

Dear Eve,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 23.5.1989. It was really a surprise for us. I could not answer immediately because we just arrived (18.6.1989) from our two months' long trip to Europe and had to organise our life and domestic chores. I do not want to discuss the state of mind of your father: it hurts both of us. I admire your interest in the history of our family, although I often notice that younger generation are curious about finding their roots. So to the best of my ability and memory I will try to give you some details regarding our and your mother's family.

As far as my parents are concerned, your informations are correct, except that four of us attended university or, like myself, a technical college. The second eldest, Joseph, was a self educated man without any higher education (university). He was a brilliant journalist specialising in economy. He published his first editorial when he was 16 (sixteen) years old! Probably you took your ability in journalism after him! Roman, the eldest, was a lawyer, he was married to a graduate in arts and they had twin girls born in 1936. He, his family and our mother perished in gas chambers of Sobibor in 1942. My mother was then about 58, Roman 35 and the girls 6. My father died after a heart attack in 1932 at the age of 49. He had a short history of angina pectoris and died after fasting on the Day of Attonement. Your father was at the time of our father's death in Brno (Czechoslovakia) studying electrical engineering at the Polytechnic ~~university~~ (department of engineering at the local university). He was called home to attend the funeral and after 3 days of mourning went back to continue his studies. You will be curious to know why your father did not study in Poland. As you may be aware the Polish Government of the time introduced a quota for Jewish students (so called "numerus clausus"). It meant that the number of Jewish students could not exceed 10% of all students at the given faculty. This quota system applied to faculty of medicine, engineering, pharmacy and other so called "attractive" studies. As Krakow had no Polytechnic and within the quota Jan could not be admitted to the Politechnic either in Warsaw or Lwow, the only solution was to send him to another country, in this case Czechoslovakia where no restrictions in admitting foreign students existed. To support financially your father was a hard decision and as my parents could not afford it, the burden of financing your father's studies was taken over by Stefan who spent every available time coaching other students and studying himself late in the night. After two years in Brno your father was involved in demonstrations against the management of the Polytechnic and was under threat of being removed from there. Thanks to influential connections of Joseph - who at this time was already a very well known journalist all over Poland - (he worked

for different newspapers) your father was admitted to the Polytechnic in Lwow (now in Russia) . In 1938 he finally graduated as an Electrical Engineer. As I mentioned before, he was supported financially by Stefan and in the last years of his studies also by Joseph. None of us studied medicine, although Roman was very interested in these studies but owing to the existing quota, he could not be admitted to this faculty.

Joseph was killed by the Ukrainians in July 1941 during the war in Lwow. The Ukrainians organised a pogrom of Jews there which was approved by the Germans. It was to commemorate the anniversary of killing of the Ukrainian leader Peltura. Joseph found himself in the street, going to keep a date with his girlfriend.

In January 1940 Stefan and Jan decided to go to Russia because they believed Germany and Russia are bound to be in war between themselves (despite the pact of non-aggression between Russia and Germany signed in August 1939). They were recruited as specialists and sent to a town called at this time "Stalinsk" and now Starokuzniec, in Siberia. Janek worked there as an electrical engineer in a steel mill and Stefan as a lecturer in mathematics at the local university. Stefan met there Natasha, an industrial engineer whom he married late in 1940. Vlad was born in October 1941. I spent the first year of the war in a small health resort, not far from Lwow, under Russian occupation, working as a building engineer, renovating hotels and other buildings for the guests, mostly arriving from Russia. After six months, when my assignment was finished, I was declared ^{yes} a "refugee", persona non-grata and forced to find another place to live and work. I stayed about 100 km east of Lwow in a small country town. In July 1941 Germans occupied the whole eastern Poland which was hitherto under German occupation. I found myself under constant threat to be either killed or sent to a concentration camp by the Germans. In September 1942 I decided to escape to Warsaw. My late wife who was at the time only a good friend, and who was also Jewish, sent me a birth certificate of a deceased person whose name was RUTKOWSKI. This type of birth certificate was easily obtainable for money and there were people who had connections with registry offices and Catholic parishes and through them birth certificates were bought. You should be aware that Germans had not the slightest idea who was a Jew, assuming that the Jew did not wear a typical beard and locks as well as the traditional dress. Only the Poles had an excellent knowledge in recognising Jews, especially if the person in question had a German surname. This the first thing for an escapee was to acquire a birth certificate with a Polish surname. Our family name was DIAMENT which is equivalent to English "Diamond". It was a Jewish name and therefore it was dangerous to keep it while living among Poles. Stefan and Jan acquired their name DROBOT while in Russia, just before leaving in 1945 for Poland. As you perhaps know, Jan was

