

René Jean-Paul Dewil

The Family Vincius

Thorn

1840- 1880

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The Characters

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--|
| Ezra Vincevicius | 1770-1845 | Married to Rebekah Munkacs in 1790 |
| Rebekah Munkacs | 1772-1848 | Married to Ezra Vincevicius |
| Asa Vincius | 1790-1860 | Married to Leah Perlman in 1814, son of Ezra Vincevicius |
| Leah Perlman | 1798-1880 | Married to Asa Vincius in 1814 |
| Rebekah Vincius | 1816-1903 | Married to Samuel Klaipsevicius in 1836, daughter of Asa Vincius |
| Esther Vincius | 1818-1863 | Married to Finkel Kaunavicius in 1836, daughter of Asa Vincius |
| Max Vincius | 1820-1900 | Married to Sara Benavicius in 1840, son of Asa Vincius |
| Sara Benavicius | 1823-1902 | Married to Max Vincius in 1840 |
| Abraham Vincevicius | 1792-1871 | Married to Abi Abramovski in 1814, son of Ezra Vincevicius |
| Abi Abramovski | 1792-1876 | Married to Abraham Vincevicius in 1814 |
| Iosel Vincevicius | 1815-1895 | Married to Sara Rausnitz in 1835, son of Abraham Vincevicius |
| Sara Rausnitz | 1816-1903 | Married to Iosel Vincevicius in 1835 |
| Edek Vincevicius | 1817-1897 | Married to Rachel Levin in 1837, son of Abraham Vincevicius |
| Rachel Levin | 1820-1910 | Married to Edek Vincevicius in 1837 |
| Sarah Vincevicius | 1800-1878 | Married to Anton Svirskius in 1827, daughter of Ezra Vincevicius |
| Anton Svirskius | 1798-1873 | Married to Sarah Vincevicius in 1827 |
| Anton Svirskius the Younger | 1832-1900 | Son of Sarah Vincius |
| Paul Svirskius | 1833-1898 | Son of Sarah Vincius |
| Johanna Svirskius | 1835-1910 | Daughter of Sarah Vincius |
| Kurt Vincius | 1840-1910 | Married to Hannah Sonnenfeld in 1862, son of Max Vincius |
| Hannah Sonnenfeld | 1845-1913 | Married to Kurt Vincius in 1862 |
| Max Vincius the Younger | 1863-1939 | Married to Maria Rosenthal in 1882, son of Kurt Vincius |
| Maria Rosenthal | 1866-1930 | Married to Max Vincius the Younger in 1882 |
| Andreas Vincius | 1864-1942 | Married to Lore Kremer in 1885, son of Kurt Vincius |
| Lore Kremer | 1865-1942 | Married to Andreas Vincius in 1885 |

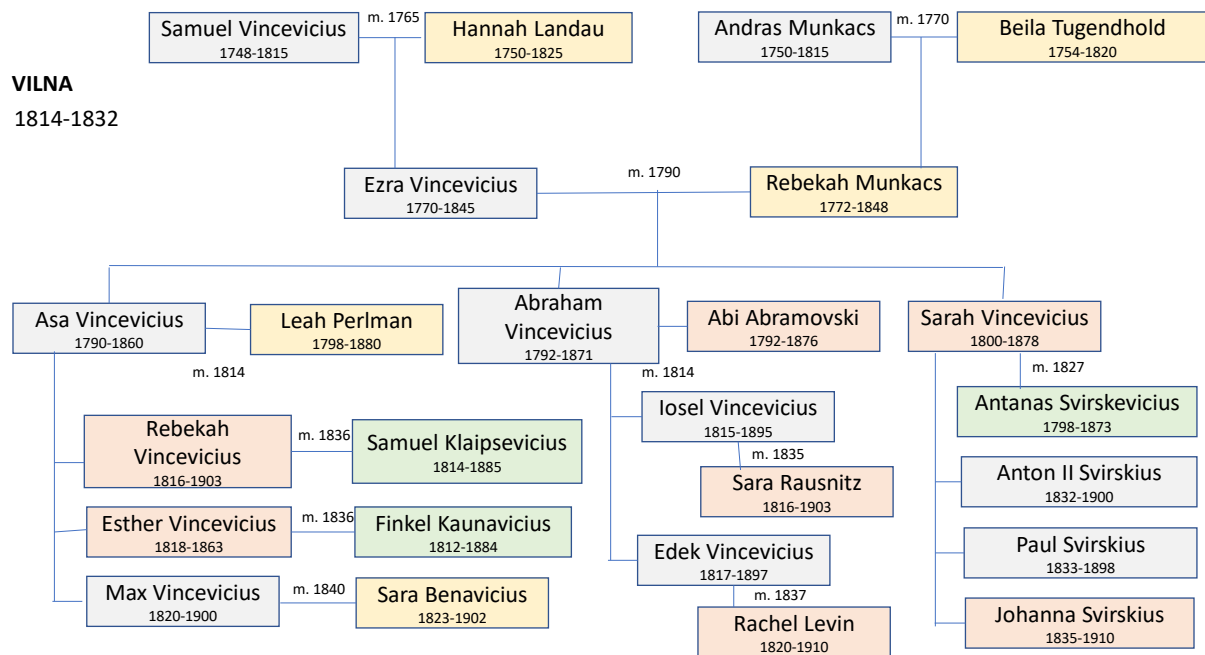
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|--------------------|-----------|--|
| Julian Vincius | 1866-1942 | Married to Hanne Altman in 1886, son of Kurt Vincius |
| Hanne Altman | 1870-1942 | Married to Julian Vincius in 1886 |
| Haim Vincius | 1842-1920 | Married to Leah Goldstern in 1865, son of Max Vincius |
| Leah Goldstern | 1843-1910 | Married to Haim Vincius in 1865 |
| Avram Vincius | 1866-1920 | Married to Manyah Kalpern in 1890, son of Haim Vincius |
| Manyah Kalpern | 1866-1930 | Married to Avram Vincius in 1890 |
| David Vincius | 1868-1928 | Married to Rosa Kalpern in 1892, son of Haim Vincius |
| Rosa Kalpern | 1869-1935 | Married to David Vincius in 1892 |
| Mikhael Vincius | 1843-1920 | Married to Fredia False in 1870, son of Max Vincius |
| Fredia False | 1845-1915 | Married to Mikhael Vincius in 1870 |
| Naomi Vincius | 1871-1950 | Married to Osyp Raisfeld in 1890, daughter of Mikhael Vincius |
| Osyp Raisfeld | 1871-1955 | Married to Naomi Vincius in 1890 |
| Rivka Vincius | 1873-1956 | Married to Johann Handelsmann in 1890, daughter of Mikhael Vincius |
| Johann Handelsmann | 1870-1946 | Married to Rivka Vincius in 1890 |

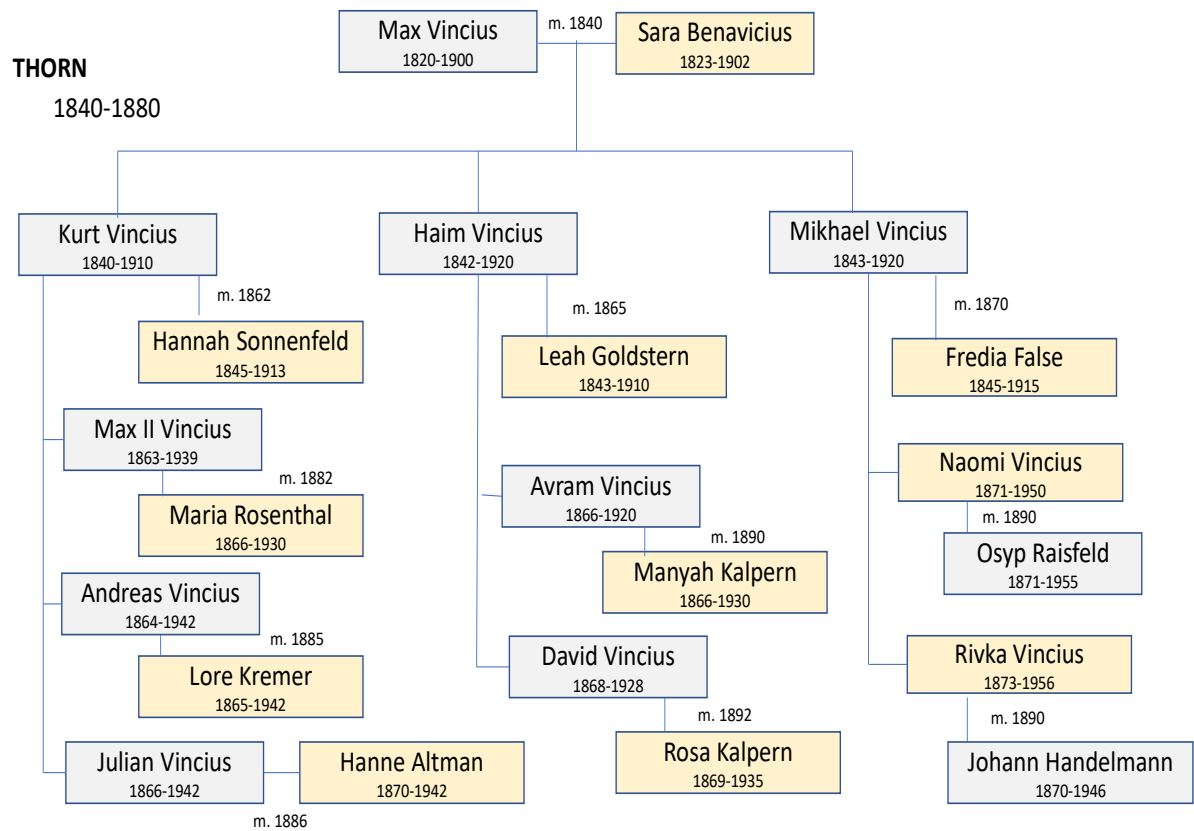
Other characters

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Friedrich (Fried) Kleinberger | | Saxon immigrant to Thorn |
| Anna Kleinberger | | Wife of Friedrich Kleinberger |
| Esther Kleinberger | 1845-1917 | Daughter of Fried and Anna Kleinberger |
| Richard Friedrich Max Vincius | 1867- | Son of Esther Kleinberger and Kurt Vincius |
| Marlene Anna Sarah Vincius | 1869- | Daughter of Esther Kleinberger and Kurt Vincius |
| Joram Cohen | | Jewish merchant of Thorn, lover of Sara Benavicius |
| Leandra von Chrapitz | 1825-1907 | Second wife of Max Vincius |
| Julius von Chrapitz-Vincius | 1865-1938 | Son of Leandra von Chrapitz and Max Vincius |

Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius 1867-1942 Daughter of Leandra von Chrapitz and Max Vincius

Avram Goldstern 1812-1888 Father of Leah Goldstern, Berlin editor





The Leaders of the Nations

Russia and Poland

Tzar Nicholas I (1796-1855) R. 1825-1855 Tzar of Russia, King of Poland-Lithuania, Grand-Prince of Finland, Dynasty Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov, married 1817 to Charlotte of Prussia, Alexandra Feodorovna. Son of Tzar Paul I and Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg.

Tzar Alexander II (1818-1881) R. 1855-1881 Tzar of Russia, King of Poland-Lithuania, Grand-Prince of Finland, Dynasty Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov, married 1841 to Marie of Hessen (d. 1880, Maria Alexandrovna) and in 1880 to Catherine Dolgorukova (morganatic, Princess Yurievskaya). Son of Nicholas I and Alexandra Feodorovna.

The so-called ‘Congress Kingdom of Poland’ was created at the Congress of Vienna (1815), after the demise of Napoleon Bonaparte. Kings of Poland during this period of rule and afterwards, until 1917, were the Russian tzars.

Viceroy of Poland

Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich (1782-1856) R. 1831-1855 Russian General. of Ukrainian descent. Viceroy.

Mikhail Dmitrievich Gorchakov (1793-1861) R. 1855-1861. Russian Artillery General and Russian Prince.

Nikolai Onufrievich Sukhozanet (1794-1871) R. May 1861 - August 1861. Resigned due to bad health.

Karl Karlovich Lambert (1815-1865) R. August 1861 – October 1861. Russian Cavalry General and Count.

Alexander von Lüders (1790-1874) R. 1861-1862. Russian Infantry General and Count.

Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich of Russia (1827-1891) R. June 1862–1863. Second son of Tzar Nicholas I of Russia and younger brother of Tzar Alexander II.

Friedrich Wilhelm Rembert von Berg (1794-1874) R. 1863-1874. Russian Field Marshal and count of Finland, of which he was Governor General from 1855 to 1861.

From 1874 to 1915, Poland was ruled by the Russian tzars and Governor-Generals appointed by Russia. The tzars were kings of Poland.

Prussia

King Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1796-1861) R. 1840-1861. King of Brandenburg-Prussia. President of the Erfurt Union (1849-1850). Dynasty of Hohenzollern, married 1823 Elisabeth Ludovika of Bavaria (d. 1873). Son of King Friedrich Wilhelm III.

Emperor Wilhelm I (1797-1888) R. 1861-1888. King of Brandenburg-Prussia. Full name: Wilhelm Friedrich Ludwig von Hohenzollern. President of the North German Confederation (1867-1871) and German Emperor from 1871 on. Dynasty of Hohenzollern. Younger brother of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Married in 1829 to Princess Augusta of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach (1811-1890).

Emperor Friedrich III (1831-1888). Called in this novel ‘the Crown Prince’. Emperor and king for 99 days only in 1888. Married to Victoria, eldest daughter of Queen Victoria of Great-Britain. Full name Friedrich Wilhelm. Only son of Emperor Wilhelm I.

Other:

Prince Friedrich Karl Prince Friedrich Karl Nicolaus of Prussia (1828-1885). Grandson of King Friedrich Wilhelm III via Friedrich Wilhelm III’s son Prince Friedrich Karl Alexander of Prussia (1801-1883), married 1827 to Princess Marie of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach. He was a nephew to Emperor Wilhelm I. Married in 1854 to Princess Maria Anna of Anhalt-Dessau. Cavalry General in this novel, participated in the 2nd Schleswig War, in the Prussian-Austrian War of 1866 and in the Franco-German War of 1870.

Austria

Ferdinand I (1793-1875) R. 1835-1848. Abdicated. Emperor of Austria-Hungary. Dynasty of Habsburg-Lorraine. Married in 1831 to Maria Anna of Savoy (1803-1884). Son of Emperor Franz I.

Franz-Joseph I (1830-1916) R. 1848-1916. Emperor of Austria-Hungary. Dynasty of Habsburg-Lorraine. Married in 1853 to Duchess Elizabeth of Bavaria (called ‘Sissi’, 1837-1898). Son of Ferdinand I.

France

King Louis-Philippe I (1773-1859) R. 1830-1848. Abdicated. King of France. Dynasty of Orléans. Married to Maria Amalia of Naples and Sicily (d. 1866).

Emperor Louis Napoleon III (1808-1873) R. 1848-1870. President of the 2nd Republic, Emperor of the French as of 1852. House of Bonaparte. Married 1853 to Eugénie de Montijo, Marchioness of Ardales (d. 1920).

Great-Britain

Queen Victoria (1819-1901) R. 1837-1901. Married 1840 to Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Granddaughter of George III.

Thorn

Part I. Prussia at Peace

The City of Thorn. 1845

At the beginning of 1845, in the winter months, Max Vincius was 24 years old. He was a tall and wiry young man, at the height of the physical and spiritual powers of his youth. He was used to hard, even menial work in the warehouses of his father. Asa had never spared him toil and fatigue. Max could as easily heave heavy boxes or bales from the ground into his father's carriages as any other labourer hired by the Vincius Family. Still, he was a thinker foremost, a reflective young man, often given to melancholic moods and periods of profound musing over his life and his business transactions. He brooded over intricate commercial contracts as long as his father, and as intensely. Once a decision taken, however, he did not shy away from its consequences. All his energy then went into execution. He was known for being blunt with people, and obstinate, but totally honest and reliable. People who knew him well told he was good-hearted.

Max was a married man. He had been wedded to a Lithuanian woman, whose origins lay in the much-praised city of Vilna. With the marriage, Max had confirmed his connections to the city he had been born in, and shown his links with Lithuania had remained lively and strong. Max had been born in Vilna, indeed, and passed the first ten years or so of his life in that town. Vilna in Russian, Wilnó in Polish or Vilnius in the old Rus language of the land, had been the former home town of the Vincius family. Max had lived most of his life in the city of Thorn, however. Had you asked which truly his hometown was, he would unhesitatingly, firmly, frankly, have answered Thorn.

Thorn was a city situated in the southwest of West-Prussia. Max was proud to be a Prussian citizen. He did not hide his pro-Prussian feelings.

Right before he married, Max's father, a man of now about fifty, still strong in body and mind too, had offered his son a large house somewhat further outward from Thorn's centre, yet practically in the same street of the city in which also the other Vinciuses lived. The Vincius family home lay in the *Breite Strasse*, as it was called in German, *Szeroka* in Polish. Max's new home lay closer to the *Bromberger Pforte*, the Bromberg Gate. Max had already three children of his own, three sons. His sons were Kurt of almost five years old, Haim of three and Mikhael of almost two.

Max had entered the trading business of his father early, at eighteen years old, after having finished his studies at the Vilna *heder* and the Thorn German Gymnasium. He had been one of the very few Jewish boys who had studied at the Gymnasium. The Vincius Family was Jewish, indeed. After his secondary studies, Max had asked to help his father. He had preferred not to continue studies of the Talmud. The study of real life ran strong in the Vincius blood! He had also not hesitated for long in taking his own initiatives.

Max had learned eagerly in which goods one traded best, at which prices one could buy and where one could sell at higher amounts, how to transport the goods the cheapest way, and who might be the most reliable partners. Max had passed some time with his father's sister and his father's best friend, her husband. These lived and traded in the Prussian port of Danzig. Once he knew how trading worked, he had engaged in small business transactions without telling his father, yet gambling on the outcome with modest, loaned amounts of money. Credit was hard to get in Thorn! How the boy had been able to convince the bank and credit institution of Thorn to lend him his first funds without collateral, or how much the boy had lied as to his actual financial status, remained a mystery for his father.

Max, of course, was handsome, a charmer, a fine orator, and a seducer with words. He was a master in presenting sound, rational arguments. Refusing such a compelling, persuading young man, would probably have led the bank managers into thinking they would lose grand profits. Max must have dressed up in his one more formal, best suit and pretended to being older than he was. Max had not made reasonable profits in those early transactions! He had won huge profits, and shown the proof of that to the bank managers. The managers by then had found out whose son he was, and Max had continued trading on his own, next to working for his father.

Max had received from his father the house he now lived in, a tradition between father and sons in the Vincius Family. It was a large house, one of many in the busiest street of Thorn. The house counted three stores and many rooms, which suited Max's quite large family. It provided no room for warehouse and stables. Max therefore had bought a terrain outside the city walls, and built a very large storehouse in between the city and the outer defences, near the suburb growing rapidly, the one in the direction of Bromberg. Bromberg was the name the suburb had already become known by.

The day Max rode out of Thorn was in the heart of the winter. It froze biting cold. The eastern wind turned the snow of Thorn to solid ice. Max did have a small space on the lower floor of his house, where he could keep a small carriage, as well as a few goods though not many and not too bulky ones. On this day of early 1845, he wanted to dress a quick inventory of the goods stored in his main warehouse. Max took his horse and carriage, a light coach in which he could load little, but which he could drive easily in the streets of Thorn. He rode out of his house for a quick journey to his possessions outside the city. He did this more out of the wish to be on his own and be able to think clearly for a while, than out of necessity. He sat on the driver's bank. His heavy furred cloak kept him warm. His protected his hands from the freezing cold in thick, leather gloves. The wind howled at his back. The icy gusts broke against the high wooden panel behind him. He felt quite comfortable in the harsh weather. Few travellers would show up in his way.

Max was in a good mood that morning. His trade had been going well the last year. He had become moderately prosperous, could invest higher amounts, and would no doubt even be better off this year. He could tell his father proudly how much he had augmented the family business on his own.

Max Vincius rode down the rest of *Szeroka*, then through the Bromberg Gate of Thorn to the suburb in front of him. No guards halted the people at the town's gate. Max surmised the guards were keeping themselves warm with vodka in the small wooden gatehouse that had

been built besides the arched gate. Max rode on. He noticed more and more houses were being built along the road, despite the fact this territory lay outside the walls. No space had been left unbuilt within the walls of the city! More and more people appeared at Thorn, the city was booming.

Prussia was at peace since tens of years. Max had known nothing else but peace in his hometown. God be praised for that! Was this not the reason why his father and mother had moved to Thorn, leaving Vilna and Russia-dominated Lithuania? No people's uprisings had shaken Prussia since long, and no independence wars were waged in this territory of West-Prussia. Peace was good for commerce, good for the installation of new business, good for trading and for sales in artisan shops.

The Immigrants

While he rode on at ease, Max noticed from some distance two people sitting or lying on the ground near a wall, huddling together in a heap of rags and wooden panels, hiding behind a ruined courtyard. Max only distinguished the white faces of a man and a woman, among bundles that might have held their meagre possessions. Were these people thrown out of their house, or had they come from far in the depth of winter? Had they slept here, in this weather? Max wooed his horse to a stop. He later never could tell why he had stopped. His hands and his horse instinctively did the work for him. The animal hated to wait in the cold wind, which threw small, icy flecks against its body from out of a high snow heap around the corner. The horse brought its head back to look at the driver, imploring to continue walking, to reach a place of shelter, or at least some more protected corner. The horse neighed, but it halted docilely right in front of the people. Max hushed it, reached out and patted its back.

From his bank, Max shouted a few words in Polish to the couple.

‘Who are you? Why are you sitting out there, in the road in this cold weather?’

The man and woman looked up at Max, a glimmer of hope in their eyes. Nobody had shown any interest in them since a long time. Max detected no understanding and no reaction.

He repeated his question in German.

The man then cried out in a German with a heavy countryside accent, ‘we have come from far, Lord, from Anhalt. We came here because we were said Thorn was a fine place to live and work in. But we cannot go on. We are too tired!’

At first, Max didn't answer. He looked again at the vast space in front of him, the white vastness covered with snow. Nobody inside Thorn would take in poor migrants at this time of the year. Commerce and activities would only resume at the beginning of spring.

Max came to a rapid decision, hoping he would not regret what he was doing. These people could have lied, be thieves or murderers even. Yet, the eyes of the man inspired him to some confidence. He judged the man and woman were no criminals.

‘Hop in,’ he cried against the wind, still in German, ‘get in the coach. Put your things behind. I have a shelter for you, and work maybe. Get in!’

Max shuffled to the extreme left corner of the bank he sat on, and invited the two next to him. The man stood, eased his legs. Max remarked the immense gratefulness in the face of the woman, and the gratefulness of the desperate man, who might have feared death near. The

man helped his woman in first, a gesture Max appreciated. He too drew the woman in. Then only, did Max notice the woman held a bundle of rags in her right arm, tight to her chest. Max saw the very bleak face of an almost new-born baby. His heart leapt. He helped the woman on the bank.

The heap of rags around the couple held other surprises. A little dog crept from under the cloths, barking with all its might and wagging its tail.

‘Your dog, I suppose,’ Max tried. He didn’t like dogs too much. A small thing like this could hardly be called a dog, though.

‘I suppose it is,’ the man responded, ‘while climbing up too. He scooped up the dog and held it in his lap. ‘It found us on the way, and has been following us the last ten days or so. We fed it as we could. It doesn’t leave us anymore.’

‘All right,’ Max shouted, ‘hold him well!’

When also the man had found a place on the bank, Max made a cracking sound with his whip, and the horse trod on. He rarely placed the whip on the animal. He kept the whip more as a weapon to ward off thieves. The animal knew well the sound of the swirling whip, though.

Max urged the animal now to go faster. He passed the street, until no houses stood by the sides anymore, until the carriage rolled in between the last houses of Thorn itself and the suburb. He drove the carriage to a very large, wooden structure, his storehouse. He stopped the horse near the gate. He made a sign to the man and woman to remain seated. He jumped off, to open the huge gate. He had to fumble with the large key. He had it difficult to push open the large panels. The wind fought him. Then, the Saxon man jumped to near him and with the force of two, they won over the elements of winter. The man didn’t wait for orders of Max. He opened the other panel alone, and signalled for Max to advance into the building, as he had guessed Max indeed wanted to do. Max nodded. It was his turn to be grateful. The wind howled stronger here! He rode the carriage just inside, and saw the man closing the panels behind him, not without much effort. The man succeeded in closing the gate. He found a plank to secure the panels. He grinned at Max, panting from the effort.

‘Damned bad weather outside, now,’ Max grumbled.

The man nodded back.

‘Yes, bad, bad,’ the man smiled. ‘At least, we got in.’

Max brought the man and woman to a door in the left wall of the massive storehouse. He went into a corridor, which led to a house. He opened another door on the left side, and showed the man and woman into a hall. This was no small hall! A sturdy oak table stood on one side, two old sofas on the other. Max made a sign for the man and woman to sit at the table. Chairs stood around.

Max opened one arm invitingly, ‘have a seat. I’ll light us a fire. It’s as cold in here as outside!’

Max went to the large hearth, piled a few large logs together, sought kindling wood, found a little paper to ease the job, and lighted his fire. Soon, he could warm his hands. He pushed heavier logs into the fire. The room would warm, though slowly. The air would lose its harsh, humid cold. The first fumes had softened the atmosphere already, and pervaded the room with the agreeable smells of burning wood, of intimacy and shelter. Max remained silent for a while.

He stood. The man and woman sat on chairs at one side of the table. They pushed somewhat back the clothes they had been swaddled in. They were dressed simply, like German farmers. Their clothes were not torn, but old and dirty at places. Max smiled. He went to sit in front of them. First things first.

Max Vincius continued for a while looking at the man and woman, studying them, staring at them until they became uncomfortable with his probing. The woman played with a finger in front of the child's eyes, and the baby responded, and smiled.

'How old is your child, woman?'

'Three months,' the woman answered.

Max would have given more months or years to the baby. He could see the child was intelligent. The mother must still be breast-feeding the baby. He suddenly felt he was in the way in his own hall. He had to hurry.

Max explained his scheme, primarily addressing the man.

'I came here to make the inventory of the goods in the storehouse. This is my storehouse. I am a trader from Thorn, but not much trade can proceed in the winter. My name is Max Vincius. How are you called?'

'Fried Kleinberger. And my wife is called Anna,' the man answered curtly.

He remained sitting, looking expectantly at Max.

'Fried, no need of many words. I could use a man to guard my storehouse,' Max continued in German. 'If you agree, we can discuss about a fee. You can live for free in this house. It is part of the storehouse, and yet separate. It is a good house, with stone walls, a stable and a small garden behind. You can grow your own legumes. You can live here with your wife. I will bring you a horse. It is not much, but it is a beginning. If you help me well, if you are honest, a good worker, and be attentive, you could live a fine life, here. You can stay and accept my offer. I'll pay you from the first day. After six months, I'll tell you whether you are doing well or whether I'm disappointed.'

'I do have a little money to pay for our staying,' the man proudly offered.

Max liked that. The Kleinberger man had retained his dignity.

He waved the offer away.

'I have to pay you,' Max said, 'and the house comes with the job. Now, I'd better show you around. There are some things your wife might want to use for supper. I'll show you the house. The corridor leads to upstairs, and then to the storeroom. This house has two bedrooms above. You don't have to sleep in the hall, here, or in the kitchen. There is the door to the kitchen,' Max pointed at a door at the other end.

The man's eyes widened. He looked at his wife. She smiled. Her eyes said, 'have confidence'.

Then, for the first time inside the hall, the man smiled, too. He nodded at Max.

Max stood. He and Fried turned back into the corridor. At the end, the staircase led upstairs. Max showed Fried the two rooms, all furnished with a bed and a closet. He showed the toilet and two more, small rooms, one that could be used for bathing, the other for storing things, clothes or other goods. They went down again.

Max entered the storehouse. Fried followed. Max showed the Saxon the wooden crates, the bales and hundreds of sacks stored.

‘You are now the guardian of all this,’ Max explained to Fried. ‘There should be a presence in here. I have been stolen twice the last month. My previous guardsman was no good. I had to fire him. I suspected him of having had a hand in the last burglary. He lived here alone. I’ll give you work to do in the storeroom. You won’t merely be the guardian. There should be more order in here. You can also help me load and unload. In winter, business is very slow, I mean the business that needs storage in here. In the evenings, I expect you to walk around a bit with a bright lamp, indicating human presence. I’ll bring you a weapon, a gun.

Prospective burglars will learn soon enough to take care! I don’t believe too much in guns, but they make the right noise, the noise thieves know and fear!’

Max arrived at the end wall. Fried remarked the storage room was huge indeed.

Max took up a sack of flour, pushed it into Fried’s hands.

‘You’ll need flour for food. Use this.’

They stepped on, Fried still holding the sack. Max took up a smaller sack of dried chickpeas.

‘This could be useful, too.’

A little later, Max pushed two cases of legumes on top of the two sacks. Fried had to spread his legs to keep standing, which made Max smile.

‘You can put those down and come back later to pick them up,’ he proposed. ‘Here is a box of ham. Take that too. You’ll have some meat to start with.’

Fried’s eyes became larger. He continued walking behind Max, but said nothing. He might have guessed by then Max was a Jew, but one who sold large dried, smoked hams, had to be an open-minded man. Or a Jew not too scrupulous with what he sought, bought and sold. His interest was piqued. Who was this man called Max Vincius?

Max saw the eyes of the man. He guessed what the other was thinking.

‘Yes, I am Jewish,’ he suddenly spat. ‘Is that an issue for you?’

He softened, he had spoken too harshly, ‘I am a man like all others. I am not a bad man, though I say so myself. I am a hard trader, but I try to be nice to the people I can trust. You’ll have to see for yourself’.

‘I know enough,’ the other retorted. ‘We can be men, whatever our faith. There is but one God, whatever its name. We both adore the same being.’

‘We do,’ acquiesced Max to that. He smiled.

Max and Fried arrived at the gate. Max stopped rather abruptly, startling Fried. Max drew his hand through his hair. He had suddenly realised the woman might need other things but flour, chickpeas, legumes and some ham.

Max said, ‘I am a fool. You need more things than what can be found in my storeroom. I’ll give you three weeks of salary in advance. Go to your wife and ask what she needs for you and for the child especially. Draw up a list. Take your time. I still have to look around. We’ll drive back to Thorn, to buy what you need the next days. We’ll get the horse and come back. You can help me with the inventory afterwards. Can you read and write, can you count?’

‘I can count well enough,’ Fried replied, first proudly and then more shyly. ‘I can read all right, but my writing is bad. My wife writes well. She kept books at a large grocery. She can help with the books.’

‘Great,’ Max exclaimed. ‘She has a job too then, for which I will pay. How is your child called?’

‘Our daughter’s name is Esther,’ the man gave.

Max was surprised.

‘Esther is a name out of the Book! Esther is a Jewish name!’

‘Yes,’ the man gave immediately. ‘We are not Jewish. We are Lutheran. We read the Book too! We found Esther a fine name.’

‘I would have expected so,’ Max nodded. ‘Esther is a fine name! A good omen for both of us! I am delighted to help little Esther. I have a sister called Esther. We are not very close, though. Fine name indeed! Fine name! Good omen!’

Fried laughed.

Fried ran into the house, to his wife. He stayed away for some time. Max wandered through the store. An idea formed in his mind. He went to a shed, took a notebook out of a drawer. The shed held a small office. He left the door open. He looked around.

Fried came back, panting. He held a piece of paper in his hand.

‘Fried,’ Max asked, ‘is that for Friedrich?’

‘It is,’ Fried answered. ‘My true name is Friedrich. My parents and friends found Friedrich too long. Then, everybody called me by the smaller name.’

‘To me, you shall be Friedrich again,’ Max decided. ‘The kings of Prussia often have Friedrich in their name. It is a fine name, too. Let’s get into the carriage.’

Max and Friedrich stepped once more on the driving seats of the carriage. Max turned the horse and carriage inside the storehouse. Friedrich had put on a ragged, old coat. Max noticed how thin the coat was. They opened the gate and forced the horse into the cold.

‘What have you written down?’ Max asked.

‘Anna has written, but I know what is on the list,’ the man replied.

‘Show it to me!’

Friedrich held the paper up to Max. The list was neatly written, in nice letters and figures. Anna would do well with his books. The list was short, too, of first necessities. On top of the list stood the one word of ‘milk’. Max read, thought about which shops he would have to drive to.

‘Fine,’ he merely said, ‘better to do things the way they have to be done.’

He handed the paper back to Friedrich, and drove out of the store on the road to Thorn.

Friedrich closed the gates behind them. He got the key from Max.

They only needed to buy the things Anna needed at three shops. Anna had been frugal with what she could use for her child. That also pleased Max. He added honey and cakes, and tea and a flask of brandy. The shopping went easily.

When the shopping was over, Max drove home again. He showed Friedrich where he lived.

‘If something goes wrong with you, the child or your wife, come to here,’ he assured Friedrich. ‘Do not hesitate.’

Max went to his stable and brought out his other horse, an old mare. He bound the animal to behind the carriage. Friedrich and his family would need a horse to buy food in Thorn. Max had wanted to buy another horse anyway. His mare would come in handy for the first months and for Friedrich. He had spare saddles in the stables of his storerooms.

They rode back to where Anna waited for them. She heard the carriage coming, and helped Friedrich open the gates.

Max felt not inclined anymore to work on his inventory today.

‘You know what?’ he said to Friedrich, ‘I am not coming with you into the house, now. I’m going to leave the storeroom to you. I’m driving back to Thorn. I will be coming back on Thursday morning.’

It was Monday.

‘You can do the inventory for me. Have Anna write down what you count in this notebook. I want just the list, and the quantities. You’ll find tools in the shed at the end. Pencils, and so on. Don’t break open the boxes and crates. Have your wife read the Polish words or the German letters inscribed on them. Move the sacks to count them all. That will be a big job. I’ll come back on Thursday morning at the latest. You do the inventory for me, Friedrich. Nobody will come here to deliver anything this week. Afterwards, carriages may arrive. Stack the goods, count them carefully. Next week, we’ll talk more about your salary and your wife’s. Is that all right for you, for now?’

Max took out his wallet and began filling the hands of Friedrich with banknotes, larger and smaller ones. Friedrich looked with large eyes at the Prussian thalers. Max was generous.

Friedrich looked at Max in a strange, curious way.

Finally, he said, ‘you scarcely know me for longer than an hour, yet you give me a house, money, a horse. You have confidence in me?’

‘I do,’ Max replied simply. ‘I have confidence in you. I can read eyes and minds.’

Max laughed, ‘you have confidence in me, Friedrich the Saxon, and be loyal, and I’ll keep confidence in you. You’ll not regret it. Neither will I then,’ he added.

Max did not add still how unscrupulously and ruthlessly he could act with any man who cheated on him. It was not necessary to add threats.

‘Do you speak Polish?’ Max asked as an afterthought.

‘I do. Not perfectly, but I understand Polish. I speak it a little less well, but I manage.’

That was more than Max had expected. Most of his deliveries came by Polish wagon drivers. Max shook hands with Friedrich.

‘We have a deal,’ he concluded.

A little later, he left the storehouse. When he rode off, he thought he saw tears in Friedrich’s eyes. The man could barely mutter his thanks. Max rode out of the huge barn. Friedrich closed the gates on the property that was now in his care. Max murmured a Jewish prayer. Would his confidence be returned? Had he not taken too high risks? He hoped for a new, fine partner.

Max Vincius and Thorn

Max rode on. The wind had eased. Even his horse stepped on in a better mood, now. It kept its head higher and more proudly. It walked as if it were dancing. Max smiled. He had smiled a few times this morning, and wasn’t that a good sign? A few sunrays broke through the dark grey, still snow-laden clouds. Max rode back to the city walls, but at the last moment, in front of the gate to Bromberg, he decided to drive on, along the outside of the walls, on the road along the Weichsel. Alone, he fell into a more melancholic mood. Max drove very slowly, not faster than a man would saunter in the snow. The snow-white blanket also covered the road here. Max looked at the vast expanse of the river that was called the Vistula in Polish, a

very long stream that ran for hundreds if not thousands of miles in Poland, before entering Prussia and then, as a mighty stream, flowed on to its seaport, to Danzig, to Gdansk in Polish.

Max had arrived here, like the Saxon immigrants he had just given shelter, though not as a poor, abandoned child. He was the son of a rather wealthy Jewish merchant. He had been about eleven years old, that more than fifteen years ago, when his parents had decided to leave their home town of Vilna. The family name had been Vincevicius then. They adopted the new name when being inscribed in the Prussian archives only. Vincius they were now called officially.

Max had finished the *heder* school by then He and his mother and sisters had lived at first in a few rooms in a hotel of Thorn, until their new home was being built and decorated. He had entered the gymnasium afterwards, even though that school was not yet a complete German Gymnasium, as it now had the ambition to become. He had stopped his studies of the Torah and of the Talmud in a *besmedresh* or even in a *yeshiva*. Studying was not what he wanted to do with his life! He had received the classical education of a Prussian burgher of Thorn. He had been the only Jewish student in most of his classes. Nobody seemed to mind. He had been a good student.

Thorn, of course, was a much smaller city than Vilna. It was of much lesser importance to Jewish faith than even Kaunas. Less than five hundred Jews lived in the cramped, walled-in old city. Thorn held about 14,000 people, of which a little over half were of the Prussian Evangelic Faith, and a little less than half of the Polish Catholic Faith. About 2,000, often more, soldiers were garrisoned in the town. The regiments exercised in their vast barracks camp to the east of the New Town, and in the castles of Thorn.

Five hundred Jews in the city meant less than 3 percent of the population, a lot less than in Vilna. Jewishness impregnated Vilna. Vilna was the Jerusalem of the North, had a tenfold higher Jewish population than Thorn. The Great Synagogue of Vilna was the brilliant symbol of Lithuanian, Polish and Russian Rabbinism, the city of the Gaon, the greatest rabbinic teacher ever. The contrast was striking. Every street and every street corner cried out Jewishness in Vilna. Not so here, in Thorn. The ceremonies of Vilna were splendid, grand, triumphant. They remained extremely modest in Thorn. Also, only very few Hassidic Jews lived in the region of Thorn. It was as if the Jews of Thorn had decided to hide within the rest of the population. It was almost impossible to distinguish between a Jewish trader and a Prussian trader, here. Besides, both were full-fledged Prussian citizens, and had no problem in discussing business together. They enjoyed practically the same rights.

Thorn had quickly become Max's true home city. He felt that way entirely. He would immediately have fought with arguments and gestures somebody who would have praised Vilna over Thorn! He also had fewer and fewer memories left of his life in Vilna. Still, he had married a girl from Vilna. His links with the city he was born in had not entirely been severed. Yet, his hometown was Thorn, not Vilna. Here, in Thorn, a Jew could breathe freely and have friends of other religions, without being called a stranger or a foreigner. Max also loved the land around the city.

The land of Thorn, the *Kreis* or district of Thorn, was part of the Culmerland, territories first inhabited by the Prussian tribes that had lent their name to Prussia. Yet, even though well

within the Culmerland, Thorn had always fought for and enjoyed special privileges, which denoted it as almost independent territory. Thorn had its own police force, for instance, which responded only to the authority of the *Oberbürgermeister*, the Mayor of the city. How had Thorn become Prussian land?

Max recalled some of the history of West-Prussia he had learned at school.

A Duke Conrad of Mazovia, a part of North-Poland, had called in the 12th century on the Teutonic Knights to help conquer the lands of the Prussian tribes. These tribes were still pagan and particularly cruel in war. When that objective had been reached, the Teutonic Knights had kept the conquered land as their own. Immigrants from Saxony and Westphalia colonised the environs of Thorn, a border city created by the Teutonic Knights. Currently still, German men and women travelled to Thorn in search of a living. One such family had been taken in by Max.

Thorn, Torún in Polish, became in 1440 a member of the Prussian *Bund*, but it implored the protection of the Polish king against the Teutonic Order.

Eventually, the Teutonic Knights fought against the Polish kings for their independence. The Knights lost a large battle against the Poles in 1454. Thorn and large parts of West-Prussia then returned to Poland. The Teutonic Order had to leave large parts of West-Prussia to the Polish kings. With Danzig and Elbing, Thorn became one of the three German Hanse cities to receive the status of Polish city. It had its own representation in the Polish *Sejm*, the Polish Parliament.

Thorn retained its strong Prussian character, however. The town continued for a long time to be ruled by German-speaking notables.

In the middle of the 16th century, the Reformation took hold in Thorn. The Catholicism of the Polish kings worked against the Reformation. The Polish Government could not diminish the town's autonomy, however, before the middle of the eighteenth century. The growing Polish population then took over the administration of the city, in an upsurge of Catholicism.

In the 17th century, Polish and Catholic Thorn fought against the invading Swedes. These wars proved to be disastrous for the entire North of Poland, and also Thorn declined in splendour. In those times, Thorn was part of the Palatinate of Kuyavia of Poland.

At the conquest of a much-weakened Poland, not in the least by Cossack insurgents from the Ukrainian lands, devastated by the Cossack wars, Russian troops invaded the vast Polish Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuanian, and a long occupation of all these territories by the Russians began.

At the First Partition of Poland, Russian handed over the lands north of the Drewenz River to Prussia. The Drewenz was a side-river of the Weichsel, near Thorn. Thorn remained Polish. Then, at the Second Partitioning of Poland in 1793, Poland had to cede Thorn and a few lands south of the Drewenz to Prussia, with the blessings of Russia.

Currently, Thorn was ruled out of Marienwerder, not anymore under Culm, and it had its own *Landrat* or district Government and district Governor. This status of Thorn within Prussia lasted until the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte tore Thorn out of Russian and Prussian domination, to incorporate it in the French-created and short-lived Duchy of Warsaw.

So was the region of Bromberg, and Thorn then belonged to the department of Bromberg. The German gymnasium was Polonised. Polish influence augmented. And so did Polish neglect of the border town.

After the debacle of the Napoleonic armies, in 1813, the Russian troops besieged the town, and they occupied the town until 1815.

Then, on orders and agreements emanating from the Vienna Congress, the Prussian military could return into the city. Thorn was officially given back to Prussia on the 7th of May of 1817.

Since then, the Prussian military presence had been large and strong. The first *Landrat* appointed by the Prussian Government was the former Underprefect von Grabczewski, and he wore still the title of *Landrat* today. Thorn then had no more than 7,000 or so inhabitants. It came under the governance of the administration at Marienwerder of West-Prussia. Thorn returned to Prussian hands in rather good understanding with Russia.

During their occupation of Thorn, Poland had neglected the town at their far northern border. The walls were almost ruined, the moat held no water any more. The town suffered from very high debts. Its economy lacked funds, as the population had lost its former wealth. The Prussian Government began the long, slow, enormous work of the restoration of the fortifications of the town. Also, the vast outer defences of Thorn, Vauban-like structures, were repaired. Max Vincius had seen always a Thorn under works. And the works continued to these days.

Max liked the care of the Prussian Government for the city. He felt very proud to be a Prussian. He would gladly have helped the Prussian *Baumeisters*, Building Masters, in their repairs. He held in high esteem the *Stadtbaurat*, the construction assistant to the Mayor of the town.

Max had not come here to reflect on the history of Thorn. It was a history of wars and of defence of the city. Thorn was peaceful now, and Max hoped it could stay that way. He had come to resource his mind with the fine landscape of the Weichsel Valley! He sighed, and looked to the majestic whiteness on his right side.

The Weichsel was about 3,000 feet wide, the valley much wider still. The hills beyond the valley sloped softly upwards. This was all very sandy soil, though ploughed under thousands of times to lend it in the centuries a thin, very fertile topsoil of loam. The flanks of the hills held stones, pebbles. They were not very fertile for agriculture.

The hills on the other side of the stream hung white now, covered with a thick blanket of immaculate snow. Max imagined the vines waiting patiently in straight rows from low to high, under the snow. The wine of Thorn and indeed of the entire Culmerland was dry, yet fruity. Max traded in this wine, though not beyond Prussia.

The Weichsel was navigable. In the winter months, the stream was closed, for frozen in. The water ran from the south, from far Warsaw, turned west near Thorn, then north again near the district of Culm.

A wooden bridge had been thrown over the Weichsel at Thorn, opposite the old town. The gate that opened in the city walls where the bridge began, was appropriately called the Bridge Gate, the *Brückenpforte*.

Max rode to near the gate. He halted his horse for a while to reflect further on his town. Several other rivers and brooks ran through the district of Thorn. Lakes covered large expanses of the territory. This was wet country!

The Drewenz River came flowing in from the Drewenzsee near Osterode. The Thorner Bache, a large brook, much smaller than the Drewenz, reached the Weichsel at Thorn. Max recalled the *Rychnauer Bache* and the *Wolfsbache*, and the Tonzynna River. The Tonzynna formed the border with Poland for about two miles. The *Grüne Fliess*, the Green Brook, flowed in from the other side of the Weichsel, from the larger town of Inowroclaw in the Archduchy of Posen, to throw itself also into the Weichsel near the village of Niedermühle. The stream was frozen over. The surface was not even. Out of the snow shot blocks of ice. The river had fought against the ice and lost.

The valley of the Weichsel was vast, over 3 miles wide. It was open space, inviting, but dangerous at this time of the year. Several islands of low-lying sandy land lay in the river, mostly near the borders of the water, now ice. These islands were merely marshlands, often drowned by the stream. Around the river, beyond the dikes, the underground held much chalk, and lots and lots of sand. Only a thin layer of loam allowed for agriculture. The loam made the valley fertile for pastures, and grain fields, and vines.

Max Vincius drew his attention back to his left. He looked up at the mighty walls and the massive, round towers of the last defences of the city. The people of Thorn appreciated their walls. The houses inside the old town, lining the streets, stood slender, and high. Three stories were no exception, four stories common. The town was crammed with houses and people. Thorn was bursting out of the walls of the Old City. New suburbs were being created, one of those called the New Town. The New Town was now already an integral part of Thorn! Max sniffed and inhaled the smell of peat. Peat was being burnt in many houses. Peat could be found around Thorn, though not in large quantities. Preference was therefore given to coal, which could not be afforded by anyone. The Thorn merchants imported coal from England, and from the closer-by Oberschlesien territory. Peat was currently being burned in large quantities. Luckily, the eastern wind blew the fumes away from the city.

The Prussian inhabitants and the Polish people of more Slavic origin of Thorn were very hospitable, and generally of agreeable character. The German population had mostly been immigrants called in by the Teutonic Knights, men and women from Saxony, Mecklenburg, Hannover and from the other Hanse towns of west and east. These people worked hard, were quite willing to help construct. They were energetic and industrial-minded. What primarily missed to make the territory boom with industry and new agriculture were the lack of funds to build big, to execute dreams. Still, life was slow and peaceful and fine in Thorn. The German-speaking population had a great interest in culture and in beauty in general. They had founded a *Leseverein*, a reading association, several choirs, and newspapers were printed in the town. A city museum with an interest for local history existed.

The economy of the city did not sleep. New farms were constantly being built around Thorn, mostly by Polish farmers. They owned about one third of the land properties. Not all land belonged to the Polish *szlachta*, the higher nobility, or to the German Junkers, the knights of Prussia. Much of the landed nobility was still Polish. More and more property moved into Prussian-German hands, though.

The most used language in the homes of Thorn was German, for over somewhat half. Then came Polish. The German population formed the most dynamic part of the people of Thorn. The German-speaking population was mostly Evangelic. The Polish-speaking families vowed to the Roman Catholic faith. Only a small minority spoke Jiddish, a dialect of German interspersed with Hebrew words.

Thorn had a synagogue, which lay in a side street behind the central Market Place, not far from the largest Christian church, and not far from the *Rathaus*, the city hall. The synagogue stood at the end of the *Baader Strasse*, a prolongation of that street. With time, this street would be called the *Schiller Strasse*, named after the great German poet and philosopher Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller. Schiller was born, and had worked in Württemberg, and died in not so far Weimar, at the end of the previous century. His works were quite popular at the *Leseverein* of Thorn, and well-read.

Max loved his city, more than he would admit. The city was surrounded by powerful, thick, high walls, which lend it a rare intimacy and feeling of cosy protection. It showed patterns of fine, broad and straight-lined streets. One felt safe in those streets, lined on both sides by houses that seemed to rise to the skies.

The old Teutonic castle of Thorn lay partly in ruins. It was a nice aim for romantic walks. More castle ruins of medieval times, built by the Teutonic Order, lay spread out around Thorn, as at Dybow, Birglau, and Papau, near the Schönsee. At the junction of the Drewenz River and the Weichsel stood the old castle of Zlotterie, still impressive in its vastness.

Despite its provincial character, Thorn was a lively place. It burst out of its walls! The New Thorn had been built east of the old town. New Thorn also had walls built around its streets. It formed an integral part of the city. Suburbs were growing north and west of Thorn. In their turn, they would be absorbed into the city. Mocker, to the north-east, had originally been a village. It was now already part of the expanse of Thorn. The same fate would fall to the *Bromberger Vorstadt*, the suburb in the direction of Bromberg, and also to the New *Culmer Vorstadt*, to the *Old Culmer Vorstadt*, and to the east, to the *Jacobs Vorstadt*. *Vorstadt* meant suburb, now. With time, these suburbs would form one great conglomeration gobbled up by Thorn itself and called by this last name. Thorn rapidly spread out its tentacles of housed-in roads towards its suburbs. Max felt huge pride for the dynamism of the place he lived in, but of all these built-over spaces, he loved the old town best. Here, one felt the weight of the ages, and that meant wisdom, care, intellect and joy of living.

The expansion of the city was the result of the splendid work of the Prussian administration, both by the Mayor of Thorn and by the *Landrat* of the *Kreis* or district. These provided the money and the initiative for new roads. They asked for railroads to be laid, especially to the western and eastern parts of Germany. To provide for additional funds, Thorn now housed a provincial credit institute. Also, a new *Königliches Bankcommandite*, a branch of the Prussian Royal Bank, had been organised in Thorn.

Traditionally, the wealth of Thorn came from its commerce, and primarily from the trade in Polish grain. Lately, the prices of English grain had fallen due to the liberal laws in Great Britain. This had become a major threat to the main commerce of Thorn. The Prussian Government and the administration of Thorn had partly reacted by showing better processes

in agriculture to the local farmers, so that better manure came to be used, and less water. More sheep had been introduced on difficult, less fertile lands, so that the commerce in wool had started with success. As a result, however, prices of land had gone up, the last years even dramatically. The prices of grain had risen by more than 60%, which should have been fine for the Thorn traders, had they been able to sell the grain easily, which had not always been the case. The export to foreign countries had suffered, so Max and his father Asa had brought less grain to Danzig. They compensated by selling more to East-Prussia, but for that they needed more and better roads, railroads and new waterways, like canals.

The Thorn farmers preferred to grow wheat, which grew nicely in wet land and in the heat of dry summers, better than rye. Max Vincius was essentially a grain trader. He exported his grain sacks to Danzig by road, but mostly by water – by the Weichsel. Transport over the stream was cheap and vast quantities could be brought to Danzig this way, but not in winter. In winter, the Weichsel was closed, for frozen tightly. Max also brought foreign grain to Warsaw over the Weichsel, but he would have preferred transport by railway, which would be open also in winter. Boats and rafts could navigate easily on the Weichsel, though captains had to look out for the *Kämpe*, the sandy islands in the stream. These could move and rise, or disappear, yet lurk right under the surface of the Weichsel. Even the modern steamships could navigate on the stream! The Weichsel was connected by canals to the Oder. On the River Drewenz, only rafts could move downriver to Leibitsch, east of Thorn. The goods could be placed there on ships bound for Thorn and further. Goods from East-Prussia were thus also brought to Thorn.

At the moment, Thorn had no railway connections yet. Even not to Warsaw! The Chamber of Commerce of Thorn urged for ever more and better and faster communications, so railways became a hotly debated subject in the Town Council. The merchants of Thorn longed for railway connections to Berlin, to Danzig, to Stettin, to Königsberg, Posen and Leipzig. Railways would only come to Thorn between 1860 and 1862. Then would be laid the connection of Thorn to Bromberg, and from there to Ottloczyn, to the line from Ottloczyn to Warsaw. For these connections, a new iron bridge would have to be built over the Weichsel. Yet another bridge had to be thrown over the Tonzynna River. Thorn would have to wait for the year 1863 to see all this happen.

With the new railways, Max could transport his goods by train to the city of Bromberg and even to the harbour of Stettin in Pomerania, in plain winter. By the future railway connections, he would be able to reach Berlin more rapidly. Currently, he could reach so far only in the summer season, by boat. The railway station of Thorn would lie on the left bank of the Weichsel. Thorn would eventually grow to be the largest centre of the grain trade for hundreds of miles around. Max would be able to export cattle meat by train to Berlin and Danzig. Also, the booming new trade in wool could be better exploited with railways. That lay in the future.

Nevertheless, the *Kreis* and city of Thorn had done already much to ameliorate the connections by road. Roads ran to everywhere from Thorn, in every direction. Transport by road was only feasible for shorter distances, however. Most heavy transport, for instance of logs, had to go over the water, over the Weichsel. Not in winter! Max saw not one boat on the

white Weichsel today! These ships would have been imprisoned in the ice anyway, and maybe even have been crushed by the pressure of the ice.

Max was happy he and his colleagues-traders had a fine future to look up to with the promise of railway lines to Thorn.

As Thorn was a centre of the shipping trade on the Warsaw-Danzig line formed by the Weichsel, many shippers lived in the town and worked in the harbours. More frequently than not, foreign sailors stayed nights over at Thorn. There was much more activity in the tranquil town than a common traveller would have expected. Thorn remained a hidden diamond for men who were eager to advance in life. The general complaint by entrepreneurs in Thorn was rather the lack of workers than rampant unemployment. He who was ready to work hard, with his hands and with his mind, always found a reasonably paid job in Thorn!

Max still owned the traditional family businesses of his father and grandfather, distilleries, taverns, and tobacco factories. He exploited two distilleries, at Grodno and at Rynsk. Max also owned a brewery near Thorn. He had invested in hostel and restaurant in the city. He managed these together with his father, Asa. Max exported some of his production of brandy, of vodka. For larger quantities of vodka, he imported from the eastern territories of Prussia, first and foremost from the near province and district of Strassburg, east of Thorn. He drew some vodka from Lithuania, from around Vilna, and thus even transported and sold his vodka to the centre of Poland!

Max's attention was drawn back to the icy river. No boats could be seen as far as the eye could go. It was a desolate view, but one usual for the season of winter. In summer, tens of boats could be counted on the water!

The lands around Thorn lay very wet. Inundations were a constant threat. A constant worry, therefore, for the administration of the *Kreis* Thorn were the dikes. Even without inundations, the Thorn lands suffered from the water. The government of Prussia spent high amounts of money on the drying out of fields and at the constant drainage of the pastures and of the small brooks.

Much water in the immediate environs of Thorn was being diverted to the *Thorner Bache*, the Brook of Thorn, so that the moat of the city was once more filling. A *Landrat* special committee saw to the works, which aimed also at stopping the inundations caused by the growing water level of the Weichsel and its feeding rivers. Dikes were being restored and drawn higher. Further up, dams had been built. Max felt quite satisfied with the work of the *Landrat*. How could it be otherwise, with the current *Landrat* called von Besser, from better? Thorn itself was managed rather well by an *Oberbürgermeister* and three assistants called the *Syndikus*, the *Kammerer* and the *Stadtbaurat*. The last one in particular, knew his business. These men proposed their plans to the City Council of about 20 members. They held vivid councils with the most prominent men, mostly traders, of the city in unofficial meetings, balls, and evening dinners. Once every while, delegates from the merchants went to have a talk with the Mayor and his assistants.

Max Vincius drew his eyes upward. On the hill crests of Thorn grew forests of firs. Oaks and other, priced wood trees, were rare. The forests delivered wood, another product of export. And in the forests lived animals, the hides of which were a priced product almost everywhere

else in the world. Other fine export products were oils, linseed oil, and legumes and tobacco. Max had received from his father two tobacco and cigar factories. He shared the profits with his father. The production units provided nice profits to the family.

And yet, the most important personality by which Thorn was known internationally was not a merchant, not an economist or a military leader. It was not a poet, not a playwright and not a novelist. Also, not a statesman.

Niklaus Kopernick was born at Thorn in 1473. He was a Prussian mathematician and astronomer, a scholar, a very learned man, a doctor also, and a scholar of Greek and Roman Antiquity, a genius of knowledge and patient research. Max liked the symbolic meaning for his town. Kopernick gave to himself a more Latinised name, to Niclaus Copernicus, as was the habit among scholars in those times.

Copernicus' father was a trader in copper at Thorn, born in Cracow of Poland, who died when Copernicus was merely ten years old. Copernicus' mother was called Barbara von Watzenrode. Her father too, was a trader of Thorn. The brother of his mother, his uncle, raised the young Copernicus.

This uncle later became the Prince-Bishop of the Archbishopric of Ermland. Copernicus studied at the University of Cracow. He was a genius. He also studied at Bologna in Italy, in civil and church law. He studied at Padua, and finally became a canon of the Church, assisting his uncle at Frauenburg in the Prince-Bishopric of Ermland, where his uncle ruled. Copernicus published several papers on the revolution of the planets. He wrote a book in 1530, published only in 1543 in Nürnberg of Germany, his most well-known work, 'De revolutionibus orbium coelestium', about the revolutions of the celestial bodies, in which he proved the earth turned around the sun. He destroyed definitely the Ptolemaian model.

Copernicus died a little later, however, in Frauenburg of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, not in Thorn. He was buried in the cathedral of Frauenburg, but he received a memorial tomb in Thorn, and later even a monument near the Market Place of the city. Max Vincius often went to stand in front of Copernicus' monument, as if asking, 'well, old boy, what would you have done in my place?'

The monument had become one of his points of reflection, as had the walk along the Weichsel, as Max was doing once more, now.

The economy of Thorn was growing. Did the townsmen still have a heart? Of course, they had! Thorn had begun to seriously care for its poor. It took pride in a communal poor-house and in an orphanage. Several hospitals existed in Thorn, among which an *Elendehaus*, a hospital especially suited for the poor, situated in the New Town. There was a hospital for the Catholics – the St James Hospital – and one for the Evangelic communities – the St George Hospital -, equally in the New Town. The old hospitals of St Peter-and-Paul, the former St Catherine and St Mary Magdalene hospitals of the previous centuries, had been organised into one unit. It was now called the *Neustädtische Bürgerhospital*. It offered sick beds for the rich and elderly persons of the burgher families of Thorn. The poor were generally not admitted in this hospital. Other hospitals existed in the town, private hospitals, and even in some of the villages around the city. There were about ten good doctors in Thorn, plus a few military doctors, about a dozen or more nurses, and as many midwives. The Thorn military camps had installed a military hospital.

The people of Thorn adhered to three main religions: the Protestant or Evangelic Christian faith, the Catholic Faith, and in much lesser numbers to the Jewish Faith. The lands to the right of the Weichsel belonged to the Catholic Bishopric of Culm. To the left of the Weichsel extended the bishopric of Posen or Poznań. Thorn was merely a deaconate of the bishopric of Culm.

The main Catholic churches, all very ancient, were St Mary's built in 1235, St John's built from about 1350 to 1400 and St James built in 1360 and situated in the *Neustadt* or New Town.

The memorial tomb of Niklaus Copernicus stood in St John's.

The main churches of the Evangelic Faith were the Evangelic Church in the Old Town, and the *Dreifaltigkeitskirche*, Trinity Church, built in 1824 in the New Town.

The Jewish community did not use the word *Kahal* anymore. They had about 200 regular members, among which Max Vincius. It organised the ceremonies in the synagogue, and had installed a *besmedresh*, a study house, and a *heder*, a Jewish primary school. The community was lively, though not brilliant. So were the rabbis of Thorn.

Max had followed the courses of the German Gymnasium of Thorn. The school was still being organised and ameliorated. With time, aimed for the full seven classes of the German *Realschule Erste Klasse A*. It could provide for the entire classical education in the middle of the 1860's.

Thorn was a border city, one of the first places to be attacked from the south by foreign armies. Little threat seemed put Prussia in danger from that direction for the moment. Still, the military garrison at Thorn was a powerful one, with more than 2,000 soldiers about the strength of a Division. The Prussian military were of the 3rd infantry Brigade of the First Prussian *Armee* corps. The Prussian military considered a strong garrison was fully justified to defend the frontier, which lay only a few miles to the south of Thorn. Thorn also housed a strong artillery battalion.

Thorn had lived through a troubled military history, signs of its strategic position on the Weichsel. Its fortifications, first around the Old Town, dated from as early as 1350! These walls still stood at places, to the current era. Thorn defended itself quite well in the wars that raged around the town.

In 1629, the Swedish Field Marshal Wrangel tried to capture the city with an army of 8,000 soldiers. He could not take the town! King Gustav Adolf of Sweden, the real warrior-king did better in 1655 and captured the town. In fact, Thorn simply surrendered to the king without having to suffer a siege.

In late 1657, the city was retaken by Austrian armies allied to Poland, led by the Generals Montecuculi and Heister.

In 1702, the Swedes led once more a siege to Thorn. In May 1703, the town surrendered again to a Swedish army of 28,000 men! The Swedes destroyed part of the fortifications, then.

Thorn was handed over to Prussia in 1793 by the conquering Russian troops. This was a gesture of keeping the peace with Prussia, over the act of aggression against formerly independent Poland.

At the end of 1806, the city was captured by the French Napoleonic armies. Thorn became the principal warehouse for the French campaign in Poland and in Russia.

When the French leaders set up the Duchy of Warsaw, as an independent puppet country, Thorn returned under the authority of Austria.

After the Napoleonic armies fled from Russia in 1813, Russian troops attacked the French garrison with 16,000 men. The French soldiers of Thorn surrendered in April of 1813.

In the autumn of 1815, Thorn returned to Prussia on orders of an agreement at the Conference of Vienna. By then, its fortifications lay in a very bad state. The Prussian troops restored, cleaned and rebuilt the inner walls and the outward, more modern defences. The moat began to refill with water. These works at the fortifications were still going on, year after year.

Max drew himself out of his musings about Thorn. He should not so much think of the past. The living brought sufficient trouble. His horse neighed. The animal showed its impatience. It longed for a warm stable and its food. Max clicked the horse on. When he reached the Bridge Gate, he drove back into the city.

The ride along the vastness of the stream had done him good. It had refreshed his thoughts. He had reflected on the city, on how impregnable the town was. He had impregnated himself with the landscape he loved so much, in all weather. He had admired the immaculateness of the white surface, and enjoyed the beauty of God's creation.

Why had he helped the homeless people who had been sitting so miserably in the street? Why had he given them much more than any normal Prussian would have done? Max was not a man given much to charity, to melodrama and pity. Max Vincius thought of himself as a rather careless, egocentric and ruthless trader. Why had he taken to him so much the fate of this poor, Saxon family?

Maybe he had shown he too could act like the Good Samaritan of the Christian New Testament. Doing charity was regarded as a fundamental virtue by the Jews. The people he had given shelter to, a home, work, a job, were no Jews. Should he not better have reserved his money for a Jewish family? Who cared of what religion those people were, Max decided. There was but one God, and the rules of living were pretty much the same, whether you were Christian or a Jew.

Max now hoped he would not regret his sudden impulse of pity. Fate had forced him to intervene, to help the poor people. Most probably the fate of the Kleinberger Family, more than his own fate, had urged Max on. He felt with a pang of depression his own fate as flat as the surface of the Weichsel. Where was a reason for his living to be found? He felt alone and unloved, though his children no doubt relied on him. What would his deed set in motion? Good events, or bad ones? Could evil come out of good deeds?

Max shook the darker thoughts off his cloak. He sought an end to his current way of living; of that he was sure. But how? He so much desired an end to every day's dread and toiling. The crispy air had reinvigorated him. The view of the white expanse and the fine feeling of a deed well worth, though only one good deed for humanity, consoled him. His day had been well spent, after all.

Reluctantly, Max forced his horse to under the Bridge Gate and back home. He first drove to the Market Place, and made a tour around the square. He concluded as a final thought it was fine living, even as a Jew, in Thorn.

In that, Max Vincius was right. In August of 1847, the Prussian government issued a new law on the Jews in its country. The law confirmed the Royal Decrees published in 1812. It started with the wonderful line, ‘our Jewish citizens shall in our monarchy totally enjoy the same duties and the same civil rights as our Christian subjects.’

The new law furthermore stated that at the universities, private teachers, ordinary and extraordinary professors of the medical, mathematical sciences, of the natural sciences, the geographic and linguistic sciences, could be Jews. The Jews remained excluded, however, from the other branches of the university faculties, as well as from the academic senates and from public functions such as rector or pro-rector or deacons. Jewish schools organised according to the articles of the law of 1847, had all the rights and properties of a Prussian public school. The Jews were allowed to take on any communal function, as long as that function was not associated with knightly noble, executive or police power.

The law of 1847 confirmed the laws of 1812 on the Jews, and widened it. The Jews could live and work peacefully in Prussia, not be discriminated, be equal to all other citizens of Prussia. This status was what Asa Vincius had sought when he had come to live in Thorn, in the respect of the other citizens of the city, whether they were speaking Polish or German.

Max Vincius’ chest broadened. He could breathe more easily. Thorn was his paradise on earth. Nowhere, the Jews had been recognised so much as citizens of the land. Thorn was a place in which one had to work hard, but practically nothing differed Max Vincius anymore from the other citizens of Thorn and Prussia. Max was no foreigner here. This was his land and his town!

Ezra Vincevicius and his Grandchildren. 1845 and earlier

Ezra's Death

At the beginning of autumn in the year of 1845, the Vincius Family of Thorn received very sad news. Ezra Vincevicius, father of Asa Vincius and grandfather of Max, had died in Vilna. Edek Vincevicius, the stout, youngest son of Abraham Vincevicius, brought the message of the Vilna family to Thorn. Edek was Ezra's grandchild, as was Max, but by different fathers and mothers. Edek had come on horseback, as fast as his horse could hold him. At 28 years old, he was still a young man, a very robust one. When he arrived at Asa's, he was thoroughly exhausted from the journey. He had ridden fast and lost no time. He had slept little. The weather had been foul, the first snow had fallen on his journey, and many icy rain showers. Strong winds had blown in his face most of the time. Another man would have spent twice as long on the journey! He arrived at Asa's house on a morning, white as a man walking in moonlight on a particularly dark night. Leah Perlman ushered him in when he knocked on the door. She made him rest immediately on the sofa, placed a bottle of vodka next to him in her hall, and began preparing a copious meal.

Edek would explain later what had happened to the patriarch of the family. First, he told he had not only come to announce the death of Asa's father. He also said that if the Vinciuses of Thorn and the Svirskiuses of Danzig wished to visit the grave of Ezra, then Ezra's other son, Abraham Vincevicius, would be happy to organise in Vilna a period of eating and talking about the life of their patriarch. There was no need to decide on the exact date long in advance. Abraham would provide rooms in Ezra's and Rebekah's house and in Abraham's, in Iosel's and in Edek's. Abraham only asked for a prospective date.

Leah Perlman instantly answered the Vinciuses of course would come to Vilna at the soonest. Everybody would want to say prayers over the tomb of Ezra. Later on, Asa entered his house, and heard the news. He had to sit down to absorb the fact. He had more or less thought his father to be indestructible.

Asa agreed to send a messenger by ship to Danzig, and have dates arranged with Sarah and Anton Svirskius there. Sarah was Ezra's daughter and Asa's sister. Then, Asa would send another message to Vilna, to Abraham. Edek reassured Leah the Vincius Family of Thorn and the Svirskius Family of Danzig would be very welcome at Vilna, at the houses of the Vincevicius Family. Asa sent for his son, for Max. Edek rested a while upstairs.

In the late afternoon, Edek explained what had happened to Ezra. He spoke slowly, trying to recall as many details as he could. He sat then near the hearth in Asa's hall. He warmed his bones. Around him sat Asa and Leah, and their son Max.

Edek was an intelligent, meticulous young man. He talked slowly, trying to recall as many images as he could. Vodka helped him to remember a little livelier what he knew and had seen.

Ezra Vincevicius had been 75 years old, yet still a strong and imposing man, tall and lean and as unbending in opinions and judgment as a magistrate. He still commanded everybody around him, not in the least his son Abraham, though with maybe a little more compassion,

comprehension and leniency than he had shown in his younger years. Ezra had grown wiser. The evening before his death, he had discussed the organisation of this week's *Sabbath* with his wife, Rebekah Munkacs. Husband and wife went to sleep, as they had done for so many days, weeks, months, years since their marriage, 55 years earlier. Yes, they had lived together for 55 years! Ezra had been 20 then, and his beautiful Rebekah 18.

In the morning of the Friday before the *Sabbath*, Rebekah had tried to tease her husband out of bed first, but Ezra had felt as stiff as a wooden staff, and Rebekah heard no snoring, and not even a breathing. Ezra felt cold.

Rebekah had jumped out of bed, cried out for Ezra, but soon she had to understand. Ezra's heart did not beat anymore. His breathing had stopped. Her husband had died in his sleep! Rebekah could appreciate such a peaceful death. She wished the same for her, a death, not in sickness and not in invalidity, without any fuss to beloved ones. Still, the shock came hard on her. She fell on her knees in the bedroom, she told. She had remained so in deep shock for quite a while. The man she thought would surely outlive her by long years, had unexpectedly passed away. Rebekah was not a woman given over to despairs. She had remained strong. She had dressed, prepared already what she could do for a burial the same day, and then she had sent word by her servants to Abraham's family.

Only a little later, Abraham, her son, arrived at his father's house, accompanied by Abi, his wife. Rebekah broke only when she saw her son. She started crying and weeping, and sank in a chair in her hall. Abi took command.

Abraham called in a few street-boys. He pushed fine coins in their hands, and told them to warn friends of the family, as well as the Burial Society of the Great Synagogue. The coins made sure the boys would deliver the sad message. Only a little later, the people of Vilna had started to stream into the house, proof of the boys' work.

Rebekah had to explain over and over Ezra had given no signs of any sickness or weakness. He had certainly been no *goyses*, no man dying for long hours! Ezra had departed for the eternal life in his sleep, without complaining or bothering anyone. It was true, Ezra and Rebekah used bedding of goose feathers, not of chicken feathers, a good sign for dying people. Ezra had not suffered while dying, for otherwise Rebekah would have heard or felt anything. Most probably, Ezra's heart had broken very suddenly, maybe even in the middle of the night, in Ezra's deepest sleep. Rebekah wished her husband to have died in sweet dreams.

Ezra had been lucky, for he had died on a Friday, no doubt thinking of the *Sabbath* to come. Yes, he had been a pious and righteous Jew, observant, and a fine servant of the community. He had given much money to the synagogue. This, everybody confirmed. Only Rebekah had been at his side, so Ezra had not died alone, and with the woman he loved most. What more could one wish in death? Many people regretted not having stood at Ezra's side, for helping a dying man into the other world was considered to be a *mitzvah*, a good deed. It had not been this way! Rebekah was sure Ezra had wanted his death as had happened, quickly and discreetly in the silence of the night. Rebekah explained over and over again she had slept, so nobody had stood in the way of the Angel of Death when the creature would have appeared with his cruel knife to take her husband's life.

The house had rapidly filled with people, neighbours and friends, Edek repeated. Two men of the Burial Society called in. Rebekah explained them what had happened. The men nodded. Ezra had had a good death, sign of a pious life. The men were grave, rather silent. They proved themselves to be the dignified representatives of the *Kahal*, the Jewish community, in sad moments. They went upstairs with Rebekah, to see the deceased. Ezra lay still in his bed. Abi had already cleaned the room. She had brought in a few, rare flowers. One of the men from the Burial Society, the older one, held a small mirror in front of Ezra's mouth and nose. The mirror shone as before.

'The man, Ezra Vincevicius, is dead,' declared the men from the Burial Society.

Rebekah burst out in tears again.

'Should we not push a needle under the nails?' the younger man asked.

Rebekah stiffened, and the older man noticed her reluctance. Even dead, Rebekah wanted not her husband to be hurt. The older man caught her reaction of being startled. He knew the old couple well.

He angrily shrugged the suggestion away, 'the soul has definitely left the body,' the older man confirmed.

Rebekah had looked at her husband's eyes. She did not have to close them, and might hardly have been able to gather the courage to do so. Yes, her husband was dead. On her own, she had poured out all the water present in the house, out of all the basins, as was the custom straight after a death in Jewish houses. All dead water had to go!

The older man, the *shames* of the Burial Society, asked Rebekah, 'I assume the people of Gaono have been informed about the death?'

'That has been done according to custom,' Abi Abramovski answered rapidly. 'My mother-in-law has seen to it. We placed some coins around the body to give to Jewish charity. As you can see, we also placed and lit candles at the head of the bed, and we covered up the mirrors.' 'Good, good,' the *shames* replied pleasingly. He knew he was in a pious family. 'Would you like our friend Ezra to be buried in the clothes he wears?'

'Yes, please, *shames*,' Abi confirmed. 'My mother-in-law and I changed him. We put on his best *kittel* and *tallis*, too.'

'I assume you washed the body?'

'Of course. My mother-in-law did so. I helped. We could put him in the standing position, as prescribed, and poured water over his head. We dried, and dressed him.'

The *shames* smiled for the first time, 'you have done well. You are pious women indeed. You eased our task considerably. Now, tell me, has a coffin been prepared or ordered? It would be better to bury our friend Ezra today. If needed or wished, we can postpone the burial until another day. I would prefer to bury today. In my experience, it eases the pain. We took the liberty to warn the Great Synagogue of a burial in the late afternoon. The Rabbi will be ready and waiting. He was quite shocked to hear of Ezra's death. He too considered your father-in-law as a friend. He told us he would come soon, and prepare the ceremony from here. He asked us to give you his sincere condolences. He too repeated several times to us he had lost a dear friend.'

'We have sent for a coffin,' Abi said. 'We were promised the coffin would be brought before noon. It may be a little later.'

'Fine, fine,' the *shames* nodded once more. 'We brought the burial shroud.'

The *shames* unfolded a long, white shroud, which had the blue star of David embroidered on it.

‘We brought our finest shroud, embroidered by my wife, courtesy of the *Kahal* and of our society. I hope you will be pleased.’

The women nodded silently. Rebekah began to weep, and she shrunk at that moment. The two men of the Burial Society went each to one side of the bed. They put on white, clean gloves. They took up the body carefully, slowly, and laid it on the floor, head to the door. Then, they enveloped the body in the open shroud.

Rebekah began to cry out loudly, tearing at her clothes. Abi held her hands in a firm grip to restrain her mother-in-law. The *shames* worked rapidly, then. These were always the most painful moments in any household. With his aide, he drew the shroud over Ezra, and started to knit the shroud over the corpse. He took the needles and strings from his pocket. His hands drew the needle and the fine thread deftly over the seams of the shroud. The knitting was expertly done. The old *shames* had done this so many times! He closed the shroud from the feet up, murmuring prayers all the time. His grief showed, then. He had known Ezra since so long! He checked to make sure there were no overseen knots in the thread.

When the *shames* arrived at the shoulders of Ezra, he said, ‘farewell, my friend. We will see each other back, soon.’

The *shames* patted Ezra’s shoulder. He said his last Hebrew prayers, and closed the shroud. Rebekah’s weeping had by then evolved to shrieks of despair. Abi had to support her. Rebekah would otherwise have thrown herself upon her husband on the floor.

Abi Abramovski held Rebekah Munkacs by the shoulders and directed her out of the room, into the hall downstairs. Many people sat or stood there. The hall fell silent. Abraham served vodka to all, also to the women.

A dozen women formed a circle when Rebekah came into the room. They formed a circle of mourners, of *baklogerins*. They offered prayers and laments in the hall. They made Rebekah sit down on a chair in their midst.

The men of the Burial Society left the bedroom and equally entered the hall. They went for Abraham’s drink. They gave their condolences to him.

Not long after, still before noon, the men of the Society who would carry the coffin to the cemetery entered the Gaono house. There were but four men. The *shames* told Abraham he would have liked to have two more men to help them carry. They would bring the coffin on a bier to the cemetery, as the Great Synagogue and the Jewish cemetery were not far. Many hands went up.

Abraham too, volunteered, but the *shames* of the Burial Society refused.

‘No, no, no, that will not do,’ he said. ‘We need you, Abraham, to care for your mother and for the guests. I and my assistants will help, then.’

In the meantime, Abi and two women had been working in the kitchen. Soon, they brought in cakes for everybody.

It was not long after noon, when the *shames* approached Abraham, telling him the sun would set soon. They should be going to the cemetery! Abraham nodded. The mourners stopped their wailing and singing. Nobody in the hall said a word, now. The men went upstairs and

came down the stairs again, holding the coffin. This was not easy. The stairs were steep in Ezra's home! The old man weighed heavily.

Once in the hall, the four men from the Carrying Society and the two men from the Burial Society pushed the bier up and the coffin on their shoulders. A sigh escaped from the people who were still in the hall. The carrying men went out of the house. They made sure no women came close to the coffin. The female mourners chanted again, and cried, wept and wailed, holding Rebekah in their midst. The *shames* wore the bier on the right side.

Normally, he should have preceded the procession. Today, he shouted, 'charity saves from death!' from under the coffin on his shoulders, a phrase from Proverbs.

The Rabbi of the Great Synagogue of Vilna arrived when the procession started to walk. A few children from the Talmud school accompanied him. They recited psalms.

In crowded Gaono, people stood in rows along the houses. Nobody would have missed saying goodbye a last time to a significant man from their street.

'So many people had come to see the coffin of our grandfather being carried to the cemetery,' told Edek. 'We didn't know Ezra had been in such high esteem by the community. And from where came all those people? Not just from Gaono! Had they all left or finished their work to honour our grandfather? We felt impressed!'

At the *dos heylike*, the holy place of the cemetery, in the centre, far from the fences, a grave had already been dug in the earth. On the way, the coffin-carriers stopped at least three times to recite prayers. All the people who participated in the procession repeated the prayers. The Rabbi ordered these stations himself. Not so long ago, Ezra and Rebekah had bought two sacks of sand from Eretz Israel, said to have been gathered near the city of Jerusalem.

'We, Iosel and I, we carried those sacks,' Edek explained proudly.

The carriers lowered the corpse into the grave. While this was being done, Rebekah and her son Abraham threw handfuls of the holy sand onto the corpse.

The corpse was being laid in the grave with his face to the east, so that Ezra would be facing in the right direction of Jerusalem when the Messiah would come. While this was being done, the mourners continued to lament in higher, shrieky tones, 'from dust you came and to dust you return.'

The assembled people, men and women together, said *kaddish*. This prayer called for sanctification of Ezra. It was the last thing they could do for the deceased man.

Afterwards, the people left the cemetery. Our grandmother Rebekah then especially understood she would not see her beloved husband again, nor we our grandfather.

Rebekah and Iosel cried loudly. Our father Abraham was stricken with grief. We all washed our hands while leaving the sacred ground, and wiped them off in the grass.

'After the burial of our grandfather, we honoured his memory in the seven days of strict mourning,' Edek told on. 'Then, my father sent me to bring you the sad news. In Vilna, we are honouring the thirty days of less strict mourning. My father asked me to tell you he would like to entertain you and hold suppers to the memory of our grandfather, the benefactor of our family, if possible, during this thirty-day period, and if not, then later. We can visit our grandfather's grave and tomb together, and say *kaddish*. We shall erect a tombstone as soon as possible, of course. We are sure the soul of Grandfather Ezra will still hover above the grave for an entire year, for Ezra deeply loved us and his city of Vilna. We are certain,

though, that Ezra's soul is at peace, at rest, and will not return as a *dybbuk*, as a malevolent spirit. The Rabbi assured us too of that. He spoke the appropriate prayers.'

'Well,' Asa concluded after this story, 'my father will remain a few days in the *Gehennem*. Then, the soul of Ezra will go to the Heavenly Garden of Eden, accompanied by angels. I have to travel to Vilna. I must pray on the grave of my father.'

Max agreed immediately to accompany his father. They did not speak only in their name. They meant both Asa's family and Max's family would leave town. The men and women conferred about how to organise the voyage. Many of their plans had to be changed. It was decided to first send a message to Danzig, to invite the Svirskius Family to come to Thorn. The Svirskius, by their mother, belonged to the Vincius Family too. Then all together, they would send word to Abraham Vincevicius as soon as the Svirskius Family arrived in Thorn. They would give an indication of the approximate date of their arrival in Vilna. Asa made these decisions, and nobody in the families opposed him.

Max calculated it would probably have been more practical for the Thorn family to sail by boat to Danzig, change ships there to the port of Memel, and then navigate from Memel up the Nemunas or Niemen River to Vilna. He didn't propose this alternative route. His father would have reasons to travel by land.

Asa, indeed, had his reasons to travel over the land. He still owned taverns in Lithuania, in Russian territory, taverns he hadn't visited – inspected – since ages. He now had the occasion to journey by them casually, and make up his mind on how to sell them, and at what price. Two of the taverns he had already given over to his son Max. He did not want to hold on to the taverns, and neither would Max, who had already told his father in clear words his business was in Prussia, and in Prussia alone. Asa needed to see the state of his inns a last time, and then hand them over all to Max, or sell them quickly. Who might be interested in buying them? Asa still had some fine contacts in Vilna. He knew men there, who might want to put good cash on the table for the right price. The first prospective buyer could be his brother Abraham, but Asa had to see for himself what potential the taverns still held. He trusted nobody with that job.

Asa was 55 years of age, still strong in limbs and health, still alert in mind, but he feared in a few years' time he might not be able at all, or not desire anymore to journey in Lithuania. With his father, other items had died within Asa.

Trade in Thorn

Max Vincius was gradually expanding his business, without telling his father in which products he was dealing. The basis of his income still originated from the taverns and distilleries given to him by his father. Did his father just want to get rid of those? Exploiting inns that lay widely dispersed, some indeed still in far-away Lithuania and Poland, as far as the region of Minsk in White Russia, took Max so much time in travels, he had decided to sell most of them. Max had told his father he would be doing so, yet had kept most of the inns and distilleries he knew his father liked for sentimental reasons. Those, luckily were among the largest taverns of Russian Lithuania, nearest to the finest distilleries Asa thus still owned a substantial business outside Prussia. Max had even enlarged some of the taverns to please

his father. The distilleries brought in good money. The profits entered into Vincius accounts in banks of Vilna. Yes, it was good to bet on two countries, on two deposits of money. But each time Max travelled to Lithuania, he brought back some of that money to Thorn in the form of gold coins. This bothered him. Roads were always unsafe between Thorn and Vilna, the way by boat long and boring. Indiscreet bank clerks could warn thieves he, Max, was a lonely traveller loaded with gold in his packs. Max now feared his father's visits to the taverns and distilleries might increase his father's feelings to this kind of business. In fact, Max underestimated his father's foresight. There was little Max could do against his father's wishes, except talk hesitantly to the older man. For Max, the journey with his father would be one occasion more for serious talks about business and investments. And Max wanted to break with Lithuania entirely, and to invest the money in Prussia.

Max liked better his tobacco factories. He owned only two of such enterprises, both in Prussia, and both not far from Thorn, well within the *Kreis*. Max had succeeded in consolidating that business nicely. He had sold off the smaller factories outside Prussia. In his Prussian tobacco factories, Max transformed the tobacco plant leaves into cigars and snuff. The snuff actually sold better than cigars. It could be produced in large quantities with simpler means, with machines, needing less employees. Max could inspect the factories without having to travel far, without having to leave Thorn for weeks. Roaming the countryside had been a way of living for his father, not for him. Taverns, distilleries and tobacco factories accounted for 25 percent of Max's current income, but together, they took far more of his time than the rest of his activities.

Max was primarily a merchant, not an entrepreneur. He traded in everything that could be bought and sold in large quantities, in bulk of grain, wood, wool, and hides, at higher prices. Occasionally, Max bought in Poland and in Posen, not too far from Thorn, yet on the other side of the nearby borders. He also bought and sold amber and other precious stones, in much smaller quantities. Grain, he bought in Poland, to ship it to Danzig, to the Svirskius Family, to the family of his aunt Sarah. The Svirskius men sold his grain overseas, to Hamburg and London, and to the eastern parts of the Baltic sea, also to Sweden and Norway. A lot of the grain was shipped to Denmark, where other traders sold it on. The grain business counted for over 30 percent of Max's income. Max hoped to expand. With fast railway connections to Warsaw and Berlin, Max could transport grain also in the middle of winter, bring in more grain from Poland, and send more grain directly to places such as Leipzig, Dresden, Berlin and ultimately on, westwards. He was convinced he could double his business in grain with the railway connections, though he would enter in competition with the English traders. Nevertheless, Max would have to wait for another fifteen years before he could expedite his sacks to the inland cities of Western Europe more directly. The railway would only arrive at Thorn in the 1860's.

Max avoided smuggling. He held accounts of his movements of goods. The administration of Thorn rarely inspected his books, but Max made sure he did not cheat, not in figures, and not in movements of goods. His main accountant and keeper of books had become the woman he had plucked from the street, Anna Kleinberger. The Saxon woman had become his principal confidant. She held his books better than he could have done, and she was honest.

Max did bring in from Poland once every while smaller quantities of goods, without declaring every last shipment, but this happened not on a regular basis. Anna Kleinberger kept additional, separate books on these deals. Max was sure all the merchants of Thorn smuggled goods to some degree, even the associates of the Mayor of the town, himself a large trader. Smuggling was, of course, illegal.

The police of Thorn worked independently from other Prussian officials. The Mayor and his Council headed the Thorn police, hired and paid the policemen. Max remained on good terms with the Councillors and with the Mayor. These men wanted first and for all to grow the funds and wealth of the town, of the traders, so that Thorn could thrive. Much money was needed for bettering the roads, the dikes, the railway connections to the city, and all that took more money than Thorn could provide for from her own treasury. The city often appealed to the large traders. The large traders could not be stopped in their own growth! What then was so bad, the Mayor once confided in Max, with a little smuggling, when amounts could be invested in new trade deals and in societies that built roads and canals, for the better sake of all the inhabitants of the city? Smuggling augmented Max's gains with less than 10 percent of his income. A few traders he knew got more than half of their income from smuggling!

Max had also begun to lend money to smaller merchants and to artisans. He only lent out small amounts on shorter terms. He nurtured no great ambitions to become a competitor for the few larger, mostly public banks of Thorn. His lending out of money was booming. He had established a house that had obtained all the necessary permits to be called a bank. It was a slowly growing business, but Max was still learning the business of finance. Recently, a few larger traders had begun to appeal to his funds for additional, peak demands of cash. Lending out money was risky business. Max suffered from notorious failings of trade partners and noble families. Nevertheless, the gains also here largely outweighed his losses. Besides, most loans he accepted were to people he knew well, who were respected businessmen or members of noble families, who might not pay him off within time, but who did pay in the end.

The traders of Thorn, though men who lived at the farthest corner of the kingdom, made sure their horizon remained wider than their region. Max did not stay all the time merely in Thorn. He travelled. He read the newspapers, and kept abreast of the politics of Prussia and abroad. He felt the need to see with his own eyes what the rest of the world looked like, and especially how the men living in the towns he traded with, thought and looked forward to. He talked with those businessmen, with merchants outside Thorn. He had visited Berlin and Frankfurt, Dresden and Leipzig, and even far-off Paris. He frequently travelled on one of his ships to Warsaw and Danzig, to Königsberg and Stockholm. He spoke for long hours with the members of the Svirskius Family in Danzig. He hesitated visiting Saint Petersburg, but his heart longed to stay a while in that city too, even merely for visiting the glorious buildings.

The Prussian Army wanted Max, and he did not avoid it. He had served as a young lieutenant in the Prussian Army in the years 1841 and 1842. As a Max's father had been a good friend to the major leading the garrison of Thorn. Max had to serve in the military, but he could remain in Thorn during his military service. He had even been able to continue trading while serving, though on a much lesser scale than before. He did not dislike being a lieutenant. Still, he did not aspire to a military career.

After his military service, Max returned to his business. He had relentlessly grown his trading opportunities. He loved doing so, recognising his calling. With time, he could buy two ships, one of which a steamboat. He had eyes on a third ship. When he could not fill a ship completely with his own goods, he took in loads for other traders. He thus gradually also became a transporter of goods. His business expanded into a transport company. He bought a few rooms in the centre of Thorn, and installed there a manager, an Evangelic man, and a clerk. He would buy his third ship mainly to transport the goods of other merchants. He only moved goods on the Weichsel, between Thorn and Danzig. With his fourth ship, he would also navigate between Warsaw and Thorn. He did not see any true obstacles in these ventures. He was considering navigating to Leipzig! Max's ships would not perturb the transport business in an inland port like Thorn, where regularly over 50 ships lay in harbour. He was only a minor player, but he profited well.

Few traders of Thorn asked for your religion these days. In that aspect, Thorn and Prussia seemed very different from Vilna and Lithuanian Russia. Max was an observant Jew. He did not work on Sabbath, at least not when he could avoid doing so. He did not attend all the synagogue ceremonies regularly, as he travelled much. He was a member of two Jewish community associations, donated money to the community, but he rarely attended the meetings. People came to see him. In this, he was not an exception in Thorn. Religious life was much more relax in Thorn than in Vilna. The Rabbi of the Thorn community was much less present in the family life of the Vincius.

A traders' guild existed in Thorn, though such a name was rarely used. It was just a place where traders met, discussed, and decided on joint ventures. Max was one of the members of this club. He had doubted at first a Jew could become a true member of the small Thorn traders' community. It had not been the case in Vilna. His father, Asa, had never tried to ask for membership.

Max did step into the meeting-house of the guild one day, and audaciously applied for membership. He was a little surprised, for many men seemed to know who he was. He got accepted immediately. He merely had a short interview with the leader of the association, a Christian Evangelic man, yet a man who told him he knew and appreciated how the Vincius men traded.

Since then, Max tried as much as possible to attend the meetings and discussions of the association of merchants of Thorn. Many deals were concluded over a dinner in one of the hotels of the centre of Thorn. He learned much at this sort of meetings. They formed as many occasions to discuss ventures and to agree on new contracts.

Max's business grew by a sizable percentage after he got to know his peers. He knew now most of the other members, and enjoyed their confidence. Other merchants approached him to agree on deals that needed large investments of several traders together. Max had dealt successfully with many of the merchants of Thorn, thanks to his connection in the traders' association. This astonished his father, who remained aloof of dealing with non-Jewish merchants and who looked very suspiciously at deals with other Jews.

Max had made many more friends in the association than competitors. This gave an additional boost to his deals and profits.

True, not everybody appreciated his dryness of character, his scrupulous sticking to the conditions of an agreement. But many more men liked his honesty, his stability in funding, his reliability and loyalty, and his occasional understanding of a colleague who might be temporarily in financial trouble. When such a man came to talk openly to Max, Max discussed in simple terms with the man on how to solve the matter together. Often, money payments were temporarily stopped. This had earned Max the gratefulness of a few of the largest traders of Thorn. Risks brought such issues. Max understood. He had been able to appeal to his father in such situations.

Max attended the association meetings whenever he could. He regularly dined with his colleagues, and met them at balls and theatre representations organised for the better society of the town. Some spoke to him of the elite, but Max hated that word.

Max at first felt clumsy in their midst. With time and benevolent help from the truly better men, he soon swam like a fish in the company of these men, yet loathing some and admiring others. This was his environment, now. Everybody knew he was a Jew, but nobody seemed to care much. Max spoke perfect German, Yiddish and Hebrew. He mastered the tongue of Thorn. He spoke Polish like a Warsaw townsman, and old Rus or Lithuanian like a man who had been living in Vilna for ever. His knowledge of languages was eagerly appreciated in certain deals.

Rebekah and Esther

Max Vincius was not the only child of his father Asa Vincius and of his mother Leah Perlman. He was the last child of three, the long-awaited son in the family and the only male offspring. Max had been spoiled. He had been the king of the household. His mother never over-protected him, and his father may have been more demanding with his son than with his daughters. Max had always been the hope and the jewel of the Vinciuses of Thorn. Still, in the house of Asa and Leah, the upbringing of the children had been a very serious affair. The girls knew their Bible, Torah and Talmud. They had followed the courses of the *heder* like Max, the Jewish primary school, and they had learned the same languages as he from private teachers.

Rebekah was the prettiest by purely aesthetic standards, and the older of the two girls. Esther was the more intelligent. She showed nice features too, and had a face that could not easily be forgotten. Her fine, even-tempered character permeated her face.

In the early months and years after the official move of Asa's family to Thorn from Vilna, Asa and his wife remained very much linked to Vilna. Max and Leah had hired a matchmaker in Vilna to look for decent and pious husbands for their daughters. As so often was the case, the matchmakers finally had been beaten to the job by the girls themselves, helped by of all people ... their grandfather Ezra!

While their parents were arranging for their new home in Thorn, young Rebekah and her sister Esther had stayed often at the house of their grandfather and grandmother, Ezra and Rebekah Vincevicius. One of the men Ezra traded with, in wines and in grain from Samogitia, in honey and amber, was a trader from Siauliai, also called Szawle. Moshe Klaipsevicius sometimes visited on his partner, Ezra Vincevicius, to organise new trade. In 1834, Moshe had an issue.

Moshe had had an excellent harvest of grapes in that year! His production of wine had almost doubled in that year, and the wine was of excellent quality. He was looking for new perspectives in selling his wine. The first man who had come to his mind was Ezra Vincevicius of Vilna. Ezra was a man full of innovative ideas, Moshe recalled vividly. Moshe Klaipsevicius therefore went and knocked on the door of his old, but always very active and opportunity-seeking co-religious partner Ezra!

Ezra received Moshe well, quite happy to hear news from Samogitia and from the lands near the Baltic, overwhelmed with joy to sit with an old friend over a few glasses of his best vodka and talk. Rebekah liked Moshe too.

Over the vodka and after a lavish supper served by Rebekah, the three of them talked openly and with assured confidence. Moshe explained his issue. Where to sell so much of the finest wine? He had to sell much more wine next year, in maybe a saturated market. So, he was looking for merchants who could take the wine barrels off his hands for a decent price. Ezra sold what he esteemed was already the utmost in the environs of Vilna and Kevno. Much of Moshe's wine went through Ezra to the Russian garrison of Vilna. Nevertheless, Ezra promised to give the issue some thought, to come up with new buyers for Moshe. He asked in the late evening for Moshe to return two days later.

