



Eva de Jong-Duldig,  
1946 in Australien

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# Bis ans andere Ende der Welt To the other side of the world

**Eva de Jong-Duldig** geboren 1938 | born 1938

Eva de Jong-Duldig wurde kurz vor dem „Anschluss“ 1938 in Wien geboren. Aufgrund ihrer jüdischen Abstammung mussten ihre Eltern Slawa und Karl Duldig, ein Künstlerehepaar, mit Eva aus Wien in die Schweiz flüchten. Ab Mai 1939 lebte die Familie in Singapur. Im September 1940 wurden sie dort als „feindliche Ausländer“ festgenommen und nach Australien deportiert. In Australien wurde die Familie bis Mai 1942 im Internierungslager Tatura festgehalten. Nach ihrer Entlassung ließen sie sich in Melbourne nieder und blieben in Australien.

Eva de Jong-Duldig was born in Vienna shortly before the “Anschluss” in 1938. As the family were Jewish her parents Slawa and Karl Duldig, both artists, had to flee Vienna with Eva to Switzerland. From May 1939 the family lived in Singapore. In September 1940 they were arrested there as “enemy aliens” and deported to Australia. In Australia the family was detained in the Tatura internment camp until May 1942. After their release they settled in Melbourne and remained in Australia.

# Erinnerungen



# Erinnerungen



Singapur

Sydney

Tatura  
Melbourne

# Erinnerungen

## By good fortune

In her application to the National Fund Eva de Jong-Duldig briefly describes the fate of her family.

I was born in Vienna on 11 February 1938. My family was Jewish and we were therefore forced to flee Austria after the “*Anschluss*”. By good fortune my father was able to obtain a temporary visa to Switzerland from where he further arranged papers for my mother and me. We remained in Switzerland for approximately six months before going to Singapore<sup>1</sup> in 1939. In 1940 we were sent to Australia by the British Colonial authorities as “enemy aliens” and were interned in a camp for nearly two years. After the war we became Australian citizens and remained in Australia. My parents, Karl Duldig and Slawa Duldig (née Horowitz) passed away in 1986 and 1975 respectively and I was an only child.

## Driftwood

In the 2017 biography, “Driftwood”, Eva de Jong-Duldig provides a compelling narrative of her family’s story. The following excerpts describe the family’s fate up to the year 1942, when Eva de Jong-Duldig and her parents were able to start building a new life in Australia.

The footnotes and the remarks printed in square brackets were inserted in the text by the editorial team of the National Fund.

## Families moving to Vienna

The Duldig and Horowitz families came from cities in Galicia, a province of the Habsburg Empire<sup>2</sup> that encompassed the southern part of present-day Poland and parts of the Ukraine.

“Karol” [Karl Duldig, Eva de-Jong-Duldig’s father] was the third son of Markus and Adela Duldig (née Nebenzahl) – his brothers, Leo and Ignaz, were thirteen and ten years older respectively. He was born on 29 December 1902. Markus Duldig and his wife sent a printed invitation to their *Wohlgeborene* (well-born) friends, to celebrate the ritual circumcision of their newborn son on 5 January at 10 am in their home at 1 Szezokagasse, Przemysl<sup>3</sup>.

Karl’s fascination with art began in primary school. He watched mesmerised as his teacher drew a house on the blackboard and with a few deft grey chalk marks the smoke suddenly came out of the chimney. How was it possible to “draw” smoke? From that moment, he began to draw. Soon he drew so well that the older boys as well as his peers asked him to illustrate their school projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Island and city state in Southeast Asia, then a British colony.

<sup>2</sup> The Habsburg Empire existed until 1918 and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the second-largest country in Europe, comprising present-day Austria, Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Montenegro and parts of present-day Poland, Ukraine, Italy, Romania and Serbia.

<sup>3</sup> Today Przemysl is a Polish town situated on the Polish-Ukrainian border.

About 70,000 people lived in Przemysl. Like my grandparents, who owned a profitable haberdashery, many of its citizens were engaged in business and trade. A number of Christian denominations were represented among the citizens, and the Jewish population of about 25,000 was not only well integrated into the city's communal life, but indeed played a respected role in its governance.

Only seventy kilometres from Przemysl, in the Ukraine, is the city of Lwow (or Lvov; called Lemberg in the old Austrian Empire)<sup>4</sup>, the home city of my maternal family. My mother, Slawa, was the second child of Nathan and Toni Horowitz (née Meisel). Her brother, Marek, was three years her senior.

Slawa was born in Horocko<sup>5</sup>, a small town near Lwow, in the parish of Drohobycz, in the home of her maternal grandparents, the Susman Meisel family. [...]

The baby was named after her great grandmother, Slawa Mesuse (Meisel), who had died not long before she was born. The Meisels owned oil wells and lived on a mixed farm with a number of animals – one horse, fifteen cows, two goats, a dozen or so chickens, a rooster and a few geese. [...]

Slawa's younger sister, Aurelie (the family called her "Rella"), was born in the family home in Lwow. [...]

Slawa's happy childhood in Lwow came to an end in 1911. Nathan and Toni were very worried about the growing political unrest in Poland and decided to relocate their family to Vienna. If a war came (which everybody thought was imminent), the family would be safer in the capital of the Habsburg Empire, rather than in Lemberg, an indefensible outpost.

Slawa had long cherished a wish to live in the beautiful city of Vienna, the home of the beloved Emperor Franz Josef<sup>6</sup> and the centre of the royal court. Her wish was coming true! She was in her final year of primary school and looked forward to starting her secondary schooling in Vienna. Even though the family spoke good German, the language of the intellectuals, Marek also loved his Polish language and history studies and was much less enthusiastic about the pending move. Rella, on the other hand, could not wait to see the grand parades of the Emperor's court and go to the opera and theatre. [...]

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<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian Lwiw, Polish Lwów, today seventh largest Ukrainian city.

<sup>5</sup> Meant is today's Horodok, a city in the Ukraine.

<sup>6</sup> Franz Joseph I (1830–1916), from 1848 until his death in 1916 Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary and of Bohemia.

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Nathan Horowitz went ahead to organise accommodation for the family in Vienna. The furniture was crated and sent on, to be installed before Toni and the children arrived. [...]

In Przemysl, in 1913, Markus and Adela Duldig were also preparing to relocate to Vienna. The apartment house they had built on Holowka Street was finished and the first tenants had moved in. It was a sound investment and would not only finance their move, but also provide a reliable income for the family in Vienna. Before they left Przemysl, Adela organized a professional photographer to take a photo of the family. It was the end of an era.

The decision to relocate the family to Vienna proved to be prescient for the Duldigs. The following year (1914) saw the start of the First World War. Przemysl, strategically located on the Eastern Front of the Austrian Empire, became the “fortress” city to be defended at all cost. [...] In the battles that followed in 1914 and 1915, the city changed hands twice. In spite of these battles, the Duldig house on Holowka Street survived intact throughout the war, though after the Armistice the city itself was no longer part of greater Austria but belonged to an independent Polish state.

[...]

In February 1911, Nathan met his wife Toni and his three children after their long journey from Lwow via Krakow<sup>7</sup> to Vienna, and he took them to their new home [...].

During the first few weeks, the family explored the city – they rode on trams and *fiacres* and walked through parks filled with sculptures and fountains. [...]

[...] the endemic anti-Semitism that had festered in Vienna for centuries was further fuelled by the large number of Jews who were attracted to the capital, making it the most Jewish city in Western Europe. So as not to attract unwanted attention, Nathan told his family to speak only German on the streets of the city.

While there is no doubt that Slawa’s parents wanted their children to maintain their Jewish traditions, they also wanted them to be comfortable in general society. They believed that this could best be achieved by a good education, and, as it happened, the best available education was in the Catholic school system. At her convent school Slawa made drawings of the nuns in their habits and distinctive headgear. She learnt Greek and Latin, and was soon

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<sup>7</sup> Second largest Polish city.

familiar with the stories of Homer<sup>8</sup>, the adventures of Ulysses<sup>9</sup> and the legends of the Greek gods. [...]

Slawa started learning the piano in Lwow, but in Vienna her new teacher said that she had the potential to become a concert pianist. She often practiced for six hours a day. Chopin<sup>10</sup>, whose music reminded her of her Polish roots, was her favourite composer. She often accompanied Marek, who was already an accomplished violinist, and they sometimes performed chamber music for family and friends. The family went to the opera and to concerts. [...]

Slawa soon became familiar with the great Viennese museums, especially the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (art museum) and the *Albertina Museum* (museum of prints and drawings), and she spent many hours studying and copying the drawings and paintings of the masters. [...]

The Duldig family arrived in Vienna in 1913 and moved into an apartment at 18 Kirchengasse, Vienna VII (seventh district). The building, a nineteenth century terrace house, was owned by Adela's brother, Eduard Nebenzahl, who had built up a thriving business supplying felt for hats. [...]

Karl was much closer in spirit to Ignaz than he was to Leo. Perhaps that was because they shared the same date of birth, 29 December. Leo and Ignaz were very different from each other. Leo was systematic and orderly in his behaviour and thinking; everything had its correct place and the letter of the law had to be followed in all matters and at all times. On the other hand, Ignaz had a rebellious streak, was headstrong and fearless. [...]

Ignaz taught Karl to box so that he could defend himself if he was attacked by hoodlums on his way to or from school. Jewish children were often the target of bullying and violence on the streets of Vienna. Karl attended the Polish-speaking high school at 22 Sophiengasse<sup>11</sup>, where he showed an aptitude for mathematics, geometry and physics, but he had great difficulty with language-related subjects. [...]

### Art students

At the end of his secondary schooling, Karl decided that he wanted to be an artist, but Adela and Markus took some convincing. Markus told his friends, "I have two decent sons [Karl's

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<sup>8</sup> Poet of the Ancient Greek world.

<sup>9</sup> Hero of Greek mythology. The epic poem "The Odyssey", attributed to Homer, tells the story of his journey home to the Greek island of Ithaka after the Trojan War.

<sup>10</sup> Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), a popular Polish composer known for his piano music.

<sup>11</sup> Then a street in the 4<sup>th</sup> District of Vienna. Sophiengasse was renamed Argentinierstraße in 1921 as an expression of gratitude for the relief provided by Argentina after World War I.

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brothers, Leo and Ignaz, had both studied Law] and one who is an artist!” Nevertheless his parents supported Karl throughout his many years of study.

[...]

After successfully completing her *Matura*<sup>12</sup> (final year at school), Slawa was accepted into the Viennese Art School for Women and Girls. [...] Slawa loved portraiture and her portrait studies in pencil, often with watercolour and white pastel highlights, received high praise.

As their skills improved, the students also painted in oil. Slawa loved *plein air* painting<sup>13</sup> and her paintings of the pretty villages of Kahlenberg and Grinzing on the outskirts of Vienna show an early mastery of the oil technique.

Slawa and Karl first met when Slawa introduced herself to Anton Hanak<sup>14</sup> who accepted her as his student. At that time Karl already was a student of Anton Hanak.

Following four years of study under Anton Hanak, both Slawa and Karl furthered their studies at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien* (Viennese Academy of Fine Arts). Founded in the seventeenth century, this was the oldest art academy in Central Europe. Slawa joined the class of the esteemed sculptor Professor Hans Bitterlich<sup>15</sup>. [...]

