

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	Emeritus Professor Tom Arie
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	9 August 1933
Interviewee POB:	Prague, Czechoslovakia

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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Jana Buresova
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV167
NAME: Emeritus Professor Tom Arie
DATE: 1st March, 2016
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Jana Buresova

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Our interviewee today is Emeritus Professor Tom Arie at his home in Kenninghall, in Norfolk, on the 1st of March, 2016.

Thank you very much indeed for kindly agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices project. May we start with... a little background about your family, where you were from, your date of birth, and what your parents did.

Yeah. Well, I was born in Prague in 1933, where my parents... lived. And my father was a lawyer, a rising young lawyer. And my mother, well, my mother really as a sort of hobby, taught modern languages to small circles of pupils that came to her home. But... she was you know, more I think a wife, than a teacher in those days. And a housewife teacher. And... my grandparents on either side were also in Prague. And the related family, aunts, uncles, so we were all there. The branches, I don't know if you like- The family were in different parts of the world. And there was an Austrian branch, and an American branch. But we were the ...Prague branch.

Do you have any special memories of Prague? I appreciate that you were very young.

Well that is a very emotive question. Lots of memories. I left when I was six, and I have few very special memories before that. But I do remember my sixth birthday, and I do remember,

of course, the Germans arriving in Prague that year. March, '39. And very conscious of the tension and the ...fear. I have one particular memory, that must have been I think in the spring of '39, when we went to spend a weekend I think, in a little town outside Prague called Dobris, where my family had many links, because my paternal grandfather's first job as a rabbi was in that little town. And had maintained links with it. And we were there, and in the night, I was woken by sounds of violence and shouting and noises. And it was the Germans who had come to smash up the synagogue. And it was terrifying. And the next morning the synagogue was in ruins. And... well, in happier times I've been back and the synagogue is beautifully restored, though these days no longer a synagogue because there isn't a Jewish Community in that little town. But it is now a community centre. But very touchingly, the Hebrew lettering on the face of the synagogue has been beautifully picked out in gold. And the appearance is still, on the façade, of a synagogue. So that was one vivid memory of before we left.

[0:04:05]

May I ask you, when you say Germans, were these Nazi Sudeten Germans or...?

No, no, no. These were the German Army, or whoever. I don't know who they were. It was the night. But the Nazis had already occupied Prague! And Hitler had been to Prague. You know, so...in a sense, you know, we'll come to that. But we were hugely lucky; not only did we get out, but we got out after Prague had already been occupied by the Nazis. And the other memory I have, is of my parents... going around the various offices that needed to give us exit visa, and leaving our property behind. And paying the huge taxes that one had to pay on everything one took with one. I remember my mother coming home, having been hugely abused by the German officials. One phrase I remember, my mother came back and the man said to her, "*Warum krepieren Sie nicht?*" Which: "Why don't you die?" But it was the '*krepieren*' as you probably know is the word you use for an animal dying, not a human dying. So that was the climate that I remember in those last months. I also remember, very terrifyingly, ...an extremely polite and correct Gestapo officer looking over our flat, with a view to taking it over when we had left. And I was on the one hand terrified of this man in his black uniform. And on the other hand I couldn't understand why he was so meticulously correct and polite. And... Well, that's about the extent of the significant memories. And of course I remember extremely clearly the journey to England.

Do you recall your parents discussing leaving Prague?

Very much so. Entirely so. There was- I think I- we have spoken of this earlier on, but there was another person of a similar background and age to me who came, and was interviewed on the BBC lately. And he said he couldn't understand why everyone was so anxious and what they were all so worried about. On the contrary, I think I was completely in the picture for a – for a small boy. Yes. ...And of course you know, I might just add, that there were various little traumatic moments. For instance, I had a much loved German nanny. And she left us. And...

[0:07:16]

Voluntarily, or...?

Well I think it was forbidden to work in the homes of Jews. That was sort of part of the Nuremberg Laws. But anyway, she left us. And her brother was in the SS. And despite that, we were very fond- well, these are the paradoxes of the world. Anyway, my memory is that I rather grieved over this nanny leaving us. The other memory I might just mention, is that my mother, as I say, gave these lessons at home. And she had her devoted pupils, and when they had passed whatever exam they were working for, they would come and say farewell. And... They would usually give my mother a little present, and a little figurine of which we still have a little Dresden shepherdess and so on which still, a few have survived. And one of them came in the uniform of the Hitler Youth. And that I remember was disconcerting too Yeah. My mother taught French and German, but particularly French. And I- presumably he was learning French because, you know, his Hitler Youth gave him his German affiliation which he would have already had. But there- there's a collection of little memories of those earliest times. And then, the journey...

I was going to ask you, before we come to the journey please. Who or which organisation helped you leave Czechoslovakia?

Well you have asked an absolutely brilliant question, because astonishingly, I'm not at all clear. And as- yesterday I was reading the most recent memoirs of Joan Bakewell, who is

exactly my age. And she was saying how one can't understand the sort of questions one didn't ask one's parents. Now I never knew, until this day I don't know, quite how it came about that we got a visa for England and came to England. I can tell you a little bit about the circumstances, but the technicalities I don't know. When my father came to England, he went to work, I think, unpaid, for the Czech Refugee Trust Fund. And it may have been some connection with that, but I don't know. The other thing is that it may have been some Zionist connection. Because my father was a very prominent Zionist. And... I think there may even have been an intention eventually to move on to Palestine. But I just don't know, and I'm completely astonished that I never got my, my parents to sit down and talk through all this. My mother has left quite a lot of details, but this isn't... She has an exercise book full of her reminiscences. But it doesn't explain quite how we managed to get the visas. The impressive thing, of course, is that, my parents, got out! Because as you are well aware, eighty percent of their contemporaries didn't. They took the view either that things couldn't be so bad and couldn't last. Or that it is impossible to take one's family to a strange land with no money. Penniless to a strange land. And they perished! And I believe some eighty percent of Czech Jews perished. And my parents upped and left. But it is a source of amazement to me that I never got them to tell me in detail. We had all these shared memories, and rather took for granted that we remembered them as a family. And there didn't seem at the time, to be a need to get them to rehearse the facts. And alas, I didn't.

[0:11:34]

It was possibly the British Committee for Czechoslovak Refugees, which was superseded by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund in July 1939.

Right...

And the Committee helped people to escape and to find people guarantors, and so on....

Right. Well, I'm not aware that we had any guarantors! In fact, I'm pretty sure we didn't because I'd- I mean there may have been organisations, but there was no question of individual people. So...I mean we- we later acquired many lovely people who were very good to us, but I'm not aware that there was anyone there that had sponsored us in any way.

No... When did you and your parents reach England, and how was your journey?

Well, we reached England on the 17th of August, 1939. And of course war broke out two weeks later. And I've since learned that the train we came on, was only the penultimate train of its sort, out of Prague. I had imagined that perhaps even though... [sound interruption]

I'll ask the question again. When did you and your parents leave Czechoslovakia, and how was your journey?

Well, we left on the 17th of August, which as you'll remember, was a couple of weeks before the war broke out. And I've since learnt- I'd assumed that there was such a train every day, but no. This was the penultimate train. And not so far from the famous tragic Winton train, which never left the platform on the 3rd...

On the 1st of September.

First of September, was it? Yes, well. So it was...

Because that was when Germany invaded Poland.

[0:13:36]

Yes, yes. Well. A very narrow thing. And I remember the journey almost hour by hour. There were my parents. And with us, was a cousin, a young woman of ...nineteen. Just nineteen at the time. I remember, and she remembers terrifying chaps getting into the train with little swastika badges. And one of them... was pawing her. And everyone was very anxious as to quite... how she should respond. I remember as we left Prague with my mother's parents on the platform, weeping. And ...then my, Edith, my cousin, and my mother went out into the corridor ...to weep. And then there was the great anxiety, of going across Germany. And the amazing relief which I as a small boy even, felt, as we entered Belgium. And... came to Ostend. And we were clear of the Germans. And of course all across Germany there were these guys clomping in with jackboots and ...pistol holsters, looking at our papers. And how my parents, who had greater appreciation than me of the situation, must have been anxious is you know, mind boggling. But I remember the journey well. I remember another item of the

