



Heinz's Story, Chapter 3

So I left in 1938 when it had become obvious that we would have to leave Germany, or I certainly would have to leave Germany. Not having any modern languages, not English, not Spanish, not French, nothing, it was decided I should take an intensive language course at a language college, a sort of Berlitz equivalent, in Hamburg which was 400 miles away from Nuremberg. And I went there in the summer of 1938.

I was in Hamburg during Kristallnacht. I remember exactly what I was doing on the night of the 9th of November. I was playing monopoly. We lived in what were student digs, a landlady who let out rooms, there were 5 or 6 of us. We got, obviously in the evenings we got together, all students, and we played monopoly. And we also discussed the happenings, of course that was the day the German diplomat was shot in Paris a couple of days before and on the 9th he actually died of his wounds. And we sat there round the table and we discussed and we knew something was going to happen but we had no idea what. So we played monopoly, we went to bed I don't know 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, whatever, and about 4 or half past the landlady knocked on my door and says "your mother's on the phone", four o'clock in the morning, "she wants to speak to you". There was only one phone, no mobiles or anything. I went down to her place and my mother was on the phone and she said "father's gone away" which was sort of code for "he's been arrested". "Geh spazieren", which in German means go for a walk. I said, "What, now?" She said, "Yes, this minute", she said. And so I went, I got dressed and went out and started walking the streets, sat on park benches, went into shops and sort of made myself scarce. During that time I could see the burning synagogues which had been set ablaze, smoke plumes everywhere and also groups of Jews being rounded up and frogmarched through the streets.

So after the war many Germans, in Hamburg too, said they had no idea what was happening, well that is not possible. You could see what was happening, you could smell what was happening, the smoke, to say they didn't know what was happening is just ostrich policy, they didn't want to know. So I was out and about for about, I don't know, 16 hours.

When I got back home the landlady said they'd been for me but I wasn't there and they said they would come back. As it happened they didn't so I stayed in

bed for a few hours then the thing blew over. But it was quite a terrible experience.

My father was arrested in Fuerth, all the Jews were rounded up including old people and children and all herded together on the centre town square, abused there, spat upon, the rabbi was asked to stamp on the holy Torah, the books. Eventually around about 4 o'clock the women and the older people were sent home, that's when my mother rang me. But the men were marched to a sort of community centre which ironically had been presented to the town by a Jewish citizen, were kept there for a while and eventually sent to Dachau concentration camp where my father was kept for 5 weeks, 5 or 6 weeks. Something happened during that time, my father never talked about anything, which I didn't know until about 50 years later when I went back to Fuerth for some sort of celebration when I was shown a film where they presented a document which I recognised had my father's signature on it, which was a sales contract. He was some sort of treasurer or something of the Jewish community. He and the president and one other, the three of them were marched before they were sent to Dachau to a notary public and forced to sign the sale of all the community's assets, synagogues, cemeteries, a hospital, an orphanage, office buildings, everything, for 100 marks which at that time was about 5 quid. And that was the document that they showed on that film with his signature on it which I didn't know, he never told anybody. So but he was quite a changed man. He came out, he was released from Dachau undertaking to emigrate, there was a time limit which nobody could stick to because there was nowhere to go to but he was a completely changed man, you know he had aged probably 20 years, completely introspect, wouldn't talk about it, morose. So that was his legacy.