

IMPORTANT

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AJR

Winston House, 2 Dollis Park

London N3 1HF

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Finkelstein
Forename:	Ludwik
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	6 December 1929
Interviewee POB:	Lwow, Poland

Date of Interview:	16 October 2006
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours and 15 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 130

NAME: LUDWIK FINKELSTEIN

DATE: 16 OCTOBER 2006

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minute 6 seconds

BL: Today is the 16th of October 2006, and I am conducting an interview with Mr Ludwik Finkelstein. We are in London and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

BL: Today is the 16th of October 2006, and I am conducting an interview with Mr Ludwik Finkelstein, we are in London and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

BL: Mr Finkelstein, thank you for allowing us to interview you. Can you please tell us your full name?

LF: My name is Ludwik Finkelstein.

BL: And where were you born?

LF: I was born in Lvov which was then Poland and is now in the Ukraine.

BL: And when were you born?

LF: On the 6th of December, 1929.

BL: Can you tell us something about your family background please?

LF: Yes I was born into an affluent and acculturated Jewish family of very long standing in the area where I was born. As far as I know, the family had been there for generations.

BL: This is your father's family or your mother's family?

LF: Both my father and my mother come from the same part of the world.

BL: And can you tell me a bit...maybe start with your paternal grandparents and then move on to your maternal grandparents?

LF: Sorry?

BL: Can you tell me a bit about your grandparents? What they did?

LF: Yes, well firstly my paternal grandparents. My paternal great grandfather was some sort of carter. Now whether he had one or many carts, I do not know, but he had three sons whom he then dispatched away from the place where he was born in Stanislavov. My grandfather went to Vienna to learn the business of iron and steel. He then became an iron and steel wholesaler in a very major way, and the firm developed into the firm of Finkelstein and FehI, which was a very major firm supplying iron steel building material, agricultural implements for the whole of Galicia and then Eastern Poland.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 40 seconds

BL: What was his name, your grandfather's name?

LF: Max Finkelstein. And the firm was called Finkelstein and FehI. My mother had a very interesting background. My great grandfather was an [...], namely an overseer of an estate and then, when Jews were allowed to own lands, he bought out the land. He was a major land owner as was my grandfather. My mother was born on my grandfather's estate in Galicia.

BL: And where did your...do you know where your parents met – how they met?

LF: How they...?

BL: Met. How they met.

LF: Well there was something between...My father then studied in Vienna and in the First World War. He'd just completed his studies when the First World War broke out, and he served as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army, mainly in Serbia. My mother, who was younger, was a refugee in Vienna and went to Vienna to high school. They then returned back to Lvov and I think they were introduced. It was a good match and very happy marriage.

BL: And when did they get married? Which year?

LF: Oh, I think 1921 is my memory.

BL: And what was your mother's maiden name and her family's...?

LF: My mother's maiden name was Yammenstein (?). Her first name was Amalia but she always went under the name of Lusha, which was a Polish diminutive.

BL: So what languages did your parents speak?

LF: My parents spoke Polish and we were a Polish-speaking family. When I was born my parents felt that I should speak one world language, which for them was German.

So that I had a German nanny and spoke German for the first few years of my life. But then I was taught Polish and Polish is my first language, but I'm quite fluent in German.

BL: Can you share with us your first childhood memories perhaps, what you remember?

Tape 1: 5 minutes 32 seconds

LF: Oh I had a very happy and blissful childhood. I was affluent. I was an only child. I remember in particular with great fondness a nanny who was with us for a long time. She was bilingual. She was speaking both German and Polish. I remember lovely holidays and playing with friends.

BL: All in Lvov?

LF: All in Lvov. Yes. All in Lvov. I then went to a Polish school at the age of 6.

BL: Sorry just to go back a bit, so you said your parents were in Vienna, and then they moved back – to Lvov?

LF: Well, my parents were...My father studied in Vienna. Then he was called up in 1914 to serve in the army and he came back from the army to Lvov, which was his parental home where his parents were when the Austrian empire broke up in 1918. Poland was still then in turmoil for a period of time before the frontiers were settled and my father was there. He had various assignments for the Polish army and then the country settled and they lived in Vienna. My mother was a... my mother went to Vienna when in the First World War Galicia was invaded by the Russians. They were under the Russians for whatever short period. There were some months that the Russians occupied Galicia, but afterwards she was evacuated. Well, they took refuge in Vienna and lived in Vienna throughout the war while my mother went to school. Then she returned back to Lvov after the end of the war. My grandparents did not return to their estate. They lived in Lvov and I think my parents were introduced to each other and, as I said, marrying, and it was a very happy marriage.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 24 seconds

BL: So where was it...where did you...Do you remember the address where you lived?

LF: Yes, well, we lived on 28 Akademitzka Street in a large flat. Then, towards I think 1939, my parents built a house. My father's business was much to do with the building trade and they then decided to build a rather splendid villa. There is some story behind that villa – that it was very much state-of-the-art, beautifully architect-designed. I think the architect won a prize for that and it caused grief afterwards when the war broke out. The address was 12 Herburtovej Street. Both Akademitzka and Herburtovej Streets have been renamed by the Ukraine.

BL: So, but mostly you grew up in the flat?

LF: I grew up in the flat, which was a very large apartment on one of the main elegant streets of Lvov. Note I call it Lvov. I can't bring myself to call it Lviv which is the current name. Although the area was divided between the Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian populations, I was very much brought up in a Polish and Jewish culture.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 20 seconds

BL: What sort of friends did you have? Do you remember?

LF: I had friends from school. Quite a large number of friends. Few of them, I suppose, survived the war. None that I have been able to trace.

BL: Can you tell us about your father's business?

LF: My father...the firm was Finkelstein and Fehl. My father and his brother then inherited it. It was a large firm, a wholesale firm: building materials, agricultural implements, iron and steel in general. And my father also owned some manufacturing facilities in Silesia. One of the interesting things about my father was that he was very active in communal affairs. He was a City Councillor. And that was a very important part of his business. Also, he represented the Jewish community on the City Council of Lvov.

BL: So he was very involved?

LF: He was very much involved in the community. We belonged to a Progressive temple in Lvov where I was always very proud when I went to hear my grandfather's name read out as one of the great benefactors.

BL: Can you tell us something about the synagogue? Do you remember going to the synagogue?

LF: Yes I remember the synagogue. We were not tremendously observant. We were very much consciously Jewish. I remember going to the synagogue in particular on the High Holy Days. It was a rather splendid building. I greatly liked that fact that the seat where my father sat had his name plate and that of my grandfather on it. That's about all that I can sort of remember. I remember in particular one person who greatly impressed me. He was a Major Ignatz Schrage who was a conscious Jew, a committed Jew, a regular officer in the Polish army, and always on the High Holy Days we sat behind him. And his rather splendid figure impressed me greatly as a boy of whatever I was – I think about eight.

Tape 1: 13 minutes 31 seconds

BL: What was his name?

LF: Ignatz Schrage. He was one of the officers shot at Katyn, by the Soviets at Katyn. I'm still friendly with his step-daughter very much. Sarah is one of our close friends.

BL: At the synagogue, can you tell me how religious your home was? How observant?

LF: Our home was not terribly observant. We certainly went to synagogue on the High Holy Days, that's one thing I remember, and I remember Pesach at my grandmother's, which was a large affair, and I always admired my father being able to conduct the Seder Service so well. But, otherwise, I think the observance was small, and the only thing that I do remember particularly is that when I was – oh, must have been eight or nine - my parents engaged for me a Hebrew teacher, who taught me Modern Hebrew, which was unusual for Poland.

BL: But your parents sent you to Polish school?

LF: Oh yes, yes. I went to a Polish school

BL: What choices did they have at that time? What other schools could you have gone to?

LF: Well, I mean schooling was compulsory. I went to a private Polish school. About 40% of the children were Jewish – maybe more. They could have sent me to a Jewish school, either a Yiddish-speaking or a Hebrew-speaking school. But they all had to be compulsory; there had to be schooling and it was to a standard laid down by the state.

BL: So for your parents it was important to send you to a Polish school? I mean it was a conscious choice?

Tape 1: 15 minutes 46 seconds

LF: Both my parents went to Polish schools. My father went to a gymnasium, Polish gymnasium, and so did my mother. It was very interesting with my mother. It was characteristic for Polish Jewry of that period that her parents had a number of sons, and my mother was the youngest child and a daughter. The sons, after having finished compulsory schooling, were sent to a Yeshiva. My mother, because religious education for a girl didn't matter, went to an elite gymnasium and subsequently to university. It was considered to be an adornment for a girl and the religious education was considered to be not that important.

BL: What did your mother study?

LF: My mother studied History of Art a relatively short time. She didn't complete her studies but she was essentially a linguist. She spoke many languages very well and eventually became a teacher of English to foreign students in England which is an accomplishment in itself.

BL: Did your mother work at all and help your father in the business, or...?

LF: Not at all. My father's business was on a very large scale. My mother was a lady of a large household; we had a nanny for me, a cook, a maid and eventually a manservant as well. There was a driver, and a gardener, so I remember her being beautifully dressed going out to play bridge and of course directing the household.

BL: So did your parents entertain a lot? Were there lots of guests in the house?

LF: Yes. I remember a lot of guests in the house. I think much of the social life in Lvov revolved around coffee houses. I always remember my parents meeting and so on in coffee houses. But I do remember various people coming and being entertained in our home.

BL: You said your father was very active in the community?

Tape 1: 18 minutes 30 seconds

LF: My father was very active as a representative on the City Council where he represented the Jewish district and very much represented Jewish interests.

BL: Do you remember what the issues were at the time? Do you remember discussing it, although you were very young, but...?

LF: Well, I know mostly things that I then learned from him by talking to him. But I do remember that when I went through the park, that my father was a great hero to the Jewish pretzel-makers of Lvov because the Polish government then, who really intended to suppress or diminish the influence of Jewish business, passed laws that would have meant that lots of pretzel-makers went out of business. My father defended the pretzel makers of Lvov, the successful Jewish pretzel-makers of Lvov. I remember that I was always offered pretzels because my father was a great hero. And the other issue that I remember is that my father was concerned with homelessness and made... constructed... helped to construct for the homeless and made sure that Jewish homeless had a fair share of allocation. He had some complication with the Zionist section of the council. Zionists were represented who actually felt that one shouldn't really do any investment in Poland. My father's view was that, important though it was to build up Jewish settlements in Palestine, he always felt there would be a Polish Jewish community and Jews have got to be engaged in it. May I say one of the things that he did, which was important for his subsequent life, that in the 30s - I don't know exactly which year - he joined the Polish Army reserve. He had been an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army. He then became an officer in the Polish Army reserve out of belief that Jews cannot achieve full citizenship rights if they did not take part in the defence of the country. That was a very important thing to him.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 24 seconds

BL: So he wanted to be a Polish citizen?

LF: I don't think he wanted to be one. He just was one.

BL: Right.

LF: He could never quite see why, after however many years that it was - 500 or more that his family was in Poland - that he was anything else but a citizen of Lvov. He was born in Lvov. He never questioned that.

BL: What was your experience of Polish-Jewish relations as a young child?

LF: None at all. I went to a school. I remember one or two anti-Semitic remarks but no more than playground taunts. I never questioned that at all.

BL: So you never had any negative experiences or anti-Semitic experiences?

LF: Well, one particular one is that one boy expressed himself unfavourably about Jews. I hit him on the nose and his nose bled. I remember that because it was...I was slow but determined and I chased him all the way down, until I managed to catch him round his house and hit him on the nose and it bled. That's the only exercise, but I mean that's a playground thing. I had none. I was aware of Polish anti-Semitism. I was aware of Polish anti-Semitic tendencies at the time because they were discussed. And there were a number of incidents in the university, or rather the technical university, where my father was in some way connected with the running of the Jewish hall of residence. I was aware of three deaths of students, but it didn't really impinge too much on my daily life. My daily life was happy and I never questioned my Polishness.

