

OUT OF THE SHADOW

ROSE COHEN



Rose Gollup Cohen, formal portrait, Underwood & Underwood studio, New York City, date uncertain.

OUT OF THE SHADOW

A RUSSIAN JEWISH GIRLHOOD
ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

BY
ROSE COHEN



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THOMAS DUBLIN

ILLUSTRATED BY
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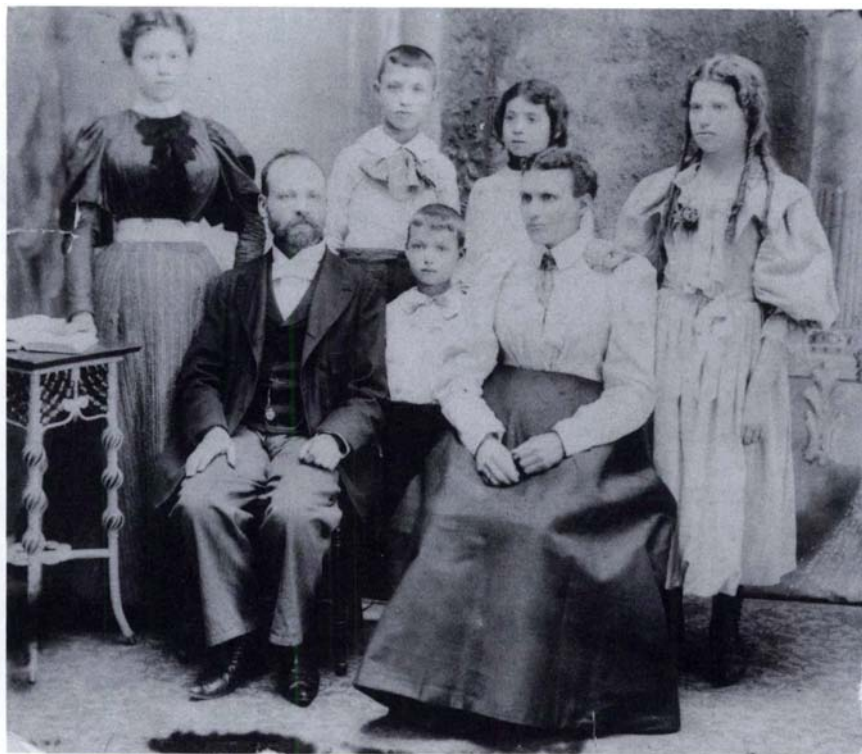
**TO
LEONORA O'REILLY**



Jacob Adler in "King Lear."

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The Gollup family, New York City, ca. 1897. Front row: (from left) Abraham, George, Annie. Back row: Rose, Eugene, Rebecca, Sarah

Introduction to the 1995 Edition

"This is the story of a Russian Jewish immigrant girl who came to this country at the age of 12, and who, after years of hard work, privation, and perplexity, found a settled life. . . . It leads to no conclusion of arresting prosperity. It has in it few 'high lights' of any kind. It is just such a record as may be true of thousands of immigrant girls. Therein its greatest value lies." So wrote one reviewer, describing *Out of the Shadow*, the 1918 autobiography of an otherwise unknown Russian Jewish immigrant, Rose Gollup Cohen. Encouraged by a night-class instructor, Cohen wrote a personal memoir that spoke to the broader experience of immigrants on New York's Lower East Side in the 1890s and early 1900s. The publication of *Out of the Shadow* thrust her briefly onto the contemporary literary scene. But her life and writing were both cut short, and her early death in 1925, when she was only forty-five, returned her to obscurity.²

More than seventy-five years after its original publication, *Out of the Shadow* has enduring value for readers. Cohen offers vivid recollections of Eastern European *shtetl* life, of her illegal exodus from Russia and her transatlantic voyage, of tenement life and sweatshop work in New York City, and of the influence of settlement-house work on the Lower East Side. She is a perceptive observer with an ability to make her experiences come alive for readers. Unlike the work of more celebrated immigrant writers, such as Mary Antin and Morris Raphael Cohen, hers is not a self-conscious success story tracing the Americanization of an immigrant Jew.³ She offers a story of everyday events in the life of the Lower East Side

unaffected by myth. We see the exploitation of the sweatshop and the anti-Semitism of city streets with a clarity that is rare in immigrant autobiography.

