
Tilted Life

Report of the Asian period

1938 - 1946

As experienced by LIESKE DE JONGH



Last Christmas card from Jan from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia

Do not kill but try to promote life

Gautama Buddha

Special thanks to Paul Bradford for proofreading
the book and undertaking numerous corrections

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FORWARD

When, after hearing Hitler's speech in Munich in 1938, my mother decided to leave the old continent to join her fiancé, it was an emotional decision motivated by a premonition of what was to cast dark clouds over Europe.

She had no idea of the terrible time she would have to endure with her two children and with so many other women in the Dutch East Indies under the rule of the Japanese Emperor.

Initially, there was a happy period following her marriage, first in India, later on Java.

Shortly after my father's transfer to Medan the war broke out in Asia, although there had already been sinister signs when the Japanese occupied parts of China. But the Dutch in the colony had great confidence in their own army, and especially in their navy, which would readily deal with the Japanese nerds.

And then there were also the British who had a strong powerful army in Singapore and would certainly come to the rescue of the Dutch if the followers of the Divine Emperor would dare to invade the archipelago. Great optimism, but little realism: the vast archipelago could certainly not be effectively defended with a rather limited army.

But there were indeed the British, who were so convinced of their own superiority that the officers were giving a party at Raffles Hotel in Singapore when the Japanese landed, surrounded the hotel and subsequently captured all the high ranking officers.

Not a single shot was fired.

Naturally, the British forces still fought for Singapore, but after seven days the city and the army had to surrender.

How badly things went wrong became clear when Rear Admiral Karel Doorman's flotilla was sunk and nothing then stood in the way of the landings of the Japanese army.

Looking back on these events, one can say that an underestimate of the enemy coupled with their own sense of superiority were the main reasons for the decline of the Blandas in the Dutch East Indies.

As always, the conquest of a country is one thing, but what was to be done with the prisoners of war and the colonial population?

In Europe, many prisoners of war were deployed to develop the Third Reich and to strengthen the war efforts of the Germans. Horrible events occurred and thousands lost their lives or were mutilated or traumatized for life. For the Divine Emperor of Japan, though, prisoners of war were deployed in futile work projects for the greater glory of the war effort.

A well-known project was the notorious Burma Railway, to which my father, too, was sent when taken prisoner. Unfortunately the film, "The Bridge on the River Kwai" in which the prisoners of war whistle while going about their work to create an English prestige project, portrays a caricature of this forced labour. The film is shameful for all who suffered and died there.

Thousands were killed on the Burma railway, due to chronic malnutrition, lack of medical help and the sadistic forced labour.

At km. pole 108 my father died of exhaustion and incurable tropical diseases. The intention of the Japanese occupiers was to achieve the extermination of the whites through starvation and exhaustion.

There were no gas chambers but lack of vitamins, shortage of protein, very poor medical care and slave labour also worked effectively.

Moreover, it cost the occupier very little.

In exterminating, the military clique which was in charge in Japan succeeded very well.

In such a situation all values are tilted.

The code of honour, so important for the Japanese, had nothing in common with the Christian sense of charity.

The creed: “Love your enemy”, was impossible for the Samurai.

That was seen as weakness and foolishness and did not serve to bring about Asia Raya, the great Asian empire, led by Japan. Precisely because of the Samurai code of honour that has continued as part of the Japanese way of life, loss of dignity is the worst thing that can happen to anyone. This is worse than Hari-Kiri.

This strong national characteristic has prevented successive Japanese governments over the years from apologizing for the suffering they caused.

Personally, I think apologizing is also useless, because it is not in the Japanese Samurai culture to do something like that. When I realized that, I decided that hatred and resentment have no purpose whatsoever.

It is as it is, and therefore we as survivors would do well to forgive our former enemies from ourselves for, if we can, the way to reconciliation is open and peace becomes our common goal. But how can we forgive them if there is no sense of guilt in the older generation, and if its own history is withheld from the younger generation and therefore cannot understand anything that has happened?

Within the word forgiving is “giving”.

What do we give to the Japanese nation? And to whom do we give?

The book of the war has been closed for the old generation who committed their horrors in the Samurai culture of that time. Within a few years, the remaining war criminals will also enter their violent celestial world.

The natural course of things therefore requires silence and incomprehension on their part, and thereby the accusations automatically pass away. They die out.

That may be so, but history remains a reality and failing to talk about it does not make that dark time disappear.

So we cannot forgive the older generation, even if we want to. The book of history must be re-opened by the Japanese themselves to bring recognition of the failure of their nation.

To the contemporary Japanese, born after the war, and generally ignorant, we should offer our friendship and listen to the stories about their parents, uncles and aunts who also had to bear suffering. By paying attention we do not have to forget history and that is why we should continue to commemorate. Actually, we must learn to commemorate together with the new generation of Japanese; that is the way of reconciliation.

