

THE  
UNBELIEVABLE

# Truth

*Jeanne Ran-Tcharnyi*

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Dedicated to  
the blessed memory  
of my dear parents  
and beloved  
brother

"Švyturys"

JEANNE RAN-TCHARNY  
THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH

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The author

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It was difficult to find an apartment at Kaunas in the winter of 1921. My father needed an apartment in the centre of the city with an entrance from the street so that his doctor's signboard would be fully visible. The private practice of a doctor, especially during the first days, depended largely on the location of his residence. My parents had a hard time, because they could not find a suitable apartment. My aunt gave us only one room, but I got into everything. Like all children of my age, everything was of interest to me; I had to touch everything.

Once my aunt invited many guests. A table in the dining room was covered with a white tablecloth with reddish roses around the edges. Aunt Sonia, my mother, and both housemaids were busy preparing the meal and did not take any notice of me. I was very curious to see what glittered so beautifully on the big table. When I was alone in the room I pulled the tablecloth, and the colored, cut-glass goblets and china came crashing down and shattered on the floor. I kept on pulling at the tablecloth. The women came running, but it was too late. The guests had to be invited for some other time.

Although my aunt and uncle were courteous and correct toward us, my aunt could no longer bear such interference with her life and comfort. We had been with her for a whole month when one day she came to our room directly from her surgery, without even

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taking off her white doctor's smock. She told my father that just then she was treating a patient from Yonava, who complained that the little town was left without a physician after doctor Ralis's recent death. She added that Yonava was situated only 32 km from Kaunas and that we could spend the winter there while she looked for a suitable apartment for us in Kaunas. My father understood her hint; we went to Yonava, where we "wintered" for the next twenty years.

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## AT YONAVA AND KAUNAS

We settled in a red, two-storey brick house at 32 Vilnius Street, across the street from a white church with two towers. Our apartment was on the top floor. Initially, we occupied half the floor - three rooms and a kitchen. In the other half lived our Lithuanian landlord with his two boys. On the ground floor beneath our apartment was our landlord's grocery, and beneath that was a bakery rented by Shapira the baker. Shapira baked at night so he could sell fresh buns, fragrant rolls, wattled loaves, "barankas" (a type of roll) in the morning. From our balcony, I could see people on the street going to the church and watch weddings and funerals. At the side of the house was a terrace along the entire floor, where we played together with the landlord's boys.

The landlord offered us the entire second floor and after we reconditioned the flat, we had ample space there. It now became possible to hire a governess for me; she was a German lady. By then, I was 5 years old, and I loved my nanny very much. She educated me, taught me new games, gymnastics, and handwork; later she prepared me for admission to a German secondary school. The only thing my mother had to do was to teach me music. That same year, my mother took me for the first time to the Kaunas theatre. At the matinee, we saw Tchaikovsky's ballet, "The Nutcracker," the impression of which lasted for life. As I recall, I was dressed very beautifully with patent-leather shoes.

One event from that time sticks in my memory. Once, when my parents had gone to Kaunas, I entered father's study. There were cigarettes on the desk. I wanted very much to smoke as my father did. I took



*Mother with her little daughter at age three,  
the author of these recollections*

matches, went out to the terrace, lit a cigarette and inhaled with all my might. I immediately burst out in a heavy fit of coughing, threw the cigarette away, and

ran to my room. Unfortunately, it turned out that our housemaid Manya had seen everything, and she told all to my parents after they returned.

A big clock stood in the dining-room. When it struck half past eight in the evening, I knew I had to wash myself and, after saying good night to my parents, go to sleep. So it was also on that evening. When, after saying good night to my mother, I turned to go to my room, father lifted his eyes from the newspaper and called me: "Jeanne, come here." Usually my father addressed me by a diminutive endearment, but now he was calling me by my full name - Jeanne. He ordered me to breathe out and asked me very sternly how I had spent my day. I still did not understand what he wanted. He told me that I smelt of cigarette smoke. Then I confessed. My father led me to his study, seated me opposite him, and began to explain quietly that neither mother, nor Aunt Sonia ever smoked. "Only bad women smoke", - he added. For the first time, father talked to me earnestly and convincingly as he would talk to an adult.

Much later, when my teenage friends tried to light cigarettes and offer them to me, I would always refuse. I never smoked again in my life.

Such a person was my father - restrained and quiet but strict and demanding with me. For that I am grateful to him.

