**Izzet’s Story**

**Summary:** During this interview Izzet recalls working in Cyprus at a British RAF base, moving to England and working as a carvery chef at the Tower Hotel, the long hours and demanding nature of his job and relationships with his colleagues.

**Hello Izzet, thank you for joining us this morning. Can I just ask, erm, when and where you were born?**

I born in Cyprus.

**And what year was you born?**

Pardon?

**What year.**

Er, second of October, 1943.

**1943, okay.**

So, this is okay? I-okay.

**Okay. Erm, so can you tell us, erm, what-so we’re looking at work and-and work people have done, and so you worked in England, did you also work in Cyprus?**

Yeah, I work-I work about fifteen years in Cyprus.

**And what did you do in Cyprus?**

I was in British Airforce.

**Okay, and what was you doin’ in the British Airforce?**

Chef.

**A chef, okay. And when you come to England, what was you doing here?**

Tower Hotel.

**Tower Hotel?**

Izzet: Carvery chef, at Tower Hotel from 19-end of the, 1980 ‘til ’85. Yeah.

**So you was a chef at the Tower Hotel?**

Tower Hotel, yeah.

**Okay, was- can you explain, erm, your daily job at the hotel, what you did?**

Er, you know, in 1980, when I came this country, I used to live Ilderton Road.

**Mhmm**.

llderton Road, near to Verney Road. I live there 5 months after I move. Council gave me flat, and go to, opposite the Rotherhithe Library. I live there about thirteen years. And, I get job in Tower Hotel. After one year I get job in Tower Hotel.

**Okay, and how did you get that job? What-did you have to go for an interview, or…**

I, no I-I used to go to job centre, you know job centre?

**Mhmm.**

Rotherhithe?

**Yes, yes.**

Albion Street, job centre. There used to be the job centre, opposite.

**Yep, yep.**

Now it’s closed.

**Mhmm.**

Yeah. And I find job one day, you know, vacancies section. I find myself. Yeah, and I give-I go in the car and I give to the, the officer, they-there and she sent me to the Tower Hotel. Is not too far from Rotherhithe Tunnel to the Tower Hotel. Sometime I walk. Some-sometime, in the morning, I used to wake up quarter past four, in the morning. And I go to open the breakfast. I-I used to make preparation to, to cook bacon, sausage for breakfast-for people, you know? Half past six we have to open the breakfast in Tower Hotel. Carvery Section, know?

**Erm, is there a difference in your-in, in the working times, er, in Cyprus and England? Is there, is there differences?**

Er, in Cyprus was, in Cyprus, different shift, you know? Sometime I-I-I get job in the morning, half past 5, and I finish half past 1, after lun-lunch. Sometime I get job 12 o’clock, I finish 8 o’clock. And when I was in Air Force, you know, because I-I work different section. Sergeant Mess, I used to work in Sergeant Mess, soldier mess in-flight catering, you know? When, Civilian people come from London, Scotland, big families you know, like about 200 passenger, maybe 300 passenger. Used cook them. Made, meal in the tray, put them in the plane. You Know? And also I used to cook for, er, plane crew. Pilot, hostess, you know? Ladies working in the plane? Every-e-every plane, they got about ten staff. Minimum. Pilot, assistant pilot, and some ladies, you know, they work in the plane. We have to cook them, feed them in the restaurant, and we have to cook make box ready to, make meal ready and put them the box, about 200 people, two-hund-300 people maybe. And when they fly, on-on there, they got lunch time, they got tea break.

**Mmm. And was that for-was that for the public or was that for, er, the soldiers? Who-who was you providing the food for?**

You know soldiers?

**Yeah.**

Air-air crew. Air people, officers, you know? And Army, soldiers they brought family.

**Oh, okay.**

They brought family, and these people, they-they let house in the (not audio) town in the area. The, the city. And, and they live there with rent. And when they are on duty they come to the camp, at (not audio) base. When they finish they go to city, after next day they come back again.

**Okay, okay, yeah. Okay. Erm-**

Yeah, some-some people fly plane, know? Harrier, Harrier plane, not Falcon, Harrier. English plane, fighter plane.

**Fighter plane?**

They had base there, then. Also some Americans. We used to feed some Americans, I would. Because these people, they help British. You know, you remember, er, maybe you, you wasn’t born that time. When Arab and Israeli war start, 1967. I used to feed Americans as well. American people-American pilot, know? They used to eat, instead of English breakfast, they used to eat fillet steak, chips, mushroom, fried egg.

**In the morning?**

In the morning.

