

Anne White and Kinga Goodwin

Invisible Poles

A Book of Interview Extracts

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Table of Contents

	page
Glossary	3
Introduction	4
1: Being Polish in the UK before 2004	9
2: Parents, grandparents and trauma	24
3: Polish names	37
4: Long-lost family in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine	43
5: Spending time in Poland and Ukraine	47
6: Poles arriving in the UK after 2004	62
7: Polish institutions in recent years	84
8: Contacts with Polish culture and news	90
9: Polish language	94
10: Transmitting interest in Poland	106
11: Brexit and British attitudes to Poles	112
12: Identity, passports and invisibility	120

Glossary

<i>babcia</i>	granny
<i>barszcz</i>	beetroot soup
<i>bigos</i>	meat stew with fresh cabbage and <i>sauerkraut</i>
<i>chciał(a)bym</i>	masculine and feminine forms of 'I'd like'
<i>Cześć</i>	Hi/hello
<i>dziadek</i>	grandfather
<i>Cichociemni</i>	'Silent and Unseen'. Paratroopers from the Polish army in exile in Britain, operating in Poland under Nazi occupation.
<i>Dzień dobry</i>	Good day/hello
<i>Elementarz</i>	textbook for youngest school children
<i>gołąbki</i>	stuffed cabbage leaves
<i>idziemy na jednego</i>	Let's go for a drink!
<i>jabłecznik</i>	apple cake
<i>Jedynka, Dwójka</i>	Channels 1 and 2
<i>kiełbasa</i>	sausage
<i>knedle</i>	stuffed potato-dough dumplings
<i>kolega</i>	friend/colleague: more than an acquaintance, but not a close friend
<i>kolonia</i>	summer camp
<i>Kresy</i>	'Borderlands'. Eastern regions of Polish Second Republic, annexed by the USSR; now located in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine.
<i>krówka</i>	type of fudge
<i>Mazowsze</i>	Polish folksong and dance group based in Warsaw
<i>naleśniki</i>	pancakes
<i>narodowcy</i>	nationalists [historically, refers to followers of Roman Dmowski]
<i>nowa emigracja</i>	new emigration [post-2004]
<i>obywatelstwo</i>	citizenship
<i>O Boże kochany!</i>	Oh my God!
<i>ogórki</i>	cucumbers, fresh or pickled
<i>opłatek</i>	Christmas wafer (broken and shared as part of the Christmas ceremony)
<i>parafia</i>	parish
<i>pierogi</i>	filled dumplings
<i>pierogi ruskie</i>	dumplings filled with white cheese, onion and potato
<i>PiS</i>	<i>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</i> : Law and Justice Party
<i>polska szynkowa</i>	Polish ham sausage
<i>Przestań!</i>	Stop!
<i>sernik</i>	cheesecake
<i>SPK</i>	<i>Stowarzyszenie Polskich kombatantów</i> : Polish Veterans' Association
<i>Tydzień Polski</i>	<i>Polish Weekly</i>
<i>Wigilia</i>	Christmas Eve ceremony and meal
<i>zabawy</i>	entertainments
<i>zespół</i>	group
<i>zupa</i>	soup
<i>ZUS</i>	<i>Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych</i> : National Insurance Office

Place names such as Katyn/Katyń are spelled with Polish diacritic marks in cases where the interviewees pronounced them with a Polish accent.

Introduction

This book presents the results of a research project titled “Invisible Poles” and the new prominence of Polish people in UK society since Poland’s EU accession’. The project consisted of 28 interviews conducted from November 2017 to July 2018 by Kinga Goodwin (research officer) and Anne White (principal investigator). The research took place at University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) and was part-funded from a UCL European Institute Jean Monnet Centre grant. The purpose was to generate a resource which would be publicly available on the SSEES website (this book); a set of transcripts archived in SSEES Library and accessible to researchers on request; and some academic journal articles.

‘Invisible Poles’ continues research by anthropologist Keith Sword, begun at SSEES in the 1980s and 1990s, but cut short by Sword’s untimely death. Sword’s archive, including the interview transcripts for his 1989 book, is deposited in SSEES Library. His Polish Migration Project, financed by the M. B. Grabowski Fund and Federation of Poles in Great Britain, consisted of interviews with first- and second- generation Polish migrants in the UK, as well as extensive analysis of written sources. The resulting three books were all SSEES publications. In 1989, Sword published *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain, 1939-50* (with Norman Davies and Jan Ciechanowski) and, in 1996, *Identity in Flux: the Polish Community in Great Britain. A companion volume, Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939-48* (1994, 1996) traces the fates of people who often, like the parents and grandparents of many of our interviewees, ended up fighting with the Allied forces. Unlike other studies (for example, Bogusia Temple’s publications on the Polish community in Manchester, or Kathy Burrell’s on Leicester) Sword discussed the Polish population across the entire United Kingdom.

In his books, Sword described how Polish refugees after the Second World War created an extensive network of Polish community organisations in the UK. A vibrant Polish community life emerged in many towns and cities, thanks to a large core of highly committed activists. The *emigracja* projected a strong patriotic, anti-communist and Catholic identity, constituting a ‘moral community’ which exerted social pressure on its members to be loyal to values such as hard work and fostering aspirations for higher education among the second generation, as well as preserving a pristine reputation in the eyes of the receiving society. The community provided a safe haven within a Britain marked by insularity and wariness of foreigners, as well as racism, from which Poles (despite their white skins) were not always immune.

Sword also illustrated the actual diversity existing behind the front of ethnic homogeneity. Polish refugees included socialists, atheists, Jews and Protestants; they came from varied class backgrounds; and, despite some pressures for marriage within the group (or to women arriving directly from Poland in the 1940s and ‘50s), many married non-Poles. The children of bi-national marriages were less likely to be encouraged to learn Polish and often did not share in the lively Polish social life enjoyed by their peers, although, as Sword points out, non-Polish spouses were sometimes supportive of family projects to keep Polish heritage and social relations alive. An important axis of difference was whether Poles in the UK had surviving relatives in the People’s Republic of Poland, with whom they were able to maintain contact during the Cold War. Sword describes the powerful impression made by

visits to Poland (especially the first visit) and the different sense of Polish identity felt by people with first-hand experience of the 'home' country.

Much of *Identity in Flux* focuses particularly on people whom Sword names the 'younger generation'. Sword skilfully presents the great variety of outcomes within this group, while also drawing attention to commonalities. Inevitably, the second generation differed from the first, partly because they achieved a remarkable degree of education, social mobility and therefore integration into the British middle class. Often this entailed geographical mobility – moving away from the strong communities where they had grown up, making it hard for them, in turn, to pass on Polish identity to their own children. Busy professional lives and marriage to non-Poles also diminished the participation of many in Polish community life. Many of Sword's interviewees did continue to feel Polish, on a personal level, but also expressed a sense of not matching up to their parents on a perceived sliding scale of Polishness. As Sword points out, it would perhaps be more accurate to see them not as less Polish but as differently Polish. 'Poles of the younger generation in Britain often maintain that they are Polish and maintain Polish culture and traditions at home. But the outward content of this Polishness [e.g. involvement in organised activities, language knowledge] is often quite meagre' (Sword 1996:12). Their Polishness, therefore, was less recognisable to the outside world. The arrival of a new wave of Poles from Poland in the 1980s – the so-called Solidarity emigration – was not sufficient to breathe new life into many of the existing organisations and the process of becoming 'invisible' gathered pace.

The end of the Cold War in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the Polish government-in-exile (based in London) seemed to deal the final blow to conceptions of the UK Polish community as a clearly-bounded entity. It rendered irrelevant the anti-communist ethic which constituted the *raison d'être* of the *emigracja*. On the one hand, it facilitated increased travel to Poland, and a degree of merging between the *emigracja* and Polish society in Poland. Sword describes how some second-generation British Poles 'returned' to live in their parents' country of origin, on a permanent or temporary basis (see also Górny and Osipovič 2006). Some of Sword's interviewees were not interested in doing this; Sword quotes one as stating 'We've got nothing in common with the Poles any more. We feel Polish – but here in England' (Sword 1996: 200). As the first generation of war refugees began dying in greater numbers, this also had an impact on the community organisations they created. In the final sentence of *Identity in Flux* (1996: 233), Sword wrote: 'While it seems rash to make predictions, it seems likely – unless unforeseen changes take place – that only London and a handful of provincial metropolitan centres will retain organised Polish communities of any viability in twenty years' time'.

Invisible Poles picks up the story twenty years later, after the 'unforeseen change' which turned Poles into the largest non-British-born national group in the UK. Polish people, and Poland as a country, were no longer 'invisible' to the British public and politicians. In response to new market opportunities, airport departure boards filled with flights to cities in Poland. At the same time, the rapid spread and development of the Internet and electronic media made information about Poland and contacts with Poles in Poland suddenly much more accessible.

This raised the intriguing question of how such developments influenced British-born Poles. Did they start to emerge from their invisibility (insofar as they had felt invisible before)? Did they begin to accentuate Polish parts of their identity, taking advantage of new

opportunities to revitalise Polish community organisations, meet other Polish people socially, travel to Poland for leisure or work, revive their knowledge of the language, attend Polish cultural events, follow Polish news, buy Polish food? If they did these things, were they also transmitting an interest in Poland to their children, grandchildren and non-Polish British friends? How did they sense that Polish-born Poles in both the UK and Poland reacted to them: were they accepted as ‘proper’ Poles? How did they contribute to ‘Polish society abroad’ and fit into the emerging transnational Polish society which spilled over the state borders of Poland (White 2018)?

Insofar as this topic has been researched, scholars have tended to focus on one small area, highlighting evidence of strained relations between British-born Poles and newcomers, particularly in the context of competing expectations about UK Polish institutions and Polish identity (see e.g. Bielewska 2012, on Manchester; Elgenius 2017; Fomina 2009, on Bradford; Galasińska 2010, on the Midlands, Garapich 2016, on London; Lehr 2015). Analysts of post-2004 Britain could also draw parallels with *Opposite Poles*, Mary Erdmans’ brilliant study of misunderstanding and conflict between established Polish residents and new 1980s immigrants in Chicago.

Nonetheless, the same sources often also reported evidence of cooperation. An extensive study of Polish Saturday schools (Praszałowicz et al 2012) indicated that problems of mismatched expectations could to some extent be resolved over time. My own observation of Polish people and institutions in the UK suggested that individual British Poles, like Sword’s interviewees in the 1990s, would have positive as well as negative experiences and would feel the changes in individualised, complex ways. Moreover, simply to discuss relations between Poles in the UK was far too narrow: the (previously) Invisible Poles were engaging also with Poland itself.

We interviewed participants from a range of locations across England, as well as one each in Wales and the Republic of Ireland. (The latter worked in the UK.) They brought different perspectives, as teachers, interpreters, social workers, doctors, dog owners, postgraduate students and others. We would have liked to interview more younger people, more people of Jewish origin, and some Protestants, as well as some Poles with British roots pre-dating the Second World War. However, this was not intended to be a representative study. In particular, we are not trying to assess how many British people of Polish origin are interested in their Polish roots. Our interviewees specifically came forward because they had stories to tell: the metaphor of becoming visible – which they interpreted in different ways – seemed relevant to them. Each story was unique and illustrated how personal choices intertwined with family histories and various other contextual factors.

Interviewees were invited to talk as long as they liked about how their contacts with Poland, Poles and Polishness had changed since 2004. Usually, when talking about themselves, they also told us their parents’ stories. We then asked follow-up questions about topics such as their use of Polish language, visits to Poland, and Polish friends. The subject matter of the interviews is broadly reflected in the various chapters constituting this book. 23 of the 28 interviewees were the children of post-war refugees, three were third-generation, and the remaining two had parents who came to the UK as economic migrants during the period of communist rule. Hence most of the research participants belonged to Sword’s ‘younger generation’, and the extracts in *Invisible Poles* often echo quotations from

Identity in Flux, sometimes almost verbatim, although they are usually lengthier and more contextualised in the interviewee's autobiography.

One topic which Sword does not discuss directly is mental health and trauma, including inter-generational trauma. We never asked questions about mental health, but it emerged spontaneously as a strong theme in a number of interviews. In her recent volume *Identity, Attachment and Resilience: Exploring Three Generations of a Polish Family*, psychologist Antonia Bifulco (2018: 234) raises but is unable to illustrate from her own family history how responses to trauma shaped inter-generational relations and the transmission of Polish identity among the *emigracja*. Unfortunately, the theme of parental mental illness is illustrated in our book, although interviewees' comments about their own mental health have been edited out. Another subject which emerged spontaneously was dual citizenship: a number of interviewees either had applied for or were intending to apply for a Polish passport.

Interviewees shared with us various details about their Polish relatives and friends; little of this information has made its way into the extracts, but it was helpful for us to understand the extent and nature of their contacts with Poles from Poland. Most place names in the UK, as well as some in Poland, have been changed or edited out. Interviewees and their friends and relatives have been given pseudonyms and some details of their lives have been glossed over or slightly altered to protect confidentiality. A few interviewees chose to keep their actual names, sometimes because they wish us to publicise their causes and work. We are particularly grateful to Eva Szegidewicz of Kresy Family: Polish WWII History group, who helped us recruit additional interviewees. Anna Chelmicka's father's story is vividly illustrated in Rita Cosby's *Quiet Hero* (2010) and readers should also look out, a few years from now, for her own book about camping in Poland with a dog. Dr Adelaide Morris has written a memoir of her own father, *Remember this Man?*, as part of her PhD at the University of Winchester.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to the interviewees for participating in the project, and for their detailed and fascinating stories of what it means to be an (in)visible Pole. When we embarked on this project, we had no idea that we would gather together such lively and often surprising accounts.

Interviewees' ages are indicated the first time they are quoted, usually in Chapter 1. Occasionally, different sections of interviews have been spliced together; where there was a significant break, this is indicated with three dots.

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1 Being Polish in the UK before 2004

Luke [aged 43]:

I grew up in London. There was a very large Polish community in London, particularly when I was growing up in the 1980s, when there was a lot of interest in the Solidarity movement, and the link with the Catholic Church was very strong, so there was a real sense of a community in London, in Ealing... I've got strong memories of Christmas Eve, and presents on Christmas Eve, and dinner, you know, *barszcz* and *opłatek* and then going to the Midnight mass. I've got a lot of memories of that kind of thing... And I remember going to Polish school which I didn't want to go to, I wanted to play football with my English friends from school. But I went along, and didn't like it, so I was always the naughty boy in the class. And also, a lot of the children there had both parents that were Polish. I wasn't Polish enough, if that makes any sense? My experiences of Polish school, you know, have driven me away from religion. My memories are of feeling very guilty, making up sins for confession. And doing it in Polish -- which kind of drove me away from religion...

I think that my political values probably come from my mother's stories of what it was like living in Poland under communism. And, you know, the oppression and the repression... I think she's given me my liberal values, so I think there is a link between my mother's experiences of her life to where I ended up politically.

Zuzanna [aged 56]:

I think my parents didn't necessarily agree on the level of involvement. My mum was very keen to be involved with the Polish community, my father was perhaps a bit more distant and not encouraging. Interestingly, the people that my mum socialised with weren't actually her peer group. They were my father's peer group, because they were people that came from Poland at that stage [in the 1940s]. There probably were a few people like my mother that came over later on. But the people that predominantly socialised with us, who came round to our house -- we had people round at Christmas time -- were people that were my father's peer group, many of whom had gone through the whole Siberian experience.

I think, compared to people I mixed with, we had a slightly odd upbringing. Because some of my Polish friends only had Polish friends. Their families were so immersed in the Polish community that it was all about Polish school, Polish church, *zabawy*, being in Polish Scouts, and going on *kolonia* and all that kind of thing. It was all about that for them. Whereas I had much more of a mix, and perhaps a bit of a muddle-up, growing up, as to quite what was right. My mother would have been very keen for us to be completely immersed, but my father wasn't.

My father grew up in a newly independent Poland, he was very patriotic. I don't think he was necessarily that traditional, but we grew up with some Polish traditions. And people held on to these traditions very strongly, because it's what kept them together as a community. Polish school, Polish singing and dancing. I remember, it may have been the second time I went to Poland, my Polish cousins thought I was bonkers. These Polish dances

were [old-fashioned]. But you couldn't meet anyone in a Polish community in the UK who didn't have some sort of link to some *zespól* or other. So it was a very different way of being brought up. And, I think I mentioned before, my mother also notices, that people [recently arrived from Poland] speak a different language. Not necessarily the grammar, but they use different words. But that's because Poland has changed and developed, and a lot of the Poles that stayed over haven't. They've just held onto visions of pre-War Poland, and the kind of Poland they always wanted to go back to.

Zuzanna (2):

My networks have diminished since I moved away from London. When I was at school, we used to do Polish singing and dancing, and I always really liked the singing. [I was] not so much into the dancing. When I left university, when I was training, I lived not that close, but not that far from Devon in London, the big Polish church. And I used to go to church there, and some of my mum's friends used to go there, even though the local one was much closer. They used to drive over. And people were forever trying to get me a husband... I think the reason I was being fixed up by some of my mum's friends with Polish men was because they only knew Polish people. If they'd known a nice Englishman, then I might have been introduced to them as well. I don't think it was specifically about being Polish.

One of the people that I met through that told me about a dance group in London that he belonged to, and I joined that dance group. So I had English friends, I had work friends, but I socialised quite a lot with these Polish people. Mainly because of the dancing rather than much more else socially. When I left London, which is a while ago now, I broke away from them – not intentionally, but it was just geography.

Sara [aged 60]:

When I was five [in the early 1960s], it was the first time I visited Poland. He [my father] took myself and my [non-Polish] mother to meet his mother, and my auntie; they had never met. After the marriage my father was trying to become a British citizen, so he didn't go back to Poland until then. So, we went back, and I met my grandmother, and was spoiled, and big fuss, so from that day my best memories of childhood are in Poland.

It's a small town, and I was a Catholic, which made it even more difficult because it's a very Welsh chapel town, and I went to the Catholic school. So, when I was eleven and went to secondary school, I would be singled out because of my religion. Because I was Catholic, they would say things like 'Oh, why are you different to us, why do you not have to come to assembly in the morning and pray with us, why are you separate?' So, there was a bit of discrimination because of faith then, for me. And because I didn't speak Welsh at that time. My surname was a problem as well then, because they [said] 'oh, you're foreign'. Even though I was born in Wales, in T., they would treat me as if I was a foreigner because of my name, and I didn't speak Welsh. So, that made me not very happy. School wasn't very happy for me, the years in school weren't very happy.

But when I went to Poland – we went every summer or Christmas – I was treated like a superstar! I had friends there, and would go out to play with them, and because I was different, and they were [saying] 'Oh, she's from England!' and all this. I would look forward

to going, because I was treated as very special there. And it was very happy times, playing out, and going to the forest, collecting mushrooms, and things we didn't do here. And it was very exciting, a big adventure. But growing up in T. sometimes was hard, because of the surname, and religion was a big issue...

There was quite a little community outside T., in a place called Pwllheli, there was a Polish camp, and a lot of people settled there. In T. itself there were four or five families and once a week we would go, it would probably be a Friday night, we would take it in turns to go to these houses, and the men would play cards and have a little vodka, the children would play together, and the wives would have coffee or tea, and talk. It was a way of meeting up once a week and keeping the Polish going. They did a lot of that, and it was about four families. One family had seven or eight children, and once a year they would go back to Poland, but they didn't take the children, because obviously there were too many children and they couldn't afford. So we, my father, my mother and myself would go to their home in T. and we would stay there for the month where the parents were visiting their family back in Poland. So, it was quite a close little Polish community. And then, on a Sunday, we would go to this Pwllheli camp for mass, and dinner. It would be like connections still with home, there were so many Polish people there. They would all collect together, and tell stories, and just relax, and it was like being in Poland.

Ann [aged 69]:

Growing up, like I say, we were made to feel inferior to the British. Both me and my brother felt the same. Some of the neighbours didn't like it, because we were given a council house, and it should have gone to English families, not to the Poles. They forgot my Mum was English. And then at school we used to get called all sorts of quite nasty names, we used to get called 'Jewski'. And then one of the kids said to us – they must have heard it off their parents, but they wanted to know how we had escaped the gas chambers. My brother John was always being picked on, always by the English kids, as was I. Even at school all the Polish kids were put in a corner in the classroom, we were all together, and if anything went wrong it was the Polish kids that were to blame. Never anybody else – it was always us. I don't think we were ever really accepted. I mean, just after the War – I was born in '48, my brother John was '49 – so yes, the housing shortage was bad, the windows had been smashed by bricks. No, it wasn't nice at all. I grew up, we both of us grew up feeling not as good as everybody else, being inferior somewhat. We weren't as clever as the next person, we weren't as good at whatever, it wasn't nice at all, it wasn't pleasant.

There was one girl particularly, she was always calling me a Polish witch, she used to thrive on that. And we were bullied to an extent, both of us were, and I think a lot of the other Polish kids were as well. We didn't fit in, we were neither one nor the other, we just didn't fit in... I'll always remember, I was about thirteen, I'd just gone to the secondary school, and one boy came up to me and he said, 'I believe you've been in some labour camps.' Was it labour camps he said? Yes, he did say labour camps. He said, 'And you've been in refugee camps around the world, haven't you?' I said 'No, I've lived in Great Harwood all my life. No.' And that was a rumour going round, that I was thick, not academically bright, because I'd been in all these different refugee camps and labour camps. Now, where did that rumour start from? I have no idea.

We made a lot of Polish food... *Pierogi*. Oh, I love *ruskie pierogi*! I make them now. *Ruskie pierogi*, we'd have *bigos*, *zupa*, *gotąbki*, all sorts we'd make, and Dad would get some cuts of meat, and cook it the Polish way. Oh yes, all that. *Ogórki*. We used to have a really nice Polish stall on Blackburn market, when it was the open market, so we used to go there for *kiełbasa*, and the *polska szynkowa*. We had a Polish baker nearby in Oswaldtwistle, so we used to go and get the bread from him and the cakes, the *sernik*, Polish cheesecake, and all things like that. So yes, both parents encouraged it...

When I went to work obviously I had my maiden name. I started work at sixteen, and people used to say, 'Where on earth do you get that Lancashire accent from?' Your Dad's got a strong Polish accent, your mother speaks with a Southern accent, where do you get that Lancashire accent from?' 'Listening to everybody!'

Janina [aged 25]:

My mum was born here, but she considers herself Polish. I don't think she would ever say she was British, apart from the passport. My mum's parents, they had her when they were quite old, so when I was born they were in their seventies. So, my mum moved my *babcia* and *dziadek* [granny and grandad] up to live on the road opposite us, on the road we lived on. She was the primary carer for my *babcia* and my *dziadek* until they passed away, seven-eight years ago. I grew up with grandparents across the road. I saw them every day, for a long time... Obviously my *babcia* and *dziadek* were Roman Catholics, so we used to go to the church in our town. They have a separate Polish mass before the English one. There is a Polish priest. He goes around all the towns and does a separate mass in Polish. I grew up going to a Polish mass, and Polish Sunday school. I grew up with older people who'd been here, after the War, but then also met newer Poles who came after the EU accession... There was a Polish school attached to the church, so we had dances and my *babcia* got us folk costumes sent over, so we'd do stuff like that.

I went to university when I was eighteen, and I did social anthropology. For my undergraduate thesis I did an ethnography about second-generation Poles in the area. You probably know this, but there were army camps up and down the country; I did an ethnography on the one that was just outside of my home town. I did walking interviews around the camp, and then I interviewed about twenty people... I was mainly interested in my own family, quite selfishly. When I got older I started to think about the stories they told me more, and it kind of clicked, and I thought this was really interesting to do some research on. So I did that, and then when I graduated I worked for the British Red Cross for a year. I worked as a refugee case worker; because again, my *dziadek* always said that the Red Cross was a good organisation and they really helped refugees.

Eva [born 1961]:

They were close to the Polish community near to the church. But where they lived was near the university, and they were redeveloping that area. There were plans for a dental hospital to be built on the place where their house was. So they got re-housed to Withington, which is a little bit of a distance from where the Polish church is. And it was difficult for them. In those days, in the 1950s, it was quite difficult for them to travel. They had two young children at that point, my brother and sister, and to get to the church and to the community

it was quite difficult. They had friends, and friends used to come and visit them, and occasionally they would visit other people. But they got cut off from that Polish community, and there was absolutely nothing here at that point in time, in the late 1940s and early '50s. It was not like it is here now, there were no Polish shops, absolutely nothing Polish here!

The Poles didn't have anything when they settled. All their money and everything that they had was taken from them. They had to find jobs, they had to buy houses, but they somehow managed. I don't know how they did this as a community - they bought an old derelict English church and converted that, and the Polish church is still here today. They set up a Saturday school: there were teachers and headteachers that had gone through that terrible journey but who set up the Saturday school – and again, that school is still operating all those years later here in Manchester, and it's thriving and doing really well. It was very hard – everything was in English, there were no translations like today. Nowadays, if you get a council tax bill, or some other sort of bill, you know, on the back of it there are things translated in all sorts of languages. There was absolutely none of that when they arrived here. They *had to* learn the English language. It was impossible, you know, to integrate into the community if you didn't adapt to the English way of life. It was tough, and they didn't like it, you can imagine. There were no [inaudible] like there are now, like I say, every corner shop, there is a Polish shop now, you can pop in and buy frozen *pierogi* and all sorts of things. In those days it was just totally not like that. It must have been really, really hard.

My parents didn't force us to go to Saturday school. They resigned themselves to the fact that they were here to stay. They couldn't go back home, Poland became a communist country taken over by Stalin, there was no way they could ever go back. And my grandfather, and my parents would never go back. And it was dangerous. A lot of people tried to go back, and it was dangerous. They didn't like it and it was awful. So, they resigned themselves to the fact that they were here to stay.

My brother is eleven years older than me. When he started school, he could not speak a word of English, because they only spoke Polish at home – my parents spoke Polish, and my grandparents spoke Polish. So he didn't hear any English at all until he started school, when he was five. And it was hard, obviously – you go to school, you have a funny name, children laugh at you, you don't know the language. But, obviously, as a young child, he picked the language up very quickly, and, you know, within three months he was talking fluent English, and he was integrated into school life and that was fine. My sister, who was eighteen months younger than my brother, picked up the language quickly because he used to come home from school and he started talking to her in English. And even my parents started then to pick up some words and learn.

My parents and grandparents, even my mother, she could read English, but she couldn't write. They all had very thick Polish accents. My grandmother only ever learned the odd words in English like 'Good morning', and 'Hello', things like that. She didn't go to work, so she wasn't talking on a daily basis to English people, like my mother and my grandfather were. All in all, it was quite hard for them...

I wasn't at all involved with the Polish community, not at all, I had no contact with people like myself. And I really didn't know that there were so many people.... I really didn't know how many people were involved with these deportations, and the whole history, the whole thing didn't mean anything to me when I was younger, when I was growing up... Even at school I was the only Polish girl in the class. You know, there was just nobody! There really

wasn't anybody. And so, I can't describe the feeling I had growing up. Obviously, I knew I was different. I wasn't English, I had a funny name, I spoke a little bit of Polish at home – I was different, and I knew I was different. And sometimes it was a disadvantage, because, particularly in school, children can be really horrible. They call you names, they call you this, that and the other, and, you know, there were times when I just felt it wasn't really something good to be somebody different...

In the home obviously we celebrated Christmas, and the Christmas traditions. My mother was a good cook, she would make Polish food. I was brought up on *pierogi* and all the other Polish food. And that was basically that, really. We didn't go anywhere, we didn't see anything, and I didn't really have those Polish traditions instilled in me. It's weird, looking back and reminiscing about those times... We went to an English Catholic church, and I still go there. So, no contact like that whatsoever.

Zosia [aged 64]:

Prior to 2004 the Polish people, the Polish community was highly respected, probably because of the fact that they did adapt to Great Britain and everything else. They were extremely hard-working. Everything they set up, they would always invite the English community. I can only speak for the area here.

Adelaide [aged 64]:

[My father taught my Italian mother] how to cook *bigos* and *knedle*. He never made *pierogi*. We went to the Polish shop to buy sausages, and they always gave us the little sweets, the shop gave us a bag of the little sweets, the what's it called? The *krówka*, like fudge, fantastic! They've always gave us those... Sometimes we would go to the Polish church in Bristol, because we were living near Bristol. And there was a Polish community. They went to the Polish SPK Club, to dances, and they were always talking Polish. As children, we didn't learn. My brother spoke Polish as a first language – well, our first language was Italian, second language Polish, and third language English. But when my brother went to school not being able to speak any English at all, the teachers told us we must not have any Polish at home. So, we were Polish; half Polish, half Italian...

When we were young, we went to Slough once, where there is a big Polish community, to a Polish festival day. My mother was never very keen, because her nationality was completely eclipsed by Polish friends, she didn't have Italian friends as such. I think that she was quite resentful that one national identity was eclipsed by another. But we went to see, there were lots of children doing dancing Polish dances, dressed in Polish dresses, and I really wanted to be a part of that: and I wondered why I wasn't. Maybe it was because of my mother, maybe because when we moved away from Bristol we didn't have access to that community anymore, although we still travelled to the church and to the dances, at the club. So we were never fully acculturated... We had two brothers who lived near us. Their father was Polish -- *Polish* Polish, from *Poland*. And their mother was Welsh, and she was a great ally to my mother. And they went to the same primary school as us. We're going back to the 1950s and '60s now. And the primary school was a country primary school, and there we were four of us: my brother, myself and these two boys. With strange names. My brother couldn't speak English when he went to school, he used to sit at the back of the class and knit. So we

were really unusual. We stood out more. But they were the people that came to our house more frequently...

I don't think we were necessarily discriminated against -- we were othered. My mother worked very hard. She was a dressmaker in Italy and she dressed us impeccably. We were always clean. What my parents did, was they had to work much harder for respectability. Because, as you know, if someone who is foreign or other makes a mistake, it's magnified. And it seems to be more potent than if a native English person should just make an error. You see something in the newspapers, some of the headlines, immigrants are doing something. That's just how it is. They suffered from it, because they had accents, which announced their otherness. I think the only time I ever really had a direct experience was when I was called -- by a boy in a secondary school -- I was told to go back where I came from because I was a foreigner. 'You foreigner, you go back where you came from.' And, of course, as you know I didn't come from anywhere really, I was there!

But I think there is a kind of suspicion on the part of some people. When I said that I passed as an English person, I did discover that when I first met someone, or a group of people for the first time, I was one of them, and there was a level of intimacy and acceptance, but when -- I felt, and I still do believe this, on many, many occasions -- when they found out that I wasn't quite right, it was like some shutters came down behind their eyes, everything changed, and the confidence of exchange of information was gone. You know, that openness and trust. I think it was probably mistrust, because suddenly I wasn't what they thought I was, and they felt as if they had been misled, maybe. They were dealing with something that they weren't quite sure of anymore, some kind of exoticism or otherness, you know. And I did feel that very much... I didn't like it.

It was through times of our lives when we wanted to feel we belonged to groups and people. So I tended to be careful. It's a difficult thing to articulate. Because of who we were, and the very difficult life that my parents had, to establish themselves, we had to work much harder. And we were also given this message by our parents, that we would never be accepted. They were telling us that we would never be accepted. Their experiences were having an impact on our trust, so we ended up with trust issues ourselves. Because they said 'You will never be able to be accepted, you will have to be better *than*. You have to be better than English people.' They othered the English, within the home. It was: 'We were never going to win this one!' They were othering the English. So when the door was closed and we were able to speak confidentially and confidently amongst ourselves, problems and issues they may have had at work, or with communication, or with anything, with authority or bureaucracy, became the English problem. Whereas I think that if they had been in their home culture, it would have just been a problem. But it was the English problem. I think there was an awful lot of projection of their -- a lot of it was very legitimate and valid, you know, they did feel, they weren't allowed to do certain jobs, and, you know, it was hard.

[By contrast, on her first visit to Italy] in this place there was a cemetery with graves of my people -- you know, who belonged to me, and I belonged to them. And there were friends of my mother's, who she grew up with, who wanted to see her children. This is something I never experienced ever in my life, that there were people who belonged to us! But they go back beyond that one auntie and my parents. It's like there was someone behind me. And when I was in England I never felt there was anyone behind me. It was just us.

Mike [born 1955]:

I was brought up in a small town called Rose Bridge in Lancashire, north of Manchester, which contained quite a large Polish community. As did all of the towns in the north-west of England and in Yorkshire. The Poles varied, from eastern Poland, western Poland. Some had been through Siberia, some had been through the West, via Germany, forced labour, or German army, and others had made their own way there, in various different ways. And there was a very strong Polish community in those early years, as I remember from the very late '50s and early '60s... I remember very clearly the Polish building, we had a Polish building, run by the SPK, in Rose Bridge, which had quite a variety of Poles and other nationalities in there. It was a veritable multicultural place, with Poles, White Russians, Italians, Germans even, Hungarians, all frequented the place in those years. And also there was a Polish community which grew up in Rose Bridge and in the surrounding towns. Each of which had their own little club, either an SPK club or a parish club. From a very early age I felt slightly different, I felt that I was English, British, but also Polish, very much so. I had very strong feelings of Polishness in those days and still do, for that matter.

Maria [aged 51]:

It was always Polish food at home, and going to church on Sundays. Visiting grandparents. It felt very much like a small little world, and I didn't feel very English as a result. Every day I was spending more time with the English people, but it felt like our home life was very different, and we didn't have vast amounts of friends. It tended to be the Polish community and family, really... I always felt a bit different, because I could see that my friends in my English school had different lives. My parents were quite protective, so I didn't go to other children's houses overnight, for sleep-overs or anything like that. That made that divide even more. I did get called names a couple of times, but it wasn't anything really bad, and it wasn't something that carried on. It was something that occasionally might have happened, without being Polish. At primary school they would change our name into English words that sounded funny to them, but nothing terrible. I remember someone saying, 'Oh you silly Polish girl', because my grandmother made homemade dresses, and I think someone thought it was a very old-fashioned dress I was wearing at school.

Barbara [aged 68]:

Even when my Mum was still alive, my contacts with Polish communities decreased. When I was studying, I made an effort to make contact with the Polish community in Southampton - that was in the '70s - but I was just too busy to maintain those contacts. And then when I came here for work, initially I lived with a Polish family in a bedsit, but, again, work took over and I got very involved with English people. It was only when I used to go back to Nottingham that I got involved again in Polish activities. And then we tried here, there were a few Polish people in this town. There were only about six or seven Polish families, and I established contact with some of them, but they were very anglicised. We tried to form a Polish circle, and the Polish priest from Brighton used to come once a month to say mass here for us, but that fizzled out...

I tend to be an ambassador for Poland. Even as a child. I was asked, would you hide your Polishness, because it might put men off you, and I said 'That's tough, I'm Polish, and that's

part of who I am. I'm proud of it. And my parents suffered too much for being Polish for me to deny my heritage'... [British people] did have negative reactions, but I just learned to put up with it. I thought I was in the right. Obviously, I understand the issues a bit more now. But I just thought we were a bit persecuted maybe and I did feel out of it a little bit... They used to shout after my Mum, and my Mum was told, I was told I should only play with Polish children. My Mum had a terrible time at work. Because both my parents had to work. And she was made a supervisor. And they didn't take to that very kindly. They used to put union jacks up, and sing the British anthem. But you see, she'd had to deal with Stalin, hadn't she, so what was a trade unionist representative to her? Nothing, really.

Agnieszka [born c. 1956]:

[I experienced] more ignorance [than discrimination] I think, historically, my generation didn't know enough about the Poles' contribution to the War. I think my children's generation know more now. But there were things like ... you know, especially in rural Suffolk, you wouldn't get it in London so much. I remember at school girls thinking that I came from a family that wore braids, plaits and national costume. So, they had really no idea. But I don't think it was something I discussed, it was probably something I internalised, because it those days you didn't discuss that sort of thing, and it wasn't until later on that, perhaps, it started impacting on me. But I don't remember having huge conversations... I remember my flatmate loving the Polish food that I always made, and respecting that. They were intelligent enough, and read the history.

Aniela [aged 51]:

I think the fact that there are so many more Polish people here has had quite a marked influence on the Poles here. It's sort of revived us. When I was growing up, it was very difficult – people didn't even know what or where Poland was. When I started school, I tended to stick out like a sore thumb because my name stood out. I was amongst a handful of other Polish children, and Italian children, in a class of British-Irish...

I spoke Polish at home from the word go. I knew very little when I started school, which sounds quite scary, but we managed. I think Mum taught me a few sentences. 'Please can I go to the toilet?' and other things, necessary things. But other than that. We were taught prayers, we went to church, we went to Saturday school when we were old enough, and that continued, right up until A levels for me... I was also in the girl guides, so my whole childhood, my teens, up until I went to university I was very, very involved in the Polish community. In the girl guides, at the school, and then in the venture girl guides. And we used to do things like, all the traditions, the Christmas traditions, the Easter traditions, we were very much involved in what was going on in the church as well. So, quite a full community life. Up until that point. And then people began to drift away, because they were going away to university, and then not coming back, or a lot of girls married, and a lot of girls married British men. So, again, that, let's say, diluted us, diluted us a little bit. But about 1990, 1991, a handful of Polish girls came over, to B. One married a friend of mine, and they've been married nearly 30 years. So there was a trickling in the early nineties where a few families came over.

Filip [born 1956]:

[My father] was a socialist, he was a union rep, at the factory where he worked, and I could never understand why all of his friends were very conservative. We never went to church. I went to a Catholic school and we were dragged to church from the Catholic school, and I was confirmed and christened and all of that, but we weren't made to go to church. And I could never understand why there was this dichotomy, that all of his friends were patriotic and cried every time they spoke to each other. My father wouldn't go to any of the local Polish clubs. There were several locally. He would never go there. I said to him one day 'I'll take you – I'll drive you there.' He wouldn't go. He said - I won't tell you what he said, he wasn't very nice about them, let's put it that way. I couldn't understand why, as he was Polish, why he wouldn't mix with them. I think it was ideological. And again, that meant that we were even more isolated from the Polish community. We grew up and assimilated. There was no Polish spoken at home. He said the Iron Curtain was there, and it was going to stay: what was the point of learning Polish? Ah, I wish he hadn't! So now I struggle to learn Polish...