One may wonder what was the cause of this great world conflagration that was burning in Europe and Asia? The answers lie at different levels and one of them is that our society needed to change thoroughly. Western civilization was stuck in civilian sleepiness and naivety, which led to the fact that, despite the threat of war, our Prime Minister called on us all to go to bed quietly and not to worry. Chamberlain had returned home with a piece of paper with a promise from Hitler! And a sort of ostrich consciousness led to the movement of the broken gun becoming very popular, also in politics.

We will remain strictly neutral and not give offence. And besides, Hitler had promised peace, black and whiteWe experienced what the promise of a dictator is worth. A gruesome war broke out and the world was on fire. Except for Switzerland, which does not participate in anything. By dropping the two atomic bombs on Japan, the war in Asia ended, and this cost the lives of many tens of thousands of civilians (not soldiers) and some of them had to bear the consequences for life.

What would have happened if President Truman had not taken upon himself the blame for this inhumane act?

The Japanese supreme command had ordered that if the Americans landed on the coast of Japan, all internees would be executed. And in the camps the gullies had already been dug where the bodies were to be thrown in.

The internees already stood with one foot in the grave.

They could no longer sustain the hardship. The outcome has never been a consideration of the Allies, but as a result many lives were saved by the "bomb".

So the gruesome weapon of the atomic bomb was the salvation for many, including myself.

And that is a bizarre thought.

You can say here that in the period from 1933 to 1945 the abyss opened and the Beast from the Apocalypse nestled into the soul of many. There is every probability that this Beast still roams around us and tempts us to evil.

How did so many brave women survive in the camps? On the one hand, there was an intelligent survival strategy, which turned out to be capable of achieving the impossible. And then there was hope.

Initially it was thought that the war would end in a few months, if not weeks. Then there were the many ties with the royal family, in which Queen Wilhelmina was a shining example for the liberty to be regained. But in the case of my mother, it was mainly her children that kept her going. There were women who in their despair no longer fought, and wasted away or went mad. Some committed suicide and many succumbed to starvation and illness. My mother drew strength from the hope that my father would come back, and also through caring for her two children who were so completely dependent on her.

They gave her the strength to endure all the trials.

In the book we read how life was for the colonial Dutch in the Dutch East Indies. Apart from keeping an eye on the household, the wives had little to do. The laundry was done, the food was cooked – and also the groceries bought - and the house was cleaned by domestic workers. Actually, they often did not even have to make the cup of tea that they drank.

That's how it was. There was a lot of pampering.

Of course, the wives did have to work, because money had to come in, but they lived a carefree existence, convinced of the lofty mission of bringing (our) civilization to the native population. How different that was during the internment. All values that one was so contented with and believed in, moved out of existence and tilted life, and those who could not find the personal power to hold on to the basic values of life slipped into the abyss. Even after the war, there was a difficult recovery period for many. The Dutch at home had also experienced quite a lot and were not waiting for the poor souls who returned from the lost colony. The reception was also cold, just as cold as the weather when we finally arrived in Rotterdam in the late summer of 1946.

But my mother had a very positive attitude for coping with setbacks and she developed a cordiality and commitment to others that you would not think possible for someone who had experienced so much.

She received an education certificate and taught young children, and later she became a kindergarten teacher and moved with her second husband to Aachen in Germany where she was in charge of a kindergarten for severely handicapped children. In this she was a great success and was hailed by the parents and the diocese. Her life was brutally tilted but she herself found the strength to build a new and meaningful existence in which she brought meaning to others.

She never wanted to talk about the war years.

As children we knew very little about it, until the time she wrote this book as a personal report for those who were dear to her. Unlike other reports about the internment period, my mother did not pay too much attention to the horrific treatment by the Japanese. It was as if she did not want to evoke evil by writing about it in detail. Yet the report is clear enough for understanding how degrading the warriors of the Divine Emperor treated their prisoners.

But because we must try to forgive, though not forget, it is important that an eyewitness like this is given greater prominence, not only to do

justice to my dear mother, but also to all those brave women who resisted evil and picked up life again.

