

Interviewee: Annelise Hentschel

Interviewer: Andrea Berdichevsky

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Annelise Hentschel was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1921. Mother traveled much for the leather factory of small goods they owned. (Parents were divorced, and grandmother took care of Annelise.) Their apartment had 7 rooms: three were front rooms and the rest, in the back, where the factory was.

Annelise went to a public school, and then to a women's lyceum. She practiced rhythmic gymnastics and, as part of her school's student group, she took part in the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

She and maternal aunt were very close, and with them she went to the synagogue. The rabbi was the famous Dr. Printz. Annelise became part of the youth group there. She met her mother during summer vacations. She got to visit Sweden, Holland, Switzerland and more. Her childhood was happy.

After graduating from school she was trained in the leather factory to fabricate fancy articles. When the Nazis came, they took over the factory, and sold all the merchandise in a public auction.

Annelise was sent to do forced labor in a different leather factory where there worked already a group of 80 Jews. She was put in charge of them. (She was well-known because of her father's factory.) She worked there for about 7-8 months. Mother still lived in the apartment. When she decided she did not want to do forced labor any more she read the want-ads for nannies for the diplomatic corps. In the Argentinean embassy there was a want-ad for all kinds of work and she worked as the personal assistant of the (bachelor) Argentinean ambassador who was 52-years old. It was lots of work, but after a while-when Argentina cut diplomatic ties with Germany-they were all fired. While working there, the first deportation of the Jews from Germany to Lodz was occurring... She was informed that her mother was taken to the synagogue, and went to see her. She gave Annelise the receipts of all the jobs in progress. Mother had bank accounts in Holland, Sweden and Switzerland, and they were never found. Mother's deportation.

The New Year's party at the Chilean embassy where the guests were the top diplomats in Germany and also Germany's top generals. Annelise was asked to work the party. Raquel Alfonso de Barros was the wife of the Chilean ambassador, mother of Carmen and Tobias. At the end of the party a false report circulated that general Paulus had taken Sebastopol. It was a lie because the Russians had prevailed there, and the ambassador managed to extract from the generals present the fact that it was a lie. The next day a cable went from the embassy to Chile saying that the Germans are losing the war, and that it is time to cut relations with Germany. The ambassador's wife was in very good terms with Annelise-who was by then living in the residence. The auction of Annelise's home. When recognized, she was kicked out of the auction. In the meantime, she received a letter from an elder in Lodz saying that her mother was there and that she could send her 10 marks each week. The last time she sent the money, it was returned with the note that she was no longer there. She never heard from her again...

Annelise returned to the Chilean embassy, and they were sent to a place where they were safe from the Allies' bombardment, in Sloschtartzetel (?) near Cotbus (?) a castle of a past German Queen. Since Annelise did not have a German passport, the Chilean ambassador tried to obtain one for her, but he was denied. He got her one from the Prague consul, a friend of his. It was a Chilean passport. At the end of October they left Germany, by train, via Friburg to Biarritz, however the train tracks were destroyed in the segment Friburg-Biarritz, and they were forced to wait for 3 days until they were repaired. Arrival in Biarritz. German soldiers were still there. She was exchanged for 25 German prisoners in Lisbon, and allowed to proceed to Chile. But in the ship, she was detained by British officers and interrogated. All her belongings continued to Portugal, while she was imprisoned in the ship.

(The tape end here, abruptly.)