

INTERVIEWEE FRITZ LUSTIG  
SECRET LISTENER

INTERVIEWER JULIA PASCAL

Julia Pascal interviewing Fritz Lustig at his home in Muswell Hill in June 2012 for The Secret Listeners Project. His wife Susan was also in the room. [Her words are noted in italics.]

**TAPE 1**

Do you speak German?

**Ein bisschen. <0:00:04>**

They were called "*Dissidenten*" which means they were humanists, in other words, didn't follow any religion and in fact they had all four children – I had three siblings – we were all baptised, Protestants, because they thought this, I mean, at that time once you were no longer a religious Jew you were no longer a Jew and that would of course have made us not subject to antisemitism but the Nazis changed all that because for them there was something which they called the Jewish race which I don't think exists but it didn't matter what religion you belonged to, if you had four Jewish grandparents, as I did, you were considered a Jew.

**What did your father do? <0:00:52:8>**

My father before the First World War had a factory doing mercerised cotton. All that of course went off during the First World War and the following inflation and after the First World War he became an agent for various companies.

*A representative*

Representative – particularly in the bicycle trade.

**Can you say what happened to your family in World War One? <0:01:26>**

My father was called up. He was rather old, he was born in 1873 so he was in his 40s, late 40s when the war started. My mother at that time thought he was too old to be called up but as of course the war progressed he was eventually called up, I think in 1916. And he was in the Artillery, served on both the Western and Eastern Fronts, was moved around, was fortunately not wounded in any way, was discharged from the army in 1918 and then became a representative.

**Tell me a little bit about your childhood - what sort of life was it? <0:02:11>**

It was a very happy life, my parents had a very happy marriage. I was by a long stretch the youngest of the four siblings. My next sibling was my brother who was seven years older than me who was born in 1912 before the First World War. I strongly suspect that I was not programmed –

*Planned*

- because my brother was given the first names of both my grandfathers which seems to show that no further boy was expected.

**What were those names? <0:02:50>**

They were, he was called Theodor Hans, my paternal grandfather was Theodor Lustig and my maternal grandfather was Heinrich Philipson. And so the family story goes that my mother wanted to called me Franz as he was called, as my father was called but that he didn't like the idea and on his way to the registry office he decided that he would register me as Fritz which had the first two letters and the last letter the same but the vowel was different.

**Tell me a little bit about your mother's family. <0:03:28>**

My mother's family, Philipson, was quite a well-known Jewish family in Magdeburg, a great uncle I think of hers was Ludwig Philipson who was the founder of the first German speaking Jewish newspaper in Germany. And he also translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into German and he was a very well known rabbi and writer, and there were several other scientists and

academics in the family. My mother herself was the oldest of four daughters and her father was a stockbroker in Magdeburg. And she originally trained as a teacher but got engaged when she was 19, I think, so she didn't finish her training and became a -

*A full-time mother*

Became a mother, yes, a wife and mother.

**What sort of teacher? <0:04:38>**

A general teacher, yes.

**You said that the family were *Dissidenten* but the grandfather was a rabbi. <0:04:43>**

Not grandfather, no, he was, I think, great uncle of my mother.

**So how did Jewish life appear to you? <0:04:54>**

There was a story in the family that at one stage we had a synagogue in the street where I lived and at that time people wore either top hats or bowler hats when they went to the synagogue, and I asked what all these men, why they were wearing this headgear, and I was told that they were Jews and they went to the synagogue and that we also were, that my forbearers were Jews, and I was supposed to have said *Zu meinem Erstaunen habe ich gehört dass wir Juden sind!*

**What was your reaction apart from being astounded? <0:05:38>**

Nothing much. I mean, of course at school I took part in the Christian religious instructions and there was a Jewish boy who had separate religious instructions because a rabbi came to see him, teach him. And I mean it was no great deal, one way or the other.

**Your parents never commented on it? <0:06:01>**

No, I mean once the Nazis came it became very much an important subject.

**When was the first time you experienced antisemitism? <0:06:10>**

I was very lucky in that in my school I hardly experienced any, *if* any, in fact. I went to the gymnasium in Schöneberg which the teacher - teaching staff - was more or less on the right, they were conservative and not very happy about the Weimar Republic. But the other students were mainly lower middle class, I would say, minor civil servants, their fathers and that kind of thing. But the director, the headmaster, changed after I had been there for two years, and what would it have been - in 1927 - and a much younger man came, who was a social democrat, who must have had a lot of opposition from the teaching staff because he started to sort of make modern alterations such as having what was called a *Schulgemeinder* where the older pupils from the sixth form, some of them were asked about their opinions about how the school should be run etc, and every Monday morning when there had been a religious observation, called *Andacht*, it was changed to a non-religious one where general -

*Assembly*

- assembly where general questions were discussed and music was played etc. But he was of course dismissed after about six months after the Nazis came to power and a Nazi was appointed, who was disliked by everybody, in fact, including Nazi-oriented pupils because he was a nincompoop. He was very fat and was really quite useless as a headmaster.

**What did he do that was different? <0:08:25>**

The Monday morning assembly - we all assembled. He didn't come in until everyone was in the assembly room, the *Aula*, and then we all had to - somebody shouted *Achtung* when he approached - we all had to stand up, give the Hitler salute and he marched along the whole length of the room

with outstretched hand, Hitler salute, and called out *Heil Hitler* when he reached the front and the whole assembly had to answer *Heil Hitler* etc. And then of course he gave a speech, a Nazi speech

*Which year was that?*

That would have been in 1933.

*Good heavens, as early as that.*

Yes, because the old headmaster was a social democrat so he couldn't be left there. But I mean amazingly enough, at the time a school play was rehearsed, the play by Kleist, Prince of Homburg, and one of the main parts, the Grosse Kurfürst, was played by a Jew and that was still allowed to go on, I mean the performances took place in March 1933 and nobody objected to that - which was amazing, looking back.

**You said he came to power in January 33? <0:09:47>**

January '33 he came to power.

*His name was Cohen?*

At that time it wasn't Cohen anymore because he had changed his name to Sahbourg.

**How did your family react to the rise of the National Socialists? <0:10:00>**

One was obviously very concerned about it. But my father took the view that it would pass, that it couldn't last. I mean, my mother had a cousin who was very active politically against the Nazis, who was eventually arrested by the Gestapo and sentenced to lifelong penal servitude, and my father said immediately, well, he will outlast Hitler and he won't have to be in prison all his life, but I mean as things happened he was sent to Auschwitz and of course didn't get out.

**Tell me how the atmosphere starts to change for your family from 1933 onwards? <0:10:48>**

My father gradually lost most of his employments. How he managed to keep us all fed I have no idea because he had very little work at the end.

**Did he still have his factory? <0:11:04>**

No, no, no - the factory finished after the First World War

**Right. <0:11:11>**

No, he was just representative for factories in the bicycle trade, and he must have made, well, sufficient money to keep a family of six going, and in fact he had his old mother living with us as well at first, but she died in 1932. So, I mean, things changed radically of course after Kristallnacht because then one realised that it was not a matter of eventually having to emigrate but having to emigrate here and now.

**Can you remember Kristallnacht? <0:11:48>**

Oh yes, very well. I played the cello and I was very busy playing with various chamber music people and I was that evening on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1938, I was out playing with somebody called Ernst von Harnack who was a social democrat, he had been a senior civil servant – of course had been dismissed, who eventually was killed after the 20th July 1930 – what was it, '43, and he had a radio which we didn't have at home. We all knew that the murder of the German official at the Paris Embassy had taken place and before we went home he listened to the radio and said that the German Councillor vom Rath had died, and we immediately all knew that would have grave consequences, and when I got home - there was an off-licence on the ground floor of our block of flats and - which was Jewish owned - and I noticed that the window had been pushed in and a crowd of people were helping themselves to whatever was in the shop. And when I came back upstairs my parents said well, this was going on all over the place and the next day it became known through the – by word of mouth - that male Jews were being arrested by the Gestapo, and it was considered important that my

father and I who were the only males left in the family would not stay at home during the night, and we went to a woman who lived on her own, a widow, a friend of my sister's who lived in a suburb of Berlin and we stayed there for the night.

