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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Needham
Forename:	Peter
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	13 May 1934
Interviewee POB:	Teplice, Czechoslovakia

Date of Interview:	22 October 2019
Location of Interview:	Datchet
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Jana Buresova
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV245

NAME: Peter Needham

DATE: 22 October, 2019

LOCATION: Datchet, UK

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Jana Buresova

I'm looking at you. Okay.

Good morning and thank you very much indeed for kindly agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Project. Could we begin please by you stating your name and your date of birth and place of birth?

My name is Peter Needham. My date of birth, the 31st of May in 1934. And I was born in Teplice, Teplitz-Schönau [German name] at the time in what was then Czechoslovakia.

Could you say something briefly about your parents, what their names were, and their backgrounds?

My parents, I don't know what detail you want. My father was born on the 6th of February 1900 in Aachen in Germany. I didn't actually know a great deal about him. When I was born, he was my grandfather's partner, my mother's father's partner in a law practice in Brüx, now Most, in the Czech Republic. You want more about my father?

That's fine. And your mother?

My father married my mother, who was the daughter **[00:02:00]** of the senior partner in the law firm in Brüx/Most.

And what was her name?

My mother's name was Anna Niethammer, known as Annerle.

And what- did you come from a religious family at all?

Not at all.

What were your parents' official religions?

My father was a Lutheran. And my mother was Jewish. As far as I know, neither were practicing members of their religion.

Do you have any special memories of your childhood before you left Teplice?

Do I have any special memories of my childhood? I suppose it's worth mentioning that in 1938 when already the Germans and Nazis were threatening the Sudetenland, we moved from Brüx, where we'd lived to, our estate, a family estate, at a place called Radic, which is about 50 miles to the south of Prague. And I do remember spending my last summer, I suppose, in Europe, on the estate in Radic, in the Czech- which is now the Czech Republic.

As a child, were you aware of tensions and the threats that was to come?

No, I mean, obviously not. I came to England when I was four and a half. I mean, obviously, there were **[00:04:00]** very serious tensions, but I mean, I was not- I don't think I was aware of them. There were all sorts of unpleasant things were happening. I think they were kept from me, in particular when we were in Radic, which was an estate with animals on and walks and et cetera. I think there was actually- oddly enough, a very happy time, although... it was also a very tense time for the family.

Did you encounter any personal unpleasantness or threats at that juncture?

No.

And where did you go from there? What led up to your departure?

What led up to the departure was, of course, I mean, [chuckles] it was clear that Czechoslovakia was completely surrounded by Nazi elements. I mean it was only a matter of time before the balloon went up. And - how did I- what was the question again?

Did your parents see the writing on the wall?

I have to make it clear; my father was not Jewish. My mother was. My father absolutely backed away from when we- my mother's family went to the estate where we didn't normally go because, either it was shared by other members of the family. My father stayed in Brüx, and pretty soon when Munich came, et cetera, et cetera, he washed his hands of the whole affair; eventually divorced my mother. My father played absolutely no part in this. There is no question, "What did my father **[00:06:00]** do?" He did nothing. He abandoned the Jewish side of the family.

Do you feel resentful about that?

I feel very resentful about all sorts of things relating to my father. That, that is one.

How did your mother then cope with the situation?

After the Munich crisis-

Which was in?

September/October 1938. We were staying in Radic, which is in the- not in the Sudetenland. We were Germans- Germans and Jews. The local Czechs did not want us there anymore, because I mean, they had a great hatred for the Ger- as they were concerned, we were Germans rather than Jews. They basically forced us out of Radic. "You can't stay here anymore. You're Germans. Go back to the Sudetenland," which, of course, as Jews we did not want to do. What happened then was- that I'm not absolutely certain what happened, but we fetched up in Prague. Somehow, we managed to go to ground in Prague in, I think it must have been October/November 1938. We did not go back to the Sudetenland. I think this was pretty difficult to fix this. I think, i think lots- lots of money was changing hands, or bribes were being offered and received to give us a street we were allowed to stay in Prague, rather than being pushed back into the Sudetenland.