Out of the Shadow speaks to experiences that were shared widely in the decades before the outbreak of World War I. Two million Russian and East European Jews emigrated to the United States between 1880 and 1914. Roughly a third of the Jewish population residing in western Russia and the Polish and Baltic provinces ruled by the tsar fled their homelands in the face of mounting religious persecution and economic restrictions. Along with the Irish famine emigration of the mid-nineteenth century, this population movement was one of the great migrations of modern times.⁴

Most Russian and East European Jews in the period of mass emigration were confined to residence within an area known as the Pale of Settlement, which stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. Within that area, Jews lived in larger cities, such as Vilna and Kovno, as well as smaller Jewish villages, called *shtetlekh* or *shtetls*. Not permitted to own land, Jews clustered in artisan trades, garment work, and trading. Beginning in the 1880s, growing economic disabilities and attacks on Jewish communities made life increasingly unbearable for the Jewish minority. The result was a mass exodus, despite restrictive laws forbidding emigration.

By 1920 fully 45 percent of Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the United States resided in New York City, primarily on the Lower East Side. In 1910, this area of scarcely more than half a square mile provided homes for over 540,000 people. The population density of the Lower East Side exceeded 700 per acre, making it the most crowded neighborhood in the city, perhaps in the world. Its foreign and exotic atmosphere struck one observer, who wrote:

"The vast east side is scarcely New York. It is Europe,—with a touch of Asia." On the streets the visitor found "Yiddish signs, Yiddish newspapers, Yiddish beards and wigs."⁵

Historians have written vividly of the experience of Eastern European and Russian Jewish immigrants. From Moses Rischin's classic account *The Promised City* (1962), to Irving Howe's cultural history *The World of Our Fathers* (1976), to Susan Glenn's exploration of the female working-class Jewish experience in *Daughters of the Shtetl* (1990), a substantial body of research on the immigrant generation before World War I has emerged.⁶ All these works have relied heavily on Yiddish and English-language memoirs and reminiscences, but few of these primary sources are accessible to a general audience today.⁷ The publication of this volume is intended to address that need and open for contemporary readers a window onto shtetl life in the Pale of Settlement, the migration experience, and immigrant life on the Lower East Side. Rose Cohen offers rich views of one family's experiences during the 1890s in what are today Belarus and New York City.

Although clearly the work of an author who had only recently mastered the English language, *Out of the Shadow* is written with a strength that brings alive the characters and events it portrays. The autobiography is particularly useful because Cohen wrote it while she was still in her thirties and relatively close to the time period her narrative covered. Unlike most immigrant autobiographies, her story is not the product of assimilation and old age, but represents the first effort of a relatively young woman struggling to make a place for herself in a new world.

As valuable as the autobiography is, however, it proves frustrating to the historian trying to trace Cohen's life. She does not indicate her birthplace or date of birth; she does

not name her mother, husband, or daughter, or indicate the dates of her marriage or her daughter's birth. Fortunately, additional sources offer glimpses of her life and permit us to place her autobiography within that broader context.⁸

Born Rahel Gollup on April 4, 1880, the first child in her family, Cohen grew up in a small village in western Russia, in present-day Belarus. Her father was a tailor and a pious Orthodox Jew, whose motivations for emigrating must have been much like those of thousands of others in the Pale of Settlement. As was common in Russian Jewish families, Rahel Gollup's father migrated first, leaving his family behind. Lacking proper papers, he was arrested and had to escape from custody before crossing into Germany and securing steamship passage to the United States in 1890. There he worked and got a foothold for himself in New York City, and after a year and a half sent two pre-paid steamship tickets to his family. In *Out of the Shadow*, Cohen describes the 1892 emigration of herself and her unmarried aunt, Masha. A year later, her mother, two brothers, and two sisters joined the rest of the family.

The autobiography describes in particular detail Cohen's work in garment sweatshops on the Lower East Side. She began in the shop where her father worked, but soon graduated to work on her own, stitching sleeve linings for men's coats. She recounts union organizing among the men of her shop, her own attendance at a mass union meeting, and finally joining the union herself. After the arrival of her mother and other siblings, her story continues with accounts of a brief stint as a domestic servant, her rejection of a prospective suitor, and increasing health problems. During one illness, she was visited by the noted settlement worker Lillian Wald, and Cohen soon discovered the world of the Nurses' Settlement on Henry Street. Through the settlement

she was referred for treatment to the uptown Presbyterian Hospital, and there met wealthy non-Jews who sponsored summer outings for children of the Lower East Side. She worked during successive summers at a Connecticut retreat established for immigrant children and, like others, found herself torn between the world of her family in the immigrant ghetto and the broader American culture beyond its bounds.