During all these years, Mother was in correspondence with her sister Manya and with her brother Yanya in Red Russia. Each in turn played a significant role at different periods of my life. Aunt Manya got stuck in Moscow, a fact that caused a great pain to my mother. Who could know that one day, many years later, the mere existence of my mother's sister in Moscow would be of moral support to me.

Similar worries cost my mother the fate of her brother Yanya, stuck in Leningrad.

In the spring of 1926 Uncle Yanya and his wife Sonya came to visit us from Leningrad. They stayed with us for about a month. Uncle Yanya spoiled me terribly; it was very pleasant to be with him. He went often to Kaunas with my mother. With great difficulties my mother helped them obtain a visa, which enabled them, instead of returning to Red Russia, to leave for Paris. This completely changed their lives. There, aunt Sonya gave birth to a daughter, Tamara, who still lives in France. My uncle could not make use in Paris of his lawyer's diploma, and he started to work as a representative of the Goeginger and Tobler Companies. After ten years of hard labor he and a partner opened their own office - a warehouse that supplied soft and pressed caviar, salmon, and Tobler's chocolate to Russian restaurants and food stores.

In a suburb of Paris, where many Russian emigrants lived, my uncle built a small, two-storey brick house. The kitchen, the dining room, and a drawing room were on the ground floor; the bedrooms were on the top floor. Uncle Yanya himself installed a heating system in the basement, where there was also a garage. Around the house and on window sills they grew flowers.

Yanya's wife, Sonya, was well-proportioned and found employment as a model with a large fashion house. She was allowed to wear the clothes she modelled after work as well. Later, assisted by a poet friend, she established the first children's movie-house on the Champs d'Elysée and called it "Cinderella." The children's movie-house enjoyed enormous success. My aunt established contacts with many countries, including the Soviet Union. She participated

in film festivals not only at Cannes and throughout Europe, but even twice in Moscow.

My mother gave birth to my brother Shurik. He was born 20 June 1927 in uncle Grigory Rabinovitch's clinic in Kaunas on Kestutis street. When my parents brought the baby home, all attention was directed at him. At first I felt hurt, but later I also was fond of him. But my brother and I were not destined to live together for very long.

In 1928, when I was nearly eight years old, on passing examinations I was admitted to the third preparatory class of the German secondary school, the Septima, in Kaunas. There were four preparatory and eight high school classes, all in all twelve years of study. Having studied at home with my governess, I was able to skip two classes.

Shortly before the beginning of the school year, my mother took me to the home of our distant relative Rebecca Pavlovna Rosenblum. She had two grown daughters, who were in the upper classes of the same gymnasium. They were Zina and Anya. They lived on the first floor. In the same building there were the Versailles Hotel and the Versailles Restaurant, which also belonged to father's relatives.

As a girl of eight left on my own, I felt myself quite independent: I washed myself, put my room in order, and ate all that was served without any objection - trying to collect all my willpower to appear a grown-up, though sometimes there were dishes which I strongly disliked. In addition to our relatives I was always welcomed in Kaunas at the house of my father's close friends Lyola and Stella Schwartz. Both husband and wife were physicians and I made friends with their younger son, Max. Their elder daughter Lina kept her own company



but liked me very much. With the Schwartz family I felt almost at home.

At the beginning of the school year, I went to the Gymnasium together with the younger daughter of my hostess, since there were a number of busy streets to be crossed, especially the Laisves Alley. After passing the cathedral, we had to turn to Kestutis street and walk along it for a full block to Vytautas Avenue where the gymnasium was located. Soon I made acquaintance with my school-mates and began to socialize with them. On the way to school, we would peep into the shop of Katzenelenbogen where we bought photos of famous movie actors. Later I gathered an entire collection of such photos. I admired Marlene Dietrich and sent her the photos to receive them back with her autograph.

On Saturdays, after school, I returned to Yonava by bus. The coaches were privately owned at that time. A seat in a coach cost five lits (*Lithuanian currency*). Although my parents paid the full price of my ticket, it happened, when there was some additional passenger, that the driver would seat me on somebody's lap in order to make some extra money. I disliked this very much.

I made friends at school with Grazhina Vosiliute and Clara Boyvit. Grazhina lived with her parents and her older sister Birute, who also studied at our school. I often visited them at their home. Grazhina and I brought delicious sandwiches for the midday break, inviting Clara as well. In the canteen, we drank cōcoa or milk.

