

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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

INTERVIEW: 109

NAME: ERIC KAUFMAN

DATE: 16 NOVEMBER 2005

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE

TAPE 1

AG: Well, first of all, Mr. Kaufmann, I'd like to thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us. Could I start by asking you simply to state your full name at birth?

EC: It was Eric Alexander Kaufmann.

AG: Where were you born?

EC: I was born in London at Hampstead, 262 Goldhurst Terrace. The house was called Belgrin. And my parents are of German nationality. My father was born in Mannheim, South Germany. My mother a born Flechtheim - of that a little more later - from Münster in Westphalia.

AG: When were you born? What was the date?

EK: On the 24th March 1913.

AG: Perhaps I could start by simply asking you if you could tell us a little about the history of your family please. I don't know if you'd like to start with your father's side?

EK: Yes, I can do that quite easily. My father came from Mannheim, as I said, and his father was in the tobacco business, had an import and export business there. And he himself - and I will come to that later, of course - went into quite a different trade, but remained commercially active all his life. My mother's background - and I'm coming to that in more detail also later - coming from Münster of family that stretched back into the far distance, mainly starting in the grain business in the 19th century, around 1840, and I will be coming to all this in due course.

AG: What was your father's name?

EC: Leo. And my mother's name was Ilse.

AG: And what sort of family was it that you grew up in?

EC: What sort of a family?

AG: Well, actually, I should first of all ask you, I suppose, could you give us a bit of the back history of how you came to be born in London, because your family were not resident ...

EC: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. But may I just come to the need of our interview, if I may put it that way. I'd like just to state, mention, as an introduction that I have a conception of my life really as having lived through so many events like World War I in London during the Zeppelin attack, having during the war crossed the Channel going to Germany, having then been under threat during the revolution in Berlin, followed by the baffling event of the hyper-inflation, lived through the occupation of the Ruhr which followed up with, in due course, the Machtergreifung of Hitler. And all this, I would think, gave my life a reflection of the history of the 20th century. And as such I'd like to start my story, if I may.

AG: Go ahead, please.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 52 seconds

EC: My father had been working in Germany commercially first in Mannheim in South Germany, and to widen his outlook he got a job in Hamburg in the coffee trade, which was quite strange to him but he made quite some progress there. He looked across the sea and thought "well, I've got some distant relations in England, why not go there?" which he did in 1907. He had some reasonably good business relations in Germany to help him to establish his own business in the City of London in, not the coffee trade, although that came a bit into it, but mainly in grain and pulses. He made quite some progress, so much so that by 1912 he managed to get married to my mother Ilse in Düsseldorf.

AG: Do you know how they met?

EK: That I don't know. That is a secret. It hasn't been bared to me and I'm afraid at the moment I cannot give any further information. Not that there is anything secretive behind it.

AG: But she had been in Düsseldorf, or had she ...?

EK: She'd be in Düsseldorf, where her mother lived as well, coming originally from Münster and I'll be reverting to this in due course. Coming to London then in 1912, I was born in 1913, and unfortunately, of course, war broke out already in 1914, one year later. And in 1915, when the Lusitania was torpedoed by the Germans, my father like all Germans at the time and Italians, was interned. So in 1915 he was taken to the Isle of

Man, Douglas, and really and truly had quite a reasonable time there. He had his own tent, he had a batman to look after him, and I've got a photo here

AG: We'll take photos right at the end.

EK: At the end, right. The photo was actually shown at the exhibition held a few years ago in Douglas, combining both internment periods for aliens, refugees, in both the First World War and the Second World War. We were even allowed to visit occasionally and we did I think in 1917, my mother and I. And a picture was taken of me that will be shown later.

AG: Yes. Could you tell us a little about what memories you have, if any, of going up to the Isle of Man in the First World War. There can't be many people who remember that.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 1 second

EK: No. The interesting thing is, as you ask me, that was presumably in 1917. Now in 1915 the Zeppelins attacked London already and that is my earliest memory and I was only 2 years old when a bomb fell at the back of our house in Goldhurst Terrace and I was taken there by my then nanny – I haven't got one now – but there I found in the street a birdcage with a canary, and I asked "What is the canary doing in a birdcage in the street?" And a bobby was there and he smiled – I can remember this and this is my earliest memory – and then, of course, my father left and we visited him, as I said, in 1917, and at the end of '17 my mother was told that the Quakers would be able to exchange my mother and myself with British civilian prisoners of war in Berlin-Ruhleben and arranged in this way, we returned to Germany.

AG: Do you remember anything about the camps on the Isle of Man?

EK: Very vaguely, very vaguely only. I remember somehow an outline of the camp, the tent which he had, it looked all very civilised and they played, I know that my father played tennis and enjoyed it there and he had a great number of Italian friends. In fact, whenever we were on holiday later on in Germany, ever so often waiters or hairdressers would rush to my father and embrace him and say "Ah, Leo Kaufman, Douglas!" [Laughs] All the Italian hairdressers and waiters could have been collected there.

AG: Sorry, I interrupted you. You were talking about the Quakers arranging for you to be exchanged.

EK: Yes, that was a very efficient arrangement, which was actually done, I think, in Holland, if not across the sea. That I can't remember in detail. But we managed to get across and our destination was Bad Pyrmont, where my grandmother resided – she was widowed by then – and unfortunately the whole hotel was full of German officers on leave from the front. And there was little me babbling away in English. And a rumour went through the house. "British spies, sieh hier, ein Engländer! Gott im Himmel. Gott strafe England. He must go! Raus!" And within 24 hours we were told to leave. My first

experience of Germany. And off to Berlin, where my aunt lived with her family in Berlin-Schöneberg. And we stayed there for only a little while. The war ended in 1918. We had a hope that my father would be released. In fact, the Quakers said at the time he should be released earlier on account of our moving back to Germany. But this in fact wasn't done. And he tried to establish himself again back in the City, but at that time there was such a tremendous anti-German feeling that all his friends in the trade said: "Don't do it. You won't succeed. You'll have one difficulty after another. It's not the right time to do that." And so he decided to go back to Germany. He went to Düsseldorf, where the family on the other side, that's my aunt had married Dr. Itzy Hugo Meyer and he was the chief director of the Getreidekommission und -finanzierung AG [Corn Commission and Financing Company] and he joined the firm. I must say here – this is of great interest I think – Hugo Meyer was quite an outstanding personality. During the First World War he was in charge of the distribution of bread for the population. He was

AG: In Düsseldorf, or more widely?

EK: Widely, nationally ...

AG: How is the Meyer spelt?

Tape 1: 14 minutes 38 seconds

EK: M-E-Y-E-R. And his firm was started by his father in Bochum in the 19th century and in Düsseldorf it was vastly extended and therefore he was known to the government as an owner of a score of flourmills etc. etc and well-known in the trade and therefore was nominated to see to the distribution. And he was so successful in fact that he was told to go to Belgium, occupied Belgium, and do the same there. Which he did, and again he was very successful. Then – very much more interesting – he was sent to Germany's ally, Turkey, and became a member of the Sultan's cabinet. And strangely enough, when we were on our holiday in Istanbul many years later on a little trip through the Black Sea, we met on board ship a very interesting elderly lady, very aristocratic-looking, got into talking to her and somehow the conversation came to politics in Turkey / Germany and I said that my uncle had been working for your government in the Sultan's cabinet. "Oh, what was his name?" I said "Hugo Meyer". "Of course, I know Hugo Meyer. He was a colleague of my husband, was a minister at the time, a very interesting man and very efficient." So that was a confirmation and was very nice. So my father established himself then in Düsseldorf and we moved there. In the meantime we had also moved from my aunt's place to a flat nearby in a different suburb there away from all the trouble of the events in Berlin at the time, the shooting that took place and the mass demonstrations. It was a bloody time and people were starving and it was a very difficult period for anybody there. We then, because my father had now got a job in Düsseldorf, moved to Düsseldorf in 1920 I suppose it was and there at the age of 7 -1913 yes, it was 1920 – I had to learn German, had private lessons, and started school at Form B, the local Gymnasium and all ...

AG: Did it have a name, the local Gymnasium?

EK: ... Hindenburg Gymnasium near the Hindenburgwall. Hindenburg comes into it all the time a little later. And I can only remember that during the usual daily break we were marched through the town singing most enthusiastically “und so geht der Bayrische Marsch, und so geht der Bayrische Marsch.” Why they should entrust us to sing the Bavarian march, I don’t know to this day. I didn’t stay there very long because we then moved to the property which belonged to the firm, in the suburb, and there I had my Prinz-Georg-Gymnasium, which was quite close by.

AG: What suburb was this?

Tape 1: 19 minutes 59 seconds

EK: Well it wasn’t a suburb as such, it was at the fringe of the town and away from the city, from the centre. And there I went to the Prinz-Georg-Gymnasium in 1921, when the French moved into Düsseldorf, Duisburg. And I remember to this day how with their traditional trumpeting they marched into and through our road, a column of soldiers about a few hundred strong, came to a halt, rifles down, and all the officers went from house to house to confiscate rooms for the occupying force. They came to our house. Fortunately at the time we had employed a maid from the Saarland, she spoke fluent French, and explained to the officer in charge “My people are refugees from Britain. Therefore, no confiscation please!” Agreed. But upstairs lived Hugo Meyer’s elderly mother. And she occupied three rooms – one room was sealed – and never anybody went up there. Typical for the French occupation at the time. That was 1921. In 1923, of course, was the occupation of the whole Ruhr and more French and Belgians came into Düsseldorf. And it was a tougher time then because of the passive resistance on the part of particularly railway workers in the Ruhr. A number of them were expelled and we in our form at the school had an influx of boys from the Ruhr - Essen, Gelsenkirchen, all these places – and then we had a very unpleasant time because the national, the extreme right, started reacting. One of the railways bridges was blown up, the French discovered the person in charge of that particular commando, Albert Leo Schlageter, and he was shot at the nearby heath at Düsseldorf and he was later on by the Nazis called the first soldier of the National Socialist revolution, Machtergreifung. There were other nasty incidents. Another man threw a hand grenade into a column of French soldiers and that created bad blood between the two, between the French, the occupation, and the inhabitants, of course. And it really led to the formation, the first formation, of a Nazi organization, a local organization. Things died down somewhat as far as the occupation was concerned because the passive resistance had to give way, because at that time Stresemann took over the government and just said this can’t carry on. Dr. Schacht was in charge of finance and he said, “It ruins the country completely, we can’t afford this. It must stop.” So it stopped. And on top of it all, of course, in 1922, 1923 we suffered the hyper-inflation. And that ruined so many members of the middle-classes, which was one cause for the development of the Nazi party. My experience then was for instance that my father needed a rest for a few days and we went to the Baltic. We went for just 24 hours and the funds had come to an end. We telegraphed the office, “Immediately send money”. Two days later we got a wicker basket full of bills, millions and millions, which lasted for another 24 hours and

then we went home. And then, for instance, another little incident, as kids we used to play in the streets there and one day [when I was with] a friend of mine, a stranger came along and said "Can you direct me to that and that street?" Yes, certainly, it's a bit difficult, but we'll take you there, if you don't mind." "Ooh, thank you very much!" So we got him there and he gave us as a reward a bill for 100 million Marks. So I said to Robert, "One hundred million Marks! What do we do with it?" "We'll sleep on it." Shouldn't have. And next day after school we went to the local confectionery: "We've got one hundred million Marks. What can you give us, how much of your shop?" And he opened his little glass, well no, he had a little pot there, and he pulled out a little stick, a liquorice stick, a liquorice *Stange*, that was all, hundred million Marks! Hyper-inflation, and it was a very bad time for people, no doubt about it and as I said it led to the ruin of so many people who were on fixed income, and even for professional people, it was the end of some of them.

