

TESTIMONY OF JOHN (JAN PAVEL) TETZELI
REGARDING HIS STAY IN ESTORIL, IN 1940.

Family group:

JAN TETZELI (n. 22.06.1932)

BEDRICH TETZELI (12.09.1930 – 8.11.2005)

BLANCA KRONACKER DEYM (11.04.1901 - 15.06.1996)

LUDOVIK TETZELI (25.02. 1901 – 02.08.1990)

SOPHIA TETZELI DEYM (09.07.1899 – 09.04.1999)

Stayed at

PENSÃO PANORAMA, ESTORIL: 24.06.1940 – 12.07.1940

Jan Tetzeli lived with his brother, Bedrich, and his parents, Ludovik, a bank director, and Sophia, the daughter of Count Bedrich Deym ze Stritez, in Usti Nad Labem, formerly Aussig, in Czechoslovakia. The couple, who came from prominent families, openly defended the independence of Czechoslovakia after the First World War and opposed the attempts to Germanize the Sudeten region.

In 1938, shortly before the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Germany, and in reaction to the extremely hostile environment to Czech patriotism felt throughout the city, the family moved to Antwerp, Belgium, where Ludovik was invited by Baron Paul Kronacker, husband of Blanca, sister of Sophie, to serve as treasurer of the *Société pour l'Exportation du Sucre*. In Belgium, the children attended school, where they learned Flemish and French.



Sophia, Jan and Bedrich Tetzeli in 1939

On May 10, 1940, upon the German invasion, the Tetzeli family fled Antwerp. Ludovik had prepared himself, and had earlier visited a hotel on the Franco-Belgian border, where the family stayed for a week. With the Belgian defeat looming, the family headed south in two cars, accompanied by Blanca Kronacker and Wladislaw Radziwill, a family friend and representative of the Polish Red Cross. Throughout the journey they used detailed military maps given to them by Paul Kronacker, a veteran of the First World War. They were thus able to travel on secondary roads and arrive in Bordeaux in late May 1940. Given the chaos installed in the city, the family rented a small cottage next to the Garonne river – which they called the *Château Bleu*, and where Jan Tetzeli recalls having seen, for the first time, bamboo.

On June 20, Ludovik obtained entry visas into Portugal signed by the Portuguese consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes. They departed immediately, stopping in Madrid, where they met with another sister of Sophia, and in Mérida, where they visited the Roman theatre.

Jan Tetzeli remembers his shock at the destruction left from the Spanish Civil War, which had ended the previous year. Spanish bread was dark, and there was little food available – the family had been cautious and brought food with them, including a huge ham leg. The Tetzelis entered Portugal through the Elvas border post.

‘We entered a different world from the one we had been living in – the stress, the tension were gone.’

From his passage through Estoril, Jan Tetzeli remembers mostly feelings and emotions – the relief, the absence of fear. According to him, Blanca, who had an international contact network, suggested that they go to Estoril. On June 24, 1940 the family checked in at the *Pensão Panorama*, located on Rua de Olivença. Jan Tetzeli remembers the guesthouse’s building 'sitting on the top of a hill, with a great view ', and its staff, with whom he spoke in French.

The family’s stay in Estoril was short. Of the eighteen days he spent in Estoril as a refugee, he remembers the beach outings down the street, where he swam and played, possibly with other children; and a nearby garden, possibly the Casino garden. The bread was tasty, as well as seafood 'much appreciated by all of us'. For him, Estoril was beautiful, and the people were pleasant.



Pensão Panorama, José Santos Fernandes Coll.,/AHMC

Meanwhile, his parents, convinced that Hitler would invade the Iberian Peninsula, wanted to cross the ocean. Ludovik's contacts in the sugar industry in Cuba were essential in obtaining visas for that country. On July 12, the family departed from Estoril and headed to Vigo, where they boarded the *Marqués de Comillas*, reaching Havana in August 1940. On the boat, they met other Czechs on the run. With them, Ludovik founded the Czech Union of Cuba, to inform the public about the Nazi occupation of the territory.

In the early 1960s, Jan Tetzeli fled the Cuban revolution with his wife and two children, settling in Miami. In the process, the family left behind documents and photographs related to their European life, including the passage through Estoril. The hotel lodging bulletins held at the Cascais Historical Archive are thus particularly appreciated by the family.

Ludovik and Sophia would eventually divorce. Ludovik settled in Mexico, where he remarried, having visited Czechoslovakia still under the communist regime. Sophia never wanted to return to Czechoslovakia, having profoundly felt the loss of her country to the communist regime, and wanting to honor the memory of the democratic regime which she had known and fervently supported.

Jan, now John, Tetzeli returned to his home country, visiting his relatives who had stayed behind, after the communist regime was overthrown. The Daym family country estate had been confiscated by the regime to serve as an orphanage, and served instead as a residence for the children of dissidents. The heir to estate, one of Jan's cousins residing in Argentina, succeeded, after a lawsuit, in regaining ownership of the Deym family estate.



John Tetzeli, his wife Helena, and Andrew, one of their children

Jan Tetzeli is grateful for the efforts of the Exiles Memorial Centre in locating him and securing the testimonial of his exodus.

' My life has had many blessings – and it is my duty to tell my story so that history does not repeat itself. It's wonderful to be able to leave my memories somewhere for my children, and for my grandchildren.'