Clara was German. (*In Lithuania there was a considerable German minority. The local Germans had Lithuanian citizenship but they preserved their German communal life and their culture (e. g. schools*

*and churches). When the Nazis came to power in Germany, they defined this type of Germans living in the Diaspora as "Volksdeutsche". The Volksdeutsche supported the Nazis and their interests before the Second World War and all the more so after the occupation.)* She lived on Maironis Street in a basement flat. Her father was disabled; he plaited reeds from which he made beautiful furniture. Since it was a German gymnasium, the children of indigent Germans had the right to study without paying tuition fees. The Lithuanians and children of other nationalities had to pay 800 lits for the school year. Excellent teachers lectured at the gymnasium; they knew their subjects perfectly. The pupils were drilled to be disciplined, orderly, and diligent; sports were also important.

But in 1933 the pupils of non-German origin - Lithuanians, Russians, and Jews suddenly felt that not only the teachers but also our German classmates and pupils of the higher grades started putting on airs, pretending to be more clever and superior than we were, as if they surpassed us in everything. They preferred not to rub shoulders with us, to shun us. They appeared to be masters of the situation. This phenomenon was especially strong in the higher grades.

That summer our parents transferred us to other Kaunas schools for the next school year. Grazhina moved to the Saules School situated on the Zhaliakalnis. Others joined the Aushros, a Jesuit school, the Russians - the Russian school, and a section of the Jewish children moved to Yiddish and Hebrew schools. There were in Kaunas one yeshiva, about four Hebrew schools and one Yiddish school. Parents whose children did not know Hebrew undertook the initiative to establish a new Jewish school with Lithuanian as the language of instruction. In that school, pupils of all grades could

initially answer their lessons in German as well, while English continued to be employed in accordance with the curriculum of the German gymnasium, whereas the teaching of Lithuanian was intensified - five lessons weekly.

My parents decided to bring me home and send me to the Yonava Secondary School. During the summer, I studied Lithuanian assiduously, because I would have to answer all lessons in that language. At first it was very difficult for me, because we spoke Russian at home and, until 1933, German at school. The teacher of natural science J. Vaitchiunas also taught German. I was thus able to answer my natural science lessons in German sometimes. He did not object, and gave me the marks I deserved.

The Lithuanian language was taught by the school-mistress Julia Zhukauskaitė. She was very strict and did not give me an easy time. I "earned" many very low grades from her, but in the end that was also useful. I remain eternally grateful to her for her strictness. Thanks only to her, I mastered the Lithuanian language perfectly.

Many years later, after the war, I unexpectedly met her on a Vilnius street. She recognized me. J. Zhukauskaitė was already a lecturer at the Vilnius University and a well known authority on the Lithuanian language. I lovingly thanked her for the Lithuanian she taught me.

During those times, I was the only Jewess at the Yonava Secondary School. One day, when entering the classroom, I saw an inscription on the blackboard: "It is very good that at least two Jews were finished off in Yonava." I asked what was the meaning of it. It was explained to me, that that night somebody had broken into a Jewish home, robbed it, and murdered

its owners with great cruelty. Yonava was a small town, four synagogues and one church. The population consisted mostly of Jewish shopkeepers, furniture makers, caterers and wagoners, saddlers and tradesmen generally. For the rest of the day I sat quietly in class. After I returned home that day, I declared that in the spring, after leaving the secondary school, I would never again attend a Lithuanian gymnasium. I would rather learn sewing from Pani Vera, a dressmaker, who did all the sewing at our home.

The pupils and some of the teachers did not avoid humiliating expressions, such as “to put a bloody Jew,” which meant “to make an ink-blot”. I was then thirteen! As a pupil of the third grade, I made friends with a pupil of the fourth grade a certain Vaclovas Yarockas. He was an excellent student and had a beautiful voice: he sang in the school choir. To school he rode on a bicycle, he lived not far from the railway station, where his father worked. When I went out for a walk with my little brother, Vaclovas offered to take him for a bicycle ride. Shurik was very happy to take a seat just behind the bicycle’s handlebars. Vaclovas offered to teach me as well, but I did not have the courage to ride a boy’s bike. Later, when I received a girls’ bicycle, I sometimes rode together with Vaclovas. The next year, after I passed to the fourth grade, Vaclovas was studying already at the Kaunas Technical High School and went to the lectures every day by train. But our friendship continued.

Almost every day when he returned home he made efforts to see me. We strolled together along the streets of Yonava, went to movies, sometimes together with my brother. We spoke Lithuanian, which improved considerably my fluency in that language. I felt that he was not indifferent to me, but I was not romantically

involved with him. I did appreciate his sensitivity and intelligence. Besides, he was a real friend.

