

**IMPORTANT**

**This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees**

**Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.**

**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

**AJR**

**Winston House, 2 Dollis Park**

**London N3 1HF**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	36

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Klinger
<b>Forename:</b>	Carl
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	15 June 1913
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Uzhorod, Austria

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	5 November 2003
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	London
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Anthony Grenville
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	2 hours 15 minutes

## **REFUGEE VOICES: THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 36**

**NAME: CARL KLINGER**

**DATE: 5 NOVEMBER 2003**

**LOCATION: LONDON**

**INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE**

### **TAPE 1**

AG: I'm doing an interview with Carl Klinger, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2003 in Finchley in London. My name is Anthony Grenville.

AG: First of all, Mr Klinger, I'd just like to thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us. Just to start with, could you tell me your full name please?

CK: My name is Carl Koloman Klinger.

AG: And where were you born?

CK: I was born in Uzhgorod, in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, on 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1913.

AG: Thank you. And for those of us who are not very familiar with that part of the world could you tell us where Uzhgorod is, the many countries it belonged to?

CK: Well, Uzhgorod is wedged between Poland, Romania, Hungary, there were frontiers around it, it is Carpatho-Ruthenia, which was created in 1919 after the First World War. It is a town which is not very far from the Carpathian Mountains. There were very, very heavy fighting in the First World War then and there is a very important pass which between Poland and Carpatho-Ruthenia, that passes the Uzhok Pass, and there were many, many fighting in the First World War. The town itself is, was at the time when I was there, when I was born there, it was 30,000 people, it was very, very active. When I grew up there it was a very, very active town, with industry, and a lot of manual workers, and it was very striving, and it was in a way, when it became Czechoslovakia, it became in a way the Czech government trying to pacify the Ruthenian population and therefore they did...

[Interruption: Phone call]

### **Tape 1:3 minutes 15 seconds**

AG: Just starting again after the telephone call. You were saying that the Czech government after 1919 was trying to placate the Ruthenians.

CK: Yes and therefore they did spend a lot of money there, they did, there was, in the middle of the town there was a River Uzh, therefore the name Uzhgorod is derived, and they regulated the river which every year practically was flooding our homes. We had a home where we had a garden, it was quite a distance from the river, but each year practically we could count with it that it will be flooded with the Uzh water, but after of course the regulation all that was rectified and people were very pleased that it had been accomplished and they benefited a great deal from it. The people were very mixed nationalities, there were Ruthenians, then the Hungarians, and then the Czech people, a lot of Czech people moved in there from Bohemia and Moravia. And there was a very active social life there, and of course there were quite a number, a very high percentage of Jews.

AG: What sort of percentage, do you know?

CK: Erm, I couldn't put my finger on it, how many it is, but it could have been 25% or so, or even more.

AG: Several thousand.

CK: Yes. The Jews had commerce, and industry and intellectual life as well, and they were very, they were supported the theatre, we had a theatre and any other activities and concerts and so on.

AG: Were they mainly orthodox?

CK: It was mainly orthodox. It was orthodox, yes, it was orthodox, but a proportion of the people there were not orthodox. Because we had even I remember a so-called a Neolog there, which was quite strange in that environment, and the people were there, in a way there was quite a different, there were differences in the two, a lot of people who were on the orthodox side and the unorthodox side, which very often came out in certain quarrels between these two factions of people.

AG: One other background question. Before 1918, was it in the Austrian, or the Hungarian part of the Empire?

**Tape 1: 7 minutes 3 seconds**

CK: It was Hungarian, more Hungarian, but of course I was very, very small at the time, and I was only six or seven years old under the Austro-Hungarians.

AG: Turning to your family, could you tell me something about your father or your father's family?

CK: I know very very little about my father. First of all, when I was 18, I, I left Uzhgorod for Prague, and I was very young yet, and in a way my father hasn't had any more people left from the family only distant uncles and so, these uncles were farmers, they were living in Hungary mainly, and I had, and my mother was from the real Hungarian Puszta, from the plains of Hungary. And she was brought up in Debreczin, which was a very known Hungarian town. And in a way we had a very normal, middle-class family, we had always, father provided the family well, he was the proprietor of a mineral factory, like soda water and other

mineral things, mineral water. And in a way we had, I think, prosperous living there, we had around the house we had the factory which at the time was, I remember as a young boy I always enjoyed to go out with the people who were working for my father on the delivery vans which were drawn by horses, at that time cars were not yet popular, not yet used. And when I was allowed, when the driver of the delivery van was kind enough to take me along, so it was a great happening for me as a young boy. And also I remember that we had a, we had a carriage which we used for personal use which was also drawn by a horse. And that horse so much used to stop everywhere on the way to, on delivery, that when we used it for private use in our carriage, he stopped all the time at the shops where we usually delivered the various mineral waters. So of course we were greatly excited about travelling this way in town.

**Tape 1: 11 minutes 23 seconds**

And I had been educated in Uzhgorod for the time being, and then after my elementary schools, I, there was no, I wasn't at a Gymnasium, but a kind of an in-between school which finished when I was about 14.

AG: Sorry to interrupt you. Was this a Jewish school or...

CK: No, no, no, that was a general school. There wasn't any special Jewish schools as such. In the basic elementary school there were a lot of Jewish children in my class at the time, I believe that was a Jewish school, the first, first years of my education. Only the later one which was a mixed school, that was four years, and when I was about 14, then my parents didn't know which way to try to give me some further education, so my father specially was the one who initiated, they wanted to give us children some commercial education, and they managed to get from the Czech government to establish a commercial school which was two years and it was very, very high standard. And actually at that time my Czech was not very good because we spoke still Hungarian at home, so it was rather difficult for me to switch over from Hungarian to fully, entirely Czech school, all the subjects at school were Czech. As it happens it, we, many of us were in the same position, and we succeeded, and first my sister, who is two years, who was two years older, she was first in that school and then I came to that school as well, and later, after the two years, there was a further problem how to go any further.

**Tape 1: 13 minutes 48 seconds**

So we haven't had any further commercial school there, but in, neighbouring Mukacheve, which is Munkacs, which is another similar size town like Uzhgorod, had a commercial academy, and the commercial academy was four years, and it ended with a matriculation. Now, but that was away from Uzhgorod, so we were, so my parents decided that I would finish that and that I would get my matriculation in Mukacheve in the commercial academy and as it happens I went to that academy for... they acknowledged the two years which I had in the Czech commercial school, they accepted the two years, but I had to do only another two years in the academy in order to qualify, to get the Abitur, to get the certificate. And, but this means that I had to leave home, I had to live in a different town. And we were living in....

AG: Can I take you back a moment because we've gone on quite far into your life. I just want to go over some basic facts. What was your father's name?

CK: My father's name? Leopold. Well he, well, he was a very caring father, he is very progressive, actually in our family it was our mother who was the more religious, she had a Kosher home, my mother, but my father wasn't very interested in this part of the, our life. But, how shall I put it?, it was a harmony, they agreed upon it, that my mother wanted to be Kosher perhaps because of the neighbours and so she was more inclined to keep, to the orthodoxy.

AG: Did you attend synagogue?

CK: We did, we did go to synagogue, on Holy Days, but as I say it wasn't a very important part of our life, but it was a Kosher home, and we did keep also the Shabbat, in a sense, but we had quite a lot of liberty as well, as children, not as strict as I can see sometimes here you know, where people are on Saturday going to the synagogue and so on. It wasn't very regular with us.

AG: Did your father have to fight in the First World War?

