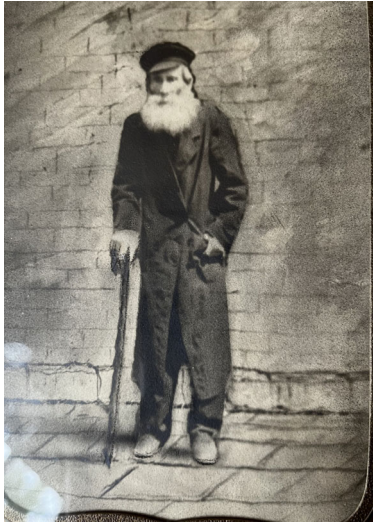


## 0.12 Early postwar years

Kaila's father, Yitzhak was running away from Ausditich to another little town, he and his wife. They didn't have any food; they didn't have anything to eat. Then they took, he ate kropova. It's a green poison ivy. Grandpa had to tear out poison ivy (and cook it). That's what they ate. His wife, taka, got swollen and she died. They couldn't get a piece of bread to eat. They were worse off (than we were.)



Toward the end of the war Yitzhak was able to join daughter Kaila and the others. He had changed. His poor diet had barely kept him alive, and his face was swollen. He moved in with the Ferdmans and was a member of their household until his death.

One snowy night a dozen yeans later Yitzhak was a sickly man and was breathing heavily. His bed hovered close to the brick oven that heated the house. He heard hoof beats. It's Shia, Yitzhak said. His horse has a broken hoof. Shia came in and talked to his father. Then he went to his cousin Rosa's for the night. Manuel was in the front of the house. Kaila put on her coat and walked to the cow shed that was attached to the house and began milking the cow. Then, suddenly the air was filled with silence. Yitzhak's loud breathing had stopped. They both rushed in and found him dead. He was buried the next day as sleet fell on the town. In retrospect it seemed eerie that Shia was drawn to Torchin that miserable wintry day, that he felt compelled to come just so he could sit and talk to his father for a while.

Yitzhak Meister –born 1843; died 1928

There was a brick building. We were hiding some stuff there. When we came to get it everything was gone. But that's beside the point. This woman had a grand daughter living with her (who was) deaf and dumb. She was a beautiful girl. The soldiers came and they wanted to rape her. So the grandma said "What am I going to do? She's a dumb and deaf." And they didn't do it. From pity they didn't do it. She was saved.

Baila, Ester's mother, went to wash laundry at the lake. And another girl was there. She was an only child. (the other girl.) And a shrapnel fell and injured that Baila. She got a piece in her arm. And (the shrapnel) killed the other girl. She fell into the lake. And she (Baila) ran to our house. She didn't go straight to her mother. Maybe her mother wasn't home. She ran to our house. She told us "A girl was killed. A girl was killed." And then they had to take Baila to the hospital and take out that piece of shrapnel.

Daddy (Shlomo,) bought a calf and he slaughtered it (so) we should have meat to eat. So I don't know what happened. The government of the time arrested him and they put him in



chains. And they dragged him away to Lutsk. And mother was left here (in Ilka's house) with the children and the whole family. She went to Lutsk. She went into the trial...I don't know...the government office? She screamed and she cried. And she says "What did he do?" Anyway they looked what the crime was and they let him go free. When (he was released) he didn't have where to go to sleep. He went back to jail to sleep overnight. Who knows were Kaila slept.

The Russian Tsar was overthrown in March 1917: It happened after Russia suffered 3 crushing defeats in 1914, 1915, and again in 1916, the Germans had decimated the Russian army.

The Russian people overthrew the Tzar in the winter when Moscow and especially Petrograd didn't have enough food or coal. It happened when the soldiers guarding the capital were young and raw and willing to revolt.

### *White crucifixion Chagall*

Kerensky took over the government. He became the head of the Duma, the Russian Parliament. But, for some reason, though the people wanted peace, though the war seemed

senseless to many, Kerensky did not sue for peace. He allowed the generals to raise yet another army and to, once again, attack the Germans.

When Russia was again defeated in 1917 the stage was set for the successful Communist revolution led by Lenin in November 1917.

When he came to power, Lenin promised the Russians peace. On March 1918 the Russian communist government signed a "humiliating" peace treaty in the town of Brest-Litovsk.

Borders shifted. New countries were formed. (Torchin was now a town in greater Poland.) A large part of western Russia and 60 million people fully a third of the Tsar's empire were now citizens of: Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, & Lithuania. Russia also relinquished control over the Ukraine, the Crimea, and most of the Caucasus.

