

The Memoirs of the Palestinian Maskobi Doctor

George "Yuri" Rodenko, M.D.

Foreword by Olla Rodenko

Editor's Note:

Using a 1962 pharmaceutical promotional agenda, Dr. George Rodenko (1897–1974) began recording his memoirs in very neat handwriting, detailing his early life's journey until just before the Nakba. These excerpts, edited slightly for clarity, focus on his years studying in Lebanon and his early life in Palestine. A number of extended passages on hunting – Dr. Rodenko's deep passion and an arena in which he sought both leisure and expertise and described in remarkable detail – have been excluded here, but will be published by *JQ* in the future, in print or online. Excerpted, edited, and annotated by Carol Khoury.

My father Dr. George Rodenko was known to many Palestinians by his moniker, Dr. al-Maskobi (from his hometown, Moscow). He began his medical career in Gaza, but became most renowned for his work at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) hospital in Jaffa where, as a general practitioner – like most physicians at the time – he became particularly well skilled at treating a wide variety of cases. He was a very amicable person, always joking with his patients and dispensing advice. His reputation spread throughout Palestine. My mother Frida Bahu, a staff nurse from Jerusalem, was my father's constant companion in the clinic. They loved each other dearly, and we were a happy family of four girls and one boy.

In 1948, the year of the Nakba, the situation became very difficult. My aunt Milia lived in Ramallah so it was decided that the family would travel there. With a few suitcases, our dogs, our maid, and the driver, we went to Ramallah hoping to return to Jaffa within a few weeks. After the withdrawal of the Arab armies and with more refugees coming to Ramallah it became hopeless to go back to Jaffa. Dr. Rodenko became a refugee for the second time. Under fire, our maid and the driver went to Jaffa and retrieved a glass cupboard, and the birds. Those were the only things that were saved from our home. We were told the occupying Jews later threw the furniture, including a piano, from the second floor to the garden.

With our return to Jaffa impossible, we settled in Ramallah; life had to be resumed and Dr. Rodenko/al-Maskobi soon began working again. His patients – who were now also refugees from Jaffa, Lydd, Ramleh and other places – came looking for their doctor. We, the children, were enrolled in the Friends School.

In 1957 when two of his daughters, my sisters Tatyana and Zenayda, were studying

in Beirut, a letter arrived to the university [the American University of Beirut] from my father's brother Nikolai Rodenko inquiring about his brother Dr. George Rodenko. The two brothers had been separated from each other since 1918. Nikolai was living at the time in Germany after having left the Soviet Union with his family in 1941. The university replied that Dr. George Rodenko had graduated in 1927 and that his daughter Tatyana was currently studying medicine there. After thirty-nine years apart the two brothers had found each other: Nikolai and his wife traveled to Ramallah where they lived with us until his death. He was buried in the Russian church at Gethsemane in Jerusalem.

In September 1974 my father, who was only 76 years and in good health, decided to have some medical tests after passing blood in his urine. He went walking to the hospital. During the tests the surgeon doctor carelessly ruptured his colon. They operated on him to repair the damage but he then suffered a heart attack. Several days later, on 6 October 1974, my father died: a sad ending for a great doctor. All of Ramallah mourned. A lady said: Ramallah is not the same without Dr. Rodenko's hat (which he always wore for his daily trips to the local club).

Dr. Rodenko/al-Maskobi was buried next to his brother Nikolai in the Russian church at Gethsemane in Jerusalem. He had loved this church. Whenever we visited it with him he would sit there looking at al-Aqsa Mosque and admiring the view of Jerusalem.

At the time of his sickness and death, he had been writing his memoirs and sadly had not written of events beyond 1944.

The Russian family from Jaffa is now scattered all over the world, just like other Palestinian families. His son Peter is in Dallas, Texas, where his son is also a famous Dr. George Rodenko. Tatyana, a doctor, is with her family in Chicago. Some grandchildren are in Los Angeles, one is in Germany, and another in Malta. Two of us, Zenayda and myself, are in Amman with our families.

A Ukraine Childhood

I was born on 30 April 1897. They named me Yuri – George. I was the fourth and last son in the family. Our family was living in the small town of Klintzi in Ukraine,¹ surrounded by pine trees and woods, with a small river flowing across it and a medium-sized lake at the northern border. My childhood games were flying kites, breeding pigeons and catching singing birds such as goldfinch, bullfinch, and siskin which gave us a wonderful concert every morning. Every spring, on 7 April, I and everybody else in Russia used to open the doors of the cages and let the birds free because it was their mating



George Rodenko's photo taken for the graduation from the AUB, Beirut, June 1927. Family album.

time and it was considered a big sin not to allow birds to build their own nests. In winter we played with snowballs and divided ourselves into two groups, building fortifications from snow and attacking each other. I would enjoy riding on sledges with the other boys and careening very fast downhill. At home I often sat in a warm room near the fire looking through the window at bullfinches as they sat on the trees eating their seeds.

