# A LONG ROAD HOME

The Life and Times

of

Grisha Sklovsky

1915-1995

by

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Chaja, also known as Anna Sklovsky, who placed her trust in justice and the rule of law and was betrayed by justice and the rule of law in a gas-chamber at Auschwitz.

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# Introduction

In the early years of the twentieth century, when the word *pogrom* [Russian: devastation] had entered the world's vocabulary, many members of a Russian Jewish family named Sklovsky were leaving their long-time homes within the Pale of Settlement.[1] They were compelled to leave because, after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, experiments in half-hearted liberalism were abandoned and throughout the regimes of Alexander III [1881-1894] and Nicholas II [1894-1917] the Jews of Russia were subjected to endless persecution.

As a result of the partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century more than a million Jews had found themselves within the Russian empire but permitted to live only within the Pale, the boundaries of which were determined in 1812. It covered areas in the Ukraine around Kiev, leading towards ancient provinces of Byelorussia, part of Poland, as well as east and south, towards Kharkov and Odessa. Permits were provided to small numbers to live and work elsewhere, provided baptism took place or they had certain professional qualifications. The census of 1897 revealed that nearly five million were confined within the Pale.

On his accession to the throne Alexander III immediately indicated he was not interested in limiting autocratic power and that he intended to save Russia from anarchy and revolution, not by parliamentary institutions or liberalism, but by the principles of Orthodoxy, autocracy and belief in the Russian people: one administration, one nationality, one language, one religion. Russian language and Russian schools would be forced on his Finnish, Polish and German subjects while, in the defence of Orthodoxy, German, Polish and Swedish institutions would be dismantled and the Jews persecuted. One of the Tsar's advisers observed:

"One third of the Jews will emigrate, one third will be baptised and one third will starve". He failed to allocate a percentage to those who would be murdered.

With the promulgation of a series of statutes, known as the May Laws, pogroms, ritual murder accusations, the publication of fraudulent documents, such as the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*[2], were perpetrated under the protection of Government policy, often with Russian Orthodox Church complicity. It was a device, ultimately fruitless, to deflect the rage of the Russian people away from Tsarist autocracy. In 1905 Nicholas II, reaffirming his commitment to those principles embraced by his predecessor, lent Government support to the creation of the League of the Russian People, also known as the Black Hundreds. These notorious anti-Semitic groups, prototypes of the fascist gangs of the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties, were guilty of countless atrocities. Mob violence and official oppression of the Jews were also common in other parts of Europe, especially Galicia in Poland, then part of the Austrian Empire, and Rumania. That country's independence had been guaranteed by the Congress of Berlin [1878] which demanded that all citizens should have fair and equal treatment. When Rumania declared that Jews were not citizens persecution and discrimination became matters of policy.

Throughout the more than thirty years from 1881 to the outbreak of World War I the Jews of Russia experienced further punitive restrictions: in employment; expulsion from many cities; a reduction in the area of the Pale; many more areas, within the Pale, forbidden them and countless attacks in which Jews were robbed and murdered while their homes were destroyed. A pogrom in Odessa in 1905, that went on for four days, resulted in the deaths of four hundred Jews, while in 1906 the army and police took part in the atrocities at Bialystok.

Under these impossible conditions many Jews who had been tending towards assimilation, retreated from that stance and sought hope in strict adherence to the Torah, if they were religious, and for those who had wandered from their faith, salvation would be sought in Jewish nationalism or the socialist labour movement: the General Jewish Workers' Union in Russia, Poland and Lithuania, created in 1897, and known as the Bund. But most of the Jews in Russia were in no doubt that it was time for a new Exodus and that exodus would become one of the great migrations of history. From fifty to sixty thousand each year in the early 1880s the departures reached 137,000 in 1892 and more than 200,000 in 1905-

1906 when the Black Hundreds began their activities. From Austria's Galicia more than 350,000 joined in the search for a better life, for survival.

The overwhelming proportion of this mass of people seeking refuge looked towards the West. Small numbers arrived in Palestine, England and other countries, a few in Australia,[3] while more than two million arrived in the United States. Yet there remained a number of better educated Jews, many of them more Russianised, more assimilated [they spoke Russian not Yiddish], who were looking elsewhere. They looked to the East.

Chapter One

## Siberia

In 1902 Abram Sklovsky was studying Economics and Law at the University of Kiev. He was clever, handsome, a star of the university's amateur theatre and was planning his future life. He was one of the privileged Jews. He spoke Russian and had qualified to enrol in the university under *Numerus Clausus* [Latin: Closed Number], a statute, enacted in 1887, which could result in a total prohibition of Jewish students or limit their number in accordance with a discriminatory rule. These restrictions were removed after the revolution of 1917. Apart from being proficient in Russian, Abram would have had to catch up on matriculation subjects not taught in Jewish schools, become familiar with Russian and other classics and undergo a number of tests, competing among a highly motivated group for a small number of university places. The woman he was to marry would be confronted with the same challenges and, like Abram, she would overcome them.

Some three hundred kilometres to the north-east of Kiev, in Abram's home town, his family was considering its future. Glukhov, with a population of 140,000 was home to some 5,000 Jews and the numbers were dropping each year. For Abram, for his sister and his three brothers, the future had to be elsewhere. Yet, like many before and after them, they knew that departure from familiar surroundings, however oppressive it may be, is never easy. For many educated Russian Jews, assimilated in part, the West held no appeal. They were not religious and Zionism's call for a Jewish homeland went unheard. They were listening to another call. They heard stories of extraordinary developments in the East, far distant eastern Siberia, Vladivostok and Harbin in Manchuria.

Harbin owed its development as a city to the construction, by the Russians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The former small market town became the administrative and construction centre for the railway which was to link the Trans-Siberian Railroad from just east of Lake Baikal in Siberia with Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan. This saved a thousand kilometres in the journey from Moscow. Another line stretched south, linking Harbin to the Russian-developed city of Port Arthur in southern

Manchuria. Harbin and eastern Siberia were the new frontiers offering countless opportunities. For Jews they could also boast the priceless asset of being many thousands of kilometres from the Tsar.

However, Samuel Sklovsky, Abram's father, was not convinced that emigration was necessary. No longer strictly religious, he spoke Russian as well as Yiddish, encouraged the education of his children and was widely respected throughout the Jewish communities of the Glukhov area. His business was well established and he felt no direct pressure to leave his home. But his daughter, Zippa, had other ideas. A strong-willed young woman, she and her husband, Iakov Basin, were determined to leave and their destination was to be Harbin, a decision that was to decide the future of the family. The eldest brother, Samarij, who had married a renowned singer, was going to join his sister in order "to prepare the ground for the younger brothers once they completed their education". Samuel did not attempt to hinder his children's departure but it was not for him. He would remain in Glukhov.

On completion of his studies Abram also departed for Harbin where he joined his brother-in-law in tendering for contracts for the supply of materials for the railway construction and other development projects financed by the Russian government. Samarij had opened other businesses, trading in soft drinks and cigarettes and eventually taking control of the electricity supply station. After a few years, although very successful, Abram was not satisfied. Harbin was too narrow a field for his vision and energy. There were too many relatives in town and it was not the Far East he had imagined. He would venture into the wilds of Siberia, the area between Harbin and Irkutsk, where he expected new frontiers to open up a Russian Eldorado and his judgement was right. Maintaining a loose partnership with Iakov he assured a supply of whatever was required by the railway and other authorities. In the small town of Sretensk, where he had settled, he was one of the early business pioneers, better educated than his competitors, courageous and imaginative. The railways had opened up the country to a growing and well paid population and Siberia was over-abundant with natural resources. One of his earliest ventures was remarkably successful. He built the first plant to produce felt boots, the only practical footwear for all classes during winter. It was near a gold mine he had acquired and the boots proved to be a more valuable

asset than the gold. He built other factories and invested in timber for the burgeoning building industry. He was rich and he was lonely. He was looking forward to marriage.

Chaja Gourevitch [or Guerevic] was born on 13 September 1889 at Novozybkov in the Pale. She may have been distantly related to Abram but we do not know how or when they first met but, like him, she came from the privileged, educated class of Russian Jews and while he was making his fortune in the East, she was studying medicine at the University of Kiev. On the completion of her studies they were married at Novozybkov on 27 June 1914. They returned to Sretensk where, on 6 October 1915, their first child, Grisha, was born. Chaja, a tall, cultured, educated, beautiful woman [her son would recall "the regal bearing"] must at first have experienced some culture shock. A former Cossack settlement, Sretensk had a population of 20,000 when she arrived with her husband. It was indeed a frontier town and it was to be her home for the next seven years. Grisha later wrote of home life:
"Sretensk was the largest centre between Chita (capital of Amuria) and Harbin. We had one of the big houses in the region, a wooden building, with four or five courtyards for the different sections like private accommodation, offices, stables. In the last courtyard was the *banya*, a brick building with no windows. It housed the sauna-like bath with steam-generating facilities, benches of various temperatures etc. This building also served as a shelter for all during the military operations which took place 1918 to 1920.

"Catering preparations are worth mentioning. In October a team of women used to arrive with the most extraordinary array of cooking equipment and containers in order to produce food for the winter to be stored in enclosed verandahs and other areas near the kitchen. Barrels were filled with shredded cabbage and other ingredients to produce sauerkraut. Thousands of meatballs were made, as well as *pelmeny* (a sort of Siberian dim sim), gefilte fish, wiener schnitzels, chicken dishes and giant, white icipoles of ten litre size in the shape of milk churns.... All goods, representative of Russian and Jewish cooking, were placed on the verandah, in the ice-cellar and in other places which kept them cool (down to -45 C) for many months. This 'ready to cook' food lasted the entire Winter, even on the enormous scale of Sklovsky family catering and any number of unexpected drop-ins could be fed

without notice. Teams of workers in the meantime were installing the vital double-glazing on the whole property. The reverse operation took place in April.

My earliest memories of the family meal routine are of about sixty people sitting down to eat, for reasons not well known in the West. It was World War I and many troops under Austro-Hungarian control quickly surrendered to the Russians. There were many Czechs, Serbians, Jews whose reasons for escape ranged from extreme Slavonic nationalism to lack of enthusiasm for their Austrian masters. As prisoners of war they were quickly dispatched to Siberia. *Other Ranks*, under the Geneva Convention, could be used as rural or factory labour and hundreds of them were assigned to my father's enterprises immediately on arrival. Officers, prohibited from being used as labour, could supervise their working troops or live in as guests wherever they were billeted. Thus in the first four to five years of my life I had several dozen, friendly, educated *uncles* with very little to do. Many of them remained friends for life and claimed that the best time they ever had was as non-paying guests in Siberia. Useful Czech contacts were also made".

Grisha's mother was always fearful of illness and epidemics. Her father had died of tuberculosis when she was a child and her brother, while studying engineering at Kiev University, contracted the same disease and died. When Grisha was nine-months old typhus broke out in the Sretensk area. Chaja immediately packed up herself and her baby and headed for Harbin where they still had relatives. They were there for some six months and only returned home when it was safe to do so. There were, however, other and far-reaching concerns that threatened the family's survival in those years.

The economic and social effects of the Russian Revolution of 1917 took a long time to reach eastern Siberia. However, the outbreak of Civil War, May 1918, largely triggered by clashes between Soviet forces and the Czech Legion, caused instant upheaval across thousands of kilometres, widespread clashes and the threat of violence to even the most remote communities. The Czech Legion, a force of some 50,000 men, comprised Czech and Slovak prisoners of war and deserters from the Austro-Hungarian army. Tomas Masaryk, soon to be elected President of Czechoslovakia, played a part in the organisation of this

fighting force, "this army without a country". After Russia withdrew from World War I, following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk,[4] an agreement with the Bolshevik regime allowed for the Legion's evacuation by the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok. From there they were to be shipped around the world, still intent on fighting the Germans and Austrians, to take up arms alongside French forces on the Western Front. The Legion was already en route to the East when the unpredictable Leon Trotsky[5] issued an ultimatum: Join the Red Army or be imprisoned. The Legion had no intention of becoming prisoners or being conscripted into the Red Army. They were neither necessarily for nor against the Bolshevik revolution but if they had to fight the Red Army to secure their departure from Russia they would do so. And they did. The anti-Bolshevik White Russian forces looked upon the Legion as an ally, as did the forces landed in Russia by the allied powers. France, Great Britain and the United States put troops into northern Russia while Japan and the United States landed troops in eastern Siberia. Whatever the motives of the allies, diverse and often conflicting, their very presence in the midst of the Red/White conflict, along with marauding partisan forces, Cossack raiding parties and the Czech Legion fighting its way to the Pacific, contributed to the overall chaos and breakdown of any semblance of civil order.

While most of the fighting and massacres in Siberia occurred west of Lake Baikal, towns like Sretensk, east of the Lake in the region known as Transbaikal, were in constant danger because all the competing forces were desperate to control the railway. In one terrifying incident the family was interrogated by a notorious leader of troops aligned with the Whites. This was Grigorii Semenov, a man responsible for many atrocities, whom Grisha referred to as Ataman Semenov, Ataman being the title of an elected commander of Cossack forces. Grisha remembered:

"To save ourselves we used the sauna building as a shelter and emerged only to welcome whoever had liberated us, hoping their demands would not be too unreasonable – and no plunder or torture or murder. My father always had to negotiate with our temporary masters, in the hope that he had not commited himself too much, because nobody stayed very long".

By early 1920 the White Army in Siberia, led by Aleksandr Kolchak[6] was defeated, allied forces and their High Commissioners in Irkutsk were evacuated and the Czechs had finally

reached Vladivostok. With the withdrawal of the British High Commissioner from Siberia, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, observed: “So ends a highly discreditable enterprise”.

The Sklovskys survived the civil war and in 1921 Abram moved his family westwards to Chita, a larger town on the railway line where he had long maintained an office. Much larger than Sretensk, with greater natural resources, Chita would provide even greater opportunities. The Sklovsky household had been substantially reduced since the departure of the Czech prisoners-of-war but, with many of Chaja’s family permanently in residence and some of Abram’s, as well as regular visitors from Harbin, there were always many mouths to feed. As the son of a capitalist Grisha was ineligible for school but a governess was soon provided, as there had been in Sretensk, and the study of many subjects, including English, progressed. He had no toys but hundreds of spent cartridges of many calibres and wooden offcuts left by carpenters provided distraction from his studies. Near the home which, like that in Sretensk, was very large with courtyards, there was a public library where Grisha spent many hours, his parents encouraging his reading in the Russian classics and history. There was no religious teaching and little discussion of Jewish affairs as his parents had spent their young lives trying to become more Russian than their families without denying their origins. Abram was constantly travelling to manage his business affairs, particularly to Irkutsk, three days by train, and to Harbin, two days away. Both at Sretensk and Chita he had established small hospitals where Chaja could apply and maintain her medical skills but after the Soviet authorities took over the hospital at Chita and declared her redundant she never again would work as a doctor.

For the young Grisha there was much to discover. Spring was a magical time with the booming cracking of the river ice, the appearance of small water channels ever growing and the final escape of the ice down the swiftly flowing rivers. Summer breaks were spent at Darasun, a spa town, also a centre of gold-mining, some three hundred kilometres north of Chita. It took many hours to get there by train and carriage and accommodation was in timber dachas. After the short warm season Darasun would close down to be frequented for the rest of the year only by wolves. Winter had its attractions even though the temperature

would drop alarmingly and one was warned never to touch metal. Grisha's slight lisp of later life was the result of his licking a wire in a Siberian winter and requiring a painful separation.

On 29 September 1922 Grisha had been called into his mother's room and shown Sophie, his new-born sister. The baby's arrival had no effect on the life of the young boy as she was put in the care of a nurse and they lived in a separate wing. Grisha's governess, his last full-time carer, died and numerous tutors in specific subjects and activities continued his education.

A year later, in September 1923, Abram announced that Grisha would accompany his parents on a visit to Moscow and the Crimea. Leaving Sophie with her nurse and the extended family they set out on the Trans-Siberian Express. Abram could afford the best in travel and Grisha enjoyed the comfort of International Wagon-lit two berth compartments. Shortly into the journey the train was stopped by a mass meeting to express socialist solidarity with suffering Japanese workers. It was the first the Sklovskys had heard of the devastating earthquake of 1 September which had utterly destroyed Yokohama and most of Tokyo. Half a million Japanese had died and the train passengers were asked to contribute to the support of the survivors.

The journey captured the young boy's imagination as the train moved through forests, around Lake Baikal, through the steppes, stopping at stations where Mongols sold food to the passengers [but not the Sklovskys], to the Urals and, after seven days, the family arrived at Moscow – the first time for Grisha and his parents. They stayed at the renowned Hotel Moskwa where he saw his first elevator and the wonderfully long, polished banisters of the elegant staircases gave promise of an exciting and rapid descent. But his mother discouraged that adventure. The family enjoyed being tourists, attending the ballet *Swan Lake*, visiting museums, churches and the Red Square. On the edge of the city they discovered displays of industrial products from the various Republics and, in the Siberian pavilion, where there was an exhibit of felt boots from the A. S. SKLOVSKY WORKS in Sretensk, Grisha very proudly and loudly insisted on announcing to all that the boots were

made by his father It took some time for Abram, the capitalist from Siberia, to explain to his eight-year old son that this was not the type of publicity he was looking for in the second year of the Soviets' New Economic Policy. From Moscow they headed south to Sevastopol and the Crimea. They saw the famous panorama of the Crimean War siege, the beaches, properties of the nobility and wealthy, now used as sanatoria and workers' retreats, and for the first time they looked upon the sea, the Black Sea. They spent three weeks there before returning to Moscow and Chita.

It had been an extraordinary journey. The country was still in turmoil, there was widespread famine, yet the Sklovskys had travelled like privileged tourists as though in a time of peace and tranquillity. Abram, however, had learnt much. Not only had he enjoyed his holiday and undisturbed time with Chaja but he had looked, listened and had come to an inevitable decision. There was no future for Sklovsky enterprises in Russia. Immediately on his return home he started to plan yet another exodus for his family.

The year 1923 had already brought one tragedy. Abram's mother had died during the Sretensk years and his father had remarried. Two sons were born of this union and both achieved high distinction in their chosen fields. Josif Sklovsky would come to be described as "the father of radioastronomy" during his career at Moscow University and the Sternberg Astronomical Institute while his brother Gena also settled in Moscow and won fame as a sculptor. Their father did not live to witness their success. Though he persisted in refusing to leave his home in Glukhov, Samuel was anxious to keep in touch with and visit his family. Throughout the years he travelled the great distances to Transbaikal to spend time with his children and other relatives. His last visit was in 1923. For his return journey he boarded the train in Chita but he did not arrive in Glukhov and was never seen again. He had become yet another statistic in the violence of revolution, civil war and their chaotic aftermath.

In planning the family's departure Abram was conscious of the need for haste but there was time to make a measured and calculated withdrawal. He began to divest himself of his investments and did so in currency exchanges unimpaired by inflation or devaluation. How

he achieved this remains a mystery but he certainly left Siberia with substantial sums to invest elsewhere. It was also important to be seen to be leaving for reasons other than a rejection of the new government and its policies. Abram and Chaja had apparently been planning their strategy for some time and it centred around Chaja's need for specialised medical treatment – or at least documented evidence of such a need. She had consulted many doctors about a stomach complaint and maintained a dossier of consultations and treatments. The visit to Moscow had provided the opportunity to see another specialist, a colleague known to her, who added to the file his diagnosis that an operation was probably necessary and the medical expertise was available not in Russia but in Germany. Within a few months of returning from Moscow they were ready to return there. Appointments were made with more specialists and there was no difficulty about leaving for Germany for medical treatment. Then Abram received an urgent call to return to Chita. Relatives were still there and some business concerns remained to be settled. He had to return. While it was vital that the family leave immediately for Berlin, with Abram following when possible, perhaps via the Far East, it was a hard decision for the parents but only one of many that had been, and would be, forced upon them. Chaja and her children set off and the next day the train stopped at Riga where they were met and cared for by one of their Czech prisoner-of-war officers, named Helmer, who had stayed with them at Sretensk. They had planned well.

Chapter Two

## Berlin

It was 1924 and not a bad time to arrive in Germany. It was the beginning of the slow rebirth of a nation after the desolation of World War I and the effects of the Treaty of Versailles[7]. Post-war runaway inflation had frustrated any attempt to return to a normal society. Prior to 1914 one US dollar would buy 4.2 marks; in 1922 it bought 7,000 and a year later it could buy meaningless millions while barter was replacing normal commerce and food riots were breaking out. In November 1923 Adolf Hitler and his National Socialists had attempted a coup in Munich for which he was subsequently charged with high treason and sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was released after nine months. Financial and political stability were gradually restored when the national bank, the Reichsbank, was made independent of government control in August 1924 and a new Reichsmark was issued. Foreign investment began to flow back into the country, there was a reduction in the unemployment figures and in September 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. The Weimar Republic[8] was dragging itself from the depths of defeat and despair and rebuilding had begun.

When Abram put his family on the train in Moscow he had no fear that they would be alone when they arrived in Germany. His sister Zippa and her husband, Jakov Basin, the pioneers who led the way to Harbin some twenty years earlier, had already established a base in Berlin. They had bought an apartment there for their daughters. Stassia, the eldest, was studying medicine, Raya enrolled in a course in medical technology, while the youngest, Shura, would soon leave Harbin to join her older sisters. Their brother, Leva, with a prescience shared by few, saw no future for himself in Germany and travelled on to Belgium to study engineering. The Basins' apartment was in Charlottenberg, near the university and it was there that the Sklovskys spent their first days in Berlin.

They soon moved into a boarding house and Grisha was enrolled in the local Volksschule, the first school he had ever attended. It was the middle of the second term and he arrived the morning his class was to be given a dictation test. This was a problem. His first language

was, of course, Russian but he had learnt German from the earliest age. However, in Sretensk and Chita, for some inexplicable reason, Baltic German was believed to be the purest form of the language and all Grisha's tutors had taught the Baltic version. He arrived in Berlin, in his own words, "with a ridiculous accent and using incomprehensible words". In the dictation test he managed seventeen errors and the teacher determined he should be caned. The nine-year old, having informed the teacher that caning should only be administered for bad behaviour not ignorance, walked out of the school never to return. Protestations from teacher and mother had no effect. He would not return. His first experience with organised education had lasted less than a day and in later life he would claim that a sense of justice had always determined his code of behaviour. Then, disturbing news arrived from Russia. Abram had been arrested in Chita. Chaja decided to return immediately, taking Sophie with her and leaving Grisha in a boarding school with the young Basin sisters having an *in loco parentis* role. Once again it was a difficult decision but, if they had to leave Russia illegally, it would be better to have at least one family member out of the country.

At Michendorf, forty-five minutes by rail from Berlin, Dr Levy ran a boarding school for children aged seven to fourteen and it was there that Chaja left Grisha. The atmosphere was disciplined but friendly and visitors were allowed on Sundays. Stassia, by then a third-year medical student, came every Sunday for the next five months and Grisha would never forget her generous spirit. News finally arrived from Russia. Abram had achieved his release from prison, the result of a bribe to the local commissar, and they were in possession of exit permits.

With the family reunited the priorities were to find a permanent residence and identify an outlet for Abram's energies, utilising the substantial capital he had been able to salvage from his investments in Siberia and Harbin. A home was found in Wilmersdorf, a district Chaja had found appealing during her first days in Berlin. The apartment, on the fourth floor at Barbarossa Strasse 33, was large enough to provide separate accommodation for Sophie and her governess, a maid as well as guests who often stayed. The district did not survive World War II and today even the street names are different.

Finding an outlet for Abram's experience and talent was a more difficult challenge. He was not interested in simple investments, leaving him a passive role. He needed to be involved. Already suspicious of Germany's political future he was looking to the East for opportunities as well as to France and Belgium. Then in Poland he came across a timber business which appealed and in which he had had experience in Siberia. Grodno, now a Belorussian city, has had a most chequered history and has known Lithuanian and Russian masters but from 1921 to 1939 it found itself in Polish territory. During World War I the occupying Germans built a railway line into the dense forests near Grodno intending to exploit the huge timber reserves but were driven out before work could begin. It was an opportunity and a challenge made for Abram's drive and need for involvement and while there was an obstacle, a law prohibiting foreign Jews from buying property in Poland, this was overcome by the enlistment of a Polish nobleman as a partner. This proved to be an extremely profitable venture but the frequent travelling it demanded was a great strain on Abram's health and he developed an angina condition.

In the Winter of 1926 Grisha was enrolled in the local secondary school, the Werner Siemens Realgymnasium, and there he was admitted to first year in the last term,where he would meet boys who would remain life-long friends. With the discovery of his shortsightedness glasses were prescribed to be worn full-time which aided his studies. Chaja, concerned that her son was small and thin, urged him to play sport though he showed little interest.

"My mother tried to set an example. She was really quite heroic about it. Learned swimming to force me to do likewise. Took up all kinds of PT exercises and even visited the Sports Master in the new school – all in vain."

Apart from the regular school subjects he studied Russian and took piano lessons but "having reached the *Pathétique Sonata*, I went to a Schnabel recital. Hearing him play it I discovered that I really loved music and stopped torturing the piano". He also joined Jewish youth clubs but their main activities centred on promoting Zionism and socialism, or both, and the young boy was not interested. From an early age he was taken to theatres, the opera, Russian cultural activities and a weekly visit to the cinema was permitted where he saw

German, American, English and French movies with Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy ranking high among his favourites. He was to remain a fan of the cinema.

Government schools in Germany provided religious instruction as part of the curriculum and twice a week the classes divided into Catholic, Protestant and Jewish groups for tuition. Grisha now discovered his Jewishness and religion. For the first time he became aware of a division between Jews, they numbered more than a third of the school's students, and non-Jewish groups.

"[These groups] were very nationalist but had leftish elements who were generally friendlier to Jews than the right-wingers..... For me, arriving quite without prejudice or experience with larger groups of boys, there was no other way but settling where I belonged.....we were very young and the atmosphere not as bad as later and, for me, there was the novelty of being in a big, new school. In the next year or so I became religious and when I was twelve I criticised my parents for not following synagogue services outside the High Holy Days. I did not get as far as demanding kosher food but insisted on a Bar Mitzvah. This took place in a German synagogue as ours (the Russian synagogue which used a school hall) only functioned on the High Holy Days. My parents had taken a very reasonable approach and did not discourage me. I continued luke-warm synagogue attendance on special occasions – also to show solidarity as times for Jews became harder in Germany".

Then there was the scouting movement in which he became involved for a time. The *Drang* [craving] for and identification with nature had been a patriotic tool in the nineteenth century. There was awe of nature, [Goethe played a role here], love of the German countryside, a preference for group activities, marching songs of folk or military tradition, all long personified in the *Wandervogel* [hiking bird], whom today we would recognise as a backpacker. By the time Grisha appeared "each political group and religious sect had its own scouting troop. Uniforms and even songs, mediaeval mercenary and romantic lyrics as well as political hymns, were common to all, as were some extraordinary proscriptions: no neckties, no dancing other than folk, no 'bourgeois prejudices'. There was total segregation with Russian émigré and other groups of foreigners. There were male groups, female groups, mixed groups and the choice seemed endless. It was obviously useless for me to

approach a non-Jewish group. I disliked the Russian scoutmaster of our small troop but I stayed for a time."

He enjoyed excellent relations with his parents, so much so that he was accused by school friends of "not having the normal generation gap with family warfare. I was very close to my mother in spite of her criticism of my non-sporting life. (This was linked to her fear of illness.) My father was a bit more remote because of frequent absences but we had great games of chess, cinema outings and discussions of all sorts. He was quite proud of my scholastic progress but did not show it too frequently. Both parents were in agreement about what mattered and considered that health and education needed all they could afford". Vacations, with relatives and friends, were spent in a variety of places. There was Swinemünde at the mouth of the Oder and the island of Rügen in the Baltic; the holidays of Michaelmas were spent just north of Berlin at Oranienburg, [where the notorious concentration camp Sachsenhausen would be established in 1938]; a large number went to Wyk on the island of Föhr near the Danish border while a smaller, family group went to Hamburg; then it was to Bavaria to visit Füssen, Augsburg and Munich. Travel was considered essential, not only for relaxation but as part of an ever-continuing education.

It was a time of high German *Kultur*, perhaps best represented by the Bauhaus, a school of design founded by the architect Walter Gropius[9] in 1919 at Weimar. It later moved to Dessau and finally to Berlin. The faculty of the Bauhaus included some of the most outstanding creative artists of the twentieth century, including Kandinsky [wall painting], Paul Klee [stained glass and painting], Lyonel Feininger [graphic arts] and Oskar Schlemmer [stagecraft]. According to Gropius, the new design, the new architecture should be "the inevitable logical product of the intellectual, social and technical conditions of our age" and "in all great epochs of history the existence of standards..... has been the criterion of a polite and well-ordered society". "The arts must be brought together under the wing of a great architecture," he said, and artists "must all go back to the crafts". It was all too well-ordered, too civilised for the regime of National Socialism and the Bauhaus was forcibly closed in 1933 with the creations of Kandinsky, Klee and others being declared degenerate.

In 1928 Grisha was enrolled in a remarkable school, the Grünewald Gymnasium. Some of his friends were already enrolled there and he was keen to discover why they were so enthusiastic about the place. Aware of the quality of the education, his parents were anxious that he conclude his secondary studies there even though it meant their son would have to travel fifty minutes each way. A list of students contemporary with and just preceding the boy from Siberia makes for remarkable reading:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer[10] and Claus von Stauffenberg[11] had been students;

Klaus Alsberg [who in England took the name Claud Allen] served in the British army, the Royal Corps of Signals, then became a barrister and Deputy Crown Court Judge in London;

Rolf Landshoff, after Albert Einstein,[12] in a letter from Princeton, had recommended him, arrived in the United States and in 1940 was appointed Professor of Mathematics and Physics at St Paul, Minnesota. In 1944 Edward Teller invited him to join the team at Los Alamos, New Mexico where he met and worked with some of the most illustrious names in the history of physics: Niels Bohr, Enrico Fermi, John von Neumann, Richard Feynman and others. [Among all these distinguished colleagues Landshoff would later record that Fermi had impressed him as having the most brilliant mind];

Werner Levi, a friend of Landshoff, became Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii;

Carlos Meyer left Germany at the age of fifteen in 1935 for Chile but soon left there for Palestine where he spent his life working on kibbutzim;

Gunter Philipp arrived in South Africa in 1934, served in the South African Defence Force 1941-1946 and then became a businessman in Johannesburg;

Gerhard Rathenau hid on a farm in Friesland during the war and was later appointed Professor of Physics at the University of Amsterdam;

Edwin Rosenstiel became a Reader in Dentistry at the University of London;

Marie Louise Marx became a successful photographer in France and died with her mother at Auschwitz;

Konrad Bieber was interned in France in 1940, escaped October 1940, 1941-44 served in the French Resistance as courier, radio operator and interpreter with Mouvement de Libération Nationale, while teaching in school for refugees at Montauban. Later he became Professor of French and Comparative Literature at State University, New York. He published

*L'Allemagne vue par les Écrivains de la Résistance Française*, with an introduction by Albert Camus Geneva, 1954;

Ulrich Simon, whose father was taken by the Nazis in Holland and murdered while his mother escaped to Zurich, became a Church of England priest, Professor of Christian Literature, and Dean, King's College, University of London;

Leo Fialkoff graduated in law from the Sorbonne, joined the French army and escaped to the United States in 1941. He joined the U.S. Army and became Russian Liaison Officer [he was fluent in Russian, German, French and English] in Berlin in 1945. He later became a successful businessman in California;

Peter Witt, 1937-45 German military service and medical student in Berlin; 1952-53 Rockefeller Fellow and Harvard Officer, Department of Pharmacology, Harvard Medical School, Boston; 1966-80 Director of Research, Department of Mental Health, State of North Carolina and lecturer at the University of North Carolina;

Ernest Borneman, writer and expert on jazz, of whom we shall hear more later

- and so the list goes on.

Hitler would not have had it in mind to benefit the United States and other countries, such as Australia, when he began to mouth his obscenities and unleashed the mad-dog Brownshirts – but he did. Without the Nazi lunacy, masquerading as a political philosophy, Einstein would not have arrived at Princeton and, to select music as an example of the impoverishment of Germany to the profit of others, Hindemith would not have gone to Yale or Weill to New York, Otto Klemperer wouldn't have spent so many years in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills would not have had the privilege of burying the maestro Bruno Walter and America's symphony orchestras would not have been enriched by so many European virtuosi. The list of Europeans seeking sanctuary, who graced the intellectual and artistic landscape of the United States, would fill a large tome while Australia owes a considerable debt to the Dunera Boys[13] and other refugees for their achievements and contributions to the life of the nation. The Grünewald Gymnasium made a significant contribution to this migration of the intellect.

Grisha would later write about his new school that "when the offer of a place for me came, we accepted with alacrity in spite of the travel .....even now I feel that, as long as I had to go to school in Germany we could not have done better. This was due to Dr.Wilhelm Vilmar, who had transformed this school in the most privileged part of Berlin into an outstanding institution..... the pride of parents and pupils. How this conservative, honest and great man must have hated what he saw after his enforced retirement in 1933. [It] was the local high school of the poshest part of Berlin, where the rich and famous lived. So their children went there, as did the children of their drivers and servants and those of the local shopkeeper, so that we had a realistic population mix, with a high level of social aspirations..... In racial terms this made an unusual mix, rich in historic and in new Jewish names, because old-rich and new-rich liked living in villas in Grunewald or in the nearby Kurfürstendamm flats.

"Not knowing a soul amongst the towering German lads, with few Jewish faces around, I quietly sat down in the right seat of the front bench and remained in this position in the various classrooms until 1934. A bit later, a thin chap with reddish hair came to sit next to me. His name was Heinz Bing. At Easter 1934, the procession of matriculants was led by Bing (in navy-blue suit), followed by twelve Germans in Nazi uniform and me last (in navy-blue suit).....Such are the vagaries of fate and alphabetic sequencing."

Much of Germany's prosperity in the mid to late nineteen-twenties depended on foreign investment and this was already being withdrawn before the crash of the New York Stock exchange in October 1929. Germany suffered more than most countries from the world-wide Depression with unemployment reaching six million in 1932 and production falling by half. When Chancellor Brüning,[14] having been frustrated in the Reichstag by a combined opposition of Nationalists [yearning for another Kaiser], Nazis, Social Democrats and Communists, called for elections in September 1930, the doors were opened for the extremist parties. The Nazis and the Communists greatly increased their vote. Over the next two years the bumbling, political antics of other parties, the posturing of the Ruhr's industrial magnates, the manoeuvrings of incompetent Chancellors and a decrepit President Hindenburg[15] saw the Nazis emerge as the largest single Party in the Reichstag, with Hitler becoming Chancellor in January 1933. However, with the Social Democrats and the Centre

Party maintaining their numbers he still lacked a majority. This obstacle was soon overcome when fifty-two Nationalist members supported the Nazis. Determined not again to be frustrated, Hitler, after arresting or expelling the eighty-one Communist Deputies, forced the Enabling Act through the Reichstag. This Act authorised him to legislate without reference to President or parliament. Within a few months the Trade Unions were suppressed and, soon after, all political Parties, other than the Nationalist Socialist Party, were banned.

Nothing could now stand in the way of the Third Reich.[16] One historian would write: "The German scene was transformed by the entry of Hitler: never before had a man so malignant attained such power, nor a nation shown so little revulsion from evil."[17]

In May 1933 Grisha witnessed a scene that clearly portrayed to the world the totalitarian character of the Nazi regime. It was the burning of the books. This conflagration, which was to be repeated throughout many cities of Germany, took place on Unter den Linden, near the University of Berlin, and saw the burning of volumes of many German authors including Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Arnold and Stefan Zweig, Eric Maria Remarque, Walter Rathenau,[18] Albert Einstein and Hugo Preuss, who had drafted the Constitution of the Weimar Republic. Non-German authors, whose works were burnt, included André Gide, Sigmund Freud, Emile Zola, Marcel Proust, H.G.Wells, Upton Sinclair, Havelock Ellis and Jack London. The Reich Chamber of Culture was established in September 1933, with the Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, defining its role:

"In order to pursue a policy of German culture, it is necessary to gather together the creative artists in all spheres into a unified organisation under the leadership of the Reich. The Reich must not only determine the lines of progress, mental and spiritual, but also lead and organise the professions".

As the Nazi chief of propaganda Goebbels wielded total control of the arts and the media. He condemned all artists and journalists who were unacceptable to the Nazis and ordered the destruction of their work.

Official persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany began in April 1933 with a national boycott of Jewish shops, businesses and professionals. It was a time to show solidarity, even in the face of mindless brutality. A friend of Grisha, Leo Fialkoff, would later recall:
"After school, by prearrangement, two friends of mine, Grisha Sklovsky, Shura Gorenstein and I took the subway to the commercial centre of town. Grisha had a Czech passport [when the Sklovskys' Russian passports expired in 1932 Abram obtained Czech passports for the family], Shura a Soviet one and I a Polish one. All the Jewish stores had JUDE painted on doors and windows in white paint, often accompanied with a Star of David. In front was a uniformed stormtrooper to prevent people from going in. The three of us walked from store to store, flashed our passports, whereupon the stormtrooper stepped back from the door and some of them even saluted, and we went in to talk to the shopkeeper for a minute, and then went on to the next one."[19]

Many, particularly non-German Jews, determined it was time to move on. Preparations for yet another migration were being made even as the experiment of German democracy in the Weimar Republic came to its miserable end. Grisha's cousin, Stassia, returned to Harbin after her graduation in 1933. Her sister Raya married Tossia Peschkowsky, a medical doctor, and they joined their relatives in Harbin. Tossia's brother Paul, also a doctor, married the daughter of the Jewish politician Kurt Landsberger, murdered by Nazis in 1926, and they managed to get to the United States where their son, Michael Peschkowsky, changed his name to Mike Nichols and became a well known cabaret entertainer and film director.[20] Leo Fialkoff, whose mother had been a friend of Chaja Sklovsy in Russia, moved to Paris to complete his schooling and then studied law. They were followed by the Nesviginsky family, whose son Alex went to study arts/law in Paris. Ernest Borneman was expelled for lampooning the new headmaster; without proper papers he infiltrated a group of Nazi schoolboys on a trip to England; once there he publicly thanked them for aiding his escape from the Fatherland and won asylum in the UK. The Herzenberg family, close friends of the Sklovskys, managed to get their son Erwin to England in 1935 and later to Australia where he studied chemistry; Erwin's family disappeared in the war years. The Juda family, German citizens who had never believed the Nazis would come to power, but were convinced otherwise by 1933, made plans to leave; the son, Walter, who was to play a

significant role in Grisha's destiny, left immediately to study in France and by 1935 his parents had moved to Palestine.

Grisha still had a year of study before his *abitur* [matriculation] and it was to be a year in which life at the Grunewald Gymnasium became increasingly stressful. Many students were now attending school in their Hitler Youth uniforms, complete with swastika armbands, and some teachers sported Nazi Party buttons in their lapels. One of them, Goslich, wore his stormtrooper uniform in class and began a campaign of intimidation against the Jewish students who remained. Grisha, determined to survive until his final exams, was not defeated.

"It would be impossible to recount the almost daily provocations, petty attacks and condescending compliments to which I was constantly exposed and for which I even learnt to prepare. My fate was luckier than most of his victims and perhaps he gave me a special survival training course."

After World War II Goslich reapplied for a teaching position at Grünewald but was rejected.

Early in 1934 Grisha passed the *abitur* with excellent results.