The narrative trails off after the 1890s, but other sources permit a partial reconstruction of Cohen's later life. In 1897 Lillian Wald referred Rose Gollup to a cooperative shirtwaist shop under the direction of Leonora O'Reilly, later a board member of the national Women's Trade Union League. That work proved short-lived, but when O'Reilly began teaching at the Manhattan Trade School for girls in 1902, she recruited Rose as her assistant.

In 1900 Rose still lived with her parents, Abraham and Annie, at 332 Cherry Street. Her father continued to work as a tailor. Rose (called Rosie in the census) was 19, and she and her 17-year-old sister, Sarah, were both employed as tailloresses. Three younger siblings, Michael, Becca, and George, attended school while the youngest, Bertham, was not quite one. A 20-year-old boarder lived with the family.⁹ With three family members working and income from a boarder, the family may have been able to save in this period, for in 1902 Abraham was operating a grocery on 1st Street.

Improving family economics may have led the Gollup family to thoughts of marriage for their eldest daughter and *Out of the Shadow* provides a fascinating account of Rose's courtship by a young grocer. Although Rose rejected the suitor, she eventually married Joseph Cohen and, upon the birth of her daughter, stopped working. She continued her education after her marriage and slowly overcame her self-consciousness about the English language. Attending classes at Bread-

winners' College sponsored by the Educational Alliance and also at the Rand School, she came under the influence of Joseph Gollomb, a Russian Jewish immigrant who later wrote his own autobiographical novel, *Unquiet*. In a 1922 self-portrait she expressed gratitude to those who had helped on her journey to becoming a writer: "I owe much of what I know of writing to all my teachers, from the blue-eyed girl in the Thomas Davidson School long ago, who explained a sentence to me, to my present teachers."¹⁰

In addition to her autobiography, Cohen wrote at least five short pieces published in New York literary magazines between 1918 and 1922. In an autobiographical account addressed "To the Friends of 'Out of the Shadow,'" she summed up her motivation for writing: she sought to communicate her origins "among the Russian peasants," her recent past "among the Jews of Cherry Street," and her present life "among the Americans." Her autobiography captures that cultural journey with striking clarity.¹¹

Her writing was received enthusiastically by contemporaries. A brief review of her book in *The Outlook* described it as an "autobiography that reads like a novel. How a Russian emigrant girl could write such a story as this is one of the mysteries of the thing we call genius." *The New York Times* offered a very positive review, noting: "The book is written simply and with sincerity." Lillian Wald, who had known Cohen for some time, wrote perhaps the most glowing review: "The story is told wonderfully well and cannot fail to interest deeply a good many different kinds of readers. I venture to predict that it will fascinate, but also prick and prod, and that it will be accepted as a social document transcending in value many volumes that have been brought forth by academically trained searchers for data on the conditions that the writer has experienced." The book appeared in two

European editions, translated into French and Russian.¹² Cohen's short story, "Natalka's Portion," was reprinted at least six times, including in the prestigious *Best Short Stories of 1922*.¹³

All this acclaim must have made quite an impression on the immigrant author, and Cohen began to travel in more exalted circles. In the summers of 1923 and 1924 she resided at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. After a day's writing in her studio, Cohen would join other resident writers, composers, and artists for dinner and evening activities. There she met and enjoyed the company of the American impressionist painter Lilla Cabot Perry and the poet Edwin Arlington Robinson, both of whom she kept in touch with after her time at the Colony. She probably also met the philosopher Morris Raphael Cohen and the play-wright Thornton Wilder, also residents at the Colony in 1924.¹⁴

Yet perhaps the attention intimidated Cohen as much as it encouraged her. After her autobiographical sketch appeared in 1922, she published no more. A few scant clues offer hints as to what may have happened, but we cannot tell the story of Cohen's last years with any certainty. The *New York Times* of September 17, 1922, reported a suicide attempt by a "Rose Cohen, 40, of 25 Decatur Avenue, Brooklyn," who jumped into the East River from a landing at the New York Yacht Club.

Anzia Yeziarska, another leading Russian Jewish writer, embroidered this account into a 1927 short story, "Wild Winter Love."¹⁵ It depicts an immigrant woman driven by the need to write her life's story and alienated from her tailor husband in the process. Despite her struggles with the demands of a young daughter and domestic life, the protagonist, Ruth Raefsky, writes her book, *Out of the Ghetto*, and gains a measure of fame. Her success further distances her

from her husband and ultimately leads her to move out on her own. After a brief, but ill-fated love affair with an older, married Gentile, the protagonist commits suicide. How much of Yeziarska's story is fact and how much fiction we will never know.