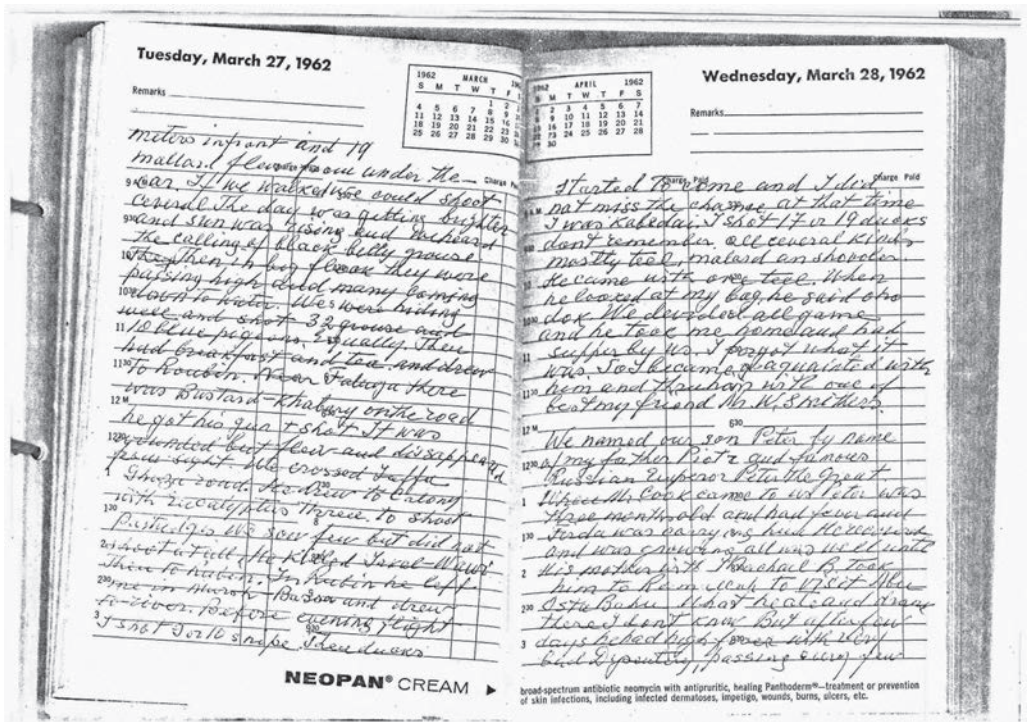
Now I want to write about my family: My father finished the military medical academy² in St. Petersburg and came to Klintzi to practice. He was a doctor in charge of factories, hospitals and three schools. His private practice was very busy. His only vacations were spent hunting, fishing, and collecting mushrooms and wild flowers. He was fond of reading and drinking lots of very strong tea. My mother had little education, but was a very clever woman. She was the best housekeeper, very energetic, strict, the best in cooking. She was fond of playing cards and going to the forest to collect mushrooms and swimming in the lake in summer.

My oldest brother, Alexander, finished gymnasium [high school] in Chernigov town and entered the university engineering department in St. Petersburg. He was clever, the best in mathematics, but he did not study well. He spent his time between the opera and the races. He married while at university. His wife was Polish and Alexander was spending so much money that he had to write home saying he's short of it. My mother used to run to the post office to send him money by telegram. It took Alexander about ten years to receive his diploma. He became an engineer in an arms factory, and then worked as a high school teacher. Later Alexander was shot by the government forces (civil war).

My second brother Nikolai also finished gymnasium in Chernigov and entered the University of St. Petersburg to study natural history. He too was lazy and used to run after the ladies a lot. He also married while he was a student, had one daughter and divorced his wife, married again and had a daughter and a son. His son was also shot by the government forces (civil war). During Nikolai's teaching career, he ran away from Russia with the Germans to Bavaria. Later, I was able to invite him to Jordan [Ramallah, West Bank] after he found my address through the American University in Beirut.

My third brother Valerian was very religious. He finished middle school in the town of Novozibkob and entered the theological seminary. After he finished there he entered the agricultural university³ in Kiev. He became a priest for several years, married and had a daughter and a son, but the son was killed at the front during the war. Then Valerian became a teacher and, while I know he was alive during the war, I don't know what happened later.

We were living well and happily. Then in 1914 World War I started. In 1917, when the first revolution [Bolshevik] started, all of us in our family were in favor of it. My brother Valerian was chosen to be the leader commissar of the workers. It was spring and my father, Kola, and I went to Feshenko's farm with Mikaila, of course to shoot male ducks and woodcocks. Two days after returning from shooting my father became ill. He had a fever which worsened every day. Two doctors came and diagnosed typhoid fever. Of course there was no treatment for it at that time. After two weeks he became delirious and died. He was 64 years old. His funeral was two days later and practically everyone



A page from the pharmaceutical promotional agenda on which Dr. Rodenko wrote his memoirs in his neat handwriting.

from Klintzi and thousands others from the villages around Klintzi came to attend. He was buried under pine trees. Mama cried very much and we all helped drop the coffin into his grave. Very few people had such a father. People called him *bezserbrenik*, “the father of the poor,” meaning the man who does not care about money.