Ezra was a little embarrassed then, for he also had to organise for a family reunion at Vilna. His son Asa would arrive with his wife and son at Vilna, to visit their two daughters, who had stayed on at their grandparents. Rebekah would want to receive her son, her son's wife and especially her grandson in style, with a feasting of several days for Asa's family and for Abraham's. Ezra could not refuse a service to an old colleague, merchant and friend. While he thought about the matters, Ezra was sure Abraham and Asa might solve Moshe's issue by buying the wine and sell the barrels. Ezra talked to Abraham, who agreed to take in much of the wine. Abraham could tell Asa was always on the lookout for an opportunity. Asa had told Abraham the last time they met he would buy more wine from him. Asa could buy from Moshe! Asa knew how fine the Samogitian wines were. He could expedite them to Danzig and to Königsberg, where the demand for fine alcohols remained high. Ezra settled Moshe's problem in no time. Even if Asa refused to take the wine, Ezra could store the barrels and bottles and sell them somewhat later. It was an opportunity Moshe had come up with, Ezra could not let Moshe return home empty-handed and sad.

Moshe Klaipsevicius came to Ezra's home a little later, as agreed. He came not alone. Behind him stepped Moshe's grandson Samuel, of the same name.

Samuel was a tall, very handsome young man. Samuel had the face of an angel. He was also very polite with Ezra and showed respect for the old man. Young Rebekah was at home with her grandfather and grandmother. She stayed in the Gaono house in a room of her own. Esther occupied another room, but she was out at that moment. Rebekah was 18, Samuel 20. When Ezra ushered Moshe and Samuel in, young Rebekah put her knitting aside and listened to the conversation between her grandfather and his friend. The men were in the best of moods, for Ezra could solve Moshe's wine surplus almost immediately. After a few words, seeing Ezra's friend so relieved, Rebekah Munkacs brought in a bottle of their finest vodka.

In the meantime, young Rebekah and Samuel were staring at each other with wide, interested eyes. Rebekah was well aware of the pressure of her parents and grandparents for her to marry. Yes, she may already have been past her first years of marriageable age. Young Rebekah was a simple girl, not extremely bright, but sufficiently intelligent to understand and perceive how others thought of her. She was not given to studies and reading complex texts, but she was quite dexterous with her hands, good-natured, and she loved all beautiful things. She feared a matchmaker would soon present snotty suitors to her parents. She disliked being sold like cattle. Therefore, these last weeks she had remained closed, taciturn and distant. She had stayed in a subdued mood all through her stay in Vilna. She did not want to marry one of those haughty, scholarly Jews, who would want to marry her only because her hips were wide and her breasts heavy and her cheeks rosy. She would as well have liked to remain in Thorn, sleeping in a tent, in the primitive life Thorn offered her at that moment, instead of being considered a saleable item in Vilna.

Samuel Klaipsevicius was another sort of young man, young Rebekah noticed. He was a fine young lad, extremely good-looking, and he didn't seem to be a bad, bragging boy, not a violent man, nor a mischievous one. He looked at her with innocent, though probing eyes. Young Rebekah kept staring at Samuel, studying him, until the youth seemed embarrassed by her gaze. Young Rebekah pushed her womanly treasures quite in his view! Samuel had taken a good view at Rebekah too, and remarked how much woman she was. He reddened several times in the face. His looks had remained polite though, furtive, hidden, but then he had repeatedly sought her eyes and ever come back to her. He liked what he saw. Most importantly, he reckoned Rebekah was a nice girl. He could only love nice girls.

A little later, Rebekah Munkacs returned to her kitchen. She had not asked for young Rebekah to come and help her. Young Rebekah had quite well understood why, but for once she didn't mind. Ezra and Moshe left the hall, too. Ezra wanted to show his friend what he had in stock at the moment, among which a stock of new brandy he had discovered at a small, completely artisanal distillery. Ezra and Moshe left the hall for a short while, ignoring entirely the young people. They returned only quite some time later.

Ezra and Moshe found young Rebekah and Samuel then sitting on the same sofa, not sitting the one far from the other, and engaged in a lively conversation on each other's friends and on the life in Vilna and in Siauliai.

Ezra looked at Moshe. Moshe looked at Ezra. Both men showed surprise and apprehension in their eyes. Here presented itself a new opportunity that hadn't yet crossed their mind, but that seemed obvious!

Ezra broke the astonished silence, 'I haven't shown you all, Moshe, follow me!'

Ezra and Moshe left the hall surreptitiously, only a few seconds after they had entered it. In the storeroom, Ezra halted Moshe.

'I haven't anything more to show you, Moshe. Have you seen our two grandchildren?'

'Of course, I have eyes in my head, too! What are we going to do with what we saw?'

Both men burst out in laughter.

'Would your grandson be marriable? Is he already engaged?' Ezra asked.

'Yes and no to your questions,' Moshe grunted.

He went to sit on a group of stacked cases of vodka.

‘My son and daughter-in-law are desperate and angry with the boy,’ Moshe explained. ‘They have tried three times before to marry the boy to a decent girl. He refused each time. The girls were not beautiful or not smart enough, or wild. I have to warn you, he is not easy, that boy. He is a good boy, I can tell. I like him a lot. He is a fine companion on my trips. I take him with me all the time, and I can assure you he might be a slow thinker, but he is no fool. I brought him with me this time too, because the tension in my son’s house between him and his parents is growing. Samuel is a fine boy, in every sense. He has a warm heart. I repeat, I truly like the boy. He is agreeable, open-eyed, polite, a little shy with women, especially with women, but too good-natured for most of the wenches of Szawle. He is not quick in judgement; he likes to think matters through. He does not have a brilliant mind, but a solid one. He astonished me more than once by his fine and appropriate common sense. Some people seem to think that, since he is so handsome, he might like boys more than girls. I can assure you that is not the case! He knows no evil. He is just a normal boy, who is merely shy with girls. When I saw him next to your granddaughter, Ezra, I had to say he seemed not shy at all with your young Rebekah. What was happening? Samuel is just an ordinary boy, of a decent intelligence, stubborn but with a fine disposition for business and the heart of a good father. He will not make killings as a merchant, but he will not go broke easily, either. His money will grow steadily, not spectacularly. He truly has a good heart and he is gentle. There!’

‘That was quite a speech you gave me, Moshe,’ Ezra said. ‘It seems to me he could be the perfect husband for young Rebekah. She too has been difficult to make up her mind with boys! I have never seen her sitting so close to a boy or man before. Has she found her choice? I think there might be a good chance for that! I truly do! Now, my son and I can provide for a nice dowry to the girl. You know that. Rebekah is a nice, sweet girl. She is not fickle, nor malicious. She could be a fine, loving wife to a pious young man. Her parents have been looking for a husband. Young Rebekah has thrice refused offers. She seems to genuinely like your Samuel. I have never seen her chat so relaxed with a boy. Would you think they could be of the same kind?’

‘Our Samuel is very shy with girls,’ Moshe responded. ‘I too have never seen him so at ease with a maiden. Would you be willing to consider a marriage between the two? It would make me very happy! I would be delighted! Your young Rebekah seems a decent young woman. A fine Jewish housewife and an adornment to my grandson.’

‘She is,’ Ezra agreed. ‘We could do worse, couldn’t we? But we may be running a little too fast. Young Rebekah needs time.’

‘So does Samuel,’ Moshe nodded. ‘Well, matchmaking doesn’t seem to work so well with Samuel dear,’ Moshe sighed. ‘Maybe we should let the two find each other further on, and not stand in their way.’

‘I fully agree with that,’ Ezra laughed. ‘Please stay for supper. Let’s not break the conversation they are engaged in. Let’s observe them somewhat more. If they need a little push, a little bit of encouragement to talk together, let’s assist them. Do you agree, can you stay for supper? I’ll place the two of them together at the end of the table, and let them simmer.’

The two older men giggled, as quiet conspirators do. They were satisfied with themselves. Ezra and Moshe could not have seen anything better that day than their grandchildren together.

Rebekah sat alone with the two youngsters in the hall when Samuel and Moshe shoved the one the other back into Ezra's hall. Rebekah Munkacs saw their eyes gleam.

'What are those two up, now?' Rebekah wondered silently.

Ezra proposed the Klaipsevicius men to stay a while longer and have supper together.

Rebekah Munkacs was surprised, for her husband had told her nothing about a possible supper. Luckily, she had everything in her kitchen she needed for a lavish supper, and good brandy. But she would have to hurry.

Then she followed the eyes of Ezra and Moshe, and her mouth went, 'oh, oh!'

She understood instantly.

The old men were smiling inside, she could tell, and though they were discussing prices of grain and wood in Samogitia, their eyes returned and returned to the young people, who seemed quite content with each other only.

'Well,' Rebekah Munkacs thought, 'the choice could be much worse. Why not?'

She stood and made for the kitchen, smiling sweetly at the old men, who sat there like conspirators, and who knew by her smile they had another willing ally this evening.

And so it happened, that when Rebekah Munkacs invited everybody to the table, Ezra pushed his granddaughter next to Samuel Klaipsevicius, and her sister Esther, who come in later, between him and his wife, Rebekah Munkacs. Soon two entirely different conversation continued during supper. Rebekah Vincius and Samuel Klaipsevicius never stopped talking together, almost oblivious of who else sat in the hall. Ezra Vincevicius and Moshe Klaipsevicius were talking with Rebekah Munkacs without interrupting the youth. Rebekah Munkacs looked from right to left. She sat at the head of the table, the two elderly men and Esther at either side. At times, she had to bring her hands to her mouth to not burst out in laughter, for she had never seen two old matchmakers so eagerly at work. Whenever the chat between the two youngsters stalled, either the one or the other old man did his best to relaunch the talk between the two young people. When one had success, the other winked and nodded at the other for 'well done!'

'They are so funny, my old men,' Rebekah concluded affectionately.

All finer things of life end. Though Ezra prolonged the evening as long as he could with his best brandy, Moshe and Samuel Klaipsevicius had to return to their hostel.

'When do you have to leave Vilna?' Rebekah the Younger asked bluntly to Samuel.

Moshe quickly answered for his grandson, 'we have to stay on for a few days more.

Something has come up that retains me in Vilna.'

Moshe was not telling the truth, there, but Ezra closed his eyes a second in a sign of agreement.

'Grandma,' young Rebekah continued, 'can I show Vilna to Samuel tomorrow? He doesn't know our city very well.'

Moshe was already eagerly nodding, and Ezra wanted to answer quickly, 'of course, my darling,' but Grandma Rebekah was faster yet.

'You can, Rebekah, but you'll have to take Esther with you!'

Ezra had forgotten a chaperone was needed at this stage. He bit his lips.
‘Can I bring Finkel too?’ Samuel asked smartly. ‘Finkel is my friend. He doesn’t know Vilna too well, either.’

‘Who is Finkel?’ Ezra and his wife wondered at the same time, alarmed.

There would be two couples then, they immediately realised, not exactly what they had expected. Samuel could be sly sometimes! Esther would be neutralised!

‘Finkel is Finkel Kaunavicius,’ Moshe explained. ‘The Kaunavicius are at Vilna, but they originate from Kaunas. They are a well-to-do trading family, pious Jews too. Samuel knows Finkel because they went to school together. Finkel is a very bright boy. The Kaunavicius trade to Memel and Königsberg in Prussia. Finkel is a nice boy, a good Jew, though sometimes really too smart for me.’

‘Well then,’ Rebekah Munkacs hesitated. ‘just be nice girls, then, and don’t do anything stupid, rash or ...’

‘Thank you, Grandma,’ young Rebekah concluded instantly, before her grandmother could change her mind. ‘Tomorrow morning, I’ll go and Esther can come with us.’

‘Well, that settles that,’ Moshe told, clapping his hands on his knees and standing up. ‘We really have to go, now.’

They said goodbye, wished each other a goodnight, and the Klaipsevicius men left.

The next few days, the four youths, Rebekah and Esther Vincius, Samuel Klaipsevicius and Finkel Kaunavicius disappeared into town. Ezra and his wife told them to be back for dinner, which they dutifully did. The youngsters ate their belly full, all four, at Ezra’s. They ate like ogres, explaining they had walked far and wide, along the Vilya and on the other side of the city. They had met other friends of Rebekah and Esther. Rebekah and Esther had brought the two boys even to see the Great Synagogue and the nearby *besmedresh*. Weren’t they nice, pious girls? Ezra might have been fooled, not Rebekah Munkacs.

‘Where else have you been?’ she asked innocently, but received not much of an answer. Rebekah guessed rightly the young women and boys were working on the spirit of their grandparents.

Rebekah Munkacs, despite her suspicious misgivings when matters concerned young girls, could discern no flaws in the intentions of the boys. Actually, Rebekah Munkacs had more faith in the boys than in her granddaughters. She had been young too! Samuel Klaipsevicius remained very polite and considerate with the girls and with herself. She found Samuel a careful, trustworthy youth. He was probably a little naïve where young Rebekah was concerned, who could act mischievously, as all women of her age.

Rebekah Munkacs felt more reserved about Finkel Kaunavicius. He was a tall, thin young boy, a bespectacled youth, who seemed extremely intelligent. Sometimes he answered openly and sarcastically. Oh, he sounded nice enough at table, but when he spoke, he acted just a little too worldly, too sophisticated for the Vincevicius spirit. Strangely, this attitude seemed to please and amuse Esther, who answered him as sharply as he had launched. She was up to Finkel, her grandmother noticed. But then, Esther was up to everybody in fast intellect. Finkel had to smile more than once, admitting he had been surplussed. Did Finkel appreciate smart women? Esther and Finkel were Jewish youth of another planet, Rebekah Munkacs surmised. They were true intellectuals, often as wrong as possibly could when confronted

with real life, and still also full of illusions and strong opinions, young as they were. They seemed dry, rational thinkers, who had to invent everything by themselves. They would also feel the pain of that, Rebekah Munkacs knew.

Oh, they would learn quickly, Rebekah thought, and then, they would fly, reach smart decisions and do extraordinary things everybody would be astonished of. Or, anything could go awfully awry between those two. Life was magical, Grandma Rebekah knew, and she had two marvellous examples in front of her. These two, Esther and Finkel, if they remained together, might eat each other's heart out with unheard-of cruel words. Or they might take on together any challenge of life and have their love win over any threat or obstacle to their marriage.

Rebekah Munkacs caught herself thinking Esther and Finkel made a pair already. She was startled by that thought. Could she have guessed right? The younger couple equally spoke mostly to each other on walks. They left young Rebekah and Samuel far behind. Had Ezra and Moshe been wise to let thus two couples form? Finkel and Esther were smart, really smart, but from what Rebekah Munkacs sensed, they were the exact opposite of true chaperones for young Rebekah and Samuel! Esther and Finkel were busy with themselves, and they were capable of the worst, of things young Rebekah and Samuel could not even imagine. Esther and Finkel entered and left together, had eyes and ears only for each other's arguments, bickered and discussed, and looked already as if they were married for life. What had Ezra and Moshe let happen? What would her son, Asa, and his beautiful, sophisticated wife, Leah Perlman think of such a couple?

Rebekah Munkacs sighed. Small children, small trouble. Older children, big trouble! Her son and his wife had left Vilnius. Their daughters might well want to remain in the country, in Lithuania and not in Prussia! Rebekah began to worry. Would her son Asa accept this? He had moved to Thorn, but risked losing his daughters in the act!

In the afternoon, and in the following afternoons, the four youth ran out of Ezra's house in Gaono with obvious pleasure. They came back only when the sun began to lower, lingering red at the horizon.

The next days, the weather was foul. In the morning, the girls couldn't go out. The two boys knocked at the same moment on Ezra's door. Ezra let them in. For the rest of the morning, the four young people hung about in Ezra's hall and warehouse, talking, reading, playing games, and sitting close to each other. In the afternoon, they couldn't be held. They ran from the house, weather or no weather. Ezra proudly told his wife he and Moshe had emerged as excellent matchmakers. Rebekah Munkacs sighed.

After a week and a half of such walk-and-talk therapy of youthful togetherness, Moshe Klaipsevicius announced he would have to return to Siauliai. Samuel would have to return with him. Finkel Kaunavicius drew a long face. He too would have to go, then. Rebekah Munkacs sighed for relief, and Ezra wondered what would come of his and Moshe's schemes. Moshe only told he would send news, maybe by a letter, maybe in person. Ezra was not too pleased. Moshe was like this, devising a plan, executing it and talking a lot about it, then suddenly abandoning it. Often though, Moshe came back to his original ideas, and then in a whirlwind, pieces of voluble talk would really fall in place with astonishing speed.

Asa Vincius and his wife Leah arrived a few days later. They stayed two weeks in Vilna, and then they too left, returning to Thorn with young Rebekah and with Esther. Both girls looked meekly and desperate when they said goodbye to their grandparents. Never did they or Ezra and Rebekah Munkacs tell anything about the two boys they had been going out with.

One month after the four youth had left, Ezra Vincevicius and Rebekah Munkacs received a thick letter from Siauliai. Two days later arrived another, very polite letter from Kaunas. Moshe Klaipsevicius announced he had the honour and pleasure, in the name of his son and daughter-in-law, to ask for the hand of Ezra's granddaughter Rebekah for Moshe's grandson Samuel. Moshe wrote he would come to Vilna two weeks later to explain things in detail. He hoped he and Ezra could discuss about the possibility and the procedures of a wedding. The letter from Kaunas was one written by the father of Finkel Kaunavicius. He told in the letter who he was, what his family did for a living, and he asked formally for the hand of Ezra's granddaughter Esther for his son Finkel. He wrote he had met his old acquaintance Moshe Klaipsevicius. He proposed for his father, Nathan Kaunavicius, to accompany Moshe Klaipsevicius to Vilna, to arrange matters with Ezra.

Ezra Vincevicius had to sit on a chair while he read one letter and then the other to Rebekah Munkacs, his wife. He felt proud as a rooster, and he showed it to Rebekah. His attitude radiated: you see what I can accomplish with my friends? Rebekah Munkacs stood in front of him, her two hands clasped to fists at her hips. She had to admit she should not underestimate her old husband.

'We can have a double wedding, here at Vilna, in Gaono, in our house,' she concluded immediately. 'Our son Asa will have to agree his parents still count for something. He may have escaped to Prussia, but he may well have to abandon his sweethearts, young Rebekah and Esther, in Lithuania. I feel happy. And you did this on your own! I hope you three, you, Moshe and that other man Nathan, will not cry and shout too loudly so as to break up the negotiations on the dowry. I want those marriages concluded, you hear! Kaunas and Siauliai are not too far away. We'll see our granddaughters once every while. We have the money for the dowries. What else will the money serve for? You will help Asa, lest the boy might be ruined!'

Ezra sighed and smiled. He had already calculated he would have to help Asa with the dowries. He smiled, because Rebekah did not bicker, but he sighed thinking about how much this would cost him. His greatest worry had been over whether his wife, Rebekah, would have allowed him to take money out of their joint fortune. Rebekah had always rejected such proposals these last years. She had grown old and often told he was a naïve and dumb old man. From Rebekah's words, he deduced he would get away with everything concerning young Rebekah and Esther.

Ezra and Rebekah read and reread the letter from Kaunas. Ezra didn't know this Nathan Kaunavicius. The son of that man told they were traders in Kaunas, and claimed to be well-to-do Jews. Yes, they mainly sent their goods to Memel and Königsberg. The family nurtured connections with Prussia. That news might have been given to please Asa. Ezra thought about who he could discreetly talk to, to hear more about the Kaunavicius Family. He asked around in Vilnius among his friends and contacts. He soon received encouraging news.

The Kaunavicius were an old, respected and pious Jewish family, living since ever in the former capital of Lithuania. Their fortune was as ancient as the family was solid, stable and appreciated in Kaunas. The boy Finkel enjoyed the reputation of being something of a prodigy, a very intelligent boy, who might become an esteemed scholar, a Rabbi maybe, or a well-known trader, like his father and grandfather. Ezra could boast with good news to his son Asa.

A little later, Moshe Klaipsevicius and Nathan Kaunavicius arrived together in Vilna. Nathan was a very dignified, tall, austere looking fellow. Once he had a couple of glasses of Vilnius vodka in his system, he warmed up rapidly and proved to be a genial partner for Ezra and Moshe, a mild, goodhearted person, good-natured too, a cheerful and willing man to accommodate Ezra with the dowry. He showed how happy he was to find two such delightful friends as Ezra and Moshe together by the links of marriage. He told his grandson Finkel had cried out and shouted in his family he wanted to marry no one else but Esther. Esther was the only woman on earth he would be able to respect, he had told. He despised silly girls, but Esther was of quite another kind.

Word was sent to Thorn. Asa Vincius and Leah Perlman rode as fast as they could to Vilnius. Though many days had passed since Moshe and Nathan had arrived in Vilna, Asa and Leah found the three old men still sitting together in a corner of Ezra's hall. They were drinking of Ezra's best vodka. They were joking and laughing together.

Rebekah Munkacs made large eyes at Asa Vincius and Leah Perlman, meaning, 'please take these three out of my hands!'

'Who needs professional matchmakers when one has such parents?' Asa asked to his brother Abraham.

The double wedding turned out to be one of the grandest Jewish feasts ever in Vilna. It tightened the relations between several cities, between Thorn and Danzig and Siauliai and Kaunas, and also with Vilna. Rebekah Vincius went to live with her husband Samuel Klaipsevicius in Siauliai. Esther Vincius followed her husband Finkel Kaunavicius to Kaunas. The new Klaipsevicius Family did well, and the new Kaunavicius prospered incredibly well. The Kaunavicius couple squabbled almost constantly, but if you tried to come between man and wife, you got the two together on your back. Their marriage too lasted and was a very happy one.

After the grand wedding of their granddaughters, and the departure of Asa and Leah back to Thorn, the Vincevicius house of Vilna regained its peace and quiet. Ezra and Rebekah sat henceforth silently in their hall. They sighed a lot, but they received visitors all the time, mostly Moshe and his wife and Nathan and his wife. Young Rebekah and Esther flew in once every while, visiting or passing through Vilna, and less frequently also Abraham and Asa with their family. Ezra Vincevicius and Rebekah enjoyed a very happy old age.

Rebekah Munkacs was still wondering what had happened to Asa's two lovely daughters. She had thought her husband, Ezra, had inflicted some form of punishment on his son Asa. Kit seemed to her as if Ezra had wanted to show his son could leave the town of his forefathers on his own initiative, but not without a cost! The cost was his two daughters, who

would stay behind, in Lithuania. Had Ezra realised this unconsciously, driven by circumstance and chance only, had he been an instrument of fate, or an instrument of God? Consciously, Ezra would have applied much power to direct the destinies of the four young people, Rebekah the Younger, Esther, Samuel and Finkel! No, she shook her head. Ezra had no such power! Or had he? No, not even the *Gaon* of Vilna had been able to wield such power over souls, not even the *Zadiks* of the Hassidim! Only God had such power, and God was benevolent, not malign. Rebekah was not a superstitious woman. She thought rationally about matters. But ... Why should Asa have to be punished for leaving Vilna for Thorn? For a short moment, she shuddered when she thought of her grandson, of Max. What would happen with him? What was Ezra planning to do with Max? Could any power from the patriarch reach Max?

Rebekah Munkacs recognised her husband's good work on her granddaughters.

'You should start thinking about young Max,' Rebekah remarked one evening. 'He too is of a marrying age, and he is our jewel.'

'I know, I know,' Ezra retorted.

Maybe Rebekah Munkacs wanted to keep her grandson near, too! Ezra shook his head.

Ezra had run out of ideas, however, at least for the moment. Where was he to look for the perfect girl for Max Vincius?

At the same time, in Thorn, also Asa Vincius and Leah Perlman sat together, sighing equally in front of one another. Their two daughters had been the spirit of their house. Their large house had gone silent. Max was not a garrulous boy. Asa and Leah too were wondering what to do with their taciturn, seemingly boring, inward-looking, yet quite intelligent son Max. It was 1836 in Thorn. Life was good.

Sarah Benavicius. 1839

Max Vincius remembered his youngest years quite well, and especially the double marriage of his sisters in Vilna. He had been in his teens only when his parents moved to Thorn. He was a very keen boy at that time, sensible and very observant. He was not only the king of the house for his parents. Also, his sisters had adored and spoilt him. Their departure from home shocked him.

The move to Thorn cut him away drastically from many a friend in Vilna. Until 1840 he still spent many days in Vilna, at the house of his grandparents. He asked to do so, experiencing the tearing away from his childhood home painful for his mind and emotions. He had followed the courses of the *heder* associated with the Great Synagogue of Vilna, one of the best Jewish primary schools of Lithuania. Then, his parents decided to place him in the German Gymnasium of Thorn.

The change came hard upon Max. He had it difficult to absorb the lessons and to follow the implacable German meticulous logic.

From twelve to twenty, he felt a young man of two cities. The experience left him a little unbalanced, shy, distant, and suspicious of everything. He was half Polish-Lithuanian and half Prussian. Only gradually, very slowly did he adapt. Finally, he chose for Prussia and for the German way of life and of thinking. At eighteen years of age, he reckoned he knew a lot more about the history of Germany and of Prussia than of Poland-Lithuania. With time, of course, he had learned at least a little to find the Polish way of handling issues inferior in efficiency, but his heart longed for Lithuania and for Vilna.

In 1839, Max was nineteen, and quite interested in the soft touch of girls. His more or less steady girlfriend at that time was one Eidele Fiterman. Like the Vincevicius, the Fitermans were Jewish traders of Vilna. They were a pious family, observant Jews, and since always mainly large traders in wood. Lately, they had also begun trading a good deal in wool and hides. Asa Vincius considered that sort of trade a little limited. He preferred trading more widely, and to spread his chances in many products. Nevertheless, the name of Fiterman was well-known and respected in Vilna. The Vincevicius would not object to a relation between Max and a Fiterman girl, but Max was not seriously thinking of more than a flirt and fun.

On a clear, sunny day of 1839, Max was walking along the Vilya with his girlfriend Eidele. Eidele was a lusty girl. She might be a little plump for Max's taste, but not to the general Jewish likings. She had much to grab for at her body, nice and broad hips, heavy breasts, long brown hair, sturdy legs of the right length, an agreeable, round face in which a smile lingered almost permanently, and most importantly, a nice character. She seemed to like for Max groping at her flesh more often that time. More than once she had excited Max almost to the breaking point, just by being herself. Eidele could allure any boy!

Leah Perlman was well aware of Eidele's assets, so attractive to young boys. She worried quite a bit. She didn't think Max would marry late. For Max's sake equally, though unknown to him, Asa and Leah had contracted a Jewish matchmaker of Vilna with the aim of tracking down an appropriate, pious and virtuous girl for Max to marry. Max didn't know at the time what his parents were concocting behind his back. They wanted the best for him, and that

might not be Eidele Fiterman. Max remained rather inclined to think only he knew what was best for him. On that beautiful spring day, he would have wanted only Eidele Fiterman!

Max and Eidele strolled at leisure. Sometimes, they held hands. They were admiring the houses and the woods along the Vilya. The previous week had been particularly sombre, every day grey, foggy and humid. The sky had remained closed with low-hanging dark, pregnant clouds full of rain. The Vilna fog had covered the city every day with its veil. The fog had hidden the river from view.

Today was a colder, even a little frosty day, but the sun shone brilliantly and was chasing winter to oblivion. The fog had frozen the last night on the firs and on the bare leaf trees. In the vivid colours of the sunrays, the icy-white trees in the landscape looked simply marvellous. Max was a little gloomy, knowing this scene would soon disappear and not return this year. It was a day for the loveliest views, for the eyes and the mind to take in and to remember. Lithuania stood at its most beautiful!

Eidele and Max walked along, dressed still in heavy coat and firs. Only their faces, glowing red because bitten by a sharp, eastern wind, emerged out of their thick clothing. They held hands once every while, but both still wore sheepskin gloves. Their bodies regularly touched, something Eidele sought more than Max. They had stolen a few light kisses behind thick tree-trunks and barns, on their way. They were young.

From the opposite direction, on their side of the path, arrived a friend of Max Vincius. Max recognised the youth's profile from far. Simon Benavicius was a Jewish boy of about Max's age. Max and Simon had been together at the *heder* for several years. They had sat on benches in the same classes. They had suffered together under the same teacher-*rebbe*s of Vilna. The Benavicius family were Jewish, fine citizens of Vilna. They did not live in *Gaono*, but in another street, on the other side of town. Therefore, although Max knew Simon well, he had only rarely visited the Benavicius family home. And Simon had never set a foot in the Vincevicius house. Simon and Max would have called each other friends, but they had never really been close. Also, Max had no idea how large the Benavicius Family actually was.

Simon walked rapidly up to Max and Eidele. Max suspected Simon really wanted to know who was Max's girlfriend of the moment. Simon was accompanied by a girl with whom he was engaged in a very lively conversation. From the far already, Max noticed the wide gestures for which Simon was famous, and the apparent boredom of the girl. She seemed to dance excitedly around Simon, obviously not really hearing what he was telling. She seemed a lively girl.

As the couple approached Max, he could tell more and more the girl was an interesting beauty. She looked also a daring person, for she had thrown back her cape and offered her face to the cold, and her thick, brown and straggly hair to the wind. Her cheeks seemed flushed red from the gales. She did wear gloves, and was well tucked in in her ample, fur-lined coat, which at times flew open around her. Max wondered where Simon, a rather common, unremarkable young man, could have caught the attention of such a special girl. He felt quite astonished. Simon must have harboured hidden qualities Max knew nothing off and had never suspected. The two came closer. Simon steered his female companion straight to Max and Eidele, probably to be able to boast with his conquest.

When the two couples stood in front of each other, Max clapped with his feet on the ground to keep the numbness of the cold out of his toes, and also to indicate he should not linger for too long. He shook hands with Simon. Simon presented himself to Eidele, something Max should have done but had hesitated to do. Then, he presented his girl to Max. The girl had by then stopped chatting and making broad gestures. She brushed her hair out of her face and remained standing, smiling happily. Simon introduced her as his sister, Sara!

Max's eyes widened. So, this wonderful, interesting girl was not Simon's girlfriend, but simply his sister! That was more normal, but Max could not hide his surprise. The girl seemed everything Simon was not. She looked bright and beautiful. Quite smaller than Simon, her large, brown eyes searched mockingly, invitingly, and a little haughtily at Max. She was aware of her beauty and attractiveness to boys! She seemed at the same time a little interested in Max, as her eyes did stare and study him, yet keeping her distance. She showed a derisive jeer on her thick, sensual lips. An open smile quite innocently, quite alluring, appeared naturally on her face. She looked like a rare Russian beauty to Max, with a round, attracting face, strong and yet soft features, flirting already in glances and smiles, yet all that quite naturally. Max found himself impressed, subdued, lesser, surplussed by this young woman. He had never met quite such a fine young beauty. She was quite special, an unusual personality. She looked to him like a princess, a woman of the world, a courtesan maybe, a girl who could make any man feel a midget from the first moment she set eyes on him. Yes, she definitely displayed a Russian exotic charm. She was a mystery. She fascinated Max. He continued staring at her, and when she noticed this, he was even more lost to her. Max suddenly didn't know anymore what to do with his feet, his hands, his gaze, nor what to say. For a few moments, an awkward silence set in, which made the girl smile more. Max was enchanted by that smile. He watched every movement of her lips and of her eyes.

Simon Benavicius did not seem to understand what was happening. Wasn't Max walking with his girlfriend? He looked from his sister to Max, and from Max to his sister. Eidele must have felt a mysterious, sudden attraction building up between Max and the other girl, for she kept tucking at Max. Simon then gave more attention to Eidele.

Eidele had come to stand quite close to Max. She grabbed his hand, confirming some form of possession. She pushed her hand in Max's arm. Max almost instinctively plied his left arm to receive Eidele's hands.

Eidele's gesture had come quickly and clear, addressed to Sara, 'this is my beau, stay away from him, you bitch. This is my conquest, my man, my property. He is occupied by me!'

Eidele Fiterman tugged at Max's arm, so that he seemed to emerge out of his trance, looked at Eidele, smiling, as if to ask what she wanted.

He came back to his senses, saying, 'oh, this is Eidele Fiterman, my friend!'

Eidele drew her lips to a cherry, held her head a little obliquely, curtsied for fun, and added, 'Eidele Fiterman at your service!'

She had noticed Max had not presented her as his girlfriend. She grew angry with him.

That answer seemed to amuse Simon, who opened his arms and went silently, a little mockingly too, through his knees.

He gave Eidele a charming smile, saying, 'honoured to meet you, lovely lady!'

Max did nothing of the sort to Sara. He was wondering how Sara might look like without her big coat and furs on. He went so far as to imagining her without anything at all on, and suddenly reddened deeply. Sara might have guessed his thoughts, for when she saw Max blushing and embarrassed, she started laughing. She realised she had won a dashing victory already! She laughed only a few short smiles, threw Max enticing glares, and then directed a glance back at her brother.

The look meant, 'I have made a conquest instantly, brother! Do something!'

It was not to her, not to Sara, not to any girl, to take any initiative, now. It would have broken her charm.

'We have been strolling along the river for a while,' Simon explained. 'It is damned cold still, I say. Would you have a drink with us to get warmer? I know of an inn, there, behind that house. I could need a vodka or a tea!'

Once more, Max felt embarrassed. He had some money on him, probably enough to buy a few drinks, but he wasn't sure his grandparents and parents would appreciate and approve of him sitting with a girlfriend in a tavern, drinking in the company of another girl.

'Excellent idea,' Sara agreed in a warm, husky voice.

She stepped surreptitiously forward, grabbed Max's other arm and drew him and Eidele on. Max was drawn backwards, and towards his left side, feeling Sara's body along his. The girl pushed him away from the river, to the city.

Simon had deftly jumped to the other side of Eidele, grabbing her arm too, and he tucked in the same direction as Sara. The four hung, arm to arm. Eidele screamed for joy. Going to an inn was also something more or less forbidden to her, but she found herself quite willing to let her be drawn on by Simon. Simon's common attitude seemed to vanish with his laugh. He drew Eidele on, and she excitedly followed. Simon had a good grip on Eidele Fiterman.

Max should have felt a little offended, but he had only eyes for Sara. Her eyes shone more softly now. The sun stood straight in front of her. Sara's eyes were not fully of one pure colour, he noticed. The girl's irises were interspersed with many small green flecks, which shone like shards of precious stones shattered against the brown background. Max felt mesmerised by those eyes. He remained looking, fascinated by their glimmering tints. The girl sent him one of her blinding smiles, which transformed her face to that of an angel. Max saw innocence now, softness, credulity, and a surge of sensuality that made it impossible for him to take his gaze off her.

The two young men and the girls ran on. They ran, still interlinked, laughing, to a tavern. Inside, they hurried into an unoccupied corner. Simon called a waiter. He ordered a carafe of vodka and glasses. As quickly, however, Sara and Eidele ordered tea. Max asked for a glass of tea equally. This shot him pitying, reproaching glances from Simon. Simon was in an excellent mood. He sat next to Eidele, arms wide open on the rail of the bank, one arm entirely on the wood but along Eidele's back and neck. His body touched Eidele's. She did not draw away from him, laughed quite amusedly. Simon didn't reproach loudly Max for only daring to have a tea.

The four sat and talked on. Simon and Max unearthed anecdotes from the times they had been at school. They described the good and the bad teachers, the funny differences in the

ways their *rebbes* tried to teach the boys something. The girls listened and smiled. They had similar stories ready at hand. They had a good time. They smiled a lot. They drank. Simon began to speak and laugh a little too loudly. He encroached on Eidele. Max looked around once every while to find out whether somebody in the tavern knew him or Eidele and had noticed them in their corner. The tavern felt warm and cosy. Max accepted two small glasses of vodka. Simon threw one glass after the other in his system. His cheeks glowed red. Enticed to do so by Simon, Max too drank, but way not as much as Simon. The girls stuck to their tea. Suddenly, Sara jumped up, as if out of a dream, exclaiming she had absolutely to get back to her parents. Simon reluctantly agreed. Max helped Sara in her coat, firs and shawl. He drew her cape over her head.

He whispered, hoping neither Simon nor Eidele would hear him, ‘when and where can I see you again?’

Max was surprised by his daring. Why would he want to meet this Sara, when he was already dating Eidele? He felt smug, dirty and traitorous. Yet, he couldn’t stop himself. He had blurted his question out without thinking. He blushed.

Sara didn’t seem surprised at all. She gave Max a flirting, furtive look, full of meaning. All resolutions of Max would have melted away at that look.

Sara whispered back, ‘tomorrow early afternoon, near here. Wait for me at the house in front.’, while letting Max envelop her in her coat.

She did not address him directly. She said this while dressing, her face turned to the wall. To anybody it would merely seem she was mentioning something inconsequential, a thank you for helping her with her coat. When she was dressed, and Simon waiting for her near the table, she shot a last look, heavy with the meaning of taking possession of Max, of sudden intimacy with him. Then, she ran off, without even saying goodbye to Eidele. Simon followed her. Max understood Sara now considered Eidele a non-entity. It was her sense of revenge.

Max and Eidele remained sitting for a while. They drank their tea and hardly exchanged another word. Then they left also, and Max had to pay the bill. Simon had not even proposed to pay his part.

The next day, Max waited early near the tavern. He didn’t have to linger for long. Sara too was early. She appeared from out of nowhere, out of a small backstreet. She ran up to him. Max asked whether she wanted to warm herself in the tavern, or go for a walk with him. Sara preferred to walk. They went, close to each other though not touching. They started talking only after a while. Sara wanted to know who he was. He had to tell her everything about him she didn’t know yet. Max explained from which family he originated. He talked about his grandparents, of his father and uncle’s families, of his life in Vilna, and also about Thorn. Sara took his arm and seemed to listen intently. In between stories, Sara equally explained who she was, what and where she had studied. Both had been true, genuine inhabitants of Vilna, of families that had lived here almost forever. Yet, they lived in quite different quarters of the town.

Sara didn’t ask once in that afternoon to enter yet another tavern. She probably dreaded being seen alone with a boy in such an establishment, without being chaperoned by her brother. She merely wanted to know all about Max.

Max had never met a girl who was truly interested in him. Sara interested him enormously. He could not get enough of how she turned her face, her eyes, her lips, how she frowned her forehead. Sara wielded an extremely sophisticated seductive power, he understood, but he could not but admire her. He would study endlessly the modifications of her face according to the emotions he thought he induced in her. He wondered whether those feelings were natural, genuine, or artificial, merely the product of innocent flirting. His gaze almost never left Sara's face.

Sara was quite aware of the fascination she exerted on Max, and she liked that very much. He was a most handsome, strong and interesting boy. He was quite different from the circle of wealthy Jewish boys she had met so far. It seemed he could become her slave. In this, Max was weak indeed, at least in his relations with her. She liked that, and yet therefore she also despised him a little. He did not subdue her, which maybe he would have wanted, too. Max seemed to her the most eligible young man to continue a relationship with, a relationship which might evolve in closer and longer-lasting links. How would everybody envy her with a man like this Max! And Max was the son of a very wealthy Jewish family! Why hadn't she met him long before? Was there any such other in Vilna? She didn't think so. She was sure and could see she had overwhelmed Max with her beauty. She didn't doubt he had immediately fallen for her.

They walked on, and arrived at a series of warehouses, which stood practically abandoned. Sara drew Max on, there, to behind a wall sheltered from other eyes. She came to stand close to him, in front of him, almost touching his body. Max wasn't fully aware Sara now expected something else of him than another anecdote. Still, he did what was natural at that moment. He went a little forward, and moved his head to kiss Sara on her mouth. His lips remained closed. Sara accepted the kiss, and held it. Still, this first kiss didn't last long. Max, still inexperienced in the art of seduction and of falling in love, withdrew first. Sara hadn't opened her lips either. Sara looked at him a little surprised and disappointed. She did not insist. She drew Max on, back on the long path near the river. They walked on, side by side, Sara's arm in his.

Sara asked, 'what about Eidele Fiterman?'

'I didn't promise anything to Eidele,' Max replied.

He hesitated a moment, then continued, 'I couldn't know I would fall in love with you.'

Sara laughed out loud, 'you seem to fall in love quite rapidly, Max Vincius.'

'Well, it happened. I couldn't do anything about it. Could you?'

Sara had to think about an answer. What had indeed happened with her?

She seemed suddenly to grab the realisation she too might have fallen in love.

She answered, kissing him on his cheek, 'no, I too couldn't. We have fallen in love, didn't we? My beautiful Max.'

Max smiled happily.

At the end of the afternoon, Max and Sara discussed about where and how they would see each other back again. This time, Sara wanted to walk in the middle of the town. Vilna could see with whom she was walking! Max would have accepted any place to talk to Sara.

The next days, their meetings continued. They walked arm in arm now, oblivious of who was looking at them. Everybody could see how much in love they were. They kissed frequently, ever more passionately and long. Teeth and tongues clashed and probed. They went, still dressed in long, heavy coats, but Max had felt the softness of Sara's lips, pressed his body against her chest, felt her legs against his. His hands had slipped against her spine more than once. He had caressed her back. She had voluptuously thrown herself against him.

Ezra Vincevicius owned a storeroom close to the Vilya, just outside the city walls. The large, wooden gate of the large barn was generally closed, but Max knew there was a small door at the other end, far from the street, hidden from all views. It sufficed to exert continuous pressure against the panel of that door, for the door to give in just a little, enough for the lock to give way. Max was desperate when he brought Sara there. He would have to announce to Sara he had to leave Vilna within two days and return to Thorn with his parents. It might take months before he could meet with Sara again, for Max had to finish his years at the German Gymnasium. He took Sara to the storerooms to talk with her at ease. He got inside with her. There lay still many, many goods in the huge volume. Nobody worked here now, for this was still not the right season. Trade had practically stopped in winter. Ezra and his partners traded little in the heart of the Vilna winter. Sara drew Max excitedly on, to a high heap of straw in a corner. She threw herself on the straw, almost entirely disappeared in it, and drew Max on her. They kissed passionately. Max's hands moved for the first time to Sara's breasts. He caressed her and felt her nipples tighten. Sara moved her body under her. She groaned. She pressed and shoved. Max was quite excited himself at that point. He too continued to press against her. While kissing Max, Sara had opened her coat entirely. She was already opening her bodice. Max's hand slipped in to her naked breast. He kneaded her breasts on both sides. Sara spread her arms wide, let him do, and continued to move her underbelly against his growing erection. Max caressed Sara more strongly, which she seemed to like. She writhed under him. When he felt he would be reaching orgasm soon, Max withdrew suddenly from her, to lie next to her in the straw, panting. Sara seemed not to understand what could have happened. She drew at him, wanted more of him. Then, she too stopped.

She asked, 'are you cross about something?'

'No, no, not at all,' Max still panted. 'I had to stop. What we were doing became dangerous for me. I might not have been able to draw back later. We should be more careful!'

'What if I don't want to be careful anymore? What if I asked you to continue?' Sara whispered.

She kept looking at him with drowsy, damp, alluring eyes. Max noticed the unquenchable desire. She made a movement as if she wanted to climb on him.

'Then we should marry,' Max exclaimed, aware of the only practical solution to continue this way.

Sara was surprised. She drew herself off Max.

'So, we should, then,' Sara responded. 'I want more of you, much more, soon!'

'Fine,' Max whispered back, his face very close to hers. 'Let's marry, then. If I ask my parents, they would contact your family. Would you like that?'

'I would,' Sara agreed instantly.

Her mind was made up. She did not have to think further. Nobody pleased her more than this Max Vincius. Also, their marriage would be the talk of the town!

Sara truly wanted to marry Max and his Vincevicius Family. She wanted to be in bed with him, make love an entire night, and do to him whatever she liked. Her senses had been led to such height of passion, she would have pushed Max down here, and made love to him in the barn. She was vaguely aware her senses were much more excited than his, though he was older. She was still a virgin, but she realised she wanted a man deep in her, often.

She repeated in a hoarse voice, breasts still open on her shirt, Max's hands on her, 'yes, we must marry. We must marry, soon. I want you. I want you in me.'

'I still have to finish the gymnasium,' Max explained beyond his desire. 'Tomorrow, I have to prepare for our journey back to Thorn. I cannot see you again for quite some while. I'll talk to my parents!'

Max was then once more sucking at Sara's breasts. She began panting and writhing again, under him.

'What about Eidele Fiterman?' Sara jumped up suddenly.

Max stopped what he was doing and drew Sara's undershirt over her chest.

'What about Eidele?' Max retorted. 'I never did anything like what we have done just now with Eidele! She was a friend, nothing more. I promised her nothing, either.'

'Good then,' Sara concluded. 'Out Eidele!'

She laughed loudly.

Max had to return to his grandfather's house.

'That is settled then,' he said, while he drew his clothes right.

He closed his coat. He clapped with his hands against his coat to free it from the straw.

'We have to go back, now,' Max urged. 'I cannot arrange another meeting between us. My parents will contact your family. That may take a month or so.'

'A month? Soo long?' Sara wailed.

'Yes. We will have to be patient. Will you wait for me?'

For an answer, Sara pushed once more against him. She kissed him. Teeth clashed. Her tongue probed in his mouth.

'Don't you fear I might fall in love with someone else?' Sara teased him.

'I hope not,' Max could only reply. 'Don't do that to me. I love you.'

They hardly dared looking at one another for the moment, lest they would be tempted to start touching and kissing each other again, not being able to stop.

Sara was closing her clothes in the straw. She pushed the last blades of straw away. She drew on her coat. Max took the last blades of straw off her. His hands lingered on her body, but then she too drew away with a sigh. She took Max's hand. They ran out of the barn. Max drew the door closed behind him, which took all his force. Nobody would suspect he had been in the storerooms.

They ran to the road, and back to the centre of Vilna. They ran, trying to quench their desires, hardly looking at each other, for their passions might flare up again.

Max dutifully returned to Thorn with his parents. On the travel home, he remained particularly reticent to talk about where he had disappeared so often to in Vilna, whereas before, he had particularly enjoyed family reunions. Max had been thinking and rethinking in the coaches that brought him back to Thorn on how to announce his intentions to his parents.

His conscience nagged at him, because he had not spoken to Eidele before his return. He consoled himself with the thought he had also promised nothing to that girl. He pondered over how fast he had committed to Sara Benavicius. He hardly knew the girl! Was she intelligent? Was she a marriable girl? Would they live in peace together? What about children? Should he not have sought confirmation about her character from people who knew her family? He thought he knew enough about Sara, but did he? How well do you know a woman after having almost made love to her and having caressed her naked chest? On the other hand, he had talked much with Sara on their walks. Sara had always answered naturally to his questions, as any other intelligent girl would have, sensibly and reassuringly. How they might agree in marriage was a matter to work on, both of them! Max had heard a lot about loose women, about passionate girls, and Sara had certainly not held back from his kisses and caresses, as pious Jewish girls maybe should. That could hardly prove she was not virtuous! Max had not withheld either from touching her in places where a very decent young man should have hesitated. His blood still pulsed hotly when he thought of her whitish, so soft flesh.

Max sighed and sighed when he now remembered so well what he and Sara had done last. He was not at all sure anymore he had acted for the best. He had let himself be dominated by his lusts. True, Sara had awakened in him extremely strong feelings of desire. Could that not be the basis of a fine, joyful marriage? And yet, Max feared something was not entirely right! He could not put in words the reticence that had invaded his mind. When he thought back of Sara sprawled in the straw, breasts nude, he could not but imagine him lying on her or beside her, his hands on her body.

Max wondered how to announce to his parents he wanted to marry. He had promised to do so. In the end, Asa and Leah Vincius solved the issue for him.

A few days after what was left of the Vincius family had returned to Thorn, his parents spoke to him about his future. He was sitting with his parents at the table, after supper, in the Vincius great hall.

‘We should talk seriously, son,’ Asa Vincius began. ‘Soon, you will leave the gymnasium. You studied well. We have been quite satisfied with your results, about what you have accomplished. Your mother and I have also been proud to notice how much you helped me out in the trade. You even traded on your own. Your initiatives I found well-considered, sly, and – more importantly – they were successful and very profitable. You acted like a careful young man. Soon, you will have to do your duty to the Prussian king in the military service. I took care for that, as you know and have agreed to. You can stay in Thorn, at our town garrison. It will be a hard time, but well spent, and no doubt you will also learn a lot from that experience. Make friends, keep contact with the other officers. Two years is not long. You are a man now; you will be more of a man when you return to civil life.’

‘Yes, father,’ Max agreed.

He was wondering what more his father could tell on such subjects. His mother looked at her husband and took over.

‘We have been thinking, your father and I,’ Leah Perlman said. ‘We have been wondering whether you might be ready to marry and found a home and family of yourself. We have spoken to a well-known matchmaker of Vilna, a man linked to the Great Synagogue of Vilna. We have stood on the point of asking him to look for a decent, pious girl for you. We have

not yet told him to start looking for a suitable girl. We wanted to talk to you about this before having the man start his work. However, we can write to your grandfather Ezra, to have the man begin his search.'

Max wanted to say something and interrupt his mother, but she hushed him with a movement of her hand, and continued.

'You are still young. There is much time still to think about such matters as marriage, but a right girl is also not easily to be found. It may come to a year, two years even, to present the right young woman from the right family, willing to marry. We only know Vilna and Thorn, and Thorn is but a small city! We surmised a Vilna girl from a fine Jewish family would be best for you. That girl would have to be willing to live in Thorn, in another country!

Otherwise, a Kaunas girl, maybe? You see, the search will take time. What do you say?'

'Well, but, thank you, mother and father, to think so much about me,' Max started. 'Hm, well, you should not worry about me. The truth is, I know already quite well who, what girl I would like to marry. I proposed to her, only to her, while we were alone. I would like to marry a girl from Vilna, a girl called Sara Benavicius. You probably don't know her. Her family are wealthy, Jewish traders of Vilna. We love each other. I believe we indeed do not need to rush. Still, I consider myself engaged – though not officially – to this Sara.'

Asa Vincius and Leah Perlman changed attitudes on the other side of him. They moved their hands on the table, straightened their backs, looked at each other. They seemed suspicious. This was not according to their plans! They felt surprised Max had taken his own fate in hands so quickly.

'Why,' Leah Perlman exclaimed in a higher tone than usual, 'this quite surprising! How quick! How well do you know this girl?'

'I know her quite well,' Max continued. 'I don't know her parents, of course. I believe they may satisfy you as to their income. They live in a grand house in the centre of Vilna.'

'I do know vaguely about the Benavicius Family,' Asa interjected. 'I dealt with them somewhat in Vilna. They are quite wealthy, yes, and of an old Vilna family, rather good stock, I would say, well established in the Vilna *Kahal*, the Jewish community. I know them as quite ambitious traders. Not always too meticulous in choosing with whom they deal. A little reckless. They lost quite some money in daring ventures, but not to the extent they could be threatened. They trade with Poland and Posen. They smuggle hard. They move in the higher circles of Vilna, also among the Prussian traders and among the well-established traders of the largest fortunes. Yes, they are a wealthy family with wide connections in Prussia and abroad. They own ships. How did you get to a Benavicius girl? I imagine they protect their women and keep them inside or in close circles all the time!'

'I knew her brother at school, a Simon Benavicius. He presented her to me. We liked each other instantly.'

'You can hardly have met the girl more than a few times,' Leah warned in a pensive way. 'Or was it with her you spent your mornings and afternoons lately, in Vilna, when we stayed there recently and would have liked to see more of you with your grandfather and grandmother?'

'I did,' Max reddened. 'We met each other more than a few times.'

‘I suppose she is a handsome girl,’ Asa Vincius probed, drawing reproaching eyes from his wife Leah.

Max’s face lit up, ‘of course she is, father, would I want to marry an ugly girl?’

Max’s father coughed and smiled, ‘no, I suppose not, indeed. She must be some girl!’

Asa once more drew strange eyes from his wife.

‘And so, you declared,’ Leah repeated.

‘I did, mother. She is a nice girl. We liked talking to each other.’

‘Only talk?’ Leah probed on, looking straight at her son.

Max reddened more deeply, ‘of course,’ he almost cried out.

Max resented this question coming from his mother. How could she?

‘All right, then,’ Leah Perlman pacified and concluded. ‘We will have to get some more information on this girl Sara. I hope you understand. No doubt, your grandfather Ezra will know all about the family. Have you any idea when you would want to marry? You still have your military service to think of!’

‘I can sustain a family, mother. I trade already, with decent profits. Sara will come with a dowry. My father thought me much in the business. Father could help me on. I wouldn’t want to wait too long, now. I can be married and at the same time serve in the garrison of Thorn. Officers are often allowed to sleep in town.’

‘How old is the girl?’ Asa wondered suddenly.

Max reddened again under the tightening questions of his parents, ‘she is sixteen, and will soon have her anniversary.’

‘Then she is of marriageable age,’ Asa said, throwing an inquisitive glance at his wife.

The girl was younger than he would have expected.

‘Sixteen is very young,’ Leah remarked, frowning her forehead.

Asa smiled, for when he and Leah had declared, Leah had still been very young, too. And Leah had very well-known who she wanted and why. He smiled knowingly at Leah, which she did not entirely appreciate. She drew her shoulders higher.

‘Times change,’ Leah almost whispered. ‘One marries later, now, than in our years.’

Her possible reticence was melting away, however.

‘Fine then,’ Asa concluded. ‘We’ll take some more information about the girl. Has she promised to wait for you, Max?’

‘She did,’ Max told proudly.

Once more, Leah and Asa once more looked significantly at each other.

A silence fell.

Max’s parents didn’t ask him out further. Max asked permission to leave the table, and went to his room. Asa and Leah remained sitting at the table in their hall, in silence.

Finally, Leah broke out, ‘well, that was quite a surprise! Our boy takes his own initiatives early on! After our two daughters, our son astonishes me as much!’

‘Isn’t that our way?’ Asa wondered, smiling, and putting a hand on his wife’s.

‘No doubt,’ Leah agreed, mellowing. ‘As you said, you should ask information about that girl from your parents in Vilna. I’ll ask my father, too. I remember the name of Benavicius slightly, now. Their family may have been of pious Jews, but I seem to recall having heard rumours mentioning them as quite wild in their sexual habits. I think I heard they were involved in a few scandals of adultery.’

‘They were,’ Asa sighed. ‘One of the Benavicius men was a friend of my brother. I’ll write to Abraham, too.’

‘Yes, do that, please,’ Leah answered. ‘I am a little worried! Our son has been dallying about, alone, with this Sara. What have they been doing all those days together? Young blood boils hot quickly. I hope they haven’t shot out of their clothes too soon. We should not wait too long. A bride with a full belly would produce a juicy scandal in Vilna, and also in Thorn!’

‘Oh, come on, now,’ Asa replied. ‘Our son would not do a thing like that! He is a very sensible young man.’

‘I hope he is what you claim, Asa. I too, think so. Still, make haste. Somehow, something doesn’t seem right in this relation.’

Asa smiled. His wife didn’t like losing her adored son. He understood the feeling. He had learnt not to underestimate his wife and a mother’s instinct, and especially not Leah’s.

His face turned serious, but his mind was sure, ‘no, no, no, not Max!’

Asa understood the feelings that racked Leah. For her, Max had been her dearest accomplishment. She had not spoilt Max, but feared for him, for his safety, for his health, for his happiness, every day for the nineteen years of Max’s life. Asa speculated Leah would not like seeing her precious child, her only son, being won in love by a strange girl. What guarantees had Leah obtained that this Sara would make Max happy? So very few! None, even, thought Asa. Certainly not the opinion of an experienced matchmaker, of a very wise man in such affairs. Could Leah ever get such guarantees? Asa didn’t think so. Leah could only have faith in Max, as Rebekah Munkacs had once had with him, Asa. Leah too had provoked a great sensation in the Vincevicius household once.

Well then, Asa sighed. He had now better look for a suitable new home for his son in Thorn. He absolutely hoped Max would not do like his sisters, return to Lithuania and to Vilna! For most families, the man followed the wife in the choice of a home, rarely to the contrary. Could Asa succeed in twisting his son’s hand a little by buying him a comfortable house in Thorn? Yes, that was what he should do, to console Leah, to make sure she could keep an eye on her son, as she had always done. That was the best solution! How would Max react? Max liked Prussia and Thorn better than Vilna and Poland-Lithuania. Of that, Asa felt assured. How many times had he, Asa, not told his son about the much higher respect Jewish men and traders enjoyed in Prussia? It was now here, in Thorn, Max had his better and most friends. No, no, Asa assured himself. Max would want to stay in Prussia!

What would this Sara want? Asa could tell Max to persuade the girl to come and stay in Thorn. Leah would love to have her daughter-in-law and her son and her grandchildren around! Could Asa realise his aspirations?

Asa Vincius wrote letters to his father Ezra and to his brother Abraham. Leah wrote a long letter to her father. It took a while for the answers to arrive in Thorn.

Both Ezra Vincevicius and Ben Perlman wrote in their answers what Asa and Leah had already known. The Benavicius were a respectable and wealthy family.

Abraham wrote the same. He agreed with Asa some of the Benavicius were of a wilder nature, not too faithful with their wives, but not to the point of being considered men unfit for the better society of Vilna or for the synagogue. Abraham proposed to act as go-between to

the Benavicius, and to negotiate the dowry. He promised to do his utmost best to get the highest amount.

Asa and Leah read the return letters carefully. In this matter of dowry, they could have confidence in Abraham. Abraham would conclude on a hard bargain. Abraham knew the value of a coin! Asa and Leah sent letters back to Vilna, asking Abraham to go and propose marriage to the Benavicius for their son Max, and to arrange for the matter of the dowry. Max and Leah asked their fathers Ezra and Ben to sign the papers for them.

It lasted a little more than three months before Asa and Leah could announce good news to Max.

The Benavicius had been enchanted with the proposal for Max to marry Sara. The girl would bring a nice dowry. And Sara had agreed to come and live in Thorn.

Max was extremely happy. He did understand his father and mother had turned Sara's arm at least a little by forcing her to come to Prussia. Still, he didn't want to leave Prussia, so he was happy Sara had agreed to come to him. Had she refused, what would he have done? He hoped Sara would like living in the much quieter Thorn. He might have to distract her with theatre representations, balls, suppers in the better circles of the town, but all of that he could easily arrange! Max felt confident the heat of his love would make Sara accustomed to the quieter life in a smaller, provincial town.

Asa, Leah and Max began to prepare for the wedding, which would take place in the Benavicius home of Vilna. The wedding could be arranged in the same Great Synagogue of Vilna, where so many members of the Vincevicius Family had married.

Abraham and Ezra told the Benavicius had first objected to the marriage on the grounds that their Sara was too young. Such objections, and other, had been overcome by the lowering of the dowry for Sara. Asa and Leah had looked significantly at each other when Max read Abraham's report on the negotiations. Such movements had been expected.

Another, far more serious obstacle emerged a little later.

It had become more widely known in the Jewish community of Vilna that Max and Sara would soon marry. Ezra Vincevicius received a visit by the patriarch of the Fiterman Family of Vilna. The Fitermans insisted for Max to marry Eidele. The Fiterman patriarch claimed Max and Eidele had been going out together since long. Max had more or less promised to Eidele to marry her! Afterwards, Eidele had let her be seduced by Max. The girl had lost her virginity to Max. It seemed she was now pregnant with Max's child!

The news hit the Vincius Family in Thorn very hard, like the explosion of a bomb in their vicinity. Asa and Leah called Max to an evening council, to justify himself. The session had been distressful! Max shouted he had never touched Eidele in more than a light, furtive kiss. He had never pronounced any promises to the girl. The young man repeated his version so many times, so strongly worded, that Asa and Leah could not but believe him. Their son was not a liar! Asa wrote this version to his father. He also decided to travel in person to Vilna, to discuss the issue with the Fiterman Family. Max would have to join his father and swear to the veracity of his version. Max terribly dreaded returning to Vilna and face an angry family and a vindictive judgement.

The issue solved itself just the day before Asa and Max would begin on their dreadful journey to Vilna.

Abraham Vincevicius sent a letter to Thorn. His words arrived right before Asa and Max prepared to drive to Vilna. Abraham explained in long phrases he had been able to talk to Sara Benavicius without her parents near. Abraham didn't tell how he had succeeded in doing so. Asa knew too well his brother could be a rogue in certain circumstances.

Later, however, Sara told Max she, actually, had sought to contact Abraham! Sara had confirmed to Abraham she had never lain with Max. Max was an honourable boy, she had said. She didn't believe Eidele had lain with Max either. Sara had, however, seen her own brother Simon several times go out strolling and frolicking with Eidele. That happened after the marriage announcement of her and Max had been published. Simon had always envied Max, Sara had explained to Abraham. She had strongly accused her brother to have wanted to thwart her and Max's plans for marriage. Sara had called a council of the Benavicius Family! She had directly accused Simon of having slept with Eidele! Sara had placed the dilemma to her family's council. If Eidele continue to uphold her claim, Sara might well not be allowed to marry the man she loved dearly, a member of the respected Vincevicius family. This would not only make her very miserable, but mean a great loss for the Benavicius in fame and fortune and honour. Sara had threatened to reveal she too had lain with Max before marriage. The Benavicius dreaded Sara might realise her threat, so desperately she had cried she in the family council!

The Benavicius dreaded such an intricate scandal on which Vilna might mock the family for years to come. Everybody had then looked at Simon, who had reddened as deeply red as he could. He had at first persisted in crying out he was as innocent as a lamb, until Sara began asking Simon where had had been on this and that day, time and hour. The discussion had lasted for a long time. Sara had threatened calling in Eidele Fiterman. Finally, Simon had confessed he had slept with Eidele to smite Max. When Eidele had told him, she thought she was with child, Simon had asked her who she really wanted, Max or him. Eidele had continued weeping, and shouted she of course had preferred Max. Eidele and Simon had devised the scheme everybody knew. The child of Eidele was his.

The Benavicius patriarch had then stood as tall as he was in the great hall of the Benavicius house, and concluded Simon had to do his Jewish duty, which was to marry Eidele Fiterman. His voice had sounded louder than thunder in the hall, and his decision had been final! Sara had obtained her victory. She and Max were the innocent youth in the matter! The child of Eidele was indeed his, Simon had finally shouted.

Sara had explained all this to Abraham. She had fought for her honour and for Max! Abraham had let a few days pass to have the moods calm down a little. He had then contacted the Fitermans to close the affair with them. He wrote he had found the Fitermans confused and in turmoil, given over to apologies to the Vincevicius, and accusing the Benavicius of infamy, for Simon did no longer wish to marry Eidele. The Fitermans swore they would force Eidele and Simon to the wedding. Abraham then spoke again to the Benavicius. The Benavicius confirmed Sara's story. They asked to declare any possible conflict with the Vincevicius void and non-existent. They

confirmed they saw no obstacle at all to the marriage of their daughter Sara with the young man Max Vincius. Abraham had been able to draw the dowry up again!

In Thorn, Max was not a little pleased to read how Sara had fought for their union. He did not doubt Sara's motives. She had been driven by love. She had defended her marriage. This was the woman he wanted. Max was the more convinced Sara and he were meant by fate for each other. He thanked God.

Ezra and Rebekah Munkacs felt happy too. Max would leave for Thorn, but he would regularly return to Vilna. His wife Sara would want to see her parents often. And even Max would never entirely forget his links with Vilna.

The wedding feasts in Vilna of Max Vincius with Sara Benavicius were a great and splendid affair! The ceremony and the feasts were organised entirely by the Benavicius, at their cost. It seemed they had been ashamed by the claims of Eidele Fiterman. They wanted to redeem themselves in good honour. They accepted Max with open arms, all smiles.

Max Vincius and the very young Sara Benavicius endured the ceremonies triumphantly. They were very much in love, the one and the other. Asa Vincius and Leah Perlman remembered the turmoil aroused by their own marriage. They were as satisfied now as they had been in their time, to see the young couple so happy.

The extremely beautiful Sara shone rays of innocence. She charmed Asa and Leah so much, Max's parents immediately took Sara in their loving confidence.

Ezra and Rebekah Munkacs were happy too. Max would leave for Thorn, but he would regularly return to Vilna. His wife Sara would want to see her parents. And even Max would never entirely forget his links with Vilna.

After the marriage, Sara left for Thorn with the Vincius. Asa had not yet found a suitable home for Max and his wife. Max and Sara would at first have to live with their Vincius parents. This lasted only a few months, for Asa and Max found the suitable house at the end of the main street of Thorn, in which also Asa and Leah lived.

Asa was very pleased. He might not have been able to get his daughters to live in Prussia, but he had his son with him in Thorn. Max explained to his father how much he was proud to be a Prussian citizen, how much he liked Thorn, his true home, and how much he was proud with his beautiful bride. Leah too was fulfilled. Her most important wish, to hold her son near, had been granted by God.

Max and Sara lived for a while with Max's parents. They indulged in their union without restraint. Sara turned out to be a very sensual woman. She sought sexual intercourse with far more passion than Max. They made love often, sometimes several times a day. Max satisfied Sara's lusts. He didn't complain. Many men of Thorn would have envied him. Sara lessened his thirst, his desires, by all means. She instructed him in love, more than he her.

Max and Sara feared in the first months of their marriage to get ill from so much indulgence in their desires. They knew they were squandering their forces. They were not just in love. They had found the way of ultimate expense of their desire, no doubt held back already for so many years in their young bodies.

Their first child, a boy, they called Kurt, the Prussian way. He was born as quickly as possible after their marriage. Two other boys followed, year after year. These were called Haim and Mikhael.

Max had to perform his military service, which he did with honour. He was a fine junior officer. He did not want to pursue a career in the army. During his service, he could continue trading, as he was in fact more at home than in the garrison barracks. The garrison commander had allowed Max to be on the exercise grounds during the day, and to return home in the evening, to find solace in the soft arms of the beautiful Sara. Many a day, however, the commander allowed Max to stay at home altogether, and to trade. Max then sat at his desk with the milk-white arms of Sara Benavicius around his shoulders.

In those days, peace reigned in Thorn and in Prussia. After his military service, Max and Sara went to live in their new home. Max soon realised his wife was not a housewife like his mother. She had little inkling for preparing dishes at noon and in the evening. Sara sulked and pouted her lips then, saying she was bored in Thorn.

Max recognised early that if he did not throw himself and Sara at least a little in the high-society life of Thorn, Sara would become an embittered woman. Max therefore led Sara often to the theatre season of Thorn, to song festivals and performances of choirs, to suppers organised by the wealthiest men of the city, and to balls. Sara gleamed like a princess in the company of the Prussian junkers who paid their court to her. She glorified in the acquaintance with the noble families and the wealthiest men of the district. All this remained very provincial at Thorn, but seemed to satisfy her. Max was proud his lovely wife radiated beauty and charm.

After a few years of this regime, Max became bored with the superficiality of such, his life. He began to live two separate lives! He continued giving Sara what she needed and desired, glamour and admiration. She showed him she was grateful. He, however, sought more and more his work, his trade, a form of introvert serenity in his office and later still, in the calm presence of the Kleinberger Family. Max liked to work together with Friedrich and Anna Kleinberger. He spent evenings with them on a simple meal, discussing prices and volumes and opportunities, hearing the humble news of the labourers of Thorn. Friedrich and Anna Kleinberger became Max's first confidants. Little Esther Kleinberger was as a daughter to Max. She sat more on his knees than on those of her parents.

The Decades of Illusions. 1840-1860

The German Issues

Max and Sara Vincius lived happily in Thorn during their first years of marriage. Max worked very hard. His business soared. He traded on the axis Warsaw-Thorn-Danzig in everything that could be sold with profit, and transported over the Weichsel. He could provide for Sara a life of leisure and luxury.

As he grew wealthier and more implicated in the general welfare of the city, it became mandatory for him to meet other traders and the notables of the town. Max followed the events of Prussia, Poland and Lithuania, and of greater Germany. He spent his evenings reading newspapers that informed him about the political situation and the economic development of Prussia and the neighbouring states. He read papers such as the conservative '*Kreuzzeitung*', the more moderate '*Allgemeine Preussische Zeitung*', the democratic left paper '*Die Lokomotive*', and even the '*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*' of Karl Marx. Besides the more local papers, he had ordered these to be sent to him from Berlin.

The Vincius Family knew more or less well the history of Poland and of Lithuania. They knew much less about the history of their new country, of Prussia and even less about the other lands where German was spoken, of the German states and Austria.

Germany then still consisted of many, small independent states, about forty lands. Prussia, Bavaria and Württemberg were among the largest of those. The heads of the states were kings, dukes and counts. Some of the states had introduced parliaments, none of them chosen by general vote, and some heads of state even had agreed to constitutions for their citizens. All of the states were small and insignificant compared to the great powers of France, England, Russia, and the Empire of Austria.

The German sovereigns had felt the need to discuss general matters of politics and economy together. They had created a common assembly, the *Bundestag*, a parliament of the states, in Frankfurt. The *Bundestag* formed no representation of the people. At Frankfurt met only the delegates sent by the German sovereigns and by the free cities. The sovereigns decided autonomously over who they sent to participate in the meetings of the *Bundestag*, and these men usually were designated from out of the landed nobility. Thus, the Assembly of Frankfurt represented the sovereigns of the Lands, not the people of the states. The *Bundestag* was the only organisation indicating the recognition of the common interests of the German states, commonly named the '*Deutscher Bund*' or shorter the '*Bund*', the union of the German states. Each state remained independent, however, with its own sovereign, government, laws and eventually its own parliament. The *Deutscher Bund* was a loose confederation of 39 states! Members of the *Bund* were also countries like Great Britain, for the ruler of Hannover, the reigning house in England, was a member of the assembly. Also the Netherlands were a member, and even Denmark for the Land of Holstein. The free cities were four: Lübeck, Frankfurt, Bremen and Hamburg.

In Prussia, everybody could exercise a religion according to his or her conscience. That had been the main reason why the Vincius Family had moved to the country. Since 1812, the rule held.

On the 27th of September 1917, King Friedrich Wilhelm III, a very pious man, had announced the wish to bring order in the protestant sects of his kingdom. He wanted to merge the Lutheran and Calvinist Churches into a single, Christian Evangelic Church. The king designed even the new liturgy of a Prussian Church. He published regulations for the altars, the candles, the clothing of the preachers, and so on. The king sought to introduce homogeneity into the protestant religions. This, of course, did not work out too well. New sects emerged; the old Lutherans went underground. The Prussian authorities persecuted the people who held to their former beliefs and liturgy. The conflict only more or less ended, when in 1845 Friedrich Wilhelm IV proclaimed a general amnesty and granted the old Lutherans the right to establish within Prussia as they liked, as an autonomous church association. The Prussian kings did not touch the Jewish communities, the *Kahals*.

As from the beginning of the 1830s, the Prussian and the other German states had entered a period of rapid economic development by the growing industrialisation. With the building of new canals and better roads, with faster communications and a rapidly growing railway system, the world seemed to get closer and smaller.

In the political arena, this meant for Germany growing interest for the unification of the country. In 1819 already had been founded the ‘*Allgemeine deutsche Handels- und Gewerbeverein*’, the German General Union for Trade and Manufacturing, in which were assembled the traders and manufacturers interested in the growth of the global German economy.

Then, in 1833, was founded the ‘*Deutsche Zollverein*’, the German Customs Union. This *Zollverein* had mainly been the work of Prussian civil servants and diplomats. By cancelling the inland tolls, the prices of many goods lowered in Germany. The *Verein* made the products also more attractive on the international markets. The father of the *Zollverein* was a man called Friedrich List, an economist. List ended his life by suicide, as a broken man, desperate and utterly disillusioned on his other theories. Max Vincius took the *Zollverein* almost for granted. He had always worked in its system, and could not imagine any other move of goods in greater Germany. He absolutely recognised its advantages.

The *Zollverein* was clearly led by Prussia, but most of the German states joined as members. By the beginning of the 1840s, nearly 90% of the German population lived in the *Zollverein*! The Austrian Empire was no part of the *Zollverein*, however.

Together with the idea of economic union, was born the idea of political union. The dream of a unified Germany was proposed and actively pursued from before 1830 by the ‘*Deutsche Burschenschaften*’, the organisations of university and academy students.

The strongest, loudest call for a united Germany had been heard at the student ‘*Wartburgfest*’ of 1817. This had been a general meeting of the various student organisations from all over Germany. The unification of Germany had to be introduced, however, over the heads of the leaders of all the German states, the local kings, dukes and counts, who still ruled by absolute power.

One of the radical groups of the *Burschenschaften*, the so-called ‘*Giessener Schwarzen*’, the blackshirts of Giessen, had proposed the republic as the political institution for the states, implicating the shoving aside of all the absolutist sovereigns by violence. They called for armed revolutions to realise their political ideas.

Most groups refused these means of realising their dreams. What all the patriotic groups wanted, however, was the personal and political freedom of the citizens, with as main civil rights the freedom of opinion, the freedom of expression in the press, and the freedom of meeting. The students looked not only to the political unity of the nation. They also sought the abolition of all forms of absolutist organisations of government.

The student organisations cried out such slogans as ‘honour, freedom, patriotism’. They used a black-yellow-red flag. These colours had been used by one of the first of such patriotic student organisations founded around 1815 in Jena. The flag had been the one of the ‘*Lützowschen Freikorps*’, the civil defence battalions of the town of Lützow.

At the castle of the Wartburg, only 500 students had assembled, but in 1818 all the *Burschenschaften* of Germany united in the ‘*Allgemeine Deutsche Burschenschaft*’, who took over the slogans of the individual organisations for unity. And the black-yellow-red standard.

The student organisations demanded for the inhabitants of the German *Länder*, the individual kingdoms, counties and duchies, all citizens, to have the right of participation in the political decision processes. Demonstrations for national unification grew and matured in the assemblies. The German Union became less of a romantic dream than an aim to fight for. Demonstrations for national unification happened in many states. The first appeals for a common, pan-German parliament were heard. In the newspapers, the first enthusiastic articles in favour of national unity appeared. Liberals and radicals pointed to the great issues of German society, and also to the growing pauperism, the poverty of the masses caused by the industrialisation.

The student demands and their political aims were, of course, considered a great danger for the reigning courts all over Germany. The governments persecuted and prosecuted the loudest students. The governments decreed laws to prohibit the student organisations at the universities and academies. Gradually, the viewpoints radicalised.

During the general assembly of the student organisation in 1832 in Stuttgart, the students took as aims a revolution to obtain their demands of freedom and of the political unity of Germany. In 1833, a number of the *Burschenschaften* participated in an amateuristic revolt to modify the *Bundestag* of Frankfurt, the parliament of the states. The students took the *Hauptwache* of Frankfurt by force. The local militia rapidly struck down this early revolution. A wave of arrests among the students and scholars followed.

At the beginning of the 1840s, the *Bundestag* of Frankfurt, permeated by the new ideas of unity, chose as the colours of the German *Bund* equally the black-yellow-red colours of the *Burschenschaften* as its symbol. The flag was henceforth to be a national emblem.

In 1832 also took place the ‘*Hambacher Fest*’, organised near Hambach, near Neustadt-an-der-Haardt. Two journalists, called Wirth and Siebenpfeffer, had taken the initiative to set up this feast.

They proposed to feast the anniversary of the Bavarian Constitution of 1818. The feast evolved into an enormous demonstration for unity and freedom, in which more than 30,000

people participated. The feast may have been the first global expression denouncing the political principle of the German *Bund*. One of more than 20 subsequent speakers, Siebenpfeffer held an opening speech, ‘On the German May’, in which he argued a feast of hope in the future based on new principles. These new principles had to be held in mind by the participants, for hope on freedom and unity. Another new word was introduced there, ‘*Wohlfahrt*’ for all, welfare of the people, prosperity for all.

The answer to this manifestation of the aspirations of the German intellectuals led to a new wave of oppression, aiming especially at the men who had presented speeches at Hambach and at the many men present at the feast. Nationalism for a united Germany could only grow in the next years. For the moment, it had to remain clandestine and subdued.

Thus, when Asa Vincius and Leah Perlman arrived in Prussia, and even when Max Vincius and Sara Benavicius married and enjoyed their first days together, they lived in the state of Prussia, member of the German *Bund*, with a *Bundestag* in Frankfurt. Asa and Max were more interested in the *Zollverein*, the customs union of Germany. Prussia had taken the lead in promoting and then realising this customs union of 18 German states. The *Zollverein* had entered in full power as of the 1st of January of 1834. The organisation abolished taxes in the interior of the greater German boundaries, for the states participating in the *Verein*.

Meanwhile, the German industrialisation progressed rapidly. The German states built an impressive infrastructure to support the growing industry. The first German railway system was put into operation in 1835. The railway systems in Prussia grew from 185 kilometre laid in 1840, to 1106-kilometre in 1845. Later, up to about 1,000 kilometres of railways were laid down per year.

In the ‘*Deutsche Gewerbe-Ausstellung*’ of Berlin in 1844, the young Alfred Krupp, born only in 1812, but using the workshop of his father in Essen, showed his first steel gun barrels. He had built his first cast- steel gun the year before. Formerly, cannon barrels were made of bronze. Krupp’s were made of steel, allowing higher explosive power of the charges. His first cast-steel cannon, he delivered to the arsenal of Spandau in September of 1847. Those first cannons were tested by the military at the shooting field of Tegel, Berlin.

The galloping industrialisation meant the strongest competition for the artisans of the countries. Prices went down, by the industrialisation itself and by the disappearance of the internal taxation at the borders of the German Lands.

The farmers who had received terrains recently in the land reforms, could not grow their agricultural products in an economically viable way facing dire competition from far-away industrialised countries such as England. They had to sell their lands, felt embittered, and joined the mass of labourers who had already flocked to the cities, where the factories were. They joined the industrial proletariat, living in terrible circumstances of extreme poverty.

The first social revolts did not rise from the agricultural workers, however, but from the weavers of Silesia. The lower prices of industrially produced cloth, ruined the artisanal weavers by taking the work away from them. The first weaver revolts broke out in Silesia, in the towns of Peterswaldau and Langenbielau. The weavers revolted in 1844. Prussian troops quickly ended this first revolution. The troops dispersed the weavers in a bloody massacre. More tumults and riots happened in Prussia after the news of the rebellion spread. The

increasing impoverishment of the poor caused the riots. Almost half of the Prussian population was living near the minimum of subsistence! The poverty deepened, grew harsher on the workers, and spread. Mass poverty had been created by the industrialisation. It would soon become a political issue for the rulers of the German states.

In first reactions, the German sovereigns tried to quench all associations of workers. These cried out for better working conditions in the factories, higher wages, and social security. A new Prussian law of 1845 forbade associations of labourers. As a result, even more radical, secret associations were founded, some of them also in the neighbouring countries of Germany.

The largest and most important political movement in those times was Enlightened Liberalism. The German liberals demanded laws for the representation of the people in the various German states. They sought a united Germany, with a central representative parliament. And, of course, the essential freedoms of the people had to be guaranteed by laws, preferably frozen into a more socially-oriented constitution.

The moderate Liberals did not seek to abolish the power of the reigning sovereigns. They sought to limit those powers by law. The liberals were divided among moderates and more radical minded men. The moderates wanted a constructive dialogue with the sovereigns. The radical liberals thought only the violent revolution could realise a free and united Germany.

In between, the leftist Democrats formed a widespread movement. These edited the newspaper the '*Rheinische Zeitung*', the newspaper of the Rhineland, of which Karl Marx was an editor. The newspaper was forbidden as of 1843 in Prussia. The Democrats demanded the sovereignty of the people, social equality, as well as the proclamation of the German republic, with the liberation of all oppressed and less-privileged poor.

The political, economic and social relations in Germany could not but worsen! The attention was first drawn to the German state of Baden. Here, angry words led to acts.

In September of 1847, the liberal-minded men who were also republicans assembled in the town of Offenburg. They published a tract called 'The Demands of the people of Baden', in which they demanded the re-introduction of freedom of press and of education, the abolition of the old privileges, the eradication of the imbalances between capital and work, and a representation of the people in the *Bundestag*.

The more moderate-minded Liberals met in October of that same year of 1847 in Heppenheim. They had founded in Heidelberg a newspaper simply called the '*Deutsche Zeitung*', the German newspaper. They rejected the unification of Germany by violent means. They sought and proposed the representation of the people in the *Bundestag*, and the formation of a central government controlled by this national parliament. Such a body did not exist at the moment. They proposed to construct the political unification of Germany out of the existing and successful *Zollverein*, out of the Customs Union. They demanded no new rights to alleviate the dire situation of the poorer classes, but they studied the growing disparity between the poor and the rich. Finally, they published a paper on '*Die Forderungen des Volkes*', on the demands of the people.

These parliamentary groups or movements had not yet been crystallized into true and organised political parties, as would be constituted only later. Still they formed the grains out of which these last would be born.

While these themes were being thrown openly in the political arena, the industrialisation and the faster and cheaper transport of goods caused an economic crisis in 1846. Moreover, in the winter of 1846, harvest failures doubled to tripled the prices of food. A crop disease destroyed the potato harvests. On the 21st and 22nd of April of 1847, when food prices were on the highest, the people of Berlin plundered the market stalls and attacked the merchants. These were the first subsistence riots.

The Prussian court recognised the marks of the times. On 3 February 1847, the king convoked a Prussian Diet or parliament. This would merely be an assembly composed of the provincial diets, yet it would work like a national, Prussian Parliament. It consisted of two chambers. The Upper House was composed by the higher nobility. The lesser nobility, the town notables and the peasants met in a Lower house. About 600 people met in the royal palace of Berlin for the inauguration. More meetings were promised. It was not much of an event, as the assembly lacked all the legal prerogatives of a true parliament. But it was a beginning.

The social tensions exacerbated the unrest among the population at the end of 1847 to the beginning of 1848. Tensions and conflicts racked the whole of Europe. In February of 1848 started the Revolution of February in Paris, France, and in March, large revolutions broke out in Vienna and in Berlin.

The Uprisings of 1848 and 1849.

Uprisings as the result of social and political unease in Germany and other European countries began already in 1847 and early 1848.

In Germany, in Bavaria, reigned since 1825 King Ludwig. Bavaria was one of the few German states with a constitution. King Ludwig nevertheless interpreted the constitution as pleased him best.

Bavaria was Catholic. Ludwig admired artists. He loved grand feasts. Bavaria was very prosperous. But the country got rocked by a scandal at the royal court of Munich. Ludwig was a pious Catholic Christian, until he met the alluring, very beautiful theatre dancer Lola Montez. Lola Montez was merely her actress' name. Her true name was Betty Watson. She was the daughter of a Scottish captain and a Creole woman. She had been married to an English officer before she arrived in Munich. King Ludwig rapidly fell victim to the charms of the pretty, exciting, exotic and clever dancer. Protests against her influence on the king erupted in revolts in the Bavarian capital. Students organised the revolt as of February of 1848. Lola Montez had to flee, saving her life in Switzerland. On the 19th of March of 1848, King Ludwig I abdicated in Munich. His son Maximilian II received the crown of Bavaria to succeed on Ludwig.

In Czechia, then still a part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire, unrest simmered. On the 11th March of 1848, the Czechs demanded equal rights for all citizens, more freedoms and rights, and a common representation in parliament for the Bohemians, Moravians and Silesians. The country grumbled. Protests led to armed revolts.

In Paris, France, the economic crisis of 1846 to 1847 had caused famine. Political reforms were deemed necessary, but the ones introduced had failed miserably. The industry workers, lower class people and groups of soldiers from the National Guard had united to force King Louis Philippe to abdicate. France became a republic once more.

In Germany too, famine caused revolts. Farmers and agricultural labourers revolted in Middle Germany. In many cities, assemblies of the people took place.

In Austria, Czechia, Hungary and Italy equally, rebellions broke out. Barricades were thrown up in Vienna in March. Workers and students clashed with the military who had remained loyal to the governing regime.

On the 13th of March 1848, in Vienna, gathered the Austrian *Landtag*, the Austrian Parliament. The delegates called out for the fall of Prince Metternich, the great reactionary figure of the Viennese Congress of 1815. Metternich had been the staunch defender of absolutism of the reigning sovereigns, among whom the Austrian Emperor. He had so far refused all liberal reforms. Now, the crowds gathered in front of the *Hofburg*, the imperial palace, shouting their demands.

The Habsburg emperor was then Francis I, but in fact his older son, Archduke Ferdinand I reigned. Ferdinand was weak and not very intelligent. The Archduchess Sophie had much influence over him, and dictated her will.

When the crowd seemed to threaten to attack the *Hofburg*, the Archduke gave orders to his guards to fire. Many fell victim to the bullets, but the others fought the guards. Vienna erupted in revolution. In the afternoon, a deputation of the people asked permission to talk with the Emperor in the *Hofburg*. They had come to demand the dismissal of Metternich. Ferdinand accepted. After very long palabras, Metternich agreed.

The new government obtained as its leader the Count Kolowrat, a long-time opposer of Metternich. Hungary received its own government, of which Lajos Kossuth became the undisputed leader. Henceforth, the Habsburg Empire would be called the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

Prince Metternich, the most famous European diplomat, had thus to forsake on his function. He fled to England. The Austrian Imperial Government had to promise a constitution for the countries and allow the armament of the civil guard. Metternich returned to Austria years later. He died in 1859.

In October of 1848, a new revolution started in Vienna. Students and workers ran through the city, brandishing weapons. The town Council this time decided taking all powers in its hand. But General Windischgrätz attacked and besieged Vienna, which had to capitulate quite quickly, on the 31st of October. The troops took terrible revenge, and executed many. A little later, Felix, Prince von Schwarzenberg, Duke of Krumlov, Count of Sulz, Princely Landgrave of Keltgau, was appointed as Minister President of Austria. He published a new, more or less democratic constitution in March of 1849. A parliament would be created,

freedom of the press and the right of politicians to meet freely, were guaranteed. Schwarzenberg also sought the predominance of Austria in the National Parliament of Frankfurt.

In Prussia, in February of 1847, King Friedrich Wilhelm called together a *Landrat*, a Prussian parliament meeting. The meeting was held in April of 1847. In various speeches, the delegations warned the king about their desire for unalienable rights of the people. The king put these warnings aside.

By the end of 1847 to the beginning of 1848, the economic crisis reached its nadir in Germany. Not only the textile industry suffered badly, also the iron industry diminished drastically, by over 30% to 40%. Unemployment in the cities soared. The workers assembled and demonstrated in Berlin. They often gathered in a place called '*In den Zelten*', in the tents, in the *Tiergarten* Park, the gardens of the Berlin zoo. The *Tiergarten* was an area just outside the Brandenburg Gate.

On the 11th of March, the people of Berlin gathered in the *Tiergarten* drafted a long list of political and constitutional reforms they wanted to see adopted. By the 13th of March, the President of the police of Berlin, Julius von Minutoli, called more troops to the capital. The first civilians were killed or wounded. The next days, more crowds yet flowed into the centre of the city.

On the 18th of March 1848, one of the protest actions in Berlin evolved into a large manifestation in favour of civil protection, freedom of the press and for a Prussian parliament chosen by the people. The demonstration led to open revolt. The protesters threw up barricades in the Berlin streets. The citizens, workers and students together, defended the obstructions. The crowd flocked to the royal palace.

Around the king, chaos had set in. The king's younger brother, Prince Wilhelm, urged for an all-out attack on the insurgents. The king did exactly the opposite! He disposed of all the troops necessary to defeat and disperse the insurgents, but he did nothing of the sort. The governor of Berlin, the milder and more generous General von Pfuël, proposed political concessions to calm the mood of the crowds. General von Prittwitz was a hard-liner, and in support of violent oppression.

On the 15th of March, Berlin heard Metternich had fallen.

A strange thing then happened. The king decided not to throw the soldiers against the people. He withdrew his troops. He refused to have the barricades attacked by the Prussian army.

On the 18th of March took place a new demonstration by the people. From on the balcony of the royal palace, next to the king who saluted the amassed men, the Minister-President von Bodelschwingh made the announcements the king wished to make.

The court promised freedom of the press, a new constitution, a new German national flag, and support for the unification of Germany.

The crowd remarked the line of soldiers around the square and began to cry for, 'soldiers out!' A little later, the king handed over the troops in the capital from Pfuël to Prittwitz, and ordered the square gently cleared. Friedrich Wilhelm gave the order for the troops to advance

and clean the square in front of the palace of people. The Prussian cavalry dispersed the crowd which had gathered before the royal palace of Berlin.

A bloodshed had to be avoided! But guns were accidentally discharged. Victims fell among the demonstrators. The crowd was convinced the troops had shot on the civilians. The word spread in Berlin. More barricades were thrown up in the streets. When soldiers neared them, the occupants threw stones at the soldiers, and tiles fell down from the roofs. Berlin was in open revolt!

A few days later, on the 21st of March 1848, the Prussian King would acknowledge once more the people's wish for national unity in Germany. Prussia would become a constitutional monarchy instead of an absolute monarchy. The king put together liberal-minded ministries. The enthusiasm of the crowd was great.

The next day, Friedrich Wilhelm IV again spoke to the people. He told now he would withdraw his soldiers. He did this, true to his word. The king wrote a document, published and spread in Berlin, in which he promised Berlin would once more be largely cleared of troops. The military would be kept on guard in only a few buildings. Friedrich Wilhelm IV thus prevented further bloodshed. Already more than 300 protesters lay dead in the streets, as well as more than 100 soldiers.

The king had twice capitulated to the pressure of the crowd! His passivist reactions seemed to bear good results. The revolution began to fail end of March to April.

On the 19th of March, a solemn procession brought the victims of the battle of the royal palace to in front of the royal buildings. King Friedrich Wilhelm was present in his palace of Berlin. He showed himself on the balcony, to ease the crowd. A cry shouted at the king at least to take off his hat in respect for the victims fallen, which he did. Friedrich Wilhelm saluted, having taken off his hat to the coffins, yet still from the balcony of the palace.

The same night, he considered abdicating as king of Prussia. His generals and ministers could dissuade him from such a radical decision. In the evening, he once more spoke to the crowd. He told he had agreed to take on the old German colours and to put himself under the authority of a unified Germany. He then installed a new government.

The new government for Prussia was led by Ludolf Camphausen, a notable merchant from the Rhineland. His mission was to write a new Prussian constitution, and to form a new Prussian parliament, voted for by all citizens. Camphausen was a distinguished liberal, and a leading man of the United Diet or parliament of Prussia called together in 1847.

A little later, the second meeting of the United Diet of April of 1848, voted on a law for elections to form a true Prussian Parliament, for a national, democratically elected assembly. All adult male Prussians were eligible to vote, provided they were not receiving poor relief. A constitution would be drafted by the end of May 1848.

Only the workers had by then remained in the uprising. When they tried to arm themselves by an attack against the arsenal of Berlin called the *Zeughaus*, the army repulsed the siege on the 14th of June.

Camphausen failed to create compromises in the new Prussian assembly. He resigned on the 20th of June. The new Minister-President was the liberal, East Prussian nobleman Rudolf von

Auerswald. In September, also Auerswald had to resign on disputes in the assembly. The new Minister-President was General Ernst von Pfuel. He too could not reconcile the ever more recalcitrant king, recalcitrant for reforms, and the reform-minded assembly. Von Pfuel resigned on the 1st of November. His successor was Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg.

The turmoil in Berlin made tremble the whole of Germany, not just Prussia. The demand for a national German parliament were heard everywhere, in all the states of Germany, as well as the cries for a national government for Germany entire, and for a global German constitution. On the 5th of March already, the leading liberal and democratic, leftist personalities, could hold a meeting in Heidelberg.

On the 30th of March, they postulated the demand for this national parliament to be chosen from all the classes of society. An organisation was created, which called well-known and respected persons of the public life to assemble in a national Pre-parliament in Frankfurt. The first meeting of this Pre-parliament was held in the *Paulskirche*, the Church of Saint Paul, in Frankfurt. Most of the 500 representatives wanted not to drastically reform the political order of Germany. They sought a compromise with the sovereigns of the German states. At the meeting, finally, about 40 members among the radical liberals left the ongoing discussions. These men wanted more drastic, more democratic reforms of the existing political system.

Leader of the group was Friedrich Hecker, a lawyer from Baden. Hecker had formerly called for the constitution of the German republic at the meetings of Offenbourg.

On the 13th of April, disappointed by the democrats of Frankfurt, Friedrich Hecker and another lawyer of Baden, Gustav von Struve, organised from out of the town of Konstanz a revolutionary uprising. Hecker overestimated the will of the population of Baden to continue a true revolt. He and Struve gathered about 800 men, but the regular troops of the *Bund*, soldiers of Baden and Hessen defeated him in a battle near Kandern in the south of the Black Forest. One of the soldiers who fell was Freiherr Friedrich von Gagern. Hecker and Struve fled into Switzerland.

The delegates of the Pre-parliament of the *Paulskirche* in Frankfurt organised voting sessions in the German states. Only six states allowed at that time the direct vote by the people for the new to be elected *Nationalversammlung*, the National Parliament. In the other states, existed a system whereby *Wahlmänner*, grand electors, were chosen by the people. These, in their turn, determined the representatives for Frankfurt. In some of the Lands, workers and home servants were not allowed to vote.

In Berlin, the members of the political clubs – true political parties did not yet exist -, asked for the direct, general vote in Prussia. They did not obtain this. Almost everywhere in Prussia, burgher liberals were chosen as representatives for Frankfurt.

The first session of the German *Nationalversammlung*, the German National Parliament, took place on the 18th of May in the *Paulskirche* of Frankfurt-am-Main. Heinrich von Gagern was chosen as the first president of the parliament. In total, 831 representatives gained a seat in the parliament, of which about 500 regularly attended the meetings. Most of the representatives were well-to-do citizens, who could afford travelling to Frankfurt. Not

represented mostly, were the workers and the farmers. In this parliament too, did not yet exist organised, well-defined political parties, as would develop later. Proposals for new laws or decrees originated from individual representatives. They created hundreds of proposals, petitions, which blocked the discussions by their sheer number. Gradually, the representatives gathered in political groups or clubs, which met in the taverns of Frankfurt. They came to be called at first by the names of the inns. They agreed per club on proposals and programs. Thus, political parties condensed.

The democratic left gathered in the tavern '*Im Deutschen Hof*', in the German court, with Robert Blum as leader.

Radical Republicans among these formed their own fraction, as the '*Donnersberg*' group. They evolved into the extreme left.

In February of 1848, the largest group of the leftists formed in the '*Pariser Hof*', the court of Paris, an important coalition in number of representatives.

The liberal-conservative group first met in '*Im steinernen Haus*', in the house of stone, and later in the '*Café Milani*', under the leadership of the *Freiherr* von Vincke. This group wanted to write the new constitution in good understanding with the sovereigns of the Lands. The only aim of the national Parliament would be the writing of this constitution.

The largest group of the representatives formed the liberal centre. These divided into two wings, of the '*Württembergischer Hof*', the centre left, and of the '*Casino*', the right centre.

The liberal left refused to work together with the sovereigns.

The stronger group remained the men of the '*Casinopartei*', who had as leader the President of the Parliament, Heinrich von Gagern. They proposed a constitutional monarchy with limited voting rights. They feared anarchy more than the growing power of the sovereigns.