"My matriculation certificate lists fourteen subjects. Thirteen of these we had maintained throughout secondary school. The fourteenth was the obscene, phoney 'racial science', introduced by the Nazis as a compulsory discipline, without which no matriculation certificate could be issued. There were six hard subjects: German, French, English, mathematics, physics and chemistry; three semi-hard subjects: geography, history and biology and four soft subjects: religion, art, sport and industrial drawing. This list exceeds by two the normal German matriculation at that time. The standards in maths and science were the highest available because at thirteen I had selected the most science-oriented of the available courses, having dropped Latin too early and not started classical Greek. A few years later I regretted this choice, because some classicists joined us in the high maths and science levels for the last two years and experienced few problems, having achieved the bonus of a deeper education in the meantime."

Thirty years later he was invited to join the ex-students' association. He replied:

"I am not very keen in joining any kind of association which will bring back a past I do not wish to remember and where many personalities may be doubtful as far as I am concerned. On my recent overseas trip I saw a few old school friends, some of whom I did not hear about since leaving Berlin..... Many of the others I know about I do not want to see again. I have also been in touch with one of my old teachers whom I had known as a decent man through very hard times – and heard that some others received their just recompense after the war..... after spending some very hard years in the school and having suffered family losses subsequently, I cannot consider joining the association."

Grisha's father, despite a threatening heart condition, had maintained a demanding program of work and travel. His investments in Poland had flourished but required detailed and constant supervision. The Bristol Hotel in Warsaw became his second home and it was there, on 6 March 1934, that Abram Sklovsky died of a heart attack. He was fifty years of age. Chaja, with her children, immediately travelled to Warsaw to arrange the funeral and organise the management of the businesses. She and Sophie would leave Germany as soon as possible. There was now nothing to hold Grisha to Berlin and by late April he was in Paris.

Chapter Three

## Lyon

The years 1933-1934 should have left no one in any doubt that the peace and security of Europe, indeed, of the world, would be confronted by many challenges. Apart from the installation of Hitler as dictator of Germany, political diarists noted:

In March 1933 Japan announces it will leave the League of Nations and its army continues its campaign south from Manchuria; Germany opens its first concentration camp at Dachau; Austria's Chancellor Dollfuss bans the Nazi Party and in July 1934 he is murdered; Germany withdraws from the League of Nations and its Disarmament Conference; artists, writers, scientists, musicians, Jewish and non-Jewish, leave Germany; in Romania the fascist Iron Guard murders Prime Minister Ion Duca; riots in Paris, February 1934, lead to the resignation of Daladier's ministry and the formation of a new ministry with the connivance of Pierre Laval; Oswald Mosley leads mass meeting of British Union of Fascists in London, June 1934 and in September there are fascist and anti-fascist demonstrations in Hyde Park. Mosley would later lead the Union of Fascists in anti-Semitic marches through the streets of London.

Writing from Paris in 1934, the novelist and political essayist, Joseph Roth, observed: "European culture is much older than the European nation-states. Greece, Rome, Israel, Christendom and Renaissance, the French Revolution and Germany's eighteenth century, the polyglot music of Austria and the poetry of the Slavs: these are the forces that have formed Europe. These forces have combined to form European solidarity and the cultural conscience of Europe..... The League of Nations in Geneva should declare that all people of whatever race are equal and that any nation that disagrees should be thrown out. And therefore Germany as presently configured – the Third Reich, in other words – should be denied the standing of every other European country..... Germany should be quarantined: then European solidarity will be restored..... The enemy is the Third Reich."[21]

However, as we know, the Third Reich was not interested in the opinions of writers, arguments concerning morality and ethics or judgements of the League of Nations.

When Grisha Sklovsky left Berlin he headed for France because he wanted to study at l'Ecôle Supérieure de Chimie de Lyon. The director of this university during 1921-35 was

Victor Grignard, Nobel laureate in 1912. He was succeeded, 1936-46, by another brilliant scientist, Louis Meunier. Walter Juda had enrolled there in 1933 and he, and another friend, Louis Ferney, convinced Grisha that it was the pre-eminent place for their studies. From April 1934 Grisha worked hard at his French and prepared for the entrance examinations to Lyon which he passed in July. Chaja, after spending many months arranging the family affairs in Poland and Berlin, arrived in Paris a year later and settled in an apartment, across the Seine from the Eiffel Tower, in the 16th arrondissement. Either in Berlin or Paris, Chaja adopted the name Anna. Certainly, throughout her time in France she signed her letters "Anna" or "A". and she was known by that name to family and friends.

Grisha leased an apartment in Lyon and settled into being a serious student. He enjoyed the study, he enjoyed life and was not short of money. There is no evidence that he was concerned over political events in the next few years, a tumultuous time for France and for all of Europe. He played tennis, went skiing in the French Alps, enjoyed card games, becoming expert at bridge and always enjoyed travel in the vacations: England every year, the Adriatic coast, Cannes and the Riviera, Venice, Belgium and frequent trips to Paris to see his mother and friends. Anna and he made several trips to Poland and Berlin in connection with their business affairs. In 1936 his friend Leo Fialkoff, who was studying in Paris, joined him for a driving holiday through England and Scotland, a venture that would live in their memories:

"We managed to find a Morris Cowley for twenty-five pounds, a large slice of our holiday money. We even had an arrangement with a chap I knew to sell it in a month for twenty-six pounds. With Leo driving, we decided to first get driving experience [it was their first car] by visiting some friends in Worthing. It took us two days to get there because the generator broke down in Leatherhead and we had to spend about ten pounds.... We travelled north but near Liverpool we had to spend money on the carburettor and near Loch Ness a halfshaft broke – and we had to join the AA as well as buy a new one. Financial crisis was upon us. We got to northernmost Scotland and headed south. After changing a tyre somewhere we were coming downhill in a wide curve into a town called Dunblane, when I suddenly saw our front left wheel roll across the road. The car slowly turned around and very slowly lay on its side. We extricated ourselves without damage but found more bits of the Cowley spread

across the road. A garage proprietor arrived and offered us repairs for thirty pounds – or five pounds for the car in situ. Half-an-hour later we were in a train to London."

On another visit to London he stayed with Ernest Borneman who had been expelled from the Grunewald Gymnasium. Ernest was working in the production of documentary films and his leisure-time was spent debating politics in his flat with students from around the world, many of whom were enrolled in the London School of Economics, including Kwame Nkrumah, first Prime Minister and President of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta, first Prime Minister of independent Kenya and Eric Williams who became Prime Minister of Trinidad.

Grisha was somewhat of a hypochondriac at that time but an encounter with a doctor in Lyon finally released him from that irritation.

"My own thermometer was in frequent use and there was inspection of the throat and ever on the look-out for other symptoms. This lasted until my second year at university, when I called a doctor for some ominous cold symptoms. My fear of TB from my mother's family and heart ailments from the Sklovskys was rampant. The good doctor prescribed a range of medications, confined me to bed for two days and then, noticing my skis in the corner, said: 'I hope you are not one of those crazy young men who go to the mountain four to six hours away, put on skis that same day and return late at night for next day's work. You need one day of rest and recovery on the mountain and one day when back in Lyon'. No miracle cure could have been more potent for the doctor was attacking what we considered very ordinary behaviour. I paid him, tore up the prescriptions, got dressed and went to the bistro to play bridge."

Despite his enjoyment of the good life he never neglected his studies. In fact, he worked very hard and was an outstanding student. On 11 July 1935 he was awarded the Certificat de Minéralogie, on 3 July 1936 the Certificat de Chimie Générale and, on 22 June 1937, the Certificat de Chimie Industrielle. He was well on the way to his doctorate.

Throughout these years, the intentions of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy are abundantly clear to those with eyes to see and ears to hear. In March 1935 the Disarmament Clauses of the Treaty of

Versailles are repudiated and conscription introduced in Germany; 15 September 1935 Hitler announces the anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws: legislation will define Jewishness, Jews are banned from the professions, marriage and sexual intercourse with non-Jews are forbidden; 7 March 1936 Germany again violates the Treaty of Versailles by occupying the Rhineland; 5 May 1936 the Italian army occupies Addis Ababa; 1 November 1936 Mussolini proclaims the Rome-Berlin axis; 25 November Germany recognises Japan's regime in Manchuria; 11 December 1937 Italy withdraws from the League of Nations; 4 February 1938 Hitler declares himself Commander-in-Chief of the German army; 20 February 1938 British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, resigns in protest at Prime Minister Chamberlain's conduct of foreign policy; 12 March 1938 German troops enter Austria; 29-30 September 1938 Munich Conference: Chamberlain and France's Prime Minister Daladier, Hitler and Mussolini agree to Germany's occupation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland; on his return to London, Chamberlain asserts he has brought back "peace with honour. I believe it is peace in our time"; 1 October 1938, Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty, Duff Cooper, resigns in protest at the Munich Agreement; 6 October 1938 the Grand Fascist Council of Italy passes anti-Semitic legislation; 9 November 1938 Kristallnacht, the Night of the Crystals, when synagogues, Jewish houses, shops and schools are burnt and many Jews are murdered; 15 November Jewish children are expelled from German schools; 13 December the Decree on Aryanization is enacted which allows for the compulsory expropriation of Jewish-owned industries, businesses and shops.

Chamberlain's "peace with honour" had been bought by the craven behaviour of both England and France towards Czechoslovakia throughout 1938 and many in England knew it, even Ministers of the Crown, as evidenced by the resignations of Eden and Duff Cooper who opined: "I profoundly distrust our foreign policy". Cooper's wife, Diana, recalled Churchill sending a very Churchillian note to her husband:

"Your speech [of resignation] was one of the finest Parliamentary performances I have ever heard. It was admirable in form, massive in argument and shone with courage and public spirit."

*The Times*, a champion of appeasement and backer of Chamberlain, felt obliged to record that "the general character of the terms submitted to the Czech Government for their consideration cannot in the nature of things be expected to make a strong prima facie appeal to them." Another publication, *The Week*, considered Chamberlain had turned "all four cheeks" to Hitler. Yet, many in Britain, only nineteen years from the charnel house of

World War I, looked upon their Prime Minister as a hero. On his return fom Munich, huge crowds were waiting for him at Downing Street:
"It must have been marvellous. Everyone went absolutely mad and mobbed the car, calling out 'Good old Neville', singing *He's a Jolly Good Fellow* and *God Save the King*". Daladier did not expect such a reception when his plane landed at Le Bourget but the waiting crowds did applaud him, throwing him flowers and shouting "Vive Daladier". He would regret the shame of Munich which, he later admitted, only postponed the inevitable.

Shortly after the Munich Agreement, a young Australian woman in London received a letter from Melbourne, Australia. The writer was her mother:
"I am so awfully pleased that you feel you are really getting on with your painting. I do so want you to satisfy yourself and fill your life happily with either that or marriage – but not the latter if it has to be a foreigner! So I hope you are still heart whole, in spite of all the temptations to belong to other nations. I do hope you will still remain British and live out here. Father went to a huge dinner at the Melbourne Club last night for Mr Bruce[22] – whose speech was most interesting and he really knows all there is to be known about the inside workings of the British Govt. – owing to his position and the tremendous respect felt for his opinions in England. He says England did not treat Czechs badly – they treated us badly in not carrying out the agreement of treating the minorities fairly and letting them live in perfect freedom – when they were given those territories by Versailles – that England had never promised to go to their help - only France had done that – and that Beneš[23] had always been an unreliable man – (tho' that was not for publication) – there were no reporters present, of course, being in the Club. He has a tremendous opinion of Mr Chamberlain and his work and strength of character and courage."

The recipient of this letter was twenty-three year old Celia Weigall of Melbourne, the youngest of six children born to Dr Gerald Weigall and his wife Maud. Dr Weigall also wrote to his daughter:
"It is frequently argued that a strong Germany is the best buffer we can have to a Soviet Russia over-running Europe."

The Weigalls were Anglican, a distinguished, establishment family, linked by marriage to other prominent families in Australia, the Raleighs, the a'Becketts, the Boyds. After leaving school Celia had studied commercial art, turned to fashion design but found there was "a lot to dislike in the fashion world". She returned to art classes and in 1937 determined to visit Europe to paint and study at the great art galleries. She arrived in London early in 1938 and spent most of that year in England with short trips to the continent. In September she was offered, through mutual friends, a live-in position, an *au-pair*, with a family in Lyon, all accommodation and living provided in exchange for English conversation and some tutoring in English. She was excited at the prospect and wrote to her mother:

"I am awfully glad to hear you don't object to my going to stay with some foreign family and I am very thrilled at the prospect of going to Lyon..... Apparently, they are extremely nice and interesting people, living in a charming house and have a daughter of about my age who speaks passable English but wishes to improve her accent. They would be willing to have me for two or three months which would carry me through the coldest part of Winter."

The family's name was Molino and the daughter Renée was engaged to a chemistry student who had arrived in Lyon from Berlin in 1933, Walter Juda.

Celia arrived in Lyon in November and immediately felt at home. It was an active, social household where many visitors were always welcome. She helped Renée with her English, tutored some students, met Jewish refugees from several countries and did quite a bit of painting. Not long after arriving, she was at a cinema and during interval she asked a young man to light her cigarette. A few days later "she ran into the Molinos' home, laughing and carrying a balloon" and was astonished to see the man from the cinema there, visiting his friends the Molinos and Walter, his good friend from Berlin days. There is no doubt that Grisha Sklovsky was immediately attracted to the young Australian (she was, in fact, nine months older than he) and, while it took a little longer, she very definitely became attracted to him. As early as December, a month after arriving in Lyon, she was attempting (possibly unsuccessfully) to reassure her mother:

"Oh, it's so magic. The snow is falling and the garden is sparkling and my stockings are frozen onto the line! I'm so <u>awfully</u> happy here and it becomes better and better as Renée and I grow to understand one another..... She is a person of so much independent thought – so

very definitely herself and so passionately alive.... Another thing that rather thrilled me this week is the discovery that I am apparently a remarkably good dancer! Without exception, everyone I danced with the other night told either Grisha or myself that I was either the best dancer in the room or something like that..... I do enjoy it so. Grisha likes me, I think, and is invariably nice to me and thoughtful etc – but don't wonder. Heart unaffected."

A change of subject seemed to be advisable.

"I've been reading one of Huxley's books – *Point Counterpoint* – which I can't put down though it alternately intrigues and infuriates me. He is clever."

Her mother kept asking questions which she found difficult to answer. Celia wrote:

"I have heard of many horrible things which make my blood run cold about the way they are treated in Germany.... I don't know about average Jews but Walter Bernough (a Swiss friend of Grisha's) and Grisha strike me as being an extraordinary fine type of person" and "Yes, I do realise how lucky I am to be accepted by a French family.... But, as you can see, the Molinos are open minded in every way and accept people on their own value, be they Australians, Jews, Russians or Socialists, Swiss, French or ardent Catholics. If they like them, they do."

Over the next few months Celia and Grisha spent a great deal of time together. They went to Paris to meet Anna and Sophie, travelled to London, through Burgundy and Provence and enjoyed the Winter sports in the French Alps. She wrote weekly to her mother and Grisha appeared constantly in her letters. "He appeared at the Molinos for a surprise birthday party and gave me two Penguin books"; ".... on Friday night Grisha took me to a rather posh dance which I enjoyed"; "Grisha really is a dear and amuses me so much with his self-confidence and energy and kindness and organising ability – I wish I could give you a proper word-picture. He is such an amusingly full-blooded personality"; "I'm enclosing a photo of self and Grisha taken at Valloire". At Valloire they met a young Sikh, Khushwant Singh, who was studying law in England and was in the Alps learning to ski. He was to become a close, life-long friend. After a night of drinking champagne, Grisha and Khushwant arrived very late for breakfast and Celia, not amused, berated them:

"I don't know why you can't get down to breakfast in the hotel in good time, like Christians".

She was astounded when the miscreants, the Jew and the Sikh, collapsed roaring with laughter.

She had entered a world of which she had no experience. Multilingual, multicultural, educated, it was a world of enquiry and discovery. All were welcome, if the mind was open, impossible to enter if the mind was closed. Celia loved it, although she knew it was a challenge to her own tradition and background. In her letters she was often writing in search of herself as much as attempting to convince middle-Australia, in the person of her mother, that, if she was changing, it was all for the better:

"…. and don't worry about me mentally. I think I have changed and grown up since you saw me…. Oh God, if only we could be more honest with ourselves and other people. To be really honest with myself is what I want more than anything now…. Madame Sklovsky, I don't know when I have seen a woman who combines such beauty with such charm…. How I hate the idea of leaving them in Lyon forever. Grisha and I get along amazingly well considering his life and mine."

Grisha took her to the Russian Ball in Paris and then to the nightclubs in Montparnasse and she felt she "was seeing life with a capital L…..I know it will be a bit tricky when I get back but I will feel that I have failed miserably in this whole trip if I do find myself lost and miserable. You see, I have been trying so hard to develop a Celia who is a fairly complete thing – at least partly self-sufficient – at least to be able to give and enjoy affection…. to develop appreciations which are not tied to any special age or place. Oh, I can't express it properly – I will not come back a spoilt child. I've always looked upon cosmopolitan as a thing right out of my reach…. but these people are so natural and easy. I try to be unselfish but when I think I have been, I find I have some ulterior motive like wanting to be loved."

The originally planned two or three months in Lyon had extended to more than five months and she was "feeling such a happy and complete person, happy in a way I have never been happy before" – but it was time to leave. She did not return to Lyon after a visit to Paris with Grisha but travelled to Belgium, northern France, Switzerland and then to England. She wasn't happy to be leaving France.

"I hated arriving here [England], hated the rain, hated the woman who pushed past me to the Customs, hated the lines of grey-black houses and the dismal respectability of the streets.... I very much enjoyed my last week in Paris.... spent a lovely afternoon in the country with Madame Sklovsky. She's a delightful person and we got along beautifully and understood one another perfectly."

There was much for her to think about and coping with her mother's anxieties was becoming increasingly difficult.

"My chief concern at the moment is knowing how worried you must be – to see Paris you could not believe anything is wrong. She seems as gay and charming as ever, flooded with English and American tourists. Darling, I know it will worry you stiff but if by any chance I am held up here for a bit, don't worry about me more than you can help."

In March 1939, no one, except perhaps British Prime Minister Chamberlain, is surprised when Hitler takes over Bohemia and Moravia in Czechoslovakia, the regions becoming a German Protectorate, and places Slovakia under German "protection". On 21 March Germany demands of Poland the Free City of Danzig and in April Italy invades Albania. In May Hitler and Mussolini sign a ten-year political and military alliance – the so-called Pact of Steel.

Within days of leaving Celia in Paris, Grisha was writing her letters which reveal their relationship as being far more serious than she had indicated to her mother. Now she was away from the Lyon scene, which she had so loved and where she had found love, she began to worry about the future at home in Australia. There was no doubting the personal attraction but questions of class, race, anti-Semitism were now being raised. The following extract is from a very long letter, written by Grisha over two days, 18-19 April 1939:

"Darling.... I have become completely shy in writing to you, for I am afraid my bad English might spoil the picture..... you may see an astonished or disappointed expression of your family hearing you would like to marry a Jew.... I think that from the social point of view I am quite able to be shown in society.... (I promise to take the cigaret out of my mouth)."

He tells her he had been accepted in non-Jewish circles "in France, England and even in Germany in 1934!!!.....and that would happen in Melbourne..... We both are not religious for we are tolerant and respect the other's opinion.... The only thing I need is a fair start.... see how we belong to the same class, class in the sense of moral and mental development....

everything is of secondary importance if two honest and frank persons love and trust each other..... A great difficulty will be to overmount with your parents.... personal contact will do more than letters and descriptions."

After this letter there was practically no further discussion between them of these matters, despite continuing pressure from Melbourne. Ten days later he wrote that he was being paid to translate Hitler's speeches into French and was much amused by the irony:

"Making money through Hitler is a satisfactory thing for a Jew."

In May he astonished her with the news:

"I have inscribed into the Czechoslovakian legion in case of war as a volunteer – a lot of idealistic reasons."

He later tried to explain:

"I decided not to go like cattle to defend Chamberlain (he had been appalled by the Munich agreement), Wall Street, the City and the international iron industry..... but to go with the only people who fight <u>for</u> something.... There is no Jewish legion and to go in a regular French army, no thanks."

He had great admiration for the Czech leader Beneš and his courage. Nevertheless, he felt that chances of war in the near future were remote.

This "new" Czech Legion was the result of Germany's occupation of their country. With the breaking-up of the army, many officers and other ranks escaped to Poland and then Rumania. With plans to re-establish a Czech force in France, Czechs in eastern Europe and the Balkans made their way to Syria and then by ship to Marseille. With the agreement of the French Government, the Czech Government-in-exile mobilised all Czech subjects in France. For Grisha it was a preferable alternative to the French Army which, he knew, had harboured anti-Semitic elements since the fiasco of the Dreyfus Affair forty years earlier.

Back in London Celia received a letter from her father, expressing concern about the political situation and asking her, had she considered, in the event of war, "the risk of not being able to return for four or five years – knowing what she [Celia's mother] is like when your letters are a day late. We find your letters <u>very</u> interesting and full of curious reflections and sides of life of which I know nothing.... your mother has been a great anxiety

to me since you left.... It is fairly depressing here with mother so down – Goodbye dear – I am longing to see you again and I think you are a great girl – Your affectionate Father".

About the same time Celia heard from Grisha.

"I am glad you spent so many time with my mother – that is the best sign of her liking you, for she is very exclusif and dislikes company of people she does not enjoy".

Later he could write: "I am glad that my mother likes you, for she never would have been like that with you if it was not her sympathy for you."

And as she crossed over to England: "I hope you had a good crossing – did they not examine you for the disappeared Watteau picture in the Louvre, for the first description was: a tall lady with clear eyes and fair hair. I hope, dear, you would have taken a Bruegel, a van Gogh or a Rembrandt – but not a Watteau."

Then he heard about the letter from her father: "I think you really must go home now.... to help your mother – you never did anything wrong and no reproach."

More than occasionally, his European languages would take over and he would finish a sentence with "isn't it so?".

She made arrangements to return to Australia, sailing out of Marseille in July. On the way to the south of France she would return to Lyon and be with Grisha, when he would appear in a public defence of his thesis, which he had dedicated to his father, his mother, as "testimony of my affection and gratitude" and to his sister. From the Café-Brasserie in Place du Pont, Lyon, where he penned many of his letters, he wrote:

"..... a pity we shall have not more time together.... let us be happy together these days.... there's a final dinner for all of us graduates..... We could leave for the south the same night ..... and we shall spend the last days entirely alone – Grisha"

On 10 July he defended his thesis, on methacrylic resins, before the faculty, in a public lecture theatre with Celia watching from a gallery. She thought the experience "unforgettable, with his natural, friendly confidence". He was awarded his Doctorate in Chemical Engineering with the citation, *très honorable*.

From Lyon they travelled to Avignon and 14 July they were in Marseille. It was Bastille Day but they were not in the mood to join in the celebrations. He sat with her in her cabin on board the P & O *Strathnaver*, picked up a sheet of the ship's letterhead and wrote:
"I just want to tell you how I love you and how I want to be soon with you again – Your Grisha".
Neither recorded whether they had noticed the Latin motto on the letterhead: *Quis nos separabit* – Who will separate us?

Celia wrote to her mother:
"My last week in Lyon was just lovely – doing things of the simplest nature and just loving it. The dinner celebrating the graduations was marvellous – everyone so joyful. Dear old Grisha saw me down to Marseille – arrived here in time to see my luggage was all right, have dinner and see the fireworks in the city.... I do hope our paths will cross again."

From Marseille he travelled immediately to Paris to obtain a visa for Australia as he intended to join her there before the end of the year. The political scene, however, was developing faster than he realised and his future would be determined not by his planning but by the ambitions of nations. By the end of August children were being evacuated from Paris and women and children from London. He had already heard of the Nazi-Soviet Pact which provided for the partition of Poland and realised the Sklovsky investments in that country were lost.
"I never thought the Russians would be so disgusting.... In Europe I lost my nationality, the big part of our fortune but I found you, darling, and I finished my education."
On 1 September he was sitting in the office of the manager of the Westminster Bank in London when the BBC broadcast that the Germans were bombing Poland. A few days later he wrote:
"My only darling – The last hope that Germany could be reasonable has gone – my first impression was right, the optimistic outlooks were nonsense I have my military papers and am waiting for orders."

On 4 September Grisha's mother wrote to Celia:

Ma chère Celia,

Thank you for your letter. The events of the last days are so serious and grave and we do not know what is happening. Sophie is separated from us and it is impossible for her to come to Paris. Grisha's fate is unknown and I am staying in Paris with him until he leaves. I hope that God will protect us and the day will come when we will all be together. I am content that you find yourself among your family surrounded by tenderness. I retain the best memories of you and of the time we spent together at our home and I hope that if we stay among the living we will meet again.

With my best wishes for us all

Votre A. Sklovsky

Grisha found Sophie with friends in Brittany and arranged for her return to to Paris.

The Czechoslovakian Army's Headquarters in France were established at Agde in the south of France between Béziers and Montpellier, a camp of huts having been established there to house some of the refugees escaping over the Pyrenees from Spain's civil war. Grisha arived there 19 October as an army private and immediately began the study of the Czech language. By early 1940 this force numbered 11400 men of whom 4000 were Jews from all over Europe. In view of his educational qualifications he expected to be referred to the Officers' School but in this he was to be continually disappointed. Apart from the regular army officers who had escaped from Czechoslovakia, it was essentially a volunteer force. The *other ranks* contained large numbers of professionals, medical, legal, scientific and managerial. Dozens of medical doctors, most of them enjoying the rank of private, were later transferred to the British Army which was short of doctors. Grisha was to discover promotion of the volunteers was not favoured by the regular officers. Army life was a shock to the young man who had always enjoyed great freedom, the only real discipline having been self-imposed in driving himself through his studies. Nor did he find the Spartan conditions of barracks life at all appealing. When on leave, he would occasionally head for Béziers, book into a hotel for a bath, a good meal and a cigar and realise:

".... what an invention, hot water! The time I am here brought me to realise the marvels of the life I was leading and in future, I promise to be more grateful for everything."

Over the next few months he occasionally saw Leo Fialkoff, who had joined the French Army and was stationed not far from Agde. Leo would later recall:
"I will be driving through Perpignan on the way to Spain. It will be the first time there since the week-end you and I spent there together 24 years ago when we met on week-end passes from our respective army camps. For some reason I remember most distinctly the dressing down you got in the street from some sergeant or such – was it for not saluting or for untidy uniform? Would not put either one past you!"
Walter Juda was in an internment camp, as were all German citizens. He had obtained his doctorate three days before Grisha and had a visa for the United States where he intended to pursue his studies and research. Released on the condition he left the country he and Renée sailed out of Le Havre on 10 November. By December he was an assistant to a Harvard professor and had his own laboratory, while Renée was enrolled at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, where she continued her study of economics.

Before Grisha left Paris for Agde he sent, via Celia, a letter to her mother:
"I am sorry to understand that at the moment, and for a long time, I will be a stranger for you, not at all the person you saw for Celia – I can't give you an argument in my favour except, the one - 'I love, Celia' - and I think she loves me and we both are sure of the other's human qualities. Our love is not blind.... we found a harmony of views and ideas which went so deep that we often wondered how we could get so near.... [given] the differences of country, education, life, race and that shows us we are right – but that, of course, is no argument for a mother.... I only ask you not to judge me too hard for my love of Celia."
It is not certain that Celia passed this letter on to her mother.

Chapter Four

## The Czech Brigade

The local people welcomed the Czech troops. "It is touching to see how the people here treat us – whenever we arrive in a place a lot of women come out with wine and something to eat, everybody makes us presents in the shops and restaurants – they see in us their sons and relatives who are, at present, 'somewhere in France'. This is much more in the villages than in the towns, of course, but even in towns you remark it... this attitude is simply remarkable."
Then he heard that Lyon had been bombed.
"One is morally ready for war – and yet, to hear that a town one knows so well and especially the town where I was the most happy in all my life – that our town has been bombed...."

On 9 April 1940 Germany invades Denmark and Norway; 7 May Winston Churchill becomes Britain's Prime Minister, leading a coalition government; 10-14 May Germany invades Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

The Czech Army was put into battle on 10 June on the south bank of the Marne and was not long involved. By then the German blitzkrieg was unstoppable and the French and Czech forces were soon in retreat. The retreat became a rout and for the Czech forces there was the added threat that Germany did not recognise them as a legitimate force and prisoners were treated harshly. By the time France surrendered, 2500 of the Czech troops had been killed or taken prisoner. The escape from the Marne area, just ahead of the German Army, was totally chaotic with tens of thousands of panic-stricken civilians, on foot and any sort of wheels, short of food and fuel, competing with the armies for road space. Grisha's group, in a few trucks, was trying to cross the Loire over the bridge at Gien when they were strafed and more were killed. They continued south, not knowing where the rest of the troops or their command were.
"I know what it was to travel by road at this time – roads overcrowded and one often had to wait hours to make one kilometre – and then the air-raids and the bombs and the machine-guns, the lack of petrol even for military - several times I had to tear out a gun to get some gallons for our convoy."

In the documentary film *The Sorrow and the Pity* (Marcel Ophuls producer 1969) a future Prime Minister of France, Pierre Mendès-France, would describe how "....there was this tremendous groundswell of panic-stricken, frightened people.... On the roads people were losing their heads, panicked by the bombardments, taking along with them what little they had been able to gather...carts...bicycles. It was a strange and dreadful sight.... the Germans did not hesitate to bomb or machine-gun these columns of refugees.... corpses of men, women, horses, shells of automobiles.... a real vision of hell.... this flood of people heading for the South....there was in certain military circles a state of mind.... they entered the war without enthusiasm.... I do not say they were traitors.... but still the attitude 'better Hitler than Léon Blum' had done a great deal of damage in bourgeois circles.... and those were circles that many military men belonged to".

A few days later, after the French surrender, the Czechs were given the option of demobilization with the French Army or getting out of France but in these first hours the only thought was to escape and reach England. They knew the Germans were already occupying or bombing the Atlantic ports so they kept going south. By scrounging and trading for fuel they managed to get as far as Bordeaux.

"The town overcrowded with refugees of all kinds, full of cars and people camping in every street, on every place – no idea what to do, where to go.... in the evening someone told us there was a ship with some of our people and was leaving for England – some of us decided to go, others to stay – I didn't know, without news of my mother and sister – absolute no idea.....then in the blackout the most tremendous rain started. I saw myself walking through the darkness, to the docks, feeling perhaps an emigrant, lost, drowning – and then I thought of Celia and I was running to the ship.....and they refused to take us.....exhausted we returned to our lorries which had been looted but the tents were still there and we put up tents among the crowds in Place du Quinconce [Esplanade des Quinconces] and lay down on the pavement....without a future."

It was from Bordeaux that General Charles de Gaulle flew to England on 17 June, intent on bringing back into the war "not only some Frenchmen but France itself". The French Government, also at that time in Bordeaux, was in a state of total collapse and the General

was to be “the man of destiny”. They were days of momentous pronouncements from several leaders and their words were destined to be remembered for their courage and inspiration – and some for their infamy. Marshall Pétain had already conceded utter and ignominious defeat, no matter what the price – “.... the fighting must stop. I applied to the enemy”.

Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons in the afternoon of 18 June: “.... the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization.... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: ‘This was their finest hour’.”

That evening, through BBC Radio, de Gaulle spoke to the French people:

“But has the last word been said? Has hope vanished? Is this defeat final? No! .... This war is not confined to our unhappy country. This war has not been decided by the Battle of France. It is a world-wide war.... in the world there are all the means for one day crushing our enemies... Whatever happens, the flame of French resistance must not and shall not go out.”

The Vichy authorities ordered a court-martial at Clermont-Ferrand to consider charges against de Gaulle. They found him guilty of desertion, of entering the service of a foreign power and sentenced him to death. The General dismissed the whole procedure as irrelevant, null and void and said he would “discuss the matter with the people of Vichy after the war”.

From Bordeaux the Czech soldiers headed south towards Biarritz and in the port of Bayonne they found a Yugoslav coal-carrier. No lover of the Germans, and happy to accept two bottles of Three Star Martel, the captain agreed to take them to England although there was virtually no food on board and they would have to travel in the coal hold. Uniforms were abandoned, those who had passports gave them to stateless civilians at the port and five days later Grisha and his group, some eighty in number, were in Liverpool. In all some 3500 [1800 officers and 1700 other ranks] arrived in England from the 14000 that had set out from Agde. With later arrivals from the Middle East and other countries the Czech Army in England eventually numbered 12000.

By 22 June 1940 France and Germany determine the terms of the armistice with France being divided into two zones: the German-occupied north and south-west and an unoccupied French State. After the collapse of their military forces the French Government moves to Bordeaux but Germany will not permit the Government to operate in a coastal city and accordingly, it moves to the dreary, central-France city of Vichy. On 28 June Churchill recognises General Charles de Gaulle as leader of the Free French. The French Third Republic dies without honour on 10 July and, the next day, Marshal Petain[24] becomes President of Vichy France with Pierre Laval[25] vice-President. They very shortly reveal what type of government they will offer their defeated and cowed nation. In August the Marchandeau Decree, punishing defamation or injury in the press and forbidding racial insults, is repealed, allowing for the most vicious writings of the professional anti-Semites – and in France there are many of them. In October, all Jewish-owned-businesses must employ an Aryan supervisor which results in the theft of Jewish property and, in the same month, the Vichy cabinet approves the first Statut des Juifs which reflects the Nazis' Nuremberg Laws. A Commission for Jewish Affairs is established with Xavier Vallat, a notorious anti-Semite, appointed its first Commissioner.

Much of the fascist, racist behaviour of the Vichy regime was not unexpected by those who had studied the French political scene in the twentieth century and particularly throughout the 'thirties. Anti-Republican, anti-Semitic organisations such as Action Française, the Ligue des Croix-de-Feu and Solidarité Française all flourished in the 'thirties. A future President of France, Francois Mitterand, joined Volontaides Nationaux, the youth section of the Ligue des Croix-de-Feu, took part in a demonstration against Jewish students of Polish origin and contributed an article to *L'Echo de Paris*, a journal sympathetic to Mussolini. The electoral success of the Popular Front and the government led by Léon Blum further inflamed the anti-liberal forces in French society. Blum, a man of courage, a French patriot and a Jew, was confronted with the French fascists' taunt: "Better Hitler than Blum". By 1938 there were nearly fifty anti-Semitic newspapers and magazines published throughout France including *Candide, Gringoire* and *L'Action Française* [long published by the Action Française organisation]. Many publications and journals were happy to promote Nazi and Fascist propaganda provided they were paid for their efforts. Two journalists, one from *Le Temps,* the other from *Le Figaro,* confessed to receiving bribes, millions of francs from the Nazis. They were but two of the many French journalists who had long been on the

Nazi payroll. There was a reaction from Christian organisations and the publications *La Vie Catholique* [explicitly opposed to Action Française], *Sept* [published by the Dominicans], *Le Bulletin catholique international* and others all fought against the virulence of anti-Semitism and extreme right-wing policies.

The Czech soldiers, out of Bayonne and deep in the coal hole, did not know what to expect when they arrived in England - if they survived the U-Boats in the Atlantic. They were, in fact, "marvellously received, so humanly treated by the English officials and the population". The debriefing English officers were astonished to find one of the Czech Privates held a Doctorate in Chemistry with his own original research and was fluent in five languages and they continued to be astonished to find many other privates qualified as doctors in medicine and other disciplines. Grisha had hopes that his qualifications would be more gainfully employed in England. As more Czech survivors arrived in England, a large camp, under canvas, was established for them on a race-course. He found himself "sitting in a large tent, with a little paraffin stove and, for light, a candle in a wooden box which has seen better days when transporting apples.... two or three nights a week I am telephone orderly for the English and our command...the telephone does not ring so I can start chatting with you, my darling... my English improves, isn't it so?"

Another group of Czechs who later reached England recorded their experiences.
"We go to the Marne and we retreat to the Seine and then to the Loire and each time we dug and we fight but the troops on our flanks are not there in the morning. We march and we dig for a month and we live on chocolate and wine that we find. There are no supplies and no organisation. And finally we are near the Pyrenees and we are very despondent, but the Colonel telegraphs to President Beneš in London and there is a reply, somehow, that we are not forgotten and we do not despair.
"Then we have to decide whether to fight where we are or retreat into Spain, for there is an armistice (not for the Czechs), but from somewhere come trucks and we go to a port west of Marseille and we go on board some ships. I am lucky and am on one of those ships but my friend is not lucky and we sail without him.

"He hides and he finds a French ship going to Morocco later, so he goes there. There, too, he is faced with internment, so he finds another French ship and that is going to Martinique in the West Indies and he goes on that. Martinique, too, is Vichy, so he leaves the ship again and with others takes a small boat and reaches a British island not far away and from there he is sent to Canada. And the Canadians send him to England and we are together again."

They all were formed into the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group as part of the British Home Forces. On the night of the 14 November 1940 the Luftwaffe delivered a devastating attack on an English city. It was Coventry and Grisha was not far away.

"In mid-October 1940 Leamington Spa became the Czech Army's first UK garrison. Brigade HQ was in Newbold Terrace.... the nearby square displayed a heavy metal figure of Queen Victoria.... The HQ Liaison Office had not yet been rebuilt to provide sleeping quarters and I was billeted with the rest of HQ Co. staff three floors up in an ancient and rather neglected ex-Masonic Lodge. Four of us shared a tiny room.

"The 14 November was a lovely moonlit night and I posted some letters near the shopping arcade between my office and the Lodge. Two English soldiers with two girls were standing near Boots the chemist. We had a chat about the Czech Army and I left them to return to my room. I had just entered our room when we heard a terrific bomb blast really close by. It had fallen on the arcade killing the four I had spoken to a few minutes earlier. It had also moved Queen Victoria a few inches. Running back to the office I could see a glow in the distance and realised this must be Coventry. Noise of planes, AA guns and bombing went on for hours. A Major at HQ ordered a group of Czech soldiers to go to Coventry to provide what assistance they could. They were stopped by an irate English Area Commander who informed the Major: 'The Czech Army is part of the Home Forces, at their disposal and ready to go into action when required by them, and NOT a private charity outfit enabled to marshal manpower ad hoc even for a worthy cause'."

This air-raid destroyed the city's centre and cathedral, severely damaged industries and killed 568 people. Two nights later the RAF retaliated with a raid on Hamburg. Many more English cities were to be bombed and by the end of the month more than 4500 had been

killed. The American journalist, Ed Murrow, then broadcasting out of Britain, would later recall:

"And there was Mr Churchill, who mobilised the language and made it fight. Then came the days when Englishmen dug deep into their history.... Those were the days when most men, save Englishmen, despaired of England's life.... And the defenders of the realm were the people who worked with their hands. And it was then that I learned the meaning of that great word 'steady' – in places like Bristol, Coventry, Plymouth, Southampton and Manchester".[26]

Celia had not heard from Grisha for some months. Her sister and good friend Barbara later recalled:

"....when France fell to the German invasion, his letters stopped and he disappeared... and my Dad, who had been very anxious about the relationship, began to get very tolerant. When I congratulated him, he said: 'Well, I think there is practically no chance we'll ever see the poor chap. I might as well be decent about it'." His attitude was to change.

Then a letter arrived from England: "My darling Celia, I am living, healthy and hopeful – all my love."

His poor eyesight precluded any involvement with weapons and he was attached to the Czech HQ's Liaison Office, where his extraordinary linguistic talents, communication skills and general education were invaluable. A continuing agony for him was not hearing anything about the fate of his mother and sister. It was impossible for him to communicate direct with the Paris address and he was attempting to establish some sort of contact through friends in unoccupied southern France and in Lisbon, where many refugees were awaiting transport or attempting to obtain visas. He first heard that Anna and Sophie were in Toulouse but this was a false report for they were, in fact, still in Paris. For some time Sophie had been causing her family some concern for she seemed incapable of appreciating anything about the political reality and was intent only on finishing her schooling, which she did brilliantly, and beginning her studies at university. This single-mindedness would have tragic consequences.