In 1924, Karl relinquished his Polish citizenship and became an Austrian citizen. This allowed him to apply for a student subsidy, which, together with an allowance from his parents, supported him when he enrolled at the Academy, where he became a student of Professor Josef Müllner<sup>16</sup>.

### Karl's football career

Karl's football career began in the neighbourhood streets of his parents' Kirchengasse home. He and his friends kicked a tennis ball around, keeping a watchful eye out for the local police officer who chased them off, only for the boys to return when he was gone.

Karl was encouraged by Ignaz, himself a good all-round sportsman who firmly believed that physical activity was essential for a healthy life. [...] Ignaz advised his brother to transfer

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<sup>12</sup> Austrian high school leaver's certificate.

<sup>13</sup> French (*en plein air*) for painting outdoors.

<sup>14</sup> Austrian sculptor (1875–1934), member of the “Vienna Secession” and the “*Wiener Werkstätte*”, two Austrian art movements that were founded around the turn of the century to reform the arts.

<sup>15</sup> Austrian sculptor (1860–1949).

<sup>16</sup> Austrian sculptor (1879–1968).

from the Akademische Sports Club, where Karl had already begun to make his mark as a keeper, to Sports Club Hakoah<sup>17</sup>. Karl became the reserve to the legendary Hakoah keeper Willy Halpern<sup>18</sup>, and, in 1922, he toured with the team to Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. [...] It was an extraordinarily successful tour and Karl returned to Vienna more enthusiastic than ever about his football. Hanak despaired, and said that Karl was risking his career as a sculptor. “What if you injure your hands? You will never be able to work again.”

[...]

On 19 May 1923, a milestone was marked in Austrian football. The English Cup finalists, West Ham United<sup>19</sup>, were touring the continent and the English Football Association had accepted Hakoah’s invitation for the club to play a match in Vienna. [...] In the event, the match proved a sensation and 50,000 people turned up to watch Hakoah playing on its home ground. [...] The match was exciting and ended in a 1-1 draw. After the final whistle, Karl [...] was delighted, as he had only allowed one ball through his goal. Next day the papers reported that this was the largest crowd ever to attend a football match in Vienna.

It was, however, Hakoah’s return match against West Ham United on their home ground, Upton Park in London<sup>20</sup>, that made the name Hakoah the toast of Vienna and became its most memorable triumph. Hakoah was the first European team to play in England – the country where the sport had its origin. They started out as the underdogs, but after the first half had already scored three goals and at the end of the match had registered a sensational 5-0 victory. [...] People on street corners, in cafes and on the trams hailed this win as a great “Austrian” victory. “Hakoah” had become a household word and “Duldig” was one of several Hakoah idols whose names were adopted by young boys playing football in the back streets of Vienna.

[...]

In 1924, a number of Hakoah’s top players turned professional. Karl was tempted, but [...] he broke his collarbone and decided to quit football altogether. Although he had played a vital role in Hakoah’s most exciting years, Karl was no longer in the squad when Hakoah became champions of the Austrian Football Association later that year.

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<sup>17</sup> A Jewish sport club in Vienna, founded in 1909. Hakoah was dissolved in 1938 and its members were subject to Nazi persecution. After World War II Hakoah was re-established. In the interwar period Hakoah had one of the best football clubs in Austria.

<sup>18</sup> Wilhelm “Willy” Halpern (1895–1973), Austrian goalkeeper. Due to a bad knee injury sustained in 1923/24 he had to give up his football career. In 1925 Halpern emigrated to New York.

<sup>19</sup> Professional football club in London, founded in 1895.

<sup>20</sup> Popular name for the Boleyn Ground football stadium located in London’s Upton Park. From 1904 until its demolition in 2016 Boleyn Ground was the home stadium of West Ham United.

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Not long after giving up soccer, Karl started to play tennis. He joined one of the best tennis clubs in Vienna, All Round, which was located on the Rustenschacherallee in the Prater<sup>21</sup>, and soon he became infatuated with this new sport.

In between sessions at the Academy, at weekends and during the long summer vacations, he was often to be found at the tennis courts. He applied his natural ball skills and by watching the better players picked up the tactics of the game. Since he hated to lose, he quickly became a formidable opponent and soon a member of the club's top competition team. [...]

Leo and other members of the family were sometimes heard to remark that Karl was wasting his time with his sport and should be supporting himself rather than relying on his parents' allowance. But in reality, it was very difficult to get commissions for sculpture. To supplement his income and silence the family, Karl bought some equipment and set up a racket stringing service which he advertised at All Round. He still competed in a Jewish tournament in Berlin as late as 1937, and, as it turned out, in 1938 tennis became his passport to freedom. [...]

### Slawa's patent for a folding umbrella

After the death of her mother Slawa in 1975 Eva de Jong-Duldig found a notebook belonging to her mother in which she described how she came to invent a foldable umbrella.

**It happened [that] one May morning, a cold and rainy day, I armed myself with a big umbrella and muttered to myself, "Why on earth must I carry this utterly clumsy thing? Can't they invent a small folding umbrella which could be easily carried in a bag?"**

**Walking with my friend [Karl] to the gallery I said to him, "It would be a handsome thing to invent a pocket umbrella," adding after a while, "I am going to think about it," and I begged him to keep it a secret. "Heavens," he said, "I certainly will." "Don't gossip [or] even tell your brother about it." "Oh my brother would laugh about such an idea." He promised not to gossip. We never spoke about it again. Sleepless nights followed, while I struggled to solve the problem. Faster than I expected I found a solution.**

After solving the initial problems, Slawa shared her idea with her mother and sister, but asked them not to talk about it to anybody else. Her mother gave her money to buy the different parts and paid other upfront expenses. [...]

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<sup>21</sup> The Viennese Prater is a huge park with rich greenery in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Vienna. It is also home to a well-known amusement park.

When the first primitive prototype was ready, Slawa showed the little foldable umbrella to her family and they watched in amazement as it folded back on itself and telescoped into half its original size. [...]

Nathan Horowitz arranged an introduction to the respected Viennese patent attorney, Ing. Josef Hess. Hess was impressed with the prototype and initiated a patent search for similar inventions and then applied for a patent for “Improvements in or relating to foldable umbrellas and the like”. On 2 October 1928, the applications were sent to the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Poland and the United States.

[...]

As expenses mounted Slawa borrowed money from her father to pay the patent attorney. She was motivated by the challenge to create something that would be useful to many people. She wrote, “If I had not been so naive about the whole process [patenting, attorneys and all the other problems associated with the development of a viable business entity], I would probably not have begun. But once started, I became more and more determined to see the matter through and would not give up.”

The patent for the folding umbrella was accepted on 19 September 1929, soon after Slawa’s graduation from the Academy. Once the invention was protected by a patent, Slawa was no longer so concerned to keep it a secret and began to investigate its manufacture. She sought Leo’s advice regarding the protection of her rights. Leo conducted his legal practice from an office at 1 Salztorgasse, Vienna II (second district). He and his family, wife Steffi (née Rakower) and their two children, Irene (Ina) and Artur (Ati), also lived at this address.

Nathan and Leo accompanied Slawa to a meeting with Dr Otto Müller who represented the leading Austrian umbrella manufacturer Basch und Braun. At first Dr Müller was sceptical, but once he realized that patents had already been taken out in France and Poland and that patents in various other countries were pending, he negotiated an agreement for the company to manufacture the foldable umbrella under licence. [...]

The invention generated a huge amount of administration. After the patent was approved in the different countries, Slawa had to defend it against other claims. To keep the patent alive, there were many associated costs and taxes and the umbrella file grew larger and larger.

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The foldable umbrella was called “Flirt” and the advertisements ran: “Have you got your Flirt yet?” [...]

### **A case of death, a wedding, a farewell and a new flat**

Karl’s father, Markus Duldig, passed away in 1929 and was buried in the *Zentralfriedhof* (Central Cemetery) in Vienna<sup>22</sup>. Karl and his brothers inherited their father’s share of the Duldig family real estate interests in Przemysl. With his new independent means, Karl could propose to Slawa, but she had strong feminist leanings and career ambitions and took some persuading.

Eventually, however, Karl prevailed and they were married on 9 December 1931 in the Neudeggergasse Synagogue<sup>23</sup>, Vienna VIII (eighth district), in the presence of their immediate families. [...]

On their honeymoon, Karl and Slawa visited Italy and France. The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna gave them accreditation which meant they had free entry to the famous museums and galleries. [...]

Soon after Slawa’s marriage, her parents, Toni and Nathan, returned to Lwow. Marek had married fellow student Erna Schreckinger and had gone back to Poland some years earlier. Their daughter, Henryka, was six years old and Toni wanted to spend more time with her only grandchild. Nathan was needed to run the family’s oil wells as Grandfather Horowitz was finding it difficult to cope. It was very sad to farewell her parents, but Slawa could not know that the whole family would never be together again.

The Horowitz apartment in 2 Enzingerasse<sup>24</sup>, Door 14, became Slawa and Karl’s marital home. With the prospect of income from her umbrella invention, Slawa commissioned the *Kunstmöbelfabrik* (art house furniture-makers) Sigmund Jaray<sup>25</sup>, one of Vienna’s leading interior designers to make the furniture for the apartment. [...]

Jaray’s principal designer, an architect by training, was impressed when he discovered that his new client was the inventor of a foldable umbrella. He went out of his way to be accommodating and with considerable input from Slawa he designed the decor for each room of the

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<sup>22</sup> The *Wiener Zentralfriedhof* was established in 1874 and is one of the largest cemeteries in Europe. Markus Duldig is buried there at Gate IV, Group 010a in grave number 001. He died at the age of 66.

<sup>23</sup> The Neudeggergasse Synagogue was completely destroyed during “The Night of Broken Glass” in November 1938.

<sup>24</sup> A small street in Neubau, Vienna’s 7<sup>th</sup> District.

<sup>25</sup> The *Kunstmöbelfabrik* was founded in Vienna in the 1870s by the Austro-Hungarian interior designer Sigmund Járay (1838–1908).

apartment. It was her idea to incorporate red leather strapping in a lattice design for the living room chairs, and the same red leather formed the seat of the stools, wrapped around a simple wood frame to resemble a scroll, much like the scrolls of the *Torah* (the Jewish Bible)<sup>26</sup>. Red leather trim also featured on the modern reading lamp, and even on the keys of the bookcase.

[...]

The marble and steatite<sup>27</sup> sculptures Karl and Slawa had made while they were students of Anton Hanak were placed on shelves and mantelpieces, and Slawa's paintings [...] hung on the walls. [...] Altogether the apartment looked like a small private museum. There was no space for a working studio so Karl and Dr Arthur Fleischmann<sup>28</sup>, a fellow graduate of Professor Müllner's class at the Academy, rented a separate studio in the city. [...]

### The youngest addition to the Duldig family

Although the administration of the umbrella took a great deal of time, Slawa still managed to complete a number of commissions [for sculptures]. [...]

When Slawa realised that she was pregnant, she put aside her professional interests and concentrated all her energies on leading a healthy lifestyle. She drank fresh orange juice or carrot juice every day and read widely on prenatal care and childbirth. She also enrolled in a three-month mothercraft and infant care class run by The Nursing Association of Vienna. It finished on 7 January 1938, just over a month before the baby was due. On 28 January 1938, Karl and Slawa paid a deposit for a large room in the *Rudolfinerhaus*, the leading obstetrics hospital in Vienna. At 360 shillings<sup>29</sup> a day it was very expensive, but nothing was too expensive for their precious anticipated baby. I was born on Friday, 11 February 1938. Slawa started a Baby Book Diary [...] and noted that I was forty-nine centimetres long and weighed 2,950 grams.