CK: Yes. My father was in the First World War. He was four years in the War. He was an officer in the army and luckily he did, when he came home I remember he had a rifle, when he came back for leave, and he was four years in the army then at the time, yes. I don't know on which front he was, but he was in that. As a matter of fact I've got a book which somebody compiled about Uzhgorod, and there it mentions all the males that were in the army, most of the Jewish people, there were hundreds of them in the army and many years all of them. Some of them became officers, some of them ordinary soldiers, and some of them, two or three of them were medical people, they were doctors from the town, who were taken to the army and serving almost three or four years in the army during the war.

AG: What about your mother, what was your mother's name?

CK: Her name was Rosalie.

AG: And what was her maiden name?

CK: Her maiden name was Freifeld.

AG: What sort of person was she? How do you remember her?

CK: She was a very kind, very good-looking, very very, very very caring mother, very very caring mother, and she, she, I will come to it, she was the one with my sister later was a very very great help when they tried to survive the years of the Holocaust.

### **Tape 1: 20 minutes 0 second**

She was very caring for us, and specially our education was very important, my sister was already then, she at five or six started piano lessons and so on, and I myself, I was also educated playing the violin and so on, but unfortunately I neglected it, and instead of trying to master it I played football. But she was a very very lovely mother.

AG: And what was your sister's name?

CK: My sister's name was Bella. And she was as I said, she started early playing piano, and she qualified in the Prague conservatoire as a qualified piano teacher, and she had given quite a few concerts locally and in Košice, which was the Eastern part of Slovakia, which had a broadcasting station, so she had some concerts given well, and in Uzhgorod quite frequently, and they were, and I think it was very well attended, and she was right till the end, she was very much furthering the playing of the piano. It was a great help to her in her later life.

AG: And coming back to you now, you were going to tell me about moving away from Uzhgorod to Munkacs when you were 18.

CK: Yes, it was very difficult, but at the same time, it was, we were all the holidays we spent of course at home. We used to, we lived in digs...

AG: When you say 'we', what do you mean?

CK: I was there with a friend of mine, a friend of mine with whom I was from kindergarten right to commercial academy, in the same class.

AG: What was his name?

CK: His name was Imre Kovacs.

AG: That's a very Hungarian name.

CK: It is.

AG: Was he Hungarian?

CK: Well, Jewish of course, he was Jewish and Hungarian and we were very, very good friends. And I'm sorry to say that he survived the Holocaust, and soon after that, just when it's finished, the war he died of typhoid, which was terrible, terrible to me. I didn't know then, I knew only at the end of the war, when I got some kind of, we got some communication that Imre was in Budapest and I tried to help, do what I could, but at that time antibiotics were very difficult to get, and he died, he was a very young man. It was, and with him I shared a room in Mukacheve, always two, what do they call it? We were Kovacs with a 'K' and Klinger with a 'K', so we were sitting for examinations at the same time as well.

AG: Was this a rented room?

CK: Oh yes, this was a rented room. We were actually in a very good house which was, belonged to the Director of the electricity company of Mukacheve. He was a Jew. He was the head of the electricity company there. And as I say they had very prominent places, Jews in Carpatho-Ruthenia. And we were very, very happy there actually. And as I say we were every so often going home, which was a regular bus service between Mukacheve and Uzhgorod. So holidays we spent with our parents.

AG: You said that Jews were prominent in Carpatho-Ruthenia. When you were a boy in these schools, what were the relations like between the Jews and the Hungarians, Ukrainians, and...

**Tape 1: 25 minutes 50 seconds**

CK: Very very pleasant. It was very pleasant. There was no animosity, I didn't find animosity, and I think that the communities were very peacefully living next to each other. It was, it was accepted, this type of business was, belonged to the, Jews are doing it, and this type belonged to the others are doing it, is part of the other side of the community. There was no animosity, there was more irredentist movement. Hungarians were betraying, or crying about the day they were taken away from Hungary. There was a big Hungarian community there, and they were under the impression that this part of Carpatho-Ruthenia should belong to Hungary, which did eventually happen, after 1938.

AG: Going with, staying with your boyhood for a moment. What sort of interests did you have as a boy, apart from football?

CK: Well I don't think that I had any special, at that time we, we were, we were new to certain kinds of sports clubs, there was a sort of rivalry between... There was a Jewish and a non-Jewish football club, UAC and UTK. UTK was the Jewish and the UAC was the non-Jewish one. And that was a rivalry like here we have Manchester United and Arsenal.

AG: What, could you tell me what UTK stands for?

CK: Yes. UTK is [Hungarian name – Hungarian Sports Club], K is Klub with K you see, that is Hungarian. [Hungarian name – Hungarian Athletic Club], UAC.

AG: So that was Hungarian?

CK: This is Hungarian, yes. The accent was very much Hungarian, because as I said that was the previous Austro-Hungarian Empire. And many people were of Hungarian origin there. And Jews were also Hungarians. They were not as Jews, they were Hungarian-speaking Jews.

### **Tape 1: 29 minutes 5 seconds**

AG: No Yiddish?

CK: No Yiddish, no. The Yiddish, well, there was, let's say, Mukacheve was much more religious, Jewish religious, and therefore there was more that had Yiddish, but I couldn't speak the language at all. I had to learn of course Hungarian, Czech, and Russian, and Ruthenian, yes.

AG: And no German either?

CK: German we spoke because my parents, we had a Kinderfräulein, you know, a Kinderfräulein who looked after us, and we learned from her, and then the parents spoke between themselves sometimes in German in order that we the children do not understand, we picked up that slowly, and with the help of the Kinderfräulein we learned German as well. And we had German of course in the school. We had a kind of a, a German which I could make myself understood and so on.

AG: I wondered if German was the language of culture?



CK: No, I wouldn't say, no it wasn't, in that sense, no. That was mainly Hungarian, and later on it became mixed with Czech, German didn't come in then. German was spoken actually mainly by Jewish people, some of them spoke Yiddish as well, but that wasn't very popular, wasn't spoken very much in Uzhgorod.

AG: And when you were, during your studies in Mukacheve, when you did your examinations, I assume you passed your examinations, when was this?

CK: That was in '34,'35, around that year, yes. And then I had my, after my matriculation, I, my parents decided there were too many... I wanted to go to University, and my parents wanted me to move... and they decided that the medical side of it is too overcrowded and we had too many medical people, and therefore Law was very much in demand, so at that time it wasn't the pupil himself to decide, but the parents. They decided I should go to the Law Faculty in Prague. So in order to qualify to go to University I had to pass Latin. Latin was something which was essential for the Law studies and we had Latin in the commercial academy. We had, the commercial academy was in Hungarian. But we had two other; we had German, and, German and Russian, Ukrainian, as our second language there, or third language, beside Hungarian, which was the main language. So in order to qualify for University, I had to pass matriculation from Latin. So I had taken a year, after finishing my matriculation I was studying Latin, which I got my certificate, and then I went up to Prague. That was in 1938, 37.

**Tape 1: 33 minutes 55 seconds**

AG: Had your father's business suffered at all during the depression? Did you notice any economic...

CK: No. No. They, actually he was the only manufacturer of this kind of mineral water. And when it came to it, in 1938 when in Vienna it was decided that that part of Uzhgorod, that part of Carpatho-Ruthenia will go back to Hungary, I left for Prague. So actually I don't know how the business was because I was there in Prague and I was too young to be interested in all that, you see. I got my usual amount every month, you know, for upkeep in Prague, and that was that.

AG: You said you had a Kinderfräulein. Did you have other servants?

CK: Yes, we had. We had always, we had a servant who was, they were usually young peasant girls from the country.

AG: Ruthenians?

