

-TITLE- FRITZ HEINE
-I_DATE- JULY 26 1988
-SOURCE- CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- FAIR
-IMAGE_QUALITY- GOOD
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

Fritz Heine was born on December 6, 1904 in Hanover, Germany. He has no siblings. His mother died during the World War I, also during this time his father was a soldier in the war. Fritz's father returned in 1918. His father built organs. His hometown, Hanover, was a city comprised of approximately 80,000 to 100,000 people. Fritz recalls that his father was a serious, very clever man. He says his father was a clever worker. He made metal and wood pipes for the church organs. He recounts that his mother was very fragile and young, who died of tuberculosis. When his father returned home from the war, his mother's body was transported to the family's front steps.

His family was very poor. He claims his first difficult experience was the loss of his mother. Her death was a negative impression. His dad married again. Not sure but his step mother was a relative of the family (not clear).

His primary schooling consisted of a secular education. Then he took instruction in several commercial undertakings in 1925 (whatever that is). Around this time the Social Democratic Party

in Berlin wanted candidates for office. He was asked to join. After 6 months of training, he was accepted as a secretary of the S.D.P. of Berlin. He says that there were many Jews in Hanover while he was growing up in Hanover. However, then no one made a distinction or difference between religion. Then he says it was not important. He says that the Jews were no different and that there was no discrimination in Hanover. He had numerous Jewish friends. He says at that time there were more Jews in Berlin than there were Jews in Hanover. However, he does not know how he knows this information.

When Fritz turned 21 years of age, he became Joint Secretary of the party. He explains the orientation of parties in Germany in terms of a left to right continuum. The S.D.P party was a left party, proceeded by the Communist Party. After the S.D.P. came the Liberal Party, then the Catholic's German Missionaries, and after 1923 then came the Nazis, which is at the other end of the spectrum. He says he was first secretary of treasury for several years. Then he was asked to organize the propaganda section. He implicitly relates

prior to the Nazis ascension to power, there was little need or function of a propaganda section. It was not even a part of the headquarters, only found in the district offices. Later, though, propaganda became essential.

Sometime between February and March of 1933, the S.D.P was outlawed. They could no longer work in the open. Before then he helped to publish numerous pamphlets. He was chief of propaganda. He relates that in one of the pamphlets an author quoted a passage in the introduction and attributed the quote to the Nazi Minister of Interior, Goering. However, this was a mistake. The minister went to court to vindicate himself. Fritz, who was the chief of propaganda had to go to court to respond to the charges. However, Fritz could not prove that he was not the author of the passage which misquoted the Nazi minister. Subsequently he received 5 months suspended sentence in 1932. After this incident the S.D.P. was banned. Fritz tells that all leading people had to either go underground abroad, or be arrested. Fritz was a very active member in the party. He brought his friends over the frontier by means of skiing.

He gives several reasons why he believes that Hitler came to power. The people had a strong sense of nationality and the state, German nationalism. At the time, 6 million people were unemployed. Difficult conditions existed. The Nazis had a lot of money. They attracted young poor people into their ranks. In addition the right parties were in the majority. Further, he says that people regarded Hitler as enthusiastic. Thus collectively, nationalistic feelings, economic crisis, and clever Nazi propaganda which enabled the rise of Hitler.

Initially, Fritz did not perceive Hitler's danger. He feels that other Germans did not perceive Hitler's danger either. He pinpoints the period between 1928 and 1930, as the time during which Germans realized Hitler's danger. He speaks of street fights that began occurring. Nazi were provoking and fighting in the street with the public.

He now reveals that his father was a social democrat. As a matter of fact so was the rest of his family. He feels that growing up around family member who were social democrats provided him with a theoretical learning, atmosphere of surroundings which made the first impressions on him. "I was born into it", states Fritz.

As before mentioned, Fritz brought his political friends over the border. He did so by skiing into Czechoslovakia. The people that he saved, he says were all social democrats but they were not necessarily Jewish. "It is clear", he relates that "my Jewish friends obviously were in more danger than my non-Jewish friends." He possessed a false passport and returned back to Germany in 1936. Nazis pressed the Czechoslovakian government to also ban the S.D.P. there. In 1938, the party went to Paris to try to continue their work. The S.D.P. was able to smuggle pamphlets back into Germany in toothpaste tubes. This was done by friends.

Fritz explains that there were 6 secret districts secretaries around Germany. Four were located in Czechoslovakia. One was located in the Netherlands and one was situated in Denmark. They lived on the frontier of Germany. It was easier for people within Germany to go outside to these people. Most of his friends and himself were expropriated from Germany. They were no longer Germans. They got refugee passports from Czechoslovakia. In 1941, the Germans stormed Holland, Belgium and then France. Everyday, Fritz witnessed 100,000 people going as quick as possible to escape the advancing Germans.