Now, studying at Yonava, I made closer acquaintance with the young people of the small town. Opposite to us, close to the church, the ground floor of a white, two-storeyed brick house, was a drugstore. It belonged to two pharmacists, the Lithuanian Nasvytis and the Jewish Kagan. Each of the pharmacists had four children. The adults and the children socialized with each other. The Nasvytis's son Niutis was a bit older than me. Once Mrs. Nasvytis joked with my mother, "Surely, Vera, you wouldn't agree to marry your Jeanne to a non-Jew? Our children should marry each other." On Sundays, the daughters of Nasvytis Biruté and Alduté used to ride on horseback and come into town to attend mass. Biruté had musical talent; my mother taught her to play the piano.

The Jewish pharmacists, the Kagans, were also close friends of my parents, and their children, especially the youngest Anya, were my playmates. Although Anya was older than me, I was taller. I recall that once during vacation, when my parents went to a Kaunas theatre, I decided to play a joke. I disguised myself as a man - putting on my father's green suit, pulled on a hat, took Anya's arm, and we both set out for town. It became dark. Nobody recognized me, and Anya posed as if a lad from Kaunas had come to visit her. Afterwards I returned the suit to its place, and my parents did not notice anything.

How much fun that time was for me, how joyful it was to be alive!

Many Jews lived in Yonava: one of the sawmills belonged to the Segalovskis, another one to the Vulfovitchs; the Bursteins were lumber dealers; the Landsmans owned a furniture factory; the Zaks owned

a fancy goods shop; the Kapulskis, Kapers, and Zupovitchs traded in textiles; the Goldschmits in foodstuffs; Grinevitch in manufactured goods; the Pagirskis in iron; the Buz's in spirits. Liebermann and Shapira owned bakeries. There were also tailors: Sinior, a gentlemen's tailor and the two Kanovich brothers - one a lady's and the other a gentlemen's tailor. T. Joffe owned a movie-house, and Meyer owned a hotel. Glass, Upnitsky, Bankvetcher, and others worked at a bank. In Yonava there were four Synagogues, where the local Jews had permanent seats, and one Rabbi between them, though each had its own shames. On Fridays, towards evening, a pious Jew walked along the streets, beating clappers and loudly inviting everybody to the Synagogue: "In shul arain!" (To the prayer house). All shopkeepers hurried to close up their business until Saturday evening, and everyone made preparations for the evening prayer. Through the windows, one could see tables covered with snow-white tablecloths. On the table were two candle-sticks and a loaf of white watted bread covered with a napkin.

A black-bearded water supplier Yossia lived in Yonava, and he brought us water for a certain remuneration. He had a daughter younger than I; we passed clothes which became too small for me on to her. Two madmen, "meshugoyim," and a "meshugene" woman, Frada, were in Yonava. All the Jews endeavoured to help them in some way, to feed them and so forth.

The Jews did not sell on Saturdays, but if a customer urgently needed something, he was let into the shop, took the necessary goods by himself, and entered their cost on his account. Accounts were settled once a week, and no one ever cheated. My father directed the hospital in Yonava. There was also



*Our water carrier Yossya in Yonava in 1935*

a fire brigade led by the hospital attendant Adashkes in Yonava. What was not there in our Yonava! Here lived Russian Orthodox believers who often fought with each other on Sundays after drinking-bouts; father's aid was then required. There were not many Lithuanians - just the principal of the Secondary School, Kartanas, teachers, and Post Office workers. Most of the Poles were carpenters. The Yonava craftsmen produced beautiful furniture. Many people worked at the match-factory "Uran" built by the Swedes. Farmers, mostly Lithuanians and Poles, from surrounding villages came to the market on Wednesdays.

After graduating from Yonava Secondary School, I entered the Kaunas private Jewish Gymnasium, where Lithuanian was the language of instruction, but

thanks to the strict teacher I had, was no longer a problem. Many of my friends had studied there for two years already. German and English were taught there as in the German Gymnasium, and all the other lessons were conducted in Lithuanian. The Gymnasium was situated on Maironis Street, behind the German bookshop. My closest classmates were Vera Fraenkel, Nina Finkelstein, Buma Rosen, Max Schwartz, Ronia Feigelovich, Vava Rosenblum, Pavlik and Kobik Beilinson and Frosia Bak.

During my first school year, as a pupil of the fifth grade, I went to Kaunas every day by train just like Vaclovas; I paid only half fare, because I bought students' tickets. Very often I went together with Vaclovas in order to enjoy his good company.