That must have been a very frightening time for you.

It was for them, certainly, I mean, yes. **[00:08:00]** I mean, as a four-year-old, I did not know about it. I know about it now, and I'm obviously learned about it.

How long were you in Prague?

We left Radic for Prague, either in October or November '38. And I left Prague for the UK on the 12th of January '39. So, I personally was not there for very long.

How were you treated in Prague?

I don't know how I was treated. My gran- my grandparents arrived. My mother, we had a flat somewhere. I mean- they were the people I dealt with. There weren't people being nasty to me. I don't think there were people being particularly nasty to the rest of my family. I mean there were - my mother, who understood what was happening, was desperate to get- in the first instance, to get me out of the country, which is obviously threatened by the Nazis then. I mean the rump Czechoslovakia was not going to last very long. That was pretty clear to everybody.

Do you know how she went about getting you to Britain, or who she contacted, or who contacted her perhaps?

I obviously don't know everything about this. She discovered- she went to see somebody called Wallner, who was a German- I mean- of course lots of Germans lived in Prague; I mean- were there anyway. And he was a German clergyman, and my mother- sorry, I'm going to cough. [coughs] My mother, I don't know how she found Mr. Wallner, but he put her- told her that there was this **[00:10:00]** ...mission, the Barbican Mission to the Jews who were interested in rescuing, helping Jewish children to leave the Czech- the rump Czechoslovakia.

Do you know how your mother reacted to this, because if she was sending you to Britain [crosstalk]?

It was a pretty serious thing to, to do. That applies to all the Kinder transport.

Indeed. Indeed.

I mean, there was no guarantee that she'd ever see me again. But as a matter of fact, I mean, she got out of there about a month after I did. She got a - oh god- a domestic servants' permit. She got a job as a parlour maid to some posh English family. I don't know exactly how that worked, but she left Czechoslovakia just about a month after I did, as it happened.

How did she put it to you, do you recall, that you would be leaving for Britain?

I know- oddly enough, I know that it was made ex- exciting for me. Because, I mean, my- my wider family, my mother- my mother had two brothers. Her- one of her brothers, Hans, I know he told me all sorts of things about how exciting England would be. I can remember him. [emotional] Hans, so jollying me along, making --

Take your time. It's all right. It's all right. ***[00:12:00]***

Okay. I've answered that.

So, you were jollied along by Hans, and they took you--

I won't make a great thing off it. You asked me the question--

I'm recapping. And it was made out to be very exciting. Did you feel that it was an adventure?

It's very easy to say 'yes'. I cannot actually remember. I mean what I do remember is that- may be of some interest is that- the girl -who held my hand on this, Ilse... she-her, Ilse's mother and my mother were friends. Ilse who was older than me, she was 10, I know that she sort of jollied me along and held my hand on the flight. I know this because I'm still in touch with her now. I can't remember it then. But I mean...

How did you feel about flying?

Oh gee, I don't really know, but oddly enough I never flew in an aeroplane again, until 19-1960. And I think -I can remember being excited about flying in 1960. It was also a new experience. I can't tell you what- I don't know. It was obviously something quite remarkable.

Did your mother come to the airport with you?

Yes, I mean- that's where those - where the, the lots of photographs, all of this. Clearly, **[00:14:00]** the children on this plane were accompanied by- I think probably only my mother came. Because - there are photos of us in the center of Prague; mother, my grandfather, my grandmother. You know, I don't know where the photo was taken outside the bus terminal or whatever. I think only my mother came to the airport.

Have you an idea how many children were on that flight with you?

About 20.

I think it was the first Barbican flight.

I've recently discovered they were two. I didn't realise that. Yes, it was the first one.

How were you met and by whom in London?

Again, I know - there's old pictures in the press. It was in the dark. It was in Croydon. There are pictures of me being sort of cosseted by airline officials and whatnot. I mean- I do not know who. We arrived in Croydon, the Barbican Mission place was in Chislehurst. It was quite late in the day. Presumably, we were bused there, but I can't say more than that.

Did you feel, even at that point, the wrench of separation from your mother?

