

CHAPTER II

LIFE AS A REFUGEE

The train from Harwich wound its way through the grimy row houses of London's East End, an endless stream of sameness: red brick buildings with thousands of chimneys, sagging clothes lines; and tiny patches of green. How beautiful this ugliness looked to me. Hitler's Germany was behind me and life started anew.

My agricultural training was abruptly brought to an end with the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939. There was no longer any opportunity to travel to Australia and I had to find other ways of supporting myself.

After a short period of working as a laborer in a sand pit, Quaker friends of mine introduced me to Mr. East, the owner of a respected and well-established business in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. He and his wife took a liking to me and took me into their home. I helped with sales, designs of posters, and various promotional activities.

In the evenings, I studied Aeronautical Engineering and gave German lessons; life seemed full of meaning and promise. The owner and his wife treated me like their own son and I began to feel at home in England.

Mr. East was the former mayor of Aylesbury and a prominent social figure. Soon people began to invite me to their

ness and community clubs asked me to speak about conditions of life under Hitler.

It was a noble, heroic time; first aid training, gas-mask drills, sandbags around public buildings, black-outs, food-rationing, rumors, and everywhere a sense of anticipation. No shots were fired, no bombs fell, and everything was permeated by a sense of unreality.

Then France fell. The British troops were evacuated and a panic took over in Britain. One morning, May 16, 1940, I was arrested as an enemy alien and was interned.

I was thrown together with thousands of other refugees and aliens. Most were sympathetic to the cause of the Allies. Many of them were well-known writers, politicians, religious leaders, and scientists. Most of them were young. Their education and careers interrupted, they waited for the dreaded invasion of England by the Germans; an invasion which never came off.

After a few months behind barbed wire on the Isle of Man, we were loaded onto boats and shipped off. Some went to Australia, some went to Canada, and some died when the German submarines sank their boat.

I was the very last one to get onto the "Sobieski," a Polish vessel, before she headed for Canada. We were part of a convoy which tried to get past the German submarines off the coast of Northern Ireland, Greenland, and Newfoundland. Depth charges exploded all around us as we headed for the New World, and my life took another turn.

CHAPTER III

IN THE NEW WORLD

The streets of Trois Rivières were lined with curious onlookers as seven hundred refugees trudged to the hastily constructed internment camp. We were heavily guarded, and treated like prisoners of war. The gayly colored Quebec frame houses seemingly tied together by a maze of overhead electric wires and cables, formed a background reminiscent of an operatic stage setting. The New World looked strange indeed!

But soon we settled into a routine of life and the strange assortment of individuals formed a microcosm with its own rules, activities, and intellectual and artistic pursuits.

I watched the instructions being given by an ex-jiu jitsu champion of Germany, participated in debates with a former member of the German Reichstag, attended a religious service given by the former chief rabbi of Cologne, and attended lectures given by the infamous German nuclear physicist Klaus Fuchs. Count Lingen, a grandson of the German Kaiser and nephew of the British Queen, became the camp spokesman and represented this little world of its own.

There was ample opportunity for formal and informal learning. We could also find paid work in a wood-working

p which produced folding tables and benches for the
adian army. The pay was only 10 cents per day, but I
n became foreman and earned 25 cents per day.

When the status of internment camp was changed to that
refugee camp, it became possible to be released on parole
vided one had a skill which was of value to the "war
ort." Mechanical draftsmen were in demand, but I had no
ll in this field. Nevertheless, I found a book on des-
ptive geometry and mechanical drafting in the camp library
, after three weeks of intensive study, I passed the re-
red test. A short time later, on April 20, 1942, I was
eased on parole. A job was waiting for me with Machinery
vices Ltd. in Ville Lasalle, not far from Montreal, Quebec.

Two years of life behind barbed wire came to an end.
as free again. Life had taken another turn, a turn for the
ter.

I resumed my evening studies in Aeronautical Engineer-
and obtained my diploma from the Canadian Institute of
ence and Technology in 1943. Subsequently, I found a new
ition as mechanical designer with the Continental Can Com-
y of Canada Ltd., in Ville St. Laurent. I started to ac-
re roots.

Later that year I was admitted to Sir George Williams
lege as an evening student, as a candidate for a Bachelor
Science degree.

My class elected me as a representative to the Student
y Government, and I became familiar with parliamentary

procedures and organizational skills. Soon I was elected as chairman of the War Council and stumbled into my first encounter with problems of leadership.

I also stumbled into my first serious encounter with a young woman who was soon to become my wife. Lily Doré was a secretary. She was well experienced in the intricacies of the stock market, but not adverse to changing her status to that of housewife. We were married in 1944.

A year later, the war was over. Hitler's nightmare had ended and I wept with joy.

In 1946, shortly after my graduation from college, my first son, Edward, was born. I became more interested in domestic affairs than world politics and this was another turning point.

The next few years seemed to pass quickly. I took some post-graduate courses at Sir George Williams College, changed positions, another son, Richard, was born, and life seemed stable and promising.

In 1950, I accepted a position as group leader with Costain, John Brown, an engineering firm, in London, England. There was trouble in Iran and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company constructed an oil refinery in Scotland. I was in charge of about thirty draftsmen and engineers and learned a good deal about management the hard way.

I vividly remember one of the situations, when an employee seemed to find excessive time for reading newspapers during his working hours. I felt greatly tempted to lay him

off. Fortunately, I did not, because he turned out to be one of my best men, and I learned that it was my inexperience in organizing the work which was responsible for his periods of inactivity.

Living in Europe gave me a chance to visit my family in Vienna again, whom I had not seen for eleven years. All seemed happy and promising. However, in 1951 my wife was hospitalized for what turned out to be a serious illness. I learned to take care of my sons, five and two years old, and hold down a responsible position at the same time.

At the end of the year, I decided to return to Canada and accept a position as mechanical engineer with a consulting engineering company, Stadler, Hurter, and Company, in Montreal. I supervised a few people working on a pulp and paper mill, but added little to my managerial experience.

When the project came to an end, work was slow and I decided to try my luck elsewhere. I applied for immigration to the United States and in summer 1953 I was admitted as a landed immigrant.

I have a large number of relatives in this country, some of them third generation Americans, whom I met for the first time. As I travelled across the vast expanse of the American continent for the first time, I had the strange sensation that I was coming home.

Thus, life took another turn.

CHAPTER IV

TAKING ROOT

When I was a youth, I dreamed of going to California. *I would be riding in a covered wagon, drawn by six horses and loaded with supplied and household goods. The bottom of the wagon box was gently curved and covered with canvas to keep out sun, rain, and dust. All around me were striking and graceful vehicles moving over the hills, past Indians who waved at me.*

Our actual arrival in California was less romantic. A steady stream of automobiles bore witness to the changes which had occurred since, as a young boy, I had read about the Wild West.

My first position in Los Angeles was with the Fluor Corporation, a company of engineers and constructors. After a few months of field experience in a refinery, I became a planning engineer. My responsibilities were limited at first and I was encouraged to attend a variety of lectures at East Los Angeles Junior College dealing with engineering as well as management subjects.

Life seemed easy and full of hope. I bought a house in Long Beach and planted the trees which were to bear fruit in the years to come. Little did I know then that I would never see their fruit.