The *Nationalversammlung*, the first pan-German parliament, decided also to create a provisional central power. The left wanted one man for this power, the right proposed a college of several men. Heinrich von Gagern proposed to vote for one man only to hold the parliamentary power, for a '*Reichsverweser*', a protector of the Reich. The vote went to the very reasonable and intelligent Grand Duke Johann of Austria. The parliament handed over her competence to this man. The *Reichsverweser* and his Cabinet of Ministers had no army, no police and no administration of civil servants at their disposal. Johann of Austria had to depend entirely on the executive departments of the various German Lands to execute the decrees of parliament. Often, these were in conflict with local interests. Especially the largest Lands, such as Prussia, Bavaria and above all Austria, did not apply the edicts of the *Reichsverweser*.

In June of 1848, the Prussian King had appointed General Wrangel to Commander-in Chief of Brandenburg. In November of 1848, he chose a very conservative government with Count Brandenburg as Prime Minister and with Otto von Manteuffel as Minister of the Interior. On the 9th of November, Wrangel's troops entered Berlin to quench all last revolts.

On the 5th of December, the king dismissed the Prussian Parliament, but he promulgated a constitution, as he had promised. This Prussian Constitution installed a parliament, consisting of a Lower House and an Upper house. The Lower House had 350 members. In it served the representatives for 5 years. In the organisation of the Lower House, every 250 voters selected an Elector. These elected the deputies or representatives of the districts. At least two deputies

were elected per district. The Upper house had 180 members, elected for 6 years by the provinces, counties and the districts.

The constitution stated the command of the army and of the civil servants remained in the hands of the king. There was also still a House of Lords, with men of special merit, appointed directly by the king. Many well-known scholars found a place in this institution.

A young man, a conservative, called Otto von Bismarck, was nominated for this *Landtag* according to the new constitution, on the 5th of February of 1849, for Teltow in Brandenburg. The new Prussian constitution was not as conservative as the king's councillors would have wished. Therefore, it was rewritten in 1850. Formally, Prussia would be governed according to a constitution. In practice, the king had once more gained absolute powers. For instance, the ministers were appointed by the king. They had not to justify themselves to the two chambers of the *Landtag*, but exclusively and directly to the king.

This constitution remained in place in Prussia until after the turn of the century.

From mid-April to July of 1848, the German states were racked again by a wave of insurrections. Riots extended from Saxony to Baden. Revolts broke out in Bavaria and Württemberg. The united German forces suppressed these.

On the 3rd of July 1848, the National German Parliament started to work on the constitution. The debates in the Paulskirche lasted for many months. The discussions started on the basic rights of the German citizens. The representatives would later push on to other issues of the constitution. The constitution was, of course, of great historic importance.

In this way, slowly, the constitutional state Germany was created and the fundamental rights of the German citizens defined.

How else to understand and qualify this constitution than by the greatest importance phrases such as, 'the nobility as class is abolished; all the Germans are equal to the law'. Equality in justice, uniform citizenship, equality before the law, were the basic civil rights. Freedom of belief and of opinion were guaranteed.

Such simple definitions were what Asa and Max Vincius had craved for, and had once more seen confirmed, now for Germany entire, and not only for Prussia. The Germans, without exceptions, had the right to express their opinion in word, image, publications and in the press. They received the freedom of knowledge and of education. The privileges of the nobility were eradicated. The people who owned nothing, no money and no land, could freely choose and dispose of their power of labour. Nevertheless, the constitution mentioned nothing about the duties of property and nothing about any provisioning of social security.

While in 1848 barricades were being thrown up in the streets of Berlin, Rebekah Munkacs of Vilna, the matriarch of the Vincevicius Family passed away.

All her life, she had served her family, and had succeeded in keeping them together. For three years, after the death of her husband Ezra, she had been the undisputed leader of the Vincevicius. Grandmother Rebekah had reached the age of 76 when she died. She died peacefully, after a short sickness of merely a few days. The entire family, including Asa Vincius and the families of his children, Rebekah, Esther and Max, attended the remembrance feasts to her honour in Vilna. Rebekah Munkacs had been buried without much ado the same day of her death, by her son Abraham and his wife, Abi Abramovski. Asa and

his family, though long afterwards, had stayed two weeks in Vilna. With the death of Rebekah, most of the ties of the Vincius of Thorn with Vilna were broken almost definitively.

The Vilna episode was over for Asa and Max Vincius. Even Max, with his wife Sara, who had still quite some of his wife's family in Vilna, only very rarely returned to the city of his forefathers, and then only for very short periods. Asa did not even visit Abraham much, nor did Abraham feel the need to tie closer the relations with Thorn. Asa's children, Rebekah, Esther and Max, did not seek to entertain their relations with Iosel and Edek, their cousins. The connections remained tighter, warmer and more frequent between Asa and his sister Sarah, with the Svirskius family of Danzig. But then, Asa and Anton often did business together. The families lived peacefully in Thorn and Danzig and in Lithuania, and grew in prosperity. They all seemed to do well, oblivious of what happened in Prussia. After all, Berlin lay far from Vilna, Siauliai, Kaunas, Danzig and Thorn. The house of the Vincevicius in Gaono of Vilna, the ancestral house of Ezra and his wife, was sold off by Abraham Vincevicius in 1850.

Max Vincius felt sadly that the most wonderful episode of his life, his youth, had thus ended for all times. He would have liked some tangible evidence of his days in Vilna to have lived on. Nothing but memories remained. Even his sisters, though still living in Lithuania, had their houses in Siauliai and in Kevno, in Kaunas, and not in Vilna. Meetings with them were rare events, usually organised in Thorn.

This was the way of life, wasn't it? Once, hopefully far in the future, nothing would remain of him too, except for perhaps once every while a flash of memory in the minds of his children and grandchildren. And then, all would be over and he would disappear even as a vague image in the minds of his offspring.

The Schleswig-Holstein Crisis

While the German National Parliament still discussed about the constitution, an international crisis developed over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. These were lands laying in the northwest of Germany. Both lands took part in the German uprisings of 1848, directed, for them, against the Danish king to whom they had vowed feudal allegiance since old. The king of Denmark was also the official Duke of Holstein.

In January of 1848, Frederick VII obtained the throne of Denmark. He announced the publication of a national constitution. He also intended to integrate the Duchy of Schleswig into the Danish state. The king of Denmark wanted to include Schleswig and Holstein both, as royal fiefs, into his State. Frederick would probably have no male heirs. His successor as duke of Holstein would be Duke Christian-August von Augustenburg. Christian-August also wanted Schleswig.

Holstein had predominantly German-speaking inhabitants. The people were German in language and in culture. Schleswig had mainly a Danish-speaking population. Between the two duchies hung a strong sense of togetherness. Holstein was a member of the German *Bund*. In Germany, people wanted Schleswig also to join the German *Bund*. The Danish nationalists of Holstein supported Frederick.

In March of 1848, King Frederick VII promulgated a new constitution for Denmark and Schleswig. Nevertheless, the king allowed Holstein to remain and work in the German *Bund*. He and his court feared too harsh confrontations with Prussia had they done otherwise. The same month, the duchies rose in revolt against the Danish monarch. They chose a provisional, revolutionary government in Kiel, and fought with these troops against the Danes. They were defeated.

The duke of Augustenburg appealed for military protection from the German *Bund*. The National Parliament of Germany recognised the provisional government of Kiel, and asked King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia to protect Holstein and Schleswig. The Frankfurt Parliament could send troops of the *Bund* under Prussian command. The German troops entered Holstein on the 21st of April, and in May reached Jutland. They occupied Schleswig and Holstein rather rapidly. The Prussians overran the Danish defences. The Prussian general who led the German troops was General Wrangel.

Especially England and Russia raised international protests, fearing the growing power of Prussia. Tzar Nicholas I in particular, projected that with the harbour of Kiel, Prussia would develop into a large sea-power. Prussia agreed with the European powers to hold armistice negotiations at Malmö. These led to the Truce of Malmö in August of 1848.

Prussia acted alone in the negotiations, and considered Schleswig and Holstein Prussian, occupied territory. The Prussian diplomacy passed by the German Provisional Government, set up by the German National Parliament, in the name of which, however, the war with Denmark had been started. Prussia asserted its power. The Truce of Malmö underlined the impotence of the *Nationalversammlung* of Frankfurt. It was very clear, as clear as starlight, the *Reichsverweser* and the National Parliament wielded no real power. Prussia wielded the power in Germany, not the *Reichsverweser*, who was Austrian, and also not the Parliament of Frankfurt!

The Parliament of Germany had therefore a very difficult choice to make. It had to choose for or against Prussia. When it chose for Prussia, the Prussian king would have won a victory over the global Parliament of Frankfurt. If it chose against Prussia, the National Parliament set itself off against Prussia, by far the largest state in Germany, and also against the major European powers. What then, would remain of the unification of Germany?

On the 5th of September 1848, after tumultuous debates, the *Nationalversammlung*, the Parliament of Frankfurt, refused the truce of Malmö! The decision proved to be a victory for the leftists in the assembly. But on the 16th of September, the National Parliament finally did as yet accept the truce, annulling its earlier declaration! With this vote, the National Parliament sacrificed its fame and power to the views and politics of Prussia. The leftist liberal movements saw in the change of mind of the National Parliament a surrender, freely granted to the true, real power in Germany, which was Prussia.

During these discussions and debates, the republican-minded and the democratic groups gained support. A revolt threatened. An uprising was directed against the rest of the members of the National Parliament. The Provisional German Government appealed once more to the Prussian and Austrian Armies. The conflict extended. The revolution broke out in Frankfurt.

The state of siege was declared for the city. The uprising was quickly quenched by the military. The National Parliament placed itself to the side of the German reigning dynasties in the single, many states. No republic would be declared.

The uprising in Frankfurt found echo about everywhere in the southern and central states of Germany, practically all the other states being more or less controlled by Prussia. Republican and social-revolutionary slogans were heard everywhere. Gustav von Struve used the revolution to try a putsch in the Land of Baden. Germany seemed to rise against the power of the sovereigns, and for the freedom of the people. Gustav von Struve declared the German Social Republic for Germany from a balcony of the town-hall of Lörrach. But on the 26th of September of 1848, the regular army of Baden defeated the revolutionary battalions near Stauffen.

At that time, uprisings also declared in the non-Germanic parts of the Austrian Habsburg monarchy, in Italy and in Hungary.

The Hungarians under Lajos Kossuth sought the independence of their country from the Austrian Empire.

Lajos Kossuth was a Hungarian aristocrat, a lawyer and a journalist, who detested the Vienna politics of leaving everything as it was in the political constellation of the country, a Hungary regarded as a mere province of the Austrian Empire, a feudal country, in which the peasants were to remain poor and without fundamental freedoms guaranteed in a constitution.

In April of 1849, Hungary declared itself a republic. Schwarzenberg, still in the service of the Emperor, signed a coalition with Russia. Austrian and Russian troops defeated the Hungarian army.

Lajos Kossuth fled to Turkey. Hungary was forced to submit to the Emperor of Austria in a cruel oppression, which shocked the world.

When on the 5th of October, the German and Italian Habsburg troops were to be directed against the Hungarians, a revolt broke out in Vienna. The revolutionaries, mainly students and workers, tried to obstruct the departure of the Habsburg troops. The emperor and his ministers fled the city, leaving Vienna in the hands of the rebellion. Robert Blum, the leftist representative in the *Nationalversammlung* of Frankfurt, fought on the barricades against the imperial troops.

The Austrian imperial soldiers, led by Field Marshal Prince Windischgrätz, conquered Vienna after 5 days of bloody battles. The fights cost thousands of victims in the population, and terrible destruction among the houses of the city. Robert Blum was executed.

The revolution in Austria thus failed in a bloodbath. The *Reichstag*, the parliament of the Austrian Empire, was abolished. Prince Schwarzenberg, an advocate of absolutist imperial rule, was assigned as minister-president.

Nevertheless, in December of 1848, Emperor Ferdinand was forced to abdicate. Franz-Joseph followed up on him. He was the 18-year old son of Archduchess Sophie, and her worthy son. He began a long reign, which would only end in 1916.

In Berlin, protests mounted against the appointment of another supporter of absolutist rule for minister-president of Prussia. This was Lieutenant-General Brandenburg. On the 2nd of November of 1848, the Prussian Parliament refused the appointment. The king of Prussia

refused in his turn to even receive a delegation from the Prussian Parliament to hear the objections formulated by the representatives! The parliament representatives thereupon moved their assembly to the city of Brandenburg, out of Berlin, to more safety. On the 14th of November 1848, Prussian military dispersed the representatives who had indeed moved to Brandenburg. The representatives were forbidden to assemble at Brandenburg.

On the 10th of November, 40,000 soldiers led by General von Wrangel drew into Berlin. The Prussian king had decided it was now the moment he could act. The rebellion offered no significant resistance. The military declared the state of siege over the city, to halt at the core a possible second revolution in Berlin. The democratic, leftist groups offered somewhat more resistance then, but the very many monarchist troops thwarted all armed resistance. The Prussian monarchy did try to appease a little the protesters. The king promised a revised Prussian constitution, but he abolished Parliament completely. The monarchist counter-revolution had won the victory in Prussia.

Meanwhile, also in November of 1848, Prince Wilhelm and Princess Augusta of Prussia had wanted a Major Albrecht von Roon as the military governor of their eldest son, the then 17-year old Friedrich Wilhelm. In December of 1850, von Roon was promoted to lieutenant-colonel. He was to command the 33rd Reserve infantry in Thorn. This could be regarded as a fall in favour from the General Staff. A year later, however, von Roon was transferred to Köln. He took up residence in Koblenz, where Prince Wilhelm met him regularly. Von Roon became a good friend of Bismarck and would have a substantial effect on Otto von Bismarck's later career.

In the spring of 1849, the Schleswig-Holstein affair flared up anew. Denmark drew its troops into the two duchies under the pretence Germany had not honoured the Truce of Malmö. German troops, mainly Prussian, once more entered Schleswig. In July of 1849, these troops had conquered the duchy. Denmark lay defeated.

In August of 1850, Denmark and Prussia concluded the Peace of London, the final version of which they signed in 1852. The Peace Treaty now stated for Prince Christian von Glücksburg to be heir of all the lands depending from the Danish crown. The Augustenburg drooped off.

After the German Revolutions

The main question after the defeat of the uprisings of 1848-1849 was not anymore whether the unified Germany would be declared or not. That question had been solved. Everybody agreed the unification was only a matter of time, and would come into effect.

The question now, was whether it would come with or without Austria.

Two proposals confronted each other. The first was to form a smaller German-Prussian union, the '*kleindeutsche*' solution. The second was a double, larger union of Germany, a *Doppelbund*, including Prussia, with Austria, the '*grossdeutsche*' solution. The first would have Prussia as leader, the second probably the Austrian Empire.

At the end of 1848, a majority in the National Parliament of Frankfurt preferred the greater pan-German solution. The larger Reich would comprise the then existing *Bund*, plus the

duchy of Schleswig, as well as the Prussian eastern provinces of Posen, Schlesien and East- and West Prussia.

It became more and more clear and certain, however, Austria would not abandon some of its independence to the control of a Provisional German Government. The Austrian diplomats wielded an argument of some weight. They had formed an empire that could be called the continuation of the medieval German Empire, and that was regarded by them as the continuation of the West Roman Empire! What was Prussia more than one of the several kingdoms in this old empire?

Finally, the Minister-President of the *Bund*, Heinrich von Gagern, found a majority for a lesser-Germany solution, one without Austria. Parliament representatives proposed in January of 1949 a small German Empire under Prussian domination.

The National Parliament voted and decided on the 27th of March for the German Constitution. It declared Germany would become a *Bundesstaat*, a union of states, with at its head an emperor of the Germans. The *Reichstag*, the new National Parliament, would consist of two chambers, of which one would be chosen by general elections. On the 28th it proposed to declare the king of Prussia as the ‘Emperor of the Germans’.

On the 2nd of April of 1849, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia received the so-called *Kaiserdeputation*, the delegation of the National Parliament of Frankfurt, to propose to him the title of German Emperor. The president of the National Parliament, Eduard von Simson, led the representatives.

Friedrich Wilhelm IV was the Prussian king since 1840. He was already a mature man of 45 years of age when he received the crown. He was very pious, but his Christianity was eclectic and broad.

He had married the Princess Elisabeth of Bavaria, in a marriage of love. The Princess shocked the Prussian court, for she was a Roman Catholic. She converted to the Evangelic Faith of her husband, but she continued to inspire suspicions at the Prussian court.

Friedrich Wilhelm IV was a charming man, an idealist, who worked honestly and hard for the progress of Prussia. This, he reckoned, was his duty to God, who had placed him in his function. He considered he reigned best without getting influenced by others. He did not believe in a constitutional state controlled in its government by a parliament. He hated West-European liberalism that wanted to introduce a parliament chosen by the people, controlling government by a constitution that strictly defined the rights and duties of the people. He was more intelligent than many thought he was. He was also still sentimentally attached to Austria, which he admired. He was a conciliator by nature. At least, up to a point. His sister, the Prussian Princess Charlotte, was married to Emperor Nicholas I, the Tzar of Russia. In Russia, her name was Tzarina Alexandra Feodorovna!

The Prussian king esteemed that the German unity and the German Empire could not possibly be the result of a decision of a sovereign National Parliament chosen by the people. The imperial crown, he claimed, could only be created by an agreement among the reigning princes of the individual German states! The Prussian king simply declined on the imperial crown. That crown, thus proposed, was beneath his dignity! King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, in this way, ignored the work of the National Parliament to create a unified Germany, as well as the National Parliament’s Constitution for Germany.

Prussia, as well as other, larger states of Germany refused the German newer constitution, as defined by the *Nationalversammlung* of Frankfurt.

Nevertheless, on the 6th May of 1849, a congress of several parliamentary fractions called for the continuance of the new constitution in Germany. In manifestations and in papers, patriotic associations and associations of workers continued the battle for the constitution. These agitators seemed to understand the application of the constitution could be won only by weapons and by violent revolution.

The number of representatives in the National Parliament of Frankfurt, now in theory the *Reichstag*, ignored and indignantly refuted by the German sovereigns, diminished as of end March of 1849. Lesser and lesser representatives arrived to meet for an assembly that could not wield even the least power. The *Reichstag* stopped meeting altogether in June of 1849. The ministries also stopped working and quietly closed doors, leaving only empty offices behind.

New uprisings emerged in the year 1849 in Saxony, in the territories of the Rhineland, in the Pfalz, and in Baden. Revolts broke out anew. These revolts could only be defeated by Prussian troops, led by the Prussian hereditary prince, the heir of King Friedrich Wilhelm, the later Emperor Wilhelm I. After two months of fights, the Prussian troops could defeat and annihilate the revolt in Baden and in the Pfalz. Also Rastatt, the last rebellion stronghold, fell on the 23th of July of 1849.

Until the end of October of 1849, the Prussian military tribunals judged, executed or imprisoned the last insurrectionists. More than 80,000 persecuted men, about 1/5th of the entire population of Baden, left Germany into exile.

The liberal and democratic movements in Germany had thus been defeated. The same result happened in France, Italy and Hungary. In the following months and years, almost all the liberal ministries in the German states were replaced by conservative representatives. Parliaments, though not all, were abolished. The monarchs reigned again with absolute power over the people. The conservative reaction had won over the rebellions!

In Prussia, the parliament was not abolished. A three-class voting system was introduced, whereby the voters were classified into 3 groups according to the amounts of taxes they paid. The 4% of the first, wealthiest class of the population, could choose as many great electors and thus representatives as the 80% of the less wealthy people. The freedom of opinion and of press was very much limited.

Finally, in 1851, the German *Bund* abolished the fundamental rights of the German people as published by the National Parliament of Frankfurt. Liberals, democrats and social-revolutionaries were imprisoned and condemned to long years of confinement in prison. Many German scholars and idealists emigrated to Switzerland, to England and to the United States of America. The democratic founding of the constitutional, parliamentary state of Germany had failed.

But the ideas lived on!

An Austrian-Prussian Conflict

Tensions flared up once more between Berlin and Vienna in 1850. This happened over a dispute in a small German state, Hesse-Kassel. The territories of Hesse-Kassel lay between the western Prussian provinces and the main lands of the Prussian kingdom.

The Elector of that Land had tried to impose counter-revolutionary measures against the wishes of the territorial *Landtag*. Revolts ensued. He called upon the aid of the soldiers of the *Bund*. Count Schwarzenberg of Austria saw his opportunity. He would send troops under the banner of the now almost non-existing Frankfurt National Parliament to push back the Prussian influence in the centre of Germany. His move could revive some the National Parliament, and give the impression Prussia was not really the leader nation on greater Germany.

King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia had no intentions of letting this happen. Austria had not to mingle in what he considered his own affairs! On the 26th of October of 1850, the parliament of Frankfurt allowed troops from Hannover and Bavaria to intervene in Hesse-Kassel. The Hannoverian troops Frankfurt intended to send to Hesse-Kassel might block Prussia's north-west connections, which outraged the Prussian military. Prussia readied its own troops at the border, ready to resist the incursion, and Prussia mobilised. A civil war threatened in Germany!

On the 24th of November, the Austrian Minister-President Schwarzenberg served an ultimatum to Berlin, supported by Russia. Schwarzenberg demanded the withdrawal of Prussia from out of Hesse-Kassel in the shortest of times.

Prussia was in uproar in all classes of society. What were Austria and Russia to mingle thus in internal, German affairs?

At the last moment, a war between Prussia and Austria could be avoided, as everybody agreed to negotiations.

In November of 1850 took place a congress in the Bohemian town of Olmütz between von Manteuffel, who had become the Prime Minister of Prussia after the death of the Chancellors Brandenburg, and Schwarzenberg of Austria. The diplomats of Prussia and Austria discussed the ever more critical relations between their two countries. Both wanted predominance in the German *Bund*, of course.

Prussia took a step back. The Prussian king agreed to demobilise his troops, and to join the intervention in Hesse-Kassel by the forces sent by Frankfurt. Prussia thus withdrew her troops from Hessen and abandoned the project of the Union. Prussia and Austria agreed to work together in discussions to form a new *Bund*. These negotiations never led to anything, however, so the old *Bund* continued to exist as of 1851.

The Treaty of Olmütz that was the result of these discussions stipulated that Prussia relented all claims of leadership in the united states of Germany. The political situation was thus turned back to the situation of the old *Bund* of 1815.

Not one Prussian nationalist could agree with this declaration! Schwarzenberg had effectively downfaced Prussia. The Punctations of Olmütz, as the treaty was called, seemed a great diplomatic defeat for Prussia, an open humiliation.

The ‘*Olmützer Punktationen*’ meant – temporarily - the end of the national movement in Germany. Nevertheless, the world had changed profoundly. Prussia was now a constitutional state with an elected parliament.

It was to a new figure, a new Prussian Minister-President, to obtain once more Prussia’s dominance over the *Bund*. With him in charge of the Prussian state, everything would change again.

Ultimately, this man would be Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck was sent as Prussia’s representative to the National Parliament of Frankfurt in 1851.

The conservative representative in the National Parliament of Frankfurt Otto von Bismarck, had welcomed the Olmütz agreement. It was not in Prussia’s interest, he told in a speech, to serve as a Don Quixote in Germany on behalf of disgruntled representatives of Frankfurt. Bismarck thus proved himself to be a staunch supporter of the Prussian king, for good or worse. This could not but win him the sympathy of the Prussian court and, more importantly, of the king.

In early May of 1852, Otto von Bismarck was appointed by the Prussian king to ‘*Geheimer Legationsrat*’, to Privy Legation Councillor’. That drew him to the top of the very few around the king. The title also brought him a stipend that got him out of any financial worries he might have had so far.

On the 7th of November of 1852, in France, the French Senate re-established the title of Emperor of France. President Louis-Napoléon, who had already taken on practically dictatorial functions, took on the title as Emperor Napoleon III.

The Crimean War

In 1852 started a war between Russia and Turkey. Turkey was then the Ottoman Empire, headed by the sultan of the empire. The war found its origins in a religious dispute between Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic monks in Palestine over the management of the Holy Christian Places. Tzar Nicholas I, old, sickly, unstable of character, regarded it his holy right to protect the Greek Orthodox faithful in the sultan’s territories.

The new Emperor Napoleon III Bonaparte had recently taken power in France. He put the sultan of Istanbul under diplomatic pressure to hand over the keys of the Christian Nativity Church of Bethlehem to the Roman-Catholic patriarch. The Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I confirmed France’s authority over the Christian holy places in Palestine, including the Church of the Nativity of Christ, which had been previously held in protection by the Greek Orthodox Church. Napoleon III did not act out of Catholic religious fervour. He needed the support to his regime by the Catholic opinion in his country, to confirm and fortify his power over France.

Tzar Nicholas I sought allies in Western Europe. He called the British ambassador of St Petersburg to him, to discuss the Turkish matter. Nicholas I wanted the British at his side

against the French. He also wanted not to antagonise the British, who had shown marked interest in the Middle East, to agree on zones of influence. The Tzar went as far as to propose to the British to grab Ottoman lands as colonies, such as Egypt or Crete. The Tzar and his court wanted to know in which parts of the Ottoman Empire the British might be interested in. But no, the British were not interested in a partitioning of Turkey.

The British Government was divided over the matter. Prime Minister in London was at that time the Lord Aberdeen. Minister of Foreign Affairs was Lord John Russell. Lord Palmerston was Minister of the Interior. The last especially, pleaded to refuse any attempt of Russia to gain influence in Europe. He warned for increased influence of Russia in the Mediterranean. Great Britain could not tolerate Russian dominance in the Ottoman affairs, nor Russian expansion at the expense of the Ottoman sultans. The leader of the opposition in Great Britain, Benjamin Disraeli, blamed Lord Aberdeen, as well as the British ambassador in Turkey, for having made war inevitable.

Tzar Nicholas and the court of St Petersburg indeed sought easier access from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, passing the Bosphorus and Istanbul.

Access to the Black Sea could happen for Russia by the Danube. In July of 1853, Russian troops entered the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, then in the sphere of influence of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian generals who invaded the Danubian principalities were excellent military men. They were Field Marshal Ivan Paskevich, well known for his decisive involvement in the crushing of the Polish revolution of 1830, and General Mikhail Gorchakov. Heavy fighting took place between the Russian and Turkish troops. Austria quickly organised a peace conference in Vienna to mediate between Russia and Turkey, but the sultan refused the proposals. Austria too intervened briefly in the Danube fighting, against Russia and on the side of Turkey. This intervention broke the relations between the Austrian and the Russian Empires, which would later prove disastrous for Austria.

In September of 1853, a joint English and French fleet navigated to Istanbul to take the city in their protection.

On the 4th of October, the sultan of the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia.

In 1853, Russia and France thus clashed over the right to act as protectors of the holy sites of Christendom in Palestine. Turkey rejected the Russian claims over what was still officially Turkish territory.

The Austrian foreign minister was then, as of April of 1852, Karl-Ferdinand von Buol-Schauenstein. He had been appointed to the function after the death of Prince Schwarzenberg. The Russo-Turkish war thus began and dragged on. Great-Britain, France and Piedmont allied with Turkey. These countries ultimately would declare war on Russia in 1854. At about the same time, Austria and Prussia signed an alliance, allowing Austria to oppose Russia over the Danube lands it had invaded. At the beginning of August 1854, France, Britain and Austria then too signed an alliance to confront Russia.

By the end of December 1853, Prussia, though invited, refused to enter this last alliance. Buol-Schauenstein asked for Prussia to withdraw Bismarck, who had pronounced speeches

against Austria. The Prussian king refused to do so. Prussia and Germany would remain neutral in the war. Max Vincius liked very much the Prussian decision to remain at peace.

The Crimean War, as the conflict between Russia and Turkey was being called since the allied troops of France, Great Britain, Piedmont and Turkey had debarked at Eupatoria in the Crimea, lasted on.

On the 3rd of November of 1853, a first sea-battle took place between the Russian and the Ottoman fleet near the harbour of Sinope in the environs of the Bosphorus. A convoy of 8 Russian battleships destroyed 11 Ottoman battleships in the harbour of Sinope. The Turks suffered defeat. The battle was called the ‘Bloodbath of Sinope’ in the British press. The battle caused fierce reaction in the British press of London, directed against the Russian fleet and army.

At the end of March of the next year, 1854, Great Britain and France declared war on Russia. Great Britain and France used the battle as a ‘cause of war’. Napoleon III of France had chosen the side of Great Britain. The official aim of France and Great Britain seemed to defend the existence of the Ottoman Empire to serve as counter-weight to Russia in the region. Also, Camillo di Cavour, the Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, under orders of King Victor Emmanuel II, sent an expeditionary force of 15,000 soldiers to side with the French and the British armies.

The governments of the allied powers agreed to jointly attack Russia in the Crimea. Russia had fortified there the harbour of Sevastopol. The Crimea seemed a fine place to start the invasion of Russia. The Crimea was the underbelly of Russia. From there, the armies could, if need be, march northwards to Moscow. Russia could be defeated in the lands around the Black Sea! The allied expeditionary force landed at Varna in June of 1854. Varna was a city on the western coast of the Black Sea. In September of 1854, the allied expeditionary force was transported to the Crimea. The Russian campaign of the allies started fully in September of 1854. The landing took place north of Sevastopol.

The Russians evacuated Moldavia and Wallachia in late July of 1854. The war might have ended then, but the public opinions in France and in Great Britain had been thus manipulated by the political parties and by the press, that the governments found it impossible to end the war at that point.

In the autumn of 1854, three major battles took place near Sevastopol, the battles of Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman. The battles were Russian assaults against the advancing allied troops.

The Battle of the River Alma of the 20th of September, made 3,000 allied losses by death. The battle happened right after the allied landings. The allies drove the Russians out of entrenchments along the river. The allied armies lost 3,000 men, the Russians about 6,000.

The Russian assault on the allied supply base southeast of Balaclava was pushed back on the 25th of October of 1854, but the Russian army could hold strong positions north of the British

lines, blocking them from marching north. The Russians attacked the 93rd Scottish Highlanders of Sir Colin Campbell. They were repelled because the Highlanders had been furnished with the new English Minie rifles, which shot much faster than the smoothbore muskets of the Russians. The British in general, used the breech-loading Enfield rifle, which also allowed much faster shooting.

The Battle of Inkerman, much deadlier, was fought on the 5th of November of 1854. The Russians under General Soymonov launched a strong assault on the Home Hill held by the allies, east from the Russian lines on Shell Hill. The Russians attacked with over 40,000 men. Part of the Russian forces had to move north and east to the Inkerman Bridge to cover Russian enforcements under General Pavlov. The Battle of Inkerman was fought ferociously in the hills. Despite several attacks, Home Hill could not be taken by the Russians. They withdrew under heavy cannon fire from the British Home Hill, which also battered the Russian held Shell Hill. The allies made no attempt to follow the Russians. The Inkerman Battle was characterised by heavy attacks of cavalry, widespread in the valley before Sevastopol, launched impetuously both on Russian and on British sides. Although the spectacular cavalry charges, among which the later famous ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’, this battle made less victims than the battles of Alma and Inkerman. About 1,000 men got killed on allied French and British side, but the Russian suffered about 12,000 casualties, among which 3,300 killed.

The Russians made no further large-scale assaults on the western allied armies after Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman. The belligerent armies suffered greatly from sickness in the winter of from 1854 to 1855.

The battles might have been called French-British victories, but Sevastopol could not be captured, and the Crimean remained Russian after the battles.

The siege of Sevastopol led to a series of bloody skirmishes and outright battles, fought with the greatest ferocity from 1854 to 1855. One of the leading men to defend the fortifications of the city was the Russian General Todleben, his name of ‘life and death’ alone a complete program of war.

The final assault on the city and on the harbour was made as from the 5th of September of 1855. On the 8th of September, the French army captured the fortification of Malakoff Hill near Sevastopol. The Russians failed to retake the positions. Their defences collapsed. The Russians suffered heavy casualties. They retreated northwards, blowing up their magazines, while leaving the city. Sevastopol fell on the 9th of September of 1855.

The allied powers lost many soldiers in the war of 1854 and 1855, but much more to sickness than to casualties in the battles. In the English medical barracks worked the nurse Florence Nightingale. She emphasized cleanliness in her hospital of Scutari, and fought for more and better medicines. Her efforts forced the death toll in the medical barracks of the British Army down from over 40% to 2%. Her work became an example for all the European armies.

In 1855, the allies fought on other fronts too. They attacked near the Don River the seaport of Tayanrog in May of 1855. The last siege of Tayanrog from 19 to 31 August failed. The Russians continued to hold the port and town.

More skirmishes and battles between the Turks and the Russians took place in the Caucasus. Battles had been fought there from 1853 to 1855.

More battles were fought in an entirely different environment, in the Baltic Sea. In April of 1854, a British military fleet entered the Baltic to strike at the Russian naval base of Kronstadt. The marine assault failed. Other allied attacks on other Russian harbours equally failed, but the British fleet blocked the Baltic Sea and thereby the Russian trade in the Gulf of Finland. The port of Sveaborg outside Helsinki came several times under attack, as well as the Finnish Aland Islands. The British attacks on Sveaborg failed despite extremely heavy bombardments from the British fleet.

The blockade undermined the Russian exports, a large part of its economy. The blockade of the Baltic forced Russia to rely in imports overland from Prussia. This drew Russia closer to Prussia.

During the lasting siege of Sevastopol, in March of 1855, Tzar Nicholas I died. His son Tzar Alexander II continued the war.

Fierce battles had been waged for the city of Sevastopol, which finally the Russians had abandoned after heroic defence.

The new Tzar Alexander II understood his country, isolated in the war, needed reforms urgently. He agreed to peace settlements.

After the capture of Sevastopol, all belligerent parties were close to exhaustion. The diplomats called for a conference to be held in Paris.

The Treaty of Paris, a peace treaty, was signed on the 30th of March of 1856.

The Crimean War thus ended at the Peace Conference of Paris in the spring of 1856. Russia lay defeated and humiliated. Austria would not win much, either. France and Britain dictated the conditions.

In the treaty, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was guaranteed, always the official aim of the British government. Navigation on the Danube was given free. The treaty defined an organisation for the international control on the navigation on the Danube. The Black Sea was declared neutral territory. The Russians were not allowed to keep a military fleet in the Black Sea. The Russians and the Ottomans agreed to not build or hold any naval or other military arsenals or bases on the Black Sea coasts. The two Rumanian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia gained their independence. The Austrian troops would evacuate them within the year. Russia had to hand over its occupied territory to Turkey. Great Britain, France and the Ottomans turned over the cities they had captured, Sevastopol, Balaclava, Kamish, Eupatoria, Jenikade, and other territories they had occupied, to the Russians. As for the reason why the war had begun, the sultan would respect the equality of the Christians and the Muslims in his country.

The Crimean War had been fought from October 1853 to February 1856.

In the end, during the Crimean War, France and Great-Britain had not gained much. Russia had lost more. The war had demonstrated the weakness of the Russian army, despite the enormous territories of the Russian Empire.

Great Britain and France had stopped Russia from gaining territory and power at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, from the ‘sick man of Europe’ as a Russian ambassador had called the regime. The Ottomans lost more than 45,000 men. France lost 135,000 soldiers and Great Britain over 40,000. Russia may have lost over 530,000 men.

The great characteristic and tragedy of this war was, that many more soldiers died from sickness than as of military actions in the field. More than five times more soldiers died of sickness than from bullets and shrapnel. Many fell in the trenches around Sevastopol. The reputation of Napoleon III grew in France, but at the cost of very many French lives.

On the 25th of January of 1858, the Crown Prince of Prussia, Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, married the Princess Royal Victoria of Great Britain.

Later in 1858, King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia suffered a series of strokes, affecting his ability to speak, and making it impossible for him to serve as the monarch of Prussia. He appointed his younger brother, Prince Wilhelm, as regent of Prussia. In October 1857, the Prussian Regent Prince Wilhelm appointed Helmut von Moltke as his Chief of the Great General Staff. Von Moltke was a very capable chief of staff.

Otto von Bismarck’s career continued. On the 29th of January 1859, Bismarck was appointed by the Regent Wilhelm as the Prussian envoy to the court of the Russian Tzar Alexander II. Bismarck had to leave Frankfurt for Saint Petersburg.

The French-Austrian War

The French Emperor Napoleon III and Piedmont of Italy formed an alliance on the 21st of January of 1859, directed against Austria. Napoleon III had aims to liberate Italy as his predecessor Napoleon Bonaparte had done, and to reduce the power of Austria. In the eventuality of an Austro-Piedmontese war, resulting from Austrian aggression, France would join Piedmont to drive the Austrians from Italy. Then, a Kingdom of Upper Italy could be established under the Dynasty of Savoy. Piedmont had mobilised its army.

Prussia was worried about the developments. The Prussian Prince-Regent ordered the mobilisation of 3 Prussian Army Corps and all his cavalry for an all-out European war. France and Piedmont were poised against Austria and Prussia.

On the 23rd of April of that same year 1859, Austria sent an ultimatum to Piedmont-Sardinia, demanding for the Piedmontese to disarm, which the Piedmontese promptly refused. The new Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph decided for war. Austria declared war on Piedmont on the 29th of April.

The Franco-Austrian war would be very bloody! On the 20th of May, French infantry and Sardinian cavalry defeated the Austrian army near Montebello. On the 27th of the same month, Garibaldi’s Hunters of the Alps, fighting for Piedmont, equally defeated the Austrians at San Fermo. The city of Como fell in Piedmontese hands. In June, two terrible battles took place, the Battle of Magenta on the 4th, and the Battle of Solferino on the 21st to the 24th. These ended as French victories.

Meanwhile, the Hungarians had revolted against the Austrian emperor. It was high time for Austria to seek for peace. On the 11th July of 1859, Napoleon III met Franz Joseph I at

Villafranca di Verona. They signed the Treaty of Villafranca. By withdrawing from the war, and abandoning the unification of Italy, Napoleon III betrayed Piedmont. In protest, the Piedmontese Minister Cavour resigned. Piedmont received Lombardy from the Austrians, but not the Veneto. Parma, Tuscany and Modena equally, did not join Piedmont in a new kingdom under the Savoy.

Germany and Thorn

On the 5th of December 1859, the Prussian Prince-Regent appointed Albrecht von Roon as Minister of War. Von Roon urged the regent to appoint Otto von Bismarck as minister. The Prince-Regent hesitated for a long time.

In the meanwhile, in the Prussian parliament, in June of 1860, had been founded a new party, or *Fraktion*, the left-liberal *Fortschrittspartei*. In the subsequent voting, the conservative party led by Moritz von Blankenburg, the party on which Bismarck counted, lost many members. The *Fortschrittspartei*, the Party of Progress, won in the voting's of 6 May 1862 up to 65% of the votes. The court of Prussia had a new issue. Only a very firm hand could win support in the *Landtag* for king and court.

After the death of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1861, the Prince-regent Wilhelm was crowned in Königsberg as the new king of Prussia, Wilhelm I.

On the 22nd of September of 1862, Wilhelm I appointed Otto von Bismarck as Minister-President.

The highest authority in Prussia was now in the hands of four very able, strong-minded men. These were King Wilhelm I, Minister of War Albrecht von Roon, leader of the General Staff Helmut von Moltke, and Minister-President Otto von Bismarck. These would turn Prussia and Germany into an industrial and military superpower.

In these years of international turmoil, Thorn lay peaceful and life was good for the Vincius.

The Vincius of Thorn. 1860.

Max Vincius read his several newspapers, because he was interested in what happened in his country. He wanted to keep abreast of events in Prussia. He read for hours on some days. He did this not at home, but at his storerooms outside the walls of the old city of Thorn. He liked the company of the Kleinbergers. He felt safe and at ease with them. He had built for himself a new, small house on the other side of his storerooms, so as not to trouble his Saxon friends with his close presence. To his wife and children, he called this refuge his office. It was a house with few rooms, a nice hall, a kitchen, a bathroom and two bedrooms, one of which he indeed used as an office space. This room led to outside, to a nice view from a terrace on the Weichsel and on vast pastures, leading to the Bromberg Suburb.

Whenever Max felt the need to think quietly, to be alone with himself, to be creative in business, he moved into this house. He could stay here on his own for two or three days, seldom longer. He appreciated the serene calmness of the site. His company were hares and rabbits, mice, and a cat, which had chosen Max to feed her.

Anna Kleinberger, without him having to ask her, would bring him a frugal dinner of the same food her family took that day. This sufficed Max plentiful. He did not live to eat, ate merely to keep alive.

From his newspapers, from talks with other merchants of Thorn, and from the books he read, Max Vincius attempted to grasp the sense of the changes happening in the mentalities of the leading people of Prussia and of Germany. Max understood very well the world of his grandfather and even the world of his father Asa had moved along. Prussia was evolving rapidly, at a stronger pace than ever before. This, Max found disconcerting at first.

The Vincevicius patriarch, Ezra, had lived for decades the same way. He practically lived all his life in the same environment, with the same issues, the same political views, the same way of doing business. Max's father Asa had moved to Thorn to seek more safety in his status. He had feared the uncertain mood of the Russian Tzar and his regularly changing courtiers. Asa had feared the newer Tzarist governments might harm more the Jewish communities of Lithuania, the *Kahals*, and the Jewish Settlement Organisations overall. He had detested the laws on the younger Jewish men having to leave their homes for a thirty-year term in the Russian military. Asa had moved from Vilna to Thorn, because he wanted to be a citizen like all other citizens of the nation. Prussia had offered this opportunity by its 1812 decree on the Jewish people. Asa had become a Prussian citizen, with practically the same rights as all other citizens.

Max smiled, for his father had bent fate a little, as any clever Jew would have done. Hence the evolution of the Vincevicius name into the more Prussian sounding Vincius.

Asa was a Prussian citizen, now. He was equal to the law, as any other citizen of Prussia, regardless of religions. Well, that was not entirely true, but the exceptions were rare and did not touch Asa Vincius in any aspect of his life that really mattered much to him. Asa had been able to live and work in these truly non-discriminating conditions for the last twenty years of his life.

Article 11 of the new constitution given by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV stated once more religious freedom was guaranteed in Prussia. The new constitution had been decreed in

December 1848, as the king had promised to the amassed crowds in Berlin. This suited Asa and Max Vincius quite well, as it was simply the confirmation of the Prussian laws of 1812. Of course, antisemitism existed also in Prussia, mostly in the upper regions of the governments. Antisemitism was a kind of natural refusal towards all the people who were not of the same disposition as the native, original Prussians. But everybody had to obey the law.

Thorn lay on the outskirts of Prussia. This was primarily still pioneer country. People worked hard, German-speaking and Polish-speaking ones alike. They all sought to better their condition and the condition of the town at the same time. There was little interest in which religion you prayed in, here. Yes, there had been years of ups and downs in Asa's business as a merchant of Thorn, but he had survived and prospered.

Max's ways of living too had not changed much. Asa was no great reader of newspapers. Max saw his father merely read the local newspapers. Asa had not been too much interested in what kings and emperors were deciding, as long as he felt no impact on his living in Thorn. Thorn remained stable, peaceful, unchanging, and trade very profitable. What more could a man wish? Max wanted more, and was willing to pay for it.

Asa and his wife Leah had lived a good life in Thorn, truly! Their marriage was joyful and happy. The same had been true, largely, for Max. He too had enjoyed an agreeable youth in Vilna, and later in Thorn. He had made lifelong friends, many more non-Jewish friends than pious Jews. At school, the other children had not pestered him for being Jewish. Max too had married, to a very beautiful wife. He had borne children, from a lusty wife. He had not been racked by wars or other upheavals. Even the Prussian uprising of Berlin and the controversies against the king of Prussia Max had read of, had largely passed by Thorn. They had not transformed his town, nor his business. Max was grateful for the life he could live in Thorn.

Survival

Max Vincius, much more than his father Asa and his mother Leah, and probably even more than his grandparents, realised such sort of life could come to a dramatic end rapidly. He was astonished at how fast ideas and conceptions evolved in the Prussia of Berlin. Berlin of course, had been much more exposed to West-European influences than Thorn.

To start with, Asa Vincius had not just brought his family to Prussia! Prussia, Max esteemed, might sooner or later evolve into a smaller part of a much larger whole, a union of states, to be called Germany. That drew Max's attention away from the east, from Poland and Russia, to countries such as England and France.

Max had set up a small library of his own in his office outside the walls of Thorn. He owned a geographical atlas among his books. True, this was not a very detailed one, but the pictures had allowed him to remark the land that was called Germany could become a large European power!

Greater Germany, with or without Austria, could be called a large European power, the equal of France and England. With Austria, Germany was a much larger political entity than countries such as Denmark, Sweden or Italy. From his newspaper articles, Max also understood that the economy of a country was probably more important in the power relations among countries than the mere surface in square miles of the nations indicated. Max had travelled in the new Germany that was in the making. He knew how rationally and

methodically the Germans, of course especially the Prussians, worked and managed their affairs. It would still take many years for the Germans together to reach the levels of industrialisation of England, France and Belgium. Then, Germany, with Prussia, might be drawn into conflicts, he feared. The conflicts might become as large and devastating as had been the Napoleonic wars of the beginning of the century.

A country that puzzled Max in these relations, was Russia. Russia seemed to him a nation that was part of the European constellation, yet also one that sought isolation. From his atlas, Max surmised Russia was by far the largest European power. The land was huge, huger still in Asia than in Europe. It must have inexhaustible resources. By economic standards, however, Russia was not more powerful than France, England, Germany or Austria. In a great war, it could throw into the battlefields far more people, soldiers, than any other, but such mobilisation from its Asian territories could take many, many months, and in the meantime, any European power disposing of a modern army could have reached Moscow and St Petersburg before the Asian reinforcements had the chance to arrive. Moscow and St Petersburg were the decision headquarters of the enormous country. Russia might lose its head, its capitals, its centres of leadership, its growing industry, before it could tap its Asian resources. What remained of the country would not be able to oppose European armies in a modern war. Russia after all, was powerful, but probably not much more than the other European countries when those would want to put all their resources in the balance. Russia looked like a *Golem*, a lifeless giant with loam legs and feet. Max was convinced West-European countries overestimated Russian power. He acknowledged Russia too might advance, and then become more powerful than the western writers could imagine. Nevertheless, changes in the relations between powers could lead to devastating wars and enduring modifications of influences. Max was glad Russia seemed peaceful as ever when Western-Europe was concerned.

Max was also glad Prussia had not been involved the last four or five decades in wars of influence. This pleased Max inordinately. The Prussian policy might not last forever! War was a dreadful, terrible event.

Max had been born with a delicate sensibility. He hated hurting other people, as much as he detested being hurt himself by injustice or lies, by cheating and treason. He gave his confidence and trust in good faith, and expected these to be returned to himself.

Max would have to think on how to survive in a war. Survival depended on money, so he had to hide his money in basic coins or goods, in gold, in different sites. Money now had to be placed in banks to not diminish in value and to bring some interest. In which countries should he invest? In which countries could he hide his money best? Where should he bring his family to in times of war? Max thought first of hiding somewhere in a comfortable mansion deep in the woods of Prussia. Places, isolated in the wild forests, surrounded by lakes, where one had to draw one's own narrow paths, of such places there were many in Prussia, and easy to find and buy.

Yet, Max felt convinced there was no escaping a war in which hundreds of thousands of soldiers could be engaged with guns and heavy cannons.

Max esteemed his best chances of survival for him and his family, still might lay in a town such as Thorn. The Prussian commanders of the district of Thorn were still repairing and ever strengthening the walls of the city. Max knew the walls would not remain standing against hundreds of cannons firing at them. He had seen ever larger of such killing devices be built and proposed to the military. Still, no army could take the time and resources to destroy the population of a large town completely! A family could survive in the cellars of their houses. With money, one could later bribe anyone.

Max's thoughts then wandered to dangers from within. The social relations within a country could change drastically, lead to uprisings, revolts, rebellions, civil war or worse. Had he not heard that the king of Prussia, wise Friedrich-Wilhelm IV, had at a certain point during the last uprisings in Berlin considered abdicating, giving the country over to chaos? What would such a turmoil do to the economy of a country, to the internal relations? The danger would come from within, also with devastating power. The worm could eat the apple. Max should flee, he knew, flee to other cities or other countries. This meant he needed houses in those cities where he could flee to, and means of living in that country. Max held an eye on Berlin and on other cities in greater Germany, on Hamburg and Frankfurt. No, Frankfurt would be too exposed. Stuttgart maybe? Strasbourg in France?

Industrialisation could modify the conditions and means of trade as drastically as wars. Max drifted to this subject. The good strength of Thorn was its position on the Weichsel, halfway between Warsaw and Danzig. This position would always remain an important, strong asset. There would always be wealth in Thorn because of its geographical position! Max had good confidence he would always be able to trade in goods out of Thorn. In that aspect, his father Asa had made a marvellous, reasoned choice. Thorn was a good, safe place to live in.

Would the changing relations in power and in social oppositions within the country be detrimental, especially to the Jews? Max thought not. Maybe in Russia, maybe in Lithuania, maybe in Poland, but not in Prussia! Max did not feel threatened in his Jewishness in Thorn. Moreover, he had come to be a rather indifferent man when it came to religion. He traded as well with non-Jews as with Jews. What truly mattered were the personal qualities of confidence, trust, and honesty in a man. These qualities could be found in men of any religion. Max felt much more open-minded still than his father Asa, and than his grandparents. In case of difficulties because of his faith, would he stick to Judaism in the end, risk personal annihilation because of his faith? He rather thought not.

When this decision came to his mind, he realised how crude this opinion might sound. But then, Max had rarely or not sensed the hand of God in his relations to other people. Was not the God of the Christians the same as his God? There could not be two Gods. Ceremonies and liturgies and laws were man's doings. Did it really matter how one worshipped? His grandfather would have called Max a heretic had he even dared to propose these ideas to his grandfather. Yet, was it not the truth? Max would honour his forefathers' faith to the end, but he would not hesitate to worship in another way if that could save his family. Would he be punished by the God of the Jews? Why punishment, if this God was the same being he would pray to? He would not be punished by his God, for he would love and serve Him as before, in heart and mind, and most probably in the same Hebrew words. The outward signs were not

that important, Max decided. Nevertheless, when allowed, like here in Prussia, he preferred the ways of his forefathers to other ways of adoring.

Max knew very well his father and mother might not possess and forgive his openness and awareness of mind of these possible changes he should be envisaging. There, he felt, laid his responsibility as a son and as a father. He, Max Vincius, would have to lead the Vincius Family with the right words to further than where his father had brought them. Such was the duty of each generation. And drastic solutions to survive should not be discarded! It was the duty of each generation. He would have to think farther than his father, as his father had thought farther on than Ezra Vincevicius. Max felt rather confident; However drastic the changes might be that could modify the ways of his family, they would not happen so quickly as to surprise him in speed. Therefore, he concluded, it was his prime duty to stay informed about what was happening in the world, in his country, and in his town. Of one thing, Max was sure: he was proud to be a Prussian and a German, now. He was delighted by what he saw around him, and read, about how Prussia was dealing with the changes that had racked Europe the last decades. Max didn't think any other people could do better. He was ready to help his new fatherland as a true and loyal patriot.

The Family of Max Vincius

In 1860, Max Vincius had reached 40 years of age. He still considered himself a young man. Yet, his mature age and even the age of the elderly stood, so to say, at his doorstep. If he desired to make something else of his life than what he had been doing up to this moment, he had better start thinking about how to drastically change his ways too. If not, he would be doing in ten years from now the same as ever. Max didn't truly know whether he still wanted another life than the one he had been used to. In his current life, he had experienced wonderful moments, as well as very bad ones.

Max loved trading. He liked counting the gold coins handed over to him when a transaction had been led to a predicted success. He liked meeting different people, to talk to them, and hear about what had happened to their family. He liked travelling in the larger world, even though he had travelled alone these last years, and was gripped to the throat by bouts of loneliness when he sat in a hotel room in a city unknown to him. Still, the feeling of travelling caught him sometimes unawares. He would then, rather suddenly, take a valise, go to the harbour, and leave.

He had friends, the Kleinbergers the closest to him. He didn't consider the Kleinbergers any longer as people working for him. They were partners. Anna Kleinberger knew more about his business than he. She especially knew his figures better. Friedrich Kleinberger had confessed one evening he had invested in exactly the same transactions as Max, and made some money. Max had been astonished at first, then smiled. Now, he and Friedrich worked as partners. Max could send Friedrich out to conclude transactions in his own name, and in Friedrich's. The Kleinbergers were getting rich. They didn't leave the house by Max's storerooms though, and still managed his trade.

The main issue that was nagging the last years at Max's happiness, the issue that depressed him often, was his wife, Sara Benavicius.

Max had been quite satisfied living on as he had done the first years of his marriage. Now, he didn't really want to think of Sara! He was sitting in a bright sun, in calm weather, in a chair behind his small house near his storerooms, reading his newspapers, and thinking about his next business ventures. Business had been good, these last months. It was time to make more money. The railways to Danzig and to Warsaw were being laid, but had not yet reached Thorn. They would do so in a year or two. Max was already musing about which goods he would first transport to Danzig by train at acceptable cost. He was sure his business would enter a period of rapid growth. His trade ventures would accelerate. He should talk with Fried Kleinberger about the trains. Max's thoughts wandered to his children. He had three sons. Which father would not have been proud with three sons?

Max's sons were grown-up youths in 1860. Indeed, he could be proud of them. They were good boys, all different of character, but good-hearted, interesting, eager young men. None of them was bad, stupid or envious! They grew up to his expectations.

Max's oldest son, Kurt, was twenty. He was a quiet boy, as taciturn as his father, but one suspected an intense, internal life. When he spoke, his eyes flared up suddenly, and the passion immediately showed with his words. He knew what he was talking about, or he remained doggedly silent. Kurt was intelligent and pious. Max had nurtured good hopes for a while, the boy might turn out to become a scholar, a Rabbi maybe. But the boy was like the other men in the family! At sixteen already, in 1856, the boy had told Max he wanted nothing else but to continue the work of his father, of his grandfather and of his forefathers. He had said this simply but firmly, standing before Max in the great hall of their house in the *Breite Strasse*, in the last light of the sun, one evening.

Kurt had always been a calm and pensive youth. Max had not been a little surprised when Kurt had proclaimed, he wanted to trade. Trading was everything but a calm business. One had to dare taking risks. One had to have nerves of steel. Trading would need young Kurt to apply sharp and clever thinking, patience and slyness. Yet, the boy had thoroughly made up his mind. He had been a good student, first at the traditional Jewish *heder*, and then at the German Gymnasium of Thorn. Max had sent him for six months to Danzig, to the Svirskius Family. He had heard nothing but praise from his aunt and her husband. Kurt knew what he wanted and he learned fast the realities of life. Max began teaching Kurt everything he knew about the business. Soon, Max reflected now, Kurt would accompany his father on his business trips. Yet, Max sensed a vulnerability in Kurt he himself had not cared much about in his own time. The boy was sensitive, loving, caring, maybe hanging around his mother a little too much. He was also a sensible boy, however. He did not hesitate for long in his decisions. His rational thinking proceeded impeccably.

A few days ago, Max had brought up the matter of the boy's marriage. He had never seen Kurt with a girl. Did Kurt even think of girls? The boy had interrupted his father quite instantly. No need to look for a matchmaker, Kurt had stopped his father in his track. He already knew who he would marry! Max feared the worst. The boy explained in patient phrases he had met a girl, had often talked and walked with her. She was somewhat younger than he, by five years. Max found that quite younger, not just a little. That girl could not be older than fifteen! Yes, said Kurt, not in the least perturbed, but we decided we would marry. Hannah Sonnenfeld was Jewish, one of the daughters in a respected Jewish family of Thorn.

The Sonnenfeld had Rabbis in their family, and scholars who taught the Talmud in a *yeshiva*. Hannah was a serious girl, Kurt declared, and she liked him. They had discussed about the matter, and had agreed it was best they should marry.

‘If the girl is five years younger than you, she is only fifteen,’ Max had not been able to retain his first reticence. ‘That is very young for a girl to make up her mind about you and about such serious matter as marriage!’

‘It is,’ Kurt had acknowledged without changing his face in the least. ‘So, we have decided to wait one or two years. We could marry around 1862, in two years’ time. That leaves us some time to reflect, though we are both sure. The waiting will not really be necessary.’

‘How strange,’ had Max then thought in himself. ‘The Vincius wives seem all to possess a strong character. My mother Leah knew what she wanted at a young age, and she fought for my father. Sara, my wife, fought to marry me at a time when the odds could be against us. Rebekah Munkacs was a strong woman. This marriage may well turn out to be a happy and tight one, though I and Sara are not a good example for them. Maybe because of this, they may hold better together.’

Max was pleased after all, for he knew well the Sonnenfelds. Where had his son found a Sonnenfeld girl? They were a respected clan of several families. Max didn’t really know in which goods they traded, but they were merchants like himself! They were of good Prussian stock, who had been living in Thorn since always. They were a true Thorn family. The father of the girl was one of the more important elders in the Jewish community, a leader in various synagogue associations. Max could even be a little surprised the Sonnenfelds wanted to give their daughter away to a Vincius.

The Vincius had only arrived at Thorn twenty-odd years ago, and they had come from the east. The marriage of Max and Sara lay on the rocks and was considered by some in the Jewish community as a growing scandal. The Vincius family of far-off Lithuania had come out of nowhere, and the Vincius men could not be thought of as particularly pious. Max went in Thorn dressed in Prussian clothing. Some of the Sonnenfelds went in the long, black coats of the traditional Jews.

Max welcomed a well-educated, thoroughly Jewish girl, who would uphold the Jewish faith, in his family.

‘Have you already talked to the Sonnenfelds about the marriage?’ Max wondered.

‘Hannah did! Her family agreed with her waiting a little while. They seemed to like a marriage with me. They told to Hannah the Vincius formed a solid family. We are known as good and honest people. Apparently, father, you have a fine reputation among the Jewish people of Thorn. They know, of course, you and mother are having trouble living together. They seem not to mind too much. Things happen.’

Max was surprised once more at how coldly his son asserted this. He still thought his son did not know much about him and his wife, Sara. Max was a little ashamed, now. Apparently, his children knew more than he had supposed.

Max said, ‘yes, your mother and I have issues about our marriage. I can give you no excuses. Maybe we may change, maybe our divergences may widen. I can only tell you I loved your mother very much. I probably still love her, now. Yet, we grew away from each other.’

‘We know our mother’s character, father. We discussed about it all. We love you. We respect you. We know how much you cared for us. We need not go further into that subject.’

‘You mean you talked about that with your Hannah?’ Max was even more surprised. ‘We did. We know it is a painful issue for you. But by “we”, I rather meant I and my brothers.’

Max paled. So, the children, the three brothers were fully aware of what was happening in his house of the *Breite Strasse*! He should give this some more thought.

Max smiled wryly.

His son was not yet a merchant. A true merchant would have waited with a declaration such as of marriage, hoping for a higher dowry. With the marriage already a settled agreement and with this cool-thinking Hannah, and no doubt her family knowing fully about the issues, the Sonnenfelds would not offer the best of dowries that could be obtained. Well, Max had amassed enough money to offer his son a fine start in life, a house probably, and enough funds to trade and have a nice household.

The future of Kurt had been thus agreeably and quickly settled. Max was still astonished how easily life came to this son. Kurt was not a dreamer, no being trying to grope with the unknown secrets of the mind, with doubts and fears for the reality outside of his brain. His son was a sober, matter-of-fact man. Was that not the best way to pass the years of his life? Yet, Max felt that something of the magic of life, of the power of imagination lacked in his son.

‘Not at all,’ protested Kurt. ‘I like beauty. I love beautiful things, tools well made with harmonious lines, the laugh of a child, the symmetrical traits of a woman. I like to see a grand tree in flowers in spring, a blue sky. I am also a rational man, of course, but the ratio does not preclude the sense of beauty. Isn’t Hannah pretty? I think of her as of a very beautiful being, a modest one for sure, but she is beautiful inside more than on the surface. She feels like I do. I believe we are far more mature and surer of ourselves than most of the people running in the streets. We are also out to forge ourselves a perfectly happy life, father, providing God lets us.’

Max remained without words. His son was teaching him a lesson. Was it possible to have such wisdom in someone so young? Apparently, it did!

Kurt would be a merchant like him, like Max, and he would marry a Jewish girl of his choice, a woman of good, solid Prussian stock, and of his religion too. Max had better start looking for a fine house for the couple to live in. He should maybe discreetly be contacting the Sonnenfelds and start talking with them.

Max asked then, ‘is the girl really pretty? What does she look like?’

Kurt reddened, ‘she is as pretty as a fresh, white blossom in spring time, father. She is not plump, and rather skinny. I am sure she will fill up nicely in our home. Her face looks nice and regular. She has ample black hair that hangs low and shines wonderfully in the brightest sun. She is considered the finest girl in her neighbourhood. A nice catch, many would say.’ The boy proudly added, ‘many wondered why she was hanging out with me.’

Max smiled again.

‘You did well, then, my son,’ he praised the boy, who seemed quite satisfied with himself, indeed.

Max's thoughts then drifted to his two other sons. Haim, two years younger than Kurt, was quite different from his oldest brother. As a baby, he had constantly demanded more food than his two years older brother. He had grown into a big boy. He was large in shoulders and chest and had sturdier, though shorter legs. He was the muscular type of Jew. He walked earlier on than his brother.

Haim was bulkier than Kurt. He was a strong young man now, aware of his strength and therefore somewhat bullying other boys around at school. He had a strong mind, too. He followed the courses at the German Gymnasium of Thorn. He was eighteen years old. Haim had already told his father he wanted to become a soldier. He did not think of marrying. This did not stop him from flittering about with girls, who seemed to revel in his power. Max could arrange to have Haim become a soldier, sparing military service thus for Kurt and Mikhael. The major of the garrison had told him such an arrangement was quite possible in Prussia. The major had met Haim, and thought of him as an intelligent boy without inner trouble, a young man born to command. Max willing, he would make a fine lieutenant out of Haim in no time.

Prussia was at peace since decades. Max did not think Prussia would engage in any war soon. So, if the boy wanted to make a career in the army, why not. Max would be proud to have a Prussian officer for a son. Haim would do well in the Thorn garrison, or in another military division. Max had already made up his mind to not thwart his son's intentions and dreams. This son of his made him think of his uncle Abraham, from whom Haim might have inherited the physical appearance.

Max's last and third son, Mikhael, was only sixteen years old, going on seventeen. He was a very bright young man, very smart, delicate, and contrary to his brothers, doted with an active, fertile imagination. He was always inventing stories of his own finding. He seemed the adventurous type, the one with the most extraordinary dreams. A young man, constantly thinking of the future. Mikhael's time for girls seemed long off. The boy didn't mind girls too much. He also didn't give much for religion. The ceremonies in the synagogue bored him inordinately. At a very young age, after two years of learning in the *heder*, the boy had asked his father to be sent to the primary school of Thorn. His father allowed this to be. The boy didn't feel himself a Jew, much less so by religion than the other sons of Max.

Mikhael had been not a very studious pupil, but he always ended first of his class, with his two fingers in his nose, as his teachers repeatedly told Max. He knew more about most study subjects than some of his teachers! The boy read much. He hid his face in huge books, but not really religious texts. Mikhael read novels. He was growing into a tall young man, very handsome of face, and quite intelligent. Mikhael had surprised his father with his mind for figures, not in the least for the prices of goods. The boy was first in class for mathematics and counting, better than in languages.

Mikhael had asked these last couple of years to travel on his own to Danzig and Vilna. Max had still friends there, so the journeys were not too difficult to arrange. When the boy returned, he could quite naturally recite all the prices of goods in those towns! The boy was restless, but very observant. Max could try to make a trader out of Mikhael too. Luckily, the decision could wait for a few years. Max was least sure of what this son could accomplish. Were it not such sons that brought the finest or the worst surprises? The boy was intelligent, smart, sly even, so Max didn't really worry about him.

Asa Vincius

Asa, Max's father had died a few months ago, at the end of the winter. Max had never known his father ill. Asa had died as he had lived. He had felt very tired one morning, Leah explained to Max afterwards. Asa had awoken early, stood up from his bed, looked out of the window of his bedroom, remarked the morning was fine, and he had returned to bed, something he had never done before. When Asa woke, he had to get up from bed. He would wash, and start working. Sometimes he prepared breakfast for his wife.

That day, Leah Perlman had stood up first. She had rummaged about in the kitchen, and then gone back upstairs to tell Asa he should come down to have breakfast with her. Leah was a little angry at the laziness of her husband. But Leah had found Asa unusually quite still in bed, motionless, lying on his back, eyes closed. She had attempted several times to awaken him by crying out his name. She had shaken her husband by the shoulders, and then realised he didn't breathe anymore.

For Leah, her Asa was eternity. She could not imagine her Asa not anymore at her side. Asa had been exactly 70 years of age when he passed away. Leah had cried out in despair, torn at her hair. She had left the house quickly and called on Max and Sara. She was surprised they were not together in the same house, their home. Sara sent a servant to call in Max. When Max had arrived, he had pushed his very grieving mother in her kitchen, urging her to prepare meals. He then alerted the Funeral Society of the Thorn synagogue. The burial of Asa Vincius proceeded rapidly thereafter. Except for his son Max, for Sara and Leah, no other people reached the house that day. They buried Asa simply, without much ceremony, in the Jewish cemetery of Thorn. Asa would rest in the earth of the town he had come to love.

Later, two months later, Max could organise a family gathering of the Vincius, Vincevicius and Svirskius to the memory of his father. Max's sisters Rebekah and Esther had arrived from far, from Lithuania, from Siauliai and Kaunas. Also, Asa's brother Abraham and his sister-in-law Abi Abramovski attended the feast, with their sons Iosel and Edek, their wives and children. Asa's sister Sarah, now a Svirskius, her husband and her children were present. They had travelled by boat on the Weichsel from Danzig. For once, and maybe the last time, the family Vincevicius had met complete. An era had finished with Asa's death. The family from Lithuania stayed for a week. Abraham had aged very much. He was 68 years old now, and he had finally eased down, both in his business and in his private life. His fortune was as large as his belly, now, impressive in size. His mistress of so many years had died. Max had no doubts about Abraham's appreciation of Abi Abramovski. Abi had no eyes for someone else but for her husband and her children. Abraham treated her with tenderness.

Max and Sara

Max laid down his newspapers. Anna Kleinberger had noticed he was in the house. She brought him a large cup of tea and chatted a little with him. He showed how grateful he was with her. He did not pick up his papers while she was near him. He sighed. His thoughts turned to his wife, then, to Sara Benavicius. Some matters had to be thought of, however painful and sad they might be. When could Max make peace with the image of his wife,

Sara? His smile vanished into a sour grin. It was always like this when he thought of his wife, these days. His lips tightened. Sara Benavicius was quite another matter than his boys, than Asa and the rest of Max's family! Max didn't like anymore to think of the mother of his boys. Sara was his unfinished business! When Max thought of her, he felt so lonely, lost in despair, in the vastness of the universe.

Max Vincius was still married to Sara Benavicius. Sara, in the mature years of her womanhood, had developed into the most stunning beauty of Thorn. She deployed more physical qualities and charm than when she had arrived with Max in the town. She was the undisputed star of the social events in the town. Did there still lay love, then, between her and Max Vincius? She still accompanied Max to theatre shows and dinners of the wealthier men of Thorn, but Max feared love had departed for him and Sara.

They had been more or less happily married for five years. Then, bit by bit, love had been destroyed. Sara showed a difficult character after the birth of her sons. When she did not get her ways, ways of splendour, jewels and spending of much money, she could flare up in the greatest of bouts of anger. Then, she insulted Max in the worst manner imaginable. This, of course, drew Max away from her. Hatred and despise appeared in her eyes, and appalled Max. Max had once, long time ago, wanted to note on paper all the ugly words she could throw at him. He had never endeavoured on keeping the list of abuses, but he knew them by heart. He was a coward, a drunk, a man who always hesitated, a weak man. He was not up to his task as a husband and certainly not as a lover. Sara had come to despise him. He was a small man.

The first years, Max had truly been surprised by the nasty arguments he had to support from Sara. Max's yes had always been a yes, his no a no. Words were true with him. Words were true, and heavy in weight. Each word from Sara during her shouting anger touched him deeply. They cut into him as so many knife wounds. Yes, he was too sensitive to have to hear such abuse! Max had never heard his parents shout words like that during their disputes. There had always lain respect between his parents, no matter what happened. Moreover, his parents had very, very rarely disputed about anything at all. They stuck together too, whereas Sara now always chided him, also when in company. Sara had proved to be a very choleric person, especially when she was tired! At first, Max took her insults shouted with pure hatred and venom, very hard. He took the insults very personal. He believed she truly meant what she said.

With time, he understood Sara just ranted and cried out anything that came to her mind, anything that could hurt his feelings and sadden him. She wanted to humiliate him at those moments, show and assert her superiority, take command, and later all the time. Mostly, Max understood she didn't really mean what she said. This was just her means of expressing what she wanted. She wanted to subjugate him, so that he did what she desired. She wanted to ascertain she was the real power in the house.

In the beginning, Max usually gave in. On rare occasions he just left the room and then the house, because she pursued him through the rooms, and let her rant and cry out alone. After the first years, Sara made up rapidly to him after such scenes. She found other nice words to apologize and to soothe him. Sara then invariably seduced him in bed with her most alluring poises. Each time, however, Max drew a little more away from her, almost imperceptibly, just a tiny bit each time further. Max sought less and less to make love to her, horrified of her

insults. He remembered her face torn by pure hatred for him, and the abusive words shouted out as if by a witch, with distorted mouth and eyes. Max also gave less and less in to her. This excited her all the more in outbursts of anger.

Sara never lost her sexual appetites. This equally surprised Max. He had heard women were less inclined to sexual prowess after their marriage and certainly after having given birth. Sara forced him to make love to her, to enter her often and satisfy her desires.

After between five and ten years of marriage, Sara cared only for her daily comfort. Max could not explain to her what was happening in the world. Sara didn't want to hear about the main issues of Prussia in greater Germany and in the world. Sara cared for her figure and for her face. She cared about how many admirers she had met in the ballrooms and at dinners. She just wasn't interested in what happened further than her immediate environs. When Max began to talk about which movement in parliament had interested him, she sighed, looked with boring eyes at the ceiling, and asked what play was up in the theatre, to which ball they could go next month, to which dinner they had been invited next week, and which people she could visit soon.

The highest shouting row Sara had with Max, was when Max had taken interest in a proposal of the Mayor Rosenhagen of Thorn in the mid-1850s. The Mayor had appealed to the wealthier men of Thorn to form a fund. This would allow the city to extend the roads leading out of the city, and to lobby for the coming of the railways. With the money, a reserve could be built for the railway station of Thorn. The city administration would pay back the money invested by the yearly payment of a part of the capital plus interests.

Mayor Rosenhagen was a friend of Max. It was hard to refuse him help. Thorn was solid, so Max had considered that although the interests were rather on the low side, he had to help his town develop, and with time, Thorn would pay him back. He would continue trading with his ready cash and with his cash currently invested. He had asked Sara to diminish her expenses. He had proposed her a list of items on which she should spend less. He told her how much money he could give her each month from now on. That amount was quite less than what she spent today. Sara had blown to the tops and the row lasted for weeks.

Max's mother had kept her own kitchen. Such was the rule in any good, Jewish household. Not so with Sara. Sara did know how to cook, but she either lacked the imagination to serve tasty dishes, or she was simply bored with the work and found it not her duty to serve her husband and children. She was bored with her house and household. She became sloppy. The rooms were left in a constant mess. Max loved order and cleanliness. Sara didn't know what patience could mean.

Max finally had hired her a cook and a maid, two Jewish women. Sara could give orders. After a while, of course, she didn't even give orders anymore and let the two maids determine what was eaten each day. The maids referred to Max, who preferred the simpler, Jewish dishes. Of course, the food was never baked as Sara wanted, so she almost all the time insulted the maids. No maid stayed long at the Vincius house! It was finally Max who arranged with the maids for the food of the week, for the dishes of each day and for the food given to the children.

Max felt very sad for the children. Sara had little patience with them. She did care for them, showed sometimes exaggerated bouts of tenderness. She sometimes even deigned playing

with them. She rarely took the children out for walks, preferring promenades in her coach, and flirting with the men she encountered. She did show her affection to the children, but she often burst out also with them in bouts of anger and despair at their manners. The boys, Max noticed, often shied away from her. When the boys were ten or so, she wouldn't have cared anymore to harm them with words. They had complained to their father more than once. Max took the children out himself as much as he could, and he talked to them. He caressed their head, held them on his knees, told them stories, and showed how much he loved them. Sara gave them less and less her attention.

After about ten years of marriage, Max found out Sara had lovers. This too shocked him profoundly. He felt disgusted with her body. Max caught looks full of meaning at dinners. He saw Sara dance too often with the same men at balls and organised evening feasts. Sara arranged to go to the theatre while he was travelling, and Max would have to hear this later on from other men who accompanied her. She went rarely alone to theatre performances.

Gradually, her sexual need for Max seemed to slacken. She went out more often without him. He did not seem to interest her any longer. Anna and Friedrich Kleinberger, Max remarked, sometimes looked at him with pitying glances. Fried Kleinberger tried to explain him in very evasive phrases, with merely hinting expressions, he should more watch out for whom Sara accompanied in Thorn.

The more such things happened, the more Max drew away from Sara. He estranged himself from his wife. He talked less and less with her, and avoided the heavy words and the true explanations that might have opened the abscess that was festering between them. In the end, he didn't offer Sara any excuses anymore, and simply left his house after supper, to move into his little house outside the walls, where he could find rest. Supper was practically the only moment he still tried to be in the same house as his wife. He still shared these suppers with his family, and especially with the children. He talked at the table, but he mostly talked to his children. In this last stage of their living together, as if by common consent, Sara and Max did not discuss matters of the household. Love had departed from between them. Max had still a marriage, but no love or tenderness.

Max was terribly unhappy in those years. He did try to hide to his children how unhappy he felt. He thought he had reasonably succeeded in the matter. Her continued talking with his sons, and he offered them the signs of his love.

Lately, Max had found out Sara had a steady lover. Maybe that was the reason why she had softened in her relations with him. Sara sought him less out for disputes and insults. He saw Sara sometimes in town, in the company of a man called Joram Cohen, another Jewish merchant.

Joram Cohen was a bull of a man. He was truly impressive of stature and size, the Abraham Vincevicius of Thorn. In winter, dressed in thick furs, he resembled a bear having come out of the forests to harass the people of the city. When Joram was dressed up in his best, fine clothes of the wealthy, entering a huge room, however large, high and long, he filled it instantly with his personality. All eyes turned to him and his stentorian voice could be heard from one side to the other. His charisma on all people was the greatest of Thorn. In a

ballroom, all the ladies flocked around him, the he-man, to stare at him with subdued, admiring glances, to hear him profess his opinion on this or that, on the beauty of their satin dresses, on the weather outside, on the fineness of their children. The men came too, to hear his discussion of the rates of a fund, on how soon the railways would arrive at Thorn, on whether the Russians would exploit Poland in what and for how long, or on the evolution of prices of wool in the environs. Max called him the oracle of Thorn. As the old oracle of Delphi was serpent-like with a huge head, so he considered Joram. There lay envy in Max's presentation of Joram, of course. Would Max want to resemble Joram? No, not really. In fact, Joram was everything Max detested most in a man.

Joram Cohen was a wealthy Jewish trader of Thorn, probably the wealthiest Jew of the city. He could compete with the richest and most arrogant *Junkers* of the district. Max knew Joram to be one of the most active smugglers of the region. Joram was the man who could have any women ply to his will. Maybe that was why he was always surrounded by groups of women when in society. Women sought danger and adventure in dull Thorn, did they not? Joram emanated the smell of danger. Danger was exciting. What woman did not submit to the attraction of getting burnt her fingers or heart at least once in her life? Joram was the thrill of Thorn! He represented primeval sin in the crudest sense. To any woman, Max, compared to Joram Cohen, stood out as a dull, stupid child. Max understood therefore quite well how a splendid woman like Sara Benavicius, with her never satisfied sexual appetites and a dull husband, would have challenged Joram Cohen. Had Joram seduced Sara? Max was convinced Joram had to do very little work to draw Sara to him. How easy would it not have been for a character like Joram to draw Sara in his nets? He was sly and devious, and adventurous, a daring man in business. To whom Joram but talked, was impressed by him and ordained to obeisance.

Max Vincius had avoided the Joram Cohens of the world like the black pest. Not only his Jewish upbringing and convictions abhorred the man. Max didn't like types like this Cohen by definition. He had only rarely spoken to the man, and refused any business venture with him. Joram had never spoken to him directly either, never proposed business himself. But several times already, other men, cronies of the Cohen, had approached Max to draw him to enterprises with Cohen. Max had seen through the schemes each time, and set the messengers back to where they came from, empty-handed. Max felt Joram despised him for his reticence, but Max had firmly held to this attitude so far. Was this one of the reasons Joram had laid his eyes on Sara? Well, Sara was too obviously also one of the most exciting beauties of Thorn!

When Joram stood at one side of a room, Max sought out the other. Luckily, he was not alone in that. A few other men, the older, dried-out but still dignified older traders of Thorn, the men as taciturn and as wise as Max, fled from Cohen. To Joram's anger, the true *Junkers* of the best old families joined Max. These were the men who worked together with Max Vincius without hesitation. But not with Cohen.

Max did not confront Sara about her affair with Joram Cohen. He did not warn her about the possible implications. He did not warn she would henceforth be shied from by a part of the better society of Thorn. He still withheld from asking a divorce, which would have torn up his family and hurt the children. He was now very disappointed in Sara, and disgusted by

what she was doing. He remarked Sara was caught thoroughly in Joram's aura. Joram probably was trying to reach into Max's inner circle by Sara. For the moment, Joram was also not flaunting Sara in public. He remained discreet. Max knew Joram's conquests didn't last long. He might wait the affair out. Max didn't believe Sara and Joram's infatuation or intimate relation, or whatever one might call it, would last.

But Sara's affair with Joram Cohen did last. Maybe Sara had exercised on the Cohen a charm, an attraction of her own. Several people, traders like Max, took Max quietly aside and pointed out Joram and Sara to him. They spoke in gentle, covered-up, prudent words. They told him he should do something about a developing scandal in Thorn. Max remained mute. The only solution, he was sure, was to divorce Sara. The one solution he wanted to avoid at all cost.

Max did try one evening to talk about Cohen to Sara. He mainly wanted to ask for discretion. He could not refrain from chiding her, from showing his disgust. She got sharp, then, malicious of tongue, accusing him of being a hypocrite, an impotent liar, a poor man, a coward, and she gave other such wounding comments. Max didn't even react anymore on those; they were nothing more but the expression of her insane, unrestrained anger of defence. She intended to do whatever she liked about Joram. She offered no explanation, no excuse, and at the end, simply ran out of the hall, eyes on fire. From that time on, Max never once stayed at night in his house of the *Breite Strasse* of Thorn. He fled to outside the walls, to what he considered his refuge, his small house near his storerooms.

The greatest shame on Max Vincius came when Max grew aware Sara was pregnant again. He hadn't noticed anything during his evening suppers with her, the times when they did talk briefly about matters of money for the household or for the children. Good-natured ladies mentioned the matter and even congratulated him. It was years after the birth of her last son, at a moment Max would not have thought it possible for Sara to have children yet. Max was certain the child was not his. He had not had intercourse with his wife for years. The child would be of Joram Cohen. Max had to act. With a lawyer, a friend of his, he began preparing divorce papers. But then, long before the pregnancy could be clear to everyone in Thorn, Sara suddenly lost the baby. Whether the still-birth had been natural or provoked, Max would never know. He considered Sara sufficiently unscrupulous to have done away with the child. The dry-nurse simply told him the child had been deformed and not viable. Maybe that too, was the truth.

Sara remained sick in bed for weeks. Max didn't visit her. What could he have said, He made sure with the servants no Joram Cohen was to be allowed in the house. But Joram had never been in the *Breite Strasse* before.

Finally, Max tore up the papers for the divorce. Sara continued living in the *Breite Strasse*, near her children. The affair with Cohen seemed to be over, or to slacken. Max did not know what was going on in silence and privacy, of course. Sara still regularly rode out of the house in her covered coach. He still had suppers with her, nothing more. The failed birth was never mentioned.

Max could have given himself over to frivolous women and to drink, then, but he thought of his children, of what a divorce or an open scandal might do to them. He needed to continue trading in Thorn. He needed to work at his fortune for his children's sake. He continued to

uphold the veil of hypocrisy, and so Sara seemed to go along. Nevertheless, Max heard later on Joram Cohen and Sara continued to be lovers. Apparently, their characters were compatible.

Max regretted bitterly the situation. He cursed himself for being a coward. He entered into frequent moods of depression. He threw himself head-on in his work. He became more reckless than before, and made more money than ever before. With time, he slowed down again, took pleasure in the affection for and from his boys. The boys grew up, needed him less, but he still arranged for their education, and was always at their disposal when they needed him. He often spoke to them, preferably one at the time. He feared being confronted by his sons together, asking questions about their mother and him. Max also found solace in the respect of his many friends in Thorn. Everybody in town knew how the relations stood in his home, of course.

Max's boys grew up to fine young men. When occasionally they did hint at their father's relation to their mother, Max was short. He merely explained some forms of love did not last eternally. He talked about differences in character which aggravated with time. Max realised, and he said so to his sons, many of his explanations remained unsatisfactory. He told love might change with age, not always, just sometimes. Max asserted some form of love still lay between him and their mother. He then saw on their faces the scepticism, the doubts, reproaches too, and he regretted he had in fact been lying to them. Love had indeed ended between him and Sara. He had become a man without love.

The boys accepted, probably reluctantly, his explanations. Max knew he had not fooled them, though they could not lay a thick finger on the real causes of the debacle. They resigned in having no parents anymore, just a father and a mother, usually both in different places. Max and Sara lived on separately. The children at least knew he loved them. He assured them of so much.

Max also told his sons a lot about the meaning of Jewishness. Here too, however, he feared he failed a lot. He wanted to give them a purpose and a support in life, but his boys too seemed to draw away from a God that had not granted them a happy family. The Vincius boys dressed like Prussians.

Sometimes, Max still went to the synagogue with his sons at his side. They used their prayer shawls, and Max and the boys still sat in front, among the notables of the community. Sara never accompanied them. Max noted the women and men whispering among themselves. He noticed the disdainful looks thrown at him and at his boys.

Max painfully noticed the shyness of his sons. He remarked too well his sons were ashamed. He feared and wondered what the sense of being despised by the community might do to the character of his sons. It might tear his sons away from the synagogue and from Judaism.

Would they grow up, not believing in true love? Yet, Max Vincius did not change his ways and lived by the decision he had made long ago to not ask for a divorce from Sara.

At the death of Asa, his father, death was heavy on Max's mind. What would happen if he simply disappeared from the face of the earth?

Sara might spend all the money. Or Joram Cohen might quickly put his greedy hands on Sara's fortune, and gamble it away in risky ventures. Would Joram go as far as to marry Sara to get to her money and assets? Max's sons would be left with nothing.

Max was terribly unhappy, desperately unhappy. And he couldn't even envisage dying peacefully.

A forbidden Relationship. 1863

Around 1860, several events made the city of Thorn enter into the new era of modern times. In 1859, the Mayor and his assistants introduced city lighting into the streets of the walled city. Thorn from then on basked into more light than the moon could provide. Gas-lighting was installed, like in the greater capitals of Europe, first of all Paris. A gas factory, burning peat and wood to produce the precious gas, had been erected, tested, and opened for production. The gas was led in pipes to a great number of lanterns. Many of the larger houses of the town had already subscribed to receive gas. Brighter light would inundate the houses of Thorn at evening and into early nights. The view of Thorn illuminated in the dark was a marvel to the inhabitants. Everybody felt proud and delighted. Many persons could from then on be seen strolling in the evenings from street to street. The children were allowed to stay up later than usual to watch the miracle of the tens, then hundreds of lights. One had the finest view from the other bank of the Weichsel. Thorn came to be called in the environs the city that lights the sky. It was a real sensation too for the people living in the countryside to walk or ride an evening to Thorn, and admire the spectacle. Nobody could call Thorn a small, backward provincial town anymore! Thorn thus marked its ambitions of a major community, resolutely projecting itself into the future, a town of progress and faith in industry, commerce and its surrounding agriculture.

Max Vincius too, became something of a night-walker. He often strolled in the darker hours of the day, during late evenings. When he walked, he never felt alone. How often had he not to take off or tip his hat to greet people he knew? Walking through the streets thus, the first months light had come to the city, became a habit and a joy for the men and women of Thorn. The town had grown into a large city, with a population of over 14,000 inhabitants, not counting the large military garrison. Something eerie hung in the air in those months, until everybody grew accustomed to the view, while one walked slowly in the snow-covered streets of the evening. The shadows of the people and of the carriages danced over the white layers. One marvelled about the new sensations. Poems were written. After a while, the light became quite a usual sight for the people. The magic disappeared after a few months. The wonder of the light still dazzled newcomers. People arrived from far in coaches to have a look at the illumination of Thorn. Life in Thorn extended. People worked later. Shops remained open later. Ships on the Weichsel navigated to the diffuse light of the city in the far.

When Max Vincius stayed later walking on his own in the streets, he once every while also met Fried and Anna Kleinberger, his employees and partners. The couple strolled in the centre, smiling, happy, into the market place, their daughter at their hand. Esther was a fine girl of 18 years old now, always laughing, intelligent and diligent, tall and slim, a girl who could turn any male head to her. No man walked by without noticing Esther Kleinberger. Each time Max saw Esther, he too took delight in her. The way Max looked at the girl might have forced Anna to watch Max closely, but she soon noticed Max smiled serenely at the girl. Max once told Fried and Anna Esther was not just their daughter. Max claimed family ties to Esther. He called her his only daughter.

Max and Fried sat together often in those years, sometimes even not saying one word to each other, just satisfied for being together. Fried was as taciturn and deep as Max. They felt happy, drank their small glass of vodka, and looked around, each lost in thoughts. Max had no better impression of peace than in those moments. They allowed him to regenerate from busy days. When he talked with Fried, it was about which carts and carriages would arrive in the storerooms the next day. They exchanged ideas about business ventures.

The other, even more important event for Thorn had been the arrival of the railway connections to the already existing, nearby long line of railways to Danzig, to far Berlin and to Warsaw. As of this year of 1863, Max could send goods by train from Thorn to his ultimate destinations of trade. Not only did one work longer in Thorn by the light of the gas lanterns, one worked faster and felt the entire world near. True, bulk goods still had to be transported in late spring, summer and early autumn over the Weichsel. Still, the railways definitively tore Thorn out of its isolation inland, during the dark winter months.

With the lighting of the streets and with the railways, Thorn had affirmed itself as a town to be reckoned with, both in Prussia and in nearby Poland. The new status of the town would attract more capital, hence new enterprises, and far more trade. The new impetus of the changes finally meant added wealth. The efforts of the *Landrat*, of the Mayor and of so many other notable men of the city were finally beginning to pay off! Max could but be proud and happy over the added attraction of his home town. More than ever before, Thorn basked in its role of centre of trade and industry in the wider region. Merchants seeking faster transport and more easy transport in winter, arrived at Thorn. The company founded by Max to arrange for transport of goods began to bring in nice profits at lower prices. Competition was fierce, for Max Vincius was not the only trader providing now the new services in town, but there was gain for everyone in the business.

The commanding officer of the military garrison of Thorn organised a society ball once a year. All the notables of the town were invited, with wives and daughters. Such balls happened in all the Prussian towns that prided in an important garrison of troops. In Thorn, the event was particularly sought after, the feast grand and looked out for many weeks in advance. Invitation cards became a product of trade! Max's son Haim served in the Prussian Army, a fact that was well-known by the leading officers of Thorn. Haim did not serve anymore in the Thorn garrison, but he had done well in the army. Max had received an invitation for his family. He did not really look forward to the event. Politeness demanded he asked his wife Sara. Would she attend to the ball? Would she accompany him or drive by herself? Max had almost suspected Sara would icily answer him of yes, she would be at the ball, but going out with Joram Cohen. Still, she had accepted.

Max told Sara when they would leave their house. They would go together, but alone. Their three sons were not at Thorn. Sara did remember she was a married woman for such society events. From experience, Max knew how the evening would pass. He would have his servant of the *Breite Strasse* drive the coach with him and Sara to the main garrison building in New Town. Sara would lightly take his arm to enter the ballroom, and then rapidly disappear in the crowd. Sara was now a proud lady, used to move in high society. She did not have to stroll from one conversation group to the other; groups flocked around her as naturally as bees were attracted to a blossoming flower. She drew men and women to her. Why that was, what

the nature of that power was, nobody really knew. The effect always astonished Max. Why did some people, men and women alike, exert so much attractive force, of mysterious origin, on others, and men like he absolutely not?

During the ball, Max would seek out a few men he traded with, partners though no friends, for Max really had no such near acquaintances in this company, except very few. A Jewish man in this posh company did remain a rather odd person in the society of Thorn, even though several Jewish merchants had been invited. Greeting the other merchants of Thorn, the officers of the garrison, the Mayor and his assistants, was a duty. The pain Max would feel was about seeing all these men with a wife near them, or having a wife somewhere in the room regularly coming back to them. Max would spend the evening alone. Sara Benavicius would never come up to him again. Max would stroll from group to group, giving a word here and there, and after an hour or so feeling utterly bored with the rigmarole. He did like to see the couples dancing, especially the younger men and girls.

Max liked to see the glittering officers seeking out the rich daughters of the wealthy families. Not many girls were extremely beautiful, nor looked their eyes very brightly with the sparkle of high intelligence. Not many girls were interesting, not many flirtatious or as dangerous as Sara Benavicius. Sara would dazzle many men this evening and be among the queens of the ballroom. Sara, he saw once every while, often moving at the arm of Joram Cohen. The men he knew in the ballroom would not anymore start whispering when Sara and Joram moved on the dance floor. Their affair was well-known all over town, and especially in this wider circle. Max would stroll from one group of men to the other, dressed in dignity and disdain. That was the role he was now thoroughly used to play. Yet, the pain and the public humiliation nagged at him. He felt ashamed.

As if to show he didn't care about what his wife was doing, he invited to dance one or other older lady he vaguely knew in the audience. Some of these even seemed thrilled by the experience of a dance at the arm of the attractive but highly cuckolded Max Vincius. With all, Max exchanged merely very polite, totally innocent, courteous phrases. In the eyes of other women, he saw they were not inclined to be invited to the dance by him. He then turned away.

Max was here because he had to, to uphold his image of dignified and troubled husband, also in this company. His soul was not here, though. Where then hid his soul, his interest in life? Nowhere, he wryly remarked to himself. What was he but an empty shell since many years? Max Vincius was quite aware he should feel depressed. Maybe that was how he truly felt. Time and time again, Max forced his mind away from such thoughts. He sought what he called his moments of peace, and regenerated from those.

Max now looked at the colourful ladies' dresses, at the play of the shadows on the walls and floor of the huge hall. He tried to admire the gala uniforms of the officers, and listened to the enchanting music played by a band especially hired in for the evening from the Marienwerder philharmonic orchestra. Most of the pieces were short, dances invented in Vienna of Austria, many waltzes and polkas. The dancers formed a jolly lot! Max felt more tired from the strain of paying strict attention to whom he talked to. He paid compliments to the ladies. He was tired from having to choose the right words, from calculating where to talk to, how to address each in the right tone, with the right words all wanted to hear individually. He felt more tired here than from working all day shifting boxes in his warehouse.

Finally, Max noticed an abandoned sofa in a corner, temporarily unoccupied, standing largely in the dark and hence maybe forgotten by the dancing couples. He went up to the couch, hesitated, but sat down on the left side, well in the light of the candelabras, so as not to surprise someone, lady or man, who would return to this sofa to also sit down a while. Max was well aware even here, in Thorn, some people might rather want to avoid a Jewish merchant sitting alone on a sofa.

He grabbed a glass of sweet, sparkling white wine from a passing platter, and sat down with a deep sigh of sheer pleasure. He had strolled around, danced a little, three or four times, waltzed around, talked to about everybody he should pay his homage to. He could now afford to remain sitting here for another hour or so, at his ease. Then, he would stand up and return home. Home was his house outside the walls, his small home near his storerooms. He had brought a heavy cloak and a warm woollen shawl, and a walking cane. He would return on foot. That was the arrangement he had agreed with Sara. Max had told her she could use the coach-and-servant to drive her back home, or send the coach home without her. That last would mean Sara would spend the night at Joram's. Max didn't mind that anymore. Thinking of Sara's blatant adulterous behaviour made him bitter, but he would walk alone. He liked to walk. He had learnt to admire the streets, the houses, on his own, at peace, discovering always something new. He would look at the larger buildings in the lights of the lanterns. He didn't actually need the lamps in the streets of Thorn, however small the alleys he would use. He practically knew every stone in this, his town, by heart!

Max had not looked at whether someone sat in the other corner of the sofa, the corner hidden in the dark. His eyes had not been used to the shadows thrown by the bright rays of the hundreds of candles lit in the large crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. In the softer light of the corner, now his eyes adapted. Max looked sideways, to the other side of the sofa. He noticed then he was not alone on the sofa.

A woman sat there, sitting entirely in the darkest shadows, dressed mainly in grey, so that she had blended into the dark far more than he. When Max glanced at her, for a moment horrified of being caught seeking rest and quiet. He should have asked for the permission of the lady to sit. He wanted to do something about his clumsiness. The woman spoke before he could get a word of apology out.

'You are the Jew, aren't you? We did business together, last year. You cut and transported my wood. A fine deal that was,' the woman said in a husky voice, almost whispering to him. Max sat at his ease, sipping his wine. He did not answer immediately. The beverage was as he liked it, cool, much fruitier, sweeter than the real thing, than French Champagne, but still fresh and a little acidic to titillate his taste buds. Max had decided, as so often at events, the words of a woman or of anybody else, would not be able to spoil his cherished moments of peace. He had done so this evening. He racked his mind about which woman's wood he had used in his commerce ventures. He looked aside, but the woman on the sofa reclined into the cushions and was well hidden in the dark. He could not distinguish a face, only a shapeless mass.

Then, he vaguely remembered. He had dealt in the wood of the Chrapitz domain last year. He had not met the proprietress of the woods, a *Freifrau* von Chrapitz. He had merely spoken

with and agreed on a price and time with her steward. The man had told him the trees belonged to a countess, who rarely rode out of her castle, a large and nice, elegant pleasure manor outside of the village. Max had met the steward several times in a side-wing of the castle Chrapitz, but never actually met the countess. He quite well understood she might have considered him, a Jewish merchant, far below her rank.