Life in the army settled down to unremitting boredom, intensified by the bullying behaviour of some of the Czech Officers, ("I hope the British Army takes us over"), visits to the cinema or a theatre and the precious leave passes to savour solitude or the normalcy of decent human behaviour in an abnormal world.

"Celia, my darling..... I managed to get a week-end off for Manchester where I have to be official Jewish representative at the wedding of one of our Corporals. It was a big surprise when they told me I was chosen... I never do anything special here in the Jewish life of the camp....

"Here I am again, in a cafe in Manchester. My car will leave in about an hour and we can have a quiet chat if nobody turns up to disturb us... the wedding was in an ultra-modern synagogue... they played Lohengrin's wedding-march, four national anthems, then a reception with wine and cakes. The bride looks very touched with tears in her eyes and eats like three soldiers, the husband looks very proud and pushes her more pieces of cake. Many speeches in many languages and I give the one in English. Oh dear, a group of Czech soldiers have just discovered this cafe and want me to go with them – so my darling, we will have to put off our chat for a little while."

The 12th Olympic Games, scheduled for Tokyo in 1940, are cancelled; in August the RAF repulses the Luftwaffe and the Blitz of London begins; in September the USA sells fifty destroyers to the UK; in October Hitler postpones the planned invasion of Britain; in November Franklin D Roosevelt is elected President for an unprecedented third time; in December Anthony Eden becomes British Foreign Secretary and the BBC is broadcasting the radio series *Sincerely Yours*, starring Vera Lynn. She popularises the songs *White Cliffs of Dover* and *We'll Meet Again*, which become war-time hymns for the allied troops.

Those Czech soldiers who were fluent in French often "tuned into French wireless-news". Almost every day there were explanations as to why France had to agree to the armistice, anti-Jewish laws were announced and the expropriation of Rothschild assets celebrated. Appeals were made to the population to be calm, to understand that the war was lost and not to cause trouble like the students in Paris – the first this had been heard of in England. Grisha had nothing but contempt for the leaders of France, the guilty men, but still believed in, had high hopes for, the French spirit and resistance to the German oppression. He was

reading a lot, thought *The Grapes of Wrath* "a marvellous book" and hoped Steinbeck would write about the war. He was in a mood to appreciate the author's social perception and understanding of the suffering of the itinerant farm-workers, in the midst of the Depression and drought. Then he found a passage in the published diaries of Tomas Masaryk, principal founder and first President of Czechoslovakia, which had immediate relevance to himself and Celia. During World War I Masaryk had been separated from his wife and would recall:
"There were many moments, when far away from her, I was acutely aware of our unity of thought. I do not think it was telepathy but the parallel thinking and feeling of persons who are in complete harmony and who look at the world with the same eyes."
It was exactly the language Grisha had been using to describe their relationship.

He received the dreadful news that many of his French friends were either killed in the battles or were prisoners of the Germans. One friend he managed to trace was Heinz Bing, from his class at the Grunewald Gymnasium. As a German citizen he had been interned in England, where he had been working, and was later deported to Canada. Heinz was engaged to a woman in London, Lore Meyerheim, with whom Grisha corresponded. Finally, after many months he heard from his friend Leo Fialkoff:
"I still see you waving from the window of the train at Perpignan, crowds of soldiers, dirty like you and me. We did not know the things that were to come – Scandinavia invaded two days later, Western Europe five weeks later.....For eight months after the armistice I was in the south of France, not knowing whether we would be interned or if the Nazis would arrive, ever ready to cross the Pyrenees into Spain. We waited in Cannes for the Destroyer to take us over to North Africa but it didn't arrive. And then a call from Marseille and we were smuggled aboard a boat heading for the US. And all of this on the Riviera, mild and beautiful, the swanky places overflowing with the Paris societé crowd."

There had been no reliable reports about his family for months when a letter from an old friend in Lisbon arrived. Anna and Sophie were safe in their apartment in Paris and Sophie was at university doing the PCB [physics, chemistry, biology], the preparatory year for enrolment in medicine. This news left Grisha in a state of shock. He was torn between being proud of his sister and being appalled at her seeming lack of understanding of their

precarious position. They were non-French Jews living in Nazi-occupied Paris and in terrible danger, he repeatedly told Celia, and was anxious that they move south to the unoccupied zone while they awaited a response from the American Embassy.
"I foresaw more than they did and had to drag them early in 1940 to the US consulate, against their will, to apply for the visas – the only time in my life I smacked Sophie, when dragging her into the taxi to go to the consulate."
It was evident, however, that his sister had no intention of moving anywhere.

The cinema was the principal form of entertainment for the soldiers and Grisha was still a fan. He had not seen a film since he was in Paris with his mother, when they had seen *La fin du jour* and Sacha Guitry in *Ils Etaient Neuf Célibataires*. Now he started to make up for lost time. *Broadway Melody of 1940* was "an entertaining musical" he was sure Celia would enjoy; Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* was "a rather good thriller" and *Rascals*, with a team of manic, Russian musical clowns, was "musically marvellous and wonderfully funny". One movie-house, The Tatler, showed Russian films and he was often there.

He found life at Royal Leamington Spa a great improvement after many months under soaking canvas. It was the lack of privacy, the soldier's lot, he found difficult to tolerate. He would try to find "a place to have quiet and freedom from time to time, to feel *chez moi*, to write a letter, read a book.... it is a terrible thing in our life: never to be alone, never to have a corner, where to be out of the whole military complex.... and the longer I'm here, the more I realise what seems a contradiction: this forced and necessary community life, this camaraderie, though bringing people together, creates deep knowledge of each other – but no real friendship. I think it is the element of compulsion which brings people nearer to each other than in normal times and yet excludes real intimacy, real friendship". The town was pleasant with "gardens, water-drinking places, luxury shops, hotels, cafes – but not one French bistro! I'd give a lot to be sitting with you in chez Maurice [a bistro in Lyon]." His English was improving apace with Celia providing tuition. "I have heard from the fiancé of Katia – yes, I know, darling – Katia's fiancé." His command of the language was not, however, being improved by regular association with British soldiers and with some restraint he told Celia:

"Their choice of adjectives is not varied at all, while the use is more than frequent. Every noun gets an adjective, mostly the same adjective. In France you found, even among the uneducated, a cultivated language which here you rarely find. The soldier's language was picturesque in France while here there are about ten to fifteen expressions used at every suitable and unsuitable occasion."
Presumably, the language was improved at the Christmas dinner, hosted by the Vicar of Warwick, where Grisha was a guest, the official representative of the Czech Brigade.

He was a prodigious letter-writer, and would remain so throughout his life, but often his handwriting was almost illegible. Decades later friends, echoing the protests of a multitude, would comment: "I deciphered after several hours strenuous reading and deductions" and "I also found your handwriting very hard to make out, so you must forgive me if my impression of your lives and doings is a bit hazy". Occasionally, he would have pity on his friends and use a typewriter.

Night duty was always welcome as it gave him quiet, privacy and "time to chat" with a woman on the other side of the world:
"It is Christmas Eve, I am sitting with a French cigarette, with a tin of Australian peaches and with all my thoughts full of you. I volunteered for night duty as it is a holiday for a lot of my friends. Did you hear or read Churchill's speech to the Italian people yesterday? What a marvellous, clever, sensitive and intelligent speech and he was only repeating what he said years ago.... how could it happen that men like him were not listened to?"

He was growing into the role of a soldier and impressed an old friend and his wife, Beata, who remembered:
"My then husband Arnold – a childhood friend of Grisha's with a similar family background but who had joined the French army – had escaped from occupied France with his mother and myself and we reached Britain well after Grisha. Upon arrival in London, we immediately tried to locate the whereabouts of the Czech Legion – then stationed in Bridlington in Yorkshire. What I chiefly remember was the fund of funny stories that peppered his account of his army career. According to Arnold, Grisha had been a studious,

bookish type before the war, who was outstandingly successful in adapting himself to challenges in new countries. Our Bridlington meeting proved abundantly, according to Arnold, that he had once again coped successfully with the challenges of a new way of life. His appearance had taken on a new look, thanks to lots of exercise and outdoor life; he had straightened out, become an open-air loving young man and no longer made one think of the bookworm he used to be. He still wore glasses, of course, very short-sighted and had not yet mastered Czech completely but all who knew him knew this was only a matter of time. His English had become astonishingly fluent and colloquial....intensive letter-writing to Australia may have had something to do with it.... military discipline was not a familiar way of life to these soldiers – Private Dr Meir, Corporal Kopek, PhD and Private Sklovsky, Doctor of Science."

He never ceased to wonder why the nations had failed to recognise the menace of Hitler. "I've just finished reading Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*.... [which] showed to those who wanted to see – but very few did – what one can expect from the Germans. It was particularly interesting for me, as he lived very near to where I used to live."

He was delighted to discover a French newspaper being published in London but was not happy to find it an emigrants' paper.

"Do you remember the pure 'émigré atmosphere' we found in the Jewish restaurant in Lyon or in the fashionable Russian restaurant in Paris? Or do you remember the Russian émigré paper I used to read?.... the whole emigrant nature of the Russian, German, Austrian papers in France and I felt so terribly depressed to discover this atmosphere in a French paper! French – for me, it sounds like a symbol of gaiety, security, safe and free, spiritually and materially – and though I saw what happened there, know what is going on there now – to find a typical émigré paper in French was quite a blow – the sad characters, the depressing news of what is happening 'at home'. You are absolutely right, darling, to associate me, you, us with that French spirit we knew and loved."

Yet, the newspapers and the radio were important for him.

"The French wireless tells us there are new rules for the Banque de France, (another way of robbing the country 'legally') and then they played a record – *J'attendrai, le jour et la nuit, j'attendrai toujours*. Extraordinary, that the song we loved should be about 'waiting day and

night, waiting always'. You remember how often we heard it at Valloire? – this melody is bound up with you, with our first being close together – and then they played it at the dance and that group was with us and – you remember - they all perished in the avalanche on the Col de Galabier."

Chapter Five

## England

On 22 January 1941 the Vice-Consul at the American Embassy in Paris, George Miller, signed immigration visas for Anna and Sophie. The documents reveal that the "German passport authorities, Paris", Czechoslovakia being a 'Protectorate' of Germany, had issued new passports on 11 December 1940, and in a bitter twist of fate the visa also records their nationality as German. In her application Anna wrote that her destination was New York where she would reside with her cousin Leon Goldmershtein at 900 Riverside Drive, N.Y. The port of embarkation was to be "any European port" and it was essential that they quickly get to the south of France or Lisbon to arrange passage as their visas were valid for only four months, expiring on 22 May. Grisha soon heard about the visas and, through friends in Lisbon, was strongly urging his mother to get out of Paris.

The Czech soldiers quickly adapted to their new life in England and in January 1941 they presented an exhibition and concert at Stratford-on-Avon. They were even so bold as to produce a leaflet on *Bohemia and the Czechs in Shakespeare's Works*, which delighted in quoting Ben Johnson's rebuke of Shakespeare for his ignorance of geography. Act III Scene 3 of *The Winter's Tale* is placed in "Bohemia – a desert country near the sea". In February Grisha was amused to be joining the ranks of Napoleon and Hitler by being promoted Lance-Corporal and then, in March, he was hoping Sophie would accompany her mother to the synagogue as it was the seventh anniversary of Abram's death. In his liaison work with the British Army he spent a lot of time in London and would lunch at a Russian restaurant, *Troïka*, or book into the Mount Royal Hotel, Marble Arch for a hot bath – until it was bombed. In addition to his liaison and interpreting duties he was required to provide domestic help in the officers' quarters. Somewhat bitterly, he wrote to Celia:

".... you will find me 'an artist of the broom', a perfect fire-maker and overall a very domesticated person.... The old joke we had, Leo and me, on our trip through England, where he was my chauffeur and footman and I his butler and majordomo has come true!.... no positive news about my family and with everything else, terrible depression – *avoir le cafard*

we called it in France.... I'm smoking too much, 30-40 Players a day, but you do understand I am not quite normal these days and a cig can be a good friend.... then I decided to stop smoking and answered an advertisement for a 'stop-smoking cure'. They sent me an enormous amount of printed material and since I was a member of so gallant an army I could receive the full treatment for 8/6d instead of one guinea. Now that was a big problem: 8/6d means 110 Players – and I preferred to buy them – but I <u>am</u> cutting down.... Tomorrow night we have a big dinner here for it is Passover, a day my Mother particularly loves and always observes..."

Phyllis, a local schoolteacher, befriended some of the soldiers and Grisha enjoyed the quiet atmosphere of her home where he would help prepare dinner. "I escaped peeling potatoes at the barracks and dropped in there – to peel potatoes – *c'est la vie*!"

He introduced Phyllis to one of his Czech friends, Jan Reichl, and before long they announced they would marry at the end of the war. He was very fond of both of them and boasted to Celia of his successful match-making. Phyllis would remember the young Grisha "engulfed in the bulking, British Army greatcoat, standing at my door, wistfully asking 'What are the news?' Perhaps he hoped some unlooked-for miracle might signify the end of the wasted years of our youth".

Another home where Grisha enjoyed his leave days was that of Louis Ferney, a friend of the Sklovskys from the years in Germany. With degrees in science and engineering, Ferney had spent several years in the employ of British industries and had close Government contacts. He also had detailed knowledge of Grisha's doctorate, with its research background, and believed his talents could be well used in British industry. He wrote to the Ministry of Supply and received the following reply from Megson of the Ministry:

"I have been in touch with the Ministry of Aircraft Production on this matter and understand that the necessary action is being taken."

Thus began a battle of the personnel imperative that was to involve at least two British Government Ministries, electrical and engineering industrial concerns, the Czech Brigade – and Lance-Corporal Dr Sklovsky.

On 11 March 1941 the Lend-Lease Bill[27] is signed in Washington; on 24 May the British battle-cruiser *HMS Hood* is sunk by the German battleship *Bismark*, which in turn is sunk on 27 May; 22 June Operation Barbarossa: Germany invades the Soviet Union and the German 'Action Groups' Einsatzgruppen soon begin the widespread massacres of Jews in the Baltic States and the Soviet Union.

April, May and June passed and Anna and Sophie were still in Paris.

Grisha was reading a lot, including books on Australia: "We had convicts in Siberia too – but they were all political prisoners". *It's a Battlefield* introduced him, for the first time, to the writings of Graham Greene. The moral absolutes of guilt and betrayal, the loneliness were aspects of Greeneland that he found almost beyond him and certainly not something he cared to dwell upon, "....showing (as it did) in a sad way, nobody cares for anybody." He had heard much of Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* but was "disappointed in it.....I will see it again to study it more". He may well have felt too close to the reality to see it as a subject for comedy and ridicule and, again, he was angry that warnings about the Nazis and the fascists had not been expressed and heeded years before. "It should have been made four or five years ago – but its propaganda may work for the US. Hitler and Mussolini were, are comical and would have remained so if they had been stopped in '35 or '36. But there are some marvellous scenes - and Chaplin is Chaplin." His sense of frustration and anger at the almost universal lack of understanding of what the Nazis had been threatening since the 'twenties was to be maintained throughout the war. Reading *Why France Fell* by André Maurois he wanted to know why "all these people who now are telling us they knew this or that, why didn't they yell it from all the roofs to those prepared to risk anything in order to survive". Nor was he impressed by those Frenchmen who, while rejecting the Vichy regime, were not prepared to throw in their lot with de Gaulle. Maurois, well known for his promotion of French-British relations, escaped from France to London but declined to stay and left for the United States. With no little contempt, Churchill said of him: "We took him for a friend; he was only a hanger-on".

When Grisha saw Leslie Howard's *49th Parallel*, part of a British propaganda campaign to influence isolationists on the other side of the Atlantic, to get the United States into the war,

he wrote of the ".... marvellous acting, good character studies – all very well done, very thrilling up to the end.... [but] this kind of film should have been shown 1933-40. It would have meant far more then.... but better not start on the old tune of mine, you know it too well".

Yet he would again ask, when he saw Anthony Asquith's *Freedom Radio* with Clive Brook, "why not in '35, '36 '37? Very good and true – but too late". He would look for another type of film to cure his depression. *The Philadelphia Story*, with Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant, had "good humour, sharp dialogue – good escapist film – just what one needs nowadays".

Apart from writing to the Department of Supply, his friend, Louis Ferney, had sent a copy of Grisha's thesis to some business executives who showed immediate interest and one of them contacted the Czech Brigade to arrange an interview with Grisha. This resulted in his being subjected to a gruelling interrogation by the Brigade's Chief Intelligence Officer who berated him for not following "proper procedures" and daring to contact British government departments and the War Office without working through "correct military channels". Moreover, he was advised that his "research, any inventions", his whole intellectual property now belonged to the Czechoslovakian Army and he had "committed a punishable offence by making propaganda" for himself. Requests for his release from the army to work in industries associated with aircraft production were refused. He did not, however, give up hope.

"The Company isn't giving up and I have been to the Ministry of Supply for an interview. They tell me there is already a laboratory waiting for me.... I could be more productive and useful – specialising in useful work that I have been looking forward to all these years since I decided to become a chemist at the second chemistry class at school. I missed the first class! Well, where to start.... Churchill's speech on aid to Russia was marvellous.... as close as possible collaboration with the Russians... to co-operate without regard to the past or ideological differences, the clever way of formulating this in order to stop any possible prejudiced opposition in parts of the British population...."

His twelve-page letters covered many topics.

"Thank you for the photos of my very own Celia. I don't know any couple even partly as complete as we are...

"As for the Germans, I am trying to speak with as little hate as possible but there must be absolute determination to liquidate the pathological element so neither us nor our children have to face such ordeals....

"What was I like as a child? I read a lot, classics, explorers and travel, novels in several languages.... I was directed by my mother to know and understand things.... I started to learn German at three, English at seven. I read and wrote Russian and German at the age of six. I started French at nine and took up English again at fourteen....collecting was a passion, stamps, coins, stones. I played a lot of chess and then took up bridge. In Germany, after school there were piano, Russian and French lessons. In Berlin we investigated the new ice-cream shops and the places where we could exchange cigarette cards."

French Radio kept him informed about what was happening in France. News of the first round-up and internment of non-French Jews terrified him as he did not believe his mother would survive that kind of treatment. Reports from friends in Lisbon indicated that passage to the United States had been booked for Anna and Sophie but he had no news that they had left Paris and he was unaware that the visas had expired.

Then he heard that Celia had formally announced to family and friends that she was engaged to him and for Grisha that was the best of news. She asked him how she would be addressed as his wife and he explained to her both Russian and Czech usages. She, adapting the feminine form of the name, would be Sklovskaja, Russian or Sklovska, Czech. As for children's names he lamented that there was much time ahead of them before they had to make those decisions. He was on courier duty and while waiting to pick up some papers he would write to her from the underground, writing-smoking room of the Regent Hotel. They had both lost friends in the London blitz and he often thought of the circumstances of his own survival, most confrontingly at Montereau and Gien where he had watched the Stukas divebombing all around him. He believed it was his determination, that will to live, sustained by their total commitment to each other, that would bring him through. Without her he would not survive. He would send her a Russian poem:

Wait for me, I'll be back.
Do not listen
To those who tell you
It is vain to wait.
Wait for me, I'll be back.
Let those, who did not wait,
Think it chance,
That I am here.
They cannot know
How you, your waiting,
Brought me through.
We know, we two.
Just this: you waited as
No one else could do.

On 11 August 1941 Churchill and Roosevelt, on a ship off Newfoundland, sign the Atlantic Charter, condemning seizure of territories and affirming human rights; 8 September German forces reach the outskirts of Leningrad and 19 September capture Kiev; 15 October Germans are within 100 kilometres of Moscow but first offensive against the Russian capital fails; in November Marshal Timoshenko launches counterattacks against the German armies; 7 December the Japanese attack Pearl Harbour and the following day USA and Britain declare war on Japan.

Some aspects of English life he found annoying, such as cafes and restaurants closed on Sundays, the very day when soldiers wanted them open, and some bewildering.

"Sometimes I play chess at lunchtime in a nearby park with one of our officers and yesterday we were thrown out because cards, gambling and games are not permitted on Sundays. Nearby, two young people were doing just about everything to each other but that seems to be all right on a Sunday."

His friend Heinz Bing had arrived back from internment in Canada to take up a research job and marry his fiancée Lore but the day of his return she died of cancer.

"It's a strange world, is it not? Thank you for the Avignon postcard – what souvenirs it brings back to me, the wonderful, mad roofs seen from our hotel window, our trip to

Villeneuve in the heat and dust and beauty of the Provence Summer. We have just returned from a three-day exercise which we all enjoyed – hard work but weather fine, lovely country, straw to sleep on or in a young pine forest. No explanation given for not allowing me to work in aircraft production and we have just been reading a speech by our President Beneš where he talks about the importance of science and industry and the vital importance of every scientist in the war effort. That is the kind of irony I appreciate – some humour still left in Lance-Corporal Dr Sklovsky."

Occasionally, he was put in charge of a funeral party as he was "the only Jewish NCO who had mastered the art of the slow funeral march". On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, he went to the synagogue because his mother would want him to do so in memory of his father. He did not enjoy the services especially in "the ersatz military synagogue" and it was long since he had experienced the religious devotion of his youth. "I don't fast as I did when I was fourteen, fifteen but mother, completely unbelieving, keeps the fast." He was again begging Anna and Sophie to leave Paris and was deeply shocked to hear that his sister had become engaged to a Frenchman and intended to marry as soon as possible. This, Grisha felt, was yet another instance of his sister's being out of touch with reality. He made enquiries regarding the fiancé and discovered he was Jean Vaugelade, twenty-three years of age who made a modest living in the financial field and came from "a good Catholic family". Grisha thought the situation somewhat bizarre but could see a humorous side, given his and Celia's relationship.

"'A good Catholic family' has the sound and smell of the French Right, some semi-fascist or royalist circles – but that does not mean the fellow can't be an exception."

While Celia's father had not thought she might be attracted to a Jew he did warn her against marrying a Catholic.

"I always remember what your father told you about marrying Catholics and now you will be marrying somone who will be related to Catholics. Somehow I don't think you will mind too much. Sophie always hoped to enter 'French society', that group I most despised for their hypocrisy, bigotry and what they have done politically".

Then he heard from his mother that she liked the young Frenchman. He was "doux et gentil", intelligent but unaware of the realities of life and the burden he was taking on and, given these qualities, Grisha wondered how he would cope with living with Sophie.
"To talk of more pleasant things. I saw *Fantasia* – too long but I loved it. *Go West* with the wonderful, mad Marx Brothers and *Rage in Heaven* – Ingrid Bergman reminded me of you." All tall, fair, beautiful, elegant women reminded him of Celia.

On 14 October 1941 deportation of German Jews begins; 23 October, more than 30000 murdered in Odessa; 28 October 34000 massacred in Kiev; massacre in Rovno; massacre in Riga; massacre in Vilna; Chelmno extermination camp opened in Poland.

Late in the war and post-1945 many in Germany, France and other countries claimed that they did not know what was happening to the Jews of Europe. At the end of his life, President Francois Mitterand would claim he was unaware of Vichy's anti-Semitic edicts even though he had been a functionary of the Vichy bureaucracy. Yet in 1941 a lowly member of the Czech Brigade in England was well aware of the activities of the Vichy regime and was hearing broadcasts and reading reports almost daily of the atrocities in Europe. He wrote:
"The press is astonished about this new German inquisition. But is it new? What about the murder of Jews and Catholics and leftists in Germany since 1933 and all of it totally ignored? Terrible things are happening in Rumania, in Poland, in Bessarabia, in the Ukraine and western Russia and it was always clear this was going to happen."

He had not been in favour of Sophie's marriage but was enraged when he heard some clerk in Paris had refused to allow the marriage because "mixed marriages" were not permitted. He hoped she would now leave Paris, and eventually France, to avoid further humiliation and danger but that was not to be. Sophie and Jean did finally manage to find an official who was prepared to conduct the ceremony and they were married on 22 November. Anna arranged accommodation for them at 76 Boulevard Soult, 12$^{th}$ arrondissement, and gave them all the furniture from her apartment at 125 rue Michel Ange, 16$^{th}$ arrondissement

while she moved into a *pension* until she could arrange another apartment for herself, which she shortly did at 72 bis rue Michel Ange.

By the end of the year another stripe had been awarded and he was a full corporal. The Siberian conditioning as a youth meant he rarely felt the cold even to the extent of enjoying guard duty in the middle of a freezing English winter.

"I enjoyed the two hours from mid-night – there's some kind of magic, standing in an icy, moon-lit night, looking out on the sleeping village. I'm going to use my time more cleverly. I've started another English course and with my Captain, a clever man with a degree from Geneva, we are going back to calculus, differential and integral, maths being the best way to train memory, and then logic for general brain involvement. You see, we agree that accident reports, translation of orders, correspondence about WCs, condition of huts etc, etc are not a worthwhile occupation."

Chapter Six

## Waiting

Throughout her time in Europe Celia had spent many days in the great galleries and churches of London, Paris, Amsterdam, Florence and Rome. She stood in the Uffizi, Santa Croce, the Bargello, the Sistine Chapel, London's National, the Louvre, aware she was in the presence of greatness. She did not like everything she saw. The Medici Chapels with their opulence repelled her, notwithstanding the Michelangelo figures, but, like many before her and ever her own harshest critic, as an aspiring artist, she felt inadequate. While she did a few landscapes around Burgundy and Provence while living in Lyon, her heart wasn't in it. On her return to Melbourne she put her brushes away and "didn't paint to any extent for some years – the war years". As we know, she was confronted with many emotional demands throughout all that time. Her father was a doctor and, attracted to some kind of medical study, she enrolled in a course in orthoptics, graduated and worked for an eye-specialist in Melbourne. As part of the practice they also travelled to regional centres to see patients and while returning from one of these visits to the Victorian town of Benalla she was seriously injured in a car accident. For some time there was concern that she may not be able to have children but she made a full recovery. Grisha was distraught when he heard of the accident but was reassured by a convalescing Celia. She wrote to him a few days after the British forces surrendered to the Japanese at Singapore, a time when Australians did not know what the future held. This letter once again reveals the profound nature of their relationship.

"I looked into that abyss when you were lost to me in France. I want to tell you that I am not afraid of death and that my only reason for wanting so much to live is because I want to live with you.... I feel it is impossible that love could be lost simply because death intervened.... I want to tell you again – you gave me such enormous happiness I didn't know was possible.... you have been everything to me."

On 5 January 1942 the Red Army launches an offensive on all fronts; 11 January Japanese army takes Kuala Lumpur; 20 January the Wannsee Conference discusses the destruction of European Jewry; 1 February Vidkun Quisling[28] is appointed Prime Minister of Norway; 15 February Japanese army takes Singapore; 19 February Japanese planes bomb Darwin; 18 April German forces capture oil fields in the Caucasus and American planes bomb Tokyo; 4 May the Battle of the Coral Sea; 30-31 May first British 1000 bomber raid on Germany; 21 June Tobruk falls to General Rommel's forces.

Grisha was reading Julian Huxley's *The Uniqueness of Man*, which he thought "a most interesting and important book", *The Importance of Living* by Lin Yutang and then he came across what he regarded as "one of the most disgusting books, Thyssen's *I Paid Hitler*. This man,[29] one of the leaders of German industry who financed the whole Nazi gang, sits there on the Riviera and 'recognises his errors'.... a filthy feeling when reading that". He felt more hopeful at the signing of the British –Soviet Treaty, 26 May 1942, and looked forward to greater military co-ordination and, hopefully, a second front.

"To see the Red Flag on Grosvenor House, as I did yesterday, is quite historical and of tremendous importance – and you know I am far from being 'red'."

However, news from the North-African campaign was not encouraging.

"The fall of Tobruk has been announced – a terrific blow that! Not only a strategical set-back but a hard moral blow at a moment when we need victories."

This news so upset him that for some time he gave up reading newspapers and listening to radio news. He was unaware that the Prime Minister of England shared his distress. Churchill was in America for the Washington Conference on armaments production and military strategy when he heard the news.

"This was one of the heaviest blows I can recall during the war. Not only were its military effects grievous but it had affected the reputation of the British armies.... I did not attempt to hide from the President the shock I had received."[30]

Both Celia and Grisha sought relief from all the disastrous news by looking to the future, living their lives together, to family and the naming of children. While happy with the choice of *Anna* as a name he was not sure about *Ivan*, which Celia had proposed, but an idea associating the name with something in the Gospels, "the meek shall inherit the earth" and a theme from Russian folklore had some appeal.

"It's a very Russian name. *Ivan the Fool* is a children's hero, a national figure of our folk stories. In old Russian tales 'the feeble-minded' is nearer to God and receives the greatest reward - the one who is helpless is triumphant."

Friends in Cannes were able to forward letters to London through Lisbon and it was by this route that he was able to receive news of his family in Paris. In April he had heard that his mother wanted to help Sophie settle into her new life and when she was confident her daughter was coping well with marriage and studies she would leave Paris. There was also other news filtering through, Grisha told Celia:

"There is much talk of deporting Jews to Poland, mainly from the more eastern and central capitals of Europe. Some of my friends' relatives have already been sent there. You do imagine how I feel about that.... Better not to think about it but it's hard."

He was promoted to the rank of sergeant but was more interested in visiting old friends like the Fürsts from Germany, who were living in Oxford. From an academic and literary background they were "forever young with wonderful stories about their friends Kokoshka,[31] Zweig and Mann". Also at Oxford he was introduced to the widow of Hugo von Hoffmansthal, poet, dramatist, librettist and collaborator with Richard Strauss. He could not believe his good fortune, meeting this woman and told Celia: "[Her husband] was a 'classic', we read at school and to meet his widow and enjoy her wonderful cooking was very special."

Another letter arrived from his mother in which she spoke of her reluctance to move far from Sophie even though she was settled and happy. It was not reassuring news at a time when Grisha was particularly concerned. He wrote to Celia:

"After the killing of Heydrich[32] I am afraid the persecutions will increase everywhere and there is no means to protect them."

He was keeping up with the news coming out of France and none of it relieved his anxiety or depression. Roundups of Jews had started in Paris in May 1941 when Austrian, Czech and Polish Jews were arrested with more than three thousand being sent to camps in the Loiret. In August of the same year French municipal police, with Gestapo support, were instructed to arrest "all Jews of the male sex between the ages of eighteen and fifty". More than four

thousand were interned in the northern Parisian suburb of Drancy, in a camp French-administered but under the control of the Gestapo Department of Jewish Affairs. In December German agents detained 734 prominent Jewish businessmen, scholars and artists and interned them in a camp at Compiègne-Royallieu,where ninety seven of them died within a few weeks as a result of the atrocious conditions. An "entertainment", *Le Juif et la France*, sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions, opened at the Palais Berlitz in Paris in September 1941 and ran for five months. The anti-Semitic press enthusiastically endorsed whatever atrocity the Nazis or Vichy perpetrated without pausing to consider the morality of such behaviour or the rights of those being subjected to inhuman behaviour. The emancipation of the Jews of France, promoted by Mirabeau, Robespierre and Talleyrand among others, achieved at the French Revolution, had made them the envy of Jews from the Rhine to the Pale. A nation that had proclaimed the Declaration of the Rights of Man had no choice but to accept all its citizens. All such points of law, of morality, however, were irrelevant to those wielding power in Paris and Vichy. On 6 May 1942 Louis Darquier, Xavier Vallat's successor as Vichy's Commissioner for Jewish Affairs and an even more vicious anti-Semite, had met with Reinhard Heydrich at Paris's Ritz Hotel to discuss their plans for the Jews of France. Not long before this meeting, Heydrich, at the Wannsee Conference, Berlin, of 20 January, had disclosed the meaning of the "Final Solution", the annihilation of the Jews of Europe..

The administration of Marshall Pétain was interning Jews in a network of camps at Gurs, in the Pyrenees, Noé and Récébédou near Toulouse, Rivesaltes near Perpignan, Les Milles and other camps. While France had long been afflicted with a widespread anti-Semitism, Vichy being its political manifestation, when confronted with the reality of the Nazis' racist policies the attitude of many French people began to change. This was reflected throughout all levels of society in both occupied and unoccupied France. Underground newspapers of the Resistance condemned the internments; farmers and villagers, from Provence to Pas de Calais hid Jewish children, as did members of religious orders in convents and monasteries; the Chairman of the Protestant Federation, Marc Boegner, protested as did many Protestant churches and, despite the Vatican's failure to take a stand, several senior Catholic clerics, particularly in the south of the country, issued forthright condemnations. One of these,

Pierre Gerlier, Cardinal Archbishop of Lyon, had intially been a supporter of the Vichy regime but when he was confronted with evidence of what was happening he issued a pastoral letter urging protection of the Jews, protected a rabbi and hid more than fifty children to prevent their deportation. He was subsequently threatened by the Prefect of Lyon, Alexandre Angeli, and a Vichy publication demanded "the head of Gerlier, cardinal, mad Talmudist, traitor to his faith, his country and his race". Others who fought against the Nazi/Vichy policies were the Archbishop of Toulouse, Jules-Gérard Saliège, "the Jews are our brothers", and Pierre-Marie Théas, Archbishop of Montauban, whose pastoral letter condemned anti-Semitism as "a violation of the sacred rights of people". But nothing could deter those intent on genocide.

On 1 June 1942 Treblinka death camp is opened and the yellow star, for which a clothing coupon must be surrendered, will be worn by all Jews in France above the age of five; 22 July 300,000 Jews are deported from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka.

Heinrich von Stülpnagel, Military Commander of France 1942-44, shortly after his arrival in Paris, proposed that one hundred hostages be executed in reprisal for recent attacks on German soldiers and that the Jews of Paris should pay a fine of one thousand million francs. In addition, one thousand Jews and five hundred Communists should be deported for forced labour in eastern Europe. The hostages to be executed were to be described as "Soviet and Secret Service agents of Judaeo-Communist and de Gaullist origin". The first transport for the killing fields of the East left Compiègne camp 28 March and on its arrival at Auschwitz the eleven hundred deportees disappeared from history.

During his trial in 1945, Pierre Laval wrote:

"One day in July 1942, if I am not mistaken, I received a call from a certain Colonel Knochen.[33] The object of his visit was to notify me that the German Government had decided to deport every Jewish man, woman and child then living in France. No distinction was made between Jews of French nationality and others. The Prefect of Police had already been notified by the German authorities of their decision in this matter."[34]

In mid-July 1942 *le grand rafle*, the great round-up, originally planned for 14 July but postponed to 16 July to avoid the national holiday, was launched. More than 13000 Jews were arrested in Paris with singles and couples imprisoned at Drancy while families, 8160 men, women and children were herded into the Velodrome d'hiver, by the Seine near the Eiffel Tower, where they were subjected to the most degrading conditions. Arrests were carried out in other cities, large numbers in Bordeaux, and in the unoccupied zone, where the Germans had demanded 10000, Vichy managed to detain more than 11500. The arrests and deportations continued for the next two years and when the last transport left France on 17 August 1944 the deportees totalled 75721, of whom 2500 survived. Of Jewish French citizens twenty-three per cent were deported.

On 7 August Grisha was surprised to hear from his sister that she and her husband were in central France near the town of Vichy. Jean had got Sophie out of Paris and she was in hiding. He knew of the July roundups and was frantic to obtain news of his mother. A week later he heard she had been arrested. She managed to get a message to friends that she was not too worried as she was not an illegal, all her papers being in order. She had faith in the law. Grisha contacted the Red Cross and Czech Government representatives in London but he knew "too well how little they can do". On 22 August he heard Anna had been deported from France, while the Red Cross advised that "the German authorities in Paris said it was not possible to trace the whereabouts of non-Aryan deportees". He read and re-read this chilling report – "not possible to trace the whereabouts of non-Aryan deportees" – and it was then he discovered the real depths of depression, a state from which he took a very long time to recover. He raged against the Germans driving the innocents "to some corner of Europe, to starvation, degradation and pain. Anna trusted and did not understand 'our time'. She could not believe what I knew of the torturers, the lowest of humanity. I was a foreigner in their schools and know what they are, what they are capable of – this hatred makes me too a victim of our time".

Over the following weeks he continued to contact any organisation, any person he thought could possibly help, including the Secretary to the Polish Government in exile with whom the Sklovskys had had business dealings in Poland. Yet anything and everything he could

do "was so little – nothing in fact". A rumour from France suggested that some of the transports from Drancy camp had been sent to Kalish in Poland. He passed this on to the Red Cross in Clarence House in London which responded:
"We have forwarded the information that your mother has now been sent to Kalish, Poland to the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva. We feel certain that the cable you received refers to Kalish near Lodz, as Lodz is now a large Jewish Ghetto, where many Czech nationals have been sent." And a year later: "I am so sorry that so far we have been unsuccessful in obtaining any news but will let you know immediately anything comes through."

Only with Celia could he share his pain:
"Another Jewish New Year has begun.... all of us have received bad news from all over Europe.... the souvenirs of childhood are more vivid than ever.... even among the most irreligious there is a different atmosphere.... Then there was the prayer for the dead and most of us don't know if our closest relatives must be included. It is nauseating to read what the French traitors are doing. At least some of the more decent elements in France are waking up and our dear old Lyon seems to be one of the centres of resistance.[35] It is hard to imagine how beautiful our life then was – Neuville, Avignon, Valloire, Lyon – my room, your room – like magic and one can't imagine we lived this beautiful tale and not so long ago."

Two companies were still anxious to employ Grisha the chemist and again appealed to British Government departments to pressure the Czech Brigade to release him. The companies, Johnson and Phillips and Lacrimoid Products, both had the support of the Department of Aircraft Production but again failed to secure his release. The final word on the matter was addressed to him by Johnson and Phillips on 16 January 1943:
"You will realise by this time that it has been impossible for us to secure your release from the Army and I can only say how very much I regret that the authorities could not see their way to dispensing with your services."
Too much had transpired over the past months for him to be surprised or overly concerned with this result, other matters demanding his attention, though later he would regret the waste of talent and recall a day in July 1939 when "a very hopeful young man passed a thesis in a

Lyon amphitheatre and it seemed as if the world was open to him.... the most wonderful girl was looking down at him from the height of a university bench.... and nothing else existed."

His duties forced him back to an acceptable if tedious routine and that, together with the realisation that he was surrounded by people enduring like tragedy, loss of loved ones,saved him from even deeper despair. He helped organise the new camp, they had moved from Leamington, and was coerced back into the bridge school. He enjoyed live theatre as well as the cinema, thought Gielgud was marvellous in Shakespeare but preferred Emlyn Williams, the Welsh actor, in *The Morning Star,* which Williams also wrote and directed. It told the story of a man, cynical and disillusioned, ready to abandon England, but whose sense of values is restored by the death of his brother on active service and the courage of a people facing nightly bombing raids. What appealed to Grisha was the play's topicality, its relevance to the people of the bombed and isolated island. It was produced on Broadway, with Gregory Peck and Gladys Cooper, but among Americans, for whom the blitz was no more than a newspaper report or a radio broadcast, it had little impact. For the British it was real, vital, morale-boosting and, for those living the reality of the war's horror, the play's final statement of faith and hope had great emotional appeal. It was exactly what Grisha wanted and needed.