Very rarely, maybe at Easter, we'd have a visitation from one of my Dad's old friends from Poland [who lived locally]. It was an alien thing to us and I hated going to their houses because they had all the things I hate, like *flaki*, which is tripe soup, you know? The national dish! I watched a chicken running around in the back garden with no head, because that was dinner. And one of the sons was eating chicken's feet and spitting out the toenails. It was so alien. We were a Fray Bentos [processed meat] family, and suddenly there was all this alien food, and you couldn't understand them. Even as a small child I remember thinking how strange that I was in this house in England and I could have been anywhere in Eastern Europe. I understood nothing they were saying, I didn't even understand the food they were eating. It was very strange. And for that reason, as a small child, it became alien.

Natalia [born 1952]:

The Polish history that I was taught [in Saturday school] was quite romantic. It was taught by this fantastic teacher, who didn't have any of the resources that teachers have available to them now. The only resource was herself. Yet she instilled [a good knowledge of history]. She talked, and taught in pictures. When I went round Poland, it was like having her at my shoulder – it all came back. She herself had been in the [Warsaw] Uprising. So for her, 'ancient' history was very current. When we were at Polish school, obviously we had the old-fashioned *Elementarz*, but she tried to get more up-to-date material. Some of it would have Russian [influence] in it, because it was from [communist] Poland. And -- almost ceremoniously -- we had to take a pair of scissors to school and cut out any Russian references...

We went to the normal English state schools Monday to Friday but, outside that, activities tended to be around the Polish community. Polish guides or scouts, Polish school on Saturday, Polish church, made our first communion at Polish church. My children made it at both schools, they made it at their Catholic primary school as well as church, but [in my day] it was all Polish church, we got confirmed in the Polish church, we were expected to get married in the Polish church, there was the Polish shop, the Polish traditions. So, because

you had very little other free time, your friends tended to be from the Polish background. I loved dancing and singing, so I attended a Polish dance group.

My parents, and I'm not saying that this is true for everybody, but certainly in my family they had a very ambivalent attitude. They were frightened that we would get sullied by the freer way of life. The youngsters were able to go to the cinema on their own on a Saturday, or ice skating, whereas we were far more chaperoned. Which is why I can identify with the Asian community. In a way, I suppose it would be called racism. There was a young man at school whom I took a shine to, and he was of an Irish background. Trying to be fair with my parents, and honest, I said 'Would he be able to come round?' Because I sang in a choir, and it was between the rehearsal and the performance. 'Oh! Irish? All he'll end up [with] is working for John Laing' [a construction company]. And it really fascinated me that, although they were foreign themselves, they somehow regarded themselves as different and better to other foreigners. And again, towards the English, they had a very ambivalent [attitude]. They almost were in awe of the English. Certainly, [if] somebody like my neighbours might say 'black is white', they would probably go towards listening to them, because they felt as if they were more important than they were, themselves. It was sad.

We were fortunate that our next-door neighbours were a most wonderful couple. They were professional rather than just working-class. And even though my Mum and Dad worked in the most menial jobs you can imagine, education as a way of overcoming that, not for themselves but for us, was very, very, important. If I'd have said to them I needed cannabis because it was for school, they'd have let me have it. If it was educational, it would have been fine. And because they didn't have a command of English to that extent that they could read for themselves, I could have got away with murder. For example, I went to a Catholic girls' grammar school and when it came to that time, puberty and so on, we were given a brown envelope and inside that brown envelope was a smaller envelope, sealed with a picture of the Blessed Virgin on. The letter was to the parents saying there's a little leaflet in there, if you'd like to read it yourself, and if you approve, allow your daughter to read it. Well of course I had to read the leaflet to tell my parents what was in it – that was one of those silly situations. That shows the sense of two different communities – we were like a community within a community.

On the one hand it's nice because you knew that people had your back, but it was also a bit claustrophobic. You had to conform to a certain way. There were pressures, for example, if you did something wrong. My parents would say 'You've brought shame on yourself, and our family, but not only that, on the Polish community and on Poland itself.' Imagine. Because they felt that they would be judged by our behaviour, and they didn't want to sully the Polish good name.

But I also realised, with hindsight and with doing research, that perhaps they were frightened that they might well be sent back. Because initially the British government weren't too keen for them to stay. I think it was a really ambivalent situation, both for the British government as well as for the people themselves. I think possibly they felt that – just as after the end of the First World War - there might be another mini-skirmish against the Russians – and they'd be able to go back to Poland, a free Poland. I seem to remember that being in the ether, the atmosphere, constantly. But then, I do remember it stopping as well. Whether it was when Stalin died, or some sort of political change. As a child, I remember it was like 'When we go back to Poland'. Obviously, it wasn't 'back' for me, but for my parents. It stopped and suddenly we weren't going anywhere, we were stopping. So there was all

that going on. Whether it was [the same] for other families, because other families may have relatives over in Poland, so for them it would be different again.

Joanna [born 1959]:

Before Poland joined the EU, pre-2004 I was involved in the Polish community quite a bit, through my parents, mainly my mother. That was the church, mainly. I wasn't in the Polish Scouts or Guides, I should say, although I did belong to the Brownies, as a child. But then schoolwork and other things took over, so I left the Guides. But we were always very much involved in everything that was going on in the church. My mother was very active in the church and I got involved in that as well. I was on the Parish Committee for a number of years, as Secretary. Which wasn't very enjoyable, but it was, I thought, a good thing to do. It was something that I did because it was kind of expected of you. Yes, giving something back to the community. I didn't think too much about it.

I also as a child went to the Polish school, so there were a lot of activities involved with that, what we call the *akademie*, I'm sure you're familiar with that concept, where you have a celebration twice a year to commemorate Polish national events, the more important events in Polish history. So, the schoolchildren participated in that. There were lots of other activities going on which I didn't participate in as a child. But I went along to all the commemorations, all the events at the Polish club, various dances at the club, social events – there was plenty going on. When I was growing up, as a child, as a teenager I took part in all of that. Then I went to university, so I moved away from that side of life, a little bit. But still, I went to universities in cities not far from home. I still kept in touch very much with what was going on at home. I had friends in the community as well. There was very much a feeling of Polishness, in the sense that everybody was keen to maintain the traditions and links with the homeland.

There was very much a strong feeling of having to maintain Polishness and not to lose touch with the old country. But there was the added complication, of course, that Poland was not what it used to be, it had turned into a Soviet satellite. So, there were mixed feelings about that. People who sometimes wanted to go back to Poland were discouraged from doing so. In some quarters they were seen as traitors if they did go back...

My parents married in 1957. They, as I said, were very active in the old Polish community, the Ex-Combatants' Association. My mother taught in the Polish school as well, for a few years. We had a very strong sense of community and Polishness, I would say, in those years. Unfortunately, my parents are no longer with us... I suppose, after my mother died, there was other stuff going on in my life and I didn't really have a lot to do with the community at that time. But, a year later, I met my husband. Ironically, after that, though my husband is English, I got more involved in the Polish community. Because of his job he was asked to give some advice to the local Polish association and that's how I also got involved. At that point we both joined. And, of course, soon after that things changed, with Poland's accession to the EU, and the wave of emigration, what a lot of people call the Third Wave. Because we had the post-War, then we had dribs and drabs and the post-Solidarity influx in the early 80s, and then of course the latest wave.

Joanna (2):

I was bullied at school, definitely, but I don't think it necessarily was because I was Polish. I think that was part of it, certainly. I remember one girl said to me, you know what children are like, I remember one girl saying to me, 'What does your father do?' and then she asked me 'Is your father rich?' And before I'd had a chance to reply, she said 'Oh, of course he won't be rich, because all Polish people are poor.' I remember thinking to myself, I didn't say anything, but I remember, I must have been about seven at most at the time, I remember thinking to myself, because children are logical sometimes, 'No, that's not true, because Mummy said that Pan N. was very rich!'

Tomek [born 1951]:

I was brought up in an entirely Polish environment, in the days when there were no babysitters and so on. So, if my parents went round to friends, who were always Polish, I went round to them. I was totally immersed in a Polish community... I was often on stage, either reciting poetry or taking part in plays. I was an altar boy at the church, at the Polish mass (well, Latin originally). I went to the Polish school.... The head was very rarely there, so effectively the Saturday running was down to my mother. She was very much associated with that for a very long time. So, yes, deeply immersed in the Polish community. I was involved in the Polish scouts, not an organisation that I would admit to having great affection for. For a variety of reasons, it's not me. And I sometimes worry about the paramilitary elements... My mother was very deeply involved with the scout movement. But one of the scout masters gave me a book to read. I was 14-15, maybe, at the time, and I showed it to my parents, and I remember their look of consternation. They said, 'Why did he give [it to] him?' It was a book by Roman Dmowski, who was the leader of the Polish nationalists. OK, after the First World War he was a great patriot, he did a lot for [Poland], he was probably the main negotiator, along with people like Paderewski. But their attitude, immediately, because they were very anti-*narodowcy*. All these things have influenced, shaped my way of looking at things, my way of thinking.

Grażyna [aged 61]:

We just went on quietly with our own lives. A big deal didn't have to be made, to be accepted and to live a decent life... [Problems] were minor. I had a situation with my history teacher, who could never bring herself to say, 'The Poles' or 'Poland.' Recently, I was with some friends from my schooldays, and I asked, 'Did I imagine this, or did it happen?' They said 'No, Grażyna, this happened.' My history teacher always referred to Poles or Poland as 'and your lot, Grażyna'. The people who were at this recent event remembered it vividly, that's what she said. I had things like that. And, in a sense, we were excluded in a different way, which was of our own making. For example, if you choose to go to Polish Saturday school, not that anybody *chose* to go – we were forced, you missed out on all the sports at

English school. Which was a fantastic bonding experience. Instead we had to go and learn about Mieszko I or whoever it was. Because it's not what everybody else did.

Anne: But at the same time, I suppose, you also got the benefits of having Polish community life, as a child.

Grażyna: Massive benefits. Obviously, there was the language. I loved my Polish background inasmuch as it opened me up to other worlds as well. Once you have those two things going on in your life, two cultures, you're open to a third, a fourth, a fifth. Your language learning is going to be improved. It's definitely going to be easier for you to learn other languages. We had opportunities, for example, like going to Scout camp, going to Brownie camp, in summer. We had the opportunities of going to Poland and not feeling like an alien there, because we had the language. And also the Youth Club. The Youth Club was attached to the Polish church. They would get coaches together, so we would have events, usually a dance of some kind, in other towns. Whereas none of my English friends had any of that. They didn't know anybody from Bradford. Oh, big deal. Yes, very exotic! Go off to Leeds – Wow! They just didn't have that. So there were benefits. There were huge benefits...

Meeting up with those old schoolfriends, we discussed what our home lives looked like in our teens. They said they had no idea my Polish diaspora life was so different to theirs. Looking back on it, I rarely talked about it at school. I don't remember any sense of embarrassment or shame, nothing like that. Maybe I just felt 'other.' Besides, I had plenty of Polish friends nearby to talk to.

Teodora [65]:

As a child growing up, I was *very* aware, Dad made us very aware of our Polish heritage. With the *Wigilia*, that was always our Christmas focus. Easter was always very important. St Nicholas always came to us on December 6th. As I said before, Dad was very involved with the club in L., so I spent a lot of time there. And he was involved in Polish sports at UK level. He was also an FA [Football Association] referee, amateur. So a lot of my time was spent in the environment of either the Polish club or Polish sports clubs. Dad would travel the country, really, to his Polish associations. He very often came down to London as well, to the Polish clubs. As a little girl, I would go into Polish homes -- very often Dad was going because of the Polish association of one kind or another, so I'd sit there quietly, while these people spoke in this strange language. They were like little Polands. A lot of women, in particular, could only speak Polish. They couldn't speak English, which I find fascinating, because a lot of migrants, well, some migrants are criticised for that nowadays, aren't they?... [My father tried to create a 'little Poland'] in terms of the traditions that we followed in the family home, and some of the food that we ate. It wasn't typically English. Mum was English, and she also came from a very big family, so there were lots of aunties and uncles involved in Mum's side of the family, it was like a double life almost...

I did [go to Saturday school] when we moved to Shropshire. But if I'm honest, I was a teenager, and it just wasn't very cool, so I wasn't a model student!... When I was a little girl,

I can remember Dad bringing me down to London to a concert, because it was *Mazowsze* that were performing, I can remember that very vividly, being very overwhelmed by the singing and the dancing. So we were very aware that we were different.

Anna [aged 69]:

I think the reason why I didn't have such an interest in Polish things and Poland when I was younger was because of the difficulty of visiting Poland. If you don't have a contact, it's difficult to maintain an interest. It was very difficult to have any kind of meaningful relationship with the Polish side of the family. Also, in my case, I don't know about other people, but my parents divorced when I was quite young, and I lived with my mother, who was English, and I saw my father occasionally. So I just got on with my life as it was.

2 Parents, grandparents and trauma

Zuzanna:

I didn't chat to my father when I was younger, because I grew up with so many stories, and he told them time and time again, and you didn't really want to know then. Whereas now I would be quite interested in exploring them in more detail, but they've all died now. I think, having read about it from [memoirs written by] my father: he was a displaced person, he was not an immigrant, he didn't come here because he wanted to, he never would have wanted to come here, never wanted to stay. But then, by the time the Curtain came down, he couldn't have gone back, there was nothing there, nothing there for him. My mother didn't have this experience, but grew up with a very disappointed person, a very unhappy person... My mum's relatives, and perhaps my father's relatives as well, had a very distorted perspective of what it was like here for my parents, compared to how it was in Poland. I think they always felt it was very much easier. It probably was easier in lots of ways, but there are lots of challenges of not having your family around you and being an immigrant. And particularly for my parents, because as soon they opened their mouths, you can tell that they are not from England, because they both speak with very strong accents.

Janina:

When I left my job at the Red Cross, my manager, he knew about, I told him about my family before, and he said something quite nice to me. He said, 'You know, your grandparents were helped by the Red Cross when they were refugees, and now their granddaughter is doing the same thing, but sixty years later.' I was like, 'Oh, you're right, it's a nice, sort of, cyclical thing.' It made a difference because we were very close to my mum's family and my grandparents. Growing up and hearing stories of quite traumatic things... I think they do stick with you. And it reminds you of how fragile democracy is, in a way. I do think coming from a background where your very close family members have been hurt significantly. I'd love to go back to where my *babcia* was from, but it's probably not there anymore. It's sort of upsetting to think about, and probably, in quite a big way, it's formed my identity, as being someone who cares about minorities and refugees. I think so.

[My grandparents did talk about their experiences.] They could be quite funny. My grandma would always, if ever I complained about anything, she would say 'Well, you've not lived in a tin hut in an army camp and had nothing' and all these kinds of things. I think they were very open with what happened to them. A lot of it didn't really click until I got older. But you know, my grandad would tell me stories about working on the Tube when they first got here, the journey to England, working in the factory and learning English. They did talk about it, and me and my brother would ask questions. It wasn't prominent, but it was enough of a feature to be spoken about quite regularly.

Eva:

I was looking after my mum; she had osteoarthritis in her knees, and she had problems in walking, she eventually was in a wheelchair. And that stemmed from an accident that she

had in Siberia. She was crossing a frozen river in Siberia, the boat capsized, and she was in frozen water for over an hour. She came out of there, people that saw that incident said she couldn't swim, she couldn't get out, she was clinging onto the edge of this little boat for over an hour. They eventually managed to get her out, she was absolutely frozen solid. She recovered, but she suffered with rheumatism, aches and pains. During the whole of her whole life she was having various problems until it got really, really bad and turned into osteoarthritis, and she couldn't walk. So, for the last twenty years of her life, I was looking after her.

It was hard times – I don't know how I did that, looking back. I was working full-time and looking after her. My life really revolved around her all the time, it felt as though I was living the end of her life for her, if that makes any sort of sense to you. I still haven't got around to how that was. But everything revolved around her, taking her to hospital appointments, making sure that she was OK, that everything was OK for her. And I didn't really have my own life, to be honest with you. I just worked, worked full-time, and the rest of my time was spent looking after her and making sure that everything was OK for her, and that she was happy and that she could survive to the end of her days really...

So really what happened was -- my life was in a bad way when she died. I didn't know what to do with myself, I lost my identity, I didn't know who I was. I had this huge, huge hole and huge gap in my life and I didn't know how to fill it... My brother and sister are both married, they have families, children. They married English partners, their children are, kind of, English. The children can't speak the language, Polish. But I didn't marry, and I was left on my own. And it was tough, I didn't know what to do with myself. And even those little few words in Polish I used to speak to Mum, that stopped. So I wasn't speaking any Polish and, you know, it just became obvious to me that I didn't know who I was. I was neither Polish, and I didn't feel as though I was English.

And then I started having all these questions that I never asked before. For example, the Siberian experience, the African experience. Mum always used to say, 'When I was in Siberia this', and 'When I was in Africa that', and I'd heard these stories so many times I just took them for granted. I didn't understand properly what was being said. And then when she'd gone, I was looking through some of her photographs from when she was in Africa, I found her passport when she was in Tehran, and all these questions came flooding in. What was she doing in Siberia? How many people were there in Siberia? Why Africa? How big was that camp in Africa? How many people were involved? What happened? Why? All these things were starting to fill up my head.

And I thought, I need to do something with this, I need to find out more about my history, because now I really don't know what happened. So, in my spare time at work, in the lunch hour at work, I used to search the Internet. And I found it very difficult, because there were lots of sites, lots of websites in Polish about *Kresy*, about Polish World War II, all these things, and it took me forever. The translations weren't brilliant at the time, some sites didn't even have any translations. And it was taking me forever to try and piece together some information about my family. Also, I was trying to piece together that whole journey that they took, because it was like, eight or nine years of their lives travelling around the world, and not knowing the army situation. And my grandfather, he'd fought in two World Wars, what was he doing there, how was it? Who was Marshal Piłsudski? Who was General Anders? What were these army formations and things that were going on? I needed to know more – and, obviously, there was nobody to ask. So, I was searching and searching the

Internet, and eventually I found an English site, an English group, with descendants, very similar to me, all over the world, all searching for the same sorts of answers. And I joined this group, and I became very active with them...

My brother travelled a lot – he doesn't tend to nowadays, but he has holidays, he goes all over the place, and at the beginning of his career when he used to travel my mother was *absolutely shocked* by it. She used to say to him 'Why are you going away?' Sometimes they used to go, in the early days when they had children, they would go to a campsite and go into a caravan or a tent. And my mother was horrified! She used to say to them 'Why are you leaving the comfort of your own home to go and sleep outside in a tent?!' She just could not understand it. Because her journey, she had been through half of the world, and she hated every single minute of it. It wasn't a holiday for her. She was shifted from one place to another place, she saw all sorts of conditions; during the War it wasn't particularly nice. They didn't have food, they didn't have clothes, they didn't have this, that and the other. The places where she had to stay, they were awful. And for her, travelling brought back bad memories of the War. And she just could not understand why somebody would want to leave their home and go and sleep outside somewhere in a tent or in a caravan! She just could not see it, and right to the end she just could not understand that.

Adelaide:

I grew up believing that my father was Polish. He said he was. I was born in this country. He came here after the war, he was in the Second Polish Corps. He met my mother in Italy when he was fighting, [and] he came to England. We had a white Polish crowned eagle on the wall, framed, and he had Polish friends that had a similar route to England. But he never talked about his background, like many of them didn't. In fact, he was very secretive about it, he didn't want us to know. (He benefited from having a Ukrainian name so was not subject to any of the four Soviet mass deportations. However, he was arrested in May 1941 and ended up in a Siberian gulag nevertheless. It didn't take much to become an enemy of the people in those times.) He told us his family in Poland were all gone, they were all gone.

As a child, I had no conception of communism, or what that might have meant. He came from eastern Poland, which was no longer Polish anyway, it was the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Soviet Union I should say. I didn't know that at the time – I didn't know where he came from at all. And he had his army documents. He crossed out his place of origin, so nobody could find out. A big secret. But we thought he was Polish. And when the friends came to the house, his friends, lots of single men, shortly after the war, lonely, and wanting to be in a family, he taught my mother to cook Polish recipes... We thought that he was Polish and that was that... He spoke Polish. He had to because his friends were Polish. We had Polish friends, lots and lots of Polish friends, lifelong friends. And I had a Polish godmother...

My father died thirty-four years ago, and six years ago I started my research. And the first thing I did was get his documents from the Ministry of Defence. Then, of course, I found out where he came from – I looked it up on the map, and I asked the Red Cross to look for his family, because he said they were all gone. And I did a lot of reading about that, you know, the history around there, and learned a great deal about those people's experience. And I understand very much why he was... He had post-traumatic stress disorder. You know, like

many older Polish people who've been through those experiences do. And after three years the Red Cross found his family. Well, what was left of his family.

He told us stories about his mother and father: [they] were Polish and had to emigrate to Canada, when he was a small child, two years old, he couldn't travel. He was adopted by his auntie, his real name was something else, dida, dida, dida. I found out none of that was true... The truth was that he was half-Polish and half-Ukrainian. And as you probably realise, in the Second World War that was quite complex. And he identified as Polish. He identified as Polish in the Second Polish Republic, he spoke Polish. I've interviewed people in his village. You know, I was having an existential crisis during all of this. I went in 2016 the first time and found out that he had a wife in Poland, he had a son. I had a half-brother, but they were no longer alive, sadly. But my nephew is there. I found out that his mother was Polish, but his father was Ukrainian. I went again last year, re-interviewing the same people, and I got more information. And I also understood that his next-door neighbour was his godfather, and held the crown over his head at his wedding, which was not Roman Catholic, it was a Greek Catholic wedding...

We went to the state archive in Borshchiv and we found his birth records. He was born in 1917, and his mother was Polish, and his father was Ukrainian, and he was baptised. So I have conclusive evidence of his background. But he never ever, ever admitted the Ukrainian part of his life. And, in fact, the first time I went to Ukraine I was still believing that he was maybe half-Ukrainian, half-Polish, and I didn't know how he identified in the village. And, on the last day, I was shown a photograph of him at a wedding, a Ukrainian wedding, and he was standing in the background, but he was wearing a suit and a collar and tie, and everyone else was wearing ethnic Ukrainian dress. And I said, 'Why is he wearing a suit?' His neighbour -- she was a little girl when he was there -- she just said, 'Because he was Polish.' He obviously identified as Polish in the village, because there were, you know, there were Jewish people, there were Ukrainian people, there were Polish people, it was that kind of area. So he identified as Polish when he was young, and he identified as Polish in England. But his name, of course, Motkaluk, is a Ukrainian name. So I went from being Polish to maybe I'm Ukrainian and he lied, to maybe I'm back to Polish again, and really I'm nothing at all...

We didn't do so much Christmas Eve, my mother as Italian wouldn't want to do Christmas Eve. We did more of an English celebration, but we had the food. We went to the Polish Catholic church, we were baptised as Catholics. I had no conception of a different type of Catholic church then. One day, there was one strange thing, though. We were young children, and he was taking us to the Polish Catholic church. My sister was wearing a turquoise skirt and a yellow cardigan, and he said to our mother 'You'd better change her clothes, I can't take her in those colours.' And, of course, you understand why... I remember that as a significant event, he said 'I can't take her in those colours' [of the Ukrainian flag]. He did identify as Polish...

Maybe in the generation I grew up with people had good reasons to [to be afraid]. First of all, they were advised not to talk by the Army, the Ministry of Defence. A lot of my work is with post-memory and the generations which inherit traumatic histories, and a great deal of their history is so traumatic they just wanted to protect their children from it. Why would you burden your children with horror stories of what happened to you? I think that maybe there was a sense, certainly on my father's part, of a huge responsibility.

I am looking at the photograph of him now, I will show you in a minute. He was a father, his first-born son was nine months old when he was arrested. He never saw him again. And he came here, and eventually he married another woman – and he's not the only one who did that – and he had another son. In my book, in my writing, I'm writing the scene when he's looking at his new son and asking himself how he can be a father to this child when he abandoned his other one? He couldn't protect his other child, you know. What does that do to people?

And also, the post-war generation that came with the values and the traditions, they brought those with them. They seemed to be fixed. I know the first time my mother went back to Italy, after twelve, thirteen years, she was quite horrified at how liberal Italy had become. She came over in 1950, she brought the 1950 southern Italian way of thinking with her, and that's how we had to be. And for my father, you know, he brought 1940 Polish, that was practically ninetieth-century thinking from there. So harsh, such strong discipline, so high expectations, another problem with assimilating to an English culture which was more tolerant. So many difficulties. I think that each migratory wave, each diaspora, whatever you want to call it, carries with them that set of values, and almost clings. Because to dilute your values in a culture in which you are alien seems almost dangerous.

Maria:

My mother was born in Wilno, and spent most of her life, until she was nineteen, in Poland... She came to England when she was nineteen, with her mother, because her father was here. He fought with the Anders Army, as people say... My father is very, very patriotic in that sense that people who've been through Siberia have been, despite that he left Poland when he was nine. My mother had an experience of growing up in Poland in the 'fifties, so a different story really, and different attitudes to Poland as well as a result.

Barbara:

At that time my Mum, who was my Polish mainstay, who I interacted with in Polish -- she had a home which was full of Polish tradition and letters from home, and she was a big mainstay in the Polish community in Nottingham -- she was terminally ill. And losing her, in 2005, meant not just losing a mother, but losing what I called Poland, and that was it. I had nobody to speak with in Polish every day, and my life felt very barren.

Carole:

Around that time I read a book called *Joe's War* which was written by a journalist [Annette Kobak] who had a Polish father and an English mother, much like me, who grew up with unanswered questions about her father, what happened to him, before and during the war, and why he was as he was subsequently. And I have to say – somebody gave a present of it to me – it really resonated. The whole idea of trauma, handed from one generation to the next. I suppose I felt as the first of four siblings that the trauma had got dumped on me. More so than my siblings. A feeling that something existed but was somehow not accessible. I became aware, around about that time, of how un-bitter my father was. There were things I didn't know about, until I read this book. You know, the fact that after all this huge effort

the Poles had made to fight with the Allies – Monte Cassino and all that – they were somehow denied victory and handed over to Stalin on a plate. It was a double trauma. I got none of that from him. I think he wasn't the sort of man that held grudges. He wasn't an easy person, but I think he'd somehow tried to shut off everything that had happened. And again, that was communicated. So I'd grown up with a lifelong feeling of connection, rather than a real concrete connection and somehow after 2004 it became easy to make it into something tangible...

My father never spoke Polish after he came to the UK. He had very little to do with anything Polish until after 1992 when he did start to go back a bit, and almost had to re-learn some of his Polish, because he'd forgotten it, despite the fact that he actually spoke English with quite a strong accent. I've often thought about a lack of language. How that must be, to lose your mother tongue but still not feel quite at home [with your adopted language].

Agnieszka:

I was sent away to board... I just don't understand how I was sent away to board, how Poles, a Polish mother could send me away. Aged seven! This is something that I make no bones about, I had to actually see someone about it... [At a recent event for second generation] full Poles, or semi-Poles like myself... [we discussed] intergenerational effects – we had two tables, we could hardly get everybody on. Everybody was so interested! And we were talking about the commonalities of our upbringing, and for me it was very cathartic. I always knew I had a very strange upbringing, there were things I couldn't talk about to my friends... because it was the legacy from our parents' experience, in this case in Siberia.... This is a commonality... that silence was used as a punishment... My mother sometimes wouldn't talk to me for two weeks, three weeks at the time – literally not talk to me and my brother. But there were some people I met at that conference; their parents wouldn't talk to them for months!

Aniela:

My Mum and Dad are always going on about, Mum especially, she has this thing about Poland, probably because she's never quite made it back, she's never quite had a childhood there. Whereas her formative years were spent in Kenya. But I think that, because of that, because of that loss that they feel, they really hold on to their traditions and the language. It's very important to them... Dad is three years older than Mum, so he was a little bit older when the same thing happened to them. They basically ended up doing the same route – Siberia, and then the Middle East. Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, India, and then they found themselves in Africa...

[On their first visit to Poland in 1974] Mum and Dad desperately, well, it was mostly Mum, desperately wanted to go and see all of it. Since then they've been back for a month again, four years ago, five years ago, again, with those friends. And they took them to the places where they were born, which is now the Ukraine. Mum was born in Tarnopol which is now Ternopil in the Ukraine, so they went to visit the places where they would have grown up in. Mum was desperately wanting to see that. I think she had to do that. It's a form of closure almost, she's been to see her birthplace. They have no documents, they have no birth

certificates or anything. They tried to get their birth certificates when they were over there, but they just couldn't.

Dominic:

My grandfather went off to fight all over North Africa, he was in Palestine, he fought at Monte Cassino, in Italy. Dreadfully traumatic experiences. He was the only man from his village in his regiment to survive, he was separated from my grandmother for seven-eight years. Because she, meanwhile, joined the convoy of refugees that passed through Uzbekistan, then into Persia. From there she was sent onwards to Rhodesia, where she spent five and a half years in a Polish women's refugee camp, working as camp baker, and then came to the UK, where she spent another two years in Maghull refugee camp, before being eventually reunited with my grandfather through the agency of the Red Cross.

One of the things that was curious for me, about all of this, [was that], like many Poles who had experiences of that kind, my grandparents arrived in the UK severely traumatised. Both of them suffered from what we would now diagnose as post-traumatic stress disorder. In the case of my grandfather – and he was a very capable, very talented young man, he was only seventeen when he was abducted – he would have gone to university, but had to take up manual work when he came to the UK. And he had a whole host of very serious psychological problems, which required protracted hospitalisation. Relations between him and my father were extremely strained, because my father grew up, essentially, without him, as a child, and so the relationship between father and son was very difficult, complicated further by these psychological difficulties.

My father married quite young... For much of my childhood, my father wasn't in contact with his family, at all. Communication broke down completely.

It was a very strange world for me as a child. There weren't many Poles living in Ireland in the 1970s and early 1980s. I was aware of having a somewhat exotic-looking father, an exotic-sounding surname, which it certainly was, but my father didn't really speak about his experiences at all. He was very, very reluctant. In fact, his Polishness was almost a source of embarrassment to him, I think. He was acutely conscious of being different, wanting to assimilate, wanting to fit in, as in fact his brother and sister also did. All of their attitudes, towards the Polish language, towards their Polishness, were very ambivalent. I can recall, for example, that occasionally my grandmother would phone, when we were kids, and even though my father grew up speaking no other language until the age of eleven, and would have spoken Polish with his parents all the way into his early twenties, he would pretend that he'd forgotten how to speak Polish. He'd reply to her in English.

Naturally, as a child, when you feel that there are secrets in the background, things that can't be discussed, you become curious. I suppose that's what happened. My grandfather died when I was in my early twenties, and I re-established contact with my Polish grandmother, and found out – for the first time – what had happened to them. That was a deeply traumatic experience. I suppose the experiences of refugees, the experiences of people who spent time in concentration camps, in the Gulag, was something that I'd read about in history books, and I was aware of in a peripheral way. But to discover that members of your very close family had endured this horrendous experience - I found that was one of the crucial formative events, I suppose, of my adult life. In its way – obviously

one can't speak of a trauma that in any way bears comparison to what my grandparents would have experienced, but, if I can use the word traumatic in that particular sense, that it was a difficult experience, it was one that I struggled with.

My grandmother hadn't really learned to speak English very well. She could manage for everyday purposes, like shopping, but like many Poles in Liverpool they existed within a Polish-speaking community. They had a Polish doctor, Polish shops that they attended, Polish hairdressers, Polish handymen they called in. So at that stage I started to learn Polish, in my early twenties, just in an effort to be able to communicate with her. I'd always had a very strong interest in things Eastern European, and this was a good opportunity. Except in Ireland at the time learning Polish was difficult. Night classes weren't offered; no university in the country taught Polish.

But I was working in Dublin for a time and I used to get some Polish classes from a lady at the Polish Embassy. And so I used to write to my grandmother in Polish. And we would speak, a mixture of Polish and English. What was curious about that was that – with the breaking down of that linguistic barrier – she also began to speak much more freely about her experiences. Which again was strange...

Specifically that aspect [of traumatic pasts] was extremely important for me. I felt that learning Polish and my attempt to engage with things Polish actually provided me with a kind of access to that experience, to understanding this aspect of my grandparents' experience which I felt was so important for my own life. It was probably the single most important motivating factor in encouraging me to learn Polish... One was, with my grandparents, acutely aware of the extent to which their lives had been shattered by the experiences that they had undergone. I remember, as a small child, staying with my grandparents – this was before my father became completely estranged from his father for a long while – and I remember waking up in the middle of the night and hearing my grandmother screaming with some dreadful nightmare of being back in the camps. On a few occasions she began to talk about her experiences in the camps, which were absolutely dreadful – my father nearly died of malnutrition. My grandmother had only been married a week when they were deported. She gave birth in this camp, and, as I say, my father nearly died from malnutrition. She described that they were assigned to labour brigades who were breaking stones to construct railways, railway beds. And how they were eating grass and nettles and things to try and survive. They were severely malnourished. She would break into tears and become, on a couple of occasions, really distressed. That aspect of the experience, just the elemental shock of realising how brutally they had been treated, really made a profound impression on me.

My grandfather unfortunately became very disturbed. My father had a brother who died in his thirties of diabetes and at this point my grandfather wasn't even talking to my father. And out of the blue, my father happened to phone him, and my grandfather said to him 'One of your family has died. Guess which one.' And put down the phone. And a neighbour informed my father, eventually took pity on my father and informed him what had happened. And on the anniversary of his death every year my grandfather for some years used to throw a brick through the window of that neighbour. You were talking about levels of anger and disturbance. You came back from the war, having experienced what you experienced and seen what you would see, and you were expected just to get on with it.

I suppose what I'm trying to say to you is that that contact with my grandmother and with my grandparents was something very, very powerful. In some ways it was very positive in terms of expanding my own horizons. To think about things with which I wouldn't otherwise have engaged. But also, I have to say, as an adult, the shock of hearing about their experiences is something that took me a long, long time to digest.

Natalia:

I also got a job with a charity in M. This was only a part-time job, working for the Central and East European community, in terms of mental health. It brought me in contact with the new communities, with what they were going through, but it also strengthened my idea of what my parents must have gone through, when they settled. Also, when I went to conferences, people were really interested in my generation. I feel that – not though any sense of over-inflated ego or anything – I think it's important [to take into account mental health issues] for children who will be born, or are born, to parents who weren't born [in the UK]. It's quite a distinctive group of people. Because we are, you can be torn, at any time through your life. You're on this long continuum, either you're Polish or English, and sometimes you're both, sometimes you're neither. It was something that was close to my heart. Particularly being a teacher, or somebody who was working on behalf of others in the mental health 'industry' – for want of a better word – their needs were never really met. Then I found myself supporting people who'd developed Alzheimer's. My own Dad did. I was working with people who really learned English and integrated very well, but when they got Alzheimer's they forgot their English. My [own] first tongue [was Polish], because I spoke Polish until five. But God forbid, if I developed Alzheimer's, would I revert back to that language?

You don't know the secrets that a lot of these people kept. There's been research done on the children of Holocaust survivors. Surely there must be some effect on the children of people who survived the Stalinist regime? My grandparents died *en route* – coming out of Siberia – and their daughter, my aunty had to bury them where they fell. That's not a very pleasant thing to do, for a person who's a teenager, or not many years out of teenager[hood]. That would be awful, whatever age you are. And thinking where are you going to end up, or are you going to end up anywhere? Where your next meal's going to be. My mother-in-law went through that and ended up, they were placed in the colonies, and she ended up in Kojima in Africa. Even there, yes, they had their schools, it was warm, but there must have been times when they went hungry. And she said she often prayed that she could get just a locust to eat. You cannot imagine it. And, when you see people from Syria, all these atrocities that are happening now – I think, that could be my parents, that could be my family. And the idea that some of the places there's fighting in now, they are actually the places where they were given succour. They were looked after. The Kazakh women were seen as wonderful, my Dad went through Persia, Iran, all those places, again, the names have changed, but the war's still there and people are still living in horrific circumstances. I suppose that's the humanitarian aspect of my wanting to know more. And of course, somehow atone for what my parents went through.

Particularly when you consider that they arrived with nothing, and they gave so much. Me and my brother, we were well-educated, we were well-nurtured, they certainly went without so that we would have. When I mentioned about the survivors of the Holocaust, I

know that when I was at Polish school there were people there of my age, several, who had breakdowns before they were out of the school. It was the pressure, I know that there have been comedy sketches about the Asian communities, they're all going to be doctors or solicitors - but that was our families. They wanted us to achieve, but sometimes you haven't got it within you to be able to do that. And yet their expectation is there. I felt an element of that, because when I was doing my A levels, I thought, I need to have Plan B here, because if I don't get into college my parents wouldn't have been able to live within the community, because they'd be saying 'Oh, she's not done well, has she?' My Plan B was to travel the world, and I thought, if I go to Canada, they can make a story up about me and they can tell people I'm doing wonderfully well. There was all that about being that generation. Again, it comes back to how the youngsters who are growing up now, who are being born to foreign parents of any nationality but obviously [including] to Polish, that service providers, be it the educationalists, or medical, need to take care of that as well.

When I was working within the mental health organisation, they were saying 'We're very customer and client focused', but it was still very limited. In the sense that 'focused' as long as it's what we think they ought to be doing. They provided them with an interpreter, but can you imagine a Russian interpreter going to a Polish person, who might have had the trauma [unclear phrase]? ...

Post-traumatic stress is post-traumatic stress. Whatever the stress was, and the trauma. It's somehow not even acknowledged. My mum suffered from a mental breakdown... It's more than just a stiff upper lip, because, deep inside, they are crying out themselves. But we must not let that be shown, because it would be a weakness.

