



SID-0018X0001M0

Date: 1 September 2014
Interviewer: Nadezhda Antonova
Respondent: Henry Wuga

My name is Nadia Antonova and today is the 1st of September 2014. I am interviewing Mr Wuga who is representing the Jewish community. Hi, Mr Wuga.

Good afternoon.

Erm, you know this Project is called *Stepping into Diversity* and we are interviewing people from different err backgrounds and mainly we would just like to find – err to get a story how people come and how they establish their life here. So, what would you tell us about yourself first of all first?

Certainly, my name is Henry Martin Wuga. I was born in Germany in 1924 in the town of Nuremberg and under the Nazi regime, under the Nuremberg laws in 1935 they anti-semitic laws, we realised that we could no longer stay in Germany - we had to emigrate. Then came the horrible Crystal night [repeats in German] the 9th and 10th November 1939 where the Nazi's smashed up all the homes and put the men into concentration camps and we realised we had to leave that country. The difficulty was to get into another country; nobody really wanted to take you. In Great Britain it was different. A very powerful Jewish community in London went to see the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, who was a Quaker and they said to him "We have collected money. Could we at least help to save the children?" The Home Secretary said "If you can do it, we will not put any obstacle in your way now". By the Home Secretary being open-minded, that saved out life.

So all over Germany and Austria and Czechoslovakia the committee organised trains and we were taken by ... our parents took us to the station, we could come here as unaccompanied children without parents - without parents – unaccompanied children under the age of 18. The organisation was called Kinder Transport. That was a marvellous safety organisation which saved 9,500 children. Came to this Country from December 1938 until the outbreak of war. I was one of these children. My mother put me on the train; it was a pretty grim journey, you can understand. Children had never been away from their parents before. I was a little older. I was 15. I had been away from home before. Screaming children in any case. Once we left – once we left Germany it felt easier. The Nazi Guards had left the train and we – we entered Holland. We had people at every station were dishing out chocolate and apples and cups of tea and sandwiches and we felt much better.

Overnight we came by boat over the Channel from Hook in Holland to Harwich in Essex and from there by train to Liverpool Street Station. Now, Liverpool Street Station was the station where all the children from the continent arrived. In these days in 1939 it was a pretty black hole, but nevertheless we were taken off the train and we waited there to be collected. Some – some of us had Guarantors. We could come – and somebody guaranteed for us. Other children went to - to various hostels but in any case we were rescued and saved. I came directly to Glasgow.



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May – may I ask you just – at that time did you know English?

I didn't know English – I knew very little English. At school I learned French.

So most of you were communicating in German or English?

Yes, I – yes, we spoke German, yes, absolutely we spoke German. But we – we learned English fairly quickly. It is – English is err a tremendous language but it is fairly easy to learn the everyday English that you need, the 3,000 or 4,000 words. I – the next day after arriving from this long journey – it must have been a 24 hour journey – very tiring, when I came directly to Glasgow by train and in Glasgow a lady – a Jewish lady by the name of [Etta Harritch 0:05:44.0] she was in her 60's, if not 70 – her family had grown up. She had guaranteed for me and she took me in as a refugee boy. She was extremely kind to me. I was allowed to go to school. I immediately went to school. No problem, Queens Park's School in Glasgow only – only err the summer – I came here on 5th May so I was only at school for a couple of month then came the holiday time and after the holidays – I am sorry, I'm coughing – after the holidays we – I went to school, we were evacuated. All children – nothing to do with the refugees. All children were evacuated out of the towns because the government was afraid of the Germans bombing the towns so we got sent to the country – I was sent to Perthshire. I lived on a farm. I must say, the people were very kind even with us not speaking fluent English – they were very kind and we were taken care of and I went to school in Perth.

How many children came with you from Liverpool to Glasgow?

From Liverpool to Glasgow – to Glasgow there must have been at one time or another about 30 or 40 children – refugee children who were either with families or the Garnet Hill Synagogue in Glasgow had a hostel at the side. The house was a hostel for refugee boys. Many of our friends lived there. The boys were looked after and educated. So – which was wonderful.

But you were living with a family?