On 23 October 1942 the battle of El Alamein begins; 7 November allied troops land in Algeria and Morocco, Operation Torch; 11 November Hitler orders the occupation of Vichy France; 13 November British forces retake Tobruk; 24 December Admiral Darlan, Chief of State in French North Africa is assassinated; Dmitry Shostakovich premieres his 7th Symphony, the 'Leningrad'; 12 January 1943 the Casablanca Conference at which Roosevelt and Churchill agree that Germany and Japan must surrender unconditionally; 31 January the German army surrenders at Stalingrad; in October most of the Jews in Denmark are evacuated to Sweden to save them from deportation.

Grisha was elated when he heard of the landings in North Africa and, looking forward to the Mediterranean becoming "our lake", predicted the invasion of Italy. He was less impressed, however, when he read of General Montgomery inviting a captured German general, von Thoma, to dinner. Grisha was outraged and demanded of everyone:

"Do you think Timoshenko (a famous Russian General) would have dinner with a German General?"

General von Thoma, who had long been involved fighting for Franco in the Spanish Civil War, was captured by tank crews of the 10th Hussars on 4 November and dined with the British general that evening. It is possible that he deliberately ordered his tank into the British line intending to be captured as the previous night he had disobeyed an explicit directive from Hitler. The order, addressed to von Thoma's commanding officer, Erwin Rommel, read:

"The position requires that the El Alamein position be held to the last man. There is to be no retreat, not so much as one millimetre! Victory or death. Adolf Hitler"

Rommel and his staff knew it was a lunatic directive. "I cannot tolerate this order of Hitler", was von Thoma's reaction and when he withdrew his Afrika Korps troops to Fuka and Daba Rommel took no action. The social meeting between the opposing generals, Montgomery and von Thoma, caused some discussion in England but in the context of the African campaign it was not considered extraordinary.

London seemed to be full of troops from many nations with Americans predominating and looking as though they had "stepped from a movie or several movies as you see the full range from West Point to grown-up Dead End Kids but all well-dressed". He saw Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*. "Excellent propaganda for all countries, I think. It gives a lot of English soul, the constant trust and hope. Definitely a film to be seen." Earlier in the year he had visited the National Gallery to see an exhibition of war artists and found himself standing alongside Sir Charles Portal, the two of them assessing a portrait of Portal, Air Marshall and Chief of the Air Staff. Now he was anxious to see an exhibition of war photographs at the Royal Academy.

"Terrific the impression one gets there. All these horrors – and some so beautiful as pictures – the masses of bombs, hundreds of parachutes, bursting shells and aircraft in the morning mist – and in the midst of it all a RAF band playing – and the spectators mainly in uniform."

Then he read about the real horrors:

"The papers are full of the extermination campaigns of Jews in Poland.... I dare not think.... one reads about gas chambers, firing squads, soap made from human bodies."

He read a report about the Warsaw ghetto where "Jews have converted their homes into forts and barricaded shops and stores for defense posts.... fighting against annihilation by the Nazis they were using bedsteads as bunkers and fighting with arms smuggled into the ghetto. An underground Polish radio station had broadcast an appeal for help. It reported that Warsaw's remaining Jews had been sentenced to death by the German authorities and that women and children were defending themselves 'with their bare arms'. After Warsaw the Cracow ghetto is to be liquidated. Polish circles here in London believe 1,300,000 Polish Jews have already perished under the German occupation."

Chapter Seven

# Invasion

While Grisha had little respect for many political figures there were a few for whom he had the greatest regard, Roosevelt and Beneš, and two he looked upon with something approaching awe, Churchill and de Gaulle. He was attending a meeting of engineers and scientists at the Institut Français in London when the Free French leader arrived. Everyone present rose and applauded and applauded and applauded again. The General, visibly moved by this spontaneous reaction, spoke of the task ahead, after the war, in the rebuilding of Europe. Then there was the memorable day when President Beneš and Prime Minister Churchill came to inspect the Czech troops and Grisha was close to the man whose speeches he found unfailingly inspiring. He wrote to Celia:

"The whole world seems to forget the enormous role which England played for history in 1940/41 by holding out alone, carrying on – and Churchill's role in that is incalculable."

He was vitally interested in post-war reconstruction and read everything he could on the subject. Carr's book *The Condition of Peace* he thought excellent "except for the last part where he advocates a far too lenient treatment of Germany" and Clare Boothe Luce's *Europe in the Spring* interesting but superficial. His extraordinary facility with languages continued to be exercised and developed. Listening to radio he could "understand every phrase, every meaning but often can't say what language it is. This applies mainly to Slavonic languages but also to some degree the Germanic". Radio continued to be a great source of information yet listening to Swiss broadcasts made him wonder if there was a war at all as they often led their news bulletins with the results of skiing competitions. He saw *This Above All* and Joan Fontaine reminded him of Celia.

She made and kept summaries of his letters, adding her own annotations, which she shared with friends, particularly her sister Barbara:

"He is giving Russian lessons to a major who keeps smoking Camels while offering Craven A. He's complaining about the senselessness of army life, he's depressed but then pulls

himself up and expresses gratitude for our happiness and our hope for the future. He is amazed at the quality of the local repertory theatre and speaks of a cultural renaissance in England during wartime. He is receiving my airgraphs page by page sometimes and then some pages are missing. Envious of our family gatherings. Has just read and loved *Portrait of Jenny* and remarks how my influence has changed and affected him. A reference in my letter to bushfires reminds him of a holiday in Siberia when he was six, lit a fire in the woods and rushed to tell his parents who organised the villages to save their wooden homes. He didn't tell them he had lit the fire and was hailed as a hero. The mail is getting through better than before – a love letter mostly, he received the record of my voice and a pack of photos. Talks about the uproar over Germans killing allied airmen – speaks of the mass murder of Jews but a page is missing – a lot of speculation about a second front."

Each Tuesday at a camp near Northampton where they were stationed for some time, Grisha would organise a visit to the local theatre. Before they left that area to move to another camp, he wrote a letter of gratitude to the manager of the repertory theatre:
"I cannot leave this part of your wonderful country without writing to thank you on behalf of my comrades, (the group of Czechoslovak soldiers who used to come on Tuesday night, always in a strength different from the number of tickets reserved, but who always were received so graciously and sympathetically) for the very great pleasure we found in your theatre in the months of our stay here."

He was experiencing another period of depression and was not impressed by those who disapproved of the bombing of German cities. He knew what had happened to the Warsaw ghetto, annihilated by shelling and bombing.
"Well, I disapprove of everything that has happened since 1933 and now we hear even the good Mr Franco thinks bombing is immoral – well, he didn't think so in 1940, 1941 or at Guernica."

Then he was sent off to the University of London, joining diplomats, educationists, medical personnel and representatives of many of the armed services, to attend a four-day course on France. Those days, the whole experience, the lectures, the discussions, would be

remembered as the most challenging and stimulating of his entire army career. In the first session, on French resistance and the role intellectuals were playing in that struggle, he heard for the first time of the final days of the great French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). This man, who had so influenced other philosophers, writers, musicians, artists wrote in 1937:

"My reflections have led me closer and closer to Catholicism in which I see the complete fulfilment of Judaism. I would have become a convert had I not foreseen for years a formidable wave of anti-Semitism about to break upon the world. I wanted to remain among those who tomorrow would be persecuted."

A few weeks before he died he left his sick bed to register as a Jew, scornfully rejecting an exemption proffered by Vichy.

Many prominent figures lectured at the course, including Jacques Soustelle,[36] noted anthropologist and later a prominent political figure, who discussed the sociological history of France. He was followed by Denis Brogan (1900-74), Professor of Political Science at Cambridge and Robert Vansittart (1881-1957), a man Grisha was delighted to see and hear as he had for years been articulating, at the highest levels of government and diplomacy, all Grisha's own feelings about Germany and Europe. Vansittart had been First Secretary to the Paris Peace Conference (1919-20) and had worked with Foreign Secretaries and Prime Ministers. Throughout the period 1930-38 he was Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office from which Office he constantly warned against German rearmament and proved a hindrance to Chamberlain's attempts at appeasement. In 1938 Chamberlain pushed him aside, gave him a sinecure and a peerage. He had long been attacked by, in Professor Brogan's words, "professional caterers in sentimentality, a very flourishing trade". The course continued with sessions on French literature, theatre, music and art, the last being the only one to attract Grisha's displeasure as it centred on Poussin, "the most boring of French artists". Poetry and drama readings followed with the course concluding with a concert of French chamber music. For Grisha the four days had been "a revival of France" and his essentially francophile sentiments were strengthened and cherished. After that there was nothing to do but continue training and await the invasion of Europe.

On 6 June 1944 Operation Overlord is launched, D-Day, on the beaches of Normandy; 10 June a detachment of the SS das Reich Division destroys the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane, burning the women and children alive in the parish church; 13 June the first V1 flying-bombs are launched against Britain; 3 July Soviet army captures Minsk, taking 150000 prisoners; 20 July attempted assassination of Hitler fails; 14 August Operation Dragoon, American and French forces land on French Riviera; 24 August French armoured forces enter Paris; 3 September British forces enter Brussels; 8 September the first V2 rockets are launched at Britain; 10 September the French Provisional Government abolishes the Vichy legislature; 22 October Britain, USSR, USA recognise de Gaulle's Provisional Government; 7 November Roosevelt wins presidential election for fourth term; in France only four pre-war national newspapers are permitted to publish because they did not collaborate and 13th Olympic Games, scheduled for London, are cancelled.

The Czech Brigade having landed in France at Arromanches, the site of the pre-fabricated Mulberry Harbour, in August, was involved in the mopping-up of the Falaise fortress and committed to the assault and containment of the German forces at Dunkirk. The garrison there, of some thirteen thousand, had been ordered by Hitler not to surrender and its commander, a fanatical Nazi, was intent on obeying the Führer's command. The port had been isolated, then by-passed, by allied troops and in October the Czech Brigade was given the task of preventing any possible break-out. The most serious confrontation occurred on the Czech National Independence Day, 28 October. After a short barrage the Czechs attacked, losing one tank and twelve men but returned with more than three hundred and fifty prisoners and left two hundred dead within the perimeter. In a reprise of World War I, the Czechs remained in the mud of Flanders maintaining the siege until the Germans there finally surrendered in May 1945.

Sergeant Sklovsky was not at Dunkirk throughout all this time. In November he was ordered back to London where he resumed his former duties of interpreter and liaison officer and it was there he received news of the death of Celia's mother. He wrote at length to console his fiancée and concluded:

"…. how I regret not to have had an opportunity to meet your mother and to try and show her that I'm perhaps worth your trusting in me and waiting for me – but I hope she knew that."

A few months later he was again attempting to console Celia who was shocked by her father's announcement of his intention to re-marry.

"I fully understand and see how deeply you must have been shocked by this new event.... but let us try to be fair to him: an ageing man, rather spoilt, suddenly alone, discovering the most dreadful loneliness of old age.... I saw my mother's solitude for which my own devotion and attention and deep friendship could do little.... I am at a distance and unable to help you immediately but you know I am always with you."

Grisha was soon back in France and from 22-29 January, having been granted his first leave for a very long time, he was in Paris.

"To whom it may concern

On authority delegated to me by HQ L of C I certify herewith that s/sgt Dr Gregorij Sklovsky is authorised to stay in Paris on compassionate leave starting the January 22 1945 and therefore to travel through and from the American Zone.

Maj.Gen G.O.C. Czechoslovak Forces"

It was an overwhelming experience. Of his mother he could find no trace, no information apart from what he already knew, that she had been arrested in July 1942, sent to the internment camp at Drancy and subsequently deported. He spent time with Sophie and Jean, back in Paris after hiding for more than two years in the region of the Massif Central, met Jean's family whom he immediately liked and who had behaved admirably throughout the Nazi occupation. Leo Fialkoff drove a hundred kilometres from his American Army camp to spend an evening with Grisha and he was able to trace several old friends from Lyon who, having outwitted both Nazis and Vichy collaborators, had survived and were now working in Paris.

Late in 1944 Grisha and Celia had started to plan how she could get to Europe. It was not, however, a time when one could easily obtain a passport or book passage from Australia on a ship to England - or anywhere. In January 1945 he saw an advertisement which he thought might provide an opportunity and he wrote to her:

"They are looking in London for people to work for UNRRA.[37] The main point is for you to get to London."

In March, when Celia had her passport but could not get on a ship, he was writing to senior British officers to facilitate passage to England for his fiancée:

"I am taking the liberty of writing to you owing to the fact that my army is under British command.... we came to England in June 1940, after the collapse, in order to continue our common fight which we started at the very outbreak of the war.... I thought this argument might enable me to ask for the clemency of the authorities concerned..."

While Grisha was hectoring the British Army Celia was making her own arrangements. She had heard of an Australian Red Cross Unit, being formed to work in Greece under the administration of UNRRA, and managed to have herself appointed to this Unit just ten days before it left Melbourne in April.

On 12 April 1945 President Roosevelt dies; 28 April Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, are shot by Italian partisans, their bodies strung by the heels from lamp-posts; 30 April Hitler shoots himself in his Berlin bunker and Admiral Dönitz declares himself Hitler's successor; 8 May Victory in Europe.

Celia and her colleagues were heading towards Suez when they heard the war in Europe was over but Japan was still fighting and their ship was escorted by an Australian cruiser. After briefing and some training in Egypt, the women members of the Unit were flown to Athens from where they went by truck to Salonika. Celia was first assigned to Florina, then occupied by British troops, near the Albanian border and was later moved to Kozani in western Macedonia.[38] The Australians arrived in northern Greece at a particularly dangerous time. Late in 1944, when it was evident Greece was facing civil war, Churchill ordered in British troops to support the claims of the royalist government and to provide military backing to those Greeks opposed to the People's National Army of Liberation, known as ELAS.[39] The country was in a pitiful state. As they withdrew, the Germans destroyed the country's infrastructure; the roads and railways and communications were almost non-existent. There was widespread famine. In December 1944 there had been a major battle for the control of Athens which resulted in the defeat of ELAS only after the landing of the 4th British Division. Greece was to suffer for many months before stable government was achieved. While the Australians were carrying out their relief work, ELAS

guerillas caused major disruption and there were many deaths and casualties. It is possible the Australians escaped serious injury because they were providing aid and medical services to all, irrespective of their political allegiance.

Victory in Europe was celebrated by Phyllis, Grisha's friend and fiancée of Jan Reichl, "in magnificent Lincoln Cathedral with the Last Post sounded from the Angel Choir". She wept unashamedly as she did not know where the Czech troops were. The day after VE day was declared, a Czechoslovakian Brigade of some 3500 men, under the command of an American General, drove across France and Germany [Grisha: "The highlight was peeing in the Rhine, having organised my friends to sing the *Wacht am Rhein* while doing so"] to Czechoslovakia and the outskirts of Prague. Whether or not there were political considerations, arising from the Yalta Conference,[40] to be taken into account, neither the Czechs nor the Third US Army, which was close by, could enter Prague until the Soviet Army had taken control. Churchill noted that "the agreements and understandings of Yalta, such as they were, had already been broken or brushed aside by a triumphant Kremlin". As late as 30 April 1945 he had written to the new American President, Harry S Truman:
"There can be little doubt that the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia and might well influence that in near-by countries. On the other hand, if the Western Allies play no significant part in Czechoslovakian liberation that country will go the way of Yugoslavia."[41]
We know, of course, Churchill's plans for the liberation of Prague came to nothing.

When they finally were able to enter the city, the Jewish members of the Brigade found not a single survivor from their families. One of the few Czech Officers Grisha liked and respected was Jan Pleva, a native of Prague, who moved back into his apartment taking Grisha with him. During the war it had been occupied by a German bureaucrat who, at the approach of the Soviet Army, had departed in a hurry, leaving a wardrobe full of clothes. He was apparently the same size as the apartment's owner and his guest because his suits fitted them perfectly.

On the 24 August, the day all Czechoslovakian forces were united under Soviet command, Grisha obtained what he so desperately wanted - his demobilization papers. He was awarded the Czechoslovakian Service Medal and was given another document which detailed his army service and concluded: "the above statement has been issued to the above named, Sjt. Dr. G. A. Sklovsky, to assist him in the recuperation of property in formerly German-occupied Europe". Having obtained a new Czech passport he presented himself at the Swedish Embassy, which, at that time, was representing Greece in Czechoslovakia. He had no trouble in gaining the Swedish endorsement:

"The Royal Swedish Legation in Prague, regarding the affairs of Greece, certifies hereby, that there are no objections against the travelling of Dr G Sklovsky, bearer of the Czecholslovak Passport No.1126/362, to Greece. All civil and military authorities are requested to render him the aid and support during this travel."

He was ready to set out for Greece.

Although now a civilian he managed to have himself assigned to a military unit going to Constanta, the Romanian port on the Black Sea, to act as convoy guards for trains carrying UNRRA supplies. They were supposed to have left their carriages at the Czech-Hungarian frontier but, uncertain of the conditions of the trains in Hungary and Romania, they kept them, coupling them to another train for the next leg. They were held up for a day in Budapest, waiting to cross over a wooden emergency bridge. After three days of travel they arrived at Constanta and there, contrary to what he had been told in Prague, there was no traffic between Romania and Greece or even Turkey. Wearing a Czech Army uniform with passport and civilian papers in one pocket, military papers associating him with the convoy unit in another pocket, he stayed around the port waiting for something to turn up. He kept busy as an interpreter for American and English sailors and for an official sick parade before the Russian Medical Officer. It was a lawless place in those days and there were many shootings. Then he heard a cargo ship was heading for Turkey and he bribed his way on board. He was confident that if he could only get to Istanbul it would not be too difficult to get to Athens. The ship sailed through the Bosporus, he could almost touch Istanbul, but it was not stopping. Its destination was Fethiye on Turkey's south coast from where he took many buses over several days to get back to Istanbul. From there he hitched a ride on a

French cargo plane to Athens where he headed straight for the UNRRA office to discover where Celia was working. He was introduced to some Australian Red Cross staff who were returning to Macedonia by truck and he was welcome to join them. On the evening of 28 October 1945, after a two day journey, Grisha arrived at Kozani, western Macedonia. Celia was going to bed when she was told "there's a young man downstairs asking for you".

It was six years, three months and fourteen days since he had farewelled her in Marseille, promising to join her in a month or two. His odyssey was over.

Chapter Eight

## From Greece to Paris to America

When the Red Cross discovered Grisha's background and qualifications they immediately offered him a position, making it possible for him to stay and work with Celia. He was also offered a permanent appointment with UNRRA but, still intent on eventually pursuing his career in science, he declined the offer. The two of them were appointed to Grevena in south-west Macedonia, where they would be the only aid workers and it really was necessary for them to be married if they were to take up this appointment together. They first approached the orthodox priest and a meeting was held in a cafe with the proprietor providing a running commentary on the cleric's lust for money. The army great-coat, befrocked priest did agree to marry them and was delighted to hear Grisha was Jewish, thereby needing first to be baptised. All this, he declared, could be achieved for a consideration of 500,000 drachmas. They declined the services of this man of the cloth and turned to the Jewish community of Salonika. Of that city's pre-war Sephardic and Ladino-speaking[42] population of about 60,000, probably less than 2000 survived the holocaust.

The Rabbi felt constrained by Greek Law, which stipulated both parties to a marriage be of the same faith: Orthodox could marry Orthodox, Catholic with Catholic, Muslim with Muslim, Jew with Jew. There seemed to be no way out of this difficulty until the Rabbi suggested that Celia's family name, Weigall, beginning as it did with *W*, could be considered German enough to indicate Jewish ancestry. Celia and Grisha were amused and not a little bemused, given the background to their relationship, but happy to accept this rabbinical gloss on the law and a synagogue wedding was now possible. She wrote to her sister:

"....we were at a garage in Salonika waiting for a spare part for our truck and Grisha said we can't wait any longer as the rabbi was waiting for us to sign some documents. We took the jeep and rushed back to the room over the market, late and very untidy. There were about fifteen men there and then the rabbi – he had a nice face – took the signatures of our witnesses and then said he would marry us at once! We couldn't believe it. We went into another room and a ceremony was conducted in Hebrew over us. They held a sort of silk

scarf over us like a tent and I wasn't required to speak.... I felt very touched and very married. When it was all over we just had time to rush back to the garage to pick up the spare part!"

Chief Rabbinate of Thessaloniki
Marriage Agreement
On this day of Friday, the 17th day of the Month Tebet of the year five thousand seven hundred and six.....a day kept by us, here in the city of Salonika, adequately supplied with water by its wells and springs.
In the presence of the undersigned, the bridegroom Grigoris Sklovsky, son of Avram, declared to the bride, the young woman Celia Weigal, daughter of Gerald: be my wife in accordance with the Law of Moses and Israel, and I undertake, with the help of God, to serve you, to feed you and clothe you, in keeping with the men of the race of Israel who properly serve and respect and feed and clothe their wives.....
Registration No. 3747-3748
In Salonika 21-12-45
The President of the Israeli Community

Several months later Grisha approached the Chief Rabbi of Paris to guarantee the validity of this ceremony, which he did:
Je soussigné, Julien Weill, certifie que Monsieur Gregoris Sklovsky été marié selon la religion Israélite avec Mlle Celia Weigall a la date 21 Decembre 1945 à Salonique. En foi de quoi nous lui délivrons le présent certificat pour valoir ce que de droit.
Fait à Paris le 2 Août 1946
Julien Weill Grand Rabbin de Paris

After the Jewish ceremony in Salonika they called on the Office of the British Consulate-General to see if that Office would perform a civil ceremony. It was possible although, because of idiosyncracies of British Consular regulations, authorisation of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had first to be granted. A telegram was accordingly despatched to

London and an affirmative reply received within a few days by the Vice-Consul Edward Peck:

"Grisha and Celia were delighted and I was pleased to perform the simple ceremony, which consisted of little more than eliciting the response 'I do' to the obvious question. This took place in the Consular office and was celebrated with a bottle of wine, champagne not being available in those days. I issued them with a marriage certificate in true British convincing form, copy for registration at Somerset House, London. Grisha and Celia went off happily to work for UNRRA in Grevena".

Grevena was a desperate place of poverty, hunger, disease and marauding guerillas who burnt villages and murdered indiscriminately. Despite the danger, the squalid conditions of their accommodation, unheated in the freezing winter, they were utterly content, loving more and learning more about each other. Celia wrote to her sister:

"Writing-time is difficult at the present because we have no stove in our billet and it is impossible to indulge in any sedentary occupation there until we have. We do our laundry together, clean the room together, have our inadequate baths with basins beside the kerosene heater together and jump into bed with a hot-water bottle and drink beer. We can't drink tea because we can't heat the water."

Their work was extremely demanding, weeks on end without a break, with huge areas to be covered by truck over impossible roads. Yet they were able to achieve great things in alleviating the poverty and suffering of the people. Their time in Greece left an indelible impression on them and years later Celia would write:

"That Spring is something I shall never forget – after the long months of snow, which we spent largely in Grevena and on our trips to Salonika, the thaw came at last with crocuses in sheets of purple between remaining snow drifts, followed by every conceivable flower as the season advanced. The extravagant beauty we were to meet over and over again seemed to give the lie to the surrounding destitution and tragedy – hyacinths, irises, pink anemones, violets and primroses, foxgloves and wild roses, white daisies, red poppies and gentian blue somethings. During this exquisite Spring we revisited mountain villages where we had taken census statistics in the Autumn but which had been snowbound throughout the Winter. We came bringing clothing but to our horror in many villages there were no longer any

children. Measles and whooping cough had proved deadly. In one village we had counted thirty children – now one baby survived. In another village all the men had been burned in the church while the women hid in the hills. It was here that a friend of ours, a South African woman, set up looms and succeeded in starting an industry which exported to her shop in Capetown, supporting fatherless families.

"The bandits were a continuing presence but they didn't interfere with us. We must have been watched often as we made our way to lonely villages as, on several occasions, they were attacked just after our departure. On these lonely roads theft was common. Loaded trucks would be stopped by a man on a donkey in the middle of the road and while the driver was attempting to clear the road his truck was being emptied from the rear. Once I was with another girl in the back of the truck when this happened – we picked up tools and bashed the first hands that appeared – we were allowed to pass. After that we had to travel with guards in the back of a loaded truck but they had to be Red Cross staff as army or police would have prejudiced our position. Malaria was another major debilitating factor in our area.

"As the Summer advanced we began to feel that our part, the preliminary work of alleviating all that suffering, was nearly finished. We stayed long enough to see the first Greek tractors and trucks on the road – the beginning of the real recovery."

While the Australian Red Cross team, their contracts completed, broke up in April 1946, leaving for home and other destinations, Grisha and Celia decided to stay another couple of months to see some projects completed. When they left Macedonia in June the UNRRA Director noted their "work will long be remembered in the district around Grevena". However, the 'thank you' letter that gave them most pleasure was received from G. Anthopoulos, Director of the National Boarding House of Boys of Grevena:

"On your departure from the historic town of Grevena, we have the honour to transmit to you the thousand thanks of the orphans of the National Boarding House of Grevena, as well as ours, for the precious food and various sorts of material which you granted to us, and which was so useful for the re-establishment of this philanthropic Institution which had had the misfortune to be greatly destroyed by the occupation armies..... grace to you, all the institutions were enriched by material of great value.

The Director of the national orphanage, valuing your exceptional services, full of true altruism, decides: The Boarding House in body, will accompany you up to the gates of the town, thus giving an example of gratitude to the noble sons of a noble allied people."

With Czech passports and French visas they left Salonika, hoping to have a short break in Athens and the Greek islands, before leaving for Paris where there was much to be done and much to discover. However, they were to be disappointed as they were immediately booked on a troop ship to Toulon "all because UNRRA here can't be bothered to extend our repatriation rights", Celia protested.

They arrived in Paris from Toulon in July and, for a short time, moved in with Sophie and Jean, who had returned to Boulevard Soult in the 12th arrondissement after the liberation of Paris. Grisha then found a couple of rooms nearby at 83 Ave. St. Mande. Grisha's immediate task was to try and establish what had happened to his mother. His brother-in-law had already been contacting government agencies, however, and had received a letter, dated 28 May 1946, from the Ministère des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre. The advice was that, on 29 July 1942 Madame Chaja Sklovska, née Gurevic, had been deported from the camp at Drancy to Auschwitz. The letter also stated that on arrival at Auschwitz all children less than fifteen years of age and all adults over fifty years were taken directly to the gas chambers.

Grisha did not need to be told. He had always known. Despite the fantastic theories proposed by Sophie and others, that Anna would be forced to work as a doctor caring for wounded Germans, that the deportees would be exchanged for prisoners-of-war, he knew that those deported to the east would be murdered. He had listened to and read the words of Hitler and Goebbels; Hans Frank, the Nazi administrator of Poland; Erich Koch, Reichskommisar of the Ukraine; Julius Streicher, who used to stride through Munich brandishing a whip and edited the viciously anti-Semitic *der Stürmer;* Franz Stuckart, who drafted the Nuremburg Laws and all the others who declared their intention of annihilating European Jewry – and he knew they meant it.

On 27 January 2005, close to the Seine, near the Pont Louis Philippe, the Mémorial de la Shoah was opened. This museum and documentation centre has, in its forecourt, a wall into which are carved more than seventy thousand names of those deported from France. Well-known names are there, Rothschild and Dreyfus among them, some appearing many times, but there is only one Sklovsky and the documentation centre has the record: arrested at her apartment 72 bis Rue Michel Ange, deported on train convoy No. 12 from Drancy to Auschwitz 29 July 1942.

In August Celia became pregnant and they were wildly happy at the prospect of starting a family. Yet they were confronted by a number of difficulties and Grisha was becoming increasingly frustrated. He had substantial funds lodged with the London branch of The Chase National Bank but was finding it impossible to get access to this money. The bank advised:

"As your account on our books is classified as a Domestic Account and the funds are, therefore only eligible for use within the Sterling Area, the Exchange Control Authorities would not allow this transfer to be made."

Moreover, as the holder of a Czech passport he was not permitted to enter England at that time. Celia had made contact with medical authorities at Oxford and had the opportunity to work there for a few months in her field of orthoptics. She was, however, now Mme Sklovska, the feminine form of the name which Grisha had explained four years before, the holder of a Czech passport and she likewise was refused entry. Greatly irritated but somewhat amused she pleaded with her sister Barbara not to tell their father of her alien status. Grisha tried to change the account he was unable to access to a joint account but once again the bank was unable to respond to a request from an account holder of Czech citizenship:

"Regarding the transferring of your Account into a Joint Account, we wish to inform you that we are not in a position to open Joint Accounts with right of survivorship for citizens of certain foreign countries of which Czechoslovakia is one."

It would appear that The Chase National Bank was already of the conviction that an iron curtain was in existence and was not prepared to sanction even the possibility of funds being transferred to the other side of that curtain to someone with "right of survivorship".

There were funds in Paris so the financial situation was not desperate but there were other concerns including the legality of their residency in France. Their Identity Cards, in fact a visa and a *carte d'alimentation*, a licence to buy food, were valid for only three months. Then there was the lack of ships sailing from France to Australia. He spent months trying to book passage and was finally advised that the only way for them to get to Australia was from the west coast of the United States. American visas, however, could only be issued when they provided evidence that they had booked and paid for transport out of the United States.

In July 1946 Ho Chi Minh walks out of the Fontainbleau conference on the future of Indochina; 22 July Zionists blow up part of the King David Hotel, Jerusalem; 2 September Congress Party forms provisional government in India; 15 October Hermann Göring commits suicide; 16 October Ribbentrop, Keitel, Kaltenbrunner, Rosenberg, Frank, Frick, Streicher, Seyss-Inquart, Saukel and Jodl are hanged at Nuremberg; 23 October General Assembly of UN meets in New York; 16 December Léon Blum forms Socialist Government in France; and Edith Piaf records *La vie en rose*.

Another friend of Grisha's, again with a similar background, Russia, Germany, France, was Isa Leviant, who had joined the French Army in 1939, was captured and, after playing the fool, was released from a prisoner-of-war camp as insane. He spent the rest of the war in the south of France working for de Gaulle. In 1946 he was in Washington as President of the French Supply Council and it was he who had the influence to arrange berths for Grisha and Celia on the *SS Marine Phoenix*, a combination passenger and freighter vessel, sailing out of San Francisco on 31 January 1947 bound for Australia.

They were still in Paris when they received this news at the beginning of December. Apart from the ongoing battle with banks over the transfer of funds there was much to be done if they were going to be in California by the end of January. Authorisation to ship personal belongings, including Russian silver, crystal champagne glasses, Greek peasant rugs and three hundred and fifty volumes of Russian, German, French, English and Czech literature, was required from French Customs; US transit visas and Australian visas for the Czech citizens had to be applied for and issued in near-record time – and passage had to be booked to New York. Celia was four months pregnant and becoming very weary under the

strain of making all the arrangements but was enormously relieved. She wrote to her best friend, her sister Barbara:

"You will know by now that our news has taken a dramatic turn for the good and, of course, we are absolutely thrilled, as between you and me we were thoroughly worried at the prospect of having to wait here perhaps several months after babe's arrival. Now life seems too good to be true again. Grisha is all sweet and young and gay again having seemed quite an old worried man lately – he's an awful worrier."

She was concerned about where they would be able to live as finding rental-accommodation in Australia was difficult for several years after the war.

"If anything turns up could you go and look at it and take it if it's anything at all within reason.... Nor do I expect this to be our permanent home but just something to see us over the rather awkward period of producing a baby and finding a job.... I wonder whether Robin Boyd [he was to become a noted architect and author] might be helpful. He builds flats and might book a place for us."

They were sorry to be leaving their friends in Paris but not Sophie. It would seem that the wounding memories of those July days of 1942 would remain raw throughout her lifetime.

"She is so utterly devoid of human curiosity. Always gives me a feeling of complete indifference to everybody, including her baby.... She has begun to study again and is seldom at home – Jean takes most of the responsibility for the household concerns. The nurse is devoted to the child and very nice....now Jean has some sort of lung trouble and must go to the country and have a rest....

Thank you not only for your practical help but for your lovely warmth. I am so glad you are thrilled with us – thought you were sure to be. Lots of love, Celia."

They managed to achieve everything they had to and sailed into New York on the *SS Wisconsin* a few days before Christmas.

They had very little time to organise their business affairs before leaving for Australia. Grisha had succeeded in having a large amount of cash transferred to New York from Paris and London but was unsuccessful in gaining access to funds he had entrusted to a bank in Prague. Over the years he would attempt to establish the legitimacy of the Sklovskys' claim to very substantial holdings in Poland, the forests near Grodno, a timber business in Warsaw

and a home at Grodno, as well as land in Harbin but always without success. Just prior to their leaving Paris, Sophie signed an affidavit, dated 3 December 1946, stating she had no desire to claim any part of any inheritance. Grisha ignored this affidavit and signed a Trust Agreement by which his friend and now successful Californian businessman, Leo Fialkoff, would administer a Trust for the benefit of Grisha and his sister. This Agreement was for ten years and was managed brilliantly by Fialkoff. Grisha would be forever grateful:
"My sister and I owe Leo a great debt for looking after, for many years, our financial interests with devotion and wisdom."

In 1956 Sophie lodged a compensation claim against the German Government for the imprisonment and deportation of her mother. A Berlin lawyer handling the matter, advised that compensation at the rate of 4.5Dm per day would be paid for the period from the date of arrest in July 1942 until 8 May 1945, the end of the war in Europe. In 1961 Sophie received a cheque from Germany for 4500Dm. She was appalled that life could be assessed in this manner and said she intended to give half to a charity and send Grisha the other half. He replied he was not interested.

Chapter Nine

## Melbourne

From the moment Grisha left Berlin for France he had it in mind to become a top-flight research chemist and then move to a new world and his new world would be the United States where millions of Russian Jews had gone before him. Yet, from the first days in Lyon, his frequent visits to Paris, the times he spent in the Alps and Provence, he became enamoured of France and the French life-style. Had it not been for the rise of Nazism it is highly likely he would have remained there with Celia, for she too loved France, but once Europe became impossible, after his mother's fate and the behaviour of the Vichy administration, there could only be Australia where they would build a life together.

They arrived in Melbourne in February 1947 and moved into the home of Celia's sister Barbara and her family at Eaglemont. This was not a happy experience. While Barbara was ever close to her sister and totally welcoming of Grisha, her husband, Herbert Darvall, was certainly not disposed to accept him into the extended family. Some twenty months after first meeting Grisha he wrote to him on his legal firm's letterhead:

"I am writing in an endeavour to do all I can on my part to put an end to the misunderstandings which seem to exist concerning my conduct to you.

I realise that my attitude has been unreasonable and that on several occasions I have been rude, to say the least of it.

I have apologised to you personally but it would seem that something more than this is called for. Thence I write this letter to repeat that apology.

It would have been fortunate that you and I got on better than I have been able to manage but I can only say as I have in the past that, to me, we are incompatible. I quite acknowledge that the fault is entirely on my side and I would like you to understand that it is purely a matter of temperament. There is nothing that you have done to me about which I have the slightest cause for complaint.

I sincerely hope that you will understand and receive this somewhat inconsequential letter in the spirit in which it is tendered and if we meet again I assure you that my conduct will be different.
Herbert L Darvall" 15.11.48

There were others who made no attempt to make Grisha feel welcome; rather they went out of their way in an attempt to exclude and embarrass him. Such childish and gauche behaviour had absolutely no effect on the boy from Siberia who had grown into the youth facing the Nazis in Berlin, flourished as a young scientist in France and had endured the dangers, tedium and triumphs of the army and war. The final product that arrived in Australia had been strengthened by adversity, was confident of his own intellect and was rejoicing in the expectation of the life he and Celia would build and share together. And things would change. By the mid-fifties the incompatible Darvall was being referred to as "my brother-in-law and my solicitor" and other members of the Darvall family would become friends. Grisha would also become close to his father-in-law whom he admired greatly.

They quickly moved from the Darvall home at Eaglemont, renting a couple of properties before settling in Canterbury Road. Toorak, where they would spend a few years.

On 13 May 1947 Celia gave birth to a daughter. She had been conceived in Paris, the city from which her grandmother had been deported four years previously. There never was any doubt about the naming of this child. She would be called Anna.

From the moment he had landed in Melbourne Grisha had been looking for employment and in May he was able to choose from two positions offered. The first was with Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand (ICIANZ), the second with the Munitions Supply Laboratories within the Federal Department of Munitions. He would later recall his astonishment at the openness of a society that would offer a non-citizen employment in a government department responsible for munitions. In the event he opted for the ICIANZ

position, at a salary of 500 pounds per year, as "a chemist, initially in the Research Department".

His decision to attempt to resurrect his career as a research chemist was a mistake. If the Czech Army had released him in 1941/42 to work in the aircraft industry it would have been different but that had not happened. It was now eight years since that memorable day in Lyon when he had been awarded his doctorate and throughout all that time he had not set foot in a laboratory. Moreover, it was soon evident that ICIANZ was not interested in him as a research chemist. The significance of the word *initially* in the job offer had escaped him. What the company wanted was someone with a chemistry background as a production supervisor. Some years later an executive of the Company, the only one with whom Grisha had a close, friendly relationship, resigned and wrote to him:
"Don't trust any of them.... When you first came to ICIANZ I thought you had been too long away from research work and tried to have you placed on the commercial side but they wouldn't have you there. This is a little difficult to mention to you even now, despite the long time that thas gone by. ICIANZ has certain peculiarities and I think you know what I mean. I was well aware of your troubles with M but could see no way out except a move to the commercial side. These things have nothing to do with your ability as you well understand....You must appreciate, Grisha, that I was in a position where it was not practical to say certain things which would, in effect, undermine the morale of staff. Whether this was right or wrong I can't say."

When Grisha recalled the Stormtrooper teacher, Goslich, at the Grunewald Gymnasium, he would include him in the trio of "great bastards I met during my not too sheltered life....I learnt to bypass his power and did not fall victim to him. This experience was handy in the Czechoslovak Army in 1940 with a Captain Nevrala, under whom I served and survived as Brigade interpreter and, last but not least, one of my early ICIANZ bosses, the late Dr Moffat."

He was delighted that his application for citizenship was quickly processed and gratefully accepted his Certificate of Naturalization signed by the Minister of State for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, a man he admired for his promotion of migration to Australia.

On 5 June 1947 George Marshall, American Secretary of State, calls for a European Recovery Program, funded by the United States (Marshall Aid); 15 August the independence of India is proclaimed; 5 October Warsaw Conference establishes the Cominform to co-ordinate European Communist Parties; 29 October Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg (Benelux) ratify customs union; 29 November United Nations votes for partition of Palestine; *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Plague* by Albert Camus are published; 20 January 1948 Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated; 31 March US Congress passes the Marshall Aid Act; 7 June President Beneš of Czechoslovakia resigns; 28 June Yugoslavia is expelled from the Cominform; 2 November Harry S Truman wins Presidential election; in November Chinese Communists complete the conquest of Manchuria; 4 April 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is founded; 23 May Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) comes into being; 7 October Democratic Republic of Germany (East Germany) comes into being; 16 October Greek civil war ends; 8 December Chinese Nationalists are driven from the mainland and declare Taipei the capital of the Republic of China; 17 December Robert Menzies forms coalition government in Australia.

On 3 October 1949 a son was born to Celia and Grisha and they named him Michael.

Grisha did not want to burden Celia with his concerns about his employment but turned rather to his friend, confidant and financial adviser, Leo Fialkoff. He had been with the company for two years when he wrote:

"You are definitely too flattering about me as a chemist and I am afraid not to be able to live up to your expectations.... trying my best, though. I am in the new place, learning hard to get control of the profusion of machines, men and different products we are producing.... intend to start working on each of the machines myself so I can know what to expect from the fellow who does it.... I should be quite a seasoned chemist/plant-manager in two years.... I think I'll stick to this apprenticeship as things now look clearer for me than they did for a

long time in the professional line....by adopting a Sergeant-Major technique I have so far succeeded in increasing the hourly output rate without antagonising the workers."