**Wow.**

In the morning, 3 o’clock, 4 o’clock in the morning, 5 o’clock in the morning. But, British pilots, British crew, they ask scrambled egg, English breakfast, poached egg, fried egg, bacon, sausage, mushroom. But Americans, they used to eat, 3 o’clock in the morning, 4- fillet steak with mushroom, green tomato, with the chips.

**Wow.**

 Yeah.

**Where did you-did you have to train to be a chef?**

No, I, I didn’t have train, but when I go there, you know, we got in Cyprus, in-in British base is different part from civilian people, you know? There is a three, four base near is what you call? (not audio) security, know? Nobody-if you get- if you don’t work there, you can’t go in. Every day you have to show identity. We had a-extra identity, every morning work, night-time, when you go main gate, you have to show you have identity. Police, you know, check. After you tell them, I work that place, I am night chef, I am duty with for Sergeant Mess, in flight, and they said, ‘Okay,’ and then when-when you turn back, sometime they check, you know? Some terrorist, They-they-they don’t know you. Security, know, security. Otherwise, some security people they sabotage, you know, they put bomb, they put this thing, they put in the base. Very tight-very tight security.

**And how did you get your job with the RAF?**

You know in Cyprus there is a civilian unemployment office belonging to Cypru-Cyprus government. You go there, you say ‘I am unemployed,’ and they ask, they tell you, you know, ‘Where you want to work?’ ‘I want work-I want work (not audio) and they say, I am going to give you one letter – they write you one letter, your name, address, your age. And they close it in envelop, they give you. Next day you go to the civilian establish officer. There is a civilian office. You give this letter, and they -they pass you from elm...health. You have to give your err, you have to put your .., in bottle you know? And they check if your, your health is right, otherwise you can’t get job in the British Air Force. You are health must be, very healthy. And when I-when I start, first day when I start job in Sergeant Mess, Sergeant in charge in the restaurant, was charge, was English, British guy, he put me outside, there is a big room, dust bin room, you know, waste room. Big bins, about 40 bins, metal bins. Some were waste, paper, newspaper, this, that, you know? Dry things. And some for waste food. Like potato, like meat, cooking meat, like gravy, soup. All this waste, we put them in the big bin, and some farmer come from city, they get the food for farm, pigs, you know, animal. They got contract, contract with RAF, if you make contract for one year, big farm and fish people, if you get the contract, they give-they made contract, and you come in the morning, you get the waste food, you go to your farm, animals, pig, cows. And I-I, I start in this waste room I have to clean this with water pipe, I have to clean them; soapy water, brush, clean inside, outside, the floor. This room was Cyprus was very hot. Summer time, it was boiling. You have to wash everywhere. Outside, yard, room, all the floor. You have to put some soap, and you clean them, and you clean the-the bins, and you turn them down, dry them, ready for next day. After few days, when my boss, you know, Sergeant, he saw me, he told me, ‘I am going to take you inside the restaurant,’ to help chefs to prepare vegetable to prepare, to prepare cabbage, cauliflower, peas, potato, chips. I used to make about 200 chips, 200 people chips, white potato, roast potato, plus, carrots, vegetable, peas. Every, every day we had different menu, you know? I start in helping vegetable, you know? Help chef. After 6 months, my boss, what his name, Mr. Sun. told me, you are a good man, I-I-I go to put you to help the chefs, you know? Assistant chef, like assistant. And he make me cook three. Assistant chef, cook three. Comme chef. After one year, maybe two year, I pass second class, third class, second class, number one chef. But, take time, you know? But when you get, when you change the-from class three to two, you have to change base as well. I work, I work about 5 years in Sergeant Mess, after they-I moved, I moved to the air-airplane at (not audio) Base. Different place.

**And, can I ask, what did your-your mum and dad do, what did they work, what was their job?**

My mum and dad was in the village, you know, famer.

**They were farmers?**

Yeah, we had garden, we had, er, apple trees, animals, grapes, vineyard, wine yard, grapes. Yeah. My wife place, all over the village was vine yard. Field, mountain, everywhere vine yard. You see the grapes, black grapes, white grapes, different grapes. My place was different village, so my place all food.

**All food**

Cherry, plums, apples, walnut, every-everything. Because my place was in the middle of mountain, in-you know, in Cyprus there is the British base in the middle of Cyprus, high on mountain, Olympus Mountain. There is a ratha means radar, ratha on this mountain, there is a small base. At top of the mountain there is a ratha place, area, British government with (not audio) system they check the all them, Egypt, Syria, so (??), and I-I used to work about, sometime I go there for the week, for two weeks. Sometime I used to go (Berengaria?) camp. We had party there, know? United Nations soldier, me and Corporal, Englishman, Corporal, Sergeant, used to cook, prepare tea, coffee, cold coffee, and put them in the land rover and we used make them different comes. For different party, know, health service, know, different party. But, I was very pleased, yeah. I was young that time. Young man.