Tape 1: 23 minutes 51 seconds

BL: And you mixed your Polish and Jewish friends, and...?

LF: Mainly Jewish friends. Mainly Jewish friends as far as I can remember, but school - then I mixed with Polish.

BL: Did you belong to any youth clubs or any organisations?

LF: You're talking...No, no. You're talking of an age of about...The war broke out when I was just about ten - so nothing, nothing like that.

BL: Ok. So when did things change for you? What happened?

LF: Well, it changed very dramatically. It was the summer, September 1st 1939. I remember it, a beautiful day. I played in the garden of the neighbours, who were sort of vague relatives of ours - two girls. And, suddenly, I saw three planes flying overhead. I was aware of political tensions or whatever, because I was aware they were being discussed. But, suddenly, there were three planes and like a normal boy of that sort of age I said: 'Oh, they're German planes.' And everybody said: 'Nonsense.' And then the bombs dropped on Lvov and that's when life changed entirely. Very soon...The war broke out on that day. My father, as an officer of the reserve, expected to be called up. I remember the 3rd of September standing by the radio when news came that Britain and France declared war on Germany and we said: 'Oh well. The war is won now. It's O.K now.' But of course it wasn't. Slowly, we began to be aware of the enemy approaching closer and closer.

Tape 1: 26 minutes 7 seconds

We lived slightly on the outer edges of inside town. Then German troops approached Lvov and started shelling and we moved into the centre of the town to my aunt's house where we... there was a large cellar. We stayed in the cellar there with bombardment and shelling. After a period of time the shelling appeared to be not that severe and we moved back into our house. And then, suddenly, on the 17th of

September, we heard that the Soviets entered Poland. In the first instance we believed that they were possibly coming to help the Poles defend themselves, but in fact they didn't. What actually happened then was that Lvov was surrounded on both sides. On one side it was surrounded by the Soviets, one side by the Germans. My father had attempted to join his unit, but by this time he couldn't, so he was busy in some way with the headquarters in Lvov itself. Then the generals felt that they couldn't defend Lvov any more and it was a question of surrendering either to the Germans or the Soviets. They called a meeting of the City Council. My father was a City Councilman and was released to go to the meeting of the City Council, which decided to surrender to the Soviets because the large Jewish population would rather have been in the hands of the Soviets.

BL: How many Jews lived in Lvov at that time roughly?

Tape 1: 28 minutes 24 seconds

LF: It was about a third of the population.

BL: Which was?

LF: About 300,000. I can't give you the precise...

BL: Roughly...

LF: That's of that order. So my father went, as I said, to the meeting and the order was to surrender to the Soviets. The mayor and the general commanding went to surrender to Soviet headquarters and never came back. The mayor was imprisoned and the general went into a prisoner of war camp. There was a call for all troops to surrender and to go to prisoner of war camps. My father, who was not seen in uniform by anybody particularly, decided to go home, rather than surrender. All the officers that surrendered were eventually shot by the Soviets at Katyn, so he was very lucky not to have surrendered. The first thing that we saw was the marching in of the Soviet troops. In the first instance there were a few hours during which people released from prisons and so on were terrorising the local population – shooting at people and so on. But there was then an order to put out red flags. But we didn't have a red flag in our house. We had a Polish red and white flag and a Lvov blue and red flag. My father was unwilling to put out the flag, but we had a neighbour across the road, a Professor Bartel, a great personality in Polish mathematics and also at one time Premier of Poland. My father went to consult Professor Bartel what to do and he said: 'Put out the flag.' And, eventually, we put out the red flag. But, after a few hours, the Soviets came in and in the first instance were very well behaved and disciplined and the town returned to normality.

BL: Which date was that? When did...?

Tape 1: 31 minutes 0 second

LF: Oh, 21st or 22nd of September.

BL: So about 3 weeks after the war started?

LF: Yes, yes. That's right. Poland then of course collapsed after a few more days. Well. We immediately started...things immediately started changing. We had a number of Soviet officers billeted on us, which was a large house. After a short while, my father's business was taken over. They were expropriated. But then we had more and more people billeted upon us. Eventually, we had a colonel of the NKVD billeted upon us, a Jewish colonel, who was obviously determined to take over the whole house. And he entertained my parents very much with tales of executions being performed that day. But we continued to live in part of the house and eventually one day they expelled us. It was actually contrary to Soviet law. In Soviet law you were not allowed to have a house for rent, but you were allowed to live in your own house. So my father previously went into town to the Commander or whatever he was, a man called Yerevienko, and Yerevienko said: 'Yes, certainly, I'll give you permission to continue to live in your house.'

Tape 1: 33 minutes 7 seconds

Then one day, as I said, they came to our house to ask us to move out. And my father said: 'Well we have permission from Yerevienko to continue to stay here. And I will go and talk to him.' He went into town and was asked to wait. Yerevienko himself came into our home and expelled us. So we moved in to my grandmother's, down into the centre, and I remember having a room at my grandmother's. Continued for a few more weeks it must have been. I went to school. It wasn't the same school. Once we moved from the house in Herburtovej Street, I moved schools. And then, one night, I woke up and my grandmother's house and they arrested my father. It was the 10th of April 1940. There came apparently a number of soldiers and militiamen saying they were going to search the flat for arms. My father didn't have arms. Eventually they searched the whole place and said: 'Well, we're happy that you don't have any arms. Come with us to the Commissariat of the Militia to sign that everything was left in good order.' That was the last we saw of him for a long time. We woke up in the morning to find that my uncle was arrested. Many, many people. It was in the order of over 5,000 people were arrested that night.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 11 seconds

My mother went in the morning to the prosecutor's office to find a large number of women enquiring about their husbands. And he said: 'Oh, well...' She was informed, saying it was not a very major problem - they were just interrogating a whole range of people. But, you come back on the morning of the 14th and we will give you then exactly the details of what happened to your husband. Well, on the night of the 13th, the 7th NKVD soldiers and militiamen woke us up saying: 'You're being transferred to meet your husband in another part of the Soviet Union,' Probyszowokow, which is just outside Lvov. My grandmother was woken up. She was somewhat hysterical. I was rather calm. It seemed like a...for a boy it seemed like an adventure. I reminded my mother to take a suit for my father. And my father liked sardines - to take a tin of sardines with her. And, eventually with great difficulties, they moved us and they closed everything up. We were not allowed to pack many belongings. By the time we came down the stairs - my grandmother lived in an apartment - by the time we came down from the flat, from the apartment, we saw down the street that the whole town was on the move. They moved tens of thousands of people. We were put on the flat top of an open lorry and taken to the Lvov goods railway station. I remember being prodded in the back by a bayonet and rolling down the embankment. Not very

severely, but... Then we were put into cattle trucks, a large number of people in the middle of the night. It was a mixed group: Poles, Jews – mainly Poles I suppose.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 1 second

My grandmother who was a very...what you would call a spoiled person in a way, spoiled by being affluent and so on.

BL: This is your mother's mother or your father's mother?

LF: My father's mother. She sat on a...she found a seat of some kind and perched on that seat. Then the morning came and she found she was sitting basically on the tube for excreta which they had, got completely soiled. And she said to my mother, 'Lusha, I don't like it here.' Well, there wasn't anything very much we could do. But the interesting story was that we were badly guarded - it was very confused. They were very badly guarded and she just started knocking on the door of the wagon. They were letting people out to use the public latrines in the station. My grandmother was let out together with a Polish girl and you would not imagine a person, as I said, indecisive, and very spoiled as it were by luxurious living, a person so indecisive that I remember someone on the telephone saying: 'Mrs. Finkelstein senior is in the shop trying to find a colour of stockings. Could Mrs Finkelstein junior come and help her choose?' My grandmother went into that latrine, slipped off her coat, gave her gold watch to a guard and disappeared. She survived and died under natural...She was looked after by her cook, hidden by her cook and she survived. In the morning they started counting and they said: 'Where is Charlotta Finkelstein?' And my mother said: 'Oh, you've miscounted, I'm Amalia Charlotta Finkelstein - you got me wrong.' They never bothered very much. It was a mass deportation. But the morning came and we found ourselves in a large, as I said, large number of people, full of all sorts of people bewailing their fate. I remember one child being handed out, one Polish child being handed out through the small window that they had - a baby. I don't know what happened to it. So we stayed all day on this station, goods station in Lvov. Then my...

Tape 1: 41 minutes 7 seconds

BL: Sorry, so your grandmother slipped out still when the train was still in Lvov?

LF: Lvov, yes – she just...it was still there.

BL: So then she went to her cook or whomever she knew?

LF: She just went out of the station and went to her cook and the cook kept her. She died during the Soviet...she died during the German time, but a natural death. And the cook looked after her. Maria Polaynska (?) – a Pole. We, as I said, didn't know where we were going. The original idea was that we were going to go somewhere. We were being deported from the town but that wasn't proved to be it. There were lots of people on the station that I can remember and there was a little Polish girl skipping. Playing, just like that, with a skipping rope, skipping and the chant that she had was in Polish that said: 'I'm a scout and I shall carry messages.' And indeed we passed the message to my aunt, my mother's sister. And my mother's sister came to the station with...I remember being very distraught, being held up. And they passed into the...we could pass things in and out of the barred window of the train. She passed

into us a thousand roubles in a loaf of bread which a bystander gave them, a loaf of bread, and in that bread was passed the money, although we couldn't use the money where we were going. And then we said: 'Enough – it's becoming dark. Come tomorrow morning.' Well, at night we moved out and it was quite obvious we were not going anywhere near Lvov. It took us three weeks of a rather uncomfortable journey. As I said, we were on this cattle wagon.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 48 seconds

It wasn't so overwhelmingly full that we couldn't lie down. We could lie down on the floor. And there were shelves, a couple of shelves on which people sat. Eventually, after 3 weeks, we were discharged in a place, in a station in Eastern Kazakhstan in a place called Zhangiztobe, that's just on the border of Siberia. And we were de-trained and assembled and we were told: 'You're now the new workers and your job is to accommodate yourself to the old workers.' I remember being given ten roubles each, ten roubles per family I think, and divided into small sections and taken up country. We spent a day on a lorry going up country from Zhangiztobe to a place called Vorontsovka.

BL: So that was you, your mother...?

LF: Just the two of us. Just me and my mother together with a group of other people from that transport. At Vorontsovka we were divided again and then went a further day, up country, in an oxen wagon. There were about ninety Poles. We were the only Jews in that group. And because there was no accommodation for us but at the time the cattle were out on the pastures, out in the steppe, and so we were put in the cattle shed. We remember being in the sheds for calves. They then selected different people for different...and they asked my mother what her profession was and so on. She said: 'You're an educated woman. We will allocate you to cow milking.' Well, my mother was brought up in the country but manually not skilled.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 26 seconds

I remember holding the tail of the cow, but nevertheless her milking efforts were unsuccessful. And she became a labourer. Chornaya bochova. Chornaya bochova means black labourer, slowest unskilled labourer. She was employed...They emptied, throughout the winter they emptied large quantities of cow dung that was mixed with water and clay. And the women, it was mainly women, and wives - all the men had been arrested. We were mainly women there. She made adobe bricks; that was her job, and made little bricks of cow dung for subsequent heating. That was a number of things. I developed an ulcerated mouth with infection because we were being given some unsieved flour to make bread with, which was sort of unleavened pitta. We were taught by the natives to make it. Then my mother with a group of women was sent out into the steppe, out of the village, to make hay. I remember walking behind them normally drinking, normally carrying water. That was pretty dismal because one slept under the open sky. And then the hay making was finished and we came back to the village, by which time the cows had come forward and there was a need to find accommodation. So my mother and about four or five other women were told to build a house. It was sort of an adobe hut that was made. Well, the principal difficulty with that adobe hut was twofold. One was that the chimney wasn't all that good. The other one was that we didn't have enough glass in the window, so there was a gap in the window because there wasn't enough glass there. Anyhow, that hut was a lean-to to

an existing hut. And that's where we were in quite a small room. There were six of us in that room. My mother...pardon?

