively swam around to the "forbidden" side of the changing rooms!

I recently corresponded with one of the few living survivors of Peter's Class at Usti Grammar School, a retired County Court Judge in Germany, whose family was expelled from Czechoslovakia in 1945. He sketched a fine picture of Peter in words, which I would like to reproduce here:

"Particularly now at Christmas time I can see Peter again in my mind's eye. I can see him in the assembly hall of Usti Grammar School sitting at the grand piano. He is sitting there amongst us at the piano, playing from memory. He didn't read music. What fascinated us were the cinema hits from the 20's and 30's. Peter played them all by heart. And we all sat there enthralled, telling him to play one tune after another. We couldn't get enough of it. And Peter would play the classics of the time. In our music lessons we, however, had to sing Bach cantatas. You cannot have imagined a greater contrast. I have to admit that Peter was an absolute natural talent, where music was concerned. He wasn't all that good at school. His ear for music was, however, perfect. This musical streak in him is what should have been encouraged. If it had, he would not only have been happy, he would also have earned a lot of money as a composer or conductor. In any event I can well imagine that he was completely unsuited and unhappy as a manager of large sums of money. What he went through was a difficult constellation of disastrous circumstances: the terrible years under Hitler, the wars, the theft of property and assets by a great variety of robbers and the expulsions. All this would have required the natural genius of a manager, lawyer or tax specialist. Only in that way could the possibility of surviving have been exploited. In an era such as that Peter was entirely the wrong man in the wrong place. What is a romantic supposed to do in a paper mill? Despite everything, Peter did, of course, achieve a lot and he did do his honest best. And he was also often defrauded. I can well imagine that those who defrauded him didn't find it all that difficult. And now all his descendants have to suffer from this terrible constellation of circumstances...."

Reading this makes me realise that what was to befall Peter in the years following 1938 up until the final act of treachery, when he was defrauded by his own family in the period following his emigration from behind the Iron Curtain, couldn't have befallen a finer man, a more sensitive man. That no doubt goes a long way to explain why he was unable to articulate his grief.

I can well imagine that it was Peter's interest in the female form that inspired in him an interest in medicine, when it came to choose a future career. He accordingly studied for a year in Prague. However, when it came to his Grandfather Emil's attention that he was pursuing his studies with much the same enthusiasm as he had shown at Usti Grammar School, where he had had to repeat a year, Emil insisted on his taking up his responsibilities as only grandchild of a family of paper manufacturers. He had, of course, spent many happy hours working in the family mill during his free time, learning as a young boy in the smithy how to make nails and generally learning the common touch – as much at home in the salon, as in the

local workers' pub.

He was accordingly sent off to Scandinavia from 6/35 to 9/36, working as a trainee in the paper industry first in Sweden with Hannanby and then in Finland with Kankas. In many respects I believe that Peter was very similar to his grandfather – they both had a mischievous sense of humour and loved playing pranks. The Swedes were, of course, leaders in the field of paper manufacture and Emil, no doubt, felt that a period of training would steady Peter in much the same way as his own period of training in Aschaffenburg had prepared him, Emil, for assuming the mantle of his father Heinrich. Peter did gain a lot of experience in Scandinavia, in addition to deepening his knowledge of the female anatomy, but unfortunately times were against him. On his return he had to do his military service, on completion of which the disaster was about to unfold. And so it was that he was only able to make use of the skills acquired in a completely different environment, that of the emerging Communist state – some ten years later, when virtually the whole of his family had been exterminated. The contacts made in Sweden did have their immediate benefits, because the friends he had made there were able to send money through to his family in the camps in Poland. Whether any in fact arrived is, of course, debatable....

Peter's father, Eugen, had too been dispatched on a period of training prior to taking up his duties in the family business in Pilsen. He was sent to work in a London paper business. We have a very fine portrait photograph of him taken by photographers to Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria. Given Eugen's date of birth in 1886, one assumes that he may, therefore, have been in London around 1905. I have the feeling that work in London may have developed Eugen into something of a thorough, meticulous man, reflected by the fact that he became an ardent stamp collector. He certainly didn't have the entrepreneurial flare of his father, nor the magnetism and presence of his wife and son. Peter recounted that, whilst his mother was no beauty in the accepted sense of the word, she did have a presence, which made everyone's head turn when she entered a room. Peter certainly inherited this from her and I well recall how waiters seemingly dropped everything they were doing when he entered the restaurant, even though he had long lost the means to support this attention! One cannot but puzzle over the situation underlying Peter's assertion that his parents didn't get on too well at the time when the tragedy unfolded – was it because they were, by character, mutually incompatible, Lene social and outgoing, Eugen more pedestrian? Had their marriage been an arranged one – a marriage of coal and paper? The letters they exchanged before their marriage in 1913, amazingly still preserved, would appear to indicate not. Why were there no more children, when the means were there to support a large family, particularly after the family's losses in the War? Maybe it was attributable to some gynaecological mishap at the time of Peter's birth – one will never know....

What is known is that Eugen's thoroughness contributed in no small measure to the prosperity of the mill in Nestersitz, for whose day to day management he was responsible. It was he who oversaw the extensive programme of modernisation at the mill after its acquisition in 1913. His father and brothers sometimes came up from Vienna, but it was essentially his show. Trading figures we have for the last year of production at the mill under the family's control in 1937 show that paper was being exported to Germany, the USA, England, Holland, France, Italy and Yugoslavia and pulp to England, Hamburg, Holland, Palestine and Albania. Peter recounted how the mill used to produce the paper for Mars Bars. It would be interesting to know, whether this was correct, as I had thought that Mars Bars were something that appeared after the War. Having built all this up, one can well imagine Eugen's sense of despair, as the threat from across the border in Nazi Germany became ever more acute and, after Munich, a reality. The thought of having to uproot oneself at the age of 52 and start a new life as an

emigre in a foreign country must have been appalling. Emil had been much the same age, when he set off for Vienna in 1915 but he had at least been setting off into a friendly environment, the birth town of his wife, with full access to all his personal fortune. Peter himself made a similar move at the same time of life in 1967 when he emigrated from Czechoslovakia, but then again he was going to join his family in the West after what had been an appalling time behind the Iron Curtain – his experience in the West no doubt gave him occasion to re-assess his stern judgement of his father and to see him less as a "weakling" and more, like himself, as a victim of circumstances and some of humanity's more unsavoury representatives!

VIII. OBeregGENDORF - 1927-1938

When Emil resigned his post as Managing Director of Leykam Josefstal AG in ca. 1923, he will have been approaching the age of 65, at which age the normal successful businessman today would be contemplating his retirement. In the 1920's Emil was of course, already "an old man" – life expectancy was not as high as it is today! However, at precisely this time of his life Emil contemplated new ventures. The final letters he wrote from Nice indicate that his motive was to provide for his family's material welfare. One is also struck how, in his memoirs, he was repeatedly in search of an "appropriate field of activity" for his sons, Stefan and Hans. The latter did a stint of duty at times at Nestersitz, the principal source of the family's wealth. Stefan worked with his father at Leykam Josefstal AG and apparently worked for a while at a Vienna bank. Hans was, in fact, described on the Death Certificate issued in 1949, when he failed to appear after the war, as a business man. He did, however, have a distinct artistic bent, to which three of his works still in our possession bear witness: the bust of his father Auntie Gerti was supposed to give to Peter after Stefan's death and only handed to us in 1991, a kind of "carving" on bronze which appears to be of a religious nature and a post-card depicting himself and his wife with a poem beneath penned to his brother Eugen. This latter is the only likeness that we possess of Hans.

It seems strange to me writing at the beginning of the 21st century that Emil should have been searching for an appropriate field of activity for his sons at a time in their lives, when they were presumably perfectly capable of standing on their own feet. Whether this reflects some kind of inherent weakness or lack of dynamism on their part or the fact that Emil, a patriarch if ever there was one, was unwilling to let go, I have no idea. I incline to the latter view, as Peter, though lacking his grandfather's acumen, was very much the patriarch, leading us to the promised land and countenancing no questioning of the direction being taken!

It was thus in 1927 that Emil came to acquire Obereggendorfer Papierfabriks-AG (Obereggendorf Paper Mill Ltd.) at Stefan's insistence and against his better judgement, as he was to write in his memoirs.

According to information obtained in 1991, Obereggendorf produced cigarette, tissue and blotting paper, had one paper machine with a working width of 1650mm and two machines with working widths of 1500mm and had selling agents in Budapest, Hamburg, London, Prague and Zagreb. Included in a long list of special products it produced are paper for Bibles and stamps, copy and offset paper, paper for magazines and cotton wool. Given the fact that Nestersitz only had one paper machine with a working width of 2100mm, it would appear that Obereggendorf had at least the economic potential of Nestersitz. The latter was, of course, both a pulp and paper mill.

Emil described the acquisition in his memoirs as the second great blunder of his life. The first had been the acquisition of a picture post card shop, presumably for Hans, that got into financial difficulties. The background to the acquisition of the mill was a banking crisis at the time – we are approaching the year of the Wall Street crash! A lot of companies had gone into receivership and many banks held their assets, which in the past had been given as security for loans from the banks. The assets in question were only of any use to the banks, if they could in fact sell them and thereby recover their outstanding loans. The Obereggendorf Mill was such a case. Its owners had gone into receivership and the Anglo-Bank in Vienna became its owners. The Anglo-Bank in turn was going through a shaky period, doubtless in possession of many such assets and unable to sell them off. Emil was approached as early as 1925 by the bank with a view to his taking the company on. Finally he did so in 1927 – not much was paid by way of purchase price, Emil simply had to assure responsibility for the company's debts of

AS 800,000.--. It is interesting to note that, at this period of history, the Austrian currency was worth a lot less than the Czech currency, following their having had virtually the same value after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1919. Emil constantly bemoaned the fall in the value of the Austrian currency, compared with the Czech Crown. This may seem strange to us today, when Austria has the stronger economy and all Eastern Europe is emerging from the impoverishment that was the Communist experience. However, in the pre-1918 period virtually all the Austro-Hungarian Empire's heavy industry had been located in Bohemia. When the Empire split up Austria itself became a kind of agricultural backwater and Czechoslovakia with its mighty industrial base became one of the richest countries in the Europe of the inter-war years.

Emil thus went into his new venture in the secure knowledge that he had the wealth of the mill at Nestersitz in Czechoslovakia to cover any possible liabilities. The loan with Anglo-Bank was transferred to Länderbank-Wien, where Emil had contacts and was able to secure better conditions. Nestersitz was required to give a guarantee for Obereggendorf's liabilities for a sum of RM 368,000.-- (RM = reichsmarks – the pre-war Germany currency), as we were to discover, when we obtained copies of the notifications of the family's assets made to the Nazi authorities in 7/38 in 2001. Emil set about modernising the mill. In one of his letters written in Nice prior to his death Emil said that it would be one of the family lawyer's principal tasks in the post-war period to determine whether Länderbank had the right to dissolve the Austrian company, of which he was President and of which he held 98,5 % of the shares, to close down production at what was already a going concern and to place the company into receivership. The criminal way the bank was to behave in the period following 3/38 more than confirmed Emil's worst fears – however, that is the subject matter of a later chapter! The fact to be noted here is that in the period between completing his memoirs in 1934 and 3/38 he turned round what he had then still considered to be the second worst blunder in his life into a going concern, i.e. a company that was paying off its loans to the bank and making a profit! The mill apparently manufactured high quality paper, including cigarette paper, much of which was exported, I believe, to Hungary.

At the time of writing his memoirs, Emil was working on a project, involving all main Austrian manufacturers of paper, to voluntarily limit the production of paper in the interests of stabilising the prices. One of the problems of the day, doubtless against the background of the economic slump of the late Twenties and early Thirties, was an over-supply of paper, which had a ruinous effect on price. Quite whether the turn-around of the fortunes of Obereggendorf was one of the fruits of this policy is not clear. What is amazing is that Emil should have achieved this success between the age of 67 and 78. And yet all his efforts to provide his widow, children and the families of his children with a secure future were about to be swamped by the Great Flood that was to engulf humanity, as he movingly wrote in his last Will. Mention of the latter prompts me to add in conclusion that Emil was not only a very successful businessman and builder of commercial empires but also a gifted writer, as anyone who has read his memoirs will readily concede. He was a member of a literary club in Pilsen. He was also an art collector: one of the souvenirs we have of his life in Vienna is a collection of photographs taken of the interior of his flat on the Schwarzenbergplatz, one of the best addresses, I believe. Portraits I believe of his parents, a Winterhalter portrait of a Spanish Madonna, in short what appears to me, as a layman in these matters, a very fine collection. What became of all this I have no idea – either the Nazis or Auntie Gerti got it! I sometimes wonder, whether the collection of photographs was taken, when it became ever more likely that the family was going to have to flee, so that they had some documentation?

IX. THE PERSONAL TRAGEDY 1938 - 1945

It was in Austria that the family tragedy was to commence in March 1938, when Nazi Germany occupied Austria. Quite when the family fled to the former family home at 43, Jungmanova Street in Pilsen, where Emil's sister Jenny had lived since her father's death in 1911, is not clear. All Jewish families were required to notify their assets to the Nazi authorities. Stefan, describing himself at the time as a bachelor still, did this for his ageing parents on the 15.7.1938, as we recently discovered when we obtained copies of the documents from the State Archives in Vienna. This may have meant that his parents and brother Hans with family had already left for Pilsen. However, given Emil's great integrity, I can also well imagine that he refused to have anything to do with the regime, which he described in his letters as "bandits", and accordingly assigned to Stefan the task of making the notifications.

I anticipate here somewhat. What was, however, interesting to discover from the notifications of assets was that virtually the whole of the family's Austrian assets of ca. RM 950,000.-- were concentrated in the names of Emil and Sofie. All that Stefan possessed was a bank account with an outstanding balance of RM 240.--. Some time around this time Stefan, thus far a confirmed bachelor, had become involved with one Gertruda Fleischer, some 15 years his junior. The family certainly didn't approve of the liaison: Stefan took Gerti to Nestersitz to introduce her to Eugen and Lene in, presumably, early 1938 and Lene is on record as having stated that she wasn't the sort of person she would normally have invited into her home and only did so out of consideration for Stefan, the letters the family wrote from Nice indicated that they had only heard bad reports of the whole family. In fact, when Peter met a man down in the South of France in the 1970's, who had known both his family and the Fleischers before the war in Vienna, he was to say to Peter that, whilst he much admired his Uncle Stefan, he didn't envy him his aunt: she came from a notorious family of swindlers in pre-war Vienna! Crooks generally tend to come out on top in times of crisis, being as they are immersed in their element. I can well imagine that the Fleischers, anticipating what was to come, persuaded Stefan to get his money out of Austria while he could, thus explaining the absence of any assets to report. When Peter fled Prague in 2/39 he in fact went to work at a small paper mill in the south of France, at Aoust, in which his uncle had acquired an interest. Stefan had, therefore, presumably acquired his interest in the mill with the assets he had taken out of Vienna.

The next development was the occupation of the Sudetenland in October 1938 following the Munich Agreement and "Peace in our Time". Eugen and Lene fled Nestersitz, taking Lene's mother with them. As reported already the family chauffeur was not in attendance! They established themselves at Svehla Kai in Prague and a certain amount of furniture was sent from Nestersitz to furnish the apartment. Eugen used one of his life insurance policies to secure the rent, as of course all the family's bank accounts in the Sudetenland, taken over virtually immediately by German banks, were frozen and subsequently confiscated. Details of the looting are now emerging after more than 60 years! Peter had been mobilised in the Summer of 1938, when the Germans began to pose a threat on their borders. Following Munich, he joined his parents in Prague – we have a picture of him in uniform with his parents presumably taken at this time.

Bohemia and Moravia were then occupied by the Germany Army and the so-called Protectorate was created. Lene's brother had had the amazing foresight to flee to Switzerland with his wife Elisabeth and two young children, John (Hans) and Renata, just a few days

before the German occupation of the Sudetenland. Jettla went to visit them there, as she was concerned for their well-being – even apparently thought that Frederick was mentally disturbed at having taken such a rash step! She did not want to be a burden on her family abroad and insisted, on returning to Prague. Eugen wrote in one of his letters from Nice that, if only Frederick were to have detained Jettla in Switzerland against her will, Lene would have had no reason to remain behind in Prague and would have accompanied him to France, when he accompanied his ageing parents to Paris to presumed safety in, I believe, May 1939....

Jettla, however, did return. Eugen accompanied his parents to Paris, intending to return to Prague two weeks later, after settling them in. According to his letter from Nice dated the 26.8.1942, it was precisely during this time that Prague was occupied by the German Army and return for Eugen became impossible. "It is from that time that our misfortune dates." How to apportion blame in such a situation?? Peter had grown up into a young man, Eugen and Lene accordingly saw their responsibilities as to help their ageing parents – Lene her mother, who had suffered such terrible losses in the First World War and seen her husband die a terrible death, Eugen his parents, who had devoted their whole lives to provide a financially secure future for their boys and were now themselves in need of help. There was something heroic in the respective sacrifices they made and tragic in the manner of their separation. Emil wrote in his farewell letter to Eugen and Lene that he hoped that the terrible times they had lived through since 1938 would bring them closer together again. Whatever might have been wrong in their relationship prior to 10/38, one cannot help but think that that would have happened. Fate was, however, to deny them the possibility of reunion on this earth....

Peter wasn't able to work at the paper mill in Aoust for long, as the French authorities classified him as a refugee on the 15th March 1939 and he could no longer work on the official labour market. The reason for this was Germany's occupation of Bohemia and Moravia. He sought employment on the black labour market, working as a chauffeur for a wealthy English businessman, painting boats, releasing racing pigeons sent over from England, playing the harmonica in pubs and acting as a tourist guide, amongst other things. When war broke out in September 1939, he joined the Czechoslovak Army and was sent to Saumur to train for the officer corps. It was at Saumur that he met Maurice Druon, the celebrated French writer, who drew on his friend Peter for one of the characters in his first published work, "La dernière Brigade". On the fall of France, Peter was given the option by his commanding officer of returning to civilian life or of seeking to cross the Channel to England. He chose the latter option and arrived in Liverpool, having escaped in a ship of the Egyptian Mail Line converted into a troop carrier, named Mohamed el Kebir, from a port in the south of France at Sete.

At the time Paris fell, Eugen and Stefan with Auntie Gerti were there and fled to the south via different routes. Auntie Gerti had some of the family silver in the car, which was never seen again. Stefan and Gerti fled to England via Marseilles, leaving the car behind for Gerti's sister, Hedwig Könitz with children Susanne and Herbert (in their teens or early twenties) and brother Rudi, who all remained in the South of France, surviving the War. Eugen was unsure in his letters whether Gerti or Hedi had got the family silver....!

It is not clear to me, whether Eugen's parents were already down in Nice with Hans and family, when he fled Paris. It is also strange that Emil did not choose to go into exile in London, where his Nuremberg sisters Hermine and Frieda and Pilsen sister Jenny had all fled in 1939. By this time Emil and his wife were not well. Knowing from various extracts in Emil's memoirs of his fear of the English climate, it may well be that he chose to live out his

years of exile in the more stimulating climate of the Riviera. What we do know, is that they certainly spent their final years there at a house in rue Guiglia in Nice, house number 14. Either Eugen joined them there following the fall of Paris or they all moved down there from Paris at that time and took the apartment.

Emil was a man of foresight and he had not gone penniless into exile. The lost family silver was a minor consideration – in fact the great bulk of the family silver, some 35 kg of it, must have fallen into the hands of the Gestapo, as the French customs seized it when Eugen entered France in April 1939 (according to his letter – not May) and it was never seen again. Emil and Eugen had shipped a large consignment of paper to their American agents, Parsons & Whittemore, in August 1938 in anticipation of difficult times to come. This was valued at USD 75,085.21 and, if received, would have gone a long way to making the family's years of exile in Nice bearable. However, only some USD 15,844.97 of this was in fact sold. The rest was returned to Nestersitz by April 1939, by which time the Germans were, of course, in charge of the mill there. Quite why this happened is not entirely clear. However, it appears that the closure of Obereggendorf by the Austrian authorities following the family's flight placed Nestersitz in great difficulties, as the banks proceeded to call upon the guarantee given by Nestersitz for Obereggendorf's debts. Whilst still in Pilsen, a senior official from Länderbank Wien in Vienna had visited Emil and Eugen, fraudulently persuaded Emil to sign a power of attorney in his favour giving him power of attorney over the family's affairs in Austria and put the fear of the Lord into the family to the point where Eugen ordered the return of the unsold part of the consignment from the USA. Emil attributed the blame for this to his nephew Otto, who was company secretary at Nestersitz – Otto, you may remember, was Jenny's son. Emil had been a father figure to him since his father's early death in 1901 – hence no doubt his employment in Nestersitz. Despite all Emil had done for him, Otto apparently harboured a grudge against Emil, feeling apparently that Emil had been given preferential treatment in the winding up of Heinrich's estate back in 1911. This cannot have been the case, of course, as Emil had bought all his father's shares in Fürth & Gellert prior to the latter's death. Emil was convinced that Otto had brought his influence to bear on Eugen to ensure the return of the unsold part of the consignment – back into the arms of the "bandits", as he dramatically put it in a letter he wrote to his niece Lotte (Frieda's daughter) in London! What Emil cannot have known is that poor Otto ended up in the concentration camps with his sister Paula too.... Had he known that terrible fact, he might have not been quite so outraged!

The part of the consignment that was sold didn't even arrive in full – it seems that only about USD 1200.-- ever reached the family in Nice. The reason for this was that the Commissar appointed by the German authorities to manage the mill in Nestersitz started an action in the New York Courts, claiming that the sale proceeds should be legitimately remitted to the mill and not to the family. Germany was by this time the sovereign power in the Sudetenland, America had not yet entered the war and its courts seemingly respected the decisions of sovereign powers taken on their sovereign territory and so it was, I believe, that the sale proceeds probably also ended up in the throats of the bandits! Parsons & Whittemore covered themselves by paying the contested sum into court. Quite whether the enquiries going on in the USA will elucidate this episode in the loss of the family fortune, I do not know.

The consignment was not the only source of income which the family hoped to draw on during their years of exile. There were also the bond and share certificates. We know from the letters written by Emil and Eugen from Nice that a Mr. Flurschein - doubtless Rudi Fleischer using an alias on the basis of letters written by Peter in 1984 - in the company of Hedwig Könitz had taken bonds and share certificates belonging to Emil and Eugen from Emil's safe deposit box at Länderbank Wien in Vienna and failed to hand them over to the family in

Paris. Emil assumed that Stefan had entrusted them with the key. It was only in 2001 that we finally ascertained the value of the assets in question, when we obtained copies of the notifications of assets submitted by Stefan for himself and on his parents' behalf in July 1938. Emil had bond and share certificates worth RM 92,995.90 in his safe deposit box (there were some, the value of which Stefan was unable to quote), Sofie had investments worth RM 19,478.57. It is not clear, whether Eugen's certificates were included in the list of his father's investments. We knew from the transcripts of submissions made to the various courts in Vienna, Berlin and Leitmeritz (in Czechoslovakia), that, when seizing Emil's assets in settlement of his supposed debts (see next chapter!), Länderbank Wien had only given Emil credit for his bank accounts and investments worth RM 56,700.-- held at the Dresden branch of Dresdner Bank – he was not given credit for the investments that had been held in his safe deposit box! (The share certificates of the Obereggendorf paper mill were, of course, held by the bank as security for the company's debts and correspondingly seized!) We also knew from letters obtained from the Austrian Finance Ministry via the Austrian Embassy in London that Stefan had made no endeavours to claim compensation for his mother's seized assets after the war. The only record there was was of Sofie herself having applied for the release of her bank account, on which only a small amount had been deposited, in 1948 – she had, in fact, died in April 1944! In Peter's above mentioned letter dating from 1984 we also have the confirmation that, on a visit to Vecoux in the 1970's, Hedwig Könitz had let slip that she and her brother had taken the bond and share certificates from Vienna to Paris – my wife was present at the time.

It thus became perfectly clear to us that Emil had been spot on when he wrote in 3/43 that, as a result of the Fleischer family's failing to hand over the bond and share certificates to the family, he had been robbed of an asset of great value. The sum in question was RM 112,000.-- plus possibly the value of Eugen's bonds. When one considers the fact that all the Fleischer family in exile in France during the war survived and that all the Fürths in Nice perished, it is quite clear that we are not only dealing with fraud and embezzlement but also with betrayal of the ugliest variety. The Fleischers must, namely, have known that, if any of the Fürths in exile in Nice had survived the war, they would have been in dead trouble. They therefore had every reason to ensure that the Fürths did not survive the war. In the climate of the day, a telephone call would have sufficed to clinch the family's fate. Clearly we will never be able to prove that that happened, but there is every reason to suppose that it did, as the Fleischers continued with their fraudulent activity in the post-war period to the point where, only three years after having emerged from behind the hell of life behind the Iron Curtain, they had unloaded Peter of all his grandfather's inheritance. Auntie Gerti finished the job off by prevailing on Stefan – no uneasy task, I fear – to cut Peter out of his Will all together in 1971, leaving him just the bust of his grandfather, which Gerti didn't hand over to us until after Peter's death.

Emil had no illusions about the family Stefan had married into. In the period after the First World War, when he managed the fate of Leykam Josefstal AG in Vienna, he had to deal with bounders of the ilk of the Fleischers – "faiseurs" as he called them – who somehow seem to thrive in periods of social unrest and the breakdown of order. The consequences of the division of Europe at the end of the Second World War were unfortunately such that "normality" was not to be restored until after 1989, when Communism finally fell in Eastern Europe. It was only in this context that the Fleischers were able to get away with their treachery for so long. In the situation that Emil had to deal with in Austria in the period following 1918 such individuals were either consumed by their own skull-duggery or put behind bars. In the farewell letter that Emil penned to Stefan and Gerti, which he was too weak to complete, he expressly confined his hopes to the prospect that Stefan would be able to rebuild a life for himself after the War on the basis of the commercial skills he had acquired

under his father's tutelage to Stefan himself, excluding Gerti....

