

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	144

Interviewee Surname:	Sabor
Forename:	Rudolph
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	14 April 1914
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	24 January 2007
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 25 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEW: 144

NAME: RUDOLPH SABOR

DATE: 24 JANUARY 2007

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

BL: Today is 24 January 2007. We're conducting an interview with Mr. Rudolph Sabor. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in Petts Wood. Can you please tell me your name?

RS: Rudolph Sabor.

BL: And what was your name at birth?

RS: Rudolph Kohn.

BL: And when were you born?

RS: On 14 April 1914.

BL: And where, please?

RS: In Berlin.

BL: And how old are you today?

RS: 92.

BL: Mr. Sabor, thank you very much for having agreed to do this interview with us for Refugee Voices. Could you tell us something about your family background, please.

RS: My mother, Rosa Lindenbaum, was born in Berlin. She was a very beautiful young girl when she married, and she emigrated to South Africa, Cape Town, in 1934 with her husband, Paul Kohn, and her oldest son, Fredi, where they settled down in Cape Town.

My father continued his Berlin job as the Kaufmann, he was in charge of a shop that sold hats for ladies.

BL: What was the name of the shop, please?

RS: Rosa Lindenbaum.

BL: And where was it?

RS: In Berlin, in Berlin-Schöneberg in the Hauptstraße.

BL: And can you tell me something about your grandparents, please?

RS: My grandparents on the mother's side I didn't know. They died before I was born and of my grandfather I've got a few very pleasant memories. He was a tall, very upright man, a former sergeant in the Prussian army. And I remember he met another former sergeant of the Prussian army who lived next door. He met him every day. They had discussions about the war mixed with Jewish anecdotes. For instance, he would tell one of Frederick the Great and the point of it was: "Nebbich," said Frederick the Great, and so on. So, he mixed his Jewish humour with Prussian humour.

BL: What was his name?

RS: Aaron Kohn.

BL: And what was his profession?

RS: He was a Kaufmann, a member of the orthodox Jewish community in Berlin. The last of his kind.

BL: And where did he live?

RS: In the Babelsberger Straße, Berlin-Wilmersdorf.

BL: And when did you go to see him?

RS: Whenever we visited his daughter, Bertha, which was roughly once a month.

BL: And what about your grandmother?

RS: She was dead when I was born.

BL: Where did you live in Berlin?

Tape 1: 5 minutes 0 second

RS: In Schöneberg in the Hauptstraße, opposite to the shop.

BL: Can you describe for us a bit of that Schöneberg, or growing up in Berlin?

RS: It was a quiet residential Vorort of Berlin, quite different from what it is today. We had buses which were drawn by horses, I remember, and one of our favourite pastimes was looking out of the window – we were on the first floor – and occasionally, when the buses came past, or the Elektrische, we would communicate with the people downstairs by shouting things down and they answered in some way. It was a nice pastime, but harmless, and the whole atmosphere of it was one of slowness, Spitzwegian slowness ...

BL: What do you mean by that? Slowness?

RS: People were not in a rush. They took things easy and this made it the more incomprehensible to us when in 1933 everything changed, from the tempo of the living to the strange change of moral values.

BL: You were born at the outbreak of the First World War. What are your earliest memories?

RS: In our sitting room – this is one that looked out onto the street below – there was a grandfather clock, and next to the clock with that much room apart was a chest of drawers, and I squeezed into the room between the two, the grandfather clock and the chest of drawers, and I would sit there for hours doing nothing, except thinking. I started this when I was four and I did it until I was about eleven or twelve. Heaven knows why.

BL: Was this hiding because nobody could see you there?

RS: It was a good hiding place and it was a place to be alone. And that's what I wanted. We had a Dienstmädchen, who was a nuisance, and I was safe from her.

BL: Why was she a nuisance?

RS: Oh, she would tell me: "Change your trousers or your socks," and made me do things I didn't want to do.

BL: What about friends? What sort of friends did you have?

RS: I had friends who were interesting. One of them was Heinz Berggrün, who is collector of pictures now. Another one was Ernst Bergman, who was a fierce anti-Nazi and another one was Heinz Andrak, who saved me lots of times from being beaten up by older and stronger class comrades in the Nazi time.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 30 seconds

BL: Were there Jewish friends, non-Jewish friends?

RS: I didn't have any Jewish friends.

BL: What sort of circles did your parents mix with?

RS: What sort of...?

BL: What sort of circles did your parents mix with? What sort of friends did they have?

RS: Similar as me.

BL: So it was quite a non-Jewish sort of milieu?

RS: Ja, by and large. The only Jewish friend I had actually was Heinz Berggrün.

BL: Did your parents, did they go synagogue? Did you go to synagogue at all?

RS: When I was leading a group in the what was it, a group of Jewish pathfinders, I went to the Reform Synagogue, which Joachim Prinz, I think, was in charge of, Babelsberger Straße, I think.

BL: But your family, did you keep any holidays or anything?

RS: The holidays, when I was eleven until about fifteen, we were sent to a Jewish home for children, so that my parents had some time for themselves, with my older brother, Fredi, and a few cousins. It was a not very pleasant affair.

BL: Where were these camps? Round Berlin?

RS: In Krumhübel. That's the Sächsische Schweiz. It was run on the cheap apparently. They charge a lot, but we got little for it. One had the feeling that parents shoved us out for a bit, bless them. They deserved it really.

BL: And you went there every holiday, most holidays?

RS: Ja, between the ages of eleven and fifteen. After that I went with the pathfinders and then with the Jewish Deutsch-Jüdische-Jugend. That was a group of nineteen Züge, each Zug had about fifteen, sixteen members. And I remember that once I refused to sign it 'Deutsch hyphen Jüdisch'. I signed it one word 'deutschjüdisch' ...

BL: You had an issue with the hyphen?

RS: [uncomprehending look]

BL: You had an issue with the hyphen? You thought it was wrong?

RS: Ja, ja.

BL: Tell us why.

RS: I thought it was the same thing, 'deutschjüdisch', a pious thought in those days, which unfortunately came to nothing.

BL: So, how did you see yourself at the time? Deutschjüdisch?

RS: Ja. Deutschjüdisch, as deutschevangelisch, deutschkatholisch, anything.

Tape 1: 15 minutes 7 seconds

BL: Yes, but you said your grandfather was more orthodox.

RS: Ja.

BL: So, did you go with him to synagogue at all, or did you ...?

RS: No. That's where I drew the line.

BL: Which synagogue did he go to?

RS: I think it was the Babelsberger Straße.

BL: But you were not interested in religion?

RS: No.

BL: And your parents also not, or did they belong to ...?

RS: My father went to the obligatory Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the two days. And there he forced me to go with him. He went with his cylinder (top hat) and his Sunday outfit.

BL: And where did he go to? Which synagogue?

RS: That was in the Babelsberger Straße.

BL: Right. And you didn't like it?

RS: No.

BL: Why not?

RS: I thought it was a lot of pretence. I still do.

BL: Which school did you go to?

RS: Prinz Heinrichs-Gymnasium in Schöneberg, ten minutes walk from us. It was a good school with a teacher there who was the chief formative influence on my whole life, Arnold Bork. He taught us Greek and Latin, and I learned everything from him I needed in life.

BL: Why, what was special about hi? What did he teach?

RS: He understood us really. That's what very few teachers set out to do. He did much more than teach us. He formed us. But formed us not in his way, but in our way. A great man.