Teodora:

Dad saw life very much in black and white. That's the man I knew. He decided he wouldn't go back to Poland until the crown was back on the eagle. So he decided – well, that's a funny story, actually. He decided to come to England. Because recently I've regained my Polish citizenship, I had to gather Dad's army papers, and in his army papers he was asked where he wanted to go. The three places were Argentina, Canada and New Zealand. But for some reason, he ended up in the UK. He was billeted with my English granddad and that's how he met my mum. Anyway. I'm digressing a little, I know. He was always a fish out of water. And with three friends whose parents were Polish, I'm sure, looking back, he suffered from post-traumatic stress. Because he could lose his temper very easily – you never knew what kind of mood he was going to be in. As I say, he saw life in black-and-white, decided he would not go back to Poland until it was free again. But we [my English mother and the children] started going back from the early 1970s...

When Poland was free, he was too ill to travel. But... Dad said that he would want his ashes taken back to Poland. So, he died, and we asked the funeral director about looking into taking his ashes back. And the funeral director came back to us and said, 'It's really bureaucratic.' He said 'I suggest you just smuggle him back in.' And that's what we did. Mum, my husband, and our son and myself put his ashes in a Sainsburys bag, put him in the back of the car, travelled across the Netherlands. Mum suddenly became hysterical. She has quite a dark sense of humour, and said 'What will happen at the Polish border if they search

the car and come across this white substance?’ It all got a bit silly, really. We stopped in a hotel in old East Germany, it had been old East Germany, and there was a long conversation about whether Dad should go to the hotel or not.

But anyway, we arrived in Poland on the Thursday, and the next day he was interned, with my Grandma and Granddad... It’s exactly where he should be. There was a lot of concern, really, beforehand, as to whether it was the right place for him to be. With grief, you don’t really think in a very logical kind of way. So, most Saturdays I’m there with my cousins, sorting out the graves and taking the flowers, and what have you.

Anna:

My parents divorced when I was quite young, and I lived with my mother, who was English, and I saw my father occasionally. So I just got on with my life as it was. Things changed when I had children, and my father, although he wasn’t a very good father, was an amazing grandfather. Then I began to spend more time with him, and so my interest in it resumed. I think the real catalyst was when Rita [Crosby] phoned me about the book [on her father and mine], when she was just researching. Because although my father said a few things about Poland he never really spoke about his time in Poland during the war. He spoke about his school life, but not much after. So there wasn’t really much knowledge about things, other than what was in the public domain. Speaking to Rita, and meeting Rita, and reading her book, made me realise that there was a whole area of my father’s life that I really didn’t know anything about. That made him as a person something special, something that I suppose needed to be celebrated.

And then also when the Wall came down. I have to say another big, significant factor was when the Wall came down. I would have gone over to Poland then, to help teach them English. But I had a family, and young children. And when you have young children, uprooting them to go to another country is, you have to think carefully about that. So I didn’t do that. That’s how it started. I just wanted to find out more about my father, his name, about things in Poland. So, I went to Poland in my motorhome... nearly four years ago.

Iza:

There are various ways of telling this. What I’d grown up with was that my father went back [to Poland] to be happier. To be back with his family. He’d had lots of mental health stuff and I knew very little about that. That wasn’t really talked about. But my mother kept up a story about him being happier. So, when he came back, when I was twenty-five, she had to tell us a bit more... [She thought] that he might come back more. He went to buy a car for a birthday present for me and crashed and died. What we didn’t know was that his last wife’s daughter was in the car, as were two of her children. The youngest child was quite damaged with her head. So, although I knew, kind of, what trauma [he had experienced in the War], I didn’t there was more to come...

I've got all these postcards that he sent in the 60s. Poland had some fantastic art, magazines and stuff. So I've got postcards, and when I went to Stover's Park to get the translation [of his army records] they were behind glass, a whole load of the old postcards, and I thought 'They're the same ones that I got way back then!' And I think in all the books, often it starts with, in the box, so my box isn't from the War, but I've got all my father's letters, I've got little things, things that he had, the army badges and stuff like that. Everyone seems to have these little collections of stuff, photographs...

I think my father had a very nice life [in Poland] in lots of ways that he might not have had here, in that he did little bits of work as a translator, he had lots of these sanatorium visits, for tranquillity. He had quite a gentle life, as opposed to here, it was very intense mental health intervention, which, I don't know whether he would have needed again, but he didn't seem to have had. He does seem to have had a more relaxed life. But people said he was very changed. [My older relative] remembers him from before the War. He was her favourite cousin, it was fun, and they went dancing, and did all the pre-War Polish story, by the sea every summer, and what he was like then. They see it as him being very changed from the War. They seemed to think he had a head injury, but I think, perhaps something was lost in translation, it was more mental health than head injury. But I think they prefer to think of it like that. When my mother went back with him to Poland, in 1961, she had done a lot of setting up support, to make sure he had all that he'd need. They just didn't want to know that there was anything wrong with their son. They'd not seen him. His father hadn't seen him at all, my grandmother came over, in '56. I thought it was because I'd been born, but I now know it was Khrushchev's window; anyway, she came and went back. On the photos, it was me being held by her. I said 'Oh, she came over to see me!' That was the first time she'd seen him, since the War...

I suppose that's left me with [a view that] the less war the better. Appreciating that people don't just survive, they have things that go on. All the relatives that didn't survive but also the impact on the next generation. Some of the reading I've done, I've liked where you read what the people my generation have been saying... And I thought it was very interesting, watching the story being told in Poland. Because people don't necessarily want to hear it again. I want to hear it. But some of my generation think 'Not again. It's too much.' Not in a horrible way, but it's very heavy, and they've heard it, whereas I haven't. So, you can see, some of them are just like, 'Now we're here,' they're saying, 'Now we're in the EU and why are we still talking about that?' ...

When they were in Kazakhstan, Anders Army was being formed, so he walked to the Caspian Sea and crossed to Tehran and [was at] Monte Cassino, and got injured, and was sent to a hospital in Scotland. And then in the Resettlement Corps. And down to London. I think he was about 15, 16 [when he was deported to Kazakhstan], so he really lost all those teenage years, and kept up with various bits of education along the way. Once in England they all did engineering, electrical engineering, for radio, and he carried on learning lots of languages, and people seemed to pick up every opportunity there was. But obviously it had taken a toll on him...

I think it's made me think about war in a much bigger way, when you hear of events. You just think the ramifications on mental health can go on and on, that's not going to go. We still seem to be, as a world, far too flippant about taking those kinds of actions. Generations of impact, to go on... When you look at the big picture, how many groups and populations have been displaced, and have had it happen again, and are still in those situations, is

mindboggling, really. It is a very continuous pattern. But hopefully the more people say there's this kind of impact there will be more caution, about thinking that war is a first and only resort. Because it's very costly in every single way.

3 Polish names

Zuzanna:

People have always had a problem pronouncing my [sur]name, and I have very much anglicised the pronunciation, because it grates on me to have it mispronounced. And my first name, my family use the abbreviation, and varieties of the abbreviation as well. But I don't ever tell English people the abbreviation, because it's mispronounced in a way that I don't like. My husband uses it from time to time, and I'm just kind of 'Don't say that', it sounds horrible. I like my first name, I don't have any problems with my maiden surname either, but it's just that it has always been a challenge. Certainly, when I was a junior doctor and people felt, because I think once you are a consultant people feel that they ought to call you by your surname, but when I was a junior doctor people used to call me Doctor Sue, everyone used to call me Doctor Sue, because it was so much easier.

Sara:

Unless somebody knows me, they don't realise anything from the past, or what my history or ancestry is. Sometimes people can be quite shocked when I say my surname, then they say 'oh, I thought you were Welsh!' I am Welsh, but I am also half-Polish. And then they want to know the story.

Eva:

[My parents called me] Eva [pronounced 'Eeva']. In the hospital where my mother had me, the nurse said, 'What do you want to call your daughter?' She wanted to call me after my grandmother who was Ewa, because she said, when she was pregnant, expecting me, and she didn't know at that time whether she would have a boy or a girl, but she decided that if it was going to be a boy he would be called Adam, after her father, and if it was a girl she would be called Ewa after her mother. So I arrived and, obviously, she wanted to call me Ewa, but she knew there would be a problem with the name, with the pronunciation of the 'w' in the word. So she said 'Her name is going to be Eva.' It was just written down as E-V-A. And I was always called Eva, even Mother and grandparents called me that.

Adelaide:

My first name was Ada, of course, Ada, yes, which was a bit odd. The second, the [Ukrainian] surname of course, is what gave us all the problems. Because I always think that we passed, we passed as English people. The more you move away from a small community, you can pass as anything. So, until the name came up, people I encountered for the first time just thought I was English.

Maria:

I've been married for nearly fourteen years, and, when I got married, I didn't change my surname. My husband didn't mind too much, but his father did a lot, and always called me by my married surname. So, when my passport came up for renewal, I did change it... I changed my surname, but I also asked them to put a line in saying 'this person is also known as Maria C.' So I haven't got rid of it totally! I just couldn't do it, I think I just couldn't do it...

Kinga: With a [Polish] name you are more recognizable to other Polish people, they can see it's a Polish surname. Because your [given] name also could be both.

Maria: Yes, it's Maria. My parents chose it that way, because they didn't want us to have any problems with our names... I do get asked sometimes 'Is your surname Polish?', and I say 'Yes', and they say 'Oh, you don't sound like a Pole'.

Agnieszka:

It became abbreviated to Agnes, because when the English saw 'sz' they called me 'Agneska' and I couldn't stand 'Agneska'... I sign myself on everything, on every credit card, everything, bank, every official signature is 'Agnieszka'. Always. But I can't use my real name [with British people] because, as I've said, it's 'Agneska' or even worse 'Agnee-eska'.

Aniela:

When I started school, I tended to stick out like a sore thumb because my name stood out... It [my surname] was never pronounced properly. Aniela was very difficult to pronounce as well. And I had all sorts, and if you're made to stand out, you retreat into your shell. I didn't like people pronouncing my name. So over the years I anglicised it and I dropped the 'i' and started spelling it with a 'g'. Because people, when they saw the 'i', they just didn't know how to deal with it. But I found myself going back and spelling my name properly, as it was spelled, as it was given to me by my parents. So in a way, I am more comfortable about being myself, in a way. Because I'm not English, I know I'm British, I know I'm not fully Polish, but my leaning is towards that, if you know what I mean. My comfort zone is probably around what I was brought up with. Now that I'm getting older, I'm appreciating what my parents put into my upbringing. I've not lost that.

Filip:

For the whole of my life, and every time I've said my name the next thing the person does is look up and say, 'How do you spell that?' I always tell them what it means in English and it's a Polish name, but I was born in [town in the UK]. I always add that little bit to it. To me it's no different than if you were called Thomas and you come from Wales, or your ancestors did. Or if your name was de Courcy and your family came with the Normans. I don't feel that it makes me any different. I'm just an English person with a Polish name. If you don't know who you're talking to, the person doesn't know you, when I first went to [place in UK] one of the ladies there was doing something to do with Poland and she spoke very little Polish, but she tried to use it, to be polite, to speak to me in Polish. So I spoke back to her in Polish, but

I said 'Don't worry, I'm English!' She was 'Oh, thank God!' I'm proud of it. You know, if I was Smith, OK [showing by his intonation that Smith is a dull name] but it's different. There aren't too many of us in England. I've done what everyone does, and I've gone on-line, and you look for [people with the same surname]. There are some, but there aren't many. I find it nice, that it's not normal, it's slightly abnormal... When I was at school, school kids can be cruel, I used to be called 'Cabbage' because no one could say [my surname]. And strangely enough my eldest daughter was called Cabbage. So it's crossed the generations.

Stefan:

Anne: You've got quite a complicated name, to English ears. How have you coped with that during your life? Has it been difficult? How has it worked out?

Stefan: I don't mind putting difficulty in people's paths. Challenges are a stimulus, aren't they, to the local population? I got my patients to call me Dr Stefan. Because otherwise they'd say, 'Dr Oh-I-don't-know-what-his-name-is, oh, it's a long foreign name!' To avoid the poor reception staff having to go through all that twenty times a day, they called me Dr Stefan. Which they could manage. If I want to say all my names on the telephone I say, 'I'll spell it for you', and then I say what my name is, and I spell it. Otherwise they say, 'Please spell that!' So that saves time. Or sometimes I just say it and let them write it down phonetically, because I couldn't care less really what they put. If it's not some form or something... It's a rare name in Poland. Whenever I went anywhere, I used to look, [for example] in the New York phonebook, and see if there were any people with the same surname there. I've never found any, anywhere I went. There weren't any in England. Since Enlargement, there may be. That's quite special, to have a feeling of uniqueness – I'm the only one. I've found half a dozen more now. With Google and things, you can search the whole globe in seconds, for more people with your surname...

Anne: How about your first name? Do you anglicise that at all?

Stefan: No, and I'm pleased it's got an 'f' in it. I say 'f!'

Anne: You have to keep telling people?

Stefan: Yes, or I say 'I'll spell it. S-T-E-F-A-N.' They write it 'S-T-E-P-H'. 'F, F.' That gives me a little opportunity to assert myself. This is who I am. Which I find, I wouldn't say I find it enjoyable, but a momentary little piece of gratification. Presenting my identity in an emphatic way, and also saying I'm different.

Natalia:

As a toddler, you have to accept whatever you have. But when I had [passed] my eleven plus and went to grammar school I wanted to be more like the others, and I introduced myself as Natalie. People who know me from those years know me as Natalie. Even my brother and his wife call me Natalie, rather than Natalia... I didn't resent my Polish background, but I wanted to be like everybody else, I wanted to be English... I went back as a mature student, to M. College... one of them was South Asian Studies. Studying in M., where there are a lot

of Asian families, I chose to do that option. It included looking at religion, so I thought it could challenge my own set of beliefs. Actually, it didn't challenge [them] in the sense that I thought it would. What it did was confirm that it's OK to be Christian or Catholic. Religions are basically [the same], the content is the same, it's the packaging that's different. It was in the late seventies, eighties - multiculturalism was being pushed in the education system, and I was looking at other cultures. I thought 'If it's good enough for them, it's good enough for me'. And I became Natalia again.

Joanna:

I had problems with people mispronouncing it [my surname] all the time. But it didn't make me embarrassed, it just made me angry. I must admit, all through my childhood, teens and twenties, I just thought 'These people are so stupid!' It's an awful thing to say, I know, but it used to annoy me more than anything else. I remember saying things like 'It's not difficult, just read it, don't panic, just read it, think of the "cz" like a "ch", OK?' A bit patronising, but I got fed up with people mispronouncing my name. I wasn't embarrassed, I was just annoyed. I thought 'These people aren't very intelligent, are they?'

Anne: You introduced yourself to me as 'Djoe-ana'. Are you 'Djoe-ana', rather than 'Yoanna'?

Joanna: Yes, although in Polish obviously it's 'Yoanna' and to all my Polish friends I'm 'Yoanna'. But I call myself Djoe-ana. Just because it's easier. It's never occurred to me that I should use just one or the other. I change it according to the context. It doesn't bother me. Yes, I hadn't really thought of that. At work, at school it's always Djoe-ana, so I use that amongst my English friends and acquaintances. It's not a problem. Actually, I think that saying to my English friends and colleagues 'I'm Yoanna' would sound a bit pretentious. I just don't see the need for it really. I'd never really thought about that, until you mentioned it – it's always been like that. It's the same as, when I was a child, I always used to switch from English at school to Polish at home and it never occurred to me consciously that I was speaking a different language. This is the way I speak to teachers, this is the way I speak to Mummy. So what? It's just the way things are. I don't think children really question things too much, do they? They accept some things as they are. That's how it was. I suppose that kind of attitude has carried on. Polish here, English there, what's the problem?

Tomek:

They find it difficult to pronounce. Poles will refer to me, if it's a formal situation, as Pan Tomasz; very rarely, Pan [surname], but that formality is slightly changing in Poland now. Otherwise, friends call me Tomek, which is the normal thing. Very few English people do. Those English people who do call me by my Polish name will call me Tomasz, which is odd, because that's a bit too formal between close friends. But the other way, you've got to explain all these levels -- diminutives, and so on. I was Thomas when I was at school. Partly, my parents chose the name because it translated easily.

But we did the opposite, in a sense, with our first. I didn't choose the name -- it was my wife who chose the name. We gave him the name Jerzy. He has always been Jerzy. Very rarely, if somebody's asked, 'Is there an English equivalent?' we'd say, 'George'. But we'd instantly say, 'But he is not George'. And we would not have chosen the name George for him. He is Jerzy. And [it's] interesting [that] children, before they learn to read and write, have no problems in saying 'Jerzy'. As soon as they learn to read and write it becomes Jersey. I even knew a language teacher who said, 'I'm going to call him Pullover because I can't pronounce his name'. I said, 'You spend all day, every day, teaching a foreign language to pupils, you expect them to get the pronunciation and accent and so on, and yet you're telling me that you can't pronounce Jerzy?' A lot of them would say 'Jersey', and I'd think, 'But can you say "yes", can you say "yoghurt", can you say "yesterday"? Well then, you can say 'y'. The fact that it's a 'j' [makes no difference]" Anyway.

I tend very often just to introduce myself as Thomas, and I might add that it's the English version of my Polish name. But our children are Jerzy, Henryk and Feliks. Henryk tends to become Henry, because people can't cope with it, I don't know what it is. It's strange. Feliks is Feeliks, that's not really a problem, although if they write it people tend to spell it with an 'x'. They can't cope with the idea of 'ks' being pronounced 'ks'.

My mother had the 'a' at the end of her surname, and by the way my [sur]name has an accent over the 'o'. It's the closed 'o'. My mother had the 'a' in her name, but my wife didn't use that. Right from the start she said, 'Let's not complicate that, for administrative purposes', for a passport or whatever. Now, there might be more understanding, though I'm not sure that there is, amongst English people, that there is a feminine version of the name.

But it's not been a problem for me. I started using Tomasz in my signature when I went to university. It began when I was told that because of my birth certificate, for official purposes I could not be Thomas, I had to be Tomasz, because that was what was on the documents. Coinciding with that was an increased willingness to assert – this sounds odd, because I've always said I was Polish – but an increased assertion that 'No, I am not English'. I don't have a problem if somebody addresses me like that, but it's got to the point where if I see Thomas written I have an 'identity crisis'. That's not me. I can't relate to the name Thomas when written. Whereas, when spoken, some people call me Tom [and it's not a problem].

Grażyna:

It's always [being pronounced] Grazeena. Oh! '[Please say] *Grazhinna*'. And funnily enough they say, 'That's a lovely name'. Grazeena doesn't sound nice. It doesn't sound lovely in my ears. Grażyna sounds quite nice to me. My maiden name begins Grz. At work I would be phoning people in Europe and I would have 'Who's speaking?' 'Grażyna Grz...' 'Who?' 'Let me spell it for you!' 'Can you spell it again?' It was a nightmare! So I shortened it. It became Grace, and the surname – eventually I got married, so that name was moved to the side for a while. I took my husband's name because it was easier.

Teodora:

People hesitate. Even people who know me relatively well. I can see them hesitating. I say, 'My name's Tayodora, not Theeodora!' Of course, at school I was the only Teodora. Again, I wasn't the best of pupils. I think my name, because it was unusual, was remembered. But, actually, I was supposed to be called Lynette. At that time women stayed in hospital for quite a while until they were allowed home. Mum wanted me to be called Lynette. Dad went off to the registry office to register my name and, when he came back, he started talking about Teodora. Mum said, 'Who on earth is Teodora?' He said, 'Our daughter'. That was very typical of him, that he would do things without any kind of consultation. In Poland I find it funny at times, when there might be another Teodora around, and somebody says their name, I'm immediately turning round. I'm so used to it being my name.

Iza [whose official name is British, similar to Isabella, but who is known by a nickname, similar to Izzy]:

As I child, I wanted to be Iza, and wasn't. My brother has a Polish middle name, but we changed it, because when he was at school he had a lot of bullying for his surname. I didn't [get bullied], and I didn't want to change it, so when I left school I changed mine back. And he and my mother have since changed their [sur]name back... At the time we took my [British] grandmother's maiden name. Because of the hostility and curiosity. I think my mother was constantly being asked who her husband was, and she just said, 'Let's change the name and no one's going to ask'. So that was another reason for going invisible.

4 Long-lost family in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine

Adelaide:

My father never talked about his background, like many of them didn't. In fact, he was very secretive about it, he didn't want us to know. He told us his family in Poland were all gone, they were all gone... I went in 2016 the first time and found out that he had a wife in Poland, he had a son, I had a half-brother. They were no longer alive, sadly. But my nephew is there... His first-born son was nine months old when he was arrested. He never saw him again. And he came here, and eventually he married another woman – and he's not the only one who did that – and he had another son...

If you look at some of the childhood photographs, of my half-brother [next to my grandson with the same name] they look very similar. He had a sister, who's not my sister, but she almost treats this child, my grandson, as a reincarnation of her brother. And they are so happy that I found them. They are so happy. It's been wonderful to connect with them, I feel a strong connection. You know what, I do – I do. I feel a blood connection with that place [in Ukraine].

Natalia:

We found out [later]. In 2000, my Mum met her sisters for the first time. All the while she thought they were dead. Again, I think it was 2003 when I realised that my father's sister, my Aunty, had had a child, my cousin – I didn't even realise she existed, that she ended up in Australia. There's lots and lots of layers, that I'm trying to unravel, to understand myself and my family and my background.

Tomek:

We went to Hel. I'd been invited there so many times – and this is an indication of [the complexity of] relationships – by the nephew of my mother's first husband who'd been arrested in '39 and executed. We were still in touch. And when I was a child, on the mantelpiece at home, my father's first wife and two children were there on a photograph, and also a photograph of my mother's first husband. The circumstances were, it wasn't a divorce, but a tragic set of circumstances through which the family had been split up.

Grisha:

In 2004 I was abroad for some reason. When I came back my wife said 'Someone's going to contact you this evening. Someone called Magda.' This person phoned, and it turned out that she was the daughter of my half-brother. I had this repressed knowledge that I had a half-brother and half-sister... Anyway, she'd been looking for her grandfather and eventually found me in the telephone directory. I arranged to meet her outside the Royal Academy in

Piccadilly. So that was the beginning of the family reunion. This half-brother had died of a heart attack, not long before. This must have been during the spring. Magda then invited us to go to where her mother lived, for a family reunion. That's when I met my half-sister, together with some other relatives. It was so difficult for me to comprehend who this woman was. I couldn't understand. We even went to the cemetery to see the grave of this half-brother. It still didn't register... My half-sister lives in the south of the country near the Czech border with her husband, who's quite a character. She also has a daughter, Dorota ... Dorota has two sons and the elder son came over and did a degree at York... He came to stay with us for short periods. I never knew anything about any of them at all; never knew they existed.

Iza:

My father [after returning to Poland when I was five] re-married three times in Poland. And he died in '94, so I wasn't going to see *him* [in 2001]. It was going to be meeting the other people. I'd got one half-brother, who's since died. The first people I met was a cousin of mine -- I should really do this with the family tree, because it's really complicated. I had a phone number for an aunt who I hadn't had any contact with, my father's cousin. I rang the number a couple of times, didn't get an answer, and I just thought she was probably old, and we didn't get in touch with her. And then, I met the cousin in W., and we were very warmly welcomed. They found an English teacher to help translate and we went out to their country house. And then we went all the way over to Z. to meet my father's last wife's daughter in the house where my father lived. That's a big story. We went back to another cousin, the brother of the first one. And then my brother decided he would come. So, I went over to Prague and picked him up and we had a huge meeting again with those people. What was extraordinary was that I knew, intellectually, that we'd written, sent parcels, my mother sent the kids vaccinations, clothes for years and years and years. I never met the third wife. The other wives had always seen her as like the First Lady, immediately thanked us for all the [parcels], she'd been amazing, and kept sending all that stuff. My mother had kept this ideal idea, a view that everyone needs to support everybody... We went into each family, massively welcomed. Nobody spoke English. My cousin, we found him eventually. The flats weren't all numbered in the way you'd [expect], you know? We had to go and find him, and he grabbed hold of me and swung me round in the middle of the road. We called him Balloo [from Kipling's *Jungle Book*]. That massive welcome. He knew little bits of English and his wife a lot more, from films. So, he said, 'I love you. The end!' Very good at communicating...

With all that feeling going on, to be able to have a different language was quite helpful in some ways. I don't think we'd have done any better in English, because there was too much to try and say... But a massive welcome, very warm, that we wouldn't have expected. And we've carried on. So pretty much each year or two years I've been back.

When my half-brother died (his mother's the second wife) we just got the message from her. She wrote in very old-fashioned Polish, I had to get somebody near where I live, Polish EU workers. I suddenly had translators wherever I was. Which I'd never had easily before. Somebody knew somebody down there, who knew the Polish builders, and the guy who was recruiting was more able to do the translating stuff. And he said it was a very ancient form of writing. He read it and I wrote it down.

But that was very sudden and very sad. I went over to his funeral. It was when he had died, I thought, I hadn't seen myself as a sister or a daughter, I'd seen, the story was, my father left, and went, tra-ra-ra. And his mother said to me at the end of this feast that he [the brother] would have come over and had more contact with us once he had his PhD. It just went in like, oh, I thought, I never even want to, what had I done?... I realised how we might have been seen, and how it might have been for him, you know, he would have had a very different childhood to us...

So, I started then to read, and to look on the Internet, which I'd never done. Because of that [idea to] just leave it like it was when I was five [and my father returned to Poland], it hadn't even really occurred to me there was the Internet. And the Wall had come down. So suddenly I went, oh, actually, I can do this. Now I know real people, it's different to just having a story. So in response to my half-brother I started to look. I did look up the name of the person who didn't answer the phone. I feel very silly when I say this, but she's an academic, on the Internet. I looked on the Internet and found she'd written a story of her father on a public website. So, I wrote and sent some photos and said 'If this is you then this is us', sort of thing. And then an email came in one Monday night. I was sat on my own, and I phoned my daughter and said, 'I can't read this by myself, so I'm just going to read it to you.' She said there were four sisters, [and] she told me all the stories. The sister of the top four was my grandmother and her grandmother [was one of the sisters], so that's why my father and she were cousins. And then that she was an academic and obviously does English. And has a son and daughter. Her father was killed in Katyn, a very sad story. Her mother was deported, like my grandmother, but they didn't know where each other had gone, or anything like that. I wanted to go and see her the next day. Managed to wait about six weeks, and saw her. And in the April after that I met her daughter in Canada, she was an academic in the very same area of work as me. And we met at a conference. We've kept in contact, and she's been over and met all the family.

So that's been in some ways maybe nothing to do with the EU, but I think the Internet was as significant. In the way that it makes contact tentative, you could just take it or leave it, and people took it up, and kept in touch. And the easy flights. Just so strange, going that first time on the coach, and it took nearly two days. Compared to flying now from Bristol, where it's almost not long enough, for the actual journey to happen. I'm quite glad it was a long one the first time...

So it feels like I've grown up from being five to now 62, in quite enough timeframe, in terms of Polishness. I can't speak any more Polish than [before], but we do know our way around a little bit. We have to eat a great deal when we go there! Delicious things. The family in K. do all the making their own cheese, and bottling the fruit, and my partner's really into all that, so we've learned to make sourdough bread and stuff from them, learned things like that. And that's very easy engagement, to cook together, and things.

Anne: Did you say they've learned a little bit of English now?

Iza: Yes. On the first visits... my cousin's wife was working for a bank, so she knew computer systems. So, we would sit with two computers and talk like that. And every now and then I'd try to do a quick screenshot to try and keep some of the conversation, because we did it in Google Translate, which disappears. This was like writing it down as we go...

It's like each time I actually go, I get a different sense of [my father's] life, and my life. All the things my mother sent over – when I went there, they were there. The towels were hanging

up in the second wife's bathroom, and obviously they would be. Well, they might have binned them, but I just hadn't seen the other side. And when my cousins came here and saw my Polish plates and Polish dolls and my Polish postcards and stuff, they wouldn't have imagined that was happening either...

People are still looking... With the *Kresy-Siberia* organisation... they're looking back for their heritage, but some are still looking for each other. Which is really sad, isn't it? That they don't know what happened?

5 Spending time in Poland and Ukraine

Luke:

My first identity is European. But if I'm forced to choose, then of course I'm more British than I am Italian or Polish, because I lived here all my life. I, you know, understand the British way of life better than either Italian or Polish. I'm foreign in Poland, and I'm foreign in Italy...

Can I imagine living in Poland? I think I could, actually, yes. If there is a right job, the right opportunity, I definitely could see [myself] living in Poland. Yes.

Dave [aged 30]:

I wanted to go somewhere warm and exotic, and foreign, and I wanted to go to the new places, and teach English, and have some time off before I went to the university. So I went to Kraków where my grandmother, *babcia*, was still living, and she let me stay with her while I taught English. That was in Kraków. I spent three months there, then a month back, and then six months there, then a month back, and then a year there, and then a month back. [I felt] very much English. Very British, yeah. I mean, again, similar kind of phenomenon happened where people who were Polish were very happy when I was willing to speak Polish with them, they saw this as a compliment. Polish is one of the most difficult languages in the world, so I think they saw it as a compliment. And I saw that as an opportunity to try and learn Polish – which, in itself, kind of, added to my Polish identity... It was a very interesting experience, I loved it. I really enjoyed it...

I felt more Polish when I was in England. Speaking to the Polish diaspora, my Polish friends, than I did in Poland. You know, the people I encountered in Kraków, they've been to the United Kingdom many times, they've travelled there and back. It was not, you know, an othering, it was not the foreign thing, like ... one part of their store of identity, their repertoire of experience. So when that came out, in the coffee-shops, or pubs, or something like this, there were overlapping identities and experiences. But, obviously, their Polish nationality, their Polish identity superseded everything else. Just as me, in Kraków, my British identity superseded anything else. But I still had a portion of Polishness, you know?...

I went to Zakopane, we hiked the Tatra mountains, I went to Sopot, Hel, I went to a few villages in Małopolska in the south. Again, through my friends, all this kind of stuff. They would almost exclusively speak English to me as well, and I would have to remind them, insist on them speaking Polish to me so that I could learn.

Zuzanna:

I think I feel more Polish [than British in Poland], but I feel a slightly odd Polish person. Going over to Poland I can obviously practise some Polish. And the couple of times I've been there not to see family -- I've been to see family three times, and the other two times on weekend breaks -- I've really enjoyed the weekend breaks, because I really like it over there. I went to Warszawa, I went to Kraków, and I really loved it. Both times we went before

Christmas, which I've always found a rather special time anyway. And as you know I'm going away next week as well, and I'm really looking forward to it, because I feel that it is part of me, to be Polish, and I probably feel more Polish over there.

Ann:

Although in 1967 we had to report to the Police Station in Rogoźno every three days, I felt quite comfortable. Although we could only speak a little bit, we could make people understand, and they were very pleased that we were trying to speak the language. I had a lot of cousins over there, who spoke English as well as Polish, so we got on very well with them. We met them for the first time in '67, and then I met them again at the wedding [c. 2005]. I've always felt comfortable, always felt comfortable being over there. Yes, and my auntie always used to make beautiful different *pierogi*. She'd do the *ruskie pierogi*, and she'd do the ones with fruit, with plums and apples and then other ones. I never felt like a stranger, if you will. And I got used [to it]. The farm was primitive, but I'd been before so I knew what was coming and that didn't bother me, but my husband wasn't all that keen on it, having to have a wash in the farmyard in cold water...

What I did notice when we went, once Poland broke free from the communist yoke, they started to rebuild the churches, they started to take a pride. All those dreadful Stalin tower blocks were coming down and they were building lovely houses again now. Yes, it's looking good, and I'm really pleased, I'm really pleased, and I'm proud of it, I am...

I can't [imagine living in Poland]. I don't think my husband would approve. I will go back, keep going back for holidays, and then stay. I want to, we're planning to go to Kraków, I've never been to Kraków... And my cousin and myself, we want to go to the village [in Ukraine] where they were arrested, Oreskowce, and where the deportations took place. We want to go to find that, and we want to go and find the graves [of family members murdered by Ukrainian nationalists during the Second World War] ... They're buried on the land between two flowering cherry trees. And nobody's touched that land, it's there, empty. Nobody goes near it.

Janina:

It was nice [to go to Poland], but I kind of feel like I'm in between. I did quite a few exchanges when I was in high school, and we had Polish students come and stay, and we went to Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where obviously the language is slightly similar. My friends would take the piss out of me, because they'd say that I spoke like an older woman. I'd be more formal, I didn't know that you said '*Cześć*', I've always said '*Dzień dobry*', and they were like 'Why are you being so formal?' I've always felt not quite there. But it is very nice, it's quite emotional. Like when my mum -- we went for the first time after my grandparents died -- my mum got quite upset... It's strange to feel so tied to a place, almost it feels a bit irrational sometimes...

I thought about it [going to live in Poland]. But I don't ever think my language would be good enough. I keep up-to-date with Polish politics, and I don't particularly like what I see! I'd be interested to live there for a little while. I think it would give me a sense of, I don't know, fulfil a part of me maybe? But I think it would be quite difficult. Probably not, to be

quite honest, I think it would be too, you know, I'm not Polish. In a lot of ways I think it would be quite difficult.

Eva:

Believe it or not, I think the first time I went to Poland was in 2012. I didn't have the opportunity, there's no family really in Poland, and the place, obviously, where my mother was born is now the Ukraine, so you'd be going back to the Ukraine... I loved it, I loved it! It actually felt like going home. And it's not my home -- it's the weirdest feeling, I can't describe to you. I was so excited about this, I had so many mixed feelings and emotions about going back. Because my mother didn't return, she'd lived in England more than she lived in Poland. But to me it was like going back to my roots, if you can say that, although I didn't know what my roots were.

Zosia:

I've heard stories of this, they're just hearsay. Just to say, the invisible Poles thinking they would become more visible, went to Polska, you know, sold everything up, and didn't settle there either.

Adelaide:

[Poland] was a place of danger. He, my father, created it as a place of danger. It was for him, of course, because of what I found out later. If only I knew at the time, I would have understood so much more. But it was a place of danger, he couldn't go there, he would be shot, it was closed, like a black hole. And I was afraid of it! He said his family were all gone, and I was afraid of it. And it wasn't possible to travel, to go. Obviously not, because it was Soviet, it was behind the Iron Curtain, where he came from, but we didn't know. And I didn't go to Poland until 2006... I went to Warsaw and to Kraków... What a wonderful place. I was amazed at how young the population was, because I only knew old Polish people.

We were going to talk about 2004. I started to hear, because I live near Southampton, I started to hear Polish being spoken in the street by young people wearing jeans... And so that started in 2004, didn't it? Two years after, in 2006, it gave me some confidence to visit the country, but I was still afraid of the country, and so I went on one of these Great Train Journeys. Because we were a group of people, and we had a guide and everything, and when we got there I was, what on earth was I worried about? Ridiculous. Completely ridiculous. Obviously, I could see that they were having their own issues in Poland, the economy was very bad and everything -- but it was just so beautiful, and I wanted to feel, I did feel as if I belonged to it. And I still didn't know then where my father came from. So, when we got to Kraków, I was walking around Kraków thinking 'Maybe he walked on these roads, maybe he was here, maybe he saw this thing, or this church, or he stood in this square.' So that was my first experience of Poland...

You could come to Ukraine, the economy is completely wrecked, you could buy land here and live fantastically here. But no. I have a grandson in England, no I wouldn't. The future is going forward with who's here now, the future is not going backwards.

Mike:

If you're asking specifically about interaction between myself and the new Poles coming over it really hasn't made much of a difference. But I think I'm speaking now for many people in my position who feel Polish and would have gone to Poland and do go anyway. And there are a lot of course who are indifferent. Who have never been and probably won't go... When I went to Poland I felt quite Polish, quite proud to be in Poland, being in a country where I could speak the language, to a certain level anyway, quite fluently. But, unfortunately, a lot of the Poles don't regard me as Polish, they regard me as English. Of course, in England people like me are regarded, or were regarded as more or less Polish. But in Poland we were regarded as, you know, by relations, as English. 'English lord', an 'English lord'.... I feel very close [to my relatives]. It didn't inhibit friendship at all, no.

Maria:

I went when I was twenty-one, twenty-two, with the friends I'd known from Scouts, to all our families. I've probably been to Poland every single year since then. I don't think there's been a single year when I haven't been to Poland... I don't think it had anything to do with Poles coming to the UK, but certainly in the 2000s I knew a lot of people in London who were buying places in Poland and I felt that that would be my absolute dream to have somewhere. I ended up going out with my mum in 2005 and buying a studio flat: so now that's where we go. You know, we tend to go, if we're not going to friends. We don't have any family there at all...

I don't think I could [live in Poland]. Maybe it's just me, because I understand British society, I've worked in British government, I get how that works – and Poland is just so totally different. I feel lost in that world of anything to do with administration. It's a much more bureaucratic country. I don't feel I have those points of contact that I would here. I think I'd find it really hard. [Here] I feel like I know who I am. And I have those points of contact, I know how things work.

In Poland, I don't have a clue, perhaps I'm doing illegal things. Yes, I've found that hard. I did all that, setting up admin, and gas and electricity, and all sorts of things, but I found it really hard, really hard. Because if you speak Polish people assume that you know all the technical words, and I don't. I've never admitted, I've never said 'Look, I live abroad'. But I have a friend who does, who has gone to Poland and does work there, and she just says outright. She says 'Look, I might speak Polish, but I'm English as well, and I don't understand all of this.' [But in Poland] I don't feel more English, I actually feel I'm Polish. I do love landing in Poland and just feeling 'aaah', you know, it's that weird thing of feeling at home but not feeling at home.

Barbara:

It's so exhausting, because they all want to talk to you, I visit them all, I listen to them, I tell them about myself, and I do some sightseeing if I can... And then I generally just visit, and eat – unfortunately – and talk... I tend to go for a week or ten days. As a student, as a schoolchild I used to go for the whole of the six weeks holiday. So that helped cement my

Polishness and I got to know the other Polish people, not the emigres. So that's how I knew what they're like from a very early age...

