



Rudi's Story, Chapter 3

At what point then did your parents decide that you really needed to leave Germany?

Well we can pinpoint that very accurately. It would be about 1936, roundabout there, we had a maid and she got me ready for school before my parents even got up from bed and it was about quarter to eight in the morning when the bell went. I knew and the maid knew that this wasn't a patient because patients wouldn't be booked in for quarter to eight but the maid went to the door and two men in civilian clothes stood there and said they were from the Gestapo and they wanted to speak to Dr and Mrs Librowicz. And she said "Well they're not up yet" and they said "We don't care" and pushed their way in and up this long corridor and into my parents' bedroom and they were still in bed. And they said – I only found this out later but as they went up the corridor I was going down the corridor to go to the exit to go to school and I didn't know who they were but being well brought up I said "Good morning" and shook their hands. That was the custom in Germany, possibly all over Europe. If you met somebody, whoever they were, you shook hands. And they must have thought "Well he's well brought up" knowing that they were Gestapo but they didn't know that I didn't know they were Gestapo. Anyway I – the maid shuffled me off to school and I only found what I'm going to relate now later, that they went into my parents' bedroom, said "Come on, get ready, in 10 minutes you have to be ready to come with us in the car to the headquarters of the Lodge", now my father was president of the Lodge at that time. My mother was treasurer of the ladies' Lodge and they said "Come with us and you", my mother, "bring all the money that you've got for the ladies' guild with you". So they got dressed and went with the Gestapo people. My sister was still too young to go to school so she remained in the flat. But they took my parents to no. 10 Kleiststrasse, that's where the headquarters were of the Lodge where there were already members of the Lodge assembled and they all had to stand in a straight line without moving, without talking, for hours and if anybody wanted to go to the toilet they had to ask for permission, sometimes it was granted, sometimes it was not granted. Amongst them happened to be Rabbi Dr Leo Beck who was the principal of the Jewish college in Berlin, well known Jewish college, and towards the end of the afternoon my mother was told to hand over any money she'd brought with her which belonged to the Lodge and she had to hand it over, and she had the presence of mind to ask for a receipt.

Eventually they were all released, all the people there were released and told to go home this time by public transport not in a police car. After the war there was a Lodge founded in London called the Leo Beck Lodge and my mother having got some restitution from Germany which she got in the strength of this receipt handed over this money which amounted to about £30, the equivalent of £30 to this Lodge with the accompanying story.

But that was the point at which my parents said “Right, the time has come to make preparations to leave”. My father came to England 5 times, my mother came to England 3 times in order to try and get permission to come here, to get an entry visa. It was still relatively easy to get an exit visa from Germany so that was no problem but they had to get an entry visa for England and on top of that my father had to get permission from the dental board to work as a dentist. I can tell you a little story about that. Eventually he did get permission from the dental board to work as a dentist and my father said “Where can I work?” and the clerk said “Anywhere except London and Manchester” because there were already too many refugee dentists in those towns and my father said “Where *can* I work?” and the clerk metaphorically stuck a pin into the map of England and as Bradford is fairly central it landed on Bradford. The clerk said “Go to Bradford” so my father jumped on the next train to come to Bradford. Where fortunately there was a distant relative of my mother’s who was very helpful in getting my father set up in one way or another.

And how quickly did you and your sister and your mother follow him?

Well this episode of the arrest by the Gestapo of my parents happened in about 1936 and we came eventually in November 1937 just after Guy Fawkes. Today is the 10th of November, it was the 10th of November in 1937 that we came so it’s just that number of years ago.