Personal communication with several surviving children of Rose Gollup Cohen's younger siblings suggests that family members did not talk about Rose. One niece of Rose Cohen indicated that her mother had told her that Rose committed suicide, but others in the family did not recall that story. At this point we can say that Cohen's untimely death may have been a suicide, though we cannot be certain.

Although we are ultimately frustrated in reconstructing Cohen's personal life, her autobiography still portrays important aspects of Jewish immigrant life. Three of these elements deserve highlighting: the poverty and insecurity of Jewish families and the importance of wage earning by all family members; the cultural insularity of Jews; and the existence of influences that eroded this insularity and contributed over time to the assimilation of Jews into broader American culture.

As a newcomer, or "greenhorn," in the Lower East Side, Rahel Gollup was amazed at the evident wealth around her. At the same time, she was struck by her own poverty and the way work dominated her father's life. She pressed him one evening when he came home late from a day of stitching: "Father, does everybody in America live like this? Go to work early, come home late, eat and go to sleep? And the next day again work, eat, and sleep?"¹⁶ But it was not long before Rahel joined her father in the tenement sweatshop stitching men's coats, often working the same long hours he did.

When her mother, brothers, and sisters arrived, the family moved into its own apartment. Father and daughter supported the family at first, but with the depression of 1893

work dwindled and the family had to take in boarders to supplement declining wages. Soon both daughter and father had been laid off. With no garment work in sight, Rahel's younger sister—then only eleven—began doing odd jobs around the neighborhood and Rahel took a position as a servant for a nearby family. Feeling the oppressiveness of their demands on her every waking moment, she soon left that job and found work once again in a garment shop. The nation recovered from the depression, but one senses that its hardships were etched deeply into the memories of members of the Gollup family.

Although family economic needs dominate much of the narrative in Cohen's autobiography, the restrictiveness of life on the Lower East Side resulted from more than economics. From the assaults on Jewish passersby on election night to the harassment of Jewish peddlers by saloon-goers on Cherry Street, anti-Semitism was very much in evidence, and Jews learned to stay among their own and to avoid strangers. The existence of Christian missionaries—some of them Jews who had converted—lent an additional force to the admonitions to stay within the boundaries of one's own kind. In this setting Rahel Gollup had very little contact beyond her family and her shopmates. She generalized upon her own experience, writing "the child that was put into the shop remained in the old environment with the old people, held back by the old traditions, held back by illiteracy." She wrote of Lower East Side life, "On the whole we were still in our old village in Russia."¹⁷

Had Rahel married the young man her parents had selected for her or had she simply remained healthy, this restricted Russian Jewish world might have been her lifetime lot. Her health broke down, though, under the pressure of her garment work, bringing her to the attention of settlement

workers and opening up a world beyond. It was in an uptown Protestant hospital that she heard a very different English from the “Yiddish English” she had learned and began to glimpse a lifestyle very different from that of the Russian shtetl or the Lower East Side. Increasingly, the world of the social settlement entered Rahel’s life. She struggled with Shakespeare in English, she checked out books from the free library at the Educational Alliance, and she grew distant from the Yiddish world of her parents in the process. Summer trips to a rural retreat in Connecticut operated by the Henry Street Settlement reinforced this distance.¹⁸

In her autobiography, Cohen offers an account of her “making herself for a person,” in the words of Anzia Yeziarska.¹⁹ Cohen rejected the suitor her parents tried to arrange for her; as time passed she worked less and less to help support her family and focused her energies increasingly on her own development. But Cohen does not complete the story of her own individual growth. Her focus in the last section of the book again is on her family, not on herself, as she describes her father opening a store and her brother completing high school and entering Columbia University.²⁰ One really has no sense of where she herself has arrived as the story ends. She writes as an individual, precariously balanced between the old world and the new, not fully rooted in either culture, ambivalent about her life, and unable to wholeheartedly grasp her future. She has come “Out of the Shadow,” but it is clear that she has not fully entered into the light.

In the end, Cohen’s legacy is the autobiography she has written: a story of the struggle of her own life, whose outcome was still in doubt as she wrote. In the subsequent silencing of her author’s voice, in the possible suicide attempt, and in the uncertainty surrounding her death, we sense the conflict and lack of clear resolution in one immi-

grant's life. *Out of the Shadow* is very much a reflection of Rose Gollup Cohen's life. In both the strength of its expression and the uncertainty of its conclusion, it speaks to us today as it did to readers when it first appeared.

