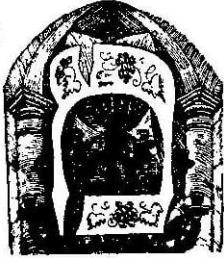


# 21



Miriam did not rest during the whole time since she had come to New York, in the knowledge that her brother Kalman and his daughter Bajla had been left in Germany, in the Feldafing DP camp and, in Warta, there was also her sister's daughter Ajdla, the only daughter of her sister Rywka-Laja, who had perished.

To her great sorrow, she already knew that her elderly mother Ruchla-Bajla, whom she had left behind in Warta when she fled, had already died before the deportation to Treblinka had begun. Her mother, peace be upon her, had been brought to a Jewish burial! Miriam had even managed to obtain a photograph of her mother's funeral, in which her family is seen, accompanying their mother to her eternal repose.

In the photograph, she saw how her family were wearing the yellow Stars of David, which Hitler's men ordered that all the Jews in Poland to wear on their garments. Her heart hurt her, looking at the picture. Yet the fate of her sister Rywka-Laja and her children was worse - they had all perished. The sole survivor was Ajdla, Rywka-Laja's daughter. By now, she would already be a grown-up girl of eighteen. It did her good to think that she had already managed, with the aid of the Jewish Labour Committee, to bring her brother Morris and his family from Paris to New York. But now she had to rescue Ajdla from Poland, while there was still a possibility!

At every meeting with Josef, she spoke to him with tears in her eyes. She pleaded for him to assist her bring over Ajdla. She would give away every grosz she had saved, if only to bring Ajdla here. Afterwards, it would also be necessary to bring over her brother Kalman with his daughter Bajla, but she felt it was her obligation to first save Ajdla, the lone orphan.

Josef thought up a plan. They needed to find a former Jewish soldier, who would be willing to marry Ajdla, in order to then bring her here as his lawfully wedded wife. Josef would offer the young man a "gentlemen's agreement" - he would be under no obligations and the marriage would be followed by a divorce. What would people not do in order to rescue the few remaining survivors from Hitler's hell?

Josef was reminded of Mojsze, who had been brought here, together with other refugees by the Jewish Labour Committee. Mojsze was the son of the deceased Bundist activist Jerachmiel. Jerachmiel had once been a councillor, in Poland, in the town of Nowy Dwór. Mojsze would surely not have the heart to refuse such a thing - after all, he was a survivor himself. He was the only one who could do it. He had served in the American army and could travel to Europe at the drop of a hat, marry Ajdla and bring her here as his wife. Later, they would see [what would happen].

Josef telephoned Mojsze, met with him and sat an entire evening with him, talking and appealing to him. They would provide him with everything - money and aeroplane tickets there and back.

“Mojsze”, Josef said to him, “you were educated under the influence of the Bund - you have to display your humanity, your sense of aiding a person in need of assistance! You are the only one whom we can entrust with such a mission”.

“Give me a couple of days to think it over. I will let you know. You will not need to wait long - I assure you”, was Mojsze’s response.

“Think it over, Mojsze. That’s good. I hope you will not disappoint me”, Josef appealed to him.

“I did the same thing for three souls, when the time demanded it. I did it lovingly. They were complete strangers and became my children in my passport, just to save them from the Soviet lackeys – the ‘redeemers’ of mankind.”

A couple of days later, Mojsze came to Josef’s room and exclaimed smilingly, “Hello<sup>1</sup>, Josef, I am here! And as you see, I am ready to perform my duty to Ajdla”.

All the formalities and preparations were made. Ajdla left Poland. She arrived safely in Stockholm, Sweden. Three days later, Mojsze already met her somewhere in the lobby of a hotel. Ajdla had readied herself for the rendezvous.

The marriage took place at the American embassy in Stockholm. A telegram arrived. Miriam gleefully read the lines, “On 10<sup>th</sup> August, 9:00 a.m., we both arrive in La Guardia Airport, New York. Auntie Miriam, let Uncle Nuchem wait for us [there]. Let Josef know, too. Maybe he will also find time to wait for us when the aeroplane arrives”.

Miriam, Nuchem and Josef stood in the airport terminal, by the huge windows, from quite early in the morning, looking out for the aeroplane that was to bring the couple to American soil.

Ajdla and Mojsze disembarked from the plane smiling and lively. After kissing them, the guests were taken to Uncle Nuchem’s house, where a tasty meal was served.

After the meal, Josef once again reminded Mojsze that the “gentlemen’s agreement” remained as had been settled, at which point Ajdla stood up, took the wedding ring off her finger and returned it to Mojsze, giving him a kiss. Everyone shook Mojsze’s hand and thanked him heartily for his mission.

The “couple”, however, continued meeting as good friends. Mojsze took Ajdla and showed her New York, and he would often spend time with her. Ajdla lived with her aunt Miriam.

These two orphans, both victims of Nazism, became intensely fond of each other, and the two were happily wed [in real life].

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: In English in the original.]

Uncle Nuchem put out a considerable sum of money and held his niece Ajdla's wedding at one of the finest hotels in town, [which was] very impressive, in accordance with the American custom. Representatives of the Jewish Labour Committee - the father and saviour of all the refugees and orphaned children - were also invited to the wedding.

Miriam became the mother of the young, newlywed couple and helped them get settled. Ajdla and Mojsze became a part of her life. And when, a year later, Ajdla happily gave birth to a little boy, Miriam felt like a grandmother, as if the newborn child were her grandson.