I thought of perhaps spending a few months there, and then coming back here, teaching English out there, but they [my friends from Poland] say I wouldn't survive, and in fact, a couple of them have tried to go back to Poland, and they've had to come back. They said after living here they can't adapt to the Polish realities of life. And they find that it's more relaxed here. In Poland, they watch what you're wearing, who you're walking down the street with, even in big towns, in cities like Warsaw. And that is an issue for them. Whereas here you can smoke, you can show your belly button, you can not go to church. They like that.

Carole:

{From my visits} I certainly gained a sense of a young democracy. There have always been political problems, taking time to develop into an open, outward-looking Poland. I suppose one thing that did strike me, and still does, is that despite the fact that young Poles go here, there and everywhere, and there's a big problem with brain drain, people are generally, very proud of being Polish, in a way that you don't see here. They know who they are. They're proud of their food, their soup, and they're proud of how things are in their towns, and the mountains. And there's also of course the Pope. Which I think cemented something. More recently I'm a bit more anxious about how the politics are developing...

I had wondered about buying somewhere, a little place in the mountains. I don't know that I could imagine moving lock, stock and barrel, I think it wouldn't be possible because of various responsibilities here, but I can imagine having somewhere to go. In the middle of winter, or at Christmas, or a few months every summer. We've perhaps missed the boat a little bit in terms of cost, but if you get a little place, a long way from anywhere, you need to be fairly good with the Polish. Maybe I'm underselling myself. I can sort of get by.

Agnieszka:

I had a very interesting first experience, which was when I was thirteen. This was 1968, something like that, the height of communism. I stayed with my mother's best friend... We went to Warszawa, to Kraków, to Zakopane, to Częstochowa... [In the village] I lived in the barn, it had cattle in it... There was, of course, a television, because in those days they needed it for propaganda reasons, everybody had a television. The loo was a hut outside – the loo paper was newspaper, there was no paper whatsoever in those days. There was no running water, I cut the wood every morning, and I lit the fire to warm my enamel bowl of water which I pumped. So that was an interesting time in Poland, I remember it very well. I went back when I was seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and I've been back several times. I'm about to go this year to take some friends ... I've taken several groups of friends to Poland, I've given them my own guided tours of Warszawa and Kraków together! I absolutely loved going there, I loved seeing the changes – especially the last time. My mother died about eight years ago, so I was able to take her back to Poland that resembled more of Warszawa which she left as a child, or as a teenager... I am concerned about the politics at the moment, so I want to talk to people. It's so sad because Poland economically is doing well, I

think, but it has this government that is going backwards, back in time... I am keen to just go and see what is happening for myself.

Aniela:

Dad had a friend who was a professor, I can't remember which university, he's retired now, but he often had to come over to England for conferences, so he would stay with us. At that time you needed a letter of invitation to get around and it was quite risky, it was quite a risky business. We got to know his daughters, which was quite nice, and we would go over to Poland to stay with them... I think the first time I went was in '74, and we went for an entire month. I remember Dad taking a month off work. We took the car... We took the ferry from Harwich to Hook of Holland, so we drove through Holland, and then East Germany, which was quite scary, I still remember the border crossings, with the armed -- policemen, I think. It was quite intimidating. Even at that age I sensed it. And I know we must have done top to bottom, I don't know which way round we did it, but we did Gdynia, Gdańsk, we went to Wrocław, Poznań, Warsaw, Kraków, Zakopane, even, we went all the way down to Zakopane, and then we went all the way back up.

And we went to stay with my great-grandmother who at that time was 99... She was one of the last remaining of her generation that actually managed to stay in Poland. They lived on a huge farm. I just remember that, I think we slept in a barn. I remember going up into a hayloft and I think we slept up there. I remember seeing a chicken being beheaded – we were horrified! Just things like that. Coming down to breakfast, we would have, we were given unpasteurised milk. And for a child from Britain, used to drinking pasteurised milk, it's very different. It's the food at that time that made an impression on me. Though Mum cooked Polish food at home, this was slightly different. You'd get your cucumber, *mizeria* it was called, cucumber in yoghurt. I remember the taste of that milk still! And another memory is, I think we were in Warsaw, in a restaurant, we were eating something, we were given strawberry ice cream, and it's not strawberry ice cream like we know over here. It was again yoghurt, milky, with a few strawberries. It's little things like that that stayed in my mind...

[On a more recent visit to Poland] I can't say, hand on heart, that I felt like a native. Although I think I could quite happily fit in if I was to go and work there, or live there. In time... I can [imagine living there], actually. I can... I think I could. Once I'd got to grips with how things work over there, the admin side. I'm actually applying for Polish citizenship, that's how strongly I feel about it. I've gone on a lot of the websites, I've got a lawyer who's doing the donkey work for me. Obviously, things have to be done, documents have to be found and they have to be translated. I can't do that myself. But having gone onto some of the council websites, and reading some of the language, it's quite particular, it can be very technical. I think if I'd got to grips with the technical side of the language I think I'd be alright...

I don't know whether that's sentimentality, or that's maybe because I'm mature enough now to understand what my grandparents went through. And they've left me a really lovely legacy. There's such a lot of lovely culture in the country that we were brought up with. All the different regions and the different, for instance, they've got a famous singing group called *Mazowsze* over there, and they all perform different dances and songs from the

regions, and I love that. Mum and Dad were always keen on music. We were very aware, especially Dad, he knew at the time, in the sixties and seventies, who was culturally important there, and that didn't interest me at the time, but it's things like that that make you think, well, actually, it's made me a richer person. Because I've got that other side to tap into. My children are very understanding of that, and they like that as well. There's another country, well, they've got my husband's heritage, and they've got my Polish heritage as well.

Dominic:

Apart from being an enrichment of my research activities, I have to say I've found it's become quite emotionally important -- those connections with Poland, and going there, being in an environment where Polish is spoken. Surrounded also by sounds, smells, signs that are familiar to me from childhood. Things like food. My Polish grandmother was a wonderful cook and used to cook lots of traditional Polish dishes... I learned Polish as an adult and of course when you don't get the chance to live in a country for an extended period, I make a lot of silly grammatical mistakes and so on. Obviously, I try to speak as correctly as I can. But even just the fact of being able to speak in Polish, and hear Polish, I find it very difficult to explain, it has a very strong emotional charge for me. As does the fact of being surrounded by people who look like me, remind me of Polish family members. As I say, food, and so on.

But on top of that, even though I didn't grow up in Poland, aspects of the contemporary Polish experience feel somehow familiar to me because of my Irish background. For example, I know that Polish colleagues are very concerned, at the moment, about the political situation in Poland, and I suppose fearful about the effects of what they see as a regressive nationalism, and the influence of the Catholic Church, and so on. But this is very familiar to me from an Irish background because -- after Ireland became independent -- there was of course a massive swing of the pendulum towards precisely the same kinds of markers. Sorry, that's a very bad metaphor. But the markers of Catholicism and language, Catholicism and nationalism became increasingly important. Because Catholicism had been persecuted, under British colonial occupation, right into the nineteenth century, in many ways to be Irish was to be Catholic. Similarly, Irish nationalism became very important.

Now, in a similar way, Catholicism was repressed to a considerable extent under communism. Not altogether successfully, of course. The Catholic Church, or Catholicism, proved surprisingly resistant to the repressive aspects of communist rule. And this sense that we had a way of life on which communism encroached, and our repeated history of invasion by others, occupation by others, that that identity was jeopardised, became fragile, and that this is something that we -- I mean, this inflamed nationalist feeling, of things to protect (OK, obviously there are aspects of that that, depending on one's point of view, one might feel are regrettable and leading to excesses, I would personally incline to that view) -- but at the same time, I think I understand where those energies are coming from, within Polish public life at the moment. And I suppose one can hope, it's important to remember that Poland was not free all that long ago, it's a comparatively short time, since Poland became free of communist rule. And it's just going to take time for things to settle down and for these things to find a balance. So in a strange way, the Irish aspects to my experience -- it sounds very presumptuous to say that you understand, as an outsider -- perhaps I suppose predispose one to a sympathetic understanding of the circumstances...

I have made an effort, insofar as time and financial resources permit, to travel around the country, just to know it better. That's definitely a long-term project to travel extensively around Poland and to spend time there...

I could [imagine living in Poland]. I suppose it's a strange thing. My experiences of Poland – maybe I've been just very lucky – but my experiences of Poland have been extraordinarily positive. The colleagues that I have met have been friendly, welcoming, tolerant of my barbaric mutilation of their native language, sometimes. That sense of friendliness, the hospitality. Even recently, going to work in the Polish archive – the staff were so obliging, nothing was too much trouble. OK, when one has experiences like that, of course it's very easy to have a somewhat romanticised view of the country. It's got to be like everywhere else, the same mixture of people that you have everywhere. But certainly, yes, I could imagine living there. For example, recently, when I was in Poznań, just looking – some of the urban centres, for example, of the large Polish cities are being extensively regenerated, money is being found to do things up. As living spaces, there are parts of these Polish cities that are really quite pleasant. I could certainly imagine, perhaps not living there permanently, but certainly basing myself there for an extended period. That I could certainly imagine.

Filip:

[When I was a child] we maintained our links with our Polish family [in Poland]. We used to go on holiday with them. But we couldn't speak Polish, the food was alien, everything was different. We'd always had that connection, but it wasn't developed. It was really a holiday destination with add-ons... My mother and father died six months apart, so, in effect, within six months of my father dying it was just me and my sister. Because we were all we had, we made the decision that we were going to have to be proactive. Luckily young children in Poland know a lot of English, so we were able to communicate like that, and we just kept going there. We would fly there, we'd drive there... We'd go to my family south of Warsaw, and then we'd say 'OK, we're going to Zakopane' or 'We're heading to the lakes in the north' or the Baltic. We would go to four or five major centres of tourism and we would take one of them with us as a translator... Eventually I met my wife, my second wife. And things became a lot easier. And then, of course, when we finally moved -- I lived in Poland for three years solid, 2004 we moved, but we kept our house here. And we set up our business in Poland. Now we see a lot of my family, and my wife's family. It's normal...

[Local people are] very surprised. I had a man one day, we were parked in the south, there's a place called Rzeszów, beautiful area, we're only about two hours from there, and we were down there one day, and we had our English car there. And he came up to me and he said to me in broken English 'What are you doing here?' I said, 'We live two hours away and I brought my mother-in-law to the hospital here.' He said, 'You've come all this way?' I said, 'Well, no, we've only come two hours away.' It was a fully English car and he thought we'd come all the way from England to Rzeszów. You do get that. They all say, 'Why are you here?' Because life in Poland is very hard.

We work very hard there and we take a lot of money, our turnover is very high, but taxes are very high, and ZUS, and all these things. And you really feel you're working for the

government. That's another thing I've noticed in Poland. In England, the government, and the councils, and all of the officials, seem to be working for you. In Poland you seem to be working for the state. I'm not sure if that's a hangover from the communist times. You know, all the communist people went home on Friday evening and put their rubber stamps in their drawers, and when they came back on Monday Poland was free, but they were still sat at their desk. I'm sure there's that mentality still in Poland. But yes, they do [say], 'What are you doing here, why the hell would you come to Poland?' It's rare. And if you're English and live in S., for instance, there are very few of us there, and you're known. The garage man will say 'Oh, that English bloke brought his car in'...

I feel that Poland is sleepwalking back into the Dark Ages. I get very frustrated. So if that's a measure of how much I feel Polish, I would say I feel very Polish. We're lucky, though, that because we live here as well, if it really does go wrong, we just step on a plane and fly back. But I don't want that to happen. I love Poland and [want it be] a liberal country, where all could get on, more like England. Am I right, though? The Polish people voted for Mr Kaczyński, well, the majority did, just, and so am I to tell them what they should have? So I would say I do feel Polish and I care about it...

I love Poland because you can go anywhere. I used to walk eight kilometres every morning for my exercise. I walked to a beautiful lake, surrounded by pine trees and sandy beaches, and it's magical. There's no sign saying, 'Keep Off the Beach' or 'Don't Walk Here'. Polish people embrace you, the whole country embraces you. S. itself is not a very pretty place. It's typical communist grey buildings. The very old part, the *Stare Miasto*, is very pretty, but it's nothing wonderful. It's more about the forests and the lakes around it and the sandy tracks and the fields... When you go out on Saturday night into town and everyone's having fun, everyone's very respectful, they're drinking, and falling over, but they're not louts. They're very honourable people. Maybe I just see the good bits, but I just love the country. If I was living in Kraków I'd be happier because it's prettier, but it's the country really. It's the whole thing... I just love it there, I love the outdoors, I love the fact that you don't have to take a coat 'just in case'. There's this rhythm to it, there's a proper rhythm over there. Here, we're never sure what season it is. Three weeks ago in Poland it was -11. Yesterday it was 21. So you know spring is here. There's no 'Will it, won't it?' There are patterns to life.

I'm sure my working future is there... I see Poland as being where we go for the summer, and England where we go for the winter. I don't know. That's part of the fun – we don't know.

Stefan:

We've been back fairly regularly over the years since then, and now we go back every two years, since Enlargement... We've been to a variety of places and about two or three dozen [relatives] turn up. It's interesting to see how they're getting on... It's easier [to travel]. There's Easyjet now. The first time I went we drove through the night. We had to drive across the Iron Curtain and obtain ridiculous visas. We had the currency control, and armed police. And low octane petrol, so one couldn't drive an English car, you'd find what would

happen if you put low octane petrol into a British-made car. It's fifty quid on new valves. So that's much easier. I think they're always very welcoming and hospitable. They've started having the reunions since '04. And that's been a family event. Obviously, we'll go to that this year and we're looking forward to it. We get to know distant family better.

Natalia:

The very, very first time I went was in 1972. I went because I had a boyfriend and we wanted to go on holiday together. But in those days, it wasn't seen as suitable to go on holiday with somebody you weren't married to. We'd booked to go to Tunisia, but my father threatened to disown me if I dared to do anything like that. So we cancelled that. And I thought, well, he's likely to approve of going to Poland, because my boyfriend had family in Poland. So that was the first time I went. We met another couple and went touring round. More recently, I've been going regularly, very regularly from late '92. I've seen the changes [of the transition], and I've seen the changes since then as well. As I say, there were some times, when I was helping out with the coach companies – I was there maybe two or three times a month. It also gave me an insight into the Polish life, into Polish business life, into the history of the people who were left there during the War as well. I'm very, very fortunate.

And now we go more socially. It's ironic that it's [through] my grandchildren. All of my children have been to Poland once or twice at least. I can't remember which year, it was just a funny conversation at the dinner table. My grandchildren had come back from Minorca with their mum... We were having supper and I'd said 'Huh, back again from holiday! I wonder where you're next going to be.' And my granddaughter said 'Grandma, can we come to Poland with you?' And I thought 'Well, yes, it would be lovely', but I didn't want to impose. Because I knew what it was like when people imposed their [own ideas] – it was lovely that it came from them. So I worked on that, and I suggested that perhaps we'd go just for a few days in February, to go skiing. Not that I ski, but they would go skiing. We chose a place where they had an indoor pool, so they wouldn't get bored. It was not too long, in case they didn't like it, but it would whet their appetite if they did. And we've been going back every summer and every February since then. We booked the flights for July this time and we're already thinking [about it] – and it's through them, all my grandchildren, we've ended up all going together, all my children and grandchildren...

I feel comfortable there. I really like the people. The way things are, at the moment, I don't like the way they [politics] are going... Where we go is what I would call just Poland. People do speak English, because that's what they learn at school, but it tends to be the old-fashioned Poland. It's still very, very Polish in essence. Even the hotel we stay in is – the food is just typically Polish. Rather than McDonalds. In fact, they don't even have a McDonalds in the place. And it's much freer for the children, as well. The children have got a sense of freedom. Well, it isn't even a sense, they actually do have freedom that they don't have here in the UK. You know, we just go for walks, along the river... They play Poohsticks in the river. I've got six grandchildren and they range now from nineteen to ten and the little ones would pick up little twigs and the big ones would pick up big ones. It's just that ordinariness. But to get a sense of my past, as well. Obviously, I go to all the museums that I can access

(but I do that wherever I go, whether it's Poland or elsewhere). I just want to know, I just want to learn more and more.

Joanna:

We do go quite regularly, not so much now. As a child, and in my twenties, and subsequently, I used to go regularly to Poland... All my aunties and uncles are dead. So, there's not many relatives left. But there are a few. I've got a few friends as well. The last time we went was last year, to see my cousin who lives in Poznań... It's a lovely city. I love Poznań. My [English] husband loves Poland as well. We had a nice time, met up with her... There are lots of things to do in Poland. Of course, other than visiting relatives. But it's difficult. Because if we do go, I feel obliged to see friends and relatives. I think I'd feel a bit guilty if we just went off to the seaside or the mountains for a week. Although soon after my husband and I first met we did go to Poland, we went to Zakopane. We managed to have a week there and a week visiting relatives. So that was nice. [My relatives are] pretty much scattered... I'd say [I know Poland] reasonably well. There are areas of course I don't know. It's a big country. But, on the whole, I'd say I know it reasonably well.

Tomek:

It's not really 2004. The way it's changed is with technology. That's the first thing. I do recall wanting to speak to my mother's sister in [a large Polish city]. I had to book the telephone call through an operator and I remember, on that occasion, I think it took about two days. It could take an hour or two, it could take a day or two... I speak to certain members of my family, those who have the connection, we speak on Skype; we phone each other, I won't say often, but fairly frequently, enough to keep in touch with what both sides are doing. I'm very close to them, my [English] wife has met them now. I still to this day feel incredibly close to that family in Poland. There's a very strong contact there, and that has never really changed. I don't feel more Polish or less Polish today than I did when I was a child. That sense of Polishness has been fairly constant, and very, very strong... But this is the strange thing: I don't have contact with the Polish community here, in the UK. It is so very different from my childhood. The obvious way to do that would be through the church, but, as I've already said, I don't go to the Polish church...

Anne: Could you tell me a bit about your visits to Poland? What do you do when you go to Poland?

Tomek's wife [off]: Go to the dentist...

Tomek: My dentist said to me, 'You're Polish, why don't you consider [going to Poland]? You could get it done much more cheaply in Poland.' I hadn't really thought about it. I knew people did this sort of thing, but I hadn't really, practically, thought of doing this... It made the dental surgery here in the UK look like something out of the Neanderthal Era. It was so modern, so up-to-date. I think that's true of a lot of things in Poland now, because they've had rapid expansion since the '90s. So, we went over, and [my relative] did one root canal... And whilst there, we didn't just go to the dentist. We stayed for a little bit longer. My cousin's son took us to Toruń, where I had never been... We did quite a bit of touring. [Over

the years, since 1963] I've seen a fair bit of Poland... It was odd, in 2016, to have suddenly gone back twice after a twenty-year gap. It was wonderful. As far as the family was concerned, it was really as if we'd spoken to them the previous day, been with them the previous day. As if we'd seen each other the previous day or the previous weekend. And it's the same for my wife, which is nice, because she's not a Polish speaker.

Grażyna:

In my teens, [we went to Poland] quite a few times. The first time we went, as a family, was in 1968. But we'd had various members of the Polish family come over before. I'd met my grandparents before. I had one set of grandparents in the UK and one set in Poland. So I met my Polish grandparents. It was lovely, meeting family, and it continues to this day. Really, I have my father to thank for that. We've kept constantly in touch with my mother's family. But my father – he was the driving force in terms of 'We speak Polish at the table,' that was the law. He made it possible for us to keep up those contacts... There was a time in the Solidarity years when I couldn't get a visa, they wouldn't let me in, and then, later, I had young children, so it wasn't easy to get over. And yes, now, with cheap flights, it's just so easy. I'm fearful about Brexit, because I just don't know what on earth is going to happen with the agreements with regard to air travel.

Teodora:

I was eighteen. We went to a family wedding. Granddad had been allowed to come out to the UK. He had to leave Grandma behind. A couple of my uncles had been allowed to come out as well. Granddad said to Mum, 'Why don't you come across?' She was very nervous, because what we knew about Poland was, a bit exotic really! For want of a better word. Anyway, so we went out for a family wedding, and that's where my love affair with Poland began. I went on a very regular basis, at least every other year, for a long time. I think that's why they gave me land, because they were fed up with me turning up! 'Just give her some land and let her build a house on it!' ...

Just before Poland became part of the EU, we were at a family wedding. My Polish family live in a small village, and there's a family farm, and it was the last day of the wedding, and my cousins gathered me around a table with a map of the land from the farm. Part of it had been designated as building land, and I was asked which plot of land I would like. So my husband and I immediately started crying – it was like a dream come true, because we'd been going to Poland for so long.

But then, because Poland wasn't part of the EU at that time, we then discovered that foreigners were not allowed to own land in Poland. So for about two years I had to prove that I was my father's daughter, legally, with legal documents flying between here and Poland. Then Poland became part of the EU, so ownership of the land wasn't a problem, and we started to build our house. Although we'd been going to Poland on a very regular basis beforehand, it meant that every holiday – because both my husband and I were involved in

education – it meant that we were zooming off to Poland, and becoming very much part of the community. Which we've built upon ever since...

I think of Poland as being my spiritual home. I hope that doesn't sound too romantic. Very often, when we leave, I cry, and I know that I could just turn back and go back to the house... Since we've retired, we spend between five and six months there throughout the year, not necessarily in a block... We're surrounded by family, and that takes up a lot of time. Because I think in Poland, I don't know if you've found this, things are far more spontaneous. On the Saturday night there was a phone call to say there was something happening at the sailing club, 'Come on down'. On Sunday night our next-door neighbour, who's a relative, said 'We're having a barbecue'. So that takes up a lot of our time. We've got quite a lot of garden, so we sort that out. We've made other friends within the community. We're not too far away from Kraków, so we've linked in with, well, they call themselves the ex-pat community, I like to refer to them as economic migrants. We've made some very good friends there, interesting people from around the world. And we have other friends in the area. So, a lot of it is socialising, really, if I'm honest...

The first time I went to Poland was in 1972. And, in terms of material things, that's changed incredibly. The fact that everybody seems to have a motorcar now. Very beautiful homes are being built. Roads are far better. And there's far more amenities than ever there used to be. I can't talk about people who live, say, in the city, but certainly in my family there's still that very strong sense of family values, and keeping the family together. I have a feeling that that perhaps doesn't happen quite so much now in towns and cities. And of course everybody has to go to church on Sunday... We don't. I'm very much a lapsed Catholic.

We use the local dentist. His surgery is state of the art, it's marvellous really. We haven't used any services like hospitals or doctors... When we built the house, we decided on what it was going to be like. We bought one of the many magazines that you can find in Poland, with house plans, and we found the plan that we liked best of all. A family member who's a civil engineer very kindly oversaw the project for us, which was great. But we had to go and get all the permissions for electricity and gas. You must know what Polish bureaucracy is like! That was interesting. We always had a family member go along and help us. I remember one time getting really irritated and this family member putting his hand on mine and saying, 'Just calm down, because if you get cross, things will just go to the bottom of the pile and it will never be seen again.' It took us about two years to build the house, with all the permissions.

We're very pleased about the house, and that we could make decisions about it being south-facing, and being very economical with heating and what have you. So that was good. We had one very funny situation. We decided we'd have a terrace at the back, which my husband was going to build. The flooring was going to be recycled stuff, but my husband needed to make a wooden framework. So he took himself off to the woodyard, which is about three miles away. The wood was delivered a few days later, and in Polish it just said '*Angielscy*' – the English! No address or anything! They obviously knew where to come.

Anna:

We went [recently] to Poland in the motorhome and I travelled all the way round Poland, and it was wonderful. The only trouble was everybody wanted to speak to us in English and I wanted to speak to people in Polish... The aim of going was, all the Chelmickis are related, and we have a family tree that goes back to 1609... And Rita [Crosby] did suggest that there was a book to be written about this. And I thought 'Yes, there is.' That would be very interesting. And that was the premise of going to Poland the first time... I had made a sort of plan of where to go. I wanted to go to Sopot and I wanted to go to Warsaw, because my family came from Warsaw originally, although my grandmother didn't end up there. She lived in Sopot when I went to visit her. But before and during the War she was in Warsaw. I wanted to go and see Cracow, obviously... And then there is some suggestion that the name Chelmicka comes from Chelmino or Chelm. And that's right out on the east side, so I thought I wanted to go there too. We went round to Chelm and Zamość...

The other reason why I'm a bit dubious about going back to Poland, is that Polish authorities, not necessarily individuals themselves, it's the same in France, I don't know where else it's the same. Italy. When you have a dog, the places where you can take your dog are restricted. I wanted to walk up the, is it the Tatar mountains in Zakopane? The Tatra mountains. You can't take your dog. I thought, 'That means I'll walk up there, come back and then I have to walk the dog.' It's the same in Italy and the same in France in a lot of places. Whereas in Switzerland you can take your dog anywhere if they're well-behaved.

And there are lots of parks where you can't take your dog. I didn't realise what this man was trying to tell me until later. We went to this park to see a remembrance parade and I took the dog. And they were trying to tell me to leave. I suddenly realised that dogs aren't allowed in parks. They didn't want the dog in that park. Well, if I can't take the dog, that's very limiting, to me. The other thing I discovered was that they wanted me to put a muzzle on the dog. My dogs never wear a muzzle. I've never used a muzzle for any reason at all. In fact, my dog might be worse if it had a muzzle than if it didn't have a muzzle. So that has rather put me off going to Poland again. But what I think I would do is improve my words of Polish so that I can say these things to people in Polish – say 'My dog is well-behaved, well-trained, and is OK.' But it will limit me as to where I can go, which is a shame. But then, I don't know. Maybe things have changed a little bit since then. Because I do know that when Poles come over here a lot of them want dogs...

And I'll tell you another very interesting thing as well, when you take a dog, and this happened a lot in Poland, when you have a dog, people stop and talk to you. If you're in a foreign country and you have a dog, people think you're a native of that country, so they come and talk to you in whatever language it is. And then you have to say, I have to say, 'I am very sorry, I only speak a little bit of...' When we were in Sopot it was quite a nice campsite and there was a nice walk on the promenade, you couldn't go on the beach with the dog, but I could understand that because you have that over here too. But you could walk along the promenade. And we walked along the promenade and we came to this open space. There were lots of stalls, naff stalls, seaside stalls. Selling seaside souvenirs. There was a garden with seats. My daughter said, 'I want to look at these' and I said 'I don't. I'll sit here with the dogs – I had two then – and you can go and have a look at all of those.' I said 'Take your time. I'm quite happy sitting here with the dogs. You just take your time.'

Just a few yards away there was a man setting up a CD stall and I was sitting here with these two dogs. When my daughter came back to me, she said, 'You've got more people gathered around you, talking to you about the dogs, than that man does at his CD stall.' I said, 'Everybody sees two dogs, quietly sat down, and wants to stop and talk.' I had quite a large gathering of people and we were talking mixed odd languages and words about the dogs. They were very interested in the dogs. Wherever I go, people stop and talk about the dogs. It is a wonderful way of meeting people, which is -- what's the word I'm looking for -- unthreatening. Because you're talking about a neutral thing. If you don't like dogs, you don't talk to the person. If you do, you have this in common. It's a very unthreatening way of talking to other people. And it's also a very good way, I find, of meeting people who live in that country and aren't tourists. People say, 'You should go and see this' or 'What about that?' And places are suggested that you go to which aren't, probably, in a tourist guide.

Iza:

He said to me, 'Why don't you come to Poland with me, Mum?' And I said, 'Well, no, I can't do that, there's an Iron Curtain'. And he said 'Mum, that came down!' And I said, I know that, but I'm still, like five years old, and I imagine an actual Iron Curtain, and it's still the kind of thing I have never imagined being able to do. And he said, 'But you can.' So he started pulling the corner of the tablecloth, and pulling it along. So, I found myself saying 'OK'. Because I completely trust him. I don't know that I would have gone with anyone else to reconnect and do that. Because my father left when I was five, lived in Poland, came back once for a week when I was twenty-five, so we had a totally written relationship. He would say things, 'I love you, I think about you every day', which lots of parents don't say to their children. So I grew up with a very idealistic view, not in any way real. I partly, I think, didn't want to tamper with that. I quite liked that the way it was, and leaping into the present was quite a scary idea. So, anyway, he [my son] said 'Come'. And because we've always written [to relatives based in Poland], I could write to people and say, 'We're thinking about coming'... I drove. How I did it I've no idea, because we couldn't understand road signs, and the camber in the road [was difficult after winter weather]. My niece came, and she had just finished her GCSEs, and had a summer, so at sixteen she thought she was up for that, completely no barriers to that, whereas I was full of all kinds of barriers. So off we went...

If I went to live there, I would learn the language in a way that -- I have tried to think about lessons and things. We have thought about it, because [my partner] is a smallholder, and really loves the way Poland has been looked after in terms of communist forestry and the preservation of flora and things are astonishingly good. He's really loved the whole thing. And he's said why don't we go and live for a few months, or a year or two, and learn the language. I don't know, I think, with all of that that happened, I'm a bit clingy, I don't think that I could live away from my family.

6 Poles arriving in the UK after 2004

Luke:

[I have] surprisingly little [contact with Polish people]. There are couple of people I meet at work that are Polish, but really not a lot. I thought there would be lot more. And it's quite disappointing really, I was looking forward to meeting lots of Poles, my age or a bit younger and seeing, hearing about their lives and home, what they get up to. But actually, very little contact. It's quite sad really...

I've met very, very few Polish migrants. I don't really understand why. To me, they are quite invisible, and I think I'm probably invisible to them as well. So, our paths haven't crossed. My groups, my tribe groups are people at work, people in local politics, parents of children... but there aren't any Polish parents of children at school where my children are... I feel very lone in terms of Polishness, I'd love to meet Poles... I'm busy with young family and busy life and so on, I haven't really looked for that kind of friendship, either. But, I haven't bumped into it...

One thing that I do, which is a bit odd, I play a game on the computer, which is just silly really, it's tanks fighting each other. And I've joined a Polish group. So I'm kind of interacting... I thought it would be fun to try, and because I can say few words in Polish I thought to be able to hack into this Polish group and convince them that I'm Polish... I don't really know them, again they are distant, it's more of a joke really.

Dave:

Generally, people keep themselves to themselves, they don't make exceptional efforts to meet other people in the Polish community. It's mainly who they know within their own circle in their own community... Almost everyone I worked with has been Polish... the majority of my Polish friends I've met at work, and they became my friends.

Kinga: So, do you think that after 2004 you have more contact with Polish people?

Dave: Oh, absolutely! If you are just talking about contact in the purest sense, without making a value judgment. There's been a distinct increase in the presence of the Polish community. But I think it's important to differentiate between what you can call the first wave and the second wave of the Polish diaspora. For instance, my family, my aunts, my cousins who I referred to earlier, who came before 2004, generally, and sometimes many years before 2004, even they noticed the distinction between themselves as a Polish community and the new wave of Polish diaspora which comes probably in 2004. The numbers are far greater, the community is far less consolidated, for example. I think because in the first wave, and I can only speak from my experience, but in the first wave the Polish community was a lot smaller, and therefore the Polish identity was a lot more concentrated, that community had closer ties, *et cetera*. But in the second wave, if you like [to call it that], for reference, the numbers are incredible. And in T., which is a small English town, you've seen the neighbourhood completely changed. And even Polish people don't speak to other Polish people, the community is now that big... I think, in my experience, there is an inclination, there is an automatic kind of empathy or sympathy if a Polish person

meets a Polish person. But that doesn't automatically result in trust or positive relationships. Which I think, when I was growing up, was more the case, before 2004...

With regards to the community, especially the new wave which I was referring to, there is a kind of assertiveness in that community which is... kind of new, even to my Polish family. And I think it's a little bit disconcerting, even to my Polish family. So, by and large, I identify myself as British, because this is my home, but at the same time I do have a lot of empathy... Seeking to identify myself with a Polish person, or a Polish group I've just met, particularly of this new wave, who generally, at least in my experience, have very little interest in trying to assimilate in the United Kingdom. You know, they want to stay in their own community, which is fine. The first performance is, I guess, speaking the language. Polish people are generally very grateful that someone who is not Polish is willing to learn their language. And then, the language inevitably follows with the question 'Oh, how do you know Polish?' And then I share my experiences of being in Poland, I share my experiences of my Polish heritage, with my family... and these three aspects build the relationship with that individual or with that group. And, I guess, in this way I perform my Polish identity. There are other more surface level superficial things as well, mentioning *naleśniki*, *pierogi*, *idziemy na jednego*, that kind of thing. Yeah, there are some stereotypes which I also comply to. But it's so ... there are so many streams of discourse now, there's no one solid identity. There are sub-groups within the sub-groups in the Polish community...

There is a certain class, if you like, of a Polish diaspora, in the United Kingdom, which, I think, would like to distance themselves from the traditional stereotypes of a traditional, hard-working Polish builder, very much so. In my experience, and I know these people personally, they do this by working hard and acquiring wealth or status through qualifications, or advancement in their jobs. And, basically, trying to increase the distance between the manual labour, this is one way. So that could be through the achievement, qualifications in the UK education sector, increasing the use of their English language. These are some of my tutoring clients, they have these kind of concerns, changing their accent, even, which is a big thing. But then, the other, and that again in broad strokes, another class, if you like, it's the other generation maybe, or lesser. They are more than willing to work more than sixty, seventy, eighty hours a week. To get paid, to work hard, some will have three, four, or five jobs, and there is no sense of urgency to advance academically or to... integrate themselves into the UK's culture. But again, I think these two are distinct groups, but again I'm painting very broadly here. Just in my experience.

Zuzanna:

Most of my friends aren't Polish, but, mainly because I've stopped work now, and I've got time, I've re-established a link with one Polish friend recently... She's someone from the dance group. In terms of close friends, most of my close friends were school friends, so they were all English. None of my work colleagues were Polish, so I don't have any there. In terms of my neighbours, I'm not aware of people. We do have a Polish cleaner. But I have met a friend of a friend recently, who is. She's not really my friend, I just met her socially once. So I don't have a very close network. Whereas it would have looked very different if you'd caught me thirty years ago... It's very easy for me to walk along and hear lots of Polish voices. As I mentioned, we have a cleaning lady, and she's got other people who work with her, so there's that's link. I do go to the Polish shops because I love Polish food, so I will go

to the Polish shops to get the food. But it's very noticeable that there are Polish people around... It hasn't really changed me. It's made me more aware of Polish people. I think if I went to a Polish meeting here I would feel very odd. But it's quite nice walking along the road and hearing someone speak Polish. I think, 'I know what they're saying'.

Sara:

We had a lot of Polish young people coming to the hotels, and the catering industry. We have a hotel in T. and I think every member of staff that were there at one time was Polish. It was nice for me because, through all these years it's been, like, you felt a little bit of an outsider, and then, all of a sudden, I'd be in a supermarket and I would be hearing Polish. And I would have to stop and say, 'Oh, where are you from, which part of Poland?' And they would stop and chat. To them it was nice too, because they are a long way from home, and it can be quite lonely. So we'd chat in the supermarket, and I would say my story, a little bit of it, and [ask] 'Do you like it?' 'Oh yes, we like it'. And I just felt sorry for them as well, because I think that a lot of time they were taken advantage of. They had these jobs in the hotels, and they weren't paid very much, and they were given accommodation maybe and some food, but they would have to work very hard for it, and they would have half the wage of a British person. And that would make me very angry, I didn't like the way they were being treated. But we also had a Polish doctor on the ward, he was with the Ear, Nose and Throat department, and he settled here with his wife, she was also a doctor. I helped with their little girl, I would take her to school and pick her up after my work. So, I got friends with them, but they moved away now as well. There was a lot in those years. Now, there's a young girl that works in the yacht club, and she's from Gdańsk, so I started to become friends with her. So, it's nice, I like the fact that there are a lot of Polish people here now, it's nice... In work, there are quite a few doctors. I would say maybe I know about ten through work. And then there's a few young ones, in T. now... It's just that you walk through the supermarket and you can hear it.

Ann:

[When Poles started arriving in my town after 2004] They were all young people. A very big influx came from Łódź. It was nice to hear them talking, I could understand them. 'Sam,' I said, 'That's somebody Polish!'

Janina:

[I have] quite a few [friends] from the exchange I did as a teenager, quite a few of them emigrated to the UK and I kept in contact with them, gave them help and stuff like that. And then there was a few who were in my high school, and then with going to church. The church was the main hub of everyone meeting. So you noticed when they joined the EU. There was a flood of younger people. Yes, a fair few. I have friends who are like me, and it's their grandparents, but there are a few 'newer' Poles...

I think you can share in cultural similarities. There's a girl on my course who didn't realise that I could speak Polish, that I was half-Polish, until a few days ago. And when she realised, she got quite excited, and we had a really nice chat, and we spoke about, like, Christmas,

and about, like... So, yeah, there is a common connection. But I think as soon as you say, 'I was born here, my mother was born here', you know, there is a generational divide. And I think a lot of the older people I know, they would always, they could be quite bitter, and they'd say things like 'Oh, we didn't have a choice to come here, whereas they're coming here purely for the money'. And I'd say to them, 'Stop attacking your own people, in a way it's not really a choice, if it's economic survival or betterment, so don't create this distinction.' But there does seem to be a distinction, almost...

At university, I maybe met about four people who were from Poland. I don't know if that's something to do with class, or money, or the combination, but there wasn't a great many Poles at university. And it seemed quite insular. There was a Polish society that me and a friend went to, but again it was people who lived in Poland and were going to go back there once they'd graduated, so it felt more like it wasn't quite appropriate for me to be there.

Eva:

I didn't really [notice the post-2004 influx of Polish people], that didn't really hit me. I was struggling with my own [inaudible] at the time. It didn't really affect me at all. I knew that there were migrants coming, and that was great, I had no problem with that. I know people had issues, and there was talk in the press and the media, you know, that all these Poles were coming over here and taking people's jobs from them, and all of this. You know, it was like a re-run of what I was hearing about, what happened in the Second World War when my family came, and when the Poles first arrived. Because they had exactly the same sort of situation. They'd fought in the War, they made a huge contribution to World War II, and at the end of that war they were thanked – 'Thanks for helping us to fight the war: bye bye, go back home'. They weren't allowed to march in the victory parade in London! And it was a very similar sort of thing. 'Oh, the Poles have come here, they're taking our women, they're taking our jobs'. And all of this, it was a re-run. When I was reading some of the newspaper articles and hearing things on the television when these new Poles were coming here, I was thinking 'This is exactly the same!'