Well, they said; I mean, I think I've been like this...I think I've been like that all my life. It's sad, I don't know who, presumably Mrs. Davidson, who was the, the woman who ran the Barbican Mission there who looked after the children, said that I cried for days, and then, you know, I decided to make the best of it. **[00:16:00]**

It's a major wrench, especially at that age.

It's absolutely deplorable when I think of my own children, grandchildren.

When you reached Chislehurst, how were you treated?

You are asking me questions- I really do not know any of them. I mean- I think it was pretty rough and ready. I mean, Mrs. Davidson wrote a book about her experience about all this, and said, you know, that they were, you know- you know, I mean, they were Christians and I mean and they prayed and whatever and then God came along and provide. You know, they didn't know where the next meal was coming from or whatnot. But then they prayed and always some good local - always some good fairy or someone came, came along and bailed them out. You're asking me the question how was I treated. I think I was treated - I think I can say I was treated very well. I can say this only because my mother, as I say- she came over as a domestic servant a month after this. She was in fact based in, I can't remember where- somewhere on the South coast at a, at a- she was based somewhere on the South coast. On her days off, she was able to come and see me. There's a lot of stuff in her, in her memoir about how extremely- [silence]

Take your time.

-extremely kind the Davidsons were to her, you know; **[00:18:00]** made her feel that-

It's all right. Take your time. You need to take your time, it's all right.

-made her feel that she wasn't a domestic servant anymore. They were obviously - i mean- very kind people. For instance, there's a famous little boy called Hansi Beck. Do you know what I mean? He died, in fact, with an ear infection. But he was the only one younger than me and his parents had not come out. They didn't survive the war. Mrs. Davidson, despite all her- you know her- she was very, very strongly Christians or evangelical Christian. She got my mother to do a sort of deceit. The little boy hadn't heard from his parents, concern, and she got my mother to read, as it were, a postcard from Prague, from Hansi Becks' - Hansi Beck's parents to make him think that his parents hadn't forgotten him. And also, I mean, they obviously looked after me- were very much concerned about my welfare because a- the headmaster of a preparatory school up in Southport who, like the Davidsons, was very evangelical Christian, he said he would take two of these refugees **[00:20:00]** children and educate them. And indeed, I was one of the ones who was chosen; was just nudging five. And in fact, I mean, Mr. Everard ran this prep school; I mean, again, had me for free from 5 to 13, educating me. I was getting the sort of middle-class education that I would have gotten if- we never left.

What was the name of the school?

Winterdyne. It's *kaputt* now. He was so Christian and evangelical. When he retired, he could find no one to carry on his ideals. I think he sold the place to the local girls' school. It came to an end sometime in the 1950s or '60s or whatever.

What was your response to the evangelical approach?

Well, I swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. That is the most extraordinary thing. For a long time- my- I mean- my family and my mother's family were completely- I mean, they were Jewish, but I mean, we did nothing in that. And indeed, we were so not- so unJewish that we celebrated Christmas. I mean, I mean, that was the thing...I was taken in by this completely. I mean, I, I thought, at one point, that I was saved. And for... a year or two, even after I'd left Winterdyne, I went to Saint Paul's School in London. I got a scholarship there. And I mean I was, while, while I was there, when I was about 15, I suddenly thought really, this ain't for

me. But I mean, and I mean, since then, I've been a nominal Christian; [laughs] I mean- pretty nominal.

*In retrospect, what is **[00:22:00]** your view of the Barbican Mission in terms of its aims and objectives, and the fact that it did save so many people?*

Well, I mean, it, it probably saved my life, I mean-I mean- obviously, I think well of it. And I think they were very- I mean- ah!- I didn't really have- I mean I left there when I was under five. I went back there to a reunion when I was about, about 13. Basically, I mean- I was- some little children, I think I stayed there for a very long time and had far more Barbican influence. I have to say that the prep school I went- carried on the ideals of the Barbican Mission; very, very strongly Christian. I mean- when I think about that now, it's almost embarrassing.

Did you ever think of being baptised?