I passed to the eighth year of gymnasium which was the final year. The second revolution occurred and the communists took over the government. I took my diploma from gymnasium and applied to the medical school of the University of Kiev.⁴ By this time the Germans had been beaten on the western front and a peace treaty was signed. The Germans began to evacuate the Ukraine and I thought if I stayed in Klintzi after the Germans left, I would be unable to go to Kiev to the university, so it would be better for me to leave with them.

On the Road⁵

I left Klintzi with the German army, and walked thirty kilometers to the town of Novozybkov. There I took the train and rode in the baggage wagon, reaching Kiev after fifteen days. Because the communist army was approaching Kiev, I left to Odessa to enter the white army. Soon I joined the cavalry division in Rostov. We came to the town of Kerch in Crimea and disembarked there to get ready to fight again. We later passed

by the Bosphorus near Constantinople and reached Gallipoli in the Dardanelles. There I saw a big Russian ship in the harbor loaded with people and getting ready to leave for Brazil. I decided to join them. By the time we got to the Aegean Sea the motors stopped and for several days we were helpless. We ran out of food and fresh water. Fortunately a French ship was passing by and we made all kinds of signals to attract the attention of its captain. The ship came to us and pulled us to Sicily.

After two days, a special ship from France came to pull us to Corsica to the town of Ajaccio, the birthplace of Napoleon. The French government told us that if we want to stay in Corsica we must sign a contract for one year with our employer or else we will be taken to Constantinople. I thought one year was too long, so I decided to leave and try my luck in Constantinople. One day, as I was walking on Taksim Street, I met the major or the officer who had been commanding our squadron, Mr. Nikolai Dimitrovich Kouzenstor. He told me about the American Russian Committee that was sending Russian students to continue their education at the American University in Beirut. He said he wanted me to go and that he would help me. I immediately ran to the French consulate and got the visa. Then I left with him to the port where the French ship was getting ready to leave in a few minutes! We were twelve Russians along with supposedly French soldiers who were really Algerian and Senegalese blacks. We had good military food and a bottle of wine each daily. We Russians of course got acquainted with each other, and in two days we reached Beirut.

A Russian at the AUB Medical School

We said goodbye to the French officers and soldiers on the ship and went off by tram to AUB. There we were met by Professor Hall, the principal of the preparatory school and a very nice old man. We had a big dormitory for lodging and took our food in the dining room with small boys from the junior departments. To begin with, it was good: we did not work, and I and a few others got secondhand clothes and monthly pocket money. We also began to learn English. Our teachers were Professor Hall, Mr. [Bayard] Dodge and one young American teacher whose name I forgot. My Latin and French helped me pick up this new language. Then summer vacation came and the university closed, so they took us to school in Aley where we continued learning English throughout the summer.

In October we returned to AUB and were asked what we wanted to study. I and a student named Krasnyanski said we wanted to study medicine. Another student from my group entered freshman studies, and the rest went into commerce. So I started my first year at medical school and found life changed. Not only was there no more pocket money but on top of that we had to work as waiters in the dining room for two hours and every Saturday afternoon to cover our scholarship.

My English was really too weak to study medicine. I could not understand a single word, but what was more difficult for me was to answer the questions. I was looking in the dictionary all the time to find out the meaning of the words, and then I would try to

remember them in order to understand the subject. I was studying until midnight but my lessons were still not ready, so I would wake up at four in the morning to study again. Later on in the morning I had to go to the dining room to serve the students their food, then after that I would go to my classes.

During the first quarter of the year all my grades were unsatisfactory except histology. My teachers knew that I was working very hard, but my English was poor, so in the faculty meeting they decided to give me the chance to study until the midyear. My friend Krasianski was kicked out of school and so he went to France. In the midyear exams I passed all my subjects except anatomy, and at the end of the year I passed all subjects. My first grade in organic chemistry was 5/100 and the last quiz was 45/100.

I passed to the second year of medical school and then summer vacation came again. A Russian-American engineer, Kisilocvi, gave me a job of carrying iron to the fourth floor of a building on my shoulders in return for twenty-five Syrian piasters. In summer Beirut was like an oven and in that heat I worked nine hours a day for two months. Then AUB's dining room opened and they asked me to come and serve there. At that time I was a waiter for the teachers and in return had good food. Never mind about money! The vacation passed, students came back, and second year of medicine began.