The steward had not been very honest! He had wanted to draw Max Vincius into a scheme whereby he would have Max cut far more wood than originally planned, and shared the profit from these parcels. Max had declined. He had walked out on the man. He didn't want to get involved in fraudulent practices, certainly not with people he didn't know well, such as the Chrapitz steward. Max didn't need devious schemes to make his profits. The steward had shouted a few obscenities at him. Max had simply walked out. A week later, the steward had come back to Max's warehouse. He acted as if nothing had happened, asking Max to cut the originally agreed upon surfaces, at Max's fixed price. Max had accepted, and brought the deal to a normal end. The wood, much oak and the rest of simple fir-trees, had been sent to Danzig by boat over the Weichsel. Max had gained the expected profit. He paid the steward the agreed amount, and held for himself the difference between that amount and the amount at which he had sold the wood to his cousin Anton the Younger Svirskius. Max had not expected doing business once more with the Chrapitz steward. He still, to this day, didn't know how the countess looked like, nor of what age she was.

'My steward tried to cheat on me, as you surely know,' the lady next to him continued. 'You should have warned me. I found out in time. I heard you run out of my manor, slamming doors angrily behind you. I threatened the scoundrel with the rack, and sent him back to you. The deal reached its normal end. When I could, later, I threw the man out. I have a new, a younger and hopefully a more honest steward, now. You were honest, though, I learned.' 'I try to be,' Max whispered back. 'I don't like people who cheat. If they cheat on you, they may cheat on me. I don't deal with people I can't trust. It simply is too complicated.' 'Yes, I understand,' the woman added. 'You are quite lenient with cheaters, aren't you, though? Didn't I see your wife dancing all the time with Joram Cohen, that other Jew?' Max sighed. He felt offended. He had come to seek rest, here. He might as well get up, finish his glass in one gulp, and walk home. Yet, he didn't do anything of the sort. Something in the woman's voice attracted him. Maybe it was her directness of talking. He refused to feel insulted, this evening. Words flowed along his vest, this evening! He didn't respond. 'What I don't understand at all,' the woman pitilessly, imperturbably chatted on, 'is why you let her get away with it all. You didn't divorce your wife a long time ago, when you still could get out of the affair with dignity. I suppose you don't divorce her because, one, you have still feelings for her, and two, you don't want to shock your children. Both reasons are commendable.'

This was no simple society chat anymore! Max drew up his head. This woman had reached far into his intimacy. Such words were never pronounced in society! He was startled. The woman next to him was the first person who had spoken like his conscience, who was trying to break through his defences, through the fortifications of his soul, through his delusions, and defying all conventions of small talk.

Max replied, ‘scrap the first argument. The second is nearer the truth. Does one ever know whether what one does is right in such cases?’

‘No, one doesn’t,’ the woman granted.

She sighed too, quite audibly. ‘Maybe indeed, you are just deluding yourself. Maybe you just don’t want to change your good burgher habits. Change can come hard.’

‘True also,’ Max nodded. ‘I’m still wondering about my true motives of inaction. Call me Hamlet!’

‘The end of Hamlet is tragic,’ the woman reflected. ‘I suggest you avoid the tragic ending. But who am I to tell you what to do?’

Max was by then really asking himself why he was still listening to what this woman had to say. She talked to him in a very frank, importune way, on the brink of being insulting, probing to the nucleus of his mind. He guessed she must be a wise old woman of sixty years old or so. The elder people he could forgive. He had to have a good look at her! He guessed he might be a friend to this woman! He didn’t feel importuned. She had pointed out the truth. He had been weak when he was young. He had been attracted by the sex Sara gave so easily. The entire mess was his fault, really!

He changed subjects.

‘I’m rude! I’m sipping at my wine quite alone.’

Max finished his glass to the last drop, ‘can I get you something to drink? To eat, maybe? I saw different, no doubt delicious, large *zakouskis* being served.’

The woman knew how to agree to a truce.

‘How good of you to ask,’ she said, somewhat sarcastically. ‘Yes, please, get us another glass of that sparkling wine you have been gulping with such absolute delight. And a small platter of *zakouskis* for both of us would suit me fine, too. Thank you!’

Max stood, walked into the crowd, secured a platter of *zakouskis* and got two glasses of his sparkling, white wine. He returned to the sofa in the shadows, half expecting the woman to have disappeared.

She still sat there, waiting for him. Only her dress hung in the bright light. Her face remained in the dark. He saw the fine silk. He offered her a glass. The hand that came out of the shadows was long and fine, elegant, not the hand of an old woman. Max sat down then, not anymore at the other side of the sofa. He sat quite near the woman, holding the platter between them. He had taken several salmon-filled *blinis*. He liked those. He had also brought smaller niceties.

‘Wait,’ the woman commanded.

She put her glass down on a small table next to her, Max had not noticed before. Then, she took the platter from out of Max’s hands, and held it between the two of them. They had now each one hand free. Max drank, and grabbed a *blini* after her.

When the woman turned to him, the crowd shifted. Max finally caught a glimpse of her face in the light. He was so startled by what he saw, his mouth must have fallen open and stayed so quite a while. He had thought to have an elderly next to him, but this lady was quite young! She was not anymore in her twenties, but certainly not far in her thirties either! And she had a beautiful, splendid, quite aristocratic face. Her traits were regular, very symmetric, the eyes large and dark, dark brown maybe, the face broad, Slavic, with strong, high cheekbones, prominent but straight nose, lips that were neither pulpous nor thin, a good-

hearted smile. She grinned a little when she noticed Max's astonishment. She had guessed why he had come nearer to her. The woman had a dignified, charming face! She held her head high on a long neck. Her breast was generous. Her voice had sounded manly, though not hoarse, not old. She was used to command. But she was still a young woman. Max was 43 years old, she in her early thirties. Yet, she had spoken at level with him.

They held a silence and ate with gusto a couple of *blinis*, then shared the other *zakouskis*. Around them, couples swung by in a rapid tango. They ignored what happened around them. Max still felt oddly at ease on the sofa. To anybody who watched them, they must have made a strange duo, filling their stomachs with obvious delight. They hid a little more in the dark by reclining in the cushions, quite satisfied with themselves. The platter emptied. The woman placed the empty silver platter on the small table next to her, and shifted her position. She actually drew nearer to Max. Her silk dress fell to upon his legs.

She eased herself in the sofa and murmured, inclining her head yet further to Max, 'that was quite good. For a while, I thought I would disappear in a puff of smoke. You brought me back to life. You saved me, Max Vincius, from certain starvation and oblivion!'

Max laughed, 'I can get you more, Lady von Chrapitz, if you desire so.'

'No, no, no,' the woman laughed back. 'I have to watch my line. With age, Prussian women tend to expand into Russian *matrouchkas*!'

'You are still quite young and slim,' Max soothed. 'You won't grow fat so early. You're simply not the type.'

Now he was penetrating her defences! He saw her bite on her upper lip, but she didn't respond.

At that moment, Sara Benavicius waltzed right past them in the arms of Joram Cohen. She glanced, surprise clear in her eyes. With whom did her husband sit on the sofa? Max saw she had recognised him, but she could not possibly recognise who sat next to him. The shadows were their defence.

'You seem to know a lot about me,' Max continued after a while, both having given no signs of wanting to move. 'Who are you? Your steward told me you were not married. I know nothing else!'

'Oh, but I was married,' the von Chrapitz lady answered. 'By the way, we haven't been properly introduced. My first name is Leandra, followed by Charlotte Elizabeth, names I never use. So, I am called Leandra von Chrapitz. I was married when I was just twenty. My husband died three years later in a hunting accident. Somebody mistook quite fortunately my husband for a deer or a boar in the forest. Nobody ever found out who exactly it was who killed him. I did not participate in that hunt, that day. I might have killed him myself, you know! Our marriage was arranged by my parents. They too died in the meantime. I have been left quite alone to manage the Chrapitz estates. I had no children. I wanted none. My husband was a stupid brute, a selfish, ignoble, violent, idiot of a man, with a great name. His idea of marriage was constant rape. So, you see, Max Vincius, I too have been for long a coward and a doubting creature. It was a good thing somebody delivered the final shot, liberating me of my husband. Otherwise, sooner or later, I would have sent him a bullet through his empty brains myself.'

The woman shuddered. She had suffered like him, Max noted.

‘You know,’ she added, ‘I too waited for a long time before doing something about my marriage. I suppose faith in God helped me in getting rid of Louis.’

‘You see, Max Vincius,’ the woman immediately continued, ‘you had your issues, and I had mine. After the death of my husband, so many men, everywhere I went, regarded me as much prey as the animals they hunted in the forests. I got so tired of holding them far from me, politely but firmly, I began to bite them off. I didn’t want a new marriage. Not at all! Hence, my sarcasm. I can scratch too, you know. I learned to hit with knuckles and tips of shoes on feet. I learned to hate men, and hate the hypocrisy. I am more or less resigned, now. I try to live quietly and agreeably on my own, a recluse, some would say. But there is much to enjoy in this world, even when one is alone and lonely. A platter of *zakouskis*, a glass of wine, a word with an honest man, one probably hurt and battered as much as I am, yet still struggling to make the best of life. Aren’t we so very similar?’

Max smiled. She was right. He nodded in agreement.

‘So, we learned to take solace in the little things that provide us with rare moments of peace,’ Max added. ‘I try to live a very rapid, exciting life of new business ventures every day. It eats my days so much that I don’t think too much of my miseries. Yes, it seems we are quite similar. Let’s not sink both in self-pity. I do cherish the rare moments of quietness, of peace of mind.’

‘But we are so alone, so alone,’ the lady von Chrapitz whispered.

Max couldn’t reply on that conclusion.

Max held a silence. He wanted to grab the woman’s hand.

‘Then,’ he suddenly proposed, ‘do you want to dance on our self-inflicted misfortunes? It was rude of me not to invite you. I’m sorry. Want to throw you in the lights?’

‘No, no,’ she quickly replied. ‘I don’t really like to dance. I’m a country girl, a terrible society dancer. I’m afraid I am not much good at what ladies normally do, chat and dance and flirt. I don’t know how to sew, not how to embroider, nor how to cook. I do read a lot, and I walk a lot. On my own. I travel. I get my novels from a library in Berlin, and also my newspapers.’

‘As do I,’ Max rapidly joined her.

He laughed, ‘I’m a rather clumsy dancer too, I have to admit. I already feared, just now, you would say yes. I walk a lot, too.’

‘I have to go, soon,’ the Lady von Chrapitz stated. ‘I have to return to my domain. I came by coach today and I intend not to stay in a hotel in Thorn. I don’t like to stay over in hostels. Well, I thank you for a nice evening. I had a fine conversation with someone in the end, so I guess my evening wasn’t entirely spoiled.’

‘I am Jewish,’ Max stressed again.

‘I know that,’ Leandra von Chrapitz hissed. ‘You are a man, aren’t you? I care little for conventions, Max Vincius. I am not very suitable company in society. People avoid me, because I am too outspoken. I tear through hypocrisy, and I can’t help it. A bad husband, though departed, remains a bitter trauma. You tolerated me this evening. Thank you for that.’

‘I actually enjoyed the conversation,’ Max granted.

They sat still. She didn’t get up.

‘I need to cut down and sell more trees this year,’ she continued. ‘Why don’t you call on me in two, or three days, at Chrapitz? You know where the castle is. You’ve been there. I’ll be

waiting for you. I'm not leaving for a few months, anyway. We can talk about where the trees have to be cut, to which percentage of the forest. Come to Chrapitz. Dine with me. I'll show you around.'

She didn't look at him.

'I will,' Max agreed after some hesitation.

Why should he hesitate? What was he doing? Why would he accept the offer? He could as well handle the matter of trees to be cut with her new steward. He could send Fried Kleinberger.

'Allow me to accompany you to your coach,' he told.

She accepted his company to outdoors gracefully. They stood. He offered her his arm, which she accepted. They would make a splendid pair, walking out! The ball was going on in full frenzy. Max didn't take his leave to anybody. Neither did Leandra von Chrapitz. Many eyes followed them in astonishment to the doors. Leandra von Chrapitz did not turn her head once to Max. Nor did she to anywhere else. She went out, like a queen, took her coat, allowed Max to help her putting the cloak around her shoulders, and passed the door. She asked a servant to call her coach. Max took his own coat and cane.

'You are not here by coach? Will you return to the ball?' she asked.

'I did come by coach,' Max replied, 'but I promised my wife I would have the coach wait for her. I like to walk. I'm returning on foot. I mostly live in another place, near my warehouse.' Lady von Chrapitz' mouth went 'oh!' in understanding.

'Can I drop you off somewhere?' she asked.

'No, we're going in opposite directions. I am quite all right. Don't worry about me. Like I said, I like to walk. I wish you a good night, Lady Chrapitz.'

'Please call me Leandra,' the woman said. 'I wish you a good night, too.'

Her coach arrived. It was a Russian-style open troika.

Before she stepped in, she suddenly turned again to him, as if she had changed her mind. She came up to Max, and placed her lips slightly on his right cheek. Her lips were moist.

'You are not as terrible as you think, Max Vincius,' she whispered.

Max was so surprised he didn't move one bone in his body. When he could and wanted to react, say something, do something, she had already disappeared in the troika, buried under the heap of thick bearskins. Her coachman placed the whip on the three horses. The troika sped around the corner.

Max still stood as if transfixed, at the monumental stair and doors of the garrison building. He came to his senses. He began to walk home at a firm pace. He felt excited and bewildered at the same time. When was the last time a woman had kissed him tenderly? She meant business quickly!

Max walked home.

The lips of Leandra von Chrapitz burned on Max's cheek for days. Then, he couldn't hold himself back anymore. He rode on horseback to Chrapitz. The air was fresh, but the sky was clear. There was actually some temperature in the sun. It did not snow, it did not rain. The sky remained clear of heavy clouds that day. He had seen Chrapitz Manor before. He noticed, as if for the first time, it was a small but delicious palace, exquisitely baroque in style. This time, he jumped off his horse in front of the castle. He didn't have to knock on the door. A

manservant ran out of the porch to hold his horse. A second servant followed. Max announced who he was.

‘Oh yes, master Max Vincius,’ the second man politely bowed. ‘We have been expecting you! Lady Chrapitz is in the blue *salon*. We’ll introduce you there. Please come in and follow me.’

Max followed the servant up the left stairs. The rooms of the castle proper obviously lay one store higher. The *piano nobile*, Max reflected. The lower floor remained reserved to the servants. This was where the kitchens would be situated.

The interior was grand, Max noticed. The Chrapitz nobles had offered their visitors a view of a large entry hall. The walls were covered with splendid paintings. A marble staircase led to the first floor. Max had expected this. The Chrapitz lived on the *piano nobile*.

Upstairs, not far to the left from the monumental marble staircase, the servant opened a door, announced him with a loud voice, and led him into a well-warmed room. Into the blue *salon*. Sofas, seats, chairs with blue linings and blue coverings. Cream-coloured walls. Large paintings of vast blue skies and white clouds. Seascapes of blue.

Near the window, opposite a large hearth in which logs crackled and flames escaped, sat the lady of the house. Max saw her for the first time in full daylight. She was more radiant and beautiful than he remembered her from the ballroom. Her face looked hard, as it had at the ball, but she was all smiles when she came forward to him, her arms in front of her, grabbing his cold hands, instantly warming them in hers. She drew him to a chair near her. She did not wear a high collar here, which had covered her neck at the ball. She wore a white shirt, quite open at the neck, enhancing her attractive bust, showing him the curves of her breasts. Her dress was of a soft orange cotton, stripes of yellow material vertically lined in it, so that she looked taller than he remembered. Nevertheless, she stood eye to eye to him. They both smiled, exchanged polite words of welcome. He stammered excuses for not having announced himself earlier. They sat.

Tea was brought in. They talked. Max had come early in the morning, but she didn’t seem to mind. They talked freely about many subjects, also about Prussian politics. Newspapers lay strayed next to her. She opened with remarks on the Polish uprising. She told she understood so well the desire for independence of the Poles, for freedom of their country. She understood how hard the Russian dominance must feel for the Polish men. She added instantly though, she didn’t like the way the Poles now had begun their new revolt. There was no hope for that revolt, she esteemed, except for a global European war against Russia, and that wouldn’t come. At least, not now! Prussia would side with Russia, and Austria too. She abhorred the horror of the cowardly assassinations of Polish collaborators with the regime, the foul attacks on Russian garrisons, the treachery of it all. Max agreed. He too had followed in the newspapers the first reports of the Polish rebellion. Her sympathies were divided, she told, like his. The Polish people would not win a war of terror. No, the Poles would not gain their independence by terror. She was sure of that. Besides, the people, the peasants, the labourers, had not joined the insurrection at all.

They chatted on about the trees she wanted to have cut and be sold.

‘All right,’ Max said in the end, ‘show me!’

Leandra seemed surprised. She changed her mind quickly.

‘Why not,’ she agreed. ‘We can as well eat afterwards. A fine walk before dinner will do us good. But we have to ride to Kantarew. You came by horse, you mentioned. I’ll have mine saddled. I have to change. Please give me some time.’

Max smiled, as Leandra left in a hurry.

He waited, looking out of the windows. He saw his horse being brought forward, then another, finer one. A little later, Leandra entered the room again. She was dressed like a man for riding.

‘Come on,’ she shouted, happy as a young girl.

Grabbing his hand, she ran down the stairs to the front doors. Her horse stood there. She did not ride as an Amazon, straddled on the saddle. She rode like a man. A moment later, they both galloped to Kantarew, she first, he in tow. She rode a stiff gallop. Max had it not easy to follow her. He noticed then she had ample dark blonde hair. She wore a hat, but she had loosened her blonde hair. It flew in the wind behind her. She seemed to enjoy the ride. When they reached the forests of Kantarew, she rode more slowly. She showed him the limits of the wood she wanted cut. She explained which trees she would see cut and sold, a small percentage only of the trees in the forest. She told she would have the trees she wanted to go, to be cut down, be marked with a particular sign in red paint. Max made notes of the borders of the lands where she wanted to better manage the growth of the trees, give more air to the better types of trees. Then, everything shown and noted, they rode back to the castle.

Leandra von Chrapitz had flushed cheeks from the cold and the wind when they returned. She ran back up the stairs, threw wide open the doors of the blue salon, and cried, ‘why don’t we dine in here? We use the small table. It’s much cosier here than in the large dining room. We don’t need the servants to serve us, here. We can cut our own slices of meat. We’ll make it simple!’

Max smiled, and agreed totally.

They dined together, just the two of them. Leandra sent all the servants out. She served Max the food that had been brought in. He cut tiny chunks of the meat. They ate as if they had met in a small pavilion in the forest. They laughed a lot. Leandra remembered jokes and small anecdotes from some of the most notable old men of Thorn. Time passed agreeably.

At one moment, Leandra asked, ‘you are Jewish. You must tell me what that means for you.’

‘I’m afraid, yes, I am a Jew. I’m not very Jewish, though,’ Max answered in a serious tone.

‘Jewish refers first to the religion. I do believe in what the *Torah* tells. I studied the *Talmud*. I try to keep the commandments Moses gave to the Israelites. I abide by most of the important rituals of Judaism out of respect for my forefathers. I do not ostentatiously show my Jewishness. I am no *Hasidic* Jew. I believe our Rabbis are wiser men. There can be one God, so the God of the Jews must be the same as the God of the Evangelic Faith, of the Catholics, of the Muslims, and so on. How we pray and adore God has been ordained by people. How we do that is not so important.

There is another dimension to the Jews, though. We were a people and we stuck to our community. The Prussian laws ignore this aspect, and I believe that is the right view. For the state, for living together, we should abide by the laws of the land. As a people, the Jews have blended into the people of the lands they live in. That is the best solution. I do not agree with how the Jews are regarded in Russia, and thus also in Poland. There is no difference between a Jewish man or woman and a man or woman from other provenance. The Prussian law is

right in this aspect. There can be no justification in considering still the Jews as a separate people. When the Russians and the Poles will understand this, I don't know. Many Jews have taken on this viewpoint, and that is good. I don't agree with the Jews, Catholics, or people from whatever religion, to have a separate dress code. That is, in a nutshell, in what I believe.'

'Do you ever feel any hatred against the Russians because of your faith?'

'No, no, certainly not. A dark, heavy kind of estrangement lies between me, of course also between many other Jews, and some of the men of your class. That is called antisemitism. I think its basis lies in envy. We, Jews, have been sending our children to school since many centuries, if not millennia. We are exercised and schooled in rational thinking. That is what the study of the intricacies of the Talmud leads to. Is it so bad to think rationally on what the elders wrote about the commands of God? Did that schooling change something in us? Maybe. Probably. Many Jews are smart. Many scholars, and now also men researching in science and other branches of our everyday work are Jewish. Some people envy us because some of the Jews are rich. These got rich from finance and commerce. Why are we blamed? Those were the only trades we were allowed to work in. In the Jewish Settlement Areas, in Poland and Lithuania, in Russia, we were not allowed to be peasants and hold lands. Most of the arts and professions of artisans were closed to us. What else could we do? Yes, those occupations bring in more money than other. I like living in Prussia. I can trade how and with whom I please. I have very good relations with the Mayor and his assistants. I meet the other traders of the city. None ever reproached me for being Jewish. The *Junkers* of Prussia are indeed a little different, please excuse my saying so. As to the Russians, I confess I quite like them, despite our differences of views. They are a jovial people. They like power. I have no issue with that. Which people don't like power over others? They have treated us fairly well so far in Lithuania. Despite some of their anti-Jewish laws. I understand them. They still consider us, Jews, as foreigners in their lands. Naturally, they are suspicious of us. And the Jews crucified part of the God they adore.'

'Yes,' Leandra replied pensively. 'We of the higher nobility, we remain more conservative. The new Minister-President, this Otto von Bismarck, he also seems to avoid Jews a little. At least, that is what is hinted at in the press I read. Still, I happen to know several Jewish men work close to him. His financier is a Frankfurt Jew, a man close to the Rothschilds. With time, that should erase more and more the difference still existing between man and faith, wouldn't you say?'

'I suppose so,' Max replied politely.

Leandra left the subject there.

After they had eaten and had enjoyed a good time together, Max noticed it became dark outside.

He said, 'I have to ride back. It will be night soon.'

Leandra looked at the windows. She saw he was right, with obvious regret.

'Well then,' she accepted, 'yes, you will have to go. I had a pleasant day in your company.

Will you come back on another day? You will be very busy, I know, but I'd like you to come back, here, and talk with me. Can we be friends?'

'Of course,' Max whispered.

He too would have liked staying on longer. How quickly could he return?

‘I can come back early next week,’ he proposed after a while.

‘Why not Saturday or Sunday?’

That was quick.

‘Sunday would be fine,’ Max granted.

‘Sunday is always a sad day for me,’ Leandra confessed. ‘The world stands still on Sundays. Most of my servants leave. It is a day of loneliness.’

‘And you must also stay without work on Sabbath, on Saturday,’ she reminded herself suddenly.

‘Indeed!’

‘We have a short religious ceremony here in the castle, each morning,’ Leandra explained. ‘I am of the Evangelic Faith, Lutheran to be exact. Our ceremony is short. We read a few texts from the Bible. A member of our Church explains the meaning of the texts. We do the same on Sunday. Please come around noon. I’ll make sure we are undisturbed.’

‘I will,’ Max answered.

What was he doing? Did he really want to see this woman again? He was so much older! And a Jew! What could or would grow out of this relationship? Max had no idea. He was bewildered about his own feelings. He wanted to end his loneliness too. He wanted to go on talking to this woman. He wanted to hear her soothing voice. Maybe he also wanted her white arms around his neck, her lips on his mouth. A Lutheran and a Jew? Did he feel love or merely an urge to end loneliness?

Once more, as at the garrison ball, Leandra von Chrapitz came up to Max. He felt the warmth of the room. He smelled her delicate perfume. He waited for her once more to put her lips slightly on his cheek, the French way of saying goodbye to a friend. He longed for her arms. Leandra didn’t hesitate. She sought his lips, this time, directly his lips. He didn’t move his hands, but he held her kiss on his lips. They kissed a real kiss, as lovers do. She drew away quite some time later. He hadn’t touched her with his hands or with his body.

‘I truly should go,’ Max sighed, against his will.

The words cost him.

‘Yes, you must,’ she whispered.

Max almost ran out of the room.

The next days, Max didn’t torture his mind any longer. He felt so good in the presence of Leandra von Chrapitz! He had been too miserable and lonely long enough. She, Leandra, had been living like he, without tenderness, for so long. What kind of a life was that? He longed for lips on his lips, for warm hands around him, for a confident and for a being who could appreciate him. She was so lovely! No, he would not so soon throw himself into a new marriage. Neither would she! Max would wait to be very, very sure of his feelings this time, and of the character of the woman. But he would not refuse his newfound hope for happiness. Leandra was so beautiful, so sweet, so understanding, so warm, he could not refuse her. Come what may!

Max Vincius returned to Chrapitz Castle on Sunday. As soon as he entered the blue *salon*, Leandra ran back out, dressed up for a walk in the forest around her house. They walked arm

in arm, and talked. They kissed several times in the gardens, amongst the trees. They walked very close to each other, shoulders and hips touching. They returned to the house in the afternoon, ate like the last time, and Max left late. Their kisses were more passionate, their parting hurt.

Such visits happened several times in the next weeks. Max and Leandra became very intimate with each other. They also strolled arm in arm in the centre of Thorn, and along the Weichsel. After the explanations Max had given to Leandra about the failing of his marriage, Leandra had brooded over that issue. She wondered, of course, what might happen to their relationship.

On one of their walks, she asked suddenly, ‘why, truly, did your marriage fail? You could have talked it out, both of you. Both of you are no violent persons. You told me a lot, but merely about the effects of your discord, not about the underlying reasons.’

Max replied, ‘true and fair. I pondered about the true reasons. I think they were two. We married out of the urge for procreation, out of pure desire. Sara was lovely, beautiful, of course, and I may have been enraptured by her. We were very young. I was in love, for certain. But did I truly love her? Did I admire her better qualities? I wonder. We were so young! What did we know about the very qualities and feelings that are important in a marriage? We may both have erred, and both missed what we ought to have really appreciated in each other for a lifelong marriage. Our desire of procreation was too strong. No, don’t laugh!’

Leandra did smile, but Max continued, ‘sometimes I believe it might have been better for me to agree with the choice of a Jewish matchmaker. At least, I can see now, these men are wise and experienced in such matters as relationships and marriages. They know what is needed in a good, lasting marriage. They could provide both for the fulfilment of the desires, and at the same time look for characters that have a good chance of blending in marriage. I and Sara, we satisfied our urges, but never succeeded in blending our souls. I have been a fool, a presumptuous fool.’

Leandra smiled again.

‘No, don’t laugh,’ Max repeated, ‘I am very serious, now. Love is something else than what we felt. Secondly, Sara had a real tendency for dominance over other people, I should say over her men, and over me in particular. Did I try to dominate her? I don’t think so, not consciously, but I do admit I often came to her with answers and with arguments, which I thought were implacably true. They were! Generally being right in discussions does not inspire much confidence in a partnership. It is too one-sided. It generates envy, and resistance. I could not manipulate. I gave my arguments, my reasons, blandly, undisguised. I never would have wanted to manipulate her, so I delivered my implacable arguments, and Sara may soon have felt the inferior. This clashed with her being. I never felt Sara to be inferior. But I understand now, she may have reacted on feelings of inferiority and revolted against them.

How she manages with a man like Joram Cohen, I have no idea. I won’t offer explanations. Maybe he still fulfils all her desires better than I, maybe she is smarter in her arguments than he. She can be a subtle woman, too. I and her, we failed. Impossible to blend in souls! It grew from bad to worse. In the end, we hated each other.’

‘So, you must now think you truly love me, and you hope I’m as smart as you!’

‘I’m sure I love you in a very different way than I was in love with Sara. I’m not a young fool anymore. And I am sure you are smarter than Sara. You managed a domain on your own for many years. I heard it said you were very prosperous. You read the newspapers and books, so you answered me with very astute and sound arguments. I can talk to you and listen to you for hours. Your answers are deduced from reason. I should be able to talk with you at level, not merely with emotion in every word. My love is more mature, sure, steady and powerful. Of course, you are very pretty and lustful too, my love!’

Leandra smiled and replied, ‘then I hope we never fall out from each other. This is also the first time you talked of love. Love is a weighty word! I liked you speaking of it. I am sure I feel love too, a strange, very agreeable intimacy. Confidence. It surprised me, and then overwhelmed me.’

‘Promise me to talk to me when something happens to our love. By talking, truly talking about our real issues, we can refer to the love we feel currently,’ Max begged.

‘I will. You must do the same.’

‘I promise!’

They walked on, closer to each other than before.

After many such weeks, a Prussian *Junker* called on Max. He was a tall, straight man of advanced age. Max guessed the man was over seventy. His name was Edwin von Kruszynski. Max received the man in his office near his storerooms. Von Kruszynski had come on foot. Max knew who the old man was, how very large his domain in the district. The nobleman owned several houses in Thorn itself, among which a really large house not far from the Market Place, which served as his residence in Thorn. Von Kruszynski did not spend many words with Max.

‘I have trees to cut, and the wood to be sold,’ he told Max in a clear, sharp voice. ‘I need the money this year. Sons to marry! Could you take the wood off me at a fair price?’

‘Sure,’ Max replied. ‘Though I don’t know your idea of a fair price. I can give you mine. How many trees had you in mind? Which volumes are you speaking of?’

Kruszynski explained how large the parcels of his forests were, the parts he wanted cut for about sixty percent, at places to complete surface.

Max changed colours. Kruszynski was proposing him a huge deal, one of the greatest ever in Thorn, if not the greatest. Large sums of money would be involved.

‘I can do what you want,’ Max replied, ‘but the cutting will have to be done over several months, probably six to eight months. I have my crews, independent contractors, for that. I need those subcontracts to cut. There is a huge risk. If we throw so much wood on the market at once, prices of wood from Thorn will plummet immediately. That will make us enemies for life, and our income will be drastically lower than we both may expect.’

‘I feared something like that too,’ von Kruszynski nodded. ‘I’m confident you have an idea on how to avoid prices going down.’

Max laughed, ‘we could cut and sell part of the wood to Danzig, another part to Posen, to Poznań, send blocks of wood cut in smaller pieces to Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin. I can pull this off. I can make the contacts in those cities; my son can manage the cutting and transport. Nevertheless, it will be a near thing, and it will demand much organisation. Are you sure you want me to handle such a deal? I am Jewish, you know.’

‘I know who you are. I know you are an honest man. I also know that if there is one man capable of pulling this off, it would be you. We haven’t done business together in the past, but I was told you were very honest in business. So, if you are willing to take this on, I will too. We shall work together.’

‘Your friends and colleagues of the nobility may not like what you will be doing,’ Max still objected. ‘I repeat, I am a Jew!’

‘Stop telling me what I already know,’ the older man smiled. ‘Do we have a deal or not?’

‘We have,’ Max shook the man’s hand. ‘I cannot guarantee a certain price now. We will have to see how the deal advances. I can give you a price for the first contingent, a probable price. There will have to be about five contingents, to ship at different times, one after the other, by boat, maybe even by railways, to different places. I have to check out where wood prices are highest at what time. I can give you an idea of the amount for each cut about two to three weeks in advance. I can provide you with the details of the additional costs. If that suits you.’

‘It does suit me. Better is impossible. We will have to have confidence in each other during the entire cut. A handshake suffices me. Deal?’

Kruszynski once more stuck out his hand.

Max accepted the hand and shook it again.

‘Deal! I promise you I’ll give you the best price I can get and the lowest-priced transport in Thorn!’

‘Good,’ said von Kruszynski and shook the hand several times.

‘Tell me,’ Max then said, curious about the possible answer, ‘what made you decide to come to me? We never dealt before.’

‘The old von Chrapitz men were my friends,’ the man told. ‘I know Leandra Charlotte von Chrapitz since she was a child. She sat on my lap when she was young. She told me if there was one man who could be trusted in business, it was you. She would guarantee it. She said you could handle such a deal. She also told you were honest, a rare quality, and a man one could count on, also in moments of issues. Issues there will be, I am sure of that. We’ll have to trust each other to solve them. I trust your judgement. Leandra knows men. She trusts very few.’

‘Thank you,’ Max whispered.

‘I know how things stand between you and Leandra,’ von Kruszynski said with some hesitation. ‘Please don’t hurt her. I like her. She is like a daughter to me.’

Kruszynski stood, readying to leave. Max sat and Kruszynski towered above him, a very dignified nobleman.

‘Well then,’ von Kruszynski concluded, ‘many words more are not necessary. Come to my estate one of these days. I’ll show you where to start cutting.’

Von Kruszynski shook Max’s hand again. He did not release the hand immediately.

‘Leandra told me all about how matters stand between you two. I do not object. I have been something of a father to her after her real father passed away. I love her very much. She has been hurt. I know about your marriage, too. It has been failing since many years, hasn’t it? I have not the least sympathy for Joram Cohen. The man is formidable, but he is a scoundrel I would never do business with. Take care. Joram Cohen will not be the only man you may get issues with if you and Leandra continue your affair. Several men of the Prussian aristocracy

have eyes set on Leandra. Greedy eyes! You, you don't need her money. You will not take her money. I can see that. But you will get in the way of many, young and old. I can help. We should talk. Don't underestimate the envy and maybe even the hatred your relation with Leandra may create.'

'I won't,' Max assured. 'Leandra has not had a pretty life. She has been too lonely for too long. What can come out of our relation, I don't know yet. I am Jewish, she is Evangelic. How much we like each other is also not entirely clear. I can only promise you I have much respect, esteem, and probably love for her. I won't hurt her if I can avoid so. That is a promise.'

Kruszynski released Max's hand.

'A fair answer,' he agreed. 'We'll do as we discussed. I'll be expecting you.'

'Tomorrow afternoon?' Max suggested rapidly. This was not a deal to let linger.

'Tomorrow afternoon at Kruszynski Castle!' von Kruszynski laughed.

Thus, began the largest enterprise of cutting down wood and selling it the same year Max Vincius had ever taken upon his shoulders. He would gain huge profits from the deal, if he could pull it off with success. He would give part of the deal to his son, part to Fried Kleinberger. The three of them would meet often and organise all.

In the end, as he realised it was also a kind of test for Leandra and him, he did pull it off. That year of 1863, the Kruszynski deal was his one best. With it, he broke into the wall the Prussian Junkers around Thorn had still drawn up between them and him, a Jew. In the subsequent years, he would become the trusted partner of many men belonging to the aristocracy of West Prussia. He made fine profits with their contracts. Within a few years, Max's son and Fried Kleinberger grew rich. The people he worked with got all the better from working with him, and Thorn prospered from the added trade.

Max and Leandra saw each other more and more. Thorn heard about their affair. When the rumours grew, they took care. They stayed in or around Castle Chrapitz. They seldom met in the centre of the city. They avoided balls and dinners and theatre representations. They made long walks in the environs of Leandra's manor, without leaving the domain.

One evening after a marvellous though frugal supper, when Max told he should return to Thorn, Leandra looked at him with a strange, veiled smile in her eyes. Instead of saying goodbye, she took Max's hand and drew him behind her. He followed, wondering where she would lead him. They went to the right wing of the castle. She opened a door. Max recognised a lady's bedroom. He wanted to protest, to say something he shouldn't, but Leandra had already closed his mouth with a passionate kiss. She placed his hand on her breast and squeezed. Still kissing him, she opened the buttons of his shirt. Leandra was as frank in her nudity as in words. She showed herself, and when she thus stood before him, Max found her as attractive as the young Sara Benavicius. They gave each other love, slowly, and much more tenderness.

Max Vincius woke up the following morning in a bed that was not his. The soft, white arms of Leandra von Chrapitz held tight around him. Her legs enveloped him. They lay both naked in the large bed.

Leandra slept. Max didn't move. He could not believe what had happened.

'Be gentle with me,' Leandra had whispered.

How could he have made love to her otherwise? Finally, she had wanted him as much as he her.

What would come of an adulterous relationship between a Jewish man and an Evangelic woman in Thorn, both so well-known, wealthy beyond imagination, and she an esteemed member of the Prussian nobility? His hand moved over the unblemished back of Leandra. His hand moved over her spine, teasing her skin. Leandra trembled. She stirred. She opened her grey eyes, which Max had discovered were speckled with bright green spots.

Max said, ‘good morning, my love!’

As if instantly Leandra knew what he was worrying about, the feelings of guilt, the betrayal of his religion, she replied, ‘no guilt! No guilt! We take what we can. We defend what we have. Nobody should spoil what we have! Nobody has the right! We have a life. I want you with me and in me as much as possible. We must give love a chance.’

He smiled.

The affair of Max Vincius and of Leandra von Chrapitz lasted as if in a dream for both of them, for several months of that year of 1863.

One afternoon, when Max had come on horse from Thorn to Castle Chrapitz, and had run up to his lover, who was sitting as usual in the blue *salon*, Leandra received him, solemnly standing like a Greek goddess, stern, serious, dignified, in full glory, tall and so beautiful. Her eyes shone brightly with a happiness he had never seen on her. Her breasts filled and heaved. She told him instantly, triumphantly, ‘guess what! I am sure! I am pregnant! We are going to have a child! It will be a boy!’

Leandra had expected no other reaction from Max. He too ran up to her and took her in his arms. He held her thus for a long, long time, hugging her, caressing her. Tears rolled down her cheeks. He kissed them away.

‘Decision time, my love,’ Max told her, laughing and also wiping a tear off his face. ‘I am so happy! We are going to take our happiness. Nobody is going to stand in our way this time!’

Part II. Prussia at War

The Polish Rebellion and the Second Schleswig War. 1860-1865

During the 1850s, after the shock of the revolutionary days of 1848 and 1849, Prussia preserved its peace. It industrialised quickly. A vast railways network was installed to enhance faster communications over the western provinces. The Prussian cities prospered. The peace was not kept overall in Europe, not for Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria, Italy and the Ottoman Empire. Tensions between these states lead to wars, fought in the period of 1850 to 1860. In the 1860s, such wars continued.

Haim Vincius as a Prussian Officer. 1850s

In Thorn, the young Haim Vincius dreamt of becoming a soldier. His head was filled by the heroic tales of warriors from Antiquity to the Crimean War. While an adolescent and a student at the German Gymnasium of Thorn, he avidly read the newspapers his father left lying about, either in their house of the *Breite Strasse*, where the Vincius sons continued to live throughout the 1850s, or in the storerooms house outside the walls of the city. Max Vincius was a little astonished about the literary interests of his son. He sometimes saw the boy running around him in a self-made Roman armour, brandishing a wooden sword and shouting war cries. He let the boy have his way and his dreams, and even encouraged him to read Thucydides and Seutonius about the generals and emperors of Greek and Roman times. Max Vincius considered the boy's interest untypical for a Jewish boy, but he did not have the heart to chide his son.

The young Haim was tall for his age, heavy, strong in legs and muscles, and commanding with his friends, not too interested in girls so far. Max did not truly know which books Haim read, nor in which columns of the newspapers Haim eagerly sought to read. In fact, Haim avidly read the war despatches from the Crimean War between Russian, the allied powers and the Ottoman Empire. He read all the published texts concerning the Russo-Turkish War he could lay his hands on. Such texts were rather rare to obtain in Thorn, except from the newspapers. Haim ordered more specialised papers and books, published in Berlin. Haim had visited Berlin from early on, accompanying his mother Sara on her regular voyages to the capitals of Europe.

Sara Benavicius quite often travelled to Berlin. She could do in the capital of Prussia as she wanted. Nobody in Berlin knew who she was and where she came from. She could meet with Joram Cohen there in total anonymity and hence impunity. She usually took Haim with her as a pretext and a supposed chaperone. Haim was the calmest of her sons, the one who spoke the least, bothered her the least, and would have been the last to report on her doings.

Haim was often on his own in Berlin. He liked to walk in the capital. He had discovered a library in Berlin. The librarian sent him lists of the newest publications he could order from out of his home town of Thorn. The transport fees were high, but Haim benefitted from a

generous stipend from his father. His money went to the books. Haim used these means to get at military treatises and novels.

Haim read Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz's book 'Vom Kriege', on War, entirely on his own, and studied it until he almost knew the work by heart. Clausewitz had been a Prussian and Russian general during the Napoleonic Wars, a real Prussian hero. Haim took him as his example. He became an autodidact on war theory and on strategy. He replayed wars of antiquity on paper, trying to apply von Clausewitz's theories.

When Haim was 18 years old, he expressed the wish to enter the Prussian military service. His father accepted, for Haim solved the difficult issue of conscription in his family. With Haim in the army, Kurt and Mikhael would not be called to duty.

The military service in Prussia was then 3 years of active service. Every Prussian of 20 years of age was subject to military service. Then followed 4 years of reserve. In this reserve, a soldier had to participate in at least the ordered field manoeuvres, to a total of about 16 weeks in the 4 years of reserve. Then, the young man passed for 5 years in the *Landwehr*, the Civil Guard. In these 5 years, he might be called twice for drill exercises, each drill of a maximum of 14 days. Each able-bodied Prussian therefore served for a total of 12 years.

The number of soldiers in active service in Prussia was fixed at about one percent of the population. The number of soldiers drafted per year was calculated from the number of men necessary to keep the army at its authorised strength in peace time.

Max Vincius surmised Prussia would stay peaceful, as it had remained neutral in the Crimean War, and not sided with Austria in the conflict. Max nevertheless had to arrange a few matters about Haim's military service. To begin with, he arranged for Haim to serve, as he himself had done, in the garrison regiments of Thorn. Max could thus keep an eye on his son in the first years of his son's career as a soldier, keep the youth out of trouble and always provided with money. Max paid his son every three months a hefty sum. The boy never approached his father for more. He apparently made no significant debts in gambling, and no girls or fathers complaining about Haim's attitudes to girls showed up at Max's gates.

Haim entered the military service in 1861. He got the lowest rank of officers. In 1862, a year later, he was promoted to lieutenant. Haim never boasted with the promotion, nor did he explain for which feat he had promoted so early. Haim's commanding officers gave Max Vincius full praise for his qualities as a soldier. They told Max Haim was an excellent cavalryman, and a born leader of men. In 1863, Haim thus still served in the Thorn garrison, Though Haim was often absent from Thorn, engaged elsewhere in the army. Max saw his son only seldom. Max had to admit, a little embarrassed, he didn't know much about what his son was exactly doing in the army. As far as he was concerned, Max supposed his son was still training assiduously on the exercise grounds of the castle and garrison of Thorn.

'Oh, no, no, no,' the colonel, the *Oberstleutnant* Max had been talking to at the yearly garrison reception smiled, 'no, no! Your son is way past training! Way past! He leads a group of cavalry of a dozen men along the Polish border. He has double that number of our infantry with him, as support. He controls the border, the smuggling of arms along the border.' Max blemished a little, for weapons smuggling was not out of his activities, though very modestly.

The colonel grinned and continued, ‘your son, my dear Vincius, is one of our best officers, you know, young as he is. He has brains, that young man of you! We can let him patrol in full confidence, on his own. He is totally up to his task, a fine soldier, a real man, a leader of men, with a great presence of mind, courageous, daring, showing a correct view of what can come next in future engagements. He is a true strategist, your son! I would gladly recommend him to Berlin! He is my youngest lieutenant, but I wished all my officers would resemble him. Moreover, his men follow him, and despite the harsh life he often forces on them, they genuinely seem to like being led by him. Who can ask for more?’

Max Vincius had been extremely pleased with this honest praise, even of admiration. Max could be proud of his son, the colonel had added.

Max Vincius did worry about how his son could force his way to an army career. At this end of 1862, when Max had the conversation with the *Oberstleutnant* of the garrison, when the boy would have almost finished his second year of conscripted service, which would end a year later, Haim had told Max he wanted to stay in the Prussian Army. Max Vincius feared promotion in the military ranks would come with issues, as Haim was Jewish. To the law, Haim was a citizen as any other Prussian, but in the army the true leaders were noblemen, Prussian *Junkers*, of which many were not really sympathetic to the Jews. Max had already proposed Haim to convert to Christian Evangelism, but the boy had refused.

‘I am Jewish,’ Haim had replied to his father. ‘I am not particularly religious. Why would I care so much for a God who cares so little for me?’

Max judged this blasphemous, but the boy continued, ‘I was born Jewish, probably ordained to be so by God, and Jewish I will stay. I am well aware it is hard for a Jew to promote into the higher ranks of the army. Up to the rank of colonel or *Oberst*, I can get without too many issues and use of special influence. Well, even promoting to that high rank for any burgher son is difficult, father. I will have to show I am an exceptionally good soldier, seeking the right initiatives, the ones that matter, and prove successful. Being lucky depends on thinking, father, but many officers believe it’s a God-given chance. Soldiers like to rely on somebody who is lucky in what he undertakes. I don’t rely on luck! It is all a matter of will power, you know! You have to show always to a troop of soldiers you can cut through any resistance. Then, your men will follow you through hell. The officers who hesitate, the men who waver in their decisions, who doubt, ask for advices from other men, those officers are not followed by their men, or reluctantly. I do not think of danger once I am in action. I subdue danger. I do what I have to do to win, to overcome. I do not think of wounds or even of getting killed! I learned to conjure fate, to determine my fate myself. I know, as sure as you know in handling a trade deal, whether I am going to win a skirmish or not, whether I have to leave an attack, or even not to start an attack, and fight another day. Some call that luck, some call it recklessness, but I assure you, father, it is all but a matter of the right reasoning and of instinct. I know whether I have a fair chance of winning a skirmish, or better wait for the next day. So far, I always came back from patrols with successes!’

Max Vincius had been appalled, astonished, proud, and very fearful of what his son told him. It seemed the army had toughened and matured his son thoroughly. Yet, Haim Vincius seemed happy and enthusiastic about his serving as a Prussian officer. In his uniform, Haim looked a fine young man, too!

Max Vincius' Second Marriage

Shortly after these conversations with his son and his son's commander, Max Vincius called his sons together to his house outside the walls, for an important announcement he had to make on family matters.

Max Vincius sat on a chair in his hall, in the very modest hall of his home outside the walls of Thorn. When he saw his sons sitting earnestly together, the three of them on the sofa in front of him, he realised how quickly time had passed. He was 43 years old. Kurt was 23, Haim 21 and Mikhael, the youngest, closed the row at 20. Before Max sat not children, as he had wanted to address them, but grown-up men. Kurt was already a married man, and soon a father. Max could not talk to his sons as if they still were children. He had to confront them as men, men he loved, but also men who might well, with reason, contest his ways! Max thought about this while he served his sons a glass of his finest vodka.

He started, 'I asked you to come here, all together, to talk about grave matters. You know the relations between me and your mother Sara have not been easy, not good, for years. I loved your mother once, long ago. I will not forget what I felt for her when we married. We were very much in love then, believe me, but the love didn't last. We went our own ways. I can offer no valid excuse. I deplore the marriage of me and your mother went awry. I don't reproach your mother of falling out with me. Our characters were too different, I suppose, so we grew apart, and that abyss widened. Believe me, the situation has aggrieved me harder than you can imagine. I suffered from the lack of love.'

Max sighed. His sons looked at him, but didn't offer a word.

Max persisted and continued, 'the situation has come to an end. Recently, I have fallen in love with another woman. This is not the love of two inexperienced, young people. We know what we are doing, and why. I am sure you have heard about the affair, though I haven't talked about it. My beloved is the Lady von Chrapitz.

It is now my intention to divorce your mother and to marry the lady von Chrapitz. She is called Leandra Charlotte. In order to marry Leandra, I shall leave the Jewish faith and convert to Lutheranism, to the Christian Evangelic Prussian faith. That will serve and ease our marriage. I will be doing this not only because I love Leandra. She also is expecting a child by me, and I want the child to have my name. You should expect a half-brother or a half-sister early next year or at the end of this year. I don't have much more to say. I give you my love. The new situation will not change my feelings towards you, nor my support.'

There, it was out, Max sighed again. The three brothers looked at each other, Max noticed. Who would be the first to react? Had he been too harsh, too rapid, too plain?

'We know you were having an affair with the Lady von Chrapitz, father,' Kurt said. 'Everybody in Thorn knows about it. We didn't know how serious the affair was, whether it was a temporary infatuation or a lasting affair. We also realised, of course, how matters stood with mother. We have regretted and suffered from the discord between you and her in our home. That lays in the past, now. We are grown-up men. We will build our own future, as we should. We will continue to honour you. We know you did your best for us. We are Jewish. I intend to remain Jewish, as my Hannah is Jewish too. I think Haim will stay Jewish too, at least for the time being. Mikhael, though he should express himself, has already talked to us

about conversion. He may convert to Prussian Evangelism. He is a thinker, our Mikhael. Whatever, he will always stay our brother, as you will always be our father. You have my blessing, if you ask me. You deserve some happiness in life, too.'

Haim took over.

'We love you, father,' he began. 'We know you tried your best. We accept marriages can be happy in time, as well as unhappy. I accept your decision to divorce from mother. We wish you the best of luck and much happiness in your new life with the Lady von Chrapitz. I have heard say praise and appreciation on her account. We congratulate you. I suppose you will present her to us one of these days.'

Max nodded.

Mikhael pronounced the last words.

'Yes, father, we heard about your affair and we knew how things stood between mother and you. We regretted that. I too am thinking about conversion. The Jewish Community of Thorn is small, and as I'm sorry to say, a little backward and very conservative in the old traditions. Some, many of the Jews of Thorn, seem to have lost contact with the wider world. They form not any longer a living, throbbing community as we had, and still have, in Vilna. So, yes, I too would like to convert to Christianity, to the faith of Prussia in Evangelism. I found a more reasonable form of adoration of God in Evangelism. We could convert together, in the same ceremony, if there is to be such a thing. I suppose we will have to be baptised. We could do so together. I am sorry, I understand what you are doing. I congratulate you with your choice, and wish you the best. When will the marriage take place?'

Max Vincius smiled then, and wanted to speak out again to give the proposed date, but Haim interrupted him.

'There is another matter to be discussed,' he told. 'I live in the garrison of Thorn. Kurt has his house. Mikhael still lives at our home in the *Breite Strasse*. Mother may marry Joram Cohen. I have to tell you I don't agree at all with Joram Cohen. Not in the least, because the man is a violent scoundrel, a cheat and a thief. He is one of the vilest, daring and greatest smugglers of weapons of the district of Thorn. If ever I catch the man with my patrol, along the border with Poland, smuggling arms, I will not hesitate to open fire on him. I happen to know something like that will not happen soon. He is too careful. The man has enough hoodlums in his paid service never to be involved in person in the smuggling of arms outside Thorn. He employs other men to do his dirty work. If mother marries Cohen, I shall stay polite, but I will only come to the *Breite Strasse* to see mother, and mother exclusively. I don't want anything to do whatsoever with that Joram Cohen!'

'Nor do I,' Kurt and Mikhael repeated, almost in unison.

Max Vincius remained sitting on his chair, totally baffled. He had received a rare declaration of solidarity from his sons.

Yes, Max had thought about the possibility of an official union between Sara and Joram. He had dreaded losing his sons, of them taking sides in favour of their mother and Joram Cohen. That, apparently, would not happen.

Max's voice was then hoarse with emotion. He fought back the tears in his eyes.

'Well then,' he said. 'That gives us only one more issue to solve. We'll have to find a nice house in Thorn for Mikhael!'

They all laughed at that. The tension in the room was broken, suddenly. Max served more vodka. His sons asked hundred questions about Leandra von Chrapitz and her castle, her domains. Max answered, and talked about his future wife in the most honesty, straightforward terms. He could not hide his happiness.

Max Vincius and Mikhael Vincius were baptised together, in the same church of Thorn, in the *Altstädtische Evangelische Kirche*, in the Evangelic Church of the Old Town of Thorn. The *Pfarrer*, the Evangelic deacon, was most sympathetic to the cause of the Lady von Chrapitz. He made no remarks, did not try to turn Max away from his project. He did not mock the Jewish faith. He merely gave a few books to Max and to Mikhael, for them to study the doctrine of the Church. Among the books were two exemplars of the New Testament. Max was not sure he would study the life of Christ. Maybe he had heard too many Jewish critics on the life of one who could at best be a Jewish prophet, but certainly not the Messiah. Nobody in the Jewish community of Thorn stirred up tensions about the conversion of two of its best-known members.

Two weeks later, Max Vincius and Leandra von Chrapitz married without fuss in the Evangelic Church. The marriage feast was humble, held in family company. That meant only with Max and Leandra and with the three sons of Max, and a few loyal servants of both Max and Leandra. The Kleinbergers also, assisted at the wedding.

In the beginning of 1864, the son of Max and Leandra was born. The delivery was difficult, but a very healthy, heavy boy was born, a son, and the mother ended very weak but alive. The parents christened the baby with the name of Julius. Leandra and Max discussed a long time about the name of their son. Transfers of much money were involved in the naming, but the child could be called by Leandra's preferred name of von Chrapitz-Vincius. Julius von Chrapitz-Vincius received his name by special signature of the king of Prussia's representative in Marienwerder.

The little Julius von Chrapitz-Vincius was a healthy child. He ate well, slept well, and demanded the constant attention from his enraptured parents. The only issue with the birth was, as Max and Leandra found out a little later from their doctor, that Leandra most probably would not have more children. Leandra did cry a little when she heard that news, for she would have wanted to give a daughter to her husband. She consoled herself by entrusting all her love to Little Julius. Max Vincius left his house outside the walls and went to live with Leandra in Castle Chrapitz.

Sara Benavicius did not marry Joram Cohen. Joram was not the marrying kind. She and Joram remained lovers, though. Sara had other lovers, some of them notorious burghers, traders of Thorn. The envious, mocking glances of his opposers among the traders could not reach Max Vincius anymore. Max gave Sara a generous stipend. She remained living alone in her house of the *Breite Strasse*, which was in fact Max's house. She met with her sons once every while, always less and less. She seemed not to give them her utmost interest.

In 1863 too, Haim Vincius, the soldier and bachelor, could be found only seldom in the garrison of Thorn in 1863. That year, he patrolled most of the time, almost continually, along the Polish border around the city of Thorn. He slept in tents in the woods and in the pastures of West-Prussia.

That was, because Poland had erupted in revolt once more. The Poles had risen against the Russian dominance in their country. As in 1830-1831, they fought for the independence of Poland.

The Polish Uprising of 1863-1864

After the debacle for the Polish insurrectionary armies in the November Uprising of 1830-1831, after the unrest of 1848 in Prussian Posen under Ludwik Mieroslawski and also the unrest in Austrian Galicia, both quickly suppressed, the Kingdom of Poland had remained even more than before firmly and strongly in Russian Tzarist hands.

The large Polish army of 1830 did not exist anymore. Poland was occupied by Russian troops, led by Russian officers. The Kingdom of Poland still existed, as created by the Vienna Congress of 1815 after the wars of the French Napoleonic era, but it was Russian.

The king of Poland was the czar of the Russian Empire. The fate of Lithuania, White Russia or Belarus and of the counties that together could be called Ukraine, which originally had belonged to the Lithuanian kings, was even harsher. These lands had all been separated from the century-old Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, and been legally incorporated into Russia. Their sovereign was the czar of Russia. The Lithuanian counties were now provinces, *gubernias*, of the Russian Empire.

In parts of these latter lands, the Russian tzars had installed the Jewish Settlement Areas, the only places in the vast empire where Jews were allowed to live and work in Russia. The Jews were only allowed to pass through or to stay as travellers for a few days in other parts of Russia. This was also the case for the capitals of the Russian Empire and of the Kingdom of Poland. The Jews were not allowed to reside in St Petersburg, Moscow, and Warsaw.

The tzars had ceded large areas of the former pre-Napoleonic Poland to Prussia and to Austria, Posen to Prussia and Galicia to Austria, in an effort to gain the support of these great Middle-European nations for the partitioning of greater Poland. The region of the city of Thorn, too, part of the former Culmerland, had thus come to Prussia.

Despite the military weakness of Poland, the flame of hope on independence had since 1772, the beginning of the threefold partitioning of the Polish heartland, never left the minds of the higher Polish classes and of the educated Polish scholars. The intellectuals, dreamers, the men and women inspired by nationalistic ideals, continued to believe in an independent Poland.

The unrest continued to rack Poland, even though Tzar Alexander II had granted amnesty in 1856 to the insurrected Poles of 1830. The insurgents of those years were restored in their civil rights, held free from prosecutions and official enquiries as to their allegiance. The emigrants were allowed to return to Poland. The various episcopal sees, which had been left vacant after the November uprising of 1830, were filled. The universities of Warsaw and Vilna had been closed by the Russian authorities. They were re-opened. The ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church of Poland was re-installed.

This Poland of after 1830 had a population of about 22 million people, of which about 70% were still Roman Catholic, and 30% of the Greek Orthodox faith.

The Russian agrarian reform of 1846 had secured the lands cultivated by Polish peasants to their class, as long as they paid the rents and kept to the duties imposed by the contracts with

the proprietors of the lands, mostly members of the higher Polish nobility. This law had first been postponed for months. The nobility had been able to take the measures needed to diminish the impact of the law to their estates. The peasants ultimately received only new, up to that point uncultivated land. The rents and mandatory services to the landlords increased with time, and obligatory labour to the nobility remained in use.

In May of 1861, a new law gave the peasants the right to substitute the money rent by labour services. Earlier on, in March of that year, the czar of Russia enfranchised the serfs. The inventoried land was by law invested on the serfs. These measures did not change the bitter attitude of the peasants and former serfs toward the Polish nobility.

From 1860 to 1862, several violent incidents attested to the rancour of many Poles against the established Russian regime. The unarmed agitation lasted not only in Poland, but also in Lithuania. Demonstrations were similarly organised in Lithuania, in Vilna and Kovno and in other cities of Western Russia. The military leader in Poland in this period was the czar's lieutenant, Prince Gorchakov. Among other minor disorders, uproars broke out in Warsaw and other cities. The Russian troops quickly suppressed them. When Prince Gorchakov died in 1862, his successor was the Count Lembert. Soon, he was followed up by General Luders. Luders was an old man when he took on his function. He was severely wounded in an attempt on his life. A bullet reached him and caused his death.

The successor on Luders was the Grand Duke Constantine, who became effectively Vice-Roy of the Kingdom of Poland. His main minister was the Marquis Wielopolski. Grand Duke Constantine arrived in Warsaw in July of 1862. In August of 1862, an attempt of assassination was made on the very unpopular Marquis Wielopolski. He was twice fired at and touched by bullets, but he survived.

The unarmed agitation lasted. Several protest actions took place. Processions in the honour of Polish and Lithuanian victims of the Russians challenged the Russian Cossack troops in Lithuania. In early August of 1861, about 5,000 Lithuanians walked from Vilna Centre to the suburbs, to wait for a similar procession coming from Poland. They attacked an infantry company and 200 Cossacks of the Russian Army. Several men were wounded, no one killed. A little later, the governor of Lithuania, General Nazimov, telegraphed to the czar the western provinces of Russia were at peace.

Nevertheless, at the end of August, the same Nazimov had to proclaim the state of siege for Vilna, Grodno and other towns of Lithuania. In the south, the Russian Army had to disarm entire provinces by force to keep the precarious peace. The unrest spread from the Baltic Sea to the Crimea. Podolia asked to return to Poland.

The Russian governors carried out a number of measures in Poland and in the western provinces of Russia proper. They disarmed the most dangerous classes of the population, treated the possession of arms as a criminal offence, arrested activists and leaders of demonstrations. They forbade the anti-Russian demonstrations, removed untrustworthy officials from office, and placed the provinces under the command of military governors. At the beginning of 1863, the agitations that had revived strong national feelings, had lasted for more than 2 years.

In 1863, the head of the civil administration in Poland was thus the Polish born Marquis Alexander Wielopolski. He was a cold and haughty man. Wielopolski was pro-Russian, very

conservative of ideas, and a man who wanted to spare current Poland the horrors of a new uprising. He imagined the destructions a new war could bring, as well as the subsequent repression by the Russian armies, as had happened in 1830-1831. He got wind of the nationalistic undercurrents in Poland. In an attempt to cut short the desires for new uprisings, he brought forward to January of 1863 the conscription of the young Polish activists into the Russian Army for 20-year terms of military service.

His decision had the reverse effect! It triggered the January uprising of 1863, the exact result the Marquis Wielopolski had tried to avoid!

In Russia, including Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine, the landowners provided the names of the conscripts to the Russian authorities. In Poland, the police selected the youths for conscription. Of course, the most insubordinate young men would be drafted first into the Russian Army, for a term of 20 years. The system had been suspended the last years. Now, it was re-installed.

With the exception of 2,000 men, Wielopolski would levy all the conscripts from the populations of the towns. He targeted the shopkeepers, the artisans and the lower nobility. In total, 8,000 men had to be delivered by Poland. Warsaw alone had to send 2,000 conscripts.

The new measure came into effect on the 14th of January of 1863. On the 16th, of January, the insurrection in Poland began. As of the 22nd, attacks happened simultaneously in all the provinces of Poland. Telegraph wires were cut, railways were torn up from their bedding, systematic mischief sabotaged the railway stations. Many Russian soldiers were killed. The Russians fought back and captured hundreds of prisoners. Among these were many Catholic priests.

In the last months of 1862, a Central National Committee had been formed in Poland. Its members were kept secret. Still, slowly, the names of the members became known. Its leaders were named Stefan Dobrowski, Jaroslaw Dabrowski, Zygmund Padlewski, Agaton Giller and Bronislaw Szwarc.

At that moment, the Russian Government held about 90,000 men under arms in Poland. The main aim of the Committee was to govern the revolutionary parties in Poland and Lithuania. End January of 1863, the Committee issued proclamations. It claimed to be the only legal governing body of Poland. It promised free land for the farmers in the countryside.

The insurrection happened for the largest part in the lands of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, much less in Posen of Prussia and in Galicia of Austria. In Poland, the landowners considered the insurrections as ‘Reds’, as leftists, and therefore showed no sympathy for the revolutionary movement.

As of January 1863, various armed Polish partisan bands harassed the Russian garrisons. Catholic priests led or guided many of these groups. The insurgents hanged Russian soldiers. They committed terrible cruelties. In the general chaos, which set to fire vast territories, the peasants generally did not join the uprisings. In the waves of cruelties, they preferred to side with order, with the Russian administrators and military. The Russians quickly declared Poland in a state of siege. Augustow, Kabisk, Warsaw, Radom, Lublin and Plock in particular, were placed under the authority of a military Russian officer.

In contrast to the kind of war called in 1830-1831, as there were no significantly large Polish troops anymore in the country, most of the insurgent bands were only armed with pikes, scythes and clubs of wood. Yet, the bands could hold as much as 5,000 men! They avoided bloody clashes with the larger bodies of Russian troops. They terrorised the countryside by sudden surprise raids. In Lithuania at first operated mainly bands having come from the Kingdom of Poland.

The principal band of insurgents had only 3,000 to 4,000 men. It operated in the town of Wachok, in the province of Radom. It was led by Marian Langiewicz. Langiewicz had been a professor in a Polish military school established in Italy. A second such band raided out of Wengzow in the district of Lublin.

The Central National Committee issued a decree, declaring all sons of Poland to be free and equal citizens without distinction of religion, condition or rank. The land cultivated by the peasants would henceforth become their unconditional property. Compensation for this measure to the landlords would be provided for out of state funds. The Committee tried to provision the bands of insurgents scattered all over Poland, a daunting effort.

In the month of February alone, more than 80 skirmishes, large and small, were fought with the Russian troops. The partisans grew in number to about 35,000 Poles under arms, facing the Russian Army that had by then gathered about 145,000 soldiers in the country. The Russians suffered considerable losses in the first months. Yet, everywhere, the partisan bands lost their confrontations with the Russian troops led by officers trained in warfare. A Russian group of infantry, dragoons and Cossacks attacked Langiewicz in early February. In a skirmish near Winchok, the Russian troops defeated the insurgents, which were thrown back in confusion. The Russian troops nearly destroyed all the rebels.

In the meantime, Prussia remained calm. The pro-reform party at court favoured constitutional rights for the Poles. The Austrians, who, like the Prussians, ruled historic parts of Poland, joined the British and the French Governments to propose a new constitutional arrangement for the Poles. Bismarck rather supported the Tzarist court! On the 18th of February, a row happened in the Prussian Parliament over a quick agreement Russia and Prussia had concluded over the uprising.

On the 8th of February, the Prussian General-Adjutant Gustav von Alvensleben, on orders of Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, had signed a convention with Russia.

Bismarck had at the onset of the new Polish uprising asked the Prussian Army to mobilise 4 army corps in Prussian, formerly Polish territories. Bismarck feared a nationalistic Poland would strengthen the influence of France in the region, against Russia. He preferred to support the court of the czar of Russia. He did not want to lose Posen.

In the military Convention of General von Alvensleben, both Prussia and Russia could cross the borders of each other's country when in pursuit of Polish armed rebellious bands.

Bismarck thus played into the hands of men at the court of the czar, who were in support of Prussian policies, men like Gorchakov, Grand-Duke Constantine and the Marquis Wielopolski.

Bismarck survived the row in the Prussian parliament, but the western powers put pressure on the Prussian Government not to ratify the treaty. The convention therefore never really came into full effect. Bismarck had won a diplomatic victory and some sympathy at the Russian court. The leader of the opposition in the Prussian parliament was then Count Schwerin-Putzar. He instantly became an arch-enemy of Bismarck.

Gradually, in the Central National Committee of Poland, the ideas and actions of the Reds had to give way for those of the ‘Whites’, the men from the Polish nobility, the *szlachta*, and from the burgher classes. In the early days of the January Uprising, in the Central National Committee, the democratic Reds were led by Louis Mieroslawski, the first man appointed to Dictator. The Committee had appointed Ludvik Mieroslawski as Dictator and Head of the Army, but Mieroslawski had moved to Kujavia with a small force. The Russian patrols defeated him rapidly.

The successor of Mieroslawski was Marian Langiewicz. He was only in charge a few weeks, for in his turn the Russian regular troops defeated him. The party of the large landowners, the ‘Whites’, were led by Andrzej Zamoyski. The Whites joined the insurgents in March of 1863. The Central National Committee had organised a Provisional Government, led from June to September by Karol Majewski.

Meanwhile, the Russian Army had swelled to about 300,000 soldiers. In this uprising of 1863, large battles of considerable armed forces never happened. The revolt was very different from the November Uprising of 1830-1831! Now, the revolt resulted in a large number of smaller, isolated skirmishes, mainly in forest regions, where the Poles and Lithuanians fought as partisans. The Russians suffered defeats in the beginning, but this situation rapidly changed. The insurrectionists could but capture a few smaller cities. The partisans did not receive much help from the peasant population. The farmers even formed their own pro-Russian groups of partisans, to fight against the Polish nobility. They supported the Russian troops and the Russian administration!

In March of 1863, Langiewicz drew all power in Poland to himself. He assumed the supreme dictatorship, and took the direction of all military operations. He called for the universal insurrection against Russia. The Central National Committee could not be pleased with the auto-proclamation of Langiewicz, but it did not suspend the general’s proclamation. On March, 18 of 1863, Langiewicz defeated a Russian detachment. On the day after, however, he did but very nearly won a battle against strong troops of Prince Schachoffskoy near Busk, almost on the Austrian frontier. He retreated and disbanded his strongly reduced troops to resort once more to partisan fighting in the forests. He issued a last proclamation, calling all the Poles to arms, rode to Podolia, but realised the situation was not anymore in favour of the uprising. He entered Austrian Galicia with a French passport in the name of a Sir Walyowski. The Austrians found him out, and Langiewicz had to place himself under Austrian protection. His role in Poland was finished.

The Central National Committee then issued a proclamation, declaring they would fight on. The countryside of Poland may have belonged mostly to the partisans at that moment. The partisans roamed and attacked as they wished, where and when they wished. They did not rule over the cities, which were too firmly defended and held by important Russian garrisons.

The Russians continued to hold the citadel of Warsaw, though no Russian was safe in the streets of the town.

The Central National Committee resorted to three distinct means to try to force the Russian Army and the Russian Governmental administration on its knees.

They used the partisan bands to harass continuously the Russian Army in the countryside. The partisans did not receive much aid and sympathy from the peasants, though, and the partisan tactics did not lead to generalised insurrection of all the classes of society. Without this support, the leaders of the insurrection in Warsaw must have realised their revolt was doomed.

Secondly, the rebels resorted unscrupulously to pure acts of terrorism. They committed assassinations of pro-Russian administrators. These murders became very unpopular in the end. The Polish population saw clearly the injustice of the foul, cowardly terror. The population turned away in horror from such acts. Yet, for months, the secret police organised by the Central National Committee shot or hanged Polish supporters of Russia.

Thirdly, the Central National Committee sought through diplomacy and messages delivered to the French and English press, to stir up the western powers to intervention in Poland. Especially the British press, which had not forgotten how hard the Crimean War had fared against the Russians, wrote triumphantly on the atrocities committed by the Russians in Poland. With time, when travellers from France and from Great-Britain rode through the country and reported rather the contrary, France and Great-Britain hesitated to intervene, and backed off. France and Great-Britain never intervened in the Polish uprising. It became known, for instance, the Central National Committee had authorised anyone to murder the Marquis Wielopolski. Such means horrified any army in any country!

In March of 1863, Grand-Duke Constantine, the new ruler for Poland assigned by the court of Russia, issued several proclamations. He proposed the peasants of Poland and of Western Russia to employ watchmen in their villages. This gave some power and justification of the use of power over the nobility, so that the highest nobility withdrew from the Polish Council of State. The peasant guards could control any noble travelling in his vast lands, and the guards were rough, uncouth and unforgiving towards their former masters.

At the end of March, a decree of the czar granted pardon to all insurgents who laid down arms before the 1st of May 1863, and who returned to their allegiance to Russia. Most of the insurgents refused this amnesty. They restated they wanted Poland entire to take up arms to shake of the yoke of the foreign governments. The Central National Committee also rejected the Polish Constitution of 1815, because it had sprung from the Congress of Vienna, which had insulted the Polish national feelings by agreeing to the partitioning of the country. The Committee repeated they sought not less than independence for Poland and for the western provinces of Russia. There could be no negotiation on this point.

In March of 1863, the Russian leader in Poland was Grand-Duke Constantine. In the northern provinces of Russia had led General Anderhoff, and in the north-western provinces General Nazimov. In May of 1863, General Mouraviev was appointed governor of the Russian north-western provinces, replacing Nazimov. He was a resolute, determined officer, a harsh and unfeeling man who had also taken part in the suppression of the rebellion of 1831 in

Lithuania. He may not have been a man with far-reaching views, but he was intelligent, an able administrator, and a man very loyal to the tzars. Almost immediately, Mouraviev had to take a few much-commented decisions.

Polish and Lithuanian women mourned their husbands killed in action very ostentatiously, especially in Vilna. Mouraviev issued a proclamation against such public signs of extreme mourning. When the order was ignored, he made the mourners to be fined, but no atrocities were committed. The English press was outraged. A little later, Mouraviev imposed a property tax of 10% on the income of the landed proprietors.

The land proprietors furnished provisions to the insurgents. A third proclamation ordered all confiscated provisions to be handed over to the Russian troops. The proprietors were to be arrested and court-martialled. The nobility and the Catholic clergy of Poland were then still generally opposed to the Russian Government. Mouraviev considered them as no less than traitors to the Russian Empire, and acted accordingly.

When enemy bands waged open war on the Russian troops, Mouraviev had the revolutionaries be shot or hanged. Still, the numbers of such executed men remained moderate.

The Russian Army attacked the partisan troops wherever they could, and decimated them in skirmishes.

A Polish man by birth, a former captain of the Russian Army, called Seriakowski, thus had assembled a group of 1,500 partisans. Russian skirmishers and Cossacks attacked him and his men on the 7th May of 1863. 200 of the partisans were killed, and Seriakowski captured. The Russians hanged him.

With the Poles fought international bands of men. A group of Garibaldi companions joined the Polish rebels.

A former French army officer, François Rochebrune, equally joined the rebels. He formed a group of men dressed in Algerian-like fashion with wide trousers. He called his troops the ‘Zouaves of Death’! Polish officers filled up the ranks of the Zouaves. They were equipped with modern rifles, knives and bayonets. They fought for instance at the Battle of Miechów in February, attached to a Polish Army led by Apollinaris Kurowski. The town of Miechów could not be taken on the Russians. They fought later in the Battle of Chrobrzem and also at the Battle of Grochowiska, loosing many men. Rochebrune was promoted to general, but soon after his promotion, he left Poland and returned to France, having understood the Polish insurrectionists were being defeated everywhere. His troops scattered.

In these ‘Zouaves of Death’ died Francisco Nullo, a member of Garibaldi’s army, who had come with about 50 companions. Nullo was killed in an attack by the Russians in the partisan groups. He was buried with a great ceremony in a church at Olkush, witnessed by one of the commanders of the Russian Army, Prince Schachovskoy.

Slowly but surely, the Russian generals quenched the uprisings in Lithuania. The same happened to a revolt in Kiev. At the end of March, a Polish rebel expeditionary force assembled near Lemberg to attack Volhynia. They were only with 1,200 men of 4,000 expected. General Wynocki led the expedition. He aimed to capture the town of Radziwilow. Inside the town, Wynocki’s troops were defeated and obliged to retreat. Wynocki crossed the Austrian frontier and surrendered.

The month of June gave a long list of disasters to the insurgents. The last hope on victory of the Whites, who by then controlled the Central National Committee, dwindled. The Whites and the Reds disputed each other's ideas in the Committee. They differed widely in the means by which to achieve the independence. The Whites were in favour of peaceful progress, the Reds by revolutionary war and violent terrorism.

At the end of August of 1863, Grand-Duke Constantine was forced to resign and leave the country. By that time, the higher nobility of Poland and Lithuania had withdrawn its support from the armed rebellion.

The successor on Grand-Duke Constantine was the Count Friedrich Wilhelm Rembert von Berg. Berg was an energetic man, of polite manners and courteous attitudes. He became the new Vice-Roy of Poland.

He gradually increased the efficiency of the Russian Army against the partisans, depriving the insurgents of power and hope on victory. The Polish Central National Committee considered Count Berg a very dangerous man to their aims, so they decided to have him assassinated. The attempt happened in September of 1863. Near the house of Zamoyski in Warsaw, but with Zamoyski having fled to France beforehand, a gun was fired from the 2nd or 3rd floor. Bombs were thrown at Count Berg. The count was not injured! The Russian troops confiscated Zamoyski's palace, which had been let out to numerous lodgers. Count Berg suppressed the revolution in Warsaw, and restored order in the capital. He imposed an extraordinary tax of 8% on the net income of the proprietors of houses and owners of lands in Warsaw and Praga. The money served his troops. The Central National Committee issued a counter-proclamation, as they did frequently, threatening all who paid the tax with death. Their decree was ignored. The power in Warsaw augmented solidly in the hands of Berg, whereas the Central National Committee's power was waning.

By the end of October of 1863, the insurrection had practically ended.

Particular partisan troops continued fighting until several months in 1864, but their importance diminished by the week. During the winter of 1863 to 1864, the partisan bands were completely dispersed and without central leadership.

In this winter, a man born in White Russia, in Belarus, Romuald Traugutt, tried once more to form a central leadership. His family was of Polish-German descent. He had served as an officer in the Russian Army and he had fought for instance in the Crimean War with courage and bravery. As from October of 1863, he tried to keep the revolutionary groups together. He failed. Because of him, the fighting continued for a few months longer. Traugutt could not rally the peasants to his cause. He mainly fought skirmishes in the south of Poland, near the Austrian border. He suffered a devastating defeat from much larger Russian forces in February of 1864.

On the 2nd of March 1864, the imperial Russian authorities issued a decree to impose the abolition of serfdom in the Kingdom of Poland. Traugutt could hope less than ever of getting the peasants join his troops, or even support them.

The Central National Committee never succeeded in mobilising the population of the countryside against the Russian troops.

The Russian generals defeated Traugutt, made him a prisoner, and condemned him to death for treason. He was only 38 years old.

The Russians hanged Romuald Traugutt on the 5th of August of 1864 in the citadel of Warsaw. With him, several leaders of the insurrection were executed. This group of men also comprised the last 4 members of the Central National Committee, namely Antoni Jezioronski, Rafal Krajewski, Josef Toczyski and Roman Zulinski.

The rebellion lingered on for a time in Samogitia and Podlosia, where the Catholic priest and commander Stanislaw Brzoska continued to fight on until the spring of 1865. He was alone.

After the end of the uprising, the Russian reprisals followed systematically. About 400 rebels more were executed. About 19,000 Poles were exiled to Siberia. Larger numbers still of men and women were sent to the interior of Russia, to the Caucasus and other far-off territories. In all, about 70,000 persons may have been imprisoned and afterwards exiled from Poland.

The Russian Government confiscated over 1,600 estates in Poland, and over 1,700 in Lithuania. New taxes were introduced, to make the Poles and Lithuanians pay for the costs of the war. The Russian government thus punished the Polish nobility for their participation and even leadership in phases of the rebellion. The Russians drew tight the ropes around the Polish insurgents. All former native Polish authority was abolished. The Count Berg led the reprisals.

The Smuggling of Weapons in Thorn

By a Prussian decree of 1863 on a law of 1838, the export of weapons and ammunition was forbidden over the borders of Prussia into the Kingdom of Poland. The district of Thorn was surrounded on three sides by Polish territories. The smuggling of weapons was understandably very active in Thorn, and a very lucrative business. Many traders of Thorn, the Lippmanns, Heilfron, Glückmann, Kaliski and others, were known by the Prussian authorities as active smugglers.

It was one thing, however, to suspect and even be sure of a trader also being a smuggler, and being able to prove his involvement in smuggling. Moreover, the men were among the foremost notables of the city, well-known in the higher bourgeoisie circles of Thorn.

Thorn enjoyed a rare privilege in West Prussia. The town had its own police force, which answered only to the Mayor. The Mayor sought peace in his town, and certainly wanted not to antagonise some of the most generous sources of contribution to the town's finances. He knew very well also that sympathisers of the Polish revolt worked in his town. The old Polish families of Korzeniewski, Kastner, Schirakowski, Schimanski and other, were among these men. The Mayor knew the traders Geldzinski, Reismüller, Schwartz and other, smuggled powder for muskets and cannons into Thorn to transport them into Poland over the Weichsel or to Warsaw by railway.

Jewish traders also smuggled weapons. Rosenthal, Cohen, Dietrich and others brought in weapons and powder. Reismüller was a musket factor!

It was difficult for the Mayor to stop these men, some of whom were his friends, from winning additional funds when an opportunity, such as the rebellion in Poland, presented itself so blatantly.

The *Landrat* of the *Kreis* Thorn, Steinmann, a very capable administrator, knew all that too well. As the policemen depended exclusively from the Mayor, and not from him, his hands were tied. He wrote to and pleaded with the Count zu Eulenburg, the then President of the Prussian Government department of Marienwerder, to have his own police force.

He insisted for a long time, and finally got his way. The government sent the Police Lieutenant Horn from Berlin to Thorn, accompanied by two other policemen, Malaika and Schwan, to be placed under the authority of the *Landrat*. The local police under the Police Commissar of Thorn, one Reszzechowski, were also temporarily placed under the *Landrat*'s command. Steinmann had outplayed the Mayor of Thorn!

He began very actively to order searches in the merchants' warehouses for arms. Guns and revolvers, with ammunition and explosive powder were found at several places. The *Landrat* punished with fines and with imprisonments for the heaviest offences of smuggling. Almost all the men known to smuggle were at one point found out and fined. Whether this finally diminished the smuggling over the border, was not sure.

The *Landrat* of the *Kreis* Thorn also had his hands full with insurgent Poles hidden in Thorn. Many insurgents passed the frontier to and fro! Deserters of the Russian and Prussian armies, mostly Poles, who tried to reach Poland or escape back in, had to be arrested at the border.

Lieutenant Haim Vincius patrolled along the borders of Poland with a large detachment of infantry and cavalry from the garrison of Thorn to pursue deserters and smugglers. The commander of the Prussian regiments in the Thorn garrison was General-Major von Stückradt. The general gave his confidence and his friendship to Lieutenant Vincius. Haim rode with his men deep into Prussian territory. He often did not return for weeks on end to Thorn. He repeatedly sent men caught at the border under guard back to the garrison. He tracked and stopped wagons loaded with weapons, ammunition and powder at the frontier. These loads were generally sent illegally into Poland.

Haim Vincius vindictively pursued large convoys sent by Joram Cohen. It took him some time to recognise Joram's assistants, but he came to know well the smugglers' paths Cohen used for his transports over land. In 1863 alone, Haim Vincius could intercept three large convoys of Joram Cohen. Haim arrested everybody, sent the men under heavy guard to Thorn, where they would sit out in prison a sentence that would be high. The confiscated weapons ended in the arsenal of the Prussian Army. Cohen must have cursed and sought revenge on Lieutenant Vincius, but there was little he could do against the Prussian regular troops and the esteemed lieutenant. The transports of smuggling by Cohen resembled a drop of water in the Weichsel. Haim Vincius caught many more transports each month! It seemed to him almost every trader of Thorn smuggled weapons!

Once every while, Haim's men also saw the traffic of Polish insurgents coming in and out of Thorn and moving to Poland.

A centre for the Polish insurgents in Thorn was in the *Gasthof zum Schwarzen Adler*, the Inn of the Black Eagle. The tavern-keeper's name was Franz Marquart. Inside Thorn, the pursuit of Polish revolutionaries was the task of the police and of the *Landrat* Steinmann. He estimated close or over 1,000 men had entered Thorn and Prussia from Poland illegally. Some of these men were unknown to the police. The leader of the Polish insurrection in

Thorn proved afterwards to be a man called Ludwig von Janiszewski. Unknowingly, the *Landrat* Steinmann had rented a house of Janiszewski to place his Royal policemen in!

Joram Cohen did not have matters go his way. He envied Max Vincius. Max was handsome, wise, loyal, honest, sought after by other traders, whereas Joram had remained the devious Jew. Many merchants of Thorn would do some business with him, and he had grown extraordinary rich the last years, but nobody wanted to be friends with him, and everybody showed disdain to enter a commercial venture with him.

Joram constantly thought people looked down on him. He had caught the finest women of Thorn in his nets. His finest catch was Max Vincius' wife, the opulent, sensational, sensuous Sara Benavicius. He didn't know what bound him to that woman. She had probably bewitched him! He couldn't really tear himself loose from her. He adored her body. She was like a drug to him he couldn't anymore get free from. In that too, he knew, Max Vincius was superior to him, for Max had been able to draw away from his former wife. Joram Cohen couldn't. Joram also envied Max for his mistress and then wife, the Lady von Chrapitz. Joram was sure he would never be able to catch a Prussian German noble woman. How had Max Vincius proceeded? What charm did the man exercise on women like the Chrapitz one? Joram Cohen therefore sought revenge on the Max Vincius he envied with the darkest thoughts possible in a man.

In the summer of 1864, Max Vincius was checking with Anna Kleinberger the contents of his warehouse. They discussed which products had to be bought because in short supply, which products had to be discarded from the storerooms, which should be sold urgently. Max had added to his storerooms a large shop, in which specialty items of ironware, textile, food products, chemicals, almost everything one might need, were brought together in one shop. Max had built the shop for Esther Kleinberger, now almost twenty years of age, prim, slender, energetic, fine and beautiful. Max loved her as the daughter he had never had. She had been managing the shop for almost a year now, though young as she was, with great success, so that Max had already twice extended the surface of the shop. Esther's blond hair and perfectly white skin attracted as many buyers as the goods she sold! The revenue of the shop was modest, never spectacular, but a steady income flowed from it, which Max mostly left to Esther. The shop also fulfilled a real need. Where else could one buy so many things in one place than in the Vincius shop? Quite many people of Thorn were willing to walk from the centre to the shop held by the marvellous Kleinberger girl for what they needed.

Max Vincius and his accountant, Anna Kleinberger, were walking in Max's warehouse, in the centre lane between the goods, when the gate panels of the storerooms were thrown open. In stepped four stately Thorn policemen, led by the fearful Royal Commissar Horn. 'Good morning everybody,' Horn shouted very loudly so that everybody present in the warehouse could hear him and be frightened. 'This is an official search! We have a search warrant issued by the Lord *Landrat*! We have to look through the products. Please stand aside! Let us do our job! Obstruction to what we have to do will lead you straight into prison!'

Anna Kleinberger and Max Vincius were at that moment the only ones present in the building. Anna wanted to throw the policemen back out with a few very sharp words. She already planted her fists in her side, but Max held her back.

‘Let the police go about it,’ he whispered to Anna, calming her with the feel of his hand on her arm. ‘There is not much here that can harm us.’

Max Vincius knew well two of the policemen. They were Thorn men, good friends of his. They were called Müher and Montag.

The policemen were out to search for guns, ammunition and powder, for the forbidden weapons. They sought illegal weapons in great quantities. Max Vincius did smuggle guns once every while, when he had secured a large order from Polish merchants he knew and could more or less trust not to betray him in the deal. This was always an issue, for money had become scarce that side of the border, and despair had filled the hearts of the Poles. Yes, Max Vincius did smuggle weapons, and then in large quantities. He never brought the forbidden goods to Thorn, however, under the nose of the policemen. He handled his deals in the countryside. His crates never left hidden shacks in the forests.

Max said as loudly to the policemen, ‘go ahead, gentlemen. I have no smuggled goods in here, no weapons. Take your time.’

Max opened his arms wide and showed his storerooms with a wide gesture.

‘Please, consider the place your own!’ he shouted.

Horn directed his officers to the four corners of the warehouse, from where they began systematically to open crates and bags and bales. Max wanted to continue his own overview, and leave the rooms otherwise to the policemen. Commissar Horn approached him. The policemen shuffled on the other sides.

Horn came up close to Max and Anna.

He whispered in such a low voice his officers could not hear him, ‘we have received a message, a denunciation, claiming you hid large quantities of weapons and ammunition. I didn’t truly believe a word of that. Frankly, Master Vincius, I do not think you would be so stupid as to hide weapons here, in the middle of Thorn. You do smuggle, of course. So would I, if I were you.’ Horn grinned.

‘Horn paused a second, then continued, ‘every trader in Thorn smuggles! Of course! Now, your son is a military man. And a fine one, too. Your son helps us catch smugglers. He is very efficient. I don’t think you smuggle much. You don’t need to do that, really. You wouldn’t run before the horses of your son. There are much larger fishes in the waters of Thorn than you. Still, we cannot ignore the denunciation, given by a fat, bearded Jewish burgher of the town, if you follow me. I cannot give you the identity of who denounced you, I’m sorry. We have to do our duty, but here, I am sure I am in the wrong place.’

Max understood Joram Cohen had denounced him to the police of Thorn.

‘I understand,’ Max nodded gratefully. ‘Yes, my son is on one of his raids again. Can you tell me somewhat clearer who tipped you off?’

‘No, I can’t,’ Horn smiled. ‘You don’t have to look far, though, and I am sure you already understood me quite well. You know best who wants to harm you most, who envies you. No, I’m afraid, Master Vincius. We will probably find some arms here. I’m sure! Everybody in Thorn hides weapons these days, and tries to make a bit of money. We will find weapons here, I know. We shall fine you for them, but the fine will be very reasonable. That is the message I got from the *Landrat* himself. So, don’t worry too much. Captain Haim Vincius would not appreciate us fining his father too much. A formidable man is he!’

‘Captain?’ Max was startled. ‘My son is a lieutenant in the garrison!’
‘News travels slowly to whom it should come quickly, it seems’ Horn philosophically added, not without quite some humour. ‘Your son has been promoted. Very hot news, I have to say! Now, Master Vincius, we admire what your son does! If somebody deserves a promotion, it should be him! He does not shy away from bad weather. He rides in the forests like a devil, and his soldiers love him! We do too! Very few officers act as courageously as he does. He pursues his enemies until he can catch them. The other officers of the garrison like to hang about in their offices, dry and warm. Haim Vincius, now, he is a true soldier, a man as we like!’

Max Vincius smiled at the compliment.

The policeman searched through the warehouse. Soon, two of them came back to the commissar with a box of 5 handguns, percussion pistols of the latest, modern faction. The guns lay heavy in the hand. They were guns that could shoot far. The man told that was all they had been able to find. They also had found some powder near the guns, and a little ammunition. In the box, two handguns missed. Only three guns were left.

‘Can you explain this?’ Horn sternly asked of Max.

‘I always trade in a few handguns and hunting rifles,’ Max answered coolly. ‘In the shop next doors, you will find two rifles behind the counter. We sell almost everything in our shop.’

‘As well we know,’ Horn sighed, and waved that information away. ‘Can you tell me to whom you sold the two missing handguns, and when?’

‘Recently,’ Max confessed. ‘The last one I sold past week. Yes, the men who bought them spoke Polish, I seem to recall. No, I didn’t ask where they came from. I rather assumed they were Prussian citizens, from the district. But yes, they spoke Polish. They didn’t look to me as noble men.’

Max knew nothing of the kind. Esther had sold the weapons, but she had told Max about the transaction.

‘All right,’ Horn decided, weighing one of the handguns in his fist. ‘Well balanced stuff! I’m afraid I’ll have to confiscate the three remaining guns, Master Vincius. You will have to pay a fine for selling weapons. Selling weapons these days has been made illegal in Thorn!’

Horn smiled, ‘the fine will not ruin you, don’t worry!’

Max smiled back wryly. He made a face. Inwards, he was glad he had not more guns in stock, particularly no rifles. Those had been moved out a few days ago. He nodded.

The policemen searched on for a while longer. Max then served them vodka. They had finished and found nothing further, but they seemed pleased. They had done their duty. They chatted amiably with Max and Anna for a few moments. It had all been a game, Max surmised. They didn’t hold anything against Max. Then, the men left.

Max sighed. He would be noted as a possible arms smuggler in the secret archives of the Prussian State at Marienwerder. Many other names of merchants of Thorn would have been entered in the files of the *Landrat* Steinmann and of the President of the Prussian Government of Marienwerder, the Count zu Eulenburg. Would that affect the career of his son? Max rather thought the information would be lost on the paper and stuffed in a far corner of the racks.

Max Vincius indeed was fined. The fine was reasonable, but any money Max lost cut through his heart. He was a trader!

At the end of 1864, when the uprising in Poland had been quenched, the special Royal Police Force of Thorn, headed by Commissar Horn, was sent back to Berlin. The old system of Thorn having its own police force under the authority of the Mayor of the town was re-instated. The *Landrat* Steinmann had always regretted not having the policemen under his own command. He reacted bitterly. The Government officials of Marienwerder, however, did not want to modify the old privileges of the frontier city of Thorn. They did not come back on their decision.

With the end of the revolution in Poland, also ended a few years of intensive dealing in arms from out of Thorn. Some merchants profited greatly, among them Joram Cohen.

Max Vincius didn't mind. He only worked on his own business, and he was very happy at Castle Chrapitz.

The Second Schleswig War

In that same year of 1864, so important and exciting to the traders of Thorn, war also finally caught up with Prussia. A conflict broke out with Denmark over the Schleswig-Holstein duchies. The war that ensued was called the Second Schleswig War.

Holstein was part of the *Deutsche Bund*, the German Confederation, the parliament of which was held in Frankfurt. Schleswig was not part of the German Confederation! The king of Denmark was also the duke of Holstein, so he was one of the German Confederation's sovereigns. In 1848, the wave of revolutions that had swept through Europe also had forced a constitution on the absolutist Danish monarch. The then King Frederick VII of Denmark announced now the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein would be incorporated into his kingdom.

The German parliament of Frankfurt had not accepted this unilateral declaration. As a result of diplomatic discussions, a war broke out between Denmark and Germany, the First Schleswig War, mainly fought by Prussian troops.

The great western powers had put pressure to Austria and Prussia to end the war. That war therefore had been discussed at an international congress in London, held between the belligerent countries.

The conference closed on a few important declarations. Prussia and Austria had recognised the integrity of Denmark. Denmark in its turn, had agreed to never incorporate the duchies into its kingdom. It was also agreed that if Frederick VII died without children, his heir, one Christian of Glücksberg, would inherit both Schleswig and Holstein. The Duke of Augustenburg, the real heir to the duchies under the Salic Law, which allowed only an heir of the male line to inherit, had signed this agreement. But he had never renounced to his rights for perpetuity!

In March of 1863, King Frederick VII announced a new unilateral arrangement, which would have brought the duchies directly unto the Danish State. Frederick VII died on the 15th of November of 1863, without having been able to sign the new laws, the November

Constitution. The November Constitution for Denmark and Schleswig had been completed, but not yet signed by the king.

During a Crown Council of Prussia, held in early December of 1863, the Minister-President of Prussia, Otto von Bismarck, had pleaded the aim of Prussian policy should be the acquisition of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein by Prussia. Bismarck never shied away from using force when he considered it necessary! Still, the king of Prussia could claim no dynastic rights on the duchies. He made this remark to Bismarck. The king remained more than reluctant to initiatives to get Schleswig and Holstein into the Prussian crown.

The Frankfurt parliament also discussed the matter. It voted to force Denmark to abide by the Treaty of London of 1852. The peace treaty stipulated that Schleswig and Holstein should be treated the same way in its relations with the Kingdom of Denmark. Holstein, however, refused to acknowledge the revision of the Danish constitution. Denmark ratified the revision, but Holstein, a duchy more German than Danish in culture, did not. This was a breach of the 1852 treaty. The Frankfurt Parliament saw a cause of war against Denmark. On the 7th of December of 1863, it voted with a majority of one vote for having Denmark to execute loyally the 1852 London Treaty.

The Danes naturally regarded Schleswig as an ancient, important territory of Denmark. The constitutional system of government of Denmark complicated matters, as Denmark had a constitution, whereas Schleswig and Holstein were still to be governed by an absolutist monarch, the Danish king.

Frederick VII had no direct heir. The new king of Denmark was Christian IX of Glücksberg. The Danish crown passed in the maternal line to Christian of Glücksberg! He signed the draft of the later called 'November Constitution' on the 19th of November of 1863! By signing this November Constitution of 1863 in Denmark, Christian IX showed his intention to absorb Schleswig into the Danish State. The German nationalists of Frankfurt considered this a provocation.

The new constitution established a shared law of succession and a common parliament for Denmark and Schleswig.

On the 19th of November, the young Duke Augustenburg, in response to the proclamations of Christian IX about Schleswig, proclaimed himself as Frederick VIII, the new ruler of Schleswig-Holstein. Indeed, the maternal line succession was not allowed in this duchy. Frederick of Augustenburg could be a rival claimant to the throne!

The father of this Frederick of Augustenburg, Christian of Augustenburg, however, had renounced to his claims in the Treaty of London of 1852. Now, in November of 1863, Frederick of Augustenburg declared himself not bound by this 1852 treaty. Frederick took the title of Duke of Holstein. The German nationalists supported him in his claim, aiming to draw the two duchies well within the *Deutsche Bund* and out of Denmark.

The parliament of the *Deutsche Bund* in Frankfurt voted for the occupation of Holstein by confederate, German troops. Hannoverian and Saxon troops were sent across the border of Holstein. These troops already entered Holstein on the 24th of December of 1863. They

consisted merely of 12,000 men, not nearly enough to invade Schleswig and have a chance against the Danish Army.