I was named Eva, after the first woman, and if I had been born a boy I would have been called Peter. [...] When we came home from hospital, Slawa and Karl had to adjust to the routine of feeding every few hours, even through the night. From the moment Karl set eyes on me, I was the joy of his life. He helped to mix formulas and sterilise bottles and generally involved himself in my care. Paula, our trusted house help, looked after the other household chores, so my parents could devote all their attention to my needs.

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<sup>26</sup> First part of the Hebrew bible, which consists of five parts.

<sup>27</sup> Soapstone, material popular among sculptors due to its relative softness and malleability.

<sup>28</sup> Austrian sculptor (1896–1990).

<sup>29</sup> Austrian Schilling, Austrian currency from 1925 to 1938 and from 1945 until the implementation of the Euro in 1999. 360 Austrian Schilling in 1938 would roughly be 1,000 Euros today.

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My grandfather Nathan came from Lwow to visit and brought presents from the family. Unfortunately, Toni, my grandmother, was not well enough to make the journey. [...]

Karl's aunts and uncles, cousins and other relatives also visited the youngest addition to the Duldig family. Ati, the last "Duldig" baby, had been born sixteen years earlier.

But their unbridled joy at the new addition to the family was shortlived, as one month after my birth Hitler marched into Vienna. [...]

### The implications of the "*Anschluss*" could not be ignored

Although the impact on the Jewish community was disastrous, this did not immediately intrude into the personal lives of my parents or their busy domestic schedule. Happy family occasions, however, came to an end as the dreadful implications of the sudden catastrophe that had befallen the Jews of Vienna could not be ignored.

[...]

On 6 June, my parents and I visited Karl's mother and brother in the family apartment at 18 Kirchengasse. Ignaz had just returned from a mountaineering expedition and his olive-skinned face was especially tanned.

In the Baby Diary, Slawa noted that I burst out crying when I caught sight of him. Maybe it was the colour of his skin, but it was more likely the serious expression on his face. Over Jause (afternoon tea), he expressed grave concern for the future of the Jews of Austria. As both Ignaz and Adela still held Polish citizenship, they could return to Poland, and in this desperate situation that is what they intended to do. At the same time, Ignaz asked his long-standing friend Fanny Blaustein to marry him, in this way also giving her the opportunity to leave Austria. When Karl and Leo had taken up Austrian citizenship in the early 1920s, they automatically forfeited their Polish citizenship, and therefore would have needed visas to return to Poland. However, since the *Anschluss*, it had become almost impossible to obtain exit visas to other countries. [...]

### Karl's departure

On 8 June, Karl was astonished when a refund of 10 Reichsmark from the All Round tennis club arrived in the mail, the accompanying note cancelling my parents' joint membership subscription for the season. On further enquiry, Karl was told to lodge any objections at the

neighbouring club, Vienna Athletic Sports Club (WAC)<sup>30</sup>. He confronted the manager at WAC, a staunch Nazi, and said that he thought Hitler was making a mistake as the Jews could be very useful to Germany. The manager looked at him keenly and answered, “*Der Führer ist nicht dieser Ansicht*” (The Leader is not of this opinion), and Karl returned home. When he told Slawa about this incident, she could not believe that he had been so foolhardy.

On 29 June, Karl registered a business in Neubau<sup>31</sup> as a repairer of tennis racquets and in spite of not being able to play at his own tennis club he was determined to organise a game. Jews were still allowed to use the public courts, so he arranged to play with Lisl Herbst<sup>32</sup>, a former Austrian Ladies’ Champion, who was also Jewish. This was his last game in Vienna and later Karl always said, “A game of tennis saved my life.”

After they finished playing, Fredl, one of the regular ball-boys working at the court, offered to take Karl’s tennis gear home for him on his bike to earn some extra pocket money. Two days later the gear had still not arrived so Karl returned to the courts to look for the young boy. “Haven’t you heard?” the other players said, “Fredl was knocked over by a car on his way to your place and has ended up in hospital.” Karl hurried home in an agitated state. In the prevailing circumstances, with more and more Jews arrested on any pretext, Fredl’s accident could lead to very serious consequences. Slawa visited Fredl in hospital, met his mother and gave her some money for which she was very grateful. Fortunately the young boy was recovering and would soon be able to go home. Fredl had already been interviewed by the police about the circumstances of the accident, and it was only a matter of time before they would come looking for Karl. Slawa took Karl’s tennis bag home, said there was no time to lose and insisted that he should leave Austria immediately.

Karl telephoned Mr Lowenstein, a tennis acquaintance who often arranged visas to Switzerland for Austrian players interested in playing the Swiss tournament circuit. He advised Karl to go to Cologne (Germany), where he knew somebody in the Swiss Embassy who would help. The next day, Karl said goodbye to his mother and brothers. To all intents and purposes, he was on his way to play the Swiss tournaments and therefore took along mainly tennis gear and racquets. On Sunday 20 August, Karl left Vienna for Cologne [...].

Karl also took along as much cash as the family could spare, most of which would be used to bribe the Swiss embassy official in Cologne.

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<sup>30</sup> *Wiener Athletiksport Club*, an Austrian sports club in the Viennese Prater, founded in 1897.

<sup>31</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> District of Vienna.

<sup>32</sup> Liesl Herbst (1902–1990), Austrian championship tennis player in the 1930s.

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Karl was very upset at having to leave Slawa and me in Vienna, but Slawa reassured him saying that no harm would come to us. I was too young to travel and it was highly unlikely that Karl could get additional visas for us. Slawa believed that we were better off in Vienna, where Rella could help her and where we could stay in our Enzingergasse apartment with all the home comforts. She said, “Somehow we will find a way to join you,” though at that moment neither of them had any idea how this could be achieved, nor when or where this might take place.

Two days later, Karl phoned from Zürich<sup>33</sup> where he was staying with his cousin, Rosa Garfunkel, and her husband Leo. After paying off the Swiss Embassy official, Karl had given the rest of the money to Mr Lowenstein who promised to return it to Slawa. Karl said, “I feel well, and to help pass the time, I will play in some tennis tournaments.” Telephoning was expensive, so Slawa said he should call only if there was something urgent to discuss. [...]

### Two men in plain grey overcoats

Not long after Karl’s departure, the doorbell rang and on the threshold were two men in plain grey overcoats who introduced themselves as police officers.

“Good morning, Madam. We are looking for Mr Karl Duldig. Does he live here and is he at home? We are following up on the matter of a young boy who was injured in a car accident and, as Mr Duldig’s tennis bag was with the young boy when he was hit by the car, we would like to speak to him about the circumstances of this event.”

“Oh yes, I visited the boy in hospital and gave his mother some money. He was doing fine. Unfortunately my husband is not here as he has gone to Switzerland to play tennis. But please come in,” Slawa said.

The two men entered the apartment and were confronted by a domestic scene as Rella was giving me a bottle.

The older of the two asked a number of questions, while the other man took notes. It soon became clear to him that there was little to be gained from talking to Slawa and that their “bird” had already flown.

“When do you expect your husband to return?”

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<sup>33</sup> One of the 26 federal states (cantons) of the Swiss Confederation and also a town in this canton in northern Switzerland. Today Zurich (German: Zürich) is the largest city in Switzerland.

“Unfortunately, I do not know,” she answered truthfully, “but as soon as he does, I will tell him to contact you”.

The older officer gave her his business card, they both clicked their heels and left. [...]

### Growing tension in Vienna

Karl’s early letters from Switzerland were optimistic. He was enjoying the tennis, was playing well and had won the Doubles at Adelboden<sup>34</sup>. The weather was beautiful and the picturesque Swiss countryside made the troubles of Vienna seem remote. He joined his friends from All Round [...] and they played in Lucerne<sup>35</sup>, but soon after, while playing at Montreux<sup>36</sup>, he fell awkwardly in a first round match and injured his left knee. The doctor advised rest and indicated that a meniscus operation might be necessary. Enforced rest dramatically changed Karl’s mood. His letters became despondent and he missed us enormously. On top of this, he became more and more agitated by the grave political situation in Europe. [...] Karl’s mother and Ignaz, together with Fanny, had already arrived in Przemysl. Ignaz wrote urging Karl to do everything in his power to get a visa for my mother so that we could join him in Switzerland. In her letters, Slawa wrote about my progress and tried to keep up his spirits, but sometimes she could not hide her own growing feelings of frustration and despair.

Slawa could no longer afford to employ Paula and relied more and more on Rella, but she continued to meticulously record every detail of my daily life in the Baby Book Diary. [...]

Caring for a baby brought a sense of normality to the otherwise surreal situation and growing tension in Vienna. Jews were not allowed to walk in the parks and could only shop in Jewish-owned businesses. Rella and Slawa ignored these restrictions and, wearing smart suits and hats, pushed the pram to the *Rathauspark*<sup>37</sup> and also visited the gardens of Schönbrunn Palace<sup>38</sup>.

[...] It was a decided advantage that neither of them looked Jewish and that they spoke perfect German. [...]

### Family emigration

Leo, his wife Steffi, and Ati, were going to Antwerp<sup>39</sup> to be with the family of their son-in-law,

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<sup>34</sup> Municipality in western Switzerland.

<sup>35</sup> Municipality in Central Switzerland.

<sup>36</sup> Town in southwestern Switzerland on Lake Geneva situated near the Franco-Swiss border.

<sup>37</sup> A park in front of the town hall in Vienna.

<sup>38</sup> The Schönbrunn Imperial Palace, which is surrounded by large gardens was the summer residence of the House of Habsburg.

<sup>39</sup> Belgian seaport town.

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Hendrik Gutwirth. Their daughter, Ina, had married Hendrik in 1936 and the young couple were living in Singapore where the Gutwirth family, who were diamond merchants, had established a branch of their business.

[...]

Rella's friend, the *Hofrätin* (wife of a Ministerial Councillor) Camilla Eisler, hosted a cultural salon and Rella often participated in her soirées. Before the First World War, Camilla's late husband, *Hofrat* (Ministerial Councillor) Eisler, had been an adviser to Emperor Franz Josef. The family was originally Jewish, but, like many other Jews in the upper circles of Viennese society, the Eislers had long ago forsaken their heritage and become assimilated.

As it happened, Camilla's French nephew, Marcel Laisné, arrived in Vienna to visit her. He said to his aunt, "I want to meet a Jewish girl, marry her, and give her a chance to leave Austria". Camilla immediately thought of Rella and arranged for them to meet.

Rella was not only a natural beauty, but was always immaculately groomed and smartly dressed in the latest fashions. [...] Throughout her acting career, she had many admirers but no long-standing relationship. Under the stage name of "Rella Karin" she performed regularly in repertory theatre, both in Austria and Germany. [...]

Marcel was smitten by Rella's beauty and she found his attentions endearing. [...]

Marcel worked as a translator of German documents in the administration section of the French railway system (SNCF)<sup>40</sup>. Rella agreed to accompany him to Paris for two weeks and afterwards Marcel proposed to her. French citizenship would automatically give her the opportunity to leave Austria, and once settled in Paris she could arrange for Slawa and me to join her. Hopefully Karl could come to France later. In hindsight, this was all wishful thinking. [...]

