



Trude Silman Chapter 5

The next move comes when my aunt and uncle eventually get their visa to go to America and they wanted me to go with them and I had all my papers but my brother at that stage decided that all these convoys were being sunk, and not only was that a great danger, but both he and Charlotte and I should stay in England even if we weren't living together at least we were in one country so the decision was made that I wouldn't go so once again my aunt and uncle with the aid of the refugee committee found a most fantastic boarding school for me who took 6 refugees without any payment, the other 5 were all German girls and I was the only Czechoslovakian. But I went to this London school which had been evacuated to North Cornwall and I spent the war, 4 years in Cornwall getting a wonderful education but doing a lot of war work which most of us did in those days because there weren't enough people to do the cleaning of the houses so we used to clean the school houses, we were attached to a farm so we used to get up at 6 in the morning and take my rota at milking the cows, we stook sheaves of corn and we salted beans, we did all sorts of things and we also taught the Home Guard first aid and we partook in a lot of community things such as putting on concerts to raise money because we needed money to buy guns and aircraft and ships because the government was short of money so we were doing all sorts of things.

I'm holding a photograph which was taken in the early 1940s and it's a photograph of my brother, sister and myself. My brother lived in London and worked in London, my sister lived with this family in Kew Gardens and I at that time must have either just started school in Cornwall, I think much more likely, and we met very very rarely although my brother and I corresponded regularly every week. My sister wasn't such a good correspondent but we were all in touch. But this photograph was when I had come up to meet them all and we had an afternoon in London and we had this photograph taken and it's a very precious photograph to me because there weren't many occasions when we were together.

Father used to write to one of us and then I would pass it on either to my brother and then he would pass it to my sister so the letters always made the round. What people don't realise is letters were very very irregular even if you

wrote regularly and they could take 6, 7 months to reach you. Occasionally we did get news because obviously people were writing abroad to relations in Hungary and to America and places like that and they would then tell us some snippets of news but there weren't all that many letters and I have very few letters from my mother and in fact the only letters I think which remain were two Red Cross letters which only allowed 25 words on the letter and even they've disappeared because unfortunately towards the end of my brother's life he couldn't bear to have anything to do with the Holocaust or the family and he basically threw everything away.

The terrible homesickness I had at the beginning in Wallsend on Tyne obviously passed but there wasn't a single night when before going to sleep I wouldn't say a silent prayer wishing that everybody was well and that I would soon see them, there wasn't a single night before I would settle down before doing that, and that has, was always with me right throughout until I knew that my parents were dead.

I wasn't obviously aware of the cruelty to, of the Holocaust but we did have the radio on, we used to listen to the news, and every night at 9 o'clock they used to play all the national anthems of all the Allies, we always used to listen to that, and we were made aware of what was happening. The other interesting thing is with being on the coast we could see far out at sea when there were battles going on between ships and now and again occasionally there would be a dead sailor would be picked up from the beaches. We were aware of all this. We were aware of the Home Guard, we could hear and see Plymouth being bombed which was very badly bombed from where we were, we were about 25 miles away, so we were aware of those things and the radio made us aware and of course we had 4 principals at the school, they were fantastic women who kept us informed of the things we needed to know.