Second year passed quickly and my English became a little better although I was still weak. But I passed all subjects with satisfactory grades. Summer came and the doctors and professors were leaving to the mountains. Dr. Parr, our bacteriology teacher, asked me to guard his house. That year the AUB dining room was to open all year round so I worked there as a waiter having my meals, and spent the nights at Dr. Parr's house. When summer passed and Dr. Parr came back, he gave me three gold Turkish pounds. I finally became a rich man! I bought a secondhand pair of shoes and a pair of underwear. Then I started third year of medical school.

Third year was not that difficult for me and even more interesting. We began to study real medicine by going to the hospital and outside clinics by sections. Those who had average grades above 75 at the end of the year passed to the fourth year without an oral examination. I was one of those but then our medical school extended the program from four to five years just as I became a senior! We all fought against it and partially won. They gave us a chance to spend our final fifth year at any hospital we liked.

During the summer vacation I worked in the dining room, had my food there, and was living in a room at the AUB opposite its main gate. In meantime, I was attending out-patient clinics and other operations at the hospital. I learned how to give intravenous injections and vaginal examinations, and gained very good experience and saw many interesting cases. Students came back after the summer vacation and we began our fourth year as seniors, each one of us with a junior medical student from third year to lead. We were called often during the night for labor cases at the hospital and we were allowed to handle deliveries. Fourth year was much easier and more interesting.

Dr. George Noucko [that is, Dr. Nehme' Nucho]⁶ was lecturing to us about tuberculosis (TB). I passed to the fifth year with good marks, and at the end of the year Dr. Noucko asked me to spend the summer at the TB sanatorium⁷ in Shebaniya. I had many cases

during that time. The treatment for TB was calcium injections thus inducing pneumothorax by injections of air in the pleural cavity to collapse the affected lung. I learnt quickly how to do it but patients were dying like flies – from the flu. As I was making my rounds in the evenings to see the patients, they used to ask me when will they be cured. With all their hopes for recovery I would come the next morning and find their beds empty. It was astonishing how TB patients had hoped for recovery until the last moment.

There were many street dogs in Shebaniya, barking all night. They did not let us, or the patients, sleep. To solve the problem I gave them small doses of strychnine to get rid of at least some of them. At the end of the summer I was given seven gold Turkish pounds. I was glad: I went ahead and bought shoes and underwear, and was able to have a cup of tea occasionally in a restaurant.

In my fifth year I spent the first three months working at AUB hospital, then I was sent to Tripoli to an American hospital⁸ where Dr. Boyes was head doctor. The hospital was in al-Mina, about two kilometers from Tripoli. I would visit Tripoli very often by a tram run by mules for three Turkish coins. My practice there was very good and interesting since Dr. Boyes gave me cases that required operations for delivery. At the end of my three-month term, I was given three gold pounds and I bought two pairs of underwear.

The last months at AUB passed quickly, the fifth year ended and graduation day was set for 22 June 1927. I did not have a new suit to wear so I borrowed five gold pounds from a nurse to make a new black suit and to take two kinds of photographs. On our graduation day we had lunch in West Hall with all of the new graduates; many old AUB alumni also came. Then at four in the afternoon commencement began. We medical students were last and as my last name starts with an R there were only four or five graduates after me. Finally I got on the platform but without many people clapping for me since I had no relatives and very few acquaintances. President Dodge gave me my diploma, shook my hand and said, “Congratulations, Dr. Rodenko!”

First Appointment in Tripoli

We had to sit for a French examination to be able to practice in Lebanon and Syria. It was very easy for me, and I got my license and left two days later to Tripoli. My salary was twelve gold Turkish pounds, which was very little for a doctor. Food was bad, but I had a very good practice. We had a nurse called Anisa who was trained in AUB in bacteriology. She taught me many things and showed me interesting slides – TB, gonococcus, malaria strains, amoeba plate tests and moving amoeba.

We had many cases of malaria, including malignant cases. At that time a new Bayer preparation came out for malaria, plasmoquine tablets which were very effective for this kind of malaria. We started treating patients with these tablets and they were cured. We had three cases of severe, complicated malaria where the patients died. Many cases of liver abscess were cured following operations by Dr. Boyes, and pelvic cases due to gonorrhoea were treated and in a few days the patient would be cured. I had a very good experience

indeed, including tonsillectomies, prostate operations, iridectomies, and labor cases.

In one very interesting case a few school boys went for a picnic from Tripoli to Bsharre. One of them had a revolver and they started to play with it until it fired accidentally. The bullet went into the abdomen of a student. He was brought to our hospital in a bad condition. First we took X-rays to locate the bullet, then he was taken to the operating room where Dr. Boyes opened his abdomen. We saw fragments of a tapeworm moving in his peritoneal cavity and sixteen holes in his intestines perforated by the bullet. We stitched the holes and washed the cavity with saline, inserted a drainage tube and thought the patient would die from peritonitis. Man proposes but God disposes. He did not get peritonitis, or suppuration. We removed the tube after a week and he was discharged in ten days. There was no penicillin or any other kind of antibiotics at that time except to trust in God and do your best.