He was a fierce anti-Nazi. I remember we had one play – he gave a yearly performance of a play – I was then in the Oberprima, the highest class of the school, in 1934, and we were performing the “Prince of Homburg”, a play by Kleist, and I was to be the Grosse Kurfürst. And the Director, a terrible little man, who came every day in his brown shirt, a Nazi of course, Deidert [?], said he wanted to see the cast list and when he found my name on it he said: ‘That’s impossible; it’s 1934’, and took me off the list, and Bork said in that case he wouldn’t be associated with the play any more. So he put his own job at risk, or even more, but he was absolutely needed in the school, so he won the day, and I played the Grosse Kurfürst.

BL: What changed for you in 1933? Do you remember?

RS: I didn’t want to believe it. And when my parents and brother had left for South Africa in ’34, they wanted me to come with them. I was then very interested in singing, and they said, “Why don’t you come and you can be a Kantor in South Africa?” And I actually had some lessons in Kantorei from Davidsohn, who was a famous German Kantor and teacher ...

BL: Magnus Davidsohn?

Tape 1: 20 minutes 51 seconds

RS: Ja. And then I saw what I would have to do. As a Kantor you have got to sing to cows before they are being slaughtered, and that didn’t appeal to me. And so I said “no” to it. And then as years went by, I was firmly convinced that my place was in Germany and that the Nazi hordes were there on ‘auf Abruf’, that any day Mr. Chamberlain would march in at the head of his troop; he would march with his umbrella and chase the Nazis away. That was what I thought and it was very foolish, but there it was. And that made me stay as long as possible.

BL: Your parents left for South Africa in ’34. That’s quite early. What made them leave?

RS: Oh, they saw what was coming.

BL: What happened? Did something happen to your father's shop in '33?

RS: In '34 it was plastered over with slogans. I have particularly nauseating remembrances of the handover of the shop to a man called Koschinsky, who was a firm friend of my father's; all along he had a hat shop in the Hauptstraße as well. And this Herr Koschinsky bought the shop from my parents, I don't know at what sum, but apparently it was a ridiculous sum, and so much for a friend, Herr Koschinsky.

BL: Why did they choose South Africa?

RS: It was the only one that would have them.

BL: Did they have any connections? Did they have anyone in South Africa?

RS: No, no.

BL: And your brother was older than you, so by the time he must have finished school already.

RS: Ja, he finished school five years before me. He was a boxer. He was in the Maccabi.

BL: What was the name? Fredi Kohn?

RS: Ja. He still kept up his boxing in South Africa. And his son, whom I never met, was a member of the South African Olympic team at Wasserball.

BL: But he was a professional boxer, your brother?

RS: Ja.

BL: So he fought for only Maccabi or also some other clubs?

RS: No, Maccabi. Maybe some other clubs, but I don't know about that.

BL: So for him it was clear that he would go with your parents.

RS: Ja. Ja.

BL: You said you had these lessons with Davidsohn?

RS: Ja.

Tape 1: 25 minutes 14 seconds

BL: That's very interesting for us because Davidsohn of course came to, was the Kantor in Belsize Square Synagogue.

RS: Oh, I didn't know.

BL: Yes. For many years. Can you tell us about the lessons. Where were they and your memories of ...?

RS: In a synagogue, I think in the Levetzowstarsse in Berlin. He had a hard time with me, I remember, because I knew so little about the background and it was necessary to be really fluent in Hebrew to do everything that was required of you, and my Hebrew was very, very poor. I found it difficult to master a language which would exclude vowels, and I thought it was stupid to exclude an important part of the language just to make it a bit harder. They weren't very successful lessons, although he did his best, but I didn't.

BL: So it was really your parents wanted to ..., it wasn't your ...?

RS: Ja.

BL: Was it while you were still at school, or was it when you had finished school already?

RS: I had finished school. I think it was the first thing I did after school.

BL: Just before we go on, in the school, after 1933, did you have to face anti-Semitism from other pupils, or ...?

RS: None at all, strangely. We had a chap even who came in a Nazi uniform, a brown shirt, but he was most pleasant to me. If anything, I felt a bit more of anti-Semitism before 1933. There you would get the usual things, good-natured, but ...

BL: Such as?

RS: They would poke fun at our own holidays, they would say: 'Oh yes, it's your holiday next week' and derogatory remarks, but all good-natured really. But, after '33, there was an absence of those remarks.

BL: That's interesting. Were there many Jewish pupils in that school?

RS: Ja, there were quite a lot.

BL: In your class, let's say, how many ...?

RS: Seven or eight out of a class of forty. We had religion taught to us by a rabbi who came into the school in his orthodox outfit. He didn't go to the Lehrerraum; he had a room for himself, and he taught us the usual things. He tried to comfort us in '43, eh in '34 about the things that happened. In the school we had several teachers who were Jewish, who ended their career in unpleasant circumstances. I don't remember them

myself, but I heard from my former school comrades in 1934, after I left school. One of them, Ehrlich, was found by the pupils in the Bayrischer Platz, which was near the Gymnasium where we were at school, on a park bench for Jews, dead, having swallowed some stuff. Another, Rubinsohn, called Tönnchen by us because he was round and small, apparently was held in the school until '36, when he had to go and he committed suicide.

BL: Very sad.

Tape 1: 31 minutes 0 second

RS: Ja.

BL: But by that time you were not in the school any more.

RS: No. I was teaching then.

BL: So, what options, what did you think you wanted to do when you finished at the school, when you had your Abitur?

RS: I wanted to be a singer. I was told I had a good voice and I wanted to go to an Academy and found that was barred. I had private lessons for a few weeks, but then settled on my teaching career.

BL: What inspired your interest in music? Was your family, did you have a musical upbringing at all?

RS: None at all. The only music I had was my mother, who was very interested in listening to music, and I had a more related interest in music through my uncle, Max, who was a splendid pianist, and he was married to a lady who had several men friends of the Berlin opera. She was a collector of tenors. And Max didn't know, or didn't want to know. Later he was divorced from her and married again, a Christian lady, a wonderful wife as far as I remember. And those two were my only relations who were left in Berlin, who took a real interest in me and helped wherever they could.

BL: This was your father's or your mother's ...?

RS: Mother's ...

BL: Mother's ...?

RS: Brother.

BL: And his wife.

RS: He was another formative influence on me.

BL: And he played piano as a hobby or he was a pianist?

RS: As a hobby, but to a concert standard.

BL: What was his profession?

RS: He hadn't one.

BL: Mhm.

RS: No. He played the piano the whole day long as far as I remember.

BL: After your parents moved, did you stay in the flat, or where did you live?

RS: Oh, I had my own room, which I rented. At first in Schöneberg to be near my former number 11, where I lived as a child. But then, when I became a teacher in the Auguststraße, I moved up North, where I rented a room.

BL: So when you decided to become a teacher, what did you do? Where did you train?

Tape 1: 34 minutes 56 seconds

RS: The training was in the Lützowstraße Lehrerausbildungsanstalt and when I became a teacher it was probably the loveliest time a teacher can imagine. Auguststraße was a modern building, a splendid building. It stands largely untouched by the war today. I don't know what it is, but I remember it was a splendid building. I taught a class of fourteen-year-old girls German and history and music. And the music soon took its main place. German lessons were music lessons, the history lessons became music lessons, and the music lessons remained music lessons. And we had a choir, and that was the choir of all choirs, die Piepmätze. And as far as I remember, although we had splendid choirs since then in this country in England, the Piepmätze were the finest. They were really excellent.

BL: So this was, so you worked obviously in a Jewish school.

RS: Ja.

BL: It was a Jewish school. What was the name again?

RS: Auguststraße.

BL: Auguststraße, yes. So was it a communal school or was it a private school?

RS: Communal.

BL: A communal school. And at that time how many pupils were there?

RS: Four to five hundred.

BL: And also, because you didn't say, the teacher training you did, was it specifically for Jewish teachers?

RS: Only.

BL: Only. Was that the only thing open to you at the time?

