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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Skubiejska
Forename:	Ida
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	21 November 1924
Interviewee POB:	Bendzin, Poland

Date of Interview:	17 November 2003
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Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 41

NAME: IDA SKUBIEJSKA

DATE: 17 NOVEMBER 2003

LOCATION: EDINBURGH

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

TAPE 1

RL: This interview is with Ida Skubiejska and the interview is taking place on Monday the 17th of November 2003. It's taking place in Edinburgh and I am Rosalyn Livshin. This is the interview with Ida Skubiejska and it's Tape 1. Can you tell me first your name?

IS: Ida. Or Eda, continental pronunciation, Eda, English Ida.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

IS: Tintpulver.

RL: Do you have any other names?

IS: No I haven't.

RL: And did you have a Hebrew name?

IS: I was never given one but I should imagine it should be Abigail.

RL: And where were you born?

IS: In Bendzin, which is a small town in Silesia in Poland.

RL: And what was the date?

IS: 21st of November 1914 which was during the First World War.

RL: So what does that make you now?

IS: 89.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 3 seconds

RL: Now can you tell me your parents' names?

IS: My father's name was Maurice Tintpulver and my mother's name was Miriam Eybuszys-Tintpulver.

RL: And where were they born?

IS: My father in Warsaw, my mother in Bendzin.

RL: Starting with your father's family, can you tell me something about his family background?

IS: Well they were upper middle class Jewish people in Poland, unbelievably cultured and extremely well-educated. My grandfather's family emigrated to America and he also went with them but somehow or other he headed then back to Warsaw where he married into a very well known Warsaw family called Shapiro, and had four or five children. And but instead of sending my father to be educated in England or in America he sent him to a very well known school in Germany where he was educated both in a secondary school and at the university so he was bilingual and had a degree in Economics and accountancy.

RL: Do you know what school it was that he attended in Germany?

IS: In Hannover. I don't remember. I remember the name of the family with whom he was associated and that their name was Schwabe. How I do remember is because after the war, when there was a terrific inflation in Germany my father used to send them small parcels of food whatever he could do to help them out.

RL: What did your father's father do for a living?

IS: My father's father, my grandfather was Hermann Tintpulver, he was the one who went with his brothers to America, he was the only one who returned, the others have stayed there, married there, and had probably about eighty, eighty descendants by now, third- or fourth-generation Americans.

RL: What was his occupation?

IS: He was an accountant. He was an extremely able, wonderful man, spoke about four languages, ran an enormous estate of rural industries in between Warsaw and Silesia, which was called Nepthisa [?]. There was a saw mill, there were huge cowsheds, there was a production of, there was everything there. Horticulture, agriculture, dairy farming, saw milling, everything, employing practically the whole village. And we lived in a big, big, big house with lots of servants and my grandmother had one great sort of pleasure

very often, marrying the local girls who worked for us, finding them nice husbands in the village. And I remember growing up and being a small girl, you know, how bread was
Tape 1: 5 minutes 58 seconds

being baked, and how milk was made and being sort of nosy and very adventurous I sort of ran around everywhere. My parents couldn't look after me because they had two small babies after me. So my mother was very busy and times were extremely difficult, because although it was the west of Poland, Poland was not only having the end of the First World War which ruined the country, at least it ruined the part where we lived, that was the Bolshevik liberation. And luckily we were in the West so the country had to produce, in the West and defend you know what was being done at the Front, but in spite of all this I had a wonderful childhood, absolutely wonderful, like a fairytale.

RL: Did you all live in the same house?

IS: It was a big, big manor house with lots of servants and beautiful furniture, and my grandfather even grew vines around about the huge window of his drawing room.

RL: How many servants did you have?

IS: Well I can't remember, quite a few, because there was the bake house, and there was the kitchen, and there was always a good responsible cook there, and there were the younger ones who cleaned the furniture and the rooms and everything. Big brass kind of things, bed, and rosewood beautiful furniture. I don't want to talk about all this too much because it later on gives me sleepless nights, and I'd rather not indulge in all this. I had a wonderful childhood, much better off than the general poverty in Poland, we were very upper class in the social I don't know, classes or whatever you call it.

RL: What did your father's siblings do, where did they, where were they?

IS: Oh he was the only boy of the family, the others were girls, they all married.

RL: And where were they living?

IS: Well the youngest one lived in Lvov and the other two lived in Katowice which is the capital of Silesia.

RL: And then if you can tell me something about your mother's family?

IS: My mother's family. Well my mother came from an extremely old family. In the 16-17th century, a rabbi called Jonathan Eybuszys was one of the great writers and philosophers of the time. He was born in Poland, but orphaned and later on educated in Prague where he married, and later on became, he couldn't study medicine because he was Jewish, and a rabbi, so he studied it under a pseudonym and became extremely knowledgeable in what was the great medicine of the time, which is herbalism and eventually he moved to Metz in France, and from there to Hamburg-Altona, where he

became so well known that the Danish king of the time invited him to dinners once a week, where he was the greatest after-dinner speaker. And that's where he died. He had
Tape 1: 10 minutes 23 seconds

seven children and my mother's father, who was also Jonathan Eybuszys, I believe that we were the only ones who stayed Jewish, because the others all sort of, I have studied the whole story, many years ago at the reading room of the British Museum from very knowledgeable encyclopaedias dealing with philosophy and the life of the great philosophers and writers of the time and I found out that he wrote a great many books in Aramaic which are in the greatest safe in the British Museum. How did I find out? I was sitting studying and writing notes out of one of the great books that I found there when a young man came and invited me to talk outside, because you can't talk in the reading room, he introduced himself as Doctor somebody, and he told me he is the custodian of the room where the writings of this great philosopher are. And when I asked him could I please at least have a look at it because he was my I don't know how many times removed grandfather, and he said unfortunately nobody is allowed there, but he can tell me that they will be for ad perpetuum, always there. And then I found in one of the books that he lived about 200 years ahead of his time, because should he live at the right time he would have been the one connected with atoms and all the rest of it. So that's the background of my family, of my mother's family, she had two brothers, both of whom were chemists and herbalists and very well known for what they produced.

RL: What did her father do?

IS: My father was a director…

RL: No, her father.

IS: Oh her father was a timber merchant. Very pious and I remember him as a very odd man. Immensely handsome, tall, blue eyes, extremely pious and people didn't speak to him before bowing to the ground almost before him. So there you are, that's my family background.

RL: What kind of education did your mother have?

IS: She was extremely well educated. She was sent at the time when girls were just married very young from a very pious family, the one which she came from, she was sent to Warsaw to be educated in one of the very much ahead colleges in Warsaw.

RL: And what did she study?

IS: She studied art, design, dressmaking, embroidery, tapestry, I inherited the ability from her because I embroidered I don't know how many, made many tapestries myself. I havn't got them here, I've only got photographs.

RL: And did she do anything after her studies?

Tape 1: 14 minutes 12 seconds

IS: I believe that she lived for a time with her older brother, who married very well and she absolutely adored and loved his - her sister-in-law who became when I was born my most beloved aunt. Frances Eybuszys. And they had a daughter called Pauline, who both Frances and Pauline were my mother's greatest love I think outside her children.

RL: How did she meet your father? How did your mother meet your father?

IS: Well you see the point is that you've got to remember, it's a story that fits sort of very slimly into an English mind because here was Poland divided between three great countries as they were 'til the number one World War. Here was Prussia, Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Russian Empire. And the three met in Silesia, which in German was called the Dreikaiserecke, the three corners of the three empires. So here is Poland, if somebody lives right a few metres over the border in Russia, they had to have a special pass to go to work to the three metres over the fence, which was in Prussia. So you see a great many young men escaped from the Russian part because they didn't want to serve in the Russian army, so they lived let's say a few railway stations away but they were in a different country. But their passport was Russian. And this is what happened to my father. He lived in Germany, in Hannover, he came to see his parents, so he had to stay on the German side, his passport was Russian and his father and his family had to travel over to see him. And on one of these occasions, they took with them, or my aunts took with them, my mother. Just for a drive, 'Come on lets meet my brother who came from Hannover and all the rest of it. And the moment he saw her he didn't want anybody else in the whole world. But he was ten years older, so it was a great gap between them. He was already a well-established young man, whereas she was just a young girl straight out of college.

RL: Had your father I'm just wondering first of all, what was he doing in Hannover?

IS: Oh he worked for a firm, can't tell you, can't remember, he worked for a firm there and he was engaged to be married to the daughter of the owner of the firm, and we used to call her 'Big Bertha' you know, because daddy was going to marry a Big Bertha when he met my mother and that was the end of it. Because he wouldn't have anybody as his wife but my mother and that was the end of it. So he had to get himself out of Germany and he couldn't go into the Russian part, so he went to the Austrian part, and settled down in Krakow, and got himself a job there. And my grandfather, my mother's father, went there, and got them a very nice apartment, and bought them very nice furniture and beautiful carpets and furnished it all, and the whole family sort of went there and made them comfortable and they got married. Everybody came there for the beautiful big marriage

RL: Where did they?

IS: And then the war, that was in January 1914 and in August that was the end of the story, why, because the Russians, the Germans moved in, found out that they were
Tape 1: 19 minutes 16 seconds

Russian citizens so they took away my father to a camp, treated him as a prisoner of war, and sent my mother heavily pregnant to her parents. So that was the end of the story. So he saw me when I was about three years old.

RL: What happened to him? Did he tell you about what happened to him?

IS: Oh well everything was stolen in Krakow, all the beautiful things, they rescued a little bit here and there, their beautiful apartment was occupied by people who wouldn't move away so the return was very painful to them. They eventually managed a place, but there were two little girls born soon after my father returned from this horrible camp and I was sent to my grandfather to the big country estate. And in the meantime they both had terrible experiences and once Poland was victorious in a way and peace was established, the heavy industries started working in Silesia and they very soon found out that my father was just about the right chap to start doing business, so they offered him the job of director of exports and invited him into the Silesian Chamber of Commerce and eventually they started an institute in Warsaw which was called the Institute of…, The Polish Institute of Foreign Trade where he also represented his part of the industry and a huge foundry where he worked was called the Polish Works of Zinc Industry. And he was the Export Director there. They employed about six thousand people so they were very major employers.

