

**IMPORTANT**

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**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE****NAME: ISCA WITTENBERG****INTERVIEW: 128****DATE: 3 AUGUST 2006****LOCATION: LONDON****INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ****TAPE 1**

BL: Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2006. We're conducting an interview with Mrs. Isca Wittenberg. We are in London and my name is Bea Lewkowicz. Thank you, Mrs. Wittenberg, for having agreed to be interviewed. Can you please tell me your name?

IW: My name is Isca Salzberger Wittenberg.

BL: And when were you born?

IW: On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1923.

BL: And where please?

IW: In Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

BL: Can you tell me a bit about your family background?

IW: Well, I come from a very Jewish German liberal background. My father was a rabbi for 30 years in Frankfurt. And... I am the youngest of 3 children - all daughters. I'm not sure whether there was great pleasure in my being the third girl because I suppose my father, although he never said so, hoped to have a son who would also become a rabbi. As it is, he's now got a grandson who's a rabbi. But he actually didn't live to see that. He died by the time our Jonathan became a rabbi. I suppose I was brought up very much in the Jewish community. My father's synagogue –actually he officiated in two synagogues, Königsbergerstrasse was one of them which actually was destroyed inside but the outside of it remained and it was rebuilt and it is still functioning. And also he was rabbi at the Hauptsynagogue as well, and I suppose we lived a very communal life. I mean my life was family, but very much within a community. We had loads and loads of visitors always, which was lovely, which I enjoyed – a big social life, and especially of course for festivals. On the other hand, I remember minding very much that when I came home from school that there were people sitting around wanting to talk to my father. They sat in the hall and many of them were either beggars or people with big problems and I minded that very much indeed. I don't know how much you want to know of earlier times.

**Tape 1: 3 minutes 20 seconds**

BL: What were your parents' backgrounds? Can you tell me a little bit about your grandparents?

IW: Well, my father's father was a rabbi in Erfurt for very many years. That grandfather had actually been born in Hungary and he walked to Vienna in order to be able to study. And then later he studied in Germany and became a rabbi – a very well-liked rabbi in Erfurt.

BL: An orthodox rabbi?

IW: No...No, I wouldn't say orthodox what here would be called conservative. But he was a *liberale Rabbiner*. And from early on my father wanted also to become a rabbi. He made his younger brother sit down while he stood up on a chair to preach. And my paternal grandmother was a poet. She wrote lovely poetry. Very, very gifted poetess. I've got one or two of her poems here.

BL: What was her name?

**Tape 1: 4 minutes 30 seconds**

IW: Oh gosh. For the moment I can't think of it. I didn't know my paternal grandparents terribly well actually. I'll think of it presently. So my paternal grandmother was called Clara. As I say she - I didn't know my paternal grandparents very well. They died fairly early. I knew my maternal grandparents much better. My mother was very attached to her father who was Professor Caro in Posen. He was head of a hospital and very beloved by many people. He himself had come from a very poor family with many children. But he said, 'I am going to study medicine and I will later help the whole family financially.' And he did extremely well and he did just that. And he was also very musical and played the piano and he - I remember that he said that he was very cross always with the farmers when they called him so late when their children were ill. He said 'If your cow is ill you get a vet right away but with your children, you wait too long!' And I remember going in a sort of horse drawn carriage with him to go and visit patients in Posen. Posen of course at that time was German, and my mother grew up there. And my grandmother who was born Zedner and a relative of hers actually founded the Hebrew section of the British Library here, Josef Zedner. She was a very beautiful blond haired blue eyed woman, whom I was supposed to become like but all I inherited was her name, which actually is quite unusual. I was called after her while she was still alive. My mother was extremely attached to her too. And she suffered for a lot of times with stomach ulcers and she died in an operation and my mother inherited this weakness of the stomach and had many stomach ulcers but she refused ever to have an operation because of that.

**Tape 1: 7 minutes 21 seconds**

Now she died when I was I think 4 and a half and my mother took me along to Posen with her and I think in many ways that was my role to be really the mother of my mother in many ways and her sort of sunshine girl, which I now much later sort of realise that I was there to cheer her up and comfort her. I remember getting from this

grandmother a toy that I kept - was a little basket with pegs, you know for dolls clothes, and I remember keeping that for many years. So this is roughly my memory of these grandparents. My grandfather lived much longer and he used to take us on splendid holidays. He was an extremely generous man. Not at all religious but my maternal grandmother was religious and for her sake he kept to the rituals.

BL: Caro is a Sephardi name, so...

IW: Caro? Yes, well we think we go back to Josef Caro. It's a Sephardi name as you say and the family originally came from Spain.

BL: And interesting in the Sephardi tradition you name children when the person is still alive.

IW: Really? I didn't know that! Ah well. Well, well, maybe that is why.

BL: Can you tell me how did your parents meet? Do you know that?

IW: Yes, my father was lecturing in Frankfurt and my mother's relatives were in Frankfurt and she was visiting there. Actually they met at the house of Erich Fromm's mother. You know who Erich Fromm is? Psychoanalyst. Very interested in religion - from an orthodox family. My mother must have been visiting there and she was a relative - Tante Rosel Fromm. She was very round. Her husband was very slim. He said, 'If I like something I like a lot of it!' That's how he sort of comforted her about her figure. And that's where my parents met. And then - they met in 1914. And then of course war broke out and my father became a *Feldrabbiner* [military chaplain] He served in France, and had pretty terrible experiences, even as a rabbi, but a very important time for him for which he eventually got the German *Eisernes Kreuz* for services in the German army. But they didn't marry then until 1917 and amazingly my husband's grandfather, who was also a rabbi, married my parents in Posen. He did the wedding ceremony.

### **Tape 1: 10 minutes 53 seconds**

BL: What was his name, please?

IW: Adi. Moritz Freimann? What was your grandfather's name? [asking her husband] Jakob Freimann, from the Freimann family. And he actually also served in Holleschau in Czechoslovakia and he is buried there. We've visited there. It's an amazing little synagogue, wooden synagogue with paintings inside. Flowers - of course no human figures - but flowers. And for some time he was the rabbi there in Holleschau.

BL: So when your father married, was he finished being a Feldrabbiner?

IW: I think he must have been at the end of that time.

BL: And then where did your parents settle?

IW: My father had studied in Heidelberg. He had a philosophy degree, which of course for German rabbis, unlike English ones, they all have degrees in literature or

mainly in Philosophy and then he went to the Berlin Rabbinical Seminar but he obtained his first position in Frankfurt. I mean otherwise...I mean both my parents really were from northern Germany but they settled in Frankfurt. My father served there for 30 years – from 1918 to 1938. Until we emigrated of course in '39, but in '38 he was taken to a concentration camp in November.

BL: Did you live in a...Did the community give you a flat?

IW: Oh no, no. That wasn't the usual. You had your own premises, thank goodness. My parents, because it was after the war when property was difficult to get, they bought an enormous house in Eschersheimerlandstrasse. It was a sort of a very big... main road. A very big house which had five floors, each with seven rooms and we lived on the third floor and we had tenants in the other flats except at the top which we used as a sort of loft and store our Pessach things. I remember running up and down with the maid to get things down for Pessach and take the other things up which was a great pleasure.

**Tape 1: 13 minutes 50 seconds**

BL: What sort of area was it? Was it a Jewish area at all where you lived, or...?

IW: No, no ...no, not particularly Jewish. Opposite was the Heine Strasse. No it wasn't. No. I don't know...you probably don't know Frankfurt at all but to Königsberger Strasse I would say it was about 15 minutes walk and also 20 minutes to the Palmengarten which was a sort of place our nannies took us to which is a big park which still exists and which seemed to me miles away as a child. But I now realise it wasn't far away at all. No it wasn't particularly. I think orthodox people more lived in a particular area. But it's important to say that my father mixed with a lot of non-Jewish people and it was enormously recognised by them. I remember coming home from a holiday in the middle of the night. And there were – we were on the third floor – in what is called the *Hof*, - a sort of back yard. Suddenly there was a big choir – a sort of mens' choir serenading him for coming home. And they were a Protestant group of people who honoured him for looking after the graves of the buried German soldiers. Also my father mixed very much with theologians – Christian theologians. We weren't just mixing with a Jewish environment. Also my best friend at that time was a Protestant girl who lived a floor above us. And as soon as I came home from school we used to play with a ball in the garden and so on. So it wasn't a very exclusive Jewish life at all. But primarily of course there was congregation and people from the Lodge and people like that that we knew – a big group of people.

BL: What school did you go to?

**Tape 1: 16 minutes 19 seconds**

IW: I went to a Jewish school from the beginning. Of course later on my two sisters, who hadn't been to a Jewish school, also transferred there because they were no longer allowed to go to anything but a Jewish school. But I went from the beginning and so I had all Jewish teachers. And one of them was Fräulein Baer who taught religious studies. And I remember the story... that she talked about Adam and Eve.

And I asked her what sort of colour hair ribbon did Eve wear? And she said, 'I don't know.' So I waited and went back to her after class and said, 'How come you don't know when my father has been teaching you?' And of course she told my parents - so that became a sort of family story. And very fortunately, in 19 - I suppose - 37, things had changed enormously - and we'll talk about that in a minute - the headmaster brought over an Englishman and a Welshman to form an English class in which you only spoke English and you were taught everything in English. And you could sit at the end for an English School Certificate. Now I was able to join that class because earlier I jumped a class. I don't know that you can do that here. But if you're bright enough and you're sort of above, above the standard of others, you could go to a higher form. So I was actually a year ahead of where I should have been. And I could join that English class. And that proved - at one point which I'll come to later - very, very important that I knew English and could speak English. And in fact I sat the School Certificate in Germany while our parents - school was already closed - our parents were already in December - were all in concentration camps and our teachers too. Not our parents - our fathers, and our teachers.

**Tape 1: 18 minutes 41 seconds**

BL: So this was for sort of school leavers or the last year?

IW: Well the other people went on to the... I mean my older sisters... My older sister did the Abitur and my other one got nearly to the Abitur but I wasn't ready for that but I joined the English class School Certificate which wasn't as big as the Abitur. It was much more A-level standard.

BL: Just to go back to the primary school.

IW: Yes. Right.

BL: What do you remember about growing up in Frankfurt?

IW: Generally?

BL: Yeah. As a young girl.