journey, which is curious. And that is, we arrived in Ostend, and for the first time in my life of course, I saw the sea! And what's more, I saw the biggest ship, a channel ferry, that I had ever seen and had never imagined, because in Prague there were steamers going up and down the river. And that was my idea of a ship. And suddenly there was this colossal thing that I had never imagined. And... then we got on the ship. And I was- I remember slightly surprised to bits, how it was that people weren't speaking Czech! [laughs] Well, and... Maybe this is the moment to say a word about Edith, our cousin, because her husband, Edward, was waiting for us at Dover. And their story was this: She was a lovely young woman who lived in Prague and used to like skiing. And she went to ski in Austria. And there she fell in love with a young man called Edward Arje – Arie, as became - our Austrian cousin. And she returned, and before long they were engaged. And... before they could get married, there'd been the *Anschluss* and he was sent to Dachau. And... he was in Dachau. And then a very ...surprising thing happened. Those were the early part of the... awful days. And it was possible to be bought out of Dachau. And he was bought out by his firm, which was Bunzl, the paper and pulp manufacturers, who were then already I think in a small way, multinational. And they had an office in London. And the London office bought Edward out of Dachau. And he came ...to- bought him out so that he could come to the London office. And he came via Prague. And the Germans were there of course. And he was able to stay in Prague for two days, during which he married Edith, and my grandfather the Rabbi, married them. And then he went on to England. And when we arrived in England, there was Edward waiting for us. And he had found us a little flat. And that was the pad in which we arrived in, in England. Completely without funds or assets. But! My father, in his last months, when he was still able to practise, had tried to arrange for clients to pay... his fees into a Paris bank account. And in the passport, which I still have, with which we travelled, I see that within days of arriving in London, my father flew to Paris, which must have cost him the earth in those days. I don't know how he managed that, to collect the money in Paris. And it wasn't there. And he came back empty-handed. And I remember... the grief, that he had made this huge investment in the flight to Paris and I still don't know, he must have borrowed the money. I have no idea. And... came back empty-handed. And then we had this flat which was on about the fifth or sixth floor of a tower sort of tower, tall house in Leinster Square, in Paddington. And that was my first taste of England. And the other thing I remember is as we arrived there, one... day in the afternoon, there was a little square, and the square had a garden in the middle. And I saw boys playing football. So I went down. I said "I want to play with them." And I went down into this ...garden. And to my- somehow I hadn't taken in that

of course they didn't speak Czech or German. They were speaking some strange language! But then something happened that gave me a moment's reassurance. It's funny how these little trivia stay with one. And lying in the grass there, one of the boys picked up a lipstick. And he said, "Oh! Lipstick!" And that was a word I knew! So I got a lot of reassurance from that. So that was so to speak, the first day, in England.

[0:21:06]

What were your overall impressions when you first arrived in England?

Well, relief. It was an incredible change of life. I had no English, and I went to school. And in Czechoslovakia in those days, school started at six. So I had never been to school; I couldn't read, I couldn't write. A little bit I could, but, you know, beginnings. I could write my name. And then as a child there in Prague I was 'Tommi', and I could write 'Tommi'. And so I went to school, and ...school was all right and very interesting. And I had this curious sense of... the English coming quite easily. But with a little bit of a struggle but I can't say exactly when I was confident in English. But then, the war broke out, within days. And we were evacuated.

Before we move on to that part, may I ask how your parents adjusted? Because as a foreign lawyer, your father could not practise here. And to lose ...all that money in Paris must have been absolutely devastating.

Well I don't know how much the money was, but it was some. You know, the loss was of the behind them rather than in Paris. But there was no work, and that's why I think he- Well, two things. I think he did voluntary helping in the Czech Refugee Trust Fund. And of course we were subsidised by them. And that's what kept us going. And my father went to train, incredibly, I can't say this without a smile coming to my face – as a welder, at the City & Guilds. And I remember him coming home with his blue overalls. Now my father was a, an absolutely ...core central European Jewish intellectual. And... if he had ever become a welder, it would have been incredible. I think he passed his City & Guilds exams, as I recall it, but never was- a welder. And then eventually found work, to which we'll come later. But I would say in passing, a very moving thing. After he died, I ...was going through his papers. And I found a correspondence with the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, from the point when he

found a job. And he wrote them to say that he proposed to repay all their subsidy, monthly, from his earnings. And the reply came:

“This was not a loan; it was a gift. That’s what we are here for.” And my father wrote, “No, I want to repay it.” And he repaid the whole lot. So...that was a little episode that I only learnt after my father died. And, well, then we began to move among similar circles, in London. And... Austrian relatives and Austrian friends of course were interned. But we, as friendly aliens, as Czechs were designated. My father not interned. And then eventually... he found work with the BBC in 19 ...late 1940, I think. You know. Meanwhile I remember very well the Blitz in London, and the dog fights up in the sky, and all those times. And then I went to school and in no time I was speaking English.

[0:25:20]

I was going to ask you about the schools. Did you go to an English school, or did you go to one of the Czechoslovak state boarding schools opened by the government-in-exile?

No, not at all. No, I went to the local primary school, at first. And I went to the local primary school. And then and that- and with the school I was evacuated. And I was evacuated- very strange when my contemporaries tell me about the great distances they went. I was evacuated to Maidenhead! You know, almost yards from London! [laughs] And I was with a family that were extremely unfriendly. And I was billeted with another Czech girl, who was unrelated, my age, with this family. And they used to call us ‘the two little Huns’. And I was deeply miserable. And my parents yearned to have me back with them. But it was not allowed to have children back, until one could show that one had an air raid shelter. And how were they to find... They were in this little flat. And then a wonderful thing happened. How it happened I don’t know. But it remains among my ...great memories of indebtedness. There appeared on the scene a man called George House, who was a Trade Union official. Who lived in Twickenham. And he took my parents into his house. And they were building an air raid shelter, in the garden. And as soon as the air raid shelter was ready, we came. And George House and his family and a daughter of my age called Enid were almost part of the family. He was a very remarkable man, and he became a Labour MP for St Pancras in the Attlee government after the war. But he was a good friend, and a good Samaritan and he gave us a home and enabled my parents to have me back with them.

[0:27:54]

You must have been overjoyed.

Overjoyed! Overjoyed, yes. And then I came back, and for reasons which aren't quite clear I went to another school which was a little private school. What some people called in those days, a Dame school. Just a one woman. And I remember the school very well. And I remember that - presumably because it was a little private school to keep the cost down, our main materials were brown parcel paper - packing paper. And we tore, and we wrote and we drew on brown paper. I don't know how widespread that was, but that was my encounter with brown paper. Then I moved on from there to the little local primary school. And then eventually, when my father got a job, which was with the BBC monitoring service in Evesham in Worcestershire, we moved to...to Evesham.

How did the other pupils in your different schools respond to you? And how did you feel about them and the language situation?

Yeah.

And were the teachers helpful?

I have no clear memories of either being unhappy or happy. Or of having any particular friends. What I did have was a lasting embarrassment, in that my parents had, against the forthcoming poverty, had brought as much clothing as they could. And the clothing they brought for me was *Lederhosen* [*leather trousers*] and stockings, full length stockings with suspenders. And at first I was wearing this stuff and was subject to some ridicule. And how it came about that eventually I got British-type clothing, I don't know. I mean again, I have no idea how my parents raised the money for...for a normal life. But they'd come with this great investment, of however many pairs, allowing for growth, of *Lederhosen*. [laughing] But they weren't the thing you wanted in England.

[0:30:13]

And ...your teachers, did they help you? Were they patient?

Do you know, I have no recollection at all of that? No- I can remember myself sitting in a classroom, both in the first primary school that was evacuated. And then...then in the, in the, school afterwards in London. But strangely, I have no particular memories of teachers or... I do have one memory to share with you of when I was back in London and in the primary school ...and yes, was in the Blitz. And... I had a teacher called Miss Robinson. And Miss Robinson, effectively and single-handedly stymied any potential musical career that I might ever have had. Because each member of the class was required to come up the front and sing a note. And in my case, she said, "You'll never do." And I was henceforth branded a non-singer. And I was mortally offended, and I wished her dead. And that night a bomb fell on her. And the next day she was dead. [laughs] So always be careful what you wish for. So poor Miss Robinson; I hope I didn't contribute to her end. That is a memory of school. Another memory of school I have is that for the war effort, we bought paper poppies, which were stuck into a...what's the word, a cloth grid to make a Union Jack. And you bought a poppy. That was your contribution to the war effort. And you stuck it in and it was red, white and blue and in the end it made... And I remember my parents, bless them, no doubt hard-pressed, had to give me the penny or two to buy a poppy. Anyway it's funny how the memories of those school days are slight and patchy. But they were not unhappy days. They- I began to have friends. And... I yearned desperately to have a bicycle. And in the end, my parents got me an old jalopy of a bicycle, which... that was an important moment in my life. Yeah.

[0:33:06]

Did your parents continue to speak to you in Czech and German?