RL: And where were your parents…?

IS: And he had a big office, being bilingual and a very clever secretary who was hired from Berlin, German.

RL: Where were your parents living?

IS: We were living in Bendzin at that time. As soon as my father got this very well-paid job, we moved to Bendzin. And that's where the Second World War found us. I went to school there.

RL: What kind of school?

IS: Well you see in Poland, as well as in the rest of Europe, secondary school academic one is called Gymnasium. And I went to a private one, where most of the teachers were officers of the newly established Polish army who fought in the war and who were extremely well, how shall I say, had good degrees from good universities. They were men, I only had two, no three women teachers, one for German, one for Latin and one for Physical Education. The rest were men.

RL: How did you get on at school?

Tape 1: 23 minutes 40 seconds

IS: Oh the school was famous for extremely high academic qualification qualities because it prepared girls for university. And my beloved older cousin, Pauline who I mentioned before, was also a graduate of that school, she became a Doctor of Biology from Jagielon Krakow University, which is the oldest in Poland and married a Doctor of Medicine and settled in Warsaw. But she very often came to see us. And before she married, after graduation she was teaching Biology for a short time in my school. So there was a connection all the way round.

RL: How did you get on with the other children in the school?

IS: Well the children, strangely enough, because it was in the middle of very heavy industry in a small town, of very mixed population surrounded by coal mines and foundries, there was no distinction that was something that never happened in any other country. If there were any academically gifted children, even of the lowest workers, they were given a chance and a scholarship to go to the private schools in Bendzin, which was one for girls and one for boys. And in the morning you could have seen coaches and strong little carriages coming from every corner of the scattered industries into the school. So there was no distinction because a daughter of the highest director, the highest executive, or somebody extremely important of title, would be sitting with the daughter of the lowest miner and there was no difference.

RL: Were there other Jewish children at the school?

IS: I'm sorry?

RL: Were there other Jewish children?

IS: Oh yes, oh yes. There was a huge Jewish population in Bendzin, so we were all mixed up together. We all got on extremely well together except for religion, when the Christian children, they were mainly Catholic, had a lesson of catechism, we went to a different room and had been read a story from the Bible or whatever. My father kept a private tutor and we spoke, we were taught pure Hebrew at home.

RL: How religious were your parents?

IS: My mother was not a bit. My father was very much. I believe he was so intensely cultured and knowledgeable that there must have been some connection between the inquisition in Spain and my father's roots because he always referred back to it. And strangely enough, since I came to live here and we went a number of times to Spain, with my husband, just for a holiday and it always disagreed with me. I always couldn't eat there, I always felt rather sickly about it, and in the end we sort of abandoned the idea, the more popular Spain became, the less we went.

RL: What level of observance was kept at home?

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IS: Oh it was very traditional. We kept beautiful wonderful Jewish traditions, it was always a Friday dinner beautifully done with candles, every holiday was beautifully observed, not only the five of us, but always parts of the family came and stayed with us, because my mother with her darling sister-in-law Frances, were just about the most knowledgeable cooks and recipe makings and oh, just its unbelievable by present-day standards how well we ate, and everything was made at home and everything was done just so.

RL: Can you describe your home?

IS: It wasn't a very big apartment because housing conditions in Poland were nothing much to compare to British standards even the very simple ones. Like most continental people we lived in an apartment in a large block. There were usually about 4 rooms out of which my parents had a big bedroom. One big room was a room come dining come living room, and the other two rooms were for the three girls. One small one was where one girl slept, and in the big room, two girls slept at each corner and in the middle was a big room where we did our homework. There was a big bathroom and a huge kitchen and a little sort of kind of how shall I call it a little extension room where the permanent house girl slept.

RL: What floor, on what floor of the block was your apartment?

IS: Oh it was on the ground floor.

RL: And how many storeys was the apartment block?

IS: I can't remember very well, I think three, three stories. They were not very tall houses. We could have lived in a house on our own, within the grounds of the factory, but my mother wouldn't have it.

RL: What area of Bendzin was this in?

IS: Bendzin was such a small town that it wasn't any, any, there was just town and the country around it with the coalmines we could see from a distance.

RL: How big was the Jewish community?

IS: Big. Very big.

RL: Can you put a number to it?

IS: Yes well when I came from my grandfather's, I was already in my second class at school, and by the time I grew up and I qualified to passed all my exams to go to university, all in all I lived there for six years or seven, that's all. So I never had any great
Tape 1: 32 minutes 0 second

connections with them, except that for my school friends. Strangely enough the owner of the school, who was a sister of one of the great generals of the Polish army who won the Polish independence after the first World War, with Marshal Pilsudski, she was the sister of one of the generals, and her husband was the Notary general of the area. She has served with an immensely cultured and wonderful lady. And she liked me immensely to such an extent that she had two daughters and they were my closest friends. And I was very often invited to go to their house for teas or occasions, birthdays, or whatever. So that's it. Another friend of mine was just the daughter of a miner, a very good one. That's it.

RL: Was your father involved in the Jewish community?

IS: I think he was, but I'm not, but I wouldn't commit myself to saying what he did. I know that he had, you see, being a member of the Institute of Foreign Trade in Warsaw, he was, he went to Warsaw every month and sometimes every fortnight depending when he was needed there. And being there he got in touch with his father's family and his mother's family who left a great many parts of the very extended family there whom I didn't know. And he was immensely fond of them. And I think he had great Zionist interests because there was always some collection of money for some Jewish person and he sponsored a great many youngsters to all sorts of, I think he was, judging by the way people behaved towards him, he was extremely well liked and respected.

RL: Did you belong to a synagogue there?

IS: I didn't, and neither did my mother, but I think my father did. My mother was not a bit religious, because you see the point was that the moment school finished we always had a chalet somewhere in the mountains which was about 2 hours away by train. We usually got transport and car from the factory, usually a big Buick with all the rest of us piled up one on top of another and an awful lot of luggage taken to the mountains and that's where we stayed for two months or three months as long as the school holidays were. And that's how we lived. Fishing for trout and going hill-walking and having a wonderful time.

RL: Did you ever attend synagogue yourself?

IS: I don't know.

RL: Did you belong to any clubs?

IS: Well no, we were just Jewish, but we didn't go to any synagogue. The school didn't sort of encourage that very much, but it wasn't a Jewish school, so everybody was just

the same you know, keeping traditional holidays and whatever was suitable and eating the right food at the right time and that's it. I know that my father prayed at home, he didn't bother to go to synagogue.

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RL: Did you belong to any clubs, or do any after-school activities?

IS: The school offered absolutely everything. It was a kind of school that prepared me for a party, a dance, a dinner, for every occasion that one could come across. Because from the age of 16 to 18 for every occasion there was a dance, a dinner, and some young men from opposite number school who could be suitable partners for a dance, and a band to play and a traditional something or other. School journeys all over Poland. Kayaking, mountain-climbing, hill-walking, from the age of 16 wherever. Theatre, special performances, in Katowice there was a wonderful theatre, ballet, opera, theatre, plays, everything. So there wasn't any outside activity, the school provided everything. And what the school did not provide, my family provided. For my 16th birthday, there was a block. Booked by my grandfather, for the Aida. Because that was my first outing to the opera, and to provide excitement when I saw the Egyptian the Ethiopian king being led from the stage in chains I burst out crying because I couldn't stand it. So that was the kind of life I had and preparation for it.

RL: Did you learn any musical instrument?

IS: You know Poland was still an incredibly poor country. To get a piano or something was beyond means.

RL: Did you ever experience anti-Semitism?

IS: While I was growing up, no. When Hitler came to, when he started rising, don't forget, we lived 10 kilometres on the Polish side from Germany. 10 kilometres. And since there was horrific unemployment in Germany for a very long time, German people used to come over and whoever could employ them and help them they did. And later on some of them even helped I am told to save some lives. But there was from nothing you could feel some sort of something was growing.

RL: How did this show itself?

IS: All of a sudden people used to come from the countryside, demanding things or grabbing things or cursing, openly cursing. A great many of the young ones went to what was Palestine, but it wasn't very easy to get an entrance to the country. But there was a very great urge to go there.

RL: Did you know people who went there?

IS: Oh yes, I did.

RL: Did any of your family?

IS: No.

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RL: Was it ever something that….?

IS: My father wanted to, my mother wouldn't go because my grandfather died but she was looking after her mother who was very old and in an old people's home for which we all paid, all the family paid, a private one where she was very well looked after, and she wouldn't sort of leave her beloved Pauline, her beloved Frances, her beloved this, and she was frightened to let us although through my father's great connections a great many people came and offered, even to marry us and take us away, they wouldn't let, they wouldn't. It didn't sort of, nobody could imagine anything quite so horrible that happened later. So you see, lets leave the school time, because you wouldn't finish it in a weeks time.

RL: What did you do after school?

IS: I went straight from school to university, which is Polish Cambridge, Jagiellonian University of Krakow to read geography. The university invented this study, after a great many years of its professors doing all sorts of research in a great many countries, in Asia and all over the world. The university started this, don't forget the old boy of the university was Nicholas Copernicus, who stopped the sun and moved the earth, so to speak. So there were a lot of very old and ancient traditions to build up on, and the professor of geography at Jagielon University was at the same time the chief head of ethnography at the League of Nations in Geneva and spent his time in between the two.
I absolutely worshipped him. He was the most brilliant, fabulous wonderful man I came across in my mind. His name was Professor Smolensky, an authority on population and unfortunately dead against Hitlerism and its horrifying theories, for which he was murdered by the Nazis. Because when the war started, let me just cut a long story short, when the war started, and the Nazis marched on Krakow University they all sat there, and all the famous ones were murdered. So that's the story. When the war started.