But, you know, obviously, there were different reasons. Like I said before, at the start of the interview, my family did not choose to come to the UK. They did not choose to come anywhere, they were happy living their lives in Poland, they were not looking for better lives or anything. The whole War situation brought them to the UK: they arrived here, but they didn't want to be here, they wanted to be back home where they came from. The younger Poles, the younger migrants came because they had a choice. They wanted to come to either the UK or wherever it was, they wanted to experience a new country. Yes, maybe they wanted to better their lives and earn more money and make better lives for themselves, and then possibly go back home. I've heard quite a number of them saying 'I don't know how long I'm going to stay here in the UK. You know, for me this is fine, I'm earning some good money, eventually I want to go back home to Poland'...

I know a young group here in Manchester that I recently got in touch with. They are doing some really good work here in Manchester clearing out an old graveyard where there are over a hundred Polish people buried. They are doing some really good work in clearing that cemetery, they are really interested in that. And just before Christmas time they got involved with collecting food parcels to send to Poland to veterans of World War II who were struggling in Poland. And I got in touch with them and I was helping them. And again,

they're actually quite surprised, because there is – and I'm going to say this again – there is this gap between the older Polish generation and the younger one. And they are both struggling with each other, I think. From what I can see, the old Polish people maybe don't trust the younger ones, think that the younger ones have got an easy life, they're coming over here, as I've said before, making better lives for themselves. Maybe they feel a little bit, you know, sad that their circumstances weren't that good when they arrived here. Similarly, the younger generation are finding it difficult to integrate with the older ones, because the older ones don't understand where they're coming from. There's all this sort of thing happening...

I try and work with both, at the moment. There's lack of trust as well with the younger ones. And I'm trying to, I've seen this young group in action -- I like what they do, I like their enthusiasm, they are totally patriotic to Poland, which is nice, which is good. And we need to bridge that gap somehow. And I feel that, maybe, what I'm doing, and the work the *Kresy* Family are doing, might help -- in maybe some respect -- in bridging that gap. They're finding it quite a unique situation as well, because where they're finding a resistance from the older generation, they are finding that my generation, the descendants, are a little bit more open to these things. They're beginning to trust a little bit more, and want to work with us, and are interested in the history that we're finding out about...

I was trying to put on a screening of a film, we got to know a few years ago a producer, he lives in America, and he found out that his grandfather was murdered in Katyn, and he did a documentary film about Katyn. And he came to the UK and my group arranged screenings of his film in Manchester, in London, in Glasgow, in Southampton, in Liverpool, we managed to get some places for him. And I managed to get a venue at the Manchester University. But before the actual screening of this film, I was trying to promote the film, and I was putting posters and leaflets into every Polish shop that I could, in the Manchester area, to get many people to go. And I walked into one Polish shop and I was telling the owner. I said, 'Could you put these leaflets in the shop, it's a film about Katyn', and this, that and the other.

And there was a girl, a young girl stood next to me who was buying some groceries. And she was obviously listening to the conversation, and I turned around to her and said, 'If you're interested you are welcome to come – it's a free event, we won't charge you for it, it's obviously to do with educating the British public and everybody about Katyn, because not many people know about it'. You know, so I turned round to her and said, 'You are welcome to come, it's going to be held on such and such a time, and such and such a date, and all the rest of it, and would you be interested to come?' And she just gave me this look and she just looked through me as though I was I don't know what, and said 'Who is interested in Polish history? The younger people, we're not interested in the Polish history, we don't care about Polish history.' I looked at her, and I was quite saddened to hear that. I thought, do you not realise what your people went through during the War, do you not want to support those people, do you not want to find out what happened to them?... I was sad, I just felt sad, and I thought 'Where is your patriotism? You are from Poland, you are a Pole, you come to the Polish shop, come and support this film.'

it's nice to see young people, the younger generation taking on an interest. Because we have this worry about what will happen to our history. The older people now are in their nineties and there are very few of them left. There's our generation that are struggling to understand what was going on there, and our children and grandchildren are finding it harder. So, you know, this generation that are coming here, who are slightly maybe a little

bit older but who know a bit about that background. You know, we're hopeful that they might help us in keeping that history alive and teaching it, obviously, to their children and keeping all of that really going. It's nice to see that they, obviously, learned that history in Poland when they were growing up, maybe they didn't know all about it, and maybe that history got distorted, or maybe the history wasn't taught in full to them, there, but it's nice to see that they are interested in it, that they are learning things about it as well. And they want to, they want to work with the groups like *Kresy Family* as well. They see as well that there is that need, which is good.

Zosia:

The new émigrés, when I've spoken to them – and it saddens me, it really saddens me! They try not to acknowledge their Polish heritage...

I know there are a few doctors, but by and large it's factory workers, or people that work, and they work tremendously hard... But there's an awful lot of people who aren't working... it all has an effect on us Poles, that we're all lumped together now. Whereas before it wasn't like that. If you're getting a certain amount of benefits it may not pay you to work, especially if you have children, so there is that sort of thing. And it does have an influence on people like me who keep their Polish name and will not change it back, because one likes to think that you're well thought of.... My father always used to say, 'You don't dirty your own nest'. Not that you dirty someone else's! But what he was trying to say is that when you're going somewhere you want to present the best [face], and I'm afraid that we haven't done that. Have we? The young Polish? ...When I say 'we', we, Polish people... I know there's a lot of wrongdoings by other people.

Adelaide:

[Around 2004] I started to hear, because I live near Southampton, I started to hear Polish being spoken in the street by young people wearing jeans... I felt a familiarity and a pull, it was pulling me. The language was pulling me towards the people. And I liked them, because they were speaking that language -- because obviously that language was my father's language. So I was very happy to hear the language, and I was so surprised to see the language being spoken by beautiful young people, with young families, little children, wearing modern clothing! Because in my mind Poland had stopped in 1939...

We have a large Polish community in Southampton, they call it *Warsaw by the Sea*, and there was always a Polish shop, for a long time. So we went there and we bought some things, but I felt like an imposter really. I tried to make some recipes, years ago, I tried to cook some food when I came back after 2006, I started make some recipes. I now have a Polish recipe book and I do make more Polish food. When I came back from Poland in 2006, I was so in love with Poland, and so in love with the idea that I belonged to something, that I got in touch with a group and offered my services to teach English to newly arrived Polish people, but for different reasons it didn't happen. I felt I wanted to enter the community, you know, I did feel the pull, I felt a magnetism, but things moved on, family and so on. I just saw that there were more people, and after the initial local reaction things settled down.

In one of my jobs there was a woman, she came from Poland with her husband, they married and had two children here – one of them is called Kinga. I talked to her a little bit, but probably as much as I would speak to my colleague next to her who was from Croatia as well... There was another couple that I knew who were Polish, they worked at the same place my husband worked, and we saw them from time to time. She did some translation for me. And at the University there are a few people from Poland. But as you've said, just because the language sounds familiar, and that first magnetism that I felt towards people walking the streets in Southampton. I wanted to rush up and say 'Oh, but my father was Polish!' I think I probably did once or twice. I was always smiling at them, like a lunatic, trying to be, you know, 'I'm so pleased to hear your voice, to see you here.' But, of course, I was a stranger to them... Right now when I hear an accent which sounds Polish, I can just smile inside, but I don't need to rush up and hug them, metaphorically speaking

The Polonia generation -- I see a culture of heroism, of hard work, of determination to rebuild, of bravery and courage in the face of adversity. And also, they have an honour. The code of honour I see in Polish people is very strong. You give hospitality, you open your door, no one stands on your doorstep, they come inside, all of that. So they were living as established, a respectable community in Southampton, a good strong community around the church. And then, all of a sudden, there is this huge influx of young, first of all, young unmarried people, originally, the young men, the young women, who wanted to have a different life, escape probably. And some of them got into trouble. And, of course, they were seeing that as spoiling their identity in the community. They didn't like it, because some of them were, like you would find in any large group of people, some of them were not behaving quite as one would hope. So there was a kind of a gap between those two migrant generations.

Mike:

I have quite a few friends... '*kolega*' friends, we see them in the pub or at social events. Because they are quite a little bit younger than we are, than I am. But yes, we have quite a few friends. And they are very friendly. But there remains a gap between us all...

The people who came along in the mid-noughties, they all had jobs... manual labouring jobs, basically. There are a few professional-type jobs. Mainly laundry work, bakeries, abattoirs, and similar sort of things. There were one or two professionals I came across, but by and large it was manual-type work. A lot of odd jobs, KFC, McDonalds, places like that. They've all moved up, of course, now. But the interesting thing was that they all came over by the dozen, and they all had jobs lined up. Or if they didn't, within a matter of a week or two they were fixed up. It was quite amazing really. I couldn't believe that they were coming over and straight into a job. So there's obviously no sort of slack in the economy, to enable that, because these jobs weren't created overnight for the Poles, they must have been there in the economy.

Maria:

I do now have a whole group of Polish ladies from Poland, who I call my friends. We probably don't go out very often, because everybody's got home life and things. They tend to be a bit younger than me because I've got to know them through both my son and Polish

Saturday school, but also because I work with the Polish Scouting Association, which I've worked with since I was sixteen, and they are all mums and dads of the children I work with, or that my son knows. I tend to work with older girls, I work with the eleven- to sixteen-year-olds. So, locally, they've just become part of my life, which I didn't have before at all... It happened quite gradually, really. I'm trying to think. I made friends with somebody who'd come over with her husband for work, and that was my first inroads to somebody who was my age, and of similar circumstances, and somebody I could talk to in Polish! So that was a start. She didn't know that many people, but she did introduce me to other people, and then we started doing things together...

I do feel that my identity is very different, because I've had different experiences. I've grown up in the UK, so I know the British system inside out. And also there are some characteristics that you take on, British characteristics that you take on. Being much more reserved, because you've grown up with that, you tend to be much more reserved, you tend not to be as open. And they are much more open. The culture is to say things as they are. I noticed those differences. To me that's good, and I've enjoyed that because it's allowed me to become less reserved and more open, and more emotional about things, because Polish people tend to be. Although I still find it difficult, when they get really heated in arguments, you know, that's not the British way. Polish people will just all almost talk at once, everybody's got to have an idea, and everybody's got to have a contribution to the conversation. Whilst the English culture, and the Polish exile community, is very much you take on that reserve, and if somebody comes up with an idea you don't necessarily have to tell them yours, if you think theirs is better. I definitely noticed that difference.

In terms of cooking and baking, I felt like the dishes that I knew, the things I could bake were quite limited, and one of the things this group of ladies organised was baking cakes to sell after the church, on Sunday, for the Scouts. And I joined that despite not having a child at the time. I learned so much – I've never heard of some of these recipes, that they were conjuring up, and the things that they were baking! Because they were all things that had developed in Poland, in the meantime, they were modern Polish recipes. I found that great. At first, I could only make *jabłecznik* or *sernik* [but now I was learning to bake] things with foreign-sounding names that I'd never heard of. But then, with the Internet you could look them up and make them yourself. The Internet has been fantastic in all of that as well, the rise of the Internet helps enormously with language as well...

I feel personally worried by [Brexit], but I know that there are other people in the émigré community who might even say it's good, that they need to go back because there are such numbers in the first place. And I know people who felt that our whole community had been spoiled by the Poles coming over, because it just wasn't the same as it was before, and they were taking over. And I think, 'Well, don't be ridiculous, we were dying out [Polish speakers] [laugh], we were going to be extinct soon!' But some people have turned away from that, they don't want to know any Polish people particularly. I think the only thing they take advantage of is Polish shops, and being able to get more Polish food than before...

If I'd ever had any doubts about my identity, I think definitely the fact that so many Polish people have come over and they have joined in the community, and I've made so many more friends, it's made me feel more Polish, and just reinforced my Polishness, and not made me feel like I'm lacking confidence about it. I have a friend who was born in Wilno, and said she spoke Polish, Russian and Lithuanian in the playground. And she says, 'Well, I don't have any issues about my Polishness.' That always surprises me when I hear that,

because I think, we've always had this feeling that we're not proper Poles because we're in the UK, and she just said, 'Well, there are different types of Poles all over. And with another background.'

Barbara:

By chance, in the Library, I saw an advert asking for volunteers, for ESOL. At the time, the Poles were starting to come *en masse*, and they needed somebody like me who was bilingual, to help them with the students. All of a sudden, I had this source of talking Polish, if only once a week at the ESOL classes. And then the ESOL classes became two ESOL classes, three ESOL classes, and they started to ask me if I could help their children with their reading and their homework, because I was in an ideal position where I could explain grammar to them in Polish, and yet give them the correct English pronunciation. So that's how my new Polish contacts developed. And this was from, I would say, from 2005 to the present day. And one thing led to another, and they started to ask me for help with going to the doctor's, with child benefit, I even helped with divorce proceedings. I've helped with annulments, I've helped with insurance situations and I've been on hospital visits. Those I don't charge for, I do that voluntarily. But I do charge for lessons, because I feel it makes them learn and it places a value on the lessons.

I now also give conversation lessons to adults, apart from helping the children. I have a limited number of pupils; I turned some down, because I need some free time as well. So Mondays and Wednesdays are my days off, and the weekends, unless something serious crops up. But my close English friend, he's a retired tax accountant, and he does tax for them as well, again without payment. One of my pupils, her mother is a seamstress, and she doesn't pay me for the lessons, but she does all my alterations. I think I'm very close to three sets of people. They're like a substitute family now for me. And I have to say that the influx of Polish people has really transformed my life. Because I really believed that was it, when my mum died. So I feel I'm almost an ideal person for you to mention...

There are differences between us, differences in attitude, even differences in attitude in the Poles I knew when I used to visit Poland as a child, under communism... They have to learn that you don't give the doctor a present, for example. That you have to be polite, with everybody, because they're quite, um, gruff, Polish can be quite, um, in your face... And I think they understand that England isn't the land of milk and honey. It can be, but you have to work hard for whatever you achieve. They tended to think, oh, you just came here and you just picked money off the trees, and it's not like that. They've realised that you have to work hard as well, in England...

Overall, they've refreshed my Polishness, given me a chance to not hide the Polish part of me. And with the young people – you see, I don't have any children – and my young pupils, they've given me contact with youth.

I can usually tell from the appearance. Or if we're in a restaurant, and there's a foreign accent, I can, not always, but 99%, I'll say 'Where are you from?' and they'll say 'from Poland' and then I start talking Polish to them... A couple of times it's not been very pleasant. On the train, I had a long journey, and I couldn't change my seat and two young Polish men were using very bad language and talking about very unpleasant things. And they didn't know I could understand them. So in the end I asked them in Polish, 'Gentlemen,

would you mind changing your language a bit?’ And they did. And another time it was in the Tube, and it looked as if they were about to start discussing some crime or something a bit dodgy. So I had to say to them in Polish ‘Excuse me, I can understand Polish’. I just felt I had to say something. And another time they were discussing a girl standing in the Tube, it was relatively innocent. So I just laughed and said ‘She is rather pretty, isn’t she?’ They burst out laughing.

Apparently, I’m very well known in our town. They all say ‘Pani Basia! Pani Basia!’ ‘I know somebody who can help you, it’s Pani Basia’. That’s what they tell me, that I’m very well known. The other aspect of my personality is that I don’t mind who I talk to. I’m always chatting to people.

Carole:

I think that in the last ten years or so – with the fact that there’s much more of a Polish presence, it’s become easier to identify with Polishness. I think also travel has made a big difference. It’s cheap to go to Poland, there are frequent flights, it’s not the big effort that it used to be. With an EU passport, it’s become much easier. Also, my family in Poland, with whom I’d always had sporadic contact, were coming over here a bit more. Children of cousins, young people, were studying in Europe, on Erasmus programmes. Coming to the UK to do courses, or for short holidays. And that made it all so much easier, I think... Because my nephews of a sort, cousin’s children, came to the UK - they also spoke a bit of English, quite good English actually - it somehow enabled me to deepen my relationship with them... I feel that I have a proper relationship with the family...

On top of that, it’s complicated for me, because – as I suppose it is for everybody – it’s tied up with a lot of emotional stuff. Family relationships, and so on. And it’s perhaps significant that my father, who was Polish, died at the end of 2003, after which it would have been possible to lose contact altogether, though to maintain any kind of contact it required effort. That effort somehow was easier. It was easier to find a language school, where I could have Polish lessons, than it had been before...

I’ve hired Polish people. And they’ve been very good and very hard working. So yes, lots of contact with tradespeople, builders, many of whom are really highly educated. They’ve got degrees in chemistry and biochemistry and so on. I’ve met people who grew up here, of my age, whose parents came over during the War, or who have one Polish parent. I can’t say I’m very involved with them socially, but they’re around, and I know them.

Aniela:

I first started noticing a big difference, just going round my local city centre. I remember distinctly going to TK Maxx and just rummaging through the rails, as you do, and hearing all these Polish voices around me. And that’s my first underlying memory of noticing how very different things had become. And then every time I would go into the city centre, I’d hear more Polish voices, or other Eastern European languages round me. To the extent that now, when I do go into town, I’m no longer surprised that I hear this. And that’s not just in B. I found that I went out to Cambridge with a friend of mine for the day and, again, in the tea shops, in the coffee shop, in the shops, lots of Eastern European, and particularly Polish. I

have noticed, that's quite a big difference, there are obviously quite a lot more people. And they're working. My local Co-op has three Polish girls working there. So I have come into contact with a lot more Polish people just through my day-to-day life.

Up until last year I was working for the Citizens' Advice Bureau in B., and that was in an advisory capacity. I've got a legal background, but I was project managing a regional project, and a lot of the office staff, there were three or four Polish girls working there; a chap from Lithuania as well. We were often called out to interpret for clients who would come in. People coming in to have their benefits looked at and other problems. That brought me into contact with a lot of people as well. From those two angles, things have changed noticeably.

And they're always very surprised when you could speak to them in their own language. They're actually very, very happy that there's somebody there that can do that. So in that respect it's quite different... It depends how good their English-speaking skills are, to begin with. Some manage. But a lot of people in the office, when they see a Polish name, or an Eastern European name, or even a Czech name, they ask me 'Can you deal with this client?' Just in case there are any language issues. Sometimes there are, because there are older members of the community that have come over as well who don't speak English very well. So that comes in handy. But a lot of the younger Poles, they're pretty clued up on the benefit system here, how to deal with things, and generally their English is very good... [Some people with less good English need help] particularly with the admin side of things, and trying to get through to the benefits helpline is often quite tricky, and then you've got to go through security questions. Sometimes they find that quite stressful. Or dealing with housing issues, or legal issues. That can be quite stressful because it's the procedural aspects that are often difficult...

From a personal level, my husband's cousin has married a Polish girl, so we now have another new member in the family that we actually have a lot in common with. And I think she feels a little bit more comfortable... I wouldn't say I've got Polish *friends* as such. I see people at work, I see, obviously, my cousin's wife, Agata, she's called, we see each other quite regularly, which is quite nice. With the Polish community, the friends that I had, people have moved away. I haven't actually mixed with the Polish community as such for a number of years. I haven't made a concerted effort to go back and get involved there. I don't know. Because my life is now where I am, if you know what I mean, so I haven't actually made a conscious effort to go and get to know people, deliberately. Because there's so much information you can find out from the internet, and Agata tells me a lot, I've met her parents, we've been invited over there, to Poland. And also I've got friends from childhood in Poland that are now easier to keep in touch with (through Skype, and email as well) that used to come over when they were still behind the Iron Curtain.

Dominic:

My grandmother died, and for a while I had no one to speak Polish to. It lapsed, it hadn't lapsed, but it had become more inactive, that could be the best way to describe it. But then, in 2004 or thereabouts, as in the UK, many Polish people began arriving in Ireland. You suddenly began to hear Polish spoken as you walked down the main streets, in Dublin and Cork. I hadn't Polish relatives with whom I was in contact, but I began reading in Polish again, and trying to improve my vocabulary.

Then I became involved in a research project for which Polish once again became relevant. Certainly, in the last six to eight years my interest in things Polish and my engagement with the Polish language has really begun to step up considerably... Because of the fact that I was cut off intermittently from that aspect of my Polish past, my access to it wasn't easy, the influx of Poles to the UK [and Ireland] has strongly encouraged me to re-engage with those aspects.

Filip:

My mother and father were very careful. They worked hard, saved money, and every time I would come home and say, 'I'm getting a new job' or 'I'm going to try and get this' they said, 'Calm down, calm down'. I really thought I was adopted, because they were nothing like me. And when I met my wife-to-be, I realised that she was very much like me, very get-up-and-go and entrepreneurial, and 'take a risk and make it work'.

At the same time, or just after that, the Poles were starting to come over from Poland, because Poland had joined the EU. My wife said 'Look, we could teach them English'. My wife was a qualified English teacher. And we put some adverts up and suddenly we were teaching 10 and 15 Poles who were all coming here to work, and you started to make friends with some of them, and you realised that they were like you – they were all here just to make money, get on. And I started to identify that I'd grown up in an English house, but I was really, emotionally and ideologically, Polish. And it completed a circle for me – I suddenly realised in effect where I came from.

I took a CELTA certificate, I'd got a BA Honours, so I could take a teaching qualification, and we both started teaching English to Poles here. And then from that, we decided that we should maybe go back to Poland and teach Polish people English. That's basically the story so far. In a way I've completed the circle and gone back to Poland...

By meeting Poles here, and being exposed to a Polish community (you could argue it was a very young Polish community; they were all financial migrants [but] they still kept all the old things, *Wigilia*, Easter when you take your basket to the church) I got drawn into all of that through our friendships, and that made me realise in effect where I came from. That was very important...

There was no 'Let's help the Polish community'. It was 'Hey, here's an opportunity'. And we went to the Polish club in D. and said, 'We'd like to rent a room off you to teach English.' And the man in charge said, 'What's that got to do with us?' He didn't see [that] the Polish migrants, or the financial migrants, and the Polish community had anything in common. They weren't 'us'. And he actually said, 'What's that got to do with us?' We ended up having to rent rooms in pubs and places. We put adverts up. Like always, you start off with thirty people and then some realised that they were paying £4 an hour and thought 'Why would I do that?' Eventually we ended up with a core of maybe fifteen people we taught, and the relationships built up. You suddenly saw that you had common things with them. This thing to get on, to make something of yourself, work hard, and if you work hard, the reward will come. It was that that made me realise how much like them I was. Straight away I could see, in the genetic pool, shall we say, I come from the deep end, where I was much more like my father's side of the family. I think my father was conditioned socially. He was

an immigrant, and, wherever he worked, he was Polish. He was hard-working Polish, and everyone said, 'The Poles work hard'. That was his only currency, that was his value, that he worked hard. And he didn't want to rock the boat. I was trapped in that family where I was more [wanting to say] 'No, get off' [the boat]. It was the fact that I saw in these people myself and identified with them and suddenly realised where I came from...

The dynamic was this: they came here for six months to earn a load of money to go and build a house in Poland. But once they were here they were seduced by it, and hardly any one we knew, back in say 2008, ever went back. One of our students and his wife – we went to their wedding in Poland – he now has a successful building company, and they specialise in stone-built buildings, and he works himself to death, but they've succeeded. And suddenly their life was here. So the house that they built in Poland they eventually sold. They didn't see their future there. And it's strange that while they're all coming here to make a better life than in Poland, and stay, I was doing the absolute opposite. I started teaching them, looking to make a better life in Poland. There is this, I always call it the honeymoon complex, that for a long time I saw the very best in Poland, the holiday syndrome. When you live there it's a very different country. But yes, my identity was reinforced by these people, and from that I understood myself.

They are [my personal friends]. In fact, on my stag night it was terrible because Poles don't know when to stop. I'd invited a few of my English friends along to my stag night and some of my Polish friends, and it was carnage. All my poor English friends didn't know what had hit them. In fact, at the end of my stag night, I went home to bed, and my Polish friends went on to a night club. There's this pride in them, it's about 'I can hold my drink', 'Let's enjoy ourselves because you never know what's going to happen tomorrow'...

This is only a personal observation, but from what I saw in D. and B. [local towns], the first wave of Poles who came were very educated. They were the ones who were the financial thinkers and said, 'We can go to England now we're in Europe, we're in the EU, and we can make a better life, send money back, and then carry on living in Poland.' Then there were what I would call the chancers, the ones who came here thinking 'We'll see how it goes'. The third wave were all the alcoholics and the hangers on. In fact, at one point, quite a few of the alcoholics, older men, who just sat round drinking and smoking, were hanging around on the bridge in D. and the Polish community gathered up and got enough money together to send them back on coaches to Poland, because they didn't want Poles to be associated with that type of thing. Very proud people.

Filip [2]:

This man, he was only a student of ours, but he came to us at the lesson one day and said, 'I've got this problem'. He'd taken his car to the garage and they said they'd fixed it, but didn't. When he went and complained they laughed in his face and sent him away. Because they thought: he was Polish and that was it, he wouldn't understand. He came to us, we wrote to the garage, we told them exactly where they'd gone wrong, and that there would be legal consequences. And they did refund his money. We also had occasions where we

wrote CVs for people. In fact, in Asda in D., there were two girls with Masters degrees in Business Studies, working on the checkouts. We were able to help them, and they both work in Lloyds Bank now. They weren't necessarily friends of ours, but they would see us as a friend of the Poles. And they would come to us and ask for help. One of our friends had a motorbike go up the back of his car. And he was being sued by the motorbike driver, even though the motorbike had caused the accident. Although he was insured in Britain, he couldn't understand the paperwork, he didn't understand the rules, and we were able to sit down with him and go through it. Eventually his car was repaired by the other man's insurers.

Things like that. They're in a strange country, and if they could get help they would seek it, and, where we could, we tried to help. It was almost a crisis management thing, quite often. Once a month at least. Someone would come and say, 'We've got this problem'. If it was to do with child benefit, or, in one case, a Polish woman's husband left her, and left her here with nothing. We were able to put her in touch with people. Because the existing Polish community weren't interested. And so these newly arrived Poles really had no one to lean on. It could be one thing one month, another thing another month. Where we could, we would try and help.

Filip [3]:

The other thing I really like about Poland, and this is going to sound strange, is that they do not forget their dead. You know what I mean?... We all die and that's the end of it. I just think the fact that we go every couple of weeks, or three weeks, and brush off the graves, and put some flowers and candles on. It's very comforting when you're alive to know that someone's going to care when you're not there. And here, it's made me visit my parents' grave far more often. I'm not kidding. When my parents died in '91 you made the first two or three token visits on birthdays, and I probably never saw their grave for five or six years. The minute I met my wife in the 2000s – 'Where's your family buried? We're going'. And now I regularly go there and clean it. It's a very strange custom which is alien to English people probably, most people, but I find that quite comforting. It's one of those things. It's things like that which I love about the country.

Stefan:

The new migration came. The first Pole I saw was running an ice cream van in West Cornwall somewhere. I thought 'Good heavens, it's a Polish boy/youth! How extraordinary.' Because you might see an occasional academic coming over – my father had occasional academic visitors – but anybody just doing a summer job was out of the question. And then we started to get lots and lots, and then we got a huge number... I started to see them in the [doctors'] practice. They were all young – they're the generation that ran the Warsaw Rising, actually. They weren't older people who'd settled and got roots and families and children and were embedded in their jobs in Poland. They were people who had the ability to get up

and go. They presented challenges here for the Consul and so on. He told me he opened his door one morning and a hundred people were standing in his small front garden, saying 'We want jobs. Where can we sleep?'

They faced the same challenges as other waves of immigrants. There were tales of four or five dozen to a house, as there had been with Jamaicans, West Indians, in the '50s. I can remember in the '60s, '70s, in my practice there had been that pattern of massive occupation of slum housing, quite bad slum housing in those days. Not so bad now, but probably still sub-standard. To start off with, there was exploitation, because people would say 'OK, 120 hours a week? Yeah, I can do that.' To generalise – it's an awful generalisation, about Poles – if you say, 'Can you do plumbing?' 'Oh yes, I can do plumbing.' 'Can you fix the computer?' 'Yes, I can do computers', 'Can you re-wire?' 'Yes.' There's this thing of saying 'Yes, I can do that'. Certainly, my father's generation all did stuff. One of my patients was working 120 hours a week at a hotel, which is completely illegal, clearly getting exploited. Things like that were put right in due course, as they came to the surface. So that was one of the problems of adjustment they faced.

We didn't see very much of them [coming in for sicknotes], to start off with. Because the ones that had come were fit and adaptable. The population was highly selective, compared to the British population, where there'd be people on every [point on the] social scale and of every age and every ability, and some people with chronic disability. I think it wasn't until the 4th or 5th or 6th or 7th wave of Polish migration that – I don't know how many waves there've been, or whether it was [instead] a constant tide -- that we started to see people with chronic illnesses, and who hadn't got successful work, a career...

Was I meeting anyone socially? I don't think so. I'd be more aware of Polish patients at work: after thirty odd years working there you'd seen a whole generation through. I'd get to know them quite well. I'd see them tending to go to the *Wigilia*, the Christmas Eve mass in the Polish church, which is quite a spectacle, as you can imagine...

[It was] heartening [to see the new arrivals]. My father had died in '89, so he'd missed it. He thought that Wall was going to stay standing up for another hundred years. Suddenly it's gone in a puff of smoke. That was such a life-changing event. Such a world-changing event. Brilliant for them, and for the rest of us...

I've got Polish radar. I can spot them. It might be clothing, it might be conversation in Polish. There are certain types of appearance. If there's a young girl with long blond pigtailed and the chap's a bit burly and he's got a receding hairline, like me, which I've had since the age of 13 – thank you, Dad. That's quite Polish. And there's a certain sort of build. A lot of them come to see the sights... There's a whole nest of them where I've got my lock-up garage... and there's an old people's home that's due to be demolished. The security organisation puts people in as residents and has put a lot of Poles in – with cheap rent, to stop them being vandalised. There's a whole bunch of them there. We've had Polish cleaners who are fearsomely hardworking, wouldn't stop for a cup of tea or a glass of water from the minute they came in to the minute they left. Polish builders, the same. The big heavy work on this house was done by my father's generation of Poles. His contemporaries. Terrific background stories... We'd try to [employ Polish people]. We'd be pleased to have them if we came

across them. Even though I wouldn't necessarily be able to chat with them in Polish. You'd feel that you'd value the connection.

Anne: Do they regard you as being Polish, do you think?

Stefan: Pol-*ish*. Yes. No, in all honesty. A bit Polish, but not really...

The old guys, I carry a torch for them, and I think they're terrific. The new migrants don't want to celebrate that. They're not interested, they're not necessarily – you're taking a risk by generalising, aren't you? – not necessarily so interested in the past. All that stuff happened, all that bad stuff happened, and we lost out. Of course, in England lots of stuff happened, but we came out ahead... In Poland, bad things happened. But the spirit continues, and the country has survived in spite of all the history that's piled on top of it and rolled backwards and forwards over it. I think the new guys carry some of the values of the old guys, even though they haven't got that awareness...

[Polish politics today is] a bit depressing, isn't it? The rise of the right wing. Actually, there's a little right-wing group in Bristol, at the Katyń memorial service. Crewcuts and leather jackets, what do they call them, it's a Latin name. I think 'How can you do this?' It's a whiff of fascism, the far right emerging again. Which is a horror.

Natalia:

I've seen first-hand, I've had discussions with the Consul in Manchester, about people who I suppose would now be called trafficked. And what happened to them, and how they are in fear of their families' lives. This couple came over, they came over, they were brought over. It's all done legally, the company who they did it with have got *bona fide* offices, they've got this license number and that licence number. They personally don't take any money. It's a friend or some other organisation. So, if they come to the law, they can hold their heads up and say 'No, I didn't take any money'. Anyway, they were brought in, and arrived in the middle of the night. Actually, what they were trafficked in for, was an introduction to an employment agency. It wasn't a job, it was just an employment agency. The employment agency worked hand-in-hand with a food production company. They weren't employed by the food production company, they were employed through the agency. They had all these zero hours. The agency themselves were then subject to the gangmasters' laws.

They arrived in the middle of the night and were put into some accommodation. They said, 'We'll be in in the morning to take you for the job'. And when they go into the property there's no hot water, there's no heating, there's seven to a room on a filthy [mattress], and this couple said, 'We want our money back'. The retort was 'Really? We know where you live. You've got a new car standing outside your home. And isn't that a six-year-old child that lives at the address?' They were strong enough, they did go back, but I raised it, and they spoke to the gangmasters' authority.

A few months later I met the Consul again and I asked what, if anything, had happened. Somebody had been imprisoned. But, like the Consul says, it's like mushrooms after a rain.

You pick a few off, but there's other agencies set up to take their place. In a way our government is complicit in all this because if they hadn't had had the opt-out of the 48-hour [regulation] maybe some of the migrants wouldn't have come. Employers wouldn't have been able to take advantage of them. But then, I suppose, I'm not sure about you but I know when I go shopping and I see a good deal, 'Buy one get one free', I'll buy that. It's cheap because the labour's cheap. So I'm also complicit in that.

I've seen landlords, how people have been treated by landlords, and, in a way, it reminds me of how my parents must have felt, and how it must have been for them, when they came over. Because they were allowed to stay, my mum had to work in a factory, and live on the premises, in a hostel. In a way that was almost slavery. Because they had to live, to work wherever they were told, they had to wait however many years, and of course they were charged for the living accommodation. So they gave with one hand and took with another.

Grisha:

No one's asked [me about my Polish identity]. I suppose, here I am, living here. There's the [Polish] name, but I speak fluent English. Obviously, I'm middle-class and can afford to have the house. So, certain assumptions they're making. No one has tried to speak to me in Polish. No one's asked me 'Do I know Polish?' I'm the one who initiates it, and say 'Where do you come from?' My wife might sometimes say to them 'Oh, he will know'. So, if someone says, 'near Krakow' I will say 'Where exactly?' I can't say I've met anyone outside the building trade.... We don't have any Polish shops. In fact, we are a French area [of London] ... My feeling is a certain pride for the Poles who are here, when I've met them, in different parts of the country, that they're working hard. In the hospitality industry. They're very polite. You get good service.

Joanna:

To me, things *have* changed. I feel that there is now – I don't really want to say this in a negative way – it's almost like two communities now, the old and the new. And sometimes there's a little bit of lack of understanding, shall we say, between the two communities. I think that the new community, by and large, this is my impression, it could be wrong, I may be biased, it may be based on my own experiences. I feel that the new community are not interested in forging a lot of links with the other. They have their own culture, they have their own magazines, radio stations. Social media platforms, etc., etc. So they have their own culture. And I think in some areas they perceive us, the older community, the traditional community as being a bit old-fashioned. Stuck in the past, stuck in the pre-War glorified, idealised vision of Poland, as it should be. Not Poland as it is in the 21st century. I feel that sometimes there is this mutual lack of understanding.

Certainly, my involvement in the community now has decreased. It's not as intense as it used to be. Although I'm still a member of the Polish Association, I still go to meetings and contribute as much as I can to their activities, and my husband does. But I feel that the

Association is not really of any great interest to the new Poles. They don't really come to any of the events. They're not interested. I think they see it as irrelevant and old-fashioned.

I've seen changes, as well, that have been brought about by the influx. Obviously there are more Polish shops, which is a nice thing, and a lot more Poles on the streets. Twenty or thirty years ago, if you saw a Polish person on the street, while my mother was still alive, she'd go up to them and say 'Hello! You're from Poland! Oh, how nice!' [I'd mutter] 'Mother, they might not be interested!' It was a novelty. You could talk to that person and make contact with them. But now, it's a common fact. Just today, I was in one of the bigger department stores, and all around me -- I'd only been standing looking at something for two minutes -- and I heard two Polish voices on their mobile phones...

It seems to me that they don't see this country as a permanent home, they just see it as somewhere that they can live and make money. That may sound a bit harsh. Particularly in the early years, I met quite a few people, personally met, who did have that attitude. It was quite clear from what they said and how they behaved that that was their main purpose and focus. Not everyone.

Joanna [2]:

They are quite a few people I've met in my job, I've met quite a few Polish professional people... I used to work as a hospital pharmacist. There were Polish pharmacists, excellent pharmacists, very hard-working, very conscientious. But not just Polish ones, there were pharmacists from all parts of the EU, from other European countries, Spain, Italy. To me, it's nice to have people from other countries working alongside. It's nice to meet people from different cultures...

Joanna [3]:

It's funny the way we met. He and two of his friends were on the bus, travelling to work. The bus was quite crowded, it was about 8 o'clock in the morning. I was on the bus sitting opposite them and of course they assumed I was English. Well, why wouldn't they? And they were chatting away to each other in Polish and I thought 'This is so tempting'. I coughed discreetly and said in Polish to them, 'Hello, gentlemen, are you on your way to work?' And they literally leapt up. Or they didn't leap up physically, but you know how it is when you see people who are startled and completely amazed that there's this person speaking to them in Polish. And of course we started chatting. Andrzej, that's the name of my friend, recovered himself soonest, and said 'Hello, nice to meet you, bla bla bla,' and that's how it started. Then we saw him in church a few times after that, and I can't remember how it progressed from then. We invited him round for a cup of tea, and it started from there. He lived not far from where we lived at the time. We still keep in touch. In fact, we visited Poland about seven or eight years ago and met his family...

The [other] Polish friends I have tend to be from years gone by... Childhood or later. I have some, I have two or three, one who arrived in the early 1980s. A couple of friends like that. I think it's the age gap. The ones that arrived after 2004 tend to be youngish. A few acquaintances from church – a nice young couple, we say hello – but that's about it. No close friends. And I suppose as you get older, it's more difficult to make friends, isn't it? Especially with the age difference.