I was baptised. Oddly enough, I was baptised at birth. I've got a- an evangelical birth certificate. And I think that was in 1934 in the Czech Republic, even- well in Czechoslovakia- even then, with the storm clouds appearing, I think mother and father thought it was a good idea for me to be a Christian. So, I mean- did I ever think of being baptised? I was baptised, but I certainly set my face/faith against [unintelligible]school, the second when I was at St. Paul's- I was very good at divinity because I had the Bible pushed into me so strongly [coughs] at my prep school, that I mean- interestingly enough-I mean- what was I going to **[00:24:00]** say? We were not given religious instruction at St. Paul's, but we were asked whether we wanted to do scripture or whatever. I said yes and I got a distinction at O levels, the school certificate, absolutely on my head because I knew the Bible so, so well. And I did so well that the chaplain at St. Paul said, "You ought to be confirmed." And I remember I made a stand and said, "I don't want to be confirmed." And ever since, although all my children, all of my lot now all go through the- well, I suppose they're Christians, but I mean, I have stand. I go to church, but I stand on one side. I don't take communion or anything. I just do that as a gesture of support.

What was your mother's reaction to the religious teaching?

What was my mother's reaction? My mother was pleased that I was at a good school and I was on the- on the, you know, I was on the road to becoming a proper little English man.

She took it in. Did she-?

She didn't say anything. I mean- when I was sort of thinking of when I was a prep school, during the holidays, eventually- I don't know exactly how this ran. My grandparents also came over. They had a bit of money. Not very much, certainly, but I used to spend the holidays with them. And I would go off, wait for it, to church on a Sunday by myself. Right? Nobody else did, I mean, they just let me go on my own. I got on with it.

They weren't muttering about your going off to church?

I have no idea what they were doing. **[00:26:00]** I was always a bright little button. I think they thought, "Yes, that's good. That's fine."

They didn't try and stop you?

No, of course not.

When did your grandparents come to Britain?

When did they come to England?

Yes.

Well, they also- I mean, my mother's parents got out, but they got out after Hitler marched into Prague. And I think they came on some kind of refugee train. I think they had some pretty horrendous adventures. I think, again, there was a great deal of bribery. I told you about this estate that we had. And my grandfather sold the estate very much at a loss, but I think he had a lot of spare cash. It was extraordinary story about- they must have had a lot of cash because my two uncles were in Prague, too. And there's a description in my mother's memoirs how my uncle spent all day wandering the streets of Prague with a case full of money because they didn't want someone to come into the house, because we were sort of illegal immigrants, finding the money. I think my grandparents and indeed my uncles who came out after the Nazi occupation, basically bribed their way onto a train. I don't know exactly how, or why, but they actually, they actually came on a train full of refugees. I mean, they must have, they must have been official, but I think they probably paid quite a bit to be on this. That was in the end of March. That was just shortly after the, Hitler's occupation of Prague. They came at the end of March, '39.

What were your uncle's first names?

My uncle's first name; Hans was the elder one, and Sepp- Joseph, but they always for nick- **[00:28:00]** for abbreviation so that he was called Seppl.

Did your mother ever indicate or convey how difficult her life was as a resident domestic?

Oh god. My mother didn't really- somehow didn't quite make it in the UK. She didn't get along with her parents. There were endless rows, I mean, there were endless rows between my grandfather and my mother. That I- those, I can remember as a child; extremely unpleasant. My mother, as I said, she came as a servant. My...somehow- she got- I think when the war came, she had had her conditions of staying in the UK changed. She became a teacher. She taught German at a kind of posh school up in Shropshire. She then- I mean she had a lot of determination. She took a degree then, I mean, an external degree in London University.

What subject?

Economics, because she wanted to know how the world worked. But I mean- she- my mother was bright, clearly. She was at a university in Prague, but she met my father and she stopped. She never graduated in Prague because she got married.

Which year, were they married?

Which year, were they married? 1932.

Were you aware that she was depressed at times?