RL: Can I just ask what you did after you finished your degree, just worked…?

IS: That's exactly what I am going to tell you.

RL: Right.

IS: I got my degree two and a half months before the war. And Professor Smolensky shook my hands and said 'One day you'll be the glory of our university.' So I said 'Well, let's hope.' When the war started, we were after a fantastic holiday, the weather was absolutely wonderful, and I was climbing mountains for two months with my friends, and

I got a message after rejoining my parents and my sisters, 'Run' because one of the girls who was openly Nazi is working for the Gestapo in Krakow and looking for you. So I took my younger sister at the insistence of my parents, and ran. And I ended up in Lvov which was occupied by the Soviet army, hoping that I should manage over the mountains into Romania or Hungary, and out into the world and contact my great uncles in America
Tape 1: 45 minutes 59 seconds

to help me out to get there. But before I could do absolutely anything, I was deported, together with my sister to Siberia and that's it. So we were there, working in the forest, for a year and a half, when the Nazis invaded Russia, and Stalin needed help with the army, with weapons and everything, and this is how he signed an agreement with both Roosevelt and Churchill, that he will get his weaponry, but he's got to release the Poles he deported. Because he managed to deport, in the one year he was there, about 2 million Poles. So that was, must have been young people who could serve in the army. And I came into that category. In the great upheaval of travelling to the North, I lost my sister and the little band of people we were together but managed to find Polish officers who took me over. Well you see my cousin Pauline was married to a doctor, and he was a major in the Polish army. So I knew that he was captured by the Russians and I expected him to be at the headquarters of the Polish army, because he was a personal doctor of Marshal Pilduski and the chief staffs of Poland in Warsaw. A very well known doctor and a great personality. Unfortunately he wasn't there, but they took me. Why? Because the last two months, the last trimester of my university, the director of the university decreed that all girls have to go through the international Red Cross course at the medical school and so I did and had a paper to prove it. So I was drafted into the Red Cross section of the military services, given eventually a commission, and this is how I spent the war years, first in a place called Buzuluk in the South Ural steppes, where the Polish army was organised, where the headquarters were, and from there we were taken by train across Asian parts, into Uzbekistan south of Tashkent, into a very nice place. In the meantime the great army organisational sort of solidifying, was I forget the name of what they used to unite you know, the scattered bits and pieces travelling there, in a place called Juzar, which was in the south of Uzbekistan on the Afghan border. In the shadow of the Hindu kush. Fantastic place to go and see it, cotton plantations…

I was sent there and I found when I came, that what was called the military hospital was a disused and partly ruined mosque. And the place was full of people dying of typhus, typhoid and dysentery. Strangely enough I managed to live through all this without any inoculations or precautions. Didn't touch anything, didn't get them, and yet doctors, nurses, volunteers, everybody was dying left, right and centre, all the way around me and nothing happened to me except that I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, I was about 6 stone and I was just like an automaton. People were either dead or alive and you know you got on. Eventually all this sort of came to an end and in the meantime there was an agreement that we were going by train to the Caspian sea and across the sea to Iran to join the British army and this is how we, I came with the section of the Polish army which went for the rest of the war under part of the British army.

RL: Can I just take you back a little. You say at the beginning that you were taken to Silesia, Siberia sorry. How did that come about?

IS: Well you see the western, eastern part of Poland was full of refugees from the West because the Nazis were marching and people were escaping the army was this is you see a huge part of the army, a huge part of the population found themselves and it was the
Tape 1: 52 minutes 23 seconds

end of the summer holidays on top of it, so people were on holiday here, there and everywhere and were caught unexpectedly by this war because they didn't ask for it, they just came. So as soon as they sort of managed to get hold of the population they came and said 'You live from now on as Soviet citizens and take Soviet papers and you're not going to go back there any more, because from now on you are liberated.' And when they offered it to me I said no. And I was pretending also to be the daughter of a landed peasant, because if they knew if we told what we were it would be even worse. So there you go.

RL: And what were conditions like in Siberia?

IS: Well I wouldn't compare it to the death camps that the Nazis ran. We were in a small camp, we were in the Tiger, I was in the Tiger, which is the incredible forest that stretches from Norway to Vladivostok. Woods. A clearing in the woods, barracks built of wood, the KGB barrack in the middle, all the other barracks around, a bannia, which is a bath and woods all the way round and you wanted to keep it warm you went into the woods and you chopped it. And our work was to prepare the woods to be ready for hauling to the river and taken away.

RL: How were you treated?

IS: They gave us what they used to call a horse feed, a mash kind of soup, a teaspoon of some oil, you see the main oil in Russia is sunflower oil. A teaspoon in the middle of the porridge they called it Suppe or whatever, and sometimes something sweet. That was just about all. So what I did was, we were immensely lucky that our overseers were released prisoners, you know the story of the first time of Soviet Union when they were transferred the …. peasants, the peasant owners. These were the ones, in the middle, when they served their time, they were free to work in the area, but they were not free to go back where they came from. And they were our overseers, they were very nice people, most of them. Very helpful, very humane. And one of them told me 'Write', gave me a piece of paper, 'Write your address of your people' and that was in the time when the short time when Stalin made peace with Hitler and he wrote, he sent it to my parents and that's how they got to know where we were. And until Germany invaded Russia I had steady communication with my parents and my sister.

RL: Who was in charge of that camp that you were in?

IS: It was just a horrifying KGB kind of chap, who sort of every time he looked at me he laughed and he said 'Oh a daughter of a peasant and herself with the kind of highest education one can get.' So they knew everything about us.

RL: How many days a week did you work?

Tape 1: 57 minutes 41 seconds

IS: Six. Sunday was free, we were not allowed to go anywhere but I found through these overseeing Russians where the nearest villages were, what I could exchange for food. I was a mountain climber, a geographer, I said this is my Postgraduate study for the next village. I didn't walk, I just flew literally through the country, you know covered with snow and all the rest of it and I always managed to exchange something that we couldn't do without.

RL: What kinds of things?

IS: Oh a piece of good bread, a piece of cheese, a piece of pork, a piece of whatever anybody could offer me because they didn't have too much themselves.

RL: And what did you exchange in return?

IS: I had a beautiful dressing gown which was a sort of satiny kind with flowers and all sorts of patterns and they very nearly went crazy over it, and oh yes I exchanged a very beautiful town coat with a lovely fur collar as it was fashionable at that time for a very ragged sheepskin which I loved, and so it went on and on and on.

RL: This film's just about to….

Tape 1: 59 minutes 33 seconds

[End of Tape 1]

TAPE 2
Tape 2: 0 minute 34 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Ida Skubiejska and this is Tape 2. Ida can I just take you back for a little moment to your days at university. First of all how long were you at university?

IS: Five years altogether.

RL: And what were you studying?

IS: I was studying geography and geography divides into meteorology, physical geography, ethnology, ethnography, Slavonic studies, anthropology, anthropogeography,

hundreds of little sub things including of great many summer schools or rather spring schools in the mountains and especially doing geology and anthropogeography in various times et cetera, et cetera. It was a very intensive study, a very intensive kind of and hardworking. Strangely enough a great many of our undergraduates were Polish officers who were preparing themselves for a military career.

RL: Where did you live at this time?

IS: In Krakow. A friend of, a school friend of mine read languages and I read science because geography came under science, so we lived together. There was no hall for girls so some professors still looked at us 'Why don't you stay in the kitchen', but we managed.

RL: How many girls were there there?

IS**:** In my studium?

RL: Very few. I was the only Jewish girl in the whole study. And I have made immensely great friendship with my male colleagues. They sort of adopted me right from the beginning, carried my books, carried my….oh, after the lectures when we had a long lunch hour we used to go to the royal pavilion you know, the royal castle in Krakow and go for walks or eat some sandwiches or whatever we managed. And it was a terrific friendship that went on beyond the study. We played bridge in the winter and went to dances, university dances, and to cinemas, theatre. I was very lucky because one of the girls at school was the niece of the great diva of the local theatre, the Krakow theatre, very famous theatre, and one of the great artists of the time in Poland. And whenever she could she squeezed us in. So we had that, wonderful opportunities.

RL: Were there Jewish boys on the course?

IS: No, not a single one, I was the only one Jew.

RL: Did you meet any anti-Semitism?

Tape 2: 4 minutes 25 seconds

IS: Never, never, not for a minute. Neither from the teaching staff nor from my colleagues, I had just a wonderful time.

RL: Did you mix at all with any of the Jewish community in Krakow?

IS: Yes I did. Strangely enough, when the news got round that there was one Jewish girl at the faculty, I had been invited to the medical faculty balls and dances where I met a great many Jewish students, law, which had a huge number, yes, medicine and law. They were my constant invites and a terrific kind of social life.

RL: And what did your two sisters do?

IS: My middle sister, the one who perished with my parents was not very, she was born at the time when things were the worst. The first World War very nearly over and the Bolshevik war on. She had, she passed her matriculation, university entrance without any difficulty because she was very academic, and a very sort of sweet, silent girl, wonderful really as a character, and she decided that she wants to go to a business school in Katowice, which offered an awful lot of it, which she did, for two years, and she got a very nice qualification from it, and got herself a job in an office in the local brewery which was Jewish owned. And she liked it very much. My younger sister passed her university entrance just before the war. So…

RL: What was she going to study?

IS: Physical education.

RL: You said besides geography, you also studied two other subjects. You studied two other subjects beside….?

IS: Yes, Zoology and Botany. Philosophy, because that was the faculty of Philosophy. You had to do social studies, economic geography, the story of philosophy and the story of logic and something else beside that I don't remember. And pass exams on all of them before you graduate.