Prussia and Austria were prepared to conquer Schleswig, but not as representing the *Deutsche Bund*, and only on the basis of the treaties of 1851 and 1852, acting as independent European powers.

On the 16th of January of 1864, Austria and Prussia jointly issued an ultimatum to Denmark, demanding the November Constitution to be abolished within 48 hours. The governments of Prussia and Austria presented the note together to the Danish Foreign Minister von Quaade. They wrote they did not accept the constitution of the 18th of November 1863, which broke the obligations of the London Treaty of 1852. The letter could be understood as an ultimatum. The Danish Government rejected the demand.

For the Austrian Prime Minister, Count Johann Bernhard Rechberg, the joint Prussian-Austrian campaign was a chance to discredit the German nationalist movement, in favour of the Austrian emperor. Austria also aimed at preventing Prussia from gaining major new territories by itself at the expense of Denmark, thereby growing its power versus Austria. Prussian and Austrian troops, in competition, then also crossed the frontier with Denmark! Some form of competition had indeed set in between the Austrian and the Prussian armies. Bismarck feared the Austrians might reach the River Eider before the Prussians.

The Prussian chief-of-staff at that time was Helmut von Moltke. The War Minister for Prussia was Albrecht von Roon. Both were friends of Minister-President Otto von Bismarck at that time.

Bismarck could not yet act alone and expose Prussia to the threat of not only having Austria be pitted against Prussia, but equally the rest of the German Confederation. The temporary association with Austria came in handy.

The Danish Government immediately abandoned Holstein. The Danish Court drew the Danish Army back to behind a series of fortifications that had existed since medieval times, called the *Danevirke*. The *Danevirke* was a last frontier for Denmark. It shortened considerably the length of the frontier Denmark could and would defend.

On the 20th of January of 1864, General and Field Marshal Count Heinrich Ernst von Wrangel, the same ‘Papa Wrangel’ who had entered Berlin in 1848 to bring to end the revolution of the city, took command of the allied army for the forced march to the River Eider of the Prussian and Austrian armies. Field Marshal Wrangel was practically 80 years old, but he had lost nothing of his dash. Wrangel had but little experience of combat and war! He had almost exclusively led the campaign against the Berlin insurgents of 1848. Wrangel did not do well in the war with Denmark. In mid-May, Bismarck insisted to have Wrangel relieved from his duties.

General Ludwig von Gablenz led the Austrian troops.

The conflict between Denmark and Germany began in earnest when on the 1st of February of 1864, the allied forces attacked Denmark. The Prussian Army crossed the border into Schleswig. On the 3rd of February, the armies fought for the *Königshügel*, for the Danish King's Hill. Several attacks and skirmishes took place in the next days. The Danes were thrown back to against the *Danevirke*.

The issue with the *Danevirke* Line was that it blocked frontal assaults on the country, but relied on marshes and lakes at the ends of it. In the winter of 1863 to 1864, these marshlands and lakes froze solid. Especially on the 4th of February, in very cold weather, the Germans, Prussians foremost, could therefore bypass the line. The Prussian forces immediately appeared behind the *Danevirke* Line, so that the Danes had to abandon it. On the 5th of February, the Danish Commander-in-Chief, Lieutenant-General Christian Julius de Meza, already withdrew from the *Danevirke*, in fear of being surrounded!

The Danish command of the army did not believe they could stop the German troops, so they retreated to occupy another defence line, more northerly, called the *Old Dybbøl Line*. This line might not stop the enemy forces from entering the heart of Denmark, Jutland, but in case of defeat and disaster, the positions at Düppel, or *Dybbøl* in Danish, would let the Danish Army be evacuated by sea from the region.

The court of Denmark insisted on defending Schleswig. Hence, the Danish Army was ordered to defend the Düppel positions. The Danish forces marched to the island of Als and to Düppel during a snow storm. While they retreated, the Austrian and Prussian troops harassed them continuously. The German forces set a siege to the area. There would be a Battle for Düppel! Bismarck also had insisted for the Prussian forces to attack the Danish fortifications of Düppel, instead of storming ahead into the Danish heartland, an act that could not be justified internationally. A full-blown invasion of Denmark was diplomatically unfeasible.

On the 18th of February, the Prussian troops nevertheless crossed the Danish border past Schleswig. They took the Danish town of Kolding. The Austrian and Prussian Armies pushed the war a little farther into Denmark proper. Fierce skirmishes took place between the military forces of Denmark and of the allies.

In this Second Schleswig War, the Prussian Army used the Dreyse needle-gun. This was a breech-loading gun, that could be loaded while the soldier was lying down. The Danes had muzzle-loading Lorenz rifles, which had to be loaded while standing, so that they were easier targets! The breech-loading guns could also fire much more quickly, from 2 to 3 times faster. The needle-gun was the Dreyse *Zündnadelgewehr*. The lead projectile, the bullet, was mounted on a small metal case, filled with the explosive charge. This ensemble was loaded in a chamber of the rifle. The powder of the cartridge was set to fire, '*gezündet*' by a blow of a small hammer, answering to the trigger. The hammer was the 'needle', the *Nadel*. The needle-gun had obvious advantages. It could be loaded easily while lying down, and it could fire more rapidly.

On the 22nd of February, the Prussian troops, giving no breathing space to the Danes, attacked the first defence line of Düppel and forced the Danish Army back.

On the 11th of March, Prussia and Austria announced they felt no longer bound by the London Treaty of 1852. France and Great-Britain tried to put Germany under diplomatic pressure.

The real siege of the Düppel Line began as of the 15th of March.

On the 17th already, the Prussian soldiers pushed back the Danish troops in front of Düppel.

The Danes and the Prussians also fought a naval battle, the Battle of Jasmund or of Rügen, in which the Danish battle-ships pushed back a Prussian fleet to Swinemünde. This could be regarded a Prussian defeat, but the outcome of the war would be decided on the ground, not at sea. Nevertheless, the Prussians could not break the Danish blockade at sea of Schleswig and Holstein.

The war at sea caused great distress in the port of Danzig. The Danish war ships, superior in the Baltic Sea, established a blockade of the Prussian ports. The Danish navy operated to prevent Prussian attacks from the sea. They safeguarded the Danish military and merchant transports. The Danish ships engaged Prussian men-of-war, and seized any German merchant ship at sea. The Prussian navy never succeeded in breaking this blockade.

The Prussian attacks on Düppel were several times thrown back, despite heavy Prussian bombardments of the Danish positions. This happened particularly on the 28th of March and on the 4th of April.

On the 18th of April, however, the Prussian infantry stormed once more and finally the fortifications of Düppel. They captured the Danish defences in Schleswig after a short but fierce battle. Danish counter-attacks failed.

At Düppel, the Danes used the ironclad vessel *Rolf Krake* as a mobile, seaborne artillery platform to fire at the Prussians. The *Rolf Krake* was an all-iron, steam-propelled warship, which had turret-armed artillery. It showed modern, rotating gun turrets, which could direct its batteries independently from the direction the ship was steaming to. The Prussians did not have control of the sea, but the fire of the *Rolf Krake* could not stop the Prussian Army from overwhelming very rapidly the Danish positions. The Prussian Army tried to outflank the Danish positions by throwing a pontoon bridge across Egersund, a narrow entrance to a small bay near Düppel. The *Rolf Krake* failed to destroy this pontoon bridge. Meanwhile, the Prussian artillery from land pounded the ship with direct hits. The German shells could not penetrate the *Rolf Krake's* armour, however.

The Danish Army lost 3,600 men killed, wounded or missing at the Battle of Düppel. The Prussians lost 1,200 men.

On the 25th of April, the Danish Army abandoned Fredericia, which was besieged by the Austrian Army.

On the 9th of May took place another naval battle, the Battle of Heligoland. During this battle, a Danish naval force fought against Prussian and Austrian ships. The two squadrons were

almost equal in strength, but the Austrian fire was somewhat superior to that of the Danes. When a Danish shell exploded on board of the Austrian frigate Schwarzenberg, the Austrians broke off the battle and sought refuge on the neutral, English territory of Heligoland. Later, under cover of darkness, the Prussian and Austrian ships fled to Cuxhafen.

On the 26th of May, the Prussian artillery began to fire on the island and town of Alsen.

In the meantime, a conference between the fighting countries had been arranged in London. Denmark sued for peace, so that on the 12th of May of 1864, the Danish king asked for and signed an armistice. Diplomacy should solve the issue, but with Denmark defeated.

Otto von Bismarck slyly eliminated the claim of the Duke of Augustenburg. The Danish king first refused the proposals of Austria and Prussia to have the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein under the Danish crown, but not in the State of Denmark. The Conference of London ended on the 25th of June without success. When the truce expired on the 26th of June, 1864, the fighting resumed!

On the 29th of June, the Danish garrison of Düppel fled to the island of Als. In the evening, the Prussian Army attacked the island in 600 small boats to launch an amphibious assault on Als. The Prussians prevailed in the ensuing fight, and captured the island. It was the last large engagement of the war. Nevertheless, a Danish force attacked Prussian troops at Lundby, in the north of Jutland. The Battle of Lundby was the very last skirmish of the war.

By mid-July, the German troops occupied large parts of the Danish mainland of Jutland. The Danish Government again had to accept a truce and peace negotiations. The new Danish Government sued for peace.

The preliminaries of the peace treaty were signed on the 1st of August of 1864. The king of Denmark had to renounce all his rights on the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, in favour of the king of Prussia and the emperor of Austria. Further negotiations happened in Vienna. These led to the Treaty of Vienna, signed on the 30th of October of 1864. Denmark ceded Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg to Prussia and Austria. Denmark also surrendered enclaves in Schleswig that had been up until then legally territories of Denmark. The land of the Danish monarchy had retreated by about 40% and the Danish frontier had retreated by about 250 kilometres, to the new frontier of the River Kongeä. About 200,000 Danes came under German rule. Prussia and Austria took over the administration of Schleswig (Prussia) and Holstein (Austria), under the Convention of Gastein of the 14th of August of 1865.

Otto von Bismarck rejected an ultimate secret proposal of King Christian IX of Denmark to have Denmark join the *Deutsche Bund* if it could hold Schleswig and Holstein. Bismarck suggested to appoint as governor for Schleswig general Edwin von Manteuffel. Bismarck had served under the general when von Manteuffel had been minister. The king appointed von Manteuffel on the 24th of August of 1865. A little later, on the 16th of September of 1865, the king gave Otto von Bismarck the title of count.

Haim Vincius asked the leading officer of his garrison in Thorn to be allowed to participate in the Schleswig War. Von Stückerdt could not miss his bravest lieutenant. He ordered Vincius to stay in Thorn. Haim obeyed.

Max Vincius read in awe the reports of the battles in the Berlin newspapers. He felt happy his son had not to serve in the war.

The second Schleswig War taught Prussia and Bismarck and the military staff a few lessons. The Prussian Army had been victorious, but not as gloriously and not as efficiently as the staff might have wished. Reforms were necessary. Technology in guns and artillery contributed heavily to success. Naval operations could play an important, though not crucial role. The victories that made a difference in a war were won on land. Ultimately, good leadership was crucial.

Prussian introduced a navy bill in 1865. The Government asked the Prussian parliament to approve the construction of two armed frigates, and a new naval base at Kiel in Schleswig-Holstein. The industrialists worked at mining coal and at expanding the armament factories to produce new steel cannons at ever larger quantities. The hour of the Krupp factories had come.

The Second Schleswig War was a test of technologies in arms, and in tactics of attack. During this war, the Prussian Army learned in practice to lead large army corps to victory. Two very fine, young operational leaders emerged. These were Prince Friedrich Carl, a Hohenzollern grandson of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and the Crown Prince of Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm. They soon would lead other Prussian armies.

Haim Vincius. 1860-1870

Leah Goldstern

Haim Vincius, the second son of Max Vincius and Sara Benavicius, had always been a strong and lively boy. In his playing, he had worked with regiments of tin soldiers, moving entire groups about, travelling them around as if they were discovering unknown territories, and ending them in fierce battles of battalions against battalions. He developed his sense of strategy in this way, very young. Haim had studied well. He was interested in books and in the accounts given of diplomacy and politics in newspapers. He had deployed at school his extraordinary logic thinking, no doubt practised already at the Jewish *heder*. He showed great confidence in sound judgement, and astonished people by his rapid mind. When Haim Vincius told you in a soft, almost whispering voice, it was better to do this and not that, you had better believe in what he claimed, whatever other men might say, for that was the only, true way you would win money or avoided disasters. Haim would have become a fine, successful merchant, but he had soon wanted to be a soldier. His father had allowed him to be conscripted in the Prussian Army. His two brothers had no inkling at all for the Army, so Max Vincius relented easily to what Haim wished.

Max arranged for Haim to do his military service of 3 years in the garrison of Thorn. Haim had the chance to be drafted very rapidly as a lieutenant. He had also done well as an officer. Haim had become a soldier at 19. At 20 he was already the only young lieutenant of the garrison who commanded his own battalion and could be sent alone on dangerous patrols, without a more experienced officer serving as his chaperone. Haim finished his military operations textbook-wise, with good success. He knew very well what his superiors wanted, and gave them just that! He suffered few losses of men in the field. He proved to be not only a sympathetic commander of men, who treated his soldiers decently. He was of the most desired breed, a lucky soldier. He possessed the mysterious qualities all officers sought, success and luck in what he undertook during his missions. Chance seemed to be on his side. Haim Vincius insisted on good food while on operation, and on decent lodgings for his men each night. He wanted his men to sleep in dry stables, in soft hay or straw, sheltered from rain and snow and wind gusts.

Lieutenant Haim Vincius could ride as a true Hussar, longer than any other officer would have done, to make sure his men were cared for, could eat and sleep comfortably. He insisted on scouts riding left, right, front and behind, and on a few riders to seek the right place to rest. With Haim Vincius, the soldiers in his patrol felt safe, even in the midst of a skirmish or in an attack on a large band of smugglers. His men relied on his unfailing judgement. As such, he was popular with his commanders.

Haim might have desired serving in more prestigious regiments. Maybe he would have been promoted earlier. He could function in any regiment or battalion to satisfaction, and at times even brilliantly. He didn't ask for another place than the regiments of Thorn, for he feared being sent to far Siberia or to the Caucasus.

After two years of duty around Thorn, Haim liked the life in the open, riding and discovering the fine landscapes of the environs of his city. The patrols his commanders sent him on, first as a test, later as the officer best suited to action, and as the leader gladly followed by the common soldiers, were what he liked most. He disliked the dull days on end when he had to stay in the Thorn garrison barracks, boring himself to death. He made himself a reputation of a man of action. Major-General von Stückradt, the garrison leader, could count on him for the hardest, the wildest and the most delicate missions.

One such missions surprised Haim more than other. This one was of a worldly kind, astonishingly different from his usual operations. He regarded it as a kind of reward from his Major-General.

‘You do have a gala-uniform, do you, Lieutenant Vincius?’ von Stückradt asked him roughly one day.

Haim had just returned from a tiring mission to near the Polish south border. He was exhausted at that moment, yet his commander had called him to his office. Not for a new patrol right away?

‘No, Major-General, no, I don’t. I’m sorry,’ Haim replied, baffled by the question. He added with the same breath, ‘but I can get one quite easily!’

Always satisfy your commander!

‘Right! I thought so. Well then, do,’ von Stückradt told him dryly. ‘I’m taking you out to dance.’

Haim grinned. Von Stückradt could show a strange humour, sometimes.

‘I’m not joking,’ the commander continued sternly. ‘The king’s son, the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, is travelling on a military inspection in Prussia. As of the 4th of June, he will be for a week or so at Graudenz. He has already been at Culm, and after Graudenz he will stay at the manor of von Winter, the Mayor of Danzig. I have no idea whether the crown-prince will also be travelling to Thorn. I rather think not. Graudenz is half as smaller than Thorn in population, but its defences are formidable. Anyway, we are invited to some niceties at Graudenz. There will be a royal supper and a ball. One evening supper with the crown prince, the next evening the ball. We are invited. That is, I got invited, but I have to bring two aides, I suppose to assert my importance, to whatever that may amount. I don’t want two aides. I volunteered to bring one. I need somebody who is used to the best of companies. I want an officer who will not pour red wine in his glass for white, and who will not ask for a beer when wine is served. I also don’t want a sissy to bring to the crown prince’s table and to the dance floor, if you see what I mean. I take it you can dance?’

Haim saw in his mind the many balls his mother had taken him to. Yes, he could put one foot in front of the other and not stumble. He knew how to hold and entertain a decent, polite conversation.

Haim nodded, eyes a little closed, delighted, frightened and extremely astonished. What had come into the mind of his commander to accept such an invitation in the first place, and then drag his roughest and toughest officer to the dance? Oh, yes, Haim understood, promotion! What a good argument for a commander seeking promotion to mention in his curriculum he had spoken with the crown prince and dined at the same table!

‘You’re coming with me, pleased or not pleased. That is an order. We’ll travel together in a coach and take two cavalry horses with us. Who knows what the whims of the mighty may be? There will be generals by the dozen in Graudenz. Try to exercise your steps. You’ll have to dance at least a couple of times. You can hold down your drink, and you won’t drink too much. I know so much about you. We leave from the garrison on the 2nd of June. We’ll stay at an inn, not in the barracks. They won’t push me into a damp, tiny barrack room at Graudenz! I’ve already sent my orderly to reserve two rooms for us in the same inn or hostel. The garrison will pay for expenses. You have one week to get up to date with polka and waltz, whatever the court pleases to dance these days. Off you go!’

And that was that. Haim saluted smartly, turned, and ran through the door opening. He was never very comfortable in the boss’s presence.

While he ran through the corridor, Haim cursed, ‘damn, damn, damn. Dance! I have to be the sissy on duty!’

Von Stückradt heard the curse and the murmur. He smiled, and wanted to shout after Haim, ‘I heard that!’.

He thought the better of it, and kept his lips one on the other. Better not antagonise the boy too much.

Major-General von Stückradt and Haim Vincius rode to Graudenz in a coach. They had a common soldier as driver, an elderly man. Graudenz was situated about 40 miles north of Thorn and about 30 miles south of Danzig. The Weichsel made a large turn between the two cities. It took them a full day to arrive in the fortified town.

Haim got an entire day to reconnoitre the streets and the buildings where the supper and the ball would take place. Graudenz, Grudziadz in Polish, was a fine town, smaller but in some aspects more elegant and more beautiful still than Thorn. Haim had not much time for sightseeing. He was also not in the mood. He had seen the addresses on the invitation cards the garrison commander had received.

The first evening, the supper would be organised in the large rooms of the Town Hall of Graudenz. When Major-General von Stückradt entered in his fine uniform, Haim at his side but half a step behind, some guests had already arrived. There would be no official presentation of the invitees to His Highness, the Crown Prince. Graudenz was not Berlin!

Von Stückradt and Haim Vincius had arrived early. A servant immediately showed them their places, von Stückradt near the centre, Haim Vincius at the almost extreme end.

‘That fits my status,’ Haim growled inside his mind.

While he sat, smiling to the servant to thank him, he looked at the cards standing on the table right and left of him. To his right, practically at the corner of the very long table, would sit a *Kammerer* of Graudenz, an alderman of the city, an assistant to the Mayor. To his left, the card read a ‘Lady Leah Goldstern’.

‘That too fits,’ Haim sighed again. ‘A Jewish civil servant of Graudenz and an 80 years old Jewish lady, probably the former mistress of someone at court. I’m in for a very boring evening!’

A little later, the *Kammerer* indeed appeared and sat. Haim and the *Kammerer* introduced. It lasted only a few polite phrases for Haim to understand the man next to him was not dull and

boring at all. The man was well-informed about what was happening in Prussia and in Poland. He started an interesting conversation. Haim asked for the man's predictions for the outcome of the new Polish uprising. The man answered him acutely, and concluded the Russian Army had all the means to suppress the revolution within a few months. The *Kammerer* also knew the crown prince had escaped from the court of Berlin, where he had angered his father by taking political initiatives without asking for the latter's permission. The crown prince was a military man, the *Kammerer* pointed out, a no-nonsense man, like no doubt Lieutenant Vincius was.

'He likes soldiers, like King Friedrich the Great did,' the man grinned, 'but he is also a women's man. The *Kammerer* began to expand on the subject, but Haim soon lost interest for something else that moved on the other side of the table. The *Kammerer* followed Haim's eyes, and stopped talking too.

Haim saw a few women enter the vast room, in the centre of which walked a tall, very gaudily dressed lady. This would be the crown prince's wife. Apparently, there had been a reception in other rooms of the Town Hall before the supper, a reception to which probably von Stückradt had been invited, but not his lieutenant.

Haim understood now why von Stückradt had told, 'you go ahead, my boy. Don't watch out for me. Go by yourself to the supper.'

Von Stückradt would have been presented to the crown prince, not a Vincius lieutenant. Among the group of rather elderly ladies went a ravishing, young, dark-haired beauty of about twenty.

'The right age for me,' Haim smiled. His eyes did not leave the girl when a servant led her to his side of the table. To his surprise, the young woman came to sit next the chair on which he sat. Haim stood, saluted quickly and formally, clacked his heels, and helped the woman in her chair. She thanked him with a smile and a radiant look in his direction. Dark brown hair, brown eyes speckled with green, the face as regular as an angel's, white, unblemished teeth, white skin, health shining.

Haim said, 'Lieutenant Haim Vincius at your service, my lady.'

The young woman sat, and giggled a little at the attention he gave her.

She noticed, 'this must be the Jewish corner, Lieutenant Vincius. I do am Jewish, I tell you at once. I guess you are too.'

'I am,' Haim acknowledged.

'I am a bit surprised to find a true Jewish officer in the army. They are rare, you know. I actually never met one!'

'Indeed, my lady,' Haim continued quite formally.

'No titles, please, lieutenant,' the girl interrupted him. 'I am no lady. Miss Goldstern will do for the moment. I am pleased to meet you.'

Haim nodded. He looked closer at her. He stared and studied her, maybe not a polite thing to do at this supper. Still, he couldn't draw his eyes away from her. She was indeed the finest young woman in the company! Had that devil of a von Stückradt managed to place this most beautiful girl of the evening next to him? On the road to Graudenz, von Stückradt had betted with Haim he would be in love within the year. Girls adored uniforms, the Major-General had warned. Haim had laughed the allusions away. Well, this young woman was ravishing indeed. In the next few minutes, Haim also found out she talked quite sensibly, was intelligent, as caustic in some of her phrases and as open as he himself and as the *Kammerer*

on his other side. A conversation developed between him, the Miss Goldstern and the Graudenz *Kammerer*, during which Haim sometimes had to lean back to let the two other exchange whispered phrases.

Unexpectedly, Haim was having a good time with an interesting politician and a witty, smart young woman on his other side. The girl spoke often open-heartedly sarcastic. She smiled like a goddess, which transformed her face to even greater beauty. She proved to be everything but a dumb-headed lady-in-waiting. Haim could hardly believe the girl was a companion to the wife of the crown prince. She was too natural for such a function! When Haim asked her since how long she was a lady to the princess, the girl broke out in a laugh she tried to hide between her hands, as if she needed to cough.

‘Oh no, lieutenant, I am not at all a lady-in-waiting,’ she gave. ‘I just brought some newly printed books to the princess. My father had promised them to her, but our printing was a little late. My father is the owner of an editing company. We print novels, lieutenant, in Berlin. Since we were late, and heard the crown prince had left Berlin, my father sent me here with two older servants to bring the books to the princess. The princess arrived by train at Graudenz two days ago, and I could get the next train, and arrived yesterday. I had a nice conversation with the princess, not the first time, by the way. The princess knows me, and so I got invited to the supper. The princess likes to read and was quite happy with what I brought from Berlin. I brought her our latest volumes of travel texts and a geographic atlas, also a few novels.’

‘Your father trusts you with such an important mission,’ Haim said admiringly.

He thought he had better shut his mouth on such questions.

‘My father is a nice man,’ the girl replied joyfully. ‘Yes, he trusts me. I won’t run into seven brooklets at the same time. He says I’m as good an ambassador as the next man. Besides, travelling, these days, is simple. I took the train in Berlin and arrived by the same train in Graudenz!’

By that time, Haim Vincius found the girl exquisite. She hadn’t taken his words wrongly. She asked him where he came from, from which regiment, based where. Haim explained he was the son of a trading family of Thorn, and served in the Thorn garrison. He explained what kind of a town Thorn was. He got maybe a little too enthusiastic about his home town and had to describe her the city centre and the surroundings. He told her he patrolled much, due to the uprising in near Poland.

Miss Goldstern then asked him what he intended to do after his military service. She didn’t seem to comprehend Haim liked being a soldier, and might stay on after his conscription time. She seemed a little impressed he was sent on patrol with a battalion, so young on his own. He replied her he would like to go on being a soldier for a few years more. She looked up at that.

‘You are a lieutenant, now. You might be promoted to captain, maybe even to become an *Oberstleutnant*, but not any further,’ Leah Goldstern remarked. ‘You won’t get any further in the army, lieutenant. Look at us, here. We have been placed at the end of the table, and together. We sit among the lowest of the invitees. Jews are not members of the nobility. You asked me a while ago whether I was a lady-in-waiting. I couldn’t be, never, though the wife of the Crown-Prince Friedrich talks amiably when I bring her the new catalogue of our books.’

I do this regularly, you know. Only ladies of the highest nobility are allowed at court, and no Jews! We are citizens of Prussia, of course, but not quite the same kind as anybody else, and who thinks otherwise, errs terribly! And we can never be part of the elite!’

Haim then found her very old for her age. She seemed to have no illusions left on her state. Did she sound bitter? Haim didn’t think so. She spoke matter-of-fact.

‘I didn’t give much thought to such considerations,’ Haim agreed. ‘Prussia is my country, and as any other citizen I wanted to defend and preserve it. I don’t aim to dwell much among this kind of people. I don’t envy them either. I do as I like, and that, for the time, is being an officer.’

‘Oh sure,’ Leah replied mockingly, irreverently, ‘until you do would expect a promotion to colonel. Then, either the Army – whoever may be in charge at the moment – will send you out in a battle to play the hero, from where you will not return. Or you will be left cosily in your rank, and nobody higher up in the hierarchy will tell you anything about a promotion anymore. Don’t nourish too many illusions, lieutenant. We, Jews, are still a doomed people, Prussian citizens or not!’

‘Well, we can still work with our hands and minds. You and your family print and sell books. In Prussia, you are allowed to do so. Better, it is your right to do so. Many editors in Berlin are Jewish, I heard.’

‘There are a few, not many,’ Leah Goldstern acquiesced. ‘There are no Jews at court, however.’

‘I read Minister-President Otto von Bismarck has Jewish friends!’

‘He has. He has Jews he relies on, Jews he exploits. Friends? Has Bismarck friends? He knows Jews in the banking business. He won’t defend Jews in the circles of the highest nobility and of the court. He doesn’t like it when somebody reminds him of his Jewish acquaintances. Bismarck doesn’t befriend anybody, except for when they have influence somewhere, at court or in the parliament. He will not even notice someone unless that person can suit him or bring useful relations. Bismarck almost exclusively dwells in the higher circles.’

Haim kept his silence. Leah Goldstern was right. He had known all that, yet he had liked his life of illusions, his fine thoughts about areas he didn’t live or work in. He was a patriot, for sure. It was not good for people to have no illusions left! Maybe it was wise to be without illusions.

Suddenly, he regarded the young woman next him as his superior. She seemed older than he. Why was her mood so dark? Yes, maybe she was right about Prussia and the Jews. But had she known how much worse the situation was for Jews in Russia, in Lithuania, she would not have spoken as she had.

They ate, drank, and did not exchange ideas for another while.

Haim began to talk about his family, his father, his brothers, the issue between his mother and father, about his father’s mistress. He talked enthusiastically about Thorn. He described the town to her, the grandeur of the Weichsel at Thorn, the beauty of the valley hills in summer, the forests. He spoke quite a while, trying to describe the beauty of Thorn the best he could, with enthusiasm. He brought to her a few of the finer military jokes, until she laughed with him. Haim found her very charming and warm-minded, her remarks astute. Her voice sounded neither sharp nor hoarse. She was very mature in spirit, much, much more mature than one would have expected for her age.

In her turn, Leah Goldstern talked to him about the business of editing books. She spoke of authors he didn't know about at all, and about the various series the Goldstern editors had developed.

Haim looked almost exclusively at her for the rest of the evening. He liked the way her face changed when she spoke and laughed. He had only then noticed how finely her dark brown hair shone thick in the candlelight.

It became late in the evening, early in the night. Suddenly, the crown prince stood. So did his wife. They nodded and greeted to the applauding audience. The crown prince and his wife left the hall, accompanied by the men and women of his court. They left the hall rapidly.

'Well, the banquet is finished,' Leah Goldstern nevertheless remarked with a little sadness in her voice. 'I'd better leave, too!'

'Do you have a coach waiting for you?' Haim wanted to know.

'No, no, I stay in an inn, in a side street close by. I'll walk. I came here by walking, too.'

'I'll not allow you to walk alone so late,' Haim offered. 'Can I accompany you?'

'I was hoping you might suggest so much. I have not far to go, but I'm afraid I do have been a little reckless. I told my servants not to wait for me. I shall accept your arm, Lieutenant Vincius, with pleasure!'

Haim smiled. They shook hands with the assistant to the mayor of Graudenz, and walked on, through the audience. Leah Goldstern accepted Haim's arm. In the corridor of the Town Hall, they passed a group of, officers who were still discussing their anecdotes of the uprising in Poland. The officers obviously were waiting for others to go together to an inn in the town centre, to get to more schnapps. Among them stood the red-faced Major-General von Stückradt. When the garrison commander remarked Haim walking sternly, the prettiest girl of the evening at his lieutenant's arm, his monocle fell out of his eye. Haim stiffly walked on, got hold of Leah's cloak and put it on her shoulders. He took his own cloak, and left with Miss Goldstern.

The night was cold. They strolled on. They didn't talk at first. Haim was thinking how a twenty-year old young woman had to feel so very far from home, in the night, practically on her own in a town she didn't know in the least.

He asked, 'a ball has been organised for tomorrow evening, for the same people, I guess. The ball will be hosted here, in the Town Hall. I suppose more rooms will be opened. May I ask whether you have been invited too?'

'You may ask. And yes, I have been invited. I received a card.'

'Then can I see you again tomorrow evening? Can you put my name on a few dances in your book?'

'Sure, lieutenant, I will. Every other dance. Will that suit you? You will not get all of those, but we can rest awhile, sit together, and talk and watch, and gossip.'

'Fine,' Haim smiled. 'And what about tomorrow morning? Can we see each other again in the morning, have dinner together?'

That made Leah Goldstern think a while, while Haim reddened more and more.

'Well, well, Lieutenant Vincius! Is that a date? I suspect the soldier here, approach covertly, conquer, and push on. Are we dating?'

Haim liked her to be so frank. Soldiers were frank too, and certainly he, Haim Vincius. Was she too a soldier?

He smiled again, and replied, 'only if you allow me, Miss Goldstern. Yes, I guess I am asking for a date. You haven't told me yet much about Berlin and where you live.'

'Oh, it is about Berlin you want me to talk, Berlin you are interested in?' she teased.

'No, no,' Haim retreated.

He dashed forward, 'I want to know you better. I may sound intrusive, and be repulsive to you. I simply asked. You can easily say no, I won't be offended, I promise you. I insist, though!'

Leah Goldstern held a few moments of silence.

She came to a decision, 'of course. Why not? It seems to me we are good friends already. I suppose you won't harm me. I appreciate your honesty and your innocence. I'm a little *blasé*, you know. Let's meet. Around eleven, tomorrow morning. I'm a late sleeper, lieutenant. And I'd love to have dinner with you. I want to be a little reckless. Invite me to the best dinner in town!'

Haim laughed. 'I'll find out where the food is the best in town,' he promised. 'We'll walk till dinner. And after dinner, we shall walk again, if that is agreeable to you. We'll discover this town. And then we'll dance!'

'And what about after the dance, lieutenant?'

'I haven't thought further than tomorrow evening, Miss Goldstern. I'll think of something to do. What can a simple lieutenant of Thorn do with a Berlin girl?'

'I'll think of something, lieutenant,' Leah Goldstern aped him. 'Here is my inn. It's better I go in alone.'

Haim released her arm. Should he now kiss her? That would be too early. She might be scared away from him. Yet, kiss her was what he desired. They looked at each other. Then, very suddenly, Leah Goldstern turned and stepped into the inn, rather brusquely. She was escaping from him. Haim Vincius remained standing outside for a while. Then, the sudden recognition banged on him. He was in love! How was that possible? He, who had never really shown interest in girls! He too turned, and walked to the inn he and his commander had a room in. He had to cool off!

The next day, Haim Vincius had merely two hours to find the best, grandest place to dine in Graudenz, with the best food in town. He relied on the inn-keeper, who drew a face, as he too cooked and could serve at noon. The lieutenant looked like one not to be trifled with, so the man proposed an address. He took pity on the lieutenant. The restaurant he had named was very expensive, too expensive for a lieutenant who probably had to live from his army salary. The inn-keeper didn't know the Vincius Family!

Armed with the address and the best of intentions, Haim then went to the hotel in which Leah Goldstern stayed. He announced himself in the lobby. Leah came down the stairs a moment later. She had changed from her gaudy evening dress into a boyish-looking two-piece, jacket and skirt, and sturdy shoes. These were her Berlin city-clothes, Haim guessed. She looked ravishing also clothed this way. Haim had abandoned his uniform for civil clothes. They were both casually dressed, and smiled when they noticed they had been inspired by the same idea. Haim took Leah out of the hostel. They walked and talked. They strolled along the Weichsel, admired the landscape and the imposing walls of the city. They went back in through the Water Gate and admired the old buildings in the centre of the town. Haim and Leah had seen

those only in the evening darkness! Graudenz was a typical Prussian city, fine and beautiful, really a large fortress. The fortifications of Graudenz were even more impressive than those of Thorn. Haim compared Graudenz with Thorn. He explained to Leah Thorn was so much nicer. Leah grinned. The lieutenant was not chauvinistic about his Thorn, oh no. They dined at the address Haim had received from his inn-keeper. The man had not fooled him. The place was up to Leah's expectations. The restaurant they entered was small, cosy, near the Weichsel, and they could have the most excellent fish dishes. The weather had remained dry, marvellous for them, but still rather cool. They dined inside, in a room the four walls of which had been panelled with dark wood.

After their Graudenz dinner, they walked again. Leah told her mother had died in childbirth for her second child, a son. She lived with her father, who had not wanted to remarry. Leah was his only child. Haim then also told Leah once more the truth about his parents. His mother and father were not divorced, yet they didn't live together anymore. His mother had a lover, a wealthy Jewish trader of Thorn, and his father lived in Castle Chrapitz with a Christian woman of Prussian nobility. He had two brothers, who hated everything violent and soldier-like. His father was a wealthy trader.

Haim didn't dare yet to grab Leah's hand. Leah Goldstern drew against him, then, and took his arm. Their bodies touched. Haim placed his other hand on her arm. She let him. She was wonderful. They strolled as if they were an old-acquainted couple, a couple in love, and maybe they were.

In the middle of the afternoon, Leah told she needed some rest before the evening ball. Haim asked whether she wanted him to reserve a coach and get her to the ball. She accepted. She told she didn't see her really walking in a wide gown through the streets of Graudenz. They parted a little later, but both knowing they would have to discuss much after the ball. Haim was certain by then they liked each other really well, and they liked being together. The obstacles of their seeing each other again hung between them as so many question marks. Leah lived in Berlin, Haim in Thorn. Haim was a soldier, a profession Leah's family would probably not appreciate. Their beloved child was flirting with an army officer? That spelled disaster! Haim caught himself thinking along those lines, as if he and Leah were already bespoken, and had declared love. How could he imagine that of a young woman he had met but since yesterday evening? Yet, it seemed to him she would never release him, and he liked that thought. He had learned to know her a little better from the conversation they had at dinner. Leah thought much the same way as he. They felt fine together, as if they had been friends for a long, long time. Intimacy had set in very soon between them.

In the afternoon, Haim hired a coach and rode it to Leah's hostel to fetch her to the ball. He had avoided his garrison commander. When he saw Leah back, she wore her wide light-blue ball dress, so that he had to be very careful with her gown when he helped her in the coach. Haim noticed once more she would be the most charming lady of the evening. They arrived together at the Town Hall. Leah took his arm. He wore his new gala uniform. When they entered the ballroom, many envious eyes followed them. Now, Haim brought Leah to his garrison commander. He presented Leah to von Stückradt. A Berlin girl! The Major-General nodded happily to his aide, and smiled knowingly. 'Knowing what?' Haim considered.

They walked into the ballroom, causing instant sensation of the great beauty striding in between two handsome officers, a powerful Major-General and his handsome aide.

Von Stückradt was not the man to make a difference between a Christian or a Jew. He liked his lieutenant. Haim and Leah soon discovered, however, few other men invited to the ball were inclined to forget Miss Leah Goldstern was not of noble stock, had no title, and was no Christian. Few men, few officers too, asked her for a dance, despite her beauty.

Nevertheless, Haim and Leah enjoyed the evening, the fine music and the wine. They danced often. More eyes followed them on the dance-floor than Leah seemed to like. Had a queen of the ball be chosen, Leah would have won the price. The crown prince had arrived in the room, danced with his wife, but never approached Haim Vincius and Leah Goldstern. The prince danced with a few elderly ladies, wives of Prussian generals.

Haim didn't mind everybody seemed to have forgotten about him and Leah. They danced with obvious delight, radiant of happiness. They danced till very late. The crown prince left the room.

Then, more men began to ask her to dance with them. Leah accepted a few, refused many more. She always returned to her dull-looking, grim lieutenant, who stood watching her like a Cerberus in the arms of other men. She danced now almost all the time, whirled around the room each time in the arms of another man.

Couples started to leave.

Major-General von Stückradt came to Haim, telling he would leave. He expected Haim Vincius around noon for the return to Thorn.

Haim had to talk to Leah! There was not much time left. When she returned to him, he asked her to come with him and sit in a sofa of a side-salon that had been opened for the dancers who needed some rest. On a table stood bottles of champagne, glasses, and more *zakouskis*. Women sat, gossiping to the last. Haim avoided a room where elderly men sat, hidden in a cloud of cigar smoke. He drew Leah to a corner sofa, told her to stay there and not move, and went to fetch two glasses of Champagne and a series of little *zakouskis* to eat. He put the plate between them. They could rest a while, Haim told, and talk. Haim was impatient and very nervous, now.

When Leah sat comfortably, Haim asked, 'can we see each other again after today?'

'Would you want that, lieutenant?' Leah wondered innocently, her eyes glistening expectantly in the candlelight.

'Yes, I would,' Haim acknowledged. 'I have grown quite fond of you, Miss Goldstern. I have become fonder of you than I have ever felt for any other woman so far. I would like to present you to my father. And to my brothers and mother, of course.'

Leah Goldstern reddened. This was serious stuff! Haim Vincius could hardly have been more outspoken and clearer. He wanted her! He was not asking to sleep with her. He was asking her for life! Did she too nurture fine, warm feelings for this young officer from Thorn? She surprised herself by thinking he had dazzled her, conquered her, impressed her, and she was suddenly afraid. Was this Lieutenant Haim Vincius as she thought he was? What if he was not? Was he as she wanted an admirer, a fiancé, a lover, a husband, to be?

She waited for quite some time, and then asked, no longer able to stay silent, ‘what are your intentions with me, lieutenant? What do you seek of me? We have met only yesterday. Should we not know each other better?’

‘Sure,’ Haim closed in on her. ‘And one day has been sufficient for me, Miss Goldstern. I am a soldier. I have learned only to be frank and direct. You have conquered my heart and my senses. I would like to know you much, much better.’

Haim sighed.

He uttered the dreaded words, he thought he wouldn’t have the courage ever to say, afraid of scaring her away, ‘I think I’m in love with you, Miss Goldstern. I assure you I haven’t said these words to any other woman in the past. I do not turn with the wind or to any pretty face. Yes, I would like to see you again. Unless you cannot discover any warm feeling for me in your heart, I would like us to be engaged to marry. I am quite well aware we have much against us. I won’t enumerate what separates us. We can overcome all that. I would like to protect you. I would like to know how you feel about me.’

Leah hesitated. Time pressed. The young man deserved a clear answer. She looked at the ball room. She saw the crown prince and his entourage still talking in the corridor, then leave. She was distracted for a few moments by the view of the gaudy uniforms of the men and the colourful dresses of the ladies. This seemed all so artificial to her. That kind of life was definitely not what she sought. This officer was not artificial. She knew he was brave and a true soldier. Did she really know what she wanted? He indeed scared her a little, for he threw both of them in a whirlwind of new events and feelings. Was she ready for him?

Leah looked back at Haim, saw the eagerness for an answer on his face. She found that face so lovely. He was no impostor. No, he was honest. He truly loved her. She noticed how handsome and innocent he looked. Yes, she could love and cherish this man so easily, if only he would be sweet and loving to her. She was convinced he was a warm-feeling, a gentle man. And he was a Jew. At least that would please her father. She would not have to convert for a man. She came to a decision.

‘Yes, I would like to meet you again, Lieutenant Haim Vincius.’

She used his first name, now, repeating, ‘yes, yes, I would like us to know each other better. I would like to be engaged to you. Marriage needs more time. You will have to seduce me, my knight.’

Haim grabbed her hand, brought it to his lips.

‘We indeed have much against us,’ Leah continued. ‘We live far apart. How could we meet again?’

‘We can meet in Berlin or in Thorn, or somewhere between,’ Haim sighed. ‘At my first leave, I may come rushing in to Berlin. We also can write to each other often. When you are free, you can come to Thorn, too. We can travel by train, now, from Thorn to Berlin and back. It may take a few days, but such travel can easily be arranged. For me, you are worth a travel to Berlin a thousand times over. I’m in love with you, Miss Goldstern. I’m a soldier, and soldiers make quick decisions, and live by their decisions. I’m in love with you. Lovers want to be together!’

Leah had to laugh, ‘lovers we are not yet, Haim, though that may and should and will happen.’

Haim reddened. She used the word love in another sense than he had intended, but, yes, this too was what he willed.

He said, 'you know what I meant. I had the best of intentions. I shall respect you always. We might be lovers, too, in the meaning you implied. Does that prospect scare you off?'

Leah reddened even more.

She hesitated again, then said, 'no, you don't scare me, Haim, quite the contrary. I might be tempted to throw me at you. But let's do this the right, the honourable way. All right! I'll give you my address in Berlin. Let's take our relation one step further. I have a card and pencil in my purse.'

She took out a little white card, and wrote 'Leah Goldstern. *Potsdamer Strasse* 60. Schöneberg, Berlin. Near the *Potsdamer Bahnhof*.'

'This is where our offices are. I will be there, mostly, during the day. I help my father in the company. We have our house in the *Steglitzer Strasse*. Better come first to our offices and ask for me there.'

Haim took the card. Leah gave him another such card and the pencil.

Haim wrote and told her, 'Haim Vincius. *Breite Strasse*. Thorn Old Town.'

He added, 'my father lives mostly at Castle Chrapitz. You are most prone to hear about me there. I will leave a note at Castle Chrapitz, to Leandra von Chrapitz and to my father, on where I am. Any coach of Thorn will take you to Chrapitz. My mother lives in the *Breite Strasse*. The house was my home. I'm not sure whether my mother will be much at home, nor will my brothers be there much. Please write when you can come. I'll arrange for us to meet out of Chrapitz. We must leave, now. I'm afraid we cannot meet tomorrow. My commander ordered me to return with him tomorrow noon. At the first occasion, I'll come to Berlin.'

Leah accepted the card. 'I'm impressed. You live in a castle?'

'Barely,' Haim refused. 'My father lives there, most of the time. He has other rooms at his central warehouse, where he stays often, too. It is all a little complicated with us. Wait, give me back my card. I'll add the names of Fried and Anna Kleinberger. Everybody knows the Kleinberger shop at my father's warehouse. The Kleinbergers will know where my father is and where I will be. They are my father's partners.'

When Haim had changed the card, they stood, and walked to leave the Town Hall. The coach waited for them. They had not far to ride. In a few minutes, Leah Goldstern was at her hostel. She went up to the entry door. Haim followed her. Suddenly, she turned.

'Well then,' she said, 'we'll see each other back.'

'Yes,' he agreed, expecting more.

Haim didn't want to leave her on words alone. He brought his hands to the sides of her face, immobilising her. She didn't draw back. He kissed her gently on the lips. The kiss lasted. She brought her arms around him. He drew his hands from her face, also to better hug her, hold her, press her to him. They did not break off the kiss. Leah stopped kissing him after a long while. There were tears in her eyes, he saw.

'I do want to be your lover, Haim Vincius,' Leah whispered, 'but not yet!'

'And I, Leah. No, not yet,' Haim acknowledged. 'We are not going to be together as we want in the room of an inn.'

Haim withdrew from her. 'It would be sordid to go up. We have to do this right, honour what we have. Go back to Berlin, Leah Goldstern, my love, and write to me. I will do the same.'

The time of waiting is necessary for us to reflect on what happens to us. I don't know about you, but I truly need the time. This has fallen over me with the speed and power of a locomotive. I'm not, definitely not, the typical soldier, who has a sweetheart in every village. We, Vincius men, have one love and only one in our life. The situation is a little more complex for my father, but that, generally, is how we are. One love means marriage, and a lifetime of happiness. Do you believe me?"

Leah Goldstern's eyes widened. 'Are you proposing to me, Haim Vincius? We know each other only since yesterday! You are charging forward!'

She laughed.

Haim too laughed, 'yes, it is ridiculous, isn't it? What am I talking about? Yet, my dear, that is absolutely what I am thinking off. You must know you are the most beautiful, intelligent, understanding, and nice, really nice woman I met so far. So, yes, what else could I be envisaging but marriage? That is my only way to respect you. Still, I'll propose to you as I should, to your father first, in style, as you deserve. Do you like me a little?'

'I feel the same as you, Haim, and call you my darling already. We should know each other better. So, we'll write. Keep yourself healthy, take good care of yourself and remain unwounded, my darling soldier. I don't want to become a widow before being married!'

Leah suddenly turned, tore herself away, and ran through the hostel door. Haim remained a while standing, stunned and surprised. Then, he got back into the coach and urged the driver to his own inn.

Haim Vincius drove back the next day to Thorn with his commander. Von Stückradt could not hold himself back from asking Haim who the young lady was with whom Haim had been dancing so often with the previous evening.

'Oh, that was my future wife,' Haim answered very seriously and totally happy. 'We are engaged! She is called Leah Goldstern. Her father is a well-known editor in Berlin.'

Von Stückradt almost choked in his vodka. They were resting halfway in a tavern, when he had let his curiosity win over his Prussian formal character. He was pleased, however, he had won his bet.

'I told you there would be a marriage announcement in the air before the year ends. You owe me one hundred Thaler! So, you scoundrel, you did know that girl after all, before you accompanied me to Graudenz!'

'I didn't, no, not at all, Sir,' Haim continued joyfully. 'I've known her only for two days! But she's the one for me!'

Von Stückradt's mouth fell open once more. He laughed, and couldn't stop laughing. Now, here was an anecdote to tell to his friends!

'Boy,' von Stückradt exclaimed, 'you made my day! You are a true soldier! Charge and conquer! That only is the soldier's way!'

Major-General von Stückradt let his dashing officer have his way. All through the years 1863 and 1864, Haim Vincius patrolled along the Polish frontier. Von Stückradt promoted Haim to captain for services rendered to Prussia.

Haim didn't tell his father he had a girlfriend, a serious one, in Berlin. Max Vincius did of course wonder why Haim disappeared to Berlin whenever he had the chance, during his

leaves from duty. Max also knew his son received letters from Berlin by the week. Max rather thought his son corresponded with historians or librarians.

Then, one day, a coach stopped in front of Castle Chrapitz. Out stepped a wonderful, beautiful, dignified, young lady. Max had been standing next to Leandra at the windows of their hall, wondering who might visit them unexpectedly. They both went out, to their imposing porch, where servants already helped the young lady out of her coach.

‘Good afternoon,’ the young woman shouted. ‘I am Leah Goldstern. Can I see Lieutenant Haim Vincius, please? Is he here?’

Max looked at Leandra, who made a stern face at her husband, wondering what such a beauty had to do with Max and Haim.

Max answered, ‘I am Max Vincius, Haim’s father. I don’t know who you are, I am sorry. How can I help you? Haim is not here, I’m afraid.’

‘Oh, but I came to see Haim,’ Leah added happily. ‘We are engaged to marry, you know! I’ve been at the *Breite Strasse* in Thorn, but found nobody home. I’m so glad I found you, though. I’ve arrived rather unexpectedly from Berlin. Haim wrote to me he would be in Thorn this week. Could you tell me when he arrives?’

‘You are engaged to my son? He hasn’t told me anything about such a thing!’ Max asked, very surprised.

‘Yes, he would be like that, wouldn’t he? He can be a scoundrel, but we love each other. Please, please, tell me, when will he arrive? I came by train from Berlin, then took a coach at the railway station. I’m a little tired!’

Max Vincius noticed immediately this young woman was not any soldier’s harlot. She was very well dressed, with delicate elegance, and she had good manners. She seemed intelligent and courageous.

‘Haim will be back in Thorn tomorrow,’ Max replied. ‘At least, that is what he told me. I understand now, why Haim made sure these last months I knew when each time he would return from his patrols. I’m sorry, Miss Goldstern, Haim is a soldier, a little insouciant, and sometimes even a joker. We didn’t know he was engaged. We rather thought he would never be engaged and remain a soldier and a bachelor all his life. He is a scoundrel, that boy! But I suppose you know all that.’

Leandra von Chrapitz was smiling, for relieved. She too liked Haim.

‘Miss Goldstern,’ Leandra intervened, ‘you are not going to look for a hostel in town. Let my servants unload your luggage. We have more agreeable rooms in Castle Chrapitz for you to stay. Please be our guest. I wish you welcome. We’ll all surprise Haim.’

Before Leah could answer, Leandra shouted at her servant, ‘Piotr, please have Miss Goldstern’s luggage placed in the Green Room upstairs. Miss Goldstern will stay with us for a while. You may have to prepare a hot bath for her.’

Leandra turned to Leah, ‘please come in, Miss Goldstern, and tell us all. How did you meet Haim? He didn’t tell us a thing about you. He is a taciturn young man on matters of the heart. Please understand our surprise. So, you will have to tell us all in his stead! Be welcome in our house. Feel at home. Supper is at eight in our dining room.’

Leah felt surprised. To what kind of manor had she come to? Was this a Vincius house or not? Why, indeed, Chrapitz, and not Vincius? Still, she was very tired. She thanked Leandra

profusely, for she had looked up to return to the Thorn she didn't know, having to find a place to sleep.

Leah followed the von Chrapitz servant. She rested, bathed and changed. She then went down to the von Chrapitz Hall, prepared to face a thousand questions. She found Max Vincius and Leandra von Chrapitz sitting at ease near a small table. A long, long talk ensued. Leah explained who she was, how she had met Haim and how they had met again, several times, in Berlin. Then, it was Max Vincius's turn to explain who he was, what he did, and which his relations were to the Lady von Chrapitz.

The next day, Captain Haim Vincius rode on a speckled horse to the von Chrapitz manor. He found the three beings he most loved together, sitting in a corner of the Chrapitz Hall, talking, and ready to crucify him. Leah Goldstern stood, and flew in his arms.

Haim Vincius and Leah Goldstern married at the beginning of 1865 in Berlin. Max Vincius and Avram Goldstern arranged the marriage and the feasts together. Haim received permission to remain for a month in Berlin. Avram Goldstern bought the couple a large house in the *Landgrafenstrasse* near the Berlin *Tiergarten*. He seemed to like Haim. He had been very suspicious of the soldier, when his daughter had confessed, she loved a Haim Vincius of Thorn, and wanted to marry him. Avram was happy his daughter had found a Jewish man to marry. He had feared his daughter might have desired to marry a Christian man. He would not have objected to such a marriage, but he was happy Haim was a Jew, and one who respected the Jewish faith.

Haim and Leah called their first son, born in 1866, a year later, after her father.

Their marriage was a sound one, and they loved each other much. Haim Vincius respected his wife, admired her, and relied on her for most of the matters of domestic life. Haim was not often at his home in Berlin, though, and this kind of life began to weigh on his mood. He regularly thought of leaving the army. It was not the right time to leave, he decided. War threatened. He was no coward, and Prussia was being drawn into a new war. Haim would be needed once more. After this war, he promised to himself, he would try to make a living in Berlin.

The Prussian-Austrian War

Since the end of 1864, ever since Prussia and Austria won together the Second Schleswig War, they had administered the two duchies together. This double autonomy was far from satisfactory for Austria, not in the least because Schleswig-Holstein lay far from Vienna, with the space in between mostly Prussian or Prussia-dominated.

Already in the autumn of 1864, therefore, the Austrian diplomats proposed to Berlin a choice between two options.

Firstly, the Prussians and Austrians could recognise the duchies as a separate German state, under the Augustenburg dynasty.

Or, alternatively, Austria could agree to have Schleswig-Holstein annexed to Prussia. Austria would then have to be compensated by Prussian territories along the Silesian frontier.

Bismarck rejected both solutions. He wanted Schleswig-Holstein to fall unconditionally, like a ripe apple, in the Prussian mouth. He refused the price to be one square foot of what he considered already Prussian territory! Bismarck was convinced Schleswig-Holstein would be joined to Prussia anyway, sooner or later.

Meanwhile, the Prussians continued to extend their control over the duchies by all means. Austria watched this development with heavy, ever more irritated eyes.

The Austrian diplomats took the Augustenburg succession to Frankfurt, to the Confederate Parliament of the *Deutsche Bund*. Austria sent also ambassadors to the Prussian king, to protest and to propose to discuss the matter. Negotiations followed, which resulted in the Convention of Gastein, signed on the 14th of August of 1865. A proposal of Otto von Bismarck was accepted. It placed Schleswig under Prussian control and Holstein under Austrian control. The solution felt slightly better for Austria, but also did not change the situation fundamentally.

In January of 1866, a nationalist meeting was held in Holstein. This voted clearly for the Augustenburg solution. Bismarck accused Vienna of wanting to break up the Treaty of Gastein. On the 28th of February, a crown council in Berlin deemed the war with Austria inevitable. Bismarck wanted to quench the power of Austria in the *Deutsche Bund*. He began actively to prepare for war with Austria, as in his view Austria had not honoured the Gastein Convention. He wanted Schleswig-Holstein incorporated in Prussia, as he had always claimed to the men around him.

‘There is every day more insistent talk of war in the newspapers,’ Max Vincius told Leandra von Chrapitz one evening of October of 1865.

‘Bismarck gets bolder. So says the *Kreuzzeitung*, this conservative newspaper. He was more reticent with war, before. He must have confidence Prussia can win a war with Austria from how he has seen our army divisions in action in Holstein. Mark my word, he will let the situation in Holstein rot and rot for Austria, until she cannot do anything else but act and send a large army into Prussia. Bismarck may then refuse access to Holstein over Prussian-dominated territories, and claim feeling threatened. The Austrians will be brought to declare war. I’m worried Haim might be drawn into a campaign against Austria!’

‘Otto von Bismarck enjoys the confidence of the king,’ Leandra answered, looking up from out of her own paper. ‘Bismarck has only just been promoted to count by the king. It is Count Bismarck, now, who makes the nice and the bad weather at the court of Berlin. The Chief-of-Staff, the Count von Moltke, will want to show once more what the Prussian Army can accomplish. Haim told us last time the reserve has been called up for exercises. Mobilisation may come next. Bismarck and Moltke will not object against war. The War Minister von Roon is more prudent, but against those two, Bismarck and Moltke, he will not be able to plead much for prudence and peace. Yes, it would be sad, at this moment of being newly-wed, for Haim and Leah, to have Haim on campaign. I prefer not to think of it!’

Max Vincius nodded. He too felt sad. A war might well have to be waged among the German speaking peoples. But then, it would not be the first time in history. Armies of hundreds of thousands of men, men who should feel like brothers, would stand in front of each other, modern weapons in hand, weapons more destructive than those used during the Napoleonic wars. This would be a terrible war! Max Vincius sighed. Life was very good at Castle Chrapitz and at Thorn. His love for Leandra was strong. She was nice to him. They truly liked each other. Would death intrude in his living?

Bismarck, perfidious, unscrupulous, and completely logically, had negotiated an alliance with Italy against Austria. Both states would assist each other in a war with Austria. This treaty was signed on the 8th of April of 1866.

The next day, on the 9th of April, the Prussian ambassador to the *Bund* submitted a motion in parliament that would change the history of Germany. The official announcement was made on the 11th of April. The Federal Assembly of the *Bund* would call together a new Assembly, which would be chosen by direct vote, and by universal vote of all citizens! The new Assembly would then consider the proposals of the German governments for a reform of the Federal Constitution. Count Bismarck had introduced democracy in Germany with one proposal! Of course, he intended to use the universal suffrage to achieve his ends, but the coup was amazing and far-reaching.

Both Prussia and Austria secretly negotiated with Emperor Napoleon III of France for the French neutrality in case of war. France would end as a beneficiary of a Prussian-Austrian War, whoever won!

Prussia received polite assurances as to the possible involvement of France in a German war. But how reliable was the word of Emperor Napoleon III?

Prussia would not have to fear Russian intervention in the Prussian-Austrian war, as Bismarck's relations with St Petersburg were among the best, whereas Russia's relations with Austria had remained strained and cool. Russia would not fight on Austria's side against Prussia. It might even welcome a demise of Austria!

Troop movements in Italy caused a partial Austrian mobilisation on the 21st of April, on which Prussia reacted with its own mobilisation.

At the beginning of June of 1866, Prussian troops entered Holstein, still Austria-held, *en masse*. The feeblar Austrian troops withdrew to Hannover.

On the 2nd of June of 1866, the king of Prussia decreed Helmut von Moltke be put in command of the Prussian Army, with the right to issue orders in the name of the king. Von Moltke thus came in control of the operational leadership in the oncoming war.

On the 14th of June, the Austrian ambassador to the German parliament at Frankfurt, protested against the illegal Prussian occupation of Holstein. He claimed this act was a flagrant breach of the Convention of Gastein!

The same day, the parliament of Frankfurt called for the mobilisation of the *Deutsche Bund* against Prussia. The resolution passed by majority vote! The Prussian ambassador left the assembly ostentatiously, declaring Prussia regarded the German Confederation dissolved. On the 15th of June, Prussia equally declared war on Hannover, Hessen-Kassel and Saxony. In numbers, 254,000 Prussians in arms would stand against 245,000 soldiers of Austria.

On the 19th of April, Italy, in its turn, had declared war on Austria.

Italy threw 200,000 men in an offensive in the Veneto region against Austria. Austria had to send 100,000 men to the Alps to stop the Italian Army. There, the 5th, 7th and 9th Austrian Army Corps, led by Archduke Albrecht of Austria, fought against the 4 corps of the Italian Army.

Most of the states of mid-Germany opted to fight on the side of Austria. The German Confederate Army could bring an additional 150,000 men in the field. These had not been trained to advance and fight as one body, though. They were not so well armed, and even less well commanded. Bavaria alone joined the Confederate Army with 65,000 men!

The Bavarian Army stood along the River Main, between Amberg and Würzburg. Its commander was Prince Karl of Bavaria.

At Frankfurt gathered a Confederate Army, the 8th Corps, formed with the troops of Baden, Württemberg, Hessen-Darmstadt and Nassau. It counted 42,000 soldiers, under the command of the Prince Alexander of Hessen.

The Saxon Army of 25,000 men and 58 cannons assembled at Dresden. The crown prince of Saxony commanded it. It joined immediately the Austrian Army.

The Austrian Army, with the allies from the German states, thus had the advantage in numbers of soldiers and in artillery. The Prussian soldiers had received at least some form of education in the excellent schools of the kingdom. This was not so for the Austrians, the army of which, moreover, was constituted of men from peoples of different lands, generally of little education, speaking many languages. This made communications among the troops quite difficult, leading to misunderstandings in the field.

The Prussian commander of the military staff of Prussia, General Helmut von Moltke, divided the Prussian troops in smaller groups that could swiftly be moved, for instance by railway transport, to where they were mostly needed. This increased the speed of intervention of the Prussian units. Movements of troops by railways could be more easily planned, and the provisioning of the regiments could be organised, and moved separately. This all demanded correct, intricate and quick planning, but weren't the Prussians masters in organisation and planning? The separate units moved and could assemble for a major battle in no time. Each unit could be planned on its own, and be provisioned more easily, or look itself for provisions.

The strategy of von Moltke could work well, and the divisions would move quickly, as long as the plan went well and the movements were well coordinated. When the movements of the divisions did not proceed in harmony, however, chaos could set in. The Prussian officers were aware of the difficulty, and corrected where necessary. The Prussians could count on an already extensive railway system for quicker transportation of troops. They also used the telegraph lines for better communications.

The von Moltke tactics of using multiple, smaller army groups that moved independently, were exactly what von Clausewitz had proposed in his books on the art of war. Von Clausewitz wrote an army resembled a tree. An army took its living powers from the ground on which it grew. When the tree was small, it could easily be planted elsewhere. It rapidly grew new roots and developed its own channels of life. Not so with a large army, warned von Clausewitz. One had always to take into account the limits that were determined by the dimensions of an army. The army could only rely on the space occupied by it, and on the space covered by its position and on the conquered land right behind it.

Von Clausewitz had also written the destruction of the enemy powers, purely and simply, was the main aim of war. This could only happen in a battle. Only large and general armed conflicts would lead to large successes. The successes were the greatest when the conflicts

came together, resulting in a large battle. Seeking a large battle was thus the main objective of a field marshal, and only there did this man govern entirely by himself. He was then truly the only leader.

The Prussian army or army groups, small enough to move rapidly and be provisioned rapidly, had to come together to wage large battles. After such a destructive battle, the army had to push on with full energy to capture the capital of the enemy. That meant for the Prussian Army to march on to Vienna! Helmut von Moltke applied von Clausewitz' advice.

Von Moltke introduced new technologies in the war. The Prussian-Austrian war was linked to the fortune of the industrialist Alfred Krupp and to his cast steel manufactory of Essen, to the Krupp *Gussstahlfabrik*. Cannons used up to then for artillery on the battlefield, were made of bronze and very heavy. The Prussian Army used for the first time in the Prussian-Austrian War lighter steel cannons made by Krupp.

In September of 1847, Alfred Krupp had delivered his first cast steel cannon at the arsenal of Spandau near Berlin. He had to fight against the scepticism of the generals. Why change something that had always worked well? The Krupp cast steel cannon was only tested in June of 1849. Krupp had ameliorated his cannons since then, so that the projectiles and powder could be loaded from behind. That meant artillery soldiers were better protected from enemy fire. Moreover, radiating grooves bettered the trajectory and speed of the cannon projectiles. During the coming battles, some of the cannons exploded. The error lay in the angle of the grooves of the blocks, behind, in which the charge exploded. Krupp was rehabilitated for his gun in late 1866. At the demonstration of his new cannon, at Tegel, the Prussian king, Bismarck, von Moltke and von Roon could see for themselves how well the Krupp cast steel cannon worked. Krupp then received massive orders for cast steel cannons. The Prussian artillery of 1866 did not yet use many Krupp breach-loading, rifled cannons, however. That would come later, after the Prussian-Austrian war. Almost exclusively, shells were fired, the shells being provided with percussion fuses.

The Austrian artillery, on the contrary, consisted mostly of bronze, muzzle-loaded rifled cannons. Their troops were well trained in using artillery on the battle-field, a legacy of Napoleon Bonaparte I.

The Prussian-Austrian War began half June. As the entire German Confederation, the German *Bund*, had declared war on Prussia, The Chief of the General Prussian Staff, General Helmut von Moltke, had to divide the army into four main parts.

One group had to move against Hannover, one against Hesse-Kassel, another one against the southern German states, mainly Bavaria, one had to be kept in reserve in Prussia, and a fourth would manoeuvre against the Austrian Empire. Von Moltke had to protect the rear of Prussia from the Hannoverian and Hessian armies. He had to prevent these to join the allies of the Confederate troops in the south of Germany, with the armies of Bavaria and Württemberg. The number of troops von Moltke could dispense to the war in Germany proper, could only defeat separately, in turn, the Confederate Army of Frankfurt and the Bavarians! Against both of the Confederate armies together, the Prussian divisions sent against the *Bund* stood no chance. The main issue of the Prussian generals therefore, was how avoid these the two armies of the *Bund* to join and confront them together as one, formidable force.

The Saxon Army had already joined the Austrians.

The Austrian Army of the North, consisted of a 1st Corps at Prague and at other Bohemian towns, the 2nd Corps near Böhmisches Trübau, the 4th Corps near Teschen, the 6th Corps near Olmütz. The 3rd and the 10th Corps was placed at Brünn, and the 8th Corps near Austerlitz. The Austrians could count, additionally, on 5 cavalry divisions and 750 cannons. The Austrian army moved under the command of the *Feldzeugmeister*, the Field Marshal Ludwig von Benedek. Von Benedek boldly intended to invade Prussia!

As Clausewitz had taught, armies had to push for the capitals of the enemy lands. Hence, Helmut von Moltke used the extensive German roads and the German railway system to move his armies rapidly into the directions of the Austrian capital. He surprised the armies of his opponents by the swiftness of his mobilisation and manoeuvring. He sent his armies on the fastest, shortest direction to Vienna! Wasn't attack the best defence?

In the garrison of Thorn, Major-General von Stückradt called Captain Vincius to his office. When Haim Vincius entered and saluted, the commander of Thorn stood at a window, looking at a drill exercise of new recruits. He did not immediately turn to Haim, and saluted merely with a nonchalant brush of his hand.

Von Stückradt then talked more to himself than to Haim, when he said, 'lucky bastards, these new recruits. I shall not send them to the war. They would be killed within the week. They are still as green as the trees in the courtyard. How many months will it take me to make something like soldiers out of them? By the time they have learned how to wear a rifle, how to shoot straight and at a regular pace, the war will be over.'

Von Stückradt paused, turned to his friend, looked at him for a long time with weary eyes, and continued, 'Marienwerder has ordered me to send a regiment of infantry and one of artillery to Breslau in Silesia, commanded by two experienced officers. I have no officers with experience in war, in any war against fellow-Germans or against fellow-Austrians. Still, I must obey. With the artillery regiment and 10 cannons, I am sending Lieutenant von Ofenhausen. He is arrogant, pedantic, stupid in mind and a fool of a soldier, but I shall not miss him, and he is a flatterer and a boaster of exactly the right level preferred by staffs, to get easily promoted into the higher circles. He knows how to fire a cannon. God be thanked for that. He has some mathematics, to a sufficient degree to choose the right cannon elevation. He will do well.

I have also to send an infantry officer of higher rank, to bring the regiments to good haven. You are a captain, so you are of superior rank to the lieutenant. He will have to respect at least that. I asked for a major to be sent, although I have none, and that has been accepted, so you can consider yourself promoted again. As of now, you will serve as Major Vincius. Marienwerder has been a little negligent. They haven't asked for specific names, well, not openly so, nor have they asked to control my choice. I do have to send someone who will take care of my boys. You are the only one I can propose the job to. You are the only one I feel capable to bring most of my boys back to Thorn. So, I offered your name, Major Vincius. You are to be transported by train, with the cannons, provisions and all, to Breslau. You are to leave in three days. The train for Breslau will arrive around 10h00 in the morning. Please prepare, and watch what the lieutenant will be doing. He may be foolish in his preparations. I will inspect him too, of course. You know what to do.

Horses for the cannons will be provided at Breslau, or farther on. So, no need to take horses. There will be one wagon for horses, thought, not more than ten allowed. You can take your own horse, of course.

I have no idea where they will send you. I guess you will join the 2nd Army, the army of the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. Maybe they will add our regiments to the Army of the Elbe, but I don't think so. They will be fools if they don't give you at least a battalion! ' Von Stückradt paused.

As if he had another idea, suddenly, he looked in the eyes of Haim Vincius, and continued, 'I'm truly sorry this had to happen to you, Haim, so soon after your marriage. You deserve better. Fate can be cruel, sometimes. So, make sure you come back, will you? I need you back here. Your wife needs you back. That sounds cruel, doesn't it, because I am the one who is sending you. I'm sorry.'

'I'll do my damndest best to come back in one piece, and not in a coffin, Major-General. Be assured of that,' Haim smiled sarcastically.

Von Stückradt smiled back, 'I am sure you will, Major Vincius. You are a survivor. I have confidence in you. Now, something else. You met the crown prince that evening in Graudenz. You didn't exchange many words, but I am sure the crown prince noticed you. You walked off with the most beautiful girl of the evening, too, so he cannot but have noticed you. The Marienwerder order did mention you in soft terms. Did Prince Friedrich remember you, after all? I wonder. My instinct says yes. I know you, Vincius, probably better than you think I do. I must warn you. You will receive orders from men less smart, less courageous, and far less aware of the true situation in the field.

People will envy you, and then may come up the matter of your religion being the Jewish one. Disobeying to those people, or flaunting their incompetence in the open and in their face, won't help you one bit. My advice is to start doing as they say, but try to ply their orders to what you know best. Claim you misunderstood them. Say the terrain and the situation changed and you did what you thought best. Once advanced a little, use the terrain, farms, ruins, walls, trees, plants, to provide an alternative for what the courtiers ordered. Use the hills. Use mole-holes if necessary, to hide your men, use the brooks, deviate some from the direction you were ordered to, just a little, avoid the heaviest fire, linger a little longer than necessary, do what you have to stay alive with your men. Have your soldiers fall to the ground when the Austrians shoot, wait till the last second when the Austrians attack with bayonets, one of their preferred methods of attacking, and make your men shoot low. Soldiers always tend to shoot high, to the head, a difficult target always. Have your men wait to shoot until they cannot miss anymore. Refuse them brandy, wine and beer the night before a battle. Well, you know all that! Just do it, don't be lenient. Furthermore, never, never, give the enemy what he wants. Do something else, something he doesn't suspect you would be doing. And foremost, use your brains to deceive the enemy and to deceive incompetent commanders. Just make sure you return!'

Haim Vincius felt emotions well up in him. His major-general was a true friend.

Haim replied, 'I will, sir, I will! I will not act as reckless as before, believe me. I promise to take heed of your advice. As you said, you know me. I will do what is needed to return any other way to Thorn than in a coffin.'

Haim was surprised then, as von Stückradt flung his fist hard on the table. The inkpot sprang up a full centimetre.

‘Damn, damn, damn,’ the Major-General exclaimed still, ‘Germans against Germans, Prussians against Germans, Prussians against Austrians! Brothers against brothers! I had hoped not having to see any of this! I have been to Vienna, Vincius. Several times. It is a most elegant city, large, proud, beautiful, filled with art and fine ways of living. You will not be fighting barbarians, or those damn Frenchmen. Take care. The Austrian soldier can be beaten. Most of them will be young men from the country, most of them without the least education. They will come from different countries, speaking many languages but German. They will have little instruction in the art of warfare. The Austrian officers, though, will be as smart as you. Don’t underestimate them! Their artillery is excellent. Watch your sides, and watch your back!’

Von Stückradt sighed.

Haim Vincius waited a while, noticed how his commanding officer sank in his chair, lowering his head and shuffling nervously at some papers in front of him. He knew he was being dismissed. He saluted, thought more phrases unnecessary, and left the room.

The Prussian 1st and 2nd Armies entered from Prussian Silesia into Austrian Bohemia, the later Czechia, to march towards Vienna, directly south.

The 1st Army was constituted of 3 Army Corps and 1 cavalry corps of six brigades. It drew about 300 cannons with it, and about 93,000 soldiers marched. Its base was at Görlitz at the beginning of the campaign, its commander Prince Friedrich Karl of Prussia, who had also participated in the Second Schleswig War, and who was at 38 years old a very able commander. His soldiers called him the ‘Red Prince’, for he usually wore the scarlet, dashing uniform of the Zieten Hussars. He was also the nephew of the king. The 1st Army rode by train from Frankfurt over Görlitz to Liegnitz.

The Prussian 2nd Army was stronger. It consisted of 4 Army corps and 1 cavalry division of 3 brigades. It drew 336 cannons on. It had about 100,000 men. It lay in camp at Nessie, under the command of the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, who was 35 years old. He was the son of the king, and married to the English Princess Royal Victoria, daughter of Queen Victoria. He was Queen Victoria’s son-in-law.

The 2nd Army used the railroad Stettin-Breslau-Langaschütz-Reckenbach-Frankenstein, and the Brieg-Neusse railroad. Equally in the direction of Bohemia! The 2nd and 3rd Armies were placed under the command of Prince Friedrich Karl.

The 3rd Army was called the Army of the Elbe. It was 3 divisions strong. Two cavalry brigades accompanied it, and about 144 cannons. It was settled around Torgan, under the command of General Herwarth von Bittenfeld. Parts of the Army of the Elbe River were aimed at Nürnberg, and later southward to Munich. Another part of this army marched from the west, eastwards, to help the 1st and 2nd Prussian Armies in Bohemia. The Army of the Elbe travelled by railroad from Berlin over Dresden to Friedland, direction Bohemia.

These three army groups converged to a line between the cities of Sadowa and of Königgrätz, this last called in the Bohemian language Hradec Králové. The main battle of the war was called after this town.

The Austrian Army would finally gather in the triangle Josephstadt-Königgrätz-Sadowa to confront the Prussian invasion. The name of Josephstadt in the Bohemian language was Pevnost Josefov, the Fortress of Josefov, a fortified town, formerly called Ples and now abbreviated to Josefov.

The Austrian Army sent 7 army corps against Prussia and 3 such corps against Italy. Each corps consisted of 4 brigades of 2 regiments each, a battalion of skirmishers, plus one regiment of cavalry.

To fight the German Confederate Armies in Germany itself, the Prussians used 3 divisions. They had one division at Altona in Holstein, under the command of General von Manteuffel. Von Manteuffel drew from Altona to Hannover, the first target of the Prussians. They pushed towards the capital, in the best and simplest advice of von Clausewitz' strategy of war. A second division, drawn together from various garrisons of Mainz, Rastadt and Frankfurt, were in camp at Wetzlar, under General von Beyer. Von Beyer started by invading Hesse-Kassel from Wetzlar.

Yet another division was at Minden, under the command of General Vogel von Falckenstein. Von Falckenstein was chosen as the commander of all the operations against the Confederate allies. He too attacked Hannover out of Minden.

The Hannoverian Army instantly retreated to Göttingen with its blind King George V. On the 17th of June, von Falckenstein entered the city of Hannover. On the 19th of June, also von Manteuffel reached the town. By the 22th, the Prussians occupied all the land of Hannover, except for the region of Göttingen,

On the 19th of June equally, the Prussian troops entered Kassel. This cut the escape routes of the Hannoverian Army. It tried to move to Fulda, to join the Bavarian Army there. The line Bleicherode-Eisenach came to be blocked, however, by the Prussians, forcing the Hannoverians to seek for alternatives. The Prussians acted according to von Moltke's orders, never to let the German armies join each other to form one. The Prussians sent troops by railway via Magdeburg to Gotha.

The Prussian troops, about 9,000 men, moved under the General von Fliess. On the River Unstrut, they clashed with Austrian troops. Von Fliess had to retreat, mostly because the Hannoverian Army attacked in greater numbers of men. Von Fliess, defeated, retreated to Warza. The Hannoverian Army, nevertheless, somewhat later found itself surrounded on all sides by 40,000 Prussians, troops of the Prussian Generals von Goeben, von Beyer and von Manteuffel. On the 29th of June, the Hannoverians surrendered!

The war between Prussia and Austria finally lasted only seven weeks. Nevertheless, many battles were fought, the one rapidly after the other.

The Prussian Army invaded Saxony as of the 16th of June, with the Army of the Elbe and with their 1st Army. The Saxons retreated into Bohemia, to join the Austrian Army. The Land

of Saxony was Prussian! In less than 2 weeks, the Prussian generals had conquered Hannover, Hesse-Kassel and Saxony. Prussia could move unhindered against Bavaria and the rest of the Confederate Army. The Prussian divisions marched on.

On the 17th of June, the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph announced the state of war with Prussia. On the 20th, Italy declared war on Austria. This diverted important masses of Austrian troops from the Prussian invasion. Austria had to fight a war on two fronts at least.

The Austrian generals had wanted to invade Prussia, but they were far too late with their mobilisation to wage such a campaign. The Prussians mobilised much faster. They were also much earlier to move and pass the frontier. They took the fastest way to Vienna, over the *Riesengebirge* between Silesia and Bohemia. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Armies marched southwards, into the *Sudetenland*, the shortest way to invade the Austrian Empire and to dash to Vienna. They had to pass the Giant Mountains, formidable barriers, in the knowledge the Austrian Army would be waiting for them when they emerged from the mountain passes and from the roads between the snow-covered mountains.

The Army of the Elbe split in two parts.

One part marched via Würzen, Dahlen and Strebela, the other via Ostrau and Dobeln. The latter marched at the right flank of the main army.

The 1st Prussian Army marched from Görlitz to Löbau and Ostritz. A cavalry detachment rode through Bischofswerder, along the left flank of the Army of the Elbe. On the 18th of June, it captured Dresden in Saxony, and pushed on. The Prussian Prince Friedrich Karl, the nephew of the king, commanded these troops. The forces of Prince Friedrich Karl could begin the invasion of Bohemia, the imperial territory of Austria-Hungary. At the same time, the Prussian 2nd Army advanced from Silesia into Bohemia. Bohemia was a land encircled by mountains. The Prussians, invading it from the north, would have to pass the Giant Mountains, the *Riesengebirge*.

On the 24th of June, at the Battle of Custozza, the Austrian Army defeated the Italian Army. The Italians had entered the Veneto region, attacking Austria there. The Austrian Army and the Venetian Army, commanded by Archduke Albrecht of Habsburg, defeated two Italian armies. One Italian Army was led by Alfonso Ferrero la Marmora and accompanied by King Vittorio Emanuele II. The other Italian Army was led by Enrico Cialdini. The Italians had a strong numerical advantage, of almost double the number of soldiers. Nevertheless, they had to give in to the shock tactics of the Austrians, which launched fierce bayonet attacks against the Italian troops. The Italians were driven back across the Mincio River, out of the Veneto region.

In the meantime, in Bohemia, the Austrian Field Marshal Ludwig von Benedek began to draw his troops together. By the 25th of June, the Austrian Army was ready to face the Prussian onslaught. The 1st Austrian Corps, one brigade of the 3rd Corps and a cavalry division had moved to Jung Bruntzlau, where also the Saxon Army was reforming. They waited on the southern side of the mountains, expecting the Prussians soon to emerge in the plains. The 10th Corps was stationed at Jaromir with one cavalry division. The Austrian 4th

Corps had moved to Opocno, the 6th Corps to Solnitz, the 3rd Corps to Tynist, the 3rd Corps to Wamberg, the 2nd Corps to Geyersberg, and 4 cavalry divisions to Gabel, Leitomischel, Abstdorf and Policzka. In total, Field Marshal von Benedek stood against the forces of the Prussian crown prince with 6 Army Corps. The Austrian forces on the Iser River, under the Count Clam-Callas, faced the Prussian Army of Prince Friedrich Karl. The Prussian Armies intended to concentrate at Gitschin, but the Austrian troops extended beyond this point, further to the north.

The Prussians advanced as of the 20th of June.

The Army of the Elbe marched by road in 6 days to Gabel.

The 1st Prussian Army started on the 22nd to reach Kirchenberg, where it assembled, having split in several groups to pass the mountains.

The Prussian 2nd Army was formidable as an invasion force. The 2nd Army that was invading Bohemia, had also to split up in order to traverse the passes of the Giant Mountains.

The 6th Prussian Corps was ordered to move in the direction of Olmütz. It fought a skirmish at Freiwaldau against Austrian cavalry. The Austrians, fearing a larger Prussian army behind it, drew large forces in its way. The Austrian brigades could not stop the Prussian 2nd Army, however! On the 28th of June, the 2nd Prussian Army reached positions on the right bank of the Elbe from Arnau to Gradlitz, north of Jaromir. This was a strategic master movement, for the gross of the Austrian Army was concentrated on the left side of the Elbe. The Prussian forces on the right side of the Elbe could, by manoeuvring farther south, cut off the Austrian Army from the roads to Vienna. Luckily for von Benedek, the Prussian movements never developed so far south.

On the 27th of June, the Prussian crown prince moved one corps against Trautenau, another against Nachod.

When the Prussian soldiers emerged on the Bohemian side, they found the Austrian forces in their way.

This led on the day mentioned to the Battles of Nachod and of Trautenau, where the Austrians checked the Prussian advance. The Prussians seemed to have been stopped in the mountains, but actually forced such great losses of men on the Austrian divisions that the battles ended disastrously for the Austrian army. The Prussian divisions marched on. The Austrian troops retreated before them.

The Prussian General Karl Friedrich von Steinmetz' 5th Corps occupied with his soldiers the high ground near Nachod. Parts of the Austrian 6th Corps under General Von Ramming came to face the Prussians and attacked them, but were repulsed. As more Austrians arrived, they joined in the shock attacks, but these proved very costly in men and did not bring the wished success. Finally, the decimated Austrians retreated from the field. The Austrians learned the power of the Prussian needle guns. They lost more than 5,700 men against the Prussians' 1,200 losses.

At Nachod, the Austrians were defeated.

The same day, on the western, German front, at the Battle of Langensalza, the army of Hannover first defeated inferior Prussian forces. King George V of Hannover directed his

army of 19,000 soldiers under General Alexander von Arentschildt against about 9,000 Prussians. The Hannoverians won a victory, but a little later they got surrounded by a larger Prussian army converging on them from several sides. The battle had given just the time the Prussians needed to converge on the Hannoverian army. Unable to link up with their Bavarian allies to the south, the Hannoverians surrendered. On the 29th of June, as already mentioned, King George V of Hannover surrendered himself at Nordhausen, two days later. The Prussians quickly overran and occupied Hannover.

General Adolf von Bonin's Prussian troops emerged from the mountain passes. They were caught on their way from Trautenau towards Pilníkov, where they hoped to link up with the Prussian 1st army. The Austrian 10th Corps, marched towards Trautenau to stop Bonin's advance.

The Prussian General von Clausewitz, commanding a division of the 1st Corps, arrived first at Pardnitz and waited there for a few hours until his other part arrived.

In the meantime, the Austrian General von Mondl's brigade of the 10th Austrian Corps equally arrived at Trautenau. He occupied the heights which commanded the town, and Trautenau itself. Somewhat later, the entire 10th Corps of the Austrian Army arrived, led by General von Gablenz.

The opponent armies delivered the Battle of Trautenau. The Austrians attacked the troops of General von Bonin. The battle lasted 6 hours, and the Prussians once more suffered a defeat. The Austrian troops drove them from the field. Though the Austrians had won a victory, they lost more than 5,000 men and 196 officers. The Prussians lost 1,300 men and 56 officers. The Battle of Trautenau thus proved particularly bloody for the Austrians, showing clearly the efficiency of the Prussian breech-loading guns. The battle also did not stop the Prussians from advancing into Bohemia!

In the meantime, the Prussian 5th Corps under von Steinmetz continued to advance to the junction of the roads to Skalitz and Neustadt, where it received orders from von Moltke to halt. The advanced-guard under General von Loewenfeldt saw the Austrian 6th Corps arriving.

The Austrians immediately detached a brigade to engage the Prussians. The Prussian advanced-guard had only 6 and a half battalions, 5 squadrons and 12 cannons, against the Austrian 21 battalions, 80 guns and much larger forces of cavalry. The Prussians and Austrians fought here too a battle, until more Prussian troops emerged. Von Steinmetz could counter-attack, defeated the Austrians, and forced his enemy to retreat to Skalitz.

In this engagement, the Prussians lost 1,122 men killed and wounded, but the Austrians lost 7,500 men, of whom 2,500 prisoners to the Prussians. The 2nd Prussian Army of the crown prince, thus fought two separate battles the same day! The Prussians lost one and won the other, and inflicted serious losses at both instances to the Austrians. The Austrian generals slowly began to doubt they could stop the invading army. Also, they were losing many men at a fast pace. Their soldiers' morale diminished rapidly.

The armies of Prince Friedrich Karl built bridges over the River Iser at Turnau and Podol. On the plateau of Sichrav, they prepared the attack on Münchengrätz, to the south, near the Iser. Münchengrätz was called Mnichovo Hradiste in Bohemian.

On the 28th of June, the 1st Prussian Army and the Army of the Elbe attacked the Austrian forces of Lieutenant-Colonel Count Eduard Clam-Callas at Münchengrätz. In the skirmish that followed, Clam-Callas lost 2,000 men and retreated to Gitschin. The Prussians only lost 341 men.

The army of the Red Prince Friedrich Karl, more than 100,000 men, then assembled in the plains of Bohemia. The Prussians drove the Austrians from the roads leading to Solotka, and united there. The position of the town of Gitschin, or Jicin in Bohemian, became of prime strategic importance for the Prussian Army. It was of strategic importance also for the Austrians! Gitschin lay between the Rivers Iser and the Elbe. One Prussian Army lay already near Gitschin, another moved towards the Elbe!

Prince Friedrich Karl's army had grown to about 140,000 soldiers. Clam-Callas, the Austrian general, had only 60,000 men. Still, Prince Friedrich Karl at first refused the engagement. He waited. The Austrians held on to their positions at Münchengrätz and Gitschin.

The Prussian 2nd Army marched the same day from Gablenz to Eypel. Two Prussian divisions attacked the Austrian troops of General von Gablenz. The Austrians lost the Battle of Soor there, leaving about 3,700 men killed or wounded in the field, for only about 720 Prussian killed and wounded. The Austrian generals learned each large skirmish or battle lost them far more men than their adversaries.

The 8th Austrian Corps and the 6th Corps, placed under Archduke Leopold, stood in front of Skalitz. The 8th Corps relieved the 6th on the east bank of the Aupa River, and the 6th Corps marched off to Dolau. The Austrian 8th Corps clashed with the Prussian troops of von Steinmetz. In this Battle of Skalitz, the Prussians lost 1,365 killed or wounded, but the Austrians lost nearly 6,000 men, of whom 2,500 had been made prisoners by the Prussians.

These battles of Soor and of Skalitz opened the way for the Prussian 1st and 6th Corps. The distance between the troops of Prince Friedrich Karl, at Ztowa, and those of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm near Soor, was only 27 miles.

On June the 29th, four Austrian Army corps, the 4th, the 6th, the 8th and the 10th, stood against the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. The Austrian 1st Corps and the Saxon Army confronted Prince Friedrich Karl.

Chief-of-Staff, General Count von Moltke, from out of his Berlin military headquarters, ordered Prince Friedrich Karl to march to Gitschin, to relieve and disengage the 2nd Prussian Army from the superior Austrian forces. The prince did as he was ordered. The Austrian Count Clam-Callas made a stand at Gitschin in a very strong position, in a terrain of ravines, hills and gullies. Nevertheless, the Prussians attacked. The Austrians had to retreat to Gitschin under the pressure, while fighting on. The Prussians could take Gitschin in the night. In this Battle for Gitschin, the Prussians lost 2,600 men, killed, wounded or missing. The Austrians, however, lost 7,000 men, of which 4,000 were taken prisoner. Count

Clam-Callas had been defeated. He could no longer stop the advance of Prince Friedrich Karl's troops, and he retreated to near the town of Königgrätz.

On the 30th of June, King Wilhelm of Prussia moved his headquarters to Jicin, or Gitschin in German, in Bohemia. He had the General Staff, headed by von Moltke, with him.

Until then, Haim Vincius found warfare was actually a very boring and tiresome matter. He had marched with his men in the 7th Division of the 2nd Prussian Army. At Breslau, he had been given orders to join this division. His artillery had been taken off his hands. He kept still fresh in his mind the sneer on the face of Lieutenant von Ofenhausen, who was so glad to be rid of his Jewish Major.

The lieutenant had added, 'finally, sir, I am on my own and can come into my own. So far, you did nothing but withhold me from serving the fatherland, from intervening in any battle. I wish you luck. But you do not honour the Prussian armies!'

Haim had not given the lieutenant the satisfaction of an answer. He had turned on his heels and walked away, without saluting.

March after march, Haim Vincius had proceeded with the 7th Division through the cold and humid mountain passes, and preserved as many of his men as he could from the cold and from sore feet. The last was more important than many might have thought. Open wounds on feet could fester and rot. Men could get very sick from the cold and from insufficient food and exhaustion. Haim managed to find food anywhere, and if he could not get enough, he stole it unscrupulously. His men became masters in scavenging farms along the roads. As a result, when they left the mountains behind them, Haim entered Bohemia with his regiment practically intact, a rare feat for which he was noticed. His regiment had been given that designation, but Haim had never received much more than half the men of a decent number of such troops. Von Stückradt had held some more in Thorn, no men had been added to his group in Breslau. The artillery troops of Thorn had been better provided for. Haim had no idea in which part of the army the Thorn artillery had been incorporated into, and he didn't care. He wrote letters to his father, to his wife in Berlin, and to von Major-General von Stückradt. He wondered whether these would ever arrive to destination. In the advancing army, he minded his own business, rarely spoke to anyone but the soldiers he knew from Thorn, and strictly obeyed all orders. He plodded on in the muddy passes, marched on, and arrived at the time demanded of him.

The Austrian Field Marshal Ludwig von Benedek ordered his main forces against Prince Friedrich Karl, holding a small contingency to contain the Prussian crown prince's divisions. He thought one corps would be sufficient to stop the advance of the crown prince. In the end, he would be so very wrong on that point.

For the Prussian 2nd Army, several corps marched independently towards the Elbe River. The Prussian 5th Corps clashed with the Austrians at Schweinschädel and sent then retreating with a loss of 5,000 men killed, wounded or made prisoners. The crown prince of Prussia reached the Elbe, without significant losses. The first issue of General von Moltke had been solved to good results, and in time.

The Austrian Field Marshal von Benedek pulled his soldiers to the plateau of Dubenetz, stopped the 3rd Corps to remain at Miletin, and ordered also the 1st corps and the Saxons to

join his army via Miletin. The Austrian 5th Army corps and 4 cavalry divisions stood in line, in front of the Elbe, the fortress of Josephstadt at their right flank.

Until that moment, the Austrian planners had lost in the battles and skirmishes against the advancing Prussians more than 30,000 men. They had not been able to contain the Prussians in the *Riesengebirge*. The Austrians moved from now on really on the defensive, and the road from Arnau to Gitschin lay open for the Prussian armies to assemble and concentrate on. The repeated defeats and gruesome losses had demoralised the Austrian troops. The Prussians enjoyed the enthusiasm of repeated victories.

The Battle of Königgrätz

On June the 30th of 1866, the Prussian armies assembled. They threatened the forces of the Austrians on the left and in the rear. The Austrians had gathered around the Elbe, on the left banks, north of Josephstadt. To their right, on the right bank of the Elbe, assembled the 2nd Prussian Army led by the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia. On their right side, advanced the 1st Prussian Army and the Army of the Elbe under Prince Friedrich Karl of Prussia. These marched past Gitschin already, southeast, and spread in a triangle from Jung Bruntzlau in the south to Turnau along the Iser. In the north, the top of the triangle, the spear-point, lay Gitschin, a nice and typical small town of Bohemia, to the west of the Austrian Army.

The Austrians wanted to keep the Prussian 2nd Army on the other side of the Elbe. The Prussian troops, as well as the Austrians held these positions at least for a while.

The next day, the 1st of July, Field-Marshal von Benedek ordered the general retreat of the Austrian Army to near the fortified town of Königgrätz. He had found a plateau between Sadowa and Königgrätz, a castle in the air that could be well defended. He had not any intention of attacking. He would make a stand there, and defend with his troops Bohemia against the oncoming Prussian Army. He ordered his *Geniedirektor*, Baron Pidole, to fortify the positions of the army. Pidole constructed several battery fortifications, protected by up to 8 feet high earthen walls.

The Austrian armies took positions in various villages in a zone, a triangle equally, directed to the south, with as base the line from Sadowa to Smiritz, and with the southern top at Königgrätz. The Crown Prince of Saxony held the defence from Pila to the heights of Probus.

The Prussian 1st Army and the Army of the Elbe under the able Prince Friedrich Karl followed to the south, past Gitschin, called Jicin in Bohemian, to the west of the Austrians. The Prussian 2nd Army, under the crown prince, equally moved south, to Königinhof, on the left bank of the Elbe.

The Austrians stood between the River Bistritz on their left, and with the Elbe on their right, viewed to the north from out of Königgrätz. The Austrian Army stood concentrated, ready to give a major battle. They had to stop the Prussian Army here. They were aware that if they lost, the road to Vienna would lay open to the Prussians.

On the 2nd of July, the Army of the Elbe advanced still from the north. The Prussians' 1st, 3rd and 2nd armies, advancing from the northwest and from the northeast respectively, stood at less than 5 miles of each other, unaware of each other, and unaware, really, of the concentration they had accomplished.

The Prussian 1st Army had been ordered to take up positions along the line Neu-Bidsow to Horwitz, to reconnoitre Sadowa, and later the Elbe between Königgrätz and Josephstadt, northly of Königgrätz. The army of the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm was to watch the direction towards Prague.

By the end of the day, Prince Friedrich Karl received reports making him and his staff aware of the true positions of the Austrian Army, quite near him, behind the Bistritz, Sadowa almost in their centre. Prince Friedrich Karl then prepared to attack the Austrians over the Bistritz. He counted on the troops of the crown prince to attack the right wing of the Austrians, along the Elbe.

The troops of Prince Friedrich Karl moved to a line running from the north at Horwitz to the south at Nechanitz. This was the left flank of the Austrians, among the Bistritz. The Army of the Elbe should attack the Austrians in the north, and attack the north-western flank of the Austrians.

The Prussian army of the crown prince still moved south to past Josephstadt, to stand just north of the Austrians, against the Elbe, and to the northeast of the enemy. The crown prince himself was still quite advancing north of the Austrians, at Königinhof. He ordered his army to the assistance of Prince Friedrich Karl, southwards.

The Bistritz was a river, a brook really, rather easily to pass. At places, it was not much larger than a ditch. It only became more difficult to pass the Bistritz near Nechanitz, where the river was swollen by the recent rains and by the waters of her feeding side-rivers.

The Austrians meanwhile strengthened a little their defences by throwing up entrenchments. They placed their batteries in line. The Austrian entrenchments had been thrown up in haste, and proved later of little use.

At dawn of the 3rd of July, the day of the battle, the Prussian attack on the Austrian army near Königgrätz really started.