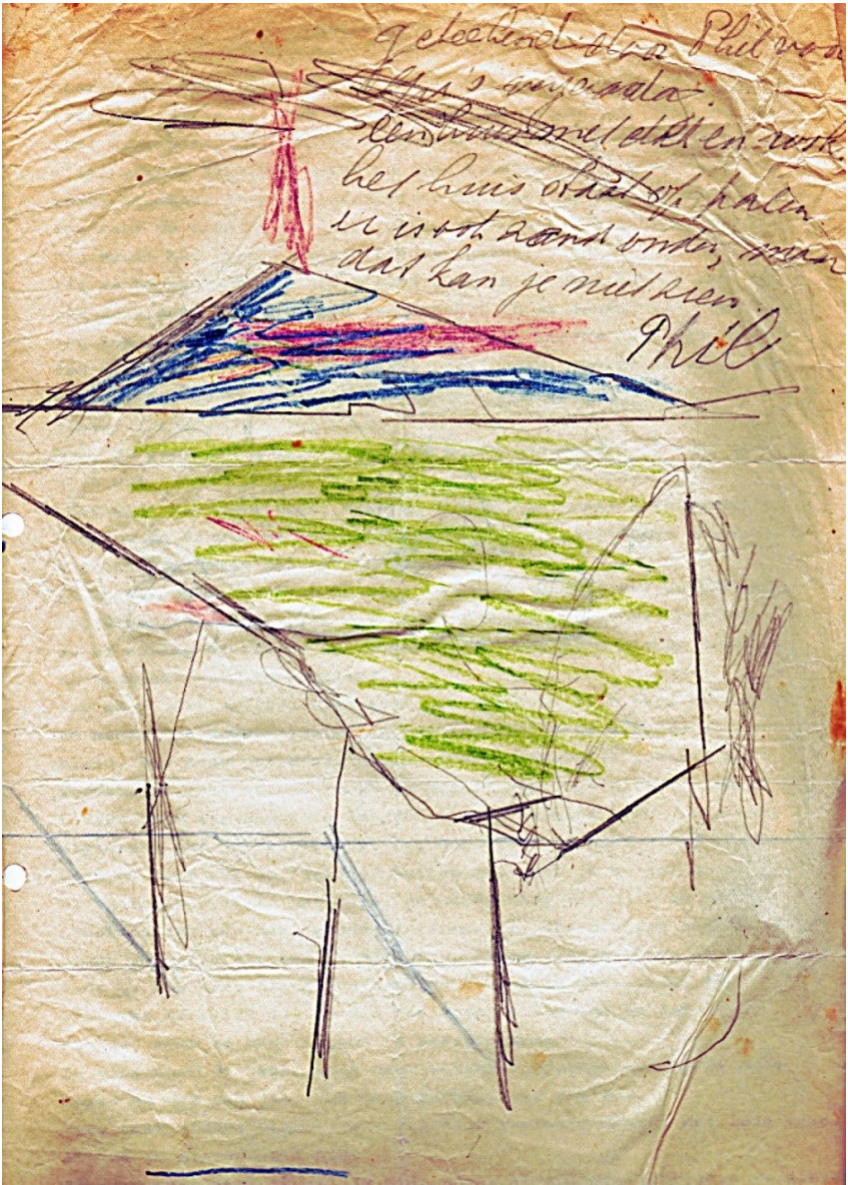
This testimony, however, would not be complete without paying attention to Jan, her husband, who played a role in the pre-war phase. We know very little about the internment time in the camps along the Burma railway. But in 1994 my sister and her husband travelled both to Brastagi and to the military cemetery in Thanbyuzayat in Burma. I have included a few pictures of this trip in the book so that the reader can get an idea of the exuberance of nature in which the dramas took place. In Appendix I, I focus on this period

Little is known about Jan's brother Leonard (Leo) after our parents moved to Batavia.

He was deported to the Philippines with many other Dutch and British Prisoners of War (POWs). But the transport ship, in which he was held in the hold, was bombed by the Americans in the Bay of Manila and nearly all on board were drowned.

I will pay further attention to his horrific fate in Appendix II.

In October 2019 Jan and Leo (Leonard) were awarded the Mobilization Cross in recognition of their brave conduct during WW II. An afterword closes the book. I personally try to give a meaning to the great suffering that has come over the world and try to show a way how Japan can play an important role in shaping a new world.



Drawn by Phil in 1946: House with roof and with smoke; the house is on poles and there is also sand under the house, but you cannot see that.

CHAPTER I

The journey I

Alone in the world

It was very quiet on the quay of Marseille until a car stopped just after seven o'clock.

"Voilà votre bateau, mademoiselle," said the young man to the girl that he helped to get out.

Lieske looked up at the dazzling white ship. "City of Venice" she read on the bow.

Yes, this was her ship. The young man put the luggage on the ground and held out his hand. "Je vous souhaite bonne voyage," he said.

She thanked him and looked at her suitcases. All five, she thought.

Then I will go. She stepped on the gangplank and felt his eyes on her back, but she did not look back.

"Good morning Madam," sounded as she stepped on board. "Your ticket please, your name please."

Switching to English shot through her mind.

Fortunately, she was on the list that the officer had in his hand.

"That's your luggage?" he asked.

What a stupid question she thought; he already saw me get out of the car. "You can take two suitcases to your cabin, the rest must go in the hold. You tell me which ones."

She had to think to herself for a moment. In the meantime two orders were given to bring her luggage on board. She pointed to her trunks and was taken to her cabin by a stewardess. Here she was introduced to her co-resident, who appeared to come from South Africa and to understand Dutch.

She could have breakfast, the stewardess said, and she took her to the empty dining room.