RL: What had you intended to do after graduation?

IS: Well my main aim was to do my PhD. And for that I wanted to do some local research of anthropogeography. One of the great travellers of Poland at that time was doing research and studies in South America among the Indian tribes of Columbia. Columbia now has got a terrible name. Before the war it was just a South American republic which was very keen on having contact with Europe. And I brought well my father was in the Institute of Foreign Trade so he had contact with all the Embassies and an awful lot of these people came to our place and very often invited to dinner to my parents' home so there was no difficulty for me to go to Warsaw, stay with some of my
Tape 2: 9 minutes 6 seconds

cousins, and go and contact anybody who would give me you know, literature and contact with anybody, and especially the ambassador of Columbia was immensely interested in my what I wrote about it. He gave me an awful lot of literature, and books and encouragement and I was told by my mother that after I escaped he came to look for me because he was going to take me with them when the embassies were leaving Warsaw.

RL: You said you escaped to Lvov. How long were you in Lvov?

IS: For a year.

RL: And what did you do there?

IS: Try to earn some money. You see we had relations there, my father's youngest sister lived there. Listen, if you want to hear the rest of the story, don't enlarge on these little bits and pieces because there is still an awful lot to say, and you can stay here 'til midnight and you still wouldn't be able to finish it.

RL: It's all important.

IS: I know.

RL: Can you tell me briefly about Lvov. Just briefly about Lvov.

IS: It's a beautiful city, used to be very well known, had a wonderful old university, the second oldest in Poland, after Krakow. Had an exhibition and international trade centre every year and there was a beautiful park with all the wonderful, beautiful buildings which had the exhibition every year. I used to love going there for a holiday with my aunt's family. So when the war, during the war it was overfull with refugees, but somehow or other we managed. We both worked wherever we could, in shops or whatever little money we could earn but we had a place to stay because my aunt had an enormous house, she was very, very well off. And that's it.

RL: And what did her husband do?

IS: He had an agency, a huge exhibition of Eastern carpets, mainly Persian and floor coverings of all description. He was doing extremely well.

RL: And what was happening to your family during this time? To your parents?

IS: Nothing very much. My father was working for, the factory was closed, so as far as I knew he was working for the Consul. There were no ghettoes as yet, everything went just under Occupation. In Lvov the Russians were trying to sort of show their might and

Tape 2: 13 minutes 9 seconds

the deportations started straight away. So we knew that it was only a question of sooner or later we would follow, which we did.

RL: And what happened to your aunt?

IS: She perished like everybody else and so did my uncle and so did my cousin, a beautiful girl, and her husband. And they had a young son who at that time was thirteen getting on fourteen, and he's the only one who survived. He lives in Israel. He's the only cousin of mine who's alive.

RL: Were you and your sister picked up together?

IS: Yes.

RL: And how were you taken to Siberia?

IS: By train. By cattle train.

RL: How long was the journey?

IS: About a month or five weeks, I can't remember.

RL: And how did you survive on the way?

IS: We were given pieces of black bread and some water and that's it.

RL: What were you able to take with you?

IS: Whatever you could carry.

RL: So what did you manage to take?

IS: Oh well we only had a rucksack between us. We were already refugees.

RL: Were those the things that you later bartered? The things that you took with, were they the things that you later exchanged for food?

IS: Not everything, but most of it. It was still in very good condition, something they hadn't seen at all.

RL: In Siberia, was there any….

IS: It was still the European part of Northern Russia, just west of the Urals. Well I call it Siberia, that is just about the country you know where they took people, where they
Tape 2: 15 minutes 39 seconds

deported people.

RL: What was the place called? Did it have a particular name? The place?

IS: Oh the one, the little clearing where we were kept, Severnaya, which means 'the Northern one'.

RL: Was there any religious activity in that camp? Was there ever any religious or social or cultural activity at all?

IS: Oh yes, they, until the curfew was imposed when the Nazis invaded Russia, you were quite free to move from one barrack to another form any friendships we wanted, we were allowed to even perform in the evening, have singing lessons, don't forget its so far to the North there is no daylight in the winter, only the Northern Lights. Well at least I've seen an awful lot of it. The Aurora Borealis. That was our greatest entertainment.

RL: And when the Nazis came in?

IS: We knew something was happening, because they wouldn't tell us. Because all of a sudden we had a curfew. We couldn't move at night after such hour. But then you see it was in the summer, and like in the winter there is no daylight, there is hardly any darkness in the summer. Everything grows in just fantastic time. Almost 20 hours daylight, full sunshine. And the missions of midges. Well to give them justice they gave us protection against them, we all had these huge hats with this, and the midges are so powerful that they could even bite you through the hair and through everything, through the hat and gloves.

RL: How long were you there?

IS: One year and three months.

RL: And then you went to? Where was that?

IS: That was Buzuluk.

RL: And is that the southern Urals?

IS: Yes, south of the Urals to join the army.

RL: And what were conditions like there?

IS: At first primitive. It was a beautiful country town, county town. It's the capital of the part of Russia, very nice. Well you see the women's section was well the best they could
Tape 2: 18 minutes 59 seconds

do, but to tell them the truth once I was commissioned I was given permission to live in a Russian house for which they paid the rent.

RL: And how many lived there?

IS: Well I lived there for a short time before we were transported to Uzbekistan, to that lovely place I told you south of Tashkent. For a short time, we weren't there for a very long time.

RL: How long would you say you were there in Buzuluk?

IS: Can't really remember. Not very long, maybe four or five months or six, but no more.

RL: And what was your work?

IS: Well I was already drafted into the Red Cross so we were given lectures of how to behave and what to do and being sort of put in the first lot in uniforms and accepted with the generals and the headquarters and all the rest of it, we had to go to all the great demonstrations of friendship all of a sudden. This is how I met all the great marshals of the army of the Soviet army and they kissed me on both cheeks.

RL: Did you actually start work there, or was it mainly the training?

IS: No, we were, we were, every day we were given school by doctors. And I was looking for my cousin, for Pauline's husband, but he never came. None of them ever came. You know what happened to them? They were all murdered in Katyn. That's the group of the 12,000 Polish officers who were murdered and he was one of them.

RL: So after you finished this training…?

IS: But they kept me so because I was his cousin and they were expecting him any day. And he was a persona very grata.

RL: And then you say you went to the south of Tashkent?

IS: Yes, there was another very pleasant place where the Poles were. You see the embassy was, the Polish embassy was evacuated from Moscow to Tashkent like most other embassies when Moscow was under siege, so it was just too close, just about an hour by train, or two hours by train, which is nothing by Russian standards and it was a nice place, a small hospital, and then they needed people for these epidemics, so of course they took me. Why not?

RL: Who was in charge of that…?

Tape 2: 22 minutes 15 seconds

IS: I wasn't charged with anything, I was just commissioned and I was told to go, so I went. I didn't go alone, there were at least 10 or 15 of us to go. At that time you know in that part of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Empire, the trains were wonderful. You slept on the train, you ate on the train, it was very comfortable. We were given one section of the train, nobody interfered. We could go to the dining room at meal times, and get very nice meals. Coming back we could rest, we could sleep, you know everything was converted for sleeping or for sitting depending on the time of day or night. Because distances you see in Russia are unbelievable. For them to go from Tashkent to Samarqand and south of Samarqand in goodness knows how long is nothing.

RL: So how long were you there in the south of Tashkent?

IS: In Juzar**.**

RL: In Juzar.

IS: Juzar. J-U-Z-A-R. I shall never forget it.

RL: How long were you there?

IS: Quite a long time. I would say seven months.

RL: And about what year was this?

IS: '41. The whole spring and most of the summer.

RL: And what were conditions like?

IS: Well the so-called hospital was in a partly dilapidated mosque. There were no conditions to speak of. People were dying, if we couldn't place them in the dilapidated old cells of the Muslim monastery, we put them in tents outside. And with the rainy season which was then the mud was unbelievable and they were dying there in the mud.

RL: What were you able to do for them?

IS: Nothing. We had practically no medicine. Some survived and some died and that's all there was to it. I don't want to talk about it anymore because it gives me still a horrifying headache and horrifying feeling.

RL: Where did you go after that?

IS: We were taken by trains and again it took days and days to the Caspian Sea to a place called Krasnovots, that's near the oil fields. You know when I read all the billions of dollars or whatever it is and all the great tycoons and all the wonderful things that are
Tape 2: 26 minutes 11 seconds

I've been to all these places and it gives me the creeps to think that I could ever see them again.

RL: What were you doing there?

IS: We had a kind of a last post, all the trains were stopping there bringing people for the shipment and we had a Red Cross centre there. We slept in little tents on the sand, 12 of us in one little tent, wrapped up in blankets and that was all. But in the huge kind of a hangar place where we had the Red Cross post, we managed in a corner, a bath and a shower and that's how we kept somehow fully alive, and food wasn't bad so there we are. And we had to see to every, because that was Russian command, we had to see that all

the able-bodied people were sent to the ships which were about a mile away. So when they went by lorries to the port we had to vouch for everyone we passed through. That's it.

RL: Did you have more medical provisions there?

IS: Oh yes we had. Russian, primitive but plenty.

RL: And how long were you there?

IS: Well we came there before we started working and we were the last to wind it up. Month, one month, five or six weeks.

RL: When was this?

IS: That was I would say August '41.

RL: And then from there?