### Egyptian gods

In Switzerland, Karl became more and more agitated and in his despair made an appointment with the Director of Immigration Police and Employment in the Canton of Zug<sup>41</sup>, a gentleman named Ernst Speck, who as it happened was instrumental in helping many refugees gain entry to Switzerland. Karl explained that he had entered Switzerland on a temporary visitor's (transit) visa to play tennis and had intended to return to Vienna after the tournament season was

<sup>40</sup> *Société nationale des chemins de fer français*: the French national railway company, founded in 1937.

<sup>41</sup> A Swiss canton and at the same time the name of the main municipality in this canton in Central Switzerland.

over. The political situation had, however, deteriorated to such a degree that it would now be dangerous for him to return and he would place his family at further risk. Mr Speck listened sympathetically and then said, “Tell your wife to send her passport here and I will insert a return visa to Switzerland [valid for six months] into the passport”. In grateful appreciation for Mr Speck’s help Karl modelled his portrait in clay.

Excitedly Karl phoned Slawa and said she should send her passport to Zug immediately. He did not say more over the phone, but soon a detailed letter arrived. Once the passport arrived in Zug, Mr Speck would endorse it, after which it would be sent back to her in Vienna and with these papers we could leave Austria.

It was too risky to send the passport in a letter, so Slawa enclosed it in a book. The book she chose was *Götter Ägyptens* (Egyptian gods) by Alexander Schiff<sup>42</sup> [...]. It was a small, thin book, exactly the right size to hide a passport. Perhaps, Slawa thought, the Egyptian gods reproduced in this little book might bring us luck. The “book” was sent by registered post, addressed to Karl at *Hotel Zum Hirschen* in Zug. He called two days later to confirm its safe arrival. Mr Speck kept his promise and inserted the return visa into the passport. Karl immediately sent the “book” back to Vienna, fully expecting that Slawa would take the next available train and leave Austria. But she still had a great deal to organise in Vienna and every week longer meant that travel with her baby would be easier. There was another problem. She had to find money for the trip, as the family’s savings have been sorely depleted through the many expenses and the bribes already paid. Fortunately Karl’s aunt, Regina Nebenzahl, the maiden sister of his mother, adored me and became our “saviour”. She offered to lend us enough money for the journey and a little extra for possible expenses. She also suggested that we come and stay with her should we need to leave our apartment before we left. [...]

### The fictitious buyer

Slawa received a letter from the Nazi *Gauleiter*<sup>43</sup> (District Superintendent) of the Bernardgasse<sup>44</sup> informing her that the apartment in Enzingergasse had to be vacated by 17 November 1938, “as it was required for other persons”. Accommodation in Vienna’s second district would be provided. Soon after, the *Gauleiter* came to inspect the property.

He said, “Mrs Duldig, you have a nice apartment and you will not be able to take all this with you. I’ll give you 1,000 Reichsmark for everything in this apartment. I am sure you will need the money when you leave Austria”.

<sup>42</sup> Meant is Alexander Scharff, *Götter Ägyptens*, Berlin 1923. Scharff (1892–1950) was a German Egyptologist.

<sup>43</sup> Meant is not the *Gauleiter* himself, a high-ranking official in Nazi administration, but probably a staff member of the *Reichsgau Wien*, the administrative division of the German Reich in Vienna.

<sup>44</sup> Street in the 7<sup>th</sup> District of Vienna.

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But Slawa was not easily intimidated and, quick as a flash and with extraordinary presence of mind, she answered, “*Herr Gauleiter*, I am very sorry, but I have already sold everything”. He looked at her in disbelief, so she added, “I will arrange for you to meet the buyer tomorrow, if you like.” It was arranged that he would return next day at three o’clock to meet “the buyer”.

After his departure, Slawa telephoned Melitta Despitz. [...] She had been a good friend ever since her father had treated Slawa’s ear infection nearly twenty years earlier and she would not be intimidated. Slawa detailed the *Gauleiter*’s visit and recounted the story she had invented to thwart his plan to “buy” all the beautiful furniture and works of art. Melitta agreed to impersonate the fictitious buyer.

Next day precisely at three o’clock the doorbell rang and the *Gauleiter* entered. “Good afternoon, Mrs Duldig. Have you managed to contact the buyer of your furniture?” Slawa assured him that the lady would arrive any moment, and sure enough a few minutes later the doorbell rang again.

“Miss Despitz, thank you for coming. Please come in”, she said, keeping the heartfelt relief out of her voice. “This is the *Herr Gauleiter*, he wanted to meet you.”

Melitta, a petite woman, was wearing a smart black suit and matching hat. A large red swastika was pinned to the lapel of her jacket. She walked past Slawa haughtily and looked down her nose at the Nazi official standing in the room. She said, “I believe you want to buy this furniture, however, I have already paid a deposit and will take possession of everything when Mrs Duldig leaves the apartment. You have absolutely no right to intervene in this arrangement. *Frau Duldig, ich möchte gerne wissen, wann ich diese Sachen in Empfang nehmen kann.* (Mrs Duldig, I would like to know when I can take delivery of these things.)”

Realising that there was nothing he could do, the *Gauleiter* left and did not bother Slawa again. In gratitude, she gave Melitta the marble kneeling figure which she had carved in the studio of Anton Hanak. [...] for fear of being sprung the women decided not to meet again in public. [...]

### Flight plans

As the Swiss visas were only valid for six months, Karl actively pursued every opportunity available to *émigrés*. Very few countries were prepared to take Jewish refugees, but on 14 November Karl managed to get a permit for Bolivia and telephoned Slawa with “the good news”. He suggested that she should buy passages to Bolivia in Vienna, as in Switzerland they were three times as expensive, and he wanted us to embark in Liverpool<sup>45</sup> on the English Pacific

<sup>45</sup> City in northwestern England.

Line Mail Service<sup>46</sup> going via Cuba<sup>47</sup> and Havana<sup>48</sup>. Apparently he could also get visas to Cuba, and by going through Havana my parents could decide whether they liked it there. At one stage, he suggested that Slawa should fly directly to London and meet him at the boat! Slawa did not share Karl's enthusiasm and would not be rushed into such a critical decision. She said, "Let's wait till we are together again and discuss the matter properly. We should not spend money we don't have to buy passages and then perhaps decide to do something else." But after hearing about the horrors of Kristallnacht (9–10 November), Karl was so worried about her delayed departure that everything else faded into insignificance. [...]

### Formalities, removalists and trunks

As a prospective *émigré*, Slawa was obliged to complete many formalities before leaving. She could only take a small amount of money out of the country and all government charges – including income tax, inheritance tax, building loans, rental, welfare payments and departure taxes – had to be settled. Among other things, she had to declare the earnings from the foldable umbrella in order to get a tax clearance prior to departure. [...]

There was much for Slawa to organise. She and Rella methodically sorted the contents of the flat to prepare the furniture, sculptures and paintings, books, linen, china and many other personal items for the removalists. Only hand luggage could be taken on the journey to Switzerland, but if Rella married Marcel they thought that maybe she could take everything else with her to Paris. Nothing could be done about the sculptures and drawings Karl had left in the studio he shared with Arthur Fleischmann. [...]

[...] the flat had to be entirely cleared by 3 pm on Friday 18 November 1938. Any items left in the house would be sold. All telephone and other household bills also had to be settled by this date. On Thursday, 17 November an official would take over the flat, but in the end the *Gauleiter* gave Slawa a few extra days grace.

Finally it was all organised. The removalist, Mr Dworzczak, took the crates away for storage pending further instructions regarding their destination. Slawa wondered if she would ever see their contents again. [...]

Slawa and Rella bought two steel-reinforced "five-handle" trunks, one for each of them [...]. Many Jewish families leaving Vienna bought these trunks. About one-and-a-half metres

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<sup>46</sup> Meant are probably the Royal Mail Lines, a British shipping company.

<sup>47</sup> Island state in the Caribbean.

<sup>48</sup> Capital of Cuba.

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long and one metre in height and depth, they were substantially larger and sturdier than a normal trunk. The trunk was packed full of personal items [...]. Two further leather cases were filled with more immediate items, many needed for the baby, including two down doonas<sup>49</sup>, plus other bedding, nappies and clothing.

Slawa [...] packed her dried and framed wedding bouquet and, from the lintel<sup>50</sup> of the living room door, unscrewed a small white *mezuzah* (a small case containing Jewish texts)<sup>51</sup>, which she put in her handbag for luck.

At 9.30 pm on 6 December, Rella came to the *Westbahnhof* (West Railway Station) to see us off. It was the beginning of a journey that would change our lives forever. [...]

### Reunion in Switzerland

Travelling at night, Slawa could remain relatively undisturbed in the sleeper and she hoped that I would sleep through the journey. The conductor came by to check the tickets and remarked, “What a fine Hitler boy you have, Madam!” Although confident of her papers, she was very relieved when the passport control at the border went without a hitch, and in the early morning of 7 December, as we travelled the final stretch of the journey to Zürich, she could finally relax a little.

The train pulled slowly into the platform at Zürich *Hauptbahnhof* (Main Railway Station) and Slawa glimpsed Karl, in his big grey overcoat, anxiously pacing up and down as he always did when he was nervous. He was overjoyed to see us, the last weeks having been particularly trying. He never understood why it took Slawa so long to leave Vienna! But in the warmth of their reunion, and in his delight in us being together again, they did not talk about these things. Our journey had not yet ended and soon the luggage was again loaded onto a train. This time our destination was Zug, where the Hotel [Zum] Hirschen became our home for the next few months. [...]

### Life was awkward and uncomfortable

After leaving our Enzingergasse apartment in Vienna, Slawa stopped writing in the Baby Diary. There was no longer any regularity in our lives and all her efforts were focused on my care and comfort. If she had kept up the diary, she would have noted that I arrived in Switzerland with a cold, and that life in a hotel/lodging house was awkward and uncomfortable. It was already winter, the hotel was bitterly cold and she was very glad she had brought so much warm clothing

<sup>49</sup> Australian slang for a quilt or blanket.

<sup>50</sup> A decorative architectural element.

<sup>51</sup> These small cases are attached to the right side of the door frames of Jewish apartments and houses and are meant to protect the inhabitants. The texts contained in the cases are part of the *Schma Israel*, which forms part of the daily Jewish prayers.

and bedding from Vienna. Mrs Itten, the owner of the hotel, whose baby was only two weeks younger than me, kindly allowed Slawa to use the kitchen to warm up my meals. [...]

Slawa's oils and brushes remained untouched, as she had no inclination to draw or paint, but Karl was always drawing. Often he picked up an odd piece of paper and quickly sketched me. Occasionally he drew sketches for sculptures that he hoped to make some day. He managed to get some clay and in spite of our cramped living conditions modelled a portrait of me. When it was finished, he hollowed it out and had it fired at the local brickworks. [...]

### What remained of the umbrella patents

In her remaining time in Vienna, Rella dealt with the furniture and works of art stored at the removalist's, and followed up all the business matters concerning the umbrella, which, after Slawa's departure from Austria, took a not totally unexpected turn.

Slawa had written to Brüder Wüster<sup>52</sup>, instructing them to forward any income from the umbrella sales to Switzerland. They acknowledged receipt of this letter on 2 January 1939, but on 13 January another letter arrived offering her 1,000 Reichsmark for all her rights to the umbrella patents in Austria, England, France, Poland and Italy.