For the next school year, my parents rented me a room at Mrs. Abramsky on Donelaitis Street, next to the "House of the Nuncio". She and her unmarried son Senya occupied a three room flat. Senya was twenty years older than me. Mrs. Abramsky's daughter had emigrated to Palestine, and I lived in her room. I took my lunch at the Asta dining rooms, close to the Central Post Office; breakfast and supper I ate at home.

My parents were very strict; they gave me only two lits a week for minor expenses. This amount had to suffice for exercise books, pencils, movies, and other trifles. I never received any money from my aunts Sonya and Rosa, although I visited them often. As time passed, these two lits did not satisfy me. They sufficed for only one movie a week, or to buy several photographs of movie-stars, which I continued to collect, or to have several scoops of wonderful Italian ice-cream, which it was difficult for me to give up. I began thinking about how to increase my budget. My mother did not give me money to pay for lunch, as



she bought me coupons at the Asta dining rooms, for which I could choose servings according to my taste. I tried to save these coupons so that some could be left over for the next week. The next week, when my mother would come to Kaunas, she would sometimes send me to buy coupons for a certain amount. Then I would quietly buy only as many as were lacking and keep the rest of the money for myself. In that way, I could go to movies more often or buy something, but my stomach was quite empty. When I returned home for weekends, my voracious appetite astonished my mother, but she never came to know the cause.

In addition to my regular studies, my parents wanted me to learn English. Twice a week I went to Miss Peel with whom I read Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Grey*. Thanks to her I could already read English authors in the original. I am grateful to my mother for that. My knowledge of languages stood me in good stead more than once during my lifetime.

I was the only non-Kaunasite in my class. All the picnics, birthday celebrations, contests, and school parties took place on the weekends, but I always had to return home. I could not participate in contests, could not dance to my heart's content, or socialize with my classmates.

About eight or nine o'clock in the evening on weekdays father or mother often telephoned; they asked what marks I earned, whether I had already done my homework, and wished me good night. The call was the moment I waited for. At these hours, my group of friends would go out for a walk along the Laisves Alley or gather at someone's house. Seeing a light in my window, they whistled, and I opened the window and told them, that after my parents' call, I could quietly go out.



*Father with both children in 1936*

One evening, after I returned at about ten or eleven o'clock, I found Mrs. Abramsky awake and playing solitaire. She told me that my parents called again and asked me to call them back as soon as I came home. I was caught. I had to call home at once. It would be better not to tell what I heard that night over the telephone. The next morning at the gymnasium I told my friends what had happened the night before. From our lessons in physics we had already learned the design of a telephone. We decided that next time we planned to go somewhere, we would remove the receiver's membrane and insert it again after our return. My hostess later complained that the telephone operated well during the day, but that it was often impossible to talk by telephone in the evening. Of course, I never disclosed my part in the phone's malfunction. Once Mrs. Abramsky even called a repairman, but when he checked the telephone, he found nothing wrong.

The 31st of December was my mother's birthday.

At home, therefore, we had a double festival – a birthday celebration and a New Year’s Eve party as well. About eight-thirty PM, around thirty guests would arrive: father’s relatives, fellow physicians from Kaunas and our pharmacists. Among them was also the actress Sofia Erdi from the Kaunas Jewish Theatre.

A long oak table stood in the dining room, and we placed another table next to it. The table was very beautifully set and decorated with flowers. My father always presented mother with a big bunch of lilacs (mother was fond of lilacs and forget-me-nots). And this every 31st of December in midwinter in Yonava! Mother was an excellent hostess; a housemaid and I assisted her. The medical attendants removed all the furniture from the bedroom, which was no smaller than the dining room, and set up four rectangular small tables borrowed from the hospital. After supper and after we celebrated New Year’s Eve, everyone passed into that room for tea. On the tables, we used to set out all kinds of home made cakes, which I always decorated. After the guests went to tea, we quickly cleared the tables in the dining room, carried one of them away, and pushed the other one aside, preparing the dining room for dancing. In the dining-room were a Telefunken radio-set, a gramophone with many records, and a piano. The guests enjoyed themselves, danced, and, late at night my father accompanied the guests to Meyer’s hotel, where rooms were reserved for them. The relatives spent the night at our house.

Later, already as a teenager, I was bored at such parties. My friends at Kaunas celebrated New Year’s Eve by themselves, without parents, but I always had to stay home because of Mother’s birthday. In general, my education was very strict. All the festivals had to be celebrated only at home in Yonava.