HAUT COMMISSARIAT
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AUPRÈS DES ÉTATS
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ET DU DJERBL, DRUZE
INSPECTION GÉNÉRALE
DES
SERVICES DE SANTÉ

PERMIS D'EXERCICE DE MÉDECINE

VU le diplôme No. 229. décerné par la Faculté de l'École de
Médecine de l'UNIVERSITÉ AMÉRICAINE de BEYROUTH, en date
du.....29 Juin.....1927.....;

VU le résultat favorable des examens passés devant la Commission
déléguée par le Haut-Commissariat de la République Française en SYRIE et
au LIBAN ;

avons accordé à M.....Georgii Petrovich Rodenko.....
le permis d'exercer la Médecine en Syrie et au Liban :

BEYROUTH, le.....29 Juin.....1927



The "Permis d'exercice de médecine" [Permission for Practicing Medicine] issued to Dr. Rodenko on 29 June 1927 by the French Authorities, allowing him to practice medicine in Syrian and Lebanon. Family papers.

Beirut Leads to Gaza and Nablus in Palestine

I was fed up with the hospital food so I sometimes went for lunch at a French restaurant even though my salary was poor, about nine English pounds. After fourteen months at the hospital and saving very little money, I decided to go to Beirut and look for a better job.

At that time Dr. [Robert] Stirling came to Beirut to look for a doctor to work with him in an English hospital in Gaza. Dr. [E. St. John] Ward, the AUB medical school dean at that time, called me to ask if I would like to go to Gaza with Stirling. They would pay me twenty-two and a half English pounds per month with lodging, and every year I would get an extra half pound per month. I agreed and he arranged my visa for Palestine. I left the eighty-five gold pounds I had with me in the AUB treasury.

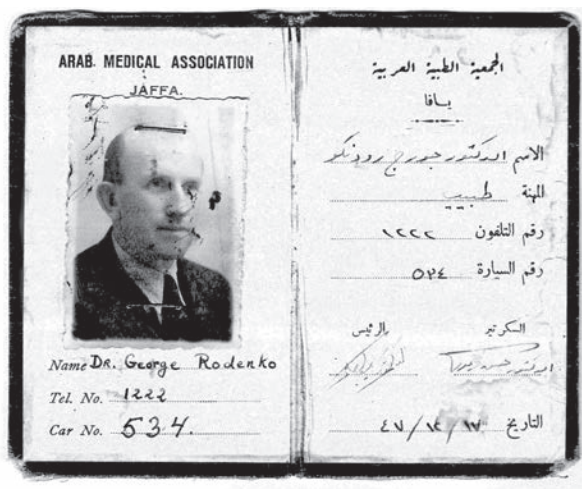
I went to Haifa by taxi. On the border between Lebanon and Palestine the French

customs and the police asked me if I had gold money. I said that I did not, and they stamped my passport. A Nansen passport⁹ for a Russian refugee! We came to Palestine. Soon we arrived to Haifa and the driver took me to the railway station. I bought a second-class ticket to Gaza and was soon on the train to Egypt. I was able to see the country and reached Gaza in the evening. I forgot how I got from the station to the hospital but I remember very well how I entered through the gate to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Hospital Compound.

The first to meet me were the head nurse Emily Dabbika and hospital pharmacist [Hagop] Arsenian. They took me to a small house that belonged to the hospital. There was no doctor in the hospital at that time so I was rather busy. I was eating my meals at a Jewish hotel where the food was Russian Jewish and not too bad. There was a pharmacy in Gaza and I became acquainted with a Russian Jewish dispenser and a private Russian Jewish doctor. Very often in the afternoons, the three of us played a Russian card game called Preferans – I was always winning.

Early in the morning a few days after I arrived I heard a strong knock at the door. When I opened the door, a public health department man showed me a letter from a government doctor named Haddad asking me to go quickly with forceps to help him deliver a woman at her house. Two doctors, Haddad and Beckman, had spent all night trying to deliver the baby but could not do so. I brought forceps from the hospital and took off to her house. There I found about fifty people and doctors sitting near the woman who was lying in a flood. I asked what the matter was and they said that it is just a difficult case. I examined the woman and found it was an arm presentation. I examined the baby's heart but could not hear it. I then asked for soap and water, washed my hands, put one hand inside to push the baby's arm back, grabbed one of the baby's legs and pulled it out, then the other leg and delivered the baby in a few minutes. The people there clapped their hands although the baby of course was dead. He had died a long time ago but the mother was fine. Both doctors were embarrassed.