At first we spoke Czech. But German was no longer spoken. Was no longer spoken - tacitly - tacit agreement. Though I was bilingual in Czech and German. And it's a great loss which I have always regretted that I've lost the German. I've largely lost the Czech too. But I can understand almost everything in both languages if it's not spoken too fast. But... I have difficulty when we're in - in the Czech Republic of sort of regaining my Czech, though I've noticed how it - how it improves even by the end of the week. But it's not good. And the German, I can't really speak German any more but I can understand and read. So that's stayed with me. But another language is a great treasure, and I'm sorry that I lost the German.

But, but of course my...my parents' refugee friends, mostly had German and some only German as their, as their...language. And I would sit in very comfortably following the conversations and joining in. But we spoke Czech. And then in time, we came to speak English. I- Eleanor has, has, has asked me; my wife Eleanor has asked me you know, when that... I don't know. Imperceptibly, we spoke English among ourselves with a few Czech words. And then as I perhaps... Telling you later when my two grandmothers came to live with us, we started speaking Czech to them again. And fortunately this was now much, much longer, and I still had enough Czech to...to speak to my, my grandmothers. Yes.

Throughout this time, how important to you was your Czechoslovak background, and your Jewish sense of identity?

Well, both were taken for granted! Those... Things were different. It wasn't always easy to be a foreigner, at school. ...And for that matter occasionally to be a Jew. But for me, my Jewishness has always been an integral part of myself. Completely without any religious content. I'm you know, not a religious person in any way. But it was part of my culture, and my heritage, and there was never any question at all that, that's where I belonged. Foreign- I mean, there were funny times with- Nowadays we're very accustomed to foreign names. In those days, people weren't! And so my name in those days, was...it was spelt A R J E, and I was called 'Argie'. An ugly name and obviously not English. But it wasn't a central theme. There were a few anti-Semitic remarks, that I still recall from Masters at school. But ...not a problem, and no doubt that I sort of, you know, identified with my background and my... my culture.

[0:37:08]

Did you have a Bar Mitzvah?

Yes, yes I had a Bar Mitzvah but, you know- my wife, who's not Jewish, reads Hebrew better than I do. And I can, just about; I've lost most of it. But ...I had a bit of a struggle a few years ago, when I was asked to read at the Bar Mitzvah of a...a friend's...son. And, and quite an effort to read the Hebrew. Not kept it up.

And your parents, did- on the whole Jewish people from Czechoslovakia were highly acculturated. Did they identify with any of the Jewish Communities or the synagogues here?

Indeed, yes, my father was a loyal member of the synagogue. And he abs- ultimately when we came to live in Reading, for many years he represented Reading Jewish Community on the Board of Deputies. And of course we went to synagogue on the High Holidays. But... I think my father half-heartedly fasted on Yom Kippur. I'm not sure- we certainly didn't walk to the synagogue. [half-laughs] And... But you know, there was still in the background was the grandfather the Rabbi from... Perhaps I should say a little more. So he came, my brother, father had two brothers. And they all were very loyally devoted to their father, the Rabbi. But totally like us. Non-observant Jews, and basically agnostics. So that was the- I think very common sort of background that I came from.

[0:39:24]

In terms of problems and difficulties, were there any other difficulties that your parents or you experienced? Frustrations?

Well, some things I- yes indeed. One was conscious in those days that foreigners and Jews were not always welcome. After my parents died, again I went through my mother's papers. And I found that when she came, she was looking for work, writing to schools for...for work as a, as a modern language teacher. And I found one letter which read roughly, "You seem admirably qualified for this post. But if it should be the case that you're of the Hebraic persuasion, that would disqualify." So that's the sort of things one came across from time to time. Ultimately, in terms of my parents' work, ultimately when my father went to work for the BBC monitoring service, well that was entirely composed of refugees. That's what it did; it listened to broadcasts in foreign languages. And there was a culture there that, you know, particularly, completely belonged in that respect as well, by this time, as having our own circle of close English friends. And I find it hard to put my finger on when we moved from being largely centred on the continental friends' ...circles and English. But it happened imperceptibly, and it happened along I think with our talking English at home. And in the end you know, it was completely reversed and there were relatively few friends of similar background and our circle became... became English people and school friends who were English and so on. Yes, I wish I'd talked to my parents more about – about their experiences

at the time. We just somehow took it for granted that that was how it had happened and never explicitly talked about it.

In the BBC... was your father involved in the programs that were broadcast to Czechoslovakia?

No, he was- the monitoring service was listening in, and that's what he did. On the other hand, when there came the Prague Spring, and... he went- now, what happened? He went to Vienna for the BBC, he was sent to Vienna. And I think he was broadcasting in Czech from Vienna. But the monitoring service was the reception end, rather than the, than the broadcasting. And of course it was a bit like the Isle of Man the BBC monitoring service. It was full of people, I mean, George Weidenfeld was a colleague, Ernst Gombrich was a colleague. You know it was a- all these hugely talented people, all doing their, their war work together. So then again, I was a bit young in those days, but it must have been an interesting community to belong to.

[0:43:30]

Did his shift from the welding to the BBC...?

Oh, he never did the welding! He trained...

He trained...

...but thank God he never did it because he would have been the world's worst – second worst! I'd have probably been the world's worst welder, and you know, it was unimaginable. And how it came about and- I didn't find any sufficient details about how he found the job and got the job, and whether it was touch-and-go whether he would get the job, or whether they sought him out. And I've no idea, but anyway, we moved. And the BBC then was in Evesham, the monitoring service. And so our first move from London, from George House's house. I might just say in passing that I was learning English, and it was a source of great difficulty to me that the man who owned our house was 'Mr House'. And it took a while to sort that out. [both laugh] Yeah.

I was going to ask if there was a noticeable change of circumstances...?

Oh, when they got work?

Yes.

Oh, indeed there was. Yes, I mean, there was money coming in. And later on, my mother...

Even though the Czech Refugee Trust Fund had been helping.

Oh yes. I mean, we were- I remember now, in retrospect. Eleanor's heard me speak of this; my wife's heard me speak of this. I had been under the impression when we came to England, that a scooter, an absolutely basic scooter, which had been a present for my sixth birthday which was at the beginning of August and we left in the middle of August, was coming with us. And I was heart-broken for reasons I don't know. It was either lost or it wasn't possible or it wasn't permitted. And it never came. And I yearned to have a scooter. And I remember my parents promising me a scooter, and obviously being - even as a small boy - I saw how they grieved that they couldn't afford to buy me a scooter. And then it became a great moment when they bought me this old bike. And I learnt, you know, I mean, frugal habits in those days, and appreciated very much how things were, for the family.

[0:45:58]

Speaking of frugal- how did you and your parents cope with the food? And was your mother able to cook or...?

My mother had never cooked in her life, but she learnt, she learnt. We- yep, she learnt. And cooked very nicely, in due course. Yeah. We had to change, she still went on and I mean it stayed with us too, occasionally we have continental things that we like and, you know. My mother made nice soups, and ...dumplings and things like that. But she learnt them here, not there. Yeah.

Yes...

And it was a long time of course before my parents had their own house. We lived in rented accommodation. Little by little we acquired second-hand furniture. And then eventually, but that's looking ahead a long way, they were able to buy a house and had their own furniture and so on. So... things came right for them in material as well as in all the other senses. So we were hugely fortunate. Hugely blessed. We had a good life, and they had a good life.

Could we turn now please to your own work, and ...whether your past experiences, your family history, influenced your - your...choice of study, career...?

Well, that's a difficult one. Not consciously. There were no, I think, family connections... Of an obvious sort. But my first career at school was in Classics. And in those days, that was the sort of high road for a bright schoolboy. The Classical Sixth outranked the Science Sixth, and so on.

Yes.

The Classical Sixth was for the bright. And the- I was told by my school- I was I guess quite a bright lad that what was expected of me was an Oxbridge Scholarship. They used to have scholarships in those days; they don't exist in quite the same way now. And that was Classical Scholarship. And then in the Sixth Form and everything was going well, I was quite good at the Classics and it was going well. But I began to have yearnings to do medicine. And ...I had done no science. It wasn't until the Sputnik, much later, that people realised what an outrage it was that you could have what was called a 'good education' at a fine school, which mine certainly was, without doing any science! And I yearned to do medicine, but the obstacle was that I had no science! And I went so far as to be interviewed at Guy's Hospital, to something of the consternation of my Classics Masters at school.

[0:49:27]

Could you say which school it was?