**Where was that? <0:14:03>**

That was in Dahlem, I think. And then we met my mother and my sister the next day in the street where we had an appointment to meet them, and they were very glad to see us obviously, but the Gestapo had not called at our flat, and I rang my office, I was a *Kaufmännischer Lehrling* at the time, in a Jewish owned firm, and I could hear from the reply I received that they knew what was going on, I mean the other staff were not Jewish, and when I got to the office I was told that the boss and his two sons had also been arrested, and as usual I went to the bank to deposit cheques and pick up some money, pick up the post, and the cashier, who knew me of course by sight and knew for whom I worked, asked me whether it was true, as she had heard, that my boss had been arrested and I said yes, it is true and she said well, strange, I always thought he was an honest man. And of course I had to bite my tongue not to say anything and so I just –

**Can you explain to people who may not know the subtext? <0:15:21>**

If I had said that he was a Jew and that was enough to be arrested I would have been liable to be arrested myself any minute, so I said nothing to correct him.

**Because people didn't know you were Jewish? <0:15:38>**

No, this cashier didn't know I was, no no. I didn't look particularly Jewish and so he didn't know. And the second night my father and I stayed away again from home, but again nobody came - the Gestapo didn't call, so the third night it was considered that they had stopped arresting people and people went back home and nothing happened. So why they didn't come for

us I have no idea – there were probably too many in Berlin to arrest everybody - in the provinces people had been - we didn't know of anybody who hadn't been - I mean, two cousins of my mother, one a lawyer in Erfurt in Thuringia and the other one in a factory in Silesia - they had been arrested and taken to concentration camps. So we knew that in the provinces it had been far worse than in Berlin. Possibly also because we were not on any Jewish lists because we didn't belong to the Jewish community.

**Who would have said you were Jews - I'm just trying to get a picture of this family? <0:16:42>**

By then, I can't remember when the law about having to adopt second names came in. I think it was only after the Kristallnacht, but if it was before that of course would have given us away as Jews, and I mean Jews you couldn't not admit that you were because if it came out by any, in any way later on, you would immediately have been arrested for not being truthful.

**I'm just trying to think it through - the baptisms start with your parents or with you? <0:17:23>**

With us, my parents just left the Jewish community - didn't belong to any Jewish – any religious community but my three siblings and I were baptised.

**Did you go to church? <0:17:44>**

No, but my brother and I, we all four were confirmed *evangelisch*. After my confirmation I didn't go to church or for any religious purposes any more, only for architectural purposes.

**What do you mean by architectural purposes? <0:18:05>**

I would go to look at a cathedral because if it was of noteworthy architectural value, but not in order to pray.

**In the church at the time was there also a level of antisemitism? <0:18:21>**

There were the *Deutsche Christen* who were the Nazi Christians and there was the *Bekennniskirche* who were the anti-Nazi Christians to which Pastor Niemöller belonged and several other well-known people. I mean I had an acquaintance who was a - of Jewish parentage but was a practising Christian who survived the war because she was hidden by various Christian anti-Nazi clergymen.

**I don't know if you know Susannah Heschel's book about the Protestant church? <0:19:02>**

I haven't read it, no.

**That's very damning of their behaviour. It's worth reading - just made me remember that. <0:19:07>**

Yes.

**OK. So from Kristallnacht just trace me then what happens to you. <0:19:16>**

I was very lucky in having friends in England because I had spent a whole summer holiday in 1936, which was my last year at school, in England in order to improve my English, with an English family in Letchworth in Hertfordshire, and I had made friends with them. They were non-Jewish but took me on in order to, well, just liked to have a – to help. They didn't have much money, they had 4 children themselves. He was a technical representative working in London. Their oldest child was a boy who was about a year or two younger than me. Their youngest one was a little girl who was six then, I was 17, and I was always good with children, I made special friends with her and with the whole family in fact, and we stayed in touch by correspondence ever since then. I sent them presents for Christmas and they wrote me a Christmas card etc and immediately after Kristallnacht I received a letter from them saying that if I wanted to come to England they would do anything necessary to help me, but they couldn't help me financially, obviously, which I knew they couldn't, and as a non-Jew – not

belonging to a Jewish community - of course no Jewish organisation would have helped me, so they got in touch with the Society of Friends, the Quakers, who had what was called the Jewish – sorry - the German Emergency Committee who helped people like me to get British visas, and it took from then until early 1949, probably about February '49, for me to get a visa to come to England, and another two months to get the necessary documents to be able to emigrate.

**1949 or '39? <0:21:31>**

'39. I got what was called a trainee visa which was valid for 12 months, only 12 months, to be trained in a trade and after which to re-emigrate from Britain to what was then called a Dominion - like Australia or New Zealand - and the Quakers in fact had to guarantee that they would pay for my re-emigration after the year was up. Before they did that I didn't get the visa. I mean, I went twice to the British Embassy in Berlin because the Quakers had told me, they had sent me a letter from London, saying that I could get the visa and I didn't. But eventually I did, and I in fact left Germany on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1939 on a 1GS visa.

**How did you leave? <0:22:29>**

The best way to go – to take money with one - was to take a transatlantic liner on which one was allowed to have what was called board money. And to go first class, in which case one had more board money than third class -

*It was ten shillings, wasn't it?*

You were allowed 10 marks officially but I think you were allowed probably 50 or even 100 dollars, I mean, I went on an American transatlantic liner, and so you got board money in dollars, and of course you changed that on board because you said you wanted to buy something on board but changed - you had the board money in sort of coupons which you had to exchange at the bursar's office - the purser's office - and they didn't like changing the big amounts because they knew that you wouldn't buy that much and take it

with you when you disembarked in England. But of course one was able to do it eventually. So I embarked in Hamburg and disembarked in Southampton.

**What was the name of the shop? <0:23:46>**

President Roosevelt.

**Was it easy to get out? <0:23:51>**

*Sorry?*

**Was it easy to get out? <0:23:43>**

One had to fulfil several formalities, you had to get a certificate from the police that you had not - had no penalties which you hadn't paid, or hadn't escaped from prison - that kind of thing. You had to get a confirmation from the Jewish community that you were not owing them any money and you had to get a passport which you could only get with these two certificates. I think there was something else - oh yes, that you didn't owe any tax, income tax, you had to get a certificate, so all that took time and

*Could you take any money out?*

Sorry?

*You could not take any money out?*

No, the board money. 10 marks you were allowed to take out officially. And you had to - everything you took with you had to be inspected by an inspector and you had to make a list of everything you were going to take abroad with you, including every tube of toothpaste etc. And you had to put against each item when it was bought because anything that was bought in less than five years ago, I think was the limit, you had to pay duty on - some emigration duty, so to speak and it was dependent on the character of the person who came to inspect you when you packed, how much you were - how strict they were. I mean, I was very lucky and the inspector who came

to see me, to watch me pack said, well, I'm going for lunch now but you can go on packing. When I come back I'll seal all your stuff but my sister when she emigrated was later than I - she had somebody who was very strict and he didn't even allow her to take her typewriter with her, and she was there all the time and was extremely strict. So we had several pages of where you had listed everything and that had to be sent in and if you had to pay any duty on it you had to pay that before you could apply for a passport and so on.

**How many of your family got out? <0:26:13>**

I was very lucky in that everybody got out. My - the second sister of mine had emigrated to Spain in 1930 long before the Nazis came to power and then because of the Spanish Civil War she couldn't go back to Spain. She was in Germany while it happened, when the civil war broke out in Spain. She then went to Portugal, she was a gymnastics teacher, and she managed to get my parents a visa which enabled them to emigrate even after the war had started in 1940, early 1940, through Italy which was then still neutral about a month before Italy entered the war, so if they had been any later they wouldn't have been able to get out any more. And my oldest sister who was 14 years older than I emigrated a little later than I still before the war started to England. She was guaranteed by friends of hers in England, and she came under a domestic permit which meant which was the only - the women had only two possibilities either a domestic permit which enabled them to work as a domestic or a nurse permit which enabled them to train as a nurse.