Oh, my God. I mean. I had a very difficult- I don't quite know where we're going on this. I had a **[00:30:00]** very difficult for relationship with my mother. She put all, all her eggs in one basket, and I was the basket. Was she depressed? Clearly, she was depressed. She had, had quite a good job, but I mean, she wasn't quite on top of it. She wasn't earning a great deal of money. She never stopped smoking. She was endlessly- really at war with her parents. That carried on really when, when we got married. She was still, in my opinion, was stirring things up between Nicki and myself. I mean...

From St Paul's School, where did you go? What did you do after that?

I went to Oxford.

And what did you read there?

Classics.

And what was your career path after [crosstalk]?

After Oxford, I did my national service, I studied Russian. I then became a schoolmaster. In fact, most of my life, my working life was spent as a teacher at Eton around the corner here.

Did you enjoy that? Did you find it fulfilling or not?

My job?

Yes.

I suppose. [laughter]I wouldn't have been fit to do anything else but basically, I might have been a lawyer and because of that, all sorts of things. I'm- I've never been in sort of making money or anything like that, so... being a classics teacher suited me pretty well.

[00:32:00] *Was your mother proud of that?*

My mother was thrilled that I got the job at Eton, and was thrilled that I went to Oxford. That was all, in a way, fulfilling her ambitions for me. But I mean my school mastering career was not particularly glorious. I mean, I was just an assistant headmaster. I think she thought that was a bit infringing. She would have liked me to be risen higher in my profession, I think. [coughs]

When did you marry?

1971.

And is your wife Jewish?

No.

And how many children do you have?

Two.

And what are their names?

Ruth and Rupert.

And have they followed you in their careers or not?

Have they followed me in my career? Rupert is a schoolteacher at Malvern College. Ruth is a- what is she?

Speaker 4: HR.

HR, but she does a particular thing. What does she do?

Speaker 4: She's a global mobility manager.

A global mobility manager, whatever that is.

Do either, or both of them, or none of them- neither of them take an interest in Czechoslovakia, your family background?

Not a great deal. The only one who has shown- for instance, my mother, wrote this memoir which Nicki showed you. And I mean they were given copies. I don't think they've ever read them at all. Oddly enough, my daughter-in-law, Julia, Rupert's wife takes an interest in this kind of thing. **[00:34:00]** Doesn't actually please me a great deal because, she's got children. I know one of her- my grandchildren, eight-year-old, nine-year-old, started asking me questions about my past. And I really didn't want to go into it. It didn't seem to me to be really suitable for me to be discussing- my background with an eight-year-old who couldn't possibly understand it. But that's- I mentioned that because that's about the only time, you say, any interest shown. The interest has been shown by my daughter-in-law and also, not to my great pleasure, by a young granddaughter. But my own children, really, they've got their own lives to lead. I don't know. The answer, I do not know, really. They certainly know, and neither of them have ever questioned me about anything.

Does that- is that a relief, or would you like them to know something about your life?

Well, they've got my mother's memoirs, which in fact cover all this, the past, the refugee situation. [sighs] This is a pretty difficult question. I mean, your question, I mean, for many, many years, really, until quite recently, I did not want to go into any of this myself, really. I

don't really know how it is. It's partly come about, I think, my mother- I've always wanted to be as a Brit. I just did not want to be a foreigner. I'm not really quite sure **[00:36:00]** how this has partly come about because when I retired, I wanted to- was very interested in getting back to the estate that we had in Radic. And things- we did go there. We found it with difficulty. And I mean, all sorts of things developed from that. So, in the last 20 years, I mean, you're coming here as a culmination of 20 years of, of- I mean, delving into the past, which is something I really did not want to do or did not do.

Do you feel yourself now to be very British, or do you have doubts, or...?

God help me. [silence] Yes, I feel myself to be British.

You've lived in this country longer than-

Yes, since 1939. I mean, I think things have changed also since my mother's death, which- died in '93. I used to speak German with my mother, well I used to speak really until I got married, but when she, I mean, when she came to our married home, we would not speak German. Basically, I think my mother's death was sort of a cut-off point. Also, I really after her death, I've felt- [sighs] I kept a lot- she had a lot of memorabilia. And, and my grandmother too had a lot of stuff. When my grandmother died, my mother made a bonfire of my grandmother's things. When my mother died, I made a bonfire of her things and got very, very little left. I regret this, in a way. And I also really regret that while my family, that my mother's side of the family were alive, I mean the grandparents, uncles, mother, I really regret that I didn't really talk to them more about the past because then, that would have been - a thing I-

Because they're your roots?