I lived with a family. My story goes a little further about education – I come later. Err, when War broke out in September, all communication with the enemy country seizes. No letters, no phone calls, no communication so how could I know how my parents are. I had an Uncle in Brussels so I sent a letter to my Uncle in Brussels who sent it to my parents in Nuremberg, they sent it back to Brussels and he sent it back to Glasgow. It is War time. There is censorship and the letters were opened and I was accused of corresponding with the enemy which, during War time, is a fairly serious offence. I was not yet 16 years of age. I was arrested. I was taken to the High Court in Edinburgh and within half an hour from a friendly enemy alien, due to Religious persecution I became a Category A dangerous enemy alien [laughter]. I was immediately arrested. I was sent to Borstal because I was not allowed in Prison - I was under the age of 17. I was sent to a Borstal. I was sent to Mary Hill Barracks with German Sailors. I was interned. I was eventually sent to the Isle of Man. I was in the Isle of Man for ten months before I was released.

Why was I released? While I was in the Isle of Man, I was interviewed three times to see whether I really was a spy or not. Whether my letters were used as espionage and they decided no, I am only a boy – I was released after ten month. The Commander of the camp said to me "I cannot keep you here a day longer because you are under the age of internment. We were not mistreated in the camp in the Isle of Man - we were looked after - there was plenty to eat



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and as a young boy it was a very high powered learning affair for me. You must remember there were tens of thousands of German Jewish in Austria the refugees interned in the Isle of Man – most of whom were fairly well educated. Many academics, professors etc. so to me as a child it was a high-powered learning affair. When I came back to Glasgow I came back to Mrs Harritch and err decided I had to do something and I wanted – I come – my family comes from a catering background. My Grandfather was a [s.l. Boer 0:10:35.9] and had restaurants in [Heilbronn 0:10:39.0] in Germany and I decided to go into – into catering. And I started as a young chef in err – a restaurant called the Corn Exchange in Glasgow so I work in this restaurant for many years, I work in many restaurants in Glasgow. The Corn Exchange, the Royal Restaurant, the Gargano Restaurant which still exists and eventually I became chef – the cuisine in The Grand Hotel at Charing Cross so I – I made a catering career. What can I tell you? I err – I met my wife at the refugee club in Glasgow in Sauchiehall Street. They called it the little house on the hill. It was a club run by refugees. People said to us "You are very clannish, you stick together" this is not quite true.

When you come to a country first of course you gather with people of err – of like background and we err – we had a very – very interesting time there. We met there, we got married. Other people said to us you always stick together. I said "No, no we also integrate into the community." I gave the example when Scottish people go to Canada, the first thing you do is join a Caledonian Society but once we learned English and integrated in the – not only the Jewish community – the community in general, that refugee club for example in Glasgow and great financial help from the Trade Union movement and in that refugee club during the War we were very – very left wing. We marched on May Day. We wanted to – we wanted a second front to defeat the Nazi's. We performed and sang in bands for Mrs Churchill's Aid to Russia Fund so we did – so we did quite a bit of work during the War to try and help the War. My wife Ingrid is also a German Jewish refugee who also came by Kinder Transport from Westphalia from Dortmund. She was very fortunate to have parents came here as domestic servants. And err we got married at an early age at the age of 20. We are both only children. Ingrid's parents were here which gave me a sort of a good feeling. I was accepted and we married and we – we created a family. We have two- two – two err – two daughters.

Ingrid – My parents had the courage to come as domestic worker. My Uncle would not do it.

Yes, Ingrid's parents came as domestic servants, which was not easy when you are from a business background, you come to a country where you don't know the language and you start again at the bottom of the pile but that's – that's what happens when you are a refugee.

Ingrid – My parents said "If there's one way we can get to Britain, we will do it". My Uncle said "No way is my wife going to do other people's washing" and he perished in Germany.

Yeah, he perished in Auschwitz. So we err integrated in to the community. We had err – we were always interested in music and the theatre and we made friends. We made err Scottish friends, we made Jewish friends, we met refugees from other countries and we established a good life in Glasgow. Eventually, after many years in the catering trade, in about 1960 we decided to start our own business and we – we had a catering business for the Jewish community. We do weddings and Bar Mitzvah's etc. which went on for thirty odd years. So it was – we integrated very well in the community. We found Glasgow to be a friendly place. There is always a certain anti-Semitism but we didn't come across it lately. We were never attacked. At the moment things are a bit difficult after this War in Gaza and Israel but err we err – we are happy here and we – we feel – we had a good life here. May I ...