**Your grandparents were dead already? <0:27:39>**

My grandparents were dead, yes, yes.

**And any other family were caught up or they all got out? <0:27:44>**

My close family all got out.

**So you came to England for the second time - a third time? <0:27:53>**

Second time in April '39.

**Did you know it was forever? <0:28:00>**

No, I didn't because my brother in America had provided an affidavit, but the waiting number at the American Embassy - the Americans had then a quota for each country - I think the quota was 30,000 at that time - and that of course had been taken up very quickly after Kristallnacht by German Jews who wanted to emigrate, so my waiting number was I think 60,000 odd, so that would have meant about two years to wait which was quite out of the question. But I still had my waiting number transferred from Berlin to London, to the American Embassy, so certainly at the beginning of the war I was still probably playing with the idea of going on to America after the war had finished. But by that time I mean I had served in the British army for five years, six years, so I wanted to stay here. And looking back I'm very glad I did.

**In your passport did it say *Juden*? <0:29:06>**

It said J, yes, a red J on the first page, yes.

**How did you feel about that? <0:29:11>**

Well, I mean, I was called Fritz Israel Lustig anyway in the passport so it was obvious who I was so, the red J didn't matter very much.

**How did you feel given you were brought up as a Christian although you didn't go to church and then suddenly you are a Jew – what did you feel inside? <0:29:27>**

As I indicated, after I was confirmed I didn't believe any more. I was not religious in any way so it didn't really matter.

**Just to flip back to your family - do you know where they were before Germany or were they there from the 17th century? <0:29:51>**

This gentleman there was a great grandfather of mine who was already in Germany who was born in 17 something or other. My mother's family certainly had been in Germany for several centuries. My father's, I think, probably for three, two generations earlier than him. My paternal grandfather came from Silesia but I think his parents – my paternal great grandparents - may have come from Poland, I'm not sure. The family tree doesn't go back very far on my father's side, it goes much further on my mother's side.

**Did your family feel very nationalistically German? <0:30:38>**

They didn't feel nationalistic but they certainly felt German, yes.

**Did they feel betrayed? <0:30:45>**

Betrayed? I don't know. I don't think betrayed was something which entered into the - I mean after Kristallnacht one concentrated so much on emigration that one's feelings about Germany sort of went into the background. One wanted to get out, certainly my generation just wanted to get out as quickly as possible and by that time of course it was important for my parents also to get out, so what one felt about Germany was really irrelevant. One just wanted to get it behind one. I mean, I remember when I was on the ship leaving Hamburg, I was standing on deck watching going out on the Elbe river and thinking this is probably the last time that I will see my home country. But it didn't turn out to be the last time but - at that time one didn't think that the Nazis would ever go.

**Really? <0:31:52>**

I mean the war at first looked very very doubtful.

**What would that have meant? <0:32:01>**

I mean, in 1940 I was interned, like almost all male "enemy aliens", although I had been classed as a friendly "enemy alien", which was a very funny description. We all had to go before a tribunal shortly after the outbreak of

war, where we were classed either A, B or C – A were people who were obviously Nazis who had to be interned immediately, B were doubtful, who were not going to be interned there and then, and C were classed as friendly enemy aliens who were not interned. But when the Germans advanced across Europe in May 1940, and it became obvious that the invasion of England was threatening, Churchill made his well-known remark “collar the lot” and male enemy aliens from, I think, 16 to 60 were interned.

**Were you in the Isle of Man? <0:33:12>**

No - yes, I ended up on the Isle of Man. I was then working as an assistant gardener in the mornings and a cello teacher in the afternoons at a public school in Derbyshire – Abbotsholme School it was called - I was interned from there. A-b-b-o-t-s-h-o-l-m-e - which was a very progressive public school, it was for boys only at that time, it's bisexual now, co-educational now, and they had classes in the open in the garden and they called teachers by their first names and that kind of thing, so it was not a typical British public school, it was a very progressive one. And the professor at Cambridge I was staying with had some connection to the headmaster - I can't remember now what the connection was so when my building job finished - I was being trained as a builder after I first arrived in Cambridge – when my building job finished because of the outbreak of war, I for a time worked as an assistant cleaner at various Cambridge colleges, and the professor who I was staying with eventually arranged for this job for me where I worked as a gardener in the mornings for my keep, and in the afternoons gave cello lessons to whoever wanted them, and was able to keep the fees as my pocket money.

**Where did the music come from? <0:34:55>**

My father was a very good pianist. He was very musical and music was very important to me. If circumstances had been normal I would have studied music in Germany, but of course it was not possible.

*Your mother was also very musical.*

Sorry?

*Your mother was also very musical.*

She was also musical.

*A very good pianist.*

Yes. My eldest sister had singing lesson, she sang and we all had to have piano lessons but I had changed to the cello lessons after two years on the piano, and probably started cello at about aged 10. And at that time still thought even after I emigrated to England that I might become a professional musician. But that changed during the war because, when I joined the army, which of course was the Pioneer Corps, the only unit we could join at the time, which was the unskilled labour of the British Army, there was an orchestra at the training centre in Ilfracombe in North Devon. I had had my cello with me in the internment camp, where we had given concerts, and I had heard that there was an orchestra there, so I took my cello with me to the training camp and was immediately transferred to the orchestra after initial training of three weeks. So I was in that orchestra where I played mainly light entertainment music which was not to my liking so I very soon decided that perhaps to be a professional musician in England was perhaps not all that desirable.

**What music did you like playing? <0:36:40>**

Classical music, serious classical music.

**Who in particular? <0:36:45>**

Any composer.

*Not dance music.*

Not dance music, no.

**My cousin is Natalie Klein, do you know her? <0:36:54>**

Oh yes, I see, well, yes....

I see. Well, she made her way but not everybody can be a Natalie Klein.

**You have to be born at the right time. Did you miss that possibility then? <0:37:09>**

Looking back I'm very glad that I didn't become a professional musician because in this country, really, unless you are right at the top it can be a terrible grind. I mean my second son, Stephen, who became a very competent violinist, after he'd finished university thought at the time whether he would become a professional violinist and joined what was then called the BBC training orchestra in which he played for a year, but decided he didn't want to make it his profession, much rather keep it as his hobby, which he did, and looking back was very glad that he did. I mean, he plays practically every free minute he has still although he is now over 60 and has a partner who is a very good cellist and they play chamber music together and so it's much better to keep it as a hobby certainly in this country where there is very little official financial support for orchestras. I mean in Germany it is quite different where there practically every little provincial town has its own orchestra and opera etc.

**Did that gulf in cultures hit you very strongly as a young man? <0:38:32>**

I remember when I was on my first visit to England in 1936 I wrote an essay for school about my visit to England, and I was then very patronising about music in England. But after I came over to live here I very soon noticed that it was quite wrong to be patronising about it, that there was a lot of serious music going on here, of a very high standard.

**Why were you patronising? <0:39:15>**

I didn't consider the musical standard in England very high at that time. The lady of the family where I - whom I stayed with - played the piano rather badly. The youngest daughter had piano lessons and played not very well. Their interest in music was not very serious.

*But you started at home with the cello, didn't you?*

Yes, well, that was after I came to stay here in '39, yes. But I mean everything I knew about music in England was that it wasn't a very high standard, which was quite wrong.

**What were the things you noticed – I'm just going back to 1936 - between life in Germany and life in Britain? <0:39:59:>**

I don't know, I can't really compare it because in Germany life had become so unnatural, I mean one had to keep, try and keep, as low a profile as possible and be very careful in what one said and in whose presence, always look over one's shoulder whether somebody was listening and that kind of thing. So obviously when one came to England one thought that one would be free now and not having to keep a low profile but that proved wrong because as a German, as a "refugee", one still had to keep a low profile because the popular papers didn't like German refugees, and therefore people who read popular papers were suspicious.