My name in Gaza became well known. While I was there a letter came to me from Dr. Ward asking me to return to AUB to be an assistant to Dr. Parr in bacteriology. I refused and Dr. Ward has been very cross with me since then. Unfortunately after two months when Dr. Stirling returned from his vacation I was asked to transfer to the CMS hospital in Nablus. I agreed and met Dr. [Louisa] Pigeon, a lady doctor, who was in charge of the hospital. We did not have many cases and none of special interest.



Dr. Rodenko's membership card at the Arab Medical Association in Jaffa, issued on 17 December 1947. Family papers.

Jaffa and Medical Renown

Two months later the CMS asked me to go to Jaffa where Dr. Khalil was in charge of the hospital. The matron was Miss Morris and there were two staff nurses: Zuhra and Frida, my future wife. Miss Morris was in love with Frida but she was also a most mischievous person. She used to smile to people, but deep inside she was a bad person. She started to like me but I became friendly with Frida. Then I was asked to go to Salt where I spent two months, and then came back to Jaffa.

Most of the missionaries were full of mischief, as were ours in Jaffa. Dr. Khalil resigned and entered the [Trans-] Jordanian Frontier Force Service. I remained there alone with a few good people like Miss Stella Garaeb, Miss McConey, Mr. Sarafin our dispenser, and of course my future wife, head nurse Frida Bahu. I was alone in the hospital for several months and had much work to do. We had a large outpatient clinic and sometimes there would be almost 100 patients waiting. Very often I would finish clinic work around four in the afternoon and then go to the hospital to make my rounds.

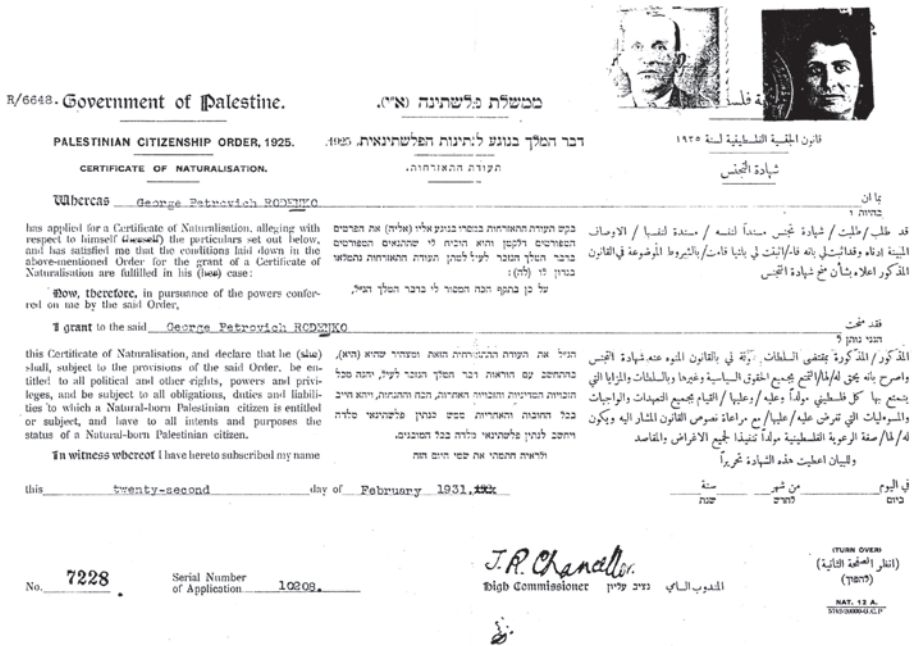
There were many anemic patients, most of whom came from orange grove areas. They had neither malaria nor nephritis and could not all be pernicious anemia cases. I remembered that when I was working in Tripoli an Egyptian fifth-year student from AUB had come as an intern to our hospital. He was writing his thesis about *Ancylostoma*, hookworm. Recalling his thesis, I asked myself if all of these anemic cases could be *Ancylostoma*? I told the nurse to get me a stool specimen from a patient to examine with a microscope which we had available. I made a slide, examined it, and at once found ova that were different from ascaris and tape worm. Inside some of them were moving larvae. I looked it up in a bacteriology book and identified the ova as those of hookworm, *Ancylostoma duodenalis*. The treatment was carbon tetrachloride but the pharmacies and even PhD pharmacists did not have it. There was a CMS hospital in Cairo, so we wrote asking them for carbon tetrachloride since they had many cases of *Ancylostoma*. We received the drug after a few weeks. The dose was 4cc at bedtime, followed the next morning by magnesium sulphate purge to be repeated again after a week. The patient was then discharged to come back after a month. When they came back they were different people, strong, color in their face, and they used to kiss my hand. News about curing them spread in the villages and many new cases started coming. The hospital was full of them and my name became well known for being the first doctor to diagnose *Ankylostoma* in Palestine. The disease was carried to Palestine by Egyptian laborers who came with the English during the First World War.