**How, wh-how old were you when you started?**

Oh, I was 22 years old.

**22 and what’s the average age that people start working in Cyprus?**

Oh, I start working in my place of birth, you know, home I was twelve-ten years old. Maybe five years old. My-my brothers, if you have brothers, sister, are you-when you wake up in the morning, you have to wake up before sunrise. In-very early, otherwise you-your family, my dad shouting ‘wake up!’

**So did you, erm, help out on the farm?**

Excuse me, just.

**That’s okay.**

Yesterday we, we go to Grove Park Cemetery. You know, a friend of mine, she came to Southwark Community Centre, one young boy, he died. So, yesterday we had ceremony. We go there; we go to Burgess Park Mosque. You know Burgess Park Mosque? We took the funeral to Burgess Park after half past one, afternoon, and we come back about four o’clock, the-the weather was very cold. Yeah. Freezing yesterday and day before.

**Yeah.**

In, if you-when you, like me, between 19, I born end of the-’43. 1943. After 3 years, maybe five- 5 years, I start to help my mother, my family, my brothers. Otherwise, you can’t stay at home and you sleep. If you sleep and the other people working, you are useless. You have to help. I have to look after the donkeys, or sheep or goat. Or trees, you know, you have to pick the apple trees. Vine yard. Because, vine yard maybe you-you got 30 hectare vine yard. You-like February, March, these months, you have to clip them. You cut the things and you have to put some, what you call? Soil?

**Soil, yeah.**

And when the grapes start you have to go and pick them and put them in the basket and carry them to the factory. Making vine yard, making wine. Or cognac, cognac, drinks.

**Oh!**

Whiskey, maybe. Beer, beer-at, beer-at, yeah.

**So from the age of five you start working and you look after the---**

Since, since I born don’t need to go age of life.

**Oh, since you were born?!**

Since you start walking, you have to help your family, otherwise is no good. Is not fair, know?

**Yeah. So is there a difference, erm…**

In big cities, different. Like London, when I came here in 1980, I shock. I had-because people, friend of mine or my brothers or the other people, they say British is-England is very cold place. Is a-much different in Cyprus. When you go there, you see everywhere frozen. When I came here 1980, 11 January, the weather was very cold, freezing. My ears, one day I-I had frozen my ears, know? Because I didn’t know to go nowhere. I-from Peckham, from Peckham to go Rotherhithe, social security, they give me one letter from Peckham unemployment office, they closed the envelope and they told me, you have to give this envelope to the social security. To say that you are unemployed, you-you come from Cyprus. You have to register first. And I didn’t-I didn’t know to get the bus from Peckham to go. I walk from Peckham, you know Peckham?

**Yeah.**

It’s still there, same unemployment office. From there, I walk, I pass Old Kent Road, Elephant Castle, er-from South, South Bank, er-university, this road, and-and I-I-I pass, I find the place, know? Social security. Before the bridge, Southwark Bridge, know? And I come back same road, know? (not audio) no-nobody you don’t- I didn’t, I had one brother. He used to work day and night, so I maybe sometime ev-each month I used to see him. Everybody working here. That time, you know? 1980s or ‘70s.

**Erm, was-was there a difference between people’s working attitudes in England and people’s working attitudes in Cyprus?**

Different is, you know the people living in-in Cyprus or in Turkey or in Greece, or the other countries, and if you got field, if you got your own soil – you have to look after your garden, farmer. If you are a-if you got animals you have to feed them, take them outside, eat some grass, you know? If you got field and you go somewhere to work, somewhere, you have to be stupid you have to look after your fields, gardens. And if you need more money, you have to go work in the rich people place, know? Like my broth-my father, he was the governor in the village.

**He was the, sorry?**

Muhtar, governor, know? He was the, ev-every village in Cyprus, there is a – if you are 30 Cypriot, you have to know your governor of the village.

**Oh! Like a-a-a-a guardian?**

No, is governor, is Muhtar, is different, is stamp (loud noise like a flat hand smacking hard against a table).

**Oh, okay.**

He put-when you born in Cyprus, you go to Muhtar House, you got a Queen picture there when my father, he was a Muhtar, Elizabeth Queen II. He got, he had big portrait on the wall, and instead we had Mister (not audio), Turkish President. He was a good man, this man. Big photograph, and Queen Elizabeth, because I born in 1943, ‘til 1960, island belonged to British. Til 1960, Cyprus was British colony!

**Right, okay. And your father was a-can you just spell that for me, please? What was he? What did he do?**

He was a farmer, governor. Farmer.