**What happened, what did you hear? <0:40:55>**

One was aware of this anti-German refugee feeling. I didn't have any direct experience of it but one was certainly aware that one still had to keep a low profile and avoid making people aware of one's origin. I mean after I came to England I stopped talking to more than, say, a handful of people at a time. I mean, in Germany, before '33, at school I had been very, well, what shall we say? - forward in trying to push myself forward, you know, never kept back and in England now I had a German accent speaking English so I had to try and not make that very obvious, because I was afraid of arousing anti-German feelings.

**Did they know you were Jews? Did they know why you were there? <0:41:58>**

Who?

**The people who would be hostile. <0:42:04>**

One would hope that they knew but one never knew how ignorant they were.

**Talk to me about moving from internment into the next stage of your life. How long were you in the Isle of Man? <0:42:16>**

Three months exactly, almost exactly, interned.

**And what was that like? <0:42:29>**

The conditions were quite tolerable – obviously we were behind barbed wire. We lived in taken over ex-bed and breakfast houses. Obviously we slept more to a room than they were meant for. There were, I don't know, maybe probably about 15 to 20 to a house, one of us was appointed housefather, who was responsible for everything that went on in that particular house. Rations were drawn for each house separately, each house cooked for itself. There was a kitchen in each house and volunteers who did the cooking. In the house I lived in there were three non-Jewish political refugees, one of them was a baker and the other two I think also knew something about cooking so they were in the kitchen, did the cooking. There were several what I would then have called elderly, probably in their sixties, men who were probably quite well-off and paid younger men to do their chores in the house. The chores obviously were divided, you had to take your turn in cleaning the rooms etc. And I rather resented this, I felt it wouldn't have done them any harm to do the cleaning themselves, and this was rather a bad aspect of capitalist society and I didn't think very much of that. So I felt that I didn't have very much in common with most of the other people living in the house and volunteered to help in the kitchen because I felt obviously these people were left-leaning, which I was, so I felt I had more in common with them although they were non-Jews and I helped in the kitchen. Until my cello arrived. My sister had arranged for my cello to be sent to me from the public school where I had left it, and so my cello arrived, undamaged, much to my relief, and there were several other people who played instruments so

we became a musical group and there was somebody who knew something about arranging music and composing and I can't remember now what we played, but we certainly gave several concerts, and I stopped working in the kitchen and became a member of the music ensemble and we rehearsed and I rehearsed for myself, practised by myself etc. And eventually categories were established by the government who were released from internment and one of the earliest one was to volunteer for the army and I had volunteered earlier anyway but that was after May '40, 1940 when recruitment of ex-German volunteers had stopped temporarily because they were - the War Office was afraid of infiltration by Nazi spies. And so as soon as that was opened up I volunteered again, and that was, as I said, the Pioneer Corps which was the unskilled labour of the army. And so I was medically examined and interviewed and accepted for the army, and got the king's shilling and left. And I gave two, or even three, farewell concerts that were the only solo cello recitals I gave in my life. I played three sonatas to much acclaim, Bach, Brahms and Beethoven, and then we were a group of about 15, I think, who left. We were on the west coast of the Isle of Man and Peel and therefore had to cross the island by train before embarking in Douglas, and we were still under the guard of a sergeant, of an army sergeant, until we got onto the ship in Douglas, and he told us that after we left his guidance or guard and set foot on the ship we would be under King's Regulations, which meant we were under army law, one step from being behind barbed wire to being in uniform which was rather farcical.

**What did you feel? <0:47:46>**

Well, very strange.

**Because you had a unit – you went from one – expression - civvies to uniform, did you? <0:47:50>**

Obviously we didn't have uniform on the way to the training centre but this was just the train journey from Liverpool to Ilfracombe in North Devon. We had to change in Bristol where there was an air raid on, and when we arrived in Ilfracombe of course we had to draw uniforms and immediately were soldiers.

**Just to go back to the cello – did the cello ever come from Germany or was it a London one? <0:48:29>**

No, that was my German cello which I had learned to play. It used to belong to a friend of the family who had played chamber music with my father. He had given me my first three-quarters cello on which I had started to learn, but this had been his cello when he died, my parents bought it from his estate, and it's a German cello of about 19<sup>th</sup> century German cello. It hasn't got a name but it had a broken neck which was mended very skilfully and that is why it is not worth very much, I think, only about £3,000 it's insured for. But it certainly served me very well - it's got a nice tone and it was sufficient for my amateur chamber music.

**Do you still use it? <0:49:23>**

Oh yes.

**The same one? <0:49:24>**

The same one.

*Regularly*

Yes.

**Fantastic. OK, What happened after that – how did the other story start to connect? <0:49:37>**

Right. I stayed in that army orchestra until 1943. I had wanted to get out of it - I mean, all younger ex-German refugees or most people of my generation - I mean I was early twenties then - wanted to get into fighting units.

Obviously the commanding officers of the alien Pioneer Corps companies didn't want to let go of good soldiers and therefore didn't make it widely known once other units became available for us. Later in 1942 and early 1943 the War Office decided that we could transfer to fighter units and I only heard about it - well, I didn't hear about it until – yes, the first thing I heard was somebody who I was friendly with in the company office knew that I

wanted to get out of the Pioneer Corps and he told me that the glider pilot was - were starting to recruit volunteers. So I volunteered for the glider pilots and I had to go to Oxford to a selection board and I passed everything apart from the medical, because I was slightly short-sighted and they didn't want anybody who had to wear glasses so I did – so I was - looking back I'm very glad I didn't join the glider pilots because I might have been involved in the Arnhem operation which was not very good, and I might have been either killed or captured by the Germans, which was not a prospect I relished. So I stayed a pioneer and I then, through a relative of my mother's, a cousin of my mother's, who knew an officer in the Intelligence Corps, he put me in touch with him. This man had a German-born wife, non-Jewish German-born wife, who had been the daughter of a colleague of his father's who had been a teacher in Magdeburg, classical languages teacher, and this man, although he had a German non-Jewish wife, was a captain in the Intelligence Corps in CSDIC and so my relative here in England put me in touch with him and I made social contact with this man late in 1942 and in early 1943 CSDIC started recruiting more non-commissioned ex-enemy aliens, German-speakers, for enlarging CSDIC. Before then it had – the listening – had only been done by British officers. So either they were British born and had learnt German degrees or they had naturalised, hastily naturalised, ex-German refugees who were then officers and they could be made listeners. But the War Office realised that they didn't have to be officers and so they started recruiting other people, and the lowest rank in that unit was sergeant. So when I arrived in Latimer House I stepped from being private to sergeant right away. And so that was in May 1943. I had to attend an interview about two months earlier, I think - an interview in London which lasted all day - part of which was by obviously MI5 because the interviewing official knew everything, knew that I had parents in Portugal, and knew when I had written to them, so it was obvious that he knew everything about me. And whether I was accepted or not, I didn't have any idea, they didn't tell me, they just said if I was accepted I would hear later. And I heard much later that a sergeant of the Entertainment Section to which I belonged, who was apparently the security contact in my section, which I hadn't known beforehand, I heard that he had been asked about me. He told me and he had told them that I was okay and so eventually, in fact, while we were on tour in Taunton in

Somerset, I was told I would have to report to London to join CSDIC, and I had to go back to pick up my kit and I left my cello with a friend of mine in the orchestra and came to London, and reported to the War Office department and got a railway warrant to Chalfont and Latimer and was picked up by car and taken to Latimer House which I didn't know then was called Latimer House because the three camps were never called by where they were situated and Latimer House and Wilton Park were called No 1 Distribution Centre and No 2 Distribution Centre or DC for short and Trent Park was called Cockfosters, we never knew that, Cockfosters was in fact Trent Park.

**What was the second one? <0:55:53>**

Latimer House and Wilton Park near Beaconsfield. And the word CSDIC was never known by anybody outside it because that would have given the game away because it was short for Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre.

**Was there any name for that organisation? <0:56:16>**

Any...?