Above in the air Germans shot down upon these people. He was among them. In 1939, when the war began the French sent many German refugees to internment camps. Around the first or second of May, in 1940, he and others were interned.

The French asked them if they would be soldiers without arms. He agreed only to escape the camp, which he was able to do. He went 15 miles outside of Paris to build roads for the Petain government. He related that things worsened and that he had to travel to the south to the free French zone. He did not make it all the way. He reached Marseilles. In Marseilles, it was very dangerous. It was rumored that he and the others would be extradited to the Nazis. Fritz says he and other S.D.P. members turned to help from friends in New York. The American Federation of Labor was to assist them. Mr. Green, then president of the A.F.L., went to the first lady, Mrs. Roosevelt to ask the President Roosevelt to issue visas for Fritz and other members. Without an American visa, one could not get out of France, Spain, nor Portugal. An American visa enabled one to get an exit visa from the french authorities. The Petain government was in cahoots, liaison with the Nazis. In 1940, 600 American visas were sent. He and other S,D.P. members were then traveled to Spain then to Portugal.

The "most in danger" got the visas. He says recipients of the visas were not necessarily Jews either. A journalist who spoke out against the Nazis and who was well hated by them was in more danger than a Jewish member of the party. Specifically, they traveled from France over the Pyrenees into Spain, then onto Portugal. In Lisbon, they got a British visa. In June of 1941 they reached the U.K. They remained there until 1946. In October 1945, he received permission to returned to Germany for three days to attend the first conference of the liberated Social Democratic Party. By February 1946, he received a permit to return to Germany for good.

In 1943, he went to Algiers at the request of the British government. The British and the Americans defeated the Germans in Algiers. As a result, there were 20 to 30 thousand German prisoners in Algiers. Fritz's job therefore was to find out the Nazi Plan from the prisoners. Fritz respond to a question posed by the interview about how he could tell who were Nazis and who were not Nazis, that even in the prison camps prisoners were still under German supervision. The camps each held about four to five thousand prisoners , which were being supervised by German Nazi officers. Soldiers who said they were not Hitlerians were mishandled and some

were murdered.

He recounts that many of his friends were in concentration camps. His first knew about the situation in the concentration camps in 1933. Yet, he says at that time there was no killing, just the terrible conditions. People died but not directly at the hands of Nazis, but from the conditions imposed upon the people. A slow death was imposed. He does not remember when the gassing began.

His main effort was protecting the party, although he helped some Jews. The main objective of the Rescue Committee was to help those in danger.

He and another person helped about 100 to 150 people to escape, he estimated that of that number maybe two dozen were Jews. For him his activities centered not so much if one was Jewish or non-Jewish. "It was not a question of whether Jew or not, it was more political." His efforts also and later included translating German newspapers, telegraphs, etc. for the British. He comments that the British operated a great intelligence system, although he did not know the particulars of the system.

Israel awarded Fritz a medal. He was honored for helping Jews out of France and for providing false documents for people to travel as far South as one could go in France. Fritz is glad that the Nazis are dead, or at least some of them are dead. He states that the Germans did a very "Black Deed". This is a sad period. However, he was prepared to return to Germany as soon as Nazis were out of power. He said as early as 1941-1942 he was ready to return. He had plans for how he would treat the Nazis, rebuild the country, etc. He could not effectuate this until the Nazis were gone.

When he did return, he was an executive member of the Social Democratic Party. It consisted of five men and one woman, who was Jewish. He remained in that position until 1958. When he returned he found that Hanover had been completely burned out. (Fritz now begins employing the pronoun "we" as opposed to "I", which he has utilized since the beginning of the interview. His wife has been present the entire time during the interview and they were worked together during the war in exile, but were not married.) We were hungry, but we were glad to be back at home. Germany for all its atrocities was home. He hopes that the atrocities will be a burden for the generations to come. However, he fears that it will not be. The Holocaust and war activities are only in the books. He feels that the younger generation is not at all interested in history. He warns that we should not be too optimistic about what they, the youth, are learning from the past. Yes some people are ashamed, but he believes a majority of the younger generation is not ashamed. In response to if Hitler could have happened anywhere, he answers it is hard to say, but one can look at Stalin, who murdered. He relates that he and his wife visited a church in France. There he learned of how some of its followers no longer were believers. He talks of 150 people who no longer believed in Catholicism. These people were burned the other Catholics. He comments it (atrocities, genocide) has happened, can happen again, but hopes that it will not happen again. It is the duty of everyone to transport events to

the generations to come about what has happened.
It is necessary to prevent any similar drastic, tragic events.
Nobody knows the future. We can only hope that experience will
teach people not to do such again. We must do everything in our
forces to prevent.

The S.D.P. upon its return did publish its own papers, which Fritz
helped to do. In 1970, he left political life. In 1961, he says he
finally got married. He and his wife knew each other during the war
and lived together during and after the war. She relates that in
1935 she had to escape. She was politically active and carried
leaflets.
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