**A farmer?**

But, he used-he had, he had a stamp.

**Mhmm.**

He have to, like a note, you know, like a note, register officer.

**Oh, he was a register officer. What do you call it? What was the word you was using-**

Muhtar.

**Muhtar, how do you spell that?**

M-U-H-T-A-R.

**Muhtar, and he would register people when they were born? Wow.**

Yeah, He had a big book, big book. He used to register family of the child, child name, birthday date, what time-what day he born, his father name, his dad name, what year, what date. You have to go to the, what you call? Like Walworth Road there is a register office there. To get the, I-

**Birth certificate.**

Birthday, birth certificate, yeah.

**Oh, and you call it a muhtar, muhtar.**

If muhtar don’t give you paper, writing paper. You can get-you can go to register officer, there they go to ask you what place you come from. What village or what…

**So each village has a muhtar, you get your paper from the muhtar and then you take it to the registration office.**

Yeah.

**Okay. And that’s what your father did.**

Yeah, we had-we had registration office in cities, not in the village.

**Oh, in the cities.**

But muhtars, they get all these things and they send to the high commission. Like in cities there is a, like a register officer here in London. Yeah.

**(To self) A muhtar.**

In my village, we had a one river, come from mountain, you know? River. Because our place was sometime, winter time was very cold. I remember when I was child, one-two months come one meter snow. On the mountain area. Was very cold, you know? We had to cook- we had to fire, put fire, like chimneys, you burn wood, put wood and you warm up. Otherwise, you couldn’t live there. Our pool was full up, dry wood-wood, know? Trees, we cut the trees, dry trees, and we prepare wood to warm up in summ-er, in in winter time. Like here, two days ago we put the central heating all day, all night, otherwise you-you frozen, you die. ‘S a very cold area.

**Yeah.**

Yeah. But some places, very hot. Like sea sides, you know? Where I used to live middle of the mountains high mountain everywhere’s s-s-seas—what you call? Like a, cloud?

**Cloudy.**

Yeah, cloudy. Specially summertime, when you go on top of mountain, every where’s cloudy. Eh-like, er, smoke. But was very nice days, y’know? All-all pine trees, this that, you know? Touristic place, know? Very-very nice. Like, you know, up mountain, up.

**Yeah. Okay. So, the, erm, so the Tower Hotel when you-when you first came to England in the Tower Hotel—**

When I came this country?

**Yeah.**

And I – After-after five months, I used to live in Rotherhithe New Road, you know Rotherhithe New Road? Well, 90 Verney Road, I used to in—my brother family, he-he-he used to live there. We live there five months, me and my wife. After we got-we get-we move to the 31 Street, near Pumphouse, you know? Albion, opposite Albion School.

**Yeah.**

Primary school.

**Yeah.**

And we used to live 17 years there. After five months, when I was in 90 Verney Road, I-I go to the, this, end of the park there is a council office there Abbey Street.

**Yeah.**

We -we register. We say, we come from Cyprus 1980, this date, and I live it now in, Verney Road, you know, Ilderton road, 19-?

**Mhmm.**

We came here, me and my wife, we sit in the office about 4 hours, 3 or 4 hours and we sat, we can’t stay anymore in somebody else place. Because, everybody working. You can’t stay more than one month or five months. Because everybody got family, you can’t stay mor-you have to go somewhere. You rent a home, something. And after five months we move to the Rotherhithe. After that-I move there, the unemployment office, you know the Al-Albany Road. Health Centre, there is a health centre there. Near the, next to the health centre, now is supermarket now. Er, I joined there. They give me number and I find the job on the (not audio) and I walk to the Tower Hotel, you know? From-from Jam---

**Can you describe that---**

From Jamaica Road I walk, I pass the bridge and I go to, I-I find the receptionist and I show her my papers, my reference. I get the job, next day I start. I-I saw the personnel office in the hotel, and I find-I find some friends from my country, and some friends from West Indian, some people from Portuguese, you know? Four-four people from Portuguese. And two West Indian, two from my country. Some people from Philippine, know? All waiters, y’know? All young waiters, know? Lady waiters? Waitress? And man was Philippine, people. These people come from Philippine, that time, they come to study in the London, and after few months or years, they get job in rest-restaurant. And all this day, everybody that time, all these people was education people, you know? Some people was es-estudy lawyer, lawyer, what you call? Accountant, lawyer.

**Oh, lawyers and accountants, yeah.**

But when they got this job, and they used to get tips. When you serve some people, you get some basheesh instead of your wage. Also you got, night waitress, you-you, maybe every week you work, if you get 50 pound a week you have to get 25 p-er, tips. Every da-week.