Tape 1: 49 minutes 32 seconds

BL: Were there any other children? Were you the only child?

LF: No, I was the only child. There were two other older unmarried women whose brother had been a municipal architect for Lvov. And they were deported because he had been arrested and they were deported. There was a Polish countess with her young daughter, twenty-nine-year-old daughter. Great name in Poland - she was a Pototska, which was a great name in Poland before the war. And there was us. We made a wicker sort of - I don't know how you would say - a wicker basket as it were, on which we put four adobe bricks and that was where we lay and covered ourselves with whatever clothing we had. That was the beginning. Well, that would have been towards the autumn. By about November, the terrible winter began and it was an incredible winter. Snow - after a very short while the hut was covered with snow. But there was a wicker sort of entrance shed built at the entrance. That collapsed under the weight of this snow, perhaps not skilfully enough done I suspect. So some men made a little shaft out of which...and my mother was the one person in the room who was deputed. She was deemed to be the toughest and deputed to fetch water.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 7 seconds

Zosha...Zosha Pototska, the young woman, suddenly developed diarrhoea and terrible intestinal pains. My mother went - it was still possible to move about the village - went and asked for a doctor to be brought to the...Well, it was twenty-four hours - no, it was a day by oxen wagon, which was quite a long distance away. But they declined saying: 'Even great doctors die.' And so Zosha Duszinska...Zosha.... Let me just get it...It was Zosha Pototska - her mother was born Duszinska. Both these are well known names in Polish history. Zosha Pototska started screaming. And I can remember I was...It became obvious that she was going to die. It was the first of the deaths we had in that village. I was shifted to the next room - to the Zhirinovsky family - not to witness anything. But I was aware of what was going on because I heard it through the very thin wall. Eventually, around about the New Year, she died. I think in her case we... it was still possible to bury her. Some men buried her. It was still possible to move about the village. She was the first of a large number. From that period of time to May, I lay on the...on our...I don't know what you call it...corner, in the corner, covered by all sorts of clothing that we had.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 34 seconds

We had very little...the only food that we had were a few food parcels that had been allowed to be sent to us before. And the difficulty was that we had absolutely - we had absolutely no fuel. Once or twice my mother went out raiding government stocks for a little cow dung, but it wasn't possible to do it too much. So it simply was unheated and the room was below freezing point almost all the time. My mother was a magnificent woman. It became dark round about three o'clock, not that you could do much more than that because you couldn't really go out. It was terrible gale winds all the time as well as snow. And she was very determined to educate me. We had two or three Polish books as a result of which I've got a very detailed knowledge of [...] Polish poetry - much Polish poetry. Some of the books were circulating around the

village - round the settlement. My mother taught me from memory, also I remember The Iliad and The Odyssey, and quoted Schiller to me and sang songs and so on, educated me a great deal.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 27 seconds

Once a day she went out to fetch water. It was a terrible expedition because the river was some distance away where the men made a hole in the ice. She wore everything, all the clothes that she had. I remember she wore my coat on the head. on the head as a form of hat. And she always reminded me subsequently that one day she came in from fetching water. And my first question to her was: 'What's the difference between an anode and a cathode?' But I certainly received an education from her together with an absolute determination. If there was an [...] it was my mother. Well we buried twelve of the ninety people in one way or the other. Then spring came. Snow started melting. And I was allowed to get up from bed and walk out. I must say I collapsed, went out and collapsed, and I remember I was revived by something we had. I remember somebody had some alcohol. That probably wasn't a wise thing but that I remember. I remember being so weak as to collapse altogether.

BL: Sorry, we have to stop, we have to change tapes.

LF: Yes. Please do.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 25 seconds

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minute 5 seconds

BL: This is Tape Two and we are conducting an interview with Ludwik Finkelstein.

We were talking about your deportation from Lvov. Can you tell us exactly who at that point was deported?

LF: Well, not of course first-hand knowledge of the time. We were deported in one of three deportations. The first deportation was a fairly small one. That was in November or so of 1939. And this was, in particular, a deportation of former military and so on, former military and civil service personnel. Ours was a large deportation of people resident normally in eastern Poland who were politically dangerous; people who were former civil servants or government officials; officers of the reserve; capitalists in the sense of anybody who owned any form of business; quite a lot of school teachers. People considered to be socially dangerous. The people, the offenders themselves, were arrested first, and then the normal Stalinist technique was to arrest and deport subsequently all the family of arrested people. Some other people who'd committed political offences like attempting to cross the frontier were deported with us. Then there was a large-ish deportation of people in June of the year, possibly a less arduous deportation. People who fled before the advancing Germans from western to eastern Poland were caught in the Soviet zone of occupation, and subsequently were deported.

BL: So did the Soviets actually know that you were Jewish?

Tape 2: 2 minutes 27 seconds

LF: I expect with a name like Finkelstein there was no doubt. They recorded only two facts. Polish documents were always two-fold: they had ethnicity and religion. The Soviet one just had ethnicity. Normally in the Soviet documents we gave our ethnicity as Polish because Jews were if anything favoured by the Soviet regime – and we, as a form of loyalty to Poland gave our ethnicity as Polish. Well, of course they knew because in fact, among other things, the militiaman who came to fetch us was Jewish and was a local person who knew the family.

BL: And you said you were ninety people who came to that particular village. Now was it sort of systematic, and who was in charge of these ninety people?

LF: No one was in charge. I was just put there to work. And the rest of the village was about; oh I don't know, 120, 150 Kazakhs. It was what they call a farm – a Sovkhoz – estate farm dealing with a very large cattle ranch. There were about five clay buildings, adobe buildings. There was a farm manager. And the question was why did we not escape? There was nowhere to escape to. You could walk for days and there would be just the same. So there was no one actually in charge. I mean I suppose there were occasionally the political police who visited us investigating various offences, but there was no one actually in charge.

Tape 2: 4 minutes 50 seconds

BL: So it was 120 people were there before and then ninety people who came...with the deportation.

LF: Who came with us, yes? The rest of them were...They were all of them Kazakhs. There was only one thing: there was a vet who was Ukrainian. Who was dumped there on some occasion, one of the previous purges. He was a Ukrainian vet. He occasionally dished out whatever medicine there was. Largely disinfectant that he dished out.

BL: How did the Kazakhs get there? Was it a form of...?

LF: No the Kazakhs were from Kazakhstan. They were natives. They were nomads before in the 30s and resettled in that place.

BL: So to remain sedentary they... I mean to make them be normal, they were settled?

LF: Yes, they were employed. It was a very large cattle ranch. They milked the cattle and then in the summer they drove a selection of them to slaughter in Semipalatinsk, which was the district town.

BL: So for example you said your mother had to fetch the water. Who was in charge of the food distribution? Was there a committee...?

LF: What food distribution?

BL: There was no food...

Tape 2: 6 minutes 27 seconds

LF: There was no food distribution. We survived on parcels early on. The Kazakhs worked as follows...And then they had bread. During the early time, during the summer, they had 100 grams per day per person. That was all that was actually sold. Now the Kazakhs drew it in the form of flour and they made pitta breads and so on. Each was allowed to own a cow – one cow. They milked the cow, made the cheese, dried the cheese on the roof in the summer and then this dried cheese was eaten with salt. It was very salty. It was eaten. Let me just see...And then they bred the cows as well. They had a calf and they slaughtered the calf and dried the meat and so they survived on this bread, and as a form of broth and that was what they ate. And we were not fit at first. And this perhaps fits...I can say how this affected me altogether.

Tape 2: 8 minutes 16 seconds

I remember waking up – no, not waking up – getting up and started moving. I was about age eleven then. And I started thinking about myself: ‘Well, why is it that we lost these twelve people and the Kazakhs on the whole tended to survive?’ One of the first things I realised was the lack of fuel. We didn’t know about fuel. We didn’t have reserves of fuel. I therefore applied myself systematically to the gathering of cow dung. Morning, noon and evening I collected cow dung. I set up a cow dung pile. One of the best cow dung piles in the village. It was admired! It was beautifully done. I knew where to collect the cow dung and how to arrange it and so on. And that determined me to become an engineer which I did because in fact I came to realise that survival very much depended on actually the practical things. All the other things were not that significant; it’s the practical things - the water, the shelter, the food and so on. So I collected a large amount of cow dung and this determined me to do something practical, something that you could actually contribute to people’s living. The food, well, it just wasn’t. That was all the food there was - the 400 grams of bread a day and sometimes it didn’t arrive in the winter. In the winter we survived on whatever parcels people had previously sent and a lot of people didn’t survive.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 23 seconds

BL: So they died of malnutrition?

LF: They mainly died of malnutrition. We were all malnourished, covered by...covered by...lack of vitamins...covered by ulcers and boils. I remember at one time - they kept us for a long time - they were known in the Polish parlance as ‘Soviet visas’. They’ve gone now from my body, but certainly I had them for a long time. Lice, a major factor because we didn’t wash. I think I remember washing twice during that winter.

BL: Were there toilet facilities?

LF: What?!

BL: I mean latrines...?

LF: Let me explain. There was no water, firstly. The water was taken from the river. Toilets? Well you went out into the steppe. In the winter you did it in a tin and threw it out. Ah, now, at one stage or another in the village there were attempts to bring culture. The first attempt to bring culture was that people kept spitting and unsanitarily passing water etc, etc. So the village shop received a consignment of spittoons and a consignment of night pots. None of the natives knew or cared in the slightest, but the Poles... It was uniformly decided who would draw a spittoon and be allowed to buy a spittoon and who would be allowed to buy a night pot. We didn't have any cooking utensils except what we had was my grandmother's small vessel for boiling her – she was a diabetic – for boiling her insulin injection thing. So we didn't have anything. But we were allocated a spittoon. And my task was in fact to guard the spittoon...we had a spittoon.

BL: What is a spittoon?

Tape 2: 13 minutes 0 second

LF: It's a sort of a vessel with a hole in it and when you want to spit you don't spit on the floor you spit into the spittoon and a cultured person spits into the spittoon. We had this spittoon. At one stage somebody...twice we had meat. Just to show you. Nowadays I'm so delicate or what do you call it, but I don't particularly like to go to the butcher's. But, once, the neighbour's ox...I think it was a cow...was close to expiring and they decided to slaughter it and I personally attended the process. And we drew a piece of meat from that. And subsequently an ox was drowned in the river and we were lucky enough to get some of the fat from that and I carried that fat in the spittoon as I remember. There wasn't much food. That was a dreadful...dreadful hunger and starvation. We had a number of parcels which my mother... and then the parcels were fat and sugar. So we had that. And there was no hot food. But we had flour occasionally and the 400 grams of bread was occasionally dished out in the form of flour. The rationing was conducted by the store keeper and we made gruel – a sort of glue called [...]. And that's what we had. Thank goodness we had a little bit of sugar so that gave one strength. Now how to boil it was difficult because we didn't have much fuel. Then there another form of culture helped us a great deal. They decided that we required education. So they imported a large quantity of *A Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* – in Kazakh. Now there were very few people who could read Kazakh who cared about this. But we bought large quantities of it and one of them boiled and made [...]. So we burned *Short Histories of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* and I remember it had its humorous aspects.

Tape 2: 16 minutes 14 seconds

BL: So during the winter – you said you had a hard winter – you said you mainly...one stayed inside the house?

LF: Totally inside. My mother was the only person who went outside of the six people. Well there were five people because Zosha Pototska died.