She could sit anywhere for breakfast and lunch, but would get a permanent seat for dinner.

Silently, a British Indian servant arrived with half a grapefruit.

Lieske was now on her way to his homeland.

Yesterday at this time she was still at home in The Hague!

A menu was presented to her.

I'll just point to something she thought, I do not know what it is.

First she got a deep bowl

After a long wait there was a kind of cornflakes and, after a century, also some sugar.

Would she ever get milk?

Eventually she started to chew the dry cornflakes, but when she was almost through her portion the milk came!

My first failure, she knew.

Lieske walked to the deck from the dining room.

How nice that the ship only had tourist class; now you could go everywhere. Nice, that view of Marseille.

She took her book from the cabin, grabbed a deck chair and started to read.

Suddenly everyone walked to the railings, the cables were thrown loose and there was some dark water immediately between the quay and the ship. For a moment she felt very lonely.

Goodbye Europe, I hope you fare well!

She was the only one of the whole family who had seen the storm coming.

Or no, the others saw that too, of course, but they could not believe that they would be involved in it themselves.

A week ago there had been that crisis in England, about Poland, which Chamberlain had calmed down, but the speech that Hitler had made in Munich with that inflated language and that "Sieg Heil" which had roared on the radio at home with uncle and aunt, sounded demonic. .

I do not want anything to do with this, Lieske had realized.

I'm going to Jan in Bombay!

After breakfast the next morning she had gone into town to a travel agency, but everything turned out to be fully booked until March, and now it was September.

But at Lisonne they had said:

"Yes, we would have had a berth for you, but that ship has already left.

It will arrive next Wednesday in Marseille. You would then have to leave The Hague on Tuesday and get your ticket from our agent in Marseille on Wednesday morning. We can arrange that for you."

She had asked for two hours reflection time.

Lieske presented the proposal at lunch.

Grandmother said: "You wanted to go to that cooking course didn't you?"

Aunt said: "You have no outfit at all yet."

Uncle said: "You have to be vaccinated, and is your passport still valid?"

But after some time they realized that if Lieske did not go now, it would not be possible for a long time, and then the family would be stuck with her for a long while.

Grandmother could be persuaded to pay the trip (f 400, -)

Auntie called her dress shop in Arnhem so that they would come tomorrow to find suitable clothes for the tropics.

Uncle insisted on buying a trunk and a suitcase, and he himself called the doctor for the first injection that evening.

She had not noticed much of that first prick. She had the other two with her. Then she had taken her travel papers and sent Jan a telegram.

How everyone had helped her and how busy she was!

No time to think about saying goodbye.

That Friday morning the three generations had travelled to Arnhem together and had chosen everything there.

The wedding gown, short with small sleeves and the pretty neck in creamy white peau d'ange with the sleeveless cloak suited her very well and she had two evening dresses: one in white crepe with a draped bodice and one in white with gold and a loose train.

And if that was not enough, Auntie had bought two linen dresses for daytime, because linen is so lovely to wear in the heat, she said.

Lieske was size 38 and there was not much to alter, but the wedding gown and the evening gowns looked fine. They were then delivered home on Sunday evening.

She went to say goodbye that Sunday.

First to Utrecht to Aunt Cato, Grandmother's asthmatic friend, where she got a silver jam spoon.

Then to Uncle Johan and Aunt Bets and little Grandma, where they lunched. Back to Utrecht, to her friend who was a nurse in the academic hospital.

In the evening at home, show the dresses and go to bed.

Yes, it was good that she was busy and now she could rest.

She put her book away and went for lunch.

She sat with her back to the dining room and at her table nobody spoke a word. Yesterday in the train it was just as much fun, she thought.

Three old gentlemen at my table, who did not see me; today between those English girls, who do not look at me either.

Do they think I'm deaf and dumb?

If I have to stay silent for three weeks until I get to Bombay, I'll go crazy.

In the afternoon, when she sat in a reclining chair with her book, tea was served.

She recognized the weird cakes in horrible colours, which Uncle and Aunt had warned her about.

Just try one, she thought.

But it was indeed disappointing.

No, the cakes from Krul were a lot better.

I'll go to the hairdresser, she thought.

My hair is so blown about.

She had to search for a long time, but found him, and he had time.

Also an Indian, but she was no better off, because she did not understand him.

And he also did not understand how she wanted her hair, with curls on top of her head and not on the sides.

Lieske thought about what she would wear for dinner.

Always something long, Uncle and Aunt had said.

If only I had been to England, I might feel at home here. But Grandmother's trips always went to French-speaking areas.

The white satin slip with the brown tulle dress, she thought, is less dressy than just white.

She was assigned a place and again they ate in silence.

Good Lord, how will I get through the evening?

Now, she would just write the story of her adventures home; that could be posted in Port Said in the letter box.

The ship glided through the sea like a knife through butter.

