



## Trude Silman Chapter 2

The changes which I became aware of really, again, in the history when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 I think every one of us knows that he was a great orator and he shouted and gesticulated a lot if you could see him and we listened to the radio, at least my father listened to a radio a lot so I could hear Mr Hitler shouting down the radio and then of course when March 1938 came and he went and the Anschluss came to Austria, where my father had two sisters and their families, and they started to be ill treated and brutalised by the Nazis. Father of course became very very aware of this and already at that stage, in that March of 1938 father actually sent the family to his mother's in the countryside till the sort of major thing blew over, and then we came back again.

I'm looking at 3 photographs which were actually taken in March 1938 that was the time when Hitler actually marched into Austria and my father had decided to send us to the country to my grandmother. It was a most fabulous spring morning, really crisp and frosty, and there was my uncle Carl and two of my cousins Otto and Deszo and a very small second cousin called Egon, my brother and myself. We were having real fun and games. The second picture shows us all on the ground and cousin Deszo squashing us. He was the photographer and he sort of threw himself on top of us while he had his delay on. And then the last picture we're standing by some sort of a road sign and we'd all swapped our hats and my young second cousin Egon is absolutely laughing his head off, really thrown back and really roaring with laughter and the rest of us are just looking at him and smiling. And it's just a nice memento of what was a happy morning at a very very unhappy time in history.

The same thing happened again in October 1938 when Mr Chamberlain went to speak to Hitler about the cessation of the Sudetenland, which was part of Czechoslovakia, to Germany, and at that stage we also went back to my grandmother's because father feared something would happen and we would be safer in the country than in a town. But once again the Sudetenland of course was given to Germany, the Czechoslovak government had no say in it, that was arranged, and we went back again. And I'm sure that by that time my parents were fully aware of the consequences which could so easily arise, and the next thing that happened, really, is that my sister leaves Bratislava on the

31<sup>st</sup> of December. She travels with my father to Prague where he puts her on a train and ostensibly she's going to an English family for a year to learn English. She then goes to this wonderful family in Kew Gardens, Mr and Mrs Leon who had two daughters, and in essence she spent the rest of the time being looked after by them until she married.

I recently, only in the last year or so, looked at some letters with my sister and some photographs from home and amongst that she had a letter I had written to her between January and March obviously in 1939 and it says, "Please please please do what you can to get me to England, I'm so afraid," and I was absolutely amazed that I had written this. Why did I want to leave home? But looking back, on the day that the Germans came into Slovakia and we were told by the schoolmaster to get our coats and go home, I didn't go to school again, and by that time I became so aware that everybody was anxious and we all waited for the knock on the door at night because we knew people were being taken away. Nothing fortunately happened while I was at home but that was the feeling which I still have inside me, this fear and yet I hadn't realised that I had expressed it to anybody. And the only other thing I remember from that period is I don't think I went out of the flat, I can't remember going out of the flat at all but there were hoardings visible from our flat advertising the Deanna Durbin film, I think it was 1000 men or 100 men and a girl and that's the only memory I have of that 2 or 3 week period while I was at home.

Charlotte is 5 years older than I am so she was basically 14 when she left home to go to England. Paul was 7 years older than I am and he couldn't come out under the sort of children system which I came out, he had to find a job and he also decided that he wanted to finish his studies and get his Arbitur or matriculation or whatever you call it, so he didn't finish his schooling til May, and at the end of May he came to England and he worked at a furriers. He lived in a tiny bedsitter on his own and quite distinctly father had given him instructions that he had to look after me because I was the youngest and he took that very very much to heart, and although Paul died about 3 years ago he was a most fantastic brother, he really cared for me, he wrote to me every week while I was away and from meagre earnings he used to send me pocket money because I had nothing else and he was a tremendous support.