BL: It must have been very difficult for you as a boy to be sort of inside the whole day?

LF: I didn't have much strength to go...to move about. I had a lively life of the mind. I read. We had a few books... about four or five. They were eventually exchanged hence I know some of them by heart. My mother taught me a great deal. I thought a great deal and you didn't have much strength. What was remarkable, I now know, how it was that my mother was so... spirited. I mean I didn't perhaps have the full realisation that we were...One of the things that caused us to be full of courage was our complete conviction of our superiority over those who oppressed us. It wasn't a religious one, but it was a very Polish one: the obvious superiority of Western civilisation over the barbarian. That was an important part. I remember singing a great deal.

BL: What did you sing? Do you remember any of the songs?

Tape 2: 18 minutes 13 seconds

LF: Oh, yes. I kept on singing some of these songs. After we got married I kept on singing some of these songs when shaving. They were Polish patriotic songs largely. Miriam asked me: 'What do the words mean?' I had to confess that it means: 'We shall sharpen our bayonets on the gravestones of our fathers.' Thereupon Miriam put a ban on it and I no longer sing while shaving. No, we sang patriotic songs. My mother sang occasionally, Cabaret songs and all sorts of things.

BL: Did you hear at all what happened to your father by then? Did you have any news?

LF: None at all. None at all. In a way thank goodness, because somebody came - a man from prison, a Jewish man from prison who was an employee of the prison - came and said to our relatives at home that my father had died and he helped to wash him before burial. He wanted money for it which he was given. But we were not informed of it and of course it was totally untrue. Now what happened to my father was that he was put into prison in Lvov together with a large number of other people. Some people imprisoned with him were former Communists who'd been in that prison before. But they compared conditions of forty people to a cell, virtually impossible conditions, mainly highly intelligent people. And my father said that the one thing that they did was that they held lectures, the various people there. He gave lectures on the economic conditions of Poland before the war and so on. And on one occasion somebody did the High Holy Day service from memory. There were quite a number of Jews but mainly they were Catholics. My father was first imprisoned in Lvov but transferred from the prison in Lvov to the prison in Kiev and then from Kiev to Kharkov, all the time being interrogated. And every time he was being interrogated the idea would be to charge him with 'strengthening the might of capitalist Poland'. And he was asked: why did he serve in the army? And he said: 'Well people did; it was a conscripted army.' He said every time there were quite harsh interrogations. Firstly, they fed them salted fish and no water and they would keep them confined before interrogation in a confined space while somebody pulled pot-shots next door.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 36 seconds

Eventually he was brought in for interrogation. He had the impression that in his case and various others, where there wasn't anything really serious to charge them with, they were actually training interrogators. But, anyhow, he was interrogated numerous times. Eventually, he was taken to prison in Starobielsk I think it was, which was a large disused church and there they had signatures on the wall - incised inscriptions of Polish prisoners who were there before and many of the people who were subsequently shot at Katyn. Anyhow, they lined them all up and said...read out sentences to them that said: 'You have been found guilty of Being a Socially Dangerous Element', Paragraph 53.14 of the Ukrainian Penal Code. The maximum sentence is fifteen years. You've been sentenced to eight.' And he was taken to the Arctic Circle to a place near [...] where he was originally employed in being a draft animal - they cut wood - forestry. And he, together with others, was tied together with ropes to pull logs into the river. That's what he did. He had a very harsh time in prison partly because the people in charge of the prisoners, political prisoners, were largely the criminals. And, somewhat later, almost towards the end of his time there, they learned that my father was literate in Russian, was an accountant, and he was made a bookkeeper. Now the privilege of the bookkeeper was that he could sleep on the table in the office. So that was my father's experience.

Tape 2: 24 minutes 18 seconds

BL: What were the dates? Do you know how long did he spend in the Arctic Circle?

LF: Yes, well, I think the best way to put it...In the invasion of Operation Barbarossa, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, very soon thereafter the Soviet government and the Polish government in exile made a pact, an agreement that was part of the agreement with Britain. And all people deprived of their liberty were liberated. To us they came, one day two people came, and we were given Polish Certificates of Nationality in exchange for our Soviet documents and said we were allowed to leave to any town we choose so long as it wasn't a town of the first category. So that was lucky. Just another relevant story was that when the spring came my mother was employed in field work. They were weeding the crops. Well, she weeded the crops. Then one day the woman in charge of weeding the crops, who wished to demonstrate to the Soviets how well Polish workers worked and was fairly harsh as a supervisor, she fell ill. And my mother was made brigadier.

Tape 2: 26 minutes 26 seconds

There were four women in charge of the work. She said to her teams: 'Well girls, take your knitting. Take whatever work you have. We will try to do as little as possible.' Well, she went out into the fields and found herself, being very untutored in matters agricultural; she found that she didn't know the weeds from what was normally grown. So she said: 'Weeds? We will weed whatever is less.' And they went over fields and fields without supervision weeding the crops, leaving just weeds. Well, the Soviet Union being like that, it was a death offence; it was sabotage of the worst kind. But no one was prepared to admit to it, because if that happens the police would have not simply imprisoned the few people who did it but everybody else. So eventually the weeds were grown, the weeds were harvested and put into sacks as seed for the next year. That was how the Soviet Union worked out. I think the other thing that I must say is just immediately thereafter, in June, the Soviet Union was invaded by the Germans. The first thing that happened was a large-scale conscription of all the men.

Tape 2: 28 minutes 16 seconds

BL: So after this little interruption let's go back again about the time frame. You were explaining to us exactly how long you spent...

LF: Yes, we were...we arrived in [...], which was the name of the ranch where we were there in May 1940 and the war between Germany and the Soviet Union began in June 1941, and then we were freed, amnestied in September 1941. The moment the war broke out a lot of the men of the village were drafted into the army. No one was left who could read and write Russian, so my mother was promoted to be a bookkeeper. Now her language was splendid, her command of arithmetic rather eccentric. She was absolutely numerate but she didn't give much...She had a lot of imagination and didn't consider facts and figures to be terribly important in the greater scheme of things. So she got promoted to the office and what I did, I sat outside the window of her office and checked her arithmetic. I remember though in the spring going out to another settlement, an outpost of our settlement, which illustrates how the conditions were. We had sold an item of our clothing, a luggage bag which we had with us.

Tape 2: 30 minutes 23 seconds

And this was to be used by somebody for boots. And when I had to collect some milk in exchange for that, when I went down I remember one of the local villagers in the village to which I went said to me, 'Oh Finkelstein, I thought you had died', which is not exactly what you say to a boy of 11 at the time. But I said: 'No, no. How is that?' And they said: 'Oh never mind. Maybe next year.' So that was the way in which human life was treated. But anyhow in 19...spring, no summer after the war in 1941, my mother became a bookkeeper. It was relatively short. I could tell stories of what bookkeeping was like in the Soviet Union mainly connected with falsifying figures. But one day the police arrived in the village to keep us...to set us free. They exchanged our Soviet internal documents for Polish Certificates. We were allowed to go and settle in any town other than a first class town and lots of people were going south. My mother was of the opinion that you shouldn't spend too long on Soviet railways, you would lose your luggage or whatever possessions you have. So she decided to move to the local town of Semipalatinsk – it's now called Semey, which was the local centre. And most of the people of the settlement...most of the deportees decided to join her. She was a sort of a leading personality. And indeed they tried very hard in the village to persuade her saying: 'Look, living in town is very tough. Here, you're now an official. Whenever there's anything in the shop, we'll sell it to you. In the town it will be difficult. You might even have to pay for water. Here water is free.' And so on, but she definitely refused.

Tape 2: 32 minutes 58 seconds

She was interviewed by the senior political official and he said: 'Amalia Isakovna, you're a very skilful person – very useful to the farm. Surely you must be the daughter of a worker?' And she said: 'No. I'm a daughter of a landowner.' 'Oh.' 'What about your brothers?' 'All landowners.' 'Was your husband a worker?' 'No, he was a capitalist and a Polish officer.' 'All right you can go.' So anyhow, this time it took us...we went by oxen and we were four days to the railway. And we moved for a

short while from Zhangiztobe to Semipalatinsk. In Semipalatinsk, we stayed there a couple of days, camped in the street while we found some place. And, eventually, we found a room to rent together with two other people, because in that street all the women had been arrested for black marketeering. They had gone to a market in the...while the law had suddenly changed and they were all in concentrations camps. We stayed and my mother found a job sorting potatoes in the railway canteen. Now the reason being that it was a very desirable job because the opportunity of stealing potatoes was very large. And she used to sort out the good potatoes – the good ones from the rotten ones – that was the job. She went in an old dressing gown and returned with a bosom full of potatoes. That's what we lived on to a certain extent. Well now, the question was: we still didn't know where my father was and a lot of the Polish released prisoners of war were going on the railways and people used to wait at railway stations shouting to trains passing by when there were Poles: 'Have you heard of my husband?' and so on. My mother didn't do it. She was convinced that if my father survived, he would attempt to join the army, and so she wrote a couple of letters to the two places where we knew the Polish army was being formed, one of which was Buzuluk, the other one was Totskoye near Tschkalow which is now called Orenburg, and saying that Amalia Finkelstein is looking for her husband.

Tape 2: 36 minutes 11 seconds

And they had vast numbers of people coming from camps in the army. They didn't have records. So they nailed my mother's letter to the door of the post office and a brother officer saw it and alerted my father. My father cabled to us. It took weeks to arrive actually because cables went by train. Anyhow, my father - we sent him what money we had and he sent us what money he had. Anyhow, our status immediately rose because being members of the Polish Army then being formed were considered to be Red Army people. We were allowed to use the army restaurant. Well now it started off with a very few people in the army there and the restaurant was reasonable - you could buy one or two things. But then the number of people grew and the queues even to the army restaurant were enormous. I remember if you were early in the queue you got in for the sitting. If you didn't, you queued behind the person who was eating's chair. It could be three or four people, so that was...but food was very short. Not only was food very short but we had no money to buy on the black market. Because when my mother shopped, the potatoes' job was finished. She tried to get another job. Although in theory they were assisting her as a now well-respected member of the community, they didn't really want to have anybody who wasn't a loyal Soviet citizen doing a job of any importance. So we lived on whatever we had which wasn't much. I remember, well it wasn't that severe. We had fuel, and...but we were hungry. I remember I spent my day on our bed. The bed was exaggerated. My mother and another woman that was in our room went at night to the railway siding and got a door of a goods wagon.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 12 seconds

They purloined it. That was propped up on bricks and that was our bed. I remember lying on the bed. My main preoccupation was contemplating a sack of bread which was hanging from the ceiling and thinking: when was it that we could eat it? Bread was very short. That was the only thing that was available in the shops and you could sometimes wait three or four hours to get it. The beginning of the queue got the bread and then the bread ran out and you had dough and then nothing. So contemplation of

the bread was my main preoccupation. For a short while I went to a school. The first Railway School by the name of the Turko-Siberian Railway. And I remember with gratitude a lovely teacher called Vera Ivanovna – I don't remember her surname. She was particularly good. Everyone always says: 'You never forget a good teacher.' Well, I certainly remember how she...in some way or another how she felt warmly towards me and I remember getting a present of a pound of honey from her. She herself was typical of what Russians underwent under Stalinism. Her parents were shot during the Revolution before her eyes when she was young. Her daughter died in the starvation that followed collectivisation. She was obviously an unhappy woman. She sympathised with our fate but didn't dare do too much because it was dangerous for her.

Tape 2: 41 minutes 7 seconds

BL: Did you speak Russian by then? Which languages did you speak?

