

**Recentemente chegou ao nosso conhecimento, através de seu genro Ricardo Venancio,
o livro de memórias MY LIFE, publicado pelo Sr. Norbert Blechner,
com notícias da ajuda humanitária feita por nosso avô, Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça,
durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial,
fato que desconhecíamos.**

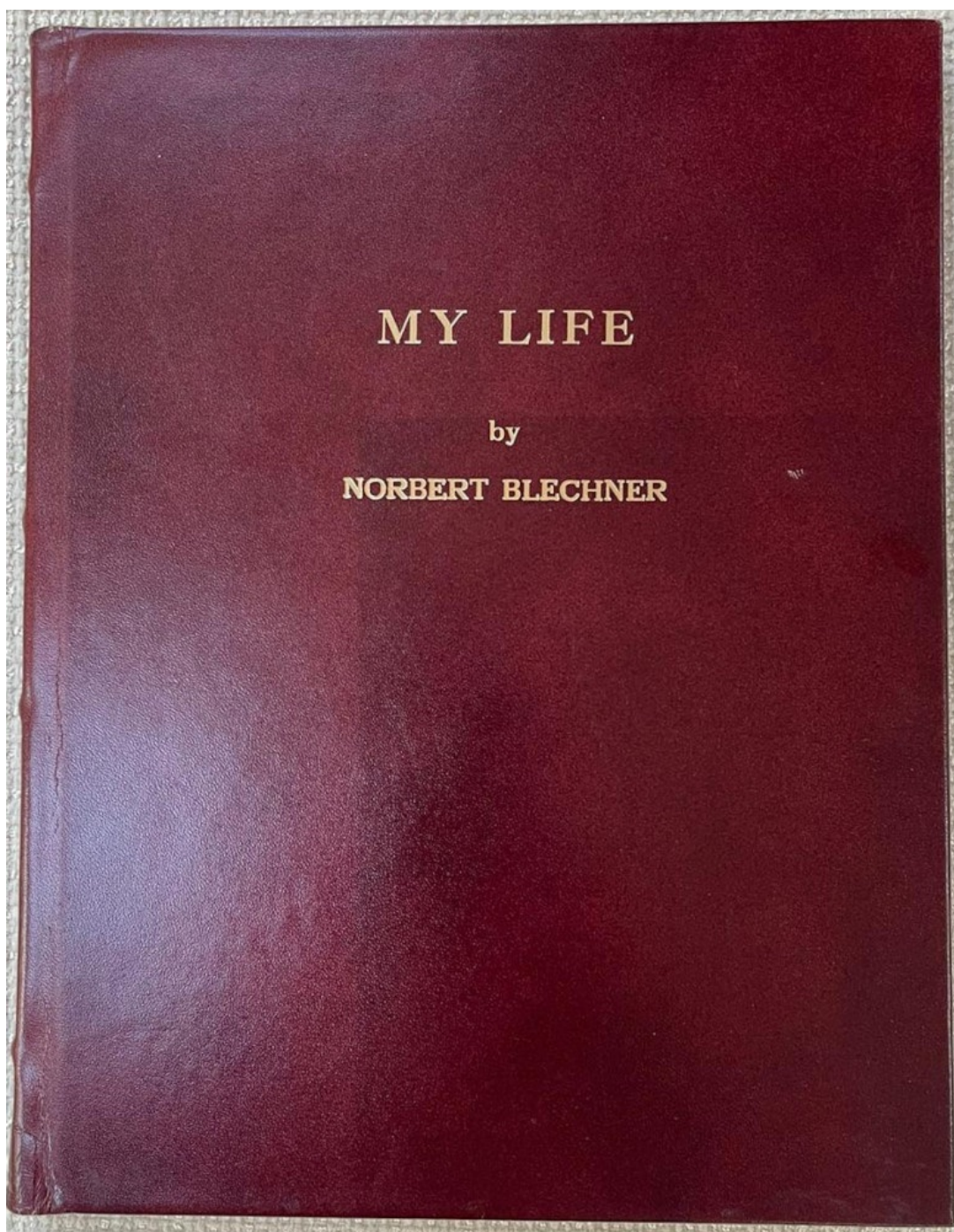


TABLE OF CONTENTS

• INTRODUCTION	1
• PREAMBLE - CENTURY TO CENTURY	2
• WORLD WAR I - AUGUST 1914 TO NOVEMBER 1918	5
• THE MINERAL AND METAL TRADE OF PRE-WAR PERIOD	11
• THE FIRST HITLER PUTCH - NOVEMBER 1921	19
• CHANCELLOR HITLER	21
• THE YEARS OF TURMOIL	26
• THE MOST URGENT PROBLEMS AFTER THE START OF WORLD WAR II - THE YEARS OF TURMOIL	42
• THE UNRESTRICTED WAR OF CONQUEST AND THE SAVING OF THE LISSAUER AND GRIESSMAN FAMILIES	50
• MY COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN BRAZIL COMMENCING AT THE START OF WORLD WAR II. LATE 1939, AND UP TO MY DEPARTURE FOR THE USA END OF APRIL 1940	53
• CHILE: IRON ORE MINING	57
• ON MY OWN - STARTING MARCH 1, 1966	60
• FLUORSPAR	67
• MY RELATIONSHIP WITH LOUIS MIKOLAJCZAK	75
• DEATH OF MENO LISSAUER / SECOND GENERATION STEPPING IN - END OF MY EMPLOYMENT	80

INTRODUCTION

This writing, dedicated to my family, is meant to give a new insight to my children and grandchildren of the history of my life covering the longest part of this century, intermingled by a short period of peace, two world wars - including the era of Hitler starting in 1921, ending with the defeat of Germany in 1945 and with the death of Hitler.

There has been no century so crowded as the 20th century.

At its beginning there was no airplane. Several years later people have flown to the moon and have reported back.

I was born May 30, 1910 in a small town named Königshofen im Grabfeld. Königshofen had fewer than 2,000 inhabitants but it had a rich local history going back to the 13th century. At the center of town is the "Rathaus," the seat of the mayor and of the town's administration and of the Court. Built during the 13th or 14th century, the Rathaus still to this date is an impressive building, still serving the same functions. It stands on one side of a large square called Marktplatz. It was and still is today the place where people come and present their wares for sale. It was also the place where every year the

PREAMBLE

My plan to write about my own life goes back to 1986. In a letter to my dear friend, the late Louis Mikolajczak, in October 1987, there is a paragraph, *"I also continue to make a tape about my own life although if I continue at the rate at which I have done it during the last half year, I guess at the end of my days it will be called the 'unfinished story'."* My daily chores for the conduct of business always took precedence over time spent on writing the story of my life. This problem continues to this day.

There has been no century so crowded with events as the 20th century.

At its beginning there was no airplane. Several years ago people have flown to the moon and have returned safely.