**What did you just call it, a bash…? A basheet?**

Basheesh, basheesh, basheesh it means Arabic.

**It means Arabic, and what is it..?**

Mediterranean people, or Egyptian people or Arabic people when they saw rich people, they ask, tips, basheesh.

**Basheesh…Ohh. Can you, can you describe that atmosphere when you was working?**

Yeah.

**Yeah, what was the atmosphere like?**

Oh not very good atmosphere. Because when I came in to hotel, and personnel manager, he show me the place that I go to work there. Different. All waiters were Philippine. All eight chefs, two for-one from my country, Turkish man, Eugene Alee he was a good mo-boy, good man. He used to work there before I go there. And four, five, four men from Portuguese, one lady from Portuguese, all family. Head chef was on top-Tony, Por-Portuguese, and one, Maria, Maria lady, she was an assistant chef, she ‘p-p-p-p-p-p-! Don’t touch this!’ I start to prepare some potato, roast potato for Carvery, know? Roast beef, roast pork, roast lamb, roast, er-meat, chorizo, mince beef, underdone beef, rare beef, under-underdone rare, medium, well done, and well done. Er, roast lamb and we had pork, leg of pork. When people come in, like 200 people come in, 30 people come after the tennis, then another 20 people. We never stop like a party, like hurry, know? Very hard work.

**Mmm. Very busy.**

Very busy, work. Next to the bridge.

**Yeah.**

Tower Bridge.

**So what did Maria do when you were tryin’ to—**

Maria was the yapping-yapy-yap-yap-yap! I didn’t understand this language because she was a little bit silly, stupid, know? Because he’s, he’s-a, head chef was his cousin, you know? From his family. And head chef was 20, Loreto, and Santos, his, what you call? His sister in-in law?

**Sister in-law, yeah?**

Father in-law?

**Yeah.**

All family.

**Okay.**

If you work with family people, you can’t happy because when you-when you come from outside you see everything is funny for you. I go downstair in the kitchen, and Jamaican people, ladies, you know? They used to prepare tea, coffee machine, know? They told me something, I didn’t understand what they say. Like a “Ooo-oo-oo-oo!” Is like a, is not clear English. Like Jamaican sounds, English sounds together, I, and if-if I-I-I didn’t find my friend – Turkish young man, when I find him, he tell me don’t worry, you have to joke with them. Otherwise you can’t work.

**Mmm. So lots of languages, lots of different cultures.**

Yeah. And if you work with different people, different nation, you can’t learn English. That’s why I didn’t learn enough English. Because Philippine people, Moroccan people, Algeria people, Fr-I, we had French waitress. Fr-French, from France. Par-Paris, know? Different countries. We had people from Vietnam. That time, people come from Vietnam, you know? South Vietnam, North we had North Vietnam. And Englishman inEng-English ships, war ships bring them here, that time. 1980s. And, but these people was quiet people. Vietnamese people they was. Very quiet, know? They don’t talk too much, you know?

**And was there, when you was doing your job, did you see, er-changes in your job? In how things were run or how things were done?**

Like here, in Cyprus we got officer, lieutenant, with two stars, very gentlemen people. Bri- err- Army people. Or Navy people. Or air crew. These people is educated people, you know, officers y’know. If you work problem, you go there, you see him, and they sort it out. And they talk you like a family, you are family. They used to talk me Abdul, my father’s name is Abdullah, and so they used to talk me ‘Abdul’. Abdul is short surname.

**Yes. Yeah**

(tapping table) Can you do it for me? Can you do this for me? Can you cook this steak for? Can you make one thousand bread roll for me? Croquette potato for me? Or can you make one coffee to me? ‘Please’...all. Every time when they same something, in British air force, they say ‘please’. And these people, and don’t forget these people are officer you know, you have to be respect. When, if you are labour, and you work with officer, you have to discipline you know. Otherwise you can’t work. But here, maybe 20 nation in one place. Bangladesh. All porter. All the heavy work. You know, the you have to wash the caravan, tins, cooking, sau- plates, you have to clean the ovens. We use to cook sometime 40 joint beef, Beef.