So not only were the proceeds of the sale of the consignment of paper sent to the USA lost but also the bonds. All that the family was left with were Eugen's collection of 18,328 stamps, worth ca. Kc 1 million according to a letter Peter wrote to the German authorities in 1967 on emigrating from CS, the family jewelry, the list of which covers 1 1/2 pages of A4 note paper, various Persian carpets that Hedwig Könitz similarly failed to hand over, the fur coats in storage at Revillon's in Paris and life insurance policies to the tune of ca. Kc 400,000.-- , that will only now be paid out it seems! Eugen listed all this property and gave a full statement of the family's business affairs in a 10 page letter he wrote from Nice on the 26.8.42. In the letter he wrote that he had on that day entrusted the valuables to a Mr. N. Giesecke, an employee of their French agents, Marcel Mace & Co, in Grenoble. Giesecke later moved to the firm's head office in Paris in rue Pepiniere. In the last letter that Eugen was to write in 7/43 he wrote of Mr. Giesecke's move to Paris and of an elderly spinster, Miss Robin, who was acting as his "trustee", and would be able to tell Peter all about the family property after the war. As far as we know, when Peter paid his visit to France at the end of 1946, he found neither Mr. Giesecke, nor Miss Robin – all he found were his mother's fur coats deposited at Revillon's....

At this point, prior to proceeding to the final account of the family's last days in exile in Nice, I should like to discuss the letters that were written from Nice. It has always been a source of amazement to me that the letters should have reached England at all – Europe was after all at War! My mother-in-law, who could not understand a word of German at the time, received the letters after having written to Nice to let the family know of her marriage to Peter and of Pat's birth on the 18th September 1941. She saw very little of Peter as the war progressed, as he was away all the time preparing for the Normandy landings. I believe it was only in 1946, when she and Pat joined Peter in Nestersitz, that she handed him the letters from his father and grand-father. I can only imagine that the letters got through, as Vichy France was semi-neutral or because they were sent via neutral Switzerland, where Lene Fürth had an uncle living in Zurich, Jettla's youngest brother, Fritz Heller. Letters passed freely from Prague to Frederick Polt in America up until the time that the USA entered the war. Thereafter all correspondence was channelled via Uncle Fritz in Zurich. It may well, therefore have been the case that it was via that channel that the Fürths in Nice succeeded in making contact with the UK? The existence of the letters also, of course, raises the question of whether Eugen and Emil, in their wish to communicate details of the family finances to their family in the UK to secure the latter's financial security, did not unknowingly contribute to their own downfall. It is hard to believe that such letters were not being censored and thus served to disclose to the Vichy collaborators particulars, not only of the family fortune, but also of the family's whereabouts.... What is visually striking about the letters is the way in which every square centimetre of both sides of very thin paper, is written or typed on: a family that had produced paper by the waggon load since 1868 was reduced to economising with its writing paper....

Eugen wrote in his letter of the 26.8.42 that he already then only weighed 52 kg. The pictures we have of him reveal a medium sized, if anything slightly corpulent man, whom one would imagine to weigh at least 80 kg. His clear self-sacrifice in the interests of his ageing, sick parents (Emil had a heart condition) and of his brother with his wife and young son is disclosed by his writing in the letter that the bulk of the USD 1200.-- that came through from the USA went to his parents and brother's family. What clearly emerges from this and other letters was the family's wish not only to do their utmost to secure the financial future of Peter and Stefan in England but also to ensure that any debts the family had were settled. Both Emil and Eugen were very conscious of the family's good name, established back in 1873 when

Heinrich had refused to close the doors of his bank at the time when the consequences of the Vienna crash threatened to engulf the business that he had built up in Pilsen.

Emil finally succumbed to his illness on the 18th September, 1943, when his great-granddaughter was, in blissful ignorance, celebrating her second birthday in England. In a farewell letter Emil addressed to Eugen and Lene, which Eugen passed on to England on the 4.10.43 – the last communication – he wrote how Eugen had more than fulfilled his filial duties towards his parents at a time when he had sufficient problems of his own on his back. He went on to express the hope that the terrible times the family had lived through since 3/38 would serve to bring Eugen and Lene together again and his concern for the welfare of Peter, Irene and Lene, adding a post-scriptum extending his fondest regards to Lene's mother, whom he held in high regard. He closed stating that all his endeavours had been directed towards keeping his family together and promoting their interests and expressing the hope that Eugen, as head of the family, would continue in his footsteps. The 83 year old man thus died in total ignorance of what had befallen his family: at the time of writing Irene had already been arrested on the 26.8.42, sent to Drancy and deported to Auschwitz on the 2.9.1942, Lene had been murdered in Majdanek, her mother in Treblinka, the family that stood by his death-bed would not survive his death by more than seven months – in fact of all those mentioned in this farewell letter, only Peter was to survive! We know from Eugen's letters that doctors had warned him that any emotional upset could be prejudicial to the health of both his parents. It is, in my view, a measure of Eugen's "greatness" – as distinct to the "weakness" with which Peter reproached him in his initial post-war reaction – that he apparently shielded his parents from the full extent of the disaster that had befallen the family, taking the full burden upon his own shoulders. How could one be severe in one's judgement of such a man??

The full tragedy of the family's final days in Nice only became apparent to us in 1996, when the French Government informed us of the fact that Eugen and Hans Fürth had been handed over to the Gestapo by the French authorities - Commander-in-chief of the French Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei Frankreich), according to the Red Cross International Tracing Agency dated the 21.11.2001 – interned at Drancy and deported to Auschwitz on the 7th March, 1944. One Henri Fürth, whom we assume to have been Hans's son Heinz, joined his father and uncle on the 20.2.44, some seven days after their arrival at Drancy, and was deported together with them on the 7.3.44. Only at this point did the text of Sofie Fürth's Death Certificate become clear to us. She died at 46, Avenue de la Voie Romaine in Nice on the 2nd April, 1944 at 8 a.m. The man, who reported her death, a Mr. Henri Brovia, knew nothing of the deceased other than that she was the widow of one Fürth, whose forename he did not know. We had always imagined that Sofie had died in the company of her family. The French Government's letter revealed that she had died all on her own. Presumably she was left behind, as it was realised that she was going to die anyway – feelings of common decency had not entirely left mankind, apparently. How must Sofie have felt, widowed in September, the last members of her family arrested and taken away, left entirely on her own to face death? It doesn't bear thinking about.... I believe that Sofie will have been the last member of the Fürth / Pollatschek family in Nazi occupied or dominated Europe to have died. The working age for Auschwitz was 17-45 – neither Eugen, Hans nor Heinz fell within this age range. Of the 1501 Jews deported on the transport of the 7.3.44 only 20 survived. I assume that they will have gone to the gas chambers on arrival.

The truly appalling thing is that, when the German authorities investigated Peter's claim for compensation between 1967 and 1978, they finally came up with a decision, stating that Emil Fürth had died in Nice on the 18.9.1943 "prior to damage occurring"! One cannot but conclude that the trauma that the German people had themselves experienced when they were

expelled from Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the war closed their eyes and minds to what they had done in the period between 1933 and 1945. We submitted an application to the International Tracing Agency of the Red Cross back in 1996 to ascertain the final fate of the Fürths in Auschwitz and other camps and still await a reply....

The fate of Lene and her mother Jettla in Prague is movingly documented in translations of the letters of Jettla and other family members, including Lene, written to Fredrick Polt and his young family in Cuba and later the USA. These were made by Frederick's daughter Renata, following her having discovered the letters when helping her mother to tidy out her flat at the beginning of the 1990's, and published by the University of Alabama Press in 1999 under the title, "A Thousand Kisses – a grandmother's Holocaust letters". The work traces the two ladies' social descent and increasing poverty – how they originally had separate flats but finally had to move into shared accommodation, ending up in an unheated room, where there was scarcely room to move around. One of the saddest passages was when Jettla saw some of her own seized furniture up for sale in a shop. Then there were all the abortive attempts to secure a visa to travel to the USA to join Frederick. By 1940 Jettla had been persuaded that this was the only course of action to take. Frederick kept sending the necessary confirmations, that he would provide for her and his sister, and the cash. But it was all just a ploy to rob them of all their money. There had been a plan to smuggle them out on the trains – a Mr. Sebek had contacts with an officer in the Prague Police Force, who obtained and forged passports, and obtained false visas from the British Consul. He bribed conductors in the sleeping cars to hide escapees. According to Peter, on the eve of the planned escape someone got terribly drunk in the house where Lene and Jettla lived in Mala Stepanska in Prague, which drew the authorities' attention to the two ladies. Lene was arrested in 3/42 and imprisoned in Prague, having to perform slave labour there. On the 7.5.1942 she was deported on transport "At" to Theresienstadt (Terezin), bearing the number 123. The transport stayed in Terezin for 2 days, its number was changed to "Ax" and it then continued its journey to Sobibor. According to the certificate from the Red Cross International Tracing Agency dated the 21.11.2001, the destination of the "Ax" transport was in fact Lublin (Majdanek)! Jettla was left on her own in Prague, very much as Sofie was to be left on her own two years later in Nice – Jettla did have the company of her sister Tonscha. Letters arrived from Lene from a slave labour camp at Siedliszczce, Nr. Cholm in the District of Lublin, apparently not far away from Sobibor. Some idea of what Lene went through in that camp is given by a letter Uncle Fritz in Zurich wrote to Frederick in the USA enclosing a letter that Lene had written from the camp to her mother in Prague – I quote:

"It is astonishing how brave the poor thing is. She has to do hard labour; hours daily at a river flood-control, without pay, like a slave. Her little suitcase, the only thing she was allowed to take along, was taken away from her, so she literally has nothing but the clothes on her back. She sleeps with 20 fellow sufferers in a miserable lean-to on a small heap of straw! What will happen when winter comes?"

Apparently winter did come, as Peter's friends from Usti Grammar School learnt of one of the supervisors at the camp, who had apparently seen his mother shovelling coal bare-foot in the snow. Peter did not follow this lead up – he wrote to us in 1978 that it would have helped neither him nor his mother. "Possibly the woman is now happy – so what would be the point?" I don't suppose that we will ever learn where Lene did die. I personally find it hard to imagine that she could have survived long into the winter of 1942/43. In the last letter we have from her dated July 26th addressed to Peter's old governess, Marta Stein, who remained a life-long friend of Lene, she requested some flea powder, an old bra and maybe a little piece of used soap....

Jettla's fate was no less terrible. She was deported from Prague to Terezin on the 13.7.1942 with transport "AAq" with her sister Tonscha. We have a record of a meeting with Jettla's nephew, Robert Heller (a son of her elder brother Eugen), who also went through the camps but survived and eventually went to live in Australia. Robert was writing to Tonscha's son, Fritz Bischitzky, who had escaped to the USA, on the 8.2.1946 – I quote:

"It was only several weeks later (after his arrival in Terezin) that I happened to learn that your mother (Tonscha) was there too and then I took the opportunity to look her up. I found her living together with her sister Jettla in a rather small ground-floor room with moist walls, without any furniture at all, which they had to share with a number of other women. There was no accommodation but one sole mattress for each person which during the day had to be put against the wall – otherwise there wouldn't have been enough room on the floor to stand on. It was a sad meeting again (= reunion), you may believe me."

Robert's mother was spared the horror of what Jettla and Tonscha went on to suffer – she died in Terezin, before the final stage of persecution. Jettla left Terezin for Treblinka on the 19.10.1942 on transport "BW". The manner of execution for the aged and infirm at Treblinka has been described as follows:

"The Treblinka Camp was divided into two sections. In Camp One there was a railroad spur and a debarcation platform for unloading human cargo. Next was a large area where the belongings of the newcomers would be laid out. Nearby was an infirmary. Two men worked there, wearing white smocks and Red Cross brassards, and passing as physicians. From the arrivals they chose the aged and ill, and seated them on a long bench facing a trench. Behind them stood Germans and Ukraines. They killed the victims by shooting them in the back, so the bodies fell at once into a mass grave. When they had assembled a large number of cadavers, they gathered them together and set them on fire."

The only thought that I can imagine sustained Lene and Jettla through those last terrible weeks was to know that members of their family were safe in the USA and England. Not long after his arrival in England Peter met my mother-in-law, Elsie Annie Edwards, nicknamed Eky (a great talker, it is reputed that everyone said, "Oh heck", when she got into full voice!). Their daughter, my wife, was born in Oswestry, where Eky's family came from, on the 18.9.1941. Whereas Peter did not write to his father throughout the war, Eky certainly did, telling them all of the birth of Pat. With some concern, she told them that Pat had unusually large feet! This news particularly pleased Emil, as this was a family feature apparently. The news of Eky's pregnancy filtered through to Prague by Christmas 1941, as evidenced by one of Lene's letters: "I have the definite feeling that my Peter held my grandchild under the Christmas Tree this year and I don't even know, if it is a girl or a boy." By the time of Lene's last letter she thankfully did know that she had a grand-daughter, as she kept writing of herself as Pat's grandmother, as if speaking of a third party – the intention was clearly to shield her family and at the same time let them know that she knew the good news.

I imagine that the birth of Pat in the family's direst hour must have had much the same symbolism for the family, as Peter's birth had had for them, when Hans and Willi died in the First World War. In the midst of despair there was hope. When Lene and Jettla faced their maker, they had at least the thought of Pat, and of course John and Renata in the USA, to sustain them. As fate will have it, Pat now suffers from Alzheimer's disease, diagnosed at the age of only 55....

One wonders, no doubt as the family often did in the period 1938-1945, who is in charge up

there....

Peter was involved in the second wave of the Normandy landings and was held up quite some time at the siege of Dunkirk, where the Germans resisted for some considerable time apparently. By the time that was over, German resistance was so weak that, according to his memoirs, he spent the rest of the war driving through bombed-out Germany in his tank in the direction of his home country, encountering hardly any resistance. He ended up in Pilsen, the town where he had been born. His commanding officer prepared the Jewish members of his regiment (3rd Armoured Regiment 3rd squadron of the Czechoslovak Ind. Armoured Brigade Gp.) for the worst and so he had few illusions of finding his family. However, fate had one other cruel blow for him: he took part in the victory parade in Prague and someone shouted to him that his mother was alive and told him to contact Karl Bischitzky, a grandson of Jettla's sister Olga. His hopes were only raised to be dashed. He wrote in a letter some three weeks later to his Uncle Frederick that it had turned out to be a false rumour....

One of the most appalling things we were to discover, when we finally obtained access to the Land Registry in Usti, was that the dates when the Pollatschek property was finally confiscated were directly related to the dates when Lene and Jettla were deported from Prague. It wasn't just a question of human beings being brutishly pushed into cattle trucks and taken to their deaths. Forms had to be signed as well, transferring the deportees' assets to the German State and People. In many ways this is worse than the actual deportations, underlining as it does how the whole administrative machine – the courts, the civil service, the police, in short all those institutions which, in a civilised society, are supposed to protect the weak and oppressed – was complicit in the crimes perpetrated against the Jews of Europe. In my estimation, those institutions bear a far heavier burden of responsibility for what happened than the brutes who carried out their orders in the camps – the former could have done something about it, the latter presumably couldn't. I shall never forget reading the entries in the Land Register at Usti. As is the way with Land Registries, the family property was spread over numerous pages, possibly some thirty all told. The entry recording the confiscation of the family property as property of persons hostile to the German State and People took up about 8 lines. These 8 lines were repeated on every of the 30 pages relating to the family property in the most perfect of writing. I couldn't help but ponder how the person who wrote those lines, who had obviously enjoyed a good education, could have associated himself or herself with such a crime. How could a culture that had produced Goethe and Schiller have sunk to such depths of depravity?

X. THE FINANCIAL LOSSES 1938 - 1945

Whilst the family suffered hardship, hunger and deprivation in their respective places of exile, ultimately to die there or to be herded into cattle trucks to be taken to a place of extermination, the German legal, administrative and banking system busied itself with the confiscation of the family's assets they had had to leave behind when they fled. This process, of course, commenced in Austria. Peter left no record of what had happened in Austria when he died in 1988. The Austrian business had been his uncle's affair – Emil had owned the mill but Stefan had been responsible for its everyday running. Peter had, thus, implicitly trusted his uncle and assumed that the latter had recovered what he could from Austria in the post-war period. Uncle Stefan was merely on record as having said, that Austria had never repaid the family all that it had stolen from them – a statement, which my investigations from ca. 1998 onwards were to reveal as being susceptible to more than one interpretation! The occasion for my investigations was the class action against Bank Austria (the successor institution to Länderbank Wien) and Credit Anstalt in the USA, which the family joined on the basis of Uncle Stefan's assertion that Austria never repaid to the family everything that had been stolen from it. There was an obvious need to supply evidence.

Enquiries of the Municipal Archives in Vienna drew a blank, in that the file that dealt with the restitution proceedings in relation to the Obereggendorf mill was destroyed some years ago. In the light of what we now know, it seems not improbable that the Fleischers, who were not without influence in Vienna, were implicated in the destruction of the file, as they had every reason to ensure that Peter never learnt of what his uncle had in fact recovered from Austria. However, the file on the restitution of the house at 18, Kirchengasse was still in the archives. As Hans had lived there, we were surprised to discover that the house in fact belonged to Emil. When Eky moved from Vecoux to England in 1996, I also discovered the submissions that were made to various courts all over the Great German Empire of Adolf Hitler in the course of Länderbank Wien's efforts to extort money from Nestersitz. Finally, having noticed in the Land registry entries relating to the Obereggendorf mill obtained for us by the Austrian Embassy in London that the company had been acquired by AGA - which turned out to be the Swedish company that used to make AGA cookers, until the firm was taken over by its British subsidiary – in 1939, I had the idea of writing to AGA in Vienna in early 2000 and received information that made it apparent to me that Peter had been defrauded by his uncle's family in a most terrible manner. The information that follows is based on my understanding of the above documentation.

The bank official, who had pursued Emil to Pilsen and persuaded him to sign a power of attorney in his favour (Eugen executed one too, I believe), had the peculiarly apt name of Dr. Dyskant. The Restitution Commission in Vienna found that, in the matter of 18, Kirchengasse, the power of attorney had been obtained from Emil using "typical national-socialist pressure" and that the exercise of the power by Dr. Dyskant had accordingly been fraudulent. An annexe to the ruling interestingly contained the information that Länderbank Wien had been the owner of a paper mill itself in the pre-war period, the Guggenberger Paper Mill. The first action of Dr. Dyskant in exercise of the power was to close down production at Obereggendorf, a company that you will remember had been described by Emil as being a profitable concern. The immediate effect of this action was, of course, that the bank loan could no longer be serviced. By closing down a competitor the bank of course not only acted fraudulently but also to further its own commercial ends. Quite when production closed down is not clear, as the next step in the fraud was the sale of the mill to AGA in 11/39, at least 18 months after Austria had been annexed by Germany.

The immediate effect of closing down production was that the family mill in Nestersitz was called upon to honour the guarantee it had given for Obereggendorf's debts, which it duly did. Nestersitz was a far larger concern and totally unencumbered by debt. The notification of Jewish assets submitted by Stefan on behalf of his father in 7/38 revealed that the share value of Obereggendorf was RM 649,350.--. The shares together with a few other of Emil's shares, were deposited at Länderbank Wien to secure the bank loan. It is quite clear that Länderbank Wien and AGA colluded in the fraud committed against the family, as the sale of Obereggendorf Paper Mill in receivership to Länderbank Wien and the subsequent sale by Länderbank Wien to AGA occurred on the same day, the 29.11.39. The first sale was no doubt effected by Dr. Dyskant in exercise of the power of attorney he held. The mill, which had a share value of RM 649,350.--, was acquired by Länderbank for RM 203,120.-- and sold on to AGA on the same day for RM 260,00.--. AGA protested to me in the letter they wrote to me in 5/00 that they had in fact made a loss on the deal. In fact they had acquired what was a clear bargain at about 40% of its true value. It doesn't take much imagination to realise that the difference between the two prices was the price AGA had to pay the bank for getting such a bargain, what one would today call a sort of commission! The minutes of the submissions we hold in fact show that AGA was a company affiliated to I.G. Farben. Whilst AGA went on to erect a plant for manufacturing oxygen on the site of the mill, its lawyers assure me that they were not involved in the manufacture of the cyclon B gas used to murder the family in Auschwitz. With its I.G. Farben connections, AGA clearly had good contacts with the Nazi regime, which it was able to use to good effect in getting Emil's mill cheap.

The minutes of the submissions reveal that Länderbank Wien, in addition to enforcing Nestersitz's guarantee, took further action to force Nestersitz, by 10/38 under the administration of the Commissar appointed by the Germans on their occupation of the Sudetenland, who was accountable for his actions to the Head of the Tax Department in Dresden, to meet the outstanding obligations of Obereggendorf. The outstanding debts resulted, of course, from the fact that the mill had been sold for just a fraction of its true value. Had it been allowed to trade, the situation would, of course, never have arisen! The debts that Dr. Dyskant sought to enforce included the costs of his chasing the family to Pilsen and later to Paris, which were booked on a so-called expenses account. Dr Dyskant secured these debts by signing a credit note on behalf of Emil and Eugen in further exercise of the powers of attorney that had been fraudulently obtained. These credit notes to the tune of RM 500,000.-- were supposed to have been secured by a charge in the Land Register in Usti on the assets of Emil Fürth & Son, Nestersitz. Our inspection of the Registry entries in 1993 had shown that there had never been any charges on the property to secure debts, not even during the Nazi era. In fact the accounts that the company had to submit to Prague at the end of the war, when the Sudetenland was returned to Czechoslovakia, revealed that, even then, the company was wholly solvent with a credit balance of RM 235,350.92 at various banks, the main holding being with Deutsche Bank (RM 226,891.77).

The reason for this discrepancy is interesting in the extreme and supports the view of Peter that the Commissar appointed in 10/38 by the Germans, a certain Rudolf Waldek, who had been with the company since its inception in 1913, had in fact sought to defend the family's interests, possibly intuitively realising that such a system had no future. Waldek always countered Länderbank Wien's attempts to extort money from Nestersitz, even sell it cheap, as they had done with Obereggendorf, to obtain repayment of the money supposedly owed to them, with the argument that his remit was to manage the mill in the interests of the German nation and people. That was in fact the express wording of the document from Dresden empowering him: he had to manage the company in such a way that the German Empire would suffer no financial loss or damage. Entering charges in the Land Register, conceding to

unjustified payment demands, doing anything that would obstruct what was by definition a branch of economic activity important for the war effort, was contrary to his remit. The German authorities must also have realised that the mill was an extremely profitable enterprise and that more was to be gained by exploiting it to the full than by selling it off cheap to a hanger-on. Production was correspondingly doubled to the pre-war level with no increase in the number of workers – were forced labourers used? – and a virtually total absence of profits! In fact when production was at its height in 1940, a loss was made! Up until production ceased in ca. 6/44 to release workers for the more important production of copper at Povrly, the value of paper and pulp being produced was of the order of Kc. 16 - 20 million, as disclosed by the reports made to Prague at the end of the war. One may safely assume 10% of that was profit, so at the rate of exchange of the Kc to the RM (8:1) profits of RM 200,000.-- to 250,000.-- a year were made for the 6 years the mill was subject to the control of the President of the Tax Authorities in Dresden.

The reason why the formal confiscation of Nestersitz was delayed until the 12.9.43 certainly had something to do with the court action instituted by Länderbank Wien against the company. The intention of the German authorities was to enrich the German state and people by the looting of Jewish property, not to incur bank debts. The question of Länderbank Wien's claims therefore had to be resolved first, as the last thing that the Nazis wanted to do was to upset the banks, on whose cooperation they relied in seizing Jewish property. The Empire Hitler had created was going to last 1000 years anyway, so whether the company was formally confiscated in 1938 or later didn't really mind: the main thing was that it was de facto under the control of the Nazi machine from day one in 10/38. We do not know what the outcome of the Länderbank court action was. It is, however, perfectly clear to me that by the time of the entry in the Register of the 12.9.43 noting the confiscation in favour of the German Empire Länderbank's claims, including the expense account claim, had been satisfied in full. This is supported by the statements sent to Prague at the end of the war: the property and the company was virtually totally unencumbered by debt – there were just small outstanding unpaid bills for RM 1351.34. To offset these were outstanding bills of RM 12,925.55 – the company's principal debtor was the Liberec branch of I.G. Farben, which owed RM 12,386.25. Had Nestersitz been supplying the packaging for the cyclon B gas....!

It is a mystery to me why the Nazis left RM 235,350.92 on the company's bank accounts. The only explanation for me is that some people high up in the banking world realised that the game was up and the post-war situation would not be helped by looting everything. Someone had to smooth the transition to the peace that would inevitably come one day. The other thing that interests me was the fact that Obereggendorf was not returned to the family after the War, after Nestersitz had discharged all its pre-war debts during the course of the war – that is, however, the subject matter of a later chapter. (There are emerging indications that paper and pulp were produced at Nestersitz at cost price during the period 1938-1944 and that Obereggendorf's debts were discharged from the family's private fortune held at the Usti branch of Deutsche Bank to the order of the President of the Tax Authorities in Dresden. An evaluation of the mill made on the 12.8.1943 prior to its official confiscation the following month cites a liquidation value of RM 525,960.-- compared with the marked value of ca. 4.25 million assessed after the War. On the basis of the liquidation value paid by Länderbank Wien for Obereggendorf in 1939 of RM 203,120.--, this leads one to assume that the market value of Obereggendorf may have been of the order of RM 1.65 million, i.e. AGA acquired it for 12.3% of its true value thanks to its connections with I.G. Farben and the Nazi regime.)