Sorry?

Because they are your roots?

Yes. I mean- what happened in the sort of time before I came to England was intensely interesting. And I don't really know enough about it.

On your mother's side, did you lose many people in the Holocaust from the family?

[crosstalk] The only - my mother's side lose in the Holocaust. My grandmother had- was a bit of a large family. I think they were five children and- god, one brother died naturally before the war. One brother committed suicide because his business wasn't working. My grandmother came to England. That left two others who were still in- who did not get out. My mother- one of my grandmother's brothers- I can't remember his name, was he called Erich- was a doctor. Obviously, he was Jewish. He was a doctor in Theresienstadt. I mean he was- he looked after the camp inmates. And he survived the war, but he was in such a bad state, he died after, you know, shortly after it. But oddly enough, I never really- I have known this happened, but my grandmother never really talked about that at all. But she was desperate - really sort of- **[00:40:00]** main victim and close victim was my grandmother's sister, Trude, who was married to a non-Jew. I think my grandmother, she could have got out, but he- her husband, they slept together, he was an invalid. He was a non-Jew, he was an invalid. She stayed there to look after him. He died of natural causes during the war, and then she no longer had the protection of being married to a non-Jew, and she was murdered.

Do you know where?

I don't think they ever discovered what happened to her. Oddly enough, when we last went to Prague, we went to Prague a number of times and Austria, I went to the, there's a sort of memorial wall somewhere in...

The Pinkas Synagogue in Prague.

And I tried, i tried to find her name on there. There were a thousand- I couldn't find it anyway - I mean. She was, she was the most direct family member, to be- the only member of the close family and my grandmother's sister who I know was murdered.

When did you first go to Czechoslovakia?

When did I last go?

No, when did you first go after coming to Britain?

In the year 2000. I told you- in my retirement, I wanted to find- I wanted to go and see the family estate, and that was in 2000. **[00:42:00]**

How did you feel going back?

Oh, golly. It was quite a thing that. I mean...It was very difficult. I mean, I couldn't find the place. i mean, it was an enormous state. And it had been- wait for it, my grandfather was sort of... he was in charge of it, but the, the, the family- it was divided between X number of members of the family. I'll give you some idea about that because my visit- a firearm from my visit was that I discovered I had some kind of claim on it, which eventually I got, but then actually I got one-sixteenth of it. To gives you some idea how widely it was divided. It was very strange going there because, I mean, it was still- but it was- more or less in ruins. And there was a- a family was squatting there and these were the people who had been allocated it by the communists if you see what I mean. They were pigging it and part of it. ..And, and while we were there, they thought we'd come- I genuinely went there because I wanted to see it. They thought I'd come to claim my inheritance- okay- so it was a pretty strange co- strange meeting. **[00:44:00]** It was in a frightful mess.

That would have been very upsetting to see.

I wasn't really upset, I was pleased that there was a great farmyard where I used to see the animals. I was pleased to see it. I was very interested. I was not wiping my eyes as I am now, I was very interested. Interested rather than upset.

Did local people resent your visit?

Oh my God. We met this rather squalid group of squatters. They couldn't speak English and they'd somehow got some bloke who did a bit of interpreting. And then one- in fact, a sort of rather posher person from the village came along and she thought I was here to claim my inheritance. What she actually told me was that there had recently been a law published, promulgated or whatever, saying that- those who had been- if you had to sell your property under duress, you were entitled to compensation. I had no idea of this. And indeed, of course, we sold the thing under duress because I mean, we wanted- we were- my grandparents wanted the money to get, to get out. And that's where the compensation came in. We didn't - we did not meet anyone other than, I say, these squalid squatters, the interpreter. And they'd obviously got another... better class from the village, I don't know who, who she was, **[00:46:00]** who talked, you know. She was on a higher, higher level and she, she thought, I think, that we were here you know, because we knew about this law, and she told me about it and I was very grateful because, because in fact, my one- my 16th share, eventually, about 10 years later, came in my direction.

