

reply to [unclear] 11/16/85

049

Forlease Cottage
2 Judhurst.

Dear Mat,

As I mentioned to you over the phone your views expressed here on life in Cz-sl. are somewhat different to mine due I presume to our different experiences. It may well be that by the time I reached the "teens" Cz-sl. was a much more cohesive state than in your earlier experiences. Equally it could be that I was not interested in politics and accepted people on such without paying much attention to their background, religion etc. I certainly did not find that great divide between Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians & Jews. I only had two close girlfriends, Tatiana Gajzik & Vera Hornok, both came from educated Slovak speaking backgrounds. I also spent (with Anni) a summer holiday in Ružomberok to improve on Slovak & there we met many highly educated young Slovaks. Though I have forgotten most of it now I must have been fluent as I had no language difficulty at the university in Bratislava.

My one and only boy friend with whom I went out for about 2-3 years was Tiber Fergach who went to the Hungarian gymnasium & through him I became friendly with other Hungarian speaking youngsters. All our conversations were always in Hungarian. I met Tiber at the dancing classes you mention (p. 65.) where I was never aware of the divisions you talk about. I was certainly - at least not until Hitler marched into Austria - not aware that there was Jewish blood in us. Your emphasis on our Jewish ancestors struck me at first as slightly exaggerated, on the other hand it may well be that you were more conscious of it & it means more to you because you had so many Jewish friends.

Anni Frankel & Duci were both in a farm below me. I only knew Anni because at one time our parents were very friendly but that friendship seemed to come to an end. Duci I met

simply because for a short time she went out with Tiber's brother.

As regards mother - I don't think she ever had any intention of coming to England. Also, her relationship with Ernst was - I feel - much deeper than you describe. Somewhere at the back of my mind is the knowledge that she did not marry him because she did not want to give us a Jewish stepfather - but I can't recall if she actually told me this. I was in touch with her throughout the war and she knew of Patricia's birth. We had a cook and a Hungarian speaking maid out mother's flat & this maid (Eszti?) stayed with her through most of the war.

Anni was in the convent for much longer than you say. I remember on occasion in the flat we lived in before the divorce when mother had thrombosis in her leg & she had news from the convent that Anni had scarlet fever. Mother was frantic & eventually a friend of hers travelled to St. Pölten to see that Anni was alright. Anni returned from the convent either for the last or the last two years before the "Madura". Like mother she had no intention of coming to England.

As regards myself I did not go to Swinemünde - I was too young. - I ran away by myself from father's flat after the divorce - ~~without the governess~~. Anni was at the convent. This must have been hurtful for father & I have often regretted it - but I was fairly young. After that I didn't really know him.

p. 144. I never had to scrub floors!! Mother would not let me come to England without a definite job to go to. As I was a medical student I had no difficulty in obtaining (through the British Legation in Bratislava) a job as a student-nurse at our L.C.C. teaching hospital. The only thing I did not know was which hospital I would go to. I started my training (with another girl from Eg-st.) at St. Alfege's in the summer of 1939. When we broke out the entire hospital staff (including me) was evacuated

St. Mary's hospital in Sidcup. Eventually, as there were no air-
voids we all went back to St. Alfred's & our training continued
- I even passed the preliminary exam. Then came ~~Dunkirk~~
& as you know we were all "aliens". Alien nurses in the then
private hospitals (e.g. Guy's etc) were sacked but because the
L.C.C. had hospitals which were not teaching hospitals &
where wounded servicemen would not be admitted we were
sent to a hospital in South London which was full of geriatric
chronic cases. I hated that & as I felt that the L.C.C. had
broken their contract, i.e. to train me, I sacked myself
& got financial support from the exiled Czech govern-
ment and as you say stayed at the Harrie's rent free
in return for helping them. It was at this time that I
met John.

Hope you are all keeping well - including you new
grand-daughter love to all from Jean