

## CHAPTER 16: 26 MARCH - FROM POLAND TO ENGLAND

The man was one of these people whom I met in the mainly southern part of Poland who spoke Polish and Yiddish. He could understand German and so we were able to converse with him. There were quite a few of this tribe in this area and they were worried too, especially since Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Nazis, but they helped us to reach our destination. He gave us food and drink and allowed us to wash and shave (apart from Magda, the wife of one of our group, of course!).

We had two hours to spare for our train and so he was able to prepare us morally for our future experiences. Then he exchanged our Czech money for the Polish zloty in case we needed some when we arrive in Katowice. In the meantime some of his pals came to have a chat with us. We felt very much at home with these people and also very much protected. When our time came to get our train one of them had already purchased our tickets and came with us. We thanked our friends and entered the train. After a few stops we had to change for the main line train to Katowice. That's where our friend left us, having made sure we were on the right train.

When we arrived we were taken straight to the hotel where our identity papers were checked. A porter took us to our hotel rooms, two in each room. After a good wash we had to come down to the main hall where we met about a hundred refugees. We were telling each other our experiences and found that these were nearly the same for all of us. I thought of many others who were still fighting their way through and wondered whether the gap where we had slipped through was still intact. We were astonished at that wonderful organisation and the many helpers which were involved. We left Prague at 10 am and we were all in bed by 10 pm in Katowice.

### Katowice 27<sup>th</sup> March 1939

In the morning we were told that we shall leave Poland from Gdynia in a few days time by ship but we have the opportunity to get some clothing etc. free. It so happened that a lot of Jewish emigrants (mainly shop keepers) were leaving Poland for South America. They will be on the same ship as we but in the meantime they were trying to sell their goods as quickly as possible. We the refugees will be able to get clothing and underwear also a pair of shoes free. We have to write on the lists what we wanted and these will be stamped first by our organisers. The local people will have to pay at a much reduced price for most of the garments. This was a very good idea because the shop keepers could not take the shops with them. As most of the owners spoke Polish I again was able to help my group and some others. The day arrived when we went by train to the ship and after a few hours we were on the way to England.

After we were out in the middle of the Baltic Sea we started singing and were very happy but when we approached Denmark there was this Skaggerak, a huge rock which made the sea very rough and, poor me, I was terribly seasick. My pals came to me and said, "Can't you organise another sing song?" "No," I said, "I'm going to die."

After we had passed that rock I was much better but I did not feel like singing. A day after we arrived in London the emigrants changed their ship for Argentina and other South American countries. In London everything was arranged to take us all to the various hotels. I shared a room with one of those who was on the ship with me. The rooms were very small and there was only a cold water

tap, so this man starts moaning, how can I shave myself when there is no warm water? I rang the bell, a girl came in and asked, what do you want? So I said to her, "Warm water pliss!" She brought the warm water and I said to him, you see, never worry!

### **London and Manchester**

The emigrants who went to South and North America and naturally those who remained here in England were the only ones who survived the Holocaust. We were well looked after. The next day after my arrival in London I received a letter in which there was a note to invite me to see a gentleman on an urgent matter. There was his address and that was all. Why he did not come to see me at the hotel I did not know.

There I was in the middle of London with that piece of paper in my hand. I felt stranded. A man watched me and came to ask me where I wanted to go. I showed him this piece of paper. He read it, called a taxi, showed him this address and paid him the fare back to my hotel which I told him where I was staying. I was so impressed by this gesture that I still think today about it. I told everybody the English people were wonderful and I even found this generosity in Manchester.

I went to this address, knocked and a lady let me in, asking me of course whether I am W.S. I said yes (another word I had learned). Then I saw the gentleman in his room, completely crippled. He was the person who dealt with all Jewish refugees (a great task). I had to show him my papers and he then gave me a sum of money for which I had to sign and also a railway ticket for Manchester, Sale. He apologised for not coming to the hotel but I hoped that I will understand. He also wanted to give my money back for the taxi but I told him that a man whom I have never seen in my life had paid it for me. I told him also that I have never seen so many wonderful people. Remember, he said, there are more good people in the world than bad ones.

Then he asked the lady whether she has anything to offer me. She had prepared some coffee and a home-made cake which I enjoyed immensely. I stayed half an hour with him whilst the taxi man was still waiting to take me back.