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LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY

Bernard Rand

Interviewed by Milenka Jackson

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Oral History
The British Library
96 Euston Road
NW1 2DB
020 7412 7404
oralhistory@bl.uk

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F151 Side A

Would you like to tell me your background Mr Rand?

Yes. My name is Bernard Rand. I was born in the most Eastern part of Poland in the Carpathian mountains, near the Rumanian border. My father had a factory making carpets. He was a pretty wealthy man. There were two of us, I and my sister. My sister was 16 years younger than I am; I can remember when she was born. After finishing school in a place called Kolomyya. It was 30 miles away from where I came from, and the school was a Ukranian school, because there were no Polish schools these days in the area. None of us spoke Polish, we spoke German. And the people, mostly the workers, spoke Ukranian. And then the war, the First World War, because I was born in 1910.

Your family wasn't Jewish, was it?

Father Jewish.

Your family is Jewish?

Yes, yes, yes. My family are Jewish. Not religious Jewish, but my grandfather he was a religious man. We had a famous rabbi in Kolomyya which is well known.

What was his name?

Rechallya. His name was Rechallya. His son I think, or his grandson is in America still - operating there. We were evacuated in the First World War, I was a little child. I went with my mother into Austria, because this part of Austria which it was those days, is now Poland, was occupied by the Russian Army, and I spent my young years, about 6 years, in a place in Upper Austria, near the Bulgarian border somewhere with my mother. My father was an officer in the Austrian Army. When the war was finished my father went back to Poland, and slowly started to rebuild his business. My mother and myself were left over in Vienna, and I went for a while to school in Vienna. And then I came back to my...the place where my father was, had a factory, with my mother. And I finished school and then I was sent to university, to Germany, and I was studying engineering in Chemnitz Hochschule für Maschinenbau, that's called the school. The business of my father's was very prosperous and we were doing...doing export a lot, and when I finished university I came back to the factory. But the small town and the whole life for me was too boring, and I convinced my father to open an office in Warsaw. And in 1939 there was a trade exhibition in New York, and we were exhibiting our carpets in New York and I was sent by my father to America, and I came to New York in May and spent there until...the middle of August. Yes, I forgot to tell you, meantime, in February of the same year, 1939, I married my girlfriend and after being married I went to America and...on my own.

With your wife?

No. No. My wife...my wife was an actress and she was engaged in the theatre. She was a very young actress, only 17. And...and she couldn't go, because it was her first big part she had in the theatre and she wouldn't... I went to America on my own and I came back in the middle of August.

What made you decide to go to America?

Because we had...we were exhibiting our carpets in New York and there was a hell of a lot of business there. We were making not only carpets, we were making only...for the furniture, covers, you know, upholstery; all sorts of these things. And I brought back very, very big orders. I came back in the middle of August, and I went straight to Warsaw to the factory. My father was about 300 miles away. And, as you know, in the years I met a lot of people who emigrated, 50, 60 years from the same town, and were in New York. And all came to me to see me, because my father was a quite known personality there, to see the son of Rand. Everywhere they gave me a few dollars to bring back to this...family. And so I had to go there and...believe me, when I arrived back in Kosov, the name was Kosov, I couldn't walk through the street. And if somebody I didn't have a present for him then I had to give it from my own pocket. Because to go to America in those days from a little town there in the Carpathians, it was...a very rare thing. When I finished university and I came back, I had to join...in

meantime to join the Army in Poland. And I was taken into the Army and I joined a very famous regiment. Highlander, you know. Not coats, but cloaks. And hats with feathers. And everybody had to be a very good skier and mountaineer, because it was a regiment there in the Carpathians where I was born. And there were only in the village only 4 Jewish chaps; they didn't accept Jews, Jews didn't want to join, because it was a very tough life. There was, I remember, Rand, Badenburg. And who was the fourth? Tess.

Did you have any persecution before that time?

I, no. I never had any persecution. As far...when I came to Warsaw, then later...not...nobody, when they looked at me - on the contrary, the students told me, "My friend, let's go beat up a few Jews". To me, to beat up a few Jews! I was very strong, and not looking Jewish, very much. And I didn't have anything...

So did you feel that there was a very...?

Yes, of course. Oh yes, of course anti-semitic. But I personally and my father, we had a lot of Polish and Ukrainian friends, very good friends of ours. We had more Polish, Ukrainian friends than Jewish friends.

And they knew that your family was Jewish?

What a question! My father was president of the Jewish...the board of deputies or something like this. Of course they knew. My family was in the place for 300 years. They knew of course, everybody knew. If somebody have to defend you, or whatever it is, or...anti-Jewish, my father was first called, and the governor of the province or whatever was a friend of ours. Everybody knew. I never, never, never in my life, even in the army, I tried on the contrary to avoid any anti-semitic things, tell them in the beginning. I was reserve officer in Poland, a second lieutenant. And our regiment in...in...on the 12th of September the Russians came from one side, the Germans from the other side and they just had to meet there where we were stationed, in the middle. And the whole regiment had moved over the border, the river, to Rumania. And this was the end for me of Poland. At the same time when we went over to Rumania the Polish government also escaped the same route. I was a duty officer on the bridge where they crossed. Because they made me a duty officer because I knew the bridge and I knew the Rumanian border. I was born there. And I used to go as a boy - I had cousins, we had family there, uncles and aunts and cousins - and I used to go there with a parcel, anything, I used to go on a bicycle. Then I knew all the Rumanians on the other side. And the head of the frontier guards, I knew him from (INAUDIBLE), a chap who used to come to the factory of my father always to get something. And we moved over to Rumania. We had...we took off our uniforms. I had a cousin who was the same size as me, he gave me a suit and six hours later I was a civilian. I didn't have any papers, but I joined the army. When I came back from America, I bought a car, a beautiful Buick. You know in Poland such a sports car was a very big sensation. And...and when I joined the army I took the car with me. You were allowed to join the army with your own car because they were very short in transport, and if you had a car it was a big asset. I went with my car and I came over with the car and then we moved from Cernowitz was the place, to Bucharest, because Cernowitz was already into the (INAUDIBLE WORD). And my family was left. But when we moved with the army out of Poland I passed through the place where I was born and I escaped from the convoy at night to the factory. It was a mile from the factory of my father. I could have managed to take the father and the mother and the sister, but they didn't want to go.

Where would you have taken them?

To Rumania. It was near, it was nothing, you could walk to Rumania. 8 kilometres. My father, you know, he was an ex-Austrian officer and..."Ah, the Germans do to me nothing". He was a very...you know, he was very...devoted Austrian patriot. In the old days when Austria was still a kingdom, you know, he was a believer. In the office was a portrait of Frans Joseph hanging in the office of my father until the war. But he...he believes in the Austrian democracy which was a true democracy. I am in Rumania, my wife was left in Warsaw, my father and mother at Kosov, at the place where I came from. I on my own didn't have a penny; I had a few hundred Polish watches which were no good, and I had to start a new life. In Bucharest we met a few friends, and we started to do something, some business that

made a few dollars, because... And I was making a living on my own and we knew that the Germans were coming to Rumania any day, and you had to get out. For some people - it was easy for me - it was very difficult, because I left a young wife. I was only 7 months married. In February I married, in September I was there. I was an officer, and I had a little group and I had my own car. If I wouldn't have my car I couldn't do it. I was driving my own car. And I was in charge of a group of about 12 people I think. And I just told them to get in the side, the convoy was moving forward, they get in the side, we want to repair something or we want to do something. It was only 15 minutes. Right. And I took the lot, all the soldiers with me, and went into the town and knocked on the door, and said to my father, "Come". He gave me all he had in foreign currency, was 20 dollars he gave me and two gold coins my mother gave me. And I joined immediately the end of the column. The column was a long column. Not only cars, there were horses, slow moving. And I joined the same column. The whole thing took me half an hour. And I knew my way; I knew better the way than they knew how to go there, to Rumania. And - yes... And in Bucharest, I found myself in Bucharest, I had some friends, you know, we were all...some of them were already...everybody was looking for a visa to get somewhere, you know, because they didn't want to - you know it's not easy to get a visa and not easy to get a boat or... Anywhere you go you had to take a boat, because of the Black Sea. I didn't want to go. I want first to try to get my wife out, first of all. I sent a letter with a chap who used to go...already when the Russians were in my place, he used to go by night through the river and he was carrying these letters. Not only mine, other people. I sent a letter to my wife and a reply from my mother. Here in London I still have it. Which...didn't want to go. They will not leave the factory, they will not leave the home, they - millions of them, they will...what will I do? And when the Germans came my father, he...not a single soul was left. And I couldn't get them out, my parents. I mean I wouldn't say I couldn't, they didn't want to go. But my wife in Warsaw, I had no contact. I knew that Warsaw already had ghettos, they were creating ghettos. I knew they were wearing already these yellow bands. Some people escaped round here. Luckily, as I told you, I was in America in 1939. Before I went to America I became very friendly with an American commercial attaché in Warsaw. He was a young man. My wife and me, he used to come to our home, we had a lovely home in Warsaw, and we became friends. America was still not at war in 1939. Walking on the street I met this American. He recognised me. "Hello, hello, nice to see you". Because the American Embassy escaped, all the embassies moved out. But then some of them went back. "How are you?" And he told me, you know, "I am going tomorrow back to Warsaw - from Bucharest". He knew my wife. "You are going back", I say, "can you do something for me?" Can you get...my wife's name is Lola". Her name is Eleanor, and Lola. He says, "What can I do? I can help her to get a passport, but nobody can go to America from Warsaw. But if you have a Rumanian visa to bring Lola over, I help her to get an exit visa". Well, that was something. I had the Buick, I told you. One day I met a guy in Bucharest, a Rumanian, whom I knew from the days when I used to go with a bicycle to Rumania where I was born. And he was something, a civil servant there. And I told him the story, how could you help get the visa to Rumania. He told me, "My brother-in-law works in the Foreign Office, the Rumanian Foreign Office. I can ask him". And I was talking to him standing near the car in the street. And, "It's a beautiful car you have there". A day or two he came back to me. "Look, I spoke to my brother-in-law and he told me - I told him about your car. He told me if you give him the car he arrange the visa for your wife to come". The car was worth a lot of money and the only capital I had. And I went to see her, I went over to see her, and she made an appointment. And she was a sort of secretary of State or something like this, I would say. I would arrange that I would give him the car if he gives me three visas. I had friends in Bucharest who had also the same...he had a wife and his wife was a girlfriend of my wife, and he was a good friend of mine, and...from Warsaw. And then he had another friend, a schoolfriend, a chap called Zeitla, he was a doctor. He had left his wife over there. And we had decided, all right, I give my car. They promised me everybody will repay me a part of the value of the car, which never...had any money...today. But I didn't want to give the car until make hundred per cent sure that they had the visas there and they had the passports to give me. This was agreed. One day I received a message from my wife through...somewhere around the world. A chap came, escaped, he brought me...that American who promised to give a visa, a passport, contact her, with some good news. And she hopes to get a passport. And when she has the passport she will approach the Rumanian Embassy for the visa. Which I send her a message through...there was a chap from South American Embassy: they were not at war, I think it was Chile, yes Chile. And they had diplomatic couriers going through Warsaw, and Warsaw was occupied by Germans. And we met somebody and they were carrying letters. These couriers, diplomatic couriers. And so I replied, it took five or six weeks until we get them. It cost money, they were delivering and bringing back and I received a letter from my wife that she has a passport and the Rumanians gave her a visa. And the best thing to have money to buy tickets. And when I was in

America in 1939 I had, you know, some money there, and we were exhibiting; because there was a restriction from Poland, you couldn't take out any foreign currency. Like here after the war. But I...as I went on business I had quite a generous allowance. And after...I had family, an uncle there and he gave some money. In any case, I had about 200 dollars over. And being clever enough I didn't take them back to Poland. I went and opened myself a bank account and paid in the 200 dollars and they gave me a cheque-book. I thought one day, maybe, I don't know, Poland was very bad... And I say to American on the street, I say, "Look, if you will...I'm wanting to pay for a ticket; you have the 200 dollars (it was quite money in 1939) I give you a cheque". I didn't have any money. For me the cheque was not valuable because I couldn't cash in a cheque. But for him... And I gave him a cheque for 200 dollars to arrange for the three girls. They went by train to Berlin. In Berlin he bought them a...he gave them a laissez-passer, not a passport. You know, laissez-passer if you go to America, an American citizen. And he gave them some laissez-passer. And they were allowed to buy three air tickets from Lufthansa, and they arrived by air to Bucharest. In Bucharest everybody took his wife; only my two friends and myself, what to do next. The time was very, very, very short. We knew that the Germans are already in Rumania, but not in Bucharest, the Western part of Rumania. We didn't know where to go. But all of my friends, they just...he had some brother in Switzerland and some money, and they just took a boat and went to India. Why to India? Because to get out. I didn't want to go to India, I wanted to go to Palestine. But to go to Palestine the British were restricting, you know, you need the special certificate or something like this. And I thought I'm going to make it on my own. We took a boat from Constansa and we went from Constansa to Istanbul through the Black Sea. We landed in Istanbul. We were in Istanbul about a week, starting snooping around, asking how to go to Palestine. It's very difficult. One day there was a hell of a lot of...of Jewish...you know, envoys, from the - there was no government - from the...what do you call it, the Jewish Agency, Jewish Agency. In Istanbul, you know, they were helping a lot. And I met a fellow, he was from Poland. Most of them were from Poland in those days, in the...in the Jewish Agencies. And he said, "Look, you go to Izmir, Izmir is the other end of Turkey. In Izmir there are little boats which are carrying goats for the Arabs. From Izmir to Palestine. And if you get in such a boat, you know, they are landing in little ports and you can get in". But in the meantime we went - I told you, my wife is an actress, and she knows the theatre and she knew the oldest writers, and...and we met a very famous writer. He died two years ago here.