**Was there any name given for CSDIC? <0:56:20>**

As I say the camps were called No 1 Distribution Centre and No 2 Distribution Centre. I mean the postal address was No 1 Distribution Centre c/o GPO Amersham and Wilton Park was No 2 Distribution Centre c/o GPO Beaconsfield and Cockfosters was the postal address we didn't know it was only referred to as Cockfosters. Trent Park was never mentioned. We had no idea, I mean the people who were at Cockfosters were kept there, we never mixed with them and No 2 and No 1 DC were interchangeable – people were transferred from one to the other. I mean I started off at No 1 and was after a couple of months transferred to No 2, and then back again to number one.

**So you never worked at Trent Park? <0:57:12>**

No, never worked at Trent Park.

**Why was there no mixing? <0:57:15>**

Because probably they wanted to keep Trent Park very secure.

**There was a rumour that Hess was there? <0:57:24>**

Sorry?

**There was a rumour that Rudolf Hess was there at one point. <0:57:27>**

Was he? I don't know. No idea, no idea, no idea at all. I only know of the generals who were there. I mean, the reports of the generals which were recorded at Trent Park, of course, were circulated. I mean all the reports which were published, which were recorded, were circulated within CSDIC, so we knew what was going on. I mean, we also saw secret naval reports which were issued monthly and other background secret intelligence material which was useful for us to know. But anything which we produced was most secret, which was, I mean, there were two stages, secret and most secret. Most secret was in a second envelope within a secret envelope so if you opened the secret envelope, of course, you had to be passed for being able to open secret envelopes. You got one which was labelled most secret and that was a further stage of being passed for information, you see.

**How did they judge you, how did they know? <0:58:37>**

We were given, most of us were given, most secret clearance once we were accepted for CSDIC. Because everything we did was most secret. I mean Susan who was there, but obviously not listening because only men listened, she didn't know what I was doing for a long time.

**When did she know? <0:59:02>**

We can't remember now exactly when but I know that eventually the girls were shown M Room, as the listening room was called, as you probably know, they were shown inside it. I mean, M Room was a separate suite of rooms to which only people who worked within M Room had a key. So nobody who worked in CSDIC.

*We never saw it, did we?*

No, no. Well, you were eventually shown it once you knew what we were doing.

*Yes?*

I suppose the girls, who were mostly clerks and typists, who - somebody must have type the recorded conversations, so they must have guessed what was going on.

*It was mainly copy typing.*

Yeah.

**So you would be recording on to – <0:59:54>**

We recorded to –

**Wax discs? <1:00:00>**

Discs, yeah.

**And then what happened? <1:00:03>**

Then it was transcribed by the person who had recorded it because he knew what they were talking about, and checked by somebody senior, who was considered better at listening to recordings. I mean, I was very soon promoted to CSM and later on to RSM, so I did a lot of checking recorded conversations. And once it had been checked the draft was typed in English, sorry, in German, obviously, and then was translated, typed again in English.

**Who translated it? <1:00:45>**

Possibly one of - some of the girls, I'm not sure. There may have been officers - I mean there was a great complement of officers as well - all of them were British.

*The women officers were graduates of German.*

Yes, they all spoke German.

*Yes, but their German was not as good as ours.*

No, obviously not!

**The transcripts are very stiff to me - sometimes I wonder if the English is, I wonder how correct – <1:01:11>**

That I can't tell you, I can't tell you. I mean, the usual way of translation is that you get people who are translating into their home to their par – to their mother tongues, don't you? So the translation into English was probably done by people whose mother tongue was English, I imagine.

*I know we often changed things because their English was not perfect.*

Yuh. In that case it would have been people whose mother tongue was not English.

*That's right, yes. No, we had some - the officers were all English, weren't they?*

Yes.

*All the women officers were English. With a German degree.*

Yes. Whether there were any who didn't speak German, I don't know. But I mean I can show you a photo of the officer corps – I mean, it's just here.

*Would you like another cup of tea?*

**END OF TAPE 1**

**TAPE 2**

**You've just joined CSDIC... <0:00.16>**

Yes.

**So the first day what happened?**

I can't remember exactly what happened, I mean, I was obviously amazed to be promoted to sergeant immediately. I also remember that I had to see the commanding officer Colonel Kendrick on my first day. At that time he saw everybody who arrived. I don't know whether he still saw everybody later on but anyway then he did. And he said to me that what I was going to do, what he had explained to me obviously, was far more important than if I drove a tank or fired a machine gun, which consoled me because I really had wanted to join a fighting unit. And looking back, I mean, I feel very inferior to people who laid their lives on the line, of whom there were quite a few.

**Tell me more about that wanting to be in the combat. <0:01:37>**

I felt that it was essential to fight and to ensure an Allied victory over the Nazis and it was the only way of defeating the Nazis was by winning this war. And it was the only way of thanking the country which had saved my life, and why should we be any better off than our British people of the same age?

**Did you know what was going on with the Jews? <0:02:28>**

In Germany, at that time of course – by '43 one knew, yes, I think so – one knew that there were extermination camps, I think so.

*Yes?*

Yes.

**How did you know that? <0:02:44>**

*I don't know.*

It's very difficult to be sure of when one knew what. We certainly knew that if any of the people we were listening to referred to any atrocities that we

had to record it. Whether we knew any details of those atrocities, and when we did, I can't be sure about. Certainly the recordings which were done at Trent Park showed that some of the generals knew what was going on and that therefore the British government knew what was going on.

**What did you hear? <0:03.44>**

Atrocities against Jews. Mass shootings, mass killings, extermination camps.

**Did they use names? They must have said where. <0.04:01>**

Oh, in the east, generally speaking, in the east. I mean, everybody was sent eastwards. I mean, it was *der Drang nach dem Osten* - was known as one of Hitler's aims and therefore, of course, the people who were sent east were only told that they would be sent there to work.

**Did they use the names of the camps at all? <0:04.38>**

I don't think so.

**Tell me the training for it. How did you learn to listen? <0:04:49**

We were just told to listen and told what to record, and some were better at it than others. Obviously you had to have an ear for dialects, you had to be able to distinguish between a lower voice and a higher voice, but for us it was easier than for people at Trent Park because we only had two people who were talking to each other, whereas at Trent Park they had everybody talking to everybody else.

*But they were not in separate cells?*

No, no, no - at Trent Park they had the free rein of the whole complex including the garden.

**And where you were they didn't have free - ? <0:05:47>**

No, no, no, they were only in their cells. They obviously were let out for exercise, probably once a day. But they were kept very strictly separate from us. We never saw them and they never saw us.

*I don't even know where the cells were.*

No, we didn't know where the cells were.

**Where were you? <0:06:14>**

We were in one of the buildings where there was upstairs on the first floor the so-called "M" Room and as I said you had to have a key for that and you only had a key if you worked there.

*I can't remember where we worked - did we work in huts?*

No, no, no it was in a building.

*We slept in huts.*

Yes, yes.

**Did you sleep there? <0:06:40>**

As an RSM – Regimental Sergeant Major – I had a room.

*Oh I had a room. I shared a room with [Miss Doreen?] when I was promoted - as a sergeant.*

But the sergeants slept in huts.

*But the sergeants slept in huts, yeah. The lowest rank was sergeant and I got promoted and I shared a room with another girl.*

**So you had your own room? <0:07:08>**

Yes.

**How long were you there, how long were you doing this? <0:07:10>**

From May '43 and after the end of the war in May '45 we were sent to Germany where we continued listening but no longer to prisoners of war but to political prisoners.

**Who? <0:07:30>**

This was CSDIC WEA – Western European Area, near Hannover in Bad Nenndorf. Not everybody was sent there. Some of us were sent to Norway, to prisoner of war camps in Norway. What they did there I have no idea.

*Richard was, wasn't he?*

Yes.

**What were you listening to in Germany? <0:07:57>**

As I said, political prisoners, suspected neo-Nazis or people who were working against the Allied occupation and that kind of thing. Or people who had technical knowledge which we wanted to have.