IS: To the ship. I was on the last ship that left Krasnovots for Pahlevi the Iranian port. Oh the difference was incredible. The British army was waiting for us there. We were still in the tents but we had comfortable beds, nice showers, and plenty of fantastic food. But for the first fortnight, the first week, we had to sleep rough on the beaches because we were disinfected, all our uniforms were burned, and we were given everything new. And that's when the recovery started. And while we slept on the beaches, on the sand, you have no idea how rough and stormy the Caspian is. I've never seen such height of tides even in mid Atlantic later on, as I've seen on the Caspian. And even the drive from the 24 hours passage from Krasnovots to Pahlevi was just up and down and up and down. A great many people were terribly sick. But I would like to say I developed a carbuncle on my neck, I must have scratched myself, and it became infected and it had to be operated and they couldn't do it. So they put me into an ambulance and sent me over these incredible, unbelievable mountains on rough tracks to Teheran. And that's where I was operated, brought back to normal, and by the time they could send me wherever the doctors said
Tape 2: 31 minutes 9 seconds

'No you're staying with us, we like you.' So I had a year and two months and three months in Teheran in complete luxury in comparison to what was before.

RL: And what were you doing there?

IS: The same. Military hospital. Apparently the Germans thought that they were going to have the Middle East like that. So there was a beautiful hospital built outside Teheran which was of course the British Army Hospital and we had one small section of it for the Polish patients and that's where I worked.

RL: How busy were you? How busy were you?

IS: Oh we were. Because you see among the lot of Poles who were brought from Russia some people had all sorts of horrible infections which they brought with them and which came only to the surface after they landed in safety. For us it was unbelievable safety. Well anyway a great many, I met a great many people there, very pleasant company. I had an awful lot of English conversations, and whatever very little English I had before, it blossomed out that very short time. And I kept being invited to all sorts of places for dinners and all sorts of entertainment and so I used to come, and it was a great life all of a sudden. So I've enjoyed it. And then one beautiful day I was approached by somebody I didn't know and I was told that there is an agency of the Palestine Jewish community in Teheran looking for any Jewish refugees who managed to come. And I found out that there were about 50 or well over a hundred, or maybe nearly two hundred Jewish refugees or army dependants who came and they were in a special camp. It was a question of getting places on a special ship sailing from the Persian Gulf to Palestine to get them there. Because you see the only land road was through Iraq. And the old army unit with whom I came from Russia, they were also in Iraq and when I listen to all the stories and it all goes back to '41 when we were very much involved with Iraq. So you see we couldn't get the civilians through, especially the children, in military transport, because they wouldn't allow Jews through. And I found it out by quite sheer chance because they sent me to the Iranian, or Iraqi consulate or whatever it was representative it to get a visa for an elderly lady who was an aunt of one of the officers, a doctor. And she was very ill and they wanted to send her as quickly as possible by plane, over Iraq to be operated at Hadassah. So they sent me because they said 'If they see a pretty girl they'll give it to you. So I went there and I was told straight away 'Are you Jewish?' Like that. So I said 'Yes.' 'Then you have no business to stay here. Go back and never come back again.' So that was my one and only time I've had anything to do with somebody from Iraq. So that's it, so we went and waited for a ship. Because the military convoys went through the Persian Gulf in between India, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, Aden, Suez, constantly royal navy and small ships and all the rest of it. And after waiting for quite a few months, we finally got permission and we went, I was seconded, I agreed, I asked to be released and be allowed to go as a civilian with them. So they told me 'Yes, you go as a Red Cross representative. And they gave me a Red Cross uniform for it. And this is how I went with the children. And eventually, after a fantastic voyage

Tape 2: 37 minutes 7 seconds

through the Persian Gulf, I shall never ever forget it in my life. It was a fantastic voyage, surrounded by the royal navy all the way round. This was a ship called Ascheinius which belonged to a Liverpool, they were not passenger liner ships, they only took some passengers. I think about 20 or 25 or…It was a big ship, quite a big ship, but not a passenger one. So most of the passengers, most of the people were housed in the hold but made very, very comfortable. And allowed during the day on decks for fresh air. They had lots of entertainment and all the rest of it. And to come to think of it that was October, November '43. The Final Solution was in full spring in Europe and these people were enjoying a beautiful voyage, surrounded by the royal navy, in a comfortable ship, being fed like kings and queens and really wonderful food, and all the older ones and the less well off, less well healthy, were housed in comfortable cabins. And ate with the

captains and the officers and everybody and treated like VIPs. It was unbelievable and yet do you think they were satisfied? Oh no. You see I was in the Red Cross uniform. I had a cabin next to the captain. The captain sat me on his right hand side at the dining table. I couldn't eat so the captain gave an order that he, if I don't finish my dinner, he will sit and wait 'til I finish. And before he gets up nobody is allowed to get up, because it was still old fashioned and just as it was. And why this? Because I was the age of his daughter. And his daughter was a WAF. And he said 'Somebody is looking after my daughter so I owe it to you.' And do you think the jealousy was unbelievable. So we came to Suez, a plane was waiting and there was the Jewish brigade, the Jewish-Palestine brigade, waiting together.

RL: Where were these people from, the people on the boat? Where were they originally from?

IS: Poles.

RL: They were all Poles?

IS: Polish Jews.

RL: And how many would you say were taken?

IS: I would say well over a hundred, maybe nearly two hundred. Quite a crowd. Mainly children, army dependents, people rescued in all sorts of ways. And they were they are called in the history of Israel 'The Teheran children'. So you see after that I had to go to hospital, after I discharged all of them and needed and was discharged from responsibility myself and allowed to sort of go free, I had to go to Jerusalem to the headquarters of the Red Cross. And I was sent to No. 41 Imperial Army hospital where there was a small again section of Polish wounded. The reason for it was translation, general work and liaison between the Indian, Australian, South African, whoever was in the Imperial Hospital, but mainly Indian and the Poles.

RL: Where was this hospital?

Tape 2: 42 minutes 7 seconds

IS: In a place which was called Kfar Bilu. Now it's a road junction. At that time it was an enormous kibbutz.

RL: And how did you feel being in Palestine?

IS: Wonderful. Fantastic. I found out you see that all the transport, all the movement was in the hands of the Jewish Brigade. But generally speaking, it was dangerous, far more dangerous than anywhere I had been before. Even transport went between the Jewish settlements and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and Haifa and all the other places. But by kind of closed little buses with tiny little windows, good for weapons. It was very difficult. The

only point was that for instance if we had to go by ambulance from the hospital to some other place, and to a scattered unit of medical supplies or whatever it was, the army and went by jeep. Now there was always somebody well armed in front, and if I sat at the back with the doctor, we always had been given masks and camphor because the smell of the Arab villages and the dirt and horror of their not poverty, but hygiene was unbelievable. You could smell about a mile before you entered, before the road entered the village and a mile afterwards. The dead was unbelievable. So there you are. And then you see I had a fantastic life for the few months I was in that hospital. I was there for about nearly 8, 9 months, something like that. I had a fantastic life. They treated me like a princess. They didn't know what to do for me. And then one beautiful day, a surgeon came to my jeep from Jerusalem, I was just leaving the theatre because I was helping to translate something during an operation, I still had my mask on my face when the surgeon came and said 'Sister, go to your tent and pack your things, here are your marching orders. You are going to the old Blighty.' D-day was approaching and the military hospitals were going to old Blighty.

RL: When was that?

IS: 1944. Spring 1944.

RL: And where were you going?

IS: To old Blighty, which was Great Britain, United Kingdom. So we were taken, I was taken to Jerusalem, luckily I knew everybody in Jerusalem so I had a lovely time of saying goodbye every night it was different for about a fortnight and I liked it very much. I said I'll stay with you for good. They wouldn't have me. After a fortnight I still have a photograph somewhere about of that going, at that time there was an express train run by the army between Beirut and Cairo. So we were and the Palestine main station was at Lod, which is now Ben Gurion Airport. And that's where we got on the train, and we went through the desert to over the Suez Canal because they put the rail bridge only once in 24 hours, and deposited us in a place quite near the Suez Canal. So yes, the Gaza strip Arabs pinched our luggage, so I had to borrow a jeep and go back and give them a lesson, with the help of the Jewish communications system, to get our luggage back, which luckily we did, otherwise we wouldn't have had even a nightie, and that's it. Over there
Tape 2: 47 minutes 37 seconds

we had nothing to do but wait for the big convoy to be formed to go to old Blighty, and then we played bridge, and that's all. And then finally after about a fortnight they gave us, took us by jeep to Cairo, where we stayed in the Red Cross house in a very nice place of Cairo. And we were taken to see the Sphinx and the pyramids, and I was even inside a pyramid, and then we were taken to Shepherd's Hotel and we were given a terrific dinner, and for escorts we had a squadron of air force people who were just passing through and were very glad to see the pyramids and those things just as much as to have a nice dinner at the Shepherd's Hotel. And the next day back to, what's the name of that one, Marrakesh or something, can't remember, and then on the train to Suez, and on the big ship which came from Bombay. And through the Suez Canal, it was terribly hot. It

was the end of May, beginning of June and the heat was unbelievable. Must have been about a hundred. And the ship was very crowded, there were about 12 of us to a cabin meant for two, on graduated sleeping beds, call it, but the place was extremely well run. We were all commissioned so we have rather been privileged in the officers section of the ship, one section, one gallery, one corridor was completely reserved for us, with military police at each end, so we were very, very nicely housed for the very long journey.

RL: How many of you were there in this officers' area, how many, how big a group?