RS: Ja. Mm.

BL: So it was not possible to become a regular teacher any more.

RS: No, no.

BL: So, in your training, did you also have to do all kinds of - because you said you didn't like this religious aspect at all – did you have to do some religious training at all?

RS: Yes, I had to, and the teacher was very understanding. He left me alone, and our music teacher, from whom I learned everything about music you can learn, Jospe (?), he was marvellous.

BL: At the time, what did most people study to become teachers at Jewish schools? Did they think they went to a Jewish school in Berlin or did they have an idea of emigrating at all?

RS: Ja, about fifty-fifty. Partly they pursued their hunting after a visa by hook or by crook, or they settled to a job in teaching, which they had to accept wherever it was offered. So they had to leave Berlin and go to the South or West, wherever they could find a place, or if they were lucky, they could stay in Berlin.

Tape 1: 39 minutes 8 seconds

BL: So you found this position in that school.

RS: Ja. And in that Lehrerbildungsanstalt. I met Emmy Veit, who later became my wife.

BL: Can you tell us something about her, please?

RS: She was born in Freiburg. She had a twin sister, Otti, who was a cellist and became a famous cellist later on in Australia, professional. She went to England in 1936 in order to continue her lessons with Nikolai Graudan, who was the first cellist with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra – he had to leave Germany, of course – and there she obtained a visa for my wife, in '39, in March, through Latham, Sir William Latham, I believe, proprietor of the News Chronicle, a journal then, and of Cadbury's, the chocolate

manufacturers. He obtained a visa for her, for my wife, and she obtained one for me, also through Otti again, which got me out of Berlin ... much against my own will.

BL: Yes, by when did you actually want to leave Berlin, because you said you didn't really want to go?

RS: I didn't want to go. But when Emmy sent it or announced that the visa was on the way, I did it to please her.

BL: Even in 1939. I mean, you must have by then, obviously this was after Kristallnacht. Can you tell us, do you remember Kristallnacht, were you in Berlin?

RS: Ja.

BL: What do you remember?

RS: I was up in the night and I went to the Babelsberger Strasse; it was after midnight, and I saw it, what happened. And that strengthened my belief: this cannot be forever. The people who produced Dürer, Goethe, Kleist, a cultured people like the Germans would wake up any day. It was total delusion. The only thing I can say to make it explicable is that my love for everything German was greater than my common sense.

BL: You said that your uncle was still in Berlin, married to a non-Jewish wife. What happened to him?

RS: He was taken to a concentration camp, ja, and murdered.

BL: But he was still until you were there, so he, they helped you, you said.

RS: Ja.

BL: What did they think, that you should leave or that you should stay?

RS: He urged me to leave. Everybody did.

BL: Tell us a bit more about teaching in the school. What was the atmosphere like?

RS: I remember distinctly, in '36, '37 and part of '38, the school was calm; you could concentrate on your job; the girls were interested in anything you gave them. We did Kleist on the roof garden of the school, and from '38 onwards, middle of '38, most of the girls had exit plans and they began to leave. And when I left, of my class there were about ten or twelve left. Of those one was Lewinski, Laura Lewinski, who was a wonderful-looking girl, mixed marriage, mother Christian and the father Jewish. Mother had died and father and daughter were hiding - I got this from eye-witnesses later, in fact only two or three years ago - hiding in two separate houses. And they communicated with one another through the neighbours, who passed messages. And one day they decided it

would be safe to meet outside. They met, and after five minutes they were followed by an informer – and they must have been Jewish informers in those days. It's quite incredible ... those people were after their own security, I suppose ...

Tape 1: 47 minutes 25 seconds

BL: And what happened?

RS: And they were denounced to the Gestapo, and both were killed. She had a sister from whom I learned this, Eva, who now lives in Tel Aviv.

BL: Were the girls given a sort of vocational training in the school as well in order to prepare for emigration?

RS: Yes, they had household lessons. My wife actually took those.

BL: Did you wife move from Freiburg specially for this job, or had she ...?

RS: Ja. She heard about the job in the Lützowstraße, and she took a flat in Berlin, and, believe it or not, it's my old flat before she knew who I was. This flat was open, and there she hired one room in the Hauptstrasse 11, where I lived. That was before she knew me.

BL: Where you grew up, the flat your family owned?

RS: Ja. My family had meanwhile moved out of the Hauptstrasse to cheaper lodgings somewhere, in the Kolonnenstraße. There was only a short interregnum between my parents moving out and Emmy Veit moving in, and that's a coincidence of a special kind.

BL: And where did you live at the time?

RS: I was living with the parents of the girl who my brother had married in South Africa. No he had married here in Berlin. She was a Christian and those parents were both working-class people, Communists until '34 or so, when they became Nazis. And I remember – I only stayed there for a week or so – it was impossible to sleep there because of the bed bugs. And bed bugs are particularly innocuous creatures because they come out at night and really bite you. And there's nothing you can do. The next day I complained to the Frau [...] about the bed bugs, and she denied that she had any. I then told this story to a friend of mine, who sent me a postcard, an open postcard, in which he said: 'I'm sorry to hear about your bed bugs. I know of an address somewhere. Why don't you hire a room there.' Now, this postcard came to Frau [...], who put this on my bedside table. And I spent one night there, and another night, where I didn't sleep. But I picked up the bed bugs, one by one, and nailed them to the tapestry [wallpaper], the Tapete, so I had about thirty or forty bed bugs as evidence. That was the end.

BL: And who were these people? They were the parents of ...?

RS: Grete [...], who was the wife of Fredi Sabor, my brother.

BL: So when did your brother marry?

RS: 1934, before he was emigrating to South Africa.

BL: So he went with his wife to South Africa?

RS: Ja.

BL: So she left, although she didn't have to leave Germany obviously.

RS: Ja. Very gorgeous-looking blond woman.

BL: So from there you moved, where did you move to? From the parents of the girl?

RS: I found a room near the Lützowstraße in the Potsdamer Straße near to where Fontane lived [laughs] and from there I moved to, I don't know where, but it was five minutes from my school in the Auguststraße.

BL: Now, how did you manage financially? Did you have enough money from your salary, or did other people support ..?

RS: Very, very little. It was touch-and-go.

BL: Had your parents left you any money behind? Did you ...?

RS: No.

BL: So you had to support yourself.

RS: Ja. I was given ten Marks, which my remaining uncles in Berlin sent me every month. That was ten Marks.

BL: And your salary?

RS: And the salary was enough to live on.

BL: How much was it? Do you remember?

RS: No, I don't. But it was sufficient to scrape by.

BL: And when did you get married?

RS: On 26 August '39.

BL: In England?

RS: No, no, in Berkhamstead, where my wife was working as a nanny in a family. That was her visa which was for a post as nanny.

BL: Yes. So you got married in England.

RS: Ja, ja.

Tape 1: 55 minutes 19 seconds

BL: When you received your visa, how much time did you have to pack your things and to prepare to leave?

