

Shaya Buchinger's Diary

The purpose of the diary is to describe the circumstances surrounding my dear father's emigration to the U.S.A. on October 17, 1939. With G-d's help the rest of the family will be joining him.

In 1937-38, because of Hungary improving its relations with Germany, the Hungarian government enacted anti-Semitic laws. The maximum number of Jews employed in a factory or business establishment was set at 6% of the workers. No Jew could obtain a license for business. Obtaining a job in a factory or business is very difficult due to the religious and legal circumstances. Jewish youth do not have a future in Hungary.

The outlawing of *Shechita* (ritual slaughtering) caused a great loss of income for the Jewish community. *Shechita* is forbidden because it is considered inhumane to the animals (so should live Hitler and all the enemies of the Jews). However, this government action harmed the entire meat industry as it caused a drop in the meat prices.

My grandfather was forced to close his butcher store in Vac. In Szombatheivye, our uncle, **Shmuel Rosenberg (Margit's husband)**, moved back to Vac, as he had to close his butcher store.

Chesky and **Bella** are the names of my dear parents. My grandfather's name is **Yitzchak** ben **Baila** and **Usher**. **Usher** ben **Yitzchak** is my great-grandfather. **Shmuel Zev** ben **Usher** is the name of my dear mother's father and grandmother's name is **Raisel** bas R'**Avrohom Meyer**.

In 1936, my grandfather, **Yitzchak**, passed away and in 1937 my great-grandfather, **Usher**, died. My grandfather, **Shmuel Zev**, passed away Iyar 7 in 1938 and is buried in Vac. Our family was in mourning for three years.

My grandmother, **Riesa's (Raizel)**, maiden name is **Klein**. She was born in Nagyszombat to a very religious family. Her father's name was **Adolph (Avrohom Meir)**, a *Talmid Chochom* who wrote a sefer called Imre Avrohom.

My dear father was born March 5, 1896 in Szombathye. He spent his youth in Papa Nagysurany and Pressburg, where he pursued his Torah and Talmud studies. When he was 13 years old, his dear mother died, her maiden name was **Regina Hoffman**. Father did not have to go to the army because he was a rabbinical student at the Yeshiva of Pressburg headed by Rabbi **Akiva Sofer**. Our parents are first cousins as my two grandfathers were brothers.

My mother was born June 15, 1901. She has five brothers and one sister; **Nandor**, **Sandor**, **Elizabeth (Bella)**, **Jeno (Yankel)**, **Margit**, **Frigyes (Fritz)** and **Imre** who was born in Vac. **Nandor** and **Sandor** went to Strasbourg in 1934. Uncle **Sandor** and Uncle **Fritz** are partners in a butcher store. Uncle **Nandor** lives in Colmar and owns a dry good store. Both Strasbourg and Colmar are near the German border.

We are five children; **Lazlo (Yishay)** my older brother was born on October 21, 1923. I was born, **(Imre) Yishayoho**, on April 18th, 1926, 4th of Iyar. My sister, **Eva (Rifka)** was born October 11, 1927 and **Endre (Bondi) Michael** on March 1, 1929.

My parents lived with my grandparents at 25 Gorgei Street in Vac, in a four-room apartment. As our financial condition became more difficult, we sold two rooms. In 1925, we moved to 14 Eotvos Street where we also built a store for the milk business. The two-room apartment was small, so we moved next door to 16 Eotvos Street.



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The yard's other entrance was on Althan Street 5 and the storage room for food had a window on Csaszar Andras Street. At first we lived with a family by the name of Fded, who were from the Status Quo Congregation. Later we lived with the Reiners, who were in the wood heating business. The Althan Street apartment was demolished so we moved to Rakoczi Street 27.

My father is in the milk business. Recently, he received a notice that he must take a test in Budapest if he wants to stay in business. After passing the test he put the business in my mother's name.

When I was four years old, a horse and buggy ran me over. Gratefully, Mr. **Ignac Winkler** took me home. We lived in a three-room apartment with a kitchen, a cellar, storage room and a long yard. The yard contained the milk store, but later we had to build another store that opened into the street. In this apartment the fifth child, **Robert Yaakov Yehuda**, was born on August 31, 1930. I was not the second child born, because a baby boy was born between **Lazio** and myself. His name was **Alfred** but he was two weeks old when he died.

My grandfather, **Shmuel Zev**, had a butcher store on Kaptalan Street. He also exported goose liver. Later, my dear father through my grandfather **Yitzchok** began exporting chickens to Germany. On his last trip to Germany he came home the day before the Anschluss (the day the Germans marched into Austria).