He also advised that he would be lecturing in industrial chemistry at the Melbourne Technical College. Then one Saturday morning he was going shopping and asked Celia what she wanted. She said they needed coffee and some fruit and "a car would be nice". So he went out and bought a second-hand Fiat for 770 pounds because he "wasn't prepared to wait ten months for an Armstrong-Sidley to be delivered".

Reading, particularly on political and social issues, remained high on the agenda and he would recommend those works which reinforced his own thinking. He urged Leo to read one of Koestler's earlier works, *Scum of the Earth,* before noting:
"This Australia is an archaic place with drinking hours 10am to 6pm and books banned for incomprehensible reasons – *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*. Please send me some caviar – can't get it here."
Leo replied:
"I recently went to a lecture of Koestler's and it was a great disappointment. Brilliant as his books are he should never open his mouth in public.... He is the worst possible speaker, meandering through the subject with constant repetitions.... without preparation.... fumbles through the subject while yawning. I sent the caviar – six jars. Please confirm the safe arrival."

In 1950 Celia's father died after a long illness and the obituary read:
"(he was) honorary medical officer to the Duke of Gloucester during the Royal visit of 1934....Dr Weigall, who was 78, was one of the most prominent members of the medical profession in Melbourne. He was President of the Melbourne Medical Association in 1932 and of the BMA in 1934..... For many years he practised in Brighton where he began the Brighton Community Hospital. Dr Weigall had been President of the Old Melburnians and a member of the Wallaby Club, the Melbourne Club and the Royal Melbourne Golf Club. Born in Melbourne and educated at Melbourne Grammar School and the University of Melbourne, Dr Weigall was the son of the late Mr Theyre Weigall, a former Master in Equity."

Grisha quickly became involved in activities that would interest and involve him for the rest of his life. From his early days in Australia he played an active role in helping people migrate to Australia, whether they were migrants or refugees. This involvement was not confined to a single group but embraced strangers as well as relatives and Czechs, Russians, Cambodians, Poles and others. Members of a family named Moshinsky, related to the Sklovskys through grandparents named Apterman, were among the earliest to benefit from his help. Following the Russian revolution they had left Russia for China, settling first in Harbin and then in Shanghai. Sam Moshinsky recalled "the critical role Grisha played in rescuing my family and bringing us to Melbourne. When the Chinese Communists took over in 1949, my family had to abandon their commercial interests in Shanghai. We were pressured to leave China but we were stateless and had nowhere to go.

"My mother managed to obtain from an uncle of Grisha's, still living in Harbin at that time, his address in Melbourne and wrote to him describing our plight. He responded immediately and warmly and in 1951 the necessary visas were issued. But then my family decided to send me, at the age of seventeen, to Australia on my own to prepare the way. Could the Sklovskys accommodate me until the rest of the family arrived? It was a big ask but once again the answer was in the affirmative and we were grateful also to Celia for her ready concurrence – she must have started to wonder what she was getting herself into with Grisha and his Russian relatives, whom she had never met.

"(I arrived) in Melbourne on Cup Day 1951. He took one look at me and realised he was facing a major challenge for quite obviously my semi-colonial upbringing in Shanghai rendered me totally unsuitable for life in Australia. He taught me how to wield a broom, how to hand-mow a lawn, wash the dishes and take out the rubbish. He sent me on a 1500 mile hitchhiking trip to get to know the country. He guided me in my studies and career. He was a true mentor – not only gifted but a giver as well".

All this family would embrace their new country and make valuable contributions to their new-found home. In 2000 Sam was awarded an OAM for his charitable, religious and cultural activities. His brother Nathan has achieved distinction in the legal profession while another brother, Elijah, is known world-wide as a director in opera and theatre. He has

directed many productions for Opera Australia, five of the BBC Shakespeare cycle, West End productions and a remarkable production of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* staged in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. All such accomplishments were a source of great satisfaction to Grisha who never ceased to argue that new Australians were obliged to become whole, complete Australians, involved in and working for the good of the society which had accepted them and in which they have their being.

In 1950 he joined the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, AIIA, an organisation, in which he would play an active role for more than forty years, ideally suited to cater to his passionate interest in and concern for international affairs. The Institute provides a forum for the discussion of matters of topical and continuing interest through meetings and seminars addressed by Australian and international specialists, distinguished scholars, authors and political figures. Over the years those addressing the Institute have included Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley, Salvador de Madariaga, Helen Suzman, Senator Eugene McCarthy and the Rt. Hon. James Callaghan. Grisha was not overly impressed by the Huxley visit. "Julian Huxley paid us a visit for a week and as a member of the AIIA I had the opportunity to listen to him on several occasions... a bit disappointing as slightly overbearing and condescending towards the listeners."

On 6 June 1953 Celia gave birth to their third child, a second daughter, and they named her Jane.

In Berlin the Sklovskys had lived in apartments but Abram had bought a large house at Schöneberg, Bozener Str 3 as an investment. Having lost most of the family's assets in Russia, Poland and China, Grisha was determined to establish the legitimacy of his claim to this property in Germany. In 1953 a Berlin court ruled in his favour and the house was subsequently leased. Rent was paid into a Berlin bank and banking records show that half of these funds were forwarded to Grisha's account in Melbourne while the remainder were paid into the Paris account of Jean Vaugelade, his brother-in-law. The house was sold in 1962, Grisha declaring he wanted to cut all ties to Europe, and the proceeds were similarly divided. While the relationship between Grisha [and Celia] and his sister deteriorated over the years,

Sophie becoming more and more reclusive and eccentric, a warm friendship had developed between Grisha's family and her husband, Jean.

Grisha and Celia had bought a house on a large block of land in Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell, where they would remain for the rest of their lives. Celia rekindled her love of painting, undertook classes in portraiture and began to study the design of gardens, an interest which would develop into a semi-professional activity.

"Celia is being kept on the run from 6.30 til 11 with very little time for rest. But it's fun and Janey is such a perfect model that we are already wondering how we managed without her.... the amount of work does not increase on a pro rata basis with increasing number of children – something like a Gompertz equation or a population curve seems to take effect and the older ones also help a bit.

Went skiing for a week in September. Had a very hard walk in worst blizzard in 15 years and it took us six hours to cover the six miles of 30 degree slopes up and down (but mainly up) to get to the chalet. Very nice once up there but a week is not enough at our age – went with another old man of my vintage (they were both thirty-eight) – to recover from the exertion of walking in and out with a full pack..... now concentrating on improving the long-neglected property: painting, sowing of vegetables, building the chicken coop – up to now we had bantams roaming decoratively through the garden and feeding on strawberries and Celia's best flowers and shrubs.

Vice-President Nixon is here and gave a most impressive radio talk last night. Sounds a good bloke.

ICI has treated me very shabbily. After having received a lot of praise throughout the year and one of the highest ratings I was awarded an increase of 70 pounds. Have an appointment to see the Technical Manager tomorrow as I feel it my duty to tell them what I think of such generosity – a *geste gratuit* which can hardly have any world-shaking repercussions but I feel I owe it to my conscience."

He was adapting effortlessly to the role of a family man, reasonably prosperous with secure employment and a private income, with a demanding and loving family and many diverse interests. Despite his half-hearted attempts to give up smoking in the war years he

had never lost his enjoyment of tobacco and for the rest of his life he was to be a devotee of fine cigars. As well as skiing he again took up tennis, which he had enjoyed in his Lyon days, and if it rained on his tennis day he would complain of "this anti-Semitic weather". Then there was his lunch club. If he was committed to a business appointment, or he simply wanted to talk to a friend, he preferred to do it over lunch where good food and good wine could only contribute to a scene of civilised companionship. More than one of his friends would refer to him as "a legend in the tradition of fine lunches" and such occasions also provided him with the opportunity to build on his ever-growing network of contacts. It was quite natural for him to convene a luncheon club which he did in the early 'fifties and which continues to the present. In the early days the venue was the Maas restaurant in St Kilda where he would converse with the proprietor in Russian, occasionally translating for the other diners. Later, the group met at various hotels in Carlton, a French restaurant in North Melbourne, for many years at the North Star Hotel in North Melbourne, before moving to a hotel in Hawthorn where they still gather. The membership list makes interesting reading: David Ferber, a former US diplomat; Phillip Law, antarctic explorer; academics Ron Taft, John Swan and Zelman Cowen, later Governor-General; Frank Nicholls, of CSIRO and later UNESCO; Gustav Nossal, scientist; John Landy, athlete and later Governor of Victoria; Nic Lottkowitz, research chemist with Kodak; Hans Snelleman, life-long friend, and many other academics and businessmen.

On 6 January 1950 Britain recognises Comunist China; 26 January the inauguration of the Republic of India; in South Africa the Immorality Act forbids sexual intercourse between Europeans and Coloureds and the entire population must register as White, Coloured or African; an American cartoonist coins the word *McCarthyism*; on 25 June North Korean forces invade South Korea; 6 February 1952 George VI of England dies; 4 November Dwight D Eisenhower wins US presidential election; 5 March 1953 Joseph Stalin dies; on US television Ed Murrow launches attack on the activities of Senator McCarthy; 7 May 1954 French forces surrender at Dien Bien Phu; 14 May 1955 Warsaw Pact established allowing for Soviet troops in member countries; 25 February 1956 Nikita Krushchev denounces the policies of Joseph Stalin; Britain deports Archbishop Makarios from Cyprus to the Seychelles; 26 July President Nasser of Egypt announces the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and France and England wage war against Egypt; 4 November Soviet tanks attack Budapest; 2 December Fidel Castro and supporters begin guerilla campaign in Cuba.

Chapter Ten

## Family, Friends and Europe

From the beginning of their life together in Australia, Grisha and Celia pursued their interests in music, theatre and the arts generally or "culture with a capital K", as he used to remark, harking back to his life in Germany where his parents, particularly his mother, tried to involve him in the world of high *Kultur*. Music was high on the list with his joining the Board of Musica Viva and they would remind their friends in Europe and the US that Melbourne was no backwater, "becoming more and more the centre of theatre, concerts, art shows.... not so different from life in more central places". The social changes wrought by the post-war mass migration were particularly welcome. "New restaurants of all nationalities, Russian nightclubs and a balalaika orchestra, Italian cafe espressos – one run by a Chinese family in Camberwell – all enliven life considerably. This hive of multinational activities can no longer be mistaken for a British provincial outpost." The successful integration of so many nationalities into Australian society he found impressive and pleasing. "A typical example is the team of painters and tradesmen in our house, working for a large, local firm: an Italian foreman, one Pole, one Scot, two Dutchmen and one Australian with only broken English and some popular songs uniting them."

And he was surprised how totally he succumbed to the appeal of "the general atmosphere of the city and the stadiums, the crowds and the colourful vistas of flags, athletes and all" of what became known as the Friendly Games – the Olympics of 1956.

"I have not been to an athletics meeting since 1932 and only go to watch tennis finals and an occasional football final. Two years ago when the Games tickets went on sale I got a few just 'to be in it'.... Sitting there among the flags and the Torch and seeing these children break records – do you realise that three Australian teenage girls swam 15% faster than Johnny Weissmuller? [American Olympic champion who became Hollywood's Tarzan] – and seeing the most sporting crowd applauding effort rather than victory or nationality, I really became Olympic-mad. Still not interested in watching sport as such, I was completely

absorbed by the atmosphere.... The closing ceremony was most moving, especially the end where they accepted the suggestion of a 17 years old Chinese Melbourne student, that athletes of all nationalities walk in rows of ten, irrespective of country and all mixed up in the colourful uniforms and this at a time of Suez and Hungary – with large numbers of Hungarian athletes deciding to remain here! Monroe Dumas, here to watch his son (win the high-jump) stayed with friends of ours and we had interesting talks about life in the US for black Americans.

Melbourne was more cosmopolitan than the Riviera in season and I would not have believed such a friendly spirit would descend upon us. One of our toughest factory workers told me: 'You know, I'll be buggered – here I was in the MCG (Melbourne Cricket Ground, the main athletics arena, usually the site of football and cricket) and I couldn't even pick a fight with any of the blokes there'."

The Sklovsky children were growing up in a happy, stable environment with loving, committed and involved parents, remembered for their generosity and involvement in many social issues. The house was constantly filled with interesting people and the garden swarming with children, "living in the trees or building huts in the most unexpected parts of our garden". There was no religious involvement, the children being neither baptised nor associated with any synagogue activity. Grisha considered himself a rational free-thinker while Celia flirted periodically with theosophical ideas, intent on her own search for meaning. She was taking portrait commissions, excited when two of her paintings were accepted in a Victorian Artists' Society Exhibition and designing gardens. She was also taking an active interest in aboriginal issues. It was not uncommon for aboriginal and other children to spend their holidays with the Sklovsky family.

It was in the 'fifties that Grisha revived the Russian custom, [it had been continued in Germany], of large numbers, extended family and friends, holidaying together. The site chosen was at Wild Dog Creek, near Apollo Bay on the Great Ocean Road and there, for many years, they would camp for two weeks each January. Grisha would welcome the "happy campers" and the endless, sun-burnt days, the mountains rushing down to meet the ocean, the empty beaches, the memories of all that have attained legendary status among

those who were there. An enduring image remains of him "in plastic sandals, hairy, barrel-chested, at low-tide, immersed in a rock pool like a hunting bear, an arm searching out hidden crevices and a bucket-full of crabs would be the outcome". In later years he and Celia bought a bush-block by the Yarra River on the outskirts of Melbourne. They first camped there in tents, later building a couple of simple huts, and it became a favoured week-end retreat, especially for Celia who loved to paint her landscapes there.

They derived great pleasure from their children and gave detailed reports of their development to friends overseas:

Anna was enrolled in Tintern, an Anglican Grammar School, where she would remain throughout her school years. Following in her mother's footsteps she continued to develop an interest in all artistic endeavours.

"She has become quite skillful with her hands and is always busy making something when she is not drawing."

"Janey's school report thrilled us at first with comments on her vigour, success and enjoyment in every field but it was somewhat marred by the final comment, 'if her exuberance could be curbed, the other children would be able to work too'."

Michael gained priority entry into Melbourne Grammar, the school of generations of Weigall boys, and his parents had no problem with this access through privilege. Grisha delighted in reporting that his son was "the first Sklovsky ever to sing in an Anglican school chapel-choir, while maintaining his talmudic logic and argumentation". An attempt to imbue Michael with a bit of old-world culture, by taking him to a film of the Bolshoi Ballet, proved a dismal failure but his parents, in the late 'fifties, delighted in many musical events, including the Smetana Quartet, Chinese Opera, pianist Claudio Arrau, the one-hundred-and-twenty-strong Czech Philharmonic, the Alma Trio, baritone Gerard Souzay, concerts presented by Musica Viva, as well as many plays and musicals.

The children were taught to appreciate food and revere wine, yet another inheritance of their father's years in France. Pilgrimages were made to the wine-growing districts and visiting the cellars would be a ritual. He kept an extensive, not very well managed, stock of wine. The garage, cupboards, the area under the house were so crammed with cases of wine

that builders, tradesmen would speculate on the effect to the house when these supports were removed. He ranked vignerons with academics, scientists and engineers as people whose work advanced the quality of life and deserved to be more highly regarded. His duties around the house were confined to sweeping, some washing-up and, when required, chicken executioner. Celia was the 'handyman', doing repairs, climbing ladders, laying brick paths. An article on her painting in the *Australian Women's Weekly* annoyed her but she did not oppose its publication as it helped to promote an exhibition of hers. The reporter, however, showed little interest in her paintings and portrayed her as a bricklayer. Shopping was always an expedition as Prahran and Camberwell markets were searched for Grisha's delicatessen favourites, cheeses, smoked fish and salamis. He knew the stall-keepers, keeping up with their family news and often conversing in their own language.

In April 1959 Ted Peck, the British diplomat who had conducted their marriage ceremony in Salonika, flew into Melbourne, from Singapore where he was then stationed, to stay at the Sklovsky home. He thought it "very gratifying to find that the marriage performed under such strange circumstances should have proved so successful and it was grand to see you both so happy with each other, 'even' after thirteen years of married life".

Other memories of their time in Greece were prompted by the arrival of a letter from the solicitor at Grevena whom they had known well. He wrote:

"Do you remember Ariadne, the maid you had? She is married to the doctor in Kozani, has two girls and is again expecting. As we say here, 'love conquers in battle'.

There is now no foreign organisation for child care. The UN left in August 1952. The care of the children was taken up by our Queen, who is working tirelessly in that direction and has built child-care houses even in the remotest villages of Greece.

After your departure so many things happened that entirely changed our way of life. The Communist rebellion was the main target and its suppression was for Greece a matter of honour. In December 1946 I was called into the army as a Company Commander and took part in many operations. After three years in the army and without any injuries, I went back to Grevena and the Law.

Dear Grisha and Mrs Celia, I always keep vivid the recollection of our close cooperation in the work of war relief.... I also keep the best memories of your good company, friendship and affection.... your moral support for the grievous condition of our children created by the last war....your supervising so well the work of the children's relief will remain unforgettable.
My respects to you and Mrs Celia
I kiss the children."

On 9 January 1957 the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden resigns; 22 January Israeli forces withdraw from the Sinai; 25 January The Treaty of Rome establishes the European Economic Community; 15 May Britain explodes its first thermonuclear bomb, in the Pacific; Jorn Utzon wins design competition for the Sydney Opera House; 4 October USSR launches Sputnik, the first satellite; 1 June 1958 Charles de Gaulle forms government; 8-9 September race riots in Notting Hill, London; 25 October Angelo Roncalli is elected Pope John XXIII; 2 January 1959 Fidel Castro becomes Prime Minister of Cuba; 17 March Dalai Lama escapes from Tibet; 10 November UN condemns apartheid in South Africa and racial discrimination generally; 23 May 1960 Israel announces arrest of Adolf Eichmann; France agrees to the independence of Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central Africa and Congo; 8 November John F Kennedy wins US presidential election and in 1960 Albert Camus and Boris Pasternak died.

Throughout 1952-57 Grisha had been Chief Development Officer at the fabrics factory at Deer Park in Melbourne. In 1958 he was appointed to the Technical Service Division in the Fabrics Group and moved into the recently completed ICI House, then the tallest building in Australia. He enjoyed the change as it gave rein to his abundant sociability, his capacity to influence people, make and renew contracts and to travel around the States. He dealt with the motor-car industry, fashion houses and the furniture trade, Government departments and the armed forces and many other industries. He was more content in this new role than he had been for a long time.

He had been "a Polar buff since boyhood". The world of snow and ice had been a source of wonder for him since his earliest days in Siberia and for most of his adult life he went skiing whenever he could. In the 1950s he met, and became a close friend of, Dr Phillip Law, the noted Antarctic explorer. It was then, a matter more of pleasure than business

when he began negotiations with the Commonwealth Antarctic Division to use fabrics which he had helped to develop and produce. These materials were used in the Antarctic for clothing, tents and tarpaulins, insulation and trail-marking pennants and he was delighted when Phillip Law's cream, nylon skiing gear, which he had also developed, attracted much attention. Another link to Polar research was through his brother-in-law, Jean Vaugelade, who had been appointed Associate Director of France's Expéditions Polaires Françaises.

One result of these associations saw Grisha appointed an official interpreter at the Antarctic Consultative Meeting held in Canberra in July 1961 which ran for three weeks. Conscious of the potential for business contacts ICI had no hesitation in releasing him for the duration of the conference. Twelve nations participated under the auspices of the International Treaty of 1959, providing for co-operation and exchange of information in the study of the Antarctic. Originally invited as a Russian interpreter he was asked to take over the French section beause of the shortage of French interpreters. Documents and speeches had to be translated and summaries produced in four languages, English, French, Russian and Spanish. He thoroughly enjoyed this experience and impressed many with his linguistic ability, the ease with which he mixed with the delegates from all the nations, for his wit and for his internationalism.

Half-way through the conference he received a letter from Celia:
"Just a week today since you left and I'm feeling very loving. It is more than twenty years since I wrote my first love letter to you and now I think so happily how much more I love you than then. How this love has proved so much better than I dared to hope – Do you know, darling, how glad I am we met? How lucky I think I am? How entirely I do really love and admire you?"
He replied: "I feel more loving than ever towards you and so happy we met – and waited – and re-met."
Theirs was a relationship that never faltered in its total commitment, a love-story without end.

It has been recorded how, when he sold the house in Berlin, he expressed his desire to "cut all ties to Europe". The Nazi years, the war, his mother's fate, which blighted his sister's life, inevitably resulted in an alienation that was shared by countless numbers of his contemporaries. His raging against Germany and Germans in his war-time letters had often shocked Celia but, while abating, the contempt was always there and of course he was not alone. The following comments come from former students of the Grunewald Gymnasium, all friends of Grisha.

- from the Netherlands:

"..... as to the ugly manifestations of human weakness in the 30ies and 40ies, I still don't understand the tragedies which have occurred. I want to forget rather than try to solve the complex problem."

- from California:

"I was back there in Berlin and found it disturbing and depressing".

- from Israel:

"It is futile to try to describe what happens to the psyche of a child who is suddenly pushed out of his natural surroundings and declared not only a second-class citizen but belonging to an inferior race....This trauma leaves deep scars which do not disappear entirely even after many decades....The Zionist Movement was where we lived and had our being. Being German Jews, we did not want any connection to the country which had declared us inferior."

- from England:

"I am in touch with a German, Horst Markau, ex Wehrmacht and pow in Russia. I have known him since my first schoolday and consider him a Nazi by duress rather than by conviction. His father was commercial attaché under Ribbentrop at the German embassy in London and Horst went to school with Ribbentrop's son. I was in the British Army and was in Berlin at the end of the war and did business there after the war. I found the city passé and don't care if I never see it again."

- from New York:

"I drove to West Germany and then took a plane from Frankfurt to Berlin in order to arrange some claims for my mother. I stayed in Berlin only two days – it was a queer feeling, oh,

nothing deep down but queer just the same. The Rhineland, with all its beauties, had left me cold, completely cold.... The people were polite, far too polite."

One of his friends, Ernest Borneman, yet another in that remarkably creative group, did return to Germany to work. Early in the war, Borneman, a Jew whose German citizenship had been revoked by the Nazis in 1935, was deported from England and interned in Canada. Quickly released he went to work for John Grierson, the father of documentary film, an industry in which Ernest had been involved in England in the 'thirties. After the war Grierson was appointed head of the UNESCO departments, Mass Communications and Information, and again he sent for Ernest, who was appointed head of the film section in Paris before Orson Welles lured him away, at three times his UNESCO salary, to Italy to work on a film script, *Ulysses.* This proved to be a disastrous undertaking when Welles went broke and Ernest and his wife retreated to London. But he did finish the script which Welles eventually bought and later sold to Italian producer Carlo Ponti who made a sad version with Kirk Douglas and Silvana Mangano in 1954. Throughout this period he was also writing a column on jazz for the periodical *The Record Changer*. A prolific writer, he wrote several novels, once using the pen-name Cameron McCabe, and other works.[43] In London he worked for two television companies, Granada, where he was drama editor, and TWW, before moving to Frankfurt to work in West German television in 1960. It was there that Grisha, ever determined to track down his school-friends from Berlin days, contacted him and they corresponded, meeting occasionally, for the rest of their lives. Ernest wrote to Grisha:

"I never went back to Germany (except to pass through on holiday) 'til last year when I was hired to build up the second German TV network as program director – and the result has been a disaster. Til now, through all the strains and stresses of the Nazi years, I preserved the basic liberal conviction that human beings are alike anywhere and that 'there but for the grace of God go I'. Now, after thirteen months in Germany, I'm no longer sure.

"It was extremely painful. The hatred of gentile against Jew, of Nazi against Communist, has turned into a hatred of individual against individual.... You can cut the hatred with a knife – it poisons the air. Everybody seems to live on the raw edge of a nervous breakdown. And rightly so – how can so much tension ever find relief?

"So the thing I envy you for is the feeling of peace you describe. I have never known it and least of all here. I made my pact with the devil, I suppose, when I threw in my lot with authors, musicians, film and television folk. It's been an exciting and sometimes a successful life – but a harrassing one. I'm white-haired now at 46. I still have that photo of you in my flat in Heathcote Street, Bloomsbury – in '35, '36? You know who came out of that flat– all those black students from the London School of Economics who changed the face of much of the globe.... the new shape of many nations was first designed in that little flat. How the meek have risen!" (See p.oo)

In 1995, shortly after his eightieth birthday, Ernest committed suicide.

On 17 January 1961 Patrice Lumumba, former Prime Minister of Congo Republic, now Zaire, is killed; 12 April USSR puts first person in space, Yuri Gagarin; 13 April UN General Assembly condemns apartheid in South Africa; 31 May Adolf Eichmann is executed in Jerusalem for crimes against the Jewish people; 17 August building of Berlin wall; 3 July 1962 France proclaims independence of Algeria; 22 October President Kennedy announces a naval blockade of Cuba; 14 January President de Gaulle blocks Britain's entry into the ECC; in May the Organisation of African Unity is founded; 1 July Kim Philby is revealed as the 'third man'; 28 August civil rights marchers in Washington hear Martin Luther King proclaim: 'I have a dream'; 12 December 1963 independence of Kenya; May 1964 the PLO is founded in Jordan; 11 June Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage and conspiracy; the Civil Rights Act is signed in Washington banning racial discrimination in employment, unions, accomodation and restaurants; 15 October Nikita Krushchev is replaced as First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party by Leonid Brezhnev.

By 1962 Grisha was anxious to see friends of his youth and discover what Europe was like some sixteen years after he and Celia had sailed out of Le Havre. They left Melbourne in June, staying at Noumea before flying to the United States. From there they continued on to England, to Paris, where they leased an apartment, and hosted many reunions, and then to Finland, Italy and by late August they were in Berlin. They were there to arrange the sale of the house and Grisha was pleased to leave after two days:

"I always felt foreign there, never intended to stay in the 'thirties and wasn't astounded at the advent of Hitlerism – a bit surprised it came so suddenly and without the resistance one could

have expected." Even the language had been dismissed from his consciousness. "German has been a dead language for me since I left and Volkswagen had to call in an interpreter when I visited their German boss in Melbourne."

They flew into Tel Aviv on 28 August and Celia reported back to the children :
"Above the general tumult as we stepped from the plane was a shout of Grisha! – Celia! and a group of about ten people, carrying great bunches of flowers, rushed to meet and hug us – I was never hugged by so many strangers in my life and now after four days I feel really warm to these new relations. Foremost among them is Dad's 60 year old beloved cousin Stassia. She is a doctor, arrived here in Israel ten years ago from Harbin in China. She was a great friend of Dad's mother in Berlin and was very good to him when he was growing up.....we were so fascinated by how this exhausted little desert is being made to flourish."

This visit, his first to Israel, profoundly influenced Grisha's thinking about that country and strengthened and heightened his sense of his own Jewishness.

On their way home they stopped over in New Delhi to see their great friend, Khushwant Singh, whom, back in 1939, Celia had attacked, along with Grisha, for being late for breakfast, not Christian-behaving, and who had become India's best known writer and columnist. After graduating from Government College, Lahore, he had gone to England and qualified as a barrister from the Inner Temple in 1939. He spent several years practising law at the Lahore High Court before joining the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in 1947. He joined All India Radio in 1951 and subsequently was editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, chief editor of *New Delhi* and editor of the *Hindustan Times*. A prodigious author, his many publications include a classic history of the Sikhs and several novels including *Delhi*, *Train to Pakistan*, and *The Company of Women*. He was a member of the Upper House of the Indian Parliament, 1980-86, and in 2000 he was conferred the Honest Man of the Year Award for his courage and honesty in his "brilliant incisive writing". A restless spirit, he was constantly travelling and when in Australia would stay with the Sklovskys. The friendship which had begun in 1939 was to endure.

The following letter, written to Celia during one of Grisha's business trips, gives some indication of this man's fascinating character and why the Sklovskys loved him:

"I came home yesterday – three weeks in Israel, one in Salzburg and three days in Germany. Israel quite overwhelmed me with its achievements and pervading atmosphere of oneness. I had to check myself from saying 'Yes, I'm Jewish – Ben Israel from India'. I am now working on articles on Israel for Indian newspapers....Anna should have received the sari by now – I will also find out about a knife for Michael.

"It's only taken 24 hours for my restlessness to return. I envy your home and children – you're feeling lost because Grisha is away and the sky is overcast. None of this happens with me – or rather to me. It is a ceaseless pushing of the pen in a snarling, snapping society. I have a large number of acquaintances and not a friend amongst them. Have almost lost the capacity of making friends and have acquired a great penchant for dropping people. Sad that it should happen in the afternoon of one's days when loneliness becomes a real problem.

"Delhi is hot and dusty. When I left Salzburg there was snow in the mountains – and here, one can't keep cool in a bathtub. [He had been in Salzburg for the awarding of the Prix International de Littérature.]

"The week in Salzburg was full of VIPs – Mary McCarthy and Moravia and Carlo Levi and many others. I had the privilege of presiding over them and exchanging a few cracks with Mary.

"She backed Solzhenitzyn and Nathalie Sarraute for the prize. (Nathalie Sarraute won.) My candidates were Bashevis Singer and Naipul. We had lots of fun and lots of whiskey.

Love to all – Khuswant."

On one of his visits to Melbourne he was invited to a legal profession dinner as the guest speaker, comparing Indian and British legal systems. Seated opposite him at the dinner was a woman who looked across at the bearded, turbaned man and, unaware of who he was or that he was the guest speaker, asked him: "Likee soupee?". Somewhat bemused and amused he thought it wisest not to respond. After his address, delivered in his wonderful, commanding voice that enchanted audiences, he turned to the woman and asked: "Likee talkee?".

During that same visit to Australia he was invited by the ABC to present the Commission's prestigious radio talk, *Guest of Honour*. In the submitted script the Director of the Talks Department detected a passage, critical of India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, that might draw the ire of the federal government in Canberra. The Talks Department would later become more robust and independent in its editorial decisions but then there was no hesitation in asking Singh to delete the offending passage. He was intrigued by such journalistic delicacy and pointed out that for years he had been offering far more trenchant criticism of Nehru on All India radio and in Indian newspapers. The ABC, however, was adamant and under protest he finally agreed, observing "When in Rome....".

On 24 January 1965 Winston Churchill dies; 7 February US planes bomb North Vietnam; 21 March Martin Luther King leads civil rights march at Selma, Alabama; 29 April Australia commits troops to South Vietnam; 19 August West German court sentences six officials of Auschwitz death camp to life imprisonment; 6 September India invades West Pakistan; 11 November Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence; 11 January 1966 Indira Gandhi becomes Prime Minister of India; 20 January Harold Holt becomes Prime Minister of Australia; 1 July France withdraws its troops from NATO Command; 28 October President de Gaulle calls for US withdrawal from Vietnam; 21 April 1967 Greek Colonels sieze power in Athens; 5-10 June Six-Day War between Israel and Arab states; 17 December Australia's Prime Minister disappears in ocean near Portsea, Victoria; 10 January 1968 John Gorton becomes Prime Minister of Australia; 30 January Vietcong launch Tet Offensive in South Vietnam cities; 4 April Martin Luther King assassinated at Memphis, Tennessee; 10 May Night of the Barricades in Paris; 5 June Robert Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles; 20 August Soviet forces invade Czechoslovakia; 31 October President Johnson halts bombing of North Vietnam; 5 November Richard Nixon wins US presidential election.

Chapter Eleven

## Battlegrounds and the Antarctic

In 1963 Grisha was appointed Chief Information Officer of ICIANZ's Research Department. He was charged with the co-ordination, by computer technology, of all information exchange, libraries and files throughout the Company's offices and factories throughout Australia and operation of the central information service. It was a role he would fill until statutory retirement from the company and certainly where he felt most challenged, involved and comfortable. He brought to the position his formidable analytic skills, continually stressing the importance of the fledgling computer technology. He would chide a gathering of librarians over the subject-title for discussion: "...it names only the Patent Officer besides the librarian and the Subject Specialist (whatever this means) and omits essential, new, professional requirements like the computer programmer, the systems analyst..."

Now he could associate and communicate at the intellectual level he had missed for many years. Never satisfied with the status quo in any situation he would ask:

"Where is it leading? How can we improve?"

So it was not uncommon to read of proposals such as:

"A working party is being appointed by the Royal Australian Chemical Institute as the first stage to implement a suggestion by Dr Sklovsky to form an Australian, Scientific and Technical Information Centre. The Centre would help improve the scientific and technical position of Australia, increase industrial and research efficiency and become an important factor in Australia's export effort, Dr Sklovsky said." [He would later be elected a Fellow of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute.]

In his new role he became involved with many organisations apart from ICIANZ. He was appointed to the National Library's Committee for Science and Technology, prepared submissions to the Pharmaceutical Industry in Australia and the CSIRO, delivered papers at ANZAAS Conferences on the information revolution and entertained librarians with the

breadth of his learning and his musical analogies. When he was asked to contribute to a seminar on the *integration* of various library specialists, he told them:

"The orchestra performing a set piece of music is one of the most perfect integrated operations: all parameters are fixed from start to finish; at times a little leeway is given to the soloist.... while the managerial role of the conductor is very much stressed in, for example, Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*, where musicians disappear one by one, whilst 'integrated' tonality continues uninterrupted with reduced and dwindling staff, until the conductor remains alone. "

Further analogies would be found in his early addiction to card games:

"Bridge, incidentally, although a highly competitive activity, is akin to librarianship; fundamentally, bidding systems differ only slightly, aiming for the same results of abstracting one's holdings, and addicts argue with religious fervour just as about cataloguing theories! One's own is always the true orthodoxy – hence, the difficulty in creating a universal system."

Nor would his military experience be ignored:

"My dislike of set establishments comes from bitter experience with bureaucracies who feed on them and after six years of military service I am certain that the more backwards-looking the army, the more rigid and and out-of-date its war establishment. The French Army in 1939-40 had set establishment tables for every contingency bar military survival in modern war, while our invasion forces of 1944 had fewer and the various partisan, resistance fighters had none but were totally integrated for the task at hand."

When he retired his staff presented him with a bound volume of the papers he had delivered over a decade. Some of the titles give an indication of his intellect and depth of knowledge: Chemical Information Systems for Australia; The Information Ecosystem in the Knowledge Environment; Scientific and Technical Information; Putting Knowledge to Work; Information Services in Australia; Information Retrieval Systems; A Farewell to Arms – or Change with Continuity in a Shrinking Universe. He was at the forefront with those promoting the new information industry and was scathing in his criticism of "those Luddites fearful of computerisation". Noted scientist, Sir Gustav Nossal, would later record: "Grisha was among the first people to realise that library science was about more than books

and journals. He was also among the first to realise the huge impact of the computer and that information technology was a separate science in its own right."

In 1967 ICIANZ sent him overseas to confer with colleagues and study latest developments in information technology. He travelled to Canada, the United States and England before arriving in Paris where he arranged a clandestine meeting with his father's half-brother, Josif Sklovsky, [usually identified as Josif Shklovsky in English publications], the renowned scientist, known as "the father of Russian radio-astronomy". Josif held several appointments in the Department of Radioastronomy at Moscow University, at the Sternberg Astronomical Institute before being appointed Head of the Astrophysical Department at the Institute of Space Research in Moscow. Many of his writings have been translated into English, including *Cosmic Radio Waves, Supernovae* and *Stars, Their Birth, Life and Death*. The background to his joint publication with the American Carl Sagan is worth noting.

A work of Josif's, *Universe, Life and Intelligence*, had attracted the attention of Sagan and they began to correspond. Unable to meet face to face and with full communication and co-operation impossible, Sagan had Josif's material translated, added his own work and *Intelligent Life in the Universe* was published in 1966 under both their names. It was a remarkably successful publication and the paperback edition was a best seller when Josif visited the United States for a conference. Denied adequate travelling expenses by the Soviet authorities Josif was finding the going more than difficult. He explained:

"I noticed that my American colleagues were perplexed at seeing me deny myself the necessities of life, down to a glass of beer. Finally, one of them said frankly, 'Forgive me, but we find your behaviour surprising. After all, you're a rich man!'

'How's that – rich?' I wondered.

'Come on, your book with Sagan came out in paperback. That's worth tens of thousands of dollars!'

Alas, the Soviet Union hadn't yet signed the international copyright agreement. With his American business sense, Sagan effectively used the 'Soviet-American book' as the springboard to a dynamic pop-science career, the apotheosis of which was his thirteen-part

TV series *Cosmos*.... I have no grievance against this businesslike, cheerful and congenial American."[44]
Josif never received a cent from any royalties.

Several times throughout his career Josif fell out of favour with the Soviet authorities but the most serious break was occasioned by his support for Andrei Sakharov,[45] the great nuclear physicist, who was described by the Nobel Peace Committee as a "spokesman for the conscience of mankind". In 1971 he wrote to Leonid Brezhnev:
"Our society is infected by apathy, hypocrisy, petty bourgeois egotism and hidden cruelty. The majority of representatives of its upper level – the Party apparatus of the government and the highest, most successful layers of the intelligentsia – cling tenaciously to their open and secret privileges and are profoundly indifferent to violations of human rights, the interests of progress, to the security and future of mankind."

His growing criticism of Soviet repression of its citizens and his championing of human rights brought him condemnation from the authorities and for several years he was sentenced to internal exile in Gorky. When he was abandoned by many of his colleagues in the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Josif wrote a public letter in his defence as a result of which he was subsequently refused permission to attend many scientific gatherings, the reason being given that he was too ill to travel. With no little irony Josif told scientists in the West: "Yes, I have diabetes. Too much Sakharov." *Sakhar* is the Russian word for sugar. On a couple of occasions, when he was allowed to travel, to the United States and Europe, he was offered assistance if he decided to defect. Rather unwisely, Grisha made a similar offer. Josif was aware of, had lived through, had suffered from, the injustices of the Soviet system, compounded, in his case, by a pervasive anti-Semitism. Yet, like other rebels, certainly Pasternak, he was a fierce nationalist. In the world of science he was the complete international with no boundaries but culturally he would remain totally Russian. He gave Grisha the reply he gave to all who invited him to defect: "Don't be ridiculous – Russia is my country." Paris 1967 was the only occasion on which they met.

From Paris Grisha had intended to go on to Israel, to catch up with friends and relatives, particularly his beloved cousin Stassia, but the Six-Day War erupted and he had to cancel the visit. Stassia worked non-stop at the hospital throughout those fateful days and on 12 June, two days after the ceasefire, she collapsed and died of a heart attack.

On 28 April 1969 Charles de Gaulle resigns as President of France; 15 June Georges Pompidou becomes President of France; 20 July Neil Armstrong walks on the Moon; 25 August the Arab League plans a jihad against Israel; 21 October Willi Brandt becomes West Germany's Chancellor; 19 November details of My Lai (Vietnam) massacre of 16 March 1968 revealed; 4 May 1970 four students shot dead at Kent State University, Ohio; 26 June Bernadette Devlin MP imprisoned in Belfast for incitement to riot; 16 September King Hussein of Jordan orders the disarmament and dispersal of Palestinian militia; 28 September Egypt's President Nasser dies and is succeeded by Anwar Sadat and in 1970 *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer and *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet are published; 7 February 1971 female suffrage is approved in Switzerland; 20 May nine Jews are sentenced to hard labour by a Leningrad Court for anti-Soviet activities; 13 June the Pentagon Papers are published by New York Times; 25 June Margaret Thatcher, Britain's Education Secretary, announces the provision of free milk for primary school children will end; 31 December Kurt Waldheim assumes office as UN Secretary General; 30 January 1972 'Bloody Sunday' in Londonderry, Northern Ireland; 21 February President Nixon visits China; 17 June Watergate break-in in Washington; 5 September eleven members of Israeli Olympic team murdered by Arab terrorists in Munich; 7 November Richard Nixon wins US presidential election; 2 December Gough Whitlam becomes Prime Minister of Australia.