**Like? <0:08:20>**

I can't remember now what exactly but I think somebody, I seem to remember that we were listening to somebody who was to do with the oil industry.

**Because the scientists like Wernher von Braun were taken to America but I think there was some activity here as well, wasn't there? <0:08:34>**

Yes, yes. Well there was also a separate place for the atomic scientists after the end of the war. I forget now it was Northamptonshire somewhere, I forget the name of the place, but you can probably find out - where some of us were sent to listen. Herbert Lehmann was one of them.

*But some of them went to Oslo, didn't they?*

Not Oslo, no, no.

*Richard?*

No, no - I don't know where in Norway they were. They had quite a good time in Norway, I think, but what they were doing there I have no idea. Because what you do in a prisoner of war camp with German prisoners after

the war is finished, I really don't know.

*They had quite a good time!*

But some of them came to us in Germany after they had finished in Norway. There I stayed until I was demobbed in July in 1946.

**That was near Hannover - Baden Endorf? <0:09:45>**

Bad Nenndorf. And there we had a commanding officer called Colonel Stephens who had been the commandant of the prison camp where captured German spies were kept. Whether they had listeners there as well, I'm not sure, but Colonel Stephens was a deeply unpleasant man, who hated Germans and therefore I suspect hated us as well. I never spoke to him - he never spoke to me, and there's a book, I can show you, he wrote a book. *(gets book)* There he makes a remark that the ex-refugees who did M Room were no good, so why, how he knew, I have no idea because he never came to visit us.

**Can I borrow this? <0:11:07**

Yes, you can borrow that.

**Thank you.**

**Let's just go back to the beginning of the listening in this country. What was in the room where you were listening? What was the mechanical? <0:11:16>**

We had in front of us, like an old-fashioned telephone switchboard. In other words a vertical wall with holes in it where you plugged in a plug, right?

**Like a doll's eye... <0:11:42>**

That's right. And there I believe there were 30 bugged cells so I imagine, I can't be sure, but I imagine that we had boards with six rows of five holes.

*You didn't listen to the whole board, did you?*

No, no, no - we each had two cells to listen to because it was most unlikely

that two - that four people would talk important talk at the same time, so we kept plugging in and out of two, and occasionally during lunchtime when obviously we had to have lunch as well, we had to perhaps plug into three and listen to three for a relatively short period. And as soon as we noticed that something important might be coming up we had a turntable next to us where we pulled a switch which set the record spinning and had another little lever which lowered the recording head onto the record and that recorded it. And for some reason, which I can't explain, the recording was done from the inside to the outside whereas on commercial records it's from the outside to the inside. So the recording head would move in the opposite direction to the commercial record.

**Was it 33, was it 78? <0:13:16>**

78. I don't think that the lower speeds had been invented yet.

**You had headphones? <0:13:25>**

Yes, we had headphones, yes.

**So it was like a telephone operator without the mouthpiece? <0:13:27>**

No, with no mouthpiece.

**No mouthpiece, so just like a doll's eye... <0:13:31>**

Headphones and a row of plugs – I don't know whether it was a row of plugs, only three or four, because no operator would listen to more than three or four at the most.

**And the turntable was wired into whatever you were listening to? <0:13:45>**

That's right.

**You couldn't see any more – it was going to their cells..? <0:13:54>**

There would have been, I think, six operators – there were three rooms, I think, with six operators in each, there may have been only four or five, but I couldn't be a hundred per cent sure.

So we had early and late shift, early shift from eight to four, late shift from four until they went to bed and went to sleep, whenever that was – I think official lights out was probably at 11 but they might have gone on talking after that so whenever they fell quiet we went home.

*I thought it was ten – eleven?*

No, I think eleven. We had one day off a week - obviously Sundays had to be covered so you tried to swap shifts with somebody else. If you were on late shift and you had your day off on late shift you tried to swap shifts with somebody on early shift so that you finished at 4 o'clock and started again two days later at 4 o'clock so you had practically 48 hours. But of course that had to be okayed by the officer who was in charge of the squad.

**Were you allowed out easily? <0:15:25>**

Yes we had what was called a permanent sleeping-out pass. I mean as a soldier normally if you wanted to sleep away from barracks you had to get a so-called sleeping-out pass. We had a pass which enabled us to sleep out any day which also was the pass that enabled us to get into the camp because there was obviously a guard at the gate who checked passes.

*I still remember - it was a green card with a cross –*

Yes, you've still got yours.

*I've still got mine.*

Would you like a photocopy of that?

**Yes, I'd love it! <:15:59>**

OK – I'll get it later.

**Did you hear anything that shocked you? <0:16:04>**

I don't remember being shocked because, I mean, one sort of did hearing and listening professionally. One tried not to get involved emotionally at all. It was a job we had to do and whatever we listened to, we listened to.

*In here out there, isn't it?*

**It also has a distancing effect, doesn't it? <0:16:30>**

Yes, yes.

**In Trent Park, tell me if I'm wrong, but I have a feeling that we had really high-class generals and perhaps in these others places we don't have the class – I may be wrong... <0:16:38>**

Yes, Trent Park was for generals and I don't think anybody below the rank of colonel was there. The book which has been published will probably tell you.

**In the German class system – can you tell where someone is from by their voice, can you tell how well-educated they are? <0:16:58>**

Yes, if they were talking in a very strong accent they would be less educated. I mean, I come from Berlin - if somebody spoke *Berlinisch* you would know they were not well-educated. If somebody spoke *Hochdeutsch* but with a slight Berlin tang - you would know they were better educated. I mean somebody from Bavaria would be able to tell when I spoke German that I came not from Bavaria.

**Yes, yes, I can hear this when I hear this when I hear – I can hear it a little bit, I'm guessing... The fact that you were a musician do you think that helped you listen in a different way? <0:17:36>**

Possibly, I don't know, I don't know. It's possible.

**What was the effect – because how many years were you listening? <0:17:55>**

Well, two, from '43 – no three, including Germany.

**What was the cumulative effect on you to be listening – I've done some research on the Nuremberg Trials and I know it had quite an effect on people – with the interpreting of what went on – I'm just curious..? <0:18:07>**

I wouldn't know of any effect, as such. I know that I went for a BBC interview after the war where they wanted people for their monitoring station in Caversham, in Reading, where you had to listen to foreign radio stations and record, and for some reason I wasn't accepted for that although I thought, well, this will be child's play for me because I'm used to listening. For some reason they didn't accept me which may have been quite –

*They didn't accept me either because I left too late. I left in 38, 39*

Too early, you mean – you left too early. Yes, our German wasn't up to scratch, you see. I can tell you a funny incident. My younger son worked for a company which dealt with publicising small publishers - on the continent, including Germany and they produced a leaflet publicising their services to Germans, and they gave me that for editing. And one of the German customers came back to them and said "I would suggest that you get someone to look at your German leaflet whose mother tongue was German.

*(Laughs) We were not up to date.*

Languages develop.

*And I wanted to work for the BBC in Reading – they had a German - they wouldn't accept me. "When did you leave Germany?", I said "'39" – "It's too long ago". This was in 1960, wasn't it. Too long ago, the language has changed. I thought, oh, the BBC – I can work for the BBC – it didn't work, my German wasn't good enough.*

**Let me just go back – you were in two different places - any difference between the two? <0:20:18.3>**

No 1 DC and No 2 DC? No 2 DC was smaller - there were fewer people there. When we first went there which I think was I think two months after I had arrived at No 1 – after I had arrived at No 1, I was already promoted to CSM, Company Sergeant Major, I was the senior rank there, I was the president of the sergeants' mess. I must tell you that the sergeants' mess was completely separate from the camp sergeants' mess. We had what was called

the “I sergeants’ mess” – we were not mixing with the camp run personnel at all.