IS: I could never tell you. We had a squadron of American air force, we had a squadron of Canadian air force, we had a Polish military hospital, full of doctors and nurses like myself, we had a contingent of British officers of very high rank, there were 3 generals, a very large number of full colonels, captains anybody, the whole bottom of this huge luxury ship, which was the mail ship of P & O before the war, was Italian prisoners of war. In between were the non-commissioned and other ranks, and people were telling me that some people slept on the floor and some people on tables. The ship was packed to the last inch, and we were the first in the block. We were first of all creeping along the northern side of Africa, because the Jerries were still in Greece and in Italy, and the weather was fantastic, and we were all enjoying it immensely. The ship was dry, we could only drink ginger ale and ginger beer, but we were allowed to smoke and everybody smoked at that time. On the decks, and we were asked to sit on the decks in our life jackets and we found out very soon that there was a full colonel who was the official painter of the convoy, because the captain told us on the loudspeakers that we were the largest convoy ever assembled to go to, to go home in times of emergency, and when we were half way through the Mediterranean, most probably about south of where Marseilles would be, we were told on the loudspeakers that D-day had started. So now they told us you know why we are sailing. And then we got into Gibraltar, and we didn't have a blackout but a brownout, and out of the enormous number of Italian officers and doctors who were at the bottom of the ship, our officers found out that they were allies from now on, because they finished with Hitler, so they organised a beautiful orchestra and we had a dance, in the engine room there and everybody was enjoying it immensely. So they let us sort of eat as much as we could, good food, and eat, dance, sing, enjoying it, drink ginger ale, and the next morning, rather early in the morning, we were all waking

Tape 2: 53 minutes 56 seconds

up 'to the cabins, we were all sailing out to the Atlantic in full military order.' The Ranchi, the Normandie, and the Royal Navy round. And two aircraft carriers here. And we were here, and the two aircraft carriers here. From now on we were not allowed to undress, so I slept in my khaki uniform, and wore the woollen one during the daytime, the good one. I suppose everybody did the same. We were very often woken up halfway through the night for mustering the lifeboats. During the daytime, we were allowed, no matter what weather we were allowed to sit on decks in our lifejackets and the colonel painted the convoy. And the painting hangs in the war museum in London, because I've seen it many times. And so it went on. And we played bridge, the moment it got dark or it was too much or it was raining or whatever, we could always sit in the enormous lounge

allowed for us, allocated to us, and you know, as time went on, the Americans sat in one corner and they found a big piano, and they played all sorts of their own games because they were very loud, and the Canadians nearby them, and we, the girls sat in one corner playing bridge, and we after playing bridge, after a few days or whatever, maybe a week later, some of the officers invited one of us, or two of us, come and play bridge, so later on we had sort of established four for the bridge, and as soon as breakfast was over it was either bridge or sitting on the deck or whatever. And now so it went on and on and on and on, praying for the safety of the two the tiny little planes going on and coming off, 'Oh please land safely!', everybody on deck, and finally after 3 weeks of meandering through the Atlantic we were approaching the British Isles from the north. The northern approaches, gradually and slowly we began to see the land from a distance, and the convoy began to sort of disintegrate, and finally on the 4th of July we were safely outside Greenock and told on the loudspeakers that this was the largest ever convoy which came home without one casualty and without losing anything whatsoever. And just as one of my bridge partners said, thanks to the Royal Navy. And that's it. So we came, we disembarked after a few days, and I was sent to a place in Scotland called Bridge of Earn, which was again a military hospital with a small Polish ward. Or rather two small wards, and I had to do translations all the time. Some people were recovering and some people unfortunately died. And from then on the war came to an end, I was still in Bridge of Earn, and then I was sent from there to a recovery place in Carnoustie in Angus, just north of Dundee where I had to supervise a complement of Polish soldiers who had lost their limbs and were waiting for artificial ones to recover them so that they could start life again. And in the meantime I got married and after demob, which took a very long time to come, because we had to wait 'til the Parliament gave us a choice of either staying in this country and getting British nationality or else emigrating wherever we wanted because the British government was paying for it because we were part of the British army. So we could either emigrate to America, or to Canada, or to Australia or to New Zealand.

RL: I think this film is about to end.

Tape 2: 59 minutes 50 seconds

[End of Tape 2]

TAPE 3
Tape 3: 0 minute 33 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Ida Skubiejska and its Tape 3. What did you think of England when you arrived, what was your first impression?

IS: Wonderful. Wonderful. We were given terrific hospitality. I had been given great friendship by some of the officers I met and played bridge with on the boat, so I had been invited to go to London, we had quite a few weeks without being to work, sort of acclimatisation time, although it was a difficult time to be in London because of the V-bombs, the Doodlebugs and the other ones, the big ones. But still the same for me it was

a terrific excitement, going to the houses of Parliament, being taken to clubs and oh to parks and seeing Europe again after all this long time of not believing that I shall ever get away from Asia. It was quite something. And the fact that we were kept in a small little place in Lancashire which was catered by a unit sent to the front, and we took over, and from then on we were dispersed to various places. Because the unit hospital I came with was stationed just north on the northern end of Wales, but I was sent to Scotland to be the liaison of this very small little Polish outlet in Bridge of Earn. But I was glad of it because Bridge of Earn is a beautiful place and Perth is a beautiful place. And I made friends immediately with the local ladies who came visiting and bringing things, and the Polish consulate in Edinburgh took a very great interest in the diet of our boys. So we used to get luxuries that nobody else got, I don't know where he got them from but we got them.

RL: What kind of things?

IS: Oh nice pieces of ham, nice pieces of Polish sausages which I made in a different way you know, something to make the boys eat, because it was the time of the Warsaw rising, terrible time. The radios were all the way around, the loudspeakers were all round the walls, and the horrifying news of the fighting that went on, that we had to watch over some of the boys practically the whole time. I was very lucky, because I had about 5 or 6 private soldiers, you know, batmen, people who were glad to work in the hospital instead of serving offices you know, and they would do anything for us and for the boys, clean them, wash them, if they were unconscious or unable to move, doing anything. Because we had kind of here was a corridor, here were the kitchens, the duty rooms, the store rooms, and we had one ward of very sick people and one ward of recovering. So the ones with the recovery were very often visited by ladies from Perth who came and taught them crafts. So they were never idle. They were being taught whatever they had an inclination for, and taught English on top of it. Whereas with the sick ones, these were where the batmen, the big boys had to….

RL: How many were in each ward? How many?

IS: Difficult for me to remember, I could tell you about 10 here and 10 here, and big windows all the way. It was a huge place, with tables and chairs and whatever. And we had a very strange patron there that was the Earl of Murray. He was a sort of unbelievable patron. I remember I came in for the first time to introduce myself, in the
Tape 3: 6 minutes 0 second

full white uniform you know, black this, stiff velvet and all the rest of it…..I think it came off…..there was an unknown gentleman sitting on the side of the bed of one of the boys, the sicker ones, and I was rather annoyed. No doctor, no nothing, nobody told me anything about it, so I marched over there, and gave him a sort of look, didn't say a word, just looked at him. So he got up, bowed in front of me, stretched his hand and said; 'I am a visitor here and I' he said in Polish, in pure, beautiful, literary Polish. 'I am the Earl of Murray and I am a visitor here, you can call me Lord John.' In Polish. So I said 'Oh, how do you do?' you know, being in the Middle East where a Lord, Duke whatever was a

daily occurrence, so they were penny a dozen sometimes, so for me it was no excitement in particular; 'How nice to meet you, how it comes that you speak Polish?'And he explained to me that he owned a big house in Edinburgh, that when the Poles came over in 1940, he gave them the house and they taught him Polish. And he was so interested that he studied it. So he came every day for a conversation of literature with me, you know, while looking. That was most welcome and quite interesting and I rather liked it. He was a very nice man. So there you are, so that was my introduction to Scotland. And then later on when the horrifying 'A bridge too far', what was the name of it, where the Polish parachuter went so horribly injured, when…Arnhem. And we had an awful lot of casualties from there, and some of them ended up in Bridge of Earn. And we had a Polish dancer coming to entertain them. And with them came invited Polish officers from the nearby camp. And that was another kind of incredible friendship because I was very soon invited to a big dinner at the mess there with a dance and all the rest of it, and that's how I met my husband. So there you are.

RL: What's your husband's background?

IS: Oh he came from a very sort of upper class Polish family. He was a Polish highlander. He was a lawyer and economist and he was a judge of industrial relations in Silesia.

RL: And when had he come over, when had he come to England?

IS: Why?

RL: When?

IS: Oh with the Dunkirk troops. He fought in Poland, from there they retreated to Hungary, from Hungary he escaped in a very incredible way to France, fought in France and we all know the way…he came to Glasgow on the ship called the Stirling Castle where you know how they sailed? They had to leave everything on the shore, they only had standing room. When on the decks and all the passage from wherever they sailed from I think they sailed from Brittany somewhere to Glasgow, the German radio was broadcasting that they had sunk. Because they were followed by Messerschmitts and he said they were standing there and looking at the bombs and none of them, millions of them probably, the Jerries were trying very badly to bomb them out and sink them, knowing that they were close. The bombs fell all the way around all the time, and none

Tape 3: 11 minutes 4 seconds

of them on the ship. Then they came to Glasgow untouched completely and half dead with tiredness and hunger and thirst they were standing. You know when one row would sit down, the other one was standing. There was only standing room on the boat. And the whole of Glasgow was waiting for them.

RL: What did he do once he was here?

IS: He was assigned to build the defences for this part of Eastern Scotland where its Fife and the fishing ports, and he got terribly bored with it being a very sort of lively character and very athletic and tall, and big, so he went to London to the war office, in the worst of the Blitz. When London was literally on fire and he told the war office that he's terribly fed up, can they give him someplace where he can fight? You know why? Because he was trained to go as an agent behind the lines and they gave him a lesson of parachuting and he broke his leg. So he couldn't go anywhere. So he was fed up as soon as they cured him, went to the war office and told them to send him somewhere where there is something to do. So they sent him to Africa, to the equatorial part. Nigeria, Ivory Coast, all that part. And he was there training commandos of the West African rifles, who eventually went to Burma. And finally after about 2 ½ years there, when he finished the job was the Vichy French. So when he finished with the Vichy French and was nearly ready to go to Burma, he got malaria. And he had to be brought by plane to a hospital in Scotland to recover. And when he recovered he wasn't fit for fighting any longer, so they gave him a job of liaison between the Polish part and the British part. So he was given his opposite number was Lord O'Neill. And the two of them liked putch. It was friendship to the ends of their lives, don't ask me. They loved liaising in Scotland, especially in the Spey Valley. So there you are.