Reading School. It was an absolutely first class Grammar school. Somehow it contrived over the years right up to now, although it was a State school, to be a selective Grammar School. And it, I had- I mean you know, you turn to many people who will tell you about the miseries

of their school days. My school days were happy. I was deeply grateful to the excellent teaching I had. And the idea of preparing me for an Oxford Scholarship was a sort of joint effort. And my Masters were as eager as I was. And the last of them died only a few years ago, and we had kept in touch. It was an entirely positive and happy experience for me. And, anyway, I had this little aberration that I got myself interviewed at Guy's Hospital, and was accepted at Guy's Hospital! They had, they had - I forget what it was called but it was - some sort of Arts Scholarship for people like me, who they would accept. And ... You had to do a year learning science. And then you were, and you had a scholarship for that. But then I got cold feet, or I regained my senses. And everything, and I had pressures at school and everything was going well and it would have been a terrible upheaval, and I couldn't face it. I don't know if that's the right phrase; I didn't do it. And I duly went to Oxford, and did what had been intended for me, and what I yearned to do, and loved it! Was totally, totally ... happy with what I was doing. But you may know that the Oxford Classics Degree is slightly unusual. It is in two parts. The first part is language and literature, and the second part is ancient history and philosophy. It was then; it's become much more flexible now. And I went and I did what was called Classical Moderations. That was the first half of the degree. And I did well in it. And then I embarked on the second part of the degree. And somehow I didn't feel that I wanted to be a philosopher. And there was an added difficulty - tell me if I'm being too circumstantial here - but there was an added difficulty in that my philosophy tutor was ill. ... And I had no tuition. We used to get little notes from him saying, "Read this..." And then- anyway it was not, not a happy business, and I was totally pissed off. I thought, am I going to hang around doing this for another two years, and I'm getting no teaching? And then a strange thing happened. One of these little turning points in life. I went to have tea, as one did in those days, in Somerville College, one of the girls' colleges with people who were then good friends. And there was a circle of us who met for tea and one of them was a chap who had just finished a Classics Degree and was... going into medicine. And had been told that they would only have him, if he got a First. And he had great doubts as to whether he would get a First. It wasn't easy in those days to get a First in, in the finals. There were very few. And ... I went away from that tea party thinking, gosh, I'm going to find myself perhaps in the same position as this guy, having spent four years- a Classics Degree in Oxford was a long one, a four-year degree, not a three-year degree. Having done all this, and then being told... when, I get the urge to do medicine, that I... well they'd have me if I got a First. And I certainly wasn't confident at getting a First in the second part of the degree. Who knows. Anyway. My son eventually fulfilled that ambition for me. But... I went

away from that tea party in Somerville, and... lest I changed my mind, I telephoned the medical tutor at my college and said, "Please may I come and talk to you?" And he said, "Come on Saturday morning for coffee." And I went and had coffee. And told him that I had decided I wanted to do medicine. He said to me, "Well, I'm sure you have given it long and careful thought." And I didn't say, well, since Thursday afternoon when I had tea in Somerville... [both laugh] So I nodded and he said, "I'd be delighted to have you." And there was one condition. And ...that was that within a year, I had to pass what was called Prelims - which was something like A-Levels, perhaps not quite the standard, I don't know - in physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology. From scratch. And that was the hardest academic year of my life! And... I you know, opened page one of a textbook of botany. And can you imagine nowadays, people I don't think have to do botany for medicine, but I had to do botany. And physics was the most difficult. And somehow I in a year, I managed to do it, and I was into medicine! And... from then things moved ahead in the normal way.

[0:55:59]

Were you aware of any events, or in addition to the tea party you mentioned, that prompted you? That urged you?

Very good question. No, I don't know. It had always been something. Maybe I was influenced by some doctor that I admired. What were the motivations for doing medicine? You know, maybe- who knows, they're complicated. And if I were on an analyst's couch, the analyst would pull out a great deal of curious motivation no doubt. Why do any of us do medicine? But medicine seemed the thing for me. And it was an absolutely spot-on decision. I never looked back. I never had a moment's regret. Well, I did have; that's not quite true. I did have. When I- the first thing I had to do in medicine, having completed the basic sciences, was anatomy. And I hated that. And that really almost brought me to a halt. I abhorred the dissecting room. I abhorred the... jocularity of my dissecting partners, you know, and... the smell of the dissecting room. The whole thing, I absolutely loathed. And... I had some real doubts at that stage. But however, it went on. And when I got to the clinical phase, and in those days, nowadays it's less so, but in those days they were very distinct phases. The pre-clinical and the clinical. And when I got to the clinical, I knew I'd arrived where I wanted to be. And I was totally content and totally happy. And so it's been, so it's been ever since. And I wouldn't have had any different sort of career. And you know, my

wife is medical and it also gave us a great deal in common. But there we are. None of our children have gone into medicine, and we sometimes wonder if that is because we set them a bad example. But I think my children saw us living very pressured lives, very demanding, very pressured lives. And sort of bringing our work home with us, and... on call and so on. And thought that that was perhaps not what they wanted. And it's turned out of course that they have equally busy, equally pressured lives - in other spheres.

[0:58:36]

In terms of your career path, what were the key elements, or stages? You've had a very varied career.

Yes, yes. It has been a rather unusual career. It was sort of initially a two- or even three-pronged career. Perhaps coming from a different background to medicine, one of the things that fascinated me was what is now called 'the sociology of medicine'. And I was very...interested for instance in the hospital as a small society. And things that were much talked about in those days. The sick row, a new discipline really arose, partly in America - mostly in America - partly here, of medical sociology. And I got very interested in that. And then, I...had to do my house jobs. The routine jobs in medicine and surgery which I hugely enjoyed. And it was at that stage that my wife and I met. She was a medical student a few years behind me, and... the question was which direction to go after my house jobs. And I talked to my professor of medicine in Oxford. And he said, "You should talk to a couple of people." And I did. And one of them was a man called Gerry Morris, whose- one of whose disciples was on the radio this morning. I don't know if you listen to the radio, perhaps in the car? An epidemiologist... from... Davy Smith from, from, from Bristol. And Gerry Morris was a most remarkable man. He was an epidemiologist, and in the early days, a student of the functioning of health services. And... he was the Director of the Medical Research Council's Social Medicine Unit at the London Hospital, in the East End of London. And I went to see him, and he and I just clicked immediately. And he said, "Come and work with me." Well, by that time I had already obtained a Medical Research Council Junior Research Fellowship. But that came with the funding, but not the job! And the question was, who would I do it with. And he said, "Certainly come and do it here. But," he said, for the sort of project which I had in mind, he thought six months' psychiatry would be a useful thing to do. So I went to the Maudsley Hospital, which was then almost the only place you could get a good training in

psychiatry. Now you can get it anywhere, but I went to the Maudsley Hospital. And after I started doing this, no, no. Not true; not true. I went to the psychiatric hospital in Oxford: Littlemore Hospital. For six months. And with a view to going, taking up this fellowship with Gerry Morris. And during the six months I realised you can't sort of play with psychiatry for six months; it needs a proper training. So I went on to the Maudsley Hospital, and didn't take up the fellowship, but kept in touch with this wonderful man, Gerry Morris. Who incidentally, was the father of heart disease and exercise. Of the pro- You know, that was largely his doing. Others too, but he was the man who really put it on the map. A very interesting man. I've written his piece in the Dictionary of National Biography which was a great pleasure to write. A very- if you have a moment, look him up.

[1:02:53]

And while I was at the Maudsley, towards the end of my time at the Maudsley, he was given by the university a Lecturer post, which he didn't have because he was only a Titular Professor in the Medical School as Head of the Medical Research Council unit. And I went to him as his first and only Lecturer. Yet I still wanted to be a clinician. And so I had two strings to my bow, which was a bit unusual. And I was a psychiatrist in the Hospital and a Lecturer in Social Medicine in the – in the Medical School. And I got very interested, as a result of working with another brilliant man at the Maudsley - called Felix Post, also a Jewish refugee, as it happened - on the psychiatry of old age, which was not a specialty, it was just a sort of little sub-interest. And he was a brilliant teacher, and I got very interested in that. Then Gerry Morris was on a government working party on the future of care for the elderly. It wasn't a government working party, no, no, it was a working party independent of government. But Kenneth Robinson, who subsequently became Health Minister in the Labour Government was on that working party. And he used to, as his Lecturer, use me for a dog's body for him. And he was one the one hand he liked people to help him with his interests; on the other hand, he was very generous in sharing interests. And so I got into this old-age thing. And so I got very interested in the psychiatry of old age and old age services in general. And a job came up in a psychiatric hospital in Ilford, Goodmayes Hospital in the outer East End of London. Which was a place- Bit of a sleepy old place, but it had its heart in the right place and it ...was forward-looking. And it said, "We need a psychiatrist to pull together the care of the elderly in this hospital. And in that capacity, I was one of the very

first people who became a consultant psychiatrist... with a special interest in the elderly. I was also doing general psychiatry. But... focusing on the elderly.