CK: They were peasant girls from the country, who wanted to earn some money, so we had somebody who lived in, who lived in our home all the time, yes.

AG: So did she do the cleaning?

CK: The cleaning, yes, and all the heavy work.

AG: And what did your mother do?

CK: She did the cooking. Yes, she had to do the cooking, and it was quite a different kind of cooking that you do today, that you go to Marks and Spencer and you go back..., you just have to warm it up and so on. My father came home, came in from the, we lived a bit further, came back home from the business, home to have lunch every day. So we had always at 12.30 or so we had lunch, and that was always a full three-course lunch. It was, the main feeding was at lunchtime.

AG: Did your mother have a social life, with friends and so on?

CK: Yes, we had the usual social intercourse with friends and so on, yes, we had quite a number of friends there, we had quite a number of variations around that. And then through us children, with other parents, the association like the Kovacs, who were, the parents, you see, we were both away, we were living together, so the parents got together and discussed various things, our progress, yes, there was a social life there. As I say, my sister had some concerts sometimes, they went to the theatre very often, we had a cinema there, and so there was always something happening.

**Tape 1: 37 minutes 54 seconds**

AG: Was your parents social circle largely Jewish?

CK: Yes. Yes. In a way the two communities were kept separate. There was no animosity as I said, but it was, they were separate. They had their own friends and we had our friends.

AG: Did you notice very much things like Hitler coming to power in 1933?

CK: No. Well, we, the first thing when we, yes, we organised already in 36-37 boycott of German goods for instance. Yes. We did. We didn't want the German films. Oh yes, we did feel that. And then when it came in 1938, I happened to be at home at the time, because it was just the end of the summer season, I was, I was, that was in 38 yes, and it was the Viennese Count Ciano [at the conference in Vienna that decided the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia], I don't know if you heard about it, the Italian Foreign Minister, and they decided that the part was best for [should be given to] Hungary, of Uzhgorod, you see, and I took the next train from Uzhgorod and I went back to Prague. That was September 1938. And that was already at that time it started, the turmoil in that part of the world as well. Hungarians occupied then Uzhgorod and part of Ruthenia, and I got in, I had been in contact with my parents through telephone and telegrams, and when the war broke out in '39...

AG: Let's stop before we go on, just to ask you, you would have done one year, you did one year of study at the University of Prague?

CK: I was there from '38, '37, already I was in Prague.

AG: Studying Law?

CK: I was studying at Charles University, yes. And I had had already two, well there were three state examinations in Law in Czechoslovakia, I had two of them already, and I was studying for a third one, which was the final actually, and then the war broke out. So anyway, I left Uzhgorod, and I had several telephone calls from home. 'Do come home, everything is quiet here, and there is no reason why you should stay in Prague, because probably the war

will break out soon.' They knew Hitler was coming. So I don't know, I had an instinct, I think that is something that is quite, I still cannot explain it. I knew that I cannot go to East, I had to go to West.

AG: What date was this?

CK: That was when the war broke out. That was in end of 38.

AG: Right. Yes. So after the Germans had occupied.

CK: After the Germans... Yes it was already reunited with Hungary, the part. And my parents were trying to tell me to get back there because it is everything quiet there.

AG: Did they make any attempt to leave?

**Tape 1: 42 minutes 30 seconds**

CK: No. They were under the false impression that... my father, who has various decorations from the army, from the First World War, that nothing will happen to him, or to the family. Nobody expected that something will happen [like] what happened. In a way it was it was very very very... I didn't know what is coming. And perhaps, as a son perhaps I should have gone home, but I had another brother at home. Yes, I had a younger brother.

AG: I didn't ask you about him. What was his name?

CK: Nicolas. He was working in the factory with my father. We will still come to it, what happened to him after. But he was already nice, a very good-looking young chap, and he had a local education, and he stayed there unfortunately. But actually we were, then my father bought a car for the family, just at that time we were under the Hungarians, and I think that it proves that they were very well-off already, I think. And I was away, and the distance between Prague and Uzhgorod was 1000 kilometres, so that was always an overnight, there was a fast train from Prague, at 9 o'clock in the evening, we started off, to go back to Uzhgorod, and we were there about 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock at lunchtime the next morning. So that was an all-night journey to go back, so it was quite a distance. And the way of communication was not so easy, it was only either telephones or telegrams. Or letters which were much slower of course.

**Tape 1: 45 minutes 19 seconds**

AG: How do you remember Prague?

CK: Prague was at the time, it was very, very pleasant. To be in Prague and to be a student there, I had a vast circle of friends, I lived in digs, there were other boys either from the same faculty, or they were from medical side of it, and we had a very very nice life there. Very very good. And very often we went to the coffee houses to study, because that was nice and warm and it didn't cost any money, or even to the Museum, where there were reading rooms, and so on, so we were reading there, studying there in the reading room, and Prague was a very pleasant place.

AG: What part of Prague did you live in?

CK: I lived in Prague 12, the Vinohrady, Weinberge, it was just a bit North from the Museum, which is so very prominent on the Wenzelsplatz.

AG: Were you a good student? Did you do well?

CK: Well, I wasn't very, specially, I just did my work, medium, I wouldn't say that I was an outstanding student. I was much better in the commercial academy. There, you see... we had these two years before this Czech commercial school and that was so intensive that practically the next two years in the Academy I had learned already in the two years before, so that we were excellent, I had a very good matriculation certificate. And it was, therefore we had a very good time in Mukacheve at that time because we didn't have much to study because we knew all that. So my student years I always look back very nostalgically and very pleasant.

AG: Did that change, first of all when the Germans occupied the Sudetenland? Did...

CK: That I didn't experience anymore, because when the Germans came in, I went out.

AG: Could you tell me a bit more about it? How you decided to leave?

CK: Well that was in 1939, the 15<sup>th</sup> of March that I remember very well. It was a very wintery day. And suddenly, I was in Prague and German tanks started to come into Prague. And of course I knew that I have to go West. Now suddenly the police headquarters was full up with people waiting for certificates and there were queues, thousands of people waiting there. It was the middle of March. And I met a colleague at the University, and he said 'Do you know that for students the Gestapo has established an office in another part of Prague', and if somebody wanted to get exit permits then they issue there, in that part of Prague.

So next day I was, first thing to see other colleagues in that place which I was told and really that was a Gestapo office, and that was early morning, about 8 o'clock, or 7.30 or so. And they started to work at 8. And then a black-uniformed German comes out and said: 'Jewish Studenten to the Polizei headquarters'. Police headquarters. So I knew that there it is almost hopeless, there were so many thousands of people. So I, I don't know what made me do it. My colleagues they went away. I stayed there and I went in. And I said to the Gestapo man: 'I have planned to go to London to study English, and I need an exit for three months'. 'Are you Jewish?' I said 'No, I'm not. Gewiss nicht'. So he gave me the permission. While some of my colleagues were still there, when I came out, and I was so ashamed for that you know, that I didn't, I didn't, wanted to tell them that that's what I did. The fact is that these colleagues eventually they got their permissions as well. Actually the one who was there as well, I spoke to him yesterday, he is in Santa Barbara, in California. I just spoke to him yesterday. And I got this permit. I got it still that permit. And that enabled me to get a ticket; I had to get a ticket to, to get a permission from the Czech authorities for the visa. You know the Devisen, foreign exchange, which was very difficult to get. And I knew I didn't have time for all that, and I wanted to get out from Czechoslovakia as soon as possible. So I have.. I went to Masaryk station, the main station where the trains are leaving for abroad. And I went to the booking office, and I said to him: 'Listen, I have got here this exit permit to go out', they were Czechs of course there, 'I need a ticket to go to London'. So he was a little bit, and he said 'You haven't got a permission from the foreign exchange and so on, but I give it to you'. You see they were helpful. And I got a ticket. I happened to have enough money at the time still to arrange all that. That was already the second part of March. And he said 'You have to come back for the ticket', the day after or so, or something. Anyway, I got the ticket, and I, as soon