* which were normal newspapers not necessarily tied with Zionist movement but defending rights of Jews in Poland.

was before the war a supporter of the Polish Communist party, in those days illegal. Once the war was over ~~and~~, the Polish people deported or those who went voluntarily to Russia, (as was the case of Jan and Stefan) started to make efforts towards getting back to Poland. There were hundreds thousands of Poles who wanted to return as soon as possible but, as usually is the case, those who had some connections with the organisation called Association of Polish Patriots established in Moscow, were on the priority list. The aim of this Association run mostly by Polish Communists, was to choose some people who would be instrumental in forming the future Polish ^{Communist} Government. Your father who had friends in this organisation was placed on the priority list and returned to Poland in October 1945. Before leaving Russia he received definite instructions what to do and how to behave. On the top of those instructions was: you have to change your name to one sounding Polish because your real name sounds Jewish. As he did not know whether anybody of our family was alive and, incidentally, somebody informed him that I was killed by a bomb, he was free to adopt a name of his choice. He had a Polish friend at THE Politechnic whose name was "Drobot". Without asking this friend for his permission, he adopted this name because he was of the opinion that it sounded Polish and at the same time it was easy to pronounce in any other language. Incidentally, this name was very popular in southern part of Poland, in the mountains.

Stefan who returned one year later, adopted the same name. It did not make any difference to me that my name was different. It often happened then that in one family everybody had a different name. Actually it did help me in 1958 to emigrate from Poland as I was not officially related to a member of Communist Party. Because of this, Stefan had to wait about 3 years before he got the permission to leave Poland.

Now regarding your mother, I can only give you information coming from different though reliable sources. Wanda (her real name was "Salomea") was a daughter of a textile merchant. She lost her mother when she was a teenager. In 1938, shortly before the war, she married a doctor who was killed by Germans during the war. She lived somewhere in southern Poland under a Polish name and moved after the war to Krakow where she stayed in A HOUSE THAT USED TO BELONG TO HER father. In 1945 she met a young electrical engineer who just returned from Russia (a member of the Communist Party). He had an important position as a director of the Central Electrical Power Station in Krakow. His name was NAHUM LEW. He was one of the few people who did not change their name even though it was typically Jewish. They were married in 1946 and it seems to me that in April 1947 Adam was born. In July 1947, on 13th, an excursion was organised for the employees of the Central Power Station to visit a lake from which electricity was generated. There were about 20 people on a very primitive motor boat. In one instance the man in charge of the motor,

probably to add a bit of fun, made suddenly a 90 degrees turn. A wave which came perpendicularly to the side of the boat overturned it and all 20 people found themselves in deep water. Your father who was a good swimmer first got out of the water and then organised a rescue operation. Only 7 people were rescued and Adam's father was among the 13 lost. As you know, the number "13" is fatal for superstitious people!

In 1948 Jan married Wanda. I do not know whether Adam knows all the details concerning who is his real father, I discussed this matter with Jan during my last visit in 1987. Jan was actually of the opinion that Adam should be informed but your mother objected. To me the whole "conspiracy" is rather silly because sooner or later Adam will learn about everything from somebody and then will have some regrets that his mother did not tell him the true story.

I pieced together all the information in the hope that this will satisfy your curiosity. I do not expect that as a consequence of my letter in which I frequently mentioned our Jewish descent, you will, as you write: "start going to Synagogue". I admire and appreciate your interest in the family background. Some years ago I read a book called THE REMNANTS written by a Polish couple, he a photographer named Tomaszewski and she a journalist Niezabitowska. It is already translated into many languages. The writer and photographer wandered from town to town in Poland, looking for Jewish remnants. May be this book will help you to understand the attitude of some of the younger generation towards history of their family. As I visited Israel a few years ago, I met several young people who were not interested at all to know anything about the histories of their families. They accused us that we allowed Germans to do with us whatever they wanted and that we did not show any resistance. I am ashamed that my children do not show such an interest like you do. I attached to my Last Will a note in which I gave all necessary information for preparing my death certificate. What to do?

Please do not hesitate to write to me again if you should find some discrepancies or things not quite clear to you. I have plenty of time and will try to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.