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Ingrid – And we were also asked would you do none Jewish functions and we said "Yes, of course".

Yes, oh yes. We did all sorts of functions – not only Jewish. May I tell you, only a few years ago I said to myself "Did they really suspect me on the isle of Man of being a Spy?" And I write to the National Archives in Kew and they said to me "We have a whole lot of information on you which cannot be revealed for another few years" which I did get the information. I was severely – when I was in the Isle of Man we were in an internment camp but I got – I got a new friend in a special room and he turned out to be an Officer from MI5. They really suspect – well, I can understand. During the War letters, even on a child can be used in secret code.

Yes, of course.

In secret code so I was really touched by MI5. I've got all the stuff here, I can show you. MI5, eventually they decided "Send the boy back to Glasgow to Mrs Harritch and let him help the War effort and do good work". So we lived here for a long time and then retired in – in err – in 1980, 1979 80. We retired and well, once we retired to give something back, this Country has been very good to us to give something back to the community we worked for 20 years in a Hospice in Glasgow, the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice and also for 20 odd years both Ingrid and I err – we are members of BLESMA The British Limbless Ex-Serviceman's Association and we took amputees from the British Forces on Skiing rehabilitation. I am a ski teacher and for twenty five years we have gone with a group of amputees every year to the Alps to ski on a rehabilitation course which gave us a wonderful retirement so we like it here. Glasgow is our home. People say "Where are you going to when you retire?" well, where would I - I won't go anywhere. I live here. I belong here. I've been here now for over 70 years and err, that's the perfect end to the story. We have – we have two – two daughters and four grandsons, they all live in Great Britain.

Break in audio 0:17:48.8 to 0:18:25.6

I was – of course it is different. The weather is different. The heating is different. There is no double glazing. There's no central heating. The people were kind. There was no rationing then – the rationing came later so none of us starved but it was certainly different. Err I didn't understand all the things that were going on and then when War broke out of course there was black out but people – people were – the people were kind. People helped each other so it took a little while ..

Break in audio 0:19:00.9 to 0:20:48.3

... my mother took me ... break in audio 0:21:00.0 to 0:22:50.7

... information about you?

Where did she ...?

How to find you, yeah?

How to find me? Well, how to find me – well, she knew – she knew where I was going. Remember, she knew Mrs Harritch's address so she knew where I was – what happened in the years during the War – she had no knowledge but she knew where I would be and we found that. And we got in touch with her again. The first – the first British Soldier that found here and then we – we corresponded immediately after the War – it was very difficult but that – relations



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were established but it took two years to get permission from the Home Office to bring my mother here. But she came here after the War.

It was difficult at that time as well or ...?

It was difficult at that time, yes not only that. It's always difficult. Err my mother came here, no problem but she had no permanent residency. Even so we said we would look after – she was happy to stay here but she had no permanent residency. She then immigrated to the United States where she became a ...

Break in audio 0:23:51.0 to 0:24:09.4.

... any connection? I know you built up your career and err your family, your life. How would you describe the – your connection with err other communities with other population or cluster? I know like a Jewish community has a very strong connection here. I know like erm – err Asian community has very strong and Polish community very strong connection. Did you come across with erm – or just like ...?

We also had – we also had a certain amount of Scottish friends. Local people, certainly. We had good neighbours, we had friends in Falkirk. We had lots of Scottish friends. Also later on working with the British Army and working for the Hospice, we – we had many non-Jewish friends but as you say, the Jewish community itself in Glasgow, it's – it's got very – fairly strong connections and – and support each other but not exclusively. We certainly had many non-Jewish friends. Friends from other – other religions or other ...

Ingrid – Falkirk for Christine.

Christine, yes, we had good Scottish friends and the religion – religion didn't come into it. It didn't matter to me whether they were Protestant or Catholic or – or Chinese, it didn't really matter. We had good connections with other people.

Ingrid – we are still in touch with Christine and we visit there.

It's err – It's important to – to integrate into the community in the wider sense.

And the Glasgow – usually Glasgow people usually are very friendly.