IW: Well... I wasn't too keen on schoolwork. I was always quick. I did it as quickly as possible and then I played with friends. I was quite tomboyish I think. I often fell over and always had a plaster on my knee. I enjoyed very much that we went on wonderful holidays. My parents always were very careful with money. I mean we had actually enough. I always thought that we weren't well off at all. We had plenty enough of money. But when we were on holiday. They always spent a lot of money on holiday. There was no restriction whatsoever. And we went on wonderful holidays. When we were little we went to the seaside. But from early on we always went at least once a year to Switzerland. And of course my father was a big, great walker and we walked a lot. And of course we learned to ski as well and went in the winter. And he loved the mountains and I came to love the mountains of Switzerland. I suppose I remember also all the visitors that came to the house. We had a lot of visitors who were invited to speak and they certainly came to my father or my father initiated their coming to the community to speak. People like Buber and he brought Franz Rosenzweig to the

Lehrhaus which was founded in Frankfurt. Leo Baeck. We knew lots of people and then there was somebody who recited - I don't know whether you've come across the name Herrstatt Oettingen. She was a very well known person who recited, who read from novels but mainly read poetry. She came very frequently. And I was a pretty naughty person. I was very naughty I would say. And one day I sort of let her know that our parents said, 'Well you know enough is enough. We don't want to see her quite so often'. And of course my parents were furious about that. I remember having lots of good friends at school. I didn't belong to a club. Nothing of that kind. But I remember certainly the life in the Lodge, where we put on shows and I remember having to be a Pfennig – a zehn Pfennig piece and having to jump into a savings box. Things like that.

**Tape 1: 22 minutes 30 seconds**

BL: Was that for children, the Lodge?

IW: No the lodge was for adults but the children were involved in putting on shows. And all together, at any birthday or big festival my father wrote a poem for every birthday, or any...for my mother and all the children. And for Bar Mitzvahs – we had none in the family, but for Bat Mitzvahs and other big festivals he wrote plays and we would enact them and that was wonderful, wonderful occasions and the whole family came from other towns. From Stettin and his brother's family from Breslau. I think, I remember the social life very well. And of course for Pessach we had loads of people. And for Sukkot we had, in the yard, we had a Sukkah and lots of guests as well.

BL: What was your favourite Jewish festival, do you remember?

IW: I suppose Pesach, because there was so much for children to do. You know, clearing up, taking with the maids stuff upstairs, bringing the other crockery and things down, rolling matzo balls, and also the songs. I loved that. Staying up late with big family and friends and strangers coming because you know that's what you do on Pessach, you also invite strangers in. Possibly non-Jews, also refugees from Russia and from Poland that came that way later on. And waiting for all the songs to start at the end of the evening. Because I loved singing and I was in the school choir and my ambition at that time was to become an opera singer. I certainly was a member of the school choir. But my sister had a much nicer voice. I had a loud voice and a musical voice but I was told I hadn't a particularly nice voice. But I loved acting and opera and fun parts for which there is actually now far too little opportunity. My father had a good sense of humour too and all his poems were also humorous and so were the plays. The plays had to do with depicting family life or what had happened. Or at the Bat Mitzvahs what the future might be for these girls, which of course changed considerably due to the circumstances later on.

**Tape 1: 25 minutes 23 seconds**

BL: How orthodox was the home?

IW: We had a kosher household. My father didn't use... he walked on Shabbat But it wasn't orthodox in that we put on lights. That wasn't a problem. I think things were cooked usually for Shabbat before hand. It wasn't orthodox.



BL: A sort of modernised... way?

IW: Yes. Yes, but I mean it was only when he came to England that he had to use a car – or transport rather, he didn't have a car. Transport for going to synagogue. He would never have dreamt of doing that in Germany.

BL: You said you had maids in the house. Were they Jewish – non-Jewish?

IW: Non-Jewish maids. Non-Jewish maids. We also had nannies when we were very small. And then later when we were at school we tended to have students who sort of came in the afternoon. Very, from very cultured backgrounds, because culture was the thing that was emphasised in the household – not material things. My parents weren't particularly interested in material things but in culture, in education, in music and art. And one of them taught me from the age of seven to play the piano. And I remember liking Bach from the beginning. And later I switched to the violin and then I changed my mind about that. I didn't like to hold it in my arm. My shoulder was painful but also my teacher was cleaning her nails while she gave instruction. I didn't like that at all. When I got to know the son of Hernstatt Oettingen who was a cellist - not a professional one but - he played the cello very well. I took up the cello later on and that remained the instrument of my choice. And in fact the cello is the object that I brought to England with me apart from the suitcases which we brought.

**Tape 1: 27 minutes 50 seconds**

BL: So you had private lessons – cello lessons?

IW: I started those pretty late – yes ...yes, all those things were private. The choir wasn't. The choir was a school choir, but violin lessons, piano lessons, and so on, they were all private.

BL: Did your mother have a specific role being the rabbi's wife? Was she involved in the community or was it quite separate?

IW: Yes I think she was very much involved in the community. She also was involved in the community here. I'm not very clear in which way she was involved in the community but certainly in entertaining people and she certainly was involved in the women's lodge as well. I don't really know what she did in the community. I'm not too clear about that.

BL: And when did things change?

IW: Well they changed obviously in...Well my first memory in terms of Hitler was '33. And we were – and I remember a holiday in Switzerland. I think it was in Arosa where there was a kosher restaurant – a kosher hotel actually. My parents tended to definitely go to kosher hotels. And my parents were reading 'Mein Kampf' and I remember very well that occasion and them being absolutely shocked. But still people really did not believe that this would come to pass or that Hitler would last any time at all as you probably know from other people. It seemed things then changed fairly rapidly in some ways, for instance, we went to school in one direction which went to

the Philantropin and the non-Jewish children used to come from another direction and they started spitting at us, using bad language. I do remember that quite clearly. And I rode to school sometimes on a bike and you had to be careful that you weren't pushed off the bike. And then later on of course there were the pictures, on the, what's called *Litfassäulen*, I don't know what that's called in English. Placards of pictures. Terrible pictures of Jews and terrible stories about Jews. And very soon we learned that you must not open your mouth or it could be extremely dangerous for you and your family.

**Tape 1: 31 minutes 0 second**

But you see it took a long time until really relationships with Christian friends were broken. I mean this friend upstairs, they only moved out I would say, '37, '38. And of course also in '38 you weren't allowed to have a Christian maid any more. You know. You mustn't mix with non Jews. I remember certainly I was very keen on music and opera in particular, and you were no longer allowed to go to opera or theatre. But I didn't look particularly Jewish and I went into the opera house once or twice and it went off ok. And you then you know, you saw people being beaten in the streets, and things went from bad to worse. Shops closed. Shops attacked. And relatives beginning to emigrate. So we had quite a lot of family in Germany. Not only my father's brother's family in Breslau who came to us very frequently. He was a doctor in Breslau and went to Uruguay later. A lovely man who also was very artistic. He painted; he also wrote poetry for occasions. We had tremendous fun at such festivals together. We had family in Stettin who came and gradually they began to emigrate and so of course did many people. While my father said, 'The captain doesn't leave his ship. I have to stay with my congregation.' And no plans were made for emigration. But actually my eldest sister Lore, who was definitely the most intelligent of us. She had finished her Abitur and she went to Zurich to study German Literature actually. She was no longer there with us in '38. She had visited but she wasn't there on Kristallnacht. We had a *Jugendheim*, a centre for Jewish youth, right next to us which had a great deal of glass actually.

**Tape 1: 33 minutes 45 seconds**

Huge glass windows. And in '38 around the time of Kristallnacht that was all smashed up. My parents at that time were not at home because they'd gone; I think it was to Darmstadt or Stuttgart to try and think if they could send us children off and to get papers. And they were away, but we were next door when this youth home was completely smashed up. And we were sitting – all three of us - pretty anxiously at home on our own at home while this was going on. And my middle sister who was the calm one said, 'Let us knit or crochet or do things while this is going on.' And she thought to try to calm us down until our parents came back again. But these were really terrible times and of course in the night the synagogues were put on fire and no one came to put them out as you know. People just stood around and watched it. No police, no interference whatsoever. And then of course my father was taken to Dachau.

BL: Was that on Kristallnacht? On the next day?

IW: No, not on the next day. He was not at home for a few days and the SS came very day and pointed at the picture of my eldest sister and said, 'Look for him, he looks like that.' You know, there was a sort of resemblance between my elder sister and

him. And they were sort of trying to hunt where he was. And they came day and night they took every telephone conversation that came through and wanted to know who it was and then hunted down those people. Our telephone was cut off. The people downstairs committed suicide. And really my mother was left with us two children and a friend of my middle sister all alone in this big house. And with - you know - with people knocking on the door all the time and waiting. My father felt he had to give himself up. It was no good staying away. He came home and gave himself up to the Gestapo.

**Tape 1: 36 minutes 51 seconds**

BL: So was he advised to stay away?

IW: I think his aunt and my mother wanted him to actually hide himself if he could. He was not far away. He was at a cousin's in the Heine Strasse. He said, 'I can't do this and I can't do this to my family. I will report myself.' And he went to the Gestapo about 4 days later.

BL: So he knew he was a target?

IW: Oh absolutely! And we as a rabbi's family were a particular target too. They came - I remember very well that they came one night and banged not he doors and said 'You children, you've got to learn how to work!' And they made us get down the big Talmud volumes and throw them down - forced us to throw them down into the yard from the third floor, which of course... and then they went away. And they came back again and threatened to take my mother away. My mother, who proved herself to be very courageous said, 'No, you have no permission to arrest me.' Which at that time they didn't, and she said, 'I'm ringing the police.' And they left, but as I say they really cut us off from telephone or any communication. And it was very dangerous. Very dangerous. They frequently came into the house searching for papers, for addresses of other people and so on. And my father was in Dachau, thank goodness. I mean he was not a physically particularly strong man.

**Tape 1: 39 minutes 2 seconds**

He was fit, ordinarily fit, but standing in icy cold weather through the nights and having been beaten up extremely badly - I think it was called 'Saalbau' where they collected them. Ach, I must tell you something about that. There was an opera singer - that famous Jewish opera singer - and they asked him to sing. And he sang '*In diesen heiligen Hallen.*' - You know from Mozart's opera. And he sang himself free through that, but later on he was also again arrested and in fact he died in the concentration camp much later.

BL: He sang where?

IW: When they were beating up and making them do all sorts of things the details of which my father never talked about what was done to them when they were arrested, assembled in Frankfurt a whole lot of them and underwent this torturous treatment.

BL: Do you know how long he stayed in Frankfurt before he was sent to Dachau?