Whilst the looting of the company assets was in full swing, the seizure of the family's private fortune also simultaneously took place. We have no idea of the size of this and Peter had no

idea really either. When he said farewell to his parents in Prague in 2/39, when he boarded a plane to Strasbourg, he was only 24. At that age I personally had no idea of the size of my parents' assets. It simply wasn't the thing you asked your parents! Peter could only have been in his father's company for a short time when Eugen turned up in Paris in 4/39 So all that we have are hints in Eugen's letters. For instance he managed the assets Lene had inherited from her father on his death in 1926 separately from his own assets and Lene's dowry, which he managed jointly. Lene and Frederick had been their father's joint heirs, when Hermann died in 1926, subject to Jettla's life interest. To secure Jettla from fluctuating market returns, Lene paid her mother a monthly income of Kc 1,500.--. Peter was to back pay Jettla after the war. With interest rates of ca. 3% common at the time, this leads one to suppose that there may have been assets of the order of Kc 400-500,000.--? All Czechoslovak banks in the Sudetenland were taken over by German banks in 10/38. Details of Czechoslovak banks are held by the Czech National Bank, details of German banks in the Sudetenland, that were not destroyed prior to the end of the war, are held by the Finance Ministry in Prague. All the archives are currently being trawled for information about the family accounts. The Czech National Bank has already produced one fascinating piece of information about the confiscation of Eugen's accounts on the 24.5.44 – once again fitting in with the time of his deportation from Drancy on the 7.3.44. No account details are held, but he is listed as being Eugen Israel Fürth. We have no record of Eugen ever having been named Israel. The forename thus attributed to him reflected the German insistence on naming all male Jews Israel and all female Jews Sarah.

The real estate, in which Peter's mother Lene held an interest, was her parents' home at 20 Kroitzschgasse, Usti (now Dvorakova Street) inherited from her father and owned by herself and her brother in equal shares, subject to her mother's life interest and an apartment block with 10 flats, presumably purchased by Hermann and Jettla as an investment asset, at Auersperggasse (now Horova Street) 50% of which was owned by Jettla and the other 50% by Lene and Frederick in equal shares subject again to Jettla's life interest. Kroitzschgasse was notified to the German authorities as having a value of Kc 800,000.--, Auersperggasse as having a value of Kc 550,000.--. The entries in the Land Registry we obtained in 1993 are again instructive: those noting the confiscation of the shares Lene and Jettla held in the properties post-dated their deportations from Prague, i.e. signatures to documents effecting the transfer of ownership to the German Empire were required before they were allowed to board the cattle trucks!

What simultaneously fascinates and appalls about the looting of the family property, is not so much its loss but the way the law was used to effect the process. How much more culpable it is when people, whose education has or should have taught them better – lawyers, civil servants, bankers – descend to such depths, knowing simultaneously what is becoming of the unfortunates, whose assets they are, seizing.

An upsetting document arrived from the Czech National Bank today in evidence of the seizure of Jettla's bank account with the Böhmisches Escompte Bank in Prague on the 18.11.42, again just one month after her deportation from Terezin to Treblinka. The balance of Kc 27,394.--, after deduction of bank charges of Kc 50!, was remitted to the Repatriation Fund of the Emigration Fund for Bohemia and Moravia on the instructions of the Central Office for the Settlement of the Jewish Question, i.e. Jettla's funds were taken to finance the whole terrible business. She had to pay for her place in the cattle trucks, had to pay for her place in that terrible room in Terezin where the water ran down the walls, had to pay the

wages of the guards, who shot her in the back of the head in Treblinka.

XI. THE AFTERMATH - LIFE UNDER COMMUNISM IN CS

Soldiers returning home after war time experiences to what they hope will be a land fit for heroes are often disappointed by what they find and have difficulty in adapting to civilian life. After what Peter had suffered during the war - the persecution, the loss of virtually the whole of his family at the hands of the enemy in the most bestial manner – one would have thought that an exception would have been made to the general rule. In fact he was treated in an infinitely worse manner than his counterparts in the West! After laying down his life for his country, his reward was not even to be given back the property that had been stolen from his family by the enemy. The reason for this was, of course, the influence of the Communists in the background. They didn't formally seize power until 1948 but they were de facto in charge from the start, backed up by the Russian troops that occupied the country. This is clearly revealed by the censoring of a letter Peter wrote to his Uncle Frederick as early as 5/45. Talking about the victory parade in Prague, he had obviously expressed the view, that the Prague population viewed the Russian presence after the years under the Germans as a mixed blessing. This section was deleted from Peter's letter. In fact all soldiers, who had had contacts with the West, were suspect.

This leads me to a discussion of why Peter decided to stay in Czechoslovakia after the war. First of all there is the fundamental question of identity. Peter had been born Jewish, but was converted to Roman Catholicism in 1920. He had then been persecuted because of his racial origins. He had been brought up as a German speaker but was to see his fellow Germans turn against him and his family - schoolmates at Usti Grammar School fought for the S.S., worked in high places in the Economic Ministry in Prague, responsible for looting the family property. He fought for his country in the War to defeat Fascism, and yet his country rewarded him by not even returning the family property to him and treating him as the class enemy, when, during his short life, he had never really enjoyed the life of a "bloated capitalist". He emerged from behind the Iron Curtain in 1967 after a truly terrible time to be defrauded by his very own family. He was a great connoisseur of the French way of life, yet it had been France that had handed his family over to the Gestapo. The final irony was when he had to assume in 1973 the citizenship of the nation that had physically and financially destroyed his family as a condition of their deigning to pay him the compensation they grudgingly awarded him. The conferment of German citizenship didn't even extend to his family members – not that any of them wanted it! One was apparently enough. How does a person feel when he has been through all that? There must be a crisis of identity, if nothing else. Peter was very proud of one encounter with officialdom on the Franco-German border shortly after having become a German citizen in 1973. He was driving the family's French registered car and produced his German passport, Eky's British passport and Stephane's Czechoslovak passport. The poor official was so perplexed by all this that, after a few minutes of trying to fathom it all, he in desperation waved Peter on. I think that, in a way, was his strategy: to become so unfathomable to the powers that be that they could in no way inflict on his family again what had happened in the period 1938-1945. He assumed a cosmopolitan identity that hid beneath it a sensitive nature that had been severely traumatized and was incapable of admitting to its true identity. We again return to the figure on the death bed, holding the photograph of his mother in his outstretched hand....

The only way Peter could cope with this crisis of identity was to create a wholly new identity, to draw a line under the past, as he famously said, and only look forward. He had a new family, his English wife, a Methodist, and young daughter, the one thing he had to live for and that possibly prevented him from putting an end to it all in 1945 – a thought that had gone

through his head, as he later confessed to Eky. Communism was the new idea, the possibility to perhaps start a better, "new" life. So why not give it a try, particularly as it was taking place in the country, for which he had laid down his life in the war. Unfortunately the experience was that that country and the bigoted regime that was Communism didn't want people like Peter, representatives of the capitalist system. When this finally became apparent to him, it was too late to leave, and so ensued a truly terrible time under Communism, which maybe served in a strange way to offset the sense of guilt he must have felt at being virtually the only person in his family to survive. What better punishment could one have than a life under Stalin in the early 1950's?!

One of the consequences of drawing a line under the past was that Peter showed very little interest in maintaining contact with his more distant family, and only basically with his uncles in London and the USA. After his death we made contact with several family members, who had established contact with Peter at Nestersitz after the war. One of these was a granddaughter of Jettla's sister Olga, who had had a farm at Obrivsty not far from Usti. This lady, Vera Milcher, had spent some days with Lene and Jettla during the war and was able to tell us a lot and take us to the many places where, in happier times, Lene had spent her youth – we stood in the courtyard of the farm, where on a visit to her Obrivsty cousins, she is depicted on a photograph we have holding a horse mounted by Vera's Uncle Franz. Vera was astonished to find that we had a photograph of her father, Karl, taken at a tennis net with Lene – the only photo she had seen of her father as an adolescent. Vera survived as her father, racially Jewish, insisted on divorcing her mother, a Roman Catholic, thus saving his son and daughter. Son Karl accompanied his father to the railway station in Prague, from where he was deported, never to see him again....

The line under the past was presumably only drawn gradually, as the full horror of his family's fate became clear to Peter. The initial letters he wrote to his uncles after the war indicated that he had the firm resolve to build up the family business at Nestersitz again – his family had been paper-makers for generations, that is what he had been trained to do. By the time he was discharged from the army and returned to Nestersitz, all the old guard, including Waldek, whom he had briefly seen on a visit in 5/45, had left in the context of the expulsions of ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland in the months and years that followed the war. A former employee and engineer of Jewish origin, Karl Dehmel, had survived Terezin and was in charge, when Peter arrived. Together they tried to get the factory going again. However, the hostility of the authorities became increasingly apparent. Peter found himself accused of trying to sabotage his own factory – a fact confirmed by a history of Povrly, the nearby town, published shortly before the fall of Communism in 1990. In addition, on the personal level, he was confronted by the memory of his parents, above all his mother, everywhere he went. So, when it became apparent that to remain in Nestersitz, asserting his property rights, was potentially suicidal, it will no doubt have been with a sense of relief that he left it all behind him and went down to manage a paper mill at Tišnov, near Brno, the capital of Moravia at the end of 1946. Eky was not present when the move occurred. She had developed appendicitis some time in the summer of 1946 and, after the operation in Usti, was sent home to England by Peter to recuperate. Pat remained with her father. When Eky returned at the end of 1946, the move had taken place and she joined the family in Tišnov, where the family eventually took up residence at a little village called Pred-Klasteri, built around a very famous Cistercian monastery, where they were to meet a remarkable family, who have remained friends up until the present day, the Justs.

The family villa at Nestersitz had, in fact, been briefly occupied by Russian troops, when they advanced into the Sudetenland, where they looted and pillaged the homes of the perpetrators

and victims indiscriminately. The family home was in a correspondingly sorry state. Even if Peter had been emotionally equal to living there, there would have been considerable practical difficulties. Friends of his parents, for instance Martha Stein, to whom Lene had addressed her last letter from Siedlisczce, had some of the family furniture in safe-keeping for Peter. There was a garage full of furniture and fixtures and fittings in Prague, presumably the remnants of the furniture and effects the family had in exile with them there, which Peter sold for a flat sum of Kc 30,000.--, no doubt because, as later in the year in Paris, he didn't want to be reminded. What remained are the items which surround the family now – the pictures and portraits, the books, a few items of furniture etc. Peter no doubt acted practically in disposing of what was superfluous to requirement – the china sets to feed parties of 24, the linen table cloths etc. What could he have done with it all in the new, hard world he was soon to inhabit?

Peter didn't entirely abandon his attempts to sought out his parents' estates. His father was declared dead by the District Court in Usti on the 20.11.47. In the absence of evidence as to his final fate, it was stated on the Death Certificate that the latest date he could still have been alive was the 31.12.1946. Interestingly the Certificate does state that he had been missing since the 7.3.1944, which leads me to suspect that something was known about Drancy but not, presumably, what happened thereafter – something, I suppose, that the French authorities did not wish to admit to? The same court issued Peter with some kind of decision in 1957, stating that his father Eugen never had owned any property and never would! Peter also tried to recover the Usti properties, in which his mother, grandmother Jettla and Frederick, had had interests, on behalf of himself and his uncle. He eventually abandoned this enterprise, writing to his uncle in 1959 that all he had been able to achieve was to pay lawyers' bills. The Czechoslovak authorities simply insisted that, having been confiscated by the Germans during their occupation of the Sudetenland and placed under the administration of a German Commissar, the property was de facto German and had to be confiscated along with all other former German property. The same legal argument applied, of course, to the Fürth property. So the family property was effectively stolen twice: first by the Nazis and then by the Communists.

So by the beginning of 1947, when the move to Pred-Klasteri had been effected and Peter had paid his visit to France in an abortive search for his father's property, finding only his mother's fur coats, the new life had begun and the line had been drawn under the past, at least at a superficial level. Eky was to find that life with such a legacy was not easy. Matters were not made easier as the Iron Curtain descended in 1948 and former members of the capitalist class were made to serve their "just punishment". When times are tough, you normally discover who your real friends are and a man like Peter, who had suffered and lost so much, could not be hurt by financial and economic hardship. At such times you discover what is important in life – and so it was to be with Peter and Eky, although Eky never forgot the hard times and, following the family's emigration to the West in 1967, became something of a shopaholic – her pantry full of food to last for a year, on the off chance that Tesco's might run out of bread!

The Justs were representatives of a strata of society that no political ideology is ever likely to destroy. Mrs. Just's mother, Babička (grandma), came from peasant stock. Pat describes how, when working in the fields, she never really paused to pass water – she simply flexed at the knees and allowed water to pass: underwear was unknown! She had two daughters, Agnes and Maženka. Agnes may well have been the product of the Russian presence in the area during the first World War, as she had noticeably Russian traits, whilst her sister was definitely Czech. Maženka looked after her mother and didn't marry until later in life, when she devoted her final years to looking after her blind husband. Agnes married the village barber before the

war, Emil. They all lived together in the house next to where Peter took up accommodation on moving to Tišnov to manage the paper mill there – a difficult task for him, involving his having to oversee the confiscation of the mill from its pre-war owners in much the same way as the state had stolen his family property the previous year. I can imagine he went about the task with great sensitivity in the light of his own experience.

One would imagine that families like the Justs would have been the great beneficiaries of the Communist experience, but this was not to be the case. Emil had owned his own barber's shop before the war – nothing very splendid, just a room where he cut the villagers' hair, Agnes looking after the needs of the womenfolk of the village. This was enough to brand the family as representatives of the dreaded capitalist class! Emil was accordingly put to work in the local quarry, splitting rocks with primitive tools by way of penance. The trouble was that the village folk no longer had a barber. Emil was also universally popular. It followed that everyone at the quarry made sure that he came to no harm - in time I believe his sole function was to operate the siren prior to blasting. This left him free to cycle around the village and surrounding countryside cutting everyone's hair, a task which he continued well on into his eighties. It was a matter of pride for him that he cut my hair every time we paid a visit from about 1971 onwards, when I became involved with the family. Emil is now in his 95th year, the oldest man in the village. He no longer cuts hair, I believe, but is still very active, climbing up into the top of the family's fruit trees at fruit picking time. He seems to have thrived on the Communist experience!

(Recently we were informed that Emil died on the 12.12.2001, two weeks after fracturing his hip in a fall and having celebrated his 95th birthday in November 2001.)

The family basically subsisted from their cottage garden, which was tended with great commitment. There was the goose that was fattened for Christmas, the pig and the masses of vegetables. Emil and Agnes had a daughter, Ola, who was a few years older than Pat and became her best friend. It was no doubt from her that she picked up the Czech language, when they played together down by the river. At the time I met the family, Ola was married. Her son, Spinek, was to become my brother-in-law's best friend. Ola's husband tragically developed kidney disease as a result of senselessly having to lie around in ditches to keep the forces of capitalism at bay as part of his military service. He died in the 1970's and Ola was left to bring Spinek up on her own – needless to say Emil became the father figure and the family was very close in consequence.

One of the consequences of the war time experience for many was no doubt an insatiable desire to have a "good time" to compensate for all the privations and horrors of what they had gone through. Peter and Eky were no exceptions and they were frequently off for days on end in Prague and elsewhere. It followed that Pat was much of her time with the Justs. Maženka reported how she would wake up to find her in her bed – Pat, left alone next door, would be frightened by the thunder and ran to Maženka for protection! Peter didn't in fact remain long in Tišnov and was moved on to some huge paper mill at Jindrikov out in the wilds. However, Pat was always sent off to the Justs for her holidays and emotionally came to see that as her haven amidst all the upheaval of her parents' life. As Stephane grew up into a young boy, Pred-Klasteri developed much the same significance for him: he was never happier than when he could go to the Justs and play with Spinek, even after the family emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1967. Justs' little house by the river and Agnes's warm embrace meant home, a place to flee from the conflicts and hardship at home, fostered in no small measure by the unresolved trauma of Peter's wartime experiences.

The only record I have of the family's life in Jindrikov was how Eky, never an early riser or at

her best in the morning, upset the mill's management when she was rudely awakened in the early hours by the factory's loud speaker system playing party propaganda music to encourage the workers on their way to work at the unearthly hour of 5 a.m. She went out on to the balcony in her night-dress and switched the infernal din off....

The family's next move was to Česka Kamenice, where Peter initially worked at the local paper mill. However, it was around the time of Stephane's birth on the 15.10.1952, that the family's problems were to truly commence. It was the time of the Stalin purges. Peter was made to do penance for his family's capitalist background by doing manual work in the woods, working as an electrician up telegraph poles and driving an ambulance. The experience of working up the telegraph poles in sub-zero temperatures was to damage his facial nerve, with the consequence that he had reduced sensation in his chin. In later life he always had to have it pointed out to him, if, for instance, soup was dribbling down his chin. Stephane's birth had been preceded by a number of abortions – Eky had always wanted a large family, but no doubt the hard times they lived through conspired against her maternal wishes and back-street abortions became a necessary evil. Quite what was the cause of the brain damage that Stephane sustained at birth is not clear – the delivery was very protracted, which could have implied oxygen starvation, but there was also a suggestion that a new drug given to stimulate labour might have a role to play. Whatever the causes may have been, the consequences were soon clear to see: Stephane's development was retarded. All the things babies are supposed to do at certain ages Stephane did late. He often cried constantly and flew into tantrums. The doctors told Eky to take him home and look after him, which is what she has basically done ever since.

The first years in Česka Kamenice were truly terrible. Peter was soon to experience his fall from grace and was sent to work in the forests and up telegraph poles. The family lived in a couple of rooms rented to them by one of the party faithful, a Post Office employee, Mrs. Bednašova. A measure of the meanness induced by the Communist system was that, although owning a large orchard which provided the good Mrs. Bednašova with fruit all the year round and plenty to spare, she never once offered the young family as much as a rotten apple, when they were all suffering from the various consequences of vitamin deficiencies. The main room, where Eky did all the cooking, constantly had condensation dripping down the walls throughout the winter – like the room, where Jettla had spent those terrible days between July and October 1942 in Theresienstadt prior to her deportation. The room was heated by a coal stove. There was no coal, or very little, and Peter was reduced to going out at night-time to steal inferior quality coal, consisting mainly of coal dust. This was one night to almost prove the family's downfall – Peter came home late to find the family asleep in the flat almost overcome by fumes from the stove. Half an hour later and there would have been no family to save. The fire was burning too slowly and the chimney wasn't pulling properly, thus permitting all the fumes to escape into the room and not up the chimney.

Česka Kamenice is only about 30 km from Nestersitz – all the years the family lived there Pat can never recall having visited Nestersitz. The first time we went there was in 1991 after the fall of Communism, when a doctor friend from Usti took us to see "the family property".

It was a measure of Peter's capacity to forgive that, many years later when the family was resident in the West, he sent cancer drugs to Mrs. Bednašova behind the Iron Curtain, after she had been diagnosed with the disease and the system, whose ardent supporter she had been, was incapable of providing her with the medication she needed.

Children are resilient to hardship, when they grow up to know nothing different. So it was with Pat. Most of her school years were spent in Česka Kamenice and, despite all the

hardship, she has fond memories of those days. In 1991 we had a marvellous time when we attended the reunion in the year all her classmates reached 50. This year would have been the reunion on their all reaching 60 but, alas, Pat's condition is such that attendance would be impossible. Under Communism elementary education ceased at 14 and one embarked on vocational training. No doubt inspired by her father before her – but with different motives – Pat wanted to study medicine. This choice required her appearing before a panel with her parents. It was a further measure of the meanness of the system that she was refused a study place on the grounds of the family's background. One of the less subtle members of the panel even said, "It is our turn now!" One should not exaggerate the significance of this comment, as doctors in Eastern Europe certainly didn't enjoy the social and financial status of their Western counterparts: it was very much a profession that you went into out of a sense of calling.

At the age of 14 Pat started Nursing College in nearby Dečín. In 1954, one year previously presumably, she had been on a visit to England with her mother. This was the first time Eky had been let out since 1947. Her application to attend her father's funeral was turned down some years before. The family was, of course, never let out together for fear that they would never return. Eky had hoped that Pat could be persuaded to stay in the West and go to boarding school at the Blue School not far from Oswestry, where she had been born in 1941. Uncle Stefan was willing to pay the fees! However, the sight of a group of middle-class girls running down the corridors of the school in their dirty shoes – in Czechoslovakia you took your shoes off when entering a house! – and waving their hockey sticks proved too much of a cultural shock for her, when she paid the obligatory visit to the school, and she returned with some relief to her nursing studios in Dečín, much to the family's consternation.

She soon moved to Karlsbad (Karlo Vyvary) for what was to be one of the happiest periods in her life. She worked there in the state-run sanatoria and met friends, with whom she is to this day still in contact. Many fled to the West during the Dubček era around 1967. Life at home had always been rather difficult, matters were not made easier by Stephane's arrival in 1952. Starting an independent life, even at such a comparatively early age, had its advantages. It was possibly symptomatic of the strained relationship at home that she started an affair with a painter old enough to be her father. I well remember paying him a visit in 1972, when I first visited the Justs with Pat.

The folly of the Stalin years of severity soon passed, not least because of the great man's death! His legacy nonetheless persisted for some time after his death. It was gradually realised that you cannot put the whole of society's intelligentsia to work in the forests, putting the workers in their positions of responsibility, and expect the wheels of commerce and industry to turn. Thus it was that Peter's days of doing penance came to their inevitable end and he was rehabilitated. The family moved to Brno, the capital of Moravia and only half an hour's journey from the Justs in Pred-Klasteri. He was to remain there working in the state-run paper industry up until 1967, when the family finally emigrated. Pat, of course, stayed in Karlsbad with Milos, the father-figure!

There was also a virtually simultaneous improvement in the family's financial and material situation. As we were to later discover, it was in 1958 that Uncle Stefan in London obtained compensation from the Austrian authorities for the family's Vienna losses. You couldn't send money behind the Iron Curtain, as it would simply be taken off the recipients or they would be made unemployed until such time that it had all been used up. You could, however, send in goods and Uncle Stefan sent Peter a couple of cars and Pat was sent one later too, which much enhanced her image driving around Karlsbad – anything from the West was a sort of status

symbol, even the most trivial items such as bananas! A sum of £7000 or thereabouts was also sent in, which enabled Peter to build a fine house in Brno. Quite how this was managed, I have no idea - no doubt the payment was specifically linked to the acquisition of the house? Eky was to compare all the houses she was subsequently to occupy unfavourably with the house at Lozibky in Brno.

It was around 1960, i.e. two years after Uncle Stefan in London had recovered the compensation in Vienna, that the Fleischers, who had thus far shown no interest in Peter and his family behind the Iron Curtain – not as much as a card –, began to visit Peter. Rudi Fleischer turned up in 1960 and told Peter that there was a sum of £40,000.-- waiting for him in the West – according to a letter Peter wrote to his uncle in 1971, after he had lost all his investment in Plastijo, the plastics factory in Vecoux, the sum awaiting him was just £30,000.-- one year later! In fact, as we were to learn last year, the sum should, in fact, have been of the order of £350, 000.-- to £400,000.-- at today's exchange rate of the Austrian schilling to the pound sterling!

The one decent member of the Fleischer family appears to have been Rudi's wife, who was an invalid. She came to one of the sanatoria in Karlsbad to convalesce and confided in Eky, who went to pay her a visit, that the family spoke of nothing else in London than how they could get Peter's money off him! Quite why Peter never heeded this warning and the warnings his father gave him in his letters from Nice ("We have only heard bad reports of the whole family"), is a mystery. He implicitly trusted his uncle – who wouldn't after he had suffered such a fate and his uncle was his only surviving relative on his father's side of the family? Would a family, who sent you cars behind the Iron Curtain and the money to build a house, really be minded to defraud you? Unthinkable....

Eky's second visit to the West was in 1959, when she went on her own. This visit was clearly linked to the recovery of the family fortune in Vienna and signatures were required to move the money from the account on which it had been deposited. Eky went armed with a power of attorney executed by Peter, who at this time could still not obtain a visa, to London, where Uncle Stefan ushered her into a room, where she signed a mass of documents, which meant nothing to her. As we were to discover last year, this was by no means the first step in the fraud and many others were to follow. The immediate effect of the signatures was that the moneys on deposit in Vienna could be transferred to an account at the UBS bank in Zurich, not an account in Peter's name but in the name of a company called Etablissements E. & S. Fabian, a company through which Peter's share of Emil's inheritance was to be laundered. After signing the papers, Auntie Gerti took Eky off to buy a fur coat....! And so the innocent are robbed.

Peter was first given a visa for the West in 1962, by which time the plastics factory, then in Paris and trading under the name of Jolivet SA, had been acquired with his money by the Fleischers. On the occasion of this visit too some strange financial transactions took place, involving the purchase of a machine and Peter's acquiring Rudi Fleischer's shares in the company for the first time (there was to be a second time too!).

In one of his farewell letters Peter commented that his years in the West had not been entirely happy. When one looks back, one wonders whether, despite all the hardships, his life might not have been more satisfying, if he had remained behind the Iron Curtain. He enjoyed his job at the paper mill in Brno. Every year there was a trade fair there, where his linguistic skills were in great demand and he in consequence came into contact with people from all over the world. By this time the family had a comfortable house and friends, real friends, abounded.