Glasgow people are very friendly, yes, that's quite true. West of Scotland they're very friendly. They might be – err Glasgow they might be cheeky but that's alright. But they are friendly but in many ways they are quite strong, yes? But you get a good welcome in Glasgow, particularly in the West of Scotland. I mean we never found any untoward feeling against foreigners. People knew alright we were foreign but people knew why we were here. We are now British, I mean we have been here the longest ever since. And we have worked here we have also been associated here in Glasgow, in the last few years with the Refugee Council. We have met there and given talks there and we give a lot of talks in schools err about our story.

Ingrid – Yeah, and how we arrived and how about – as this leads to the Second World War so we just make impression to understand how people come in, why they come in, and why they get the status of British and sometimes people don't understand.



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No, you have to explain. The ordinary man in the street – look unfortunately the tabloid press – who needs refugees? Send them home. We don't need them. They take our jobs. They are just not true. It's basically not true. Of course you need them. Most refugees – there are always people who play the system. Scottish or foreign, it doesn't matter but most refugees come here to settle down, to work and pay their taxes and that's just what they want to do. But the – in times of difficulty err and now things are quite difficult at the moment – in times of difficulty, people think "Who needs foreigners? Send them away, we don't want them," so that sort of feelings always about right wing political parties try to use that to make problems but hopefully not.

Ingrid – I was born in Germany but erm I am Jewish, I came here and I have found a home here. Thank you very much.

And err at that time when you came here, it was particularly like to you said like now media and err government, not very friendly for refugees. Was it at that time?

I – I – I pointed – well, I pointed out when we came here things were not friendly towards refugees. This is why I mention the Home Secretary at the time was the Quaker. He had a more liberal outlook. The government – you asked the government something and they will say "No, we will have an enquiry" this Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare, he said "If you can collect the money, we will not put any obstacles in your way so this Kinder Transport started within weeks. If he would have said "We will send it to a Committee. We will have an enquiry. We will tell you next year" we would all be dead. So this man acted immediately and that really saved the life of over 9,500 children by this immediate action to allow it to happen.

Ingrid – It's good to understand the situation to grasp the easier point of immediate action.

Exactly. Absolutely. So that – because this Bill went through the House of Commons and it passed but with difficult. Many people voted against it. We don't need any more there's unemployment in this country, we don't need any more refugees. But somebody said "Let the children in" and they acted quickly and this is why we are here. If they would have had a committee of enquiry we'd all be dead.

Do you want to add something or just – some stories – like your family stories with you, especially in the beginning perhaps?

Well yes, certainly. At the beginning it was difficult. First of all I was in a farm and err – at first I could speak more Scottish than English but that soon – that soon changed but the funny story is to this day I know we have not lost our accent. Okay, so be it. So people say to me – when people hear me speak "Oh, are you here on holiday?" I say "I am not here on holiday I've lived here – I've lived here for over 70 years but okay, but people accept you, yes? We don't err – nobody laughs at you. They know you have an accent. They accept that but they want to know why. Why – many of our friends do not have an accent but this is a very personal thing. Anybody can hear that I'm not born here but I feel – I feel absolutely British, Scottish by adoption as Ingrid said. But err things are – things are okay here.

Ingrid – I think – I think if you are taken in by the Scottish or English family you will soon lose your accent and speak like the people who took you in. But we – we never lost our accent.

Well, your parents – but I know some people lost their accents quicker than others but err on the hole, there are not very many of us left. I mean you are now over 90 years of age. There are



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not many of us left, people have passed away but there are still quite a few refugees from our – from our background here in Glasgow and we have – we have regular meetings once a month or every six weeks and still get together and discuss things but we also discuss local things like the err – the Referendum ... break in audio 0:32:16.3 to 0:32:25.0

... with the United Kingdom. I – I love Scotland but I would not like it to separate from – from the United Kingdom.

Ingrid – No way. No way. It's Britain. It's Britain. [Break in audio 0:32:37.3 to 0:33:14.1]

... I know you have your own [0:33:14.7] and you can't give everything up, your food, your religion but try and integrate more into the community. Don't stay completely separately. Try and mix with the community generally and you will be accepted.

Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you very much.

Transcript ends 0:33:39.1