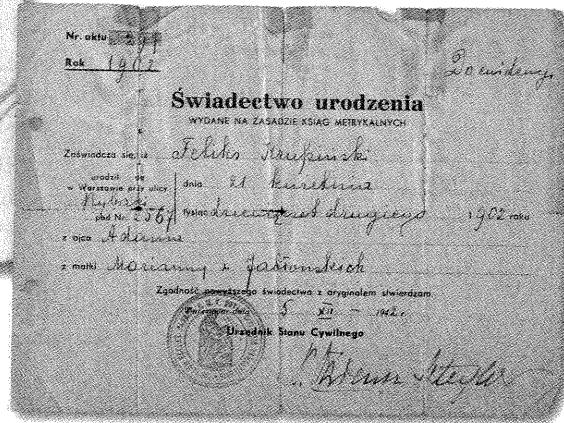


LAWYERS WITHOUT RIGHTS — VANCOUVER STORIES

BY LILLIAN BORAKS NEMETZ



**STANISLAW
BORAKS
(1903 - 1949)**



It must be noted that the fate of European Jews, professionals, business people, academics and others had been determined much earlier in Germany, shortly after Hitler came to power in January of 1933. Throughout the German judiciary system, Jewish lawyers, judges, professors and civil servants were disbarred and stripped of their rights to practice law. Under Nazi ideology, social justice and the rights of minorities became known as “Jewish perversions” that had to be eliminated. Not surprisingly, these anti-Jewish laws were subsequently implemented in Nazi-occupied Poland.

It was a collective tragedy for a people to be deprived of everything that is known to be just and humane in society. It was also a tragedy for an individual like my father, who suddenly loses the ground under his feet, his livelihood and his ability to take care of his family. He loses everything he

has worked for, his pride, his honour, his identity, and his right to justice in a world that becomes an antithesis to everything that he has come to know and respect. He starts groping in the liquefied darkness for a concrete place to fasten his feet so as not to drown. He looks into himself and finds despair. He looks out and sees only terror and confusion. He is forced to shed his former self and become another, a persona who must cope with an unprecedented order of an alien world. How is he to survive?

Others, like my father, also lost their grounding. Shortly after the blitzkrieg, their fate was decided by the Nazi banishment of Jews into the ghettos and death camps. The few who survived did so under despicable conditions, using false documents and suffering immense losses. Jewish lawyers from Poland who emigrated after the war to other countries were seldom able to resume their professions, due to the barriers of language, age, and different legal systems.

A few years ago, I found notes written by my father in a file that I previously didn't know existed. Here is a quote from these notes, which I translated from Polish:

On the ruins of primordial evil, a temple of humanity will rise, its religion will be the right of man; its catechism - freedom, equality and brotherhood. It will become the brain and the shoulder of the afflicted millions abused by nightmarish torturers, and a sweet dream of cherry orchards blossoming on the wounds of the tortured.

IMAGES:

Stanislaw Boraks, 1945

Falsified birth certificate used to escape the Warsaw ghetto in 1942

My father, Stanislaw Boraks, a prominent lawyer in pre-war Warsaw, survived the Holocaust, only to die a few years later a shattered man both in body and soul. He lived long enough to save our family from a life in Communist Poland, just as he had saved us from death during Nazi occupation.

In 1930s Poland my father's life was on course to success and prosperity. He became a respected and well-known lawyer who sat on a bench in Falenica, a position that was enviable for a Polish Jew even before the Nazi invasion of Poland. He attended the Universities of Warsaw and Geneva, before obtaining his law degree, an achievement that was not easy in those days due to rampant anti-Semitism. In addition to his law practice, he managed the family estate consisting of two apartment buildings and a villa outside of Warsaw.

We lived in a large handsomely furnished Warsaw flat with a cook, a maid, and a nanny. Life was good for us, an assimilated family, who nevertheless respected and honoured our Jewish roots. But it all came to an end on September 1, 1939, when the Nazis invaded Poland.

“The General Government which was set up in Nazi occupied Poland, was comprised of four districts; Warsaw, Lublin, Radom and Cracow. Eventually Galicia was added as well, bringing the total Jewish population under their jurisdiction to over two million. Hans Frank(1900-1946), a veteran Nazi politician and lawyer, was appointed Governor General. Frank initiated and instituted the anti-Jewish decrees in occupied Poland and was responsible for the mass murder of Polish Jewry. He was later convicted and executed at the Nuremberg trials.”