IW: I think less than...probably 24 hours at most. At most.

BL: And did you have contact with him?

IW: In Dachau, no. No. I don't remember that we got a message. I remember that my mother wanted me to sleep in the double bed and I was to be her comforter in these times and of course she cried a great deal. She was very anxious. But she was also fantastically - I mean we owe it to her that our lives were saved because my father had friends all over the world. He was a very beloved rabbi and did a lot of pastoral care. And through her phoning his friends he got what I think was a fake job or permit on which basis we could get an American visa, but we soon realised that if we waited for an American visa, because there was a quota, it would take years and it wasn't safe to do so. So on that basis of that we applied for a temporary visa for Britain. And our papers here got lost. Now my father came back from Dachau after 3 weeks because if you could show that you would emigrate within a short time at that time you were let out of concentration camp.

**Tape 1: 42 minutes 6 seconds**

He came home suffering from very severe pneumonia. I don't think he would have lasted much if he had had to stay. But through my mother's efforts and the promise of a visa he came home after 3 weeks extremely ill. Together, he was let out and I remember we got a phone call from him when he'd got out together with another rabbi - Italiener - who you may also know about. Another rabbi refugee who came to England. Quite a few of them came to England actually. And I remember very well him coming home, but then our papers got lost at the Home Office and he had to report every week to the Gestapo with the threat of being taken back to concentration camp. And it was another 4 months until our visa here came out - came through and we could get out. Now, where the English class proved so enormously helpful was that we - my mother somehow got to know that an English lawyer...Oh, I should say these English teachers - one of them I know went home several times to England to report about what was going on with Jewish people and Jewish children. And he did a great deal of letting people know here - politicians know about it.

BL: Was he a Jewish teacher?

IW: No. No, no! No. Very - very English. English and Welsh. I didn't realise he was Welsh. I probably couldn't distinguish the accent so well at that time. The main thing we learnt English. There was a day when we knew this lawyer was in Frankfurt, in the big Hotel Frankfurter Hof. And my mother desperately wanted to speak to him to see what had happened to our papers. And it was a day when there were checks at every street corner of your papers so one couldn't really go out as a Jewish person. My mother said 'Isca, we're going there. You speak English all the way there. So I babbled away in English and we had no problems. We got to the Frankfurter Hof. Most polite reception. 'Yes, Fräulein' and 'bitte schön', and so on. We got to the lawyer's private room. He of course immediately put cushions around his telephone because everything was overheard of course. And we could tell him what the problem was and through his effort, getting back to Otto Schiff, who as you know very operative in helping people to come out. Then they somehow traced our papers at the Home Office and eventually they came.

**Tape 1: 45 minutes 34 seconds**

BL: So this was the lawyer in Frankfurt. Where did you go...?

IW: An English lawyer who was visiting Frankfurt. I don't know – possibly who helped people to emigrate – I don't know about that. But my mother knew he was there and therefore we had to go on that day to see him. An English lawyer. And I mean at that time you could come out because you had to have a guarantor who guaranteed that you wouldn't become a burden to the state in England.

BL: So who guaranteed you?

IW: Friends of my parents. One of them was a man called Georg Meyer who helped to found the Belsize Square synagogue but here were others too who guaranteed for our family. But these months of waiting were – apart from the time that my father was in Dachau which was heartbreaking - were terrible. And in fact I overheard my mother talking...ach, occasionally I slept in my parents' bedroom. There was another couch at the bottom of the...And I heard my mother saying to my father...I always pretended to be asleep when they were talking, and I heard my mother say, 'should we not commit suicide and have the whole family rather than undergo this?' I must say that for years I could not understand the adults who thought it would all pass. Because I remember you know from, I can't remember from what age, but certainly years before already thinking, 'We will be killed here. This is getting worse and worse.' And always wondering, certainly in the last two years whether when one went to bed one would wake up and still be alive or be taken away – taken away to be killed. I couldn't understand the adults, so many adults believing it would change and they could stay. Of course many stayed because they had old relatives who they wanted to look after. Or they had some false hope. But if it hadn't been for Dachau my father may have stayed, actually, he might have got us out, but he would have stayed. And then my mother's tremendous efforts, fantastic, I mean she went to the Gestapo, and she went with her papers and she dared argue with them. So I mean we are owing our life to her as well. Very much so. Although she was often a very depressed person, when it came to a crisis, she was there.

**Tape 1: 48 minutes 37 seconds**

BL: How similar or different was your sister's – your middle sister was still there, your older sister was already away at school - experience to you? They were older.

IW: Well my older sister had finished school and was studying in Zurich.

BL: Yes?

IW: She just came for holidays so she was much more out of that. Do you know, I have no memory of ever discussing it with them. I think I pretty much kept it to myself, because I thought they were enough burdened. Nor with my middle sister. I cannot remember that we talked about it much. I was very frightened. But she was the calm one, and she was much more introvert. Perhaps wouldn't talk so much. Whereas my older sister was very vivacious and so on. I mean I'm sure we must at sometime have talked about it.

BL: During those 4 months did you still go to school?

IW: No, no, no, no, no. The school was closed. Our teachers were in concentration camps. The school was closed before I sat the School Certificate in December. But somehow something was arranged so that we could sit for that which would later on help me.

BL: This is like *Mittlere Reife* ?

IW: Something like that. It's before the matric on the basis that I could no an external matric here to be able to get to university. My middle sister must have been near the Abitur, but my elder sister had finished her education.

BL: So for those 4 months you were basically...?

IW: Four months were absolutely terrible. Cause my...I mean things generally were terrible ' for us. And...my mother actually got someone from the post office to reconnect the phone but it was a terribly dangerous time and...And the threat of my father being taken back. Just waiting, waiting. And all the Jewish women went every day to the British embassy and they learnt to drink tea and they were fed with cups of tea to... And they very much appreciated how they were looked after there. Every day waiting for this permit to come through. And it didn't. It didn't. And on my birthday on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March it came through. And then of course you know in the meantime we had to pack everything up. We had to sell our house for nothing practically. We had to pay *Steuer* – taxes, massive taxes for this and that. And everything had to be checked. What we had, what we packed, which was all left behind in Germany. There were many practical things my parents had to attend to at this time. I really just remember an enormous anxiety all the time. And waiting, waiting for the day to leave and for the few suitcases we could take with us and zehn Mark each that's all, which I think was something like 10 shillings I imagine to take with us and for us to go. So finally we went on Easter Monday. We flew out to Croydon. And I was terrified of flying – I'd never flown before. And I said to myself, 'Isca, if you stay here you'll definitely die. If you fly, maybe you won't.' So we flew with a few suitcases and my cello. And my father said, 'Now you can spit down on them' when we were up in the plane.

### **Tape 1: 53 minutes 6 seconds**

BL: What happened to your maternal grandparents?

IW: My maternal grandparents had long died. All the grandparents had long died. My maternal grandparents' grave which is in Berlin, we have visited. You know it's enormous – I've never seen anything like it with enormous tombstones which I never knew that Jewish people had. You've seen it? No doubt. And at that...that's many, many years ago but it was many years after the war and we were told to be very careful. Things were very overgrown but there were still unexploded bombs there. But I found my grandmother and my grandfather's graves there together I went there with my husband.

BL: So you left on that plane...?

IW: Yes. And we were distributed amongst friends of my father. And the Jewish Refugee Committee – was it Lola Hahn? - was one of the people. They sent people to say, ‘What shall we do with you?’ Now my eldest sister had won – she’d been offered a scholarship to Smith College which is a very famous girls’ college in America – one of the top ones. A scholarship to go on with her studies there. But the condition was, would you believe it, you have to return to your home country afterwards. And they insisted she had to and so she couldn’t take it up. Ridiculous. But on the basis of that and her general ability, she got a scholarship to go on studying in Glasgow. And later she became a lecturer there. She went later to Oxford to do a PhD and later she became a fellow of Girton College until she then went and taught in Israel at Hebrew University. My middle sister was sent to a Jewish school that had been founded somewhere – do you know the name of it? - in the south of England. And she was a general helper and she had a tough time – she wasn’t very happy there. I was asked what I wanted to do. I’d just turned 16. I’d just months before turned 16. And I said, ‘I’m interested in children and babies’. So they sent me off to a nursery nurse’s training college in Yorkshire. In Pannal which is near Harrogate.

**Tape 1: 56 minutes 9 seconds**

And I had the shock of my life; you know it was a huge building with mice running up and down the curtains. Freezing cold. We slept in a big dormitory. You got up and half past 5. And you said ‘yes matron, no matron, thank you matron.’ And she said, the matron - there were about 4 of us refugee girls - ‘You’re only paid for half the fee by your committee, so you work doubly hard.’ She was that sort of person. And I was appalled at what they were doing with children and babies. They had children perhaps of diplomats or people who couldn’t keep their babies at home. And it was still Truby King Method, which meant 4-hourly feeds. No picking up if the child cries. Can you imagine?! I was just heartbroken! I was also terribly homesick. And so my parents said ‘well if you can’t stand it after a month you can come home’. By that time I’d taken to a little boy who had a...a defective heart, and who was very vulnerable. And so I’d taken to little John and of course then I stayed for John’s sake and for the babies’ sake, but it was really horrible. My duty was in going along very frightening corridors with the mice running around. I mean it was just shocking. Shocking conditions. And even before war broke out she said ‘no more than half a spoon full of marmalade.’ She was that sort of matron - for breakfast. But of course later on there was rationing.

BL: We have to stop here because we have to change the tape.

IW: Right.

**58 minutes 12 seconds**

**End of Tape One**

**TAPE 2**

BL: This is an interview with Mrs Isca Wittenberg. Yes, before we come on to England maybe you could come back to Germany and any memories.

IW: At that time in German schools you came home for lunch. And you'd go back again for certain activities or lessons in the afternoon. And lunchtime was very much a family affair. Mealtimes altogether, I would say. And we all wanted to talk at once and so my oldest sister was allowed to speak first and she had a lot to say and report about her experiences. And then my second sister who was always on the sort of slow side gradually told a bit about herself. And I was dying to say something. The youngest had the last word but there didn't seem enough time. I even started stuttering for a while because I couldn't get it out fast enough what I had to say. All the more am I surprised that I can't remember anything about what we discussed. I mean we certainly were given instructions about what we mustn't do and how careful we have to be and not say anything in the streets that could be at all held against us in terms of Hitler or dreadful things were happening to Jews, and so on. But I remember, and I can't remember when it started... I certainly used to find it difficult to go to sleep without asking my mother. And I made her promise sometimes to save me from persecution or make sure that I never have to undergo this. So some time, quite early on, and I suspect it was even before Hitler's time because of course there was also anti-Semitism then, I was very aware of dangers. I was very aware of death actually as well. I know that, very much.