Hard times make you realise who your friends are and serve to cement friendships. The pursuit of wealth often leads one to miss out on this great bonus in life. So, whilst life behind the Iron Curtain had its undeniable hardships, it was not without its compensations. The decision to emigrate to the West in 1967 thus turned out to be a mixed blessing. Its main purpose for the Fleischers / Könitzs, who had been living off the family fortune all those years, whilst Peter endured the Stalin years, was, of course, to lure Peter out, so that they could rob him of the rest. For the meantime the immediate effect of the decision for Peter personally was that he had to pay the Czechoslovak authorities Kc. 40,000.-- for the right to emigrate legally and renounce all his pension and other rights. The house was sold at the price laid down by the authorities and placed on deposit, as currency couldn't be taken out of the country. In practice, however, it was customary for purchasers to pay something on the side to the vendor. The money Peter obtained in this way was converted into diamonds and taken out that way - many families, who had been wealthy in pre-Communist days, held on to their jewelry and gradually converted it into cash to provide for life's necessities. The journey's direction was initially London, where Uncle Stefan awaited the family at one of London's stations - Auntie Gerti was significantly absent.

XII. THE AFTERMATH - LIFE IN S.W.10

When Uncle Stefan arrived in England in 1940, he quickly established himself in the paper world as a result of his family connections, forming a company that traded in paper named Fürth Paper and Pulp Ltd., trading from Essex Street, in London. Auntie Gerti did spend a brief period in Holloway Jail as an enemy alien; looking back it was a fatal mistake to have ever let her out! Quite when they took the apartment in Drayton Gardens, S.W.10, I am not sure. I believe it was quite soon – they were certainly there by the end of the War as evidenced by the letters Stefan wrote to Peter at the time. Stefan was to remain there for the rest of his life. So, basically he moved from one rather comfortable setting in Vienna to a similarly comfortable setting in S.W.10 with an, admittedly, rather difficult intervening interlude in France and, of course, the trauma of having to confront the tragedy of his family's final years in Nice. He was, however, never to face the trials that Peter faced behind the Iron Curtain.

Eugen added a postscript to his father Emil's farewell letter to Stefan and Gerti that the dying man was unable to complete, which I will quote:

"Dearest Steffl! Father unfortunately didn't complete his letter to you. He certainly, however, wanted to give you the same advice as he gave me and it is for this reason that I am also sending you the original or a copy of the letter he left for Lene and me for your safe-keeping. We three brothers will stick together come what may. I know exactly that you are of one mind with me. Warmest Regards, Your Eugen. – Nice, the 4th October, 1943"

In the letter that Stefan wrote to Peter, then still in the Army in Pilsen, on the 20th June 1945 he wrote in his broken English:

"From my brothers I have heard nothing and all researches by the Red Cross have been sofar in vain. But, I shall keep on hoping to find them one day. I am sure that you will undertake what you can to find out about them."

It is certain that Stefan obtained a copy of his father's farewell letter, as a copy of Emil's Will was included in the final dispatch of documents on the 4.10.1943 – one lot presumably sent to Eky, the other lot to Stefan in London. In a letter written to the Wiesbaden lawyers dealing with Peter's claim against Germany in 1973 Stefan expressly confirmed knowledge of the existence of Emil's Will. (If the Will he had in mind was in fact the one referred to in Emil's actual last Will that was deposited in Emil's safe deposit box at his bank in Vienna, it would imply that Hedwig Konitz and Rudi Fleischer had in fact handed the contents of the safe deposit box, including presumably the bonds of Emil, Sofie and Eugen, to Stefan after the War!). The intriguing question is, thus, how Stefan could have been persuaded to defraud his murdered brother's only son who, together with him, was the only survivor of the Fürth family as it had been constituted before the war? In the letter Peter wrote to his uncle in 1971, when he lost virtually all his investment in Plastijo, he wrote:

"Finally let me tell you that you were never the old fool for me, but were always the favourite uncle, on whose lap I could rock to and fro and who secretly slipped me some money, when father wasn't looking."

Peter indeed named his only son after this favourite uncle. It defies belief that Stefan could have defrauded his nephew, but he surely did. My only explanation for this is that Stefan had

never really become independent – Emil was always looking for an appropriate field of activity for his sons. Could it be that he had never given them the freedom to stand on their own feet and that, when Stefan was left on his own, he instinctively sought for the support that his father had always given him? Could the explanation for the fraud be that the person, whose arms he fell into, was crooked through and through and moulded him in her own image? That is, in my view, the heart of the matter. There are also other considerations: Peter was behind the Iron Curtain, Stefan probably saw him for the last time in 1944 before the Normandy landings, Stefan's aunts, who had emigrated to London in 1939, were all dead by the end of the War with the possible exception of Hermine, who was in the USA. There was only Frieda's daughter, Lotte Baumann – otherwise nobody, except Auntie Gerti and her brood. So who else did he have to live for? By the time the compensation was recovered from Austria in 1958, Stefan was 65, at that time already quite an old age. Auntie Gerti and her brother and sister were all at least 15 years Stefan's junior, Hedi (Gerti's sister) had two children, Herbert and Susanne, in their prime, hungry for the material benefits that the recovered fortune could bestow. Stefan was just one against those forces, who had already proved their criminal natures in the manner they had refused to hand over the family's bond and share certificates to Emil and Eugen. So maybe, given his weak nature and lack of independence, it was inevitable that he was to betray the memory of his late father, heedless of the reputation his grandfather, Heinrich Fürth, had established at the time of the Vienna Crash in 1873 and which it was Emil's dying wish that his children should uphold.

As the letter Stefan wrote to Peter in 1945 indicates, he did, however, start off with the best of intentions. He did, erect gravestones on the sites of his parents' burial places in Nice. Pat and I only visited the French Riviera once and, given Peter's having drawn a line under the family past, we knew nothing of the graves and so, regrettably, have never visited them. Eky once made a photograph of them, when they were all holidaying on the Riviera, with Peter, Uncle Stefan and young Stephane standing in contemplation. I have personally never felt any attraction for the Riviera. After having fully appreciated the extent of the family tragedy, I have absolutely no desire to visit the place. The knowledge of what happened there and the omnipresent affluence that besports itself there today would be too great a contrast to bear. I often wonder what Peter must have felt when he spent his holidays down there. Despite this antipathy, I do hope to visit the graves one day before I depart from this world – out of season, I think, if such a thing exists!

We knew from Peter's papers that Stefan had obtained a compensation payment from the Foreign Compensation Commission in London for Nestersitz, doubtless on the grounds of his having assumed British citizenship by the end of the war, thus qualifying for payments made by the Commission to British subjects, who had suffered financial losses as a result of the events of the war. Peter had assumed that the payment was from Germany, as he wrote to the German authorities in 1967, on emigrating from Czechoslovakia, that an Anglo-German Commission had evaluated the mill after the War and valued it at £460,000.-- and that his uncle had been made a small payment by the Commission. Looking through Peter's other papers – files full! – I later found a letter from Stefan to the Wiesbaden lawyers, who acted for Peter in his compensation claim against Germany, in which Stefan wrote, in response to information requested about the mill and its value, that the Commission had valued the mill at £440,000.--. I eventually obtained the address of the Commission via the Bank of England and Department of Trade and Industry and wrote to obtain information about the payment made to Stefan. We received the reply in ca. 1999 and were surprised to find that the compensation had, in fact, been made out of Czechoslovak moneys held in London since before the war, that were used after the war to compensate British subjects, who were victims of the post-war Communist nationalisations. The mill was valued at £404,998.-- (Kc. 81.6

million) on appeal. Stefan claimed ownership of 50% of the mill by reference to the gentlemen's agreement he had entered into with Peter during the war for the event of their being the only family members to survive, and received payments between April 1954 and June 1962 totalling £18,182.14s.5d., representing compensation at the rate of 1s.9.55d in the £, and roughly the sum of money that had been held on the company's bank accounts in 1945! There was a copy of the agreement, which had only been signed by Stefan and not by Peter. Presumably it had only been possible to draft the agreement after the war, by which time it was no longer possible for Peter to sign.

The two interesting facts to emerge from this discovery were that Stefan had misrepresented to both Peter and the Wiesbaden lawyers the real valuation of Nestersitz and that there had actually been the gentlemen's agreement. In the light of what we were to subsequently discover about what had gone on in Vienna, it was quite clear that Stefan had misrepresented the value of the mill to induce Peter to claim a value in excess of the true value, realising that Peter, a gentleman, would certainly have shared any compensation he obtained with his uncle. Stefan was, of course, a party to the compensation claim in the 1970's but the compensation received from the Commission in London was set against the entitlement he had under the German compensation scheme at the rate of the pound sterling to the deutschmark, existing at the time the payments were made between 1954 and 1961! This in fact meant that the £18,182.14s.5d. paid at the time was of greater value than the DM 188,050.10 paid to Peter in 1978, as the rate of the DM to the £ back in 1954-1961 had been 11:1! There was the other interesting observation that the mill had increased in value from Kc 32-34 million to Kc. 81.6 million between 1938 and 1954! The most likely reason for this was, I believe, the post-war devaluation of the Czech Crown. We have the figure of Kc. 32-34 million from a valuation of the mill made by the German authorities in the 1970's. It is to this day not clear, whether Stefan also obtained some form of compensation from the German authorities in the years immediately following the war – I personally find it hard to believe that he didn't, as he fulfilled all the requirements to claim as a British national.

Stefan's fraud became clear, when we started to make enquiries about the mill at Obereggendorf outside Vienna in view of the need to supply the authorities in Philadelphia with information about compensation received in the past for the purposes of the class action against Austrian Banks (Bank Austria / Kreditanstalt) in New York. You will remember that we had joined the action on the grounds of Uncle Stefan's being on record as stating that Austria never paid the family all it took off them! When the letter arrived from AGA's Vienna lawyers in 2000, we were astounded to discover that, of the AS 11.5 million paid, Stefan claimed AS 8 million as his own. This didn't make sense, first because of the gentlemen's agreement, in which Peter and Stefan had agreed to share anything recovered from Austria and Czechoslovakia 50:50 and secondly because Emil's letters from Nice made it quite clear that he owned 99,5% of the shares in the mill and that he left them in equal shares to his three sons. On the 16.7.1948 the District Court in Vienna had declared Stefan, Hans and Peter to be Emil's heirs in equal shares (Eugen had been declared dead by the Czechoslovak authorities on the 20.11.47). Following the declaration of Hans's death on the 17.12.1948, Stefan and Peter were declared to be the heirs to his estate in equal shares. The implication of these two declarations of inheritance was, of course, that Stefan and Peter were heirs to Emil's assets in equal shares. The mill at Obereggendorf was an asset comprised in Emil's estate. So how had Stefan been able to claim AS 8 million of the compensation paid as his own?

It should also be considered that the wartime debt repayments made by Nestersitz under the terms of the guarantee it gave for Obereggendorf's debts were of the order of RM 563,306.--. The share value of Obereggendorf was reported by Stefan in 7/38 as being RM 649,350.--. Quite whether the share value in fact reflected the mill's market value is not clear. Be that as it

may, it is obvious that Emil Fürth & Son, the name under which Nestersitz traded, owned most of the equity in Obereggendorf by reason of its debt repayments. Under the law of succession Emil Fürth & Son was owned by Stefan and Peter after the war as follows: Peter 68.75%, Stefan 31.25% (if Stefan had chosen to prove his father's Will, the division would have been, Peter 62.5%, Stefan 37.5%). Peter was thus entitled to claim substantially more than 50% of the compensation paid for Obereggendorf – particularly as the agreement he had with Stefan was never adhered to by the latter!

The Land Registry entries we had obtained from Vienna about two years previously had revealed that the flat on the Schwarzenberg Platz did not in fact belong to Emil and that he must have been a tenant there. On the other hand, we were surprised to learn that Kirchengasse 18 did belong to him – we had always assumed that it belonged to Hans, who lived there. The factory was registered in the name of the joint stock company that owned it, Obereggendorf Paper Mill, of which Emil, of course, owned 99,5% of the shares. Whilst the Municipal Archives in Vienna didn't hold the papers about the restitution proceedings in relation to the paper mill – these you will remember had been destroyed some years ago! – they did hold the papers about the restitution of the house. This was clearly treated as part of Emil's estate and we were interested to read that Dr. Dyskant's exercise of power of attorney executed by Emil in his favour in Pilsen on the 17.11.38 had been fraudulent. It was also interesting to read that Peter had withdrawn his restitution claims on the basis of a Trust Deed entered into between himself and Stefan on the 7.10.55 (difficult to know how Peter could have signed this when he was behind the Iron Curtain!), the effect of which was presumably that Stefan acted as Peter's trustee in the matter of the family's restitution claims and would correspondingly share anything recovered with Peter 50:50 on the basis of their gentlemen's agreement and the implications of the declarations of inheritance issued in relation to the estates of Emil and Hans.

A careful reading of the declaration of inheritance in relation to Emil's estate provided the explanation of how Stefan had been able to claim AS 8 million as his own and the evidence of his fraud. Emil was declared to have died in Nice on the 18.9.1943 intestate! He had, of course, made a Will – Stefan admitted as much when he wrote to the Wiesbaden lawyers in 1973. The Will was the only evidence of who actually owned the shares of Obereggendorfer Paper Mill. In the course of the company's liquidation by Länderbank Wien in 1939, those shares will certainly have been destroyed. So who, after the war, was to say who owned the shares? The answer of course lay in Emil's Will and in the various letters that were written from Nice during the War. Peter was behind the Iron Curtain and was the only other person to know of the letters.... So, all that Stefan had to do was claim ownership of the shares himself or, at least, of a greater percentage of them than he was actually entitled to – who could disprove him?

The final proof of Stefan's fraud came when we obtained the notifications of Jewish assets signed by Stefan for himself and on behalf of his parents in July 1938. He set his signature to a document stating that his father owned the mill's 21,645 shares worth RM 649,350.--!

The total value of Emil's notified assets in 7/38 had been RM 926,732.50, that of his wife Sofie's RM 25,016.15, i.e. a combined value of RM 951,748.65. The mill made up ca. 68% of their total assets. The AS 11.5 million paid by Länderbank Wien and AGA in equal shares was compensation for the mill alone. This leads one to suppose that the total value of their assets in 1958 would have been of the order of AS 16.9 million – including of course the bond and share certificates stolen by the Fleischers! This figure correlates with the sum transferred to the account in Zurich under the name of Etablissements E. & S. Fabian between the end of

12/60 and 4/61 totalling SF 864,244.90. A lot, of course, depends on the exchange rates in force at the time, but the Swiss Franc sum appears to correspond to roughly one half of a sum of AS 16 million. On the UBS bank statements from Zurich it is possible to clearly identify the balance of the AS 11.5 million payment, i.e. AS 3.5 million, and the sale proceeds of Kirchengasse 18 – AS 410,000.-- and other payments, the meaning of which will become clearer later. There was no evidence of a transfer of AS 8 million, the sum claimed by Stefan himself: he kept that himself, paid the other moneys recovered to the UBS account, shared them with Peter (not even that, I believe!) and stated that Austria had never paid the family all that it was owed! Peter was an officer and a gentleman – Stefan, who had once been an officer and gentleman, knew that he would never question his integrity.

Stefan's fraud was not the only interesting fact that emerged from the letter from AGA's lawyers. We knew from Emil's Nice letters, that the family's pre-war lawyer had been a Dr. Gutmann and it was Dr. Gutmann who was originally in charge of the case, and from the Land Registry entries we knew that restitution of the mill had been claimed as far back as 11/48. Dr. Gutmann did not conclude the settlement for the family in 1958 ten years later but a Dr. Indra. The good Dr. Gutmann may, of course, have retired, what is certain is that he certainly did know who had been the owner of the mill before the war. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that he wouldn't go along with Stefan's fraud and that Stefan, urged on, of course, by the insatiable Fleischers, took on the more compliant Dr. Indra, maybe even a friend of Auntie Gerti!

What had always amazed me was how long the restitution proceedings took – 10 years! It took Peter ten years to obtain the pittance he was awarded by Germany in 1978, when the confiscation by the German authorities, at least the practical side of it, took just 48 hours. If one believed all the German post-war propaganda, one supposed that families who had suffered so terribly had their claims settled virtually immediately without too much bureaucratic ado and insistence on documentary evidence. In the family case quite the contrary occurred. The amount of Dr. Gutmann's original claim had in fact been for AS 50 million plus interest, i.e. almost 4 times the amount actually paid in 1958! Quite when the claim was submitted, I have no idea. Quite what justified the level of the claim, I do not know – given the fact that Nestersitz was worth about 5 times Obereggendorf, could it be that Dr. Gutmann was claiming for Nestersitz as well, based on the belief that the bank had also been implicated in the looting of the family property there? Various commissions are now looking into this aspect of the case, as it is quite evident from the submissions made to various courts in Vienna, Berlin and Leitmeritz in the context of Länderbank Wien's endeavours to extort moneys from Nestersitz during the war already discussed earlier on, that Obereggendorf's pre-war debts were discharged in full during the war. So why wasn't Obereggendorf returned or, at least, why wasn't the original claim of AS 50 million plus interest satisfied in full?

One of the most amazing facts to emerge from the letter from AGA's lawyers was that the Restitution Commission did originally rule in the family's favour. Three appeals followed, the final outcome of which was that Stefan withdrew his claims and settled for AS 11.5 million. Can you imagine the nerve to have participated in a process that physically and financially annihilated the family – writing letters, passionately signed, "Heil Hitler?", to the effect that the main object of the exercise was to place the family property in Aryan hands – and then actually to have appealed against the court decision ordering restitution of the family property? They should have left the court-room with heads bowed in shame. What total hypocrisy, that unfortunately persists to this day, accompanied by a fanfare of remorse staged for a gullible public at home and abroad: "If nothing else, we have paid full compensation for the financial damage inflicted etc. etc. "

The final interesting fact to emerge from the Restitution Commission's ruling on the 18.12.1958 was that there were two separate actions against the companies, to which AGA had sold Obereggendorf's paper machines after acquiring the mill in 1939. These were the Zehnbacher Holzstoff und Kappenfabrik in Burgstall on the River Erlauf and the Kunstleder- und Werkstoff-Fabrik Buchscheiden GmbH Innsbruck in receivership. AGA's lawyers indicated that these actions may also have produced some kind of payment as well, this explaining a few of the payments to the UBS that are not clear. The companies concerned would, presumably, have been able to sue AGA as well?

One of the explanations why the restitution proceedings in Vienna lasted quite so long was the fact that Austria was, of course, occupied by the Russians for some time after the war. This was graphically illustrated by the Land Registry entries for Schwarzenberg Platz, that for a while was named Stalin Platz.

Armed with the loot from Vienna and with Peter safely behind the Iron Curtain, Auntie Gerti commenced, or carried on, living a corresponding life style and using the family fortune to the advantage of her family. She was too much in love with herself, I believe, to do the one thing that she should have done for the Fürths, namely bear Stefan some children to make up for the terrible loss that had been suffered. Fifteen years his junior, it would not have been impossible, I think. As it was, every penny was directed towards herself, her brother and sister and her sister's two children, Herbert and Susanne. The Daimler was bought, a flat down in the South of France. Rudi had some kind of factory in Casablanca manufacturing blankets – quite whether he had headed off in that direction armed with Emil and Eugen's bonds during the war already, I do not know, but consider it a distinct possibility. Herbert Könitz, who had apparently made ends meet after the end of the war by selling stamps on the streets of Paris, possibly even Eugen's stamp collection, we shall never know, was by this time an employee of Jolivet SA in Paris, the owner of the company wanted to sell out – the money at UBS was made available! Susanne was married to an American butcher apparently – her aunt however had social aspirations and hooked an impoverished French Marquis for her.

In the meantime, of course, Peter, whose money was being used to finance this orgy of self-indulgence was living in a couple of rooms in Ceska Kaminice with the condensation pouring down the walls, resorting to stealing coal to keep his family warm. Cars were eventually sent over together with the £7,000.-- to create the impression of concern. Finally, no doubt, there was the need to get their hands on the lot, which could only be done if Peter were got out from behind the Iron Curtain and, to this end, Rudi was dispatched with the good news that £40,000.-- awaited Peter in the West, this turning out to be £30,000.-- when he visited one year later!

To conclude this account of life in S.W.10 I should like to narrate the story of my one and only encounter with Uncle Stefan. I had met Pat in 1971 and it must have been the following year that I was ushered into the presence in Drayton Gardens. Typically Auntie Gerti dominated the proceedings – Uncle Stefan led a controlled existence! – When he did eventually get a few words in, it was to ask me if I was connected to the Millwards of Cairo! I had to disappoint him by replying in the negative, humbly pointing out that I was only related to the Millwards of Wednesbury. The old man, by this time nearly 80, was back in the Vienna of 1914-1918, when he had been in the bodyguard of the last Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Franz-Josef. Emil had apparently been offered a title in 1916, when the Empire was coming to an end and they needed money to keep it going. He had the foresight to turn it down, at which his son Stefan was evidently very disappointed. We didn't of course learn this until many years later, when Auntie Gerti gave us Emil's memoirs in ca. 1991/3. It

then all added up: Uncle Stefan an inveterate old snob, Gerti the social climber and crook, willing to walk over dead bodies to attain her evil ends, exploiting a weak individual in the process and ruining the name that Heinrich and Emil and Eugen of course too had been so proud of. Gerti Fleischer finished the process that Hitler and Stalin had initiated.

XIII. IN THE LAND OF THE FREE - 1967-1988

When Peter arrived in London in 1967, he was 53, the same age his father Eugen had been, when he arrived in Paris in April 1939. Unlike his father before him, who had been through a traumatic 6 months since his unchauffeured flight to Prague from Nestersitz, Peter arrived, however, with hope in his heart, having emerged from 21 years of hardship and deprivation behind the Iron Curtain. It is true that, unlike his father, he was not to be herded into a cattle truck to be deported by the Reichsbahn to a place of extermination within a period of five years, but within a period of not much more than three years he was to be defrauded of the remnants of the family fortune and the aptly named Fleischer family (Butcher!) were so to complete the process of expropriation commenced under Hitler and continued under Stalin with the blessing, albeit unwitting, of the French state.

Stefan was very moved when he met the family at the station – how could he have been otherwise, when confronted with the only surviving member of his family. However, by this time he was too deeply compromised by the machinations of his wife's family to do much about the events that were now to unfold. What should, of course, awaited Peter on his arrival was a fortune of ca. AS 8 million with accrued interest from 1958, judiciously converted into pounds sterling and cautiously invested in gilt edge investments at a reputable bank in England. That was nothing less than Stefan's duty as Peter's trustee – it was morally incumbent on him as brother of his murdered brother Eugen. Instead, of course, the money had been hidden away in a Swiss bank account, doubtless for reasons of tax evasion, to be used for the benefit of his wife's family. What Stefan should, of course, have done is to have made Peter a partner in the company he had set up in London after the war, Fürth Paper & Pulp Ltd., handing it on to Peter when he finally retired – he was already by now in his 74th year and the day to day running of the business was in the hands of a capable Mr. Howling, - upon condition that he look after Auntie Gerti until her death. The said Auntie Gerti, who didn't even bother to turn up to greet the family on the arrival due to her social commitments, was not, however, the kind of person to share anything with anybody.

It was very soon made clear to Peter that there was no place in London for him and that he couldn't expect his uncle to support him. He was accordingly sent off to Paris into the clutches of Herbert Könitz, not knowing how the world of business operated in the West after his years behind the Iron Curtain and not knowing anything about life in France, other than his experiences in 1939, when he released racing pigeons for English pigeon fanciers. He entrusted his fate and that of his family to a family, to whom, despite his father's warnings and those of Rudi's wife, Friedl, he was to give the benefit of the doubt, as was his nature so to do, and the humbling experience of the next few years, that no doubt revised his harsh judgement of his father in the immediate post-war years, was that he suffered the same fate at their hands as his father before him.

Eky did not accompany Peter to Paris immediately, but went to live in Shrewsbury, where her family came from, so that Stefan, who was still of school age, could attend Oswestry School as a boarder. Given his mental health problems, Stéphane had, of course, never obtained any academic qualifications at school in Czechoslovakia. For a time he had attended a special school but, as a borderline case, he was eventually transferred back into the main stream. He always looks back on his year at Oswestry School with great affection - the school photograph hangs proudly on the wall of his room at his Nursing Home. However, Pat tells me that it was not a wholly happy time – he was very home-sick and missed his father very much, as he still does today 13 years after Peter's death. So within the space of not much more than a year, the

family was once more united in Paris and were soon to make the move to the Vosges, an area of France, where the textile industry, which had once been very powerful in the region and employed thousands of workers, had collapsed and the French Government was encouraging new industries to relocate to fill the void that had been created.

Pat was with her father in Paris from the start and attended the Alliance Francaise to learn French. Here she met a fellow student, an Indian by the name of Vijay Gulati – from a well known Delhi family, as Uncle Stefan's social researches were later to reveal! – whom she married in 1969. By the Autumn of 1968, the need to take up some form of employment became apparent. She was a trained nurse. By this time many of her fellow Czechs, with whom she had worked in Karlsbad, had fled Czechoslovakia during the Dubček era. Their nursing and medical qualifications were not generally recognised in England and France, but were done so in West Germany, where many of them accordingly settled. Pat had a doctor friend, Dagmar, who was working at a TB Clinic near Stuttgart, and a nurse, always known as Sister Putzi, with whom she had worked for many years in Karlsbad, was a kind of second mother to Pat and was working at a sanatorium in Bavaria on the Austrian frontier run by the family of the former kings of Bavaria, the Wittelsbach family. She worked for 3 months with Dagmar and for three months with Putzi; then, realising she was pregnant, returned to Paris to Vijay, who had a flat there. She was adamant that her child should be born in England, as she had been in 1941 and accordingly went to live with her aunt in Shrewsbury. Vijay had difficulty in obtaining an entry permit, as by this time Commonwealth citizens were no longer allowed to enter Britain without a visa. Uncle Stefan was helpful in this respect and Vijay was given a seven day visa, I believe. The couple married, he returned to Paris, Lene, named after Peter's mother, was born on the 25.10.1969. Before the end of the year Pat returned to Paris, where Vijay, a foreigner in a strange land, proved wholly unequal to the task of providing for his young family. Pat moved to live with her family, by this time installed in Vecoux, to where the factory, Jolivet SA, had been moved in the course of 1968.

