

A UNITARIAN PROFILE

'Lotte Hitschmann' was born on November 28, 1909 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. After completing her PhD at the University of Prague she worked for several newspapers as well as the Yugoslavian government news agency. Many of her writings reflected her anti-Nazi viewpoints. When the Germans seized a part of Czechoslovakia in September 1938 Lotte relocated to Paris and Brussels. At this time she changed her first name to 'Lotta' and her last name to the Slavic pronunciation 'Hitschmanova' which sounded less German than 'Hitschmann.'

After the Germans invaded Belgium Dr. Lotta escaped to Marseilles. One day, while lining up at Marseilles's market for lunch she keeled over from fatigue and hunger. After regaining consciousness she made her way to a medical clinic run by the Boston-based Unitarian Service Committee. This was her first contact with the organization.

In 1942, Dr. Lotta was able to escape from Europe by sailing from Lisbon to New York on a refugee-packed twin-screw steamer designed to carry bananas rather than passengers. After delivering a USC report to Boston, she quickly departed for Canada, which, unlike the United States, had granted her a visa. When she learned that her parents died in a holding camp en route to Auschwitz she decided to stay in Canada.

In July 1945, she helped to organize the Canadian branch of the Unitarian Service Committee and was made the Executive Director. This organization was affiliated with the Unitarian Church in Canada and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), though the official link was severed in 1948. Its initial objective was the relief of distressed people in France and Czechoslovakia. The program was later expanded to Italy, Greece, India, Nepal and Vietnam among other countries.

In 1970 she wrote a book entitled *The USC Story: A Quarter Century of Loving Service by the Unitarian Service Committee* about her experiences working for USC Canada. She always knew what was needed to make a story and used this expertise to full advantage, earning her the nickname "The Atomic Mosquito" because of her continuing success in getting good media coverage.

Throughout the years, Dr. Hitschmanova received many awards, including the Gold Medal from the Red Cross of France (1950) and the Medal of St. Paul from Greece (1952). In 1968 she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada and was promoted to Companion in 1979. In 1982 she retired from her position as Executive Director due to ill health. She spent the final years of her life suffering from Alzheimer's disease, but died of cancer on September 1, 1990. USC Canada continues to carry on Dr. Lotta's legacy into the 21 century.

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