

On A Business Trip In Thailand



This is a picture of me, Alexander Singer. The photograph was taken in 1954, during my business trip to Bangkok, Thailand.

In 1948 I was myself named the administrator of three companies that exported costume jewelry. They were small companies, which I had to merge.

There were still German employees there too, who hadn't been deported [28]. All told about 15 employees. There I needed English.

I began learning English during the years 1939 to 1942. I was staying with one friend in Budapest. He had these scratched-up records, with about 30 lessons. It was a very good system.

There was a book with it as well. There I gained the basics of English. From small companies under national administration, a large export firm was founded, Skloexport.

The main customer was American. Skloexport was later renamed to Jablonex. It was in charge of exporting costume jewelry. In 1953 I was named the best worker in the entire sector of the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

The award was given by the ministry itself. I was mainly in charge of the American market and Canada.

In Canada we had mainly Catholic customers. They bought devotional goods such as rosaries and various crosses.

There I made use of my knowledge of French. At that time I went to Canada on business. But my first business trip was to the Far East. They sent me there as an exemplary employee.

First they sent me to an international exhibition, because Czechoslovakia had an exhibit there. I spent a half year in Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Burma.

I organized the market there, and hired a Chinese representative. It was terribly hard on me. I wasn't used to the climate.

For example, in Indonesia I went out, in terrible heat, and suddenly such a storm came that I was standing in the street with water up to my waist.

The storm lasted for only ten minutes. After a half hour the water was gone from the streets, and the sun was shining. One other thing captivated me. In Indonesia there were a lot of poor people.

By the presidential palace, when they were throwing out garbage, there were rats feeding. On the main street I saw a woman sitting in the dust with a half year old naked child.

But there wasn't a child there that wasn't wearing a bit of gold. That had to be, even if there wasn't anything to eat.

There's this superstition there, that gold brings luck. They didn't even believe in money. They had these gold belts, thin plates, and they normally paid with these gold fragments.

There was high inflation there.

The more clever travelers put themselves up in hotels for diplomats. On my first trip there, I was supposed to stay at the Hotel Des Indes, but when I arrived, it was already full.

It was mainly for diplomats from Iraq and India. I didn't get a room there. There was one hotel by the presidential palace.

It was mostly natives living there. It was named the Darma Nirmala. From the window I looked right into a window of the presidential palace.

At that time the president was Sukarno. At first I was staying alone in one huge room. But suddenly five natives from various islands showed up in my room.

It was hard.