

## MANUEL LEAVES POLAND

Manuel: I was already accepted to the Polish army. They examined you. If your health is fixable they pass you. They examined us in our town-- a lot of men at once-- about 50 at once. All undressed, and the doctor examined you, and those which were very weak they postponed them for a year.

They came a year later.

That was the idea of the boys staying thin, in order so they could gain another years postponement. Practically everybody did it. They would stay up all night singing, dancing; eat only shemeshkas (sun flower seeds) in order to lose weight: I weighed 110 pounds. But I was still considered healthy.

Dave came for a visit. America was closed at that time, but he said for me to leave irregardless of what will happen; to get started, and then they'll do all that could be done Dave said he wouldn't live in Poland for nothing. He said this is the worst place to live. He said you've got to get out of here. We were in the house at the time. He suggested that I take off. He knew that I was called to the army."

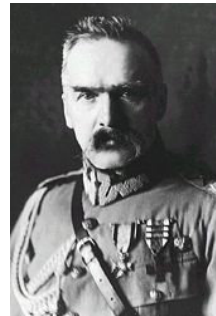
Dave said we should go to Cuba and from Cuba they'll try to take us over to America. He says "You're young people. You're willing to work like this you'll reach places."

In the 1920's it was not only virtually impossible to legally emigrate to Israel, it was also increasingly difficult to enter the United States. America had received 40 million immigrants in 150 years. And in 1921 the immigration laws changed drastically.

By 1924 the river of immigration that had marked the previous 40 years became a trickle. In 1926 when Neil went to America it must have been difficult to bring him in. He might be the last brother to enter.

In 1927 Surca got married and moved out of the family home. And in 1926-27 Poland changed. Pilsudski, the general and hero of the 1920 Polish-Russian' war took command of the government. He overthrew the democratically elected government. His power base was the army and the peasants. He owed nothing to the Jews. Some of the Jews were Bundists; some Communists. In Torchin the majority were Zionists.

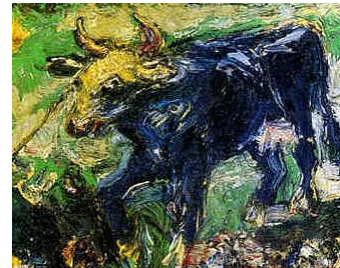
Manuel: "Naturally all my hopes for the future were to leave, 'to go to America. At that time I was very much a Zionist. And my intentions were that I would make some money and then go to Israel and settle there. We used to read a lot of literature. That's where we used to get together, all the young people, in the Zionist hall.'





During his youth Manuel went to the rabbi, to the heder, on a regular basis. In 1920 the Polish government organized schools and Manuel attended classes for 1-2 years before he decided to begin handlung. He went into partnership with a friend. The first time they bought cows they lost money. But eventually they learned how much to pay... how much they could get at market. They bought 2-3 cows a

week and drove them up to 20km to town, where they sold them. Manuel paid cash, but the German farmers of the area trusted him. Sara tried to interest him in working in her store. But Manuel yearned for America. He didn't want to get involved in her business. He didn't want to be successful. He didn't want to get involved with any women. A business; a wife, or a child could keep him in Europe. And there was no future in Europe.



His social life revolved around the young Zionist organization. They met, and talked about Israel; and planned to go one day. But in all his years the British only gave one certificate to his group. They picked out one boy who was most eligible. . . as a farmer. His name was Pesach Rubin. His younger brother was Manuel's age. Before Pesach left a fellow named Chapnick came to Manuel and the other members of the group and asked each of them for 5 zlotys. Pesach didn't have a dime in his pocket. Forty years later when Manuel was visiting his daughter in Israel, he took a series of buses and visited the Moshav where Pesach had his meshek. Of Manuel's close friends of those days, one made it to Brazil where he was in the lamp business. One escaped to Argentina.

Manuel spent his teenage years on the road. Every Sunday he would leave home and walk from farm to farm. "Is there anything for sale?" If there was, and the price was right, he bought. The roads contained other Jews doing business. Some would barter for furs or hair from pigs that were used to make brushes. At night Manuel would sleep at the home of a friendly Ukrainian farmer. He brought bread and herring with him. Sometimes a farmer would share some sour milk or a baked potato.



**Jew on road Handlung Toby Fluek**

Which way do we want to start? We decided to liquidate and to go to Cuba. We called in a man. He rented the store for 3 years.



FAVISH: I went to Danzig. I made arrangements with agencies. At that time Manuel was ready to be called to the Polish army. I said "Manuel, you come with me. Wherever we're going to go we'll take you along. And don't be afraid."

That was the first time he was out of Torchin or (on) the train. When he sat on the train he held the bench.

And grandma (Chia Kaila) she didn't agree at first to let Manuel away from home. "Manuel away?" she said.

I said "Do you want him to go to the army for 2 years?" The Polish army at that

time was very very bad. They discriminated (against) Jews. Very, very few (Jews) came back the way they went to the army. They came back with broken hands and legs and sick. That's why they tried to run away from the army.

"I said "Now's your chance." Danzig was a free state. He didn't need a foreign passport. So I took him over to Danzig. And over there he could go to Cuba.

Favish doesn't recall Manuel expressing a desire to leave Torchin. He doesn't remember Dave telling him to take Manuel along. Favish says it was his idea. He sold his store and had \$400-\$500 from the transaction. Grandma gave him a few hundred dollars. He had \$800 around his belt when he went to Danzig to buy the tickets. The money would pay the agency for the trip. After the tickets were purchased Favish planned to go back and pick up Surca and Cyril. Manuel was supposed to remain in Danzig until they returned. They would sail together.