Tape 1: 26 minutes 0 second

AG: And did it affect your father and his business particularly?

EK: Er, well, coming to another point here. The French very much interfered with the telephonic communications, so the firm decided we rent a room outside the zone, and that was in a place called Mettmann, just outside Düsseldorf. And from there they could work freely and weren't interfered with. And one day they got a telephone call. Who was on the phone but Dr. Konrad Adenauer, who was then the Mayor, Lord Mayor of Cologne. There was this attempt by France to start an independent Rhineland and Dr. Adenauer had a word with my uncle and my father and said, "What do you think about this?" and both as true German Jewish patriots said "Forget it, it will only cost bloodshed and more revolution, and we won't have it, forget it." And of course it didn't come to it. But I've got here, and I show it later, as a philatelist the first issue of – unofficially - postage stamps of the Rhineland Republic led by Dr. Hans Adam Dorten with the capital in Wiesbaden. And that was the end of it of course. So that was in 1923. Now coming to the end of the passive resistance and the stabilization of the Mark, things settled down between, say, 1924 and 1929, particularly under the guidance of Stresemann, who was following a policy of quietening down the whole complicated relationship with Germany and France, the *Erbfeind* [arch enemy], and eventually we had the Treaty of Locarno, and between 1924 and 1928 things thrived considerably in Germany. We had in 1926 the international exhibition, the GESOLEI, Gesundheit, Soziale Fürsorge und Leibesübung [health, social services and fitness], which was, when I think of the dome we had here - absolutely pathetic - really outstanding. Built up of what had been achieved during the last few years since the war and people came from, streamed in from Holland and Belgium and even from France to visit the place. In fact Düsseldorf then became, people said, Klein-Paris, Little Paris, because it was the Kunst- und Gartenstadt, and Kunst, the Arts, came very much into it. And if you looked at the leading stores in Düsseldorf at the time, they all had inspirations from Paris. And it was so much so that even Berlin people would come to Düsseldorf to enjoy themselves there, particularly as the Düsseldorf theatre was quite outstanding. That was, as I said, from 1924 to 1928. And then, of course, in 1929 we had the crash in America and the reaction in Germany was

devastating. Loans had to be withdrawn, unemployment was rising, the political situation got worse, one cabinet after another, one kind of system followed another. I was then working in a factory ...

Tape 1: 31 minutes 5 seconds

AG: Actually, I'd like to take you back a little, because I'd like to hear a little about your schooldays, if I may.

EK: Sure, I'll come to that too, yes please.

AG: Yes, because that belongs before. This was, I think you said, the Prinz-Georg-Gymnasium. Could you tell me a little about it?

EK: Indeed, indeed. It was a very liberal-minded set-up. The head in charge was a very tolerant man, and the teachers generally speaking, because one said later that all teachers had been already very nationalistic, if not Nazi, or leaning towards it. Not in my case. On the contrary, some were very much to the left. There was no, very little politics. We had one incident, which was quite interesting and showed up the weakness of the Republic really. We as pupils had colour caps, the colour changed from form to form. But round the caps was a ribbon with the national colours, schwarz-rot-gold, black-red-gold. And some boys, more of the right, had the old Kaiser-colours, schwarz-weiß-rot, black-red-white. And there was one boy who made a note of all those who had the Kaiser- colours shown. So a Jewish boy who was rather leaning towards the Communists told his father. The father went to the head, and the head said "Well, we have to discuss it with my colleagues. And he also queried the matter with the Provinzialschulkollegium [Provincial Schools Council] in Koblenz. It was the head of all the school organization in the Rhineland, and it was decided that it would be neither the Weimar Republic colour or the Kaiser, but the Rhineland colour: green-white. That was not a good way of boosting German democracy. But otherwise things were very smooth and I never had any, there was no anti-Semitism at all in the class or from the teachers. On the contrary, it was a very good relationship altogether.

AG: How many Jewish boys would there be?

EK: We were five in our class.

AG: Out of how many?

EK: Out of about, well when the influx came from the Ruhr we were about thirty plus. And all my friends except for one were non-Jewish. And they proved their loyalty right through the Nazi-time as far as I was over there and beyond after the war. And when I eventually left for... I went through the Getreidekommission to a set-up for chicken food manufacturing. And I stayed there from 1931, and in '32 I was asked would I help out the accountancy in their branch in Holland and I went, I stayed there, first for three months, and they said, no we'd like you to carry on another three months and I was there for six

months. I had a quite good relationship with the boss there although I didn't like him at all and, true enough, I understood later her joined the Dutch Nazis. So much so that after the war the exchange wouldn't give him permission to join again.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 42 seconds

AG: Just before that I'd like to find out a little more about your early life in the family. Did you have brothers and sisters?

EK: Yes, I have a younger brother, thirteen years younger. He was born in 1926.

AG: What was his German name?

EK: His name is, German name, Hans Werner. And as he joined the army here eventually his name now is Jack Knight. Somewhat different!

AG: What are your memories of your family home in Düsseldorf in the Twenties?

EK: Well, we lived first, as I said, in the Prinz-Georg Strasse and then moved in 1925 to another bigger house nearby. What do you know about family life. I was very much at that time already interested in the arts generally, very much interested in theatre, which was very cheap, standing cost 50-60 Pfennig [*laughter*] and the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus under Dumont was quite outstanding. We had perhaps the best performance of Goethe's Faust. Technically it was ahead of its time, people came from Berlin to visit it. Also we had very good concerts, Furtwängler would come there, in the Tonhalle. In addition, as far as museums were concerned, the arts, modern German Expressionism was very much to the fore. Life was between '24 and '28 easy, and enjoyable, and fruitful, and productive in every respect ...

AG: Were your parents observant at all?

EK: No, my father not at all. My mother, - fasting on a holy day, half a day.

AG: Did they ..?

EK: I, yes, had my Barmitzva in 1926 and the very able, knowledgeable and good man, Dr. Escherbacher who came to London - I met him here too - and he said to my father "Yes, your son did quite well. In fact he did better than Moses." Well, that's something, I thought, Moses, but that, of course, was the other boy there. Anyway, well, if you look around here and upstairs, I've still got 109 books as presents on that day in 1926.

AG: Did your parents mix socially mainly with other Jews or with mainly Germans?

EK: Mainly Jews. The Kegelklub [bowling club], if you know what that is. That was mixed and my father also became a Freemason, which wasn't Jewish.

AG: So an ordinary lodge?

Tape 1: 39 minutes 39 seconds

EK: And so ... yes, family life. Of course, many friends. And I'm coming already now to a later period. When I got back from Holland, that was 1932, things looked rather nasty already. We had what I called then the blue regime, all the aristocratic 'von's and 'zu's. Von Papen was the Vice-Chancellor, and the Nazis got stronger and stronger. I went to, I was invited by my relations to come to Berlin in 1930, just on the day of the Reichstags-election, when the Nazis for the first time really won 130 seats and became the second biggest party in the Reichstag and we were shocked, Jews were shocked, "what's going to happen now?" Big question mark! So in 1932 with the democratic parties losing more and more votes, the outlook was indeed very, very grim. Come 1933 and the Machtergreifung, and the torchlight-procession in Berlin, great enthusiasm, everybody seemed to be suddenly waving the Swastika-flag. I must say that just before it came to it, things already looked very difficult and one expected the worst. And I had at that time a non-Jewish girl-friend. Now I remember we were sitting in a Konditorei [cake shop] in Königsallee and they all were, the Nazis then, all were collecting for winter help, rattling the box with money. One SS-man comes into the place where we were sitting, from table to table "Heil Hitler, money", came to our table, my non-Jewish friend said "My friend is a Jew, you can't expect him to give you money, can you?" "We understand, Heil Hitler." At that time! [Chuckles] But not so good, just before Hitler took over, my mother had an appointment or arrangement to meet a friend, not as they usually did in town, because it was getting too dicey, but at the zoo there was a café too. And in the afternoon, I went along too, her friend had a daughter there, I went together with the daughter for a walk around the zoo there and suddenly I was attacked by a couple of Nazis. They threw me against a tree, and I kicked and got myself free, and there were people round there, and they went off and, well, I got away, a bit shaken, but that was that.

AG: When was that?

EK: That was 1932.

AG: Before Hitler took power.