**Wow**

10 kilo each. Cow, you know. Cow meat with ribs, beef with bone. You have to get them from downstairs; there is a big fridge freezer. There is. There, ordinary come from outside, they put them in the big freeze, fridge. You have to go downstairs sometimes we have porter sometimes we go, myself. I go, we have to get 50 joint beef, 20 joint pork. Big, very – maybe 20 kilo, very heavy. You can't- and you fill up trolley and put them and you go lift upstairs, first floor, you put them in the tray and put salt and put them in the oven. After 4 hours when they get ready you have to prepare lunch or dinner. You have to cut the customer. I used to cut customer y’know. When I to put the fork, meat fork one day. One day one customer asks me, Abdul, can you cut me lean rare beef. I say yes. When I put the fork and big knife, carving knife. The meat was underdone. Bloody you know blood. When I put the fork and I start to cut the blood go shoo on the suit of customer. The customer sitting.. like you

**oh yeah**

and I was here, and the blood and gravy…. (slaps his knees or jacket) go on the jacket. And he start warning, you know. And I showed my manager and they took his suit off and cleaned them and they didn't charge him meal. Otherwise, you can’t do nothing. You have to make customer happy you know, because this place they got big laundry, big everything you know. They cleaned the suit, they bbbbrought him new suit..

**So they, it got on his suit…**

but a lot of these people is family people. They don’t know to cut. They, you have to cook, you have to take them in the round thing, restaurant, and you have to stay there, cut the people. Everybody say I want lean, I don’t want fatty. I don’t want around the meat is fat. In the middle is all beef you know. You have to take the bone, bone out and you have to cut it very thin and lean. Y’know. Put them in the plate. If he need some gravy or roast potato and stuffing, this that. Some people ask crackling. Pork crackling. Skin. Outside. Very thin skin but very tasty’ y’know. Salty some time leg of pork finish. And they ask me ..skin..salty sskin. We have to go inside, check the table or fridge. If we find some crackling y’know..the skin..is to give customer. Sometime, nearly ser ser..service is nearly finish. Yes the restaurant nearly close. Customer come and they ask for Yorkshire pudding. You can’t cook last time, last minute. You, you have to cook 2 hours 3 hours before service open you know. You have to go inside and prepare him Yorkshire pudding

**So if the customer asked for something, you had to give it to them?**

Of course you have to give. Customers come first when, when you work in restaurants or shop, warehouse. Customers always first. If you are chef, or if you manager if you are porter. Customers is always is coming first. Because they pay money. They want to get pleased, you know. They want to get good meal, they get happy.

**Was that the same in Cyprus? If, if they asked for something.**

Cyprus is very tight system Cyprus…Cyprus there is…is what you call. AC? if you are a corporal. If you are low…Lower than corporal

**If you are lower than the corporal, okay**

There is a corporal, sergeant, flight sergeant. Two stars, ever what you call. Officer. Three stars and commander, one commander. Everybody is coming with stage you know. But the officer, most of the officer is education people. They study and they come in one camp. They are working with the place. They have church. Responsible. But the …other people. They be no corporal no, what you call?

**Lieutenant?**

Lieutenant..is .. you got two star. But flight sergeant he’s experienced. Because, y’know he maybe spent 20 30 years to came flight sergeant.

**And how did you, how did you feel about your job?**

where?…in

**In in Cyprus and how did you feel about in tower hotel. Is there a difference?**

Different yeah very big difference

**What, can you describe that?**

Eerr.. In Cyprus, because the place which I work, in the British air force or navy. British camp. Yes. You don’t do Queen, King, y’know. But here, is private. Private hotel. Private restaurant you know. You have to work private people. You see here, ship labour London and they they used to bring people from other the countries and half wage like Philippine people. People come here maybe 18 years 20 years old to study university to learn English after when they go university. But when they get this job and they find pace to eat and to live. They don’t go back to the university. They stay here. And they don’t, they buy house here, they stay here.

**Yeah**

But in Cyprus most of the people they got maybe rich people, they got good taste, good houses, good farms. But poor people they still got a small, living room or a small two bedroom or this that. But here is different. Here, is. When I came here and I saw more than when I get job in tower hotel and I saw. If you see three people white people and you see the rest all different colours you say. I shock you know. I didn’t know. Now my son finish university. My son. He go over here. London Bridge. Nice hospital” he finish university he is unemployed. And . these people come from the other countries. Everybody work. Everybody working. But my son he born here and he still unemployed. And he is. I, I am very unhappy y’know. Cause where he go to get job cause everybody come here they get the job cheap labour.. and..