She had no option but to agree to their offer as otherwise they would find another way to assume the rights. [...]

In line with Slawa's instructions, Brüder Wüster handed the money for the umbrella sale over to Rella who needed every last Reichsmark to arrange the transport of the Duldig belongings to France. The little brown umbrella that Slawa brought with her from Vienna, together with a pile of documents and letters were all that remained of this episode in her life. [...]

### Furniture in huge crates

After they married, Rella and Marcel spent a few days in Semmering<sup>53</sup> before Marcel returned to Paris. Rella finally left Vienna on 17 February 1939 and telegraphed her safe arrival in Paris. [...] In April, Camilla Eisler informed Rella that Mr Dworzczak, the removalist, had confirmed that our consignment had left Vienna for Paris. But when the consignment arrived, the authorities would not allow Rella to take possession of the goods. Apparently she had failed to verify her change of address at the French Consulate in Vienna.

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<sup>52</sup> In the meantime the Austrian umbrella manufacturer *Basch und Braun*, with whom Slawa had previously made an agreement, had authorised the Austrian firm *Brüder Wüster* to manufacture the foldable umbrella under licence.

<sup>53</sup> Climatic spa town and ski resort in southern Lower Austria.

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[...] Rella and Marcel were also faced with substantial storage costs while this was sorted out. Marcel had to walk to work, as there was not enough money for the metro. Fortunately he was able to arrange for the boxes to be moved to the station where he worked, and there the foreman agreed to store everything free of charge till the required documentation arrived. Meanwhile in Vienna, Camilla Eisler came to the rescue and forwarded the paperwork so that Rella was finally able to take legal possession of the consignment. But her problems did not end there.

The huge crates contained all the contents of the Enzingergasse apartment – the furniture from the bedroom, dining room and sitting room, linen, crockery and other household goods, as well as boxes full of sculptures and other works of art. In order to store everything the Laisnés had to rent extra space in the cellars below their apartment house [...]. Slawa wrote thanking them for all their effort and trouble, assuring them she would repay all their outstanding costs as soon as possible. [...]

### Spread out in every direction of the wind

The dilemma concerning our next destination continued. Mr Speck extended Karl's visa, but we would have to leave Switzerland before the visa expired. He was still keen to go to Bolivia and had previously organised an entry permit, but Slawa persuaded him not to buy passages until all other available options had been considered.

Slawa would dearly have liked to join Rella in Paris, but Rella's flat was much too small for two families and other housing was very difficult to find in Paris. [...]

Karl considered going to Przemysl to join Ignaz, Fanny and Adela. They had been in Poland since the end of August 1938 and had maintained a constant stream of postcards and letters to Karl. Slawa exchanged letters and postcards with her father in Lwow. Her mother never wrote, as her eyes were bad. It was another worry.

The letters from Ignaz and Adela kept up Karl's spirits. [...] In January 1939, he [Ignaz] successfully applied for a visa to America. Adela said that she did not want to hold him back, but he would not leave his ageing mother alone in Poland.

[...]

Leo and Steffi had arrived safely in Antwerp. But their container, which was sent ahead from Vienna, had disappeared, and they were left only with their hand luggage. [...]

After the *Anschluss*, Ati, then aged sixteen, had gone to Belgium to continue his studies. His sister, Ina, with her husband Hendrik Gutwirth, was well settled in Singapore. [...]

Karl received a letter from Ina. She had persuaded her parents and brother to join her in Singapore and suggested that Karl should come too.

**It is no longer possible to obtain direct entry into Singapore, so you have to book a passage on an Italian (Lloyd Triestino<sup>54</sup>) line to Shanghai<sup>55</sup> and get off en route in Singapore. This is permissible as you can show the authorities you have a through passage to Shanghai and intend to get the next ship that normally passes through in fourteen days time. If you use the fourteen days to find employment, then you can stay in Singapore.**

After his recent experiences, however, Karl would not go without us. In the meantime, Karl organised a British visa for Palestine<sup>56</sup>, valid from 16 December 1938 to 30 April 1939, ostensibly to visit relatives. Ignaz encouraged this solution. On our behalf he contacted a cousin, Kuno Trau, who was already living in Jerusalem. Kuno wrote immediately to Karl and even included a map of the city. Slawa's Uncle Herman, the brother of her mother, was also in Palestine. To Slawa's European sensibilities, Palestine seemed a much better option than either Bolivia or Singapore. [...]

### Switzerland was just an interlude

Then on 3 January 1939, Karl received a telegram from Ina, "WORK AVAILABLE SINGAPORE LETTER FOLLOWS." Her letter said that work was available for press photographers and she added, "You should all come. Two can live as well as one and a baby needs little". She advised Karl to learn as much English as possible, to read up on photography and to bring a good camera. She urged, "Come quickly as the job cannot remain open endlessly".

Suddenly the whole idea of going to Singapore became an attractive option in Karl's mind. He said, "We will be near my brother and his family". Leo had written that they expected to arrive in Singapore at the beginning of May. [...] The eternal optimist, Karl relished the opportunity to explore new horizons and thought that this exotic Oriental destination would surely open up all kinds of exciting opportunities.

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<sup>54</sup> Shipping company with its head offices in Trieste, Italy. In March 2006 the company's name was changed to *Italia Marittima*.

<sup>55</sup> Large city on the coast of East China. Between 1937 and 1945, during the course of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Japan occupied large areas of China, including Shanghai. As Japan imposed no visa requirements, Shanghai was one of the last possible places of refuge for over 20,000 Austrian and German Jews fleeing from the Nazi regime.

<sup>56</sup> From the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I until the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 the territory of present-day Israel and Jordan (among others) was administrated by Great Britain as mandated territory of the League of Nations.

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By nature more cautious and pragmatic, Slawa was much less enthusiastic. The remoteness of the Far East frightened her and, more importantly, she would leave all her immediate family – her parents, Rella, as well as Marek and his family – behind in Europe. She also realised that if things did not work out in Singapore, we might end up in Shanghai, a prospect she did not relish at all. Nevertheless she wrote to Ina enquiring about the matter of most concern to her – the health and welfare of her child.

Ina replied in detail. She said, “Singapore is the healthiest of the tropical cities and as Eva is so young, it will be easy for her to acclimatise ... You need not worry about the trip as until April the weather is fine.” Karl had asked if there was a contract to confirm the job, but she answered, “Things are not done this way here”. She said that “Karl can expect a wage of 250 Singapore dollars<sup>57</sup>, which is enough to support a family”. By way of background, Ina wrote: “There are approximately four thousand Europeans living in Singapore”.

In spite of Ina’s encouragement, Slawa was not easily convinced that our future lay in this remote tropical island. But with war in Europe imminent, she finally agreed that it would be best to get as far away as possible from the threatened conflict. The British Consulate granted a transit visa for the Straits Settlements<sup>58</sup> on 13 March. Karl went to Berne<sup>59</sup> to finalise the necessary documentation and to Zürich to buy the passages. Ina advised immunisation against smallpox<sup>60</sup>, and for total protection we also had injections against typhoid<sup>61</sup> and cholera<sup>62</sup>, while the doctor certified our good health.

[...]

It remained for Slawa to prepare for the journey. Ina said, “[L]eave all your winter clothes behind”. But as there was little enough anyway, Slawa took everything along. In the end, two suitcases and the “five-handle trunk” were packed full of personal effects. Our passage was booked on the Lloyd Triestino ship *Victoria*<sup>63</sup>, which embarked from Genoa<sup>64</sup> on 27 April 1939. A day earlier, we took the train from Zug to Genoa – a last long rail journey on European soil – via Chiaso<sup>65</sup>, Milan<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Currency of Singapore.

<sup>58</sup> The Straits Settlements were the British colonies in Southeast Asia alongside the Strait of Malacca, a strait of great strategic importance, which existed until 1946. Singapore was part of the Straits Settlements.

<sup>59</sup> Federal capital of Switzerland.

<sup>60</sup> An infectious disease that has now been eradicated.

<sup>61</sup> Typhoid fever, bacterial infectious disease with fever and stomachache, which can be lethal if untreated.

<sup>62</sup> Bacterial infectious disease of the small intestine, mostly caused by contaminated water or food.

<sup>63</sup> From 1940 the “Victoria” served as troopship for Italy. It sunk in 1942 due to a British airstrike.

<sup>64</sup> Harbour city in northern Italy; one of the key port cities from which large numbers of liners carrying refugees set sail.

<sup>65</sup> Swiss municipality located on the Swiss-Italian border.

<sup>66</sup> Large city in northern Italy.

and Voghera<sup>67</sup>. In April 1939, Slawa wrote her only Swiss entry in the Baby Book diary: “Switzerland was just an interlude”.

Rella came from Paris to Genoa to see us off. The farewell from Rella in Vienna had been sad, but in Genoa it was much worse as we were heading to the other side of the world. With the threat of war in Europe increasing day by day, the sisters had no idea when they would see each other again. [...]

### Totally unprepared for Singapore

We arrived in Singapore on 6 May 1939, and, just in case my parents could not support themselves, they were immediately obliged to obtain visas for the Republic of China. Ina and her husband Hendrik met us and we stayed with them for a few days. From 15 to 22 May we stayed in Hotel Bellevue, before moving to lodgings owned by the Maletzke family [...]. This house was a neglected tenement in a street of neglected tenements. My parents were totally unprepared for the conditions that they encountered in Singapore. People cooked, ate, washed and urinated in the street. Laundry hung from poles out of the windows. There was no sewerage and there was virtually no privacy. It was hot and humid, and Karl and Slawa walked around in a constant sweat. We all suffered from heat rash, which they said would disappear once we became acclimatised. Slawa doubted if she would ever become acclimatised. She worried about the dirty conditions, and after contracting a bout of tropical fever asked Ina to look after me till we found somewhere better to live. Of even more concern was the threat of having to move on to Shanghai as the press photographer’s job was no longer available.

[...] Leo, his wife Steffi and young Ati also arrived in Singapore. Slawa racked her brain for ways to earn a living [...].

### First steps

Then my parents got their first break. They found an apartment [...] which had enough space for a small art school. An advertisement in the *Malay Tribune*<sup>68</sup> brought an immediate response and, more quickly than they could have imagined, the first students enrolled. Students came from every walk of life and from various ethnic backgrounds. At the local tennis club, Karl met Rudolfo Nolli<sup>69</sup>, an Italian sculptor who was making a good living in Singapore. Rudolfo said that Karl could work in his studio [...].

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<sup>67</sup> Small Italian town between Milan and Genoa.

<sup>68</sup> An English newspaper published in Singapore at that time.

<sup>69</sup> Cavaliere Rudolfo Nolli (1888–1963) was an Italian sculptor and architect.

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Karl's first commission in Singapore came from Tunku Abu Bakar, the Sultan of Johor<sup>70</sup>. The Sultan needed a cenotaph<sup>71</sup> for his daughter who had died a few months earlier. The Muslim religion dictated that the cenotaph had to be non-figurative. Huge granite boulders roped to rollers were moved by six workmen into a ramshackle building with a thatched roof that my father rented for the work.

Gradually everybody became accustomed to the tropical climate and the sudden storms that erupted, sometimes four times a day. Accompanied by warm drenching rain, these downpours meant that Slawa was never without her umbrella. The little brown "Flirt" was really handy and nobody in Singapore had ever seen anything like it. [...]