EK: Yes. And then the next thing was, yes also in '32. I always had a very good, close friendship, close relations with, as I said, ex-class mates, not Jewish. And we went to..., I don't know where it was, it may have been private, I can't remember that. Anyway, I performed my usual imitation of the Führer and I shouted and bashed the table and right bang onto a wine glass, blood was all over the place. So I immediately went to the local chemist and he looked at me and looked at us. "No, I think you better go somewhere else." And so I said to my friend: "Let's go to the Catholic hospital next to our house and I know the people, they are decent." They did it alright and bandaged me soon. When I got to the office next day, everybody was, you know, banter, "ha, ha, they caught you this time, didn't they?" And who said it, a social democratic fellow, colleague, and suddenly he was in the 'bomb search', joined the S.A. And so it went on and on. And so '33, now

then. I must go back now in time. Hugo Meyer, for one reason or another - I can't go into that now - committed suicide in 1925, went into the Rhine and drowned. So my father took over and decided as the firm had extended to such a vast extent, it was in the interest of the company to join up with the state. And the state took over 51 per cent of the equity, the family firm 49 per cent. So when the Nazis took over, in their typical way, they immediately discovered that our firm had defrauded the German people for several hundred million Marks. So my father's passport was taken and what to do now? He knew it was all nonsense. He had to get over this some way or another, got some advice, went to Berlin and at a special committee at the Reichstag he was able to convince them, those days you could still do that in '33, that everything was quite wrong, these are the facts etc. etc. And he was cleared.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 50 seconds

Now he had to get his passport back, because he wanted to emigrate. How to get back the passport? The police had taken it. The police didn't know where it was. Fortunately he knew the police chief of Düsseldorf, Polizeipräsident, who was a Catholic and anti-Nazi. He had an appointment with him, came to see him, the chief locked the door and said, "Kaufman, you want to go to England. I wish I could come along with you. But now we must get your passport. I have phoned the SA headquarters. They have got it. But they assured me that Obersturmbandführer Müller would come at 11 o'clock and will receive my passport. More I can't tell you at the moment." The Obersturmbandführer turned up at 11 o'clock and said "Ah, Kaufman, you haven't got your passport." "No." "Come with me. We'll go to the Gestapo." Their habit, I'm sure. So they went there. And strangely enough, it was in the house where the partner of the firm, who was sent to Berlin to the front, used to live. That's where the Gestapo headquarters were. And they said, "No we haven't got your passport." Then he created like a little Hitler, he shouted and bashed the table, goodness knows what, and some big boss came along and said "What's the noise here?" So the S.A.man said "I want the passport for Mr. Kaufman. You've got it. I haven't got it. You must have it. So he was given the passport and he gave it to my father, "Kaufman, here's your passport. Now go to London and contact our people, they will look after you. Good luck. Heil Hitler." [Laughs]

AG: Good heavens!

EK: I don't think my father said "Heil Hitler". I don't what he said. He had his passport.

Tape 1: 49 minutes 16 seconds

AG: Do you remember, roughly speaking, what month of 1933 this would be?

EK: That I can't tell you. It was in 1934, and at the beginning of '34, because we could then prepare for the emigration. In fact in 1933, May, first I have to go back a bit now, for two reasons. First of all, myself, on the 1st of May 1934 I was sacked, discharged, as a Jew. So I was free. And I thought, now that's the end for me. I'm going to Cologne to the British Consul there and get my British passport.

AG: Well, you were British by birth ...

EK: I was British-born, I was British, my parents were German, I had dual-nationality. Because I was going to this country, I was emigrating, I must go back a little to the 1st April 1933 when the boycott of Jewish shops took place. Immediately this was on, my mother phoned London, the niece of Sir Herbert Samuel who was at the time the Home Secretary, and she told – Mrs. Cohen it was, Jeanette Franklin Cohen – what was happening here. And she should tell Sir Herbert exactly..., put it over to the Cabinet. Then, of course, again Dr. Schacht, “We can’t afford this. This must stop.” At that time he had some powers still. And even Göring came to the conclusion against Goebbels – it was always Göring versus Goebbels.. And I finished after three days and then, as I said, my father had his passport back. My mother and I went to England to prepare things. Then my father had to settle things, of course, the house and so on and so on, and through business friends of his got a temporary job in a commodity brokers office in the City, actually next door to where the gherkin is now, St. Mary Axe, and I found a boarding house very suitably in Hampstead, what you call Froggnal, and met some of my father’s former friends and distant relations. And my mother tried to find out what the chances were for him, for my father etc. The family then came. My father first came back, my mother went back to Germany, my father came in 1934, late 34, had sold the house, for the time being had taken a flat in Düsseldorf for my mother and my brother and the nanny and ... ah, before that also- I always have to go back a little- when this business about the fraud came up officially, the partner in Berlin, Mr. Hirsch, got cold feet. And I can remember hearing on the radio, the local radio, “Der Jude Hirsch wird gesucht. Er hat die Grenze überschritten. [The Jew Hirsch is wanted. He has crossed the border] Wir warnen ihn, we warn him to return immediately, otherwise his family will be taken over, looked for”, whatever. So he did return, went to the police, was taken to prison and outside his cell was an SA man. And he turned round to him, “Are you Mr. Hirsch?” “Yes, indeed.” “Have you got a son called Robert?” “Yes, indeed.” “Ah, then don’t worry, we were together in the class at school.” And that was – I knew the chap – he was a poor chap and never was politically interested, but his father had been unemployed for a long time. And that’s again typical for the time then, the boy joined the SA, got some money there and father got eventually a good job because of the Autobahn and all that, you know. Anyway, he looked out for Mr. Hirsch and he didn’t have any trouble.

AG: We’re going to have to stop here because the tape is coming to an end.

TAPE 2

AG: Eric Kaufman. Tape 2. I’d like to ask you how you felt when you left Germany. You must have thought that this was, if not forever, then for quite a long time. How did you feel about it?

EK: Well, before I left, a friend of my father’s, a very intelligent man, he said, “I’d like to know what young people think about the situation. And what do you think, how long will this last?” Because very often people said at the time by Easter it will all be over. I said,

“I am not very optimistic at all because they are already mentioning the building of Autobahn, motorways. That means employment for many thousands of unemployed people and that will be a support for the party and that will be a strengthening of the finances because Schacht will exploit it and I think it will be for some time. And I am leaving the country and I don’t think I’ll be back at all, because I am then British and will remain in Britain.” So this was my feeling although we discussed it very much with my friends, non-Jewish friends. I had one, incidentally, as you asked me, a very intelligent boy, he was number one in the class, I think, we were sort of walking by the Rhine and I said, “What is your idea now, I mean let’s talk about National Socialism.” And he said, “I can’t explain it to you because of your different blood.” And that is typical, because the whole thing was on a metaphysical basis and beyond logic and reasonable argument. I met him again, the very chap, at a class meeting after the war and I said, “Hans, you remember what you told me then?” “I didn’t.” I said, “You did. Otherwise I wouldn’t remember it, would I?” “I must have been a total idiot!” Well, that’s up to you. [laughs] On the other hand I thought, there is something behind it which is not only very dangerous, but there is a thinking that affects the whole nation beyond National Socialism. I was then reading, I don’t know whether you know about this, the magazine, the publication ‘Die Tat’. And it was right-wing, but not Nazi, with a background of a saner Nationalism deriving from the 19th century without the romantic anti-Semitism. And that gave me the feeling that there is more to it and even though it may not be the mob only, it’s more than that. In fact, of course, and this is the tragedy - and this is something which I can’t explain to this day really - that it affected the universities as much and the leading leaders were as much affected. Because going ahead in time now if I may, after the Kristallnacht, when Dr. Escherbacher, the rabbi of Düsseldorf was still in charge, he wrote a report on it – I’ve got the booklet – and he mentions there the very typical case of one of the Nazi-troops going from Jewish household to Jewish household. He was a doctor and he went to his competitor, Jewish competitor, who had installed a couple of years before a tiny new technical instrument and he went through this surgery with his axe and smashed it to bits. And that was, as one says in German, ‘ein gebildeter Mensch’, a human being with education, high education. And I think, unfortunately, it was also quite typical and that was the great danger too that they got the upper strata with them as well, willingly. So my feeling was, “I am now going to England and I’m staying there and I’m British.”

Tape 2: 5 minutes 30 seconds

AG: Had you been back to England at all?

EK: No.

AG: So how did it feel when you first arrived in England? Where did you actually arrive? Do you remember which port you came to?

EK: Yes, at Dover to Liverpool Street Station. And, not understanding very much, although I had learned English again, because the Cockney version was strange to me then. But, yes, as I said, we had this, lived in this boarding house full of refugees ...

AG: Was this in 44 Frogal?

EK: Yes, in Frogal.

AG: Oh, who was it run by, do you remember?

EK: Two ladies, Mrs. Paterson and Mrs. Hall.

AG: Oh, so they were British.

EK: They were British.

AG: Right. And their boarding house took in refugees?

EK: Yes, refugees. And that was very well done. And we stayed there until my father came over, because he then had to look for a place to live, we moved then first to another place in Haverstock Hill and eventually through a friend, who was connected with film, a flat in Gospel Oak, where I sublet two rooms, one to an ex-class mate, who was also in England, and my cousin Heinz Nathan, of which a little more later. And then my father re-established himself in the City, Mark Lane, got a partner and eventually, end of '34, the house as I mentioned before at Templars Avenue.

AG: Ah, in Golders Green.

EK: In Golders Green, where we lived.

AG: Because later I believe it was difficult, if not impossible, for Jewish refugees to get work permits. But that obviously didn't apply to your father in 1934 if he set himself up in business.

EK: Yes.

AG: Was it the same line of business as before?

EK: Yes. Not as in Düsseldorf, but as before in London.

AG: In London, yes.

EK: Because he still had the relationship, business relationship, partly through Düsseldorf, because it was an international set-up anyway, and partly through his former existence there. So it was fairly easy to get into it again, although the competition was now not only a British one but also a German-Jewish one because there were other refugees as well who'd started. And that created a certain amount of frisson, not, I wouldn't say anti-Semitism, but, you know, a foreigner, alien. And that made it a bit difficult at the time. And in any case, as you know, conditions in the Thirties were not

easy, not with unemployment, and even in the food sector it wasn't easy at all. But I joined the firm as the other job was really a temporary one, in '35.

AG: What was the firm called?

EK: Our firm?

AG: Yes.

EK: L. Kaufman Produce Limited.

AG: Oh, right.

EK: And I stayed there till the war, but I joined the fire service in 1938, knowing that war was bound to come, and made sure that I had somewhere to go to and joined the Hendon division and later on we were stationed in Golders Green, St. Dunstons, as a sub-station on a 48/24 basis during the war. In between, from '34 I had to sort of settle down in entirely new surroundings, new country, new mentality, new ways of living and was much interested to see and to pick up the English way of looking at things. I see your point ...