as I had the ticket, I left everything, I went to, I was going via Holland to London. I had this friend there, who was a goldsmith; we were allowed to go out, with a small parcel, 10 marks, or the equivalent of 10 marks, and one ring. And the goldsmith made me a ring, that ring here, which is on my finger from the end of March, and I can't take it off now, you see. And it was on me and I said when it comes to it, and I will be very hungry once, I will sell it, and I will have to eat. It didn't come to it luckily. So anyway, I got a train, and I arrived to Holland, it was in Oldenzaal. And in Oldenzaal they were very, very nice. They, they were fighting for us, to keep us accommodated, to take us home and so on, and I was staying with a Dutch family they were very, very helpful, and there were already the British started to be careful to let everybody in, to England at the time, and they had already a committee there, who passed the people, that was before the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, because the 1<sup>st</sup> of April they introduced already visas, you couldn't go to England, there was no need for visas. But anyway that was already before then, but they had already a committee who selected the people who will be allowed to get to England. I had good credentials because I was a member of the Social Democratic Party, and I had a paid up legitimation, and when I came to that committee I said I'm a Social Democrat and I cannot go back or anything because my life is in danger. So I got a permission. So I arrived here in Liverpool Street.

**Tape 1: 57 minutes 16 seconds**

AG: Can I just ask you, this committee, were they Dutch or British?

CK: No, they were British.

AG: Jewish?

CK: I don't think so. I can't remember. It was a kind of a few people, you sat down, and you were questioned about your past and your intentions and so on. I cannot quite remember who they were. I believe they were only British. And of course as it happened I got the permission straight away, and in the first possible train I then came here to Liverpool Street.

AG: We've got to take a break now to change the tape.

**TAPE 2**

AG: Carl Klinger, tape 2. You were just going to tell us about your arrival in England. Do please tell me about that. Which port did you land at?

CK: Harwich.

AG: And what happened there?

CK: In Harwich, we then went to Liverpool Street.

AG: Did you have any difficulties at Harwich, when you came to..?

CK: I can't remember now how it happened. But I can remember when we arrived to Liverpool Street, there some committees fighting about, to getting us into some accommodation. The fact is that we landed in Rowton House. The Rowton was a down-and-out peoples' lodging, somewhere in Camden Town I think, which had a little cubicle, with a

bed in it. I don't know what was the quarrel about, because people were, and I couldn't understand it because I didn't speak the language, they spoke English, and I noticed that they were saying that some people go here, some people go there, anyway, I landed there, I had never slept yet in such a place like that one, but we, that night was in Rowton House. It still exists, I believe.

AG: Yes. It's a men's hostel.

CK: Yes. And next day, I don't know what happened. The fact is that some friends of mine as well who were with some other people, friends, colleagues who were in that group which came over at the same time.

AG: Was this a group of Social Democrats mainly?

CK: Well, I was a Social Democrat, and the others were progressive people of course.

AG: Communists?

CK: No, no, no, they were, perhaps some were but not to my knowledge, and then after we, we were taken over by the Czech committee, it was Mecklenburgh Square I think, it was at that time.

AG: Was that its name, the Czech Committee?

CK: The Czech Refugee Committee.

AG: Is this the Czech Refugee Trust?

CK: Yes. The Czech Refugee Trust, yes.

### **Tape 2: 2 minutes 58 seconds**

And it is such a long time that I cannot really recollect what happened. But I know that we were given some cash, and we were supposed to find lodging outside, a few days after we arrived here, and I cannot quite remember which was the first lodging where I... I think I know, as far as I remember I went somewhere to the East End of London. We arrived to Liverpool street, and we didn't find our way yet, it's such a big, London, to find our footing, so we got a room somewhere in, very near Whitechapel, and that was a very Jewish part of London at that time. It was quite a revelation for us to see the shops with all the herring and cucumbers and big barrels, displays, and the quantities which London needs, so it was quite an experience, because we didn't know anything of this country, what people were trying to sell. And the people coming there to buy, in the markets, and the various bakeries and.. the whole thing it was quite a new experience for us and it was quite interesting of course. And we slowly, we... that was very much the beginning of April, soon after we arrived of course from Prague, or I arrived from Prague, and we stayed there for not very long, and I was sharing with a friend of mine who was a medical chap who is now in New York. He was also from Carpatho-Ruthenia and he is a doctor in New York. Actually two of them, there was another one as well, two of them, we were three sharing some room there. Later on we decided then that we want some home and yes we had some cash, as I said we got some pocket money from the Trust, the Czech Refugee Trust and they, we actually found ourselves

very rich, because the value of the pound was very very high, we got I don't know, £2 or £3 a week, which was a lot of money, I think for the room we paid about £1 or something, and the rest of it was eating, and the rest of it, to pay some repairs, some shoes, and so on, the Refugee Trust was very, very helpful, they really did give us a very good start.

**Tape 2: 6 minutes 53 seconds**

AG: And you say they were on Mecklenburgh Square?

CK: I think it was Mecklenburgh Square, yes.

AG: And do you have any memories?

CK: Well, I didn't have much do with it because I was registered there such as a refugee, as a Czech refugee, and I was allocated a certain amount every week, and so we, we had to carry on ourselves.

AG: So you went there once a week for the money, to pick up your money.

CK: I think so. It was, yes. But it was in a way very unsatisfactory, I never used to have money for nothing, and so, then later in June or July I met a friend of mine who was..., by the way, there was in Mukacheve, there was the first Hebrew Gymnasium, school, which was the first in the world I think, it wasn't anywhere else, and he was an *Absolvent* of there and he was then at the University in Prague as well. I don't know which faculty he had, but anyway he was, David Davidovich was his name, and he was, he had apparently had appendicitis so he went to Brighton to recuperate. Brighton was a kind of a spa, and he was taken and he was operated on and was sent by the Committee people at that... it was warmer and so he was sent there. And he came back to London, that was some time in July in 1939 or so, and he, and I met him and he was brown and very well looked, and so I said to him 'Where have you been, David?' He said 'Oh, I have been to Brighton'. And I said 'Where is Brighton?' He said, 'Well, it is about an hour from London, it is on the South Coast at the sea, and I was sent there and I lived there now for a few weeks because I was having an, I was under an operation'. So I said... So 'I'm going back again', he said then. 'Do you think that it would be a good idea to come there, we don't do anything here in London, why not to go to... there is the sea, you can swim every day and so on?' So I decided, I picked up my little pack and I went to Brighton. Anyway the fact is that I went to Brighton, and I got a lodging there, and again, I think I paid very little, £1 and 5 shilling I think and I had one meal, and breakfast and everything included, and the meal I think.. So anyway, they, when I got in the morning the tea, that was tea with milk, and I said 'Why with milk? We never had tea with milk. We have it with lemon usually. Or with honey.' They said 'No, no, here in England we drink it with milk.' So that was a first experience of a cup of tea. And so I stayed there and I had a friend of mine also from our town, he was, he came as well to Brighton, and then he said, well we would like to do some kind of work, we don't want to just to, to be like that, we get here some money for nothing, and so we got a typewriter to send out some letters,

**Tape 2: 11 minutes 2 seconds**

and there were a very nice schoolmaster, a retired schoolmaster Mr Goldstein, an Englishman, English Jewish man, who took us somehow in, in care, and he had a very nice family, and he, he was very kind, so I said 'Can you put together a letter, we're offering our work.' So we did

send out some letters, to some advertisements, we bought a typewriter for five shillings, which was, I wish I would have had it, as a lovely museum piece, you know you had to set each letter separately in order to... you know a very, very old typewriter, but we did put together a letter and we were helped by Mr Goldstein, and he did send it out to various future employers, and we got a letter from Mr Caspari, who was having glasshouses in Cheshunt, which is just outside Waltham Cross, outside London, and there he said, he needs, he will engage two of us for £3 a week, and we can start straight away. So we packed up and we went to Mr Caspari's place, to Cheshunt, and started to work there. My friend Maurice Köstenbaum, he was not so strong built as I at the time, so he was given the watering the plants, at that time they were switching over from chrysanthemums and various flowers to full productions, tomatoes, carrots and so on we were growing there in the glasshouses, and he was watering, and I was doing some more manual work, digging outside and so on. But I must say it was very beneficial because I never did that in my life, and in a way it did give me a certain strength, and I was very pleased because I was independent from the Committee, and I was earning my keep, and that's what's happened.