I was born May 30, 1910 in a small town named Königshofen im Grabfeld. Königshofen had fewer than 2,000 inhabitants but it had a rich local history going back to the 13th century. At the center of town is the "Rathaus," the seat of the mayor and of the town's administration and of the Court. Built during the 13th or 14th century, the Rathaus still to this date is an impressive building, still serving the same functions. It stands on one side of a large square called Marktplatz. It was and still is today the place where people come and present their wares for sale. It was also the place where every year the

circus came with a big tent. It was Circus Knie which still is performing today in many places in Europe; recently I saw the tent in Zurich. The entrance fee in Königshofen was 20 pfennig (then, namely 1914/1920, about a nickel.)

During my early years there was peace in the land.

All the people in the town and in the surrounding villages were peaceful citizens, tradesmen, craftsmen, small farmers living with each other. No rich people, very few poor people, all of them of a modesty hard to imagine by today's standards. Jews and Christians living and socializing with each other. If they had worries, they were minor measured against today's problems.

Königshofen is part of the State of Bavaria and Bavaria was governed by the royal house of Wittelsbach. King Ludwig III was admired and respected. At the same time the emperor of Germany residing in the German capital of Berlin was Wilhelm II of the house of Hohenzollern.

Königshofen was surrounded by many villages. My mother, Hilda Hofmann, was born and raised in one of them, Kleinbardorf. She was the youngest of six children who with their parents lived in a very small house with very modest means but satisfied by their family life and friends. My father was born at a nearby village called Sulzdorf an der Lederhecke. The population of the villages was largely Catholic, a minority were Protestants and their life centered largely around their churches as the life of the

small Jewish population centered around their synagogue. There were about 25 Jewish families living in Königshofen and about 10 families in each of the surrounding villages.

In my earliest years all the houses had gas light which was later replaced by electricity, but I don't remember when this happened.

Our house had two stories; the store was on the main floor with our living room behind it. My bedroom and my parents' bedroom were on the upper floor with my grandmother's room at the front of the second floor.

My grandparents and later my parents and my father's brother and his wife ran a textile store where mostly farmers bought their goods with credit until Fall when they paid with their own farm products.

Königshofen enjoyed a nearby river called Saale and had primitive facilities for swimming. I always went with my father or my uncle in summer, weather permitting, to swim in the river. Nearby there were facilities for acrobatics. My father was a small man but a great gymnast and won many laurels which we still have at home. His twin brother who was tall and heavy - about 250 lbs. - also was a good swimmer but no gymnast.