She looked for a writing tablet and started:

21. 9. 38 S.S. City of Venice

Dear All,

Let me start by thanking everyone, because the time before my trip was a treat. The farewell was too fast to take in. Before long I was in Roosendaal alone in my compartment.

In Brussels it was full and we had a half hour delay because the locomotive had to be changed. We also arrived in Paris half an hour late. In the Gare du Nord, I hung out of the window to keep an eye on my luggage, and yes, it was casually unloaded.

I also jumped out with my coupe suitcases and was just standing with my luggage on the platform when the train left. So on to the customs.

The officer was very interested in my cookbook and my mayonnaise beater. I took a taxi to the Gare de Lyon (thirty francs) and had to re-register the luggage there. I left the rest in the depot, because I wanted to go for a walk, to have some movement. I ate a sandwich and drank coffee in a somewhat obscure restaurant and then went back to the

station. In the sleeping car I asked to be left alone and took the top bunk. I tipped the conductor and went looking for my big luggage. It was not there, but it turned out that there were two trains of the same number that would leave five minutes apart. But I left in the realization that I could not do anything about it. Never leave your bags, uncle taught me, but this was force majeure. When I arrived in Marseille my luggage had arrived also. I was put in a P.L.M. bus and we drove to the Lisonne agent. There I got my ticket. In a company car I was driven to the ship and here I am now. No one has said a word to me.

Lieske had just written this down, when a very blonde young man approached her and asked if she would like to dance. She looked surprised and said "Oh yes" and got up. The letter went into her handbag and the young man introduced himself as Richard Holland. "On deck she was surrounded by a whole bunch of young people, who were all asking her questions. "Are you French? What is your name? Where do you come from, where are you going to? Are you travelling alone, why are you travelling to Bombay? " In her best English she told them that she was Dutch, was called Lieske de Jongh and was travelling alone. In Bombay she would marry a Dutchman. She was introduced to the whole circle and danced with everyone. At half past eleven the music was over and she walked up and down the deck with the whole group. The evening was wonderfully soft and the stars shone over her head and there was lots to laugh about. At half past twelve there was soup in the dining room. The young Richard brought her up to her cabin and wished her good night. It was past twelve o'clock and she only dared to make a small light, because her companion was already in her bed and fast asleep. No, she was too old to dance, but Lieske was planning to have fun on board. Her deaf-time was over and she would be able to gain proficiency in English in three weeks. That's how she went to sleep.

CHAPTER II

The Journey - II Another world

She put a sweet in her mouth as the door opened and the stewardess came in with two glasses of orange juice.

"Do you want one too?" she asked, and held out the box to her.

Six o'clock in the morning is actually no time for chocolates, but the stewardess took one anyway. At seven o'clock she climbed out of her bunk bed and ordered a bath. It looked wonderful from Lieske's Dutch point of view. Hot water in the bath and a shelf over it with a basin, also warm, and a small can next to it. She stepped in and noticed that the soap did not foam. She rinsed herself off with the water in the basin. She asked her cabin mate how it was with the bath and she said: "Salt water is present in the bath and sweet in the basin. Salt water does not foam. So if you want foam, you have to use the water in the tub. "How primitive," she thought.

Together they had breakfast. She now recognized several faces and once nodded in the direction of the other tables. Grapefruit, ham and eggs and brown rolls with marmalade or honey.

That was slightly different than yesterday's breakfast!

When she went on deck, the sea turned out to be rougher and Richard came up to her. "Would you like to see the dogs?"

There were some dog kennels at the stern and there were the four-legged friends. Actually, a bit pathetic, but of course you cannot have them in the cabin whining and barking everywhere.

She had soon had enough of it. Then she was again whisked off to the group of young people on deck. Six young girls and I, she thought, and at least twenty young men.

"We are all 21 years old and trained officers and will serve in British India. There is a troopship on the way, that we were to join in Port Said, but there was no room for us and so here we are. Aren't we lucky? "

"We cannot understand that such a young girl travels without her mother," said one of the girls.

"My mother has been dead for years and I am not so young either, I am already 25 and engaged."

"And your father?"

"My father is a major in the Dutch army and cannot leave."

I cannot say that he is travelling with a friend through Germany; the English would not understand that.

Then soup was served, after which she went to the doctor to talk about her injections.

Tomorrow the first one and about a week later the second, was agreed.

In the afternoon they saw the coasts of Italy and Sicily.

You could watch the waves for hours, especially now that it was so turbulent.

And the porthole of the cabin had to remain closed, but she felt fine, had no problems at all.

Your first voyage all alone, your first sea voyage too.

It was wonderful sailing on this cosy ship with so many young people around her.

All right, they were all younger, but she felt new born yesterday. Away from our troubled Holland and not yet in the unknown British East Indies, where Jan would be the only trusted one.

This was a holiday she would never experience again.

The young Richard regarded her as his possession, but she also found him very sympathetic.