For helpful research assistance, I thank my Binghamton students Eric Contreras, Melissa Doak, Laura Free, Soo Youn Kim, Michelle Kuhl, and Ivy Wong. My thanks also to Susan Glenn, Alice Kessler-Harris, Nick Salvatore, and Kathryn Kish Sklar for critical readings of earlier drafts of this introduction. This essay began as a biographical sketch for the forthcoming *American National Biography* (Oxford University Press). I acknowledge the permission of the American Council of Learned Societies to utilize portions of that sketch here.

THOMAS DUBLIN

Brackney, Pennsylvania

NOTES

1. *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1918, sec. VII, p. 7. The original edition of the book is Rose Cohen, *Out of the Shadow* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918).

2. There is no obituary in the *New York Times* and apparently no death record in New York City's Municipal Archives. The only source that permits us to date Cohen's death is a notation on her rolodex record at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N.H. For Cohen's birth, see Edward J. O'Brien, ed., *The Best Short Stories of 1922 and the Yearbook of the American Short Story* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1923), p. 309.

3. Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (1912; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Morris Raphael Cohen, *A Dreamer's Journey* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949).

4. For an overview of Russian Jewish immigration to the United States, see Arthur A. Goren, "Jews," in Stephan Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 579-88.

5. Goren, "Jews," p. 581; Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (1962; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 79, 93. Quotes are from Bernardine Kielty, *The Sidewalks of New York* (New York: Little Leather Library, 1923), pp. 67, 72.

6. Rischin, *The Promised City*; Irving Howe, *The World of Our Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976); Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). I thank Susan Glenn for introducing me to *Out of the Shadow* and for help in placing the work in a broader perspective.

7. Of the vast memoir literature, particularly useful for comparison with *Out of the Shadow* are Antin, *Promised Land*; Mary Antin, *From Plotzk to Boston* (1899; rpt. New York: Markus Wiener, 1986); Cohen, *Dreamer's Journey*; Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, 2 vols. (1931; rpt. New York: Dover, 1970); and Elizabeth Hasanovitz, *One of Them: Chapters from a Passionate Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918).

8. Rose Gollup Cohen, "To the Friends of 'Out of the Shadow,'" *Bookman* 55 (Mar. 1922): 36-40; O'Brien, ed., *Best Short Stories of 1922*, p. 309; U.S. Federal Manuscript Census of Population (1900), National Archives, microfilm T623, reel 1084, enumeration district 82, sheet 9, line 10. Likely links to Abraham Gollup, Rose's father, were found in New York City directories for 1895-96, 1898-1907, and 1915-16. Abraham Gollup worked as a tailor, ran a grocery store, and returned to work as a machine operator, occupations confirmed in *Out of the Shadow*. For a surviving Rose Cohen letter, see the Perry Family Papers, Colby College Library, Waterville, Maine.

9. U.S. Federal Manuscript Census of Population (1900), National Archives, microfilm T623, reel 1084, enumeration district 82, sheet 9, line 10. The family surname in the census is "Gulob," but there can be no doubt that this is Rose Gollup and her family.

10. Rose Gollup Cohen, "To the Friends of 'Out of the Shadow,'" p. 40.

For more on Breadwinners' College, see Adam Bellow, *The Educational Alliance: A Centennial Celebration* (New York: Educational Alliance, 1990), pp. 56-64. See also Joseph Gollomb, *Unquiet* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1935).

11. Rose Gollup Cohen, "To the Friends of 'Out of the Shadow,'" p. 40. Her other writings include: "My Childhood Days in Russia," *Bookman* 47 (Aug. 1918): 591-608; "The Books I Knew as a Child," *Bookman* 49 (Mar. 1919): 15-19; "Sifted Earth: A Story," *The Touchstone* 7 (July 1920): 255-60; and "Natalka's Portion," *Current Opinion* 72 (May 1922): 620-28 (originally published in *Pictorial Review*, Feb. 1922).

12. *The Outlook* (Nov. 6, 1918): 382; *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1918, sec. VII, p. 7; *Bookman* 48 (Nov. 1918): 385. The French edition was Rose Cohen, *A travers la nuit*, 3d ed. (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1924), translated by Sophie Godet. The preface to the French edition was a translation of Cohen's autobiographical sketch, "To the Friends of 'Out of the Shadow.'" The Russian translation of the autobiography was *Skvoz' Noch'*, translated by N. Ia. Khozina, under the editorship of Osip E. Mandel'shtam (Leningrad: New Books, 1927).