Joanna [4]:

This is the early days, post-2004, a person, again at the bus stop, this young man came up to me and asked me in broken English something around 'When is the next bus due?' or 'Does the bus go into town from here?' or something like that. So, of course, I replied in my best English and he looked at me blankly. And I thought 'Right, I think I know where you're from!' So, again, I did my discreet cough and said, 'Excuse me, are you Polish?', obviously in Polish. He leapt three feet in the air. 'Oh, yes I am, oh, thank goodness, oh!' We had this long conversation. I tried not to give too much away, but at one point he said something like 'How long have you been here?' I said, 'I've been here all my life.' 'Oh, goodness me – gosh, your Polish is really good!' Then he looked at me, and he looked at the bus, and he looked at me again. He couldn't quite get his head round the fact that this person who spoke to him in perfect English and was to all intents and purposes an English person suddenly broke out into Polish and was conversing with him in Polish. He couldn't understand that.

Another, similar little incident, again, sitting on a bus, I got into conversation with somebody and again he said, 'How long have you been here?' 'Quite a few years! All my life, actually.' 'Oh, my goodness. Where can I buy some decent food?' I said, 'There's a Lidl, just round the corner, the bus is coming up to Lidl, you can buy continental ham, and bread.' 'Oh, thank you, thank you, because the bread here is so awful!' I said, 'Don't worry, you can buy good bread, you just need to find it.' It was quite sad, really, these poor people who'd arrived and probably didn't even have a job to go to, they'd just arrived on spec, on these awful coaches that take three days non-stop to get from Poland to the UK. Got off the bus, had no, or very little, English. Completely lost.

The early days were interesting. But now, as I said, people have built up their own networks, their own social media, their own groups, and they seem to be quite self-contained. They don't seem to reach out to the older Poles in the same way as they used to.

I forgot to mention that, in the early days, the Polish Association used to provide help and advice for these people. So, members, including myself, my husband, and other people used to do advice sessions once a week in the evenings. We used to go to the venue and people used to come with various questions and problems – having problems in claiming benefits, completing tax returns, problems finding an NHS doctor, anything at all to do with living in the UK. We used to point them in the right direction. We didn't give advice ourselves, because we weren't qualified. But we would definitely point them in the right direction. We would give them necessary advice to go and find further information. So we did, in the end, we did help quite a lot of people, provide practical help. In that sense they did have contact

with us, the older Poles, shall we say. Now, things have changed. I suppose they don't need us anymore.

Tomek:

I'm aware of the presence of Poles since 2004, you cannot not be aware of that. There weren't many newcomers at the school [where I worked] because it's a grammar school and, however bright they may have been, their language wasn't up to the entrance test. So most of them went to the sister school. The head of a primary school asked me if I would help out with some Polish children, which I did for two and a half years. So there was a contact there, whether you call that contact with the community, or contact with individuals. That was quite an eye opener. I was suddenly meeting people – how can I put this – of a background and a class that were completely different. My parents were inter-war officer class, and most of our friends were, I suppose, what in Polish you'd call the *inteligencja*, which is almost a class there, in Poland, like a middle class. I didn't really have contact with the sort of people that [I was meeting through the primary school]. I was asked to interpret at one stage for a lady, very pleasant, don't get me wrong, very nice, but the horror stories of domestic violence, of alcoholism, and so on. And, as you probably know, the first word that any English person learns now - obviously *Polski sklep*, the word, forgive me, is *kurwa*. Because that's the word they hear all the time...

Quite a number of Polish people go to the English Catholic church. A couple of years ago our parish priest introduced the blessing of food on Holy Saturday, for Easter, so he's trying to widen those cultural ties. For the Christmas Eve mass... we do a number of Polish carols. And again, that's with some Polish people... But they're not strong ties. We don't go round to each other's [homes]... I've met a number of them when I was working at school, because many of the new Poles worked as cleaners. One of them cleaned my classroom. She's gone back to Poland now, but we've remained in contact, and we always had a long chat. There was another one, whose English was good, so that she was eventually asked to man the telephone. We became friends.

Grażyna:

In the town I lived in I did see an influx of Polish people. In that particular town, I had no contact with Poles at all until 2004. In fact, when I looked for Polish schools for my children, Saturday schools, the nearest one I could find was about at least an hour's drive away. So I gave up on that idea. When Polish people arrived, obviously they needed a lot of help, especially various forms of bureaucracy. I was 'employed' in inverted commas in several situations, one even involving a court case... They knew me, and they said, 'Can you come along?' I did my best, and I can tell you I was a rubbish interpreter! The legal process is a completely different kind of language to the Polish I learned sitting round the kitchen table with my parents and siblings. So, I was involved in situations like that. I also had to go to the

doctor with various Poles, discussing complex matters such as fertility issues. So, in terms of the new emigration, or immigration, depending on which way you look at it, *nowa emigracja*, as we call it, I became much more involved.

It really started with a girl whom I met in a restaurant. She was a waitress and I just recognised her accent. Where I lived, Polish accents, as I've said, weren't heard. So I gave her my phone number. She was a young girl, and I felt about her as I would about my own children going off into the world. Somebody, be there for them, please, should they need it! I gave her my phone number and it became a friendship. Then gradually other members of her family started coming over, and the circle widened and widened.

Anne: Did you socialise with these Polish people whom you helped?

Grażyna: Yes. It grew into a welcome social network.

Anne: It wasn't just a question of helping them out with particular things they needed, but they were actually your friends in some way?

Grażyna: Yes, most definitely yes. Because, for me, it was a great opportunity to speak Polish. I had not been in a Polish community for nearly forty years. I would go and see my family, and I went to Poland, but to have people around me, or near to me, who spoke Polish was great – I loved it.

Anne: Did you have people who were more your own age, as well?

Grażyna: No. They tended to be younger people. I'm trying to think. I'm 61 now, so there weren't that many people of my age in 2004 that were coming over. It seemed to be younger people generally. There was one couple who were older, but they still had young children... The rest were generally a good twenty years younger than me, I think...

[Where I live now] they're my parents' friends. There's a thing about helping the people from your homeland. And it starts off with that. And then they become friends. My Mum has a Polish – Polish from Poland as opposed to, you know, like me – cleaner, a gardener, but they're friends. The cleaner comes and cleans, but actually, they sit chatting for an hour first. It's not really about the cleaning, it's about the whole thing. The cleaning lady has become family now. Presents are exchanged. The fact that money changes hands is almost incidental.

Teodora:

In terms of family members, we had one family member who was an illegal immigrant in the UK before Poland became part of the EU. We actually had to go and save him. He'd paid a substantial amount of money to be brought into this country illegally. It was about twenty-five years ago. He was given a job in a pet food factory, and was being paid very little. His living conditions were dreadful. And then he'd heard about farming in Peterborough, and how that would be better for him. It felt like something out of *Grapes of Wrath*, with these migrants moving around the country. Anyway, he found himself in exactly the same position, and one day phoned us up in a dreadful state. We weren't aware, actually, that he was in the country at that point in time. And my husband said, 'We need to go and sort him

out.’ So we went and collected him and brought him back home... Since then, this relative has gone from strength to strength, and owns a very big building business now in the UK and has a lot of properties. So that worked well. Another family member has since worked with him. And then another family member came across after Poland became part of the EU and has a very good job. So immediate family have worked incredibly hard, incredibly hard, and are doing very well for themselves. The one family member who has a very good job has made England his home, whereas the other two commute between here and Poland now, every other week or so they’ll fly back home for a week. In terms of the Polish community in the UK, we have dealings with the local Polish club... Through [our relatives] we met other Polish people, who’ve now decided to make their homes here... Most are acquaintances, but some I would class as friends. Certainly, our teacher and her husband are good friends... We have some. But I’d say most of our friends [in the UK] are British.

Anna:

I have a flat in Gloucester that was rented to a couple of Poles. They got married, and had a baby and got a bigger place, and a dog. They asked me for advice about what dogs to have and where to get them. I met a Polish lady when I was out walking my dog... She told me [she was Polish]. I stop and talk to everybody. If their accent isn’t [British] I say, ‘Where are you from?’ I’m quite interested, you know. I’m just nosy! Did she have a dog? I think she had a dog, or she was thinking of getting one. So there are quite a few Polish people I’ve met who think about getting a dog...

I can’t say that I have actually met many Poles. I don’t know where they’ve all been hiding! There were a lot of Poles when I went to the Polish club, when I was younger, in Bristol. There was a very thriving Polish club. But it’s now been taken over by a drama improvisation group. They hold their meetings there... I think it’s all the older Poles who use it. I think younger Poles... meet somewhere else I don’t know where they meet. Is there much of a Polish community in Bristol? Because they didn’t hold a Heritage Day.

Iza:

I’ve now got Polish students. That’s very interesting. I want to go ‘Ah, ah!’ They know, I’ve said it to them, I say ‘Where are you from?’, they go ‘Poland’, ‘Yes, yes, but *where?*’ One of the extraordinary links was in a town near us they opened a Polish shop and it was like, how amazing. I went in and I said, ‘Where are you from?’, and he went ‘Poland’, and I said, ‘I know that, but whereabouts roughly, because I’ve got Polish family.’ He’s from the same village that my father’s last wife lived in. His mother knows the woman who we stayed the night with the first time and they played the piano. He couldn’t believe it and so he rang his mum in the shop, and he was completely [amazed], so that surprised me. I know that I would be surprised but it’s when it’s surprised the other people. So, we went and bought a lot of bread and a lot of Polish beers and things for a couple of years. Now he’s got a better shop in a city. But what was the chance, a tiny village, of that happening. I’m sure it does boost people’s connections when there’s Polish shops turning up all over.

7 Polish institutions in recent years

Ann:

We had quite a big Polish community in Great Harwood at that time. They've all gone now, they passed away, so there's not many left now in Great Harwood, Polish people. We do have a very big community now in Accrington, which is three miles away. They've got their own Polish school, they've got their Polish restaurant, and they've got their own Polish church, which is St. Joseph's. So yes, that's revived, and I thought yes, I'm proud to be Polish, why should I feel inferior to everybody else? ...

Dad used to take me and my brother, to Our Lady and St. Hubert's church in Great Harwood, that was where most Polish people attended mass. We used to go there – quite different than what it is today. But the service was always said in English, they wouldn't have a Polish priest speaking. Now if you go to St. Anne's church in Blackburn, or to St. Joseph's in Accrington, the priest will speak Polish, and some members will get up and do the readings from the gospel now in Polish. But that wasn't allowed back then when we were growing up. It all had to be done in English or in Latin...

We have many *polskie sklepy* now... There's been a few empty shops in disrepair in Accrington. They've really revamped the shops, they've done a lot of work to them and they've opened it up. We even have a Polish hairdresser now! The *fryzjer!* ... I do [go to the shops]. You can get those lovely Polish sweet fudges in there...

You know, we can go if we want to the Polish Club, I've got St. Anne's church in Blackburn, that's a Polish church. It will be coming up, end of February, for the *Cichociemni*, isn't it, so I'll go and lay a wreath on behalf of *Kresy* family, up in the Polish section of the cemetery, and go with them. Lay that for them and then we'll all go to the Polish Club afterwards, and we have the soldier's soup, and we have the cakes, cups of tea. So it's good. And I'm always chatting to somebody that's Polish, got a Polish link.

Janina:

The congregation was, like, sixty plus, and then it would be their children and their grandchildren. I do remember there being an influx and the demand to have a Polish priest grew, and the demand to have a school grew. Quite a lot of the older people, they'd really help the younger ones. A family friend used to be a landlord, and he used to rent properties to Polish families that were coming over for a lot cheaper. And my mum became a translator for the local council, in the hospital, so when women were having children, she was the translator. Yes, I definitely do remember an influx, because the need for services increased. And I think the reason that my mother finds the language so emotional is because for me speaking Polish was very domestic, it was something you did within your home, and then all of a sudden, when they opened a shop and the restaurant in town, you would hear it in a public space. I'd not heard it outside before...

[At Saturday school] I'd say about half were like my family, and half were, like, newer children. It was a mix. When they started doing history lessons and stuff, half of us didn't

know what was going on, whereas the other half had more of an idea. But it was quite nice, it felt like it was filling in the gaps that, I suppose, distance had separated.

Eva:

We're busy putting on events, we're taking part in the Polish Heritage Day that the Ambassador wants everybody to do. I had an exhibition here in the library, Manchester Central Library, last year, the first time we put on a Polish Heritage Day. *Kresy* Family had a stall with books and things, and we presented ourselves to the British public, which was great. We want to do something much bigger and much better again this year. We have offices here in Manchester now, we're expanding, we are growing. We used to take part in exhibitions, we took part in the world's largest family history show, that was called 'Who Do You Think You Are?' We held an exhibition in Olympia and in Birmingham. We're promoting Poland, we are helping people to find bits and pieces about their family, the journeys that their families took, and we've even been successful in finding long lost family people that are in Poland; we've had some good news stories, people finding family that they didn't know they even had.

Kinga: And do you think that the fact that there are more Polish people in the UK right now, there is this influx of new migrants, is it helping you or your organisation?

Eva: Yes, it does. Because, you know, recently with Facebook and stuff, when we started off there wasn't Facebook and these social media networks. That grows, because you're reaching different people. And with the newer ones, who maybe don't know as much about that history, it's sparking interest in them. They are patriotic, a lot of these younger groups are very patriotic, they are trying to find out from the older generation about history, they're very interested in it. So yes, they are helping, in a way, to spread the word. And then that escalates. They're obviously working with English people and other cultures, and they obviously talk at work to their colleagues, so that helps in spreading our history.

Zosia:

Everybody used to rely on the *parafia*. They'd have these dances. You'd get people going to the dance. They were regular, once every four weeks. You'd have a band and everything else. But that's just had to stop, hasn't it? You ask round the country. All those clubs are closing now.

Mike:

I interacted quite a lot with the Poles who came over, and still do. In the 2004-2008 period our Polish Club was still open, functioning, and we used to hold events for the new Poles, and they used to frequent these things. But they weren't really that interested. They used to come along occasionally. But we tried to interact with them and still do to some extent... The contacts are maintained through the church. We try to organise social events. In fact, we organised a couple of Christmas parties in the past few years. We have an Anglo-Polish club, an Anglo-Polish group in Rose Bridge, we try to organise events, and some of them do come along. But there remains a gap between us, and how that can be, I don't know how that can be changed or improved. I don't know... Very few, one or two have come forward

[to help with events], but the majority seem to be just interested in working, making a bit of money and hanging on...

We had our SPK club in Rose Bridge, which had a little bit of military memorabilia here and there on the walls. Photographs of Sikorski and Churchill and whatnot. And a lot of the Poles, the younger ones, they did say, the new ones who came over, that we don't really want to come along to the Polish club because it's too military for us. They wouldn't frequent the club because they felt uncomfortable, all the military photographs. Not only Sikorski, but the Queen, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, George VI, photographs of him shaking hands with Sikorski, Churchill, and all this business. And Polish symbols as well. And they didn't like it, they wouldn't come along. 'It's too military for us. We're not interested.'

Maria:

Once we became leaders in the Polish Scouts, it was a part of the thing, you spoke to the children in Polish. But then, with time, as you were saying, the Polish community was dying out, and I became an instructor -- I really felt like I was trying to get every single child to join, so our numbers would be going up rather than down. But that meant making compromises and having to speak sometimes in English to them. And different levels of young leaders, as well, would have different levels of Polish language, so it was quite difficult to keep up the Polish language. Because quite often you'd be speaking to your contemporaries in English. You're expected to try to speak to younger children in Polish, but if you had one person in your group that couldn't speak much Polish at all, then you were done for, because you either spoke a sentence in Polish and then repeated it in English, or you just went straight to English. And I got very frustrated towards the end of the '90s, beginning of 2000s, because I just thought 'Well, what is the point?' To me, Polish Scouting wasn't Polish Scouting if we were all just speaking in English...

Gradually, we started getting people into the Scouts, the younger children as well, but that took time, that did take time. Because, I think, before people established themselves, they didn't really know what was going on. Sometimes we didn't have any activity going on if there weren't enough children in our area, so it went up and down in terms of activity. And the Polish Saturday School had always been very small. where I live here, I think they never had more than about thirty children -- so that started growing as well. But then there was a point where another Saturday School set up, and the original School came crashing down. For a while, there wasn't a school, then there was another school, that somebody else set up. And there was a bit of a break. But as the original Saturday School started to be built up again by a couple of people who'd been at the original school, that's when some of the parents got more involved in scouting.

Barbara:

[There's] not really [a local Polish community], because they don't meet. We used to have Polish mass once a month, in the next town until quite recently. And then the parish priest took on another parish and it wasn't worth him coming for that, which I think was a mistake. We did at least congregate there, and have tea and coffee afterwards. But there isn't a Polish community, no. Maybe there's an underground one where people who know each other tend to congregate, but there is nothing like the Polish community we had when I was

growing up. And there is a Polish school in Hove, and Crawley, so I think that concentrates people, and they've got Polish girl guides and boy scouts, and I do think there is a community growing there.

Aniela:

I notice in my own church, you can spot the Polish families. There are about five or six of them that come regularly... A British Catholic church. And Mum tells me that at the Polish church (there is a designated Polish church in B.) from going to almost just their generation attending, the church is full now. To the extent that there's problems with parking. Complaints about parking from neighbouring streets. It's gone from being my mum and my grandparents' generation, maybe a slightly isolated, very close-knit, tight-knit little society, to then broadening out to us, then receding again, and now there's an explosion of people. I think sometimes my parents' generation feel a little bit put out. Everyone's come over, people have taken over the roles that people had in the community... some parish activities, Mum said. But... it's a natural cycle almost, isn't it?

Joanna:

There were some people [after 2004] who were very much involved in the church. In a very good, positive way. They contributed a lot to the whole community, which was very gratifying. But, on the other hand, there were people who saw the church as a social club. Whatever your feelings about religion, I think it's wrong to treat the church as somewhere where you can meet your friends and get information...

I just feel that Polishness has changed. It's quite difficult to define precisely how it's changed. The whole atmosphere, the whole concept of being Polish, has changed, and I feel as if I'm not really part of it anymore, in that sense. There's also the issue of when, in the early years, post-2004, a lot of people did arrive of course, and we couldn't physically accommodate them. The church was literally bursting at the seams and some of the older community felt like they were being pushed out, because the focus of all the services and the focus of all the activities outside of the church service were focused purely on the newcomers. So, the emphasis on what was said during the services. For example, after church they used to have these information sessions, where various people came and talked about the NHS, the benefit system, etc. Which was a great thing, but the rest of us thought, 'That's fine, but what about us? There's nothing for us now.' Because prior to that we used to have visiting actors, or they used to come and give lectures. I know that everyone's needs are different. Some people have a need for this kind of information. But we just felt like we were being side-lined a bit.

Grażyna:

In Manchester, ... nationalists seem to be infiltrating various organisations that so far have managed to avoid all that. But they're very clever. They can be charming. And they're infiltrating Polish schools. Which outrages second generationers, like myself. But you have

to be aware, you have to spot them. There are a few of us who do know how to spot them. So we act upon it. For example, the Polish schools, the heads of Polish schools are kept informed who these people are. They've taken over many commemorations, like Katyń memorials in various places, they turn up with their banners. They will have a separate commemoration to the pre-existing Polish community. Then they post it all over Facebook, of course. As if the two communities are integrated. No, they're not...

Thank goodness they're not [all nationalists]! They [ordinary post-2004 arrivals] just keep away from them. No, they're not all nationalists, it's just that this is an unfortunate by-product. It's an unfortunate by-product that our immigration policy in the UK does not prevent criminals from coming in. Polish criminals. Of which there are so many now in the UK... There are perfectly normal people like my Mum's friend/cleaner and gardener, who are absolutely not nationalists and will be vocal about that. It is a small number, but they are visible. And they're making inroads, which is very unpleasant...

Where I am, we don't really have any community organisations... I'm an administrator for Polish organisations on Facebook, several. It's actually getting too much. But that would be more my involvement. Because there's nothing in my particular town, apart from church... Until, not 2004, perhaps slightly after, I think the congregation was down to about twelve people. Now, you can't get in. So that's very different. And, of course, things like first Holy Communion. Christmas, there's a queue outside. And it's a small church, but it's absolutely chock-a-block now. It was dying. Obviously very few people were left of the generation that set it up. At the moment, there's a directive from the Polish Episcopate which has been quite clear with Poles in the UK that they should also be going to English Catholic churches. Because they don't have the priests to send over. For example, our local priest serves three Polish parishes. He runs around like a [inaudible] fly. He's the busiest man – he has to get everywhere. They won't be able to recruit any more priests to come over here.

I feel that until this *nowa emigracja* turned up, I believe Poles, on the whole, my parents' generation, and my generation had a reasonably good reputation. Of course, people would, they would go back to the War in terms of claiming that – oh, I'm struggling to express myself here. For example, things like not being allowed in the Victory Parade in 1946. They felt discriminated against initially. But time went on and they integrated. Even though they had their Polish shops and their Polish churches and their Polish schools. I think Poles, on the whole, had a good reputation in the UK. I feel that since 2004 that's changed slightly, partly because of the general xenophobia these days, and of course Brexit, and creeping racism hasn't helped. But I just think that, before, the reputation was better, on the whole.

And because people were quiet. That's the other thing. Some Poles – you know, I keep having to do this Venn diagram – it's always 'some', isn't it? It's *some* Poles who keep bringing up things to do with the War. As if the UK should be eternally grateful for Enigma, for the 303 Squadron – that the UK should be grateful. All the time. And so British people must accept every single Pole from Poland and love them. And, of course, that's not, it's not history as it was, and it's just excessive...

People of my generation just go to another church, preferring not to hear politics from the pulpit. I recently attended a funeral and a couple of memorial masses in the Irish Catholic church. I looked around me and saw several people from my youth. They're leaving the Polish church which is two miles down the road and coming to the Irish church. They go to worship – they don't want to hear politics. Some of the nonsense Polish priests come out with, you just wouldn't believe it. Recently, it's going round the Internet now, a priest in Poland said women shouldn't wear trousers, it says so in the Bible. Women should be more womanly, and wear skirts. This is the level of silliness. People brought up in the UK would naturally distance themselves from that kind of thing. In a way, it's good that the churches continue, carry on, because it feels to a certain extent that what our parents worked for – they paid for these Polish churches -- is not going to disappear. Still, the way in which they've been taken over by certain factions is painful. And that's the feeling of most people from my generation. You're glad on the one hand, but on the other hand it's 'Aj!'

8 Contacts with Polish culture and news

Zuzanna:

I mentioned that I was exploring the possibility of re-establishing my Polishness more, because I have more time now. I'm not going to cook Polish food at home, because I think my husband won't eat it, but I've got Polish books, I've been trying to do some Polish studying with apps, which I find a little bit frustrating. I've been reading Polish history books, been reading a lot over the last few years just because I think it's available now, reading about people's experiences of being in Siberia during the war, just to get more of an idea of what my father went through. My father did actually write an account, but I just wanted to read around it... I felt it's a very rich culture, or it felt very rich when I was growing up. And, in some ways, perhaps, it made me feel a bit special when I was younger, to be different.

Sara:

My friend Kasia now, she gets a Polish newspaper, so she will say 'Oh, such and such', and she will tell me what's going on. We meet up now. If we are at work, we are so busy we don't get time to talk, so we meet once a month now and she tries to put a few Polish words in, and she says, 'Come on, now, come on!' ... I go to Wrexham, shopping sometimes... there's quite a big, strong Polish community in Wrexham... I buy sauerkraut, and gherkins, and I come home with lot of bits and pieces... You know, in Tesco here in T. now they have a little section, a Polish section, and I'll go there. Because my grandfather, when they arrived in Poland from Lithuania, they were in Warsaw for a while, and then he came up to Gdańsk to look for work. And he got work in the chocolate factory, Wedel? Wedel, yes. If I see the chocolate, I am 'Oh, oh, I have to buy!' Even though, probably, it's Cadbury or Nestle or something else owning it now.... But still, I have to buy it. If there's Wedel chocolate, anywhere, I have to buy it. And everybody I see, I always say, 'Oh, my grandfather worked in the factory!'

Janina:

I do go to Polish shops and I'll buy certain foods, I do follow Polish politics on Twitter, and stuff like that. And occasionally, I'll try and read some books in Polish, or some poetry. I do try and keep it up. And me and my mum will have conversations in Polish more and more, which is nice. But yes, it's probably mainly just food... In terms of music, and popular culture, I don't really have a clue. I always support them in Eurovision, never England, they generally tend to do better. But apart from that, no.

Adelaide:

When I came back from Ukraine the second time I felt rather overwhelmed with the turquoise and yellow, and so I joined the Polish culture Facebook group. I see. I'm a voyeur on the culture, I view it from outside. I look at the food, but I don't integrate myself into Polish culture, I don't try to. I do it on my terms, from a safe distance. Because, you know,

how legitimate is anybody really, in any culture?... I feel like a fake, I suppose, I don't feel it's legitimate. I don't feel I'm Polish enough for a Polish [person]. I like it [Polish culture]. I like to celebrate the food, but I can't make Polish traditional Christmas Eve, because it's not authentic. I just lack authenticity.

Maria:

I wouldn't say that the Poles I've met [in the UK] particularly talked about politics at home. But as a result of them being here I definitely felt that I need to understand what's happening in Poland a bit more. I've had Polish TV now for quite a long time at home. I don't watch it religiously, but I do have it. And I made sure that I could get the actual main channels. My parents have got a different system, so they can only watch Polonia and all that, and they are happy with that, but I thought, no, I need to know what's going on, so I've got the whole package with *Jedynka*, *Dwójka* and all of those. And I did start to subscribe to the Polish newspaper a few years ago as well, but that's the one that's now *Tydzień Polski*. Occasionally, if I'm in London, I'll pick up the other magazines that are around, *Cooltura* – it's not 'Kultura', it's 'Cooltura', all of those. They tend to have a lot of advertising rather than articles. And on the web, I occasionally look up wp.pl, just for news. But, you know, that's really difficult, because not having grown up in Poland, it's difficult to know the politics behind the newspapers. And I still have difficulty with that, because I don't really have anyone to ask.

Barbara:

Nowadays I watch films] with my best friends... I've asked them to give me modern Polish books because I kept reading the classics. Through them, I've learned about Polish authors... Katarzyna Bonda, she's really good. And I think she's been translated into English. And then they bring me contemporary newspapers as well. There's one I like called *Angora*, and I like the children's supplement *Angorka* very much...

I'm not for the Polish government at the moment. And when they make these awful, awful denunciations, or are very anti-gay, or anti-abortion, I find that very sad. I don't like the image they project of Poland... I get a Polish paper, weekly. It's an émigré paper. When I was isolated from the Polish community my Mum advised me to get it, once a week, so I could read it. And I continue now. Ever since. And I follow the Polish news that way. And also my close Polish friends keep me updated... I can do it through the internet as well. My family in Poland on my father's side are very anti-PiS. So I get to hear their views very often.

Aniela:

I'm finding myself going on the Internet and looking at what's going on over there, not just in terms of culture but also politically. My parents are very much interested in the political situation over there. They have Polish TV channels at home, so whenever I pop over to see them it's on. They're discussing some topic of the day or whatever...

There was just [recently] one [event] two weeks ago, I did go to that one. It was a performance of songs and dances from various dance and singing troupes across the country. That tends to be an annual event. That's been going on for 25 years, all over the

country. They take different venues, they take it in turn. This year it happened to be in B. It's fantastic. I wouldn't say there's a broad range of ages, it tends to be from early twenties to mid-forties, maybe. This has been going on for 25 years. Obviously as people get older new people have been coming in. But our own group from B. have been entirely taken over by people from Poland. When they came on stage, I didn't recognise a single one of them. My Mum told me that the people who originally started the group – the lady who started the group is still running it – but the new intake is entirely from Poland.

Dominic:

I read around Poland, as well. I nearly always have a couple of books of some kind, about Poland, Polish culture.... Some things I read for relaxation. At the moment, I'm reading a political thriller... The other book that I'm reading at the moment is a book called *Homobiografie* which is a study of the experience of the LGBT community in Poland through the lives of eminent gay and lesbian and bisexual Polish cultural figures.

Joanna:

We don't have Polish satellite TV. I don't really keep up with the politics or what's going on. I only hear it second hand... It's only when my cousin sends emails saying 'It's terrible, what's happening in the country? Those dreadful people in power again. What do they think they're doing?' And I think OK, I'd better find out who these people are that she's talking about... When the Polish Association has something on, of course we go. I'm not sure there are that many. I do keep an ear out for what's happening, but I'm not aware of anything specific other than the Polish Association. They do things like Chopin concerts or talks about Polish cultural things. There are things taking place regularly, and now, with the centenary of Poland this year, there's some big event, there are events being organised and we are participating in that as well.

Tomek:

I read *Polityka*, not every week, I will buy that, and I tend to read it almost cover to cover. I listen to TOKfm. So I keep in touch with what's happening in Poland, Polish news and politics and so on. Again, that's a change. Because I couldn't get Polish radio when I was teenager. So, access to radio. Television I did have, but with the recent changes in the Polish government and the way they've taken over the media I'd rather listen to something like TOKfm than watch the Polish news on TV.

Grażyna:

We second and third generationers keep in touch when there's something on, Polish cinema, for example, we meet up and go together. We're interested also in how things are perceived abroad. Like the film *Ida*, which in Poland was 'Oh, this is the most dreadful

thing!' But had acclaim elsewhere. And again, it's that re-writing of history. So, yes, we carry on being interested. New Polish writing? I admit I should read more. *Flights* by Olga Tokarczuk, recently nominated for the Booker, is on my 'to be read' list. Along with many other Polish-themed novels.

Anna:

As I got to know my dad more, I became more interested in that whole side, and what went on. When you read the history of it, and know what went on, it's very interesting. I've read the autobiography of Lech Wałęsa, very interesting. When you read that, and you realise their living conditions in the 80s, and you think about that, you think 'That is just...!' [sigh and pause] So that's my interest. I'm reading this Polish book, called *Over the Moon*. I'm reading this now and there are other books... I tend to alternate and read something general and then something a bit specific about Poland, and then something a bit more general.

Iza:

[After I started to research my family story] I went to the Polish group here, which it had never occurred to me to go to. And I've never had so many people ask me about my father. Because meeting me you wouldn't think 'Who's her father?' In day-to-day life it's never cropped up, from being a child. We were very invisible. I didn't go to Polish school or anything like that. So, meeting them, and they were just interested. You used the word stereotypical story; to me, no one had that story, except me, all the way through childhood...

When I started to look into it more, I got my father's army records. They were obviously mostly in Polish, some of them in English. So I went to Stover, to Ilford Park [Polish Home], and found a translation person there. And we also wrote to them, we got a better version. They quite often do that kind of thing. So those were two places here that I had no idea were thriving, with the older connection. [The] Polish Society have scouts and goodness knows what else, going on, I'm not connected to that.

9 Polish language

Luke:

I hear Polish all around me, I hear Polish people talking on the street, shopping, in the parks, walking, I hear them everywhere! But I've never met them, to get to know any of them, because they are strangers. And although I can hear their language, and I like to eavesdrop sometimes what they're saying, I can't really make the first step to [laugh], to talk.... It would be like... you are still a stranger, effectively. And how do people take to people randomly talking to them? And with my Polish, as well. I could probably communicate, but to initiate a discussion in Polish, with my Polish, would be, kind of, a bit weird? Kind of a bit odd? So, although I speak the language, I don't speak well enough to have confidence.

Dave:

I can hold a conversation, but I couldn't go to court, or preach philosophy, or anything like this. At home we mainly speak English, but I think that's born out of my mother's, my aunt's, my Polish family desire to, kind of, assimilate in the United Kingdom. I only speak to her in Polish if I want to say something in secret, or if I need to get her attention like when I'm saying something important, or if we are having a joke, so we dip into that Polish identity... I try to [speak Polish to my Polish friends]. I try to take the opportunity to learn Polish, but they will very much try to speak English to me. But amongst their own communities, amongst their own circle of friends it is almost universally Polish speaking.

Zuzanna:

[I speak English] to my mother, predominantly. I mean, it's a bit like what I'm doing with you at the moment, a few words dropped in. And sometimes if I don't think my mum's understood me then I will speak in Polish to her, but my Polish, because I don't use it, and I haven't used it for a very long time, it is very rusty. She speaks in Polish to me, and I can understand what she's saying, [but] I don't feel I can express myself well enough in Polish, so it's much easier to speak in English. So it's quite lazy.

I also found this professionally, because I would see people, as a clinician, who were Polish, particularly given the influx of Polish people recently, and I could understand what they said, but I was very reluctant to speak in Polish to them, just in case I was misinterpreted. You know, there is even - people call it 'Medicalese' - it is a different language in medicine as well. You use lots of different words that the general public won't use. So, to get that wrong and to convey the wrong message to someone, I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing that, so I always had an interpreter... I think it was a source of disappointment that I wasn't speaking Polish to them, that there was always an interpreter. I always did explain why I wasn't very happy [not to be able to speak Polish to them], but I did understand what they said... I remember the father of one of the Polish children I saw... saying that I should speak Polish, or I should, you know, maintain my Polishness. I got 'It's a big church, a big Polish school, you should be doing it.' I felt, actually, I'm quite different to you...

People might well think that I've got a different name because of my husband, and I have got a different name because of my husband. And that my parents might just have spelled my first name oddly. Because, having done my job, having worked with [children], people choose all sorts of funny names for their children. It's no longer that traditional to have traditional names. And I think as soon as I open my mouth, sometimes even when I go to the Polish shop, and ask for things in Polish, they talk back to me in English, because I've obviously got a very strong English accent. And, I presume, my grammar is appalling, when I talk to them. So they end up talking to me in English. I think I probably look much more English than I do Polish, in my current community. Even though there's lots of Polish people around, I don't think people would necessarily link me in with the other Polish people in the area.

Sara:

I used to speak quite a bit when my father was alive, and we used to come to Poland and play, and the children would teach me. But because my father's been dead for over twenty, nearly thirty years now, I don't get to speak it so much. But I understand, I can understand a lot, but I can't converse, it's gone! ...

[My father] used to speak, but not much, because my mother didn't like it. When we were alone, he would, yes, and we would have little conversations. Yes, he used to, when I was a lot younger. And then I moved away, and got married, and was not at home so much, it sort of faded out a little bit...

I do have a nurse that works with me at the moment, she is Polish, she's not long been with us, so we are quite close, because of the connection, I think. She's trying her best, she'll start to speak to me a little bit, the words are coming out and 'come on, come on, come on now!' she says. 'Chodź Sara, come on, we'll go and talk!' And she'll start to go on. I'm picking up things now – it's slowly, slowly, but hopefully it will all come back. And it's nice to have somebody who understands me.

Ann:

We used to go to the Polish Saturday school, we used to go there, to Polish Saturday school. So we can speak a bit, quite a bit. But, of course, as the years went on, we grew up, everything stopped. Dad was so busy trying to learn to speak English, so we had to speak English so that he could understand, try and learn to understand. And for him to try and learn the language, the language and the accent, and the Lancashire dialect, well that caused some bits of fun, I can tell you...

[My mother] supported it. She did. She wanted to learn some simple sentences and some simple words that she could greet people with, because we all used to go to the Polish club in Blackburn, and we used to go to the Polish New Year's Eve dances, so yes, with there being such a big Polish community as it was then in Great Harwood, she did want to be able to fit in, so she tried. We never did speak fluent Polish, but we could speak quite a bit. But of course, now, Dad died in 1992, and you've nobody to practise on, and it's not your first language...

I do try [to speak Polish in local Polish shops]. They laugh at me, but I do try. But it would be very good, because I think they appreciate that you try. And I'll say it's the grammar and the endings that I struggle with, adding on all the different endings.

Janina:

Tentatively I'd say yes [I speak Polish], but no. My mum didn't speak English until she was about six or seven. When she started school, she always told us that on her first day of school they put a sticker on her that said, 'My name is T., please speak slowly to me', and that's how she learned English! Poor Mum! But she always spoke in English and Polish to us. My dad is obviously English, but he learned a little bit. Then my *babcia* and *dziadek*, their English wasn't great. It wasn't terrible, but my *dziadek* worked in a factory, so I think that he got exposed to English a lot more. Whereas my *babcia*, who was a housewife, struggled a little bit more. So, yes, we learned Polish as children, so we could speak to them better. But ever since they passed away it's not a necessity anymore. And my mum finds it quite sad to speak it sometimes. I think it reminds her of her parents. I sometimes still have dreams in it, but in terms of being bilingual, I'd have to think about it now, so I don't think I can say that. I went to Poland a year ago and it came back quite quickly, which was really lovely, because I do feel a bit of a loss. So yes. Tentatively I'll say, 'Kind of'...

I remember when I was about four or five, I remember finding out that people didn't have a grandma and a grandad and a *babcia* and a *dziadek*, I thought everyone had that. And I didn't understand. I was like, 'How do you differentiate between the two sets of grandparents then?' My brother is not as interested in maintaining the language. Whereas me and my mum will still, occasionally, we'll speak in Polish if we want to say something privately in public, or something like that, we'll still use it. But he doesn't engage with that as much...

My [Poland-based] friends would take the piss out of me, because they'd say that I spoke like an older woman. I'd be more formal, I didn't know that you said 'Cześć', I've always said 'Dzień dobry', and they were like 'Why are you being so formal?' So I've always felt not quite there [when in Poland]...

If I go into Polish shops, I'll make a point to speak Polish. They always seem quite surprised, especially if I'm with someone who's speaking English. When I've worked in retail it would come in handy quite a lot because we'd get customers who would speak Polish and they would be asking a question. I would hear them trying to figure out how to say it in English and I would butt in, saying 'Excuse me, I can help you', and they were like, 'Oh!', which was always nice. The thing I find is, that there's almost a compulsion to assimilate. Even my grandfather didn't want my mum to teach us Polish. He said, 'We're in England, we need to learn English, there's no point teaching them Polish.' A lot of my Polish friends who I met on the exchange would say things like that Polish is a useless language, it's a dead language, English is dominant. When I'm with them, even if I try, they'll say 'No, no, no, we're going to speak in English!' I think there's a sad need to not speak it... I used to think, why couldn't I have a useful language as my second language. But as I got older I was like, yes, it is useful.

Eva:

I was born ten years later, when my brother and sister were communicating all the time in English. My brother and sister communicated between themselves in English, but they spoke Polish to my parents and grandparents. So, when I was born, I heard two languages immediately. I used to speak English to my brother and sister, and then this broken Polish to my parents and grandparents...