Tape 2: 10 minutes 36 seconds

AG: We're just continuing after the interruption. Yes, go ahead, you were talking about getting used to the new ...

EK: One way of doing it, I think I thought was, I always heard about the great Hyde Park Corner speakers. I loved going there and I spouted some anti-Nazi sentiments, and a chap went for me and said, "You can't talk, you are a bloody Irish Catholic." [laughs] which wasn't quite the point.

AG: What did you say to that? What can one say?

EK: What can one say? But as to the anti-Nazi agitation or action, I got in touch with the League of Nations youth union and I addressed them in '35 or so, I'm not sure, and tried to put over what was happening in Germany. And I met a reaction which was total silence. They just didn't understand what I was talking about. They thought I was coming from the moon. That was so alien to them, the notion of National Socialism, the race and blood so-called science. So that didn't lead to very much. And then I joined in 1936 I think it was the 33-Club, which was under the guidance of Dr. Reinhard, the West London synagogue. And as I was British I was called onto the committee. We did some very good work there for refugees. We had a very good number of hostesses, decent meals, table tennis section – I met my wife across a table tennis table, playing ...

AG: Oh yes, could you tell us about that?

EK: And we had a very good rambling section. And our ramble leader at the time before I took over was a typical German ‘Wandervogel’, of that tradition. And there we were – unbelievable to think of it today – wandering through the Surrey countryside singing German Volkslieder [folk songs]. I wonder what the people thought then - the Nazis are here! [laughs] Anyway, it was a very good set-up and a very useful set-up and it helped people, particularly later when the Austrians came then in ’38. And, well I stayed there until the beginning of the war.

AG: Could you just say a bit about the 33-Club, what it was set up to do.

EK: It was set up to be of assistance in a social way, perfectly useful and if at all, to give any guidance as to how to put them in touch with Woburn House, if they hadn’t had that connection. The hostesses particularly were all British Jews and ladies, very good ladies, and very helpful in that respect. We had also, every Thursday I think it was, a special evening, dancing and entertainment, which was also very popular.

AG: What about Rabbi Harold Reinhard, how do you remember him?

EK: Well, I can’t say very much because he was very much in the background. A man who was really the Chairman there was Jim Rose. I don’t whether you know him. He was a very nice man and later I think in the war he became something of an official representative of the press organization in Switzerland. And there were one or two other very interesting ladies there who were in charge of the social side of it and the whole thing was very harmonious.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 19 seconds

AG: How did you come to meet your wife? Do tell us.

EK: Well, as I said, she was a very good table tennis player and I was medium-good and she thought she could beat me, you see. So that’s of course right for a wife to beat the husband.[laughs] Anyway, we were then together for a long time and in 1942 we got married. And she had, of course, come over as a 17-year-old on a domestic permit only. And I don’t know how many dozen jobs she had, Jewish and otherwise, there was no end to it. But the one which was very good where she could stay for a long time until the help came from Germany was – perhaps you know him – Tony Rowland, who was the owner of the Gallery in Cork Street.

AG: Is that Rowland, the banker?

EK: The banker, that’s right. And she looked after Tony, his son, he was a baby then. And as I said to him later when he was grown-up, you always wanted to be in the art trade, because you said “Dali, Dali, Dali”. [Laughs] But he didn’t remember that. No, she had a good job there at least, but somehow those things were not very good and unfortunately not only with Jewish people sometimes.

AG: Did she, do you remember what sort of conditions she encountered as a domestic servant?

EK: Well, there was one, for instance, a Jewish one, a very Jewish, English Jewish one, and she said to her when she came on the first day, "Can you cook gefillte fish?" The last thing my poor wife knew about, cooking. And that was practically the end of it. Others were very good and very helpful, and others again very mean. Even German Jewish people, very mean!

AG: I haven't asked you what your wife's full name was.

EK: Gerda Phillip. She came from a divorced background and her father and mother both were deaf. And they divorced and she was then in Berlin - she was born in Berlin - and for schooling she then lived with her aunt, the Strauss family in Wuppertal, they had a store, a big store there. And after the war, we were invited, like I was so often invited to Düsseldorf and my wife was invited to Berlin and to Wuppertal. And in Wuppertal we met very nice people, still in touch with them, as with Berlin and with Düsseldorf, and I saw the house where she lived. The interesting thing is this, that they emigrated, the Strausses, her relations, but to Holland and unfortunately got caught there and the end was in the East. But the daughter emigrated to the States and after the war went back to Wuppertal and they owned... This was a wonderful house - and had some wonderful outstanding Gobelins and a wonderful huge crystal light. And the people who had taken over were very decent and said, "You're back now, whatever you need, take it." Ja. And what happened was, she lived in North Carolina and knew the Governor there. And they had been invited for a meal there and her cousin said, "Would you be interested in this light that we have, this Kronleuchter, as it was called in German, and the Gobelins.

AG: A chandelier, isn't it?

EK: And she had the photos of that chandelier, yes, and they were taken there to the Governor's house in North Carolina. And they were invited, it was like a theatrical performance, they had a dinner and then the door was opened and full-light, and there was the chandelier and there in the hall the gobelins. And it's still there today and the Governor had asked somebody to write a book about it and if you go there it's there for you to read. That's quite interesting.

Tape 2: 20 minutes 40 seconds

AG: Yes. How did you find your reception by the native British? Probably a difficult question to answer, but how did you feel you fitted in, you and your family?

EK: Ja, quite. At first of course we had all refugees around us. Amongst them was Julius Strauss, I don't know whether you know him. He was then, worked in the City, and he was quite in the foreground for [Gap] special manipulations of the currencies he was quite a good man. Ja, British people. Yes, I mentioned Heinz Nathan, I must go back to him really. He was my cousin and he was a journalist in Germany. A sports journalist.

Why sports, because he was a member of the SC-Charlottenburg athletic relay team. In that capacity, together with Körnig, Schlöske, Grosser, Nathan, they established a world record in 1928.

AG: In what?

EK: 400 metres relay. And as my mother's cousin, Alfred Flechter the art dealer – and I'll come to talk about him later, said, "Er ist der schnellste Jude Deutschlands." The fastest Jew of Germany. [Laughter] Anyway, he introduced me to some political people. I met Alan Wilkinson at the time and some of the left there. Ja, going to Hyde Park Corner, you know the speakers, one quickly got into the current life of that type of background. Other people went through friends of my father's former days, you know they came originally in the Nineties to this country – the 1890ies- when you had the so-called Gründerjahre in Germany, the rising anti-Semitism, they came over then and established themselves here and I met quite a few of them. They were then, of course, naturalized British and slowly one got into their mentality and took on attitudes relevant to ones environment.

AG: Did you encounter hostility or anti-Semitism at all?

EK: Not here. Not then. The only time I encountered it, strangely enough, was during the war when I was in the fire service, locally, quite a number of Jews, no. But then, I must put it this way, in, we had the Blitz and I was in it right through the Blitz. And after the Blitz, after 57 days in London, as you know, it was quiet, peace in that respect. There was a period of appeasement attempt in the background, the Hess affair and all that. And I got bored with being in the fire service because nothing was asked of you. So I joined the administration, became the station clerk of the headquarters. And from there I went, from Golders Green I was sent to the main headquarters then in Northwood Hills, Pinner. And there I encountered some anti-Semitism. It was the time when they talked about the black market of the Jews.

AG: Ah, yes.

Tape 2: 25 minutes 8 seconds

EK: That really is the only time. I must, if I may, go back to an incident that happened in Germany. When this business about the attack on the firm happened and this partner, Mr. Hirsch, disappeared, my father was told, "You better leave the town for a while". And I came back from the office, opened the front door of our house and was met by two Gestapo officers. "Where are your parents?" "I've come from the office, I've no idea. If they aren't here I don't know where they are." "What have you got in your case there?" I said [Gap]. "My notes"[??" "Open it!" [Gap] "You will hear from us. We're leaving now. You will hear from us." Thank you very much. So, I didn't know what had happened to my parents. So I went to friends that they knew, local ones, and of course they didn't know. So after a while I thought I'd better go back, because my younger brother was at home with the nanny and prepared myself for anything that might happen during the

night. Fortunately nothing did and my mother and my father came back, but that was fortunately my only contretemps with the Gestapo. But now I'm in Britain that's a matter of the past. But naturally one is ... I don't know whether I should go forward, fast forward. But that's happened in 1987. I was invited as a VIP and, of course, my wife to a commemoration of her cousin, Alfred Flechtheim, who was, as I mentioned before, one of the leading art dealers in Germany.

AG: Is he the one that has the famous portrait by Grosz?

EK: No, that was Otto Dix.

AG: Dix.

EK: Dix, quite right, at the Berlin Nationalgalerie. And, I'm coming to Grosz also. And ... what was I saying? ... yes, for a commemoration of his 50th anniversary of his death because he died very tragically in 1937 here in London. I'm coming to that later. And there I met a lady, Dr. Barbara Suchert [?], you might know, and she said, "I'd like to have a word with you because I have a letter at home which you wrote in 1935 or '36 to an ex-class mate who seemed to have turned Nazi. And you wrote seven pages typewritten, a wonderful letter", she said, "regarding Judaism and democracy. And it was intercepted by the Gestapo and the receiver, your friend, was called in. 'What do you know about this man? What is your connection with him? etc. etc. and 'Dieser Saubursche muss ausgebürgert werden.' This miserable so-and-so must be expelled. And in fact just by chance I heard a radio broadcast here in London, where my name was mentioned

AG: That's when they deprived you of your citizenship.

EK: Yeah, and I thought, that's not me. But it was me. What an honour, 'ausgebürgert'. So that was something which I hadn't expected, but I'm now really in London and between 34 and 39 one worked hard. I wasn't a member of this club, very much occupied with this committee and preparing for war, no doubt, through the NFS – AFS at the time, later NFS – during the war, as I outlined, I stayed with the organization until 1945 when I rejoined the firm.

AG: What was it like in the little community of German and later Austrian Jewish refugees in London, in Northwest-London. Could you describe life a bit, what it was like living in ...

EK: Quite a different mentality of course, the Austrian, hah! And the majority were German of course, German-Jewish refugees. The Austrians came later, though there were only a few of them. And of course it varied according to the times. Then you had at the outbreak of war, the internment.