Tante **Margit** married in 1934, to **Samuel Rosenberg**, a monument engraver, from the city of Balsagyarmat. They went to live in Sombathely, where they rented a butcher store from the Orthodox Kehila. Their three children are, **Agnes (Rifka)** four years old, **Robert Acsike (Dov)** three years old and **Esther** two years old. I vacationed twice in Sombathely where a large part of our family lives. While I was there, I traveled to the village Rum.

My mother's brother **Jeno (Yankel)** married his cousin **Bertha Davidvits**, (she is **Malka Raab's** sister). She is the daughter of Aunt **Fanny**, who is a sister of my grandfather's. They had two daughters who died one after another. The third daughter is **Edith Zeidala**.

Uncle **Nandor's** wife is Tante **Mari** from Colmar, France. They have two children, **Paul** and **Andre**. Tante **Anna** is uncle **Sandor's** wife. G-d did not bless them with children. Uncle

Fritz's wife is Aunt **Lisel Klein**. They have two children, **Andre** and **Michelle**. My dear mother's brothers in France were very good to us as they often sent us money.

I started *cheder* when I was five years old. At eight years old I went to Reb **Avrom Alter Grunwald**. At the age of 10, I learned for two years with Reb **Sholom Feldman**. Now I am studying with Rav **Avrom Yakov Braun** and Reb **Boruch Mann**. This is my 4th zman (1/2 year is a zman).

My great great grandfather, **Izaak Buchinger**, was born about 1820 in the city of Nagysurany. He married **Hani Roth**. Their son, **Josef Buchinger**, my great-grandfather, was born 1843 in the city of Fakovzekenyen. He married **Betty Weitzman** from Nagysurany, who passed away before she was 40. They lived in Alsovarad and had six sons and two daughters. **Yitzchak, Shmuel Zev, Daniel, Josef Saul, Pesach, Malkiel, Fanchi** and **Irma**.

Yitzchak, my grandfather, was born in 1870 and his wife, **Regina Hoffman**, was born in Ostffyasszonyfa. Their children were, my father **Frigyes, Elek (Aba Chiya), Bella** who married **MOR Shime, Paula** who married **Bernet Porgesz** lived in Nagymergyer and **Yakob** who lived in Yanshaza (Rumie Batshie).

My grandfather was a very poor man despite trying many different ways to make a living. His second wife was **Elvene Ungar** and they had four sons: **Lipie, Aryeh, Shaya** and **Meyer**. These are my fathers' half brothers. My grandfather's wish was to live in a city with a Jewish population like Szombathyle. Unfortunately, he died suddenly, in the village of Rum before he could accomplish his goal. His *Yahrzeit* is at the start of the winter, the 24th of Kislev, *Erev Chanukah* 1936, his *zchus* should stand by us.

Uncle **Shandor** from Strasbourg, France, came for the unveiling of Opa **Shmuel Zev's** mazeva. When he went back to France he took Oma (his mother) back with him, as here, there was no parnosa.

Uncle **Jeno (Yankel)** had a position by Mr. **Dach** who was running a wholesale wheat business. Uncle **Shmuel** and aunt **Margit** were surviving financially as they had sold some furniture. Uncle **Imi (Amram)** is in the smoked goose liver business. There is very little to live on.

When we moved to Rackoczi Street 27, my dear father decided that he did not want to build a new store for the milk business every time he moved. Instead, he built a milk store at 25 Gorgei Street, where Oma and my uncles, **Jeno (Yankel)** and **Shmuel** lived. The cost was 600 Pehgowith.

On November 2, 1938, Czechoslovakia had to give up territory with a population of one million. This action created a shortage of milk for us, so my dear father went to the ceded territory in search of milk. We received a notice from the city that the new milk store was not acceptable, the reason was a fabrication but the license was revoked.

We struggled through the whole winter selling milk under the table for which we were fined 40 Pengo. In the spring, the city was half willing to approve the milk business if Opa found a suitable store. The final inspection of the new store was delayed. When the inspector came, he

declared the store unacceptable. This struggle for a license continued from November 1938 till December 1939.

In 1937, my father decided to emigrate and started the necessary procedures. **Abraham Schwartzkind**, a good friend and his roommate in Pressburg was now a *chazan* in Omaha, Nebraska, obtained the necessary papers for emigration to the U.S.A.

Also, in August 1939, we moved from Rakoczi Street to Gorgei Street. Everything was ready for the trip to the U.S.A. But there was no money for the steamship ticket. My father requested the money from HICEM, a charitable institution in France, which agreed to grant the monies through a related organization in Budapest. Unfortunately, this process dragged on until war broke out in France and the money never arrived.

Instead, my father borrowed the money from his friends **Muller, Lowey, Grunzweig** and **Rubner** in Vacs who would be reimbursed with the funds from HICEM. My father planned to travel through Germany and England. He said goodbye to all of us and left for Budapest, but was unable to go as the border between France and Germany was closed.