**Tape 2: 13 minutes 51 seconds**

AG: Was Caspari Jewish?

CK: No. He was a former Italian chap who he was established here, he had big glasshouses growing really, just before we came, it was chrysanthemums, mainly chrysanthemums. He was a very charming man, and we were working there until the war broke out.

AG: Before we get onto the war, just a couple of questions. How were you received by the British population at large.

CK: Well, we had very little contact with British people. As a matter of fact, we had in Cheshunt, we met by chance a Mr Ewing. Mr Ewing was the head of the Metropolitan Water Board. An Englishman who had a lovely house not very far where we were lodging in Cheshunt, we were lodging in Cheshunt with a man who had doing... a shoe, a shoe repairer. He had a house and he had a room, and Maurice and me has hired that room. And we lived there and we had some food as well in the evening and at breakfast. And Mr Ewing was extremely nice to us, they were a couple who didn't have any children, and they were already mature people, in their fifties or so. And they were very intrigued about us as foreigners living, coming to Cheshunt, and they never met anybody, and our stories were for them, it was, by that time we could speak a bit of pidgin English and we got on extremely well. So they insisted every Sunday we had to go to them for Sunday lunch, and I remember we left, they were very sorry about it that we were leaving, because we wanted to go back to London because I said 'we are going to do something for the war now'. When we left he called us in and he said: 'Carl and Maurice, if you need anything later on, don't forget, we are here. Anything what you want or you need, you let me know if you are short of something or cannot afford something, let me know.' They were charming people. And we kept on all the time in sharing the correspondence and we visited them sometimes during the war as well. And so then we came back to London. I think I had a room yes, in Highgate first, and then I had a room in Regency Lodge in Swiss Cottage, you know that lovely building there? So we had there, there I had already a third friend of mine, a Czech friend of mine, Suchy, and three of us, we rented a flat there, which was at the time the war broke out already, and that was my short visit, well three or four months in Cheshunt, and then we were back again in London. In



London we, I volunteered there for the army, they said well you stay where you are, and I got a job in a war factory.

**Tape 2: 18 minutes 37 seconds**

AG: Where was that?

CK: It was in, soon after when the war started, it must have been in the beginning of '40.

AG: Where?

CK: In Park Royal.

AG: Oh yes.

CK: Park Royal had a war factory which was making components, it was an American firm actually who was making components for the submarines. So I had some engineering inclination and so on, and I read up some books about or something, in between, and I got a job there. And, first I got a very, something very simple and so on, then they realised I could do something even more complicated, then they gave me a blueprint, then they said well you have to get that and that, there are certain components on the lathe and the vertical driller, we had to get this machinery to produce these parts and they were very much, very much in a hurry for these things because we were very much unprepared for that war. So, and my future wife was there as a progress chaser, so she was all the time behind us to carry on as much and as quickly as possible the things... So I was working there for quite a while and we, we... In the meantime I volunteered for the army, I went for the examination and I was accepted, and then I was called up to the army. So I said to my boss in my factory that I was leaving, and he said 'Oh no, you are not leaving, we are going to ask you to do much more here than when you go to the army. We can't spare you.' So they apparently applied for that I should not go to the army. And my, I had some friends who were in the Czech Army and they said the whole day we are playing cards here; we are not doing anything here. So if you are doing a job you are doing much more in one day than what we do here in a whole year. Because they had been for many years already in the army and nothing happened, that was a part of the war when it was still, it wasn't very active yet. It was in 41. So anyway, they didn't let me go, and I stayed there and I was working right through the war years in the factory, and...

**Tape 2: 22 minutes 40 seconds**

AG: A couple of questions. First of all, did you have any contact with your family?

CK: No. Very seldom I had some Red Cross information. I tried to send them. You couldn't send any cables or anything.

AG: Before the war.

CK: Before the war, yes, we had, before the war, yes, they were phoning me and they were sending me telegrams: 'Come back here, it is everything quiet.'

AG: When you were still in England?

CK: When I was already in England.

AG: They wanted you to come back from England?

CK: Yes, they wanted me that I should, and of course in Prague I got a lot of calls from them, before, you see, in 38 and 39, beginning of 39. I got a lot of calls from my parents 'Come back, it is everything quiet' and so on. Anyway I had no intention, I don't know, that was something that was in me that the best is to stay. So...

AG: In the end did you find out what happened?

CK: No, I did not. In that part of the world, you see, they were perfectly all right up till 1944. You see, in '44 they were living perfectly quite well; they had everything what they wanted and so on. But in 44 Hitler put a much stronger pressure on Horthy [Regent of Hungary] to deliver the Jews. And they asked, they, they ordered that all the Jews of Uzhgorod has to go to the brick factory, so that was the time that my sister took over. My sister who was there, my sister, my mother, my father, and my sister was just two years married, they had a baby, Eva, who was about 1 year old or not even, when this whole upheaval started.

AG: And your younger brother?

CK: My brother was still at home. He still at home at the time. He, my brother, he was in the army but not at that time but previously he was in the army as an ordinary soldier, but at the time he was still a civilian, he was helping in the factory. My sister, actually my father managed to get Christian papers for my sister, for my mother, for my brother-in-law, and the child, some fictitious people, who died, they took some dead people's names and all that you see which fitted and so on. But the name which they unfortunately took was Schmarz, that is a Schwab, a Schwabish name, which is very, it sounded like Schwartz, what it wasn't, but the Hungarian gendarme made it that it didn't sound very convincing that it wasn't Jewish. The fact is that they didn't want to leave the factory. All the rest of them went there, and eventually they were transported to Auschwitz. My sister and my mother with the child were travelling together to the various spas in Hungary. Spas where the people were changing very quickly, so that was my sister's idea, and somewhere it worked out. They went from one day to the other, but very often they were stopped. At that time my little niece was already was three years old. So that was already in 44, she was four, five years old, she had a big cross and she was taught the catechism and so on and saints, and she was a very, very intelligent little girl, and she was often stopped and they said, 'Well, can you tell me that and that in connection with the Catholic religion?', and she never failed. She never failed, and her name was Elisabeth, although her name was Eva, but she was Elisabeth, in the certificate which she had. So they were hiding, they had a lot of difficulties, and my sister after the war, actually I have got, they made after the war several pages of her story, of what happened. That was deposited in the Wiener Library as well. It's quite interesting what they went through, it's quite incredible. Including my mother of course. But they somehow survived in Hungary in various spas. My father was under the impression that he was staying there to look after the house. We had a property, we had a factory there, he was taken in 44, and he perished in Auschwitz.

