



## Heinz's Story, Chapter 7

On the outbreak of war, the day war broke out a policeman came to the boarding house we were still at and asked us to come down to police headquarters, which is at Calverley Street where the library is now, and to bring our documents and to bring our cameras, any cameras, binoculars, maps, that's about it I think. And our documents were stamped 'enemy alien' and we had to leave our cameras, binoculars, any maps. We didn't have any maps. That was that. Then the government instituted tribunals which interviewed every alien in the country and classified them into 3 categories. Category A were enemy aliens who were interned immediately. They were mostly German citizens who had left behind, who were potential spies. Category B were still enemy aliens but were not interned at the beginning of war and category C were called friendly aliens. In Leeds for some reason or other, possibly an anti-Semitic judge, everybody, all the Jewish refugees were made category B enemy aliens. This was not so in the rest of the country. In London for instance most people were made friendly aliens. So came the German invasion of Belgium and Holland in May 1940 with the threat of invasion here and the government decided to first of all to intern all category B enemy aliens. There had been a protest about the Leeds results in parliament and in March the government agreed to have a second tribunal in Leeds to review all the cases. They started sitting I think beginning of April, they saw people in alphabetical order and most of them whom they'd seen were made friendly aliens. My name starting with S, they got as far as G when the internment came.

To start with there was considerable resentment. You know we felt badly done to because obviously as I said we had far more reasons to be opposed to the Nazis than most British people were. And then to be treated as if we were Nazis, you know in Germany we were kicked out because we were Jews, here we were interned because we were Germans. Which we were no longer because they'd cancelled our citizenships. So there was a certain amount of resentment but also understanding because you must remember the situation in 1940, the invasion of the lowlands, invasion of France, Dunkirk and all that happening, there was panic in this country, I mean clearly, you know, and this was panic reaction I think. Churchill's famous words, you know quoted everywhere, when they put to him "What shall we do with the friendly enemy aliens?" and Churchill said "Collar the lot" (laughs), you know those were his

words. So there was some resentment but eventually you realised I mean they really had, it really was a panic reaction.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1940 the foreman came to me at work and said, "You're wanted in the office". Well I'd never been in the office before. I turned round and the manager said "You'd better take your coat". When I got to the office there were two detectives there and said to me, "We've come to intern you". They took me home, pack a case and then took me to Leeds town hall where my father was already there and I think my brother also came, he was arrested at work, and when there was a coachload full they took us to Pontefract barracks as the first sort of internment camp and we were there what was probably the drill hall, straw on the floor, no mattresses or anything. And we were there for – of course nobody had prepared for this – we were there for about a fortnight or thereabouts.

We were then taken by train to Huyton near Liverpool where people were collected from all over the country in an almost completed new housing estate, council housing estate which was built but not furnished or finished off, the houses were there but nothing else. And we were there, that was made into a sort of temporary internment camp. After a while there we were then marched, I think, to Liverpool docks, put on a ferry to the Isle of Man. And on the Isle of Man, the Isle of Man had been an internment camp in the First World War and they more or less repeated the thing in the Second World War. A row of terraced boarding houses on the sea front in Douglas was confiscated if that's the word, the landladies had to move out their furniture, everything except beds, and the block was encircled by a double fence of barbed wire. And that was the camp. Central promenade internment camp, Douglas, Isle of Man. There were several others on the Isle of Man and different places. We were there, we were interned but were more or less inside the camp left to our own devices.

And then the British government decided that they couldn't cope with all the prisoners of war as well as internees and they tried to push some off into what was then dominions and colonies. They asked Australia, Canada and South Africa to take prisoners, the internees. And South Africa refused outright, Australia and Canada agreed. So one day mostly single, single internees between 16 and 60 were shipped back to the mainland to Liverpool and put on a big trip, a converted troop ship called the SS Ettrick and we were delayed because a similar trip 24 hours earlier, the Arandora Star, had been torpedoed at the north end of the Irish sea where it goes into the Atlantic and so there was a bit of a hold-up. We were then escorted by a destroyer or a frigate, I don't know, don't know the difference, as far as the Atlantic and we were off.

We were not told where we were going, we had no idea what was happening but once we were out on the Atlantic we realised we were heading West, we realised it would be Canada. The conditions on board were appalling. There were no bunks or anything, there were a few hammocks, we were all below deck locked down during the night so if we had been torpedoed during the night nobody would have got out. During the day we were allowed up on deck. Everybody was seasick, completely seasick.

We arrived in Canada 5, 6, 7 days later, whatever long it took, to be received by French Canadian troops. We were then stationed in a camp at the Heights of Abraham, Quebec City, very beautiful view, river Lawrence, Lawrence river, but that's the only thing that was beautiful was the view. But the treatment on the whole wasn't bad. Again there were protests in parliament about our treatment, I mean after all we were far more opposed to the Nazis than most of the British were. And the government decided to send an emissary to Canada to interview people individually and to decide what to do with us, whether we could come back, whether we ought to release or not. And this guy called Alexander Patterson came, he was a prison commissioner and he was sent to Canada and he came to the camp – that was after a year or so, not before – and being in the camp office I sort of acted as his receptionist or a secretary or whatever and did his appointments. He made a very good immediate impression on us which sort of saved my view of Britain. And he interviewed everybody and made decisions as a result of which we, both Frank and I came back to England. We had to wait for transport of course, transport was very scarce, there were convoys, U-boats and supplies for the British armed forces from America and everywhere else so shipping space was scarce so it was quite a few months before we actually did come back. But come back we did, back to the Isle of Man pending a case being considered and after about 3 months on the Isle of Man I was released first and Frank about 3 weeks later and we came back to Leeds. I came back in August 1942.