LF: Oh, Russian - I spoke Russian by that time. And I was very good. I remember Vera Ivanovna saying what a shame it was to the Russian children that the people who spoke the best Russian in the class were Ludwig Polak – Ludwig the Pole - and Volodya the Uzbek. So people said that it was very much a great country of equality. Well it wasn't. We were short of money. We didn't have money at the time. The school did feed people. They fed...what was made available was soup and bread - cabbage soup, and it cost one rouble, ten kopeks, which I can still remember, which was an enormous sum for what we possessed. We had a couple of hundred roubles or thereabouts and there certainly wasn't enough for me to have lunch. They wouldn't sell the bread, which was ten kopeks unless you had soup. And I remember being so grateful to Vera Ivanovna arranging it that I could buy the bread without eating the soup. And it was a relatively short time till typhus broke out and I ceased to be sent to school because of the great danger of typhus. By this time we'd had contact with my father by exchange of letters.

Tape 2: 43 minutes 1 second

BL: When did your father join the army?

LF: My father went straight from...My father was released from prison and he was very much persuaded to stay as a fee employee of the concentration camp because he was by this time a useful member as a bookkeeper. But he, having heard that the Army was a possibility, decided to make his way to the army and he took a large number of people with him. A friend of his who was there with him was a dental technician. He felt that there was no better place than this camp, anywhere... It was as a dental technician that he had a free supply of alcohol. He felt for alcohol he could get the occasional additional food and he said to him: 'Don't go, you'll not be better off anywhere else.' My father nevertheless went and they were afraid certainly when they were released. They were, as it were, expelled from the camp and they were made to lie down on the railway sidings and they were afraid they would run a train over them, but they didn't. He in fact reached the army in Totskoye. Totskoye was a summer camp of the Tsarist army. There were tens of thousands of Polish prisoners being formed in the army and my father was interrogated, on recruitment, was being interrogated by the recruiting officer and said...He was asked his name and religion,

his name, rank, religion. And then the question of ethnicity came up and my father said: 'Ethnicity? Jewish.' So the recruiting officer said to him, 'Why do you then want to join the Polish army?' and my father said: 'Well, I'm an officer in the reserve and this is my war and I want to take part in it.' So he said: 'All right, in which case we'll put you down as a Pole.' I now know that the Soviets were objecting to Jews being recruited into the Polish Army because they didn't want, they didn't acknowledge the fact that the territories from which my father came were in fact Polish. And they were prepared to release ethnically Polish people, but not others. So that was the story. When my father joined up there was no job for him. Fortunately, the quartermaster general in Totskoye was somebody with Lvovian connections. He knew of my father's business record and when my father went seeking a job, seeking an assignment and got an assignment and the man said: 'Oh, well...Finkelstein, we know him. We'll put him on the staff.' My father was put in charge of supplying food to the Polish in government. He had quite a good record and I've got some lovely certificates for this job.

Tape 2: 46 minutes 48 seconds

Then the Polish army was transported south to Uzbekistan in the region of Tashkent. And my father was still on the staff of the Army. The commander of the Army was General Anders. My father was on that staff. Anyhow, going back to my own situation was that I was there in this rather small room and contemplating the bread. Nothing much... nothing much more. Notwithstanding the fact that we were sort of free we were quite miserable. One day, at night, - about twelve, half past twelve, terrible knocking on the door and window of the hut. Even then you were not pleased in the Soviet Union when anybody started knocking at night. And shouted out: 'Who is it?' And the answer was: 'A Polish soldier.' And that was my moment of liberation. My father managed to send a soldier to fetch us to him. He came, carrying 3 kitbags of food, including large drums of boiled sweets, I remember, lots of bottles of vodka for bribery and bread and...My father wanted to send something for my mother and all he could get was cotton stockings, but anyhow that was there. It seemed incredible wealth to us. The soldier was a knight in shining armour. The Polish Army was equipped with British uniforms. The man was Senior Rifleman Wojczek K... and I can remember him beautifully equipped in things that you didn't see in the Soviet Union before, with a real leather belt of the kind that you wore and so on. He was really a figure that made a tremendous impression in Semipalatinsk, particularly since the badges of a Polish Senior Rifleman were those of a Russian Lieutenant-Colonel.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 50 seconds

So they greeted one stripe and that was much greeted. He decided he was there to escort us south to Turkistan. At the time, there was one train going from Semipalatinsk by the Turkistan-Siberian Railway. Very difficult to get places. Anyhow we went to the railway station, went with the whole caboodle. It wasn't that we had that much with us, but anyhow we went to the railway station. And the first thing that you have to do is you have to get a de-lousing certificate from a delousing station. Well now, to get lice the easiest thing would be to go to a de-lousing station. Anyhow, by bribery he managed to get a de-lousing certificate for us for three days. Well we waited. We camped out on the station for four days. The de-lousing certificates ran out and we had to get a new one. Eventually, a train arrived and he, K..., had ten bottles of vodka with him I think. He distributed vodka to anybody who was standing by and we were eventually handed into the train. Some people were

handed through the window. I think I can remember being handed through the door but, eventually, loaded in and we found a place to squat in and it took about four days, something like that. We went first from Semipalatinsk, now Semey, to Tashkent. At Tashkent we changed trains, not without an attempt of somebody stealing our suitcase. From Tashkent to where my father was stationed, Yangiyul, was a short railway journey – I don't know, an hour, two hours something like that. And Yangiyul was the headquarters of the Polish Army formed in Russia. There was a Polish guard on the railway station. They called out the Polish guard because we were unique in being a family that joined, attached itself to the Polish Army. One of the few returnees, and most of the people had relatives somewhere who had vanished. So there was much joy about it. I remember I caught the first sight of my father and he was to me an extremely handsome man and beautifully, always beautifully turned out as a soldier. He was a born civilian but he did a very good job as a soldier. Anyhow. That's when we rejoined my father.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 31 seconds

BL: What was it like to see him after such a long time?

LF: Oh it was marvellous. It must have been even more marvellous to me. To me the great point was to see somebody so clean, so normal, so handsome. He looked younger than I remembered him because he was clean shaven. He had a moustache before the war, and he'd lost a lot of weight, but he was a very handsome man. We found that my father had been posted to Yangiyul but this time he managed to get some very nice quarters for us. But in fact it became uncomfortable for the staff. There were two possibilities...shall I say it again?

BL: Yes, because of the noise.

LF: We arrived at Yangiyul at the station. Well, firstly, they had a guard turn up – turn out for us because everybody was delighted to see an army dependent arriving - being rescued. And my father was there, very handsome in a British uniform. He looked to me very young and handsome. It was a very tremendous reunion. We went into Yangiyul, but by this time perhaps it was one of the occasions that it became no longer convenient to have a Jewish officer on the staff. That may have been the reason. The other reason may be that somebody desired his quarters. Anyhow, my father had by this time been transferred to another regiment – to the First Regiment of Signals.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 43 seconds

So we knew straight away that we were moving. And a few days later we were going to travel from Yangiyul to Zakhar'yevskiy (?). I think I recall it because it was for my mother very important. She said that...she travelled in the driver's cab of the lorry and my father and me on top of the lorry with bales of uniforms which my father was transporting. And she said for the first time she had somebody to take care of me. Anyhow, we travelled to Zakhar'yevskiy (?). I remember it as a very pleasant time. We managed to rent a room in a peasant's hut. Uzbekistan was warm. There were orchards with fruit and peaches and so on. We were well supplied with food. The big celebration was the 3rd of May, the Polish National Day, the day of the constitution. And my father was duty officer, I remember, being put in charge of meeting the Field

Bishop, Bishop Kavalina (?), who came to the regiment. He had a great difficulty because he received him but, unlike a Polish officer, a Pole, a Catholic, wouldn't kiss the Bishop's ring. But that wasn't an issue. Now we had friends because the medical officer of the regiment was a man called Captain Ostrovsky, a very distinguished dermatologist, who had also been President and Governing Mayor of Lvov. He subsequently became President of the Polish Republic in Exile. But it was always inconvenient to the rather narrow-minded regiment, which was a regular regiment, firstly, to have reservists in it, secondly to have a Jew, and not only that but the fact that the most aristocratic of the officers, namely Ostrovsky, was particularly friendly with us. Anyhow, I remember a pleasant 3 months that we spent in Yangiyul – I mean not in Yangiyul – in Zakhar'yevskiy (?).

BL: I'm having to stop you because we need to change tapes.

LF: Yeah.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 55 seconds

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minutes 4 seconds

BL: This is Tape Three and we are conducting an interview with Mr Ludwik Finkelstein.

LF: Anyhow I had a very pleasant few months in Zakhar'yevskiy. It must have been about 3 months or so. I started learning English then. My mother decided that I should learn English and taught me, I remember. I had a friend who was there. I think my father caused them to join us. She was Polish - a Catholic friend who went to school with me in Lvov and was the son of a Polish doctor who was serving in the Army in Britain. They were there. They'd been deported and somehow we...they also joined us in Zakhar'yevskiy. Then one day there was the decision to evacuate the Polish Army from the Soviet Union and put it under British command in the Middle East. I don't know that background to this. It's now been clarified in the literature but I think simply the Soviets neither had the equipment and nobody prepared to have an army – a Polish Army that was non-Communist - on its territory. The first group of people left a few months before us, but we must have been August-September. By this time it was 1942 when it was decided we should be going and civilians would be allowed to accompany the Army to go out of the Soviet Union.

Tape 3: 2 minutes 10 seconds

It then transpired that the Soviets were prepared to allow any dependents of Polish ethnicity to go, but Jewish or Ukrainian ethnicity they would only allow spouses or children of serving soldiers. We were in that category. But we had brought there a cousin of my mother whom we had hoped to take, but they were not allowed to go with us. Anyhow, we were embarked in trains and travelled from Tashkent to what was then called Kraznovodsk in Turkmenistan. It's now called Turkmenbashi Kraznovodsk. Now in order to make sure that we left any equipment we were detained 8 kilometres from the station and only allowed to march from the station to the harbour with what we could carry. It was blazing hot I remember that, and we

took shelter – there was no, no shadow, no shade at all. There were two huts there and we took shelter in either one of the huts and then we found that one of the huts was the morgue. A vast number of people died of tropical diseases because people were transported from prison. Most of the soldiers had been prisoners, were physically exhausted and succumbed to tropical diseases. We moved into the shadow of the other hut and that happened to be NKVD headquarters. Fortunately the NKVD officer who was in charge of that station – it wasn't a very serious station but it was there to watch the people going out - he traded a lorry light for this. He gave us a lorry to carry my mother and us to the harbour in exchange for our goods that we had to normally leave behind. Anyhow, we arrived in the night in the large assembly of people trying to embark on a ship which was taking people across the Caspian Sea from Krasnovodsk to what was then called Baklany - I believe that it's Bandar Khomeini now. Well, I remember being assembled in a large group waiting for a list of people to be read – to read out a list of people allowed to go. They had two lists. A vast list – I say vast, several hundreds of Poles, people of Polish ethnicity. List A, and List B, Finkelstein, Amalia, and Finkelstein, Ludwig.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 44 seconds

I remember my mother marching off to the officer at the bottom of the gang plank, who was a Polish officer in charge of the embarkation, and saying: 'Please realise that List B boards first.' Well, now Poles may be anti-Semitic but they were always very impressed by an elegant lady which my mother was. And indeed he said: 'All right Madam, as you please.' My mother then gathering courage that she was being freed turned to the Russian soldier with bayonet fixed at the bottom of the gangplank and said to him, in Russian: 'Will you carry my bags up please?' He was so impressed by her – anyhow, she might have been important as far as he was concerned - that in fact that was the last thing we did. He carried our stuff...he carried our bags to the top, to the deck of the... We were evacuated by a tanker called Zhitanov. You can imagine evacuating about 1,500 people on the deck of a tanker with no sanitation – it was a bit hell.

BL: Sorry, but you said before that your father was listed with Polish ethnicity?