It had rained very hard during the night. No weather to send a soldier in! Fog hung over the fields, between the villages. The weather was foul for marching soldiers. Cannonades opened the hostilities. The village of Benatek was set on fire rapidly. Benatek lay on the Bistritz, in the northwest. At first, the divisions of Prince Friedrich Karl, who energetically commanded himself, did not pass the Bistritz.

At that time, early in the morning, the 70-year old king of Prussia, Wilhelm I, arrived on the battlefield! He had arrived mainly by train, accompanied by the War Minister von Roon, by his Chief-of-Staff von Moltke, and by the Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck. The generals of Prince Friedrich Karl explained the situation to the king.

The king of Prussia agreed with a general attack along the line Benatek-Nechanitz, the line of the Bistritz. The main attack would proceed at the western flank of the Austrian Army. The

army of the crown prince was still advancing from the north. Against the pressure, if the gods of war allowed, the Austrian soldiers would be pushed south, to below Königgrätz, over the Elbe, to the east, on the way to Olmütz and Vienna. No doubt, if defeated, the Austrian generals would want to defend the capital.

Bohemia was a beautiful country, with green hills and fine dales, small farms clustered together to small villages, fine grain fields, hedgerows and groves. Here would soon be shown horrible scenes of carnage!

On this day, the Austrian Army was over 206,000 men strong, with about 770 cannons. The Prussian 1st Army and the Army of the Elbe opposed the Austrians with about 124,000 men and 440 cannons. The 2nd Army of the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, would increase the Prussian forces to about 221,000 men and 790 cannons, slightly higher than the Austrians in both numbers.

The Battle of Königgrätz could begin. Königgrätz itself, the fortress and its garrison, hardly played a central role. The battle was fought on the terrains to its west, in open fields and in hills and forests. The rain continued pouring down the whole morning. Prince Friedrich Karl's divisions drove forward and attacked the Austrian barrage.

The Austrian Field Marshal had very well chosen the place for a defensive stand. The heights of Lipa covered from above the advancing Prussian troops, which laboriously drew on through the muddy valley. From the heights of Lipa, the very powerful Austrian batteries pounded on the Prussian, oncoming troops. The Prussian artillerymen had to plough their heavy cannons through the muddy terrain of the Bistritz Valley, and under pouring rain. Still, the Prussians advanced to the attack. The horror of the enemy artillery fire the Prussian soldiers had to walk into was terrible, a deluge of iron shrapnels falling upon them at tremendous power, piercing the bodies. And yet, the Prussian infantry and the cavalry marched inexorably on, most of the officers convinced they could not lose this day, as they had won most engagements of the past days. They would not just win a battle today! They would win the campaign, if they could dislodge the Austrians from the heights. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm sped to the support of Prince Friedrich Karl, but his troops were still farther off, to the north, to the side of the Elbe. Friedrich Wilhelm heard it say in his staff that if the Austrians had to keep their entire army to hold off Prince Friedrich Karl, the Austrians would be finished at their right flanks by the nearing crown prince's troops. That army stood at 11 o'clock at Choteborek, ready to attack frontally. The crown prince's men were necessary, for by noon, the Prussian army of Prince Friedrich Karl stood almost to a standstill, dug into the earth by the Austrian gunnery.

One of the first attacks of the day saw the crown prince's Prussian 7th Division move forward, southwards, against the Swiepwald, a forest on the wooded heights of Maslowed. The wood covered a steep ridge. General von Fransecky sent 4 battalions forward.

Haim Vincius and his men stood in very nasty weather, in muddy ground and sweeping rain showers in front of a wood. He had no idea how the wood was called, and he had no idea how the villages he and his men had passed were called. He had heard it say he would be fighting today, see some action, and he had vaguely heard talk about a village called Benatek, which

would lay to the north of where he stood. That village was burning. He had seen very high, red flames reach from the earth behind him, in the far, and somewhat later dark smoke rise to the skies. He heard the rolling sounds of cannonades to his right and to his left, and farther away too, to the southwest. He didn't know how the battle was evolving, if there even was a battle going on, and not merely a duel of artillery. He only knew he and other battalions had been sent forward to take the wood, in which lurked the enemy. Would he run into an artillery barrage too, or not? Haim Vincius did not know, then, that Benatek and the Swiepwald lay in the centre of the northern defence line of the Austrian Army.

Haim felt wet all through, to the bone, and very irritated by the humidity. His clothes hung heavy on him and clung to his body. It was a feeling he didn't like, and his soldiers even less. The rain pelted down around him. His boots and his uniform were stained with mud. It was the kind of sandy mud one just had to shake off when dry, but now remained sticky on Haim and his men. Every step one took was hard and heavy. Haim sometimes slid in the mud. Often, his feet completely disappeared in the slippery mud. He was glad to run up into the heights of the wood, out of the swampy terrain below. His only consolation was that he was not alone in this ordeal. If the entire Prussian Army advanced, everybody would be feeling the same utter discomfort and irritation as he.

He was definitely not alone! To his left and right, other columns of infantry advanced alongside of Haim. Haim didn't at all like to have to advance in columns. He had the heart of an individual skirmisher, of a lonely, sole fighter, of a hunter, a *Jäger*, advancing by using the terrain to remain invisible, and shoot unexpectedly. He would have preferred to walk with his men in dispersed order, leaving a comfortable distance between each man.

Haim stepped, as ordered, but he gave a strange example to his men, copied by them, springing from bushes to bushes, from occasional low tree to tree. Behind him, his men did the same, as he had taught them. Even other columns began to imitate him, finding this way far safer than walking in a straight line and thus making excellent targets for enemy shooters. Before him, Haim saw a dense wood, the kind of terrain he longed for. The trees meant safety, places to hide. The wood was growing up to a ridge. If the Austrians were holding that ridge, or hiding behind it, many of his comrades would die today!

When Haim arrived at about two paces from where the trees began, the wood erupted in smoke. The Austrians indeed stood there, waiting behind the trees. They had opened fire on the advancing Prussians.

Haim Vincius shouted instantly, 'down, down!'

He fired into the wood, not sparing ammunition, dropped in the mud and reloaded. His *Zündnadelgewehr* fired despite the rain. Haim had already another cartridge in his rifle. He remained lying down, and shot into the wood. He distinguished no human form amongst the trees in front of him. He just fired into the thickness of the leaves. His men opened fire like their officers. Haim heard cries from enemy soldiers when Prussian bullets reached Austrian bodies. He had also seen several of his men fall down, killed or wounded by bullets from Austrian muskets. A violent rage gripped him.

When he had shot five or six bullets into the trees, he heard shouts in German of 'forward, forward, *Vorwärts!*'

Haim had to obey. The Austrians shot in volleys. Haim heard the bullets fly over his head. He stood and ran forward, bowed as low as he could. He looked at what his men did. Luckily, they imitated him and followed. He did not shout anymore, he led by example. He reached the border of the wood. He had heard several bullets whistle past his ears, but as he ran, bowed, he made a smaller target. Were the Austrians really taking aim on the running Prussian soldiers? Haim doubted it, for his men continued to run next to him and behind him. He threw himself down amidst the first trees of the wood. Several of his men came to form a line, close to him. This line would be formidable, almost impossible to take by the Austrians, as the Dreyse guns allowed their own barrage of fire. His column had disappeared. There was no straight line anymore in all the men behind him; they had chosen to form a jagged line along the border of the wood, as Haim wanted, next to him.

‘Thank God,’ Haim prayed, ‘they are doing what I taught them to do. Good boys!’

The surprising thing was, Haim thought, he saw no other Prussians darting past him on left and on right. Had he advanced too soon, too far?

Then, he refused to think about anything and in his turn stood and began running, shouting, ‘forward! Forward!’

Haim stood, shot, ran a few steps from tree to tree, reloaded, and opened fire on uniforms moving in front of him.

‘Shoot low,’ he warned again, and ran on.

He reloaded while running, threw himself down, shot again, reloaded while lying in the very damp grass, shot, reloaded, sprang up and ran forward.

He reached a group of Austrian soldiers standing behind low bushes, shooting and reloading the muzzles of their muskets. Haim took aim, shot, and ordered his men to shoot and to advance. One by one, as if struck by a hard wind, the Austrians fell to the ground.

Haim reloaded, shot, sprang forward, reloaded, shot at whatever moved in front of him. He didn’t know who ran in front of him, Austrian or Prussian, but he shot as fast as he could. He ran like a deadly fury in the wood. He would not have been able to recognise friend or enemy. He just took aim, shot, dropped down, reloaded, took new aim, shot again, stood, reloaded on the run, shot. He took a second to find out whether he was alone, but he noticed his men to left and right advancing at the same height as he, giving hell’s fire of bullets to before them. Who could withstand such a wild attack? Haim would not have recognised friend or enemy, because of the mud clinging to uniforms. He just ran, shot, dropped down, reloaded, shot, stood and ran on. His men advanced the same way, at his side, darting from tree to tree, shooting and reloading. Haim passed corpses lying in the mud or in the ferns, Austrians touched by Prussian bullets. Austrians had run to Haim, shouting, bayonets ready to stab. Such lines of Austrians, muskets empty of bullets, did not run far. The bullets from the Prussian guns, very quickly reloaded, shot the Austrian waves of men mercilessly down. No bayonet reached the Prussian soldiers.

The running became more difficult. The terrain rose. Haim understood he was running up the wood’s ridge. A couple of times, a bullet sizzled past his head, but he felt no impact on his body. He kept in movement, the surest way to avoid enemy bullets. He ran, shot, reloaded, ran forward.

After a while, Haim thought he had reached the ridge of the hill in the wood. More bodies of killed or wounded Austrians lay here. He saw fog and smoke mixing in front of him, but he

also could hear the rain and wind intensify. If only this weather could change a little! Haim longed for dryness, for a warming sun. He guessed the sun would not show today!

The first part of the wood in front of him had been cleared of Austrian enemies. Or so he thought, for he could still see the flashes of muskets shooting, but far in front of him. Smoke from out of many muskets rose to his left and to his right.

Haim ran on, until he was sure to have passed the ridge. When he stood, he could see the second half of the wood a little beneath him. He waited, gathered about ten men around him, knew the others would sit or lie down farther on and behind him.

Haim placed the men he could see around him, told them to lie down and wait for him. Then, he ordered about five men to follow him to the left. He didn't want to go much farther left and right, for Prussian bullets might reach him there. He walked, or rather sprang, ever bowed, to about twenty steps on his left. There, he saw other Prussian soldiers advance. It seemed all right to attack on. He did the same to the right of him, assuring himself the other Prussians caught well up with him. His column had now become a jagged, triple line. He had found it rather silly to advance in a straight column, the more so now, when everybody could hide in the wood. Prussians from other regiments must have joined in his movement, for he found Prussian soldiers to left and tight.

Haim should not be staying here! A battle was on in the Swiepwald.

Haim stood, began to shout his cry of 'forward, forward!' again.

He ran forward, shot, reloaded, shot, and ran on. Shoot, drop, reload, stand, shoot, drop, reload, stand, shoot!

Each and every man of his regiment knew the drill. Haim saw his men executed this to perfection, as he did. Haim afterwards didn't recall how many times he did this movement. Ten times? Anyway, he was the first to emerge from the trees. He suddenly saw the sky open a little, and he could see far in front of him, on to green fields. He ran into a plain. He remarked another village in front of him. Several of his men emerged next to him and remained standing there, as astonished as their major. To his horror, Haim noticed a dense line of Austrian columns right in front of him, men standing and coming forward in line, parallel to the border of the wood, bayonets on their muskets.

The Austrians already counter-attacked in shock-order, the Austrian way! Haim ordered his men back in the wood, just one pace. He ordered to hide behind trees and to lie down. He ordered to fire at will into the oncoming Austrians. The Austrians were crying, now, in the fury of the battle. The Austrians ran onto Haim in formations of three or four rows thick, man to man in each row.

Haim ordered his men again to fire at will, and hundreds of bullets slammed into the advancing rows. He shot and shot, and shot again. Tens of Austrian soldiers dropped. He kept on shooting. The sounds of the rapid firing, the cries of falling Austrians was deafening. The Austrians had hoped to overrun the Prussians in one of their bayonet-on-muzzles attacks, movements that were frightening indeed, but the Prussians believed in their Dreyse guns and shot series after series of bullets into the Austrian ranks. The Prussians fired into the mass of men. They saw hundreds of Austrians being mowed down like grass stalks in the fields.

Then, cannonballs whizzed around the Prussians in the wood, and exploded with fire and overwhelming noise. The wood became a hell of fire and smoke. Metal shrapnels and long, cutting pieces of wood flew around and would have mowed down any Prussian who stood. Not so Haim's men, who stuck their body as low as they could to the ground, using any elevation – if only a few centimetres high – to hide their flesh behind. They continued firing from the round. When the artillery salvos seemed to lessen a little, Haim ordered his men somewhat deeper in the wood. The Prussians retreated step by step, past the impacts of the murderous cannon fire. When they reached the ridge again, Haim made his men lie down again. They shot and kept shooting at the last oncoming Austrians. Haim saw many men fall in front of him. Not one Austrian soldier reached his line on the ridge. The Austrian counter-attacks had been stopped.

When Haim really couldn't see any men in the wood in front of him, he ordered to stop firing. How many cartridges did he and his men still have? The Austrians by then had also stopped shooting cannon balls into the wood.

A strange silence began to hang over the wood, interrupted here and there by a last musket or rifle firing. Haim guessed this, his first attack, was over.

He should look to left and right, move out of this wood and go out for information. Haim was rather convinced nobody would bring him news the next hour or so. No new orders. The Austrian counter-attacks must have been stopped everywhere. The orders had been to take the Swiepwald! The battle had to burn on! Haim reluctantly stood and walked back, down the ridge, to the border of the wood.

Haim Vincius once more saw the village in front of him. No Austrian soldiers seemed to remain in the field. He walked on, slowly now, his men in one, thin line to the left and to the right of him. He noticed he had suddenly many more Prussians doing exactly as he had asked of his own. He walked on, to the village. No Austrians came in his way. The Prussians cheered, and walked on. They passed tens of corpses lying in the fields. Haim strode over dead Austrians. He walked on, taking aim on the church tower of the village in front. He walked past the Swiepwald. He would take the village in front, then wait there and ask for information and new orders.

The Prussians drove 2 Austrian battalions out of the wood. The northern defence line of the Austrians had thus been broken at the first attack!

The Austrians counter-attacked with reinforcements, drawn from the Austrian 4th and 2nd Corps. General Von Fransecky too asked for reinforcements, and received two more battalions from the Prussian 8th Division. He disposed now of 14 battalions and 24 cannons, but he attacked an Austrian force of 40 battalions and 122 cannons! The Prussian 7th division bowed and retreated, but kept their stand at the northern ridge of the Swiepwald. They fought for more than 3 hours, holding their ground. And then, they advanced. Major Haim Vincius led.

While this battle was going on, the Prussian 8th Division passed the Bistritz over two bridges. They quickly pushed the Austrian forces back from the woods of Skalka and Sadowa. The Austrians fled, back to the heights of Lipa.

The Austrians had concentrated about 160 cannons between Lipa and Langenhof. These opened fire on the Prussians of the 8th Division. The Prussian soldiers could not advance from out of the woods. They would all have been slaughtered without having even seen an adversary.

The Prussian 4th and 3rd Divisions also moved forward and drove the Austrians in front of them back to Dohalitz and Mokrowous, and from there to positions to the west of Langenhof and Stresetitz. The Prussians conquered these places too, but then, like the Prussian 8th Division, they were checked by superior fire of the Austrian artillery. The batteries held them down.

The advanced guard of the Army of the Elbe had by that time equally passed the Bistritz, more to the south, near Nechanitz. They crossed in a long line north to south from Nechanitz to Kuncitz, dislodging the Saxon Army along the Bistritz. By 11h00, the Army of the Elbe reformed along the line Hradek-Lubno, with the Bistritz in their back.

By that time, on the Austrian north flank, the 1st Prussian Army stood in front of Maslowed, to the wood of Sadowa and to Mokrowous. Nevertheless, the troops of General von Fransecky were suffering on their left, and the Prussian 8th Division still suffered heavily from the excellent fire of the Austrian artillery.

Prince Friedrich Karl called his 5th and 6th Divisions forward to Sadowa wood, but the Austrians repulsed all attempts of these troops also to move towards the heights of Lipa. On the other hand, the Prussians, in their turn, easily repulsed feeble counter-attacks by the Austrians. The Prussian advance of the 1st Army came to a standstill!

From the heights of Lipa to Probus, the north-south defence line of the Austrians, the Austrian Army had amassed about 250 cannons, which held the Prussian 1st Army in check. The Prussian artillery of a mere slightly over 40 cannons replied from the left bank of the Bistritz. The Austrian artillery mercilessly pounded on the Prussian infantry. The Prussian cavalry could render no assistance. The Prussians stood in danger of being swept from the field, there. It was now 13h00. The Prussians ordered already their Reserve Cavalry to Sadowa, to cover the inevitable Prussian, reluctant retreat.

Better news from other fronts then began to draw the Prussian 1st Army from its dangerous situation!

The Army of the Elbe had attacked the Saxon Army as of 11h30. They attacked on the southern Bistritz flank of the Austrians, from Hradek to Probus. The Prussian advanced guard moved forward. The Prince of Saxony counter-attacked this Prussian advanced guard with a brigade, but was pushed back. The Saxon prince attacked a second time, with 2 stronger brigades. He was driven back once more, leaving very heavy losses in the field. The Prussians captured Ober-Prim. The Prussian General Herwarth von Bittenfeld succeeded in moving 66 cannons to the right, eastern bank of the Bistritz. He brought these to near Nieder-Prim. He directed his fire against the village, so that a regiment of the 15th Prussian Division could capture it. The Prussian 14th and 15th Divisions together could then launch an attack on Probus.

To the south, the Prince of Saxony ordered the retreat to the heights southwest of Rosnitz, to near Brira. The Prussians advanced from Problus, for the Austrian rear-guard had been driven from that village. The Prussian 14th and 15th Divisions were only slowed down by the artillery fire of the Saxons and of the 8th Austrian Corps, placed on the hills, northeast of Problus. The south-western front of the Austrians was evolving to near collapse!

We have to go back in time, to another front. While this battle was going on, the Prussian 2nd Army had arrived at Chlum, south of the Swiepwald. The Prussian 2nd Army arrived full force from the north, but was late. The advanced troops of the Prussian Guard Corps were led by General von Alvensleben. He had heard of the cannonades early in the morning near Benatek. He sent word to General von Fransecky he would be at Jericek around 11h30. The rest of the corps followed him quickly. As it was still raining, the Prussians pushed and drew their cannons laboriously through the mud. The troops found that particularly hard to do, but persevered on the orders.

Von Alvensleben indeed arrived at 11h00 at Jericek on the Trotina River. His main forces had moved to Choteborek, slightly to the northeast of Jericek. The Prussian 11th Division of the 2nd Army even reached north of Racitz, on the Trotina, quite south of Jericek, and immediately, as it made contact with the Austrian troops, came under Austrian artillery fire. At 11h00, the troops of the 2nd Prussian Army that had reached the Trotina, were the Prussian Guards and the 6th Corps. They neared the left wing of the 1st Prussian Army! They occupied the line Burglitz-Jericek-Choteborek-Welchow.

Haim Vincius had never actually met his commanding officers! He had received orders by messengers from headquarters, by officers of lower rank, who brought him small papers with new orders scribbled on them, often the script hard to read. After the battle in the Swiepwald and the taking of the village of Maslowed, he and his men had stayed within the 7th Division of the 2nd Prussian Army. When Haim stood at the outskirts of Maslowed, however, an officer on horse rode up to him.

The man smiled. He apparently knew well who Haim was, and handed over to Haim one of those small papers that came from the staff of his division. Haim read, which took him quite a while, and then read aloud he was ordered alone, without his men from Thorn, immediately, to join the staff of the Prussian Guard Corps. General von Alvensleben led this corps.

Von Alvensleben was a name and a concept in the Prussian Army, a man who had the confidence of the king and of Count von Bismarck. The Guard Corps was the elite corps of the 2nd Army, led by the crown prince in person.

General von Alvensleben was the diplomat who had been sent to St Petersburg in 1863 to negotiate a treaty of mutual help with the Russians! The agreement, then called the Alvensleben Convention, had arranged for the cooperation of the Prussian authorities and army with the Russian Army. The Russian Army was then fighting against the ignominious revolt of a part of the Poles.

Von Alvensleben was known to enjoy the friendship and confidence of the king. He was a Berlin courtier of the highest regards. He was also a fighting man, a true, loyal soldier.

Alvensleben was a brave man, not a man to only drink tea in the staff tents. Von Alvensleben did that too, but he was a dogged fighter also. It was said of him he didn't know what the words defeat or retreat meant.

Haim Vincius cursed. He had rather wanted to stay with von Stückerdt's boys. What did the Prussian Guards want with him, a Jew?

Haim Vincius rode back northwards, for the Guards rode and marched behind the 7th Division. He rode on a borrowed horse, and had to ask several times where the staff tents were. When he arrived, officers told him von Alvensleben was riding on an inspection tour with his closest military staff officers. Haim didn't then really know what to do with himself. Should he wait for hours outside the tent until General von Alvensleben returned?

Luckily, a young officer, dressed in a very gaudy uniform, noticed him, probably because he, Haim, was so dirty, still covered with yesterday's only half-dried mud, blood stains still visible on his uniform.

'Are you by any chance Major Vincius?' the captain wondered.

'I am,' Haim replied defiantly.

The captain saluted formally, 'good afternoon, Major! I am Captain Diefenthal of the staff of the Prussian Guards. I can tell you why you are here. General von Alvensleben told me to give his excuses. Duty called him off. You are here, because the crown prince and the general heard of what you did earlier on. The first out of the Swiepwald, the first to enter Maslowed! The example that drew the 7th Division on. We need such fighting men! Men of the other kind, we have in sufficiency. Consider yourself from now on transferred to the Guard Corps. You are promoted to *Oberstleutnant*, to colonel, and you are to lead three of our battalions of the Guards. I'll show you where your battalions are, currently. The commanding officers there know already they will have a new colonel. They will explain the situation to you. During the day, after the staff meeting later today, you will receive a series of maps and new orders on where to advance to. We are going to attack the Austrians! You are to lead a large part of our infantry. We hope the best of you and for you!'

Colonel! Haim Vincius could not believe his ears. So quickly? Yet, this young man, dressed in the impeccable uniform, shining gold about everywhere on his body, had pronounced the words loud and clear.

Haim stammered, 'I am a Jew!'

It was the first thought that came to his mind.

The young officer looked Haim over, surprised by the protest, 'yes, we know of that,' he said stoically. 'In this army of the Crown Prince Friedrich, we don't care, really, about what your religion is, as long as you fight for Prussia. Well, that is not entirely true, of course, but we certainly do not fuss more about it than the other corps. You are a colonel now, and nobody can take the promotion from you. It has been confirmed and signed by the king himself, in full knowledge of who you are and what you have done. Allow me to be the first to congratulate, sir!'

The young officer grinned at the face of surprise Haim still drew, and saluted.

'Well, I ever,' was all Colonel Vincius could now reply.

The officer laughed.

'All right then,' Haim, equally smiling, stammered.

'I'll give you a young lieutenant to take you there, sir. I suppose you don't have a uniform of the Guards with you. I'll think of something, and send it to you with the messenger, later.'

Haim nodded, 'thank you, captain. I'm obliged to you.'

‘Don’t mention it, colonel. By the way, I’m the provisioning officer of the Guards. If I couldn’t find you even a uniform, then who could?’

Haim smiled and thanked again.

The young captain called in a lieutenant. He told him to guide Colonel Vincius to his battalions. The captain went out with Haim. He had one good look at the horse Haim had come with, suppressed another smile, and exclaimed, ‘oh, heavens, this animal won’t do, either! You can’t ride on an old artillery horse to the Guards! Lieutenant, get one of the better spare horses of the staff for the colonel, will you, with the right saddle and the colours of the Guards!’

The lieutenant saluted.

A little later, Haim and the lieutenant rode in the still drenching rain to the staff of his new battalions. The staff had been organised in an old, but large barn of a farm, hidden in a small wood. Haim met his officers.

Later in the early afternoon, Haim Vincius and his battalions were ordered to move to Choteborek, in front of the heights of Horenowes.

It continued to rain in the afternoon of the 3rd of July. The weather did not turn softer. A dense fog still hung on the valley of the Bistritz. Before the Prussians stood the heights of Horenowes, which the Austrians had left almost without defences. The fighting and cannonades continued at the Swiepwald.

The Prussian crown prince placed 48 cannons between Racitz and Horenowes. The Prussian infantry of the crown prince advanced! The cannons of the 2nd Prussian Army opened fire on the Austrian right wing. The Prussians launched an attack on Horenowes. The 11th Prussian Division took Racitz. The Prussian Guards and Prussian cavalry marched on to Horenowes. The Austrians had brought 40 cannons at Horenowes, but the Guards easily carried the heights and the Austrian artillery was forced to retreat southwards.

In the meantime, the Prussian 12th Division had taken Sendrasitz. The 11th Division marched to north of that village, to the left of the Prussian Guards. The Guards marched to Maslowed. The Prussians installed 90 cannons on the heights of Horenowes, then brought these close to the Austrians. They prepared yet another attack of the Prussian infantry. The Guards overran the Austrians and advanced to Sweti. They did this, despite intense cannonades by almost 100 cannons of Austrian artillery. The cannons made the joy of the commander of the Guards’ artillery, Prince Hohenlohe.

The Prussian right wing of the 2nd Army then stormed the village of Chlum.

As the Prussian Guards advanced, the force commanded by General von Alvensleben moved forward to their right. Von Alvensleben fought against an Austrian brigade and continued to advance. The Prussians rammed south, capturing Nedelitz. The 12th Division drove the Austrian troops southwards, into Lochenitz.

The Austrians did try to counter-attack from Langenhof and from the wood of Lipa, upon Chlum.

Haim Vincius lay flat on the ground, in the mud of the wet plains south of Chlum and Nedelitz. From there, he had led his men to the village of Rosberitz, south of Chlum. He lay

at the end of a part of the forest of Chlum, looking through his spy-glasses. His battalions had conquered the forest that now lay behind him. The fight had been hard, the troops lost men, but Haim had pushed on. He had soon discarded his prize horse. He too, fought and advanced on foot.

His orders had come quickly. He was to capture Rosberitz at all cost and secure the area between the line Chlum-Nedelitz for the Prussian forces. Apparently, the Austrian Reserve Cavalry was on its way to attack the Guards north of Rosberitz. Haim would see action, soon again, this day.

So far, Haim had painstakingly slow forced his way through the forest of Chlum. Opposition had been hard. As if the Austrians had gauged Prussian tactics, they had positioned their men behind every tree and bush they could find. Haim had not much time to lose. He whipped his battalions through the wood, forward, overwhelming Austrian resistance. He ran from one column to the other, shouted to the officers how to move forward, using the terrain like the Austrians did, and to advance steadily southwards. It had almost seemed a drill exercise in skirmishing tactics, yet applied for real by three full battalions in line. Haim had wanted not to hear of rest, not to hear of temporary halts. Despite men wounded and killed, he drew forward. He had grabbed another horse later, one found galloping alone, riderless, in the forest. On that horse, he rode from group to group. He also had two *ordonnanz* younger lieutenants with him, to carry his orders. It had taken him some time to understand that when one was a colonel, one did not lead three battalions of the Guards the same way one led a half regiment of infantry of Thorn. He used his lieutenants, and found the battalions could indeed be sent forward by one man only, with some help of messengers.

Near Rosberitz, still inside the forest of Chlum, there was a large clearing, hidden from the Austrian Army. Haim Vincius had assembled his three battalions there, about 2,000 men. He had realised the need to address his soldiers before the coming battles. The men had stood in fine columns, in fine uniforms, in front of him. Haim sighed, and then began to shout very loudly what he had to say. Only the men in the first rows could hear him, but his orders and recommendations would be transmitted to the other rows by the lieutenants, captains and sergeants deeper behind.

‘I have observed you so far. You are fine soldiers,’ Haim started in words of praise, ‘and I have to admit you fight well. Nevertheless, one thing additionally you must absolutely learn. This is not a drill ground. This is a war. In a war, there is but one rule. You kill and you don’t get killed. When the enemy shoots a full volley, you don’t remain standing and take the wave of bullets arriving at you without reacting. Consider the bullets that arrive at you as of a glass, an invisible, advancing surface, which is hauled at you at the level of your necks. The surface can’t be seen, but it arrives at incredible speed. When it doesn’t hit you, you can hear it whistle past you. In that surface fly thousands of bullets, in an almost straight line. So, here is what you must do! When I shout “down!” probably repeated by your officers, you go down to the ground damn quick. The surface will pass over you, and far less of you will be hit and die. Did you understand the image?’

Haim noticed a few men nod. These would explain to the others, later. Most of the soldiers remained standing in the stiff position more suited to the parade courtyard of barracks than in this forest and in the middle of a battle. Haim realised well they had been ordered to do so by their officers.

‘With your permission, Sir,’ one of the younger lieutenants next to him reacted, ‘if we go down in this weather, we go down in the mud. Should we not rather face the enemy in dignity, and stand like true men? A Guard does not dive into the mud!’

Haim looked at the man with murderous eyes. Where was the reputed discipline of the Prussian soldier in front of a superior officer?

Haim shouted back to the young man, so loudly his battalions could hear, ‘fine, lieutenant! You fear mud stains on your uniform more than a bullet in your chest, do you? Well, when I shout “down”, it will be because a volley of musket bullets will fly your way at amazing speed. All those of you who prefer to stand, have my permission to do so, and die! All those who cherish their life and prefer to kill some more Austrians, will go down, yes, in the mud, in a pool of dirty water if necessary, in a cesspit if necessary. I shall applaud these men, for they will live and follow me to another victory that will be written in the annals of the division of the Guards. Because, yes, you will see me drop to the ground and live. And when the volley has passed above our heads, we will start killing the bastards in front of us, firing as fast as we can, until we are out of bullets, or until I order you to stand and advance. And when I tell you to stand up, you don’t have my permission to shoot me in the back when I, myself stand up. Is that understood?’

Many soldiers were grinning, now. They had understood!

‘Choose, lieutenant,’ Haim continued, ‘choose you all! Stand and die, or dive, shoot and reload, shoot again, and live! Is that clear? All who keep standing and don’t go down in the mud or murk, and who dare to live through the enemy fire, I may well have an inkling to shoot myself for disobeying orders!’

The young lieutenant blanched. Haim wanted to console him, but he could not do that now, and here. The men had to tremble before him. The lieutenant was still very young, 17 or 18 years old, not much more. Haim supposed he was the son of a lesser Prussian Junker, a fine son of perhaps an impoverished Prussian nobleman, a young man still dreaming of being a hero. Haim would have wanted to give back this son to his parents alive, after this damned campaign.

Haim shouted on, ‘I have no need of dead heroes! I want my men alive! So, you drop where you stand when I order you to! I’ll keep you alive. And when we advance, you only start shooting when I or another officer shouts to shoot. Otherwise, you do not shoot at all! You are to spare your bullets until I tell you to. We shoot to kill. You have to see the colour of the eyes of your enemies before you shoot! Got it? You have my explicit permission, no, order, to duck or go down whenever you feel the need to do so.’

Haim understood well enough he commanded three of the proudest battalions of the Prussian Army, but he had no use of pride in a battle.

A little later, Haim ordered his battalions to beyond the borders of the forest of Chlum. He was considering advancing over the open plains that lay in front of him. For a few moments, he remained astonished the Austrian batteries didn’t take aim on the forest and on this wide, open plain. It had become very quiet around him. He ordered his men forward. The Prussian Royal Guards marched in loose formation into the plains, into the fields in front of Rosberitz.

A low grumbling of the earth, a tremor could be felt under Haim's boots. A low noise grew and turned more menacing. The trembling was felt in the bellies of the Guards. They looked at each other, halted, but were whipped on by their officers. Haim knew what was going to happen. The Austrians had launched cavalry against his battalions. The Austrian cavalry rode and charged to hack on his troops of infantry. They rode still behind the low hills in front of him. They would soon emerge, too late for the Prussians, advancing in what was a dispersed, skirmishing formation, to regroup and form a compact block. The Austrians rode behind the low hills of Rosberitz! They would appear as the riders of death, straight before the Guards, and towards them. The sound grew ominously.

Haim shouted, 'down, down! Down, you bastards! Quick! Reload!'

He added a movement of his left arm to show everybody had to drop to the ground. Haim's rifle was loaded. He looked behind him. His battalions lay in the pasture, up to the borders of the forest. Too late to retreat to the trees! His men would be hacked down. To his satisfaction, Haim noted all his lieutenants had dropped to the ground. The terrain was wet and muddy. Haim grinned. The Guards would be muddled! Their uniforms would be wet and brown. He too had sunk to the ground, and took aim to in front of him.

Haim Vincius saw an enormous horde of horsemen riding onto him. The Austrians must have unleashed their entire cavalry at his Guards, aiming to kill them, obliterate them, or at least throw them back, at great loss of lives, back into the forests of Chlum. Even with bayonets on their rifles, the Prussian Guards would be wiped off this earth. Haim prayed his soldiers now didn't lose their nerves. Haim was not sure he could stop the wild charge of the wall of Austrian cavalry that arrived at the gallop against him. Haim saw Austrian hussars to the left, then the magnificent lancers, called *Uhlans* in the Prussian Army, lances already held horizontally, and then the frightful cuirassiers in armour, holding long, heavy, broad-bladed swords in front of them as so many lances too. The mass of riders would ride in, at great speed, into the Prussians, and crush them to eternity.

Haim looked at his closest lieutenants. They both lay in the mud, right at his side. They looked at him in utmost tension, waiting for the final order.

'No firing until I give the order,' Haim shouted once more.

Haim let the cavalry come droning on. The sound of the thousands of hooves hitting the grass, throwing up large clods of earth, grew like waves of thunder. And still it rained.

Haim waited until to many it seemed too late. Then when the horses were less than twenty metres from his lines, he shouted, 'fire, fire, you bastards! Fire at will! Show them how the Guards can shoot!'

The last of his words were drowned in a new thunder of two thousand Prussian rifles shooting into the mass of oncoming riders. The Prussian Guards had held their nerves, indeed! The Austrian cavalry had already been shouting their savage cries of victory. They were still looking at where the Prussians might be hiding, well into the forests of Chlum. And then, the pride of Austria saw suddenly thousands of flames erupting from Prussian guns. They rode close enough to see hundreds of men lying in the grass in front of them. The Prussian bullets almost instantly hit home, in the horses, in the breasts and legs of the riders, very few bullets in heads.

The first rows of the horse riders were slammed down. The Austrians still cried for victory, but their triumphant shouts were mixed with cries of pain and of falling horses. The Austrians knew well the time needed to reload rifles or muskets at the muzzles. They expected the enemy soldiers to stand and reload, but the Prussians reloaded while still lying in the grass, and reloading took them a second. The Prussians Guards reloaded in an instant, and shot again at the next rows of riders.

The second Prussian volley lasted longer than the first, and the third began immediately after the second, and then the Prussian Guards shot at will, in a constant rumbling of rolling fire. Haim had asked to take careful aim, and so the Guards did. They did not just fire almost blindly into the mass of oncoming horses, most of the bullets spent and hitting air only. Each Guard targeted on a particular horseman.

A few hussars and lancers made it into the rows of lying Guards. They were killed by bullets from amidst the farther rows. The Austrian cavalry was mowed down! Yet, still they came, and still they died in front of the Prussians. The Guards shot frantically now, as it was clear to all to them, they should take aim to kill, and keep killing, if they wanted to live. Standing up now, meant losing your head to sabres and swords, or being pierced by lances. Holding fire now, was madness. Fear should not keep the Guards from shooting! Don't stand and run. Keep lying down, and shoot! Look at your officer! Shoot! Shoot!

So, the Prussian Guards shot and kept shooting. The result was a terrible massacre! The Austrians were spending their precious reserve Cavalry in one daunting charge! Yet, still the horses and the riders came, and the more they came, and the fastest, the more they died. Horses had to jump over cadavers of horses now, but still, the Prussians fired. The cavalry charge began to falter. Fewer and fewer riders rode on, into the murderous Prussian fire. The last riders stopped, turned their horses, and fled back. They would regroup, no doubt. The Austrians retreated after the first charge. Even then, while they rode back, many men fell. So many bullets were still sent their way, the occasional bullet still found a target, and one proud Austrian horse rider fell after the other.

Suddenly, it seemed all over! The Austrian horse riders disappeared behind the hills, to Rosberitz. Haim saw how, much farther, over the hills, the cavalry, very much diminished, fled southwards, past Rosberitz. He thought his moment had come. The rain drizzled down. Haim ordered his man to stand. When he heard them stop shooting, he too dared to stand. When he thought everybody was ready, he didn't want to remain in the open fields. He pointed his arm to Rosberitz, and ordered the advance. His battalions marched on!

Haim Vincius had watched the attacks with great attention. He was surprised at the many colours he saw on the uniforms of the enemy. The Prussians almost all wore grey, uniform grey, which seemed even more colourless in this sombre weather of constantly pouring rain. The Austrian infantry, however, dressed in white with blue trousers! In the rain, they had drawn grey coats over their jackets, but the bright colours could be seen clearly when the coats were thrown open by the wind. The *Chasseurs* of Austria wore grey, and the officers wore brown coats and high shakos. The hussars wore shakos too, cylindrical military hats, yellow bands on the hats, whereas the *Uhlanen*, the lancers, had red bands on their shakos. The Austrian cuirassiers wore red-green uniforms, and the artillerymen were dressed in brown.

After the thundering sound of the skirmish in which the Austrian cavalry had disappeared, Haim Vincius ordered his Prussian Guards forward. Haim did not want his men to start thinking about the massacre. He should order his men past the horror.

Haim heard the cries of pain, the sound of the dying or wounded horses, the whining, the hooves that hit out, the horses that could not stand and would die in agony. He saw the hundreds of horses slain, other hundreds aimlessly roaming over the battlefield. He had to move on. He couldn't care for the wounded Austrians. He had to move on, if only to pass the horses and the Austrian riders fallen to Prussian bullets. He did order a few men to gather the Prussian dead and wounded. He would send carts from Rosberitz, he promised, to get these into the dry. Now, he had to move on. He couldn't lick his wounds. He could not care for the Austrian wounded, but he would later give orders to look for the lightly wounded among his enemies, too. He couldn't care now. He had to move on!

Colonel Haim Vincius walked forward, the first to set one foot in front of the other. He held his rifle horizontally. His two lieutenants walked on each side of him. The Guards advanced, particularly silently. They walked over a graveyard!

Haim and his Guards would reach Rosberitz well before 3 o'clock in that afternoon. Haim took the village, seeing many Austrian groups flee out of the streets and out of the farms. The Austrians left behind many cannons.

At the southern end of the village of Rosberitz, Haim halted his men and told his lieutenants to post the men west and east, and to rest a while. At that moment, unknown to him, he formed the most southern tip of the Prussian spearpoint, directed southwards, into the heart of the Austrian Army. He had pierced the Austrian centre, broken the enemy's north line of defence. He didn't know yet, that this attack broke the defences of the Austrian Army at a crucial point. Ultimately, his action won the Battle of Königgrätz.

The Prussian Guards had thus repulsed the Austrian counter-attacks. They advanced still, inexorably, captured Rosberitz and the forest of Chlum, south to that village. When the Austrian Reserve Cavalry counter-attacked the Prussian troops, the infantry of the Prussian Guards held their nerves, let the cavalry come droning on, and opened fire at the very last moment. The result was yet another massacre. Would they never learn? The impetuous Austrian cavalry charge failed. The Austrians retreated.

By around 15h00, the situation should have been clear to the Austrian generals. Their army was being rolled up from the north by the 2nd Prussian Army of the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. On their left wing, the Saxons were in full retreat. On their right, the Prussian Guards stood, and formed a line Rosberitz-Nedelitz-Lochenitz. That line seemed impregnable and the Guards stood ready to advance! Many Austrian soldiers could be seen fleeing to Wsestar, Sweti and Lochenitz, and on. The Prussian Guards had captured 55 Austrian cannons during their attacks.

Still, the Austrians kept strong reserves in the valley of Sweti-Wsestar-Rosnitz, with 70 squadrons of cavalry. Between Langenhof and Wsestar stood the strong batteries of the Austrian reserve artillery. These fired against the Prussians advancing at Rosberitz, coming from Chlum.

At that time, the Austrian Field Marshal, the *Feldzeugmeister* von Benedek, remained with his staff between Lipa and Chlum. When he saw the Prussians were already pushing south beyond Chlum, he understood he could not win anymore on this day. He would be defeated. He had now to save what he could, save himself and his staff, save his right wing from being destroyed totally, and save the rest of the army from being cut off from the bridges over the Elbe. If he wanted to retreat to Vienna, to defend the capital, he had to pass over the broad River Elbe! Therefore, von Benedek sent reinforcements to the Saxons near Probus, and reinforcements to Lipa and Chlum against the Prussian Guards. These troops counter-attacked the Prussians near Chlum once more. The Prussians repulsed them. At great loss of life, the Austrian attack faltered.

Haim Vincius sent a messenger on a fast, captured horse to headquarters. He sent the young lieutenant who had protested against dropping in the mud during an attack. The young man had developed other ideas on the matter, after the massacre of the Austrian Reserve Cavalry south of the forests of Chlum. The mud was his victory medal!

When the Prussian Guard battalions of Haim Vincius took Rosberitz, Haim had stood a long while, sunk in thoughts, at the road leading to Langenhof. How many men had he killed today? How many had he killed himself with his own rifle, how many with his battalions? Had he become a murderer according to his religion? He had remained very cold, very pitiless, but had that not happened to save himself and his men? Was this not legally self-defence, kill to not be killed? Haim Vincius yet knew already all these dead men would henceforth haunt his thoughts during his sleep, in nightmares. He would not be able to talk to anybody about his feelings and about what he had done, here. But had he been able to act otherwise? Was this war and were all these dead bodies justified? Was the grandeur of Prussia worth all these dead, all this pain, all these Prussian and Austrian killed men? Haim preferred to think of the more urgent.

Haim looked to the east. Should he march on and attack Sweti? No direct roads, but for paths in the fields, led to Sweti! Haim didn't know what to do, so he decided for sending yet another of his lieutenants to ask for new orders. That would leave his battalions about an hour to rest.

At that moment, a young captain had come up to him, had come to stand next to him, and then he had applauded Haim for his victory. Haim had turned to the young man, had noticed how also this Guard's uniform was stained with wetness and brown muck. He had wanted to stop with an angry movement of his hand the man from clapping his knuckles on his rifle. The applause had been taken over by Haim's other officers, and by the Guards who had come running to the scene. The applause was warmly felt. Haim noticed the pleasure and admiration in the eyes of the soldiers. Yes, a great victory had been won, Haim gave in, and smiled, though the feat might well be overlooked entirely by the Prussian generals and staff, who had not been around at that particular moment. Whatever, the soldiers knew! Had they not all gone down, then more than half of the Royal Guards would have run to the wood behind them, and then they would have all been massacred! He waved his arm to all the soldiers, then, and clapped in his hands, showing the victory actually was theirs, not his. That had led to cheers, which even the Austrians, far off, must have heard.

Haim did not smile for long. He was still thinking of the pain and the deaths and the suffering of the maimed he had caused to some of the finest youth of Austria and her lands, to Bohemia, to Hungary, and to the other states that formed the Austrian-Prussian Empire. How many dead men, and men to die soon, lay on the ground behind him, between Rosberitz and the forests of Chlum? Was that one thousand, two thousand, more? His Prussian Guards had been attacked by close to 10,000 cavalry. How many deaths had been necessary, before the Austrians had turned their horses? When Haim and his men had passed the battlefield to march in loose formation to Rosberitz, nobody had dare to speak a word. The silence had been holy. Haim had rather suspected his own men to despise him for inflicting a massacre on the Austrians. He could live with that. It had been them or us, he thought. War was simple. You killed or got Killed. The sight indeed had been horrific, the reason why he had wanted to get away from the battlefield so quickly. Now, after the tension of the battle had eased, and after the horror of the slaughter, in which he had ordered to do the devil's work, now had come the hubris, the recognition this work had to be done. It was war, wasn't it? Yes, you killed, or were killed.

Haim waved the applause away. He considered the open appraisal very untypical for the Prussian Army, and so it was, but here, it seemed appropriate. Haim knew all too well the battle had been won by the implacable discipline stamped into the Guards by the exercises and the drill. The Guards had held their nerves, had obeyed to the letter, and opposed the enemy as one. They had understood. They had opened fire at the moment ordered, not a second before, not a second later, than when he had shouted to do so. The Guards had not hesitated then, and they had never wavered. Not one of the Guards had stood and fled. That was what Prussian discipline was about, and it had saved all, preserving their lives. Haim now nodded, smiled, waved, pointed back to his men, made a half circle with his finger, telling them the honour was theirs. Then, he waved with his hands to stop the applause. There was work to do!

Waiting for new orders, Haim told his officers to build entrenchments in haste. It was enough to bring wood, hack down small trees, push carts and furniture to where the roads entered Rosberitz. Haim told his officers he wanted within the hour the village to be turned into a fortress. Guards should be posted behind each outward-looking window, holes made in the roofs and the best shooters placed there, on the lookout, and at places from where they could cover the ground in front of the village. He told to what he perceived as the truth, that either they would have soon to march on, which meant the work would have all have been done for nothing. Or, as he expected, the Austrians would still counter-attack soon, with infantry. Haim and his officers were well aware they occupied the village of Rosberitz, in the middle of the northern defence line of the Austrian Army, in fact, well within that army. The Austrian higher command would do anything in their power to take back that line. Yes, the Austrian Army would counter-attack!

The Prussian Guards placed their barricades and entrenchments as fast as they could. As Colonel Vincius had demanded, Rosberitz was turned into a fortified little town.

The barricades were not finished by far, when the first groups of Austrian infantry arrived. Seeing the village occupied, the Austrians assembled, and attacked a little later in solid

blocks, formed of columns of soldiers. Haim Vincius stood behind the barricades with his officers. He ordered to fire at will. He had his two battalions, not more than 2,000 men minus the casualties of the past hours. He was being attacked from all sides except from the north. Haim should not expect reinforcements. The Austrians came in dense blocks of infantry, at least 5,000 men, infantry all, their officers on horseback. The soldiers ran, bayonet on their guns. The Prussian Guards waited until they could take targets, and then opened fire. The Austrians sent volley after volley into the ranks of the Prussians. The Guards fired continuously. Haim saw also Prussians fall in this attack, more than he liked. Of course, many more Austrian soldiers lost their life in this battle.

The Austrians continued to come. Haim Vincius sent out his two young lieutenants to headquarters, to warn he lay under severe attack. He whispered to the young men, so low no one else could hear, to tell headquarters he was not sure he could hold Rosberitz. The lieutenants understood the gravity of the situation. They nodded, grabbed their captured Austrian horses, and rode off at a gallop.

Haim ran from defence point to defence point. He added groups from one position to the other. Reserves he had not. The Austrians came running on, but their groups and columns were not dense enough to overrun the guards. More than once, the Austrians managed to reach the barricades. The Prussian Guards held, no one fled. After half an hour of intense and constant attacks by the Austrian soldiers, whipped on by their officers, the Austrians attacked, yet failed to pass the barricades. Their counter-attack had faltered. The Prussian Guards could look at the damage the counter-attack had caused. They would have a short respite. Haim knew by instinct the Austrians would come again!

How many losses could the Austrians endure, before they ordered the general retreat? Field Marshal von Benedek held very much onto his redoubts, to the triangle with as northern base the line Dohalitz-Lipa-Chlum and Rosberitz-Nedelitz, to the top down at Techlowitz, between the Bistritz and the Elbe. One place in his base was Prussian, however: Rosberitz. Would the Austrians be defeated there? If they would, and lose the northern base line, the Austrians would have to retreat over the Elbe, between Königgrätz and Pardubitz. The Austrians, waiting for new troops, hid behind trees and sent killing bullets by their best shooters to the Prussian guards in the village. Haim was convinced such a slow killing he could not withstand for long. His men began to fall, slowly, one by one.

The Prussian troops pressed all along the northern enemy line. The Austrians had to retreat from Lipa. Their northern line was at risk of collapse.

Haim had lost more men in this ongoing Austrian attack than in his repulse of the enemy cavalry near the forest of Chlum! Maybe about one hundred Guards already lay in the mud. The rain had continued to fall, sometimes pelting on the roofs of Rosberitz. His men were wet to the bone, but still they held the village. Haim stood near the southernmost barricades, shouting courage into his men.

If the Austrians launched now a second such attack, with more men, Haim projected the Austrians would simply be able to run over his entrenchments. He would have to retreat a little earlier! If a second counter-attack would be forced with twice the men of the first attack,

he would have to abandon Rosberitz. No use to stay here and all be killed! He could not have all these courageous Prussian Guards be killed to the last in a desperate stand. Retreat, and fight another hour. The smoke out of thousands of muskets and rifles slowly blew into Rosberitz. Haim Vincius found himself lucky the Austrians had not directed cannonades at the entrenched Guards. The Austrian artillery had been left more to the south. Haim liked the Austrians to be so close. Otherwise, he would have been blasted out of Rosberitz since long. Sooner or later, however, the Austrians would bring in their heavier guns, and destroy Rosberitz. They should have done that in the first place!

Haim then thought of his wife, Leah Goldstern. He longed to be in Berlin, in her arms. Where were his messengers? Why had they not returned by now? Was the military headquarters so far behind? Would the generals refuse to relieve the Guards at Rosberitz? At that moment, Haim Vincius didn't realise he stood with his much less than three battalions of Guards far more to the south, inside the strongest Austrian defence line, than any other Prussian troops! Rosberitz had become critical to the Austrian Army!

After little more than half an hour, the Austrians once more attacked. This time, they came in long lines, in waves, and with many more men than the first time. The shooting began anew. The Austrians pressed on, lost very many men, but once not too far from the barricades, they ran on, bayonets horizontal, over their own, falling men. Few of the Austrians reloaded. They had waged on speed now, outrunning the seconds the Prussians needed after each shot. Haim saw once more so many Austrians being mowed down. Still, there simply came many more enemy infantry than the Prussian Guards could kill. The Austrians reached the barricades, and swept over them, bayonets forward. Haim Vincius had to order the retreat! His men risked being massacred where they stood. Simply too many Austrians arrived and arrived still. He could not hold against this flood of enemy soldiers!

Haim shouted the retreat at all posts. Prussian Guards ran out of houses, reloading and shooting. There was no time to go down and reload and shoot. Haim was desperate for having to abandon the village, but it was that, or perish all. He had to retreat back to the forests of Chlum. His soldiers stepped backwards in waves. One group ran back, covered by another, in movements perfectly executed as planned on the drill grounds. Haim Vincius once more felt proud of these soldiers, who courageously performed the manoeuvres their officers had told them would save lives.

The retreat of the Prussian Guards happened under heavy artillery fire from the Austrians. The batteries shot constantly at the end of the village the Guards still held. One of Haim Vincius' main worries now were for his wounded men. The wounded of the Prussian Guards had been assembled in a large barn near the church. True, most of the lightly wounded retreated with the gross of Haim's still fighting battalions, but what would happen with the severely wounded Prussians Haim had to leave behind in that barn? He rather expected the on-running Austrians would kill them all pitilessly!

Colonel Haim Vincius stood with the rests of his battalions at the outskirts, at the last few houses of Rosberitz. He could not hold the site under the pressure of overwhelming forces. He would soon have to flee backwards, on the run, over the plains lying between the village and the forests of Chlum. That retreat could become a slaughterhouse, too. The Austrian

artillery would shoot in those plains, at the fleeing Guards, while the Prussians ran in the open ground. This time, Haim faced obliteration of his forces!

The Austrians had succeeded in dislodging the Prussian Guards from Rosberitz. Haim suddenly heard trumpet calls. Hundreds of Prussian soldiers came running out of the forests of Chlum to the village of Rosberitz. It seemed the entire Prussian 1st Corps had arrived! Hundreds of soldiers became thousands, running on with waving flags. Prussian flags! When Haim looked to the east, more troops advanced from there, nicely in columns and blocks, cocksure, also running, but keeping pace with other. They too, were Prussians, coming from the direction of Nedelitz. Haim supposed they were troops of the Prussian 12th Division, which had captured Nedelitz not long ago. His lieutenants had done their work correctly! From two sides, thousands of soldiers of Prussian infantry came rolling on over the fields.

The men of Haim cheered! They died, but held on to the northern border of Rosberitz. It should not be said they had abandoned the village! They took new hope, and tried to defend to the last man the last farms of Rosberitz, to not give the Austrians a fortress more difficult to win back. Soon, the Prussians of the 1st Corps and of the 12th Division swept past the exhausted, yet grinning Guards. The Prussians flowed in great numbers inside Rosberitz.

Unknown to Haim Vincius, also the Prussian 11th Division attacked the Austrians who had amassed at and south of Rosberitz. The 11th Division did not stop after having overwhelmed in their turn the Austrians at Rosberitz. They marched on to Sweti! Haim and the Prussian Guards had been the first to reach and form a huge southward bulge in the Austrian main defences, on their north front. Haim and his Guard battalions had held Rosberitz for just enough time for the Prussian generals to notice they could pierce at that point through the Austrian defences of the north. The battle of the infantry at Rosberitz then turned into a slaughterhouse for the Austrians!

The Austrian tactics of attack were to run forward in dense masses of men, bayonet on muskets, take the losses of the enemy's salvos, yet keep running and overwhelm the enemy while the opposing troops reloaded. The *Zündnadelgewehr*, however, allowed the Prussians to keep on firing while the Austrians ran to them, and entirely break the storm of the Austrian attacks in front of their lines. The losses of the Austrians were therefore gruesome. The Austrian generals applied their traditional attack tactics at several places in the front. Each time their troops were thrown back, and they left the pastures sowed with dead bodies and blood. Their losses were heavy. Their form of storm attacks proved simply to be of another age, of other weapons and not adapted at all to the defences of the Prussian Army.

When the main wave of the Prussian advance had flowed past Rosberitz, Haim Vincius stood once more at the southern end of the village, watching the Prussians advance in the wide Landscape. It was about 16h00 on his pocket watch. There were still a few hours of light in the day. Haim had not seen the sun shine once on this day! It would be dark in a few hours. Haim pondered over so many dead. He felt a new presence near him. A general had come up to him. Haim didn't know the man, so he saluted formally. The man, accompanied by his staff officers, waved the salute away.

‘You are *Oberstleutnant* Haim Vincius, aren’t you? You are the leader of the Guards, here?’ the general asked.

‘I am,’ Haim nodded and replied.

He expected a reprimand, now, for having had to abandon Rosberitz. Well, he could take that, too.

The general continued, ‘I saw the slaughter you caused to the Austrian Reserve Cavalry. You practically wiped them out, Colonel. I also noticed the corpses of so many slain Austrians inside the village, and also at this, southern end. I rarely saw such a carnage. It is I, who salute you, colonel, for you won us major victories. Your actions allowed us the time to arrive and you created the opportunity for a decisive breakthrough that ultimately must break the Austrians. They lost so many soldiers against your Prussian Guards, their determination to hold faltered. The crown prince and the king will hear of what you realised here. Please be assured of my admiration and affection. I rarely met a soldier, as bold, as courageous and as true to our cause as you. I give you my hand.’

The general took Haim’s hand in his, and held it for a few moments.

He grinned, ‘for a while, Colonel Vincius, you fought against the forces of an Austrian colonel. His name was Fleishhacker, you know, or meat hacker. Quite an appropriate name, I would say. Fleishhacker fled. It was you who cut him to pieces. Well done! We forced Thun, Molinary, Ramming, and the Lord only knows how many other Austrian generals, the finest military courtiers of splendid Vienna, on the run. Now, my friend, we must keep them running. We ram into the open breach in the Austrians’ centre, and drive them apart. That will win us the campaign. Your work is not yet finished, though the hardest part has been done.’

Then, he walked on with his staff.

‘Who the hell was that?’ Haim asked out loud to himself.

One of the last staff officers of the general’s group had heard his words.

He turned, saying, ‘don’t you really know? You just shook the hand of the king’s nephew, of Prince Friedrich Karl, colonel!’

Then, the man hurried after the staff.

Haim remained standing, surprised, but not too impressed.

Haim Vincius’ greatest joy of the day, was to find his wounded guards unharmed in the barn of Rosberitz. Maybe the Austrians had not found the time to do anything about the wounded Prussians, or more probably, they had respected the wounded. Haim thought he had a debt to the Austrian soldiers.

Field Marshal von Benedek had almost – but not quite - enjoyed success in his second counter-attack of Rosberitz. The Austrians dislodged the Prussian Guards there from the village. This succeeded until the Guards received reinforcements in their turn by the advance guard of the 1st Prussian Corps. Also, from Lochnitz, troops of the Prussian 12th Division advanced from Nedelist to Rosberitz. Once more, here too, the Austrians had to retreat southwards. The Austrians were entirely driven out of Rosberitz.

The Prussian 11th Division then struck against the Austrians. The Austrians suffered heavy losses. The 11th Prussian Division did not stop, either. It swayed near Sweti once more against the Austrians, who protected the Austrian reserve artillery. These last troops retreated

in haste and much confusion, back to the village of Sweti. A little later, the Prussians took the village by storm and won many of the Austrian cannons.

The debacle of the Austrian Army happened really after 16h00. The Prussian 14th and 15th Divisions routed the Saxon Army and the Austrian troops that had stood to the help of the Saxons. The Austrian left and right wings had been defeated. They were in general retreat, and the 1st Prussian Army attacked the Austrian front globally, from the north.

The Austrian troops soon lost total control of the heights of Maslowed. The Prussian King Wilhelm I had ordered the general attack of the 1st Army, with all its force and undaunting spirit.

The Austrian 10th Corps stood against the Prussian centre, concealed by hills. The Austrian artillery, retreated to Rosnitz and Brira, opened fire upon the advancing Prussians with all the cannons they still had. The Austrian cavalry helped to cover the retreat of the Austrian 10th Corps. These fought fierce combats near Langenhof, Streselitz and Probus with the Prussian cavalry. The Austrian cavalry was exhausted after these fights. They lost many men, but they did succeed in covering the retreat of the Austrian Army. In the Battle of Königgrätz, the regiments that had fought best were the Austrian artillery and their cavalry.

The Austrians had set up a new line of artillery, which had remained in position. They now held the Prussians under heavy fire to cover the retreat of the gross of the Austrian Army. The Prussians in their turn brought cannons to the hill ridges of Wsestar and Sweti. They shot on the Austrian artillery. When the Prussian divisions came close to the Austrian batteries and threatened even them, the Austrian artillery also retreated, leaving 36 more cannons behind. The Austrian artillery moved south, formed yet a new line Stösser-Freihofen-Zeigelschlag, and succeeded in stopping the Prussian pursuit. The duel between the Prussian and the Austrian batteries lasted until long after darkness.

The Austrians fled, leaving hundreds of wagons behind. Confusion set in around the swampy, at places inundated environs of Königgrätz. The Austrian Army fled in a rout. Königgrätz closed its gates, for fear of letting the Prussian in together with the Austrians. The garrison feared a siege.

The remnants of the Austrian Army, still powerful, and their Field-Marshal von Benedek, slipped over the Elbe south of Königgrätz. There lay many bridges over the Elbe, south of the town, which the Austrian Army eagerly used for its retreat. The Prussian troops were exhausted.

King Wilhelm I of Prussia could call his horse, a dark chestnut, ‘Sadowa’ after the battle of Königgrätz. For the battle, he preferred the name of Königgrätz, because it held the words of king and grace.

Haim Vincius continued to lead his battalions of the Prussian Guards. His men formed now one of the best veteran troops of the Prussian Army.

In one of the last convulsions of the Austrian rear-guards, Haim and his men marched into a line of Austrian artillery batteries. They overran the batteries near Pardubitz. Then fate turned against Haim Vincius!

A shell exploded too close to Haim for him to remain unharmed on this late evening of the 3rd of July of 1866. Searing hot pieces of metal flew in and cut his left leg. Blood erupted out of multiple wounds. Smaller pieces pierced his uniform and hit him in the side and in his arm. For a few moments, Haim remained standing as if in shock from the painful impacts. This couldn't have happened to him! Then, he had to sit down, for his left leg buckled under him. He sat in the grass, saw the many ugly wounds, also in his knee. He had enough presence of mind to curse, and then to see no bones, for at least as far as he could feel, had been broken. He suffered from many ugly wounds in the flesh of his leg, and muscles no doubt had been touched or received long, bloody cuts. He didn't think the main artery had been sliced, for then he would not live long. Not so much blood flowed. His orderlies had to place a garrotte to stop the bleeding. The wounds looked uglier than he thought they were, actually. So, he thought.

Several officers of the Guards gathered around him. To all of these, Haim still yelled to continue to advance, and to take the Austrian cannons. To the young lieutenant who had protested on his first day with Haim, he asked to fetch a stretcher and to bring him with a few Guards to a lazaret of the Prussian doctors. It took about two hours for the lieutenant to come back with a doctor, and with two soldiers and a stretcher. The doctor cut open Haim's trousers, washed the leg with very cold water he had with him in a large flask, and then the doctor poured alcohol over the wounds. In place, he took pliers and tore shrapnel pieces out of the wounds. Haim fainted. The doctor worked at Haim's side and arm.

The next day, Haim Vincius found himself lying in a field-bed near Königgrätz. White bandages had been tightly wound around his left leg and around his chest. Bandages also were wound around his left arm. Haim noticed red patches on the bandages. He had to wait until noon, before a male nurse had the time to tell him how seriously wounded he actually was.

'*Oberstleutnant*,' the young man said, 'you will live happily on, and that is the best of news, isn't it? There is more good news. We won't let you walk on for a while, so for you, this war is over. Unless it lasts still many more months, which nobody thinks will happen, really!'

'Fine,' Haim replied, 'so what will happen to me?'

'Well, we thought it best to transfer you to Prague. There, we will put you on a train to Berlin. The doctors of the Charité Hospital will look at you and continue caring for you, until you can walk again.'

'How serious is it?' Haim wanted to know.

'That depends on what you call serious,' the young man answered. 'You have multiple wounds, though none too grave. I fear, nevertheless, your muscles are in a mess. The doctors say you will walk again, and I think that will be the case, too. You will probably limp for the rest of your life, but you will walk on your own. There is nothing I could see that can't be helped by a good cane, and on horseback, nobody should notice anything. Muscles take a long time to heal properly, longer than any broken leg. By the way, nothing has been broken in you, be assured of that. So, it is rest for you, I'm afraid. And back to Berlin! You will miss

the dances in Vienna, the waltzes with the finest girls on earth and on the best music. Wish me good luck! I suppose your wife will rejoice. Oh yes, don't fear about children. Your most precious qualities have not been touched!'

The nurse laughed, and Haim joined in with him. The nurse's vodka was very good, too.

Haim Vincius did rest, then. He let the nurses and the doctors patiently do their work. After two weeks in the lazaret, he could walk, though with crutches. His left leg was nearly useless. The doctors provided him with papers. They placed the papers in an envelope fixed on his chest, as if he couldn't explain himself who he was and where he had to go. Soldiers brought him in a carriage to Prague. There, they put him on a train, which ultimately would take him to Berlin. He had to change trains several times. He did not travel alone. Several more soldiers, mostly officers, travelled in the same compartment. All were bound for Berlin. They were a funny lot, though most of them wounded in one or other place. They joked and laughed until they reached the capital.

While he travelled back to Prussia, Haim Vincius did not avoid thinking about his future. He thought of leaving the army.

Count Otto von Bismarck had told openly and often in the press, that Prussian politics should not be determined by confessional aims. The German unity, won on the battlefield, should be consolidated for the future. He tolerated different confessions in one German State, in which all Germans had to live together in peace. Nevertheless, Haim knew well antisemitism continued to live underhand, in a non-aggressive form, in Berlin, and in the circles of the higher authorities. Haim could try to fight these opinions and feelings, hope to defy them, but lose in the end. He could accept the antisemitism as a fact of life, and live on outside the army, for the better. Haim didn't want to end his life as a bitter, grudging old soldier, talking all the time of his service as a younger man and be mocked behind his back by the newer officers. What better victory than to say and believe there was more to life than passing glory? He was an *Oberstleutnant* of the Prussian Army. He could live on an army pension, and start trading. Besides, he longed to be able to live with his wonderful wife. It was time to have children and a family. He should say farewell to the army. Once that decision formed in his mind, Haim wasn't even sorry for himself. He accepted the solution with wisdom, and looked forward to a new kind of life. Wasn't life beautiful if you knew to take what you could get, and enjoy the niceties that would surely still come his way.

Finally, Haim arrived in Berlin by the end of July. When he strumped out of the station on one crutch – he had thrown away the other one -, still advancing painstakingly, he did as was told, rode in a carriage to the *Charité* Hospital, and handed over his papers. The first thing the nurses there did to him, women all, was to wash him entirely and tell him how handsome he was. They did whisper some among them, when they found out he was a Jew. But then, when he was as clean as a baby, and had received a room of his own, he lay in a nice, completely white bed. He gave money to a nurse to get a letter to Leah Goldstern. Nobody made any remarks on his being Jewish. He was a Prussian hero, as the letters he had brought, told. He was treated accordingly.

Haim Vincius learned about what had happened in Bohemia after he had been wounded, from the Berlin newspapers.

The Austrian Field Marshal von Benedek marched to Olmütz and Vienna. For 3 days, the Prussian generals didn't even know exactly where the rests of the Austrian Army marched.

This was the end of the battle of Königgrätz. The Prussian losses amounted to over 9,000 man killed, wounded and missing. The Austrians lost about 40,000 men killed, wounded and missing, including in the last category almost 20,000 prisoners to the Prussians. They lost more than 160 of their bronze cannons. Königgrätz proved to be decisive in the Prussian-Austrian conflict. The Austrian generals had not succeeded in stopping the advance of the Prussians. The unthinkable had happened. The Empire had been defeated. Though perhaps not yet quite.

The Road to Vienna and after

After their victory at the Battle of Königgrätz, the Prussian divisions rested for a day. The next day already, the armies marched on, objective Vienna. The fortresses of Josephstadt and Königgrätz refused to surrender, so the Prussian generals held a strong force in the environs of the towns to prevent the garrisons from sallying, and to cut off the provisioning to the fortresses. The Prussian divisions passed the Elbe at Pardubitz and Przelantsch. A division of *Landwehr* soldiers was sent to Prague. The capital of Bohemia surrendered without resistance on the 8th of July 1866.

After Königgrätz, the Austrian Field Marshal Ludwig von Benedek marched off in full retreat with his army. He marched to Olmütz. Vienna lay about 135 miles from the Elbe, Olmütz halfway. The Prussian General von Moltke wanted to reach Vienna before the victorious Austrian troops that had fought against Italy, returned to Vienna. He ordered quick advance.

The Italian Army had attacked Austria over the Mincio River's mountain passes as of the 23rd of June. The commander of the Italian army was in all but title General de Marmora. King Victor Emmanuel was with the troops, and their leader in name. The Austrian Army under Archduke Albrecht, had thrown itself in the way of the Italians at Custoza. The Austrians had then about 72,000 soldiers, the Italians far more, about 120,000 soldiers. Still, the Austrian Army had defeated the Italians, which had retreated over the Mincio. In the meantime, Garibaldi and about 6,000 men had invaded Tyrol. The Austrians defeated them equally, in two bloody skirmishes. Garibaldi remained in the small piece of Austrian territory he could occupy.

The largest and most noted battle of the Austrian-Italian war was a sea-battle, which took place near Lissa. The Austrian fleet under Admiral Tegethoff defeated the Italian fleet. The Italian navy lost three major battleships.

The Italians had suffered defeat in every battle and skirmish against the more organised Austrians. The Austrians temporarily offered the Veneto to the French Emperor after Königgrätz, and the Austrian Armies indeed, as von Moltke had feared, marched back to Vienna. The Italians then moved forward under General Cialdini. They forced the mere 30,000 Austrians to fall back to the Veneto. An armistice was concluded on the 25th of July.

In the war against Austria, on the roads to Vienna, the Prussian Chief-of-Staff von Moltke, separated his army once more in the two usual parts.

The Army of the Elbe and the 1st Prussian Army, used now to work together, were sent to Vienna via two different roads.

The crown prince led the 2nd Army to Olmütz, to observe what von Benedek was doing with his Austrian Army. Their aim was to keep the Austrian troops that had fought at Königgrätz from attacking Prince Friedrich Karl's forces, the 1st Army, in the flank or in the rear.

The Prussian 7th Division's cavalry fought its first skirmish with the Austrians on the 7th of July. The Austrians were defeated. The Austrian Government asked for an armistice the following day. General Von Moltke refused to grant it.

The Austrian Government relieved Field Marshal Ludwig von Benedek from his command. Generals who lost a great battle were never very popular at court! Archduke Albrecht, the victor of Custoza, superseded him. Von Benedek nevertheless retained his command until the Austrian Army reached the Danube, and that also marked the end of the war. The Austrians rushed in by train as many troops as they could to Vienna, among which mainly the corps that had fought in Italy.

When von Benedek reached Olmütz, his army too was ordered to march to Vienna immediately. Some of his troops could be moved by train. The gross of the Austrian Northern Army marched through the valley of the March to Pressburg.

The Austrian cavalry fought continuously against the advancing Prussians. A large cavalry skirmish took place at Tischnowitz, once more resulting in an Austrian defeat. There seemed no possibility for the Austrian staff to stop the Prussian divisions.

On the 10th of July, Prince Friedrich Karl captured Olmütz. The Army of the Elbe took Zwettl. It marched on to Krems, and the 1st Army to Nikolsburg. The crown prince and his 2nd Prussian Army reached Prosnitz on the 14th of July, south of Olmütz, where the advance guard of the Prussian Army fought yet one more skirmish with the retreating Saxon cavalry and some Austrian infantry. In other skirmishes, along the way, Prussian cavalry divisions defeated other parts of von Benedek's troops, at Tobitschau and Rokienitz.

The Prussians nevertheless could not bar the march to Vienna of von Benedek's troops. Von Moltke therefore ordered the 1st Army to Lundenburg.

On the 16th of July, Prince Friedrich Karl captured Lundenburg, cutting the railway connection to Vienna for Field Marshal von Benedek. The only road open to Vienna for the Austrians marching from Königgrätz was through the Carpathian Mountains, by following the valley of the Waag River. The Prussians pushed on to Vienna. By then, they were very late!

On the 17th of July, the Prussian Army of the Elbe and the 1st Prussian Army arrived at Brünn, or Brno in Bohemian. The armies moved on to near Nikolsburg.

Von Moltke began to prepare for a battle of Vienna. He sent the 1st Army to Wagram, the 2nd Army to Schönkirchen, and the Army of the Elbe to Wolkersdorf. Von Moltke's troops concentrated behind the Russbach, expecting an attack by 150,000 Austrian soldiers from out the fortifications of Florisdorf, the outer defences of Vienna.

Field Marshal von Benedek's troops reached Vienna on the 20th of July, his first divisions totalling about 60,000 men. The Austrian troops hurrying in from Italy numbered about 50,000 men. The Austrians tried to defend Pressburg. They marched and rode as fast as they could to this town. Only two Austrian brigades held the city by the 21st of July.

The Prussian Army first moved to Pressburg instead of to Vienna, on special demand of Count von Bismarck. Bismarck wanted to spare Vienna, but he could not temper the ardour of the 'demi-gods', as the second-rank generals of the Army were called. Bismarck directed their energy against Pressburg to win time for his ongoing negotiations with the Austrian higher diplomats. This did not make him very popular in the Prussian Army. Yet, Bismarck was fundamentally right. The army was an instrument of the politics of the kingdom, not the other way around!

On that same 21st of July, the Prussian General von Fransecky crossed the River March and advanced on Pressburg. Fransecky was a small, corpulent fellow, but an excellent army man. When he attacked, no enemy force could resist him. His daring was well known in the entire Prussian Army and with the General Staff. He arrived with a considerable force, so that the Austrians drew away, risked losing Pressburg, and thereby cutting off von Benedek's army from Vienna.

The Prussian Army of 184,000 men at least, stood against an Austrian Army of only 110,000 men, in front of Vienna. General von Moltke's army was growing once more to 200,000 men, because of the reinforcements that joined his men. He could capture Vienna, and then turn to Field Marshal von Benedek, as he wished, sure to destroy the rest of the remaining Austrian forces!

On the 22nd of July, General von Fransecky attacked the two Austrian brigades that had kept Pressburg. The battle was sure to be won by the Prussians, but at noon, a 5-day armistice, mediated by France, set in between Prussia and Austria. Diplomacy had stopped the military. Count Otto von Bismarck had not considered it wise to humiliate the Austrians any further. The Prussian troops would not hold a triumphant parade in the splendid boulevards of Vienna.

Bismarck asked General von Moltke during the peace negotiations in Nikolsburg, what he thought of the campaign of General von Fransecky. Could the Prussians win the battle for Pressburg? Von Moltke could not and wanted not to guarantee the outcome of any battle. Bismarck therefore advised the king to start a truce with Vienna on the 22nd of July, a Sunday, at noon, and to stop the truce exactly at noon on the 27th. Fransecky's battle near Blumenau was therefore broken up at noon exactly!

The terms of peace between Prussia and Austria were signed at Nikolsburg on the 26th of July, still during the truce.

The Peace Treaty was definitely ratified at Prague on the 30th of August.

The Prussian Armies then withdrew, as agreed, from the 25th of August on. They entirely left the Austrian territories by the 20th of September.

The demands of King Wilhelm I of Prussia for the peace with Austria were the reform of the *Deutsche Bund* under Prussian lead, the annexation purely and simply of Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia, a modification of the frontier with Bohemia, East Friesland, and the deposition of the current sovereigns of Hannover, Kurhessen, Meiningen and Nassau, to be replaced by their successors. Later, the king wanted for Prussia parts of Saxony, of Hannover and Hessen, and also Ansbach and Bayreuth. It should not be forgotten that the origins of the Margraves of Brandenburg lay south and east of Nürnberg! The king equally wanted parts of Saxony.

Count Otto von Bismarck rather believed the region of Nürnberg and Bayreuth had been so long Bavarian, a return to Berlin, to Prussia, would not be welcomed by the people of those territories. Bismarck wanted Austria's influence in Germany proper ended, and Prussia's influence over entire Germany had been stopped once and for all. Still, he also desired the sympathy of Austria not to be destroyed totally.

Bismarck thus negotiated at Nikolsburg. He talked with the Austrian Count Aloys Karolyi. Austria wanted the integrity of the Saxon lands to be guaranteed, as the Saxons had proved the best allies of Austria in the war. Otto von Bismarck desperately wanted to spare the Austrians the humiliation of the capture of Vienna, although the Prussian generals desired ardently the continuation of their triumphant campaign in Austria. Bismarck, as was often the case under severe pressure and nervous tension, got sick from the effort and threatened to present his resignation as Prime Minister. The crisis happened during a council of war in the presence of the king of Prussia, on the 22th of July.

Bismarck did not want an axe France-Austria directed against Germany. He also did not want to continue the current war into Hungary. Bismarck emphasized the aim of the war had been, first and foremost, the creation of the German unity under the leadership of the king of Prussia. That had been the aim of the war, a political aim, and more was not necessary. Bismarck also discussed the interests for each of the German States, with the king. During these talks, Bismarck went so far as to wonder whether it would not be better if he threw himself out of a window on the fourth floor. Of course, Otto von Bismarck got his way!

Bismarck met Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm in the corridor, who told him Bismarck knew well he had never wanted war with Austria. Now, however, if Bismarck thought it better to stop the hostilities, though victorious on all fronts, the crown prince would also propose the peace and support Bismarck's views on the war.

The crown prince went to talk with his father for half an hour, and came back to Bismarck with the news the king had agreed with the peace, and to stop the military campaign. This happened on the 24th of July.

Bismarck had won his difference of opinions with the military and with the king, but he regretted having angered the king, his old lord. Bismarck certainly applied the 'Vae Victis' on the German sovereigns. He dictated at Nikolsburg what Prussia wanted from the Austrian Emperor.

The Peace Treaty of Nikolsburg was a clear humiliation for Austria. Austria had to cede Venice and its hinterland to Italy. The German *Bund*, the Confederation, as it had existed until then, was dissolved. What replaced it was a North-German *Bund* under the direct

influence and lead of Prussia. A union of South German States would be organised. Austria was excluded from both of these confederations, its influence in German affairs effectively ended. Prussia became the first and overwhelming influence in all Germany. The Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were given entirely to Prussia. Prussia demanded enormous payments for its war efforts of the allies that had conspired and risen against it. Prussia also annexed the conquered territories in the west: Hannover, Hesse-Kassel, Nassau, and Frankfurt. Prussia was victorious on all fronts. They indeed had also defeated the southern German allies.

The Prussian Campaign against the allied German Forces

After the Battle of Langensalza on the 29th of June, General von Falckenstein had directed his army, now called the Army of the Main River, of a strength of 45,000 men and with about 100 cannons, against the South-German States. He had to confront two armies. The first, the Bavarian Corps of 40,000 men and about 140 cannons, was led by the Prince Karl of Bavaria. This army assembled at Schweinfurt. The other, with 46,000 men and over 130 cannons, led by Prince Alexander of Hessen, gathered at Frankfurt.

Prince Karl and Prince Alexander met on the 26th of June. They decided to move both their armies on different roads to join at Herzfeld, 21 miles north of Fulda. At that time, however, the German Allied troops were twice as far away from Fulda than the Prussian troops! A remnant of the Hannoverian Army still roamed in the fields near Mühlhausen. But on the 30th of June, as a result of the Prussian-Hannoverian negotiations, the Hannoverian Army had to surrender to the Prussians. The Prussians sent the soldiers simply home by train. The junction of the two German armies had been initiated too late, and became impossible. That had been a prime objective of the Prussians!

Prince Karl of Bavaria then formed a line at Meiningen, facing the town of Eisenach. He hoped his other forces and the troops of Prince Alexander of Hessen could still join him here. The Bavarians of Prince Karl began their march from Meiningen to Fulda. Prince Alexander marched eastwards, and occupied Lauterbach and Alsfeld on the 3rd of July. He left troops on the River Lahn to cover Frankfurt and to protect his flank and rear during his advance.

Meanwhile, the Prussian troops of von Falckenstein had marched off from Eisenach on the 1st of July, to arrive in front of the Bavarians on the 3rd of July.

A Prussian division under General von Beyer was then in the vicinity of Geisa. Another division under General von Goeben had arrived at Dermbach. Von Manteuffel's division followed as reserve.

On the 4th of July, von Goeben attacked the Bavarian divisions. The battle went on about evenly, so that both troops retreated at the same time. Near Heinfeld, meanwhile, the Prussian General von Beyer also fought a skirmish with the Bavarians, but the latter quickly fled in confusion to the River Main. The Prussians had only to send a few cannon shots in their direction, for those troops to flee!

Von Falckenstein concentrated his troops around Dermbach and Geisa. A little later, when von Falckenstein understood the Bavarians were in retreat, he advanced on Fulda.

Prince Alexander of Hessen retreated to Schlüchtern, where he hoped to offer a stubborn resistance to the oncoming Prussian Army. He waited at the entrance of the Kinzig Valley. While he did this, he heard of the defeat of the Austrians at Königgrätz. He then didn't bother to know what his allies were doing. He hurried to the River Main, between Hanau and Mainz, with the intention to protect the southern states. He turned back to Frankfurt. By this movement, he isolated himself from his allies, from the Bavarian forces, and thus invited his troops to be destroyed by the Prussian Army!

On the 7th of July, the Prussians entered Fulda. Von Falckenstein ordered General von Goeben to Brückenau and General von Beyer to Schlüchtern. Von Manteuffel remained at Fulda. Von Beyer finally also marched to Brückenau, while von Goeben reached beyond. The Bavarians were then spread along the River Saale, from Neustadt to Hammelburg. Von Falckenstein ordered on the 10th of July von Beyer to Hammelburg, and von Goeben to Kissingen. Von Manteuffel followed von Goeben with his men. At Kissingen and at Hammelburg, in large skirmishes, the Prussian troops defeated the Bavarians. The same happened in further skirmishes up the river, from Kissingen. The passes of the Saale fell into the hands of the Prussians. The Bavarians fell back on Schweinfurt and Würzburg. Von Falckenstein cleared the northern banks of the River Main from the Confederate forces. Prince Alexander of Hessen sought to make a junction with the Bavarians at Würzburg, via Aschaffenburg and Gmünden. The mountains between these towns were, however, difficult to pass.

Von Falckenstein's forces marched down the Main. On the 13th of July, General von Goeben defeated a Hessian brigade at Laufach. The brigade returned to Aschaffenburg, and received reinforcements. In another skirmish near that town, von Goeben defeated the 8th Confederate Corps.

Prince Alexander of Hessen deemed it impossible to join the other allied troops at Würzburg. He concentrated his own troops at Dieburg, thereby leaving Frankfurt defenceless. The German Diet, the parliament, fled to Augsburg.

Prince Karl of Bavaria insisted on a junction of the two armies via Tauberbischofsheim, in the south, the junction to be effective on the 20th of July. The Bavarian troops, however, had only to march a few miles, while the 8th Allied Corps had to march for 90 miles. Still, Prince Alexander of Hessen complied.

The Prussian Army entered Frankfurt on the 21st of July. The division of General von Goeben occupied the city. The division of von Manteuffel held Aschaffenburg. The entire region north of the River Main was Prussian!

On the 16th of July, von Falckenstein left the Prussian Army of the Main. The king had appointed him to Military Governor of Bohemia. Von Manteuffel succeeded on him in the west, and his division was placed under the command of General von Fliess. The Prussian Army of the Main received reinforcements to 50,000 men and over 120 cannons.

The junction of the 8th Confederate Corps and of the Bavarians was completed on the 22nd of July. The 8th Corps occupied the banks of the River Tauber; the Bavarians remained between Würzburg and the Tauber. Von Manteuffel chose to move straight against them, though the allies disposed of superior forces, about 81,000 men and almost 290 cannons.

The allies agreed on how to handle the attack of the Prussians. But Prince Karl of Bavaria wanted to march along the River Main to Frankfurt, whereas Prince Alexander of Hessen preferred marching on the other bank, via Aschaffenburg. This last solution was chosen, after 2 days of palavering, while von Manteuffel acted and marched rapidly to the Tauber. He reached his enemies on the 23rd of July. The Bavarians still moved along the River Main, by train, one part to Gmünden, another to Lohr. By this movement, once more, the junction of the allies had been broken! Prince Alexander of Hessen withdrew his troops behind the Tauber, into a region of steep ravines, difficult to pass. He could not move quickly with his artillery and with his men.

On the 24th of July, General von Goeben defeated a division from Baden at Werbach and a division from Württemberg at Tauberbischofsheim. Prince Alexander of Hessen ordered the 8th Corps back to the Tauber, though everybody wondered what the use might be of such a march, as the Bavarians could not assist him. Prince Alexander chose to ignore the movement of his allies, and gathered his forces at Gerchsheim. These movements of both Allied Armies proved to be as many strategical errors!

A day later, General von Goeben marched as the right wing of the Prussians, von Beyer in the centre. The Prussians of von Beyer unexpectedly stumbled upon Bavarian troops and gained the upper hand in the ensuing skirmishes.

While this happened, von Goeben fought with the 8th Allied Corps at Gerchsheim, defeating and routing the troops of Prince Alexander of Hessen to Würzburg. The Federal Corps constituted by troops of Württemberg, Baden, Hessen and Nassau, lay thus defeated by Prussia. The Prussian troops could occupy Northern Württemberg.

Prince Karl of Bavaria then held a council of war and resolved to make a defensive stand at Rosbrunn, 7 miles west of Würzburg. Prince Alexander of Hessen was to stay in front of Würzburg, to cover, if necessary, the retreat of the Confederate, Allied Army across the River Main.

In the early morning of the 26th of July, General von Fliess clashed with the Bavarian Army at Rosbrunn. He received assistance from General von Beyer, who attacked the Bavarians in the flank. By 10h00, the Bavarians broke and fled. Past noon, Prince Karl placed his troops on the nearby plateau. The 8th Confederate Army retreated and crossed the River Main. Later in the day, also Prince Karl withdrew across the Main. No allied troops still stood north of the Main, an objective demanded by Bismarck.

The next day, the Prussians marched against Würzburg. The citadel of Marienberg shot from very high on the northern bank of the River Main. The Prussians shot back, and succeeded in setting fire to the citadel's arsenal. Marienberg was silenced. The armies faced each other, but the Bavarians were cut off on all sides.

During that time, the Prussian 2nd Reserve Corps had marched through Saxony and Leipzig. It was approaching Bayreuth, and threatened entire Bavaria.

On the 28th of July, the Bavarian troops got news of the peace negotiations between Prussia and Austria. They agreed to suspend the hostilities with the Prussian armies. The Prussian Reserve Corps still marched into Bavaria at that time, took Nürnberg before they heard of the truce, and occupied it.

Prussia concluded a peace treaty with the land of Württemberg on the 13th of August, with Baden on the 17th, and with Bavaria on the 22nd. The Confederate Army lay utterly defeated. The Prussians were victorious, mostly due to the impressive strategies and tactics of their generals. Prussia had won the seven weeks' war with her German neighbours, as well as with Austria.

A new political constellation was in the making for Germany. Prussia would be her uncontested leader, Berlin the undisputed capital of Germany. Otto von Bismarck could sigh with relief. His military friends with whom he shared power, the men who had led the Prussian Army into Bohemia, sabred the Champagne bottles.

In Thorn and Berlin. 1866-1867

Leah Goldstern

The letter Haim Vincius had sent in the morning by a female nurse to Leah Goldstern must have arrived the same day. The nurse didn't tell him, but she delivered the note personally. In the middle of the afternoon, Leah stormed into the Charité Hospital, panting as if she had run from the Landgrafenstrasse all the way to the Charité. She threw herself on to Haim with a passion he had not imagined in her. Leah covered him with kisses, wept and laughed at the same time. She hurt his side, leg and arm too, but Haim didn't care. The tears also welled up in his eyes, which he didn't want to show so ostensibly to his wife.

'I haven't heard from you since more than a month,' Leah cried. 'I was so worried! I didn't know what to think. I read of the terrible battles, so many, going on in Bohemia, especially around the towns of Josephstadt and Königgrätz! I wondered whether I had lost you or not. God be thanked, you are well and alive, and entire! What happened to you? Let me guess. You fought in the first lines, of course, and you got hurt! My poor darling!'

'Something like that,' Haim laughed. 'I'm also not that much hurt! A few scratches! It is all far less serious than it looks. In fact, so little serious I want to get out of here as quickly as I can. I have crutches. I can walk. I can rest as well at home, with you. That would be far more pleasant than being here, in the hospital, with nurses I don't know. There are enough doctors in Berlin. They'll tell us what to do, when.'

'Oh no, no, no, my warrior, I'm going to have a talk with the doctors of the Charité first, and then I'll decide where you go to! I bet you have been in more battles, being shot at by muskets and by cannons, far more than anybody, including you, will ever tell me. Here, my love, I'm in command! And don't you dare countermand my orders! This is Berlin, and not Thorn, and not Königgrätz!'

Leah Goldstern ran back out of the room. She shouted in the corridors she wanted to speak to the doctors of Colonel Vincius. Haim smiled when he heard her cry out. Nurses ran to her. After half an hour of suspicious silence, Leah stormed back into the room.

'You can come with me. I'll help get you dressed. You must be careful. A nice, young doctor allows you to go. He is writing the release papers and notes for our family doctor. He also gave me the name and address of the best doctor in town for the wounds you suffered. You were right. We indeed can go home together, and to the finest place on earth for both of us: my bed. Where are your clothes?'

Haim showed her the closet with one outstretched finger. In there lay his uniform, washed, ironed and mended by the services of the hospital. The nurse Leah Goldstern helped him in his underwear, shirt, trousers and jacket. While Leah was helping getting his arm in his sleeve, the doctor entered, showed some surprise at the scene, smiled, and handed over a folder with a set of papers to Leah, not to Haim.

'In this is everything you need,' the doctor laughed. 'Don't wait too long at home to call a doctor. Do you want a hand to dress your husband, do I send in a nurse? Our nurses are used to doing this, you know.'

'No other Berlin woman is going to touch my man from now on,' Leah decided. The doctor had to smile again.

Before he left the room, he added, 'I know the Goldstern Edition Company. I have several books at home, edited by your firm. We have met too, some time ago, at a supper. I wish you good luck.'

Leah Goldstern and one crutch managed to get Haim Vincius the same day out of the Charité.

In the next weeks, visitors came and went at Haim's Berlin house.

Many were friends of Haim, who came to ask how he went. He stayed on hours with them, smoking cigars and explaining how the war had fared in Bohemia.

Leah's father, who had objected to his daughter's marriage with a soldier, but having to acknowledge a colonel was not really the same as a soldier, visited often and stayed on longer and longer.

Max Vincius and Leandra von Chrapitz arrived, with their child. They had travelled by train from Thorn, and found that voyage far less tiresome than in a coach.

Haim's brothers ran into the *Landgrafenstrasse* house, Kurt with his wife, Hanna Sonnenfeld, and their three children.

Mikhael Vincius came less loudly, elegant and sophisticated as ever, polite, the true gentleman. He brought many presents. He liked Leah Goldstern. He told Haim he was so lucky to have discovered a rare jewel before he, Mikhael, had. Leah was the same age as Mikhael. Mikhael was not married yet. He told Haim and Leah he wasn't sure he would ever find another woman such as Leah. He could not get married, now! The truth was, Mikhael liked too much to flirt and show off to girls, and to remain a bachelor for the time being. Also, Haim's mother announced herself, Sara Benavicius. Her visit remained rather formal. She visited Berlin with Joram Cohen. Cohen was waiting in a coach downstairs, in the street. He had declined to enter Haim's house. The brothers Vincius had made peace with their mother, not with Joram.

Avram Goldstern became a regular visitor to the house. The editor was a man of but 54 years of age. He was tall, distinguished, a grave looking man, with a short, always well-clipped beard, a black moustache above his lips, always impeccably dressed. He looked like a very dignified gentleman, which he was, an erudite, the ideal personality to inspire confidence in authors. He also knew his business. His wife had died quite some time ago. He had mistresses, but never could bring himself to marry again. He cherished the memory of his wife and adored his daughter. He and Haim became friends.

Goldstern sat with his son-in-law in the house of the *Landgrafenstrasse*. Leah was somewhere else in the house at that moment.

'I am proud of you, Haim,' the older man acknowledged. 'When Leah announced to me, she wanted a soldier for a husband, I have to admit I thought she had lost her mind. I educated my daughter to a very rational being, a woman with a man's mind, to a real Berliner and a real Prussian, proud woman. I thought she had thrown it all away in the arms of a gigolo. I made a Spartan out of her, I admit. I thought a soldier had turned her mind, conquered her for her money, mollified her brain, and transformed her in a female version of a complete idiot. On her knees for a soldier? You must have heard in what terms she described you! You might have been the only genius of Prussia! Well, I am happy to confess I was wrong! You are a fine man, a hero of the fatherland, a decent human being, a Jew, truly a *Mensch*! You climbed higher in the army's hierarchy than I could have imagined. An *Oberstleutnant* and a veteran

of Königgrätz! I would have been a stupid asshole to refuse you to my daughter. She couldn't have found a better man. I beg your pardon. So, what are you going to do now?'

'I am not an *Oberstleutnant* anymore, not anymore a lieutenant colonel,' Haim first replied dryly. 'Two days ago, I received a promotion. I am a full colonel, an *Oberst*, now. But I am half a cripple. I could apply for a staff position. I am Jewish. I don't think I would ever be very welcome in any army staff. Oh, I know I would be able to turn the tide, but no humiliations for me! I don't want an administrative job. I would never be a general. That would be one street too far for a Jew. I'm a warrior, not one to hang on to maps or papers. So, I'll retire from the ranks. I'll turn trader, like my father and my brothers, like all the men of my family. They have the talent. I should have the talent too. I can be their middle-man for trade further on to the west.'

'I'm amazed you would wish to leave the army. Surely, you can ride still, as any other. Does the Prussian Army not have horses?' the older man smiled.

'Oh, they do, of course,' Haim sighed. 'But I am done with the army. I saw too many horrors. I had a lucky star, but I shouldn't push my luck. I just feel that way. Besides, Leah told me she would divorce me if I returned to active service!'

'There you have my daughter,' Avram smiled. 'She would be quite capable of doing just that! I have another idea,' he chuckled.

'Wat then?' Haim wondered.

'I am getting older, Haim. Oh, I can keep on doing what I do now for quite some time yet. I may also not live long. I made me some money. I need a successor for my editing firm.'

'You have a successor. Leah,' Haim remarked.

'Sure, I do. I know,' Goldstern amiably returned. 'I am expanding. I'm setting up editing companies, daughter companies, in Frankfurt, Dresden and Leipzig. Why not in Paris, London, St Petersburg? I'm also expanding in breadth. I need someone to lead new branches: *Konversationslexikons* or encyclopaedias, geographic atlases, books on travels, world history books, and there is a whole new domain in technology and medicine-oriented scientific books to edit! I need someone to lead these parts. Too little attention will not get me anywhere seriously. I cannot do all!'

'I'm sure you will find able collaborators to manage those domains for you,' Haim continued.

'Maybe, yes. But could I trust them? I also want to be able to sleep well at night! Besides, I would like to travel. I had not really an interesting youth, you know. I worked and worked, and fought to keep the editions alive. I'd like to profit a little of life. Oh yes, there will be women, probably more than before. I won't marry again, though. I liked my wife too much. I'll honour my defunct wife on earth and in the life thereafter, as my religion tells me to do. No, I won't marry again. So, what do you say, then, Haim Vincius? Shall we call the firm Goldstern and Vincius, or do you want to go out on your own? It is a solution which keeps you in Berlin, close to Leah. I'd like that. She would too. I am a grumpy old man already! I can teach you. I'm not a bad man to work with, though I say so myself, and what I want to leave behind in knowledge of doing business can be counted on one hand. I consider you my son already. You're a decent man, loyal, a trustworthy person. I was quite surprised when I realised that. After all, I should have had more confidence in my daughter! She did choose a fine man. So, what do you say, Haim?'

'I'm not certain I can agree with your proposal now, without Leah's consent,' Haim replied. 'Of course. That answer too honours you. Well, you talk it over. You have all the time.'

Goldstern cheered his brandy against Haim's.

Haim indeed talked the proposal over with Leah. Leah Goldstern reacted by keeping a silence for a very long time.

Finally, she said, 'father wants to stay at the head of the firm. He'll be the king. He will have a general and a colonel under him. Is that the general idea?'

Haim smiled. She had been quick in learning military ranks.