Yes, yes, because there's a whole major issue about restitution and the difficulties arising from that.

No, I think we've settled it. I mean it took a hell of a long time.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

No.

Would you have a special message for your family viewing, perhaps the interview at some point?

Say that again.

Do you have or would you like to give a special message to your family members who might be viewing this interview at a later stage?

No.

And have you- you mentioned that you'd been back to Czechoslovakia a number of times. Are they just cultural visits?

Yes. Now, let's get this straight. I went in 2000, I went to see Radic. Where we - we had a car. And did some other things. Then once- fast forward 10 years, I've got my one-sixteenth, **[00:48:00]** Nicky and I went back. I wanted two, two things. I wanted to say thank you to the lawyer who'd done it all for us, and secondly, I wanted to see who was in Radic now. That's what we did. We went, we went and had lunch. 10 years have passed. A young couple rather, an elder... a married couple was trying to put it, set it up again. They had some great plans of making it, making it into a- stately home and visitors and whatever. We had, we had, we had lunch with the, the young woman who owned it now and, again, a friend who was an interpreter. And that went off very, very pleasantly, the social occasion. I think they were so badly off, i n fact, that later on, she wrote to us and said how would we like to take a flat in the new, in the new Radic. We didn't go along with that, that was visit number two. Visit number three, wait for it, is again something- we've somehow or rather not really to my best, really not, really to my great pleasure, we've got involved in the Kindertransport thing. We- I was not Kindertransport because I mean the Barbican Mission was not Kindertransport. But, we've somehow or other via- you know who Nicholas Winton is?

Yes.

We went to see a film about, he lived around here, we went to see a film about his life and he was there himself. And afterwards, Nicky insisted that I go and say hello to him. I, I think he was really probably past him to talk to everyone. He was in his hundreds, but his daughter was there. Daughter was writing a **[00:50:00]** memoir of her father. Nicky, as it happened, had some photographs that showed them to Barbara Winton or whatever her name is now. She was very pleased to see us because he was able to get some pictures for her book because the Kindertransport, there are no pictures of it because, obviously, the Nazis would not allow any pictures, but the various pictures relating to my departure, they were of great interest to her. And as a result of that, I've somehow become a sort of honorary member of the Kindertransport via this Winton collec- connection. I've been to various events at the embassy there, but- yes, we went back to Prague because we contributed to the memorial, to the parents who said goodbye. Do you know one of those?

I do, it's Milena Grenfell - Lady Milena Grenfell- Baines.

Yes, that thing. We contributed to that and we went back for the ceremony of dedicating this monument, which I believe has now been desecrated.

I saw it just weeks ago- you might be pleased to know- and yes, the glass was cracked, but the actual memorial is intact. And hundreds of people pass it every day and I think it's an excellent position.

Good. Then there's a postscript. Wait for it, I went last year to give a lecture at the University of Brno. It has nothing to do with Kindertransport- that was to do with my prowess in the Latin language. That was the last time I've been.

*I think on that very positive note, if there's nothing that you would like to add, **[00:52:00]** to say thank you very much indeed for granting us this interview.*

Okay, it was a pleasure.

I'm sorry that it's been painful for you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Are we done now?

Yes.

It's only painful in bits.

Yes, it's not easy to speak about the past.

This, please.

I think that is my great -grandfather. My maternal grandmother's father.

His name?

Jospeh Spitz, it says there.

Do you know where and when it was taken?

No. Not conscious of ever having seen the picture before. I don't know where- when it was taken, I assume it was taken in the town of Brüx. Presumably in Austria- Hungary, obviously, in pre-Czechoslovakia days as he seems to have died in 1914.

This, please.