George Rodenko with his wife Frida Bahu, date and place unknown. Family album.

Frida and Childbirth

During this time I had my eyes on Frida and we became friendly. I wanted to get married, so I asked Frida and she agreed. But as the custom goes with all Arabs, she told me to go to Jerusalem and ask her brother Micha'il . So one day I went to Jerusalem and found Micha'il near his office. I told him that I wanted to marry Frida and he said, "Mabrook." After several weeks we were married at Mar Elias church near Jerusalem. There were two priests, a Russian, Otety Tekhon, and an Arab, Khalil. The service was long and tiring but after it was over we went to Jericho for two days for our honeymoon.



The Certificate of Naturalisation, issued on 22 February 1931 by the Government of Palestine, granted to George Rodenko declaring him "entitled to all political and other rights, powers and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, duties and liabilities to which a Natural-born Palestinian citizen is entitled or subject, and have to all intents and purposes the status of a Natural-born Palestinian citizen." Family papers.

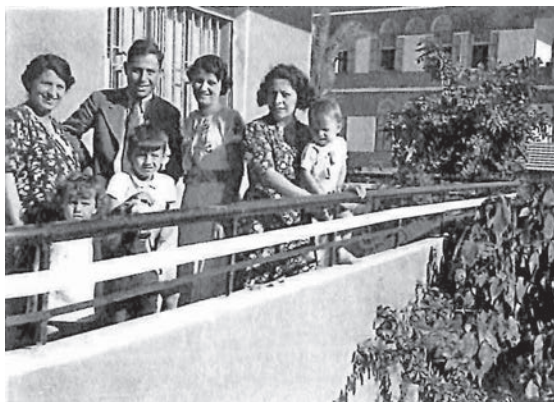
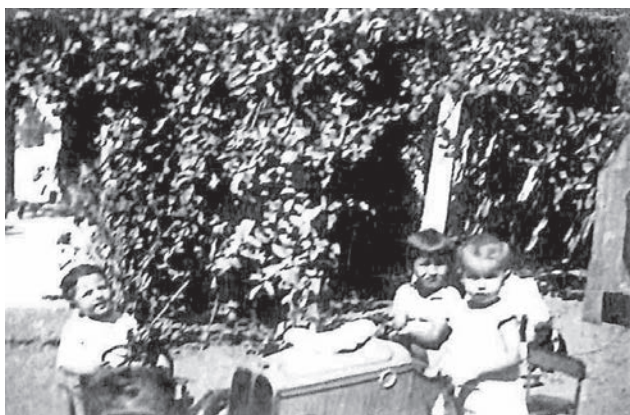
Back in Jaffa we lived in a small house with two small rooms, a small dining room and kitchen, in the hospital compound. The furniture bought from Tel Aviv was simple but durable, since we are still using it until now. Frida stopped working at the hospital and spent her time cooking and taking care of the house. An old woman helped us.

In the afternoons I used to go to a coffee house called Abu Shakush. I played pinnace and rummy with Dr. Burdkush and Mr. Saba who was a pharmacist. In the evenings we went to play cards at Mrs. Halliway's, our neighbor. Then Frida became pregnant. She liked halawah very much and every morning ate some. Her due date came and the baby seemed big. I made a mistake by not taking her to the hospital in Tel Aviv. People

advised us to get a German midwife from the German colony. When her labor started, the midwife came, a middle-aged woman and very energetic, but she could not deliver Frida. She called me in the morning and after examining her I found out that there was no heartbeat. The baby was dead so I took Frida to our hospital where Dr. Carnee, a French doctor, came and delivered a dead, big and nice-looking baby boy. We lost our first son; he was buried near the hospital.

Private Practice in Ajami, Jaffa

I was working hard but I was paid very little and outside practice was forbidden. Our hospital had an outpatient clinic in Lydda which was opened twice a week. I and another English doctor each went once weekly. Patients used to pay five piasters for a visit and medicine, which was the same as what they paid at any hospital. I went to the clinic early to finish by noon. The English doctor was jealous of me and he did not like the fact that all patients wanted to be seen by me. Miss Morris was jealous too. So Frida and I decided to resign. If I had had a written contract with the hospital – which I did not have



From the family album. Place and date unknown.

– I would not have been able to work in the same town for two years after resigning. We found a house in the Ajami neighborhood that belonged to the Majdalanis, so we told the people at the hospital goodbye and we moved. Our new home was full of scorpions and far from the main street. But soon the patients discovered it and during the first month I made two and a half times more money than I had made at the hospital. We started to buy furniture for the house and we found a good servant.