BL: Perhaps it's to do with your father's First World War experiences?

IW: With my father's war experiences. But also of course he was constantly dealing with birth, weddings and deaths, and mourners who came to the house. So I think ...my grandchildren too. They know about everything of that kind, very early on. In fact our little Mossi, sometimes answers the phone and I hear him say 'I am so sorry! Oh I'm so sorry you've lost so-and-so.'

**Tape 2: 3 minutes 42 seconds**

So I think rabbi's children are not protected from that. Also I think I remember as a rabbi's child we were always observed as to how we behaved, we had to behave very well when we went to shul, synagogue - we didn't call it shul in that time actually. We had to be beautifully dressed and very well behaved which I found very difficult. On Yom Kippur before I had to fast, when I was younger, I made a point of telling everybody that I had fasted chicken, to make everybody quite sure that I was eating a very good meal on Yom Kippur. Again I think it was a bit of naughtiness on my part. But actually, before I had to fast. But you felt very observed by everybody. Here come the - you know - rabbi's children.

BL: What do you remember from the synagogue? Which synagogue was it?

IW: Königsberger Strasse. Women and men sat both...there was not - there was no upstairs - downstairs, but I think separately. And I loved my father's - he had a beautiful resonant voice. I loved to hear him talk and I loved to hear him preach. He ...he was, and Jonathan's like that, poetic in the way he spoke with his background in philosophy and literature. He spoke beautifully. He was actually the youngest of three rabbis at that synagogue. There was Caesar Seligman who was well known and who was one of the big - you call it here - reform rabbis. There was Lazarus and then there was my father. And Cesar Seligman also came here. And I remember I had to recite on Cesar Seligman's birthday '*viele Kerzen zündest Du an, aber die allerschönsten Kerzen sind die die Du enzündest in Kinderherzen*'. But he was a very nice man and



he was very fond of my father. So I certainly remember very much the synagogue and beautiful music too. Lewandowski music, which the Belsize Square synagogue has carried on.

BL: Was there a choir in the synagogue?

IW: I think there was. I think it was a mixed choir.

BL: And an organ?

IW: There was.

BL: Did you go every Shabbat? Or for the High Holydays, or?

**Tape 2: 5 minutes 57 seconds**

IW: We weren't forced to go as children. So I'd go quite often. Very often, but not always. Certainly for the holidays. Certainly for the High Holy days.

BL: And you mentioned before Bat Mitzvahs. Did you have a Bat Mitzvah?

IW: Well I remember my sister's Bat Mitzvah. At that time it was always in a group of girls, all dressed in white I think. And then I realised that if I were to wait for my Bat Mitzvah which of course wasn't at 12. In Germany it wasn't at 12, it was much later – it was at 15 – yes. They had it as late as that!

BL: That was a *liberale* tradition I suppose?

IW: Yes, because I don't know that the others had a Bat Mitzvah at all. The others and what kind of performance, but certainly we had to write a piece for that, a *Dawar Thora* if you like, or something. But it was in a group and each person spoke up and my father always had tremendous admirers. There were the young girls, the young women and later they were old ladies. He always had a following of women and my mother actually didn't mind because my father adored my mother and I don't think she had a problem about that. And then I realised that our relatives were disappearing. They were emigrating. And I said 'I want to have it while family is still here.' So I had mine early. I had mine in 1937. So I was 14.

**Tape 2: 7 minutes 48 seconds**

BL: And the normal age for the Bat Mitzvah was...?

IW: Fifteen. I think I had it oh yes, in 37.

BL: Can you tell us a bit about that Bat Mitzvah?

IW: I remember it was a wonderful family festival. I think I remember the text I chose, which was that I hoped '*der Gott meiner Väter wird mein Gott sein*'. And I always sort of hoped I would have a religious experience which would transform my belief into something really very fundamental. So I waited and I waited, but I can't

say it happened then, and I found it took a really long time to find my own kind of faith which underwent many different stages and wasn't helped, was rather undermined by psychoanalysis. But I now think I feel quite strongly something. But not in the way that my father – not corresponding to my father. And much more along my son's Jonathan's way, but again not so deeply founded as that. I think mine is far more...It is there, but it's far more general, in some good, certainly in a creator. I believe in a creator and the oneness of the world and the interrelatedness of everything in the world. Hence our needing to respect other people and other nations and the planet and so on. But also my interest in people and also in other religions and other nations was very much promoted already by my father who was very, very active in the Christian Jewish societies. He also belonged here in England to something called the World Congress of Faith, which was founded by somebody called Younghusband.

**Tape 2: 10 minutes 24 seconds**

So he had connections with England through that. And of course he worked a lot after the war, also in Germany, with the Society of Christians and Jews. In fact he was awarded two medals. One was the BuberRosenzweig medal for his work with Christians and Jews and one, amazingly perhaps I should have come to that later, for the work he did in helping to re-establish connections with Germany. And he was given some *Auszeichnung* from the German state. I'm not sure exactly what it was called, that medal.

BL: Just to come back to your Bat Mitzvah, what happened actually on the day?

IW: On the day? Well I went up with another group of girls and I said my piece. And then there was a big family festival.

BL: In the house?

IW: Yes, yes, yes, in the house. Oh, no. Our things were always family things in the house. I don't think at that time people made you know, these enormous celebrations as they do now. They don't. And certainly with my...what I so appreciated that it wasn't something that came from outside, with catering from outside and so on. It was all based in the family with...with people contributing what they'd written, the poetry the plays, the gifts they'd made and so on. No. It was very much a family thing.

BL: So most of the family was still there? Your extended family?

IW: Yes. Quite. Yes, most of the extended family was still there. We didn't have a very big family because my mother was the only daughter. But there was one very important member of my mother's family. It was the sister of my grandmother, Tante Rosel. Tante Rosel had had a pretty tragic life. She had lost her husband very early. She brought up her children. And she was a very little lady, full of vitality who always sang in the morning and always said 'Ich bin nicht bei Stimme', 'my voice is not good today' but she sang: *Glücklich ist, wer vergisst was nicht mehr zu verändern ist* [happy is the one who forgets what cannot be changed].

**Tape 2: 13 minutes 0 second**

And she was like that. She got up in the morning, full of cheerfulness at half past five every morning and started knitting and she was the most welcome, cheerful contributing an atmosphere of hope and joy in the family, and I always wanted to be like her. And she eventually went to Israel with her son, who was a lawyer, and they went to Nahariya, to a very non-religious Kibbutz, Shomer Hazair, Kibbutz, Hasorea. . And her grandchildren were founder members of that.

BL: And she was present at your Bat Mitzvah?

IW: Oh she was, very much so.

BL: So coming back to England you mentioned the cello. Can you remember any other things that you wanted to take from home? That your parents wanted to take with them?

IW: No, my parents took some photographs. They took some family documents, but that's about all. That's about all, apart from clothes and necessities. I can't remember any personal possessions apart from the cello.

BL: And what happened to the furniture? What happened and where were they left.

IW: They were in a lift in Germany and they said it was bombed, that place where they were kept. So we never got anything of that except we got compensation.

BL: What were your first impressions of England when you arrived?

IW: Oh dear. I can't really...I think what was important was that we had friends who were so welcoming and so kind to us. But I was very soon sent away to this dreadful place. What I do remember is that before the war, obviously in the street they soon said, 'Oh, where are you from?' 'From Germany.' So you were identified as German. And English always so admired the Germans. Their efficiency, their economy and their culture. And there was I, identified as a German which I didn't want to be. But at the same time I didn't want to tell them my whole history. Then later of course one certainly didn't speak German because you didn't want to become an enemy alien! So either way, being a German wasn't the right thing.

**Tape 2: 16 minutes 24 seconds**

And certainly when I was at that nursery training college, it was a totally strange world. A totally strange world. With none of the comforts and none of the emotional warmth at all. Oh of course immediately one was very impressed with the policemen here, how friendly and nice they were. And all together that people were very civilised and nice in their behaviour to each other. But there I felt totally alien. I felt very much somebody who didn't belong, who was inferior. And the girls talked about lipstick and boyfriends and Pop music. And so on. You know, I thought, 'What are they talking about? I'm glad I'm alive. We're worried about our family and our friends in Germany. It's a matter of life and death!' You know, we had nothing in common whatsoever. So I felt very alienated. Until a girl came who became a very close friend of mine, Helen, who was from Breslau. And we became very great friends and that helped me a great deal. She came home with me and stayed with my family in Boxmoor because her family wasn't there at all. She was joined up later by

her mother and brothers but she had no home at that point so became my twin. We called each other 'twin'. We were very close to each other. And she made life, and she was a cheerful person and she made my life in that place very much easier.

BL: She came to the same...?

IW: She came to this nursery training college, which was just for a year. After that I was sent for a job with a family where the child was in a terrible state. I was up night and day and then they wanted me to come back as a staff nurse, but I did that for a very short time because I really hated that place. It was really for financial reasons. And then I worked in war nurseries in Hemel Hempstead. So did my sister Ruth, work in war nurseries. And then again somebody came along from Refugee Committee and said, 'Well, do you want some help? What can we do and what do you want to do?' I said, 'I would like to study. I would like to study Social Sciences.' And with their help I got to Birmingham. This was in '43. And there you could choose whether to stay in a hostel in town you had to stay in some community, or at the Quaker College which was called Woodbrooke. I and chose the Quaker College.

**Tape 2: 19 minutes 47 seconds**

Now that's where I came to life again as a person because there they were interested in individuals, they were interested in different nationalities; they respected you as an individual whoever you were. And it was a wonderful community life. They'd taken in not only Quaker students but a lot of young students studying Social Sciences. I really came to life and felt I was a person again in my own right and I could be who I was. Quite a few of the Jewish students became Quakers because they were so...such a marvellous community. Incidentally, Quakers, as you know helped quite a lot of people in Germany to get out. But I could not become non-Jewish although there was a certain temptation in that. But all the same they made me Senior Student there of Woodbrook and I felt very pleased to be so and also to communicate what Judaism was about.

BL: So when did you go to Birmingham?

IW: In '43.

BL: You said war nurseries. Can you describe what a war nursery was?

IW: War nurseries just children whose parents were working and helping the war effort. And nurseries were provided for young children.