**Tape 2: 29 minutes 30 seconds**

My brother was taken into the Hungarian workforce, and was sent to the Russian front, and he died of typhoid. He was 27 years old. [Pause] So they survived. My brother in law, who is an electrical engineer, the husband of my sister, he was in Budapest in a printing place as an assistant, and he did not, he, as a non-Jew, he didn't look at all Jewish. And he was a qualified chap, a qualified electrical engineer, a very intelligent fellow. And he had the chance to steal some of the laissez-passers which they printed there, and he had a lot of people, and he relied on a lot of people who could keep these laissez-passers, and filled them, and falsified it, and they saved their lives through that. And they, as I said, they survived, in Budapest, in the end, and they went back to Uzhgorod where we had still, we hoped we had something to go back for. But of course the Russians were there at the time. They got somehow a room and so on, I was told, the family, and they tried from there to build up a life. But they realised that to live there under Russian [...] it was terrible. They were, although they were, they went back to our home, but they had only a room available, the rest of it was with Russian officers, and the Russian officers were, were, they were very nice, but so very primitive, that for instance they didn't know what is a bell outside. So when they, when my sister explains, well the bell is there and when you want somebody to open the door you press the button and somebody on the ringing of the bell they will come to the door. So he was so intrigued, the officer, that they started to play this with each other. [Laughs] That was the Russian army. But they were very nice people otherwise. So they thought this is not a future for them to stay there. To get out from Russia was very difficult, so they had to bribe somebody who will take them over from Uzhgorod to Slovakia, which was very near towards Košice, because the border was almost outside Uzhgorod. And during the night, somebody has taken them, walked them over to Slovak territory, and from there they went over to Košice. And in Košice we had some relations, so they stayed with them for a while, I don't know how long they stayed there, and still I hadn't had, that was after the war, but I still couldn't get... the communication was very very... I couldn't come there and they couldn't come out. And eventually they went back to Prague and in Prague we had some friends and so on and they established themselves in Prague. My sister started again to teach piano, and my brother in law got some, had some other kind of work and so on, and they were living there very modestly, they had a very very nice flat actually in Prague, and later in, in 48 or 49 I managed to get there to meet them. But of course my father and my brother disappeared. That's, we didn't know what's happened to them. Only later we found out that my father was eventually sent to Auschwitz and my brother died in Russia of typhoid. And, well, that was in a way the story. And then I managed to get, when the Communists were there of course, and when I went to Prague to visit them, they were always warning me 'There are some friends but you mustn't talk in front of them, they are Communists, and you have to be very careful'. Because the Stalinist regime in Czechoslovakia at the time was very corrupt and a lot who, people were very denouncing other people and so on, and you had to be very careful whatever you say. So it was a very, very difficult time for all of them at the time.

### **Tape 2: 36 minutes 25 seconds**

But luckily I could, the little means what I had, to send certain things there, but it, I remember that mother became ill with some kind of infection and I was sending through a pilot from here who was flying to Prague some antibiotic which at that time was so... Anyway she died in 57 in Prague and so my sister with her husband and the child Eva was there, and my sister had after the war another child. So there is a ten-year difference between Eva and the newcomer. Eva is, became, she was studying medicine and she became a doctor of medicine and she met her future husband on one of his conferences in Czechoslovakia where there was a French doctor who lost his wife just before, a few months before, and had two children, and

he was very keen to marry Eva, and they married. He is, he is a Dozent at the Sorbonne. And Eva specialised on nervous diseases, so she was in charge of a hospital in Paris as well. She is a very, very special girl. When she was a young student she spoke several languages, so Russian as well of course, so the Intourist asked her to take Czech people to Moscow and so on, visiting and so on, as a tourist guide she was going, Eva, and as she spoke several languages and so on and she is an exceptionally lovely person. And she chose that profession because she wanted to have, because she knew how many people have been in the war and so on.

And she is in Paris with her husband today, and she just retired, in September, she is sixty-something, and they had a very nice life. She had a child with her husband, and she became a French lady. And now she is retired. And the other, Martha, who is ten years younger, she is a chemical engineer. She got her degree at the university in Prague. And she married a Czech non-Jewish architect, in the name of Ivo Thaler. Ivo is an exceptionally nice man. He, they married just about, in, that was in 74 I think. They married, they were married only about a year and a half or so, and they had a beautiful flat in Prague. And by then my mother was visiting me here in London, and my sister was visiting, they got each individually permission from the Communists to visit me, individually. They couldn't come together and so on.

**Tape 2: 41 minutes 33 seconds**

And Ivo and Marta asked for permission, and by fluke they made a mistake, they gave both of them at the same time exit permits to visit me. And of course when they came here, they didn't tell anybody there at home, they left that lovely flat, everything, and they never came back again. So of course my sister and my brother-in-law, they got quite in trouble. Of course they told somebody involved in that that they moved from Prague, that they stayed outside and they said, well we have nothing to do with it, they couldn't be persecuted because it had nothing to do with them, it was their choice. So they came here. They stayed with us and that was... yes, they stayed for six or seven months they stayed here. It was very difficult because I wasn't very well off but we managed it somehow. They eventually, after six or seven months they got a permission to go to Canada, so they went to Montreal, and in Montreal they got jobs in their old profession, so they extended themselves, they have two children, lovely two children, a boy and a girl, both of them also now... the boy is now working for the government and the girl is working in some other kind of.. they both have some kind of degrees, commercial degrees and so on. And Ivo is working in a very big firm as an architect, he was doing a lot of work when they had a few years ago this exhibition in Vancouver, they live in Vancouver, and as a matter of fact he was here a couple of weeks ago, Ivo, he went back because his family, his Czech family, the remainder of his family, is still in Czechoslovakia, in the Sudetenland. But they are very Czech people, very charming people, the father was a High Court judge, of his, and they are very very nice people and we got on very well with some of them. Because we went back to Prague, we went to Prague with my family and so on, and we met his family and so on, and they are very charming people. And they are living very happily in Vancouver now, Marta, and in a way that is my story.

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 48 seconds**

AG: Well, we seemed to have covered that. Can I take you back to yourself in the wartime years. You say you spent the whole war working with this factory.

CK: And then after the war, when...

AG: Before we get to after the war, just a couple of questions about your experiences of the war...

**Tape 2: 45 minutes 11 seconds**

CK: The experiences of the war, some of them was very very very difficult. Because there it's happened that one day I came home from work, that was in the early morning, and I was living in Willesden, I had a flat there, and there was a policeman standing outside the door of the entrance and he said, 'Oh, you can't go in there because there is an unexploded bomb.' So I said, well I'm sorry but I'm going in there because I have to go to have a sleep, I am just coming from work and I have to work, tomorrow, and tonight as well. And I cannot be without. And he said, well you do it on your own risk and so on, you know. But that one, and another one where we were bombed out, a bomb landed very near, and damaged the building where I was living and so on.

AG: Where was this?

CK: That was in Bayswater. And my wife also had, she was also doing night work, and the whole ceiling came down on them, so we had our share of the war of course, but as it happened, we survived.

AG: What were your impressions of the behaviour of the British population during the Blitz, during the war?

CK: I think that they were very very tolerant in a way. As a matter of fact I had a foreman who was in charge of me in the factory, and he gave me the blueprint and said 'Carl, carry on with that'. And I looked at the blueprint and I saw that there was a deficiency of a 2000<sup>th</sup> of a millimetre difference. And I said, that's no good, we can't make it because it won't fit. So he was a foreman, but he didn't know much about the whole things, you know, technically, so... So he said 'you do as you are told', so I said 'no, because we are going to turn out scrap'. So we had that... that was a confrontation between me and him. But otherwise... he was very good actually. They didn't have any batteries at the time, because we had torches, and it was very important, it was blackout everywhere. So I got .... he said 'I get you some batteries', he spent half a penny on it. He said, you know, we British we believe in profits you see. So it was, I had a very very good experience with the British, I must say. And it was, I told you that I don't have such a good opinion of the British Jews.