*The Signals.*

No, not signals – the signals looked after recording equipment. I mean obviously there were the people who were guarding the prisoners who let them out, who were at the gate to check the passes and so on. So there was a commanding officer for the camp and there was a commanding officer for the intelligence. And the camp side never mixed with the intelligence side - for security reasons obviously. So when the No 2 DC intelligence side increased in numbers I was the senior rank there, I was president of the sergeants’ mess and there were only about a dozen or perhaps 15 –

*17, I remember...*

17 of us there. There was an old mansion house in Wilton Park called The White House which housed Italian generals and there were already some Italian-speaking listeners there but the German-speaking listeners were only fairly recently arrived when I went there. And so it was a much smaller outfit than at No 1 DC. All – the bulk of the officer corps was at No 1 DC. So it was a more homely atmosphere.

*And you didn’t want us to come, did you?*

I didn’t want girls to come because of all the backbiting and jealousies which I had observed at No 1 where there were relatively few girls and a great many men.

*I was posted there and I knew there was Fritz Lustig who didn’t like women!*

Well, that changed.

**How tough was it – I’m just trying to get the feel of it, was it boring, was it exciting? <0:22:57>**

Sometimes it was quite exciting. The only incident I remember clearly is after the Battleship Scharnhorst was sunk in December 1943 off Norway. I think there were 50 odd survivors out of about 2 or even 3,000 people on the ship and we got all the survivors and of course what they had to tell was of

great interest to the Admiralty, so that was quite exciting listening to them. Before that the great bulk of the prisoners were either shot-down Luftwaffe pilots or U-Boat survivors. There were very few army prisoners. That of course changed radically after D-Day, when there were masses of army people. There was also a CSDIC in Cairo - I don't whether you know that

**No... <0:24:10>**

Where African prisoners, I mean not African prisoners but prisoners taken in Africa, were interrogated and recorded. A relative of mine was an officer there. That's how I know about it. We didn't know about it.

**So he was listened to? <0:24:30>**

Yes.

**How funny. Both sides. A relative of yours who hid his past? <0:24:40>**

She lived in South Africa – her family had emigrated to South Africa and she joined the ATS in South Africa, became an officer and somehow got into the Intelligence at CSDIC in Cairo.

*She was in Cairo.*

**Where else was it going on then? <0:25:00>**

I don't think elsewhere. If you look at the book published about Trent Park.

**Yes, I've got that. <0:25:13>**

You've got that. I've only got the German version, the original German version, where it gives a lot of the history of CSDIC – whether it gives as much in the English version, I don't know. But probably it does. I think it tells you quite a bit about it there.

**You said something about D-Day – did you get a lot of people coming in after D-Day? <0:25:47>**

Yes.

**So the houses were fuller? <0:25:53>**

Probably the cells were more fully occupied. I don't know whether all 30 were always full before D-Day. I'm not sure. Possibly not, but I'm not too sure. I've seen the records of the total number of prisoners who went through CSDIC. And strangely enough there are more air force and navy than army. Probably because they started earlier coming through.

**Did you hear different things after D-Day? <0:26:32>**

You heard a lot about the battles of course on the continent, yes. I mean, before then it was mainly U-boats and air battles.

**At what point did you realise the war was changing and the Germans were losing? 0:26:46>**

Probably after some of the victories at El Alamein in Africa and the invasion of Italy and Sicily.

**Because what you were saying earlier that there was a feeling that Britain would lose it and then obviously that changed. <0:27:07>**

I mean, when I was interned, obviously, the threat of invasion was ever present and I feared that greatly because the Germans wouldn't have had to round us up, we were all there already. All that meant was to change the Tommies over to SS. So that's why – in fact, they asked for volunteers to be sent to Canada and Australia and I volunteered because I wanted to get out of England in case it was invaded. But then the - whatever the ship was called –

**Dunera? <0:27:56>**

No, the ship that was sunk.

**The Arandora Star. <0:28:00>**

Yes, the Arandora Star was sunk and they stopped sending people abroad. A cousin of mine from – who was arrested and interned in Ireland, Northern Ireland, was sent to Australia and never came back – he decided to stay there. But quite a few internees came back to England to enlist in the British Army. But to my luck I wasn't sent to Canada or Australia because really it was quite dangerous.

**So what happened after this period – what did you feel when you went back to Germany with the British Army? <0:28:37>**

Strange, it was strange to get back in British uniform. I sent my washing to a German laundry and of course changed my name because I did not want to be recognised as a German refugee by the Germans. I called myself Lundy.

**Just your surname because you didn't have to – <0:29:05>**

No, I didn't have to tell them my first name. But of course people – as you are probably aware – people who joined fighting units had to change their names and their military numbers because we all had numbers starting with 1380 which would have given the game away in case they were captured by the Germans.

**Because that was the Listeners number – the CSDIC number...? <0:29:36>**

No, no, this was the Pioneer Corps number.

*138 was it?*

1380. I haven't heard of any ex-refugees who were captured by the Germans who were executed. Whether that happened or not I don't know. Obviously there were some who were captured by the Germans from fighting units and quite a few were killed.

**Being on German soil again – what did that feel like at that point? <0:30:12>**

Well, as I say, it was strange. For instance, the German railway officials all had German uniforms and they used to have swastikas on their caps and the swastika had been filed off - there was only the bird left. That happened everywhere where there used to be a swastika - the swastika itself had been removed.

**Did you speak German? <0:30:54>**

If you talked to Germans, yes. A lot of my fellow soldiers, fellow sergeants, dealt in the black market because the Germans did not have any cigarettes and you could get a lot of money if you sold cigarettes. We had an army allocation of cigarettes. I didn't smoke but I didn't deal in the black market because I didn't like that. But a lot of them did and got a lot of Deutschmarks for it of course, and so they must have dealt with Germans obviously. I had a German contact in Hannover who in fact was a Jew who had survived the war, by escaping from one concentration camp after another. And he in fact was my contact for sending letters to German relatives or friends because at that time we were not allowed to use the German post – that only happened later.

**Why? <0:32:02>**

I don't know why. I mean, there was an anti-fraternisation rule, we were not supposed to deal with Germans direct at all.

*I remember you got a lot of records.*

Yes, the Deutsche Grammophon was in Hannover in fact, so we could buy records very cheaply from them – classical music records which we sent home to England

*Not that we made much use of them.*

No.

**Just talk me through again exactly what your work was at this point. What were you doing, because I have a picture of what you were doing in England – how were you listening to them, same way? <0:32:35>**

Yes, it was the same way, exactly the same - technically exactly the same.

**How long did that go on for? <0:32:57>**

When the camp was dissolved, I don't know. When I was demobbed in May 1945 - sorry '46 - it was still going on. I know that my commanding officer Colonel Stephens had a court martial several months later because he was supposed to have maltreated German prisoners. The commanding officer Colonel Stephens of the camp. It is probably in the book you are borrowing. And another one of the majors who was an ex-German refugee, I remember also had a court martial for the same reason but I think they were both not sentenced, they were absolved from any guilt.

**The actual physicality of Germany – I'm assuming it was completely bombed. <0:34:05>**

Where we were wasn't bombed – no, it was a spa. In fact, the cells were where the spa had been, where there had been bath tubs and so on. I remember once going into the cells for translating and they were damp and dank and horrible. And one of my colleagues who also had been sent into the cells said, after he came back, that it was the first time that he was ashamed of wearing a British uniform.

**Because? <0:34:49>**

Because the prisoners were kept in such horrible conditions.

**Could I ask you just to say that again *auf Deutsch* – so I could hear that in German, that experience of being in the spa... <0:34:57>**

Die Gefangenzellen waren wo früher die Badwannen waren.