BL: So this was full time or did they stay half day...?

IW: I think it was the whole day. I think it was the whole day.

BL: So they were picked up...later?

IW: In the afternoon.

BL: Was there...did you have any contact with Anna Freud and the school?

IW: No I didn't at all at that time. But my interest in human beings and their minds started very early. I remember writing in my diary at the age of 12, 'I want to help people to help themselves. To become the person they want to be.' And then of course I think various things contributed to my taking up later the career I did. Well obviously studying social science and becoming a social worker was to help people. I thought I would work as a Children's Officer, it was called then. People who looked after children and were involved in placing them. But...No first of all after the war I worked for a year and a half in the Jewish Search Committee which was linked to the World Jewish Congress. It was somewhere near Harley Street, I can't remember exactly where. Near Harley Street.

**Tape 2: 23 minutes 0 second**

It was a Jewish search bureau which tried to trace where people had been taken to – which concentration camps. To try to find out any information what happened to them. To try and trace whether there were any people who were alive. And in some wonderful cases we did find people alive, with a lot of trying to find them in the various countries they might have returned to and putting them in touch with their families. And sometimes two people who'd both been taken away and found each other again which was wonderful. But even finding out information, when people were taken away, where they went to when they were put in the gas chamber, even the information was very important to people. And that was very worthwhile and important work that I felt very engaged in. I think I did it for a year and a half. And then I wanted to get back into other work. I don't know whether the work actually finished then or what happened to it. I wrote to my professor. At that time you could only take a diploma course in social science which came under, for some peculiar reason, under the Commerce Department. I wrote to him, Sergeant Florence. And he said, 'I remember you very well. You were a refugee girl and you got yourself an Honours Diploma. And I'd like you to come on the staff of the university.' And I said, 'Well, you've now got a degree course in Social Science. And I'd like to get a degree if I'm going to be teaching students who are going to be coming – you know, studying for a degree.' So I both taught them and took up further study to get a degree in Social Science. And then...then they wanted me to become a tutor on the staff who would start a generic casework course. And I said I have done very little practical work I know far too little, and I want to go to the Tavistock which has an Advanced Course in Social Work for a year to learn before I take this up. So I came to the Tavistock and of course that...I was enormously impressed by the deep understanding of children in particular. Esther Bick was there and Bowlby and they argued a lot. And I was very taken up with – of course I thought I had all the problems that everybody else obviously had – and no doubt I had quite a few of them. And I remember our year of social workers. There were 5 in the group. By the time - we started in September – it came to Christmas, we all went to Bowlby and said, 'We're so disturbed we think we need analysis.'

**Tape 2: 26 minutes 40 seconds**

He said, 'Well look, I you didn't think you needed it and you weren't worried about yourselves, you wouldn't be suitable. But you don't necessarily need to have analysis.' I thought it was terrific and I reminded people of that. That if they really see in themselves echoes of what they come across, that's a very good sign that they know and touch with feelings and emotions at some deeper level. However I did never return to...I mean I had been a lecturer at Birmingham University. In fact they

called me 'Baby Don' because I think I was 25 when I went there – not long after I had finished my Diploma Course. Ah, I left out something. During your diploma course you had to have some practical experience and I chose to have it in London. And I worked in Islington. And I was with another girl student. And we went for lunch to a particular ABC restaurant. And I was asked by somebody called Gosling in Birmingham who was chairman of the Rotary Club whether I would speak on the subject of – so it must have been '44 – the subject of 'Five Years As a Refugee in England'. He said, 'Well, we're all men. Would you like me to bring my daughter?' I was actually quite honoured and happy to do this anyway. And so I went up for a day to Birmingham. And on that day, that ABC restaurant in Islington got a direct hit. So I was extremely fortunate that I was in Birmingham giving my lecture to the Rotary Club. Now that name Gosling then I rediscovered when I came to the Tavistock because he was Chairman of the Tavistock Clinic. He was the son of this man who had asked me to speak.

**Tape 2: 29 minutes 13 seconds**

BL: So when did you get to the Tavistock?

IW: I got to the Tavistock...now let me see. I started in '45. I went back as a tutor / don / lecturer in '48 and I was there till about '50. ' No. Must have been later. Longer than that. I then contracted tuberculosis of the Hylam gland which is not really the pulmonary but very close to it. So I was told that I couldn't work. I was quite ill. My mother said, 'She must go to Switzerland in the winters' The doctor said, 'What? You have so little money.' And this and that. Why is this necessary? However I went to Switzerland. I went to Davos. Not into a sanatorium but into a *Kurpension*, where there were people who were ill but not needing constant lying down. And it was a very – like The Magic Mountain – a book, you know that? By Thomas Mann. It was a very stimulating atmosphere. I don't know whether disease does it but certainly you've got a lot of time and there was a group of interesting people there. And we read poetry; we went for walks we were covered up with furs for hours on the balconies. I loved the mountains there. And... now this is the first time I met up with German people again. With a group of theology students from Germany. And that of course was a nice way to be getting back in touch with Germans. And they wanted me to teach them Hebrew so we...I did a bit of Hebrew teaching and we had loads of discussions and it was very, very interesting. Some of them came from East Germany and...but there must have been 7 or 8 of them. And I became very friendly particularly with one of them. But altogether we had an interesting time. My doctor told me that I mustn't get so excited, that I was running a temperature. I had the most wonderful doctor who treated me for next to nothing because he knew we had very little money. A Dr. Sutter, who was a wonderful person.

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 40 seconds**

But I also learned a lot about human beings. Firstly of all how everybody talks endlessly about their illness. Especially if you come first everyone is much iller than the next one. And at length they would deliberate about that and of course they had the best doctor than the other one had, etc, etc... But what I came to see also that when people became better and were ready to go home they suddenly became ill again...And it made me think that there is a fear of life, actually. It's better to be ill than to face the problems of life. The question was, what was I going to do when I came home? In between I came home. I was just there for winter months. And I must

say I actually had a rather nice time reading and discussing. And I had an interview at the Tavistock. And I was interviewed by a Dr. Hunter who was known to say very little but had the ability to evoke in others to talk. I said that just what I told you now and I think that rather impressed him that I'd noticed this in people: some anxiety about getting back into life and how it can make people ill or remain ill. And I was accepted on the course. When I came out of the interview I thought, 'Now I've told him everything about myself. All my difficulties and all my problems.' And I think – anyway I got in. And then I decided that I wanted a year in Israel first before coming back to do the Child Psychotherapy Course. So I worked in Jerusalem in the Hadassah Health Centre – outside Jerusalem actually, where there was a new community of Iraqis, Moroccans, and all sorts of people, some of them very violent.

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 1 second**

Certainly not used to psychological talk and anyway my Hebrew was very limited. I took lessons and I loved my lessons and I improved a lot. But I'm afraid I didn't keep it up so it's not very good now at all, but I can understand quite a bit. And there was a South African in charge of that Health centre and there were various English speaking doctors but who had lived in Israel and could speak *Ivrit*. So I worked as a social worker and could do that. And they did all sorts of impressive things. There was a woman who said she was possessed by the devil. So what do you do with a person like that? Well, they gave her a strong aspirin dose and she started sweating every night, terribly. And she said, 'I've been cured now. It's all been sweated out of me.' I mean they had to be very original and inventive in their work and how they treated people. And then I came back to do the Child Psychotherapy Training which was 3 years at that time. It's now 4 years actually. And the link to the Tavistock still is maintained. I was a student. I was placed in Walthamstow, St George's Hospital, and various places for practical experience. You had to take on children 5 days a week. One under-5, one latency child and one adolescent and for each one you had an analyst as a supervisor. And it was a fantastically good course. Very intensive. Again I was extremely fortunate because Bowlby had negotiated with Americans for scholarships. And I had a scholarship so all I needed is living expenses. And then of course I got jobs and very soon I was back on the staff at the Tavistock. And gradually rose in 'rank' until I became a Consultant Psychotherapist and also Vice Chairman of the clinic for 10 years which was a new post next to the Chairman.

**Tape 2: 38 minutes 0 second**

And I loved the Tavistock. I felt very much at home there. Because it's so international. Also it was at that time I would say 60% Jewish staff. 30 Scottish and various other nationalities and very small proportion of English people, but it's changed enormously now. That isn't so now. Although of course psychoanalysis is a very Jewish field, not only because of Freud but because I think that through all the tragedies our people have been through we know about loss, and depth of feeling and suffering and wanting to relieve it. So you've got lots of people in medicine and in these kinds of professions.

BL: When you were at the Tavistock, were there many other refugees - German Jewish refugees there?

IW: Some of them actually were actually on the staff who had come there much earlier. Were on the staff. Not that many Jewish refugees I don't think. No. I know that some of them were staff members were refugees.

BL: Such as? Do you remember any names?

IW: Oh God. I've got to think about that. They're no longer in existence. They're all dead. Well certainly Mrs Bick who started the Child Psychology training. Irene Caspari, who's an educational psychologist. I'm trying to think of another psychologist but I can't think of any just at the moment. I don't remember my students being that many refugees at all as a matter of fact, but certainly quite a few Jewish ones. And I loved it. I had a Jewish psychoanalyst from South Africa. And I was very glad to have a Jewish Kleinian psychoanalyst. I had no idea the difference between Freud, Jung or Klein. But the person in charge who was not Mrs Bick but a Mrs Mattie Harris said to me, 'Isca you look to be greedy. I think you need a Kleinian analysis.' I don't know but to be quite frank I think it was a funny statement to make because she was a Kleinian, and she would have anyway sent me to Klein.

**Tape 2: 41 minutes 0 second**

She sent me to a very, very warm hearted, not orthodox sort of in his way, very open minded, very nice person. Lived in Highgate. I know he was musical. He had been analysed by Melanie Klein. Very, very nice man who unfortunately in '61/'62 drowned in Scotland. Which I didn't know - he was a great angler and he drowned in a river in Scotland. I had just been to the Psychoanalytical Congress where I'd heard Doctor Wilfred Bion give a talk on... Do you know his name? No. Well he became the most outstanding post-Kleinian great thinker and is well known not only in psychoanalytic thinking, amongst psychoanalytic thinking people but he is used in universities, and I'd heard him give a paper on thinking and thought processes. So I heard about it. I was there with a boyfriend in Scotland and he saw it in the paper. He told me about it. And all the analysts of my analyst were gathered in - you know, by other analysts. It was, 'What do you want to do and how are you and how are you faring?' I said I'd really like to go to Doctor Bion, if I can.