And that is my great- grandmother, the mother of my maternal grandmother. Oma Spitz, grandmother Spitz. I didn't know anything more about her. These are my maternal grandparents. On the left is my grandfather, Oskar Bergmann. He was born in 1880 somewhere in Austria, Hungary. This is Czechoslovakia, I don't know where. **[00:54:00]** He died in London in 1949. On the right is my maternal grandmother, Minka, Emilia Bergman, but there is Minka and she was born, again, in Austria- Hungary, presumably in Brüx, I'm not sure in 1888 and she died in London in 1969.

This, please.

That's me with my mother known as Annele Needham, formerly Niethammer, maiden name Bergmann. She was born on the 5th of November, 1910. Again, I think- I know in Brüx and she died in London on the 18th of December, 1993 and the creature to her left is me at, I don't know, possibly the age of two. This picture shows me at age three perhaps. On the left next, we have my father, Fritz Niethammer, born Aachen 6th of February, 1900, died in Berlin

14th of April, 1978. To the right is my **[00:56:00]** mother of whom I've already spoken. Okay, now this picture was taken on the day we left Prague for England on the 12th of January, 1939. The children left is Hansi Beck who's the youngest member of the group. He died, unfortunately, while in the care of the Barbican home. I'm not sure exactly when, but not very long after we arrived in the UK. Possibly 1941, I don't know. Next is me, you know about me. The tall girl next to me is Ilse Stein, as she then was, now Ilse Ryder. She is- I was four, she was 10. She's still alive and kicking. She recently celebrated her 90th birthday. The girl, little girl on the right, I do not know, but I believe she leaves in Canada now, and I believe she has contributed her life story to the AJR. I'm not sure. She's still around anyway. Now, the adults- from the left, the, the man and the woman, sorry. Yes, the woman and the man left of the picture are the parents of Hansi Beck. I believe they were both killed in the Holocaust. Next is my mother. Have already, have I talked about my mother? Yes, I must have done. Far behind Ilse **[00:58:00]** is my grandmother who I've talked about, and I don't know who the person, the man or is it a woman- far-right is, I'm presuming parents of the little girl on the right. This is a picture of me. It says eight and a half years old. Christmas 1942 at the time I was at Winterdyne School. I'm wearing the school tie. The picture was taken by a photographer in Worcester. My grandparents lived at a place called Bromsgrove near Worcester at the time.

That's pretty cool.

This photo was taken on the day I graduated with a BA in Oxford on approximately October 1956. This photograph was taken on the 21st of August, 1971. It's outside the church, in that church. My wife Nicki is on my right. We've been happily married ever since then. Today is, God, what is today? Where are we now?

22nd of October.

22nd of October, 2019, so we've been married for over 48 years. She was born on the 2nd of September, 1952 in Dublin. On May the 27th, **[01:00:00]** 201-, I was going to say 2017, we returned to Prague to take part in a ceremony dedicating a memorial to the parents of the children who left the station on the Kindertransport in 1939.

This one.

This is the reverse side of the previous picture. These are the hands of the- one side we've got the hands of the parents saying goodbye, on the other side, the hands of the children who are leaving.

The figure in the photograph.

They tell me that the hat in the picture belongs to me. I'm walking behind the picture, behind the memorial. Now this is more or less my immediate family. The photo was taken in the garden of Ruth's house in Datchet in July 2017. Reading from the left, my wife Nicki, daughter Ruth is holding grandson Noah on her lap. They're called Carling, by the way, then there's me grinning. Next in the center, we have my son Rupert, holding his youngest child, **[01:02:00]** Henry, on his lap. Then touching the dog, we have Rupert's second child Elizabeth, behind... Elizabeth, we have, we have a grandson who has a twin and whose name is Joshua. Again, I mean, they're Carlings. Next to the right of Joshua is my daughter-in-law, Julia; Julia Needham. Below her, we have eldest granddaughter Mary, and Mary has got her arm around the girl twin sister of Joshua, and she is called... Isabella, and the bloke on the right is my son-in-law, Nick Carling. Okay, that's them. Now, this is a picture of the Zamek at Radic taken by my wife when we visited it in the year 2000. Well, there it is. **[01:04:00]** [coughs] Sorry. Well, this is self-evident, this is my birth cum baptismal certificate issued in August 1934. [silence] **[END OF AUDIO]**