



The earliest holiday of my life which I can now remember had a very dramatic ending and that is the reason why I can still recall it. I was 8 years old in 1924. It must have been the first real holiday for my parents after the hard times of World War I and the hyper-inflation which had struck Germany in the early 1920s. My parents took me to a small hotel in the forests of Thuringia, not more than a few hours train ride from Berlin. By then, in 1924, my father had lost all his savings twice, once through the worthless War Loans in 1918 and secondly through the inflation, so our holiday must have been a simple and cheap one.

I often heard from my mother that during the days of inflation, how she was waiting at the entrance to the house where my father was visiting a patient who had paid him in cash. She took immediately the bundle of banknotes—first thousands of Marks, later millions and in the end billions—and bought the essential provisions for the next day's meals, before the money ceased to be worth the paper on which it had been printed. The inflation ended in November 1923 and hence I am certain that our holiday was in the summer of 1924, when I was 8 years old.

It was a happy holiday and in the forest we discovered a small brook. My father decided that it would be fun for me, and also instructive, if we built a dam across the brook from the stones lying around. This we completed but later I had some pains in my groin which my father took very seriously. The next morning he announced that he had been called to an urgent consultation in Berlin and that we would return at once. At the Berlin railway station I became suspicious, as the son of one my father's colleagues was waiting for us with an ambulance on the platform. Within the hour I was in the private hospital of my father's colleague, the surgeon Professor Unger, anaesthetised and operated for an acute appendicitis. All went well, and soon I was back at school.

By the next year 1925, family finances must have been much improved and we spent the Easter Holidays from 8-20 April at the then large and famous Hotel Wittebrugh near Scheveningen in Holland. My parents took me to the great museums, the Mauritshuis, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, to Leiden and to Harlem. Then in the summer we went to Rigi-Klösterli in Switzerland.

I still have my own diary of the four weeks we enjoyed there, the walks, the train trips on the rack-and-pinion railways and the steamer excursions—a day by day record with many postcards stuck in. Re-reading it 70 years later, I enjoyed these reminiscences, but I doubt if they would mean anything to the reader.