[Nowadays] I speak, but it's not brilliant. The fact is that I can't read and write, and I don't know the spellings of words and how they're supposed to be properly pronounced. I have difficulties in pronouncing words. But I understand a lot of the Polish language. I'm a member of a Polish organisation, an ex-combatant association, it used to be known as SPK, the Polish veterans' association. It recently has changed its name to Friends of Polish Veterans Association. And I am actually the vice-president of that organisation and I attend their monthly meetings. And they are conducted totally in Polish, and when it comes to me reporting on matters, or for me to say things, I speak in English. They understand me in English, and I understand them in Polish, but the conversation is really weird, a funny combination of a meeting. But we understand each other, and it somehow works.

I'm a little more confident speaking to the older generation, but I'm very, very self-conscious in speaking to, for example, you [Kinga Goodwin], or somebody, you know, because I think I'm going to say something really childish, and really silly, and really stupid, and people are going to laugh at me. Because there were words when I was growing up that I couldn't pronounce in Polish, and I would say something funny, and – obviously – parents and grandparents like these sorts of thing, and they'd say 'Oh, say that again', and they made fun of it. And some of these words stick in my mind and I think I'm going to throw them into a conversation talking to some people, and they're going to think that I'm absolutely mad...

People actually say that, when I do speak, they do understand me, it's understandable and it's OK. But I lack the confidence, because I don't have the pronunciation, I can't say some of the words. My language is very basic. I can get by, I've been to Poland and I've got by there, I can go to the shop and buy things, and I can order things and I can communicate, but it doesn't come easily. I do feel shy and sometimes embarrassed, even, about the way I speak. And I do, in a way, resent the fact a little bit, that I wasn't forced to go the Saturday school, because having learned the language at an earlier age it would have been much easier for me. It's only in the recent years that I've been trying to read a little bit in Polish to get the words – and I can actually read quite a bit, skipping maybe a few words if I don't understand, but it's very difficult. I wish I could write, I can't write a single word, I just don't know the spelling at all. I'm very sad about it.

Adelaide:

I can swear in Polish. I know a few words. No, I don't speak Polish. I've learned a few words, and because I'm writing his [my father's] memoir I'm using some Polish words in the places where he's with Polish people. But I'm limiting those, because it's for an English audience, the memoir, so I have to give translations there. So, no, I don't speak Polish... At home we were speaking mostly Italian, when we were very young. My father learned Italian when he met my mother, and then he spoke Polish to his friends. My brother had more Polish than I did. And then when my brother went to school, the schoolteacher from this small village primary school came to the house and said that it was completely unacceptable that we

should have all these languages, and that we had to speak exclusively English if we were to stand any chance at all of an education. And so we just stopped all language at home except English. I retained a good understanding of Italian. When my parents wanted to talk about something they didn't want us to hear, they spoke Italian. But, later on, my mother learned to speak Polish. Later on, when they found out that we could understand Italian, they switched to Polish because they knew they were safer in that language to be private from the children.

Maria:

At the beginnings of my dealings with them I felt like I wasn't a real Pole? Perhaps my language wasn't as great because I didn't have any opportunities to speak on a daily basis. I spoke to my parents on the phone, but what you speak about is very limited, as well, to your parents. I think, initially, I felt a bit lacking in confidence about my Polish, because I could hear that they spoke differently, and I had an English accent in the way I spoke. But, I think, with time, that's broken down. There are some people who still live within this -- particularly in London I'd say -- still live within the old *emigracja*, I've noticed that they are sticking with their English-Polish accent, not changing with the opening of our world to new Poles. Because I've listened to the way people speak. My mum says, 'You speak differently to me, and when I hear you on the phone to one of your new Polish friends, you speak like they do.' You know, accent-wise, I try to mimic it. Obviously, it's never going to be the same, but I try to mimic as much as possible. So, I feel like I'm on a level playing field, and they're not talking Polish-Polish and I'm speaking with my very English accent.

Barbara:

I suppose I'm more relaxed when I'm speaking Polish... I think Polish people are more emotional, more direct, and you have to learn not to be so direct with English people. It's mainly something like that...

Mine was fossilised, mine was pre-war Polish. And then it took on some English phrases. And since the Polish people have come, I've learned current Polish, and their phraseology. After I graduated, I worked for Sue Ryder for a year. That was with concentration camp survivors. And she used to have people coming over from Poland to help. So in my early 20s I had an injection of what was then current Polish. My Mum said, 'Where are you picking all this stuff up from? I don't know what you mean!' I said 'It's Joanna, or Halinka, they've taught me all this.'

Carole:

I'm very regretful of the fact that I didn't grow up speaking two languages... I think I did [go to Saturday school briefly]. I have a very vague memory... I think I probably didn't like it, or something, and my mother didn't really support it... At school I had a choice of German or Russian as a second foreign language, and I chose Russian, I think because of the connection. Surprisingly, my father seemed very pleased with that, despite his deep antipathy to anything communist. I'd always wanted to go to Poland and when I was sixteen, just before I went to university, I went to London, quite young -- I went on my own

for two months to stay with my uncle and my grandfather and their respective families. I went with a *Teach Yourself Polish* book, a dictionary and some Russian. This was 1968. I worked very hard, and I came back speaking domestic Polish, quite easily. The interesting thing about that, and languages, was that, with Russian, I'd always had real difficulty speaking it, translating laboriously from English to Russian – that kind of block. I managed it, because one has to, for exams, but it didn't come easily. But I was very aware that with the Polish I spoke I was using a different part of my brain. I felt it. I felt a real difference. One I spoke, and the other I translated. I couldn't understand news bulletins in Poland, or read a newspaper, but I could discuss cutting potatoes and peeling them -- whatever. The weather, and all that simple stuff.

And then it really lapsed. I always said I would continue it, but I never did. The next time I went to Poland was in 1983, to a wedding. I went with my husband, and I drove, through Checkpoint Charlie. And I got my grammar book out a few weeks beforehand and with those that spoke English and my rudimentary Polish that I remembered, we sort of coped... I thought, when I took up the language again, that if I made a really big effort it would come back easily. But it's been much harder than I thought. And now what's happening is that I'm speaking Polish as I did Russian. I'm translating from English. I'm not using it and practising it enough, and I know that it's clunky and not quite right. It really frustrates me...

I look forward to my language being better, so that I can discuss these things [like social issues] properly... I'm just curious in getting to know their reasons. And it's also getting to know the society that my father was dislocated from.

Aniela:

I was brought up to speak Polish, that was my first language... I'm always reminding her [my new in-law from Poland], please, speak to me in Polish. Because, up until that point, I found it very difficult to continue the language, because I had no opportunity to speak it. But in a way it's boosted my interest in the language, and I'm finding myself going on the Internet and looking at what's going on over there, not just in terms of culture but also politically...

[When we went to Poland] my son said, 'Oh Mum, they just think you're Polish, don't they, because you can speak the language?' I wouldn't say I felt an imposter, because I didn't feel like an imposter, but I didn't feel quite like a native, to put it that way, although I can speak the language. I don't know the colloquialisms and I don't know, you know, language develops over time, doesn't it, and I wasn't sure. I could definitely make myself understood, we had no problems chatting with taxi drivers about what was going on. As soon as you get in and you say you can speak Polish, they tell you everything. What's going on in the country, what they don't like about the government. What they think should happen. They were impressed that, having been brought up in Britain, I could speak it, at the extent to which I could speak it...

I think some people realised I wasn't Polish. As such, they would talk to me in English in the shop. Some shop assistants would just want to talk to you in English and I would talk to them in Polish and they'd come back at me in English. I thought 'I know you know I'm not, but just play along with me and talk to me in Polish!' I think Europeans make more of an effort to learn languages than we do. I don't know whether they pick it up easier, I'm not sure what it is, but they're very keen. And their English generally is really good. But it's the

older generation, I found, that were really grateful that you could – they had taken somebody from England, but they could speak to them in Polish.

Dominic:

I started to learn Polish, in my early twenties, just in an effort to be able to communicate with [my grandmother]. I'd always had a very strong interest in things Eastern European, and this was a good opportunity. Except in Ireland at the time learning Polish was difficult. Night classes weren't offered; no university in the country taught Polish. But I was working in Dublin for a time and I used to get some Polish classes from a lady at the Polish Embassy. And so I used to write to my grandmother in Polish. And we would speak, a mixture of Polish and English...

My engagement with things Polish has become quite intense. I would put in about an hour a day working at Polish language. Working my way through texts, looking up words that I don't understand. Looking up vocabulary phrases that I could test myself with. Just to make my reading a little bit more fluent and less arduous...

[A taxi driver in Ireland was] a bit surprised [to have a conversation with me in Polish]. I suppose because I'm obviously not a native speaker and my Irish accent is going to come through when I pronounce things, and you're going to be very aware of it. But, I suppose, surprise that a foreigner – or somebody that they would think of as a foreigner – had learned it. But very pleased. It is amazing that, if one makes the effort, at all, to learn Polish [people are pleased]. I understand completely why people find it so daunting: it is a difficult, a challenging language, and it requires a major commitment to learn it. Certainly, in my opinion, Polish is more difficult than Russian. The number of irregular forms and cases are greater, there are aspects to the grammar that are rather more elusive and complicated. But it is amazing that if you make the effort, at all, to connect, you will be very richly rewarded, in my experience. Because it breaks down the barrier of otherness. You often find that if you're speaking Polish and you express an interest in people's lives, how they came to Ireland, how they came to the UK, what they're doing, what were their experiences like, how often do they go back to Poland, have their relatives come over, what do they think of Ireland and the UK, it can be really, really interesting learning about people's experiences. After all, in a taxi journey that's quite long.

Filip:

I'm not a great Polish speaker, I speak enough to go to the dentist, buy a train ticket, plane ticket, shopping, see the doctor. But I couldn't talk deep stuff about the meaning of life... I just throw myself in. I go there, I speak very bad Polish, but they love it that you try. They know you're English. I'm getting better, but I spent two years... You know when you say, 'I'm from England?' I was getting the 'z' and the 'w' the wrong way round. When people would ask me 'Could you tell me where this is?' in Polish I would say 'I'm very sorry, I'm in England'. And one day I said something, and my wife said, 'You're saying "I'm in England", not "I'm from England"'. I thought '[although] I've made myself look stupid for two years, I can just do it'. So I survive in Poland. I can go shopping, I can do anything, but I couldn't talk about life... I don't read Polish... The problem is, as you know, every consonant is used. If I

read Polish, I can pick out things. For instance, when the news is on in Poland, the ring across the bottom, I can read enough of the words to get the context of what's going on, and so then I understand what it's telling me. I can cherry pick words I know. So if I saw the words 'president' 'road crash' and 'three dead' I'd understand what had happened and where it happened. The rest of it would just go away. I fully intend to learn properly. I need to... I'd understand a nuanced Poland. At the moment, I get a black and white Poland, but I think if I really understood the language it would change things.

Stefan:

The generation of the 1940s obviously grew older and older and I had quite a lot as patients, although I haven't got clinical Polish. I've got restaurant Polish, I haven't got clinical Polish... I went to Saturday school. I managed to resist learning Polish there, successfully. Because there were lots of other things that I wanted to be doing on Saturday, rather than sitting in this [classroom] with rather antiquated teaching methods... I've picked up more since, really, as I became more interested in going to Poland and talking to my relatives.

Natalia:

I was working with people who really learned English and integrated very well, but when they got Alzheimer's they forgot their English. My [own] first tongue [was Polish], because I spoke Polish until five. But God forbid, if I developed Alzheimer's, would I revert back to that language? How far along your life does your first language remain your first language? Because I feel, now, that I'm bilingual. I read and write in Polish as well as English. I've been keeping contact with Polish people on a regular basis, keeping my language up. When I first started going on these study tours in Poland, people were fascinated by my Polish. My Polish was learned from my parents. There was a fluency, and my pronunciation was probably OK, and grammatical structures, but it was based on the 1930s and '40s. The first time when I was in Poland, they were introducing me, and they said, 'Today we're very lucky because we've got an English lady with us'. I turned round and said 'Oh dear'...

Anne: Do you feel as comfortable in Polish as in English?

Natalia: Very much so, yes. And it's funny, it's really strange, that if there is somebody who is Polish, I find it difficult to speak English with them. There was a lady who wanted me to help her with her English and we'd sit down very systematically and start speaking English, but before I knew it, it was Polish we were speaking. It just happens. And sometimes I forget words in English that I can remember best in Polish. Or *vice versa*. You get stuck for the vocabulary one way or another.

Anne: You said that your Polish had changed and perhaps become a bit more like the Polish that people speak in Poland.

Natalia: Yes, very much so. I noticed that when my Mum and Dad eventually managed to get Polish satellite television, they found it difficult to understand. Because obviously language is a dynamic thing – it moves, it lives, and it changes constantly. I've just come back from Warsaw and I bought a couple of Polish books. I was reading one the other night. And you

can see Polish adapting English words, within their language now. This is by a Polish lady, it's not written by an English person. For example *symptom*, and it's spelled the same way and everything. I don't think that would have been used years ago. It would have been *objawienie* or something different. Plus the language of computing, that comes into the language. Sometimes they alter the spelling, so Facebook is spelled F-E-J, you know, but the words are the same... I'd speak with my Polish friends, I've got people who are Polish – on a regular basis... Because when I was working in M. -- I've moved and retired from there – well, the funding stopped for the charity – I made an awful lot of friends through helping them originally – so I still keep in touch with them. And my ex-mother-in-law, I speak Polish with her, my uncle, I speak Polish with him. But it's usually by phone, or when I go to Poland that I speak.

Joanna:

I'm lucky that my mother taught me Polish when I was a child. Which caused a few problems when I went to school, because I couldn't speak a word of English. The first year was horrendous. But as a child, of course, you quickly catch up. In that sense I was very lucky that I was able to speak two languages and still can. Although obviously my Polish now is not as fluent as it could be, but it's still good enough for me to be able to visit Poland without any problems...

When I speak Polish, a few people have said I've got a funny accent, in the sense that it's a mixture of English and, not exactly Russian, but that kind of, hmm, Eastern influence. Which is understandable, because my mother spoke like that and I learned from her. And the British accent might come through a little bit as well. It's only recently, because twenty or thirty years ago, when I used to meet people from Poland on various trips, around Europe or wherever, or in Poland itself, they used to compliment me on my Polish and say how good it was. I'm not saying this to blow my own trumpet, I'm saying it for comparison with what's happening now.

Now, if I speak to people who've arrived recently, I can hear the difference between the way I speak and the way they speak. Sometimes I really struggle to understand them. Because they speak really quickly, and also they speak with a different accent from the way that my contemporaries and even people that I know from Poland, the way they speak. The younger generation, to me, speak a different sort of Polish. Not just the vocabulary, but the way they speak, the way they pronounce their words, the accent, the inflection, the tone of their voices. Everything is different. And I do really struggle sometimes. I think to myself 'This is ridiculous. I understand Polish, surely I ought to be able to understand them, but I can't, because of the way that they speak.' I'm aware of the fact that my Polish is probably at least fifty years old by now, which is a bit embarrassing... There is a huge difference, particularly over the last perhaps ten years, I'd say the language has changed a lot.

Tomek:

The first word that any English person learns now, obviously *Polski sklep*, the word, forgive me, is *kurwa*. Because that's the word they hear all the time. My parents didn't use language like that, nor did any of their friends. My father occasionally would say '*Cholera!*' which sounds odd, it's a very dated thing now. They didn't use that kind of language. And now you walk down [name of street] and it's a different Polish. One of my cousins once said to me, 'The problem with your Polish, when you speak, is that you sound like a university professor. You don't speak the street language.' That's probably true. But then, it's closer to the Polish that I hear in the discussions on TOKfm. It's closer to the language of Professor Miodek, who's an expert in the Polish language, and often does explanations of the niceties of the language, or Bralczyk, who's another professor. Their language isn't completely different from mine. It's more sophisticated, but there are very few Poles who reach that level of language. It's not the language of the street.

Anne: Would you say that your Polish language has evolved, from listening to that more literary language on the radio? Maybe it's different from the Polish you learned from your parents in the 1950s and '60s?

Tomek: In terms of vocabulary, obviously so... Someone said to me, 'How do you know the word for "airbag"?' In a car. Your mother didn't drive, your father didn't drive, and they didn't have airbags. Well, I know it, for example, because I will also look at Polish adverts, which I would never do [in English]. Or I might listen to something. On television, I might listen to the morning breakfast programme in Polish, just for five or ten minutes. That of course is not language that my parents necessarily used. So [yes] in terms of vocabulary. Sophistication – always, the more you read, the more you have contact, that develops. Having said that, having studied Polish [as an undergraduate] I was always in contact with that kind of language. Yes, of course it will evolve, but that's inevitable, my English has evolved too and developed, because it does on a daily basis.

I still feel frustrations, at times, because sometimes I know the word, but I can't think of it. Especially when I'm speaking, because I don't have enough spoken contact. I speak to my family, but we don't do that every day, and we don't speak for an hour every day. Very often I know the word, but I can't quite think of it at the time and it comes to me five minutes later, when it's too late. And then there are [specialist] areas, [for example] when my mother was ill, she was 95, she was in hospital, and I had to explain to my family in Poland what was being done. I had no idea what a PEG feed was in Polish. I should point out, I had no idea what a PEG feed was in English until I saw it. I could explain what it is in Polish. I now know what it is, but the chances are that I could easily forget it, at a particular moment. There was a whole range of medical vocabulary.

Grażyna:

My Polish accent is, on the whole, acceptable. But I'd probably be able to say about six sentences before somebody clocked on. 'Aha, she's not Polish!' I'll get a case ending wrong or something. My accent is good, but my grammar goes adrift sometimes. So they'll realise I'm not from here. Sometimes they think that I maybe moved away, twenty years ago, and

my Polish has deteriorated, whereas I was born in the UK. I like the fact that I get away with it for some time, particularly handy where taxi drivers are concerned, and then 'Oh no, I've just blown it!'

I remember being a teenager – I think I was going somewhere with a few Guides, or it might have been the youth club. But we were on a coach and we were all very hungry. We hadn't planned for this trip. Somebody in the seat in front of us was eating a sandwich, probably a garlicky *kietbasa*, and my friend said to me in Polish 'Oh God, I wish he'd give us some of that sandwich, I'm starving'. And the guy turned round and offered us a piece in Polish. This would have been in 1970 something.

It depends on the situation whether I will admit to my inverted commas 'Polishness'. I won't butt into a conversation, because it's their conversation, and it also depends on the level of the conversation... I would do that for example if somebody was having a problem. Let's say they're in a post office, or they're in the doctor's surgery, and they're not being understood. I would butt in then, because I can. I just always think, 'I hope somebody would help me in a different country, if I didn't speak the language.' So, in that situation I would.

Teodora:

My husband is English, my father was Polish, Mum was English, so in fact English was the language that was spoken at home. I never actually learned Polish. But we decided, because we had a house [in Poland], and we wanted to become very much part of the community, that we ought to do something about that. So we went and had Polish lessons in the local Polish club. But that didn't work out very well because our teacher became a firm friend. She would start off each lesson saying something in Polish like 'How was your week?' and I'd start to tell her in my very laboured Polish, and then I'd say 'It's just far too complicated!' and then we'd spend the rest of the lesson speaking English. We've been told by the local Polish women in the delicatessen that we speak 'pretty' Polish. *Piękny*. I don't know if they mean child-like...

None of my cousins speak English, because they're of an age where Russian was the second language, that was taught in school. But we get by... I think if you want to communicate you do, don't you? Sometimes [in the 1970s-80s] it would be drawing! Or miming. But, as I say, I think, if you want to communicate, you will. Sometimes I think that we got the wrong end of the stick. But I have a very close relationship with my cousins [although I could only say] 'Hello', 'goodbye', 'thank you'.

Anna:

I did try Polish lessons with the Bristol University language school. But she started by telling us all the grammatical [cases]: the accusative, the dative, genitive, and I thought 'That is not the way I want to learn!' I want to learn Polish the way a child would learn Polish, whereby you talk, and if you made a mistake, someone would say 'It's not *Pan*, it's *Pani*'. And 'it's not *chciałbym*, it's *chciałabym*'. I want to talk to someone and for me to repeat it, lots of times.

I'm no good with a book like that... I've started a system whereby I've got it on my iPod, put it in when I'm walking the dog. I think people must think [I'm mad], because there I am spouting Polish, walking the dog. 'What's she doing, what's she doing? Can't even understand what she's saying!' And then I get home, and I have a tape, the Library was clearing out their old tapes, and they said, 'Would you like this one in Polish?' It comes with a book, so I keep listening to the tape and reading the book.

10 Transmitting interest in Poland

Luke:

There's only so much, I think, that children can learn, and there is a lot to learn in the world, and I'm not sure that the Polish language is something that will necessarily benefit them. I haven't felt that learning a Polish language, the amount of time I spent learning the Polish language, has benefited me other than understanding some cultural perspective, you know, Polish ways of life, and identity. But I haven't found it particularly useful to me. So, I haven't encouraged them to learn Polish, other than interacting with *babcia*, and talking, you know, saying few words here and there. But not a full on 'you must learn Polish'.

Luke [2]:

How are they [roots] relevant to my children? *Babcia* being there and active in their lives... They see she's a bit different, a different accent. You know, Christmas is something that is a bit different, but beyond that I'm not sure.

Sara:

I still have Christmas Eve, my father would do the big buffet and then I try to do it as - when Claire [my daughter] was younger I didn't, but as Claire was a bit older, she likes it, so I try to do it on Christmas Eve now. We'll have a few family and friends, and I will make the *pierogi* and all the different pieces. I try to keep it alive, because I'm quite proud of it... I do the stuffed cabbage, and I will make - what else do I do? Sometimes I will do the fish soup, especially at Christmas I've got the fish soup. But I've forgotten most of it now, and there is nobody to ask. But Kasia now, in work, she'll say 'You need to do it this way, this is the best way', so she'll give me a recipe... I didn't [try to teach Claire Polish]: unfortunately, my Polish wasn't good enough. But she can count, and I had taken her quite a few times to Poland when my aunt was still alive, so she picked up a few words along the way. She loves Poland, she likes Poland... Claire has been in contact with a young singer in Gdańsk and they are going to do a little project together, so we're going to go over this year. And also she, Claire is interested in doing a little programme, something similar... She has a new boyfriend who has the same background as her, his mother is half-Polish like me. So, they want to take us to Poland, and maybe retrace their roots, and try and sell it to the Welsh TV programme here.

Ann:

[My daughter] doesn't [speak Polish]. My grandson is sixteen, Dominik. It's even spelled the Polish way with a 'k', and he's so proud of it. He's so proud of his Polish roots. He's a member of *Kresy* Family. He's sixteen, he's studying for his A-levels and he's uploaded some material onto the website. He asked me a lot about the Polish side of the family, and I'm teaching him to speak some simple sentences, and some phrases, because he's always asking me. And on 4th February we're going to Bradford to the commemoration. We can't get to London, it's too far for us, my husband's not very well. So the three of us are going to

Bradford to mark the 78th anniversary of the deportations. He's always there, anything that's going on for *Kresy* Family, he's there helping out. For example the Who Do You Think You Are exhibition in Birmingham. He's mixing with as many Polish people as he can. And he tells all his mates at school, he tells them about his Polish great-grandfather, and they keep telling him to shut up... I taught Dominik to sing the Polish national anthem. He gets up there and you can hear him a mile away! ... I've made my grandchildren some *pierogi*, some *ruskie pierogi*. They say, 'Will you make some more, Grandma?' I said 'Alright, I'll make some more when I get time.' It's a big job. When you buy them frozen they are not the same as home-made...

We're planning on going [to Poland] next year. Dominik and his sister, my two grandchildren -- Dom definitely wants to go, and his sister said she'd like to go... And she has a little friend now in school, she's Polish, she's Polish-born. And her other little friend's grandfather is Polish as well, so they're all together because they've got this Polish connection, and they're quite proud of it. I'm really pleased with that. They say, 'We're like sisters, we've got Polish connections.'

Janina:

We always had *pierogi*, and we'd do *Wigilia*, when my grandparents were alive. That sort of stuck, although I did it this year by myself with my partner, which was nice...

My mum is not going to be grandma, she's going to be *babcia* if I ever have children. And yes, it would just feel really sad, I think there would be a lot of grief if it wasn't passed on. I don't know, I think when love your family, and you come from that sort of background, the culture and the language are so tied to who you are as a person. And I think it would be strange to not call my mum *babcia*, or not say certain things, or sing Polish lullabies for example. But I have thought about when is the endpoint? Because, you know, how long can you say: so, my granddaughter, she's not going to say she's Polish, so when do you stop, almost? It's quite a hard thing to think about.

Zosia:

I speak, I write in Polish to my daughter – she speaks more English, shall we say, but she understands everything I say.... If she admonishes her little one, she'll say '*Przestań!*' Or sometimes when she doesn't want the children to hear, because she'll be saying something about them, she'll say it in Polish... [If] I say '*O Boże kochany!*' [her little boy] says '*O Boże kochany!*' That sort of thing. These little things. Or I'll say something to them in Polish, and they think it's funny, because they wonder what *babcia* is saying. And I'm *babcia*. Yes, and I upkeep that. And, in fact, I'll always text her in Polish. Rarely would I write it in English. So that it would keep up. And she cooks Polish, she's got Polish cookbooks.'

Maria:

[My son] does speak Polish, it's kind of up and down sometimes. At the moment, I'm struggling with him a bit to speak Polish to me. I try to speak Polish to him all the time, but that's when it's the two of us together. When it's the three of us with my husband, obviously we speak a lot of English. But I do try, if I'm speaking to my son directly, I'll try to

speak in Polish and get him to speak back. It's incredibly hard, incredibly. But he goes to Polish Saturday school as well, and I try to take him to Poland as much as possible. And, preferably, to friends, because then he will speak Polish to children of his own age rather than just the three of us. Because if it's just the three of us it's just perpetuating what we have here at home. We're in Poland, but he's not necessarily hearing it around him. Unless I meet somebody who is a friend who's there. But it's not that easy to suddenly make friends in Poland with people you don't know...

We do most of the Polish things with him. My husband's just accepted that he's married into a Polish world. So we do Christmas Eve, and we do Christmas Day the next day. My relationship with the Polish Church -- although I do believe -- has been dependent on the priest in residence. And I decided fairly early on that, because my son goes to a Catholic school, and his friends will be doing Communion in an English church, he'd be better off in an English church. He's an altar server now, but it's in an English church. He knows his prayers in Polish, but, yes, church is English.

Agnieszka:

We always enjoyed all the Polish customs, the *Wigilia*, Easter... My brother has carried on the traditions with his kids, and all my girls can do *Wigilia* standing on their head, which I am very proud of... I'm about to go this year to take some friends ... I've taken several groups of friends to Poland, I've given them my own guided tours of Warszawa and Kraków together!... I love taking friends to Polish restaurants: in fact, I just organised two more trips to Daquise or Ognisko.

Aniela:

My boys -- I've got three sons -- although they don't speak the language -- we started off when they were very young, but it trailed off, because another generation hence. But they are very, very interested in what's going on there. My eldest son has been to Poland with me. My middle son has been to Poland by himself. They appreciate, they understand how important it is... It is gratifying, and it's gratifying for my parents as well. Because, when they were little, they used to ram information down them about their own experiences and how they lived, and what they went through, the War, and what my grandparents went through in the War. They know that backwards.

Filip:

Obviously, the boys have got the [Polish sur]name. But my two daughters, we gave them Polish middle names. And they've carried on the tradition. My son has called his two daughters, they've got Polish middle names as well. They go to Poland and they love Poland. Sometimes they'll go to Tesco's in [the UK] and they'll buy rye bread and *kietbasa*. We eat *bigos*, *gotąbki*. All of us make all of those dishes, as part of life. It's not a special occasion. I'll go and buy *bigos* this week, and I can leave it at the back [of the refrigerator], and they keep taking it.

So, yes, they all identify with Poland, they love the heat, and the countryside, and the family, as much as I do. I think it's partly down to me. I tried to keep it going, I took them so often to Poland when they were young, to really infuse it into them. We used to go every three years in the motor caravan. My eldest daughter in fact... speaks perfect Polish, partly through my Polish thing. When all these lads came over in 2008, 2006, and because she lived in D. and she met Polish people, she started dating Polish blokes. She's more of a Polophile than I am. I love it. Everyone eventually dies, and I want to try and keep that going, I want to keep that connection. I would hate that in thirty years' time someone said to my granddaughters 'Where does [your surname] come from?' or 'Why have you got a Polish middle name?' and she didn't know. I just don't want someone to hear the word Poland and understand hot summers, cold winters. When they talk about Poland, I want them to feel it... All of my children come to Poland regularly and in fact bring their children. I want it to keep going. It's important to me. It's not just something I want to do. It's really important to me.

Natalia:

My granddaughter said 'Grandma, can we come to Poland with you?' And I thought 'Well, yes, it would be lovely'... And we've been going back every summer and every February since then... It's through them, all my grandchildren, we've ended up all going together, all my children and grandchildren. But they're all so enthused, they've brought other people, friends who have no connection with Poland whatsoever. And I've ended up being like a guide. The number of times I've been to Auschwitz and the salt mine is beyond count! I'm not complaining, but it's funny how my enthusiasm – I think they were fascinated by why Grandma keeps going off to Poland so often...

[Our holiday hotel is] in the south, at the foot of the mountains. It's good, old-fashioned, wholesome, and it appeals to the children. I think the adults think they would like to perhaps do something similar but somewhere else, but it's the little ones that say 'No, we want to go back there'. And I often think how proud my parents, who obviously don't see this, because both of them are no longer with me, how they would have felt, being witness to that. And it happened, not because somebody said they had to, it happened because they [the grandchildren] were the ones that wanted to...

[My own children] tend not to [speak]. My children do understand... I think, as adults, we become very self-conscious of our own abilities. And unless we can speak properly we tend not to even try. Whereas the youngsters do pick up bits of Polish. In fact, they were saying they'd love to live there, and I think, pre-Brexit, I would have considered moving out there. But I don't know what would happen post-Brexit in terms of my pension and so on. The children were saying 'We'd come and live with you, Grandma'. I said, 'It wouldn't be like a holiday, you'd have to go to school!' 'Yeah, we could learn Polish, couldn't we?' They're not averse to it. And I do speak with them. They don't speak with me, but they'll ask me 'How do you say this?'... A teacher was talking about Polish background and Polish children. And she [my granddaughter] said, 'My teacher was asking about whether I like *naleśniki*.' They don't deny their heritage, which is much healthier than the element that I went through, however briefly...

I have people that I sing with, and that I have as close friends, they are English. But I've persuaded them, and they like Poland, and they come to Poland. In fact we're going in May, to Gdańsk. One of the ladies has already been before, she's been with me a couple of times. I think there's something magical about Poland. People who haven't been have a peculiar image of Poland: 'Is it dark, is it cold?' This sort of thing. But once they've been, it becomes addictive. You want to go again and again... I think I would have been a millionaire if I'd been paid for the people I'd invited there. There is something, whether it's a yearning for a time past, I've no idea... It's such a huge place in comparison to the UK, the cities are widespread. Here, you can go from Leeds to Bradford to Keighley – you don't know where one finishes and the other begins. In Poland, you know when Warsaw finishes. There is an imaginary border and you're out into the country. And it's the same throughout the country. You're into the open space, whether it's fields, the mountains. I think humans want that, natural, rather than an urban, built-up [landscape]. Plus, I think the other advantage it has might be the financial aspect. It's much more affordable than anywhere else, as well, at the moment... It's warm, and they want an ice cream, and then you can see them wanting another one but not sure whether they could ask. 'You want one? You can have as many as you want!'

Tomek [who has an English wife]:

I spoke to my children in Polish and never mixed, until my eldest came back from his first term at university. He'd studied philosophy and had no contact with Polish. He was unable to explain what he'd been studying. He was all enthusiastic about it, but obviously he didn't have the vocabulary. Just as if somebody asked me to talk about car mechanics – well, in any language! -- I wouldn't be able to do that.

Grażyna:

It's very important for myself and my siblings that our children keep in contact with them. And they do. My children don't speak Polish, my siblings' children don't speak Polish, but they're in Poland all the time. One of them's actually working in Warsaw now. One of my children wants to go to work in Poland. When there's a wedding or a christening or something we all go to Poland, and it's a big family occasion.

Teodora:

We have lots of friends who come to stop with us [in our house in Poland]. The family laugh at us. They say we're like tourist operators, taking people around Poland. But we're very proud to do so. We want to show off the country... For many of them it's their first time in Poland, and they come with a certain perception of what they think it's going to be like, and go away with a very different perception. I think they still have a feeling, maybe it's a throwback to communist times, that it's going to be very grey, and people are very dour. But they come away with a very strong feeling about the people of Poland, I suppose that's because we have family, they're involved in that, and they meet friends, as well. The food, they think is wonderful! And the countryside as well... They're surprised by what Poland has to offer...

[Acquiring a Polish passport] gives our son the opportunity because if he wants, well, he is keen to, he can get Polish citizenship through me.... He goes on a very regular basis. He and his partner use the house a lot when we're not there. He had a very strong bond with my father. He loves Poland. He has a very good relationship with my cousins' children. I think that link will continue. I'd be very disappointed if it didn't. But I'm sure it will do.

Iza:

[My relative is] 22 now, at Warsaw University, and she's been over... So she met my brother who has a daughter who's 28... They've become internet friends and she's been over several times now. They're very close buddies and they know what each other likes and that's got nothing to do with my generation, that's the first friendship of that generation. So that's been quite interesting, I didn't imagine that would happen... I think [my children are] interested. They're busy, they're not thinking about moving somewhere else, but they would have more of that readiness to go and do that, I think... My middle son's partner is Polish, her father was Polish, he's died, but she's got relatives in Manchester and she's become more interested... My grandchildren have been to Poland... They went a couple of years ago. It all feels very ordinary, doable, possible, interesting, whereas for me it's quite massive.

11 Brexit and British attitudes to Poles

(a) Brexit

Dave:

For the record, as far as my Polish family is concerned, the ones that have British citizenships actually voted for Brexit. They, my Polish family, have zero concerns about what Brexit will do with regards to the Polish community or Polish diaspora, they see beyond them... In my experience in T., which is a very small experience, a very small town, but it is my experience. And, of course, I am friends with some of these people from the new wave, and they have this [attitude that] Poland is very much on the rise, it's a growing economy, they have a strong national identity, very homogenous country, they have many traits that even the British would look up to, you know. And all this kind of thing. So they feel no need to become British or something like this. And from a macro-economic perspective, they are quite aware, my friends, that a lot of the economic output of this country is dependent on their labours. So the threat of Brexit, it's not something like that, it's not something which they consider an existential threat...

I try to keep up with the political situation [in Poland], especially now. But I think that Poland is, actually experiencing the same challenges as the UK, as a society. For example, they really value their sovereignty and, you know, generally people don't like the idea of the supra-national institution such as the EU taking sovereignty away from them. It's quite natural, I think. So I think that even if our identities are different, there are lot of similarities as well.

Zuzanna:

I think, for me, a lot of the Brexit discussions, I've been frustrated by them because I don't feel I have enough perspective to know what's right and what's wrong. There have been lots of positive reports about contributions of Polish people coming over to the United Kingdom, and I haven't read anything that suggests that the Poles' contribution to the workforce, the economy of the United Kingdom has been anything other than a good thing. Obviously, when you get lots and lots of people you're going to get, not necessarily a representative sample of the people in Poland, but you're going to get the good with the bad, aren't you, and there are going to be a few people that you read about in the press who haven't been quite so appealing, but you can't screen that out at immigration point.

I have a general concern about Brexit and about what's it going to do now to the United Kingdom, it's not specifically about Polish people, it's about the effect generally.

Janina:

I got quite upset after the referendum. A lot of it is my political views, I was upset at the result, but partly it seemed like a slap in the face to every migrant who came here. And I started thinking about my own grandparents. It felt like -- I know Britain has not, historically,

even though it likes to give the persona, not historically been a very welcoming place, but it just made me think, it's becoming even more unwelcoming.

Agnieszka:

Brexit has appalled me – had appalled me. I was a Remainer, I am a Remainer. I am desperately sorry for my children's' generation because they are Europeans, they are not just English, they are Europeans. And this was a retrograde step.

Natalia:

I was quite surprised that somebody whom I was friends with, an English friend, I went on holiday with her and she came to Poland with me. I realised how very, very different we were. She voted for Brexit, I obviously voted against, and I was hurt. Because post-Brexit there'd been those attacks on people in places, whether it was to do with Brexit or not... and she said, 'How did it make you feel, did you feel, you know?' and I thought, well, how on earth can you ask me that. Because obviously it's hurtful, it did feel as if it was a personal attack. And I thought, not on me personally, I think it always pulled me back to how my parents might have [experienced things], because they were in that sort of situation.

Iza:

Both sons are working in London. They're shocked by the Brexit thing because all the people they're working with left, they're just going straight back home, or to Germany or Holland, because of the fall in the pound but also hostile attitudes. That's quite heart breaking when you've seen it open up, and the Polish shops springing up, and the Polish supermarket aisles. Certainly, I've eaten things that I've eaten there now here, and we make *borshch*, and we make the sourdough bread, and things like that. So it had been a very growing story, and now it feels like we're going to lose something, with what's happening right now.

(b) British attitudes towards Poles in the UK today

Dave:

There are some British friends who have complained to me in jest – although I guess there are some serious underlying concerns – that their communities have changed, that there are Polish people who have taken their jobs, that kind of stuff. And I laugh at them. I say, of course they are taking your jobs, look at you, you're f... ng lazy, you are sitting in front of Play Station when my uncle is willing to work sixty, seventy, eighty hours a week, no problem. My cousin is willing to come to a different country, work hard, you know, work up the ladder. Here we are lazy, so of course, you know, when you say they are taking your jobs, that's because you f... ing let them.