RS: Ten minutes. Really. I got a telegram from my wife that the visa is on its way. And that night I had a phone call – I don't remember the time, but it was somewhere between two and three at night – from a former class mate of mine who was in the SS then, who said a few words, something like "Rudi, hau ab! We come and fetch you in half an hour." And Rudi hau'd ab. I took ten minutes. I packed willy nilly things. I packed all my photos, books, and my guitar. And made my way – the only thing that ran then on the way was the Stadt- und Rundfahrt / Stadtbahn. It's our U-Bahn, which in those days was underground and above ground, and that was a thing that went round the city, and then it went round again, and then it went round again, always stopped at the stops, but never stopped for longer than to admit people to get off and on. And I sat on this. In the morning I went out to the lavatory and to buy some subsistence and phoned my Herr Silberstein, who was the owner of the flat I had then hired, and told him what had happened, and I asked him: 'Has the visa come?' Nothing had come, so I continued the travel for another day and night. And on the third morning I phoned Herr Silberstein again, and he said: 'Yes, it has come.' And I asked him to come to the station – I think it was the Zoological Garden, but I'm not quite sure. There I wanted to pay him for my outstanding rent and receive the visa from him. And I did the two things. I found I had an hour and a half before my train to Hook van Holland left with the visa in my pocket. I went to the restaurant, which was above the station I remember. No, it was apart from the station, but very, very close to it, and somewhere one had to climb a stairs, and there was the restaurant. It said: 'Juden unerwünscht' and I went in, idiot that I was. It only took one person to recognize me and that would have been it. And there I had my favourite dish, which was Leberknödel, and I ordered another because I had another half hour to go, and I had a Weisse mit 'nem Schuss. That is white beer, a very big beer Seidl and a Schuss of alcohol in it. And suddenly, I noticed from a tree which was above me rain drops fell into me beer. But I looked round and it wasn't raining, and I looked again in the tree and there was a cat sitting in the tree and tending to its business. And that somehow sealed my leaving Berlin when the cat piddled in my beer. That was of significance.

BL: Mr Sabor, we need to change tapes. We have to stop here.

TAPE 2

BL: This is Tape 2. We're conducting an interview with Mr. Rudolph Sabor. You were telling us about leaving Berlin. So what happened after you had the meal in this restaurant and the cat poured something into your beer?

RS: Well, the train came. I remember it was packed with people on the same errand as mine to Hoek van Holland. Everything there went quite smoothly. We took the passage steamer from Hoek van Holland to Harwich and there we disembarked and a new life began. I remember the arrival in Harwich. The first thing was a nurse came racing up and down the platform asking everyone: 'Have you seen the doctor?' My English was very poor in those days and I thought it was a plain question: 'Have you seen a doctor?' And I said: 'No', and that was that. Then I went through the formalities, found myself on a train to London and there I was greeted by a reception committee from Bloomsbury House. They handed me over to somebody from the Friends Association, and from there they took me on a bus to Tring in Hertfordshire and settled me on a farm with twelve to fifteen other refugees and assorted spies – two or three of them were – and we were given a spade and told to go to a field nearby and make ourselves useful. I felt like a character in an Oscar Wilde play. I'd never seen a spade in my life and how to use it just the same, and I found it was quite interesting. We had a whole day out in the field. I suppose we just turned it over. The next day we turned it back again; we seemed to make ourselves useful in some way, or unuseful. And we did that for a month or two. And, meanwhile, my wife was settled with her family, which was nearby in Berkhamsted, which was the next village or two from Tring, with a family of three, where my wife had to be cook and nursemaid at the same time. She had neither done one nor the other before, but she was with very nice people who looked after her. When they heard about me, they said we should get married and they would pay for a honeymoon of three days in the [Mount Royal] Hotel, Marble Arch. What is the famous Hotel in Marble Arch? ... Anyway, it still is a famous hotel, and there we had our honeymoon. And I remember the maid coming to see us in the morning: did we want tea or coffee? And we found this all very unusual. My wife said to her, to comfort her I suppose: 'Oh, I'm a maid too', which was then wholly inappropriate, being on a second honeymoon, and then we returned as a newly-baked couple [sic]. Oh yes, we bought the wedding rings from Woolworth, six pence ...

Tape 2: 6 minutes 0 seconds

BL: And where did you actually get married?

RS: In a London registry office.

BL: And who were the witnesses?

RS: Two people whom we picked up on the way. I don't know if they were always doing that, waiting for handouts. Anyway, they strolled up and down there, so we thought they were the right people and we hired them.

BL: Yes, so you had this honeymoon in Marble Arch. This is after you got married in this registry office.

RS: That's right. Then we went to pursue our separate duties. My wife continued in Berkhamsted and I in the youth house in Tring.

BL: What was it, a youth house for refugees?

RS: Ja.

BL: What was it called?

RS: The Youth House. The Quakers ran it. And there I met a chap from Austria, who was a genuine refugee, who was interested in writing, as I was, so we did some sketches, short stories. And one day we typed them out and went up to London and sold them to the Daily Express. That was our first excursion.

BL: And what were they about? What were the themes of those sketches?

RS: You know, I don't know any more. I think I remember one of them had a background of our own, something to do with refugees, and learning English ...

BL: Have you still got them?

RS: No. They've gone.

BL: But were they published?

RS: Ja. Very soon, we were astonished at that, after two or three days. After that, I was asked would I like to go to London to the Youth House in Camden Road, 250 Camden Road, I remember. That was their official address, large house of the Friends, Society of Friends, and they gave me a room there and fed me and I lived like God in France. It was marvelous. They gave me a gramophone, a wind up and pull lever. And Emmy came over to see me on her free days. We listened to music. I remember it was two pieces we heard more than any others. One was Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 played by Wilhelm Kempf, and the other one was Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 played by the Philharmonic Orchestra. I don't know who the conductor was. We heard that again and again. Then Emmy changed her job because war, which was then in its second year, 1940, was going badly, and the family in Berkhamsted left for somewhere, and Emmy took a job, a similar one to the one she had had before with a family in Hampstead in Well Walk, Forsythe, very nice people, where I was invited to stay while they went off as well. They went to Oxford. So Emmy and I were in charge of the room in Well Walk in

Hampstead. Very high building, four storeys and a basement. And then one day I had a visitor from the police, telling me that I had changed my address. It would be Lingfield Racecourse from tomorrow on, and would I pack my belongings and be ready for an internment.

Tape 2: 11 minutes 45 seconds

BL: Was there a tribunal before? Were you tribunalled before?

RS: No. Just the normal notification. Lingfield, which was changed to York. I had a visit from my wife there, regularly, every two weeks. We had a lovely time in York. It was away from the war, very understanding people who were in charge of us. One was the father of an M.P. today, Janner, a Liberal M.P, I believe. And he kept us there no longer than he could. He made it easy for us to find reasons for leaving. One of the main reasons was bad health. And we had in our company a man with diabetes, and he would sell his urine to people, which we took ourselves to the camp doctor, one by one, and every day one of us was released for suffering from diabetes, except the man himself, who stayed till the end, of course, because it was a marvelous revenue for him. He was the last one to leave the camp. So we stayed for a total of about six months or so.

BL: So, when were you interned?

RS: In 1941, I think, roundabout September. So we must have been out in '42, in spring. And there we saw an advertisement, people wanted for training for munitions to help the war effort. We applied and first I was accepted. I had a choice of a milling machine and a Drehbank, what is a Drehbank? [A lathe] You don't know. Another machine. Anyway, I didn't know anything about either of them, but the milling machine appealed to me as having affinity with the miller of the mill, the young miller of Schubert's mill, but it was nothing like it. It was a fierce-looking monster, a wide table with gears all round and so on, and I must confess to my shame I was totally and utterly unsuited to it. I was told by the foreman to sit quietly by my machine while somebody else would do the work for me. That went on for three months. That was our training. And then I was a fully-trained machine operator. Or I was supposed to be. Meanwhile my wife has joined too and she was on the other machine, and she was very well with that. She did lots of bonus work which added to our income.

Tape 2: 16 minutes 12 seconds

BL: Was you wife interned at all?

RS: No.