AG: Yes, but before the war.

Tape 2: 31minutes 5 seconds

EK: Good friends. And you personally know Mr. Hinrichsen, who was a good friend and of course he was taken immediately to ... he had a most interesting time, as you know, too. Particularly with Kurt Schwitters who painted the painting of Hinrichsen it's very good. And he and his wife have still got it of course. And what with the kind of intelligence there was at the camp, they had a marvelous time. For some youngsters who had never been to university or had any higher education at all. It was the time of their lives. There were lectures, as you know, and there was Rabbitzin Landauer for music and artists talking about their lives and so on. And, of course, there was the other side to it, of those who were deported to Canada and Australia. I just got a – and this is, of course, another thing I'm coming to – I am very much connected with the Mahn-und-Gedenkstätte in Düsseldorf, I'm friendly with the Leiter, Angela Genger and Barbara Suchert and their latest magazine 'Der Augenblick' is the story of the Denera Boys which was a disgusting affair as you no doubt know. And one of our relations was on it, Hans Markus, and as fate would have it, he had this disgusting experience on that journey. And his father was taken on the Arandora Star, yes, to Canada and was drowned. So that was no point for Jewish refugees, wasn't it, internment and the deportations. And Nathan also was taken to Canada. He then came back to this country and became a master of history at King's School in Worcester and he left the deposit of his experience with the British Library, no, with the British Library also, but mainly with the Historical Institute in Munich.

AG: Is that the Institut für Zeitgeschichte?

EK: Zeitgenössische Geschichte. Yes. I read it up there. He became, when he retired, quite a television personality, not necessarily over here but also in Germany. He wrote for the Süddeutsche Zeitung, and I've got a number of books written by him for schools, German for English and English for the Germans, so both ways. And unfortunately he [sic] had a call one day from the police. "Are you related to Mr. Nathan?" His name was then Eric Nathan ..

AG: Ah yes.

EK: And I said "Yes indeed" and I got there and he was slumped over his typewriter in the middle of a sentence. He had a stroke and died. And he lived together with a boy from ... He was a student I think later, also teaching there in Southampton, didn't know a word of German and Heinz had a wonderful life really because he was reviewing books and he got it all. And not only that, he showed me he had so many, a collection of Alfred Flechtheim's 'Querschnitt'. I don't know whether you've heard of it, the publication, a very sophisticated publication and very valuable after the war. And this boy got it all and didn't know a word of German. So the first thing he did was selling it to a bookstore in Israel. And it all ended there. Yes, I mustn't look down.

AG: Oh, that's all right. I'd like to ask you, you know, the last thing more or less on the pre-war period, if you could describe life in Templars Avenue, you and your parents and younger brother presumably when ...

EK: Well, my brother, he was boarded out in Aldenham and so really we didn't have very much in common, particularly as the gap was thirteen years.

AG: What did you live in? Was it a house that you had in ...?

Tape 2 – 36 minutes 14 seconds

EK: Yes, 11 Templars Avenue. It was a very nice pre-First World War built house. And a few refugees were living around there during the war. We had an Anderson, no not an Anderson shelter, more, yes an Anderson shelter – a Morrison shelter we had in Goldhurst Terrace – and a bomb fell at the corner of there, Templars Avenue. We moved then, my wife and I when we got married, to a flat in Goldhurst Terrace again, 223, and chance wanted it, my wife was working commercially as a secretary in town. And coming home one day a V1 appeared up on the horizon and it came closer and closer and she was starting to run and then thought, no I'd better go straight into this first house there, that was 263, where we used to ... which my father owned. So a very nice old lady opened the door and she said, "Oh, my father-in-law used to own this house." "Oh, was it Mr. Kaufman?" "Yes, indeed." [laughs] So the circle closed. So we live in Goldhurst Terrace and we made some good friends there. And I remember that on the day the invasion took place, I heard it when I was at the Jewish delicatessen shop in Fairfax Garden on the wireless - another memory. Yes, we lived there from 40.. – we first lived in Belsize Park and then in Goldhurst Terrace till '46 where my son was born, Andrew, in Northwood Hills, Pinner. So I had in mind to send him to public school, Merchant Taylor's, which is not too far away from Pinner, which, of course, as you might know, he was part of in due course and then had a scholarship in German. I sent him to Germany to a business friend of mine in Frankfurt to improve his German, which has come very much in use now that he is commuting practically with Germany, in fact, today now, I think, he is in Munich. So then the post-war period ...

AG: Well, before we get to the post-war, we'll have to look at the war, which we haven't really done.

EK: No.

AG: Do you remember the war breaking out? Do you remember where you ...?

EK: Yes, very much so, because we listened to Chamberlain's mourning voice on the radio and immediately, you know, there was the air raid alert. We were sent to an action station, beautiful sunshine at the time, we scanned the sky, nothing happened - and that was, of course, a false alarm – and back to the station. And of course, at that time we had the phoney war. Nothing much happened. We had exercises, exercises and more exercises and waiting for things to happen, which of course they did. And what with the

Blitz coming along, the first call was for our best crew to go to Beckenham, where the gas works were aflame. We were, my crew, were sent to the City ...

AG: This is at the, sort of the first big German attack on London during the Blitz?

EK: Yes.

AG: Right. So do please tell me about that.

EK: Yes. I was sent to Eastcheap. And we didn't have any water because the Germans had come at low tide, ebb tide. And we couldn't get any water from the river, only what was in the reservoirs and the tanks there. That wasn't much. So we were standing around and one house after another was ablaze. And so I said to the officer in charge, "Can I go and look at my offices?" because I couldn't do anything. So I saw our office going up in flames Mark Lane. And then, of course, we got the water and we fought all day, but it was too late. That was the worst, I suppose, of our city calls, because we had local calls and incendiary bombs and that sort of thing and that was easily attended to. And then afterwards we just had our usual duty and one day we had a, I had an alert, I was on guard duty and I thought there was something wrong with the balloons we had there, you see. There was that fear of parachutes coming down, you see, so I alerted the station and nothing happened fortunately.

Tape 2: 42 minutes 20 seconds

AG: But you must have been called out, for example, during the first Blitz in the autumn of 1940. You must have been out virtually every day.

EK: Ja, ja. Well, we weren't always because, you know, as we were outside London and the Inner London fire brigades were there first and when it was really bad we came in. Ja.

AG: I've never interviewed anybody, I don't think I've ever met anybody that was in the fire service during the war. Could you give me some idea of what it was like?

EK: Of course, during the 57 days or nights, of course, because we had a continuous attack we were continuously at it. Either here, or locally, or elsewhere. And it wasn't our crew necessarily always. But on the bad nights everybody had to go or the whole main station and sub station as well, you see, because we had only the little pumps.

AG: Where was your station?

EK: At St. Dunstan's in Golders Green.

AG: Oh yes.

EK: Opposite the BBC, you know the corner of the Hippodrome.

AG: Yes, but did you ...?

EK: But then, as I said, once it was over I asked for a transfer to the administrative side and I was first then at the headquarters in, also in St. Dunstan's Avenue, I think it was, a very nice private house and it was very pleasant there for some time until there was a reorganisation of the whole Fire Service and it was centralized and there was a big headquarters and I was sent to Pinner.

Tape 2: 44 minutes 12 seconds

AG: Did your unit suffer casualties when you were fighting ...?

EK: No, fortunately not. We had some slightly wounded, but nothing to talk of. Fortunately not. And I don't know of any of the main station either.

AG: What was your impression of the behaviour of the civilian population during the Blitz?

EK: Lovely. During the Blitz? Yes, during the Blitz, well, it was the spirit one talks about. We've got to see it through, and we've got Churchill, and we hope things will turn out alright. The old cockney spirit really. Generally speaking, everybody was very helpful. Before the Blitz we had exercises and I was always the smallest, you see, the shortest. So that was an easy casualty. And I was dumped at one time at a private house in the bedroom, up on top, second floor, in Hampstead Garden Suburb. And it was the house of – I don't know whether you have heard of him – a very interesting man, a lawyer Evey, Jewish, and he said "yes, yes, yes, you go there" but he forgot to tell his wife, you see. Where was I? Under her bed! [laughter]. And I was rescued then fortunately through the window. That was one of those things, you see. The sub-station was at the Institute, Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. And again there everybody was really helping people and you know ... During the phoney war one didn't know what was happening. There were some ugly rumours around that the appeasers are at it and that was the time Hess came over. And - we have now read the books about his possible relationship, or non-relationship, with the Duke of Hamilton and his peace plan - he had to neutralize this country so that they could attack Russia. And there were so many nasty rumours around and one got a bit uneasy at times. Because as a Jew, one knew, or I knew, what it meant if they were to come.

AG: Were you ever afraid when the Nazis actually got as far as Calais. Were you afraid that they would invade?

EK: Yes, surely, I wouldn't say afraid, but I mean it was a bit too close to the bone, isn't it? And all one could say is, they mustn't succeed and that's it. I was the only German in the station, of course, but there were several other Jewish boys.

AG: Refugees or British?

EK: Not refugees, British Jews.

AG: I suppose they wouldn't let refugees into the fire service.

EK: No.

AG: But you had British nationality, of course, yes.

EK: Quite. Exactly! That's why. So, well, one was fully aware of it. At the same time there was a nice feeling of community within the station and one didn't feel isolated in any way. And one felt, well, if it comes to it, we'll be all together, although of course we would stand out naturally eventually, because they all the black lists, it was all noted and of course you know what happened. Hitler really never seriously considered it. And I felt somehow once the air battle was over that the danger was past and that there was always that inkling, even with Hitler, he admired this country and he didn't want it to be defeated and humiliated. So I did not think he was seriously intending it, because it was all in 'Mein Kampf'. And if only people had read it! And I know this cousin who was drowned on the Arandora, he read it in 1929 and he immediately transferred all his money to Holland because it was quite clearly set out, what his ideas were. And they went towards the East, not towards, against us.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 35 seconds

AG: Do you remember the, you talked about the [interruption / telephone ringing] Just continuing: I just wanted to ask you what you remembered of the Battle of Britain, of the air battle. You mentioned it.