AG: Why not, if I may ask?

CK: Later I discussed it with my friends and so on. They were not very helpful to us refugees. You probably know that as well that it's... they were, on the contrary they were against that there should be so many people let in here and so on. Well, they had their own reason, they were afraid that there will be anti-Semitism and so on. Well that is in a way, obviously in retrospect it's easy to make a judgement, but somewhere it leaves a bitter taste. But with British people I had very good experience. And after that I got a job with a friend of mine who had his own business, and he had electrical installations. And he, he had already about half a dozen people working for him after the war. And also rebuilding machinery for the clothing trade, sewing machines and so on.

AG: Was he English?

CK: No. He was a friend of mine from Czechoslovakia. He was also a very good footballer. Yes. And he said, 'why don't you come to work for me and so on', so I became his secretary or something like that, I was running with him the business. I was his employee there. After a while a friend of mine who was in the British army, also Czech, who was a schoolfriend of mine, with whom I also matriculated together, because he was also 'K', Klein was his name, and he had a business of sewing machines in Stoke Newington. So he said to me, Carl, I think with your experience, you might be able to do, I would like, why don't you try to do on your own. So I said, well I haven't got any premises and so on, I haven't got any money to establish myself. He said 'well I can give you here the office, you can use it, it's up to you, there is a telephone, there is a desk for you, and when you are established then we will talk about this further. And he was very nice, he was a very good friend of mine. And I gave notice to my friend, I said 'look, I want to establish myself', so I established myself, with his help, with this friend of mine, who gave me this opportunity, and I did build up an export business of machinery. I exported thousands of machines to the underdeveloped world, and they were very, it was quite successful, and then I made myself of course independent, I had premises, bigger premises, and I had people working for me, mechanics...

**Tape 2: 52 minutes 50 seconds**

AG: What was your business called?

CK: Sewing Machines Export Company.

AG: Where was it based?

CK: It was in Angel House, in, you know, at the top of City Road, there was a Lyons Corner House there, next to it. You see Angel House was a big house, and I had a big factory there, and there it happened that a friend of mine came one day, and he was in the same position as I, he was employed by somebody, and he would have liked to be independent. So I said to him 'we have got here a desk, we have got here an office, you can establish yourself'. And he was in electronics, and he said, well I would like you to join that we do it together. So we did it together, I became a partner in that. So we established a firm: Klinger Controls, making electronic things. We were making amplifiers, loudspeakers, tuners, I have all these things here, made by Klinger. We had a big factory, we had about 55-60 people working for us.

AG: Was that also in...

CK: That was in the sixties.

AG: The factory, was that also...

CK: No, we had new factories, and we had a factory in the City, the, and then we had one in, in, near Haverstock Hill, in... Yes, we had in two places, it was quite an establishment, as I say about 55-60 people working for us. And we were turning out hundreds and hundreds of various electronic things. Then in the 70s, end of 70s the Japanese came in and they flooded the market with cheap... we couldn't compete anymore, so we sold out. We didn't do badly. It was time to sell out. But I had my other business still going, you know the export business of machinery. And I was, up till 1985 I was working in that, I was having that. And sometimes I had customers coming from Africa, from Nigeria, and from Sierra Leone and all

these other places in Africa, and they said 'Mr Klinger, your machines are so good that we don't have to replace it.' [Laughs] That was of course very very gratifying to know. But we did send thousands of machines. Usually I went to New York, I bought machinery there, there are certain special machines you know, button sewers, and button-hole machines you know, and complicated machines, and plain machines, or power machines, and motors, and stands, and so on, that I had... and after 85 I gave it up. My son didn't want to have anything to do with the business and so he started on his own and so I let it fade out, the business as such.

AG: I must ask you about your family. How did you come to meet your wife?

CK: She was a progress-chaser in the... And through that we met.

AG: And what is her name?

CK: Hertha Reiter was her name. She is exceptionally good wife. I will introduce you in a minute. She is, we have got two children and we were very very happy, since 1948, after the war we married. She has got two brothers who survived. One is, the elder one is Dr Reiter, he is a biochemist.

### **Tape 2: 57 minutes 37 seconds**

AG: In this country?

CK: Yes, he was working in Reading University till his retirement, he is the same age as I am, I am about three months older than he is and I have a very good relationship with him, and another one, a younger, who is ten years younger than Hertha my wife, a latecomer, who was a lecturer in Bath University, a metallurgist. Harry. The first one is Bruno. And he is just retired as well. I live too long, I never expected all this. Because Harry came once as a young boy, he came here with the Kindertransport. And he was sponsored by an English family, an English Jewish family who were very far removed from Jewishness, it was a manufacturer of margarine, very wealthy people. But they were people who were mixing with upper class, upper Jewish class, you see, English...

AG: We've got to stop because the tape is coming to an end.

### **TAPE 3**

AG: Carl Klinger. Tape 3

We were just talking about your wife. How did your wife come to this country?

CK: She came here on a domestic permit. As it happened she had quite a rough time, in a very, it was very difficult, she was 18 years old, and had a very sheltered life in Vienna and when she came here and to be a domestic servant, it was a bit difficult, the transition. She came here with Persian Lamb coats and dresses and shoes, and quite a trunk of various shoes, at the time it was still allowed to bring from Austria various things. And when she arrived sometime, she was telling me, she went to Manchester, once to Manchester, and then people who were waiting for her they never approached her, because this well-dressed young lady was not our future domestic servant. So she was high and dry left on the station and she had to get somehow to the people to communicate that she is waiting for them. She had a lot of

experiences which would be quite interesting for you. But, to discuss, she had not so pleasant experiences with her employers and some of her Jewish employers as well. And luckily they were here the three of them, the two brothers as well, and it helped in a way they could somehow help each other. When she came over she started to work actually with the same people, the margarine manufacturer who gave the affidavit for her young brother Harry. And she was a lady's maid, which means she had to prepare the bath for the lady, she was a young woman, the daughter of the manufacturer who lived such a high standard life here, and she was very nice, but she was very much apart, she didn't want to know very much about that. Her conscience was that she got somebody in, sponsored, she was very good to Harry, and she enabled, got Harry taken to a boarding school, as a nine year old boy, and he went to University and it all has been on her expenses. And well, so we are very grateful to her of course. But as such she didn't want anything to do further. And there was something else you wanted to ask me.

**Tape 3: 4 minutes 1 second**

AG: Well, let's continue with you and your wife. You got married in 1948?

CK: '48, that's right.

AG: And where were you married?

CK: We were in the Hampstead Registry Office.

AG: Hampstead Town Hall?

CK: Yes, yes. That was, we were in there. And we were lucky enough to have some friends, they were sharing a flat, three of them, somewhere in St John's Wood, three girls, and they were bombed out during the Blitz, a couple of times, and one of them went to America, and she became very well off and so on and they kept in very much contact, the two of them. So in the last 27 years we did spend the holidays together with these American friends from New York. They were very very generous to us; we have been practically every year in the Caribbean, or in America. Actually, America as such is better known to me than England, because I have been only once up to Scotland, but I have been several times in the States, in the East and West Coast, so we of course went there for holidays with this very dear friend. Unfortunately she died a year ago. We went there the last time a year ago in October. So October we went there the last time, we were supposed to go again, but I don't think I undertake again that journey, considering my age.