13. MacDowell Colony, *Annual Report*, 1924, p. 10; O'Brien, ed., *Best Short Stories of 1922*, pp. 83-99.

14. Rose Gollup Cohen to Lilla Cabot Perry, 12 Nov. [?], Perry Family Papers. In the Edwin Arlington Robinson Papers, also at Colby College, is an autographed presentation copy of the French edition of Cohen's autobiography. For Cohen's times at the Colony, see MacDowell Colony, *Annual Report*, 1923, p. 7; 1924, p. 7. Courtesy of the MacDowell Colony.

15. Anzia Yezierska, "Wild Winter Love," *Century Magazine* 113 (Feb. 1927): 485-91. The story has been reprinted in Anzia Yezierska, *Hungry Hearts and Other Stories* (New York: Persea, 1985), pp. 316-35. My thanks to Anzia Yezierska's daughter, Louise Levitas Henriksen, for responding to my queries about the relationship between Yezierska and Cohen.

16. *Out of the Shadow*, p. 74.

17. *Out of the Shadow*, p. 246. It is striking here how Cohen's rendition of the Russian Jewish experience contradicts the influential interpretation offered by Oscar Handlin in *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951).

18. The settlement house had a strong influence on many new immigrants as they took their journey from old to new world culture. For others.

participation in trade unions, public schools, or urban politics served a similar purpose.

19. For a thoughtful analysis of this theme in Yeziarska's writing, see Alice Kessler-Harris's introduction to Yeziarska, *Bread Givers* (New York: Persea, 1975), p. xiii.

20. Both of these developments are corroborated by independent sources. New York City directory listings for Abraham Gallup (sometimes Gollup) confirm the Cherry Street residence and his period as a grocer. Rose's brother, Eugene Michael Gollup, received a B.S. in Educational Psychology from Teachers College in 1911. Correspondence with the author, 8 Mar. 1994, Dinesh Bhatt, Administrative Assistant to the Registrar, Teachers College, Columbia University.

PART ONE



Our home was a log house covered with a straw roof.

PART ONE

I

I WAS born in a small Russian village. Our home was a log house, covered with a straw roof. The front part of the house overlooked a large clear lake, and the back, open fields.

The first time I became aware of my existence was on a cold winter night. My father and I were sitting on top of our red brick oven. The wind, whistling through the chimney and rattling the ice-covered windows, frightened me, and so I pressed close to my father and held his hand tightly. He was looking across the room where mother's bed stood curtained off with white sheets. Every now and then I heard a moan coming from the bed, and each time I felt father's hand tremble.

Appearing and disappearing behind the bed curtains, I saw my little old great-aunt, in a red quilted petticoat and white, close-fitting cap. Whenever she appeared and caught father's eye, she smiled to him, a sweet, crooked smile. Finally, I recall hearing a few sound slaps, followed by a baby's cry and aunt calling out loudly, "It's a girl again."

About three years passed. With my little sister as companion, I recall many happy days we spent together. In the summer we picked field mushrooms at the back of the house or played near the lake and watched the women bleaching their linens. I was happiest in the morning when I first went out of doors. To see the sunshine, the blue sky, and the green fields, filled my soul with unspeak-

able happiness. At such moments I would run away from my little sister, hide myself in a favourite bush and sit for a while listening to the singing of the birds and the rustling of the leaves. Then I would jump up and skip about like a young pony and shout out of pure joy.

In the winter we cut and made doll's clothing. Father was a tailor, and as soon as we were able to hold a needle we were taught to sew. Mother taught us how to spin, grandfather made toys out of wood for us, and grandmother told us stories.

These were the pleasant days during the winter. But there were others, days that were cold and dark and dreary, when we children had to stay a great part of the time on top of the oven, and no one came, not even a beggar. But when a beggar did come our joy was boundless.

I remember that grandfather would hasten to meet the poor man, as we called him, at the door with a hearty handshake and a welcoming smile, saying, "Peace be with you, brother. Take off your knapsack and stay over night."

Mother would put on a fresh apron and begin to prepare something extra for supper. And grandmother, who was blind, and always sat in bed knitting a stocking, would stop for a moment at the sound of the stranger's voice to smooth the comforter on her bed. Her pale face, so indifferent a minute before, would light up as if with new life, while we children, fearing, if seen idle, to be rebuked and sent into a distant corner from where we could neither see nor hear the stranger, would suddenly find a dozen things to do.