The year 1968 would prove to be a year of heightened activity in Grisha's involvement in assistance to migrants. As we have seen, from his earliest days in Australia he was ready to aid relatives and friends who were anxious to migrate for a better life. He constantly wrote to government departments and other organisations to facilitate migration procedures and to achieve recognition of qualifications obtained in countries other than Australia. He offered to assist in overcoming "problems and difficulties that can arise.... through too literal translation of academic titles". To bureaucrats he would explain:

"The term 'Candidate' in most tertiary institutions in Russia, Czechoslovakia and other Slavonic countries is recognised by most professional associations to be equivalent to PhD.... Translating this as 'Master' is a downgrading of the qualification, whereas leaving

'Candidate' without comment can make this incomprehensible to many Australian employers."

He congratulated the Department of Immigration on their initiatives in these matters:

"Delighted to see that the crash courses (at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the New South Wales Institute of Technology) have now been adopted for all educated migrants. Congratulations! Am also glad to see that steps are now being taken re the recognition of European degrees and diplomas. This is very good as considerable embarrassment and hardship is caused by the 'closed shop' attitudes of certain professional bodies."

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet forces in August 1968 gave further impetus to these activities as well as provoking political involvement. Meetings to plan for the provision of aid to migrants, particularly Czechs, and to organise political protest were held at the Sklovskys' home with Grisha and Jan Reichl providing the leadership. [Reichl was his friend in the Czech Brigade whom he had introduced to his schoolteacher friend Phyllis. They had married and, after considerable hardship involving Jan's escape from Prague, had migrated to Australia.] These meetings established structures to lobby politicians and bureaucrats, seek out employment opportunities, provide aid for those new arrivals in need, provide, free of charge, refresher courses in a variety of disciplines and seek out scholarships for those students whose studies had been interrupted by the Soviet invasion. They also contributed to the organisation of rallies , "attended by all who value democratic rights and justice, [and who] condemn most strongly the brutal acts of aggression against Czechoslovakia". None of this involvement was a burden to Grisha. He welcomed such challenges and was ever surprised when others, whom he could have expected to contribute, pleaded the pressure of other commitments for not being involved.

Celia was continuing with her portrait paintings and often took artist friends to their "hilly land on the Yarra River", where they would paint their landscapes and study Australian native flora. Four could sleep in the hut they had built while others would stay in tents. While Grisha was overseas in 1967 Celia took Michael on a trip to Sydney and while she

"was delighted to find him a charming companion of wide interests in people, paintings and architecture", all was not well between Michael and his parents.

Grisha always set the highest standards for himself, in all endeavours, and demanded the same from those close to him. He was known to enquire of his children, when advised a 97% exam pass had been achieved, "So how did you lose 3%?" Part witticism, part serious question. Their daughters caused little or no concern.

"Anna is delightful and we are very proud of her....slim and dark-eyed, full of life and humour and sometimes surprisingly adult wisdom. Her concentrated enthusiasm during a week-end may be applied to writing an essay, running up an evening dress, doing some mosaic, making Christmas cards and selling them to unsuspecting friends." She matriculated and enrolled in the Arts faculty at the University of Melbourne.

"Jane....a most satisfactory child: junior scholarship, flute honours, all sports teams....too strong a personality for restful co-existence, she organises her school, home, neighbourhood, cares for numerous animals – a keen and brave swimmer."

Michael, however, was not realising his potential, according to Grisha. He confided to a friend:

".... up to now Mike shows no interest in any university subject but would quite like to 'try out' university life. This does not seem to us enough motivation to take up a valuable place, perhaps at the expense of a keen, fully extended but slightly less able candidate. Hard to say where we went wrong in not succeeding to inculcate any sense of motivation or dedication in an otherwise very nice, clever and obviously intelligent boy who will have to earn his livelihood with his head as he suffers fom my lack of manual dexterity. Time should show whether he will snap out of the apathy he has shown so consistently towards scholastic achievement."

The friend replied that perhaps Grisha should calm down, be less demanding, Michael would find his own way and time would provide solutions to any possible conflict.

There was not, at this time a great deal of understanding between father and son. Grisha really had no idea how much the schoolboy despised the environment of his school:

"I never enjoyed this school.... Another thing that made me feel an outsider at this stage of my life was my ethnic background. The racism was mild. Despite my lack of a formal religious background I was considered one of the school's three Jews.... My Russian surname stood out from the list of Anglo-Saxon names and I remember being ashamed of my embarrassment when my father kissed me goodbye at the school gates.

"I was smug in the knowledge that I had escaped brainwashing and that the other students were forever stuck in their narrow world. My detachment from my colleagues was enhanced by the fact that I saw myself as not being White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant, despite that being my mother's background.... I grew to hate the attitudes underlying the school, not just the excessive competition but the arrogance.... it all affected my growing sense of social justice as did much else, including the school's endorsement of conscription and the Vietnam war – and the preferential way the sons of the rich and famous were treated by staff. I spent an enormous amount of time reading during those years and remember John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis and George Orwell being very influential on my thinking between twelve and seventeen.

"It hurt me that Grisha seemed to support this system....To him, formal education was the one stable benefit in a world of change and in terms of his and his parents' life stories this had certainly been the case. I argued that times were different and that people not qualifications or results were important and that I wanted a lifestyle not a career. It is ironic that he argued against my gaining a motor-cycle licence which I did at the youngest age possible. This has proved for me my most useful skill, more than my science degree, as it gained me access to remote Third World villages.

"For years there was continuous argument with mutual upset. Some subjects, such as my admiration for Bob Dylan, were treated with humour. 'Just another misguided Jewish boy', was Grisha's verdict on the young man Zimmerman who had changed his name to Dylan.

"Many subjects roused real passion: Conscription and Vietnam and many political issues....it was a low point in my family relations and I set off for Sydney on a motorcycle. For two years I had minimum contact with my family, living what I saw as a bohemian lifestyle.

"Then I was called up. I considered refusing to comply and going to gaol, going 'underground' or fighting a case of conscientious objection. This last course of action

presented a major problem: the only admissible grounds were religious and I didn't believe in God."

Michael's apparent lack of interest in further education, coupled with his rejection of his father's advice, were matters of concern but it was his son's contempt for the policy of the then government, his opposition to the Vietnam war and his determination not to be drafted, all this amounted to crisis time for Grisha. Throughout his years in Australia he had become more conservative in his politics and increasingly demonstrated little tolerance for views contrary to his own. He had embraced the British heritage in Australia as a symbol of civilisation, a bulwark against the fascism he had experienced and, out of respect for that tradition and remembering his admiration for the behaviour of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth during the London blitz, he joined the Royal Society of Victoria. Of course, that organisation's role in presenting the world of science strongly attracted him. His European life, despite emigrations as a refugee, had been one of privilege while in Australia he had joined Celia's family and circle which again was a scene of privilege and political conservatism. Certainly, there was a time in Lyon when he had adopted the young person's traditional, challenging attitude but, now, at this stage of his life, he probably would not have recognised the young man who had tried to explain to Celia why he had enlisted in the Czechoslovakian Army:

"I decided not to go like cattle to defend .... Wall Street, the City and the international iron industry...."

The history of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia had inevitably influenced him profoundly. He railed against that intellectualism he perceived as being divorced from reality and against an existentialism he considered nihilistic. Certain elements of the political left he attacked for having abandoned a commitment to the underprivileged and anti-fascism and he would warn against an unholy alliance between the left and the right-wing bigotry of Arab extremism. His formal education had always concentrated on the sciences and mathematics and he attempted to apply logic and scientific certainty, or what was perceived to be certainty, to all social and political issues. This was not how he conducted his personal relationships but in political, public debate wounds could be inflicted when conciliation, political pluralism and emotional appeal were regarded with suspicion. Some

associates and friends suggested he adopt a more conciliatory attitude to those whose ideas he opposed. One of them wrote:

"I am claiming the privilege of friendship, to be heard; I am fulfilling an obligation of friendship, to speak up when necessary, though not asked; and I am risking, perhaps, an old and valued liaison.

"I found myself baulking against your insistence, toward your friends, of a distinctly 'polarizing' concept of the political history in this country.... one-eyed people are making it harder for 'past insanity' to disappear. Grisha, as a matter of fact, you and I are obviously on the same side of the political spectrum. Only, my conviction of the essential importance of the human worth, forbids me to call them names and allows, nay compels me to cultivate continued and continuous dialogue. And mark, my friend, surely 'logic' is not the only thing that moves human affairs! Feelings, affections, perversions, enmities and the lot are as much of that stuff as maths and physical phenomena.... it is not possible to maintain the human warmth that makes the Sklovsky families of this world such an important and beneficial influence on their neighbours and friends if any of them start ramming their personal foibles down other people's throats.... I rest my fire but consider it please – and rest assured of my continued affectionate regards."

Despite such serious disagreements it is doubtful whether the fundamental basis of friendships was ever challenged. While he had few acquaintances who shared his political convictions he maintained friendly relationships with people of all political persuasions. Yet with Michael, profound divergence of views was highlighted by frequent verbal eruptions and inevitably tensions developed. As Celia's father had written to her in 1939, noting her letters were "full of curious reflections and sides of life of which I know nothing", Grisha had now to acknowledge his son was travelling a road which he, Grisha, found utterly alien. Michael was determined to have his day in court to fight his call-up and, having excluded himself from the conscientious objector's traditional defence based on a theistic faith, "decided to base a case on Buddhist belief". Witnesses were needed to attest that he had long held sincere and strong objections to war and the person who knew all about that was his father. Grisha disagreed with almost everything his son was propounding but this was family, family came before all else, and there never was any real doubt that he would offer

his support and appear for the defence. In court he stated that he had been arguing for years against his son's anti-war stance, his anti-government attitude but had not had the slightest influence in changing those sincerely held views. After an examination of gruelling questioning that went on for hours Michael won his case.

It was the turning point in their relationship. There was still much about which they would disagree but humour and a sense of detachment came to the fore and mutual respect for opposing views would replace anger and resentment. Pride in each other's personality and achievements would endure.

Early in 1969 Grisha set off on what he regarded as one of the great adventures of his life. Since Jean Vaugelade, had become Associate-Director of the Expéditions Polaires Françaises in 1958, Grisha had acted, in an unofficial capacity, as a liaison officer for the French organisation with the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition. In a gesture of gratitude Grisha had been invited to join the Antarctic supply ship, *Thala Dan*, taking supplies to the French base at Dumont d'Urville and to return the 1968 expedition personnel to Australia. "I was treated as an official Australian observer." The *Thala Dan* left Melbourne on 3 March with one year's supply of food for the French team, 1000 gallons of red wine from South Australia, scientific equipment and plants from the Central Research Laboratories of ICI. The idea for the selection and assembly of these plants, destined for an Antarctic garden, was initiated by Vaugelade who was attempting to make the conditions at Dumont d'Urville base a little more human for those there who were desperate to see something growing, other than moss. Through Grisha's representation, the laboratories' gardener, Paul Waddington, developed some special plants which he believed could survive the constant indoor environment. The collection also included mint and chives destined for the French Antarctic kitchen.

The *Thala Dan* left Melbourne on 3 March and immediately ran into stormy weather with the ship rolling up to forty degrees. Grisha was grateful for sea-sickness pills and for two days was even off his cigars. The Aurora Australis turned on a spectacular show and twice a day Grisha was in the radio shack helping in the translation of radio messages. One of those

messages was from the French base which advised that there was unusually early ice at the base. This was shortly confirmed when the *Thala Dan*, no icebreaker, was blocked forty miles from the base. A request went out for an American icebreaker to come to their aid but it advised it could not get there before April by which time they would have been locked in. Fortunately, a sister ship, the *Nella Dan*, (named after Nell, Phillip Law's wife), was within twenty-four hours sailing and it had three helicopters on board with plenty of fuel. When it arrived the helicopters flew continuously for two days, bringing out those of the French team who had completed their tour of duty, and ferrying in supplies, although the garden plants and the wine had to remain on board. Grisha failed to set foot on Antarctica but his day would come.

Chapter Twelve

## New Directions and Multiculturalism

The early 'seventies saw the Sklovsky children each taking the first steps to determine their future lives. Anna graduated from university majoring in Fine Arts and Indian Studies and, in the footsteps of her mother, set off for a year in England. On her return she was restless and seemed not content with her life. Then a man whom she had met in London made a quick visit to Melbourne to see her. This was Piers Haggard,[46] a film and television director and the father of four children from a previous marriage. Anna returned to London where she and Piers were married in February 1972. Celia was surprised at the suddenness of all this but after visiting them "returned much happier for having seen Anna and Piers and his numerous congenial family. He is a charming person, cheerful and kind and made me feel very welcome in their London home".

Michael and his long-time girlfriend, Barbara, were married the same year. Following his conscientious objector's case he had enrolled in the University of Melbourne in the Science faculty, opting to major in psychology. He and Barbara were running a business, making and selling their own craft works, batik, leather work, candles and bead jewellery and his parents were pleasantly surprised to discover he had "developed an unexpectedly high business sense and considerable artistic dexterity".

Jane had excelled in her matriculation year and was studying medicine at the University of Melbourne.

News from Paris was invariably depressing with Sophie periodically refusing to communicate with Grisha but he ensured, through friends, that he was kept informed of her situation:

"Sophie, I thought, did not look bad at all....As you know, her morale and stubbornness are a great trouble. We bore down on her as hard as possible about taking a more constructive attitude and admitting that her chance of not dying is at least 50%.... Of course, she keeps

clobbering everybody over the head with the statement that she is a doctor and we are all laymen."

"I had dinner at the house of your sister and brother-in-law. Sophie looked well. Her outlook was as pessimistic as ever."

"Your sister is as impossible as ever. When I called she told me about her imminent death, confidentially advised me that Elizabeth [her daughter] was pregnant but that the baby was not the right way up - a fact Elizabeth didn't seem to be aware of! When Sophie mentioned that she didn't have help in the house at the moment, I suggested that we come for a cup of tea instead of dinner. This she indignantly refused on the grounds that 'After all, that was going to be our last dinner together, ever' since she was going to be dead by the time of our next visit. I sometimes wonder how she can function as a psychiatrist and do her patients any good! I am afraid all that is not news to you."

On 15 January 1973 the USA suspends all military action against North Vietnam; all charges against the *New York Times* dismissed on 11 May in Pentagon Paper Trial because of 'Government misconduct'; 24 June Leonid Brezhnev declares Cold War over; 21 July French nuclear tests at Mururoa Atoll over Australian and New Zealand protests; 11 September President Allende killed in Chile and General Pinochet seizes power; 6 October Egypt and Syria attack Israel during Yom Kippur observances; 5 March 1974 Harold Wilson forms Government in Britain; 8 May West German Chancellor Willy Brandt resigns; 20 July Turkey invades Cyprus; 9 August President Richard Nixon resigns; 30 April 1975 Saigon surrenders to Communist forces; 23 July Greek Colonels found guilty of treason and sentenced to death; 11 November Australia's Prime Minister Gough Whitlam dismissed; 20 November Spain's General Franco dies; 16 March 1976 Britain's Prime Minister announces he is to resign; 9 September Chairman of Chinese Communist Party Mao Zedong dies; 2 November Jimmy Carter wins US Presidential election; 5 December in France Gaullist Party revived by Jacques Chirac; 17 May 1977 the Likud Party's Menachem Begin becomes Prime Minister of Israel; 12 September South African Steve Biko is killed in police custody; 19 November Egypt's President Sadat visits Israel.

In 1972 Grisha was again invited to join the French relief expedition, led by his brother-in-law Jean, to Dumont d'Urville station on Adelie Island. This time the weather was kinder and he spent a week at the French base, finally realising a lifetime's dream that proved even

more fascinating, beautiful and interesting than expected. He was again travelling in 1973, partly for ICIANZ but always pursuing his own interests, to Mauritius, South Africa, England and Europe. Back home he and Celia maintained a hectic lifestyle, attending theatres, St Martin's in South Yarra and la Mama in Carlton, concerts, lectures, seminars, conferences and tennis was a compulsory, weekly ritual. His intense interest in all aspects of culture and politics was served by his active involvement in the Victorian Branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, being elected President of that organisation in 1974 and re-elected in the following two years. He would later spend two years as President of the Royal Society of Victoria. He delighted in the opportunities these roles provided for him to meet and debate with many national and international figures. In these years two of the most interesting visitors to the AIIF were Israel's Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and James Michener, the American author of South Pacific fame.

Both Celia and Grisha were delighted to be in England in 1975 for the birth of Anna's first child, William Godfrey Abraham Haggard, but were later saddened to hear that Michael and Barbara were separating. Michael had graduated with degrees in science and psychology but was concentrating on building his business importing art, craftwork, furniture from Asia. In the midst of her medical studies Jane found time to travel to Europe, join her mother in walking and painting around Queensland, tour South East Asia with her parents and bring to the house her friends who were always welcome, even though they would argue with her father. Celia, ever more intent on her painting, was delighted with an exhibition of her landscapes and got away to the country, central Australian deserts and rain forests, whenever she could, forever with brush in hand. Grisha was concerned that, as statutory retirement from ICIANZ loomed, there would be "no pottering about the place or senior citizens' activities". There never was any real possibilty of this occurring.

In 1977 he retired from ICIANZ but had prepared for the day. He immediately joined two friends in founding a company, Trans-Knowledge Associates: Bob Williamson, who had a chemical engineering, manufacturing and management background and had developed computer-based information systems for Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd, and Frank Nicholls, who, after a long association with CSIRO, held United Nations scientific advisory

posts in Asia. As Special Governor of the Applied Scientific Research Corporation of Thailand he established that country's National Documentation Centre. Services offered by the company included: improving internal communications programs; organising information into computer-compatible systems and operating them if required; advising on policy for purchasing information material; and selecting information service staff. The three men comprised a formidable and experienced team and were at the forefront of systems development in those early days of computerisation.

Then in late 1977 Grisha was invited by the federal government to take up a position he found appealing and challenging. It was that of Chairman of the Board of the Special Broadcasting Service and his appointment, to commence 1 January 1978, was for an initial term of two years. This organisation had its roots in 1975 when the Federal Government established the radio stations 2EA Sydney and 3EA Melbourne to meet the needs of Australia's diverse cultural communities in their first language, particularly providing information on government initiatives in the provision of health care. It was to have been a three months experiment but was quickly extended a further three years. By December 1978 2EA was broadcasting in forty-one languages and 3EA thirty-eight. The Board was appointed to manage these stations, extend the services to other States and plan the introduction of a new television network which would be known as SBSTV. On his appointment Grisha addressed a gathering, reflecting on his own experiences of life as an immigrant in Australia:

"I have been a consumer of 'ethnic problems' all my life. The difference between countries is obvious and so are the developments which occurred in Australia during the post-war decades. For my whole time in Australia I have worked in various sections of ICI Australia. There I saw a very wide cross section of the growing population actively involved in the operation of a major local industry and in the conversion of the company's products. I dealt with firms ranging from a motor-car giant to a neighbourhood book-binder. This experience reinforced my belief in the democratic processes of integration of people of the most varied national and social background into one multifaceted community. This integration is not an abdication of original cultural backgrounds, not a coercive subjugation of individuals, but is a force which enriches both the life of the individuals involved and of the country as a whole....

This post will enable me to contribute to the democratic Australian community which has accepted me without obliging me to change my ethnic characteristics."

It is evident that he did not fully appreciate what he was letting himself in for nor was he aware, at that time, of the many pressure groups demanding a role in migrant-media initiatives. At the beginning of his appointment he knew virtually nothing about broadcasting though that was not necessarily a handicap as witness Chairmen of the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Commission] over the decades, of whom none, with the exception of Sir James Darling who had been a member of the Broadcasting Control Board, had had any experience in the media. The important qualities he brought to the position were his willingness to learn and to delegate, his intimate knowledge and experience of the lot of a migrant [several times over], his capacity to handle an ever-demanding workload and his skill and courage in confronting, when necessary, bureaucrats and politicians. He also had with him on the Board, Neil Hutchison, a man who did know more than a little about broadcasting. He had arrived in Sydney from England in the 'forties as the BBC representative in Australia and subsequently joined the ABC where he held several senior positions including that of Controller of Programs. He and Grisha would work closely together.

In September 1976 the Federal Government had offered the radio stations 2EA, 3EA to the Australian Broadcasting Commission (later Corporation) and the then Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Michael McKellar, set up committees, representing ethnic communities, to advise ABC management how the stations might be managed. At the time the national broadcaster was being subjected to severe budget cuts and enforced staff reductions and was not really interested in having an ethnic unit as another of its production departments. After what appeared to be unnecessary delays and with budget estimates for running the stations considered excessive by the Government, the offer was withdrawn in June 1977. Professor Leonie Kramer, then a director of the ABC and its Chairman, 1982-1983, later wrote:

"In retrospect (and indeed in 1977), it was obvious that the ABC had not recognised the important changes in the composition of the Australian population that had begun after

World War II. It had offered English for Migrants on radio, but its general programming did not reflect the expanded meaning of being Australian. So I suppose it was not surprising that the government regarded the ABC as at best indifferent and at worst hostile to the idea of ethnic broadcasting."[47]

The ABC would continue to struggle somewhat clumsily with these issues in the ensuing years. In 1980, in its submission to the Dix *Review of the Australian Broadcasting Commission,* we read:

"Because of its special duty as a national broadcasting service, to hold in balance regional and national interests, it has a clear view of its responsibilities towards ethnic communities. It regards with concern some of the current views on the subject of ethnic broadcasting. Ethnic communities understandably take pride in their cultural traditions and customs and in their languages. They all have a great deal to give to the country of their adoption and a great deal to learn from it. But just as regional and local interests must be placed in the larger perspective of national concerns, so must those of ethnic communities."

This tone of patronage and condescension was somewhat ameliorated in the following paragraph, while its attitude to the fledgling SBS was apparent.

"Their contribution to Australian life will be effective only if they are clearly participating fully in the affairs of the nation and not confined to separate enclaves. They will not learn to understand the history and nature of Australian life if they do not watch or listen to the national broadcasting network; nor contribute to it if they remain locked in their own language groups. The ABC regards the ethnic communities as part of its national responsibility and does not support arguments that would result in such communities being discriminated against through not being specifically served by it."

In 1985 the Corporation issued a document, *Corporate Plan 1985-1988,* which gave no indication of any maturing of thought on the subject:

"Multiculturalism.

Special programs dealing with multicultural issues will continue to be shown on ABC-TV from time to time. But it is even more important to ensure, without forcefeeding or tokenism, that the ABC's general television output reflects the cultural diversity of

Australian society. This will be a specific responsibility of Controller, TV Programs, advised by the Multicultural Working Group established by the Board of Directors.

Cultural Diversity.

During 1985-86 specific initiatives will be implemented to better integrate multicultural values within the output of the Radio Division. Increasingly, programming will incorporate such values. Consultation with ethnic communities will be a crucial component of all developments in the multicultural area."

Throughout the 'seventies some ABC staff had been pushing for the inclusion of foreign language programs, including films, to be included in the radio and television schedules but the then General Manager, Talbot Duckmanton, and other executives, constantly rejected such proposals as being outside the organisation's charter.

On 30 May 1978 the Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, tabled the *Report of the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants*, known as the Galbally Report after its Chairman, the Melbourne barrister, Frank Galbally. The Report's recommendations were accepted in toto by the Government and included [totally inadequate] funding of $7.3m, for a pilot ethnic television station. The Report included the following observations:

"We recognise the extensive cultural and racial diversity existing in Australia and we are conscious of the problems and the advantages to the nation such diversity presents.

It is desirable to define our concept of culture. We believe it is a way of life, that 'complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. The concept of race is clear.

We are convinced that migrants have the right to maintain their cultural and racial identity and that it is clearly in the best interests of our nation that they should be encouraged and assisted to do so if they wish. Provided that ethnic identity is not stressed at the expense of society at large, but is interwoven into the fabric of our nationhood by the process of multicultural interaction, then the community as a whole will benefit substantially and its democratic nature will be reinforced. The knowledge that people are identified with their cultural background and ethnic group enables them to take their place in their new society

with confidence and a sense of purpose if their ethnicity has been accepted by the community.

We reject the argument that cultural diversity necessarily creates divisiveness. Rather, we believe that hostility and bitterness between groups are often the result of cultural repression."

All of this was perfectly acceptable to Grisha and the other Board members as they set about strengthening and extending the ethnic radio network and launching a new television channel. Multiculturalism was 'in the air'. Some politicians, academics and social commentators were having difficulty with the concept and, indeed, with the very word. Canada had appointed a Minister for Multiculturalism in 1972 and the following year, Australia's Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, published a paper, *A Multicultural Society for Australia*. The Whitlam Labor Government initiated many important inquiries to investigate the problems confronting migrants in Australian society. Included were Migrant Task Forces in each State and committees to report on community relations, migrant languages in schools, policies in manufacturing industries and poverty in Australia. The Racial Discrimination Act was proclaimed in 1975 and with the accession of the Liberal Government in the same year the then Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser gave a commitment to multiculturalism. With Al Grassby's successor in the immigration portfolio, the Liberal Michael Mackeller, readily using the word, multiculturalism, the concept, the policy had arrived, notwithstanding some critics, such as Leonie Kramer who asserted:

"There is no such thing as 'multiculture'. There *is* an Australian culture, which changes with the expansion and diversification of the society from which it grows."

The SBS's Chairman had no such qualms as long as everyone recognised that they were living in one, united society that required every individual to work for the good of that society:

"Multiculturalism is an excellent way to build a new society...; however, its framework must be publicly and frequently proclaimed as the need for the creation of an English-speaking, British law-based, Australian multiculturalism and multiracialism. This needs stressing and enforcing, even if it will initially be criticised by some of the vociferous, self-appointed

'professional ethnics', who lead an easy personal life on this new interface of growing demands upon Australia and reduced commitment to this new society."

What was implied in the Board's understanding of its role, as articulated by its Chairman, was much more than the provision of special services to minority ethnic groups within the broader community. It required of Australian society a recognition of the legitimacy of cultural diversity, acceptance of differences, appreciation of a variety of lifestyles rather than obligatory conformity to a standardised norm. The aim was to achieve a community in which peoples from diverse backgrounds could express and maintain their cultural identity, while recognising and adhering to a core of cultural and moral values.

The task confronting the Board was enormous as scores of bodies demanded to have a role in the control of the radio stations and the coming television channel and input into their programs. There was the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council [NEBAC] chaired by Sir Arvi Parbo [a friend of Grisha]; the Victorian and NSW Ethnic Communities Councils; the Greek Welfare Society; "a large number of extreme right-wing groups in the Serbian and Croatian communites, but also among the Vietnamese, Maltese and Slovenian"; embassies and consulates [quite improperly] exerting pressure; Public Broacasters of Australia; a staff-member of 2EA, who led a national anti-SBS campaign when her hours were reduced; the Commissioner of Community Relations and the Ministers for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, and Post and Telecommunications and many other organisations and individuals including the owner of a Sydney videotape production company who proposed to the Federal Government that he provide multilingual television.

Grisha may have been surprised at the vehemence of all those aspiring to play a role in the new media outlets but it certainly did not weigh heavily upon him. Rather he enjoyed the confrontation as he did the battle with the Canberra bureaucracy. He could be diplomatic or blunt, whichever way they wanted to play. It was immediately apparent to him that the organisational structures were inadequate for the tasks ahead. He went to Canberra to "see the Public Service Head to point out that these titles, these functions cannot be frozen as had been done.... you remain flexible and at any given time the people you have know where they

stand; they also know that in the long run the functions and their job allocations will change."
Shortly afterward he wrote to another senior public servant, Fred Green, Secretary of the Department, Post and Telecommunications, a letter which pulled no punches:
".... we in SBS as well as Sir Arvi Parbo in NEBAC are extremely concerned that there still may be a delay or doubt about the construction and establishment of translators for Wollongong and Newcastle and the upgrading of 2EA and 3EA, the latter replacing a translator for Geelong....
We seem to have had the same discussion every few months, starting with our briefing session in November 1977 and repeated again after my discovery that half the 1977/78 budget had been lost before SBS took over....
During all these discussions the translators and upgrading equipment, which I thought to be a routine type of established hardware, seem to have become something like the Manhattan Project Technology and their installation appears to be comparable to the Snowy Mountains Scheme logistics....
....please realise that if we cannot get a satisfactory arrangement immediately, both SBS and NEBAC will have to take very drastic steps with Ministers and the Government, with appropriate publicity, in order to make clear where the responsibility lies and to see that action is taken to implement our mandate. We assume that SBS and NEBAC are required to act and not merely perform a token role."
This matter was satisfactorily resolved within days and the projects all finished on schedule. Henceforth all Canberra/SBS negotiations were conducted with a degree of caution.

January, 1978 British Conservative Leader, Margaret Thatcher speaks of white Britons' fear of 'swamping' by immigrants; 16 March Italian Red Brigade kidnaps former Prime Minister Aldo Moro (his corpse is later found in Rome); 16 May Rhodesian forces kill ninety-four at political meeting; 18 May Soviet dissident Yuri Orlov is sentenced to labour camp; in June the US Supreme Court rules in favour of positive discrimination for admission of disadvantaged to universities; in September summit meeting at Camp David between Carter, Sadat and Begin; 16 October Karol Wojtyla elected Pope; 25 December Vietnam invades Cambodia.

The first SBS-produced experimental TV programs were broadcast on ABC channels on Sunday mornings between April and July 1979 and a second cycle ran from February to May

1980. The Government was moving into new territory in the world of broadcasting and did not really know how to handle it. Another committee seemed to be the solution. In January 1980 the Government announced its intention to establish the Independent and Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation (IMBC) to provide multicultural television and multilingual radio services and there would be an Implementation Committee to advise SBS and to bridge the gap between the disbanding of SBS and the establishment of IMBC.

A Senate Committee expressed serious doubt as to the wisdom of this development. It was "not entirely satisfied that the ethnic community prefers the IMBC concept to the ABC concept for multicultural television. There was a strong element of evidence which suggested that some representatives from the ethnic communities would be prepared to support broadcasting programs on a second channel operated by a re-organised and restructured ABC". The Committee recommended:

"that the ABC Committee of Review be asked to examine and report upon the possibility of a second channel operation by the ABC or otherwise, which provides for

(a) multicultural and multilingual broadcasting and television services that –

(i) appeal to, entertain, inform and are of educational value to the Australian community as a whole and its component ethnic communities; and

(ii) foster understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultures within Australia; and

(b) to support and encourage the provision and development of public broadcasting and public television services."

All of which utterly infuriated the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria:

"We are appalled that the Senate Committee, whose Chairman (Senator Gordon Davidson) was for many years Chairman of the Immigration Advisory Council, was so insensitive to the importance of Ethnic Television to a large section of the Australian community that they made no effort to hear evidence from spokesmen for ethnic community organisations, particularly from Victoria, nor give them an opportunity to comment on the submissions on which their recommendations are based.....

The Management of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, in particular, continued its contemptible disregard for the ethnic communities in their belated bid for multicultural television..... By now claiming a share of the available funds for multicultural broadcasting,

without even consulting those involved and interested in catering for the needs of ethnic communities, they have shown their cynical disregard for them and clearly disqualified the ABC from any involvement in this aspect of Australia's public broadcasting and television system."

Frank Galbally was Chairman of the IMBC's Implementation Committee and Bruce Gyngell a member. Gyngell, a man with wide experience in commercial television in both Australia and England, had also been appointed by SBS as its television consultant. Inherent in all these structures of committees was a fundamental flaw and Tony Staley, Minister, Post and Telecommunications, was soon confronted with it. While SBS was a statutory authority, established, in November 1977, by amendments to the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* the Implementation Committee had no legal standing whatever. Yet the Committee, appointed by the Minister, was being asked to advise and direct SBS.

It was, of course, an unworkable situation and minutes of meetings reveal scenes of confusion and frustration. The following is an extract from the meeting of the Implementation Committee of 9 September 1980:

"The Minister said that in pursuing the immediate objectives, the Implementation Committee can be no more seen as simply advisory than SBS can be seen as simply a legal mechanism. All powers derive from SBS legislation.

Mr Gyngell asked if this meant that the IMBC Implementation Committee is an advisory body to the SBS.

The Minister replied that in strict law, the Committee cannot administer but that in practice, there needs to be co-operation. Pending legislation, there is no legal authority in the Committee itself, the Minister said.

Galbally: Do we have the administration of multicultural television? We are the policy making body. As such, any member of the Committee may require information in the course of working out certain policies. We see ourselves as in lieu of the future IMBC Board. Are we that, or are we not?

Minister: It is not quite as simple as that. In practical terms this group was set up to administer the introduction of multicultural television. It does not have legal power and can

only make recommendations to SBS. Therefore, there is a need for co-operation with the people who bear the legal responsibility. If this group had a clear view on something, which is not shared by the SBS, the two would need to get together and sort it out.
Gyngell: I will now resign from the Committee and simply remain a consultant to the SBS. Sick of dealing with amateurs."

It was evident that the lobby groups were having an impact on Government thinking and that of many of its advisers. Galbally told the Minister:
"The appearance of SBS has led to certain perceptions in the (ethnic) communities. This Committee has achieved an important swing around; gaining the support of those communities. There is a deep social problem with the communities – they are concerned about who is running multicultural television. Obviously, SBS has the legal responsibility.... This Committee was formed with a responsibility of laying down the principles and will dictate policy."
Minister: "You cannot dictate policy; you can only recommend policy, which must be agreed by SBS. You have not got the power to dictate policy."

There was a breakdown in communication between the Implementation Committee and SBS and the Minister's Department and SBS. Ron Fowell, SBS's Executive Director, was being excluded from meetings of Galbally's Committee. Fowell wrote:
"In my position, under the provisions of SBS legislation, I have the final responsibility for the administrative actions of the organisation. In this respect it is desirable that the responsibilities of my position should be recognised by the Committee.... There should be appropriate lines of communication with the Committee.... responsibility which devolves to my position is harder to handle when one has not been privy to the development of policy recommendations which impact on SBS."
Grisha wrote to Galbally and the Minster: "...the Chief Executive.... should be invited automatically to attend all meetings of the Television Implementation Committee."

The Department, pleading lack of time, failed to consult SBS when preparing submissions on the Broadcasting and Television Amendment Bill to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts. These submissions included the following:

"Support can be expected from ethnic groups who share our confidence in the IMBC concept. These include the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, the Ethnic Communities Councils of Victoria and NSW, the Australian Greek Welfare Society and the COASIT Italian Assistance Association....

In Decision 10829 of 22 January 1980 Cabinet agreed I should introduce legislation in the Autumn session of Parliament to disband the Special Broadcasting Service and establish the Independent and Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation. This decision followed Cabinet's consideration of the Second Report of the Ethnic Television Review Panel....

The Implementation Committee, chaired by Mr Frank Galbally, will continue to administer the introduction of the multicultural television service. It provides a diversity and balance of skills and experience essential to this project and would be the basis of the body responsible for the permanent service."

A.A.Staley 27 August 1980

Grisha and his Board wrote to the Minister expressing concern for their legal responsibility as a Statutory Authority. They requested legal clarification as to their relationship with the Implementation Committee and "the (television) will go to air under SBS legislation. We would be acting illegally to proceed with an outside body making key decisions that are directly implemented by management without the approval of the SBS Board, which is accountable to Parliament under the Act....

Your views on these issues are urgently required before the next meeting of the Implementation Committee scheduled for 9 September 1980."

We have seen how Staley reacted at that meeting.

October 1980 saw the introduction of Multicultural Television in Sydney and Melbourne on VHF Channel 0 and UHF Channel 28. Grisha felt proud of what his Board had been able to achieve:

"…. in spite (or because) of the odds against it, Melbourne's and Sydney's fifth television channel proved an unqualified success – the most prejudiced anti-SBSniks acknowledged the high standard of films selected, the quality of News and local sub-titling operations. Radical ethnics who had hoped for 'ethnic radio with pictures' are disappointed but we always promised a multicultural television service, while remainng ethnic on radio, where considerable extensions were made throughout this vast country."

In December Tony Staley was no longer the responsible Minister and Grisha received a letter from a member of his staff:

Dear Grisha

The last three years were ones of great controversy and change. Those of us on Tony's personal staff will always be grateful for the assistance and advice readily offered by yourself and all with whom we worked at the SBS.

I hope that history is kind to Tony's period of administration in this area. While hindsight frequently gives one the opportunity to question specific decisions, I am certain that we all were attempting to achieve something which is worthwhile and must ultimately be taken seriously by this community.

I am personally grateful for your assistance, given invariably with good sense and in good humour.

R.J. Rowe

A few months later the Government announced it was dropping the idea of the IMBC and, to placate some of the more vociferous of the ambitious among the ethnic communities' councils, yet another advisory council was established, with Frank Galbally once again in the Chair. This Committee would be abolished in January 1985.

Chapter Thirteen

## SBS Television

These years were busy and productive times for the Sklovsky family. Early in 1978 Celia was in London with Anna who was expecting her second child. Daisy was born in March. Piers was directing the successful television series *Pennies from Heaven* and planning the filming of *The Fiendish Plot of Dr Fu Manchu* with Peter Sellers. Jane went trekking through the Himalayas and, having graduated in medicine, was a resident in a pediatric hospital. She also bought a block of land near Apollo Bay, where the family and many friends had gone camping throughout twenty memorable summers and, following in her father's footsteps, she joined her uncle Jean in a three-week trip to Antarctica, as ship's doctor. Sophie had accompanied Jean to Australia to meet Grisha's family for the first time. In January 1980 Jane married Peter Mason, an architect. Michael was travelling extensively throughout India and other lands in search of artefacts for his stores, trading under the name *Ishka*, "run in his personal management style by remote control", according to his father.

In 1979 Celia and Grisha visited New Zealand, she to paint and he to attend the ANZAAS Congress in Auckland, where he was presiding over the section, Communication. [ANZAAS: Australian New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science] For four years, 1979-1982, at Auckland, Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney he addressed the Congresses on communication and multicultural media. In the introduction to his paper in 1980 he noted: "When planning to establish what now is known as Section 33: Communication, for the Hobart Congress in 1976, none of us foresaw how it would grow in the direction of today's topics, or that some of us would become so actively involved in the media. I am delighted to bring the new topic of ethnic media to this group and hope that the involvement of multi-disciplinary Section 33 members will help to increase knowledge about our multicultural Australian society and improve communication within it."

The ANZAAS papers were only a part of an extraordinary output as he preached the good news of multicultural broadcasting, respect for cultural background and the need for migrants to be active and contributing citizens within Australian society. He gave major addresses at Monash University's Migration Studies Seminar, the National Conference of Ethnic Broadcasters, a Conference on Languages, Education and Culture, the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia Conference, the Ethnic Liaison Officers Conference and La Trobe University's Meredith Lectures; SBS became an associate member of the European Broadcasting Union and he contributed a long article to the EBU Review and another to Media Information Australia; when the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs published a booklet, *Multiculturalism and its Implications for Immigration Policy,* he sent the Department's Secretary a six-page commentary in which he attacked what he perceived to be "sectarian" ethnic pressure groups.

"The large number and the growing range of ethnic organisations is a good illustration of the spectrum of approaches to multiculturalism and of possible influences on the integration process which is an essential ingredient for national survival.