Who was that?

In London. Hammer? One of the top. He was Jewish. He was baptised in...and he was brilliant and such a...such a...very brilliant man. I knew him when he was a boy from home, because he was from (INAUDIBLE). And he was lost completely. You know, I was more or less a tough guy who was not afraid for anything. And he was, you know, a quiet writer, he was afraid; he couldn't...he couldn't make a cup of tea himself. We took him with us and another man. And we four of us went to...took a train from (INAUDIBLE). It was a narrow gauge train, which took us five days to go to Izmir. Five days. The train used to stop in the middle of nowhere and stay the whole night. And so we came to Izmir. We didn't have any money. There was no boat, nothing. We didn't have money to go to an hotel. We couldn't afford. We were sleeping in a...an orange grove. And waiting for a boat to... One day we really saw a boat on the horizon. Some boats coming to Izmir. And the night was hot in the summer. And we were waiting and the boats came and I went up to the captain and asked him if he would take us. He says, "No, we can't take you, we are loading goats; all the crew are out. Only he is only Jewish, he was an Austrian Jew, and he will not take us". I started, you know, frightening him, I'm going to sink his boat. It was rubbish, you know, it was just to get on the boat.

End of F151. Side A

F151 Side B

He couldn't read a word! We were travelling all night and in the day, but no sign of Palestine at all. At the end he didn't know where he is. And he landed in Cyprus, but not in Palestine. Then from Cyprus we asked the way how to go to Palestine. "You just go across there, you will see". And so we went across the sea and we saw land and - unfortunately we didn't come to a little harbour, but we landed in Haifa. He came into Haifa with us and the goats. And of course Haifa was British - military police, they took us immediately off from the boat. We didn't have any passports, we didn't have any visas, we had nothing. And they arrested us all, the poet, my wife and myself and another three Polish flyers, pilots. Not exactly in jail, they put us in a camp, it was a camp with a lot of Jewish immigrants, illegal. I myself...and my wife went to a ladies camp and I was in the men's camp, not far away. After about a fortnight I think I was released under the condition that I would re-join. Because they knew I was an officer in the Polish Army. And they start already to organise a Polish army in the Middle East, which was the name of...a brigade, not an army, called Carpathian Brigade. And I was born in the Carpathians, because most people from this part of Poland escaped. All right - I'm going to join the army; I'm not going to desert in any case because everybody has a hope that we will go back to Poland; how can I be a deserter? My wife was released; she went with some friends, she went straight to the theatre because she is a very good singer and actress. And she couldn't speak Hebrew, but she has learned - very talented, and she has learnt in no time. She couldn't read or write, but she could speak perfect. She went to the Habima and other theatres. And I joined the Polish Brigade. And after a short while, yes, my only...my biggest asset was that I could speak English. Nobody in those days in this Polish Brigade, there was only about 800 or 900, could speak a word of English. So I was the most important man there. I used to go to all the conferences with the generals and I knew everything that was going on. And I was in the Polish Brigade. After 6 months or 8 months, I can't remember, they sent us to Tobruk. Tobruk was surrounded. I was in Tobruk and we were fighting against Rommel. First against (INAUDIBLE) an Italian General, then against Rommel. And the whole story about Tobruk. I lost a couple of friends. They killed, by the way, a son of the famous writer, Zilberman. You have heard. He had a son in the Polish Army. And I saw him when he was killed. I gave him first aid, and he was terrible. Was killed by a German artillery. We were in Tobruk and then we broke out. I was in the Battle of Benghazi. After Benghazi and back, and Rommel came back, and we stopped in El Alamein. And there was my finish in the Polish Army. It was the order of the day that every officer in the Polish or French Army, who is required for the welfare of the British people, can be transferred from one army to the other. And I took this up. I am an engineer, and I was transferred to the British Army in no time. I became a workshop officer in (INAUDIBLE) in Egypt, one of the biggest workshops in the Middle East. And I then...when the Poles came out from Russia, because I was not a Russian, the majority of the Polish Army came from Russia, from Persia - Iran. And you understand that I was already in the British Army. And I was...there was...I had a friend - a friend, a man I met who was a South African; Polish origin, born in Poland. And there was a unit called 26 B.L.U. British Liaison Unit. British Liaison Unit was mostly officers who could speak a few languages and - there were French troops in the Middle East, there were all sorts, Czechs and Poles and Indians and God knows, Australians, New Zealanders and the lot. And he was sort of a liaison officer. I have arranged for myself a transfer to 26 B.L.U, which I had a very good job. I was dealing mostly with businesses. The Polish Army was already an Army, and I went to Iraq, to a place called Khanaqin. Khanaqin was a very big base. And we were arranging all the equipment for the Polish Army from the British. You know, the special...I knew the English technical language, because my father used to import machinery before the war, export it from England. And the biggest trouble with this machinery was to read the instructions, all of them in English. Because, as you know, in England they didn't care if somebody there in the Carpathians who could speak English there. To write it in German or other civilized - no, in English. And nobody could read it. When I went to university, my father was insisting that I should learn English, you know, and this helped me through all the wars. You know, my English is not perfect, not perfect, even today I have still a foreign accent. But I could speak and everywhere they understood, and this was a great, great asset for me. So when the Polish Army came out from Russia into Iraq, to Persia, and went there, our unit received 30 or 40 officers. I was one of the most important of them because I was the only one who could speak - these Russians, they came from Siberia, they could not speak English - and I was the only one who was arranging everything and therefore I...I was very busy and I had a very good job you know. And then the Polish Army was created, and I was still in the 20th B.L.U. And then of course, a lot of Poles have learned in the meantime to speak in...some were sent out from here to the Middle East, as spokesmen for this type...learn here, they were in Scotland, learn to speak English. And I was transferred myself to...I was looking for some other jobs to do. I was in the

desert, with the 7th Armoured Division, Desert Rats. We used to have Rats here, with Montgomery. And as I told you, transferred to a recovery unit. We were recovering tanks from the mines. It's a very nasty job. But with some big grabs - if the thing went into a mine, we dragged it out. It's called recovery. And when the Battle of El Alamein, I was there. I was staff officer. And went through the whole thing. Up, up, up, up to Tripoli, with the 7th British Armoured Division in the desert. We landed in...with my unit, in Palermo, in Sicily. And then the Americans came in there and then they put us back in boats and we landed a second time in Salerno, which was very nasty. And we landed and we couldn't...we landed in the early hours of the morning from little landing crafts. And the Germans were in hills. If you know the area there, Salerno, around the sea are hills. And these Germans had opened artillery, we couldn't even put a finger out. It was murder. We jumped off to a tobacco factory. The tobacco factories there are not far from the sea, Amalfi, Ravello. And in the tobacco factory, you know, the leaves are hanging for maturing. And they set these leaves on fire. It was such a smoke that we couldn't breathe, we had to put gas masks on. We were staying there a whole night, and a whole day, and a whole day, without a drop of water, nothing; you couldn't... After that a big American cruiser came in and they started to open fire on these hills. I've seen the hills all alight, like daytime. And then not far there was a place called Eboli. Eboli is a very famous place in Italy. And a nigger division landed there. They had saved quite a lot of lives. My company lost 62 people there, which are in the cemetery in Eboli. Eboli is a big military cemetery. I am going there more or less every year, every second year. I had quite a few friends there. So we were in Italy. Then Salerno - I landed in a place called Conte Alburno. It was a little village. It was about, I think, 30 miles from Naples. And I walked 5 miles from Salerno. Salerno was still burning and the Germans were still fighting. I went...they took Salerno. And if you go from Salerno - here, Salerno, here is Naples. If you want to go to Salerno you can go over the middle and...or right around the coast, Amalfi, Ravello - that's along the coast to Pompeii. And the two allies are meeting in Pompeii and then they go inland into Naples. The main road which goes to a place called Cava. We went along the coast which every hundred yards or so, it is like a bridge. It took us about 2 weeks to go to...the 25 miles to (INAUDIBLE). Every time we had to stop and to put the bridge over, a Bailey bridge. As we arrived in...in...we arrived in Amalfi, and on the top of Amalfi is a place called (INAUDIBLE). On the top, just on the top. I remember me and another chap driving up in a tank on these roads. I don't know how he done it until these days. I must have been mad. I don't know. Then we went off to Ravello. And we were not expected at all, because the British they didn't know what to do, who we are and so on. There was an hotel called Caruso, and the Hotel Caruso was full of wounded German officers. And I remember the hotel, you had to go through 20 steps, and I was afraid to go on the steps because you didn't know who was there. And I drove the tank through the steps and knocked the door off on the hotel and drove more or less into the hall of the hotel. I can speak Italian. And came out the night watchman. And I asked him, "Where are the Germans?" "They are asleep". So I said, "Go and bring them down". He brought down about, I think, 30 or 35 in their pyjamas. I didn't know what to do, we just put them into the hall. We didn't know if they hadn't got any arms there. We didn't let them go back. And they were sitting in the hall and we sent a message down to Amalfi to send some transport for them. And then they sent Military Police in a lorry and they took them in their pyjamas - their uniforms were left there - in their pyjamas they took them away. Then we went from there to Positano. Positano is a holiday place where the famous... I came to Positano and I did the same thing. I could speak a bit of Italian. And in Positano there were a lot of Fascists. Positano was known as a Fascist place. We had some information. And I found a fellow. He was recommended, he was recommended to us. A civilian, an Italian, that he is a Communist. But we preferred the Communists than the Fascists. And we took Paulo Saratani. His name was Paulo Saratani. Paulo Saratani is a very good family. Which is today converted into an hotel. It's called (INAUDIBLE). It's called an hotel today. He was a young man. I said, "Look Paulo, first of all we want to clean out all the Fascists", which he knew everyone, because he was born, he was a Communist. He was imprisoned you know. And we cleaned out all the Fascists and put them on the beach. Today there is a restaurant there. We put them all there in the middle, a hundred maybe. And we made Paulo, we said, "Paulo, we need somebody who will deal with the civilians, the Army will not..." Spoken in Italian, 'syndica'. Syndica is like a mayor. I said, "Paulo, would you like to be a syndica?" He says... And I made him a syndica there. And he was syndica for 30 years in Positano. Two years ago he retired. He married an English girl a few years ago; he was a bachelor. And he has retired and he is in Rome now. I have some contact with him. And he was mayor for the time of 38 or 40 years, this fellow. Then we moved forward, captured Naples, you know. Florence. Tell you all the stories now. My regiment were the first in Milan. And Mussolini was still laying on the piazza. He was hanged and shot and then they dumped him there. We came in, I remember, with a company of armoured tanks. And we went to...towards...back towards Padua. And Venice there, you know, there is