**Tape 3: 6 minutes 8 seconds**

AG: You said you married in a Registry Office, obviously not a Synagogue. Do you maintain any...?

CK: No. No. I am a member of the Liberal Synagogue, the Synagogue here, many years here. You see Hertha also worked before we had the children with a gentleman who is an English Jewish gentleman who had quite a big business in second-hand clothing, and she was a secretary there. And she, they were members of the Liberal Synagogue and they said, 'you will like it, it will be up to your liking, the service and so on.' So...

[Interruption: Phone rings]



**Tape 3: 7 minutes 12 seconds**

So it's they were members of the synagogue, and they said I will probably like the way they have the service and so on, and I went many many years ago and I am a member there, and I don't make much use of it, I am going once a year to the synagogue, and my children are not as, not religious at all, but they are very much aware of their Jewishness, just the same as I am, but that's, that is how far it goes.

AG: When were your children born?

CK: They were born in... Well Anthony is 48 and Katherine is 46, so they were going to private schools, I must say we hardly could afford it, but that was one of the priorities of ours, and I think that we didn't regret it. In fact my daughter once asked me 'Daddy, why did you send me to the private school?' She went to the City of London School for Girls. So I said 'So that you can speak properly, so that you don't speak the Finchley accent', that was one of the reasons why we did send you there. And then she had of course her degree in Sussex.

AG: What does she do now?

**Tape 3: 9 minutes 10 seconds**

CK: She is working with the Wiener Library. And again, something which is a strange point, we were once invited to one of my nephews who had a wedding in Lincolnshire, and she had to come back earlier for work and we had to spend the night there in a hotel and suddenly the police came, came to announce, 'Is there a Mr Klinger, he is wanted by the police.' So I went to the telephone, and the police said 'your daughter had a car accident', I said 'what's happening?' and he said, 'I cannot tell you anything, she's in the hospital, here and here', and my wife and I, we jumped into, we had just breakfast at the time, we were having breakfast with the wedding guests, and I jumped in the car and I went to that hospital, it was a very foggy morning, and when we arrived there luckily Catherine was waiting in a dressing gown and I could see that she was alive, but I didn't know what was happening, if it was serious or not serious, he was told to give a message. So that was a very serious accident which luckily she escaped unhurt. It was something, she was on the main road, and the Royal Air Force chap from the side road just shot out from the side road, and it was, her car and his car were total write-offs. So she was very lucky to escape that. And that made her to think. And when I ask her, why did you involve yourself in this kind of work, which is not so rewarding financially and so on, you could do much better than work for this kind of institution, the Library, she said 'Well, I think that I owe something to this community, I escaped this accident and somewhere I feel I have to pay something back something to the community.' So somewhere that is the reason why she is... Because she is a very capable girl, she is very intelligent, and so if it gives her satisfaction, by all means, I think in the end she will be all right.

AG: And what about your son?

CK: My son is, again, he all his life had to do with cars. He started with the, there is a 2CV car, you might know, a Citroen, it was very popular a few years ago. So my son, decided to establish himself as a mechanic. He had a 2CV car, he knew it inside out, so he printed leaflets which he distributed himself to the 2CV cars, saying he does repairs in their own

home, they should contact him on the telephone, and so on. And he made it going, he built up a business of repairing the 2CV. And afterwards he became more and more acquainted with electronic parts of the car, and he started to deal with electronics, and he has got alternators and starting motors and so on, on a small scale, and now, he has built up a business which is a very substantial business on the Continent, because he found that for him it is better to live on the other side of the Channel because of proximity of his clients and so on. So therefore he is living there at the moment, he is very happy, we are very much in contact, as a matter of fact we see him much more often than when he had his flat in Ealing, because he comes here on business, and of course he stays one or two nights with us and it is very convenient, and of course we are very pleased that he can come home. And he, we, I think we are a very happy family and so far everything was very very good considering now that I have reached my 90<sup>th</sup> year.

**Tape 3: 14 minutes 25 seconds**

AG: Yes. And do you have grandchildren?

CK: No. Neither Anthony nor... why I don't know. Because with the example of us, it should have been very much an encouragement for to establish their... They have got their own boyfriend and girlfriend and so on, but they did not settle down for a family. Why, I couldn't really explain it.

AG: And have you been back to Uzhgorod with your family?

CK: Yes. Ten years ago when I was 80 I took the family back to Uzhgorod. Actually Uzhgorod was still under the Communist regime. So we flew to Košice, and from there we took a taxi to Uzhgorod. It's all very complicated because when you get there at the border and so on, they let you wait there, and they take sometimes hours to let you into Carpatho-Ruthenia, so we managed to get there and I was amazed to see I hardly could recognise Uzhgorod, because Uzhgorod became from 35,000 when I left there, became 135,000. It grew of course, but it certainly looked in relation to the number of people, the buildings which they have built, the additional buildings, cannot accommodate, there were 100,000 people, and people were living there under less congenial circumstances than we do. Two, three people in one room and so on. But what was the most disappointing actually for us, and for the children of course. The food was so atrociously bad, and inedible, very cheap, but it was just not fit for human beings and that is the part bordering the Ukraine, which was the bread supply of the whole Russia in a way, and there was very very little to hand, and we were lucky that we have taken some iron rations like some tins and so on, because otherwise we would have been very very hungry there. Luckily we had also somebody there, some distant relation of mine, and we visited the Jewish community there of course which I made a point to see. Very few who were left there. These people who are there are not very well off, so we tried to do some help, but it was temporary, but I got in touch with Jewish Aid and as a matter of fact I collected some money for them and sent it to the Jewish Agency to, they actually did send a year or two ago a deputation there to Ukraine and Uzhgorod, to see the people, the remaining people who are there and how they can help them. As a matter of fact I have some correspondence in that respect. And they did have quite a lot of people who are there, and I hope that somewhere they will pick it up, and I regularly ask them, have they got news and so on, and I am in contact with the Jewish Agency.

**Tape 3: 19 minutes 28 seconds**

AG: Did you visit your family home?

CK: No. I didn't, I passed, we were in a very prominent place, I've got photos I made of this, they called it the Sternberg Palace where we used to live. It was one of the good buildings in Uzhgorod, and I didn't dare to go in there, I didn't, what was the point, so many years after, and I don't know who is there, and they might not let me in and so on, so I didn't go there. But I visited the various... you know I visited the cemetery where my grandparents are there and I spoke to the various people, and my children, they were saying to me that I would have lived here, that is a terrible thought.

**Tape 3: 20 minutes 48 seconds**

AG: So your children are very much at home in England.

CK: Oh yes. Well I am very very much of an Anglophile, that was my biggest luck that I decided not to go to the East, or not to go there, or not to go anywhere because people went to France. No, I must say that I'm very thankful to England that they gave me refuge here, and I cannot really repay that in my life, and I'm quite aware of it.

AG: I wonder if there is anything else you would like to say about your life or any message you would like to give to anyone.

CK: Well, I must say only, as I said, I'm very thankful for all that was given to me in this country, for so many years, long years in this country, I didn't experience any anti-Semitism or animosity as a Jew, I never denied my origin, besides the once when I had a confrontation with the Gestapo, which I guess saved my life, otherwise I must say that I'm just thankful that I am in this country. After all I came here with nothing and I did build up a home, and I have got a family, my children and so on, and I hope that my children will also be thankful and good citizens for the country and they will benefit from their efforts.

AG: Well, in that case, Mr Klinger, I will say thank you very much for doing the interview.

CK: It is my pleasure.