"Genuine welfare societies help to overcome loneliness, lack of language and lack of knowledge of rights and duties by recreating a bit of 'homeland' on the new, strange surroundings. At the other extreme are sectarian groups, fanning old hatreds and divisions, at times anti-establishment, but always appealing for Government funds, recognition and frequently even claiming leadership over the entire group, in spite of being utterly non-representative of the majority who came to start a new life.

"Unfortunately, such minority groups tend at times to dominate the English language media and are a disservice not only to their own group but to the whole fabric of the genuine multicultural Australian community.

"It seems to me that constructive ethnic organisations are those based on cultural, religious, language, neighbourhood links and not on political ideals....

Sectarian organisations, be they political or otherwise militant, are not only divisive within their own group but also do not blend into the fabric of the multicultural society we want to form for our children."

In November 1980 he attended Government House in Melbourne to receive the Order of Australia for "outstanding service in the development and implementation of ethnic broadcasting in Australia".

On 1 April 1979 Iran is declared an Islamic Republic by Ayatollah Khomeini; 4 April Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is executed in Pakistan; 25 May DC-10 crashes at Chicago killing 273 and all DC-10s are grounded; 16 July Saddam Hussein becomes President of Iraq; 10 September Lancaster House Conference to resolve Rhodesian problem; 25 December USSR invades Afghanistan; 22 January 1980 Russian physicist Andrei Sakharov sentenced to internal exile to Gorki; 12 February International Olympic Committee rejects US demands for cancellation of Moscow Olympics; 24 March Archbishop Oscar Romero murdered while celebrating Mass in San Salvador; 23 April Saudi Arabia expels British ambassador in protest at British television program on execution of Saudi princess for adultery; 4 May Yugoslavia's President Tito dies; 14 August Polish workers occupy Lenin shipyard in Gdansk; 4 November Ronald Reagan wins presidential election; 2 December European Community warns USSR against military intervention in Poland.

When it came to his attitude to news and current affairs programs, Grisha's youth in Nazi Germany and his war-time experiences proved to be formative influences. Against a State that had no regard for civilised behaviour he had believed in any tactic, any propaganda that would bring victory. Arguments reinforced by appeals to journalistic integrity, the responsibilities of the Fourth Estate and the First Amendment of the American Constitution did not necessarily win him over. His attitude could be authoritatian and he knew it. In December 1980 SBS television presented a *Forum* program dealing with *Migrants and the Law* which drew the displeasure of Mr H R Downey, then Director of Victoria's Ministry of Immigration within the Department of State Development. He telexed a protest:

"Wish to express my total disappointment on viewing that program. Quite obviously editing staff have attempted to portray only the negative elements of the subject. I know full well that Mr Storey (Minister) and my officers gave ample enunciation of positive work already done and planned in cultural awareness training for professionals and the work of the ethnic affairs/police liaison committee in Victoria. It would appear partisan pressures decisive in editing out any positive action. My support for SBS has been unquestioned to date but that particular program and other *Forum* programs makes me rethink this Ministry's attitude. If

you expect wider viewing and a growth in tolerance and social cohesion then program planning needs complete rethink. Current policy flies in the face of this Ministry's key and specific objectives."

Grisha was sympathetic to this protest and consulted other Board members. He found support in the views of Neil Hutchison which was not surprising. In 1971 he had been the ABC's Controller of Programs when the Commissioners became disturbed over the performance of some of the staff on the current affairs television program *This Day Tonight*. They were particularly incensed over an interview with the federal treasurer, Billy Snedden, and were critical of other reporters, Alan Hogan and Stewart Littlemore. Hutchison had written a report for the Commission, suggesting that the Current Affairs staff were too independent, the Executive Producer of *This Day Tonight* should be removed and the program's compere, Bill Peach, eased out. Creative thought need not be frustrated in a more authoritative environment, he assured the Commissioners. He now wrote to Grisha:

"Yes, I very much agree that our policies in the area of News and Topical Affairs need to be re-thought.... I believe that we should carefully consider whether we ought not to demand that each program should be balanced within itself.... The obligation to balance within the same program was originally part of the ABC's program philosophy and I can't see why it shouldn't be adopted by us as an initial policy stance (together with a carefully expressed statement as to its justification). It is, in any case, much easier to loosen guidelines as time goes on, than to tighten inadequately delineated directives. Procedures can be progressively modified and liberalised as traditions are built up and accepted. Ideally, they can then become principles to be followed rather than precepts to be obeyed.

Between ourselves, a new organisation, such as SBS, with national responsibilities, necessarily implies an educative element....

I think all this needs to be handled smartly or it will seriously impede our credibility. Carefully explained, I do not think we need to appear reactionary, oppressive or authoritarian – merely prudent, watchful and jealous of our reputation as a respected broadcasting body which is aware of the special complexity of its unique position."

Before he had received this letter from Hutchison, Grisha had written to Ron Fowell:

"I am afraid that there is nothing I can say in defence of the SBS producer in this particular case and that I fully agree with Bob Downey's complaint. I was at the filming and thought that at last we had filmed a few positive statements in a *Forum* program and not just the general negative attitude and tone about which I had commented previously.... Excision from the program of the sequence on Sensitivity Courses, in an otherwise 'anti-Australian' atmosphere, is to me not explainable in terms other than bias and/or disregard of our objectives.

I have always maintained, and I intend to continue maintaining, that our programs are not 'pure journalism'. Ethnic radio and multicultural television, whether they are run by SBS or some other agency, are meant to serve the purpose of integration, ie, creating a more cohesive society than we have at present in Australia by helping individuals to adjust while maintaining their cultures. This does not mean that we should avoid justified criticism, but to me it does mean that we must indicate positive steps where possible and not just destroy and niggle and ask for more services funded by taxpayers. Also, as far as possible, criticism must be constructive and in each case the whole presentation must be balanced within the program segment. Here, an opportunity to do this was eliminated in the cutting room."

We have here a clearly articulated statement as to how Grisha perceived his role and that of the Special Broadcasting Service: "to serve the purpose of integration". In a publication, *Ethnic Broadcasting in Australia 1979*, he had written:

"The general objectives for ethnic broadcasting under the SBS are to assist the progressive integration of all residents into a multicultural, multilingual Australia. Individual language groups are encouraged to provide, for their listeners, entertainment, news and information in accordance with actual needs of their communities. *Their politics and political partisanship are excluded, so as not to divide the Australian community and to render listeners proud of their background and proud of Australia*." [The author's italics.]

He believed that migrants, indeed all Australians, were fortunate to be living in Australia, that everyone had the obligation to strive to create "a more cohesive society" and that SBS had a vital role in forging that cohesion. The thinking of the Board at the time was influenced by the SBS Broadcasting Criteria. These had their origin in a *Report of the Joint*

*Sub-Committee for Defence and Foreign Affairs*, a major study written against the background of the war in Lebanon which included an appendix, Criteria for Ethnic Broadcasting in Australia. Grisha's Board wholeheartedly adopted them as guiding principles in the development of the new broadcaster. In an address at Monash University he quoted from the Criteria:

" 'Provide as adequately and equitably as possible for all ethnic groups including those which are numerically small.

Assist in promoting mutual understanding and harmony between and within ethnic groups and between ethnic groups and the English-speaking community.

Avoid political partisanship.'

I think this is self-explanatory, if you accept that the object of the exercise is integration of different backgrounds, different nationalities and different cultures into one multicultural Australia. This is a unique phenomenon. I do not think there is any country in the world which has grappled with this problem in such a straightforward way."

Again, in an address to a Conference of Ethnic Liaison Officers in Canberra: "I agree that there must be available media where people can say and write anything they feel but this should not happen on Government or taxpayers' money. That can be done in the ethnic press and on public broadcasting stations. But even there I believe that certain courtesy rules and certain basic principles must be introduced even if some people object to such restraints. I don't think this country can afford .....[verbal] violence against people whose philosophy, religion or skin colour displeases you. There must be some sort of basic rule...."

It was a theme to which he constantly returned in his public lectures and was encouraged when he received support such as that proffered by Sir James Darling. Darling is probably best remembered for the thirty-one years he spent as headmaster of Geelong Grammar School. He also spent time as a member of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, was President of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, a member of the Universities Commission and the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council and served for two terms as Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Of his appointment to the ABC, he later wrote that "vanity and conscience again united to make me believe that I could do something for

Australia by improving the quality of programs and setting higher standards of taste in the community".[48]

There is more than a touch of the coloniser here, he had arrived in Australia from England in 1930, but the condescension is that of an educated and civilised man. In the event, his time as Chairman was marked by his independence and courage. He declined to be the accredited adviser to the Minister, declaring "in no place in the Act is it laid down"; he understood the concerns of Jörn Utzon and those concerned with the production of opera but he backed the ABC's Concerts Department who wanted the larger auditorium in the Sydney Opera House for concerts or it would remain in the Sydney Town Hall; there were many instances of his defending the program makers. The Government refused to re-appoint him, recognising that, while it thought it had appointed a conservative, it had, in fact, appointed a liberal. Darling wrote to Grisha in August 1981:

"I have just watched your News and *Scoop* and my wife and I both wish to congratulate you and to thank you. In an attempt to analyse our satisfaction we think it is because in watching your programs, and perhaps particularly *Scoop* under the remarkable compere, we always feel more hopeful about the future.... The short-term future is full of threats but in the long-term what matters is the courage and the compassion of human beings and I think that it is because your programs never lose sight of these human qualities that, in spite of the countless disasters in the world, we are left optimistic and hopeful. This is a very great and important thing that you are doing for Australians as well, of course, as making possible the growth of a real multicultural society. My excuse for writing is that I was involved in television from its start in this country, first in the Control Board and later with the ABC. What you are doing is very largely what I always hoped could be done, but which I failed to do and I should like you and your staff to know that some of us, old Australians though we may be, are grateful and wish you every success in the future."

Darling was writing in support of programs that stressed only positive elements of Australian society. It was not the sort of letter he would have written in the 'sixties when he was the ABC's Chairman but he had aged and wanted to be "optimistic and hopeful".

Grisha welcomed such instances of support as total justification of his decision, supported by the other Board members, to exclude any suggestion of political partisanship; rigorous debates on matters of public interest would find no place in this publicly-funded media organisation. Moreover, this media organisation, SBS, was to be a servant, serving the harmonious integration of the migrant population. He was proud that SBS could celebrate Greek Independence Day without upsetting the Turkish community. In this regard, his perception of the role of SBS avoiding controversy appears quaint and misguided but was, in fact, not far removed from those who see ulterior motives, indeed political bias, in a national broadcaster who ventures to ask "why?". It is not the responsibility of the media to make life easy for the possessors of power. It is the role of the media to report, to discuss, to investigate and while that may sometimes be inconvenient it is at all times essential in a democracy. National broadcasters of England, Canada and Australia, to instance just three, have ever been subjected to intimidation in the form of budget cuts and unsympathetic Board members. The Australian Broadcasting Commission was barely more than a decade old when *The Sydney Morning Herald* warned in an editorial of 17 April 1945:

"The fight for the independence of the ABC will have to be carried on continuously. No 'charter', even if it be framed in the loftiest terms, will long be proof against Ministerial encroachments unless the Commission administering it has the backing of an alert public and Parliamentary opinion."

Of course, as SBS Television developed, becoming an integral part of the mainstream Australian media scene, traditional principles of objective reporting would exert themselves and SBS would produce quality current affairs and news programs, fronted by arguably the best newsreader in Australia, which would occasionally become as much an irritant to Government as the ABC, thus fulfilling its impartial, fearless and independent role as a national broadcaster. It would still play its part in promoting integration of migrants but not in the manner envisaged by its foundation Chairman. His misjudgement in this matter, largely provoked by infighting within and between different ethnic organisations, should not be used to detract from his reputation as a pioneer of multicultural broadcasting. One SBS staff member understood that Grisha believed "in a tolerant, multicultural but united society,

the members of which would share the same values and would look in the same direction for the future".

Grisha's original appointment was for two years but this was extended to three and a half years. In 1981 he was succeeded as Chairman by Sir Nicholas Shehadie, a former Lord Mayor of Sydney and international Rugby Union player, but he would remain a member of the Board for a further two years.

On 25 January 1981 China's Gang of Four is convicted of treason; 27 March the USSR condemns Poland's Solidarity Movement as counter-revolutionary; 8 June Israel's Air Force bombs nuclear reactor near Baghdad; 13 August East Germany celebrates 20th anniversary of Berlin Wall; 6 October President Sadat of Egypt is assassinated; 13 December martial law is imposed in Poland; and Picasso's *Guernica* is taken from New York to Madrid; 2 April 1982 Argentine invades Falkland Islands; 3 May Prime Minister Begin announces Israel will assert sovereignty over the West Bank; 13 July Iranian army enters Iraq and in 1982 Ingrid Bergman, Jacques Tati, Leonid Brezhnev and Artur Rubinstein die; 5 March 1983 Labor Party wins Australian federal election; 23 March President Ronald Reagan proposes Star Wars defence program; 19 June Polish Government warns the Catholic Church to stay out of politics; 24 June Yasser Arafat is ordered out of Syria; 21 August Benigno Aquino, Opposition leader in the Philippines is assassinated; and in 1983 Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini declares Islam is A Religion of the Sword.

In July 1983 the new Labor Government's Minister for Communications advised that Grisha's membership on the Board would not be renewed but wrote warmly of his contribution to Australian broadcasting:

"I should like to record the thanks of the Government for the service you have rendered to multilingual broadcasting and multicultural television.

"Your work as foundation Chairman of the SBS from 1978 to 1981, and as a Member of the Board from 1981, has been most valuable.

"I am aware that, since the establishment of the SBS, you and your colleagues on the Board have responded creatively to the various challenges put before you and as a result have helped build a unique and worthwhile Australian institution."

SBS continued to flourish: in October 1983 SBS TV opened in Canberra; in August 1984 the SBS Board established an advisory committee on racism; in January 1985 Network 0/28 TV logo was changed to SBS Television; in June 1985 SBS TV extended to Newcastle, Wollongong, Adelaide, Brisbane and the Gold Coast and in March 1986 to Perth and Hobart – and Grisha followed it all with the greatest of interest. However, more than his interest was roused in August 1986 when the Government announced its intention to amalgamate SBS with the ABC. While the legislation to achieve the merger was defeated in the Senate the following December, the Minister insisted that amalgamation would be achieved.

On 31 March 1987 Grisha made a submission to the parliamentary committee looking into the matter. As was to be expected his views were expressed robustly:

"SBS had been created as an aid to the integration of some 20% of Australians into the fabric of this nation, without loss of individual dignity through having to deny one's roots, and for the benefit of all Australians.... It was designed after the ABC failed to act. The dual strands of 'ethnic radio' and 'multicultural television' are essential ingredients of the SBS, yet one rarely hears about the radio.

1. The proposed merger with the ABC is dishonest....its motivation is based on the eternal *idée fixe* of some senior members of the Communication Department who, while helping us to start up SBS, did all they could to prevent its operation and to obstruct our activities by adding to our workload. The time wasted in the early years in justifying our existence caused havoc in the vital work of our senior staff.... perusal of files will show you not only the details but also our ways to outrun the Sir Humphreys....
2. Cost savings through the merger is a fallacy. When we created the staff establishment and general policies of the early SBS, we were proffered, by the Department of Communication, strong recommendations based on ABC methods and figures. We used these for how NOT to work, ie, we cut much out and created a lean, active organisation....
3. The merger is not good for integration of Australians. The dual arm of ethnic radio for individual ethnic awareness and television as a bridging medium for all Australians who can see Channel 28, [which had a limited range in its early days], were meant to be an aid to all concerned with creating a better Australia.... To attempt this was a daring

task, which was achieved in spite of the many 'helpers' and 'critics' with a wide range of axes to grind because success would reduce power bases...This, of course, created frictions but a small, sensitive and ethnically attuned group (with not too many single issue people) was making considerable progress. How can the ABC consider some 55 language groups.... after their long history of neglecting foreign languages?

4. The merger is politically silly. I am on record in talks with Ministers and shadow-Ministers that both Mr Whitlam and Mr Fraser were conned by ethnic pressurisers in believing that the 'ethnic vote' exists.
5. Co-operation between ABC and SBS. Of course, it is essential that both Government-financed broadcasters co-operate closely in the use of scarce resources. Perusal of files in both ABC and SBS should show members of the Committee how this was handled by the ABC at the time when we required trial TV transmissions or other assistance based on their under-used resources. [However] such co-operation could be cemented through a high-level steering committee.... Convergence is desirable and should be a policy for both but not a drastic change which will save no money yet spoil a good product and damage political reputations of the instigators."

The following month the Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced the proposed amalgamation would not occur. More money was provided for SBS services and its autonomy was guaranteed. Hawke also spoke of multiculturalism in the language of the Report of Stephen Fitzgerald's Committee to Advise on Australian Immigration. While recognising and supporting diversity, all citizens of the nation "should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia" and Grisha had no argument with that. His last battle for SBS had been fought and won and now he would have to find new challenges.

Chapter Fourteen

## Of Camberwell and Other Battles

Shortly after they moved to Camberwell in the early 'fifties, the local Council voted against building a library for the municipality. Grisha was outraged by this decision, regarding it as anti-intellectualism being imposed on his community. On his way to a residents' meeting over the matter, he collected seventy-five signatures for a petition protesting the decision. The library was built and he had emerged as a resident who loved, and would fight for his suburb, his environment, his home. In the 'seventies he waged a running battle with the Mobil Oil Company over the operations of a petrol station in his street. Again, petitions of protest were organised, Council inactivity criticised and he advised the oil company that apart from his concern regarding safety and pollution he was "looking forward to action by your firm in restoring to our area something of the dignified residential character it enjoyed before garish displays of plastic flags were added to the Mobil signs and emblems with the blessing of your advertising specialists".

All such activities can be viewed as preliminary skirmishes for the major confrontation in which he and Celia would be involved over a redevelopment of Camberwell Junction, the district's main shopping precinct.

On 6 June 1984 250 Sikhs are killed when Indian forces storm the Golden Temple at Amritsar; 8 August Robert Mugabe announces Zimbabwe a one-party State; 31 October Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards; 6 November Ronald Reagan wins US presidential election; 3 December gas leak at Union Carbide plant at Bhopal, India kills 2500 and injures more than 200000; in Chile Catholic Church supports demonstrations against Pinochet regime; 29 January 1985 academics at Oxford University refuse Margaret Thatcher an honorary doctorate; 11 March Mikhail Gorbachev becomes first secretary of Soviet Communist Party, calls for more *glasnost* (openness) and pursues policy of *perestroika* (reconstruction); 11 July Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* is destroyed in Auckland harbour by French agents; 7 October Palestinian guerillas hijack Italian liner *Achille Lauro*; 24 February 1986 Corazon Aquino becomes President of Philippines; 26 April USSR announces a major accident at Chernobyl nuclear plant; 18 August USSR and Israel hold talks on plight of Jews in USSR.

The ’eighties were years of travel, of family growth, of births and death, of wearing out of the body, of painting and gardening still for Celia, of arguing about politics, luncheon club, tennis and defending Camberwell for Grisha. He remained a tribal elder of the AIIA and the Royal Society, never losing his appetite for debate and political discussion.

Jane gave birth to Stephen Sklovsky Mason in 1981 and she and Peter built a house at Apollo Bay where many holidays would be enjoyed by family and friends. The January holidays under canvas were over. While Celia spent two months in England laying out a garden at the Haggards’ cottage in Sussex, Piers was on location in Belgium filming an Edna O’Brien story and Anna was receiving commissions for her original work in stained-glass. Michael was wandering through Kashmir, India, Bali, Java and other lands, adopting a modus operandi that his father did not understand but was impressed that it seemed to work. “He walks (or motorbikes) into far-away villages which are doing interesting crafts, leaves large sums in cash, and months later every bit finds its way here. His preference for unusual methods of operation seems to work. He had a mixed year in ’82 with one of his shops burning down, a major burglary from another, with miraculous recovery of the whole stock two months later at a university market – further proof of his extraordinary luck. We admire his equanimity in the face of such occurrences.”

Early in 1984 the family celebrated the birth of Jane’s second son, Daniel Sklovsky Mason. In the same year Grisha and Celia enjoyed Piers’ film *Waters of the Moon* and remained keen movie fans. Jacques Tati had joined Chaplin as one of Grisha’s all-time favourites and he loved the humour of American Tom Lehrer, England’s Flanders and Swann and the Two Ronnies while the stagecraft magic of Marcel Marceau overwhelmed him.

On 3 March 1985 Josif Sklovsky died in Moscow. Tributes were paid to him around the world and the list of his achievements, the details of his penetrating insights into the major problems of astrophysics, make remarkable reading. The American magazine *Physics Today* of May 1985 concluded its tribute:

“[His] research has touched on almost every subject of contemporary interest in astronomy. [He] was always surrounded by students and he educated a large number of the best

theoreticians of this generation in Soviet astronomy. He was universally respected for his genius and equally admired for his warm outgoing personality, his candid freedom of expression and a wonderful sense of humour. His numerous friends feel the deepest sense of loss at his passing."
Grisha grieved his passing and keenly regretted they had not met after 1967.

Grisha's body was causing him concern, both hips causing such pain that any movement was difficult and Celia's activities were seriously curtailed as he needed constant attention and she provided the nursing. He finally had a double hip-replacement and was astonished at how successful the procedure proved to be. Before long he was back on the court playing "mildly geriatric tennis" and Celia was able to return to her life-style of painting, gardening and travel, although she too was not without health problems. She joined Michael on a buying trip to Bali, travelling on the back of his motorbike, where she was warmly welcomed by villagers who supplied Michael with their artefacts. In 1985 he had been in India and met there a Danish woman, Bodil Rasmussen, a nurse and educator of nurses. In 1987 she arrived in Melbourne, they were married and settled in a rambling, old home not far from Celia and Grisha. Jane's family would also shortly move into the area. Celia noted how delighted she was to see Michael "so obviously truly suited at last". Following another operation for Grisha, this time a retina reattachment, he and Celia, in May 1987, set off once again for England and France. They spent a month in their beloved Paris with short trips to Lyon and the Loire. For both of them, but particularly Grisha, France had lost none of its appeal.

It was also in 1987 that Grisha's improved health and mobility enabled him, with Celia's strong support, to embark on an epic struggle to save his neighbourhood, the Camberwell he loved, from the developers. His own street, with its avenue of stately plane trees, was threatened by a proposed one hundred million dollar shopping complex. The developers, however, along with the Council, did not appreciate the quality of the opposition they would shortly have to confront.

"They will be putting in five-lane highways, quadrupling the traffic," he told the media. "It will cut Camberwell into ribbons and degrade the neighbourhood. It would mean complete destruction of the residential and quality of life factors."

The councillors, he argued, were favouring the entrepreneurs ahead of quality of life in one of Melbourne's oldest, quality residential areas; they were acting contrary to the wishes of the majority of residents, without a masterplan, ignoring the call for tenders or preparation of economic impact studies and granting excessive, unwarranted privileges to the developer in their attempt to impose on the people of Camberwell a giant, unwanted shopping centre. Stormy Council meetings ensued with Grisha's group of activists, the Planning Watch, being termed "a rabble minority". Some six thousand names were included in a petition against the development and finally, at the Council elections, Planning Watch organised candidates to stand for election and were successful in gaining a majority. More than fifty-three thousand points of objection were presented to the new Council and the proposal was finally rejected. Grisha and his group celebrated.

"We weren't anti-development. We were against unreasonable development which would have destroyed the quality of life for which Camberwell is renowned. The greatest objection to the project, beyond traffic, planning and environmental concerns, was that it would have been development for its own sake. Where is the need? What is the justification? On every bit of space you could build a supermarket. There must be a limit and that limit is fixed by what people need, what people want. I believe people have priority".

In a subsequent court case, with the developers claiming damages, allegations of sinister activities and undue influence were levelled at Planning Watch. In the Supreme Court Mr Justice Teague saw fit to comment:

"It is clear that the Planning Watch was an important group of people, working actively, among other things, for the rejection of the plaintiff's development. It is quite appropriate that there should be contact between members of such a group and the local councillors.... I am satisfied that the influence of the Planning Watch was significant, but indirect and subtle rather than direct and forceful. It achieved a great deal just because it was the mechanism which brought together persons of similar thinking, making it possible for a meeting of minds to be arrived at."

Grisha delighted in quoting that judicial opinion.

The passing years saw no diminution in his passion for debate, for involvement in the great issues, although logical argument would now often lose out to emotional protest. In the *Australia/Israel Review* of February, 1987 he debated prominent Jewish activist Norman Rothfield (whose generally leftist arguments, according to Ron Taft, always infuriated Grisha) on the merits of Prime Minister Hawke's plea to Israel and the PLO to recognise each publicly as they had long done in private. Rothfield argued that most Western European leaders had taken a position similar to Bob Hawke's, as had Presidents Carter, Nixon and Ford; that the King of Morocco and President Mubarak of Egypt had gone further and in 1982 Phillip Klutznick, the late Dr Nahum Goldmann and Mendès-France together made a dramatic call for Israel and the PLO to negotiate.
Grisha would have none of it. He saw in the proposal an anti-Israel plot.
"The anti-Israel attitude of the new-Left, UNESCO, all sorts of friendship leagues and world councils, now becoming more audible in Australia, is a contemporary form of anti-Semitism."

In the same year, 1987, in a letter to a political commentator, he was already expressing serious doubts about possible reform in the Soviet Union:
"Most oppressive symptoms of Soviet life have been part and parcel of Russian tradition since the first Tsars. Every now and then 'a good Tsar' emerged, a liberaliser trying to open a window to the West. Peter the Great, Ekaterina, Alexander II.... and now Gorbachev. Each of the 'good Tsars' was followed by reactionary rulers.... we should not go overboard."

Perhaps most significantly of all, and reflecting his own youthful experiences, in the bicentenary year 1988 he was defending his adopted country against those wanting to indulge in 'Australia-bashing'. "Here, we migrants, met far less prejudice than foreigners who came to our old countries. Australia seemed a land of promise to many and remains so.... in spite of the colossal multi-racial influx." He was distressed by expatriates, such as journalist John Pilger and Germaine Greer, who would profit from the "rare commodity of freedom to work, write and speak" to attack their own birthplace "and be paid for it as a guru". As a person

who had sought refuge, over and over again, from Russia, from Germany, from France, from post-war Europe, he would be forever grateful to the land that had accepted him.

He welcomed the Gulf War of 1991:

"....so many of us saw how Hitler, starting militarily almost from nothing, was aided and abetted by all sorts of devout appeasers who climaxed at Munich with 'Peace in our Time'....I have been experiencing bouts of fear, fear of having to live through another Munich. There was a formidable troop build-up in August 1990 but it had not produced the desired result. The blockade was hurting but not enough. It was a relief to me when President Bush made his announcement. War, of course, is a terrible thing but a war imposed on us, by a madman when he is ready, would be worse."

Then in 1992 he was singularly unimpressed by Paul Keating's promotion of a republican Australia. He had always been impressed by the behaviour of George VI and Queen Elizabeth during World War II.

"Not a single export dollar would be gained, not one additional job created, no improvement in health, education or welfare would result if we became a Republic tomorrow.... I do not admire all monarchs – Farouk of Egypt and Carol of Rumania being good examples of the dregs....I object to migrants benefiting from what this country has to offer while demanding major changes of laws that can make us more like the countries they fled from. It is very likely that future royal families will give up this job or deteriorate by popular standards.... a normal development may and probably will occur. But why push for it now when all our efforts should be directed to more important issues?"

After the protracted and victorious struggle against unwanted, unwarranted development he had become somewhat of a cult figure in his part of Melbourne and continued to be involved in many local government issues. He was pleased, though not surprised, when asked to address new Australians at a citizenship ceremony. His speech on that occasion, repeated at other ceremonies, crystallised his own history and his feelings about his adopted country.

"It is my very special pride to welcome you into this extended family. I went through it all in days before most of you were born.....Camberwell, Australia was my fifth start in settling

anywhere....Yet it is the first country and place where I have felt welcome, free and 'at home'. Escaping oppression in Russia aged eight and, on completing school, from Hitler's Germany; pre-war university years in France as a welcome paying guest as long as I did not have to earn a living there; Free Czech Army service in wartime England and Europe did not make it possible to obtain even a visitor's entrée to post-war England. In 1945 it seemed unsafe and unwise to remain in Czechoslovakia after six years of army service..

Since I was nine years of age I dreamt of life in the New World. I fell in love with a Melbourne girl in France just before the war started. We managed to remain in contact and married as Red Cross Officers in Greece and I arrived here in 1947.

[In Australia] there were no visible class barriers. There was, however, some suspicion towards foreigners, simply because most people had not met any. Arthur Calwell, a wise and humane Minister of great vision, not racist, defined and ran Australia's new, generous and effective immigration policy.

Never did so may people of different, at times hostile backgrounds, move with so little friction or conflict into a new host society. No host society had accepted such a sudden influx of so many foreigners so readily.... the general level of racial, religious and overall tolerance is quite outstanding in Australia. Help make it remain so.....

I am happy to see so many of you making this commitment at a time when the importance of citizenship seems to be underrated by so many. All of us willingly accept all privileges and rights of living in Australia yet many fail to commit themselves fully, unaware of the true value of citizenship.... the more one has or accepts, the more obligations and duties one has.... Your next step is your more active participation as citizens in civic activities of all sorts and on any level of your choice or ability.

Australia is one of the very few countries where governments enable newcomers to remain active in their first ethnic groups, while being first class citizens in this country.... this is not so elsewhere. I believe that having accepted the privilege of becoming Australians, we should reciprocate by joining in activities beyond our past ethnic ties. We can do this..... by reaching out to our Australian neighbours of any background, near and far, without conflict with our religious or ethnic origins."

On 27 April 1987 USA refuses entry to President Waldheim of Austria due to charges that he was involved in World War II atrocities; 11 September UN begins peace talks to end Iran-Iraq war; 8 February 1988 Mikhail Gorbachev announces Soviet forces will leave Afghanistan; 8 November George Bush wins US presidential election; 21 December Pan Am jet destroyed over Lockerbie, Scotland; 14 February 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini issues fatwa against author Salman Rushdie for blasphemy; 3 June Chinese Army moves tanks into Tiananmen Square against protesters; 9 November beginning of demolition of Berlin Wall; 2 December President Gorbachev of USSR and President Reagan of USA declare end of Cold War; 29 December Václav Havel elected President of Czechoslovakia.

In April 1992 Dr Phillip Law turned eighty and Grisha proposed that a symposium to celebrate the occasion be arranged under the auspices of the Royal Society of Victoria. Entitled *Education, Antarctica, Marine Science and Australia's Future* it was held at the University of Melbourne and, with more than two hundred in attendance, proved to be a memorable occasion as scientists, educators and others recalled Law's remarkable career. Grisha was the final speaker:

"Today, we have heard about the 'great' from experts who have worked in their various jobs under Phil Law's leadership. I wonder how much better the standing of Australia's science and education would be today had his leads been followed longer. Even so, as we have seen and heard, the imprints Phil made on whatever he tackled are lasting and great.

"As to 'Australian', I am probably more qualified to judge this attribute than most of us here. Arriving in 1947, I was awe-struck to see that Australian academics of international standing also had practical, down-to-earth skills and accomplishments, unlike most of their European counterparts.

"A Polar buff since boyhood, I never imagined I'd meet a real explorer! Dick Thompson [who took part in fourteen exploration voyages to Antarctica], in his inimitable address, told about seeing Phil skiing, wearing unusual cream nylon gear. I can now confess that, having developed these fabrics for ICI, I used them as a pretext to meet the Antarctic Division's people.

"In Phil Law I discovered a polymath of Renaissance stature. Essential aspects of this you have been hearing all day. Let me just voice my personal appreciation of two facets: his invaluable assistance in my attempts to create a modern Australian National Information

Service, fallen by the wayside since, and his role in pulling our Royal Society out of its lengthy hibernation into the era of relevant contemporary debate."

Chapter Fifteen

## Moscow

Throughout his years in Australia Grisha had worked at maintaining contact with friends and relatives wherever they had settled throughout the world. While he had never lost touch with the extended Sklovsky family in Russia, all now centred in Moscow, he had not wished to travel there. He had not known Moscow as a child, visiting there only once and that briefly, and, over the years, Soviet policies, not least the inherent anti-Semitism, had repelled him. Yet the Moscow Sklovskys had long urged him to visit them and in June 1992, nearly seventy years after his departure from Russia, he decided it was time.

"The purpose of my first visit to Moscow since 1924 was to meet descendants of my parents' families who had been inviting me there for years. Distaste of recrossing the Iron Curtain after leaving Czechoslovakia in 1945 had stopped me up to now," he wrote. "However, the recent changes [he admired Gorbachev for what he believed he was trying to achieve but could not understand his motivation] and a fourteen-page letter from an aunt triggered off a desire to go and meet the family."

Mike had decided to join him there as part of a business trip. Quite by chance, his KLM flight arrived in Moscow one hour ahead of Grisha's Air France plane and he was glad to see his son waiting in the customs hall with a luggage trolley.

"Stepping out of the international sanctum of the typical airport into the austere hall filled with welcoming Russians was a minor culture shock, cushioned by the extreme warmth of our welcoming party. There were five people there, holding a banner with a kangaroo on it. There was aunt Irina, with her daughter Nina, cousin Tanya with her son Sergej and Yasha, a distinguished looking man, their friend who had offered to drive us in his car. Five of us with the luggage were packed into the small car while the youngsters were sent off by public transport..... through park-like avenues we reached my uncle's house in a cluster of blocks of flats. This area was allocated to senior artists, writers and intellectuals in the 'seventies."

He spent a memorable and emotional week there, taking note of everything, shopping, food, the economy, culture – he saw *Giselle* at the Bolshoi and the Moscow Circus – while

some of his questioning seemed unrealistic if not naive to his relatives. When he asked about the possibility of resistance to widespread anti-Semitic measures the response was quick: ....."impossible, useless – who's there to do it in this country? Emigration is out of the question for the older group; here they are privileged though oppressed..... in Israel they'd be competing without initial advantages – and elsewhere? No."

His host in Moscow, Uncle Gena, the son of Grandfather Samuel's second marriage and brother of the astrophysicist Josif, was four years younger than Grisha. A keen athlete in his youth and a radar officer during World War II, he was well-known in Russia as a painter and a noted sculptor. He was but one of a remarkably talented group of people from both maternal and paternal sides of the family and we have already remarked on his brother, the great astrophysicist Josif. Uncle Boris had been a Professor of aeronautics design and his daughter, Dr Tanya Shirmanova, worked in the same field. There was an Aunt Celia, whose social-revolutionary husband had been shot in yet another of Stalin's purges, while she had spent fifteen years in the Gulag. Rehabilitated after Stalin's death, she wrote for *Literatur naya Gazeta*. Aunt Manya also spent many years in a Siberian camp after her Trotskyite husband had been executed. There were others who had suffered much and achieved much while many of Anna's relatives had been killed during the Nazi occupation of the Ukraine.

During that hectic week in Moscow he also called on Sasha Kabakov, deputy editor of *Moskovskie Novosti*. Kabakov had been in Melbourne just a year before and Grisha had chaired a meeting at AIIA when the writer-journalist had talked about modern-day Russia, forecasting "major events soon". In his vote of thanks and summing-up Grisha had said:
"We've had many Russian visitors here at the Institute over the years. The earlier ones lied and could go home while the later ones told the truth and could not go home. Sasha is the first to tell the truth and can go home."

Then there was Victor Sklovsky, a cousin of his father, who died in Moscow in 1984, aged ninety-one. Grisha wrote that he was proud of all members of his extended family except Victor who "had adopted every hue of Communist Party lines over the past sixty years to continue his artistic efforts in praising the regimes from his high prestige position

with dacha and other Soviet perks". This assessment of the life and work of Victor Sklovsky was ill-advised and misguided. Grisha got it all wrong. It is possible he was influenced by Solzhenitsyn, who may have had made some derogatory remarks about Victor, but, in justice to Victor, this noted Russian writer, it is essential to record some evidence relevant to the days of the persecution of the literary establishment in the days of Stalinist repression.

Victor Sklovsky was an eminent literary figure and a Formalist critic. The Formalist school of literary criticism, of which Victor was, in 1916,one of the founders of the "Society for the Study of Poetic Language", focused on form in the artistic process. He wielded considerable influence not only in Russia but throughout Europe and Brecht was one who came under his sway. In his analytical work, *Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art and His Times*, Frederic Ewen wrote:

"Even as late as 1936, Brecht still speaks of an 'Enfremdungsprozess' (process of alienation), using the traditional term of Hegel and Marx. It has been suggested that it was Brecht's visit to the Soviet Union in 1935 that finally fixed both the concept and the term; that Brecht might have derived both from the Russian Formalist critic Victor Sklovsky, who had written of *Art and Artifice* in 1917 and had stated that the 'procedure of art is the procedure of estrangement'.....He had asked for an artistic procedure which would 'deliberately impede' and provoke the reader to a more strenuous effort and a coming to grips with the world." Victor was writing in those terms during World War I and on the eve of the Russian Revolution when there were serious challenges for anyone hoping to come "to grips with the world".

The flat of Victor and his wife in Moscow became a refuge for writers in time of persecution and most memorably for Osip Mandelstam[49] and his wife Nadezhda[50] and Isaac Babel. We shall deal with the Sklovsky-Mandelstam link but first, the case of Babel.[51]

One of Russia's greatest writers Babel was arrested in Moscow by the secret police, on the orders of Lavrenti Beria,[52] in May 1939 and taken to Lubyanka prison. We know details of his interrogation from the research of Vitaly Shentalinsky[53] into the archives of the secret police. Babel was accused of having been recruited by André Malraux,[54] scholar, writer and

later politician, to spy for France. They had first met in 1933, again in Moscow in 1934 and then in Paris in 1935 at an anti-fascist congress. The Soviet delegation at the congress included Boris Pasternak[55] and Babel. In 1936 Babel and Malraux were discussing the official campaign against the Formalists, including Shostakovich,[56] Pasternak and Sklovsky. In 1936-37 Babel was associated with Sergei Eisenstein[57] in the Soviet film industry which was under considerable pressure to conform to Communist Party directives. They did not, however, feel abandoned, Babel told his interrogators, as they were encouraged and supported by artists and writers such as Sklovsky and Pasternak. He also accompanied Malraux to the Crimea to see Maxim Gorky[58] shortly before the famed writer's death. Gorky, Babel recalled, was distressed over the campaign against the Formalists.

"Babel was incriminating his friends..... Interrogation by the NKVD [a predecessor of the KGB] reduced individuals to a point where they were no longer responsible for their words. Emotional torture, added to the physical torments they suffered, drove them to a mental disorder verging on insanity".[59]

One must pause before censuring anyone who has been subjected to such barbaric treatment.

The picture that emerges from those terrible last months of Babel's purgatory, a victim of the Soviets' paranoia, is that of a group of creative people, scholars, writers, musicians, mutually supportive, struggling to survive in a cruel and mindless environment.

Osip Mandelstam once said that only in Russia were poets taken seriously as it was only there that they were murdered for their poetry. He was first arrested in 1934, charged with "anti-Soviet activities which took the form of counter-revolutionary poetry", and sentenced to three years exile. On his release he was forbidden to live in or visit Moscow. In 1938 he was again arrested and taken to Lubyanka prison. During his interrogation he admitted visiting Moscow where he would stay with the Sklovskys or Osmyorkin (an artist) to whom he would read his poems. The Mandelstams had no income, Osip was denied employment and could get nothing published and, he told his inquisitors, they were dependent on Victor Sklovsky and one or two others for material assistance. We know from the writings of Nadezhda Mandelstam [see Note 50] that Victor had also been proscribed by the secret police, could not obtain employment, and, like Babel, had sought refuge in the film industry

where friends could be relied upon. He attempted to find work there for Mandelstam but this did not eventuate. It was in the Sklovskys' home, and only there, that the Mandelstams "felt like human beings again". They worried about compromising the Sklovskys – "a single denunciation and they could all land in prison" – and attempted to arrange other places to stay but Victor and his wife, Vasilisa, demanded they return. Nadezhda thought Vasilisa "the only real person in the whole world". This contrasted with Pasternak's wife who would not have the Mandelstams near her home.