The crowded streets and markets of Singapore teemed with humanity and vehicular traffic of every possible kind. Rickshaw boys ran between the bullock carts and hundreds of cyclists negotiated their way through the crowds. In more recent times the motor vehicle had added to the chaos, but it was still principally the preserve of the more wealthy Europeans and of Government officials. A nightmare of noise and confusion often resulted in accidents. The lack of even basic hygiene meant that disease was rife, and in the neighbourhood of Boat Quay and the so-called Singapore River<sup>72</sup>, the stench of the putrid water was overwhelming.

I took my first steps in Ina's house and clomped around in Chinese wooden clogs. Slawa did her best to protect me from disease, forbade me from picking anything up from the ground and entrenched a careful ritual of hand-washing before eating. Water was boiled and so were vegetables, and fruit was either peeled or cooked.

Though the Chinese predominated, the citizens of Singapore came from many ethnic and racial origins. Indians, Malays, Arabs and many other groups walked the crowded streets. Karl took every opportunity to sketch and draw – a coolie sitting on the roadside or a rickshaw boy running by with his European passenger. He admired the tall Indian women who balanced bowls on their heads and they inspired both drawings and sculptures. In Europe, Karl had principally carved in stone; in Singapore, he mainly worked in clay as this material was more readily available and also suited the moist climate.

[...]

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<sup>70</sup> Tunku Abu Bakar (1898–1956) was the son of Ibrahim (1873–1959), the then Sultan of the Sultanate of Johor, the southernmost federal state of Malaysia.

<sup>71</sup> A sepulchral monument for a person who is buried elsewhere.

<sup>72</sup> Boat Quay is situated along the south bank of Singapore River and played an important role for Singapore's commerce, but its inhabitants had to live under miserable conditions.

Ever since Sir Stamford Raffles<sup>73</sup> founded the Straits Settlements in 1819, British governance and customs had been the norm. British bureaucracy dictated a 9 am to 5 pm working day, even though the climate was more suited to an afternoon siesta as was the custom in southern Europe. The public service was run by Westerners, and every European family had at least one Asian servant. Karl and Slawa quickly learned to speak English, and, with her knowledge of Greek and Latin, Slawa was soon able to read broadly and write fluently in this language. Her trustworthy German-English dictionary was in constant use.

In Noll's studio, Karl finished his first commissioned portrait in Singapore [...]. The family liked the work, recommended Karl to their friends and gave him a list of other European families to approach for commissions. [...]

### Further pieces of good fortune

In Singapore, my parents had a further piece of good fortune when Dr Chee Peck Lian, a local physician, introduced Karl and Slawa to the secretary of the multi-millionaire businessman Aw Boon Haw<sup>74</sup>. The latter, whose name means “gentle and cultured tiger”, was affectionately known locally as “The Tiger Balm King”. He was the head of the family firm that invented and manufactured the ointment known as Tiger Balm, a universally used “cure-all” for such ailments as headaches, stomach aches, coughs, colds, rheumatism and insect bites. Originally from Fujian Province in China, Aw Boon Haw and his brother Aw Boon Par<sup>75</sup> (Gentle Leopard) set up a factory in Singapore in 1926 and moved their families there in the same year. Tiger Balm was a household name in Asia and the Aw family was among the richest in South East Asia. They were known for their generosity and philanthropy, and, because they owned several publishing houses, the family was a powerful voice for the Chinese people in Singapore.

Mr Aw's secretary offered to rent us the top floor of his house at 3 St Thomas Walk. As a rule, Westerners would not share a house with a Chinese family, but this was of no concern to my parents. Our new home allowed much more space for art classes and the wide return balcony was an ideal exhibition space. I made friends with the little Chinese children living below us and babbled away in Chinese.

[...]

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<sup>73</sup> Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781–1826), governor in British East India and founder of Singapore in 1819.

<sup>74</sup> Sino-Burmese businessman (1882–1954).

<sup>75</sup> Sino-Burmese businessman (1888–1944).

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From photographs Slawa painted a portrait of King George VI<sup>76</sup>. My cousin Ati told me that the portrait was later hung in Parliament House. Her reputation established, Slawa contacted Mr Ralph Bridges, Superintendent of the Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall in the Municipal Office, offering to restore paintings in the municipal art collection. [...]

Mr Bridges commissioned the restoration of the portrait of Sir Charles Mitchell<sup>77</sup>. With the money Slawa earned, my parents purchased a few pieces of furniture for our apartment. Mr Bridges would have liked Slawa to restore more paintings, however as it turned out this never eventuated.

While my mother was busy, a Chinese *amah*<sup>78</sup> looked after me. She was a kind, middle-aged woman, but she spoke only Chinese, with the consequence that I spoke more and more Chinese and often my parents did not know what I was talking about.

Over the period 1–3 August 1940, my parents mounted an exhibition at 3 St Thomas Walk [...].

Public response to Karl's exhibition was remarkable. The Belgian Consul bought a sculpture, and fifteen other drawings and sculptures were sold to private patrons. [...]

Although much of Karl's patronage in Singapore came from the European community, my parents also made friends among the local Chinese community. [...] Chinese language newspapers published articles about Karl and Slawa and their escape from Austria. [...]

### Enemy aliens

On 22 July 1940, my parents received a letter from The Jewish Refugee Relief Committee:

**It is practically certain that within three weeks all German, Austrian and Italian Jewish refugees, including women and children, will be interned and will be sent out of the country, and they are therefore advised to make arrangements accordingly. [...]**

According to parole restrictions first imposed on all German and Austrian refugees in December 1939 we were not allowed to travel from the Settlement, change address, be absent from the home address for more than twenty-four hours, possess arms or cameras, and approach any prohibited area, naval or military base without notifying the Registrar of Aliens to obtain special permission. [...]

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<sup>76</sup> George VI (1895–1952) was King of the United Kingdom from 1936 until his death. He is the father of Queen Elizabeth II.

<sup>77</sup> Sir Charles Bullen Hugh Mitchell (1836–1899) was the British Governor of the Straits Settlements in Singapore from 1894 until his death.

<sup>78</sup> A maid and nanny.

[...] With the threat of a German invasion imminent, and the possible infiltration of Nazi agents and sympathisers into the British Government and Armed Forces, Prime Minister Winston Churchill<sup>79</sup> acted decisively and unilaterally against all refugees and aliens of German and Austrian nationality then living in Britain. They were all classified and many were immediately rounded up and interned.

As Singapore was a strategic fortress and a very important British naval base, it soon followed that the Straits Settlement authorities took similar steps to prevent foreign nationals in Singapore becoming security risks. The Singapore Jewish community lobbied on behalf of the Jewish refugees, explaining that they were in fact “friendly” aliens and genuine refugees from Nazi Germany. However, this was to no avail. [...]

### Bronze sculptures

At the same time as my parents received the letter from The Jewish Refugee Relief Committee, Aw Boon Haw’s secretary arranged an audience with Mr Aw Boon Haw at the Aw Par villa. Mr Aw was impressed by photos of Karl’s work and asked how long it would take to make bronze life-size figures of himself and of his [...] brother Aw Boon Par. Karl explained that the clay modelling and casting into plaster could be completed quickly, but that the bronze casting would take longer. On 31 July, Mr Aw’s secretary drew up a contract for the commission of “two hollow six-foot lifesize bronze statues of Mr Aw Boon Haw and another two similar seated statues of Mr Aw Boon Par”. [...]

Mr Aw rose between 4 and 5 am each day and allocated Karl only one hour a day for the sittings, between 7 and 8 am. While working on Aw Boon Haw’s head, Karl paid special attention to the ears. Chinese culture places particular significance on the shape of the ear and Aw Boon Haw’s distinctive long earlobes denoted a man of exceptional wisdom. [...]

Our impending departure from Singapore made Karl work even more quickly than usual, and in two weeks both statues had been modelled in clay. With the help of local workmen, they were then cast into plaster. By the end of the third week the two plaster figures of the Aw brothers were ready to be delivered to the bronze foundry [...].

The authorities did not finalise arrangements for our departure as quickly as at first thought, but even so, Karl never saw the completed bronze sculptures before he left and it was many years later before he knew what had happened to the figures.

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<sup>79</sup> Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill (1874–1965), Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 until 1945 and from 1951 until 1955.

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In 1957 Godfrey and Myra Cohen invited our family to see slides of their recent world trip. One of the slides was of the Tiger Balm Gardens in Hong Kong<sup>80</sup>. My mother asked them to show the slide again as she had spotted something in the top right corner of the photo. Sure enough this turned out to be the finished bronze statue of Aw Boon Haw which was now a part of the Tiger Balm Gardens. My parents were thrilled that the sculpture had survived.

In 1968 Karl and Slawa visited Hong Kong, met Sally Aw, the daughter of Aw Boon Haw<sup>81</sup> and saw the finished bronze sculpture for the first time. [...]

### Proceed to internment

[...] on 3 September, my parents received final notification: “You will be removed from the colony in two weeks”.

[...]

Only a limited amount of luggage was allowed, therefore Karl’s large sculptures and all the furniture had to be left behind. But Karl was able to take all his drawings and photographs as well as a few smaller sculptures [...]. Two sculptures by Slawa, a small head of a woman with a topknot and a standing female figure, also came along.

[...]

Slawa had no idea where we would end up, but thought that the warm winter clothing, as well as the doonas and other items brought from Europe, might prove useful.

[...]

The final instructions arrived on 11 September 1940:

**... to attend at the Sikh Barracks<sup>82</sup>, Pearls Hill (off New Bridge Road), at 8 am on 18.9.40 ready to proceed to internment ... Bring only hand luggage with you. Your heavy baggage will be brought to the Sikh Police Barracks between 9 am and 4 pm on 15.9.40 by you personally for inspection. A reasonable amount of personal baggage only will be allowed, and cases of furniture, crockery and so on, will not be permitted.**

<sup>80</sup> The Aw family built three Tiger Balm Gardens. These public gardens are located in Hong Kong, Singapore and in the Fujian Province in China.

<sup>81</sup> Sally Aw Sian (born 1926) is the adopted daughter of Aw Boon Haw.

<sup>82</sup> Built in 1931 to accommodate the Sikh contingent of the Straits Settlements Police. Sikhs are the followers of Sikhism, a monotheistic religion that originated in India and Pakistan during the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Fate sees it differently**

A handwritten note from Karl Duldig, 4 September 1940

*In deep sadness we feel ourselves displaced far away from lands where we spent so many years. Set apart and alone we are like two children who have suddenly been transplanted to a lonely island. We were never trained to deal with this. For us everything was looked after by our parents.*

*In this greatest danger we took up the fight and I must say it was not an easy fight.*

*Now that certain decisions mean that our fate is once again threatened, I no longer have concerns about the future. We have withstood the test. In spite of everything we have remained loyal to our ideals. We look back on the work of almost 16 months with the ideals at this time and we can be satisfied with what we have achieved. We built a home and a future.*

*But nevertheless fate sees it differently.*

*We have to start again from the beginning.*

*This fight will keep us young.*

*Sometimes I think that it is hard to give up what we have built.*

*One has to succumb to fate.*

*Think about the dearest who far away have undergone and suffered so much.*

*Will we ever see them again? They gave up everything for us. Still ungrateful we thank them. Neither time or deeds rob us of our feelings.*

*So man has to suffer new battles and leave himself to God. The battles and suffering remind him of God and that which he owes to his parents.*

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[...] The “five-handle trunk” was once again packed full. [...]

