



Heinz's Story, Chapter 2

And tell me what you can remember about the Nazis coming to power?

I remember it very well I was 13, almost 13 at the time, two weeks before my 13th birthday. The Nazis celebrated their coming to power by torchlight processions in the evening everywhere, and we lived in a flat on the second floor on one of the main thoroughfares and I remember them coming past with their torches singing anti-Semitic songs, looking forward to Jewish blood splashing from their knives – that's one of the songs. So we saw that and had of course no idea what was in store for us. Nobody took it very seriously, everybody says "Oh it's a passing phase, they'll be voted out at the next election", but of course there was no next election because the political parties by then were forbidden. So that was their coming to power.

I remember the Reichstag fire which was four weeks later, which of course was the excuse for the banning of political parties, trade unions and other democratic organisations. Not all at once, they went one by one, Communist party first, Social Democratic parties, Liberal party and so on.

And the part of Germany you were in, was that particularly anti-Semitic?

It was. Well Nuremberg is the base of Nazism, their regional Gauleiter was Julius Streicher who was a blatant anti-Semite, issued a newspaper which was nothing else but anti-Semitic, so our area was always more anti-Semitic than anywhere else and always did everything earlier than it happened elsewhere.

And can you tell me what developments happened in your grammar school?

Well grammar school went on, there was I don't know what the percentage was, fair sprinkling of Jewish pupils, but it diminished. Some emigrated early on, some changed to the Jewish secondary school, there was a Jewish secondary school in Fuerth and some went there voluntarily, and by about 1935 two years later there were 3 of us left in the class and there was an episode when one of the Hitler Youth leaders who was in the class came to us with a couple of pals and says "It's time you three left, we don't want Jews here". The pupils, not the teachers. So we went home, discussed it with our parents, we also discussed it with some of our school mates who were not

blatant Nazis and everybody says, ignore them, forget about it, stay where you are, and that's what we did, and we stayed on. I left at 16, at sort of GCSE equivalent, my best friend Frank stayed on and actually did his A-levels in 1938 but he was the last one.

At the age of 16 there had to be a decision taken of what was going to happen. Should I go on and take A-levels – universities were already out for Jews – added to the fact is that I never liked school. I hated it from day one. So it was decided that I should leave at 16 and enter what is there called a commercial apprenticeship, something which doesn't exist here. You sign a contract for 2 years saying that taking part time further education, evening courses and one day off work for further education and the firm, you know, undertakes to train you in various commercial aspects and so on, and you finish up with some sort of diploma, certificate.