RL: When did you marry?

IS: Oh we were married about a fortnight after the war was over. The war was over on the 5th or May, 6th of May, something like that and we were married on the 2nd of June.

RL: And where did you marry?

IS: In Perth.

RL: What kind of ceremony?

IS: My husband was a Catholic and I was Jewish so we had absolutely no quarrel about anything to do with religion so we went to the ordinary pairs you know office and got married.

RL: And where did you go after marriage?

Tape 3: 14 minutes 55 seconds

IS: Oh we went to a lovely little hotel called Branelbain, I think if I can still remember, it's on Lough Tay in the islands, beautiful place. You see from liaising with Lord O'Neill who knew absolutely every lovely little place in the Spey Valley and the Lough valleys and the glens of Scotland, he knew exactly where to go and where it will be nice and it was nice.

RL: And where did you live?

IS: Oh we had to wait for demob for quite a long time. And my husband was assigned to see that the soldiers who opted to stay in this country were trained and directed in the right position to work in either factories or mines or whatever was their qualification or whatever that was the line of work. And he was very busy so I had them…Oh and before he did this they sent him to Oxford for a course, well he had two degrees already, to a course of special you know doing with all this kind of ethnical work to Magdalen College where he stayed for quite a while and from then he was sent to Salisbury plain to the army centre where he had another kind of training, and then he was all sorts of all over the place and I was staying in Scotland. And occasionally sort of we managed to get together and finally we were demobbed. I was demobbed first so I decided I was going to London where I found out quite a number of my university colleagues and friends, law and medicine, and they were only too happy to have me because everybody sort of clung together after all this horrifying disaster. And I went to the Ministry of Education and within a fortnight I was standing in a college and teaching geography. And that's how I spent the rest of my life teaching geography.

RL: So where was your first job?

IS: In Edmonton in a Technical College in London. And my second job was in Shoreditch Technical College in London. And in the meantime before they decided that I was quite good enough they gave me a training time in the worst of the slums of London in the East End, in Rotherhithe, in Elephant and Castle, you know in places where I had to be taken from the underground by policeman to the school and brought back to the underground by policeman after school was over. So you see you wouldn't say that…Oh yes, in the meantime the War Office sent me two medals. One for courage and one for defence.

RL: So were you living in London?

IS: Yes we were very lucky because my husband's friend was a colonel in the tanks brigade that liberated Belgium, decided to emigrate to Canada. And his wife, who was French, and who stayed the whole of the wartime in London, had a lovely flat in Hampstead. So you know he called on my husband and he gave us the flat, literally gave us the flat. He said at last he knows that it goes to the right people. So there you go. He even gave me a lamp made of Carrera marble which is standing here on my desk.

Tape 3: 19 minutes 45 seconds

RL: What was your husband doing?

IS: Well he first of all…before Poland was given over to the Communists he worked at the embassy in exactly the same kind of job that my old father was doing, which was Foreign Trade. Trying to get trade between Poland and Britain. The bacon shops, you know, geese, eggs, whatever could be done. And then the Communists took over. And then he went, oh that was a terrifying time for him. He went and got himself a job with the fruit importers from the Canary Islands in Spitalfields and managed to get himself

some business, but he didn't like it because the hours weren't any good and he never really fully recovered from the horrifying malaria, so he got very, very ill and by the end of it he got a job as an accountant with Remploy, which is the organisation for reemploying disabled Ex-servicemen. And that was his job 'til retirement. When we retired…oh we lived in the flat for as long as it was convenient for us, and then we bought a small house in Hendon because I liked gardening and growing things and after we retired we sold the house in Hendon and bought a bungalow in Dalgety Bay. And we lived in Dalgety Bay in very happy retirement having lovely holidays and beautiful drives all over Scotland, and in the winter we used to go to concerts, and theatres and operas, and we did the same in London too. And travelling all over the place. But when we decided to live and stay in this country, we also decided not to have children. We were too old, too tired, too unable to think to bring a new creature, human being into the world and not to give it what we were given by our parents. That was unthinkable, and that's why we had no children. But we helped everybody. We helped to bring up orphans in Poland, we helped….there isn't one creature that I came across whom I haven't helped to such a degree, and my husband also, that I learned, having the advantage of teaching in technical colleges, I was size ten, so I used to go and buy in the worst of times remnants, and the girls in the schools, in the colleges used to make my clothes. And that saved money which went for food, for clothes, for anything for people who needed it. Unfortunately my husband died four years ago and I have never, ever replaced him by anybody. That's why I live alone. But have many, many, many friends, strangely enough here in Edinburgh, and people still remember me in London, and I still belong to the society of Christians and Jews and literary society and this, that and the other.

RL: What societies were you involved in?

IS: In London?

RL: Yes.

IS: First of all I belonged to the Liberal Jewish synagogue, which is very progressive. And I am still a member there. I've just been sent a most beautiful little gift from the synagogue with a lovely little card. And that is the tape is the Kol Nidrei from the synagogue which is wonderful. Here in Edinburgh I belong to the Jewish literary society which meets at the synagogue here, I also belong to the not quite so much to the Society of Christians and Jews and to a group of progressive reformed Juda…Jews who live
Tape 3: 25 minutes 11 seconds

here in Edinburgh and who are affiliated to the Glasgow synagogue. And that's all. I've got a sister whom I managed to rescue, she lives in Australia with her family.

RL: Can you just tell me what happened to your family and when you discovered what had happened to them?

IS: Well very quickly because I don't want to embellish on it. Everybody was killed in Auschwitz, that's my parents, my sister, all my uncles, all my aunts, all my cousins,

everybody. Absolutely everybody except my sister who is in Sydney who was in Russia with me and my cousin who is in Israel and who survived as a soldier of the underground army.

RL: How had your sister survived?

IS: The one who is in Sydney? Well I took her with me, we were together the whole time until we lost one another when we were travelling to find the Polish army.

RL: And what happened to her?

IS: Well she was with a group of young people with whom we were sort of being together in the camp, and she married one of them. So she wasn't alone. She married one of them and when the war was over they went back to Poland and that's how I found them. And very soon after the Communist, as long as they were sort of quasi free they were perfectly all right because her late husband came from an extremely wealthy family and he was just about going to recover some of their possessions, they were the spinners of wool in the Polish textile industry and had owned an awful lot. And when the Communists took over and unpleasant things started happening, I got them out of there and couldn't get them permission to stay here, so they went to Australia.

RL: And did they have a family?

IS: Yes, quite a few, a beautiful family, all of them university trained by now.

RL: How many children did she have?

IS: A son and a daughter. And they have grandchildren both of whom are young graduates now, there are photographs of them over there. And I don't want to talk about all this because that gives me weeks of sleepless nights and I don't like it.

RL: How have your experiences affected you? Psychologically, or…?

IS: Well it was until I got the news what happened I kept in touch with doctors all over the place with whom I worked, with senior officers who wrote me long letters and I enjoyed all this huge company from Teheran, from Palestine, from Kiev, from
Tape 3: 29 minutes 18 seconds

then, whoever I came across we sort of kept in touch and wrote letters to one another and gave little gifts and this and that and the other. When I got the news I sort of completely shut myself in. I spent the days, I was in Carnoustie at that time, I spent the days getting up very, very early, at daybreak, and running along the seashore. I just had a marathon of running, I was very, very sort of sporty, I could walk, I could mountain climb, I could do anything in the way of just running. And that running helped me. But for years and years on end, maybe fifteen years afterwards, I would not wear any other colour but black. And it was quite psychological because it never crossed my mind if I went into a shop or went

to buy a piece of remnant to make something out of it, it had to be black or white. And the same with coats and the same with hats and the same with everything whatever I wore. Black. And everything was all right because once I started concentrating on getting my geography into English which was exactly the same except of the sort of different pronunciation. Everything went well, went extremely well. But one could not ask me where is your mother, or what happened. If I spoke about her, that was alright, but if somebody else asked me I couldn't answer, tears dropping down. And the same at colleges at that time in London and especially in all sorts of places of education all the anniversaries and remembrance days and all the rest of it were very strictly observed because that was the generation which knew it. And I couldn't stand there. To listen to the last post was just about as much as I could do. And now I can. It took me ages and ages before I could even talk about it. And now I can talk without crying. But only a fortnight ago we had a remembrance service here next door in the main office for all the residents around here, many of whom are ex service, and with the last post back again.

RL: How long was it before you were able to talk about…?

IS: Oh very, very long time, a very, very long time. But nevertheless you know I spoke all the time about recipes and this, that, and how to make this and how to make that, and how I remember from home and this, that and this I could talk about, but not the rest. So that's the story.

RL: Does it affect your sleep?

IS: Well, no it doesn't. What I don't like is too much loneliness. I like to be with people, I like to go out, and since I've had a very unpleasant accident just about two years ago I very nearly got trampled over by a car, here in Edinburgh, I have difficulty walking on my own. And on top of my slipped disk makes me too much at home. And I much, that is one thing that is a little bit too much. Because I am used to travelling, I am used to being on my own, I don't mind I never minded running everything, being a boss to everything. Now I am not, and that hurts.

RL: Are you able to watch Holocaust programmes on television or to read books?

IS: Well that's one thing I will not watch. I would not watch the Pianist, I would not watch Schindler's List, but I went a year before my husband died, we went for a month to
Tape 3: 34 minutes 14 seconds

Poland. And I went to my university town although it was long holidays, the people, my husband's cousins, who have both that same university graduates, took me there by car. And they sort of kept me one here, one here, I was in between and we went from place to place to place to place, and they even opened the my Institute for me to have a look. And I could photograph the remembrance to my professor who was murdered by the Russians. And they stood beside me, they knew I was shivering. And all this was just wonderful for me. And I would gladly go there again. And I'm still invited to go there because I keep in

touch with his cousins, some of whom live in Warsaw and some of whom still in Silesia in the mountains.