**Hmm.. okay. so the people working in the hotel, they were, it was low wages.**

That what they say y’know. Everybody say that. But I used to get. When I start 1980 I used to get about £72 a week. Sterling y’know. English money. And if I did a work overtime. Extra time. It was nothing you know at that time it was nothing

**Yeah. It’s not a lot of money**

 but I tell you a few days ago. Sometimes summer times, forty-five day like July, August. Holiday time. If you are in one place you work eight shift and two of them or four of them go holiday. You have to cover the other shift y’know. Every shift you used to work 3, 4 chef y’know. If I work, today if I work from 8-4, tomorrow maybe from 4 o clock to midnight and next day from 6 o’clock to 2 o’clock. Breakfast. You have to done if you work at 6 o’clock in the morning and finish after lunch 2 o clock. You have to done breakfast and prepare lunch as well. When lunchtime finish you go home. It’s different you know. Shift..shift…

**Shifts..yeah. it sounds like a very hard an demanding job**

Sometime my wife she was to give home because her language was very poor. And some of my friends they say you got wedding party.. this Sunday we got wedding party we have to go Tottenham or we have to go Bromley or somewhere. I can’t because I say okay you can go with your brother-in-law, my brother-in-law or my family. i..i I have to work, I have to work all the time otherwise you can’t make money in this country.

**Okay**

I, I know some people that time they used to change 3 job a day

**Wow**

4 hours in one place, 4 hours few mile away for another 4 hours and they used to work half a half a 4 hours 3 hours shift you know and they get money

**was there, was there a union at you’re.. when you was working? A union**

A union. Yes, yeah I register union after I closed six month. They register me, union. And sometime we had strike. When the general manager change, you know, we had one manager when I start and after a few years another Mister Holland company change new manager the head manager and this head manager he start to change like my place…we had…banqueting, cavalry section, picnic basket and room service. You have to take food upstairs, when the people is sleeping upstairs. Six floors. Tower hotel is a big place. Full up. Bedrooms upstairs y’know you have to from from bedrooms they want meal they want this, they want that. But people.. work people there make room service. We prepare the food and they take them it upstairs. And some, some ladies they lay in the clean the rooms they put clean blanket and this that they prepare the room every day. Too many people. We had one sitting room from here to the pub.

**Wow**

Big room, everybody we had tea break or lunch time about 200 people eating or making drinking coffee tea

**And that was workers**

This is my tea (Izzet is reaching for his cup).

**Okay. So you had 200 workers eating or drinking**

Yeah about yeah. Maybe more. Because we used to work shifts. Because this place is..all over the year is open. Only one day a year is closed but still there is a customers there. From Japanese people or a from…get a money from the other countries all over the world

**So you said that there was a strike. Did you go on strike?**

(He puts his tea down). some time yeah. We gone few days in about. Union here. I saw union in Cyprus

**you have a union in Cyprus?**

Very, a very sst strong union. Here catering union workers’ union MGU..something like that.. And mine workers and different section but in Cyprus there is a like a union is a Greek people union but we used to before, when British was ruled the Cyprus we used to work together: Turkish people and Greek people. Used to work in one same place and we used to talk everybody used to talk English or I used to speak Greek to my friend. Greek I know very good Greek better than English you know.

**So when Cyprus was ruled by errm**

British

**British. Turkish, Greek and Cypriot people used to all work together. When did that.. did you then separate?**

End of the 1963.

**Right, okay I then you started working..**

In 1960, 1960. You remember Macmillan? Macmillan. Conservative party. President Macmillan? And Turkish president Mendelas and Markarios and Karamanges from Greece. They come here and make agreement in London and Zurich and Sweden

**Yeah**

Not Sweden, err Switzerland. They make agreement and Cyprus get no more colony become republic. Cyprus republic. But English government is still he keep some places for him there. Base. [not audio]. Few four place y’know. You can’t go there. It belong to British.

**And you said in Cyprus the union in very strong and this country it’s not so strong. Can you des..can you explain that? Why do you think feel there’s a difference?**

Because here, here the employer employer they bring foreign people from outside like Philippine like Vietnamese people like the other countries. Spain Portuguese Morocco. Algeria. Everywhere. Some people from Turkey but very few from Turkey. A lot of people was at that time come from Cyprus. Like Bang..Bangladesh y’know.

**Yeah**

Bangladesh people. Like before they used to live with India. Before they get independence. And. I saw about 20 Bangladesh porters there in my place. They live there. They work in the kitchen. Very hard job. Plate wash or clean wash. And they clean the floor and they can’t go back to Bangladesh because he live in the London he work in London and every 10 years or every 5 years he fly to, he keep some money from the work and he fly to see his wife, his family in the Bangladesh you know.

**Yeah, so how does that affect..sorry just…So how does that affect the union? Why is Cyprus stronger?**

Cyprus is stronger..because..Cyprus is 100 years in British colony from 1987. No. 1887 to 1960. Cyprus was British colony. When the people work. I … I used to make (not audio) you know, when I join British camp because different had a system. If you work with British base. If you work in town with civilian place. They don’t got respect. They look you like slave. But if you work that time Cyprus British was big empire, very rich country. So everybody they try to work in British base

**Cause you got respect in the British base**

And er if you work 8 hours a day. Only you work 3 hours maybe 4 hours the other..wasting time.. you get money but like a eer holiday.