a main road for Milan going around... We went to Padua. The Germans were there and there was fighting on the road, but nothing...nothing very big. And so we came not far from the Austrian border. I was with a unit with reconnaissance cars. (INAUDIBLE) Little cars, very fast, called Recce. English (INAUDIBLE). And we went just to have a look around because this was a 'recce', a reconnaissance. It was not a fighting raid, it was a reconnaissance raid. Fighting raids were in a heavy car. This was very quick. They had guns on them of course, but when they were attacking they were no good. We went forward. It was not far from...on the Austrian border, not far from Klagenfurt, a place called Klagenfurt. Klagenfurt is more or less on the Italian/Austrian border, more or less. I remember it was very early morning and we were sent out on reconnaissance to have a look where the Germans are. Because there was quite heavy fighting there around...around the forests, there was a lot of forests and... I saw, through my binoculars - it must have been 4 o'clock in the morning, 5 o'clock - I saw a train under steam, and just ready to move out. We had some reconnoissances - some intelligence information that the Germans are cleaning out part of the concentration camps, (INAUDIBLE) and just killing them off and... There were a lot of lakes there and - this we knew from intelligence - people who escaped. When I saw this train it just occurred to me, I don't know, maybe some of these trains are...I didn't know. I saw a train, but I didn't know what's in the train. But to make sure I was very...a bit adventurous. I had quite a heavy machine gun, six-pounder it was called. And that banged in a few six-pounder in the engine of this train and made a hole, and steam and hot water came out. And some German soldiers came out and started shooting; shouting and shooting. There were 4 of us. We opened up machine-gun fire. We cleaned them out, all of them. Some were wounded, some were killed. And we went near the train to have a look. I went near, because, you know, being an officer in charge of a unit, you are not allowed to risk your soldiers, your people; you can take yourself a risk, but not you are not allowed to send...because it was not a military action, it was just - you know, an adventure. I didn't know what it was, I had no idea. And I went myself around the train, some distance. I drove around the train. We had put a few hand grenades on the tracks. We established the train is immobilized. I saw the train loaded with these people, these people. Barbed wire on the doors, on the windows. I frightened myself to hell, not physically, that they would harm me. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to approach even. What will I do, what can I help them? Nothing. I can't even take a single person into my car because we were two in the car. And there was a unit, U.N.R.R.A. U.N.R.R.A. is United Nations Relief Organisation. They were with the Army. And there were army officers that worked with U.N.R.R.A. I sent a message to my unit, because I didn't have any contact with U.N.R.R.A. direct. They informed U.N.R.R.A. that such and such a thing has happened. And to make sure that the Germans are not coming. The Germans were...a mile away from there, two miles away. They were still shooting some units that they were attacking there in the mountains, in the forests. And I stayed there, stopped with my cars, in case the Germans would come back. We were hoping not, because they will kill these people. After a few hours we were looking around, we saw two lorry loads of U.N.R.R.A. and two ambulances that came. And U.N.R.R.A. went near the train, I went near and had a look. And I never saw such a picture in my life. Those people in the train had dirty dresses...undescrivable. I cannot tell you. Something I never... I saw a lot of dead people in El Alamein, soldiers on the field. I saw quite a lot, I was rather hardened, you know, I was... But this, no. And...

Did you know about concentration camps before that?

Of course, we knew.

Before that time?

Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. We already captured in Italy - I mean they were not so bad like the German, but in Italy, we knew about them. You were briefed. Our officer was briefed in case he comes across it, and how to behave and so forth. And these U.N.R.R.A. they started to unload these people; they couldn't unload a lot, but what they could, they went back. And we left. People were in such a terrible...I didn't have the guts to go out there. We went to some shooting somewhere else and we went back. As I came back to my regiment - I've forgotten the name of the place in Italy - I was enquiring what had they done with these people. And I was told they moved already lorryloads near Padua or somewhere there. I thought, 'Ah, let's have a look what's going on'. And I found the place. I took a driver in a jeep; he was a Cockney, British. He is still alive, I remember his name, Peter Tate was his name. He was a Cockney, a very nice guy, he was my driver. And we went there. We went to look and we found the place. In an olive orchard. Tents - some army tent, Italian army tent or... I went to go in. There was already sentries standing there and... "You can't go in". I was not allowed to go in. "Who is

in charge of the camp?" I went to an office. Luckily I saw a chap who was in charge. His name was...he was an Irishman who I met three years before in Palestine. He was in the same office. His name was Cooper, Reg Cooper. Reginald Cooper. Drunkard, out of this world, every day he was dead drunk and... He recognise me, I recognise him. "What do you want?". "My name is Bernard". I told him the story of the train. I was involved in it. And I would like to have a look who is in this... There were quite a few hundred people. At least I'd like to know how many lives I have saved indirectly - not directly, but indirectly. And I went in to see. A black beret and a leather jacket, unshaven, dirty. And one of them had a stick like an officer. And there was a big queue queueing for soup. It was already getting dark. People are looking like they're going in another five minutes to die, or people...I don't know... It was terrible; the people in rags, without shoes, without teeth and so on. And in the queue I was thinking of asking in all languages - I know quite a few languages - maybe...but to ask...I know Italian, Russian: you know Poles you can speak Russian. There were a lot of Russian, there were a lot of Yugoslavs, a lot of Jews. I asked in Yiddish. My Yiddish is not brilliant, but I can...I can speak German; if you can speak German you understand. Nobody. On the end of queue, a man, a very, very sick looking to me man, with his head down. And if they saw a uniform they were shivering, they were afraid. And once I start talking to him in Yiddish he quietened down. Ask him first, "Where are you from?". In Yiddish or in English?.

In English. "From where do you live?" He told me, "I'm from Russia, Ukraine, Kiev."

End of F151, Side B

F152, Side A

There was a huge queue and at the end of the queue was a man in a very, very, very bad physical shape, and I asked him the same question, in Russian and Yiddish. He spoke Yiddish. "Have you a family, Rand?" And what he told me, he looked at me and asked me, "Are you Benoit Rand?" I nearly had a shock. My name is Bernard, but at home my mother used to call me Benoit, and my sister used to call me Benoit, but nobody else knew me as Benoit. I said, "Yes". And then he asked me, "Have you got a sister Lola?" Because the name of my sister is Lola, and my wife is also Lola: we have two Lola's in the family. I say, "Yes, where is she?" And he pointed to a tent. She is indeed in this tent. You can imagine - I had a shock. I was afraid to walk into the tent in case she is in such... I don't know in what condition she is. I kept the man, this man, with me, and asked the...the...the man in charge of the camp, the Irishman, to send in the soldiers and to ask for Mrs Rand. But he says, "Wait, she is not known as Mrs Rand". I say, "What do you mean, what's she known as?" He replied, "She is registered as Markowitz". The story was like that. They found her - she was very young, she was 14 when the war broke out, as a little girl. And in the camp they have adopted her. And adopting her...nobody has any papers, and adopted her as Markowitz as they had no children. And so she was registered as Markowitz. But she's no Markowitz. In any case, the soldier went in and asked for Miss Markowitz, Lola Markowitz, and after ten minutes he brought her in. There were no lights in the office of the man in charge of the camp. And this was my sister. No - no - I'm generally...you know - I'm - making quick decisions. Besides I know what I wanted. This time I did not know what I shall do with myself. The war is still on, I'm in the army. I have to go back. I don't know if the Germans will not come back, it's all possibilities. And...it was a very very terrible, very difficult decision. What have I done. I manage to get a pass - a 24 hour pass. I went back to the camp and arranged with this captain - he was a captain, yes - Reg Cooper, to let them out - they are not allowed to let anybody, any civilians out of the camp. They had them out from the camp, put them into a jeep, covered them over with blankets.

How many?

Three. Markowitz, his wife, my sister. And drove back up to Padua. In Padua I knew an Italian doctor, whom I met when I was in Padua before. I was staying there, it was a home - physician - for officers, and I was staying at his home and I was very friendly. I thought to myself, he is a doctor. My sister was in a terrible physical condition. I felt she is - she will not live for a week. And I brought her back to this doctor, left them there, left some money I had. Food, the main thing was food. And went back.

Which camp had your sister been in?

She has been in...not one of the big camps. Somewhere in the area where I had been - I have forgotten the name of it.

Was it in Italy?

No, no, no, the camp was in Poland. And then they transferred them. They were on the way to...I think to (INAUDIBLE) or somewhere like that, on the train. In the meantime...the war was going to an end; in the meantime there was some...do you believe me or not, my sister still today doesn't want to talk about it. I have approached her many times to tell me some details. No. No. She can't talk. And then I was about two weeks, I think, they were there staying with the doctor. And then the war came - it was not the end, but we saw the end of it. And I managed to be transferred to a very big mechanical depot near Padua. MOT, as they called it, near Padua. And I had contact with them. Then I moved them all the other side of Italy towards...to Naples - Salerno. Because in Salerno I knew there was a Jewish Brigade, part of the Jewish Brigade were there, and I had a lot of officers, friends, pre-war officers from Poland. And then it was easier, maybe - it was the intention, of course, to get them out from Italy altogether. I myself was transferred to Naples. And I was working for a time for - also for - transferring lorries to...afterwards when the war was over, to U.N.R.R.A. U.N.R.R.A. was taking over and I was the man who was transferring this sort of thing. And they were staying in Italy. I put them up in an officers' hotel outside Naples. And so they were six months there. I thought I would soon be finished, and I would meet them up. And I had to go to England. I was in the British Army and I was already a British citizen; by being in the Army you automatically are a citizen - a British citizen. And now how to get them - my wife was in Palestine during the whole war - but how to get them to

Palestine. This was a question. Officially it was out of question. I have approached everybody. Unofficially, yes. There was a lot of boats - the Polish Army was still...the rest of the Polish Army was still around Naples, waiting for transport to England. But a lot of officers, soldiers, meantime they took holidays to the Holy Land to Palestine, and there were boats running from Naples to Haifa. This was immediately afterwards. I knew a colonel, a good friend of mine, and I have approached him to give them papers, army papers, that they are in the army. My sister could speak Polish. The English didn't know the difference between Russian and Polish either. And we put them on an army ship. They are going on holiday. And this officer - he is still alive, here in London. I had a beautiful car also in...in Naples, captured from a German general. And he sold this car. I was sometimes driving it. I kept it mostly hidden, because I was afraid to... And he liked it, he say, "If you give me this car I give you...I will arrange it". In any case, we made a deal, he gave them papers, I've arranged uniforms. It's not difficult. Put them myself on a boat to Naples. And the boat went to Alexandria, to Egypt, not to Haifa. They went as army personnel. But how will they get from Alexandria to Tel Aviv? I knew some...I knew a pilot, he was a Jewish American pilot, whom I met in Naples, and he was flying to Egypt, to Alexandria, carrying spare parts for aeroplanes. And I arranged with him he will give me a lift to Alexandria. And in this plane - they were bombers, empty, taking out the guns, no seats, and they were loading them; it was all metal, and I was lying on the floor in this bomber, only with a blanket. There was only two seats for the pilot and the navigator. And they took off, and they were flying to Egypt. Believe it or not, they were so drunk, both of them, they couldn't find Alexandria. They landed in the Sinai Desert, somewhere in the military airport - there was a lot of military airports there. And then after half an hour they studied the map again and took off and landed in Alexandria. I remember I...I took a taxi around to the docks. I knew exactly when the boat arrived. The boat is just arriving into port. I was waiting. I took them off the boat. And there was a train running from Alexandria to Rehovoth - in those days. Through the desert - Ismalia - I brought them to the station. They had papers. Bought them tickets. And rang up from Alexandria my wife in Tel Aviv, by which train they will arrive. And she was waiting in Rehovoth, took them off from the train, took them to her home. In the uniform, papers, and so - they were in Palestine. Now, Mr Markowitz, later on, he was a...a book-keeper in Russia. And believe it or not, he got a job, and he became a manager in a bank, in Bank Leumi in Tel Aviv, in Holon, outside Tel Aviv. And he's now retired. He and she are still alive, live next door to my sister. My sister - she was staying with my wife for a time. My wife is an actress, she was out. And she wanted to go to Kibbutz. It was very difficult, it was just before the war of independence broke out. In any case, my wife knew a lot of people there and she arranged for her, she went to a Kibbutz on the Kinneret, on the lake. She spent a week in the Kibbutz, the Kibbutz was surrounded, the war of independence broke out. And she after this had a nervous breakdown and they had to evacuate her to the mainland. Evacuation was only by night and by a rowing boat. And a soldier evacuated her. And this soldier was a student of medicine, in the first year, and he fell in love with her. She was a nice little blonde girl. But he didn't have...I didn't know because I was already here. And somehow, you know, she is very shy my sister, and she told the boy, "Look, I don't know", ... blah, blah, you know, she was like this. I sent over from here - I didn't have any money, I managed to have some overdraft from a bank - my wife. In those days, to fly to Israel was a two-day flight; you had to stay the night in Rome or in Athens, by plane. And I sent her because she was living there and she knew all the people and she speaks Hebrew perfect, my wife. She went there and she saw, she came back and said, "He's a lovely boy. But he hasn't got any money - to study". He...some family want to lend him. He should go back to university. And I have paid six years, through all sorts of ways which you couldn't...I didn't have money. I was very hard-up. I had 285 pounds I had here in the Post Office in Brompton Road, near Harrods. They gave me a Post Office book and I had five-pound notes. And here, in this place, I came here, and they change a fiver. I met some bomb happy officers, you know, pilots. And we had a half a bottle of vodka here and we were telling stories about the war. In this, in this place it was. And I paid for six years. He finished. I went to his graduation. And an old professor came to me and he knew about it, that I was helping them. I bought them a little bungalow, they married and a boy was born. And he told me, I will never forget this story, "You are Mr Rand, yes" - my brother-in-law's name is Nicky - "You have done a very good investment", he told me. "You have invested in humanity". This is what he told me. "Because such a person is devoted to medicine like him, I don't know, all my life...". And this was true. He is a professor today. He's working for the Rockefeller Foundation of America, with a budget, I think, of 2 million, making coronary research into heart diseases. Very big specialist.