'Something like this,' Haim agreed, 'but you will be the heiress. After Avram, you'll inherit the firm, the money, the assets, and after you the children. I'll remain the colonel ever after, not the general. I can live with that. I'll ask for high wages, and shares from the successors.'

'No, that won't work,' Leah whispered. 'I'll hold and manage the money. I'll do the bookkeeping. You lead the firm. You must be the overall manager, but I'll be at the cords of finance. That suits me better. You'll be the overall manager. I'll be your wife, and the Cerberus of the accounts. Yet, no separate accounts for us.'

'Agreed,' Haim laughed. 'We'll have to learn to start liking each other, Miss Goldstern!'

'I thought we did that already,' Leah replied in a husky voice.

'In bed we do,' Haim acknowledged.

Leah then unbuttoned her shirt, drew her white bandages from her breasts. She pushed Haim with her to the corridor, to the bedroom.

Henceforth, Haim and Leah worked passionately together in the Goldstern editing business. Avram was sincerely surprised at how well husband and wife agreed on new ventures. Haim and Leah seemed to be grudging each other's victories, but when one was attacked, that person faced both of them in unison. Avram Goldstern released the reins over the company only 4 years later. By then, the editing business of Goldstern & Vincius had in fact already slipped out of Avram's hands. He had taught Haim everything he needed to run the company in every day's management. Haim had the list with the Goldstern contracts. Avram had taught Haim all the tricks in the business. Haim sought new writers in all scientific and technological domains, managed them with a sure hand, and boosted profits. When new customers, distribution houses and large shops, doubted about the Jewish origins of the owners, Haim could explain he had practised the Jewish faith at Thorn and at Vilna, the great synagogue of Vilna still having an eternal reputation. Haim told he was a loyal Prussian citizen. He had fought at Königgrätz and had been awarded the rank of *Oberst* in the Prussian Army. A few people actually challenged this, and asked the Army for information. They returned, chastised. Yes, Haim Vincius had been a hero and a colonel! Haim thus opened doors that had before remained shut for Avram Goldstern;

Avram finally could enjoy life. His firm lay in good hands! In the end, Avram cared a lot less for his mistresses. He had found new masters of his mind! His grandchildren Avram the Younger and David monopolised him. The parents of his half-god grandchildren were taken by their work. Little Avram and David knew all that mattered in the world from their grandfather Goldstern. Avram walked them around Berlin. He showed them how grand the capital of Prussia had become. He took them to the museums, to the parks, and inspired them with a love of beauty and nature that was quite exceptionally for the time and for children so young.

Esther Kleinberger

Max Vincius was troubled. Each time he tried to talk to Esther Kleinberger, she avoided him. He couldn't catch her anymore. She employed helpers in the shop now, the shop outside Thorn, near the warehouse of the Vincius-Kleinberger families. The assistants told Max how matters stood. They showed him the books. When he appeared unannounced in the shop, Esther rapidly handed over a transaction to one of the others. Sometimes, when Max abruptly entered the shop, she disappeared in haste to the house that was adjoined to her premises. Max Vincius remained extremely satisfied with the results of the selling in the shop. Almost everything he traded in, and more, was sold there. The shop was so successful, it had become a pleasant meeting-place for the inhabitants of Thorn. Max had wanted to talk to Esther, for setting up new initiatives with her, installing Vincius shops in other towns of Prussia, such as Graudenz, Culm, Marienwerder and other. He had thought of Esther as the manager of a chain of shops. But he could not catch her! What was the matter? He wanted to arrange a meeting by a note from a messenger, and that resulted also in nothing. Finally, he had the good idea to explain his issue to the girl's mother, to Anna Kleinberger.

Anna Kleinberger did not avoid Max. She heard him out defiantly, her fists in her hips. What was the matter, really, Max complained and wondered to Anna about all this. Why was Esther angry with him? What had he done wrong? Was that because he had converted to the Evangelic faith? Did she consider him a hypocrite? The fact he was Christian too, now, should rather have been a pleasant change to Ether. Did she reproached him for having married a von Chrapitz, after having divorced his wife?

'No, no, nothing of all that,' Anna Kleinberger sternly replied. 'Have you seen her lately?'

'No, how could I?' complained Max. 'She's been avoiding me for weeks, I tell you. She runs when she sees my shadow. Why is she angry with me?'

'I don't think she is angry with you,' Anna mollified. 'Men are always the last to know and to notice, aren't they? Esther is ashamed. She is pregnant. Her belly shows so, these days. Her belly grows. She doesn't want you to find out about her situation. It is silly, for sooner or later you would know. Still, that is what she does!'

'Pregnant? I didn't know she had developed a relationship! Who is the father, is she so ashamed for me? I only want the best for her!'

'So she is, yes. She is not married, you see.'

'Who then is the father?' Max wanted to know. He insisted.

Anna hesitated, then. She drew her hands through her hair and sighed. She looked the other way.

'Oh, damn,' she finally exclaimed, 'sooner or later you'll get to know anyway. The father is your son, Kurt.'

Max Vincius stood flabbergasted.

'You didn't really know, then, what was going on between Kurt and Esther?'

Max and Anna stood in the middle of the warehouse. Max had to sit. He grabbed Anna by the arm and drew her to his small house behind the storerooms. He pushed her on a chair, and went to sit in another chair in front of her. What had been going on behind his back?

'Explain,' Max wanted.

‘So, you truly didn’t know! Oh, Max, we thought you knew it all and wanted not to intervene! Yes, you were so busy with other matters, with the von Chrapitz lady in the first place, with the war, and all that. What can I say? How did it happen Kurt got involved with my daughter? I suppose it happened quite naturally, for none of them is bad or mischievous. Your son Kurt is married, and we all believed he was happily wed. How he came to set his eyes on Esther, I don’t know. Esther doesn’t want to talk about it to me, nor to Fried. Fried, actually, thought you had something to do with Esther, in the beginning, but Esther cried out it was definitely not you, but Kurt. That was how we found out.’

Max gasped, ‘I’m like a father to the girl, I wouldn’t have touched her for nothing in the world, Anna! But Kurt is happily married! He has wanted Hannah Sonnenfeld since ever! Nobody else ever existed for him.’

‘You haven’t truly talked to your son in ages, haven’t you, Max Vincius? As far as I could draw bit by bit out of Esther, Kurt was so happily married with the even-character, sweet Hannah, his life became a long, dull stream without the least ripple in his mind. That was how we all, you, Fried and I, have seen Kurt around since always. No young man lived so quietly as Kurt Vincius! Kurt was the man without the least adventure. Nothing ever happened to him that might have put his mind in doubt or turmoil. He was a rock! Now, Esther, she is all the contrary of all that. Esther is passionate, joyful, energetic, lively, sensual, womanly, enterprising, and very beautiful, if you may have noticed. She is nice to look at, and she can make those eyes! I think she admired Kurt much. Kurt was so successful in business! There was a time they worked much together, Kurt and Esther. They expanded the shop, brought up new ideas. She worked far more with Kurt than with any of us.’

‘Yes,’ Max remembered. ‘Go on!’

‘I guess, Esther fell in love with Kurt. Kurt noticed her. He got caught, became intrigued with her, remarked how different she was from him in character, so natural a fine human being too, whereas he remained so stiff in his respect for his father and mother, so pious in his religion. Kurt must have begun to be startled by Esther. Then he began to admire her, the first step to love always. Maybe he longed to be like her. Well, from one and one came two. I noticed, of course, he and Esther saw each other more than often. I admit I too was fooled at the beginning. They acted both the same as before. Bye and bye, I noticed the brilliance in my daughter’s eyes, hands lingering a little too long on a shoulder. Esther peered over Kurt, but her chin rested on him. Kurt held a hand in the low of her back. I became suspicious, but told myself I was seeing ghosts. I did try to talk to Esther.’

Anna sank in her chair, tears welled up in her eyes.

‘Esther broke out in tears when I asked her what was going on. She told me she loved Kurt, and he her. She told me worse. She was pregnant! That confession happened a few weeks ago. I’ve been at a loss, confused, these last weeks. What are we to do? I asked Fried. He told me he hadn’t his eyes in his pockets, either, and knew well something had been going on between the two of them. I only believed half of that! But he too, was at a loss. What are we to do, Max? You have been a friend to us. What are we to do? We don’t want to hurt anybody! We didn’t want you to get angry.’

Max Vincius sank down in his chair. He needed much time before he could say anything.

‘You should have known by now, Anna, I too didn’t want to hurt anybody. Not in the least my best friends! I consider you and Fried more my family than ...’

Max stopped, for a knot in his throat withheld him from saying more.

He waited a few moments.

He continued, 'how should I know what to do now? I have not the least clue. Kurt, yes, seems to be evenly tempered and married to Hannah without any problem. Hannah is a quiet, dedicated woman. Her life has not been in any turbulence since she married. They have three children. The children came so easily! Hannah seemed quite content with her life. Kurt has been successful in business. He is often around the children. He proves his love.'

'I know all of that! He should not break up his family and bring catastrophe and scandal in the household. But what of my Esther, Max? She is branded, now. I love my Esther, Max! She is the most precious being on earth for me. You can understand that! My daughter!'

'I understand, Anna. I agree with you. You ask me what should be done? How would I know? I haven't the slightest idea. I wouldn't have wanted anything better than Kurt having married Esther.'

Anna and Max were out of words. Anna began to cry in silence. She wiped her eyes with her handkerchief.

Finally, Max said, 'I'll have a talk with them. That is what I have to do. I'll hear them out about what they have to say for themselves. I'd rather not have Fried with me. Fried is nice. But he is a man of few words and quick decisions. Here, words are necessary. Fried might get excited during the talk. Could you be present?'

'I would,' Anna replied, 'but that wouldn't be loyal to Fried, wouldn't it? You'll have to confront them alone. Some solution must be found. I don't want to lose my child, Max. I don't want to see Esther miserable. I don't want her to move to some far-away town and only see her a few times a year. I don't want her to live alone, far from her family and her friends. She is not a bad woman!'

'Neither would I! I know she is not a bad woman. Might there even be hope on a satisfactory solution, Anna?'

Max and Anna continued discussing for a long time. A fine solution, even a half-fine one, they could not come up with.

Max Vincius told Kurt and Esther the same day, separately, he wanted to see them together in his house outside Thorn. With Esther, he had to run after her, behind her counter, into the Kleinberger house, to give her his message. Yes, Max noticed the child growing in her.

Esther nodded. She and Kurt would see him in the evening, two days from then.

That evening, Kurt Vincius and Esther Kleinberger sat in front of Max Vincius. They sat on chairs, next to each other. Max also sat in a chair, no table between them. Max again remarked how the belly of Esther has swollen. The child could not anymore remain concealed. Max scraped his throat. He started his sermon.

Kurt interrupted his father immediately, saying, 'father, Esther and I created this situation. We do not regret, for the child is the proof of our love. We have been talking, and we have arrived at a decision. There is no easy solution out of what we have done. As I said, we regret nothing. I love Esther, and she loves me. We do not want out of the situation. We have to face our relationship and the communities of Thorn. We shall do as follows.

We want to keep the child. We believe it will be a boy, and we will call him Richard Vincius. I shall recognise him as my child to the Prussian authorities. I will remain Jewish, and I shall

remain married to Hannah. She is a simple soul, with an innocent character. She will hear no evil and see no evil in the family. She will have no more children. She is content with her three sons, Max the Younger, Andreas and Julian. I am not giving up Esther. I thought I could have a simple, pious life with Hannah. I had not expected love to happen. The life the rabbis told me about, was a feeling without passion, leading to a life of death, devoid of feelings. How could I now reject the woman who has brought me to life, Esther? She taught me, quite naturally, another life existed. In that life, strong feelings, much stronger than I ever experienced until then, hold between man and woman. I want that kind of life. If I divorce, we would destroy a family life for which I bear great responsibility. I cannot do that, so I will not divorce either from Hannah. The life we will lead will be the life of a quiet family. I shall have a second life with Esther. We cannot marry, but we do not intend to give up on each other. We shall live our love. We shall raise our child or children, if more are to come. Such is our decision. Esther shall continue to live here, and she will continue to keep the store and develop it. We will open more shops in other cities, Esther and I. I hope you too will not condemn us. I hope you too would recognise our children, and help us build a fine future with them. In time, I will explain to our children what has happened, and how we tried to cope, Esther and I. Do you understand? We are not giving each other up! We shall live a lie, knowingly and all. We shall cherish our love!’

Kurt took both Esther’s hands in his, as if to emphasize they refused to be separated.

Max asked to Esther, ‘do you agree with this arrangement? You shall both have to lie a lot. Your life shall be a lie!’

Esther was startled.

Her voice stayed firm, ‘I agree. We found no other solution that would cause less pain. I too think we can live this way. I don’t blame Kurt. I want no other man, and I want his children. The rest, we leave to fate, in the hope of the forgiveness of our children and in the hope of the blessing of my parents, and of you and of Kurt’s brothers. In the stories of Christ, He asked who would throw the first stone. We are guilty, but we wouldn’t have it any other way.’

Max’s mind was in turmoil. He wanted to shout that a lie would always, at one time, come into the open, and what then? A life with a lie would anyhow at one time be broken. Still, the words refused to come out of his mouth and out of his heart. He knew they were right to try to proceed in this way.

Max held a silence for a very long time. He thought on. Images of the young days of Kurt and of Esther came to his mind. How had they run as children around him! He loved them so much! No, he could not condemn him. He was a weak man. He loved them too much! Finally, he gave, ‘well then, all is said. You will walk on a difficult road. Yet, you are right. There is no other decent or more satisfying solution. You are not going to have an easy life, my children. You have my love. People, rabbis, priests and deacons, will find out about how you live. They will condemn you severely. I hope our God might be forgiving. You have my blessing. For me, you know, it is as if my son is marrying my daughter! I still recall quite clearly how I saw you both for the first time. Now, I cannot and will not tear you asunder. Anna will forgive you. To Fried, you will have to plead far longer than with me. Anna and I, we cannot but forgive you, bless you, and wish you the best. Of course, I will help you. Your brothers will come to understand and continue loving you.’

In the end, tears also rolled over Max's cheeks.

He thought, 'is this also a punishment on me for having lived in adultery with Leandra, A vengeful God then, we have! I don't want other people to be punished for my sins! God, forgive me!'

'Go now,' Max said. 'All is told. I'll explain to Anna, and we both will help you face Fried.'

A few months later, the boy called Richard Friedrich Max Vincius was born. Later, a girl would come from Esther and Kurt. They called her Marlene Sarah Anna Vincius. Kurt recognised the children officially as his. Kurt remained faithful to Jewishness. Often, in the synagogue, people looked at him with angry, reproaching eyes. Anna and Fried Kleinberger equally made peace with their daughter and with Kurt. Their grandchildren became their greatest happiness.

Of course, the secret of Kurt and Esther reached the world of Thorn. Kurt and Esther were happy. They didn't bother with the other people.

Hannah Sonnenfeld kept her family entire. Did ever someone tell her Kurt, her husband, also lived with another woman? She never mentioned such a thing. Max Vincius doubted Hannah ever learnt of how her husband was living. She seemed to hold on to her happy, unblemished family life. Hannah knew, though, but held her eyes and ears closed. With time, also her heart closed.

Max Vincius

Max Vincius, despite his worries about one son having been at war and the other involved in what was no less than one more family scandal, lived a happy life into the 1860's. He hoped Prussia would wage no new wars. In that he was wrong, but the wars of the rest of the century did not affect his family much. His marriage to Leandra was a very happy one. So happy, Max could barely believe his luck. Complete harmony lay between him and Leandra, an amazing luck, in all respects. They both loved their son Julius. After a son came a girl, they called Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius. Julius and Maria filled the manor with laughter and sounds nobody understood, but which indicated already strong wills and fine intelligence. Max continued to trade out of Thorn. He did the more so with time, and in far larger volumes than ever before. His ventures demanded ever higher investments. He always found the partners to help him finance his deals. He became one of the wealthier men of Thorn. As he let others profit with him, he was one of the most appreciated men of the town.

Around Max also turned men who envied his success and his happiness. One of these men, of course, was Joram Cohen. Cohen had not expected Max capable of converting to Christendom. He blackened the reputation of Max in the Jewish community. The so easily found special notoriety of Max Vincius, married to the respectable Lady von Chrapitz of Prussian nobility, irked Joram much. If he could say something nasty of the Vincius, Cohen did not hesitate! Max ignored Cohen, and became the better man in doing so. He never entered business deals with Joram. The other traders of Thorn, Jewish or Evangelic or Polish Catholic, continued to frequent Max. Cohen became more and more isolated. He had to work on his own. In fact, this had really nothing to do with Max Vincius! The other traders of Thorn had understood since long ago Joram Cohen was not a reliable partner. In the booming

trade of Thorn, nobody needed him! It was far better to do business with Max, Kurt or Mikhael Vincius than with the Cohen known to the police for dark businesses.

The railways had transformed Thorn in volumes displaced and traded in. It had transformed Thorn in speed of transactions and in breadth of products offered and brought in. Wealth soared in Thorn. Everybody profited from the increased richness commerce brought. The mayor and his assistants worked with far more funds to invest in new roads, in new dikes and better harbours, in fine city monuments, in schools and hospitals.

Max had left Sara Benavicius in her house of the *Breite Strasse*. From echoes Max caught here and there in the meetings, dinners and balls organised by the associations of traders and shopkeepers of Thorn, he assumed the relations between her and Joram Cohen were no longer as bright as before. Both of them appeared less and less together at social events. He heard of other lovers for Sara.

Max had also seen Sara walking in the centre of Thorn, lately. He hardly recognised her. When he saw Sara listlessly strolling near the cathedral in the Thorn marketplace, he was driving with Leandra in a coach. Sara had turned into an old matron, aged before her years, her face puffy. She was only about 44 years old. She looked older. At that age, many women still lived in the bloom of beauty and respectability. Sara had fattened. Her figure was now far from harmonious. Max saw her walk slowly, painfully maybe, painstakingly, like a woman who had never moved much in her life. Was this the splendid woman who had once seduced him – and Joram Cohen – by her female force of appeal? Max felt horrified. He pitied her. In the society circles of Thorn, would she still be considered attractive? Max thought not! Sara had to be living a sad middle-age. Her old age had to be passed in loneliness and in bitter feelings.

Leandra von Chrapitz, on the contrary, seemed to have grown prettier and more assured of herself with age! She had preserved her elegance and fine figure. She radiated happiness, in the joy of her husband and her children. Her face was not swollen from alcohol and debauchery. Leandra could still run and play with the children, without feeling her bones crack and her muscles give in. She never lost her wit, her intelligence, the firm lines of her body, and her good humour. How she could laugh in the manor! Leandra continued to manage the von Chrapitz domain herself, in an arrangement she and Max had agreed upon. Leandra looked in her thirties when you met her currently.

Max Vincius always rode his horse when he travelled from Castle Chrapitz to Thorn, and to his warehouse and small house near his storerooms. He used to do that in all weather and wind, he only rarely used a coach. On his horse too, he could arrange his day as he wished, sometimes visiting his newest storerooms near the harbours of Thorn and near the railway station. He remained cautious at all times. He wore a whip in his hands, though he needed none on his horse, and a newer model of revolvers hung at his saddle. He could fire six shots with this handgun. When he held his horse alone, outdoors, he wore the revolver under his coat, generally concealed.

One day of the late summer of 1867, invigorated by the good news of his son Haim having left the hospital of Berlin and not returning to any war, leaving military service and having been designated by Avram Goldstern as his successor – together with Leah, happy of seeing

the affair between his other son Kurt and the Kleinbergers solved as well as humanly, decently and socially possible, Max Vincius rode through the woods of Chrapitz, towards Thorn. He was whistling, looked at the fine leave trees, the pines, and the multitude of birds in his and Leandra's domains. He rode slowly, yet quicker than at leisure. It was a fine day, dry and still warm.

Suddenly, Max noticed the birds did not sing anymore in the section of the road he was riding in. A little later, three shots sounded close to him, from deeper in the woods. Max hadn't seen any movement in the bushes along the road. Men must have lain down in the ferns, and that since a long time already, for Max had only the same second perceived a change in the singing of the birds. His horse had not given him any special warning.

Almost instantly, three bullets hit him. One bullet passed through his right leg, another bullet pierced his right arm, and a third hit him painfully in the chest. The bullets arrived from some distance, for the last bullet did not go deep. It lodged quite high in his chest, against a bone.

Several men had ambushed Max on the road, but from the right side. Had they shot from the left, they might have reached his heart and killed him on the spot. Max grabbed at his arm, and then the impact of the bullets threw him to the ground, on the other side of his horse. He was still conscious enough to draw his revolver out of its leather pocket, in a movement he had rehearsed a few times before. While falling, one foot remained in the stirrups. The horse cared for nothing. It panicked. Its instincts commanded it to flee. A threat came from the right! The animal jumped up, drawing Max behind it, into the bushes on the left side of the road. The bullet that went through Max's leg had also touched and hurt the horse. That bullet had lodged itself in the horse's side.

The animal galloped away from the threat and from the pain. It galloped left, in between the trees. It drew Max heavily on the ground, quite a distance farther. Max soon suffered terrible chafing wounds on his back, legs and arms. Luckily, the woods of Chrapitz had been cleaned well. No large tree trunks lay between the trees, only ferns, other low bushes, rotten leaves and small twigs. Thorns wounded Max's back. He cried out in pain. Max could not liberate his foot. He held on to his revolver, though, and looked desperately at how to draw his left foot out of the stirrups. He hung dangerously close to the hind legs of his animal. Only one thought rammed through his head: a man with his back on the ground and one leg in a stirrup, chasing through the wood, could not stay alive for long. By chance, he could see what happened in front of him. He could at least move his head and shoulders some, to avoid thicker bushes.

The horse ran frantically into a part of the forest where firs grew. No bushes here, no thistles, only softer ground. Here would lie dried wood and old trunks! In this terrain, death was certain to come. Max's back would soon be broken, his head burst on large, wooden obstacles. But then, soon, the horse was also slowed down by low, peaky branches, which hurt the animal if it continued to gallop on. The many, low hanging and sticking out branches hindered the unbridled course. The horse slowed down quickly to a slow canter and then, the animal stopped altogether. Max could twist his foot. As by miracle, the foot slipped out of the stirrup.

Max rolled on for a few feet. Then, he lay on the softer ground, still on his back. He continued rolling on to behind a tree in a movement of utter self-preservation. He hurt everywhere. His horse stepped to a little farther, among trees that had grown close together and thus barred the animal's way. It stood there, neighing wildly. The horse stood, panting, and turned around. Max saw blood oozing out of its wound. The horse kept on turning and turning, and trying with its head to reach the wound, but the bullet had hurt low.

Max then lay on his back, aching in all limbs, his right leg wounded, his left leg practically useless and very painful. He pushed himself nevertheless on his left leg and held himself on his unhurt arm to stand, then he moved behind a tree. He still had his revolver! He turned very slowly, to lie on his belly behind the tree. He placed the revolver in his left hand. Max hurt terribly everywhere on his body. He tried not to groan and feared most he would faint. He had to remain conscious to stay alive!

Max remained lying as quietly as he could behind the tree. He felt the weapon in his hand, his last assurance. Max was right-handed. He had exercised some with firearms in his left hand. Would he have the force to shoot if necessary? He waited. He had heard three shots, almost at the same time. He expected three men to yet come for him. He looked at his wounds, but couldn't do much to ease the pain. He felt dizzy.

He saw blood seeping through his clothes.

After a while, which seemed an eternity to him, Max heard horses advancing. Three men on horses approached. They rode very slowly, watching to right and to left. They followed tracks. One man led. The bandits rode quite closely to each other. Max wondered what he should do, continue hiding, or shoot and try to wound or kill one or two of the murderers, hoping the other would flee. To shoot would mean the bandits who had shot him, would know he was still alive. He could shoot one, maybe two of the men, never all three of them. Better to sell his hide dearly! If he tried to hide, and the men found out where he lay, they would have the time to split and yet attack him. He had six bullets in his weapon on the wrong arm!

Max heard and now saw the horses coming in line. One man, the leader, would ride quite closely to where Max was. Max waited. When that man was but a few feet away from Max, he shot at the man. Max had aimed for the neck, but his bullet slammed in the man's heart, in his left side. A second bullet, fired less than a second later, hit the horse. The animal pranked and jumped forward in panic. Max then looked at the second man, who was startled. Max could also shoot that man in the breast. The three horses sprang forward then, and disappeared among the trees.

Max lay very still behind his tree. The three horses with the two bandits galloped on through the trees. Max could no longer wait. He should get up. Once more, this took him quite a while. He saw his own horse, quite far off, but standing in one place. He had taught this horse a trick. When he whistled, the animal would come up to him. He whistled this way, now. The animal heard. Its ears moved. It nervously shook its head. Max whistled again, leaning against the tree. The horse could see him. It moved, came to him very slowly. Max made soft, clacking noises with his tongue. The animal stepped closer. Max could grab the reins, placed his left foot in the stirrups. He had to push his foot the last small distance with his hand. He drew with all his remaining power on his arms to get into the saddle. The pain in his right arm

shot to his brain. The pain was excruciating, but he finally hung over his horse. He could fling his right, stiff leg over the back of the horse. He sat in the saddle!

Max turned the horse and directed it through the wood to Castle Chrapitz. He didn't need the road, after all. He knew how to use the protection of the trees to reach Chrapitz. He heard horses behind him, advancing through the forest. The two remaining bandits had not given up chasing him. Maybe they had heard the noise his horse was making. When the wood of firs ended and the trees became less dense before him, Max spurred his horse faster on. The animal only sauntered at first, but then it broke into a slow gallop. Max would reach Chrapitz with a little luck, before the bandits would be on him. He continued riding. He feared any moment a bullet in his back. Finally, by miracle, he rode out of the wood, onto the long lawns of Chrapitz. He thought the bandits had abandoned his pursuit. Then, two shots cracked from behind him. He heard the bullets whizzing near his head. No bullet hit him. The men were too far behind him, and on horse, to fire. Max rode on, urging his horse to speed. He thus ran into the Chrapitz stables, and fell once more from his horse there. He could hide in the stables! Several servants ran to him. Max still held his revolver when he fainted from pain.

Max Vincius woke up in a room devoid of almost any furniture, except for a very clean bed. He was lying in that bed. A small, round table stood next to him. A glass of water and a filled decanter stood on the table. Max took it, and gulped down the water. He was very thirsty. He looked to the other side, and saw Leandra dozing in a large seat. It was dawn outside. She opened her eyes and smiled at him. He remembered.

Max asked, 'where am I? It is nice to see you again.'

'I dare say the same,' Leandra softly returned. 'You are at Castle Chrapitz. You are in a guest room we arranged especially for you, as you were wounded. You are in my custody. Don't worry, you'll be fine. You'll mend. I am so glad you came back to me, and to life.'

'I had no intention to do anything else,' Max answered.

He looked under the blankets. White bandages were worn around his right arm, and leg.

Leandra explained he had been shot three times. He remembered. The bullet had been removed from his chest. He would live. Like his son Haim, he might limp in the future, but he would be able to walk and to ride.

'This the doctors assured me,' Leandra told. 'Now, who did this to you? Do you entertain some vindictive mistress I didn't know anything about?'

He saw she was joking. Despite his situation, Max grinned.

'I have far better than a mistress in my bed and home,' he answered meekly.

'I was shot by three bandits,' Max explained.

'Yes, we know that much. Our servants saw two men suddenly emerging from the forest. The men must have realised they were in the open, vulnerable to be recognised, near Castle Chrapitz. They turned their horses, and fled. They must be far by now. One man was wounded, but he rode. A day later, we found a dead body near the road. Kurt and Mikhael have taken care of it. Also, the police of Thorn promised an investigation. They didn't know the killed man, though.'

'What do you mean, they took care of it?' Max asked, startled by what Leandra told him.

‘Your two sons went to have a talk with the trader called Joram Cohen,’ Leandra explained further. ‘They told him that if anything similar still happened to you in the future, they would make sure Cohen would first be totally ruined, and then killed without mercy. They told so in the presence of Sara Benavicius. Mikhael can be quite menacing if he wants to, you know. I was surprised at the ferocity in his eyes. I did not suspect your sons could be so vindictive of character, and so menacing! They already taught Cohen a few lessons. It seems he fears your sons. So, he has left Thorn, though he probably continues trading here. He has left Sara Benavicius. She is distraught. She still has her three sons. Mikhael fears she has taken to drink, to brandy, not anymore to wine, and to laudanum maybe. Well, I do suppose you are safe now. Cohen must be convinced the brothers Vincius, one an *Oberst* of the Prussian Army, shall execute their threat. Your sons told they wouldn’t need proof either of any wrongdoing by Cohen. They would do their own justice. Whatever might happen to you, they would come and follow him to the end of the world. Those are the exact words of Mikhael. Mikhael was astonishing! He may be the youngest, he has taken the lead. Wherever Cohen hid, they would find him and kill him. He won’t try to harm you again! He got the message. Still, we have no proof he, indeed, sent the bandits. Anybody may have done that. Cohen did not cry out he was innocent, though!’

‘Great!’ Max exclaimed. ‘There you have my sons for me. I wouldn’t have dared to imagine they were capable of such instant bellicose attitude. Not Mikhael and Kurt, anyway. How long have I remained unconscious?’

‘Over a week, about ten days,’ Leandra replied, her face grim.

Max looked at her, surprised. He had thought he had awakened the day after the incident. He saw Leandra’s mouth twitch. She began to sob. Her body shook, and she threw herself on him, in the bed.

‘At first, when you fell off the horse, here, I was so afraid you had been shot to death,’ she cried. ‘Afterwards, we didn’t know whether you would survive the wound in your chest or not, I don’t want to lose you. Not now! Not now! I bring bad luck to the people I love!’ Max let her cry. He kept holding on to her, though she hurt him with her weight on his chest, arm and leg. When Leandra felt Max did not react, simply held her and let her cry her heart out, as she had wanted to do all the days of the past week, she slowly came back to her senses.

‘The doctors said you would live,’ she told, wiping her eyes and nose. ‘I wasn’t too sure!’

‘I’ll be fine,’ Max said. ‘You brought me back to life. The moment I drove my horse into Chrapitz, I knew I was saved and would be fine. I wouldn’t give you up. Bye the way, how is the horse?’

‘The horse is fine, too,’ Leandra nodded. ‘We got the bullet out. It didn’t go deep. You thought you would be safe with me?’

Leandra did not return to her seat.

‘Of course, with you,’ Max repeated. ‘Whatever could happen to us, now, we do have each other, no?’

And that was the greatest truth, Max suddenly came to the awareness. As long as he had Leandra, he would live and be happy.

Max Vincius healed. He too developed a limp. Later, he felt overjoyed when he could walk beside his son in *Unter den Linden* in Berlin, both of them accompanied on one side by Leandra and by Leah on the other. Those were happy holidays for them.

After a few months of voluntary exile from Thorn, Joram Cohen returned to live in the city. He continued his trade business in Thorn. Then, he disappeared again from the town. Nobody among the other traders still wanted to have anything to do with him. The Vincius family heard Cohen had moved to East-Prussia, to Königsberg.

Sara Benavicius remained living in Thorn. She entertained other lovers, but lived alone. She had become an old woman, knowing not what to do with her time. She stayed on in her house with two maidservants. She drank heavily. She still had her three sons, who came to see her regularly, but not often. Max Vincius heard she often cried for hours. She lived a long, lonely old age. Her sons never left her grandchildren with her, unless they were present, too. Still, she drew some satisfaction from seeing them once every while. Max Vincius provided her with the funds to live a life of leisure and comfort. She was often seen at the theatre, usually quite alone.

On the 3rd of July of 1869, the North German *Bund* granted full emancipation to the Jews. The new law stated more generally all existing restrictions in civil and national rights arising from the diversity of religious confessions were lifted.

Max Vincius and his family regarded this as their triumph, the triumph of Prussian tolerance and justice. This was why they had been living in Prussia. They felt proud to live in this greater Germany, in which the Prussian ideals of living together of all humans, had been fully realised.

Mikhael Vincius. 1865-1875

In 1867, Mikhael Vincius, the third and youngest son of Max Vincius, was 25 years old. Mikhael had always been considered the angel of the family. Though he was the youngest son, he had been spoilt the most by his parents. His mother had protected him probably quite more than she had her other sons. He looked so much like her! She also occupied herself more with Mikhael than with her older sons. He too, hung constantly on her robes when he was young. Sara kept him with her more often, and gave him her full affectionate attention always.

Mikhael grew up to a very handsome, charming young man. He had inherited the natural seductive ease in company from his mother. Unknown to her, and even unknown to his father, Mikhael nevertheless had the most rational, thoughtful character of Max Vincius! His will became of steel, his determination as stiff as iron, his planning exceedingly sharp and detailed. He was as cunning in business as his parental forefathers in direct line. He was tough at heart, Mikhael, but his obstinacy remained hidden under a mask of amiability, elegance and affability. People who dealt with him in business, later, when he was practically a grown-up man, remarked astonished, and generally when it was too late, at the end of a commercial transaction, Mikhael always got matters his way. He could trick his partners into accepting and bringing them to accept and adopt his views. Mikhael was a very honest man. But with Mikhael Vincius, you had better formulate beforehand quite exactly and in elaborate detail what you wanted out of a deal, and how, or you could end up with far less profits than you expected, having innocently been led into results far more profitable for Mikhael Vincius than for you! He had received the heart and the talent of the ideal merchant.

Because Mikhael was so handsome of traits and limbs, so gentle and courteous with women, he had conquered already many a female heart in Thorn by the time he was 25 years old. He never abused of these women. He never promised them something he could not really give them, everlasting love and marriage, but many hearts remained broken and sad.

Mikhael simply had not yet met the girl who had so much impressed him he would have fallen instantly for her. The girls he met concluded to each other Mikhael Vincius was a cold one. He never lost control over the relationships he entered. He had his fun, and then broke up. Fathers of fine daughters had complained to Max Vincius about the behaviour of this Vincius son. Mikhael waved the concerns away. No, he had not slept with any of the girls. Oh yes, that particular girl had been nice, and was pretty, but no, she was not interesting enough for him to spend more time with her. They did not fit together!

Max Vincius esteemed his son arrogant. He ascribed his son's behaviour to his first wife's character, without noticing he, Max, had not been so different when he was young. Mikhael was much more the cautious type, as his father had been at a riper age.

Oh yes, Mikhael had learnt from his father! He had learnt more than Max would ever acknowledge. Mikhael wanted to be sure he married the right girl. He was ready to wait long for her. He then wanted to love and honour his wife. He abhorred divorce. So, Mikhael Vincius walked with many girls, searching for perfection, and brought none of them home. He was searching for that rarest of feelings that would make him run after a girl and not the other way around. He sought his love. He hadn't found it yet!

Max Vincius had an easy duty with providing security in life for his two oldest sons. Kurt was a born trader, better even in usual commerce than Max, his father. Haim had chosen to be a military man, and by a strange and lucky strike of fortune, Haim had married the daughter of a wealthy book editor of Berlin, in which business he could enter and excel at any moment, when he wished.

Max could not fathom where the interests lay of his youngest son. Mikhael was a brilliant student at the secondary school of Thorn, at the German Gymnasium. Should Max send this son to a fine university? To Berlin perhaps? Mikhael showed no interest in becoming a scholar. He felt no interest in seeking notoriety in any religious function. Finally, Max Vincius had proposed to Mikhael on his son's 19th birthday to have him manage the distilleries of vodka he still owned, as well as the one beer brewery in the family. Mikhael had needed a whole week to think over his father's proposal. Then, he had quietly accepted. So it happened, that Mikhael Vincius took over the distilleries and the brewery from his father's hands. Max Vincius kept the proprietor papers of the sites. He merely handed over the management of the factories to Mikhael.

Max Vincius had rather expected some sort of catastrophe to happen when his dandy of a son took over the reins. Nothing of the sort happened. The first year, production and profits dropped a little. Max feared the worst. The second year, the factories bloomed, and profits rose. The following years, profits mounted steadily. Then, Max had to hear his son had actually invested, built two more distilleries, both quite nearer to Danzig. His son was exporting large quantities of pure alcohol and of tasty brandy overseas, supported by large publicity campaigns abroad. Profits then soared! Mikhael seemed to have developed an affinity for money. Max Vincius could not but conclude all was well too with this, atypical youngest son.

Max Vincius was a generous man when he was happy and satisfied. He shared the profits with his son, allowing Mikhael the larger percentage. Mikhael was then already heaping up a fortune, sooner than Max could have dreamed of. He was satisfied, and stopped worrying about this son, too. Max was thinking about handing over to Mikhael the propriety papers of the distilleries and the beer factory.

Mikhael too was satisfied. He managed the distilleries of his father now with his two fingers in his nose, leaving him much free time to do what he liked even more, chasing girls. He laughed with the men and women who thought they could deceive him because of his young age.

Mikhael had taken a keen interest in the process of brewing and distilling. This had surprised him, for many would have estimated the work in a dark, dirty factory rather dull. For Mikhael, the process was simple enough. Dirt and the black oil, the dust of grain, the fumes in the factories, the smelling liquids, the sticky sugars, the smell of sweating workers, didn't scare him off. He had come to love his work!

You took grain, or potatoes. You dropped those in water in large vats, elevated the temperature just a little in winter, less or even not at all in summer, to obtain a consistent gruel or liquid that contained many ingredients, and sugars. This first stage produced thus mainly a sugary liquid, as the water transformed the starch to sugars.

In a second phase, you added local yeasts. The yeast would transform the sugars to alcohol. In both those processes, one needed some time, but only a matter of days. The contents of the last vats went into the stills. One could then use pot stills or column still to separate the alcohols from the rest. The pot stills preserved better the taste of the grain in the resulting beverage. The columns allowed a more continuous distilling process, higher degrees of alcohol in the finished liquid, but of lesser taste. Taste was lost in distilling with columns stills, but higher productivity was reached. Both could be used, Mikhael decided. In between the single pots and the column stills, one could use the Pistorius system of interconnected pot stills. One obtained then some of the advantages of each previous system: higher degree of alcohol, a more continuous process and thus higher productivity, some better conservation of finer flavours than with column stills. In Mikhael's newer distilleries, all three processes were used, producing different qualities of brandy. For his own consumption, he preferred the smaller quantities obtained with his old pot stills of copper. What exactly did the distilling process consist of? One applied heat to the sugary liquid, to bring the liquid on which the yeasts had worked almost to ebullition. The liquid turned to vapour. The alcohol transformed into gas earlier than water. The alcohol vapours rose higher and sooner than the water. At the end of the still, pot or column, one collected the alcohol vapours, which again liquified to drops in contact with the lower temperatures of the environment. The drops that fell from the stills held a high alcohol percentage.

Mikhael produced large quantities of the brandy. To some alcohols, he added various herbs at different stages, to flavour the brandy, commonly called vodka by the Russians and the Poles, for 'little water'. If one wanted to give yet more taste to the vodka, one could store the liquid in barrels. The wood of the barrels transferred other flavours to the alcohol. Mikhael imported old wine barrels from France and from Lithuania. He found usually two to three years in barrels sufficed to deliver a high-grade, very tasty vodka of considerable quantity.

When Mikhael Vincius disappeared for weeks from Thorn to experiment in his distilleries, people said he was actually living a new, wild love with one of his current mistresses. The same people did not look out for these mistresses in town, for otherwise they would have noticed the girls or ladies walking around, and walking with other boys or men. Mikhael lived alone in the country during these periods, near his distilleries, girls then far from his mind. He didn't much care about his reputation in those days. His refusal to comment heightened the mystery around his person in Thorn. He was a lonely, somewhat strange, headstrong, wealthy, hard-working individual in Thorn.

When Mikhael Vincius knew about all there was to know from older master-distillers working in his and in other distilleries, he became slightly bored. The men ended merely by telling him anecdotes of how fine life had been in times of lore, when distilling was still in its infancy. Mikhael then continued to experiment. Sometimes, he lost money in the searching. Still liquids grew sour. He also had the widest gamma of tastes in his brandies, anywhere on offer. This particularity of his firm made his publicity. He always sold well, in quantity and in quality, to different buyers. He also more and more exported his brandy to other countries, out of the port of Danzig. There, he worked usually with the Svirskius men, who were of his greater family. Mikhael was the Vincius brother who entertained the closest relations with the Svirskius relatives!

Mikhael, like his father, was an avid reader of newspapers. He learned early that France would organise another '*Exposition Universelle*' in 1867. This was yet one more universal, international exhibition of the contemporary arts and industry. The show would be held in Paris, as of the month of April of 1867.

Prussia was still at war with Austria, but the campaigns drew to their logical end and the ultimate victory of Prussia. It was safe to travel. Mikhael felt a little bored in the first months of winter of that year. The war with Austria had come to a standstill. He received regularly long letters from his brother Haim. He felt reassured as to the outcome of the war and the health of his brother. One of the girls he had been seeing the last months was insisting on sleeping with him. That was the moment with these kinds of girls to disappear from Thorn for a few weeks!

Mikhael decided for the change of air, to visit the Exhibition of Paris. He intended to stay for a month or two in the French capital. The production of vodka could flow along without him. His directors and masters knew what to do.

End March of 1867, Mikhael went on board of a ship in Danzig, bound for the port of Antwerp in Belgium. From there, he could reach Paris by another ship sailing to Rouen at the mouth of the Seine River, or he could travel by coach to the French capital. Rouen lay close to Paris.

Mikhael packed, travelled lightly, and proceeded as he had planned. He arrived in Paris at the beginning of April of 1867, a few days after the French Emperor Napoleon III had officially opened the Universal Exhibition.

Mikhael read in the newspapers the first Universal Exhibition ever had opened in London, in the spring of 1851. This show was the first sign the European revolutions of 1848 definitely were manifestations of grudges of the past. It presented the produce of the arts and industry of many countries, allowing industrials and scholars, as well as the broader public, to discover the latest practical products resulting from the advances in science and technology. This first exhibition had been a huge success.

The next one took place in France, in Paris, in 1855. This exhibition merely filled one permanent palace on the Parisian *Champs Elysées*. The War of the Crimea was still being waged then, which meant the exhibition opened in unfavourable circumstances. Yet, it too was a great success for the public.

A new exhibition was set up in London in 1862. The two exhibitions of 1855 and 1862 had been too small in scope to really suit the demand and expectations of the visitors. The exposing countries and enterprises complained of not having obtained enough space to comfortably demonstrate their products. The taste for such grand, international exhibitions developed further in the modern societies. They filled a need. Countries could proudly show off with the realisations of their economy. Entrepreneurs could present their products and inventions, and hope on world-wide interest to boost sales.

A French Imperial Decree of 1863 had announced a yet new exhibition for 1867. The decree was based on a report of Monsieur Rouher, the then French Minister of Agriculture, of Commerce and Public Works. The Minister proposed a new exhibition to be held in Paris in 1867. This would be grander than anything organised before! The Minister hoped to flatter

Emperor Napoleon III. The emperor would be able to show off with his power, the power of the most developed country in the world, Imperial France. The exhibition should as much as possible show the works of art, the industrial products of the participating countries, and in general, the manifestations of all the branches of human activity. It should be huge in surface, as many millions of visitors could be expected. Emperor Napoleon III endorsed the idea enthusiastically.

Both the French State and the City of Paris would provide a subvention of 12 million Francs each. A public subscription of 8 million Francs would provide the remaining expected budget for the titanic works. The French Government and the City of Paris thus provided for the main funds, but many enterprises exhibited and contributed. Among these were the French Suez Canal Company and the German *Gussstahlfabrik* of Krupp.

It was decided in France to have an Imperial Commission installed, to supervise the exhibition works, under the presidency of the emperor and of the ministers, whose attributes called them to participate. The committee was actually led by Prince Jérôme Napoléon. It counted 60 members, among whom 3 distinguished Englishmen. Thus, Lord Cowley, the British Ambassador to Paris, was called to the membership. Also, Lord Granville, President of the Council of the Queen of England, would be a member. One found distinguished persons for the commission, such as the Baron Hausmann, the Prince Bonaparte, the famous painter Ingres, a Rothschild banker, the Count of Nieuwekerke, Count Walewzki, and the industrialist Schneider, among other important figures of public French life.

The officially named '*Exposition Universelle d'art et d'industrie*', the international exhibition of Paris of 1867, was thus the second of such world fairs to be organised in the French capital. It would be held from the 1st of April of 1867 to the 8th of November of the same year, a 6-month period of extravagancy. The exhibition had been prepared since 1864, in the frenzy of the renovation of Paris itself by the Baron Hausmann. Large new boulevards were being drawn in Paris, demanding the demolition of thousands of modest houses on the places where the new, wide boulevards were to come. Fortunes were made by the financiers and promoters who had the financial means to buy land along the new boulevards, and by the promoters of grand new buildings, holding luxurious apartments and shops along them. Fortunes were lost, of course, by the people whose modest houses were being demolished without compensation.

The site chosen for the buildings of the Exhibition was the *Champ de Mars*, the military parade ground of Paris.

The works on the main palace of the exhibitions started on the 25th of September of 1865. This palace would consist of an unusual, oval-shaped construction of seven concentric galleries built of glass, iron and concrete, with cast-iron columns. It had to send the Crystal Palace of a previous London show to the shadows. It was huge, indeed. This principal building stood on a rectangular field of 490 metres long and 380 metres wide. Around the central structure stood nearly 100 smaller constructions, covering the open terrain between the oval-shaped central and the rectangular sides of the *Champ de Mars*.

When Mikhael Vincius arrived in Paris, a city he had never visited before, he first walked for long hours to get acquainted with the layout of the capital. He stayed in one of the finest hotels of the town.

In 1867, Paris was a marvel to behold. Gas lighting had been introduced, making of Paris the '*Cité Lumière*', the city of lights. Thorn, of course also had gas lighting, and even its own gas works to provide for the light, but the spectacle of this city at night was so much more exciting than Thorn at night! New water and sewer pipes had been laid. Entire avenues and streets were refurbished. Paris looked the centre of civilisation, and the Parisian for sure acted as if this was definitely so. A gigantic food market, '*Les Halles*', had been built, a long structure of huge iron and glass vaulting. Large department stores were being envisaged, or already existed. '*Le Printemps*', spring, dated from 1865 and '*La Samaritaine*' would rise in 1869. New railroad stations, east and north, connected Paris to an expanding network of railways. Powerful banks such as the '*Crédit Lyonnais*' and the '*Société Générale*' of 1864 had been founded to serve and to exploit financially the dynamism and growth of the French economy. The Opera House of Charles Garnier, the *Opéra Garnier*, was fully in use. True, the Paris of Napoleon III boomed in every human activity. Enormous masses of people of all nations this year arrived to visit Paris and its Exhibition. The crowds dazzled Mikhael Vincius. This was life on a scale he had never seen before. A quite modern, far more glittering society worked and lived in this city than in Thorn. The sense of rational organisation and planning could be felt everywhere, even more than in Berlin, Mikhael had to grant. The smell of money hung in the air.

The first time Mikhael Vincius set himself on his way to the Exhibition, he felt quite impressed and elated. The gates were opened every morning at 8 o'clock sharp, and closed every evening at six. Mikhael entered the *Champs de Mars* by its principal entry at the Iéna Bridge. The immense dais or velum there prolonged to the palace of the exhibition, a walk of 256 metres. The visitors and Mikhael Vincius were received between rows of trees, rare plants and exotic flowers. The velum in green cloth held the symbols of French Imperial power, the golden bees of the Napoleons. The dais was painted beneath in gold and in green, the borders were decorated with *oriflammes* and flags. The entry most used by the Parisians on foot was the Rapp gate. No service of public coaches ended there. Mikhael arrived each day by hired coach. He afforded himself this extravagant luxury to savour the views of Paris.

Mikhael walked through the exhibition site first, merely to have a good overview of the different buildings. He followed the guidebook he had bought at the entry. The main exhibit palace was a vast, astonishingly vast iron-and-glass oval of a mile in circumference. Within the outer structure, a gallery actually, ever smaller oval buildings repeated the form of the outside structure. There were seven concentric ovals! This '*Palais du Champ de Mars*' had been conceived by Frédéric Le Play, the General Commissioner of the Exhibition, and designed by Baptiste-Sébastien Kranz. He had contracted a young engineer, named Gustave Eiffel, to carry out his vision. The architect was Léopold Hardy. More than 26,000 men had been working at the construction of the main palace for 2 years. Eiffel, an entrepreneur of metallic constructions, built the outer Gallery of Machinery.

As Mikhael could estimate on first inspection, France had received the largest exhibit space, and then Great Britain, the North German Bund with Prussia. Followed Austria, Belgium, the

United States of America, and Russia, in that order. Seven oval galleries in all, the one inside the other, formed the entire palace. The innermost oval held the ‘Gallery of the History of Labour’, an ode to the artisanal crafts of mankind. It proudly showed the advance of the human race from the Stone Age to contemporary, modern times. The centre was open, and held a marvellous garden. The innermost, central pavilion in the garden, featured an assemblage of money, weights and measures from several countries around the world. The exhibitions in the palace offered a bewildering variety of products resulting from human ingenuity. As the glass and iron structures had at their centre a large garden, the outer ring of the *Palais du Champ de Mars* held in contrast the great machines of the industry of the world, the most impressive inventions of the human mind.

Mikhael read in the guidebook the composer Gioacchino Rossini had been appointed as honorary president of the committee that had decided on the musical composition of the exhibition. His ‘Hymn to Napoleon III and his valiant people’ became the official hymn of the Exhibition. The well-known poet and writer Victor Hugo, though a long-time political opposer to the French emperor, wrote the introduction to the Paris guidebook. The exhibition was to be an ode to the expansion of French art, industry and finance, and to the reshaping of the boulevards of the city by the Baron Hausmann. Those all, were so many odes to the splendid reign of Emperor Napoleon III.

Mikhael Vincius read about all that, not too much interested in the fame of the politicians of his age. He wanted to have an idea of what technology nowadays could offer, in what was regarded as the fine arts – a domain he knew almost nothing of, and for what he thought was one of the greater holes in his education and erudition – and of what the modern machinery amounted to, as presented by the larger, main powers of Europe. The second day, he was still roaming through the pavilions, without having reconnoitred them all. The Exhibition was far larger and far more interesting than he could have imagined. He began to enjoy himself in Paris, at the exhibition buildings, at the Exhibition itself, and in the exciting city of Paris. Nevertheless, he felt lonely, and sometimes wondered why he had left Thorn.

Then, happened one of those totally unexpected whims of fate, which so often can decide over a life and which certainly Mikhael had never, never expected to happen so far from his home.

Mikhael was walking in the centre gardens, more daydreaming than admiring the scenery. He looked at the cascade, wondering how the garden architects had been able to bring so much water to the middle of the buildings of the grand palace, and make it disappear in the earth again. He went past a flower kiosk, where he would have bought some of the more exotic, huge, colourful flowers for a beloved one. He was a little saddened he had no one to present flowers to. For a moment, a wave of nostalgia overwhelmed him. What was he doing here, all alone, on himself, living beyond the world of everybody else. He saw far more couples wandering around, arm in arm, than single men, and almost never women walking alone. Two or a few women strolled about the Exhibition, yes, only very rarely a woman alone, and rarely one of these handsome! A pain had been gripping him lately, a kind of panic in his mind for having to live the rest of his days thus alone, without love and affection. He felt the few, desperate moments of the yearning for affection that, he presumed, racked all lonely

human beings. Mikhael forced himself on, to other, more cheerful thoughts, and other pavilions. He forced himself on, to, the huge aquariums. He noted where they were situated, decided to return later, frankly not too interested. He ran almost into glass houses filled with more exotic plants, many of which presented flowers he had never seen before. The multitude of colours brought him some joy. He breathed easier.

Suddenly, Mikhael heard a female voice cursing out loudly, not far from where he stood. He walked two paces on, and saw a woman standing with her back to him, tall but bent over, presenting nice, round, fine and rather ample well-shaped and silk-covered buttocks to him. This was not really a very elegant poise in public! Why was the woman bent over, here? It seemed incongruous! In any case, the woman, noting from the language she used, could not be an elegant lady nor a refined demoiselle of the better society, for she kept cursing like a tempested peat-shuffler. Mikhael was all the more surprised, because the coarse terms arrived at him in his own German language! A German with the accent of the north, sharp, a sea-German.

Mikhael cautiously stepped around the woman to better see what was happening. He was being not too discreet about that. He had expected a woman of forty to fifty, maybe even older to offer his services to. When he too bent a little, he noticed the woman was quite younger, a robust girl in her early twenties. Mikhael could not well enough make out her face, for she stood sideways from him, not anymore on the path of the visitors, well inside the flower beds. He understood the issue soon enough.

The girl or woman, very blond-haired, he noticed, had stepped into the flowers to get onto a series of cactuses, which had imprisoned her with their hooks. When she drew her ample silk robes away here, another great cactus shrub caught her elsewhere on her robe and shirt and vest. The plants had caught her in flagrant act of stealing the flowers and punishing her now for stepping among them. They would not allow her to liberate herself from their thorny embraces. Mikhael saw a large tear on one side of her flimsy silk overdress. Mikhael dared to push closer, took pity, and addressed her in a somewhat compassionate though commanding tone, meant only to stop the woman from ever gesticulating more widely and wildly, from getting caught ever more in the plants.

He said, ‘please allow me! If you stand still, I may succeed in taking out the hooks one by one and liberate you from the thorns!’

The woman froze instantly. Mikhael could still not discern her face. She said no word anymore, stopped her sudden, desperate movements and stayed put where she was. She didn’t ask who her potential saviour might be. She just stood, stood right, which tore once more at her dress. She brought her arms even high, to allow the intruder in, and waited. He heard no thank you, no go ahead, no sigh of relief, just an attitude of abandonment, of ‘get on with it, I am in your hands entirely now. Make the best of it!’

Mikhael bent around the woman. He noticed her dress was an expensive, elaborate Parisian fashion affair, flimsy in layers, and oh so vulnerable to cactuses. He noticed too the woman showed a fine bust, nor too large nor too small, a generous bust, an exquisite small waist and very, very long, slender legs. She was as tall as he was. He checked at which points the cactuses and other thorn bushes had hooked into her dress. He started at the side closest to him, her left, and unhooked her one by one at those places.

When she tried to move, he said, ‘please stand still yet a while. You’re free on one side. I’ll unhook you on the other side, now. I’m afraid your silk is torn in a couple of places, though not in long tears.’

The woman moved not a thumb. Mikhael went around her to the other side, gently prising the other thorns out. He saw two more thorns tearing at her front, easily took those thorns out of her, then looked at her back. Two more thorns stuck in the silk near the girl’s bottom. He dared not touch her there. He hesitated.

‘Get on with it, will you?’ the husky voice of the woman sounded, whispering.

Mikhael unhooked her bottom.

‘I think that is all,’ Mikhael reacted. ‘Now, move only as I direct you, or more thorns will yet imprison you. A nasty spot you worked yourself in!’

Mikhael put his hands on the woman’s sides. She trembled a little at his touch. He took her at the armpits. She still had her back to him. He drew her slowly to him. She felt the gentle pressure, yielded, and in his direction, stepped backwards a little.

‘Fine! Step backwards a little more, just one step. I’ll guide you. Follow my hands!’

Mikhael drew on. The woman stepped backwards. She felt the stones of the visitors’ path under her shoes, stepped once backwards further for good measure, sighed deeply, and turned. She turned so decisively, she and Mikhael stood almost nose to nose, eye in eye, and Mikhael looked in very wonderful eyes and an even handsomer face.

Mikhael stared, then. The woman indeed was quite young, a girl really, though a woman entirely, physically. She showed a strong face of good bones, an enthralling mocking smile on her lips, and her piercing, blue eyes kept holding his gaze. The girl, obviously a very, very pretty girl, inclined her head to the left, studied him, seemed to like what she saw for she snorted a little, taking in her breath, and smiled on with her bright eyes. Mikhael felt rather lost in those admirable eyes, which he considered splendidly soft, two eyes of the finest, purest blue he had ever seen. The girls of Thorn and even of Danzig were dark-eyed! Above the eyes hung luxurious, thick blond hair, golden, higher up drawn backwards in a large dot, which was somewhat undone from the effort. That hair should be long, falling down to her bust when completely undone, Mikhael mused. For a few moments, Mikhael imagined how marvellous the girl would look with her hair loose.

He came back to his senses, released her, took a step on, away from her. She was not unattractive in her face either, he noticed now, though not one of the Parisian slim beauties of white porcelain he had admired in the city. Her traits were fine and harmonious, though long, hard and strong, not really soft but showing a determined expression, sharp-edged at places, and yet very alluring. Her skin was perfect, a little sun-burnt and roughened by the wind. She was a girl who was not kept inside all the time. This girl was much woman!

The girl broke the enchantment first, ‘well, I have to thank you! You released me from captivity, dear sir! Each time I moved, I felt more hooks in my dress and in my body. Bloody cactuses! They tempt you with the finest flowers of the most intricate patterns of petals and with the most dazzling colours, and then they punish you for having dared to reach out for them. I should have known! One should not pick a flower from those! That will teach me! But weren’t they lovely?’

The girl spoke to him in a very comprehensible, fine German, with the sharper, cool intonations of the north. Where was she from?

Mikhael proposed, 'which flower did you want? Allow me.'

He looked into the thorny bed of plants.

'That one over there,' the girl pointed. 'They are quite a few. I thought picking one wouldn't hurt. One would not be a sin, though those signs, there, warned and said not to pick the flowers!'

Mikhael didn't reply. He looked at the plants, found a way in without being caught in his turn, stepped in, reached one of the flowers, went cautiously down on one knee, pinched out the fresh, red flower, stood up as cautiously as before, turned on his heels, and went back exactly the same way he had gotten in. Triumphantly, he presented the blood-red flower to the girl.

She smiled again, then, accepted the flower with a ravishing smile and a curtsy, and brought it to her nose. Her eyes flickered, definitely flirting for a second.

Then, the girl said, 'I owe you, Monsieur. May I at least know your name?'

'Mikhael Vincius, at your service. I forgot we hadn't been introduced. Sorry for that. My home town is in Germany, the city of Thorn in West Prussia. I have family in Berlin and in Danzig, though.'

'Ah,' the girl sighed. 'Fredia False. Bremen! Thorn lies far from Bremen!'

'It does. The world has become smaller because of the railways, though. Distances have shrunk.'

'True,' Fredia False said doubtingly. 'And what brought you to Paris, if I may ask, Herr Vincius?'

'Please, no sir. Please call me Mikhael. My father is a tradesman, a brewer and a distiller. I too, am mainly a distiller. I came to Paris, frankly, because I felt bored in Thorn at the moment, and to learn what the world has evolved into in the distilling business.'

'You produce vodka?'

'I do,' Mikhael admitted proudly. 'A little beer too. I manage the factories of my father, have installed a distillery on my own.'

'At Thorn?'

'Yes, most of them at Thorn. My family originated from Vilna, though, from Lithuania. We still own smaller factories in Lithuania. We are selling those. Our factories near Thorn are larger, more modern, and export from Thorn is easy. Tell me, how came you to the Exhibition? Are you alone?'

'I was not alone. I accompanied my father and my two brothers. They must be somewhere, wandering about here, looking out for me. I confess I deliberately escaped from them. That did not succeed well. I got caught elsewhere, until you liberated me. I am so thankful!'

'I did little, really. I have no merit.'

They continued chatting while they walked on. Mikhael wondered why this tall girl, who showed him so little femininity, though she was very attractive and well formed in all physical places, seemed to surprise and enchant him all the time. She seemed to fit him, as none of his previous female friends had been able to do. He felt fine with her. They talked freely, like two conspirators, and they walked closely together, touching shoulders even. They advanced quite a while thus, neither of them willing to say goodbye and split and break apart. Mikhael was unaware the people around them must have considered them a married couple. They strolled on without aim, looked around, and commented on what they saw.

They must have been doing this for over an hour, wandering through the concentric glass-covered halls, unconcerned, when suddenly, Fredia caught his arm and nervously tore at his sleeve.

‘My father and my brothers! They have seen us. They are coming up to us. They will be angry I ducked away from them.’

Mikhael suppressed a smile. He was not afraid of confronting angry fathers. He had some experience with that. The three men accelerated to their daughter and sister. Fredia’s cheeks turned to deeper red. She would have some explaining to do, and it was too late to flee. Fredia stammered out her story. She had lost her way. She had got caught in thorn bushes, and be saved from hurt and imprisonment by this gentle, courteous man who had come to her assistance. Fredia’s brothers indeed looked with very angry eyes, until one almost broke out in laughter. They seemed relieved. Their conscience was not all pure. They had given no thought of Fredia in their enthusiasm for what they had seen in the Exhibition. Fredia’s father also looked rather amused, Mikhael noticed.

‘And you, dear sir, who might you be?’ Fredia’s father wondered out loud.

‘Mikhael Vincius,’ Mikhael introduced hastily, ‘I am a trader from the city of Thorn in West Prussia.’

‘Vincius, Vincius,’ Fredia’s father murmured. ‘I did business with a Vincius of Thorn a couple of times, in the past. Never stood face to face. I bought wood. Part rare wood, part firs in bulk.’

‘That should have been with my father, Max Vincius,’ Mikhael helped.

‘Indeed!’ I seem to remember a name of Max. I traded with the Svirskius of Danzig. They indicated the Vincius wood.’

‘The Svirskius are family of ours,’ Mikhael quickly added.

‘If I recall, the Vincius are a Jewish family,’ Fredia’s father tentatively launched.

‘We are of a Jewish family, yes,’ Mikhael agreed. ‘My father and I converted to Christianity. He married the Lady Leandra von Chrapitz. My father now lives at Castle Chrapitz.’

Fredia’s father looked up in surprise. ‘I know, or rather, knew, some of the von Chrapitz men.’

He seemed to soften in his expressions.

‘We, Falses, are of far Jewish stock, too. Our grand-grandfather converted, many years ago, in another generation. We are Catholic.’

The man paused, then seemed to wait for a conclusion. Mikhael didn’t move a finger. He stood, and smiled enigmatically.

‘Well then, Herr Vincius,’ he continued, ‘we express our gratitude for having saved our daughter.’

He looked to Fredia, ‘we wanted to have a look at the French pavilions now, Fredia, that way.’

‘I wonder,’ Mikhael intervened. ‘I would like to ask your permission, Sir False, to walk a while on with Miss Fredia. We got acquainted just now. I proposed to show her the machinery I was interested in. Could we have your permission to walk on, together? Just in friendship, of course. Could we have your permission to see each other yet the next days? We’ll grab a coach and get Miss Fredia back to your hotel this late afternoon, before the closing time of the Exhibition. Tomorrow, I’d like to come to your hotel and walk again

through the Exhibition with her. I have no friends, no acquaintances in Paris and in the Exhibition. Your daughter and I, we seem to have the same interests. The name of my family is a guarantee for my honour. Let's say I'll chaperone her.'

Mikhael looked at Fredia. She was nodding energetically at her father. Her eyes pleaded.

'I'll be quite secure with *Herr Vincius*, father,' she added.

Fredia's father was clearly surprised. No, he couldn't leave his daughter alone with a stranger! He was at a loss on what to answer. He did like the young man he saw standing in front of him, and he didn't doubt the Vincius Family was one of wealth, honouring their reputation. Fredia would be in no danger. And Fredia was not the girl who would lose her wits.

'Well, eh,' he tried, 'why not. You would then be responsible for my daughter, Mikhael Vincius, no easy or light task. Can I have confidence?'

'My family and I are most respected in Thorn, Herr False. I shall guard your daughter with my life. You can have confidence in me. I wish nothing but the best for her. We both feel alone and would appreciate some companionship. I guarantee you Fredia and I will return at six o'clock to your hotel. May I perhaps invite you all for supper this evening? At eight? I'll try to reserve in your hotel. Otherwise, I'll reserve in another restaurant of Paris, in the neighbourhood.'

Fredia's father was once more overwhelmed.

He stammered a feeble, 'yes, of course.'

Fredia's brothers, young men of less than Mikhael's age, stood as surprised by the speed of the developments and by the decisions made in an instant.

'Thank you,' Mikhael decided for all.

Mikhael presented his left arm to Fredia, which she took with a light hand. She laid her hand on his arm, and Mikhael guided her gently on to a side path. Fredia let herself be led. She stepped proudly, triumphantly, on, showing her father and brothers her back. Nevertheless, she too was surprised at how quickly she had confided in, no, been conquered by this Prussian. She walked away from her family and did not turn her head. She and Mikhael walked slowly on. Neither of them said anything for the moment. Only at the end of the path, did Fredia dared to look to behind her. She saw her father and brothers actively arguing amongst each other. She hurried her steps. She should disappear before they could change their mind. Around the bend, she seemed to relax.

She smiled, saying, 'Mikhael Vincius! First you save me, liberate me, then you abduct me. What are we going to do? What are you going to do with me? I am in your care, now, you know?'

Mikhael broke out in laughter.

'I said nothing but the truth, my dear,' Mikhael explained. 'I came to Paris utterly alone, and have ever felt lonely since my arrival. Isn't it funnier to walk in company? I'd rather roam in this Exhibition in the company of a nice, interesting person, than alone. I thought you wanted to be freed from your father and brothers. Isn't that fine? We both got what we wanted. Now, what do you want to see the rest of the day? Let's make the day agreeable. Or don't you fancy strolling with me?'

The girl stopped in her tracks. She was considering what to do for the first time since they had met her father. Mikhael had taken them and her by storm!

‘I’m not a frail beauty, Mikhael Vincius! I’m tall and clumsy and unmanageable. Are you sure you want to continue your way with me as company? I can be rude and straightforward.’ Mikhael replied, definitely amused now, ‘first, Miss False, I find you quite charming, intelligent, free and open-minded. I appreciate those qualities. You, obviously, have a mind of your own. I like that. I prefer a thousand times to walk around near somebody nice, pretty, smart, and hear interesting comments and remarks, than be on my own. I really thought you had the same idea.’

Fredia’s eyes had begun to shine more lightly again, when he mentioned he found her beautiful and interesting. She suddenly grabbed his arm and walked on with him. She was smiling. She kept her hand on Mikhael’s arm.

‘Poor daddy,’ she said, a few moments later. ‘You did force his hand, you know! He may start regretting that in a few moments.’

‘I know,’ Mikhael acquiesced to that. ‘I feared he might regret having let you walk with me. I’ll make up for my rashness to your father and brothers this evening, at supper. I do intend to see you back tomorrow and the next days, Miss Fredia, if you agree. Consider me a huge cactus, who placed his hooks in you, but only wishes the best for you. Would you consent being my prisoner for a while?’

Mikhael held a silence for a few moments.

Then he continued, ‘no, Miss Fredia, no imprisonment, not this way. If you say but one word, I will not come to your hotel tomorrow morning!’

Fredia too kept a silence for a while, before she retorted, ‘I’ll tell you after supper, Mikhael Vincius. I’ll whisper a simple yes or no in your ear, intended for you only. If yes, then pick me up at ten in the morning. If no, then don’t wait for me, don’t come to my hotel ever again.’

‘Promised,’ Mikhael replied, very seriously.

They walked on and reached the Japanese art pieces from the Satsuma and Saga clans in Kyushu. Fredia clapped her hands in admiration. The Japanese also presented wonderful woodcut prints of mystic landscapes. These prints would be much admired too by the French Impressionist painters of the moment. Fredia and Mikhael commented very lively on this strange, but oh so attractive art.

They strolled on to the Seine River. World rowing championships were to be organised here, they learned, but only in July. On the borders of the stream had been built several more pavilions. Many boats lay along the quays and formed part of the Exhibition. Mikhael and Fredia walked past this wonderful spectacle of boats, reflecting their joyous tints in the calm waters of the stream.

Fredia did not say a word for a while. Her face was a little drawn. Mikhael asked what was the matter.

‘We return to Bremen in two weeks’ time,’ Fredia said, regretting already.

‘From Thorn to Bremen must be merely a two-day journey by railway’s,’ Mikhael mused.

‘We do have the railways in Thorn, you know!’

‘I would think it could even be a far shorter trip,’ Fredia whispered.

‘Maybe,’ Mikhael responded, looking at her.

‘Well then, tell me what would you like to see yet, Mikhael?’ Fredia changed subjects.

Mikhael took her to the Prussian pavilions in the main hall of machinery.

Krupp exhibited an enormous cast steel cannon, weighing over 47 tons. The gun was called the Leviathan. It could fire shells of over 500 kilograms. It was a true Leviathan of destruction. Little did the visitors, or Fredia and Mikhael, suspect this sort of cannons would within 4 years' time drop its shells on this, same city of Paris.

Mikhael commented, 'several countries exhibit cannons, rifles, and other gear of warfare. The Krupp company also displays a little farther an 80,000-pound heavy cast-steel ingot, a flawless, gigantic, pure steel ingot. This cannon, here, is intended for coastal defences, but who knows what it may be used for? It can be transported by train! Advances in technology of war have been tremendous. In the exhibition of the Ministry of War of Austria, I saw photographs of the fortifications of the land, war maps, still more artillery. The Austrians laud the applications of the new sciences to the art of war. The exhibition has been organised and devised some time back, before we, Prussians, started a war with Austria. The show has been set up by an *Oberst* Ilmer, a Colonel of the Imperial Engineers. Other cannons from the arsenal of Vienna are exposed. And the Austrians display electrical explosive devices to put to fire powder kegs placed in mines under walls. The military pavilion of England also exhibits cannons. Cannons to put aboard English men-of-war. I would like, Fredia, to live in a country that cannot be attacked, and where all inhabitants could thus live in peace. I hate violence, and war, with all my being. Sooner or later, I would like to bring my family to a country that doesn't risk war or that cannot be touched by war from its neighbours.'

Fredia looked at him. She studied his face. Had she a boy, here, who wouldn't fight? How charming, how reassuring!

'Does such a country exist?' she wondered. 'Any country can be drawn into war. A lot depends on the political situation. A dictator, or a king or emperor, will much easier lead a country to war, according to his whim, or for matters of honour. What do we, poorer citizens care about honour? We merely want to live in peace and raise our children. You are right. I would prefer to have my children and grandchildren live in a country that is much less at risk of getting involved in a war.'

'I'm afraid we would have to live in an inhospitable place like Siberia or the heartland of China, to feel safe. And then yet,' Mikhael uttered.

Fredia's heart went out to Mikhael when he pronounced the magical word 'we'. She shared Mikhael's wish, his ideal. The world was not ideal.

By then, Mikhael's conscience was nagging at him. How utterly clumsy of him to take an extremely beautiful woman to an exhibition of war engines and machinery first! Shouldn't she rather like flowers and other more female, nice, beautiful things? The next days, he should ask her what she wanted to see, and bring her to her own preferences! That would only be gentlemanly! He cursed himself for being so utterly stupid and selfish. He felt bad about the entire matter.

'There are the United States of America,' she proposed.

'Maybe, yes,' Mikhael agreed. 'Don't forget the Americans fought a devastating war just a few years ago. The northern Union Troops fought the southern secessionist Confederate Troops from 1861 to 1865. That war was terrible, maybe the cruellest war ever fought. Slavery was abolished and the Confederate states dissolved. I agree, though. The United States seem not to have to fear other countries attacking her on her own territory. Canada

won't, and Mexico couldn't anymore. Yes, the United States would probably be the best choice to live in!

They walked on aimlessly then, quieter than before. Had Mikhael dared, he would now have taken Fredia's hand. Time passed.

They decided to return to their hotels. They started for the exit, called a coach, and Mikhael dismissed the coach at Fredia's hotel. He promised to come back at half past seven. He went in briefly to reserve a table for the evening supper.

Mikhael did come back that evening! He did lead the Falses to one of the best restaurants of Paris, not in their hotel. Mikhael could be very charming in the right, honourable, distinguished way when he wanted to. Leandra von Chrapitz had taught him much, and he had listened well. By the end of the evening, he had become Father False's best friend, and a jolly good fellow for Fredia's brothers. He had been generous with wine.

He had to explain his father Max lived on the vast von Chrapitz estate, and did little less than manage this estate with his wife. He told one of his two brothers was a well-known and wealthy trader of Thorn, his other brother an *Oberst* or Colonel in the Prussian Royal Army, and married into a family owing a respectable edition house of Berlin. The eyebrows of the Falses drew higher. Fredia could marry into a far worse family! And they could trust Fredia with such a fine young man.

When they all left the restaurant and went back in a short walk, it was quite late in Paris. Mikhael had helped Fredia in her coat. She came to very close to him and whispered in his right ear, 'yes!'

The next morning at ten o'clock, Mikhael stood in the lobby of Fredia's hotel. She came down the stairs at the exact time they had agreed upon. Mikhael proposed to walk to the Exhibition, which she accepted. Mikhael had it all worked out.

He brought Fredia not to the Exhibition proper, but first to the *Avenue de Suffren*. The French inventor Henri Griffard proposed trips in the air, in a balloon filled with hydrogen, of 5,000 cubic metre volume. Griffard's balloon rose in the air by the hydrogen, which was lighter than air. Still, the balloon remained connected to the ground by a cable, activated by a steam engine. The engine drew the balloon down again and the cable prevented the balloon from drifting. Even the Empress Eugénie had taken place in the balloon.

Mikhael had reserved two places. He did ask whether Fredia feared going high. She shook her head of no, but said no word until the balloon was high up. One enjoyed a breath-taking view of the site of the Exhibition and of the city of Paris from so high! During the summer and autumn months, the photographer Nadar took his camera and passengers in another hydrogen-filled balloon over the oval buildings of the Exhibition.

Afterwards, Fredia would always talk excitedly about her expedition in the airs.

The balloon was used a few years later as a reconnaissance tool by the French Army. The balloon rose during the German siege of the city. The Germans destroyed it by directing their gunfire to it. It came down in Prussian-held territory, and was used by the German soldiers as material for tents!

With the air-trip, Mikhael had scored a point more with Fredia. When he wondered to himself why he wanted to score, he grasped the awesome meaning of his act. Why did he want to make marks with this Fredia False? The recognition of his own feelings hit him. Had he

fallen in love with this tall woman of Bremen? He feared the answer was yes! How, in heaven's name, had he found his love in the thousands of people who had come to visit the Universal Exhibition of Paris, and so far from home? God must have guided them both to the cactus plants! And how did Fredia feel about him?

Fredia False and Mikhael Vincius visited the exhibition of 1867 in Paris in April-May of 1867. Other, more notable visitors would be the Queen of Portugal, Maria Pia of Savoy. Also, Prince Oscar of Sweden visited, and King Leopold II of Belgium with his wife Marie Henriette.

Tzar Alexander II of Russia came to Paris. During his visit, the Polish patriot Berezowski tried to assassinate the tzar. His attempt failed.

In June, Emperor Maximilian of Mexico was executed by Mexican insurgents. Maximilian had been placed there on political pressure by Emperor Napoleon III of France. The opposition to Napoleon's interior and foreign policies grew by the month in France. Sultan Abdulaziz came to Paris, the English Prince of Wales, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Emir Abd El-Kader, and the Japanese Prince Tokugawa Akitake, the brother of the last Shogun Yoshinobu Tokugawa.

King Wilhelm I of Prussia arrived at the Exhibition, accompanied by his Minister-President Count Otto von Bismarck and his General von Moltke of the Prussian General Staff.

Other visitors were the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph, and his court. The emperor might have met the victors of Königgrätz, the Prussian king and his aides.

Many more princes of the world had travelled to Paris.

As another kind of visitors, Hans Christian Anders came, and Jules Verne was inspired by the giant aquariums into writing his very popular novel 'Twenty thousand miles under the Sea'.

During the Exhibition, medals were granted to the most outstanding products. A golden medal, for instance, went to the manufactories of Baccarat in France for a fountain of crystal of 7 metres high. In another line, the Château of Rayne-Vigneau received gold for their wine of 1861. Among other realisations, a silver medal went to the aquarelles for the frescoes of the Church of Our Saviour at Nereditza of Novgorod in Russia.

Mikhael Vincius asked Fredia False what she wanted to see today.

She thought for a while, and then said, 'lighthouses and paintings!'

Mikhael was looking at the same paper guide as she. She had found an incongruous combination. He would have to comply.

Mikhael merely replied, 'let's go!'

Fredia took his hand. They sped on like children in a garden of toys. Mikhael felt happy. The hand in hand meant so much! They were practically a couple, he supposed. He surprised himself again by liking the idea. Her hand was cold, then warmed up in his. She pressed more tightly, as if she wouldn't lose him. They went to look for the lighthouses in the Exhibition first.

Among the smaller palaces, built around the main oval, centre complex, stood a first lighthouse of more than 56 metres high. It dominated the exhibition. From this tower too, one could enjoy a fine view of the entire *Champ de Mars* and of parts of the city of Paris. Mikhael afterwards drew Fredia on to the English Quarter. There stood another, electric lighthouse.

Fredia looked in admiration. Mikhael did not look at the tower when he saw her so. He admired Fredia and her childish, innocent marvel. Still, he too admired these great works of modern construction.

Mikhael then drew Fredia on to the paintings she wanted to see. They passed through the exhibitions of paintings in the French, English and Dutch pavilions of fine art, walking very slowly. They admired the works. Fredia explained. Fredia liked the pictures of the French artist Gérôme, particularly his 'Phryne before the Aeropagus of Athens', with Phryne waiting to be condemned to death. She also admired the 'Birth of Venus' by Cabanel. She found the Venus very gracious and drew Mikhael to in front of the picture.

So much nudity was not really to the taste of Mikhael, at least not in public. He stood there, awkwardly, shuffling his feet, trying not to show too obvious interest. Fredia noticed, of course, and broke out in laughter. She guessed his thoughts. She found Mikhael a little too Jewish! She drew him naughtily to a 'Nymph abducted by a Faun', and to a better – by Mikhael's standards – large 'Paradise Lost'. Mikhael liked more 'Cambronne at Waterloo' from Armand Dumaesq, as well as the Bavarian paintings of nice landscapes and heroic battles. They saw the paintings of England and of the United States of America. Fredia agreed the landscapes were marvellous.

Finally, they admired the vast paintings of 'Concordia et Bellum', painted on the themes of war and peace, started at the previous Exhibition of Paris of 1861 and now hopefully finished. These pictures had been made by the world-famous French painter Puvis de Chavannes. They had been reproduced and assembled all in the international galleries of the *Champ de Mars*.

Finally, Fredia drew an exasperated Mikhael on to the French gallery of clothing and textiles. It was near closing time, then, and they were practically alone in the falling darkness of evening. Fredia must have felt inspired by their intimacy, for in that pavilion, she suddenly surprised Mikhael totally by drawing him to her, and kissing him on the lips. Mikhael would never have dared such a thing so early on, so she took the initiative. They held the kiss for a long time. The kiss became passionate, and then they were embracing and feeling the contours of their body, as if they wanted to devour each other.

This was unseemly! The discreet cough of an elderly, smiling couple, seeking for the exit, drew them apart for a moment. Fredia smiled naughtily at Mikhael. He stood with red cheeks, this time! They both curtsied for excuse to the elderly people, and ran off, laughing, embracing again in a quiet corner of the next pavilion.

While strolling on, Mikhael brought her to the porcelains of Prussia and equally to the porcelains of St Petersburg in the Russian pavilion. They went on to the glasses and mosaics of Venice.

After art, Fredia and Mikhael sought for the gardens of the Exhibition. There were gardens almost everywhere. They visited the centre garden in the oval galleries, the garden in the French Quarter and in the space allocated to Belgium. They also remained a long time in the Chinese gardens. Here, they roamed on and visited the pavilions of Chinese Tea and the Chinese Theatre.

Mikhael noticed how much Fredia everywhere loved flowers, particularly the roses. He would have to find a larger house for her than where he currently lived in Thorn. He would have to find a nice garden for her, and have winding paths designed for her to walk in. What

was he thinking of? Who said Fredia would live with him, and live with him in Thorn? He was imagining him already as a married man, Fredia his wife and mother of children, and she imprisoned among flowers! Fredia definitely was not a woman to be imprisoned! She would break out of cages, as she had escaped from her father and brothers! Fredia would want to break out of any cage, however golden the cage that limited her. Besides, Fredia preferred green, and all sorts of harsh colours thrown together. Harmony might not be for her. She liked the clash of tints.

What surprised Mikhael most, was that he liked the idea of having her around him for the rest of his life. He had never had experienced such feelings before. Fredia was not a striking beauty, not a Parisian demoiselle. He considered her already completely as his lifelong companion!

The next day brought the realisation that if they would continue this frantic way of exploring, they would be dead-tired or sick in a day or two more. They decided to slow down. They sought other interests and themes to visit, and be a lot more relaxed and more attentive to details. They remained longer, sitting in coffee- and tea-houses, and talk. A silence never felt between them. They had much to talk about. They decided both to start exploring the exotic, strange, mind-challenging subjects and country exhibitions present here.

They walked from a replica of the Tunisian king's palace to a colossal amusement park installed for everyone to enjoy by the city of Paris, for general diversion. They visited an Egyptian Temple and a full-size Gothic cathedral in the French Quarter. The cathedral had been designed by Charles Levecque of Amiens. They sought refreshments in an American Bar, where they tried a few odd cocktails, and walked on slightly tipsy! They passed by, and then entered the annexed pavilions of an Austrian village and of a Russian Izba. Mikhael and Fredia walked arm in arm, a splendid, elegant couple, bodies touching, into the horse stables of the Russian Tzar, and in several other Russian houses, among which a Russian Post Office building. Not far from the Izba stood the Manor of Gustave Wasa, the figure from whom descended the kings of Sweden. Other nice pavilions included an English cottage, a fine landscape with windmills, and they stood amazed in various oriental installations, among which a Muslim mosque, a kiosque of the Bosphorus, a building of Turkish Baths, the palace of the Bey of Tunis – which was indeed a replica of the palace constructed in Tunis, called the Bardo – and a large Moroccan tent. They even visited a monumental pyramid, actually built at about 25 miles southeast of Mexico, the Aztec Temple of Xochicalco! Spain and Portugal also had interesting annexes in the parks. They highly regarded the other Egyptian pavilions. One was a replica of the palace of the vice-roy. They visited Egyptian houses, and the Temple of the Pharaoh at Philoë.

The Netherlands presented a complete farm in two buildings. They ran from one culture into the other, without any sign of amazement. In this splendid Exhibition, anything was possible! They saw the Norwegian House, as well as the House of the miners of Blanzy in France.

They visited the American houses, to come to peace with their impressions.

They discovered the exhibition of the Pontifical Sates, in which they visited a reproduction of a section of the Catacombs of Rome!

Fredia was interested in a pavilion filled with children's games, and another of dolls.

They walked in Turkey and in Algeria, in the Russian rooms and in the Prussian rooms, in a street of Morocco, in a room of costumes of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. They looked at the editing tools of the 'Editions Hachette', having cut on a side-path near the aquariums.

They ended with an indigestion of images and impressions. How would they be able to recall all this, once returned to Bremen and Thorn? The indigestion rose to its paroxysm when they visited the caves of Roquefort blue cheese, a reconstruction of the caves in France where this famous cheese was refined.

While Fredia and Mikhael walked about, they seemed to belong to each other, and that despite the distance that lay between their two home towns. For the moment, they pushed such issues very far back, away in remote corners of their mind. Mikhael had suddenly become aware of how rapidly and obvious matters could be between a man and a woman. Fredia had understood this all too, quickly. She had not waited for his initiatives, which might have arrived late, because he wouldn't want to give the impression his instant aim had to be taking advantage of her. Her kiss had come early, she had committed them. All was clear between them with that kiss.

The next day, Fredia gave Mikhael some respite. She allowed him to have a look again at the rest of the machinery. They had already seen the Krupp cannon. In the Prussian building, they now also saw the statue of King Wilhelm I of Prussia on horseback. The bronze statue was destined for the railway bridge over the Rhine at the city of Köln. They also found a statue of Emperor Charlemagne! They bumped into the equally equestrian statue of King Leopold I of Belgium, and a new, formidable gate for the citadel of Antwerp. Enormous statues of giants flanked the gate at both sides.

'How odd to believe or want to make believe statues of giants might hold back an enemy to break through the gates,' Mikhael remarked.

Elsewhere, even Fredia admired a pavilion among the American houses, in which many bells hung. In total hung here 43 bells, commanded for the cathedral of the city of Buffalo in the United States.

They rapidly walked through the '*Salle des Machines*'. The *Compagnie du Canal de Suez* presented its works and models of the waterway here, as well as models of the machines used to trace the canal. The French displayed also a few of the enormous dredging machines used to dig out the canal.

As for other machinery, the Americans showed systems used for telegraphic communications, as well as huge reaping machines and ambulances to be used in wars. The Americans Charles and Norton Otis presented an elevator, provided with a system of secure breaking. The elevator could revolutionise buildings, as stairs imposed a natural barrier to how high actually one could build and still remain practical. People could now move upwards in ever higher skyscrapers, and move up in total security!

Even Fredia looked with interest at the various musical instruments devised by Adolphe Sax of Belgium. These were instruments in copper. A musician demonstrated the tones produced by the instruments.

Mikhael was most interested in the larger agricultural machines, and finally, he stood rigid before a column still, one of the devices for which he had come to Paris in the first place. That had merely been a subterfuge for him to travel, he realised now. The aim of seeking out new stills seemed already far to him. His new aim, Fredia False, had replaced all aims completely.

The Savalle still exhibited, was produced by the French manufactory of D. Savalle and Sons, to distil alcohol from wine. Large volumes of pure alcohol could be produced by the still. It was presented as a revolutionary innovation, but Mikhael was less impressed. He studied the large, slender column still, until he understood how it worked. He understood the function of all the pipes leading into and out the still. He had brought his small sketchbook with him, and made a drawing. He drew some pieces in detail. The still would produce alcohol to a high degree, he surmised. But it would produce alcohol in large quantities without much taste. He preferred his pot stills – the French used the word of '*alambic*' – for stronger taste, as well as the Pistorius still, a combination of pot stills, for productivity.

The alcohol produced with the new Savalle column, would have to wait for many long years in oak barrels to develop its fine, characteristic taste of cognac or of so-called '*marcs*' of wine. Mikhael had tasted whiskys in Paris, the brandy made in Ireland and Scotland from malts. He preferred the taste of the 3-year pot-stilled Irish whiskys to the 10 to 12 years matured single malt Scottish whiskys, the latter mostly distilled in column stills.

By these last visits, Fredia and Mikhael considered they had seen everything of interest in the Parisian Exhibition. Mikhael wondered how Fredia would react for the rest of her stay. He asked her.

'We have seen everything in a hurried way,' Fredia replied. 'The next days, let us just linger and stroll and see more slowly what interested us. I liked the gardens, the Seine borders, the art, such as the pictures and the porcelains. You seem to love the machinery and the buildings, the replicas of exotic houses. Let's visit them again, at our ease now, in the morning, and in the afternoons stroll in the gardens and look again at art.'

In other words, Fredia did not want to say goodbye and thank you to Mikhael. Neither did he want to release her from his arm.

'What about afterwards?' Mikhael probed.

Fredia turned to more serious subjects. 'What, afterwards? What do you want to make of our relationship?'

'If I had a choice,' Mikhael replied very seriously too, 'I would take you instantly with me to Thorn. Let's get married. I'll convert to Catholicism if necessary. Why should I not? I don't want to live apart from you. I want to found a family, and have you live with me and with our children. What do you think?'

Fredia stopped.

'Why, Mikhael Vincius, is that a very rational, simple, straightforward proposal of marriage? I'd have to think about that! I tell you, sorry, Thorn doesn't particularly excite me. You do, though! Why not first see each other halfway between Bremen and Thorn? Berlin?'

'That is an alternative,' Mikhael granted. 'I have family living in Berlin. I can get to Berlin by the railways easily. The quickest way. It will be a challenge, though, to live separated from you for many months.'

'Who spoke of many months? But, true! This has fallen over me like a tempest, Mikhael. How many days have we known each other? Three days, four? There must be love in a marriage. Otherwise, it won't work.'

'Sure. If you want to make certain of your feelings, and let some time pass, well, then think about it. We can do this your way. I can wait. I'm very sure about my feelings, anyway,' Mikhael answered her.

She understood he was not at all sure about her feelings for him.

Mikhael indeed felt chastened. A little feeling of have been refused and set back invaded him. Was he the more romantic of both of them, and the only one sure of his feelings?

‘I love you. I am quite sure of that,’ Fredia hastily added.

Mikhael nodded of yes. Afterwards, their embraces were definitely cooler and less passionate.

Fredia perceived Mikhael’s disappointment. She felt his resentment for not having gotten his way immediately, however friendly and enamoured he stayed.

When they left the Exhibition, Mikhael accompanied Fredia back to her hotel. Fredia got out of the coach. Mikhael helped her.

Fredia held him for yet an instant, saying, ‘don’t come to my hotel tomorrow. I’ll come to your hotel for a change. I’ll be there around ten o’clock, as usual.’

Mikhael was somewhat astonished, but he nodded for yes. Fredia didn’t see him nod. She had given him no choice and wanted not to argue. She was already running up the stairs to her lobby.

The next day, Mikhael waited for Fredia in the hall of his hotel as of nine thirty. She arrived in a coach, indeed, which she dismissed immediately. Mikhael had rather expected she would never have arrived anymore. She entered, and saw Mikhael waiting for her. He proposed his arm to guide her back out, and call another coach for the Exhibition.

Fredia looked at him oddly. She took Mikhael’s arm, but drew to make him turn, up the grand stairs of the hotel’s hall.

‘Take me to you room,’ she commanded.

Mikhael was going to protest such a thing was not really seemly. He was responsible for Fredia to her father, after all! Nevertheless, he kept his teeth together, wondering what she was at. He showed her upstairs. He took her to his room. He had reserved a fine suite. Fredia False entered, looked around, appreciated the luxury. She decided this was a fine place to do what she had come for. She opened doors and found the bedroom. She noticed the bed had been done as a man could, not yet as a hotel maid would have done. She turned, faced Mikhael in the bedroom.

Mikhael stood there, wanting to know what she was doing. Fredia took off her coat, threw it on a seat, then her hat, her vest, her bodice, and began opening her shirt.

‘What are you waiting for?’ she asked Mikhael in a very hoarse voice. ‘Take off those clothes!’

She couldn’t wait any longer. Without opening all buttons, she drew out of all her clothes, tore at them, and let them fall where they wanted.

Mikhael wasn’t sure he had well understood her. Fredia had finished undressing. Mikhael stood as frozen, still in his coat, in the opening of the door.

‘To make sure you would know I fell in love with you and want you, and want to marry you,’ she whispered, while she lay naked in front of him. ‘Take me!’

Fredia hadn’t her hands over her breasts and pubis. She opened her arms wide! She definitely wanted to show Mikhael she was well-built, a naked beauty any man would desire and want to take. She offered herself.

Mikhael then also threw off his clothes. They both jumped on the bed.

‘I saw you making a long face yesterday,’ Fredia explained, a long time afterwards, when they lay side by side in the bed, one naked leg over another. ‘You shouldn’t have doubted. We’ll marry, all right, sooner or later. How we are going to live together, where, when, we should give some thought. I want no place that can be at war during my lifetime. That is the only issue to discuss!’

‘So true,’ Mikhael agreed, and moved upon her again.

They remained in bed the entire day. When darkness fell, they got hungry. By then, they had come to a decision, too. Fredia would continue living in Bremen for the moment, and Mikhael in Thorn, until they could marry. In the meantime, Mikhael would convert to Catholicism, or find out whether his new, Evangelic religion could be accepted by the Catholic priests in one way or another. Fredia would have to work on her family to force them to accept her marriage to a former Jewish man, currently Evangelic, of the far-away lands of West-Prussia. If her parents refused, Fredia would elope with Mikhael. Before they could marry, they would see each other mostly in Berlin. Once married, they would move to Denmark. They thought the small Denmark would be spared any war in the next hundreds of years.

They settled not for Aalborg, already well-known for its spirits, but for the city of Aarhus. Fredia would already travel to Denmark, to find a nice house with a large garden and some sort of domain at it or near it. There, they would build a new distillery. They both knew Denmark was a country for *Akvavit*, a white grain alcohol with added cumin. Mikhael assured Fredia he could distil from anything, with any desired flavour, also *Akvavit*!

Fredia False and Mikhael Vincius were very decisive, rational-minded people. They did entirely as they agreed in a Parisian bed, in Mikhael’s hotel room. They married in 1870, when they had arranged everything, Mikhael’s conversion, which finally had seemed necessary indeed, the marriage ceremony and the marriage feast, their acquisition of a suitable house at Aarhus.

They lived a very happy life. Their love was eternal. They had two daughters, Naomi and Rivka, born in 1871 and in 1873. They lived very happily in Denmark, avoiding the more turbulent years that followed in Europe. The only sorrow for Mikhael was that his name disappeared in his part of the Vincius family of Thorn. But then, his name would continue elsewhere, in other parts of the world.

Their daughter Rivka married in her turn, with the Schleswig brewer and distiller Johann Handelsmann, an Evangelist man. Rivka had inherited the hard head of her mother, the grace and courtesy of her father, and the intelligence of both of her parents. These ingredients assured her success in any business she would want to enter. Eventually, these two decided to leave the European continent and move to the United States of America. They had money. The Americans, most of them migrants like Rivka, appreciated and loved her. Handelsmann had the heart, the inquisitiveness and the mind of a researcher. He laid a scientific basis for brewing and distilling, and wanted to continue his studies in the United States. Rivka and Johann sailed to the United States of America. Together, they founded a brewing and distillery imperium Handelsmann-Vincius in Chicago, in the northernly Midwest of the United States.

Naomi Vincius too, married a researcher, a university professor. After the death of her father, she continued to lead and exploit the Vincius factories in Denmark.

Neither Naomi, nor Rivka Vincius, and their husbands, ever returned to the city of Thorn.

The second great Conflict. The Franco-German War. 1870-1871

The Foreplay

In the autumn of 1863, Queen Isabella of Spain was deposited from the throne. She left the country in exile. The throne of Spain was vacant. The provisional government established as a result of the constitutional crisis, had the General Prim as driving force. Marshal Juan Prim was the President of the Council of the interim government. Spain sought a new candidate for the crown of Spain. General Prim proposed as successor the young Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to the throne.

Leopold was a Roman Catholic by faith, as most of the people of Spain, and a South-German relative of the famous Hohenzollern Family that had produced the kings of Prussia. Leopold was married to a Portuguese noblewoman. He was also on his mother's side a far relative of the Bonaparte Family. He seemed well-suited for the task.

Count Otto von Bismarck had not really had a hand in this succession. Yet, he proved a supporter of the candidate Prince Leopold. King Wilhelm I of Prussia, as well as Leopold's father, Karl Anton, were not keen on the Spanish choice. They feared trouble. Karl Anton recognised his son would need the formal permission of King Wilhelm I and of Bismarck, before he could give his consent.