RL: Did you visit anywhere else when you went back?

IS: I didn't go to Auschwitz although we passed the entrance to it a number of times. I didn't want to go there, too much effort. I wouldn't change anything. What I did, and what I am proud of, I belonged to the ex-service organisation of ex Jewish servicemen. And I went with them to Jerusalem to Yad Vashem for a big service. And I found out the cave with memorial plates instead of a tombstone and both my husband and I went there and bought it, bought this stone like a cemetery remembrance one and it is in the cave of remembrance at Yad Vashem. And that's where I think I buried my parents and my sister. Not in Auschwitz, in Jerusalem.

RL: When did you do that?

IS Oh a long time ago. Must be, must be about 20 years, maybe 19. I've just found out I've left the papers on my bed, they were together in the big case.

RL: Had you been back to Israel before that?

IS: Where, in Jerusalem? Oh good Lord, I was there during the war for a year.

RL: No but after?

IS: Oh yes, I've been there, and I've sent the Australian bit there to say Kadish And I also I went a number of times to Jerusalem since. And every time I went to Yad Vashem. And they still send me the most beautiful publications under the television there is the newest of the newest from Yad Vashem. Because I belong to the international Yad Vashem club or whatever they call it. And send them you know a little donation at Rosh Hashana. So there you are.

RL: In terms of identity, how would you describe yourself? In terms lets say of nationality?

IS: Well I've got sixty years of being British, sort of, it sort of grows on you like feathers. So I have I sort of I just took it like, it just came.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 27 seconds

RL: Do you feel different to the British in any way?

IS: In some yes, well you know, when you get on teaching as many years as I have done, in a college or a school or wherever, you're just one of them. That's all. When we were young stayed from and because I had to go to all sorts of colleges in London university, colleges and seminars and Goldsmiths college and all this that and the other, so I had

another degree almost, from the British part of my re-education after the war. It never crossed my mind that I was any different from anybody else.

RL: Do you feel different in any cultural sense?

IS: Here I do. Because I look different, I speak differently, I think differently. But that I just can't help it, I'm just as I am and if anybody doesn't like me, well too bad. Not for me, for them. I don't very much talking about myself, but I've done a little bit in my life. And I think all of it is positive.

RL: How at home do you feel here?

IS: How?

RL: How at home?

IS: Oh yes very much at home. I am at home wherever. I'm very sort of how shall I say, wherever I am. Even in a tent. I am at home wherever I am. That taught me you know, the six weeks on the train from Lvov to the Severnaya,
Tape 3: 40 minutes 33 seconds

RL: And what about your Jewishness?

IS: Oh that I keep. That is something I could have so easily sink into the English world without a trace, for which I had no end of possibilities and opportunities. I didn't do it. With my eyes as open as that. Although materially I would have been a very wealthy woman now. If I took any opportunity but I didn't. And I very bravely, quite openly and sincerely always explained why I couldn't take it.

RL: What did you turn down?

IS: Well, it's very personal, I wouldn't like to go through all this.

RL: In terms of your Jewishness, what does it mean to you?

IS: Oh it was always one part of me which I could never sort of shed away or change or do without. Look, in all my thirty years of teaching I didn't tell you that when I was completely fed up with teaching in London, because too many changes happened to my
Tape 3: 42 minutes 2 seconds

great dislike of it. I had an opportunity to teach and welcomed in Italy in the most expensive college for the highest Italian aristocracy. And I did take the job because my husband insisted that I go there and go away from places I dislike. I was the only Jewish person there, the only British teacher there in the midst of Italians. All of whom were either Contessa or goodness knows what. It never crossed my mind to be with them although I liked being there. And I truly enjoyed staying with them for a year. They

opened their hospitality to me, they invited me to stay there for good. And at the same time on the last I was commuting every term between Venice and Heathrow. And on the last I going to Venice my husband said 'How long am I going to be a taxi driver to Heathrow?' 'One year like this' he said 'is enough. Because the house is going to pieces and I can't keep it.' So I came here and they said 'Do stay with us', and I liked it. The life there was fantastic. And I didn't have to do anything, I was served,…I was a lady of leisure and the few hours I had to teach was just nothing much to do, so there you are. And yet I came back to London, in spite of all this, because whoever else with a little bit weaker restraint than I've got, would have stayed.

RL: And you came back, was it because of your husband?

IS: No, I came back because there was a beautiful chapel at the end of a corridor in this huge college, in the heights of the mountains, in Cortina D'Ampezzo, where I looked down on the mountain called Cristallo, through the beautiful sculptured chapel. Do you know what I did, I came to London, unpacked, and the next day I went to the Liberal Jewish synagogue and asked the Rabbi to say Kadesh for my parents, which he did, and I burst out crying, which took out hours, and we sat there and talked. And talked and talked and talked. And it turned out that he was my distant cousin. His name was Hugo Gryn. And this was why I came back. I couldn't take it any longer. Apart from being very loyal to my husband, who understood everything you know, because if he were let's say of different nationality, he wouldn't. But although his parents were not killed, but they had horrifying losses and horrifying experiences and they brought up a few orphans. They were wonderful people.

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

IS: Oh well, you can't blame the present generation. But one of my distant cousins was an international lawyer in London, my beloved auntie Frances' nephew. So he went, he knew my parents very well, especially my mother. And he went to Germany and took them to court in my name. And got some compensation and got some retirement money, which my father would have been earning if he were alive. So I went to the German Embassy to sign some papers and some very distinguished German came into the room, looked at me, and started saying something, asking how I get on and all this and the other. I said 'Look. There's no problem with me getting on. And I'll not take a penny of this money, although its mine, unless you promise me one thing.' And he said 'What's that.' 'That you watch that this horrifying evil, this horrifying, terrifying evil that overran you, of all people will never, ever happen again.' And do you know what he did? He said
Tape 3: 48 minutes 24 seconds

'I promise you' and kissed my hands. And later on it turned out that that was the Ambassador.

RL: Have you connections with AJR? The Association of Jewish Refugees?

IS: No, I never even knew about them until about two months ago or three months ago. They traced me, through you know they found Dessi, the warden to whom you spoke, and Dessi found me, we are constantly talking to one another because we like one another very much, and she said 'Look there is a phone call from London, asking whether you give permission to or may I give them your personal number or whatever', I said 'Do.' And they phoned me, it was Michael Newman. And that's how I came to know about it. I didn't know about you. I only knew about Ajax and the progressive synagogue and that's all. Because of my teaching and travelling all over the world I never knew anything about it.

RL: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

IS: No I don't, except that does this video, would I have a copy of it?

RL: Yes.

IS: Oh thank you.

RL: Is there any message that you'd like to give?

IS: Just the same you know, be watchful because what is happening today in the world gives me the creeps. Sometimes I thought you know that years after the war that life is going to be a little bit different, that things would be so much better, that there were years when we were younger when we'd take a small car, travel all over France, travel all over Europe, going wherever we wanted, nobody touched us, everybody was hospitable, look what's happening now. Terrible. Just when I am old and would gladly see you know that whatever little time I've got left things are going better, but they are going worse. In this mornings paper just fills me with horror.

RL: How safe do you feel here?

IS: Oh this is safe. This area is wonderfully safe because the other things I had, the other choice I had is to go to Sydney to stay nearer my next of kin. Or else to Israel, and I spoke to them, I am in constant touch with them, we talk on the phone practically every few days. So we know each other extremely well. And my nephew was here only a few weeks ago just by passing, had some business in Europe so he came to see me. And now that I am on my own, everybody knows it. I've got a good doctor, who is also Polish, not Jewish, I've got these friends both in the synagogue and in various places and here in this place I am the only Jewish resident. And yet I feel here completely safe. There are very
Tape 3: 52 minutes 23 seconds

nice people around here. They none of them is messy, you know, none of them would come and sort of do anything or trespass or whatever. But when we have a residents meeting we all sort of respect one another.

RL: Have you ever met any anti-Semitism in this country?

IS: Yes. Not from the British, from the Poles. And from the British as well. Never talked loudly about it, but I would be overlooked, I'd be doing how shall I say, used as a scapegoat. With great politeness.

RL: And by the Poles?

IS: No, by the English.

RL: And what anti-Semitism was shown by the Polish community?

IS: Oh, during the war at the time when we were leaving Russia and going into Persia. Shocking. A horrible jealousy of old women taking the opportunity of just showing their wrath on somebody who is completely helpless because I had a wound on my neck and they were showing, horrible showing off. And yet at the same time the greatest help and the greatest tolerance and the greatest friendship one could get from another source. So bad equalled, no grudges. You come across good people, bad people in this kind of a unbelievable mosaic that my life was, you can be always, you can always sort of get the good and the worst and the bad and the whatever.

RL: Thank you very much.

IS: Thank you. Do you want the photograph of this?

Tape 3: 55 minutes 05 seconds

[End of interview]

Photographs

RL: Tell us about the photograph.

IS: It's a photograph of my schooldays. A school photograph. And this is the identity card of the fact that I was at school in a ladies' high school in Bendzin. In 19.. Let's say 1930 or '29.

IS: This is matriculation, university entrance 1933 in June. Place, Bendzin.

RL: Can you tell us about this Ida, tell us about the photograph.

Tape 3: 56 minutes 15 seconds

IS: Oh this is the identity card of the Allied personnel Polish army under British command. 1945.

IS: It's my mother, my father, myself age 6, who my father holds by the hand, and my little sister Helena who was three years younger. Date 1920 Krakow. Poland.

IS: My father, and my mother, three passport photographs put together and sent to Switzerland to a family friend with a plea of getting an entry into Switzerland in 1943. And that is the last photograph I have of them.

RL: And on the left?

IS: My sister Helena, my father, Maurice Tintpulver, and my mother Miriam Tintpulver.

Tape 3: 57 minutes 39 seconds

[End of Tape Three]