And still in Israel?

Yes. In Israel. His son is a pilot in the army. You know, a 'Sabra'. He is a crazy boy. I have no children. To have him here, nothing doing, he doesn't want. He will soon be...I think he's 35 now. In the meantime he was married, he was divorced. He had a boy. And we have tried, we are trying very hard to study, to be a doctor, you know, Jewish, like his father. We send him to Padua, to the university, which I have some big connection in Italy, to help get in, it's very difficult. He was over a year in the university. I bought him a car and a flat in Padua. He tells me he is going to study. When the war in 1968, yes, the war with the Egyptians broke out, he left everything, didn't tell anybody, and the next day he was bombing Cairo. Bombing Cairo! Goodness. He didn't even...he didn't inform his parents that he is back from...he didn't have money to buy a ticket. He sold the car which I bought him, a Volkswagen. He went over. I did not know either. And so that is the story. I don't know anything else what to tell you.

Can you tell me what happened to you in England here?

To me?

Yes, here.

In England here I came, I didn't know what to do. I had some experience before the war - before the war, in plastics. My father had a licence, an Italian licence to make lanital. Lanital is wood made from milk...from casing - I don't know. But it was 1938. No time to build it up. But I had some experience. I came here, I saw plastic as the future, and I came in. I remember I was invited...somebody wanted to buy little toys, there was no toys. I thought I'm going to make something in plastic. Now, to make, a) you need machines, and a) you need money. b) you need machines, c) you need raw materials. Again a story. Machines I have managed myself to construct a little hand moulding machine to make little tools for making toys. I made a horse. I made myself the tools with the help of two Polish mechanics here. And then I made a little aeroplane. But I didn't have the materials, the plastic, to mould it. There's a company in Chingford called BX Plastics, still today. British Cellanite. BX Plastics. I was told that BX Plastics have materials. I came to BX Plastics, to Chingford. I remember twopence I paid for a green bus, which I took in Cricklewood somewhere. And came to BX Plastics, Station Road - they are still in Station Road today, Chingford - and asked the man on the door - on the gate - whom I wanted to see. I had a very foreign accent, in English and I said I wanted to see the sales manager. He took the telephone, rang up, "Mr Galbraith, here is a foreign gentleman who wants to speak to you". And he said, "Mr Galbraith is not interested. He's busy". Put down the phone. "Mr Galbraith is busy". That's the name, Galbraith. Believe it or not, I was...I told you, I went to...I was in Iraq before I went to Persia, before the Poles came out from Russia. I was sent some spare parts based in Basra. Basra is in the desert - they were fighting in Iraq. And I had a lieutenant with me, his name was Galbraith, Colin Galbraith. And I thought maybe...maybe there were, I don't know, so many Galbraiths in England. But, to try. He didn't let me. I went out of the telephone box, took a telephone book, phoned the telephone number. Ha'penny you paid for the telephone. Rang up to the exchange and the girl asked me, "Who you want to speak?" I say, "Can I speak to Mr Galbraith?" And she connected me. And a man came to the telephone, it was a busy voice. I say, "Excuse me sir, are you Colin Galbraith?" "He says, "Yes, who are you?" I say, "I'm Bernard Rand. Remember me from Basra?" 500 BOD was the unit. BOD is Base Ordnance Depot. BOD. Two minutes silence. Say, "Where are you ringing from?" Say, "I'm here, I'm outside the gate". "What the hell are you doing here?" I told him the story. He came out, brought me in. I told him what I want. He told me, "Look, it's so difficult, because everything is controlled by the Board of Trade, blah-blah-blah, to supply manufacturers before the war here. But, I will see what I can do". Make a long story short. He arranged for me some plastics. And...but...money. I told him, "Look Colin, I have got about 200 quid they gave me from the Army when I came out". And I went to the bank manager in Cricklewood Broadway, into Barclays Bank, 101 Cricklewood Broadway, and asked the manager. He told me he will give me an overdraft of 100 pounds. Then 300 pounds. But I need at least 500 or 600 pounds. Colin Galbraith went with me to the bank and guaranteed a loan, not an overdraft, but a loan. He guaranteed a loan for 500 pounds. And so I started making toys, a little, in plastic. When I went with the first collection of four toys to Woolworths, they didn't want to believe me that I'm going to supply all the toys. I don't know how did they... And I started making toys. Then I start making buttons from casein. Because I know a lot about casein. Buttons are made - today are made from polyester. I was working day and night. I used to live in Fulham Road, walk to Hyde Park Corner, take 16 bus and travel to Cricklewood Broadway. There I had an air-raided shelter as a factory, with no windows. I used to come there in the morning, it was still

dark. I used to leave in the evening when it was dark. I used to come to this club - I was alone, my wife was still in Palestine - to have something to eat, and to meet something, then walk down to...to Fulham Road, near the hospital, Fulham Road. And I'd have...I had a room with no heating. Shinwell was the minister of fuel and power, there was no fuel and no power. I had no bed, I was sleeping on the floor, in Fulham Road, and getting up when it was dark in the morning. And so I had been working for over a year. Very hard. And this developed and developed, and I bought some machinery. I built up a very big business. When I sold the business - I'm retired today - it was 360 people working for me. My factory exists in the city of York. I was in London, then I transferred to York. I built a beautiful factory here in London in Maygrove Road, near West Hampstead station. Then it was too small. Then I have transferred to York. I sold it - the business was a...a goldmine, it was a very good business. I was the biggest supplier of buttons to Marks & Spencer, and to the biggest companies in England. We were making 2 million buttons a day. And all sorts of knobs for doors, for furniture. You know, these plastic...only specialist plastic I was making. The factory is still very, very...but I...as I told you, I approached 70, I have no children. My family which I have, they live in Israel, and it was a little difficult for me to travel. I used to travel every day to York when I sold, here, the business. 8 o'clock I was at King's Cross, I had breakfast on the train and stay in York until 4. 6 in King's Cross, until I was home it was 7. I left 7 in the morning, came home 7 in the evening. It was too difficult. And in London it was very difficult to run a factory in West Hampstead, you know, running a factory was very, very difficult. Pollution, etcetera, etcetera, labour and so on. And so I made a co-operative. I sold it to the people working there. The government gave them a very generous loan for 10 years, and they paid me - not a lot, but they paid me, the money is secured. And...I have a lovely house. I live in Hampstead. I had last week a big party. There was my...my fiftieth wedding anniversary. The press was full of it and so on.

And when did your wife join you?

My wife came over about 2 years when I was here already. I came in 1945, she came in 1947. I didn't want to bring her - she was there - somebody, you know, to bring her, I haven't got the home. And I had a little money. I used to live in Swiss Cottage, I bought in Swiss Cottage a flat, Northways Court. I don't know if you know Northways Court, very nice Court in Swiss Cottage. My own flat. Then it was too small, I sold it and I bought a house in Hampstead. My house is worth today 700,000, 800,000 pounds. I live 40 years in the same house.

And what about your wife. Did she work over here?

My wife was working, she still works today. She works mostly for the old people's home. She gives them concerts. And she has made a film now for the BBC. And there is a lot of old people's homes around in Hampstead. Very elegant homes. And she is twice a week at least, she is giving concerts.

What did she do when she first came over to England?

She went to RADA. You know, to...she was an actress, very good, but the English language...and she was twice in the West End. In...on a show called 'Grab Me a Gondola'. A long time ago. But here is a very good theatre. Here in Hammersmith is a Polish big club. And she's very, very often playing here. She is very popular here in the Polish community, very popular.

And what about your sister?

My sister is a housewife. She was here at this party, here...from Israel she came. Two weeks here. She is a bit suffering, because...my mother was shot and she was also shot, but she was not killed. My mother was killed, and she was not killed. In the same town where they came from in Poland.

Your mother was shot before your sister was taken away?

No, they were together.

In the camp?

My mother was not in the camp. No. This was before the camp. Then she was taken.

So your mother died first and then your sister was taken away, is that right?

They were together and they were shot together. And my mother was killed, and she was not.

End of F152, Side A

F152 Side B

Your sister...

My sister was kept by a Polish man we knew, my family, in a cellar, and one day some Ukrainians denounced her and she was taken away, and she was very young and she was...terrible.

You don't know which camp she went to?

No, I don't know exactly the name.

And she would never talk about it?

No. She will not talk at all. If she talks she starts crying. She doesn't want to talk. No. Some stories I know about it. I know from somebody, you know - there is a lady here, a Polish lady who knew something. And she told me. But she wouldn't talk.

Has her marriage been a happy one?

Very happy. Very happy indeed. She has the most finest husband you can imagine. A girl - after these all sorts of things I told you, she was at home, she was...she was very young, and my parents were already not so young. 15 years difference between us. But she was...my father and my mother, anything in the world she wants; she was very spoiled, terrible spoiled at home, terrible. Special teachers they came in. I was already outside, I was not living at home, but I knew. And after this - all stories - and she is suffering a little with her back, because she was hit in the back. And I don't know how she survived. For me it is a miracle. But she is here and she is still suffering today. She was here in London in Harley Street. I brought her to see a professor. Her husband he is not a specialist, but she has been all over. There is not a single specialist in Israel where she hasn't been. And sometimes it's better and sometimes it's worse. But the boy, you should see the boy, as tall as me. He is blonde like a Scandinavian. Very tough boy and he's a fighter pilot. He's flying Phantoms. But, you know, in Israel, if you want to join the air force or...or, I don't know, parachutist, and the only son at home, then the mother has to sign permission for it. They will not take him until the mother has signed. And this was our problem. She didn't want to sign. You know, I was just - arbitor between her and he. I was also, you know, a bit - adventurous. I was not afraid. And I convinced her to sign because it will not help you. If he wants to do these things - he's a young boy, he was 17, you know, strong boy. And she had to sign. She signed and he is in the air force. But last year they gave him some medal. But I think that next year he will be discharged. You know in the air force they are keeping them a certain age. He must be today 36, 37.

What about your father, do you know what happened to him?

Yes. He was taken away and I never saw him again.

And you have heard no reports?

No.

And what about your town that you came from? The place that you came from. Has anybody...?

You cannot go there. I have tried. It belongs to Russia, it is not Polish. I have tried about 4 years ago. I went as a tourist. When I retired I thought to myself ah, I want to see the little town where I was born. And they told me it's a military zone, you can't go there. Now, the changes in Russia - maybe you can go. I haven't been. My wife doesn't let me go. But one day I will go and ask if I can go there. It's in Galitzia. This whole area they took away.

Do you know how many people survived there?

In the town?

Yes. Jewish people.

A dozen. 8000 of them. The whole town had 11,000 people. 8000 were Jews.

Have you ever met any of the dozen who survived?

Oh yes.

What do they say about what happened?

Not everybody knows the story, because they were taken away from this little town in all different areas in the mountains, and they shot them there and buried them. Some of them escaped to Russia. I had a schoolfriend. But here in London there is a lady, an elderly lady, Polish, not Jewish. I knew her and her family in England, they are going to these...for slimming, to the camps. We had that in Poland in...40 years ago. And her parents, her father was a doctor, and he had a big camp with little bungalows and they used to...they used to feed them with some special food, dieting and massages, what they are doing today, this was 60 years ago. And she was there - hidden somewhere there, all the war through, and she...from her I had some good...she came out after the war, and got away, you know. And she is not interested now, with all these Jews and what happened to them. I know the Rabbi was killed.

The Rabbi was killed?

Yes. He had a palace there. A small Buckingham Palace there.

It was a majority of Jews in the little town?

A majority, a majority, of course. Of course.

Was it a very religious Jewish...?