While this domestic drama was going on, Peter had arrived in Paris in the summer of 1967 and was given work by Herbert Könitz, the managing director, of the factory that had basically been acquired with Peter's money in 1961 after the arrival of the funds from Vienna. Needless to say, Herbert was no more willing to share than his aunt back in S.W.10 – in fact there are, to my mind, quite clear indications that the two of them were the driving force behind the fraud perpetrated against Peter. What Peter found in Paris at the Cachan site, where Jolivet SA was situated, was a small factory that, given its location, could not possibly expand. Peter's initial instinct was to sell up – with the proceeds and the money at the UBS Zurich to which he was entitled he could have lived quite comfortably and, after all he had been through, he had certainly deserved it! However, it was impossible to sell the place, as it was mortgaged to the hilt. Apparently capital repairs had been carried out; nobody was, however, able to show Peter a bill for the work done. It seems more than likely to me that the factory was merely a vehicle for subsidising Herbert's life style at Peter's expense – as managing director virtually all his living expenses were paid through the company, a practice that continued following the move to Vecoux. Out of a sense of gratitude to his uncle for what the latter had done for him during his time behind the Iron Curtain, Peter had already signed over one quarter of Cachan to Stefan. Auntie Gerti prevailed on Peter to sign over 700 of his shares in Jolivet SA to Herbert on the grounds that the 300 shares he held were not consistent with his role as managing director. Peter, a gentleman and implicitly trusting his uncle, complied. The fact that the two of them could have accepted these gifts from Peter in the knowledge that Peter had been defrauded in the matter of the distribution of Emil's estate is an indication of their total lack of any sense of right and wrong.

The factory was seemingly in constant need of fresh capital. Peter, who was the sort of man who would take off his own shirt for you if in need, willingly complied and cashed in his share of the investments in Zurich to meet the demand. He financed the move to Vecoux at the beginning of 1969, agreeing to invest all the proceeds of the sale of Cachan in the new venture. As he was to point out to his uncle in 1971, when the bubble finally burst, nobody in the family advised him to keep the Cachan premises, for which Jolivet SA had been paying rent – a low rent, of course. If he had retained Cachan, the rent alone – three times the amount Jolivet SA paid was later paid – would have provided him with the wherewithal to live.

In Vecoux Peter initially lived in the house next to the factory – I am not sure whether the factory owned it or whether he rented it. In the course of the spring and summer, he had a house built facing the factory up near a farm some 300 metres away. By this time his funds in Zurich must have been running out, as he had to take out a mortgage, which was still being paid off when he died in 1988. The house was nothing grand – a kind of prefabricated chalet built above cellars with a large living room with a picture window looking out on to the factory and the hills of the Vosges that rose behind the factory on the other side of the River Moselle. Later, and possibly even then, we were to realise that it was a conscious endeavour on Peter's part to recreate the idyll of his youth in the valley of the River Elbe, where the family villa stood proudly above the paper mill. Peter would often sit for hours looking out of that window lost in his thoughts, deaf to all that was going on around him. Constitutionally incapable of communicating with his family about the family tragedy, he doubtless communed with his past as he sat there looking at the factory, the spire of the village church, the hills in the background and behind them in his mind's eye, all his past. When he was to lose virtually all that he had invested in the enterprise not even 2 years later, it must have been bitter for him to look out at the factory for the rest of his life, his hopes of rebuilding the family fortunes after all the adversities of the past shattered and realising that he, like his father, had failed or, at least, been the dupe of the Fleischers / Könitzs.

The letters Peter left behind – in particular the letter he wrote to his uncle in 1971 and a letter he wrote to Herbert at the end of 1984 – show that he had invested a total of FF 1,08 million in Jolivet SA and Cachan. Cachan had been purchased in 1961 for ca. FF 200,000.--. When it was sold in 1968/69, it in fact fetched FF 650,000.--, from which the mortgage of FF 200,000.-- had to be paid off – taken out of course during Peter's absence. This implies that FF 450,000.-- of Peter's investment was in fact growth on his investments that had occurred since the compensation had been recovered from Austria. We have never been able to find out quite what percentage of the SF 864,244.90 held in Zurich was Peter's, despite the bank's exhaustive searches. What is, however, perfectly clear is that the money Peter invested in Jolivet SA in no way represented one half of the money held in Zurich and certainly not the full amount, which was, in my view, Peter's inheritance. The strategy of getting Peter to invest all his share of the moneys held in Zurich in the company was thus a calculated ploy to defraud him.

By the middle of 1970 the banks were knocking at the door, or so Peter was led to believe – in fact Stefan could have intervened at any time to save the day, as could Peter, if he had disposed of all his inheritance! Herbert had a buddy, named J. Hermann, who for a quite modest sum, FF 272,744.--, paid off the banks and undertook to find fresh investors. The price of this intervention was that the shares in the company were devalued to FF 1 each. Peter's 45,000 shares were thus effectively worth FF 45,000.--, possibly one hundredth of what his inheritance should have been worth at that time! Peter left with his papers a photocopy of the hand-written agreement that made this possible, dated the 22.6.1970. It was signed by Stefan and Peter Fürth, Herbert Könitz and Rudolf Fleischer. All of them who sat

round the table and signed that agreement, with the exception of Peter, of course, knew that Peter was being defrauded. Peter, an emigrant on French soil, who could have been deported if he became a burden on the French state, with responsibilities towards his family and a newly constructed house mortgaged up to the hilt, was pleased to escape solvent from the supposed disaster. Herbert, and the rest as well presumably, reserved the right to repurchase their lost shareholding, which I can well imagine was indirectly done with Peter's money, wherever they had got it stacked away. By the time the factory was sold in 1986, other investors had of course, been brought in. However, I am of the view that, if Peter had not been defrauded, those outside investors would not have been required. He could have found the necessary capital from his own investments or have taken out loans that could have been financed from the company's profits. By the time of the sale, just two years before Peter's death, it was the second largest manufacturer of plastic bags in France and has continued to grow since. We have yet to hear from the French Government how much was realised at the time of the sale in 1986 – Peter got just some FF 230,000.-- for his 45,000 shares in return for the FF 1,08 million he had invested some 20-25 years previously!

To have committed this fraud against Peter after the fate he had suffered during the war and after all he had been through behind the Iron Curtain, was, in my view, the most wicked and despicable crime tantamount to stealing from the blind! The Commission at the Prime Minister's Office in Paris dealing with the looting of Jewish assets in France during the war is currently examining the affair together with the question of what happened to all the movable property Eugen had with him in exile in France. I find it extremely hard to believe that nothing will be done about it. On the other hand I am aware, from the time I have myself spent in France, that it is a pretty corrupt place. How otherwise could a crook like Herbert Könitz have risen to the position he held up until his retirement – he was some kind of a Judge on a Commercial Tribunal and was awarded some honour by the French State for his work in building up Plastijo SA (the successor company to Jolivet SA) in Vecoux? To top it all he, whose family defrauded the Fürths in Nice and was doubtless directly or indirectly instrumental in their being handed over to the Gestapo, draws a pension from Austria for his war-time persecution – a graphic illustration, I am sure, of how much of the compensation paid after the war ended up in the wrong hands as a result of the consequences of the Cold War. Can it really be the case that, when fraud has gone on on this scale and is at last exposed, because Austria opens up its archives, nothing will be done about it because of the implications of the Statute of Limitations?? There is, of course, the possibility that the descendants of those who defrauded Peter, who were sent to boarding schools and finishing schools funded out of the family fortune, may well have profited morally from the time spent in such establishments and, when confronted with the crimes of their parents and grandparents and the knowledge that their comfortable circumstances have basically been the fruit of a most terrible fraud, will of their own volition hand over what is morally not theirs.!? I advisedly say descendants, because those who perpetrated the fraud are no longer here or are no longer compos mentis – Rudi and Hedi died many years ago, Auntie Gerti was still alive last year at the age of 94 suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease, Herbert and his sister the Marchioness will be approaching their 80's. What does one do in such a situation....?

It was about the time Peter lost the family fortune that I became involved in the family history. Pat stayed with Lene in Vecoux for the first year of her life. Realising the situation that had developed at home and the fact that she could not remain a burden on her parents, she set out for Germany again in the Autumn of 1970, leaving Lene at home with Eky. She found work at the sanatorium run by a descendant of the former rulers of Bavaria, called Wildbad Kreuth, where Putzi had worked since her flight from Czechoslovakia in 1968. She returned home at Christmas, having found a lady in the nearby village of Kreuth to look after Lene

when she was on duty. When she returned after Christmas, as yet without Lene, I met her for the first time. I had been working there on the estate farm breeding and working cart horses since 1969. We were most surprised to discover that I was born in Dudley and she not far away in Oswestry!

This account of the family history is not about me. However, I should just briefly explain how it came to be that I was working with cart horses in the South of Bavaria. I had shown great academic promise at school but this had been overshadowed by developing epilepsy in 1958, presumably post-traumatic epilepsy following brain damage sustained in a road traffic accident in 1953 when I was 7 years old. This was not so bad but, at around the time I was supposed to sit the Cambridge entrance exams for the greater glory of the school(!), I developed seizures again after a trial period of suspending medication. During the school holidays my attending neurologist flatly told me that I couldn't play rugby again or engage in any other form of activity where I might damage my head – I was Captain of my year and not quite 17. The rest of my life has been something of a reaction to all this, in that I turned my back on the possibility of glory at Oxbridge and, after a period as an articled clerk at law, on which my distraught parents insisted, I set off in search of a more natural life, inspired by my reading of Rousseau and the young Goethe. I spent a couple of years at Cawdor Castle in Scotland as an under-Butler and then, armed with a glowing reference from the 7th Earl and an awakened passion in the works of Richard Wagner – ironic in view of the family I was to marry into!, - I set off to Bavaria and found work at Wildbad Kreuth in the employ of Herzog Max in Bayern. Pat and I fell in love immediately we set eyes on one another in January 1971, following her return from Vecoux. Peter and Eky turned up with Lene around Easter time. I well remember walking along beside Peter being told that he couldn't go on supporting Pat for the rest of his life – at the time he was pushing the pram. The pram was duly handed to me and I have been pushing it ever since....

We left Wildbad in 1973, when the building that housed the staff burned to the ground – during the day thank the Lord. The hotel director had been smoking out wasps with a blow-lamp! The Duke used this as an excuse for closing the sanatorium. All this time Pat had been trying to obtain a divorce, which was not made easier by the fact that Vijay had disappeared. We spent a few months in Vecoux, where I worked at the factory. The news then came through from the German lawyers, after more than two years of deliberations, that the courts had come to the conclusion that the only place where Pat could legally divorce was in England. So we moved to England in the autumn of 1973, where I worked for a while with shire horses, but was then sent off to university in Exeter, where I studied modern languages and education until 1978, milking cows on the farm where we rented a bungalow in my spare time. There followed a rather miserable year, in which I made rather a bad job of trying to teach in the Forest of Dean. Pat was missing her friends in Stuttgart and Wildbad Kreuth, so we decided to return. I found a job as a woodcutter on a private estate between Munich and Stuttgart, Neuburg an der Kammel, in 1979, where we remained until the time of the heart attack mentioned in the introduction to this account of the family history. It was, thus, in Neuburg that Pat and I were living with Lene at the time of Peter's death in 1988. Following my first few months in the job, I was given the forester's job, as my predecessor left.

When Stephane joined his father in France, he was sent to a school in Remiremont called St. Joseph. He will have spent about a year there, as his school days were gradually drawing to their close. He had attended schools in Czechoslovakia, England and France and nowhere, of course, did he obtain qualifications due to his learning difficulties. When he finally left school in ca. 1970, the great problem was, therefore, what to do with him. In our more enlightened times he would no doubt have been assessed at a far earlier stage of his development and an

appropriate form of schooling and vocational training would have been suggested for him. As it was, the course that was adopted on his leaving school, although well intended, was probably in part to blame for his later mental health problems. Although Peter had lost virtually all his investment in Plastijo, the outward pretence was maintained of his being one of the "patrons". Stephane was, thus, to all intents and purposes the boss's son – a difficult situation for anyone with a strong mental constitution, a heavy burden for someone like Stephane. The hope was that he could do a small job in the office – he attended typing lessons and, of course, failed. Peter thought that the French Army would make a man of him, so Stephane was sent off to Nancy for his Army medical. He, of course, failed. When I came into the family, Stephane had been sent off to a factory in Austria in Kaprun, belonging to a friend of Peter's from Aussig Grammar School, to do some kind of training. He apparently hadn't turned up to work for several days and, as Pat and I weren't all that far away, just over the border in Bavaria, we were sent to investigate. We found him in his bed complaining that he had piles! The truth, of course, was that he was simply frightened by being sent off to this remote factory where there was an infernal din. We took him out for a meal, brightened him up and bought him some suppositories! It wasn't long before he was back in Vecoux and he was sent to do an unskilled manual job in the factory, exposed to all the workers' taunts of his being the boss's son.

When I worked there, he used to assemble the cardboard boxes, getting very het-up when he was under pressure. However, as long as he was young, he coped well. He went out with his friends to the bistro – there were the good friends, who looked after him and the bad ones, who just made him pay for all the drinks until he was broke. The problems started when all his friends were growing up and he was left behind, without anyone to play with – I use the word deliberately, as his mental age was that of a boy. That is why he loved going to Pred-Klasteři in the summer holidays, whenever he could, to play with Ola's son, Spinek, then still a teenager. As the factory grew in size, and made an ever greater din, Stephane's behaviour underwent a change. When we visited at Christmas and in the summer holidays, he would always retreat into his room. He constantly wore ear-plugs to block out the noise from the factory and the noise of his parents arguing – understandably, after all the family's hopes of a better future had been dashed in 1970, the domestic tension did not improve. I would also frequently observe him through the window shaking his fist at the factory and grimacing. Suggestions that he should do something else were countered by the reply that there was no other employment in the area – it was Plastijo or nothing!

The boy finally broke down in 1986. In the middle of winter he didn't return home one evening. Enquiries were made at the local cafe and Peter was told that he had been seen walking off in the direction of the woods, muttering to himself. Peter and Eky went up with the car and, luckily, someone else had seen him walking up a forest track. Peter followed the foot-prints in the snow and found him in a disused farm building, seemingly intent on lying there and dying of hypothermia. There had apparently been an earlier suicide attempt, when he shot himself in the leg with an air-pistol. He was coaxed home and taken to the local mental hospital at Mirecourt. Eky was horrified by the place and refused to have him admitted, so unfortunately a proper diagnosis was never made. By this time we had become involved and I had discovered that there was a Workshop for the Disabled in the nearby County town of, ironically, Günzburg, the birth-place of Mengele, where the Mengele family to this day has a factory that manufactures agricultural machinery. It was agreed that Stephane could attend. This was shortly before Christmas 1986. We went over for Christmas, as usual, with the good news. Unfortunately the Works Medical Officer had persuaded Peter that Stephane should have another attempt at working in the factory. I remember being summoned into Peter's office with Stephane and having to witness Stephane being informed of this, for

him, terrible development. He was constitutionally incapable of standing up to his father, whom he greatly loved and he just sat there on the couch saying, “Yes, Daddy, yes, Daddy” in a monotone voice. We returned to Neuburg after Christmas and, of course, it wasn't long before the inevitable phone call came, informing us that there had been a further incident. Stephane was to come and have a trial at the Work-shop in Günzburg – Peter would be putting him on the train! .When we went to collect him, both he and his father emerged from the carriage – the boy had been frightened to go on his own. Peter stayed for a while, went to see the manager of the work-shop and then returned. We knew he wasn't well and felt relieved that we had at least taken this burden off his back. Maybe he and Eky could now enjoy their last years together....? As fate would have it, he only had one year to live.

Stephane wasn't very long at the Work-shop, when a telephone call came, asking us to take a suitcase to the District Psychiatric Hospital in Günzburg, as he had had a break-down. The problem was, of course, that his condition had not yet been diagnosed and, as there was a corresponding lack of therapy, his condition was wholly unstable. He must have been nearly three months in hospital, first in the closed ward and then on the open ward. We visited regularly to what over the next seven years, for the remaining duration of. our stay in Germany, was to become a regular destination, as Stephane's condition necessitated admissions from time to time. I well remember our games of mini-golf together! Finally the doctors reached their conclusions and we were informed that Stephane suffered from schizophrenic psychosis. Over the years his condition has been varyingly interpreted as manic-depressive psychosis and schizoaffective psychosis as well. Gradually they got the balance of drugs right and Stephane was able to come home initially for a day and then at week-ends. He went down to the work-shop for work trials and so he was gradually eased back into society. He lived with us in Neuburg and went to his work-shop on the local train. That was how his life continued until we came to England, where he attended similar institutions, until the point where, in 1998, he could no longer cope with life in the community and moved into residential care. After a short time his funds ran out and the short-fall in income is met by Norfolk County Council.

I now go back in time to the period post-1970, when Peter had lost everything in Plastijo SA and was now just its paid employee in much the same way, as he had been an employee at Nestersitz in 1946, after laying his life down for his country and lost virtually all his family at the hands of the enemy. He summed up his disgust at what had happened in a letter to his uncle dated the 3.3.1971, to which I have already alluded on several occasions and from which I would like to quote the opening, translated from German:

“My dear Uncle Steff,

When faced with bickering elderly ladies , you can either laugh, which sometimes can result in heart attacks, or keep your silence, which is what I preferred to do. Now however, a certain period of time has elapsed, the postal strike is over and I can tell you in peace and calm, what I would have liked to tell you in private in Paris.

I take note of the fact then that I can calmly die and Aunt won't raise a finger for me. She of course could never abide me – already in Passy during the war I was too much of a yokel and not refined enough for her. This latter quality saved me from Stalin's prisons, where most of the snobs were carted off to after the war. Chacun a son gout. I can but warn you: Once upon a time there was an Emperor of a large multi-ethnic Empire. Then one morning he was pictured in the newspapers with a chamber-pot on his head, then came the Empire that was supposed to last for 1000 years and then one fine morning the Red Flag flew over the Brandenburg Gate – and once upon a time too there was a company, which was the very

essence of solidity and reliability, that looks for an individual like Hermann after going bankrupt. One should never pretend to be too high and mighty - life is such a transitory affair. However, all this has nothing to do with you, my dear old uncle. I cannot believe that you had your heart and soul in it”.

It is interesting to speculate why Peter did not research more deeply into the background of Jovilet S.A.'s insolvency in 1970. He did in fact write off to the UBS bank in Zurich to obtain statements of the Etablissements E. & S. Fabian account from the time of its opening at the end of 1960, but did not go the necessary one further step back into the past to obtain confirmation of the level of compensation obtained by Stefan from Vienna, as he implicitly trusted his uncle. Even had he known the full truth, one questions whether he would in fact have done anything about it. Would he have wanted to expose the uncle he had earlier so admired as a fraud or, at least, as a party to a fraud? I think not as, like his father and grandfather before him, he would have done nothing to bring shame on the family name. He also had a fatalistic streak in him, evidenced by the conclusion of his letter to his uncle: "Sometimes I believe that we are damned to go completely to the dogs. It seems that we get one slap in the face after the other and it is difficult to remain optimistic." Maybe he saw the events of 1967 - 1970 as just one more step in an inevitable process that had commenced back in 3/38 through no apparent fault of the family?

There was the legacy of the years he spent behind the Iron Curtain too, where the rule of law, as we understand it in the West, simply did not apply: the last thing you did was to go to the authorities with your problems or to report anyone to them, not even your worst enemy. At a deeper level one also wonders whether, to offset the sense of guilt felt by the survivor of such an appalling tragedy, he did not in some way welcome this further loss. Could one actually enjoy the benefits that such a fortune could bestow in the knowledge of how those who had created it perished?

What Peter, of course, didn't appreciate is that, whilst his uncle may not have had his heart and soul in it, he nonetheless allowed the fraud to happen and let his name be used to effect it – as witnessed by his signatures on the various documents already referred to. It is interesting to note that Peter complained of the fact that he couldn't have a word with his uncle in private in Paris. He in fact complained of this fact on more than one occasion. This leads me to believe that Auntie Gerti adopted a strict policy of keeping the two apart as much as possible, for fear that Stefan might disclose the truth to Peter. Maybe the old man really believed that the money that had been transferred to Zurich was in Peter's possession?

The outcome of Peter's letter was that Auntie Gerti used it against Peter and induced Stefan to change his Will. There had always been talk that Stefan would see Peter all right in his Will. After Stefan's death on the 5.3.1978, Peter must have obtained a copy of his uncle's Will from the Public Records Office – Gerti certainly wouldn't have sent him a copy! The will was dated the 26.7.1971, some 4 1/2 months after Peter's letter, and effectively left everything to his wife. The trusty retainer, who had managed Fürth Paper & Pulp Ltd. for years, was only given a small legacy of £2,000.--, a further sign of Gerti's rapaciousness. All that Peter was left was Emil's bust, which she didn't even hand over to us until 1991, three years after Peter's death. What was interesting were the contingency arrangements in the event of Gerti's not surviving Stefan. Three quarters of the estate would have gone to the marchioness, Gerti's niece Susanne, the other quarter would have gone to Pat and Stephane in equal shares. This constitutes fairly conclusive evidence that Herbert, Susanne's brother, had obtained his cut of the fortune in the way Peter was defrauded in Jolivet Plastijo. It also makes perfectly clear, how the fraud was to be perpetuated after Gerti's demise, as any assets she will leave, or has already left will go to her niece. The fact that Stefan left one quarter to Pat and Stephane in

the event of Gerti's not surviving is evidence of the fact that the old man had sufficient residual conscience to realise that he had committed wrong and could not cut out the family of his murdered brother entirely from their just rights. Doubtless Gerti, fifteen years Stefan's junior, didn't lose too much sleep over this clause, as she knew that, short of an accident, she was going to outlive Stefan. My visit to him at around this time, when I disappointed him in not being connected with the Millwards of Cairo, revealed a frail old man, who wasn't really quite with it. Gerti wouldn't have required much persuasion to get him to sign the Will – the signature is noticeably not the signature that appears on earlier documents.

When I confronted Herbert's wife some time ago with the truth of what went on in first Vienna and then France – as Peter had done in his letter to Herbert in 1984 albeit not in possession of the full facts – the reaction was, "But Peter kept his job at Plastijo". It appears in France that it is a condition of being taken on the books that you first hand over all your personal fortune! I hope that the French authorities will be providing clarification on this point. Peter of course did stoically keep on going down to the factory until his retirement in 1979 and went down afterwards as well, whenever a translator was needed. Efforts were made to make him unemployed once, but Eky, the Irish blood in her aroused, threatened to go to the Union! Peter's personal magnetism was such that, when important visitors came to the factory, it was automatically assumed that he was the "patron", much to the discomfort of Herbert, whom the workers, during the three months I worked there, contemptibly referred to as the "crapaud" (toad). Of course, it was Peter's factory and I assume that that is why he maintained the pretence of being the owner, as he was the "moral" owner. After all he had been through, property meant nothing to him – you couldn't hurt a man like that by taking material things off him. The factory was important to him, I am sure, for its symbolism, being as it was tangible evidence that the Fürths hadn't been destroyed by the forces of evil. I hope very much that, if and when the French authorities come to the conclusion, that Peter was defrauded in his investment in Plastijo, they will bring moral pressure on the present owners – to whom, of course, no culpability attaches – to rename the factory Emil Fürth & Son in memory of the family that perished so terribly and whose capital was used to create it.

Peter was a vastly popular figure in the village, possessing as he did the common touch, so despised by Auntie Gerti, the "tante richissima", as he referred to her in one letter! Friends were always going in and out, old and young. In the cellar of the chalet he created, or more properly improvised a room, where he played his piano to the delight of everyone. You could take every penny off such a person, but you would not destroy him. He even made his peace with his former fellow pupils at Aussig Grammar School and attended their annual reunions in Germany and Austria, where most of them had settled after the War, up until his death. His final years were overshadowed by the fact that he was unable to visit his friends in Czechoslovakia, as the latter's Embassy in Paris refused to issue him an entry visa on the grounds, I believe, that he had criticised the Communist regime in letters he wrote that were no doubt censored.