**Tape 2: 43 minutes 15 seconds**

They said, 'You've had a male analyst, you should really have a female analyst.' But I was so impressed by Bion he eventually offered me a place and I went to him. And he was somebody who was an extremely original thinker and you know his interpretations were very - well they weren't along theoretical lines, if you like - they were very original and enormously helpful. And while I thought I'd had my baby hood and childhood analysed, in my second analysis he dealt very much with the adult part of me. In '62, my sister had been ill, my older sister. She got married in - no she got married here, but she met Adi in Jerusalem. She was teaching at the University, but again through friends and family she met Adi who was a chemical engineer in refrigeration, so totally different field. And they got married in London here with Leo Baeck officiating at the wedding. Leo Baeck had founded here a group where he was teaching and having discussion with other refugee analysts - (laughs) - rabbis. Rabbis - but I also actually attended there. And they had difficulty getting their Leo Baeck wedding recognised in Israel, which seemed quite amazing. But anyway they did get it recognised. And Raphael the oldest was born in Jerusalem. But after a year there they went to Glasgow where my sister was offered a job at the university.



And Adi worked in a refrigeration firm. And Jonathan – three and a half years younger than Raphael - was born in Glasgow. Now my sister became ill – started becoming ill with breast cancer when Jonathan was one and a half or two. At first it was thought to be nothing much but then it was found to be a particularly vicious kind of cancer and she had her womb removed and so on, etc. And, no - he was two I think. And she always regained her health. She had always been a rather delicate person and also very worried about her health.

**Tape 2: 46 minutes 45 seconds**

Always. And so there was a great deal of worry. My parents went up frequently. I went up frequently. We spent holidays together. I knew the children of course extremely well. I looked after Jonathan in London when they went on holiday with Raphael and just Adi and Lore. I was very close to my sister who was an extremely interesting person, very well liked by everybody. Very deeply religious, not necessarily in terms of keeping everything, but she was very close to my father. I think if she had been a boy she probably would have been a rabbi. In those times one wrote letters home, or we did anyway, every second day – long letters. And I've still got some letters from the 50s here because my mother kept everything. And they wrote back every second day. And I think one of the things about telephone and e-mail is that there will be no records. And of course through letters one has records. And it's just amazing how she discusses who she met and the interesting people in Oxford and Cambridge and Glasgow. Her views on writers and on literature. Very, very lively and very enjoyable. And Raphael was also always a somewhat delicate baby and child and emotionally also very sensitive. A wonderful brother to his younger brother. He took him to school. My sister died in '62 so Jonathan was 5 and a quarter and Raphael was eight and 8 months, let us say.

**Tape 2: 49 minutes 10 seconds**

My parents were there when she was ill in hospital, but she was actually only in the end in hospital for the last 2 and a half, 3 weeks. With Raphael very aware of it and sending her letters which she could hardly open any more, she was so weak. Jonathan had seen much less of his mother, and really remembers practically nothing. They'd had a wonderful holiday still in the summer in Switzerland where my sister looked so well, and she was very well, in August. And then she was going...She was supposed to come down to my mother's birthday the 11<sup>th</sup> October and she was ill, and that was when her last bout of illness started, although as I say she was only very acutely ill in the last few weeks in hospital. Adi, at that time was engaged by a very nice Scottish firm called Stern and he did designs for them. And my parents were there until just a very few days before my sister died. My father came down because my parents had kept my sister's illness pretty secret from everybody – the congregation and even from friends. And so there were people coming on the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday to wish him well. I was running upstairs and downstairs in our house in Hodford Road crying and in between sort of saying hello to people. And after lunch Adi phoned to say that my sister died on my father's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday actually. And my parents wanted her brought to London to be buried in Hoop Lane. And I remember collecting the coffin – well the coffin was taken away by others, but collecting the family from the station when they came down. Raphael had actually been sent down for my father's birthday, and it was Hanukkah time too. I mean it was bizarre how we kept face for others and really underneath were crying. And also of course Adi wanted to tell Raphael himself so we

had to wait until he came down which was very soon. It must have been a day or two, to tell Raphael the bad news.

**Tape 2: 53 minutes 0 second**

And Jonathan of course was little and he actually said, 'When are we getting a new mummy?' as children will. And I think it didn't really hit him for a bit. Now Adi had to return to Glasgow of course. They very quickly found through friends a very, very good German au pair girl, Heide. And she was excellent with the children and looking after the household. And I went up every second weekend. I took the night train up on Friday night as I was working. I took the night train down on Sunday night and back to work and in between work to see what was happening with the children. And everybody there assumed, because my sister talked about that, that I would look after the children. She wanted me to look after the children. And she also hoped that somehow that Adi and I would get married. And of course my father talked a lot to her about death. And... but they actually never, from the hospital, or Adi, discussed death with her. They kept her hope going, but I can't believe she didn't know she was dying. She certainly discussed it with my father. And my father, how old was he? '62, he was born in '82 – yes, he was 80! Yes, it was his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday! He was for years already of course he had retired from the congregation some years before, but he went every year to Germany to take services, High Holy Day services.

**Tape 2: 55 minutes 19 seconds**

Pestalozzistrasse I think it is, and Fasanstrasse [both synagogues in Berlin] is another place, and at the old age homes. And my mother went with him and he himself went quite often to lecture. Now he had said, his first reaction was 'I can't go back to Germany. I'll murder someone. I'll kill one if I ever meet one of these people.' But in fact far from killing them he made contact with non-Nazi people. Including Willi Brandt. The new mayor of Frankfurt. He became friendly with very prominent Germans. He had – better put that in as well – he had broadcast from the BBC to the continent. He had given sermons and one of the people who was working and cleaning an SS man's premises. She'd been taken from Holland. She came from Germany and went to Holland – went to a concentration camp. And she picked up this sermon and she said, 'I think I'll be saved.' 'Having heard this, I think I will be saved.' And she now lives in London.

BL: When did he give these services?

IW: During the war. Certainly towards the end of the war. And so he was also then asked by the German radio, by the Süddeutscher Rundfunk to tell his life story, his experience of Nazi Germany and what he thought about it. And he went quite frequently to Germany. They recorded it here through the Süddeutscher Rundfunk but he travelled often for lectures for the Society of Christians and Jews and to meet important people and he was awarded a medal for that.

BL: Sorry, we have to stop now.

IW: Yeah. I gathered that.

**57 minutes 44 seconds**

**End of Tape Two.**

**TAPE 3**

BL: This is Tape Three. We are conducting an interview with Mrs Isca Wittenberg. Perhaps we could just talk more about the time in Glasgow, when you went up to Glasgow.

IW: Well I went up as I say, very often for weekends and for the children's birthdays and did the birthday parties etc, etc. They also came down sometimes of course to see my parents but it seemed to me they needed...they needed a mother. Adi and I then decided to get married, having got to know each other more, having been on holiday together. Actually without my parents knowing. And my sister was furious about it. My parents actually weren't happy about it at all. I suppose they thought it was all too early to marry just after a year of mourning. But I think actually for them it was a marvellous thing because they had their grandchildren with them which they wouldn't have had otherwise. Because Adi moved to London. And he got a job with the same firm but doing a different kind of job. He had to do sales management which he wasn't very keen on. Eventually his career developed very much. He eventually became Managing Director of a firm of a mixture of British Oxygen Company and a German firm Stern - no Linde. Stern was the one in Glasgow. Linde. And also he was the ideal person for that because he spoke German, he knew how German minds worked and also how English minds worked and he very much enjoyed his job as the Managing Director. And he bought this house then. And very close to my parents who were in Hodford Road, so they were very close to the family and to the children. Going up to Glasgow I overheard a conversation between the two boys. They lived upstairs. They had a bungalow but they built a room upstairs. I heard Jonathan say to Raphael, 'What about when Daddy dies? Will Daddy die too and will we be sent to children's home or where will we be sent?'

**Tape 3: 3 minutes 6 seconds**

I was very glad that I overheard that and I went up and said, 'You will never be sent to a Children's Home. You've got a family and I will make sure and the family all together will make sure that you will always have family and Daddy isn't going.' And I think this also promoted the idea that they needed a home pretty soon. We got married and meanwhile Adi got this job here and well that's what happened to us. And of course I knew the boys' history in some ways better than Adi did. And what had happened with the children's illnesses and so on. Now Raphael had adored me as an aunt - adored me. Idealised me. But the moment I became mother to them, they never called me 'Mummy' - I didn't want that. They called me 'Isca', but in front of other people Mother. But they never called me 'Mother' either. But I think that's right. But he found that very difficult. He was very worried. 'Will I forget what she sounded like? Will I forget what she looked like?' With Jonathan it was somehow different. He was actually quite a naughty boy. Nobody ever thought that Jonathan would become a rabbi. Every body thought that Raphael would become a rabbi. He looked like my sister. And she looked like my father to some extent. So all this developed totally differently. We continued to have wonderful family occasions. My parents' wedding anniversary and birthdays and so on. Very little was made of our marriage, it was a very quiet affair. But at the wedding anniversary of my parents, the Bar Mitzvahs of Raphael and Jonathan, my father spoke wonderfully. Again, he wrote poems to the end for everybody's birthday and so on. My mother was frequently in

hospital. My father was very, very well until he developed some heart trouble. He had a heart – what do you call it?

**Tape 3: 5 minutes 55 seconds**

BL: A by-pass?

IW: No, the thing that goes tick-tock...A pacemaker. And he was so happy. 'I've been given a new heart!' He was very optimistic actually.

BL: Let's go back to your parents when they arrived here because we jumped over that.

IW: Well my parents first lived with these friends. Then my father...then we moved to Boxmoor where we didn't pay any rent.

BL: Why didn't you have to...?

IW: Because we'd been bombed out several times. We were offered this home by this gentleman who had been a Queen's Counsellor under Queen Victoria.

BL: So where did they live in London?

IW: We lived in Kilburn, we moved around, we were several times bombed out although we never went to shelters actually. We felt much better being in your own bed under your eiderdown.

BL: So when they moved was he already associated with the New Liberal Congregation?

IW: Absolutely. Oh, absolutely. But you know there was all this mistake that they were thought to be *Liberale*. St Johns Wood Synagogue had proved very kind to offer them their premises but it was very clear we didn't belong in the liberal movement at all. We were to the right of reform. A bit like American conservatism, a bit like Masorti, although Masorti I would say is more traditional than American conservatism or *Liberalesl Judentum* too. No he started to work very soon. He was interviewed. You know, people were interned and you came before a tribunal. They judged whether you were an enemy alien, and they didn't know the difference really. And they were so naïve they asked him 'Surely they didn't realise you were a cleric. You didn't wear your dog collar when they came to take you away?'