[1:05:29]

And I built up a service which I wrote about a great deal. And met the half a dozen other people who were doing similar things. And between us one way and another, over time, we founded a new specialty in this country, of the psychiatry of old age, which is now one of the biggest specialities in the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Not sure if it isn't, after general psychiatry, possibly even the biggest. And... one thing led to another. And I was encouraged to apply for the Foundation Chair, at the new medical school in Nottingham. Nottingham, as you may remember, being the first new medical school in this country ...in that century. And this was irresistible to me, especially as they appeared very sympathetic to my wish not merely to go there as Professor of Old Age Psychiatry, but to set up a comprehensive department for the elderly, which contained all the specialties. I was not Professor of Old Age Psychiatry; I was Professor of Health Care of the Elderly. And my department included physicians, psychiatrists and all the other relevant professions. And it had an orthopaedic geriatric unit, and a continence service, and it had a great deal of hospital outreach; that was the important thing. And that was a very rewarding – difficult – but very rewarding period of my life. And that was the last... eighteen years of my career as Professor in Nottingham. And so now you have the story from how I ...went to tea in Somerville to...[laughs] what happened in the years after and...there we are. And then you know, from there we retired. We came here where we already had a little house in this part of East Anglia. And Eleanor was working as a consultant in Norwich. And... And I was still very busy in the earlier years of my retirement in doing things and committee work. All sorts of things, lecturing. And so there you have my career...

[1:08:00]

You've written as well.

Sorry?

You've written as well...

Sorry?

You have written as well...

Yes, well I've written a lot about - about our- that goes with the job, doesn't it? I've written, and I've you know, lectured very, a lot and I've travelled a lot and I've had a very rewarding and privileged professional life. And... saw lots of people who've become my friends who I trained up and who are now doing similar things, younger people. And- very gratifying. Life has been, you know, in a sense, how can I put it? When I was first approached about doing this interview, I thought the ...I don't want to claim in any sense, status as somehow a survivor of the Holocaust implying some sort of suffering and so on. My goodness there was suffering in my family and around me. But my life has been blessed in every sort of way! The professional aspect of course isn't the main one. My family, and the fact that it's been a privilege to grow up in this country. It's been a privilege to have a very rich career. I've had, I mean a totally satisfying career with innumerable frustrations. You take that for granted in, you know in the political aspect, the organisational aspect. But deeply satisfying career. And a wonderful family. And ...a wonderful wife. And you know. From a very different background. And... so, I felt as I think when you and I first spoke I may have indicated I felt a little bit uncomfortable perhaps in being- putting myself forward as a survivor with people expecting in some way that I had had great suffering and...had come out the other end well. Deeply privileged and deeply blessed has been my life.

Good to hear. Good to hear.

Not without frustrations, and not without problems of many different sorts! But you know- my goodness, I've been fortunate.

[1:10:37]

Which year did you meet, and when did you marry?

Well...[laughing] you'd have another interviewee for that! We met in Oxford in ...1960. 1960. Yeah, 1960. In my last year as a clinical student we met twice. Do you want to hear

this? We met twice. Once, very indirectly I think, when Eleanor was in the audience when I was presenting a case to a visiting surgeon, as a medical student. And... she would tell you, a cocky medical student because the surgeon took one view of the case, and I took another. And flukishly, completely flukishly, when it came to operation, I was right and the surgeon was wrong. [laughs] So that was I think our first encounter. And then we ...a, a, a woman played at that time a very key role in our life, called Sheila Cassidy. I don't know if that name might mean anything to you. Well Sheila Cassidy was the person who... caused a rumpus with Pinochet. She was a British doctor in Chile... long story. I can't tell you why she was in Chile, but she was in Chile. And she got in trouble with Pinochet, and she got arrested and tortured and put in this stadium and then she was finally released but... She, at the time, was a medical student on the firm where I was the House Physician. And I was working very hard, you hear now about the doctors' hours and so on. In those days we took it for granted that hours were continuous, around the clock. And she said to me one day, "You look as if what you need is a square meal. Let me cook you a square meal." Great. And I went round to her flat for a square meal, and there I met Eleanor and from the beginning, that was the person who was going to be my wife. And very delightfully, at our actual wedding reception, Sheila qualified in medicine that afternoon. And the Professor of Medicine led her by the hand to our wedding reception in Balliol College... with a new doctor of ten minutes' standing. And that was the person who had introduced us to each other. So that's... a bit of how, how we met.

And in which year were you married?

We were married in 1963.

[1:13:38]

Was there any family...? Were there reservations on either side?

Good question. Well, on our side there were absolutely none. My parents, my parents, I think, were absolutely delighted. They loved Eleanor from the first moment. And there was no problem at all. Eleanor's parents were not quite so straightforward. My...my father-in-law was a distinguished physician of the old school, who had become a Head of the university. And I think he had some doubts about whether psychiatry was a legitimate trade. Also a

Jewish psychiatrist was very remote from the family background. Not least, I think, because they had had unhappy experience in the university with a Jewish First Professor of Psychiatry who had not been happy there, and who had pushed off. And they were a bit fed up, I think. And so a Jewish psychiatrist was not the flavour-of-the-month when I was brought home. However! We got on well, and everything settled down. And, you know, it was, it was completely happy and satisfactory but not as cordial as it was with my parents. And you know, I was an only child, and Eleanor became a daughter, and what she did for my mother in the days when she became frail and widowed, is something that I am deeply touched and grateful for. And no daughter could have done more. And it wasn't always easy. And, you know. So that- that I hope that's a fair account of how things were. But putting it altogether, you know, it's a rich, diverse background for my children. My, my, my parents-in-law were New Zealanders. My father-in-law came here as a Rhodes Scholar from New Zealand and then stayed here. And then joined by my mother-in-law. And they- it was a very different background: Scottish New Zealand Presbyterian - Czech Jewish. Spans a, you know, and the richer for that! And our children seem to have assimilated it – oh - very comfortably. Our children are very conscious of both their sides of their heritage and, interested. And somehow I think in recent years perhaps more interested in the...in the Jewish side, though I sometimes wonder how far that is because somehow I've got rather more immersed in my old age with it. And share it with them. But they are, you know, they very much identify with it. I'm not aware that there have been any problems arising from this mixed background at all.

Could we move from your children, back to your parents, and your family. And the fate of your family members...

Yes.

... who had remained in Czechoslovakia?

Well, the family, the close family in Czechoslovakia comprised my maternal grandparents, my mother's only brother, and ...that was about it, close family. There were brothers of my grandmother, but the close family was, was my uncle Hugo, my mother's brother, and my grandparents. Now, my paternal grandfather was a Rabbi in Prague, as I think I mentioned. And it had always been his life plan to retire to the Holy Land. And so, retirement in 1939, they left, and they went and again, a good question would be, how did they get permission?

In those days there was the white paper, there was all these quotas for Palestine and so on. But they went, as far as I know, perfectly smoothly.

[1:18:48]

There was a scheme in 1939...allowing people to go. It restricted numbers.

Well, how they got into that quota I don't know. That's- you know, I don't know. But anyway, they did. Perhaps something- Part of it was that my father's youngest brother – he was one of three brothers, and the youngest brother had gone to Palestine as a young man, as a keen Zionist and went to Palestine, and was already there. And he joined the RAF in Palestine, and became an intelligence officer – intelligence officer to Montgomery in the North African Campaign. And then... left the RAF to join the Czech Army. And in the Czech Army he came to England. So that was another happy story, relatively. He came during the war as a, as a, as a Czech officer ...transferred to England. And then there was my father's middle brother. And that's an interesting story of which I will try as briefly as I can, tell you a bit. But I mentioned that my grandfather's first job as a young Rabbi, was for this small Community in a town called Dobris. And it was a small Community that centred around a glove factory owned by a Jewish family called Fleischman. And it gathered around itself ...a few Jewish families, but was – I think - the main industry of this small town. And a great friendship developed between my family and the Fleischman family, which continued after my grandfather was so-to-speak translated to a bigger parish in Prague. And there was a very close friendship between the children of both families. And my uncle Herbert, the middle of the three brothers, married the daughter of the Fleischman family. And then a very curious thing happened, which again, I wish I had found out more, but they were trapped by the Germans in Prague, but in some way of which possibly you will know more about the mechanics than I do. In 1940, into the war, and... And long after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, he and his wife went to Palestine, from Prague! And I don't know how that came about. Anyway, so they lived out their life, the war in Palestine. The other brother was in the Forces and came back to, to ...came to the UK. And that is the story of the family really. And there were other links then grew up with this Fleischman family over the years, but that's a long story.

