



SID-0017X0001M0

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... in Moscow. So I did have the language and that's probably made my life ... or the integration into the life in Scotland much much easier than for the others. But I wouldn't say that it was that easy. First of all probably it wasn't the language which scared me, but it was a cultural shock - it's such a different society

But originally your husband is originally from here, from Scotland?

Yes, he is Scottish, yes, and my first taste of Scottish accent was when the group – there was a tourist group, they used to be the organisation of (ph 0:02:26.8 SofScot) Tours back in '87, it was a very good tour company and it's trade union-based and it was an exchange of delegations.; people would come over to Russia and have a wonderful holiday for two weeks; most (0:02:48.1). So a friend of mine in Moscow approached me and said, "Would you like to refresh your English, and during summertime be a guide for two weeks?" I thought, "That's a good opportunity." So I made my first delegation – my first delegation happened to be Scottish. For three days I didn't understand a single word. In fact when some of them spoke I thought it was Japanese because they pointed to everything and would say, "Whas 'at? Whas 'at?" [laughter] so I thought this is not English – this is Japanese [laughs]. (from 0:03:29.2 buzzing only no audio to 0:03:50.7) where you can be lost in a crowd.

I'd been without job, without work for about two months and then I thought, "There's no way I could be a housewife – I just ... it's not me." So I started looking for a job and I must say that my second qualification is teaching Russian. So that was working to my advantage, as I couldn't teach English here; but I went to the university – two universities, Glasgow and Strathclyde – to the languages department and introduced myself; then I angled a few hours. They gave me a taste; it was a taste of what's in store. They tested me to see if I could teach or not. Obviously my profession was a teacher of English mainly, but I could also teach Russian so that's how I started, and I absolutely loved it. So overall obviously, things happened you know, as I said I was terrified of small shops. The first time I left the house after ten days – we spent ten days travelling with my husband and then he eventually back to work and he said, "By all means go out; see the world; explore the things that I'm in to." I was really not very sure at all, so I went to the underground; we lived just nearby and as soon as I went down – I don't remember how it started – I didn't know there were two ways; I wasn't sure what's the way to the city centre. So I've asked someone, and obviously my accent was immediately causing questions and the woman said, "Oh hen, are you from Moscow?" Well I told her I was from Moscow and I said, "Yes." "Could you tell me is that true that they've got long queues for bread?" I said, "No, it's not." "I told you," she said to her friend, "this is all rubbish." [laughs]. So I made it to the city centre and it was quite an adventure, as I said, I only visited big shops, you know. So that's how my life started there.

Do you want me to continue?

Oh yes. It was a positive experience walking to know what people is there?



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Yes. The second thing which struck me in a positive way was when I stepped onto the train. You know, when you're on your own in a completely different country, you know, you're quite scared and I was so pleasantly surprised that people say, "Sorry. Excuse me," all the time and it really pleasantly surprised me. I felt much better. Well when I started working it was completely – I always had very very interesting jobs; fascinating work; so that got me through no problem. I would say I settled down very very quickly, just because I did have the problems with the language,

And because of the underground, because it is same back in Moscow

Oh absolutely, yes, that was funny because, you know, I expected something, you know coming from Moscow where we've got 186 stations and so many different lines, you know; here it was just a toy underground and then again it was quite handy. People used to be absolutely horrified when I told them that I stayed in South Side and I actually walked to the town very often. I said "It's only 40 minutes' walk, what's wrong with that?" [laughs] People couldn't believe me. Here I've noticed people don't take distances like that. For a Moscowite obviously you know it's nothing; it's only 40 minutes' walk. I don't do it now, unfortunately. [laughs].

I found people were very very friendly, very approachable. If you asked anyone at all they not only tell you the direction but they will take you there, which is very pleasant because when I first, after six months here, I was on my way back to Moscow via London, and in London I decided to talk to a shop assistant in the airport and they didn't have any reaction whatsoever, because people talk here very nicely, very pleasantly in every shop. But there was very cold response, very cold reaction, you know, to my question or whatever. They would tend to hold some sort of conversation or something while I was buying things, and I thought, "Oh! That's different." [laughs] So I suppose all the capitals all over the world have got so many people, and the attitude's totally different; so I've understood that Glasgow is the right size for me. And here am I.

Did you make like a connection with the local people and how was it there? It's not really your job and a part of job.