This was a time when I remember the streets were empty. There were no cars in 1941. The occasional car every two or three minutes was all there was. So we were on night shift, and we went there on our bicycles. On the bicycles we read the News Chronicle. You could do that because there was no traffic. There were only other bicycles. In the

beginning when I was still admitted to the milling machine before the foreman saw the error of his ways and made me sit quietly, I did a few scraps, they were supposed to be gears for the Hurricanes. I saved many a British flier's life for doing with these scraps what they were used for. They were dropped into the Thames on our way back from work to our digs in Ealing, we had then. That was from 1941, late '41, until I saw an advertisement that a school in the West of England in a place called Melksham, which is near Bath, was in need of a music teacher because their music teacher had been called up. I applied for it and got the job. And Emmy continued in her successful career as a – I wish I was sure what it was called ...

BL: Was it the Pioneer Corps?

RS: No. It doesn't matter. And she joined me after about half a year. The school was called Beltane School, a progressive school, boys and girls, run by a progressive couple, the Tomlinsons. He was a candidate for an M.P. He had a school which was surrounded by railway carriages, which he had bought, and they were converted into living quarters for the boys and girls of the school. And when he ran out of railway carriages, he had tents. And the progressiveness of the school can be gauged by the visit we had from a London journalist who wanted to see it. He had heard of the school. He was given around an inspection. And when he saw the railway carriages and tents, where they had girls and boys mixed - that was in those days, except for one or two other schools in the country, a very daring thing - he asked: 'How do you segregate the sexes?' And he must have heard it before because his answer came out pat: 'We use crowbars'. And that was very funny, I thought, but the journalist got the message. But in reality it was a wonderful school, run on very progressive but beautifully worked-out rules and regulations and people went from there to high positions, mainly in the arts. We had Joanna Lumley, William Bennett, the flautist, was one of ours. It was a wonderful time.

BL: Yes, the school.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 55 seconds

RS: Until we came to a match, a cricket match between old boys and new, and I was asked to play in the cricket team. I'd never seen a cricket ball before, I didn't know who belonged to which side, and my knowledge of cricket has not improved till then, from then on. But I was somehow coerced into it, but I was told to stand there and pretend to be a tree or something. And I did that until a ball came towards me, towards my face, and in self defence I put out my hands and I caught it, and apparently that's very good if you catch a ball. But it was my only good thing I did in the match. I lost the match for them, I was told. The old boys were beaten by the young boys. The highlight of it all was a visit by Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. That was marvellous. They announced a concert down in the village in Melksham first of all, to which I took about twenty or twenty-five of my music pupils and Emmy. We heard the concert, which was marvelous. But then we asked Benjamin Britten: would he like to come and see the school,? It was 10.30 then at night. We hired a taxi because he consented. We packed into the taxi half our people who were there, about nine or ten. I don't know we did it, and Emmy and Peter Pears and

Benjamin Britten. I remember we had Emmy sitting in the back with Peter Piers on our lap, which probably did more for Emmy than Peter Pears, and they came up to the school. There they found the remainder of the school, some two hundred or so, and the concert goes in various undress and ready for bed, or being hauled out of bed rather. And they gave us a repeat of their concert, which was absolutely wonderful. To have that there specially for us, a night concert from about 11.30 to 1.30, that set the seal to everything we've done in our music lessons before, which featured Benjamin Britten as a centre piece of all our instruction, because by that time I was absolutely hooked on his music. We then followed that up by visits to Covent Garden whenever a new opera by Britten was performed. The first one was 'Peter Grimes'.

Tape 2: 26 minutes 22 seconds

BL: How different was the music teaching in England from Germany?

RS: Totally different. I had to start right from rock bottom again. But we managed.

BL: Completely different curriculum?

RS: Ja. Curriculum was left completely to my own discretion. I could have wrought havoc with it had I wanted to, but I didn't want to. We had a very fine choir, a decent orchestra, and we performed 'The Marriage of Figaro', the real 'Marriage of Figaro', and 'Dido and Aeneas'. We had some very, very fine singers. And this went on till 1945. And when the war was over, the school moved away from the West of England to North London, but with a different head. The Tomlinsons, who were the headmaster and headmistress, were then about seventy years old, and they retired, sold the school to a – what is it called, a ... what is the name of a man who pretends to be something he isn't?

BL: A fake ... [Laughs]

RS: Well, say a fake headmaster ...

BL: Really? An impostor.

RS: An impostor. That's it, yes. An impostor of the first rate. He instigated art lessons with the girls in the nude, and things like that. It was pretty awful, and one by one the staff left. In those days we didn't have either the know-how or the gumption to denounce this chap to the police, so he was left to do his dirty work for about a quarter of a year. And then the school closed. We had left before it..., and went back to London. And then I started a career in teaching in the state schools.

BL: Just before we move on, were you the only refugee in that school ..?

RS: Ja.

BL: Was it a problem when you applied for the job? Did it come up?

RS: No. They interviewed me, and I told them what I wanted to do and that apparently sold it.

BL: Because obviously you had a completely different background in teaching and music.

RS: Well, Beltane School welcomed that sort of thing. The more outlandish, the better.

BL: Before we move to the post-war era, I'd like to just go back a little bit and ask you some more questions in detail. When you arrived in England, you must have been pretty exhausted, because you said you were in Berlin on that train going around for a couple of days, so what were your first impressions of England, of coming to England?

Tape 2: 30 minutes 50 seconds

RS: A country totally different from the one I was used to. For one thing everybody rushed around compared with Berlin, but more importantly the war was much more visible in London at that time than Berlin was. You didn't see much of the war in Berlin. That was kept away, but in London you saw balloons in Hyde Park, amazing sight, air-raid defences. You saw helmeted men patrolling the streets, seeing that lights are out at night. You saw hordes of little children, boys and girls, in railway stations, being packed off to being evacuated with weeping mothers behind, and all that.

BL: So the war was much more present.

RS: Ja. Then my first school was in Woking, where I taught music and German and English. The teaching of English was a joke because my English was very poor, but they had need of me so they explained, the English teacher was out in the war. So I had to learn a bit. I concentrated on the music mainly.

BL: This was which year, in Woking?

RS: That was 1944, it must have been, '45, coming towards the end of the war. And from Kingfield I went to Chessington Secondary School where the Chess Singers were founded by me. I was the music teacher, and that was a choir of great strength. After a year or two we sang everywhere, starting in a friend's house in London to the Festival Hall, the newly built Festival Hall. We went to Holland, Germany, and my first pupil in music, in singing, was Anne Chamberlain. She then married later. Her husband died four or five years ago, and I was in a similar position. I asked her: did she remember our time fifty years ago, small span of space? And she consented. Now she runs a very efficient house and is my companion. Back to Chessington. It was a school where we had mainly music. The headmistress was totally sold to the idea of music. The publishers Bosworth, music publishers, published our songs. One of them was 'Julishka under the lilac tree'. That was a song which we, well, when it was being written, it was all there except the word Julishka. I wanted Rumanian or a Hungarian girls' name with three syllables to fit

the music because that went da, da, Julishka under the lilac tree. But I didn't know the word Julishka, so I rang the Hungarian Embassy and asked to be put in touch with the Cultural Attaché, who came on the phone, and I asked him: 'Could you tell me a name, a Hungarian name of a girl with three syllables, of those three syllables the tone must be on the first syllable.' This must be a message to him, which was on the face of it totally incomprehensible, so it must be the message of a spy. This didn't occur to me, of course. I just wanted what I had asked for. He said: would I hold on, took about quarter of an hour and another voice answered and said: 'Are we flying tonight?'[Laughs] And I thought, good heavens, I've got myself into something, and I hung up. But somehow I got the name Julishka and this stuck.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 48 seconds

BL: So, you wrote the music.

RS: Ja. And this word Julishka is coming up now because now we have a reunion of this choir which was taking place fifty years ago in Chessington. We concocted a letter which was published in the Surrey Comet last December with a picture of the choir asking any remaining singers to get in touch with us. We are planning a reunion. About twelve of them answered. We hoped for more, and we look forward to a reunion.