Yes, rather, yes. My family were not religious. My grandfather, yes. Yes. Very religious. But my father, you would see my father, he looks like a German officer. Moustache, well-shaven, well chosen, civilised dress. My mother, she used to go to the spa every year, to a spa, to Czechoslovakia. Carlsbad. Famous. Every year when I was a little boy she used to take me. Drinking the water there and beauty treatments and all sorts. And at our home the mother was the main brains, not the father. Father was running the factory. He was a very good technician, but the business of the running of the home was my mother. I had a very young mother. I used to go...if she wanted to go out she didn't have any...I was the boyfriend. She used to take me to go to dance. Because I was only 14 or 15. I was tall and my mother was young. We used to go to dances.

How old was your mother when you were born?

My mother was 18.

The same age as your wife. You married a young woman too?

Yes. 18. Very beautiful. Very beautiful. My mother was very beautiful. Shame I didn't bring a picture. I have a picture. I found a picture of her in America. With...I had an uncle - her brother, my mother's brother, he's dead, but the children. And I found some very, very nice pictures. They are before the war.

And her parents were living in the same little town, were they?

My mother's parents? Yes.

And your father's parents?

No, my father's parents died. But my mother's parents, my grandfather died, he was the most charming man I can remember. If you call it today 'science fiction', he was a science fiction storyteller, and 60

years ago I was a little boy and he used to entertain me with stories he invented. So fascinating, for hours and hours, about bandits, about people who came from Mars; some people came down, but they couldn't speak the language.. Invented them. He was a grain merchant, he used to buy grain in Ukraine. He had horses. He used to go away for three or four months to the Ukraine and buy grain and bring it over to Galitzia - it was still Poland. But then from Poland we had fruit, we had the most fantastic fruit in Europe. Peaches and grapes and... And so every trip took 3 months. He was selling and buying in Ukraine. And this was his business, and then he came back. And I was the first grandchild. And he died; I remember when he died, he was, I think, 90, but nobody knew exactly. Somebody said he was 100, because there was no evidence in the family. He was very witty, very, very witty. And he used to make jokes with my grandmother. I remember a joke, he was sitting in the front of our factory, my father's factory, and there was the only electric lamp in the street, and this was from our own electricity - we had the generator in the factory. There was no communal electricity. And there was a big lamp on the street lamp and we were sitting on a bench, and the girls used to go by with the boys. And he was looking and he was then maybe 80 or more, and he muttered, "Ach! if I would be 70", you know, what he could do. He was 80 or 90 and he said, "If I would be 70!" (LAUGHTER) He died. He was never to a doctor in his life. And he was getting up every day about 5 in the morning, and go to shul - the first 'minyan' they call it. And he came back about 6 or half past 6. And he had such a glass of vodka, in the morning. And chopped liver, goose liver. Chopped liver! My grandmother used to make it. With...what do you call it...

The fat. The chicken fat?

No. From goose.

Goose fat?

Goose fat, yes. And - a jar of Russian tea. And then he went to bed for an hour. Then he came up and went to town on business, an office or something. He had some business. He came back. We were invited to a Seder the other day, to our friends, and I told them the story how Seders were looking 60 years ago, as I remember, even 70 years ago, as I remember.

Can you describe it, please?

It was something traditional. You can't see it today.

Can you describe it for us?

You know Seder is the first thing... There was a big settee or...or chairs joined together, with all the pillows...because Seder, you have to sit on soft, you can't...because you have to lean. You can't sit at the Seder straight, you have to lean. You will see this in the Hagadah - leaning over. Of course we had a big family, and they used to come with their own pillows. Instead of flowers they brought a pillow. And they put these around, and the children. And there was a lot of drinking going on, Slivovitz, you know, made at home by my grandmother. Plum brandy, which is very strong. And the whole stories, you know, about the children and...and the ladies and the beautiful... Everything was covered up, you know, you couldn't use what you were using every day, you had special...in the loft we had a whole set of plates and spoons and forks and the lot. It was brought down and cleaned, and all silver candlesticks, and it was very, very beautiful. Crisp white, with lace, the covers. And reading the Hagadah. And every time they had stopped and they discussed...and they discussed it, and it took a long time. Then the dinner itself was about midnight. And when you finished the Hagadah even it was 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock in the morning. And grandfather was drunk completely. And he was a bit...having a nap, until about 5, and at 5 he went up, he had to go to shul, early morning shul.

All his life he went, did he?

Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh yes, he went all his life. He was very healthy. He was never, never...I can't remember when he was sick.

And he went to shul every day of his life?

Every day he went, when he was at home. I don't know when he was travelling. He went about...in the summer, I would say 4 or 5. In the winter maybe 6. Snow up to here. But he went and when he came from shul every day he had a big glass of vodka, you know, and chopped liver, and something - goose liver, and some other things which today is prohibited. And, you know, bread was baked at home. We didn't have a baker, you couldn't go out and buy bread, you had to bake it at home. My mother used to bake it. She used to bake for me when I went to school. It's called a Plumpletzil? Plumpletzil. In English, I would say is a pitta. But it is a pitta, but more refined. They turn it over in the flame in the big oven. Out. And they used to open it and fill it with goose fat and with grivelach. And this I used to take to school. And ha'penny - there was no pennies, but there was a pfennig. What was the ha'penny for? There was a lady, a Jewish lady in the front of the school. All boys bought a knadel, a chocolate. Like a ball, a chocolate ball, for a ha'penny. Her name was Chaia. If I didn't have a ha'penny she gave me credit. I was only 4 or 5.

Do you remember any other Jewish practices and festivals?

I remember, of course I remember Rosh Hashana. I remember Yom Kippur. I remember everything - Succoth specially. I was very...you know, we used to go, at Succah in the garden, outside. When it was raining it was terrible; you know, there was no roof. And there was a very famous rabbi in Kosov. I remember a little story. I used to go out. My father was very known, he knew the Rabbi, you know, he was very involved in politics, in Jewish, in the town. I used to go out with girls, not always Jewish girls, Ukrainian girls.

Did your parents mind that?

My parents didn't mind, no. But the Rabbi didn't like it. And I used to go out with very nice girls you know. Because the Jewish girls in little towns they were very, very difficult to go out with. You go out once or twice, you have to marry the next day. I used to go out with very nice girls, dancing. One day the Rabbi called my father to come up with me to see him, in the palace. He had a palace. A small Buckingham Palace.

Was it common for rabbis to live in palaces?

Yes, they were millionaires. Och! they were terribly rich.

How did they make their money?

By Chassidim, by supporting them. They had rich Chassidim. A lot of Chassidim came from Hungary, because the Hungarian border was very near. They had...sacks of gold, they brought them. They were terribly rich.

What did the other Jews think about rabbis being so rich?

Rabbi - he wants to support a rabbi, I can't see anything is wrong with it. Nothing is wrong. The bishops are rich here. And Rabbi asked my father to come up. I came up. Rabbi was sitting here, I was standing here, and my father... And Rabbi asked, "You don't understand Yiddish". "Sag mein Sohn", "Tell me my son, what is the difference between a Yiddish Madel and a goyeshe Madel?" Can't tell him the difference. (LAUGHTER) My father was very...he knew. He told the Rabbi not to take it so seriously. And he was right. And...I liked to go out. And you will laugh, I tell you. We had a girl, her name was Katrusha. Katrusha in Ukraine is Katrine. Katrusha had a father, a drunkard, and a mother - I don't know, she was not a prostitute, it's too ugly, but she was a washing or something, and she was the only child and very neglected, but she was so beautiful, really like a...like a goddess. We were left alone. Her mother used to come washing at our home. And my sister, they became the biggest friends with this little Katrusha. They were the same age. They were going to primary school together. And they became so both involved that my parents had to take Katrusha into our home - they didn't adopt her because they couldn't, but she was with us, with my sister, living like two girls, up to the war. I don't know what happened to her. Neither my sister knows. She was brought up. My parents paid for her education. She was making the most beautiful embroidery, sitting and embroidering this Ukrainian embroidery. We have still here a tablecloth; it's in pieces, but we still keep the embroidery made by this girl.

What about your school. Can you tell me anything about your school? Was it a Jewish school?

No.

But it must have been mostly Jewish children?

There was a lot of Jewish children in the school, of course. Then I was in university in Germany. But I was the - only a few of us in the whole town. We were not all very religious, but I'd been sent to Hebrew lessons, and I could speak Hebrew - I could speak Hebrew before I could speak Polish. Yes. My father was a very, very Zionist-minded man. He bought a piece of land in 1928 in Palestine, from Keren Kayemeth actually.

What about here in England, are you part of Jewish community?

No. No. No. I was for years president of the Polish Jewish Ex-Servicemen. But then I didn't like the...set-up. But I am here involved. Here is quite a few Jews. The president of this club is a Jew, Lasky, he is a Jew. I was treasurer here, until September - September. I don't want to have anything - new people came; the old people were here, I knew everybody. New generations which came here, which has to be. I am not on the same wavelength with them. I'm a lifetime member here and I'm treasurer here. I'm in charge of the home committee here. Everything which has been done I...

In what way do you feel not en rapport with them? In what way do you feel not on the same wavelength?

With these new people?

Yes.

They are mostly people who came here after the war, were in the army, who were growing up in the Communist Poland, you know. And they...you know, they...they...they see everything different than we are seeing. Quite a few of us are resigning.

Is it because they are Communist?

They're not Communist, no, no. They cannot come here as Communists. This is a very anti...anti-Communist place.

What is the difference do you think?

They are spending money too easy, they don't...they are not serious, they hadn't... You know a man who will give you advice, how to do something, first he had to prove to you that he gave this advice himself. A chap who is here 8 or 10 years hasn't got a penny, you know. Nobody knows what he is doing, but he comes to a meeting, he will shout and he will tell stories. Why haven't you done it for yourself? - he hadn't cigarettes even. And there are here quite a few people who are...done very well. Some of them are millionaires, and they don't want to have it. But on the other hand, you have to change the...the whole...you know the...you are getting older, quite a few have died. Don't forget it will be 50 years that we bought this place, opened this place. 50 years it will be next year. Next year in May it will be 50 years. I came here, people they were 20, 25, 30 - they're 80. And these youngsters, unfortunately, the good element of the young Polish people, they're not coming here, they are English. They're more British than the British. They're born here and they have their British friends. What will they come here? They're going to their own clubs, wherever they live. Some of them are barristers and engineers, a hell of a lot, thousands. On television you will see how many Polish names - they are not coming here. What will happen to this one day, I don't know. It's three million pounds' worth. It's a freehold building.

Did you meet any anti-semitism among Polish people?

Here? Here no. Here no. You wouldn't last five minutes. Here no. But of course there are some who takes them seriously. I know a chap here, when I was at university, a student, he was very anti-semitic in Poland. In Poland he used to go around, I remember, with razor blades, they had razor blades with 6 inch heads, to cut off Rabbis' beards. He is here. I said, "Look, you son of a..." He knows I know. He told me, "What do you want from me, I've been young, I've been stupid, I apologise". What can you tell him. This is his reply. "I've been an idiot, I agree with it, I give it to you in writing". Today there is no anti-semitism in Poland, even in Poland. Do you know how many Jews we have in Poland? Four and a half thousand. In the whole country. What will they do? I think three thousand of them are over 70. The rest are gone. 4 millions.

Do you feel yourself to be more Polish or more Jewish, or is it something you don't...?

Yes, I tell you exactly. I have been asked this question for many times, and I have a ready reply. I am feeling myself as a Polish Jew. I am born in Poland, I was brought up, I have a lot of Polish friends. But I never, never have said to anybody, never pretended in my life, even in the army, in...to...to cover it up, that I am not Jewish. Because a lot of people don't even believe that I'm Jewish. At my age. Today I am older but as a youngster they said you are looking like a Pole. I'm a Polish Jew, and this is the same as you're an English Jew; I'm a Polish Jew, and this is the same as you are an English Jew, with an English passport, with...with... You cannot hide it. You cannot say otherwise. I'm not a snob, I don't want to pretend I'm an Englishman or whatever it is. I open my mouth, you can see it in five seconds.

