

Interviewee: Hilla Haymann

October 16, 2009

Interviewer: Ximena Hinzpeter

Hilla Haymann's name at birth was Hildegard Haymann. She was born in Berlin, in an upper middle class, very quiet district. Hilla lived with her brother Uri and parents. Her infancy was happy. Father was a pharmacist and mother stayed home. When Hilla was 9, they moved to another apartment nearby. Hilla and her brother went to German schools until 1937-38, when they had to transfer to Jewish schools. Brother belonged to a Zionist youth movement and in October 1938 left for Palestine. Three weeks before a local police officer came to the home to talk to Uri. He requested his passport. Uri said he did not have it with him. He was ordered to bring it next day to the police station. Uri went and explained to the officers that he needed his passport to make arrangements to travel. He was ordered to appear at the station 3 times a day, at predetermined hours. A few days before Uri's departure for Palestine, and wanting to say goodbye to his grandmother and other relatives, he went to the police to alert them to the fact he would not be coming. Three days later he departed for Israel, together with a group of 60 to 80 young people.

Hilla rode her bike to school on November 9, 1938, not knowing what happened the night before. (They were the only Jews in the building.) The school was empty and she was ordered to go back home immediately. She returned home by train, going one station further out, and witnessed a roundup of Jewish men by the Nazis. On the way back home, she saw the synagogues burning. Another woman also married to a pharmacist- a Mrs. Glazer- called Mrs. Haymann to find out if they had seen her husband. Mrs. Glazer informed them that they were rounding up all Jewish men. Hilla's father was not home. He was in a course to be retrained to be an upholsterer (since he could no longer work at his profession.) Mr. Glazer was never seen again. Mr Haymann kept wandering around the city, not to return home. He then considered the idea of emigrating. Through connections, they managed to request a visa for Chile, and they obtained it... Hilla did not like the idea. She was registered to go with a children's illegal transport to Palestine (ages 13 to 15), via Holland. A friend insisted though that she goes

to Chile and Hilla finally relented. ((The children's transport never made it to Israel. They were caught after the Nazis invaded Holland.) On September 1, when the war started, both Hilla and her father were mobilized to fortify their building's bunker (a subway station nearby) with sand bags. At the time of the bombardment, only the Jews were not allowed in the refuge.

Nov. 28, 1939. The family departed for Chile, while Germany was dark. They sailed on the Augustus from Geneva. They arrived in Valparaiso December 28, 1939. The voyage. Pablo Neruda was also in the ship! A Jewish committee decided where everyone was going. Agricultural visas were sold in Germany: many were sent to those settlements, including Hilla's family. Eventually, the family was allowed to move to Santiago, where Hilla had already moved and where father found a job as a pharmacist with a former colleague from Germany.

Brother went to the Israeli army, and then joined the Jewish Brigade with the British Army. He was finally sent to Rome, to work in intelligence. Trying to get a visitor's visa to Chile proved arduous until the intervention of a father's friend, the Portuguese ambassador in Chile. The encounter after 10 years...

Hilla never married.