BL: When is the reunion going to be?

RS: Well, we think of holding it in April.

BL: So how long were you in Chessington?

RS: That was quite some time. Until '60.

BL: And did you live in Chessington. Were you near the school?

RS: Nearby?

BL: Where did you live?

RS: I lived in Hampton Court. That was about half an hour's drive on my Micromobil, the forerunner of the Vespa, a monster of a machine I had then, a two-wheeler with a motor attached. It was alright once it was running, but to get it running was a terrible job. But it did what it was for; it got me to the school and back.

BL: Just, again, before we move on, I have to just go back a bit and ask you some more questions about internment. Because we, you just mentioned that. Your time, were you angry, upset at the time for being taken away, or would you describe it as a positive experience given the circumstances?

RS: No, it was a time for reflection - this was perhaps the best thing - and of peace, which was unbroken. And I remember I had a typewriter, which I placed on the Friday evening torah or whatever they had, very mistakenly and stupidly of me. I suppose the torah was affected by it somehow, by the typewriter. It must have offended some people, but I didn't think of that.

BL: Were there services there? Religious services?

RS: Yes, they had...

BL: And can you just describe physically what it looked like, first in Camden...

RS: Ja, there were horse boxes, and in York too. It was horse boxes.

BL: Can you just describe, what does it mean?

RS: Well, since the horses were highly bred, highly expensive, of course, they had the best horse boxes. Wonderful boxes, which instead of horses now had bedsteads ...

BL: Covered?

RS: Covered, yes. With curtains in the front. And the three sides were wooden.

BL: and how many people were there at the time?

RS: About fifty.

BL: And all these people went to York?

RS: Ja, they went to York. And this is very important actually – one day a different man in charge appeared, a higher rank than the normal, and he told us to parade for them and count from one to fifty. And all even numbers stepped one forward and uneven number stepped one behind. And the man, not next to me, but next but one to me, pulled me on my shirt sleeve and pulled me forward before I could do it myself. And that was the right thing to do, because all those that remained there were told to pack their bags. They have to go to another camp. And that camp turned out to be the Isle of Man camp, and from there they had to go on the Australian boat, and that's another story.

Tape 2: 43 minutes 43 seconds

BL: So you were lucky to be able to stay.

RS: Ja. Ja.

BL: Do you remember any cultural life during that six months? Were there any ...?

RS: We had the pick of them. Philosophers, artists of any description, you could hear them practice violin, cello, oboe, chess masters. I was very interested in chess then, but I found my masters. The highest of the high in the cultural sphere, I would say, and that applies to the majority of the people. Out of the fifty at least thirty were top-class men who later became leading in their profession.

BL: Any names? Do you remember anyone by name?

RS: I can't remember any of their names. But there must have been people who are now household names. Ja, I wish I had a better memory.

BL: During your whole time, when you first arrived and after your internment, you had contact with the Friends House, the Quakers. Did you have any other contact to Bloomsbury House or any other refugee organization, or was it mainly the Quakers who were your ...?

RS: It was mainly the Quakers.

BL: How come? Was that something you requested, or ..?

RS: No, the first to start me on the Quaker circuit was Sir William Latham, who is/was a Quaker.

BL: And that suited you? Did you like the Quaker ...?

RS: Ja.

BL: Did you become involved at all in the Quaker, in their ...?

RS: I was in the fringes, not really involved as such, but sympathetic towards them.

BL: When you said the Youth House, what did it mean? Did you actually? It must have been younger people than you because you were at the time in your mid-twenties ...

RS: Ja. No,no, not really younger ones, most of them were older than me.

BL: So, did you have responsibility, when you were in Camden, for example, with that Youth House?

RS: I hadn't to do anything. They fed me and kept the room in order. They were marvellous people.

BL: And no contact, you say, to any other refugee organizations, helping or ...?

RS: Not while I was with the Quakers.

BL: And I also wanted to ask you, you said your wife changed the job as a nanny ...

RS: Ja.

BL: Did she have contact with the ...? Who helped her find the next job? Was it herself, or was through an organization?

RS: Well, we mainly worked together. When we saw the advertisement to the munitions training, then from there to the munitions factory, and the job in Melksham, and from the time I worked in the state sector, she was at home ... No, no, no, she wasn't. She'd also taught history in a school in Surbiton, a private school. And that went on until the children were born in '56 and '59. Then she only did part-time teaching. The last job was in Tiffin's School for Girls round about '58 or so.

Tape 2: 48 minutes 50 seconds

BL: Throughout the war, did you have contact with your parents and your brother? Did you know what had happened to them in South Africa?

RS: I had little contact. It was my fault because I was behind in answering letters and we somehow stopped writing, and I reciprocated.

BL: So you didn't really have... were in touch throughout the war?

RS: Not more than one letter a year.

BL: So when did you re-establish contact?

RS: After the war when my brother came over for a week and also my mother came over for three days to the school we had in the West Country, Beltane School, but nothing since. Well, he died then.

BL: So you're not very close to them.

RS: No.

BL: When did you become British?

RS: Oh yes, I think it must have been '46 or '47.

BL: And when did you change your name?

RS: That was in Berlin. I changed it, or my father did. I suppose he did it in order to disguise his Jewish pedigree.

BL: Your father changed it. When? Which year?

RS: Oh, let me see, must have been '33 or '34 he changed it.

BL: From what to what did he change it?

RS: From Kohn to Sabor.

BL: And how did he come to the name Sabor?

RS: That was my uncle on the mother's side who was called Sabor, and he told us when he changed his name and that we would change our name too. That was so that the name Sabor shouldn't die out. Well, I had famous Sabor in the family. He was in the Frankfurt Regierungsgebäude, Frankfurt Parliament, 1860, '40, I don't know, between '40 and '60 [1848]. That was the Frankfurt Parliament, new one, and he was a deputy there, and his fame to glory was he is in the Duden, which is the German book of sayings: 'Es geht etwas vor, aber man weiss nicht was, sagt Sabor.' [Something's happening but one doesn't know what, says Sabor] [Chuckles] And another one, I forgot what his immortal saying was.

RS: So were you happy to change your name?

RS: I couldn't care less.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 6 seconds

BL: So since '34 you became Sabor.

RS: Ja.

BL: So all the documents, your documents, are already in the name of Sabor.

RS: Ja.

BL: And also your parents emigrated, not as Kohns, but in the name of Sabor.

RS: Ja.

BL: It must have been '34, early '34, or late '33 that they changed.

BL: Was it important to you to become naturalized?

RS: Not really. Well, yes, on balance, I suppose it was.

BL: Did you consider after the war had ended to emigrate to another place?

RS: No. No. No, I wouldn't ever.

BL: Or to go back?

RS: No, definitely not. We went back to Germany every year from '54 onwards till my wife died, every year to the Bayreuth Festival. I got to know Wolfgang Wagner there and Wieland Wagner, grandsons, found they were marvellous people, and their grandmother Winifred, who was born English, who was the only Nazi in Germany. Nobody else was, but she had the gumption to say that she was.

BL: But before '54, did you go back to Berlin at all?

RS: Did I?

BL: When did we go? In '61 we went first, and then we went once more, it must have been '69.

BL: And what was that like, to go back to Berlin?