End of F152, Side B

F153. Side A

About four years ago I was told by my friend, Mr Dembinski, the president of the Sikorski Institute, that a man, a Polish man who lives in Balham in London, found in his home, in the cellar, 13 boxes of documents regarding Jewish inmates in Mauthausen. I decided to go down there and to have a look at what type of documents they were. We took a car, we went to Balham, and together with Mr. Dembinski we went down to Balham, to the cellar. What we saw, 13 big ammunition boxes packed with evidence, personal evidence of all prisoners in Mauthausen. I nearly had a shock when I saw it, but I'm not an expert and I did not know if these documents are real or they're fakes or whatever it is. And before deciding what to do with it, I took from every box out a few pieces of cards, a few cards, went over to the Israeli Embassy, have shown it to them and asked them if they know if they can tell me if this is of any value. I was told that they don't know, and the best thing to approach Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and they are the experts. So without hesitation, about two weeks later I took a plane with my wife and we went to Jerusalem, went to Yad Vashem. We are showing them the samples of the boxes and they nearly - they didn't believe it, that such a thing was still... And I was told, in Yad Vashem, that these papers they are looking for the last 30 years - or more, and they couldn't find where this evidence has gone. The story was like that. Polish had took intelligence, and Polish troops they came to Mauthausen during the war, and what they had done they had removed the whole evidence from the office, from Mauthausen concentration camp, put them on a lorry and smuggled the whole thing into England. The colonel in charge had a house in Balham. He was afraid to tell anybody, because the British government did not know he took all these cards away, and he stored them in his cellar. A few years later he forgot about these thing, he died, and another gentleman, a Polish gentleman, bought the house and found the cases in the cellar. He went to the Sikorski Institute here and told them the story. And so we decided to bring over somebody from Yad Vashem, a gentleman, a Professor Goodman, with his secretary. They came here and they have re-opened all these cases and they had a look and they told us, "Look - it's gold." It was something which we wouldn't believe that these things still existed. All the cases we want to remove from the house in Balham, but the owner of the house started to argue, he wanted some money. In any case we have agreed that instead of money he will get a medal from the Polish government in exile. And so it was. The president agreed, which is the father-in-law of Mr Dembinski, to give him a medal, and he gave us all the cases. We have removed the cases and stored them in the Sikorski Institute, in London. After a few weeks later the legation came from Yad Vashem here. They went through all the 13 cases. By the way, the weight of the 13 cases was 1000 kilograms, 64,000 pieces of evidence, with exactly the indication of every prisoner, and why he was in Mauthausen. For example: in German: the reason why he went to Mauthausen, because he was a Polish Jew, it said, 'Polische juda'. So these cases were removed from the Sikorski Institute and sent by diplomatic mail to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem they were tested, and they found undisputed evidence of thousands of Jewish people who perished in Mauthausen, or who survived Mauthausen. And Professor Goodman, himself an ex-prisoner of Mauthausen, found his own card with his picture and his name in these boxes. These records are now all on the computer. All sorted. And thousands of people have already...they found themselves or their families, and they know about the...the documents, if somebody was killed or if somebody died. It was written down on every card, that he died or he was...I don't know, he was killed or whatever.

Was the method of death on each card?

It was not exactly the method, but it was...he died. It didn't give the reason.

It specified the reason for them being in the camp, didn't it?

Yes. The reason for being in the camp was specified on every card. Let's say he was an officer, a Polish officer, was the reason. And regarding to the Jews, the reason was only 'Polish' or 'Jude'. This was the reason why he was in the camp. He was a Polish Jew and they put him in the camp. And these documents, after they went to Yad Vashem, Mr Dembinski and I we went over two years ago, when everything was already sorted out. He had a medal given to him from Yad Vashem. And myself, now, we have very good relations with Yad Vashem. I will add another thing to it, also regarding the Sikorski Institute. A lot of documents were released by the British government after the 35 years, regarding Poland, regarding the Polish Army. And these documents were transferred also to the Institute of Sikorski, and Yad Vashem was very much interested to have some information what happened to the Polish ghetto fighters. Which a lot of evidence they found in these papers released

now, and I have arranged that Yad Vashem has sent over here a secretary and she took away about three and a half thousand pieces of evidence, into Yad Vashem, which are now stored in Yad Vashem. This unfortunately is 40 years too late. But better later than never. And these documents are all today in Yad Vashem.

Also you mentioned that the Mauthausen papers were the only ones that were missing?

Yes, the Mauthausen papers, I was told by Yad Vashem, by Dr. Krakowski, who was in charge of this whole thing, that they have most of the concentration camp papers. The only missing link were these papers from Mauthausen, which we found here in London. And this, more or less, has completed the evidence which they have.

You were telling me about how you came to enlist in the Carpathian Army?

I...as I told you, I was born in the Carpathians, in the heart of the Carpathians. My family used to live there, for as far as I know, for 300 years. And...and to join the Polish Army, it was...I wanted to be a) near home and b) I wanted to be in a regiment which has some tradition, history with the area where I was born. And it was not easy to get into the - I will call it the (INAUDIBLE) In English like Highlander. Highlander Regiment in Scotland. It was not easy. There were only a few Jewish, about four or five of us, in the whole regiment of about 2000 or something. And...but I had very good relations, I finished officer school and became an officer. And, I don't know, mostly people in this regiment were people from the area where I came from. There were a lot of Ukrainians, a few Jews, Poles. Even a few, I call them 'Bruzos'. A Bruzo was a native there from the area, you know - you have to be very tough, you have to be a very good skier, a climber, you know, sleeping in the open and the snow, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

It was a bit of an élite one?

Elite. It was a highly élite Polish regiment. You know we used to wear cloaks and hats with a feather, like in Italy the Saleri? In Italy it was Saleri, they have the same thing. One has to be very tough and to finish the officers school. So I remember from one hundred in the officer's school only 36 have finished. And the rest were deferred till the next year or another year. But it was not easy. I finished the first year.

You were telling me about your family. 300 years in Carpathia. Have you any idea where they came from before that?

Yes. Yes. You know my name is Rand. It's not a Jewish name. It's my real name. And I remember being in school with Jewish boys. Rappaports and other Jewish names. And Rosenberg. And I was Rand, which was not very Jewish and neither a Polish name. And I was always very interested where we came from. When I finished school I was told by my father - my grandfather was already dead - by my father - that they - he knew that they came from Sweden through the Baltic. You know, Sweden, about 300 years ago, had a Polish King. Sweden - Sweden was the story. And they came from Sweden somewhere, he didn't know exactly. And I remember I went over the Baltic to Stockholm, and I made a little research, and I brought back the family tree. That the Rands came to Sweden over a hundred years ago. And then there was three brothers and they moved over to Poland and they opened a business making wires and nails, metal, in Crackow. Three brothers. And then they split, the three brothers, and they opened different businesses. One had a factory in Tarnow making tyres of rubber. You know they used to wear Schnee shoes - over-shoes in those days. And all sorts of rubber products. The other went to Austria, because it was Austria, and married a girl, she was Swedish, her name was Tretton. And Tretton still exists. One of the biggest Swedish rubber companies. Nobody from this family the Tretton exists, but they used to live in Vienna and they had a factory in Austria. And he married a Tretton. The third was my great grandfather, who moved east. And to Kosov where I was born, to the area, first to Kolomya, it was a bigger town, and then he moved to a little town, to Kosov, and opened a factory making textiles. Hand woven, you know, all sorts of Kilim - they used to call it in Polish. Carpets, handmade carpets, beautiful carpets. And so they were doing it for a few hundred years in the same place. My - this was my father's side - my mother's family, they...I knew they came over the border from Hungary, that was not far away. Hungary and Czechoslovakia were such a corner...they came from Hungary. And their name was Vinege. And they settled down and my

grandfather, from my mother's side, was a grain merchant. He used to go to the Ukraine to buy grain and he was a...he was one of the best storytellers I ever knew, I remember as a little boy. And he was a science fiction man. As I told you, he used to tell me all these invented stories. He was a very brilliant, brilliant storyteller, and had a very good memory, and he was very witty and very...always good humour. His name was Herschel Vinege. He died, according to some, when he was 90. According to other people he was 100. Nobody knew exactly his age, because there was no evidence in those days. My grandfather. My grandmother, she was - the war broke out, she was still alive, she was very, very old, I don't know how old she was. And I remember, when I was told, I remember that she was sitting in the front of my parents' house, she was nearly blind, and a German soldier walked through and hit her with his rifle and she died. This is what I know. I was brought up with my grandmother, because my mother married when she was 17. And she once was very beautiful and she wants to go out and have a good time and she...I was the first child, first grandchild, and she left me with my grandmother. And so I was brought up with the grandmother. All these years. And then the mother was very...in business a lot.

Did you not see much of your mother when you were small?

I saw her, yes, I saw her every day. But I...she left me, she used to go out and she left me always with the grandmother. Grandmother was absolutely...she was an angel. I was...she was out of this world, and she was a very good cook and she was working very hard for the whole family, cooking and baking and cleaning. And we had some servants at home, Ukrainians I remember. And she was, until I left home and went to university, and then I went to Warsaw, I was living in Warsaw and...and I used to come once a year for...for...mostly for Pesach.

Could you describe your grandmother's home to me?

Grandmother's home was a little - bungalow, I would call it. Wood, from wood, not a single brick. Very primitive. There was no tap water. They used to bring a man, a water carrier, used to bring water from a well, very good water.

And it was in the mountains, was it?

In the mountains. From the well - the well was near the church, there was a Catholic church.

Was it in a village, or was it kind of in the mountains on its own?

No, it was a village. It was a village. In the little village was a Catholic church and there was a big well. You know, you had to with your hands. Not a motorised - with your hand you had to...a hundred foot deep. And to bring a bucket out the water and the waterman was here, and you had two - one here and one here - two big water containers. And then it was brought to our home. We had a big barrel outside and fill up the barrel and this was the water arrangement. My parents, no my parents already had tap water and... What else do I remember from home? I tell you one thing which I shall always remember. We had a stove. You know it was very cold there, and heating, there was no central heating. We had a stove which was in a hall between two rooms. It was heating two rooms. And this stove was high up to the ceiling and all glued on tiles, hand painted, in these Ukrainian colours, yellow, green and red. I don't know, I would give a few thousand pounds for the chance to put it up here in my home. It was the most beautifully warm and of course the fuel was wood. And we had some servants, they used to - in the summer they used to buy the wood, they brought the wood from the forest, they used to cut it in small logs, store it outside the house, under a little roof outside in the garden. This was fuel for the whole winter. And this...the heat was terrific. And the whole stove was hand painted from the top to the bottom. And only the...the door to the stove was brass.

Which home was that in? Your grandmother's home?

Grandmother. From my mother's - from my mother's side. My father - I nearly don't remember him. I was very, very small when he died.

You mean your father's parents?

My father's parents, yes. I remember only his sisters. He had two sisters. And - I don't remember. I remember her name was Schapps. She had a son - she was a widow I think - and...and used to live in Vienna, who married a...who married in Vienna. And one other sister used to live Kolomya, not far away where I lived, about 10 miles away. But the mother's family, up to the war, my mother had two brothers. One left for America in 1902, which is the family I am still in contact today. He's...his grandchildren came to my wedding anniversary from America. Of course they have changed their names. They don't know anything of the family. I was also tape recording them all the story about the family, because they don't know anything. And he died, my uncle, he died when I was in the Army during the war. And the other brother was killed by the Germans. Married, with a fantastic son. He has a son who was 14. He was a violin player, and if he would be today he would be a big artist, he will be alive. It was his only son, and was a dress designer. He was fantastic, he used to design for - in Austria, to Vienna, to all these fashion...papers. Fantastic designer. He was a very, very good designer and used to paint and design and... And he was also killed. And then...

How was he killed?

German. I don't know.

But you don't know how?

No.

What about your parents' home? Can you describe your own home?

Oh, my home, my parents' home was rather a modern home. And...

Was that made of wood too?

No, no, no, no. My parent's home was made of bricks. But not these type of bricks which you have in England, they were completely different bricks, because there were no bricks like here. The bricks were made from straw, straw and mud. You know, something like this, but...cemented over plaster. We had central heating, we had...we had tapped water, we had...and outside the home was a factory, near the house.

Your own factory?

Yes, and we had...outside was a bit of the river.

And were you in the village too?

Yes, yes, yes. Outside the town, about a mile. Because the bridge - there was a river - a bit of a wooden bridge.

Was it a smarter home than your grandmother? Because you said hers was rather primitive. Yours wasn't primitive, was it?

No. No. By even today's standards. Because we had everything. We had central heating; it was not thermostatic control, but we had central heating. And we had hot water and cold water in the bathroom. We had two bathrooms at home.

And you had plenty of food?

Oh. Food, too much food. Food. My father was a very wealthy man.

Did food become more short?

Of course. Poor people - Friday always they used to come and in the front of father's office, you know, they gave him some money for to buy a fish for Shabbos or something like that, or a Challah, a sort of a

cake. Yes. There were poor people. But most people in this little town and village, they were not poor.

They grew their own vegetables, did they?