Tape 3: 7 minutes 14 seconds

LF: Well, my father was in the regiment. They didn't question the soldiers.

BL: I see, so you were List B as the dependents?

LF: Yes, they recognised...The Soviets recognised it by the name. Anyhow, we travelled a day across the Caspian, arriving at Bandashar [Babolsar?] where we were discharged into the... The ship was a really hellish, hellish journey largely because people were suffering from unsanitary diseases; there was no sanitation and so on. My father was travelling with the troops. And we arrived at Baklanye and discharged into boats and then went with the boats. And eventually the boats were beached and we waded through the water to the beach dragging what possessions we had behind. And, as we arrived at the beach, we sang the hymn 'Lord Who Has Saved Poland in Ages Past'. I always thought it was a sort unique event, but apparently from subsequent literature I found that that was normal.

BL: So the ship couldn't come too close to the coast, so...?

LF: Just we went into lightest...

Tape 3: 9 minutes 0 second

BL: ... boats?

LF: Boats, yes. And we dragged our luggage. Now they had a number of camps there. There was the dirtiest civilian camp for people who were not disinfected and that's where we were. Now there was a camp which was an exaggeration. There were poles with matting strung on top of this so there were no walls or anything else.

BL: Where was this now?

LF: Baklanye. My father was on the ship but he was with the troops. My father was disembarkation officer. One of the things we saw, was we heard about this was my uncle, my father's brother, who had also been a prisoner, who also came to us similarly, was also a civilian employee of the Army. So we had a reunion there. We stood – it's an interesting thing if you actually saw it in a film you would say it's typical kitschy Hollywood - my father, my uncle stood with us there not having seen his brother, his very loved, very close brother for a long time. Eventually, the last unit...my father was in charge of disembarkation, just was duty officer for the day. And there marched the head of the last unit and he saw his brother and they couldn't of course break ranks and... They saw each other but couldn't greet each other. My father marched off to the military camp. But, eventually, a few hours later he got leave to come over and see us.

Tape 3: 11 minutes 13 seconds

It was pretty rough on the beach there. The rain started coming and there was no shelter from the rain at all. I developed a high temperature, just throat infection, nothing that was really serious. But there were so many diseases, tropical diseases, going that to go to hospital was a sentence of death. My parents kept me on the beach there, I can remember, with a great deal of tenderness and love. My father had one of those... at the time they had rubber capes, this part of the British uniform...sitting, stretching a rubber cape over me. Anyhow, that was a few days. Eventually, we were disinfected, allowed to move into the 'clean' civilian camp. Well we had an Indian Army tent, shared with about twelve people, so it was a much better accommodation. Then, one day, my father said he had a pass for himself and for us to go out of camp. Well, we unpacked our things. My mother had a very lovely dress. I had some suit. I hadn't grown much during the period. We walked out of camp and there was a droshky or horse carriage. We got in and we went to a restaurant! I could not believe the fact that there in that restaurant you sat down and somebody served – started off by serving an enormous basket of bread, tomatoes and cucumbers, which is normally what Persians do, and you could order anything you liked!

Tape 3: 13 minutes 28 seconds

I just couldn't ...it just was beyond me. That was a particular meal. And we spent a couple of hours, two or three hours there. And the time was coming to come back and when we came back my father's orderly was already waiting for us with helmet and

full pack. My father was being shifted to Iraq, where the Polish Army went to occupy Northern Kurdistan. We saw him off. I didn't think of it as that tragic but I don't know what my mother could have...must have felt. But, anyhow, my father's brother I remember weeping and saying to my father's orderly: 'Look after him.' But, anyhow, my father was shifted to Iraq. He had made it. Most of the Polish civilians were due to be shifted from there to Kenya. We were fortunate in that my father had managed to make other arrangements with my...with the Polish headquarters in Teheran. He had a superior officer, who was very friendly to him, who allowed us to go to Teheran. We went to Teheran where we stayed in an encampment.

BL: While your father was in Iraq?

LF: My father was in Iraq. Then my mother was enterprising. She got a pass to be allowed to go into town. She went to the Polish cultural centre and offered to teach English, and she was engaged to teach English. I think her English was not all that good, but good enough to do that. And she started teaching. We lived in a camp which was pretty basic by our standards, but once a week we were allowed to go out of camp.

BL: How old were you by the time you got to Teheran?

Tape 3: 15 minutes 54 seconds

LF: Twelve and a half, I was Bar Mitzvah. I was the age of Bar Mitzvah in Teheran. Then what happened was that my father was shifted out of the Signals because he was told - he was in his 50s then - to go as a fighting soldier, and he received a posting to a military camp to a staff course to teach people for future occupation of German-occupied territories. He was a good German speaker, an accountant and so on and of all things the posting was to Tel Aviv. We'd been a year in Teheran and my father obtained a posting in Tel Aviv and he obtained, via what was then possible, a certificate for us to go to...to settle in Palestine.

BL: Sorry, during that year, did you see your father at all, during that year in Teheran?

LF: No, no most of the time my father was in Iraq. He came eventually for a short time during the time that he took between his release from the Signals and his attachment to the staff course. He was in Teheran. Eventually, my mother made arrangements to live in town which was quite difficult to get the arrangements. We had a room in a house, a Persian house in Teheran. I started going to school, to the Polish gymnasium in Teheran. We were there for a year and then we had the attachment to go to Tel Aviv.

Tape 3: 18 minutes 12 seconds

BL: Were there any other Jewish kids in that school?

LF: There were a number of Jewish children. The majority of them were Catholics but some Jewish children. Yes. Yes, come to think of it a reasonable number. But there was no Jewish teaching or anything else. And...

BL: Did you ever go to synagogue in Teheran? There must have been a local Jewish community?

LF: No. Well, my father made contact with the Jewish community because my uncle died there. But I don't think that they established any close links. He made contacts with the Jewish community ...it wasn't really powerful enough, or large enough or powerful enough in our culture, but we didn't.

BL: What happened to your uncle?

LF: He died of...he was released from his civilian service with the Army. He was a trained civil engineer. He worked on the Persian railways. There was an epidemic of typhus and he was weak. He died of typhus there and was buried there. Certainly my parents didn't contemplate me having Bar Mitzvah. Anyhow, in a rather complicated way we travelled to Iran to go to Palestine. Jews were not allowed to travel through Iraq to settle in Palestine at the time, so we were theoretically joining the Polish Army. I was enlisted in the Polish school of Cadets. We travelled oh I think about five days in a lorry across from Persia to Tel Aviv.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 21 seconds

When we arrived in Jordan they sorted that out into...differently in our transport. Arriving in Tel Aviv we found ourselves detached from the convoy in which my father was travelling. And the next thing that I found myself was in [...] detention camp which was in fact because somebody gave information to the British police, British Palestine police, that there were Jews being smuggled. Well, it was a large encampment. Very few people were being...well there was very little illegal immigration. And I was by this time fourteen, getting on fourteen and judged to be a man, so myself, one other boy of seventeen, and we had a military prisoner, somebody who was on detention because he insulted a colonel. And so he...

BL: British? British or Polish?

LF: No, Polish. Polish soldier. So there was this enormous male section of the camp where the three of us... which was empty and the three of us were there. I remember the soldier in detention was a trumpeter and he kept shouting obscenities through the trumpet. Then it transpired, when people started interrogating us, that we had valid certificates to settle in Palestine.

BL: And what about your mother? Was she also in the detention centre?

LF: My mother was in the female part of the detention camp. Jewish authorities came to rescue us – took us there, but not without them being pretty roughly handled by the British Palestine police. I remember I had my hat...no my tropical solar tope was knocked off my head with a rifle. Anyhow, the Jewish agency sent for us and we were kidnapped. A few hours later my father, chasing us, arrived. We arrived at a rather rough immigration centre, immigration absorption centre, where a rather elegant [...] lady was trying to teach my mother elementary hygiene which my mother didn't take of very well. But, eventually, my father came and we came out of that camp.

Tape 3: 23 minutes 22 seconds

BL: You said the Jewish agency; they kidnapped you from the detention centre?

LF: Well they came down and we had valid certificates so they liberated us from the detention camp and put us up in an absorption centre. But in a few hours...I don't recall staying there over-night. My father arrived and then we stayed in the officer's camp, officer's mess in Tel Aviv. My father had started on the staff course. I went to the Polish school in Tel Aviv.

BL: Where was the Polish School in Tel Aviv?

LF: It was very near, behind Gymnasium Hertzelia near Hertzal Street – very near. Anyway, it was quite a good school. What formal education I had was about...I stayed there about 18 months. My father went through the course. It then transpired that he didn't have an assignment and was put on long-term leave waiting for an assignment. And he would have been allowed to take his discharge in Palestine, but he found it difficult to find a job. However qualified he was, there were too many businessmen of that kind. Here's something about why I feel warmly about the Polish Army in various ways: My father got a job as a sort of pre-demob job. He could have taken his discharge already - he was about forty-four - where he was working as a clerk and so on for somebody who was a supplier of fruit and vegetables to the Army. Now my father knew the Army; he spoke good English; he was a trained accountant. And then it transpired that what was in fact required of my father was to bribe the various soldiers to accept oranges instead of potatoes. Now, my father was a person of transparent honesty and I have had the vision that he gave this job up or was sacked – I can't remember what it was.

Tape 3: 26 minutes 12 seconds

But I remember my father coming back and for the first and only time stood by the wall and cried. But again, like in a movie, suddenly a despatch rider in full equipment came knocking at the door saying - with a despatch - asking my father to report to the army. A general found out that my father was on long-term leave and he said: 'Never can we let such a valuable officer go.' And my father was so happy to be back in uniform, he never looked back. He went off to Egypt and he did a job interrogating German prisoners of war who claimed to be Polish. He was there for a while in Egypt. We stayed there in Tel Aviv. My mother was teaching English to Poles in Tel Aviv.

BL: Where did you live in Tel Aviv?

LF: In 36 Jaffa Street Tel Aviv. It was a converted hotel. Vast numbers of people crammed into sort of an old hotel, one room, and then my father came back. He was posted to the Polish headquarters in Tel Aviv as a Quartermaster officer and as a liaison officer with the British Army because his English by this time was quite good. That was my father stationed. And, eventually, I remember that what actually happened was that Britain recognised the Communist regime in Poland. And my father was once on one of his journeys back to Egypt. I remember taking him off to the railway station in Tel Aviv. A train used to go from Tel Aviv to...now where was it? - Latrun and from there to Kantara.

Tape 3: 28 minutes 42 seconds

I remember seeing my father...I must have been by this time about 15... He said: 'Look, you must realise that, if we're put under the Communists, we're going to mutiny. The chances are that I'm not going to return for a long time, or if at all. Look after mother.' Well, if you sometimes find that I'm odd, that might be one of those sorts of experiences. As it was, the British were just not like that. They kept their word. They looked after the Polish Army well; they never put them under Communist command. Then in 19... we found the war, the end of the war rather a disaster because there we were without possibility of returning anywhere, feeling demoralised and defeated. I had difficulties. I suddenly realised – as I was getting towards 16 – firstly, that I wasn't Polish, that I wasn't Polish by ethnicity. I didn't have the sense of belonging. I began to greatly admire the Yishuv, the Hebrew secular culture. Round about the age of fifteen and a half I said to my parents I wished to study for the London...I had a feeling that my education would continue in England. I greatly admired English as a culture and that I would...would I be allowed to go out of school and study for the London University Matriculation Examination? My parents agreed to that. And that's what I did. I got a London University Matriculation Examination in 1947. It became obvious that we wouldn't go back to Poland. My father was given an opportunity of continuing to serve as...coming to Britain and continuing to serve in the Polish Resettlement Corps, which was part of the British Army. That's what he did. We came to England in 1947, then...