RS: Very strange. Oh the first one was reunion in Berlin, where the Bürgermeister of Berlin invited you and other people to come as their guests, and that's where I met my former class mates, those who were survivors of the war, and we went to the opera of course. And the second one was with my wife when we went by car and there the Russians were, handled our presence in Berlin very strangely. It started with the Grenzübergang [frontier post]. We went after the festival in Bayreuth and in Berlin we stopped the car. We were in the Russian zone first, and the Russians were totally stony-faced, no smiles at all, kept us for ages, two or three hours with our passports and so on. And finally when we got them again, my wife said: 'I've got a marvellous idea how to smuggle people through, in the back of the car, of course.' That was the last thing I wanted to hear, because that was within earshot of the Russian, but apparently he didn't understand German, so he let us pass. And then we stayed in the West, of course. But we went over on a conducted tour in a bus through the Checkpoint Charlie, and at the Checkpoint Charlie I had a most amazing experience. We were all called out. We were asked to stand in a row; they took our passports - they, that is the Russians - and disappeared with them. And after ten minutes or so, two Russians soldiers with their bayonets came into the bus and put their bayonets in every seat of the bus, through, went out. The bus is OK; we got our passports and we got on.

BL: Mr. Sabor, the tape is finishing.

TAPE 3

Tape 2: 0 minutes 6 seconds

BL: This is Tape 3. We're conducting an interview with Mr. Rudolph Sabor. You were talking about this experience with the Russians going back to, going to East Berlin. So, what happened? You crossed Checkpoint Charlie and went to East Berlin?

RS: Ja, then we had a conducted tour of East Berlin, which was very monotonous. The buildings, the opera house, the stony-faced burghers, the Russians. It's quite different now, of course. In Berlin, the most memorable thing of all was a meeting with the Berlin Philharmonic who were playing in the then new Philharmonie, and amongst the cellists on the programme I saw the name Heribert Dünschede (?). Oh no, sorry, not Heribert, another name, I don't know what it was any more ... Dünschede. Now Dünschede was the man, the SS man who told me: 'Hau ab, Rudi. We fetch you in five minutes.' It can't have been that one because he was far too old for that now. It must have been his son, or his cousin. It can't be very far away from that because the name Dünschede is one which doesn't exist really, nobody is called that. And I discussed with myself throughout the whole concert, Do I make myself known to him, or not? And I considered the yes and nos. And I thought best is not. Because what happened to Dünschede during the war? I don't know. What happened after the war? I don't know. Did he tell his son what he did in the war? If I tell him this story, does this come as a pleasant or as a very unpleasant surprise? And as long as there was the possibility that it was an unpleasant surprise, it's better not to talk to, and I would ask you not to name him in anything you might use our discussion for.

BL: So, you didn't contact that person?

RS: No.

BL: In Berlin, did you see your flat you lived in? Did you go back to ...?

RS: Ja. It is now a hotel of ill repute. Times have changed.

BL: But you were in the rare position of going to Bayreuth every year. Probably there were not that many refugees who ...

RS: No. Well, for one thing it's impossible to get tickets, because you get tickets every ten years. Your name goes into a computer and that rolls out your name every ten years. Well, I was lucky, I got to know the people who run that festival and I wrote about the festival on my way back for The Guardian and The Listener and Opera.

BL: So, in a way you maintained very close links to German culture.

RS: Ja.

BL: So, despite all the experiences, you maintained that link.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 4 seconds

RS: I found that is the only way to maintain the link today. There are marvellous people in Germany. We got to know the Wendlers, they are priceless. That's a family of

definitely anti-Nazi background in whose house we lived year after year. We got to know them through the German hotel service as private people who let their house or part of their house. And in the second year she refused to take any money from us. She said we are her friends now, and that remained until today, this friendship, a wonderful friendship. We are in constant touch. We telephone each other once a fortnight, copious exchange of letters. Their children are now grown up and it goes into the third generation now where this contact is maintained unbrokenly. No, we haven't got ... Ja, I've got a picture of her. You must look at it later ... Julia Wendler, a fine painter. She's the daughter. And one or two class friends whom I'm in touch with, Then there's the large, large grey mass of people whom you don't know. 'What did their grandfathers do?' And living in Germany you would have to have contact with all of them, or with many of them, and that would be too uncomfortable, or a bit late to spend time to pick out the genuine from non-genuine ones. It's better to leave it as it is.

BL: You raised two children in England. What sort of identity did you want to give to your children?

RS: We wanted them to grow up bilingual; it was impossible. In 1946, '47, '48 and so on, for a child to be found to learn German was a stigma, and we couldn't do it. Whereas now, of course, it's a matter of absolute ease. My son in Canada has three children, grown-ups now between 21 and 16, who at the age of three were perfect in French and English. And when they came over here, they told us something in French and immediately translated for us in English. In fact, the oldest one is studying in London now to become an interpreter.

BL: But you speak German now to your wife?

RS: No.

BL: So, you switched to English.

RS: Ja....

BL: And how ... sorry

RS: I was saying, after Bayreuth, no not after, but concurrently with Bayreuth, I had my own paper which I, journal, which I edited, 'Music' it was called. It existed for five or six years. Then I gave lectures, places like Morley College, all over the country really in residential colleges, Crayford Manor. Then I wrote books, mainly about Wagner, but lately other topics cropped up. That's about it.

BL: So, your main musical interest has been Wagner.

RS: Ja.

BL: How come?

Tape 3: 10 minutes 51 seconds

RS: I think that Wagner combines in his operas everything that is good in human nature, quite funnily because in his life he was far from that. In his works he was the opposite to what he was in life, whereas in his daily dealings with people and wives he was impossible. In his operas none of this appears anywhere and people who make a profession now out of pointing out that this character or that character are meant to be a Jewish caricature are far, far off the mark. If they would read Wagner's writings, which went hand-in-hand with his operas he composed, they would find that, for instance, in *Meistersinger*, where we learn that Beckmesser is a Jewish caricature, he told the singers of Beckmesser: "Don't exaggerate this role. Make him as a true expression of the normal German burgher." Now that is far from a caricature. But of course those things are only to be had in letters, and letters he has written fifteen thousand in his life. Who can read fifteen thousand? I have. It's a terrible journey, but it's very rewarding too. And if you are prepared to make this journey, you find new vistas on Wagner, quite new and unexpected ones. And in his operas you get the real Wagner. This is much better than have it the other way round: have a wonderful man and a model husband and a lousy composer.

BL: When you started writing about Wagner, did you find there was a big interest here in England?

RS: Ja. There was. Put on a Wagner opera now in Covent Garden or in the Coliseum and it's sold out even before they sell the ticket. It's on the internet and all you get is twenty seats on a day basis.

BL: Did you find your German background obviously helped to understand Wagner. I mean first of all of course you had the language.

RS: Well, ja, the language first.

BL: Did you have Wagner in Berlin before at all?

Tape 3: 14 minutes 45 seconds

RS: Ja. My first published poem at the age of thirteen, it was in Berlin, was about a visit to my first Wagner opera in Berlin. I was taken there by a classmate, Heinz Helgers, who was the son of Otto Helgers, who was the principal bass of Berlin and sang parts like *Hunding* and *Hagen* and so on. Well, he took me to the opera where his father sang and there I heard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* and I was sold on it immediately. I understood very little of it but what music that was!

BL: How do you see yourself? Do you feel, in terms of your identity, do you feel British or English or ...?

RS: British English without a hyphen. British German without a hyphen.

BL: What impact do you think did your emigration have on your life?

RS: It made me a little saner, I hope, and a little more understanding the other person's view.

BL: Do you think your life would have been very different if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

RS: I would probably be a singer in Germany for a certain time. I wonder whether I would ever have lost my belief in the Germans as a cultured race. They are a cultured race if they are allowed to. But they must be allowed to, whereas in England you are a cultured race without being allowed one.

BL: In England or in your career, did you ever face any anti-German or anti-German Jewish sentiment? Any antagonism, or ...

RS: You know, in sixty years or so of living in England, I can't remember one. No. Perhaps I didn't move in the right circles.

BL: Do you see yourself as a sort of bridge between German and British culture, I mean, being a Wagner expert?