Did he not say, "You are engaged, we will not touch you."

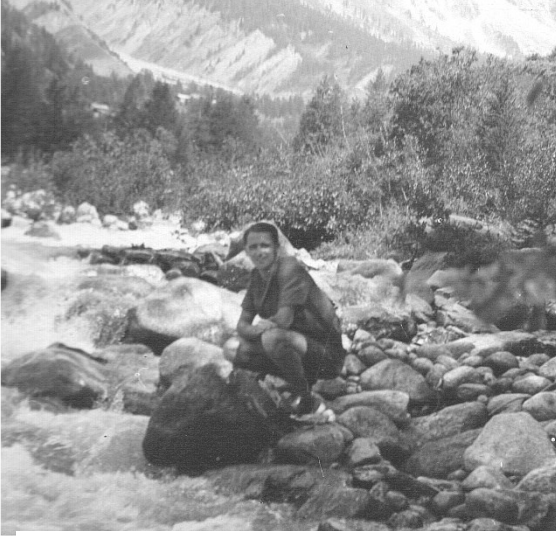
I was lucky, she thought.

Yes, you had to take your life into your own hands and not watch passively if it went the wrong way.

Do something about it, she had thought, and that is why she floated above the water and had the time of her life.

In the evening Richard had organized a place for her at his table and that's how it stayed for the rest of the trip.

The next day, after the injection, she soon felt miserable. She had little appetite for lunch.



Jan on holiday in Turin

Ha, ha, that was an idea. How crazy that the lettuce was not dressed, she thought.

Well I can also do oil and vinegar myself.

But the oil turned out not to be oil, but something undefinable; to be filthy. But mayonnaise.

And more rusks with cheese, no nothing hot; she felt feverish.

Languidly she lay in her deckchair after that, but in the evening she danced

again. The next morning she was fit again. In the distance they saw rocks: Crete. It did not mean much to her. And now I want to make myself pretty, she thought, when dressing up. She put on the white evening gown with the wide skirt, which fell through the strap in the hem: so nice. It was long: wouldn't she kick it? And it was very white. What could she do with it?

She had a purple georgette scarf and a feather corsage or bodice in the same colour. Scarf around the shoulders?

No, that was boring. On her head? But how? She tried for a while.

Yes, with a point on her forehead and then hanging loose over her hair, which was not that great anymore, and the corsage on the narrow shoulder strap, because the tight line of the body had to look good.

“You have no right to be so beautiful, Lieske, if you are going to be married. You look like Mary, Queen of Scots, Lieske!”

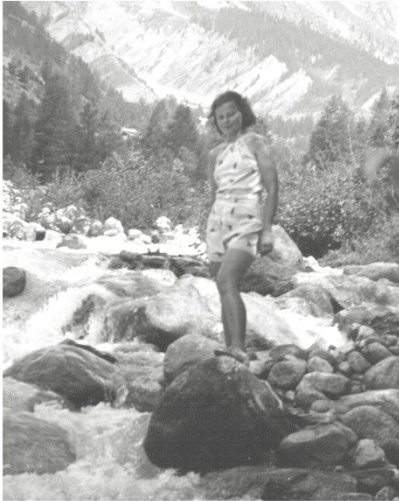
She enjoyed the admiration intensely. She refused to melt into the crowd.

“Are you going to visit the troop ship tomorrow and go into Port Said? We put in at 5 o'clock, so it's early. And then we have breakfast in Port Said. ”

She loved it, it was Sunday and there was no dancing today so she could turn in early. When she came on deck at 5 o'clock the next morning, a whole group of them hung over the railing to look at the city and the sunrise. But it was six hours before they could go ashore. First a telegram home, she thought - and to Jan.

With the help of Richard and the others she found the post office and then they went to the troop ship. The boys were all wearing a white suit now; she thought it was their only one. She was feeling very well on board but suddenly realized she was the only girl; the other girls were with their parents in Port Said. I wish they'd get on, but those young people were in no hurry. There was talk about politics but she did not listen. Finally they left and walked into the city. It was already very hot then. And what a dirty lot and what poverty!

In her letter home she wrote:



Lieske on holiday in Turin

Port Said is really filthy. Here and there a policeman stood at a crossroads. But as there was no traffic so early we saw a policeman standing and talking. In the middle of his conversation a bird came by and the cop turned around, jumped into the air and missed the bird.

It turns out to be a source of income in Port Said to catch birds. The people who make it their profession have a net that they throw in the air when a bird flies by and sometimes they catch something. In the back streets, people wore something that must have been

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pyjamas in a previous life.

I was told that the intelligent native tucks his shirt into his trousers, while the unintelligent lets it hang.

All kinds of animals also just walked across the street.

We saw an indescribably dirty goat that ate the dust from the street for lack of food. I wonder what kind of milk the poor animal gives. Nobody cared for the animals but they seemed to be doing well.