THE YEARS OF TURMOIL

In the latter part of February 1933, an act of arson had started a fire of the Reichstag building. The man was caught. He was a Dutchman, Marinns van der Luppe, obviously mentally deranged. Among the non-Nazis it was generally assumed that he acted on instructions of the Nazis. Hitler and his cohorts used this event to round up all alleged enemies of the Third Reich and particularly the Jews.

In the early days of November 1938 a member of the German Embassy in Paris was shot by a Jew whose name I believe was Grynszpan as an act of revenge for mistreatment of his father. This was the spark which triggered the additional persecution of the Jews with the ultimate goal of "the final solution" first into concentration camps and then into the gas chambers.

Also in the very early days of November 1938 I was on one of my monthly trips to the zinc smelters of Upper Silesia and Poland and whilst normally these trips would continue to Czechoslovakia, this particular trip was cut short as I was eager to return to Cologne in order to get ready for transfer of my residence from Cologne to Amsterdam, Holland. For this purpose I had to exchange my regular German passport against a special exit passport.

On November 8 I had gone to the railroad station in

Next morning the Cologne office phoned to tell me that I should return to Cologne immediately as the Gestapo wanted to question me on certain currency transactions. This of course was a friendly warning on the part of one of my associates in Cologne. I was entirely innocent on any accusation of this kind. After a few days with Dr. Alberty and his charming wife, I took a train from Katowice to Gdynia via the so-called Polish Corridor. From there I booked myself on a coal steamer to Copenhagen, being one of two passengers, and whilst in the neighboring town of Danzig (Gdansk) all hell broke loose with anti-Jewish occurrences, the vessel brought me safely to Copenhagen from where I connected with a non-stop flight to Amsterdam hoping all the way on the trip that there would be no forced landing en route. Fortunately it flew non-stop without any emergency landing in Germany.

This was not my first flight. My first flight under more peaceful conditions had taken me from Cologne to Frankfurt on an Air France plane with an open cockpit. It was on the day before Rosh Hashana. It was a short trip, as in those days - if I remember correctly - pressurized cabins did not exist; my company paid for it as they had insisted on my participating in a morning conference on the same day.

Thus I left Germany at the very critical hour - thereafter known as Kristallnacht and arrived safely in Amsterdam where I took up my job with Oxyde until I was sent to Brazil on behalf of Oxyde and British European Steel London, to negotiate a barter of Brazilian iron ore against European locomotives.

Among my other friends in that part of the world were Prof. Eisler, a director of Witkowitz Iron and Steelworks, who later escaped to Stockholm, and Mr. Busch of Teplitzschonau, the director of Weinmanwerke, whose interests in art and music were more lively than his professional involvement in the zinc plant. His wife, Lydia, was a famous singer.

In the same township there were Gebrüder Dudek, producers of zinc oxyde. Teplitz was located in the so called Sudetenland which somewhat later was swallowed up by Hitler and his brutal gang.

We had agents in Brazil who were able business people although not familiar with our line of business. Our negotiating partner was Usina Queiroz under the management of Queiroz's son-in-law, Marcos de Mendonça. He was the hero of the young population of Rio as he was the goalkeeper of the largest soccer club "Fluminense" and on several occasions goalkeeper of the national soccer team. Wherever we walked we were followed by a great group of young boys and girls admiring Marcos. During the first few days of my visit he treated me royally to many social occasions including taking me to the Presidential platform on the Brazilian Day of Independence where all the great Brazilian figures of those days were assembled: the President Getulio Vargas, Foreign Minister Graca Aranha, and so on, but of course the time of relaxation was short as the war started and we were cut off from Europe. This trip to Brazil saved my life because almost all the young people of my generation, 25 of them employed at Oxyde, were transferred to

concentration camps at Auchwitz, at Mauthausen, and at a few other camps where they were killed by the Nazis.

The owners of Oxyde after all the efforts and the successful transfer from Germany to Holland quite obviously could not muster the strength to move away from Holland at the beginning of the war which would have been possible no doubt. They lived in the fantasy of: "brink of war - yes, but war - no." There were more "Chamberlains" and more "Munichs" to follow.

With my contacts to Marcos de Mendonça and his contacts to all the top political figures in Brazil, a simple request to Marcos and a phone call from Marcos to Graca Aranha was all that was needed to give instruction the following day to the Brazilian Embassy in Holland to issue visas for 13 members of the Lissauer and Griessman families. Prior thereto we asked the then President of Associated Metals & Minerals Corporation, New York, Walter Rothschild, brother-in-law of Meno Lissauer, whether we should endeavor to get visas. Back came the classic answer, "What will it cost?" It is worthwhile mentioning only because it demonstrated how even at that time the danger of extinction of people in Europe was not taken seriously. We disregarded this telegram and our agents, Sussel and Rosenwald, and myself went promptly to Marcos to ask for his help to get visas. As I said above, my only regret during all these following years was that I did not ask for 100 visas.