They didn't grow vegetables as far as I know. They had all little industries, there were a lot of industries there. Very cheap labour, Ukrainian, 90 per cent Ukrainian, and they used to make carpets, they used to work for my father; they used to have little at home and bring it to father every week, every two weeks, and father used to pay them and we used to export them. And they had, you know, I wouldn't say like a luxurious life, a reasonable life. People used to come on holidays there, it was in the middle of the beautiful mountains and the climate was very good there. Winter was cold and summer was very hot.

And did you have the Friday evening before the Sabbath at home?

This we always had. Even with my parents, which they were not religious people, but Friday evening was traditional Friday evening holidays, was traditional holidays more than anything you can see here. Dressed in white, all the family, the children. Aah, it was... Now my father was not religious, but he used to go to shul, but he had a seat in the...in the synagogue. And my mother too - only the holy days, they were not these type of people who used to go every day. But we were...I don't think he was as kosher as my grandfather, who was strict kosher.

What did you have on your Friday evening meal?

We had soup with lockshen macaroni. We had chicken or this type of dish. Or some...something my grandmother...my mother didn't cook. I don't know if she knew how to cook. The grandmother, she was doing everything, her mother. She was a hundred percent business woman, business woman, and she was very nice dressed, she had a lot of money. She knew more about money than my father knew.

Was there a big age difference between your parents? Was your father a lot older?

6 years.

So he was quite young too?

Yes.

And on the Saturday what did you do?

Saturday the factory was closed. The factory was closed. And Sunday it was closed. Sunday some Jewish workers were working. On Saturday - we had a big garden, we used to sit in the garden if the weather was good. My father was mad on reading German newspapers from Vienna. They used to come three weeks late. He didn't read a Polish paper because he didn't believe anything in the Polish papers. He was a typical Austrian patriot. He used to read a paper, I remember the name of the paper was 'Neve Presse'. It still today exists. And he was very keen for these papers to come, five or six papers, and all Saturday he was sitting over these papers and reading in German - German papers. My mother, she was around the home or - I don't know - go for a walk or...or...you know, used to go round the village and say, "Good Shabbos...and blah, blah, blah". And then lunch. After lunch we used to have a nap I remember - not me, not my father. And then I used to go to some girl's. I don't know, somewhere, to a dance on Saturday evening. Or, you know, promenade, we used to call it. There and back, there and back, in the main street. There and back, there and back. To go out with a girl was very difficult, because these girls in the small towns are so looked after by their parents. Huh. You had to go in the side-streets. It was very, very, very complicated. Much easier today. A lot easier.

End of F153, Side A

F153 Side B

.....As long as I remember. To Carlsbad, to Czechoslovakia, and she used to take the water there. And - I don't know - and when I was a young boy, I remember, she used to take me. And then as I remember, after the war, I think, more or less, and...she was all right. My father was completely all right and I can't remember him ever being ill.

And you were always well too?

Yes, always well. You know, the fresh air in this place, in this part of the world, and the food, healthy food. And the type of life was very healthy, very healthy.

Were most people healthy?

Most people.

Was there no tuberculosis?

No. I don't know anybody who had tuberculosis. Really it was gold to live there, the air and the snow. I used to ski without a shirt, only my trousers; my body was covered with ice, I didn't know even it was cold.

How did the British Army treat you at the end of the war?

Superb. I'm afraid I can't show you - I have got some certificates, letters, from the various...my commanding officers. Recommendations. First class, first class. I had no complaint whatever. I came here to Tilbury. I remember I landed in Tilbury on the 31st of December.

Which year?

1945. And we couldn't land. We were waiting - it was New Year. Shinwell, I think, was minister - or later on I think. I didn't have a home, I didn't have anything. And I landed here with my Army belongings. I had an Army bag, a canvas bag, I still have it. And I landed with a Polish colonel here in Fulham Road, he is dead; I knew him from the Army. I was sleeping on the floor. Didn't have a bed. No heating. And I started, you know, like every...almost thousands of us started over again. And my wife was in Palestine, I was on my own. And...

After the war did you decide to stay here?

Yes.

Because you liked it?

I liked it.

Or any other reason?

No. The reason was that I knew very well Palestine, I was nearly a year there, I had a lot of friends there which I knew from before the war. But it was...for me Palestine in those days was like being locked up in a small - you know, room. It was too small. I had always a vision, you know, I wanted to see the world, I wanted... This was one reason. The second reason was, when I came here I never wanted to stay in Palestine. Maybe if I wouldn't start off to make my future, to build up a future, maybe I would have gone back, because my wife was two years there. But I saw here a greater future for myself than I saw in Palestine. Maybe I was wrong; I wouldn't say that is a question of discussion, I don't know, but I haven't done so bad here. I'm very pleased and content. And I didn't think the climate would suit me. When I was a youngster, yes, in the desert and tanks and... But later on I...I'm not very keen. I'm born in the mountains and it's very, very cold. I like...I feel much better here, in this climate or if I go to Switzerland or...than I was in Palestine with the Hamsin and so on.

What do you think of the situation in Israel now?

I have many friends there. I knew Begin very well personally. I knew him when he was in the Polish Army, he was a corporal. I used to discuss with him Israel every evening in...Iraq, he was a corporal in the Polish Army. I was in the British Army but stationed together. Their philosophy, for me, is...I don't know, I would have gone for a settlement - how many people - Israel is such a small country, they have to live, and every Israeli boy who is killed, I've... I'm against war because I have seen too much war. I've been in the biggest bloody battle - El Alamein; I've been in Tobruk; I've landed in Italy. I've seen the lot. And I'm against war, against killing, against war, against... And if...of course it's a very difficult question. To settle it. I'm even against the...that the P.L.O. have their own independent country, because there is no room in the country. I don't know...I know this area very well indeed. From somewhere - from Nablus or from Jerusalem to Jordan it is nothing, you can walk there now. How will they solve the Gaza, the Gaza has no connection with Israel's bank. They will have to make some corridor. It's a very complicated story. And I think Shamir - you know you have to study first the mentality of the leaders in Israel. They are little Polish Jews, they come from little Polish towns, which they couldn't see right or left, they never saw anything. Take Begin - except Ben Gurion, Ben Gurion he was travelling, he saw the world, he was another man. Take Begin. Who is Begin? I don't know, a little...nothing in Poland. I knew him. I didn't know him, I knew of him. He was a big talker, and Jabotinski came to...I remember came to Warsaw. I was myself a refugee. And he was a big talker. They saw only this, they want to have a big Eretz Ysrael. Very well, but nobody will tell them how to have it. To have it by fighting, they will never win. Because there are tens of millions of Arabs. If they kill ten Jewish boys, it's like to kill a half a million Arabs. And ten Jewish boys will come, you know what they are doing, they are throwing stones and there are lots of little boys killed. I saw children in Jerusalem, I was ashamed of them, you know. It is...it is very difficult. I have got my only nephew, my sister's son, who is a pilot, and I am afraid even...to think about it.

You feel a great sympathy for the Arabs?

I am afraid, he is not afraid. Yes. It is very, very difficult. But...the best you can...I would say settle it even. I'm not a bit politician, an Israeli politician. But I can tell you that Shamir - I don't know what his name was, his name was not Shamir - he came from a little town in East Poland, you know, and - terrible misery. Nothing. He was...during the war he was a Stern gang. I knew Stern, I knew him.

Did you?

Yes, I knew him personally.

Can you tell me anything interesting about him?

He was a very...very religious, very, very, very right wing man. You know. He was...he was only fighting and fighting and fighting. He was throwing bombs here and bombs there. He was a very brave man. He was one of these lieutenants. These people, you know, they are...their mind is fixed in a certain direction. But if you take...I'm not a very big admirer of Perez. I know Perez personally, I know him very well personally. I know Weizman. Weizman was with me together in the Army in Egypt. I remember Weizman when he was a truck driver, he was driving a water tanker and then they sent him to Rhodesia to train as a pilot. When he came back he was a big 'Schwitzer'. Do you know what a 'Schwitzer' is? Do you know...? Talks a lot and does a little. And he was in a place called Ismalia, on the Suez Canal. He went to Rhodesia and became a pilot after 6 or 8 months. He came back. He was flying a Spitfire. The Germans were away - 500 or 600 miles from there, out in the desert. You couldn't see a German plane near there even. And the Spitfires they were training and they had petrol for 200 miles. And he came back and he shot down a German. How he had done it with such little petrol. We were laughing in the officers' mess. I became a great friend of his when he became Minister of Aviation. And he was Minister of Aviation. He was a pilot, he was a nice man. He is a labour man. Parents - where did he get his education over? He came to Israel, to a kibbutz, a youngster from Poland. He came from another little town near Galitzia where I am from this part of... He was Ben Gurion's right hand, he used to send him to buy arms and so on. And these old people, they had one thing - to fight. It is very nice if you have a big country, you have a big human reserve, you can afford if 100 soldiers, 500 will be killed. The Chinese can afford it and the Americans, the British not so much.

Did you feel the whole idea of Zionism was misguided?

No. I am a Zionist myself. But - you see, Communism is a very nice thing if there is a human face. And this is...Communism is not a bad idea, but only Communism with a human face. The same as Zionism. I think Zionism is a nice idea. Settle it, settle it as best you can. Of course they have to make sure that the family will be... But settle it. For Gods sake don't...don't settle it by bomb throwing, by shooting young Arabs. I don't like it. And I know such a lot of my friends they don't like it. Of course, maybe - I don't know - maybe we don't know so much...reason of the background of it. I don't live in Israel. I have a sister there, I am in Israel twice a year, sometimes three times. I know of a lot of more friends there than here. But my friends will say the same thing as I am talking to you. Israeli officers, you know, in the Army, in the British Army, they have been in Israel, they have been in the Israeli Army, and they say the same things. But you have to be very, very right wing man to...I...I am against.

Do you feel that something like the Holocaust could happen again?

I don't think the Holocaust will happen again. In any case not in our lifetime. It is too much - the young generation is too liberal today. Because it's not up to us, we are told we are nothing. I'm speaking about me, not about you, because you're young. I speak about myself, we are nothing. And the young people, or as far as...I am meeting quite a few young people here and not here. They are...I don't think...I don't think they have a chance to start again a Fascist party or... Of course we have to be on watch 24 hours a day, we have to be on watch. I don't say we should forget, never forget for a moment. Always remember. As long as we remember always, there will be no Holocaust. In the moment you start forgetting, ignoring it, there is a possibility.

Do you know Simon Wiesenthal at all?

Very well, yes. Very well. He lives in Vienna. Yes. There will be a film, today I think. He will be on television. Very great man. He's from the same part of Poland as I am. Yes. I met him when I was president of the Polish Jewish Ex-Servicemens' Association. I met him twice.

You think his work is...?

Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think what he has done, I...I know no other man who has...all his life... He had very great difficulties in the beginning, in Austria where he lives, and...all over the place, and... Now he has a museum in America in his name and... Wiesenthal is a very, very, very great man. (INAUDIBLE)...ex politicians today because...

This is in Israel?

In Israel. I know a general, his name is Metcliff(ph) A very brave man. He was in the British Army and then became an Israeli in...one of the first generals. A very good friend of mine. I don't know if he is still alive, I couldn't tell you. There was another man, a very nice man, Janick Steiner(ph) He is alive, I spoke to him the other day on the telephone. He rings me once a month, I ring him. He lives in Israel, in Zahala. Zahala is a colony for ex-officers, outside Tel Aviv. And he lives next door to Dayan - ex-Dayan, now Dayan is dead. I knew him, yes, I knew Dayan, and he had both eyes. Very few people...in Israel...here, I don't know. There was a story. I was stationed in Zarafant. Zarafant is a big camp, a British camp outside Tel Aviv, half-way between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. And I remember Dayan when he was a sergeant. And he went with scouts - scouts, not commandos, scouts. He and two Scotsmen. No, one Scotsman and the other was an Israeli. The other was an Israeli Sabra. And...went on...on...intelligence business to Syria, over to Syria. Because Dayan knew the area, he was born on the border there in a kibbutz. I've forgotten the name of the kibbutz. I remember then I saw this fellow, this Scotsman, I knew him he was an officer. Dayan was not an officer, and the other chap was also not an officer, a warrant officer. And I knew he...told they were going on intelligence business over to Syria. There was such trips a lot in those days. Germans, they were already in Syria. I remember when he left and I remember when he came back. He came back with one eye. How did he lose his eye? A sharp-shooter was sitting in the top of the mosque and he saw them and he hit them through the binoculars and damaged his eye. He came back and his eye was completely gone, and I remember he was in hospital in Sarafand(ph). I haven't seen, but I saw him just after he left hospital. But this is not

the story, the story is this. That there are disputes in Israel today, who was with Dayan when he lost his eye. And I knew the man, I knew this man. I told somebody years ago the story in Israel. About a year ago, or less even, a chap came here and was looking to find me. He was went to the Sikorski Institute because somebody told him that I'm an ex-Polish officer, and he found me. And I've been told, "We are making a film now about Dayan, and we want to know the truth. And we were told that you knew the Scotsman who was with Dayan, and if he is still alive". I knew the Scotsman, but if he is still alive I don't know. I had seen this Scotsman after the war, here, on a reunion. There was a reunion in...Lord's. You know, the cricket ground. There was a reunion, a reunion of the Desert Rats. And this Scotsman was one of the Desert Rats, and I saw him at this reunion. What happened to the Scotsman. They were mad to find the Scotsman. I knew a few people, in here, English people, and...and I contacted them. Maybe they know, they have some idea. I knew more or less...I didn't know exactly his name, I didn't know his name. We used to call him Mac. I don't know his name, but I knew him. And some difficult Scots name he had. Make a long story short, we found the Scotsman through the Association of the Desert Rats, Desert Rats Association. And we found him and he told them all the story. It was the same story as I told you. We found him somewhere in the Highlands in a village, he was an old man, retired. This is the Dayan story which I remember. Yes, I remember him with both eyes.