On such a night after supper there was something of the holiday spirit in our home. We would light the lamp instead of a candle and place it on a milk jug in the centre

of the table. Then we all sat around it, grandmother with her knitting, mother with her sewing, all of us listening eagerly to the stories the stranger told. But more surprised even than any of us children about the wonderful things going on in the world, was grandfather. He would sit listening with his lips partly open and his eyes large with wonder. Every now and then he would call out, "Ach, brother, I never would have even dreamt such things were possible!"

At bedtime grandfather would give up his favourite bed, the bench near the oven, to the stranger. Mother would give him the largest and softest of her pillows. And grandmother would give him a clean pair of socks to put on in the morning.

The next day after he was gone we felt as after a pleasant holiday when we had to put on our old clothes and turn in to do the every day things.

Yes, I recall happy days, and sad days—days of sorrow which then were very real.

Across the road from our home, about a quarter of a block to the left, was a cemetery. Over each grave stood a wooden cross, and about the middle of each one there were tied little aprons of red, green and yellow material. On windy days I loved to watch these fluttering in the wind and whenever I looked through half-closed eyes they took form and became like coloured birds hovering over the graves.

One windy day, at dusk, I went out to the middle of the road to watch the little aprons flying in the breeze and saw something red lying on the road near the cemetery. I guessed it to be an apron blown away by the wind.

How beautiful my doll would look in one of these, thought I. But how could I get it? I was in mortal fear of the cemetery. Although mother had often pointed out

how peacefully the dead slept and had said that she wished the living were as little to be feared, I never went near them. But now I wanted the little red apron for my doll. The longer I looked at it the more I wanted it. Finally, I decided to risk getting it. Slowly, step by step, I walked toward it, keeping my eyes on the graves and repeating softly to myself, to keep up courage, "There is nothing to fear; there is nothing to fear," until I reached it. When I had it in my hand I stood still for a moment. The very thought of turning my back on the dead made my hair stand on end. I walked backwards a few steps; suddenly I turned and ran. As I ran I felt my heart beating violently against my ribs; my feet were as heavy as lead and the distance to the house seemed endless. But I ran fast; so fast, that when I reached the door I could not stop. I fell against it, it flew open and I fell headlong into the house. Mother came running over to pick me up. When I regained my breath, I told her what had happened and showed her the little apron which I still held in my hand. As usual, sister, who wanted everything she saw and to whom I was made to give in because she was younger, came over and asked for it and, as usual, I refused. She tried to snatch it from my hand but I pushed her away. She fell and struck her head against a bench. Then father came over with a strap and told us to kiss each other or we should be spanked. Mother looked at me with tears in her eyes, knowing, no doubt, what would happen, and she left the room. Grandmother called to me to hide behind her back, but I would not do that. My sister looked at me, then at the strap, and came over to kiss me. But I could not at such moments, neither would I let her kiss me. So I was spanked and the little apron was taken away from me and given to her.

II

WHEN I was about eleven years old there were five of us children. One day father went to town and came back with a stranger, who, we were told, would teach us to read and write. Our teacher was a young man of middle height, thin, dark and pale. He had an agreeable voice, and when he sang it was pleasant to hear him. When we did our lessons well his eyes brightened and his tightly closed lips would relax a little. But when we did poorly he was angry and would scold us.

As soon as I learned how to read I would sit for hours and read to my grandmother. Besides the Bible, we had a few religious books. I read these again and again, and became very devout. I read the morning, noon and evening prayers, and sometimes I fasted for half a day. Then I became less stubborn and the quarrels between sister and myself became less frequent.

One day father left home on a three days' journey. When he returned he did not look like himself. His face was pale and he seemed to be restless. During the three days that followed, father went out only at night. I also noticed that mother collected all of father's clothes, and, as she sat mending them, I often saw her tears fall on her work. On the third night I awoke and saw father bending over me. He wore his heavy overcoat, his hat was pulled well over his forehead and a knapsack was strapped across his shoulders. Before I had time to say a word he kissed me and went to grandmother's bed and woke her up. "I am going away, mother." She sat up, rubbed her eyes and asked in a sleepy voice, "Where?" "To America," father whispered hoarsely.

For a moment there was silence; then grandmother uttered a cry that chilled my blood. My mother, who sat in a corner weeping, went to her and tried to quiet her. The noise woke grandfather and the children. We all gathered around grandmother's bed, and I heard father explaining the reason for his going. He said that he could not get a passport (for a reason I could not understand at the time). And as no one may live in Russia even a week without a passport, he had to leave immediately. His explanation did not comfort grandmother; she still sat crying and wringing her hands. After embracing us all, father ran out of the house, and grandfather ran after him into the snow with his bare feet. When he returned he sat down and cried like a little child. I spent the rest of the night in prayer for a safe journey for my father.