*A group of classmates in 1937, from left to right:  
sitting - Max Schwartz, Verachka Zakov, Ronya  
Feigelovich, Nina Finkelstein; second row - Jeanne  
Ran, Eta Ziv, Kriger; third row - Shura Ozhensky,  
Frosia Bak, Vera Fraenkel*

My school friends decided to organize an outing at the school year's end: to cycle 32 km to Yonava. When I returned home for the weekend, I told my parents, and they offered to arrange this trip on my birthday. And so, on 30 June 1936 all my close friends, with Frosya Bak among them, arrived at our house on bicycles. It was a nice warm. We all went to the Neris to bathe, and an excellent meal awaited us after we returned; it was a "real" birthday party – the adults did not participate in this celebration. For the first time my strict father offered everybody wine, and afterwards he even allowed us to dance.

In Kaunas I attended the Maccabi sports club, where I participated in gymnastics and field athletics. Every year in the winter our sportsmen performed at the State Theatre. This was a very solemn event. We

proudly carried our blue-white banner, the bicycles were decorated in blue-white stripes. On the T-shirts we had a blue Magen David... blue not yet yellow. We, the teenagers, prepared ourselves for this grand occasion, training not only in the gym, but at home as well. For the gymnastic performance, about twenty boys and girls were chosen. I strove to qualify for the first four. The first four included Vera Fraenkel, Nina Finkelstein and me, and in the first row were two girls and two boys. President Antanas Smetona himself arrived to watch the performance, and we were fortunate to participate. In summer the Maccabi organized camps at the seashore. I dreamed of being at least once with my friends at the camp, but my parents never allowed it. I felt bitterly disappointed for many years. This wonderful, placid period of life ended after I left school.

## HOME IN LITHUANIA- SUMMER 1939

I returned home for my summer vacation. My father met me at the Kaunas railway station. We talked incessantly all the way to Yonava. We reached our



*Our family with the dog Lyalka in Yonava*

home about noon. Our devoted doggie Lalia jumped, yelping with joy and tried to lick my face, not letting me pass until I took her into my arms, to greet and pet her. Mother and Shurik could not get over how the dog had not forgotten me after such a long separation. We were all happy to be together again. Our housemaid Veronica was happy to see me again.

After putting my belongings away, I washed myself



*Brother Shurik on our last summer vacation  
in Palanga 1939*

and entered the dining room, where a festive dinner, cooked for my homecoming already awaited us. As soon as I sat down at my usual place and took my napkin wishing bon appetite to everybody, my father asked me, "Have you already washed, dear Jeanne?" I, being astonished by such a strange question, replied, "Of course, father." Then he took me under my arm and led me to the bathroom. There he ordered me to wash my face thoroughly with soap removing the slight film of makeup, which I had started to use. He then asked, where my fancy bag was, removed all the cosmetics, and, after bringing them to his study, stuffed them into his desk drawer. He returned, as if nothing had happened, and we all sat down to have dinner.

Nevertheless, mother convinced my father that, being nineteen, I was already an adult and ready to use a bit of makeup. The next day father returned my cosmetics.

In the summer of 1939, the political situation became so precarious that I did not return to Paris to study after the summer vacation. My parents saw the clouds gathering over Europe and decided not to let me go abroad alone, but they allowed me to go to Kaunas. As I did not want to be dependent on my parents any longer, I enrolled for an eight-month course at 6 Sapiegos Street, where I was trained in shorthand, typing, bookkeeping, and business correspondence. I finished this course with excellent marks and sought to find a job, continuing simultaneously to study.

Regretfully, fate decided otherwise.

I graduated with high marks. My typing speed was high as my fingers were trained on the piano.

Because I spoke several foreign languages, the management of the course offered to place me at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but because I was Jewish, the Ministry refused to employ me. Next they offered me a position with the republic's Board of Statistics. Though the work there was not interesting, I had no choice and decided to try my luck. Unfortunately, the Board of Statistics also courteously refused me employment because of my nationality. All this was happening in Kaunas. In despair I returned to Yonava.

My father was the director of the Yonava hospital until June of 1940. He had practiced medicine in that small city for twenty years. He was called near and far to treat patients, and was admired and respected by them. Father took his fee only from wealthy people - landlords, factory owners and other well-to-do residents of the town. Not only did he treat people of modest means without being paid, he also brought them free medicines, which he received as samples from many European countries as advertisements.