As has already been mentioned, Peter spent 10 years from 1967-1978 in an endeavour to obtain compensation from the German Government, We had always assumed that this was compensation for what Germany had done to his family in the period 1938-1945. It required the intervention of the Office of the German President to persuade the German authorities, the so-called Equalisation of War Burdens Office, to provide us with full details of this payment – DM 188,050,10 less legal costs of DM 30,000.-- he had to pay, as there was no compulsion to be legally represented, you will recall. The background to this payment provides a fascinating insight into the hypocrisy that surrounds the issue of compensation for Holocaust related losses. Peter submitted his first informal claim to the German Embassy in December 1967. He

attended at the German Embassy in Paris on the 21.3.1968 and made a statutory declaration of his then understanding of the family tragedy – no word of Auschwitz, of course, as the French authorities hadn't had the decency to tell the family in the immediate post-War period what the destination of the transport of the 7.3.44 was. Peter's claim was turned down on the 5.11.69 on the grounds of his being resident in a country uninvited to sign the London Debt Convention on the 31.12.52, i.e. in Czechoslovakia. A normal thinking person will ask what the place of residence of a person, who suffered such a terrible loss in the period 1938-1945, on the 31.12.1952 has to do with his right to compensation. The answer is, of course, that the Western Powers who signed the Convention, which Her Majesty's Government hosted, had no interest in seeing large sums of capital flowing in the direction of Soviet dominated Eastern Europe, which would only be used against themselves and never reach the affected families, and correspondingly limited Germany's liability to paying compensation to Jewish families, who were resident in the West by this key date. Germany naturally exploited this and used the Convention to turn down claims of persons such as Peter. If they had wanted to compensate him – as their propaganda suggests they are falling over to do, whenever they find a victim or his family - there would have been nothing to stop them. Through our M.P. I was to discover that the Foreign Office has a so-called Post-Holocaust Issues Desk at its European Union Department. I have corresponded with them in the past and unsuccessfully pointed out that HMG, as host and signatory of the London Debt Convention, must surely have a moral responsibility to sort out the consequences of what is a clearly unjust situation. The family case is so hugely complicated and the claimants are both incapable of resolving it themselves – Pat suffers from Alzheimer's disease and can no longer write, Stephane is the subject of a Court of Protection Order and, moreover, dependent on support from the public purse. As the Foreign Office has all the necessary expertise to resolve cases of this complexity, one would think that they would set about doing so in conjunction with the Court of Protection and all the various Commissions and Courts involved. However, they don't – I don't exclude that something might be going on behind the scenes. The implication of the London Debt Convention is of course, that not only Germany and the other countries involved in the atrocities of the Holocaust are responsible for the still unresolved question of looted Jewish assets, but also all the signatories to the Convention. This is a point, which is, I believe, not widely appreciated.

The consequence of the Convention for Peter was that, to obtain compensation – which after the loss of all his capital in Plastijo became a matter of fundamental importance – he had to take out German citizenship, take up residence in Germany and have himself compensated for the damage sustained by those who persecuted his family in the period 1938-1945, namely for the damage sustained by the ethnic German population of the Sudetenland and Eastern Europe when they were expelled from Eastern Europe in the months and years following the War. To this end he had to go the round of various Sudetenland Associations in West Germany, obtaining information about the mill they had stolen from his family in 10/38, as the necessary documentary evidence from the Land Registry in Usti was, of course, not forthcoming. An utter humiliation for the man, for which once again the London Debt Convention and its signatories are indirectly to blame! The consequence of his being compensated for the damage that occurred at the end of the war – the failure of the Communists to return the mill – was, as already mentioned, that Emil was described as having died in Nice on the 18.9.1943 "prior to damage occurring". Eugen, whose death wasn't certified until the 20.11.47 and was defined as having occurred not later than the 31.12.46, was classified as being the direct victim of the damage sustained at the end of the war. How can a man, who was deported to Auschwitz on the 7.3.44 and certainly was murdered there on arrival, as he wasn't of an age to work, have been the victim of damage occurring on or after the 8.5.45? What he and all the rest of the family were victims of and what Peter was entitled

to be compensated for as their heir, was of course what went on during the period 3/38 - 5/45. The irony now of Peter's having accepted the compensation for the damage that occurred at the end of the war is that, in the event of the family property in Nestersitz and Usti being restituted to the rightful heirs, Pat and Stephane, Germany actually insists on the compensation being repaid! I have in vain pointed out to them that they murdered the whole family, looted all their private fortune and exploited the mill during the war years in the manner already described (i.e. increased production to RM 2.5 million a year, implying profits of ca. RM 250,000.-- a year). One can only conclude that, as during the war years, the German bureaucratic machine continues to implement the word of the law irrespective of moral considerations, whilst simultaneously maintaining an outward appearance of contrition for what happened. The truth is a lot uglier, I am afraid. Needless to say, we do not intend returning one penny, furthermore we will not rest until we hold a document in our hand stating that Emil died in Nice on the 18.9.1943 five and a half years after the vilest crime in history had commenced. A commission in Geneva, responsible for distributing the new fund set up by Germany to cover cases such as the family's, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), is charged with sorting out this aspect of the family case.

The other perceived element of the compensation received by Peter was a pension he was awarded by Germany on retirement, which Eky to this day draws in the form of a Widow's Pension. It had always been our understanding until quite recently that this had something to do with his family's persecution. Enquiries in Berlin revealed that this was not the case. German expellees, of whom Peter was nominally one, were given credit on retirement for the insurance periods they had acquired in Eastern Europe prior to their expulsion at the end of the war or, as in Peter's case, later (in fact he emigrated legally!). The condition was that they had to live in West Germany to draw the full pension and, where there was no record of contribution payments in Germany itself, that they had to pay voluntary contributions for, I believe, 5 years. This is what Peter had to do to get his pension – I don't think that he actually paid the voluntary contributions, they were simply deducted from his first instalments. So, in fact what he was given was a pension, to which many Germans, who had lived in Eastern Europe prior to 1945, would have been entitled, including those who persecuted his family. As if this wasn't enough, his pension was cut, when he could no longer afford to maintain a second residence - he had a room with a friend, I believe! He was paid just 32.38% of his full pension. So the good lady, who had supervised Peter's mother shovelling coal barefoot in the snow in the winter or autumn of 1942, received her full pension, Peter just a proportion by reason of his non-residence on German soil....

Quite how Peter bore the tragedy of his family, the loss of all the family property, the way he was defrauded by his own family after 1967, the cruel games the German authorities played with him, I shall never know. It certainly caused his early death – he came from a long living family, both Emil and Heinrich and Uncle Stefan too lived well into their eighties. And so the account of the family history comes full circle to Peter's death on the 6.3.1988, almost 44 years to the day when his father was deported from Drancy to Auschwitz. I have already recounted how Pat and Eky found him holding his mother's picture in his hand, how we disposed of his remains, how we were confronted by all his papers and how I have pondered those papers and made enquiries to the point where I am now able to commit this account of the Fürth family history to paper. I have often pondered why Peter didn't dispose of all his papers prior to his death, if he didn't want to burden us with the family tragedy. The answer, I suppose, is that he could no more have done that than he was able to erase from his memory what had happened prior to his having drawn his line under the past at the end of the war, as was dramatically illustrated by the picture that confronted Pat and Eky on his death-bed. Certainly he felt shame at having not seen through the Fleischers and having failed his family.

Why otherwise did he let Eky believe that he held 75,000 shares in Plastijo, rather than the 45,000 he in fact held! Do I hold him to blame for it? Of course not, no more than he by the end of his life held his own father to blame for the tragedy that befell the family. "Do not be too severe in your judgements in regard to my father - try to imagine the state of mind of a man, who had never been in the war and whose entire life had been totally and fully disrupted: no more home, no more income, no safe place to be in, a wife who did not want to leave her mother, parents whom he greatly admired much in the same situation as himself – little wonder, therefore, that he trusted in those who, after all, were the brother and sister of Gerti Fürth!" He could have been writing of himself and, in a way, I am sure that he was. Of course, Germany was the instigator of the family's downfall and must bear a heavy responsibility for putting the whole matter right now in such a way as does justice to the situation of my brother-in-law. However, at a deeper level, when one considers the family history from the time of Emil's birth in 1860, there seems to be what is almost an inevitability in the family's decline from the time of the pogrom in Sušice in 1866, in which the family's astronomic rise to wealth and influence in the period 1868-1938 – in the case of the Hellers and the Pollatscheks too of course – was but a brief interlude. Great fortunes are, of course, made and lost all the time, but normally there is an element of personal blame, which, in the family case, I fail to perceive – the family was victim of the vilest crime of the modern era, Peter went to fight for his country in 1939 and trusted his uncle. At irrational moments I sometimes wonder whether the family did not so displease the God they had worshipped for generations when they converted to Roman Catholicism for reasons of commercial necessity, that God chose to smite them down and will not rest until the last member of the family has passed from this earth....

In conclusion I quote the last paragraph of the letter Peter wrote to us in 1978, when he broached in words what he was unable to discuss with us in person:

"In 1946, when you and mother joined me in Nestersitz, I drew a line under the history of the Fürth family up to that point in time. The memoirs, that I am now writing, are in part a novel, even though based on historical facts. Nothing on this earth seems to be so transitory as the individual fates of human beings. When you have read all Ditzfurth's works, his second book too, it will become clear to you that the 70 years that we on average live on this planet are such an incredibly small part in the storms of the universe, that we should not worry ourselves about things that cannot be altered and are in the past. We no longer feel regret for the early Christians, whom the ancient Romans threw to the lions to provide amusement for the common people but, rather, we regret the fate of Aldo Moro and the Schleyer Family."

Twenty three years have passed since Peter wrote the above – the memory of Aldo Moro and the Schleyer family has, I am sure, faded in a manner that the memory of the Jewish population of Europe, who fell victim to the Holocaust, never will. I dedicate this account of the Fürth family to them and, in particular, to Emil and Sofie, Eugen and Lene, Jettla, Hans, Irene and Heinz and, of course, Peter, born on the eve of the outbreak of the great conflagration of the 20th century, died shortly before its logical conclusion with the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, who, wishing to spare others the pain and suffering that was his, bore the terrible burden of the family tragedy alone in silence.

XIV. CONCLUSION

Coming completely full circle, I return, in conclusion, to the introduction and the situation of Pat and Stephane which, according to the good doctor from King's Lynn, is the true source of my preoccupation with the family history. Presumably that preoccupation can only abate in intensity, if the perceived connection between the family tragedy of the war years and the current health situation of Pat and Stephane can in some way be interrupted? If those who were responsible for and profited from the family's downfall – the Austrian and German banks, the insurance companies, AGA, Plastijo etc. etc. – were to contribute towards at least Stephane's care needs (I feel responsible for Pat as her husband), one would have the feeling that some form of justice had been done. For it is justice that my preoccupation with the family's horrific history is all about, not just a question of cash, as some cynical commentators in the media seem to interpret the various endeavours currently afoot to resolve these issues. One doesn't want to hammer the German nation – the current generation of Germans, as Peter pointed out, have nothing to do with the sins of their fathers and grandfathers. We also have 15 happy years spent in Germany to look back on! The German state, which turned Peter's claim down in 1969 on the grounds of his place of residence on the 31.12.1952, and German institutions in general do, however, have a quite clear responsibility to ensure a just resolution to cases like the family case, where the son and heir is being supported in an institution for patients with severe psychiatric and neurodegenerative diseases out of the public purse. Could there be a more fitting manner in which to atone for the crimes committed against Stephane's grandparents?

If one extends the concept of atonement through good deeds, the family property in the Czech Republic could be made the subject of a charitable foundation – for instance the "Eugen and Helene Fürth Memorial Foundation" – to be administered for the benefit of persons in Usti and surrounds suffering from conditions such as Pat and Stephane, presumably not a priority in the Czech Republic today, struggling to emerge from the legacy of 50 years of Communism! Those responsible for the physical and financial annihilation of the family could be invited to have a good look at Nestersitz and reconstruct it, not necessarily as a paper and pulp mill, giving it its old name back, Emil Fürth & Son. A part of the profits could be used to fund the foundation. The houses themselves in Nestersitz and Usti could be used as homes for those with problems like Stephane's. The family could be given a holding in the company so reconstructed, as, if nothing else, the land on which the factory stands belongs morally and legally, I am sure, to the family.

In that way a permanent memorial could be created to perpetuate the memory of a family that suffered so terribly, serving simultaneously as a warning to all future generations of what can happen, when a society goes collectively mad, and as a source of goodness in the present. Such a foundation, together with a memorial plaque we were considering erecting to Peter's family in the House of Prayer at the synagogue in Usti, where Eugen and Lene married on the 25.5.1913., and possibly also this account of the family history, could, and I hope will be the family's way of honouring and remembering those, who died so cruelly.

(In fact we have recently learnt from the Usti Archives that the original synagogue, the construction of which was commenced in April 1880 financed by members of the Jewish community of the town (including presumably the Pollatschek family), no longer exists. The House of Prayer at 26, Moskevaska Street is the pre-war office of the Jewish Cultural Community of Usti and now serves as both synagogue and office. The erection of a memorial plaque on the site of the old synagogue would not be at all appropriate. Presumably to celebrate their arrival in the Sudetenland, the Germans burnt the old synagogue to the ground

on the 31.12.1938. The exterior walls and the ground-floor survived and were used as a butcher's shop from 1940 onwards. The building sustained bomb damage in the final phase of the war. After the war a one storey building was erected by the Communist authorities on the site in the 1950's with public toilets in the basement. Apparently a lawn has now been laid – whether this implies that the public conveniences have been removed, I do not know. The fate of Usti Synagogue in a way mirrors the fate of the Fürth family: set fire to by the Germans, urinated upon by the Communists!

In view of the above it is now intended to erect the memorial plaque in the Olsany Jewish Cemetery in Prague, hopefully in the vicinity of the grave of Marcus and Julie Heller, which it would seem is the only family grave from the twentieth century to have survived - apart from those in the graveyard in Sušice of very distant relatives e.g. the gravestone of David L. Fürth, Heinrich's brother.

(A re-reading of Emil's memoirs revealed that Sofie's parents had died in Vienna, her father, Moritz Lemberger on the 23.3.1918 aged 91 ½ and her mother Rosa on the 25.1.1902 aged 76. Enquiries of Schalom, the Association for the Restoration and Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Vienna, have revealed that the grave still exists. It is therefore now intended to make an inscription on the grave there in memory of the family, including the names of Emil's parents, Heinrich and Charlotte, the latter of course being not only Emil's mother but also, by reason of her being Rosa's sister, Sofie's aunt. In this way Emil's final wish that his ashes should be interred in one of his parent's graves can at least be respected in a symbolic way. In fact all the immediate members of Emil's family, who suffered the terrible fate of the Holocaust, can be reunited on the gravestone, surrounded by the older generation, who lived in a happier age, as the splendour of the gravestone itself indicates. (The gravestone reveals that Moritz was born on the 11th August 1826 exactly one year after Heinrich Fürth, both thus sharing as birthday by a singular coincidence, a date in the year which has assumed such awesome significance in our own century with the terrible attack on the World Trade Centre.)

In conclusion a list of the various institutions charged with the resolution of the family case, which will give the reader an understanding of the scale of the complexity of the family case and the nature of the issues currently under deliberation:

1. The International Organisation for Migration in Geneva, charged with distributing the funds now put up jointly by the German state and German companies to compensate families such as the Fürths.
2. The Commission for Compensating the Victims of Looting that Occurred by Reason of the Anti-Semitic Legislation in Force during the Occupation at the Office of the Prime Minister in Paris, which deals with the loss of the moveable property the Fürths had with them in exile in France and the question of whether Peter was defrauded when he arrived in the West in 1967.
3. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund, which is investigating whether the compensation paid to Stefan Fürth in 1958 constitutes full compensation for the damage inflicted on the family's Austrian and Czechoslovak property, and whether the estates of Emil and Sofie Fürth were administered fraudulently.
4. The Endowment Fund for Victims of the Holocaust in Prague which, together with the family's Prague lawyer, is charged with the restitution of the family's property in Nesterdice and Usti or payment of compensation, where restitution is not possible.
5. The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims in Rotterdam, which liaises with the various insurance companies with which Eugen held insurance policies.

6. The Holocaust Claims Processing Office at the State of New York Banking Department in New York, that investigates the looting of the family's bank accounts in the Sudetenland, Prague and Austria and Switzerland.
7. The Austrian Bank Holocaust Litigation in Philadelphia, which investigates whether Bank Austria (Länderbank Wien's successor bank) has any residual liability towards the family on the grounds that it was not known in 1958 that Nestersitz had in fact discharged all Obereggendorf's pre-war debts during the course of the war.
8. The Swedish Embassy in London, which is investigating AGA's war-time links with German companies, in particular I.G. Farben, and the question of whether AGA too has any residual liability towards the family.
9. The UBS bank in Zurich, which is investigating whether the Etablissements E & S Fabian account was used as an instrument to launder Peter's share of Emil's estate.
10. Last and not least the Post-Holocaust Issues Desk at the Foreign Office in London, which, in my view, as host and signatory of the 1952 London Debt Convention should be coordinating the above endeavours to ensure a just resolution of the family case. It is, after all, one of the state's functions to uphold the interests of the legally incapable!

XV. Emil's last will

As my will that was deposited at the Vienna Bank (Wiener Kasse) has doubtless been lost but also as it has lost much of its significance in relation to our present situation as a result of "the tragic events" the following lines, which I am putting to paper in my own hand, in a clearly lucid state and uninfluenced by any particular person, represent my last will and testament:

I currently dispose of no tangible assets apart from my share of the sum of money deposited in New York, which in the event of my predeceasing her is to be left to my wife, Sofie. This is because the factory at Nestersitz that belongs jointly to me and my sons and the shares in the factory at Obereggendorf, 99% of which belong to me, have illegally been removed from our control and the credit balances and bonds that I have deposited at the Dresden Branch of the Dresdner Bank and the Länderbank in Vienna have also been illegally blocked.

In the event of the above property and assets becoming once more available to us I direct as follows:

1.) My share in the company, Emil Fürth & Son, shall pass to my sons, Stefan and Hans, in equal shares. In all fairness my son, Eugen, will not consider this disposition to in any way relegate or be hurtful to him but will rather take into account that, at the time of his marriage, I transferred a large sum from my assets to him in what were then gold crowns, enabling him to acquire a full one half share in Nestersitz when it was purchased without having to use his wife's dowry, whereas the sums I later paid to his brothers were paid in devalued currency.

2.) If the Obereggendorf factory by virtue of the 99% of its shares that I hold which are deposited at the Länderbank in Vienna should be restored to me or my heirs either as a result of an amicable agreement or as a result of a court action, this asset or the proceeds from its sale shall be divided between my sons, Eugen, Stefan and Hans in equal shares.

3.) The cash credits and bonds I have deposited at the Länderbank in Vienna and at the Dresden branch of the Dresdner Bank should be handed to my wife, Sofie, together with any other assets there may be, in particular all the fixtures and fittings in our flat in Vienna including objects of art, that have been deposited with Schenker & Co. for safe keeping. The greater part of these fixtures and fittings are her property anyway, as they were hers prior to our marriage. My children know their incomparably loving mother will look after this furniture and these objects of art or the proceeds of their sale and will leave the same together with the assets deposited at the Länderbank and the Dresdner Bank above mentioned in the event of her death to them intact and doubtless in equal shares (this she shall stipulate herself), provided that it should not have proved necessary prior to her death to use the same to provide herself with the means to live. If for whatever reasons any difficulties should be placed in the way of the transfer of the aforementioned assets, I am sure that my children, who are greatly attached to their mother, will do everything in their power to make the rest of her life as comfortable as it will be possible to do so in this world that has been destroyed so terribly.

I thank my children from the depths of my heart for the affection that they have always shown to me as children. I strove throughout my life to create for them and their families a secure future. The great flood that has enveloped the whole of humanity has destroyed this intention and washed away all that I had built and all my plans. Not only were my family's possessions a great source of happiness to me but also the knowledge of the great affection my sons had for one another. With these final words of greeting to them I implore them to continue

remaining loyal to one another as brothers irrespective of external influences of whatever nature, to promote each other's welfare as best they can and to help one another where necessary and possible. This is my final wish.

From the depths of my heart I thank my wife, Sofie, to whom I am deeply attached after what are now almost 56 years of marriage, for the many happy years we have spent together. She was the great prize of my life and in the days and years of the misfortune that has befallen us she was my comfort and support.

If, contrary to expectation, it should after all be permitted to me to die in my old home country, please inter my ashes, if possible, in one of the graves of my parents. If, however, I should finally close my eyes on this world in exile, then my mortal remains should be cremated or buried without ceremony or fuss. The loyal memory in which all my family, my dear sisters and my friends will hold me will be a more than adequate substitute for any grave stone.

When my father departed from us, he spoke the following words of farewell:

“I have a happy and long life behind me and it was my joy to have had good children. Grant me peace and do not bemoan my passing.” I repeat the same words: do not bemoan me.

Nice, the 1st March, 1941

Emil Fürth

I confirm that this transcript corresponds word for word with the hand-written original.

Nice, the 1st October, 1943

Sofie Fürth

XVI. Eugen's letter dated 17.6.1942 (written in English)

June 17th 42

Eky dearest,

You cannot imagine the great "joie", which I, we all had with your very kind letter, the first line I ever received from you, and which I have read with brightest pleasure, being so sincere, frank and friendly. Therefore I hasten to thank you very much for your nice letter; as wished I am addressing my answer to Oswestry. I happened to write just these days to my friend, Mr. Julius Ebershardt, New Lodge, Windsor Forest, Windsor, Berks. a letter destined for him, for you and Peter, as your letter arrived. Mr. Ebershardt being an old and very good friend of ours, I am sure Peter spoke many times to you about him. In his recent letter he promised me to do all to get the permission for the expedition to my address of a photo of the dearest baby. But I, and we all here, should appreciate highly to get also a photo of yourself. Please enter therefore in correspondence with him in order to hasten this question so very important to me. Many, many thanks. – With highest possible interest I took notice of the fact that Peter being (has) moved. Probably this is the reason you have returned to your old home in Oswestry, as I presumed you have lived, last months at least, together somewhere in the neighbourhood of his employment. In this way I understand the nice letter I ever received, some months ago, from Peter: he wrote me that – at least – you and the tiny Pat moved to him in the neighbourhood of his working place, that he drives every morning to work, likes very much to return towards evening to you and to the child - whilst the first months after your marriage you have been forced to live separated with only few possibilities of seeing each other. I deplore this newly occurred moving for both of you, and, especially for Peter as I must confess it to you ma cherie - I also have fallen in love with you, and can so imagine the loss he has to take when now deprived of your presence. He wrote me too that you are resembling very much his grandmother Henriette, naturally only in her mind, her spirits, her thoughts, as I can imagine your youth against her. But as Henriette is, since .30 years, loved, by me for her excellent qualities in every respect it is quite natural that also you, being so much equal, have found the direct way to my heart. Everybody writes me the same: Peter is very, very happy with Eky and Pat. And I am so happy to know that, so thankful to you to make him happy and now somewhat downhearted to know you separated newly. But, considering his actual occupation, his removal is explainable. Please send him this letter, if he is not able to come and see you frequently. You are asking me directly, dear Eky, whether it has been "a bad shock" for me hearing of you for the first time? Now, I must confess that it was no shock at all; naturally I was highly surprised, as Helen has been informed of your marriage, being so far away, first than I myself. I heard of your marriage first from her, and this inspite of the fact that quite a lot of aunts and cousins and in first line my brother Stephan are living in your country. So I was surprised that Peter has not found a way to inform me directly. But "shocked"? No, not a moment. Helen and also I, we always educated him to be able to act for himself and to stand also, if necessary, alone against the risks of life. And so I knew that Peter's choice, surely, has been wise. And more I am assuring you, my love, that Helen and I have only one thought: to know him as happy as ever possible. That's all! Naturally, quite naturally, I am hoping sincereliest that day not too far away which shall allow us to meet, and to arrange our future to our all mutual satisfaction. But for the present time, actually, my heaviest and greatest sorrows and worrying are for Helen. I am sure my letter of May 21st through our friend Ebershardt (named also Gyula) reached you, informing you of Helen's fate: she was kept 6 weeks somewhere. I and also her mother did not know of any reason for this fact. Perhaps – but this is only my feeling, my thought, without reason perhaps – her

possessions at Cross Street and at the Roland (Peter can explain it to you fully) have been the background. After having been freed she was not allowed to see her mother, but she has been transported into the country where Gyula stayed before he visited friend Theo. He knows her address, I indicated it to him these days. She has (as she informed her mother) no bed, only straw, and a very bad stove. She must go into the forest to find some wood. Such is now her situation. But, most fortunately, she has good comrades, is in high spirits, is most sensible and full of hope. For me the situation is most terrible, being helpless for the moment. I wrote without delay to Theo, Kyell, Tore and Emmy, and also to Hans and Irma Gutman, begging them to send, if possible, monthly some money and, in first line, some food to her. I am now awaiting their answers, but one must be patient nowadays, letters are being so very long on the way. As soon as possible I shall write further news, you can rely upon me.

I am hoping you have been able in the meantime to pay the visit you mentioned in your letter to my brother Stephan, being quite sure that you will have found there a good welcome. Stephan, as I am knowing it, loves Peter quite as I am doing it and, surely, will appreciate you highly. It was very nice indeed of Stephan and Gerty to send you for Pat some little things, and you cannot, really you cannot realise how much I am regretting the fact that I myself am handicapped to do so for the baby, but in first line for you, Eky dear. But let us hope once more that all these can, in the near future and in the presence of Helen, be made under cheerful conditions.

As to the feet of our beloved Pat, I am sure that she will get tall and svelte, a real English girl, mixed with the Continent, and that her feet will be in good proportion to her, not at all a handicap for her. Oh, how I would like to see her, the little sweetheart!

Really, I cannot, by no means, I cannot understand why Peter is hindered to write to Stephan, but also to his father. What ideas, what thoughts are dwelling in his brain? The poor chap, surely does he think he is forgotten, or not loved enough, or other nonsense. Quite the contrary is the real fact, as I am knowing it, speaking every day with his Grandfather about him and you and Pat. He cannot imagine the heavy sorrows of his father for our beloved Helen, but he cannot realise, as a matter of fact, the sadness and troubles of this man, who receives so very few lines from his son. So you can see, dear Eky, what "joie" your letter caused also to Peter's father, you being a part of his son.

Please therefore be sure: you can say "Hello" to me whenever you like at every minute every word from you, or him, shall be highest welcome. My very best wishes for you three: but also your father and sister, I should ask to receive my best regards,

Hello - don't ever forget

Yours sincerely,

Eugene.

XVII. Eugen's letter dated 26.8.1942

A list of the articles, which I today took to Mr. N. Giesecke at the firm that represented us for safekeeping.