**Okay so I see so**

But if you work in the different places, it’s like a labour..slave..slave

**So if you work in the British bases you was respected, but if you work in the village it was like slave labour.**

You know, when I when I start job in Tower Hotel. It was Portuguese people. His name was Tony. Tony. He used to work Brazil.

**Brazil**

Brazil was British colony before 50 years before. So after Brazil they came to the Tower Hotel. Four people. All family they work in head chef, assistant chef and Maria sister all family. And Like a slave. Like a slave. The fix 500 sometimes 500 people in one night, one lunch time. So they, they don’t have respects to the other labours. They push, they pull people to done the job if, you have to wash 500 plates 500 knife forks, this that you clean the tables, you clean the plate wash you clean the floor everywhere. You take the waste all downstairs. Very slave you know. And these people they don’t Portuguese people is like a you know, they used korson, they what you call korson ..paarr, parr parrots. parrots

**Parrots?**

Parrots. They work in the ship and they you they say to you do this do that do this y’know. One day this head chef he go downstair to the fridge he took some maybe 20 bag potato, clean potato, roast potato. 40 portion 40 joint beef pork lamb, he put on big trolley. And he got he got one porter with him or two and he come upstair. I used to work on table prepare some potato, roast potato to put in the oven. When he come, he enter in the kitchen he say ‘hey, come here’, I say ‘what?’ The man tall man but he was a head chef. Hey he said to me ‘hey’ and I say ‘what? I am busy now’. I am cooking I start to cook prepare potato vegetable to put in the oven and to put cook them and to get ready for lunch. He call to bring some stuff upstair everybody we have to different job. Because I was a new staff he start to shout to me. I say to him ‘don’t tell me here here like a shepherd you know. You can call me Abdul or Izzet or this that.’ Because I work in I work in British people in Cyprus nobody told me ‘hey hey do this do that’ like a boy, what a you know? And, after he told me ‘come upstairs’ I say ‘okay’ he leave the trolley there full up stuff. He took upstair, Mister Gavril was the manager. Upstairs at the office. I go upstair. He go front I go behind him he go upstairs to the office. Mr Gavril was a Greek man, from Cyprus but he born here. He was a manger.

**Yeah**

Not a staff a manger. Assistant. After the staff manager. He was very good man. Middle aged man. I told him ‘Mr Gavril I work 11 years in Cyprus with two star or three star officers. Big like a (not audio) big people gentleman people nobody tell me ‘hey whoo whoo do this do that do that’ like a .. what you call…this man who shout to me because he got family there. And I was new staff. After few months he was best pals with me

**Laughs. Good**

But this day he tell Mr Gavril manager. ‘You, sack him. I don’t want him here. Sack him’ I tell Mr. ‘ if you go to sack me..sack me..because if..I don’t want to go myself. I don’t want to left the job. If you sack me I go to make complain to the the unemployment service. You see?

**Yeah. And how did you spell his name, what was his name, the manager?**

Tony Tony

**The manager?**

Gavron (not very audible)

**How do you spell that?**

G A…A…V ..gavril..R I L.

**And he was the manager. So you stood up for yourself?**

I told, I saw My Gavril. You want to talk you as English or in Greek because I can speak better than my English language is not very good I can speak your Greek language and you can tell this head chef. And I talk him Greek. And he tell Mr Gavril tell me ‘you can speak anything you like Greek or English’ and I start to tell him situation what happen. And after that, when they thought Mr Gavril he he was a good man, he didn’t tell me okay okay . He tried to tell me ‘go downstairs, if you go down to the, the coffee shop.’ I say ‘no I can’t .. in the coffee shop because no idea. Coffee shop is different my section is different I have to work maybe few months and then learn the…past the banqueting…some people is some places is a la carte. Some people you have to need four hours to prepare roast beef roast lamb carvery section is different. And, after, after that, he he was a good Mr. Gavril. Because he got 4 people to around him all family they say if Abdul go, maybe I, I give my family I can carry on the job you know

**Yeah**

When I find the other young man from m country. He tried to get manager. He was education man. Ali. His name was Ali. Young man and he, they sent him to the college. To get catering manager. Because his English was better than me and he speak he write good English. But he had the family problems so he sometime he say ‘today I got busy, I don’t come ins’ he didn’t stay but these people maybe they were 24 hours (not audio) because they were family. Costa, Norero, Sanots, Maria, all family.

**Yeah**

Sometime they work 3 shift, no off, because they are family.

**Well, thank you very, very much for that.**