Some fifteen hundred writers perished in a period when artists from all fields were victimised, terrorised, tortured and murdered. While many, witness the Writers' Union which became a mouthpiece for Stalinist repression, betrayed their calling and their colleagues, there were others who survived without abandoning their ideals or their friends. Victor Sklovsky wrote:

"In literature study the firing line is preferable to the Party line."

It is a matter of regret that Grisha was unaware of the brave and principled stance of his relatives, Victor and Vasilisa, during those dark and shameful years.

On 2 February 1990 South Africa's President de Klerk ends a thirty year ban on the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela is released from prison on 11 February; the USSR announces it will withdraw troops from Czechoslovakia by July 1991; in March free elections in East Germany, Lithuania declares independence from USSR and Mikhail Gorbachev becomes the first executive President of USSR; 2 August Iraq invades Kuwait; 14 August President Gorbachev restores citizenship to dissidents, including Solzhenitsyn; 2 October West and East Germany are united; 16 January 1991 Operation Desert Storm to free Kuwait commences; 21 May Rajiv Gandhi is assassinated; 1 October siege of Dubrovnik begins; 19 December Paul Keating succeeds Bob Hawke as Australia's Prime Minister; 25 December Mikhail Gorbachev resigns and USSR formally ceases to exist; 1 February 1992 UN negotiated truce in El Salvador; 30 May UN sanctions against new Yugoslavian state as a result of Serbian aggression; 17 July President Hável of Czechoslovakia resigns over Slovak secession; 13 August UN condemns Serbia for its 'ethnic cleansing' policy; 3 November William Clinton wins US presidential election.

Chapter Sixteen

## Last Days

No longer prepared for international travel Grisha and Celia were not to be confined in their later years. They drove extensively throughout Victoria, South Australia and along the Murray Valley and, for the first time, travelled to northern Queensland, to rain forests and the Barrier Reef. Celia was busy with her painting and still receiving portrait commissions. The family was, as ever, close-knit and appreciative of each other's achievements. Anna was enjoying increasing success as an artist in stained glass and Piers was directing in Canada and the United States. Leo Fialkoff and his wife Maureen visited from California and Leo spoke at the AIIA. Then, as a result of a meeting with a friend of Michael, Grisha was offered the position of Chair of the Advisory Committee of Monash University's Institute of Reproduction and Development.

The Institute was formed in 1991 bringing together Monash University scientists, already internationally recognised, who worked in the field of reproduction and development. With some eighty scientists and fifty-five support staff involved, the Institute supported research in the University's departments of Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology as well as the education of medical and science students, undergraduate and postgraduate. Staff of the Institute formed an integral part of the Monash Medical Centre, caring for pregnant mothers and newborn children, premature babies, childhood disorders, as well as conducting research studies into male and female infertility, development abnormalities, heart and lung development of the foetus and other critical areas in the field of reproduction and development.

Grisha himself was excited by the opportunity this appointment provided. He considered the Institute was dealing with matters of national and international importance giving it a very special relevance, both now and for decades or even centuries to come. He was especially concerned that it maintain its unique character – the blending of creative research,

clinical work, teaching and the ability to recognise possibilities for the application of its findings in new fields – in order to maintain and enhance that relevance.
"The Board will continue to foster the high scientific, educational and economic objectives in this field which is also vital for Australia's technological export expansion. We will help in every possible way to improve the Institute's facilities and to raise the community's awareness of the Institute.....[this] will enable our scientists to continue to excel in a more creative atmosphere – a vital ingredient for success in the tough internationally competitive world of research in which the Institute's staff is active."

This proved to be an inspired appointment. As many had commented, no one knew as many people as Grisha and he was eminently placed to promote the work of the Institute and to solicit essential funding. Moreover, he was a generalist, asking what were the future directions, how would the Institute expand, where would the research lead? A decade later he would be one of the people credited with the Institute's expansion of its area of research. With the onset of serious eye problems he was, for some time, unable to drive and offered to the Institute his resignation. It was rejected and transport was provided for him to attend Board meetings and travel on Institute business.

He had maintained his interest and involvement in helping migrants from many countries, writing to universities, governments and industry seeking employment opportunities, and recognition of qualifications. Russian family members were advised and materially supported to settle in Israel, provided with money to cover settling-in expenses and put in touch with a world-wide network of friends and relatives. He did not, however, feel constrained to remind a recently arrived young man, also a relative, who was prone to complain of hard times, that he was fortunate indeed:
"You mention your present difficulties, comparing them to my generation. I agree, you are passing through a tough phase just now – but how much easier than in our time for we literally had no options. Until I left Europe in 1947, I had no chance for a job anywhere.... in Germany or France we could live as long as we did NOT earn any money. We could get top marks in the most prestigious schools, as long as our parents paid the fees, but we could never get a job. After spending years in the army in England I could NOT get a permit to go

to London for a few days to pick up my belongings, although I showed them my visa and tickets for Australia! Add to this, the knowledge of us who knew Germany, that without a war we would all perish in Europe.... Consider, in spite of your present worries, you are lucky that it's happening now, not then..... Believe me – the present and future are better than the past."

Then word came from Paris. On 29 March 1994 Sophie had finally been relieved of her tortured existence, many years after she had told everyone she was dying, yet one more victim of the scourge the Nazis had visited upon the land. She was cremated at Père Lachaise Cemetery. Grisha knew that for him also the days were growing shorter. There would be no more journeyings to Paris and Lyon. Not many relatives and friends from the old days were still alive. The remarkable Madame Molino, in whose home in Lyon he and Celia had first met, had died back in the 'sixties as had his beloved, long-mourned Stassia. Jan Pleva was gone and Grisha recalled how he and Jan had tried on the Nazi's suits in the Prague apartment. No longer would the great friend Leo Fialkoff, more like a brother, send birthday greetings or pass on investment advice or call into Paris to try to console Sophie. He had died in Santa Barbara not long after his visit to Melbourne. Walter Juda was still active in science, business and university cirles in America but few other boys from the Grunewald Gymnasium were left. Grisha wrote a tribute to celebrate Ernest Borneman's coming eightieth birthday but would not know what tragedy lay ahead there. He tried not to dwell on the events of July 1942, well aware that sanity would not be served by too much reflection on his mother's fate.

His visit to Moscow in 1992 had had a profound effect on his thinking about family, religion and his Jewishness. He would write, to think, to seek, in search of what he was not sure but partly, certainly, in search of himself:

"I've been reminiscing about the awakening of my Jewish consciousness. To be Jewish is to accept the consequences of being a Jew. But who or what is a Jew? It is no longer solely a follower of a particular religious faith, if it ever was, because a very high proportion of Jews, of Israelis, are not religious and nowadays there are so many versions of Judaism. For thousands of years the Jews had no country, yet they survived as Jews in generally hostile

environments with frequent pogroms and evictions. The concept of Jewry as a nation does not seem to apply.[60] It was the common language of the prayer books and the bible which enabled this group of people to survive and feel a certain international kinship. Integration in lieu of assimilation seems at present to be the method of accommodating different groups within one country. Jewishness in the diaspora should be easier than in earlier times because the existence of the state of Israel gives all Jews a backing they have not experienced for millenia.

"The first consequence of my becoming a schoolboy in Germany was to be shown that I was a Jew and therefore belonged to a separate group. The first part was not new to me, the second was hard to grasp. However, formal tuition in biblical history and prayer-book Hebrew dispelled any suggestion of inferiority. At this time, a Zionist was defined as "a Jew who collects money from rich Jews to send poor Jews to Palestine". A bit hard but among the upper-middle-class German Jews, that was our environment, Zionism had little appeal. My initial contacts with the movement did not impress me. There were groups of every political shade who claimed to be training for the new life in Palestine and were constantly fighting among themselves. As time went on, the need for the Zionist outlet became more obvious. It became clear in 1933 that Hitlerism had prevailed in Germany and rapid departure became necessary. Zionism required farmers, agriculturalists and tradesmen of all sorts. Many a promising scholar of my generation made the decision, left school or university and retrained for the new life. I could not see this sort of career for myself. A foreign passport and some family money made this decision easier.

"I have become, since my first visit to Israel in 1962, an admirer of the land, a believer in its future and a defender of its existence. At times I regret not to have participated in this fascinating creation of a country and its new society.

"My personal break with Jewish religion occurred in 1943. Stationed in the English Midlands with the Czech Brigade, we found one of our Jewish soldiers had committed a messy suicide with his Sten gun. It was a Saturday morning and I was on duty. Phoning the army rabbi I was told by him to do certain things and he would come on Sunday – he

could not come by car on a Saturday and eight miles was too far to walk. I exploded and told him to join the infantry if he was too religious to perform his rabbinical duties. He persisted and did not turn up and I have not been to a religious service other than a wedding or a Bar Mizvah since. I must confess, however, that when I go to a Reform Synagogue and hear non-Hebrew prayers, I feel there is something wrong. I well understand the desire of many Catholics to have a Latin Mass.

"As a true believer in integration since very early in my life, well before the term was coined by sociologists, I saw no problem in marrying out and in bringing up our children without a formal religion – in the knowledge that they were free to choose their own destiny."

On 1 January 1993 Czech and Slovak Republics become sovereign countries; 22 February UN Security Council creates War Crimes Tribunal relating to events in former Yugoslavia; 12 March Australian Labor Party wins federal election; 4 May inquiry begins into British Government's involvement into supply of arms to Iraq; 15 October Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk of South Africa; 1 November European Community becomes the European Union when the Maastricht Treaty comes into effect; 30 December Vatican and Israel sign 'fundamental agreement' whereby the Vatican recognises the State of Israel; 26 April 1994 African National Congress wins general election in South Africa and 10 May Nelson Mandela becomes President; 14 June UN completes program to destroy Iraq's chemical weapons; 1 August UN investigates wide-spread massacres and human rights violations in Rwanda; 8 September last Russian troops leave Poland; 12 November demonstrations in East Timor highlight Indonesian oppression.

One morning early in January 1995 he awoke and found only darkness. He was blind. He 'phoned his old friend Ron Taft : "Ron, I can't see. Still, I'll be eighty this year, one of the oldest male Sklovskys I've ever heard of."

Full vision returned within an hour but the seriousness of even temporary lack of sight was recognised and various medical examinations were immediately undertaken. The 8 January was the sort of day he loved as he drove to the Mornington Peninsula with Celia to enjoy lunch and a gathering with friends. They spent a quiet evening back home watching television. That night he died, not as his father, too young and alone in a foreign land, not as

his mother, unspeakably at the hands of the barbarians, but in the fulness of his days in the family home, the setting of much love and generosity of spirit. It had been a long, sometimes tortuous road home but he had never faltered.

The family quickly gathered, Anna flying in from London, to support Celia. They were "overwhelmed by the kindness and love shown for Grisha. He has constantly been admired for his warmth, optimism, humour, generosity, his love of life, interest in others and his willingness to help others. Many, including those with different political views, talk of the huge gap in their lives now he is no longer with us."

A private funeral was held on 16 January and two days later more than four hundred people attended Camberwell's Civic Centre to celebrate and recall his life.

A relative from Israel, Vera Havel,wrote: "Somehow it didn't occur to us that Grisha would one day leave life."
Sir Zelman Cowan spoke of his "style, zest, enthusiasm. Grisha had a genius for friendship. Samuel Johnson said that friendship should be worked at and kept in constant repair. Grisha's friendship gave great comfort and I'm glad to have been a beneficiary."
Maureen, the widow of Leo Fialkoff, thought of him as "an exceptional person, intelligent, caring, curious-in-everything, best of friends. He was a true gentleman."
Hans Snelleman, a friend of forty years, also spoke of how "Grisha was one of the wondrous things in our life and for the rest of our life we should rejoice in having known him."
Bill Darvall: "It is possible to imagine Grisha dead but not possible to imagine him not alive."
Peter Darvall: "Delight most sums him up. Pleasure in little things. Delight in all little children. If life is a party, Grisha was the life of the party."
Sir Gustav Nossal: "He hated regimes that curtailed the human spirit... huge-hearted and a positive friend."
Dr Philip Law: "A remarkable person with a penchant for getting things done.... knew more people than anyone.... understood the high responsibility of friendship."

Richard Oppenheim: “A man of enormous spirit, enthusiasm, interest and curiosity. No problem appeared to be too big or too small for Grisha to tackle. His model remains with us forever.”

Professor David de Kretser: “He was so enthusiastic and energetic, almost impatient at times as matters moved slowly in university circles.... I greatly appreciated his wise counsel, his infectious sense of humour and his optimism as things got tough at times... I continued to be amazed by his ability to identify people of influence whom he hoped to involve in the work of the Institute.”

The Institute of Reproduction and Development, Professor de Kretser announced, would name a post-graduate scholarship, the Grisha Sklovsky Scholarship. “Such an award would embody Grisha’s interest in young people and the provision of funds to enable their intellectual development would certainly be in keeping with his philosophy.”

SBS TV, in its program *Dateline* devoted a segment to its former Chairman. One of those taking part was Sir Arvi Parbo, a long-time friend of Grisha and former Chairman of the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council:

“He was a wonderful person to work with, very direct, very honest... he had a very clear mind, he was able to reduce complicated things to rather simple results and I really enjoyed working with him and I think he deserves great credit for having the SBS organisation established in a way that it did and the success it had become.”

The Chairman of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils, Victor Rebikoff, recalled how “Dr Sklovsky’s tireless efforts in leading SBS through the crucial early years contributed enormously to the present success of the radio and television services.”

Sir Nicholas Shehadie, who succeeded Grisha as SBS’s Chairman said:

“....it was not possible to speak too highly of Dr Sklovsky’s contribution to the service. The contribution he made was by setting the place in concrete, he gave it solid foundations, he was commited to the service, he was commited to multiculturalism and SBS will be ever grateful for the work that he has done.”

On 1 February time was allowed in the Senate of the Australian Parliament for a tribute to him which concluded:

"Grisha Sklovsky was a great Australian. His life experience meant that he could appreciate, in way not open to us, the reality of a free society. He was a beacon of commonsense and dedication to the values of a free society."

Daniele Kemp, Head of French Language Group SBS, Melbourne remembered the founding Chairman:

"He spoke many languages, was familiar with many cultures and he believed in a tolerant, multicultural but united society, the members of which would share the same values and would look in the same direction for the future..... His idealism and involvement with humanist and intellectual causes was unlimited. For the fortunate ones who knew him in one of his many roles he was an inspiration, an initiator of ideas and a man with an inexhaustible sense of mirth.... It took a very special mind to trust that differences can act as a force to forge a nation and that many languages can be part of one Australia. It took a great talent to sell these ideas to a community, a community which was trying to come to terms with its part in one of the most momentous population movements in history... Thank you, Grisha. You will be remembered with respect and affection."

Celia: "We did have a particularly happy marriage. Grisha was a wonderful husband and father and left a family who loved and admired him very much – and miss him badly."

It was in all a farewell he would have enjoyed, the gathering of friends to remember the boy from Siberia, who had travelled far to find his home, was proud to become an Australian citizen but would forever remain an international.

# Epilogue

Celia continued to live in the family home, alone, with her new dog, and had no intention of moving. Her health began to fail and in 1998 she left a pan of boiling oil on the stove. The resultant fire destroyed the kitchen but the rest of the house was saved. She became increasingly frustrated by her slowness and forgetful mind. In 2001 she wrote her last end-of-the-year letter to friends:

"I am feeling that this will be the last time I will be able to write to you for Christmas because I am becoming less and less competent and more and more forgetful. I am being beautifully looked after at home by a very kind and understanding friend, Netta, whom Janey notified of my deterioration.... she is a trained nurse who seems pleased to live with me.... We enjoy many of the same things including the garden.... I am still enjoying gardening but I am getting increasingly lame and inclined to think I won't have a long future."

Celia died in her ninetieth year on 19 May 2004.

Anna and Piers live in Stockwell, London and Sussex, as they have done for thirty years. Piers is recovering from major surgery, slowly getting back to directing and writing and is very involved in the battle for directors' rights. Anna teaches stained glass at the Mary Ward Centre in Bloomsbury, works on public and private commissions and for exhibitions in glass and jewellery. Their son William is an architect and in 2006 married Agnieszka Glowacka, also an architect, in Kracow. Daisy is a successful actor with a variety of roles in TV, film and theatre. Two of Piers' older children, Phillip and Claire and their families live in London, while Sarah and her family are in Canada and Rachel and hers in Bangladesh. The family continues the large, noisy, welcoming tradition of Sklovsky-Haggard hospitality.

Michael still lives in Melbourne where his company now includes ten *Ishka* stores that market hand-made goods from forty developing countries. He has written arts and crafts

sections for several Lonely Planet guide books. Bodil lectures at Deakin University and is involved in diabetes research. Their daughter, Anna Karin, of Vietnamese background was adopted shortly after Grisha's death and is a much-travelled twelve-year old.

Jane continues to work in general practice in Melbourne and is involved in a number of medical bodies including one concerned with professional ethics. She is also head of an Aged Care portfolio. Stephen completed a degree in Environmental Engineering and Daniel is in the fifth year of his medical course. Peter is still active as an architect. The daughter of her father, Jane enjoys reading, travel, wining and dining and, with her family, holidays at Apollo Bay.

Notes

1 The Pale of Settlement *(palus*: Latin for stake) – a district which was separated from the surrounding district by fixed boundaries. In 1792 Russia created a Pale for Jews in the south-west territories seized from Poland in 1772. Jews were not permitted to live or travel outside the Pale. Certain exceptions were made, in the 1860s, for Jews with a higher education and those with particular professional qualifications. The census of 1897 showed five million Jews still confined to the Pale with 200,000 living elsewhere in European Russia. (See the English Pale in Ireland 1547.)

2 *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* was a fraudulent document created as a rationale for anti-Semitism. It was printed in Russia in abbreviated form in 1903 and was later used as an addendum to a religious pamphlet by Serge Nilus, a Tsarist bureaucrat. The car manufacturer Henry Ford did not bother to question its authenticity. In his private newspaper, *Dearborn Independent,* he quoted the *Protocols* as evidence of a Jewish threat. The Russian historian, Vladimir Burtsev, revealed the Protocols as fabrications created by officials of the Tsarist secret police using a variety of literary sources, satires and fantastic novels.

3 The best known Russian Jewish immigrant to Australia at the time was Simcha Baevski (1878-1934) who arrived in Melbourne in 1898. He adopted the name Sidney Myer and founded the Myer Emporium.

4 The Treaties of Brest-Litovsk, signed by the Central Powers with the Ukrainian Republic (9 February 1918) and with Soviet Russia (3 March 1918), concluded hostilities between those nations in World War I. The Ukrainian and Russian treaties were both annulled by the armistice of 11 November 1918, which marked the defeat of Germany and the end of World War I.

5 Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) was one of the leaders of the October Revolution in 1917. He became Commissar of Foreign Affairs and War in the Soviet Union. A rival to Stalin he was exiled and subsequently murdered in Mexico.

6 Aleksandr Kolchak (1873-1920), a Russian naval officer, was a leader of the White Russian opposition to the Bolsheviks 1918-20. He lost the support of the allies and the Czech Legion, was handed over to the Bolsheviks and was shot 7 February 1920.

7 The Treaty of Versailles, a product of the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920), was handed to the German delegation, which was denied the right to negotiate, on 7 May 1919 and, after many protestations, was signed on 28 June. Under the terms of the Treaty, Germany was to cede various territories to other nations, restrict all defence forces and armaments and huge reparation payments were stipulated. Under Article 231 of the Treaty, the war-guilt clause, Germany and its allies were deemed to be the aggressors in the war and thereby held responsible for loss and damage suffered by the allies. The argument, put forward by many Germans and others, that the disastrous inflation had been caused by unrealistic reparation payments cannot be sustained. The fact is that Germany never paid anything like the reparations demanded. Even during the prosperous years of the Weimar Republic less than two per cent of national income was paid, a figure more than offset by foreign loans which were never repaid.

8 The German National Assembly met at Weimar, a provincial town in Thuringia, from 6 February 1919 and the constitution of the new republic was drawn up there on 11 August 1919. Goethe and Schiller once ran a theatre in Weimar.

9 Walter Gropius (1883-1969) was appointed Professor of Architecture at Harvard University in 1937.

10 Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), Lutheran theologian. A leader of the Confessing Church opposed to Nazism, he was involved in plots against Hitler and was hanged by the SS at Flossenbürg concentration camp on 9 April 1945. His brother Klaus and his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, the lawyer son of the Hungarian composer, both former students of the Grunewald Gymnasium, were also executed.

11 Claus von Stauffenberg (1907-1944), a German army officer, was a principal figure in the resistance against Hitler. On 20 July 1944 he placed a bomb in Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg. He was executed that night in Berlin when it was established that Hitler had survived.

12 An extract from Einstein's letter, written at Princeton, 16 November 1934:

He [Rolf Landshoff] has accomplished his studies in Germany and has worked under the guidance of Professor R. Becker and Professor R. Rothe. He must be a very able man, being recommended by so reliable German scientists. He is still living in Germany, but has no chance to get any position or opportunity to scientific work, being a 'Non-Aryan'.

I have not written to him myself, because my name is so strongly hated in official Germany that it would be dangerous for the young man. Therefore I beg you – if you are kind enough to get in touch with Mr Landshoff – not to mention my name. [His] wish is to get any fellowship enabling him to continue his work outside Germany or to find a possibility to earn his life in doing any work in connection with his studies.....

Thanking you for your kind reply, I am

Very sincerely yours

A. Einstein

13 In 1940, 2542 men, Austrian and German citizens, were shipped from England to Australia on board the *Dunera* as enemy aliens. Many of them were to make significant contributions to the cultural and academic life of Australia.

14 Heinrich Brüning (1885-1970) , a member of the Catholic Centre Party, Chancellor and Foreign Minister, March 1930-May 1932.

15 Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934). A Field-Marshal in World War I he was elected President of the Weimar Republic in 1925 and again in 1932.

16 The Holy Roman Empire 962-1806 was termed the First Reich; the Second Reich was that created by Bismark in 1871.

17 Namier, Lewis, *Vanished Supremacies*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1958

18 Walther Rathenau (1867-1922), industrialist and founder of the German Democratic Party. In his *The New Economy*, published 1918, he advocated employee participation and State control. Appointed Foreign Minister in 1922 he negotiated the Treaty of Rapallo which strengthened relations and economic ties between the Soviet Union and Germany. Reviled by those of the extreme right because of his Judaism and his political philosophy he was assassinated 24 June 1922. After World War II the Grunewald Gymnasium was re-named the Walther Rathenau Schule.

19 Not only the young were courageous. On the same day, 1 April 1933, Julie Bonhoeffer, Dietrich's grandmother, pushed her way through a cordon of stormtroopers to shop at a Jewish-owned store.

20 Mike Nichol's film credits include *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, The Graduate*, *Catch 22, Carnal Knowledge, Silkwood.*

21 Roth, Joseph, *The White Cities,* translated by Michael Hofmann, Granta 2004

22 Stanley Bruce (1883-1967). Born in Melbourne, a lawyer, former Prime Minister of Australia who lost his seat in the 1929 election. He was Australia's High Commissioner in London, 1933-45. Bruce died in London.

23 Edvard Beneš (1884-1948). Foreign Minister, President and a founder of Czechoslovakia. Abandoned by his allies, he capitulated to German demands, resigned in October 1938 and led the provisional government of his country in exile in England.

24 Philippe Pétain (1856-1951). A French soldier who became a military hero after his defence of Verdun in World War I. In 1940 he negotiated the armistice with Nazi Germany and headed the Vichy government 1940-1944. Condemned as a collaborationist after the war he was sentenced to death in August 1945. This was commuted to solitary confinement for life and he was imprisoned on the Île d'Yeu.

25 Pierre Laval (1883-1945). He led the collaborationist push in France with Nazi Germany and was found guilty of treason, 1945, and shot as a traitor.

26 *The Listener*, BBC, 18 January 1946.

27 President Roosevelt sent the Lend-Lease Bill to Congress on 6 January and it was signed on 11 March. It allowed the President to sell, lend, or lease products, goods to countries whose defence the President considered important to the United States.

28 Vidkun Quisling (1887-1945). A Norwegian army officer who enthusiastically supported the Nazi invasion of Norway. He was named Minister President in February 1942 under the Reich Commissioner Josef Terboven. Quisling's attempt to convert all Norway's institutions to National Socialism roused widespread opposition. He was charged with being responsible for the deportation of Norwegian Jews to concentration camps, treason and other war crimes and was executed in Oslo on 24 October 1945. His name has become synonymous with traitor.

29 Thyssen, Fritz (1873-1951). Head of an iron and steel conglomerate, he was one of the richest and most powerful men in Germany. A lavish supporter of the Nazi Party he promoted its cause among German industrialists.

30 Churchill, Winston, *The Second World War*, vol.7, Cassell, London,1964

31 Oskar Kokoshka (1886-1980). Austrian artist, poet, dramatist; moved to London in 1938.

32 Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942). Head of the Nazi security police and deputy to Head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler; Heydrich was appointed Protector of Bohemia and Moravia by Hitler and was assassinated in Prague.

33 Standartenführer Helmuth Knochen, Security-Police Commander, Northern France, Belgium. Twice sentenced to death after the war but second sentence of French court commuted to life imprisonment. He was repatriated to Germany in 1963.

34 Laval, Pierre, *The Unpublished Diary of Pierre Laval*, The Falcon Press, London,1948.

35 It was in Lyon that Jean Moulin (1899-1943), de Gaulle's co-ordinator and Chairman of the National Council of Resistance, was arrested and tortured by Klaus Barbie, head of the SS in Lyon.

36 Jacques Soustelle (1912-1990). Professor at the Collège de France. Of the left politically, he became secretary of the Comité des Intellectuels Antifascistes. He joined de Gaulle in London in 1940, held many government posts in post-war France but opposed de Gaulle over Algeria and went into exile. He returned to France in 1968.

37 UNRRA. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration created to provide social welfare programs for countries devastated by Worl War II; providing trained personnel to distribute food, clothing, fuel, medicine and shelter; also involved in the care of displaced persons; disbanded in 1947, its projects were handed over to the International Refugee Organisation, WHO and other UN agencies.

38 For a detailed account of the Australian Red Cross mission to Greece in 1945, 1946 see: Gilchrist, Hugh, *Australians and Greeks*, vol.III, Halstead Press, Broadway, 2004.

39 ELAS. Communist backed resistance organisation and its military wing in Greece. When the restored government, after the Nazi retreat, ordered ELAS to lay down its arms it refused. A peace agreement was signed 12 February 1945 but a guerilla war was waged 1946-49.

40 Yalta Conference 4-11 February 1945; Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt and Premier Stalin met at Yalta in the Crimea to discuss the occupation of a defeated Germany and other matters affecting post-war Europe.

41 Churchill, Winston, *The Second World War*, vol.12, Cassell, London,1964

42 Ladino is a Judaeo-Spanish dialect spoken in Turkey, Greece, North Africa and other countries. The language was transported by Jews exiled from Spain after 1492. The language contains elements of grammar lost to modern Spanish.

43 Ernest Borneman's publications: *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor*, many editions, the latest being Gregg Press, Boston, 1981 and Penguin, 1986; *A Critic Looks at Jazz*, 1946; *Tremolo*, Jarrolds,1948 [filmed with Yul Brynner for CBS]; *Bang, You're Dead*, screenplay, 1954; *Four O'Clock in the Morning Blues*, jazz opera with music by Malcolm Rayment; *Face the Music*, novel and screenplay, 1954; *Tomorrow is Now*; *The Compromisers*, 1962; *Landscape with Nudes*, 1968, etc. In later life he moved to Austria where he worked as an academic, publishing extensively, in German, studies on sex and culture.

44 Sklovsky, Josif, *Five Billion Vodka Bottles to the Moon, Tales of a Soviet Scientist*, trans. by Mary Fleming Zirin and Harold Zirin, W W Norton & Co, New York, 1991.

45 Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989). was the leading Soviet nuclear physicist of his time. He spent many years designing nuclear weapons and is known as the "father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb". He became one of the most courageous critics of the Soviet Union.

46 Piers Haggard. Television credits include *Pennies from Heaven, A Summer Story, I'll Take Romance*, *Eskimo Day, Waters of the Moon*, *Quartermass Conclusion* etc. Film credits include *Wedding Night, The Fiendish Plot of Dr Fu Manchu, Venom, Blood on Satan's Claw*, *Summer Story.*

47 *The Australian*, 11 June 1990

48 Darling, J.R., *Richly Rewarding*, Hill of Content in assoc. Lloyd O'Neil, Melbourne, 1978.

49 Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) was a great Russian poet, studied at Heidelberg and St Petersburg. His story has been told by his wife Nadezhda in the two volumes *Hope Against Hope* and *Hope Abandoned*, published in English by Penguin in 1975 and 1976.

50 Nadezhda Mandelstam (1899-1980). After her husband's death she worked as a teacher at Tashkent and elsewhere before being allowed to return to Moscow in 1956.

51 Isaac Babel (1894-1941) was a leading Russian writer who, along with many other writers, was silenced in the 'thirties. "I have invented a new genre – the genre of silence". Arrested in 1939, he disappeared in the Lubyanka prison. Years later a death certificate was issued by the Soviet authorities advising of his death on 17 March 1941.

52 Lavrenti Beria (1899-1953) was the director of the secret police from 1938 until his execution in 1953.

53 Shentalinsky, Vitaly, *The KGB's Literary Archive*, trans. John Crowfoot, The Harvill Press, London, 1995.

54 André Malraux (1901-1976) French novelist and art historian. He was involved in revolutionary movements in Indochina; frequently met with Russian writers; supported the Popular Front in the Spanish civil war; was a member of the French Resistance against the Nazis; a close colleague of de Gaulle and for ten years was France's Minister for Cultural Affairs.

55 Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), Russian poet, best known in the West for his novel *Dr Zhivago*.

56 Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). A great Russian composer; condemned by Soviet authorities in 1948 for Formalism.

57 Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948). Russia's greatest film director. His films include *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Alexander Nevski* and the two-part *Ivan the Terrible*. He also was accused of Formalism.

58 Maxim Gorky (1868-1936). Noted Russian writer, a friend of Lenin, a pioneer of "socialist realism" in literature.

59 Shentalinsky, p53

60 In considering the concept of Jewish *nation* it is of interest to consider the history of Jews in France. See: Benbassa, Esther, *The Jews of France*, trans. by M B DeBevoise, Princeton,1999 regarding Sephardic *nations* of the south contrasted to Ashkenazic *nations* of the east. In August 1789, in the course of a debate on citizenship in the National Constituent Assembly, Stanislaus Clermont-Tonnerre argued: "...everything must be refused to the Jews as a *nation* in the sense of a corporate body and everything granted to the Jews as *individuals*."

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Maureen, oo
Fitzgerald, Stephen, oo
Flanders and Swann, oo
Fontaine, Joan, oo
Ford Henry, Note 2
Ford, Gerald, oo
Fowell Ron, oo
Franco, Gen., oo
Frank, Hans, oo
Fraser, Malcolm, oo
Freud, Sigmund, oo
Frick, Wilhelm, oo

Galbally, Frank, oo
Gandhi, Indira, oo
Mahatma, oo
Gerlier, Pierre, Card., oo
Gide, André, oo
Gielgud, John, oo
Glowacka, Agnieszka, oo
Goebbels, Joseph, oo
Goethe, Johann von, oo
Goldmann, Nahum, oo
Goldmershtein, Leon, oo
Gorbachev, Mikhail, oo
Gorenstein, Shura, oo
Göring, Hermann, oo
Gorky, Maxim, oo
Goslich, oo
Grant, Cary, oo
Grassby, Al, oo
Greene, Graham, oo
Green, Fred, oo
Greer, Germaine, oo
Grignard, Victor, oo
Gropius Walter, oo
Guerevic, Chaja Anna
See Sklovsky, Anna Chaja
Guitry, Sacha, oo
Gyngell, Bruce, oo

Haggard, Piers, oo
Claire, oo
Daisy, oo
Phillip, oo
Rachel, oo
Sarah, oo
William, oo
Hawke, Bob, oo
Havel, Vera, oo
Helmer, oo
Hepburn, Katherine, oo
Herzenberg, Erwin, oo
Heydrich,, Reinhard, Note 32
Hindenburg, Paul von, oo
Hindemith, Paul, oo
Hitler, Adolf, oo
Hitchcock, Alfred, oo
Ho Chi Minh, oo
Hoffmansthal, Hugo von , oo
Hogan, Alan, oo
Howard, Leslie, oo
Hutchison, Neil, oo
Huxley, Aldous, oo
Julian, oo

Isherwood, Christopher, oo

Johnson, Ben, oo
Jodl, Alfred. oo
Juda, Walter, oo

Kaltenbrunner, Ernst, oo
Kandinsky, Wassily, oo
Keating, Paul, oo
Keaton, Buster, oo
Keitel, Wilhelm von, oo
Kemp, Daniele, oo
Kenyatta, Jomo, oo
Klee, Paul, oo
Klemperer, Otto, oo
Klutznick, Phillip, oo
Knochen, Helmuth, oo
Koch, Erich, oo
Koestler, Arthur, oo
Kokoshka, Oskar, Note 31
Kolchak, Aleksandr, oo
Kramer, Leonie, oo

Landsberger, Kurt, oo
Landshoff, Rolf, oo
Laurel and Hardy, oo
Laval, Pierre, oo
Law, Philip, oo
Lehrer, Tom, oo
Levi, Werner, oo
Levi, Carlo, oo
Leviant, Isa, oo
Levy, Dr., oo
Littlemore, Stewart, oo
London, Jack, oo
Luce, Clare Boothe, oo
Lynn, Vera, oo

McCarthy, Eugene, oo
McCarthy, Mary, oo
McKellar, Michael, oo
Madariaga, Salvador de, oo
Malraux, André, oo
Mandela, Nelson, oo
Mandelstam, Nadezhda, oo
Osip, oo
Mangano, Silvana, oo
Mann, Heinrich, oo
Thomas, oo
Mao Zedong, oo
Marceau, Marcel, oo
Marcos, Ferdinand, oo
Markau, Horst, oo
Marx, Brothers, oo
Marx, Marie Louise, oo
Masaryk, Thomas, oo
Mason, Peter, oo
Daniel, oo
Steven, oo
Maurois, André, oo
Mendès-France, Pierre, oo
Menzies, Robert, oo
Meunier, Louis, oo
Meyer, Carlos, oo
Michener, James, oo
Miller, George, oo
Mirabeau, Comte de, oo
Mitterand, Francois, oo
Moffat, Dr, oo
Molino, Mme.
Renée, oo
Montgomery, Bernard, oo
Moravia, Alberto, oo
Moro, Aldo, oo
Moshinsky, Elijah, oo
Nathan, oo
Samson, oo
Mosley, Oswald, oo
Mubarak, Hosni, oo
Mugabe, Robert, oo
Murrow, Ed, oo
Mussolini, Benito, oo
Myer, Sidney, Note 3

Naipaul, V S, oo
Namier, Lewis, oo, Note 17
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Nehru, Jawaharlal, oo
Nesviginsky, Alex,oo
Neumann, John von, oo
Nevrala, Captain, oo
Nicholas II, Tsar, oo
Nichols, Mike (See Peschkowsky)
Nilus, Serge, Note 2
Nixon, Richard, oo
Nkrumah, Kwame, oo
Nossal, Sir Gus, oo

Oppenheim, Richard, oo

Orlov, Yuri, oo

Parbo, Sir Arvi, oo
Pasternak, Boris, oo
Peach, Bill, oo
Peck, Edward, oo
Peck, Gregory, oo
Petacci, Clara, oo
Peschkowsky, Michael, oo
Paul, oo
Tossia, oo
Petain, Philippe, oo
Philipp, Gunter, oo
Pilger, John, oo
Pinochet, Augusto, oo
Pleva, Jan, oo
Portal, Sir Charles, oo
Poussin, Nicolas, oo
Preuss, Hugo, oo
Proust, Marcel, oo

Quisling, Vidkun, oo

Raleigh, family, oo
Rasmussen, Bodil, oo
Rathenau, Gerhard, oo
Rathenau, Walter, oo
Rayment, Malcolm, oo
Reagan, Ronald, oo
Rebikoff, Victor, oo
Reichl, Jan, oo
Phyllis, oo
Remarque, Erich Maria, oo
Rembrandt, oo
Ribbentrop, Joachim, oo
Robespierre, Maximilien, oo
Rommel, Erwin, oo
Ronnies, The Two, oo
Roosevelt, F.D.R., oo
Rosenberg, Alfred, oo
Rosenstiel, Edwin, oo
Roth, Joseph, oo
Rothfield, Norman, oo
Rothe, R. Note 12
Rowe, R.J., oo
Rubinstein, Artur, oo
Russell, Bertrand, oo

Sadat, Anwar, oo
Sagan, Carl, oo
Sakharov, Andrei, oo
Saliege, Jules-Gérard
Sarraute, Nathalie, oo
Saukel, Fritz, oo
Schlemmer, Oscar, oo
Schnabel, Artur, oo
Schiller, Friedrich, oo
Sellers, Peter, oo
Semenov, Gregorii, (Ataman), oo
Seyss-Inquart, Arthur, oo
Shakespeare, William, oo
Shehadie, Nicholas, oo

Shentalinsky, Vitaly, oo
Shostakovich, Dmitri, oo
Simon, Ulrich, oo
Sinclair, Upton, oo
Singer, Isaac Bashevis, oo
Singh, Khuswant, oo
Sklovsky, Abram, oo
Anna, Chaja, oo
Anna, (Haggard), oo
Anna Karin, oo
Celia, oo
Gena, oo
Grisha, oo
Jane, (Mason), oo
Josif, oo
Michael, oo
Samarij, oo
Samuel, oo
Sophie, oo
Victor, oo
Zippa,(seeBasin,Zippa)
Snedden, Billy, oo
Snelleman, Hans, oo
Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr, oo
Soustelle, Jacques, oo
Souzay, Gerard, oo
Staley, Tony, oo
Stalin, Josef, oo
Stauffenberg, Claus von, oo
Steinbeck, John, oo
Storey, Hadden, oo
Streicher, Julius, oo
Stuckart, Franz, oo
Suzman, Helen, oo
Utzon, Jörn, oo

Taft, Ron, oo
Talleyrand, Charles-Maurice, oo
Tati, Jacques, oo
Teague, Justice, oo
Teller, Edward, oo
Thatcher, Margaret, oo

Théas, Pierre-Marie, oo
Thyssen, Fritz, oo
Timoshenko, Marshal, oo
Trotsky, Leon, oo
Truman, Harry S, oo

Vallat, Xavier, oo
Van Gogh, Vincent, oo
Vansittart, Robert, oo
Vaugelade, Jean, oo
Vilmar, Wilhelm,oo
Von Thoma, Gen., oo

Walter, Bruno, oo
Watteau, Antoine, oo
Weigall, Celia, (see Sklovsky, Celia)
Gerald, oo
Maud, oo

Weill, Julien, oo

Wells, H.G., oo

Whitlam, Gough, oo

Williams, Emlyn, oo

Eric, oo

Wilson, Harold, oo

Witt, Peter, o

Wojtyla, Karol, oo

Yutang, Lin, oo

Zola, Emile, oo

Zweig, Arnold, oo

Stefan,oo