Yes, my husband's family is really a big family; they welcomed me with open hearts, so it started with the family. Then when I worked back in Moscow and I worked with this tourist group, there were a couple of Scots people in that group – young people – who I got in touch with here because I had their addresses and they took me round Glasgow. We kept in touch for a while and then at the university obviously I very quickly established connections. I was very lucky to teach in Glasgow University rather than continuing education, Department of teaching Russian to Adults, and I had fantastic people in my group; all different professions and we really became friends, more than just teacher and students. So that's how I've established connections. To be honest I've always had more – up until recently – I had more Scottish friends than Russian friends. At that time there were not many Russians in Glasgow, so I obviously kept in touch with those who I worked with at both universities; but I very very quickly became friendly with Scottish people as well. I didn't have any problem ever, you know, whatsoever, so I can't really say that I was lonely or was looking for a connection just with a person who spoke Russian, because I didn't have the need and the majority of my friends were Scottish, and English.

So for you integration process was very smooth?

Very smooth, yes, very smooth.



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Any troubles, any barriers for communication?

Just once, the first time – well there wasn't a confrontation; I wouldn't even say that – the first time I went to a Pakistani shop, a local shop, he asked me – people always asked about the accent – at that time I spoke with a wonderful American accent – that's how I was taught at the university back in Moscow. He asked me where I was from and I said from Moscow. "Oh, you're Russian," he said, "You know we're at war with Russians?" And I said, "Well you're not at war with me are you?" And it just basically became a joke, you know; actually I visited that shop so many times, but that was the reaction. That's how you get – you know people always ask, "What's the accent?" But as I said people are so friendly here in my experience and I never ever had any confrontation or hatred or sort of cautious attitude. No, it was absolutely fine for me.

You said you had experienced culture shock; was it only regarding accent, or something else?

No I found the – obviously when I came from Moscow – you know, Moscow is not the land of plenty of consumer goods, you know, not food; so for me that was a shock; there was so much choice. I just couldn't choose and I felt like I didn't want to shop; I just wanted to go home because I wasn't used to that. So that was, you know – the abundance of goods didn't quite make me happy; the opposite I felt; there was far too much. People don't need that much. So it took me time, you know, to get used to it. So that was the one, you know. It was so long ago; it's hard to remember. No, but I really didn't – maybe I'm not the right subject for you for the research [laughs] – I was making connections through my work; it was always international offices you know. I used to work for a while in the European based, the European project based here in Glasgow. We had so many nationalities in one room; it was fantastic. I was really happy there. So no, I didn't have any problems whatsoever.

And I assume you got a huge support from your husband's family?

Oh yes I did; they became my second family. It was a remarkable family; we're still very very friendly, very close. It was very good.

You have mentioned that there were no Russians over here yet?

Well only – we could count them – you know, in '87 when I came over, obviously there were Russians teaching at both departments in Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities and I got friendly with them. But I only knew a handful – up to ten probably, and that's all; and I'm not the person who would make friends just because we speak the same language, because there were quite unsuccessful attempts, you know, and I more or less decided that I'm not going to look out for the Russians. I would just look out for friends. So that's what I did for a long long time.

I'm asking because I see, you know, Glasgow very multicultural; diversity of nationalities are huge and sometimes I see how is it people like making communities and they making the community, talking in their way, and they don't want to step out of their community. In your case, at that time, how did you feel? Did you feel that you want something, let's say like to eat Russian food; to have Russian television; to have Russian friends?

Well again, then again my job – I got another job; I was a research assistant at Glasgow University at the Institute of Soviet Studies and I was a Research Fellow Assistant to the Director of the Institute for three years. I was travelling back and forward every two or three months so I could get the papers, read the papers, get the books, watch television; so I had plenty of



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opportunities. Oh yes, you definitely get homesick and you want to read in Russian; but because I was working in Glasgow University there was a library with a good supply of Russian books; there was a whole department because they teach Russian. So I borrowed books there. So I was lucky, you know, I just didn't have that sort of complete closed curtain and I could just travel back and forward constantly and that helped, obviously.

Yes I would say you were in a better position and better situation in your life. What about the weather? People always when they come complain about weather, Scottish weather?

I'm still complaining [laughs]; I'm still complaining. It's just – you can get used to everything, but not the weather. It is so unpredictable, so wet, you know, and it's not miserable; I don't feel miserable, I just shut that sort of perspective down and there are other things apart from the weather. We've been lucky for the past two years anyway; we had summer, so when I felt sort of miserable I would just travel somewhere warm, you know, I wasn't shut off from the whole world, you know, I had means to travel and that's how it didn't bother me too much. I love Scotland; I think it's such a beautiful country; fantastic nature, you know; but I haven't got used to the weather. But I'm trying to compliment it with something else you know. [laughs]

OK. Another question, I would say personal probably. Anyway, when we come to a different country we have some fears, we have some, probably, advance evaluation and also some fear, this feeling like, "I will not be accepted." Have you this?