Except for a very large black lady who was holding a big pig, which kept on wanting to go out through the door where she screamed after it. At half past nine we were all having breakfast at Simon Artz on a large balcony above the street.

You could get everything and at no more expensive than at home.

I bought a dark blue bathing suit and a white corsage.

When we got back on board, we heard that the troop ship had been ordered to turn back, because of the threat of war.

That caused great excitement among the English, as far as they can get excited. Our officers ran to the ship in that heat, because they thought they should go back also, but no order was given for that. They ran back in the nick of time and were very relieved that they could continue their journey!

Then we sailed through the Suez Canal, which is a mighty grand structure just like the Koninginnegracht in The Hague, but on a larger scale, with a railway line on one side and the desert on the other. When I slept in the afternoon, I saw on the other side through the porthole, a man on a camel with another camel behind it.

Then you know that you are on the way to unknown regions! In the evening at eleven o'clock we were in Suez, but we did not go ashore. The first two days on the Red Sea were not too bad, but on the third day it was 36 degrees in the shade and I was sick of it, and had to vomit repeatedly, so I went to bed.

Two days later I had recovered a bit, but then I got my last injection it was even worse. In this way I missed the costumed party....

Every day was warmer than the previous one and Lieske thought she was lucky to sleep on the cool side of the ship.

She did not play deck tennis anymore, but after breakfast she flopped directly into a lounge. Every day that blue-green sea was no longer anything novel. You had time to think. What had inspired her to telegraph Jan in Jeddah, after she said last year that she did not want to meet him when he was on leave. I was driven to the phone that afternoon. I could not think; it was stronger than me. It was as if I did not send that telegram to Jeddah myself. That awful report she had seen in a German magazine, of a young girl with a big sign on her back who was being chased through Munich: "I am deeply worried about it", she had said.



August 1938 in the mountains near Turin

And those beastly Nazis behind her, hitting and spitting at and kicking her, and stoning her for three hours until she fell down exhausted. She would never forget that image again.

I would be that girl if I stayed at home, she thought. When the Nazis come to Holland, they will find out that I went to the home of Prof. Rosenberg, to see Bini, a Jewish boy and his family that I knew in Amsterdam. And then slowly the conviction had begun to grow, that she wanted to leave Europe.

And she had travelled to Italy with Grandmother and met Jan in Courmayeur, a mountain nest on the wrong side of Mont Blanc, where Jan did not run the risk of meeting someone from the bank, because he

had just three weeks of domestic leave. The broken engagement, which was actually the result of the strict bank rules that a young man had to earn a certain salary before he could marry...

And that could last for seven or eight years according to Jan, with the current malaise.

The broken engagement became a fully restored engagement, because Jan had spent three years in Jeddah and those years counted double because of the murderous climate. He would be transferred to Bombay on September first, which he already knew.

So that was all very good.

She would then follow later.

Oh, she knew him, he was reliable, you could always call on him. He was sporty and very attentive. And he knew what he wanted: a career far away from the Netherlands because he had outgrown the Dutch atmosphere in those five years. He knew her family, had he not neatly asked her mother for her hand on her twentieth birthday?

Mother had said: "You are still very young, but if you really want to, my blessing is yours."

She told her that with Jan's parents she had messed up the situation. She still had to smile when she thought about it.

When Jan was already in the Dutch East Indies, his younger brother Leo, took her to a ball in Rotterdam, and she was to stay at his home that night.

As a partner she did not like him, because he was still in his final exams, but it was a way to get in touch with other young people and so she had said yes. And what did she do?

She had left the house with him wearing stockings.

His mother had admired her blood-red evening gown very much.

But in the taxi to the ball she had quickly stripped off her stockings in the dark and got out in her golden sandals with bare feet.

Only in the ballroom did Leo see her ten brightly coloured toenails in the golden sandals. He was furious, but she laughed squarely in his face. She had not failed to have partners and she had amused herself.

Her father-in-law heard about it and called Grandmother on the exchange. He had written to Jan.

But Jan had laconically replied that going barefoot in the Indies was very common and that he did not understand what they were so upset about. No, pettiness was not for Jan.

He would be a good companion and was it not much more than a gooey infatuation?

She had to be a little careful here with that Jimmy Flynn.

Yesterday, while dancing, he had told her that he was 'terribly in love' with her. That he thought it terrible that she was getting married to someone else. That he would rather take her to the garrisons somewhere in the interior of Karachi, where they were to arrive the next day.

She had told him that someone was waiting for her and that she had no intention of disembarking in Karachi.

Then he had picked her up and said, "If you will not be my wife, I will throw you overboard," And he had really held her over the railing. "Hail De Valera, to Hell with the Pope", that was Jimmy's famous cry with which he walked down the gangway in Karachi.

"Why are those Irish people sentimental?" she had thought when he said good-bye to her.