My dear father exchanged his ticket for a Holland steamship, named Statendam. He obtained a Dutch transit visa and decided to go through Germany to Holland and board the ship in Rotterdam. On October 14, he left for Sombathelj to visit the *kever* of his parents and to bid good-bye to his relatives. He traveled to Komaron where he met his sister, **Paula**, who lived in Nagymegyér. From there he traveled to Papa where **Yishay** was learning in the yeshiva and to visit his brother, **Meyer**, who was 24 years younger than Opa.

In Janoshaza, he visited his younger brother **Jacob (Rumi)** a very kind and wonderful person who had helped us with a generous amount of money. On the 16th of October he was in Sombathely to see his brother **Elek** and all the other relatives living there. He went to the *kever* of his father and mother. In the afternoon, he left for the village of Somloszolo to see his uncle **Malkiel** who is the father of cousin **Sori Wiess**. **Yankel**, my brother, who was there for the summer vacation returned home with my father.

My dear father returned to Vac on October 15 and left on October 17, 1939, a Tuesday evening. Mother accompanied father to Budapest returning home at night. Father left Budapest, the 18th, on an express train, arriving before noon in Vienna, from where we received his first postcard. Thursday night, he arrived in Rotterdam, Holland, from where we also received a post card. He remained there Friday and Shabbos. On Shabbos night he boarded the ship. Sunday the 22nd, he wrote us a card, as he was passing close to the English coast that arrived eight days.

On October 31, he arrived in New York and sent us a telegram confirming his safe arrival that we received on November 1st. He has yet to find work. At first he lived at the well-known organization, HIAS, and later moved to the even better known Agudath Israel. On Wednesday, November 1, father wrote a letter and enclosed the letters dated October 25 and 29, which he had written, on the boat. This letter took 23 days to reach us.

The following are all the letters we received from father. On November 23, we received a postcard mailed November 3. On the 9th he sent a letter that took 13 days to arrive. Friday,

November 17, he sent a letter that arrived 20 days later. The November 21 airmail letter arrived in nine days. The Friday, November 24th letter arrived in 13 days while the November 28 letter took two weeks. On November 30 he sent a card via airmail that was delivered in 10 days.

The Russians invaded Finland on December 1, 1939. For the next four weeks we received no mail until January 7, 1940 when letters written on Dec. 3 and Dec 7 arrived. The letters written on Dec.14 and Dec 22 took 33 and 27 days respectively while the Dec. 23 letter arrived in 14 days. The Jan. 1 and 4 airmail letters arrived in 25 days. On Feb.1 we received the letters mailed Jan 15 and 16. Both the Jan 22 and Jan. 23 letters arrived on February 10.

I saved my dear father's letters and put them together, except the letter dated November 17 that we sent to Aunt **Paula** in Nagymegyér. So far father has written seven postcards and five letters.

I kept track of the letters that we wrote Papa only from January 12, 1940 when we sent a card via airmail about the Partfogo case. On January 23, Mr. **Lowy** asked for his address. The January 26 letter we sent included addresses and a picture of **Lacis (Yishay)**. On the 28th, we mailed a picture of, Mother, **Eva, Bandi, Robi** and I. Our dear mother sent a letter and card via airmail on January 31st. We wrote about the coffee case in the February 2nd, 5th and 6th letters. On the 10th, we mailed three newspapers addressed to **Silber** a relative of the **Brauns** from Vac. Later father's address was the N.Y. Agudah office at 616 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn N.Y.

On December 4th 1939, mother received a summons for allegedly not having the right to sell milk (which was a lie). She was fined and warned that should she continue selling milk she would be fined for each day separately. She stopped selling milk, which was our only *parnosa*.

Tante **Margit** and Uncle **Amram** also did not have any income so they decided to leave for *Eretz Yisroel* and enter it illegally. The office handling their file in Budapest delayed their departure. Finally, on Friday, December 15, 1939 the ship arrived in Budapest. In the morning Uncle **Amram** took Uncle **Shmuel's** two children, **Agi** and **Ocsi (Dov)** and left for Budapest. Before noon Uncle **Shmuel**, Tante **Margit** and daughter **Esther** also left for Budapest. The ship left Friday night. Two weeks later they sent a letter from Sulina, Romania that for reasons unknown to them they had not yet boarded the ocean liner. Sulina is located at the end of the Danube River. We received their last letter on January 26, 1940, confirming that they are boarding the ship.

On September 1, 1939, Germany attacked Poland and declared a state of war with France and England. France evacuated the city of Strasbourg, forcing Oma, Uncles **Fritz** and **Sandor** and their families to abandon the city. At first they lived in the Ronvrai, then La Chatre and finally in Limoges where a baby girl was born to Tante **Lisel** and **Fritzi**.