[1:22:14]

But at the end of the war, in case you – perhaps I'll just complete it. Those two brothers came back to Czechoslovakia. And the younger brother, Kurt, the Czech Army bloke, married the widow of the son of the Fleischman family, who was left with a small boy, survived Theresienstadt, and was on this little town with the glove factory. And the whole Fleischman family had been wiped out. And this widow, Irma, was left with a little boy. And my Czech soldier uncle, came to Prague, I think in 1947...might have been '46, as the head of an escort for a collection of German war criminals, for trial in Prague. And decided to go to this little town, Dobris, and see what was left there. And found this lovely woman, older than him, and with a little boy. And they fell in love, and they married to our amazement and delight. And he took over the glove factory. Uncle Herbert, who had married the daughter of the glove factory, also returned to Prague, and with sort of one hand ran - helped to run the glove factory, and with the other hand had a government job. And of course everything collapsed when the Communist take-over came. The glove factory was expropriated; they were both out of work. One of them worked as an upholsterer, and the other one as a night watchman. And that was what happened through - through the Cold War. And then eventually, things eased up a bit, and the middle uncle who had spent the war in Palestine, went back to Israel, and lived out his life in Israel with his wife and his subsequent wife. And the younger brother, the Czech soldier, eventually became the Manager of what was in its day quite a famous Czech Mime company – Fialka it was called. And with that, he travelled. And things had eased up and they could even have a joint holiday abroad. And they were on holiday when the Russian tanks moved in – to Prague. And from France they came to England, and they lived out their lives in England too. So that is the long-winded reply to your question about the family. But, I mean- of the real victims of the Holocaust, there was my mother's brother, and there was a brother of, of my grandmother. And my family was you know, came through relatively, relatively unscathed. Relatively. I mean how can you measure suffering in that way? But there are other families who have more...more victims. And so, that's– that's what became of us. And in Prague we have the grave of my - the Theresienstadt, Terezin survivor - grandfather which we tend and visit. He died...he died at a time of, when he and my grandmother were very poor, and had a very simple grave and a very simple headstone which keeps breaking. And I have to keep having it re-set and repaired and so on. So it's just been done again. But that is a little piece of ground that we treasure. And there is another great-uncle buried there. And again, there are commemorations of another such great-uncle who perished in, in the Minsk ghetto to which he was transported.

[1:27:09]

Do you still go to Prague at all?

We go to Prague. We try to go every year. And the children have been and... Well, for me, I, I am, deeply engaged with it. I love just to wander the streets, and just to be there. And, and there where we lived in the last, in the phase of my life that I remember, before we came to England, all that has gone. It's now a sort of spaghetti junction-type motorway, and the block of flats in which we lived has gone. But I've been to Dobris the little town; we've all been, the whole family and... visited them the, my grandfather's synagogue... which was trashed by the Nazis. Has been very nicely rebuilt. And is there. And the house that the Fleischman family lived in, is there. And that is for me very moving, and I think moving for the rest of the family. The... We are beginning now to explore the rest of – of the Czech Republic. You know, we take trips out of Prague, and so on. And it's a part of our lives that we go and nose around, just as we have been several times to New Zealand too. So this is all part of our family heritage.

[1:29:01]

Did your parents, as far as you know, ever contemplate returning to Czechoslovakia permanently after the war?

I don't think; not for a day. They certainly, I mean, after the war first thought was: what had become of the family that was left there? And that was before the days of computers and so on, so getting information was a nightmare. And we had no idea what had happened to the grandparents. And then, through the Red Cross we were notified that they were alive. That my uncle, Hugo, their son, had perished. And that they were in a little boarding-house in Prague, where they'd been located, transferred out of Theresienstadt. And so the first thing was to go and visit them. But we weren't terribly well off even at the end of the war. And the only way of going in 1946 was to fly, which was very expensive. But that's what we did. And... we went to Prague; I remember it very well. 1946. I was thirteen. I'd just had my Bar Mitzvah, for what it was worth. [laughs] And there we were. And ...we stayed with the grandparents. And I mean, my, my grandmother and incidentally also Irma, the Fleischman

widow, were ...solid survivors. I often ask myself, is it chance that they survived? No. They were, they were survivors. Un-anxious, un-recriminating, outgoing, cheerful personalities. And my grandmother and my grandfather had a little flat and they lived there. And we spent the summer there. And then in '47 we spent the summer there again and that I remember well, but there was never any thought of going back. I think. Certainly I wasn't conscious of one. We were by this time, totally rooted in England and happy to be. Whereas, as you will be well aware of course, that many of my parents' contemporaries did go back. And some with catastrophically tragic consequences. Others went back and then had to escape again. And then there were those who went back and didn't escape 'til... 'til the Prague Spring. So it was a, a dark, cold period. And we kept in touch with the family, and occasionally for a special occasion like our wedding, they sent us, a – heart-breaking - they sent us a dinner service of Czech china. But, first of all, they had lost the skills of making good china, and it wasn't particularly impressive. And secondly they'd lost the skills of packing it. And it arrived here smashed to pieces. And it must have cost them the earth that they could ill afford. This was the family back there. And- but we were in contact with them. And then later on, my grandmother used to come and visit us. But she too was now settled in Czechoslovakia and she was going to stay there. And then eventually she got frail, and we persuaded her to stay in this country. And she lived with my parents. And similarly the Rabbi in Israel. He died in Jerusalem, and is buried there. And his widow came and lived with us until she died. So...

[1:33:08]

So you were able to keep up your Czech to a certain degree...?

Well, yes, and no. I had to, with the grandmothers. But... but... I- it, it has decayed very badly. And that is a great shame, a great shame because another language is a, is a treasure. But as I say, I can understand everything in Czech, and can understand pretty well in German. And I'm not fluent in either, but I can get by in Czech-o. And Eleanor will tell you it seems to come back to me when I'm in high dudgeon, for instance. For instance, there was one occasion when it was obvious that we were foreign, and the woman said to me, "You're German are you?" And that got up my nose, as a first choice. And I came back in pretty voluble Czech, you know, that I bloody well wasn't. [both laugh] But there we are. Another little thing I will share with you, which is a very curious little experience which I will share

with you, which I don't know quite what to make of. We were going around the old synagogue in the Jewish Quarter in Prague. And there was a very nice woman was taking another party around. And we got talking to her. And I said, you know, "Well, I'm actually from Prague. And as it happens my grandfather was a Rabbi here." And she said, "Oh? Who was that?" And I said, "Oh, well, there's no reason why you should know him, but his name was Samuel Arje...in Smichov [district of Prague]." And she gasped, and she said, "Not the great Rabbi Arje, Smichov?" I said, "Yes." "Well," she said, "I've done my Master's thesis on him!" [laughs] And then the curious thing happened. I said, "Well, I mean I'm absolutely amazed! Is there any chance I could read it?" And she backed off immediately. And we had no idea, we couldn't understand. She froze. No...no. You'd have thought she would have...but anyway, there you are. So that was a little vignette of a couple of years ago in Prague.

[1:35:30]

Was that recent?

Recent? Yes! Two or three years ago in Prague! Yeah, yeah! In one of our visits we were going around; I don't know whether we were going with friends or we were going on our own. Anyway, we were – we were going round there, and so that was curious. I'd still quite like to know, but she actually gave me her card and I came across it the other day. And...But she obviously for some reason didn't want to share it with me. And I can't think why.

No.

There we are.

In terms of the situation there, post-war, were any members of your family maltreated in the sense of being expelled from Czechoslovakia?

Well...

Or abused as Jewish returnees who were unwelcome?

[1:36:32]

Very, very good point. That was very much in the air, on our visits there in '46. ...They were branded as Germans, and worse, Germans from the Sudetenland. Whereas in fact, they were not only Jewish but actually victims of the Sudetenland. My grandfather had a house there, and ran a Sudeten German magazine, called '*Hohe Warte*', the High Tower, in Karlsbad, Karlovy Vary. And came the Germans to the Sudetenland, and they... expropriated him and threw him out, sent him to Prague. And I remember his quote there, that, "Get out, or you'll go in a coffin." And yet, after the war, he was regarded as German. And in the great expulsion of the Germans from the Czech Republic, he was in danger, along with many other Jews, regardless of the fact they'd spent the war in camps. And they weren't- were going to be expelled. And there was a great anxiety, great trepidation in that first summer, I remember. Having survived, were they now going to be, in this incredibly mistaken way, expelled. And my mother who was a... very gentle person, absolutely got her dudgeon up. And she went round office after office and she said, you know, it brought back her memories of going round office after office for the immigration. And in the end she completely blew her top with one official. And she said to him, "Well, I spent the war in England doing war work, and what exactly did you do during the war?" My mother liked to tell this story. And he blanched and gave her the stamp on the bit of paper. And not only were my grandparents not expelled, but they were allowed, I've forgotten its name, and you will probably know. They became recognised as 'victims of fascism'. There was some organisation which I think even brought them possibly one or two possible privileges. I don't know. So- and the next time we went in '47, you know, things had settled down and they were secure.