If nothing is stated to the contrary, all these articles are the property of your mother!

- 1.) Seven small pieces of genuine lace sewn into a handkerchief.
- 2.) My stamp collection as detailed on the enclosed two lists with its being necessary for me to mention that I am still retaining my collection of French stamps, as I am still in the process of collecting French stamps and therefore need to keep this part of the collection with me.
- 3.) The following original policy documents relating to my insurances. A similar list is also in the possession of your uncle, Dr. Frederick Pollatschek and my cousin, Mr. Grant, the son-in-law of my aunt, Hermine Frye, in St. Louis, Missouri (MO), U.S.A.
 - a.) Sekuritas, Prague – policy No. 1 163.762 insuring against accidents. This insurance is doubtless invalid. I have just retained it for precaution's sake.
 - b.) International Accident Insurance Co. Ltd., Vienna I, Weihburggasse 4 – policy No. 1757 with cover for 100,000. Kc (Czech crowns) taken out for the duration of my life to cover the consequences of physical injury sustained in accidents on railway journeys anywhere in the world. If I should have such an accident, compensation claims should be made in view of the situation we are today living in, even if the deadline laid down has expired. A one off premium payment was made when the policy was taken out.
 - c.) Regional State Life Insurance Institution in Brno – policy No. 156.634 with life insurance cover of 23,500. Kc according to a letter dated the 3.5.1939 payable on my death or at the latest on the 16.6.1947. This policy is fully paid up and is payable to Mrs. Helene Elisabeth Fürth.
 - d.) Phoenix Prague taken over by Star in Prague – policy No. 11,031.827 – life insurance for 24,111. Kc reduced and fully paid up payable on my death or at the latest on the 1.12.54.
 - e.) Generali Assurance in Prague: policy No. 113.732 – life insurance with cover for 165,340. Kc (fully paid up and reduced) payable on my death or on the 17.1.54. This policy served as a rent guarantee, when we were living in the house at Svehla Kai in Prague, which belonged to this particular insurance company. The document evidencing receipt of the policy document dated the 6.10.38 is attached in lieu of the document itself.
 - f.) Riunione Adriatica, Prague – policy No. 352.816/c – life insurance with cover for 100,000. Kc. payable on the 24.6.1952 or on my death to Peter H. Fürth. As far as I know the last premium was paid on the 21.7.38 according to the money order attached and the insurance has therefore doubtless automatically been reduced and converted into a fully paid up policy. I have already received a loan – according to the certificates of, I believe, 1-,000. Kc. (12, ?).
 - g.) The same insurance company – policy No. 376.601/c – life insurance cover for 103,000. Kc. (of which a loan of 1-,000 Kc. has already been received) payable to my wife, Helene Elisabeth Fürth on the 24.6.1948 or on my death. According to the money order the last premium was paid on the 21.7.38 and therefore this insurance has

also been automatically reduced and converted into a fully paid up policy.

4.) Parcelled up in a small handkerchief: one small square box 11x14x2.5cm in size, richly decorated enamel, blue edge, the outside of the lid decorated with miniature shepherds and female figures; this box is, I believe, gold plated and contains the following: 1 lady's snuffbox with silver sides and the top and bottom made of tortoise-shell. This snuff-box contains the following:

1 small gold chain, 1 platinum chain with seven small pearls, swivel and clasp;

1 three part bracelet with clasp made of very small pearls;

1 pendant made by N.D. de Fourviere. I don't know to whom these articles belong -possibly to your grandmother, Jettla.

1 brooch, long shape with an enamel picture of Venus and 2 Amors.

1 tie pin, gold and pearl with white and red small stones.

1 tie pin in gold in the shape of a bow with pearls and white and red small stones. I think that these two tie pins belong to your grandmother, Jettla.

2 safe keys to the two safe deposit boxes at the Societe Generale I shall mention later on.

1 gold arm bracelet in the form of a snake with rubies.

1 lady's watch with a chain made of material.

1 smoking wrist watch with a black strap and gold fittings.

1 gold pendant with pictures of Uncle Hans and Uncle Willi inside.

Grandfather Harry's wedding ring inscribed, "Jettla 26.1.1890".

1 pair of ear rings each with a pearl and gold screws.

1 pair of ear rings in thin gold-imitation antique in blue enamel.

1 brooch: a blue crowned crest with 3 crowns in enamel.

1 brooch: gold ring with 12 small diamonds and blue small stones.

1 ring, blue enamel, oval in shape with diamonds, gold and platinum.

6 Austrian double silver shillings, 1 10 Kc and 2 20 Kc Masaryk coins, French small change

1 pair of cuff-links made of gold and platinum with facets.

2 shirt studs made of pearls with gold mounting.

1 gold plate small cigar cutter.

5.) 1 silver net little bag with a chain containing the following:

1 antique gold bracelet in leaf and blossom style with 4 emeralds and 10 small pearls.

1 antique gold brooch with numerous red, blue and lilac stones.

1 small sack containing 15 Swiss silver frank pieces.

1 small sack containing: 1 platinum brooch with a small pearl in the middle; 1 pair of antique ear-rings in gold each with one ruby; 1 antique gold bracelet - flat and light and thin;

1 gold bracelet made of thin gold chains with little balls made of 'lapis lazuli' as a pendant;

1 small Mary medallion apparently not genuine; 1 ring made of platinum and black enamel, the edge being of platinum and a facet in the centre;

1 gold ring a lilac coloured stone engraved like a gem; 1 gold ring with one green stone, two small diamonds and 2 pearls.

1 small sack containing a string of pearls, 101 pearls and a gold clasp with 2 facets and a long shaped emerald – and 1 long shaped gold brooch made out of two types of gold with 15 small pearls.

1 platinum ring with two large brilliants and small diamonds – your mother's engagement ring

1 heavy gold ring with diamonds and 4 rubies – there is evidence of this being a very old heirloom from the Lemberger side of the family – it is Peter's property!!

1 brooch – an eight pointed star made of facets and 9 opals.

1 gold platinum brooch with brilliants and one pair of matching ear pendants – apparently the

property of your grandmother, Jettla.

1 small sack - the contents of which apparently all belong to your grandmother, Jettla - containing: 1 lady's wrist watch made of gold (I am in fact now using this and in its place is a Glashutte watch); 1 gold chain with an eight cornered enamel pendant; 1 broken gold bracelet; 1 long gold chain with long segments mounted between chains; 1 gold crayon 1 gold chain, apparently intended as a gentleman's bracelet; 1 gold ring with three pearls 1 silver or platinum very thin small chain with a pendant of pink coral with pearls in a ring; 1 gold empty medallion with small stones, one of which is missing; 1 gold loose pendant with a small ruby; 1 pair of gold ear-rings each with a small brilliant; 1 loose link of a gold chain that has become detached and seven gold rings – some smooth and some with small stones and some of them being gentlemen's rings.

In addition you will find attached to this letter a photocopy of a document confirming that Emil Fürth & Son donated the sum of 50,000. Kc. for national defence on the 8.8.36. This documentary evidence may be very useful to you!

According to the three letters of confirmation from Reveillon & Co., 40, rue de la Boetie, Paris, which are also attached, I deposited your mother's Astrachan fur coat, her silver fox collar, your city fur coat and my city fur coat there for safe keeping on the 5.5.39 under the deposit number 3072. According to the estimate made at the time the value of the furs was 35,500 FF – peace time French francs to be noted!! Their value today is a lot more and therefore, when the time comes, you will have to make efforts to retrieve these articles or their corresponding value – in your own interests if in nobody else's!

You will perhaps remember that your mother used to wear two small marten-furs around her neck. I let your Aunt Irene wear these, just for the time being, but of course did not give them to her as a present, which it was not my right to do.

Your Aunt Irene also has two small and two large spoons, three small and two large forks and three small and two large knives all taken from our silver service. I have got a large fork, large spoon, large knife and small spoon amongst my luggage and your grandmother, Sophie Fürth, is using a small silver spoon.

Rudolf Fleischer, Gerti Fürth's brother, is still owing your grandfather, Emil Fürth, 6,000 FF, as at the time he was supposed to bring this sum with him from Czechoslovakia. He certainly knows about this – you will have to see to this matter as well. When he was with us in Paris I had given him a tie pin too, quite a long pearl. This is an heir-loom from your uncle Hans, your mother's brother who fell in the First World War; he never returned it to me here, even though he often promised to do so on more than one occasion. Please make sure that it is returned to you as something by which to remember your dear uncle, who died so young.

As you know, your dear mother forwarded several suitcases on to me, when I was already in France. Part of this luggage is with me here. The greater part of our silver was contained in this luggage too; part of it bore French hallmarks and part of it managed to get through customs undetected. Many pieces of the service, particularly the heavy serving dishes, which wouldn't go into the safe, but also cutlery too had been given by me to Stefan and Gerti for safe-keeping. Gerti made sure to arrange things so that she never had time to draw me up a list of these items that were in her possession. When we fled, when Paris had fallen, I spoke quite briefly to Stefan and Gerti, who took me a short way into town by car; just after we had left Paris they told me, "We have got your silver packed with our luggage too." They then handed this car to Hedi Kohnitz, Gerti's sister, in the South of France; I have never been able to find

out, whether Stefan and Gerti succeeded at the time in taking this large amount of silver to England. I asked Hedi about this, when she spoke to me in Vichy on the return journey, but she didn't know anything about it.... It must therefore be assumed that either Stefan took the silver with him or that Hedi has withheld it from me! I consider it out of the question that Stefan and Gerti, assuming that they hadn't taken my silver with them to England, would have said nothing to Hedi about the silver, when they handed the car to her! The greater part of our silver collection was, however, of course discovered when the customs check was made. At the time I had to take the silver by car, accompanied by a guard, to the "Garantie" to deposit it there. A high level of customs duty was demanded and the hall-mark fees too. I drew up a petition to the competent authority and succeeded in having the duty waived, if I could produce an Identity Card valid for three years. I reported that it was impossible to do this, as at that time documents of that nature were no longer being issued. In reply the authorities wrote to me, that I should leave the silver deposited where it was and after a period of three years it would be handed to me free of duty with only the hallmark fees to pay. That was extremely kind of them. I have deposited the correspondence and the certificate of deposit in one of the safes at the Societe Generale (I shall write to you separately in more detail about these safes); however, I have to conclude that following the forcible opening of the safes I have heard about these papers were found with the result that this silver must be considered lost. In any event I draw your attention quite explicitly to the fact, that the certificate of deposit was by mistake issued with the weight of silver stated to be far less than it in fact weighed - in the event of my being wrong and the papers still being in existence. Unfortunately it was only much later on that I discovered this mistake. If my memory is correct, I deposited no less than about 35 kg of silver at the time! It is therefore clearly the case that you will have to see to this matter! The silver was deposited in April 1939 – maybe this date will be of assistance to you in pursuing the matter.

I had taken the safes I have mentioned already several times for the purposes of keeping documents and valuables in safe-keeping, as I was only living in hotels at the time, mainly outside Paris in Amiens, Versailles and St. Cloud. The safes are at a branch of the Societe Generale in the rue de Passy on the corner of the Avenue Paul Doumer – near to the Passy Grand Hotel, where you (Peter) and I lived together for a while – and they are numbered W-701 and Z-822. The keys are to be found in the pretty box listed at 4 above. I heard some years ago that all the safes had been officially opened by the Occupying Authorities and searched, I assume, for gold, silver, precious stones and bonds. As far as I can remember, all that I had in there were documents, of which I have already mentioned several to you in this letter, and also a lot of stamps bundled together, none of which were valuable. All the same it will be a good idea, if you look into this too – maybe there will be documents in there too, which might be useful to you and are probably of no worth to third parties and will probably therefore not have been removed.

Your dear mother also sent me a chest containing our carpets – I can no longer recall whether there were 5, 6 or 7 carpets in all. Gerti brought them out at the time without having to pay duty by stating that they belonged to herself. I gave her one of them as a present for doing this – one that she was to pick out herself. I can no longer recall which one she picked out. I was unable to give Stefan a wedding present at the time after all and one can, therefore, look upon this carpet as being such a present. I am using one of the carpets where I am living now, the others remained in Stefan's flat. As you can read in the enclosed letter from Hedi (Gerti's sister) dated the 25.4.41, Suzi (Hedi's daughter), who at the time was able to visit her grandmother (Dora Fleischer?), was of the opinion that the latter – at my request please note – had put the carpets into storage somewhere – quite where I have never been able to find out. These items are, of course, of great value. You know them after all and, when the time comes,

you will have to arrange for them to be found. It is inexplicable to me that Grandma Dora Fleischer didn't tell me via Suzi, where they had been deposited. Maybe she had good reasons for keeping this information secret from me. I can recall quite definitely having given her the advice to ask Mr. Marcel Mace (employed by our agents) of 11, rue de la Pepiniere for advice about this and maybe to hand the items to him for him to keep and use. Unfortunately, I have no information whatsoever as to what became of them.

As you can see from the enclosed post-card from Grandma Fleischer dated the 17.8.41, she had dispatched a large chest, whose contents belonged mainly to me, along with the furniture belonging to Stefan and Gerti. This is also made quite clear in Grandma Fleischer's postcard dated the 16.9.41. On the 14th September Hedi wrote to me, as set out in the attached original letter, that she was unable to provide me with any information about my property – everything is stored away in a room etc. Grandma Fleischer wrote to me in her postcard dated the 25th December, 1941, that Hedi would be able to send me my property, as soon as she, Hedi, had moved into her flat in Montlucon. Then suddenly – according to Grandma Fleischer's postcard dated the 12th February 1942 – it is stated that the large chest never arrived. The removal firm states that this is impossible but the fact remains that I have never heard any more about the matter, have never received any of my property – not even a button – from Hedi and have not heard any more from her for months. I do know, however, that she has now at last moved into her flat in Montlucon. She lives there at 26, rue Pierre Curie. I have great trust in Grandma Fleischer but I and we all have great distrust in Hedi, her daughter.

At the time Hedi also took it upon herself to bring a large collection of bonds for your grandfather (Emil Fürth) from Vienna to us here in France. Your grandfather has not even seen one of the bonds! Most unfortunately, there were included amongst these bonds some that belonged to myself. You will find attached two lists of the bonds written by your grandfather himself. On the small list are listed my bonds and on the large list those of your grandfather. Perhaps you will be able to rescue something of the loss, which would also be in the interests of Stefan, who, possibly, by now has come to the conclusion that Hedi is unfortunately under no circumstances to be trusted. Between you and me I have in the intervening period only heard bad reports of the whole Fleischer family, but have the feeling, however, that your Aunt Gerti has distanced herself somewhat from the rest of her family. But it can be that I am mistaken. When peace will have been restored, you will maybe find some way to recover our property and family possessions, at least in part.

I am totally ignorant of whether your mother has been able to save any of the family property back in Czechoslovakia – and, if she has, what she has saved and where. Whatever the case the best of all wives has sent me what she has been able to – money as well. She has, of course, never written a single word to me about this. All that I know is that Lolli behaved in an extremely decent and most friendly manner towards her up until the time I last received news. Unfortunately I have, however, learnt through Uncle Fritz Heller (Jettla's brother) of 14, avenue Gambach, Fribourg, Switzerland that both his brothers have been murdered and Uncle Fritz also fears that Lolli is also no longer alive. Maybe your mother had handed possessions to him (Lolli) or to Patockas or R. Putzler as well? Maybe when the time comes, we shall find something out about what has happened because the prospect of seeing your mother again is the great hope, which props me up now and helps me to bear the great concern that I have for her welfare. Whatever the case may be, both your mother and grandmother have proved themselves to be very courageous and practical and your mother has certainly done everything that was possible to preserve possessions for you, which will hopefully be of use to you in the future. But you will have to pursue the matter with vigour and not allow yourself to be put off by any difficulties there may be. Whether I shall be able to help you in the process lies in the hands of the Lord! I have the firm resolve to live through

these difficult times to see you, Eky and Pat and to enjoy your company along with mother. However, today one is less able to make plans than is otherwise the case and I therefore wish to provide for all eventualities and be sure that you are fully informed about my material situation. Even though I know that you are not keen on money, it is nonetheless good to have some, even if it is only for little Pat's sake and to preserve our good name and rights. For generations our name was held in high regard and it must remain that way.

I now want to tell you about our paper mill in Nestersitz. You know that I have exactly one half share in it; the other half belongs to your grandfather and Uncle Stefan and Uncle Hans. The land, buildings, machines, raw materials in hand, in short one half of the lot, including claims we have and outstanding debts, belongs to me. It follows, of course, that I am also liable for one half of the debts and charges on the property. When I left Nestersitz no mortgage on the property was entered in the Land Registry and the ratio of our debts to the bank to the monies owed to us was perfectly normal. However a few years earlier I stupidly let myself be persuaded to sign an undated bill of exchange for my friend, Dr. Josef Bittner, whom you of course know, along with Ludwig Merckla and Dr. Wilhelm Lederer, each of us bearing a third of the liability. At the time Dr. B. was in difficulties – we knew that at the time he had just failed to sell his land in Eger but still kept trying to sell it. To cut the story short, we were all taken in and each of us had to pay about 60/70,000 Kc., if I remember correctly. This was because the bank, the Doctors' Bank, demanded payment of the bill of exchange immediately when the Czechoslovak Republic fell apart. I was prosecuted, was unable to pay of course from the position I was in in Prague and was therefore sentenced and arrangements were made for my debt to be entered in the Land Registry against my interest in the family firm in Nestersitz. It is not quite clear to me, whether this actually happened or if the debt wasn't simply paid from my assets with Emil Fürth & Son, which were several times greater than the debt in question. – In any event this matter, however cross I was with myself for having been taken in by acting against my maxim never to put my signature to a bill of exchange, is trivial compared with the financial burden placed on Nestersitz by my having had to give a guarantee on behalf of Emil Fürth & Son many years ago for Obereggendorf (a paper mill near Vienna belonging to Emil and Stefan Fürth), which was at the time in difficulty. At the time there was nothing else that I could do, particularly as your grandfather, who is so industrious and thoroughly astute, urged me to do so and, as he and your uncles in the final analysis had themselves to bear one half of the burden, I agreed stupidly to sign the guarantee. I have never spoken about the matter but this matter has been a great source of worry for me all these years. When at about the same time as the Dr. Bittner affair the Vienna Länderbank, which was in possession of our guarantee, was taken over by the Dresdner Bank – or was it the Deutsche Bank - Dr. Diskant came to see me in Prague, was with me in Pilsen and even came to look for us in Paris. To cut a long story short, he also entered the debt in the Land Registry as a charge against Nestersitz. I do not know whether and to what extent it has so far been possible to pay off this debt. Your mother once wrote to me in the course of the last few years, that Dr. Schedlbauer had reported to her that he had heard from Waldeck (the factory manager in the war years) that the latter had been able to pay off a fair amount of the debt. As however the object of the guarantee, i.e. the Obereggendorf mill, now belongs to Emil Fürth & Son in view of the latter's having assumed liability for the debt, it will be necessary to examine what has become of the Obereggendorf mill and whether Nestersitz can be indemnified for the payments it has made. As far as we have been informed Obereggendorf has been officially wound up; but even if this should have happened, a very considerable sum must have been realised, which should definitely be paid to Nestersitz. This whole matter is extremely complicated and will unfortunately occupy lawyers quite enough. As we are dealing with millions here, I strongly urge you to pursue the matter. I hope that, if I am not there to help you in this task, Stefan will be able to do so.

I assume that you know that acting from Paris we have issued writs against our London agents, Cox, and our New York agents, Parsons & Whittemore to ensure that any monies in hand for Emil Fürth & Son are paid to us and not to Nestersitz. As you have been in Stefan's company so often and hopefully will continue to do so, I trust that he has informed you of this very important matter. All that I know is that he had to come to a settlement with Cox and that our lawyer in New York, Mr. Hochmann, had to be sued by Wachtell, Mannheim and Grouf of 1, Cedar St., New York, as Mr. Hochmann made outrageous, later demands and had no intention of handing over the money. It is of no use to quote figures to you and also impossible, as I don't even know precisely what they are. All that I want to let you know is that we, acting on a suggestion from Stefan, decided at the time to divide these two sums of money between us in equal shares i.e. each having one quarter an exception to the general rule, because we are all equally dependant on this money to provide for our living. However, it was I who paid the two lawyers from my own savings; the London lawyer, Mr. Rubens, was paid £15. or maybe it was double that sum; I believe you could find this out from Emil Kohnstamm, as I seem to recall that he made the payments in question from savings I had deposited with him. I paid the lawyer, Mr. Hochman 300 US dollars, the remarkable Dr. Gottlieb 50 US dollars and a similar sum to his good friend, Mr. Hahn. It follows that your grandfather, Stefan and Hans each owe me one quarter of these disbursements. I incurred further expenses in connection with these matters but I don't want to appear to be petty and will say no more. Neither I nor any other of us have so far received a single penny of our credit in England by which I mean the monies received by Cox, and, as already mentioned, I also have no knowledge of how much those monies are nor where they have been deposited; I have been left completely in the dark about the matter despite my having asked Stefan on several occasions for clarification.

However, as a result of efforts by father's good friend, Dr. H.C. Berthold Kaufmann of 2, Astor Place, New York (who is also a good friend of Hermine's son-in-law Grant – Hermine = Emil Fürth's sister), our lawyer, Mr. Hochmann, whom we ourselves had to sue, has now and again sent monies to us. As at today's date, the 26th August 1942, a total of 1200 US dollars and 8134.60 FF have arrived here. This latter amount must somehow be a mistake, as the exchange rate for the dollar has not changed (the payment we receive here is, of course, always based on the official exchange rate); in the latter instance I am, therefore, unable to quote the amount of dollars paid. These payments were divided up as follows: your grandfather received 546.67 US dollars and 3260 FF, Hans 376.67 US dollars and 2840 FF and myself 276.66 US dollars and 2034.60 FF. We divided the money up this way, on the one hand so that your grandfather would never be too short of money and on the other hand so that Hans and Irene and their child would be able to make ends meet more easily. I unfortunately was on my own and therefore needed least of all. However, as I have repeatedly mentioned, these monies have to be divided in four and the final settlement of payment will need to be dealt with exactly when the time comes, as I can well imagine that none of us will be living in any great style and therefore strict book keeping will be the order of the day, particularly as that is what preserves friendship best of all.

I haven't a clue whether Gretl's husband, Emil Kohnstam in Gerrards Cross is still owing me money. He is, however, a truly honest fellow with the result that I have never needed to write anything down. When the time comes, you will have to ask him what the situation is and he will settle up with you exactly and let you know what has been transacted, should he not have done this already.

Both mother and I had a small amount of capital in Switzerland. Fortunately I transferred this in good time to New York to the Pennsylvania Exchange Bank, 8th Avenue, 26th Street. The bank placed both the sums they received on one account. I therefore no longer know how

much belongs to me and how much to your mother but assume that it was roughly 50 - 50. I don't think either that this question need today be of any great importance any longer. As at today's date, the 25th August 1942, we have received 1100 US dollars from the bank also as a result of the efforts of Dr. Kaufmann, who alone has realised our situation; this we have divided as follows: your grandfather received 379 US dollars, Uncle Hans 350.50 US dollars and I 370.50 US dollars. Put otherwise, your grandfather and Uncle Hans owe me, yourself and your mother the amounts paid to them. I am sure you will find the correct and most tactful way of ensuring that you and your mother get the money owing to the two of you, if I should no longer be able to do this myself. We have also received 20,000 FF here from Emil Freund, the Director of the Vienna Länderbank, who is currently in Cuba and is an old gentleman and an old acquaintance of many years standing but in no way a true friend, as your grandfather had assumed. I was given 4,000 FF of this sum – this is the sum I owe him, the rest is owed by my father and Hans and I expressly decline to pay the monies owed by the latter to this devious gentleman. He had quite specifically refused to let us have more of the quite considerable reserves he had in French francs, even though a mutual friend, Carl Adler from Pilsen, a very well known man and one of the acknowledged capacities in the petrol branch, had made great efforts to persuade him to do so and despite the fact that Mr. Adler told him that we were able to offer him dollars in return – which was the God's honest truth – and were prepared to offer them to him at an exchange rate that was better than the official rate. Mr. Adler took it upon himself to arrange this and went to Cuba. We would in no way have contravened the French currency laws, as the dollars were in America and the Francs were here in France. It was a direct act of unpleasantness to put it mildly. In the matter of Nestersitz's guarantee for Obereggendorf Mr. Freund had directly given your grandfather wrong advice, probably knowingly so, despite the fact that he sat on the Board of Obereggendorf and as such should have looked to the latter's interests and not just those of his Vienna Länderbank. But let's draw a line under the matter there, the last word in the matter has not yet been spoken. The 4000 FF, which at some time will have to be reimbursed in French currency whatever the future exchange rate of the Franc against the US dollar will be, are a debt of mine. I am also owing those sums sent by Tore's father, Kjoll Warwinge and Ministerial Councillor Ferenzc Bauer from Budapest in instalments to your mother in Poland, that they will hopefully continue to send. When the time comes, you will have to find out how much money was sent, get in touch with these gentlemen or their heirs and at least show good will in wanting to reimburse them. I believe, however, that they will have hardly thought about the question of reimbursement but one must at least offer it to them, assuming of course that in making repayment you yourself would not get into financial difficulties! Otherwise I am not conscious of having any other debts and, if someone should come up to you claiming monies, be sure to check first most carefully, whether their claims are genuine, because, as I have said, I am not aware of my owing anyone anything.