So all of a sudden we walked into the office and the agent said "something terrible happened. Cuba closed every entrance to the country....immigration. You can leave Danzig for Cuba, but they don't guarantee that they'll let us in. They may send us back, or you may have the choice, over there, (to go to) another area over there, before they ship you back."

I was astonished, very disappointed. And I had to go back to Torchin. I had liquidated all my business and everything else. I turned to Manuel and said "You're not going back, because in a month from now you'll be called to the army. I took off the belt with the \$800 and said, "I don't need no money. I can go to Torchin. I have a ticket for Torchin, and in Torchin I don't need money. Whatever I'll do I'll make a living."

Manuel was afraid. I said "Manuel you're a strong boy. Anything you do, you come anyplace in the world, an island..and you'll always make a piece of bread. And if not you have the address from your brothers. And you know you're going to be close to America. They can come visit you. They can do things for you: You're not going back to Poland.

He said "What'll I do in Cuba?"

I said "You can go all over North America or South America, wherever a boat goes, go. And wherever you come down . . . .and see what your brothers are going to do about it.

So he took a chance. And that's what happened.

**Manuel:** So when Dave come, he said "you've just got to get started, you've got to leave." He gave me some money. If I'm not mistaken as much as \$600 at that time. in cash. He had it with him.



"Take this." The cost was about \$300 for the passport and the boat ride to Cuba.

So I went to Danzig. I acquired a passport in Germany which meant that I'm leaving the country. Actually it would mean just like somebody's traveling through. I didn't leave right away. I went to say goodbye to my parents." (He also went to uncle Elya's house. The girls knew he was leaving. They began crying when they saw him. Elya wasn't home. Manuel told the girls goodbye in their home so there wouldn't be a scene at the bus station.)

When Manuel said goodbye to his father, his father didn't try to stop him. He said you must do what you must do. His face was serious. He didn't create a scene.

Dave gave Manuel an address where he could send a telegram if something went wrong. Favish would take Manuel to Danzig.

Manuel: I had to leave secretly in the daytime, on a bus to another city. We already had a bus between us and Lutsk where there was a train; a railway station. I remember my uncle, my father's brother, found about it and he come over to tell me good-bye. He was crying at the station. In those days ...I mean, he felt 'God knows whether I'll ever see you again.' That was usually the way that could happen. It was in the fall of the year."

Manuel carried a straw suitcase containing a change of clothing, a tallis, tephillin, and a prayer book.. He wore his heavy winter coat, though it was just September and too warm for such attire. In Lutsk they caught a train for Warsaw. Manuel remembers being nervous, scared, and excited.



In Warsaw Favish hired a droshky, a horse drawn cab with drivers that wore top hats. He took it to a pension where he stayed. Manuel found Warsaw depressing. People burned coal here (coal had even started coming to Torchin), and the town seemed crowded and dirty. There were well dressed business men and craftsmen, Jews and gentiles, beggars and peddlers. Favish stayed in one of those giant Warsaw buildings that faced on a courtyard. The building was 4 stories high and formed a giant "U". 100 apartments faced the courtyard where they got their share of air and sky: The toilets were in the courtyards. They were unusually dirty and foul smelling. The Pension where they stayed was an apartment with drab walls. The people were polite. The wife served tea. The supper was meager. Manuel was depressed.



He didn't want to stay in Warsaw any longer than was necessary.

It took Favish only a few days to get Manuel the papers he would need. Then they caught the train to Danzig. On the train Manuel noticed an American couple.. The man was dressed in a gray flannel suit. The woman wore an elegant dress. Some day, Manuel thought, I will have a suit like that, and I will look like that.

Danzig was the Polish sea port on the Baltic Sea. Compared with Warsaw it was a modern city: The streets were wider. There were trolley cars. People seemed more prosperous. And the ocean breezes blew the thick black smoke of coal operated furnaces inland, cleaning the air and the city. In Danzig Favish contacted a travel agent, a Jewish man who knew how to handle departures like Manuel's. Then Favish returned to Torchin.



**POLES GOING TO U.S. 1927**

The agent found Manuel a room in a kosher hotel where he would stay during the 6 weeks it took before his boat was to sail. The agent was a medium sized red-head in his 40's. He wore a beard and spoke Yiddish, Polish, and German. He was efficient and businesslike when he was making arrangements. But once he had completed his job he invited Manuel over. His home was warm and friendly. There his air was more relaxed and casual. There was herring on the table and hot water on the stove. On Rosh Hashanah the agent took Manuel to a large, elegant shul.

Manuel spent most of his free time at the wharf, watching boats come and go, smelling the salt air, observing the longshoremen and the people. Another Jewish boy moved into the hotel. The agent asked Manuel to show him around. Manuel agreed, but it didn't take long before he realized he was in no position to teach the newcomer "the ropes." The other Jew came from Warsaw. He spoke German and Polish and couldn't speak Yiddish. He was blonde, blue-eyed, and a lady's man. Manuel considered him wild, "out of line."

The blond, no doubt, felt Manuel was a shy hick. One day the 2 attended a large protest rally in the town square. The Arabs of Hebron, in Palestine, had massacred 45 Jewish boys who were studying at the Yeshiva near their town. The British had done little to help. The Jews of Danzig were incensed. Speeches were made. A protest would be sent to the British. It was an exciting day.