**Wie war die Atmosphäre?** <0:35:22>

*Die Atmosphäre war feucht und dunkel und nicht sehr angenehm.*

**Und was hat der Offizier gesagt der Englische?** <0:35:35>

*Ein Kollege von mir sagte dass es das erste mal war dass er sich schämte in einer englischen Uniform zu sein – weil [UNCLEAR] die Gefangenzellen nicht sehr gut waren.*

**We're doing some sound recording and I'm aware that you've got such a fantastic story and that it would be great to have *echte Deutsch* at that point. It's such a bizarre story, complex. And also the spa – the idea of good health... Did that part of your life remain something in a drawer that has now just come back or has it always been....?** <0:35:58>

Obviously we were bound by the Official Secrets Act which we had to sign when we got there, and we didn't talk about it to anybody but each other for many many years. I mean, my family, other members of my family, never knew what I was doing. And I think probably the curtain was lifted when the first books about Bletchley Park came out, because then it became obvious that there were no longer any secrets about British Intelligence during the war. And that's when I was less reticent about talking about it and the first time I talked in detail about it was after I met Helen Fry, the author of that book. And she - I got in contact with her because she put an advertisement in the AJR journal – the Journal of the Association of Jewish Refugees – asking whether anybody knew Hanna Musch who was the wife of another entertainment section colleague of mine in Ilfracombe who was a professional dancer. And of course I knew her and I got I touch with Helen Fry and have been in touch with her ever since. That's how we got into that book and, I mean, we were without knowing it - or rather I was - in a book which she had published before which was called "Juden in North Devon during the last war" – I can show it to you as well - and she published programmes of our concerts and shows in that where I was mentioned as a member of the orchestra.

**Did you talk to your children about it?** <0:38:36>

Now we have, yes.

**What did you tell them you were doing in the war then when you couldn't ?  
<0:38:41>**

We just said we were working in Intelligence and it was so secret we couldn't talk about it.

**And what was their reaction when you told them? <0:38:50>**

*They weren't very interested, were they?*

I don't remember very well – now they are quite interested of course.

*Now, yes. But I don't remember them asking...*

No, I don't think they were terribly curious about it.

*I think it was too close to the war.*

Well, I mean, they were – close to the war – they were too young to be interested in it. I mean, they knew obviously about my orchestra experiences but my Intelligence Corps activities I don't think they tried to probe – if you told them that it was secret that was it.

**Do you have grandchildren? <0:39:33>**

Yes – Robin's two children.

**Are they old enough to be curious? <0:39:37>**

Yes, yes, they are. Lately we have been mentioned in several papers so obviously they are very thrilled to see that.

**Did you ever want to write about this? 0:39:51>**

No - I am in the process of writing my memoirs and obviously I talked to some teachers about that there.

*Famous last words.*

**What do you mean? <0:40:07>**

*You haven't got very far yet, have you?*  
The 1960s....

**That's pretty good! <0:40:15>**

Now, you were asking about whether you could use the article in the AJR journal. Have you asked their permission? Because obviously their permission is more important than mine. I mean, as far as I'm concerned you can use it, yes, fine.

**It would just be good to have a book so that people could just see... Is there anything I haven't asked you which you..? <0:40:36>**

I wrote in some more details about my Pioneer Corps activities - I can give you a photocopy of that, because we had a reunion at the Imperial War Museum about five years ago – but I'll show you the whole thing.

**END OF TAPE 2**

Appendix

## **Fritz Lustig's answers to questions raised about the secret listening in correspondence between 2/2012 and 4/2013.**

Fritz Lustig was at Latimer House and Trent Park between 1943-1945

### **Recording Equipment for Secret Listening**

I have no idea who supplied or manufactured the recording equipment. I wouldn't have been very interested in that at the time, so I do not recollect any logos.

I think our records must have been improved since "a lot of swarf" came off when they were cut - as far as I remember, they were quite clean while being cut.

I didn't know anything about the apparent involvement of the Post Office Research Station at Dollis Hill - all we were ever told was that the used records went back to "the Post Office" for recycling. I know for a fact - and have no doubts about it at all - that members of the Royal Corps of Signals were at No 1 and No 2 Distribution Centres (i.e. Latimer House and Wilton Park) and when anything went wrong with the recording or listening equipment, they put it right. In charge of them was Capt. Copping (?)<sup>1</sup>, who is on the group photo of all the officers, where their names are mentioned. I also remember a Sergeant (whose name I can't remember) and a Corporal named Tanner. Although they obviously knew everything about the "secret listening", they lived with the non-Intelligence staff at the Camp, and did not mix with us unless they had to, as part of their duties.

They are not on the group photo of the Intelligence non-commissioned staff, although one or two draughtsmen (members of the Royal Corps of Engineers) are. I never came into contact with anybody who was not in uniform, and as I said above, did not even know of any connection with Dollis Hill (I probably had never heard of the P.O Research Station).

### **The liaison between interrogators and listeners**

We had no "very close" liaison with interrogation officers. Even Stephens admitted that the "close liaison" only operated early in the war - at the beginning of pg. 121 of "Camp 020" he says that ".....it became necessary to lay down that only really important interrogations could be covered". I cannot recall ever listening to, let alone recording, an interrogation. An IO would sometimes come to the M Room immediately after he had interrogated a PoW to listen to "his" PoW, but not that often. Sometimes he would speak briefly to the M operator covering the relevant cell to ask about the general attitude of the PoW he was going to interrogate. But certainly no "very close liaison". In this connection, and just "by the way", Col. Stephens, who was my Commanding Officer at Bad Nenndorf (CSDIC/WEA) in Germany after the war had finished, was a singularly unpleasant individual. ....

### **Resources for Intelligence Purposes**

I don't know anything about library facilities at CSDIC. Whatever background information it was considered we should obtain was given to us in the shape of Intelligence Reports while we were on duty and listening.

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<sup>1</sup> Captain G P Copping Royal Corps of Signals

## **ATS, WAAFs and WRENs**

As far as I am aware all the ATS officers did intelligence work, but I have no idea what precisely they were doing. I would imagine mainly translating, but that is purely an assumption. I don't think any of them were concerned with the Camp administration, but I could be wrong. The WRENs and WAAFs were presumably dealing with the clerical and typing jobs within their own service branch, but again I am not sure - we simply did not talk about what precisely we were doing !

I have a group photograph of all army and ATS members of CSDIC where I have put the names on the back - they are as follows: Eve Henry (later married to Bamberger), Robin Eltringham (later married to Tuerkheim), Inge Jaeger (later married to Beevers), Ruth Schein, Ena Fothergill, Mary Gomes, Anne Bell, Joanne Fisk, Doreen Wilkinson, Muriel Richardson, Jane Hopkins, Lucy Haley, Joan Stansfield, Ilse Hirsch, Gerda Engel, Dora Garrett. Not all of these were German speakers - those who were not presumably did the typing of English texts. This does not include the few WAAFs and WRENs who were also there. Apart from the names neither Susan nor I can add any other information about them.

Most women officers were ATS, but a few WRENs or WAAFs. ATS were by no means all volunteers - Susan was called up for war work in 1943 and chose to join the ATS instead. We only assume what jobs they did - nobody's exact job was ever discussed.

## **Lord Aberfeldy / Stool Pigeons**

Lord Aberfeldy was not a stool pigeon, but pretended to be a "welfare officer" at Trent Park, although being in fact an Intelligence Officer. Stool pigeons were either "turned" German POWs who had agreed to work for the British, but pretended that they were ordinary fellow-prisoners of the their cell mates; or they were ex-refugees who were wearing German uniforms and pretended to be German POWs. There was only one of the latter at Latimer House, and perhaps 3 or 4 of the former (but there might have been more - this aspect of intelligence gathering was kept very "dark"). I don't know about Wilton Park (although I worked there for a while), nor about Trent Park (I was never there).

I don't know whether Lord Aberfeldy's identity has ever been established - I know nothing at all about the SPs working at any of the three camps.

## **International Red Cross**

I know nothing at all about visits by the International Red Cross. The existence and location of the M Room would have been relatively easy to keep from them - located as it was inside a "general" building and nowhere near the prison cells.

## **Arms**

In the UK we were not given any arms in the Intelligence Corps. But when we were posted to Germany after the war finished in 1945, I was by then an RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major) or WO 1 (Warrant Officer Class 1). As such I was issued with a pistol, which I had to wear whenever I left our Camp. Lower ranks (i.e. Sergeants and CSMs) were issued with Bren guns, but neither I nor they were given any training in firing them !

## **S. Mijit**

**April 2013**