

CHAPTER 1
GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

I will have to go far into the past and take you far across the Atlantic Ocean and the European continent to show you where we came from. I was born in Czernowitz, which was the capital of the province Bukowina at the eastern end of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, which was a very big country, situated in the center of Europe. (See the attached map). To the north was another big country, Germany, also to the north and east the enormous Russia, to the south relatively small countries, Rumania, Serbia, also to the south Italy, and to the west Switzerland. The map shows the situation before the First World War.

As the name said, the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy consisted of two parts, Austria and Hungary. The emperor Franz Josef I. was emperor of Austria and king of Hungary. Both parts had their own parliaments, Austria in Vienna and Hungary in Budapest. It was a conglomerate, consisting of many provinces, and I will give you the names of all of them in German and, where necessary, also in English, starting in the West at the Swiss border, going around, first to the east and then back to the west and then to the south.

The western-most province was Vorarlberg, then came Tyrol, Salzburg, Ober-Oesterreich, Nieder-Oesterreich, then Maehren (Moravia), from where the family Ziegler originally came, Boehmen (Bohemia), Schlesien (Silesia), from where the family Mechner originally came, Galizien (Galicia), Bukowina, where my hometown Czernowitz was the capital (marked on the



GENERAL MAP
EUROPE IN 1914

0 100 200 300
SCALE OF MILES

CZERNOWITZ



The 'Ringplatz' in the centre of the city, with the City Hall



The theatre



The Greek-Oriental Archbishops palace



The railway station

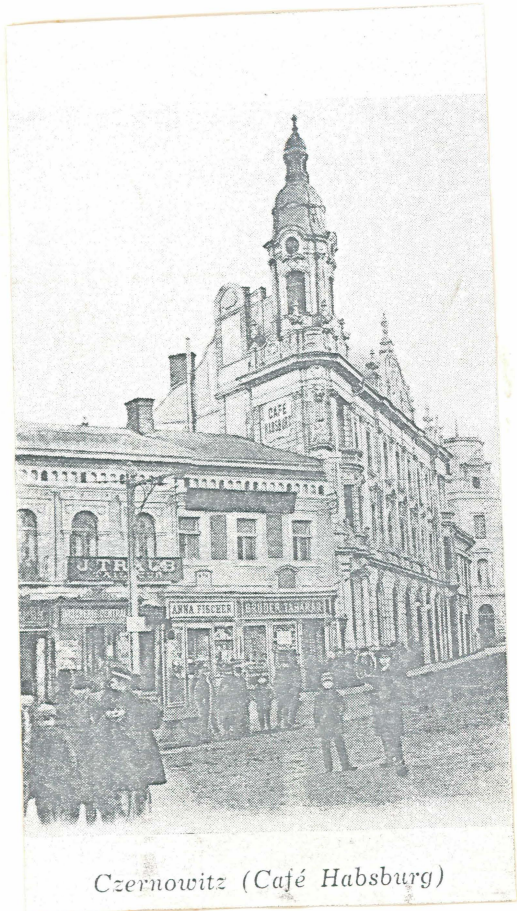


The theatre.



Alt-Czernowitz

Rathaus und Ringplatz (Südseite)



Czernowitz (Café Habsburg)



Czernowitz (Musikvereinsgebäude)

map with XI). This was the eastern-most province, bordering on Russia. We continue now with the other provinces: Hungary, which, as I said, was in a certain way autonomous, then Kroatien (Croatia), Slavonien (Slavonia), Krain (Carniola), Steiermark (Styria). In the south there were more provinces: Kuestenland (Coastland), Dalmatien (Dalmatia), Bosnien (Bosnia), and Herzegowina.

We now go back to my hometown Czernowitz, which, as already told, was the capital of the province Bukowina. This was a relatively small province, bordering in the north on Galicia, in the east on Russia, in the south on Rumania and in the west on Hungary, where the border was formed by the Carpathian Mountains, from which many rivers came down, the Pruth, the Seret, and the Suczawa river, which joined the Danube river in Rumania. Czernowitz, lying on the river Pruth, was a beautiful city of about 130,000 inhabitants.

The population of the Bukowina was mixed. The capital was mostly German, but the rest consisted of Ukrainians, which were generally called Ruthenians, Poles, Hungarians, Rumanians, and quite a lot (about 35%) of Jews. The official language was German. It had a University and was the seat of a Greek-Oriental Archbishop, who resided in an architecturally beautiful palace, with an enormous, well-kept park. It had two railway stations and connecting the two stations was an electric streetcar, which ran through the center of the city.

The Bukowina was governed by a governor called "Stadthalter", who was nominated by and responsible to the emperor. Czerno-

witz and other big cities had a big Jewish population. Jews lived in that area already since the year 1400 and probably even earlier. They came there from the north and west, expelled from Germany, Poland and other countries. They had periods of relative peace, but often interrupted by periods of persecution. Often whole quarters where they lived were put on fire and they had to move to other areas. When Constantinople was taken by the Turks in 1458 it led to the incorporation of Moldavia and Walachia, of which the Bukowina was a part, into the Turkish Empire, and bad times started for the Jews. Things improved somewhat in the year 1775, when the Bukowina was given by the Turks to Austria as a gift after the Russian-Turkish war, in which Austria had supported the Turks. The Bukowina was attached to Galicia.

At that time, Maria Theresia was Empress of Austria, but there was still much suffering and persecution of the Jews. There was gradual improvement under her successors, Emperor Josef II, Leopold II, and Franz I and finally under Emperor Franz Josef I.

I know about the difficult and bad times the Jews had from history books. When I was young, I did not know anything about it. At that time Jews had already for many decades equal rights with others. There were Jews in important positions like judges, professors of the University, doctors etc., even mayors and some were even honored by becoming aristocrats with the title "Ritter von" like the Jewish Mayor of Czernowitz, who was Dr. Salo Ritter von Weisselberger, and there was also a physician, Dr. Ritter von Anhauch, whom I knew, by the way, personally. Some Jews were honored by getting the title "Baron," "Hofrat," "Kaiserlicher Rat," which

meant something like counselor to the emperor.

Many of the details of the history I know from a book, "The History of the Jews in Czernowitz." It tells in detail how the Jews came to that city as refugees, mostly from Poland and Russia, where there were often pogroms and only few could flee and save their lives. In Czernowitz itself there were also pogroms and the Jews had to leave. The Turks did something very special: They took Jewish children away from their parents and educated them in special institutions to become good Turkish soldiers called Janitschars. They took also children from other populations, not only from Jews. This little book, written in German, contains many pictures of buildings which I knew, and it should be preserved as a part of my biography. I will also prepare a very complete family tree which will help to trace the relationship of members of my family and Hedy's family, whose names will appear often in the following pages. Many of the people will be seen in the many photo albums (so far 7) so that the readers can see what they looked like at certain times.