EK: Yes, well, one couldn't see very much, could one, here in London, but one knew, of course followed it up ... I mean we were all involved with it to such an extent that if they don't succeed, we won't succeed. And therefore, it was a matter of life and death really; and one got a report, particularly on that September day when, I think, 115 were supposed to be shot down, well, one discounted it to a certain extent, but it gave us great help and a feeling of "we'll make it and we have Churchill", and everybody believed in Churchill and he was such an outstanding man. And I don't know that people really appreciated him at that time, in 1940 and during the early days, and that we owe everything to him. And I met later on his daughter Sarah – I've got a painting of her upstairs – and she said, "Well, he was a terrific man, as a father. As a politician he had his negative sides, we know that, but as a leader in those days he was just unique."

AG: Do you remember the broadcast speeches of Churchill?

EK: Yes, I do, sure

AG: What was it like to listen to them?

EK: That voice was ... You just sat there, "Ah, it's a performance, it's a performance, it's theatre." It stirs you, it was most emotional. That voice, that voice only already carried

you. When you thought, particularly me, when you think of that rasping un-German shouting of the Führer and then this civilized man, with his wonderful English, with his wonderful personal intonation, that was, they were two worlds. And this “if we don’t win, it will be the end.”

AG: Perhaps we should stop there.
[Short break]

TAPE 3

Eric Kaufman, Tape 3. One thing I didn’t ask you about when you mentioned it, was your actual wedding. When and where did it take place?

EK: Good question. Because it was, I must say, a miserable day. It was pouring with rain, cats and dogs, and we had a meal, very small company because of war time, nearest relations of my wife and my parents at the L’Etoile in town ...

AG: Where was this?

EK: L’Etoile.

AG: Oh, L’Etoile, ah yes. Mmm

EK: L’Etoile restaurant, which was very nice. And we even in the evening went to theatre, to one of those revues which were in fashion at the time. And we enjoyed it very much. We wondered how my father and my mother took it because it was for a different generation apparently. But it was enjoyable. Unfortunately getting home my wife fell ill on that night, which was not a good conclusion. But never mind. We carried on for almost 60 years together.

AG: Where were you actually married?

EK: Where?

AG: Yes, where was the ceremony held?

EK: In Edgware registry office. “Half a crown please”, and we were married.

AG: I see.

EK: That was all there was to it in war time. And I got a nice present from the fire service. And that was it. After all, when you think of what happens these days when the youngsters marry and get the whole outfit for the whole house in one go. There you are. May I just mention one item which I haven’t mentioned ..

AG: Yes please.

EK: ...because I have got a photo there which was very appropriate. I joined as a youngster the sports club DSC 99 in Düsseldorf for, as an athlete. I loved running like my cousin Heinz.

AG: Is that D for Düsseldorf Sportklub?

EK: Sportklub Düsseldorf, yes. And we were called up, and that's why I'm mentioning it, at the end of the occupation of Düsseldorf by the French, as a liberation celebration, President Hindenburg came to Düsseldorf and we arranged a special sports day, had a relay team from the Rhine right up to where the sports section of the Rhine was down to the centre to the so-called Hindenburgwall to acclaim Hindenburg. And there I have a photo of him - you can see my little self as well - which was one of the outstanding things for Düsseldorf because that was the celebration of the liberation after all the troubled days that we lived through.

AG: Yes, going back to the war. You were working throughout obviously with the fire service. What about your wife, what did she do during the war?

EK: She was employed as a secretary in town, not in the City, in the West End.

AG: What sort of firm was it?

EK: It was a textile business, not Jewish. And she was fluent at the time in short hand and all that sort of thing. For as long as she could until Andrew was born in 1946. And we then lived in Pinner, Northwood Hills.

AG: And did she manage to continue working throughout, I mean there was no bombing or disruption?

EK: No, there was ... not personally. At least she didn't have to suffer in any way, and the firm didn't have to suffer and weren't affected by it as far as actual damage was concerned.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 4 seconds

AG: Where did she live before you were married?

EK: From one room to another. And being employed, domestically employed that was a constant movement because with Rowland she stayed a year or so, because then Tony got his housekeeper from Munich and she took over and looked after the little Tony. And then my wife had to look for another job and there were scores of them. Some were good and some were not so good, as I said. And I would visit her, as far as possible. I remember one day she had a very good job with a bachelor, who was a bit naughty I think, but in South Kensington, and I think I stayed with her until one o'clock in the

morning and then there was no transport and I walked from South Kensington to Golders Green. I still like walking. [Laughs]

AG: And what about your parents, how did they get on during the war?

EK: Well, during the war there were of course restrictions in business, but there was a good system on the part of the government. And, in fact, we were able, my father was – because I was already in the fire service – to retain a whole shipment of pulses for this country although it was destined to Belgium and we got a letter of thanks from the War Office because it was quite a tonnage and from the point of view of food supply it was of some importance. The business was then practically regulated by the Government getting not licences but allocations of what was available and according to your pre-war turnover you got a percentage. And that enabled the businesses to carry on, because internationally you couldn't deal, you couldn't work. We had connections in Eastern Europe, Rumania, and then in Africa, and it was practically impossible.

AG: And did they mix with other refugees? Did they find a social circle?

EK: Sure. Well, refugees, of course, yes, and from Düsseldorf too, and also from friends from the previous residence in this country. Quite a crowd. And well-known people, I mean, you know the AJR and you know the Marxes and Cohnstamm [or Kohnstamm [?], I think, we knew all the Cohnstamms[?]. Yes, there was quite a social relationship with both pre-war friends and post-war refugees.

AG: You said earlier in the interview that the Austrians were rather different. Could you expand on that a bit and say how, as a refugee from Germany, how you perceived the Austrians, the Viennese that came?

EK: Well, the Austrians one considered as the yackers, were rather superior and “ah, we did that much better in Vienna, of course”. But it was different, a different mentality. And of course they suffered; they suffered because it was... One mustn't forget, whereas in Germany it was a very gradual shrinking of ones existence, in Austria it was from one day to the next, from complete freedom to complete slave, slavery. And that affected the outlook of people who streamed into this country.

AG: Did you find that the two groups remained somewhat separate?

EK: No. No. No. No. There weren't so many in the crowd really but no I wouldn't say that they disappeared. And on the other hand I must say that in our rambling section we didn't have any Austrians, strangely enough, it just so happened.

AG: Where did you go rambling?

Tape 3: 10 minutes 28 seconds

EK: Oh, mainly to Surrey. From Victoria Station to place like Merstham, half a crown return. And then perhaps this way to Rickmansworth, Cockernhoe Green, Chesham, that way, rambling. And sometimes over the weekend and right throughout the war. After the beginning of the war it was very helpful to everybody because one could live and forget about the every day worries and bothers. And it was a nice relationship. I've got so many photos, you know, which shows how we lived together, and sometimes knighted [sic] out in tents. And it was very enjoyable, in spite of the times. Because one ... so many of us didn't know where the parents were ...

AG: Well yes.

EK: ... what was going to happen to them, you see. Trying to get them over, but it was impossible.

AG: Yes, I suppose, well your parents had come, and your wife's as well.

EK: Well, quite, she too because the parents were divorced and her mother managed to get to Finland, of all places. But unfortunately her father was caught, from Frankfurt he was taken to – and we only found it out after the war, only very recently – that he was taken to Minsk and shot there. And the other relations from Wuppertal were taken from Holland also to Auschwitz and (were) also eliminated. Ja, ja.

AG: So your family in fact suffered, did suffer losses in the holocaust.

EK: Yes, because my father's brother, who was working for the Kaufman family in Holland, was taken to Sobibor and they all died, father, mother, two daughters and husband, one husband. Completely eliminated in Sobibor.

AG: You were telling me that that wasn't the only brother that your father had.

EK: No. The youngest member of the family volunteered in 1914 immediately after the First World War and fell within a month at the front ...

AG: At the western front.

EK: At the western front. Ja, ja. And another brother, who was a bit of a loner but worked for his father, was taken during the Kristallnacht to Buchenwald and I got in touch after the war with the archives and they confirmed that he died within three weeks that he got there. And he was quite fit. What happened, I don't know. So we certainly ... And then my aunt, sister of my mother's went, had a second marriage, married a non-Jew, but was denounced at the Weiße Hirsch, in the sanatorium, because she didn't feel well for a while, taken to Theresienstadt and from there to Auschwitz.

AG: Where was this sanatorium, in which city?

EK: Dresden. Quite well-known. So the family certainly suffered, yes, no doubt about it. Which family hasn't?

Tape 3: 15 minutes 1 second

AG: On the subject of family members, could you tell me a little about the wartime experiences of your younger brother? Jack as he became. What happened to him?

EK: Well, he finished his schooling here.

AG: Which school?

EK: Aldenham.

AG: Oh yes.

EK: And then joined the Army, in the intelligence section, was taken to Italy. Austria and Italy. First Italy. I think he had to take Kesselring at the time, General Kesselring, after the war, to an intelligence centre for interviewing and then the commanding officer said to my brother "Leave the room. We have to discuss it with K." And then he went to Carinthia.

AG: Oh, that was British-occupied.

EK: In Austria. '46 I think he was discharged. Then joined the firm and when my father died we carried on. By that time we had joined up with the partnership and had a factory to deal with the cleaning of the goods which we imported.

AG: Can you tell me again what sort of goods you were importing?