The Spanish authorities made their first contacts concerning the proposal in 1869. The negotiations were kept strictly secret, but soon, rumours leaked. Bismarck had intrigued to win the consent of the political opposers to the choice at the courts of Berlin and of Sigmaringen. The news of the proposal of the candidature and of its formal acceptance, was announced in July of 1870.

The announcement caused immediate uproar in France. France would be encircled by the German Hohenzollern Family! Unacceptable! The new Foreign Minister of France, Antoine Agénor Duke of Gramont, promised in a speech in the French Parliament the Hohenzollern prince would never be allowed to ascend to the throne.

At that time, the French ambassador to the Berlin court was Count Vincent de Benedetti. Wilhelm I was not in Berlin. He was at Bad Ems, not far from Coblenz on the Mosel and Rhine, for a healthy water cure. Bad Ems lay not far from the frontier of Germany with Luxemburg.

The least King Wilhelm I wanted was a new war on his hands. Wilhelm was then 73 years of age. He did not want to lose his new-found laurels of the German-Austrian War of 1866 in another. Besides, was not France's Army invincible, or nearly so, as Napoleon I had proved many times.

Count von Benedetti was recalled to Paris. The Duke of Gramont talked with him, and ordered him back to the Prussian king, to demand the formal assurance Wilhelm would never, not in perpetuity, again support the Hohenzollern candidacy.

The Prussian king considered the demand an insult. No French sovereign would tell him what to do! Wilhelm refused to answer.

King Wilhelm sent a telegram, later called the *Emser Dépêche*, with the text of his refusal to Count von Bismarck. Bismarck was not at Bad Ems. He resided in his domain of Varzin. On the 12th of July 1870, Bismarck was already riding from Varzin to Ems. He received the royal telegram on his way, at Berlin. While Bismarck dined with his friends Field Marshal Helmut von Moltke and War Minister Albrecht von Roon, he also received the announcement that the Hohenzollern prince had withdrawn his candidature to avoid a conflict with France. Bismarck considered this an insult and a humiliation to Prussia, forced by France on Germany and on himself. His first reaction was to resign from his functions. He already telegraphed to his family in Varzin not to prepare to follow him to Berlin. He gave up on his voyage to Ems. He would return to Varzin soon. Nevertheless, he asked Count von Eulenburg, his assistant, to ride to Ems in his place, to present his viewpoint. Actually, Bismarck needed a war in the west to overcome the resistance of the South-German states to a complete unification of Germany under the leadership of Prussia. Still, he more navigated on the waves of international politics at that time, than forcing the waves himself.

In the meantime, King Wilhelm I had also decided to return to Berlin. On the 13th, still in Berlin, Otto von Bismarck invited once more von Roon and von Moltke to have dinner with him. While they were eating together, more telegrams arrived to Bismarck, among which one sent by the *Geheimrat* Abeken. This telegram, in cypher code, contained the viewpoint of the Prussian king. The telegram told Wilhelm I had simply refused to continue receiving Ambassador Benedetti on the matter of the Spanish succession. Wilhelm I had also received the news the Hohenzollern Prince Leopold had relinquished on the Spanish throne. The king of Prussia had therefore nothing more to say to the French ambassador. He had refused to see the Count Benedetti.

In Berlin, Bismarck, von Moltke and von Roon were very disappointed by the turn of events. They felt depressed at the humiliation forced upon them by the French diplomacy of Napoleon III. Wilhelm I had decided to return to Berlin. His Queen Augusta begged her husband not to do anything that could provoke a war with powerful France, in memory of Jena and Tilsit.

Count Otto von Bismarck then used the power given him by the king to make public the *Emser Dépêche*, the king's telegram from Bad Ems. Writing at the table, with von Moltke and von Roon, Bismarck didn't change one word in the king's telegram. Still, he reduced the message by a few phrases, so that it sounded crisper.

The *Emser Dépêche* now read, 'after the announcement to the Imperial French Government of the refusal of the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to take on the crown of Spain, the French representative at Bad Ems has demanded of the king of Prussia to authorise him to telegraph to Paris that his Majesty the king of Prussia would refuse in the future the Hohenzollerns to present once more a candidature to the throne of Spain. His Majesty the king has declined as a result to receive any further the French ambassador, and he has told the ambassador by his adjutants in service, that His Majesty had nothing more to tell to him.' The message was formulated in stronger expressions than in the original of the king. Von Moltke and von Roon had agreed with the sharper tone of the message. Bismarck told, that if he sent this message to the journals and to the embassies of Prussia and other, it would be known by Paris around midnight. It would work like a red cloth on a Gallic bull!

It did. The French emperor and his government were outraged. They really didn't need much, and even less than the Prussian king, to be offended. The next day, the 14th of July, the French Council of Ministers decided for immediate mobilisation. The French were sure to win a war with Prussia. Napoleon had been thinking about such a war for quite some time. The emperor had to show, to prove, which country was the first and strongest in Europe. A victory over Prussia and Germany would provide him and his court with ever-lasting fame and glory. A Napoleon would be once more the leader of Europe.

On the 19th of July, France declared war on Prussia. The declaration was published only two days later.

The only one to protest and proclaim France was not ready for war, was the member of parliament and leader of the liberal fraction, Adolphe Thiers. But then, Thiers had opposed the second empire since its start.

Bismarck had not really planned a war, but the war with France was one of the possibilities he had anticipated. The Prussian Army mobilised as of the 16th of July.

The war instantly caused strong patriotic feelings, not only in Prussia, but in Germany at large, also in its southern states.

Prussia could come to gruesome issues when the other powers of Europa decided to intervene in the conflict.

Vienna was still occupied with absorbing the shock of Königgrätz. The court of Vienna had been banned from the affairs of Germany!

The Italians would not rush to the assistance of France, as French troops still occupied the Papal States, preventing this territory to be absorbed into the Italian kingdom.

Great Britain remained passive.

Bismarck had promised to come to the aid of Russia in revising the hardest conditions of the Crimea Peace Agreements. The Russians would therefore have to confront France.

None of these countries would enter the Franco-German conflict!

Though von Moltke and von Roon remained cautious in promising a German victory, Bismarck could suppose with good reason Prussian would win a war with France. Prussian could count on her superior organisation and discipline. It had no technological advantage in guns anymore, as the French Army equally disposed of an excellent breech-loading rifle, the so-called *chassepot*, against the Dreyse gun. The French could introduce the first *mitrailleuses*, the machine guns, against the attacking Prussians. But the Prussian Army had better cannons. They brought not anymore the bronze smoothbore field guns to the battles. They had now the steel Krupp cannons, in all calibres desired. The Prussians could employ these field cannons to draw the French fire away from the advancing Prussian infantry divisions.

The French Imperial War Plan was to mobilise, move its armies to the Rhine immediately, pass the mighty stream into Germany, and to push eastward between the north and the south German Lands, hoping on the neutrality of the south German states. These had fought recently against Prussia. They could be expected to bear the Prussians some ill-will. A French

Army would also be brought by the French fleet to the northern coasts. The Scandinavian countries might help. Foremost targeted by diplomacy would be Denmark, which had suffered from the Prussians in the Second War for Schleswig and Holstein. The plan was optimistic, and the war turned quickly out otherwise.

The enthusiasm for the defence of Germany worked as much in the large southern states, in Württemberg and in Bavaria, as in the northern German states. That proved to be the first surprise for Napoleon III! No *Land* of Germany had forgotten the Napoleonic Wars of around 1800. The king of Prussia proposed Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm to lead the troops of the southern states to victory. These felt in danger more than the northern ones, so they responded positively to the Prussian appeal. The parliaments of Bavaria and Württemberg voted the budgets for the war without protests. Nothing could have welded the German states better together than a common enemy, than a war with the old arch-enemy of ever, France. Bismarck wore a large smile on his face in that first period of the war. Napoleon III had united Germany under Prussia better than he, Bismarck, would ever have been able to realise!

The French generals already called their troops by the name of the ‘Army of the Rhine’! France wanted to recuperate the territories of the ‘old French cities’ of Landau and Saarlouis, the keys to the Alsace and Lorraine regions. If possible, the lands to the west of the Rhine too would be annexed to France, or at the least, be made to be neutralised and brought under the protection of the other European powers. The French Army could deploy about 340,000 soldiers, 33 armoured ships, 100 wooden ships and 96 transport vessels. The German fleet was still very small at the time.

On the 23rd of July 1870, Napoleon III published the decree handing over the powers of regency to his Empress Eugénie. She would reign out of Paris. He gave a long speech the same day, in which he told he respected the independence of Germany. He took arms but to gain the peace, in the interest of the people. Napoleon III took the command of the army, as his predecessor of the same name had done at the end of the previous century. The right cause could not be defeated!

Napoleon III left Paris on the 28th of July. He set up his headquarters at the city of Metz. He was convinced, of course, the war would be fought on German territory. The French troops occupied the border line from Thionville to Belfort, with 210,000 men. The mobilisation went not so well after all, but this assembled force should be sufficient to defeat the Prussians. It consisted of the Imperial Guard and seven army corps.

The French 4th Corps stood on the left bank of the Mosel under General Ladmirault, near Thionville. The 2nd Corps led by General Frossard, was in the vicinity of Metz. The 3rd French Corps under Marshal François-Achille Bazaine, had advanced to Saint Avold. Marshal Maurice de Mac Mahon formed the right flank with the 1st Corps. General Félix Donay led the 7th Corps, as well as the Corps of Strasbourg and Belfort. In the centre stood the 5th Corps, headquarters in Bitche, under General de Failly. The Imperial Guard remained near Nancy, under General Charles Bourbaki. Finally, near Châlons, remained the 6th Corps with Marshal Sanrobert.

At Metz would gather 150,000 soldiers, near Strasbourg 100,000 and at Châlons a further 50,000 men. The Rhine would be passed at Maxau, northwest of Karlsruhe. Nobody in

France had read the reports sent by the French military ambassador in Berlin, Baron Stossel, asserting the German forces formidable.

The French mobilisation had already started on the 15th of July.

On the German side, in 10 days, the north German army had been transported by train to the French frontier. In peace time, this army consisted of 300,000 soldiers and in war time, it could be raised to 900,000 men. Seven days after the German mobilisation, the Division of the Land of Baden stood ready to move at Rastatt. On the 18th of July, 12 Army Corps of the North German Federation stood at the French border. On the 27th of July, the troops of Württemberg and of Bavaria took the train to the frontier with France. Baden, Hessen and Württemberg sent strong divisions. Bavaria had brought 2 Army Corps! The south German states thus brought in total 3 Army Corps against the French armies.

The German Army would be led by the king of Prussia himself, by King Wilhelm I. His chief-of-staff was once more General Helmut von Moltke. Under the king served the Field Marshals Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm and Prince Friedrich Karl. The plan of the German Army was simple: to find the main powers of the enemy, and to engage!

The Beginning of the War

On the 20th of July 1870, Haim Vincius received a letter brought by a military messenger at his home in Berlin. The letter and the papers in it bore the stationeries of the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. In very courteous phrases and words, the paper stated the prince asked for Colonel Haim Vincius to join his staff for the Franco-German War. Haim Vincius would not have to lead divisions in combat. The crown prince personally wrote he needed excellent heads and experienced leaders, officers who had been fighting soldiers, to act as his advisers. The knowledge of troop movements, the energy and force of the Prussian soldiers would be necessary to win a war against an army that had still the reputation of being the finest in the world.

Haim stood in a quandary. He felt half invalid for engagements on the battlefield. He had promised his wife not to return to battle. He was doing rather well in the editing business. But could he refuse his aid to the future king of Prussia?

The same day, Haim first talked to Avram Goldstern. He showed the royal letter to his father-in-law, now his mentor.

Avram had barely started to read when he sighed, and he continued to sigh.

‘My son,’ he said, deposing his monocle, ‘this is not a plea to refuse. I regret your having to return to the army. I hope it will be the last time such a sacrifice is asked of you. You will serve in the headquarters of the future king. What an honour to our family! You shall not be sent into combat. At least, that is what I sincerely hope. I think I know you by now. When the battles go wrong, which I assume God will forbid, you may be drawn into them. You are a warrior at heart! Better not tell my daughter of such an eventuality. Nevertheless, your chances of returning safe and sound seem far greater than in our war against Austria. Leah and I, we will manage! I shall step back in for a while, until you come back, take over the tasks in the firm you handled. This letter is not to be refused! Somebody of your experience, of your intricate knowledge of how Prussians can fight and manoeuvre, is formidable. I understand the crown prince cannot look over such skills. We are Prussian citizens. You have

no other choice but to go. I'll tell so to Leah. And, of course, I shall pray for you every day you are not back here, in Berlin. I wish you the very best. But do your duty!'

'Fine,' Haim reacted. 'That leaves me to talk to Leah.'

'Rather you than I,' Avram smiled in sympathy. 'Which general is not more afraid to confront his wife in such matters than the enemy?'

Haim could not laugh.

Later, on the same day, Haim sat alone with Leah. He showed her the letter. Leah read. Not even halfway, she got her handkerchief out of a pocket, and began to cry.

'It is in moments like this,' Leah sobbed, 'a woman understands how much she holds on to her man. You will go, of course. You have to go, after such a letter. You cannot refuse, and you will not refuse, for you are no coward. You are an honourable man, and you indeed can help the crown prince. You are loyal to your country and to the king. When Prussia is threatened, you will want to go and help. Prussia is your larger family, isn't it? And yes, you are a true soldier in mind and heart.'

Leah suddenly stood up from her seat, ran to Haim, threw her arms around him, sat on his knees, and cried, 'do what you have to do and cannot but do! But please, please, come back to me! Do not throw yourself head-on in battles. Come back to me!'

The next day, early in the morning, Colonel Haim Vincius packed. He said goodbye to Leah and her father in rather emotional terms. He hugged and kissed his two young boys. He drove a horse to the Royal Palace in the *Wilhelmstrasse* of Berlin, to receive further instructions. Maybe Haim thought to return home within a few months, three or four at the most. In the end, he would return only after about one year. Yet, he would return safely, unharmed. He indeed stayed at the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm's staff. He returned, but he was a man changed in mind.

The war had started.

The 1st German Army gathered at Koblenz under General von Steinmetz. He led the two army corps that had formed the Army of the Elbe in 1866. Karl Friedrich von Steinmetz was 73 years old when the war began. He was a very stubborn man, who always did what he thought best, orders or no orders.

General von Zastrow led the 7th Army Corps of Westphalia. General von Goeben led the 8th Army Corps. He received also two divisions of cavalry.

Field Marshal Prince Friedrich Karl led the centre army forces, gathering at Mainz and Bingen. These were the strongest Prussian forces, in which also moved the Royal Guards, the divisions preferred by Haim Vincius, now led by Prince August von Württemberg, an able army commander. Equally here would fight the 3rd Brandenburger Corps, the 4th Magdeburger and Thüringer Corps, the 9th Corps from Schleswig-Holstein, the 10th Corps of Hannover, Oldenburg and Braunschweig under General Voigs-Rhess, the 12th Corps of Saxony under its Crown Prince Albert, and 2 divisions of cavalry.

The German right wing drew together over Mannheim and Maxau. This was the 3rd Army Corps of Field Marshal and Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm too. He moved with his usual Chief-of-Staff, as in 1866, General Leonhard Count von Blumenthal. In this staff served Colonel Haim Vincius. With the prince marched the 5th Corps of Lower Schlesien and of

Posen under General von Kirchbach. The 11th Corps of Kurhessen, Nassau, Thüringen under Lieutenant-General von Bose also joined Friedrich Wilhelm.

The 1st Bavarian Corps was led by General Ludwig Freiherr von der Tann, and the 2nd Bavarian by General von Hartmann. General von Werder led the combined troops of Baden and Württemberg, with two divisions of cavalry.

Colonel Haim Vincius worked with more than one hundred other officers in the staff of the crown prince. Friedrich Wilhelm had welcomed him personally and expressed his gratitude. Haim often talked during the meetings of the staff with Prince Friedrich. The prince could count on Haim to put the feasibility of new plans to the test of reality. Haim saw Friedrich Wilhelm almost daily, except for when he rode out to scout and observe. He did not find the man's intelligence extraordinary. The prince often asked advice. Him being able to listen to advice, was almost a miracle on itself, and Friedrich never decided without second opinions. The crown prince listened to what his closest generals and colonels had to say. Then, he made his decisions swiftly, provided logical arguments, looked for final approbation around him, ignored the doubters, and then issued his orders swiftly. He was not a man to remain undecided or paralysed by doubts. He stuck to his plans with obstinacy, believing them the right ones, and mostly, his tenacity prevailed in the field. He could also admit he had been proved wrong, and then changed directions without second thoughts. For Haim, he was the perfect leader. His sympathy for the crown prince grew by the day. He liked working for the man.

Germany had assembled in no time an operational army of 450,000 men and 1200 cannon! This terrible, mighty army was only a part of the power Germany could now muster and form.

Behind these troops mentioned, waited the 1st Corps of East Prussia under General Edwin Freiherr von Manteuffel, the 2nd Corps of Pommerania under General von Fransecky, the 6th Corps of Schlesien under General von Tümppling, in total 190,000 more soldiers. Behind them formed the *Landwehr* with 160,000 men, and reserve troops were called in to a total of 216,000 men. They stood ready to push back any French invasion from over the sea, as well as possible Austrian incursions. These troops in all counted about 520,000 man and 1600 cannon! They formed the army of the interior.

In the German *Bund* of the north, 5 general governors were assigned, in Hannover, Berlin, Koblenz, Breslau and Dresden. The defence of the coasts would be under the leadership of the General Government in Hannover, under General Vogel von Falckenstein.

On the 28th of July, when the French fleet arrived near Skagen, without any landing troops, strong German troops welcomed the French. The German soldiers on the coast were then under the command of the Archduke Friedrich Franz II of Mecklenburg-Schwerin.

King Wilhelm I left Berlin on the 31st of July, together with his Minister-President of the North German *Bund*, Count Otto von Bismarck.

The War in the East of France. Gravelotte.

The first skirmishes of the war took place on the 2nd of August of 1870. Near Saarbrücken, General Frossard attacked the Germans. The French soldiers came in mass over the Heights

of Spichern, directed against the German forces of General Gneisenau. Frossard quickly took Saarbrücken. The French then withdrew back to the Heights of Spichern. They claimed a victory, which was commented in the French press as the first great victory of the French army.

On the 3rd of August, the German plan began to be executed methodically. King Wilhelm had by then reached his headquarters at Mainz. The army of the Crown Prince Friedrich advanced. His headquarters were at Speier.

On that same day, not a French, but a division of Württemberg passed the Rhine at Maxau! The 7th French Corps of General Félix Donay was then still at Belfort, the 1st Corps of Mac Mahon at Strassburg, and a division of the right wing under General Abel Donay at Weissenberg. The first large skirmishes were fought here. The 5th Prussian Corps of General Kirchbach attacked the French troops, and also the Bavarians. By 14h00, the first victory on French territory of the Germans had been won. The Germans lost 1,460 soldiers and 90 officers, but the magic of the French invincibility had been broken. The German troops made 1,000 prisoners. They called this the Victory of Weissenberg. It erased the supposed first French Victory of Saarbrücken completely.

A new battle was already in the making.

On the 5th of August, the French General Mac Mahon had arrived near the village of Wörth. He wanted to protect the railways that connected Strasbourg to Metz over Bitche. The Corps of General de Failly joined him. Mac Mahon had 45,000 French soldiers with him. A battle began on the 6th of August.

The German Generals Kirchbach and Hartmann attacked the French troops. Soon also the German 11th Corps under General Bose arrived on the scene. In the beginning, the French won the advantage. Then, the Crown Prince of Prussia arrived from the east. The French succeeded in pushing back the troops of Bose and Kirchbach in the centre. Further French counter-attacks failed, however. In the late afternoon, yet more German troops led by von Tann sped to the battlefields, arrived and attacked the villages of Fröschweiler and Reichshofen. Marshal Mac Mahon had to retreat.

By 17h00, the Germans realised they had won a victory. The French fled. The Germans immediately pursued the retreating French soldiers. The German Army made 9,000 French prisoners, 260 officers, and they captured 28 cannons and 5 mitrailleuses. The French troops fled from Hagenau back to Strasbourg. Marshal Mac Mahon could regroup 15,000 men near Zabern. In this major battle, the Germans had lost over 10,000 soldiers and about 490 officers, far more than in the Battle of Königgrätz! But with the Battle of Wörth, they had won a major victory.

On the 6th of August, the French Army Corps of Frossard had withdrawn to the heights south of Saarbrücken, on French territory, to the Heights of Spichern. The 1st and 2nd German Armies of General Steinmetz and Prince Friedrich Karl had moved southwards. When General Kamecke arrived with a division at Saarbrücken around noon, he ordered the assault on the French troops. Twelve Prussian battalions attacked 39 French battalions of Frossard. The Prussians could climb up the hills to the plateau, and succeeded even in bringing some

artillery to the Heights. They moved to on the Red Mountain, to a prominent mass of rocks there.

By the fall of the evening, despite counter-attacks, the French had to draw back. During the night, Frossard moved his troops to Saargemünd. At the end, The Germans had brought together 27 battalions and 16 batteries against the 39 French battalions and 15 batteries. Spichern meant a new victory, but the German Army had lost more victims than the French in the assault. They lost about 4,650 men and 223 officers, against about 3,820 French soldiers and 250 officers. The French had to abandon 1,500 men prisoners in German hands. The final result was everything but a grand victory for the French. Mac Mahon had lost his battle, and Frossard had been forced to retreat to the River Saar.

Haim Vincius had until then remained in the staff of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. He had been astonished how the war had advanced. He compared the war with France to the campaign of 1866 against Austria. He had to admit he had much underestimated the enormous war that was going on near him. Prussia had needed only a campaign of a few weeks and one major battle to totally defeat Austria. Here, in France, such a large battle as Königgrätz had been, had to be delivered almost each week, and one French defeat after the other could not bring the French state to its knees and provoke a more global retreat of the French forces. Several French armies still roamed in the countryside or near the cities, each in higher fighting spirit than the Austrian troops of 1866 had remained in after Königgrätz! How many battles had to be won here, to reach the final victory and the surrender of France? A dozen? More? The expenditure of soldiers, of men, of young and able men, was enormous. The pain Haim felt was excruciating. Behind each dead Prussian, Haim saw a tragedy, a family, a wife, parents, children that were now orphans. Why so many men lost? For what purpose? For the vanity of a self-appointed emperor?

Haim remained rather shocked in his heart and very being, to see the hundreds of men lying dead in heaps in the pastures and the woods, time after time. He found it difficult to participate in the feasting in the German camps and in the German staff of the crown prince. He realised the war and the slaughter made him revulse, get a little sicker in the mind time after time. He wondered what was happening to him.

Prussia won the battles. But the cost of the death of too many young men, most of whom, no doubt, were married and had children, was getting too expensive for the aims pursued. Haim was still certain Napoleon III had started this war merely out of personal, silly vanity and ambition. Haim became very angry with this man. The hatred directed against a thoughtless dictator, gave him the force of mind to continue to serve the Prussian Army. It seemed to him Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm shared those feelings, though maybe not most of the officers of the staff. A rage then enveloped Haim, the rage to win and win and end this nonsensical war. That, however, would demand yet more victims.

In Paris, the French representatives heard the truth of how the war was going in the east. The government proposed to resign. Empress Eugénie accepted. General Montauban, count of Palikao, an older man of 73, formed a new government. On the 10th of August, this new government called to arms all French men from 15 to 30 years old. The government prepared for the defence of Paris. All German citizens living in Paris, were banned from the town.

Meanwhile, on the 25th of July, the French fleet under Vice-Admiral Bouet-Villaumez had left Cherbourg. The fleet had no landing troops on board at all! A few days later, the ships arrived in the Baltic Sea, the sea the Germans called their *Ostsee*, the Eastern Sea. The French Navy remained at sea, far out of the range of the German coastal batteries. To the Germans, the French sea-campaign seemed utter useless in military terms.

After its defeat on the 6th of August 1870, the French Army had divided in two parts, which were both in full retreat. The troops of Marshal Mac Mahon marched to Châlons on the Marne. The famous Army of the Rhine had never passed the stream! Two weeks after the declaration of war, the first aim of the French generals had already become the defence of the French capital! They had retreated, much more than advance towards Germany. Napoleon III decided to make a stand on the River Moselle, the Mosel in German, and hold it at all cost. The French armies gathered around Metz. Napoleon III gathered about 200,000 soldiers near the city.

The 1st German Army, enforced with the 1st Corps of von Manteuffel, marched from Saarbrücken over Forbach to Metz. The 2nd German Army, enforced with the 2nd Corps of von Fransecky, moved from Saargemünd to Pont-à-Mousson, about 20 kilometres south of Metz. On the 9th of August, the German headquarters were set in Saarbrücken, on the 11th at Saint Avold, in French territory.

Napoleon III then transferred his command over the army to the Marshal Bazaine. It had become clear Napoleon III would not enjoy the same triumph as his predecessor Napoleon I. Napoleon III simply had not been gifted with the same genius as a military leader! Since he could not win battles and manoeuvres, the defeats had better not stain his name. If there were defeats to follow, better they would be on the name of Bazaine. And Napoleon's staff had more faith in the military abilities of Marshal Bazaine, than in those of the former President of France become emperor.

The movement of the German 2nd Army made the French generals fear an encirclement of Metz. The roads to Paris were in danger of being cut off for the French Army. Marshal Bazaine decided on a new strategy. He abandoned Metz to its fate, left a garrison in the city, and withdrew with the rest of the army to Verdun.

On the 12th of August, the German cavalry of the 2nd Army reached the bridges south of Metz near Pont-à-Mousson, near Dieulouard and Nancy. A group of German *Uhlanen*, lancers, took Nancy, a town of then about 49,000 inhabitants!

Marshal Mac Mahon had already withdrawn further southwards.

On the 8th, the German Army under von Steinmetz had passed the frontier.

On the 14th of August, the French Army marched out of Metz.

On the same day, the French Guards under Bourbaki, the 2nd Army of Frossard, the 6th of Sanrobert, two divisions of the 4th Army under Ladmirault, had passed to the left bank of the Moselle. The French 3rd Army of General Decaen and the rests of the 4th Army were still on the right, eastern side of the river.

The Germans arrived! The leader of the avantgarde of the 7th German Corps, General von der Goltz, wanted to stop the French troops from passing the Mosel entirely. When he tried to call

a halt to the French, a new battle started, called by the French the Battle of Borny. The battle was waged between General Ladmirault and the troops of the German 7th and 1st Corps under Zastrow and von Manteuffel. The confrontations lasted until the evening, when the French withdrew to behind the lines of the outer defences of Metz. Once more, the German losses were higher than the French losses: 4,600 German soldiers, against 3,400 for the French. But the French marched on the retreat, not the Germans. The battle allowed the rest of the French Army to reach Verdun. Thus, the German Army battered at the French troops, and continued to penetrate deep in France. It took the losses that accompanied its advance, and moved on. Once more, the strategy of von Moltke was the aim defined by von Clausewitz: push for the capital! Ignore the setbacks, ignore the losses, keep to your aim, and advance! For the German Staff, that meant to push on to Paris. They would have to destroy the military forces that tried to thwart their plans.

The next day, the 15th of August, was a Memorial Day for Emperor Napoleon I in France. Marshal Bazaine had two main roads to leave Metz. The first one led southward, over the villages of Rezonville, Vionville and Mars-la-Tour to Verdun. The other road ran northwest over Doncourt, Conflans and Etain, equally to Verdun. The French Army moved slowly over both roads.

On the 15th of August, the 9th and 4th French Corps reached Saint Marcel, west of Metz and close to Mars-la-Tour. On the south road, the French cavalry of the Division Forton reached only Vionville, where the reconnaissance troops of the German cavalry made contact with them, to the surprise of the French.

On the 16th of August, the French march continued. Emperor Napoleon III rode on the northbound route to Verdun.

On the German side, the Cavalry Division Rheinbaben of the 2nd Army had passed to the left side of the Mosel at Pont-à-Mousson. They set up camp near the southern route from Metz to Verdun.

On the 16th of August, the 3rd Brandenburg Corps moved over the plateau of Gorze to that road. Its general had to force the French Army to remain there and march no further. He fought the second battle around Metz, the Battle of Vionville and Mars-la-Tour. An assault of the Cavalry Division von Rheinbaben, coming from the west, completely surprised the French! The two Corps of Frossard and Sanrobert positioned their front line against the west. The Brandenburg riders fought until noon alone. They captured Vionville and Flavigny. At noon, the first French reinforcements of the 10th Corps arrived. Marshal Bazaine himself was with these troops. Sanrobert decided to retake Vionville, in the centre. The German general brought in the 6th Cavalry Division of Duke Wilhelm von Mecklenburg. The French and German troops fought a ferocious battle, which remained for long undecided. The Germans could not force a success either. Three squadrons of the Cuirassiers Regiment Number 7 of Magdeburg, and 3 squadrons of the *Uhlanen* regiment Number 16 of the Altmark, 900 riders, threw themselves under General-Major von Brelow against the French Corps. Their attack could in all logic not succeed, but it did! The German cavalry broke through the enemy batteries of Pallasch and Lanze. They dispersed the French infantry. The infantry lost good order in this fight. The French Cavalry Divisions Forton then arrived. The German riders had to retreat, through the masses of French infantry. The German cavalry lost a third of its men! Nevertheless, the movement of the French centre, of two Army Corps, had been stopped!

Around 15h00 in the afternoon, new German reinforcements arrived. They were of the 10th German Corps, which came after a long, urgent march. They threw themselves into the battle without stopping.

At 16h00, Prince Friedrich Karl was at one hour's march from where the battle raged.

Around 18h00, yet more German regiments arrived at the German right wing.

The battle continued until nightfall! The last shots were heard around 22h00, after the battle had raged for 12 hours.

The losses on both sides were about the same, and considerable. About 15,000 Germans and 16,000 French soldiers remained killed or severely wounded on the battlefield.

The Germans had attacked the 120,000 French soldiers with only 60,000 men.

Both armies set up camp on or near the battlefield. On that evening of the 16th of August, the road of retreat of the French Army was in German hands! The Battle of Mars-la-Tour, a particularly bloody battle, ended undecided. Strategically, however, the German generals had won. They had pushed the French Army back, once more. The road to Verdun had been blocked for the French.

For his retreat, Marshal Bazaine had then only still the northerly roads over Conflans and Etain open. Bazaine could march still further to the north, but he needed ammunitions and other provisions. He therefore drew his forces closer to the fortifications in these parts of France. He needed at least 24 hours. Before these 24 hours were passed, the German generals could bring together a force that was three times as strong as the forces Bazaine had not been able to defeat totally the day before, in a battle of 12 hours. Bazaine was about to be crushed, and he knew it.

On the 17th of August, King Wilhelm arrived on the battlefield. The troops that had fought so bravely the day before, received a day's rest. The newly arrived troops moved on, against the retreat routes of the French Army.

On the 18th of August, the German generals prepared to attack once more the French Army, with all their forces. The king decisively took command of what should become once more a major battle! The orders had to be gathered at a hill to the east of Flavigny, half an hour to the south of Vionville.

On the 18th, the French Army, then still a formidable 140,000 men strong, stood on a plateau to the west of Metz, on a line from Sainte Ruffine, south of the road Metz-Gravelotte to Roncourt, north of the road Metz-Briey. From left to right the French placed the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th Corps of the generals Frossard, Leboeuf, Ladmirault and Sanrobert. The Reserve and the Guard Corps stood behind the left wing on the heights of Plappeville. Marshal Bazaine occupied the heights of Saint Quentin, behind the left wing.

In the morning of the 18th of August, at 6 o'clock, King Wilhelm I of Prussia arrived at the heights of Flavigny, from where he would direct the battle.

The German 1st Army under General Steinmetz, with the 7th and 8th Corps, formed the German left wing. The 2nd Army under Prince Friedrich Karl positioned itself against the French centre, and against the French right wing. Behind them waited from the right to the left the 9th, the Guard Corps, the 12th Saxon Corps and behind these still in reserve the 3rd and 10th Corps.

The Saxons marched to Sainte-Marie-aux-Chênes, on the road Metz-Briey. The main tactics of the Germans was to win a decision on the French right wing, the German left one. Until this could be realised, the troops of the right German wing and of the centre had to keep the enemy busy.

The centre was at Vernéville. The artillery of Hessen and of Schleswig-Holstein opened fire near 12 o'clock against the 4th French Corps. At 1 o'clock, followed the fire from the batteries of the German right wing, coming from the heights of the east of Gravelotte. At 14h00, north of Vernéville, the Guard Corps brought its artillery together. About 230 cannons came in action. These pounded without respite on the French enemy. The infantry advanced in the centre, near Vernéville. The decisive action of the day was the movement around the enemy right by the Saxon Corps, which had been on the march since 06h00, in a 4 hours morning march.

On the right wing and in the centre, from Sainte Ruffine to Amanvillers, the French Army held their positions. The German attacks were thrown back! The French Army remained standing on the defensive. They never launched their own offensive. Marshal Bazaine seemed not to fear for his right wing. Yet here, at Sainte-Marie-aux-Chênes, Saint Privat and Roncourt, as of 17h00, began the movements which decided in the outcome of the battle.

At Sainte-Marie-aux-Chênes, Prince August von Württemberg waited with the infantry of the Guards, until the Saxon Corps had ended its flanking manoeuvre around the Corps of Sanrobert. Prince August then ordered an assault on Saint Privat. The French soldiers had turned this village into a true citadel. The French had installed cannons and *mitrailleuses*. The fire battered so intensely, the German infantry could not break through, despite heavy losses. They had to wait for the Saxon infantry to attack from the north. The German infantry arrived around 18h00 near Roncourt. The French had abandoned this village, to concentrate on Saint Privat. The German troops launched once more an attack. The Saxons assaulted from the north. The battle was hard. The French soldiers retreated house by house. They had to leave their positions by 20h00 and left along the roads still open to them. They fled, though not to Verdun!

In the meantime, the French Corps in the centre had held their positions. Only at around 20h00, the French left wing attacked the German right wing in front of them. They advanced in the valley of the Mance, against the bridges to the east of Gravelotte. The counter-attack failed! A little later, German reinforcements from Pommerania arrived. Von Fransecky's troops stopped the French.

In the falling darkness, the German troops set up camp on the battlefield.

In the morning of the 19th of August, the next day, the French Army retreated. The king of Prussia told his Chief-of-Staff von Moltke, the victory was now assured. Nevertheless, skirmishes and cannonades lasted throughout the night.

The people of Metz could see in the far the long columns of the retreating French Army march off. The Battle of Gravelotte, the third and most decisive of the battles around Metz, had ended. The French had been defeated; the Germans had one victory more.

The Battle of Gravelotte was the bloodiest of all battles in the Franco-German war. On German side, 19,000 soldiers and 904 officers were most, killed or wounded. On French side, the losses amounted to about 12,000 men and 600 officers. The Prussian losses amounted to 15,400 soldiers and 700 officers. The Saxon losses were about 1,800 men and 90 officers. The losses of the Prussian Guards alone amounted to about half of the Prussian losses, with 7,785 men and 315 officers!

The battle had lasted about 9 hours. The French troops had been thrown back to Metz. So many French soldiers had reached Metz, the provisioning of the city could not last long. For at least a week, the French Army was incapable of breaking through the German lines.

The Continuation of the War

Gradually, though still very young, by his judicious advice, Colonel Vincius had grown in the esteem of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm.

One day, when Haim was alone with the prince, very late, in the tent of the headquarters nearest to the theatre of operations, the crown prince was, more murmuring to himself than asking a question to the colonel of the staff at his side, ‘what now? What are we doing in front of Metz? We want the city for us, so destroy it is not a viable option. What could we do with a town that should hate us for having demolished it? And then there is the rest of France! When shall we see an end to the horror? When?’

The crown prince lacked in theoretical knowledge of movements of troops. He had received no formal education in the art of war. Yet, his soldier instincts went deep and were sound. So were Haim Vincius’ instincts in battle, the natural instincts of the born fighter. Naturally, Haim and the crown prince had found each other.

Haim felt obliged to react.

‘Clausewitz told the best was to dash for the capital. Metz can be encircled. It is not that large. We can simply guard it, and leave it to its fate. It is not that important for the rest of the war. Bazaine is trapped inside it. We should advance. If our aim, the aim of our part of the Prussian Army, is to pacify the eastern part of France, and secure our open communication lines, the railways to Germany, then we should be at that. Clausewitz advised not to leave respite to the enemy. To dash on, take the rest of Lorraine, the Alsace, and more southern regions if necessary, is first priority. As long as the French are on the run, we should pursue them and have them keep running on. We should not sit here, waiting, lingering at one town. What danger can Metz offer when it is encircled, with our own entrenchments and batteries at her gates? The French soldiers inside Metz are impotent, now, while we can freely continue our actions. I say: we move on, destroy all the organised forces in the countryside, grab the lesser cities, and leave the bigger ones, which are difficult to take, aside. It will cost us many, many soldiers to take the larger cities, while strategically they have little to offer. When we have all the regions around in our hands, the big towns will fall like ripe fruit in our lap anyway. There is no better encouragement to surrender than hunger. Sitting stuck in front of a big town, like as we are doing now, without new successes, will only lower moral in our own troops. More so, waiting troops will soon fight among themselves in riots. Corruption sets in. Soon more food will enter the city, stolen food provided by our own soldiers, than food smuggled in by the French. No, I say, move on, and arrange for a steel circle around Metz.’

The crown prince was visibly surprised. He had heard the name of Clausewitz mentioned by Colonel Vincius.

‘So, you’ve read Clausewitz,’ he exclaimed. ‘I wondered whether anybody at all in my staff had read those books. It makes sense you, of all men, did! I agree with you. Metz will fall, in its own time. We should not linger here, indeed. We must leave troops here, of course, and fight stealing food from our own forces. Our men want glory, so glory it is we should give them, not laziness. We must push on. Maybe to Châlons on the Marne. At least, that is in the direction of Paris.’

‘Châlons on the Marne, better said Châlons-en-Champagne, is a good option,’ Haim agreed. ‘That will keep the French running. We should continue sapping their morale.’

‘You have seen our troops. I know you rode all day, and still quite some time during the night at the Battle of Gravelotte. You were relaying orders, not necessarily orders coming from my headquarters. Sometimes you gave orders yourself, which made sense. I had not to revoke them. You saw our troops fighting. You were among them. What do our men say?’

‘They are very proud of what we have accomplished so far and so quickly. They are eager for more, your Highness. We should really not stop now. On! On! We must thrive on the drive, the eager of our men to win. They desire more victories.’

‘Good, good. Victories is what we shall give them. There exists another, a more cautious fraction in the staff, of course. I don’t care for being over-cautious at this moment. Our drive to conquer must continue to roll over our enemies. We must not give them breathing-space! We should make good use of this Prussian wave of enthusiasm. We are winning. We should keep on winning. And indeed, leave Metz for later.’

The crown prince’s face got sombre, suddenly. ‘Our advance is costing us terrible losses in men! Terrible! Yet, we must dash on to end this war the earliest. The longer we fight, the higher finally our losses will rise. We must think of that! We are doomed to continue and fight.’

‘Indeed,’ Haim nodded.

The prince seemed to have come to a decision. They began to discuss the details of the movement to Châlons-en-Champagne, the details of the orders to be dispatched tomorrow morning. Haim merely added a detail a word here and there. When the prince had it all figured out, he yawned. Haim Vincius took his leave. The army would once more be on the move tomorrow!

The Saxon cavalry broke all military communication of Metz with Thionville. Since the 19th of August, Marshal Bazaine had no telegraph connections anymore with the outside world. The German Army encircled Metz, and set up a new system of defence, of entrenchments and batteries. Roads and bridges were blocked. Would Metz be cannonaded yet? A force of at least 160,000 soldiers under the leadership of Prince Friedrich Karl, with seven Prussian Army Corps, surrounded Metz. More reinforcements arrived from Germany.

With the rest of the German troops, the Guard Corps, the Saxon Corps, the 12th Prussian Corps and 4 cavalry divisions were brought together to form the Army of the Meuse, placed under the command of Prince Albert of Saxony.

General Steinmetz resigned after the Battle of Gravelotte. General Manteuffel replaced him, but the main command remained with the Saxon prince. This army, together with 3rd Army of the crown prince of Prussia, would still operate against the rests of the French Army, led by Marshal Mac Mahon. The Army of the Meuse and the 3rd Army had gathered in total over 240,000 men!

The troops of the crown prince held their headquarter in the beautiful city of Nancy. Their Division of Baden had marched southwards, to reach Hagenau on the 7th of August. It captured the city by surprise, and marched on to reach Strasbourg on the 12th of August. They encircled the town on the 15th. On the 9th and the 10th, the French fortresses of Pfalzburg and Bitche were surrounded. On the 12th in the evening, the city of Lunéville surrendered to the crown prince. On the 16th, the crown prince was in Nancy, to explain to the population the painful necessities of the war. In his proclamation of the 16th of August, the crown prince declared Germany fought a war against the Emperor of the French, not against the French people.

The 3rd and 4th German Army Corps marched then to Châlons. They came at the fortress of Toul. They surrounded the town, as it was well defended and could not be taken easily. The troops took the road to Vaucouleurs, north of Toul.

On the 23th of August, the Prussian Crown prince set up his headquarter at Ligny-en-Barrois. The king had his headquarters then at Bar-le-Duc. The king arrived at Ligny on the 24th, for a visit to his son. The news arrived the same day the French had abandoned Châlons-en-Champagne.

Haim Vincius was not present at the headquarters when King Wilhelm arrived there. Haim was riding in the countryside, in between the villages and the towns. He was scouting to form a clear idea for himself of which forces the enemy had placed in the way of the German Army, especially in the direction of Paris. He had liked very much being quartered in the house of a wine seller of Nancy, a very affable man. Nancy was a splendid town, Haim considered. Good wine, fine company. He enjoyed for a while his stay.

Haim brought his news and views on the situation of the armies to the Prussian generals at headquarters. He held regular talks on the same subject with the Crown Prince.

Once, the crown prince addressed Haim Vincius quite directly and frankly. Friedrich Wilhelm told Haim he knew Haim was a Jew. Haim nodded and stayed suddenly on his guard. The prince had made a statement, rather than asked him a question.

The crown prince continued, ‘converting to Christendom would ease matters and hasten your promotion.’

This was a suggestion, a royal wish, and a promise.

‘I am aware,’ Haim replied.

He owed the prince an explanation.

‘I am Jewish, indeed. I am not a very practising Jew. I do respect my religion. I believe it is better to have a religion than none, and I honour mine. When you are religious, you cannot but hear about the basic values of living together, about respect for other men and women. These values are given unto us, Jews, at each ceremony. My father converted. He is an Evangelist. He married a lady called Leandra von Chrapitz. He lives on the Chrapitz estate

near Thorn. I have a brother, my younger brother, who also has converted to Christianity. He is a Catholic, now. He converted to marry a woman of Bremen.'

The crown prince looked up in surprise, and laid down his pencil.

'I would not mind doing like my father,' Haim continued, smiling. 'The God of the Jews must be the God of the Christians, too. But my wife is Jewish, and she has a character.'

The crown prince smiled.

'My father-in-law is a pious Jew. He is the owner of the Goldstern-Vincius edition Company of Berlin. He and my wife, me too, we manage the firm. My wife would not gladly follow me into conversion, and my father-in-law would be angry if I changed of faith. I respect my faith. I believe it is better to honour one's ancestors than to convert for purely selfish, worldly reasons.'

'That is an honourable statement,' the crown prince agreed.

The prince laughed, 'and it is better at all times to keep the peace with one's wife! I can share some thoughts with you there!'

The prince clapped Haim on the shoulders. He poured two glasses of brandy, and he cheered, 'on our wives!'

Haim relaxed.

'Bismarck told me he is without religion,' the prince confided on Haim. 'He distrusts all politicians in long robes, be they women or priests!'

They laughed again.

The crown prince returned to a heavier, darker mood.

Suddenly, he acknowledged, 'I knew your wife.'

Haim looked up, but otherwise didn't react.

'She used to bring books to my wife,' the crown prince continued. 'I too, talked to her. I remember her well. She was a striking woman. She was very intelligent, a sound woman in judgement. We became friends. We got used to talking together, like you and I now do. Rest assured, we had no further relation. You are not my Uriah the Hittite! But then, suddenly, after a visit of our court in West-Prussia, to where she had come with books, she vanished from court. Books were delivered by servants. I never saw her again. I heard much later she had married you.'

Haim had listened in astonishment to the crown prince. Leah had told him nothing about the crown prince. He understood why. Had more been going on than both wanted to acknowledge now? Haim remained sitting in silence. The crown prince too, kept his silence. They drank.

Friedrich Wilhelm then still said, whispering, 'you both are near to my heart!'

His eyes darkened again.

'The past must always rest,' the prince concluded, looking back at Haim.

He found no enmity.

The prince stopped his memories from being revived.

Haim spoke to the prince until late in the night about what he had seen in the French countryside. They discussed what should be done with the movements of the troops the next days. They left as the best of friends. Haim never told his wife about what the crown prince had told him.

As of from between the 11th and the 13th of August of 1870, Emperor Napoleon III lost all authority in the higher circles of the French parliament. The Minister of War, Count Palikao, announced Marshal Leboeuf had been dismissed. The upper command of the Army was given to Marshal Bazaine. But the German troops actually stood between Bazaine and Paris! On the 13th, the French politician Leon Gambetta mentioned for the first time the deposition of Napoleon III from his military functions. Only around the 25th of August, Gambetta and the French parliament received more or less the truth about the staggering losses of Bazaine. The French Government at St Cloud could still telegraph with the army of Mac Mahon, in which also the French Emperor remained.

The French emperor had left Metz on the 14th, passed the night from the 15th to the 16th near Gravelotte. Then, he had fled, not to be made a prisoner by the German cavalry. He had arrived with his son at Châlons-en-Champagne on the evening of the 16th. Here, he found the troops of the Generals Doncrot, de Failly, and Trochu. With a few other brigades, their army amounted to about 120,000 men. The emperor was ill, had lost all his energy with his authority. He decided on nothing anymore, and was totally useless.

On the 17th of August, a Council of War was held in Châlons. At this meeting were present the emperor, his son, Mac Mahon, and the Generals Schniz, Berthaut and Trochu. These told the emperor he actually did not command the army anymore, and also not anymore France. The emperor, they told, had either to take up the leadership of the government of France, or the command of the army. One of both. Napoleon chose to head the government. Therefore, Napoleon should return to Paris. General Louis Jules Trochu was named to prepare for the emperor's return to the capital. To that aim, he was appointed Governor of Paris. General Mac Mahon would follow the emperor to Paris.

Louis Trochu indeed rode to Paris. But in the Tuileries, nobody wanted to hear of the return of Napoleon to political power. They did not want Napoleon in Paris. They also wanted not to hear about the retreat of the fighting army to the capital. The empress feared a revolution.

On the 20th of August, General Mac Mahon gave the order to march out of Châlons. He would direct his troops to Reims. On the 24th, 150,000 French soldiers moved to Reims and to the Meuse River. On that same day, the King of Prussia also ordered his main German Army to the Meuse!

Originally, the Germans had decided to march to Châlons. But on the 24th, the German Army heard the French had begun to retreat to Reims. The new orders for the Germans were to march northwards, to the French Army. The armies of the Crown Prince of Saxony and the Guard Corps both joined the Bavarian Corps.

On the 25th of August, the Germans passed the Meuse Stream to the north, just south of the fortress of Verdun. Verdun could not be captured. Yet, the aim of the German troops was to force the French troops further northwards, and to hold it in place.

On the 27th of August, the 3rd German Army was at Sainte-Menehould on the River Aisne, on the western border of the Argonne Forest. The Germans knew the French had then either to move to Belgium, meaning probably surrender, or to stand and fight. The French would hold somewhere between Carignan and Charleville-Mézières, near or at Sedan. New battles, hopefully the last ones, would have to be fought.

Sedan

On the 30th of August, the main drama of the Franco-German War unfolded. The German troops, everywhere they could, bit into the French divisions.

The French 5th Corps of de Failly marched by Beaumont to the Meuse. The French troops marched during the night to avoid the Germans. They set up camp to eat in Beaumont-en-Argonne. At that moment, the German Army caught up with them. The French had reached the point where they could flee over the Meuse, but they had to leave 3,000 prisoners and more than 20 guns to the Germans.

The 7th French Corps of General Donay was at Villers-sur-Meuse, when they were attacked by the German troops. They lost their provisions to a Bavarian infantry division of the corps of General von der Tann. Other such skirmishes were fought at different places along the Meuse. The king of Prussia held his headquarters in Buzancy. He ordered the Germans, the Meuse Army, on. The Germans harassed the left wing of the enemy, to force it to move eastwards.

The German Army headquarters were at Vendresse. A large battle would be waged at Sedan on the 1st of September!

The Bavarian troops attacked early in the morning. They fell on the French right wing, the corps of Lebrun, near Bazeilles, just outside Sedan. The battle lasted here for 6 hours, and was finally ferociously fought in the burning villages.

At 07h00, while these fights were fully going on, the French Marshal arrived at the heights between Bazeilles and La Moncelle, just north of Bazeilles. Mac Mahon was hit by a shrapnel of a grenade, and had to leave the battlefield. General Ducrot took the French command, but General Wimpffen was older and claimed the leadership. There followed some confusion in the French ranks about who, actually, was in command. The battle developed on the entire line of the Givonne River, from Bazeilles to the village equally called Givonne, north of Sedan.

Around 10h00, the Prussian Guard equally arrived at Givonne. The battle gained in intensity. The Germans won many cannons, and many French prisoners. These fights took place on the eastern side of Sedan.

On the western side, arrived the troops of the 3rd German Army, the 11th and the 5th Corps. They instantly attacked the enemy's left wing. The French stood against the fortified city. Behind their cannons moved the French troops of Donay. The Prussians amassed many cannon batteries against the French. General Donnay's orders were to bring every French cannon still available to the Plateau of Illy, but these commands could no more be executed. The Prussian artillery stopped them. Eleven regiments of French cavalry tried to counter-attack, but the German infantry decimated them pitilessly. The resistance of the French troops was being broken everywhere around Sedan!

Between 14h00 and 15h00 in the afternoon, General Wimpffen proposed to the emperor to run in the midst of a thousand chosen men, to flee to Montmédy. The emperor estimated this effort futile. He equally refused other such proposals of leaving the army.

The Battle of Sedan, a series of battles, actually, ended around 15h00. The French troops returned in chaos to the city. A 16h00, no French troops were still able to fight back. In the

streets of Sedan, total confusion reigned. The German Army directed their 600 cannons against the fortified town. Behind the cannons stood seven and a half German Army corps, ready for the last assault. Around 15h00 already, Emperor Napoleon II had the flag be risen he wanted to negotiate.

The emperor sent General Lebrun to the Germans. On his way, Lebrun met General Wimpffen, his commander, who wanted to terminate the day with a last show of bravado. He would seek to break through the German Army near Montmédy. His soldiers soon left him, and let him advance alone!

Around 17h00, the Germans advanced Bavarian batteries to Villette, on the northwest side of Sedan, to bombard the town. The city was in flames.

The king of Prussia then sent an officer of his staff to demand the capitulation of Sedan. The officer found Napoleon III in person.

The Germans had not known until then the emperor had been present inside Sedan.

At 19h00, the French Adjutant General Reille arrived to the king of Prussia, with a handwritten letter of the emperor. Napoleon III wrote he surrendered to the Prussian King. Wilhelm I was at that moment on the heights of Sedan, with the Generals von Moltke, von Roon, Blumenthal, with the crown prince, Bismarck and the other German sovereigns. Among the men of their headquarters, their staffs, rode Colonel Haim Vincius. Haim was witness to an event nobody would have imagined or thought possible. The Germans made the French Emperor their prisoner.

In the night of the 2nd of September, at Donchéry, the last commander of the French army of Châlons, General Wimpffen, met with General von Moltke and with Count Bismarck. Von Moltke threatened to have the German batteries open fire on Sedan after the end of the truce. That had been scheduled for the 2nd of September, at 9 o'clock. Von Moltke demanded the unconditional surrender of the French Army. General Wimpffen called together a Council of War. Wimpffen explained the hopeless situation to the French generals gathered. The French Emperor rode the same morning to Donchéry, to the Minister-President Bismarck.

Bismarck asked whether Napoleon III could negotiate the capitulation of France. Napoleon answered he was a prisoner, and could therefore not negotiate the capitulation. He mentioned the regency in Paris. The emperor then wanted to negotiate in person with the German King Wilhelm. This would take place in the Castle Bellevue, near Sedan. The negotiations ended before the afternoon. Napoleon surrendered the army of Sedan!

The German Army made at Sedan 83,000 French soldiers their prisoners, among whom 2,866 officers, 40 generals and 230 officers of the staff. The Battle of Sedan and around cost the French 13,000 dead and wounded men, and 25,000 unwounded prisoners. 3,000 French soldiers fled over the Belgian frontier and saved their lives and their liberty. Further men who thus fled numbered about 10,000 men. The Germans gained 184 cannons used for the defence of Sedan, 350 field cannon, 70 mitrailleuses and 12,000 horses. The main army of France, in total 140,000 men, was destroyed.

The Germans lost 9,860 men, of which 1,310 dead. Once more, they had won a great victory, but the cost had been high.

Napoleon III was brought to Wilhelm I around noon. He spoke with the king until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and was then escorted to Castle Wilhelmshöhe near Kassel. The entire French Army of Châlons was taken prisoner.

‘It is strange,’ mused Colonel Haim Vincius. ‘We made a prisoner of the head of the state, yet the war has not ended. How illogical! Who is this Emperor Napoleon, who has lost his country and yet his country continues to fight, as if he never existed! I suppose France is once more a republic, now, in the form of government France had before she became an empire. France is no empire anymore. How easily an emperor can be undone! France is a defeated country. Yet, how many battles do we still have to wage before the state surrenders to us? Do we have to lay siege to Paris, capture Bordeaux and Lyon, and any other town some sort of French government might occupy? Do we have to fight our way down to the Mediterranean? How large is this country? How long shall it take until France declares herself vanquished? Who can make this declaration now?’

After Sedan

To begin with, France had still the Army of the Rhine, at Metz!

Those troops were also surrounded at Metz by German contingents. The French tried to break out, mainly to the north. All these attempts failed, even though the ensuing battles, especially the attempts on the 31st of August, led to 3,000 German soldiers killed. The French lost 3,500 men. After this frustrated campaign, the French could forget all hope on ever leaving Metz heads high.

Marshal Bazaine was caught in a trap. He could no longer provision the city, in which 150,000 soldiers of his army had gathered. Metz was doomed to surrender soon.

Also at sea, the French fleet delivered no success. After 66 days of navigation in vain, it returned to Cherbourg. Not one French soldier had set foot on German soil along the Baltic Sea.

Chaos set in at Paris. Empress Eugénie left France after the imprisonment in Germany of her husband. She quietly fled from Paris. She reached in a coach a small harbour near Trouville. There, she went aboard a private yacht, which brought her to England. She would never return to any authority in France.

In Paris, a governmental defence commission took over power. Late on the 4th of September, a new revolution happened in France. In the evening, the new government published a proclamation. France would again be a republic. France abolished the imperial dynasty. Jules Favre became Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gambetta Minister of the Interior. General Leflô was promoted to Minister of War. Admiral Fourichon was Minister of the Navy. Crémieux got the Department of Justice, Picard Finances. Cults and religious Affairs, with Education, came to Jules Simon. Magnin obtained Commerce and Agriculture. About 8 to 10 men had actually appointed themselves to a government of France. The new government was a republican one. Although this government was largely self-appointed, it took and seemed to receive power and authority over France.

In 1870, Paris had a population of about 2 million people. Around the capital of France ran several defence circles of fortified positions. The provisional government prepared for a siege. The regular French troops in Paris amounted to about 65,000 men with about 15,000 marine troops. More men were called to arms: custom officials, firemen, guards of all sorts, about 100,000 soldiers more. Other civil guards could additionally deliver 100,000 men. In total, Paris held an army of about 400,000 men, a considerable force.

Out of this mass, the government formed three Army Corps.

The first was constituted of the 266 battalions of the National Guard. These were placed under General Thomas.

The 2nd Corps would be commanded by General Ducrot, the 3rd by General Louis Trochu.

The siege of Paris lasted 132 days. The soldiers of Paris lacked sufficient arms, good officers and trained combatants. Yet, they defended the capital.

The German troops marched on Paris as of the 4th of September 1870, led by the crown prince and by Prince Friedrich Karl. On the 10th September, the fortified city of Laon, which lay on the roads used by the German army, surrendered. On the 15th, German cavalry reached Corbeil. On the 17th, the last railways of Paris were cut. On the 19th, the king of Prussia set up his headquarters at Ferrières, in a castle of the Baron James de Rothschild. On the 20th, the crown prince could arrange for his own headquarters in Versailles!

And thus, it came to happen, that Colonel Haim Vincius visited and lived at Versailles. The glorious former palace of King Louis XIV held hundreds of rooms. Most of these had once been occupied by the noblemen and noble women of France. Despite their status and despite their ownership of large castles and domains elsewhere in the country, the nobility lived here in really small apartments, merely for the honour to live near the Sun, near the king of France. That kind of culture was completely alien to Haim Vincius. The Jews recognised no Jewish nobility. The Jews knew a bourgeois caste, of course, built by the power of money, but no titles in their community, and no real sense of dynasties.

Haim found himself in a strange world of past glory and power, the appeal of which he couldn't share. The German generals and the two Field Marshals, the Princes Friedrich Karl and Friedrich Wilhelm, moved into the lower, grand rooms of the Palace of Versailles, as if they deserved no less. They were at ease in this environment, which was not so different from theirs. They felt more in their place here than the former presidents of the French Republic, more at ease even, than the so-called Emperor Napoleon III. This Napoleon had less ancient nobility to claim than the German courtiers, and certainly than the Royal Family of Prussia.

Haim talked quite openly of his feelings with the crown prince of Prussia. Friedrich Wilhelm had taken the habit to once every while send off, out of his rooms, all his adjutants and servants, and have a long evening conversation with his Colonel Vincius. These were his moments of resourcing. The crown prince told so to Haim. He especially liked the hours he heard Vincius tell of the life of the simple soldier, of the pains and the joys of the German army man. Often, in the past, Friedrich Wilhelm had modified his views on the advance of the war, on troop movements and on battles to come, according to the information, the stories and advice of his Colonel Vincius.

Haim wandered through the halls of the palace, admiring their decorations, the multitude of splendid paintings, the richness of the statues, the splendour the old rooms still displayed. He really considered himself a privileged man, then. He understood how elated and powerful the Prussian Royal Family must feel to be able to consider them the masters of this world. To what extent, however, could the German court and its generals really feel themselves the possessors of this splendour? The German victory was certain by then. But could they really claim this palace and the glorious gardens to be theirs? The war was still not over yet. Versailles was what the French people had realised, not just the vision and the money of the few, the leaders of the nation.

A voice inside Haim warned, ‘take care! This is only a temporary occupation. There will be a peace treaty, and then the court of Prussia and our generals will leave, and we shall all happily return to Berlin and forget about all this. Should we not look, and learn? Can we make of Berlin a city to be proud of, as glorious and splendid as Paris and Versailles? What will the many thousands of dead men, the bodies of which are still rotting in the woods and fields of northern France, think of us, when, after a while, we, the visitors, march off with our armies, our flags, back to Berlin? Was this worth its while for the sacrifice of our dead men? What have we gained in the end? What have our families in Germany gained? Are we not as poor as before? What then, is the sense of war? Do we just fight for the glory of one man, our king? To what extent is the king Germany? To what extent can he really decide on our fate?

During the Paris Siege

Meanwhile, the Crown Prince of Saxony held the northeast of Paris. Skirmishes, large and small, happened between the German and the French troops as of the 19th of September. These didn’t matter much in the general situation. The Germans held only a limited army at Paris, 6 Army Corps of 122,000 infantry, 24,000 cavalry and 662 cannons. The Germans dug a ring of fortifications of their own around Paris, using the old castles, manors and other large houses and farms. Negotiations between both armies began already on the 20th of September. Jules Favre met Otto von Bismarck at Ferrières. Bismarck wanted Strasbourg, the Elzas and the Lorraine regions for Germany. The French refused these demands, and the war continued.

What was still to come, was the final Battle for Paris, the end of the siege of Metz, further skirmishes on the eastern front, and lastly, in the south, the campaigns on the Loire River.

On the 23th of September, Toul surrendered to the German onslaught. The French garrison of 2,300 men were made prisoners. The French officers were released on their word of honour not to fight anymore against the German Army.

On the 27th of September, Strasbourg surrendered. The French garrison in the town amounted to 17,000 men, which were all made prisoners, the officers released on their word of honour. The German Army lost 750 men and 45 officers in the siege. The city had then about 85,000 inhabitants. It had been defended by the General Uhrich.

The 14th Army Corps of the Germans, led by General von Werder, obtained the orders to conquer the upper part of the Seine and of the Marne rivers. At the same time arrived a new reserve division drawn from Germany, led by General von Schmeling, to operate against the

fortifications in the Elzas and Lorraine. Von Werder moved to these regions as of the 1st of October 1870.

At the beginning of October 1870, von Moltke could declare the war was over. He was right, in a way, yet large skirmishes, taking a toll of many deaths, were still being fought. In the second half of October, the encirclement of Paris was practically finished and a fact. The German upper command drew about 200,000 soldiers to the French capital, 84,000 cavalry and 900 cannons. The Germans used the next four weeks to fortify their own positions. During that time, on the 5th of October, King Wilhelm I moved his headquarters equally to Versailles.

The Germans transformed the palace of Versailles into a lazaretto, a field hospital for their wounded.

The French Army of Paris sallied on the 13th of October, but was beaten back into the town. On the 21st, the French once more tried to sally, on the west and the southwest sides. This plan equally failed. The French Army succeeded on the 28th to recapture Le Bourget in the north, but had to withdraw the same day.

Napoleon Gambetta, commonly called Leon, the 32-year Parisian lawyer and self-appointed politician, who would later play a significant role in French politics, fled Paris on the 9th of October. He published proclamations out of Tours as of the 9th. Gambetta claimed Paris was invincible and could not be captured. One may ask why then had he escaped from the town like a coward? The town of Chartres surrendered to the Germans the same day.

In October and November, von Moltke refused to shell Paris. Von Roon and Bismarck were in favour. Bismarck clashed thus regularly with the General Staff in that period. It seemed as if the military authority had taken power over the political authority of Prussia, an outright horror for Otto Count von Bismarck!

In Metz, the situation of the troops of Marshal Bazaine had evolved to hopeless. After a large counter-attack, launched by the French on the 31st of August, and which ended the next day at the Battle of Roisseville, Bazaine's forces were still trapped, failing to break out of their encirclement each time. Marshal Bazaine had provisions only until the 20th of October. He received no new provisions. His cavalry had no more horses.

Bazaine entered negotiations for the surrender of Metz on the 10th of October. For a while, he demanded the free departure of his forces, in arms and full gear. The German generals of course refused. Finally, the German General von Stiehle and the French General Jarras met in Castle Frescaty to the south of Metz, for confidential discussions. This happened on the 26th of October. In the night of the 27th, these negotiations ended in an agreement, similar to the conditions of surrender of Sedan.

On the 29th of October, the French Army of Metz left the town, without weapons. The French soldiers marched out. They marched stiffly with 3 field marshals, 70 generals, more than 4,000 officers, 56 Eagles, and 173,000 soldiers. The Germans recuperated 622 field cannons, 72 mitrailleuses, 876 fortification cannons, and 300,000 infantry rifles. The complete Army of the Rhine had fallen prisoners of war. The French prisoners were brought to fortifications in Germany.

The French Government at Tours spoke out in a proclamation signed by Gambetta, Crémieux and Glais-Bizouin on the alleged treason of Marshal Bazaine.

The General Thiers returned on the 21st of October to Paris, after a diplomatic mission in the neighbouring countries. He had failed to win support for France. He arrived in Versailles on the 30th of October, with letters of plenipotentiary powers from the Government of Tours. He began negotiations with the German authorities to concede a truce. The government of France was in chaos. The negotiations soon failed, the French deciding for continuance of the fight for Paris. Out of Tours, the government ordered the mobilisation of all men between 20 and 40 years old to the war effort. The time and the organisation for this mobilisation failed, however.

The French government then formed five French armies.

The Army of the Loire, which seemed still intact, organised and armed, was the first one.

In the north, General Bourbaki would lead an army with headquarters at Lille.

In the west would operate an army under Fiérek, with headquarters at Le Mans.

The Army of the Centre was to be led by Polhès, out of headquarters at Bourges.

In the east, finally, would fight an army under Cambriels, headquarters at Besançon.

The German General Staff had moved the largest part of its forces held up to then in front of Metz, to Compiègne and Saint Quentin. The other forces were placed under Prince Friedrich Karl, made, like the crown prince, was a field marshal of Prussia. These marched to the Loire.

The Army Movements around the Loire River and elsewhere

In the meantime, General von der Tann had held Orléans for the Germans with a small force. He heard a large French army would soon attack him. He marched out of Orléans to confront the French Loire Army. Von der Tann disposed only of about 20,000 soldiers and 110 cannons. The French Loire Army, under General Aurelles de Paladine, could place 70,000 men and 150 cannons in his way. Von der Tann's forces delivered a battle, lost about 800 men, held their positions until evening, and then withdrew to St Pérvy-la-Colombe, near Orléans.

In Tours, the French Government hailed a grand victory. Between the 27th of November and the 4th of December, the forces of von der Tann received reinforcements from the troops of the Archduke of Mecklenburg, who became the leader of the joined troops.

At the same moment, the regiments of Prince Friedrich Karl attacked towards the Loire. On the 28th of November, the French forces assaulted the troops of Prince Friedrich Karl. Large skirmishes developed around and on the small cities of Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers.

After this battle, the French retreated, leaving 7,000 dead and wounded, and 1,600 prisoners on the battlefield. Once more, the superior tactical skills of Friedrich Karl and his staff had prevailed. His army had grown to about 120,000 men, 19,000 cavalry and 480 cannons. Nevertheless, the French Army of the Loire still had about 200,000 men!

On the 3rd of December 1870 started the Battle for Orléans. The result was one more victory for the Germans, who lost 1,500 men against French losses of 14,000 men, of which 12,000 had been made prisoners. The French also lost 60 cannons.

From the 28th of November to the 5th of December, the German Army had made 24,000 French prisoners!

At Paris, the French troops under siege counter-attacked again, this time in the south-east. They fought against the German Corps of Saxony and Württemberg. The battle started on the 29th of October and lasted till the 1st of December. General Trochu withdrew his forces on that 2nd of December. The French lost about 12,000 men, the Germans about half as much.

From the 27th of November to the 4th of December, battles were fought around Paris, on the Loire River, and in the north. These battles and skirmishes all ended in German victories. The French Army of the North found its advantage in a series of fortresses: La Fère, Péronne, Arras, Douai, and Lille. General von Manteuffel attacked Amiens. He fought a battle against the French forces of General Faidherbe. Faidherbe had replaced General Bourbaki, who had been called to another command. The French were defeated, here too, and had to withdraw to behind the Somme River. The last French position fell on that day, later also La Fère. The German Army won many thousands of prisoners in other fortresses taken or surrendered. Von Manteuffel made over 20,000 prisoners in Soissons, Verdun, Schlettstadt, Neubreisach, Fort Mortier, Thionville and at the citadel of Amiens. He then directed his attention to Rouen.

The Army of the Loire had been split in two. One part was the right wing, commanded now by General Bourbaki. He withdrew to Bourges. The other, the left wing, formerly under General Aurelles de Paladine, had escaped in the direction of Blois. Aurelles de Paladine fell in disgrace with Gambetta, and had been replaced by the young General Chanzy. This army attacked the Germans for four days to return, beaten, back to Blois and Tours.

The German Army cannonaded Tours on the 19th of December. Part of the French Government fled to Bordeaux. Henceforth, one had to take account of a second French Government in Bordeaux, of which Gambetta was the most prominent politician. Léon Gambetta nurtured high ambitions.

On the 6th of December, von Manteuffel entered Rouen. The Germans had once more occupied Orléans.

In Paris, General Trochu held the command over the military forces of the capital. The Parisian troops tried once more to break out on the 21st of December, in the north and in the east of Paris. Both sallies failed.

The German had amassed an enormous number of cannons at the city. They cannonaded the Parisian forts of the plateau of Mont Avron. General Trochu had to draw his troops out of these forts on the 28th of December.

By the end of the year 1870, 450,000 French soldiers had been brought together in Paris. The Army of the North under General Faidherbe had about 50,000 men. General Briand brought 20,000 French soldiers more to Le Havre, ready to intervene. General Chanzy and his Army of the West had grown to about 150,000 soldiers. In the east, General Cremer waited with 10,000 men. Garibaldi, the perpetual fighter, brought 20,000 men together. Bourbaki's army was again at 100,000 soldiers. France had in all, amassed more than 800,000 soldiers in arms around and in Paris. These formed a formidable power opposed to the Germans.

The German generals continued to oppose those armies. They calmly continued to roll up French fortifications one by one. Pfalzburg fell on the 12th of December, Montmédy on the 14th. The year drew to an end.

The last Battles

On New Year's Eve, the German Military Council finally decided to cannonade Paris. It seemed the only way to get the French on their knees. The crown prince of Prussia was opposed to the plan, but had to accept the decision. The first shells began to fall into Paris on the 4th of January 1871. The crown prince also organised the reconciliation between von Moltke and Bismarck.

The German Army then planned a final attack on Paris. The attack came in January of 1871. French and Germans delivered four main battles, in the west, the east, the north and directly in front of the city.

In the west, Prince Friedrich Karl attacked the troops of General Bourbaki. He forced the French troops back to Orléans. The prince had only 60,000 infantry and 15,000 cavalry, with 318 cannons to defeat the French. His army moved on the 30th of December of 1870. It rained terribly. Friedrich Karl launched his attack in the direction of Le Mans. The skirmishes intensified from the 6th of January on, to the 11th. The excellent General Chanzy stood near Le Mans in a strong defensive position, and with still about 100,000 men. On the evening of the 11th, however, most of the French fortified positions had been captured by the German troops. The next day, the 12th, the battle continued, and by the end of that day, Chanzy retreated. The German Army had won 18,000 prisoners, and this number grew by the day. Nevertheless, Chanzy retreated with still about 70,000 soldiers. The Germans lost 4,000 men in the battles. The troops of Chanzy consisted of young, practically untrained, newly mobilised recruits. He had done what he could with such troops, but in the end marched back. On the 17th of January, at Laval on the Mayence River, Chanzy lost a further 2,000 soldiers. Prince Friedrich Karl sent the Archduke of Mecklenburg, who had led very successfully the Germans' right wing, to Rouen. These troops arrived there on the 15th of January, to hear the final decision of the war had already fallen.

On the 23rd of December, the French Army of the North under General Faidherbe and the German 1st Army under General Manteuffel, had clashed on the River Hallue, a river that flew to the Somme. Von Manteuffel had won the battle.

On the 27th of December, Péronne had been surrounded by the Germans. On the 1st of January 1871, the 1st German Army held about 46,000 men and 200 cannons. One part of this army camped near Amiens on the Somme, and another part on both sides of the Seine at Rouen. The French forces were held in respect at Le Havre and Honfleur. The French General Faidherbe drew to Péronne. On the 3rd of January, north of this town, General von Goeben delivered a battle against these French forces at Bapaume. Faidherbe had four times more soldiers than von Goeben! He claimed a victory when von Goeben ordered on the 4th of January the retreat to Arras.

On the 5th of January, General von Manteuffel transferred his upper command of the 1st Army to von Goeben. General Faidherbe advanced once more, but Péronne surrendered to the Germans on the 19th. The 3,000 men of the French garrison became prisoners of Germany. Faidherbe then took the road from St Quentin to Laon and Reims. The two forces delivered one battle more at St Quentin. The French occupied the west and north regions of the town. After 5 hours of battle, the French Army of the North, then still 40,000 men, were thrown out of St Quentin. On the 19th of January, the German troops made 10,000 French soldiers their prisoners, and the French Army had 3,000 more wounded men to care for. The battle had cost the lives of 3,000 Germans.

On the 28th of January, General von Goeben received a message telling him the French army in its entirety had accepted an armistice that was to begin on the 31st of January at 12h00.

In the east, since November of 1870, several battles had taken place. The troops of Garibaldi and of General Cremer lost large skirmishes for France. On the Lisaine River, a large battle lasting for three days, was fought between 50,000 German troops from Baden and Prussia against about 150,000 French soldiers. The French attacked several times, but were pushed back each time. On the 18th of January, the French retreated, leaving behind 7,000 men killed and wounded, and 4,000 men made prisoners. The Germans lost about 2,000 soldiers. General Werder, who had assumed the upper command, had won one more German victory.

At Paris, the German Army had fully begun to open fire with their cannons on the 8th of January. They shot into the Gardens of the Luxembourg and on the Rue Saint Jacques, on the left borders of the Seine. From mid-January on, each day about 200 to 300 shells fell in the city. It was icy cold in that period, and famine set in for the population. The generals of the French Army in Paris decided on a massive sally for the 19th of January.

On the 18th of January, by a solemn proclamation, King Wilhelm I of Prussia declared himself Emperor of Germany in the Mirror Hall of the Palace of Versailles. Bismarck had to work very hard to get the fact accepted in Baden, in Württemberg and Bavaria. The ceremony took place in the Palace of Versailles of King Louis XIV!

Colonel Haim Vincius was one of the men of the crown prince's staff to be invited to the ceremony of this declaration. He participated in the day's feasting. More than the joy of the declaration, everybody felt this was the victory feast of the German Army in France. Haim Vincius was probably one of the few melancholic men, who were already thinking of returning to Berlin. All this was but glitter, he thought, the vain crying out of triumph, of which so little would last.

The same day, the French troops attacked in the southwest of Paris. The ensuing battle has been called the Battle of the Mont Valérien.

General Louis Trochu attacked with 100,000 men in the direction of Versailles. The German troops in his way were only 33,000 strong. At first, the German troops were pushed back. In the evening, however, all German regiments stood back in their former positions. The French losses were about 6,500 men, a tenfold of the German losses.

The same day too, the French Army of the North under General Faidherbe lost St Quentin. And on the 20th, the German artillery directed its cannons against the northern suburbs of Paris, against St Denis.

On the same 20th of January, Jules Favre had a meeting with the mayors of Paris. Trochu explained to them the Generals Chanzy and Faidherbe had been defeated. No success should be awaited from General Bourbaki. The mayors nevertheless refused to surrender Paris. Protests of the inhabitants gained the next day. Trochu resigned as governor and from his upper command. He remained on as President of the Council of Ministers. General Binoy replaced him in the Army.

The End of the War

On the 23th of January 1871, around noon, Otto von Bismarck received a letter from Jules Favre, in which Favre asked for the permission to come to the Versailles headquarters. Favre rode in the evening. He came to discuss a truce. During that truce, in Favre's views, a new French Parliament would be chosen, which would have the power of the nation to negotiate a totally legal and binding Peace treaty. The Parisian Government of France, indeed, had taken power in its own hands without asking for the consent of the nation. There was a government at Bordeaux, equally without the necessary credentials from the people of France. This situation should be righted before talking of peace. The Germans should negotiate with a proper, chosen, entirely legal Parliament and Government.

Favre and Bismarck did not just discuss the proceedings for a truce and for peace. Money, repair payments had to be determined too. These negotiations were held by separate, financial experts. The private banker of Count Bismarck was a man called Gerson Bleichröder. He negotiated informally about the French reparation payments. Bleichröder was called the Chancellor's private Jew.

On the 28th of January, French and Germans signed the Convention of Paris. A truce of 21 days would begin immediately. Elections for a new parliament would be organised in Paris and in the country. In the departments of the Côte d'Or, the Doubs and the Jura, occupied by the Germans, these elections could start on the 31st of January. The vote for a new parliament would take place. The new parliament would sit at Bordeaux and decide over peace or continuation of the war. The French authorities handed over the forts around Paris, but it was agreed no German would enter the city. Emperor Wilhelm I would not have a triumphal parade on the *Champs Elysées*. The Parisian troops would surrender and become the prisoners of the German Empire, except for 12,000 men, who would remain the military guards of the capital. Paris would have to pay a reparation fee of 5 billion Francs. The word of 'capitulation' was never mentioned in the official papers. In Bordeaux, Léon Gambetta still cried out to continue the war against the Barbarians.

On the 29th of January 1871, the Government in Paris ordered the voting for the new, democratically elected Parliament. The hostilities between the German and the French Army of the East, now led by General Bourbaki, continued during that time. Bourbaki fought on with about 100,000 men, of which, however, only 40,000 were trained soldiers. Garibaldi had

about 20,000 men in arms. These troops rapidly retreated fully. The French Army of the East soon fled into Switzerland. The German Army took Dijon, and a little later Belfort.

On the 12th of February, the newly chosen French Parliament, the *Assemblée Nationale*, met at Bordeaux. General Thiers spoke for peace with Germany. On the 17th, Thiers was chosen as the Chief of the Executive Power of the French Republic. He was allowed to choose his ministers.

On the next day, the 18th of February, Thiers chose for Dufranc in the Justice Department, Favre in Foreign Affairs, Picard for the Interior, Simon for the cults. Parliament voted for Jules Grévy as President of the *Assemblée*. Thiers received a Commission of 15 Members of the *Assemblée* to ride to Versailles, to the German victors, to negotiate further. For the French side, mainly Jules Favre and Thiers led the talks. On the German side sat Count Otto von Bismarck, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bavaria, Count Bray, the Minister of Württemberg von Wächter, and the Baden Councillor of State Jolly. The current truce was prolonged to the 26th of February.

In the end, the German Empire took Strasbourg and Metz, but gave back Belfort. On the 26th of February, an agreement was written down in the Preliminary Peace of Versailles. The truce was continued once more, now to the 12th of March. The French *Assemblée* decided for the end of the dynasty of the Bonapartes in France. Napoleon III was officially emperor no more. At Bordeaux, the *Assemblée Nationale* agreed with the results of the Franco-German negotiations of Versailles. For a short while, the German troops did enter Paris, to leave again on the 3rd of March.

Paris then erupted in revolt. On the 10th of March, the Government of Paris left the city for safer Versailles. The revolt of Paris was an inner issue, not a matter anymore to be solved by the German Nation. The Revolt of the *Commune* of Paris raged. Later, the revolt would be quenched in bloody fights by General Thiers.

The German Emperor and the crown prince arrived in Potsdam on the 17th of March. On the 21st of March of 1871, Count Otto von Bismarck received a letter, written by Emperor Wilhelm I himself, granting Bismarck the title of *Fürst*, of prince.

On the 16th of April, the German *Reichstag* approved the new constitution for Germany. The foundation of the new empire of Germany was the nadir of the political career of Otto von Bismarck.

The final peace between France and Germany had not yet been completely declared. The negotiations between France and Germany continued in Brussels and in Frankfurt. In this last city, on the 10th of May 1871, the definite and final Peace Treaty was signed. The German Emperor ratified the treaty of the 16th, the French *Assemblée* on the 18th. The war was officially over.

The German troops returned to their German camps. The Prussian troops entered Berlin on the 16th of June, and held their triumph.

Haim Vincius had spent the last months of the war in the staff of the crown prince of Prussia in utter boredom. The crown prince would not yet allow Vincius to return home, though Haim asked several times. The two men continued to seek peace and comfort in a small, cosy room of Versailles over glasses of Champagne. Haim explained a lot about his Jewishness to the crown prince. Prince Friedrich Wilhelm listened attentively and respectfully. He sighed often. Haim understood. How could a sovereign reconcile so many different cultures together in one and the same patriotism?

Finally, when Haim had also moved with the prince to Frankfurt, he insisted asking the crown prince for his dismissal from the army. He had to wait for another week, until he received a long, handwritten letter from Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. The prince first expressed his gratitude for the services rendered by the colonel and member of his staff. The tone of the letter went on in friendly terms. Haim received his dismissal from duty. The crown prince expressed hopes Haim Vincius would return to the army in the event the prince would still need him, in or out of service. In a further declaration of gratitude, Colonel Haim Vincius was promoted to the rank of General in the Royal Guard Corps of Prussia, in the corps Haim had fought in and had always preferred. The title was merely an honorary one, Haim knew. He would never join the army again. He was only 29 years old, though, and one of the very youngest generals in the Prussian Army.

Haim Vincius arrived, dressed in nice but civilian clothes, alone, at the station of Berlin on the 10th of June of 1871, almost a year after he had left to the war in France. And then, the feasting began.

In Thorn. 1875

In 1875, Max Vincius was fifty-five years old. He was thinking of old age, which would be on him so quickly, now. He lived a happy and satisfying life on all accounts. Most of the people of Thorn respected him. His opinions were appreciated. People consulted him on grave matters and on projects of commerce. True, he regretted a few unhappy events. He had hoped in his young years those could be avoided. In the end, though, he had lived through hard moments, like anybody else. He considered the bad moments as part of his fate. Max had always acted in good faith. At least, the thought so of himself. He had helped his fellow-men whenever he could, to the best of his abilities and means. He had not cheated on others, though he had been a cunning businessman. He regretted much his discord with Sara Benavicius, his first wife. He would have liked continuing to live with her on the best of terms. It had not been possible. Finally, he now did not regret having divorced from Sara when his marriage had lain broken at his feet, and Sara in the bed of another, despicable man. He regretted his son Kurt's affair with the Kleinberger daughter, though he loved all his grandchildren, also the Kleinberger children. Max had been thinking of his testament, lately. He would provide for the Kleinberger children! He had many grandchildren. He loved them all the same.

Max Vincius regretted seeing little of his sons Haim and Mikhael, and even less of his grandchildren by them. He often imagined how they would be, now, and in the future. Haim lived happily and honoured in Berlin. Max visited Haim's family two or three times a year. Train travel was not really easy, nor very comfortable, but far better than the long travel by coach. Mikhael lived in Denmark. Aarhus was far away from Thorn. Still, Max and Leandra made a habit of visiting Mikhael and Fredia once a year. Mikhael was very happy. He had a wonderful wife. It was great to see his son be loved by a fine woman.

Usually, Max's three sons tried to come together to Thorn at the same time, in spring, at least once a year. Max's fourth son, the Chrapitz boy, was present at these reunions. Max's greatest joy was to see his three sons by Sara happily married and able to grow a considerable fortune each. There was no black sheep in his immediate family! Kurt was a wealthy man, wealthier than he, Max. Haim and Leah Goldstern were equally building on their fortune. Max was particularly glad Haim had confirmed to him, his father, he would never resume his military career. Haim was an honorary general; he would never be an effective general in the future. Max was proud of Haim. The one son who always looked the happiest man in the world, though, was Mikhael. And Mikhael had found the oddest wife in the oddest of circumstances. Yet, they formed a fusion couple. Their two little daughters were lovely children, smart already for their age, and promising to become great beauties. His sons acted gracefully, friendly with his Chrapitz son Julius.

Max Vincius surmised his life would now flow on quietly until his death. He hoped peace for his Vincius Family of Thorn. Life for a Jew in Thorn was as good as was possible and could be wished for. There was not much difference between a Jew in Thorn like his sons and still like himself, despite his conversion, and an Evangelist in Thorn or a Catholic in Denmark. Max expected for himself and for his sons matters to continue like this during his lifetime. He

did not expect more antisemitism in Prussia and in Germany than existed today. Antisemitism was still a reality in the mind of some men, of course, but not in the great majority of German and Prussian citizens. And the court of Germany promoted the equality of all citizens! Some antisemitism might live on and be active among certain high-placed men at the court of the emperor, though not more than in all levels of German society. Max Vincius considered this not harsher than the natural, understandable rancour of any citizen in any country for people who had not lived for many, many generations in the country. He found the reasons for such attitudes stupid, unreal and never true, more often than not based on envy. Indeed, the Jews had it not difficult to find success in business. They were smarter than most other categories of people, an inbred quality from generations of schooling. The last years, Max Vincius had felt no issues with anti-Jewish feelings of any sort. Not in Thorn! Life and the future seemed bright for his sons and for his grandchildren. Antisemitism could practically be ignored in Prussia. His father's gamble to move from Vilna in Tussia to Thorn in Prussia, had proved successful.

The greatest fear of Max for the future were induced in him by some of the arguments his son Haim had given him. Haim had talked much about the wars he had fought in, and about the evolution in warfare he had perceived.

Germany was an empire, now. Germany had also developed into a superpower. Her economy, industry and military might equalled those of the other superpowers of Europe. That meant Germany had become a subject of envy for the other superpowers. They would feel Germany could be a threat to their power. As Germany had proven it could beat Austria and France, Germany would only have to fear England and Russia.

Haim doubted England would ever wage a war on the mainland, in continental Europe, unless provoked really hard. Max and Haim could think of no reason why Germany or Russia would provoke England. What for? England was no threat for Germany.

Russia was another matter altogether. Yet, many persons in very high positions of both countries, Germany and Russia, liked each other, and seemed not inclined to wish each other bad luck. Both countries had fought the revolution of France and the terrible wars of Napoleon I. Prussian had discreetly helped Russia on several occasions, mainly in the Polish Wars of Independence.

The trick, Haim had said, was not to support Austria in her possible clashes with Slavic countries, and hence with Russia. Haim said his thoughts were actually those of Bismarck, which Haim seemed to admire much and agree with. Austria was a German-speaking country at its heartland and at its court, but it was involved in territories in which many languages were spoken. The Slavic element was a constant source of conflicts, and Austria lay also close to Turkey, another constant threat, so near. Austria might come in dispute with Russia over its Slavic provinces. Germany should stay out of any war between Russia and Austria over these lands! That was a crucial point, Haim had heard Bismarck say. But then, Bismarck had always preferred his relations with St Petersburg over those with Vienna.

War by itself, Haim had explained to his father and to Leandra, had evolved to a terrible, man-eating confrontation of will-power. In the war with Austria of 1866 to 1867, Haim argued, the advantage of the *Ziindnadelgewehr*, the fast shooting breech-loading gun had forced five times more victims on Austrian side than on Prussian side, despite superior

Austrian cannon-fire. Of course, better Prussian strategy and tactics had been superior. That, and superior education and training of the Prussian recruits had to be added in favour of the Prussian State and Military. In the Franco-German war of 1870 to 1871, the French *Chassepot* rifle had caused, however, as many terrible deaths and victims on German side as on the French, enemy side! That war had lasted much longer, also! Only one large battle, Königgrätz, had decided on the outcome of the campaign in Bohemia and Austria. In the Franco-German War, many more battles had to be fought to gain the advantage. The battles had lasted for longer than a year, and purely by arms, France was far from subdued even when the end of the war, probably somewhat by surprise, arrived. German victims in the Franco-German war were almost as high as the French losses, with rare exceptions. No quick, single battle of one day had been able to stop the war. The capture of the head of the state had not held the country from fighting on, nor the large, terrible battles, such as Gravelotte or Sedan.

Gravelotte was a great victory for the Germans, but it had not ended the war, despite the enormous losses in man. The Franco-German war only stopped when German bombardments threatened to destroy the grandeur of Paris. Clausewitz had once more proved right. The first aim of any war campaign should be to capture and paralyse the capital of a country, at all cost, for only that could end all hostilities. The French politicians only stopped the war when their capital, the seat of their Government, risked total destruction. Haim was not even sure anymore Clausewitz' rule would still apply in all circumstances! Governments, such as the French had shown, might move elsewhere, avoid capture, and fight on from out of another place, out of another temporary capital.

Germany had rolled in its heaviest Krupp cannons, and trained its army with heavy artillery. They had learned that from their war with Austria, only a few years before. Other countries could learn from how the Germans fought in the war with France. The use of enormous destructive weapons could decide on the outcome of wars. That was a major lesson from the Franco-German War.

Max Vincius did not entirely agree, but accepted the arguments. He remarked nevertheless Napoleon I of France had captured Moscow, but that turn of events had not finished the war with Russia. True, Haim remarked in his turn, but Russia had two capitals, and the main one, the one that counted, St Petersburg, had remained in the hands of the czar.

Any country that had observed the Franco-German war, Haim continued, would learn from that war, and many other European countries would now look at awe to Germany, and try to diminish its power.

With only one dominating power, Haim had argued still, there would be peace in Europe. With four or five of them, with France, England, Germany, Austria and Russia, and also probably Italy, not to count Turkey, dominance would be fought over. That meant more wars to come! What if France, and the other superpowers of Europe learned from the Franco-German war? What if they too learned to apply better strategy and tactics and large arsenals of cannons and rifles? Was it still obvious Germany would win a war, then? Haim had his doubts, despite the enthusiasm and self-confidence of the German General Staff. Haim feared indeed, more wars would come in Europe, to decide over which country would have the

supremacy on the continent. Such wars would be more horrible than the Franco-German war, and cause many, many more victims!

To where should a Jew flee and live through a next war, and survive? Not in Thorn, Max Vincius feared. Thorn lay too close to Poland and Russia. The railways guaranteed faster troop movements. Max reasoned the centre of a country, its capital, would henceforth prove to be the principal aim of foreign forces, but also be the best defended part of the country, the last to be captured, and hence the safest place in Germany. Had diplomacy at the last moment not saved Vienna in 1867 and Paris in 1871? The safest place in Germany would not be Thorn, too near dangerous borders, too vulnerable, not precious enough to escape destruction. Berlin, the capital of the German Empire would be the safest place to live and work in. Ultimately, the Vincius Family of Max would be safest in Berlin! Moreover, Berlin was now also the centre of research and advancement in medicine, in all technologies, in industry, and probably also in trade. In the end, Berlin was the place to move to in the next generations of the Vincius Family.

Max would not leave Thorn, however. Leandra von Chrapitz would never leave her domain and Thorn. Max had a son strongly connected to the Chrapitz domain. His youngest son's name was von Chrapitz! Max's and Leandra's work would be to defend the domain, to defend Thorn. And thus, Max thought on, I have become a Prussian, a German first, and I remain a Jew in second place, despite my conversion.

Max Vincius could not but note the difference in causes for the reflections on changes in places of living he had been musing about. Max's father had left Vilna, because he could not support any longer the state discriminations to the detriment of the Jewish people. Be they Poles or Russians, Max's father had feared more such restrictions would be introduced in Lithuania, as part of the Russian Empire. More laws, more restrictions to the way of living of the Jews had indeed come in the form of decrees.

Max's father had not been considered an equal citizen in Vilna, equal of the Russian citizen. This had weighed heavily on his father's mind. Thus, the reason of the move of part of the Vincius family to Thorn and to Danzig had been religious. In Prussia, and now also in the German Empire, all citizens enjoyed the same rights and duties, whatever their religion, and that by law. Of course, the law counted in all official relations and functions only. In private affairs, the differences in religion, the old grudges and prejudices against the Jews continued to live on. Nevertheless, Max had to acknowledge a true will to treat everybody the same in Prussia, also the Jews. These were the real motives of the law and the lawgivers. For the Jews who had moved to Prussia, this was a wonderful feeling, so different from the obvious mentality of the Polish and Russian authorities, a real amelioration of the status of the Jews. The State mattered more than the individual convictions of the people.

Max Vincius remained thinking about the issue of where his family could best survive in the future. The urge to worry about survival long before catastrophes happened, had probably been burned in his mind, in his character, by his nature of being born a Jew. Religion was not any more the issue, though, Max reasoned. Politics were now the main reason for thinking about survival. Moreover, the religious zeal that had pervaded his family in Vilna, had been weakened much by the weakness of the Jewish community of Thorn. Religious life, Jewish

life, had been more intense in Vilna! Max had converted without much afterthought, and so had done his son Mikhael.

Kurt and Haim had remained faithful to the Jewish religion, but they did not really practice their religion with the old zeal, not as they would have done in the Vilna they scarcely knew! Haim would also have converted easily, if necessary, for his advance in the army. But his wife and father-in-law had kept Haim Jewish. Finally, Max Vincius speculated, purely humanist reasons now dominated his thoughts, and survival still the first of matters to reflect about.

Kurt was still Jewish, but he lived in adultery and sin with both a Jewish wife and a Christian mistress. He had Christian children. And as long as his Kleinberger, much-loved mistress would remain living in Thorn, Kurt would not move.

Max still lively remembered the moments when he had for the first time seen little Esther Kleinberger, so many years ago. She had been a 3-month old baby then, with the surprisingly Jewish first name, swaddled in rags, sleeping in the arms of her mother. Little did he suspect at that time this girl would challenge all his traditional beliefs in the conventions for love and marriage. She had enriched him in the act of loving his son and be loved by him. She had taught him to put the love of man and woman at least as high as the love of God. Maybe such thoughts were sinful according to the Jewish and Christian faiths. Max hoped there could be some reconciliation of both hopes in the Creation. He lauded his God. It all came back to put simple humanism, the love of people, first, even above religion. That was considered by all religions as sacrilege. Could the two be reconciled? He thought and hoped so. The Christian religion held that grain of hope.

Max Vincius wondered to where the evolution of his family would lead to. Would, sooner or later, his entire family convert to Christianity?

The reasons why Max was pondering over the next move of his family, was purely a matter of survival. Where could the Vincius family of Max Vincius continue, to not be exterminated? This was quite another reason than any religious consideration might lead to. Jews were now well accepted in all the European powers, except Russia. Max did not doubt Russia too would evolve to equal rights for all citizens. Russia was merely evolving a little slower than other European countries. Jews enjoyed equal rights in France, in England and in Germany. These countries were the superpowers of Europe. What if they fought against each other for the ultimate power in Europe? What if they used technologies as yet unthinkable? Where would one be safe, then?

That was the central survival question of Max Vincius. For the moment, his answer seemed to be to live in a great capital, to start with in Berlin.

Author's Notes

This novel is a work of fiction. As in most of my historical novels, I mixed real history with fiction, hopefully not too much having distorted real facts. Everything concerning the Vincius Family and the members of that family is pure fiction, of course.

The two main historical chapters in the novel are about the Battle of Königgrätz and about the Franco-German War of 1870-1871.

For the Battle of Königgrätz, I used Schlosser's World History in the first place, and several other sources. All stories concerning Haim Vincius are, of course, completely fictitious. For the Franco-German War, I equally mostly followed the account of Schlosser's World History.

I read yet more books, articles and essays on the battles and on the war, and added my own insight into the events to this novel.

The life of the Jews in the Pale Settlement areas has been documented by several fine non-fiction books by Jewish authors and scholars. For life in Thorn around the period of this novel, the account of the *Landrat* Steinmann was a treasure trove of information (see the bibliography).

On the January uprising of the Polish people in 1863, the book of Augustin P. O'Brien brought useful insight.

F. Ducuing published an enormous series of articles, in journal form, on the World Exhibition in Paris of 1867, published almost day to day, and brought together in two large volumes, luckily with very fine and ample illustrations.

Hereafter, the reader can find a short list of books relating to the period and to the story. I used these and many, many other texts on the subjects of the novel as basic information.

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