No because, as I said, when I came over the family welcomed me with open hearts, you know, and took me in and I never had any problem whatsoever you know, not be accepted. So I felt really at home. So I didn't have any problem whatsoever in that respect.

Good, good. Yes, it's different from others, especially people who have completely different culture; even so you think Russian culture is different from Scottish culture, but in general we can find a lot of similarity rather than differences, and probably as being European for you it was easier to integrate.

Oh absolutely, definitely. First of all I was excited about the basic application, you know, I was able to apply my language and the knowledge of the culture; the knowledge of the literature, you know; it was such a sea of opportunities for me and I embraced it fully. Besides, there used to be a fantastic – not only in Edinburgh but in Glasgow – a festival, it was called Mayfest, for many years and then funds ran out. And every May there was so many Russian artists and actors, you know, theatres came over to Scotland, to Glasgow and obviously we visited Edinburgh Festival and Mayfest. I used all the opportunities to visit them all, you know, to attend the theatres, the presentations. At the University of Glasgow where I worked at the Soviet Institute there were so many visitors from Russian, you know, and they had like presentations. So I was always close, you know, cos my job was always connected with the Russian language. I didn't feel that isolation.

Yes, I would say you've had a very lucky life [laughs]

Oh absolutely, yes, in that respect; I actually had fantastic, fantastic jobs, one after another. I was really lucky. Yes, I didn't have – there was only one time; after a while I got my post-graduate education here; I decided that I really needed something, not just a Russian diploma. I got higher education qualifications, that I just felt like I was working contracts constantly, I wanted security and a permanent job, so I thought, "I really need to get some post-graduate qualification – British degree – so that I can find a permanent position." I was lucky again,



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because I was working at Strathclyde University, I was managing a European project, I was given an opportunity to have a free degree. So for three years I was studying to become a Master of Business Administration, in Strathclyde MBA. When I started studying there I was terrified, because I thought one thing is to speak English, but another one to be taught in English and to produce quality written essays, assignments in English. So I thought, "Oh no, I don't think I can write an essay – a huge one you know – on a business topic." But after the first one I was actually a top student. The first opportunity was Human Resources; it was called Organisational Change – something like that and I got the highest mark. So I thought, "Oh! I'm not that bad apparently." The majority were engineers, you know, and sometimes their English was not as good as mine [laughs], and that was probably the only time I felt, "Oh, I don't think it's up to standard." But it was OK, you know, and I'm still working. I don't have anyone Russian at work at the moment; I've been working in the NHS for fourteen years and I don't feel the necessity, you know, having my working colleague the same language as I am. I am quite content to be among Scottish colleagues.

OK. Again it is probably how you see Glasgow at that time, when you came first time; and now if to compare is different; is it huge difference in this, let's see, 27 years here?

Yes, yes.

So in 27 years – of course it's some development; of course it's changes; but in your view is it something progressive, or ?

Oh sure, yes. It's not a stale society, you know, it's always on the go. Another thing which was very surprising to me – the shops would just open and close, open and close; I mean one day you come and there was a shop there; you come back to that shop in a month's time, the shop disappears; there's constant change. I understand it's a different system because that was the peculiarity of the Soviet society at that time, that everything was stable, you know; that job was years ago and I was still there, it would never go away, you know; but it's changed now. So for me that was surprising as well. I've noticed things like – it was funny because public transport was not as developed as back in Moscow, because you would come to a bus stop and again, for a foreigner you know, you would need to ask how to get to the town, and there is nothing on the bus stop. It doesn't say what time, what bus stops here, where it goes, nothing on the bus again; so it's changed. I was asking for a map of the buses network at that time and you couldn't even get that. So it's changed very quickly. Now it's really high-tech and you can, you know, you can know where you're going. That's why I preferred to walk, because I didn't have to ask. I would just walk to the city centre. At that time remember, there was no internet [laughs] I couldn't Google anything, you know. I just needed the local knowledge. So things like that, definitely Glasgow has flourished since then. So much has been constructed, cleaned up; all the pedestrian areas and things like that; they were all not there when I came over, you know, there's been change toward the better, although so many multi-storey buildings were demolished because they're not really, you know, good places to live. So there's a lot's been done for the benefit of people in Glasgow. It was always a positive change; there was no negativity about it. I like the way people preserve their history here, cultural inheritance, things like that. There's a lot changed but it's all positive changes.