..... I was a staff officer before the battle of El Alamein. At Montgomery's...I remember he was in the caravan, and we were outside. We did not know exactly when, that any minute the battle of El Alamein will start. But I remember at midnight - the date I can't remember - when the all thousand guns at once start firing on the German lines. The whole sky was red, it was like middle of a sunny day; it was light like mid-day. And I will never forget the crying of the Germans which were...the tankers. The German soldiers in tanks were blown up in the minefields. And the first...the 7th British Armoured Division which I was attached to, and they went in to clear the tanks from the minefields, and their losses which they had which I remember when daylight came we saw them...a massacre. In the three hours battle, three or four hours, it was something I will remember all my life. The battle - the start of the battle of El Alamein - there was about 600 killed in three hours. They killed, they killed, you know, you couldn't...you couldn't save them, you were in tank; you saw a man dead, and you had to run him over. What could you...you couldn't... There was a narrow passage into the minefields. They cleared the mines - the engineers, you know. And you were driving. It was something terrible. That is why I am against war.

End of F153, Side B

END OF INTERVIEW

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NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Ref.No.: C410/015 Playback Nos: F151-153 inc

Collection title: Living Memory of the Jewish Community

Interviewee's surname: RAND Title: Mr

Interviewee's forenames: BERNARD

Date of birth: 1910 Sex: M

Date(s) of recording: 22.04.1989

Location of interview: Polish Club, 55 Exhibition Road

Name of interviewer: Milenka Jackson

Type of recorder: Marantz CP430

Total no. of tapes: 3 Speed: -

Type of tape: C60 Noise reduction: ?

Mono or stereo: Stereo Original or copy: Original

Additional material: None

Copyright/Clearance: Full clearance

F151 Side A

Born in 1910 in Carpathian mountains (Kolomyja) - then Austria, now Poland. Jewish family, father had carpet factory. Spoke German at home. He was evacuated with mother during First World War to Upper Austria and later went to school in Vienna. Later rejoined father in Poland and studied engineering in Chemnitz (Germany). He joined his father at the factory which was prosperous and expanded and he went to trade exhibition in New York in 1939.

In February 1939 he married a young actress. He took many presents from American Jews to their friends and families back home in Kosov. After university he joined famous Highlander Regiment in Poland. Though family was Jewish they were not religious and had many non-Jewish friends.

In September the Russians and Germans met in his part of Poland, he was in the army and escaped with them, and with his car which he brought from America, into Rumania. He tried to take his parents along but they did not want to leave. Moved on to Bucharest, started to make a living and tried to get his wife out of Warsaw. With the help of an American friend in diplomatic service and various other people who managed to pass letters, he eventually managed to get a Rumanian visa for his wife and two friends - in exchange for his car.

With money saved from his USA trip which he managed to send, his wife got ticket, passport and visa and reached Bucharest - via Germany. By that time the Germans had already entered Western Rumania and it became urgent to leave. He and his wife decided to try to get to Palestine, took a boat to Constanza in Turkey. There, with the help of Jewish Agency members, they were advised to go to Izmir and from there get on a small Arab boat which was used for carrying goats. They decided to do that and took writer friend and some other friends with them. The train journey to Izmir took five days, but at first there was no boat. Eventually a boat came and, only by threats, they were eventually taken on board.

F151 Side B

They travelled all night and eventually landed in Cyprus, were sent on "across the sea" and landed in Haifa. There they were all arrested by the British and sent to a camp. After two weeks he was released in order to join the Polish army and his wife found work as an actress, learned Hebrew. As B.R. was the only Pole who could speak English he became an important aid at various conferences. After 6-8 months he was sent to Tobruk - fighting against Rommel. Some friends were killed there. Later in the battle of Benghazi and stopped in El Alamein. There he was transferred to the British army as an English speaking engineer - to a large workshop and later he transferred to 26 B.L.U. (British Liaison Unit) which took him to Iraq - arranging equipment for the Polish army which had come to Iraq and Persia.

He was then transferred back to the desert with the 7th Armoured Division - Desert Rats - in the "recovery unit" - recovering tanks from the minefields. He went through the battle of El Alamein - on to Tripoli - on to Sicily. Describes landing in Salerno and hiding in a tobacco factory which was set on fire - survived the smoke with gas masks. Then on to Eboli where a lot of his friends got killed - buried in large military cemetery which he visits often. Then landed in Salerno and went along coast, using Bailey bridges.

On to Ravello where he describes driving a tank into Hotel Caruso which was full of German wounded officers. They rounded them up in their pyjamas and arranged to have them collected by military police. On to Positano, where with the help of a communist friend they rounded up all the fascists. And the communist was made mayor and remained so for 30 years. Then on to Naples, Florence - his regiment first in Milan with Mussolini still lying in the Piazza. Then they moved on to Padua and towards the Austrian border.

He was then in a unit that used small reconnaissance cars. One early morning they went in one of the small reconnaissance cars to investigate German positions near Klagenfurt, when they saw a train about to move. He suspected it might be full of concentration camp people and decided to shoot, destroying the engine and then shot or wounded all the Germans who came out. He investigated the train and found it full of camp inmates. He contacted U.N.R.R.A. and waited until they came to rescue the

people in the train. When back with his regiment he finds out where the people from the train were taken to and decides to find them - near Padua. He finds the camp, manages to get permission to go in, talks to people in various languages and eventually talks to a frightened old man from Kiev.

F152 Side A

The old man in the queue recognises B.R. and tells him that his sister is in one of the tents in the camp. After a difficult decision he decides to get a 24 hour pass from the army and manages to get his sister and her adopted parents out to Padua - took them to a doctor friend and left them there with some money as he had to rejoin the army. Later he manages to get himself transferred to Naples and, with the help of friends in the Jewish Brigade, he gets the three of them to Naples where they stayed for six months in an hotel. He then tries to get them to Palestine. With the help of a Polish colonel he manages to get them the necessary papers to get on a ship as Polish army. The ship went to Alexandria. He got himself on a plane to Alexandria so that he could meet his sister on arrival. He got his sister on a train, still in Polish uniform - to Palestine, where she was met by B.R.'s wife - who managed to get her into a Kibbutz.

During the war of independence the sister had a nervous breakdown, was rescued by a medical student whom she later married. B.R. paid for his studies - he is now a famous Professor. His sister and husband had a son who became an airline pilot, gave up medical studies in Padua and bombed Cairo during the Israeli war.

B.R. went to England after the war and decided to make plastic taps. With the help of friends he managed to get a loan for machinery and some plastic. Started selling taps to Woolworths, and later also made buttons. He worked very hard - with a workshop in a Cricklewood air-raid shelter. But he was very successful. Later had a factory in West Hampstead and in York. He supplied buttons to Marks & Spencer. Eventually he made the West Hampstead factory into a co-operative. He now has large house in Hampstead and celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary there. His wife came over from Palestine in 1947. She also works, now in old people's homes, and also gives concerts. When she first came here she went to RADA, but had difficulties due to language problems, but performed in the Polish Club in Hammersmith. The sister is still in Israel, came over for party. Sister is suffering still from the times when both she and her mother were shot; mother died but she survived.

F152 Side B

Talks about his sister who was very spoilt at home - is 15 years younger. After war experiences, about which she will not talk, she is suffering from back trouble due to the shooting incident. Her son, now a pilot, is very adventurous. His mother - with advice from B.R. - had to sign to give permission for him to become a pilot. Now is soon due for retirement.

B.R. does not know what happened to his father. B.R. tried to go back to his old home but was not able as it is now Russian military zone. He talks about his parents and grandparents. Mother was the brain in the family and very beautiful, used to take her son to dances. Remembered his mother's parents, especially grandfather - a grain merchant. Describes grandfather's day, starting with "Shul" followed by vodka and chopped liver. Obviously a great character. Describes the special Seder evening that was celebrated in his grandfather's house, which went on until 2 or 3 in the morning.

He also remembers the bread his mother baked, which he took to school, and a special chocolate ball they used to buy at school. Talks about going out with non-Jewish girls and being reprimanded by the Rabbi for doing so. And the daughter of a non-Jewish washerwoman was a friend of his sister and brought up and educated in their home. He still has some of her embroidery. B.R. did learn Hebrew, father was a Zionist and bought land in Palestine in 1928. B.R. was president of Polish Jewish ex-servicemen in England, but does not feel in rapport with present generation who are members of the club. The children of old members are now British and not interested anymore. No anti-semitism in Polish community here. He himself feels a "Polish Jew".

F153 Side A

Four years ago the president of the Sikorski Institute (Mr Dembuski?) told B.R. of some 13 boxes of documents relating to inmates of Mauthausen which had been found in the cellar of a house, owned by a Pole. He and a friend (Mr Dembuski?) went to investigate, took some of the cards from the boxes and he took them personally to Israel to Yad Vashem. Yad Vashem assured authenticity of papers - they were the missing link in the evidence of camps. The boxes were brought to England by Polish troops who came to Mauthausen and kept by the colonel in charge who had this house in Balham. After he died another Polish man bought the house and found the boxes and informed the Sikorski Institute.

The boxes were removed by Yad Vashem and the owner of the house got a medal from the Polish government in exile as a reward. The boxes contained most valuable evidence with cards of every inmate, giving details on their origin and their fate. More documents, released by the British government after 35 years, were now also released to Sikorski Institute which was also made available to Yad Vashem.

B.R. describes now why and how he joined elite regiment in the Polish army, when he became an officer.

B.R. explains the origin of his name - father's family came from Sweden a long time ago, three brothers came to Poland, one was his great grandfather who opened a textile factory. Mother's family came from Hungary - name was Vinegr. Grandfather was a grain merchant - used to tell him science fiction-like stories. He died very old. Grandmother, when brought him up, was killed by German soldier who hit her with his rifle. He was very fond of grandmother when used to run the household. Describes grandmother's house which still had water brought from a well in the village.

Describes hand painted tiled store in grandmother's home. Talks about father's and mother's siblings, some now in America.

B.R.'s own home was a modern house with electricity and water and central heating. Father was rich. Most people in village were not poor, had little industries. Parents were not religious but always kept Friday evening holidays. Describes food on Friday evenings. Father was Austrian patriot, read Austrian newspapers on Saturdays. B.R. spent Saturday evenings going to dances or promenade with the girls.

Fl53 Side B

Mother used to take B.R. on holidays to Karlsbad in Czechoslovakia - all the family was very healthy.

Talks about coming to England after the war - decided to stay here, did not want to go to Palestine - too small and bad climate. He discusses his opinions on Israel and some of its personalities. He knows Begin who was corporal in Polish army. He does not agree with present policy, does not approve of war. He feels people like Begin, Shamir, are too narrow, "little Polish Jews". He would prefer to settle with the Arabs. He knew Stern, who was religious, very right wing. Talks about Perez and Weizman.

His opinion on Zionism - he wants Zionism with a human face, not throwing of bombs. A lot of friends in Israel share his opinion. He does not think a Holocaust likely again in our lifetime. He is admirer of Wiesenthal. He remembers Dyan and tells how he lost one eye on mission to Syria, the story that was supported by a Scots soldier who was with him on this mission.

B.R. describes the start of the battle of El Alamein, in which he took part, he describes the horror of the massacre, with the many dead, British and German - the reason why he is against war.