The peace that the Communists accepted precipitated a series of wars. The White Russians attacked the Communists. Armed bands roamed through the Ukraine. And ultimately Poland, under the leadership of General Pilsudski, won enough victories to establish the borders of post-WWI Poland. And the Polish Democracy was established. (@1920)

In 1919 and 1920, 3 separate armies fought for the land around Torchin. The Poles, the White Russians, and the rag tag bands of the Ukrainian, Petlura who robbed, killed and raped.

One day they came to Torchin. Shlomo and Neil were apparently away. There was the sound of gunfire and running horses. Someone yelled "the thieves are coming: The murderers are coming!" Kaila brought her children into the house and began to overturn tables and chairs, to break dishes, and to scatter clothing. She left the front door open. When a shadow crossed her doorway she cried and moaned and clung to her children. The Ukrainian raiders with their large sacks filled with loot paused, peered in, and then left. Apparently they were convinced that this house had already been ransacked.



Later, when Poland became a democracy, many Jews served in the legislature.

There was a Jewish workers party named the Bund that had 13 seats in the Sejm.

After the war was over the Ferdman's rebuilt their house. They were allotted some pine trees for the construction. Some Germans Shlomo knew were paid to bring the trees to town. Manuel remembers going with them, hearing some anti-Semitic slurs about lazy Jews. He decided to show them. He worked and lifted as much and as hard as any of the Germans. During the construction Neil got his arm caught under a rolling log. It was a massive, heavy log. Shlomo rushed over and with superhuman strength pushed the log uphill and got Neil out

When we came out of the war (when it was) already settled, we started to build a house. And big shot me and Neil we were dragging boards from the forest. I was 9-10 years old. But I was strong. I found somebody to work. And they built up the house. We moved in.

Daddy (Shlomo) handled wheat and potatoes. We had sacks of wheat and sacks of potatoes. We heard downtown they're robbing the people. So mother and dad took the sacks of wheat and poured it out. (They poured out the) potatoes. And they took the chairs and turned (them) over. When they (the band of ruffians) came in we cried. The kids (were) crying that we were robbed. Some soldiers came in. They still looked for some shirts. So I was a kid staying by them while they were looking (for the shirts) they looked for the good ones and the torn ones they dropped them. So I threw the better ones (on the floor) and the (torn) ones I left. We had mother's father, (Yitzhak) staying with us by that time. They wanted money from him. We hollered. . . the kids (did). We started kissing the soldier and begging him until somehow he didn't hurt him (Yitzhak) We said "He's a poor man. He doesn't have nothing. Everything was robbed. We were robbed."



After the war people used to steal a lot from each other. We had a grocery (store) In the middle of the night (some people came). They knocked on the door. They (said) they wanted to sell a tank of coal oil.

**Grandpa (Shlomo) says "I'm not buying." and he started to scream "Gevalt: Gevalt: "He made such a scream.**

**They begged him "quiet down already." They were afraid. You don't want to buy it but quiet down."**

**But he screamed just like they would have held him up. He said "I'm not buying any g'novishe business."**

**There was a boy between Neil and I that died when he was three years old. Yonkele.**

**There was a lot of girls dying also. Neil tells me between (before) you no girls were allowed. Every time it was born it died...the girls. And when I came it was such a gadeela. You can imagine.**

**The couple across the street died and left 2 girls--one my age (my friend) and one 4 years older. They were rich (the parents) at one time. They had a big lot. After the war they sold half of the lot and built a little house. We helped em with groceries. We already, at the time, had a grocery store.**

**The older one was 20. She was a nervous wreck. She cried for hours for my mother. When I was there I figured that this girl has to get married. She was too..too..**

**We went to Lutsk to the shadhan. That girl, her sister, and I, we went to the shadhan. I was the spokes lady. I told him she was very m'husan. She had yihis. We told him her uncle was a rabbi. Her parents were rich and such nice people. And she is looking for a shitach. This woman had a narrow book. (She turned) from page to page. And she found she said "I have a boy for you. From a farm.**

**And they want to have a yihis."**

**It didn't take long before they came to see her. The dumb and deaf girl was her aunt. She (the aunt) invited them to her house and they looked em over once. And we 2 girls (her sister and I) were staying outside. That young man came with his family. And they got engaged (at) the same time. And they got married. They had a nice family. They moved to Lutsk. He was a handsome man.**

**Then my girl friend got married to a very nice man. We helped them. That was my first mitzvah**



CHAGALL WEDDING