**Tape 3: 8 minutes 24 seconds**

As naïve as that! Rather than that he would have been particularly persecuted as a rabbi. But he was allowed to stay. And he was very happy of course. It was a very, very little congregation as you well know, started in a small room but people very keen to find a home and to find a community and people with similar experiences. And so he loved it. And he could speak to them in German. Preach in German which was his language and always remained the German of his poetry. You know – poetic language.

BL: He must have known many people - I mean – personally?

IW: Yes. He knew some. He knew some. I wouldn't say that that many people from Frankfurt came to England. Most people from Frankfurt went to the United States. Most people. I don't think he knew that many. But...

BL: Certainly some people that I interviewed knew him from Frankfurt.

IW: Somebody from...? Well Henry Meier who was one of the founders of the congregation knew him from Frankfurt. You know others?

BL: Somebody I interviewed for example had classes with your father at school.

IW: Really? Really! Well. I didn't even know that. I didn't even know that. Aha. Good.

BL: As you said he could speak German.

IW: He could speak in German and he could preach in German. And yes, it was extremely important that he could work!

BL: What were your memories of that congregation? Or by then, you were not here?

IW: You see I wasn't here that much. Not that much. I was first in Nursery College, then I was there. Then I was in Boxmoor but I didn't go that much into London. So that was much later that I got to know the congregation. Except for holiday times. Holidays and High Holy days, of course I knew them.

BL: Can you remember some of those High Holy days? The New Liberal Congregation?

### **Tape 3: 11 minutes 0 second**

IW: It felt very much like home and you know. It felt very much like...very reduced numbers and people. And very stressed people in very hard circumstances with very little to live on. And so had we, very little to live on. But it felt like a bit of home with a lot of tragedy hanging around us and a lot of worry. But very feeling of closeness and warmth and connectedness to the past. My mother was instrumental in starting the Women's Society. And my mother very much wanted a children's choir. And that, as you know has become the most tremendously successful thing! The choir. The children's choir. Outstanding! Giving concerts and still going on singing for special occasions. And the choirs, the mixed choir, although quite reduced by now. Kuttner is still there whose father I think conducted it - the choir at one point. Wonderful. Wonderful. And the High Holy day services were held in various places. One of them was in Friends' Hall in Euston. Another was in a cinema, etc, etc, and there were lots of people there. And it grew and grew, until there were 1,500 members, which was great.

BL: But it wasn't an important part of your life in that time?

IW: Not in the early days, but later on yes. Later yes. Later, when we moved to London after the war, which probably was '46, '47. But then again I was in Birmingham...much of the time. So by that time, later on, it was pretty well established. No I was very fond of the congregation. And...There was a youth club to which I belonged.

**Tape 3: 13 minutes 16 seconds**

BL: What was it called?

IW: Oh dear. It'll come to me later but not at the moment.

BL: The Phoenix?

IW: The Phoenix! That's right. There were some weddings amongst that group. And no, we were very fond of it. Although, apart from the social occasions my father for instance wasn't for the bazaar at all. To him it was far too commercial. And he was very worried that they prepared while it was still the Sabbath. It was not allowed to open until afterwards of course. But he didn't approve of some of these things that went on. And also you know it was totally different the relationship between rabbi then and now. It was an...you know people were used to authority and formality and my father was keen on that. I mean he was of the old school and I think that led to some difficulties.

BL: But he was happy in the congregation?

IW: Yes, on the whole yes. One the whole, yes, Yes. He was certainly happy with the membership. He felt he was very underpaid and he was. And also there were problems with secretarial help and all sorts of things. But he was very happy to have a congregation although it was very different from what he was used to.

BL: But was it similar to Frankfurt in the sense that you had people visiting in the house and that sort of thing or was that not the case?

IW: Well, certainly he had a lot of friends that came to the house. But you know my parents were growing older, it wasn't quite as easy and there was no domestic help. My mother had to change an awful lot from having quite an easy life to having to cope with the household and teas for visitors. But they had a lot of friends. He was very loved by very many people. No, no. It was quite a social life. Not as... I mean the congregation wasn't as big or as near as it was in Frankfurt.

**Tape 3: 16 minutes 10 seconds**

BL: So the experience of emigration for your parents...was...it must have been...?

IW: Very hard. Very hard. I think, very grateful too that we all found our feet. But a total complete change from living a very comfortable life to having...making do, having to be watching every penny and being very careful. And my mother having no help and wanting her daughters to be around to help. Very much so. She always said she was very glad she had daughters because they stayed home and they looked after

their parents and they help and so on, etc. She said that actually well before the emigration. She said she was glad to have daughters because they are more home-bound.

BL: Did they have contact with the non-refugee community or did they mix mostly in refugee circles?

IW: No. My father continued to...The Society of Christians and Jews. World Congress of Faiths. No, no. In Germany and here with non-Jews. It wasn't an isolationist kind of home at all. No. But of course here it was harder for him to establish that. But he did. As I say in non Jewish circles as well. And he had Bible classes at home until I don't know, I think well into his 90s. Which people from the congregation came to although he was no longer a rabbi of a congregation. So he had a lot of loyal good friends. I'm trying to think how much we mixed with non-Jewish people. Certainly I did and so did my sisters, very much so. And of course my husband worked in a totally non-Jewish environment but he has been brought up much more orthodox than I have and he as a child – they never would have thought of going to a church and they didn't mix with Christians at all.

**Tape 3: 18 seconds 38 seconds**

BL: This was where?

IW: In Breslau. He lived in Breslau most of his life. And then he went to Israel. He went to Israel via Switzerland in '37. A year before Kristallnacht. They had a very impoverished life. His mother was a wonderful cook. Unlike my mother who didn't like cooking at all. And his mother started sort of *Mittagstisch* and they took meals to people and so on. His father never found any satisfactory work. They had owned a timber business in Germany. He was very much a shul-goer there, and so was his mother. And his sisters, one died very young she was on a kibbutz and she died of diphtheria at 20. And there were two other sisters that lived together with the mother, although one of them was married. They all lived in Rambam [street]. And well here, after my father finished being the rabbi of Belsize Square and he was not at all keen on his successor. Not at all. I think it's very difficult for any rabbi to retire let me tell you. Any rabbi and I've seen it many times over. But I think he really didn't like it, didn't think Kokotek's character was what he would have hoped for in a successor and so he actually didn't want us to go there, continue there. And we joined Louis Jacobs Synagogue. We became founder members of Louis Jacobs New London Synagogue. And that's where the boys grew up. And Adi took them regularly to shul and they learned Aleph Bet [the Hebrew alphabet] and to *leyn* from very early on and Jonathan too. And then Jonathan, who'd wanted to become a vet because he loved animals - he wanted to become forester because he loved nature and he's still is all into that very much. Raphael studied in Oxford. He studied first philosophy and classics and then he changed to PPE, which is politics, philosophy and economics, and he became a civil servant.

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 48 seconds**

And Jonathan went to Cambridge and studied English literature. So there was no question about competition in rowing because neither of them is very sporty. But he then for a short time taught immigrant children. And he wasn't sure what he wanted to

be at all. And then somehow the idea - and of course they all learned with my father as well – the idea of being a rabbi suddenly took over. and he went to Leo Baeck college but he also was taught in Israel and he's got a qualification from Yeshiva as well. And he became student rabbi of the newly founded New North London Synagogue which is a sort of child of New London and founded by – one of the founders there is the son of Louis Jacobs – Ivor. And he's been there ever since and got on like a house on fire and is now – everywhere we go we hear his praises. He's done a lot and like my father, always interested in interfaith activities – with Christians but particularly with Muslims. And he broadcasts. In fact they're television broadcasts in which people from Arab countries fire questions at clerics from this country and you can imagine what he has to deal with and he manages to do that very well.

**Tape 3: 23 minutes 39 seconds**

BL: So your father really wasn't keen on contact with Belsize after his ....?

IW: No. No. He wasn't.

BL: So did he spiritually feel quite close to New London?

IW: No, I don't.

BL: No, Your father.

IW: He never went to New London?

BL: He never went to...?

IW: Where did my father go to shul?

BL: When did he leave Belsize Square?

IW: I can't understand this quite. Did he go to New London? Did my father go to the New London? He must have gone to Belsize Square. He must have gone to Belsize Square actually.

BL: So he did continue?

IW: Yes, he must have continued. [Adi speaks in the background] No, no, no. That's not right at all. That was earlier. That was just in the house. I really don't know. He must have gone to Belsize square.

BL: Would he have gone to any other synagogue?

IW: I really don't know. Funny, that's a complete blank in my mind.

BL: So when did he first go back to Germany?



IW: Of course, people did not approve of that. People in the congregation did not approve of that. They thought it was a betrayal to go back to Germany. Again, I'm not sure. I think it started probably shortly. No I don't know. I really don't know. I think it might have been...I know it was in Willy Brandt's time. Do you know when that is?

BL: In the '50s.

IW: In the '50s.

BL: When did you go back to Germany?

IW: I once went with my parents very briefly. We went through there to go to Switzerland. But I've been back to Germany many times because through the Tavistock I had many international contacts. I've taught worldwide except in...America, actually.

**Tape 3: 26 minutes 40 seconds**

Not worldwide but certainly many countries in Europe and also in South Africa and Australia a lot. And I was asked to go back to Germany and I went the first time to a congress which was about Melanie Klein and I immediately had a terrible nightmare that I couldn't get out and I hadn't got my passport. It was terrible. And the conference also was shockingly awful. They had such a misunderstanding of Melanie Klein. I was quite appalled and I found it very difficult. But I was asked to teach there and I've often taught there and of course people immediately say, 'How come you speak German?' Although my German actually improved through teaching in Germany quite often. And people coming here to have supervision with me in German. And of course I said, and then of course we talked about it after the lecture or whatever I had to give. And many people, they always did want to talk about it usually. Most people did. And some of them cried on my shoulder that they didn't know what their fathers did. And their fathers or grandparents or mothers didn't talk about it. Others knew that their family had been all right. I don't know whether yes or no. Neither of us really want to talk to Germans who are our age or older. But the younger generation, you know. I have absolutely no problem with whatsoever. In fact I find Germany very much easier to go to than to Vienna, where, although I've been there several times over the weekend as a visiting professor. They ask me to be. I find Vienna impossible. There's an undertone of anti-Semitism there. I usually become ill.