Tape 3: 31 minutes 16 seconds

BL: Just before we go on... just to slightly talk a bit more about your time in Israel. In that time do you remember: were there lots of other German Jewish refugees? Who were the people you sort of met?

LF: We mainly met them as people from...we had social friends. We had relatives who'd been in the Yishuv. Socially, my parents met because people in our particular circle, people round about the Army, we had a number of Polish, German-Jewish olim who were there, so my parents met those. And a close cousin of my mother's was actually a second cousin but we were close. So we had Israeli friends. And then, when I started studying for the London Matriculation Examination. I didn't go to a...I went to somebody who was a specialist tutor. I was the great expert on that and I met a number of his pupils, Israeli pupils who – not Israeli – members of the Yishuv. So that I, round about 16, getting on for 16 I also joined my first organisation, a rowing club, and started making friends in Israel. But, all the time, the problem, terribly worried about my parents' future and so on.

BL: Was there any idea of staying in Palestine?

Tape 3: 33 minutes 16 seconds

LF: Well, I had an idea of staying there and my father had sort of an idea, but in fact his experiences were poor, and the opportunities were immense to come to England. It was expected that I could then study. I'd never contemplated – I was sixteen – I'd never contemplated doing anything other than staying with my parents.

And you said before, your father wasn't a Zionist – I mean pre-wartime?

LF: No my father was committed as a Jew and greatly supported the settlement but he himself wasn't Zionist. I developed a knowledge of Hebrew, not perhaps as well as I could have done. It was relatively late because I mainly learned English at that time. It was to me very traumatic to leave Israel. Not to my parents. I suddenly found myself in a camp in Egypt. We were taken by military transport to Egypt. Military transport first to the railway station, then to Egypt, then discharged into a vast army encampment in the Canal Zone. It was then already rather unpleasant as far as the Egyptians were concerned. And I suddenly saw my life collapsing around me. Namely having been sort of... I began to have inklings of normality with Israeli friends. And now I saw all of our possessions in a small heap in this army camp. One nice...the one warmth...sunshine... ray of sunshine there was, was that where we were was pretty primitive. But the person, the sergeant who was in charge of the Sergeant's mess had been imprisoned with my father, so he looked after us. He specially laid on what to me seemed an absolutely luxurious surrounding in his tent there. 19...We were then put on ships in the Suez Canal zone. I actually had the experience of being loaded on...our luggage being loaded on by Afrika Korps members, who were there kept as prisoners of war. And we arrived in a rather rainy Southampton.

Tape 3: 36 minutes 24 seconds

BL: What were your first impressions of coming to England?

LF: Of?

BL: Of coming to England?

LF: Well I was very impressed with English culture from reading. I liked the English language; I was reasonably fluent in English. We felt demoralised and defeated as Poles, but I liked England and my father liked England. My father very much liked England. My first impression of England was of a very rainy Southampton docks, being loaded on a train to go to a place called Fairford in Gloucestershire, which was an Army camp. And being conscripted to do kitchen duties and suddenly realising that all the permanent staff of the camp were people who'd been prisoners, people who'd been sentenced by court-martial for looting and rape and so on in Italy, but who couldn't be held because they were sentenced by Polish court-martial to be held in Britain. So they couldn't get jobs outside. I remember doing kitchen duty in that camp and an enormous piece of cheddar arrived for the camp. I remember the cook slicing it in half and saying 'half for us and half for the king'. Anyhow, there it was. Then eventually somebody decided that Fairford was not the proper place for us and we were transported across the country to Uckfield.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 16 seconds

BL: This is you and your mother or you and your mother and father?

LF: Just me and my mother. My father was with the Regiment somewhere else. Eventually in Uckfield my father made his way to London where he had an aunt. The aunt was elderly, had half a house and we were settled into a house in Golders Green.

BL: How did she...how did the aunt get to England?

LF: Oh she was from Vienna and she emigrated. Her sons...her older son was Sir Jules Thorn of Thorn Electric. So she was well off and we were staying there. I started preparing for the University of London Intermediate Examination and never looked back since. I don't know... Thereafter, to summarise, I studied physics and got my London University Matriculation as I mentioned. I got a scholarship from the Polish authorities, from the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain paid for my university. I graduated in physics and mathematics. I found a job in the electronics industry. It was quite difficult because I wasn't a British national and that was not an area that was easy, but nevertheless I found a job. Then worked for the National Coal Board, became an academic. Worked my way from lecturer, particularly in the field of measurement and instrumentation, my major contribution being the theory of design and application of measuring instruments. I made my way and became Professor of Measurement and Instrumentation, then Head of Department, Dean and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of City University. I wasn't too well prepared for this academic career, but I slowly acquired... I eventually acquired a higher doctorate in the field and was admitted to the Royal Academy of Engineering, so somewhere in the premiership – I'm not in the front rank – but somewhere in the premiership of engineering. The main thing was that in 1956 I went to a B'nai B'rith meeting and Miriam was the membership officer, and I decided that any organisation that has a membership officer like that is worth joining. And we've lived happily ever since..

Tape 3: 41 minutes 22 seconds

BL: When did you get married to Miriam?

LF: 1957. We have three grown-up children, two sons and a daughter, all married. We have seven grandchildren and an eighth one on the way. Slowly I...the tremendous influence of my father-in-law, who...I must say my own father died at the age of 59, scarcely a few weeks after discharge from the Army...

BL: Which year was that?

LF: 1950.

BL: Also, I was going to ask you. What was it like for him to be in England?

LF: He loved England. He felt it was a country where people answered letters, filed letters, keep their word of honour – keep their word! It was orderly, systematic, where the council looks after beautiful trees. He was a local councillor. He much appreciated Hendon, which is where he lived. He loved England and greatly admired the English. He never felt a refugee because he always felt the British didn't keep their word to defend Poland, but at least they were honourable people and they treated him well. And he was therefore a tremendous admirer of the English system.

BL: And how did your mother manage in England?

Tape 3: 43 minutes 9 seconds

LF: My mother was...I suddenly realised my mother was only forty-nine when my father died and that was a tremendous blow. She was in a tremendous... and suddenly we found ourselves with only my studentship to support us. My mother just missed by a few months getting a widow's pension, which was very fortunate because they sent us...we lived for thirteen weeks...she got National Assistance. Thereafter, she was told to go to work. She intended to become a kitchen helper. She went to a labour exchange to register and they said: 'Oh well you've got all these languages; there's a language school in Golders Green, which is looking for a teacher. Why don't you go and put on something better than what you're wearing at the moment and try to get...try to see whether...? They'll not pay you very much but they might take you on.' In fact, my mother went to the Golders Green School of Languages wearing...in fact they were looking for a part-time teacher. They had a business which wasn't very good. My mother became a teacher of foreign languages including English. Started out being paid three shillings for a private hour, which was then one shilling and six pence per person attending a class, and sometimes she had a single group, namely one person, and sometimes she had somebody for only half an hour. But she worked from 9 till 9. And she built up a...she was very charming...a tremendous ability to get on with people and because she spoke many languages. Once the au pair girls started coming they liked somebody who could teach them English but could understand the grammar of their own languages and so on. And she became a very successful teacher. She turned a corner by the time I got married. She suddenly found that this was a return to normality. She was a great friend of Miriam, always used to say: if anything goes wrong with our marriage I'm out of guarantee, I can't come back, but Miriam can. She died when she was eighty, so she saw all our children married and felt happy and contented in England. You wouldn't have recognised anything about her. She just felt totally adjusted in England. There is an expression 'Eshet Chail' [biblical Hebrew for 'a woman of worth'] and in that respect my mother was like that; she was a very good grandmother and very good mother-in-law.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 30 seconds

She was very happy that I should get married and set up a normal household. I then turned more religious partly because I was looking for something. I recognised my Jewish identity but couldn't quite...Maybe the fact that my father-in-law, who's very well versed in Judaism as well as being somebody with a very good...with a very wide secular knowledge. I tend to be interested and became much more observant and developed a great interest in Jewish studies which grew over the years. When I retired, part of the retirement, I announced to my colleagues that in my retirement it was my intention to become an amiable eccentric. And when they found out that I was taking up Hebrew and Jewish Studies they said, 'Fink, you're eccentric enough now, work on the amiability!' So the rest of it I continue still. When I retired I continued working on engineering. Do about three days a week. Do two days a week on Jewish Studies.

BL: What is your interest in Jewish Studies? What do you work on specifically?

Tape 3: 48 minutes 13 seconds

LF: Now? Particularly on the Jewish Enlightenment; this is my general interest. My original interest was to work on the impact of technology on prophesy. I was much

more interested in Biblical studies. But there was no one to actually...there was no support for it. The interest at Leo Baeck College was very much in the use of the Bible as a liturgical religious document, not really about what actually happened in Biblical times. After a few months when nothing was happening in terms of...I couldn't excite anybody's interest in that sort of study. I think they weren't all that happy and I was advised...well wasn't really happily supported and I decided that I couldn't really hang around doing it, and said: 'What about the Jewish Enlightenment in Poland?' because I had some books on it on the shelf. And there was tremendous enthusiasm because in fact very few people have the Polish, have the linguistic skills to do it. I took it up and continued with it. First I took an MA in Hebrew and Jewish Studies and then I decided to pioneer Jewish Studies to doctoral level at Leo Baeck College. I was the first to do it. It would have been more sensible to enrol at UCL or somewhere like that. But my intention was to support Leo Baeck College and it proved to be quite interesting. It was a bit of a cultural struggle. Anyhow, I've got there now and I've continued now working on the problems of the Jewish Enlightenment in Poland. Now that I have the depth of knowledge of the doctoral studies I feel that there is a lot more to do. There are a lot more questions that I ask myself. So that's what I do. My work in engineering...I'm working on the logical and philosophical foundations of measurement.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 48 seconds

BL: How would you describe yourself in terms of your identity?

LF: I'm Jewish. Yes, no question about that, but very much feeling a warmth towards Britain. One effect that is a bit of an eccentricity of mine. I felt very much like my father that no one can be a citizen of a country unless they're prepared to work in its defence. At the time it was conscription. I was too young and otherwise I felt it was going to be very difficult being a person of East European birth. I joined the Civil Defence Corps, which was a three year engagement. I stayed in it for forty years, reached Chief Officer Rank, a number of decorations. Total eccentricity – that was an eccentricity of mine. People usually think that the OBE is for some kind of...is for scientific merit, which it isn't. It's purely for years served in Home Defence.

BL: When did you receive your OBE?

LF: Oh 1990 or thereabouts, the Birthday Honours List. I hold the Civil Defence Long Service Medal and Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal. So, that's all for services to Civil Defence. In a way it was a dreadful thing to contemplate what we did, but it involved me with a slice of society which you would not otherwise... policemen, firemen, soldiers. I spent a lot of time on that. I would say over forty years, on average twenty-twenty-five days a year full time on that sort of job. Quite interesting.

Tape 3: 53 minutes 31 seconds

BL: But you felt it was important...as a citizen?

LF: It was an important part of my contribution. I then eventually got very worried about the overall strategy that Britain had, but felt that I was doing more good by

being in than by going out and campaigning against it. Eventually, I served it until the Civil Defence Service was stood down in '93.

BL: When did you become a British Citizen?

LF: 1954. It was a great impact on me. I was not sure whether I absolutely wanted to do it because I wasn't sure that I was emotionally ready to commit myself. But I was. I take it really seriously. I'm always surprised the extent to which my children are a) very Jewish, and b) how they've reached the sort of British establishment.

BL: What sort of identity did you try to transmit to your children?

LF: Sorry?

BL: What sort of identity – you said you turned more observant - did you try to transmit to your children?