He had talked to her two afternoons on the Irish issue, but Lieske thought it was a rather exaggerated story and did not share his enthusiasm.

When he noticed that, he had asked for her opinion. "Funny," she had said. She found a lot that was funny on board. He had come up with the stereotypical question: "Funny peculiar or funny ha ha?" And now he walked onto the quay. She waved a moment and thought Karachi looked like an outpost of hell.

No green, no flowers; behind the city, sandy hills; murderous.

It was already warm on board, now that they were not sailing.

How would Bombay be?

Many passengers left the ship and when the ship took to the sea again it was much emptier.

But Richard was still there.

They got into a violent storm, the portholes closed again and you had to hold on to the inside if you wanted to get on deck.

At one time you only saw air, and the other, only water.

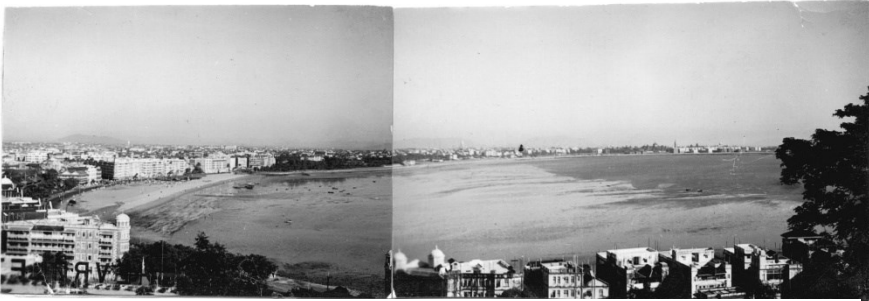
Their group sat on the front deck with the loungers and looked straight ahead across the bow. "There is a strong cyclone, which we have to get through, but here, at the dead point almost at the centre of the boat, we have no problems."

"Shall we play poker?" Richard asked.

"Then you'll have to teach me," Lieske answered, because her knowledge of card games did not extend beyond playing patience with Grandmother. There was hardly anyone in the dining room, but at their table they ate to their heart's content.

And that was also allowed, because tomorrow they would arrive in Bombay.

They played poker until well into the night.



View of the bay of Bombay from the roof terrace

Then the sea became calmer and everyone went to his or her cabin

For the last time orange juice at six o'clock in the morning.

Good - against the nasty taste in her mouth after the beer yesterday evening.

She put on the white dress with red ribbons and for the occasion put the white scarf from Port Said in her hair.

Did she have all the papers in her bag?

She went on deck.

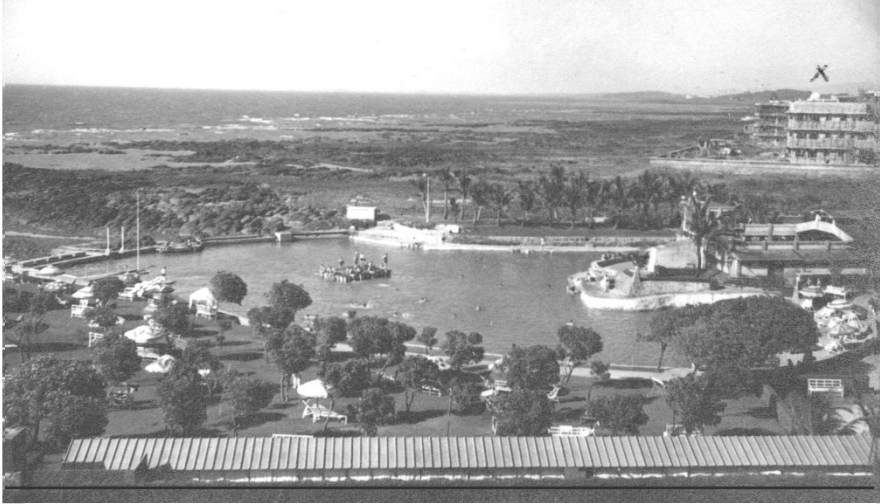
Yes, you could see Bombay in the distance.

How crazy, it was raining! And my raincoat is in one of the suitcases in the hold.

First breakfast, Lieske thought.

But she had no appetite and no peace.

She saw Jan standing on the quay and she waved.



View to the sea from the flat of the Boss

He waved back.

"Why does it take so long?" she thought impatiently.

It had to be over soon now. She knew the ship like her own handbag and she was very curious about what awaited her.

As soon as Jan could, he ran up the gangway.

"Here I am," Lieske said, but Jan smothered her words with a kiss.

"Let's just sit down and discuss everything. I have already given customs a few tips, so I hope they will not be too difficult."

Lieske showed what she had: a passport for all continents, vaccination record, birth certificate, proof of baptism and adoption.

"Are we getting married today?" she asked.

"No, honey, you have to be 14 days in this country to get married. You stay with the boss for that long and now we have to go to the bank first, then I can introduce you to your host and all the colleagues."