When I was sent to Brazil the underlying arrangement between Meno Lissauer and Baron Freiherr von Oppenheim concerning my involvement was that I would spend two to three months on a specific job in Rio and to then meet with Baron von Oppenheim, head of the Bank Oppenheim of Cologne, and a close friend of Lissauer and to travel with him around the world for about one year, of course on luxury boats because flying was not yet an acceptable means of travel. Oppenheim was in New York when the war started in October and succeeded in returning to Germany via Tokyo and the Trans-Siberian Railroad with all his luggage minus the jewels of the Oppenheim family which he had taken to New York and which were subsequently sequestered by the alien property custodian. Incidentally, after the war with the help of a Washington lawyer I succeeded in getting the jewels released and returned to the Oppenheim family. I don't know exactly how the Oppenheim family lived in Germany during the war. I believe that they lived on a farm in Bavaria away from the limelight. Their grandfather was a Jew and had built the large orthodox synagogue in Cologne, then destroyed during the Kristallnacht, but the next generation was baptized and were knighted by the German emperor to be "Baron Freiherr von." This was not sufficient in principle to be considered as aryan during the Hitler period. But I was also told that the famous saying of Marshall Goering, "It is I who determines who is Jewish and who is not," referred to the Oppenheim situation. Anyhow, they were sincere good friends of the Lissauer family and so was Mr. Pferdmenges who took over the bank from Oppenheim and renamed it Pferdmenges and Company, but turned it back to the Oppenheims after the war. Incidentally, Pferdmenges was the closest economic advisor and friend to Adenauer. When I came to Cologne after the war I met with Pferdmenges and at each subsequent visit he always

found the time to have a chat with me. He was one of the most modest people I have ever encountered, of high intelligence, and if I would have followed his advice, I would have purchased for very little money a great part of the shares of Thyssen and Bayer.

The Lissauer/Griessman family received Brazilian visas and somehow managed (it was said with the help of Oppenheim) to get a safe conduct from Holland through France to the Spanish border from where they traveled to Portugal and stayed several months at Estoril. In November 1940 they traveled on a Portuguese boat, the "Serpo Pinto" (Portugal was not at war) and arrived in Rio de Janeiro on November 16, 1940, well received by myself, our agents and Marcos de Mendonca and his wife, Dona Amelia, a woman of unusual charm and intellect, generally called the Second Lady of the country.

As stated before, I had working papers and right of residency in Holland since 1933, and it was my intention to emigrate to America. Was it foresight or was it because my parents had safely reached America in September 1938? I applied for an immigration visa with the American Consulate in Rotterdam and strangely enough the Consulate gave me a date for the usual examination prior to issuing of a visa for November 11, 1938. When I reached Holland - coming from Poland via Copenhagen - there was a message for me from the Consulate canceling the date because in view of the events in Germany all available visa quotas were transferred back to Germany so that those in immediate danger could have preference.

Shortly after my arrival in Brazil I called on the American Consul in Rio de Janeiro to have my application transferred to Rio and to obtain an American immigration visa as soon as possible, particularly as I was in Brazil on a business visa with no right of residency. I called on the Consul quite often; he was a friendly man without the pressure of the American Consulates in Europe. On February 27, 1940 he called Ruth Hirtenstein, then the secretary of our agents, to tell her that he had one open visa quota provided I could be at the Consulate the next day, February 28, 1940. If unused by the end of February the visa allotment had to be returned to Berlin. I was traveling between Rio Grande Brazil, and Sao Paulo. Roadways and communication systems were very poor in those days. In the proper sense of the word, Brazil in those days was underdeveloped. Ruth alerted the several Western Union offices which at that time served as the best communication system, and they found me in the town of Blumenau in the afternoon of February 27,. Somehow I managed to be at the door of the Consulate in Rio a few minutes before opening time on February 28, 1940. As I still remember, it was one of the happiest days of my life to carry with me the immigration permit with the red seal of the U. S. To understand this better, one must realize that I was in Brazil defacto a man without a nationality. My German passport had been changed - as had all German passports of Jews - from Norbert Blechner to Norbert Israel Blechner with a big "J" next to it. How little did the Germans realize at that time - nor any one of us - how proud we would be one day of the name of Israel which in 1948 became the name of the independent Jewish state. *Yishuv*, and consisting of five *thousand* people and very little money. I heard then that when *Holland* was invaded in May 1940 the capital of Associated