LF: I didn't but it turned up. The identity which they have is Anglo-Jewish to my... more family committed to Judaism than I thought I would succeed in implanting on them. I didn't particularly try to do it deliberately. It was the fact that the home practices a lot that they know that I'm very committed. I would say, partly it's the marriage. I would say. Tamara my daughter is very observant, certainly seriously observant and puts a lot of emphasis on Jewish learning. Anthony is just generally normal Anglo-Jewish attitude. I think Daniel has to give, because he is involved in politics and journalism, had to give it a lot more thought, and I'm surprised the extent to which he's in Conservative political circles and so on, is clearly Jewish, clearly proud of his ancestry and so on.

Tape 3: 56 minutes 40 seconds

I would actually say my colleagues at work are very conscious of my observance and my commitment to Judaism.

BL: Did you talk about the past with your children or about your experiences?

LF: They are aware of it...They are aware of it, yes. Not particularly...It's not particularly a daily topic. But I mean they are aware of everything that both Miriam and I have been through. I find no question about it. Daniel is particularly aware of it. It interested him. He's given a number of lectures of 'Voyage Around My Grandfathers' talking about Miriam's father and my father and various...he's often been asked to speak.

BL: For the record, what's Miriam's father's name? You haven't mentioned a name.

LF: Alfred. Dr Alfred Wiener.

BL: Thank you.

LF: ...Founder of the Wiener Library. Tremendous man. I consciously owe a lot to him. I was always sorry that I didn't meet Miriam's mother who was obviously a splendid woman but she died just immediately on liberation from Belsen. As I say,

I've given a lot of impression of my mother who was an 'Eshet Chail' in every conceivable way. My father too. I always admired the fact that I never heard my father complain about his fate. Now, you would have imagined being landed in a strange country in his 50s, already not...in poor health, finding it difficult. My father always looked forward. I mean the question was not what happened but what is the next step? And he always had full confidence that they would rebuild the Finkelstein fortunes. Now we didn't quite, not in the material sense, but in other ways he would have been very pleased.

BL: Mr Finkelstein we have to stop – we have to change tapes.

LF: Yeah.

Tape 3: 59 minutes 24 seconds

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minute 6 seconds

BL: This is tape four we are conducting an interview with Mr Ludwik Finkelstein.

Can you tell me what impact your experiences had on your later life?

LF: I find it very difficult to evaluate because once I settled in England I attempted to live a perfectly normal life. My concentration was on devotion to my profession, which I considered to be extremely important, and on the contribution that my profession made to society. Maybe the realisation of the great importance of material civilisation, the supply of food and water and so on, made me a very enthusiastic engineer. I think that was the principal thing, a great scepticism towards some of the ideas of Socialism always underlined that because I've seen it working out and... though I'm socially liberal and inclined to be rather to the left of centre in terms of social sentiments and so on. A tremendous gratitude to Britain for taking me on. I never experienced any difficulties once I landed. Polish Army camps, no one actually seriously made it difficult for me. I just found that I was taken as myself. A tremendous gratitude to Britain. As I grew up an understanding of the importance of general moral values. I suddenly remembered our survival was not just due to, concerned with material things, but the spiritual part was very important.

Tape 4: 2 minutes 34 seconds

And gratitude for Miriam marrying me because without her I might have been odder than I am. That's more or less it if I have a message. I'm not very much given to large scale moral messages. There are two things which I keep on transmitting to my children, one of which is from my father in law in whose Bar Mitzvah book was inscribed the words: 'Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.' That's something that I try to transmit to... It's from the Psalms (Mr F quotes previous passage in Hebrew) and the other one is from Micah: 'What does the Lord your God require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.' These would be the messages that come to mind. Now I shall probably have other messages to my engineering students. They wouldn't take very well to Biblical quotations.

Tape 4: 4 minutes 14 seconds

BL: What do you think would have happened to you if you hadn't been forced to leave Lvov – if history had been different?

LF: I find it difficult. I would have been – being a fairly dutiful sort of person - I would have been the owner, manager of Finkelstein and Pfehl supplying iron and steel to the Jewish retailers of Galicia. Not a bad fate either. But, in fact, I'm rather pleased that... Certainly my father would not have easily envisaged what I'm doing now. So it's very difficult to... But I would have been a normal businessman. I had to always find myself thinking how I would have met Miriam and I speculate that I would have gone to study in Berlin and would have met her there. As it was, we met in the council room of West London Synagogue, so that I maintain it's a marriage made in heaven.

BL: Just let me ask...Do you think you belong to England?

LF: Oh yes, very much so. In an odd sort of way I recognise that I am different and have a different background from my colleagues. But even this country does allow a certain amount of eccentricity. I certainly found that I am, I am settled. I very much belong to it. I very much admire, value, cherish English institutions, feel that I owe the country loyalty and service. I look with pride. Surprisingly enough, one thing that happens: I'm a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Scientific Instrument Makers.

Tape 4: 6 minutes 40 seconds

Now that's an odd sort of society in a way. When I was earlier recruited into...when people persuaded me to join I originally didn't want to do it because I always felt that, well, that it was an old fashioned and medieval institution. Eventually, it became obvious that they were such benefactors of City University and I was a real scientific instrument maker and really worked for the city that I did join. Once I joined I found a tremendous pride and pleasure of being a Freeman of London. I like going among all the old boys, feel very much part of that, feel very much part of the British academic institutions, feel very much part of the British academic life. The Civil Defence gave me a great sense of belonging. All the time I'm aware of my background and so on. I don't deny it. I have a deep feeling of belonging to the Jewish people, a deep feeling of sort of empathy for Poland. I've taken leave of Poland, but understand Poles and respect them, like them - at least theoretically.

BL: Did you ever go back to Lvov?

Tape 4: 8 minutes 34 seconds

LF: No. My grandson was chosen by Channel 5 to be one of the children – British children whose roots lie elsewhere. He was taken for a week to Lvov. I did not wish to go with him. Anthony went with...his father went with him. I didn't wish to prejudice him with my views on it. But I did not go back. I might go back but on the whole...anyhow I have no sentiments for Lvov. I have some kind of sympathy for a theoretical Poland consisting of Polish language and Polish culture. I love Polish language. I understand Polish culture. I understand their aspirations, but I think with Poles we mutually understand that I was born into a multi-ethnic Poland where Jews

were ten percent, in the eyes of Jews like my father and so on were a legitimate part of the nation. Now there are no more Jews the Poles are better off without us. We are better off without the Poles. So, although I greatly admire and like Poles, separate living together is fine.

BL: Mr Finkelstein is there anything we haven't covered which you'd like to add...which I haven't asked you?

LF: Well unless you want to hear about mathematical modelling of transducers I think I've finished.

BL: Thank you very, very much for this interview.

LF: Thank you very much for listening to me.

Tape 4: 10 minutes 39 seconds

End of spoken interview, Tape Four

Photographs

Tape 4: 11 minutes 0 second

BL: Describe these photos.

LF: I'm Ludwig Finkelstein. The two photographs here are my great grandfather and my great grandmother. Their name is Landis and they were parents of my paternal grandmother.

BL: And where was this photograph taken?

LF: I expect it was taken and as far as I'm concerned it was taken in Lvov, Lemberg, but I don't precisely know. It was something that we received from a relative after the war.

LF: On the left of the photograph is my paternal grandfather, Max Finkelstein, in the centre holding me as a baby is my nanny Monika Nenza (?) who then became Monika Schneider and, on the right of the photograph, is my paternal mother - that's Charlotta Finkelstein, born Landis. The photograph was taken in about 1930 in Grinski (?) Park, Lemberg - Lvov.

Tape 4: 12 minutes 40 seconds

LF: That's me, Ludwig Finkelstein, age about three and the photograph was taken in Lemberg - Lvov.

LF: The picture shows me, the furthest on the right, in the company of my friends on holiday in the Carpathian Mountains in 1936.

BL: And do you remember the names of any of your friends?

LF: Can't recognise them, no. I think [...] Zelig is one of them. I could recognise him, but most of them I don't recall the names of.

BL: Do you know what happened to any of them?

LF: No, I expect that no...None of them as far as I know survived the Holocaust.

LF: That photograph shows me, Ludwik Finkelstein, with my father on holiday in Krynitsa in 1939 – the summer of 1939. The Patria was the best hotel in Krynitsa owned by the well-known opera singer Jan Kipura.

BL: Yes please.

LF: This photograph is my father together with his younger brother Bernard, who was mentioned by me as having died in Teheran of typhus. The photograph must have been taken immediately before or after the First World War.

LF: This photograph is of my mother, Amalia Lusha Finkelstein, taken on holiday in Krynitsa in 1939.

LF: This photograph is of myself with a good friend, Roma Mushka Huppert taken in Tel Aviv in 1946.

BL: Where was it taken in Tel Aviv?

LF: In Tel Aviv, in 1946.

LF: This photograph is of myself with my parents taken on the seafront in Tel Aviv in 1943.

BL: And your father is in uniform?

LF: My father is in uniform, yes.

LF: In this photograph I am among the crowd of students participating in International Students Day in 1948 I think.

BL: Where?

LF: Oh this would have been in London, going down, I think, Baker Street.

Tape 4: 15 minutes 56 seconds

LF: This is a photograph of my wedding to Miriam taken outside West London Synagogue. My mother is on the left. On the right is my father-in-law and his second wife, a very important person in the family, Lotte.

BL: And who else is in the picture?

LF: Pardon? Yes...oh- I can't recognise from here. I can recognise all the people. They're relatives on both sides.

BL: And which year was it?

LF: 1957. We're coming up to our 50th wedding anniversary.

BL: Thank you.

LF: This is my photograph with Miriam and our oldest son, Anthony, taken when he...in about 1960. Anthony is now Professor and Head of Computing at University College London. [Noise interruption] Anthony is now Professor of Software Systems Engineering and Head of Computing University College London.

LF: This is a photograph of the wedding of my daughter Tamara to Michael Isaacs. Tamara is now Director of Treasury Management at Her Majesty's Treasury. Michael is a partner of an advertising agency. There's my son Daniel, who is Associate Editor of The Times. His wife, Nikki Connor, who is a consultant in public health. And there's a photograph of my son Anthony who as I mentioned is Professor of Software Systems Engineering and Head of Computing University College London with his wife Judith, a solicitor.

Tape 4: 18 minutes 27 seconds

LF: The children are Anthony's children, the older one, Simon, the younger one, Alex.

BL: Yes please.

LF: This is a photograph taken at the Bar Mitzvah celebration two years ago of my older grandson, Simon. And the other grandchildren are the children of our son, Daniel - Sam Finkelstein and Aaron Finkelstein. And also the children of my daughter Tamara - Jade Isaacs and Calum Isaacs. Since then we have had another grandchild Roxana Isaacs and we're expecting yet another one.

LF: This is a photograph of me being awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Civil Law. I'm in the academic robes of the degree and next to me stands the orator who presented me for that degree - Dr Adrian Savill, the Academic Registrar of City University.

BL: When were you given this doctorate?

LF: 1999.

Tape 4: 20 minutes 0 second

LF: This is a photograph of myself with Miriam taken in our sitting room about 2004-2005.

LF: This is a Polish passport issued to my mother in 1937 in Lvov. It shows me also on the photograph. It was issued to us because we were going on holiday to Marienbad in Czechoslovakia.

BL: Thank you. Yes please.

LF: This document was issued to my mother on the occasion of our deportation from Lvov on the 13th of April, 1940. It purports to describe the contents of my grandmother's apartment from which we were deported and has a list of furniture. It's very rough and incomplete.

LF: This was issued to my mother on the occasion of our deportation on the 13th of April 1940. It purports to be a list of the furniture of my grandmother's apartment from which we were deported. As far as I can see it's a rather incomplete list of our possessions.

BL: Mr Finkelstein thank you again for the interview.

LF: Thank you very much indeed.

Tape 4: 21 minutes 58 seconds
End of Photographs.