Your grandmother Jettla is, however, an exception to the above. For me to able to explain to you the reasons for this I need to go back into the past. When my most dear father-in-law, whom I am unable to forget, your Grandfather Harry, died, he made your Uncle Frederick and your mother his heirs subject to their being liable to pay to your grandmother, i.e. his wife, the income produced by his estate for the duration of her life. However, to make your grandmother independent of all the fluctuations in the income yielded by the investments it was agreed amongst us all, that your mother would pay her mother the monthly sum of 1500 Kc. This together with the considerable pension paid to her by Josef Petschek & Co. (Grandfather Harry's former employers), that you know about, enabled her to live a comfortable life. I managed your mother's inheritance quite independently of my remaining assets, which I managed jointly together with her dowry i.e. what your mother inherited from

her father was managed quite separately from our and my assets. I trust that you will be able to obtain the book-keeping entries about the assets she inherited from her father that I have with me here via the same route that you receive this long letter i.e. from Mr. Giesecke in Grenoble. You will see from the entries, that I (it was I who managed your mother's affairs) last made this monthly payment of 1500 Kc. to your grandmother on the 26th August 1938 – by chance, as I have just realised, four years ago today. It is possible, even though it is certainly improbable, that we i.e. you or I will have to make a back payment, assuming of course that we will be in a position to do so. I have absolutely no knowledge as to whether your grandmother has incurred any other expenses on your mother's behalf but I can hardly imagine that she would claim reimbursement if that were the case....

I also want to draw your attention to the fact that your mother has a one half interest in the house in the Kroitzeasse and a one third interest in the house in the Auersperggasse named "Roland" and she still owns those interests today – I am wholly unaware of any sale having taken place and, if it did, it was doubtless carried out compulsorily and the amount realised by the sale would bear no relationship whatsoever to the real value of the assets and any such forced sale would, therefore, have to be contested, which Uncle Frederick, who as a lawyer would be the man for such a case, would certainly do, if it were at all possible. But you will also have to look into the matter and come to some agreement with him as to what is to be done. For me it is a case of ensuring that our enemies should fully compensate all the damage that we have had to suffer. I take it that you will not want to return to live with our compatriots in the Sudetenland (i.e. the indigenous German population there expelled in 1945/1946). I equally have absolutely no longing to do so. One will doubtless be able to sell Nestersitz for a good price – as far it is humanly reasonable to expect, Nestersitz will not have been destroyed, which means that in view of all the other paper mills that have been destroyed its value will have increased, even though during the War no maintenance work will have been done, I suppose. It is a factory in full production and is situated very favourably for export purposes. As a result of the expansion of the canal system the trade routes via the waterway systems will also exist to France, Belgium and Holland, which have little pulp. I can well imagine that French, Belgian or Dutch paper mills, maybe even a consortium, might well have an interest in acquiring Nestersitz. Together with your Uncle Stefan try and get Mr. Mace and his firm interested in the matter. They have behaved like real, true friends to us and even wanted to lend 10,000 FF to us in the event of our getting into difficulties. And you can also see how kind Mr. Giesecke has been, because without him I would have been unable to send you this letter containing my thoughts and equally unable to send you the small parcels that are so important and valuable. My stamp collection has become quite valuable; my advice to you is to hang on to them for as long as possible and only then convert them into money: the longer you postpone their sale, the more I hope you will get for them, my dear boy. If I should live to see the day, I myself would like to settle with your mother here in France or with you in old England. Not together with you under the same roof – don't be worried on that account – but near to you, so that we can see one another frequently and can enjoy one another's company. The proceeds of the sale of Nestersitz or possibly its regular profits might suffice for this purpose. If possible, I should like to do something too; when I am properly fed again – my likely weight today is just 53 kg – the energy that I today lack will return, I hope. It will all depend on whether I will be able to save your mother and have her with me again. When the time comes, I shall do my utmost possible, which goes without saying. You cannot imagine how greatly I reproach myself for not having taken her with me – against her will. That was the greatest mistake of my life, that I shall regret as long as I have air to breathe. Here too it is your Uncle Frederick, who is in large measure to blame, because if, when his mother was with him in Switzerland, he had simply refused to allow her to return to Czechoslovakia, your dear mother would most probably have fled with us to Paris, particularly as even I at the time only intended to stay there for 14 days. As a result of the

enemy's having occupied Prague, I was unable to return any more and it is from that time that our misfortune dates. But what is the point of pursuing such phantasies today; what has happened, can no longer be eradicated, must be suffered and one must build one's life on the saying, "make the best of it".

I have written this long explanatory letter in German, as it would have been difficult for me to express myself clearly and precisely in English. Please explain this to your dear wife, Eky and tell her how very much I long for her and her little child too, how much I cherish her, as she loves you and how earnestly I hope to meet and get to know her together with your mother. I know that your mother will agree to your giving her jewelry to your dear Eky. But I confidently hope that your mother will be able to do this herself. Only when it will have become absolutely certain that your mother will not be able to do this should Eky become the owner of the jewelry.

Written by Eugen in English in conclusion:

Eky dear, please very much do not be offended when I wrote these lines in German. I am knowing very well the English language, but I have been afraid to not be able to explain my thoughts quite clearly in English. And so I preferred to write in German. Peter surely will translate my letter word by word or someone else. In case of Peter's not coming home from war, in case of my decease and of my wife's decease, naturally you and Pat, or Pat alone shall enter in possession of my havings. You must take some good lawyer in order to settle this question in very best manner. Naturally when I or Helene or we both shall be yet alive, we will do all to help you and I am quite and absolutely sure that no quarrel shall turn up about money and such questions. You are my very much beloved daughter and Pat – and perhaps your other children – shall have my and also Helene's full love and so all questions will be settled in very mutual interests and to everyone's satisfaction.

Of this long letter – I am saying it expressly – I have made no copy; it is the original. I am sincerely hoping I wrote all what could be of interest for your future and that I have cleared up all questions re.my money etc. etc.

Quite useless to say how much my very best wishes shall be with you till the moment of my end. May the Lord save you all, my very beloved.

Nice, the 26th August, 1942

sincerely yours - old Eugen Fürth.

XVIII. Extract from Peter's "Fidermutz"
(about his first visit to Nestersitz after the War).

Lolli (= Apollo Ruzicka) spoke very slowly, as was his manner. After 30 years of marriage his wife, Manka spoke the same way too. He filled three glasses with vodka, which they drank standing up and then they sat down at the alabaster table. “You have got to be very brave, Kiki, but there is something sad that I have to tell you”. Cyril (Cyril, Kilian, Kiki, Fidermutz = Peter Fürth) looked deeply into Lolli Peterka's pale blue eyes. Lolli told him that Mr. Schoustek and Police Captain Gärtner had issued a passport for his mother. After a lot of effort, Lolli, Mana, Martha Stein and a few other friends, who had found the courage to frequent with Jews, had been able to persuade her to leave the country because of Kiki, Kitty and the baby (Peter, Eky and Pat). Just one day before Schoustek had been able to obtain the last stamp on the passport and the visa, his mother and grandmother were selected for the transport to Theresienstadt. His mother was not allowed to say goodbye to her mother. Manka had seen the old lady with the small rucksack on her back that she used to take on walking trips to Italy, comforting others with a smile on her face, wherever it was possible for her to do so. Cyril read the last two letters from his mother. By this time his hosts had withdrawn. For a whole hour Cyril (= Peter) subjected the facts to a technical analysis based on logic alone. On the one hand there was nothing left any more – his grandparents, parents and doubtless other relatives too had all died without there being anything that he, Cyril, could do to bring them back to life again. It seemed pointless to philosophize at this point on why this had come to pass. On the other hand there was Kitty and his little daughter who, unaffected by all this horror, were looking forward to the adventure of taking leave of their solid island kingdom and moving home to the middle of a Europe in ruins. In all this one element in the overall picture was missing: come what may he had to go to Nestersitz.

When Lolli and his wife returned to the drawing room, he asked them to lend him their car for a day or to go with him to Nestersitz. “Only too gladly”, said Lolli, “but where are we to get the petrol”? “If you have enough in the tank to get us to the next garage, I shall make sure that we get the rest that we need”. In the evening they walked around the city centre, where everything still looked chaotic, dusty and gloomy. But they were already serving beer in a few bars and, of course, for Lucky Strikes you could get any amount of local rum, brandy of whisky you wanted.

Early in the morning they drove off to the Weinberge district of the city, where some of the Fidermutz furniture and the family glass collection had been deposited by Mr. Schoustek in two crates in a large garage.

Paying part in cash and part in Camel cigarettes, they tanked and were given a reserve canister of petrol for the return journey. Cyril drove via Dubice, where Uncle Viktor had his farm. The present owner with his plump wife looked suspiciously at the young lieutenant with his black Colt revolver and at the other smart gentleman, who introduced himself as Graduate Engineer Peterka. Cyril calmed them down saying, “You don't need to be frightened of me, I am not a farmer, but tell me what has become of Mr. Viktor (Bischitzky) and his wife Olga”? “Believe me, good Sirs, we don't know anything about that, we come from Kladno, we bought the farm perfectly legally, do believe me, good Sirs, everything was perfectly legal, wasn't it Anicko, my dear”? “Thank you”, said Cyril, “time will tell whether that is correct, won't it? I believe that the children of their son, Karl and Karla (= Vera) Bischitzky, are still alive, they will look into the matter themselves - good day to you”! There was no love in the look the farmer gave him. For a while Kilian thought of the argument between the couple that would now

inevitably ensue. (see footnote)

Dubice lay on the right bank of the river Elbe and, for this reason, they didn't have to drive via Theresienstadt but followed the road via Leitmeritz to Tschernosk, a wine village, where the older generation had celebrated many a festive occasion and where Fritz Nagel, a master of the keyboard, had composed a hymn of thanksgiving. 31 years ago Cyril had taken the same route along the bank of the river, following his birth in Pilsen on the 26.3.1914 and the family's move to Nestersitz later in the year, down the valley, bordered by the gentle hills with their slowly rising slopes, with thousands of fruit trees on either side of the road and passing through pretty villages with their church spires. The railway and the road ran almost in parallel as far as Tetschen. With his heart beat accelerating, he drove slowly along the road close to the river at Schreckenstein vis-a-vis the heap of rubble that had once been Usti. The Biela Island with the Elysium Cinema, the whole street, where they had rented their little room with Tom and Ernst, the row of houses where Tutti had lived, the lady who had given him dancing lessons, Wall Street, the Swan Hotel, where Munich Löwenbräu beer was offered to customers twice a year – it had all been flattened. He couldn't bring himself to cross the bridge to go into the town. The factories dotted along the valley had remained intact. There was even smoke coming out of the chimney of the Alcohol, Yeast and Liqueur Factory. Now and again a train even passed down the line, even though they were mainly never ending freight trains full of Russian soldiers, that steamed their way up river.

In Tivoli, a pub in Grosspriessen, they were greeted by a jovial publican, who gave them to understand that he had good connections when it came to getting hold of tinned pork and eggs. “You understand, don't you – I don't like smoking Russian Machorka”. The ferryman, who took them over the river was a blue-eyed giant, his assistant was a portly, powerful man, Mr. König, the previous Czech owner of the ferry, had been elected to the office of chairman of the local council. The ferry moved sluggishly across the river to Nestersitz – the water level of the Elbe was low.

Cyril drove straight to the chairman. Franta König greeted him with his former cordiality. “Just imagine, Franta, if now at this moment all the clowns you ferried over the Elbe with me were to enter the door”! “And let's not forget the bed in the cabin of my ferry they spewed all over”! said Franta grinning, “do you have any news of your father”? “None at all, Franta, the only members of the family left are Uncle Stefan, who used to ride his horse through the meadows along the river, and myself”. Cyril interrupted the embarrassed silence by asking for the key to the family villa.

His companion Lolli gasped when they entered the villa. “Don't be shocked, it is just as I had imagined it”, said Cyril, telling a lie. Broken bits of furniture, household effects strewn all over the place, wall paper torn off the walls, panelling ripped off the walls, crates broken into, most of them smeared with faeces, sodden bedding, damp patches in the corners of the rooms, broken window panes – not even the view from his bedroom window was the same, the trees had grown and concealed a part of the familiar view. It was only in two rooms in the basement and in the lodge that they found intact furniture, antique furniture, that had been left behind by the liberators as junk.

“Anyone there”? a voice called up in the hall. They returned to the front door through the overgrown garden around the outside of the house. It was old Fuchs who was standing in the doorway, the boiler cleaner, stoker's mate and man in charge of coal and ashes, who was for ever black. He threw his arms around Cyril sobbing. “How are your father and mother”? “They have all been killed, Fuchs, only Uncle Stefan is still alive”. “We didn't want that,

believe me, boss”. “I know you didn't, Fuchs. If you see Mr. Daume (Deimel), the engineer, please tell him to come and see me here at the villa – you won't forget will you”? “I shall tell him straight away, Mr. Kilian”, Fuchs said and disappeared in the direction of the joiner's shop, the shortest route from the villa to the mill.

Daume found them in the tomato garden, which had been the pride of his mother. She had had a terraced garden on three levels constructed and grew a variety of strains of tomato plants there. They embraced one another in silence. Cyril introduced Lolli to Daume. Louis Daume did know a few of Engineer Peterka's dye formulae, but it was only shortly before the war that he had started work at Nestersitz and he had never met him personally. Daume also owed his life to his Aryan mother. He only had to spend a few months in Theresienstadt and had escaped before the outbreak of the typhoid fever epidemic. His wife Else then kept him hidden in her wash-house and coal-shed up until the end of the war.

Two other Czechs from the work-force joined Daume, stoker Cerveny and Vyskocil, the lead solderer. Cyril was told that his best friends had not only become Nazis, which was understandable, but also leading figures in the party. Karl, a fine, jovial bear of a man had, as it later emerged, remained a thoroughly decent fellow and remained so until he died of cancer a few weeks later. All the others had joined up and, to the last man, had fallen in action.

Lolli observed that it was only with difficulty that Cyril was able to maintain his composure. The Germans had closed production down at his mill 18 months previously and requisitioned the work-force for work in the copper works in the next village, which had been important for the war effort. In the mill yard there was no wood, no coal, no sulphur and no lime, in the stores there was no oil, the felt had been stolen from the pulp and paper machines, the bronze sieves had been handed over to the Germany Army, the machines were rusty, pipes had burst, the whole covered by hundredweights of dust – a picture of utter misery.

“Just leave me on my own for half an hour, please - then we shall meet up in my father's office”, Cyril said and then went through the iron doors, past Father Eugen's steam bath, up the spiral staircase, into the hall where the glazing rollers were, past the cross-cut machine and up to the paper machine. Every paper machine has a soul. Motorways have one too. There are old ones, that have served their purpose and can no longer be repaired, there are those that are in the zenith of their lives, that grow, push, restrict, forbid and suddenly, with a black stroke, unleash great reserves of pent up energy, then there are others which take to hitherto quiet corners of the country the bustle of the new age and finally there are the new ones, the untouched virgins, that as yet nobody has been allowed to operate.

And his machine, which had bitten her best friend's arm, because the latter had approached her clumsily, thought that, if they would only clean her thoroughly, fit her out with new felt and tighten her belts, when old Schindler had prepared a good mix of pulp, she would only be too happy to produce chocolate paper once again.

Cyril went to the pulp boiler house. The smell of sulphurous acids and dissolved spruce resin tipped the balance. The acid container was undamaged, by way of precaution Vyskocil had dismantled the pumps and washed them clean.

Cyril sat down in the office behind his father's kidney-shaped writing desk and said, “Gentlemen, as soon as I am discharged from the Army, we shall make a start. I shall make the necessary arrangements in Prague with the Paper Association. In any event you can already make a start now clearing up. Well that's it, and now I don't want to see anyone any more – you can surely understand that. See you soon”!

When they walked back through the steep garden, Cyril said to Lolli, "I want to be on my own for a little while, Lolli - we'll meet back at the car". In the summer-house he sat down on a piece of paper, that he had torn from a forgotten roll of paper with the skill of a papermaker and, without knowing it, had been holding in his hand all the time. It was here that Mrs. Peter, the wife of the master machinist, had bathed the first cut he sustained on his head, when he tore down the steep slope with his cart and overturned. It was here that he and the Peter girls and their two brothers had often sat together in the evening and sung songs. After every thunderstorm they had searched for toads, when the trickle that flowed down the slope grew into a veritable stream and carried the toads down to the pond.

He was seized by rage. What was the explanation for this indescribable narrow-mindedness – why would he, Mr. Peter, have gone along with the same mad ideas, as he was persuaded he had? Because it was so easy to let oneself be led? Or because people were too stupid to reflect on the meaning of the words that, regurgitated to them in such a logical manner, fed their primeval instincts, their cruelty and their greed?

Meter high nettles were growing between the red currant and gooseberry bushes, that bordered the steep path with its steps up to the two horse-chestnut trees where the play area was, coltsfoot and weeds grew into the middle of the path. Beneath the copper beech and the three ancient birch trees he couldn't help but think of Liesl and old mother Pfitzner. He thought of the former, because it was she who had given him his first kiss, and of the latter, because of the Wiener Schnitzels she made every Sunday, which were all the more juicier than those made by the family cook, Marie, because they weren't beaten to death.

Cyril thought to himself, "Your Trixie (Pat) cannot grow up here, how can Kitty (= Eky) be mistress of a house, where the presence of my mother can still be felt in every nook and cranny, where the broken linen cupboard bears the scent of her Mitsouko perfume and father's chest of drawers for his shirts the scent of his Yardley Lavender?" He drew an almighty line under the past. And now he had to get away from this place, not to see anyone any more, to go somewhere – it didn't mind where, just to get away from the Elbe, from all that had been destroyed and wiped out.

A small group of people was standing at the retaining wall, where the two draught horses had bolted and jumped on to the railway lines. In their midst stood the company secretary, Mr. Fichtenecker (Waldek). "Don't you want to bid him good day, Cyril"?, enquired Lolli. "I don't have time today, Lolliku, I shall be coming again soon", replied Cyril and put his foot down on the accelerator. Fichtenecker had been appointed by the Germans as the trustee of Jewish property and had behaved in an exemplary way towards the Fidermutz (Fürth) family. He never saw him again to thank him for what he had done or to try and help him. When Cyril returned, he had been "evacuated" and shortly afterwards died in exile.

On hearing the news of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima:

Cyril again tried to make sense of it all. A glance at the morning papers confirmed the facts, which were a lot worse than he had imagined them. A forest fire had consumed an anthill - purgatory – hell – to begin with it was a fact of life and one that was in the hands of the Americans. From now on one would therefore have to live with that fact of life, just as one would have to live without Father, without Mother, without Grandma Jettla, without Dubice, without Schwarzenbergplatz in Vienna, without Trebitsch, without Aunt Tonca in Prague and without the family home and the paper mill in Nestersitz. Kitty wouldn't become the lady of the white house, Trixie wouldn't learn to cook with Aunt Olga, nothing would again be, as it

once had been . What is the point of the Elbe valley without the people who once lived there? What is the point of Tivoli, if Erich, Lene, Franz, Use, Karl, Emmi, Elli and Walter cannot all sit there together and sing?

Again he had to say to himself, "Don't think these thoughts – everything will be different, but notwithstanding it is precisely now that a new life is dawning – on your way to breakfast."

Footnote:

Olga and Viktor Bischitzky's farm had in fact been at Obristvi to the south of Melnik on the R. Elbe. Olga taught all her nieces how to cook, including Peter's mother. She died in 1930 already. Viktor sold the farm and moved to Prague, where he died in 1938. Their son Karel rented or owned a farm to the north of Melnik at Citov. He found himself accused of setting fire to the farm in 1938, was imprisoned for a while and, on release, was forced to give up the farm and moved to Prague. His wife Karla was a Roman Catholic and the only way that Karel could save his children, Karel and Vera, was to divorce his wife. He was deported from Prague following the assassination of Heydrich - his son accompanied him to Prague railway station ... When writing of Viktor and Olga, one thus assumes that Peter was in fact writing about Karel and Karla.

XIX. Peter's letter dated 7.12.1967

Peter Fürth

7.12.67

currently resident at:
52, Avenue du General Leclerc,
Paris – 14th District.

I was born on the 26th March 1914 in Pilsen in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire and what is now Czechoslovakia. My father was the paper manufacturer, Eugen Fürth and my mother, Helene nee Pollatschek, was born in Aussig. In the same year as my birth we moved to Nestersitz on the Elbe, where my father took over the management of the family business, the Pulp and Paper Mill trading under the name, Emil Fürth & Son. I attended the German Primary School in Pommerle and following this the German Grammar School in Aussig on the Elbe. After passing my 'A' levels I registered as a student at the German Medical Faculty in Prague. However, my grandfather, the head of our family, Counsellor Emil Fürth did not approve of my studies and could not get over the fact that I intended to embark on a different career from that carried on by our family for generations as a tradition, that of a paper-maker. I therefore commenced a course of practical study in Sweden, Norway and Finland that commenced in 1935 and lasted until October 1936. On the 1.10.36 I joined the B. Dragoon Regiment to do my military service.

Then Hitler occupied the Sudetenland. As we were all Roman Catholics but under German racial laws were classified as Jews, my parents had to drop everything, leave home and flee to Prague. I myself left Czechoslovakia on the 25.2.1939 to commence a job as a factory manager in a small Paper mill at Aoust in the South of France. However, from the 15th March 1939 onwards the French authorities classified me as a "refugee", as Hitler had by then occupied the rest of Bohemia and Moravia and I subsequently became a driver, ship's painter, racing pigeon starter, harmonica player and tourist guide amongst other jobs all without the necessary work permit. My father followed me to France in May 1939. Following a life spent amongst Germans and almost only with Germans my mother and grandmother wouldn't believe that what was by that time already being said could be true and they could not be persuaded to follow us.

It is no doubt unnecessary to list how many of our relations fell victim to Hitler's thirst for blood. My mother and grandmother died in Poland. The last news we received was from Kielce in Poland. My father was unable to reach the Czech troops in France and disappeared in 1944. The only survivors bearing our family name were two men - my Uncle Stephan Fürth, who now resides at 59, Drayton Gardens, London, SW 10 and myself, both of whom enlisted in the Czech Army in Agde. In the Winter of 1939 - 1940 I was sent as a Cadet to the French Cavalry's Officer's School at Saumur, where I became a room mate of Maurice Druon, currently the youngest author to have been made a member of the Academie Francaise, who portrays me as one of the main characters in the first book he wrote, "The last Brigade".

Following the fall of France the Czech Army was evacuated to England. There in the Spring

of 1941 I married an English girl named Anne E. Edwards and our daughter, Patricia, was born. She was followed 11 years later by our son, who was born in Bohemia, Stephan. In 1945 I returned with the Army to my old home country to at last start rebuilding after all the years of destruction. Anyone will understand that at that time I was not inclined to go to live amongst those who had exterminated all of my family. I therefore placed myself at the disposal of the state paper-making industry and assumed the management of my father's mill in Nestersitz that had been closed down by the German authorities in the last years of the War so as to find workers for the nearby copper factory in Pommerle.

During the War years the management of the factory had been in the hands of a trustee, our former Company Secretary, Mr. Rudolf Waldek, who has unfortunately died and of whom I heard only good reports from all sides. Due to a lack of workers, lubricating agents and vandalism the mill had descended into the desolate condition I found it at the time I assumed its management in 1945. Without any raw or secondary materials and even without skilled workers I nonetheless succeeded in making a profit in my first year. It suffices to state that some of the rollers on the second paper machine, the horizontal cutter and the rollers had been worn down by several centimeters through the bearings into the bearing surroundings. I managed the mill up until its official nationalisation in Autumn 1946. After about 6 years it folded up as a result of the poor management - they had allowed the pulp boiler to corrode - and in the end it was abandoned.

Following this I managed several state paper-mills, worked for 5 years as a manual worker, driver of a timber truck, electrician and ambulance driver and following my rehabilitation I became Head of Technology at the Paper Mill in Brno.

For financial reasons it was only last year that we took the decision to emigrate from Czechoslovakia. As in the case of our family my wife and my daughter are English citizens and we have no relatives in Czechoslovakia, our application to emigrate was granted after about 9 months and we departed from Brno at the end of June 1967 in the direction of England.

At the present time I am in charge of the technical department of a small firm producing polythene bags trading under the name of Jolivet & Co., 86, rue du Colonel Fabian, Cachan Seine, France, belonging in part to our family. This is now known as, "Plastijo S.A. - Vecoux".

Our property in Nestersitz and Aussig comprised the Pulp and Paper Mill, a villa, numerous pieces of land and houses in the local authorities of Mosern, Wesseln, Pommerle and Nestersitz, a large villa at 20, Kroitschgasse, Aussig and a tenement block bearing the name, "Roland" in the Auersberggasse of that town. An Anglo-German Commission assessed the value of this property to be £460,000.00, £s at the value they had in 1946, corresponding roughly to its market value (British Compensation Commission). I am in possession of the Company's balance sheets and the various formal notifications of Jewish property made in 1938, from which it emerges that it was an enterprise that made up to one million Czech crowns a year profit. Not included in the above is my father's stamp collection, that was also worth one million crowns, the whole of my mother's jewelry, a part of our home's fixtures and fittings, a car etc. etc.

As - as I have already stated - virtually the whole of my family fell victim to Hitler's racial persecution, I take leave now, as it is only now possible for me to do so unfortunately, to claim my share of the compensation that the West German Government has so generously

made available. As I was not allowed to take a single penny with me from Czechoslovakia apart from my furniture and car and had to pay about 40,000 Czech crowns to obtain my freedom, will you please check my case and forward me your decision as soon as possible.

At the present time I am in the process of setting up a trading company named Copetex France to deal with the import and export of mass consumer goods. We did not carry on with this due to the Russians' occupying Prague. An EC orientated branch of this will be the Deutsche Copetex in Düsseldorf, that it is our intention to open in January 1968.

Paris, the 8.12.67

Peter Fürth.