How do you see this diversity population in Glasgow now? It was a bit different when you came here?

No, it was always – there were three very strong communities you know; a Polish community; Chinese; and Pakistani and Indian. So there was always diversity, you know. But now it's much



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much bigger, on a bigger scale. So obviously it changes and changes constantly, and it's going to change again, you know, with new countries entering the European Union. So it's going to be more an influx of other nationalities as well. But I would say that's a very pleasant change of Polish people coming over here more, because they used to be here, but not – oh, Italians here as well, you know, a big community from time memorial. But it is so nice and pleasant now because Polish people are so industrious and so polite. I wouldn't say that Scottish citizens are not polite, but it's a nice addition I would say. It was really really nice to see other nationalities here.

And Italian food everywhere; Chinese too, you know?

Yes that was, obviously, I wouldn't say that in Moscow I wasn't exposed to any other kind of food, you know; Moscow and Russian people would eat anything, you know, the cuisine is quite diverse and we could try anything; and because we used to be part of the Soviet Union there was so many different cuisines; there were different nations within the USSR. But still I was very interested to try Indian food; that was first after I got here; tried Thai, that was interesting as well, yes. But as I said, I don't remember a single negative experience, which is luck, and was good.

Yes and do you feel the nature of the Glaswegian?

Oh yes, definitely, they big part of it, because people are so friendly and so hospitable, you know, there's no hostility at all.

And are they giving still, people friendly, are they polite to you?

Oh definitely, and well – I'm not boasting, but people just don't take me for Russian any more [laughs]. Sometimes they do ask if I'm from Norway, probably because of the blond hair, but the majority of instances, for example in the West End, they're always asking what island I'm from – Lewis or Harris? They say I've got a highland lilt to my language. So people don't treat me as a foreigner any more, you know; so very very occasionally. You know you can take Russian out of Russian – our harsh 'R' you know still can be traceable – but I suppose I speak fluently and don't give them a chance to ask where I'm from, you know, so still good. [laughs]

And most your life, most days you spend here, your life is here so you are more Scottish than other people.

Oh yes, it's half life now, you know, half of my life I've been living here so obviously, you know, sometimes I still feel homesick, but I'm a lucky person couldn't justify for; if I feel homesick I just go home; I just go travel to Moscow. It's like the opposite reaction now, when I came over to Moscow - I wanted to come over for so long – I came over for 2-3 days and I feel now I want to go back, because it's too noisy, the crowds are too big; it's not my type of city any more. And so much has changed there as well. So no, I don't think if I was given a chance now to choose, that I would choose to go back, because my more mature years took place here and I do feel at home. And besides, the major factor is my son is half-Scottish, half-Russian and I wouldn't go away. He would never settle down in Moscow, you know, he's been in Scotland and Russia; so I wouldn't want to be far away from him. So no, no I'm not – although I like going, you know, I've still got friends in Moscow you know. I like to go and have some good times but I always come back.

So you feel more homesick in Moscow rather than here



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Oh yes, probably yes. Because of the internet now, because of the huge Russian community which I'm lucky to be part of; because I've got the Russian television at home here; I really don't feel like I am too far away. It's just a flight away.

So, just like you have some funny story in your life here, some various people misunderstanding probably in language, probably in culture, and accent and different... Any funny stories with you?

Well the stories I've told you – that's probably the only stories I had. I suppose there were funny stories but not connected with the language or my integration. Oh yes – mince pies! It's probably language – mince pies I was surprised to discover that mince pies got raisins inside, you know, at Christmas, cos I thought mince is mince, so it should be meat inside. So that was a puzzle for a while. Another one that was quite funny, when I first saw fish tea and I thought, "How on earth could be fish tea?" cos I never through that tea was just enough, so how do they make tea out of fish? So there was something with that, you know. Well, that's just – I don't remember anything else.

I think having the support of your husband and the family it was easier for you than other people.

Oh definitely, yes, yes. Yes, that was the first time you know, when I came across that it was quite striking, you know, I thought, "strange people" [laughs] "brewing fish for tea!"

OK, I would like to thank you for your interview, and we have finished just now.

OK thank you very much.

Transcript ends 0:36:18.0