EK: Pulses like peas and beans and lentils, which came from Africa mainly and had to be cleaned because they were not up to the standards required over here and we prepared either for the canning industry or the wholesale trade. And when the African Asians became independent business became very difficult because the natives took over and they were unfortunately very unreliable so we had to switch to other countries like Canada and America for the supply of pulses for the trade. And then, as we are that far, in 1987 I got this invitation to Düsseldorf, I mentioned it before, the commemoration of the death of Alfred Flechtheim and it was very highly interesting. The son of [Gap] was there. Wonderful exhibition of paintings which went through either through his hands, through Alfred Flechtheim's hands, or from his private collection, lots of Picassos, Braques, Klee particularly, Grosz. And then –we had a very interesting time there naturally – then I needed a bit of a rest and we went for a few days to Baden-Baden. And there I suffered a stroke, or rather a heart attack and my wife said, "Unfortunately, you must be taken to hospital" and I said, "No, I won't have it. I am not going to be hospitalized in Germany. I'll be alright. I'll survive the night and I'll go back home". And I was feeling somewhat better in the morning, managed to get back and in the morning

arriving back home I felt better. So I said, "I'm going to the office now." "Oh no, you won't," says my wife, "you'll go to the doctor." So I took my business case and went to my doctor, the GP, and I said, "I'm on my way to the office, but I want to ask you what you think of my health." He said after five minutes, "You go straight to hospital because you suffered a heart attack. You can't go to the office. Forget that." I went to the Churchill here and was operated for a by-pass and stayed there for seven weeks as I had some complications. So after that I considered, 87, I retire. And we sold the company and I then started, once I felt fit enough again, not that long afterwards, to go into the research of the family, particularly my mother's family, the Flechtheims.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 1 second

And this is an on-going business. In fact, strangely enough, I got an interesting letter today because, first of all, as far as my mother was concerned, the family, the firm, the family firm started in 1843 in Brackel, a small town in Westphalia, in the grain trade. The earliest ancestor was born in 1720 and I've since discovered that through marriage we can trace ourselves back to 1695. But what is more interesting that my mother told me - and at the time I didn't take much notice of it - that she thought we date back, the family dates back to the twelfth century around the district of Speyer, or Trier. Now, as I said, I didn't take any notice of this at the time because there was no documentary evidence whatsoever, but I once got a telephone call right out of the blue from a German, and he said "You are a member of the Flechtheim family?", "Indeed". Well, I was born in Lengerich. I never met a Jew, but my mother always said, in this little place, little town, there were some nice people living there, had a very good reputation, they were Jews. And they were Feibes [?], and they were members of your family, aren't they?" "Yes, indeed." I said. "My great grandfather married a Feibes [?]" So he said later - that was on another call - "I am sending you a leaflet from Speyer, they have a special exhibition on, of the Jewish culture, flourishing culture in the 12th century in Speyer and what happened after they suffered a local pogrom, the Jews had to flee and escaped up North to Hessen and Westphalia." Now I linked that up, you see. I know from very good friends, and I'm coming to that too, personal friends in Münster, where my mother was born, who as university students, studied the feudal rights of Judaism. And as such - Germans they were - as such they cleaned up the Jewish cemetery in Münster and discovered the grave of my great grandfather - I've got the photos here, which were sent to me - beautifully cleaned - you could see the German and the Hebrew - and through them..., they were so effective, they wrote three books on the Jews of Münster, and various chapters on the family firm, and they told me that the first Jews to settle in Münster came in the twelfth century. So in my mind I had a link somewhere, these happenings in Speyer and Jews in Münster. I'm still following that up, I'm in touch with Speyer, I'm in touch with Münster. It's obviously almost impossible to get any documents dating back that far although the Germans are very efficient, even during the Nazi time, but you had this Thirty Years War in between and so much was destroyed. But that is an interesting point: the family reaches back that far. And so in the course of my studies of the family I got also suddenly a letter, a phone call from Bad Oeynhausen, spa, and the archivist there said, "I understand you are a member of the Flechtheim family. We are having an exhibiton here in the summer of a member of your family. But it's a different branch, you see, the whole

family started in Brackel. Then this, our family business eventually moved to Münster for reasons of greater transport facilities, bigger town, another branch went to Warburg.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 8 seconds

And the Warburg family, a member had quite an interesting existence, although father Sali Flechtheim was a banker, her didn't want to know anything about banking and he strayed into the variety business and became a dancer and married a German girl. And they had a duo, a couple dancing, known as Munro and Molly right through Germany and got engagements in America. When they finished with all that he settled in Bad Oeynhausen and became the variety director of the spa. In those days these spas were very, very Deutschnational, that is not Nazi, but völkisch-natioanalistic. He didn't care, he had brass bands there playing all the marches of Prussians and all that, and that was commemorated in that exhibition at Bad Oeynhausen. And not only was it successful there but they toured all round in Westphalia and then went to Berlin. I was invited back to Berlin for the exhibition. And finally it ended up where the family was started, in Brackel, in Westphalia. And he is a very helpful man – I got a letter from him today, I haven't even looked at it yet. I've got his photos there of it, because very interesting that the sister of this Walter Flechtheim married – I don't know if you've heard of him – Professor Lewandowski. Now his father, Louis Lewandowski is a well-known Jewish composer for reform synagogues and his son was a surgeon and married a Flechtheim and they emigrated to London eventually. And strangely enough I was reading the other day the Tagebuch, the diary, Gertrud Bleichröder, the niece of von Bleichröder who financed the Kaiser and Bismarck. And her closest friend was Lewandowski. It was very interesting. And I've got a photo there of him now, today. And this archivist, a very, very helpful man! I must point this out, I've got so many German friends now and they are genuine friends. They are all acting positively towards the Jewish communities there. There is Angela Gänger at the Mahn-und-Gedenkstätte, there are these two good ladies in Münster and I have them in Wuppertal, in Berlin, and there are so many of them. And so one asks oneself, why weren't they there during the war? It was a different generation, but it is a misunderstanding of the workings of a dictatorship. You cannot ask people to sacrifice their lives, when they have a family and other obligations. And then on the other hand, things did happen which were outstanding in that respect, I'm thinking of Marianne Strauss, who when her parents were taken by the Gestapo, slipped through the back door and joined the *Bund* in Essen. And from one family to another she survived the war, from Essen to Munich and Munich to Breslau and who knows, all over Germany. Covered, in hiding and survived.

AG: Is she the one the book appeared on *The Past in Hiding*?

EK: Ja. And she lived here then in England in Birmingham.

AG: Liverpool, I think.

EK: Ah Liverpool, yes. Ja, ja. And so in Oeynhausen, he was very helpful and with my various dates which I had, gave me a computerised history of the family date-wise, which

was very useful. And then part of the family research made me aware of some of the outstanding personalities of the family. And there was in the forefront both Alfred Flechtheim as the number one on Goebbels' blacklist – 'entartete Kunst' – he was, the picture was there satirized in Hamburg – and I'm still ... Now I've got a very intelligent and eminent professorial collaborator in Germany, in Dortmund. We are still trying to find as many of his paintings which were shown from his own collection at the Bleibtreustrasse in Berlin. Again I've got some evidence there. Also, the other one outstanding person, is Professor Julius Flechtheim, my uncle, brother of my mother's, who was the legal adviser to IG Farben and at the time of Chancellor Wirth in 1922 he was asked to take on the job as Minister of Justice in Germany. But he turned it down because at that time Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau was assassinated and as a Jew he wouldn't want to take the risk. So one thing or another, this is a fascinating business and on-going job for me to deal with it.

Tape 3: 32 minutes 4 seconds

AG: Right, yes. Well, coming back to Britain, I'd like to get some idea of your life after the war. You said that your son was born, I mean, first of all I should ask – although, of course I know the answer – how many children do you have?

EK: Just Andrew, yes.

AG: And he was born ...?

EK: In 1946.

AG: In '46, yes. And then you were living ... were you still in Goldhurst ...?

EK: Then, no, then we were living in Northwood Hills, Pinner.

AG: Aha.

EK: Ja. Because I moved there and got a house there and thought it would be near to the public school, you see, Merchant Taylors', which I had in view for Andrew. And that worked out alright and he was very successful there.

AG: We might as well continue. If you could tell me what became of him professionally and in terms of his family.

EK: Exactly. He was exceedingly good at school and specialized in German, although when he was a baby, or a youngster, he didn't want to know anything of that awful language. But he learned it and I then arranged he had a gap year to go to Germany, to Frankfurt, where I had a business friend, to improve his German, which was then exceedingly useful for his later career as a lawyer. He didn't know what to study, but he met a lawyer friend of ours and he said, "Oh, Andrew is such a bright boy, why not come into my office?" Which he did. Robert Dutch was the name, and he's died now

unfortunately. So Andrew studied eventually in Oxford, St. John's, and took up the legal career, was very successful, had the first partnership and now of course is a partner of this big firm in the West End and commutes to Germany practically almost weekly.

AG: Could you give us the name of the firm for the tape?

EK: Names, stupid thing.

AG: Well, its Fladgate Fielder though, isn't it?

EK: That's right, yes. There are 35 partners. It's a big enterprise and he's in charge of the section for German-speaking countries, that is Germany, Switzerland, Austria.

AG: And apart from that, does he have other positions that you might mention?

EK: His positions?

AG: Yes, other offices that he holds?

EK: Ja, of course he's chairman of the AJR, which is very important because as such after the 60 year celebration it's very much at the forefront of the news and we have also – oh, I haven't got it here, but I've got it upstairs – the very special photograph chatting with Prince Charles at the Kindertransport event recently. And also the other day in the Jewish News a picture with Andrew, Susan and Bertha Leverton of the Kindertransport organizer. So he is certainly very popular and very successful in every respect. And recently moved to a very attractive home in Hampstead, a home with great character, so well looked after by Susan, my granddaughter, who is an outstanding organizer, as we know from the catering side of the AJR and that has been inherited by daughter Nicole, who is an exceedingly efficient organizer for a hotel group in High Wycombe, organising their activities all over the country. And of course I mustn't forget Oliver, who now is with a property investment company in the West End and, as fate will have it, also commutes to Germany and is now taking German lessons paid by the firm in the firm's time and has been travelling across the whole German landscape and it's amazing, from one generation to another. And so in that respect we were happy to have a lovely family background.

AG: Mm, yes, thank you.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 5 seconds

EK: So, unless you want to have some special questions still ...

AG: I do have one or two more, yes. I mean, I was just going to ask you what it was like after the war, you left the fire service. How did you manage when it came to sort of settle down in Britain?

EK: Well, that was a difficult time really because things politically and economically were difficult, weren't they? And we were more severely rationed after the war than during the war. Consequently, it made business also more difficult because there was very little money there on the part of the government to import and on the part of the people settling after the war. And it took quite some time to overcome all this and to get trade moving, in a more traditional manner, when all the licensing and restrictions were overcome.

AG: When would that have been?

EK: That would have been in the '50's towards the '60's, ja, in the '50's.

AG: I don't think I asked you what the firm was called.

EK: Yes, you did. L. Kaufman Produce Limited.

AG: Oh yes.

EK: And of course my father's, pre-war, pre-First World War, was L. Kaufman, and now it's L. Kaufman Produce Limited. And we had this factory in Helstead in Essex, Helstead Produce Cleaning Produces. We sold the company and the Helstead set-up still exists, but under quite a different name.