Sara:

I feel quite protective. There's a lot of conversations, people are saying things like 'Oh, these people are coming to this country, they're taking the jobs, and they're taking our homes, and all these things, and they should all go back.' And I'm thinking, I'm keeping very quiet, and then at the end of the conversation [I say] 'Well, excuse me, I am half-Polish, and they are coming here, they are working, and the jobs they are doing, they are open to *everybody*! And half the people that are taking the benefits from the country are the British people, they're not the people coming over to try and make a few pennies and have a better life for themselves. They are British people, they don't want the jobs, so you can't say' - and I get quite emotional, and I say – 'no, they are coming here, most of them will probably go back eventually or maybe stay, but they are prepared to work, they are hard-working, not one of them are coming for benefits, they are coming to work'. So yeah, I do get very protective sometimes when they start saying these things.

Ann:

I'd heard somebody complaining once about all the Polish people that were here, that they should get back home and this, that and the other. It was outside. I explained to these people, all these ignorant people, exactly what the Poles did during World War II, and why we should welcome them with open arms. Because, after all, England, the British and the Americans did betray them at the end of the last war, they sold them down the river to Stalin, as they did with a lot of the other countries. And Poland, I always say, she fought on the first day and she was still fighting on the last day, she never surrendered. So I get on my soap-box and I gave them all a lecture about 'Leave the Poles alone'. Because it's the least we can do. Or the least the British can do, I should say, to welcome them after what happened after World War II...

When they all first came over, in 2004, 2005, there was just this massive influx in Accrington. They would go 'Oh, they've taken our jobs, and they're doing this, and doing that.' 'No, no, they're not taking your jobs at all.' So yes, I've spoken out once or twice... You always get some ignorant people that are always ready to have an underdog or somebody to blame for whatever is going wrong. And I don't know whether it happens in all

nationalities, or just in the British society. But I'm always telling somebody about my Polish roots.

Janina [aged 25]:

When you say, 'Oh, my family is Polish' people would assume your mother was born there or that you were born there, whereas there were a lot of us at school who had Polish parents who were born here and then grandparents who weren't born here. And whenever we'd say it they wouldn't know anything about it. So you had to explain, and get into this long-winded story. And then, obviously, when Poland joined the EU [the situation got worse]. Because where I come from it's quite rural, and it's very white, so all the racism was targeted on the Eastern Europeans. I remember growing up, like, we were the group that got picked on. I remember coming out of church once and the English parishioners saying some things. A girl once said to me, I'm not ever going to forget this, she said, it was something like 'Oh, Polish people are the worst, because you don't know that they're foreign until they open their mouths, but you blend in too well.' I remember hearing that, and thinking, 'But I'm not Polish in a way' ... The times when me and my mum have been speaking Polish, and someone says something, and we'll rip around and say, 'What do you mean by that?' And they'll hear our accents and kind of be like 'Oh, sorry, we've mocked you', and it's like the wrong sort of immigrant...

I worked at Sainsbury's café as a teenager, and on my first shift there had been some rumours going around that I was Polish. I think they must have seen my first name and my middle name and thought, well, she's not English, she must be Eastern European. I remember when I got there, and the manager was speaking really slowly to me, and I was like 'Why is she speaking so slowly to me?' So I said to her 'I can understand you, why are you speaking slowly?' And she said 'Oh, we all thought you were Polish and your English would be quite bad.' And I was like 'No!' And she was like, 'Well, do you know Piotr, he works in the bakery' – and, funnily enough, I did know him, but this weird approach of, oh well, if you've got a slightly foreign sounding name and you're white, it must be Eastern European...

It feels like a lot of people I've met, when I say, 'I can speak Polish' they say 'Oh, I know a bit of Polish.' They always know how to say, 'Thank you', or 'Please', or a swear word.

Zosia:

The friends that I'm most in contact with... came over here [in the 1960s and '70s] and settled and assimilated to the British way of life. Now, they've all remarked on the same sort of things as myself. It's now very difficult to own up about the fact that you're Polish... When I go out anywhere, it's a quiet residential little town, and, shall we say, quite a wealthy town. At one time, I would have no problem speaking Polish. Now I'm a little more reserved. And I'm very sad about that, but it's the way it is.

Maria:

It personally bothers me that the country has chosen this way forward, which is kind of unthinkable really. I suppose, yes, I recognize that in some areas there have been real

problems because there are just so many Poles compared to the population. And it's become so apparent with the shops, and companies that just employ Poles. I do feel personally hurt by the fact that Poles don't seem to be that welcome. And it does affect me when I hear of any discrimination. I haven't had any personally. Though my parents do say to me 'Don't speak Polish on the streets', it hasn't really stopped me. If I'm walking with my son wherever, we'll speak Polish together. If we are in shops on errands. So it hasn't really stopped that.

Barbara:

It's a little bit negative again. I was actually quite upset, because I thought I wouldn't feel that sort of reaction ever again. And it's come back a bit. It reminds me of what I went through in my childhood. I went to a builders' shop with my friend, it was Jewsons, and he was asking about coving, and this other man was very patronising, because he could hear the foreign accent, and I just said, 'Well actually we speak very good English'. He was so ashamed, embarrassed because he had been initially very, very rude. And I thought that was all behind me... At least twice they've been very critical of Polish people to me. And I've said 'Well, actually, each country has its own hooligans, there are cultured people and not cultured people, in both societies'...

I stick up for them all the time. Occasionally they're in the wrong. For example, some neighbours were so noisy one night, on a Saturday, I said to them quietly, 'After 11 o'clock, you do need to ask them to be quiet.' And they're more careful now. And they would congregate here in the car park late at night. I said, 'Don't do that, because it's upsetting the other residents.' So (a) I don't want them to get into trouble and (b) it was giving Polish people a bad name, I felt, that sort of behaviour, so I do actually speak up for the other side as well. And for example, now, in the news, that Polish lorry driver [Ryszard Masierak, convicted of causing death by drunk driving] that's dreadful, there's no words of defence for him. And then I'm embarrassed by it [sigh].

Anne: Although it's funny, isn't it, because it's no connection with you, but at the same time you can't help being embarrassed.

Barbara: Exactly. It's still Poland, you see.

Aniela:

I think there is a certain amount of hostility to the amount of immigration that has happened. I think maybe that was the trigger, but I don't know, maybe I'm making a huge generalisation, but I think for some people they thought Brexit would end immigration. But I don't think that's necessarily the case. It's about two completely separate things. Although I was a bit taken aback when a so-called friend of mine, when we went out, a group of us went out, and she made a comment, 'Oh, Angela's always helping Polish people', which took me aback a little bit. I think there is maybe a sense of underlying hostility, but only maybe because people don't understand. A lot of the friends that I made through the children's schools, we never necessarily talked about our backgrounds, it was all beneath the surface. Those who were interested were genuinely interested, and still are, but there are a few that

maybe thought ‘Why did your grandparents come over here, why did your parents come over here? Why did you not go back?’ I’ve had a couple of uncomfortable comments...

I’m still surprised when I meet British people, going [to Poland], I don’t know why I’m surprised, but people choose to go, whereas when I was growing up we only went because we had what remaining family there was – which there isn’t now, but what remaining members of the family there were. And also for seeing what remaining friends there were. You didn’t really go for any other reason, but now Kraków is a really popular destination, as is Warsaw, and even the other Eastern European capitals as well. And Wrocław as well.

Filip:

Maybe back in the ‘60s when the War was still quite fresh, if you went into a pub in the sixties, I was only young, but even in the early ‘70s, when I was able to go into a pub, that War generation was still there. If you told them you were Polish the first thing they said was ‘Very brave, the Poles.’ That was the Polish thing. Battle of Britain, very brave, recklessly brave, fantastically hard workers. Move on. That basically was it. There was no deep political or ideological understanding. Poles were brave, hardworking, and that was it...

[After the Brexit referendum there’s no sign of hostility locally.] The Poles mostly now have been there for ten years, and they’re part of things. Most of the Poles I know are settled. They own houses, their kids go to English schools, in fact some of the children of my Polish friends speak with Wiltshire accents. It’s very strange. You go into their houses and the smell of *bigos* and *gotybkki*. These kids go ‘Awwright?’ It’s very strange. It’s like history repeating itself. But, no, the Poles who are here are here. They [local non-Poles] are saying that you’ve been here so long, you’ll be OK.

Joanna:

I still remember, as a child, I’m old enough to remember in the early ‘70s we were on the train going to the seaside, and my father got into conversation with a young man, and they got talking about the War. It was less than thirty years after the War had ended. So I remember this man said to my father, ‘Ah yes, only the Poles could have taken Cassino!’ And I remember feeling so proud, I was only about eleven or twelve at the time. Wow, this is fantastic, the fact that this person knew about the Battle of Monte Cassino and had acknowledged that my father was Polish and associated him with that.

Whereas fast forward another forty years, I befriended a Polish bus driver, he’s a lovely guy. He and his friend and myself and my husband were on the bus – he wasn’t working, we were passengers on the bus, travelling home. He and I and this other friend were chatting away in Polish, and unfortunately a person, an English person turned round and said ‘Why don’t you speak English?’

And I just thought, I nearly said something in broad [local accent], but then I thought ‘No, it’s not worth it’. I just felt quite upset. I thought, ‘I don’t want this.’ Unfortunately, now, if I’m on public transport, and I hear a Polish person talking very loudly into their mobile, at

the top of their voice, in that sort of screechy voice, I just think 'No, please don't.' It's embarrassing. I feel embarrassed on their behalf, which I shouldn't really be, but somehow it embarrasses me now. Which is crazy, because it shouldn't, but I sometimes feel that I can see it from the local population's point of view. That, yes, there is this huge influx of people and yes, they are taking our jobs. Now, I know this is not strictly true, we could argue the pros and cons, and this is not the place to do it, but you can see how why people who don't fully understand what's happening could easily have that perception, couldn't they? When they see all these Polish people wandering around speaking Polish, their perception is that they're being invaded, so to speak, which I know is wrong, and is not the right attitude to have. But I can understand why people think like that, because Polish people are very visible, and audible.

In that sense, sometimes I have to be careful and think, perhaps I ought not to use my maiden name. I do feel sometimes that, what I'm trying to say is, Polish people are perceived in a negative way now. Whereas perhaps in the past, although we didn't know much about them, people who did know about Poles perceived them in a very positive light, because they had this association with the Battle of Britain, with World War II, the pilots, and all that kind of thing. Whereas nowadays it's all about builders and plumbers and people coming to 'take our jobs', in inverted commas. That is something that has changed. and not changed for the better... I haven't personally met anyone who's said that to me directly. It's what you read, what you hear. On social media, and what the papers say. And there was that incident on the bus, which was quite upsetting.

Tomek:

There was one of those Humanities days at school and I was involved with a different group. But, in the hall, a Holocaust survivor was talking to a very large group. Over lunch, the head of the sixth form turned round to me and said, 'Thomas, why did he say, and it was a throwaway comment, in the middle of something else, "Oh, but all Poles are anti-Semites"?' If I'd been in that hall... I'd have stood up and I would have said 'You have just answered a major question that the children of this age could ask. How could the Holocaust happen? It happened because people like you were prepared to say, "All Jews are this, all blacks are this, all Poles are this".' That's behind it all. Once you start saying 'All are X, Y, Z.'

Grażyna:

This is a rather horrible thing. I took my mum for lunch on the Sunday after the referendum. Until that point, never, in my entire life, had I been concerned about speaking Polish in public. Never. With my father, who passed away several years ago, my siblings and I usually spoke Polish, apart from when in English company. But with my mother we'd speak English-Polish. It's natural for us to go from one into the other. Both for her and for myself. Dad would have wanted it to be more in Polish. I never used to have any reservations about speaking Polish in public. On the Sunday in question, I took my mum out for lunch. In the

restaurant, it was most peculiar. Because I could sense something coming from the people at the table next to us. One woman was staring at us. And staring unpleasantly. I can't tell you, maybe it was my imagination. I don't think I'm overly sensitive. And I felt compelled to switch to speaking English with my mother. Whatever was going on there, I sensed something. Since then I'm just a little bit more careful where I speak Polish.

Teodora:

[My Polish relatives who work in the UK] could apply for residence, I'm sure, because they've been here for such a long time, but we were talking about their situation, just recently, in the last couple of weeks. And they were saying it's interesting how people's attitudes are changing towards them. At one time, if they said they came from Poland, and they'd set up this business, British people would congratulate them on that. Whereas now they feel there's a bit of a distance. Certainly, my other relative, who has made his home here [in a highly-skilled professional job], feels that people are vocalising a little more about their discontent with foreigners working here.

Anne: To his face?

Teodora: Yes – to the point where he wanted to talk about it – he was quite upset about it... I do feel that since Brexit people here feel they can vocalise more about immigrants to this country in a way that perhaps they didn't before. I do sometimes feel a bit concerned, in Poland, that there might be a backlash towards us. If we're talking, in Kraków or Katowice. And also because of the right-wing element in Poland, as well, that seems to be building up. I am at times a little bit cautious about that...

Anne: But do you actually sense that there's any kind of hostility, in some situations?

Teodora: I think it's my imagination, really. It's just something I'm aware of. I'm on Facebook, and one of the groups that I'm on is the Kraków expats group, which is huge. And, certainly, people on that at times voice that they've had hostility towards them. And there are other Polish groups that I get information from, and in places like Warsaw I think there have been some incidents of people being treated badly. But I suppose in any country you can get that sort of reaction.

12 Identity, passports and invisibility

(a) Feeling more British since 2004

Dave:

In the face of this new wave I found my cousins, my aunts, and whatnot, especially the younger generation, wanting to become increasingly more 'British', if you like.

(b) Emphasising Polish identities

Sara:

If Poland is playing and Wales are playing, he says, 'Who do you support?' 'I'm supporting Poland!' 'You can't do that!' 'Why?' 'Because you're half-Welsh!' 'Exactly, so you're supporting Wales, so I'll support Poland!' No, I'm very proud of my Polish blood, I'm very proud.

Ann:

I think of myself as a Polish person. But I'm always, if I'm trying to talk to someone in Polish, I always say, 'I am sorry, I am ashamed I don't speak fluent Polish'... Yes, it's part of me. And I'm not ashamed of it – I'm proud of it these days. I'm not inferior to people anymore, I'm proud of who I am.

Mike:

I noticed in those days that, as time went by, some of the second generation developed their Polishness and became more intensely Polish, but the vast majority began to lose the feeling, their sense of Polishness. And began to drift away completely from it. Whereas others like myself felt quite Polish and still do. And quite a few still feel in some ways more Polish than the Polish. Because they were over here as part of the mission of exile, if you will, and so on and so forth. So, as time went by, I became interested in why there is such a disparity, such a difference within the second generation. Why there are some at one end of the spectrum who feel very, very Polish, and at the other end of the spectrum, completely reject the Polish aspect of it. And an awful lot in the middle are sort of hybrids, hybrid feelings, like both ways.

After 2004, after the Accession, and when the Poles came over to Britain, my feelings of Polishness were accentuated. In the sense that I could compare myself and the Polish second and third generations in this country against the Poles coming over from Poland. And in some ways, that made myself and others feel more Polish than before. It enabled us

to define ourselves against the new Poles coming over. The new Poles have very little time really for the existing Polish organisations in Britain and the West... The feeling amongst our generation and our parents' generation is that some of those Poles are not quite as patriotic as the Poles who remained here in exile were and are. After the Accession, it was really mixed feelings. It was good to see all these Poles coming over, but in some ways disappointing that a lot of them have no idea of why we original ones ended up here, why we were here in the first place... And just weren't interested. So in a sense that was a surprise, but it enabled myself to in some ways feel more Polish than they are, in a funny sort of way.

Agnieszka

In my teens I had a huge identity crisis, you know, what was I – was I English, was I Polish, was I European, what was I? But, you know, if you look [now] at my Twitter account, whatever, I just always talk about my Polish heritage, my roots are hugely strong and embedded in me... I've always been so proud. I've been terribly proud of being Polish, because not only of what they've gone through, but a course of the culture, the history, what they've achieved, you know. And just the people themselves ... the whole world recognizes the strength of character of the Poles, which is great.

Filip:

It was only later on that my elder self became inquisitive. I think it's very empowering to know where you come from. My research in history, over the years, got this thing going in me. To know where you come from makes a big difference. If you just suddenly appear and have no family or anything it's very hard to be rooted. I do feel that, I do feel rooted. I know where I come from, I know why I'm like I am. Now. But for many years I didn't. I couldn't understand why I was so different, but now I do...

In fact, I'll be buried in Poland. In my will, my ashes will be buried in Poland with my wife. Ironically for someone who says he feels English. I think, if I'm going to say one thing that I'd really like to get across, it's that there's an emotional connection with Poland and my Polish family which was never there with my English family. I think that's the main driver. It's this emotional thing that I never had before. It's nice to be part of that.

Tomek:

In 1973, when Poland eliminated England from the World Cup, I was advised not to watch it on the college TV. A friend invited me round to her flat and said, 'Watch it here, because it would be too dangerous for you anywhere else.' No, of course, I would support Poland against England, I wouldn't think twice about that... I distinguish between nationality and citizenship... I'll say 'I'm a British subject, I'm a British passport holder, born here, but I'm Polish.'

I was brought up with a certain kind of patriotism. And that patriotism had its roots very much in 19th century Polish poetry, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, that Messianic Poland as the Christ of Nations, fighting for others' independence, but always the victim. My mother was no nationalist, but she was a patriot that I think sometimes crossed the line into a form of chauvinism. But she hated the *narodowcy*, the Polish nationalist party. She and my father and most of our friends were very much in the Piłsudski camp. The point is, that that kind of patriotism evolved in me partly because of my love of history, that's always been my passion -- and [partly because] as you grow older, even in my later teens, I began to question some of the idealised vision of Poland that was conveyed. It's inevitable in an émigré community – what are they supposed to say? I can understand why I was brought up in that kind of patriotic spirit. But it became increasingly difficult for me to talk about this with my mother, and I was very attached to my parents, particularly to my mother... My mother didn't work, so I spent a lot of time with her...

So that patriotism has changed, developed and evolved into what I would regard as something as strong as the patriotism of my parents, but different. I utterly despise what is happening in Poland at the moment, under – I say under Kaczyński, although theoretically he has no official position... All this re-writing of history, the new books that are now being promoted, that every child should read. There's a whole thing about Sienkiewicz now. *W pustyni i w puszczy* is a great child's book, but it's terribly racist. The attitude to Arabs, the attitude to black people in there. So, it's evolved, it's changed a lot. I would say it's as deep, if not deeper, and very strong, but it's different from the patriotism that I was brought up with...

[Comparing] the émigré community of the post-War period and the ones who have come since 2004... there are very obvious differences, in all sorts of attitudes. Inevitably. These people are economic migrants. They don't always have the same attachment to certain values. I remember somebody many years ago, who came from Poland before accession to Europe: she turned round to my mother and said 'I no longer believe in barricades' I had that discussion with my father, because one of his sons had died in the first day of the Warsaw Uprising. I said, 'Do you think the Warsaw Uprising should' -- there is a real dilemma actually – 'should it have taken place?' I won't go into all the reasons how it was justified. My father took some time to answer that question and eventually he said yes.

(c) Mixtures

Dave:

My father was strongly Irish, my mother was strongly Polish, both of them were Catholics, and I was born in the United Kingdom, in Birmingham. So I have multiple identities now because of that, and I think it is quite common these days, a rising trend. When I'm in Poland I'm Polish, when I'm in Ireland I'm Irish, when I'm in the United Kingdom I'm British...

If I was meeting Polish friends, then, you know, I'm Polish, or I'm an English guy. So identity is something, I think, that can be used in that sense. But in regards to 'the Polish identity', my opinion is that it's too varied. What do we mean when we say 'Polish identity'?

Zuzanna:

I very much felt, growing up, that when I was with English people I felt Polish, but when I was with Polish people, my own peer groups, with the same background to me, I felt English. Partly because as I think I mentioned my father wasn't quite as eager for us to be as involved as my mum was keen to do.

Ann:

[According to a DNA test] I am 48% Eastern European, 29% Western European, 11% British, 7% Scandinavian, 3% Iberian Peninsula, 1% Finland/N.W. Russia, 1% European Jewish -- a right mixed bag. I just thought Anglo-Polish.

Janina:

I think in terms of that story attached to your family, it does feel quite unique. In the way that whenever I've told anyone about it, or whenever I've met someone who's got the same sort of family, we get very excited. It's the sort of thing that it warrants an explanation, if I ever mention it. Whereas sometimes it would be easier to say, 'My mum is from Warsaw', it would be a lot easier to say that, I think, than having to explain. I guess. But no, I think, when I'm in a room with Brits, I do feel British, I am British, but the fact that we grew up speaking another language, or my middle name, or my mum's family - a huge part of me isn't British, and that does mark you out, a little bit. But then again, if I was in a room of Polish people my own age, I am not Polish, so it's in between I suppose... I remember around 2004, I think that was when I realised, oh, I'm not fully British, because people are now are making the distinction more, but there's also a bigger community to be a part of.

Eva:

I'm still a half and half person. But I know, deep down, that I am Polish, I have Polish blood in my veins. I heard somebody once said that if a dog was to be born in a stable where horses are, it doesn't make that dog into a horse, you know, that sort of thing. The fact that I was born here in the UK doesn't mean that I'm totally British. I speak English with a very good English accent, obviously, I was brought up to, but I'm not English, I'm certainly not a hundred percent English.

Maria:

Do I think I'm British? Hmm. I very rarely describe myself as that. I tend to, if I describe myself, [describe myself] as Polish, but then I'd say Polish-British. It's a difficult one, isn't it?

Filip:

I still feel English, though. If England and Poland were playing football I would have a real problem, because I would be thinking, in one way I can't lose, whoever wins, I win. [Sigh] I think if you really ask me, to my core I'm still English. I'm an English person with a deep love of Poland and a shared history, shall we say. But I think, if you put a gun to my head, I would still say that 'I'm English with all the Polish benefits'.

Natalia:

Although I'd tried to reject my Polishness, the community [in England] constantly regarded me as Polish. If I ever heard arguments that we are Polish [I didn't agree], if anything, we're Penglish. I'm British because I've only got a British passport. My nationality is British, I'm not a naturalised subject, I am a citizen and my nationality is British. Whatever I might personally feel, or not. And yet the community tries to keep us Polish. And yet the Polish abroad, in Poland, regard us as English.

Joanna:

My family [in Poland] think of me as Polish – although I've never really discussed that. It's never been a question that's arisen, as far as I know. It's a difficult one, because I don't think I belong to either country, to be perfectly honest. I don't feel any close allegiance with either. I suppose, as people say, the acid test is when you're watching football. The interesting thing is that I support the Polish national team, but I support Newton Rovers. [laughs] And other English teams. What I'm trying to say is that this is about local allegiance. If there's anything going on in Newton that I don't like or disagree with, I get very passionate about it... But if Poland does well in anything, let's say for example a Polish author or scientist won the Nobel Prize, I'd think 'that's fabulous' and I'd be very proud. In that sense I suppose I do feel Polish. I feel a sense of national pride if there's any major achievement by a Polish person.

But in terms of actually belonging to anywhere! As I've said to other people, I think I could happily live in any country, as long as the country suited me. A nice place to live, basically. I wouldn't say that I have to live in Poland or the UK or anywhere else. No, I could live anywhere. I don't feel that strong allegiance. I suppose, if somebody said to me that I'd have to go and fight for a particular country, I'd say 'No'. It's not worth it, I'm not fighting for it. Yes, I support this country, or Poland or any other country, if it's a question of something positive. I wouldn't say I'd lay down my life for my country, because I wouldn't. Because I honestly can't say what is my country, I don't really have a country. That would be my response.

Anne: But if somebody tried to invade Newton, would you lay down your life?

Joanna: I don't know!

Grażyna:

There was a time when I'd be walking down the steps of the plane, particularly when I was in Warsaw, that I would – actually, it makes me emotional – when I'd want to kiss the ground. I felt such a strong connection. But now it's different. I don't know, we'll see. I've been very angry this year, I've been *very* angry this year, and I do follow Polish politics. I have been angry and I have to keep on holding onto [the thought] 'This is not forever, this is a moment in time, this is not forever, this is not the whole Polish nation.' This is what I must hold onto. Pretty much like with Brexit. 'It's only part of the country, bla bla...' I'm a Polish Brit or a British Pole. I love that aspect that I can have both or either. I don't think I'm fully one way or the other... Do people [in Poland] make me feel foreign? Well, my family certainly don't. Let me think about it – no, I don't think so.

Teodora [interviewed a few hours after she arrived in the UK for a visit]:

Anne: So do you feel like Poland is your home now, more than England? [pause]

Teodora: As I said before, I feel it's more of a spiritual home. I love being there. But the politics, at the moment, in Poland, I find really difficult. Politics at family gatherings and friends' gatherings can be quite awkward at times. I'm quite outspoken about my feelings. So that puts a bit of a dampener on things for me, at the moment. But are things any better here, really?

We still have family here, our son lives in London, both of our mums are still alive, we still have a lot of friends here. Having said that, I'm glad to be coming back to see people, but in my heart I'm looking forward to going back to Poland...

With my British side of things – during the Olympics, I was a gamesmaker. For the first time ever, really, I felt some pride about welcoming people from around the world. I was a meeter-and-greeter at Heathrow Airport. Greeting people from around the world. The way our country felt at that time. It was the first time I felt 'Oh, gosh, I'm really quite proud of being a British citizen.' But I don't feel that at the moment, because of Brexit, basically. So I feel a bit of both, but the Britishness is fading, at the present.

(d) European identity

Luke:

I'm technically British, but my primary identity, for me, actually, is European, I have European identity. You know, I class myself as British reluctantly, I see myself as European.

Adelaide:

I wanted to be just a European. If I want to identify, that's how I would fix my identity: I'm a European. And the idea that I can go to any European country and just walk around and be a European, that is my ideal. I know it's naïve, and now it's receding rapidly, but that for me would be an ideal.

Joanna:

I would say I'm more European, than having an allegiance to any particular country. I suppose that would be a fair assessment.

Grisha:

The only time I get quite annoyed is when I'm filling in a form and it gives me all these different categories to choose from. Am I 'Black Caribbean', 'Bangladeshi' and so on. I write 'Slav'. Out of total annoyance. Why are you asking about all these ethnicities? When my name attracts attention and I'm asked 'where are you from' or 'when did you come over', I say with a shrug 'I was born here', so that's my identity. My father used to say that where he came from [in today's Belarus] they referred to themselves as *My tuteishie* [we are people from here]. I consider myself European through and through.

(e) Polish passports

Janina:

I was a Remainer, and I campaigned to do so... There was a brief phase when I thought about getting dual citizenship, but one of my friends who was a Polish migrant was like 'Why would you do that?'

Maria:

In terms of Brexit and my Polishness, for a long time I'd thought about getting my Polish citizenship acknowledged, and although I haven't still quite done it, the whole Brexit debate has made me think, yes, I'm definitely going to do it.... There's a real procedure about how to do it, with birth certificates and things translated and registered in Poland, but I don't think I'd have a problem doing it. I just have to gather all the relevant documents together. I've always had a bit of fear about it, because at the end of the day, I go to Poland and nobody from the British Embassy is ever going to save me from anything, because they'll say, 'You are treated as a Polish citizen here.' But I can't really think of anything, a situation I could get myself into, where that would be a fear...

And I think, more generally, I just feel that it would make me a proper Pole! If I'd ever had any doubts about my identity, I think definitely the fact that so many Polish people have come over and they have joined in the community, and I've made so many more friends, it's

made me feel more Polish, and just reinforced my Polishness, and not made me feel like I'm lacking confidence about it.... So yes, to me, getting Polish citizenship and a passport would feel like I was cementing it.

Carole:

One of the things I've been thinking about – more with reference to the ease of travel and the EU – is taking up Polish citizenship. I've got the documents I need. I think there's no difficulty. It just costs a lot. Not the actual citizenship, but going through a lawyer. It's quite a complicated process. But I'm very unhappy about the direction politics [in Poland] is taking.

Agnieszka:

As soon as Brexit happened my youngest daughter said, 'Mummy, please will you get a Polish passport?' And, in fact, my application form is sitting at my desk, because I do have my mother's passport which is, I think, the only way which I would get my own Polish passport. But then I hesitated because I didn't know what was going on in Poland, as well.

Aniela:

I'm actually applying for Polish citizenship, that's how strongly I feel about it [my Polish identity]. I've gone on a lot of the websites, I've got a lawyer who's doing the donkey work for me. Obviously, things have to be done, documents have to be found and they have to be translated. I can't do that myself...

I wouldn't say it was [connected specifically to Brexit], but it has got me thinking. It almost crystallised what my feelings were. I know that sounds a bit corny. It just crystallised my feelings. I was feeling really proud that that's my background, and I want to be part of it. Because if we are moving away from it, I want a little bit of me there, if that makes sense. I'm also hoping that, through this process, if they can find my parents' birth certificates. I have my grandparents' birth certificates, but my parents' documents were lost, or taken, or stolen, or whatever, my grandmother said. I think for them, if this process comes to fruition, I'll be able to then hand them over a copy, which they would love.

Filip:

I've got residency in Poland already, I've got residence papers. But this year I'm going up to London to get my passport. I'm very lucky. I was born between 1952 and '60. Because I was born in that time, I've got dual nationality. My sister and myself are both able to go and say, 'I was born in this time period'. It's not a done deal, nothing in Poland is, but at least I can say 'Legally I will be dual nationality, and I'd like a passport, please'. Although there'll be lots of rubber stamps, I'm sure, slashing down on pieces of paper... Ironically, with Brexit now, my English friends say, 'What are you doing about Brexit?' Because they know I have a life there, I work there, I've got residency there, and so does my wife. My wife is also a British citizen. My answer was 'I'm going to get myself a Polish passport.' Because I voted to stay in

Europe. I really felt that [with] all the rhetoric, and the lies, and the political meandering that went on, people didn't understand really what was at stake... But I'm easy – I can get a Polish passport. And I will still be in Europe.

Stefan:

I think they [local Polish people] were impressed when I said I'd got back my *obywatelstwo polskie*. We have our Polish citizenship now, myself and my daughters did that together last year. It's by *Jus Krewa*, by the rule of blood, so if you've got a Polish ancestor you are Polish whether you like it or not. You've no choice. So I'd been travelling to Poland at risk all these years without a Polish passport... I was entitled to apply for one, but if I got into trouble in Poland I wouldn't be protected by the British consulate. I think it only happened once or twice, a small number of people were detained. They said 'You can't leave here, because of your passport. You're Poles, you ought to have a Polish passport.' So that would have been fun, wouldn't it? You'd be in Poland for many weeks waiting for the paperwork...

[I applied for a passport] partly for romantic reasons. To celebrate being Polish. And also, this is my father's country, and what he went through mustn't be forgotten. Not just normalised in the midst of modern-day living. And partly for practical reasons, because it means that my daughters will be members of the EEC state. Border-free travel, if the worst comes to the worst... Melodramatic as well. If you come across a Brexiteer, it's a good thing to drop into the conversation, causing a sort of cognitive dissonance. So, yes. I'm pleased with the passport. Well, I haven't got the passport yet. I'm pleased with the citizenship. I've sent off my birth certificates. We have been issued with Polish birth certificates, even though we weren't born there. They'll give a Polish birth certificate, recording where you were born. There are agencies that do it all, for probably a thousand euros. It just meant filling out the forms carefully. And collecting piles of paperwork, which was fascinating in itself. Again, there are agencies that track ancestors in Eastern Europe quite successfully. I got my grandfather's birth certificate from 1868.

Joanna:

[Getting a Polish passport is] on my large 'to do' list. Yes, I will definitely consider that. Because now that the UK is leaving the EU I would see it as a huge advantage to have a passport which would allow me to be a member of the EU. We were talking about nationality just now, but I would say I'm more European, than having an allegiance to any particular country.

Tomek:

One of the great memorable days of my life was when, in the first elections, I was able to vote on the strength of – my father had died – but on the strength of their war papers. My mother came down from L., which is where I'd been brought up, with a coachload of other

Poles. It was the presidential election [of 1990]. I went over to the Polish Embassy and met my mother there. On that one occasion I was able to vote. Since then I've often thought of [getting a passport] and then wondered, whether I would, for the sake of emotional reasons, create possible complications. The other thing is, it shouldn't be now, with Poland's accession in 2004, but there are places in the world, I don't know. Also, it is very expensive. And why would I be doing it? I'd be doing it for very deep, profound emotional reasons, no practical purpose.

Grażyna:

My siblings have Polish citizenship. I've never applied for Polish citizenship. I've never felt a need. However, I will be applying now. Not so much for myself, I think, but for my children. My children are furious about Brexit. They want to have the freedom to work anywhere they want to. They're all polyglots. They wanted to have European citizenship and their only way of doing that is via Poland. So, I will be applying. For everything that's my background, for everything that's my future.

Teodora:

Recently I've regained my Polish citizenship... Brexit... made me decide to look into getting my dual nationality, dual citizenship. For many reasons. First of all, I think it will really make the house and land secure in Poland. Which I hope it would have been anyway. But it gives us, or gives me, far more opportunities about moving around Europe. And it also gives our son the opportunity because if he wants, well, he is keen to, he can get Polish citizenship through me...

When I eventually received my certificate to say that I'd regained my Polish citizenship, I was immensely proud of that. In the small town where we have the house, people are very pleased about it. It was a year last Easter that I found out that I'd been awarded the citizenship. And when we arrived at the house there was a Polish flag and a town flag flying from the balcony. My cousins were waiting with cake and coffee and wine to celebrate – so they were really pleased. The local mayor sent me a present to celebrate that. So people are generally very pleased about it.

(f) (In)visibility

Luke:

I've met very, very few Polish migrants. I don't really understand why. To me, they are quite invisible, and I think I'm probably invisible to them as well. So, our paths haven't crossed.

Janina:

I think because of my accent -- invisible is the best way to put it. But the times when me and my mum have been speaking Polish, and someone says something, and we'll rip around and say, 'What do you mean by that?' And they'll hear our accents and kind of be like 'Oh, sorry, we've mocked you', and it's like the wrong sort of immigrant. But again, I've got the privilege to be able to, you know, without having the accent, and having a British passport, it's very different.

Eva:

I feel that we're like the forgotten people! Because the old generation who first came here to the UK, and the new migrants coming here, we're different kinds of people. Because we were born here. And there are times when we struggle with our identity, we don't know if we're Polish or we're English. Sometimes we don't fit into either category. A lot of people don't recognize us. In Poland they don't appreciate who we are and where we've come from, and obviously here in Britain they don't realise our heritage, our background. So we are quite unique, we don't fall into one category or the other...

Here in Manchester there are what usually English people see as 'the old Poles', and 'the young Poles'. But they don't see the middle, they don't see people like me, who were born here. And I've been to Poland, and I've spoken to people in Poland, and they see, you know, when I start talking about my experiences, they see things totally in a different light. Because they expect me to have either gone through that experience through the War, and that I'm a survivor. They just can't get their heads around the fact that all these Poles ended up in England, and they settled here, and they had families here, and they didn't go back, and now I am -- sort of -- a Pole, but I'm not really a Pole because I'm English, you know. And it's a weird, weird thing altogether...

The Poles, I know the community here, they tend to be quiet, they tend to keep themselves to themselves, and they don't show off like other people show off who they are; and they should do a lot more. We've got every reason to be proud, there's no reason for us to be quiet, or hide. We've not done anything wrong, we are a good nation, and we should be proud of everything that we do and have done in the past.

Zosia:

Even though we never thought about discrimination at that time [in the 1990s], it wasn't apparent to me and not to people that I spoke with, but we couldn't settle, we weren't settled, we were uneasy in soul and spirit... I don't feel English. I live in England, and yet I know -- because I've spent a lot of time, and in fact I worked in Polska, but I don't fit in there either. So you don't fit in England, and you don't fit in Polska, you just don't fit in anywhere, you are like the proverbial square peg in a round hole, you just don't fit in...

I may have had the idea of wanting to go over there [to live], but it isn't because I felt I belonged over there. I'm an Invisible Pole. I like that. It actually gives me a label... Because when you're invisible [pause] you don't belong. Unless you're with other invisibles!

Adelaide:

I never felt English. It was an accident that I was born here, in this country. I never felt English, I still don't... I'm nothing.

Mike:

I think the 2nd and 3rd generation, apart from a few enclaves here and there such as London will eventually forget, lose their Polishness, and just become invisible in society... The other point I would make is that there's been a lot of talk in recent years amongst the Polish community in this country, the post-Accession community, about how to bring up their children. Whether they should be brought up English or Polish. Bilingual, speak English or Polish, or whatever. Now I occasionally read the *Dziennik Polski, Polish Daily*. And in there a chap called Moszczyński, you know, who wrote a fine article some months ago to say that, well, they're talking about how to bring up the second generation in this country. They have a second generation: that's us. People like me and my brother. And that generation has been completely ignored by the Polish authorities, as if we just don't exist. They just don't seem to be interested.

Aniela:

I just really wanted to make the point that I think us invisible Poles have now suddenly become visible. I think that's the overriding point. People have now become aware of the country, more, because obviously it's part of the EU, it's in the news a lot more. People are becoming aware. And also when I listen to Radio 4 there's often programmes either from there or about something that's going on there – in the last couple of weeks there was something about some industry in Poland, I think it might have been shipbuilding, so, little pockets of information that wouldn't even have filtered into the media before 2004. Now it's suddenly making an impact and an appearance. It's things like that, just becoming more aware. When I was a little girl I said to somebody I was Polish, they wouldn't even have known where -- 'Where's that?'

Anne: Somewhere behind the Iron Curtain.

Aniela: That's really how it felt.

Natalia:

My parents' backgrounds were quite hidden, really. I knew where they came from, sort of, in Poland, but the information was quite hazy. Since then I have realised why, but that was only in the twenty-first century, when I started going to Poland quite regularly. In fact, I'm going in a couple of weeks. I've signed up to get access to the local archives... I was fascinated and interested. My father's family, particularly, suffered at the hands of Stalin, but I still want to know about it. That's the other thing that's been pushing me, that people are very much... more aware of Nazism and the atrocities that happened. But the other side is very little known. Probably from the mid-90s to the present day I've really wanted to know more. And I want to have it more publicised. So when I saw 'Invisible Poles' [on Facebook] it really scored.