[1:39:23]

In '48 we were all set to go, and there was a Communist take-over. And my mother was determined to go but wasn't going to, it was a bit irrational – wasn't going to... take me. I mean, you know, it would have done me little good if she'd got into difficulty there. But she- and she went bravely, and she went, and that was the last visit. And after '48, there were no more visits and alas I, you know, I grieved that I would never see Prague again, and that my family wouldn't know Prague. And one of the most marvellous things in my life is after the Velvet Revolution, to take all the family to Prague. In fact, it was a near miss, because in '68, I was signed up, and it was going to be a great experience for us with our eldest, still a baby,

to go to Prague. I was going to a medical sociology conference. And... a week before the conference, the Russian tanks moved into Prague. And I remember listening to the news in the morning, and weeping. I don't often weep, and I don't know how often I've wept, but I wept. And then resigned myself for decades that my family would never see Prague. So you can well imagine and you know what I'm talking about. It was just a wonderful thing to go, and in we went in 1990. So it was still the Havel new in the Palace. And the Citizens' Forum, you remember? And they were very heady times. So much so, that after that, as it became prosperous and Westernised and so on, I had no great inclination to go again. I wanted to remember that marvellous heady post-cold war visit. But then we started going again, and now, it's part of our lives- we haven't made our plans for this year, but I hope we shall be planning – planning a visit later this year. And I've got to go and check out these people in that new cemetery, who've restored the grave for me. And they've sent me a photograph on, on the email. But I want to go and check out that they've done a good job of it. [laughs] So, yes.

[1:42:18]

Have I understood correctly? A grave for you?

No, no! No, no, sorry, this is my grandfather's, my, my grandfather's grave. No, no, I...don't have any...God. This is my grandfather's. It's a- I might as well finish with this little story. But I never knew where my grandfather was buried. And I went to the- this is an unbelievable story, but why shouldn't it be told? I went to the Jewish Community in Prague, and I said, "My grandfather Max Glaser died in - '54 was it? - '54, and is buried here, and can you...?" I was, I'm afraid, very innocent. And I didn't know even that the so-called New Jewish Cemetery was where obviously he would be, but...

And it's not very new.

Well, not very new. Like New College in Oxford. Yeah. And when we went on the computer, couldn't find, couldn't find Max Glaser. Made a phone call; said, "There's no such person. We have no record of him. He must be buried somewhere else." And I said, "There's no question! I know he was buried here." So I went away crestfallen and returned to England and talked to some friends who are in the business of genealogy and so on. And then the most

amazing thing happened. They discovered on an American website, a photographic account of every grave in the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague. And they sent me a photograph of my grandfather's grave, in that, in that cemetery. And it also had the row, and the number and so on. And so of course we haired back and there it was! And can you believe why it wasn't known that he was there? They had misspelt paradoxically his name, as 'Glazer' with a 'z' which is the English way of spelling it. And his name is Glaser with an "s", which... But they had misspelt it 'Glazer', and they didn't notice that there was a Max Glazer with a 'z' instead of a Max- And they might have said to me, "Well we don't have a Max Glaser with an 's', but we've got one with a 'z'. And the dates would have fitted. Anyway. So that was a strange ...happening, a misunderstanding, but eventually found the grave. And I got there and having had this picture of the grave, we found it a complete shambles. It had fallen completely to pieces.

That must have been very upsetting.

[1:45:06]

It was a bit upsetting, but then it all, you know- very impressively we went to the cemetery office and said, "Can you restore it?" And they said, "Certainly." "And can you do it by next Monday?" And they said, "OK." And we paid a very reasonable thing and they, they restored it and before we went away we had all the children there with us. We all went and we saw the grave beautifully, beautifully restored. And so we're very attached to it.

It must have been a very special moment to take your stones...

A very special moment. And as I say, since then, it's- well, when they had set the grave stone and so on they were very hard up, and my poor widowed grandmother. So they had a very simple grave, and not very durable one. Whereas the graves that are there for pre-war times are much more substantial [laughs] and prosperous.

This is terribly important for you and your children?

Indeed, it is; indeed, it is! Yes. Yes. And of course I remember him so well, because in those years that we used to go back to Prague after the war, there he was. An old boy like me now.

A bit different in all sorts of ways, but, yeah. My sort of age, and you know, there we are. The next generation will have to look after him.

Those links are clearly very close to your heart.

Very close to my heart. Very close to my heart. Yeah. Yeah.

In your heart of hearts do you now feel ...totally British? Or do you still- do you feel a little bit British?

No. It's not- there's no sort of so much space and which is it. I'm totally British certainly, but also totally the other side of me.

Complementary.

Yeah! Complementary, and there's room for them all. Look, when I, when I was still in... post, I used to have ridiculous questionnaires from the university grants committee and so on, saying how much of my time do I spend seeing patients? How much do I spend in academic work? How much do I spend in administration?

[1:47:29]

And I used to answer: 100% seeing patients, 100% ...You know. [laughs] It doesn't...And this is the same, you know. 100 percent British, I feel, and 100 percent the other.

It's- yeah. Yeah.

Is there anything else that you would like to add or any particular reflections on your life and your family history and circumstances?

Well I think I've rather given you that haven't I? Great gratitude, sense of having had a very good deal in life. In every sense. A good deal and a good deal in life. And if I should go tomorrow, I would have had a jolly fortunate and privileged life, for which I'm deeply grateful. Deeply grateful to my parents for so to speak having given me life twice over by,

you know, for coming to this country. Was a... people don't realise. It was a very brave thing to do, which the majority of people couldn't summon up the courage to do. And they did it; left everything and came. And I have a deep respect and gratitude. They were not perfect, but I'm perfect, very far from it. But that was a heroic move in their lives, I think. Complete uprooting and change, background. And descending from comfortable bourgeois lives into poverty as refugees. That was a brave thing to do. And I admire them, and I yearn to tell them how much I appreciate that in a way that, in real life one never quite does. Perhaps one doesn't appreciate it until late. Blessed and happy in my family. Good friends with our children. Healthy, happy family, and a very rewarding professional career.

And you've contributed a great deal to this country.

Oh, Gosh, who knows. The beneficiary has been me. Yeah.

It's been a great privilege to speak with you. On behalf of AJR thank you very much indeed.

Well, thank you. It's been a treat for me to talk to someone who knows so well what I'm talking about. That's very special. Thank you.

Thank you. Very special for me too.

[1:50:27]

[End of interview]

[Photographs]

[1:50:50]

[1] Right, well this is my mother's parents. My maternal grandparents, Max and Agnieszka or Agnes Glaser. And this was their wedding photograph. It was about 1903.

[2] Well, these are my father's parents, the Rabbi and his wife. Samuel and Mina Arje. And... that picture was probably taken in Jerusalem. They came over here to visit us, and

then returned after the war. And then returned to Jerusalem. And Samuel died there, and is buried there. And Mina came to us in England, and is buried in the Brighton Cemetery.

[3] This again is my grandfather, Samuel Arje the Rabbi. And this picture actually has very happy memories for me because it was taken in Marienbad or Marianske Lazne in Czech, in 1947 in the immediate aftermath of the war. And we crossed Europe, crossed Germany by train. And saw a completely devastated Germany. Flattened cities. Cities where there was only the platform left at the station. Hungry, wretched-looking people standing on the platform. And the whole thing was grim. And then we crossed the Czech border, and suddenly everything was bright, and fresh and joyous. And on the platform in this beautiful spa town of Marienbad, which consists of – of wooded hillsides with wedding-cake white hotels, there was, also on a visit with my family, including my grandfather and so on. And I stayed with them for a week. And this is him enjoying, enjoying a drink, in Marienbad.

[1:53:04]

[4] OK. Well now, here's another picture. In the front is my grandfather and grandmother. And behind them are their three sons, and the wives of two of them. And this is taken in Dobris, the little town near Prague, where my grandfather had originally been the Rabbi. It was his first job as a rabbi. And on the left of that, the woman nearest the left, is Milena Fleischman. The daughter of the glove manufacturers of that town that I spoke of earlier on, who married my uncle who's beside her. And then my...my... Sorry. [brief break] In the middle at the back is my father. And I remember the badge he was wearing, which was quite something just after the war saying, 'BBC'. That was a – you know – that was a good trademark. And then there is my youngest uncle of the three brothers, with his wife, who was the widow of the son of the Fleischman family who was murdered. And with her is her small son of that marriage. They too had survived Terezin, Theresienstadt. So that was a very symbolic post-war picture and it's taken in the garden of the Fleischman family house, in Dobris, which had been of course expropriated by the Germans, and was later to be again expropriated by the Communists.