**Tape 3: 28 minutes 50 seconds**

BL: Have you been to Frankfurt?

IW: I've been to Frankfurt. I went there...In fact I was asked to do a seminar with university staff. Because I like group work - and I think I learned that also through Wilfred Bion's work, who was very interested in groups - to talk about emotional relationships between teachers and students. I don't know whether you know I've written a book about that because I taught teachers in an evening course also at the Tavistock. And I wrote a book for social workers which was translated into German so badly that I complained. And they said, 'It's a disaster that the author knows the language.' But now it's been re-translated in Vienna by Vienna University and it's much, much better. In fact I'm going to Berlin in September for the first time in a

long time. I haven't been able to get away because of my husband's illness. I don't mind going to Germany to teach, but I wouldn't go there for a holiday and when I've been to a conference or something I will not go to dances or balls of that kind. I won't. But for teaching or work, I will go.

BL: What do you mean – any sort of entertainment?

IW: Yes, I wouldn't go for yes – entertainment. So I don't feel that I want to.

BL: Did you keep any relationship with anyone in Germany from pre-war? You know ...the friend you mentioned?

**Tape 3: 30 minutes 45 seconds**

IW: Non-Jewish friends? None. I have none at all. They never tried to contact us. I have no idea what's happened to them. I have had a few school friends – Jewish school friends who have moved to London. No, absolutely none. No.

BL: How do you think your experiences of being a refugee affected your life or affected also your choice of profession?

IW: I'm sure it affected my choice of profession, because I could not understand how, these people we'd been so friendly with...You know, we were very free as German Jews. And people were in very high positions and very well regarded. As I said my father had admirers amongst non-Jewish people galore. I could not understand what had happened. How it could turn to hatred and persecution. And I wanted to know what it is in people that turns their minds. How people can, from being ordinary human beings become so cruel. So outrageous...outrageous and commit such crimes. To come from a culture - such fantastic culture- and civilised people become like that. It seemed to me I needed to find out how peoples' minds worked. To find out the good and the bad in it and in oneself. And as I said, from early on I wanted to help people and I think also particularly people who suffer, who are in pain. I'm sure it had very much to do with that. And I've been to Second Generation conferences where I then was asked to be coordinator or facilitator of a group. And it turned out that two-thirds were social workers or psychotherapists! So I think, you know, makes one want A- to help people but also to understand peoples minds.

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

**Tape 3: 33 minutes 29 seconds**

IW: I expect it would have been very different. One of the things I want to say about being a refugee. Maybe it would have happened anyway, but I'm terribly, terribly interested in making links between different professions, between different nationalities, between different religions to further understanding. I can't say that I feel at all English. Not at all. I feel a bit of everything. I feel a bit at home. I mean I feel certainly at home in Israel in many ways, but I feel a bit at home in many areas in the world. But I don't feel totally at home anywhere. If somebody says, 'What's your primary orientation? I would say, 'Jewish.' Jewish. My home is in being Jewish. I

mean I do feel at home in some ways in Germany, very much so. I mean not only in language but in other ways I can easily sort of connect up with people.

BL: In which ways?

IW: Well in the background and the culture really. In that way. And of course in the language. But I mean my language is quite different from theirs now. Modern German has changed in quite a lot of ways. Certainly I feel this is my home but I don't feel in the least bit English. Not at all. So I feel sort of a bit of everything. But primarily Jewish and in the Jewish community and of course in Jonathan's community which is a wonderful community. And I think community is so important to me.

BL: Is there anything else we haven't mentioned that you'd like to...?

IW: I think I've been very lucky, you know. I've been professionally very lucky to come to the Tavistock an international centre, to have had so many invitations abroad, and to have seen so much of the world. So I count myself very lucky. I knew that through the tuberculosis I knew that I couldn't have children of my own so I'm very lucky to have Raphael and Jonathan whom I regard absolutely as my children although their mummy is never forgotten.

**Tape 3: 36 minutes 24 seconds**

And I don't know whether it was my daughter in law, Nicki's - Jonathan's wife's idea to call me Immi, which is so nice. And the grandchildren also call me Immi. So though I'm not mother, I'm Immi, which is very nice. I think the point is that - never to give up hope. To be very aware of other peoples suffering and tragedies and be helpful. And the importance of friends and community and to make something out of every opportunity that comes your way and to invest it with hope and helpfulness.

BL: What for you is the most important part of your German Jewish heritage?

IW: I don't know how to answer that. The most important part?

BL: Yes.

IW: Well perhaps it is to combine the culture of your environment with your Jewish foundations and roots which was so much so true of the German rabbis and certainly of my father. And for people to not isolate themselves, be very close to Jewishness and their community, but also to go out to help others and understanding between different religions and communities.

BL: Which is what the *liberale* tradition...?

IW: They have to have a degree based in their culture before they started their theological studies. I think that is very true and it isn't true of Anglo-Jews at all, or Yeshiva boys who become rabbis, or maybe in America, I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure about America. It's different in America.

**Tape 3: 38 minutes 52 seconds**

BL: You said you don't feel English. Is that because of any bad experiences being a refugee or because of antagonism, or because of your own experiences?

IW: No I can't say I've had bad experiences. I haven't experienced much anti-Semitism here at all. I don't think so but I just...I'll never be English. You never are. You're British. I'm very grateful to England and I think I admire a lot about England and the English. That the ordinary man in the street is polite and gentle on the whole, although that has changed to some extent – or a considerable extent. So I admire a lot about it. I feel there are relationships who are closer, and certainly they are closer in Jewish families. Much closer. So...It's different. It's different. Is that not what you've come across with others? Not so much?

BL: Now finally is there any message – other message – you'd like to give to anyone who might watch this tape?

IW: Well I think I've said it. To maintain hope in difficult circumstances and to learn from the suffering, actually. Because I think suffering, unless you go under with despair, enriches you – your personality and your empathy for other people. Not only in your own community, but the world over.

**Tape 3: 40 minutes 56 seconds**

BL: Mrs Wittenberg thank you very much for this interview.

IW: Thank You.

**Tape 3: 41 minutes 18 seconds**

**Photographs:**

BL: Please describe this photo.

IW: Well this is my parents wedding, really, in 1917. I am very glad we have that although it's grown very faint.

BL: Can you please tell me the names of your parents?

IW: My mother is Nanni Charlotte and my father is Georg Salzberger, and she was born Caro, and they married in Posen. And my father was still obviously a Feldrabbiner because I see he's still in uniform. 1917.

BL: Thank You.

IW: That's a picture of my paternal grandparents. He was Rabbi Max, Moritz. Sorry...What was he? Max or Moritz [Laughs]? Adi! Moritz Salzberger, he was rabbi in Erfurt and his wife Anna who wrote poetry and who I was told she said when the phone came and it was a new thing at that time, she said, 'Please don't talk. Let me talk because I don't know how I can hear on a thing like that.' And when my father

went to the war and he was leaning out of the window on the train she said, 'Oh, take care. Don't catch cold!'

**Tape 3: 42 minutes 55 seconds**

IW: Well this is the three girls. Salzberger girls. My sister Lore, my sister Ruth and me as a baby.

BL: When was this taken?

IW: It must have been 23 to 24 judging by what a round little baby I still am there. Taken in Frankfurt.

BL: Yes please.

IW: This is with my maternal grandfather who often took us on holidays. Lore, Ruth and Isca.

BL: And what was his name?

IW: Leopold Caro. He was Professor Leopold Caro in Posen.

IW: This is a rare picture with my maternal grandmother. Taken in Frankfurt on the balcony that extended from our flat. It's got my maternal grandmother and us three children on it.

BL: And what was her name please?

IW: Isca.

BL: Your grandmother's name?

IW: That is the grandmother after whom I am called. My mother's mother.

**Tape 3: 44 minutes 27 seconds**

BL: And the address of the flat?

IW: 67 Eschersheimerlandstrasse

BL: Thank you.

IW: That's a funny picture of my parents and the three girls. Lore, Ruth, Isca, aged probably I guess 9, 7 and 5 roughly.

IW: Well that's me, I guess 10 and a half roughly, maybe 11.

IW: Well that's me with my cello before we emigrated so that must be '38 maybe. 1938 I would say. Now the cello is one that I brought with me although that one is one that I no longer have. I sold that eventually and I have a wonderful very old cello

now that William Pleeth chose for me. I could afford it because it had been broken in many places the new one. But it is an old 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian cello.

IW: That's me in my nurse's uniform when I was a nursery nurse.

BL: When?

IW: That must be '39-'40. 1940 roughly.

**Tape 3: 46 minutes 10 seconds**

IW: That's my friend Helen and me outside the nursery college I think in Pannal Harrogate and that must be 1940 I imagine.

IW: That's my parents and my two sisters. And I see that my sister Ruth and I are in Girl Guide uniform. I don't really know when that was taken but I guess it must be something like '43.

BL: And where are you in the picture? Is that you, in the middle, behind your parents?

IW: I don't think so. I think that's my sister Ruth. That's me on the right, no?

IW: This is my parents taken in Frankfurt, I reckon about '37. 1937.

IW: Here at last is Adi with me taken some years ago. I think it must be somewhere outside our house. I don't know the exact year.

IW: This is Jonathan the rabbi with his wife Nicki who comes from... who is English born comes from a family her father actually is of Indian extraction. Her mother's family owned an apple orchard in Kent. So she is a country girl. She is now a wonderful solicitor and also acts as a judge. This is their first child, called Mossi – Amos – called Mossi. Obviously he's still a baby. They've got 3 children. After Mossi they've got two girls one is called Libby and one is called Kadya.

**Tape 3: 48 minutes 40 seconds**

IW: This is Raphael, who married quite late. He married Lena who stems from Georgia, Russia. She is actually Russian. She was married before and the older boy is her son, Gideon, who studied in Leeds. He came to this country at 8 and a half and knew nothing about Jewish things but now knows a lot, and working at the moment for Jewish Board of Deputies. The son of Raphael and Lena who is little Dani who is a bright spark. I think he was about 7 or 8.

IW: This is taken on my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. And from right to left it's Kadya, Jonathan's youngest, and Dani, Raphael's little boy. After me in the middle, there is Libby, Jonathan's girl, and Mossi.

BL: Mrs Wittenberg, thank you again for this interview.

IW: Thank you.

**Tape 3: 50 minutes 10 seconds**

**The End**