Frida became pregnant again and one day, nine months later, Frida had light pain early in the morning but she did not tell me. That morning I went shooting and when I came back her pains were stronger so I immediately took her to Tel Aviv to Dr. Poukhovski's hospital. Early the next morning, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi arrived – my son Bannoor, Peter. Frida had a very simple normal delivery and the baby was healthy. We took him home after a few days and Frida nursed him. We named our son after my father, Piotr and the famous Russian emperor Peter the Great. I was working well and we were making much money. Our friend Abu Khalil came to us daily, played with Peter, carried him and sang to him, “*Idi, Idi, Salam idi, Salam idak al-baba...*”

It was time for Frida to have another baby. This time her labor was not normal so we took her to the French hospital in the evening and Dr. Bouraux delivered her. We had a nice-looking blond baby girl, a future doctor. We named her Tatyana, a good Russian name in many ways, popular in Russian literature and in many romances.

[In 1934–1935] trouble erupted in Palestine. The Jews were coming in the thousands. We had saved enough money and decided to build a house, so we bought a piece of land on the main street and started to build. It was 1935 and our engineer was Butros Shamiya from Jerusalem. It was a two-story house with a garage, a clinic on top, a garden in the front and a backyard. Arabs started to strike against the English government, so our house construction stopped for several months. While the house was being built, Frida was there with the workers every day, pregnant with a big abdomen, often telling them to change this and that.

I was gone to see a patient in our car with Miss Morris and the driver Hassan when that afternoon Frida had labor pains. Her cousin, *bint khalitha*, Emily Dabbika, delivered her. Again we had a girl and named her Zena “Zenayda.” She was fifteen days old when we moved to our newly finished house after the strikes were over.

Our new house was beautiful and very strong, with double walls, a cement roof, asphalt, tiles, handsome entrance, and big verandas in the front and back. The front garden was full of roses, carnations, and beautiful trees. The backyard had roses, lemon and *kashta* [graviola or soursop] trees, a cage for the poultry and pigeons, an electric pump for the water, and a beautiful bathroom with green tile and walls. We had a gas heater which gave us hot water in just a few moments. The garage and the clinic had white walls and tiles and many other features – in short the house was beautiful and one of the best in Jaffa. I had a new Buick car which I bought from Emile Katarji. It was wonderful and I had a nice Armenian driver called Simon Gagarian.

One woman had amenorrhea for two years. I treated her and she started to have a normal menses, and became pregnant. They called me for her labor and she delivered a

baby boy. The neighbors could not believe that the woman had actually gotten pregnant and had a baby, and when they saw the child they said, “Muscofi found him in his bag (*shanta*)!” We had two other good friends, Emile Katorji and Saba Farah. Neither had been able to have children for fifteen years. There was not a single sperm in their seminal fluid. So I started treating both men, and to my surprise their wives both became pregnant. Emile’s wife had twin boys but one died, while Saba’s wife had a girl and a boy. Very good luck, *min Allah*, from God.

My work was very good. I had many patients in the morning, had two hours of sleep after lunch, and then saw more patients in the afternoon. We saved money and bought a piece of land near our house because we did not want people to build on it and disturb us. Then we had another child, a girl and we named her Zoya. When Um Bannour got pregnant again, we had our fifth child, a baby girl who we named Olla (Olga).

Endnotes

- 1 Klintsy, as it is commonly spelled, is now in Russia.
- 2 The S. M. Kirov Military Medical Academy.
- 3 The National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine.
- 4 The Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.
- 5 The following paragraphs, which have been condensed from a longer account in the memoir, omit many details but retain all of the major routes of his journey. Although his account does not provide dates, it does give durations. Thus one can conclude that the author arrived in Beirut in 1921, three years after leaving his hometown.
- 6 “Professor Emeritus Nehme’ Nucho is most well-known for his tireless and pioneering work in the diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis. He graduated with an MD in 1901 from what was then the Syrian Protestant College and returned in 1904 to join the medical faculty. In 1908, Nucho was approached by Dr. Mary Pearson Eddy to help at the newly established Hamlin Memorial Sanitorium, which was primarily used

to care for tuberculosis patients. At that time, tuberculosis was essentially incurable. Nucho introduced many advances in dealing with this dreaded disease, including surgical treatment of advanced cases as well as new methods for early diagnosis before it appeared on chest x-rays,” in *Main Gate*, American University of Beirut Quarterly Magazine, 5, no. 4 (Summer 2007), online at staff.aub.edu.lb/~webmgate/summer2007/profile.htm (accessed 17 April 2018).

- 7 In the early 1900s, the Presbyterian missionary Mary Pierson Eddy began taking care of tuberculosis patients in the region. She started Hamlin Sanatorium for tuberculosis which gradually became known as The Hospital for Chest Diseases. Online at hamlinhome.org/ (accessed 17 April 2018).
- 8 Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Tripoli.
- 9 Nansen passports, advocated by the polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen in the aftermath of World War I, were internationally recognized refugee travel documents used from 1922 to 1938. They were first issued by the League of Nations to stateless refugees.