[5] Well these are my parents, Otto and Hedy Arje. And what can I say about them? I think that would have been in the early part of the war probably. I would say that was early 1940s. There they are. Much loved.

[6] Well, this again is my Glaser grandparents, with my mother, who looks I suppose two or three years old, so it must have been in about 1909. She was born in 1906, so that's a nice old picture. Again with his fine moustache.

[7] OK? Well, this is a very significant picture for me. This we received in a plain envelope with a Swiss post stamp, in 1943, when we were in Evesham. And it was the only trace we had throughout those dark days of the war, of my grandparents in Prague. And it is a picture of my grandmother, and her much-loved little dachshund and her daughter-in-law. The wife of her son Hugo. But delighted and reassured as we were to receive it, we had no idea how old it was. And it obviously dated before what we subsequently learnt, that she and her son had been deported to Terezin and he then sent east and murdered. So these were in the relatively happier days during the war before complete disaster befell them. And I remember the arrival of this picture, and how we yearned to get reassurance that they were OK from it. But we knew we couldn't have that reassurance because we had no idea how old it was. And of course by the time we got it in 1943, they were already in Terezin. And I think he was not yet deported. In fact, he died just before the end of the war – weeks before the end of the war.

[1:57:35]

[8] Right. Well this is another very poignant picture for me. This is my mother's only brother, Hugo. And his wife, Julcha. She was a physician and he was a lawyer. And this is in very happy times, skiing, before the war. Alas when he was deported, his wife who wasn't Jewish, divorced him. And the...I can't bring my mind to think of his feelings when he, on top of being deported, he learnt that, if ever he did! After the war when we went to Prague, she was utterly full of remorse. She yearned for my mother to forgive her. And it was a very difficult situation. She just ...craved that forgiveness from my mother. She had married again and had a very unhappy short marriage. But fundamentally, she felt she had betrayed him and herself. And it was very hard; I remember bits of the meetings. And my mother making it clear that it wasn't for her to forgive. And being pleasant and appreciative of her outstretched arm, so to speak. But a little tale of a tragedy of our time. And that's a picture of happy times.

[9] This is my grandmother Agnieszka on the left. It's a picture I found among her stuff. I don't know the date. They're in Prague. In the middle is my great-grandmother, Teresa, her

mother. They both, with the rest of Agnieszka's family, were taken to Theresienstadt. My great-grandmother died there, and Agnieszka survived. The other lady is a friend, an unidentified friend.

[10] Now my grandmother Agnieszka, whose pictures we've just been looking at, had three brothers. One died young. And these are the ones who survived. And they are Richard on the left, and Hugo on the right. And I remember them. They were both bachelors, men about town. And they used to enjoy spoiling little me: taking me to a *kavarna*, a coffee shop, and buying me a *zmrzlina*, an ice cream. And you know, they were nice guys. Richard died naturally. And, and, and Hugo was murdered by the Germans. He was deported to the Minsk ghetto, and died there. And they're all collected together on a gravestone and commemorated in that Prague cemetery that's so important to us.

[11] This is an obscenity of our day. This is my grandfather Max's identity card. And you'll see that it has a 'J' for 'Jew' stamped on it. And then obscenely it has a stamp saying, '*Ghettoisiert*' – Ghettoized. So he became a non-person, and there it is: a document of our time and a warning to all.

[2:01:31]

[12] This is my father's Czech passport, with which we travelled to England. I think we're all on that passport, though maybe my mother had a separate one then. But she certainly had a separate one later, which alas, I don't have.

[13 two documents in one photo] Well this is the precious entry visa. Dover, 17th of August 1939. We arrived in England. And ...later shall I go on? Later I will show you the exit visa they had to, my parents had to – to get, because they weren't allowed to leave without the exit visa. And that's the one with the German stamp and the Swastika on it.

Well, here is on the left, is the precious entry visa. And my goodness that was ...sorry on the right. Shall we start again?

On the right here is the precious British entry visa which took so much getting. And it was issued in May. On the left is the entry visa to Dover, in August. And both are blessed, blessed tokens of my life. But, the reason we couldn't go until August, is presumably as we'll show

in a moment that we had to get an exit visa and that took some getting. And that's on another page.

And here on the right, is the German occupier's exit visa. And that is dated... what is the date? August the 14th and then we were off as soon as we got it, evidently. I know no more the chronology of this than we see here in the passport. But that's how we put it together. But I do know, that before one could get an exit visa one had to pay enormous imposts and confiscations, and to say nothing of the arbitrary abuse one had in the offices when one waited to get them. And I do remember my mother coming home from these excursions and the anxiety and the grief and the horribleness of it. Anyway in the end they got it, and they were on their way.

[2:04:34]

[14] Well this is the familiar and awful Jewish star that Jews were made to wear all over Europe, under the Germans. I think I found this among my grandparents' stuff. Whether it's just an instance or it's one they actually wore, perhaps doesn't matter very much. And I think we may go on to look at another picture where my grandmother is actually wearing it, in Theresienstadt. But there it is, and to be ...kept respectfully as I do. This is the star which it was always said, that the King of Denmark wore one, and said he wore it 'as a badge of honour'. But I gather that's apocryphal and he never did any such thing. But it's nice; let's believe that he did.

[15] Well, this here is a quite incredible picture. I was watching the television one day. Punishing myself by making myself watch a programme about Adolph Eichmann on Channel Four, some years ago. And it included excerpts from the notorious German film called '*Der Führer Schenkt Den Juden Eine Stadt*'. The Führer makes the Jews the gift of a town. And it was about Theresienstadt, and how it was tarted up, cynically and rapidly, with new turf and new clothes for people, pseudo-schools and cafés for a visit by the Swiss Red Cross. And the Swiss Red Cross came and were totally duped. In fact, they said of the place, incredibly, that it was 'stern but just'. And if you could imagine such a statement in that context. However, I was about to switch off the television, when who should I suddenly see but my grandmother. In Theresienstadt. And there she is; she's the one on the right, and she is coming through a door and looking up in a mixture of surprise and contempt at the pseudo-photography that's

going on. What you can't- I managed through the kindness of the Wiener Library, Ben Barker at the Wiener Library, to get from Channel Four stills of this sequence. And this is one of them. On a previous one, it would be clear that the little patch on her left chest is the Jewish star. The '*Jude*' such as we saw a moment ago. Anyway, what an incredible picture. My grandmother in a concentration camp. And it is a very treasured possession of mine.

[16] Well, this is my grandfather Max's grave, in what's called the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague. But in fact it's not new at all; it's new in the same sense as New College in Oxford, ancient. And it is a grave which we always visit. When we found it, it was in terrible dereliction and we've had it restored it. And on it, commemorated is his son, Hugo, who perished in Kaufering, a sort of co-camp of Dachau. And he too is commemorated on my grandmother's grave in Oxford. So this is a story of the Jews of our time. One grave in Prague, one grave in Oxford. And one without a grave.

[2:08:45]

[17] Well here's something of a curiosity and another treasure of mine. This is young Masaryk, the son of the founder of Czechoslovakia, Tomas Masaryk, after whom I am named. Thomas - Tomas. And this is in December, 1939. A picture from the Daily Herald newspaper of those days of a function of Czech Jewish refugees attended by Masaryk. And as you see, he has two such Jewish refugee children on his lap but he's much more interested in the little girl. And it is a great joy and honour to me, to have a picture of him, for he was a great man, and came to a very tragic end.

[18] This is, this is a wedding photograph. July, 1963. Isn't that nice? Our wedding! Our wedding. And this was, well it was at the Registry Office in Oxford. And this is taken at Balliol College, my College, where we had our reception.

[19] Well here's a cheerful picture. This is us visiting Buckingham Palace which we don't do every day, and me being given my CBE, my gong. And there you see from left to right, Rona Shulman, a dear friend, wife of Ken Shulman, a very dear colleague and friend. Eleanor, myself, our daughter Laura, our daughter Sophie and our son Sam. But there's a nice story to this picture. The picture is being taken by Ken, so alas he's not in it. And they were over here for our Golden Wedding a couple of years ago and they produced this picture for us. Now on

this visit Ken and Rona had come to England from Toronto. Ken was speaking at a College of Psychiatrists meeting in Torquay, and he asked his booking agent to book him to Torquay. But the travel agent perhaps not knowing Torquay that well, booked him to Turkey instead. So they said, "What the hell, why don't we have a holiday in Turkey?" so they came to Torquay, and they went to Turkey. What they didn't tell us, was that they had arranged to come back from Turkey on the day of the investiture at Buckingham Palace. And when we were all at Buckingham Palace, Ken and Rona showed up. And that's why the picture is by Ken, and there's Rona in the picture.

[End of photographs]

[2:12:05]