RS: Oh yes. Now there is a bridge between the two countries. It's quite exciting, and it's a great, great challenge for both countries, I think. For the English to combine firmness with understanding, and for the Germans not to forget the past, because it's easy to forget.

BL: When did you last go to Bayreuth? When was your last ...?

RS: Two years ago.

BL: And has it changed a lot from 1940, 54 to now?

RS: Oh, completely and utterly. The music is the same, of course, but the style of production is totally different. It's very avant garde. Wieland Wagner started it all with the Entrümpelung of the stage, the total emptiness. When Siegfried kills the dragon, there's nothing on the stage except two lights, one in the bottom left-hand corner, one in the top right-hand corner, and that diagonal is a vast one because it's the largest stage on earth. Those are the two eyes of the monster. If the diagonal between the eyes is as large as that, the tail must be down at the railway station. Things like that were imported into Bayreuth, so the audience were very, very bewildered at first, but they soon learned. And this way they were taught to concentrate on the real contents of the opera instead of on the paraphernalia.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 37 seconds

BL: For you, what is the most important aspect of your German Jewish background?

RS: I should think Wagner. And to be able to bring Wagner to the attention of well-intended English people through lectures and through the translations. I have translated the Ring for them – I think it's a good one, it's published – and the love of Wagner is the same for me as the love for everything and everybody that is striving for attaining the unattainable. It's the striving that's important; the result may be there, maybe not.

BL: So what do you see as your most important contribution?

RS: To have brought Wagner to the English. And I think without wanting to sound great or grand I have almost succeeded.

BL: Mr. Sabor, is there anything else we haven't discussed or I haven't asked you which you'd like to add?

RS: I think we've covered everything. What have we done, about two and half hours or so. Yes, all one really wants out of life is to be able to see the fruits.

BL: Is there any message you'd like to give to anyone who has watched this film based on your experiences?

RS: Think of the hyphen in deutsch-jüdisch. I still would not write one.

BL: Mr. Sabor, thank you very much for this interview.

RS: Thank you.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 15 seconds

[wide shot]

PHOTOS

RS: This is my mother, Rosa Lindenbaum, my brother Fredi and I. The year is approximately 1915.

RS: This is my brother Fredi and myself. The year is 1915.

RS: My mother, Rosa Lindenbaum, my brother Fredi and myself. The year approximately 1919.

BL: And where was it taken?

RS: In Berlin.

Man's voice: Next please?

RS: Here we have Aaron Kohn, my grandfather on the fraternal side, his wife on the left, and in the centre Tante Berta, his daughter. The year approximately 1930.

Man's voice: And where was this?

RS: In Berlin.

RS: In this picture of 1930, oh no, sorry, of 1920, taken in Berlin, you have my mother Rosa Lindenbaum on the left, and in front of her myself.

Man's voice: Yes please.

RS: Myself, Rudolph Sabor, the year is 1921 in Berlin.

Man's voice: Yes please.

RS: A picture of my beloved teacher Arnold Bork. I am on his right. The year is 1933. Berlin.

Man's voice: Yes please.

RS: A picture taken in 1933 in my school with me in the back row centre.

BL: Do you remember any of the other names?

Tape 3: 28 minutes 23 seconds

RS: No.

RS: My friend in schooldays in Berlin, 1933. Gosh I forgot his name now.

BL: Hans.

RS: Hansel Schröder, who died outside Stalingrad.

RS: Berlin, 1936. I'm on the right top right, an auxiliary in a school for boys who were job seekers.

BL: And who is in the picture?

RS: I am.

BL: And, who else? Your wife?

RS: No, no, no, it's boys only.

Man's voice: Ok, we're repeating the previous photo.

RS: 1939, we are in Tring in Hertfordshire. I am on the top row furthest to the right.

BL: And your wife, is she on there?

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: My wife's parents, Berthold Veit and Frau Veit, and Emmy Veit, my wife, in London 1941.

Tape 3: 30 minutes 38 seconds

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: Kleist on the roof of the school in the Auguststrasse, Berlin 1938.

BL: Can you tell us a bit more about this picture.

RS: We went occasionally up on the roof of our school and there we read Kleist, Hölderlin, Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare.

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: Berlin 1930. A picture of my uncle, Max Lindenbaum.

BL: What happened to him?

RS: He was taken by the Gestapo and disappeared.

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: 1936, South Africa. The picture shows my parents, Rosa and Paul Sabor. In South Africa my father continued his work which he undertook in Berlin. That is he had a shop for ladies hats, and my mother was a housewife.

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: Emmy Veit, 1936, in Freiburg im Breisgau, before she became my wife.

Man's voice: OK.

RS: This is my last digs in Berlin-Steglitz, 1939, from which I escaped with seven minutes in hand.

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: This is my first English picture. I am in the middle of the last row. And somewhere in the picture is also a spy who must be nameless.

BL: A German spy.

RS: An Austrian spy.

BL: An Austrian spy who pretended to be a refugee.

RS: Ja.

Tape 3: 33 minutes 48 seconds

Man's voice: OK.

RS: 1956. The first picture of our newly-born daughter, Monica, in Beltane School, outside the railway carriages, and her parents.

BL: Is it 1946?

RS: '56.

BL: '56.

RS: Sorry, '56.

Man's voice: OK, we're repeating the previous photograph.

RS: The first picture of our daughter, Monica, taken in Beltane School outside out railway carriages. 1956. Sorry, 1946.

Man's voice: OK.

RS: Approximately 1954. Monica, my wife and myself in Hampton Court where we had our first English domicile.

Man's voice: OK.

RS: Approximately 1959, our children Monica and Peter. The photo was taken in London.

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: I rehearsing a section of the Chess Singers, 1956.

Man's voice: OK, yes please.

RS: Marta Eitler on the left, and third from the left is me as music adviser of the London Borough of East Ham. The year is approximately 1960.

Man's voice: Yes, please.

RS: We jump to 1990. This is me in a serious conversation with Wolfgang Wagner, who is the grandson of Richard Wagner, in Bayreuth.

Man's voice: OK.

RS: Magnum opus. The five volumes of Wagner's Ring with the new translation and commentary. The year is 1989, Phaidon Press, London.

Tape 3: 37 minutes 15 seconds

Man's voice: OK.

RS: A fairly recent picture of the Canadian gang of five, which comprises my son, Peter Sabor, his wife, Marie Sabor, and the three grandchildren, whose names escape me at the moment, but then they don't come when I call them anyway.

RS: My daughter, Monica Sabor, and her prize possession, a Wheaten terrier, a very rare breed, which is famous for digging up the garden. The year it was taken was about a year or two ago in Wales.

Man's voice: OK.

RS: A picture of our class which meets on Saturdays and Sundays on Wagner in our house in Petts Wood.

BL: Mr. Sabor, could I please ask you to read this poem you wrote?

RS: Heimat. Where?

Blossoming in the Gothic alphabet?

In the disdainful cool eyes of the Egyptian cat?

In the Dionysic ochre of Arles?

In the grooves of a Schubert record?

In the stem of a Florentine lily?

In the lake-sealed forest?

A welcome exertion outside the town?

In the silence after the last campfire song?
As likely as not
Or in the legible in-between spaces of scarcely legible letters
Written when the hell-hound was still a painter?
As likely as not.
Search, search, search!
Heimat is nowhere but behind two doors
Doors that once were open to you
One to the wise-beloved guide into the land of the forefathers of forefathers
The other to the friend and his flute.
Now you are both there.
Where? In the Heimat.

BL: Mr. Sabor, thank you very much for this poem and for this interview.

RS: You are very welcome indeed.

Tape 3: 41 minutes 27 seconds

END OF INTERVIEW