AG: How long did your father continue to run the business?

EK: Practically till he died in '62 at the age of 84. He was a man who wanted to work and that was his life.

AG: Did your parents continue living in Templars Avenue?

EK: No, my mother died in '52 and then my father sold the house and lived in hotels actually, first in Hendon, and then in Bayswater.

AG: And in 1962, you took it over or did you take it over with your brother?

EK: With my brother, yes, we continued. And then we started a partnership, as I said, we had this factory, and that sort of extended the business through this special operation till I had my attack and then, of course, I had to retire.

AG: Did you expand the business during the Fifties and Sixties, did it expand or ...?

EK: Yes, as I said, through this operation as a factory, that meant that you could offer a better product and therefore a greater chance to sell, yes. But towards the Eighties trade had become exceedingly difficult and we have the experience generally in the trade, or in trading, that from that time onwards individual companies had a very difficult time to exist. The big boys swallowed up the little ones and, therefore, you have fewer and fewer

outlets and if you weren't in with the big boys, you've had it. And so if I were to give figures, whereas perhaps in the Seventies we had our office in Eastcheap and actually we rented it from the later Lord Mayor of London, Lionel Denny, you could do trade along the street, there were about 20 to 30 people one could do business with. Now, or even in the Eighties, when I left, there were only half a dozen left; and now there isn't a single one in Eastcheap, those who were still working in the trade had moved over across the river, where it was cheaper rent-wise, and now I think there may be one left and that's all, because trade is concentrating in different hands. It's a different ethic. And that goes not only for this particular trade, but, I think, all trade. Therefore, from the Jewish point of view, whereas in the past, I would say, all the youngsters had a chance to go into father's business, this doesn't exist any more, because unless father is a director of a big concern, there may be a chance, but individual firms, family firms, family businesses can't exist.

Tape 3: 43 minutes 51 seconds

AG: And when did you move here to ..?

EK: 1967. It was just being built and we could still advise the builder on certain ideas which my wife and I had and moved in after a trip to Israel in 1967.

AG: So you must by then have been living what one would call a fairly comfortable life.

EK: Yes.

AG: Did you go from the difficult times after the war, how long do you think it took before you got yourself financially fairly well established and ...

EK: Well, I suppose during the Sixties. And well, we had good connections. German connection. And, I mean, going back now, when I first went back to Germany on business ...

AG: When was that?

EK: It was 1951, and things were still very bad and destroyed in Düsseldorf, and we stayed at the hotel and we had a call from the reception "There are some gentlemen waiting for you" so "Ja, I'm coming down to the lobby" and there I was faced with a dozen of my former schoolmates. One of them, a good friend of mine – as I said they were very loyal to me – had organized it to welcome me back in Germany. And ever since I always attended, whenever possible, the class meeting in the Altstadt [old town] in Düsseldorf. And because, as I said, we had intimate German relationships with people who'd survived the war in business, they had to. And there were good people in Düsseldorf, a very nice man in Frankfurt, and so on, and we had the good will with them and that was very useful for the business, you see.

AG: What was it like, how did you feel when you first went back to Germany?

EK: Very awkward, very awkward, but one has learnt not to generalize. I mean, we always, my wife and I, took good holidays and on some holidays you did meet Germans. And I remember we went to Elba it was there - two I might mention - Elba, and there was what I thought was a typical German, bull neck and "Ja, ja" all the time and I said to my wife, "That's a Nazi." And I was sitting next to him in the evening and, of course, got talking. And he said, "You're English, aren't you?" and I said "yes", "In London?", "yes". "Oh, I've got good people living there." "Have you? How come?" "Well, we looked after them, you know." And I knew his name. When I got back here, I knew of them, and I contacted them and (they) said "Yes, they were absolutely first-class people. They looked after us Jews until we could emigrate." So you can not and you must not generalize. Another thing, on holiday in Italy, Lake Garda, a friend of mine said, "I've stayed there, it's a lovely place, it's a private hotel and it's in a lovely position overlooking the lake, and you would love it. And there are no Germans there." Good, booked it. And when we got there, we got into the dining room and I said to my wife "they're speaking German there, there are some Germans." All around me there were Germans. I said, "That lot over there, I don't like them. This man "Oh dear, we've got the wrong place, you know." And the one we thought were the worst, came over to me, and I thought, ah, there it goes. He said, "See this here, the Auschwitz number. They are all Nazis. I was Sozialdemokrat, a social democrat, and I was in Auschwitz and survived. Not they, they are the Nazis." What do you know? You see, never generalize.

Tape 3: 48 minutes 52 seconds

And then, after the war, of course, in German trade the de-Nazification went on for a little while, but then the danger of the East arose in Russian and they forgot all about it. The good old Nazis were suddenly good old Republicans in the Bundesrepublik. And one of the leaders of the grain association of the Nazis, he was then in charge in Hamburg of the local exchange, and he came to London to our exchange here. But what can you do? You have to deal with them. They are there. But as you said, "What do you think? what are you feeling?". One felt with the old generation one has to be very careful. The young generation is different. And I had arranged with a friend of mine, also an ex-class mate, that his daughter would come over and stay with us. And she complained, "We are all called Nazis. What can I do? I haven't done anything! I wasn't even born then!" And that's quite obvious. And then we arranged for an exchange for Andrew to go to Düsseldorf and somebody from Düsseldorf to stay with us. And again through a good friend of mine, ex-class mate, he arranged, sorted out a family which he thought was of our style, went to the rabbi in Düsseldorf and asked him, "What did you think of my choice for my friend in London?" "Yes, very good". They were an outstanding family. They had a family photo shop in the centre of Düsseldorf, well-established for years and years. And the boy came to us and Andy went to them. And had a very good time, both ways. Which again shows, you have to be careful, but at the same you mustn't be prejudiced.

AG: And a couple of questions about institutions. First of all, when did you begin to have connections with the AJR?

EK: Yes, through the business we had always, what was her name the lady, a French lady, Mrs. Weil, and she would collect for the various occasions, I can't remember. So through that I got to hear of the AJR and then, of course, much later, maybe through Andrew, I got well in with the organization. And that was the beginning, yes, it must have been during the Fifties and Sixties.

AG: And have you any, did you have any synagogue affiliations?

EK: No. No, in that respect after Auschwitz I have my doubts of religion and having read Richard Rubinstein's 'After Auschwitz', second volume, he comes also to a very different conclusion, a conclusion which is not appropriate for the masses, but for an individual. And I think all religions have their fundamentalists, they cause religious wars, we have it now, more or less. I'm not active in that respect. And neither was my father. My mother, as I said, to a certain extent. The family generally. In South Germany people were a little more that way inclined, I should think, than in more French, westernized regions.

AG: Did you have anything else that you wanted to say? I saw you looking at your notes. I wondered if there was another area that you wanted to talk about.

EK: I think I more or less covered it. I would like to show you the various photos I've got.

AG: We'll do that afterwards.

EK. We'll do that afterwards, ja. No, I think I more or less, let me just see – oh, I mustn't do that, ha, ha – I think I covered it mostly, yes, I think so, because really I wanted to say in conclusion there that whilst I am not considering myself of any importance at all, I think that having experienced all this from England to Germany, all the events in Germany, and Germany back to England, it has reflected the events of the 20th Century and as such, I think, my life has some meaning. So any other questions I would be pleased to ...

AG: I think we are more or less finished in that case and it only remains for me to say thank you very much indeed again for doing the interview.

EK: I thank you. I think it was most enjoyable. The more I can think of, the more I will let you know in due course.

AG: OK. Thanks very much then.

Tape 3: 55 minutes 38 seconds

Tape 4

Tape 4: 0 minutes 5 seconds

Photograph 1

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: That's my grandfather in Mannheim with my father and his younger brother.

AG: What was your grandfather's name?

EK: It was Jakob. Jakob Kaufman. And his wife was Clara Kaufman.

AG: When would this photograph have been taken?

EK: Possibly in, that must have been before the First World War, round about that time, I think, in 1912.

AG: And where would it have been taken?

EK: In Mannheim.

AG: Thank you very much. Good.

Photograph 2

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: This is my father, just married to my mother Ilse, possibly in 1912, in - I dare say it was taken in London, although they were married in Düsseldorf.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photograph 3

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: Well, you see there my young father and my very young self and the even younger teddy, which I liked very much, no doubt, taken presumably, I would think, in 19.., just before the war or just the beginning of the war, 1914, in London.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photograph 4

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: There you find my parents there, my father and my mother, taken presumably I think at their home in Golders Green, Templars Avenue, presumably in the post-war period in the Fifties, Forties or Fifties.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photograph 5

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: There you see my late wife Gerda and myself very much enjoying a very good meal in a local Italian restaurant in Harrow.

AG: About when ...?

EK: That was taken, I would think, in about 5 years ago.

AG: About 2000.

EK: About 2000, ja.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photograph 6

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: Here we have a photo taken at a gallery for an exhibition of Winston Churchill's daughter Sarah and I had a very interesting discussion with her about my hero Winston Churchill and the great man's life and particularly during the terrible days of 1940, at the beginning of the war.

Tape 3: 3 minutes 12 seconds

AG: When would it have been taken?

EK: That would be taken presumably some time in the Eighties.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photograph 7

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

EK: Here we have the lovely family led by Andrew and Susan with Oliver and Nicole, presumably taken possibly at their home about 10 years ago, if not a little later, earlier.

AG: So about 1995.

EK: About 1995, I would think, ja.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photograph 8

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

AG: Well, I needn't explain either, I think. There we have our good relationship with the Royal House of Windsor, Prince Charles and my son Andrew at the occasion of the reception of the *Kindertransport* occasion. It was a very, very harmonious occasion apparently and Andrew had a very interesting and pleasing chat with the prince. And so had others of my friends, who enjoyed it all enormously.

AG: That would have been taken this year, 2005?

EK: Was it 2005 or 2004? Possibly 2005.

AG: And in what capacity was Andrew ...?

EK: Andrew was there as the Chairman of the Association of Jewish Refugees, the AJR, and very much appreciated by the members. And I think it's really a holy icon for the family.

AG: Lovely. Thank you very much indeed.

Tape 4: 5 minutes 9 seconds

END OF INTERVIEW