III

As father's departure to America had to be kept secret until he was safe out of Russia, we had to bury our sorrow deep in our own hearts, and go about our work as if nothing unusual had happened.

Mother and I sat at the window, sewing, and grandfather found relief in chopping wood. All day long his axe flashed in the sun and chips flew far and near. And even grandmother's tears, which were always ready, were kept back now as she sat on her bed, knitting a stocking and rocking the cradle with one foot, while sister seemed to be everywhere at once. It was then and for the first time that I realised something of her real worth. Those soft grey eyes of hers seemed to see every one's needs. When grandmother put her feet down on the floor and felt about for her slippers, it was sister who would find them and stick them on her toes. The same little woman of eight kept a little brother of five and a sister of two playing quietly in a corner. And even when they were hungry she would not let them disturb mother, but would cut some thick slices of black bread, dip them into water, sprinkle them with salt, and taking a bite of her slice, she would close her eyes and say, "M-m—what delicious cake!" In the evening, after supper, when grandfather would sit down near the stove staring sadly into the fire, she would climb up on his knee and plait his long grey beard into braids. Soothed by her gentle touches and childish prattle, he would fall asleep and forget his troubles for a while.

IV

So the days passed.

One morning mother went to the postoffice and when she came back she looked as if she had suddenly aged. She took a postal card from her pocket and we all bent our heads over it and read: "I have been arrested while crossing the border and I am on my way home, walking the greater part of the way. If we pass through our village I shall ask the officer to let me stop home for a few minutes. Be brave and trust in God." At the news more tears were shed in our house than on the Day of Atonement.

That night after the doors were barred and the windows darkened, grandmother, grandfather, and mother, with a three weeks' old baby in her arms, sat in the niche of our chimney, making plans to defeat the Tzar of Russia.

The next day mother sent grandfather away on a visit. He was not a person to have around in case of trouble, for the very sight of brass buttons put him into such fright and confusion, that he would forget his own name. After he was gone mother went to town to see her brother and arrange for the escape. Then there was nothing left to do but wait for father's home-coming. I remember that I used to run out on the road many times a day to see if he were coming.

One afternoon we were all startled at hearing some one stamping the snow off her feet at our door. I ran to the window and looked out. It was only Yana, a woman known in our village to be very clever and religious, but unkind. I wondered at her coming for I

knew that she and my mother were not on friendly terms. She came into the house and walking straight over to mother, who was bending over the cradle, she said in her usual voice, which was like a drake's, soft and hoarse, "Your husband is arrested; I just saw him on the road!" Mother became so pale and looked so ill that I thought she would fall, but the next minute I saw her straighten herself, and putting her arm over the cradle as if to protect it, she said quietly and distinctly, "Yana, I hope you will live to carry better news." When Yana passed me on her way out of the house I thought her face looked more yellow than usual, and her black, large teeth further apart.

After the woman was gone mother put on a cheerful face and busied herself laying the cloth and setting food on the table, and grandmother put on her best apron, father's last gift, and sat down near the table with her hands folded in her lap, waiting. We children stood at the window looking out. Soon we saw father open our gate. He was closely followed by Yonko, the sheriff, in his grey fur cap which he wore summer and winter, and grey coat tied with a red girdle.

Father was limping and when he came nearer I saw how greatly he had changed. His face was thin and weatherbeaten, and his eyes had sunk deep into his head. At sight of us near the window his lips twitched, but the next moment we saw his own old smile light up his whole face.

Our greeting and our conversation were quiet and restrained.

When father sat down at the table he said that he was very hungry but after taking a few mouthfuls he fell asleep. The peasant who sat near the stove resting his elbows on his knees and turning his cap between his

hands, rose and wanted to wake father. "Oh, let him sleep a little while," mother entreated. "Impossible," said Yonko, "the roads are bad and we have to be in the next village before night falls." "Well, then just let him sleep until I bathe his feet." The man consented. Father's boots were worn and wet through, and were hard to get off, but he never woke while mother tugged away at them. At last they were off and the socks also.

"Thank God that his mother is blind," she whispered, covering her face for a moment. Father's feet were red, blistered, and swollen. As she lifted them into the basin I saw her tears falling into the water. When I looked at Yonko he turned away quickly and became interested in a crack in the ceiling.

Our parting like our greeting was restrained. Father embraced grandmother, then he smiled a quick farewell from the door and was gone. Sister and I ran out on the road and stood watching him until he looked a black speck against the white snow. Then we ran back to the house, she to help and I to pray.