### The day when we lost our freedom

On 17 September 1940 we bade a sad goodbye to the Chinese family at 3 St Thomas Walk. John Eber [a student of Karl] drove us to the barracks and for the first time we met all our fellow internees. About sixty family groups were assembled, many with children of my age and even younger, and some with aged grandparents. There were six Duldigs in all, as Leo, Steffi and Ati were also included in the group. Ina and Hendrik could remain in Singapore, as they held Belgian passports.

Most of the 295 “enemy alien” internees were Jewish refugees from Nazi oppression, and, like us, they had only been in the Straits Settlements for a short time. [...]

Although many of the internees were strangers to us, one lady, Minna Huppert, was a friend of Karl’s from his schooldays in Vienna. She and her husband, Eugen, had a toddler son, George, who was only a few months older than me. [...]

After their assembly at the Sikh Barracks Slawa, Eva and Karl and all other internees were brought to St. John’s Island<sup>83</sup> from where they were deported to Australia.

### Transport W1 to Australia

The launches motored from the small wharf at St John’s Island into the morning mist hanging low over the water. Soon the outline of a huge grey ship appeared. It was the *Queen Mary*<sup>84</sup>, the largest ship afloat, but its name has been painted over and now read *Transport W1*.

The ship had delivered a contingent of British troops to assist the garrison of Singapore and had remained in dry dock for a few weeks for the refitting of armaments. It had been assigned to transport us to Australia. [...]

[...] it would then transport Australian soldiers back to the theatres of war in Europe. The crew, officers of the Gordon Highlander regiment<sup>85</sup>, were surprised when “the dangerous enemy aliens” in their charge turned out to be genuine refugees, and included old people,

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<sup>83</sup> Small island south of Singapore mainland mainly used as quarantine centre for immigrants.

<sup>84</sup> The RMS (Royal Mail Ship) “Queen Mary”, an ocean liner in the service of the British shipping company Cunard Line, was converted into a troopship during World War II.

<sup>85</sup> An infantry regiment of the British Army from 1881 until 1994.

### **The loss of freedom**

Diary entry of Karl which he wrote in around 1941/1942 recalling the first day of the internment

*One incident remains indelibly in my mind and made a deep impression on me. It is so deep it is almost as if it has a form. By “form” I mean the experience is so strong that it becomes figurative. It is very difficult to explain this experience, the experience of the loss of freedom. This loss of freedom became clear to me when, after our assembly on St John’s Island, we were marched one behind the other to fetch something for the night from our luggage. [...]*

*That was the first day of my imprisonment. I visited my wife and child who was with other women at another [...] location [...] on this beautiful small island [...]. In the evening light we went for a walk with the child and for a moment enjoyed the beautiful panorama. But soon I and the others had to leave the women and children and go back to the camp of the men.*

*The day of departure came, the day of the END ... as we gathered below I see before my eyes the beautiful sight of the sea and Singapore, Singapore which in such a short time left the deepest impressions on me.*

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women and children. At a steady 28 knots<sup>86</sup> the liner could outrun most other ships,<sup>87</sup> so it sailed unescorted, and, were it not for regular testing of the newly installed cannons, it could almost have been a holiday cruise.

The “second class” menu on 20 September 1940 included:

**... grape fruit cocktail, followed by soup, then supreme of halibut, cardinal, or sauté of duckling with green peas or roast sirloin of beef, York fritters, French beans, boiled and roast potatoes and for the dessert pears, Belle Hélène and French pastry. Coffee to follow.**

Although the ship had been converted to carry troops, our cabin, 2A on “C” deck, was small but comfortable. Ati went up on deck to witness the testing of the cannon and was given cotton wool for his ears. In order to avoid confrontation with torpedoes, enemy ships, submarines or aircraft, the captain steered a zigzag course.

After eight days, the ship approached land and on 25 September entered Sydney<sup>88</sup> Harbour. Everybody was on deck as the ship sailed through Sydney Heads<sup>89</sup> and, with the aid of a pilot boat, slowly negotiated the channel past the pretty headlands towards the centre of the city. A flotilla of small sailing boats and motor boats followed in our wake, as it was not often that such a large liner entered Sydney Harbour. The famous Harbour Bridge<sup>90</sup> lay ahead and it was anticipated that the ship would moor at one of the nearby wharves. To everybody’s surprise, it kept moving towards the bridge. Then the engines were cut and the anchor cast, as apparently the tide was still too high for the huge liner to sail under the bridge to its designated protected berth on the other side. At low tide, it passed underneath with only two metres to spare between the bridge trusses and the top of the ship’s three funnels. We had one more night on board, with the exciting prospect of disembarkation in Sydney the next day. [...]

### Luxury internees

With a mixture of apprehension and excitement, the internees rose on 26 September. More than one hundred soldiers, naval officers, policemen and women supervised the disembarkation, which had been preceded by a detailed security check. Fingerprints were taken and personal details – such as age, profession, last employment, religion and nationality – were recorded.

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<sup>86</sup> One knot equals 1.852 km/h.

<sup>87</sup> From 1938 until 1952 the RMS “Queen Mary” was recognised as the fastest passenger liner crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

<sup>88</sup> The largest city in Australia, situated in southeastern Australia, and capital of the Australian state of New South Wales.

<sup>89</sup> The headlands forming the entrance of Sydney Harbour.

<sup>90</sup> Sydney Harbour Bridge, built in 1932, is the main connection between the north and south coast of Sydney, leading across Sydney Harbour. Because of its design it is nicknamed “The Coathanger”.

When the passengers finally disembarked, the crew assembled on deck to see us off. Hopes of seeing more of Sydney, however, were quickly dashed as we were shepherded to another narrow gangway that led to a green and yellow ferry named *Barrenjoey*<sup>91</sup>. [...]

The next day, pictures of our group appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>92</sup> and our arrival was described as follows:

**“Luxury” internees have disembarked in Sydney on their way to a country internment camp ... The internees are Germans, Eurasians and Italians. They will be kept in Australia for the duration ... Police and naval launches supervised the transfer of the internees from the liner to a ferry boat in mid-harbour.**

Apart from remarking on “the well-dressed internees”, the journalist saw the European stickers on our luggage as a reflection of well-to-do travellers rather than signifying the harried journeys that most of the families had already endured after leaving their homelands. [...]

### **Surrounded by police, lined by soldiers and ringed by troops**

The ferry was surrounded by police launches, but it was unlikely that anybody would jump ship as Sydney Harbour was well known for its man-eating sharks. We disembarked near a railway siding and were herded onto a platform lined by soldiers. Other soldiers loaded the baggage into the goods carriage of a waiting train and soon we were also ushered on board. Each carriage had a number of armed guards and the barred windows could only be opened a small distance.

The train passed through vast spaces broken only by an occasional farmhouse and open fields sparsely dotted with sheep or cattle. Eventually the train stopped at Albury<sup>93</sup>, where a light meal was provided before we changed trains till the next stop, where we were all transferred into covered army trucks. General staff officers supervised this procedure and, as at previous stops, the station was ringed by troops. About twenty people, including two guards, crowded into each truck. The hard, narrow wooden planks were very uncomfortable, especially for the older folk who were visibly tired from the long journey.

The trucks travelled many miles over rough and dusty roads till eventually they entered a large compound entirely surrounded by high barbed wire fences. This was Internment Camp No. 3, which was to become our new home. [...]

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<sup>91</sup> Named after a small Sydney peninsula of the same name.

<sup>92</sup> The oldest newspaper in Australia, founded in 1831 and still published today.

<sup>93</sup> City in southeastern Australia.

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## Tatura Internment Camp – shock of the arrival

Ours was the third of the purpose-built internment camps which had been newly constructed by the Australian Government to confine prisoners of war, enemy aliens and others whose nationality or activities made them a possible threat to the security of the country. It was located in central Victoria<sup>94</sup>, halfway between Rushworth and Tatura<sup>95</sup> near the western shores of the vast water storage, the Waranga Basin<sup>96</sup>.

It took everybody a couple of days to recover from the shock of the arrival. Karl and Slawa slept on straw-filled palliasses<sup>97</sup> which took up nearly all the space in a tiny room, one of twelve identical rooms in a galvanised iron-clad barracks. There were eight similar barracks in our compound – “D” – separated from three other identical compounds by high barbed wire fences. Armed soldiers manned watchtowers equipped with searchlights at each corner of the Camp and powerful lights scanned the perimeter at night. Armed soldiers also patrolled the narrow corridors between the four compounds.

The internees from Singapore were the first to be housed in the Camp. Facilities were utterly primitive and did not cater for families that included babies and the elderly. The worst of the winter was over, but, after living in the tropics, nobody was prepared for the brisk cold winds during the day and the still colder nights. Over and above our allocation of blankets, Karl’s heavy winter overcoat was thrown on the bed at night to provide extra warmth. The largest of the feather doonas brought from Europe was used by my parents, and the smaller ones covered me [...]. Slawa was glad that she had kept all the winter clothes last used in Switzerland, eighteen months earlier, and we were quickly provided with extra warm clothing for both children and adults. From wool provided by aid agencies, Slawa started to knit me a navy blue cardigan.

The communal facilities at the Camp included a large kitchen, a mess hut and a laundry, as well as separate washing and ablution blocks for men and women. There was also an area set aside as a makeshift hospital, with a fully qualified nursing sister in charge. The land, which had been compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth<sup>98</sup> from a local farmer, had been almost totally denuded of trees, scrub or grass. It was in stark contrast to the peaceful rural scene on the other side of the perimeter fence, where horses grazed in lush green fields and giant gum trees dotted the landscape. [...]

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<sup>94</sup> Federal state in southeastern Australia.

<sup>95</sup> Two cities in southeastern Australia.

<sup>96</sup> The Waranga Basin embankment project with the construction of the Waranga Dam at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of the largest embankment projects of its time.

<sup>97</sup> Straw mattresses.

<sup>98</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, the full official name for Australia.

### Prisoners of war: here you are and here you will stay

On the first day, an officer addressed the internees in excellent German: “Here you are and here you will stay. For this, you have to thank Hitler and his friends.” There was no doubt that he regarded the refugees as the enemy and that, in effect, we were prisoners of war. [...]

On 29 September, the day after our arrival in Tatura, a document titled “Detained Refugees from the Straits Settlement and Malay States Requesting Release from Internment” was sent to the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon.<sup>99</sup> R.G. Menzies<sup>100</sup>, The Governor General, His Excellency Lord Gowrie<sup>101</sup>, and others.

[...]

Further petitions were sent at regular intervals and petitions were also drafted and forwarded by individual refugees. They all stressed that, as Jews and genuine refugees, the internees were displaced persons and therefore unjustly imprisoned. But, in effect, nobody cared or took any responsibility for our predicament. The Straits Settlements authorities were glad to be rid of the refugees, did not want them to return to Singapore and wanted nothing more to do with them. Ironically they had no objections to our release in Australia; however, the Australians, who had been placed in an invidious position, refused to release anybody on Australian soil. [...]

### To make the best of the situation

In spite of their justified frustration and anger, the internees made the best of the situation. Rosters were drawn up to share the daily chores of Camp life. Women took turns to cook and wash, while the men handled the heavy work around the Camp. Fresh food was plentiful and, with Leo in charge of supplies, deliveries were efficiently organised. Excellent cooks were among the internees and meals were both nourishing and tasty. Most meals started with wholesome soups, and finished with popular Austrian desserts such as *Apfelstrudel* [apple strudel] topped by fresh whipped cream.

Lolo Jacobowitz and Inge Rosenfeld, both trained teachers, organised a Camp kindergarten. There were a number of children around my age, including George, the son of Eugen and Minna Huppert [...].

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<sup>99</sup> Abbreviation for “The Right Honourable” (title for important British officials).

<sup>100</sup> Sir Robert Gordon Menzies (1894–1978) was Prime Minister of Australia twice (1939–1941 and 1949–1966).

<sup>101</sup> Alexander Gore Arkwright Hore-Ruthven, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Gowrie (1872–1955) was British Governor General of Australia from 1936 until 1945.

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I had complete freedom to explore and play within the barbed wire perimeter fence and, with so little space in our hut and nothing to attract me indoors, most of my time was spent outside. Only in the extreme cold of mid-winter or during the red dust storms brought by the north winds in summer did I seek shelter. Occasionally, as a special treat, a local women's group organised a picnic for the women and children to a local beauty spot near the Waranga Basin.

Life for the older children was more complex and difficult. They were sent to school in Melbourne<sup>102</sup> and lived in an orphanage. This was hard on the children, as they could only see their parents during school holidays. [...]

Karl invented all kinds of jobs to relieve his boredom. He missed the lush greenery of tropical Singapore and drew up a landscape plan to beautify the compound. Together with other men he prepared garden beds between the huts, which were planted with flower seeds. Later I picked the flowers and gave them to the guards. More ambitiously Karl set about building a tennis court. A flat area in a corner of the compound was identified. It was hoed, raked and rolled till eventually it was level and relatively even. "Netposts" were installed and a long rope served as the net. Karl had brought three racquets from Singapore and cut one down for me. To his delight, once or twice, I even managed to connect with the ball. He posted a notice in the mess hall: "Founding of the tennis club. Today at 8.15h in the mess hall, all ladies and gentlemen who are interested in tennis are invited."

In November 1940, the internees, many of whom were gifted musicians, organised a revue, *Tatura Melody*, to which the guards were invited. Karl was listed in the programm under an item called "Impressions". His pen and ink minimal line drawings illustrated the ordinary daily activities in the Camp: Karl in his heavy Austrian overcoat worn over pyjamas on a bitterly cold winter's morning; Karl chopping wood; a soldier with a gun; me giving a flower to a soldier and, amusingly, Slawa walking with my potty from our hut to the latrines.

I and my even younger partner, Gerald Seefeld, starred in the second revue, *Laugh and Forget*. Our spirited version of an old German folksong [...], in which we bounced our bottoms against each other, had everybody in stitches. Most of the little children were bilingual and German folksongs were translated into English, but we also learnt English nursery rhymes. Karl kept fit by chopping the wood needed for cooking, hot water and heating. He became expert at handling the axe and from one of the eucalypt firewood blocks carved a fine head. In the field outside the perimeter fence, Karl saw a large eucalyptus branch that had fallen from a massive gum tree.

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<sup>102</sup> Major city in southeastern Australia and capital of the Australian state of Victoria.

The Camp Commandant allowed him to leave the Camp with a guard so that he could work on the log with his axe. A few days later, the life-size figure of a mother and child was brought into the Camp and installed in front of our hut. Everyone was amazed that he had managed to carve such a large sculpture with such primitive tools. [...]

At first, Karl drew on the few pages left in a [...] drawing block brought from Singapore, often using the black Indian ink that he had also used in Singapore. When there was no drawing paper left, he used any scrap of paper that he could lay his hands on. This included envelopes, lined airmail paper and even toilet paper and on these scraps he drew portraits, sketches for sculpture and illustrations of Camp life. [...]

On 7 June 1941, Karl was one of the organisers of a football match. He designed a poster with a figure in football gear about to kick a ball held high above his head. The younger women played netball, but Slawa preferred playing chess. She had played chess since childhood and nobody in the Camp could better her. [...]

### Frustrations of our situation

Everybody was very worried about the family members they had left behind on the other side of the world. [...] here in Tatura, news about the war in Europe was difficult to come by. No radios were allowed and the huts were regularly searched in case somebody had managed to smuggle in a transmitter. I was scared when soldiers carrying guns searched our hut, and I crawled into bed with my mother. Later, the Pacific War escalated and the Camp was blacked out every night, but we were never physically threatened and indeed felt extraordinarily safe in Tatura. [...]

In November 1941, the frustrations of our situation were exacerbated when Leo, Steffi and Ati (who had been transferred to the adjacent compound for single men) were released and allowed to go to Melbourne. Ina had travelled to Canberra<sup>103</sup>, met Arthur Calwell<sup>104</sup> MHR<sup>105</sup>, and through this intervention her parents and brother were immediately released. Karl was very angry and found it incomprehensible that his brother, with an identical background to his own, was released while he remained incarcerated. [...]

### Australia at war

On 7 December 1941, Pearl Harbour was bombed by the Japanese and, soon after, Britain,

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<sup>103</sup> Capital of Australia.

<sup>104</sup> Australian politician (1896–1973), from 1943 until 1945 Minister for Information, from 1945 until 1949 Minister for Immigration in Australia.

<sup>105</sup> Abbreviation for “Member of the House of Representatives”.

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America and Australia declared war on Japan. The threat of a Japanese invasion of Australia became a reality. [...]

[...] Leo and Ati registered for service in the Army Corps, but the family was very worried about Ina and Hendrik, who were still in Singapore. Leo's next letter reported that Ina and Hendrik had left Singapore on one of the last civilian ships to get away before the Japanese invasion,<sup>106</sup> and, after a hair-raising journey, had arrived safely in Melbourne.

On 11 February, I celebrated my fourth birthday. There was a birthday cake with candles and everybody sang "Happy Birthday". Then we ate my favourite sweet, *makagiga* – a kind of sticky walnut and honey lolly, the taste of which has stayed with me till today. Somebody clipped a flower into my hair, but it was pulled off by my small friend George (Huppert) and the party ended in tears.

Four days after my birthday, Singapore, the supposedly impregnable British fortress, fell to the Japanese invaders. [...]

The news of the fall of Singapore changed the mood in the Camp. The internees realised that internment in this remote part of Australia was a blessing in disguise. Men and women, who for many months had not talked to each other, now passed the time of day. There were fewer complaints about the heat, the dust and the flies, the cramped and primitive living quarters and the boredom of everyday life. [...]

### Much-needed manpower

[...] the Australian Army [...] established an Employment Company as part of a Labour Corps to serve on the home front. [...] Provided they [the male internees] could pass the medical examination, they would become soldiers on normal Army pay and, most importantly, would automatically be released from internment. In the case of the Singapore group, the families of any enlisting men – the women, children and the elderly – would also be released into civilian life on humanitarian grounds.

The 2nd AIF<sup>107</sup> 8th Employment Company (AEC) eventually consisted of approximately 900 men, principally refugees and mostly Jewish, drawn from eligible volunteers from the internment camps. It provided a valuable source of much-needed manpower. [...].

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<sup>106</sup> After its victory over the British forces in the Battle of Singapore, in 1942 Japan invaded and occupied Singapore.

<sup>107</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Imperial Force: volunteers serving in the Australian Army during World War II.

Karl and Slawa decided that this opportunity had to be grasped. Karl at thirty-nine was very fit, had good eyesight, hearing and a strong constitution. [...] It was therefore a great disappointment when he failed the test. On enquiry he was informed that this was due to a scoliosis of the spine.

[...] On Slawa's insistence, Karl prepared a new application. This time the accompanying letter outlined his history, emphasised Karl's impressive sporting record and physical fitness and restated his desire to serve the war effort [...].

[...] Two weeks later, Karl was informed that his second application had been successful and he should proceed directly to Melbourne.

On 11 April 1942, I stood with my mother at the Camp gate waving a white handkerchief till the Army truck carrying my beloved Daddy became a mere speck in the cloud of dust surrounding the fast disappearing vehicle. [...]

### The next phase of our lives

Karl was trying to get accomodation for us in Melbourne. [...]

Slawa packed all our things – a much easier task than four years earlier in Vienna. Sometimes Slawa wondered what had happened to all the furniture, art and other items which, the last she heard, were stored in the cellars of Rella's apartment house in Paris. There was no way of knowing, but to her the survival of Rella and her husband was paramount and by comparison the fate of our belongings paled into insignificance. She only hoped that these things did not cause difficulties for Rella in Occupied France<sup>108</sup>.

Slawa repacked the "five-handled trunk" and the suitcases that had been brought from Singapore. [...]

Slawa placed Karl's unfired clay masks and heads done in the Camp between items of soft clothing. [...] Unfortunately there was no way that the large *Mother and Child* figure could be moved. [...] Some time later, my parents learned that the next group of inmates [...] had chopped it up for firewood! [...]

On 14 May 1942, my mother and I left the Camp for Melbourne. Slawa was happy to see the last of the barbed wire compounds and I was happy and excited at the prospect of seeing

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<sup>108</sup> After Germany had invaded and occupied France in 1940, the country was divided into a German occupied zone in the north and into Vichy France in the south, an authoritarian regime in collaboration with Germany.

## Erinnerungen

my Daddy. Karl took leave to meet us at Spencer Street Station<sup>109</sup>. Although many other men in uniform were on the platform, I recognised him immediately and ran to leap into his arms. Karl hailed a taxi, which deposited us at 18 Park Street, St Kilda<sup>110</sup>, and the next phase of our lives began. [...]

After their release from the internment camp Slawa and Karl Duldig found work as art teachers in Melbourne. In addition to teaching they devoted themselves to creating art until the end of their lives.

Eva de Jong-Duldig became a top tennis player, reaching the quarter finals at Wimbledon in the 1960s and becoming a tennis champion in the Netherlands.

Karl's mother Adela, his brother Ignaz and Ignaz's wife Fanny were killed by the Nazis in Przemyśl. Slawa's mother Toni had died early in the war and Slawa's father Nathan, her brother Marek, his wife Erna and their daughter Henryka managed to escape to Russia where they vanished without a trace. Rella and Marcel survived the war in France. The two sisters, Slawa and Rella, only ever saw each other again one more time.

The furniture from the Duldig's Viennese apartment and numerous sculptures of Slawa and Karl Duldig originating from their time in Vienna before World War II survived hidden in the cellar of Rella and Marcel Laisné in Paris. After World War II the original Viennese furniture of Slawa and Karl Duldig was transported to Australia where Slawa and Karl used it in their Melbourne home. Later, the artworks were also moved from Paris to Australia. After the death of Slawa and Karl, Eva de Jong-Duldig opened her parents' home and their artists' studio to the public. "The Duldig Studio museum + sculpture garden" ([www.duldig.org.au](http://www.duldig.org.au)) in Melbourne can still be visited today.

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<sup>109</sup> A major railway station in Melbourne, today Southern Cross railway station.

<sup>110</sup> District of Melbourne.

“Most of the children I knew had grandparents and I often asked why I had none. My mother said that her parents had died because they were old. I had no inkling of the terrible truth and the awful fate of our many relatives was never talked about or revealed to me.”

**Eva de Jong-Duldig**